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Save your race... again!
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She's the most famous woman in gaming. But who are the men pulling her strings? And how long can the phenomenon last? Plus: A psychologist analyses Lara Croft's appeal (as if you couldn't guess).

By Jonathan Smith

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Why Arcade?

With Matt Bielby, Editor-in-Chief

It's the very first issue of a new magazine, and that generally means it's time for a little self-justification. And who am I to fly in the face of convention? Here, then, is the general thinking behind Arcade.

Y'see, there are two ways of looking at this magazine. You can see it as the culmination of years of videogame mags - as the best bits of Your Sinclair and Crash and ACE and Zero and PC Gamer and Official PlayStation holding a party between the same covers. If you've been around games for more years than you care to count, you'll probably look at it like this. Or you can see Arcade as something new - the first games magazine to take its cues from the semi-lifestyle specialist mags, like Q and Empire and Total Film. In truth, it's probably a bit of both.

Arcade, you see, is a new type of games magazine - but that doesn't mean we've chucked away all the traditional stuff. So yes, we have game previews (15 pages of them, starting on page 22) and developer interviews (page 42) and, of course, reviews (over 35 pages of them, tucked towards the back of the mag). But we also have plenty that should, with a bit of luck, be less familiar - features that go deeper than you might be used to (try our T-Rex sized Tomb Raider epic, starting on 46), columns that really know what they're talking about, and our paper-and-ink simulation of what it's like to play games round your mate's house, Games Night.

Mostly, though, it's in attitude that Arcade is different - we look at games and say, "They're no longer some bedroom hobby, but a young and growing slice of mainstream entertainment, just like films and music, and should be treated as such." Hopefully that's how it comes across.

You see, Arcade is for experts and novices alike - it's for anyone who's ever had fun with a game. It covers all the bases (chiefly PlayStation, PC and N64, for now at least) in enough depth to tell you what you need to know, but not enough to bore you. It gives you lots of pages, hopefully decent writing (you'll find many of the best videogame journalists of the last ten years lurking between these covers). And all at a affordable regular price of just £2.70.

All of which is just a long-winded way of saying welcome to what should become the magazine for videogamers. Please write and let me know what you think.

Matt Bielby
Editor-in-Chief

Rants & Raves

Packed with hymns, angst and vitriol, it's the bit we get you write. Well, next month it will be...

It's that old letters page conundrum. The first issue of a new magazine never has any letters, but the pages are still there to be filled. What do you do? Well, one solution is to ask all your pals in the videogame business to answer a couple of pressing questions. Like, "What's been your favourite game of 1998?" and "What are you looking forward to in '99?" So that's what we did.

Next issue, this page will be home to your comments on Arcade 1, but in the meantime, over to the great and the good of gaming...

LETTER OF THE MONTH

Seriously spooky

Part of the problem with making your own games is that you have a lot less time to play other people's. In fact, I've got a stack of games about three feet high sitting next to my PC at home, waiting for Half-Life to be finished. With that said, the game I enjoyed the most this year was Resident Evil 2.

It's the kind of game I usually hate. I'm not usually a big fan of inventory permutation and find-the-button adventure gameplay. The player control is pretty frustrating, and the beginning is a lot harder than the rest of it. But even with those faults stacked against the thing, I couldn't stop playing. I've finished it as Leon and Claire, and am even thinking about trying to play it through as Tofu next, too.

It's pretty weird, as a game designer, to find yourself playing and enjoying something you thought you would hate. But it's a good thing, because it forces you to try and understand exactly why it is you've been hooked. What did it for me was Capcom's utter commitment to turning RE2 into a seriously spooky experience. It never got cryptic, the characters were always consistent, and, Tofu aside, they resisted the temptation to do anything silly. So even though I was a bit frustrated at times, I really felt like I was in the middle of a George Romero zombie movie - a feeling that kept me hanging on waiting to see what would happen next.

The game I'm looking forward to the most right now is the US version of Konami's Metal Gear Solid. We got hold of a Japanese demo version and a group of about 15 of us all stood around and watched. There were a ton of impressive things, from both a technological and design point of view. But when one of the people watching said, "Hey, can you do anything with the cardboard box?" and we were able to hide under it to sneak past the guard, the game pretty much owned me.

Gabe Newell,
Managing Director, Valve Software

Valve's Half-Life for PC, already touted as the best 3D shooter yet, is reviewed in Arcade 2, out 14 December.

Write to us at Arcade

Tell us what you think!

Rants & Raves
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Pants & Raves

On the side

This year I have spent a lot of time playing Anvil of Dawn, even though it has been out for a while. I am most looking forward to the release of Indiana Jones. I'm always up for a new adventure.

Roberta Williams, Designer (King's Quest). Sierra

It's impossible for me to choose between my two favourite games of last year, Fallout and Twinsen's Odyssey. Fallout, in particular, kept me guessing right up to the end (both times I played it!). Unsurprisingly, I'm most looking forward to Fallout 2. Alex Garden, CEO, Relic Entertainment

From the opening cinematic all the way through to the exciting final battle, Descent: Freespace was a top notch game with high production values. Zelda 64 is the one I'm looking forward to. Mr. Miyamoto consistently has the magic touch.

Cliff Bleszinski, Lead Level Designer (Unreal). Epic MegaGames

My favourite game of '98 was Dungeon Keeper. I'm keeping my eye on playing Zelda because I know how much time Miyamoto-san has spent on it. This could be his magnum opus.

Will Wright, Designer, Maxis

I'm going with Total Annihilation, a game loaded with so many innovations it made 2D real-time strategy games obsolete. I'm looking forward to Half-Life. Here's a game that plays like a 3D movie, and it's fun just walking around and seeing all the stuff that happens.

Scott Miller, President, Apogee

Life - a first person game with a decent plot, clever cinematics and a bit of 'bleedin' thought behind it. It's about time. Games are the new films. Brown is the new black. Simon Lebon is a New Romantic. But watch your back, Half-Life - you may be looking great now, but indestructables is coming to get you.

James Leach, Head of scripting, Bullfrog. James was once editor of Super Play, the much-mourned Super Nintendo mag.

The Industry-wowing Metal Gear Solid. Creator Hideo Kojima is on p42.

Glittering gem

I've played some cracking good games, but one game that stands out for me in the glittering necklace of the games industry is Metal Gear Solid. It's easily Konami's finest hour! It's always great having access to import games, but few are as stunning as this classic espionage-cum-stealth romp.

The thing that attracted me to it is the sheer whole-things. A world of endless beat-em-ups and car games, it's refreshing to play a new type of game that really delivers the goods. Even if all the language is in Japanese, everything about GAG/Sooz quality from its super-dick 3D engine, right through to its beautifully orchestrated soundtrack, it's superb. There's incredible detail in evidence just about everywhere you look (the ragmags in the cell are particularly fine).

As for the game I can't wait for, it's got to be Square's Final Fantasy VIII. From what little I've played of the demo that came free with Brave Fencer, it seems like it'll look and feel even better than its predecessor. And this time round they've moved the graphics up a gear. Roll on the long evenings!

Christian Russell, Graphic Artist, Core Design. Christian has worked on Normality, Hardcore 4x4 and Reloaded.

Damn expensive

After a hard day doing Bullfrog-type things, there's nothing like kicking back with a spot of multiplayer Quake if it's fast and furious and few survive - the all-night tequila session of the gaming world. Then, for a more chilled bit of gaming fun, there's always StarCraft. The three sides are so well-balanced, argument surges back and forth about which actually is the best. (Okay, let's be honest, most of the time it's Protoss. If only they weren't so damn expensive.)

The real craze for us, though, is our own Populous: The Beginning. We've had a hell of an intense time getting this one to play exactly right, and it's nice to be able to step back from the tweaking and just let-play the demo with other humans, both guys in the office and people in America at night.

But what will be the next thing to keep us here in the office, propped up next to empty beer bottles and coding, half-eaten pizza night after night? I reckon it'll be Valve Software's great Half-

GoldenEye 007 stunned N64 gamers, but annoyed Peter Molyneux's mum.

Mum trouble

I've enjoyed Rare's GoldenEye 007 the most this year. I started playing it just before Christmas lunch and was immediately captivated - so much so that I missed the first course (and got in trouble with my Mum). GoldenEye is so impressive because it uses that old stand-by, a film licence, in a way that no other game ever has before. It has a solid 3D engine, great level design and the balance is just perfect. The only thing I found poor was the multiple-player bit, which felt a little like it was thrown together at the last moment.

As for '99, I'm probably looking forward to Bullfrog's Populous III: The most part because of all the other games I've seen on have slapped this. It is a bit of a disappointment, because I know the people you work on it, but it's so well that players don't seem to care. Peter Molyneux, Director, Lionhead Studios. Peter's God sims, like the Populous series and Powermonger, built Bullfrog and created a whole new game genre.

Life in the old girl

This last year I've been heavily involved with the design of Federation, Klingon and Romulan ground units for our upcoming Star Trek: Next World. As a result, I'm now more deeply versed in Trek lore than is permitted under EU law. But I've still found time to play games. My favourite of the year was Unreal. It looked great, played well and featured a GoldenEye 007 sniper-rifle. What more could a growing boy want? But the one I'm looking forward to playing is Tomb Raider III. It may not be as impressive, but it sure has a great story. The game is coming to get me.

Trenton Webb, Designer, Binary Asylum. Trent, an ex-journalist, turned to the dark side in the belief that Mario is his father.

The Videogame Magazine

Premier Issue

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Among the boys and girls who've made Arcade this month are...

Jonathan Smith
"The thing I've really learned about Mycroft," says Jon Smith, after two weeks living and breathing Lara for this issue's lead feature, "is that the more you think about her, the less real she seems. Plus, I've surprised to find that, in the first game at least, her breasts really aren't that big at all. At best 10 say they're 38C. It's really only with the artwork. For one, Jill Valentine is gorgeous and they didn't get their hands on, so to speak, that she turned into the top-heavy adventures we've grown to love."

Jon's next assignment for Arcade involves trying out some of the latest board-games. "I love 'em, but there's less opportunity for musing on box size," he sighs.

Game of the moment: Defender on the PC's Williams Arcade Classics: "I'm getting to try over 100,000. It's nuts."

I'm holding my breath for: Zelda: Ocarina of Time on Nintendo 64: "It's going to be the best thing ever!"

Mark Green
Mark's very much the new boy at Arcade - he's fresh out of university and right into his first job here. But rarely has a new boy shown quite such an extensive, nay, encyclopedic, (nay, tragically comprehensive) knowledge of virtually every game system under the sun. And rarely has one been brave or foolish enough to admit to some of the more unfashionable viewpoints this side of Ian Faiers - "I don't actually like Star Wars much", he says, and "I'm allergic to choc-ices". Don't worry though, his take on new games generally makes more sense.

Game of the moment: F-Zero X on N64: "It's like Speedy Gonzales on speed."

I'm holding my breath for: Sonic Adventure on Dreamcast: "It'll be like Speedy Gonzales on speed for something important."

Neil West
Back from California, his tan fading, his Beach Boy blond locks slowly reverting to a natural mousy brown, Neil is finding a few things have changed in the five years he's been away from the UK.

"Everyone's gone out and bought a mobile phone," he says, "and I haven't met anyone who's died of the flu."

Game of the moment: Blizzards' Starcraft on PC: "I'm still obsessed, I'm afraid."

I'm holding my breath for: Parappa the Rapper 2 on PlayStation: "He reminds me of a girl I once fancied."

Emlyn Parkinson
The office answerer to Brunswick, and certain to squash any of us if we get in her way. Emma's the heavyweight of the team, the no-nonsense rather than choice - it's her job to make sure everyone does what they say, when they say they will.

Game of the moment: Madintosh Retro: "Simply an all-time classic."

I'm holding my breath for: Interplay's Star Trek New Worlds on PC.

---

Duke Nukey 3D, considered by many to be the thinking man's chess. Kinda.

Sounds daft
I haven't really played many games this year. I know that sounds daft for a game developer, but the development of Championship Manager 3 has been eating up a good, oh, 100% of my time. In fact, the last game I played for any real stretch was GT Interactive's Duke Nukey 3D - totally brilliant, of course.

In fact, I liked it so much that my most anticipated game for '99 has to be Duke Nukey 4ever, if they ever bloody get around to releasing it! That's why we keep delaying Championship Manager 3 - we don't want it to be out so soon.

Oliver Collyer
Co-designer (Championship Manager). EDOS
Oliver is currently knuckling down to beat Duke Nukey 3D's tricky last level.

Hollywood great
For me, for sheer size and the quality of ideas, my pick of the year has to be Square's Final Fantasy VII. Its intriguing plot, great video sequences and top-notch music are woven together in a way to fuel all of Hollywood's greats. Sure, the story's clichéd and moralistic, but like Spielberg's Home Alone II, that's what makes it so entertaining. And it's also a big game. But, like all great classics, at the end I was gutted because I realised I'd have to find something else to fill the void.

The game I'm looking forward to most is Zelda 64. Everything I've seen about it excites me. I had a chance to play it at the European Computer Trade Show, but I don't think I even scratched the surface (probably because a Nintendo baby was breathing down my neck and hinting for me to move over and let this other guy play). Again, it's the sheer quality and variety which makes it hard to resist. And, of course, it's the brainchild of good old Shigeru Miyamoto. I saw him at a trade show once - not as tall as you'd think.

Nick Harper
Game Designer, Psygnosis
Nick's last game was Overboard, but he won't tell us what his next project is.

Groovy ambush
Last year my favourite game was Myth from Bungie - I purchased quite a bit of time into it. It's the first 3D strategy game to give me that Command & Conquer buzz again. That said, it had its problems. My main bitches is that I would sometimes spend ages setting up a groovy ambush and then, at the vital moment when I threw in my bomb, instead of setting off on a chain reaction to wipe out the enemy, it would just fizzle and fail. I would be left with nothing but a giant group of enemies kicking my ass.

I hope this immensely annoying aspect of the gameplay gets fixed in Myth II, which I intend to buy the day it appears. The dark side of my job is that I work long hours. This means that I mostly get to play games when I'm on vacation or on a plane. As I write this, for instance, I'm sitting in a hotel room in Thailand, all I have with me is my laptop, and I fancy playing a good game. Except so many of them require 3D cards these days that they're totally non-portable-friendly. So please read this, Bungie - and make Myth II work on my laptop!

Dave Perry
President, Shiny Entertainment
Dave lives in sunny Laguna Beach, just south of LA, and we're dead jealous.

Very polished
I haven't had much time to play games this year - Tomb Raider II has taken up most of my time - but the one game that did grab me was Epic Megagames' Unreal. Okay, so it wasn't quite the revelation I was expecting, but it was very polished.

For '99 I'm really looking forward to Outcast by Infogrames and the excellent-looking Trapper by Dreamworkx. Richard Morten
Designer, Core Design
Richard's has spent more time staring at Lara Croft's arse than any man alive.

StarCraft pits alien races against each other. A bit like it's a Knockout.

Instantly intrigued
For me it's a toss-up between Blizzard's StarCraft and Microsoft's Age of Empires. In the end I put more hours into StarCraft - probably because of the awesome sound and gameplay, and overall attention to detail. Blizzard really gets the interface and entertainment value right - their games are simple to use and endless fun.

I'm most looking forward to playing (or pointing and clicking around) LucasArts' Grim Fandango. I spent about 15 minutes with the demo and was intrigued by the characters, the story, the quality of the art and voices, and the unusual nature of the whole experience. I instantly pre-ordered a copy at my local store.

Lorne Lanning
President & Creative Director, Oddworld Inhabitants
Lorne's Oddworld: Abe's Exoddus on PlayStation is reviewed on page 117.

Misspent youth
Over the last year I've most enjoyed Unreal, Quake, and GoldenEye. Oh, and Barbie Fashion Designer bought back fond memories of my youth. I'm most looking forward to Half-Life: Metal Gear Solid and StarCraft 64.

John Kavanagh
Publishing Director, EDOS
Neil West once heard me singing tenderly to a bottle of beer.
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Dreamcast prepares to take on the world
Sega's 128-bit super-console ready | Launches in Japan 27 November

By Neil West

Sega's Dreamcast wasn't officially arrive in the UK until September of next year, but Japanese gamers get their hands on the 128-bit super console within the next few weeks, 27 November is the official date, and Sega is working furiously behind the scenes to ensure that the launch is a success. After all, it knows that Dreamcast could be the company's last chance to recapture a significant share of the videogame console market.

In a flurry of last minute pre-launch activity, Sega showed its hand to the gathered world press at its second "New Challenge" conference in Tokyo this October. There, Sega President Mr. Kamizui revealed that Dreamcast will sell for ¥29,800 (around £150) in Japan, and that five games will be immediately available (Godzillan Generations, Sega Rally 2, Virtua Fighter 3tb, Pen Pen Tricolor, and July). He promised a "steady flow" to follow in the months ahead.

The disappointing news that the machine's most important early game, Sonic Adventure (see Coming Soon, page 22), has been delayed until 17 December was countered with the nice surprise that Capcom has signed up as a Dreamcast developer. A special version of Resident Evil, to be named Biohazard: Code Veronica in Japan, will be released "some time after April of 1999."

Additionally, veteran game maker Namco (publisher of the Tekkien and Ridge Racer series) pledged support to Dreamcast's future, but could offer no firm news of specific game releases. Something original seems likely. It was all exciting news — enough to visibly excite the crowd, and the mood remained buoyant throughout the rest of the presentation. Even the less interesting unveiling of Sega's Dream Passport online network (unlikely to appear in the UK) was met with enthusiasm.

So Dreamcast has received a provisional thumbs up from the world's press, most of whom went on to the Tokyo Games Show (held the weekend after) to see what the game playing public would make of it (see the story on page 14 for more).

Of course, Sega's return to the home console arena is far from a guaranteed success, but at least Dreamcast has negotiated its first couple of hurdles in style. We'll have a full report on how it's going down in Tokyo in Arcade 2.

For more on Tokyo Games Show, page 14.
For more on Dreamcast, page 18.

Dreamcast's famous five early games (from top): Godzillan Generations, July, Pen Pen Tricolor, Sega Rally 2, and Virtua Fighter 3tb. The last two matter most.

A special version of Capcom's Resident Evil will be released in 1999"
Fast Lady

Gran Turismo stole the PlayStation racing crown. Now, with Ridge Racer Type 4, Namco wants it back.

By Matt Bielby

Back in 1994, it was Namco's Ridge Racer that first made everyone sit up and take notice of PlayStation. It was, quite simply, the most stunning racing game ever seen on a home console, delivering turbo-charged graphics and foot-to-the-floor powerslides straight from the arcade. Namco were overnight kings of the PlayStation highway.

But other developers quickly caught up, and when Gran Turismo roared into town with its hundreds of cars and “It's just like TV!” graphics the Ridge Racer series was left coughing exhaust fumes.

But now it's back, with R4: Ridge Racer Type 4, and it's looking to whup ass. The game features eight tracks, over 300 car variations and a new Grand Prix mode in which you have to compete with other drivers in your team for the best cars.

But it's the graphics that will amaze. Check out the glare trails from the cars' headlights and tail-lights during night levels. Take your eyes off the road to appreciate the colours and textures of the scenery. Too late return your eyes to the road and notice how the multi-vehicular collisions have been beefed up. Basically, marvel at the return to form of Namco. This one is going to be a classic.

R4: Ridge Racer Type 4 proves that there's still plenty of untapped power under PlayStation's hood. These graphics are a leap beyond anything yet seen, and with no sign of Gran Turismo 2 anytime soon, Namco's return to pole position should be assured.
Tokyo Games Show

Dreamcast’s public debut | Sony keeps stiff upper lip

Strangest success of the show was Taito’s Go 2, a well loved train driving sim

By Neil West

T
he videogame industry moves pretty fast. If you don’t stop and look around once in a while, you might miss something. With this in mind, a band of videogame journalists, eager publicists, scruffy developers, firm-handed CEOs, and others with a stake in the booms and busts of Sony, Sega, Nintendo et al, spend a surprising amount of their working lives at trade shows. There’s almost an established circuit, each year taking in London’s ECTS (European Computer Trade Show), America’s E3 (Electronic Entertainment Exposition), Nintendo’s Space World extravaganza and Japan’s leading event, the over-sized, biannual Tokyo Games Show.

The first public unveiling of Sega’s Dreamcast headed the bill at this October’s TGS, and this meant that I simply had to be there to witness events first hand. Although demonstrated to the press at Sega’s own New Challenge conference over the days preceding the show (see pages 12 and 18 for more on this), and Dreamcast in general the TGS was the 128-bit superconsole’s first test under the eyes of the toughest critics of them all – the Japanese game playing public.

Sega has enjoyed mixed fortunes on its home turf over the years, but continued success in the arcades, and the perennial appeal of Sonic the Hedgehog, has kept the company a place in the hearts of Japan’s gamers. Going into TGS, it was clear that most wanted to give Sega the benefit of the doubt one more time. They wanted Sonic Adventure to be like nothing they’d played before. They wanted Dreamcast to be a success. But were their hopes realised?

In a word, yes – the buzz surrounding the banks of Dreamcast systems available for hands-on testing remained “up” throughout. Despite the absence of the eagerly awaited Dreamcast take on Biohazard (aka Resident Evil) or playable versions of the stunning-looking Sega Rally 2, Sega’s new baby was met with almost universal approval. On the Saturday of the show, enthusiastic gamers (typically, but not always, schoolchildren) queued in lines ten deep to grab a five minute demo of Sonic Adventure, while the scrum surrounding the ten machines running Virtus Fighter 3tb (the tb stands for Tournament Battle) often completely eclipsed the on-screen action. On the periphery, executives from both Nintendo and Sony cast a wary eye over their new competitor, occasionally even swapping notes. But despite all this, Dreamcast wasn’t necessarily the undisputed star of the show. The line of fanatical children waiting in line for a go at Bandai’s Mobile Suit Gundam: Char’s Counterattack reached such lengths that a man was sent out with a big sign informing the crowd that it would take four hours to reach the front.

Games, games and more games

But then they would say that...

The movers ‘n’ shakers of the vast international videogame industry all came to the Tokyo Games Show to see Dreamcast and judge its potential for themselves. But finding a show-goer with an unbiased point of view is practically impossible in these days of corporate partners and strategic alliances – nearly everyone’s got a vested interest. Like this, “Dreamcast is clearly not everything Sega said it was going to be,” says Sony’s Phil Harrison. But then he would say that. He also thinks it’s kinda great that, “Crash Bandicoot 3 can be quite reasonably compared to the best game on a brand new system.”

Others, however, would disagree with him.

“Sega pulled off a great launch,” says Jaz San of Argonaut. “Of course, Sonic was the star. But Virtus Fighter 3tb was also excellent – an exact conversion of the model 3 console, more or less. And Sega Rally 2 looked good too.”

So, in a big fan. But then, of course, his company, Argonaut, has a “special” relationship with Sega. So he would say that.

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Babes, beautiful babes

No game demo at the Tokyo Games Show is complete without a pack of scantily clad women (or "companions") to help draw in the very male-dominated crowds. Politically correct? No, probably not. But, our Japanese sources tell us competition for these jobs is fierce — with a hefty pay packet and three days of fame (yes, "fame") the reward.

At each show a "Costume Contest of Companion Lady" is held (we think it's a bit like the Krypton Factor!). With the winner's photograph being publicly displayed in Tokyo's Meiji Jingu Square for a week.

The patient queue merely dug its heels in for the wait. Elsewhere, the unveiling of Namco's Ridge Racer Type 4 is a worthy challenger to Gran Turismo's racing crown. Square's Final Fantasy VII the blockbuster follow-up to the long awaited game, guessed it, FFVII, and Sonsoft's surprise hit Hard Edge 5a Resident Evil-inspired action game is served as reminders that any talk of PlayStation's successor may be more than a tad premature.

Indeed, Sony's business is booming — and continues to gain momentum. After the demise of Saturn, and with Nintendo 64's continued failure to impress the Japanese public, PlayStation is the undisputed champion of the Japanese games scene.

Prior to the show there had been speculation that Dreamcast's last hurrah would force Sony to show its hand regarding PlayStation 2 — but it didn't happen. Instead, Sega seemed content to allow Dreamcast to enjoy its 15 minutes in the spotlight. "It takes more than an ageing blue hedgehog and a two year old coin-op conversion to scare us," Sony seemed to be saying. Instead, PocketStation and games such as Warped, IQ Final and Crash Bandicoot 3 were the focus of Sony's enormous stand.

Disappointingly, there was no sign of either PaRappa the Rapper 2 or Gran Turismo 2, but there was plenty to enjoy amongst the crowds. Square, the undisputed king of Japanese game development and animation, once again cemented its reputation with a world-class display of its art. Produced especially for the show, a trailer for Final Fantasy VIII featured snippets from the game's many cut scenes, including an on-one sword duel between Squall and Syphum (from the game's intro), stunning scenes of a speeding train and the game's backdrop. Exhilarating stuff.

Capcom, another giant of the Japanese games scene, proved that you can't keep a great game down with Street Fighter Zero 3. Featuring a host of characters from Capcom's back catalogue and the classic gameplay of the Street Fighter series, it proves that 2D games are still viable — and a lot of fun. Perhaps the strongest success of the show was Taito's Go 2 — a faithful PlayStation conversion of the well loved train driving game. Yes, soon you too will be able to enjoy at home the nerve-jangling tension and gut-wrenching excitement that is applying the brakes to a slow-moving train so that it stops in line with a mark on a platform. No, we don't get it either. But the Japanese love it.

So who were the big winners and losers? Well, Sega has to be pleased with Dreamcast's first outing. While not exactly rocking the Makuhari Messe convention centre to its foundations, the console certainly sent out a few shock waves. And, PlayStation gamers have both PocketStation and a slew of great new games to look forward to. All that was missing was Nintendo, but then it got its own show to look forward to later in November. Arcade will be there.

Everybody's kung fu fighting!

And grooving. And boogying. And twisting.

The latest coin-op craze to hit Tokyo is Konami's Dance Revolution. No, really — it's huge. Everybody's at it. Businessmen, kids, policemen, it seems no one can resist the unique experience of making an utter twit of oneself in front of an arcade full of giggling spectators. Anyone who's played PaRappa the Rapper will see that Dance Dance Revolution is the logical evolution of an old theme. Here's how it works: dance music plays, moves are flashed on the game screen ("Right!" "Left!" "Right-right!"
"Down!" and so on) and players have to respond accordingly. Except that they're not holding a joystick, they're standing on one. That's right. Pressure sensitive pads on the floor record your dance moves — the tights light up under your feet. Michael Jackson style, if you're doing it right — and your performance is rated on screen. If you're keeping up with the steps to the song you're told, "You're a dancing machine!" and asked "Where did you learn moves like that?" If you have all the dancing talent of a dalek, you're unceremoniously booted off the floor.

At 4am one morning, your Arcade reporter witnessed queues five deep at one particular machine in the sleazy Ropongi area of Tokyo. The music was blaring. Two Japanese businessmen (complete with suits, ties and briefcases) were dancing out for supremacy. Both were on expert level. Both were sweating buckets. Both refused to quit.

Be warned, Dance Dance Revolution is highly addictive. And it's coming to an arcade near you soon.

Sam Richards' World of Games

Gran Turismo 3 gets green light:

Quick thoughts on the near-mythical PlayStation 2 games are harder to come by than pubs in Iran, it seems likely the launch games will include Gran Turismo 3, the much-awaited sequel to the currently reigning champion race game. This news would seem to suggest that Gran Turismo 2, due for PlayStation in Autumn '99 or thereabouts, may use a modified version of the existing game engine, with all the hot new tricks being saved for PlayStation 2.

PlayStation 2 "just rumours":

Meanwhile, Sony has released an official statement to coincide with the launch of Dreamcast, part of which warns against the circulation of spoof stories regarding PlayStation 2. So, or, don't believe everything you read...

Unreal decision:

Despite the success of Epic's brilliant PC first-person shooter Unreal, the company says it plans to form out development of the sequel to Legend Entertainment, creators of the dubious Star Control: Upsilon to produce the game through its in-house team. Epic has understandably refused to comment on Sony's move, earlier in the year, to buy out the developer, although it confirms that the original team are working on various (as yet unspecified) Unreal add-ons.

Micro coin-op:

Fans of cult racing classic Micro Machines will be thrilled to learn that Japanese arcade giant Namco has approached UK-based Codemasters to develop a coin-op version of its console and home computer hit. The new game will boast special features exclusive to the arcade version — though it will, of course, allow the player option that has all coin-ops hooked. Codemasters expect the machine to be ready for the arcades by Autumn 1999, but will have to fight history if the thing is to succeed. After all, both EA with Madden Football and, famously, MicroProse with F-11 Strike Eagle have lost millions trying to pull off the same trick.

Sony's PocketStation is a cuteie

It's the size of a fat PlayStation memory card. It has its own LCD display, but this is about G2. It's inspired by the PlayStation games. And it's from Sony — so you can be sure that the demand will be successful. But what is it? Think of a tinned Game Boy. Except that you don't plug in cartridges, you tap into your PlayStation's memory card slot and download mini-games from the select PlayStation games. Slap in a copy of Final Fantasy VII, for example, plug in your PocketStation, and you can walk off with a little FFVII sub-game to play. It's a very neat idea.

Other upcoming PocketStation games include Street Fighter Zero 3, Monster Farm 2 and Lunar Dix 5. Sony says it will make two or three of these, but you can only wonder how the UK next summer.
CARMAGEDDON: censors see red

"Secretive" ratings board challenged | Child psychologists consulted

Industry News

By Sam Richards

That slow-burning evergreen that is the videogame censorship issue flamed again this month as SCI's painfully punned Carmageddon II: Carcopocalypse Now was finally released - but with zombies instead of humans providing the roadkill. This move was taken in order to appease rating chiefs from the British Board of Film Classification, who awarded the game with a 15 rating after some last-minute changes to the colour palette had turned humans into green-blooded living dead. The original version of the game would have struggled to gain even an 18 certificate, and had encouraged the BBFC to hire child psychologists in a bid to assess it. "We were simply astounded when the psychologists were brought in," says Georgina Worsley-Winteringham of SCI. "It was always intended as an adult game."

The BBFC has declined to comment on the matter, an unhelpful position that has provoked criticism from the European Leisure Software Publisher's Association. "We don't believe the BBFC are qualified to censor computer games," says ELSPA chairman Roger Bennett. "They're very secretive and give no idea as to their criteria. They can also take forever to rate a game, and don't let the publishers know what's going on."

Instead, ELSPA is confident it can persuade the government to change the law, taking power out of the BBFC's hands and instead enforcing a method of self-regulation, to be administered by the existing Video Standards Council. "We are perfectly capable of ensuring that unacceptable games don't receive a rating," says Bennett. "Our criteria will be far, sensible and, more importantly, out in the open."

Meanwhile, SCI insists that the graphical abstractions made to Carmageddon II will have no real affect on the game's appeal, which "lies in the improved physics and gameplay. It's a view shared by Darren Newham of HMV, who's hoping the game will still sell in large numbers to a 'switched-on audience who know what they're getting, and will be on the lookout for updates via patch disks or the internet anyway.'"

Incoming

Six of the best new games coming your way...

6 months

Marvel Super Heroes Versus Street Fighter
- PlayStation - Capcom
- March '99

Basically a sequel to X-Men: Versus Street Fighter but with additional moves and crazy combos. Our money's on the Marvel Super Heroes.

Magical Tetris Starring Mickey
- NES - Capcom
- Spring '99

Classic Tetris with playable Disney characters and much, much, much fun. You know, for kids.

Race-On
- Coin-op - Namco
- Spring '99

A mental Japanese racer which snaps your portrait and sticks it on the screen above your car. Makes watching your mate in the rear view mirror hilarious.

Crash Bandicoot 3
- Sony PlayStation - SCE Summer '99

That cheeky Crash from the first bout of PocketStation software, along with Street Fighter 3, Theme Aquarium and Final Fantasy VIII.

1 year

Japan
- PlayStation - Konami
- Late '99

An action adventure, set in ancient you-know-where, in which you play a young Samurai fighting enemies possessed by demons. The poor chaps.

Biohazard Code: Veronica
- Dreamcast - Capcom
- Winter '99

Fitting in somewhere between Resident Evil parts I and II (the latter is planned for PlayStation 2), you play Claire Redfield trapped in a tropical zombie hell.

FASHION NEWS

Leisure Suit Lara

A certain Ms Croft bunches her own range of leisurewear. To tie in with the release of Tomb Raider III on PC and PlayStation, Eidos Interactive has announced a new range of Lara clothing manufactured by Animal Promotions, each item featuring rubberised badges, stitched-on fabric labels, embossed logos and embroidery. There are polo shirts, sweat shirts, t's, fleeces, jackets, rucksacks, baseball caps, towels, watches and the like, not to mention mousemats, calendars, Lara figurines and £5 free-standing cut-outs. In line with the understated design principle, colours have been intentionally limited to black, white and grey, they say. No rubberised green t-shirts or cargo shorts then, unfortunately.

In upcoming issues...

You've played the game, now... (And so on.)
Activision reaches for the stars

Star Trek and Star Wars under one roof  Software boss "very excited"

ne-time games giant Activision, still famous for bringing us the likes of Pitfall and Ghostbusters back in the '80s, is currently in the midst of a quite remarkable return to form, now capped by the signing of exclusive worldwide game rights to media outfit Viacom's Star Trek property for the next ten years. This follows a couple of distribution deals struck with the Hollywood giants Disney and LucasArts - home, of course, of Star Wars - which will see some of the biggest hits of '99 wearing the until-recently near-dead Activation label. The Star Trek deal is most significant, as it means all Trek games will be brought under the wing of a single publishing house for the first time. By the time the last games from existing licensees MicroProse and Interplay are with us, Activation should be ready with its first Trek game, probably a multiformat title to tie in with the new movie Star Trek: Insurrection. "The passion that's gone into creating the Star Trek universe is indescribable, and that passion is well reflected in its following," enthuses Activation's John Burns. "When you look at the depth of the characters, the vehicles and the equipment, plus every species of alien creature the Federation has encountered over the years, the potential for game design is as limitless as space itself."

Over in LucasLand excitement is running even higher. All material featuring characters from the first three films is to be repackaged and re-released as Star Wars Classic in the run-up to May '99's new movie, with a game based on Episode One: The Phantom Menace due pretty soon after. In the shadow of all this, the Disney stuff might seem like small potatoes, though much is hoped of theToy Story/Toy game, currently scheduled to tie in with the release of the second movie sometime next year.

Smack my pitch up

Arcade tests the limits of industry patience with "creative" game ideas

No. 1 Britannia Rules

The pitch: This is the in-depth PC strategy game where you get to build Britain's army so she's in a position to reclaim her old empire territory. Will you begin with a small-scale attack on somewhere pairy, like Singapore, or a large-scale invasion of a major former colony, like India? Will you covertly supply arms to Pakistan to distract Indian troops in Kashmir?

The response: "Without doubt this is the worst idea I have ever heard. I have never been in the German border. Sorry, but there's no great gaming leap to be found here."

By Travis

Next month: We have another go.

"You foolish mortals!"

Quake champ Thrash takes on all-comers at "Quakeadelica."
Can you guess who wins?

The date: October 15th. The place: the world-famous London nightclub, Ministry of Sound. The event: Quakeadelica, a Wireplay-sponsored tournament to crown the UK's best Quake if player. After weeks of heats played at venues up and down the country as well as on Wireplay (http://www.wireplay.com), the best of British Quake players gathered to fight it out amongst themselves. To the winner, not only a trip to New York to play in a professional tournament, but also the chance to take on Thrash, acknowledged as the world's greatest Quake player. After an evening of elimination only one man - handled "Bilox" - was left standing, and Thrash awaited. But 20 minutes later the gap between mere mortals such as Bilox and the indefatigable Thrash was evident. The final score: Thrash 56, Bilox 4.

Complaints about Thrash using his own superior PC and faster USB mouse fell by the wayside; this was a smack-down of unprecedented proportions. May we all hang our heads in shame.

Thresh squirms under Arcade's glare on page 44.

By Populous

The response: "I have never heard of this guy. I have never heard of this game. I have never heard of this"...
Sega’s Dreamcast offers incredible power, but will that be enough?

Impressive 128-bit superconsole | Arrives Japan now, UK Autumn ’99 | But can it really beat Sony?

By Jason Brookes

These have been hard times for Sega. Only five years ago it was the acceptable face of gaming, the assertive brand leader confidently defining what videogaming could mean to the man in the street. Sonic the Hedgehog was a universally recognised icon, while the swoopily designed, aggressively marketed Mega Drive console gave gaming sex appeal for perhaps the first time. Early ’90s Sega did tons to bring videogames out of the bedroom and into the living room, and for that we should all salute it. But then it went wrong. Mega Drive got old. Add-ons such as the ill-fated 32X and Mega CD systems got nowhere. Worst of all, Sega’s Mega Drive replacement, Saturn, was utterly bounced by PlayStation. In no time at all, the brand became synonymous with arrogance and short-sightedness. To be this bad took Sega just four years.

But now the company has another chance in Japan, where Sega’s about to launch Dreamcast – its latest and most powerful games system – the pre-launch hype has worked desperately to put things right. The new machine hits Tokyo stores on 27 November, and Sega’s promotional push is already in full swing. Bizarrely enough, the TV ad campaigns have shown Yu kawa Hidekazu, the company’s executive director, wandering around Tokyo and realising that his worst fears have come true – Sega simply isn’t cool anymore. But, of course, soon it will be. Dreamcast is something different. Sega’s saying – a fact driven home by the conspicuous absence of the company’s logo on the console itself.

You see, with Dreamcast, everything is new. Where previous Sega machines were black andfash, Dreamcast is an understated dull silver. The Japanese marketing works hard to build an impression of Apple-like quirkiness sophistication, while the name alludes not just to some vague “realisation of your dreams” motif, but to Sega’s very own dream team of top-notch technology partners that includes NEC (graphics), Hitachi (processor), Yamaha (sound) and Microsoft.
How powerful is Dreamcast?

How Dreamcast outperforms high-end Pentium PCs – and all for £150.

There are many parallels between the Dreamcast chipset and a high-end Pentium PC, but there are also enough differences to make this a considerably more efficient and powerful piece of kit (although such is the nature of PCs, they will inevitably catch up). The new Sega machine's central processing unit (CPU) is designed by Hitachi and is not only a faster chip than a Pentium 2, it's ideally suited to running the fast mathematical calculations needed in 3D games. "The architecture of this system has been designed from the ground up to be optimised for console gaming," says Neal Robinson, director of advanced technical support at Sega of America. "We've allowed for the flow of information to travel amongst the different components of this closed box architecture in a way that is best suited to videogames. This is something that just doesn't happen on the PC."

The graphical prowess of Dreamcast is largely down to the expertise of a UK outfit, PC graphics card manufacturer VideoLogic. Via parent company NEC, the second generation of its PowerVR PC 3D technology has been integrated into the Dreamcast chipset, providing a 640x480 standard high resolution and a massive number of polygons (the physical geometry that makes up most 3D graphics) on screen at once. The result is a system approaching or even matching the power of a state-of-the-art arcade game such as Daytona USA 2, or The Last World, although it will take some time before Dreamcast titles that are this graphically accomplished start appearing.

Dreamcast also plays host to a highly advanced sound processor courtesy of Yamaha (providing 64 voices, and sophisticated effects), as well as a 12-speed CD-ROM drive. While theoretically this should reduce loading delays compared to the PlayStation, in reality the system's eight-fold increase in storage (RAM space over Sony's machine may offset any potential benefits – yes, it's quicker, but now there's also more space to fill.

Dreamcast: looks a lot like a PlayStation, doesn't it?
its developer relations and give up vital technical information has been good. Microsoft's provision of its PC-based Windows CE operating system may undermine the overall quality level. Windows CE makes it easy to port PC code to Dreamcast, y'see, and the fear is that this may encourage lazy development. One prospective developer, who asked not to be named, commented, "There'll be a ton of turds dropping on that machine in no time, and they'll all be under-programmed parts of dodgy PC games - games that probably wouldn't have made it across without Windows CE."

It's a valid fear. The best of the Dreamcast programmers, on the other hand, are ignoring Windows CE completely, and "writing to the metal," thus producing results that are already some way ahead of what's possible on even a high-end PC. A steady flow of time-sensitive, technical information to developers from Sega should ensure that this is the route most of them take.

Sega has made sure it's got the creative back-up to give Dreamcast the best chance possible

As has become traditional for game consoles, Dreamcast will receive a warm-up run in Japan before taking on the world - Sega's current estimate has US machines arriving in September '99, with official UK imports at the same time or shortly after. But for those too impatient to wait a whole year, specialist gaming stores will be bringing Japanese systems over to the UK by the start of December at a vastly inflated rate - expect to pay around £400 initially. It's a "grey import" market that has existed in the UK, US and Europe for years, and holds the same risks as personally importing a Jap spec car - your Japanese warranty won't be worth the paper its written on over here. You'll also need an NTSC compatible TV to get your import Dreamcast running.

So what's it add up to? Well, Dreamcast is clearly an exciting machine, and one we'll watch closely over the coming months. Possibly the biggest problem it faces, however, is that while good - and clearly more powerful than anything Sony or Nintendo have on offer - Dreamcast doesn't represent anything like the giant leap in graphical performance, or indeed, game experience, that Sega Drive/Super Nintendo and PlayStation/Nintendo 64 offered at launch. Sony's PlayStation, in particular, was a monumental step over the 2D displays of previous consoles, providing a rich and immersive 3D that's now become de rigueur. In technical terms, Dreamcast is way ahead of PSX, but it still looks like an incremental step, or intermediate technology - a giant leap for Sega but a small one for videogamers, perhaps. This isn't necessarily a fatal flaw, but it means Dreamcast will need some imaginative software to become a mass-market must-buy.

More worrying is the fact that all eyes are now turned towards its biggest rival, Sony - a company that now boasts Godzilla-like stature in its native market. How much time will it give Sega to get Dreamcast established before leaping in with PSX 2? Ominously, major news about the PlayStation sequel is expected in the week prior to Dreamcast's launch, with most predicting that it'll be launched in Japan next Christmas. Sega clearly has a big fight on its hands.

PERIPHERALS

Dreamcast's innovative add-ons

Why the modem won't come to the UK, but VMS will

- Joypad
The Dreamcast pad looks and feels like a hybrid of the N64 pad and Sega's own analogue controller from Saturn. Hedging its bets, it uses an analogue stick and a conventional D-pad. However, with only four main buttons plus a trigger either side, it's curiously lacking in control options, a leaning towards simplicity that could compromise game design in the future.

- Visual Memory System
Almost a handheld console in its own right, the VMS is a kind of personal data assistant designed to add a new element to Dreamcast games, as well as provide storage space for saved game files. Boasting a 48-bit pixel screen, an 8-bit processor and 128k RAM, the unit has the capability to act as a Tamagotchi/Pocket Monster-style games system (allowing you to, say, train a Dreamcast character away from the console, Tamagotchi-style). As the LCD screen is visible when the unit is plugged into the joypad, another potential use could be for displaying personal "hidden card" information to players in multiplayer games. The VMS has been designed so it can be connected for Pocket Monster-style battling or sharing of data, and is even be plugged into the brand new Naomi range of Dreamcast compatible coin-ops, allowing for yet more cross fertilisation of game information. It sounds fascinating.

- Modern
Built as an add-on to the Japanese model, this 33.6Kbps device enables Dreamcast users in Japan to connect to online games servers or enter a dedicated Dreamcast online service, providing Internet browsing and a host of features, such as high score "Hall of Fame" and even digital greeting cards that can be sent to other users. A keyboard will also be made available, further extending the scope of the console - if Sega makes use of such peripherals intelligently.

In the USA, where online gaming is at its most advanced, the modem may well be included - it'd be pretty foolish not to, especially considering the increased activity of online users and services there. In the UK, however, it's unlikely that Dreamcast will get the modem - at least initially. Those who can afford the rather daunting local call rates for Internet connection, however, should be able to buy it separately.

THE COIN-OP

Dreamcast goes to the arcades

- Dreamcast tech to be used in a new coin-op system, code-named Naomi, that will provide a stream of easy-to-do game conversions. Three titles for the new system have been announced so far - Blodc Buffet, House of the Dead 2, and arcade Dynamite Baseball - along with a Spikeout-style beat-'em-up from Capcom called Power Stone. But will this move work? Aside from the costly Neo Geo and Naomi's PlayStation-powered Rikken coin-ops, the viability of an arcade system based on console technology has yet to be proven. Sega's own Saturn-based STV system suffered from a lack of power compared to its high-end coin-op efforts, but it was a lack of value for money for the thing that actually killed it. Once again, as with the console, it is the games that will ultimately seal Naomi's fate, not just the power of the system itself.
Giving the games away

Dreamcast should have around 10 titles ready for Christmas. We detail the front runners.

Available at launch
The following games are scheduled to be released with the machine on its 27 November launch date. Of course, whether they'll all be ready by then is another thing entirely.

- Godzilla Generations
- 2371.98
A dumy 3D interpretation of the long-running B-flick series that's as impressive as the recent big-budget US movie version. Yes, it's that bad — and it's a real shame, because it's a great idea. This is the first title to make use of the Godzilla VMS unit that's been on sale in Japan for several months. The big idea is that the monsters created on your hand-held can be realised in 3D on the console version.

- Virtua Fighter 2: Tournament Battle
- 2721.98
The thrum card in Japan. An enormously popular coin-op, this Asia beat-'em-up's been expertly converted from Sega's famous arcade machine. State of the art visuals and effortlessly fluid gameplay guarantee a hit.

- Sega Rally 2
- 2371.98
This conversion of the fairly recent arcade sequel lacks pizzazz when compared to

- Virtua Fighter 2: "lacks pizzazz."

- Godzillas: "clumsy."!

- Virtua Fighter 3
- VFE, and wasn't even made playable at the Tokyo Game Show — worrying, seeing as it's expected on launch day.
- Pen Pen Tricolor
- 2721.98
A cutey animal racing game that stars a mimic-looking penguin, and at least displays some nice 3D polygon environments.

- 3D adventure. We've seen a London bus get blown up, which was kinda cool.

- All 3D

- Incoming
- 2332.98
A polished UK-developed PC title that was already blessed with sumptuous visuals and now has the added power of Dreamcast behind it. Essentially just a 3D shoot-'em-up that allows you to take control of a supersonic, tank-and-ground command vehicle. Despite the fact that it doesn't have the same scope and scale as other versions, it's still well worth a look.

- Geist Force
- 2721.98
The main attraction when recently unveiled at the Tokyo Game Show (see page 15) Sonic is a make or break game for Dreamcast. Essentially it's basically the Mega Drive classic, but bolstered by extra characters, different styles of gameplay and some vast 3D environments. We have more on this vital game on page 22.

Available before Christmas
This little lot should be available pre-Christmas, though most of them haven't got firm release dates yet.

- Blue Stinger
- 312.98
An unabashedly blatant "tribute" to Resident Evil that features impressively detailed visuals and real-time action as opposed to static backdrops. The version shown at TGS received a mixed response, however. It certainly lacks the deep atmosphere of Capcom's classic.

- Sonic Adventure
- 2721.98
The main attraction when recently unveiled at the Tokyo Game Show (see page 15) Sonic is a make or break game for Dreamcast. Essentially it's basically the Mega Drive classic, but bolstered by extra characters, different styles of gameplay and some vast 3D environments. We have more on this vital game on page 22.

- Geist Force
- 2721.98
Into-the-screen space ship shoot-'em-up that will have you at the controls of a supersonic, tank-and-ground command vehicle. Despite the fact that it doesn't have the same scope and scale as other versions, it's still well worth a look.

- Monaco Grand Prix Racing Simulation 2
- 2332.98
The inevitable Formula One racing game, this one courtesy of the PC developer Ubisoft.

Available 1999
Stuff for early next year.

- Get Bass
- Conversion of Sega's oddly engaging fishing coin-op.

- Power Stone
- Spikeout-style Naomi beat-'em-up from Capcom.

- Virtual-On 2
- Sega's robot fight coin-op.

- Virtua Fighter RPG
- Spin-off from the fighters.

- Resident Evil
- Code: Veronica
- Dreamcast interpretation of the famous "spook-'em-up.

- D2
- Lovely looking snow-bound 3D adventure.

- D2: "lovely."
COMING SOON
A WORLD OF GAMING MERE MONTHS AWAY

DREAMCAST
SONIC ADVENTURE

He's back. And he's been on more than Oil of Ulay while he was away. As a showcase game for the new 128-bit Dreamcast, Sonic Adventure simply has to be stunning. And it is. But can Sega's superstar recapture the thrills of his early '90s glory years?

IN A NUTSHELL: Dreamcast's showcase game is an ambitious 3D reworking of Mega Drive's greatest hit.

In the early '90s, it was Sonic the Hedgehog that pretty much single-handedly dragged Sega into the home videogame limelight. Although Sega continued to enjoy success throughout the 16-bit era, successive hardware disasters soon dragged the company back to the arcades from whence it came. Sure, Saturn fans will tell you Sega's 32-bit answer to PlayStation wasn't in the same dire league as the Mega CD or 32X travesties, but this is true only in the way some parts of the Titanic are slightly less underwater than others. Sega's home console business was sunk, and Sonic went down with the ship.

The good news is that Sega's back, with a brand new console (for more, see page 118) and hopes pinned on Sonic Adventure doing for Dreamcast what the original Sonic the Hedgehog did for the Mega Drive back in 1991. Arcade played a demo version at the Tokyo Games Show.
and can offer an eye-witness glimpse of what we have in store.

First, Sonic Adventure looks great. Sega claims that Dreamcast's 128-bit graphics hardware can draw 12 million polygons per second (compare to PlayStation's measly 120,000). Certainly, the intricate detail of Sonic's new 3D persona and game world's leaps and bounds ahead of what Mega Drive gamers will remember.

It's not, however, the quantum leap forward that the hype printed elsewhere may lead you to believe. Take our word for it, in places the graphics of Sonic Adventure really don't look that much more fancy and sophisticated than the best PlayStation or Nintendo 64 games. Look closely and you'll notice that the gold rings and long tunnels aren't so much circular as octagonal. At times, Sonic,

**RUNNING DOWN A SKYSCRAPER IS PRETTY MUCH GUARANTEED TO DELIVER AN ADRENALINE RUSH**

Knuckles, Tails et al suffer from some severely jagged edges. A lot of the backgrounds are simply flat 2D pictures, as opposed to dynamic 3D models. And there's an uncomfortable degree of "pop up" large objects appearing from nowhere, instead of gradually enlarging from the horizon. On face value, these quirks could point you toward the conclusion that Dreamcast's graphics technology isn't as powerful as we'd hoped. Or, it could be that Sega's Sonic Team hasn't got it's head fully around how Dreamcast works yet. Either way, the game isn't quite finished, and Yuji Naka's Sonic Team have until December 17th for tweaking and tuning. And they've been known to pull off some pretty impressive feats in the past.

Of course, graphics are only part of the story. The real question should be is it fun to play? And yes, it most definitely is. Sonic's gameplay has always been based on speed, and here's where Sonic Adventure really delivers. Each of the game's six characters play at different paces, but it's Sonic's foot-to-the-floor rush through tubes, jumps, and loops that provide the greatest thrills. There's no arguing with running down the side of a skyscraper for delivering an adrenaline rush. Snowboarding down a mountain while being chased by an avalanche is pretty cool too even if you can't see where you're going – take note budding game designers).

Control is generally solid but at times feels loose. The analogue pad is going to take a little getting used to, just as Nintendo 64's did. There'll be plenty of time to do so, though, because it's clear that the game boasts plenty of replay value. The fun of coming back to previously completed levels – to find all the rings and secret bits or beat a previous fastest time – is what made the first Sonic more than just a five minute thrill. And while Sonic Adventure is still no Mario, it's getting there.

Sonic Adventure is going to be a great videogame. No doubt. Whether it's enough to secure Dreamcast's future is another question entirely.

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**SIX APPEAL**

Sonic Adventure gives players the chance to play at six very different characters. The feel and pace of the game changes as each newcomer brings individual skills to the party (Knuckles can fly and Tails snowboards, for example).

At the Tokyo Game Show, programmer Yuji Naka talked of the final game utilising both speech and Artificial Life technology – so expect a lot of character interaction. From left to right:

- **Sonic**
  - No introduction necessary, surely.

- **Knuckles**
  - Used to be Sonic's enemy, but is now an ally. He can fly.

- **Tails**
  - A fox with two (wait for it) tails. Whether or not he has two bums holes is a matter for unanswerable debate elsewhere.

- **Amy**
  - Sonic's girlfriend? Sega isn't saying. But she's got "love interest" written all over her. We'll wait and see.

- **Dig USP**
  - A fat, smiling cat with a fishing rod.

- **E-102**
  - Packing a machine gun, E-102 is the first Sonic character to come armed.
COMING SOON
A WORLD OF GAMING MERE MONTHS AWAY

PC NINTENDO 64

STAR WARS: ROGUE SQUADRON

Furry midgets, walking carpets and Danish pastry haircuts. It can only be the new Star Wars game...

IN A NUTSHELL: The latest Star Wars spin-off, Rogue Squadron takes the arcade-action flight levels from Shadows of the Empire and builds a game around 'em.

There are some films that touch a nerve inside all of us, that make us want to forget our boring, predictable lives and be someone else - who, after Top Gun, didn't want to don a furry-collared jacket and take to the skies, for instance? And who hasn't fancied being Luke Skywalker, saving the galaxy from black-dooked, wheezing tyranny?

Indeed, such is the appeal of Star Wars it gives the LucasArts games based on it an almost unfair advantage over just about everything else - even when a Star Wars game is less than fantastic like the overly video-reliant Rebel Assault games on PC it'll still manage to do okay. The most recent Star Wars-licensed reincarnation was Shadows of the Empire for N64 and PC, which started well but fell to pieces after its exhilarating first level.

And now we have Star Wars: Rogue Squadron, set in the time between Star Wars and The Empire Strikes Back.
PlayStation
QUAKE 2

Death or glory? Quake II offers both...

IN A NUTSHELI: The famed PC killer comes to the PlayStation — if they can work out how to make it fit.

When the PC version of Quake II materialized in games shops back in January, ecstatic PC owners curled up into tight, giggling balls. This violent first-person shooter, follow-up to Quake and Doom, offered the quite irresistible combination of a convincing land-of-Satan environment and assorted blood-thirsty nasties which you had to remove in a variety of unpleasant ways.

Though they've teased us with glimpses of the PlayStation version a couple of times now, Activision is remaining extremely tight-lipped over exactly how the project's going. The fact is, Sony's gamebox just isn't equipped to cope with the huge, architecturally stunning levels Quake players have grown used to — or, indeed, the game engine itself, which was designed to run comfortably on £2,000-plus desktop computers. So what exactly was developer Hammerhead to do?

For starters, remain pragmatic about how it handles the conversion. That means that while the team clearly has to do its best to ensure that most of the maps remain intact, it's allowed to make it easier for the PSx to cope with

and loosely based on the series of Wedge Antilles-starring Rogue Squadron books, in which Wedge leads a sort of Dirty Dozen of top X-wing pilots on dangerous and challenging missions. The game, in which you play Luke Skywalker on secondment to Rogue Squadron, centres on your climbing into as many different space vehicles as possible for 16 levels across familiar and unfamiliar Star Wars locations.

Missions are of an escort-and-then-rescue, search-and-destroy or reconnaissance variety, often complicated by a mix of primary, secondary and sub-objectives, while the plot is linked together using plenty of cut scenes. Keeping an eye on wingmen like Wedge and Dack from the film is a big priority — the more of them that are still alive, the more will

WHO HASN'T FANCIED BEING LUKE SKYWALKER, SAVING THE GALAXY FROM BLACK-CLOAKED TYRANNY?

be around to protect you. But the emphasis here is really on flying around and having fun, pulling off manoeuvres like rolls and loop-the-loops.

"We took the best in gameplay from the action-packed flight levels of Shadows of the Empire," says LucasArts' Joel Dreskin, "and made it better, with special effects, real-time lighting, varied camera perspectives and more." And from the stuff we've seen so far, we'd be hard put to disagree.

FACT FILE

Star Wars: Rogue Squadron

Format: 32/64-bit

Developer: LucasArts

Publisher: Eidos

Players: 1

On sale in the UK: October

PC needs: PC Pentium with 33 MHz

FACT FILE

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Format: 32/64-bit

Developer: LucasArts

Publisher: Eidos

Players: 1

On sale in the UK: October

PC needs: PC Pentium with 33 MHz

With the original Quake shelved for PlayStation release because no one was up to the conversion job, the fact that the game is available with impressive Shadow Master, Hammerhead, can make Quake II look good is nothing short of astounding.

December | 1998 | Arcade | 25
COMING SOON
A WORLD OF GAMING MERE MONTHS AWAY

PLAYSTATION
CRASH BANDICOOT
3: WARPED

He's the cute PlayStation mascot to rival the all-conquering Mario and Sonic. And now he's back.

IN A NUTSHELL: Third in the popular, but not perfect, 3D platform series, boasting more characters and much wider-ranging levels. It's good, but is it a Mario-beater?

The first two Crash Bandicoot games are real love 'em or hate 'em affairs. Though they're the best-looking 3D platformers available on the PlayStation, were generally well received, and are definite by-the-bucketload sellers, there's always been something is not quite right with the gameplay — and for most, this rather spoils the games.

The problems aren't with Crash himself, who's full of comic animation. Nor is there anything wrong with the relentless pace, or the 3D levels which, in both existing cases, are large and beg exploration. It's to do with how frustrating the damn things are: the strict screen-wide routes which are full of timed jumps, and probably too many baddies, the constant stumbles across deadly gaps, sure to kill you and bounce you back to a restart point.

But with Crash 3, we're told, it's different. The early levels still remain hemmed in, but some of the later ones...
**Jet Force Gemini**

Overloaded colour palettes and a bazooka-toting pup in Rare's latest lunatic spawn.

**In a Nutshell**: Nintendo's favourite non-Japanesees' launch stunning Mario-Kambo crossover.

GoldenEye 007. Banjo-Kazooie. Both recent N64 hits, and the hardwork of sly and secretive UK. developer, Rare. So surely a coupling of Bond's cool with the crazed antics of the bear/bird combo would seem the next logical step--should anyone be unim-pressed to suggest it. Jet Force Gemini provides an unstoppable mix of the best the N64 has to offer: a beautifully coloured 3D world, where movement is fast and free-roaming, bizarre yet strangely believable character designs (in this case a pre-pubescent blue-haired mini, a wannabe Power Ranger and a dog called Lupus), occasional puzzle interludes, and of course, a multitude of frighteningly large weapons.

**Fact File**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jet Force Gemini</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Format</strong>: N64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Developer</strong>: Rare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Publisher</strong>:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Players</strong>: 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>On Sale in UK</strong>: March 1999</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

In normal mode you have to switch between the three characters in order to progress in an extension of the Banjo-Kazooie-style gameplay, but there is a lot more violence to this game—along the way you have to beat the crap out of a menagerie of ugly opponents. The multi-player mode heralds a return to the days of two-player coin-ops, while a highly entertaining four-player deathmatch option proves gloriously incongruous as you blast the cute little characters into pixel oblivion.

Jet Force Gemini is the kind of non-taxing nonsensefest for which the N64 was invented. Rare beating the Japanese at their own game? Signs point to yes.

---

**Detail in the 3D Backgrounds is Quite Incredible, But You Can't Roam As Much As You Might Like**

Crash even has six new super-moves, including speed boosts, double jumps and a super belly flop.

And the end result is impressive. Crash 3 looks beautiful, if pretty similar to the previous two incarnations. The detail in the 3D backgrounds is quite incredible, but you can't roam as much as you might like. And we did find the instant-death routines annoying as before. But this said, Crash 3 is one that requires some playing. We'll tell you more next issue.
COMING SOON
A WORLD OF GAMING MERE MONTHS AWAY

With an X-Files inspired plot and spunky female lead, Perfect Dark sounds perhaps a tad dull and over-familiar — until you realise it uses the great GoldenEye engine. Join us for a walk in the Dark...

NINTENDO 64

PERFECT DARK

IN A NUTSHELL: Rare’s 007-free GoldenEye “sequel”, with even more exotic locations, better AI, a whole host of new weapons and an all-new female star.

With the James Bond licence wrestled from its grasp, developer Rare was left with the excellent GoldenEye game engine and the freedom to use it in whatever way it chose. But how? After a collective brain racking, the guys came up with a game based around a sexy gun-toting young lady and alien conspiracies. Originality? It’s dead. Quality, however, is very much alive...

The Perfect Dark team comprises the original GoldenEye 007 programmers, plus a couple of new artists. Rare claims real-time ray-tracing can be thanked for the reflections, shadows, glares and transparency effects that add depth and realism to the game’s futuristic sets, and there’s clearly clever stuff going on here. After all, it looks fantastic and still manages to knock out a slightly improved frame rate.

The game’s 20 levels see heroine Joaana Dark on a mission to rescue a kidnapped scientist from the heart of...
A HOST OF NEW GUNS AND GADGETS INCLUDE A HEAT-SEEKING PISTOL AND MINES THAT DESTROY WALLS

The sinister dataDyne Corporation — an outfit suspected of harbouring secret alien equipment. As things progress you can expect to find a sprawling military-style airfield, science labs and even a Pacific underwater level, all rendered in gorgeous 3D. Each houses a decent amount of fodder for your big gun, though the emphasis on stealth that made GoldenEye a heart-pounding scare-fest will remain.

Perfect Dark’s improved AI should make the experience even more convincing than GoldenEye. Many of your enemies will act with scary intelligence, basing their actions on what you’re up to. Depending on the circumstance, they’ll either hide, run away, get some friends to help, or simply start shooting at you. Until, that is, you make a few holes in them with weapons of your own. Rare promises a host of new guns and gadgets, including a heat-seeking pistol and mines that you can use to destroy walls. And if you liked GoldenEye’s multi-player extravaganza, you’ll simply love the new two-player co-operative experience.

Rare is striving to ensure that Perfect Dark tops Acclaim’s fantastic Turok 2. Quite a task, but which would you rather murder in cold blood, a dinosaur or a super-cute four-foot high alien? Exactly...
COMING SOON
A WORLD OF GAMING MERE MONTHS AWAY

SOUTH PARK

Run away from a comet, rescue Cartman’s mum and fling live chickens and Yuletide turds at everything that moves... Oh my God, you killed Kenny!
PC PLAYSTATION
ROLLCAGE

Put WipEout on steroids, give it ten pints of strong lager, then stand well back to see the future of racing go apeshit...

In a Nutshell: More powerful super-speedy sci-fi road rage from WipEout publisher, Psygnosis. This time with wheels.

Now if anyone really knows futuristic racers, it's Psygnosis. With the original WipEout and its 2097 sequel, the pool-based outfit chuckled away all the wheels, cat's eyes and sensible road markings of your average racing game in favour of a madly-paced vision of high-velocity hover cars, missiles and pumping techno.

Rollcage is along much the same lines, but with the tyres reinstated – this is less friction-free than WipEout, but still hardy a Gran Turismo in the realism stakes. Set in a future without traffic jams, it stars big-wheeled super-buggies that bear more than passing resemblance to those remote control jobs that flip over when you drive into walls.

So Rollcage shares a great deal with WipEout, including a groovy soundtrack (this one featuring the likes of Fatboy Slim). Where it differs is in the behaviour of the cars. Rather than just clunking into the sides and blowing up, this bunch bounce off walls, flip over and keep going. Almost indestructible, they're tailor-made for driving up on to the ceiling, where the speed-up arrows have been cleverly placed.

But that's not all. Weapons have been thrown in to up the carnage level. Missiles are only to be expected, but there are also pick-ups that enable you to freeze the track in front of you, then watch as your opponents skid off, and warps, which actually enable you to slow the driver in front by altering the very passage of time. Your armoury isn't just there for car-to-car exchanges either – blast a building on the horizon (the pop-up-free graphics help) and you can send chunks of masonry down on a rival or cause an explosion that rips across the track.

Vicious opponent AI sees your competitors race like futuristic sales reps with more than just horns in their armoury, while the scenery moves by at such an impressive rate that hitting a speed-up arrow is almost more than you can take. Add in split-screen two-player races, a six-player PC network game and different gravity and weather on later tracks, and Rollcage looks like it might redefine racers all over again.

Kyle, Stan, Cartman and Kenny are running about in full 3D for the first time

the same name (reviewed for N64 on page 140 this issue).

South Park the game is simple – it's all to do with our heroes facing mayhem when a comet is revealed to be on collision course. Armageddon-style, with South Park itself. In the meantime, Cartman's mum has been kidnapped by aliens, and there's a problem with turkeys. The four main characters are all present, as well as a supporting cast that includes Terrence & Phillip, Mr Garrison, Big Gay Al and Marsh. Oh my God! They're in 3D! Yup, the South Park guys have got into shape – and they're going to need to be fit as you race them around town as fast as their fat little legs can carry them. You can pick your character of choice and fire chickens, cows and turds in a variety of missions, including a four-player deathmatch. And when you're fed up of that, Kick the Baby!

Speed, that's what this one's all about. Rollcage stars a bunch of big-wheeled super-buggies that flip over but keep going every time they hit the slightest thing, just like those remote control things you see on kids' TV.

Kyle, Stan, Cartman and Kenny are running about in full 3D for the first time

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COMING SOON
A WORLD OF GAMING MERE MONTHS AWAY

GOAL

EIDOS

PC PLAYSTATION

MICHAEL OWEN'S
WORLD LEAGUE SOCCER '99

Yes, the scorer of That Goal has now got his own footie game.

IN A NUTSHELL: Golden boy Owen supplies his fleet footed majesty to EIDOS's previously under-performing football franchise. Rival publishers are gutted.

FACT FILE

MICHAEL OWEN'S WORLD LEAGUE SOCCER '99

FORMAT: PC, PLAYSTATION
DEVELOPER: EIDOS INTERACTIVE
PUBLISHER: EIDOS INTERACTIVE
PLAYERS: 1-4
ON SALE IN UK: APRIL 1999

PlayStation version now running in hi-res. The players look more lifelike, and sport the same patented brand of smooth-skin technology as Lara Croft. The animation, too, is slicker throughout.

The controls, criticised as too complicated by casual players last time around, have been changed to a tad to smooth-out WLS's learning curve to a gentler slope. Basic passing, shooting and tackling are on the PlayStation controller buttons but, used in combination with the shoulder buttons, enable shimmies, slip overs and dragbacks. The defence-splitting through balls and one-twos that were such a highlight of the original are retained in the new version, and can now be used with a new camera pan that enables you to see players running into space.

Fittingly, for the universal appeal of the new license, WLS '99 isn't as uncompromising to play as the original, which surely only lacked the endorsement of David Bailey due to a clerical error. Shots now head swiftly goalwards even if you're not perfectly lined up, and while you don't get IRS-style 15-14 goal bonanzas, a 1-1 draw's just as unlikely.

Judging by the latest version we've played at Arcade, developer Silicon Dreams shouldn't take the cup to the engravers quite yet, but the license alone should ensure more people get to experience a well-crafted game of football.

itself will be any good. One should never judge a game by it's packaging, right Trevor?

Certainly the immense largeness of Owen's name is probably necessary to bring some much-needed glamour to EIDOS Interactive's World League Soccer franchise. The original did tend to look a bit Wimbledon-ish when compared to SS Pro and FIFA's silky shirted presentation. That said, it actually played very solid football and was hailed in some quarters as the fan's choice of football game last year. The emphasis was on a skilled passing game, which took some getting to grips with, rather than giving you instant out-of-the-box playability and a flashy great front end.

The biggest change in this year's version, apart from the name on the box, is in the graphics, with the...
Remember Battlestar Galactica? Now you can play it (kinda) in Relic’s space epic.

**IN A NUTSHELL:** Real-time strategy in the C&C mould, but set in the vast impenetrableness of space.

"...It’s all hype. All game." That’s the message behind the release of Homeworld, Cendant’s soon-arriving real-time strategy epic. Unfortunately, developer Relic Entertainment has also described it as a cross between (yes!) Star Wars and Command & Conquer, forcing the hype machine to naturally flick on to automatic.

A brief look swiftly reveals what all the excitement is about. The plot echoes that of ageing TV space epic Battlestar Galactica, concentrating on our heroes' struggles to construct a gigantic mothership for use in their search for their lost “homeworld”, the planet they were turfed off centuries before by nasty aliens. Your job is to take control of the ship and her accompanying fleet, before embarking on a series of missions in deep space, testing all your resource-building, exploration and combat skills.

Despite this real-time strategy basis, Homeworld differs wildly from early sections, where you’re free-diving without an aqualung, like in the Jean Reno movie The Big Blue, and are thus nerve-janglingly reliant on trapped air pockets and the like.

The whole thing is, like, pretty normal and realistic to start with, but — in the tradition of submarine movies like The Abyss — gets stranger as it goes on. Lobsters grow to giant sizes and the dolphins (who on early levels help you out when you’re in trouble) start to reveal untold secrets.

For the UK version, things are being reimagined slightly. The large and empty first level is being turned into a training area, for instance. The cheesy US intro voiceover is also being kicked into touch. But can these alterations ensure a UK success? “This is the sort of game the PlayStation has room for,” hopes Konami’s Jon Murphy.

We’re not sure what that means either, but he’s probably saying that while Deep Blue won’t be to everyone’s taste, there’s always room for something just that little bit different. And Arcade agrees with him wholeheartedly.

**FACT FILE**

**DEEP BLUE**

- FORMAT: PC
- DEVELOPER: Konami
- PUBLISHER: Konami
- PLAYERS: 1-4
- ON SALE IN UK: JANUARY 1999

Don’t risk plummeting like a rock in a crooked bathtubsphere. Explore the undersea the easy way, just you and a PlayStation.

- IN A NUTSHELL: Slightly bizarre Konami 3D diving game, presenting players with assorted wreck-searching, shark-fighting subaquatic missions. Think the nautical bastard offspring of Tomb Raider and Pilot Wings.

Known as Dolphin’s Dream in Japan, and G-Shock in the US, Konami's latest is nothing if not original. It’s a diving game offering a number of underwater missions, such as hunt down and kill an evil Great White in its waterlogged cave lair, or search level after level of Gigantic Matilda, a crazily named liner wreck, for trapped divers and sunken treasure. It also introduces just about every kind of fish you can think of, from barracuda to puffer fish, jellyfish to manta rays, some of which (we'll leave you to guess) damage your health bar should you bump into them.

There are puzzles to solve, caves to explore, rock-falls to avoid and stuff to find, each level being driven by a strict how-much-air-have-you-got? time limit. It’s worse in the
COMING SOON
A WORLD OF GAMING MERE MONTHS AWAY

PLAYSTATION
LEGEND OF KAIN: SOUL REAVER

Do Anne Rice novels get your pulse racing? Then try this 3D vampire title.

In a Nutshell: Tomb Raider-ish 3D adventure, using the vampire-populated RPG world introduced in Blood Omen: Legacy of Kain to more dramatic effect.

For all those who say, "Bloddy brown, pink, or whatever it is they're claiming is the new black this year. Black is the new black, and always will be," the intricate gothic world of Legacy of Kain will feel like coming home. It's a place occupied almost entirely by vampires — at least 10 different types at last count, including ones specifically adapted to life underwater. In this world humans have largely become domesticated cattle, and the ruling vampire court houses intrigues and back-stabbings to rival any European monarchy.

If you never played the original Legacy game, Blood Omen — a top-down viewed action RPG from a couple of years back, but set 1000 years before Soul Reaver — the first thing that may surprise you is that you don't play Kain himself. Instead he's the vampire Lord who established the status quo, and thus has become your enemy. You play Raziel, once one of his prized lieutenants, who's been thrown out of the land of Nosgoth into the bottomless vortex. Lucifer-style, for daring to mutate — as all the leading vampires do, apparently — faster than his master. Now serving another, perhaps-yet-darker, lord, you're back in a Nosgoth now rendered in fluid full-freedom 3D, seeking vengeance, and perhaps to uncover the mysteries of this world.

The game boasts a new hand-to-hand combat system that allows you to dub foes with whatever happens to be lying around — very effective.

Raziel, the vamp hero of Soul Reaver, can glide with his wings, but he can't fly. Kind of like a possessed turkey. His quest is to kill vampires. Fight his way out of Hell and slay his demonic overlord. And all accompanied by a "compelling" voiceover from "a famous thesp". But who?

The game allows you to move from the real world to a twisted spectral realm, where you're able to do things impossible in the physical universe. And, as you move around, sucking the souls from other vampires will even give you added superhuman abilities. You can already glide (but not quite fly) — kind of like a flying squirrel on bat-like wings (the mutation that got Kain so hacked at you, apparently), but killing an underwater vamp will give you his abilities too, for instance. The game may look kinda Tomb Raider-y, but it's weirder. And definitely blacker.
**PlayStation**

**G-POLICE 2**

**Weapons of Justice**

Psynosis updates last year's 3D blaster with harder hardware and badder battles.

**In a Nutshell:** Sequel to the ace but ill-selling futuristic 3D blaster-cum-flight game.

The news that Psynosis is releasing a sequel to its ambitious 3D flying-and-shooting adventure will probably excite fewer people than it should. The original — imagine some kind of futuristic version of a helicopter gunship blaster and you won't be far off — garnered frothing reviews on its release in December last year, but still sold damn poorly. It remains undear why.

Perhaps it was because previous PlayStation flight titles had almost always been turds in a truck, so gamers were unwilling to take a risk. Or perhaps it's because G-Police offered such an aggressive learning curve people got quickly bored and frustrated with it. Certainly, the relative complexity of the game may well have daunted less experienced gamers. Admittedly important points, but more than balanced out by the gorgeous opening FMV sequence, the imaginative storyline and the many and varied missions. All good stuff, so it's great to see the same team back for a second bite at the cherry.

G-Police 2 makes a series of very important changes. Handling the complexities of flying — a vital part of the game — is far more intuitive than it was before, with Psynosis making a few secret ones. There are 39 tracks in eight countries (talking in nearly everything from rainy England to rocky Corsica). There are four game modes (Arcade, Time Trial, Championship and Rally), plus a choice of horizontal or vertical split-screen options (but no four-player mode - it was rumoured, but the game chugs enough with two controllable cars on screen). Just the fact that Infogrames has bothered to improve upon the PlayStation version (with better car dynamics) suggests a new commitment from the French giant to the N64 too, another plus.

In fact, Nintendo players are clearly benefiting from the game's testing in the PlayStation market. It's got a well-thought-out game structure, fine controls, right, mist, dust, snow and every other weather condition you can think of, and a real feeling that you're in a different car each time — especially when you switch from a tail-happy real-driver to a scrabbling front-wheel-drive to a beautifully balanced 4x4. N64 die-hards might normally be reluctant to buy a game soled by PlayStation association, but this one's good enough to make them swallow their pride.

**Nintendo 64**

**V-Rally 98**

**Championship Edition**

At last — a Nintendo 64 version of one of PlayStation's greatest off-road racers. And about time.

In a Nutshell: This new N64 version of top PlayStation rally game gives Nintendo's machine a much-needed boost in the vaguely-realistic driving sim stakes.

The Nintendo 64 take on V-Rally isn't a radical improvement on the PlayStation game, but it is an important release nonetheless. Slipping into shops barely this side of New Year it near-enough justifies its "98" tag and will be afforded a warm welcome from Nintendo 64 gamers itching for something to drive. This, F-1 World Grand Prix and F-Zero are all needed to fill gaps in Nintendo's software line-up lingering from the bad old "quality not quantity" days when its philosophy appeared to be never to release any games.

Mario Kart and look alike Diddy Kong Racing have offered cartoon-style thrills, but what the system has needed is a half-decent, seriously driving game. The good news is that it looks like it may now have got one.

V-Rally 98 is is one of the best around. It boasts 12 real rally cars — including radical Class A types like the Subaru Impreza and milder Class B Peugeots and Renaults — plus a
COMING SOON
A WORLD OF GAMING MERE MONTHS AWAY

Lots of people who know what they're talking about expect bronto-sized things of Trespasser (not least Tomb Raider II designer Richard Morten – see letters, page 6). The game's complex AI and great graphics prove not all movie tie-in need be dinosaurs.

IN A NUTSHELL: Shoot the dinosaurs, sure. Show 'em who's the daddy. But cook up their ecosystem and you could be extinct.

The Jurassic Park saga rumbles steadily onward. The disappointing Lost World movie sequel was accompanied by a fantastic coin-op shooter which bore little resemblance to its cinematic cousin (save for the inclusion of dinosaurs, naturally), and now Trespasser grasps the fraying ends of the story's thread. Hapless Anne (voiced by Minnie Driver) is stranded on the nasty Site B island, and it's your job to get her outta there in one piece. However, blasting your way through the reptilian population is not an option...

Trespasser is presented in the first-person, with you as Anne running about, grabbing weapons and solving lots of puzzles. With every object in the 3D environment promising interactivity, cause-and-effect becomes a serious issue. What's certain is that you can expect tasks to be intricate and varied, from manipulating logs in order to cross a river, to weighing specific quantities of chemicals. But perhaps Trespasser's most interesting feature is that an understanding of the island's ecosystem is needed to finish the game. Although this could sound a tad pretentious, this also promises to be fascinating. Apparently, the use of ground-breaking AI and physics modelling now mean the game's dinosaurs react to their environment both physically and emotionally, behaving more like sophisticated animals than one-dimensional monsters. Mess about with the food chain, then, and you could be in trouble as your place in it shifts. In an ironic echo of the original film plot, apocryphal stories have the game's designers supposedly expressing surprise at the actions of their own on-screen dinosaurs. We're keeping a pinch of salt handy for that one, but it certainly sounds interesting.

Chances are Trespasser isn't going to appeal to everyone. Edge-of-seat thrills are largely replaced by cerebral deliberation – this is much more complex than your average JP game. And creeping around – Metal Gear Solid style – is as much a part of the game as blasting. It's so complex, in fact, that there are fears over the level of hardware required to run the thing satisfactorily. EA claims a P66 will do the job, but a 3D accelerator card may be needed to get Trespasser playing as it should.

Here's a Jurassic Park game without the Jurassic Park name.

FACT FILE

TRESSESSER

FORM nebula
DEVELOPER: DIGITAL MOUNTAIN
PUBLISHER: EA
ON SALE IN UK: DECEMBER 1998

36 | Arcade | December | 1998
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You know games. We know games. But these guys, they really know games. And when they talk about games... Well, it's worth listening.

2) The developer runs out of money
If a game's running late, and the original money-men pull out, and the developer can't immediately jump into bed with a new partner in a follow-on relationship, it's screwed. If a deal comes really late, teams sometimes "two-time" their publishers, working on two different games simultaneously, delaying both. It's the oldest vicious circle in the business.

3) The producer/designer/lead programmer changes
New-arrival bosses are always a problem – like a new wife, they'll try and change round the whole house. And losing your top coder is similar to losing a vital organ – a person's programming tricks are as individual as their lovemaking style, and it can take days to figure out where someone else's methods work better than yours. Documentation is like waking up – it only gets done by flunkies, not coders.

4) Expectation exceeds capability
The failure to realise that the full-screen 3D, real-time-animated, action-adventure-simulation-strategy-management-cinematic-shot-em-up is just not going to get done in five months by two retread ex-Civil Service computer operators, no matter how late they stay at the office.

5) The marketing guys want "just a little bit" more
A mere couple of months before completion, the marketing team develops a plan and assesses the competition. If it doesn't think the game is as red-hot as a Dutch porn video, the team will demand on overhead. It's like wallpapering the living room only to find that the misus now wants "marbling," like Mr and Mrs Jones next door.

6) Shareholder pressure
The investors in stock-market-quoted publishers are rather like diffident, gold-digging girlfriends – one dodgy present and you're dumped. Healthy-looking accounts mean happy shareholders, so people often get fired or moved, budgets get cut and offices closed for reasons that have nothing to do with the game. It can ruin continuity and scare key people into jumping like rats off what they fear is soon to be a sinking ship. Then, of course, it sinks.

7) Strong rival games expected on sale at the same time as yours
When a project is first signed up, publishers are like runs on a vow of silence. Three-quarters in, and they turn into knicker-flashing cheerleaders. Then they get like jealous lovers if they discover a sexy-looking rival will be running head-to-head with their offering. If they can't release earlier, they'll move your project back – often after they've already started the game's pre-release hype. Oops.

8) The licensor holds up approval
For every game-of-the-film, book or sport, there's a company that's licensing a publisher to use its trademark. Strings are always attached. The licensor holds the right of approval, and may force redesigns at any stage. A licensor may even withhold final approval because the dumb computer-literate fools simply can't load or play the finished product.

9) Platform quality dramatically improves or new platforms emerge
You're nine months into a game's development, and then someone decides that the new Sogendo DreamStation 64 really is better than eclipys. The publisher cuts a new deal, perhaps with a different developer, to do a version for it. A tight-fisted publisher may sit on the completed version of a project and launch them both together for the same marketing cost.

10) The developer runs into technical trouble
When an inexperienced team is hired solely on the strength of a demo, it may find expanding a neat, one-trick demo into a fully fledged game turns it into a ball of virtual spaghetti. It's like arguing with your lover, you're always in the wrong and losing ground, no matter what you add, excuse or fiddle with.

Well that's this issue's mystery demystified, but if you have a question about the software biz, or want to know the reasons behind some of the seemingly daft decisions that get made, send your hard-hitting questions to backscreen@techno.demon.co.uk and I'll try and answer them in a future column.

This is Hardcore

Julian Rignall

You may think Unreal is just another dumb shooter. It's not.

I've been playing games for years. Ever since Pong, indeed. I was one of those idiots who used to play arcade machines all day for 10p, and I'm always first to buy the latest console. I'm a hardcore gamer.

But as the years have gone by, I've found fewer and fewer games get me really excited. At times I've been as jaded as buggy. But every time I think that I'm finally going to hang up my joystick and quit, from out of nowhere a stonking game comes along and reminds me why I got into this business in the first place. It's because videogames are great. Videogames really are great. You're just got to sort the wheat from the chaff.

The latest sheaf of wheat to get me all athered up has been Unreal. It's a truly excellent game, and even though it's not as original, it has something that just keeps me playing. What is that "something"? Let's take a look.

First of all, the environments are superb – for the first time ever while playing a game, I actually stopped to look around and marvel at the view. Unreal genuinely feels like it's transported you to somewhere you've never been before. A lot of games try and do this, but few succeed. Unreal's parents, Doom and Quake, were pretty good at it though, and Unreal takes it to new heights. There's a kind of cohesion to the environment that makes it really convincing – it feels lived-in.

And, in a way, it is. Basically, the planet you crash land on at the start of the game is occupied by a horde of ruthless aliens who are slowly killing the peace-loving indigenous populace. But you don't know this at first, instead slowly discovering the grizzly truth as you wander around the environment, happening upon torn bodies hanging from rafters.
roasting over hot fires or just lying in bloody bits at every turn. You soon realise who the good guys are, who the baddies are, and that you're in a world where something 'big' is going down. You don't know what, but you want to find out. And it's this plot construction, on top of the ludicrous graphics, that makes the action compelling from the off.

To really get my motor running, a game has to offer depth, evolving interest and lots of things to do. Unreal provides plenty of great examples of this. Occasionally, for instance, you'll stumble into a situation where there might be two or three bad guys about to execute a good guy. If you're quick enough, you can save the good guy if you're too slow, or if you are seen, the baddies quickly kill off the good guys and then come after you. It doesn't necessarily matter to your completion of the game whether or not you get there in time. It just makes the whole experience feel a bit more real, it makes you feel like there's stuff happening all around you, whether you stumble across it or not. You're actually somewhere else, getting involved in something where maybe you can make a difference.

Other games have done this in the past, but not to Unreal's degree. So even though there are plenty of holes in the game, even though, when you get down to it, the plot and scenario are still fairly simplistic, Unreal still marks a step forward. Not a great one, but just enough to offer a decent glimpse of how games can continue to evolve if they're to make sure they stay entertaining.

Bottom line: making a great game is not just about upping the audio-visuals and supplying us 'more' of what we played last year. It's about challenging the player with new ideas, ideas and situations. It's about delivering something that will make even a jaded old hack like me stop and think: "If I shot this guy, what's going to happen? If I get involved in this situation, is someone in the game world going to get pissed off and make things harder? Or will there be a reward that makes things easier?"

It's about making sure the player taxes more than just his trigger finger.

Julian's a gaming legend. Just ask anyone who's been around for a while.

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**Dancing coin-ops are monopolising the time of arcade goers**

1990 one in four households in Japan owned a Nintendo console - back then, an unassuming box called the Famicom (in terms of brand consciousness, this was the Hooker of videogames, which later became known as the NES in the west. Now, just eight years later, the company that took videogaming into the Japanese home and built a multi-billion yen industry, has been relegated to third position in the living room console stakes behind relative newcomers Sony and long-term rival Sega (Saturn having been a much bigger deal in Japan than anywhere else, while Nintendo 64 conspicuously failed to take off in its homeland). Only the imminent and wonderful Zelda looks set to revitalise the N64's fortunes.

Nintendo's misfortune has been Sony's gain, however, and the changes in Japan's gaming landscape since the N64 entered the market, in December 1994, have been remarkable. Sony tapped into the population well beyond the established (and least attractive) demographic kids and hardcore gamers) and opened up its appeal to an older, more casual onlooker.

While Sony has been criticized for allowing too many games to come into the Japanese market - and one look in a typically packed games store will confirm there's a problem - the company has also been commended for investing some of its vast revenue into creating fresh, more imaginative software. A successful example is the gloriously 'kawaii' (cute) PaRappa the Rapper, which has not only invited a wave of rival products (a genre in Japan dubbed by some magazines 'rhythm action' games), but has also provided a bankable blueprint to be used by exploitive coin-op manufacturers. As a result, both DJ best mixing and dancing coin-ops are monopolising the time of Japan's millions of arcade goers. The best - Konami's Dance Dance Revolution, covered in detail in Game On this issue (page 12) - is a real crowd puller. Sony's influence on the games market can also be seen in the release and marketing of western-developed games in Japan. In this notoriously tough-to-crack market, games often bomb, irrespective of quality, so a clever marketing job spent "educating" PlayStation owners about new software while shoveling foreign games with a modicum of kudos, has helped - particularly with Crash Bandicoot, the most successful non-Japanese videogame character in Japan so far. The fact that it took a hefty campaign from Sony to convince people that Crash Bandicootkin. is, of course, a sign that western videogames have some way to go before they can even be considered the same as western pop music.

**Jason is an ex-editor of Edge magazine.**

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**TURNING JAPANESE**

**Jason Brockes**

Introducing a brand new genre: the "rhythm action" game...

weather cruising Tokyo's "electric town" of Akihabara, with its endless sprawl of frantic game stores, or simply wandering into packed arcades at midnight on a Friday, Japan's reputation as gaming's nirvana is deserved. Few know this better than Hideo Kojima, designer of one of 1998's biggest PlayStation titles, *Metal Gear Solid*. Sitting in a restaurant with *Arcade* staff after the Tokyo Games Show, he accepts a napkin from a passing waiter - not to wipe his mouth, but for scribbling his autograph on. The man about to take his order, you see, is also an awestruck fan. Forget Mario, Sonic and Crash Bandicoot - Japan has real-life videogame stars.

Despite an economy that has the balliffs banging at the door, Japan is still unashakably the epicentre of the videogaming world. Indeed, by mispronunciations and enable the Americans to understand street signs in countries they were about to invade. Well, it failed. The Sinclair CS1 of languages, it had a silly name, a high concept and, in the end, no one bought it. Attempting anything on such a grand scale, it seems, is a risky proposition. But wait - it seems that videogames could be working where Esperanto failed.

It would be stretching the point to say that videogames are a truly international language. But you could probably get away with arguing that great videogames - no matter where conceived - cross borders at least as well as any other cultural export. The joy of being a fan of last year's *Grunt* with just 2% health left is exactly the same in any language.

Americans are waiting with bated breath for *Quake III* and so are you. Americans are dying to sneek about wearing a dress instead of a tux in the GoldenEye "sequel" *Perfect Dark* - just like you. And they're going to rush out and buy *Zelda* when it eventually ships just, in fact, like you. And although it required a lot of reading (something marginally less appealing to Americans than a bone marrow transplant). Square's *Final Fantasy VII* made just as big an impression in the leafy suburbs of New England as it did in well, old England.

Okay, so FFA '99 isn't going to sell more than *Madden 99*. And if Buffing were to shift *Populous: The Beginning* over here it may need to add some tanks to the mix. But all in all, the markets are converging. Hits are hits, after all.

Now, this may be great, in a "Why can't we all just get along?" kind of way. But it also buggers up this column. What's the point of me going on about US games if they're just like you? Have I just talked my way out of a job? Well, no. With *Zelda*, yes, it's a great but quirky European game that fails to raise the Yanks from their chips and sausas. There are millions of UK marketings that meet nothing but blank stares from perplexed American gamers ("Yeah, but I can shoot it"). And there's the worrying tendency for PC gamers over here to spend hours simulating rudder sports. So even though, mainly, they have the same gaming DNA as us, in some ways they're very, very different.

Over the coming months I'll be in the process of trying to explain how much you're missing out on by ignoring things like on-line gaming. I'll try and get to the bottom of the success of the UK market's grandiose franchise. And, somehow, I'll find a cultural and sociological reason for the existence of titles like *Doom* Hunter. Of course, obviously, than pointing at this country's rare talent for producing psychotic gun-toting Republican loonies by the 16-wheeler truckload. Because that wouldn't be sporting, would it?
Reaper Woman

Devastating elemental sorceress, Deiph, is about to raise temperatures in the upcoming PC game "Citizen Kabuto. Here's why...

There's a chance it'll do too. Deiph is the queen of the Sea Reapers, angry all females who - humanoids Nasus who've been known to live in the magical realms of the world. They're capable of virtual immortality and able to survive for hundreds of years by bathing in the sea. There is no need to kill them, and a dull death is more likely to occur than an explosion. The power of Deiph is restrained by a mysterious force, but a chance of escaping his control...

W

When your island home has been invaded by evil space marine, Kabuto, you've got to act quickly. With the power of Deiph's magic, you can control your own fate and save your own world. And if you're lucky, you might just find a way to escape the clutches of Kabuto.

Don't be fooled by appearances! Deiph's daughter, Kabuto, is a powerful sorceress who can control the elements and manipulate the forces of nature. With her help, you can defeat the evil forces that threaten the world and bring peace to all.

And if you're still not convinced, just ask Deiph. She'll tell you everything you need to know...
“Snake likes songs with positive lyrics more than love songs. There may be times on the battlefield when he sings while reloading his gun.”

Hideo Kojima, Tokyo, October 1998
Hideo Kojima is producer of Konami's red-hot Metal Gear Solid, due for release in the UK this February. The game is already available in Japan, where it has been described as "the best PlayStation game of all time" by several magazines. It's selling by the bucketload too, and Kojima-san is enjoying something approaching rock star status in his native Tokyo.

Arcade caught up with him at the Tokyo Games Show to talk about his ground-breaking sneak-em-up, and its hero, Solid Snake...

You've become pretty famous in Tokyo. Are you enjoying it?
Now that Metal Gear's been out for a month, I can relax - I can walk around and see stuff. When my own games first go on sale I worry about what other people think of them. I get very nervous. But now I can walk around making other people nervous!

Have you been stalked by any crazy Japanese fans?
There was this one guy who used to work in the Japanese Self Defence Army. He sent me a whole bunch of pictures of himself without a shirt posing with a model gun in his hand. These were crazy photos. In his letter he wrote "Use me as Snake!" and kept on explaining how physically fit he was. Luckily, not all gamers are like this.

How involved are you in the UK version of Metal Gear Solid?
Mainly it's just a case of translating the language and moving from NTSC to PAL. We haven't added any major features, it's just little things. Japanese and Western gamers have slightly different tastes in terms of difficulty level, for example.

Hang on. Are you calling Western gamers poofs?
No - I meant the other way round. We actually have to make it easier for the Japanese gamers. They're accustomed to playing easy games. They're used to being able to finish everything they play.

You see, I think you get used to games like you get used to cars: if you're used to a high-performance car, then you might not feel comfortable driving a car with limited power. So US and European gamers would be dissatisfied with the difficulty level of the Japanese version.

Plenty of English gamers are so keen to play Metal Gear Solid, they've bought Japanese versions on import. Assuming they can't speak Japanese, how much are they missing out on?
They won't understand the storyline and the in-game dialogue. But the real fun of the game is sneaking around, hiding and creeping up on enemies, and all this is the same, regardless of language. The message of the game - anti-war, anti-nuclear weapons - is quite simple and pretty obvious.

Anti-war? But Snake is so incredibly violent. If I was to meet him in a bar, do you think he'd be friendly?
It's hard to say. We tried not to give him too much character because we want players to be able to take on his role. Snake isn't like a movie star. He's not someone you watch, he's someone you can step into the shoes of. Playing Snake gives gamers the chance to be a hero.

OK, so he's mysterious. But let's try to add a little colour. What would he choose to sing at a karaoke party?
If he had to, I think he'd probably pick something like "Raindrops Keep Fallin' On My Head" by Burt Bacharach. With the BI Thomas vocal - from the 1969 movie Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid. He'd probably sing in a whispering, mumbling kind of way.

Snake likes songs with positive lyrics more than love songs. There may be times on the battlefield when he sings while reloading his gun.

Does he get invited to many parties?
Snake is not the sociable type, but he does want to go to parties. He gets invited often and goes to the venue. But he stands outside and stares through the window at the people inside, envying all the fun they're having.

Now we're getting somewhere. He smokes, too. Was it hard getting cigarettes in the game? Some publishers get funny about it.
People of our generation, we grew up with these hard-boiled characters in hardboiled espionage stories - and they all smoked cigarettes and put out matches. It seems Snake had to do the same in the game. Konami didn't have a problem with it because we let the player know that cigarettes are bad for them. Snake's life bar goes down when he's smoking.

It seems that smoking a pack of Snake's ciggies equates to taking a bullet in the head! Those are pretty serious fags he's got...
It's not that bad. And he can't die from smoking. If you were down to your last bit of health, and lit a cigarette, it wouldn't kill you. We were planning to include more of the cigarettes in the gameplay. At one point you would be stuck in a cell with no way out. The trick would be to befriend the guard by giving him a cigarette, but this idea didn't make it to the final game.

What games first made you catch the videogame bug?
Super Mario Bros, Murder in the Portal, which is a text adventure game, and the shoot-'em-up Xevious.

And have those early experiences shaped the way you approach your own games?
I am influenced by many things but, yes, these early games did make a big impact on me. Super Mario Bros taught me what an action game should aspire to be. Murder in the Portal taught me that it's possible to mix great gameplay with a strong story line. From Xevious I learned that you can create an entire universe in which a game can take place. I've tried to do all that for Solid Snake.

Konami's Metal Gear Solid will be released in the UK in February 1999.
“If someone uses a good move on me I’ll be one step ahead the next time he tries it on. And I might use that move on the next person I play.”

*Dennis Fong, London, October 1998*
Thresh is the first in what will probably become a long line of professional gaming “personalities” who actually play computer or videogames in public, for prizes. After collecting more than $100,000 in prize money and a Ferrari donated by Quake designer John Carmack, Thresh is beginning to look beyond America and plot world domination. The day before the Ministry of Sound’s “Quakeadelica” event in October (see Game On, page 12), we cornered him in a London cybercafé, to find out what it takes to become one of the world’s greatest gamers.

Let's get this out of the way first, then: why Thresh?
I used to use the name “Threshold” back in my old role playing days, because I wanted my opponents to be on the “threshold of fear”. But one day I logged on to a new gaming server, the name wouldn't fit, so I shortened it. I didn't know it was a real word until I looked it up and saw it meant “to hit repeatedly”. I thought that was pretty cool.

Here in the UK, we're not used to these big game tournaments that you take part in. How do they work?
They generally start off with a massive free-for-all game of Quake, until about 128 players are left, and then it's one-on-one until you get a winner. I started on the road to becoming a champion when I won a Doom deathmatch tournament back in 1995, which got me on to the local news back home in Los Altos, California. It all spiralled from there, until I became official Quake champion at this big videogame show that we had in Atlanta last year.

What did your friends say?
They were like, “What the hell were you doing in the news? Was that really you?” That was kind of funny. Before then I'd just been a normal teenager in an average high school. I'd been waiting till midnight to play Doom at home, because that's when there's much less traffic on the Internet, so no-one really had any idea how good I was.

What's the secret of your success?
I approach the game a bit differently to most people. If someone uses a good move on me, I'll be one step ahead the next time he tries it on. And I might use that move on the next person I play. But there are lots of great players out there, and any one of them could trash me on any particular day.

Like Reptile did at the Professional Gamers’ League contest recently...
Yeah. I got overconfident that day, because I knew I could beat him. I got up to 10-0, relaxed, and got whupped. I came back and won after that, though, which showed the people who thought I'd panic and lose the whole match.

Why do you think that Doom and Quake are so popular?
They're very immersive. I've played them at night with the lights off, and fallen off the chair with fright. These games have people trying to peek around their monitor to see what's round the next corner. That's amazing.

Do you ever worry that the violence in games like Quake might be a little too realistic for comfort?
Games have ratings like films, so I don't see how people can criticise. Anyway, the graphics in computer games are still quite cartoony. Seeing severed heads rolling about just makes me laugh.

So is the head-rolling your favourite bit in Quake III?
No, most of my favourite bits are from Quake II. If Quake II had Quake physics, you could bounce guys around by hitting them with rockets. That'd be cool.

So you prefer the original, eh? Is John Carmack happy about that?
People have criticised me for complaining about Quake II, but I just say that for most people Quake is the better game, which everyone would realise if they just sat down and played it. Quake II's still fun, but it's too slow. It's actually set multiplayer gaming back somewhat.

But you play-tested Quake II: why didn't you tell creator id all this?
Id really didn't care that much about the multi-player options. I'm in contact with Id, and even level designer John Romero now admits the guys made a mistake. Quake II will be faster-paced. I'm really excited about it. When id said it was going to concentrate on multi-player...

...you fell off your chair?
If anyone's going to do it properly, it's going to be id. The guys know what they're doing this time. And John Carmack's a genius.

What other games do you play?
I've won a few Warcraft II tournaments, and I play Riven sometimes. I don't tend to play games single-player, although I might well make an exception for Sierra's Half-Life. I've seen screenshots of that, and it's like... “Wow!” I do a bit of real-life paintballing with friends, too.

Outside of id, you have to be the expert on 3D shoot-'em-ups. What do you think is the next big step forward for Quake-style games?
Once on-line gaming really takes off, we'll see professional gaming enter the big time. The next generation of these games are already building towards that, putting camera modes in that'll turn Quake into a proper spectator sport. If the company can do this and make the games less violent, then we might see sponsors like Coke or Pepsi get involved. You can probably expect to see a whole lot more Threshes in the future...

Thresh who?
Thresh, a.k.a Dennis Fong, was catapulted to fame in July 1997, when he won the first Official Quake Tournament at America's Electronic Entertainment Expo - "E3", to its fans - in Atlanta, Georgia. This success encouraged him to take up gameplaying professionally, and he now tours America and the world entering tournaments and taking on all-comers. Recently, he won processor manufacturer AMD's Professional Gamers' League tournament in Seattle, despite losing a game publicly for the first time. Still, at least it was against his friend - the equally colourfully titled Reptile.

Thresh recently set up a company, Gamers Extreme, which creates strategy books and a well-visited Web site (www.gamers.com), dedicated to on-line gaming news and Thresh's "weekly rant". Part of the Death Row Quake clan, Thresh is sponsored by Microsoft, and endorses several of the company's products in return for hard cash.

Quake III: Arena is scheduled to go on sale in May 1999.
SLIP ON THE RUCKSACK. LOAD THE AUTOMATICS. CATCH A PLANE. LARA SWINGS AGAIN

NEXT TO A CERTAIN STUNTED ITALIAN PLUMBER, SHE'S THE MOST RECOGNISABLE HUMAN IN VIDEOGAMES. NOW THERE'S A THIRD TOMB RAIDER OUTFIT ON THE HORIZON, A MOVIE IN THE OFFING AND THE INEVITABLE BACKLASH RUMBLING IN THE BACKGROUND. WHERE CAN LARA GO FROM HERE?
LARA SWINGS AGAIN
the Croft Report

Want to understand Lara? Over to Dr Mark Griffiths of Nottingham Trent University’s Psychology department...

- Do you guide Lara or do you become Lara?
- And is the appeal of Tomb Raider purely based on sex? 
- Lara’s extreme success has prompted lots of questions.
- Players claim to admire her “realism” and “believability”. But do they see how “others” may enjoy the fairly sexual positions she occasionally finds herself in.

Tomb Raider seems to have hit the jackpot.

So is Lara a good influence? I would be the first to say that games need strong female icons, if only to bring in the still fairly untargeted women’s market.

Lara had problems doing this – too many women see her as a crudely realised male fantasy figure for her to be completely effective in this role – but she’s a step in the right direction.

Until Tomb Raider, female game characters – outside of the limited beat-'em-up genre – tended to be cast as victims of violence, like in Night Trap, victims to be rescued (Mario and Zelda), or simple diversions from the action. Lara, on the other hand, is very much her own person. She’s fit, independent and completely unrelated to super-human powers again. Believability is an important issue with many players. And she inhabits a series of great games. Ultimately, that is what matters most.

Dr Mark Griffiths lectures at Nottingham Trent University

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LARA SWINGS AGAIN
Jeremy Smith knows Lara Croft better than anyone. Along with his brother Adrian, he founded Tomb Raider developer Core Design. He's masterminded Lara's rise to fame ever since he returned from a behind-closed-doors preview of PlayStation, took his entire company out to a hotel, and asked them to invent a game which would make Core into the new 32-bit world he had just glimpsed.

"We just sat down and started throwing ideas around," he remembers. "And then one of the guys said, 'I've got this idea for an Egyptian style pyramid-raiding game.' The irony of the whole thing," Smith laughs, "is that there's not one tomb in Tomb Raider. But the original thing was going to be very Egyptian. We visualised pyramids with entire cities beneath them, connected by underground tunnels."

But no Lara.

"The original character was actually male. He had a whip—more a rope, really—which he was going to use to climb and lasso things, and we just thought, 'That's so close to Indiana Jones, it's scary.'"

We don't fancy taking on the weight of LucasArts (the publisher who owns the rights to produce games based on Indiana Jones) so let's look at something else. And a couple of weeks later, the something else was Lara.

This is a disappointingly undignified birth for someone who turned out so perfect. The idea that there could have been a Tomb Raider without Lara now seems ridiculous, but Smith admits he had no idea at the time how important she would become.

"We knew what we were trying to achieve with our 3D game engine, and it was a case of fitting a character around it," he states, prosaically. "And when Lead Artist Toby Gard came up with Lara, Smith was initially unconvinced. His immediate reaction was, he says, 'Shit...do we really want to do a female character in a game?'

Gard recalls the cool reception his creation received: 'I really liked making Lara,' he says. 'and I couldn't understand how other people could fail to succumb to her charms.'

But succumb, eventually, they did, and Lara was born. Well, almost. Lara "Cruz"—the originally proposed name—had to be ditched, first, with the significantly more English "Croft" introduced to reflect the character's toffee-nosed background. And then she had to be brought to life.

"None of Lara's actions were motion captured," says Gard. "But I animated her to move as realistically as I could. Although her movements were stylised, they were stylised to look like a normal person." His attention to detail paid off, and Lara did indeed look stunningly real—a major factor behind the dramatic impact she had on anyone who played her. This was the very dawn of the modern 3D age, don't forget, and the recognisable humanity of Lara Croft was an eye-burstingly giant leap forward for gamers used to cartoon-style sprites. Jeremy Smith's claim to have created 'the third first-person perspective game' is a little wishful if we were only talking about 3D titles. Virtu Fighter was already in the arcades and on Saturn, while Alone in the Dark offered a similar view over the shoulder 3D perspective years ago, but Lara still sent jaws plummeting.

Crucially, the fact that she looked like a normal person brought a new depth to player character interaction. "Because she's recognisably human," says Smith, "you have an affinity with her. It's difficult to get emotional if Sonic falls off a cliff, but different principles apply when you're playing Lara. There's a bond between player and character—if you're playing some mad creature, like a big dog or a fox, or whatever, it's far more

"To reflect her toffee-nosed background, Lara "Cruz"—her original name—had to be ditched in favour of the significantly more English "Croft"..."
difficult to actually connect with that character."

And connect we do. You don't have to be involved in the Internet
cult of Lara 'fan fiction', glamourising your fantasies in sixth-form prose, to
have struck up a personal relationship with the Tomb Raider heroine. You
don't have to believe she's real, like the Net fan who feels she's "a nice
person... remember her giving you tips at the assault course? Not harsh in
any way, but reasonable and clear."

You don't have to be dysfunctional to get intimate with this virtual
woman. You simply have to play her.

"It's like a movie," muses Smith. "I mean, it's difficult to watch a movie
and not relate to the main character."

The cinematic elements of the Tomb Raider titles, the animated cut-
scenes and dramatic set pieces, certainly support this analogy. At the same
time, however, the games are more than movies. You're not just watching
Lara - you are her. Or are you controlling her? Guiding her? The
relationship is difficult to define.

Asking players where they place themselves in relation to Lara
elicits a wide variety of responses. Some project themselves strongly
into the game environment, and play very much as themselves. In
other words they become Lara and play from what amounts to a first-
person perspective. Others describe themselves as spectators or
sideliners, trying to share in Lara's success. The language used by
male players, revealingly, is often that of the chivalrous protector: 'I'm
guiding her... I don't want bad things to happen to her'.

Jeremy Smith believes that Lara's femininity makes men more receptive
to her. 'I'm not sure that male players actually want to "be" Lara,' he says. 'I
think they like playing Lara, because it's a refreshing change from being the
muscular masculine guy. At the end of the day, it's far more difficult for a
bloke to get emotional about another bloke on screen.'

"It's difficult to get emotional if Sonic falls
off a cliff, but Lara is
human. There's a bond
between player and
character."

Jeremy Smith, Core Design

Which is probably true. In addition, though, there's the never overlooked
matter of Lara's sex appeal.

"We know that she's very heavily regarded as a sex icon," says marketeer
David Burton. "We've always tried to be very, very careful about how much
clothing we let her take off in the artwork that we've produced for her. It's a
constant battle with the press, particularly the European press, who always
want her to have on as little clothing as possible.

"Then again," he adds, "we don't ever pose her so she's looking
unattractive or like a wet blanket. You'll never see Lara looking frumpy."

No. Of course not. No bed-messed hair for Ms Croft. But there's a
curious discrepancy between her promotional portrayals outside the game
- the swimsuit pics; the come-hither poses; the centre of attention bust -
and Lara's image within. Tomb Raider itself. If you go back and play the
original game, for example, one of the first things to strike you is the fact
that her chest isn't half as prominent as you remember it from subsequent
marketing images. Rounded out with a higher polygon count. Tomb Raider
II's heroine is rather more top-heavy, but even then the game's clearly more
concerned with big guns than... er, bigguns.

Toby Gard, who's still credited with Tomb Raider's original
concept, left Core a few months after the first game was released, and
cites 'down-market marketing' as one of the reasons for his departure.

"The sexism only started when the marketing people came in," echoed
graphic artist Heather Gibson in a Daily Telegraph article last year.

So when does "sexy" become "sexist"? And how much of Lara's
mass-market profile is due to her image as cyber-sex object, how much to
her game role as resourceful puzzle solver?

A large part of Tomb Raider's cross-over media coverage has to be
credited to her random access mammaries. And even if we can't blame
the marketing men for, as could be charitably claimed, just doing their
job, we can certainly curse the imaginatively bankrupt designers who
have subsequently cloned a harem of overtly chested heroines. All eager to clamber aboard Lara's bosom bandwagon.

David Burton, meanwhile, is keen to assert his appreciation of Lara's unbreastly attributes, and play up her cross-gender appeal.

"From what we've seen," he says, "the vast majority of women like what she does, and like the way she takes no crap from anyone. I think she's a good role model. People rarely get the advantage over her, and she's always up against the odds. I guess that people often feel in their lives like they're up against it - she always is, and she overcomes things. Her games aren't about going around killing everything; either, there's a lot of puzzle-solving, which is a type of game that girls traditionally like anyway."

And, after his initial uncertainty, Jeremy Smith is left with no doubts that he made the right decision to go with a female lead character. "I think the timing was absolutely right for us," he says. "There's a huge surge of change within the population of the world, almost towards - you know - women. The whole girly power thing was happening at the time, and nobody could have planned for that."

Girly power? Perhaps. But the timing was also absolutely right for Lara to ride the wave of PlayStation's success into a new game-friendly culture. Sony's marketing nous broke the console through the 'toy' barrier into the grown-up mass market, and Lara fought in the front line of the company's assault.

"Sony realises how linked Lara is to PlayStation," says David Burton. "Whenever you see a PlayStation, you see Tomb Raider."

"She's an icon," Smith asserts.

"An icon of what?"

"An icon of videogaming. Videogaming has matured from being a bunch of geeks who stay up very late at night in their bedrooms, to being an industry. And I think Lara is an icon for the whole gaming industry."

"The French like her sexiness. The Germans like her aggressive side. I think the English like her aloofness." David Burton, Lara's "agent"

That sounds like a bold claim. But the fortunes of the game and the industry-defining console have certainly been intertwined. It's difficult to imagine a PC-only Lara gracing the cover of The Face - the world of video card upgrades and DirectX conflicts is hardly hip.

And now the textured tempress is taking on Hollywood, though Smith is philosophical about her trip to Tinseltown.

"People loved the Indiana Jones series, and here we've got a female Indiana Jones, basically," he says. "As a standalone concept, that's great. The fact that it's going to be packaged with Lara on it is a bonus to us."

"Doesn't he worry that her 'virtual' mystique won't translate into a live-action vehicle?"

"I think if we'd done a virtual character movie then I'd be more concerned," Smith replies. "I see this as a kind of side issue to the whole gaming arena. It'll run alongside the game quite comfortably. But if Tomb Raider fans go and see it and think it sucks, I don't think it will affect their view on the videogame side of things because we're not using anything from the game in the movie, other than the name."

"Oh. Right... And are there other areas into which Lara's likely to move?"

"There's lots, but to be honest with you we're just holding back. We're cautious of over-exposing her. We don't want to sell her out. There's no need to - we're not too bothered about being a sponsor for a thousand different pieces of merchandise. She doesn't need it."

"Well, how about the games, then? How long can Tomb Raider maintain its momentum?"

"I think it would be silly to kill off somebody as strong as Lara. Our philosophy is very simple: we will produce Tomb Raider games while people want them. You've only got to see the buzz on the Net about Lara, or the quantity of letters we get here about the game: to know that people want more. We'll look at doing something else when it gets to the point that people say, 'Well, we're bored of this now, what else are you going to do?'"

"A different kind of game, but still with Lara?"

"Absolutely. Lara can't continue to sustain her appeal in the environment she's in currently. There will come a saturation point. Take the Mario series
as an example of the fairly static platform game: what did they do next? They blew Mario into this tremendous 3D world, and off he goes again. Lara's already in a 3D world - where does she go from there? Well, lots of places. There's plenty of room, with new hardware coming through, to expand on what we've done so far fairly rapidly.

And that answers the recent complaints, both in the press and on the Net, that the Tomb Raider series is in danger of stagnating. Magazine previews of the new game, in particular, have been generally rather sniffy about a perceived lack of originality. In response, Eidos launched a major campaign of 're-education' to show see it all before hacks the error of their ways. Was this a conscious move to nip a potential backlash in the bud?

"In this country, people like to knock anything that's successful," gripes Jeremy Smith. "They seem to take great delight in knocking people off podiums when they've got up there. If people buy Tomb Raider 3 then I'll be very happy - whatever the press say... I mean, it's a free world, they can say what they like. Unfortunately, some people are very quick to judge without having a close look at what it's all about. And now there's a huge swing in the press activity on Tomb Raider 3, and they're going. Wow. This is actually the best of the games so far."

The new Tomb Raider has a smoother, triangle based graphics system. It exploits all the new 3D card special effects and it's got a new, non-linear structure. But what about Lara?

She's got some new moves. And, yes, a few new outfits. But don't expect any character developments. She's unlikely to show us a whole new side to her personality. We'll still know little more than her blood type, and where she went to school.

And perhaps this is for the best. Perhaps the secret of Lara's success lies not in her marketed sexuality or her ever improving realism, or even the exotic drama of her exploits. Who the hell does Lara Croft think she is?

Jeremy Smith has a compelling answer:

"The sexism only started when the marketing people came in" - Heather Gibson, graphic artist on Tomb Raider

"I think the key is that she's whatever anybody wants her to be," he says.

Lara has been given just enough character to enable her to run and shoot, as the game requires of its heroine. Any more personality than that, however, would intrude into the player's relationship with her. Perhaps you learn Lara likes country music - if you don't dig Hank Williams, that'll make it harder for you to care so much about her next time you play Tomb Raider III. Lara can only accommodate the wishes of the eight million people who've bought one of her games by being, essentially, an empty vessel.

"It is interesting how she's perceived differently in different markets," reveals David Burton. "For example, the French angle is more on her sexuality, the Germans like her aggressive side. I think the English like her aloofness, and her sense of inaccessibility. Many Englishmen have a thing about Lara because she has this aristocratic unobtainability about her."

So we all see what we want to see.

Of the most recent additions to the world of Lara Croft has been a glossy 188-page book. It's called, perhaps unsurprisingly, Lara's Book, and its vacuity is astounding. Inside is where we learn that Lara's blood group is AB negative, for instance. There are many pictures of her and, inexplicably, several pages of coloured circles.

But there's more. Also included in this loveably pointless tome, Zeitgeisty Generation X author Douglas Coupland tries to pin down Lara's character. She's a composition of devastating force, set against a backdrop of intelligence and intuition. Perhaps it's that juxtaposition which draws me to her," writes. It's all very airy.

As Toby Gard his opinion of the book, and Lara's creator comments dryly. "It seems to me you can go up your own arse over analysing things."

Gard believes that all the money around Tomb Raider has restricted the game's development. "I guess it won't ever change that much," he says. "I suppose like any corporate thing it's too inflexible, so something flashier and less staid will eventually come along and blow it away."

He hopes said blowage will come courtesy of his own game, Galileo. Like Tomb Raider, it'll be a third-person perspective 3D action-adventure. But whereas Lara, Gard reckons, "began to be limited by the realistic style," his new, male central character Rahma will be "almost superhuman."

Because, after all, he's not real. You know.

Jon Smith is a regular contributor to Arcade magazine.

Win! A larger than life Lara!

She's six foot tall. She's packing heat. She'll kick your butt. Guaranteed.

Now here's a prize you don't come across every day. We've got a larger-than-life Lara Croft statue for you to win. It's six feet something of pistol-packing female Indiana Jones, mounted on a plinth and ready to scare the living daylights out of any unsuspecting strangers who should stumble across her in your living room, hallway, bedroom (steady) or anywhere else you might decide she belongs.

Our giant Lara (still being made at time of going to press, which is why we haven't shown you her here) might not quite boast the level of detail of our Neil McAndrew stand-in, but she's pretty impressive nonetheless.

And getting the chance to win her is simplicity itself. All you have to do to be in with a chance is complete the following sentence in the most amusing and convincing fashion: "My Lara statue is better than the real thing because..."

Simply jot your answer on the back of a postcard or envelope, and send it to: Lara Competition, Arcade Magazine, Future Publishing, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath BA1 2BW.

Entries should reach us no later than December 31, 1998, when we'll pick our favourite. The editor's decision is final, by the way, but for the full rules check out page 160.

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What goes up must come down. But not until we've had some fun with it.

Official All-Formats Top 40

1. (2) F1 World Grand Prix
   (N64, Nintendo)
   The N64's first truly playable racing car (as opposed to racing go-kart) game barges past the mighty Tekken 3 to take the top slot. No pole position jokes here, though.

2. (1) Tekken 3
   (SNES, Namco)
   With virtually all the hardcore fans buying this - the current Best Fighting Game Ever - in its first month of release, our prediction is that Tekken 3 will soon be dropping like a great big rock.

3. (9) Colin McRae Rally
   (PSX/PC, Codemasters)
   The ultimate wet 'n' muddy rally sim, starring the ultimate in rally drivers, crashes back into the top three, thanks to a timely PC release. We expect it to stick around the multiformat chart for a while - after all, rallying suits the winter months.

(4) TOCA Touring Car Championship
   (PSX, Codemasters)
   The highest-placed Platinum entry is this excellent (if rather ancient) Codemasters racer, still precariously holding on after nearly a year in the charts.

(5) ISS '98
   (PSX/N64, Konami)
   The football lover's football game seems off contenders in much the same manner as Arsenal's Lee Dixon/Nigel Winterburn back line.

6. (6) 1080°
   (N64, Nintendo)
   Nintendo's definitive snowboarding sim slides into the top 10 with consummate ease. It's a great game, reviewed this issue.

7. (10) Gran Turismo
   (PSX, Sony)
   The Best PlayStation Racing Game In The World adds to its 250,000 sales to date.

8. (3) Mission: Impossible
   (N64, Ocean)
   Horrifyingly slow, deservedly falling after being hyped up into higher territory.

9. (7) Oddworld: Abe's Oddysee
   (PSX, Ocean)
   Interest in this budget platformer is rather wan with the imminent release of its Oddworld sequel, Abe's Exodus.

10. (11) Premier Manager '98
    (PSX/PC, Codemasters)
    Still hanging around the top 10.

    (PC, EA)
    Goodbye to the top 10 for this recently-released real-time strategy game.

12. (16) Tomb Raider II
    (PSX, Eidos Interactive)
    The Platinum price means Lara's original exploits are now out-selling TRIL.

13. (13) V-Rally
    (PC, Interactive Simulations)
    The first really fun rally sim, now a year old, selling at a cheap price, and still loitering around in the top 20.

14. (12) Tomb Raider
    (PC, Eidos Interactive)
    More big bang puzzle action, and gradually falling as people await Tomb Raider II.

15. (15) World Cup '98
    (PSX/MPC/EA Sports)
    Passable licensed fare, still flying out of the shops more months after you know what.

16. (6) C&C: Retaliation
    (PSX, Westwood)
    The real-time strategy game on PlayStation, sadly heading down the chart.

17. (17) Crash Bandicoot
    (PSX, SCE)
    The Platinum release of this average platformer is a non-mover this month.

18. (29) Command & Conquer
    (PSX/PC, EA)
    A Platinum release rejuvenates the mother of all real-time strategy titles.

19. (14) WWF: Warzone
    (PSX/MPC/EA Sports)
    The first good wrestling game is still selling well, but won't be around for much longer.

20. (20) MediEvil
    (PSX, SCE)
    Average 'Tomb Raider' running around is just enough to excite PlayStation owners.

21. (1) Moto Racer 2
    (PSX, Adkod)

22. (19) Theme Hospital
    (PC/PSX, Bullfrog Interactive)

23. (20) Tekken 2
    (PSX, Namco (budget))

24. (21) Resident Evil 2
    (PSX, Virgin)

25. (27) Rayman
    (PSX/PC, Ubisoft (budget))

26. (18) Formula 1 '97
    (PSX/PC, Codemasters)

27. (26) Die Hard Trilogy
    (PC, Interactive Simulations)

28. (24) Commandos: Behind Enemy Lines
    (PC, Eidos Interactive)

29. (25) Banjo-Kazooie
    (N64, Nintendo)

30. (22) FIFA '98
    (PSX/PC, Prozone) (budget)

31. (1) Grand Prix Legends
    (PC, Sierra)

32. (28) Grand Theft Auto
    (PSX/PC, DMA)

33. (31) Micro Machines V3
    (PSX/PC, Codemasters)

34. (22) Mortal Kombat 4
    (N64/PC/PSX, GT Williams)

35. (32) Theme Park
    (PC/PSX/Amiga, Bullfrog (budget))

36. (33) Space World
    (PSX, SCE (budget))

37. (17) Need For Speed 3: Hot Pursuit
    (PSX, EA Sports)

38. (36) C&C: Red Alert
    (PSX, Westwood)

39. (34) Worms
    (PSX/GB/MD/Saturn/PC, Team 17 (budget))

40. (39) Tomb Raider Unfinished Business
    (PC, Eidos Interactive (budget))

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N64 Top 10

1. (1) F1 World Grand Prix
   (N64, Nintendo)

2. (2) TOCA Touring Car Championship
   (N64, Codemasters)

3. (5) ISS '98
   (SNES, Konami)

4. (7) Oddworld: Abe's Oddysee
   (PSX, Ocean)

5. (4) Colin McRae Rally
   (PSX/PC, Codemasters)

6. (9) Tomb Raider
   (PSX, Eidos Interactive)

7. (8) Mario Kart 64
   (N64, Nintendo)

8. (6) Mortal Kombat 4
   (PC, Williams)

9. (8) Mario Kart 64
   (SNES, Nintendo)

10. (10) Super Mario 64
    (N64, Nintendo)

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PC Top 10

1. (1) Duke 2000
   (PC, EA)

2. (2) Colin McRae Rally
   (PSX, Codemasters)

3. (3) Commandos: Behind Enemy Lines
   (Eidos)

4. (4) GP Legends
   (Sierra)

5. (4) Premier Manager '98
   (Sega)

6. (8) Need for Speed 3: Hot Pursuit
   (EA)

7. (9) C&C: Red Alert
   (Westwood)

8. (5) Titanic: Adventure Out Of Time
   (Sega)

9. (7) World Cup '98
   (EA Sports)

10. (6) Age of Empires
    (Microsoft) Dune 2000 rocks. We approve.

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Import Zone

Who’s that at the door? Why, it’s Steve Lucas from top game import shop NextGen. He’s kindly agreed to let us know what the movers and shakers are on the import scene at the mo. So what’s going on, Mr Lucas? “Well, Metal Gear Solid is still selling a ton, especially now that the US release is out. And NTSC Tekken 3 is shifting as people realise how rubbish the PAL conversion is.” What about the N64? “The Australian PAL version of 1080° is still popular.” Anything else? “Cards that let you play movie CDs on the PlayStation are flying out of the door, as are Saturn titles.”

So Sega’s poor old Saturn is live and well on the import scene, but there’s no shortage of everywhere else, really. See you next month, Stevey (oh, he’s already gone.)
Stop smiling at me!

Some game characters are just plain annoying. Here's a top 10.

1. Dizzy
   - Archie, the walking egg thing. Became a national phenomenon in the '80s, with his "mercy" blend of platforms and puzzles. But his foldegg gall, fixed grin, and nasty tendency to roll about like a buffoon when a simple walking manoeuvre would be more desirable, made him one egg we hoped would contract a particularly virulent strain of salmonella. No, really. He's a git.

2. Lemmings
   - The aim was to save the little green-haired folks from hideous death, but their nauseatingly cute catchphrases - "Oh no!" - and their irritating ignorance of the danger of wandering under a gallotine or into a blazing fire, made the "Nuke All Lemmings" button the most attractive option.

3. Toad
   - (Mario 64/Mario Kart 64)
   - You know, the mushroom guy? He seemed okay in Super Mario 64, helping you along with an extra star here and there, but then he dropped into Mario Kart 64 with a helmet-enhanced voice and an attitude perfectly summed up by his trademark, "I'm the best!" as he swept past to victory. Worse still, was the crinkly little cackle as he smacked you up with a red shell. The little turd.

4. Rascal
   - Oh, how Pygnozis crowed when it so rudely commissioned the world renowned Jim Henson's Creature Shop to create (at considerable expense) a new character for its brave, bold Mario-beating 3D platform game. And how the company went mad of course, countless rival game publishers sniggered when the result turned out to be a faceless, leather-jacket-wearing, baseball-capped urchin with all the personality of a fishbone.

5. Natalya
   - (GoldenEye 007)
   - Unbelievably annoying sidekick (so called because you'd want to kick her). She'll mince about the shop, seemingly oblivious to the screaming gun-battles taking place in her immediate vicinity, and can only be alerted to danger by an accidental bullet-in-the-face (or, much more likely, a completely intentional bullet-in-the-but of Bond, thus causing an automatic mission failure.

6. Yoshisaurus
   - (Super Mario World)
   - Before Yoshi became a leading Nintendo character in his own right, he was just Mario's fancy horse. And he was rubbish. It'd be fine until some turtle got in your way, at which point the grinning dino would throw you from his back and immediately leg it, evading all recapture attempts, hell-bent on throwing himself straight down the nearest hole.

7. Sonic
   - The blue hedgehog attracted a whole load of adoration, a thunderous applause upon his debut. But to many, he oozes a level of arrogance beyond that of even Chris Evans. His specialty was tapping his foot and scowling when left to rest, and yet putting on a melodramatic cry-baby face and shedding his cap until smacking into a spike. And now he's back. Where's the justice?

8. Thorin
   - (The Hobbit)
   - Back in the days when adventures consisted of typing "GO NORTH" and "KILL GOBLIN", the ZX Spectrum brought you a character who considered sitting on the ground and singing about gold as somehow helpful to your quest. The usual recourse to this peculiarity was to type "TAKE THORIN AND INSERT GOLD".

9. Thargons
   - (Elite)
   - Ancient 8-bit classic Elite mostly involved a happy medium of combat and trade. Until, without warning, an "error in hyperspace" occurred, plunging you immediately into unpleasant "witspace", and a pitched battle against several hard-as-you-like Thargon ships, whose pleasure it was to finish you off in fine time for tea. And had you saved your game beforehand? Had you hell, Basterds.

10. Mario
    - Well, if Sonic's going to appear, then Nintendo's camp-as-you-like plumber has to be included, too. First, he's unable to keep up with a ridiculous whoop or gasp accompanying every leap. Imagine if one of your friends behaved that way. Second, he looks like a cross between Uncle Jesse from The Dukes of Hazzard and one of The Village People.

Ten sport sims that you'll never see on the shelves:
1. Synchronised swimming
2. Bungee jumping
3. Heavy drinking
4. Off-ground tag
5. British bulldog
6. Tiddly-winks
7. Kite flying
8. Dwarf throwing
9. Fox hunting
10. Caber tossing

Chart analysis: For all you crazy stat fans
Our pie-chart this month clearly shows that games starring people are the most popular, this month, healthy beating cars to the top slot. The Tomb Raider games and Spice World mates make games starring boots the third most popular, with animals (chiefly worms and bandicoots), aliens (Abe) and wrestlers bringing up the rear.

Who's the star?

1. People 47%
2. Cars 20%
3. Boobs 10%
4. Animals 7%
5. Aliens 3%
6. Wrestlers 3%

Vox-pop: But what games are The People's Choice? We found out.

Hello. (Enthusiastically) Oh! Hello! Who are you, then? "Tony." And what do you do? "I'm a D". Blimey, that's a bit flash. Bet you haven't got a PlayStation, then. "Actually, I got a PlayStation last Christmas." What do you play most? "Tekken 3, bye." OK, bye.

Who are you? "I'm Anne and I'm a housewife. I was looking at CD-ROMs to learn Spanish." Don't suppose you play any games, do you? "Actually, I'm quite good at Minesweeper. But I'm too old for games, really." But you're young at heart, right? Or, you've gone.

Hello, "Hello, I'm Charlie." (Girlls) And how old are you? "I'm 22 years old." And a quarter. No, hang on, three quarters. Right. And you're a... I'm a student. Are you on your way to lectures? No, I'm going home to play GoldenEye. Excellent, that's great. Thanks.

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# Release Schedule

What's coming out when? Here's our current best guess to the next three months.

## November

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## Most wanted

Write and let us know what you're looking forward to playing. Here are our choices...

- **Metal Gear Solid**
  - Konami, PlayStation
  - Scheduled to arrive here in February, this gorgeous stealth affair experience is going to be simply great. Check out the import review on page 96 if you doubt us. Even in a foreign tongue, this is a strong contender for Most Absorbing PlayStation Game Yet.

- **Legend of Zelda: Ocarina Of Time**
  - Nintendo, N64
  - This one's been rather a long time coming—a big three years at the last count—but it looks set to be the second N64 game after Meta World 64, to re-shape an entire genre. Check out the five page feature on page 66 for more details.

- **Command & Conquer: Tiberian Sun**
  - Westwood, PC
  - It's just been delayed again, but should still be worth the wait. With lots of hot new 3D landscape technology, completely destructible scenery and real-life physics, it's just packed with promise. Come on, Westwood!
Got a burning gaming question? We know the answer. Or rather, Mark Green won't be paid until he finds it out.

**Q** Why are the best games and new consoles always out much later here in Japan or in the US? Metal Gear Solid and Sega's Dreamcast spring to mind...

**A** Here's why it happens: Japan is where most blockbuster games and gorgeous machines originate, so it's perhaps only natural that Japan gets stuff first. It's the keenest games market in the world, but also physically small (at least next to Europe or the US), making it an ideal testbed – if a games does well there, there's a good chance it will do well elsewhere too. The US's gaming market is much more important politically, and so they get second bite at the cherry. Europe's also massive but trickier – lots of different languages, lots of different counties, lots of different TV systems – so we come last.

But that's not quite the whole story. Factories can only produce a certain number of carts or CD's at any one time, so they tend to do it territory by territory – publishers make sure Japan and the States have all they need before starting on Europe. The odd game gets held back until what seems like a suitable time for launch too – like the N64 game 1080°, waylaid until a big Christmas sales period and people started planning their snowboarding holidays.

**Q** When's Super Mario 64 2 coming out? It's been ages since the first one. Is the bloke who did it still alive?

**A** Of course he is! He's Shigeru Miyamoto, the creator of many of Nintendo's best games, and currently resting after putting the final touches to the fantastic new Zelda game (reviewed next issue). Mario 64 2 is started, but it's been on a back burner for a while, waiting for Zelda. Once he gets back to it, however, Mr. Miyamoto reckons Mario 2 shouldn't take too long to complete. Just remember that Nintendo Time is a little different to time by any other measures. It could take years.

**Q** Is there anywhere I can get hold of old Spectrum games? I'd like to see if any of them are as good as I remember.

**A** You can, but with a few exceptions they're probably not. The Internet holds a host of freely available emulators to make your PC think it's a Speccy (or G64 for that matter) – the problem is, using them you can push it into a legal minefield. Alternatively, find a car-boot sale or good second-hand shop, or scour the classifieds. You won't be able to move for old, cheap rubbish.

### Whatever happened to...? | Superstars of gaming's past tracked down

**Matthew Smith**

- **Claim to fame:** A pioneer of the UK platform game, Matthew Smith became a hero to thousands (and a reputed millionaire, though that seems very unlikely in the cold light of '90s reason) in 1983, when he came up with the ace new ZX Spectrum game, Manic Miner. Based on the Atari classic Miner 2049er, it was hardy original – but it did sell. And sell and sell and sell. Its sequel, Jet Set Willy, was even better.

- But following this impressive double whammy, things went quiet. There were rumours of a mysterious third title, and indeed – some years later – adverts started appearing for something called Attack of the Flesh-Eating Zombie Chickens from Mars. But the game never appeared. Attack's publishers said they didn't know where they'd gone. So what happened?

- **So, where is he?** We don't know. Now, that may sound a bit crap, but it seems no one knows. It's a bit like Richie of the Manic Street Preachers. But like Richie, keen Matthew fans won't allow him to rest in peace. Web sites are devoted to tracking him down (try dx.dia.piper.com/town/parade/no50/specimen.html), with the rumor being that after Jet Set Willy, Matthew developed a penchant for motorbikes, changed his name to "Matthew From Earth" and ran off to live in a Dutch commune. Apparently he's still there, his only link with the outside world being an occasional call to UK talk radio shows. (In other words, don't expect Jet Set Willy 2 any time soon.)
THE COLOR PURPLE

In the world of handhelds Nintendo rules. Nearly ten years after the launch of the all-conquering Game Boy, comes its biggest update ever: colour.

It's hard to believe that the Game Boy is knocking on for ten years old now - in the fast moving world of game consoles that's veteran status - but the truth is that it's rarely been more popular. One time would-be rivals like the Sega Game Gear and Atari Lynx have been seen-off. While bright new casings, fancy add-ons and the slim-line Pocket models have added a bit of sex appeal to what was, for so long, a chewing gum-coloured brick. But the biggest step forward was always going to be with the introduction of colour games running on a snazzier, non-backlit LCD screen. And from November 23, that's what we've got.

The first thing you'll notice about Game Boy Color is the shape - ever so slightly larger than the Pocket models, and in what Nintendo claims to be a more ergonomic shape. Some people find the Pocket a little fiddly,
The Game Boy History Man

It's a familiar feature in the hand of every teenager but how did it start?

Launched with very little fanfare in April '89, Game Boy was initially seen by Nintendo as a way to take advantage of the "Game & Watch" craze of the time — those electronic toys with a single game built in. Few could have predicted the quiet revolution Game Boy would bring about. Within two years, this grey box had become a public face of videogames. Outside on the streets it was ubiquitous and unavoidable, just as at home on the bus or in the office, as it was in the playground. Tetris became a craze; its infuriatingly tiny accompanying music the Game Boy's official theme tune. Since then, Game Boy has had more fade-aways and comebacks than Gary Glitter, but in recent years, smart marketing and new variations — like coloured outer cases, smaller Pocket versions and the recent Game Boy Camera — allied to a consistent flow of quality software, have made for a real renaissance. It's estimated that there are 43 million Game Boys in use worldwide, far more than any other games machine.

And the joy of Game Boy is worldwide, far more than any other games machine. Over the years, Game Boy games have become more complex — the current trend being for scaled-down adaptations of 64-bit titles. It's not enough to win the summer with a machine of such modest memory capabilities. The continually rising sales curve suggests that consumers are happy with the product, but that doesn't mean they wouldn't like it to be better. And that means having bigger games — and colour.

At last, a saviour: Game Boy Color should keep you from having to converse with nasty bus stop drunkards.

The Console Will Analyse the Code, Work Out What's a Moving Sprite, What's a Background Object, and What Shade of Grey They All Are, Then Attempt to Colour Them

Rudimentary, their own right. That's right — chuck an old GB game onto GBC and the console will analyse the code, work out what's a moving sprite, what's a background object, and what shade of grey they all are, then attempt to colour them. It may not get it right — Mario might get a blue outfit, say — but you can cycle through combinations until you get something vaguely acceptable. (It's similar to what Super Game Boy — the cart that plugged into SNES machines, enabling you to play GB games on your TV screen — used to do, but cleverer.) Some games work better than others — Golf just goes all green with black men and a red ball, but some of the Kirby games look impressive, with up to four shades of colour to each item. Inserting an old Donkey Kong cartridge, we found that only the characters coloured, while the scenery remained grey.

But all this new technology needn't send shivers up your spine if you own a mono Game Boy. Your machine isn't getting phased out any time soon, and neither is the supply of software going to dry up. Instead, there will soon be three types of GB software on sale — black and white, color, and dual mode. No one has yet suggested how long it will be before mono and dual mode are phased out in favour of colour-only, but around two or three years would seem to make decent bets.

While it's long been possible to link two Game Boys with a cable for head-to-head gaming, Game Boy Color also offers an intriguing alternative — there is a new infra-red port on the top side of each machine, which will enable two Game Boy Colors to communicate without needing to physically touch, as long as the ports are facing each other and not too many inches apart. This sounds very exciting, but no one — or certainly no one outside Nintendo Japan — seems quite sure what the feature is going to be used for. As far as we are aware there isn't any software due soon which makes use of it. Our best guess — and also that of Nintendo UK, incidentally — is that the ports will be used to transfer data from one Game Boy Color to another, perhaps for trading of characters in a Pocket Monsters game. It's certainly hard to imagine infra-red being any use for head-to-head. So delicate is the signal.

And that, in a nutshell, is Game Boy Color. Nothing about it is very radical. It's the infra-red port aside) even surprising, but it all works, and enables more involving handheld games than previously possible. This is, it's safe to say, Game Boy as it always should have been — and at under £70, pretty damn affordable. Now all we need to wait for are the first batch of 56 colour games, and perhaps, a wider range of casing colours. I mean, purple. What were they thinking of?

Specifications

**Game Boy Color**
- 32,000 colour palette, with up to 56 colours displayed at any one time.
- Vastly upgraded, non-backlit LCD screen.
- Improved link cable ports and new infra-red ports for better Boy-to-Boy communication.
- Capable of adding basic colour to old mono games.
- Four times the RAM, eight times the ROM.
- Takes two AA batteries.
- In the shops: 23 November 1998.

Game Boy Color features include an infra-red port and that all-important battery-bulge.
It looked like Mario Kart would be a Neil victory, until, in a moment of supreme over-confidence, he took a corner too tight, spun, and sailed right off the edge of a cliff...
rd Drivin'!

Your host | Simon Kirrane

Games Night

Every few weeks, we get together for beer, insults and games. Lots of games. Our quest: to name the best car sims for multi-player fun.

It’s late. You're trying to scrub kebab sauce off the back of the sofa and one of your friends suggests rounding the evening off with a glass of port, a Cuban cigar and some virtual, high-speed fun. We've all been there — and it ain’t a bad place to be. Games are always great, of course, but never quite as great as with a few mates, a crate of beer and lots of shouting.

Thus, in a selfless quest to bring you the best games for your own bouts of late night multi-player madness, we present Games Night. The idea is simplicity itself: every month we get together, get drunk, play a bunch of stuff and hopefully remember enough the next morning to come up with a few recommendations. Because it’s such a social thing, the best Games Night games will typically be on PlayStation or N64 — far more front-room friendly than a PC — and they will almost certainly all have some sort of multi-player mode. They'll also be high in action, high in accessibility and highest of all in generating a real feeling of competitiveness — things like football games, beat-'em-ups and first-person shoot-'em-ups are all naturals, as are this month's contenders, the big-name driving games.

The minute we arrived at my house for the night's action, the tension began to mount. Everyone figures they're handy behind the wheel, but now — in our safe little way — it was time to prove it...

7.32pm
Circuit Breakers, Mindscape

From the development team that brought us Codemasters' excellent MicroMachines comes this very similar effort — another top-down, viewed affair with tiny cars, a great full-screen four-player mode and crazily eccentric courses. It fared well in reviews a few months ago, but isn't exactly flying off the shelves. Somehow it's failed to capture the imagination of the great gaming public. Would it grab ours?

The signs were good from the start. All four of us could play at once, with the twisted tracks and abundance of power-ups (ranging from rockets and smoke bombs to Alice in Wonderland-esque Huey and Smudge options) encouraging us to cheat, nudge, blow up and generally scupper our pals as much as possible. Okay, so it's not exactly realistic, but damn, it's playable.

There were, of course, initial set up problems ("Which one am I?", "My car's not moving!", "Oh, that's me, is it?!"), but soon we were really motoring. Quickly the game's major flaw came to light. Matt moaned about it first: "I can't see where I'm supposed to be going."

And he was right — when you're leading the pack you can race so far up the screen that you can't see more than a car length or two ahead of you, making steering as much a test of your memory of the course as it is a test of your reactions.

Matt: "It's a massive problem! You can't see when to turn, which is ridiculous — this is meant to be a driving game."

Neil completely disagreed — he reckoned the whole point is that you have to get used to the tracks" — and the debate raged, Neil making his point by winning every race for the next half hour. At least it meant Matt knew which way to go — he could just follow Neil.

That Circuit Breakers has taken the lead from MicroMachines in the teeny-weeny racing stakes may not be news to hardcore
Gamers, but the public at large remains unimpressed. It's a shame - we reckon a bit more exposure to Circuit Breakers would change most minds, even Matt's. Indeed, despite his grumbling, he failed to complain when we overran our strict "30 minutes per game" rule by a good 20 minutes.

8.28pm
Gran Turismo, SCEE

This is, of course, the racing game that set the PlayStation alight - and it's not hard to see why. It boasts the most thrilling handling and by far the best graphics available on any PSX racer, plus a vast assortment of almost photo-realistic cars (mainly Japanese factory hot rods, which adds to the exotic feel and exactly the sort of soundtrack (Ash, Garbage et al) that you'd put on if you were racing these road rockets for real. What it lacks - and what it told against it in Games Night terms - is a four-player mode. Instead we were reduced to running a bunch of two-player challenges, pitting the different driver combos (Matt vs Rich, Mark vs Neil and so on) against each other, awarding a point for each victory, then letting the two leaders (Neil and Mark) go head-to-head in the final, which was eventually won by Mark.

Overall we remain as impressed with Gran Turismo as we were when we first witnessed its real feeling of speed, fine handling (it's forgiving yet realistic) and, of course, its great looks. As ever, fun was had watching the movie-style full screen replays - it's hard to think of another game, the odd football sim aside, where the replays count so much towards the overall fun factor. If games were rated on the swearing and outrageous boasting they generate in their players (Neil's "I'm going to reel you in like a floundering kipper of the road that you are!" - will live long in the memory), GT would be in pole position.

Neil: "Elsewhere this issue we've got GT down as one of the best driving games to date, and playing it tonight isn't changing my mind any. It's great."

Matt: "I know it's only a small part of the overall thing, but I just love the presentation. It's almost like an official Japanese car Web site, with genuine company logos and neat photo-realistic pics of all the cars. A good half of them are special super-hot Japanese-only models that you can't buy here, which really adds to the excitement level. GT is thrilling before you even pick up the joypad! And then the fact that the cars look good when moving is the icing on the cake."

Rich: "The cars feel very different to each other, too. This one (he'd picked the skittish Mitsubishi FTO - clutch is all over the place."

Matt: "For me this is probably the best game of the night, but I have to admit that it's at least partially because I love stupidly fast Japanese cars and this lets me drive them all from the comfort of my sofa."

Mark: "You know, I'm not sure realism counts for much. Mario Kart doesn't look real in the slightest, but once you're moving that hardy matters. Who cares if you're a half of a gumball machine?"

First he hit a tree, then a fence, then, for a long time he sat facing backwards in a ditch, his head in his hands.

Mazda RX-7 or a dinosaur in a go-kart? You're just racing, and your overall concern is to win. For me, GT is a game, but Mario Kart is better - and particularly for tonight, when we're messing with the four-player mode."

And no-one could disagree. Except for one dissenting voice in the wilderness:

Rich: "I like the music in GT better than in Mario Kart, that's for sure."

And no-one could disagree with him.

9.14pm
Colin McRae World Rally, Codemasters

If there's a game to challenge the racing god Gran Turismo for realism, it's this surprisingly popular rally game. Surprising, because it simulates that grimmest of motor sports terrifying, is, after all, more at home in damp woods than Monte Carlo, and because its ex-world champion star, Mr Colin McRae, is hardly a household name. Where the game has scored with many gamers, however, is with its realistic car feel and great attention to detail. The car's Behavioural Physics seem believable and also, after the perhaps over-generous GT, McRae's beef-and-potatoes insistence that if your car is something it might get damaged comes across like a breath of fresh forest air. There's not much

The joypad jury

Eight games, four men, one writer and one mission - a race to the death.

[Images of Matt, Neil, Rich, Mark, and Simon with captions:]

Matt
Arcade Ed-in-chief, sporadically "good" gamer-player and hopeless Japanese muscle-car fan. He brought along that hymn to Skylines GT-Rs, Gran Turismo.

Neil
Fresh from San Francisco and Japan, he picked the twistiest, twistiest driving game of them all: Circuit Breakers.

Rich
Rarely very serious about anything, he shocked us all by sponsoring the most grinning realistic game of the night: Colin McRae Rally.

Mark
Young, dumb and full of fun, our N4 fan went with Nintendo's new interpretation of a classic: F-Zero X.

Simon
Your host, listener and scribe. He bought Mario Kart 64, Motor Toon GP2, Pole Position and Supersonic Racers. Gentlemen, start your engines...

In Others...
glamour to Colin McRae, but an abundance of seat-of-your-pants grit more than makes up for the absence of champagne and laurel.

For this particular bout of mud-splattered hill-side tumbling we chose the arcade two-player race, and plumped for the ghost cars option, which ensures that no contact is ever made between the two cars (it just shows how confident we were in our ability not to hit each other). Rich had picked Colin McRae as the game held champion, claiming he was "really rather good at it". We'd see...

Neil: "So, who exactly is Colin McRae?"

Neil, you have to remember, has been in the USA for the last five years, so we quickly filled him in on Colin's Scottishness, thinning hairline and car-sliding trickery. Meanwhile, it was quickly becoming apparent that "really rather good" means something different in Rich's world to ours. First he hit a tree, then a fence, then, for a long time, he sat facing backwards in a ditch, his head in his hands. Eventually, the truth was revealed - he had only picked Colin McRae Rally to bring along because he'd got it mixed up with V-Rally.

Rich having given up in despair, the rest of us started to work our way through the game, and opinion quickly split. On the plus side, we did all agree it looks great - the backgrounds are intricate, even beautiful, but at the expense of some very noticeable pop-up at times - and we reckoned that it's probably better as a one-player game than thrown to the lions like this. But ranged against it was the simple fact that we were all crashing too much for it to be fun - that, and the strange emptiness of it all, which almost tempts you to slow to a country-drive saunter instead of pressing on, forcing your car forward like a madman.

Mark: "I enjoy V-Rally and at the arcades I love Sega Rally, but this is just - I don't know - floaty and unreal. And where are all the crazed spectators who leap out of the way of the cars at the last minute? It doesn't feel like I'm driving - it's just too detached."

Time, then, for the next game.

9.32pm
Motor Toon GP2, SCE

Colin McRae's surprise panning meant this was rapidly developing into a digital Killing Fields, but no other game got mauled quite as badly as Motor Toon GP2. Amazingly, it was developed by the same in-house Sony team that brought us Gran Turismo, but it doesn't show. It's reasonably fast, but the crazed cartoon graphics (likened by more than one player to Jeremy Beadle's tragic skewwiff house from earlier incarnations of You've Been Framed!) and dubious handling rob it of any sense of the car, road or any relationship between the two. To be honest we disliked the whole look, and feel of the thing, and didn't give it much of a chance.

Mark: "So how on earth did this shower go on to make GT?"

It was a good question. We concluded that the quitting of heavy narcotics must have had something to do with it, before deciding to follow their lead. We quit. All in all the unfortunate game was loaded on the PlayStation for around three minutes.

9.40pm
Supersonic Racers, Mindscape

Next was another offering from Supersonic Software, creator of Circuit Breakers and MicroMachines - this one being, we believe, the team's third attempt at top-down tiny-car racing, and its first since making a break away from Codemasters. Happily, Supersonic Racers would allow for some always-fun four-player battling. Unhappily, however, we randomly chose the Planet level, a ridiculous novelty course (like you get any other sort in a Supersonic game), which had us all racing around a barrier-free track in space rockets.

Matt: "My God, it's Motor Toon GP2 all over again. This looks like Wacky Races."

Soon everyone discovered the big challenge of the game - staying on the
Games Night

twisty, narrow track. Fall off and you’re toast, which would make sense if you were in a car, but becomes more difficult to swallow when you’re piloting a Fireball XL-5 lookalike. With wings and everything.

Neil: “Let’s quit this track and start again.”

So quit it we did, but even the more Earth-bound replacement proved frustrating. Bored with crashing, we moved on, with Neil summing up the feeling for all of us: “I never want to play that game again.”

9.53pm

Namco Museum Volume 2: Pole Position, Namco

Pole Position was, of course, the original racing game – the first coin-op to use the now traditional just-behind-your-car viewpoint. As such, it deserves our respect – but not, perhaps, our playing time. Naturally, by modern standards this racer is almost unbelievably crude, but we all know from the likes of Defender and even from Space Invaders that crude doesn’t always mean rubbish. The question is, can the same hold true of something that’s attempting to simulate real life, like a racing sim?

Pole Position is on the Namco Museum Vol 2 compilation, where it and its historical companions take up so little disc space that Namco has wrapped the whole thing up in a bizarre late-’90s front end, which takes the form of a sort of virtual coin-op museum. Each ancient coin-op, along with assorted displays, lives in its own gallery and takes a surprising amount of walking around to find. Once there, though, we quickly realised that our wonder had been a squandered effort – the sad fact is that, in 1998, Pole Position is a complete waste of time. It’s faults are legion, and we’re not just talking about Spectrum-quality graphics, or even the utterly hopeless soundtrack (which sounds exactly the same as a Scoppy loading…),

Rich: “How come it seems to play slower on the start than the corners?”

Yes, for some reason known only to ’80s coin-op developers, Pole Position’s cars all react in a completely opposite way to a real car, speeding up as they take the tightest corners (on rails, like a train), but chugging along like asthmatic Austin Allegros when you put your foot down on the straight.

Matt: “There’s nothing wrong with retro gaming…”

Mark: “It’s just that while some old games are still playable, most of them aren’t. And this is one that isn’t.”

10.10pm

Mario Kart 64, Nintendo

At last, we’d waded through the mounds of racing rubbish – now it was time for some fun. Everyone had played Mario Kart 64 before, everyone knew how great it is and everyone was thrilled by the chance to use, once more, one of the very best multi-player options that exists in gaming. As a die-hard Nintendo fan, Mark was especially thrilled to be moving over to his favourite machine from the PlayStation, not least because it meant there’d be no more CD loading time to contend with, while the rest of us were just looking forward to taking part in some great competitive action. Inevitably, a mini-debate started almost immediately on the relative merits of this 64-bit take on Mario Kart vis-à-vis the original Super Nintendo masterpiece. Even more inevitably, though, we dropped the chatter as soon as the line-up for the first race began.

Our first course was an atypically realistic highway route, peppered with giant trucks and hazardous cars, both intent on crushing our go-kart-mounted chums. Neil stormed into an early lead, using a speed start and one of the heavier characters, then narrowly avoided being crushed by a looming bus, and started grabbing the better power-ups. Immediately a shower of banana-skins, loose shells and that lightning that shimmers you into a miniature version of yourself, began to rain down upon the rest of us.

Neil: “You can’t catch me! I’m unstoppable!”

And he was, at least until the rest of us got the hang of manoeuvring around the trucks instead of going under them. With Rich still insisting on the superiority of the SNES version – and heading the wrong way round the course for much of the race – and Matt failing to make headway on second-placed Mark, it looked like Kart would be a Neil victory until, in a moment of supreme over-confidence, he took a corner too tight, spun and sailed right off the edge of a cliff, leaving Mark to take the chequered flag.

Mark, the Nintendo fan, won the second race too, after which priority one became a concerted effort to scupper him, whatever the personal cost to the other players.

Rich: “How did Mark get so far ahead?”

Neil: “Because he’s too scared to stay back here and join a man’s race.”

It was getting on towards 11 o’clock by now, and though we still had another game to slot in, the vote to keep messing about with Mario Kart was unanimous – the sure sign of a great game. This time, though, we decided to go for the battle match – Mario Kart’s famous non-racing option, where you chase each other around maze-like circuits. As ever, you’re all armed with fireable shells, which you use in the attempt to take the other guys out of the game. It’s sort of

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like dogfighting, but in this case it happens in largely two dimensions.

As you'd expect, any guy was chosen. As you'd expect, it was Rich. Three shells later and he'd lost his lives, reducing him to a sort of living death as a hazard for the other players — a random and lethal bomb.

**Rich:** "So what is it that I do now, exactly? Just drive around trying to hit one of you and blow you up?"

He'd got it exactly right. In a touching scene Matt attempted to point Rich in the right direction, only to be undone by a sneak double attack from Neil and, seconds later, Mark. Now we had two unstable bombs roaming the circuit — and, unfortunately, in dangerous proximity to each other.

**Matt:** "Right, Rich — don't touch anything! We're both bombs now, so just reverse away from me slowly."

But instead of reversing Rich nudged forward, both bombs go up, and Mark and Neil were left to wage their battle to the death. Like the Phoney War in '39. It began with much shouting and no action, until capitulating from Matt and Rich forced an end to the stealth and the start of some serious shell-play. It was a bloodbath, with Neil emerging — just — as the victor.

12.15am
**F-Zero X, Nintendo**

It was getting late for a school night, but we had just one more game to play. Everyone remembered the original Super Nintendo version of F-Zero, making this new take on the rapid future racer a welcome sight. Back in the early '90s, F-Zero had pioneered the use of "Mode 7," the super-whizzy fake-3D graphics capability of the Super NES that became its main weapon against Sega's Mega Drive. It had looked stunning at the time, but F-Zero X, of course, has knocked it into a cocked hat. The N64 version is a nerve-rattling four-player, which moves at a quite incredible lick — easily the fastest game of the night. That it simultaneously packs the game with "cars" (really, futuristic hover-buggies and the like) and is never any less than inventive in its use of crazy course layouts, soon made it a firm favourite — particularly with Mark, who had brought the game along and voted it its favourite of the night.

We soon saw why — he'd obviously played it rather a lot, meaning he knew all the cars, all the courses, each and every short cut and (naturally) every cheat. He was, quite frankly, looking for a damn good slapping.

**Neil:** "Let it be noted that Mark, the utter bastard, just chose a car that's a full 300mph faster than everyone else, while encouraging me to go for 'the pretty blue one.'"

And now, with Mark tempting the entire team on to a very bizarre pole track, where oversteering results in an inevitable tumble to your death, things began to get even more heated. With everyone glovering at Mark — at which point, of course, he finally came up with a few vital how-to-stay-on-tips — things started to descend into chaos, tempting Matt into a well-meaning but vain attempt to keep things civil by insisting that everyone had the same cars and that the track should hold no surprises. And it didn't — until a huge jump appeared from nowhere. Everyone failed to land, and Mark was forcibly ejected from the house.

So the first Games Night was over. Next morning we would reconvene, and try and come up with some conclusions.

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**Games Night picks**

**Our Night of the Long Drives furnished us with a number of interesting high-speed conclusions:**

1) Sometimes people like games for reasons not always apparent to anyone else, or which have nothing to do with the game. (Hence Matt's rather pathetic devotion to Gran Turismo has as much to do with the enjoyment of picking cars and watching replays as it does with racing.)

2) Nobody likes a game they're no good at. (Except Rich, who claimed to be a big fan of F-Zero X, despite all the evidence.)

3) In a Games Night-type context, things like realism and even glorious graphics count for much less than speed, a neat multi-player option and the opportunity to do the dirty on your mates as often as possible.

4) Classic sometimes means "old and really great", but more often it just means "old". With that list in mind, the night's heroes soon began to emerge.

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**Runners up**

1. **Circuit Breakers**
   
   Plenty of imagination, lots of bashing around and a real you-get-right-into-it feel make this a sleeper hit.

2. **Super Mario Kart**
   
   Fantastic look and feel, but let down on the night by an obvious limitation — only two of you can play at once.

3. **F-Zero X**
   
   The fastest game of the night. Some felt the four-player option should have boosted its position well above Gran Turismo, but Matt shouted them down.

**Our winner**

**Mario Kart 64**

This one has it all — lots of cool characters, a top four-player option, plenty of speed, great courses and the chance to attack all the other players as often as you like. Nobody has a bad word to say about it — that's how good it is.
MISSING LINK

When Nintendo finally releases the long-awaited Legend of Zelda: The Ocarina of Time – a game crucial to the future of the system – millions of N64 owners will take to the streets to celebrate. And then rush inside, pausing only to hang "Do Not Disturb" signs on their doors. So, we ask creator Shigeru Miyamoto, what exactly has been the hold-up?
Ever since Nintendo released its 64-bit machine in the middle of 1996, N64 owners have been anxiously pacing up and down their bedrooms. They played Super Mario 64, which helped for a while. GoldenEye 007 provided a few more weeks' distraction. And plenty of other games have come and gone - some fantastic, some excruciating. But even the best ones have been let down by one fundamental problem: they're not Zelda 64. Nintendo promised us Zelda within a year of the N64's release. The company was typically secretive about how the game would work, but showed us enough amazing-looking screenshots to have us dribbling down our T-shirts in anticipation. Zelda 64 would have all the action and adventure of the great Zelda games of old - but in 3D!

The game would feature Link, Zelda and all our other pals from the previous games - but there'd be a crowd of new faces as well! Once again you'd get a sword, a bow and arrow, a boomerang and bombs - but you'd be able to use them to fight dazzling 3D battles! Nintendo promised that Zelda 64 would redefine the role playing game forever!

But summer 1997 drifted by. The leaves turned brown; the sky; grey. There'd be a delay, we were told, until Christmas. Final tidying up and tweaking, they said. Besides technically speaking Nintendo had never actually set a definite release date in the first place. In the meantime, though, here were some more pictures to pore over. The graphics looked even more incredible. And - get this - there wasn't just one Link, but two! Our little Link would appear as his old diminutive self for part of the game, and as a strapping teenager for the rest. Some sort of time travelling storyline looked to be in order. And the game would come on a huge 256 Megabit cartridge, four times the size of Super Mario 64! In the light of these revelations we resolved to wait, knowing that Nintendo knew best.

The evenings drew in, and our breath formed clouds in the chill night air. But anyone hoping to find a copy of Zelda 64 in their Christmas stocking was to be disappointed. There'd been another delay. Till February.

Here were some more pictures, though - and an official title: The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time. Scouring through our dictionaries, we discovered an ocarina to be a simple wind instrument made from clay. Link's magic ocarina, Nintendo told us, would enable him to travel in time on a quest to beat the evil Ganondorf (a version of Ganon from the old games) to the Triforce. Well, okay, we'd wait a bit longer, although we'd

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already gnawed our knuckles almost to the bone. Crocuses emerged through the frosty ground. Squirrels crawled sleepily from their burrows, yawned and stretched in the crisp spring air. But Zelda remained in hibernation in the depths of Nintendo's Kyoto headquarters. Despite topping 'most wanted' lists across the globe, it wouldn't be out till April.

But - hey - more pictures. We could see more clearly than ever the exciting battles we'd be able to fight when Zelda did finally appear. There were hordes of baddies to take on - skeletons, giant spiders, boulder spitting Octoroks - and some dazzling special effects to accompany them. There were massive bosses, too. But best of all, perhaps, the graphics now looked extraordinary - especially the villages, with finely detailed cottages and trees. We'd wait till April, albeit with our legs crossed, jiggling up and down on our chairs.

1998's excuse for a summer reached its soggy height, yet still no Zelda. Instead, we were offered a few more screenshots - brilliant ones, though, showing the astonishing cut-scenes that would illustrate important plot points while giving your thumbs a rest - and a definite, absolute.
MISSING LINK

The world of Legend of Zelda has been evolving endlessly. If we could, we'd like to continue forever. "Er... on the other hand, our marketing guys are furious. So Zelda's going to make it this time, finally."

He may have put us through hell over the last few months, but it's hard to be annoyed with Shigeru Miyamoto for long. He is, after all, the reason Zelda 64 is so eagerly anticipated in the first place. Behind Miyamoto's humble, easy-going facade lies a powerful brain that understands games better than anyone else in the world.

While questions have been raised over Nintendo's business acumen recently – particularly following the NES's dismal performance at home in Japan – its capacity to produce the best games in the world has never been in doubt. And it's Miyamoto the company has got to thank. He's produced hit after hit on machines going right back to the NES, which sold largely on the strength of his Super Mario Bros series. But Miyamoto concedes a debt to Nintendo too: "Nintendo is one of those rare companies which put the top priority on the developers' voices, not the marketing people's. So it's fun to work there because I can do what I want to."

While Mario has become the moustachioed face of Nintendo, it's the Zelda games for which millions salute Miyamoto. Nintendo fans adore Link and his ceaseless struggles to save Princess Zelda from the attentions of the evil sorcerer Ganon. They love the Zelda games' attention to detail, their wealth of secrets, their midnight oil-consuming scope and their quirky humour.

The only thing Link's adventures have never really done is stretch the boundaries of Nintendo's hardware. Zeldas 1 and 2 were big, but scarcely threatened to overload the NES's 6502 processor. Only the Game Boy ever seemed stretched by its contribution to the series, and that was only because the Game Boy is slightly more powerful than an 8-bit machine. All this looks set to change with Ocarina of Time.

"Dynamic light, dynamic fog, lens flare, particle physics and motion blur are all being used," says Yoshiki Kojima, Zelda's graphics director. If previous Nintendo 64 games have moved the graphical goalposts, he implies. Zelda 64 will load them into a van, drive them to an airfield, transfer them to a C-130 Hercules and re-erect them in the Maldives.

"Texture mapping, making full use of the Nintendo 64's colour combiner, has enabled a rich expression of landscapes, light and natural objects. Our skin technology has allowed smooth rendering of Link, his enemies and non-playable characters without the joins. More than 500 player motions can be displayed in real-time, with these being calculated to be smoothly synchronised with rugged topographies."
The "dynamic light" bit is perhaps the most exciting aspect. Such things have previously been the preserve of top-end PC games. "Light source calculation is being done for every frame," elaborates Yoshiaki Koizumi. "The shadows change according to a plural light source. Like in a motion picture, we're using plural lights in order to express natural feelings." So hairy-legged Ghomas standing before flickering torches will cast spooky shadows on the slimy walls around them.

All this will be brought to life by a roving camera far more flexible than even Mario 64's. It'll shift to give the most dramatic view possible of the action, so when, for example, Link is attacked by a giant, fire-breathing Dodongo, it will suddenly switch to the monster's point of view, showing the ant-like Link cowering beneath it, before switching back to Link's view of the giant beast towering above him. Then, when battle commences, Zelda 64's "Z Targeting System" will come into play, whereby pressing the Z Trigger locks the view onto the moving monster, giving Link the opportunity to really start putting the boot in.

When even more detail is called for, full 3D graphics will make way for static, Resident Evil-style backdrops. You'll see this when Link is wandering around the exquisitely drawn villages, for example, when he'll be superimposed onto a fixed background. "But with N64 technology, everything will look like full 3D graphics," promises Koizumi, adding: "You'll see this technique in future N64 adventure games, too."

Watch out, also, for seamless transitions to expository cut scenes. The screen will close to a letterbox format for stylistic reasons, rather than because the N64 can't hack it; the controls will lock out and we'll be treated to dazzling scenes of fire dragons preparing to attack, Ganondorf smiting his foes from horseback, the Triforce emitting blinding rays of light or the (ahem) Fairy Tree, Deku, imparting knowledge to Link.

All this graphical trickery is a far cry from the original Zelda concept, however. With role-playing games, isn't the idea to keep things simple, and allow the player's imagination to fill in the blanks? Isn't there a

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danger of the magic being lost? "Now you mention it, I suspect many people might have a similar view," admits Yoshiaki Koizumi. "But on the other hand, no player could possibly explore the world of Ocarina of Time without expending the maximum power of his imagination. In other words, your imagination is more strongly required for other purposes. So please don't worry about such a thing." Phew.

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These "other purposes" are likely to involve fiendish puzzles, a hallmark of all Zelda games - and, not least, the deployment of the eponymous ocarina. (Ocarinas are rather more popular in Japan than over here, in case you're wondering, although you can hear one in "California Dreamin'" by the Mamas and the Papas and also in "Wild Thing" by the Troggs, fact fans) It's now common knowledge that Zelda 64's plot involves the evil Ganondorf once again trying to plunge the land of Hyrule into chaos. This time he plans to capture the Triforce...
Itself (the Triforce being a symbol of power in Hyrule), Link hears this from the (cough) Fairy Tree. Teams up with Zelda and sets off to thwart Ganondorf by using the ocarina to travel through time.

Curiously enough, however, according to Miyamoto-san there isn't just the one ocarina. "There are actually two," he discloses, "the Ocarina of Time and the Ocarina of Fair. Rumour has it the latter is used by a certain tribe to communicate their unspoken words, while the former is said to be a secret treasure of the royal family of Hyrule." Perhaps a duet is in order.

Tradition has it that nothing of the Zelda world is lost when a new game joins the series. As well as a new slingshot weapon, Link will pack his trusty boomerang, bow and Deku stick staff complete with spectacular 3D power swoosh if you hold down the fire button, and a brand new - a beam of light projected from its tip. As well as extra monsters, such as water and fire spirits, there'll be all his old adversaries like Ghosts, Stalfos Knights, Mud Dolls and Tektites. As usual he'll need to hunt out Rupees and energy hearts hidden deep within the underground. And once again he'll be getting some help from (erm) fairies - although this time, rather than having to search them out in caves scattered around Hyrule, he'll have one called Navi constantly by his side, Tinkerbell-like, who'll warn him of impending danger by turning a rather fetching shade of red.

As news of all these goodies has slowly filtered through Nintendo's PR apparatus, Zelda fans have grown more and more excited. But there's one feature of Ocarina of Time that's had them practically writhing on the floor in anticipation. In what's almost certainly a video game first, Link will be able to blow a whistle to summon a fully animated 3D horse - and then ride off on it. It can canter! It can gallop! It can be spurred on (by pressing B) It can rear up on its back legs! At one point you can race against Mr Ingo, the ranch hand, for Rupee prizes. Another bit sees you having to shoot targets with your bow and arrow from horseback. It seems only Big Link can saddle up, although in one picture Little Link comes across a loal that bears a striking resemblance to Big Link's steed...

With all the delays and abortive release dates that have afflicted Zelda 64, the normally secretive Nintendo has ended up releasing an enormous amount of information about the game. In fact, you could probably cut out all the hundreds of screen-shots they've handed out, staple them together into a flick book and see pretty much the entire game. Couldn't you? "Oh no," Shigeru Miyamoto assures us. He says Ocarina of Time is a colossal game of which we've seen just a tiny fraction. There are lots more surprises than we've shown you so far. That's why it ended up being a 256Mbit game - we wanted to construct a world with so much depth. And anyway, seeing pictures is one thing. Playing the actual game is quite another. Please try it and see for yourself.

Chanced be a fine thing.

If Hyruled the world

Newcomers to the land of Hyrule might not appreciate just why Nintendo devotees are looking forward to Zelda 64 so much. Who actually is Zelda? Why isn't she in many pictures? What's the Triforce? And what's everyone's problem with this Gannon chap? Here, then, is an ocarina-stop tour of the Zelda story so far...

- 1987: The Legend of Zelda (NES)
  Looks a bit rubbish now, but still in action in its day. On his way to the shop to pick up his Hyrule Evening Post, Link comes across a damsel being harassed by a band of thugs. He sees them off - not bad for a pixie sprite with very limited animation - and asks the lady what's up. Turns out she's Princess Zelda's nursemaid, sent with a plea for help. Her highness was kidnapped by the evil Gannon, but not before she managed to split the Triforce - the key to peace in Hyrule - into eight pieces to prevent it falling into Gannon's hands. She's after someone to actually recover the Triforce, and b) rescue her. Looks like Link's her man. Nothing like The Legend of Zelda had been seen before. It offered a huge quest spread over dozens of screens, requiring hours of devoted play. It had action, adventure, treasure, rock-splitting monsters and the promise of a snog at the end.

- 1989: The Adventure of Link (NES)
  The million-plus Zelda fans who'd bought the first game tutted disapprovingly upon discovering Nintendo had switched the view from over Link's head to a more conventional side-on approach. If they wanted a platform game, they sniffed, they'd play Castlevania. But some already-established Zelda traditions were preserved. Conversations, for one: you couldn't move an inch without a villager pouring his heart out about his lost medical dog. And several-objects-scattered-throughout-the-land-that-needed-collecting, for another. This time it was six crystals that wanted rounding up before Link headed for the final confrontation with Gannon in the seventh cavern. Zelda was distinguished mainly by being hard - you couldn't find energy hearts for love nor Rupees.

- 1992: A Link to the Past (SNES)
  Here the story started to get a little confused, so listen up. Although Zelda 3 featured Link, Zelda and the rest of the gang, it was actually set some time before they were born - generations before, in fact. This Link and Zelda were in fact ancestors of the Link and Zelda we've come to know and revere. More reassuringly, for its SNES outing the format returned to the original bird's-eye-view format, albeit with rather nattier graphics and 3D "Mode 7" map. And Link's task? To round up a number of things, of course. First off, this time. And then? Rescue - yes - Zelda, from a cuddly wizard called Agahnim who needed seeing to with the Master Sword. The best Zelda game so far. A Link to the Past was split across two worlds - Hyrule and the Dark World - and required around 35 hours' graft to play to completion.

- 1994: Link's Awakening (Game Boy)
  The saga's pocket-sized installment proved to be anything but when it came to item gathering (eighty instruments of the Sirens this time), with another epic quest set not in Hyrule but on the island of Koholint. A shipwrecked Link had to secure his passage home to the Wizard of Oz-style by seeking the Wind Fish that ruled the island. You may well raise an eyebrow, but Nintendo's American wing hadn't really got the hang of the translation by this point. The characters had progressed from mumbling Japish gobbledegook in the first game to coming out with genuinely funny lines, and the moment when a troupe of monkeys descends from the trees and builds Link a bridge to the castle will remain in players' hearts forever.

- And the CDI games
  At some point, as a side effect of some arcane negotiation with Nintendo over the abortive SNES CD-ROM drive, Philips managed to secure the rights to produce Zelda games for their 64-bit CDI console. Additions to the canon included Zelda: The Wand of Gamelon and Link: The Faces of Evil. But we tend not to talk about them.
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STATE OF PLAY

Twenty years ago we loved Space Invaders. Today it's the turn of Tomb Raider III, 1080° and Metal Gear Solid. Tomorrow there's Sonic Adventure, Zelda 64 and a world of 128-bit possibilities. Videogames are evolving at such a pace, and in so many directions, it's safe to say that no one -- not even the most diehard fanatic -- has all of it covered. With 60 or more titles released every month, across a multitude of platforms and genres, it would be near-impossible.

Whether you've been into games for years, spend the odd evening in a PlayStation or simply sneak the occasional blast on Quake when the boss's back is turned, you've probably only scratched the surface of gaming. So for now, let's take stock of where the industry's at. Join us for 22 pages of the world's best games and a look at the people who make them, as well as the most exciting systems and the pros and cons of popular hardware. Read this, and we can't promise you'll know everything there is to know -- but you'll know where to start...

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STATE OF PLAY

ARCADE MAGAZINE, IN ASSOCIATION WITH GAMERS OF BRITAIN, PRESENTS FOR THE TITLE

“UNDISPUTED GAMES MACHINE CHAMPION OF THE WORLD”

THE BIG FIGHT

SONY PLAYSTATION “THE AGING CHAMP”

VS

NINTENDO 64 “THE LAST-CHANCE KID”

SIX ROUNDS OR A KNOCKOUT TO DECIDE | YOUR MASTER OF CEREMONIES: RICH PELLEY

In the red corner: Sony’s PlayStation, the most successful games machine ever. In the blue corner: Nintendo’s N64, now loaded with top-notch titles and armed with reduced prices for a Christmas push. Get ready as the contenders do battle for a share of your gaming cash. Seconds out...

The games industry is now moving so fast that virtually every year something happens to force a sea-change in the way we look at things, but 1999’s shaping up to be more volatile than most. Sony’s PlayStation rules the roost in a way no console ever has before, but it’s getting on a bit, and its detractors are suggesting that all the starting things a developer can do with the machine have already been done. Nintendo’s N64 is – most would agree – more powerful, and with some fine software, but the problem is its serious lack of titles. And lurking round the corner for ’99 is the official UK release of Sega’s Dreamcast, the first emissary of an even more powerful generation of machines which, provided that Sega doesn’t fumble the ball, should really start a fight.

So this is a very significant time for Sony and Nintendo. 1999 may well prove to be PlayStation’s biggest ever year, but few are predicting that next Christmas will be as

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WHY YOU SHOULD CHOOSE PLAYSTATION

In the red corner: Sony PlayStation, championed by Sean Atkins, editor of PlayStation Power magazine.

"The PlayStation has many obvious advantages over the N64 – chiefly the sheer wealth of software and the fact that it has plenty of budget-priced releases. It’s also generally considered the cooler machine and looks better propped under your telly, but there are some less obvious reasons to opt for a PlayStation, as well.

"For a start, the new N64 games never seem to surpass the quality of some of the platform’s first releases like Mario 64, while PlayStation games just get better. The third generation of PlayStation games, things like Metal Gear Solid, are an advance over what came before, and the fourth-gen games like Gran Turismo 2 and Ridge Racer 4, both due in ’99, are going to get even better. Yes, the Nintendo is good at things like Doom-dones and platform games, but the fact that it lacks any decent beat-‘em-ups or driving games is another massive handicap. Plus, Dreamcast will hurt N64 more than it hurts PlayStation – PlayStation 2 is waiting in the wings, and should be more powerful than Dreamcast. It will certainly boast more software. The only disappointment is that it doesn’t look like it’s going to be backwards-compatible. Otherwise, it’s no contest."

The official line

"The PlayStation should be most people’s preferred format, due to the quality of existing software and the aspirational values suggested by the strength and positioning of the brand. The release of creative entertainment products, such as Final Fantasy, has somewhat broadened the appeal of the PlayStation, making it attractive and accessible to an even wider audience."

Guy Pearce, PR Manager, Sony UK

PlayStation’s flagship games

If there are ten games you’ve got to own on PlayStation, it’s this little lot.

- You’ll find many all-time greats on the PlayStation, and you already know stars like Lara Croft and Crash Bandicoot, so where better to start than by seeing what they’re up to in new releases Tomb Raider III and Crash Bandicoot 3? Then feel free to join in with the gore-fest that is Doom, at its best on PlayStation, and only £20.
- Gran Turismo is easily the best driving game ever. It was developed using Sony’s new Performance Analyst – a revolutionary tool which enables programmers to push all the PlayStation’s processors to their optimum. Sports games like Cool Boarders 2 (4) and ISS Pro ’98 are great too. But it’s not all action. The Japanese RPG Final Fantasy VII (2) is deep, absorbing and highly user-friendly. In fact, couple this with the great Resident Evil 2 (dripping in tension) and Command and Conquer: Retaliation (3) (real-time war gaming) and your PlayStation is likely to eat up a chunk of your life.
- Finally, you should treat yourself to something like the fine Tetris-inspired Bust-A-Move 2 (1) so you can remember that simple games can be great too.

Because PlayStation games come on CDs and not cartridges, they’re pretty cheap to make. This means a greater diversity of game genres as publishers can take a chance on niche markets. You’d find something for everyone somewhere in PlayStation’s catalogue.
THE BIG FIGHT
SONY PLAYSTATION VS NINTENDO 64

Hampering the overall message that if a game comes out on the PlayStation you can guarantee that it's going to be stylish, cool and halfway-playable just as a matter of course.

Nintendo, on the other hand, has far less money to splash out and runs blink-or-you'll-miss-'em ads that sell on the graphical content of the games alone. Advertisers reckon on a 20-second glimpse of GoldenEye 007 with some loud background music, that appears halfway through Home and Away, is all Nintendo requires (or can afford) to get you dashing shopwards.

Though they have their detractors, most would agree that Sony's ads seem far cooler than Nintendo's more basic message – N64, the TV ads seem to say, is for younger kids, and maybe some hardcore gamers too (a funny mix, but that's what games like Mario 64 court). The PlayStation, on the other hand, is the gaming console of choice, as selected by hip teens and twentysomethings. First round to Sony.

ROUND 1: Which is best for your image?

Image, it would seem, is everything. Consider the differing stances Sony and Nintendo have taken on their advertising. These days, Sony doesn't need the feel to show games in its sleek ads at all, aiming instead at a lifestyle sell ("By day I catch the bus, and run with the hot-pollo") that sits easily among the beer ads in the men's glossy mags and peak-time ad breaks. Such is the stylish look of the campaign and its all-pervasive nature, it's starting to work, too – Sony's square/circle/triangle/cross logo is edging ever closer to Nike's swooshy logo in terms of sheer recognisability and (perhaps even more remarkably) trendiness.

Assuming that you just wouldn't want any game that scored below 70%, the chances of randomly picking a game and finding it to be a turkey are 67.7% for PlayStation, but only 39.9% for N64.

ROUND 2: Which has the best games?

At the time of writing, there were 487 games available on the PlayStation but only 101 on the N64. On choice alone, then, it's another round to PlayStation.

But wait. What's that you say – Nintendo games tend to be much better than most PlayStation efforts? You may have a point – and it's one we can easily back up with a bit of (dubious) research. We took every review published in PlayStation Power and N64 Magazine – both of which are independent machine-dedicated game titles from the same stable as Arcade, and both of which score games out of the traditional 100% – and dividing the scores into bands by the percentage earned, plotted the results on the histograms above. Both graphs peak in the 70%-80% bracket. However, few games score below 50% on the N64, while loads come below the halfway mark on PlayStation, suggesting that either there's far less crap for the N64, or that PlayStation Power's reviewers are exceptionally harsh in their marking schemes. Indeed, a bit of calculator work reveals mean scores of 73.3% on the N64 and 49.3% on the PlayStation. Taking into account that there are 48 PlayStation games on the market for every N64 game, and assuming that (at £40 a pop) you wouldn't want to play any game that scored less than 70%, the chances of walking into a shop, randomly picking a game off the shelf and finding it to be a turkey is (verbally) 67.7% for the PSX, but only 39.9% for the N64. There's only a 14.3% chance that you're still reading, but in the meantime it looks like it's Round 2 to the N64.

Except maybe not. You see, most of us don't buy our games blind, but put some degree of research into it, making the "random pick" test pretty much irrelevant – sure, there might be less N64 rubbish out there, but there are so many PlayStation games and that's the platform that both systems offer more many more quality choices than any average gamer will ever be able to afford – or indeed have time to play. That being the case, the choice of which system you prefer probably comes down to the style of gameplay you enjoy the most. The PlayStation is great at racing games and shoot-'em-ups, while the N64 is unrivalled at the platform game, but has an incredible weak spot in that it boasts virtually no fighting games. A hard one to call, then, so after an all-action bout with both the contenders nearly snatching victory, the result is an honourable draw.

ROUND 3: Which is most powerful?

The evolution of the N64 was strange. Rather than trying to improve the earlier Super Nintendo Entertainment System, Nintendo instead decided to start from scratch by teaming up with Silicon Graphics, the company behind the computer-generated dinosaurs in Jurassic Park. Nintendo's idea was to take a hefty £10,000 Silicon Graphics machine, chop out the non-essentials and mass produce like crazy to create a machine virtually as powerful for a couple of hundred quid (and now a snip under £100). And this is what happened.

Sony entered the console market via – equally oddly – a deal brokered with Nintendo to create a CD drive to sit under the SNES. In return, Nintendo allowed Sony to produce a Sony/SNES-compatible standalone console. But somewhere down the line Nintendo pulled out, leaving Sony with a half-finished clone that, in time to come, would evolve into the PlayStation.

Two very different approaches to virtually the same task, then, but which is technically better? Well, both machines are jammed full of custom hardware chips, but the PlayStation's main processor is 32-bit while the N64's is 64-bit. This 'bitnage' is actually a measure of the processor bus width, which in turn is a measure of how big a number each processor can cope with. Think of it as like seeing how many mathematicians you can get in your mouth at a time. The PSX can eat 32, but the N64 can...
Why You Should Choose Nintendo 64

In the blue corner: Nintendo 64, championed by James Ashton, editor of N64 Magazine.

"The N64 will always be streets ahead of the PlayStation because its games have more soul. Nintendo's designers are more interested in creating a deeper experience than simply trying to dazzle. N64 games inspire a genuine, emotional response, an alternative reality – a virtual reality without the headset or headache. N64 games are special to people who are getting jaded by the cynically repetitive and formula-based stream of PlayStation 3D racers and shoot-'em-ups. In its short life the N64 has played host to more benchmark titles than Sony could ever imagine having, swamping Sony's cast of Lara-likes with an army of characters who are strong enough to live outside their games, with several even jumping to their own TV shows.

"With more games, an aggressive pricing policy and a wide (if misguided) following, the PlayStation looks like an attractive bet. If it's originality you're after, though; games that are worth more than a quick post-pub trash; games that are "games" and not just an exercise in copyist programming, then the N64 is the only choice."

The official line

"In the run-up to Christmas we have 12 triple-A titles in the pipeline, Nintendo's strongest line up ever. All in all, we intend to wipe the floor with Sony. The great thing about the N64 is the graphics. If you compare the N64's F1 Racing Grand Prix with Sony's F1 98, or 1080° with Cool Boarders 2, it is obvious which machine is the best. With the release of Zelda, the N64 should go from strength to strength."

Shelly Friend, PR and Communications manager, THE Games (Nintendo UK)

N64's flagship games

Still waiting to be convinced of the power of N64? Check out this lineup.

1. "GoldenEye" should be your next order since it's the best Doom-style blaster ever. The scenery is beautiful, the weaponly breathtaking, the difficulty level perfectly pitched, and the four-player deathmatch mode riveting. While you're there, plug in copies of Super Mario Kart 64 and Diddy Kong Riding (1, both also ace).

While we're thinking about racing games, do bag yourself Wave Race 64 (jet bike racing), F-Zero X (loopy 1,000mph space-race) and 1080° ° ° (snowboarding minus the limb-breaking). And dessert? International Superstar Soccer (2).

Finally, along with your coffee and mints, tuck away a copy of Turbografx Dinosaur Hunter (4), like Jurassic Park, but with all the destruction that game so badly needed.

4. "Quality not quantity" was Nintendo's slogan when N64 was released. For a white, though, delays upon delays meant that disgruntled gamers got neither. But now N64 boasts some of the best games on the planet, and more are arriving every month.
The Big Fight

Sony PlayStation vs Nintendo 64

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The most direct consequence of this is that the PlayStation can cope with 30 million instructions per second, while the N64 can cope with up to 125 million. The N64 is clearly a more capable machine – and that means a three-trump-what A-quality N64 title is always going to wow an audience much more than a triple-A PlayStation title. And this is going to become increasingly true, say some industry watchers, as the Nintendo developers continue to explore the potential of their machine while the PlayStation programmers struggle to squeeze anything additional out of the hardware that's already running at more or less the limit of its abilities.

That's not quite all there is to it, though. PlayStation games come on CDs, which take up less room and are very easy and cheap to mass produce – hence the generally lower price of PlayStation games and opportunities for budget-priced ranges and cover-mounted magazine demo discs – but CDs can get scratched and require you to wait for access times. N64 games come on cartridges, which cost much more to produce (hence the games cost more), but are harder to pirate, load almost instantly and are virtually indestructible. Cost aside, then – and that's not what we're talking about here – Round 3 goes to Nintendo.

Round 3: Nintendo.

Round 4: Sony.

Which will make you most friends?

Two and a half million PlayStations have been sold in the UK, but only 85,000 N64s. That's four PlayStations to every N64. And that ratio doesn't seem to be evening out – in the last three months, for instance, our local branch of Argos sold 64 PlayStation but only 12 N64s. As a social thing, then – seeing as owning a particular system means being able to swap games with mates and enjoy drawn-out conversations with strangers on trains – you would think that Round 5 would have to go to the PlayStation.

But hold it! One of the N64's initial selling points was that it came with fourjoypad ports for, essentially, four-player games of Super Mario Kart 64. And lots of fun those games were nearly as good, in fact, as playing the later GoldenEye 007 in the four-player deathmatch mode. The new F-Zero X kicks four-player ass, too, making the Nintendo a social experience to be savoured. By comparison, PlayStation's multi-player credentials are relatively limp-wristed – sure, there are loads of two-player games, but for four players you need to buy a MultiTap, and the only good game is Bomberman World. After much debate, then, the judges consider Round 5 a draw.

Round 5: a tie.

The Final Bell

As we predicted, this is no clear-cut contest – both machines have their strong points, their weaker ones, their advocates and their detractors. So, assuming the evidence presented so far hasn't swayed you one way or the other, we decided to ask the experts. A couple of magazine editors defend their favoured systems elsewhere on these pages, alongside comments from Nintendo and Sony themselves – and all, of course, come firmly down on the side of their own machine.

The answer, then, is that there is no answer – you weigh up the pros and cons and take your pick. For what it's worth, even within the Arcade office opinion is hopelessly divided. Staff writer Mark, a long-time Nintendo devotee, is adamant that N64 games are simply better. Sam, relatively new to the scene and a PlayStation owner, insists that the N64 looks like it's for kids with all those big-colour joypad ports and cartoony Banjo-Kazooie games. The truth is that you won't lose out either way – both are great consoles with great games, and at these prices there's a lot to be said for having both systems in your lounge.

Of course where it gets lots more complicated is when the PC Goliat enters the equation. Look to your right to find out why...

Arcade presents tonight's Second Bout

A Mismatched David & Goliath Contest

PC vs Console

The Dark-Grey Bruiser

The Puny Plastic Flyweight

"Can Weedy Little Consoles Really Compete with the Power of PC?"

Master of Ceremonies: Rich Pelley

While the leading consoles battle it out between themselves, a giant looms in the background. A giant that has the power to crush the victor without breaking a sweat.

But it has an Achilles heel – it's expensive and over-complex. So, how serious a games machine is the PC?
WHY YOU SHOULD CHOOSE A PC

If you want real games, you want a real man’s machine: by James Binns, editor of PC Format.

"The open nature of the PC means that anyone can develop for it. Not only do PC owners often get the best games first, but the concepts that lie behind those games can be more adventurous than those that you so often see presented by the average console platformer. Plus, the growth of the Internet enables you to get hold of free levels and upgrades really easily, enabling you to keep your favourite games exciting and interesting pretty much forever."

"You can also design your own levels for games, and save them out too – it all puts the PlayStation's memory card to shame. The PC's mouse is the very best system of control for real time strategy games and 3D shooters, while the Force Feedback of PC joysticks makes rumble packs seem more like grumble packs.

"On the presentation side, PCs can offer totally unrivalled network support, covering both networking and Internet gaming."

Games have the very best 3D graphics and Surround Sound, and that's not to mention all the other funky stuff you can do. You can make music or create stunning graphics, browse the Web and much more, making the PC an essential tool whether you decide to play games on it or not."

The PC's flagship games

So you bought it for your accounts? Never mind, take a look at this lot.

- There are thousands of games available for the PC at all prices. Unlike console games, however, PC games date quickly – just like the hardware. Because of this, we'll just take a look at the newest and best around.

Try Conflict: Freespace
The Great War (1) to play a sprawling, yet intricate space combat sim – it's deeper than a really big hole in the ground, comes with plenty of repliability and is a really good example of Just What Can Be Done on the PC. The same can be said for Final Fantasy VIII (3), the great PlayStation RPG made bigger and better with a marvellous story, lavish graphics and a brilliant selection of spells. StarCraft (1) (real-time strategy stuff), is fab too. Then, of course, there are the Doom/Quake (3) twins. Or, more correctly, the recent bandwagon-hopping group of games that are, in the main, even better than the originals. Forsaken is full of droids, missiles, guns and robots. Unreal, on the other hand, simply oozes with atmosphere and gore, and features a great deathmatch where you can play against 16 simulated humans.

Because of its large writable hard drive (it can store lots of game data) and its keyboard (communication isn't restricted to joystick twitches) the PC has traditionally enjoyed more cerebral games. Now, 3D cards mean they have great graphics too.
Spend about £1,500 on a PC and it will play all the latest games very well indeed. But in six months it will start to appear a little slow, and in a year you’ll have to upgrade.

ROUND 1
WHICH HAS MOST POWER?
In terms of game size, graphics quality and just about any other benchmark by which you can judge them, N64 and PlayStation games are every bit as good as their PC cousins, in spite of the fact that the consoles now come in at under £100. This is because the consoles are rammed full of custom chips that have been designed for game playing. By not having to cope with all the other functions that PCs have to manage, consoles balance power with price far more efficiently. If you only want a machine for gaming, your wallet will thank you for doing that.

ROUND 2
THE ABYSS OF CHOICE
In a typical month there might be around ten or 15 PlayStation releases and three or four N64 games – though rather more around Christmas, obviously. In the same period of time, however, the PC will take that number and double it, then double it again. This being the case, there are now thousands of PC games available, many of which don’t appear on any other system. Though most platform fans won’t be too impressed with the majority of PC releases, there are some areas in which the PC is very strong – notably strategy games, simulations of various types (but mostly planes) and first-person shoot-’em-ups. Despite the lack of an obvious Miyamoto-type genius coming up with a landmark game every few years (and see page 95 of this issue for more information about him), the PC whups any console on sheer volume alone.

ROUND 3
NO NEED TO PURCHASE
Unlike consoles, people buy and own their PCs for many reasons. Maybe you do your home accounts or check out Web pages on your PC. Maybe you like flying fishing CD-ROMs or e-mailing your cousin in Alabama. Maybe you’re a quarter of the way through writing that novel that’s going to make you rich and famous one day. Maybe you won your PC in a raffle. It’s unlikely (though by no means impossible) that you simply bought it to play games on.

ROUND 4
THE EVOLUTION OF THE SPECIES
From a developer’s point of view, consoles are very different to PCs. The creation of a top quality console game requires a programmer to push the machine to its limits – something the developers tend to get better and better at. You can see this in the games themselves – the fantastic PlayStation racer Gran Turismo, for instance, shows what the PlayStation is capable of when working flat out, shifting scenery at a rate that puts the PlayStation’s initial flagship racing game Ridge Racer, to shame. It’s the same story on N64 – faces gawped when people first saw Super Mario World, but two years on and Banjo-Kazooie looks even better. The real problem is that sooner or later both N64 and PlayStation will get pushed to their absolute limits, and at that stage the public’s interest will start to wane, leaving the door open for Dreamcast and the next generation of machines. PCs, though, are different. They still evolve. Spend about £1500 on a PC today and it will play all the latest games very well indeed. In six months’ time, however, it will appear a little slow at running the cutting-edge stuff, and in a year it won’t play the latest releases effectively and you’ll have to upgrade. Buy a PC today, and chances are you’ll still be having to have it MOT-ed once a year to keep up with the best games. If you don’t want the fight to keep your games machine up-to-date to turn into a never-ending grind, you can play some games on it is like driving back from Sainsbury’s in your Ferrari on a Saturday afternoon, and discovering that you’ve just won the National Lottery. The PC can do so much more than a console developer could ever dream of.

LEXON 3D2
Price: £999
What you get: PII 266MHz PC, monitor, speakers, keyboard, mouse.
Contact: Lexon Technology on 0181 667 1173

G6-33M
Price: £1,789.52
What you get: PII 333MHz PC, monitor, speakers, keyboard, mouse, Digital Versatile Disk drive.
Contact: Gateway on 0800 322000

Simply Professional PL10
Price: £2,184
What you get: PII 400MHz PC, monitor, speakers, keyboard, mouse, DVD drive, colour-inject printer, scanner, video camera and a copy of Four Weddings and a Funeral on DVD.
Contact: Simply Computers on 0181 498 2100

The G6-33M includes a Digital Versatile Disk (DV/DS player for watching films and a huge 19-inch monitor. It’s a very capable machine that certainly gives you computing power for your money – you should be able to wait at least a year before needing to upgrade.

“Do you think I’m made of money?”
We don’t know much about PCs, but we do like the one that we use in the office. It’s grey, and has some light blue bits and some rubber keys. Apparently, there’s a little more to PCs than that, though. These days you wouldn’t want anything less than a Pentium 166, with both a soundcard and 3Dfx graphics card, which, on a decent PC, will come as standard. Here are some shopping suggestions for the best packages around.

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UNDER £1,000
Lexon 3D2
Price: £999
What you get: PII 266MHz PC, monitor, speakers, keyboard, mouse.
Contact: Lexon Technology on 0181 667 1173

£1,000-£2,000
G6-33M
Price: £1,789.52
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Contact: Gateway on 0800 322000

£2,000 and over
Simply Professional PL10
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But what if you don't want, or can't afford, a PlayStation, N64 or PC?

Sega Mega Drive
The SNE's big early '90s rival, and these are now absurdly cheap second hand. A very trendy machine in its time, with swoopy (ff plastic) Darth Vader styling, it had bags more games but a bit less ability than the Nintendo machine. Shown here, by the way, is the restyled Mega Drive 2 with piggyback 3DO, a hardware boosting add-on. And gamewise it's over to Arcade Editor, and one-time boss at the Mega Drive-dedicated Mega Pak: "Sonic the Hedgehog" and its sequel, obviously, are still superb. Strider - a platform actioner starring a guy with a big sword - is very good too, but my personal favourite remains EAS's superb John Madden Football, which set the standard for American football games."

Super Nintendo Entertainment System
The N64's immediate predecessor can be picked up second-hand for around £30-40, with games a fiver a pop, and it still plays very well. In its day '92 through '95 it occupied a similar position in the market to that now occupied by the N64 - it was more powerful than the rival Sega Mega Drive, but it didn't sell as well and had far fewer games. Still, much of what it did have was fantastic and some still argue that SNES Mario Kart is superior to the N64 version. Other big name games, like Star Wing and Super Mario World, still play very well.

Nintendo Game Boy
The world's most popular handheld games machine, Nintendo's Game Boy has been on the scene for around nine years now, sometimes looking likely to fade from popularity, but always coming back stronger than ever. Now, with the arrival of a new colour version (see page 60 this issue), its future looks assured. For as little as £45 you can now buy a £60 second-hand, with a bunch of games, the Game Boy remains a must-have for any long journey, with Fretz the classic game. Sega's defunct rival Game Gear had a colour screen from the beginning, but it was larger and a real issue if you're intending to carry it around and more expensive.

And the rest...
Of course, there are a whole range of other rarer machines out there too. Fancy a PC Engine or Neo-Geo? You might be looking for a while. These 16-bit consoles offered near-perfect arcade conversions, but were never officially released in Britain. The Atari Jaguar did make it, but few games and a nightmarish controller sank it without trace. The Sega Saturn had lots of games, but PlayStation killed it, and Commodore's CD-TV, Philips's CD-i and all used CD-ROM to run dull interactive movies and encyclopaedias. Which leaves Dreamcast (pictured), available on import now.

Round 4: Consoles.

Round 5
Two's Company, Three's Better
Networking is a huge part of PC game culture. Games like Quake can be played over an office network, over the Internet or by as many PCs as you can link together with cabling. Here at Arcade you can guarantee to hear the harsh fizzle of gunfire and screams of dissemblowment at 6.00pm every evening, as Quake's loyal little band of devotees log on instead of going to the pub like the rest of us.

But the users of office networks are still the lucky exception rather than the rule. Quake (or whichever of the many clones you favour) may well be the best multi-player game in the world, but relatively few people will ever get to play it in the environment for which it was designed. At home, the four-player options available on PlayStation and N64 are a much more practical multi-player proposition.

The Final Bell
We really are comparing apples and oranges here. The PC, despite being immensely popular, remains something of a specialist taste as a pure games machine. PCs are expensive - a great deal more expensive than previous generations of home computer, like the Commodore Amiga or Sinclair Spectrum - but then they're also a lot more powerful. PCs got out of date almost the minute you buy them - the way a new car loses a grand or two in value the minute you drive it off the garage forecourt - but they offer loads of games and applications, and you can link them together for a fantastic multi-player experience. PCs are getting much more user-friendly, too. The fact is that you'd almost certainly buy a PC for completely different reasons than you would a console, making this mismatched title fight not so much a draw, more a null and void contest. We love both PCs and consoles level, with the PC it's more of a love/hate relationship, and can't imagine living in a world that didn't have both.

The 8-Bit Consoles
Commodore Amiga and Atari ST
In the first half of the '90s, before the IBM-compatible PCs took over the world, these 16-bit computers ruled the roost. Relatively cheap and quite capable - they're good for word processing and Internet access among other things, as well as games - they still have their fans today, particularly the superior Amiga. These are very cheap second-hand - about £60 with a bunch of games chucked in - and are home to some fantastic games. The Amiga effort Sensible Soccer was the unofficially best Football Game of All Time.

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The 8-Bit Home Computers
Sinclair Spectrum, Commodore 64 and Amstrad CPC
This trio of '80s efforts are the oldest home computers you're likely to come across. These tiny, tinny, cassette-driven relics were more than likely won you a penny - and you may decide that's almost too much when you look at their primitive games. Early Spectrum comes with rubber keys, but with three ex-Sinclair writers on the Arcade staff, it has to be our recommendation. After all, many Speccy games - like The Sentinel or Knight Lore - remain retro classics with a strong cult following.
BEST OF BREED

Games come in all shapes and sizes. But, with a bit of pushing and shoving, most can sorted into genres – or, for the sake of this article – breeds. So what are these “breeds”? And which games represent them best?

OLD SKOOL

It’s not like the old days...

Some people will tell you that, like Wagon Wheels or Shreddies with hot milk, old games are never as good as you remember. Perhaps, then, the best way to treat the retro gaming revival is as an exercise in nostalgia.

That said, there’s a definite tingle of excitement to be had from playing retro compilations and PC emulators. And some of these oldies really are goldies. We’re thinking here of things like Williams Arcade Classics, boasting Defender and Robotron. Then there’s Atari Classics, with Missile Command and Tempest, and Namco Collection Vol 3 with Ms Pacman and Galaga.

Another way to enjoy the games of yesterday is with remakes of classic titles. Activision’s Battlezone makes the wireframe original look like the knuckle-dragging distant predecessor it undoubtedly is. Meanwhile, Tempest 2000 and Tempest X fiddle only mildly with the original formula. Best of all, though, is discovering an old coin-op at some rundown seaside arcade and playing a classic the old fashioned way.

MAME

System: PC/Mac
Publisher: From the Internet

The Internet’s full of emulators, but get hold of the superb MAME (multi-arcade machine emulator), for either PC or Mac, and the history of arcade games is yours. Practically every coin-op, from Space Invaders to Mr Do, is out there, and all downloadable in their original ROM form. As well as enabling you to own and replay classics, MAME is a great way of finding long-forgotten games, a history lesson in videogaming – and in some cases illegal. Many of the games use illegally copied code and having your own copies breaks anti-piracy laws. We’ll be looking the issues surrounding gaming piracy in a future Arcade.

Honourable mentions:
- The Atari Collection (PS2, GTI), Namco Museum Vol 3 (PS2, Namco), Street Fighter Collection (PS2, Capcom);
- Tempest X (PS2, Interplay), Williams Arcade Classics (PS2, Williams)
3D SHOOTERS


D-shooters do exactly what they say on the tin; you run around big mazes, killing everything that moves, before it kills you. However, the reasons these games appeal so much are a little uncomfortable when you think about them - worrying, even. Perhaps the exploration is like visiting a new country and the panic like getting lost in a supermarket while young. Maybe the mindless violence links with our quasy interest in motorway pile-ups and fire engines. Possibly the slaughter provides a vent for frustrations and homicidal fantasies - like playing cowboys and Indians in the park when you're small.

Whatever the reason, there's no denying that id software's Doom, the first mega-hit of the type, defined a generation of computer games back in early '93. Though primarily a PC phenomenon, Doom was recently converted to the PlayStation. Son of Doom - Quake - and its sequel Quake II, continue to rock on the PC. Most people prefer playing these 3D games, not as single players, but with PCs linked together locally or over the Internet where you can experience a deathmatch with up to 16 players. If

STRATEGY

You don't have to have a beard to play these, but it certainly helps...

Throughout gaming history there have been several classic strategy games - like Populous, Civilization, SimCity, Railroad Tycoon - that remain as milestones of evolution. It wasn't until the 1993 release of Dune II, though, that a successful formula for strategy gaming arrived; a formula that was powerful enough to grow beyond the dedicated PC fan base and grab a slice of the mainstream pie.

Westwood Studios has hogged the stage ever since with its Command & Conquer series. Blizzard's Warcraft II and StarCraft have pushed the genre forward too, but the fact remains that most strategy games still boil down to the same basic elements that Dune II pioneered: explore your surroundings, locate resources, consolidate supply lines, fashion a defensive/offensive game-plan and then - preparations made - set about hammering seven shades of shit out of the opposition.

If you've never been initiated into this world, it may not sound like much fun, but we say don't knock it till you've tried it. With the ability to link PCs together (either locally or via the Internet), the option to slug it out with your mates to swiftly become highly

BEST OF BREED

GoldenEye 007
System: N64 Publisher: Nintendo

GoldenEye functions as superbly with one player as it does if you try a four-player deathmatch multi-game, thanks to its intricate level design and highly logical progression. Developer Rare has made full use of the James Bond licence, ensuring that the game sticks strictly to the movie plot, and has enough secrets and difficulty levels to keep you playing for eternity. Miss the opportunity to play GoldenEye and you risk suffering a stylish-yet-traditional on and off-the-tablet...dropping into your wine when you're least expecting it death.

Honourable mentions: Doom (Mac/PC/PSX, GT); Duke Nukem (Mac/PC, GT); Jedi Knight (PC, LucasArts); Quake/Quake II (PC, GT); Unreal (Mac/PC, GT).

It may look dated, but Civilization was Sid Meier's strategy milestone.

BEST OF BREED

Total Annihilation
System: PC Publisher: GT Interactive

Total Annihilation is the thinking man's strategy game. It's faster, more sophisticated and far more involved than any other RTS (real-time strategy) title on the market and, tactically speaking, it's way ahead of the competition. The exquisite true-3D landscapes look peachy as your textured-polygon forces roll relentlessly across 'em. There are sheds of units to build, with more released regularly on the Internet, via developer Cavedog's Web site. It's a game for the history books. Buy it now and enjoy it.

Honourable mentions: Civilization II (Mac/PC, MicroProse); Command & Conquer (Mac/PC, Westwood); SimCity 2000 (Mac/PC, Maxis); StarCraft (PC, Blizzard); WarCraft II (Mac/PC, Blizzard).
Driving/Racing

Driving games divide into three categories; strict simulations in the style of Grand Prix II (PC) and F1 '98 (PlayStation), where you race around actual grand prix circuits; arcade games like San Francisco Rush and Colin McRae Rally, where it all looks realistic, but you can soon have round tracks with the pedal flat on the floor; and comedy racers like Diddy Kong Racing, where the rules of the road make way for a monkey driving a go-kart. Just to confuse things further, there's also top fun to be had in entirely different vehicles like space ships (in WipeOut) and jet skis (WaveRace).

Most PC driving games are strict simulations. These are frequently annoying at first, as everyone hurtles into the distance, leaving you to chug round an empty track, but if you stick with it you'll find there's lots to enjoy. The PlayStation focuses on foot-to-the-floor arcade-style games such as Colin McRae Rally and Formula One Grand Prix, but many people say the best fun of all is to be had on the four-player thrills of N64's Mario Kart 64.

Basically, if you've ever seen Top Gear, you know the world of cars and racing is one of confusion and pain.

Best of Breed

Gran Turismo
System: PlayStation Publisher: SCEE

After a mammoth tiff over whether this or Mario Kart should finally take the chequered flag, we settled on the game that's caused many other developers to question their life's work. Pulling stuff trickery that you would never have expected from a grey box the size of a couple of bricks, the real strength of Gran Turismo is that it couples the genuine feeling of racing with real car dynamics (understeer, overtun, the world's cars) with movie car chase-quality visuals. With a choice of either arcade-style thrills or technically accurate jiggery-pokery, no-one should be without this game. Except N64 and PC owners, of course. Ooh!

Honourable mentions: Colin McRae Rally (PSX, Codemasters); Grand Prix II (PC, MicroProse); Grand Prix Legends (PC, Sierra); Mario Kart 64 (N64, Nintendo); Micro Machines V3 (PSX, Codemasters); WaveRace 64 (N64, Nintendo).

Best of Breed

Resident Evil 2
System: PlayStation Publisher: Capcom

The movie rule that suggests sequels should, by default, be several multiples worse than the original version has never really applied to videogames — probably because the games are all so technology-driven. Resident Evil 2 is no exception. A game with a heavier BBFC rating, and with good reason, RE2 carefully crafts all its menacing camera angles and horror-movie set-pieces into a nerve-tangling whole. Play this game to see just how videogames can induce emotions (albeit basic ones, like fear) in exactly the same way as a good movie. In other words, keep the light on.

Honourable mentions: Alone in the Dark (Mac/PC, Interplay), Oddworld: Abe's, Oddworld:x (PC/PSX, GT), Tomb Raider II (Mac/PC/PSX, Eidos).

Action Adventure

For the gamer who likes to think (just a little bit).

It's difficult, this categorising games. Sometimes it all gets a bit woolly. And this is one of those times. Basically, the action adventure category embraces all those games that require a degree of thought and puzzle-solving abilities, as well as lightning-quick trigger fingers. It also incorporates the more slow-paced releases that, while never quite becoming role playing games (there's not much conversation, say), do include a story element. Good examples of this genre are Resident Evil and Tomb Raider.

Action adventures have evolved from two main threads. Echoes of classic oldies such as Alone in the Dark, Prince of Persia and Flashback can be seen in the likes of the Indiana Jones-Influenced Tomb Raider series, while another thread — represented by Resident Evil — owes much to the dull CD-based "interactive movies" of the early '90s. These showed you video snippets then asked "What next?" Praise the Lord, technology has caught up with this concept, and the sight of a player staring in bulbous-eyed terror at the screen, in fear of what's round the next corner, has become common.

One to watch in the future is Metal Gear Solid, where you achieve stealthy infiltration using both guard-strangling action and hair-tearing puzzles. It's the love interest within the story that shows how piti-lead these games can be. And how charmingly soppy.
Fighting

See that bloke over there? He’s looking at you funny...

Until recently, videogames were almost entirely the preserve of young men—and if there’s one thing young men like doing it’s smacking people up. The pleasure that’s to be had playing fighting games comes, simply, from using your on-screen fighter to soundly trounce an opponent through sheer digitised brutality. And then performing your own special little victory dance around the room. This genre’s strength lies in the two-player mode. Because total perfection comes through using a lethal combination of reflexes, speed, technique, co-ordination and memory, if you beat someone at a fighting game, you’re just better than them. Simple as that. In many ways, the beat-em-up is the purest form of videogame there is.

1984’s Karate Champ from Data East was the first real arcade fighter, born of the karate craze of the early ’80s. The Way of the Exploding Fist more complex, moves. The gameplay balance and amusing characters (like Indian rubber-man Dhalsim) helped endear the game to millions. Its big rival was the brutal Mortal Kombat, which grabbed headlines the world over with its blood-soaked fatalities.

Since then, many fighting games have embraced the move to 3D (led by Sega’s Virtua Fighter series), but in essence have actually changed little. Some immensely complex background stories have emerged, and the range and violence of moves has increased, but there have been few innovations. Testament to this trend is Namco’s continued success with new Street Fighter games that are, essentially, eight years old. The PlayStation is the home of most fighters—both the PC and N64 have failed to add significantly to the fighting game genre. If this sounds negative, don’t be put off. The lack of real evolution is largely because none is needed. Street Fighter II was such a great game that it’s still highly playable. And there are new champions. Square’s Bushido Blade on the PlayStation is steeped in oriental mystique and cerebral challenge. Meanwhile, the Tekken series gets stronger. Tekken 3 offers PlayStation gamers as good a scrap as it’s possible to get.

BEST OF BREED

Tekken 3
System: PlayStation Publisher: Namco

Best of breed

Let’s be honest. Tekken 3 is as unoriginal as a game gets. It borrows heavily from every single fighter before it, including its own prequels. But each borrowed bit has been handed over to the master programmers deep inside Namco (we strongly suspect they must themselves be ninjas who trine, tweak, test and tune the gameplay until it’s just right—and then keel over. As perfect as Big Daddy versus Giant Haystacks, but a hell of lot more visually appealing.

Honourable mentions: Street Fighter Alpha 2 (PSX, Capcom); Virtua Fighter 2 (Saturn, Sega; Virtua Fighter 3 arcade coin-op, Sega).
BEST OF BREED

ARCADE ACTION

After a bit of mindless action to pass the time of day? Step right this way guv'nor...

Arcade action games can look very different to each other, but the feeling you get from playing each one should be more or less the same. You might find yourself in a car, a space ship or a space marine's size 12s – indeed, on first glance an arcade action game may well look like one of our other breeds instead. But don’t be fooled – a quick play will soon reveal the truth.

There are two big giveaway signs: first, it'll challenge your reflexes more than your grey matter. It will remain relentlessly fast-paced throughout (with no puzzle element or restful moments, like you might get in that other great catch-all category, the action adventure) and undoubtedly you’ll be armed. Second, you’ll soon find that although it might look a bit like a driving game or basic flight sim, there’s so little reality to your situation that you’d be reluctant to call it such. If so it must be an arcade action game. In truth, this is an extremely woolly, ill-defined genre – but you'll know one when you play it.

Since the 80s, when you couldn't leave your house for tripping over the piles of 'sideways-scrolling' shoot-em-ups and fighters that are this genre’s staple, the number of arcade action

PLATFORMERS

A world of mushroom-eating plumpers and marsupials with attitude.

Unless you’re Bowser, King of the Koopas, and thus destined to be forever embarrassed by an Italian bag mechanic, platformers are great. With gameplay and innovation skipping hand in hand, they’ve provided console gaming with some of its finest moments. They are dismissed as “kids stuff” only by those who know not what they say.

The whole breed is more or less the life's work of one man, Shigeru Miyamoto. Creating Donkey Kong for Nintendo in 1981, he introduced the whole “avoid and collect” concept, as well as a new character – Jumpman. Renamed Mario, the moustachioed tradesman has dominated the genre ever since, establishing Nintendo as the dominant videogame company with three Mario Bros games on the NES (later collected in enhanced form on the Super NES).

The Shigster’s level design and imagination reached its 2D peak in Super Mario World on the SNES which, with sequel ‘Yoshi’s Island’ trailing just behind, was the best platform ever, until the same man then shifted everything into 3D with Super Mario 64. As one writer eloquently scribbled, it suddenly seemed that all previous Mario games had merely been postcards from this magical land.

Sega is now hoping to see an equally revolutionary update of its platform mascot with the new Sonic Adventure for Dreamcast. The blue hedgehog's Mega Drive outings are remembered fondly, although they never matched Mario for creativity. With Sonic stabled while Saturn struggled, it's been up to Sony's Crash Bandicoot, the stunning looking Spyro the Dragon and the

BEST OF BREED

Incoming
System: PC Publisher: Rage

With visuals that make Independence Day look bland, and a host of missions, you'd be forgiven for thinking that this space-based shoot-out was trying to hide something rotten within. But no, Incoming takes the best ingredients of arcade action – aliens, shooting and explosions – and pumps them up to 11 on the actionometer. Guaranteed to bring forth the sore thumb associated with protracted game-play and 200 fire button presses a minute.

Honourable mentions: Fighting Force (PSX, BB90 Interactive), Lytatr Wars (SNES, Nintendo); Twisted Metal 2 (PSX, SCEI).

SUPER MARIO 64
System: N64 Publisher: Nintendo

Mario's 3D N64 debut is arguably the finest videogame ever created. Offering unrivalled character control, sparkling level design, tons of secret bits, and the gameplay of Nintendo's 2D platformers, Super Mario 64 is good enough to make grown gamers weep. In fact, the only bad bit about Miyamoto's masterpiece is that it inspired countless developers to come up with inferior clones. If you haven't played this game, go and steal a copy from a small child immediately.

Honourable mentions: Crash Bandicoot 2 (PSX, SCEI); Sonic the Hedgehog (Mega Drive, Sega); Super Mario World (SNES, Nintendo).
SPORTS

One ball, four posts, 22 men and a spreadsheet...

Pong started the whole videogame sports ball bouncing back in '73. Since then, sports games have increased in popularity, as TV-games like tennis evolved into the 3D. "It looks just like TV!" offerings of today.

Of all gaming genres, it's sports that offers the most variety. Take golf, for example. For most of the '80s it was golf that pushed game graphics, with increasingly photorealistic offerings trying to woo the lucrative "dad" market. Now, of course, there's also Sony's cute Everybody's Golf - a game with a console written all over it.

The pattern repeats everywhere. Any sport you can think of is not only represented, but has its own range of wildly different titles, catering for every gamer imaginable, from full-on action junkies to spreadsheet jocks.

In the UK, football dominates. EA Sports leads with an ever-present and constantly updated market leader in its FIFA series, but both Gremlin's Actua Soccer (the only serious British contender) and Konami's International Superstar Soccer are gaining ground with each release. New and ambitious recruitment of a certain footballing young Turk, Michael Owen, testifies.

Gridiron fans have the US market leader Madden, and efforts from the Gameday, Blitz, QB Club and Pro lines to consider. For basketball think: In the Zone, NBA Live, NBA Hangtime and NBA Pro. Even Deerhunter (a number one PC smash in the States), is about to be challenged by the likes of Wild Turkey Hunt and Cabela's Big Game Hunter. You get the idea.

In the real world, the result of this branding is the trend towards stables and labels - EA Sports, VR Sports - the list is growing fast. Every games company needs a spin-off sports arm. Fox Interactive in the States did it the easy way, buying the rights to the Actua range and changing the name.

The immediate future belongs to EA Sports: FIFA '99 is heading towards a Christmas list near you, and the Canadian giant has just signed a four-year licensing deal with the Carling Premiership, upon which it's building its first management sim. Sports sim fans may rarely attempt the radical, but they'll always be here.

BEST OF BREED

ISS Pro '98

System: PlayStation Publisher: Konami

Ooh, controversial. While many insist that the '94's (totally different) version of ISS '98 is just the best football game available, here in the Arcade office it's scorned for its habit of allowing cheap, stick-wobbling dribbles and finishes. The PlayStation version, however, allows some impressive team AI with solid defences and a slick passing game. Graphically, it's helped along by superb animation.

Of course it's the two-player game, abetted by solid, layered controls and a wealth of convincing team moves, that makes this such a favourite. Very rarely have we played a two-player game that provides such an involving contest. It's simply the best rendering of the best sport on the planet.

Honourable mentions:

Links LS (PC, Access); Madden '93 (Mega Drive, EA Sports); NFL '98 (PC, EA); NBA In The Zone (PlayStation, Konami); NFL GameDay '98 (PlayStation, SCE); World Series '98 (Sega, Sega).
Use the force! Fulfil your destiny! (Just make sure you don’t end up snogging your sister.)

Some games defy being pigeon-holed and show an arrogant disregard for the rules. These originals are the result of someone’s belief that a crazy idea might just work. And often this belief is justified. Remember Little Computer People (1986) on the Commodore 64, a Tamagotchi 15 years ahead of its time?

While games like this will never sell as well as fighters or 3D shooters, true originals are fun — often hilarious — and rarely impose strict rules on the player. In the majority of these games it’s impossible to “die” — they’re more interactive toys than games. We’re all looking forward to the release of Bust-A-Groove on the PlayStation, where the simple aim is, bizarrely, just to dance yourself stupid...

**BEST OF BREED**

**EPIC SPACE COMBAT**

- **Elite**
  - System: BBC Micro
  - Publisher: Acornsoft

- It came out in 1984. There was no story and no end of game goal. It had wireframe 3D graphics and was black and white. It was just you, a space ship and a whole universe to explore. It was the greatest space combat game ever, copied by many and rubbish by its sequels, but never, ever, bettered.

- **TRUE ORIGINALS**
  - **PaRappa The Rapper**
    - System: PlayStation
    - Publisher: SCE

  - Our only criticism of this rapping dog game is that there’s just not enough of it. The basic concept requires you to remember ever-more-complicated button sequences (essentially it’s Simon with knobs on), and it’s accompanied by catchy tunes and — praise the Lord — a genuinely amusing sense of humour.

- **Honourable mentions:** Creatures (Mac/PC, Mindscape), Pilotwings 64 (NA, NTSC, NTSC), The Sentinel (Spectrum), Firebird, Tall of the Sun (PSX, ArtDink).

**BEST OF BREED**

**Videogame Lexicon**

- **On-line gaming** — playing against or with people, or using the Internet.
- **PAL** — another type of TV format used in mainland Europe and parts of Asia.
- **Paradise** — creating a world of perfect tourism resort objects, even with the smallest flaws.
- **Pixel** — the smallest dot that can be seen on a TV screen, and when connected to a computer in a video game.
- **Polygons** — 3D objects, used to create complex 3D graphics, where they are arranged in layers.
- **Pop-up** — a game where the player moves the mouse to move the cursor, to help the player navigate.
- **RPG** — a role-playing game, where the player controls the hero and makes decisions.
- **Programmer** — the person responsible for writing the code that makes the game work.
POINT & CLICK ADVENTURES

Funny, charming, sedate – and not just for OAPs.

Usually, point 'n' clicks start off by giving you the role of a character. Sometimes you can see your character on screen, sometimes you can't. By pointing the cursor at a place, and then clicking it, you can pick things up, put things down, use things, talk to other characters, move around the game world and solve puzzles to progress the story. At worst, point 'n' click adventures are an exercise in moving the cursor about the screen until an area lights up, indicating that you've found something of interest.

Grim Fandango: it's the next big adventure, and reviewed in Arcade 2.

Enter the stunning, puzzling and utterly absorbing world of Myst.

Full Throttle is a great reminder of why LucasArts is king of the genre.

Still harbour childhood dreams of being a fighter pilot? Try Jet Fighter.

Team Apache: if you could master the manual, the chopper was easy.

At best, they are as surprising and absorbing as gaming gets.

LucasArts does point 'n' clicks better than anyone. The pirate-based Monkey Island trilogy proved just how funny computer games can be, while Indiana Jones and the Fate of Atlantis is so well scripted that it is rumoured to be a potential starting point for the next Indy film.

Point & Click Adventures

Simulations

It's time to live out all those magical childhood dreams.

You name your transport and there'll be an obscure PC game that simulates it. Most popular of all are the flight sims which, over the years, have become so accurate that if you were to get good at them and then find yourself in an Airplane-style "No need to panic, but can anybody fly a plane?" situation, you'd be the most qualified for the job.

The problem is that getting to grips with your virtual machinery can be a lengthy process. Every key of your keyboard will have a specific purpose, and occasionally it's necessary to use custom controllers. And it's not just hardware. Games like Flight Unlimited stick you up in the sky in a stunt plane, with a manual the size of a novel.

Best of Breed

The Curse of Monkey Island

System: PC Publisher: LucasArts

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Best of Breed

Flight Unlimited 2

System: PC Publisher: EIDOS Interactive

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Best of Breed

Total AirWar: all the action and, um, black smoke of a real dog fight.

No other flight sim creates quite the same three-way battle between man, machine and the elements as Flight Unlimited 2, set in the skies above San Francisco. There are 11,000 square miles of photo-realistic terrain, as well as solid models for any building over ten stories high. There's no actual combat involved, so you can focus your attention entirely on flying around – and under – the Golden Gate Bridge, without having to worry about being shot down. Aex.

Honourable Mentions: Apollo 18 (PC, Black Friar); F-15 (PC, Origin); Jet Fighter (PC, Take 2); Pro Pilot (PC, Sierra On-Line); Total Air War (PC, DDD).
You're surrounded by giant eels. You're scouring the Plains of Ahk'nedar for the mythical Sword of Poking. You're running low on Hit Points, and there's a vicious Red Dragon between you and the nearest village. Chances are, you're playing an RPG. A role-playing game.

The line between adventure and RPG is dotted and wiggly. In both you lead characters on quests. You meet other characters and talk to them. You collect objects and solve puzzles. But an RPG is concerned with atmosphere and character development, rather than simple progress through a linear narrative. You nurture your on-screen alter-egos obsessively as they grow powerful by slaying evil monsters or discovering valuable equipment.

RPGs are complicated. You control a cast of characters, each with different specialties. You have to manage enormous inventories and work your way through numerous separate plots and subplots. RPGs are an utterly immersive experience - and a killer of real-world relationships.

Many glassy-eyed believers will tell you Final Fantasy VII is the most complex, surprising and engrossing game ever. It has superbly defined characters, plenty of action and a relentlessly imaginative setting. The combat system is elegant and flexible, and the graphics stylish and sparkling with dramatic special effects. Even the non-interactive cut-scenes that pepper the action are compelling. And the whole thing's bloody enormous.

You will spend around 150 hours of your life playing Final Fantasy VII - and love every single minute of it.

Honorable Mentions: The Legend of Zelda: A Link to the Past (SNES); Ultima VIII (PC, Origin).

Submit your cerebellum to the ultimate conundrums with some of the most fiendishly addictive games ever made.

Bust-A-Move 2: It's simple, gripping and it'll probably take over your life.

Oh no? It's the Lemmings - green-haired time thieves.

Over many years, Tetris has evolved into Wetrix and a myriad of shameless (and not so shameless) clones, but despite all this effort, no one has truly surpassed the original. The double-handed beauties of the Game Boy version are its simplicity and portability. On the beach, on the bus, on the toilet, driving the car (no, forget we ever said that) - Tetris fun is to be had wherever you have two hands free. According to the latest statistics, three out of every five Americans have played Tetris. The other 100 million don't know what they're missing.

Honorable Mentions: Bust-A-Move 2 (PSX/N64, Acclaim); Lemmings (PC/Mac, Psygnosis); Super Puzzle Fighter 2 (PSX, Capcom); Wetrix (PC/ N64, Ocean).
 MOVE OVER, NEW YORK!

Spielberg, Tarantino, Scorsese – we all know the best movie directors. But who are the brains behind the world's top games? Here are ten of the best...

Just as moviemaking is a very much a team game, videogame creation is becoming a group activity. Couple that with the shy, elusive nature of game developers, and the importance of brand names as signifiers of quality, and it becomes clear why no game creator has reached household-name status yet, despite the increasing size of the industry. That said, just as movie directors take a lot of credit for their films, every game has its guiding light – someone with a vision and the ability to realise it – and a few have been conscripted into superstar status. The individuals here will be keen to share credit with colleagues, but let's face it – without these guys, many of the most significant games of all time wouldn't have happened.

The father of videogaming
Home team: Nintendo.
Career highlight: Creator of Mario.
What's the big deal? The most beloved (and also imitated) console developer of all time (Nintendo has shifted over 140 million Mario carts since its 1985 NES debut). Each new installment of the Mario series pushes the "easy to pick up, hard to put down" gameplay style forward. Put simply, nobody does it better.
In-game signature: Penguins tend to crop up a lot, for some reason.

Playing Miyamoto at his own game
Home team: Sega's Sonic Team.
Career highlight: Sonic: The Hedgehog.
What's the big deal? Video game folklore has it that, before launching the Mega Drive, Sega had an internal competition to come up with a Mario challenger. Sonic was the result, and Yuji Naka the programmer given the job of creating him. Naka's non-Sonic移植 wasn't white, great, failed to ignite Saturn sales, but Sonic for Dreamcast is Naka's chance to prove he's still top tier.
In-game signature: Loop-the-loops.
Currently working on: Sonic Adventure, due December 1998 (Japan).

Non-stop action pioneer
Home team: Sega.
Career highlight: Virtua Fighter series.
What's the big deal? As the long-time creative head of Sega's legendary AM2 arcade division, Suzuki was responsible for some of the coin-op world's finest. He's less hand-on now, but his legacy and influence live on. The Virtua Fighter series continues to blaze a trail for Riiken and others to follow, while more than one Arcade writer still rates OutRun as the best racer ever.
In-game signature: Leggy American blondes are his background detail of choice.
Currently working on: Assorted Dreamcast projects.

The doyen of Doom
Home team: id Software.
Career highlight: Doom/Quake series.
What's the big deal? When Doom conquered the world, and the id Software phenomenon began, it was level designer John Romero who was first thrust into the spotlight of the world's media as company spokesperson. Romero deserves much of the credit, but it was Carmack who crafted the engine for the Doom juggernaut, and has kept it's pols as the metal ever since.
In-game signature: Primal war: hurling thugs and big, big guns.
Currently working on: Quake 3 Arena, due May 1999.

Lord British himself!
Home team: Origin.
Career highlight: Ultima series.
What's the big deal? Richard Garriott's role-playing games are as old as a gaming itself (the first installment ran on an Apple II and debuted in 1982). With eight installments under his jewelled-encrusted belt, Garriott is still king of the CRPG castle, and with the Net-based Ultima Online multi-player adventures, his talents are reaching more people than ever.
In-game signature: An appearance from Lord British (Garriott's alter ego).
Currently working on: Ultima 9: Ascension, due April 1999.

Japanese RPG's top dog
Home team: Square.
Career highlight: Final Fantasy series.
What's the big deal? From '87 until last year, Square's Final Fantasy games were adored by their Japanese audience. It wasn't until the success of Final Fantasy VIII on PlayStation that Square's work began to enjoy worldwide acclaim. He's now top dog in the increasingly crucial console RPG arena and - short of a very drastic creative u-turn - it's unlikely anyone will catch him.
In-game signature: Atora-style wide-eyed teen angst.
Currently working on: Final Fantasy VIII, due December 1998 (Japan).

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What, no Brits?

■ Of these ten high-fliers only the Stamper brothers are British. A few years ago, however, it seemed all the top game designers were Brits. So what's happened?

Basically, the games industry has lost its parochialism. In the 'good old days' a system could thrive in a space as small as just one country. The Spectrum was designed and built by a Brit (Sir Clive Sinclair), bought mostly by Brits (and all the games were coded by Brits. The heroes of yesteryear seemed like big fish, but they were in a very little pond.

Nowadays, the PC and consoles are global systems and our boys have not to compete on the world stage. There are still plenty of heroes keeping the British end up, though, and if we were to write a Top 50, it would include all these chaps and more besides:

David Braben Frontier Development: Elite, V2000
Geoff Crammond: F1 Grand Prix
Richard Darling Codemasters: Micro Machines, TOCA, Colin McRae Rally
David Jones DMA Design: Lemmings, Grand Theft Auto
Martin Kaye Dreamcast: F22, EF2000, TFX
Ian Livingstone Big Finish Interactive: Deathtrap Dungeon, Games Workshop
Jeff Minter Lamasoft: Tempest 2000, Defender
Peter Molyneux Lionhead Studios: Populous, Dungeon Keeper
Dave Perry Shiny Entertainment: Earthworm Jim, MDK, Wild 9

December | 1998 | Arcade | 95
SO WHERE'S IT ALL GOING?

In which we dust off our crystal balls, wait for the mists to part, and take a few wild stabs at what the future holds...

Compare the lush 3D worlds of Tomb Raider or Quake II with the black and white flatness of Space Invaders. Videogames are moving very fast indeed – faster than any entertainment medium has ever moved before. Just witness the quantum leap in quality from Mario on the SNES to the awesome beauty of Super Mario 64. And yet most experts agree that this is just the beginning. Even the move from 2D to 3D is just equivalent to the two year period in the late '70s when movies evolved from silent into the talkies.

The price of all this technological progress, however, is that sooner or later videogame hardware becomes dated and eventually obsolete. At the moment, Sony's PlayStation rules the roost, but this will inevitably change. And though PlayStation probably has a couple more years of mainstream success ahead of it, the potential successors are already lining up.

First into the ring is going to be Sega's Dreamcast, due to be launched in Japan this November (see page 18 for the full story). It probably won't be released in the UK until late 1999, but it looks like it'll be well worth the wait. Graphics for the first batch of games look jaw-dropping, and there's better to come. Unofficial bench tests rate Dreamcast's graphics output as more powerful than that of a state-of-the-art Virtua Fighter 3 arcade cabinet.

 Sega is backing this technological left hook with a hunger to reclaim the glory of the Mega Drive years – and the return of Sonic the Hedgehog is a sure-fire crowd-pleasing start. Trouble is, though, Sony ain't gonna let no pesky hedgehog undo all of the good work that PlayStation has done. The company's response to Dreamcast will be PlayStation 2, rumored to be a DVD-based powerhouse, every inch a match for Dreamcast. Ominously for Sega, Sony has announced that it will unveil its PlayStation 2 plans the same day Sega releases its new machine. A mere coincidence? Of course it's not. Meanwhile, Nintendo already has plans for Nintendo 64's replacement. There'll soon be more custom designed silicon squabbling for your attention than in an episode of Baywatch.

So what's going to win? Most people guess that Sega will get a year of glory with its Dreamcast before getting squashed by PlayStation 2. We should then see a battle between Sega and Nintendo for number two. But nothing is guaranteed. The only certain winner in all of this is us, the game players – for we get to play great new games on whichever piece of kit comes out on top.

As for home computers, prices will continue to fall, and more people will want Internet access, so more PCs will find their way into people's homes. And games will ride in on the coat tails. Sooner or later every PC will be used to play games. It's destiny. And as processors become more powerful and 3D accelerators commonplace, the games will continue to improve. The internet, too, offers bags of potential for multi-player gaming. Despite the promises of Dreamcast et al, the PC will remain a cutting-edge games system for the foreseeable future.

So where will it all end? Star Trek's Holodeck is the technological dream. And slowly we're getting there.

In some ways, though, for all of gaming's great technological leaps, we haven't really progressed at all. Why? Because, from Space Invaders through to Quake II, we're still just shooting things. We can't talk to other game characters and our range of behaviour is extremely limited. We're still acting like caversn – silently wandering about killing things. And it's in areas like behaviour and interaction that much of gaming's most exciting evolution is yet to occur. Sophisticated character development, Artificial Life technologies, improved interfaces, speech recognition – games are just going to get deeper, more complex, more involving, and plain better.

And Arcade magazine will be watching excited as hell.

Sony ain't gonna let no pesky hedgehog undo all the good work that the PlayStation has done

Bigger all the time
Just look how big games have got!

Bigger than the movies? Bigger than pop music? Just check out the graph.

Some notes about the figures: the games total includes neither rental nor coin-op revenues, and combines both console and PC sales. The music total includes all retail sales of CDs, singles and cassettes, and assumes that pop and rock is 60% of total sales. The movies total does not include satellite, cable or terrestrial, and assumes an average cinema admission price of £4 and that 60% of video sales are of feature films. Data is from the European Leisure Software Publisher's Association, the British Video Association, the Cinema Advertising Association, and the British Phonograph Institute.
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KICK ASS
BECOME A DEMON GAME PLAYER OVERNIGHT

WELCOME TO KICK ASS
IT’S SPYROTASTIC!

Edited by Rich Pelley

When I was first offered the position of staff writer on Arcade, I was told that it was my friendly nature, skill with electrical appliances and general willingness to "get my hands dirty" that made me the ideal candidate. However, I've also had my responsibilities to extend beyond simply making tea and I was right. Not only do I get to make the tea (and go to the shops anytime anyone in the office fancies chocolate or crisps), but I also have to personally scour the globe to bring you the most complete monthly tips section money can buy. Everything from over-sized complete gaming guides to the smallest hints - I'm on their tail.

Welcome, therefore, to Kick Ass. This month I've been playing quite a lot of Spyro the Dragon. In fact, I've

"We'll be offering complete guides to the biggest games around every month"

played all of it. Only this morning I beat Gnasty Gnorc, the final boss, but was told that I'd have to collect every single item of treasure before I'd be allowed into the last level, at which point I nearly had a nervous breakdown. I'll be blown if I can find the third dragon in Haunted Tower, but apart from that, I present a mammoth six-page guide to everything (also) you need to know about Spyro the Dragon. Took me ages, you know. We'll be doing complete guides like this to the biggest games around every month, so let these adventures with Spyro whet your appetite.

I've got pretty good at 3082, the top-quality N64 snowboarding game too, and you'll find tips for that on page 106. In fact, there are tips for over 35 games here, on everything from the N64 to the Playstation to the PC to the Game Boy. If there's a cheat worth knowing about, Arcade is the place to read about it, no matter what your system preference or taste in games. I bid you the very best of gentlemen's luck, and hope to see you again next issue.

COMPLETE PLAYERS GUIDE
KICK ASS AT...

SPYRO THE

Format: PlayStation | Publisher: Sony | Developer: Insomniac Games | Price: £39.99 | Players: 1

- Spyro the Dragon is a game that always turns heads, and impresses upon the brain just how powerful a machine the PlayStation can be when it tries. It's a great game, of course, as you'll have gathered from our review on page 104, but how do you complete it?

GENERAL TIPPERY

Fans
Fire at fans to release a gem.

Gliding
Press @ to jump, @ again while in the air to glide, and @ to stop abruptly from a glide.

About to die?
If you mistake a lapa jump on a level other than one of the Home ones, press Start and choose Exit Level. You'll be saved.

Chests
Those with a lock require a key. Those with no lock can be supercharged, or you can blast them open with a red firework. TNT barrel for your breath (once you've kissed a blue fairy).

Fairies
There are three types of fairy. Red ones appear when you rescue a dragon, and enable you to save the game. Blue ones (on High Caves and Haunted Towers) will give you a kiss and temporarily supercharge your breath so you can blow through metal doors, and kill otherwise invincible baddies. Yellow ones open up new whirlwinds (on Lofty Castle) and save you on (on High Caves) when you leap off a cliff.

Supercharge strips
Yellow arrows on the floor enable you to supercharge into baddies and chests. Jump at the end for a huge leap. Sometimes you need to charge down more than one strip in a row to get a supercharge.

Thieves
Catching a thief can be a tricky business. Put your horns down and charge, following their movement patterns. They run slightly slower than you so you can catch them by cutting corners and jumping "torch or charm them. If you lose them, they'll reappear in the same spot as you first saw them. On later levels, slow down for the tricky navigation parts - there's nothing more annoying than charging after a thief only to plummet off the side of a bridge.

FIRE!

HOME
- Rescue Nestor and Debin from the waterfall. Collect gams from the raised platforms near Stone Hill. Dark Hollow is through the maze that's next to the castle entrance. Take the purple door by Stone Hill to rescue Tomas, use the whirlwind to glide to treasure and enter the Town Square. Back at the start you can slide down the hill for gams, run through the gap to the right to release Argos and enter Toasty. Then go back through the Castle entrance and grab a lift with Marco.

TOWN SQUARE
- Take the steps to Nils. Glide to the bulbs. Glide again from the highest point. Jump over the water and rescue Delkin. Up the steps to Alvis. Stand on the platform up the steps by the chokers and glide down the steps to the right. Chase the thief and rescue Thor.

STONE HILL
- Jump down the well to release Gail. Run through the first door to bag treasure and rescue Leder. Take the whirlwind inside the tower to rescue Gildas. Glide off the hill to reach the level outskirts. Ab the treasure and chase the thief. Jump onto the castle wall and drop down onto the beach for the key. Open the chest down the well, rescue Astor and return home.

TOASTY
- An opening on the left leads to dogs, shepherds and treasure. Rescue Nevis. Kill the dogs before you have a pop at the Hensman and avoid his scythe.
### PLAYSTATION
- P100 G-Darius
- P110 Madden '99
- P105 NBA Hangtime
- P100 R-Type
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- P105 James Bond 007

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**DRAGON**

FOR FULL REVIEW TURN TO PAGE 124

COMPLETE PLAYERS GUIDE

SPIRO THE DRAGON PEACE KEEPERS WORLD 2

**HOME**
- Rescue Titan Rame the lama, rescue Magnus. Find the red target on the rock, kill the bad guy. Maneuver the cannon, nudge the cannon around and breathe flames on the end to fire at the target. Jump across to rescue Gunner and grab the egg from the thief, get the key and find Night Right. Keep coming back to this level to charge up your lives.

**CLIFF TOWN**
- Collect treasure from the rooftops, go over the second bridge, rescue Hakor and chase the thief. Follow the string of bridges up to Enzo. Shoot the cautious for a gem. Glide over the rooftop with the red firework, and use it to blast open the chest. Glide from Enzo to the other side of the river. Clear the place of gems and buzzards, and rescue Marco. Glide in all directions to nab more treasure.

**DRY CANYON**
- Hang a sharp left to nab the thief and plenty of treasure. Rescue Canon. Use the steps over the water to glide down to rescue Ko and find a bit of jumping and gliding plenty of treasure. The chest is on a rock out to sea. Back at the starting area, leap under the steps and rescue Boris. Glide into the castle entrance above the water for treasure. Explore for the final dragon before returning home.

**ICE CAVERN**
- Rescue Urik and Todor. Knock the poles for gems, and glide to the platform for the key. Glide back to the chest and turn right. A passage on the left leads to Anor and back round to Tod. Glide across the main straight to the chest, then follow back over the narrow windy bridge to Asher. There's more treasure past the return home chest. Follow the trail of crystals over the platforms by Asher, and kill and collect your way to Ragnar.

**DOCTOR SUMP**
- Follow the outskirts of the castle around past the first whirlwind and take the second one around the corner. Glide over to the purple gem, then down to the key. Glide across the final whirlwind and save Tondo. Get close to the yellow Zuko boss (to avoid his staff) and touch his bottom. Kill him three times. Exit the level.

---

**Dragons. You never know quite where you are with dragons.**
**Spyro the Dragon Continued...**

**Complete Players Guide**

**World 3**

**1. Home**
- Jump the water and bust the thief. Rescue Cosmos. Follow the main path round and nab the second thief. Go up against the yellow arrows and rescue Zenox. Enter High Caves. Supercharge down the hill and rescue Boldar to Crystal Right. The key and chest are hidden in caves that you can spy if you stop for a look around.

**2. Alpine Ridge**
- Round and up the steps, jumping to kill the wizard and rescue Zane. Leap right, and time your way into the cave. Jump a second after the wall has risen. Time your way over to Braid. Head down the purple cave for treasure, and up the steps to Zander. Glide down to the purple cave to rescue Kelvin and chase the thief.

**3. High Caves**
- Go up high past the whirlwinds. Rescue Gyrus. The blue wizards shoot the green wizards. Jump across the platforms. Avoid the lobsters in the cave to the kissing fairy past the last cave. Rescue Angy. Use the supercharge ramp to leap to the right cave. Leap into oblivion. The fairies will carry you to the supercharge ramp. Leap to the left cave and rescue Cedric. Take the fairies. Jump from the bridge to the nearest cave. Jump to the second and nail the thief. Use the fairies. Jump to the distant grass. Hit the second thief. Use the fairies. Go left to the ring around the castle for treasure.

**4. Wizard Peak**
- Look around the edges of the opening cave. Jump on the platform for gems and whirlwinds. There are no dead ends so you can work all the way around to the start. Enter and clear the area of bad guys. Rescue Janus. Charge down the supercharge ramp to kill the wizards. Rescue Heus. Now supercharge to the chest. There's lots of treasure through the cave on the right. Supercharge through and jump to the platform. Go up the stairs, nab the thief, rescue Loso, and open the sunny flight level on Artisans. The thief is behind the big superjump ramp.

**5. Blowhard**
- Follow round to the Whirlwind boss. Shoot him, run through the door over the platforms, kill the wizards and rescue Attar. Over the platforms, find the boss and shoot and kill him. Jump down the windy bit.

**The Badies**

**How to beat every baddy in the entire game? You must be joking. No, we're not.**

**1. Monsters**
- Level: Artisans
- Appearance: green, brown hat, big feet
- Attacks: run away
- Kill: charge or fire
- 2. Thieves
- Level: Artisans
- Appearance: green, swing back, drop goodies
- Attacks: run away
- Kill: charge or fire
- 3. Rams
- Level: Stone Hill
- Appearance: yellow, big horns
- Attacks: charge
- Kill: charge/drown or fire (or kill/drown)

**2. Creatures**
- Level: Stone Hill
- Appearance: green, brown hat, big feet
- Attacks: block with shield
- Kill: charge/charge/drown or fire (or kill/drown/drown)
- 6. Club Monsters
- Level: Dark Hollow
- Appearance: red, green, big club
- Attacks: whack you
- Kill: fire
- 7. Fat Monsters
- Level: Dark Hollow
- Appearance: heavy, Viking hat, armor
- Attacks: belly-bounce
- Kill: fire from behind

**3. Bulls**
- Level: Town Square
- Appearance: red horns, now ring
- Attacks: charge
- Kill: charge or fire

**4. Bullyfighter**
- Level: Town Square
- Appearance: hat, red dress
- Attacks: charge, chains, fire
- Kill: charge or fire

**5. Speak Monsters**
- Level: Peace Keepers
- Appearance: red hat, front armor, spear
- Attacks: stumps, spear
- Kill: charge or fire

**6. Cannon Monsters**
- Level: Peace Keepers
- Appearance: blue hat, mans
- Attacks: fires cannon
- Kill: charge or fire

**7. Cheeky Monsters**
- Level: Peace Keepers
- Appearance: hide in tents
- Attacks: quiets and moans
- Kill: charge or fire

**8. Blind burst Baddies**
- Level: Dry Canyon
- Appearance: yellow, shield, robe
- Attacks: shield
- Kill: charge or fire

**9. Attakas**
- Level: Dry Canyon
- Appearance: yellow, shield, robe
- Attacks: shield
- Kill: charge or fire

**10. Buzzards**
- Level: Dry Canyon
- Appearance: feather, beak
- Attacks: squawks
- Kill: charge or fire

**11. Bird-Swinging Baddies**
- Level: Dry Canyon
- Appearance: hat, yellow
HOME
- Find Bruno, rescue Gekkot. Jump down a well next to Gekkot to find Wild Fight. The key is on a platform out to sea over the bridge past the tree stump, and the chest nearby.

TERRACE VILLAGE
- Push right as soon as you enter the level or you'll land in the swamp. Follow the level round. Always take out ground elecrocritters first, then charge into the cannon bad guys. Go into the building, skirt around the outside for more treasure, and rescue Guade. There's lots of treasure around the outskirts of the castle. Take the whirlwind and glide to more treasure, including from the top of the brown steps and round the corner for more rooftop access and two more fireworks. Navigate some more electrical platforms and rescue Cyprin.

TREE TOPS
- Head right through window for the key. Glide over to Kyle Supercharge jump over to the platform, jump to the castle wall and superjump again. Use the whirlwind by the Return Home chest. Back at the start, keep straight on for the chest and rescue Salak. Supercharge over and supercharge again. The last dragon is tricky to find. Look for him in the distance: you need to combine superjumps. The green thief at the beginning will lead you to him if you follow.

MISTY BOG
- Kill the buddy behind the start. Rescue Rosco. Ram the Walkman-wearing bad guys, turn back on yourself and cross the water on the platforms to the cave and rescue Damon. Glide back to land. Jump down the cave. Rescue Zeke and Babka and search around for some more easy treasure.

METAL HEAD
- Lots of treasure to find, and Saddik to rescue. To kill the boss, charge the energy poles when they are green.
SPYRO THE DRAGON CONTINUED...

COME FLY WITH ME: The flying levels, eh? Where are they?

- SUNNY FLIGHT ARTISANS: Rescue Losas from Wizard Peak on Magic Crafters. Return to Artisans. Jump on the five platforms by the waterfall. The archway will open.
- NIGHT FLIGHT PEACE KEEPERS: Go to the cannon near the rock with the red target. Nudge the cannon round, flame the end to blast the rock, jump the platform. Turn right.
- CRYSTAL FLIGHT MAGIC CRAFTERS: Charge down the supercharge ramp, knock over the big green wizards, take out the small green wizards and rescue the dragon.
- WILD FLIGHT BEAST MAKERS: It's down a well near where you rescue the second dragon from Jump down, and use the whirlwind to get back up again.
- ICY FLIGHT DREAM WEAVING: Use cannon to shoot guys blocking the doorway to the castle. Hop through, flame the jesters, jump onto raised platform and bingo!

COMPLETE PLAYERS GUIDE

SPYRO THE DRAGON DREAM WEAVING WORLD 5

1. HOME
   - Lots of jumps, but an otherwise easy home level to negotiate. Rescue Laevel. To get into the castle, kill the bad guy manning the morphing cannon and fire at the two bakers guarding the entrance. Use the dragon jesters to jump the platforms to reach the Ice Flight Level. Die down to rescue Zelo.

2. DARN PASSAGE
   - Take whirlwind, rescue Kastja. Follow path round to Asia. Glide from here to the green cave. This will lead you via a couple of glides, around the entire level to Apars, Ochid, and eventually Bakari. And in doing so enable you to bag an almost obscene amount of treasure.

3. LOFTY CASTLE
   - Release the three trapped fairies to open up a whirlwind. Rescue Mubita. But it is over some more platforms. Release the three fairies on the platforms.

THE BADDIES CONT'D

- Appearance: pink nose, tufts
- Attacks: charge
- Kill: fire
- 35 ELECTRICIANS
  - Appearance: green, backpacks
  - Attack: electricity ground
  - Kill: charge, then fire
  - 36 ZAPPIERS
  - Appearance: purple, black
  - 37 TWIN-TURRET BADDIES
  - Appearance: eyes inside mini link
  - Attack: blast you
  - Kill: charge
  - 38 SMALL ZULUS
  - Appearance: big head, small body
  - Attack: baby yellow spears
  - Kill: charge or fire
  - 39 BIG ZULUS
  - Appearance: big head, long arms
  - Attack: grabs you/spins small Zulus
  - Kill: fire
  - 40 BLUE WIZARDS
  - Appearance: big head, small body
  - Attack: blue cocktails
  - Kill: fire
  - 41 WALKMAN WEARING BADDIES
  - Appearance: amphilian
  - Attack: swings tongue
  - Kill: fire
  - 42 TUMBLING ZULUS
  - Appearance: small and spining
  - Attack: knocks you over
  - Kill: charge
  - 43 ROBOT BOSS
  - Appearance: big head, small body
  - Attack: blasts you
  - Kill: fire
  - 44 BLUE FRIGGS
  - Appearance: small and spining
  - Kill: fire
  - 45 MAD MEN
  - Appearance: Dream Weavers
  - Attack: grabs you
  - Kill: charge or fire
  - 46 MAD MEN 2
  - Appearance: Dream Weavers
  - Attack: grabs you
  - Kill: charge or fire
  - 47 MAD MEN 3
  - Appearance: Dream Weavers
  - Attack: grabs you
  - Kill: charge or fire
  - 48 ALARM JESTERS
  - Appearance:ערב
  - Kill: charge or fire

Level: Dream Weavers/Towers
- Appearance: jester hat, grins
- Attack: no attacks
- Kill: charge, turns to alarm, sets off alarm platform
- Appearance: cute/gray
- Attack: no attacks
- Kill: charge, sets off alarm platform
- Appearance: cute/gray
- Attack: no attacks
- Kill: charge, sets off alarm platform

Level: Dark Passage
- Appearance: cute/gray
- Attack: no attacks
- Kill: charge, sets off alarm platform

Level: Dark Passage

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GNORC GNEXUS
This is the portal to the final four levels. Complete and find the exit to progress to the next. Rescue Debin, nab the treasure and head into Gnorc Cove.

GNORC COVE
Get past first two barrel-oliers, and collect the treasure. Use the TNT barrel to blow open the chest. Jump into the hole at the TNT barrel rolling down the slope. Kill the bad guy at the top. Rescue Lates! Enter the boat and follow round. Rescue Tomas. Follow round. Blow the bad guy standing on TNT barrels. Tonk the barrel with your horns to clear a path through baddies. Exit level.

TWILIGHT HARBOUR
Kill your way round to the whirlwind, and follow the basic course of the level.

GNASTY GNORC
Chase the thief, nab the key, chase the thief, nab the key. Chase Gnorc around the circuit, jumping and gliding to save time (and avoid falling off) as you go down the stairs. Shoot him once as he stops on his platform, quickly follow him, jump over the platforms and shoot him again. Speed is the key - if you're too slow you'll run out of platforms.

IS THAT IT?
Er, kinda. Except the very last level, which you need to have 100% treasure to enter.

HIGH ENERGY
You have to feed your dragonfly to keep your energy levels topped up. "But with what?", we hear you ask?

- Sheep
- Frogs
- Chickens
- Rabbits
- Lizards
- Bats
- Blasted chickens
- Dancing mushrooms

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**WWF WAR ZONE**

**ARM-LOCKING MOVES**

For an easy ring out, climb down from the ring when the match begins. Your opponent will always follow. Then you get to follow you around the outside of the ring to run the timer down. But don’t get too far away or your opponent will climb back into the ring. Once the timer reaches four or five seconds, quickly hit your opponent repeatedly to stun them. Jump back on the mat with only a second or two to spare and you will win by ring out. Granted, it’s not particularly interesting, but victory will be yours. Oh yes.

**FINISHING MOVES**

And the finishing moves? The same apply to both PlayStation and N64.

- **Stone Cold** Steve Austin
  - Stone Cold Stunner: Right, Right, Tie Up
  - To do it, you need: To be Tied Up

- **Heartbreak Kid** Shawn Michaels
  - Sweet Chin Music: Right, Down, Up, Kick+Block
  - To do it, you need: To be both standing

- **Triple H** Hunter Hearst Helmsley
  - The Pedigree: Right, Down, L, Punch+Tie Up
  - To do it, you need: To be both standing

- **The Undertaker**
  - Tombstone Piledriver: Down, Down, Down
  - Punch+Tie Up
  - To do it, you need: To be both standing

- **The Black Hart** Owen Hart
  - The Sharpshooter: Left, Left, Up, Kick+Block
  - To do it, you need: To stand at the feet of a fallen opponent

- **The Rock** Rocky Maivia
  - The Rock Bottom: Right, Right, Up, Punch+Tie Up
  - To do it, you need: To be both standing

- Faarooq
  - The Dominator: Up, Up, Up, Tie-Up+Block
  - To do it, you need: To be both standing

- Mankind/Cactus Jack/Dude Love
  - Mandible Claw: Right, Left, Up, Tie-Up+Block
  - To do it, you need: To be both standing, or standing at the head of a fallen opponent

- Goldust
  - Curtain Call: Left, Down, Down, Tie-Up+Block
  - To do it, you need: To be behind your opponent

- Ken Shamrock
  - Ankle Lock Submission: Left, Right, Up, Kick, Tie-Up
  - To do it, you need: To stand at the feet of a fallen opponent

- Bret "Hitman" Hart
  - The Sharpshooter: Left, Left, Up, Kick+Block
  - To do it, you need: To stand at the feet of a fallen opponent

- **The British Bulldog** Davey Boy Smith
  - Running Powerslam: Up, Down, Tie-Up
  - To do it, you need: To be tied up

- Ahmed Johnson
  - Pearl River Plunge: Right, Left, Up, Kick+Block
  - To do it, you need: To be both standing

- Kane
  - Tombstone Piledriver: Down, Down, Down, Punch+Tie Up
  - To do it, you need: To be both standing

- Headbanger Mosh
  - Mosh Pit: Left, Right, Up, Tie-Up+Block
  - To do it, you need: Your opponent on the ground, while you’re standing on the top turnbuckle

- Headbanger Thrasher
  - Stage Dive: Right, Up, Up, Punch+Kick
  - To do it, you need: Your opponent on the ground, while you’re standing on the top turnbuckle

**PLAYSTATION**

To view the FMV Movies, at the title screen press Up+@, Right+@, Down+@, Left+@ four times. R1, L1 and R2+L2 twice. The words "Movie 1" will appear. Use Up and Down to scroll through the movies, and

**NINTENDO 64**

- The computer chooses a wrestler for you at the selection screen. Hold Up and hit Kick. Hold C-Down, C-Right, top R or C-Up while selecting your wrestler for alternate outfits. To call for a certain wrestler to run in during a match, hold both top buttons, the 2 trigger and press a direction on the digital pad and an attack button. To access the basement, hit the top L and then the top R at the elevator.

- To let the computer choose a wrestler for you at the selection screen, hold Up and hit Kick. Hold C-Down, C-Right, top R or C-Up while selecting your wrestler for alternate outfits. To call for a certain wrestler to run in during a match, hold both top buttons, the 2 trigger and press a direction on the digital pad and an attack button. To access the basement, hit the top L and then the top R at the elevator.

**PC**

**HOUSE OF THE DEAD**

- Cheaty pants.

- Hold [ctrl] and type "skidman" at the main menu to enable the cheat options. Then type "creatures" to be able to edit the character stats.
TENCHU

There's a brand new breed of game coming on to the market – sneak-'em-ups, which are arcade adventures where the emphasis is not on the fighting, but instead on the passive completion of your mission. Metal Gear Solid which is reviewed in import on page 126 is going to be massive, and similarly, Tenchu (bless you) did snazzy things recently too.

To restore your health during play, press Start to pause then press Up twice, Down twice, Left, Right, Left, Right, @, @. A shout should confirm things. To carry up to 99 weapons, hold L1 and press Up twice, Down twice, Left, Right, Left, Right, @, @, @ at the weapon selection screen. To increase your ammo, hold L2 and press Up twice, Down twice, Left, Right, Left, Right, @, @. For more weapons hold R1 and press Up twice, Down twice, Left, Right, Left, Right, @, @ at the weapon selection screen. Do you want to select a level? Select a character then hold R2 and press Up twice, Down twice, Left, Right, Left, Right, @, @ at the next screen.

GENERAL TIPPERY

- Watch your opponent carefully, and take advantage of any movement that he does.
- Block when you need to. Some attacks will pierce your guard if they're too strong (like the bear's attack), or if they're at the correct angle. So, be wary.
- Use water: No enemy can swim, not even the bosses.
- You can drink medicine when fighting the boss if you find a safe area. Pick it up from the floor if it's knocked from your hand.
- Use a bomb if you really need to.
- Remember, fighting is a ninja's second weapon; the way of Shindai should always be foremost in your thoughts (chicken out and sneaking around instead). There is never a need for you to strike first. Unless the blick really pisses you off.

YOU SNEAKY BAST

The first thing you need to remember is to not be seen. Use the L1 button to check out the territory around you, and then hide behind cars and walls – whatever you can.

Keep a close eye on the circle below you. When it's green, no-one can see you. When it's orange, enemies (especially dogs) will move closer and spot you. When it's red, you've been spotted and are under attack. Try to escape and return. The size of the circle is directly proportionate to the proximity of enemies.

Use rooftops – the baddies rarely look up. Wait until the guard changes direction or yawns before attacking. You can minimise the risk of a baddy turning around as you drop from a nearby rooftop by crouching and rolling off with a sideways roll for the very best viewing angle.

If you can't get a clear shot at an enemy, don't use the L1 button. By the time you release it and drop, they'll have turned around. Instead, go back and forth for a better view. If all else fails and you can only get one glance at an enemy's back, keep it. Most times you'll make it.

TEKKEN 3

If at first you don't succeed... enter one of the following numbers to activate a cheat function.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effect</th>
<th>Code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tournament mode</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fast paced</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stealth turbo</td>
<td>273</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum speed</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No pushing</td>
<td>390</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unlimited turbo</td>
<td>461</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hyper speed</td>
<td>552</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum block</td>
<td>616</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quick hands</td>
<td>709</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum power</td>
<td>802</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal tending</td>
<td>937</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tsk. Tekken, eh? What can we say about the world's greatest beat-'em-up game? Well, apart from how to fight as the other characters, not a great deal...

So, you've bought Tekken 3 and want to beat the crap out of all your mates. Well, you can fight as Kuma, Julia, Gun Jack, Mokujin, Anna, Bryan, Ogre, True Ogre or Heihachi just by completing Arcade mode with each of the nine characters. Fight as Panda or Tiger by highlighting Kuma or Tiger at the character selection screen and pressing @ or @.

Alternatively, if you want to, you can fight as Doctor Boskonwitch by completing Force Mode four times, and defeating the Doctor. And if that's not your cup of tea (or indeed, doesn't flex your honed muscles to bursting point), you can fight as Gon by completing Arcade mode using Doctor Boskonwitch. Then, select Arcade mode and press the D-pad off either side of the character selection screen. Or you can defeat Gon under "Ball mode" or play Survival or Force mode until prompted for initials, then enter GON.

Enter Practice mode and then choose the "Freestyle" selection. Press L1+R1+R2+ @ at the freestyle options screen. Then press Down+ Select to record or replay a combo. Select Arcade mode, highlight a fighter on the character selection screen, and hold R1+R2+L+L2 until the timer reaches zero. Release the buttons when both fighters are displayed. Et voila!

WRECKIN' CREW

Enter these easy-to-type codes on the option screen. Oh, go on – you know you want to really.

GIMMEALL
All levels and cars

RESETALL
Resets the game to defaults

RESTLAP
Resets lap records, times

KEYFOUN
Give you all the paddock keys

CINEMAON
Access all the FMV bits

KARTSON
Play with karts

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If Kentucky Fried Chicken is finger-twistingly good (dispassionately), then 1080° is finger-twistingly hard. At times, it requires the finger dexterity of, er, someone who can move their digits about totally independently from each other. There’s far more to the controls than the instructions or initial play might suggest, as well as plenty of interesting glitches. Won’t you step this way?

When in the air, position your board correctly to land any form of jump. Tucking makes you go faster, inhibits steering, but increases stability. When you do a jump, tap the Z button a split second before you land. Luck also any time you find yourself not on snow. When jumping, the longer you hold the A button, the higher you fly. Remember that you can’t grab your board while you’re holding either the Z or the A button.

You can pull off some grab tricks on flat ground, such as a Method or Tweak. Others, such as Indy Nosebone, require lift off a ramp or lip first.

The key with spin tricks is to get too frustrated. Practice looking at your hands rather than the telly. Once you are accustomed to accelerating up the sides of the half-pipe, releasing Z and pressing A, you need only give the screen an occasional glance as you sort your fingers out. In fact, it’s even worth practising on a spare controller: work the correct combinations of fingers, pressing faster and faster until you’re confident enough to try one on the game proper.

To get a boost at the start of a stage, turn to ‘93, and tap forward. For a huge ramp, immediately turn left at the start of the training half-pipe and squeeze Z. When you’re near the wall, you need to turn back towards the pipe to be boosted absurdly high into the air. For a huge jump, head off the cliff next to the first pointy neon light on Dragon Forest. If you choose ‘Retro’ as you approach the finish line in a match race, you’ll be able to continue snowboarding. And if you carry out this manoeuvre on the Deadly Falls course, you will have to board right off the cliff. Cool, eh?

If you can’t complete a training trick (stop going down the pub and get practising), you can pick and complete a really easy one and press C-Right while you’re still in the air. Scroll down to the trick you can’t do, and when you land, you’ll be credited for completing it. You can score an easy 500-point combo even on the flat with a jump+grab+180. If that’s too easy, jump immediately after the word ‘go’. With practice, you ought to be able to make a 360+540+360+540+180, worth 8000 points.

The fastest way through the Mountain Village tunnel, meanwhile, is to turn left first right, then left. As the light at the end of the tunnel comes into view, outrun and fly out as far as possible, but don’t jump. Past the two logs, jump off/drop off to the mud leading to a mugol and a house.

---

**PLAYSTATION**

**WILD ARMS**

PlayStation RPG fun, with a nifty flaw that allows you to duplicate items in your inventory.

Make sure that you’ve only got one of the item to be duplicated, then enter a battle mode. Have the first character (typically Jack) use a healing item, such as a medicine or berry. Then have the second character (typically Cecile) also use the same healing item. Have the final character (Rudy) exchange the positions of the healing item and the item to be multiplied in the inventory. Then, have Rudy use the healing item. Post-victory, the inventory will contain 255 of the multiplied item. Cool.

---

**GAME GUIDE**

**CASTLEVANIA LEGENDS**

Hand-held pleasure.

Enter [Axe] [Dagger] [Dagger] [Dagger] as a password to start at the last level with all items and soul weapons. And the level passwords? Try [Axe] [Cross] [Space] [Clock] for level three, and [Clock] [Space] [Dagger] [Dagger] for level four.
THE X-FILES

FBI FIELD OFFICE, SEATTLE: APRIL 2, 1996

Haven't any problems getting started? Walk this way, Spook-face. First up, meet Special Agent Cook. Pack your best friendly smile to greet him. Then take one step forward, turn left into your office, enter it and pick up the phone. Now go to the chief's office and look at the map on the door which leads outside.

Skinner tells you Mulder and Scully are missing. Ask him where they were last seen and what case they were working on. You'll receive orders. They flew from Dulles International Airport to Tacoma, and are staying at the Comity Inn in Everett. Ask him about their previous behaviour and all the questions you want, even if it seems irrelevant.

Talk to the chief, and nip to his office. Talk to him, but don't ask him to send an APR. Go to your own room. Look at the right desk drawer beneath the phone. Get the gun, cuffs and badge. Use the computer and enter the password 'shikot', found on the clipboard on the wall. Read your e-mail.

Hand the file from your desk to Cook. Finally, choose Everett and Comity Inn as your destinations.

THE COMITY INN, EVERETT: APRIL 2, 1996

First, show the girl behind your desk counter your D badge. Ask her about the two missing agents and the rental car (it's a Ford Taurus, plate 62517). The note she's written will be in your folder. Ask the girl to show you the rented rooms 103 and 104.

Search the room. There's a paper with some alien-related articles, plus some sunflower seeds and a bottle of vodka mix. In the suitcase on the bed there's a case file (number SE-75424, case X3099 with forms and a note on it). Take the book from the stand near the phone. Ask Skinner about the case Scully and Mulder were on. Ask the girl at the motel office about the outgoing calls (click on the phone image). Call the numbers on the form. Now return to the motel room and take the laptop (you’ll get a password from the Crime Lab later). Go back to the motel office and talk to Skinner. Go back to the FBI field office and hide behind your PC. Use the NG function to look up the phone numbers, passwords and rental car number. Go to the meeting room, then the closet for authorised personal only. Get the binoculars, camera, lock pick, flashlight, night vision goggles and evidence kit. Leave the office, head for the Seattle docks. Got it now? You're on your own from here.

SAN FRANCISCO RUSH

Enter one of the following codes to activate the corresponding cheat function.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EYESGOD</td>
<td>Enable extra zoom level on lower-level machines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SALADTOSS</td>
<td>Mission select</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TWOBYFOUR</td>
<td>Build any unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HERMES</td>
<td>Faster unit ordering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DONKEYS</td>
<td>Shoot jeeps instead of missiles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MORNINGAFTER</td>
<td>Full map</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GIMMIEGIMMIE</td>
<td>Build anything without a Command Center or Complex</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNCLEJOHN</td>
<td>God mode</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHACHING</td>
<td>$10,000 added to resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MRMUSCLE</td>
<td>Increased armour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIGSOFTY</td>
<td>Decreased enemy armour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COFFEE</td>
<td>Increased speed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BEER</td>
<td>Decreased enemy speed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SHAFT</td>
<td>Increased fire-power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SHANK</td>
<td>Decreased enemy fire-power</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NIGHTMARE CREATURES

Type everywhere to enable cheat mode and a level selection feature. Then, enter one of the following codes to activate the corresponding cheat function.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BOULON</td>
<td>Unlimited items</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BRONKO</td>
<td>Play as creature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHCD</td>
<td>Small creatures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DAVID</td>
<td>Disables combos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GU</td>
<td>One hit kills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BLUR</td>
<td>Blur mode</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BES</td>
<td>Debug mode</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOBY</td>
<td>Music test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALAIN GUYET</td>
<td>Enable all cheats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOVOKI</td>
<td>Development team message</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

F-ZERO X

It doesn't look that great, but buried deep beneath F-Zero X's graphics lies a game of quite remarkable depth. As you ought to know, from our review on page 142, there are some cheats, too, though. Like you didn't know, eh?

For instant access to all the cups, all 30 cars, and an extra difficulty level, press in strict order at the Mode Selection screen, L, Z, R, C-Up, C-Down, C-Left, C-Right, Start. You should then hear a chime to tell you that things are all working. At the car selection screen, you can shrink all the cars by pressing and holding L, R, and the four C-buttons. You can change your ship colour by pressing Z or R at the ship stars screen too, and give your ship a twist with the C-buttons. Plus, it's also possible to ram the side of the track and blow up through the finish line if you cross with no energy left. Which all sounds ideal...
BIO FREAKS

Okay, so you've got the bigger gun, but what are you like at Scrabble?

Beat-'em-ups, eh? They're usually full of cheats anyway...

You'll be pleased to hear that it's possible to guarantee a win in every fight with every player in the game, except for Purge. Start the Arcade mode, begin a fight, and pause. Go to the Disable menu, turn off shields and return to the game. Now, when you return to the game, you can beat everyone just by holding your distance and firing. Use this technique to kill Mutilator with an Ultimate Victory too. Turn off shields and play as Minitek or Zipperhead. As Minitek, continually repeat the missile attack (Down+R+L) to shove Mutilator into the water and send him to a watery grave. As Zipperhead, aim at his gun. You ought to be able to kill the last five to six rounds of ammo.

Once a fight has started, press and hold Left on the digital pad, then press the Start button. Bizarrely, you will be able to play through the eyes of your character. Not ever-so helpful, maybe, but fun none the less. To switch back, press and hold down on the digital pad and press the Start button. And you did know that you can taunt your opponent by pressing UP+RK simultaneously, didn't you? Good.

FATALITIES

- And here's a list of how to pull off every fatality.
- MinaTek: Headspin
  Towards, Away, Left+C+Bottom-C (close)
- ZipperHead: Buzzout
  Towards, Away, Left+Right-C (close once opponent's arms are gone)
- Sappo: Headache
  Towards, Away, Top+C+Right-C (close)
- PsyClown: Cut in half
  Towards, Away, Away+Left-C+Top-C (close)
- Sabotage: Decapiblast
  Towards, Away, Away+Top-C
  (F-3 steps away once opponent's arms are gone)
- BuildEye: Backhand
  Towards, Away, Away+Top-C (close)
- Delta: Torsoshears
  Towards, Away, Away+Bottom-C (close)
- Purge: Mutilator
  Away, Towards, Towards+Top+C+Right-C

GEX 64

Here's how to find some of the more obscure Silver remotes.

Out of Toon: After passing through the Hard Hat Area, go to the stream and jump the two rainboxes. Go to your left and follow the ledge to a snowy area. The remote is where the retracting ledge reaches out. You'll need to run across the ledge to bag it.

First Scream TV: Get to the jumping jack-o'-lantern and a blood cooler. Go up to the bookcase. Inside are skulls, gravestones, or masks. There's also a switch there. Turnwhit it and go find a balcony with two doors. Go into the one with a Mona Lisa picture inside, and walk out again. You'll see a red remote here, but don't get it. Instead, jump off an edge where there's no balcony. You should land on or next to a river. Go down to the end of the river and you will find a silver remote. Now go back and nab the red remote to get out of the place.

Pre-History Channel: Dodge the Steam Vent level. After going up all the steam vents (or taking the short-cut), jump up to where there's fire coming out of the wall. Instead of running into the fire for the red remote, turn to the right where you will see a silver remote. Jump on to the ledge and get it, and then you can continue on with your regular journey.

Smellraiser: Pick Ride The Haunted Elevator. When you get to red remote for that task, jump off the bridge into a little stream. Go all the way to the end and there you'll find the silver remote. To get out of the stream, go to the other end to find some steps leading up to where the red remote was.

Other top tips: Also, for easy Access to either the "No Weddings and a Funeral" level, complete Goliath vs. Mechanix. Run through the gate you opened and jump on the platform to the right. The platform then flies you up to a stone lion head. The jaws are closed shut and can't be opened until you get 26 red remotes. However, there is a tiny crack which you can jump into. The easiest way to do this is to aim between the teeth. Here's that link.

CRUIS'N WORLD

Low-key, niggly-heavy and sluggish driving game. Oh, and it doesn't look too hot either. Looking forward to it?

You don't have to win races to get points in the crazy universe that is Cruis'n World. Doing flips, rolls and helicopter spins also rack up the rewards. To rapidly gain points, therefore, go to the Options screen and set the laps to six. You should start a championship on easy and aim to rack as many laps as possible. Before each jump, pump the gas twice to perform a flip. You can even flip off the back of opponent cars if you're in the right position. Press the gas/Left or Right on the analog to do a two-wheel side wheels. And remember that if you perform this before you go for a jump, you will roll. Your aim in Cruis'n World is to complete all six laps while performing as many tricks as you can. When done, get the points and quit. Go back to options and set the laps to one. Go back to championship and finish the next two easy tracks. Repeat the process and you'll have bags of points in no time.

STREET FIGHTER ALPHA WARRIOR

Super Street Fighter Turbo Alpha Beta: Warrior Dreams 2 Puzzle Special Edition: Christmas Version 1998. These Street Fighter people are going to run out of sub-titles quite soon if they're not careful.

To play as Akuma, put the cursor over the random character selection icon, hold Space and the strongest Kick button, then press the weak Kick button. To be Bison, do the same by holding the strongest Punch rather than the strongest Kick. For Dan, hold Space and press any Kick or Punch button.
DOMINION: STORM OVER GIFT 3

Want some cheats? Press Enter, type in the relevant code, then hit Enter again.

INFRA RED Show map
ZIPPER Speed building
BANSHEE Increase resources
COMBUSTION Kill all the bad guys

Some exploding monster render action! H Heat

COLIN MCRAE RALLY

The mighty PlayStation game makes it on to the PC and, surprisingly, it's still really good. They've even managed to keep the cheats in...

KITCAR Turbo Boost
MOREOMPH Double Power
FORKLIFT Forklift Mode
SILKYSMOTH 60 Frames/Sec
MOONWALK Reduce Gravity
DIDDY CARS MicroMachines
SKIRCART Reverse Tracks
WHITEBUNNY Mirror Tracks
NIGHTRIDER All Night
HOVERCRAFT Hover Car
TINFOILED Chrome Car

Adventure, dash, subway tunnels. A day in the life.

FINAL FANTASY VII

Anything PlayStation can do, PCs can do better.

For easy Chocobo races, hold [Page Down] + [Target] while racing to restore energy. For unlimited items, you'll need the W-Item materia. You get the materia after your party parachutes back into Midden in disc three. After entering the subway tunnels in sector eight, your party may walk away from the screen and encounter the Turks, or towards it to reach another subway section. Select second choice and follow the tunnel until the dead end with the W-Item materia. Equip the materia on the character with the item to be duplicated. When a battle begins, select the W-Item entry on the Battle menu and pick the item to be duplicated. Answer "OK" to confirm, and choose who will receive the item. When you're selecting the second item, choose the item to be duplicated. Answer "OK" to confirm, but cancel before choosing a person to receive. The amount of that item should have increased by one. This can be repeated to increase the total of that item to 99.

For money, sell a Master level All materia. Another appears when the original reaches Master level.

GAME BOY

BATTLE ARENA TOSHINDEN

Getting beat up? Don't worry, we'll help out.

For Scooter mode, press Select three times. Up twice, Select, A, Down twice, Select, and B at the Takasa screen. You can now conduct special attacks. To fight as the Bosses, press Up, Down, B, A, Right, Left, B, A when Ellis begins to dance. Gala, Gala 2, Lianus, and Sho will now be accessible at the character selection screen. To view all dialogue, press B, A, Left, Right, B, A, Down, Up, B, A when the Takasa logo appears. Dialogue from all characters, including tips and special attacks will now be displayed.

NINTENDO 64

ALL-STAR BASEBALL 99

Here's how you can score easy home runs and easy outs.

For an easy out, when a runner on the computer's team gets on any base, throw the ball to the base he's on. Keep throwing between the base he's on and the base in front of him until a player throws it wildly. As he leaves the base, throw the ball to the closest person and tag him out. For an easy home run, turn the pitch aid on at the Options screen. Set up your batting marker a little below the pitching marker, so that the pitch marker is almost even with the top of your batting marker. When the pitcher throws you inside pitch, line the batting marker up so it's on the inside section with the pitcher's marker, level with the top of your batting marker. This will enable you to pull the ball and knock a whopper. If the pitch is outside, do the same with the markers lined up conversely. Go Blue Jays.

JAMES BOND 007

Here, you can reduce Pierce Brosnan to a quarter of an inch — about as big as he felt when the reviews of Dante's Peak came out.

If you want a Black Jack mini-game, enter your name as BLACK. For a Baccarat mini-game, enter BACCAR as a name. For a Red Dog mini-game, enter REDDOG. All very logical really.

For extra med-kits, begin gameplay and enter the house. Take the med-kit from the top bunk, save the game, and quit. Resume the game and enter the house to find another med-kit in the same location. Repeat this process to collect up to ten med-kits.

To find the secret MARBLE object (which you can't use until you've completed the game), go to London (which is on the second level), pass Moneypenny, give the planes to M, and visit Q. Next, you need to move above him to the occupied chair. Press B and Q will say, "Don't touch that, 007!" Press B again, and the chair will rocket away and leave a hole. Enter the hole, and grab the MARBLE. Now, go to the casino in Marricketh and play any one of the casino games. If you win about $1000, your opponent will tell you that you're a high roller and the casino will pay for your visit. After that heavy night out, you return to the hotel and talk to the manager behind the desk. There, he will give you the presidential key that will open the locked door on the first floor. And remember, don't steal the bath robe...

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**PLAYSTATION**

**MADDEN '99**

- Loads bonus team cheats. Enter one of the following names as a code, then make an identical entry as a player name on the "Create Player" screen.
  - NFC Pro Bowl: BESTNFC
  - AFC Pro Bowl: AFCEBEST
  - All-Madden: BOOM
  - All-Time Stat Leaders: IMTHMAN
  - '60s Greats: PEACELOVE
  - '70s Greats: BELLOBOTTOMS
  - '80s Greats: SPIBWLSHFL
  - '90s Greats: HEREANDNOW
  - All-Time Greats: TURKEYLEG
  - 75th Anniversary Team: THROWBACK
  - NFL Equipment Team: GERARDD
  - 1999 Cleveland Browns: WELCOMEBACK
  - EA Sports: INTHEGAME
  - Tiburon: HAMMERHEAD
  - Enable real names on classic teams: MADDENNAMES

**X-MEN VS STREET FIGHTER**

- X-Men used to be a comic, but it's now a videogame. Street Fighter used to be a videogame, but is now a comic. It was inevitable that at some point along the line the two would meet.

**R-TYPES**

- All sorts of cheats for the classic blaster.

Great moments in gaming history part one: when you first get to level 5 of R-Type, you discover that the whole level is made up of one large ship. Awful moments gaming history part one: realising how impossible it is if you get killed, and lose all your weapons. Highlight either the R-Type or R-Type II options at the title screen. Quickly press L2 ten times, then R2 ten times. Begin gameplay and press Start. Any level, including the ending FMV sequences, may now be accessible. To put the game into turbo mode, press Start to pause. Hold L2 and press Right, Right, Up, Down, Left, Down, Left, Right, Down, Left, Up. Right followed by one of the following buttons for various weapons: @, &, @, @, or R1.

**G-DARIUS**

- Fancy some unlimited credits? You do?
- Then pray follow me, m'lud.

Accumulate over 100 continues, then enter the Options screen. Change the "Credit" option to "Free Play". To view all the FMV sequences, highlight the "Movie" selection on the Options screen. Finally, you need to press Down, Up, Down, Up, and then hold L1+L2+R1+R2 and press Start. Easy when you know how.

**NINTENDO 64**

**SUPER ROBOT SPIRITS**

- Weird Japanese anime-style beat-'em-up. Will it get a release over here? Who can say.

To access all the characters, start the game and put in the following code before the Banpresto logo fades. Press L, R, L, then R, seven times, 2, once, C-Down ten times and C-Right five times. You can now play all the characters. Beat Story Mode with all characters, then use Master Gundam in the 64 Mode and beat Devil Gundam. You can now select Devil Gundam. Beat Master Gundam three times in the Story Mode, and you can select him. Use Shining Gundam in VS mode. If you win 20 times. Super Mode Shining Gundam appears at your 20th turn. Go to the select screen and press Start while selecting Shining Gundam. You can use him everywhere now — even in Training and 64 Mode.

Lease the game on for over 50 hours, and you can select different coloured versions of Dunbine and Walker Galliam by pressing Start on them at the select screen. Leave your N64 on for over 300 hours (11), and insectoid Judecca appears.

**PC**

**COMMANDOS: BEHIND ENEMY LINES**

- Type gonzole1982 in gameplay to enable cheat mode. Then, enter one of the following codes to activate the corresponding cheat function.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[SHIFT] + X</td>
<td>Place selected commands under the pointer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[CTRL] + I</td>
<td>Invincibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[CTRL] + [SHIFT] + N</td>
<td>Mission skip</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[SHIFT] +</td>
<td>Destroy everything</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>Trace user</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

And the level codes? Sigh.

- Level 2: 4JXK
- Level 3: 2D0DT
- Level 4: RFFJ
- Level 5: K4TGC
- Level 6: DTVW
- Level 7: H3W1
- Level 8: S2W17
- Level 9: 24BF
- Level 10: HY4B3
- Level 11: JF0F3
- Level 12: 4MB4D
- Level 13: BJK4Y
- Level 14: T1D1
- Level 15: XOYDC
- Level 16: 34MMW
- Level 17: VTMR
- Level 18: R4OF
- Level 19: TFCWB
- Level 20: DKW1

**MAX 2**


Enter one of the following codes, including the bracket characters, to activate the corresponding cheat function. Don't try to use multi-player mode, though — it destroys all your stuff!

- [MAXSPY]: View all enemies and animals
- [MAXSTORAGE]: Maximum raw materials
- [MAXSURVEY]: View all deposits
- [MAXSUPER]: Max out highlighted unit

**CLOCKING OFF**

- Well, that's me well and truly finished off for another month. Next month, we'll be bringing you a complete guide to...
- Oh, why pretend? Right now I haven't got a clue.

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Call us on: 01225 732375
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The Ultimate Game Buyer's Guide

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MORE THAN
75 GAMES
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TOMB RAIDER III

WHISPER IT! SOME SAY LARA'S LATEST AIN'T WHAT IT SHOULD BE. FIND OUT IF THEY'RE RIGHT ON PAGE 128.

PLUS! BOOKS/BOARD GAMES/CD-ROMS/COMICS/FILMS/MUSIC
GAME ACCESSORIES/INTERNET/GADGETS/TOYS/VIDEOS

Star ratings
- 5 Stars: A game you really must play.
- 4 Stars: Highly recommended, don't miss it.
- 3 Stars: Enjoyable, but not outstanding.
- 2 Stars: Not a world-beater, but it's not terrible.
- 1 Star: Lousy, avoid at all costs.
Super Star Toca
Baby, you can drive my car...
TOCA 2

Publisher: Codemasters  ■  Developer: Codemasters
Price: £44.99 ■  Release Date: on sale now
Players: 1 ■  Extras: Memory Card, Dual Shock, Analogue Pad

Praised for its realism and thrills, but criticised for bland looks and a too-high learning curve, the original TOCA sold by the helmet-full, but divided PlayStation owners. Will this one do the same?

We'd heard great things about TOCA 2; like it was the best PlayStation touring car game by far. But when we started playing, we didn't like it much. "It's a bit boring," we thought, as everyone else whizzed off into the distance and we were forced to spend the remains of the course staring at the gaping expanse of blank tarmac in front of the car.

"It's not very glamorous," we said, as we raced through the country, with nothing but hills and trees for company.

"It's a bit hard," we mused, as we over-steered on virtually every corner, spinning round hopelessly and being forced to reverse back on to the track.

"In fact," we concluded, "it's just as if we got a car, souped it up a bit, and burnt around some country roads as fast as possible, trying not to crash."

There's something reassuringly Boy Racery about taking the tracks in a souped-up Fiesta

Then we stopped.
And thought about what we'd just said.
You see, the fact is that TOCA 2 plays just as if you'd got a car, souped it up a bit, and burnt around some country roads as fast as possible, trying not to crash. This is exactly what makes it so great - it's as accurate a simulation of touring car racing as you could possibly hope for. To drive successfully you need to motor sensibly - braking severely into corners, keeping strictly to the roads and respecting other road users (because banging into them is going to mess up your lap times a treat). To win, you need to steer like a maniac, braking at the right moment and accelerating out of bends. It's a matter of finding the shortest racing line and weaving in and out of the other cars with as much care as you'd take removing a splinter from a loved one's finger. You have to learn to drive TOCA to play it properly.

The main circuits are set in England and Scotland and look fantastic, having been accurately modelled from the real thing. Screaming round Silverstone, admiring the grandstands and drizzly English weather, the layout feels as familiar as watching Grandstand. The scenery is relevant rather than decorative: fences are there to be crashed into, sand traps are there to catch you if you spin off, and as much detail has been put into the trackside visuals as the cars themselves. There are bonus tracks too, including an alpine climb, Bavaria, three test tracks and downtown USA, where every bend is a right angle and there's a fantastic Italian Job-style short-cut down a long run of concrete steps.

The cars feel good too. They all handle differently, and can be tweaked to accommodate your needs. Which will be your favourite? The Mondeo? The Honda? The Fiesta? The Vauxhall? There's something reassuringly Boy Racery about taking the tracks in a souped up Fiesta, and it's our car of choice. The bonus cars include a Jaguar, an AC Superblower and a cigar-shaped three wheeler, with one rear wheel.

And (hurrah!) there's a split-screen two-player mode, too - the most disappointing omission from the first TOCA game. The speed that the game cracks along at, with two players and 16 other cars on screen, is quite phenomenal, and the graphics are colourful and hi-res.

TOCA 2 is a game that you are going to have to stick at. It may well not appeal at first and, to be honest, might not be the right thing if you were raised on the arcade thrills of the likes of Rage Racer. Like the real sport, TOCA 2 ain't as sexy-looking as its F1 rivals, but stick with it and you'll find it provides more consistently enthralling racing. If you want a Mars Bar, you'd go to the newsagents. If you want the best touring car racing game on the PlayStation, buy TOCA 2, and celebrate your fine purchase with a Mars Bar from the newsagents on the way home.

Or you could try...

From the bottom, up: evidence of the split-screen two-player mode, the choice-to-dive Fiestas, and the fact that neither player seems to be particularly good. Shame.

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The action remains fast, the visuals hold together well and the single player game is (wait for it) rad.

**ALP HUNTERS**

**THE COOL BOARDERS SERIES SAVES ITS BEST TIL LAST**

![Image of snowboarders in action]

**Cool Boarders 3**

- **Publisher:** SCEI
- **Developer:** 989 Studios
- **Price:** £44.99
- **UK release:** November 20
- **Players:** 1-2
- **Extras:** Dual Shock, Memory Card

Third in the PlayStation's premier snowboarding series, **Cool Boarders 3** throws away the old game engine and starts again from scratch.

As you might have guessed from the title, we have here the culmination of a trilogy. **Cool Boarders 1** and **2** pretty much set the standard for ironing-board-down-hill games but for this third incarnation the series has had a complete makeover. The simplistic, grainy visuals of UEP Systems' earlier games have melted away, and taken with them some of the more niggly control problems. The result is both stylish and fun: if **CB2** sported C&A boarding gear, **CB3** is pure Ellesse.

The basic premise, of course, remains the same. There's you. Or rather a wide selection of you, from the sturdy, Mohicaned Joker to the slender, foxy Sasha. Then there's your board. Or rather, a wide selection of boards. Some built for downhill tanking, others for twisty, turny, tricksiness. Splice board and boarder together, and you're ready for some slash-in-mouth action.

**Cool Boarders 3** offers 30 tracks — three of 'em are immediately available, the rest accessed by working through a full tournament. Some demand the more obvious, racing game-style pleasures of pure speed; others require trick moves (there are 34 to master), making the whole thing feel more like a beat-'em-up of all things, as you battle through a myriad button combinations in an attempt to pull off ever more complicated moves. Fortunately, control over your boarder is generally sharp — a nudge, a flick, an on-a-sixpence turn, all are easily accessed from the D-Pad (or, even better, with an analogue controller). Press down and your character's resulting crouch will add speed, but minimises control. This is the crux of the game, a constant binary choice between pace and precision.

**Cool Boarders 3** without doubt is the best looking of any PlayStation winter sports game, but it does slip up occasionally. Collision detection is less than 100% predictable (sometimes you can go through the foliage and pop out the other side, and other times you'll break your face — realistic, perhaps, but annoying). Also, the game has a general tendency to hover disconcertingly between realism and arcade fantasy. The boards feel correct and the physics of their movement has been captured accurately, but all this seems somewhat superfluous when your courageous, Pepsi Max dude tosses himself from a colossal precipice, hits a rock and somehow manages to keep going.

Perhaps the biggest fly in the ointment, however, is the existence of Nintendo's '808'. Sorry, PSX fans, but the N64 simply has the hardware to handle this sort of stuff better. So while **Cool Boarders 3** may be the best snowboarding game available on PlayStation, it's not the best snowboarding game full stop.

Stephen Pierce

---

Or you could try...

- **Cool Boarders 3**
- **Getaway Truck**
- **Out Run 2006**
- **Plat Air Extreme Snowboarding**

**Image:** Acceptable image with an extreme snow photo.

**Video:** Acceptable video with a Smith/Starbucks theme.
NHL '99
- Publisher: Electronic Arts
- Developer: EA Sports
- Price: £39.99
- Release date: on sale now
- Players: 1-2

Latest update of the ongoing series of licensed NHL ice hockey games.

It's strange how some sports - like, say, ice hockey - evoke such outbursts of frustration and violence. The crushing feeling of defeat is universally unpleasant throughout all sporting endeavour, but never do you see someone like Jimmy White picking up his cue and breaking it in two over Stephen Hendry's head, before attempting to saw a metre-or-so of splintered wood up the snooker, Scottish one's bottom.

Anyway, ice hockey. NHL '99 is the latest in a long line of NHL-licensed sports games. What we have, therefore, is an ice hockey game which a) looks great and comes packed with loads of small, detailed graphics; b) plays well, with strong artificial intelligence exhibited by members of both teams; c) features a well-adjusted learning curve, with a simplistic, yet versatile, control method; and d) is up-to-date, with all the stats you'd expect to find buried in an official NHL licence.

When you're playing NHL '99, enables you to feel like you're in control of your team, while giving you just enough support to stop you colliding red-faced into the crash barriers with every speedy turn. There's also room for special manoeuvres like spin turns and stick flicks, and you can either steam up the arena on your own or, alternatively, you can play the - ultimately more successful - passing game.

The camera problems that plagued NHL '98 have been corrected, with '99 showing off its pretty visuals, and atmospheric touches like victory celebrations, greatly. The only real downside is to do with the built-in problems of ice hockey - a game with so many goals scored that the excitement of each one is swiftly diminished. If you're into the sport, this is fine, but for most people a more comprehensible, strategic football game is probably a much better bet.

Rich Pelley

I GOT YOU ABE
THE ODD SQUAD RETURN

Oddworld: Abe's Exoddus
- Publisher: GT Interactive
- Developer: Oddworld Inhabitants
- Price: £40
- Release date: November 20
- Players: 1-2 (alternative)
- Extras: Memory card

It's Abe to the rescue again, in another puzzly platforming potpourri.

Amed with a limited repertoire of baby-talk and some disquieting personal habits, Abe has attracted a fan base beyond that usually expected of your average pony-tailed alien with a taped-up mouth.

Exoddus sticks rigidly to the formula that defined its prequel, Abe's Oddyssey. As you wander through atmospheric 2D platform worlds, your task is to reach the exit and, if you're feeling generous, rescue your enslaved compatriots.

This time, though, your alien buddies are subject to various types of emotional turmoil. Infiltrating as this is, as they sit on the ground sulking or stumble about giggling like school-kids, the feature isn't used to excess, and most dissenters can be swiftly cured with a "Sorry" or - more satisfyingly - a quick thump.

The puzzles are a brilliantly perplexing mix of tripping switches, opening doors, climbing and jumping. Even if you're a puzzling demi-God, there are effectively two "levels" to the game; whizzing through - cheerfully sticking two fingers up at your friends - offers a quick fix, but the challenging option of freeing the Mudokons leaves you feeling a lot better.

Happily, none of the puzzles are irritatingly taxing. This makes progress a lot more fun than frustrating and the extra touches, like being able to mind-control all the enemy characters (rather than just the one you were allowed in Oddyssey), are enjoyable and integral to the gameplay.

Exoddus's strength comes from its character and humour. Abe is as lovable as ever, and watching him chat, laugh and otherwise interact with his mates never gets boring. The combination of this, the pleasure of solving puzzles and the range of tasks on offer, makes Exoddus essential for any cerebral platform fan.

Mark Green

You'll often need the help of a whole team of Mudokons when you're solving the puzzles. Shouting out "Work!" and "Follow me!" soon becomes second nature.

Or you could try...

- Abe's Oddyssey
- Oddworld: Abe's Exoddus
- Oddworld: Munch's Oddysee
- Oddworld: Abe's Exoddus 2
- Oddworld: Abe's Oddysee
- Oddworld: Abe's Exoddus

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New PlayStation Games

Rival Schools
- Publisher: Virgin Interactive Entertainment
- Developer: Capcom
- Price: £39.99
- Release date: 20 November
- Players: 1-2

Subtitled United By Fate, Capcom's new 3D fighter features battling Tokyo high-school kids and whispered messages to meet on the common after the bell. Bike chains not included.

B eat-em-ups and real-world logic have never made happy bedfellows. You only need study the average fighter's range of bizarre haircuts and extravagant trousers to know that. But where the likes of games like Tekken 3 know more or less where to stop (with a stumpy dinosaur fighter or walking tree), Rival Schools gleefully throws absolutely all sense of reality out of the window. With its press-up performing tutors, minor volleyball sub-games and flaming footballs replacing traditional weapons, this entire sense-assaulting, anime-style experience provides a brand new oddness benchmark for the fighting genre. It's still daffy stuff - as ever from Street Fighter supremo Capcom, the character designs are superb - but it ain't exactly sensible.

One bit that's surprisingly non-fanciful, however, is the title - Rival Schools really is about rucking schoolkids. 20 pupils and (not exactly professional, surely?) teachers fight it out in 3D, with each player given the opportunity to team-up two characters (as you see in tag-team wrestling, or X-Men Vs Street Fighter). You can switch between the pair of them before bouts, making a strategic swap for a more suitable match against an opponent. But it's the dramatic selection of special moves, where you can have both your characters appear on screen to do a double-whammy on your enemy's energy bar, that sets the brilliantly over-the-top tone of the fighting.

This is real Street Fighter stuff - full of spectacular blue energy balls and blurred, jaw-thwacking specials. Despite their flashiness, the moves are all surprisingly easy to pull off - after all, it's solid Capcom fight mechanics that underpin the game. One of the best things about Rival Schools is that you're never many button presses away from a decent move. Street Fighter veterans should enjoy seeing favourites like the Dragon Punch performed by spec-wearing teachers, rather than Ryu or Ken.

In fact, Rival Schools is full of enjoyable bits. It comes on two CDs - one holding the basic PlayStation take on Capcom's arcade original, the other being a value adding "Evolution" disc, which packs in more ways to play (league, tournament, group and co-operative), overloads you with lovely manga artwork and provides a lesson mode that teaches and tests your fighting skills. It's a shame the create-a-fighter simulation mode of the Japanese version hasn't been included, but you do get some great sub games as reward when you complete the game according to different criteria.

Rival Schools' real strength is that it's not trying to be Tekken. Instead, Capcom has built on its expertise at the cartoon, honed over countless Street Fighter games, but this time has let its imagination run even wilder than usual. The result may lack quite the technical brilliance or hardcore scrapping feel that you get from a good game of Tekken 3, but by patching the action at an over-the-top, guests-on-Jerry Springer level all its own, comes far closer than most to equaling the PlayStation's grandmaster.

Or you could try...

Robin Alway

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Strange Hill
- It's Zammo vs Gripper, Japanese-style

Lemmings Compilation
- Publisher: Psygnosis
- Developer: DMA Design
- Price: £24.99
- Release date: out now
- Players: 1

Live or die? The lemmings don't care. The deathwish dunes' first two outings are back on PlayStation.

Sharing many of the attributes associated with Team 17's Worms (small, cute, sneaky, irritating), the Lemmings have returned to the PS. After the chaotic mélange of contemporary styling and tactical fiddling that was the more recent Lemmings 3D, it is refreshing to again view these minuscule suicidal ninnigans as they were originally devised. Raw and simple, but with the sort of addictive properties that you rarely find aided by spooking on additional polygons.

Put simply, Lemmings and Oh No! More Lemmings are puzzle games, designed to tax your mind more than they do your reflexes. Lemmings are stupid. They walk. Constantly. Other than that they need to be told exactly what to do, and this is where you come into the grand scheme of things. Each screen involves a maze, that you view side-on. As the furry fools drop from the ceiling, they are immediately in danger of striding straight off a cliff, drowning or getting burned alive, chopped, sliced or minced, depending on their environment.

At the base of each screen you'll find your function icons, including blocking, swimming, digging, digging and - always rather tragic this one - blowing up. You click on a function to activate it, then select a lemming to carry out the procedure that you've chosen. This way you can manipulate the constantly flowing stream of lemmings through puzzle after puzzle, with the overall aim being to rescue the requisite number of green-haired beauties from whatever deadly fate they were trooping toward.

While the games are initially easy, they very soon become an organisational nightmare. Visually, Lemmings is, rather obviously, a personifier. Aurally, it's virtually deaf. But this is to veer from the point: Both titles grab you by the joypad (preferably mouse) and drag you, and your cerebrum, into a lunatic world of bijou lemming carnage. While not for everyone, Lemmings Compilation happily ignores the tinsel and glitter of modern gaming, and is better for it. ★★★

Stephen Pierce

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Blazing school
- Some brilliantly over-the-top fighting
- Massive number of modes
- Includes the second value-packed Evolution CD

School blazer
- No create-a-player option available in the UK version
- Some finger-drumming loading breaks
- The fighters aren't as solid looking as Tekken 3's

There's never been a fighting game quite like this: it's as if Steven Segal became head at the school out of Saved By The Bell. Hit an opponent into the air and you can play a great game of keepy-uppy with 'em.

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COLONY WARS: IT'S BIG, AND SOMETIMES IT'S CLEVER

COLONIC IRRITATION

Colony Wars: Vengeance

Publisher: Psygnosis  ■  Price: £39.99  ■  Release date: on sale now  ■  Players: 1  ■  Extras: Memory Card

Follow-up to the fantastic-looking but rather samey 3D space shoot-'em-up, this updated model boasts more structured, varied missions.

Colony Wars: Vengeance is like a puppy. Treat it well, with love, patience and attention and it'll love you back. Lose your temper and whack it with a rolled-up newspaper, however, and it'll bite you in the ankles.

You'll be wary when you start playing. You'll find it irritating that you keep getting blasted out of the sky the instant any enemies appear. You'll complain that you don't have enough missiles and that your lasers are ineffective. You'll give yourself a headache chasing enemy fighters around the 360° environment, trying to line up your sights.

But then you discover the energy bar accompanying every buddy, and realise that you can drain the yellow bar (the shields) with the shield-draining laser and then the red bar (energy) with the plasma laser. You'll soon get to grips with the missiles – one press of @ to lock on, another to fire. You'll realise that you can take out baddies far more effectively while they're in the distance, where you can avoid return fire. You'll also begin to appreciate the variety of missions, whether you're flying through asteroid zones, protecting your fleet in a raid on the enemy's base, or finding energy pods and blasting them into wormholes before they go off.

Vengeance has an atmosphere all its own. You don't get many slow, methodical shoot-'em-ups, but this is a Sunday drive in the country, not a screeching lap of Brands Hatch. But it doesn't make it bad. Partly because the graphics are very impressive – stunningly detailed throughout, though you could complain that the ships seem a little small (for much of the time, 90% of the screen is black). But mostly because, unlike the original Colony Wars, this gives you loads of interesting things to do.

To some extent, Vengeance is full of missed opportunities. It's a pity more isn't made of the motherships and enemy bases. It'd be nice to be able to fly over their surfaces, then dive into trenches and pull back, Star Wars-style. But you can't. Once you're used to it, piloting your ship takes little skill, either – a thrust here, an afterburn there, but sadly with little feeling that you are in a huge metallic box, zooming about in the sky. There's definitely work to be done on this whole game design, but for all its faults, Vengeance still manages to entertain. Treat it well, show it patience, and it'll return the favour.

★★★★ Rich Pelley

PILOTING YOUR SHIP TAKES LITTLE SKILL – A THRUST HERE, AN AFTERBURN THERE...
New PlayStation Games

Tenchu
Publisher: Activision
Developer: Sony Music
Price: £39.99
Release date:
on sale now
Players: 1
Extras: memory card

Metal Gear Solid meets Bushido Blade down a dark alley. Sporting arteries a distinct possibility.

After Core's unuble arcade approach to the ancient warrior cult in Ninja Shadow of Darkness, this is the authentic kung fu slipper-wearing experience. With a swirling Oriental soundtrack and furtive gameplay that encourages you to hide in the shadows and blood spilling at Moulinex-sans-led levels, it's atmospheric enough to have a real-time strategy fans balancing on a post when they think no one's looking.

The behind-character view is similar to Tomb Raider, but in your conduct over the ten mission-based levels, Tenchu makes an honourable bow to Metal Gear's stealthy play. You crawl about on rooftops (which you access with a superb grappling hook accessory), before dropping down to skin your throat and sever a selection of major arteries with a swish of your sword. As with the similarly inscrutable Bushido Blade, the fighting is pitched at a much more realistic level than the usual punishment-taking beat-'em-up. A few blows can very quickly cut your energy bar in half, which means that no opponent is too strong for you to take down.

Technically, Tenchu is perhaps a little close to its chirpy sappy film counterparts, however. The erratic camera makes the fights confusing, there's some unsightly glitching and the animation of your character (you can play as a very different male or female ninja) doesn't seem quite right. But while it lacks Metal Gear's finesse, Tenchu's secret is in the subtlety and edge, feet-firsted feel makes for an engaging, endorsed-by-Zenmasters experience. Learn to live with the graphical failings, and the entire atmosphere of the game will soon have you uttering mystic wisdom like: 'I must become as one with the wind.'

Trust us.

Robin Alway

FRENCH FANCY
IT STANDS FOR OR DIE TRYING. NO, REALLY

ODT
Publisher: Psygnosis
Developer: Psygnosis
Price: £44.99
Release date:
on sale now
Players: 1
Extras: Dual Shock or Analogue pad

A 3D third-person Lara wannabe, by the team that brought us the awful adidas Power Soccer. Not a good start then.

Of all the times to release a Tomb Raider clone, this coincides with the release of Tomb Raider III - it's perhaps the worst. Fortunately, ODT aims to sidestep such accusations with the addition of RPG-type elements and a choice of four characters. Nice, but there's no mistaking that follow-cam and those hoards of things that need killing. This is Lara without the breasts.

The first level of ODT has to be the most precarious introduction to any game ever. Set atop an ancient tower, it is riddled with pitfalls, traps and ant-wide ledges. When paired with the slightly shaky controls the result is many falls into the inky blackness. Fortunately once you're inside the tower the opportunity to tumble off the damn thing is greatly reduced and the real meat of the game can begin.

Ammo, health and magic power-ups are scattered throughout, and can be used to enhance your chosen skill, be it better, more powerful weapons or attaining the latest spell. Ultimately though, collecting these pick-ups isn't worth the difficult death-defying leaps and bounds. And the fiddly weapon aiming system makes it easier just to ignore baddies, rather than taking them on in combat.

ODT's ultimate sin, you see, is its bloody awful controls. No matter which button-assignment you choose, the running, walking, weapon loading, looking, aiming and spell selecting seems to fall on the wrong finger. The inability to judge jump distances (and whether they're possible) is awkward because of the camera angle, and actually getting to an edge is doing with death thanks to the rather imprecise too little-then-too-much weighting to the run and walk features. Fortunately, a restart point is never far away, as the areas held in memory are no bigger than a football pitch - perhaps because of the game's adias Power Soccer 2 engine origins? Also, in another nod to misery, each chunk requires painful loading and reloading as it's entered.

There's much good stuff in here, and the levels are sizable and imaginative, but the lame execution of the project lets the whole shabby package down.

Simon Garner

You're right, Lara he ain't. Watching him is going to be no fun.

Or you could try:
Tomb Raider I or III

Simon Garner. Just in case you miss some gorgeous scenery and find you've died too. Oh, and you're looking for it.
Play School

Music Sounds Better with You

Uppers & Downers
- Diva: Makes banging tunes
- Truly interactive
- Driver: Makes crap videos
- Can't play melodies

Convince yourself that you've created 1999's Itza Club anthem with Music's easy-to-approach sequencing program.

Music: Music Creation for the PlayStation

- Publisher: Codemasters
- Developer: Jester Interactive
- Price: £34.99
- UK release: 20 November
- Players: 1
- Extras: Memory card

Forget your destruction of evil sand zombies from the moon of Kronax for just one moment and turn your attentions to becoming the next Fatboy Slim. Without unplugging your PlayStation.

Ever harboured an ambition to become the next Armand Van Helden or Fatboy Slim? Where would you begin? A keyboard? Sampler? Pair of decks? PC sequencing package? All of these are legitimate starting points for creating your own dance music. Suggest that you're going to win a Mercury prize using only your PlayStation, and we will justifiably knock you to the ground with a rusty synths-axe. The PlayStation is a games machine rather than a creative tool largely because its sole source of information is the CD, and you can only manipulate what's already etched on there, rather than add anything new.

So step forward Jester and Codemasters, who have created what is arguably the first product for the PlayStation to include no element of gameplay whatsoever. Fluid had a go at the music creation thing earlier this year, but you still had to assume the role of a dolphin, swimming around your tranquil aquarium on a world in search of musical stimuli. Music dispenses with the frills altogether and presents you with a scaled-down version of the display used on professional sequencing programs such as Cubase or Cakewalk. If you're familiar with the general concept of on-screen sequencing you have a head start with this set-up, although Music works in a completely logical fashion and it isn't difficult to pick up.

Essentially, the idea is to arrange blocks of sound. These are divided into chunks of four or eight beats, and these chunks are arranged in the program by genre and subdivided again by instrument. These sound blocks are professional samples assembled by "acclaimed" dance producers Cold Storage, and are all cleverly beatmatched to avoid troublesome discrepancies in pitch and tempo.

If you follow the manual's advice and lay down a drum track, followed by percussion, then a pre-recorded baseline and various snippets of melody, you'll be pumping out passable trancey house before you can say Paul Oakenfold.

If you delve into musically more complex genres such as drum 'n' bass, you may find that the pre-arranged loops are a little limited, which is where the Riff Editor comes into play. With a whole assortment of instruments, you can create your own four-beat riffs. Unfortunately, it's impossible to play your melodies in real-time, so unless you're a musical prodigy, this is a painstaking trial-and-error process. And once you start altering pitches, there's no guarantee they will tally with the prerecorded loops.

The worst case scenario is that Music will frustrate the novices, while anyone with genuine desire to create music will opt for a set-up which enables genuine sampling and melody creation. In fact, though, Music has the potential to amuse and stimulate all ability ranges and undoubtedly provides greater intellectual exercise than even the most complex of so-called interactive games. I haven't given a mention to the video creation mode, but unless you're interested in manipulating a load of garish fractal patterns in time to your music, it's best to stick with the beats. See you at the pressing plant.

Test Drive 4x4
- Publisher: Electronic Arts
- Developer: Acclaim
- Price: £39.99
- Release date: 4 December
- Players: 1
- Extras: Dual Shock, memory cartridge

Dirty international driving brought to you direct from the good old US of A. Don't even go there...

If piloting colossal, wheeled biscuit tins over swathes of glamorous, international dirt appeals, then start sizing garish bodywarmers and unsuitable baseball headwear now. If you are of a rather more discerning nature, however, you should simply stick with Gran Turismo, Colin McRae or the forthcoming TOCA 2. Why? Well Test Drive is just a roof-rack packed full with average. You have five classes of licensed motors including the Hummer, Safari and SUV, and six courses each with a reverse) in such grandiose locations as Santa Cruz, Hawaii and, er...well, Wales. Basically, there's a medley of mud, sand, snow, grit, shale, shingle and asphalt just waiting for you to slide about on it.

Once you have the vehicle, you can immediately flick on the ignition of a number of cars in the single race option, but it's the World Tour that forms the crux of the title. Here, you are required to win races, to win credits, to win better cars, to win more races. "Hooahy" you might say. But no. The vast, rectangular, barren maps sluggishlly slide about the track as if someone's spiked their diesel. The hill-top-based terrain is often spartan and driib, while your tyres churn piles of snow that rekindle memories of the hating paper bits in TV's The Crystal Maze.

For all of Test Drive's visual shortcomings, however, it is the gameplay that really requires an MOT. The undulating nature of the tracks mean that "getting air" is a prerequisite. This sounds okay in theory, it's just that no sooner have you returned from enforced aerodynamics than you are bounced skyward again, while the gleeful American commentator trots out another of his limited phrases. "Awesome, awesome", it most certainly is not.

Stephen Pierce

Sam Richards

Or you could try...

Fluid... It's the absolute coolest, most advanced dance music creator..."...

This looks way too complex, but only available for the PC.
**FORMULA FORGETTABLE**

**F1 ’98: AMAZINGLY, NOT AS GOOD AS ’97 OR ’96**

**Formula 1 ’98**

- Publisher: Psygnosis
- Developer: Visual Sciences
- Price: £44.99
- Release date: on sale now
- Players: 1-4 (with link cable)

Post Gran Turismo, racing gamers expect a lot. But the third in Psygnosis's ultra-successful Formula 1 series conspicuously fails to deliver.

To be frank, Formula 1 ’98 is a disaster. Not because it’s terrible – it’s merely very average – but because the first two games in the trilogy were so good. Far from being a progressive, suitably tweaked update of its two well-received predecessors, this year’s ’98 model distinguishes itself by being depressingly inferior to both. It should be run off the road.

Psygnosis received unwanted publicity following the release of its first F1 title a couple of years back, with many owners disappointed by its many apparent "bugs" (including one glitch that saw every CPU-controlled car take a pit stop per lap). F1 ’98 features a technical shortcoming of a far more sinister nature: its polygon-pushing game engine just isn’t up to the task required of it. Most PlayStation driving games - Gran Turismo included – feature pop-up and limited draw distances, and we always have to keep that in mind when reviewing them.

**Uppers & Downers**

- **McLarens**
  - "Real" names and cars to choose from
  - The link cable makes a non-idea
  - Ugh, it doesn't have scobies
- **Sauber**
  - Distal graphics engine
  - Disappointingly unrealistic car physics
  - Horrible car control, more "boozy" than "weary"

But F1 ’98 takes this to absurd extremes. It features such a ridiculously low horizon that the percentage of track you have visible at any one time is woefully inadequate.

Consequently, its in-car views are virtually useless, making the judging of corners an imprecise affair. Even with an external alternative, you must memorise the layout of any given track before you have even a fighting chance of completing a lap at speed without crashing. This renders the game mere exercise in measured, almost robotic joystick manipulation rather than anything else.

Worse still, F1 ’98’s handling mechanics are hideously unconvincing. Psygnosis’s patronising assumption that most PlayStation owners will prefer a simplified physics model removes much of the challenge and sense of disbelief that the game could have done with. What of the aspirational aspect of playing games? What of the fact that most people want a racing title to offer them a crack at a 180mph overtaking manoeuvre through the Monaco tunnel that they’ll simply never get to experience in real life? From the smallest spin to the biggest slide, F1 ’98 trades the sin-like pretensions it so desperately needs for an inappropriate, flawed, arcade-oriented drive.

In its defence, the game does boast an impressive number of options, and the admirable inclusion of a link cable mode enables you to combine two TVs and PSXs in the name of four-player gaming. But who will be inclined to bother? Particularly as the most eloquent argument against buying this update is probably sharing shelf space with it. The excellent F1 ’97 is now a mere £20, and worthwhile every penny. You know what to do. 

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*James Price*

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Mark Green
TEST MATCH SPECIAL
AT LAST! CRICKET GETS A FAIR VIDEOGAMING INNINGS

Brian Lara Cricket

Publisher: Codemasters  Developer: Codemasters  Price: £44.99  Release date: 18 November  Players: 1-4

West Indies captain Brian Lara returns from years stuck in Mega Drive ignominy to star in PlayStation's first cricket game.

Ten minutes into Brian Lara Cricket and Geoffrey Boycott and Jonathan Agnew start chatting. Not in an "And, Australia. Are. About. To. Bat." kind of way. No, theirs is a conversation. They talk about pitches, about batsmen. They even talk about the weather. And it's right there and then that the class of Codemasters' sequel to the Mega Drive hit becomes clear.

The PlayStation, hardly well known for its tranquil games, has never before seen the like of BLC. Sure, it's one for lazing on a Sunday afternoon, but the game feels so good to play that you don't mind whiling the hours away.Funny enough, it's when you lose concentration and spoon the ball into the slips that it becomes the most enjoyable. It goes without saying that the players move smoothly, and the whole thing looks good, but the knowledge that you were caught because you got the split second timing wrong just about sums up BLC. It's a realistic alright.

Mostly Brian Lara Cricket is an enjoyable afternoon (not) spent at the park. The fielding is depressingly difficult -- much better to let the computer do the donkey work for you -- but again, a close run-out decision adds to the fun.

Batting is very much easier than bowling, however. How Alec Stewart must wish he could see where the ball was going to pitch before it left Shane Warne's magic fingertips -- in BLC being a bowler means moving an all-too-apparent circle round and down the pitch, taking some of the surprise out of the whole affair. Nevertheless, with enough statistics, players and teams to make John Madden himself blush, BLC is wonderfully well executed. It should sell -- well, a few copies, at least -- simply because fans have been so starved of cricket games they'll lap up whatever they can get. But more of us should give it a chance. In fact, even the most devoted Final Fantasy fan should find there's much to enjoy here...

Ben East

Zero Divide 2

Publisher: Sony  Developer: Sony  Release: on sale now  Players: 1-2

Sequel to hopeless robot beat-'em-up Zero Divide, boasting (slightly) more convincing 'bots.

Look can be very deceptive. Take Nicky Clarke, the famous hairdresser. Now examine his haircut -- would you trust him to touch your barnet? And those chocolate covered pretzels? They just look horrible.

And like chocolate covered pretzels, Zero Divide 2 looks like it's going to be a no-hoper from the start. Why? You can't help thinking, wouldn't you want to play a beat-'em-up as a cross between an Alien and a chicken? Surely, you think, playing as a big red crab isn't going to give you much of an advantage if you opponent is a hulking great human-shaped robot? And you'd be right. The difference between Nicky, Pretzel Pip and this is that the first two a gruesome first impression hides a talent, of sorts. With Zero Divide 2 however, what you see is what you get. It's rubbish.

But though the visuals aren't promising, it's the lack of even matches that makes Zero Divide 2 the duffer it is. It's simple: the human-shaped robots always have the edge over the non-human ones. The cabs and the like have going for them the fact that they dumb with a satisfying metallic sound, and segments of their exoskeletons shatter, but that's all. Also, there aren't nearly enough moves available. What you want are lots of flashy bangs and lights, resulting from sick moves that would set the robot characters of Zero Divide 2 apart from the ninjas of Tekken 3. What you get is a variety of pushes and kicks that with a little more hair-pulling and name-calling wouldn't look out of place in a schoolyard girl-fight. Overall, Zero Divide 2 is a limp beat-'em-up, with not even enough adrenaline-rushing, body-flinching, blood-curdling violence. Next to Tekken (or anything, it's a joke.

Rich Pelley

NFL Extreme

Publisher: Sony  Developer: 989 Studios  Price: £39.99  Release date: on sale now  Players: 1-4

Sony presents us with its gormlessly grinning antidote to po-faced American football sims.

This is Sony's answer to NFL Blitz. bee page 125, the game that attempted to treat American football with the less-serious, arcade-style paintbrush that EA has successfully applied to the Am series of basketball in NBA Extreme you'll find simplified rules, a host of illegal tackles and punches and a handful of dubious comedy moments -- like players' buttocks alarmingly catching fire as they go for a touchdown. You'll also get your attacker sneezing at you after every successful tackle. You only need to hear some shoulder-padded American beefcake shouting gibberish at you once before you've had enough.

All this simplicity is reflected in the controls, which offer only a handful of buttons to press for throws, tackles and everything else. It sounds, then, reasonably promising -- a way, perhaps, to sell the non-believers among us on the virtues of gridiron.

Such a shame, then, that 989 Studios has seen fit to complicate matters in a number of flashy but ultimately pointless ways. The biggest problem is that passing and running have been made near-impossible by the over use of obscure camera angles and the decidedly low-resolution graphics -- a combination that makes picking yourself and your team mates out of the crowd more difficult than finding your car in the Lakeside car park.

Meanwhile, though simplified from the usual over-complicated American football game choice of plays, the tactical side of NFL Extreme still seems too involved for what's presumably meant to be a beginner's version of the game -- when you play against a computer opponent, progress is so difficult that each yard you make up-pitch soon becomes cause for minor celebration, while you really have to keep your wits about you in two-player mode to prevent your PlayStation keening upon any hesitation and deciding your move for you.

Basically, the game is caught between two stools and it's still too American football for beginners to the genre, and it's too arcade if you're already a shoulderpad fanatic. Within that context, its poor attempts at humour swiftly become just plain annoying. And as for effects like realistic motion capture? No, we'll go for mod flailing idiots. Break for tactics after a tackle? No, we'll jump on the attacker screaming at the downed unfortunate after every collision. It's guaranteed to leave both football fans and arcade players disappointed. In fact, they might both feel a touch down...
B-Movie
[Publisher: GT Interactive]  [Developer: King Of The Jungle]  [Price: £39.99]  [Release date: 20 November]  [Players: 1]

Save the Earth from the evil Martian horde in this not-to-be-taken-too-seriously space shooter.

Aliens these days, eh? They've no manners, no respect, you just don't know where you stand with them. So if the behaviour of the modern brand of extraterrestrial enemy disgusts you, let B-Move return you to those halcyon days when Martians were Martians and liked nothing better than to travel in flying saucers, creating crop circles and shooting rayguns. This is a fast, original 3D flight shooter in which you control the starship pilot Irwin Stryker. It's a former vacuum cleaner salesman, naturally whose task is to protect the Earth from alien invaders. Not only must you fight off the swarms of enemy ships, but a series of missions beamed in from Earthling Command require you to move civilians to safe houses and reposition ground forces. There are no pretensions to cutting-edge graphics, but B-Move's cartoon setting is surprisingly well-drawn, with great attention to cheesy detail, including a collection of white-haired scientists dressed in labcoats and Martian mother ships whose bellies open up to release fleets of smaller craft.

As you progress through the early missions, amassing piles of equipment and technology in order to build more impressive weapons, the gameplay is quietly satisfying, even if the controls can be occasionally inaccurate. It's very long, however, before you encounter an insurmountable barrier as you find yourself forced to manipulate your ground troops while facing a barrage of hostile fire. And this is the problem with B-Move: It becomes too hard too quickly, and offers no short cuts – there's only so long you can vainly attempt the same mission before casting the joy of the floor in a childish fit of petulance. Despite some encouraging signs, this is one that should head straight to video. ** Sam Richards

The magical, colourful world in which Spyro lives. And a big baddy with a club, down on the right there. Better try not to upset him.

COOKIE-COO
MEET SPYRO: CAMP, CUTE AND COCKSURE

Spyro the Dragon
[Publisher; Sony]  [Developer: Insomniac Games]  [Price: £39.99]  [Release date: on sale now]  [Players: 1]

Long-awaited 3D explore-em-up, with a painfully cute hero and Mario gameplay.

There's a very fine line between cute and camp, and Spyro, graphically at least, lives very much on the boundary. On the one hand, he's the dragon you'll want to take home and love as a pet, to stroke as he curls up on your bed. On the other, you can't help feeling rather than macho as you control a character who runs around a 3D world with a bouncing effeminate Canter and suggestive tail flick – you wouldn't want the lads from the pub football team catching you playing with a My Little Pony, after all.

But you can't help growing to love Spyro, and the breathtaking world that he inhabits. It's true 3D in the style of Mario World 64 (rather than the contrived 3D of Tomb Raider) and enables you to gallop off in any direction – to spy a place in the distance and actually be able to get there. Equally, the puzzles are set at an ideal skill level, meaning that you won't die for a while (unlike games such as Gex 3D that kill you within seconds for Not Knowing What You Are Doing). Better still, Spyro provides you with plenty of opportunity to explore your 3D environment without you having to achieve anything that's too taxing.

As you progress through Spyro, you'll come across other dragons who have been turned to stone. Your main mission is to find them all and release them. In return, the previously fossilised dragons will provide you with helpful hints – from suggestions for getting to grips with the control methods, to advising which part of the map to visit next. New sections of the map open up all the time, but you also have to keep coming back to the old ones; they're complex enough that you've almost certainly missed some goodies, and probably a dragon or two.

Spyro plays as well as it looks. It's full of nice touches, including moaning bad guys and a huge scarecrow boss whose jacket opens to reveal a sheep standing on stilts. The gameplay won't frustrate you, either – you'll simply keep playing Spyro until you finish it – which is how, as any dedicated game player will tell you, life should be. ** Rich Pelley

Or you could try...
BRUISE EXPLOSION
OF SHOULDER PADS, HELMETS AND CHOREOGRAPHED HOMICIDE

NFL Blitz

Acclaim stuck two fingers up to motion-captured realism with 1996's NBA Jam. Now, Midway decides to give American Football a similar makeover, ditching the tactics for balls-out carnage...

Not everyone is the testosterone ballet that is American Football. What once appeared to be an emerging sport back the '80s (The Fridge, anyone?) has, in the face of increasing public apathy, been reduced to 3:27am graveyard TV slots on Channel 5. That taken, it's no surprise then that of the seven million licensed games released every year in the US, only the odd few make it over the Pond. Like, who cares?

Well, you should actually. Because while the majority of American Football titles come replete with motion-captured pirouettes and infinite screens of the tedious stats Johnny Yank and cherubs, NFL Blitz arrives without rules, without realism and without the safety warning it so palpably requires. While the title is understandably based on the actual game, and makes the most of that expensive NFL licence (with real player names and the like), it's from there that Blitz departs from tradition. "First down and ten" is now "first down and 30", the number of players per team has been reduced to a mere seven and the amount of both offensive and defensive plays is minimal, totalling a scant 18 and nine respectively. Granted, a few stats adorn the mid-game loading screens, but anyone expecting EA Sports-style numerical overload best leave the stadium right now.

And after that? And after that... madness. Blessed with a simple control interface and an amphetamine arcade pace, the whole game now revolves around getting into your opponent's end zone and mangling as much player cartilage as you humanly can on the way. Yup, Blitz comes sans penalties and thus you can ditch the comparatively gentle art of blocking and happily kick, punch and gouge your way to hellish gridiron victory. True, said tactics are not exactly sportsman-like - and a clever play will always win out over machismo-driven brute force - but there is much schadenfreude to be savoured by simple thuggery. "Watch out! He's gone postal!" bellows a passing in-game commentator. Damn right he has.

NFL Blitz is no masterpiece. The graphics are a tad too blocky, it's perhaps a touch too simple and, painful though it is to admit it, the beatific bliss that is poleaxing a huge quarterback with a dropkick will inevitably become sadly repetitive. On the other hand, knickers to that. NFL Blitz is überviolence stamped on a shiny black disc and it deserves to be wedged in the PlayStation of every right-minded psychopath who enjoys the give of Lyra and the taste of pain. Yup, that good.

Mike Goldsmith

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New PlayStation Games

Import Snake Charmer

Introducing a brand new genre: The Sneak-'Em-Up

Test Drive 5
Publisher: Electronic Arts
Developer: Acclaim
Price: £39.99
Release date:
Players: 1-2

Take a spin round the globe in some of the world's finest automobiles. (It's not as sexy as it sounds.)

If the words "test drive" conjure up for you the image of a greasy teenager in a Next suit straining to look like a company CEO so he can spin round suburban streets in a top-of-the-range Aston Martin with plastic on the seats for an hour, you're not alone. Which is why Test Drive is a silly name for this glamorous street racing series. Classic American models such as the Pontiac GT1 are pitched in fantasy battles against lovingly-rendered Jaguar XKRs and TVR Cerberas. Not wanting to resort to Jeremy Clarkson levels of sexual metaphor, the handling of each car is basic but responsive, with subtle differences between the models. Basically, Test Drive 5 boasts high accessibility but with questionable longevity.

Still, the game's trump card may well be the intimacy and diversity of its courses. If you've ever wanted to burn around the streets of Moscow at 150mph, upending Sunday drivers and hardbraking round Red Square, alright here. You can also stage a road race round the faux-Victorian cobbled streets of Edinburgh's steep and narrow thoroughfares. It's not geographically accurate, but at it creates a satisfyingly different environment to say, the deserts of Jordan. Your driving companions are also amusingly stereotyped, depending on your venue. Thus everyone in Sydney becomes Bruce, while back in Scotland's city of culture, your opponents are Lord and Alec.

Test Drive 5 shows some neat touches, but given the illustrous nature of the competition, you can't really rate its chances. (Colin McRae, Gran Turismo and TOCA are all ostensibly similar, but much more absorbing). Borrow it, have a few laughs, and play the industrial metal soundtrack for someone you hate. ** Sam Richards

Metal Gear Solid
Publisher: Sony
Developer: Konami
Release date (Japan): on sale now (available from NextGen on 0181 339 0666)
Price: £44.99
Release date (UK): March 1999
Players: 1

Based on the old NES Metal Gear series, this Bond/SAS-style sneak-around is hotly tipped to be the Next Big Thing. It presents a concept rare in gaming: fear.

Metal Gear Solid is a simply fantastic game — possibly it's the best-ever on the PlayStation, and sure to herald a tidal wave of "sneak-em-ups", action games where the emphasis is on keeping a low profile and staying out of trouble. Many game creators will tell you that the next big step in gaming will be to make the player genuinely experience real emotions while playing, and Metal Gear Solid handles this fantastically well — rarely have you felt the fear of getting caught like this before.

As the uniquely named Snake, you're a special forces guy on a near-suicidal one-man mission to take out a snow-bound base full of baddies intent on lobbing nukes at the rest of the world. It's a simple story, but told well — from the off your mission deviates from the original plan as new characters and subplots are introduced, while the near-faultless detail of the graphics and cinematic twist of the camera angles immerse you in the action.

There are so many perfectly realised "good bits" in Metal Gear Solid, you won't be able to stop playing. For instance, there's a cardboard box that you won't be able to get out of for at least half an hour, once you've found it and realised that you can use it to hide in and sneak past enemies.

The problem is, however, that buy it on Japanese import and you're going to miss out on a lot of what the game has to offer. It's all unreadable, of course, and so plot heavy that not only will you be losing out a great storyline, but on all but the most basic level you won't have the faintest idea what's going on. There would be no way of knowing, for example, that you have to blow up bits large sections of the wall with plastic explosives in the underground basement on the third area you visit.

A brilliant, technically stunning, well thought through release that's sure to influence action adventure games for many years. But we can't recommend the Japanese original — not when the English-language US release has just gone on sale, and the UK version is expected by March '99. Wait for one of those.

Rich Pelley

Or you could try...

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Megaman Legends
- Publisher: Virgin Interactive Entertainment
- Developer: Capcom
- Price: £34.99
- Release date: November
- Players: 1
- Extra: memory card

Remember me? The blue boy returns, and this time he’s brought along an extra dimension.

Now that most people have lost count of the number of Megaman titles, the robotically-enhanced superboy has finally obtained himself a shiny new polygon suit. Besides the obvious graphical improvements, however, Capcom hasn’t made many more changes for this latest addition – it certainly hasn’t tinkered too much with the original Megaman formula of puzzles and shooting. What it has done, however, is add a limited story-led RPG element, and this has just about proved enough to breath new life into this toy-like adventure.

The first couple of minutes of Megaman Legends, set in bland, grey Doom-style corridors, acts as a training ground to help you get to grips with doing battle in 3D. With a helpful auto-aim function and a host of power-ups, running in circles and shooting is at least easy to pull off, but – despite its importance – if you’re going to successfully get used to the feel of mammoth robots queuing up to finish you off later in the game – quickly becomes monotonous.

Despite the sheer number of massive automatons, it’s the story that really drives along Megaman Legends. After crashing his anime-style flying ship, the little lad is driven into a city under siege and beyond. It’s a Japanese game, so it comes supplied with a generous dollop of saucer-eyed teen girls and cute robot slaves to help the plot along, the storytelling achieves through an absorbing mix of cut-scenes and chatting.

The new 3D visuals do the job adequately and smoothly, and the game’s massive map, taking in vistas like sprawling cyphers and atmospheric towns and villages, means that Legends back up its engrossing story with a degree of “What’s around the next corner?!” excitement. Overall, though, you will find that it’s the repetitiveness of the shooting sections, and the limited nature of the puzzles, often simply a case of moving between locations before the next fight, that make Legends limited fun. *** Mark Green

R-Types
- Publisher: Virgin Interactive Entertainment
- Developer: Capcom
- Price: £29.99
- Release date: on sale now
- Players: 1

Think arcades, Think shoot-em-up, Think R-Type. The genre classic redefined the coin-op back in the mid-'80s – and now it’s back and available from the comfort of your own sofa.

Time was when I’d be able to pop 20 pts into an R-Type machine and breeze to level five without losing a life. Well, maybe just once. These days I can’t even get past the big green mothship on level three – by the pricing standards of today’s coin-ops, I’d already be down by about £250. I mean, it just isn’t fair. Back in 87 when I first took on the Bally Bude single handed, I was a man possessed by the ravages of age, and considerably nimbler of hand and swifter of reaction. But have the aliens mellowed over time, attacking in tasteless packed craft, wearing comfort zones of simply choosing not to fight? It looks a bit nippy out tonight? Have I?

Ah, R-Type. And your lesser-known but equally profit-making brother, R-Type II. There are can’t-load-a-game-too-damn-bloke who hasn’t – in one format or another – suffered repeatedly at the hands of your many varied and unpleasant-looking ships, over a decade.

After all these years, I thought this 8-bit throwbacks would look dreadfully out of place on Sony’s 32-bit gemmister, but the pixel-perfect conversions merely show just how far ahead of their time the originals were.

Besides, if Irem stopped to pull off an R-Type 98, it’d get 24-bit colour and 15 levels of parachute scrolling and tresorne over-acted to death. I’d be flabbergasted if the structure of the game would change. Yes, every go on R-Type is exactly the same, and yes, you can get used to it. But I always mindlessly to the same old tactics, and yes, when you die you’re shagged because your weaponry (that fantastic ball thing we keep chopping on) has gone. But because the route to success is so bloody obvious, you refuse to believe that you can win – and so you keep coming back time after time after time, for Just One More Go.

Steve Jarrett

PlayStation budget round-up

One of the best things about PlayStations is that you can get hold of all sorts of top quality goodies for under £20.


Croc
- Publisher: Electronical Arts
- Developer: Argonaut
- Price: £19.99
- Release date: November
- Players: 1
- Extra: memory card

The first attempt at doing Super Mario 64 on the PlayStation, Croc’s technically impressive platformer, but is severely lacking in the sort of inspired gameplay that’s needed to save it from the obvious, if harsh, “just do it” pandering. There’s no sense of freedom you negotiate the enclosed stages. The “will this do” level design suggests the developers went to the pub after quitting the graphics engine, leaving you more or less alone with the already-incredible, a few baddies and platforms you fall off more than because of the off-earth camera angles than anything. To be fair, this isn’t completely disastrous, just dull and frustrating. And Croc himself isn’t much to write home about. Even well-adjusted five-year-olds struggle to warm to the cynical cute repit of its “whacky” engine, particularly nauseating, meaning you’d be better off playing one of his fellow-facial-panorama platforms, notably Get 3D or Crash Bandicoot and put it on Platinum.**

Grand Theft Auto
- Publisher: Namco
- Developer: Argonaut
- Price: £19.99
- Release date: November
- Players: 1
- Extra: memory card

If inciting violence was a legitirum criterion by which to judge a game, Grand Theft Auto would have cocked max points on its release in December ’97. Telford’s monsters queued up to froth about the game’s prooof depiction of juicing, drug dealing and the almost life-offending hilarity it also offered. You put Death Race 2000 style stunts like moving down pedestrians, Blues Brothers police car weaponary and Scirocco-standard house-toronto. And it looked like the most original, grotty game in years.

If it only too stood up to inspection. Become brawl to the game’s behind-the-bike-shed humour and the top-down Trevor’s tension that was there down to the bone. The graphics are nothing special either – Commodore 64, anyone? – but these elements come to the game’s ugly, a last splash of excitement. There’s an American tension that makes use of improved graphics and gameplay, so why couldn’t we have had that instead of just a budget re-release of the inferior UK model?**

Oddworld: Abe’s Oddyssey
- Publisher: Argonaut
- Developer: Oddworld Inhabitants
- Price: £19.99
- Release date: on sale now
- Players: 1
- Extra: memory card

Released at around the same time as the first proper PlayStation release, Oddworld done, it soon became dear that Abe wasn’t from around these parts. The grey-green scrawny little alien meat packer turned Freedom Fighter didn’t only lock wield he was staring in a platformer that was 2D and proud of the fact. Still, it did have lavishly drawn backdrops and a darkly humorous first that was all own, at least until the sequel came along (see page 17).

Nice touches abound in Oddworld, as our endeavours animated via, chants, talks and what he way through some intricately crafted puzzles, possessing baffles and running them into mindless machines to escape his fellow enslaved Mudokons. Admittedly, at the end of the day this is only a block 3D platformer, but the production values are lavish and slowly you can’t help be carried along by the sheer wealth of imagination that’s gone into creating Oddworld.*****

Time Crisis
- Publisher: Namco
- Developer: Namco
- Price: £19.99
- Release date: November
- Players: 1
- Extra: G-Con 45 light gun

In its coin-op incarnation, this was the ultimate midway waits station tension reliever, and this daisy conversion was originally packaged with Namco’s superb short G-Con light gun. Now rolled its idealism for a Platinum re-release. Time Crisis is still a fast-paced side-scrolling shooter that’s available for home console, as you take on the massed forces of a gun-equipped terrorist against a time-limit that makes the Countdown dock look soft.

Time Crisis ticks on the tension as the seconds ticks away, but also gives you the chance to alleviate it – a “duck” button letting you hide behind scenery before popping up and blasting away. You don’t need to play with the light gun rather than a pad to feel the full John Woo film benefit, though, which means this is an essential purchase if you bought your G-Con along with Namco’s other excellent light gun, Point Blank. **

Pool Shark
- Publisher: Gremlin Interactive
- Developer: Gremlin Interactive
- Price: £39.99
- Release date: 27 November
- Players: 1-2

A taking an entertaining game that involves skill and social intercourse and convert it so you can play it using a joystick on your toe. Hmm.

Well, no prizes for guessing what this one’s about: good old “dinky back room of the pub, line up your money on the side of the table” pool. The game in question features three, eight, nine or ten-ball pool with US or UK rules, played in one of four locations and a variety of CPU-controlled opponents.

As you’d expect, it’s played just like any of the snooker and pool sims that have been doing the rounds over the last couple of years. Your hand and cue are represented on screen, forcing you to eye up the shot just as you would in real life; position the cue taking far too long for a shot this simple, choosing a side, screw or top (then think better of it, knowing that you only have a basic grasp of pool physics); adjust the power of the shot in double, twist it; and then watch as your target ball slips below baize level (watch as you down the white, miss totally or sink your opponent’s ball).

Pool Shark is all there, but it’s not without its faults. For starters, why is there such an incredibly non-processor intensive game not presented in hi-res, so it’s all nice and crisp looking? Please, spare the technical excuses. Second, the roving, golf-style power bar is just crap – I want to be able to set my power accurately, not have to rely on a random button press; and third, there are times when you want to line a shot up without having the cue in the way. Okay, you can achieve this by flicking between cue and camera views, but it’s a faff that I don’t need, frankly. So nice try, but no cigar.

Steve Jarrett

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New PC Games

Arcade PC
Game of the Month

London girl: Tomb Raider III sets Lara loose in the UK for the very first time. Foxes and hedgehogs should pack their bags now.
AUTOMATICS FOR THE PEOPLE
LARA'S BACK. THE GAME'S HARDER. BUT SHE'S LOVELIER

Tomb Raider III

- Publisher: EIDOS Interactive
- Developer: Core Design
- Price: £39.99
- Release date: 20 November
- Players: 1
- Requires: P166, 16Mb RAM
- Recommended: 32Mb RAM, 3D card

The new moves, locations and costumes are the obvious things Tomb Raider III has over the earlier games. Look closer, though, and you'll see more.

Make sure there are no sensitively eared young kids or shockable grandparents near when you start to play Tomb Raider III. They should be shielded from the abuse you will, inevitably, hurl at the screen.

"What the...! Arghh!"
"Don't jump that way, you stupid... nyaaagh!"
"Where the hell did that come from... NO! GNAAGH!"
Tomb Raider III is utterly frustrating. It's often irritating and repetitive. And, at the same time, it's totally brilliant.

There are two main reasons why a game this annoying is also so totally great. To begin with, there's the fact that every obstacle -- every jump you don't quite make, every enemy who comes out of nowhere, every fatal surprise -- can and will be beaten, with a little skill and practice.

The first time you get skewered by a descending ceiling of spikes as you run around trying to escape, you'll curse long and hard. The second and third times, when you've worked out what to do but can't quite manage it, or you mess up some tiny element of timing, you'll yell even more vehemently. But the fourth time, you'll do it, and you'll be delighted. (Then, of course, you'll get killed in the next bit, and will have to go back and do it all again, because of the ferociously difficult new save-game system.)

But the point is that however angry you get, however much you cry "unfair", you never give up. You always feel that, this time you'll make it through. And when you don't, you know exactly what you did wrong. You're locked in the grip of that "just one more try" compulsion, because you're never truly stuck for more than a few minutes. Every step's a struggle, but you will make it to the next level. Eventually.

And the second reason for TRL's success is that your efforts are rewarded. Every new area is awe-inspiring, and solved puzzles grant access to so many magical spectacles. Conventionally, it's said that graphics have no impact on "gameplay", but the dramatic majesty of TRL's visuals is perhaps the most important factor in the game's success.

This is because -- and it's important to remember this -- the Tomb Raider titles aim towards the adventure end of action adventure games. Despite their running and shooting excitement, the essential object of the series is to explore and discover all the new places. The more impressive that these "new places" appear, the more rewarding it is to find them.

And by golly, Tomb Raider III will take you to some truly remarkable new places. There are bits of this game that are simply breathtaking.

Whether you're standing high in the treetops above the Ganges or shivering in the rain on a walkway above the streets of London, Tomb Raider III's sense of the dramatic wows you with a cinematic vision. It's not just the awesome vistas, or the intense close-up action sequences, or even the clever mixing of cutscenes, video sequences and in-game set-pieces, which gives the game its emotional power. It's the theatrical flourish with which it surprises you at every turn, exceeding your expectations with each trick or stunt.

The many cosmetic enhancements new to this third Tomb Raider title are crucial details in this captivating vision.
New PC Games

It's alive, it should be dead. Not a sophisticated philosophy, but you can't deny it works.

Uppers & Downers

Tomb:
- Some fantastic locations
- Beautiful graphical details
- Genuine feeling of tension
- New save-game system
- Very hard

Gloom:
- Not much of a step on from earlier games
- Ultra-annoying instant death
- Very hard

THE ACTION IS WELL-PACED, CHALLENGING AND VARIED. IT'S FULL OF SURPRISES AND TREATS.

Elements such as the impressive new dynamic lighting system or the truly outstanding "particle/d" smoke effects (which mean, for example, that circles of smoke waft and dissipate in the air above your pistols as you fire them) could be instantly dismissed as trivial, but collectively these create a startlingly realistic veneer of plausibility.

Everywhere you look, there's some new lifelike detail, from the footsteps in the snow to the rippling water, from the shafts of light through the trees to the cold grey fog at the bottom of the valley. Lara's ponytail flutters; your enemies are better animated; the true-3D London rain effects have to be seen to be believed. On a PC with 3D acceleration, the new effects are especially impressive.

And the cumulative result of this unprecedented level of realism is a true suspension of disbelief, and complete absorption in the adventure. You really do gasp at the tension as Lara hangs from the edge of a balcony, inching along by her fingernails while a guard patrols directly above her. You can't help but let out an involuntary cry when an Alatian leaps out at her from a darkened corner — just as you can't help but cheer when her quad bike leaps the chasm.

This combination of carefully-controlled realism with hyper-dramatic special effects has always been a trademark of the Tomb Raider titles, but this new game develops the style with total confidence, taking it onwards to a thrilling new level.

That's not all that's been developed in TRIII, though. The almost-entirely new design team has taken two very significant liberties with the basic Tomb Raider structure.

First, they've broken up the constraining linearity of the earlier titles, thus offering you radically different pathways through many of the levels. The easiest way is rarely the best way, and some exploring will frequently be rewarded by hidden areas and pick-ups.

Second, there's an all-new save-game system. As in the last game, you can still save at any place in the level, but now it's going to cost you one "blue crystal" to do so. And, be warned, these blue crystals are quite incredibly hard to come by. You start the game with a meagre four, and you'll be whooping with delight each time you snatch a new one.

This new set-up is, of course, more satisfactory than the clumsy and tension-disruptive "save-anywhere" system, but it also makes the game much, much harder. The same jumps and the same enemies are going to take you out again and again as you slog through to the next save crystal — and there are going to be times when your frustration will boil over, and you'll have to go away for a little while and have a lie down. On the up-side, however, everything becomes much more exciting. You'll take a lot more care and, in the long run, find you have a much more rewarding game because of the extra challenge.

So, does all that add up to a sequel worthy of the name? Are there enough new elements here to justify an entirely new game?

Let's face it, Tomb Raider III isn't a quantum leap in game development from Tomb Raider II. It wasn't meant to be. It's a measured, intelligent progression. If you've never liked the Tomb Raider style, then three or four new "moves" and a few graphical tweaks aren't going to make a convert of you.

But if you do have the patience to immerse yourself in a true adventure, then Tomb Raider III offers a collection of brilliantly imaginative virtual playgrounds for you to explore. Most of the levels are great (except for some of the early ones, which are a little prosaic), and some are outstanding. The action is well-paced, challenging and varied. It's full of surprises and treats, most notable among these the supremely entertaining vehicles (including the quad bike, kayak and a brilliant James Bond-style underwater propulsion unit). There's a fantastic arsenal to collect, and, better still, a great variety of semi-intelligent creatures to try it out on.

You could, perhaps, complain that it needs a greater number of more intriguing puzzles, or moan that it's still far too keen to throw instant death your way. You could even throw in a gripe about the occasionally mismatched textures, or the times when your great new vehicle gets glitchily stuck inside a solid wall.

But you're much more likely to be, quite simply, thrilled. There's life left in Lara yet.

Jonathan Smith

Or you could try...

Still looking. Neither happy nor sad, just looking. Perhaps that's why we like her so.

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The Fifth Element
- Publisher: Ubisoft
- Developer: Kaistlo
- Price: £39.99
- Release date: on sale now
- Players: 1
- Requires: P166, 16MB RAM, 50MB HD space, soundcard, Win 95
- Recommended: 3Dfx card

The much-hyped game of Luc Besson's flamboyant Bruce Willis actioner. If you shout the loudest, you will inevitably have the most to prove...

- Beyond simply cashing in on its association with the Luc Besson sci-fi film, The Fifth Element also attempts the "3D-rendered, big, bab" play. While these two selling points may grab the title a bunch of attention they don't, of course, necessarily mean that the game will be any good.

- Technically, The Fifth Element is an average Tomb Raider clone involving the usual mix of puzzle solving, weaponTry and hand-to-hand combat. Its controls are a little cumbersome, but if you keep at it for all 23 levels, you should become pretty adept at moving without constantly bashing your head against brick walls or moonwalking into dark corners.

- That said, the game's third-person camera's peculiar behaviour can still make it difficult, even for the exceptionally patient.

- Sometimes developers have to work hard to find gameplay in a film license, but this one should have been a no-brainer. Except it clearly wasn't. Forget the Fifth Element, what about the plot elements? The Ubisoft guys have played fast and loose with the movie's (admittedly convoluted) storyline. This time around, Leeloo, high-kicking heroine and wearer of that immovable strap of orange fanbelt, spends much time kicking the crap out of cops as she does the evil Mangalores. The manual's hint: "Destroy everything you can", is surely not the credo of The Ultimate Being, the protector of all life! Evidently it is. Even TFE's dramatic climax, the solution to the triggering of the stones, is dumbed down to use tacky pickup objects called Activators, instead of the movie's, far subtler, power of imagination.

- Classic games can be made from classic films, but it's attention to detail and at least a passing degree of reverence for the original material that makes them worthwhile. A game which sells MondoShavians no less than five different ways is obviously not even trying. ** Neil Jackson

UP POMPEI

ROME WASN'T BUILT IN A DAY, BUT YOU CAN BUGGER IT ALL UP IN LESS THAN AN HOUR

Caesar III
- Publisher: Sierra
- Developer: Impressions
- Price: £34.99
- Release date: on sale now
- Players: 1
- Requires: P166, 16MB RAM, 4x CD-ROM drive, 1MB PCI video card, soundcard, Win 95

Novices be warned: this one's a toughie.

Ancient Rome was an incredible military and engineering force, but its role as a social innovator is frequently overestimated. If you remember your history, you'll know that Roman culture was largely based on Greek principles and ideals. A lot of Rome's greatness, it transpires, was borrowed. It's perhaps fitting, then, that Impressions' Caesar series owes a similar debt of gratitude to the SimCity series and, with the third installment, System 3's Constructor.

Caesar III offers two different types of game: either pursue a goal-based career or take the more traditional option of building and refining a single city. Either way, your immediate aim will be to appease both your populace and the titular autocrat.

At first, it's hard to shake off the suspicion that Caesar III's huge variety of buildings and game laws encourages linear "reaction" alone - rather than the more free creation you might have preferred. For a city to evolve, you must address seemingly every demand from a rarely content populace. And, as in Constructor, the detailed specifications of the many, many structures available threatens to drown even the most hearty God-game enthusiast beneath tidal waves of statistics.

On page 210 of the Caesar III manual, there's the following delightfully inappropriate type: "Administration: Prosperity rating up to 75%. The hell is this shit!" (sic) At first - as you plough through the instructions for clues on how to make your city work - you'll be tempted to agree with the anonymous writer.

But as time goes on, you'll start to think he's wrong and, with experience, the details and rules that at first frustrated begin to fascinate. Sure, Caesar III ain't one for the faint-hearted. But buried under all the stats and hassle is a fine real-time strategy game, and one of the highlights of the genre to date.

One thing's for sure, with this level of complexity Caesar IV will need a massive rethink. Keep going in this particular direction, and Sierra risks seriously over-taxing the one piece of PC gaming hardware that can't be upgraded - the player. ______

James Price

Or you could try...

Graduates of SimCity 2000 will find Caesar III a great new challenge.

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Uppers & Downers

Toga party
- There's a whole lot of game to get stuck into
- Two modes to play

Animal house
- Heavy going to start
- And where are the orgies?
People Mover
Do You Still Believe?

Populous: The Beginning

- Publisher: Electronic Arts
- Developer: Bullfrog Productions
- Price: £34.99
- Release date: out now
- Players: 1
- Requires: P133, 16Mb RAM, sound card, Win 95
- Recommended: P200, 3D card (direct 3D)

Populous was the release that heralded the arrival of Bullfrog, built a games industry star out of creator Peter Molyneux, and, along with the first SimCity, invented the “God sim”. Now, 10 years later, it’s back. But, in a world of ever-more-complicated real-time strategy games, is there still a place for the game that started it all?

The idea of Populous is to build a village of warriors on one side of the game’s beautifully depicted world map that’s strong enough to take out the enemy village on the other.

And that’s it. Except, you see, religion’s involved — so inevitably everything gets complicated. As “God”, you start each level with just a handful of male and female villagers (braves) and a female leader (your shaman, and the only one capable of casting spells). You can command the
braves to build huts, in which they will live and breed and gain magic power (mana), and training huts, in which they will become warriors. Sacred monuments, such as stone heads and totem poles, are scattered near your starting point. Your followers need to worship these to enable you to gain new spells (ones to create land, so they can walk from island to island, say) or build more intricate buildings like guard posts and temples. Once you have temples, you can turn some of your braves into preachers, who will convert the enemy's warriors and braves to your side.

With me so far?

But to gain the powerful spells needed to decisively beat your enemy, and thus move to the next level, you're going to have to try a bit harder. In fact, your shaman will often have to sneak towards the enemy camp where she can worship at their Vault of Knowledge tower. Here's well you'll find the Really Good Stuff - a different super-spell per level, giving you the ability to, say, blast a bolt of lightning down on an enemy, send a swarm of bees to scatter his forces, or cause a spectacular volcano to erupt from the ground and ooze lava, causing mucho destruction.

Hang on a minute.

You've heard this all before, right?

Populous first came out in 1989, and spawned a sequel and a whole host of imitations and derivatives. There were so many that everyone eventually got bored of this whole building-up-communities-then-sending-them-to-fight stuff. By the mid-'90s the original genre, the so-called "God sim", had all but died. Real-time strategy games such as C&C and Warcraft took the basic concept and successfully ran with it.

But now the first, the original, is back. Populous: The Beginning is essentially the same game it always was - simple at it's heart (though it always comes across as complicated when you try to explain it), and definitely touched by a smattering of genius. So what's different about The Beginning? And is it relevant ten years on?

It's certainly much better looking, with a swish new 3D graphics engine that enables you to swivel your way around the levels and view what's going on in your domain from all angles. The only slight problem is that this can occasionally become disorientating, particularly when you've become used to seeing the level from one viewpoint. A quick change of camera angle can feel a bit like stopping halfway through a meal, turning your plate around, and expecting to see the mashed potato where the carrots are.

Populous: The Beginning is also easier to get to grips with than the original. You don't have to worry about flattening your land to provide room for your people to build (a major part of the original). There's less emphasis placed on the continuous acquisition of mana. And your people go where you tell them to (they've become more manageable in their old age). It's really an old-school God sim, but presented with '90s sophistication - which is, I guess, exactly what Bullfrog wanted.

If you've never played Populous, then, this makes an excellent piece to start. You'll probably be fascinated by the great central idea, and you'll get to see what all the fuss was about - this is still one of gaming's landmark titles. If you did play the original game, play it again in 3D. How much you get out of it - and this touches on a slight feeling of repetitiveness that is the only real downside to the game - will depend on how much you persevere. ★★★★★

Richard Pelley

Or you could try...

- SimCity 2000
  Lots of different little people
- Risk
  Always good if you can find it
- Orioles
  Great if you enjoy birds
- SimCity: San Francisco
  The city is in San Francisco
- SimCity: The Big City
  The city is crowded and busy
- SimCity 2000: The Big City
  The city is also a big city
- SimCity 2000: The Big City 2
  The city is a big city 2
- SimCity 2000: The Big City 3
  The city is a big city 3
- SimCity 2000: The Big City 4
  The city is a big city 4

As with many modern interpretations of old games, Populous: The Beginning is like one of those live action film versions of cartoons. Say, the Flintstones. You remember stuff like the volcanoes (top) from before, but they never looked real until now.
WORF EAGER
ALIEN LONG-HAIRS KILL EACH OTHER. LIKE WOODSTOCK, ONLY GRISLIER.

Klingon Honor Guard

Publisher: MicroProse
Developer: MicroProse
Price: £39.99
Release date: on sale now
Players: 1-16
Requires: P166, 16mb RAM, Win 95
Recommended: 3D card

It's the first Star Trek game with proper killing. Ever. (BTW, why do Klingons have such big chops on their shoulders? To go with the pasties on their foreheads!)

S o then, a proper Star Trek first-person action game. Well, sort of. Due to the legal complications of the mighty Star Trek franchise, doing a proper shooting game with real Star Trek characters is against the rules. No matter how attractive, nay, necessary, it might seem, no way are you ever going to see Wesley Crusher get his balls blown off by a rocket launcher. So to get round the intricacies of Hollywood contracts, MicroProse has pulled off the wizard whee of having a Star Trek shooter in the Star Trek universe, but without real Star Trek characters; just those grizzly old Klingons. You're a Klingon and, thanks, no doubt, to some administrative cock-up, the bad guys are Klingons as well.

Look, it's based around Epic Megagame's mighty Unreal engine, so have little doubt that the Klingon Honor Guard looks fantastic; the best-looking Star Trek game ever, in fact. And like Unreal, it mostly plays like a dream. There are a couple of oddities that might annoy or perplex you; the fact that if you kill an evil Klingon who has a better weapon than you, you can't pick it up. Why? Loads of them have those weird boomerang-shaped swords, and early in the game there's little more irritating than smashing them down, only to find that they keep a tight grip on their bendy blades. Gits.

And then there's the way that some levels end when you least expect it. You think you've got some way to go, you do something important without realising it and next thing you know, you're on your way to the next level. Uh, why? What did I do right? Couldn't we have some sort of big, obvious button to press to end the level of our own accord? It sounds picky, but if you're the type who likes to fully explore every level and find all those tricky secrets, this is going to wind you up something rotten.

Two complaints and that's about it, apart from the inevitable fact that you need a monster PC for it to look its best. On the plus side are the witty asides your Klingon character comes up with and, uh, the rest of it. A shade more polished and it would have been perfect. As the Klingons themselves would say... Oh, sod it. Get a big throat full of phlegm and make some guttural noises. That sounds about right.

Travis

Uppers & Downners

Federation
- It's Star Trek
- With shiny Unreal looks
- And you can kill things!
Klingon
- But you can't kill Kirk
- Or Wesley
- Kill all Aikoh a bit right

Or you could try...
DESSERT STORM
BUILDING CASTLES IN THE SAND

by dumping the plodding turn-based business that dominated the area, giving birth to a new style of game: real-time strategy.

That was then, and this is now. Strategy games have come along in leaps and bounds since 1993, and Duke II's long-awaited sequel—Dune 2000—is both more and, curiously, less than the original. What we have here is Duke II with knobs on. It's the original game lovingly reproduced, polished, and dressed in a dapper tweed sports jacket. In this brushed up reincarnation your challenge is to fight your way across 27 map sections playing the warring Harkonnen, the sneaky Ordos, or the rather more noble Atreides—all races introduced in Frank Herbert's bestselling Dune series of science fiction novels, of course—using a combination of fighting and resource management to progress.

The problem is that while Duke 2000 manages to offer improvements over the original in virtually every area, these improvements really aren't very dramatic. The graphics haven't been beefed up so much as given a quick lick of paint. This time around the Giant Sandworms (surely the Dune series' most compelling visual) are more pleasantly rendered and animated—there's a better attempt at animating the appearance when you enter a blue crackle of static electricity—but that's it. The combat units themselves, although pretty hit-and-miss than Duke II's, aren't much to write home about either—they look very dated, even shabbier than the original Command & Conquer's. Considering that C&C was released a little over three years ago, that's pretty disappointing.

The control interface has also been updated, with group selection now possible and, unlike in the original, you can now directly build units from the sidebar. Pretty cool, but for a game that once innovated so much, this is hardly ground-breaking stuff.

So where does all this lead us? The sad fact is that great though Duke II was in its time, any new version is going to be too simplistic to compete with modern real-time strategy titles, like the likes of Age Of Empires or Total Annihilation, unless it's given a pretty serious overhaul. And Dune 2000 simply hasn't been given the attention.

On one level perhaps I'm being a little unfair. Dune 2000 never specifically claims to be a next-generation game, more the remaster of a classic. And on these terms it works. So if you fancy a trip down memory lane then give it a try—you'll be playing a piece of gaming's history. If you're after an innovative game that breaks new ground, however, look elsewhere. Gaming moves so fast these days there's little room for old men. And that's decided what Dune 2000 is.

Alex Bickham

Rainbow Six

■ Publisher: Red Storm
■ Developer: Red Storm
■ Price: £34.99
■ The whole first-person shooter genre has been crying out for a more cerebral approach, and Rainbow Six delivers it. Not that I was convinced it would (I've been burned too many times by games based on books or films). But Rainbow Six isn't just a jack Ryan vehicle, it stars all new characters: a bunch of tough ex-special forces types from assorted nations, all specialists in combating international terrorism.

During the action, you assume a QUAKE-style perspective as you wander through petro-chemical plants and foreign embassies, defusing explosives, rescuing hostages and putting bullets in the brains of terrorists. The graphics are more 3D, but the game still has some nice touches, such as slow-moving pools of scum and the recently deceased.

As a nod towards realism, there are no health packs conveniently lying around, and no grenade-proof armour. A single bullet could quickly end your career. This all gives the game a very realistic, stealth-orientated feel—more so than with PlayStation's Metal Gear Solid.

But where Rainbow Six really exceeds expectations is in the planning of missions. You get to configure your team's strategy, routes and tasks prior to the action on a blueprint of the target building. It's real Italian embassy stuff, and adds layers of depth. Perhaps the only real flaw is the AI of your troops, who waver between SAS-style brilliance and United States Marine Corps incompetence. The terrorists themselves are a bit like Grandma—easily frightened and only hearing are small sounds. But while this is frustrating, it's not enough to spoil an unusual and otherwise inventive title.

Don your black combat, not to go clubbing but to pitch in with hard-as-nails SAS-types in Tom Clancy's realistic shoot-'em-up.

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**New PC Games**

**Hedz**

- Publisher: Hasbro Interactive
- Developer: VIS Interactive
- Price: £39.99
- Release date: on sale now
- Players: 1 (Internet multiplayer option)
- Requires: P100, 16Mb RAM, 30Mb HD space, 4x CD-ROM drive, 2Mb graphics card

Now here's an original release: you have to scamper around 3D mazes, taking the phrase “head-hunting” to its limit.

It seems most people are wary of the prospect of real-life head transplants being mere years away and, if Hedz is anything to go by, we've got good reason to be scared. Hasbro has evidently seen the future and it's a world where aliens strap human brains onto their torsos and then adopt not only their dead savior's physical attributes, but also any weapons or vehicles they may have owned. It isn't as gory as it sounds, though — largely because you play the part of one of the noggin-nabbing aliens.

Hedz takes place in a series of garish 3D worlds, ranging from downtown cities to over-sized children's playgrounds, all of them viewed from the behind-and-above perspective that's become de rigueur since Lara's first appearance. Your quest is to collect bonces from the other head-hunting green-boys littering the landscape. And — wouldn't you know it? — asking nicely just ain't gonna work.

Despite the lure of gaining extra heads, each bringing with it new abilities, actually making progress in Hedz verges on the monotonous. The only way to open locked doors, for example, is to kill aliens until one of them spits out a key. These key-holders will frequently make such a run for it that you have to trek back half a level to find them. After three or more levels of this sort of "action", you'll be contemplating removing your own head just for the relief of it.

On the plus side, on the plus side. Let me see. I suppose the idea is fairly neat. And the controls are intuitive enough, with homing shots and a helpful radar showing your enemies at long range. The graphics and sound do their job too, and there are a host of nice touches — such as shot aliens making a last grab for their lost head before they're teleported out. So it's interesting, if not actually that entertaining. Me, I'm looking forward to the sequel. *Legz.*

**Mid-League Respectability**

Fancy yourself as Glen Huddle?

**FA Premier League Football Manager '99**

- Publisher: EA Sports
- Developer: EA Sports
- Price: £39.99
- Release date: on sale now
- Players: 1
- Requires: P133, 16Mb RAM, Win 95, 3Dfx card
- Recommended: P200, 32Mb RAM

EA Sports makes its inevitable move into the football management arena, and does its usual professional job.

Tackling up with the FA Premier League is a good start, but EA's still going to need to give 10% to lure fans away from such well-established football manager league-leaders as EDO's Championship Manager and Gremlin's Premier Manager series.

Despite the title, *FA Premier League Football Manager '99* allows you to work with teams from the top four English and two Scottish divisions. So you can start off small and, if you're successful, switch to larger clubs as the season progresses. The game is divided into the usual business and coaching options, and both are handled well. EA-mails arrive at your office to let you know if something major needs attending.

**Uppers & Downers**

**Premier Division**
- Training pays off
- Virtual managers help out
- A great transfer system
- It's not just the premiere league

**Vauxhall Conference**
- It's up against some pretty stiff competition

And for those who are looking for a bit more of a challenge, there are options for playing as the FA Chairman or the Premier Manager. But be warned, it's not all about the money in this occupation.

*Or you could try...*  

**Championship Manager 2**
- Big name managers
- Proven track record
- Offering new to offer the best value.

**Premier Manager '98**
- Budget
- But not up to the standards of competition.

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*Mark Green*  
**Glen Weston**  

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RACE FOR YOUR LIFE

STEP INTO A DARK AND DEMANDING FUTURE

DethKarz

- Publisher: Infogrames
- Developer: Melbourne House
- Price: £34.99
- Release date: November
- Players: 1-8
- Requires: P166, 16Mb RAM, 3D card

Why is the future never a bright place where peaceful citizens reside in quiet affability? Because dark, fast, and dangerous makes for a better storyline.

PC simulations can be perplexing axes. Almost every flight sim you boot-up looks like it belongs in a military training establishment, while driving games can be as gruelling as a genuine 24 hour Le Mans session. Occasionally you crave a good old fashioned arcade experience, and with a top-notch PC - 3D card primed - you ought to expect something fast, furious and fun. Et voilà! It’s DethKarz, a moronically titled yet classily looking release, which has few very original ideas but more zest than a lemon.

Through squinted eyes it resembles WipeOut 2697, Pod, Motorhead... in fact any brightly-lit, high-energy racing game set in the far future.

The game offers 12 circuits, set across four worlds, each more challenging than the last.

Metro City, Grand Keys, The Pole and Red Planet provide the backdrops for a roller-coaster ride of sudden turns and gut-twisting leaps. Your vehicles resemble a collection of souped-up F1 machines each awaiting the first sign of road rage, although you are going to have to earn the right to drive the more powerful of the bunch. Each comes with a laser gun with which to punch rivals out of your path, although you can collect a range of more powerful weapon-power-ups on the track, like the antimatter device which arches out to sap energy from passing opponents.

There are no invisible walls keeping you locked to the track, which means that skidding clean off the road is frustratingly easy to do and, until you become proficient, the crash restart routine is very alienating. But once the handling has become second-nature, DethKarz becomes an exhilarating bit of nonsense which should please all but the most demanding PC thrill-seekers.

Cam Anderson

Or you could try...

Screamer Rally

Motorhead

Ring

- Publisher: Cryo
- Developer: Cryo
- Price: £44.99
- Release date: on sale now
- Players: 1
- Requires: P133, 16Mb RAM, 8x CD-ROM drive, Win 95

What do you get if you cross an operatic epic with a puzzling point ‘n’ click? Oddly, not quite the disaster you’d expect.

Video games based on operas are becoming a rarity, especially since Codemasters canned its eagerly awaited TOSCA Touring Car Championship. Not missing a trick or a gap in the market, eccentric French developer Cryo steps into the breach with the unfortunately titled Ring, a game based on Richard Wagner’s The Ring of the Nibelungen.

Ring actually began life all the way back in 1972 as a set of stage designs for a futuristic reworking of Wagner’s Viking epic, but two and a half decades down the line, it’s mutated into a point and click adventure, complete with singing characters and music conducted by Sir Georg Solti.

It really is as odd as it sounds. Wagner’s music plays constantly in the background so you explore the various different worlds in Ring’s universe, and at important points in the story the characters will burst into song. When there’s no singing going on you get the opportunity to wander round the stunning settings and solve a few puzzles. Opera aside, it’s basically a standard first-person adventure, albeit one that also has some stunning pre-rendered graphics and an artful burke’s collection of robotic Norse gods thrown in the mix. The puzzles are pretty simple, the graphics are lovely and controlling the characters is a breeze – this is particularly useful if you’re just getting started with playing video games.

Ring comes on six CD-ROMs, so there’s quite a big amount of adventuring to be had, and the game does a good job of drawing you in to the plot – especially if you’re not quite sure when Alberich the dwarf king might start belting out another tune. Big ups the aural.

Tim Cant

Riverworld

- Publisher: Cryo
- Developer: Cryo
- Price: £34.99
- Release date: on sale now
- Players: 1 and networked game
- Requires: P90, 16Mb RAM, 30Mb HD space, 2x CD-ROM drive, soundcard
- Recommended: 3D accelerator card

How do you take a sprawling series of classic science fiction novels and condense them into a single game? Not like this.

Riverworld is based on the series of novels by Philip José Farmer. It’s an interesting premise: imagine that everyone who has ever lived has been reincarnated in the far future on the banks of a river that winds its way around a massive planet. If you’ve ever wanted to watch Queen Victoria go five rounds with Julius Caesar, this is your chance. (Actually, if you do want to see that, you should probably seek help from an appropriately qualified person.)

Not to put too fine a point on it, Riverworld is a good sim. You control the actions of one Richard Burton (the Victorian explorer, not the bloke who married Liz Taylor), and your eventual aim is to find the source of the river in order to do this, you’ll need to enlist the help of the various people around you. To begin with, you’ll need to provide them with somewhere to live. After that, they’ll happily do your work for you, chopping down trees or quarrying stone to build your little empire. You can expand your territory by taking over your neighbours’ Gallstones, which they need to provide them with food. There are well-known historical figures scattered around who will help you or fight as you try to find your way up-river.

The game uses an intuitive point-and-click system that makes use of a 3D cards if you have one. Graphically, it’s attractive but overall it’s not very varied, making it a great game for fans of the lengthy series of books, but not one that’s likely to pull too many non-sci-fi fans in. Goodish, then, but certainly not the best in its genre.

Jim Chandler

Fighter Pilot

- Publisher: Electronic Arts
- Developer: Electronic Arts
- Price: £34.99
- Release date: on sale now
- Players: 1
- Requires: P166, 16Mb RAM, 30Mb HD space, 2x CD-ROM drive, 2Mb graphics card, soundcard
- Recommended: Joystick, 3D accelerator card

It looks like a flight sim, it smells like a flight sim, but by golly it doesn’t taste like a flight sim. EA’s Fighter Pilot has all the trappings, but no complications.

Despite the looks, this isn’t really a flight sim. It’s an arcade game. There’s no mucking around with flaps and radios, and tedious details like taking off and landing simply don’t happen. Stripped to the

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Newman/Haas Racing

Publisher: Psygnosis
Developer: Psygnosis
Price: £32.95
Release date: on sale now
Players: 1-8
Requires: P133, 16Mb RAM, 33Mb HD space, 2x CD-ROM, graphics card, soundcard
Win 95 Recommended: P166, 4x CD-ROM, 3Dfx card
Extra: steering wheel can be used

In the wheeler-dealer world of racing games, it's easier to end up with a Trabant than your dream Ferrari. Psygnosis's latest IndyCar effort is a bit of both.

Newman/Haas Racing has all the usual racing-game suspects: 16 different cars and drivers, 11 tracks with different racing styles and oodles of crisp 3D scenery. You get plenty of pit action, knobbly tyres, and technology, while the racing is smooth, fast and doesn't require an engineering degree. Sounds great! It's not.

Newman/Haas seems to have it all, but doesn't. The sounds grate, like the commentator. The engine is stolen from your sister's moped — it's tinny and unrealistic, despite the fact it's a sampled Haas. And far from the chassis-crunching cacophony you'd expect from high-speed crashes, they all sound like someone wheezing.

Now That's Magic

But has it got a rabbit up its sleeve?

Magic & Mayhem

Publisher: Virgin Interactive Entertainment
Developer: Mythos Games
Price: £39.99
Release date: on sale now
Players: 1
Requires: P100, 16Mb RAM, 100Mb HD space, 4x CD-ROM, 2Mb graphics card, soundcard
Recommended: P133, 32Mb RAM, 275Mb HD space, modem for Internet play

For once, a combination of spells, summoning and strategy guaranteed to entertain someone other than hippies and eternal students.

With a name like Magic & Mayhem, you know it's either a fantasy battle game, or a heavy night out with Paul Daniels. Let's hope bloodshed is involved, either way. It's tempting at this stage to let rip a barrage of Monty Python and the Holy Grail quotes — but I shall resist. Still, M&M sets itself up royally for that kind of treatment, focusing as it does on such staple-diet fantasies as quests for golden cups, mighty wizards with dull-sounding names, knights of the round tabletop wargames, and so on.

Preconceptions aside, the surprise is that M&M is great entertainment. It's absolutely packed with stuff — okay, so it's the usual spell-casting and zombie-summoning, but it's beautifully done and that's what counts. It manages to serve two masters equally; there is good main-character development with an appealing, not-too-tired story line, yet it's also a great hack-'n'-slash strategy game. A rare thing.

You may be sick to death of Arthurian legends, tales of Avalon, and old Joe from Arimathia — but if those things still appeal, M&M is a must-have. Even its combination of 30 Celtic, Greek and Medieval regions feels wonderfully Olde English, but without a trace of that puerile "pointy-hatted dursell" rubbish we've come to loathe in so many US-made fantasy games. I'd probably never admit this in the pub, in front of my football and motorbike-loving mates, but I like M&M — and I think I'm gonna buy a copy, so I can finish the damn thing. Pass the brimstone Merlin, it's going to be another late one.***** — Neil Jackson
heads with a biscuit tin lid. Visually, Newman-Hass Racing is well-stocked with great tyre-stops: cars - dead - at 140mph, without knocking the traffic cones off the top. Ballard's. However, once you've settled into racing, not crashing, the fun starts. The impossible right-angled corners click. The wall-jamming frustration opens into a set of the pant's experience. Your near-misses are captured by the Crash Cam, which zooms out to catch the collision. For a while. So, doesn’t you lose connection with things. So where does it finish? Well, Newman-Hass Racing is a middle-ground contender. Beating most of the traffic, but occasionally ending up with a wheel on the hard shoulders. 

Neiman

PC budget re-releases

by Robin Alway and Sam Richards

Here’s an entrepreneurial idea. Take a load of old PC games. Package 'em up in shiny new boxes and sell ‘em dead cheap. Eh? Come on, we’d make a fortune...Oh. Someone already thought of that. Bugger. Well, there goes another get-rich-quick scheme. Best take a look at what they’ve done, then.

Dungeon Keeper

Publisher: EA Classics
Price: £1.99
Release date: out now
Players: 1

Dungeon Keeper is a spectacularly frantic Madagascar parody. You're in charge of the dungeon, and your task is to play the role of the Bond villain. Your minions are armed with lasers, plasma guns, and other deadly weapons. You must defend your dungeon from the outside world, avoiding traps, and dealing with the constant threat of invasion. It's a challenging and addictive game that will keep you entertained for hours.

F1 Racing Simulation

Publisher: UbiSoft
Price: £1.99
Release date: out now
Players: 1-4

F1 Racing Simulation is a realistic Formula 1 racing game. You can choose from a range of drivers and cars, and compete in a variety of races and events. The graphics are impressive, and the gameplay is challenging. This is a great game for fans of Formula 1 racing.

Little Big Adventure 2

Publisher: EA Classics
Price: £1.99
Release date: out now
Players: 1

Little Big Adventure 2 is a sequel to the popular video game Little Big Adventure. It features a similar storyline, with the same characters and settings. The graphics are improved, and the gameplay is more challenging. This is a great game for fans of the original Little Big Adventure.

Network Q RAC Rally

Publisher: Genesis
Price: £3.99
Release date: out now
Players: 1-2

Network Q RAC Rally is a rally racing game. You can choose from a range of rally cars, and compete in a variety of races. The graphics are impressive, and the gameplay is challenging. This is a great game for fans of rally racing.

Oddworld: Abe's Odyssey

Publisher: GT Replays
Price: £1.99
Release date: out now
Players: 1

Oddworld: Abe's Odyssey is a platform game. You play as Abe, a tribesman who must escape from a wrecked planet. The game is challenging, and the graphics are impressive. This is a great game for fans of platform games.

Pro Pinball: Timeshock

Publisher: EA Classics
Price: £1.99
Release date: out now
Players: 1

Pro Pinball: Timeshock is a pinball game. You can choose from a range of tables, and compete in a variety of games. The graphics are impressive, and the gameplay is challenging. This is a great game for fans of pinball.

Total Annihilation 2

Publisher: Genesis
Price: £3.99
Release date: out now
Players: 1-4

Total Annihilation 2 is a strategy game. You must defend your territory against the enemy, and capture their territory. The graphics are impressive, and the gameplay is challenging. This is a great game for fans of strategy games.

Total Insanity 2

Publisher: Genesis
Price: £3.99
Release date: out now
Players: 1-4

Total Insanity 2 is a strategy game. You must defend your territory against the enemy, and capture their territory. The graphics are impressive, and the gameplay is challenging. This is a great game for fans of strategy games.

Sid Meier's Gettysburg!

Publisher: UbiSoft
Price: £1.99
Release date: out now
Players: 1

Sid Meier's Gettysburg! is a strategy game. You must defend your territory against the enemy, and capture their territory. The graphics are impressive, and the gameplay is challenging. This is a great game for fans of strategy games.

Subculture

Publisher: EA Classics
Price: £1.99
Release date: out now
Players: 1

Subculture is a strategy game. You must defend your territory against the enemy, and capture their territory. The graphics are impressive, and the gameplay is challenging. This is a great game for fans of strategy games.

Theme Hospital

Publisher: EA Classics
Price: £1.99
Release date: out now
Players: 1

Theme Hospital is a strategy game. You must defend your territory against the enemy, and capture their territory. The graphics are impressive, and the gameplay is challenging. This is a great game for fans of strategy games.

Tomb Raider: Unfinished Business

Publisher: FIDOS
Price: £4.99
Release date: out now
Players: 1

Tomb Raider: Unfinished Business is a platform game. You play as Lara Croft, and must explore ancient tombs and temples to find treasure and artifacts. The graphics are impressive, and the gameplay is challenging. This is a great game for fans of platform games.
New Nintendo 64 Games

DINO-ROAR!

Show those lizards who's boss with some disturbingly unpleasant weaponry.
Turok 2

- Publisher: Acclaim Entertainment
- Developer: Iguna
- Price: £39.99
- Release date: Late November, 1998
- Players: 1-4
- Requires: 4Mb RAM Pack (Nintendo, price and availability TBA)

The king of blood and splatter is back. And this time his toys are going to make even more of a mess.

If you ask us, there's something fishy going on at Iguna, the Acclaim-owned developer behind Turok 2. Back in 1997, the company released a first-person dinosaur shoot-'em-up that saved Acclaim from bankruptcy - and helped prop up the adult end of the N64's launch into the bargain. Now they've followed it up with a sequel that begins the original in almost every way.

So why the fish? Look at it this way: Turok was the first game to use Nintendo's controller-processed memory pack, and its memory upgrade that fits under the N64's top hatch doubles its memory power to 8Mb. When Nintendo America's President was questioned about the expansion pack at this year's ECTS computer game show in London, he had to admit that Nintendo hadn't even thought of a name for the thing yet.

So how did Iguna get hold of a memory pack so early? Why was it the first company to have a game capable of using it (just as they did with the memory pack the year before)? And how come Turok 2 is so damn good?

Arcade's first videogame conspiracy theory, then: there's something going on between Nintendo and Acclaim. At the very least the Iguna studio has a direct - and completely unique - helpline back to the technical boffins in Japan. At the most, Nintendo has secretly bought open its enormous cash vault and bought into one of the oldest companies in the videogame business. Okay, so it's not a case for Mulder and Scully, but with a company as resolutely shy as Nintendo, it's always nice to start a bit of speculation.

Either way, Turok 2 is the finest-looking N64 outing yet. Without the RAM pack in place, it improves five-fold on Turok - rolling back the first game's all-encompassing mist to show far more of a level than you ever got a chance to see originally. With the RAM pack in place, the game looks like a graphics card-assisted, high-end PC title - you won't believe what you see on your TV can really come from the same machine that plays host to Cruis'n World.

In fact, it's impossible to talk about Turok 2 without dwelling on the graphics. While the game's setting has remained roughly the same - a cross between Jabberwocky medievalism and a Doom dungeon - the enemies have changed beyond all recognition. Out go the majority of the first game's curiously uninviting dinosaurs and in comes a new range of pi-pedal mutant space monsters, many of them with guns. Big guns. The Raptors remain, fortunately, and (if you can bear to watch as they sprint out on you) you'll see the attention to graphic detail is superb. From rows of bloody reptile teeth, to the points on their slicing talons, these guys will haunt your thoughts long after you've turnd your machine off.

Of course, whenever screen-filling bad guys turn up in a game like Turok 2, you can be sure that someone's carelessly left an enormous arsenal of dangerous weaponry lying around. Indeed, if you thought Turok's nuclear weapon-sized Chronoscepter was the endpoint for any first-person game's gun ambitions, you'll be pleased to learn that Turok 2 has found new extremes in which to revel. How about a spiked frisbee with boomerang properties that slices the limbs off anything you throw it at? Or a three-at-a-time missile launcher, whose final missile never does anything more than spread your enemy's corpse a little bit further across the grass? And if - due to some mental impairment, say - those don't take your fancy, switch to the Cerebral Bore and watch as your missile locks on to an enemy's head, etc... etc... etc...

Where the original game fell down was its difficulty. To make proceedings last, Iguna incorporated madly frustrating precision jumping levels where the slightest mistake resulted in death. Now, the designers of Turok 2 have used the extra cartridge space to offer instead a barely manageable stream of enemies who simply won't take no for an answer. A lot better. Couple all this with a four-player mode - the biggest omission in the first game - and Turok 2 threatens to eclipse the might of Rare's GoldenEye. Did anyone think this was possible?

If you're going to level a criticism at Turok 2, you could say that the actual bread and butter of its gameplay - kill things, find switches, open doors, kill more things - has undergone only cosmetic surgery since the days of Doom. It's not intellectually taxing, certainly, but it's not supposed to be. Turok 2 is happy to stick with "chilling", "exhilarating" and "tough", which - if it's going to be as well executed as this - we're more than happy with.

This is a great, great game. Come and have a go if you think you're hard enough.

James Ashton

Gone are the shrouds of mist that haunted the original Turok. Turok 2's levels feel more open, more expansive, and plain bigger.

Turok 2 Threatens to Eclipse the Might of Rare's GoldenEye. Did Anyone Think This Was Possible?
THE BODY BEAUTIFUL
MOW DOWN CIVILIANS, DRIVE COOL VEHICLES, BLAST ALIENS AND SAVE THE WORLD

Body Harvest's graphics, while not the best, generate the feel of an Earth terrorised by alien people-eaters. Fans of the likes of Wrexham's The Kraken Wakes will recognise scenes like this.

Body Harvest draws upon B-movie imagery and a number of established gameplay styles. There are even elements of the Williams coin-op classic, Defender.

Body Harvest
- Publisher: Gremlin Interactive
- Developer: DMA
- Price: £40
- Release date: on sale now
- Players: 1
- Extras: Rumble pack

It's been three long years in the making, but DMA's incredibly violent alien invasion epic is finally here. This is a massive game, but graphics are only so-so. Can it live up to expectations?

Imagine an amalgamation of every fantastic alien bug B-movie you've ever seen on Channel 4 late on a Saturday night. Imagine a world with huge, hideous creatures, unfazed by the heaviest artillery the military can muster, flesh-eating mutants hell-bent on reducing the population of Small Town USA to a decidedly unhealthy zero and a lone hero, Earth's last hope of avoiding its grisly fate as a larder for a race of alien superbeings.

Now imagine that you're the star of the show. Throw in a sizeable arsenal of destructive weaponry, more than 100 vehicles, five very different stages with over 1,000 square miles of landscape, and - lo and behold - you've got DMA Design's epic Body Harvest.

The game casts you as Adam Drake, a genetically enhanced warrior from the 21st century. Earth is bighted by time-travelling aliens who have infested various time zones from the past in order to snack on their favourite calorie-uncontrolled diet of human brains, bones and balls. The only way to put a stop to their unsavoury habit is to travel back in time and meet the aliens before they can wolf down enough of your ancestors to make the idea of even the loosest family reunion a non-starter.

Your first stop is in 1916 Greece, and it takes all of 30 seconds before you're thrown into your first battle with an alien harvester patrol. Enter a unit consisting of winged scouts which sniff out humans in their homes, muscular "bashers" which knock down any houses the scouts hover over and the utterly disgusting Drone King. This fella is the leader of the operation, and sits in the middle of the destruction waiting for the roving blobs of green goo it dumps from its grisly backside to fetch it some homeless Earth folk. The captured humans are delivered directly to the Drone King's jaws and swallowed down whole.

Luckily for the hapless Greeks, you're armed with a laser pistol and a trigger finger-chaffingly large amount of ammo. The scouts and bashers are swiftly dispatched, and you can free the trapped humans from the slime by simply shooting at it. A few well-placed shots and the Drone King will spew yuck and explode, scattering the remains of its last lunch over the remains of its last lunch's house.

Similar harvester waves beam down into the levels at pre-set intervals, and you have a limited amount of time to
locate them. If you ignore the little red arrow pointing you in the direction of the action, munching will occur on a wholesale basis. When six humans have been eaten, a super-powerful mutant alien will arrive and hunt you remorselessly. If you’re slack enough to let more than 25 hapless people meet their fate in the Drone King’s belly, it’s Game Over.

Since each level is so huge, and Adam is hardly Sally Gunnell when it comes to the old pegging-it-around-on-foot-looking-for-alien-invaders lark, it’s a good job that there are hundreds of vehicles lying around just waiting to be stolen. You can drive everything from tanks to buses and fire engines to motorbikes. All the vehicles handle and perform differently — you can pull handbrake turns in a lightweight two-seater sports car, or you can hop in a tank and just roll over the smaller flea-like aliens.

You can also roll over the humans (they make a crunchy, squishy sort of sound). They’re very tempting to kill but, sadly, any innocent folk you may absent-mindedly slaughter get added on to your 25-human maximum death-level-meter — even if it’s an honest mistake (like parking the tank at the top of a hill and accidentally letting it roll down into the town square).

If you make it through the four main stages of the level, you’ll be faced with a gigantic boss alien and given the Alpha Tank — a futuristic hovercraft — as your final vehicle with which to battle it.

And that’s just the first level. It’s followed by Java 1941, USA 1966, Siberia 1991, and a final trip out to the aliens’ comet homeworld in 2016. Each level is just as vast as Greece, and is infested with tougher varieties of bug. They also offer a completely different set of vehicles. Java is filled with wartime jeeps and trucks; the USA has Cadillacs and helicopters, and Siberia has secret military hardware — bizarrely — a combine harvester, which can be used to mine zombies and... damn! It’s that 25-kill limit spoiling the fun again.

Body Harvest is almost the perfect action/shooting/bug-hunting game. It’s got some fairly basic puzzle-solving elements, with characters to talk to and items to find, but for the most part it’s all about killing. And it does it extremely well. The sheer size of the game means you won’t finish it for ages, and the promise of trying out every vehicle is enough to keep you playing until you do. Just thinking about in the various different trucks is almost a game in itself. Excellent stuff. **星**

Simon Garner

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**Eff ‘n’ Quick**

**Not a Major Contribution to Road Safety**

**F-Zero X**

- **Publisher:** Nintendo
- **Developer:** in-house
- **Price:** £40
- **UK release:** out now
- **Players:** 1-4

With the original SNES F-Zero, Nintendo set the standard for futuristic racers. Now the master is back to teach WipEout a few lessons.

Nintendo's futuristic racer has apparently set itself one aim: to be the fastest game in the whole wide world. And with one track featuring a series of turbo pads that will get you up to a whopping claimed 1000kph, and another whipping through neon-striped tunnels so fast it feels like you’re going backwards, it hasn’t done too badly.

With this much speed, graphical complications have understandably taken a back seat. Every one of F-Zero X’s tracks are suspended in mid-air so there’s no pesky scenery to draw. Instead, processing power can be focussed purely on providing high-octane racing thrills with 29 opponents from hell and routes designed by someone who thinks that jumps followed by 200ft drops are “a pretty neat idea.”

The angular, space-age transports of F-Zero X (yes, they do look a little like WipEout) are a pleasure to drive thanks to finely-tuned controls that respond perfectly to subtle pushes of the analogue stick. This is good because winning races means pushing your machine to its limit; tearing round corners without skidding, smashing into walls or falling off. Too much wall-snogging not only costs you energy but also slows you down.

On the easier difficulty settings you’ll soon be champion, but things get tougher very quickly. Indeed, if anything risks spoiling F-Zero X for the average player it’s the way your computer opponents cheat on the trickier stages. All too often they’ll simply screem past thanks to some kind of magic boosting power (they get it from the start, you have to wait a lap). There’s no counteracting this unfair advantage, other than by tracking the arrow highlighting your nearest rival, sneaking up quietly behind him and, at your convenience, giving him a gentle shove earthwards.

There are 24 tracks divided between four race series, or “Cups”, culminating in the nightmarish, U-turn-laden Big Hand, a course laid out like — well, you guessed it. Complete all this and you graduate to the X Cup, which spontaneously generates a random track every time you play. These special tracks have a habit of churning out horrific 90° turns immediately preceded by a jump, causing more ground-plunging heartbeat than all the other courses put together.

F-Zero X isn’t perfect, but it’s not far off. And with the inclusion of a four-player option it’s another great buy for N64 owners who feel the need... **星**

Mark Green
New Nintendo 64 Games

SILICON CHIC
WHY NOT TRY A BIT OF ANIMAL MAGIC?

1080º
Snowboarding
Publisher: Nintendo
Developer: Nintendo
Price: £39.99

It's old news in the States, Japan and Australia, but now it's winter, Nintendo's top-notch snowboard sim finally gets its UK release.

A very familiar title with import gamers, 1080º is at last getting a UK release - just in time for a few practice runs before you lark out 600 quid on a week in Chamonix. And it's about time too. 1080º has become a real PC favourite in recent weeks, not least because its wide range of options and pick-up-and-go nature make it as much fun for a quick five minute powder blast as it is for a longer mountain-bashing sesh.

Playing in Match Race mode means you simply have to win to progress. In the silicon Time Trial, though, you race against a ghost of yourself from a previous race. Trick Attack mode is superb too, enabling you to go for all sorts of fancy moves and combos, racking up points. There are six courses, a training track, a half-pipe course and one big run-up leading to a huge airump, not to mention five main and three additional secret snowboarders, and eight main boards, with one secret - all in all, more than enough options to keep anyone interested.

Of course, none of this would matter a hoot if the game didn't look and feel good, and this is where 1080º really delivers. It's suitably fast, almost superhumanly smooth and scattered with lovely visual effects, not least the way that visibility seems to close in as snow begins to fall, giving an eerie feel to some sections - familiar if you've ever suddenly found yourself alone and lonely on top of a French mountain.

The replays are all fantastically-looking too, and useful - helping you to commit every nod and cranach of your course to memory. Assorted camera angles chase your boarder down the slope, zoom out as he blazes 540º out of a cliff jump, then pan down the mountain as your man grabs a Stiffy to Indy Nosegrab, mimes the landing and touches down in the powder on his arse. With a pumping soundtrack and snow-whoooshing effects, replays look as good as any snowboard video.

But while the speed racing games are fantastic, it's trying to perfect the wide range of trick moves that'll keep you coming back for more. It'll take you ages to do them all - the grab ones like Tweak and Mute Grab are reasonably easy, but the spin tricks are excruciatingly hard. They require spins of the joystick and well-timed button presses, progressing from the fairly basic 180º (R+left), through the harder 720º (R+anti-clockwise rotation), then R+anti-clockwise rotation +B, to the mother of them all, the 1080º (R+anti), then R+anti+B, then R+anti+B+Z. It took me weeks to get it right, and even now I have a very limited success rate. (For more help staying on your feet, check out the tips in Kick Ass, starting on page 98.)

All-in-all, 1080º is a near-perfect release - easy to get into, hard to perfect, great looking, and packed tight with variety. It even comes with a split-screen two-player mode (actually one of the few disappointments - play with a friend and the more expert boarder is soon bound to zoom off into the far distance, never to be seen again). This is, as near as dammit, perfect snowboarding on your N64! Rich Peiley

Spacestation: Silicon Valley

Publisher: Take 2
Developer: DMA Design
Price: £49.99
Release date: on sale now
Players: 1-2

From the creator of Lemmings comes another creature-based puzzler. Killing animals and taking control of the corpses has never been so much fun.

MA is best-known for bad-taste titles that cheekily deviate from the mainstream. Watching tiny green-haired idiots getting drowned, crushed and hanged? That'd be Lemmings: Trafficciding drugs and shooting coppers? You're playing Grand Theft Auto. Now say "Hi" to Spacestation: Silicon Valley, which carries on the style of SimCity on drugs.

The central character is Eva, a small computer chip with the power of resurrection. To complete each level is a case of flipping switches or dragging items from one place to another and then control assorted bestiary, each animal's skills and shortcomings affecting where you can go and which creatures you're able to kill for later use.

With levels featuring everything from underwater sewers to picturesque fields, the graphics have a flat, old-skool Mario feel to them, which makes everything seem a tad other-worldly. Want to see a jelly-like wobbling sheep or a fox on wheels? Then this is the game for you.

Despite some of the animals being a bit slow, they're all easy to control - if there's any difficulty getting any of them to do what you want, it's intentional, to prevent you completing the level too easily. On the down side, the camera doesn't always track you properly, and this can occasionally make seeing where you're going difficult.

But it's the attention to detail that makes Silicon Valley so likable. The music gets louder as you approach loudspeakers, while animals leave footprints in the snow level. Fun, then, but no showstopper. Mark Green

Or you could try...

F1 World Grand Prix
Publisher: Nintendo
Developer: Nintendo
Price: £39.99
Release date: on sale now
Players: 1-2

17 tracks of beautiful, accurate race simulation. From Nintendo itself.

"Have you got that one that was on TV?" someone asked the other day when I explained that I played N64 games for a living. They meant the heavily advertised ("Let's see that again") F1 World Grand Prix, the Formula One racer to put all others to shame.

With games like this and snow sim 1080º (left), Nintendo is slowly building up a strong portfolio of more PlayStation-style games - accurate simulation, cool real-life activities, unobscured by bright colours and cute animals and thus, perhaps, more attractive to the man in the street. Take this more photo-realistic approach, add it to the graphical power of the N64 and the abilities of Nintendo's peers in software development, and you have a tremendously stunning product - squirt your eyes a bit, and you could instead be watching F1 on a Sunday afternoon. The graphics are first-rate, the sound is perfect, the handling of the cars is spot on, all the real cars and drivers are present and correct, and the tracks are so accurate you could be there. Just as you'd expect.

What comes more of a treat, however, is the effort made to give variety to the way you play the game. You can mess around with it in Arcade mode, which has automatic braking and gears and enables you to charge round all 17 laps with your finger pretty much glued to the accelerator button. You can play it as a racing game with automatic gears - your finger switching between brake and accelerator as you commit the bends of each course to memory. You can play a strict simulation, where a thorough understanding of each course's twists, turns and undulations is as important to you as it is to a real-life Grand Prix driver. You can even play through a simulation of the entire 1997 Formula One Grand Prix season, where everything down to the weather, pit stops, crashes and positions of the other cars is historically accurate. If even that's not quite enough for you, and you're starting to feel a touch lonely, you can play a friend in two-player mode, and watch the replays over and over again.

Rich Peiley
CONTINENTAL CIRCUS
ROLL UP! ROLL UP! OR RATHER, DON'T

Starshot: Space Circus Fever

- Publisher: Infogrames
- Developer: Infogrames
- Price: £39.99
- Release date: November 1998
- Players: 1
- Extras: Cartridge back-up

3D platforming antics, with a dash of puzzling and a whole heap of bizarre European humour.

Entering on a touring "Space Circus", which is in battle with the evil "Virtu Circus" for exotic items, Starshot sounds more intriguing than it is. In fact, it's just a French Mario 64-like 3D platformer, and full of the same flaws that have scuppered earlier pretenders. An unwise and confusing camera? Seen it before. Over-tidily controls? Been there. It's all so disappointingly familiar.

Each planet that impish character Starshot visits is impressively large, packed with enemies and pretty. But the graphics, although intricate, are garish and confusing, and the number of both static and wandering objects means you'll often find yourself stumbling about confused before falling off a nearby ledge. There's a developing plot and characters to speak to, but the map is almost too helpful, turning play into a case of merely getting to the target area and taking to an "instruction balloon". Reaching the target is a problem, though, with an over-reliance on jumping between platforms suspended in mid-air, made more difficult by the combination of 3D perspective and jerky graphics.

This is a shame, because the few puzzles you encounter are often quite original. One, for example, has you turning a jukebox on to bring a dancing ghost to life, and then pushing tables together so that he dances across the room to smash open a locked door. The firing system, though - where you can guide missiles with the analogue stick - is too cumbersome and makes the shooting puzzles as difficult as the brain and control-oriented examples.

So, despite being loaded with a scary atmosphere and a decent sense of humour, Starshot is too frustrating and, ironically, one-dimensional to hook you. ★★★

Mark Green

Or you could try...
- Mystical Maps
- Screaming at the Moon (under the world's eye)
- Sonic Adventure
- Sonic Adventure 2
- Xbox

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good offer!
STREET FIGHT

LUCKILY, YOUR MATES ARE WITH YOU

COIN-OP
SpikeOut

- Maker: Sega
- Developer: Sega Am2
- Release date: early 1999
- Players: 1-4

Already out in Japan, Sega's latest arcade creation offers all the fun of gangland fighting. With your pals.

There's no disputing that Sega's AM2 coin-op division is the very best. With a back catalogue including Hang-On, OutRun, Daytona USA, Scud Race and the Virtua Fighter series, no one—not even Namco—comes close. Sega AM2 really is (as young people say) "all that."

There's also no disputing the power of Sega's Model 3 arcade graphics technology. And there's no arguing with the appeal of extreme, multi-player, no-holds-barred violence.

Combine these three vital ingredients and you're pretty much guaranteed a winner. And that's exactly what SpikeOut is. Essentially, it's a 3D beat-'em-up, viewed from behind the back of your character (kind of like Tomb Raider). If it feels somewhat like Virtua Fighter, that's because some of VFS's animation code was borrowed for SpikeOut's basic fighting moves. The game's 3D setting also takes a lot of Virtua Fighter's feel and turns it into something more gritty, more urban and with tons more interactive scenery.

Having picked one of four characters, it's into this world you must walk with a view to kicking some serious ass. You head through a department store (the fights on the escalators are a game in themselves) and into the city. Gangs of hoodlums and thugs surround you from all directions. At the end of each section a hard-as-nails boss and an assortment of cronies will try to do dreadful things to you. It's a world of pain.

Except that you're not alone. And this is one of those game features that you have to play to appreciate. Knowing that you have three other allies watching your back (players two, three and four) is tops. You can fight as a team. You can combine to pull off special combos. You can be stuck in a corner, having seven shades of shit hammered out of you, and then all of a sudden your assailants are dispersed with a few well-aimed punches from one of your buddies. It feels just like the end of Star Wars, when Han piles in and saves Luke.

SpikeOut is great. We love it. Try it as soon as you can. ******

Neil West

Fighting talk

SpikeOut is the brainchild of Sega's Toshihiro Nagoshi, previously best known for the Daytona USA series of coin-ops. Here's what he had to say when we asked about the development of his most ambitious title yet:

What turned out to be the hardest part of making SpikeOut?

The multi-player feature was difficult to implement, and it also proved, dealing with multiple enemies. From my previous experience on driving games I'm familiar with multi-player, but characters have much more data than cars—cars don't have special moves.

SpikeOut is a true original. Why do you think it's taken so long for a game like this to appear?

It's a problem of technology, but also one of time. Apart from Sega, there are few companies in the world who could make such a game. So how would you describe the difference between SpikeOut and conventional fighting games?

SpikeOut is not really a fighting game in the traditional sense. Recent fighting games feature very short periods of play, with fights lasting just 50 or 30 seconds. SpikeOut is a very different spin on the genre. It takes an expert player 45 minutes to complete. It's based on collaboration. You are not fighting against the game character, you are fighting against the CPU. So, do you reckon a SpikeOut conversion will ever appear for the Dreamcast?

I wouldn't rule it out.

Robin Alway

SEGA SATURN

Radiant Silvergun

- Publisher: Treasure
- Developer: Treasure
- Price: See importer
- Japanese release: on sale now
- Players: 1

Crazed but respected Jap developer Treasure takes the Saturn to the peak of its 2D powers.

The number of titles that a grown up gamer would call "loch" or even "ace" is pretty limited, but this gorgeous 2D Saturn shoot-'em-up is surely one of them. A fantastic Japanese name, scores throbbing with explosions and what we're legally bound to call "hot layer death" spraying all over the shop, it's a crime it'll never be released over here, because of the "For Sale" ad status of the Saturn. Get hold of an import copy, though, and providing that your Saturn's been "switched" to play JP games you'll be setting down for one of the finest 2D blasters ever. What it does really well is pack in spectacular eye-napping visuals (cleverly combining hi-res backdrops with 3D boxes), while remaining superbly easy to play.

The developer Treasure has managed to pack plenty of neat new touches into a style of game that's been unfortunately seen as an evolutionary blind alley for a good few years now. Bonuses make easy early levels interesting, even when you know the attack patterns. There aren't any extra weapons to collect, which forces you to master the seven fitted as standard to your ship and power them up to seriously spectacular levels, while the Dog Master sub-game (collect cartoon dogs and breed them, we think) is as mod as it sounds.

It's all surprisingly deep for a blaster, rewarding precise shooting just as much as red-thumbed perseverance. Radiant Silvergun is very much as nature intended, a sense-pummelling top-down shooter with the kind of repeat play magnetism that makes you wonder why 2D shoot-'em-ups fell from grace in the first place. You can keep your fancy bloody polygons, for the time being, at least. ******

Robin Alway

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MACINTOSH

Unreal
- Publisher: GT Interactive
- Developer: Epic MegaGames
- Price: £39.99
- Release date: on sale now
- Players: 1
- Full network game
- Requires: 603e PowerMac (80Mhz) or better, 32Mb RAM, 12Mb HD space, System 7.5.5 and 3Dfx card.

Not since Marathon was released back in 1994 has the Mac had such a game to shout about, but pretty graphics aside, is Unreal actually any good?

You can blame Wolfenstein. That's where the tidal wave of first-person shooter series started. It defined a new game, one which Unreal takes to its limits, testing your abilities and those of your Mac. Unreal is basically just Quake taken up a gear, a first-person shooter with more advanced 3D engine, and more gore.

The plot goes thus: you are an inmate aboard a prison colony spaceship, stranded on a planet inhabited by helpful but over-religious four-armed bipeds called the Nali, and an assortment of deep-space monsters who'd like to disembowel you.

You start by escaping the crippled ship, negotiating corridors, vents and the remains of your fellow inmates and crew, who seem unable to die either quietly or in one piece. From there, you move to bright sunlight and the planet's surface, pick up a weapon and meet your first alien/terror. What follows is 20-odd levels of tennins, tunnels and villages to fire through.

What sets Unreal apart from other 3D games is the detail in the graphics. The maps are highly complex and the textures detailed and realistic. The sound effects are great, and you will literally break into cold sweat when you hear a deep growl coming from behind you. Your opponents are varied and intelligent. First they stalk you, then dodge your fire, weaving left, right, up and down to close in for the kill. Your weapons are limited to start with, and Unreal does cut power-ups grudgingly. There are no fantastic weapons of mass destruction à la Turok; the grenade-launcher and mini-gun are about as powerful as it gets.

Unreal is great fun. However, there are no new ideas here — something to replace the tired and frustrating hunt-the-switch gag is needed, and Unreal doesn't provide. It's good, but it's nothing new.

Lindsay Bruce

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THE FIRST GAME BOY COLOR STUFF IS HERE!

As Game Boy Color arrives on these shores, does the first batch of multi-hued software. It's not a selection bursting with big names, but hey — at least everything on offer is quite pretty. By Robin Alway.

GAME BOY COLOR

Cool Hand
- Publisher: Take 2 Interactive
- Developer: Tarantula
- Release date: on sale now
- Price: £19.99
- Players: 1

Card games with enough swagger to turn even the wettest Welsh weekend into a Las Vegas fantasy.

Montezuma's Return
- Publisher: Take 2 Interactive
- Developer: Tarantula
- Release date: on sale now
- Price: £19.99
- Players: 1

It's the multi-coloured return of one of the game's most loved characters. (It says here.)

Power Quest
- Publisher: Sunsoft
- Developer: Sunsoft
- Release date: December
- Price: £19.99
- Players: 2

Remote control beat-'em-up with RPG elements. But who cares? It's in colour!

Reservoir Rat
- Publisher: Take 2 Interactive
- Developer: Tarantula
- Release date: on sale now
- Price: £19.99
- Players: 1

A rat-plat that's more fun than Weil's disease. Just.

More simple platform action, this time with a smug, shades-wearing rodent who's unlikely to make it on to licensed lunch boxes anytime soon. The fact that you can shoot and jump is flagged as selling point, which gives you some idea of just how straightforward the proceedings are.

Reservoir Rat's difficulty level has only been cranked out of the reach of anyone over the age of seven by a strict requirement that you kill every enemy and collect every item on each screen before you can exit — something sure to cause needless frustration if Nintendo is successful in its plan to market Game Boy Color to men in suits. A worse feature still — and in direct contravention of international Platform Ordinances — you can't jump on baddies' heads or make the kind of pin-point accurate leaps necessary to avoid psycho red squares (now there's the kind of sentence you're only going to read in a games mag). All in all, it's another workaday platformer, never managing to offer the sort of gameplay needed to make the Game Boy Color's new-found techno sophistication.
ON-LINE GAMING

NO ONE IS POWERFUL ENOUGH TO RESIST THE QUAKE UNIVERSE

When you talk network gaming, you're really talking about just one game: Quake, king of the first-person 3D shooters.

Ever since a rudimentary test version was released on the Internet early in 1996, one title has dominated the on-line gaming scene: that game is Quake. From the outset, it was clear that it's latest offering was far more than merely Doom with knobs on. As well as showcasing the best 3D graphics engine yet seen, it was clear that Quake was built with multi-player games in mind. The first versions available for play offered multiplayer levels only, and the Quake "deathmatch" - fast, frantic, occasionally tactical and always very, very bloody - was born. Word quickly spread, and the greatest Net gaming phenomenon of them all began.

There's a lot more to the game than simply shooting people's faces off with rockets, though. (That said, it should be noted that shooting people's faces off with rockets is a lot more fun - and remains fun for a lot longer - than those who haven't tried it might suspect.) A quick glance at the leading Quake-related site, Blue's News (http://www.blue8news.com/) will yield a wealth of Quake-related fun to be had a little off the beaten path. The game's open architecture enables anyone with an ounce or two of imagination and programming ability to make their own customised version, and there are a lot of them about. Capture the Flag is by far the most popular variant, where two teams try to nab each other's standard and carry it back to base, and then there's TeamFortress, another team-based game where every player has his own skills and abilities. Those are the two big favourites, but many, many more abound; you can find a huge assortment of them at PlanetQuake (http://www.planetquake.com/).

You may ask, Quake II was designed more with the solo player in mind, and did nothing to better the multiplayer experience, thus it was largely bypassed by gamers on the Net. How does anyone keep up with it all? Blue's News is the place to start, but for something different try Cary's Shuga Shack (http://www.shugasack.com/) for "sweet-ass news just the way you like it."

CD-ROM of the Month

Always a touch ahead of the curve, PlanetQuake is the place to get Quake II. With a "good Ol' fashioned" multimedia CD, you get all the game, the manuals, the installation programs, and the whole "good" game experience. The Quake II CD is available now for a cool $24.99. (You can also find it at www.realworld.on.net and www.planetquake.com for the same price.)

CEREMONY OF INNOCENCE

Publisher: Real World Multimedia | Price: £24.99
Contact: 01225 743188; http://www.realworld.on.net
Recommended: Pentium 90 PC, 16Mb RAM, Windows 95
Release date: on sale now

Not too long ago, following a particularly lacklustre bout of thinly veiled database, the multimedia CD was declared dead. Not just running a bit of a temperature, but full-on dead, deceased, and gone to meet its maker. It seems the life-support machines (with Intel inside, naturally) weren't switched off completely, however, because here's another multimedia CD-ROM. And it seems that the genre's near-death experience must have provided more than a little visionary inspiration.

Based around the best selling Griffin and Sabine trilogy, written by Nick Bantock (essentially a kind of love story/mystery built on a stack of correspondence between the two eponymous artists, one in the remote South Sea Island, the tale is virtually recreated here via interactive postcards. The front of each is decorated by a heady combination of dream imagery, cerebral conundrums and a smattering of hotspots. The rear offers text recited by the likes of Paul McGann and Isabella Rosselini. Whih this structure may make for a somewhat linear experience, it is more than justified by the compelling story-line and some genuinely breathtaking images.

So if you want to see just how good CD-ROMs can be, buy it. It just won two BAFTA awards, too, so you don't have to take my word for it. ****

Chris James
1. Jordan Grand Prix Wheel
- Price: £49.99
- Available from: Joytech on 01525 802000

- Revolutionary attachment technology (suckers) means you don't have to mess about with clamps to fix this flimsy-looking wheel to your desk. The problem is that the Jordan's so sensitive, throwing it through the jerks of a real racing driver is a non-starter — at least if you want to stay near the road. The pedal block is sturdy, but the pedals are too steep (though this may, if we're being charitable, replicate the design of F1 cars). Basically, it does the job, but not spectacularly well.

2. Air Racer Wheel
- Price: £99.99
- Available from: SC&T on 01705 200700

- A free floating wheel, would you believe? Call us old-fashioned, but we prefer to play in gaming's equivalent of the missionary position — sitting square-on, facing the screen — and it's in such a pose that it shows its true colours. First, any wheel without auto-centring is always going to be tricky to control. Piss about with something that moves in three dimensions, but only recognises two, and you're sure to run into trouble, not to mention walls and unsuspecting pedestrians. The Air Racer is a non-starter.

3. Stealth Playcentre
- Price: £99.99 including P&P
- Available from: The Furniture Factory on 0870 602 4000

- The Stealth Playcentre is, on first investigation, very heavy. Retrieved from a nearby office, where it was being utilised to accommodate a pot plant, we put it to its true purpose — telly on top. PlayStation on the shelf, games up the side, feet placed comfortably on special raised platforms and bottom on a bean bag. It's a little expensive for a TV stand, but at least it leaves your telly at the perfect height for you to sit on the floor and slob out big time.

4. Maquadian PlayStation Console Tidier
- Price: £19.99
- Available from: Cotswold Exports on 01242 235536

- Quite a good idea in theory — a bright yellow metal washing up rack to keep your PlayStation stand, unofficially, but it sits in the middle of the rack and you can wrap your controller leads around the handles to keep them out of the way. It does the job — such as it is — and it does stop you covering the living room floor in cable spaghetti, but come on, it's far too expensive.

5. ASCII 360* Sphere
- Price: £49.99
- Available from: ASCII on 01923 202097

- Though ASCII's new model may look odd, it does at least make a fair stab at breaking fresh ground for PlayStation controllers. It can be hard to use a joystick to control 3D games — particularly flight sims — but ASCII's ball design is intended to make the full 360° as easy as pie. Sadly, since flight sims don't really translate to the PSX, there are few games that suit the Sphere. ASCII suggests games like 3D shooter Descent can be played more smoothly with it, but ought to give more reasons for its device's existence.
6. PlayStation Movie Card
- Price: £70 plus P&P
- Available from: Digital City on 0181 491 6349

The PlayStation plays games from CDs, right? And films can be stuck on to CD too, right? And ages ago some people stuck films on CD for the now defunct Philips 300 and CD machines. Films no longer appear in the Video CD format in the UK, but in countries like Taiwan and Hong Kong, VCDs are extremely cheap (as little as 60p from local, but bizarrely legal, markets) and very popular.

The PlayStation Movie Card plugs into the back of your PSX and enables you to watch films in this VCD format – the discs are available by mail order for around a tenner. The main advantage is that many import films actually arrive in this format before their UK cinema release. We were able to watch the X-Files film (and didn’t enjoy it one bit, though that’s not to do with the Movie Card). The sound quality of VCD films is excellent (Dolby stereo) and the picture, apart from the odd sticking frame, is not too far behind regular VHS video.

Incidentally, don’t confuse VCD with DVD (Digital Versatile Disc); DVD offers much more advanced performance in a different format. Also, if you own a white imported PlayStation, then you don’t need a Movie Card, since you already have the necessary gadgetry. ★★★

7. Quickshot GenX 500
- Price: £29.99
- Available from: Quickshot on 0181 365 1993

It looks black, but according to the box, GenX is a “cool, dark, metallic blue”. The base is large, flat and sturdy, and you feel safe in yanking the shaft back as hard as you like to recover from a stall turn in Flight Unlimited 2. It’s also good to know that you can frag with the best in Quake without the thing flying off the desk. The Quickshot includes the important multi-view HAT switch (a separate little joystick at the top), and the shaft rotates too. A cheap and sturdy PC-only joystick. ★★★

8. Formula Sprint Wheel
- Price: £34.99 (with International Rally Championship)
- Available from: Thrustmaster on 01276 609955

Sometimes you wonder why anyone ever spends a hundred quid or more on a PC steering wheel. Think about how many goes you could have on the dodgems for that kind of cash. Plus, at home you don’t get “impress” girls, eat candy floss or give your mates whips. That’s where the cheapish Formula Sprint comes in. It works fine, enables you to play all your driving games to a pretty good standard, yet leaves enough money for his ‘n’ hers candyfloss and a couple of goes on the coconut shy.

PC-only, the Formula Sprint moves smoothly, but is weighty enough not to force your virtual automobile into a 180° spin at the slightest push. The pedal board is equally solid, and, indeed, the whole deal looks like it has been designed to take a battering. Thrustmaster is obviously well in touch with its gaming audience, right down to the provision of some of the most straightforward installation instructions we’ve ever seen. Great stuff. ★★★★★
Film of the Month

SWORD AND HORSERY
ANTONIO BANDERAS: THE MAN WHO WOULD BE FLYNN

The Mask Of Zorro
Director: Martin Campbell
Starring: Anthony Hopkins, Antonio Banderas, Catherine Zeta Jones
UK release: 11 December

Pig-budget revamp of the ancient TV show about 19th Century vigilante Don Diego De La Vega – aka Zorro, the olde Los Angeles answer to Robin Hood.

Make no mistake, folks, The Mask Of Zorro – a lavish, beautifully-crafted, incredibly enjoyable action/adventure full of the kind of stylish swordplay that went out of favour with Errol Flynn – is the finest blockbuster of the year. It walks all over the likes of Godzilla and Armageddon – and without any CGI in sight.

Back in the late ‘50s, when Guy Williams starred in the black-and-white Zorro TV show, our hero was the slacker son of a California landowner, a wimpish fop who turned, Clark Kent-like, into a superhuman defender of the oppressed when trouble threatened. It's a classic story – part Batman, part Robin Hood – and GoldenEye-helmer Martin Campbell has been smart enough to update it in details but not in spirit. The swish new ‘98 model has Brit thesp Anthony Hopkins as the aging masked avenger who, when his wife is murdered and daughter kidnapped by evil Spanish governor Stuart Wilson, trains bandit drifter Antonio Banderas as his do-gooder replacement. The Zorro team then battle Wilson, rescue Hopkins junior (now grown into Catherine Zeta Jones), and generally raise merry hell. As Campbell insists, this is, "not the traditional story with Zorro as a nobleman's son. It has more to do with a Merlin/King Arthur relationship, where Zorro trains a young man to be his successor."

But it's not so much the story as the fast-paced style of the film that counts. The Mask Of Zorro is that rare thing – a big-budget "event" picture that doesn't simply rely on a series of explosive set-pieces to pump it mindlessly along. Sure, it's packed with action (chiefly swordfights and old-fashioned horse stunts), but it's the character bits, played by a fantastic international cast, that you remember. Zorro is epic, loud, passionate, genuinely funny, largely free of cheesy cliché and immensely enjoyable from start to finish. The best action/adventure film of 1998? Absolutely. *****

Out Of Sight
Director: Steven Soderbergh
Starring: George Clooney, Jennifer Lopez
UK release: 27 November

Another adaptation of an Elmore Leonard crime novel (we've already had Get Shorty, Touch TV's Maximum Bob and Tarantino's Jackie Brown in recent years), Out Of Sight mixes cool likeable characters, great snap-y dialogue, the occasional tense set-piece and slightly surreal comedy in typical Leonard fashion. This time the events revolve around the sexual tension between ER heartthrob George Clooney's jail escapee and hot Federal Marshal Jennifer Lopez; he takes her hostage, banter with her, frees her, and she goes after him, so beginning a cat-and-mouse chase bound to end with him in her jail, her bed, or both.

Out Of Sight is a character piece really, relying on an excellent script and brilliant acting rather than overblown set-pieces. It's well-served by its actors – George is suitably charismatic (there's no trace of smarmy Doc Ross here) and Jen decidedly sexy – while director Steven Soderbergh has fun with the madly weaving plot. Even the tiniest supporting role is memorable (we have the likes of

Tekken 3 was a film...

- It would be directed by Paul Verhoeven – acknowledged god of bloody, flashy, over-the-top action and moral ambiguity.
- It would star Björk as Ling Xiaoyu, Uma Thurman as Anna, a redressed Dolph Lundgren as Paul Phoenix, a masked Ice-T as King, David Beckham as the petulant Hwoarg, the suitably wooden Keanu Reeves as Mokun and that Ray from the "Reef Radio" Baccardi ads as Eddy Gordo's lawful. First choice for Lei Wugong, Jackie Chan, would fall out with the dark Verhoeven when the director refuses to film a slapstick, cross-dressing 20-minute fight atop a train, to be replaced, controversially, by Verhoeven pal Rutger Hauer.
- Facts: There was an animated Tekken film made by Japanese director Jun Umezu in 1995. Limited numbers are available on import.

- Anna: kind of Emma Peelish.
Blade
Director: Stephen Norrington
Starring: Wesley Snipes, Stephen Dorff
UK release: out now

Rounders
Director: John Dahl
Starring: Matt Damon, Edward Norton
UK release: 20 November

Ronin
Director: John Frankenheimer
Starring: Robert De Niro, Natasha McElhone, Jean Reno, Jonathan Pryce, Sean Bean
UK release: 20 November

Boogie Nights
Entertainment in Video

Starship Troopers
Touchstone

The Simpsons: Last Temptation of Homer

LA Confidential

City of Angels

Videos to Rent

The Wedding Singer

Scream 2

Buena Vista

Boogie Nights

Rounders: "confusing."

Ronin: "middle-aged."

Blade: "wham-bam."

Videos to Buy

December | 1998 | Arcade | 155

Ving Rhames and Dennis Farina in the little parts), making this one movie I challenge you to watch without your wry smile curling on your lips. Even if you've read the book, it'll still surprise. The movie has a new ending, and it's much, much better. ★★★★★

Blade

Sounds cheesy and a bit crap? Well, it is. But go to it in the right frame of mind, and you'll have to admit that Snipes - who also produced and choreographed the Mortal Kombat-style action sequences - has done a pretty stylish job, considering. ★★

Rounders

Getting good Will Hunting star Matt Damon is everywhere at the moment, and while many of his choices have been good ones (Saving Private Ryan, say) he's been due a dunk. And this is it. Rounders is a 'quirky drama' that revolves around the dimly-lit world of hardcore poker players. Damon plays a reformed cardsharp who thinks his gambling years are behind him. But he's got a good life, a pretty girlfriend - and an ex-jailbird best friend, Edward Norton, who has a $25,000 debt hanging over his head. In a bid to help his pal, Damon promises to partner Eddie in a series of big-money poker games, an idea that might have worked, if Ed hadn't run out to be a conniving girl... Rounders has a pretty good cast (John Malkovich, GoldenEye's Famke Janssen and Space: 1999 hero Martin Landau are also here) and Red Rock: West-helmer John Dahl is always interesting, but the whole film is let down terribly by a series of confusing bizarre poker games. It tries desperately hard to convey the addictive, highrisk, you-couldn't-lose-everything nature of high-stakes gambling, but inconsistent plotting and characters you swiftly realise you couldn't give a monkey about, soon reduce it to an argoninfested bore. By the time John Malkovich's hilariously-accented Russian has strangled the final reel, stripping away the tension of the win-or-have-your-legs-broken finale, you'll be wondering why you bothered. So don't... ★★

Ronin

Coming on like some middle-aged Mission: Impossible, this $35 million heavyweight action thriller tells the story of an international gang of ex-Cold War spies who're persuaded to take one last, covert op. Their job: recover a briefcase from an unknown group of men, for an unidentified employer. Our freelance agents answer to no one - like the ronin (masterless samurai of ancient Japan) but still retain all of their special forces skills. Cure violence and destruction on an epic scale...

Ronin is certainly classier than most action films. Made by John Frankenheimer (The Manchurian Candidate, career low: The Island Of Dr Moreau) and boasting a top-notch cast, this should have been a thoughtful, action-packed thriller of heat proportions. But it ain't. Instead, Ronin's over-complicated plot is a rush of flags, flagstaffs, doublecrosses, betrayed friendships and quite unforeseeable twists that goes nowhere. There's a bad taste take on the Diana car crash too. ★★★★

Scream 2

Buena Vista

The sequel to Wes Craven's excellent postmodern slasher movie. Scream 2 relies again on flickering between several levels of reality, attempting to incorporate the whole idea of "the sequel" into its smart self-parody. As the characters themselves agree, the bodycount just has to be higher after the second round, and the gore goes up a notch.

Unfortunately, however, the surprise the first one had on its side is gone - this is perhaps too clever-deev-and self-referential. The cast of bright young things look suitably terrified and sexy, but it's difficult to care very much when you see them slowly piled off. As for the ending, it seems that Craven is straining hard for an unpredictable finale that the surprise is actually no surprise at all. Merely satirising the fact that 'it's a sequel it doesn't save Scream 2 from the near-in避table. Yes, it's not as good as the original. ★★★

City of Angels

Warners

Not having seen Wings Of Desire, on which this is based, may make a difference, but City Of Angels is tedium in a box. Okay, the cinematography is excellent, capturing a lazy and serene atmosphere, but only the plot held as much appeal. Nicolas Cage plays an angel who falls for brain surgeon Meg Ryan and then has to consider the nature of his immortality. But that's about it, which makes for endless shots of Cage wearing his hangdog look and looking like he's suffering from a slow puncture. Meg Ryan puts in much the same "Will this do?" performance as ever, and there's about as much spark between the leads as a wet stick.

And if you, for some reason, find yourself liking it, please switch off before the botched ending, which strives for noble tragedy but is, in fact, laughable. ★★
SUPER MARIO ART

GAME GRAPHICS GET THE ARTHOUSE TREATMENT

Re:play: Ultimate Games Graphics
Liz Faber/State Design

Price: £19.95
Publisher: Laurence King

considering the size and speed-of-growth of the games industry, it's surprising so few books have been written about it, decent or not. That being the case, something as glossy and professional-looking as Re:play would make a welcome addition even if it read terribly — at least the piccies would still look nice.

Thankfully, however, it's better than that. Sure, the text is cursory (a general introduction, a page each on the different genres, and short interviews with the likes of Quake's John Romero, Myst/Riven creators Robyn and Rand Miller, and Lara's "dad", Toby Gard), but what's here is fine. It's written from a UK perspective (well, kinda — Sega's Mega Drive is referred to as Genesis, and important machines like the Amiga don't even warrant a mention), but it covers all the bases and makes some important points. And anyway, words aren't what Re:play is all about. Instead, it's a glossy showcase for some of the best game graphics from the last quarter century, from Pong — which gets an entire double page spread! — to the likes of Virtua Fighter and Final Fantasy VII.

A few things swiftly become clear. Once frozen, removed from the game and blown up large, many screenshots begin to demand contemplation as works of art. Re:play's minimalist presentation enables graphics to tell their own story — there's powerful imagery at work here, from the simple, immediately recognisable shapes of a Pac-man or Space Invaders to glorious (if over-familiar) renders from Tekken 3. At the most basic level, this is a collection of good-looking pictures which you'll enjoy having hang around your coffee table — and well-selected enough to provoke weepy nostalgia in anyone who remembers the likes of Battlezone or Pole Position first time round.

As a major part of pop culture, gaming has so few defining volumes that Re:play will probably get more attention than it deserves. Still, it'll make a fantastic Xmas present. The only real downside I can see is if you own more than three game mags, you'll have seen most of these pictures before, albeit not presented in quite such a glamorous way.

Sam Richards

Everybody Dies
Author: Lawrence Block
Price: £16.99
Publisher: Orion

In an unusual turn of events, the dame wasn't trouble. Nor was it a hot, sultry summer night. Apart from these minor points, however, Everybody Dies is as formulaic a detective thriller as you could wish to find; a mix of ex-cops turned private eyes, call-girls made good, and sleazy adults with names like Hell's Kitchen gangsters with a penchant for getting cuffed. This is the 14th in Lawrence Block's series of Matt Scudder novels, narrated by a jaded PI hero who is, naturally, ex-New York PD and ex-alcoholic in roughly equal measure. Thus time round Matt makes the mistake of doing a favour for pal Mick Ballou and, soon the bodies are flying.

Block's style is standard road-boiled stuff — She was standing beside the bed, wearing perfume and a smile — that exists in a sort of timeless fantasy world which works fine once you're used to it. Certainly, it doesn't prevent the last moments of Scudder's fight for life from being unexpectedly gripping. Everybody Dies is not a taxing read, but for its engaging characters is well worth an evening of your life.

Emma Parkinson

King Rat
Author: China Miéville
Price: £9.99
Publisher: Macmillan
ISBN: 0-333-33870-7

A young, shaven-headed intellectual, his debut novel about the city's seedy underbelly set to a pumping drum 'n' bass soundtrack — predictable enough. But you'd be pretty hard pressed to forsee Miéville swerving wildly into the world of fantasy, conjuring the macabre charms of drugs, sex and petty crime in favour of shifty mutant rodents — the "King Rat's" title — battling an evil Pied Piper for control of London's sewers.

Our hero, Saul Garamond, gets caught up in the struggle when his father, then rescued from the cells by King Rat himself, turns out to be Saul's uncle, making our boy a man-deed hybrid capable of resisting the Piper's lure. It's all pretty ludicrous, but you've got to admire the amount of energy Miéville brings to such unlikely goings-on. Less successful, however, are laboured references to London's club scene, and, despite the general unpalatability, an uncomfortable mix of bleak 'n' filthy real-life and wild flights of fantasy, you're going to need a wide guile to swallow it.

Sam Richards

An Arm and Four Legs
Author: Stan Hey
Price: £15
Publisher: Yellow Jersey
ISBN: 0-224-05237-3

This is a book born of obsession. Subtitled "A Love Story into Racehorse Ownership", it acknowledges that childhood sporting dreams are best not explored — that, but then goes on to detail how our hero, the author, got involved in one anyway. The first few chapters are a medi-vocated listing of the myriad disadvantages of actually getting involved in geegee ownership — the initial outlay, the endless peripheral costs, the meagre prize money and overwhelming odds in favour of your buying a nag that never wins anything. But then he goes on to write a whopping cheque to the Tally-Ho Partnership for a share in two jump horses anyway.

The subsequent story of failure is almost inevitable, but Hey doesn't give up, and is eventually rewarded with a partnership with trainer Nigel Smith, one of many eccentric personalities he meets on his journeys around British racecourses. As an insight into the racing community, and a look at sporting obsession, it's enthralling stuff.

Sam Richards

Questioning the Millennium
Author: Stephen Jay Gould
Price: TBA
Publisher: Vintage
ISBN: 0-71461459-

You've probably noticed that there's a lot of pressure regarding mankind's importance rapidly approaching. The publishing industry certainly has, with Stephen Jay Gould's latest merely adding to the build-up of unnecessary millennium fever. Still, at least he remains from making prophecies, instead looking to the reasons why we invest such an arbitrary human creation as a mere date with such importance.

Tackling both the concept of the apocalypse throughout history and our attempts to reconcile numerical logic with the stubborn indivisibility of the Earth's natural cycles, Gould roams between the scholarly disciplines with style. His writing is highly approachable and, although occasionally smug, avoids soulless objectivity.

If you're still puzzled by the idea of a world without Easter, wonder if we really did "lose" 11 days in 1752, and want to know if there's any basis for our obsession with round numbers, read this — and before 31 December, 1999.

Sam Richards
Comic of the Month

300
- Creator: Frank Miller
- Plot: Dark Horse

The plot of '300' follows the story of 300 Spartan warriors who, in the year 480 BC, defended ancient Greece from the might of 300,000 invading Persians, and thus kept safe, as Miller has it, 'the world's one hope for reason and justice'.

It's stunning, powerful stuff, mixing elements of the Alamo and Rocky's Drift with touches of the near incomprehensible Spartan mindset - imagine a city state where only the strong and weak are killed at birth, and the rest are trained and brainwashed into being pure warriors - and boasting countless scenes and moments that are more than cinematic, they're pure comics. And all this in an imagining of the masculine, heavy-on-the-backs style familiar from its recent Sin City crime stories. More than anything, it's a reminder of Miller's power and his ability to give comics a much-needed slice of respectability. Like I said, trust Frank Miller.

Matt Biebey

Music

Various Artists
Free The Funk Volume 3
- Company: R&B

It's not made clear quite who imprisoned the Funk in the first place, but if this compilation is anything to go by, the Funk has sneaked out of its cell, released the other convicts and clergy. Free The Funk is on a quest to reconstruct, resurrect, reunite, and recreate, as it admires odd track selection and pitch perfection. Pitch the minimalist soul of Niccolene and Kamirine Kendra next to Add N To X's Moog terrorism and The Bullitts' kinkily afro. Then find the eminently sensible Howie B surfing through a lunatic medley entitled "My Speedboat Is Faster Than Yours".

The Belgians responsible for this collection claim they're all floor-fillers from their Brussels club night. It's almost worth a trip across the Channel to gawp at the chaos. Sam Richards

Super Furry Animals
Out Spaced
- Company: Creation

Yet another compilation: my finely attuned seasonal trend antennae tells me that it must be nearly Xmas. In a way, it's a shame that one of our most inventive pop groups, noted for pink tanks, 60-foot inflatable pandas and artificiar views on Welsh devolution, has succumbed to the inevitable manifestation of '90s rock culture, the B-Sides And Rarities Album. Then again, not many pop groups can claim as a rarity one of the funniest, smartest, most powerful tunes of the decade in "The Man Don't Give A F*ck". A Steely Dan sample and 50 examples of the classic shock word in three minutes - beat that, Ice Cube.

Out Spaced follows the same path from fifty glam stovepipes to rural melancholy, via acid blots and cartoon those tunes; just like SF's two proper albums, but without the cohesion. Pedants might point to the omission of gems like "Lazy Life" in favour of the inconsequential "Fix Idiot" and "Carry The Can", but overall, good stuff.

Sam Richards

Oasis
The Masterplan
- Company: Creation

No matter what your views on Oasis, musical gods or talentless louts, however much you know their songs, whether you can hum "Stay Young" or know that "Talk Tonight" goes Emi, A7, A7, C7, G, A7, A7, C7, D7, however much you disagree with Noel Gallagher's decision not to let the Wombles call their new album What's The Story/Tobermory, an Oasis b-sides album is a significant release. Many a fan will argue that the band's finest moments occur on the reverse side of the vinyl, allowing Noel to croon away on such happy buskers as "Half A World Away" and Liamt to stretch his vocals on "Acquiescence". They've all been heard before, of course, but the songs sit comfortably together and alternate between the loud ones ("Listen Up" and "It's Good To Be Free"), the quiet ones ("Going Nowhere", "Rockin' Chair"), the classic ("I Am The Walrus"), the pure genius ("Listen Up") and the inevitable crap ("The Swamp Song"). This is as much as a proper album as a collection, and not a Wombles in sight.

Rich Pelley

Ice Cube
War and Peace Volume One: The War Disc
- Company: Virgin

Adding to hip hop's mountain of grandiose concept albums, and causing mere hell at HMV when staff try to squeeze the title on to a section divider, comes the first solo work from Ice Cube in nearly five years. Name checking Totoy and with Volume Two: The Peace Disc already in the can, it's clear the man isn't messing around. Vitality, there's none of the mellowing off that could have been predicted from recent lame film work. Volume One is a visceral return to the shifty ghetto reportage that made his name, with a sound that cleverly takes in both former NWA cohort D.O. and the horror film freakiness of the Wu-Tang Clan. Cube remains one of rap's most compulsive vocalists.

Robin Alway

Album of the Month

Beck
- "sensible."

Mutant Strains
Considered Stuff From The King Of Post Modern Cool

Beck
- Mutations
- Company: Geffen

At last we saw him, Beck was leaping about a festival stage in cowboy hat and purple slacks, human beatboxing through a harmonica. But his new album, Mutations, finds him in very different mood - sedate, deferent, even sensitive. This means no more obtuse references to mayonnaise and "pocket line-dancing satans", replaced instead by a poetical weariness. It may be muted, but these are amongst his best lyrics to date.

If you're familiar with Beck's early lo-fi country efforts on albums such as One Foot In The Grave, you should recognise the trains of thought at work here, if not this album's songwriting conventionality. Mutations is normal and revels in the fact. Musically, homage is paid to Woody Guthrie and John Lennon, and future single "Tropicalia" cheekily recalls Georgie Fame's "Yeah Yeah". The downside of all this reverence is that, with worrying irony, Beck occasionally sounds like new stars, Gomez.

It's when Beck performs tricks that no-one else can fathom that he truly excels. "Static" begins as a gorgeous existential lament, before becoming a fuzzrock bootshaker, floating away on portentous organ chords. In the man's own words, this may be a "pamphletical" album, but even Beck's tossed-off in-betweeners contain greatness.

Sam Richards

Millenium Jukebox

Stuff rockin' the Arcade office this month...

Album
- The Pastels
- Illuminati (Domino)
- Arctic Monkeys (Si Bellezza)
- The Coral (Cherry Red Records)

Track
- "Angus Meets Jimmies" (from the Up Canadian Point, Fused And Brutalised, Funk rock battle to the death except with short-circuiting synths instead of guitars. Everyone wins.

Track
- "Kick Off" (from the single "Star Fruits Surf Rider", Matador)

Frankie, ludicrous and with a commendably tenuous grasp of what makes a really good football team. Undeniably Japanese, but undesirably good.

Tracks
- "Paid In Full" (from the full "The Platinum Edition", Island)
- A 90's old favourite, resurrected once more just so we can all do that all-scratching thing. It really is a journey into sound.

December | 1998 | Arcade | 1 57
KRYPTON NIGHT
3D BRAINBLENDERS TO GET YOUR HEAD HURTING

AHEAD ***
FIREWOOD ***
SATELLITE ***

Price: £35 each
Available from: branches of John Lewis and Argos, or Really Useful Games on 0171 534 0600

You’ve eaten the food, you’ve drunk the wine and you’ve exchanged repartee. Now, the only way to round off that impressive dinner party is to dig out the parlour games and, let’s face it, a dog-eared copy of Monopoly is just not going to cut the mustard. Step forward Really Useful and its new range of sleek puzzle games.

This lot are marketed, a little disingenuously, as Krypton Factor-style puzzles, though really games like Downfall and Ker-Punk are obvious inspirations. This level of difficulty works, though, since it’s unlikely that you’d want to tackle an intense logic problem with a head-full of Cabernet Sauvignon. The games are all competitive, but, cleverly, the difficulty of each specific contest depends as much on the (drunken) calibre of your opponent as on any intrinsic hardness.

The most original of the three is Saturn. The central concept involves winning with weights on a peculiar series of interdependently balanced rings. It’s probably a cinch for physics graduates, but if you are quite less acquainted with the intricacies of Newton’s laws, a tense and hard-fought mental battle should ensue.

AHEAD relies more on luck, as you attempt to create blocks of matching colour on your side of a hole in a wooden head, while interfering with your opponent’s pursuit of the same goal. Unfortunately, a too-complex scoring system has been added to this, obviously with the intention of providing more depth to the gameplay. It does that alright, but it also means that adding up the final tally can prove more taxing than the game itself.

At first glance, FIREWOOD seems impossible, but the ingenious design ought to see it rival Lenga in the try-to-pull-a-piece-from-the-bottom-of-the-structure-without-toppling-the-whole-lot genre. In FIREWOOD, gravity is your tool, so use it wisely.

As a trio they’re all a little bit Galt for our liking (we can’t help feel that parlour games should have boards and fiddly plastic pieces), but everyone who enters our office immediately gravitates to AHEAD, wondering what on Earth it is. Proof that real 3D gaming still has appeal, and looks better than a CD when you stick it on your mantelpiece.

SAM RICHARDS

FORE PLAY

Sports Feel Golf
- Product: Sports Feel Golf
- Manufacturer: Tiger Electronics
- Price: £19.99
- Release date: on sale now
- Available from: John Lewis and most toy stores or call 01423 501151

Believe it when people tell you virtual reality is the future. You can now play a physically strenuous round of golf without leaving your house and for less than 20 quid. Step forward Sports Feel Golf, the latest in a bizarre string of handheld electronic games to combine LCD action with a physical simulation of sport.

Essentially, it’s console golf on a machine which emulates a golf club. You select a club and direct your ball, and your shot’s power is determined by the traditional on-screen swingmeter. However (and here’s the clever bit), you must coincide your release of the swingmeter with a physical swing of the club in order to move the ball. The handle of the Sports Feel Golf is only 20cm long, so the recommendation to swing as if it were a real club seems impossible. It’s far more comfortable to swing the thing like a cudgel and this is no less effective, though to the untrained eye this may look more like virtual GBH than virtual golf.

Ultimately, the game is pretty limited; we were soon floundering round in seven under par, trying to ignore the first twinges of cudgel elbow. Hilarious to begin with, but you soon hit a steep boredom curve, and it’s expensive compared with the cost of a new toy for your Game Boy.

It’s the world’s first interactive cudgel.

SAM RICHARDS

MINI TVS
TAKE A TUBE ON THE TUBE

You’re a go-getter, always on the move; you’re here, you’re there, with a finger on the pulse and an eye on the main chance. Thing is, you keep missing The Bill. What you need to improve the quality of your life, says Russell Deeks, is one of these miniature tellies.

JY-10 LCD colour TV
- Available from: Casio on 0181 450 9311
- Price: £50
- Release date: on sale now

The JY-10 is the unfortunate result of what was obviously an attempt to design by committee: “Let’s make it blue.” “No, let’s make it yellow.” “No, let’s make it purple.” “But you what, let’s make it bright yellow with blue writing and a strange purple bit at the end.”

Fantastic. Unfortunately, while looks aren’t everything the JY-10 doesn’t fare much better on the performance front. It comes complete with lacklustre sound and an LCD that has a habit of disappearing whenever the sun comes out. It’s heavy, too, so not too many marks there, either. Basic. You should resist the temptation to buy this, even if you have some strange addiction to bright yellow things.

SAM RICHARDS

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too much. The cassette player is chunky, waterproof and yellow (always a bonus), and comes with a radio. It's a bit big to carry round in your pocket, but the sound quality is surprisingly good and the bass is very acceptable. It's good for the beach, and our pick of the trio.

Rich Pelley

MPEC PEGGED

THE BEST IN PORTABLE MUSIC KIT

MPMMan personal audio player

- Available from: GBS Ltd on 07075 607078
- Price: £399
- Release date: on sale now

P3 is a new form of digital data compression that enables you to squeeze sound files into a tenth of the space they'd normally occupy, without any loss in quality. The significant thing about it is that it makes downloading music off the Net much quicker than normal – a situation the music industry isn't happy with, since it's made possible a whole bunch of sites offering copyright-breaking MP3s of material by established artists. Of course, there are plenty of legal MP3s on the Net, too, usually by unsigned bands and the like. And here, for £399, is the perfect thing to play them on.

Using it is simplicity itself – just download the MP3s to your PC, put the MPMMan in its supplied docking station and click and drag files into its memory. Hey presto, you've got a near CD-quality personal stereo that'll play 90 minutes of your favourite music. The MPMMan also comes with cables, an AC adaptor and all the necessary PC software and, better still, it will never skip or jump, because there are no moving parts. The fact that it looks dead sexy is merely a bonus.

Russell Deeks

Game Boy Bath and Shower Foam

- Price: £2.99
- Available from: Boots the Chemist.

Arriving in six colours, the Game Boy Bath and Shower Foam provides entertainment while you soak away your troubles. Of the six games available (all of the 'squidgy-button-designed-to-free-bits-of-plastic-through-liquid variety'), our favourite has you firing bananas into Donkey Kong Junior's barrel. This model scores points for the independence of the buttons – one fires bananas, the other shoots DK Jr up a tree. The shower gel smells nice, too, although it did make our hair go a bit fluffy.

Rich Pelley

ST73 LCD colour TV and FM/AM radio

- Available from: Citizen on 01869 233200
- Price: £170
- Release date: on sale now

This is the first model from Citizen to feature here, and the flashier one of the two, with its laptop-like styling. Our grumbles are the disappointing size of the screen compared to the overall dimensions, the variable picture quality (fast on-screen movement leads to annoying amounts of flicker) and the sound, which is a bit flat. On the plus side, you get colour and brightness controls, and a built-in radio. The radio sound is actually rather good, even though it's mono only. Of the models here, this is the one you could pull out of your pocket in the pub and hear all your mates go "Doh! That's unusual you're willing to fork out £170 just so your friends don't miss brookie."

LCD-3203 LCD colour TV and FM radio

- Available from: Roadstar on 01813 55533
- Price: £150
- Release date: on sale now

There could be a wild argument for saying that the LCD-3203 doesn't belong here as it's a pocket TV (you'd have to have a pocket the size of Alan Partridge's if you're a bit small portable! However, it takes batteries (although a mains cable is supplied), so we'll say the former to bit means it feels more substantial than some of the other models here, it's nice and easy to use, and it features an FM radio as well. The sound's passable, if tinny, but the picture quality's very good (although the viewing angle's a tad limited). Overall, the LCD-3203 is a pretty respectable offering, albeit one of the pricier ones here.

Watchman FDL-E22U LCD colour TV

- Available from: Sony on 01932 816000
- Price: £100
- Release date: on sale now

You're probably familiar with the Sony Watchman brand, and this latest model is surely one of the most common of the six models featured here. It's matte black, and shaped to be nice and easy to hold. If you're the kind of person who finds stuff difficult to hold on to, it also offers great sound quality, but what lets the Watchman down is the lack of an external aerial. This tragic omission will result in you performing all kinds of bizarre (and possibly illegal) contortions as you attempt to hold the Watchman in the position that gives you the best picture. And, of course, the image you finally get probably won't come up to scratch anyway. Doh!

TV-770 LCD colour TV

- Available from: Casio on 01814 502800
- Price: £70
- Release date: on sale now

This second offering from Casio is far superior to the JV-10 (also featured on these pages), not least because it abandons the basic colour scheme in favour of respectable gunmetal grey. It's £20 cheaper, too (in fact it's the least expensive model here), and it's much easier to lug around, which has to be one of the prime considerations. The picture quality and sound aren't the very best on offer, but they're comfortable enough and, far from being the worst we've seen. At this price, you're getting a reasonable-enough little telly for your money – just don't expect any miracles. Of a brightness control, or any other little extras. You pay your money and you take your choice.

ST755 LCD colour TV

- Available from: Citizen on 01869 233200
- Price: £100
- Release date: on sale now

They don't come much more compact than this. Measuring just 79 x 122 x 30mm, the ST755 is the smallest of the six models featured here, which means it's also the easiest to carry around (and the easiest to hide in your desk drawer when you need to keep an eye on the 'job match'. What's more, it has a slot so you can plug it into a VCR through holding that in your desk might be more problematical and comes in a sleek silver casing. The auto-tuning's simple to use and works well, and the picture is excellent. In fact, the only quibble we have is that it's a bit on the quiet side – but while that might be a drawback, if you watch on the train, it's probably for the best in the office.

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Live life in the fast lane!

No, we can't give you a Jordan, but you can win the front room of your dreams.

You've got the PlayStation or N64, but somehow the rest of your pad just doesn't come up to scratch. Your couch isn't comfy, your TV screen's covered in funny white flecks, and the volume's so poor you can barely hear the explosions in Lycol Wars. If this all sounds like a painfully familiar story, what you need is the Arcade/Psygnosis makeover. We can't do anything about your flea-infested sofa, but the crap TV blues? That's something else entirely.

First prize
The complete living room makeover
Reinvigorate your drab and tired old lounge with these fabulous prizes...

Now this really is the business. We'll give you a top-quality 28-inch Sony widescreen TV, a Dolby Pro-Logic amplifier and the speakers to go with it, a Nicam long-play video recorder, a bunch of Formula 1 season round-up goodies and even some official F1 dobber to wear while you're using it all. Then, when you've studied exactly how the real-life season panned out using your new book and video, you can get ready to relive the whole thing on your PlayStation, running it through your fantastic new television.

Runner up prizes also officially "not bad"
Ten runners up will each get a copy of the Formula 1 season round-up video and the F1 cap as consolation for not winning the "big telly."

Rules of the game
1) No purchase is necessary.
2) No Future Publishing or Psygnosis employees or their associates may enter this draw.
3) The closing date is midnight on 31 December 1998.
4) The editor's decision is final and absolutely no correspondence will be entered into regarding any aspect of this competition.
5) There is no cash alternative to the prizes.
6) Individuals may only enter once.
7) All entries must be sent to: Arcade, Future Publishing, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath BA1 2BE.

Look at what you can win

- Sony 28-inch Nicam stereo widescreen TV. (It's a damn sight nicer than the one in the Arcade office. Wanna swap?)
- A Sony Dolby Pro-Logic amplifier and two speakers. (Your games will sound absolutely fantastic!!)
- Sony Nicam long-play video recorder. (Go good it makes even South Park look like fine art.)
- A Formula 1 season round-up video, a Formula 1 season round-up book. (Every corner, every start, every overtaking move — picked in aspic, obviously.)
- A rather classy Formula 1 fleece jacket and Formula 1 cap (forget replacing your clapped-out central heating. This dobber will keep you warm and stylish while you play at home).
- Ten lucky runners up will be the proud winners of an excellent hat and video pack. Not quite a telly, but still quite a snaz.
How to enter

Here are ten of the world's greatest Formula 1 heroes. Can you name them all?

- David
- Damon
- Alain
- James
- Mika
- Michael
- Niki
- Graham
- Ralph
- Ayrton

Taking part couldn't be easier. Just send us a postcard or sealed envelope with your name, address and daytime telephone number on it – and the names of the ten famous Formula 1 drivers pictured below. Some are current heroes, some are '70s superstars, but none of them are particularly obscure. We've even given you their first names, just to get you going.

But like our heroes above, you'll have to get a move on if you want to take part: the closing date is 31 December 1998. Remember to get your spelling right and send your entry to:

Formula 1 Competition,
Arcade,
Future Publishing,
30 Monmouth Street,
Bath BA1 2BW

The names of the winner and ten runners up will be published in Arcade 4.
You don’t have to love SF to love SFX...

Why? Just check out our latest, fantastic vacuum-packed issue...

The Truman Show...
Director Peter Weir reveals how he turned Jim Carrey from grinning loon to possible Oscar nominee in this year’s best movie.

Vampires!
The creator of the UK’s answer to The X-Files, Joe Ahearne, describes how he’s re-invented the vampire myth in Channel 4’s Ultraviolet... Plus an exclusive interview with the writer of the surprise US box office smash, Blade...

Dan Aykroyd
He really believes in aliens! Honest! The Ghostbuster star tells SFX how he’s the PR guy for the real X-Files...

Cube
The indie film that’s wowing SF fans and critics alike

Plus: Babylon 5, Star Trek, Lord Of The Rings, Doctor Who, Xena: Warrior Princess...

Special pics from The X-Files movie & Small Soldiers

SFX44 ON SALE NOW!
Welcome to the A-list, Arcade's harsh-but-fair guide to what's hot and what's not in the world of gaming. We don't claim to cover every game ever made, but all the big names are here. And some would much rather they weren't.

This month in the hard-hitting, constantly updated A-list...

165 Golf galore!
Fancy a round? Then join us for a quick run through the five best golf games.

166 Why I love Mario
Mark Green has a secret desire — it's for a portly plumber from Palma.

168 Grand Prix 2
Long term test.

170 Zig-a-zig-arghh!
Why buying Spice World isn't acceptable behaviour under any circumstances.

163 PlayStation games
Over 130 games reviewed for Britain's top console.

168 PC games
More than 90 of the latest PC releases rated.

171 Nintendo 64 games
We haven't forgotten...

172 Game Boy games
...the less popular systems!

Star ratings

★★★★★ Simply the best. A game you really should try.
★★★★ Excellent. Definitely worth your money.
★★★ Good stuff. Not exactly a world beater, but fine within its genre.
★★ Strictly average. We say: don't buy it.
★ Really bad news. Avoid at all costs.

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not one ounce of quality slips into the mix and you end up with this horrendous example of short-lived art. Tense! Teakettle!... Anyway, the multiplayer is ridiculously addictive.

**Batman & Robin**
**Adventure 1 player**
**Or try: Batman Forever**

As good as the film (yes, that bad) mixture of various genres that doesn't really get despite the puzzle theme running throughout. Floor consists and a generic robot (literally) hammers the nails home - at least you can do it with a robot police.**

**Or try: Batman Forever**
**Or try: Acclaim Entertainment**

A quality scrolling fighting game.

**Battle Arena Toshinden 3**
**Firefighter 1-2 players**
**Or try: Street Fighter 3**

The crazy old men return for a High for the Toshinden series. Modeled after Donkey Kong's shadow. Characters are over the original, but the graphics is in line with the date and the design of the levels and combat action makes it a bit of a banger.

**Bio Frogs**
**Fighter 1-2 players**
**Or try: Bleach: Soul Pack**

A brilliantly brilliant platform classic. And with the Acclaim and Toshinden collections, limited graphics and over-simplified gameplay sadly leave these two fighters struggling to compete against today's buman adventurers and Latino heroes. But old nostalgics they're unbeatable.

**Buffy Blade**
**Fighting 1-2 players**
**Sony or Puiglim for purists**

Using sword weapons, and with characters who drop to the floor after just one hit, this is the beat-em-up for purists. After other, non-celebrity, action games, it takes time to adjust to this way of fighting, but is it becoming proficient but there are rewards a-plenty if you persevere.

**Bust-A-Move 2**
**Or try: Street Fighter 2**

A robotic action strategy.

**Command & Conquer: Red Alert**
**Strategy 1-2 players**
**Or try: Street Fighter 2**

The simplest and most addictive game some since Russian biker had an idea while mumbling with his kids. Lago. Just match the balls to the screen, to play two-player mode will keep you, and a mate up at night; try one player and you'll find every friend you ever had.

**Command & Conquer: Retaliation**
**Strategy 1-2 players**
**Or try: Street Fighter 2**

A fighting game which is more than just a taste, and as Red Alert was so good, this is worth getting too. A must for anyone watching men die.

**Cool Boarder 2**
**Racing 1-2 players**
**Or try: Street Fighter 2**

Now with more realism. The most realistic game in this series. Have you ever seen a Russian biker had an idea while mumbling with his kids? Lago. Just match the balls to the screen, to play two-player mode will keep you, and a mate up at night; try one player and you'll find every friend you ever had.

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Final Fantasy VII
- RPG 8 player
- SCEI
- 150 hours of truly epic adventure
- Quite incredible cut-scenes, which mix seamlessly with the moving characters, existing conflicts, and story that will have you emotionally involved throughout. The random battles and linear nature are minor faults, but otherwise, it's a near-perfect adventure experience.

Fluid
- Music 1 player
- SCEI
- Interactive aquatic music
- Guiding a dolphin around to find and create music is a weird idea, but the ability to create and edit, and visuals to go with it, is excellent. The graphics are darker than you'd expect, but it should supplement your top-notch friend list in those chillest post-church hours.

Five of the Best

Five forests
- Golf games are near-identical, so why try to rate 'em? Because you'll only ever need to buy one...
similar to Teppets, and is good fun in a retro sense, but despite its addictive power, it's just not that exciting. 

Nagano Winter Olympics '98
Sports 1 player
Konami
Snowboard simulation
The sluggish controls completely undermined the character's movement, and just to make matters worse, you also get poor collision detection, and very boring events. Less entertaining than Evercade.'The Eagle's Wings.'

Need for Speed 3
Racing 1-2 players
EA Sports
I feel the need...
A lot of modes to make the game last that little bit longer, great graphics, and a good sense of speed (which is what the name and everything means). The chance to get its feature points and the player mode make this the best so far, however, I've never won any events on the inside by Gran Turismo.

NFL '98
Sports 1 player
EA Sports
Great ice hockey.
It's genuine.

Namco Museum 1
Retro 1 player
Namco
A galaxy of Pac-Man, Pinball, Pac-Man
Police "Perry" The first of the five museum-style games in the Namco Museum. And certainly the best housing the least obscure games of the various Namcos. It might provide nostalgic relief, but the lot are otherwise far too simple to be worth the money for today's audience.

NBA Live '99
Sports 1-4 players
EA Sports
3D basketball
An improvement over the two earlier incarnations, and players have enough options to satisfy anyone who plays a game of the team. Everything from a list of strategy requirements instead of just a limited time mode, and the graphics are pretty much the same for the fans.

Ninja Shadow of Darkness
Adventure 1 player
SCEI Interactive
Here comes the man in black...
A great fighting game, and the opening puzzle and series is coupled with a decent amount of a video game's value. Make a sharp move for the first few levels, but the rest of the game is eventually difficult.

Or try:
Soviet Strike
1 player
Electronic Arts
Plain and simple.

Odegard: Abe's Oddyssey
Platformer 1 player
Platinum
Abe's adventure...
Here's a platformer, but not exactly as you might expect.

Nuclear Strike
Platformer 1 player
Electronic Arts
Gunship: Helicopters!
There are some missions and 3 missions in offer in the latest of this long-running helicopter-based shoot 'em up, along with loads of strategy requirements instead of just a limited time mode, and the graphics are pretty much the same for the fans.

Point Blank
Lightgun shooter 1-4 players
Namco
Grab your gun...The Japanese could create a shooting gallery featuring guns and pistols, and stick in a four-player mode, and still make it one of the most well-adapted and addictive experiences this side of Time Crisis. 

Or try:
Pikmin
1 player
Konami
Pikmin's light gun fight.

Porsche Challenge
Racing 1-2 players
Sony Computer Entertainment
Cruise in expensive cars
 å

Rayman
Action adventure 1 player
Ubisoft
Rayman is the new look on a bit weakly.
Cheap, but that's about it. It has its faults, but it doesn't have anything that would put a full-price game in the shade.

Resident Evil
Action adventure 1 player
Capcom
Brews more low.
Genuinely frightening and the first game to achieve a proper film-like anticipation of the next scene, aimed to pull by frightening and detailed backgrounds and a great plot. Have a clean pair of pants versus kids.

Resident Evil: Director's Cut
Action adventure 1 player
Capcom
Added value version of RE added to the sequel.
Now that we have RE2, the significance of the demo here is a bit less. We basically have the original, this is a nigh-on essential purchase. This is the best version of the Japanese version, is so bad to attract the hardcore gamer.

Ride Racer
Racing 1-4 players
Namco
Arcade licensing in your house.
The third in the Ridge Racer series is incredibly faithful to the arcade original, losing none of the speed, mood, good looks or options that were present previously. This is the definitive racer if you like your racing games "cool-weather/sunlight/shrubs" than Gran Turismo. Let down only by the lack of a two-player split-screen and to understand that you are the only present. Even if there are any, I will enjoy playing it in England's various spectacular World Cup crash-outs.

Ride Racer Revolution
Racing 1-4 players
Namco
Riding racing in your house.
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Cheap, but that's about it. It has its faults, but it doesn't have anything that would put a full-price game in the shade.

Resident Evil
Action adventure 1 player
Capcom
Brews more low.
Genuinely frightening and the first game to achieve a proper film-like anticipation of the next scene, aimed to pull by frightening and detailed backgrounds and a great plot. Have a clean pair of pants versus kids.

Resident Evil: Director's Cut
Action adventure 1 player
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Added value version of RE added to the sequel.
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Road Rash 3D ★ Racing ★ 1-4 players ★ Electronic Arts ★ Maxx TT meets SW: With fine control, your car can get tangled in traffic, get involved in accidents, this is the racer for people who like the look of brushes or a man, the racing is supplemented by smashing other riders about, but unfortunately the two don't balance well in practice. It's just good, pretty much of cool, but far from exciting, and it's certainly a bit of a looker. ★★★★★

R-Type ★ Shooter ★ 1-2 players ★ Virgin Interactive ★ Entertainment Blaster from the past! Merging the classics (from 80's-90's) into one is a good move for old nostalgists, but these space-bound antics are unlikely to really grab the attention of many of today's gamers. A solid, well-done effort, and there's enough speed, big bosses and flying bad guys to keep the kids happy for a while. ★★★★★

S.C.A.R.S. ★ Racing ★ 1-4 players ★ Psygnosis ★ Classic "blitz" style racer in a faithful attempt at a Nascar Kit done, but rather less important. It has a difficult control system that rewards patience, and greater deviations in style and handling between the individual vehicles, but the multi-player game option — Micros of all ages! — is not enjoyable. ★★★★★

Sentinel Returns ★ Strategy ★ 1-6 players ★ Psygnosis ★ Classic "3D" Tactics Your aim is to absorb the Sentinels, who sit on the highest point on the landscape, and the attempt has lost little in translation from its 80's-90's PSX, especially as the graphics have all been kept diligently low key to maintain the feel in the system, but the million-word plot is massive and — praise the Lord — a successful retro genre. ★★★★★

Skull Monkeys ★ Platform ★ 1 player ★ Electronic Arts ★ Nostalgic-joke-fest Beautiful graphics, that work incredibly quickly, but really just a retro of Bath & Broom written by the same team. This is a 2D platformer for the kids, especially bearing in mind the incredibly bad jokes that spring forth from the screen. ★★★★★

Dr. Psycho-Buck ★ 1 player ★ Virgin Interactive ★ Entertainment Blaster ★ Dr. Psycho-Buck ★ ★★★★★

Teken ★ Fighting ★ 1-2 players ★ Nanom ★ Round two… Fight! Again, it used to be the best "beat'em-up", but Teken 2 arrived. The character models wouldn't look out of place in a per-deated 1990's movie. The game is totally engrossing fun; however, it is tough and there are plenty of moves, bosses and secrets to get your teeth into. ★★★★★

Tekken 2 ★ Fighting ★ 1-2 players ★ Namco ★ Round two… Fight! Again, it used to be the best "beat'em-up", but Teken 2 arrived. The character models wouldn't look out of place in a per-deated 1990's movie. The game is totally engrossing fun; however, it is tough and there are plenty of moves, bosses and secrets to get your teeth into. ★★★★★

Or try: Darkstalkers ★ 2 players ★ Virgin Interactive ★ Entertainment Blaster ★ Darkstalkers ★ ★★★★★

Tekken 3 ★ Fighting ★ 1-2 players ★ Namco ★ Round two… Fight! Again, it used to be the best "beat'em-up", but Teken 2 arrived. The character models wouldn't look out of place in a per-deated 1990's movie. The game is totally engrossing fun; however, it is tough and there are plenty of moves, bosses and secrets to get your teeth into. ★★★★★

Or try: Darkstalkers ★ 2 players ★ Virgin Interactive ★ Entertainment Blaster ★ Darkstalkers ★ ★★★★★

Time Crisis ★ Lightgun shooter ★ 2 players ★ Sony ★ Go for your gun! The innovative "duck and run" option is present, as is the G-Cro 45. Both make for exciting, floating and flowing play that relies on pure speed. With bonus levels as a reward for performance, don't worry about the longevity — just feel the power. ★★★★★

Or try: Judge Dredd ★ 2 players ★ Gemini ★ ★★★★★

TOCA Touring Car ★ Racing ★ 1 player ★ Codemasters ★ One of the original "modern" games. Excellent racing with decent speed and excellent tracks, correct handling and control. The graphics and lack of options let it down slightly, but you won't forgive it because of features like real-time damage. ★★★★★

Tomb Raider ★ Adventure ★ 1-4 players ★ Eidos Interactive ★ ★★★★★

Indiana Jones meets Malleable Man. Lara Croft is a global icon and showed many positive images of computer gamers into the mass media, but it was the excellent level design and the secret hiding places, that made Tomb Raider deserve some of Marie's smile, and showed that a pretty face and great gaming aren't mutually exclusive. ★★★★★

True Pinball ★ Pinball ★ 1 player ★ Ocean ★ Platinum ★ Fipping mad? This is the pinball software that doesn't make it an essential purchase, unless you're too scared to go down the arcades. Across the four tables, the choice of 2D and 3D views doesn't help when the visual quality is so poor, but the performance of the ball work well, and there's the obligatory multi-ball and video display. ★★★★★

Virtua Fighter ★ Fighting ★ 1 player ★ Sega ★  Great character selection, and the shadow of Squeak's seminal classic Final Fight. VR Suffers from Final Fantasy's random battle system, and the slow, but retro-lookin' visual strips stick awfully. ★★★★★

Wild Arms ★ Shooter ★ 1-2 players ★ Giro Digital ★ Adventure ★ 1-2 players ★ Giro Digital ★ ★★★★★

Virtua Tennis ★ Sports ★ 1-2 players ★ Sega ★ ★★★★★

Lundquist: "I've decided to deal with this problem as just that little interaction that you might as well give just the controller to your -- it's the absurdity, characters and moves to make the fans smile, but everyone else will just laugh. ★★★★★

Wolverine ★ Role-playing ★ 1-2 players ★ Eidos Interactive ★ ★★★★★

The shadow of Squeak's seminal classic Final Fight. VR Suffers from Final Fantasy's random battle system, and the slow, but retro-lookin' visual strips stick awfully. ★★★★★
A-list
dimensional graphics, horribly difficult controls and weapons that are
genetic clones of one another. **

X-Men vs Street Fighter

Vigilante **

Virtual Interactive Entertainment

Fighting

Meaegs the X-Men into the Street Fighter universe, and maintains the
custom system and sprite-based
characters that you're going to come
expect to see, but it's also important
adding fighters of a size to rival
the Empire State Building. A bit
repetitive, joky and shallow
please true fighting fans. **

PC

Actua Ice Hockey

Sports **

Grenml Interactive

Freezing fast-paced action
likely to be overlook by
10/96, but still the beauty
of the ice hockey world,
despite some bad
graphics, especially since you
get to play as any one of the
world's top teams. The controls are
tricky, but it all takes place at
descent pace, and the very harsh computer
opponent and tactics will satisfy
true bloodsport. * * * en ice hockey fans.

Actua Soccer 2

Sports **

Grenml Interactive

Actually finally coming out
graphic and a shedload of camera
angles, but the latter seem kind of
pointless when you will almost
certainly be sticking with one.
The play is frustrating, there's a
limited number of options and,
quite shockingly, it's worse than
its PlayStation incarnation. **

Actua Tennis

Sports **

Grenml Interactive

Survive alone in
dome stay alive by
keeping your
tennis court covered.
Biosys chucks a load of
players and resource management at
you, but doesn't become frustrating.
The plot will suck you in, but you
might find it a bit slow. **

Buggy

Driving **

Grenml Interactive

Radio-controlled racing
fun. The 16 teams
cars are heaven to handle, bounding
and sliding all across the shop,
and have enough differences to make
them last fun. But the tracks -
indoors and outdoors -
seem to look at, are a bit confusing,
and there's not the fun of hard
length of Mario and Friends. **

Bust-A-Move 2

Puzzle **

Acclaim Entertainment

Match bubbles, go mad
One of the add-on puzzles since
Toru, bringing its bubble
bursting capabilities to your
screen in an explosion of rubber-hued
visuals. It's a really easy game,
and much more challenging than
you'd think, with the very addictive
two-player mode and the
difficult challenge of the
concept. **

Apollo 18: The
Moon Missions

Space sim **

Black Pillar

You want to be an astronaut?
NASCAR
-endurance space flight sim that
takes flying an F-15 look as easy
as driving a milk float. One that's
only for punks who harbour an
unreasonable ambition to visit the
galaxy beyond our world. **

Armour Command

Strategy **

Take 2 Interactive

Tasks 'n' strategy.
Pastel-colored sci-fi
strategy, first stylisty, but
ultimately unoriginal. Any good tactics tend
leave the screen a mess of
any menu, waypoint markers and
pilots. **

Bass Masters Classic Tournament

Edition **

THQ

Budget: Go fishing,
but on your PC.No
watcher in the dark, or
which isn't quite as bizarre or
boring as it might be sounding. **

Castrol Honda

Superbikes World

cup

Racing **

Player

Interactive Entertainment

A platform game, but the
over-sensitive controls make it a
bit too hard. **

Championship Manager 2

Sports management

1-8 players. Eidos Interactive

is Keegan

With CD/Demon, this prequel has
appeared at a bargain price.
Looking a little out-of-date now,
and still far too easy, it's
nevertheless engrossing and
packed with neat details. **

Creatures

Breed-em-up **

Blizzard

Raise a family of cuddly creatures
Less a game, more an exercise
in parenthood, the main idea behind
Creatures is to breed your race of
funny critters and then use them
to search for biological bits and
bosses. It's fun, but can suffer from
too much difficulty and not enough doing. **

Conflict: Freespace

The Great War

Space combat

Multi-player. Interplay

Sprawling, yet intricate,
protocol, space combat. Escort
- protect, that shoot the other

The cockpit may at first seem like a
dark, tight fit, but in-air
fighting is quite popular
enough to make you
win a battle in just
the one move defeat the
purpose somewhat. **

Dominion: Storm Over

Grits

Strategy **

Eidos Interactive

Real-time war game

Terrain-based strategy
maps, on the side, which
helps control over
your units' orders. Crafty troops
packs and a notably different feel
between the four races present
extra points. **

ExciteBike 255AD

Adventure **

Talent

Entertainment

with Beth A tragic dungeon-
based adventure to emulate the
dear Lara Croft. It keeps the basic
visuals and ideas, but shows
out any concept of helpful controls or
good level design. Limited action
just doesn't come across with
simple puzzles, make this a
tedious experience. **

Fallout

RPG **

Interplay

Puzzle-solving post-Armageddon
An RPG in the post-Armageddon
world, with a whole load of quests
and tasks to take on and a
good choice of characters. It's
very old-school in its use of pointy
backed and hand level designs,
and it starts off slowly, but the
action and interaction soon blend together well. **

F1 Racing Simulation

Driving **

1-8 players

Ubisoft

Driving for would-be drivers
stats and tracks are here, and the
handling and controls are perfect.
There's a slight lack of realism
in the controls and
personalisation options, but it's
very fast and offers a different
challenge. Don't expect to be able to
smash into verges without playing
the ultimate price of your
career. **

On the Alien Prost Grand Prix

Pilots **

Dort

Similar but less realistic. **

F-15

Flight sim **

Electronic Arts

Absolutely accurate F-15
simulators. This won't change-
PC can cop, but oh so much more of
a strict simulation than a game. **

Diallo

Strategy/RPG

1-4 players

Blizzard

Hack 'n' slash adventure

The environment is
incredibly wide, with hidden
depths and complexity to be
found if you delve deeper into its
dark and sinister labyrinths.
A whole load of escape-killing and
spelling to keep beauty types
happy, absolutely massive and
it looks like a dream too. **

Deathtrap Dungeon

Adventure **

Eidos Interactive

No frills. Tomb Raider done
fairly round a huge dungeon
monsters and outdoors traps. How
many times have we seen this sort of
thing before? **

or try: Tomb Raider 2

Eidos Interactive

A second outing for the
lovely Lara Croft. **

Descent to

Undermountain

RPG **

Interplay

Eat the mould of the H
demo

Original Doom bemos
Taking the title of the original
Demp and then using it to run
Adam was a good idea - but three years ago.
Demp, flawed and, ultimately,
Hugely tedious. **

Decoration Derby

Racing **

10-15 players

Turn-taking/strategy

Pongy

Hit-and-run rivalry fine as
a normal racing game, but better
as an all-out smash-em-up that
gives edge-of-seat race
table, coupled with
gorgeous visuals and perfect images
of your car, as it dissipates into
gestures. Great tracks, a
genuine impression of speed and smart
computer cars, too. Yay! **

Diablo

Strategy/RPG

1-4 players

Blizzard

Hack 'n' slash adventure

The environment is
incredibly wide, with hidden
depths and complexity to be
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A whole load of escape-killing and
spelling to keep beauty types
happy, absolutely massive and
it looks like a dream too. **

Final Fantasy VII

RPG **

Eidos Interactive

Why shouldn't the
PC have the best RPG
ever? As long as
you kept up all night,
I'll make my noise
bitter, but only
if someone hits you in
the face with a copy of it. Which
they ought to do, if you don't buy it. A
great story, lush graphics and
terrific selection of spells. It's
a little confusing, easily allowing you
to lose your enemies before you get
out of the city, but this above
to Japanese quirkiness and you'll be
as it is. **

or try: Little Big Adventure

1-2 players

Eidos Interactive

A fun adventure. **

Flight Simulator 98

10 players

3 players

Microsoft

Ultra-realistic
eapolitan aeropla

This isn't for
the casual gamer, including, as it
does, the health and
the hang of it, in that it's supposed to be a
bit like a true flying experience.
The controls are difficult, but some
of the graphics are less realistic than
you'd think. There's also a quite
righteously difficult-to-control helicopter included as
a bit of a laugh. **

or try: Forsaken

1-16 players

Acclaim Entertainment

Alamo

Heart of Darkness

Platformer **

Player

Ocean

Visually stunning
runabout. It was five years in the making and, oh, how very nearly worth the wait. Stretches the 3D platformer out as far as it will go without snapping straight back and hurting your fingers. The backdrops are beautiful, and there are puzzles a plenty. 

The House Of The Dead
1. First person shooter 1 player
2. 3D into-the-screen fire-button finger-fleeder

IF/A-18E: Carrier Strike Fighter
1. Flight sim 1 player
2. Interactive Magic
3. Fly planes around. Smashing a path that won't be flying for five years (although based on enough test data to ensure authenticity, Strike Fighter, for the most part, looks absolutely gorgeous. The missions are convincing and varied, and your success alters what you're offered to do in future levels. Unfortunately, you're going to need a lot of patience. It can run it properly, though.

Interstate 76
1. Racing 1-2 players
2. Activision '70s retro challenge, taking its cue from the Twisted Metal games, this race-come-shooter suffers from jerky and simplistic graphics and repetitive gameplay, although you're still to find a plenty of fun in just driving about, and shooting up scenery and other vehicles. The ongoing plot and gigantic candy Rory afters satisfy all but the most obsessive 70s-phile. 

Jimmy White's 2: Cueball
1. Sports 2 players
2. Management
3. Interactive Entertainment
4. Snooker
5. Woody nutts are we Spectre snooker and pool sim with a highly playable game engine and nearly startling depth and fruit machine sub-games.
6. Or try: Virtuoso Pool
7. Multi-player: Interactive Pool without the celebrity

Incoming: Lux et Rubor
1. First-person shooter 1 player
2. Rape Software
3. Fancy, multi-vehicle blaster A level of conventionality over originality. incoming features every shooter script-up-diced know, but the gorgeous visuals, wide variety of vehicles and frenetic, finger action point there's plenty of life in the game yet.

Jack Charter's Soccer Nation
1. Sports management 1 player
2. Attica
3. The world soccer game ever The Accrington Stanley of football games. The arcade section was taken out at the last minute. Despite the option screen might tell you, leaving a pits poor management thing.

Jetfighter: Fullburn
1. Flight sim 1 player
2. Take 2 interactive
3. Flying, with a plot
4. Exhilarating flight sim, where the missions are glued together with video sequences. Trimming at times, but with a nice feeling of not being too techy.
5. Or try: F22: Ace

Leisure Suit Larry
1. Strategy 1 player
2. Sierra
3. Leisure Suit Larry is a loose, softhearted adventure. The womanly visuals and characters of Leisure Suit Larry, turned into a beautiful 3D world. The control system is almost uniquely amusing, and the nongeeks makes things difficult, but this is as involving as any good bedtime story should be.

MAX 2
1. Strategy 1 player
2. Sierra
3. Furry, heavy, real-time war game
4. On one side, completely blood and meat, war machine sub-games.
5. Or try: Virtuoso 2
6. Multi-player Interactive Pool without the celebrity

Judge Dredd Pinball
1. Pinball 2 players
2. Pin-ball Games
3. Guesses
4. Detailed, but only four tables and an odd over-speed perspective, which makes you wonder if the table seem too far away. A couple of sub-arcade video-games, there's also a strip of side of the Judge Dredd tie-in, either
5. Or try: Addiction Pinball
6. Multi-player Microprose
7. Alternative metal ball.

Last Bronx
1. Fighter 1-2 players
2. Sega
3. Japanese
4. Fisticuffs It's fast-moving, with a number of options included to make life more interesting, but the menagerie number of characters and moves made it clashing down to Earth. The lack of support for 3D, the 16K memory limit, led to a second-strategy from the approach of previous MicroMan games. Commands are clearly laid out, logistics, detail and special conditions.
5. Or try: MechWarrior II
6. Player 1: Activision
7. Huge, hulking sci-fi control traits.

MecCommander
1. Strategy 1 player
2. Microprose
3. Real time strategy
4. Management
5. Big robots on the British-Lichtbox game, shoved into a beautiful 3D world. The control system is almost uniquely amusing, and the nongeeks makes things difficult, but this is as involving as any good bedtime story should be.

Microsoft Golf 1998
1. Sports 2 Multi-player
2. Microsoft
3. Golf sim
4. Motion-captured players add realism and a novel twist, but the doo-dad control stuff stunts play and has you flinging to play a golf game. Make a backspin and actually hit the ball into the hole when you want to.
5. Or try: Links 5-1 players
6. Multi-player: Eidos Interactive
7. Highly friendly and great looking

Obidans
1. Adventure 1 player
2. Sierra
3. Galactic and FMV adventure
4. Typical PC adventure game that could have stood out from the crowd but drops for too many baffling puzzles into the otherwise bopper turn of thought-out, absorbing head-scratchers. The characters also feel about as interactive as a travel agent trying to book you a holiday - not very at all.

Outwar
1. Adventure 1 player
2. Microsoft
3. Starship Troopers: the (unofficial) game
4. The Troopers launch an oxum research establishment, then try to take a cargo lift as big as a Quake DOS. Outward, innocent, and breathes fresh air into this 3D shoot-'em-boat game, and it's a hoot. The Quake/Tomb Raider cross-over. The on-screen, sudden-death routines are cleverly designed, though.
5. Or try: Terra Nova
6. Player 2: Interactive Entertainment

Pandemonium 2
1. Platformer 1 player
2. UbiSoft
3. Animation-heavy run-around
4. The game is a pseudo-3D world, beautifully designed levels versus sammy gameplay. The choice to play as two differently handling characters adds interest to an otherwise predictable run-around-trying-not-to-die-yep-up.

Pinball Soccer
1. Pinball 2 players
2. Microsoft
3. More themed pinball, where the table looks like a football pitch. Suffers from the same steep performance rate as Judge Dredd Pinball.

Police Quest SWAT 2
1. Strategy 1 player
2. Sierra
3. Control the thin blue line in the mould of the earlier Syndicate Wars, SWAT has you directing cops and more to block the clowns away. It's ruined by its subject matter. But it's not an old negotiation before gun-play - and importantly small graphics, and the story of an undercover cop makes control difficult.

Postal
1. First-person shooter 1 player
2. Interplay
3. Laid-back, with great action sequences, but an unconvincing story line.

Potter
1. Interactive 1 player
2. HOG
3. Ugly and boring, unusual voice control option.

Redneck: Revenge
1. Action 1 player
2. Interplay
3. Interactive 1 player
4. With great action sequences, but an unconvincing story line.

Quake II
1. First-person shooter 1 player
2. Infogrames
3. 1-2 players
4. Fine first-person shooter
5. Basically more of the same, but still among the best of the few games in the world. Quake II is undoubtedly best played over a network or on the Internet, and offers bigger, better (although not necessarily more realistic), massive guns, improved design levels and a fully controllable game engine.

Quake II:
1. First-person shooter 1 player
2. Infogrames
3. More stylized, with great action sequences, but an unconvincing story line.

Roland Garros 1998: The French Open
1. Sports 1-4 players
2. Interactive
3. Roland Garros
4. Accurate tennis sim
5. Garros's great strength (giving you realistic control of the ball) will land you in at its low weakness (making it too easy to beat the computer opponents). There are 50 players, each of the four courts look lively and, despite
Agent to 007 and the best multi-player game money can buy if you ever get bored of 1-player. Plus it's got James Bond and Robbie Coltrane. And Sean Bean.

***

Igggy’s Reckin’ Balls

- Racing 1-4 players
- Acclaim Entertainment
- Sells for around 1.5 times its retail cost, but where there's no need to do any manual tuning, it doesn't work. Monotonous tracks and the ugliest characters this side of Miyuki Glay.

ISS ’98

- Sports 1-4 players
- Konami
- Beautiful goalmouth advancements are identical to the original ISS ’94, and so you get the same silly controls and wealth of options, which mean beautiful smooth football. There are also so much of ridiculous improvements – the referee is always on the pitch and it's, coupled with the film camera angles, new kicks and better crosses and headers, that it makes an essential purchase. Again.

Kobe Bryant in NBA CourtSide

- Basketball 1-4 players
- Konami
- Beautiful goalmouth advancements are identical to the original ISS ’94, and so you get the same silly controls and wealth of options, which mean beautiful smooth football. There are also so much of ridiculous improvements – the referee is always on the pitch and it's, coupled with the film camera angles, new kicks and better crosses and headers, that it makes an essential purchase. Again.

Lylat Wars

- Shooter 1-4 players
- Nintendo
- Animal Magic in space. Love the story, love the use of SNES’s Starving, and intended to be a truly immersive space video game, with cut-scenes that are all the more relevant, and the whole game has been incredible.

Madden 64

- Sports 1-4 players
- EA Sports
- An American football series update looks a little sparse, especially without the official logo. Starred by original Lenum Duk Cup, but offers the controls and game mechanics in the purest form that you'll feel like you actually understand what's going on in that! Hull Hall. Or not.

Mario Kart 64

- Racer 1-4 players
- Nintendo
- Takes to the track. The original comedy racer returns. The one-player game is a long-lived experience, especially with the much improved kart designs, but the time-trial mode adds longevity, and the two-player game is arguably the best on any platform.

Mission: Impossible

- Stealth 1-4 players
- Infogrames
- Tom Cruise in 3D real-look. Not bad looking, with good ideas such as disguising yourself as other characters in order to progress, which that should turn the stealthy “em-up” into a potentially Goldleafy beauty. Sadly, it’s turned out a little bland and underdeveloped.

MK Mythologies

- Fighting 1-4 players
- GT Interactive
- Beat-em-up/RPG marriage is this just as awful for the story, and the laughable animation and controls which render playing it as easy as eating soup with your fingers, make for a game so bad it’s actually makes you physically angry to even contemplate its existence.

Mortal Kombat 4

- Fighting 1-4 players
- Acclaim Entertainment
- Ugly potato-skin version of the game, where there's no need to do any manual tuning, it doesn't work. Monotonous tracks and the ugliest characters this side of Miyuki Glay.

N64

- Sports 1-4 players
- Konami
- Beautiful goalmouth advancements are identical to the original ISS ’94, and so you get the same silly controls and wealth of options, which mean beautiful smooth football. There are also so much of ridiculous improvements – the referee is always on the pitch and it's, coupled with the film camera angles, new kicks and better crosses and headers, that it makes an essential purchase. Again.

Ocarina of Time

- Adventure 1-4 players
- Nintendo
- A blop of your own – seeks to recapture the true essence of the original world. This takes the original key opening, having been transcribedfaithfully from the original handmade wonders. The adventure is not intended to sustain interest, but – be honestly here – what’s Game & Watch, anyway a bit rubbish?

Tennis World Tour

- Sports 1-4 players
- Nintendo
- Acclaim Entertainment
- Gorgeous graphics show remarkable advancement. The game is well made, but it’s a bit too difficult, even if you get into a rhythm. A good game to satisfy senile, puppy-like children, but no one else.

Tomagotchi

- Platform 1-4 players
- Bandai
- A blob of your own – seeks to recapture the true essence of the original world. This takes the original key opening, having been transcribedfaithfully from the original handmade wonders. The adventure is not intended to sustain interest, but – be honestly here – what’s Game & Watch, anyway a bit rubbish?

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Tetris

- Puzzle 1-4 players
- Nintendo
- Acclaim Entertainment
- A blop of your own – seeks to recapture the true essence of the original world. This takes the original key opening, having been transcribedfaithfully from the original handmade wonders. The adventure is not intended to sustain interest, but – be honestly here – what’s Game & Watch, anyway a bit rubbish?

Turok

- Platform 1-4 players
- Acclaim Entertainment
- A blop of your own – seeks to recapture the true essence of the original world. This takes the original key opening, having been transcribedfaithfully from the original handmade wonders. The adventure is not intended to sustain interest, but – be honestly here – what’s Game & Watch, anyway a bit rubbish?

Warlo

- Platform 1-4 players
- Nintendo
- Acclaim Entertainment
- A blop of your own – seeks to recapture the true essence of the original world. This takes the original key opening, having been transcribedfaithfully from the original handmade wonders. The adventure is not intended to sustain interest, but – be honestly here – what’s Game & Watch, anyway a bit rubbish?

Wave Race

- Racing 1-4 players
- Nintendo
- A blop of your own – seeks to recapture the true essence of the original world. This takes the original key opening, having been transcribedfaithfully from the original handmade wonders. The adventure is not intended to sustain interest, but – be honestly here – what’s Game & Watch, anyway a bit rubbish?

WWF Warzone

- Sports 1-4 players
- Acclaim Entertainment
- A blop of your own – seeks to recapture the true essence of the original world. This takes the original key opening, having been transcribedfaithfully from the original handmade wonders. The adventure is not intended to sustain interest, but – be honestly here – what’s Game & Watch, anyway a bit rubbish?
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December 1984
The best games, biggest failures and news that rocked the world 14 years ago.

Any Ultimate game is a thrill to unpack and load, but with Knight Lore they have surpassed themselves. The 3D graphics are so exciting to see that the fingers are instantly itching to get at the keys. A real treat.

How much did Ultimate pay this guy?
Michael J Fox for movie Teen Wolf. The plot, though, was secondary to the game itself, which, being more-or-less a platformer in 3D, was able to deliver entirely new challenges.
The reviewers fell over themselves raving for the incoherent race in a race to come up with the best superlative. Chris Bourne of Sinclair User said it was “a cephalopod world of claustrophobic menace,” while Crash thought only captain's could convey the game’s brilliance, shouting “IT’S SIMPLY A GREAT GAME.” Computer & Video Games magazine was more reserved, merely stating that Knight Lore was “great to look at and to play.”
The software houses loved it too. Crash described Knight Lore as “the second most cloned piece of software after Word Star (the first word processor).” Some showed restraint, such as Pete Harrop, then of Gremlin Graphics and now director at Krisalis Software, who remembers how, “we did a few game plans along a similar vein until we realised that what everyone else was doing.” Most, though, threw caution to the wind, ripped Knight Lore’s code apart and gave birth to numerous genetic twins as quickly as possible.

But Knight Lore saved its biggest surprise for four years later, when Tim and Chris Stamper, Ultimate’s directors, revealed to Roger Kean of now-defunct Games Machine magazine, that Knight Lore had been ready for release months earlier. But, anxious to avoid rendering all following games disappointments, the Stamper’s held it back.
That meant that Ultimate had not one but two great games available for Christmas ’84. The second half of its seasonal double-whammy was Underwired, a fairly typical Jet Set Willy-style multi-screen platformer disguised by gorgeous graphics. Being less innovative than its stable-mate, it caused marginally less fuss, but was still a massive hit — as with Knight Lore, the beauty of the game lay in a slickness and arcade-feel that left ‘80s programmers breaking their brains.

After leaving the Spectrum scene, Ultimate metamorphosed into Rare, and began to work exclusively for Nintendo consoles. Today, its GoldenEye, Donkey Kong Racing and Banjo-Kazooie behind it, showing that it hasn’t lost the knack of coxing the maximum potential from its chosen platform.

Knight Lore spearheads Ultimate double-whammy

By 1984 the quite madly monikered Ultimate Play
The Game was held by its peers, magazines and gamers alike in an esteem usually reserved for bearded deities, despite — or perhaps because of — constant hide-and-seek playing with the press and a policy of releasing games at the bank-breaking price of (gasp!) £10. Its wordless, darkly atmospheric one-page advertisements heralded games of such promise, they caused reviewers to gibber “arcade quality” and similar (frankly ludicrous) phrases with gay abandon, creating a mystique and expectation level that has rarely been equaled at any time since.

So, when hints began to be dropped of a new game starring Sabreman, the hero of Sabre Wulf, boasting a never-before-seen graphics engine dubbed “Luminary,” the likes of Spectrum mag Crash got very excited — as did its readers. By the time Knight Lore appeared on the ZX Spectrum, with its jaw-splitting isometric 3D graphics, trampling over anything that had come before, gamers were sending letters to their parents with thanks for conceiving them in time to see it.
The storyline was simple — Sabreman needed to collect potion ingredients to prevent mighty transformations into a hairy werewolf, making the game a sort of precursor to the following year’s

Games of the month

This little lot were the Tomb Raider Ills and Metal Gear Solid’s of 14 years ago...

Daley Thompson’s Decathlon
Publisher: Microgen
System: Spectrum

A cross-country running simulation

Pyjamarama
Publisher: Microgen
System: Spectrum

A twin-screen platformer high-jump collecting concept created by Art Set Willy and extending it with a bit of preset graphics and a complex set of puzzles. Pyjamarama created a star in Willy Week, its hero, Wally went on to feature in a sequel, everyone’s a Wally.

Skool Daze
Publisher: Microgen
System: Spectrum

Now acclaimed as one of the most original and involving games of the '80s, Skool Daze built an entire game around an ordinary school. You played the teacher, whose task was to alter his school report in time for term end. He all remember playing this and writing rudest on the blackboards. Don’t we?
Imagination overload

Television only takes the world of videogames seriously when there's a big pile of money involved. So, in 1984, a BBC film crew travelled to Liverpool to film the phenomenal success of publishing house Imagine. And as soon as the cameras started rolling, everything began to go horribly wrong.

Imagine had shot to fame overnight with its Galaxians clone, Arcadia, but the money from this success was quickly frittered away. Full-page colour magazine ads, huge company expansion, plus Ferraris and BMWs for programmers led the BBC to smell a family of stinking rats.

Before the cameras arrived, the quality of software had begun to drop, with buggy titles such as Ah Diddums and Jankons. This, along with falling deals, prompted a holy cat-fight between the directors of Imagine, Marc Butler, David Law and Ian Metherington.

"Ian wanted to become a millionaire overnight, while Dave was anxious about losing his house," described Bruce Bexis, responsible for the day-to-

to-day running of the company. According to Marc Dawson, ex-Imagine and now Senior Projects Manager at Software Creations, one director resigned the day before the TV cameras arrived and "took us all down the pub to get drunk."

According to Marc, the trouble really started when Imagine signed a reputed multi-million pound deal with famous partwork publishers Marshall Cavendish to produce a brand new line of games. "The company thought it was going to get a game every two weeks," he says, "but it soon became clear that the programmers simply couldn't cope."

In fact, Imagine had other ideas anyway - big ideas. The proposed "megagames", Bandersnatch and Psyklapse, would both come bundled with hardware add-ons, providing essential extra memory and processing power. It was over-ambitious as it sounds. "Bandersnatch was great," explains Marc, "but the add-on was a G64 on the back of your C64." And Psyklapse had the artwork and packaging, but the game was no more than an idea.

With Imagine's overdraft rumoured at £1,000,000, the megagames would never happen. Plans were drawn up to pass its assets and talent to a new software house, but these fell through and Imagine was wound up. The company's name, logo and programmers were bought by publishing house Ocean, who used the label for more minor releases. The rights to Bandersnatch were bought by Sinclair Research for the QL computer, but the game never saw the light of day.

The final act by Imagine was a re-union party in July the following year. A coffin was hired, an "Imagine RIP" plaque placed on top, and programmers laid single roses at the feet of the company's metaphorical corpse.

Music Charts

15th December 1984

1. (1) Do They Know It's Christmas
   Band Aid
2. (1) Last Christmas/Everythings
   Wham!
3. (1) The Power of Love
   Frankie Goes To Hollywood
4. (1) We All Stand Together
   Paul McCartney
5. (1) Like A Virgin
   Madonna

Film Charts

London, 16th Dec

1. (1) Ghostbusters
2. (1) Gremlins
3. (5) The Killing Fields
4. (4) A Private Function
5. (1) Give My Regards to Broad Street

Gaming Round-Up

- Coleco pulled out of the computer market after its disastrous Adam console, sequel to the Colecovision, failed to take off. And that's despite having a Smurfs game. Where's the justice there?
- Publishing house Mastertronic hit a whole load of trouble with its Manic Miner clone Chiller. A certain Mr. Michael Jackson threatened massive legal action unless it did something about the game's music, which was "heavily influenced" by his hit Thriller. Mastertronic, never one to shy away from a fight, completely removed the music from the game and went on to apologise profusely to the monkey-loving singer. Wimps!
- Long-awaited adventure game The Wrath of Magra, first developed by Carwell Software, finally slipped under computer software label Mastertronic, and it was hailed by several magazines as "the worst game of all time." Legend replied by going bust.
- Malan Associates decided to court controversy with a couple of titles based on carnal knowledge.

All Formats

Top 10

1. (2) Ghostbusters
2. (1) Gremlins
3. (5) The Killing Fields
4. (4) A Private Function
5. (1) Give My Regards to Broad Street

Your Spectrum magazine Reader's Top 10

1. (2) Sabre Wulf
2. (1) Daley Thompson's Decathlon
3. (3) Starstrike
4. (4) Elite
5. (5) Raid over Moscow
6. (6) Pyjamarama
7. (4) Elite
8. (5) Match Day
9. (9) Booty
10. (10) Skool Daze

Kung Fu
Publisher: Bug-Byte
System: Commodore 64

The first fighting game on home computers, this was an admirable attempt to emulate the storming success of the time, with absolutely massive characters and a worthy series of moves to pull off. No Miya, though, which is a shame. Or is that kung fu? Bah!

Raid Over Moscow
Publisher: U.S. Gold
System: Commodore 64

Theaved horrendous controversy with its title, requiring you to shout down the real communist heirs. C64 ended up protecting itself outside US govt's offices, and when the Spectrum version was released, it had the far less offensive name, Raid.

Eureka!
Publisher: Dornan
System: Spectrum

The first release from Dornan, Eureka! was an adventure with a difference. It offered a prize of £2,000 to the first person to successfully complete it and ring a phone number marked at the end of the game. The prize was duly won - by a young Stoty boy, would you believe?
Guess who's coming to dinner? Our little Egyptians wonder what's on the menu in Lionhead's first game, Black & White. Read about it in next month's 1999 preview.
Let’s party like it’s 1999
All the new games. All the hot new developments. Plus plenty of opinion, prediction and prejudice. Next issue we have the entire story of the year to come.

Electric Avenue
Fancy buying your own coin-op? We meet the men who have.
Everyone thinks about it, at least occasionally, but few of us ever do it. The idea of having a genuine, real-life arcade machine in yer living room has a universal appeal, but immense practical consequences. Where would you put it? How much noise would it make? How long before one of your family members attacked it with a rolling pin? Next month we talk to four men who’ve — through a combination of rashness, bravery and ignorance — taken the plunge, and chat with the coin-op world’s answer to Quentin Wilson for a complete round-up of what to get, where to get it from and how much to spend. (It’s less than you think!)

Plus!
All the latest games reviewed, plus Coming Soon, Games Night, all your soon-to-be-favourites — and the odd surprise. With luck, we’ll have a free gift for you too.

Arcade 2 on sale Monday, 14 December. Order your copy now.
Great Gaming Moments

Use the Force!

Getting to grips with R-Type’s Force, the ballsiest add-on weapon of them all.

The first computer games I played were on my uncle’s Commodore Pet – moon landing “sims” and one where subs torpedoed ships that chugged erratically across the screen. This would have been 1982 or ‘83. The first computer I ever owned was a Speccy 128K+2. And the first proper job I ever had was as staff writer on Computer & Video Games, Britain’s first games magazine. It was early 1988 and we wrote on typewriters, but in the games room lurked every kind of games machine imaginable. It was like walking into an arcade – and it was there that I came across the PC Engine version of R-Type.

To a kid who’d only ever owned a Speccy it was all amazing. There was a Nintendo, where I discovered Super Mario Brothers.

The new Commodore Amiga and Atari ST were impressive, too. Favourite shoots-‘em-ups: the shoot-‘em-up Sidewinder and the Bitmap Brothers’ Speedball. But the best toy in the shop was that small, grey chunk of plastic from Japan: NEC’s fabulous PC Engine.

If you didn’t already know, the PC Engine was one of the great missed opportunities of gaming – tiny and powerful (the graphics were all Amiga quality or better), yet never officially imported into this country. And in R-Type, its best game, it owned one of the greatest shoots-‘em-ups ever created for a home system. Sure, Irem’s coin-op quickly found its way on to virtually every games system going, but for those who saw it, the PC Engine version was the best – one of the very few coin-op conversions that ever lived up to the description “arcade perfect”. It was as near as dammit a ’1’ port.

And what a coin-op. R-Type wasn’t just stylish, it was also brilliantly designed. All the levels were distinctive and original, the boss characters gigantic and ingenious, and the power-ups simply perfect. R-Type took the extensive extra-weapon system introduced in games like Gradius and vastly improved it. Your basic R-9 ship came armed with a standard shot that could be charged for a high-powered burst if you held on to the fire button for an extra second or two – a great weapon in its own right – but once you’d blasted a few bonus droids (spherical R2-D2s that hopped across the screen) things really started to motor. It was then you earned the Force – a floating ball about half the size of your ship that could be clamped to the front or back to boost firepower and act as an impregnable shield. Alternatively it could be left to tag around after you like some loyal sheepdog, blasting bad guys as it went – and it was a simply perfect weapon. Speed-ups, extra weapon power-ups (including the great rear-shots, bouncing lasers and so on) and power boosts for your existing arsenal added to the fun, but it was that very first introduction of the Force – and your almost immediate realisation that it was simply the best shoot-‘em-up weapon you’d ever seen – that gets my nomination as a Great Gaming Moment.

It could be left to tag around like some loyal sheepdog, blasting bad guys as it went.

Wanna play?

■ You can easily play the classic R-Type on your PlayStation today. Virgin’s R-Type has both the original game and its even harder and prettier sequel R-Type II on one disc – a rather good deal when you think that the original PC Engine version only included the first half of the coin-op (you had to buy the second lot of levels separately). With a bit of digging you can get hold of a version of R-Type for just about any system – there’s even one for Nintendo’s Game Boy, and it’s surprisingly decent.

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