Lifecycle 2 Vol2 #12 12/00

www.DailyRadar.com

→NextGen

Next Generation Magazine

SURF'S UP!
PLAYSTATION 2'S NEXT WAVE

Not impressed with PS2? We reveal the games that will redefine the system in 2001, including:

Silent Hill 2
Dark Cloud
The Getaway
Twisted Metal Black
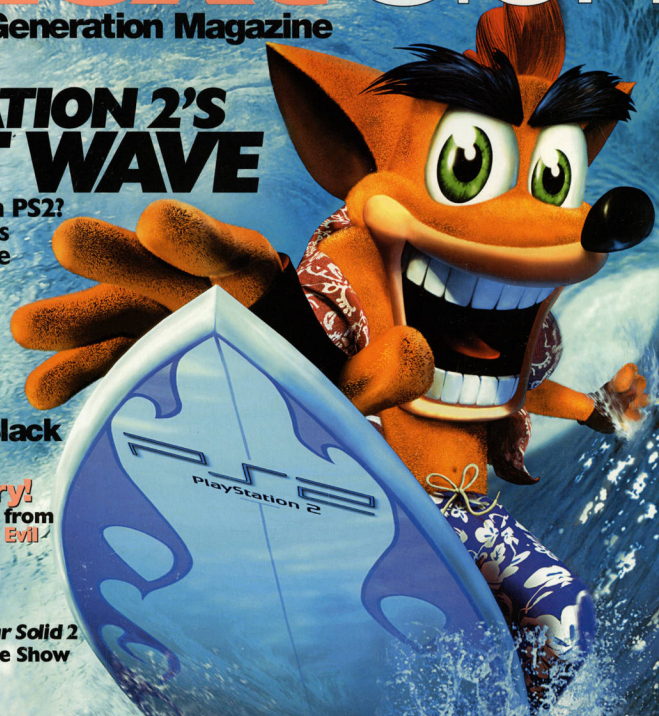## Legion and...
The Devil May Cry!
The new PS2 adventure from the creator of *Resident Evil*

PLUS:
- New Pics of *Metal Gear Solid* 2
- Live From Tokyo Game Show
- Xbox: Big in Japan?

MASSIVE REVIEW EXPLOSION!
- Legend of Zelda: Majora's Mask
- Final Fantasy IX ■ Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2
- Tekken Tag Tournament ■ Baldur's Gate II
- Shenmue ■ Star Trek: Voyager — Elite Force

PlayStation 2

imagine
MEDIA WITH PASSION

$5.99 U.S. $6.99 CAN

12 >

0 74470 02585 6

Dreamcast ■ Nintendo 64 ■ PlayStation 2 ■ PC ■ Xbox ■ Gamecube

CHARTER FIS

PH: 555-268

Relax.
He'll find other work.

SEGA MARINE FISHING™

Rip some lip.

It's all in the wrist. You should be good at that.

You're the fishin' technician.

Poor Captain Jack. Thanks to Sega Marine Fishing, folks aren't lining up to pay top dollar to not catch fish on his tourist troller. Nope, seems all the smart fishermen are out on the Sega Sea matching wits with Sailfish, Tarpon, Blue Marlin, Tuna and Mako Shark. Any wonder things are a little slow down at the docks?
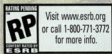
Dreamcast™

Born of different worlds,
woven together by fate, each shall rise
to face their destiny.

"The level of detail paid to every single moment, circumstance and environment is overwhelming."
Official Dreamcast Magazine

"...undeniably the prettiest role-playing game ever to grace a console."
www.dailyradar.com

"...this will indeed be the first epic RPG on Dreamcast."
www.ign.com

"Grandia II is easily the most impressive next-generation RPG we've seen, and the first true RPG epic for a next-generation console."
www.thegia.com

"Take a new look at what is surely the best-looking RPG yet on a next-generation console..."
Gamer's Republic Online

"...set to give sub-par developers a lesson in how to do a DC RPG right."
GameFan Magazine

"Any RPG fan would be insane to miss out on this fantastic gameplay experience and it could go far in converting those who previously rode the RPG fence."
GamerWeb.com

"If you want your copy of Grandia 2 this holiday season, don't expect Santa's little elves to make you a special copy, pre-order it now or you may not get it until late January."
www.GA-Console.com

Critically acclaimed and over 2 years in the making, Grandia™ II arrives December 2000.

Only on Dreamcast™

COME ONE, COME ALL.

IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME SINCE YOU WERE INVOLVED IN A FREE-FOR-ALL OF THIS MAGNITUDE.
QUAKE III ARENA ON SEGA DREAMCAST IS A PRIMAL STRUGGLE FOR SURVIVAL WHERE THE
FIT BECOME CHAMPIONS AND THE UNFIT BECOME STAINS. PRACTICING ALONE CAN ONLY TAKE
YOU SO FAR. IF YOU'RE READY TO TRY YOUR CHARM ON OTHERS, TRY A CASUAL ONE-NIGHTER
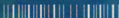IN THE ARENA. YOU NEVER KNEW IT COULD BE LIKE THIS.

MAGNIFICATION
2239X

BECOME ONE OF OVER 30
SAVAGE GLADIATORS FROM
ALL OVER THE UNIVERSE TO
MEET IN THE ARENA.

MAGNIFICATION
228X

MOTHERSHIP

DIAMETER: 3.14
ATOMIC NO.: 23
DESCRIPTION: OPTIMAL HOST
FOR MULTIPLAYER ACTIVITY.
ACCEPT NO SUBSTITUTES.

HISOF0: 798543

→Next Gen

Next Generation Magazine

Think the PS3 launch games were ho-hum! With only a few exceptions, so do we. Given all the hype surrounding the PlayStation 2's amazing processing power (yes, we'll take some of the blame for that) we certainly expected more from Sony's black box. The reality of the situation is that great software takes time, and despite the best efforts of Sony and many developers, the PlayStation 2 launch came too soon. Still, the games that will deliver the promise of PlayStation 2 are in the works — just take a look at...

PLAYSTATION 2's
NEXT WAVE

THE TECHNOLOGY, TALENT, AND MOST IMPORTANTLY, THE GAMES THAT WILL DEFINE THE PS2 EXPERIENCE

PAGE 76
METAL GEAR SOLID 2

PAGE 78
DRAKAN

PAGE 79
THE LOST

PAGE 81
LEGION

PAGE 82
THE DEVIL MAY CRY

PAGE 83
TWISTED METAL BLACK

PAGE 84
CRASH HANDICOUT

It seems as if there's a conspiracy underfoot in the PS2 development community, a feeling that everything is not as it appears. On the surface, when we sit down and talk for a few hours with a PlayStation 2 developer, we hear plenty of negative things about the system's flaws.

"It's difficult to program for."

"It's nothing like working in the Windows environment."

"We never realized how many resources we'd need."

"We just don't have good enough development tools yet."

We're heard each of these, as well as quite a few other equally valid complaints in interviews and background discussions during the last year. With this much negative talk, it's easy to think that the PS2 is in deep trouble.

But that's where the conspiracy comes in. Watching closely as the developer discusses the problems with PS2, we always seem to detect a bit of a grin. No matter how hard the developer tries to hide it, it always shows up. So how can the developer be smiling even though the PS2 is causing headaches for development teams? How can a game maker still grin when even Sony itself is only able to scrape together one — count 'em one — passable title in time for launch?

The answer is simple: The developers are part of the conspiracy because they've already seen the next wave of PS2 games. Yes, programming for PlayStation 2 is often a nightmare. Yes, the system is unfriendly to those most comfortable with the PC-style development model of the last 20 years. And yes, it requires more development resources than ever before. But now that the initial

74 NextGen 12/00 www.DailyRadar.com

frustration has worn off, these problems are not causing panic among developers because more and more of them have experienced the secret of the next wave of PS2 games. And, frankly, they're pleased.

Ken Levine, president of Irrational Games (who's working now on the PS2 action horror title The Lost) explains why "The PS2 is like the smart girl in the movie who doesn't seem attractive at first," he says. "But once she lets down her hair and takes off her glasses, she's a beauty. The system has many mysteries and quite a bit of depth — once you get to know it."

Slowly and surely developers are discovering the potential hidden within the complexity of PlayStation 2. PS2 is made of many powerful chips working together. The Emotion Engine is the heart, and most of the first generation of PS2 games are built using this chip almost exclusively. These games are already impressive, but this is just the beginning. PlayStation 2 also houses a powerful graphics synthesizer and two lightning-quick vector unit processors that can be used in parallel with the Emotion Engine. Developers have yet to scratch the surface of the potential power of these chips in combination. That's why no one's even talking about the upper limit of possibilities with this console.

Because the system is so complex as it is deep, the learning curve PS2 developers face is unlike anything they've experienced before. On a typical console, the quality of games tends to improve for the first and, occasionally the second year. After that, improvements come at a much slower pace. But what we're increasingly coming to believe we'll see with PS2 are neat,

Tokyo Game Show 12

Retroview 150

X-philes 20

The Devil May Cry 82

Nintendo's Hiroshi Imanishi 92

12/00

The Waiting Game

■ Cool Boarders
Code Alien   **52**

■ Shenmue   **98**

■ The Getaway   **28**

■ Tony Hawk's
Pro Skater 2   **127**

■ Dark Cloud   **44**

These days, it's not uncommon for me to get calls from *Time, Newsweek, USA Today, Rolling Stone, The New York Times,* and other magazines and major market newspapers. The calls usually come, coincidentally, right around the time of a system launch, as videogames are making more headlines than ever. And more and more frequently, the experts of the world have been calling on us, the experts on the videogame industry, for our analysis of this confusing and expensive market.

Which brings me to PlayStation 2. By the time you read this, the hype surrounding the shortage of units is likely to be epic in scale. If you were eager to own the system and successfully pre-ordered the machine, congratulations. You're probably very happy if you picked up *Madden, SSX,* or any other launch title you may have been anticipating.

On the other hand, if you've decided to wait and test-drive system first, you've also made a smart decision. While there are a few exciting titles available, developers are only beginning to tap the power of the system. If your budget is tight and you're happy with your current gaming system(s), waiting isn't such a bad idea. 2001 will be a much better year for PS2 — if you want proof, check out our cover story starting on page 74.

Until next issue, here's hoping your holiday season is joyous and filled with the games you really want.

Tom

— Tom Russo
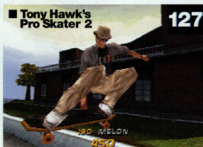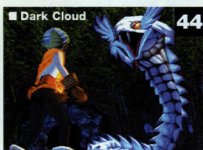
→Finals

Reviews of games you can play... um, yet...

→Ending

"Now's the time to say goodbye, to all our company..."

Dreamcast™

sega.com

Stopping is a bad idea.

In a world of angry cops, rival taggers and lots of paint, it's important to keep moving.
It's a race against time to leave your mark on the sprawling urban environment.
Armed with skates, a radio and varying quiver of spray paints, it's you against the world.
But you'd better be quick because the price of self expression just got higher.

Featuring music by Rob Zombie, Jurassic 5 and Mix Master Mike.
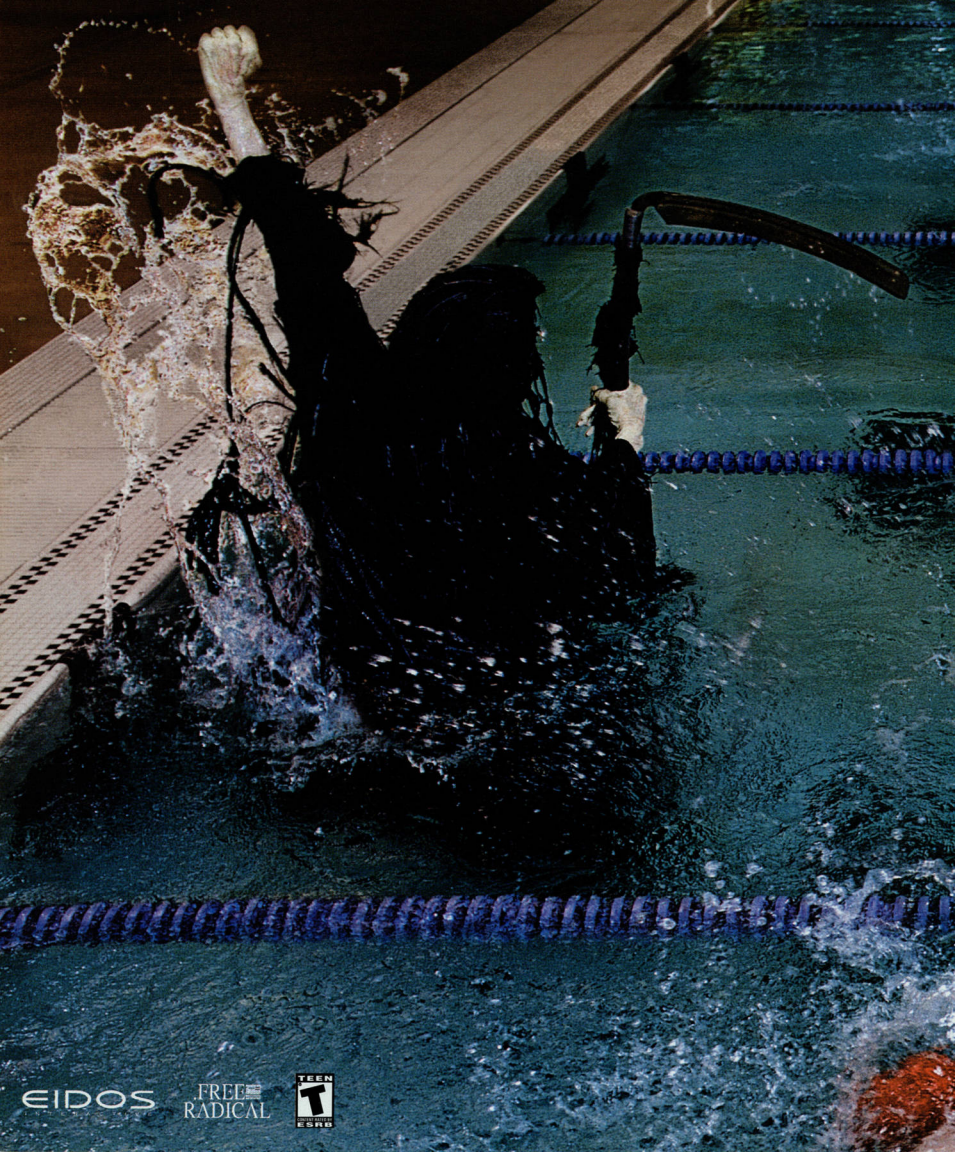
EIDOS FREE RADICAL TEEN T ESRB

Death has never been faster.
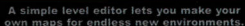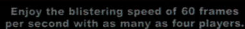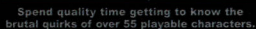
Tokyo Game Show Special Report

Japan's biannual show leaves much to be desired

If gamers needed any further evidence that the Japanese gaming market is in a period of transition, this year's Fall Tokyo Game Show, held Sept. 22-24 at Makuhari Messe, was it. Despite a large number of booths on the show floor, avid gamers who had come to the show looking for the hottest new products found instead the absence of heavy hitters like Squaresoft and Sega and a general lack of exciting new games.

Konami's booth was the talk of the show, with plenty of playable PS2 software as well as its standard non-interactive trailers for the newest games. While the *MGS 2* trailer drew a large crowd, the most impressive new item at their booth was the extremely creepy video for *Silent Hill 2* (see Alpha, page 57). The biggest playable hit at the booth (and the show) was *Zone of the Enders*, which made its first public appearance at TGS and wowed players with awesome graphics and great robot combat. The new Game Boy Advance version of *Castlevania* was also extremely popular, and those who played it compared it to the superlative *Castlevania: Symphony of the Night* on PSX. Of course, Konami's booth also featured many rhythm action games including the newest in the *Dance Dance* and *Beat Mania* series as well as a new game where you — get this — conduct music by waving a baton up and down. We don't see the latter game ever making its way to the States.

Sony also made a pretty good PS2 showing, with playable versions of *Dark Cloud* (see Alpha, page 44), *Sky Gunners*, and *Gran Turismo 3* (see Milestones, page 66), complete with the new PS2 force feedback steering wheel from Logitech. Curiously, the company only showed a single PSone game, *Crash Carnival* (*Crash Bash* in the U.S.), despite claims that Sony is confident that it can keep the PSone going concurrently with the PS2.

Genki's *Kengo* and Capcom's *Onimusha* were two of the more noteworthy playable PS2 titles, but the rest of PS2's better showing amounted to non-interactive demos. Koei's impressive presentation of *Kessen 2* drew huge crowds, as did Namco's video wall, which not only featured some impressive footage for *Klonoa 2* (see Alpha, page 51) but also showed off the previously unannounced *Ace Combat 4* for PS2.

Despite these few highlights, the feeling at the show was rather bleak due to the lack of any real innovative products. To add insult to injury, many of the titles were still looking and playing like first-generation games. Tomy's PS2 *Grappler*, for example, was laughably bad, while titles such as Bandai's new *Mobile Suit Gundam*, Capcom's *Snowboard Heaven*, and Enix's *Bust-a-Move Dance Summit 2001* just looked primitive — complete with jaggies and/or flicker — in comparison to current U.S. titles in development.

Since Sega wasn't there to show off its first-party games, Dreamcast's presence was scarce. The lone points of interest were Sammy's 2D fighting game *Guilty Gear X*, which surprisingly boasted the longest lines at the entire show, Tecmo's retooling of *DOA2* for Japan, and a couple familiar Konami sports titles and Capcom fighting games. Climax's miniature haunted house for *Illbleed* was also worth as quick visit — if only for the fact that the video demo proudly proclaimed that you would "shit with terror."

Curiously missing, despite a strong presence in the entry hall with banners, was Microsoft's Xbox. While the company had plenty of PC products on the floor — an oddity at TGS — the only real evidence of the elusive Xbox was a small sign and people passing out Xbox backpacks.

Overall, the fall TGS can only be viewed as a disappointment. While a few impressive products were shown, most were either already familiar or in poor shape. Equally frightening was the appearance of not one but two different ping pong games (one for PS2). We're hoping this is just a phase, and, as the video footage seems to indicate, original, high-quality games are just around the corner. **Next**Gen

> **While the *MGS2* trailer drew in large crowds, the most impressive new item at the show was the creepy video for *Silent Hill 2***

■ TGS can be broken down into three main categories: Booth babes at every booth, stage shows featuring everything from breakdancing to mascot-costume-wearing dancers, and tons of gaming stations for players to check out the newest games and systems

TOKYO GAME SHOW 2000 AUTUMN

9/22 (金)
9/23 (土)
24 (日)
10:00~17:00

東京ゲームショウ2000秋 展示ホール1~8
東京ゲームショウ2000秋 展示ホール1~8 (CESA)
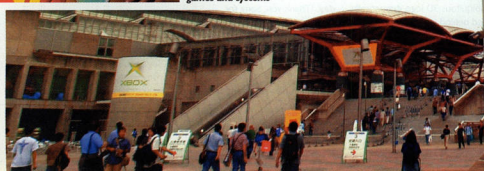
■ **LISTEN UP! WE DID**

Surrounded by Speakers
Which PS2 surround sound system is right for you?

Face it — between DVDs and 5.1-enabled games, you're going to want surround sound speakers. We separate the gold from the guano

PlayWorks PS2000 Digital

Manufacturer: **Cambridge SoundWorks/Creative**
MSRP: **$199**

→ This system simulates surround sound using a subwoofer and a single dipole speaker that looks suspiciously like a discarded ship design from *Episode One*. It's more convincing than we expected, but the key word is simulation. It's not surround sound, with many frequencies thin or missing, the 12-watt subwoofer sounding like a kid thumping a cardboard box, and everything turning to white noise at all but the softest volumes. Yes, they're cheap, but you get what you pay for.

AudioStorm PST

Manufacturer: **Gallant**
MSRP: **$299**

This was the only unit to use a standard, PC-style, detachable power cord, so it's a total mystery why each speaker is permanently bonded to its speaker wire. Good luck if you get a short. The receiver actually mimics the PS2's casing, so visually, it fits right in with the system. Sonically, it underwhelms like nobody's business. The bass is neither full nor deep. The high end is deficient, and the mid-range quickly becomes muddy and indistinct. At this price, it's insulting.

PlayWorks DTT2500 Digital

Manufacturer: **Cambridge SoundWorks/Creative**
MSRP: **$299**

This scaled-down version of the DTT3500s commits the immediate cardinal sin of not including a remote control (hey, if we wanted to peel our butts off the couch, we'd be outside exercising). The other major difference is the less powerful receiver, resulting in slightly muddier subwoofer response and increased distortion at higher volumes.

Desktop Theater 5.1 DTT3500 Digital

Manufacturer: **Cambridge SoundWorks/Creative**
MSRP: **$349**

The most expensive system tested also boasts the most extras. While nearly every set comes with a remote control, optical cable, and Dolby 5.1 surround capability, the DTT3500 throws in stands for the rear speakers and wall-mounting brackets for all five satellites.
With a price point higher than that of the PS2 itself, we expected this system to sound incredible — and it comes close. The sound is full and rich, and the 5.1 surround simply can't be beat. But the bass is a bit sloppy and overpowering, at the expense of the mid-range. This is more of a problem during DVD playback than games and is probably a result of the speakers being designed around PC users, who sit much closer to the satellite speakers than do living-room-dwelling console players. Still, it's a minor complaint, and a complaint that one editor even preferred.

Midland S4 8200

Manufacturer: **Midland**
MSRP: **$299 (without optical cable)**

Meet the champ. With crisp, clear performance across all frequencies, these speakers revealed sounds we missed with other sets — the cut of your board through the snow in *SSX*, and the subtle pad of individual footsteps during that amazing kung fu battle in *The Matrix*. Despite the lack of an included optical cable or stands, this is the only set we think has the capabilities to move from the computer desk to the living room. The DTT3500s come close, but the absence of mid-range sounds reproduced perfectly by the S4s cannot be denied. The Midland S4 8200s are the best. Hail to the king!

■ **BITS FROM THE EDGE**

News Bytes

→ **Selling a product is often more about buzz than it is about actually having something worth selling.** The sheep-like human race consistently finds it more convenient to stick with the flock than discover the emerald sheen of greener pastures just a stone's throw away. How else would we explain Pet Rocks? Still, getting consumers — not to mention jaded

journalists — excited about games, and even gaming consoles, is definitely not an exact science. Witness the latest in the next-gen console war.

First, Microsoft assembled the gaming press for some important announcements, including the name of its upcoming game machine (surprise! It's Xbox! Doh!). The

atmosphere clearly was aimed to generate excitement, from the spinning DJ and the cartoonish giant scroll of company names revealed to be developing for Xbox to the now ubiquitous 3D logo dramatically unveiled behind velvet curtains. But the topper was the most anti-climactic video ever, filled with footage of games currently available on systems with about a quarter the purported power of Xbox. Ho-hum.

Enter Sony, which, in a shocking revelation, announced that it could ship only half of the million PlayStation 2s it had previously promised for launch day. (Thank you, Sony, for confirming what was posted on every game Web site on the planet.) The fact that the company failed to specify what components were in short supply merely fueled rumors that it was all a big attention-getting

ploy, and there were, in fact, plenty of PlayStation 2s available for the entire planet. Nothing like a "shortage" to ensure that any and all PS2s shipped to retail will be snapped up like the last "retired" Beanie Baby.
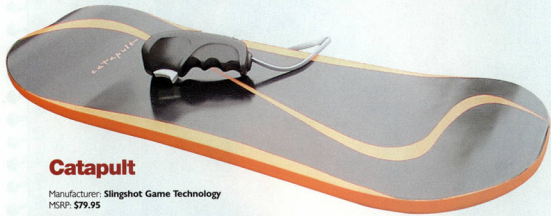
Following Sony's PS2 disclosure, Sega made a pathetic attempt at the "notice me" game by issuing press releases that there were

New hardware for the holidays

Gear for the game addict in your life

Catapult

Manufacturer: **Slingshot Game Technology**
MSRP: **$79.95**

➜ The problem with most snowboard controllers is that they just duplicate the action of the keyboard or joystick through the use of your feet — an imprecise input device at best. Not so with the Catapult from Slingshot Game Technology. It uses patent-pending technology that actually lets you rotate on its skateboard-like deck, creating a real snowboarding feel, with a small hand controller that enables you to take control for jumps and tricks. The entire setup is elegantly interfaced with *Soul Ride*, Slingshot's snowboarding game — the "rewind" button, which lets you quickly back up and then keep boarding, is especially cool. Even better, N64 and PlayStation adapters, which will come with the final unit, let you use the game with any console snowboarding or skateboarding games. For more info, go to www.soulride.com
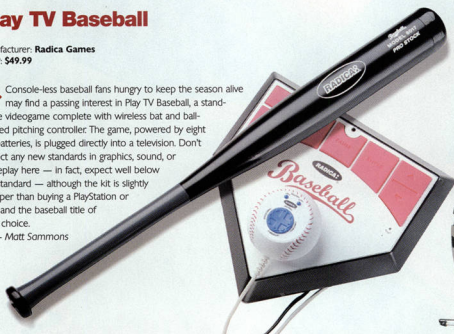— *Chris Charla*

Play TV Baseball

Manufacturer: **Radica Games**
MSRP: **$49.99**

➜ Console-less baseball fans hungry to keep the season alive may find a passing interest in Play TV Baseball, a stand-alone videogame complete with wireless bat and ball-shaped pitching controller. The game, powered by eight AA batteries, is plugged directly into a television. Don't expect any new standards in graphics, sound, or gameplay here — in fact, expect well below the standard — although the kit is slightly cheaper than buying a PlayStation or N64 and the baseball title of your choice.
— *Matt Sammons*

Shark MX

Manufacturer: **Interact**
MSRP: **$39.99**

➜ This Game Boy modem and email service works with the Game Boy Camera and Printer. It's totally cool, but also not that practical. The interface is great, but entering email using a virtual keyboard, letter by ... scroll ... letter ... scroll ... by... scroll ... letter ... is excruciating. The "PDA functions" (a world clock and calendar hampered by the absence of a clock chip) aren't impressive, but the email itself works quite well. Writing and reading mail is done offline — you connect just long enough to upload and download data. Downloading and uploading usually takes around a minute or two, and the MX comes with a free email account and 30 minutes of connect time (additional time is 10¢ a minute). Useful? Not particularly. Cool? Sure. Worth it? Your call. — *Chris Charla*

Microsoft SideWinder Force Feedback Pro 2

Manufacturer: **Microsoft**
MSRP: **$109.99**

➜ For their latest stick, Microsoft has trimmed down the size, eliminated the massive power pack, tweaked the force feedback, added a cool, Xbox-looking green power light, and made the throttle easier to use. The only bad change is the repositioning of buttons on the top of the stick. Button 2, which used to be a long button on the left side, has been moved lower on the face, making it uncomfortable to use in the heat of battle. — *Chris Kramer*

Microsoft SideWinder Game Voice

Manufacturer: **Microsoft**
MSRP: **$49.99**

➜ The Game Voice is both a disappointment and a triumph. On one hand, it's a fantastic tool for chatting with your friends over the Internet, enabling you to do such things as single out individual players for chat as well as talk to your entire team at once. Better still, it works well with a standard analog modem. The problem is, its voice command feature is weak. In theory, you can speak into the microphone to control your games (i.e. say the word "fire" and your gun will fire) as an alternative to using a standard input device. In practice, however, there's too long a delay between when speaking the command and when the game actually executes it, making all but the least time-intensive commands worth the effort. Grab a Game Voice if you want to chat over your games — just don't rely on it as a viable game controller. — *Greg Vederman*

---

no shortages of Dreamcasts. Duh! And by the way, there are no shortages of N64s either.

Meanwhile, Sony shipped its mini-PlayStation, PSone, to stores. No one noticed. Then the company revealed its PS2 campaign to journalists (to what one attendee called "absolute apathy"). The centerpiece, a question mark in the PS2 font, will stand alone in advertisements for a week before it's revealed to the public that the annoying squiggle they've been seeing everywhere is part of the PS2 logo, which will mean nothing to the people who didn't already realize the question mark was the P in PS2 anyway. Which they won't be able to buy, because there aren't enough for everyone.

What you will be able to buy is Mattel Interactive. Anyone want a giant money-losing pit of Reader Rabbit software? Mattel finally unloaded its Learning Company division, for free, to buyout firm Gores Technology Group, which, presumably, will try to foist it off on someone else. Mattel's net worth has shriveled as a result of the poison $3.5 billion acquisition last year; the company reportedly took a $430 million after-tax loss from discontinued operations as a result of the deal. They're also planning to cut around 350 jobs in the U.S., meaning Mattel Interactive President Bernie Stolar may once again be looking for work.

What exactly are people excited about these days? Stickin' it to the man. The U.S. Supreme Court recently refused to review the case between Sony and Connectix, allowing the latter to continue to sell its Virtual Game Station PlayStation emulator. Sony, no doubt, wants to squeeze out every cent of profit possible from its console — even though it's already sold 27 million units and holds over 50% of the U.S. hardware market share. So VGS is still on sale. And that, friends, is exciting.
— *Carrie Shepherd, Executive News Editor, DailyRadar.com*

ONLINE RACING THAT'S JUST A LITTLE MORE THAN YOU CAN HANDLE.

Now that you can challenge anyone to race online - anytime, anywhere in the country - knowing your cars can separate the small town punk from the primetime player. Take the Seacat. Nice car. Its power around the corners just might help you muscle through Pod's six mercilessly interactive, multi-layered tracks. But don't take our word for it. Get in there yourself. Because right now you've got nothing, podboy, and every-one in the online circuit is laughing in your single-player face.
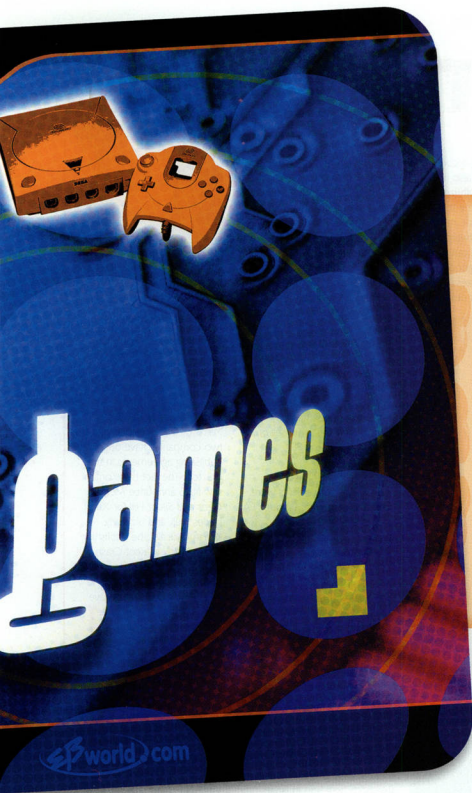
The X-philes

Big in Japan — big the world over

→ While I'm sure the '80s pop band Alphaville realized the irony of its seminal hit song, "Big in Japan," I doubt the band realized that those lyrics would be paraphrased to the point of cliche long after they'd vanished into obscurity. Being big in Japan is tough — it's at once essential, unknowable, and unpredictable. The assumption is that as an object, service, or even pop band, Japan will choose you, and that you cannot choose Japan.

Microsoft's challenge with the Xbox is twofold. Not only does it have to convince the notoriously fickle (and yet bizarrely loyal) Japanese public that the new wave in videogaming is coming from America, but it also has to convince Japanese software companies of the same thing. Without both, it's sunk. And without Japanese software to buoy its library, Xbox can probably kiss the U.S. market goodbye too.

At a September press event, Microsoft unveiled its new Xbox logo and J. Allard, Xbox general manager, read off the names (somewhat theatrically from a giant scroll of paper) of 155 worldwide developers. Allard claimed that around a third were Japanese. And there were certainly some vital names on that list. Namco, Konami, and Capcom are in, phew! Square didn't announce anything, but by the time you read this, the *Final Fantasy* maven's participation should be confirmed. Other Japanese names included Artdink, Atlus, Kemco, Koei, Tecmo, and Taito. So developer support has been confirmed from roughly the same set of players backing the PS2.

Back in the USA

The U.S. announcements were predictable enough, although EA was notably absent. Allard stressed that not all developers have yet been announced. "We've been working real close with the folks at EA," he said. "The guys in the studios are super excited about Xbox, and you know, we're not announcing everybody today. There will be more news to come, and it's going to be good news, and all the people you can expect are going to be there for Xbox."

The fact that neither Square nor EA have announced anything right now may not be a coincidence. The two companies share a close publishing relationship both here and in Japan. When asked about the absence of Square and rival RPG maker Enix, Allard was a little evasive. "The Xbox program, since its inception, has been worldwide, and we've been working on all the territories to line up developers," he said. "It's a really balanced portfolio." Some believe that Square and EA will wait until after the U.S. launch of PlayStation 2 before confirming support for Xbox.

But it's not all smooth sailing. The only Japanese games

■ When he isn't crank calling Microsoft's J. Allard, columnist Frank O'Connor plays Editor-in-Chief of Daily Radar Consoles

announced so far are from Konami — one of Microsoft's stalwart business partners. The company publishes a lot of Microsoft titles in Japan, and the two companies have ongoing publishing agreements in the U.S. too. The fact that Konami saw fit to announce *Metal Gear* and *Silent Hill* for Xbox bodes well, and bizarrely, Konami will also be publishing former Sony mascot *Crash Bandicoot* for the system. Microsoft won't have time to relax until more games have been announced. Let's see *Tekken*, *Ridge Racer*, and *Street Fighter* announced before the celebrations begin.

Still turning Japanese

Although some elements of Microsoft's September announcement were muddled and incomplete, the Japan-based software support — real, assumed, and rumored — is startlingly impressive. Neither Nintendo nor Sega can boast a fraction of those developers. And if you have any doubts about Microsoft's ability to succeed in Japan, just look at Windows. Microsoft in the '90s managed to completely diffuse the efforts of Sharp, Fujitsu, and NEC to create competing GUI-based computer systems. Now each of those manufacturers ships PCs running the Microsoft OS. In the end, maybe Japan will choose Xbox after all. **Next**Gen

■ Allard (right) in his Xbox-ing robe, jumps as the final Xbox logo is unveiled

■ BACKWARDS, IT SAYS "PAUL IS DEAD"

DOA2 Hardcore
has a message

→ Tecmo's huge print ad for the PlayStation 2 release of *DOA2 Hardcore* includes a lot of tiny print and some "hidden" messages. Easily discernable is a gleeful "more skin," along with a baiting "tekken bites."

However, on the right hand side, alternating with "team ninja rules," is the message "no censorship." In keeping with the latter, the bottom half of the ad lists six numbers, which can be broken into two groups, each with a pair of three-digit numbers followed by a four-digit number. These turn out to be phone numbers, the first to the office of Sen. Joseph Lieberman, the second to the Mayor's Action Center of Indianapolis mayor Bart Peterson, who back in July passed the first city ordinance prohibiting arcades from letting minors view violent games. **Next**Gen

---

■ THE BOOK STOPS HERE

The First Quarter:
A 25-Year History of Video Games

→ OK, we admit we're biased. Like most **Next Gen** readers, we've been waiting for years to get our hands on Kent's opus — the entire history of the videogame industry, writ large through the words of the men and women who created it. Can such an anticipated book possibly live up to our expectations? In a word, yes.

The result of more than 500 interviews (he failed to bag only Yamauchi, Kutaragi, and Sam Tramiel) and years of research, the book delivers an authoritative yet personal view of the game industry, packed with great quotes and anecdotes. While some of the facts in the book will be well known (especially to readers of **Next Gen**), frequently the book exposes totally new (and fascinating) behind-the-scenes secrets. More than that though, it delivers the personal stories behind the facts, bringing you the faces behind the games, and giving

you a feel for what it's like to work with those people.

If *Phoenix* is the game industry's textbook, this is its unauthorized biography. Both books are great on their own, but they also complement each other amazingly well — reading one makes you want to reread the other immediately.

We did have a few quibbles with *The First Quarter*. Frequently the text is too wordy, and several times we

felt Steve was devoting too much space to minor issues that weren't worth it — like a multi-page anecdote about Nintendo buying the Mariners — or glossing over bits we wanted to hear more on. (Sega's famous "Sega Scream" campaign gets far less ink than their nearly forgotten "Sega does what Ninten-don't" ads.) Those issues aside, though, this book is a major triumph, destined to stand with *Hackers*, *Game Over*, and *Phoenix* as "must reads" for

anyone who cares about the game industry. — Chris Charla

**476 pages
(20 pages of pictures)
BWD Press
http://members.aol.com/
stevenkent**
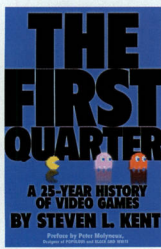
■ The First Quarter is available exclusively on Amazon.com

EXCERPT:
"The next big event was the September release of PlayStation. One person who was not going to see this release, however, was Steve Race. On August 7, Race resigned as president of SCEA ... Few people were surprised by Race's departure; his ongoing battles with his employers in Japan were well known.

We had celebrated differences of opinion as to where the product should be and how it should be priced and positioned. I wouldn't say we had screaming matches, but we just had long pregnant pauses, and I questioned their heritage, from whence they came... something about female dogs.
— Steve Race"
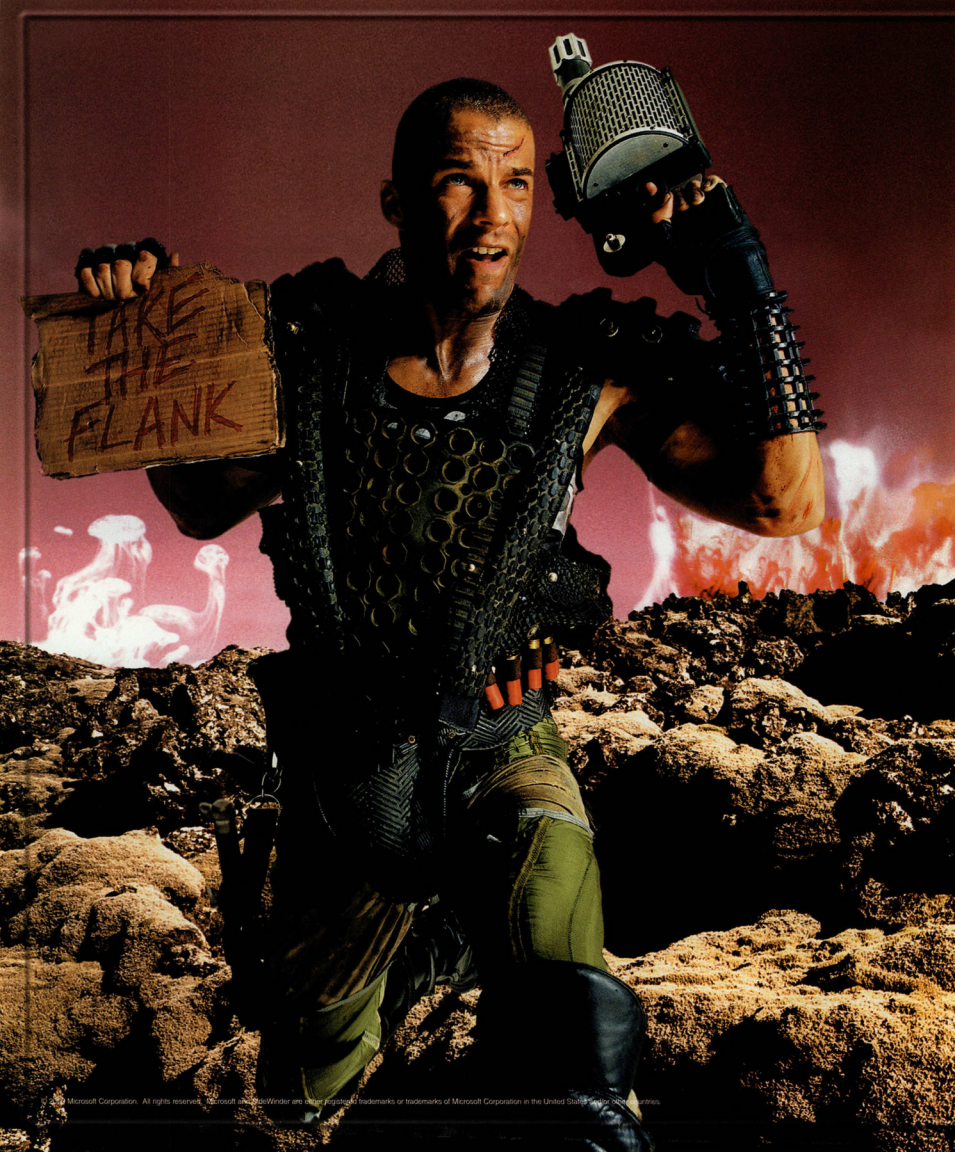
Real squads don't pass notes.

Scream. Howl. Heckle. The voice, man's primal form of communication, will once again revolutionize the way battles are won. With SideWinder® Game Voice you'll talk to and hear your squad without losing a step in an online firefight. Set up six different channels so you can plot with your teammates. Or broadcast abuse across the entire warzone. Taunt 'em. Scare 'em out of hiding. Because with the power of speech, your team's more like a real squad— focusing on the hunt and kill. Instead of the hunt and peck.

I'LL COVER YOU

MICROSOFT
SideWinder
GAME VOICE

Gamecube Watch

Gamecube: We don't need more polygons

→ **Misconceptions and Misdemeanors**

Is honesty always the best policy? Perhaps not, if Nintendo's Gamecube unveiling is anything to go by. In a refreshing change of pace, the company didn't attempt to manipulate the polygon numbers of its next-generation hardware in order to spin everything in its favor and say, "So you see, our machine is the most powerful. It can push 100 million polygons per second!" with a small print disclaimer reading, "Well, in theory anyway, and with no physics, lighting effects, texture mapping, artificial intelligence, or gameplay." Rather, it opted to tell the truth and present the press and gaming world with real play environment figures — a tangible, realizable goal that all developers could attain: 6 to 12 million polygons per second in gameplay environments. It's an impressive number for those of us with half a brain, but judging by some of the disappointed reactions by industry analysts and gamers alike, many are still confused by Nintendo's honesty. So let's take it from the top.

Polygons and Practicality

The important thing to remember when comparing system polygon performance is that, as a general rule, you shouldn't do it. Console polygon figures are often measured in different ways to achieve desired results, and it can be both unfair and misleading to try and arrange them side by side. This, unfortunately, seems to be exactly what has happened with Gamecube versus PlayStation 2. Whereas Nintendo has released perfectly realistic polygon performance figures

based in peak-play environments, Sony has handed out theoretical, unproven numbers that no developer on the planet has ever reached. According to Sony, PS2 is capable of pushing roughly 20 million polygons per second in actual play environments. But the fact is that no PlayStation 2 game has come anywhere close to realizing that number. *Ridge Racer V*, one of the more pretty launch titles in the console's library, is said to output just under 4 million polygons — and that's coming from Namco, a company that definitely knows its stuff. Furthermore, development sources we've

talked to indicate that the console could realistically max out in this respect at anywhere between "10 to 15 million polygons." And because PlayStation 2 is so difficult to develop for, it's going to be a long, hard road to that figure.

A Different Perspective

The proof, we suggest, is in the pudding. Nintendo's "technical demos" have already surpassed the benchmark of 12 million polygons per second the company says its console can do, and those were merely pre-first-generation examples. But what are polygons without effects? This is where Gamecube

really shines. Don't think of it as just 12 million polygons. Think of it as 12 million polygons featuring eight light sources, alpha blending, multi-texture mapping, bump mapping, environment mapping, and bi-linear filtering, all decompressed on the fly with no hit on hardware thanks to S3 texture compression on-chip, and much of it achieved through a single pass. Once you start applying these effects to PS2 software, that figure of 20 million polygons per second begins to decrease. And decrease. And decrease some more. Until suddenly 12 million polygons per second becomes

■ Columnist Matt Casamassina, the biggest Dolphin sleuth in the videogame industry, is the editor-in-chief of IGN64.com

an astronomical figure.

What Does It All Mean?

It means that Nintendo's Gamecube is a very powerful piece of hardware and that you'd be doing yourself an injustice to fall victim to the polygon hype. Don't do it. Wait until E3 2001 and judge the games, not the polygon numbers. You're not likely to be disappointed. **Next**Gen

> ## Nintendo has released perfectly realistic polygon performance figures... Sony has handed out theoretical, unproven numbers that no developer on the planet has reached

■ Will Gamecube's hardware be able to keep up? Yes, if this realtime *Zelda* demo shown at Spaceworld is any indication

NEW LEGENDS ON XBOX

→ Infinite Machine, the company started by Justin Chin of *Jedi Knight* fame, is bringing his next game, *New Legends*, to Xbox for launch. The announcement came slipped out at publisher THQ's editors' day. This third-person action adventure boasting heavy hand-to-hand combat was originally made for PC and appeared in our August "20 Games That Will Save the PC" feature. Well, better make that 19...

CONSOLE CONSPIRACY

→ In a time when all publishers are seemingly being absorbed into French companies, newly formed Conspiracy Entertainment has set up shop in Los Angeles and is sneaking two Japan-developed Dreamcast titles into the U.S. market this Christmas. Watch for the *Diablo*-like *Record of Lodoss War* and *Bangai-O*, a hardcore 2D shooter from Treasure.

■ Bangai-O   ■ Record of Lodoss War

SCHAFER GOES SOLO

→ Longtime adventure game creator Tim Schafer (*Full Throttle*, *Grim Fandango*) has left the confines of LucasArts and set up shop on his own Monkey-free Island, Double Fine Productions — the name comes from a traffic sign on the Golden Gate Bridge. "At this point," Schafer says, "half of our company is from LucasArts, and the other half is also from LucasArts." Double Fine's team of six has worked on past Schafer-driven products such as *Grim Fandango*. And what kind of game will Tim's next title be? He isn't saying, but — "I always tell people adventure games are dead," Schafer remarks. "That's my way of tricking them into abandoning the genre so we have it to ourselves." At press time, Double Fine was currently in negotiations with publishers. Given the early nature of Schafer's company, we don't expect that you'll see a finished game until after 2001. More news later as to what platform the game will appear on. Hint: it ain't the PC.

TRAVELING UNANNOUNCED

→ U.K.-based Traveller's Tales has more than just one secret project up its sleeve. Aside from *Crash Bandicoot* (revealed on page 86), the company is hard at work on *A.N.Other*, a PlayStation 2 game for Activision due late next year.

You see yourself
as a great warrior...

Your opponents see
you as spare parts.
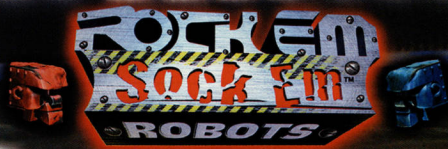
10 menacing robots, each with its own special way to turn enemies into scrap metal.

Devastate your opponent with weaponry like missiles, flame throwers and lasers.

Learn incredible combo moves that will make your competitor's head spin (if it's still attached).

Rock 'Em Sock 'Em™ Robots Arena gives you the power to rip off your opponent's body parts and attach them to yourself. Turn your enemy into rubbish with their own weapons. Or save the parts you collect for future victims. The more you win, the more powerful you become. You're not just competing for pride and honor, you're fighting for limbs.

www.rockemsockemrobots.com

→ # Alphas

Next Generation narrowly evades the authorities and escapes with the best new game previews

■ 18 Wheeler

■ Dark Cloud

■ Cool Boarders Code Alien

■ Silent Hill 2

■ Now this is an ambitious game. A super-deep, solid driving model, a huge, free-roaming map, and a dark plotline worthy of a classic caper film. Oh yeah — and this is an actual screenshot

THE GETAWAY

■ Publisher: **SCEE** ■ Developer: **SCEE (Team Soho)** ■ Release Date: **TBA** ■ Origin: **UK**

Not just photorealism, *total* realism

→ Complex architecture aside, the PlayStation 2 is a monster piece of hardware. However, **Next Gen** has hardly seen any software that looked like it could make the machine even break a sweat. But *The Getaway* is surely one of those titles. In fact, many early screens of the game were so detailed, they were widely reported to be conceptual renders. Skeptics, consider yourselves debunked. This game looks to have it all — photorealistic environments, accurate car handling, uncannily lifelike animation, and a much deeper gaming experience than anyone has yet realized.

"Nothing you see today is rendered," Studio Manager Brendan McNamara asserts, "and *The Getaway* is not just about driving."

Indeed, though 60% of game is comprised of vehicular missions and will inevitably be compared to *Driver 2*, a full 40% of the action takes place out of the car. It is also completely free-roaming. How you go about getting somewhere — on foot if you like — is entirely up to you. Choosing that critical route will be no simple task — 50 square kilometers of central London have been penciled in for use in the game, including side streets, cul-de-sacs, roundabouts, and one-way streets. Even taxi drivers could learn their way around playing this game.

The world of *The Getaway* will be immediately familiar to those who have seen caper films like *Lock,*
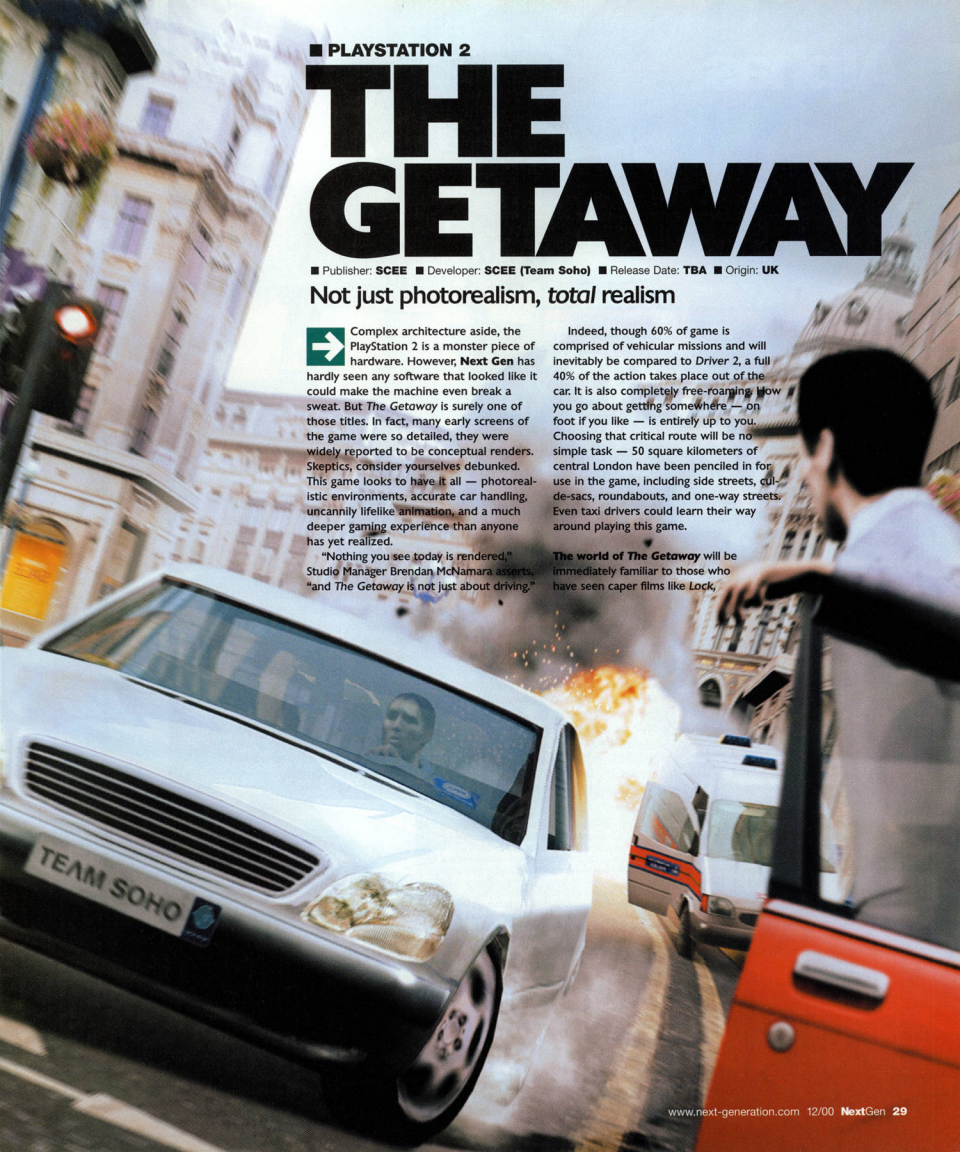
■ Damage is targeted to very specific areas. For instance, landing this jump will probably severely damage the front suspension, making it almost impossible to steer

Stock and Two Smoking Barrels, Get Carter (the original Michael Caine film — this is an English developer, remember!) and *The Long*
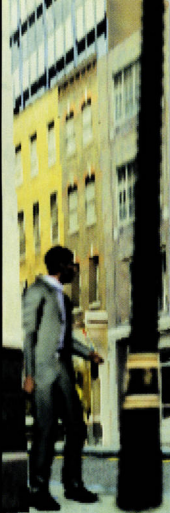

■ These drivers are sticking to the road, but if collision is unavoidable, try to hit something soft (stay away from people — that'll attract the cops). Different materials will cause different amounts of damage and deformation upon contact

Good Friday. In fact, members of the development team are required to watch tapes of these films — the programmer's equivalent of an actor's "getting into character." McNamara also wants to make it clear that the game won't just be technical bells and whistles. "We have a whole bunch of people from a film background," he continues. "We had a wardrobe designer. Two people are now working on the script, which has been really, really difficult, and we have an art director who has worked in film. We want the game to be driven by the story."

There will be two playable characters: Mark, a reformed bank robber, and Roy, a police officer. When Mark's son is kidnapped by a gangland boss, Mark is reluctantly forced back into business, and Roy is

assigned his case. There will be 12 missions, each of which can be played with either character and will be markedly different. They will include shootouts, robberies, stealth assignments and, of course, manic car chases through London.

One particularly impressive technical touch is the way the game engine transitions seamlessly from outdoor environments to FPS-quality interiors — which often consist of several rooms and even multiple levels — with no hesitation whatsoever. More remarkable still is that events that take place on the outside will affect enemy behavior on the inside. "We want some really subtle effects," Chun Wah Kong, *The Getaway's* lead designer, emphasizes. "One task might be to drive to a particular location and steal an item, but
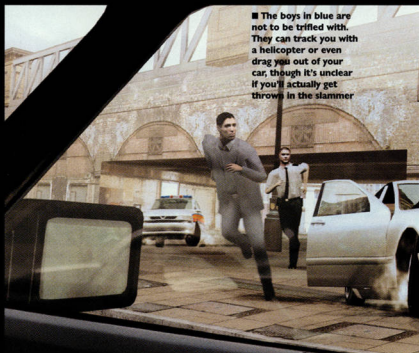

■ The boys in blue are not to be trifled with. They can track you with a helicopter or even drag you out of your car, though it's unclear if you'll actually get thrown in the slammer

OUT-ANIMATING DISNEY

The Getaway's intense level of realism will extend to characters' faces, thanks to a software tool called Talking Heads, which can mimic blink rates, random head movement, and even breathing at the end of sentences. Actors' heads are scanned in and overlaid onto a muscle mesh that covers 64 movement points, all of which can be manipulated independently. Talking Heads has six basic parameters: happiness, sadness, anger, fear, surprise, and disgust, and others can be added. Furthermore, the parameters can be adjusted in intensity or even blended.

Speech is also accurately synced using the company's proprietary software. The lips respond to 16 phonemes (the sounds that make up spoken dialogue). For comparison, a standard Disney cartoon animates only six different phonemes), and the data is then checked against a digital dictionary. This process renders painstaking, word-by-word lip-syncing unnecessary. The demonstration given to *Next Gen* was impressive; apart from some unfinished details inside the mouth, the face came to life with an unnerving accuracy.

■ The hand brake should come in handy when speeding through the narrow streets and tight corners of London
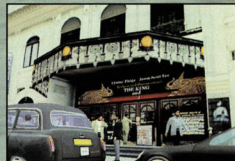
■ While the level of detail on this street above is already breathtaking, the dev team will continue to add flourishes like trashcans, lamp posts, and cracks in the sidewalk

if you slam the brakes on too loudly, that will alert the baddies inside."

The Getaway also boasts a realistic traffic and pedestrian system that perfects its reproduction of city life. Traffic is so completely modeled that if, at a given London intersection, 50% of cars go straight ahead, 25% go right, and 25% go left, these exact percentages will occur in the game.

Pedestrians will react dynamically to their environment, and it's not just a case of their jumping out of the way of oncoming vehicles. They can answer mobile phones, stop and point at emergency vehicles, and even react to you — if you exit a building while carrying a gun, for example, everyone

will run away. If you put your gun away, however, you can disappear into the crowd.

Pedestrians are also realistically easy targets, which introduces the sinister temptation to plow through entire sidewalks of them, administering one *European Vacation*-style bloody flesh wound after another. McNamara remains adamant that this aspect, along with other adult material, including swearing, maiming, racist characters, and storylines incorporating the sex trade, will remain.

Not that wanton vehicular manslaughter is necessarily a good idea. You can run people over and even gun down pedestrians, but it will trigger a flood of police on the scene. McNamara maintains

this is the purest approach: "We have a morality in the game which comes out through the story, but we're not forcing people to think in certain ways."

The Getaway is clearly an inspiring, exciting example of next-generation software. It's important to note, however, that despite all the discussion of complex AI, realistic images, and accurate driving physics, one bit of information was not forthcoming: the release date. Games with this level of ambition typically arrive late (if at all), containing far fewer features than were originally planned. Still, if our brief glimpse is any indication, the team is definitely on the right track — *Eric Bratcher/Nigel Edge*

H λ L F

INCLUDES EXCLUSIVE NEW MISSION!

New weapons, characters and effects designed to take advantage of Dreamcast's power.

Intelligent characters and an intense story create a unique action game experience.

$12500

■ A battle of the big rigs on the open American highway — sounds like a good time to us

18 WHEELER: PRO AMERICAN TRUCKER

■ Publisher: **Sega** ■ Developer: **Sega/AM2** ■ Release Date: **Q1 2001** ■ Origin: **Japan**

The story of a truck, a race, and a lizard

Although it's been described as "*Crazy Taxi* in a big rig," *18 Wheeler* is its own beast and promises to be even more so after it makes the move from arcade to Dreamcast. The idea is to pick a driver, then decide which cargo to haul — heavier loads mean more money but also slower acceleration and more difficult handling. Then, you head for the open road on a cross-country odyssey from New York to San Francisco, racing against your fiendish arch rival, Lizard Tail.

Lizard Tail does anything he can to slow you down, from yelling insults to pulling in front of you and dumping his cargo out on the road. There are also highway patrol cars you need to avoid, and in one area, a tornado rips through and dumps debris in your path.

That's the gist of the single-player arcade mode. For the home version, AM2 is adding a number of extras, including a Parking Challenge, in which you race against time through the cramped lots of a typical trucking depot, moving from space to space. And, naturally enough, you can also expect a two-player splitscreen mode.

Most interesting of all, however, are the new modes that take advantage of SegaNet. A Score

■ The game offers a number of multiplayer options, including a splitscreen mode and head-to-head play over SegaNet

Attack mode enables you to post your best single-player scores in an Internet-wide ranking. Best of all, the game will offer head-to-head play directly over SegaNet, replacing the crafty Lizard Tail with a live human being.

With the game still in development, other new options and surprises may be added as well. We'll keep you posted.

— *Jeff Lundrigan*

TOTAL TIME 0'24"83
TIME LIMIT 0'05"80

PENALTY TIME -4 Sec.

■ The home version will feature a number of new modes, like the Parking Challenge

YOU KNOW, THAT SPIELBERG KID

The best movie (and quite possibly, the only *good* movie) ever to prominently feature an 18 wheeler was Steven Spielberg's first work as a director, the made-for-TV film *Duel*. Dennis Weaver stars as a traveling salesman who cuts off a trucker on a desert highway. In a series of frightening set pieces, the truck — which is massive, encrusted with grime, and seems almost to be a living, breathing animal, since the driver is never shown — harasses Weaver over the next 90 minutes. The movie clearly prefigures *Jaws* in its intensity, and since it's now available on DVD, you should check it out.

■ The medieval world comes complete with friendly wizards, oversized chessboards, and, of course, evil black knights

■ PLAYSTATION 2
VIKKI'S ADVENTURES

■ Publisher: **3DO**   ■ Developer: **3DO**   ■ Release Date: **Q2 2001**   ■ Origin: **US**

Army Men not doing it for you? How about Army Women...

→ It's not unfair to say that the *Army Men* series hasn't come close to meeting its true potential. 3DO's next, *Vikki's Adventures*, is a spin-off from the "popular" series and goes head-first against the big boys of the character-based, third-person action adventure. The question is, can 3DO make Vikki stand out?

As a lost journalist from the *Army Men* universe, Vikki must escape from three parallel toy worlds: prehistoric, medieval, and space. The most distinguishing aspect to the game — and the secret to its appeal — is in the interaction between Vikki and her pet lion Leonardo. As she runs, jumps, fights, and puzzles her way through, Leonardo accompanies her and helps her out. The catch is that you don't have absolute control of your feline companion. So, while you can give him commands, Leo won't always follow them — he can and will act independently. This becomes its own mini-game, since you have to be constantly aware of how well, or badly, you're getting along with Leonardo. He comes equipped with a "rage meter," which determines his impulsiveness. You must feed and pet him to keep him soothed, or he'll get himself — and you — into trouble.

While the game is still in an early state, the levels seen by **Next Generation** showed promise, and the plot, which weaves and twists cleverly, is actually somewhat — dare we say? — charming. The big question is whether or not 3DO can pull this project off without running

into the same pitfalls that have always befallen the *Army Men* franchise — namely, rough graphics and unfinished gameplay. After talking to the team, we're convinced they could be on the road to redemption, but as is always the case, time will tell.

— *Blake Fischer*

■ Leonardo is around to help Vikki out in a pinch, but you have to make sure that he's kept in a good mood or he could get you into trouble

■ Vikki's primary weapon throughout the game is her bow, which will evolve into different forms depending on what world she is in

TWO WORDS

Shenmue

www.sega.com/shenmue

■ Many elements of the original *Theme Park* were blatantly co-opted into Microprose's *Rollercoaster Tycoon*, and they resurface here. For instance, individual rides now charge admission

THE REAL ROLLER-COASTER TYCOONS

It's a poorly known fact, especially among the "I buy my games at Target" crowd, that Microprose did not invent the amusement park sim with *Rollercoaster Tycoon*. That honor goes to Bullfrog, and specifically to Peter Molyneux, who also created *Populous*, *Theme Hospital*, the morbidly satisfying *Dungeon Keeper*, and Lionhead's upcoming über God-sim *Black and White*. The game was 1994's *Theme Park*, and though Molyneux himself is long gone from the company, his signature dark sense of humor is still present in the series. For instance, if your junk food stands are too close to your thrill rides, your little virtual kiddies will develop a tendency to spew their lunch all over the place, much to the chagrin of your janitorial staff.

■ PC
SIM COASTER

■ Publisher: **Electronic Arts** ■ Developer: **Bullfrog** ■ Release Date: **February 2001** ■ Origin: **Europe**

Sometimes it's laughing along with Mickey. Sometimes it's cleaning up after Pluto

→ They're back. Those little virtual hellions who run instead of walk, scream "gimme" instead of saying "please," and throw their litter on the ground beside the garbage can. They are the closest approximation to evil incarnate that modern programming can create. And pleasing them is the only way you can make a living.

Welcome to *Sim Coaster*, the second sequel to 1994's *Theme Park*. While last year's *Sim Theme Park* took a somewhat shallow approach, this new title returns the series to its deeper, business-simulation roots.

The most notable difference is the inclusion of a plotline. Your kindly, Willie Wonka-style boss is secretly grooming you to take over when he retires, so throughout the game you have to accomplish specific goals, which will eventually earn you a controlling interest in the

company. Completing a given objective — say, draining a body of water or removing construction debris — frequently involves keeping things running smoothly as you research solutions for your problem then train your workers to complete the task.

There are three themes this time (Polar Zone, Land of Invention, and Arabian Nights) with twice as many rollercoasters (18 in all, including new bobsleds and hanging versions) as well as some 200 different attractions (up from around 130 in *STP*). A new worker, the gardener, has been added, and you must now satisfy the tastes of virtual parents, grandparents, and children alike. Weather will heavily affect your guests' actions, and rides will now have optional admission prices. There are also substantial interface tweaks designed to make running your park easier than ever.

While *Sim Coaster* isn't likely to revolutionize PC gaming, it continues to refine the best elements of this genre into a cohesive whole that proves to be as addictive, imaginative, and effortless to enjoy as the theme parks that inspire it.

— *Eric Bratcher*

■ Bullfrog plans to release their attraction-creation tools to the public, though we're warned they're quite complex

■ Successful coaster designs can now be named and saved, enabling players to upload or download new designs via the Internet

The Adventure Begins Here.

Win an eight-day trip to the United Kingdom in the **Dungeon & Dragons®** Castle Sweepstakes!

Enter to win and demo the game at www.playdnd.com/nextgen.

■ After you complete each dungeon you will have to fight against a boss. Much like in *Zelda*, the boss will make a dramatic entrance via a realtime cut scene

■ **PLAYSTATION 2**

DARK CLOUD

■ Publisher: **SCEA** ■ Developer: **SCEI** ■ Release Date: **December (Japan), 2001 (US)** ■ Origin: **Japan**

Sony's first RPG for PS2 may look a lot like *Zelda*, but it's got a *SimCity* twist

➜ When *Dark Cloud* was first shown at the PlayStation 2 unveiling in November of last year, fans around the world took one look at the game's lush graphics, action RPG gameplay, and strange world-building aspects and immediately put it at the top of their must-have lists for PS2.

Of course, much like other promising titles such as *The Bouncer* and *Gran Turismo 3*, which were shown at the same time, *Dark Cloud* didn't make the Japanese launch and has even slipped past the American launch date. Now on schedule for a December release, *Dark Cloud* continues to be a shining star in SCEI's rather limited first-party offering, but whether it will live up to the expectations

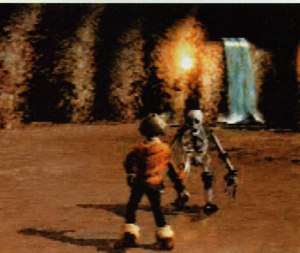■ You will explore a wide variety of locales in your quest to slay the demon

of an increasingly disconsolate PS2 marketplace still remains to be seen.

In *Dark Cloud*, you play as a young boy charged with defeating a demon that has ravaged the land. The third-person action

■ Just like in Zelda, you can lock the camera onto a specific monster for combat

■ Dark Cloud's third-person action complies with many of your standard RPG conventions — earning experience levels, buying goods from stores, etc.

Comparisons to *Zelda 64* are inevitable as *Dark Cloud* obviously shares many design concepts with the Nintendo masterpiece

adventure offers dungeon-exploring, boss-fighting gameplay that will be familiar to most console gamers. In fact, comparisons to *Zelda 64* are almost inevitable as *Dark Cloud* obviously shares many of its design concepts with the Nintendo masterpiece — the lock-on during combat, for example, appears to be exactly the same. Project Director Kentaro Motomura admits there are some similarities between the two products. "I spent a long time thinking about how to design the perfect interface for *Dark Cloud*," he confides. "I came up with one, and then, during the time

we were developing the game, we noticed our interface was very similar to the one in *Zelda*. But *Dark Cloud* also has the unique diorama feature which makes it very different."

The diorama world-building feature that Motomura mentions is one of the most intriguing parts of the experience. As you fight and explore your way through the many dungeons in the game — some go as deep as 16 levels — you must also rescue the citizenry of the land who have been hidden in magical capsules. Once you rescue these people, however, it's up to you to rebuild their village, and that's where the game takes a dramatic turn from the action RPG norm. After each

爺さんの馬車
■ City building is an important part of the game. From this overall point of view, you can lay out your own city plans, and after you're done, you can zoom in and run around in your village

ねえ、いいでしょ。
ね！ね！おねがい。
■ Throughout the game you can play many different characters with their own unique talents. Unlike many games, however, you can switch between these characters at any time

■ *Dark Cloud* has its own day and night cycle. Things will happen at night that you can't find during the day, and vice versa

level, you return to the village hub, reconstructing it from the materials you've found. "Through a top view, you will place the buildings and other elements as you wish — you can even set the orientation," explains Motomura. "The game will even evaluate your skill in editing the village." After you start putting buildings in place, however, the actual scope of the diorama part of the game is revealed. "The people you have freed will have their own wishes and by meeting their wishes you will increase your score further. These wishes are quite varied too: to be beside a waterfall or to not be by someone and stuff like that."

Dark Cloud differs further from *Zelda* in that players can control six different characters throughout the course of the game. Curiously, you can change between

■ **As you build each village, you will find that the villagers make special requests in the construction. Luckily, if you've made a mistake you can still move things after they've been initially placed**

■ **Throughout the game you will find civilians captured in magical capsules. Each capsule you uncover allows you to add to your village**

Once you rescue the citizenry from their containment in magical capsules it's up to you to rebuild their village

characters at any time, which allows you to utilize each character's special abilities whenever you see fit. Motomura points out that this could come in handy. "You will actually have to change in a few situations to pass an obstacle or enemy," he explains.

"Especially in the boss stage, which requires you to manage several character abilities in order to defeat the monster." Despite the inherent complexity of character management, especially with different ability sets for each one, Motomura stresses that the interface has been kept relatively simple — most actions can be accomplished with a single button. This seems to be a hard line that most PS2 developers are trying to cross, as they want their games to appeal to the broader, more mainstream audience as well as the hardcore.

Unfortunately, many of the features shown in the original PlayStation 2 demo — like the magic carpet ride — haven't made it into the final game. "Many things have just been dropped," admits Motomura. "Don't forget that the first demo was kind of a technical demo for the PS2." Admittedly, Motomura tried to put as much into the game as he possibly could within the constraints presented him. "It's essentially a problem of time," he says.

Besides the time constraints, the biggest problem we saw in our recent demo is that *Dark Cloud* has to fight its own legacy as a first-generation project. Many of the levels we played featured the usual jaggies as well as some sparse texturing. Hopefully, the gameplay will be enough to shine through, because in the face of newer, shinier products, that's what will be most important.

— *Blake Fischer/Christophe Kagotani*

■ **Even though a lot of *Dark Cloud* is dungeon exploring and fighting, the game still has a storyline that is told via both realtime cut scenes and FMV**

Your thirst for conquest goes unquenched no longer.

Age of Empires® II: The Conquerors Expansion

Five new civilizations to lead or conquer: Aztec, Mayan, Huns, Spanish, and Korean. Four new campaigns to emerge victorious: Attila the Hun, El Cid, Montezuma, and the Battles of the Conquerors. Your challenge: Expand your empire and rule the world.

www.microsoft.com/games/conquerors

You know the rules.

PlayStation®2
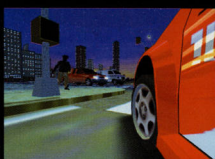
湾岸
MIDNIGHT CLUB
STREET RACING

In secret gatherings around the world a mysterious group of urban street racers, known as the Midnight Club, race for pride, power and glory in sleekly customized, tricked-out sports cars. Speeding through crowded streets, running red lights, terrorizing pedestrians, driving on sidewalks and outrunning the cops are just the basics for the "Midnight Club".

Racing action in two accurately modeled cities on both sides of the Atlantic · New York and London!

17 different performance enhanced cars to race · concept prototypes, foreign sports cars, muscle cars and pickup trucks.

Play in a persistent world · with interactive traffic, pedestrians and law enforcement.

Win the pink slips of opposing players! Rise up through the ranks in the illicit world of the Midnight Club.

Winning cars are tuned up with equipment from street-racing specialists such as Dimmer, VeilSide, Zender, Neuspeed, Wings West and more....

Release date: PlayStation 2 Launch

www.rockstargames.com/midnightclub

There are no rules.

Cutting edge soundtrack from some of the world's leading techno/drum and bass artists· Dom and Roland, Derrick May and Surgeon

KLONOA 2: LUNATEA'S VEIL

■ Publisher: **Namco** ■ Developer: **Namco** ■ Release Date: **March 2001 (Japan)** ■ Origin: **Japan**

One of the better games nobody ever played gets a sequel

■ *Klonoa 2's* cartoonish, cel-shaded graphics belie its technical sophistication: When Klonoa is blasted out of a cannon, the entire landscape tumbles along below him

➡ Back in early '98, Namco released *Klonoa: Door to Phantomile* for PlayStation, and it sank like a rock. That was real shame, since it was easily one of the best 3D "rail" platform games — in which the characters and backgrounds are full 3D, but the action runs along a set path — of the last few years.

So we're happy to report that Namco is working on a sequel. As in the original, the lead character, Klonoa, has become trapped in a dream world come true — although this time around it's not his own dream. The basic 3D platform gameplay has been retained, along with Klonoa's ability to use a large ring to capture enemies. This gives the plucky little hero a number of temporary powers depending on what he catches, such as flying for short distances or simply hurling his captives at other bad guys.

The original boasted an amazing design that took full advantage of such simple gameplay dynamics, and this sequel includes a new double-jump, along with assorted environmental doodads like trampolines and cannons that can fire him vast distances. This last one is especially nifty, and watching the landscape fly by underneath is visually quite impressive.

Like a growing number of recent titles, *Klonoa 2* uses a cel-shading renderer, which makes the 3D characters look like 2D cartoons. In this case, however, while the characters do have a definite cartoonish quality, the backgrounds seem to have been left with relatively realistic shadows, textures, and shading. It's a decidedly different look for a game, but given the "it's only a dream" backstory, perhaps it's appropriate.

The original *Klonoa* was an undeservedly overlooked little gem of its type. Hopefully, this PlayStation 2 sequel will find a larger audience.

— *Jeff Lundrigan/Christophe Kagotani*

■ **Klonoa can grab enemies and use them to augment his own abilities, such as being able to reach high platforms by double-jumping off their heads**

NEED HELP?

One of the original game's strongest points was its well-developed story, which was told through a combination of in-game and pre-rendered cut scenes. *Klonoa 2* seems to be following in this tradition. The squirrelly hero finds himself in the land of Lunatea, where he washes up on the shore and is found by Lolo, a Shrine Maiden. She may or may not be a romantic interest, but nevertheless she helps him find his way around and learn how Lunatea works. Also along for the ride is Popuka, Lolo's oddly proportioned puppy dog (we think that's what he is, anyway), who's apparently there just to provide comic relief and an extra (unnecessary!) dose of cuteness.

■ The venerable snowboarding series is getting a major graphic facelift – kinda pretty, ain't it?

■ **PLAYSTATION 2**

COOL BOARDERS CODE ALIEN

■ Publisher: **UEP Systems** ■ Developer: **UEP Systems** ■ Release Date: **December (Japan)** ■ Origin: **Japan**

No, we don't know how the aliens fit in either

Although this title currently has no announced U.S. release date, someone always picks up the latest *Cool Boarders*. The various PlayStation versions have been released by Sony and/or 989, while the Dreamcast version was picked up by Sega and re-titled *Rippin' Riders* late last year.

For *Code Alien*, the series' first outing on PlayStation 2, UEP hasn't fooled much with its traditional formula. The game offers seven different mountain courses — each of which has stretches of downhill racing broken up by stunt areas — in which your overall score is based on a combination of fast times and flashy tricks. There are, however, some additional modes, including Half Pipe and Big Air trick modes, as well as the brand new Board Park, which invites you to perform board tricks in a more urban environment, grinding guard rails and skimming the tops of phone booths. There's also SBC Mode, in which you race against seven opponents. In all, there are 14 different environments, and given the shift to PS2, you can expect a number of visual enhancements. Weather varies from clear to a full blizzard and the lighting shifts from day to night as well.

Perhaps the most interesting addition, however, is support for PS2's analog buttons; A light tap yields a simple trick, while pressing harder results in a more extreme move. Whether this makes a practical difference in gameplay has yet to be seen, but it's another reason to look forward to giving this a test run.
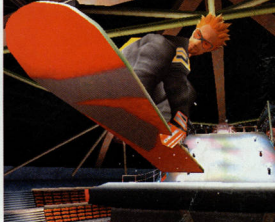
— *Jeff Lundrigan/Christophe Kagotani*

■ Here's something we haven't seen before in a game: the Northern Lights

■ Note your life meter in the upper left — take too many spills, and it's *adios muchachos*

Great commanders don't do grunt work.

No matter what anyone says, the trowel is not mightier than the sword. With SideWinder Strategic Commander, you can finally focus on commanding your army. That's because a quick push of a button will order the construction of vast infrastructures. Assemble legions of troops. Delegate entire fiefdoms. Or jump to any spot on the battlefield. Set it up with your keyboard and mouse. Customize it for 72 different chores. And let it do the dirty work so you're free to strategize at the speed of thought. It won't, however, choreograph your victory jig. But we're working on that.

MICROSOFT
SIDEWINDER
STRATEGIC COMMANDER
www.microsoft.com/sidewinder

WIN

Dreamcast

LOSE

- Sleep
- Any semblance of personal hygiene
- All pigment in your skin
- The use of your lower extremities
- The love of your pets
- The remainder of your youth
- The interest in anything that isn't pixilated
- The loving touch of anything that lives and breathes
- Your grip on reality

That's a fair trade.

Hollywood Video® is giving away 3 Dreamcast™ deluxe packages. Enter automatically with every game rental visit. Or you can enter at www.hollywoodvideo.com. Package includes a new Dreamcast system and 2 new release games.

See our website for complete official rules. Winners drawn Monday, January 8, 2001.

HOLLYWOOD *VIDEO*

SILENT HILL 2

■ Publisher: **Konami** ■ Developer: **Konami** ■ Release Date: **2001** ■ Origin: **Japan**

Can the newest gaming technology make this visit to Silent Hill scarier than the first?

Despite gamers' tendency to lump all horror games together into a single "survival horror" genre, *Silent Hill*'s slow, methodical horror gameplay was actually a sharp contrast to the *Aliens*-esque pacing seen in the *Resident Evil* series. With its oppressively dense fog, dark psychological storyline, and superbly twisted creatures, *Silent Hill* was less about survival — although you could die quite easily — and more about the fear of the unknown, and the hidden. Now, almost two years later, the developers of the first game are taking us back to their fictional city of the damned for a whole new adventure — and new depths of terror.

Even though this is the second in the series, there is actually very little connection between the two *Silent Hill* titles. "The only link is the town itself," confirms Director Akihiro Imamura. "For the rest it is a brand new story, a brand new adventure." And even though you had almost free run of the town in the first game, there will be very little crossover content-wise. "As PS2 is able to do much
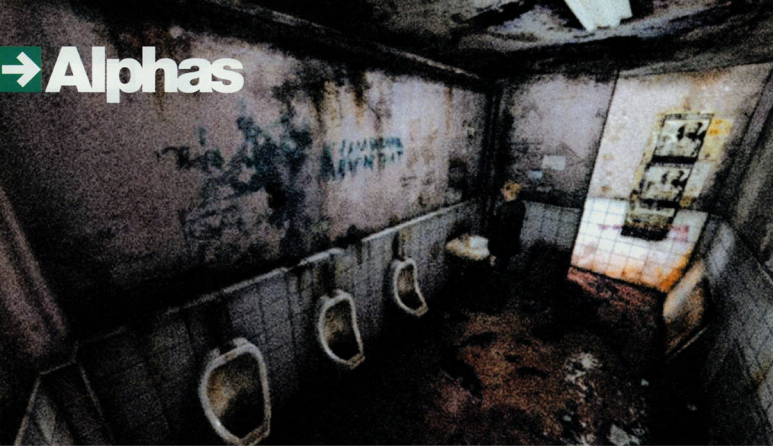
■ The PS2 has enabled the art team to give the world of *SH2* a grim and gritty look that just wasn't possible with the first game

■ The shambling horrors you find are vaguely human, but nobody knows what they really are

"You can feel something when you see the monsters in *Silent Hill 2*. There is something human in them"
—Art Director Masashi Tsuboyama

more than the first PlayStation," Imamura continues. "and because we wanted new experiences for the player, we had to design new locations. You may cross a few places already present in the first episode, but that's all."

Silent Hill 2's basic scenario is also quite different from the first game, and it's a little more disturbing. Everything revolves around our main hero, who has been living alone, riddled with grief after the death of his wife. Now, just as he has started to put his life back together, he receives a letter from his deceased wife telling him to go to Silent Hill where all will be explained. Naturally, he rushes off to the town, and here is where the main story begins.

A tantalizing video trailer shown at Tokyo Game Show suggests that his wife actually does await him in Silent Hill — the trailer showed an eerie scene where she and our hero are talking. "See, I'm real," she breathes, as she reaches out to touch his face.

Early gameplay and video footage also gives a sampling of the dark rogues' gallery you will encounter on your adventure. Art Director Masashi Tsuboyama feels that PlayStation 2's increased capacity has added yet another level of depth to these lurking horrors. "With the power of PS2 we certainly have been able to increase the graphical aspects of the game, but above all we can create a greater impact on human feelings," he explains. "The monsters in

■ Our hero discovers Laura sitting on a fence singing. While she evidently is a piece of the town's mystery, the team was reluctant to explain her exact role

Silent Hill 2 are expressing more humanity [than in the first game]. You can feel something when you see them. There is something human in them." One such character is a little girl named Laura sitting on a fence and singing "Ring Around the Roses," while other, darker forms shamble in and out of the shadows in other areas. Other scenes involved what looked like a bloody surgeon dragging a body away while an unidentified form twitched on the ground in a manner eerily reminiscent of a scene from the film *Jacob's Ladder*.

Not surprisingly, the gameplay remains much like it was in the original PlayStation game. "Everything works in similar fashion [to the first *Silent Hill*]," explains Tsuboyama. "A character in a 3D world is looking for clues about dramatic events. As he encounters enemies, he has to

fight to survive in an action mode and find the truth hidden in the town."

Most of the effort has gone into developing the game technically — trying to get the best feel for the town itself. "The most difficult part from my perspective," admits Tsuboyama, "was to be able to deliver a perfect representation of what *Silent Hill* is. Even if we had more power and possibilities than we do now with PS2, it would be vital to define a line that would describe the game atmosphere perfectly."

The fog effect, which was a defining characteristic of the first game, was one thing the team has opted to keep. "In the first episode, we used the fog to face the technical problems of the PS," admits Imamura, "but it was also designed to reinforce the atmosphere of the game. We chose to keep this feature for PS2 because the fog gives the game a terrifying feeling. Forms appear and disappear. You have a limited perception of the surroundings." Of

FROM PLAYSTATION TO PLAYSTATION 2 AND BEYOND

When Next Generation sat down with key members of the *Silent Hill 2* team we asked them about their decision to bring the franchise to PS2. "We touched the limits of the PlayStation in terms of 3D," says Director Akihiro Imamura, "so any sequel was set for a next-generation system." Since at the time of this decision — about a year ago — no other system had been announced, PlayStation 2 was the only way to go.

Still, the team seems more than willing to work with other more recent next-generation platforms like Nintendo's Gamecube and Microsoft's Xbox. Curiously, despite the fact that *Silent Hill X* is one of the few announced titles on Xbox, at the time of this interview Imamura claimed that he and his team hadn't yet played with the dev kits for either system. "I hope we will be able to access a few kits soon," Imamura confided wistfully.

■ *Silent Hill 2* team leaders (from left): CGI Director Takoyashi Sato, Designer Suguru Murakoshi, Director Akijiro Imamura, and Art Director Masashi Tsuboyama

■ Unlike the *Resident Evil* series, *Silent Hill's* lead character isn't really a gung-ho action hero

■ The team did lots of research from books and film to perfectly define the visual style of *Silent Hill*

■ One of the creepiest scenes we've seen is the one in which our hero encounters his dead wife

course, since PS2 allows many more options than its predecessor, the fog in *Silent Hill 2* isn't just a static wall of obscurity in the distance, but an entity in itself that ebbs and creeps through the scenery with an apparent life of its own.

Given these obvious graphical facelifts, however, Designer Suguru Murakoshi, says that he and the team are working very hard to make sure the visuals balance out. "For example," he begins, "let's say we can work with 10 times more polygons than the former PlayStation. That's great, but you also have to consider the other aspects like the textures, the animation, or the motion. If you don't take care of the global balance of your game, it will be total nonsense." Murakoshi is very keen to make sure this balance extends to all aspects of the game, especially gameplay. "You know, there are many projects with great visuals, but nothing

inside, something without any balance," he muses. "I don't want people to say that *Silent Hill 2* is only graphics. We've worked hard to keep the gameplay at the same level."

It's perhaps a testament to Konami's resurgence as a gaming superpower that *Silent Hill 2* is now one of our most anticipated PS2 titles, along *Metal Gear Solid 2* and *Zone of the Enders*. If our early look is any indication, the team is well on its way to defining the new look of horror gaming, and if the TGS teaser taught us anything, it's that we haven't even scratched the surface. — *Blake Fischer/Christophe Kagotani*

■ The fog effect in *Silent Hill 2* helps to enforce the oppressive feel that the team is trying to achieve

AN INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION IN A WORLD of MAGIC

Danger awaits, hardy traveler, in the turbulent lands of Arcanum! Prepare potion or pistol, for armament is a must! Encounter more than 500 friends and fiends of the oddest sort on dozens of quests and campaigns. Travel alone through this massive realm, or invite companions to join you online. And for those with discriminating taste, we sport the most advanced role-playing system ever created in this or any other reality.

Brigands beware! Eighty spells in 16 Colleges are at your disposal, while the mechanically inclined can construct wonders of the age with 56 technological degrees from eight disciplines.

An epic story with multiple paths ensures you'll never play a single or multiplayer game the same way twice. Or create your very own online campaigns with the Arcanum World Editor.

Dozens of quests and a limitless character design let you decide the destiny of your character, be it elf, half-ogre or other sundry races.

SIERRA STUDIOS™

www.arcanum1.com

NO MAGES ALLOWED

BULLETS & BRIMSTONE

Witness the metallurgical might of the repeating rifle or unleash the dark arts of a Hellgate, as a mechanical future challenges a magical past.

ARCANUM™

OF STEAMWORKS & MAGICK OBSCURA

Endless Adventure

All-New Characters

Improved Battle System

TEEN
T
CONTENT RATED BY
ESRB

Animated Violence
Mild Language

FINAL FANTASY IX

PREPARE YOURSELF

for a world of mystery and magic

for a journey of danger and discovery

for characters you'll never forget

for the most amazing adventure ever

Countless Interactions

Amazing CG Cinemas

PlayStation

SQUARESOFT

PICK A WORLD
WE'LL TAKE YOU THERE

4th

■ Sony is incorporating what they term "emotional" AI. If you cut a computer-controlled car off, the driver may decide to tailgate you. Sounds like road rage to us

3

134 km/h

■ **PLAYSTATION 2**

GRAN TURISMO 3

■ Publisher: **SCEA** ■ Developer: **Polyphony Digital** ■ Release Date: **Q1 2001**

→ Formerly known as *Gran Turismo 2000*, this title sits at the top of many an editor's "most wanted" list. It looks amazing — the physics and opponent AI have been cranked up, and with 15 tracks (though only two new ones) and roughly 130 vehicles, it should keep you busy for quite a while. Peripheral fans take note: Sony has been giving demos of *GT3* with a Logitech-engineered force-feedback steering wheel specifically designed for this game.
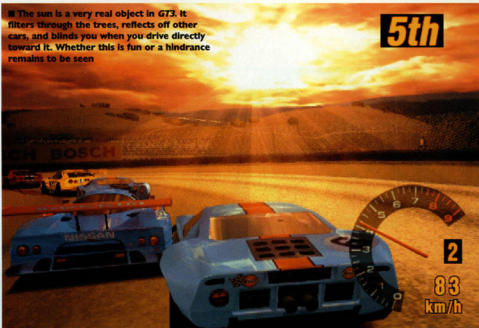
■ The sun is a very real object in *GT3*. It filters through the trees, reflects off other cars, and blinds you when you drive directly toward it. Whether this is fun or a hindrance remains to be seen

5th

2

83 km/h

3rd

1st

■ After the vast selection of cars in *Gran Turismo 2* — some 600 in all — the fact that *Gran Turismo 3* has only 130 seems a little weak. However, these screens should demonstrate that the models are infinitely more detailed

■ PC
TRIBES 2
■ Publisher: **Sierra** ■ Developer: **Dynamix** ■ Release Date: **December**

➡ The original was one of the first and best titles to focus on team-based online multiplay. The sequel will build on this solid foundation with notably better graphics, new vehicles, and many user-friendly interface tweaks. This one has been delayed repeatedly, but the end result looks to be well worth the wait.

■ While jet-packing it around on foot is fine, we're really looking forward to mounting up in the new two-man tank (upper left) and doing some real damage

■ NINTENDO 64
SIN AND PUNISHMENT
■ Publisher: **Nintendo** ■ Developer: **Treasure** ■ Release Date: **Q3 2001**

➡ This 3D shooter on rails tells the story of freedom fighters trying to retake the world from genetically engineered monsters. Skeptics should take note of two facts: The game will feature optional *Contra*-style cooperative play, and it's developed by Treasure, the hands-down, best shooter designers on the planet.

■ Very like *Starfox* on foot or *Panzer Dragoon* with no dragon, this game supplements its initial appeal with two-player team play

■ PLAYSTATION 2
SOUL REAVER 2
■ Publisher: **Eidos** ■ Developer: **Crystal Dynamics** ■ Release Date: **March 2001**

➡ The latest sequel in this ongoing third-person epic thankfully moves away from the crate-heavy puzzles of previous titles. The player now has access to seven elementally aligned reavers (sword of fire, sword of water, sword of spirit, etc.) that will enable deeper mechanics for both puzzles and battles.

■ Each reaver has different abilities. For example, the light reaver illuminates darkened areas, and the air reaver can activate updrafts, which Raziel can ride to previously unreachable areas

■ DREAMCAST
DAYTONA U.S.A. NETWORK RACING
■ Publisher: **Sega** ■ Developer: **Sega (Amusement Vision)** ■ Release Date: **Q1 2001**

➡ In the past, all you had to do to play one of the greatest arcade racers of all time at home against human opponents was buy a bunch of full-sized arcade machines (at several thousand dollars each) and link them. Now you have to go to the trouble of buying a Dreamcast and logging on.

■ You can play against four human opponents online, but computer-controlled cars will also participate, creating massive races with 40 cars on the track

■ Just look at this terrain. It's just like Beggar's Canyon back home

■ Although it's not immediately evident from these screenshots, the game can also be played with a first-person camera

■ PLAYSTATION 2

STAR WARS STARFIGHTER

■ Publisher: **LucasArts** ■ Developer: **LucasArts** ■ Release Date: **December**

We recently got a chance to fly a few of the 14 missions in this game, and it continues to blow us away. The graphics just keep improving, and the terrain engine is simply incredible. Whether you're weaving through planet-side canyons or blasting your way through proto-imperial forces in deep-space, this feels like *Star Wars*. And that's awesome.

■ Missions are balanced between space-based and terrestrial assignments. Given the differences between the characters' storylines and vehicles, LucasArts should have ample source material to design plenty of unique, creative missions
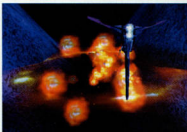
■ The player will control three different characters and ships. Vana's Guardian Mantis is shown here

→ Milestones

■ DREAMCAST
HALF-LIFE: BLUE SHIFT

■ Publisher: **Sierra** ■ Developer: **Gearbox** ■ Release Date: **Late Nov/Early Dec**

→ ■ **Titled** *Blue Shift*, the new adventure will find the player guiding Barney, the security guard, through his role in the original plotline

→ Multiplay will have to wait (a separate product in January will include multiplay, *Team Fortress 1.5*, *Opposing Force*, and possibly *Counterstrike*), but the single-player portion of the PC's greatest game has been enhanced for Dreamcast, with greatly improved models and a new 10- to 15-hour Dreamcast-only episode.

■ DREAMCAST
CHICKEN RUN

■ Publisher: **Eidos** ■ Developer: **Blitz Entertainment** ■ Release Date: **November 2000**

→ Believe it or not, this third-person sneak-'em-up borrows much from the gameplay of *Tenchu* and *Metal Gear Solid*. The players will construct and execute various escape plans while doing their best to avoid evil guard dogs, the dimwitted Mr. Tweedy, and his evil wife, Mrs. Tweedy.

■ Much of the game is played from the avian perspective of Ginger, the film's main character, but you'll also control Fetcher the rat at times

■ PC
GUNMAN CHRONICLES

■ Publisher: **Sierra** ■ Developer: **Rewolf** ■ Release Date: **November**

→ This game actually began as a total conversion of *Half-Life* that was being cobbled together by a group of amateur developers literally spread across the globe. Valve somehow got a look at it (most likely scenario: They asked. Would you tell the creators of *Half-Life* they couldn't see your mod?) and decided to give it the full treatment.
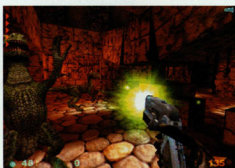
■ The various vehicles aren't just for show — we know at least the tank will be usable

■ PC
THRONE OF DARKNESS

■ Publisher: **Sierra** ■ Developer: **Click Entertainment** ■ Release Date: **Q1 2001**
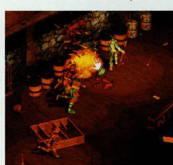
■ You can program your party's combat maneuvers ahead of time, making actual battle easier to manage

→ A *Diablo*-style adventure RPG set in medieval Japan and developed by former members of Blizzard's *Diablo* team, this game adds depth to the action by giving the player control of a party of up to seven warriors of various classes. Multiplayer action will be a variation on King of the Hill, with the current king commanding a demon horde.

Last night, she shot you down.
TODAY, IT'S YOUR TURN.

Dogfight opponents online in cutthroat multiplay.

Fly 11 tricked-out planes in 24 thrilling missions.

The 1930s ain't what they used to be. America lies in pieces
and air power is king. It's a shoot-or-get-shot-down world.
You'll dogfight ruthless air pirates. Rescue saucy pinups.
Dodge flak from dicey femmes fatales. And mix it up with
other aces online. But remember, one thing still holds true—
don't get mad, get even.

www.microsoft.com/games/crimsonskies

Big guns. Fast planes. Gorgeous dames.

CRIMSON SKIES

Microsoft   Zone.com   ZIPPER INTERACTIVE

TEEN
T
ESRB
Animated Violence
Use of Alcohol
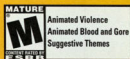
EIDOS
INTERACTIVE

MURDER AND MAYHEM INTERRUPTED
BY FREQUENT DRESSING AND UNDRESSING.

fear effect 2
RETRO HELIX

Think the PS2 launch games were ho-hum? With only a few exceptions, so do we. Given all the hype surrounding the PlayStation 2's amazing processing power (yes, we'll take some of the blame for that) we certainly expected more from Sony's black box. The reality of the situation is that great software takes time, and despite the best efforts of Sony and many developers, the PlayStation 2 launch came too soon. Still, the games that will deliver the promise of PlayStation 2 are in the works — just take a look at...

PLAYSTATION 2's
NEXT WAVE

THE TECHNOLOGY, TALENT, AND MOST IMPORTANTLY, THE GAMES THAT WILL DEFINE THE PS2 EXPERIENCE

It seems as if there's a conspiracy underfoot in the PS2 development community, a feeling that everything is not as it appears. On the surface, when we sit down and talk for a few hours with a PlayStation 2 developer, we hear plenty of negative things about the system's flaws.

"It's difficult to program for."

"It's nothing like working in the Windows environment."

"We never realized how many resources we'd need."

"We just don't have good enough development tools yet."

We've heard each of these, as well as quite a few other equally valid complaints in interviews and background discussions during the last year. With this much negative talk, it's easy to think that the PS2 is in deep trouble.

But that's where the conspiracy comes in. Watching closely as the developer discusses the problems with PS2, we always seem to detect a bit of a grin. No matter how hard the developer tries to hide it, it always shows up. So how can the developer be smiling even though the PS2 is causing headaches for development teams? How can a game maker still grin when even Sony itself is only able to scrape together one — count it: one — passable title in time for launch?

The answer is simple: The developers are part of the conspiracy because they've already seen the next wave of PS2 games. Yes, programming for PlayStation 2 is often a nightmare. Yes, the system is unfriendly to those most comfortable with the PC-style development model of the last 20 years. And yes, it requires more development resources than ever before. But now that the initial

frustration has worn off, these problems are not causing panic among developers because more and more of them have been privy to the secrets of the next wave of PS2 games. And, frankly, they're pleased.

Ken Levine, president of Irrational Games (who's working now on the PS2 action horror title *The Lost*) explains why. "The PS2 is like the smart girl in the movie who doesn't seem attractive at first," he says. "But once she takes off her glasses, she's a beauty. The system has many mysteries and quite a bit of depth — once you get to know it."

Slowly and surely developers are discovering the potential hidden within the complexity of PlayStation 2. PS2 is made of many powerful chips working together. The Emotion Engine is the heart, and most of the first generation of PS2 games are built using this chip almost exclusively. These games are already impressive, but this is just the beginning. PlayStation 2 also houses a powerful graphics synthesizer and two lightning-quick vector unit processors that can be used in parallel with the Emotion Engine. Developers have yet to scratch the surface of the potential power of these chips in combination. That's why no one's even talking about the upper limit of possibilities with this console.

Because the system is as complex as it is deep, the learning curve PS2 developers face is unlike anything they've experienced before. On a typical console, the quality of games vastly improves for the first and, occasionally, the second year. After that, improvements come at a much slower pace. But what we're increasingly coming to believe we'll see with PS2 are vast,

steady improvements in games on a yearly basis for a much longer period of time as developers master the console's multi-chip design.

"Conservatively, the PS2 development curve will be an extremely sharp incline for four to five years and won't flatten out at all until then," Levine continues. "I think the initial releases from other platforms will be more polished, but down the road, the developers will really get the hang of this thing and expose more and more of its power."

Naughty Dog's Jason Rubin agrees: "The difference between first-generation and second-generation games will be immense — far larger a gap then ever before. But I think that the difference between second-generation and third-generation games will be even more stunning relative to what we have seen from systems before. The machine's power is immense. It just takes time to open each successive advance."

The improvements that we'll see as early as the second generation of PS2 games are actually quite varied. As developers master the system, they'll improve in all aspects of game design, from administration, to technical prowess, and even to the core of their ambition levels. Already, we are seeing developers adapting for the second generation of PlayStation 2.

BIGGER, MORE FOCUSED DEVELOPMENT TEAMS

It seems that every time a new
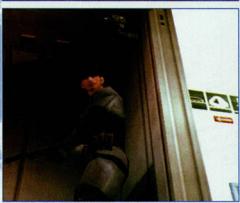
■ When people talk about the next wave of PlayStation 2 games, the first title that has to be mentioned is Konami's *Metal Gear Solid 2*. When it first made its debut at the 2000 E3 show it raised the bar in terms of expectations for PlayStation 2. These images give a hint why

METAL GEAR SOLID 2

■ DEVELOPER: **KONAMI**
■ PUBLISHER: **KONAMI**
■ RELEASE DATE: **Q3 2001**

→ No PlayStation 2 game on the planet today represents the future of Sony's new console better than *Metal Gear Solid 2*. While other developers are successfully lurching forward along the evolutionary pathway of videogames, Konami has bet the bank that it can sprint its way ahead of the pack with an instant PS2 masterpiece. You've already seen this title's unbelievably real environments, fantastically detailed physics (bottles popping, windows shattering, shells flying), and movie-quality effects (rain, shadows, steam, light trails, and too many others to list). It's the kind of game that makes everyone in the entire industry try harder just to keep up.

Now let's just see if they can finish it in time... Until then, here are a few world-exclusive pictures to enjoy while we wait.
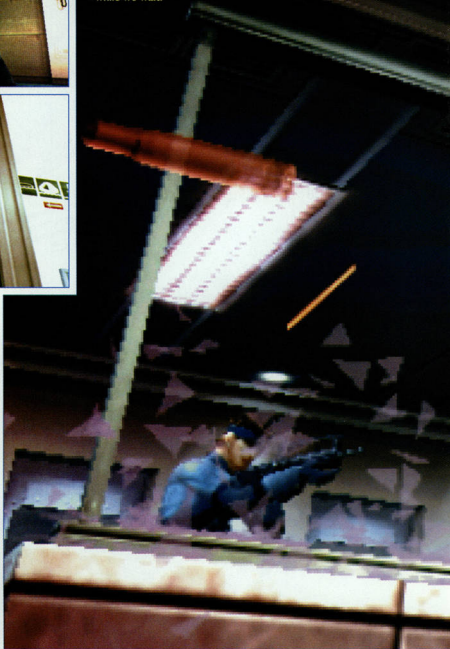
■ *Drakan* for PS2 is not just a port. It's an entirely new adventure
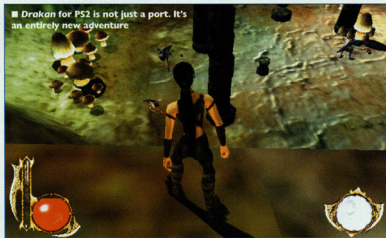
DRAKAN

■ DEVELOPER: **SURREAL SOFTWARE**
■ PUBLISHER: **SONY COMPUTER EUROPE (US TBA)**
■ RELEASE DATE: **Q1 2001**

As we revealed in our July issue earlier this year, this is not a port of the PC version. In the process of bringing their engine over from PC, Surreal Software has designed an entirely new game.

The extra time and effort going into this title guarantee to make it that much better. The most telling improvements are more significant than just a higher polygon count or crisper textures. In this case, the developer has used the PS2's extra muscle to create "procedurally generated content," such as mouths that move based on the actual soundwaves of a character's dialogue, and animations that are generated on the fly. And that's just the beginning.

Perhaps the most noticeable use of this generated content is in a technique called "procedural texturing." Surreal's Stu Denman explains: "This system generates landscape textures realtime as the terrain comes into view. The textures are based on artist-created 'dirt' and 'grass' and use many different noise textures to blend between them in realistic ways that create very organic transitions. This creates the effect of grass growing in the cracks of rocks and has the potential for every square inch of the terrain to look completely different."

The proof of this effect can be seen in the pictures here, and while many developers bemoan the fact that bringing PC-developed technology to the PlayStation 2 is difficult, it is that very complexity that could bring out the best in developers. On the other hand, it could also send developers running into the arms of Xbox and Gamecube.

generation of consoles emerge, people (fanboys rather) start to say how close we've come to perfectly modeled reality. The truth, of course, is that we're still years — if not decades — away from that sort of thing. But videogame technology has already reached a point where developers are forced to change their ways of thinking.

And this technological complexity has placed small development teams on the endangered species list. The PS2 is a prime example. Because of its intricate architecture, sheer horsepower, and untapped potential, within the time constraints of a typical game development cycle, a small development team will only be able to reach a certain level of depth and realism. Only a team as massive as Konami's *Metal Gear Solid 2* crew (currently at 35 team members and still expected to grow) will have the tremendous amount of resources

necessary to create the highly detailed textures and environments that make this game so impressive.

Al Hastings, VP of technology for Insomniac Games, has encountered this problem. "Developing games for PS2 requires a significantly higher degree of structure and planning," he says. "The complexity of the process is magnified by the fact that there is more of everything on a PS2 project. More people, more code, more polys, more sound, more effects — you name it there's more of it."

Combatting the PS2's insatiable demand for more, more, *more* will require game makers to rethink their strategy. EA, for example, delivered two of the finest launch games (*SSX* and *Madden 2001*) thanks in part to large development teams, and a

> ### "THE PS2'S ABILITY TO PUSH POLYS IS INCREDIBLE. IT'S LIKE WE'VE UPGRADED FROM A GARDEN HOSE TO A FIRE HOSE."
> — **Michael Douglas, Director of Technology, 7 Studios**

well-planned sharing of code routines and know-how across the company. Does this spell the end of the small developer?

Absolutely not. Ambitious small teams like Planet Moon Studios have proven that they can still produce intricate, brilliant games such as *Giants*. However, it's going to take a lot longer for

BEFORE ■ Notice how the borders between snow and dirt are sharp and very noticeable. This was the best that could be done using simple textures

AFTER ■ "Procedural texturing" enables texture artists to make the transitions between different texture types more organic and realistic
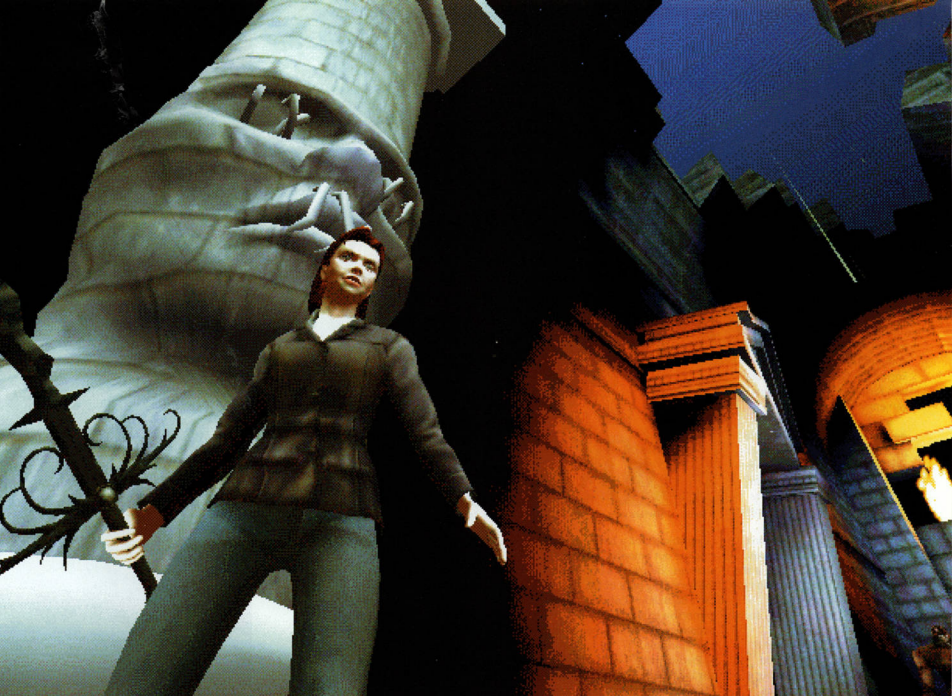
THE LOST

■ PUBLISHER: **CRAVE**
■ DEVELOPER: **IRRATIONAL GAMES**
■ RELEASE DATE: **FALL 2001**

To put *The Lost* in the same category with horror titles like *Resident Evil* wouldn't do justice to the team's level of ambition. "That genre of game [survival horror] has been stuck in a rut since *Alone in the Dark* and *Resident Evil*," admits Irrational President Ken Levine. "We will change all that."

With *The Lost*, Levine and team are hoping to up the ante in the horror world by removing many of the limits that have defined — or even plagued — the genre to date, like the static cameras, cheesy dialogue, and overly static worlds. It's a bold gauntlet to throw, and one that directly places Irrational against one of the most powerful franchises in gaming. But since the team is also responsible for the superlative 3D horror adventure *System Shock 2*, they stand more than a ghost of a chance.

The Lost attempts to retell the story of Dante's *Inferno* in a modern setting. The story follows Amanda Wright, who has wagered against the devil that she can survive the nine circles of hell to retrieve her murdered daughter. As these few screens show, the team is aiming for a dark, oppressive feel — even though the game offers a fully 3D camera and large outdoor environments (big no-nos in the world of horror gaming so far). Game details are few and far between — the game is still almost a year out — but we know that you'll have quite a bit of control over how your characters develop in the game, and there will be over a hundred weapons, power-ups, and interactive items.

■ *The Lost* drags players into the depths of Dante's *Inferno*. The developers are hoping to leave behind the shoddy clichés of horror gaming. So don't expect to see any static cameras or bland worlds, and don't expect to hear cheesy horror dialogue. Irrational Games is shooting for something greater

studios like this to finish their games. The question is whether a four-year project will fall behind the technology curve, and is it too long an investment period for console publishers?

THE DAWN OF PHYSICS

As graphics improve from the first wave of PS2 games to the second, a more subtle and far more important change will also take place. We're just starting to see in the second wave of PS2 games that developers are learning how to take advantage of the complexities of the Emotion Engine not just for graphics, but also for physics and all-around gameplay depth.

Irrational Games is just one developer that understands the possibilities. President Ken Levine explains: "The second- and third-generation PS2 games are going to be like nothing anybody has ever seen. I remember looking at *Doom* a few years ago and thinking graphics really couldn't get much better. In a few years, gamers will be able to look at the more subtle, under-the-hood type gameplay elements and say, 'Wow, did we actually enjoy such simplistic simulations?'"

A major key to making this work is knowing how to add depth without overwhelming gamers. "And I'm not talking about making games more complicated for the user," Levine continues. "I'm talking about world interactions that feel more real, and by extension, more meaningful. Knock over a can of soda and watch what happens. Watch how the can rolls, how the liquid gurgles out across the table and pools up at various points along the path. Now imagine

■ Medieval warfare sure can get ugly. As you can see, *Legion* aims to keep that experience intact

being able to roll a barrel of gasoline out amongst a group of enemies and chuck a match into the spreading pool of gas. You can't do that kind of cool, immersive stuff until physics become realistic, and therefore, unpredictable."

Physics models will have to advance if developers hope to keep up with the ever-improving graphics. Brian Fleming, a producer at Sucker Punch, agrees: "Graphics will be the easiest thing to improve, so everyone will do that first. But a more realistic-looking tree which is just sitting there is in many ways worse than a low-poly tree you could actually climb. When we get to the point where the world can live up to the realistic visuals, the true next-generation games will have arrived."

And Sucker Punch knows physics. The company's first title, the unfortunately overlooked *Rocket: Robot on Wheels* brought some fantastic physics-based gameplay to Nintendo 64. Founded by senior-level ex-Microsoft employees, Sucker Punch built some rather impressive technology for N64 that, in Fleming's words, "adapted pretty smoothly to the PS2." Will the company's next game incorporate realtime physics? "Absolutely," Fleming responds. "We really think this is a key to making a great next-generation title, because the realtime physics brings a quality of movement to the screen which lives up to the visuals. We think the combination makes a lot of sense."

If you're looking for proof, one need only turn to *Metal Gear Solid 2*, which is unquestionably the first title to bring this concept into reality. Watching Snake shoot out an entire bar full of liquor bottles that have their own individual physics is mind-blowing when you consider the possibility of an entire game environment populated with such objects. This kind of depth isn't necessary for pure gameplay — at least, no one's made it necessary yet — but it makes the *Metal Gear* world seem more real than any other you'd ever played in before.

■ While Merlin is part of Arthurian lore, some artistic license has been taken

> ## "THERE IS THE POTENTIAL TO USE ONLINE IN EVERY SINGLE GENRE OF GAME FROM FIGHTERS TO RPGS TO ADVENTURE GAMES TO PUZZLE GAMES."
> — Al Hastings, VP of Technology, Insomniac Games

■ Even though this image is more representative of rendered sequences than gameplay, you can be sure that the people behind *Command and Conquer* haven't forgotten how to meld the best of gaming and graphics

LEGION

■ PUBLISHER: **MIDWAY**
■ DEVELOPER: **7 STUDIOS**
■ RELEASE DATE: **FALL 2001**

➡ If the first year of PlayStation 2 development was about taking current game trends, making prettier versions, and just getting the games done, then the second year is about rethinking the current standards and getting them done right. Teams like the newly formed 7 Studios are the epitome of this new design ethic and their first game, *Legion*, could be one of 2001's premiere products.

The fact that *Legion* is, at its heart, a realtime strategy game isn't surprising considering many of the people working on it come from Westwood Studios' *Command and Conquer* team, and that several months ago designer George Collins came in from Pandemic Studios, developers of *Battlezone/Battlezone II*. Yet unlike most console strategy titles that carry the assorted baggage of their PC heritage (drag-and-drop mouse action just doesn't work on a control pad), *Legion* has been designed from the ground up for console gameplay. Everything from the graphics engine and the camera to the controls have been designed with the strengths and limitations of PS2 in mind, and we're predicting this will be a unique and highly playable game experience.

Of course, the chosen subject matter — King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table — is as exciting as it is a dreadfully under-explored area (although if *Legion* becomes a success we'll no doubt see a rash of games based on Arthurian legend in its wake). Early videos we've seen show not only knights and archers battling it out in epic settings, but magic, giants, and other fantasy elements.

THE ACCELERATION OF POLYGON EVOLUTION

One thing that just about every PS2 developer agrees on is that we haven't seen even the slightest hint yet of this console's polygon-pushing abilities. Like many development teams, 7 Studios, a company started by some of the same people who created the *Command and Conquer* franchise, has experienced growing pains in dealing with PlayStation 2 development tools — which are too paltry even to call first-generation tools. However, the team is quickly getting past those issues and is discovering the PS2's phenomenal polygon-rendering abilities.

"The PS2's ability to push polys is incredible," 7 Studios' Director of Technology Michael Douglas says. "It's like we've upgraded from a garden hose to a fire hose."

As developers tap into ways to use PS2's polygon power, games will get bigger in scope, more realistic in design, and more impressive on all levels. What's truly remarkable about the PS2 is not how much it can do now, but how much it will be able to do when developers can fully utilize millions and millions of polygons.

"The next big breakthrough will be games that look different," says Sucker Punch's Fleming. "Most next-generation games these days — PlayStation 2, but also PC and Dreamcast — have a blandness to them. They all basically look the same. The PS2 rendering hardware is super flexible, and we think once teams get up to speed we'll see some really divergent visuals, especially on games that are PS2-specific."

As developers start to come to grips with the power of this machine, they'll begin to change the way they make games. Until now, developers have used better textures to make objects look more realistic. Starting with this second generation of games, we're seeing developers begin to push more polys than ever while also using better textures. Games will look much different — starting now.

COMPUTER- GENERATED CONTENT

Because the PS2 is such a graphics workhorse, the console has plenty of horsepower left over to use on new techniques. In the past, almost every in-game character action needed to be animated completely by the developer. This was time-consuming, and it limited the amount of real-life behavior that could be added into a game. Starting with the second generation of PS2 games, developers

are beginning to hand those tasks over to the PS2.

When Surreal Software decided to bring its *Drakan* franchise from PC over to PlayStation 2, the company first experienced difficulties getting its made-for-PC engine to work well on the console. Once that was smoothed out, the developer discovered new computer-generated features that could be added to the game.

Stu Denman, the company's chief technology officer, explains. "In the future, I think we'll see more procedurally generated content: plants and trees, terrain, texture, even animations," he says. "In our first-generation PS2 engine, we've already developed procedural animation techniques where our characters' mouths move based on the sound wave. Their eyes blink and head bobs appropriately, and none of it is pre-recorded."

Surreal didn't stop there. The company also used procedurally generated content to improve *Drakan's* graphics. When the company first got the game up and running on PS2 (as seen in the July issue of **Next Gen**) the borders between grass textures, snow textures, and ground textures were blatantly obvious. Using procedural texturing, however, the developer has since blended these to make smooth borders and large-scale environments that look far more random and organic than anything seen on the PC version.

Still, Surreal isn't the only company working towards these kinds of solutions. Both Naughty Dog and Sucker Punch have been developing similar tools, but as neither company has shown their games yet, how this affects what can be seen and experienced can't be demonstrated. Still, Brian Fleming says, "We've worked really hard on tools to improve the efficiency of our artists. From simple to the exotic — if we can figure out how to automate it, we're going to do it. Otherwise, we'd drown under the sea of content we need to produce."

We expect most other PS2 developers to follow suit, and procedurally generated content will begin to flood PS2 games for two reasons. First, the PS2's multi-processor architecture does not require developers to sacrifice graphics for special features. Second, randomly generated content makes games look far more realistic and organic than anything pre-designed.

THE EXPANSION OF GAME WORLDS

To be honest, we'll only see the very beginnings of this potential during the second wave of PS2 games. So far, every game we've seen has levels that are limited in size. Not that they're *small* by any means, but soon we'll see much, much bigger environments — which was supposed to be a problem because of the PlayStation 2's RAM restrictions.

For instance, Surreal Software is exploring such options right now with *Drakan*. "We're taking advantage of the parallel I/O processor on the PS2 to stream world content from the DVD in realtime," says Stu Denman. "This means we can have levels that are almost unlimited in size, incredibly rich in detail and filled out. And we can run them on a system with only 32+ MB of system RAM."

This means that with some clever programming, we could play games such as *Mario 64* as the game was meant to be played: without load times. Aside from the massive storage DVD provides, expansion packs of new worlds could even be provided via PS2 memory cards. "Our N64 game fit in a 12-meg cart," says Fleming. "So we think you could store a lot of content on an 8-meg memory card."

We've already seen much larger game environments (such as the huge downhill courses of *SSX*) and we're expecting to see action game levels that take hours to explore. Seamless loading will go a long way towards eliminating the scourge of game involvement: the between-level loading screen.

Still, don't bet your lunch that mid-game loading screens will be gone forever. Developers have slowly been moving towards this for years. The PS2 makes it more of a reality because of its speedy DVD drive and memory set-up

THE DEVIL MAY CRY

■ **DEVELOPER: CAPCOM**
■ **PUBLISHER: CAPCOM**
■ **RELEASE: Q2 2001**

➤ While Irrational Games attempts to move survival horror to the next level (see *The Lost*, page 79), the master of the genre, Capcom's Shinji Mikami, is well under way with his next effort. Based on our exclusive sneak peek, we're sure *The Devil May Cry* will raise the bar Mikami set with *Resident Evil* and *Dino Crisis*.

The Devil May Cry follows the same gore-and-explore format made famous in Mikami's other creations, telling the story of Dante, the descendent of a legendary swordsman who waged a one-man battle against the demon world and saved the world from a demon emperor. Two thousand years later, after his mother and brother are murdered, Dante discovers that the demons are out for revenge. Like his legendary forebear, Dante's weapon of choice is a sword. He has three basic sword modes — "attack," "speed," and "fly." And as it turns out, Dante has demon blood running through his veins and can turn into three super beings depending on which sword mode he is in. Mikami is a self-confessed movie buff, and we're detecting a significant *Blade* influence. And, as you may have guessed, this game won't have an "E" rating.

Unfortunately we're only able to reveal concept art at this time, but rest assured, a brand new engine is in development that will render the world in full 3D. How good will the final in-game graphics look? According to Mikami, when it's finished, the actual gameplay graphics will equal the pre-rendered CG graphics found at the beginning of *Resident Evil 2* or 3.

When we met with Mikami, the designs were still very early, and he was able to demonstrate only a small section of the game. Still, he guided Dante through a cavernous cathedral, where dozens of bodies dangled from the ceiling. As Dante walked below the bodies, they dropped to the floor and attacked, not unlike demonic marionettes. The effect was, as you'd expect, very creepy. Prepare for what should be the next generation of horror sometime towards the middle of next year.

■ **Evil characters with long, curved weapons could be more frightening than zombies**

that encourages on-the-fly texture swapping, but we're still going to see loading times for years to come. And even if developers were able to create infinitely sized levels, would it make for good gameplay? This question must be answered before we see mainstream use of streaming levels.

THE MARCH TOWARDS ONLINE

Sony certainly slowed the move toward online console gaming by making its online plans a secondary objective until some kind of broadband network is up and running. However, online gaming is the future, and it will not be stopped.

"There is the potential to use online in every single genre of game from fighters to RPGs to adventure games to puzzle games," says Insomniac's Hastings. The shared experience of online gaming is simply too compelling to avoid for long.

Like many things, it all comes down to money. "The biggest factor is most likely going to be cost," continues Hastings. "Adding online capacity to a game and, even more important, maintaining that capacity for the entire lifespan of the title may not prove to be cost-effective for the average title."

But despite this, the medium is moving inexorably in that direction, and developers have little choice but to jump on board. Look for a few to do it sooner rather than later, and

there may be some online options in second-wave games. (Specifically, **Next Gen** has been told there will likely be some announcements before Christmas.) But how long before online functionality is a part of almost every PS2 game? Give it about three years. Sony must get its broadband network up and running to earn industry-wide support, and frankly, the company doesn't seem like it's in much of a hurry.

THE PROLIFERATION OF NEW VISUAL EFFECTS

Special effects can make a game look fantastic, or they can be an unnecessary distraction (remember the gratuitous use of lens flare in games released throughout '98 and '99?). As developers begin to understand the PS2, we're already beginning to see a revolution in visual effects. It's safe to say, however, that we haven't even begun to see a fraction of the kind of eye candy we'll see in the future. Already we're seeing developers experiment with

■ Particle effects and enhanced explosions are just a few of goodies that have been added to *Twisted Metal Black* in the hope of revitalizing the once popular vehicular combat genre. If Incognito can stuff in enough special effects, gamers will certainly jump on board

TWISTED METAL BLACK

■ PUBLISHER: **SCEA**
■ DEVELOPER: **INCOGNITO**
■ RELEASE DATE: **SPRING 2001**

At first, the announcement of a PS2 update of a flagging PlayStation car-combat series may seem like another clumsy business move by Sony. Yet this one actually might pay off. After the disastrously uninspired *Twisted Metal 3* and 4, the team behind the original two games is back on board. The producer/designer of the original game, Dave Jaffe, has teamed up with Incognito Studios, a development house made up mainly of ex-Singletrac employees responsible for the first *Twisted* and *Twisted 2*. All agreed to tackle the project only on the new hardware, and only if they could do it "their way."

For the record, "their way" is dark — and violent. Expect the franchise to return with more of that "edgy" quality it had when it first launched. As the story goes, the contestants come straight from an insane asylum. The vehicle models are far more detailed than ever before, with textures that look fantastic. The mood is dark, and the special effects are finally looking truly "special." Included among these visual treats are particle effects, unique weapons (such as a pair of missiles that weave back and forth before hitting their target), and huge, moving environmental objects — like a massive, runaway ferris wheel.

It's apparent that the developer is not holding back the innovation. In fact, at one point, one of the most familiar of the game's 14 vehicles, Sweet Tooth, pulls an "Optimus Prime" and transforms from a weaponized ice cream truck into a creepy clown robot during the middle of a battle. If there's more of this kind of stuff hidden in the game, Sony may have a winner on its hands. Right now, the company needs a few more games like this to call its own.

blurring, particle effects, camera flourishes, scene transitions, and other visual techniques. Other tricks such as in-game depth-of-field visuals and *Bullet Time*-like replays are already on the way.

Al Hastings, however, still isn't satisfied. "I hope that we'll see more games that are willing to explore non-realistic visuals," he says. "The first generation of

■ The massive environments planned for this game are also fully interactive. Imagine what might happen if a rocket hits that crane in the distance
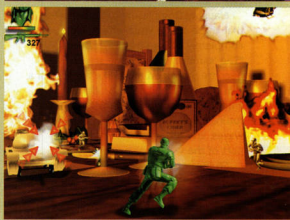
games is bound to focus on how much more realistic the game experience can be on PS2. Can we get this person, or car, or explosion, or blood splatter, to look more like it does in real life? But I'm much more interested in a creation by someone who's asking questions like, 'What's the scariest experience we can create?' or 'what's the most beautiful experience we can create?'"

Hastings' point is legitimate. Lots of visual flash can disrupt gameplay, and the best visual effects are the ones you barely notice because they make the plastic world of computer animation seem more like the real world. These effects help make a game more realistic, in turn making the experience more immersive, which is a key gameplay element no game should do without.

Naughty Dog's Jason Rubin believes that these subtle visual effects will completely change the way games look. "The 'camera' of the game screen will become more and more like the lens of a real camera. On PlayStation that was limited to the overused lens flare. In the future, depth of field, motion blur, heat waves, and other effects will become part of the way we view the action."

So the second wave of PlayStation 2 games will in many aspects look similar to the first. But when you look carefully, you'll start to notice the little improvements and innovations that developers are beginning to grasp. And that's when you'll see the future of console gaming.

Congratulations. You are now part of the conspiracy. **Next**Gen

■ Traveller's Tales has mixed familiar *Crash* elements such as TNT boxes, fruit, and jump boxes with a larger, more open 3D world. By focusing on established gameplay concepts, the developer is hoping to update the *Crash* franchise without leaving fans of the series disappointed
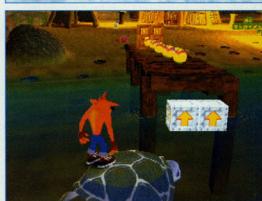
CRASH BANDICOOT

■ PUBLISHER: **KONAMI**
■ DEVELOPER: **UNIVERSAL INTERACTIVE/TRAVELLER'S TALES**
■ RELEASE DATE: **FALL 2001**

➤ When PlayStation first made its debut, the newfound freedom of 3D worlds distracted more than one developer's focus on gameplay. One company, however, didn't lose sight of what's important, and instead stuck with classic 2D-style gameplay with a distinct 3D twist.

That developer was Naughty Dog, and its creation became one of the most popular franchises ever to hit the PlayStation. During the series' first four outings, Naughty Dog pushed PlayStation's hardware to new heights with clever programming and ambitious innovations such as z-buffer effects (*Crash 2*) and realistic water simulation (*CTR*). When Naughty Dog turned its attentions elsewhere (to an unannounced PS2 title) Universal decided to keep the franchise alive, and U.K.-based Traveller's Tales was given the assignment of creating the next-generation *Crash Bandicoot*.

This decision may have resulted in a perfect fit. Traveller's Tales is the tech-savvy developer of games such as *Rascal*, *Bugs Life*, and *Sonic R*. While none of these titles are remembered for their gameplay (*Rascal* in particular), each pushed the limits of the hardware with innovative visual effects. The mix of

■ One false spin, and this poor sap will become the first bandicoot to achieve orbit.

■ The linear style of play that Crash fans are most comfortable with will not be totally sacrificed. Expect to see more 3D puzzles and gameplay than before

Crash's polished gameplay and Traveller's technical ambition could provide some spectacular results.

According to Universal Interactive producer Daniel Suarez, the developer understands the value of Crash's gameplay, and it has no plans to mess with the series' successful formula. "We're going to add new moves," Suarez says, "new playable characters. The environments are going to be a lot bigger and a lot deeper and richer, but we're still playing upon the core elements of Crash. The gameplay that Naughty Dog created was fantastic. We're just building upon that to bring it to the next level."

Like the original PlayStation titles, this next-generation Crash game focuses on simple, fast-paced action. This time, you'll even have the opportunity to take direct control of Coco, who in past games was only playable in vehicle segments. In fact, everything we know about the game right now says that it will be very similar to the PlayStation versions with spicier graphics and a healthy dose of Traveller's specialty: cool visual effects.

The popular vehicle-riding segments are back with various and sundry new means of transportation, and the wild chase sequences have also returned. Instead of being chased by a rock, bear, or dinosaur, this time Crash is trying to outrun a massive avalanche accompanied by gorgeous particle effects. Platform standards such as lava worlds and snow worlds are featured, as well as a promising world set on a giant lake of liquid mercury.

As we've logged countless hours playing the Crash series, we're not worried about the gameplay. However, a few issues stand in the way of this game's overall potential. For starters, Universal is planning to port the game to Xbox and Gamecube. A cross-platform port in this technologically-varied console generation won't be as likely to take full advantage of each platform's quirks and strengths.

■ Crash looks great after his jump to next generation hardware. But he's also headed to Xbox and Gamecube

One of the reasons that the original Crash series was so impressive was that it was programmed directly to the PlayStation metal. That kind of focused attention is difficult to achieve in cross-platform development.

Another issue that comes to mind concerns the Japanese version. Naughty Dog turned Crash into one of the few U.S.-made smash hits in Japan by localizing the game itself for a Japanese audience. For the next generation of the series, the Japanese version will likely be handed to industry veteran Konami, Crash's new publisher. How they handle the localization will have a great effect on this franchise's worldwide popularity.

The Crash series is one of the most loved game franchises in existence today. This first new venture will be key to determine if Traveller's Tales, Universal, and Konami can keep that momentum going into the next generation.

He's still the new guy at Sony Computer Entertainment America, and he may ultimately be responsible for creating your favorite PS2 game, but right now we have to ask him... Where are Sony's first-party games?

AN INTERVIEW WITH
SHUHEI YOSHIDA

SONY'S VP OF FIRST-PARTY DEVELOPMENT TELLS US WHY THERE ARE NO FIRST-PARTY GAMES — AND WHY THIS IS GOOD FOR US

→ At Sony's first PS2 editors' day, the company introduced the U.S. media to Shuhei Yoshida, who, as of this spring, became responsible for all first-party development for Sony Computer Entertainment America (SCEA) just as 989 Studios once more became part of SCEA. Could Sony have picked a better man than Yoshida for the job? Probably not. As a studio director for Sony Computer Japan, titles that have flourished under his leadership include *Gran Turismo*, *Ape Escape*, and *The Legend of Dragoon*. He is also directly responsible for the fantastic direction of Japan's versions of *Crash* and *Spyro*, which made them two of the only Western-developed games to become hits in Japan's market. **Next Generation** sat down with a very jovial Yoshida to find out exactly what was going on with PS2 first-party development.

Next Generation: Before joining SCEA, you had a great role with Sony Computer Japan software. What did you leave behind?
Shuhei Yoshida: [Laughs] OK. When I left Japan, I had 200 people and four or five different teams working on projects. I started and didn't quite finish *Fantavision* and *Eco*, and there were many other games I started.

NG: So there are a lot of first-party PlayStation 2 titles in Japan being worked on right now that we don't know about yet?
SY: Right, right. They're currently in development.

NG: So what's been going on with SCEA first-party since you came on board in the spring? What were your concerns when 989 came back into the company?
SY: Well, the thing was, internally and externally, I was really happy to see that many of the teams were very passionate and professional and like to get things done. And what I realized was some of these things they took for granted through the years working at 989 or SISA is a bit different from what I'd like to see as a first party. I feel, being a first party, you need to be very, very responsible and present the quality of the platform.

I really respect Nintendo, as they very consistently put out quality games and people feel very comfortable purchasing them — I don't know if it's good to write that [laughing]. So you know, I really want to make sure the games we produce and release and market get the people to come back to purchase another game because they played our game and had a really good time. 989 Studios was operated as an independent publisher. They had to make their numbers every year. So it's a very different model, and they were doing their job very professionally — what they felt was good for the company. So that's the thing, I feel now that as a first party, there are things I'll gradually turn around.

NG: You mention Nintendo. One of the things you said during your editors' day presentation is that, not unlike Nintendo's first party, you were looking at doing fewer products with bigger teams that require more time.
SY: That's true, but I don't go for just size. I had more than one hundred people on *The Legend of Dragoon*, but I do not feel it's the best way to make games. Just managing a team can be hard, and, you know, great production value is just a part of it. But the PS2 has an amazing capability for attention to detail — there is a complexity to the images one might create, so we have to have more people to do, for example, the textures or graphical routines. The programming teams alone are basically doubled. In most cases, I think we cannot avoid this. On the other hand, [laughs] we had only five people to make *Fantavision*!

NG: Five people made *Fantavision*?
SY: [Laughing] Yes, in six months. But I think that's an exceptional case, and it's a small game. It may work well in Japan given it's a release for a new platform. So in a general sense, because it's very competitive on PS2, it's very different from when we started with PS1 because we are like a newcomer. All the third parties, except for Namco, were not very serious about making games for PlayStation. Multi-platform companies picked teams to do PlayStation, but not the top teams [laughing]. So when 989 and SISA came out with *Gameboy* and *Twisted Metal*, those software teams made great games because of the lack of competition and were able to be the first games in town.

NG: So the success of the original PlayStation has really made it harder for first-party games to stand out the way they did when the system launched?
SY: Right, right. And it does not have to be the same way because there are many great people making games. I mean, I'm not trying to make an excuse here, but I'm just saying it's very competitive in a good way for the platform. I really want to make sure we get the same kind of resources for our games, otherwise the games won't compare to what's out there.

NG: Good point. Still, it's a month from launch, and until you showed *Twisted Metal Black* today, we hadn't seen any SCEA-developed first-party titles. So why is *Fantavision* the only launch game?
SY: [Pauses] Because we don't have the products [laughs].

NG: Why?
SY: Do you want an honest answer? [Very seriously] We are trying very hard — because we know the quality of some of the third-party products, you know, and we just cannot put out games on time. If we rush our games, it just doesn't help the platform, our brand, or our business. So when we feel comfortable about the games we are developing here, we will release them.

NG: Can you offer any more reason than that?
SY: I think it has more to do with short-term focus. I don't know if I should say that, but that's my observation. 989 Studios, has, unfortunately, only had a year on their projects. If they were a first party last year, they could have been ready.

NG: Obviously the pains of merging 989 back into SCEA — the shifting businesses — caused some delays.

■ Shuhei Yoshida is faced with the daunting task of merging 989 Studios back into SCEA and producing quality first-party games for PS2 — yet as you can see, he's got control firmly in hand

SY: [Laughs] Well I don't want to criticize...

NG: We won't speak ill of [former 989 President] Kelly Flock.

SY: [Laughs] No, no.

NG: So how many first-party titles are in development right now?

SY: Ten internal teams, and including the external, we have, in the United States, about 30 projects going on, excluding the games in development in Japan and Europe.

NG: External being companies such as Incognito, working on *Twisted Metal Black*?

SY: Yeah, that's right. The original *Syphon Filter* team [Eidetic] was external and is now internal, as it was purchased by SCEA earlier this year. Some other external teams we work with include Naughty Dog and Insomniac.

NG: Is Eidetic going to continue working on the *Syphon Filter* franchise?

SY: If they want to do that. [Laughs] Actually they are working on projects that are not really announced. But we've kept the same producing structure, though they are now internal.

NG: When the first PlayStation launched, *GameDay* was one of the first titles that proved to the world that Sony had talented first-party teams. What can we expect to see on PlayStation 2 that really validates Sony's first-party talent as a PS2 developer?

SY: Red Zone [*GameDay*'s design team] has consistently been a very tight-knit group of people, and they are adding staff to become a different, stronger group. So I guess the time they started working on PlayStation 2 was a bit later than I would have

wanted them to start, but I have full confidence in the team. I know it's a very competitive market. We are competing with very great game developers, so it could take a bit more time to show that we will excel, but I'm very confident moving into the future.

NG: You've said that every group was working in some capacity on online games. Are we going to see first-party games with a single-player and online multiplayer modes?

SY: We'll do both. You know, we view the online technology as something available to the developer. So whatever makes sense to a particular project, you know, we'll make it so. Some of the games will be enhanced with an online component.

NG: What about massively multiplayer games like *EverQuest*?

SY: *EverQuest*, yes. We have a great sister company [laughs].

NG: Is that something you would like to do though?

SY: Yes we'd like to do it. But it takes a great, visionary kind of person. You know, like [*EverQuest* Designer] Brad McQuaid has that vision right? It can take three or four years to develop a game like *EverQuest*. So you need to have the right team and the time.

NG: Yes, and as a first party doesn't have the same time and budgetary constraints that a third-party business does, are you really going to be able to change people's opinions on what the PlayStation 2 can do? Can you change the way people think about what videogames can be?

SY: That's always our goal. We're trying.

NG: So how long before you really change our lives?

SY: Well I don't know [chuckles]. A year or two [laughs], I hope [laughs harder].

Sony 36" WEGA
Flat Screen

Play Station 2

© Best Buy 2000

BestBuy.com

AND ALL THE GAMES TO KEEP
THE HOLIDAYS FROM SUCKING.

BEST
BUY

Turn On the Fun™

THE ART OF THE
CONSOLE WAR:
AN INTERVIEW WITH NINTENDO'S
HIROSHI IMANISHI

With Nintendo since 1963, Imanishi has seen and survived every console war ever waged. Now the veteran executive reveals the company's battle plans for Gamecube.

→ Throughout his 38 years with Nintendo, Hiroshi Imanishi has worked in the finance, research and development, planning, and general affairs divisions of the company. In short, Imanishi is all things Nintendo — not to mention being President Hiroshi Yamauchi's most trusted associate. **Next Generation** sat down with Imanishi to discuss the future of Gamecube.

Next Generation: Going into the launch of Gamecube, which console company poses the biggest threat to Nintendo?

Hiroshi Imanishi: *Well if I have to name one console which threatens Gamecube, it would be Game Boy Advance. Honestly. Some may say that we are simply pretending to be strong, but we are not specifically thinking about so-called competition or rivals. People say, "Well Sony should be the biggest competitor for the new Nintendo system." Sony was originally a hardware-oriented company, and we are pretty much different. We are simply going ahead in our own direction, making fun and interesting games, and providing these games for our users. So we haven't specifically been concerned with any competition.*

NG: Sony, Sega, and Microsoft believe network gaming will be an important part of their next game machines. Will it play an important role for Gamecube?

HI: *Yes of course. We are interested in and thinking very carefully about the network communication capability of Gamecube. This is important. As we say, we are a game company, so that when we say that we are ready to expand network communication, we mean that with games.*

And the network won't be everything. The network is simply one of the options which some creators may be interested in using in order to make their gaming dreams come true. For creators, it may enable them to realize their game idea, but at the same time it may be good from the business point of view and the marketing point of view. It may be possible to use the network as the delivery method of software, or advertisement method, and such and such. So, once again, it's simply one of the options we may be interested in opting for in the future. With the Gamecube, we are ready to make use of any kind of new technologies, including networking capabilities.

NG: Can you tell us which Japan- and U.S.-based third parties will be involved in Gamecube software development?

HI: *It is difficult to say, because most of them are second parties. In Japan for example, HAL Laboratories, and in the U.K., Rare, and in the United States, Retro. At this time, only counting the second parties, there are more than ten developers promising software.*

NG: But at this point in time you can't comment on larger third-party publishing companies such as Electronic Arts or Namco or Capcom — companies that have traditionally supported most home console launches with quality titles?

HI: *I believe there are strong relationships between the software creators at these companies and Nintendo. I understand that they are talking about something, but I actually don't know how things are going with these companies.*

NG: Talking is one thing, but Microsoft and Sony have already delivered full software development kits to third parties such as Namco and Capcom. When does Nintendo plan to deliver these to other third parties? If they're not delivered already, can we expect any games at launch from companies outside

■ Can the tiny Gamecube (left) be the David to Sony's PS2 Goliath? Or is it more like a neutron bomb in a suitcase?

of Nintendo and its second parties?

HI: Nintendo's position is that we are going to sell our hardware with our own software titles, and if consumers buy a number of Gamecubes, then licensees would become interested in making games for Nintendo Gamecube. That's the general idea in Nintendo's business. So we are not actually approaching them and asking them to make software for Nintendo. Already there are a number of requests [from publishers] who would like to make the software for Gamecube, so probably in September we will start explaining the technology and delivering the development kits to them. Once again, it's their decision. If they would like to make Gamecube software, that's fine. But we will never demand them to make games for Gamecube.

NG: With more competition in the marketplace next year for Gamecube, isn't gaining the support of third parties such as Namco or Electronic Arts important to Nintendo? What incentives is Nintendo planning to offer its publishing partners?

HI: Right now we are not thinking about giving away any special incentives to any software manufacturers. Just as I said, our primary mission is to come up with new and unique software. As a result of our [Spaceworld] announcement, Gamecube information has now made its way to potential licensees. If they become interested in it enough to say, "We want to make games for Gamecube," we say that's OK. I think this is going to be the attitude we want to take once again.

NG: So it is more important for Nintendo moving forward to have more second-party developers who are focused primarily on building games for Nintendo than it is to have support from external publishing groups?

HI: Actually our position hasn't changed a bit, but the number of the second-party developers has increased. So while seemingly it may look so, we haven't changed our stance.

NG: Nintendo 64 was criticized in the U.S. for having a limited launch library. PlayStation 2 is planning on launching with somewhere in the neighborhood of 25 titles. Nintendo is saying there will be only five titles available for Gamecube's launch. Is five titles really enough?

HI: I don't know how much is actually enough for the launch of Gamecube. But if

we have five titles, we feel that should be enough. We are not making much of quantity. Once again, quality counts most. If we can create very good games for Gamecube, I don't think it will fail.

NG: Are you concerned with Microsoft's entry into the console space?

HI: Very frankly speaking, I just can't understand or conceive what it will be like when Microsoft actually makes the advancement into this market.

NG: Microsoft is planning to spend five hundred million dollars in marketing their system. How much does Nintendo have to spend to market Gamecube?

HI: We haven't decided how much money we should spend on the launch marketing for Gamecube yet. But, of course, this is going to be the great new product for Nintendo, so we will spend some appropriate money for that. Of course, the amount of money doesn't compare and doesn't equally correspond to the amount of good will we can express in terms of cost, and we'll come up with a good decision.

NG: So why is the pricing such a big secret? It sounds as if you plan on coming into the U.S. market with Gamecube at a significantly lower price point than any of your competitors' systems.

HI: Yes, of course we would like to make

Gamecube as inexpensive as possible, and in terms of the price comparison with other machines too. But since the launch in Japan is July of next year and October of next year in the U.S., it's not right for us to disclose any specific information at this point in time in terms of our own strategy. Actually, we are still in the midst of negotiations with the component manufacturers. So this is not the right time, and because of these reasons, we've refrained from giving any specific price information.

NG: Can we expect some kind of price announcement at E3?

HI: Yes, at the latest E3.

NG: Do you have any idea how many Gamecube units you plan to have available in the U.S. for next October?

HI: Actually we have not set any specific figures at this point, but I believe that in the recent trend we are responsible for coming up with one million units or so.

NG: Nintendo is notorious for pushing back its intended release dates. Is there any chance that Gamecube could be delayed again?

HI: We have announced the launch date taking into consideration many possible delay elements, so I believe that we can introduce the hardware on time. **Next**Gen

> "If we have five titles [at launch], we feel that should be enough ... Once again, quality counts most."
>
> — Hiroshi Imanishi
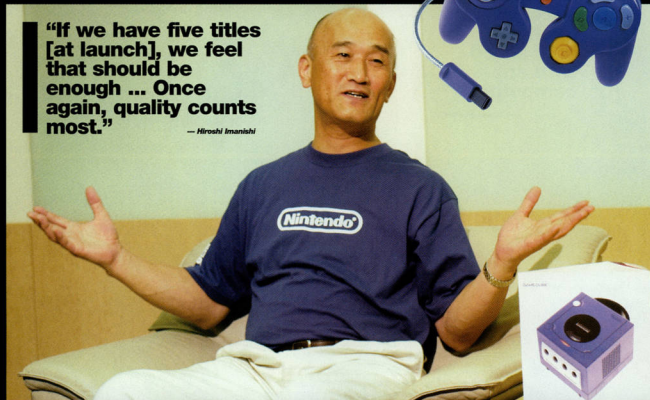
She's out for Blood.

AND WITH VICTORY AT HAND, SHE CAN ALMOST TASTE IT

DARK ANGEL
Vampire Apocalypse

- Explore secluded swamps and dark dungeons, tranquil forests and ancient crypts
- Crouch, jump, roll, side-step, and slash and dash
- Experience ever-changing landscapes, based on player performance
- Roam freely throughout open architecture kingdoms.

Screens shown are from Sega Dreamcast.

Metro3D, Inc.

PlayStation 2

Dreamcast

RATING PENDING
RP
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

ACTUAL GAME FOOTAGE

It must be the holiday season: it's chock full of the finest games. Feast your eyes on the tastiest selection in two years

Thanks a lot, Ryo.

■ Never hesitate to help people out – half the satisfaction here is in seeing what kinds of troubles you can solve

■ *Shenmue's* world is such a complete standout, every encounter is a ferociously cinematic experience, rendered in real time

■ DREAMCAST

Shenmue

■ Publisher: **Sega** ■ Developer: **Sega**

Worth the time, worth the money

→ By now you're probably aware that *Shenmue* is game maestro Yu Suzuki's magnum opus. Years (and millions upon millions of yen) in the making, it's a sprawling, intricately detailed combination of action and adventure, casting you in the role of martial arts student Ryo Hazuki.

To begin with, the graphics and the game's world are utterly jaw-dropping. This is the most ambitious title ever to grace a videogame screen, and the result is thankfully not one of those pathetically bloated, ego-driven projects that fails to deliver, an interactive *Waterworld*. Rather, like *Titanic*, every bit of time

and money spent is there to be seen and experienced.

This is the most fully realized virtual world ever created. Every drawer and cabinet in Ryo's house can be opened and examined — even the paintings can be taken down off the walls. In the course of his adventures, Ryo visits a

wide variety of urban environments, in which almost every door can be knocked on, every business entered, and every person engaged in conversation. If you've never lived in or visited suburban Japan, *Shenmue's* world comes mighty close to duplicating the experience for you.

Every one of the huge cast of characters has been painstakingly modeled, textured, and animated right down to subtle changes of expression, and even the most stilted movement here is far more realistic than the highest standards set by almost any other title you can name. The only weak link is the same one that plagues many games: While the translation is impeccable and much of the voice acting is very good, quite a lot of the voice work is awful.

However, these spotless graphics are viewed through what is easily the best game camera ever devised. Not once — we repeat, not once, *ever* — did the camera get in the way or obscure the

108

142

The Finals Rating System

Since we're living in a time when even average games are pretty good, we at **Next Generation** will continue to demand even better. Note that a three-star rating is a typical "good" game, so expect to see a lot of them.

★★★★★ **REVOLUTIONARY**
★★★★☆ **EXCELLENT**
★★★☆☆ **GOOD**
★★☆☆☆ **FAIR**
★☆☆☆☆ **BAD**
⬤ Denotes a review of a Japanese product

THE PASSPORT AND THE MINI-GAMES

Shenmue takes up three full GD-ROM discs, but the game comes with four. The fourth is the "Passport" disc, which enables you to do things like replay any cinematic scenes you've watched or hear explanations on various aspects of gameplay from different characters. It also lets you dial into *Shenmue*'s SegaNet site, where you can find all kinds of goodies.

In addition to the extra disc, the world of *Shenmue* itself is chock full of all kinds of things to occupy your time. The market district, for example, has an arcade in which you can play perfect versions of the Yu Suzuki classics *Hang On* and *Space Harrier*. You can also play slot machines and darts. In all, there's an awful lot to do.

■ Expect to interact with dozens of characters, all nicely developed and strangely real

action. This remarkable feat alone is almost worth five stars.

The storyline, however, isn't quite as ambitious. Ryo's father, a martial arts sensei, is killed by a mysterious stranger looking for the Dragon Mirror, an artifact in Hazuki's possession. Ryo naturally vows revenge and sets out to track down the killer. This has been the launching point for a million movies and games, and the way in which the story unfolds — Ryo's brushes with various gangs, other martial arts masters, and hints of the supernatural

— doesn't exactly leap in unexpected directions either. Plus, since this is the first of a three-game series, the ending leaves things sort of hanging, with no real resolution.

Also, while you can go anywhere and do quite a lot, the story is completely linear: Clue A leads directly to clue B, which leads to clue C. While this means it's almost impossible to get lost or stuck and the pacing is snappy, it also means the world is limited in how it responds to you. For example, Ryo has a love interest, Nozomi, but that plot thread is disappointingly

■ Ryo is an accomplished martial arts student, and he has few qualms about putting that knowledge and skill to use in finding the truth

underdeveloped, and no amount of visiting her or calling on the phone will further the relationship.

The game mechanics are a mix of straightforward adventure game clue-hunting, with decent fighting game sequences and *Dragon's Lair*-style "Quick Timer Events." However, the result feels amazingly natural and not as disconnected as such hybrid elements would lead you to believe. It flows nicely from one event to the next, without ever seeming like you've switched genres or games.

In the final analysis, *Shenmue* stands out as a phenomenal achievement. Few titles, perhaps none, have pulled off its blend of gameplay styles with such panache, and certainly no other game has ever offered such a rock-

■ The fighting game engine is surprisingly deep and complete, considering this isn't a simple fighting game

■ This is such a completely fleshed out world, you can enter every store you see here

solid, completely realized, fully populated world. This will remain a high watermark for years. — *Jeff Lundrigan*

➡NextGen ★★★★☆

Bottom Line: Everyone on Earth owes it to themselves to play this. Some will enjoy it more than others, but no one will fail to recognize its magnificent production values and depth of design.

RELEASE DATE: PlayStation 2 Launch
WWW.ROCKSTARGAMES.COM/SMUGGLERSRUN

AS A MEMBER OF A RUTHLESS GANG OF
SMUGGLERS, IT'S YOUR JOB TO EVADE THE
U.S. BORDER PATROL, CIA AND CUTTHROAT
RIVALS TO DELIVER ILLEGAL CARGO. IT'LL
TAKE COMPLETE MASTERY OF YOUR OFF-ROAD
VEHICLE TO MAKE IT ACROSS UNFORGIVING
TERRAIN AND STAY ONE STEP AHEAD OF THE
FORCES OUT TO DESTROY YOU.

DELIVER AT ALL COSTS

SMUGGLER'S RUN

Levels are over 5 square miles, each with a "drive anywhere" environment filled with other smugglers and law enforcement officials.

Choose from 35 different vehicles, each with unique modifications and strengths.

Compete head-to-head or run "pick up and deliver" missions against AI opponents or in full multiplayer mode.

Maneuver your way through arid desert, icy tundra, or rocky mountain forest.

Real Time Damage Models allow you to watch the parts fly as you pay the price for punishing collisions!

SOUNDTRACK AVAILABLE ON GUIDANCE RECORDINGS

■ Once again, EA has delivered a polished game complete with TV-style presentation — it's beautiful, no question

■ PLAYSTATION 2
NHL 2001
■ Publisher: **EA Sports** ■ Developer: **EA**

EA scores on the PS2

To its detractors, EA is more interested in reproducing the feeling of watching hockey on TV than in reproducing how it feels to actually play the game. But no matter how dismissive the purists are, EA deserves credit for reliably producing a simply fantastic-looking hockey game year after year.

The 2001 edition of the *NHL* series continues that tradition and introduces it for the first time on PlayStation 2. Despite some rather lengthy load times, the game is

another visual masterpiece with better face mapping, textures, lighting, and reflections. Improved collision detection and motion-captured animation make every hip check and high sticking seem incredibly real, and the TV-style transitions and updates are superb.

To hardcore simulation fans, however, the move to 3D hockey back in 1996 has left the series in an arcade funk. It has all the requisite features like one-timers, speed bursts, dekes, and big hits. But the play is fast and furious, with the emphasis on devastating hits and a constant transitioning offense. The lack of subtle controls like drop passes, give-n-goes, and the ability to change your whole line but not your defensive pairings on the fly shows that EA is clearly focused on a rapid game rather than a realistic one.

There is a wealth of options, including the ability to tone the game down to whatever pace you desire, and a new momentum meter adds drama to last-minute comebacks. Decent AI makes single-player games fun, while the multiplayer Season mode is ideal for groups. *NHL 2001* may not please the purists who want a slow, deliberate day on the slab, but few games can rival its smooth controls and awesome visuals. — *Jim Preston*

■ The spin-o-rama is still here

■ The dedicated "deke" and "big hit" buttons makes for fast play and devastating checks

⮕ **NextGen ★★★★☆**

Bottom Line: EA's first NHL effort on Playstation 2 is almost as deep as it is pretty.

Wild Wild Racing
■ Platform: **PlayStation 2** ■ Publisher: **Interplay** ■ Developer: **Rage**

The launch of a new console brings with it the promise of new games and new types of games. Shooters, fighters, and sports games have all received the special treatment in preparation for Oct. 26, and racing games are no exception. However, there are always the otherwise fine titles that simply fall back on old standards, and *Wild Wild Racing* is one of these.

This puts you at the wheel of a customized 4x4, racing for medals and upgrades across a wide range of rugged terrain. While the initial roster of vehicles isn't that exciting, unlocking more isn't difficult, and these offer some zippier thrills. In addition to the standard Championship, Single Race, and Time Attack modes, a Challenge mode offers numerous timed mini-games, including stunt driving and pushing a giant plastic ball across the finish line, which is mildly amusing.

Different weather and time-of-day modes are available, and racing takes place across several treacherous

■ At least there's some variety — racing takes place in five different regions, including Australia, Iceland, India, and Mexico

surfaces, from snow-covered asphalt to oil-slicked gravel.

Graphics are crisp, and gameplay is enjoyable enough, if not exactly exhilarating. Impact collision is too picky — simply brushing a fence can hook your wheel, leading to a frustrating spinout and the loss of valuable time. For a game that will appeal strongly to the pick-up-and-play gamer, at times it's simply too realistic and demanding. It's a decent title and worth a look, but we'd like to see more innovation in our launch titles. — *David Chen*

⮕ **NextGen ★★★☆☆**

Bottom Line: Next-generation consoles deserve next-generation racers, and while *Wild Wild Racing* is an enjoyable ride, it doesn't make much of the new hardware
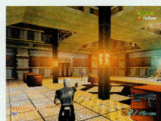
X Squad
■ Platform: **PlayStation 2** ■ Publisher: **EA Games** ■ Developer: **EA Square**

There may be no "I" in "team," but there are two in "irritated." *X Squad's* most touted gameplay mechanic — namely, the teamwork of squad-based operations — doesn't really factor into the game at all. Instead, you more or less go it alone while your three teammates run into walls, shoot at solid objects, and generally act anything but artificially intelligent.

While the game does boast an enormously diverse selection of weapons and high-tech gadgets, it manages to come up woefully short in terms of actual gameplay and level variety. Each mission is essentially a variation on the last, the goal being to find your way through similar-looking hallways, flip switches to open those locked doors you passed earlier, and shoot the unnaturally accurate gunmen you encounter along the way.

To its credit, *X Squad* does manage especially solid control of its lead character. Using the Dual Shock 2's button layout to its fullest, the control feels remarkably natural as you sneak, roll, and peek around corners while targeting. But however

■ X Squad sports surprisingly drab visuals for a PS2 title

good the control, it's far outweighed by the game's many flaws, which are only compounded by odd polygon glitches, repetitive textures, and sub-par voice acting. Graphically, there's only the occasional particle effect to let it slip that this is actually running on PlayStation 2.

With its squad-based component rendered virtually useless and its design anything but inspired, *X Squad* ultimately boils down to a below-average third-person shooter. And though it has a massive arsenal and solid character control to draw on, it's a game that even the genre's most hardened fans will be pressed to find much excitement in. — *Randy Nelson*

⮕ **NextGen ★★☆☆☆**

Bottom Line: A concept game that unfortunately doesn't even get its concept right.

■ Tekken fans have a real reason to rejoice: Not only is the latest in the series finally arriving on U.S. shores, but the graphics have even been improved over the Japanese release

■ PLAYSTATION 2
Tekken Tag Tournament
■ Publisher: **Namco** ■ Developer: **Namco**

The fix is in…

→ *Tekken Tag Tournament* suffered from a graceless arrival in Japan, amid complaints of Namco's apparent failure to grasp the intricacies of PS2 anti-aliasing. Yet so much was made of the jaggies that something else was totally overlooked: that *Tekken Tag*, while not perfect, is still a fine entry in the *Tekken* series, and as such, it's a stunning fighting game. So we're happy to report that in a hugely unlikely move, Namco has even fixed the graphics for the U.S. release.

The *Tekken* style of play (absurdly long combos and grabby, twitchy special moves) might not be everyone's cup of tea, but it's hard to beat for sheer depth. This is still an

ostensibly 2D experience — characters can move in and out of the 3D plane, but the infinite, swirling "tile" of floor has been retained from previous entries.

The U.S. release features not only smoothed-out characters and backdrops but an entirely new one-on-one game mode to complement the tag battles that make up most of the play. Mastering the Tag feature is what makes this remarkably different

from the otherwise very similar *Tekken 3*. The Tag feature means that each player picks two fighters and must use them wisely — for instance, a character can throw an opponent and hit the Tag button, and a teammate will finish the move. Depending on which characters you choose, they can also make special tag throws that take advantage of the two characters' combined traits.

The game's presentation is flawless, with wonderful movie intros and endings, an offbeat mix of techno and orchestral soundtracks, and a single-player adventure mode. Add a list of over 20 characters and a hidden and addictive Tekken Bowling mode, and this quickly graduates from disappointing Japanese title to a U.S. must-have. — Frank O'Connor

ANTI-AMAZING

So what happened with all this anti-aliasing business? It certainly sounded the death knell for PS2 on Dreamcast fan sites. Lots of first-generation games shipped with jagged stair-stepping, detracting from the otherwise high resolution and silky framerates. Then *Dead or Alive 2* from Tecmo showed up almost one year later, fully anti-aliased and, frankly, looking better than *Tekken*. Perhaps that, as much as anything else, encouraged Namco to take another pass at *Tekken Tag*. The result? Clean, crisp anti-aliased graphics throughout and not the slightest hint of a performance hit.

■ Of course, the gameplay is still the same

▶**Next**Gen ★★★★☆

Bottom Line: A densely packed, gloriously rendered, and very playable fighting game. Almost but not quite a killer app.

Silent Scope

■ Platform: **PlayStation 2** ■ Publisher: **Konami** ■ Developer: **Konami**

Based on the arcade game of the same name, *Silent Scope* trades in the coin-op's sniper rifle peripheral (with built-in LCD screen) for the Dual Shock 2 and an onscreen sight. While it does take a little getting used to, the control scheme (which uses the L2 button to toggle in and out of sniper mode) succeeds at the difficult task of making a light gun game play reasonably well without a light gun.

Depth is not *Silent Scope*'s forte, as it can be beaten in one sitting with some good shooting. However, several branching paths through the game add up to some replay value, and training and target range modes both hone your skills and provide another healthy dose of replay.

Most of the missions put the game's primary play mechanic — namely the sniper rifle — to good use as you snipe away at targets through hotel windows while onboard a helicopter or driving down a freeway. Overall, though, it's just another take on the standard gun game and not a real advancement of the genre.

■ **Silent Scope** presents some harrowing challenges, such as sniping harrier pilots from a helicopter and taking out targets while rushing down a freeway

Visually, the game straddles the line between looking decidedly better than the coin-op but not really tapping PlayStation 2's graphic abilities to any extent. The same thing can be said for the sound — it's sufficient but not a standout.

All told, this may not be a groundbreaking title, but it's a solid action game nonetheless. *Virtua Cop*, *Time Crisis*, and *House of the Dead 2* are all better games, but if you enjoyed those, *Silent Scope* is definitely worth a shot.
— Randy Nelson

▶ **Next**Gen ★★★☆☆
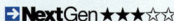
Bottom Line: It's not groundbreaking, but it's a solid shooting game with unique play mechanics.

● Super Puzzle Bobble

■ Platform: **PlayStation 2** ■ Publisher: **Taito** ■ Developer: **Taito**

Over the years, the *Puzzle Bobble* series has become nearly as omnipresent as the ubiquitous *Tetris*. Indeed, this is the B-league companion to Alexey Pajitnov's classic puzzler if ever one existed.

In the event that you've recently been transported to the year 2000 from the Stone Age and have never played any of the *Puzzle Bobble* series (a.k.a. *Bust-a-Move* in the U.S., where this will be released as *Super Bust-a-Move* by the time you read this), it's a simple, rather addictive puzzle game. You must match colored bubbles by launching them into a field of pre-existing bubbles. This version features three modes of play: a single-player *Puzzle* mode, a two-player *Versus* mode, and single-player vs. the CPU.

Aside from a few new techniques, new moving walls, and the addition of giant transparent bubbles that have "friendly mascot types" trapped inside, there's not much to distinguish this from earlier entries in the series.

■ **Puzzle Bobble in stunning 2D —** same as it ever was

That's a bit disappointing since, given the power of PS2, we were hoping at least for some kind of visual embellishment besides sharper backgrounds.

It's the same game it's always been: addictive, with tons of puzzle screens to play through and huge replay value for two players. But something more could have been brought to the party. Considering any PlayStation version of *Puzzle Bobble* (including last year's extremely similar *Puzzle Bobble '99*) will run in your PS2, we don't really see the point in this one.
— Tom Russo

▶ **Next**Gen ★★★☆☆
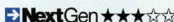
Bottom Line: Still as much fun to play today as back when the original was released (about ten years ago). However, that doesn't keep this from being the least technically impressive or ambitious PlayStation 2 title we've seen yet.

■ PLAYSTATION 2

Smuggler's Run

■ Publisher: **Rockstar** ■ Developer: **Angel Studios**

Meet a game that screams on PS2, breaking boundaries all along the way

■ The physics model is quite impressive — each vehicle has varying pitch control so you can adjust for a smooth landing

➔ One of the most innovative titles slated for launch, *Smuggler's Run* mixes freeform exploration with criminal intent for an off-road trek that busts clean through the boundaries of the racing genre. As a wheelman whose specialty is contraband (ranging from industrial secrets to body parts), you've got the rule of the land — almost 25 square miles of it. Three massive and diverse environments (all of which lie suspiciously close to a border) are available: Canada, seen in both winter and summer, and the American Southwest. Although three worlds may seem limited at

■ The police are plentiful and vicious. Take too much damage from their bumpers and you're under arrest. And no, you don't get to keep the money

first, a little exploration in each reveals endless details.

After choosing one of several vehicles, you can try your hand at the increasingly challenging Smuggler's Mission mode or simply test your skill in the single missions of Turf War. Even the Joy Ridin' mode actually serves a purpose: taking time to explore is crucial to completing later

■ Canada has two seasons, so bundle up for winter

missions, as the Emotion Engine's considerable power renders a world of amazing scope. Does that distant mountain look interesting? Just hit the gas, point the hood at it, and eventually you'll get there, or any other point visible — it's truly impressive and a welcome first. Other details help make for an addictive challenge — bounce your cargo too many times, for example, and it decreases in value.

Publisher Rockstar claims to have been disappointed with the lack of innovation in many forthcoming racers. With *Smuggler's Run* they've not only filled that niche but created a game that's intuitive, yet full of the technical embellishments that appeal to the truly hardcore. Proof positive that it's good to be bad, *Smuggler's Run* is a fine pick for the proud owner of a new PlayStation 2. — David Chen

▶ **Next**Gen ★★★★☆

Bottom Line: A truly next-generation launch title, it's fast, fun, and free of constraints — just the way we like our cross-country racing sprees.

PLAYSTATION 2 SCREENSHOTS

■ DREAMCAST
Capcom vs. SNK
■ Publisher: **Capcom** ■ Developer: **Capcom**

Ryu, meet Terry. Terry...

■ For the remaining 2D fighting game fans out there, *Capcom vs. SNK* will prove quite tasty

→ There's little doubt that *Street Fighter* and *King of Fighters* fans will love this. It's got a ton (but not all) of the most famous brawlers from each signature series, which means that the type of match-ups long dreamed of by hardcore 2D fighting nuts are now possible: Ken and Ryu versus Iori and Kyo, Terry and Yuri versus Sakura and Sagat, and more, more, more!

The fighting consists of team combat in *King of Fighters* style — that is, teams but no tag feature. However, unlike *KOF*, up to four characters can play together. The way this works is through a character ranking system that sorts fighters into three groups: bosses, normal characters, and weaker characters. So while you can choose four weak characters,

you can only choose two if you pick bosses. Although Capcom has balanced this system out fairly well, there are a few exceptions; Yuri, for example, is definitely strong enough to belong to the second group.

Gameplay isn't distinctly in the style of either *Street Fighter* or *King of Fighters*. The game borrows elements from each, though it more closely resembles the *SF Alpha* series than anything else. In fact the fighting is fairly basic and provides less depth than other current Capcom titles. However, even if you get a little tired of the fighting system, there is also a huge number of secrets to unlock (even more than in *Marvel vs. Capcom 2*), which will keep hardcore fans coming back for more.   — *Chet Barber*

⇨ NextGen ★★★☆☆

Bottom Line: Although there are many unique ideas here, *Capcom vs. SNK* simply lacks ambition. Capcom and its newly acquired developers from SNK need to sit down and once again revolutionize this genre.

Gunbird 2
■ Platform: **Dreamcast** ■ Publisher: **Capcom** ■ Developer: **Capcom**

■ Marion uses a rabbit for her close attack, and her smart bomb turns enemies' shots into harmless candy

What's with the rash of old-school shooters lately? There's this, *Ray Crisis*, *Galaga: Destination Earth*, and the upcoming *Gradius III & IV*. Eh, go figure.

Gunbird 2 is easily the oldest-school of them all, as unapologetically classic as they come: a completely 2D, vertically scrolling shooter, whose one goal is to throw as much stuff onscreen at once as possible. You get to choose from six characters (a seventh, Morrigan from *Darkstalkers*, is hidden), each with its own different weapons, and it's worth noting that all of them are very well balanced.

There's a nominal storyline, a quest to collect the three elements necessary to make the legendary "All-Purpose Medicine" and find the Medicine God who can use it to cure

various ailments, but that's not really important. The overall goal is to blast your way through, destroying everything that moves. On that score, *Gunbird 2* doesn't really offer anything you haven't seen before.

In fact it offers a bit less, since the game is fairly short for this sort of thing, opting for insane difficulty rather than length. Even on Normal difficulty, there are times when the screen is so awash in movement, it's almost impossible to keep track of — or even just *see* — the often tiny, glowing bits that are dangerous. But if you're one of the faithful, we're betting that will actually seem enticing.   — *Jeff Lundrigan*

⇨ NextGen ★★★☆☆

Bottom Line: If you want a ridiculously high level of pure twitch-response challenge, look no further. If you don't, well, move along.

Sno Cross: Championship Racing
■ Platform: **Dreamcast** ■ Publisher: **Crave** ■ Developer: **UDS**

Last year, EA surprised everyone with the first snowmobile game, *Sled Storm* for PlayStation. This year there are a couple more contenders, but the only one you'll find on Dreamcast is *Sno Cross*. So how does it stack up? Well, the interface is atrocious: a weird border-scrolling job that forces you to read sideways half the time. Once you get past that though, things get better.

This is a significant upgrade from its PlayStation cousin, with higher polygon models and better textures. But while the view distance is impressive, clipping can be extreme — sometimes the entire side of the track disappears. The wealth of details around the track, however, is intense, and you really feel like you're in the environment. Control is loose, but the

Dreamcast version has an almost terminal understeer: You'll need practice to get your snowmobile to move the way you want it.

Along with the ability to win cash to upgrade your snowmobile and the additional tracks and 'mobiles you can unlock, the game's best feature is its track editor. You can make some really enormous tracks here, and they look very, very good. There's little of that "cheap" feeling you get with some track editors.

Despite the difficult learning curve on control along with the interface

■ There's nothing like the feel of racing across frozen tundra

and clipping issues, *Sno Cross* is a fine successor to the snowmobile standard set last year by EA.   — *Chris Charla*

⇨ NextGen ★★★☆☆

Bottom Line: It's the only game of its kind on Dreamcast, and though it's not perfect, it's still a fair amount of fun.

Spawn: In The Demon's Hand
■ Platform: **Dreamcast** ■ Publisher: **Capcom** ■ Developer: **Capcom**

Here, in the interest of public service, are some things you would be more happy doing than playing the singularly dreadful *Spawn*: Sit on broken glass, eat maggots straight from a rotting weasel carcass, or catch the ebola virus. A virtual turd pressed onto a GD-ROM, this puts the antihero Spawn and his various allies and enemies into a series of multi-roomed and tiered stages for a brutally ugly, third-person fragfest with a wide variety of exotic short- and long-range weapons.

This sort of unrestrained violence would be both cathartic and enjoyable were it not so shoddy. There is no analog stick support whatsoever, and even the option to back out of gameplay menus has been excised. Gameplay itself is a confused morass powered by an

epileptic camera that twitches and jumps at every opportunity, obscuring the action and forcing you to readjust your character's view ad nauseam. Although everything is fairly well detailed, you'd be hard-pressed to notice, especially since everything clips through everything else.

Because misery loves company, this bad, bad monkey features a multiplayer option that splits the play screen, which results in exponentially aggravating visuals. The furious explosions, camera shifts, and flying bodies (*Spawn* turns spontaneously

■ This is awful — Spawn would've been better off staying in Hell

hurling characters across the screen into an art form) make this the spawn of all things migraine.   — *Greg Orlando*

⇨ NextGen ★☆☆☆☆

Bottom Line: Lack of decorum allows us only to comment that this game would more aptly be subtitled "From Capcom's Rectum."

Ace pilots don't settle for cheap thrills.

Real flying is all about wrestling the raw powers of Mother Nature. Hanging on as you throttle your engines. And relishing the feeling as your wheels kiss the tarmac. You've never felt anything like the new SideWinder® Force Feedback 2 joystick. Using a next-generation processor, it takes technology to the limit by delivering over 100 distinct forces with more speed and strength than ever before. Turning more than 200 force feedback–enabled games into the most intense gaming experience imaginable. So the next time you're ready to push the envelope, you'd better buckle in first.

MICROSOFT
SideWinder
FORCE FEEDBACK 2

www.microsoft.com/sidewinder

Okay, aerodynamic he's not.

But Mickey and his friends still tear it up with 4-player action and 16 magical tracks.

CHALK ONE UP... ON PLAYSTATION®2 !

REAL POOL™

Bring home the most realistic pool simulation ever!

Over 12 different pool games!

Complete 360° views!

Line up and sink the perfect shot!

Unique Puzzle Mode...

Real-world physics!

Bring The Real Pool Experience Home!
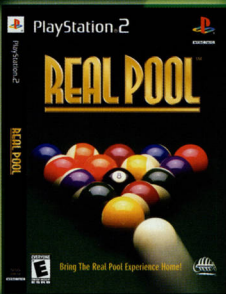
...with 25 new tables!

COMING SOON ON PLAYSTATION 2 COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM

PlayStation.2   TAKARA   INFOGRAMES

EVERYONE
E
CONTENT RATED BY
ESRB

Toy Story 2

■ Platform: **Dreamcast** ■ Publisher: **Activision** ■ Developer: **Traveller's Tales**

The path to infinite disappointment and beyond leads straight through the heart of the cutesy little third-person 3D platformer *Toy Story 2*. Jumpy, jerky, and seven kinds of flawed, this sad story clearly reeks, and the heady odor of a shoddy PlayStation-to-Dreamcast port should be enough to choke even the airtight space-helmet-wearing hero Buzz Lightyear.

Lightyear is on a quest to rescue his pal Woody through 15 different levels spanning five environments. The plot and characters come kicking and screaming from the brilliant Disney/Pixar film, and you can expect to run into many of the movie's minor players: Mr. Potato Head, Slinky Dog, et al. While the familiarity is welcome, these bit characters only exist to bleat out annoying sound bites and challenge our hero to perform various tasks for (what else?) coins.

Two types of camera angles exist in *Toy Story 2*: passively putrid and actively terrible. Whichever option you select, the camera swings, jumps,

■ **If you have any compassion as a parent, you'll keep your kids far away from *Toy Story 2* — the gameplay will give them nightmares**

and pans wildly whenever Buzz decides to, say, move. You constantly need to modify the view, and the problematic camera turns even the simplest task into a Herculean labor. Endless platforms await, as do hordes of toy robots to blast, and any appeal held by the characters or license is pretty much totally wrecked by the clichéd play. Terrible draw-in, ultra-sensitive controls, and graphics that are barely better than the PlayStation version further damn this to the Isle of Misfit Toys.   — Greg Orlando

▶**Next**Gen ★☆☆☆☆

Bottom Line: Call this *Story* a hack job.

Street Fighter III: 3rd Strike

■ Platform: **Dreamcast** ■ Publisher: **Capcom** ■ Developer: **Capcom**

The third installment of *Street Fighter III* marks the return of some classic characters, all prettied up and raring to go. However, as with *SFII*, Capcom is doing a bit of overkill with *SFIII*. The game remains virtually unchanged from previous versions, and yes, this means that moves are executed flawlessly, with top-notch animation and a fighting engine as deep as you can find. But besides some different characters, practically every move and feature hails from *SFIII: Double Impact*.

The only difference of note is a very small but key change to the combat system. The quick-jump attack is easier to perform and can be chained together with other combos or even super combos. Although veterans may initially feel that this change is cheap, it does speed battles up a little more (thank goodness).

There's also a new debug menu, which enables you to adjust practically every aspect of the game. For example, the pause time after Ryu throws a fireball can be adjusted from

■ **Look familiar? That's the problem — it's a great game, but so were all the previous ones, and this isn't much different**

very long to short, or you can adjust the precision of the parry feature. This means that even beginners can execute counters without a problem, but the feature will appeal to experts as well, since hardcore fight fans can tinker with the combat system to their hearts' delight.

Unfortunately, the additions stop here. Although this is arguably the best in the series, if you've played any previous *Street Fighter III* title, you may want to think twice about picking this one up.   — Chet Barber

▶**Next**Gen ★★★☆☆

Bottom Line: A very deep and complex game that's a blast to play, with welcome new characters and a few extras. But if you've already played *SFIII*, you're probably as burned out as we are.

■ DREAMCAST

Sega GT

■ Publisher: **Sega** ■ Developer: **Sega**

Did we mention this is a fantastic game?

POSITION **5/6**   LAP **1/3**

TOTAL RECORD **03'01"715**
FASTEST LAP **00'57"176**

TOTAL TIME **00'18"814**
LAP TIME **00'18"814**

100 MPH
AT 4

■ **Does this look beautiful? Yes it does, and it drives like a dream too**

➡ We reviewed the import version of this back in May, but now that it's available in the U.S., it's worth another plug. Sega has dropped the cumbersome "*Homologation Special*" from the title, but that hasn't affected anything. To wit: On a system with a metric ton of racing games, this is easily the best of the best. True, it apes the structure of Sony's *Gran Turismo* pretty closely, but it also offers a number of additional features all its own.

Perhaps the most interesting of these (to the truly anal car-nut types, of course) is the Carrozzeria, which enables you to build an original car from the ground up. You can choose everything from engine to body style, but there are limitations — we were looking forward to seeing what would happen if you shoehorned a V8 into a compact body, for example, but such options are restricted within a given size class. Ah well.

Otherwise, this is a beautiful game. The graphics are absolutely superb, and scrupulous in detail. The touch of mist you see clinging in the background of the Snowy Mountain track, for example, is there just because the mountain is a little foggy and not to hide draw-in. The cars just shine, and the control is dead on — every car

simply *feels* different. And if we're a little disappointed with the lack of any sort of damage model, that's a pretty small knock on an otherwise near-perfect racing experience. Very nice.   — Jeff Lundrigan

FACTORY

CHASSIS
ENGINE LAYOUT
FRONT
MID
REAR

FRONT-ENGINE

The engine is placed at the front of the chassis. This design benefits from the weight of the engine directly over the wheels that steer. But at high speeds traction may suffer due to the car's weight shifting to the rear.

EXIT

Cost 7,100

championship/carrozzeria/factory
MY CAR   MONEY 10,000

■ **When you've had enough with Toyotas, Mustangs, and Hondas, you can build a car from the ground up. Cool huh?**

▶**Next**Gen ★★★★★

Bottom Line: If you only buy one racing game for Dreamcast, make it this one. In fact, run out and buy it anyway, just on principle.

■ Our good hero Link finds that the mask indeed makes the man – but sometimes it's best to go sans facial costuming

■ NINTENDO 64

Legend of Zelda:
Majora's Mask

■ Publisher: **Nintendo** ■ Developer: **Nintendo**

■ The mask and the true face: who can tell which is live and which is Memorex?

YOUR MASK, MY GAS!

History recorded April 15, 1922 as one of darkest days ever. The Germans, fighting the French at Ypres, unleashed a fearsome chlorine gas attack, prompting the French not to surrender but to counter with the gas mask. The once-decorative mask had been transformed into a life-saving device for thousands of men in stinking trenches, and throughout the years soldiers would be given new and more advanced masks to stave off newer and more sinister chemical and biochemical weaponry.

Put on your mask, my little hero

→ We are the masks we wear and, in the case of venerable hero Link, this statement may be taken literally. As the star of *Legend of Zelda: Majora's Mask*, Link must again muster his courage, crimp the plans of a power-crazed fiend, and prevent a sneering moon from destroying the world. And, dear friends, he only has three days to do it.

A direct sequel to *Legend of Zelda: The Ocarina of Time*, *Majora's Mask* features the same solid, third-person play as its predecessor. Controls are at once simple and elegant; you maneuver Link with the analog stick allowing for both finesse and force. Items acquired can be mapped to three of the Nintendo's C-arrow buttons and accessed at will with a mere tap. Different actions are available during play, and a handy onscreen menu, nestled in the top right-hand corner so as not to distract, informs you of what Link can do at any given moment. In a game so reliant on action-based puzzle-solving (avoiding guards in hedgerow mazes,

soaring across platforms, etc.) and combat, this control scheme is indeed manna from heaven.

Majora's Mask is tougher than a rawhide birthday cake, and you've got roughly 72 hours of simulated time to set things right. Sure, Link can manipulate time with his powerful Ocarina, but Nintendo has drastically cut the opportunities to save the game. Inside the game's delightful four worlds and anchoring hub, endless possibilities are presented. Our good little sword-wielding man can collect masks to transform his flesh, compete in frenzied races, play mini-games, chat and kill in equal doses, rescue monkeys, and perform hundreds of different tasks and chores. There is so much to see, but Nintendo will have players racing to see it; the greatest enemy here is not the fiendish Skull Kid (a frightened boy who finds a voice by concealing his face under Majora's Mask) but rather the ticking clock. And each passing moment, it seems, is to be savored more than the previous one.   — *Greg Orlando*

■ And indeed there will be time to murder and create – but only 72 hours' worth of simulated gameplay. Hop to it, hero

■ Slow and stupid, this fire-breather reminds us all to brush and floss regularly

◆ **Next**Gen ★★★★☆

Bottom Line: Another beautiful Link in the chain.

PlayStation®2

UNLEASH YOUR INNER ROAD RAGE

DRIVE ON ROOFTOPS, THROUGH STORES, ACROSS PLAZAS NOTHING IS OUT OF BOUNDS

OVER 30 PULSE-POUNDING LEVELS ACROSS FOUR INTERNATIONAL CITIES

PLAY HEAD-TO-HEAD AGAINST YOUR FRIENDS

TOP GEAR Dare Devil

kemco

WWW.TOP-GEAR.COM

Lucky_Larry
Tramdog Iudder
death by: grenade

2quick4U
CrazyCarter Clan
death by: rail gun

King_of_Pain
Brain Splatter Crew
death by: Spear Gun

Who's keeping score?

Chalk up another victory and hang your fallen enemy on the wall. Introducing Global Rankings™ – your tool for tracking all your game scores, statistics, and world rankings. With FREE real-time automatic reporting you can easily check the results when you're done playing your favorite games. Find out who has the most kills with the rocket launcher or who's always camping out. User-managed leagues let you compete against your friends or take on a rival clan. Isn't it time you take your game to the next level?

You kick ass, we'll take the names.
www.globalrankings.com

GLOBAL
RANKINGS™

Look for Global Rankings in these killer games:
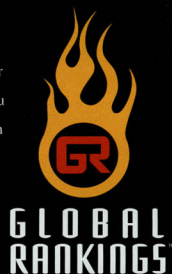
COMMANDOS 2   STARFLEET COMMAND VOLUME II EMPIRES AT WAR   No One Lives Forever   Fallout TACTICS   ALIENS vs PREDATOR GOLD EDITION

Global Rankings is a Trademark of HearMe. Designated trademarks and brands are the property of their respective owners.

■ NINTENDO 64

Turok 3:
Shadows of Oblivion

■ Publisher: **Acclaim** ■ Developer: **Iguana West (Acclaim)**

Third time's a charm

Although actually the fourth *Turok* game for the N64, this is the third with a complete single-player experience, and Acclaim finally got it right with this one. After a semi-dramatic and lengthy opening scene, you pick the role of either Joseph or Danielle Fireseed, and like the character selection process in *Resident Evil 2*, each one has a slightly different skill set and path through the game. The game itself is straight action with common-sense puzzles and well-laid-out levels. Gone are the giant, confusing levels of the original *Turok* and stomach-churning puzzles of *Turok 2*.

Turok 3 is actually more a mix of a bunch of other FPS games, but that turns out to be a good thing. You get some Bond-style gadgets,

come up against *Half-Life*-esque boss enemies, explore *Unreal*-style locations and even perform tasks one might think are suited to a *Soldier of Fortune*. It all happens in the context of the *Turok* world — your character is, after all, an American Indian — but that's reinforced only by the wading-pool-deep storyline and music.

The cut scenes, all in-engine and realtime, are some of the best the N64 has seen. In addition to this, the soundtrack is one of the best heard in any N64 game, and the voice acting, while not the greatest

in the world, is clear and easy to understand. It's amazing that Acclaim managed to jam all of this onto a cartridge, because the game is not small, featuring lots of quality textures and locations to explore.

The framerate is still something of a problem. While definitely an improvement, there are still noticeable moments of slowdown, especially in multiplayer. That small technical complaint aside, the game moves along at a brisk pace, and if it's all pretty derivative, it's also well-done. *Turok 3* is the best in the series.

— *Kevin Rice*

NextGen ★★★★☆

Bottom Line: Despite a few problems, *Turok 3* is a satisfying experience that closes this N64 series in style. FPS fans will not be disappointed.

■ Who would've thought the last *Turok* for N64 would turn out to be the best?

■ This series has never quite lived up to its promise, but this latest offering fixes just about everything that brought the others down

---

■ NINTENDO 64

The World Is Not Enough

■ Publisher: **EA** ■ Developer: **EA Games**

It was more fun when it was called *GoldenEye*, but this is still a good time

The World Is Not Enough, EA's latest Bond-licensed game, has a lot going for it. The games offers well-done graphics (although there's noticeable slowdown when the screen is busy) with decent sound and voiceovers, and the whole thing plays quite well. And sure, everything in *TWINE* has already been done before, but the developers have done a nice job.

There are the usual elements, "shoot everything but the hostages" levels, and plenty of interaction and sub-quests to move the game along. Standouts include a level that involves absolutely no shooting — you just sneak everywhere. Seen that before? Well, yes. But is it cool? Well, yes. Likewise, the skiing level gives you the opportunity to race down a mountain picking off baddies and blowing things up. It's basically a rail shooter, but it's enjoyable.

The gadgets are mostly standard fare, including the multipurpose

watch, phone taps, safe-crackers, micro-cameras, and the like. Multiplayer suffers from a slow framerate and doesn't offer anything particularly new, but it'll be fun if you've got three friends over. The game also includes a surprising number of cut scenes and voice work, although there's a "load time" of five seconds or so between scene and game. The control, if somewhat

complex, works very well after you learn all the commands, and thankfully, new commands are usually introduced onscreen the first time they are used.

And face it: *Bond* is a perfect videogame license. Cool gadgets, stealth moves, dead-eye shooting, timely one-liners, sexy partners — it's everything a player could want. On Nintendo 64, Rare beat EA by three years with 1997's *GoldenEye*, and even though that three-year-old game is arguably still better than this new one, that doesn't mean *TWINE* is a bad game — far from it.

— *Kevin Rice*

■ The world is certainly ready for a little more first-person James Bond action, and this one pulls it off well

■ The game also gives you lots of options and nifty gadgets to use — Bond really is the perfect license

NextGen ★★★☆☆

Bottom Line: If you've beaten *GoldenEye* and *Perfect Dark* but still want more, this will fit the bill nicely.

■ Exploring towns and landscapes gets a boost from the addition of exclamation point indicators and loads of mini-events

REEL CG CINEMAS

After witnessing what Square has done with the art of in-game CG cut scenes, it's little surprise that *Final Fantasy* is making the leap to screens nationwide in 2001, courtesy of Square's über-talented crew of artists at its Honolulu studios and a few helping hands from Hollywood. Set in the not-so-distant future (oh, if we had a dime...), the year is 2065 and the human race has been all but demolished. It's in this environment that Square is hoping to flex its story-writing muscles by exploring philosophical questions regarding life, death, love, and friendship. For anyone who's even glimpsed the trailer, this may be the movie to join together two of the world's most popular entertainment media for the first time.

Zidane
"So that's the antlion!"

■ **PLAYSTATION**

Final Fantasy IX

■ Publisher: **Square EA** ■ Developer: **Squaresoft**

Good things come in IXs

⮕ What in particular makes *Final Fantasy* games so good? Perhaps the storylines? Or the graphics? Or maybe the gameplay? In fact, it's all of these, and there's no denying that Square has created something akin to a well-oiled machine as it moves into this ninth installment of the series.

■ *FFIX* includes some gameplay carry-overs from the rest of the series but includes many new touches in and out of battle

The mature characters and futuristic, romance-heavy plots of the last two *Final Fantasy* titles have been swapped for medieval-esque, super-deformed characters and a more whimsical storyline. When a girl-crazy, furry-tailed bandit named Zidane launches his scheme to kidnap a beautiful princess, *FFIX* weaves an epic tale out of small beginnings. But while things may appear simple at first, there's more beneath the surface, both within the storyline and the gameplay itself. The abduction finds a willing victim, as Princess Garnet is actually looking for a way out of the kingdom. From this point on, the game launches headlong into an adventure filled with twists, turns, and some of the most amazing CG cinemas this side of...well, *Final Fantasy VIII*.

Made up of pre-rendered backdrops and polygonal characters, *FFIX* seems the culmination of Square's experience on PlayStation. Character designs are crisply drawn with intense attention to detail. And while it may take some time to adjust to the 3D, big-headed

Dagger "Who?"

■ Good night, sweet princess: Square has mastered the art of CG game cut scenes and attractive, super-deformed brunettes

characters (even by super-deformed standards, Princess Garnet has an incredibly massive head), the look and feel of *FFIX* screams high-quality production values through and through.

There's an undeniable polish to everything seen and unseen in *FFIX*. From the mind-numbing amount of mini-games and sub-missions and the inclusion of new Active Time Events to the ragtag bunch of memorable characters in your party, you're given so much to do and see that it's nearly impossible to put the controller down. If this is the "final" *Final Fantasy* on PlayStation, it's clear that Square saved the best for last.
— *Francesca Reyes*

⮕ **NextGen** ★★★★★

Bottom Line: An imaginative return to the roots of the *Final Fantasy* series that hits the RPG mark dead-on.

If you can wish it, we got it!

gamestop!com   FuncoLand
Gamestop   Babbage's   software etc

Oh The Joy. Oh The Wonder. Oh The Sound Of

Final Fantasy IX
by EA/SQUARESOFT
The crystal comes back. Return to a world filled with mystery and magic for the biggest adventure yet. The ninth installment of this best-selling RPG series has a completely new look and feel. An amazing visual, audio, and gameplay experience for any brave enough to enter.

Ultimate Fighting Championship
by Crave

Ultimate Fighting Championship is an ultra realistic, full contact fighting game that brings all styles of mixed martial arts together in the Octagon. Featuring 22 of the UFC's top fighters, each with their own specific talents and temperaments, just about anything goes. So if you think you've got what it takes, get ready to get in on in the Octagon.
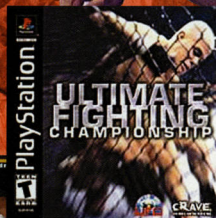
Star Wars Demolition
by Lucas Arts
Star Wars Demolition dares players to compete in a series of brutal vehicular destruction contests organized by crime boss Jabba the Hutt. Contestants' vehicles are equipped with basic blasters, plus their own unique and powerful weapon. Challengers are pitted against each other in an all-or-nothing fight for victory.

Game Shark CDX
by Interact
The Playstation **Game Shark CDX** includes cheat codes & customization capabilities for the hottest games. Codes can be updated from numerous different sources to provide you with the latest tips, hints and secrets about your favorite games.

Babbage's   FuncoLand
Gamestop   software ETC   gamestop!.com

Giddy Gamers Squealing Like Little Girls.

Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2
by Activision

Skate as legendary Tony Hawk or create a character from scratch and hit the course. The newest feature on **Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2** empowers you with the divine ability to customize a rider that looks anyway you want but skates like a pro.

Driver 2
by Infogrames

Violence ignites Chicago when a U.S. crime lord's bookkeeper, Pink Lenny, cuts a deal with his greatest rival, a Brazilian gangster. Tanner and his partner, Jones, go undercover to defuse it. They realize that Lenny's deal, whatever its details, tilts the balance of power in the crime underworld in the Brazilian's favor.
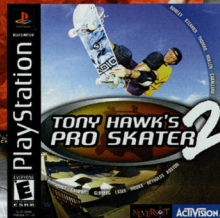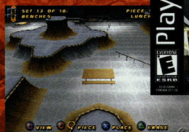
Memory Card, 1X
by Mad Catz

This memory card for your Sony PlayStation features a full 15 blocks of memory. Copy and save game positions, high scores, controller settings and much more.

James Bond: The World Is Not Enough
by Electronic Arts

More than enough Bond-style action. Experience the excitement and intensity of one of the biggest blockbuster movies ever through the eyes of 007. Equipped with a full arsenal of Q-lab gadgets and weapons, you are Bond.

www.gamestop.com
the world's largest selection of gaming products.

Don't forget the GAMES!

C'MON C'MON C'MON C'MON C'MON C'MON

PlayStation.2

Armored Core 2
by Agetec

In **Armored Core 2** ,the newest addition to the **Armored Core** series, you go head-to-head in relentless battles using an endless combination of parts. You can select from the collection of parts and armaments to customize your machine. Choose equipment from 14 different categories to make your own personal weapon of destruction.

NFL GameDay 2001
by 989SPORTS

Strap on your helmet for another hard-hitting season with **NFL GameDay 2001**. Take your favorite team from pre-season all the way to Super Bowl Sunday with this realistic football game. Brand new player models, eye-popping graphics and smooth game play will give you the real NFL experience with this game.

PlayStation.2

NFL GameDay 2001

PlayStation.2

Summoner
by THQ

A Summoner's inheritance is a power greater than magic. With rings of channeling, Summoners call forth demons and golems, supernatural servants and elemental creatures. Summoners have toppled empires and challenged gods.

Summoner

PlayStation.2

SSX Snowboarding
by Electronic Arts

Get ready for the ride of your life! Explode out of the starting gate and launch into the race of your life. Push the boundaries of real physics to dominate the SSX World Circuit.

SSX

BIG

C'MON C'MON C'MON C'MON, Please!
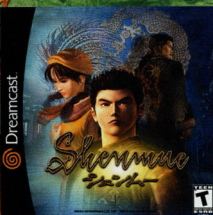
Shenmue
by Sega
The first chapter of Yu Suzuki's epic saga is at hand. **Shenmue** is an adventure game that transports you to Japan, circa 1986. You are Ryo, a young man trying to solve the mystery of his father's death. Along the way, you'll be treated to the most richly-detailed game world ever conceived.

Unreal Tournament
by Infogrames
The first tournament 3D shooter of its time, **Unreal Tournament** includes over 30 unique levels – waterfronts, oil rigs, speeding trains, floating castles, pirate ships and much more.

Visual Memory Unit
by Sega
More then just a memory card. Take the **VMU** out of the back of your Dreamcast controller and use it as a portable gaming system! Play portable games on the **VMU's** LCD screen wherever you go and exchange game data with friends who also have a **VMU**.

102 Dalmatians: Puppies to the Rescue
by Eidos
It's puppy power to the rescue! With the help of your animal friends, rescue your puppy brothers and sisters from the evil clutches of Cruella De Vil and her army of pet-napping toys.

Don't forget the GAMES!

Gamer's wish list for (name) _____

Title	ESRB Rating	Format	Availability A=Available CS=Coming Soon	Also Want
☐ PlayStation One	E	System	A	☐ Dual Shock Analog Controller
☐ Crash Bash	E	PlayStation	CS	☐ Official Strategy Guide
☐ Driver 2	RP	PlayStation	CS	☐ Steering Wheel
☐ Dukes of Hazzard 2	RP	PlayStation	CS	☐ Game Shark CDX
☐ Final Fantasy IX	RP	PlayStation	CS	☐ Official Strategy Guide
☐ The Grinch	E	PlayStation	CS	☐ Memory Card
☐ Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2	E	PlayStation	A	☐ Official Strategy Guide
☐ WWF: Smackdown! 2 (Know Your Role)	RP	PlayStation	CS	☐ Dual Shock Analog Controller
☐ Bond: The World is not Enough	RP	N64 & PlayStation	CS	☐ Official Guide
☐ Spiderman	E	Nintendo 64	CS	☐ Expansion Pak
☐ WWF: No Mercy	RP	Nintendo 64	CS	☐ Controller
☐ N64 Pickacu		System		☐ Control Pad
☐ PlayStation 2	E	System	CS	☐ Multi-tap and DVD Remote Control
☐ Dark Cloud	RP	PlayStation 2	CS	☐ Memory Card 8MB
☐ Dead or Alive 2: Hardcore	RP	PlaySation 2	CS	☐ Memory Card 8MB
☐ Fantavision	E	PlayStation 2	CS	☐ Dual Shock Controller
☐ Gran Turismo 2000	E	PlayStation 2	CS	☐ PS2 Steering Wheel
☐ Orphen	RP	PlayStation 2	CS	☐ Hint Book
☐ Ready 2 Rumble Boxing	E	PlayStation 2	CS	☐ Multi-Tap
☐ Ridge Racer 5	E	PlayStation 2	CS	☐ Steering Wheel
☐ Tekken Tag Tournament	T	PlayStation 2	CS	☐ Official Strategy Guide
☐ Shenmue	T	Dreamcast	CS	☐ Official Strategy Guide
☐ Diablo 2	M	PC	A	☐ Homeworld Cataclysm
☐ MS Age of Empires II Collector's Edition	RP	PC	CS	☐ Metal Gear Solid v1.0
☐ Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2	E	PC	CS	☐ Madden NFL 2001

I currently own these systems:

☐ Sony PlayStation ☐ Dreamcast
☐ PS ONE ☐ Game Boy
☐ Nintendo 64 ☐ Color Game Boy
☐ PlayStation 2

☐ Personal Computer

3D Accelerator _____

RAM _____

Processor _____

NOLLIE + BS CROOKED
409 X2

AIRWALK
540
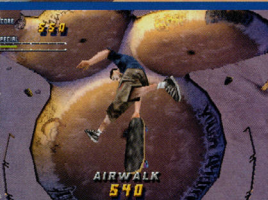
■ The best just keeps getting better — consider this *beyond* a must-have

180 MELON
450

SCORE

SPECIAL

FS BOARDSLIDE + FS BLUNTSLIDE
6704 X2

■ PLAYSTATION

Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2

■ Publisher: **Activision** ■ Developer: **NeverSoft**

Once more, with grace and fluidity flies Tony Hawk, the ethereal star of *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater*

→ Tony Hawk is back in the sky life again. This sequel to the skateboarding epic *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater* returns the soaring trickman to videogame glory. Ah, all is right with the world.

No one will ever complain that Activision sought to rest on its laurels. *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2* even outdoes the original in many ways, filling its plate with plenty of new features. The game offers new skaters, new parks (modeled after real-world locales such as Skate Street Ventura and Philadelphia's Love Park), new maneuvers (such as manuals that can be used to segue

■ The two-player mode is great this time

between tricks without breaking an accumulated point chain), a new "Create a Park" option, and more. Would-be grind session addicts can also create their own riders and customize them right down to the none-more-black and ever-so-cool cargo pants. The multiplayer mode has even been similarly juiced with a violent take on "Tag."

The game's engine remains untouched, and there are the standard PlayStation problems with draw-in and clipping, but *Hawk 2* nonetheless soars. The breathless feel of taking Tony down a hill, sending him grinding across a rail before hopping into an extended wall ride before attacking a half-pipe with a handstand or a 540 Melon coupled with a few grab tricks cannot be accurately portrayed within the boundaries of a mere sentence. The visceral heart-stopping experience — every last bit of it, right down to the part where

rapper-poet Chuck D screams, "Get thee in front of me!" — demands to be savored, repeatedly.

Although it seems a tad mercenary to have Hawk and comrades collect bundles of money (dollars replace points in this brave new world), brilliant level design enables you to exercise maximum trick creativity, and the quest for the best trick ever will keep the masses yearning for the blue yonder. Like the original, this one is a must-have. — Greg Orlando

■NextGen ★★★★★

Bottom Line: Stop reading. Go buy. Hurry — and consider stoplights to be a suggestion.
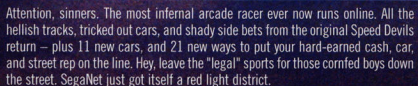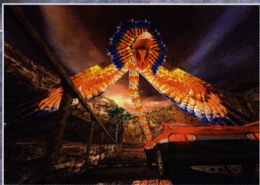
THE HIGHWAY TO HELL NOW ONLINE.

ROUTE
666

147   1VB

■ Although single-seat fighter craft have never been a part of the *Trek* universe before, *Invasion* makes you glad somebody tried it

■ PLAYSTATION

Star Trek: Invasion

■ Publisher: **Activision** ■ Developer: **Warthog**

Make it so

➡ While PC *Star Trek* games seem to beam down every other month, PlayStation has had to wait its entire existence for one single game. However, with the voice-acting talents of Patrick Stewart (Captain Picard) and Michael Dorn (Lt. Commander Worf), Invasion immerses you in the *Next Generation* universe from the opening cinema.

Surprisingly, though, the bulk of this game features *Star Wars*–style, fighter-to-fighter space combat. Warthog (best known for *Colony Wars*) has done an excellent job of creating a whole new line of Federation, Romulan, Cardassian, and Borg attack fighters.

In single-player mode, you begin as Ensign Ryan Cooper, assigned to the U.S.S. Typhon under the command of Worf. Some things never change in the *Star Trek* universe, and once again there's trouble with those nasty Borg. After a solid tutorial covering the three classes of attack ships (Orcus, Griphon, and Scarab), the

■ The graphics are excellent for a latter-day PlayStation game

plot twists unfold. There are over 20 multi-objective missions, from protecting space convoys to retrieving damaged shuttlecraft. But the heart of the game is dogfighting. The screen is always filled with incoming fighters, and, accompanied by some very smart, AI-controlled Federation wingmen, you'll also get the chance to attack full-sized enemy starships.

The gorgeous graphics push PlayStation to the max. Scenes of crippled fighters maneuvering through space, hulls ablaze in glowing fire, set against the deep black of space or a blazing sun, are pure beauty. There are both cooperative and competitive multiplayer missions, as well as timed Holomatch play with up to three CPU-controlled opponents. From the dynamic musical score to the authentic *Star Trek* computer-style options menus, this is a keeper. — John Gaudiosi

⏩**Next**Gen ★★★★☆

Bottom Line: A textbook example of how to blend a popular license with solid console gameplay, this deep-space shooter offers an original *Star Trek* storyline and fun multiplayer action.

Ms. Pac-Man Maze Madness

■ Platform: **PlayStation** ■ Publisher: **Namco** ■ Developer: **Namco**

After the success of Namco's recent *Pac-Man* adventure game, a turn for *Ms. Pac-Man* was a no-brainer. This time, though, Namco has returned the game to its pellet-chomping, ghost-dodging, fruit-eating roots. You play Ms. Pac-Man as she gobbles her way through several different worlds.

The level structure is surprisingly similar to *Ape Escape*: You work through a level, get a little help from Pac-Professor, see some animated story cut scenes, and open up new levels. However, "beaten" levels remain available, waiting for you to complete them with a perfect score and solve all their other challenges — getting through the entire level under a certain time limit, for example.

Despite the additions of some new tricks to the mazes (jump blocks, mud that slows you down, and so on) and the move to an isometric 3D view a la *Pac Mania*, the gameplay is surprisingly familiar. The biggest change is that the mazes don't fit on one screen, and each level is made up of

■ If you like mazes and females (hey, who doesn't!), give this one a try

several mini-mazes linked together. The different jump pads and moveable blocks add some new puzzle elements, but this is essentially an old-school maze game.

This is both good and bad. It's easy to get the hang of and can be a lot of fun, especially if you get into the story, so you have good motivation to continue. But some may find that all the mazing eventually gets repetitious. We didn't, though, for quite a while. And of course, Ms. Pac-Man's gender makes this a great "girl" or "girlfriend" game too. — Chris Charla

⏩**Next**Gen ★★★☆☆

Bottom Line: The maze format makes the game too limited to be the next *Ape Escape*, but it's definitely worth a look.

Muppet RaceMania

■ Platform: **PlayStation** ■ Publisher: **Midway** ■ Developer: **Midway**

PlayStation owners, prepare for the invasion of the kiddie games. Best taken as a sign of maturity-skewing things to come for Sony's original console, this kart racer is long on quantity, short on quality.

There's a full variety of 25 characters and vehicles in *MRM*, including Miss Piggy in a monster truck, Rizzo driving a piece of cheese, and a Gonzo-piloted UFO. But the 28 tracks, ostensibly based on themes from the Muppets films, are largely uninspired and often seem specifically designed to catch the cars in corners or hook them on obstacles. This is exacerbated by a driving model in which all but the best vehicles boast wimpy engines, sloppy steering, and little traction.

Racing is as enjoyable as it can be, given the shabby track designs and poor driving model. Power-ups are plentiful and clever (homing chickens, flying fish), but every vehicle uses the same ones. Battle mode is lousy, with

■ There are tons of characters and vehicles, but most of them drive like air-hockey pucks on Vallium

an insipid scoring system, overly fragile cars, and a camera that tends to swing to the side, rendering you incapable of seeing what's in front of you. Stunt mode is similarly hampered by a sidelong view and fun-free tracks with which you must be intimately familiar just to complete. Sparse voice samples and music lend personality, but pacing is slowed by incredibly frequent movie clips that, while fun, have nothing to do with the game and result in far too much time spent staring at loading screens. — Eric Bratcher

⏩**Next**Gen ★★☆☆☆

Bottom Line: A substandard kart racer that unsuccessfully relies upon the Muppets' huge charisma to overcome its technical shortcomings.

Get to the **finish line** any **freakin'** way you can.

8 new screaming machines are hitting the streets of San Francisco and London. Not to mention the buildings, fountains and shopping malls. The only rule in this race is: There aren't any rules.

MIDTOWN MADNESS 2

www.microsoft.com/games/midtown2

Microsoft

...it's a death sentence.

- **More than 200 customizable parts available – featuring Interior Equipment & Extension Packs.**
- **Enter all new Arenas to challenge over 45 menacing AC's.**
- **Over-Boost Propulsion generates lightning speed for AC units.**
- **More than 35 Single-Player Missions and 13 VS. Battle Stages.**

"Mech combat at its finest"
– PSM 100% Independent PlayStation Magazine

Wield an energy blade in close-quarters combat

Enhanced propulsion technology

Challenge a friend in 2-player split-screen action

Destroy!!!

Customize your A.C. for maximum damage

Replays highlight your destructive kills

www.agetec.com

FROM SOFTWARE

TEEN
T
CONTENT RATED BY
ESRB

agetec

■ PLAYSTATION
RC Revenge
■ Publisher: **Acclaim** ■ Developer: **Acclaim Studios**
Just don't toy with it

■ RC Revenge is a terrific entry in the growing RC racing game sub-genre (and there is such a sub-genre — remember, you heard here first)

The radio-controlled racer, Re-Volt, was a blast to play on PC and Dreamcast last year, but the PlayStation version was plagued by a horrible framerate and frustrating control problems. Acclaim went back to the drawing boards with this PlayStation-only sequel, handing the franchise reigns over to a new internal development team. The end result is a fresh and fun arcade racing experience that puts you in control of RC cars and boats with five movie-themed worlds to explore.

The graphics don't push the envelope, but they're decent, and the game is fast, running at a solid framerate with little pop-up, clipping, or texture-warping to speak of. There are some such problems in the two-player, splitscreen mode, but even here the result is an improvement over the original. There are 10 playable

vehicles initially, which vary from off-road buggies to pavement-hugging speedsters. There are also an additional five vehicles to unlock, as well as RC boats.

What keeps you coming back, however, is the addictive gameplay. The computer AI is super-smart — a CPU opponent will wait until you're right behind him before unleashing an oil slick, while cars and boats routinely ram you off course. Staying ahead of the pack is the best way to the checkered flag, although picking up power-ups (like a bouncing mine or bottle rocket) also helps. Control is much more forgiving this time around, so you can jump right into the action. Aside from a weak soundtrack, Acclaim has effectively fixed with all of Re-Volt's problems. — *John Gaudiosi*

■ When you get tired of racing RC cars, try RC boats

▶ NextGen ★★★★☆

Bottom Line: Though there are other RC racing games on the market, RC Revenge offers a fun racing diversion with lots of depth. Fun for gamers of all ages, this kid-friendly game serves up some serious racing challenges.

Ray Crisis
■ Platform: **PlayStation** ■ Publisher: **Working Designs** ■ Developer: **Taito**

Vertical shooters are about as popular with mainstream gamers as text adventures these days. Worse, the few shooters that come out today rarely do justice to the greats like R-Type or Thunder Force V.

And so it is with Ray Crisis. The follow-up to Taito's Ray Storm, it manages to improve on the original's amazing 3D visuals — no small feat — but the gameplay is only slightly better than Ray Storm's lackluster effort. Don't get us wrong: It ain't bad, but it's not much different than the hundreds of generic shooters that helped kill the genre in the first place.

You can choose the order in which to go through the levels, and you can choose from three ships, which offer different lock-on and

multi-fire strategies. Each ship also has its own unique special attack. Unfortunately, in order to add the different ships, the Taito team seems to have sacrificed the number and variety of power-ups.

Like any shooter, this has lots of slowdown, particularly during boss sequences. But frankly we're never sure whether shooter slowdown is a bug or an actual feature, since it's a big help when the entire screen is filled with bullets and missiles.

That said, this isn't a bad game. It looks great, in fact. But the gameplay

■ It looks like every other shooter you've ever seen and plays like every other shooter you've ever played

gives credence to the idea that scrolling shooters are essentially finished as a genre. — *Chris Charla*

▶ NextGen ★★★☆☆

Bottom Line: It looks fantastic and plays ok, but if you're looking for the next R-Type, look elsewhere.

Resident Evil Survivor
■ Platform: **PlayStation** ■ Publisher: **Capcom** ■ Developer: **Capcom**

There's a reason this isn't called RE: Gun Survivor outside Japan: It does not support the Gun-Con anymore. This, what was designed as a gun game becomes an absolutely horrible FPS.

The plot here is typical, if shallow, Resident Evil. You play Vincent, an amnesiac stranded in a town overrun with shambling undead. You must figure out who you are, what has happened, and why the only other humans you can find want you dead. (Hint: turns out, you're a total ass.)

Gameplay itself is just awful, largely because the standard RE movement system isn't worth a damn in an FPS. You can't strafe or turn around swiftly, and there is absolutely no way to move and shoot at the same time.

This alone renders the game nearly unplayable, but the game adds

insult to injury by taking incessant cheap shots. You constantly walk through doorways to find multiple adversaries immediately surrounding you, so you have no choice but to expose your back to one enemy in order to dispatch another.

But there's more — or, rather, less: There are no save points, and your path is almost completely linear. Plus, this is a fully 3D engine, complete with pixels the size of dinner plates and textures that warp so badly it looks like a special effect.

■ Imagine a gun game that can't be played using a gun. Now imagine it's even less fun than it sounds

Survivor is the wrong title. This game clearly didn't make it. — *Eric Bratcher*

▶ NextGen ★☆☆☆☆

Bottom Line: The RE universe could definitely inspire a great gun game. But with bad technology, unforgiving control limitations, and an uncanny lack of fun, this non-gun game definitely isn't it.

Tyco R/C: Assault With a Battery
■ Platform: **PlayStation** ■ Publisher: **Mattel Interactive** ■ Developer: **Lucky Chicken Games**

Like RC Revenge (see left), this is a smash-n-bash little racer featuring life-sized remote-control cars, based this time on actual Tyco R/Cs you can buy at your favorite toy or hobby store.

The racing action is freewheeling and high-flying, as jumps, obstacles and the occasional ice patch all collaborate to keep your battery-powered racer careening all over the place.

The good-looking courses are clever, and each has its own challenges. In Frantic Freeway, for instance, you have to win the race while avoiding full-sized cars and trucks. The weapon power-ups, however, are neither powerful nor practical. To use most of them you have to be right next to another car, and when you do connect with a

"Cyclone Fire" or an "Electro Zapper," the results are far from Twisted Metal.

But the two-player mode is where this game really shines. You can race, battle, or play a version of tag called "Capture It" in which the longer you hang on to a little energy ball, the more points you get. This quickly turns into a high-speed chase in which you get the ball back by smashing into your opponent, and it's a blast.

Yet the one drawback is also what makes this so appealing: It's simple. This is a quick little racer, but it doesn't have a lot of meat. The hidden cars

■ Tyco R/C gives new meaning to the phrase "race with the big boys"

and bonuses extend things a bit, but not much. Then again, we're not talking about a NASCAR sim here, just light-hearted RC fun. — *Emmett Schkloven*
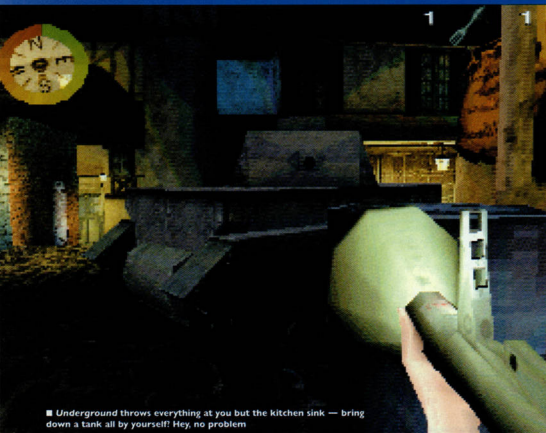
▶ NextGen ★★★☆☆

Bottom Line: Neither a monster nor a must-have, but a quick and entertaining diversion nonetheless.

■ PLAYSTATION

Medal of Honor Underground

■ Publisher: **EA Games** ■ Developer: **Dreamworks Interactive**

Vive la Resistance!

■ *Underground throws everything at you but the kitchen sink — bring down a tank all by yourself! Hey, no problem*

→ Not quite a year ago (**NG 01/00**), the original *Medal of Honor* completely wowed us with its nifty combination of straight-up FPS action and more involved stealth and strategy, not to mention its solid graphics and utterly flawless WWII atmosphere. *Underground* is actually a prequel that tracks the adventures of Manon, the gutsy heroine of the French Resistance from the previous game. And once again, it's a stunner.

The gameplay is, if anything, even more solid and challenging than before. Indeed, this seems aimed squarely at returning fans of the original, since the difficulty ramps up rather quickly — by the third mission, you're actually expected to kill a few tanks while on foot and alone! There are some new wrinkles in the gameplay, like friendly, AI-driven "partners" you'll

have to work with (and invariably fight to keep alive) during certain missions. There's also a level or two in which you commandeer a vehicle (manning the machine gun in the sidecar of a motorcycle, for example). Also, in an odd twist, during undercover missions you can use a flash camera to snap pictures of suspicious enemies — somehow, this helps assuage their doubts about you. Weird.

In other words the gameplay is great, great stuff, and the icing on the cake is that *Underground* is possibly even more fully immersed in its background and setting than the original. The 22 missions range from the catacombs of occupied

Paris to the sun-baked streets of Casablanca. There's also a final hidden mission, the "Panzerknacker," that is a sheer hoot and has to be played to be believed. This is not to be missed.
— *Jeff Lundrigan*

■ *This is one game that offers you both style and substance*

→ **Next**Gen ★★★★☆

Bottom Line: A terrific game gets a sequel that's in some ways even better. And after all, it's still true: At the end of the day, nothing is more satisfying than shooting a Nazi in the face.

Ball Breakers

■ Platform: **PlayStation** ■ Publisher: **Take 2** ■ Developer: **Lost Toys**

The weird thing about Take 2's line of $9.99 budget games is that a lot of them have turned out to be better than games that a lot of publishers — Take 2, Rockstar and GOD included — release for full price. Even games like *Spec Ops*, which basically blew on PC, turn out to be easily worth $9.99.

Ball Breakers is just the latest surprise in the budget line. It starts with a premise so ridiculously reminiscent of old-school videogames (convicted felons have their lower halves amputated and replaced with rollers so they can compete in brutal combat) that we had a smile on our faces before we even put the game in the machine.

Once we did though, we were rewarded with a quirky combat-action-racing game. In an attempt to win parole, prisoners compete in one of six events, all of which feature some combination of rolling, fighting, and platform-style jumping. Each prisoner only has one wheel (damn budget cuts), so the control has some inertia (*Marble Madness/Crystal*

■ *The gameplay is as goofy as the title, but since the disc is cheap, Ball Breakers is worth a look*

Quest-style). This works better in some events (Run the Gauntlet, Trick 'n' Tag) than others (Last Man Rolling being the weakest). Each event is set at a different prison, and each of these, of course, presents its own special challenges.

Graphically, this ain't *Final Fantasy*, but the art does the job, and the cut scenes that introduce the characters, while almost totally nonsensical, are at least fun to watch. *Ball Breakers* isn't the next *Tony Hawk* by any stretch of the imagination, but for ten bucks (plus tax) it'll deliver more than a weekend of fun.
— *Chris Charla*

→ **Next**Gen ★★★☆☆

Bottom Line: *The Running Man* meets *Marble Madness*: surprisingly fun, especially for less than the cost of two boxes of Cheerios.

Galaga: Destination Earth

■ Platform: **PlayStation** ■ Publisher: **Hasbro** ■ Developer: **King of the Jungle**

As with many of its classic game licenses, Hasbro has brought the venerable *Galaga* into the new millennium, all gussied up in 3D trappings. Imagine the same patterned waves of insectoid enemies flying in from the sides of the screen, then imagine the whole thing recast as a forward-scrolling rail shooter similar to *Star Fox*. Now imagine it isn't very exciting. Got it? There — you've got the perfect mental picture of *Galaga: Destination Earth*.

There's a bit more to it than that, of course, and it isn't as if the game as a whole is a complete misfire. From time to time the game switches for brief periods to a side-scrolling or vertical-scrolling view — why it does this, other than to provide a bit of variety, is unfortunately, unclear. There are also certain stages in which you have a goal other than simply blasting everything that moves, like collecting "escape pods" as you fly. Also, in addition to the classic *Galaga* mechanic of allowing your ship to be
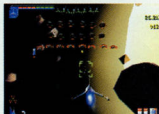
■ *It looks a little like the classic, but Galaga: Destination Earth isn't nearly as exciting even as the original from 1981*

captured, then shooting the mother ship to get it back and doubling your firepower, there are power-ups that enable you to capture enemy ships directly, which is oddly satisfying if you're a devotee of the original.

The graphics, however, are barely more than functional, and although the pace picks up a tad as the game progresses, it just never really gets the pulse pounding. It's also not a particularly demanding challenge either. This is not a terrible game, by any means. It's just not that good.
— *Jeff Lundrigan*

→ **Next**Gen ★★☆☆☆

Bottom Line: Despite the nostalgia factor, this seems to be aimed at the mass market, not the hardcore. As such, it's relatively simple and not that thrilling.

PSM ONLINE
www. .com

TOP STORIES
24 HOUR NEWS
REVIEWS
PREVIEWS
HINTS AND GUIDES

WWW.PSMONLINE.COM

PSM
100% Independent PlayStation Magazine

POWERED BY DAILYRADAR.COM

Daily
RADAR.com

HOLLYWOOD

PC
NINTENDO
SEGA
SONY
X-BOX
SHOWBIZ
TECH

...FOR THE HOLIDAYS

GAMES
CONSOLES
DVDs
GADGETS
24-HR NEWS
REVIEWS
EXCLUSIVE PREVIEWS
SARDONIC JOURNALISM

ON LINE NOW!

All New
BUYER'S
GUIDE
2000

Daily Radar.COM

GET IT. DAILY!

www.DAILYRADAR.COM

■ Overcoming mixed groups of monsters requires creative tactics and effective use of the environment — friendly NPCs and a well-orchestrated assault can make the difference between success and oblivion

■ Improved spell effects and some truly spectacular monsters provide eye candy for players and the highest challenge for characters

SnowWalker did 1 damage to Greater Yuan-Ti
DWS- PAUSED
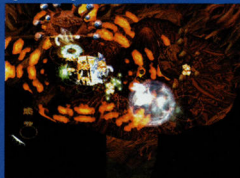
■ PC

Baldur's Gate II:
Shadows of Amn
■ Publisher: **Interplay** ■ Developer: **Bioware**

Bioware shows how much better a good thing can be

➜ *Baldur's Gate II: Shadows of Amn* reveals its primary conflict in the first minutes of gameplay and then offers literally hundreds of hours of adventure without ever losing that initial tension. Some RPGs achieve length by repeating a few good elements indefinitely. *BG2* thrives on variety. There are quests, but very few leave you feeling like a super-heroic mouse on a treadmill. Combat is still the primary form of conflict resolution, but your tactics will need to adapt to each situation. While most obstacles can be overcome in several ways, no single strategy works perfectly everywhere.

Yet the variety doesn't stop with encounters and tactics. The game sends its characters plummeting through a greatest hits collection of locations, and unlike the first game, the locations of *BG2* are compact and easily explored, full of reasons to poke into every nook and cranny. There are so many quests and set encounters that you could easily miss half of them and still come away feeling like the game was packed with opportunities for adventure.

BG2 uses an enhanced Infinity Engine that includes support for 3D acceleration, and the addition of 800x600 resolution reveals more of the landscape and improves the sense of control within the action. The expanded view also helps to emphasize the somber mood that permeates the game's art.

Simply put, the game engine is the most complete translation of a tabletop RPG to a computer game ever created. The magnitude of the game system places an enormous number of choices at the player's feet, but the complexity is never an impediment to fun: The game includes clearly defined difficulty levels to help tailor the game to your individual preferences.

Because in the end, the greatest joy of *BG2* is the control you have over the protagonist. The wealth of options will enable almost anyone to create the character they want to play. Most encounters in the game allow for multiple solutions, and many can be pursued or left alone, at your discretion. Life-changing decisions are peppered throughout, enabling you to choose a development path for the character and experience the consequences. More than simply a passing, enjoyable distraction, *BG2* is an experience worth savoring.   — David Simkins

A MATTER OF CHARACTER

Character generation for *Baldur's Gate II* is more complex than in any other D&D computer game, and while the complexity may be overwhelming at first, it pays to plan ahead. The experience cap is 2,950,000, but a character is highly unlikely to reach that number with one play through the game. Multi-class characters split their experience evenly between classes, and although this doesn't hurt much at lower levels, later in the game they'll be many levels behind their single- and dual-classed peers. However, dual classing — earning experience in one class, then switching to another — is a powerful tool. You can become a ninth-level cleric then switch to another class to give the party another raise-dead specialcaster. Fighter is perhaps the favorite first class for a dual-class character, offering better hit points and combat abilities at ninth level than most classes can achieve in the entire game.

NextGen ★★★★★
Bottom Line: Make no mistake — *Baldur's Gate II* raises the bar for PC RPGs, elevating the genre to a new level.

■ The storyline will fling the characters through a host of worlds, each skillfully rendered by the art team

■ A first-person shooter with the Borg in it should be fantastic – fortunately, *Elite Force* happens to be just that

92 | 92 | 300

■ PC

Star Trek: Voyager — Elite Force

■ Publisher: **Activision** ■ Developer: **Raven**

Boldly going to kick Borg ass
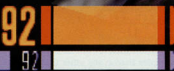
→ "Voyager" might not be the best of the *Star Trek* shows, but as of now it's definitely responsible for one of the top *Star Trek* games. Once again, Raven has snagged id's latest 3D technology, whipped up some kick-ass graphics, and managed to stuff a compelling single-player game into the whole package. It may be a bit short, but it's gorgeous and filled with enough blasting to keep shooter fans happy and enough techno-babble to make Trekkers smile.

Ensign Munroe is a generic red shirt in a new security detail aboard Voyager. The group, dubbed "Hazard Team," serves as the ship's version of SWAT — in other words, they're the guys who get to beam in first and see what's hiding in those dark corridors. The Hazard Team is called out for its first mission when Voyager is sucked out into a mysterious ships' graveyard, forcing the crew to explore nearby ships in an effort to find a way home.

Unfortunately, the derelict ships are all crawling with Klingons, Maalons, Borg, and a posse of new critters whipped up just for this game.

Most *Star Trek* games don't emphasize combat, but since *Elite Force* runs on the *Quake 3* engine, obviously there's very little diplomacy here. The standard rocket launcher and chain gun have been replaced by phaser rifles and portable photon torpedoes, but it's what you'd expect from an FPS: Aliens appear and you use 'em for target practice.

Besides the single-player game, there are also numerous multiplayer options. These include the typical batch of online and LAN features, but there's also a fully bot-populated deathmatch tournament ladder for players to hone their mad Borg-blasting skillz.
— *Chris Kramer*

■ Expect a few Voyager crew members to pop up then shoot everything else that moves

▶**Next**Gen ★★★★☆

Bottom Line: It's a fun game, if a bit on the simple and short side. Raven's made the already impressive graphics code crackle with excellent textures, gorgeous lighting effects, and heavy usage of the engine's curvy nature to create pulsing, organic alien levels.

"WHY CAN'T YOU BE A LAWYER LIKE YOUR BROTHER?"

BECAUSE YOU KNOW YOUR FUTURE IS IN GAMES!
Boss Game Studios is looking for experienced artists, animators and programmers, as well as artists and animators looking for their first gaming experience. Artists should have a classical art background with computer experience a strong plus and must submit samples/demo reel; programmers should have at least one published game on any format. Please send your best samples/resume to:

8383 / 158th Ave. NE / Suite 100
Redmond / Washington / 98052
E-mail / mom@bossgame.com
Phone / 425 . 556 . 0440
www.bossgame.com

BOSS game

Enemy Engaged

■ Platform: **PC** ■ Publisher: **Empire Interactive** ■ Developer: **Razorworks**

From one of the best development teams in the U.K. comes a helicopter simulation that lets you fly a pair of modern whirlybirds of destruction, the RAH-66 Comanche or the KA-52 Hokum. The game has the usual modes that one would expect from the genre: You can blast tanks, ships, buildings, and other helicopters into the stratosphere with Hellfire missiles, dumbfire rockets, and a chain cannon. There are a number of lengthy campaigns, or you can fly around freely and challenge friends in a war for the skies.

On a less-than-top-of-the-line system, the high-resolution textures occasionally cause a drop in framerate, even when simply scanning the horizon for enemy

vehicles. However, this never really causes a problem. While overall this sim doesn't break any new ground, it earns its stripes for being incredibly true to life — air battles look like footage from CNN.

As in modern helicopter combat, enemy vehicles rarely make visual contact with one another and don't display the frantic twisting and turning seen in films like Top Gun. There are so many precise, technical details in this title that it can hardly be recognized as a game — "simulation" is the only true word for

■ **Enemy Engaged** will be a hit with obsessed chopper-sim purists

Enemy Engaged. As such, fans of realistic flight sims will adore this title for its wealth of technical detail and subtle nuances. — Doug Trueman

→ NextGen ★★★★☆

Bottom Line: For those who love hyper-realistic simulations, they don't get much more hyper-realistic than this.

Dukes of Hazzard: Racing for Home

■ Platform: **PC** ■ Publisher: **Southpeak Interactive** ■ Developer: **Sinister Games**

Just a bad ol' game, never meanin' no harm, but with gameplay like this, it winds up doing plenty. It's a shame really, because The Dukes of Hazzard could've been mindless fun. Instead, the gameplay is as uninspired as it is tiresome: "Don't Let Enos Catch You!" "Make It to the Bank!" "Chase Down the Robber!" Every level is unimaginative and horribly repetitious. There are a few vaguely interesting bits here and there, like some of the Hazzard County races and a junkyard level in which you have to collect parts, but on the whole, it's all the same races on the same roads, over and over.

The graphics are OK, with above-average if strangely eerie cut scenes — everyone looks hollow-eyed and pale, as if the characters had all been

raised from the dead. Arguably this isn't far from the truth, since the original cast members perform most of the voices, which at least makes the game sound authentic.

But all fun is practically AWOL. The AI cheats like mad. There's no option to use a steering wheel. Skids, turns, and collisions feature cartoon-like physics, bouncing you around like a rubber ball, and the General Lee can even be outrun by big brown vans. If that weren't bad enough, you can beat the game in less than ten hours.

■ **Strangely enough, you only get to drive the General Lee in fewer than half the stages**

Only die-hard Duke-boy fans should even look at the box. — Kevin Rice

→ NextGen ★☆☆☆☆

Bottom Line: The README file begins, "We hope you enjoy playing the game as much as we've enjoyed making it for you." We can only assume this is some kind of sick joke.

Star Trek: New Worlds

■ Platform: **PC** ■ Publisher: **Interplay** ■ Developer: **14° East**

Interplay's latest PC game is a cross between the chess-like play of Masters of Orion and the frenetic, all-out war of Total Annihilation. The end result is a realtime strategy game with elements of turn-based complexity.

Set after the movie Star Trek V on the surfaces of hostile planets, players can be the Federation, Klingon, or Romulan Empire, all waging a galactic war over a newly discovered star system. While the potential for this game was great, the arbitrarily long technology trees will frustrate anyone hoping to raise an army and quickly launch an assault. Creating a single photon tank — not an especially impressive weapon, incidentally — requires building a construction yard, upgrading the colony hub, and building a vehicle yard, then upgrading the

construction yard, building a science center, upgrading the hub (again), building a security center, upgrading the construction yard (again), then upgrading the science center to "phaser technology." Whew!

Maps are absolutely enormous, taking hours to explore with the game's tiny craft. Units often fail to acknowledge orders they're given, and you can't save in the middle of a mission. This just isn't fun.

The graphics, sound, music, and story are all stellar, and Trek fans will feel right at home, but that can't save

■ **What Prime Directive? Blast 'em!**

the gameplay from practically self-destructing. This is far too slow for action fans and virtually unplayable for turn-based fans. — Doug Trueman

→ NextGen ★★☆☆☆

Bottom Line: Star Trek: New Worlds is caught in a temporal anomaly. Save your hard drive space for Star Trek: Dominion Wars.

■ **PC**

Blair Witch
Volume I: Rustin Parr

■ Publisher: **Gathering of Developers** ■ Developer: **Terminal Reality**

Rrrealllly scaaary, eh kids?
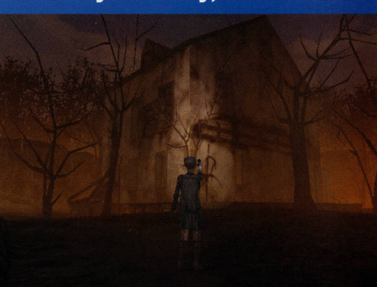
■ **Here's a tip: if you're lost in the woods and come across a house that looks like this, just turn around and stay lost**

→ This is the first of three Blair Witch games, all from different developers, to be published one a month for a bargain $19.95 each. Volume I: Rustin Parr is from Terminal Reality, and in addition to using Blair Witch mythology from the movie and TV specials, it borrows characters and the game engine from the developer's own supernatural action adventure, Nocturne.

The game is set in 1941, and you play Elspeth "Doc" Holiday (a peripheral character from Nocturne), who's sent by the government Spookhouse to investigate the Rustin Parr child murders. We had a lot of problems with Nocturne (see NG 01:00), and we're sorry to report that Blair Witch I has many of the same troubles. You're offered more great 2D, prerendered backgrounds with oddly animated 3D characters (wearing the same ridiculously billowy clothing), along with mostly interesting dialogue delivered in a series of dull, slow monotones — a mishmash that never quite pulls off the atmosphere it's striving for.

There are some nice touches: apparitions occasionally appear in the background or in corners, then

they're gone so quickly they're never quite certain they were really there. But the Blair Witch myth is scary largely because no one really knows why such awful things happen in Burkittsville — the evil is unseen and unfathomable. So a game that hinges on uncovering the ultimate source of that evil is almost by definition self-defeating. This is especially true when it degenerates into the usual zombies and big-toothed demons you can blast with a rifle.

Also, this only offers about ten hours of gameplay, extended purely by making certain goals rather obscure and interminable time spent lost in the woods. Still, for $19.95, maybe ten hours is enough. — Jeff Lundrigan
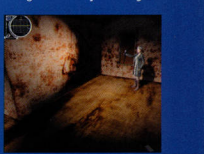
■ **Much like the movie, this game is short and quite cheap**

→ NextGen ★★☆☆☆

Bottom Line: A few nice touches and additional Blair Witch background can't save this short, occasionally frustrating adventure.

→ I love gaming, and I feel in order to be a real gamer and enjoy the gaming experience, you have to own more than one console. I love my PlayStation. I've played it so much that the only way to make it work is to flip it upside down when turning it on. I've also burned out my NES, SNES, and, soon, my N64 and Game Boy. And now with the console wars heating up, I've saved up enough money to buy a PS2 and four games, with more than enough cash to go towards Nintendo's Gamecube and Microsoft's Xbox. Thank goodness my cousin is a Sega fan because I can play with his Dreamcast instead of buying my own.

What I want to know is why do people brag about what system they own when the best games on the market are on all different systems? And what do we have to thank for this? *Competition*! I love the hype going around the gaming world. It's that very reason why people like me put aside $80 a month and stash it in an envelope dedicated to gaming. As a true gamer, I don't care who comes out on top just as long as they keep pushing each other to raise the bar.

I'm not saying that everyone has to buy every system out there; I just like to enjoy the whole experience. But if people really want every system, they can if they put their minds to it. Just look at the Hardcore section of your magazine — people will do anything, won't they?

Cedric Canton
Via email

Nicely put. The simple fact is that no single system ever has (or likely ever will have) a monopoly on the greatest games. As long as multiple systems exist, competition will always drive publishers to push the limits, and the more systems in the mix, the better. Which is why the coming system wars are so exciting — by this time next year, there will be more systems on the market than at any time in recent history, and unlike the last round (in the era of Saturn, Jaguar, and 3DO), there appear to be no outright clunkers in the lot. So yes, if at all possible, don't settle for one machine.

While you're at it, make sure you buy multiple copies of Next Gen every month, 'cause, well, you never know when you'll need one.

COMIC BOOK CURSE?

Spider-Man gets a game on PlayStation. Long overdue. Then *Danger Girl* gets a game overnight. What's with this? Well, if they're giving away game deals to indie comics creators, why not games for *Cerebus*? *Cave-Woman*? *Duck-Girl*! *Semantic Lace*? *BlackJack*? *Magnus Robot Fighter*? *The Savage Dragon*? *StormWatch*? *Brother-Man*? *Tribe*? *Love and Rockets*? *Stray Bullets*? *Finals*? *Trouble Magnet*? *Top Ten*? *Tom Strong*? *Static*? *Steam Punk*? *Glory*? *Pitt*? *The Maxx*? Jeff Smith's *Bone* and James O'Barr's *The Crow*?

The game industry should realize that there is a demand for these games and they should be delivered. Think about it.

"Robolic"
Via email

Interesting idea. However, if we were going to be uncharitable we could point out that the history of comic books translated into games has been spotty at best. For every effort that captures the essence of its subject, like *Spider-Man*, there have been legions of others that, in a word, suck. *Superman* for Nintendo 64? *Fantastic Four* for PlayStation? *The Crow* (admittedly, based on the TV show based on the movie based on the comic)? And don't forget to check page 108 for our review of the latest *Spawn* game.

It's also worth noting that, especially with indie comics, even coming up with a game mechanic that did its subject justice would prove quite a hurdle. How would you adapt the interpersonal relationships of *Love and Rockets*, or capture the shifting perspectives and internal dialogs of *The Maxx* in a game context, for example? Still, your enthusiasm is telling, and as games become increasingly sophisticated, perhaps more such projects will be mounted. We hope so too.

→ The other day I had the misfortune of hearing Republican Rep. Scott McInnis of Colorado speak on the subject of videogames and the evils they are inflicting on the youth of this country. The reason I'm writing you is that he was waving your fine publication around while he uttered this nonsense. Is it just me, or has this country now officially reached a point of disrepair? I don't mean to sound like some kind of crazy militant or anything but I think the system is broken. I mean, really, for an elected member of Congress to be speaking on television about how videogames are corrupting today's youth? He's obviously been spending too much time researching the games he hates rather than looking into real problems like guns, drugs, poverty, and disease — oh yeah, and parents who have kids and either don't care or don't have time to bother keeping track of what they're playing or, for that matter, to teach them the difference between reality and a videogame.

I'm an expectant parent myself, and while I don't plan to allow my child to play the more violent games (at least until I think he or she is mature enough), I believe that's a decision that I, not the government, should make. Please let your readers know that all they have to do to put this worsening trend to a halt is write to their representatives in Congress, and be sure to vote. Politicians only really think about one thing — getting re-elected — and if you express your displeasure over what they're doing, they will listen. Let's all do something before we're forced to go to a place that resembles a porno shop to buy a game that shows a little blood.

"Jemma"
Via email

Thanks for leaping to our defense, and your argument is well stated. This is also rather interesting, since McInnis has waved around Next Gen before, notably in a speech he made last year before Congress. We have to wonder if the issue you saw him wave around this time was the same issue he used back then, or whether he's gotten a new one.

→ I've just purchased the latest issue of **Next Gen**, just like every month since you started in 1995. I tremendously enjoy your magazine and am still a loyal reader even with the Internet providing free news 24-7. Why? Because I like the humor, the honest reviews, and, quite simply, your immense knowledge of the business. Basically, I find it to be a very mature publication.

It therefore pains me to write this. I never thought I'd have to do this, but an article in your latest issue is very offensive: page nine, News Bytes by Aaron John Loeb. I am French, and I don't think I've ever been insulted in a

■ **Spider-Man**

■ **Danger Girl**

■ While *Spider-Man* was a great comic-book game — and *Danger Girl* might be — as a rule, such games disappoint

→Letters

magazine before. For example, "French giant Infogrames has packed up its baguettes and gone home." Now, have you ever written: "Konami has packed up its chopsticks and gone home?" You would never do so, and you shouldn't. This kind of backstabbing "humor" — you think none of your readers belong to the group you're mocking — is unacceptable.

It gets worse: "Cheese-eating surrender monkeys." The "surrender" bit is vague — is it in reference to World War II? I'd like to have that clarified, Mr. Loeb. I've never read anything about Nintendo that sounded like "noodle-eating China-invading orangutans." Or maybe I missed that issue?

As editors of a nationally sold publication, you have a lot of power to influence the general population. It is your duty to make absolutely sure that you show everyone the same amount of respect. Anything else is bad faith and a form of discrimination, regardless of intent.

You owe me and the rest of your French-speaking readers an apology.

Nicolas Antoine
Via email

CULTURAL BACKWATER

While it's true the industry has grown tremendously, I have to ask: When were videogames not "mainstream"? I hear it all the time in magazines like yours, but come on — videogames have always been at the forefront of American culture. Once movies are made about a phenomenon and it appears in television shows and commercials, it has become mainstream. A few examples: *Wargames*. When was this movie made, 1983? Then there was *The Last Starfighter* and a *Pac-Man* cartoon in the early '80s as well. There are countless examples of videogaming in mainstream culture, so why do people only now say, "Now that videogames have become mainstream"?

The term is being used incorrectly. What people mean to say is, "Videogames are crossing over into broader genres of entertainment," like digital distribution and online convergence. This does not mean "mainstream." We need to stop using the word wrong, because it sounds silly.

"one luv"
Via email

Um, no, not exactly. While certain game characters, or the existence of videogames by themselves, is something that mainstream media has been aware of for a quarter of a century (not "always"), movies, TV shows, and songs about them have traditionally been cultural oddities. After all, the gaming (and hacking) elements of *Wargames* was laughably off base. The number of people who actually play games — meaning they think of games as being a worthwhile way to spend their leisure time, like watching movies — has been rather small until just recently. Sony currently has over 27 million PlayStations in the U.S., which is a lot more than Nintendo ever imagined selling even at the height of the 8-bit NES craze in the late '80s. More people are playing games now than ever before.

This is why we say "games are going mainstream." It has less to do with how much lip service the culture gives to games than how many people are actually playing them. And the broadening of the market inevitably brings with it an attempt to reach as large an audience as possible by appealing to lowest common denominator tastes. It's a problem, but once the market becomes large enough, it can then support more niche, hardcore titles, meaning the problem is also somewhat paradoxically a solution — we just have to hang on until we get there.
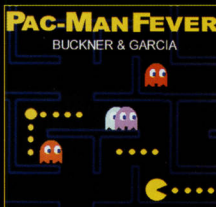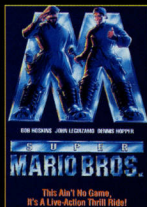
■ Do you really think a smattering of "novelty" games, TV shows, and other cultural detritus from the '70s and '80s means gaming was "mainstream"?

Aaron Loeb responds:

Nicolas,
I offer you, and any other readers who were offended, a very humble apology.

It is a long tradition in English letters to continue our jocular rivalry with the French. Authors in the English language, from Alexander Pope to Mark Twain, have long made the nation of France the butt of their jokes — and French authors have returned the favor. It's a very old tradition in both of our languages. Anti-Japanese rhetoric, like the kind you mention in your letter, also has a rich and varied history in our language, with its principal architect in the United States being William

Randolph Hearst. However, unlike the humorous back and forth between rival peers like France and England/America, anti-Japanese rhetoric has always had a very real sting to it, with Hearst's "yellow journalism" leading quite directly to the internment of Japanese-Americans during World War II. By contrast, at its very worst, when France had been invaded by Nazi Germany and the Vichy government had allied itself with Berlin, no one in the English-speaking world ever recommended putting those of French descent into concentration camps.

My point is that there is a difference between friendly

(if sometimes harsh) rivalry and actual racism. I grew up in Illinois, a state with a long and distinguished history of absolutely hating folks from Indiana — Hoosiers, as they're called. I grew up with regular jokes about Hoosiers being the dumbest people on earth, but as we would say in rural Illinois, "it didn't mean nothin'. It's just jokes."

Right now, the French economy is hungry for videogame companies. Infogrames, Havas, and Ubi Soft are all making plays to dominate the interactive entertainment industry worldwide, and bold, brilliant businessmen like Bruno Bonnell of Infogrames may succeed through their plan

of targeted acquisitions. News Bytes, which has always been pretty snide, reports on these facts, while also "taking the piss" out of the folks who are making the news. This, of course, is the context and reason for the offending comments.

I hope that explains how the phrase "cheese-eating surrender monkeys," which many of our readers found amusing, managed to appear in the pages of **Next Generation**. It was certainly never meant, as your letter

indicates, to be a form of out-and-out racism. However, when real people are genuinely hurt by our words, it's never been **Next Gen**'s policy to sweep it under the rug. So I offer you my sincerest apologies. I hope you see from my explanation above that the comments were not coming from any insidious, racist intent toward the French — they was just jokes — but we will cease to publish mean-spirited French jokes as, perhaps, this tradition is one that has grown ugly with age.

THE WORLD'S BEST-SELLING PC GAMES MAGAZINE
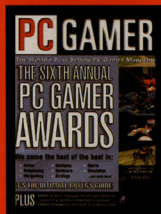
PC GAMER

MEET THE NEXT
GAME GODS

PC GAMER

THE SIXTH ANNUAL
PC GAMER AWARDS

PLUS

imagine
MEDIA WITH PASSION

→ Retroview

December 1992

The CD-ROM debuts, and Ryu comes home

→ Genesis and SNES were fierce competitors at the beginning of 1992, with the *Sonic*-fueled Sega unit steadily pulling away. Both looked to price drops ($99 by year's end) and planned CD-ROM peripherals to remain competitive. Sega CD (which,

■ *Night Trap* didn't sell well until Senate hearings showcased its adult-oriented content. When it was originally released, it tanked.

ironically, Sony manufactured) owed its success to karaoke discs in Japan, but a U.S. release was delayed until deeper software support arrived. Judging by abysmal launch titles like *Night Trap* and *Sewer Shark*, the delay wasn't long enough.

As soon as Sega CD debuted, Nintendo delayed its CD-ROM peripheral, citing new technology and a new collaboration with Sony. The partnership dissolved within a month, and the peripheral never materialized.

Secondary competitors were more addled than the major players. NEC dropped the price of both the TurboGrafix-16 console and its TurboCD

peripheral, then debuted the TurboDuo at a lower price point. Then there was Atari, who was certain its new machine would be named the Jaguar but was up in the air about every other detail. It would be 32- or 64-bit, using cartridges or CD-ROMs, and possibly supporting some combination of keyboard, disk drive, and modem.

Despite the market diversification, demand was still high. A yuletide Gallup poll revealed that 63% of American 7 to 12 year-olds wanted a videogame console for Christmas.

What we were playing

To do: explore the galaxy, play some sports, and kill some Nazis. It's not all street fighting

■ WOLFENSTEIN 3-D	■ AMAZING TENNIS	■ ROAD RASH II	■ SUPER MARIO KART	■ STAR CONTROL 2
■ System: many	■ System: SNES	■ System: Genesis	■ System: SNES	■ System: PC
■ Publisher: id Software/Apogee	■ Publisher: Absolute Entertainment	■ Publisher: Electronic Arts	■ Publisher: Nintendo	■ Publisher: Accolade

Top 10 movies of 1992

1. Aladdin
   $ 217,350,219
2. Home Alone 2
   $ 173,585,516
3. Batman Returns
   $ 162,831,698
4. Lethal Weapon 3
   $ 144,731,527
5. A Few Good Men
   $ 141,340,178
6. Sister Act
   $ 139,605,150
7. The Bodyguard
   $ 121,945,720
8. Wayne's World
   $ 121,697,323
9. Basic Instinct
   $ 117,727,224
10. A League of Their Own
    $ 107,533,928

...and in the real world

■ Johnny Carson retires after 29 seasons as the permanent host of "The Tonight Show." Though comedian Jay Leno would assume Carson's duties as the show's host, Carson would be unable to convince anyone to take over substantial alimony payments to his three previous wives.

■ An all-white jury renders a "not guilty" judgment for four police officers caught on tape savagely beating black motorist Rodney King. South Central Los Angeles immediately erupts in mass violence and looting. By the time the smoke from over 100 arson fires clears, the riots have claimed a dozen lives.

■ In a blow to female objectificationists everywhere, an FDA claim that silicon breast implants may be unsafe is followed by a report stating that Dow Corning, the implants' largest manufacturer, ignored its own scientists' recommendations to test the implants more thoroughly.

■ Long Island teen Amy Fisher becomes immediate movie-of-the-week gold when she admits to shooting Mary Jo Buttafuoco, whose husband was having an

affair with Fisher. Mary Jo recovers and gets a divorce, while Joey gets six months for statutory rape and Amy gains notoriety, nearly seven years in the clink, and a new career as a supermarket tabloid cover model.

■ Unshackled from the Olympics' long-standing "amateur rule", a U.S. "Dream Team" composed of NBA All-Stars like Michael Jordan, Magic Johnson, and Larry Bird stampedes through the Olympic basketball competition in Barcelona, winning each game by an average of 44 points.

■ The first baboon-to-human liver transplant is successfully performed. The terminally ill recipient is given another 71 days of life before he succumbs to a stroke. The baboon is supposedly given a lollipop, but this report cannot be confirmed.

■ Texas billionaire and political comic relief Ross Perot first abandons, then re-enters the presidential race, joined by Vietnam veteran-turned-mannequin-esque running mate Admiral James Stockdale.

BackwardsCompatible

The most expensive *Space Harrier* emulator ever made. – Page 98. **Couldn't afford plane fare to Tokyo for TGS? Don't worry. We were there, and we took notes. – Page 13.** You can argue all you want about whether the movie was scary or not, but the game still falls short. – Page 145. **Eastbound and down, loaded up and truckin'... How to feel like a semi-driver without learning CB lingo and buying an orangutan. – Page 35.** Of course the aliens fit right in! Don't you *see*, man? It's a snowboard, and there's snow, and mountains, and the northern lights! It's so obvious, man! They're in control. They're always in control. We're just like *sheep* to them, man! Sheep with car keys... – Page 52. **The sequel to the greatest Nintendo 64 game of all time. – Page 115.** It's a difficult thing to fathom, but there is evidence here that bargain titles actually deserve to exist. Who knew? – Page 136. **Attention all PC RPG devotees: if you ever finish this game, just remember this: That big yellow thing in the sky is perfectly normal. – Page 141.** A decent *Turok* game? What'll they come up with next, N64s with different colored shells? – Page 119. **Two pictures with pelicans in them. – Page 40.** We'd be careful about feeding this chick after midnight. If you squint your eyes a little, she looks way too much like Gizmo from *Gremlins.* – Page 45. **"If I had to name one console that competes with Gamecube, it would be Game Boy Advance." Who said this, and is he insane? – Page 92.** If they continue to be this wonderful, we hope the word "final" is never an accurate description. – Page 120. **We got our own enemy-grabbing ring for the office, but it got taken away when we kept using it on each other. – Page 51.** How to make the best even better? See here. By the way, Spider-Man is indeed a hidden character. Evidently, he shreds. – Page 127. **Either some of these shots are taken from a replay camera, or someone is heading in exactly the wrong direction at about 100 miles an hour. – Page 66.** Hey, mod makers. Need some inspiration? – Page 70. **Still fantastic, if a bit less... homologatous. – Page 113.** If this game were any more realistic, it would require proof of auto insurance. – Page 28.

➔**Next**Month **Showdown!**

FIRST PARTY WARS

SEGA. SONY. MICROSOFT. NINTENDO.

They all depend on their exclusive first-party games
to define what sets their consoles apart

Each has assembled world-class talent to
accomplish this goal

It's make-or-break time

A Next Generation special report

NextGen 01/01 **on sale December 21, 2000**
Smart readers have already subscribed. To find out how you can save money and guarantee your
copy, turn to the subscription card insert

Vyse the Ninny

Vyse the Coward

Vyse the Unimpressive

Yes, you can change your reputation.

Vyse the Determined

Vyse the Hero

VYSE THE DASHING

Vyse the Hero

Skies of Arcadia

No, you can't change your clothes.

VYSE
THE BOLD

VYSE THE LEGEND

You're Vyse, a Blue Rogue pirate. And a well-known ninny. Which sucks. So sail the vast 3D sky in your killer airship. Discover unchartered floating islands. Fight evil pirates. With 70 weapons and 36 magic skills, you'll kick ass by the boatload. You'll be captain of your own ship with 22 crew members. You'll conquer the enemy nation. Then everyone will respect you. And they'll call you Vyse the Legend. Which rocks. Unless you don't fight. Then you're just a wuss.

Dreamcast™

RP
RATING PENDING
ESRB

sega.com

TAKING HELL TO
THE NEXT LEVEL.

SPAWN®
In The Demon's Hand

NextGen

Silent Hill 2 ■ PlayStation 2's Next Generation ■ Massive Review Extravaganza!

Lifecycle 2 Vol2 #12 12/00

Todd McFarlane's blockbuster comic book characters come to life on Sega Dreamcast. Compete in the four-player simultaneous Battle Royal mode. Includes the original Arcade Mode and tournament style Dreamcast Mode. All your favorite characters from the Spawn series are faithfully recreated in the ultimate death match challenge.

MATURE
M
ESRB
Animated Blood
Animated Violence

TODD McFARLANE
ENTERTAINMENT
SPAWN.COM

CAPCOM
CAPCOM.COM

Dreamcast™