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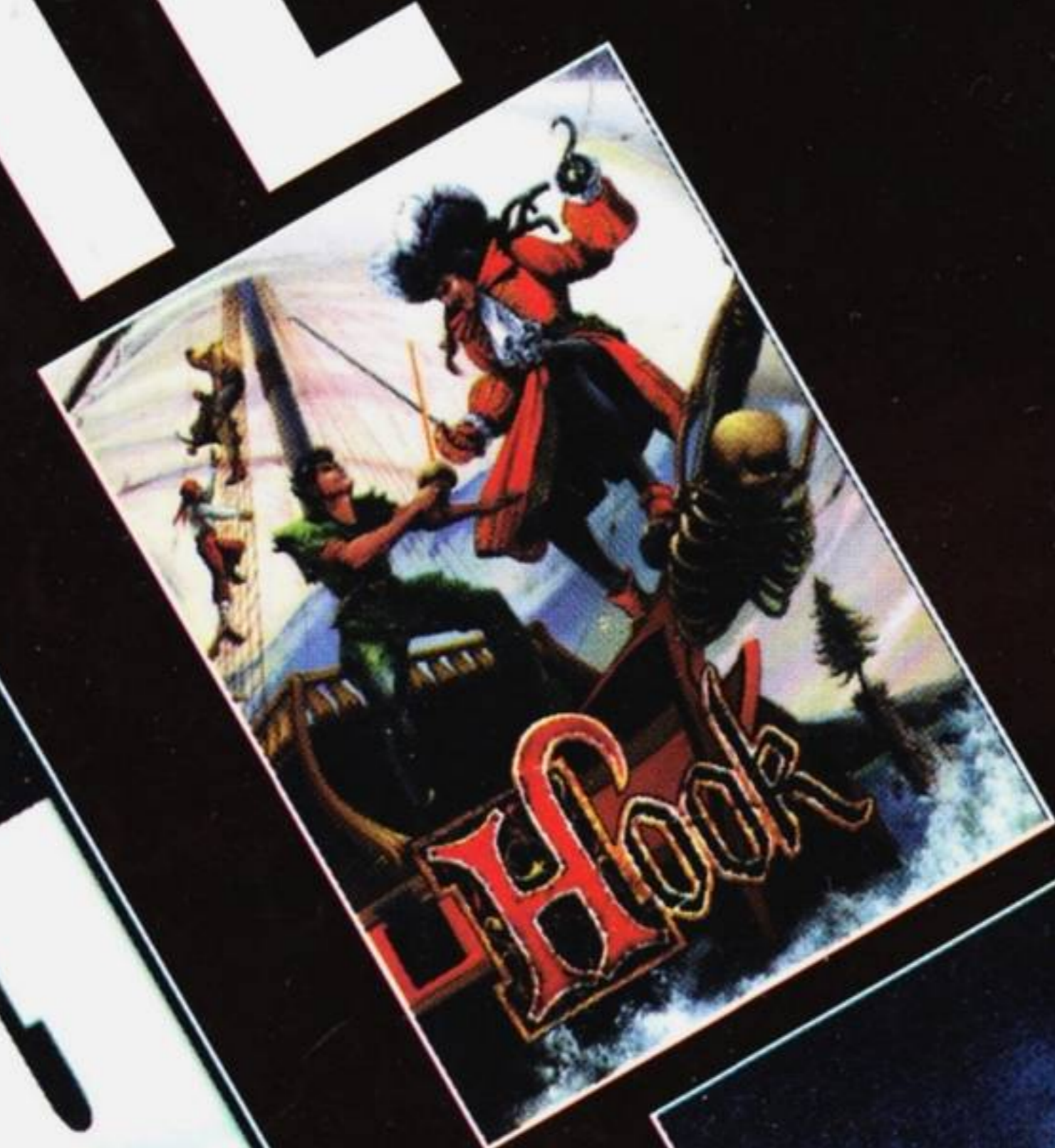
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Outlander	89 59 30	Tokai	69 49 20
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Pitfighter	109 59 30	Universal Soldier	89 69 37
Populous II	109	Valis III	56 27
Power Challenge	99	Virtual Pinball	Soon
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NHLPA Hockey '93	109 69 40	WWF Wrestlemania	99 62 33
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hype it up

The first issue of **HYPER** certainly hit the streets with a **bang**. We've been kept busy reading the (literally) thousands of reader's surveys that came pouring in. Unfortunately (in one sense) most of you couldn't find anything wrong with the magazine, but there have been some great suggestions and we will be using some of the best ideas in future issues.

What the reader's surveys did confirm though, was that **you liked our feature articles** and **unbiased reviewing** of games on all systems. But above all, **HYPER** readers wanted to be treated **intelligently**, and that's what this magazine is all about. This is not a kid's magazine (even though some have called it that), as **computer and video games** are now a major source of entertainment for people of all ages (after all, what's worth watching on TV these days - **Ren & Stimpy** excepted, of course), and that wide readership has been reflected in the surveys.

You also made it clear that you wanted to be **first** with the **latest**, and we're giving it to you again with another **stinking hot** issue. As you may have guessed from our cover star, **Sonic the Hedgehog is back!** You'll find reviews of both **Sonic Spinball** and the long-awaited **Sonic CD** inside. But don't despair **Super Nintendo** owners, you've got a treat too, as we take a long, hard look at the superb **Super Empire Strikes Back**. Of course PC users are not forgotten and we **Return to Zork** for a look at what is probably the closest to an interactive movie yet produced. In our **soccer special** we compare some of the flood of "real football" games that will be appearing in coming months. Other hot games inside are the tripped-out **Toe Jam and Earl**, the **SNES** version of **Jurassic Park** and the manic blasting fun of **Gunstar Heroes**. Check them out.

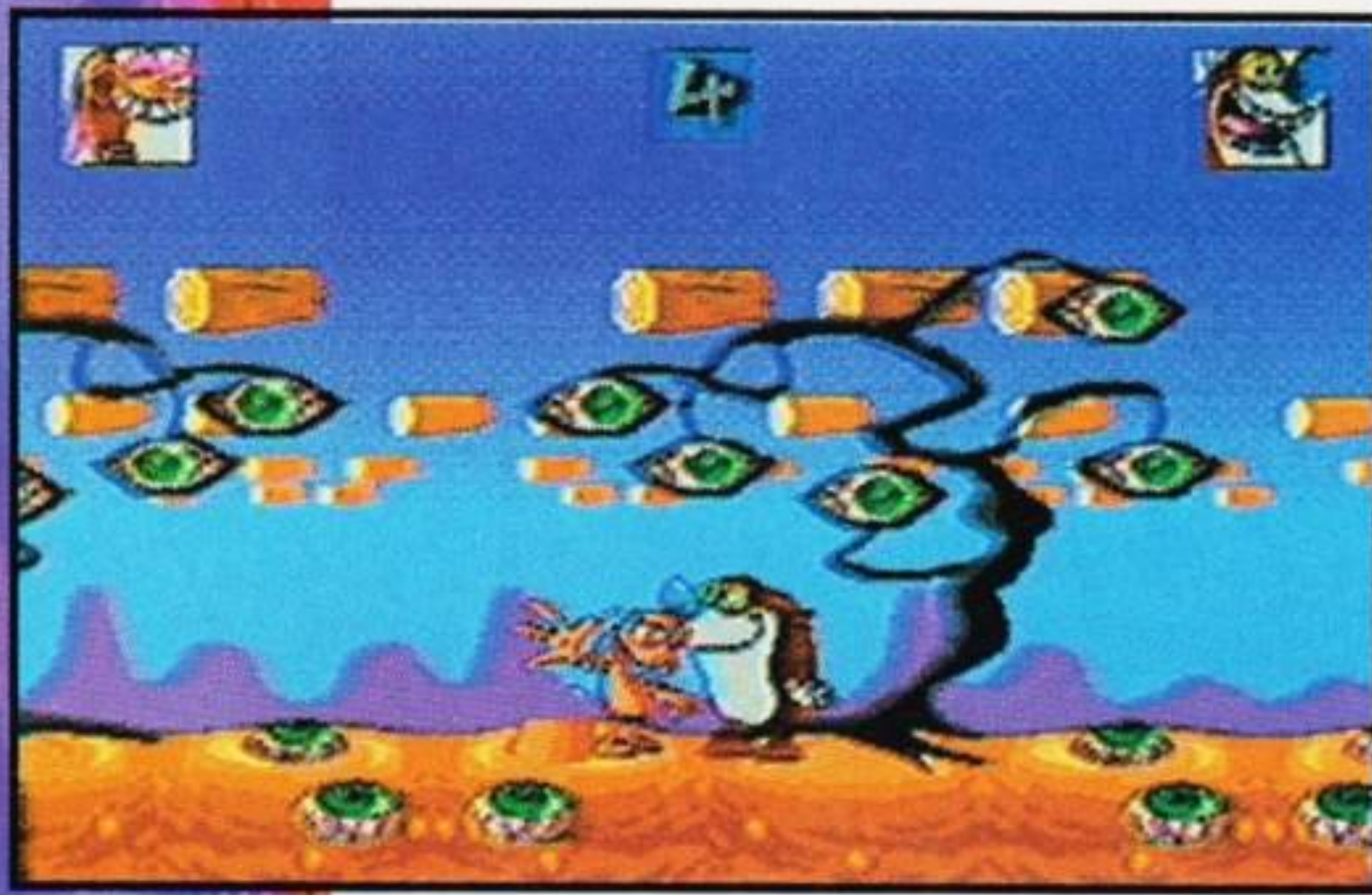
Keeping with our

Australian focus (after all, if you wanted an English mag you'd live in England), we've got a couple of articles about young Australians who are taking on the world in techno fields. **Laser Beam** software is this county's leading software developers and chances are most of you would have played some of their games without realising that they were local productions. We take a look at the Melbourne based company and their latest title, the very tasty **Shadowrun**. In the electronic music field, **Volition** is the small Australian record label leading the way with their stable of up-and-coming techno acts. We talk to some of the bands about creating electronic music and the struggle to get it heard in Australia.

But that's far too much from me, so jack into **HYPER**, and don't forget that we're now monthly so look for us around the 20th of each month (or better still, subscribe!).

Stuart [editor]

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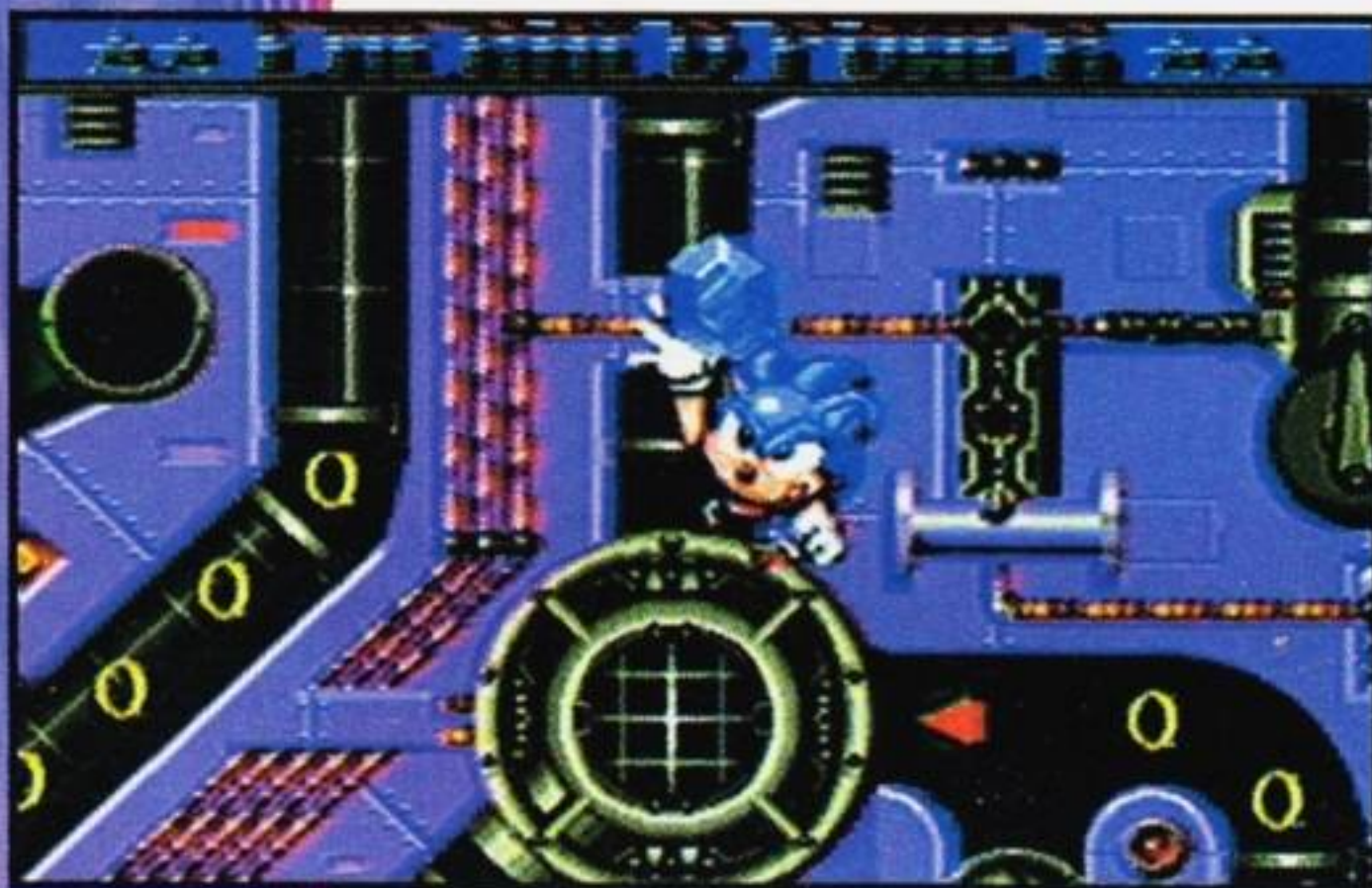


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Thanks to all the readers who wrote in asking if we are going to have a letters page. Well, yes we are, but we couldn't have one in the first issue because (surprise, surprise) we didn't have any letters! But that situation has already changed and we've been flooded with correspondence. So if you want to get your very important concerns to the Ed's attention, keep the letters brief, sharp and (relatively) sensible. After all, the Ed has problems figuring out a Noughts and Crosses game let alone complicated reader's questions.

**Write to:
HYPER Letters
PO Box 634
Strawberry Hills NSW 2012**

Letters...

Chunners the Mighty

Dear Hyper crew,

My eye was caught by the mighty Chun Li on your cover. At first I thought your mag was another overseas publication, God knows there's enough of them, so it was most refreshing to see that you were from Australia. Upon flicking through the pages I liked what I saw.

Having now read the mag from cover to cover I can safely say that you guys are on a winner here. It was good to see honest, unbiased reviews of games. Games are anything but cheap these days so it's great to have an Australian perspective on what to buy and what to avoid. There is nothing worse than forking out over \$100 for what proves to be garbage. I really like the way you compare games that are released for both the console systems. Being fortunate enough to own a SNES, Mega Drive and a PC, I sometimes struggle to decide which is the best version of a game to buy.

Your articles on the 3DO system (can't wait for that one!) and the Virtual Sex phenomenon were both enjoyable and informative. (The latter article proved to me that you won't be just a kiddies magazine! I mean there are thousands of us over the age of 25 who love and immensely enjoy this industry and hobby! At last a magazine that won't treat it's readers a prepubescent, spotty faced dweebs!)

In closing I'd like to wish you nothing but success in the coming issues. Being your first issue there is still room for improvement which I'm sure you'll capitalise on.

Good luck and all the best!

John Raptis
Chadstone Vic

Thanks John, and you're right, we're not a kid's magazine, because games are definitely not kid's stuff any more (if they ever were). We hope game players of all ages will be able to jack into our HYPER universe and download something useful.

Lifetime Subscriber

Dear Hyper People,

I just had to write to you guys about what an amazing job you have done with this mag. It is totally great. I recognise your names from the late Megazone line-up and I think it's awesome that you're all back on the job again.

Congratulations! It's also great that you have stayed with some of the best section ideas (movies, music etc). What makes it a good mag is that it covers a huge range of material. If you keep it up, you can consider me a lifetime subscriber.

When I saw Hyper on the shelf, I flicked through it and I saw something that I couldn't stop thanking you for if I thanked you till Streetfighter II is removed from the arcades (that won't be anytime soon!). You see I'm one of these socially unacceptable psycho's who likes their Kombat accompanied by the splattering of blood and the tearing of a spine (Sub-zero rules). When I saw the cheat for the blood in Mortal Kombat, you can probably guess how happy I was. Anyway, after all the praise I have heaped on you, I was wondering if you could answer a question for me? When is Landstalker being released? Keep up the good work.

Thanks
Josh Hobbs
Algester QLD

So much praise, I hope it doesn't go to my head. Anyway Josh, Landstalker should be on the shelves and if it isn't give Sega a ring and tell them to hurry up.

Constructive Criticisms

To everyone at Hyper

I've just read your first issue and I think its got what it takes to make a hot mag. I've been reading mags like C+VG, Super Play, Super Action, Gamepro etc for five years and I find your mag has heaps of potential. It's a million times better than the new Megazone because you guys give an honest and balanced view between Sega and Nintendo. Just because I own a SNES doesn't mean I'm anti-Sega. I like reading about both consoles, more people should be like me and be fair to both consoles.

I don't mind music and movie sections in mags but my opinion is that these section don't sit naturally in a games magazine. Of course I'm only one person in a crowd of readers who have varying opinions, which I respect. If music and movies is what your readers want then give it to them.

I really hate 0055 competitions too. Please have mail in comps for us poor people that can't afford 0055 numbers. PLEASE! I can't beg much more than that. I really liked the Virtual Reality report and I think you handle your reviews very professionally. I look forward to reading future issues of Hyper. Good luck.

Yours sincerely
Jeremy Greening
Wurtulla QLD

We have had varied responses to the music and movies section, but most people like to be informed of what else is new and happening outside the game world. As for 0055, there is a maximum cost of 50 cents for our competition, so that probably works out cheaper and easier than sending a letter.



This very impressive bumble-bee was created by HYPER reader Ian Kraus (with some help from Lisa Cainero) on Macintosh computer. He whipped it up on an LCIII, using Photoshop 2.5, with the honeycomb background rendered in Stratavision. HYPER will be publishing the best

of our reader's computer art, so if you're a bit of a cyberpunk Picasso send in your PC, Amiga or Mac disc and you might see your masterpiece in these very pages in a future issue. Send your creation to HYPER Art, PO Box 634, Strawberry Hills NSW 2012. If you want to contact Ian page him on 214 4269.

Game Players are Normal Human Beings

Dear Hyper

In a time where the issue of 'violent computer games poisoning children's minds' is rife, one is drawn to the conclusion that many of the game playing public are putting this label upon themselves. I shall explain . . .

Almost every month in games magazines, there are letters which complain about the lack of space dedicated to reviews and/or previews. However, if you actually break down these letters into two categories: constructive criticism/questions, and mindless dribble, you will find that the latter is what makes up the majority.

Us games players should be showing the public that we are normal mature human beings who simply enjoy playing computer games for entertainment just as someone else might read a book or play a sport. It would be fair to say that books or movies can contain much more violence than your average computer game.

But apart from continually threatening violence, many people can't write a serious letter without trying to convince the readership that they are Confucious or a She-Dolphin from the planet Mars.

All I can say is, please readers, don't drag a quality magazine such as Hyper down to a level much less than it deserves. There are people out there with an I.Q over 10 who have something important to say.

Post Script:

1. Praise: Not that I agree with the way many people spend half of their letters saying how much they love the magazine, but hey, when in Rome... Congratulations on the first issue of Hyper, you've brought truth to the saying that there is life after Megazone. (What do you mean there is no such saying!?)

David Rogerson

Warnbro WA

Thanks David, and I would have to agree with everything you've said. It would be great to get sensible letters of praise and criticism, as well as comments and views on the industry and game playing as a way of life., rather than mindless drivel. How about it?

Soccer Questions

To Hyper

Congratulations on a great Mag. It's good to see another Australian Video game magazine out on the market. Keep up the good work! Also, could you please answer the following questions. When in Sensible Soccer being released for the Mega Drive? Also, when is EA's Soccer Game being released, again for the Sega?

Once again great work!

D Nopper

Moi VIC

Both Sensible Soccer and EA Soccer (now known as FIFA International Soccer) should be out now. Check our soccer round-up for a comparative review.

Joy! An Australian Magazine

Dear Hyper

I was looking through the newsstands looking for the latest copy of NMS when I spied Chun Li peering up at me from behind a Superman comic. Then I saw the words 'Australian' and 'Magazine' in the same sentence! Joy! I was once an avid reader of Megazone (good on ya Stuart) and then NMS, but Hyper is just unbelievable! For one, the screenshots are nice and clear, the layouts neat and clean and the reviews are H-O-T! And for \$4.95! My God, how do you do it? Anyway, enough of being nice (bum-licking is such an ugly word), I've got some questions for your superior intellect:

- 1: When's the 3DO coming out (officially) and how much will it cost?
2. How much will the games cost? In particular, the awesome Road Rash?
3. Will Mortal Kombat or Streetfighter II come out on 3DO?
4. Is the 32-Bit Amiga better than the 3DO?

Joshua Edge

Master of the SNES!

That almost sounded like one of our press releases that we forgot to release, so I thank you for that. The 3DO will be out in March/April next year and will cost between \$1000-\$1500. I have no idea what the games will cost at this stage, or if Mortal Kombat or SFII will be released (I would say so). And no, the CD32 isn't better, but it is comparable, cheaper and available now, so the decision is yours.

Unbiased Slag Offs

Dear Ed,

Congratulations on your first edition, very impressive, in fact I had to read the cover twice to check it wasn't an imported mag. Your news on 3DO, the Amiga CD 32 and virtual reality were great but how about some info on the Atari 64 bit Jaguar. The Mortal Kombat and Street Fighter II reviews were excellent and I like the way you are not biased towards the SNES or the Mega Drive unlike the other two Australian mags. It's also good to see the way you slag off crap games.

Perfect timing with your reviews on Mortal Kombat and Virtual Sex. Just as the media were bagging sex and violence in video games, you bring out articles supporting them. Lets face it, Mortal Kombat without the gore is like Cornflakes without milk.

Well done to all your staff, your only problem now is how to follow up such a great first issue?

Harry Steel

Lockleys SA

Thanks for that, and you're in luck because we have another great

issue and a big news piece on the Atari Jaguar . But we're not necessarily supporting sex and violence in video games, just objectively covering an issue that has been treated far too hysterically by the ill-informed mainstream media and politicians.

A Psychic Reader

Dear Hyper

Just thought I'd slip a little note in to commend you on a fine effort. Apart from a few tiny niggles, your first issue was brilliant. So far all of the Aussie game mags haven't lived up to expectation, and yours is the first to even come close to good.

But include more comic stuff. Here's an idea for next issue: a special on Laser Beam (you know, Aussie game publisher). Keep up the good job!

Yours sincerely

David Quinn

You read my mind. There's a special on Laser Beam inside.

Two of Australia's best young bands, Caligula and You Am I, being the big game heads that they are, called into the HYPER offices recently for an impromptu gaming session. The office was soon a gigantic lounge room as the boys tried to finish each other in *Mortal Kombat*. But these guys are all sensitive and new age, so soon the blood

Mega Drive. John Madden Football is another favourite. Tim Rogers from You Am I is a proud new Mega Drive owner and agreed with the choice of John Madden Football as one of the best games around.

You Am I are famous for taking the Mega Drive everywhere they go, and spend a lot of time with it when on tour. They are now



Battle of the Bands You Am I vs Caligula

was left behind and the *Dragon's Fury* pinball challenge began. In between rounds we managed to get some words out them.

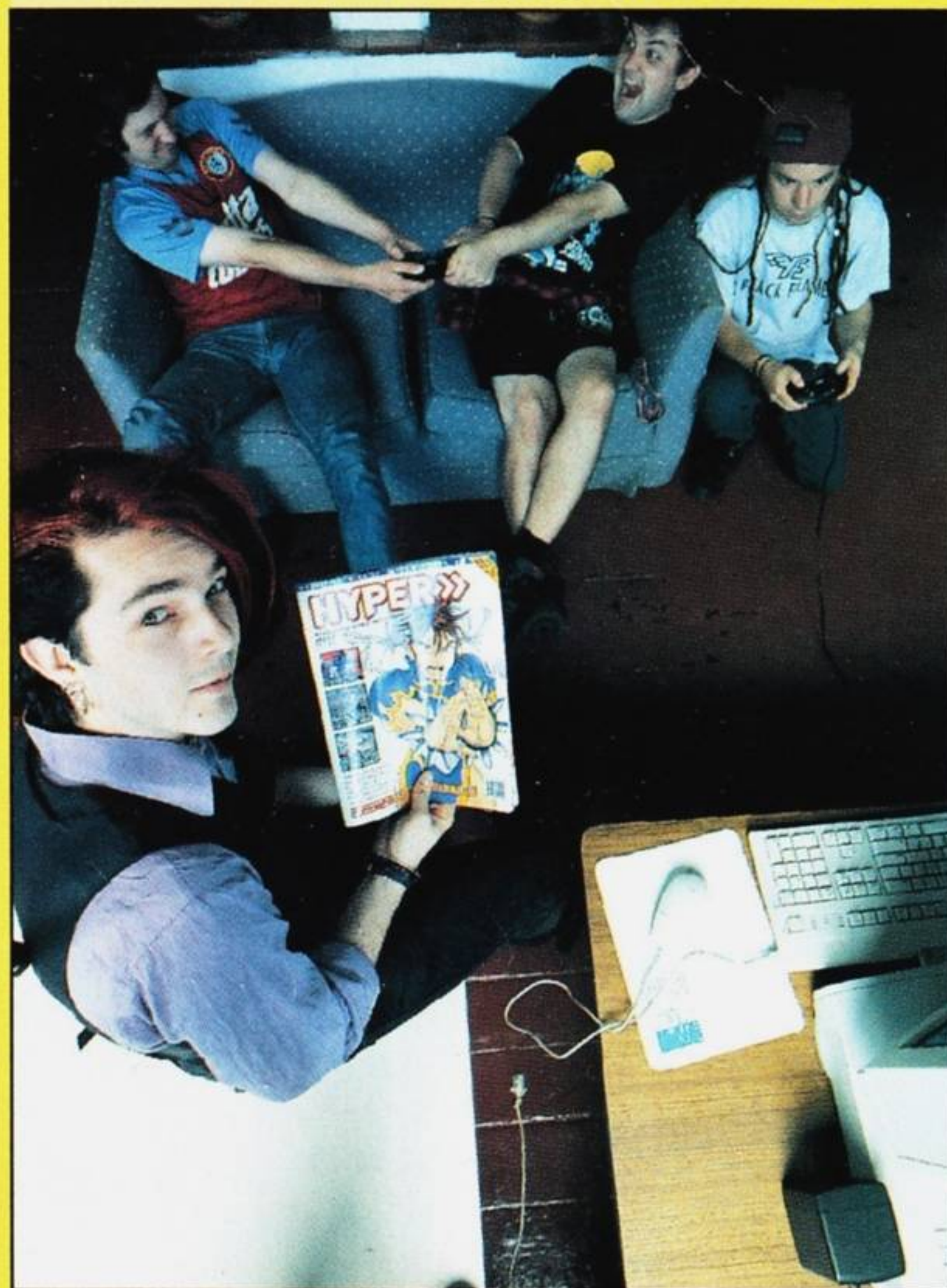
Sean from Caligula had a Mega Drive but it was recently stolen or lost (he's not sure). Before that tragedy he owned Sonic, Road Rash, Quackshot, Mickey Mouse and Castle of Illusion, Truxton and "that beast thing" (its name is not to be mentioned in this magazine).

He's very interested in recording a game soundtrack because "there's just something lacking with the music. It always sound really dorky. You need something to supplement the game, to match the level of excitement. When you're playing a good game you're going off, and you need the music to match that feeling."

Ashley from Caligula is an easily pleased game-head. Besides liking any game with digitised images, likes old Atari ST games because they're cheaper and easier.

Russell from You Am I says his favourite game is Road Rash "because of the violence". He also gets into role-playing games, but complained about the lack of decent ones for the

Caligula and You Am I going off in the Battle of the Bands.



thinking of getting Game Gears so they can play while travelling as well.

If you want to hear what sort of music these guys play, look out for You Am I's great new CD, "Sound As Ever" (reviewed at the back) and Caligula's EP "Tears of a Clown". Caligula should have their debut album out early '94, and both bands are regular names on the live circuit, so check them out.

Street Fighter II ^{Victorian} Competition

Over the weekend of the 5th to 7th November, at the Entertainment Centre in Melbourne video heads congregated for the Street Fighter II showdown to determine the Victorian SFII champion. The competition was fast and furious, as 1000 plus entrants battled it out for the coveted video game title.

There was quite a mixture of characters chosen by contestants, although the weight of numbers favoured a Ken or Ryu victory. The joy-pad skills were quite

astounding, and the eventual winner Chris Brooks, who used Ryu to dominate the playfield, certainly made those hours of joy-pad callous inducing play pay off, when he walked away (or should I say rode away in a Limousine) from the Entertainment Centre with his own SFII The New Challengers Arcade machine! The competition is being put on the road and is hopefully heading for Sydney in early 1994. So NSW SFII addicts, y'all better start training now!



A Vision in Joypads Continual Killer Combos

If you want to reduce eye strain and stand 15 feet away from the telly, the new Vision infra-red joy-

pads for Mega Drive and Super NES are for you. These pads have got all the features (like turbo fire and slow motion) and they actually seem to work pretty well. In fact, we used them

to review some of the games in this very issue, and they have the much sought after official HYPER seal of approval. The receiver looks like a groovy little spaceship too and you could always do with a spare suction cup, couldn't you?



Is there any one out there in SNES or Mega Drive land who enjoys a "sure thing"? Well now that we have your attention, Metro Games have released a joypad for SFII and other combat cart addicts, which has all of the special moves programmed in. "Shoryuken" was never so easy! The SN (SNES) and SG (Genesis) Propads also feature a storable memory function so that you can input and save combinations from other games that have special moves, such as the grisly Mortal Kombat. An unfair advantage is just a touch of a button away!

The Propads are fairly effective in reproducing the special moves, although occasionally the real time save is a little bit of a hassle, because the speed that you put the special move in the memory is the speed that the move will be replayed at, so you still have to be good and quick at the move once. But having done it right once, you can then annihilate away to your hearts content. The Propads are distributed Australia wide, and if you can call the Game Squad (03) 882-7828 you need more information.

Classified Information



Even as we speak, some busy little boffin in Canberra is drafting legislation for the classification and regulation of all video and computer games. At a Sydney meeting on the 4th of November, Censorship Ministers from all States agreed on guidelines for a uniform national scheme.

Once it's in place, all games which are sold or hired for home use will be placed in age categories and labelled with consumer advice. Arcade games will also be classified and labelled for appropriate age groups. The classifications, which are based on the categories for film and

video, will be as follows:

G - for general audiences, recommended for all ages.

G8 - recommended for children 8 years and over.

M - for mature audiences, recommended for those 15 and over.

MA - restricted to those aged 15 and over; not available in arcades.

R - restricted to those 18 years and over.

X - restricted to those aged 18 years and over.

X-rated games (and there's X-rated CD-ROM stuff around already), just like X-rated videos, will probably be banned everywhere bar the

Northern Territory and the ACT. So it looks like a healthy mail order porn market will flourish.

Classification will be carried out by the Office of Film and Literature Classification and will rely heavily on industry assistance. Distributors will submit all games, along with a video of the game in action and a suggested classification for each of them.

So what's it mean to the games player? Not as much as you might think. It's certainly nothing to panic about. Andrew Humphreys (HYPER assistant ed and man about town) was at the Sydney meeting, demonstrating *Night Trap* to the Ministers and having a yarn to the people from the Classification



Office. They're reasonable people who think about what they do and care about what they do. Video games might be new to them, but they're struggling bravely to come to terms with the technology. Contrary to what the newspapers would have you believe, they're not about to ban games for the hell of it. The real down side is that, because the classification process will take a bit of time, games may take a little longer to hit the shelves. We'll just have to wait and see.



THE BEAT FROM THE DANCE DEPARTMENT '93

'High - A Dance Compilation'

Essential 20 track dance compilation album featuring the cream of Australian dance - Boxcar, Severed Heads, Vision Four 5, Itch-e & Scratch-e, South End, Single Gun Theory and many more!! Includes the single "Rave The Brave" by The Celtic Kings Of Rock (also available on 12") and the forthcoming single "Steppin' On" by Sexing The Cherry remixed by Robert Racic. Voltcd/c88

'Texture' - Vision Four 5

Acclaimed debut album from multimedia duo that explores the gamut of dance music from hardcore to ambience and all areas in between. "If this is the future of electronic music, it's looking very bright indeed" ★★ ★★ *Rolling Stone*. "Fluidly concise, it's excellent" ★★ ★ *Juice*. Includes the single "Ritual Of Love" (now available on 12" featuring extended remixes). Forget Belgium, Vision Four 5 are leading the way in the euro-dance stakes. Watch out for the new 12" single release featuring further club remixes from 'Texture'. Voltcd/c81

'Fanatical' - South End

Debut 6-track mini-album full of power-pumping bpm's from the Sydney based four-piece. Pop to the max at a special introductory *Fanatical* price. Favourites of numerous raves and dance parties, this band are the biz. "Probably the best live rave band in Australia" *Drum Media*. Just released is the new 12" single featuring *Fanatical* remixes of "Get Down! (Cos I'm In Love)" and "Take Me Up" by Sydney DJ's Paul Holden and Abel plus "600 Miles from Nowhere" remixed by labelmates Vision Four 5. Voltcd/c74

"Universal Hymn" - Boxcar

The great new single from the forthcoming album 'Algorhythm'. Four pulsating punchy mixes - two courtesy of top U.K. remixer Justin Robertson (aka Lion Rock) - further proof of the band's international standing with remixers far and wide. Already a club hit in the U.K., the track has also claimed rave reviews in the press there, including a 4 out of 5 rating in the dance bible *Mixmag*. "Universal Hymn" has also got the thumbs up from renowned U.K. DJ Paul Oakenfold who has been featuring it during his set on the U2 "Zooropa" tour. 12" single includes two additional Robertson remixes. Voltcd/c65

'Itch-e Kitch-e Koo' - Itch-e & Scratch-e

The brilliant debut album and long awaited follow up to the 'Irritable' mini-album. Already the faves of international DJ's (and worthy of it!) this new release is outstanding for its innovative sounds and challenging direction. 'Itch-e Kitch-e Koo' is simply stunning. The Future Sound Of...The World!! 12" single available soon. Voltcd/c76

LEADING THE REVOLUTIONS



SECOND NATURE



Vision



SONY MUSIC

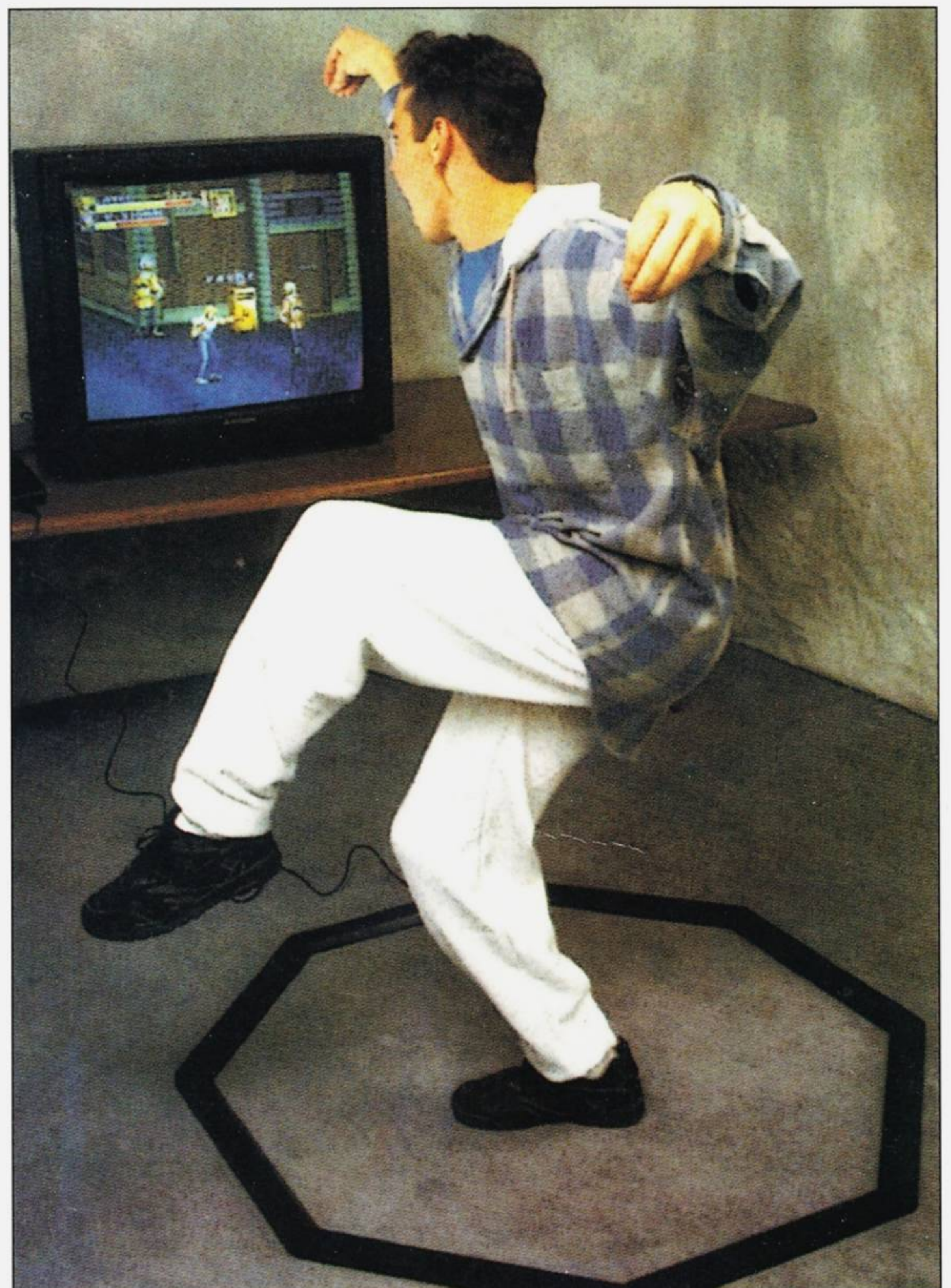
Aⁿ Activated Christmas?

No news on an Australian release date just yet, but Sega's Activator control system will be available in the US this Christmas at \$80 (US). The Activator is made up of eight panels that connect together into an octagonal frame that sits on your floor and plugs into your Mega Drive's control port. The idea is that you stand in the middle of the Activator and control the game by breaking the invisible infra-red beams that shoot up from the frame with arm and leg movements. Each panel corresponds to a direction or fire button on a standard controller.

Sega claim that the Activator works best with fighting games like *Mortal Kombat* and *Streetfighter II* and that it's compatible with most older titles too. Imagine, just by swinging your arms like a madman you can *Dragon Punch* to your

heart's content - or at least until you're out of breath.

The Activator is all part of getting players more involved with the games they play. You kick, your character on screen kicks - that sort of thing. It may be a small step towards "Virtual Reality" (a very, very small step), but we suspect that the Activator will probably go the way of Nintendo's "Power Glove" for the NES - ie, it will fail dismally. Why? For a start it's got "GIMMICK" written all over it in big red letters. But most of all, even if the thing works like a dream, it's all just a bit too dicky and a lot too physical for hard-core gamers to even bother with it. I mean, we play games to *avoid* exercise, don't we? And who, even in the privacy of their own lounge room, wants to look as stupid as the fool in the picture?



This wanker's obviously seen *The Karate Kid* once too often for his own good. Do you really want people laughing at you?



Atari's Jaguar Comes Out of the Closet

Once upon a time, Atari - not Nintendo, not Sega, and certainly not 3DO - were the giants of console gaming. If you didn't have an Atari 2600 you were nobody. Atari want to be big players again, and they're making a strong comeback with their new machine - the 64-bit Jaguar super-console.

The butchly-named Jaguar - which Atari prefer to think of as an "Interactive Multimedia System", not a console - will be test marketed in New York and San Francisco in time for Christmas and launched across the States and Europe (and hopefully, Australia too) in the first quarter of 1994. And the target price? A measly \$200 (US). Atari's President, Sam Tramiel, is confident his company can take on all comers: "We believe that we have taken a more substantial jump than 3DO has in bringing a better and more affordable entertainment experience to the consumer market". Hmmm.

Stick-on Bits

The Jaguar is a cartridge based system (uncompressed, the cart capacity is 48 megs; it can hit 400 megs when compressed), but a CD add-on should also be available later in 1994. The CD module, which will also be compatible with audio CD, Karaoke CD (wow!), CD+G, and Kodak's Photo CD, is expected to

cost around \$250-\$300 (US). When the standard becomes available, Atari also plans to release a plug-in MPEG 2 (Motion Picture Experts Group) cartridge to allow the machine to play full length movies on CD.

Like the 3DO, the Jaguar is based on multiprocessor architecture. At its heart is a 68000 CPU (the same chip the Mega Drive uses), but it's got four other custom chips to kick it along: a graphics processor for 3D objects, another object processor, a blitter chip (to speed up the screen display), and a special DSP chip dedicated to audio. The Atari boys claim this little chip produces CD quality sound.

Big Boys Toys

Atari have been busy little corporate beavers. To ensure the Jaguar has every chance of success, they have struck up a couple of deals with industry big boys. The first, with Time Warner, gives Atari and their third party licensed publishers access to a huge library of video clips for game development.

The second, with ailing (but still quite large) computer nerds IBM, is more significant. Atari have contracted IBM to manufacture, package, and distribute the Jaguar. IBM will also be responsible for component sourcing and quality testing. It's an important deal for IBM too - the Jaguar will be

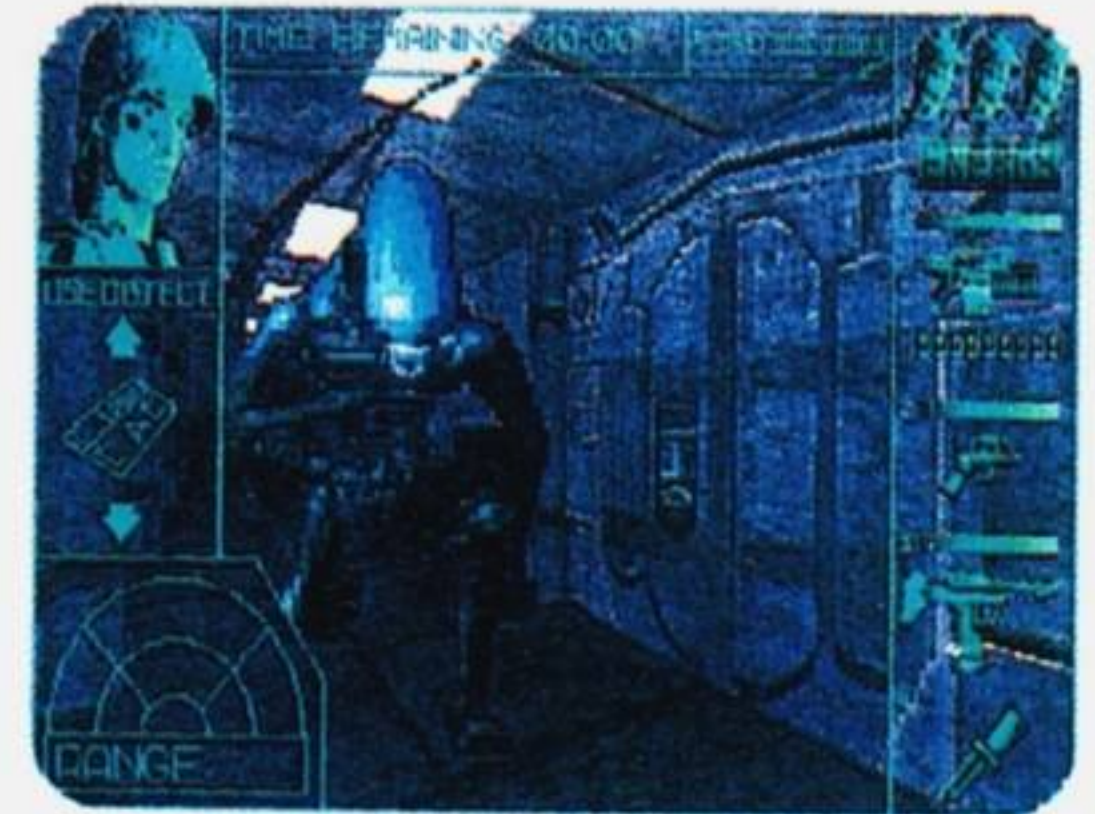
one of their first entries into mass consumer electronics manufacturing. The 30 month contract is valued at \$500 million (US).

What About the Games?

It doesn't matter how good a system looks on paper (and the Tech Box will show you how impressive the Jag is), without good quality games, it hasn't got a hope. Third party licensees are very important. 3DO have already lined up hundreds of the buggers; Atari have "less than 20", and this will probably be the Jaguar's biggest problem.

Adventures, Alien vs Predator and The Humans which will be retitled *Evolution: Dino Dudes*.

As we said last issue, the high-end console market looks set to be a real war over the next couple of years, so stay tuned to HYPER to get the inside info on who's winning and who's not, and more importantly, who's got the best games for you to play.



Anyway, at least 10 games (priced in the \$50-\$80 range) should be available when the machine is launched. There's three shooters - *Crescent Galaxy*, *Cybermorph*, and *Raiden* - two racing games - *Club Drive* and *Chequered Flag* - a beat em up called *Kasumi Ninja*, something called *Tempest 2000* and conversions of *Tiny Toon*



System	Jaguar	3DO	SNES	Mega Drive
System Architecture (Bus Width)	64-bit, with a high-speed, 106.4 megabytes per second 64-bit data path.	32-bit, with a bandwidth of 50 megabytes per second	16-bit	16-bit
Rendering/Animation Speed	Greater than 850 Million Pixels/Second	Maximum 64 Million Pixels/Second	Not available	Not available
On Screen Colours	16.7 Million	16.7 Million	256	64
Resolution	720x576	640x480	512x448	320x224

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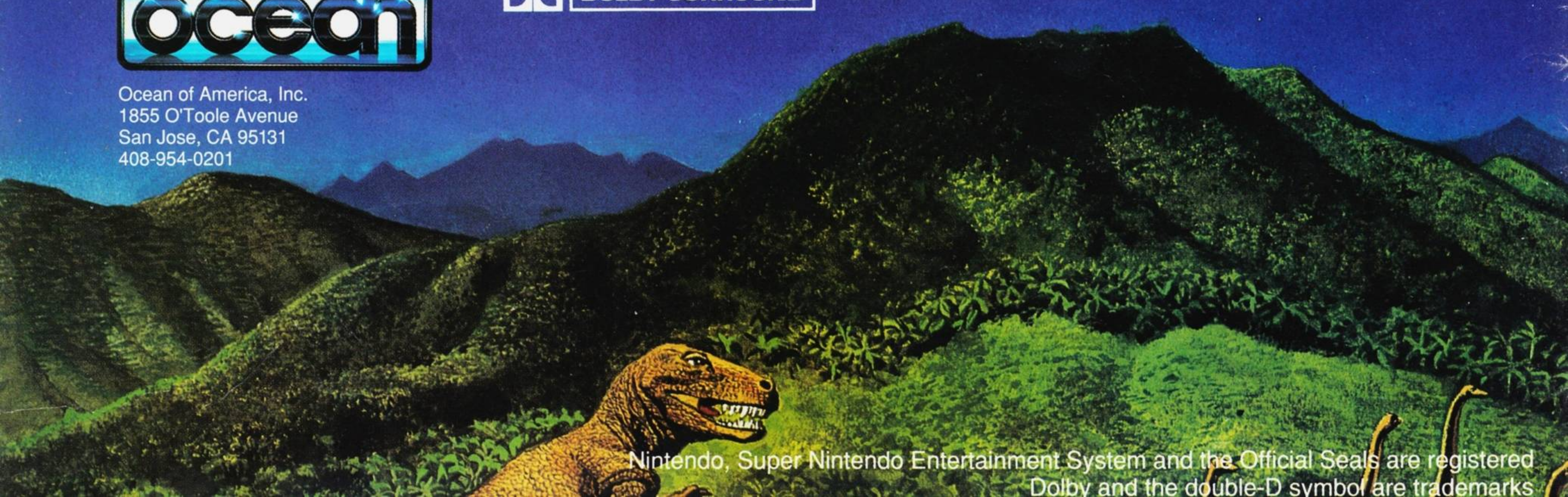
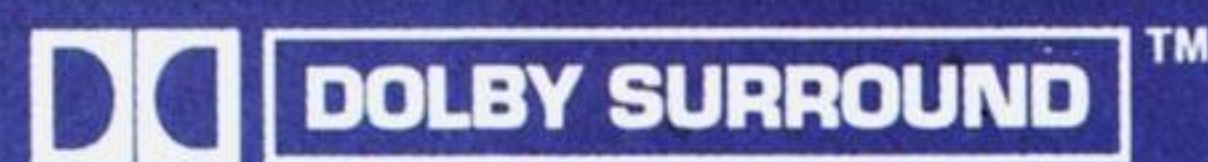
**This is first-person,
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action like
you've never
experienced
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**If the movie shook you, Jurassic Park
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ADVENTURE OF ALL TIME...



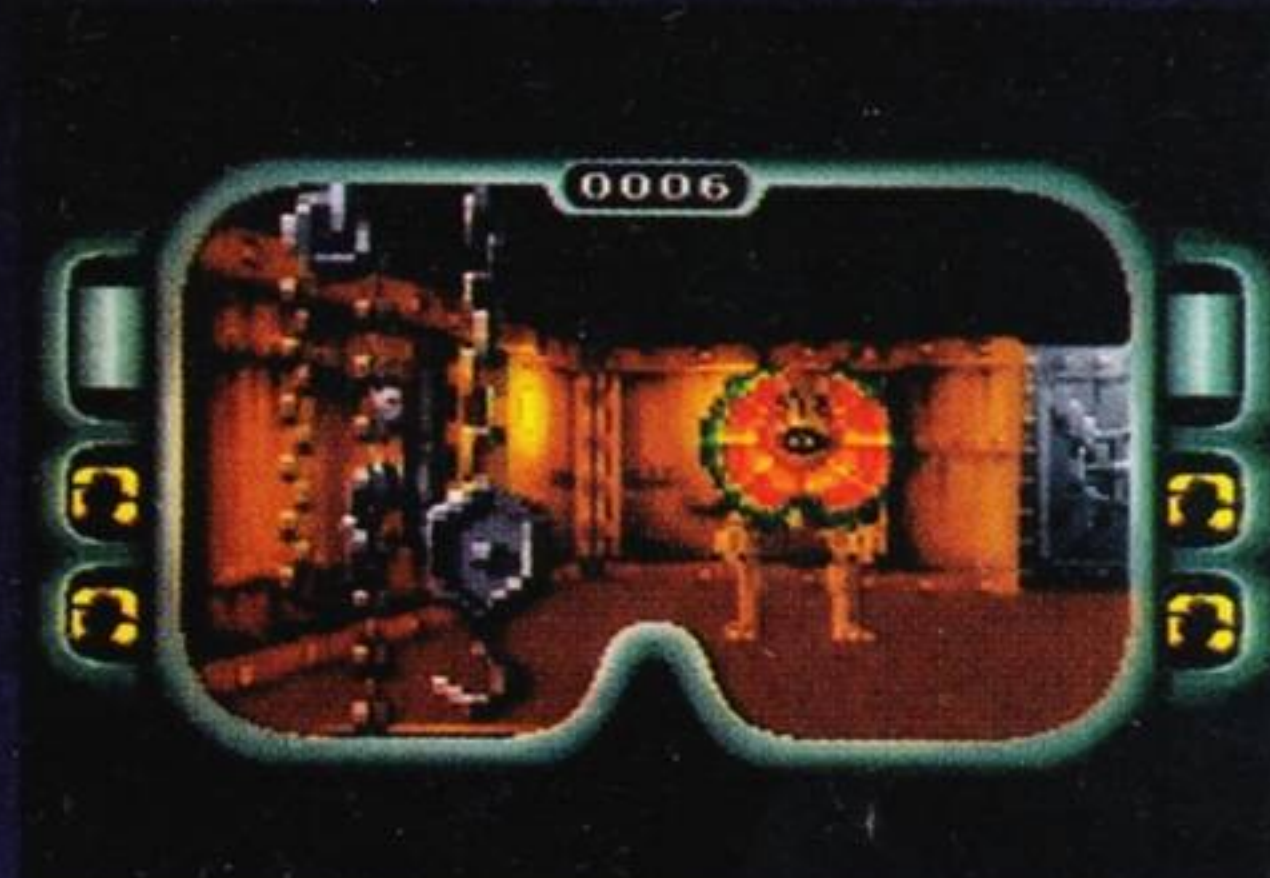
If you thought the movie was hot... Wait until the razor-sharp intensity of full-motion 3-D graphics gets a hold of you!



Hey Dr. Grant! Never underestimate your opponent... Especially when he's 20 feet tall and weighs over seven tons.



Meet your chefs... The Raptor slices and dices you, while the Spitter waits to baste you in his venomous marinade.



No more plain polygons or simple two-dimensional sprites! Ocean's exclusive, technically advanced graphics engines deliver REAL 3-D dinosaurs in a solid, dynamic and fully interactive universe.



Triceratops is heading your way! Restore island security and re-arm the voltage gates. Remember: the only good dinosaur is a fried dinosaur.

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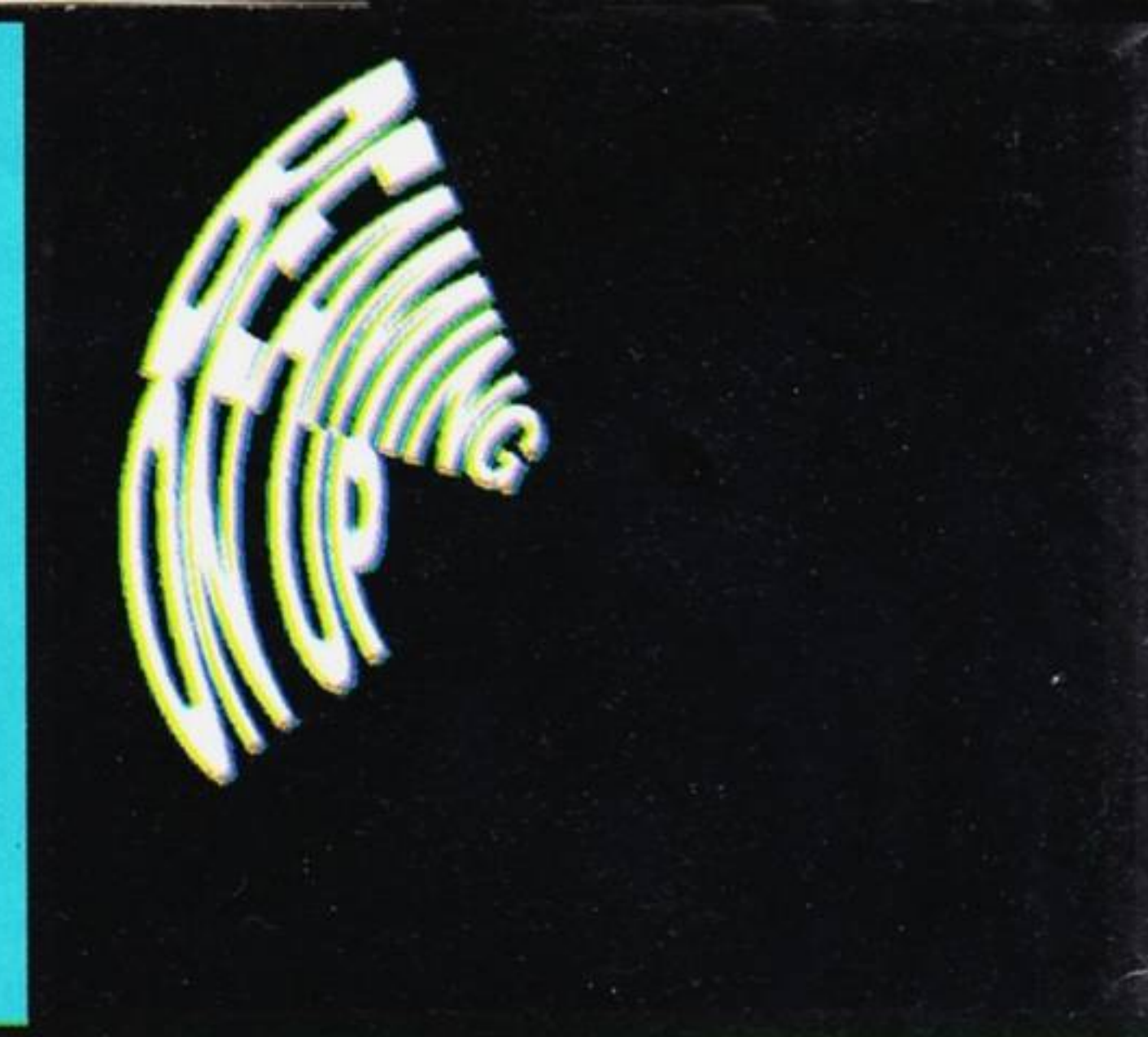
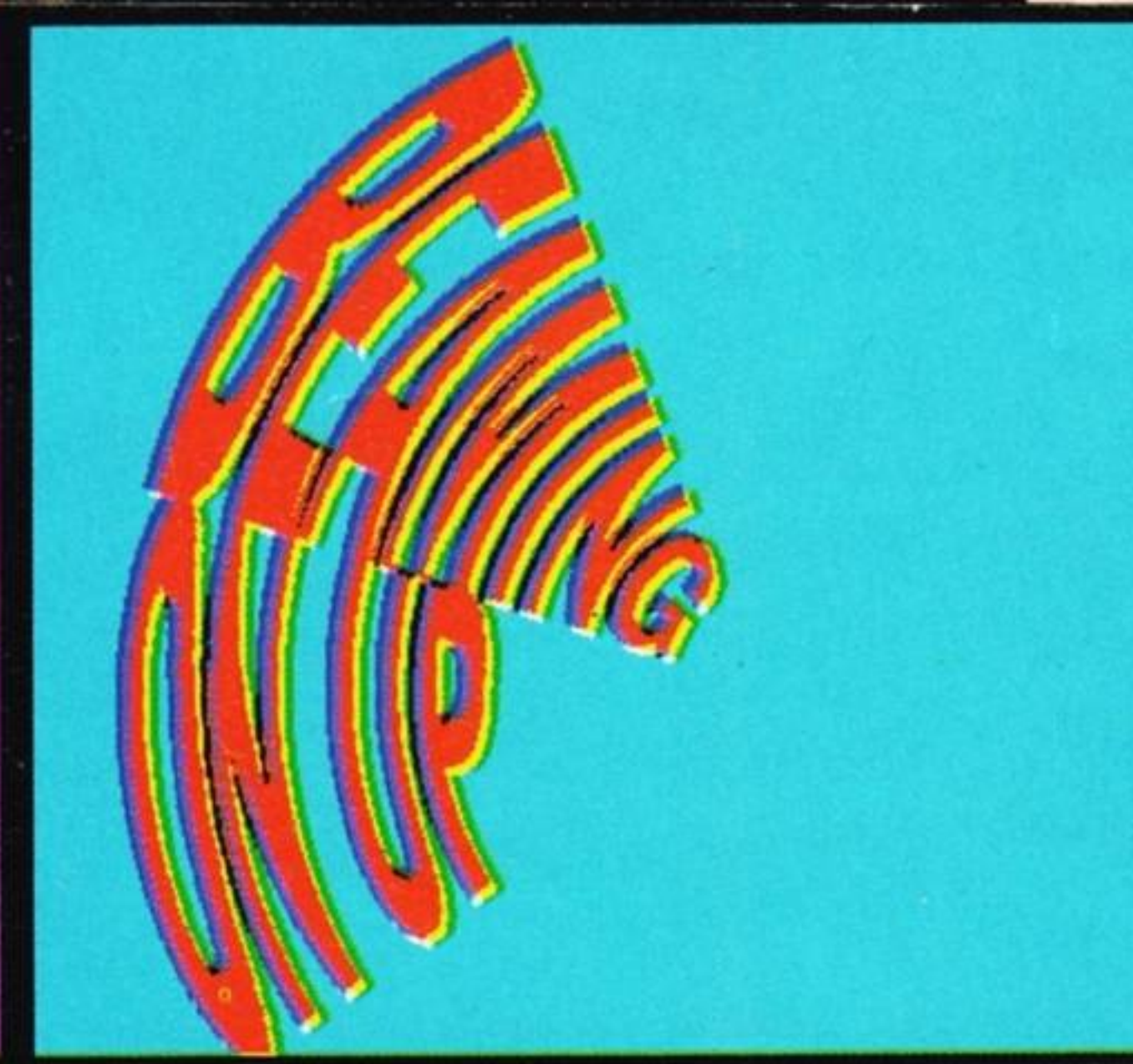
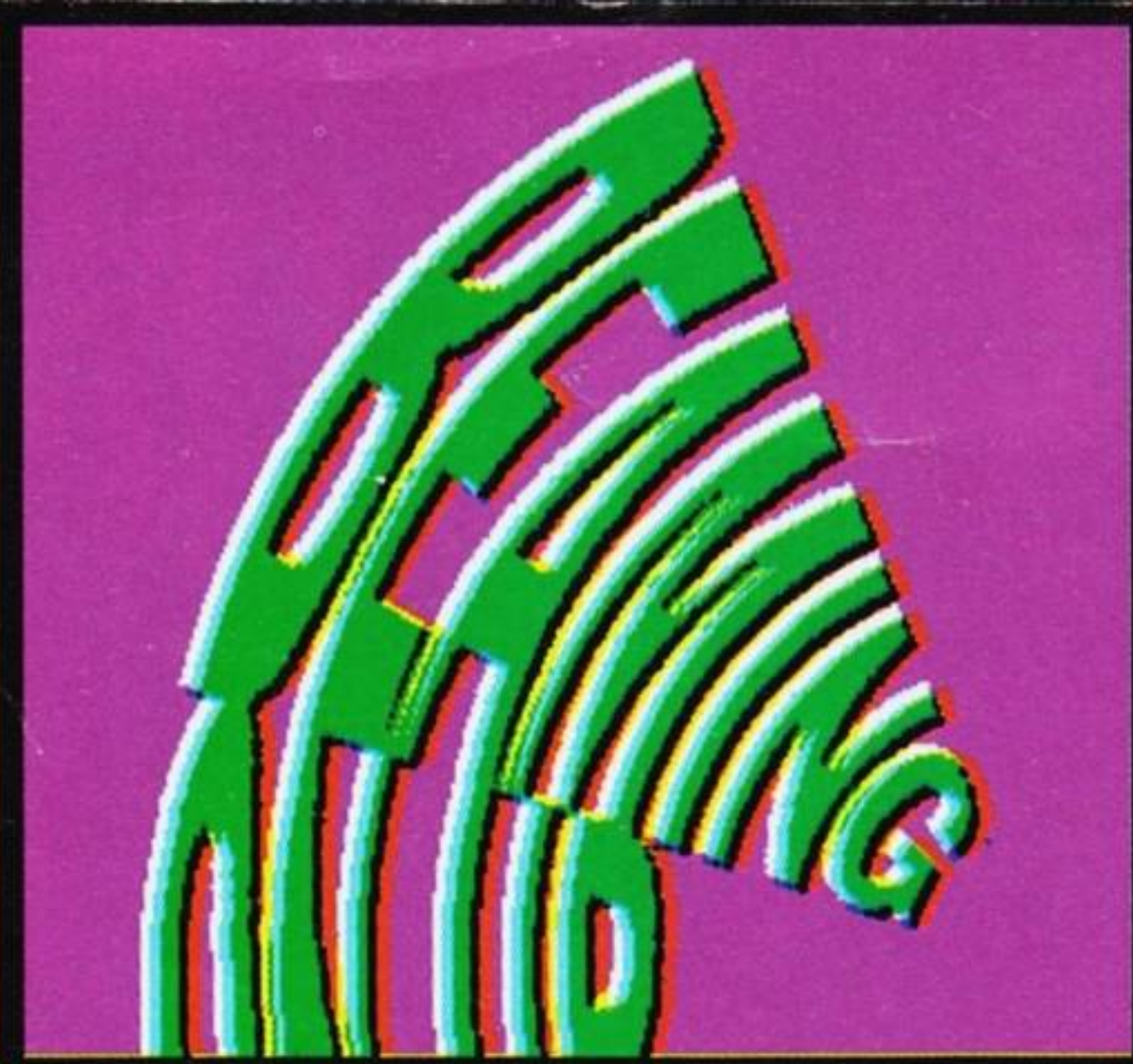
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ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM

ALSO AVAILABLE FOR



AND GAME BOY



What do Star Wars, Super Smash TV, The Hobbit, Way of the Exploding Fist, and Hunt for Red October, all have in common? Well, apart from all being extremely successful games, they were all programmed and developed right here in Australia. True! It is quite refreshing to discover that in our very own backyard (well,

▶ Laser Beam Software

South Melbourne's anyway) we have a highly successful producer of SNES and Sega software, going by the name of Laser Beam. STEVE POLAK chats to Adam Lancman (Beam's front man) about violence, censorship and their latest hit, Shadowrun.



Beam Software began producing computer games way back in 1980 under the name of Melbourne House. Their first big game, *The Hobbit*, was released in 1982 on the now extinct Sinclair ZX-81, the Sinclair Spectrum and Commodore 64. The adventure game, based on Tolkein's masterpiece, was a

Number 1 best seller throughout Europe and sales ended up exceeding 500 000 units. That success was repeated three years later with their classic Commodore 64 karate game, *Way of the Exploding Fist*, which even today stands up to the competition.

Beam became Nintendo developers in 1987, developing many titles for publishers in the US and Japan. Their biggest hits were the NES's *Star Wars*, developed for Lucasfilm, and the Gameboy's *Hunt for Red October* which was the first Gameboy title to feature head-to-head action. Then came the first fast arcade action game for the Super Nintendo - *Super Smash TV* and two NES Australian Number One's - *Aussie Rules Footy* and *International Cricket*.

Today, Beam has 65 employees in game development, and have two new Super Nintendo titles that are getting noticed on the world stage - *MechWarrior* and *Shadowrun*. So, everyone wants to know. What's the secret of Laser Beam's success?

"Our success comes from a love of games. Also we have always been in the forefront of technology, and have built up a reputation that says if you ask us to do the product, you'll get the product. We have also been able to predict the future trends."

And if you wanted to work for Laser Beam, orchestrating technophilic fantasies, what credentials would you need (besides being a HYPER subscriber)?

"We are looking for a very unique beast in a programmer. In Australia we have to train people to program



games. We can't find people out there who already have the relevant experience. Even the guys who have experimented and created some games themselves, that is a good start, but you still have to bring them up to speed in terms the console market."

So now down to the nitty gritty. What actually goes into the creation of a SNES masterpiece?

"To do a game you are looking at a team of people. We work on a departmental basis. We have artists, programmers, map builders, testers, database people, project managers, and musicians. All these resources come in to play at different levels in the development. The resources that we bring to bare on a project are quite significant, and it is an eye opener for some people when they start here."

And what of the role of organisations like Laser Beam? In fashioning fantasy, and providing a great deal of cultural stimulus for an ever growing number of people, do software developers have to be careful about being 'gurus of morality'? Could playing Lemmings really lead to IRA style megalomania, and will there be a thousand Johnny Cage impersonators punching people in the nuts, and knocking off their heads on city streets?!

"The idea of games affecting people has grabbed peoples attention. Mortal Kombat is in the papers at the moment, but there are far more violent games around. I don't believe that games have such an influence on children's behaviour. When kids are playing with games, they are playing games. If they do have abhorrent behaviour it is not because they have been influenced by the games, they already have the tendency in themselves. It is convenient to point at something and say that, 'everybody is angelic, and the only reason they become a demon

is because they have been influenced by something.' Games are a form of entertainment, the same as movies, music, reading and TV."

So apart from being harmless fun, and allowing us all to sublimate our secret fantasies (I have always dreamed of being the Raccoon in Pocky and Rocky), what are the positive aspects of the videodrome? Does Adam think games are just an efficient way of keeping us from getting homework/housework/work done, or is there more to it?

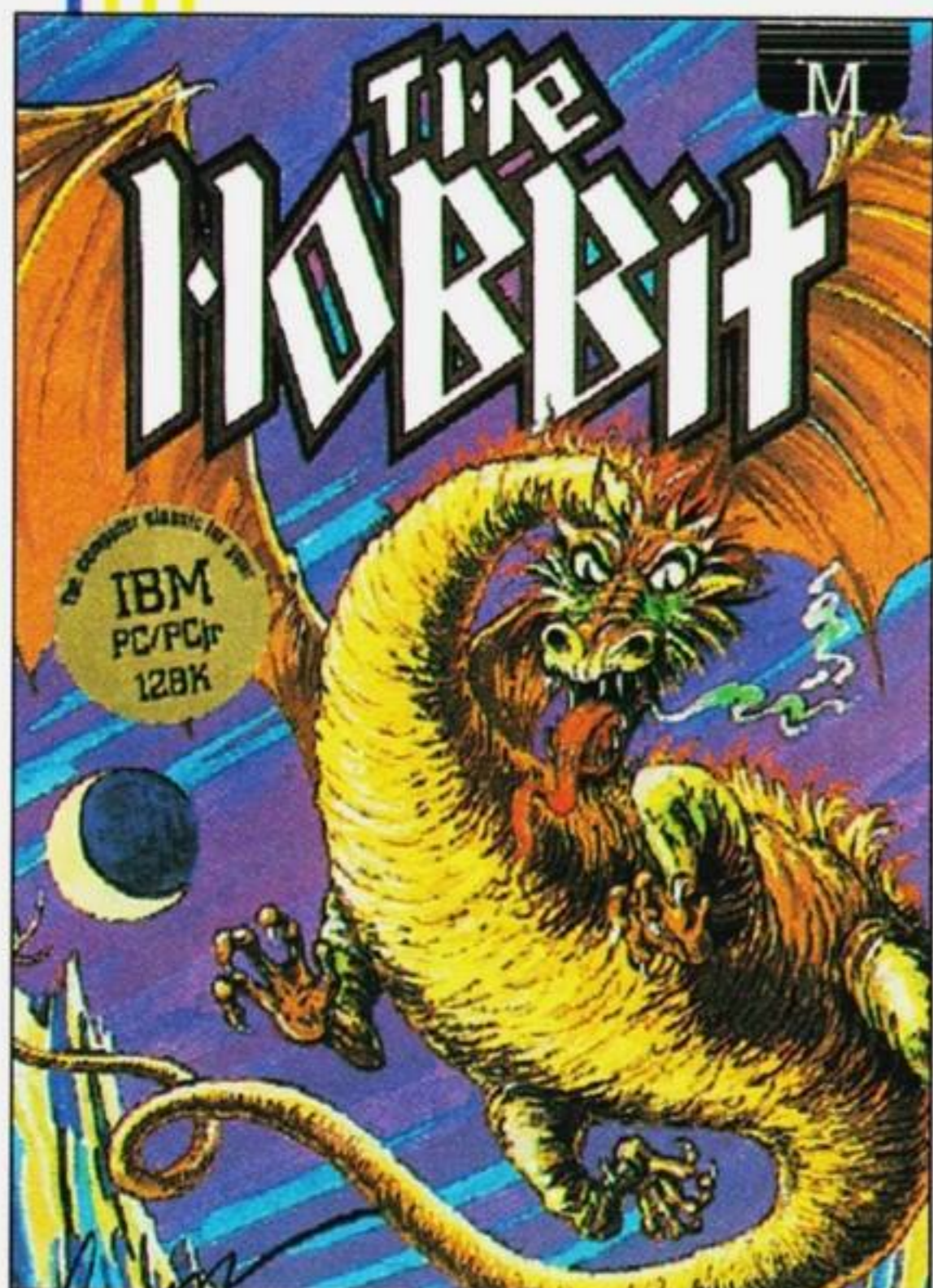
"Games provide more than hand eye co-ordination, there are games that are cognitive, such as *Zelda* or *Shadowrun*. Games require you to learn tactics, to test your memory as to where to find the pick-ups, and it is amazing how much you bring into play during those games, because it is not just hitting the button at the right time, it is learning where to go so you can get further in the games. Games are not as passive as watching TV, but some people see that as negative because there is a direct interaction with the screen."

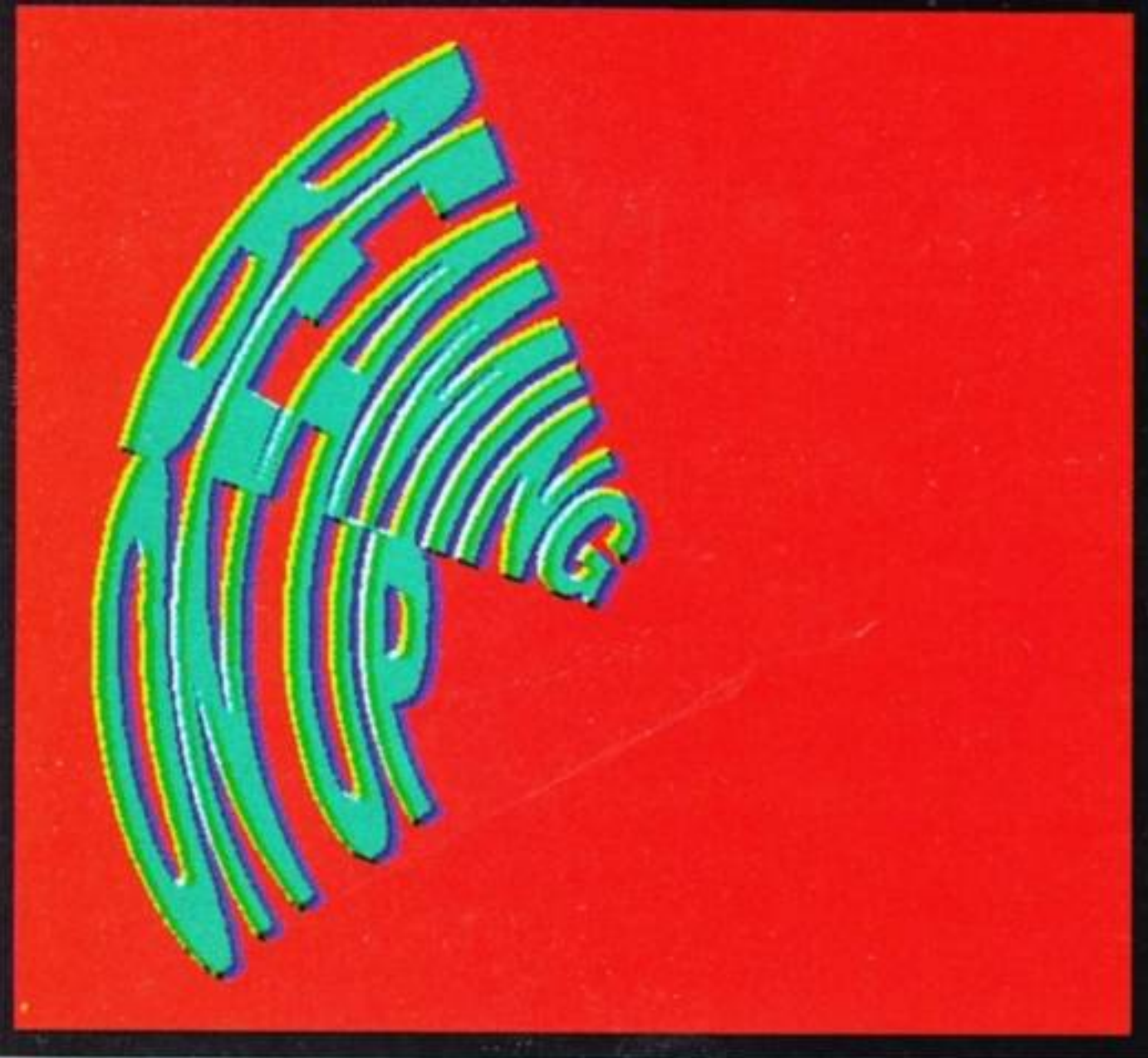
I wonder whether this issue is a matter of generations and exposure. Those parents who worry about the effects of games are perhaps not as concerned about the effects of TV, because TV is something they grew up with. But remember there was still a lot of scare mongering ("you'll get square eyes") that the parents of today railed against as children. Perhaps with the socialisation of successive generations more people will come to accept, and dare I say it 'enjoy' video games. It will not just be kids stuff in the near future. Are games just for kids, or even aimed at kids any more?

"No. Look at the demographics. Five years ago sales were mainly in the 8 to 14 year old boys bracket, now 50% of the market is made up of women and people over the age of 25. Also the more sophisticated the machines get, the larger the group of people they are going to attract. Games will be part of life, they will be just as accepted as TVs and VCRs."

Seeing we are talking about the 'brave new world' of the future where 'interactive entertainment' will replace the 'video game', what about Laser Beam's latest cyberpunk masterpiece, *Shadowrun*, which looks at possible images of the future and hurls the player relentlessly into the new milieu.

"*Shadowrun* is an RPG system and we acquired the rights to the license for computer games. We had a number of meetings with FASA >>





(the people responsible for the Shadowrun board RPG and comics), and we developed a broad concept which we massaged until the FASA people were satisfied. We had to be very careful that we didn't breach any of their natural laws of the Shadowrun universe, the pivotal law being that magic and technology don't mix. Our original concept was that we wanted to have both magic and technology as a part of the lead character Jake's abilities, but he is now a specific magic user. In the story Jake's problem was that someone put a computer in his head, and we just got away with allowing him to have that! FASA were very helpful in identifying the initial presence and mood of the game. Then they were professional enough to leave us alone and let us do our job."

"Having established the concept, it was then a case of sitting down and working out how we were going to approach the game. We were doing a console game, and role playing games were never successful on console in terms of sales, so it was a bit of a gamble. Shadowrun is something that is very in-depth. What we ended up with was a design that we thought was a new direction for console games. Obviously there is no keyboard, so you have to communicate with your keypad, but it has an arcade feel about it in terms of how you interact with the environment. So we achieved a delicate balance with the game that still gives you the depth you would expect for an RPG game, and also gives you the excitement and action feel that you would expect in an arcade game on a console."

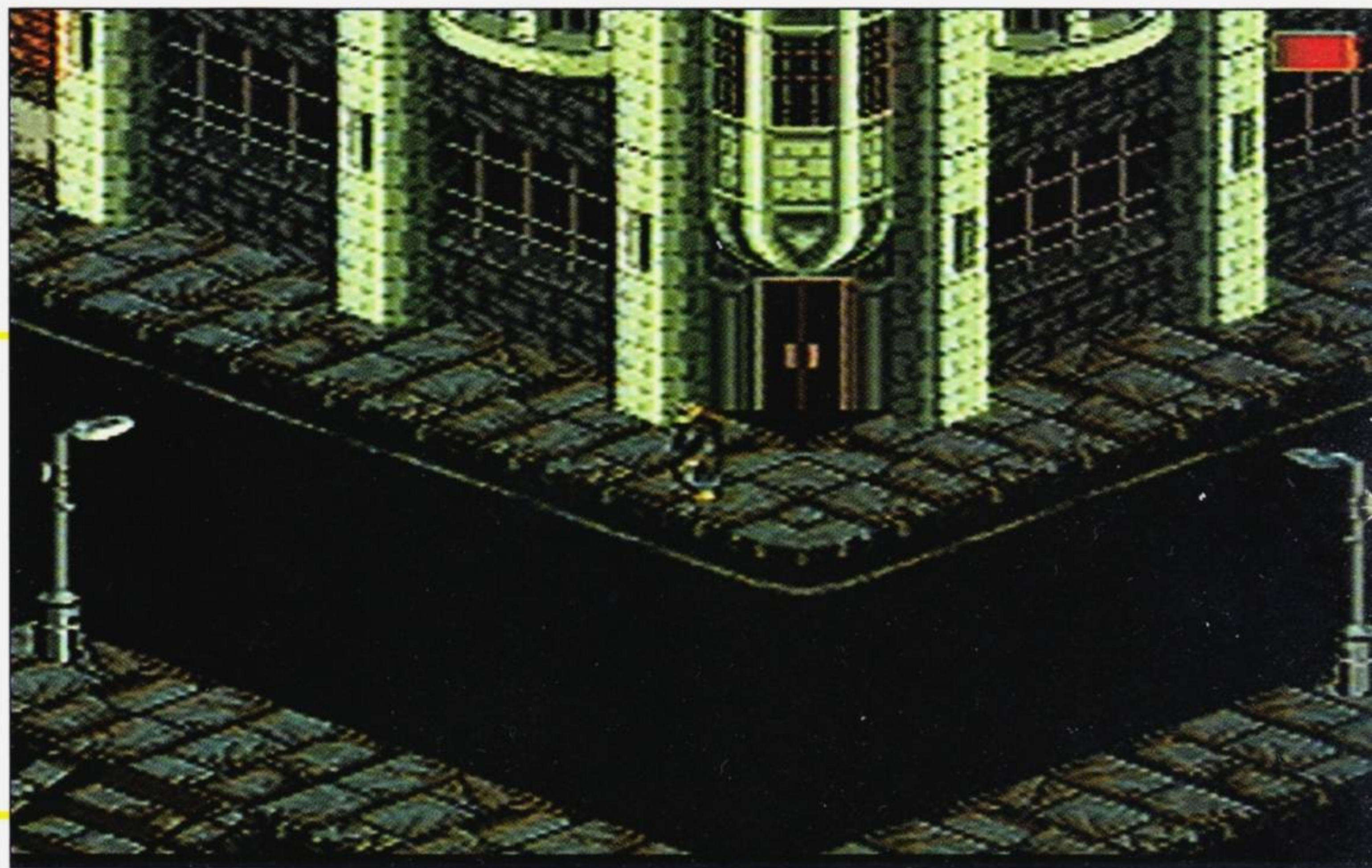
Tell us about the bits that thrill! What about the sombre graphics and moody sonics (and we're not talking depressed hedgehogs!).

"When we looked at how we were going to represent Shadowrun on the screen, we chose an isometric perspective. We saw what Zelda did, but we didn't want it to look like a Japanese RPG game, so we didn't want the little 'balloon characters' running around. Shadowrun has an edge to it, a modern look that

doesn't have Princesses and mushrooms. The only criticism of Shadowrun was that the sprite graphics were small, but they were small because, if we had made the characters any bigger on the screen, then the scale of the screen changes and you see less of your environment, and that was a critical part of the game. Also if you make the character bigger then you make the buildings bigger, and you see less of the street, and that would minimise the impact of combat. Shadowrun is a dark game. The graphics were deliberately created to give that dark, moody feel, and the music complements that. So we established the viewpoint and the user interface, then we sat down with artists and started to produce some graphic depictions for Seattle."

With the land laid out by the god of computer map making (aka lead game designer — Arthur Kakouris), the Shadowrun world could then be populated with the sleazy self interested gutterslime that are an integral part of the game.

"We had to develop personalities for the different creatures you talked



Those parents who worry about the effects of games are perhaps not as concerned about the effects of TV, because TV is something they grew up with. But remember there was still a lot of scare mongering

("you'll get square eyes") that the parents of today railed against as children.

to. So one artist's job was to create the portraits that you see, like what an Orc looks like and what was his mood. Then we started working out what conversations you were going to have with the guy. Conversations are pivotal to the game, because they give you the information that you need to proceed. Then you have to establish what the key words are, and build up the list of people you meet, and objects you have to find from there. It started out with the original design and then we put the details in place and it spreads out like a tree structure.

"Next was the testing process. We had about 12 people playing off and on. The level of testing on an RPG

Here are some stills from Laserbeam's newest game for the SNES, the cyberpunk RPG Shadowrun.



game is quite extensive, as you have to make sure that all the different combinations are covered. You have to play the game stupidly and see what happens."

Well, perhaps there is a career for me in game development after all. I could be the person they get to play games stupidly. You could say it's just a natural talent of mine!

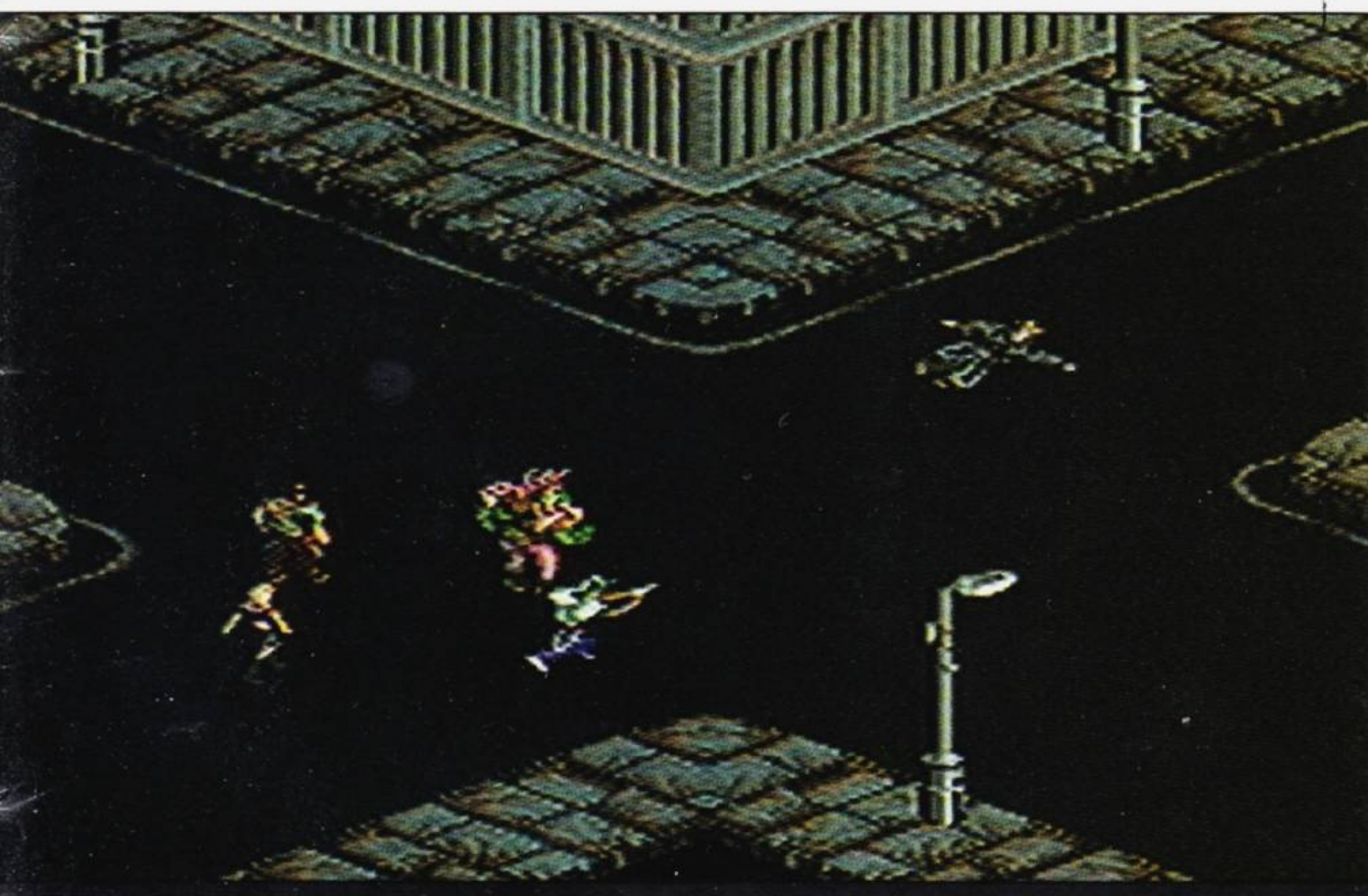
Anyway speaking of stupidity, what of the moral guidelines that the big 'N' place on cart development?

"We have some very strict software development guidelines. The media get carried away with looking at how violent games are, but there is already industry self regulation. For example you can't put any religion in games. If you look at the cemetery very closely, there are no crosses on the tombstones. Also we don't go to a bar, we go to a club. We don't order beer, we specifically order a non-alcoholic

drink, iced tea. We do that for the guidelines. In reality the original Shadowrun is pretty hard edged, the shadowrunners go to bars and order beer and scotch. But we couldn't do that, they are the sort of things we had to take out. When the scriptwriters were writing, they did it within the Nintendo guidelines. But sometimes they will try to sneak something in, and Arthur and I would have to say no."

Actually there are one or two cadavers in Shadowrun. What sort of definitional sleight of hand did you use to get that past mother Nintendo's guide to better living?

"The bodies are not dead, they're just not well. Normally in a Nintendo game the bodies just dissolve. We needed to be able to leave things behind so that we could search the body. So we actually drew it and sent it to Nintendo and said 'We want your



Oh goody! So what moral decrepitude did get left in, and what else did you have to leave out in order to keep the Shadowrun world smelling as clean as Patsy Biscoe's undergarments?

"In the Shadowrun world, ordering a milkshake or iced tea at a club isn't realistic is it? A big Troll or an Orc doesn't ask for a glass of milk! It's inconsistent, but OK, we can't promote alcoholism. Also, you can't light a cigarette. We had a sleazy girl with a cigarette which looked fine, but we had to take it out. Stereotyping is the other thing we have to be very careful of. You can't call a girl 'babe', and even though the character's personality might be like that, you can't get away with it. An advantage with Shadowrun is that it has its own slang. We didn't have to say 'Fuck off', we could say 'Drekhead'. Drek is vomit. We developed the game with a full understanding of what was acceptable. In Nintendo games generally you are not allowed to show the results of violence."

Oh yeah! What about the (admittedly revised) 'death moves' in Mortal Kombat. Sonya's "barbecue supreme" move looks pretty much like the result of violence to me!

"Well yes, but the characters come back so they are never really dead. They were quite lucky to get away with that."

input on this', and if you look at it the body is very indistinct, deliberately so. At first what we had was a detailed illustration of an Orc lying on the ground which they wouldn't accept. So what we ended up with was a vague human figure and that was fine."

And finally Adam, is there any real possibility that the Seattle of 2050 could be a vision of the future which we will have to accept. Is Shadowrun the blueprint for our bleak, cyberpunk, multi-corporate destiny?

"It is possible that it could happen. Certainly the level of computer sophistication will happen, and there is a risk that the mega corporations will supplant government. The attraction of Shadowrun is that it isn't based on fantasy, but science."

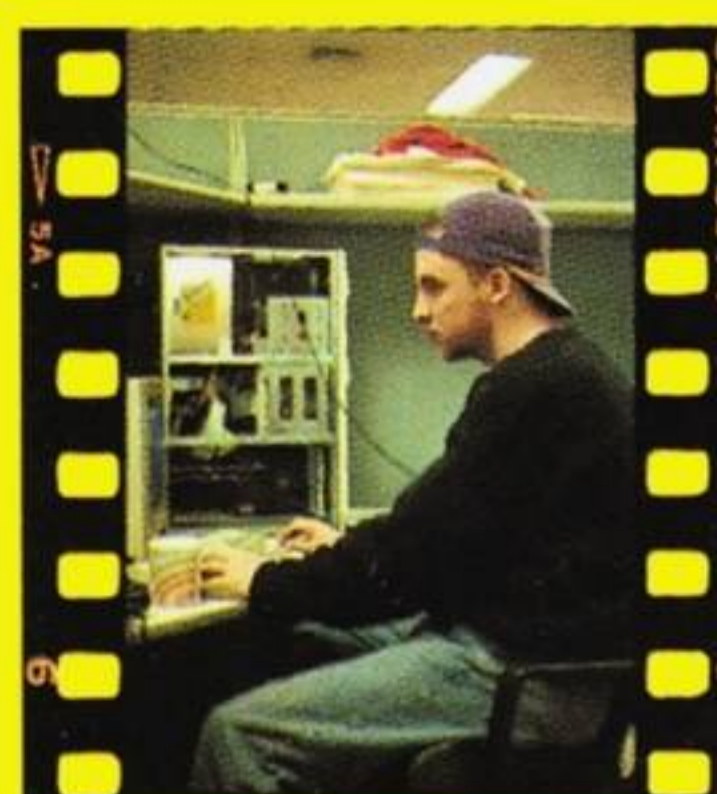
So, if you want to be prepared for one possible vision of the future, and have fun doing it, dive headlong into the Shadowrun world of unbridled fantasy and technophilia. There is a Shadowrunthrough of the cart on page 51.

Oh, and keep your eyes on Laser Beam, because they've got several hot carts on the way, including Super T-Rex, Choplifter III, Nightmare and Shadowrun II. In future issues we'll take a more detailed look at what Beam programmers and artists get up to.

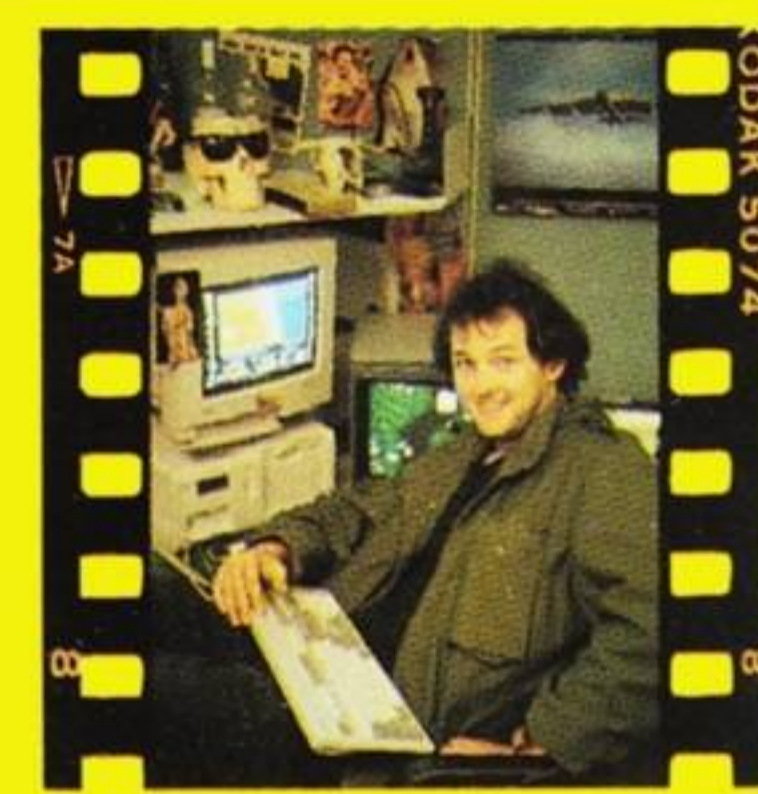
The Beam Team



Justin Halliday
Game Designer



Jef Kamanek
Programmer



Grant Arthur
Artist



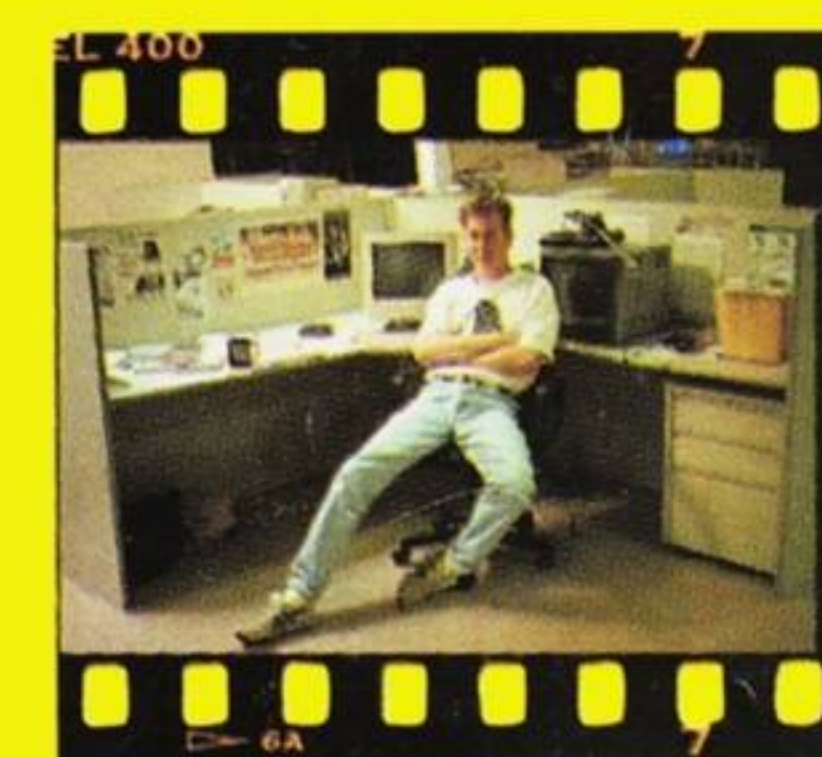
Shane Lontis
Programmer



Darren Bremmer
Lead Programmer



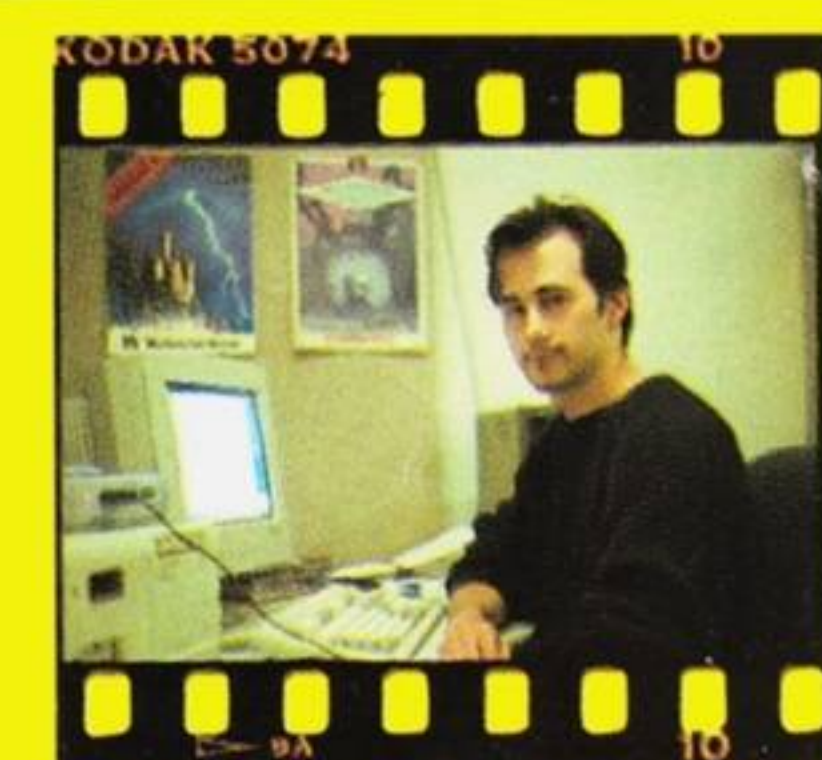
Arthur Kakouris
Game Designer



Simon Hart
Artist



Marshall Parker
Music+Sound Tech



Mark Maynard
Lead Artist



Andrew Bailey
Programmer



Graeme Scott
Programmer



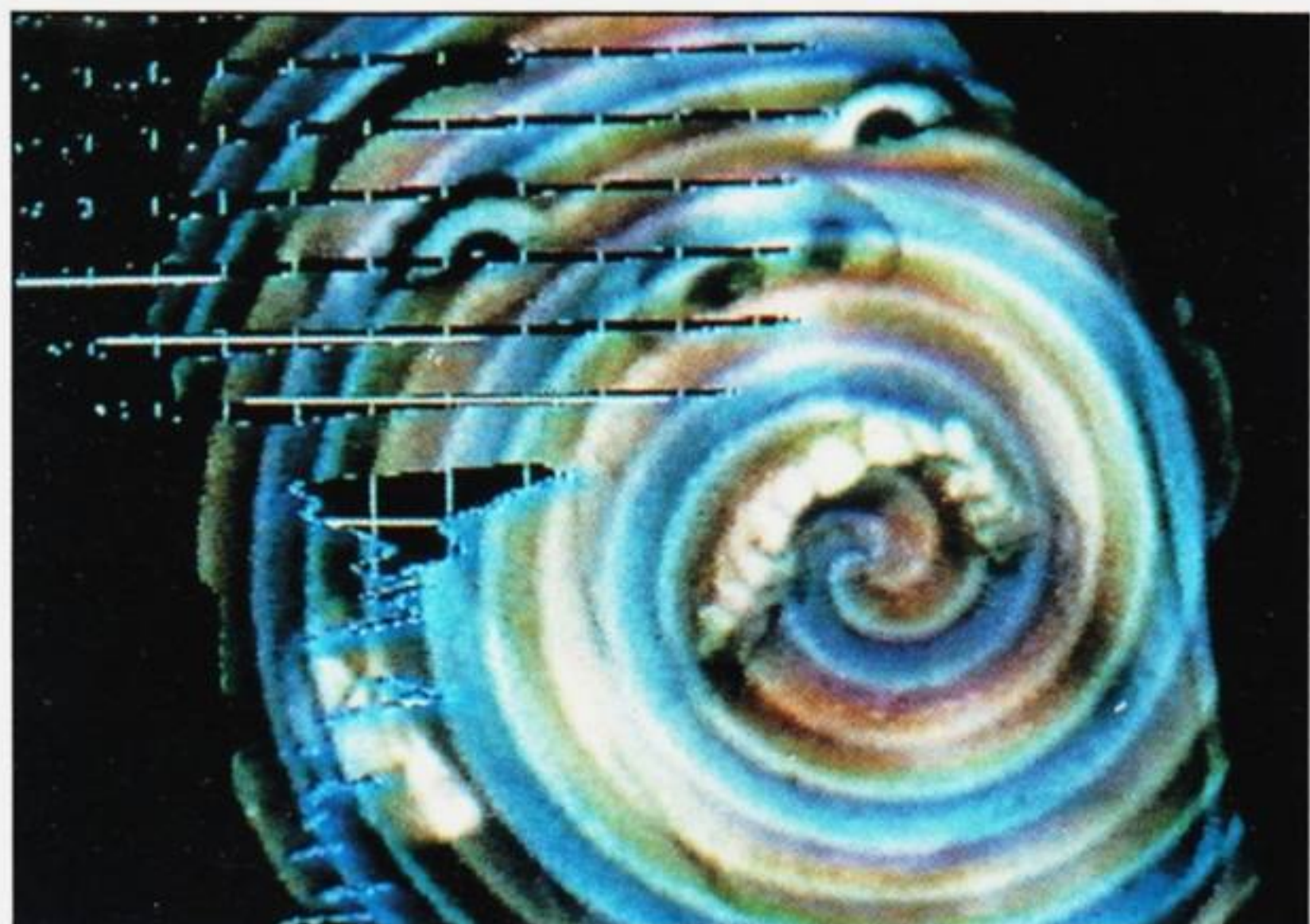
beats

beats



When you think of techno, house or other forms of electronic music, chances are that you wouldn't think of Australians. The bands that make the charts and dance-

» wicked beats



floors move all seem to be faceless acts from Belgium, England, Italy or America. This isn't to say that Australians have never made music with machines though. Severed Heads were the pioneers of Australian techno and electronic dance music, and led not only the local scene, but in world terms as well, with their amazing multimedia performances which incorporated computer-generated graphics. While bands that began at the same time, like New Order and Depeche Mode, have gone on to top the charts and sell millions of records worldwide, Severed Heads have never received much mainstream recognition, due in part to Australia's cultural cringe and the slowly changing belief that electronic music is not *real* music.

However, as raves and dance parties show no sign of losing popularity, a string of young Australian techno and dance acts are coming out of their bedroom studios and onto the stage. *Volition* is the record label who is fostering this new breed, and their compilation *High* is a superb showcase of local talent. In recognition of the growing popularity and importance of electronic music, *Volition's* biggest acts - *Severed Heads*, *Boxcar*, *Vision 4/5*, *Itch-E & Scratch-E* and *Southend* will be playing at the upcoming Big Day Out concerts, alongside bands such as Soundgarden and the Ramones. **STUART CLARKE** talks to the young techno-evangelists about their music, the struggle to legitimise techno and the many different wonders of technology.

Box Car

David Smith, Stewart Lawler and Brett Mitchell are the faces behind the sound of Boxcar. Originating in Brisbane around five years, Boxcar have experienced popular successes, including three Top Tens singles in the American dance charts, as well as critical praise for their albums Vertigo and Revision. And while supporting such overseas acts as New Order and Depeche Mode, the band have earned an enviable live reputation. However, as David Smith explains, there is still a sizeable resistance to groups who make music with computers and samplers.

"Making our music has been a strange thing from day one. The history of Australian music is that it has grown out of the pubs, but I am afraid that this is no longer the case. That belief still holds though. Music is changing and has become a new form of expression that is no longer primarily based around guitars, bass and drums. There are a whole universe of possibilities that people should be investigating.

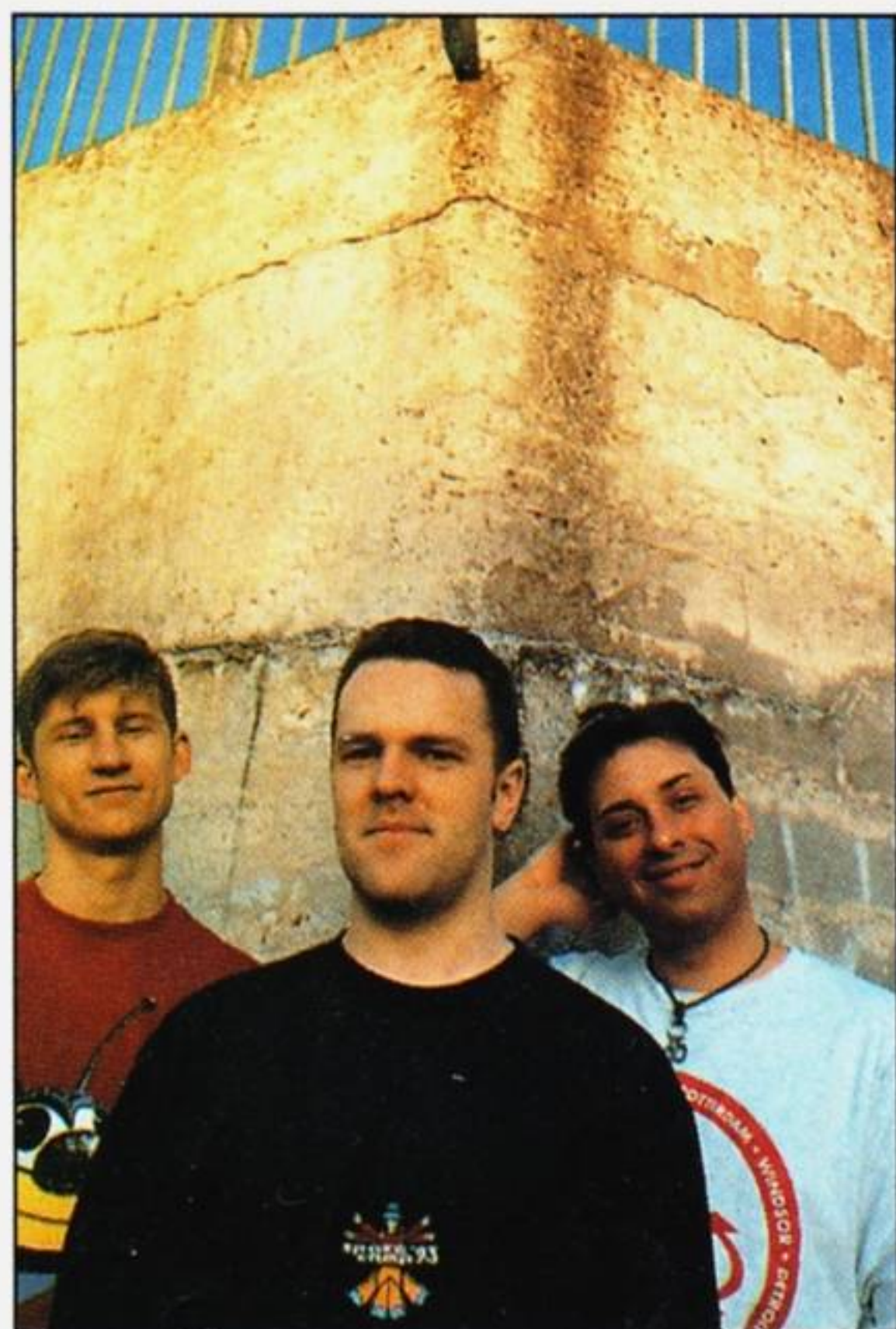
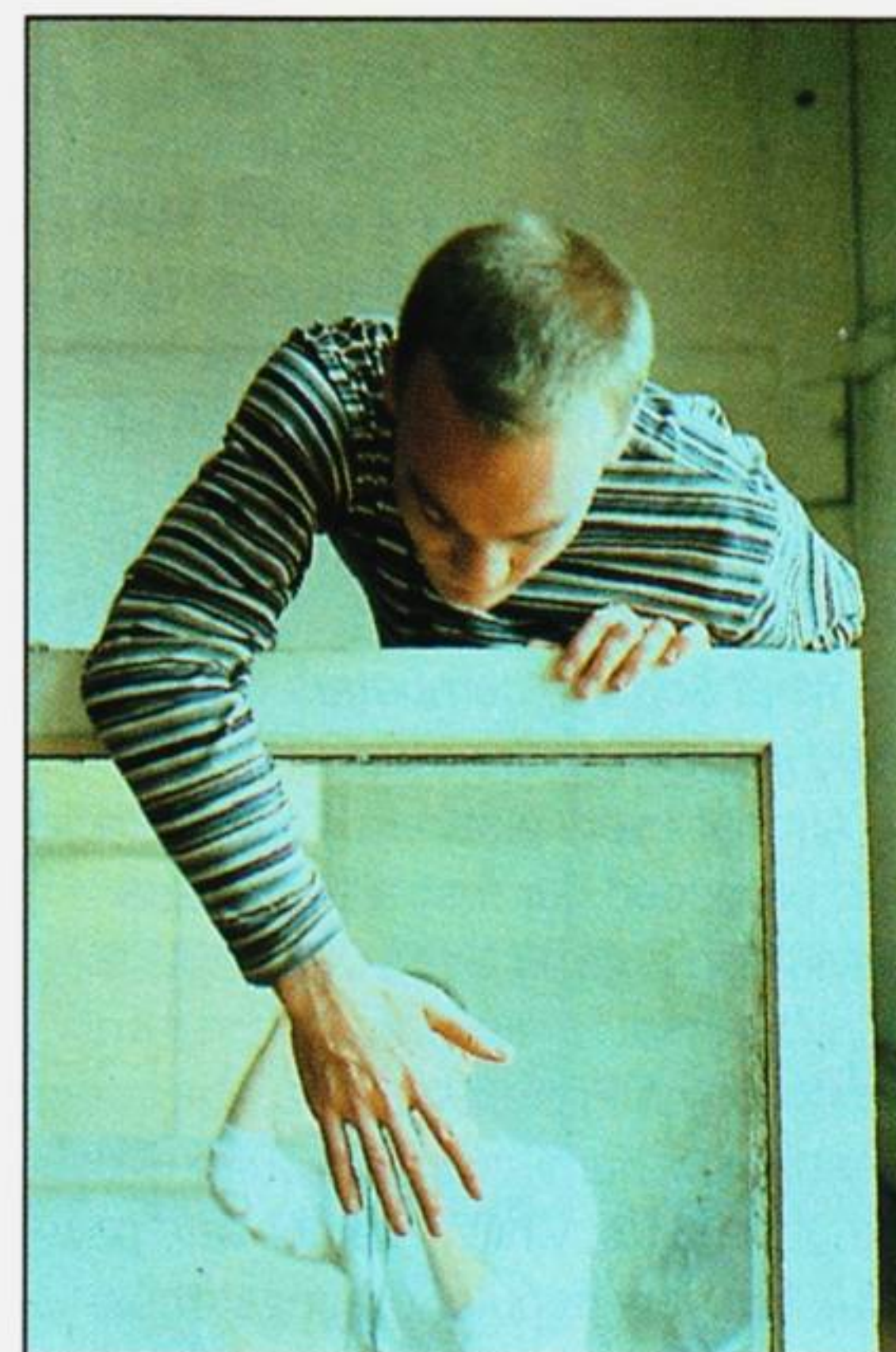
Was there a resistance at first?
Definitely. We were total freaks and forever having to explain ourselves. I feel like I have spent the last five year explaining the music to others. People were continuously saying that

itch-e and Scratch-e

Itch-E & Scratch-E are a band almost in spite of themselves. There are at least two semi-permanent members (who are simply known as Itch-e and Scratch-e) plus another three or four "floating" members. In a very non-rock 'n roll manner they would all prefer to remain anonymous and let the music speak for itself. The band is not a full-time project either, as all members either work in the "real world" or on other musical projects, and only come together when they feel inspired. As one of the band members (let's call him Itch-E, shall we?) puts it, "we were all working on separate projects

back in 1989 and decided to do a techno track on the side as a bit of a joke. It's become a bit more serious now, but not much else has changed." Fortunately the "band" (whose name is inspired by everyone's favourite ultra-violent cat and mouse cartoon) got into the studio long enough to record their superb first album, *Itch-E Kitch-E Koo*, which has just been released.

They were driven to techno and trance by "the desire to get out of it. The desire to create some different places that don't actually exist. I find techno the most amazingly satisfying music. I'm not satisfied with music unless it evokes strong visual images to accompany the audio element. The music should take you on





A still from a Boxcar clip.

machines have no feeling.

Is the reception in Europe and America different. Is it more open?

I hope that articles like this will draw a perspective to Australian dance music. Australians don't think that it's cool. The Europeans and the Americans listen to songs on their own merits and don't compare it to music deriving from their own countries. Australians do, and it's something that must change in our psyche.

I read a hilarious review on our first album in a Western Australian magazine. It said that it is sad to see Aussies slavishly and desperately copy European trends, why can't we be innovators like INXS and Midnight Oil — which was the ultimate irony. Doesn't INXS sound like 99.9% of American rock bands? Isn't Midnight Oil big in America for that very reason?

I must admit that I used to think that all Australian dance music was pretty uncool, but I completely changed my view when I heard the Volition compilation, High. It blew me away. Although I knew you and Severed Heads, I didn't realise that there was so much fantastic Australian dance music out there.

There has been a real struggle for identity for these bands and I think people should be slightly reverential towards those like Severed Heads because imagine having a boot in your face every day. People say your music sucks, and that you are copying other people. It is a real struggle to get up everyday and ignore the constant remarks. The discouragement really does affect you.

What sorts of computers have you used in creating the music?

Almost every platform. Robert Racic, who produced our first album, uses Macintosh a great deal. Our latest single, Universal Hymn, was edited and mastered on Protools on the Macintosh. Most of our home music though is done with Atari ST's, which are not very powerful, but very popular amongst musi-

a journey, both sonically and emotionally. But that's a very personal response, and probably everyone in the band would have a different answer."

Unlike all the other bands featured, live gigs are not on the list of priorities. "We've done a few live shows like the Happy Valley rave last year, but live performances are not where our hearts are at. It's something we do to please the record company. I don't think it's where our audience is at either. We don't find techno a particularly live music medium, and strutting my stuff on stage is something that's totally alien to me."

Like the other bands though, Itch-e & Scratch-e cite Severed Heads as an inspiration, along with pioneer Australian hardcore act SPK (Surgical Penis Clinic). But when it actually comes down to creating the music, "we're inspired by each other, and that's not just a feel good comment, I really mean it. One of us will get an idea, a sample, vocal, bassline or whatever, and another of us will connect with it and take it further, until we get the finished track. It's a really satisfying working relationship."

If you can't wait for the Big Day Out, you can catch Itch-E & Scratch-E doing one of their rare live gigs at Happy Valley 3, a huge outdoor rave which is taking place near Sydney on December 18.

cians. Macs and digital sampling have only really just kicked off. They are really catching up with the MIDI-software. Although I love my Atari, I have to admit that the Mac is really going places. For games though we like Amigas.

Other techno bands have sampled video game music and effects. Have you?

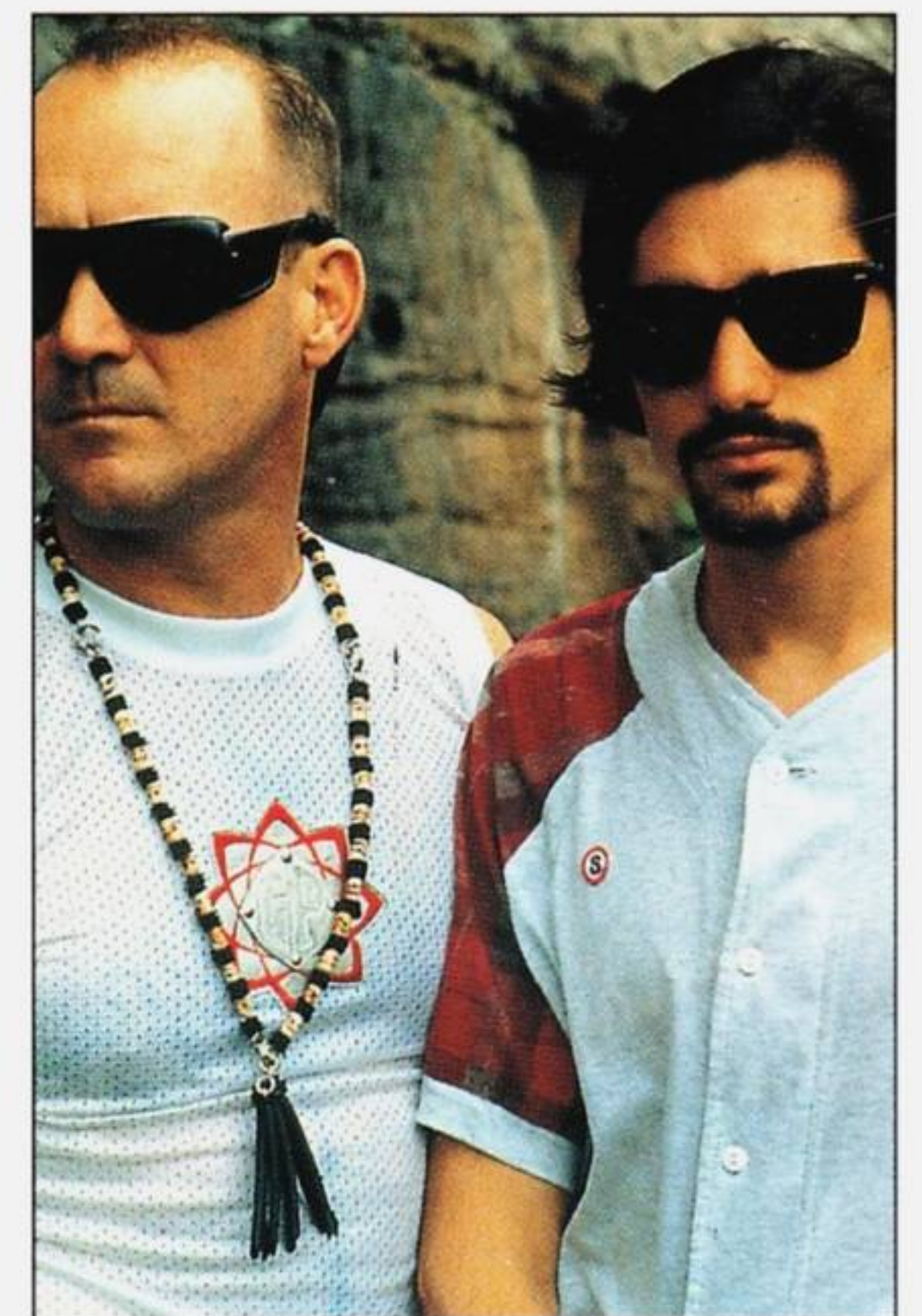
We have done it, but I don't find it very appealing, as most games at the moment are very low-fi. Their sound is really quite grungy and that can be really good, but it depends greatly on what kind of music you are producing.

What is the direction of the new album?

To continue the tradition of the electronic music we love, but we also want to have vocals and cover subjects of interest. While sampling and synthesis have created interesting combinations and great abstractions, it has also abstracted the meaning and content, arousing an indistinct feeling. Feelings are greatly overlooked, everything is virtual — virtual sex, virtual reality, virtual

A Techno Vision

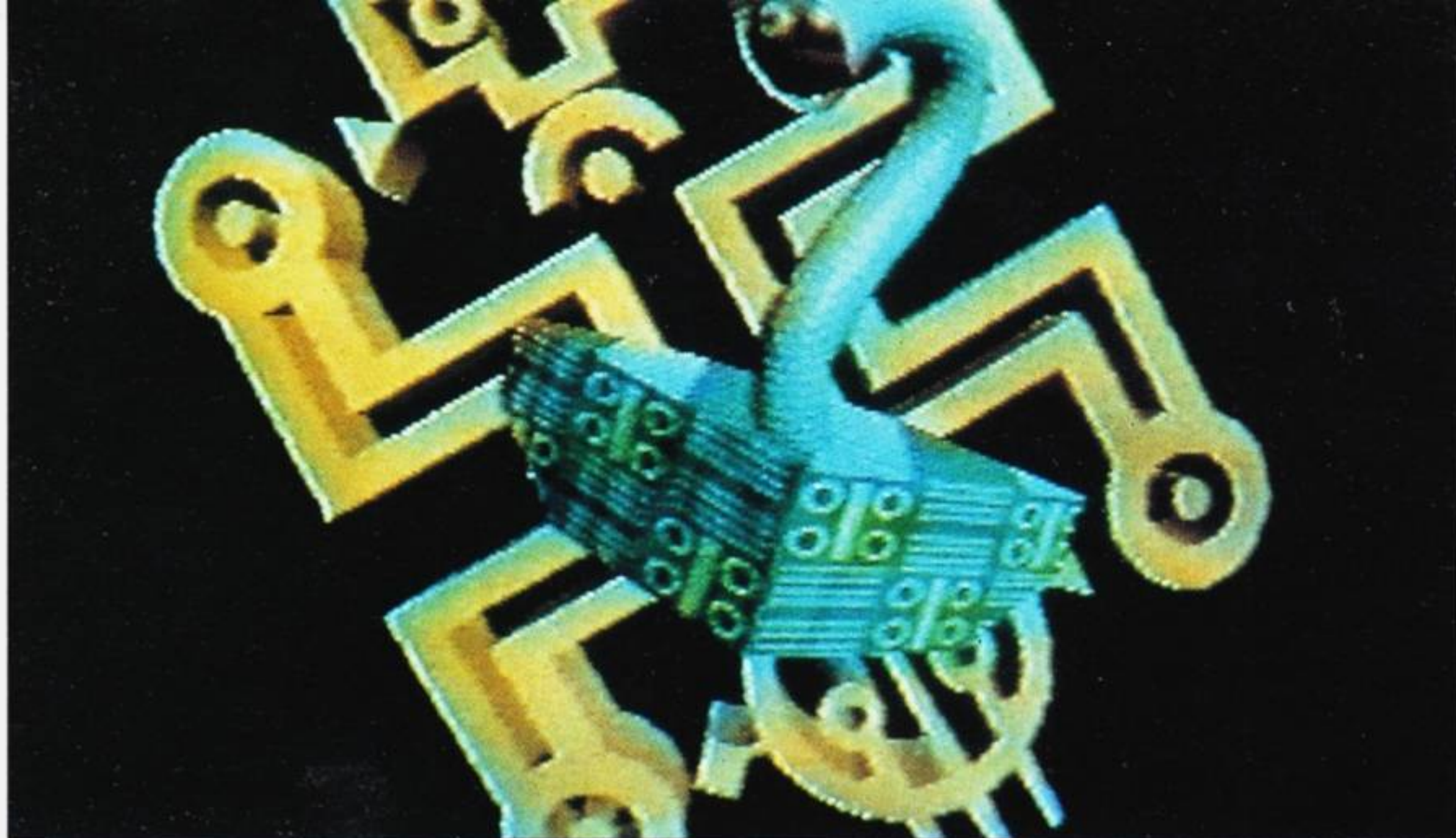
Vision 4/5 is a true multi-media band. Noel Burgess (who is based in Brisbane) takes care of the musical side of things, while Tim Gruchy (who lives in Sydney) is in charge of the visual element, which is an integral part of their live performance. They met around three years ago through the rave/dance party scene, and were driven to form the band by the lack of quality Australian dance music. According to Noel, "everyone was listening to



this and that. We want to get some distinct feelings.

It is really difficult to explain how you can identify to one techno song and not to another. There are certain visual and audio stimulus that trigger the responses, whether it be a positive or negative attitude, and we need to probe deeper. We need to look beyond our analog and digital sense and further into the communication.

Boxcar will be communicating directly to the masses, even before their new album, Algorhythm comes out (hopefully in January). They will be downloading MIDI files into bulletin boards so that if you've got a modem and a computer, you'll be able to hear their new tracks first (and play around with them yourself). This seems to be a growing trend amongst techno bands, who use computers so heavily in the creation of the music. Bands can get feedback and even remixed tracks sent back to them. Oh, the wonders of modern technology!



Itch-e and Scratch-e doing their video thing.

imports and there was a void of Australian techno/dance music which we have tried to fill". So far they have released the excellent *Texture* LP, which lives up to its title and ranges in styles from ambience to hardcore. They are currently in the middle of producing a re-mix album which will surface early next year.

When on stage, Tim is behind an Amiga, with the Mandala interactive authoring program being used to

create some absolutely mind-blowing visuals live. Noel has a whole truckload full of technology at his disposal including a Mac SE/30 and K2000RS sampler. They have used a lot of movie and video game samples in the past (including *Aliens* and the classic Mac game *Spectre*), but are moving away from obvious samples. Noel says that the aim of Vision 4/5's music and live show is to create "a spontaneous, emotional response", and he draws inspiration from all manner of sources, including the fantasy series "The Chronicles of

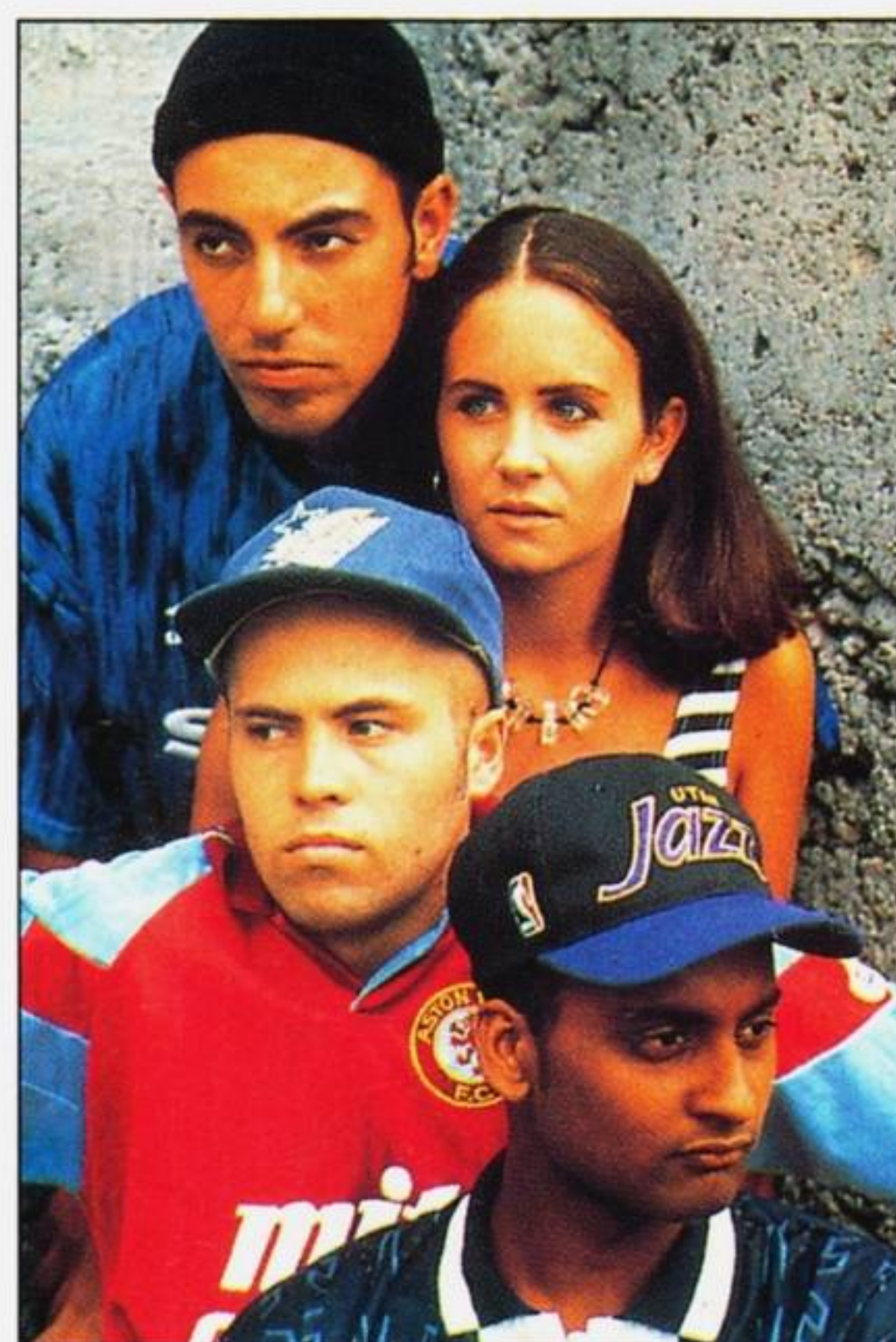
Southend

Southend are particular favourites of the Sydney rave crowd with their vibed and uplifting techno pop. They have a more accessible sound than bands such as Vision 4/5 and Itch-e & Scratch-e, and their occasional live shows have already gained a large and loyal following. The four members (Stuart McCarthy, Sameer Sen-Gupta, Melinda Page, Steve Younan) met lining up for tickets to the Depeche Mode concert a couple of years ago, and while they were all in different groups at the time, they were drawn together by their common musical interests.

Apart from supplying a couple of the standout tracks on Volition's High compilation, *Southend* have just released their first EP, *Fanatical*.

Vision 4/5 and *Severed Heads*, have a very visual side to their music. Do you have a visual element at all?

Stuart: Yes, us! What we are trying to do is break down the whole belief that techno being performed live is shit. One of the reasons that electronic music does not work as well in Australia as it does overseas, is because people are used to going to the pub and seeing your four basic band members - guitarist, drummer, keyboardist and singer. When they think of electronic bands they conjure up images of people hidden behind keyboards and a big video screen. It is great that we have a presence on stage but we are still trying to overcome this belief that electronic dance music can't be transferred into a live atmosphere. We are big on making it low-tech as opposed to high-tech, perhaps because



it is more relatable to an audience.

Do you do many live shows?

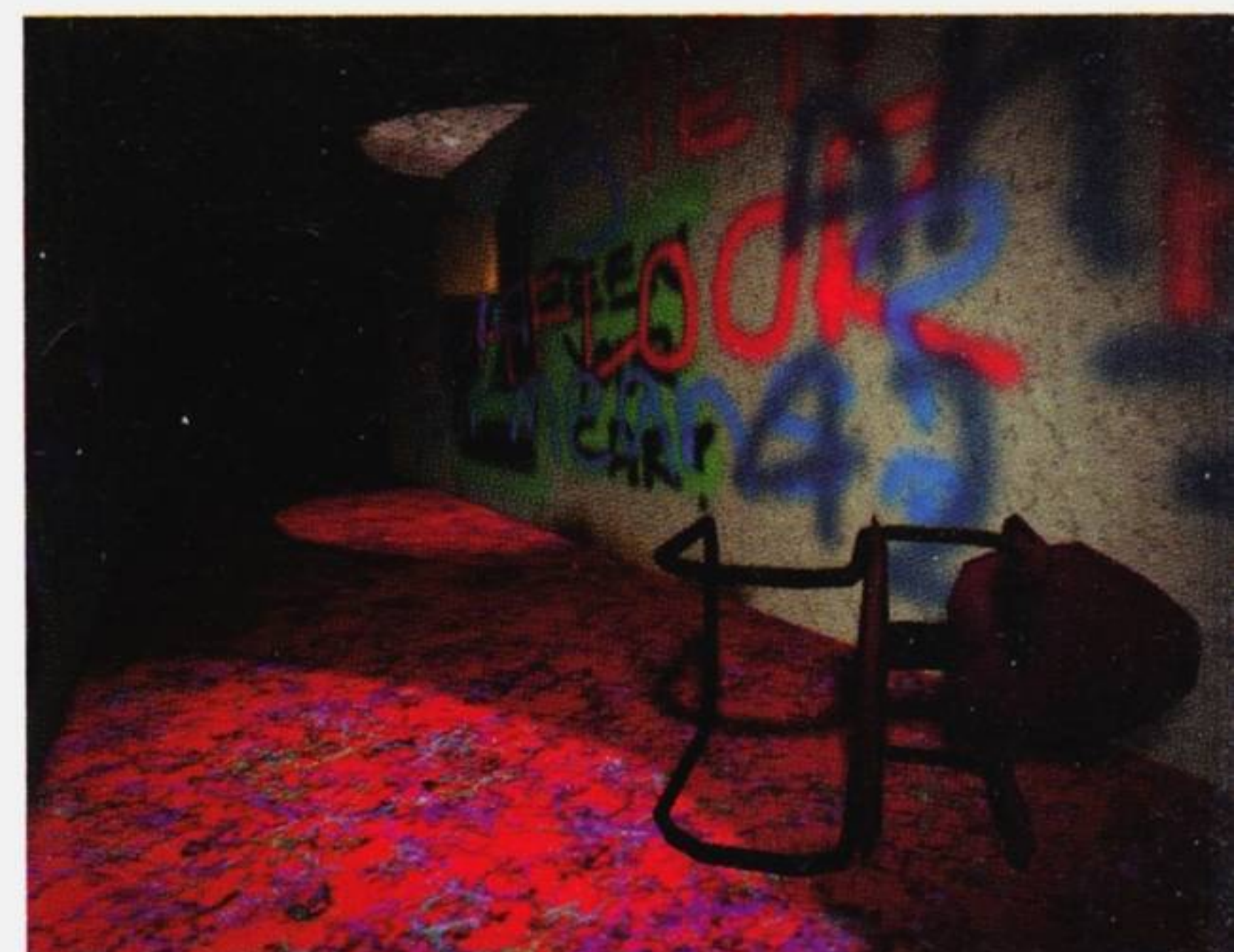
Sameer: Basically we get work wherever we can. We have done quite a few raves and have previously done pub shows, but not recently. Our main aim is the rave crowd, because they are an easier crowd to get access to.

Why do you think this so?

Sameer: Primarily because there is so much resistance to electronic dance music in Australia. There is this barrier — people do not like change, they don't understand it. It's just a question of time before they come around, though. At a grass roots level, the kids want to listen to dance music, not rock 'n' roll. Hopefully the principles of supply and demand will make the situation change.

Severed Heads

have always led the way with electronic music in Australia, and now they are in production of a very impressive looking game for the PC CD-Rom. Tom Ellard from the band popped into the HYPER office to show us the work-in-progress (seen right) and it looks set to be as visually mind-blowing as *The 7th Guest*, and with *Severed Heads* supplying music as well, get ready for a totally wicked multi-media experience. The game won't be out for quite a while, as funding such a massive project is difficult, but we'll be talking to Tom and keeping you up to date with the game's progress in future issues.



Thomas Covenant" by Stephen Donaldson; "The track, *Caamora* has a lot of tension in the structure inspired by the ritual burning of the giants in fire."

Another track, *Cyberphobia*, is about the fear of new technology, an affliction that Vision 4/5 definitely don't suffer from. Some sort of interactive music disc is on the cards for next year, the only problem (and it's a big one) is finding the finance to

produce it. Noel says that the disc (either CDI, CD-Rom or 3DO) will hopefully allow the user/listener to assemble the Vision 4/5 tracks as they like, and will also incorporate a game element, with the band's tracks emerging at different points in the gameplay. "The interactive discs that have been released so far, like Billy Idol's *Cyberpunk*, are just gimmicks. They're only using the technology because it's there, not because they want to do something really great with it. If we do it, we're going to do it properly."

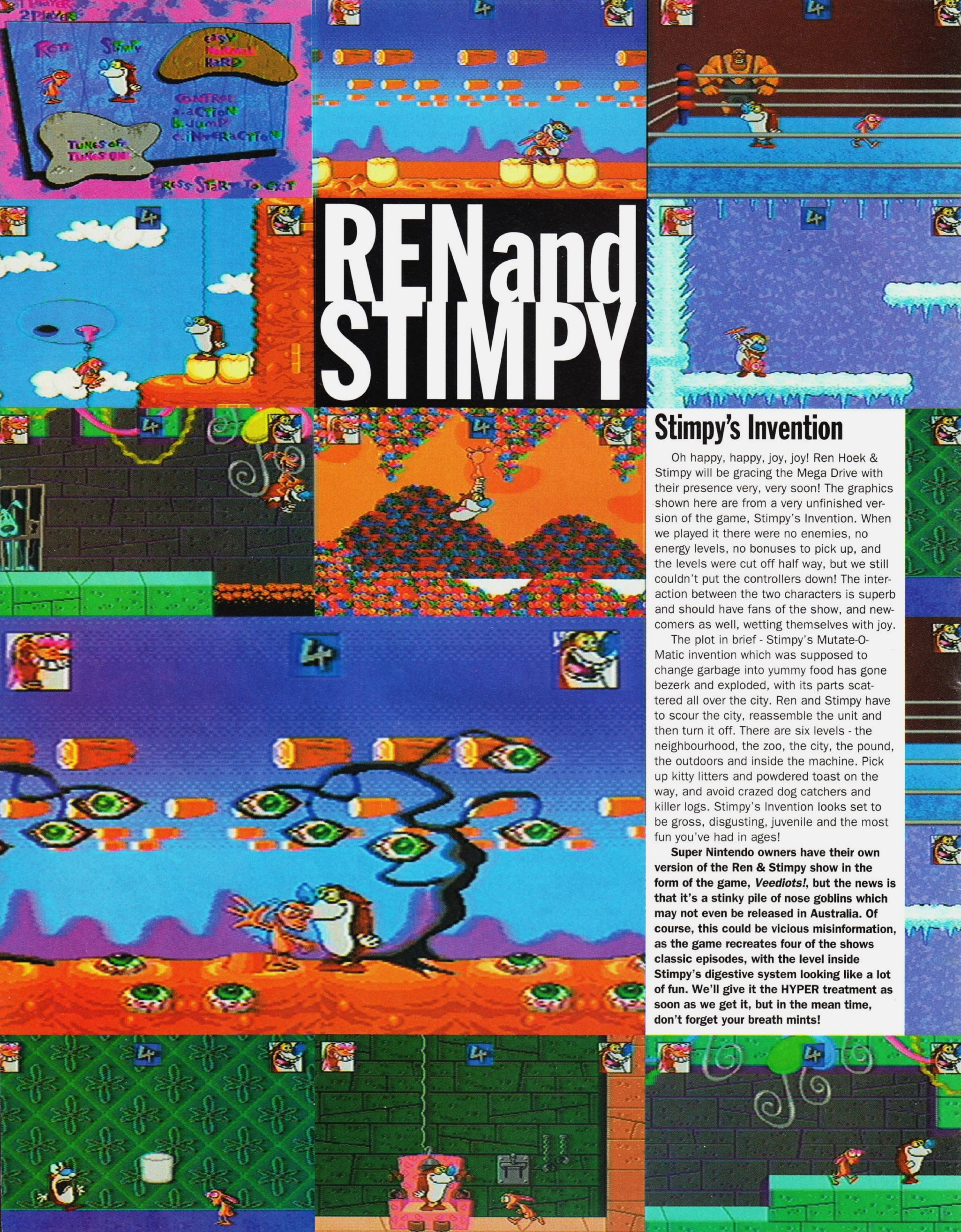
I find your music very commercial, poppy even.

Stuart: Yes, that's what we are trying to do. The radio stations are not playing the hardcore stuff because it may turn off the audience, but I can't understand why they don't play other dance music. The mentalities of techno and rock 'n' roll, are not really all that different. On Triple J Monday nights they play three hours of hard, hard rock 'n' roll, and techno/hardcore music is of a similar nature.

When *Severed Heads* and *Itch-E* and *Scratch-E* played at the Big Day Out last year, the crowd loved it, it was like. "Hey rock 'n' roll!" We know that there is an audience out there, if only we were able to get to them!

So where do you see things going? Overseas?

Stuart: It would have to be a last resort for me to ditch home and go overseas. I basically feel it would be just as hard. We are lucky in one respect, as there are not a lot of people out here doing this kind of music. I could count them all on two hands. Plus, financially it would be a big step. I honestly believe that one day things will work out, and we will be in a position to capitalise on that. We've done the ground work, and when it is a success we'll still be around, making records.



REN and STIMPY

Stimpy's Invention

Oh happy, happy, joy, joy! Ren Hoek & Stimpy will be gracing the Mega Drive with their presence very, very soon! The graphics shown here are from a very unfinished version of the game, Stimpy's Invention. When we played it there were no enemies, no energy levels, no bonuses to pick up, and the levels were cut off half way, but we still couldn't put the controllers down! The interaction between the two characters is superb and should have fans of the show, and newcomers as well, wetting themselves with joy.

The plot in brief - Stimpy's Mutate-O-Matic invention which was supposed to change garbage into yummy food has gone bezerk and exploded, with its parts scattered all over the city. Ren and Stimpy have to scour the city, reassemble the unit and then turn it off. There are six levels - the neighbourhood, the zoo, the city, the pound, the outdoors and inside the machine. Pick up kitty litters and powdered toast on the way, and avoid crazed dog catchers and killer logs. Stimpy's Invention looks set to be gross, disgusting, juvenile and the most fun you've had in ages!

Super Nintendo owners have their own version of the Ren & Stimpy show in the form of the game, *Veediots!*, but the news is that it's a stinky pile of nose goblins which may not even be released in Australia. Of course, this could be vicious misinformation, as the game recreates four of the shows classic episodes, with the level inside Stimpy's digestive system looking like a lot of fun. We'll give it the HYPER treatment as soon as we get it, but in the mean time, don't forget your breath mints!

Joe Montana's NFL Football

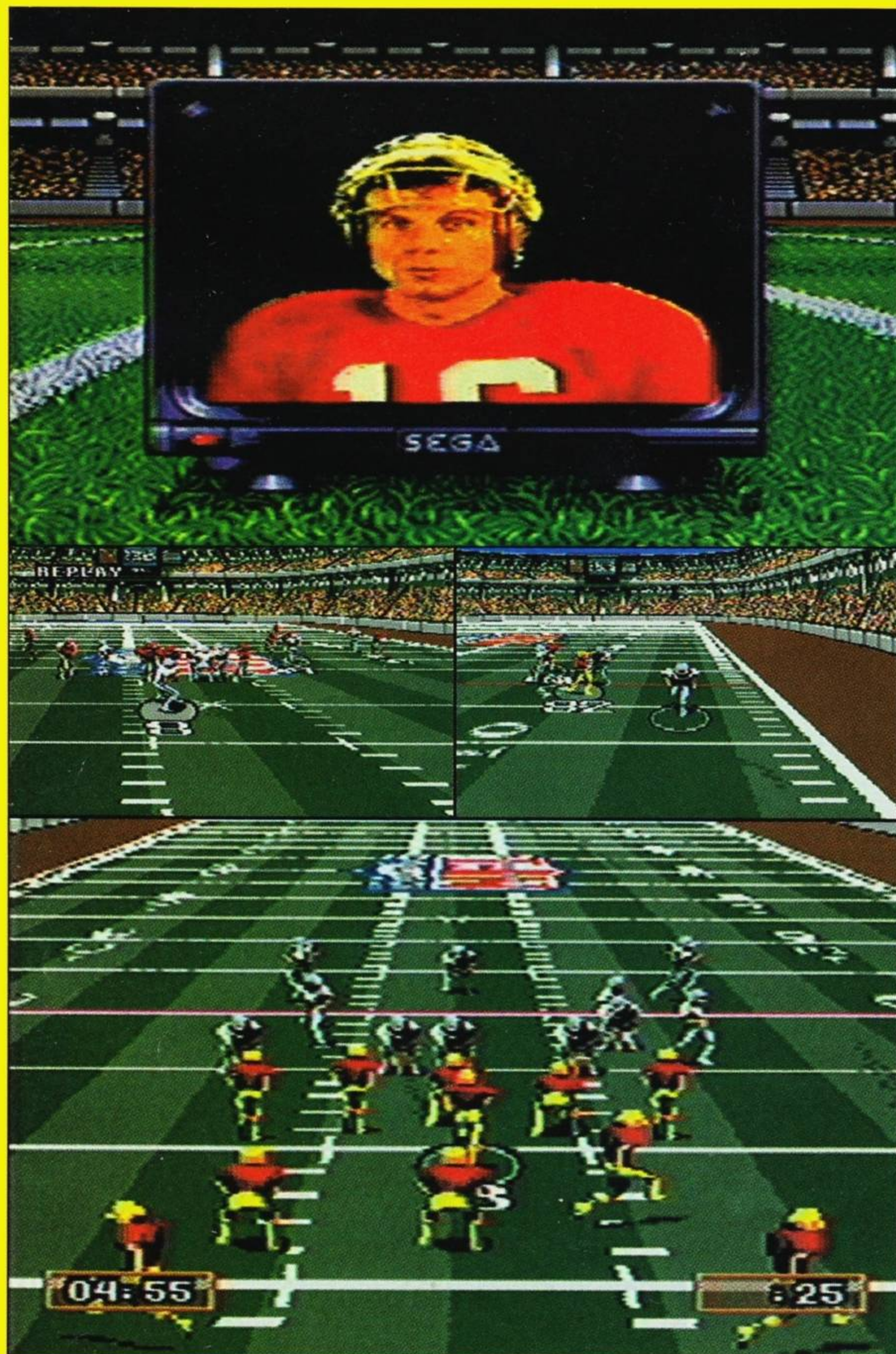
Joe Montana may be the greatest quarterback ever to have hobbled on to a football field, but Sega's *Joe Montana* series has always lacked something - game-play. So Sega have gone all out to with the CD version to make it as playable as it is technically impressive. How? By making it more like a *John Madden* game. We've played it, and while it's a lot better than the *Montana* carts, we're still not sure it's got what it takes to take on *Madden 94*. But that's best left to a discussion next issue.

You can play a full NFL season and if you're good enough, you'll get a Playoff spot and maybe even take

MEGA CD
Available: January
Category: Sports
Players: 1
Publisher: Sega of America

out the Superbowl. If you win the Superbowl you can take on 10 of the NFL's all-time great teams - like the '72 Dolphins or the '68 Jets.

The graphics are good (if blocky), there's scaling and rotation galore, play by play commentary, instant replay from four different angles (even Helmet Cam), and full-motion video (using Cinepak technology) of Joe himself. Check out the screen grabs and stay tuned for a full review.

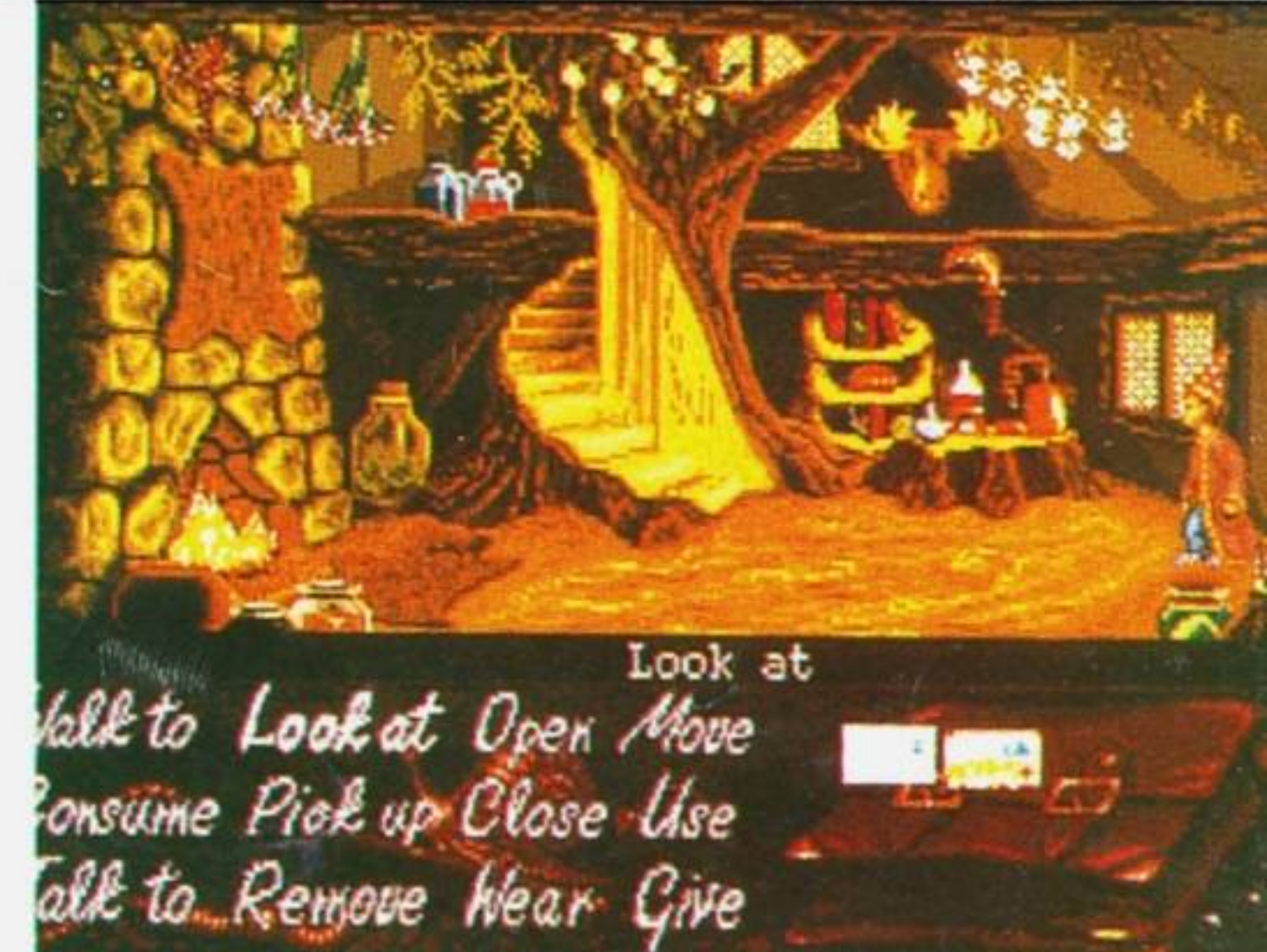


Look at
 Walk to Look at Open Move
 Consume Pick up Close Use
 Talk to Remove Wear Give



Look at
 Walk to Look at Open Move
 Consume Pick up Close Use
 Talk to Remove Wear Give

Simon the Sorcerer



Look at
 Walk to Look at Open Move
 Consume Pick up Close Use
 Talk to Remove Wear Give

PC
Available: December
Category: Adventure
Players: 1
Publisher: Infocom

Look out *Monkey Island* and *Day of the Tentacle*, there's another humorous graphic adventure on the block! Simon, would you believe, is a sorcerer. He is also a 12 year old with a big attitude which may give you a few laughs on your quest to rescue the good wizard Calypso. Alternatively he could piss you right up the wall with his all-too cute adolescent "wit". I think it's going to be a case of either loving it or hating it.

There are over 100 scenes to explore on Skull Island and along the way, Simon will come into con-

tact with all sorts of weird and wonderful creatures and people, including beer-swilling trolls, a schizophrenic two-headed clerk, werfrogs, swamplings and a dragon with a fiery temper. Witty dialogue is promised, as well as a challenging puzzle structure, but as fans of *Monkey* and *Tentacle* will know, it'll take a lot to make this one better than the LucasArts classics. Available before Christmas.

CLAYFIGHTER

SNES

Available: February
 Category: Fighting
 Players: 1-2
 Publisher: Interplay

At last a fighting game that doesn't take itself too seriously. *Clayfighter* looks like an innovative twist to the *Streetfighter* genre - all of the characters have been created using claymation. So instead of muscle-bound world warriors, you get to play with vicious snowmen like Bad Mr Frosty, flexible fighting demons like Bonkers the Clown, Ickybod Clay, Taffy and the Blob, a buxom Viking called Helga, and even an Elvis impersonator - Blue Suede Goo.

There's bonus stages, eight speed settings and some extra-special special moves (like Blue Suede Goo's Hair Blade) so the one-on-one action is as intense as it is hilarious. The claymation looks spectacular and there's no messy blood flying around the screen to get your parents' knickers in a twist. We can't wait to get our hands on this one.



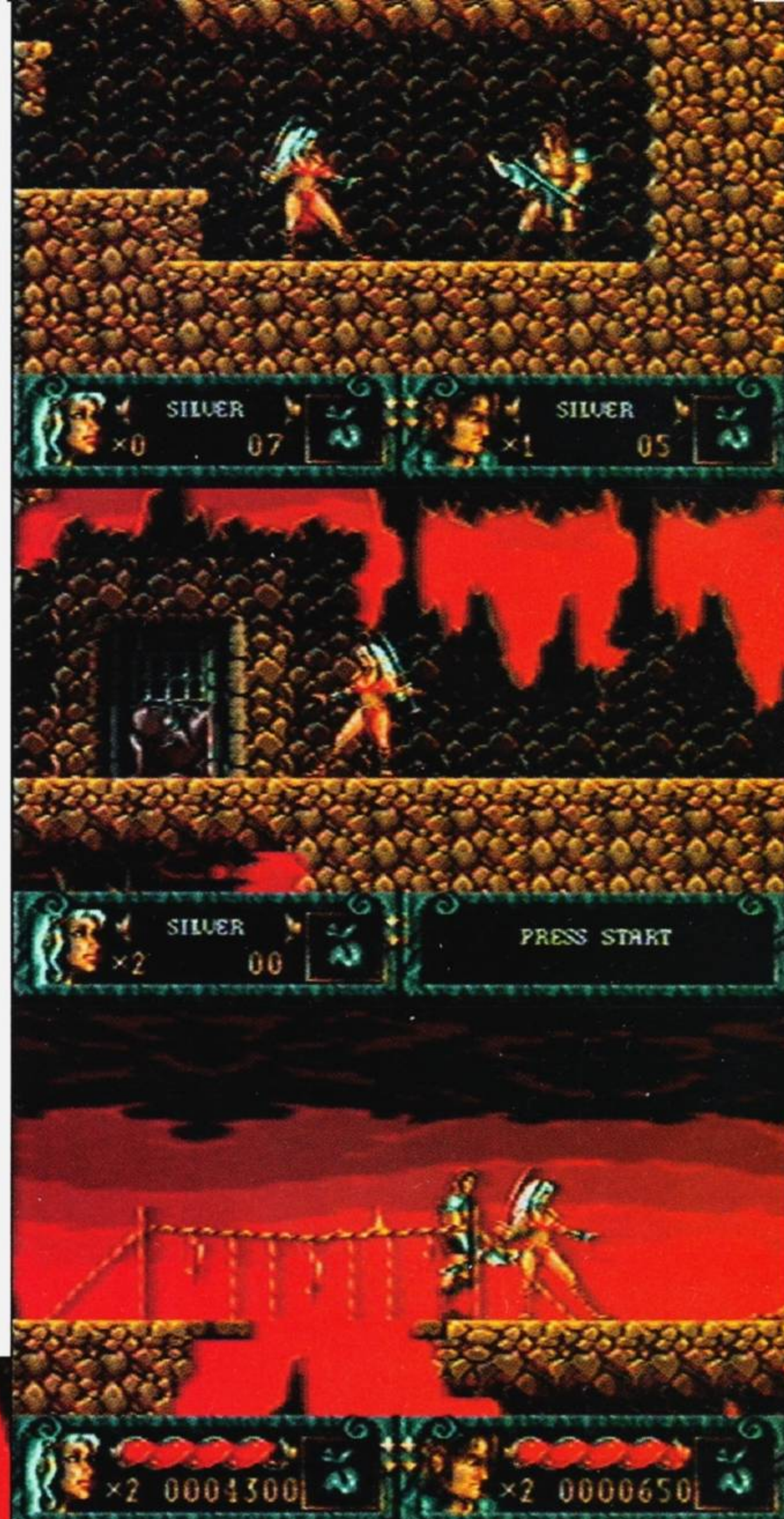
Blades of Vengeance

MEGA DRIVE

Available: December
 Category: Action/Platformer
 Players: 1-2
 Publisher: Electronic Arts

Blades of Vengeance doesn't look overly promising. It's one of those Swords and Sorcery platform hack 'em ups in the tradition of *Golden Axe*. *Golden Axe* was quite exciting in 1988; sadly, we're now entering 1994.

Anyway, you get a choice of the standard three characters - a butch Warrior type, a butch but cute Amazon type, and a wizened but tough Sorcerer type - there's lots of magic to go round too. Unfortunately, all you have to do is walk forever to the right, jump a bit and hit the attack button a lot. But (and this is the most interesting thing about it) the game was developed right here in Australia by the famed Beam Software team (see our feature this issue) so we'll be as kind to it as we possibly can be when we get around to reviewing it.



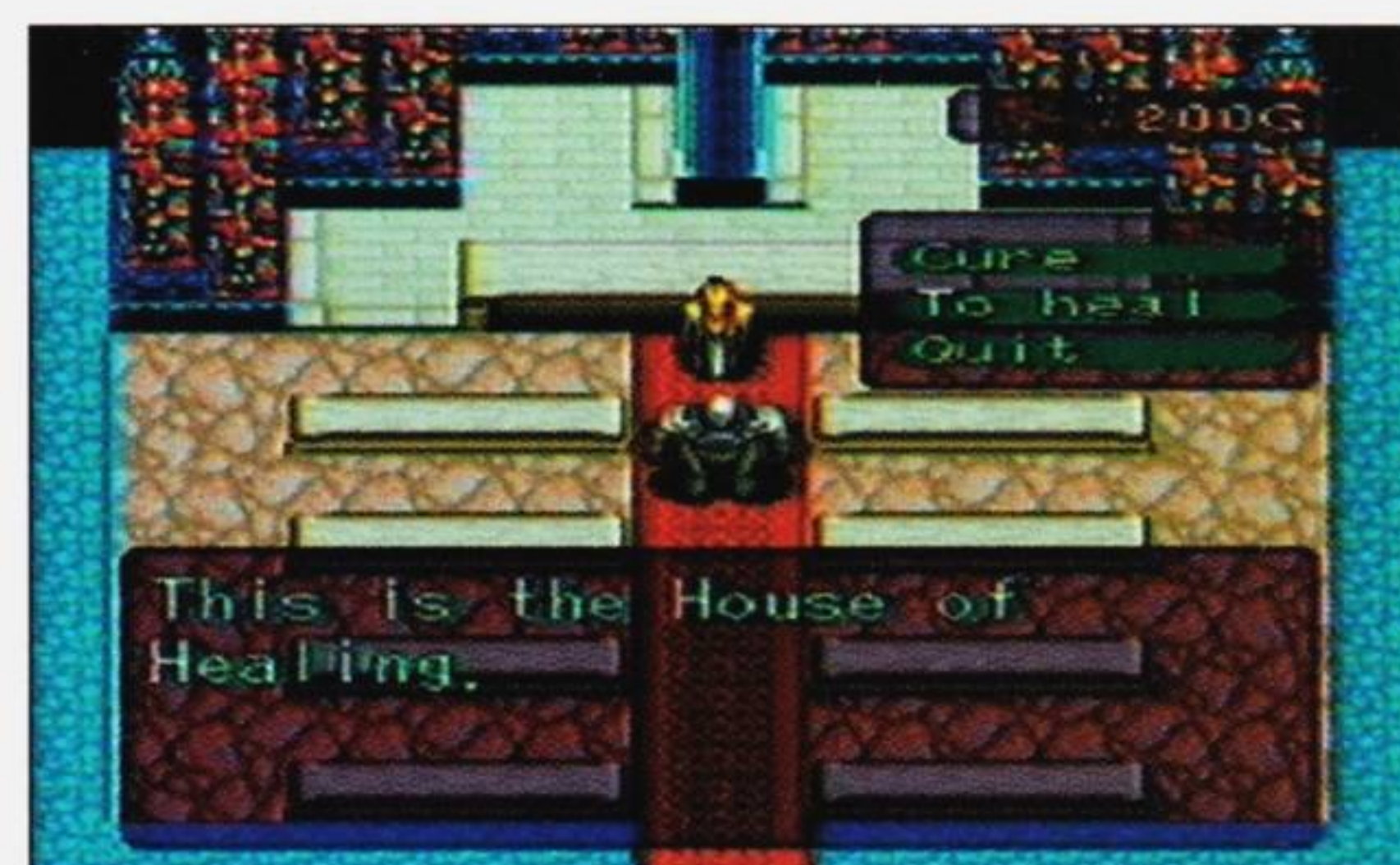
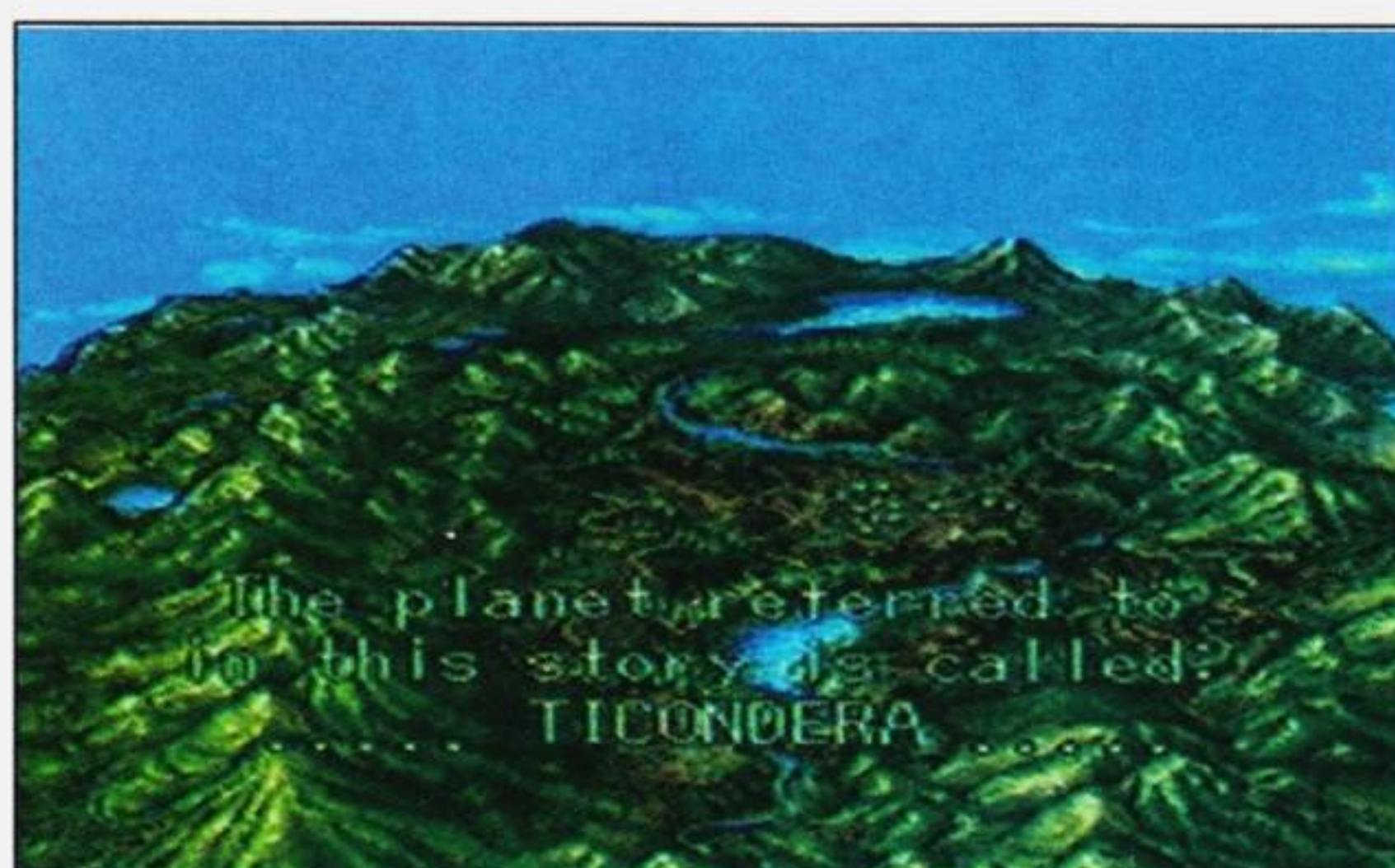
7th Saga

SNES

Available: February
 Category: RPG
 Players: 1
 Publisher: Enix

One of the areas of software drought on the SNES is decent RPGs. Not many good ones get made, leaving RPG fans left with unsatisfied lusts for adventure. But there is hope, and that hope comes from Enix, a company that has consistently produced RPGs of style and quality for the SNES, such as *Soul Blazer*, *EVO*, *Act Raiser* and now *7th Saga*.

7th Saga allows you to select from seven characters, and do the wandering around RPG thing for seven different quests which are dependent on who you are playing. The cart has some excellent music and graphics, as well as an interesting variation on the tired RPG combat systems currently around. It will hopefully be given a local release soon.





ULTIMA 8 PAGAN

PC

Available: December

Category: RPG

Players: 1

Publisher: Origin

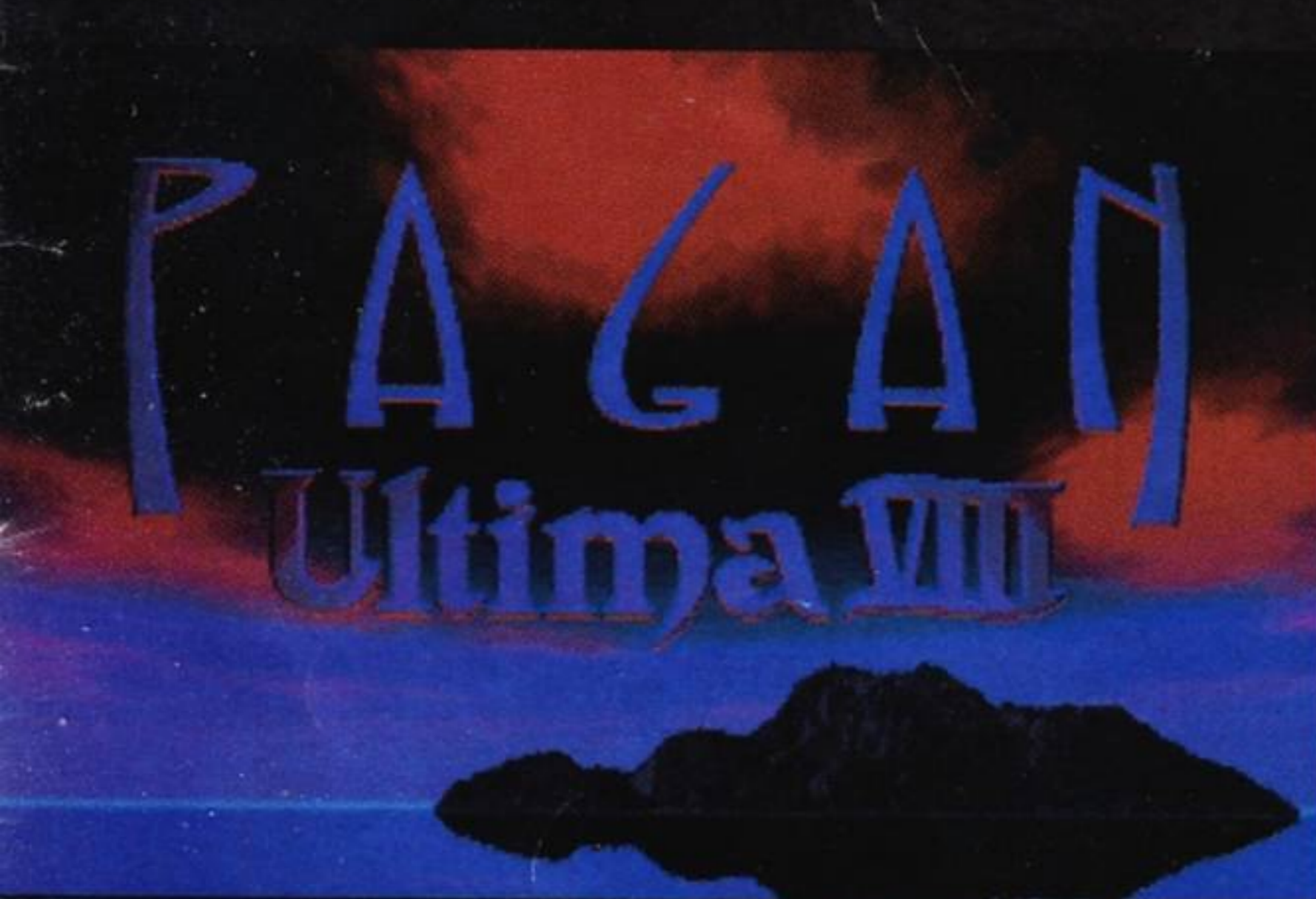
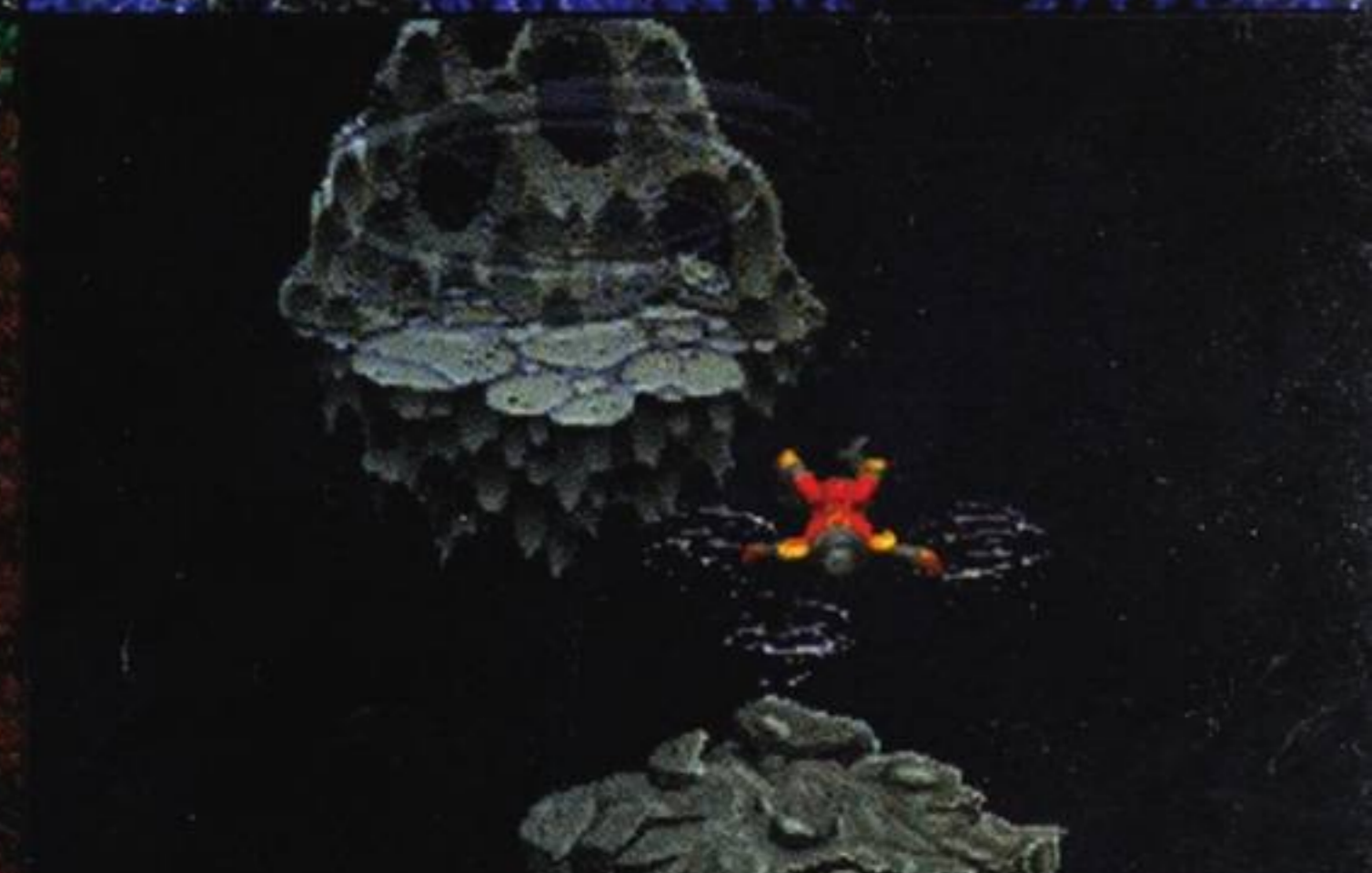
Ultima 8: Pagan, looks set to take RPGs to a new level. You again take on the role of the Avatar who has been transported from Britannia to a world already under the dominion of the evil Guardian. Once there, you must gather enough power to face and defeat the elemental Titans.

The game is viewed from a more

slanted angle meaning you are closer to the action than in previous Ultima titles. Over 1200 frames of animation for the Avatar will have him looking more lifelike than ever before. He can now jump as well as climb, adding a new dimension to combat and exploration.

The game runs at twice as many frames per second, producing a richer, faster story and there is 10 times the art of any previous Ultima! A speech pack will also be available, allowing monsters and characters to come to life.

Hopefully it will be in the stores before Xmas.



Game Charts

Hyper's game charts supplied by the Gamesmen.

Mega Drive

1. Streetfighter 2
2. F1
3. Landstalker
4. Aladdin
5. Micro Machines
6. John Madden Football '93
7. Jack Nicklaus Golf
8. Jungle Strike
9. Jurassic Park
10. Flashback

IBM

1. Microprose Grand Prix
2. Privateer
3. MS Flight Sim 5
4. Fields of Glory
5. Street Fighter 2
6. Jurassic Park
7. Railroad Tycoon Deluxe
8. Front Page Sports
9. Links 386 Pro
10. Gunship 2000

Super Nintendo

1. SF2 - Turbo
2. Mortal Kombat
3. Super NBA Basketball
4. Super Mario All Stars
5. Jurassic Park
6. Nigel Mansell's
7. Pebble Beach Golf
8. WWF Royal Rumble
9. Vegas Starkes
10. Player Manager

Mega CD

1. Sonic CD
2. Wolfchild
3. Final Fight
4. Time Gal
5. Robo Aleste

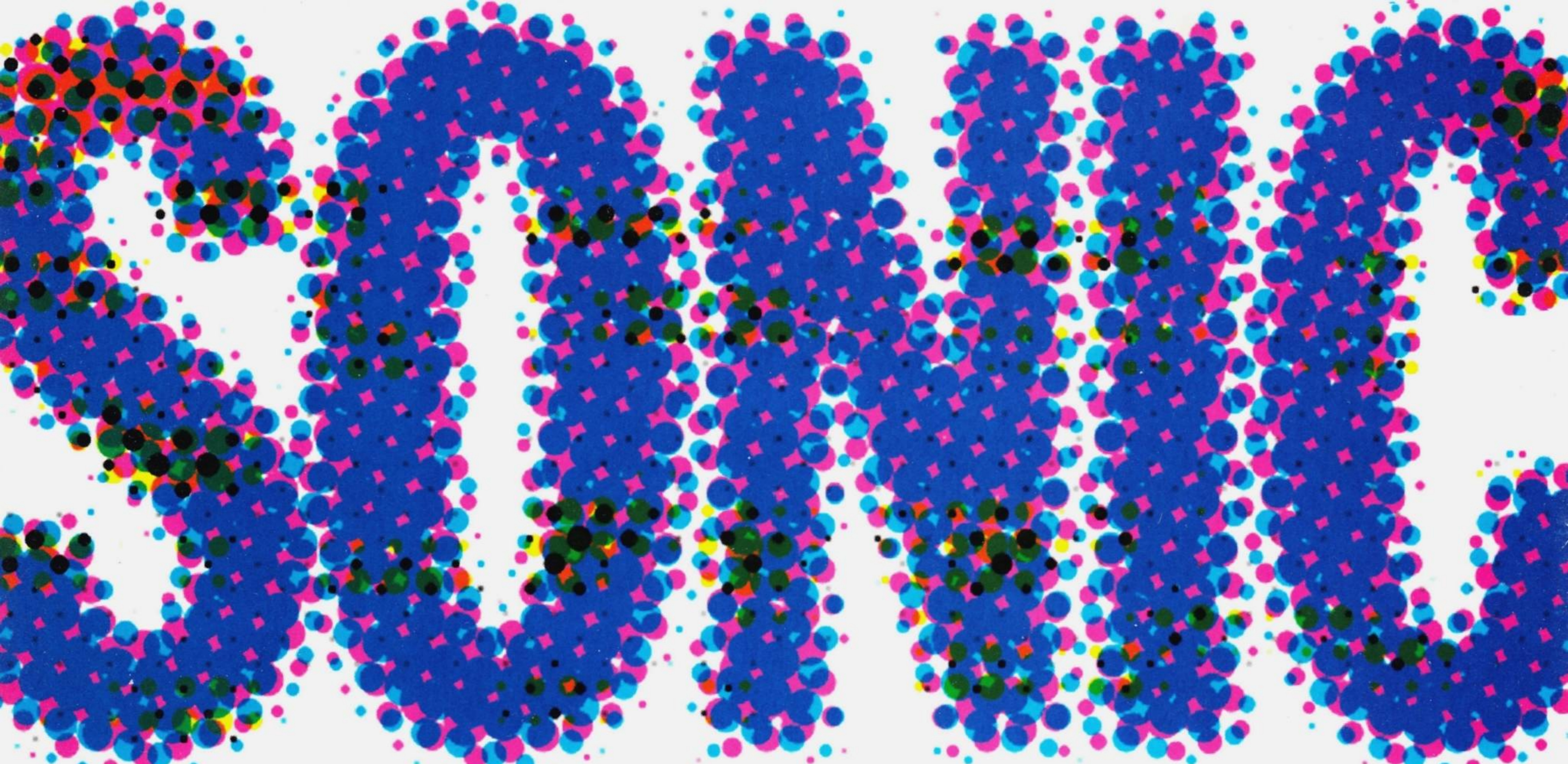
Hyper's January Chart Predictions

Check these hot titles out! All available in January.

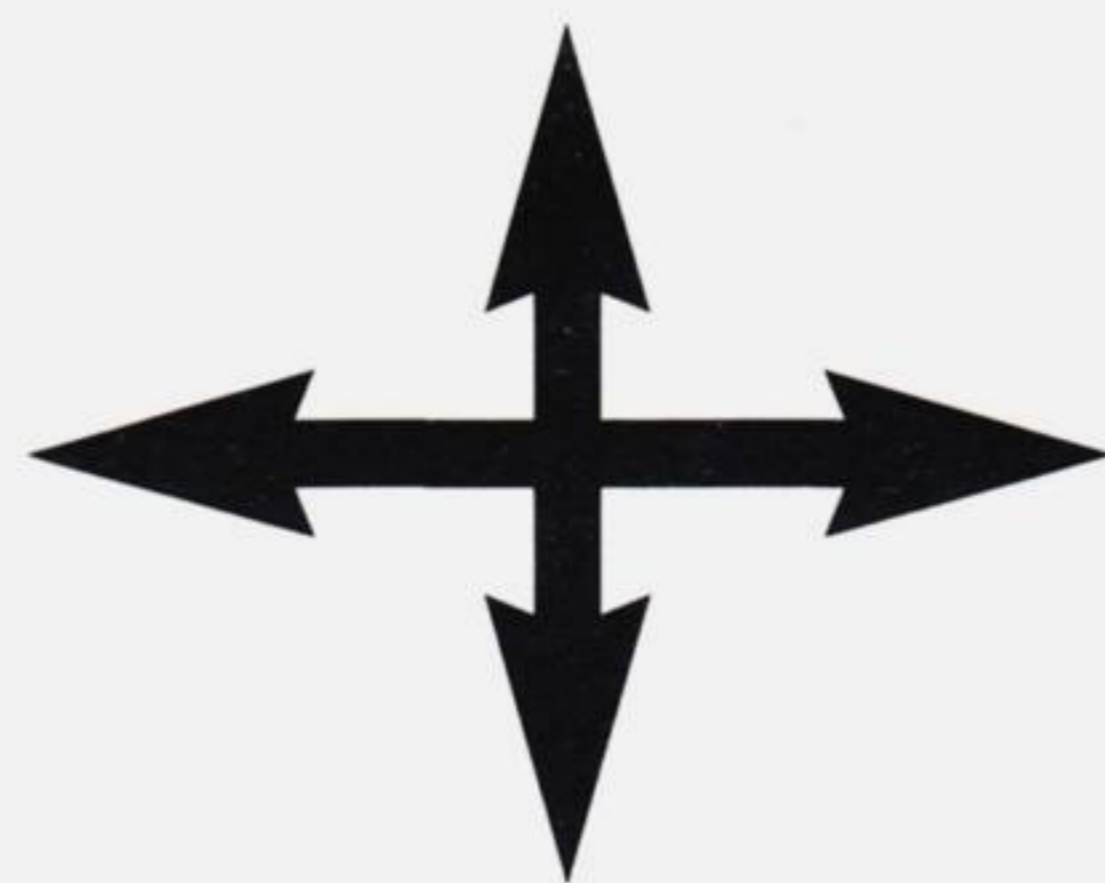
- Skyblazer** (SNES)
- Rebel Assault** (PC CD-Rom)
- Super Empire Strikes Back** (SNES)
- FIFA International Soccer** (Mega Drive)
- Toe Jam and Earl 2** (Mega Drive)
- Sam and Max Hit the Road** (PC)
- Mechwarrior** (SNES)
- Equinox** (SNES)
- Journeyman** (PC CD-Rom)
- James Pond 3** (Mega Drive)
- Zool** (Mega Drive)
- Alien vs Predator** (SNES)
- Gunstar Heroes** (Mega Drive)
- Ultima 8: Pagan** (PC)
- Shadowrun** (SNES)



REVIEW



Ahhhh, Christmas time. It's a time of peace, goodwill and opportunity. An opportunity for Sega to make sack loads of cash by releasing new Sonic titles. Not only is there Sonic Spinball for the Mega Drive, but the speedy one is finally debuting on the Mega CD. Will the games survive the marketing hype? Read on...



Sonic Spinball

Got a bit of a hedgehog fetish, but you're sick and tired of platform games? Picky bugger, aren't you? Why not try Sonic Spinball? ANDREW HUMPHREYS did and he'd just love to share it with you, dear readers...

The last time I played a game using a hedgehog as a ball I got arrested - something about cruelty to animals and playing soccer in the off season. But there'll be no such problems with *Sonic Spinball*. Why? Because Sonic the Hedgehog is not a real hedgehog (I'm sorry boys and girls, but he's not) and he doesn't leave hedgehog-blood splattered all around a deserted car park.

When we previewed this game in the last issue we told you it wasn't

Sonic 3, but I'll tell you again: this is not *Sonic 3*. It's a pinball game with Sonic as the ball. If Mario can have his own spin-off games (like the excellent *Super Mario Kart*) then so can Sonic. It's all part of Sega's cunning plan to make their Hedgehog the President of the United States and leader of the Free World. Or something like that...

Veg-O-Matic

Sonic Spinball is not an ordinary pinball game - the gameplay is far more rewarding than other video pinball games (like *Dragon's Fury*), and it's actually got a plot. Robotnik has built himself a high-tech factory, the

Veg-O-Fortress, on top of a live volcano. As usual, he's getting his kicks by turning cute, fluffy animals into deadly hedgehog-hunting robots. Only Sonic can stop this insidious evil.

But the Veg-O-Fortress is protected by a special Pinball Defence Mechanism, and if Sonic's not careful he could end up being bounced silly. There's four HUGE levels to deal with. Each level requires you to collect a given number of Chaos Emeralds (three for the first two levels, five for levels three and four) in order to open up the Boss Room. Destroy the boss and the level is complete.

LEVEL ONE



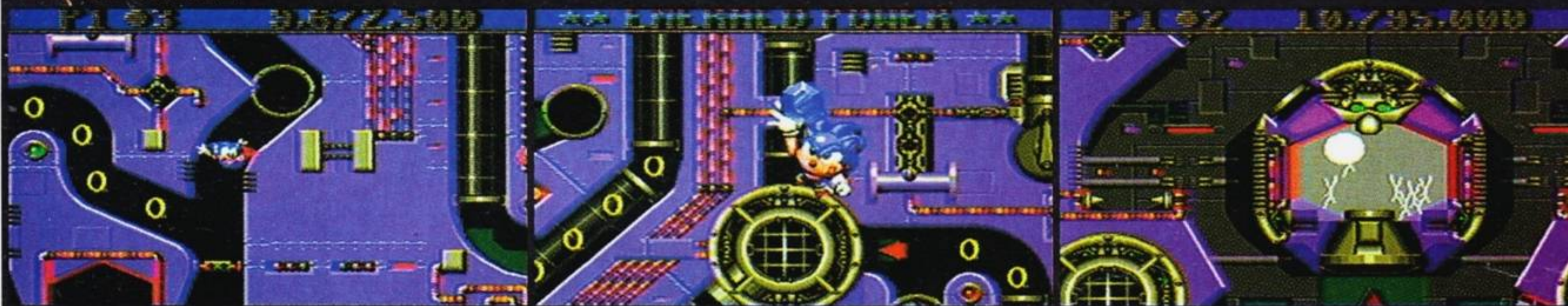
Sonic Spinball is made up of four very different levels. Sonic enters the Veg-O-Fortress from under the sea into the first level, *The Toxic Caves*. Unfortunately the water is a touch toxic, so Sonic needs to stay dry. Check out the level map we've patched together for you to see just how well-designed it is.

LEVEL TWO



The second level is the *Lava Powerhouse* and, as the name suggests, it's full of lava, not water. Lava pits are obviously best avoided.

LEVEL THREE



Make it through the Powerhouse and you hit level three - *The Machine*. It's made up of pistons and dangerous machinery. And there's no Workers' Comp if Sonic has an accident.

LEVEL FOUR



Once you manage to take out *The Machine* things get really interesting. Robotnik takes off in a spaceship built into the top of the fortress. But Sonic hangs on and it's time for the last level - *The Showdown*. If you're lucky you'll also get to see the 3-D Bonus Stages. Sonic has to smash open the glass jars at the back of the machine which are full of his fluffy friends from the Sonic Comicbook series. Lots of fun!

Collecting the Emeralds is more than just a simple matter of bouncing around and using your flippers. There's switches to pull, targets to hit, passages to open and even cart-rides to take.

Flippin' Out

Sega of America have done a very slick job with their new toy. The graphics are excellent. Sonic is his usual smoothly animated self, but it's the backgrounds that really stand out. All four levels have been beautifully designed. The detail and the complexity is just amazing.

The soundtrack packs in familiar Sonic themes with new in-game music

and there's some excellent effects too (the death-screams from the first boss are wild). All in all, it's well up to the standard you expect from a Sonic game.

Spinball plays very well. The flipper controls are great and the whole game has an authentic pinball feel to it. You can hold the ball in your flipper, hit it hard or soft, and you can even influence Sonic's direction after you hit him (sort of like tilting a machine). Gravity does everything it should too. And when he's not being the ball, Sonic spins and jumps just fine.

Finishing this game will take a bit of skill and a lot of patience (it is

pinball after all). The game gives you lots of things to do and it gets difficult very quickly. One thing that frustrated the HYPER crew, however, was that when you died, you had to start the whole level all over again, even if you'd already collected an Emerald - or even if you had them all. But we were playing a pre-release version of the game and it might be a different story if you buy the game off the shelf.

Niggles aside, this is an exceptionally designed, imaginative game. It's a class product and a welcome and refreshing addition to the Sonic series.

MEGA DRIVE

available

NOW

category

SPINBALL?

players

1-4 (ALTERNATELY)

publisher

SEGA OF AMERICA

visuals

The levels are perfectly designed, the bosses are cool, and Sonic's not too bad either.

sound

Familiar Sonic themes and some nice (if ultimately repetitive) in-game music. Good FX too.

gameplay

Pinball fans will flip (geddit?) but it may be too slow for others. It is involving and slightly addictive though.

longterm

It's tough, but there are only four levels to play around in.

overall

It's original, it's challenging, and more often than not, it's a lot of fun. And it's not Sonic 3.

88%

This is a map of the first level. To get at the first Emerald you need to hit two switches during it, move up to the Sewer section, then paddle an oil drum over to it. To get the other two you'll need



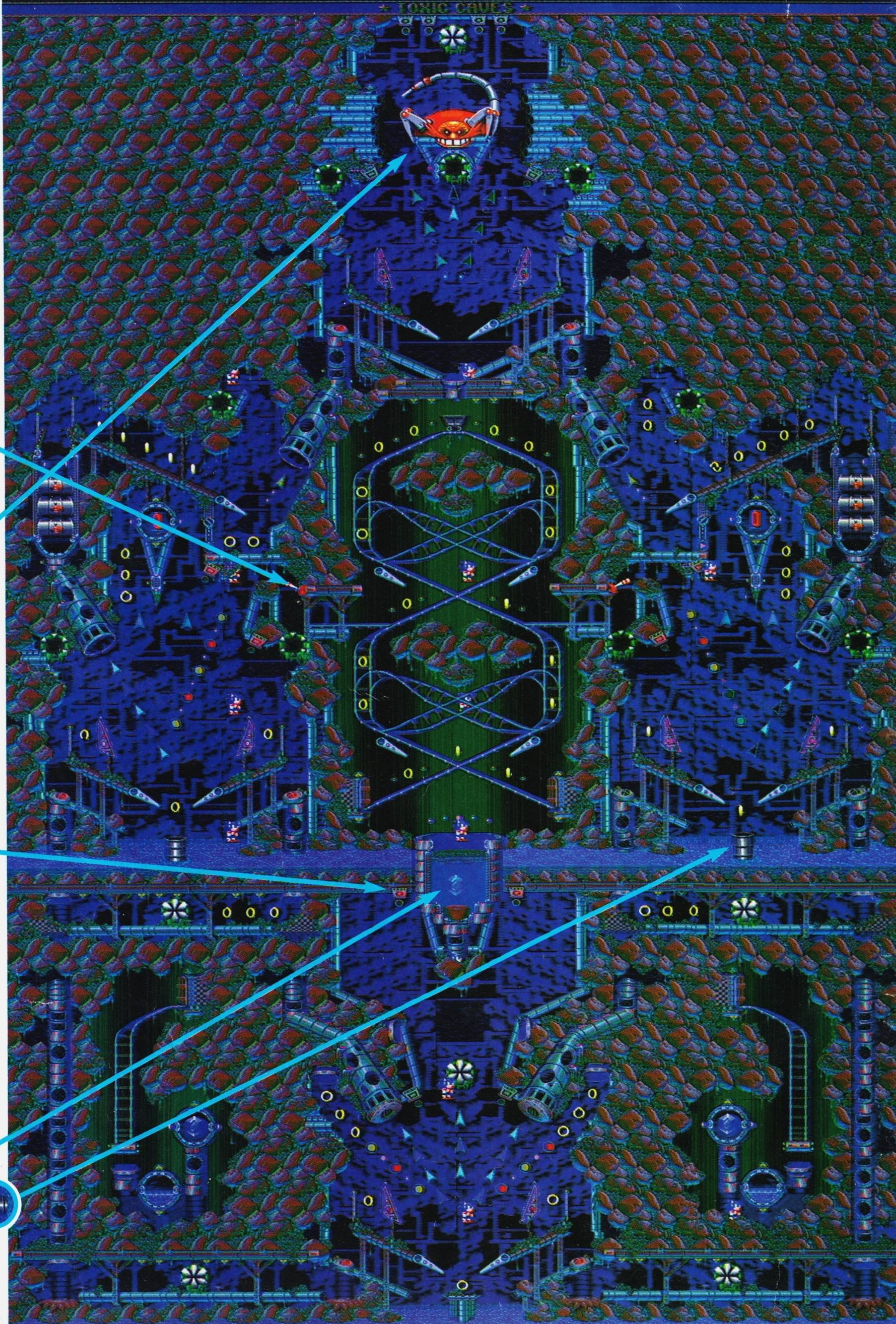
to pull the right switches. Then find your way up to the Boss Room and make Robotnik scream.



and take a mine cart for a spin. It's a lot harder and a lot more involving than simply racking up a high score.



ply racking up a high score.





What can you say about Sonic that hasn't been said before? Not much really, so we're not even going to try to write anything clever to introduce him. STUART CLARKE has a spin on the Mega CD's most eagerly awaited title.

I'm going to come clean here. While Sonic may have become too big for his shiny red boots and been hyped by the Sega corporate machine until I felt like punching his spiky blue head in, he is still the star of some of the best video games ever made, and I am an unashamed admirer. In my mind, Sonic has hardly put a foot wrong in his short but spectacular career, and I had little doubt that he would with his debut on CD.

Good News and Bad News

And the good news is that he doesn't. Fans of the speedy blue one will be wetting themselves when they see, hear and play Sonic's new adventure. But that's not to say that the game is without it's faults and problems. In fact there are a few, the most immediately obvious being that Sonic CD looks and plays exactly like the Mega Drive's Sonic 1 and 2. Maybe I was expecting too much from the Mega CD or the programmers, but I couldn't help but be disappointed that there were no startlingly different tricks or much divergence from the tried-and-true gameplay. It's very much a case of been there, done that, I'm bored with it and want something new.

Another problem is that it's too easy. With unlimited continues to churn through, it should take no hardcore gamer more than a few days to complete all the levels. This doesn't actually mean you've completed the game (more on that later) but lots of people will just play to get through all the scenes and bounce on all the bosses, and once you've done that, the game does lose a certain appeal.

I don't mean to sound too negative though. Sonic fans will have big smiles on their faces as soon as they see the very impressive introduction where a Manga-style animation sets the story. And the story goes that Robotnik has man-



aged to capture the Little Planet that orbits Sonic's home world Mobius. The Little Planet contains the Time Stones which can alter and defy the passage of time. With these stones under his control, Robotnik will be able to manipulate time and enslave the world! (*Cue - evil laughter*). Of course, Sonic isn't having a bar of this, and he sets out to reach the Time Stones first and have some fun by bouncing on the mad Doctor a few more times. His resolve is strengthened when Robotnik's favourite henchman, Metal Sonic kidnaps Princess Sally (who has the hots for Sonic) at the beginning of the second zone.

So Sonic sets out for another dose of turbo-charged action and you're guaranteed to have a huge amount of fun getting him through all the weird and wonderful levels. The CD sound is a giant asset, with a wide range of tunes (ranging in style from techno to rock) plus some superb effects. While it's nothing new or revolutionary, Sonic CD will keep virtually anyone happy for a few hours and most people for a lot longer than that. It's definitely one of the best Mega CDs games out so far, and Sega have pulled out another big one for the world's number one video game icon. The hedgehog's a winner. And only a few months to wait for Sonic 3...



PALMTREE PANIC

Looking remarkably similar to the first stage in both Sonic 1 and 2, Palmtree Panic is also very easy. Use it as a chance to pick up a couple of Time Stones via the special stages.



COLLISION CHAOS

A very attractive little zone, both visually and aurally. Bright and distinctive graphics on all three time zones, with a techno track in the past which really kicks. The shattering glass effect is also spectacular. Robotnik is hiding in

a giant pinball section at the end, so gets some practice on the flippers.



TIDAL TEMPEST

This one is like the Labyrinth Zone on Sonic 1, and you'll spend a lot of time underwater, which can be slow and painful. However, there's chilled out tunes (which sound alot like the Tokyo Ska Paradise Orchestra) to keep you company.



QUARTZ QUADRANT

Hmmm, look at the scenery. This is a particularly spunky level, and the attention to detail is phenomenal. There's also a lot of fun to be had before you have to fight Robotnik on an ever-quickening treadmill.



WACKY WORKBENCH

The perspective effects on the roof will blow your mind, but this zone's quite a tough one. There are electric wires everywhere with a springy floor that keeps shooting you up into them. Plus there are the beams that leave Sonic

encased in ice. This is generally a lot of fun, but the boss at the end is about the toughest of the lot.



STARDUST SPEEDWAY

Brass and other musical instruments litter this most peculiar level. It can get very frustrating in parts, but there's lots of places where you can build up some big speed. At the end of the zone you face not only Robotnik, but Metal

Sonic as well, and if you avoid their laser fire and electricity weapons, you'll rescue the lovely Princess Sally. (Cue - crowd goes wild).



METALLIC MADNESS

As you would expect, the going is getting tough now, and Robotnik throws lots of frustrating enemies and tricky platforms at you. There are several cute bits, like the forward to background switching fences and the miniaturising

beam which turns our hero into Mini-Sonic. Beat this zone and you'll get to battle Robotnik for supremacy, but remember, if you don't have all the Time Stones from the special stages you can't completely win.



A VERY SPECIAL STAGE



Sonic is famous for his extra-special special stages, and CD Sonic doesn't let us down. What we get this time is a first-person perspective game where the object is to run around a road network, bouncing on a certain number of UFOs before the timer runs out. The Mega CD's scaling capabilities are in full effect here and the 3D effect is amazing (as are the totally tripped out backdrops). While Sonic runs fairly slowly (a little too slowly methinks), these stages are still a lot of fun, but also quite difficult. There are plenty of obstacles to avoid, like water (which makes the timer count down super fast) and Chopper Blocks which grab your feet and knock you flat, spilling all your rings. However there are also lots of goodies to collect and lots of fun to be had with the Fan Blocks which send you into flight, and Spring Blocks for bouncing high and launching airborne attacks.



Mastering the special stages is the key to winning the game. You have to collect all seven Time Stones to completely defeat Robotnik and halt his evil plans. And it's not easy, so a lot of practice is needed. I don't think too many people will mind putting in the time and effort though!



PAST PRESENT FUTURE

This is the extra treat for Sonic CD. The first 2 levels in each zone have three different sections - the past, the present (where you begin) and the future. All three time zones are the same size (huge), so this adds a lot to the lastability of the game as there is now three times the territory to explore. You don't necessarily need to time travel to complete a level, but if you want to create a *good* future (one that Robotnik hasn't messed up) you'll have to go back in time and destroy his evil machine which is pumping out foulness and pollution.

To go to the past or the future simply run past a marked signpost and build up enough speed to warp time. It's sometimes quite difficult to find enough space to maintain warp speed, so this brings an extra strategic element to the game. The clever player will soon find tricks on how to build up speed quickly and easily, and will be warping back and forwards continually.



TIME ATTACK

This is a nice little extra, aimed at all the speed freaks whose main aim is to get Sonic to the end of the level as quickly as possible. When you select the Time Attack option, you can race any of the levels on any zone, provided you have completed the zone in the main

game. The levels are timed to the hundredth of a second, and the top three are permanently recorded on battery backup. You can try and beat your own score, or have competitions with friends, so in this way it replaces the split-screen two-player mode from Sonic 2.



MEGA CD

available

NOW

category

PLATFORM/ACTION

players

1

publisher

SEGA

visuals

Basically the same as Sonic on Mega Drive. Some of the backdrops and enemies will trip you right out, and the special stage is another beauty.

93

sound

The music (one or two tracks excepted) and effects absolutely kick. This is one game where you definitely don't need to turn the sound down.

94

gameplay

It's the same Sonic that you know and love (or hate, as the case may be).

91

longterm

You'll love playing it so much you'll finish it very quickly. But if you want to *really* finish it, you'll be stuck with it quite a while.

82

overall

Sonic hasn't let us down yet, and Sonic CD isn't the place he's going to start. A must-have for fans, and hours of fun for everybody else.

89%

SUPER EMPIRE STRIKES BACK



No messing around here. You all know what this one's about, and how good Super Star Wars was. Excited? STEVE POLAK certainly is...

It's a Wet Dream Come True Movie licences for games are normally viewed with dread rather than anticipation or excitement. Most of the time the cart that results is more about hype and advertising, than being a playable game. Not so with the second in the LucasArts Star Wars trilogy, **Super Empire Strikes Back**. In this game you get it all. It is multi-character, with you taking control of Han Solo, Luke and the mighty grunter himself, Chewbacca, at various different occasions. And the

sound, the graphics, and the gameplay, well in terms of an action platformer, it's a SNES player's wet dream.

Yes, you can go one-on-one with an empire of weird and wonderful creatures from the fabled movie, ending in a climatic conflict with the asthmatic warlord himself, Darth Vader. The beauty of this quest is that it really traverses the whole milieu of the film, bringing you face to face with a multitude of worlds, new environments, and foes to decimate.

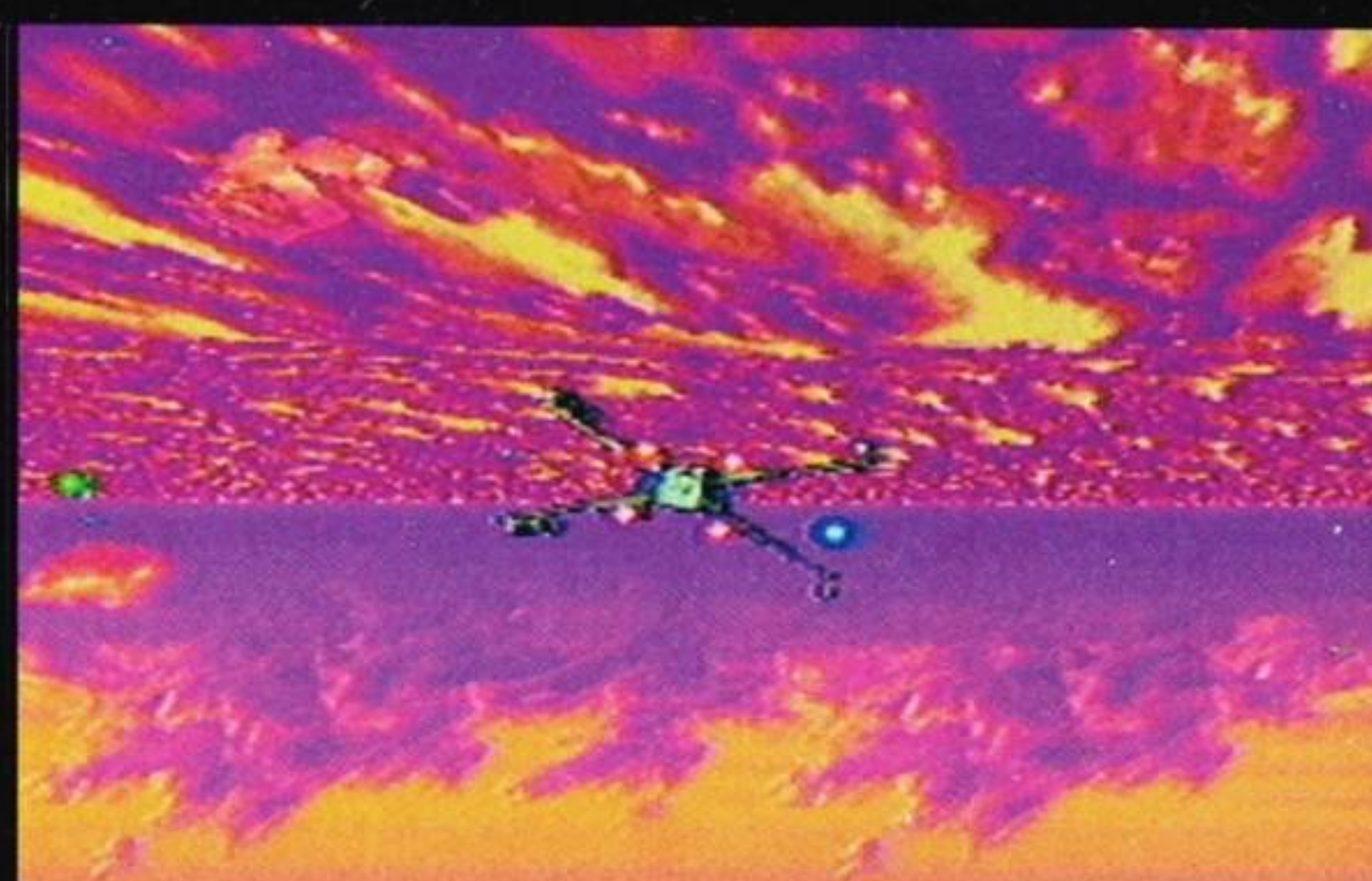
Actually, the cinematic scenes that link the huge number of stages follow the plot of the film quite closely. And better still, the interludes are brilliantly drawn, and allow you to really get into the feel of the game. The bits of the squat weird one, the ubiquitous Yoda, are particularly impressive. And apart from the screen where the millennium Falcon lands on Lando's cloud island, the graphics for all of the other cinematic bits will have your jaw wanting to drop in awe. »»

We've grouped these shots according to the various characters in **Super Empire Strikes Back**. The Mode 7 Snowspeeder and X-Wing stages just have to be seen to be believed - almost as good as the Mega CD's *Thunderhawk*. And it's all crammed onto a cart!

LUKE SKYWALKER



X-WING



CHEWIE



SNOWSPEEDER



HAN SOLO



SPEEDSTERS





And Meaty Too SESB also has a lot of meat to it. This is a cart which will have you transfixed in front of the screen for hours. St Bernard dogs with provisions may have to be sent to emaciated SNES players who are dying from starvation, because they have forgotten about food, until they just manage to defeat that boss at the end of the next level. It's that compelling. And those bosses, well they are very very big, quite hard, and usually require quite a variety of tactics to overcome. But this is the beauty of SESB because you have a variety of weapons and abilities on hand to deal with the evil Imperial slime. Also the 'force' has been included so you have access to a whole range of 'spell' like powers. This really gives the gameplay a great deal of depth, as you can use mind control, invisibility, healing powers and various offensive Light Sabre movers that come with "Using the force".

Also the challenge is intensified by the manner in which SESB offers a series of different sections which would probably be complete games in their own right on other carts. There is a lot of good old platform style running around, blasting all the hapless creatures that cross your path, but SESB has much, much more. There are several amazing sections reminiscent of the Land speeder stage on Star Wars, where you have to pilot the X-wing, or other speeder craft along a brilliantly presented scrolling rotated landscape. Dizziness really results during these sections as the speed of the rotation, coupled with the brilliance of the landscape gives you a real buzz. I was really blown away by the approach to cloud city, where not only is there excellent scrolling through a layer of mist, but you can move

above and below the clouds, giving the 3D effect a real shake up. This bit has to be seen to be believed! It is definitely one of the best 3D movement screens on the SNES to date.

The Force is Strong Here

Basically whenever you are piloting something, the graphics and 3D effects are breathtaking, but there's more good news. The sonics, which were excellent in Star Wars, are even better now, with some great blast effects, as well as excellent vocal samples from the main characters in the film. The Chewie 'whingeing noises' are quite realistic, although a bit annoying at times, and the commentary by Vader, "The force is strong here", and "Very Impressive" really adds to the mood of some sections.

As well as that, the section where Luke finds Yoda is very atmospheric, combining some great screechy jungle sound effects, with a subtle echo, which really makes it sound like you are wandering around lost in a big wet wilderness. The clever use of shading also adds to this



section, so that it looks, sounds and almost feels like you are traipsing around in a dingy swamp stepping in big pools of alien do do. This whole feel is also complemented by some excellent stereo panning, which is even more awesome if you use a surround sound system.

Sequel Problems SESB's character sprite animation is good, but nothing less than what we would have expected if we had played the first episode of the Star Wars trilogy, and it is here where I had my only real problem with the game. I know I am only commenting on this because I can't find any other serious criticism, but the fact that the game is a sequel (albeit a brilliant one) means that the initial impact of the package has been weakened by the fact that we have seen a lot of it before. This makes the cart less of a must buy for those on a tight SNES budget. The gameplay is more or less the same as the quests in Star Wars, and so it depends on whether you would like another bite at the juicy LucasArts cherry.

Still if you're tempted, the final battle with the indomitable Lord Vader is ball-tearingly difficult. I haven't had such an engrossingly frustrating time since the end of levels bosses in Castlevania IV. So if you want to improve your vocab of expletives, use the force, and have a good hard loooooonnnngggg platform romp, then maybe you should get hip to the Super Empire Strikes Back groove.

The force is no farce.

SNES

available

JANUARY

category

ACTION

players

1

publisher

LUCASARTS

visuals

The platform levels are good with nice character animation, but it's the Mode 7 levels that will really blow your pants off.

92

sound

The soundtracks have been lifted straight from the movie - they're superb. Even better in Dolby Surround sound! Great FX too.

90

gameplay

Heaps to do with loads of variety. The platform bits may be a bit mundane but the variety more than makes up for it.

90

longterm

Size does count, and they don't come any bigger than this. Bosses galore provide a huge challenge. You'll play the Snowspeeder section again and again.

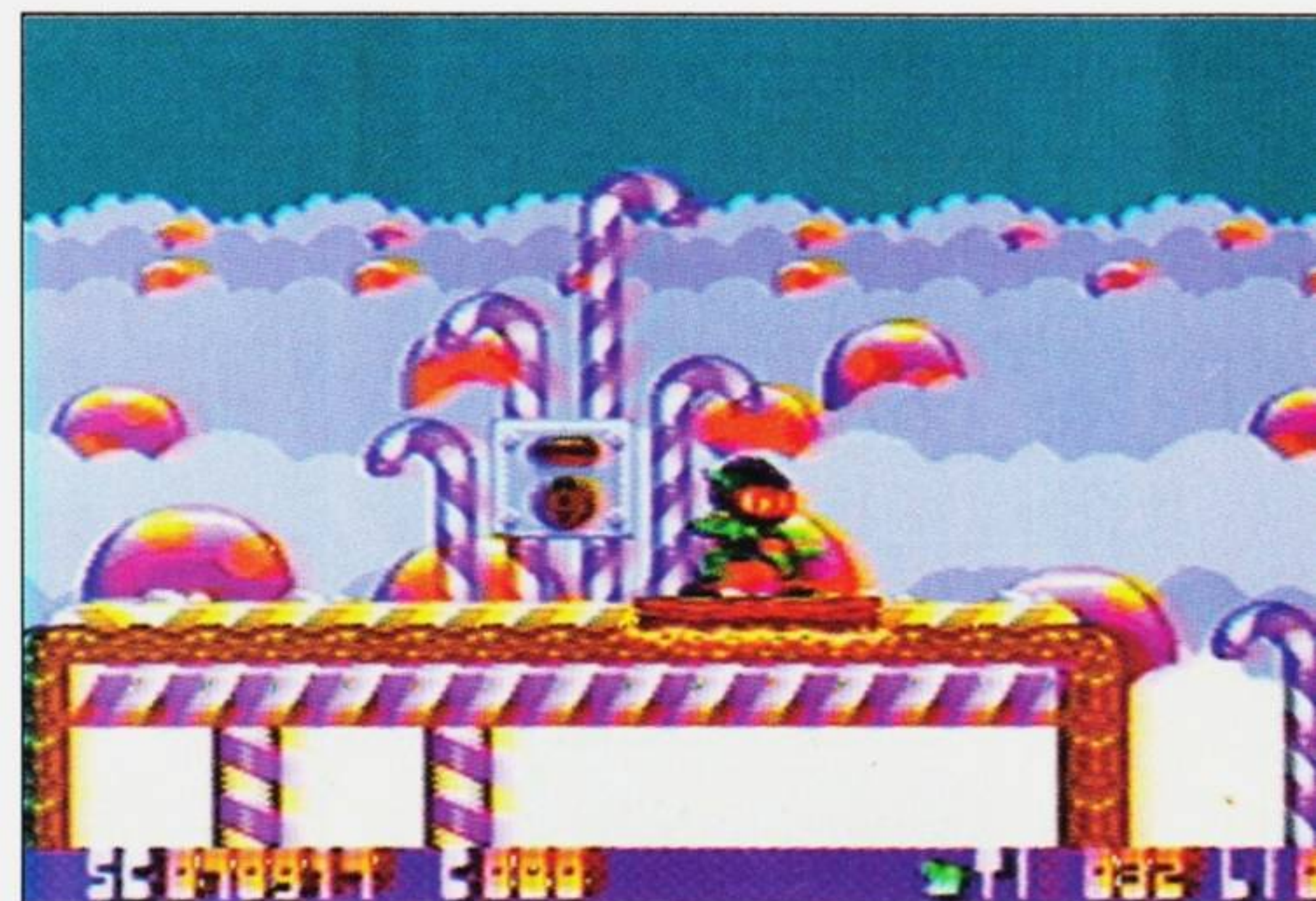
92

overall

A fantastic sequel. Every bit as amazing as Super Star Wars. Just don't expect too many surprises.

92%

Oh oh, it's another cutesy platform hero - Zool, the Ninja Ant from the Nth Dimension. Should you give him a go, or just squash him with a rolled up copy of HYPER? Andrew Humphreys isn't sure...



Sega owners may never have heard of Zool, but he was one of last year's biggest stars on the Amiga. It was a nice, slick platformer on a system that didn't have too many nice, slick platformers. But the Mega Drive's got hundreds of them (well, a lot anyway) - *Sonic*, *Tiny Toons*, *Cool Spot*, and *Bubsy* all deserve mention. So what makes *Zool* (besides the fact that he's a Ninja Ant from the Nth Dimension)

to collect a certain number of items before the exit will open (the number keeps going up) and you need to do it within a fairly tight time limit. After the first couple of levels (which aren't too taxing) finding enough items and even finding the exits gets harder and harder.

The basic gameplay is just that - basic. You run, you jump, you shoot and you can spin in the air for an extra attack. Zool, being the ant that he is, sticks to walls too, and there's a lot of climbing to be done. The controls take a bit of getting used to - in fact they're downright annoying at first. It's not that they're unresponsive, they're actually *too* responsive. Zool jumps too far (so you can't tell what's below you) and

it's all too jerky. But once you're past the first boss you should find yourself at ease with Zool's eccentricities and you might even start to enjoy yourself - I did.

Chupa Chups Even if you're not having fun you can always enjoy the scenery. *Zool* is a good-looking game. It looked good on the Amiga and it looks a little better on the Mega Drive. The game is split into distinctive "worlds", each with a different visual theme. The first world is all lollies and Chupa Chups (I wonder how much they payed for that?), the next is full of fruit and vegies. At least you get a balanced diet. The graphics are sharp and colourful and Zool himself is a well animated and fairly cool character.

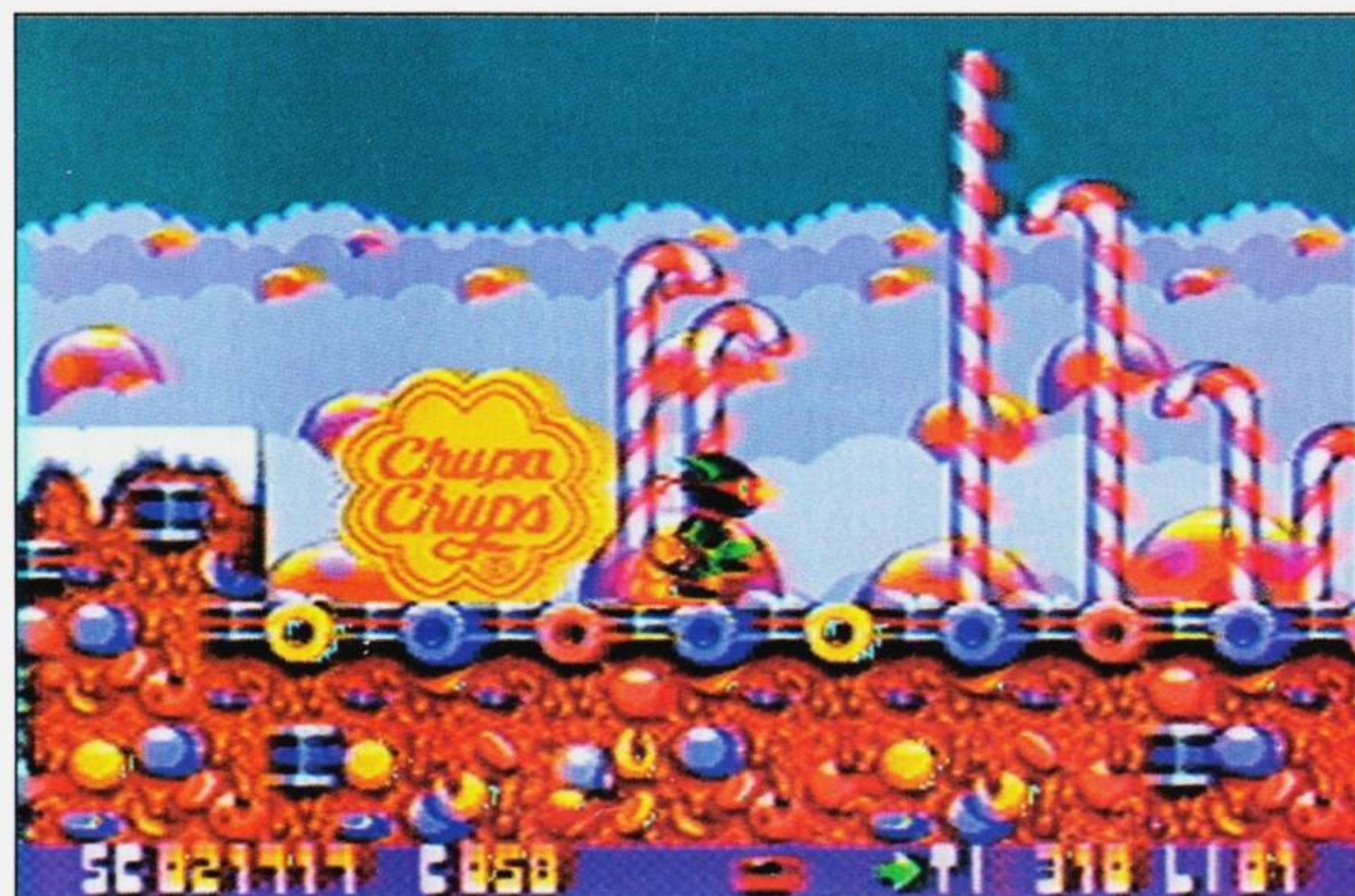
Zool is a very slick, professional platformer and it's a lot tougher than most. It does have some nice features (like the Mirror Zool), great parallax, and it can be fast and fun, but the bottom line is that you've seen it all before. *Zool* is better than average, but nothing to get too excited about. If platform tomfoolery is your thing, check it out. Otherwise, stick with Sonic.



stand out from the crowd? Absolutely nothing.

An ant in a spaceship?

Here's the story line: Zool is cruising around the galaxy when all of a sudden his spaceship conks out on him. What's this (thinks the Ninja ant), I filled the tank at Venus. And I had my 2 zillion mile service just last week. What could possibly be wrong? Ah hah! It must be the work of Krool! So Zool finds himself stranded in an alien world (he and Puggsy must've had the same scriptwriter) and the only way out is (of course) through a series of platform packed levels and (double of course) end-of-level bad guys.



FORMAT: MEGA DRIVE

CATEGORY: PLATFORMER

AVAILABLE: DECEMBER

PLAYERS: 1

ELECTRONIC ARTS

visuals

Colourful enough to burn a hole through your retina. Lots of depth and variety too.

85

sound

The FX are nothing special and neither is the music - but it won't drive you insane.

74

gameplay

I don't like the control layout and it's fiddly at first, but you can live with it. Standard platform stuff overall.

78

longterm

Heaps of tough levels and bosses. Continues are limited so you won't finish it too quickly either. But will you bother?

76

overall

Polished but standard platform stuff that's definitely worth a few hours of your time if you've got nothing better to do.

79%

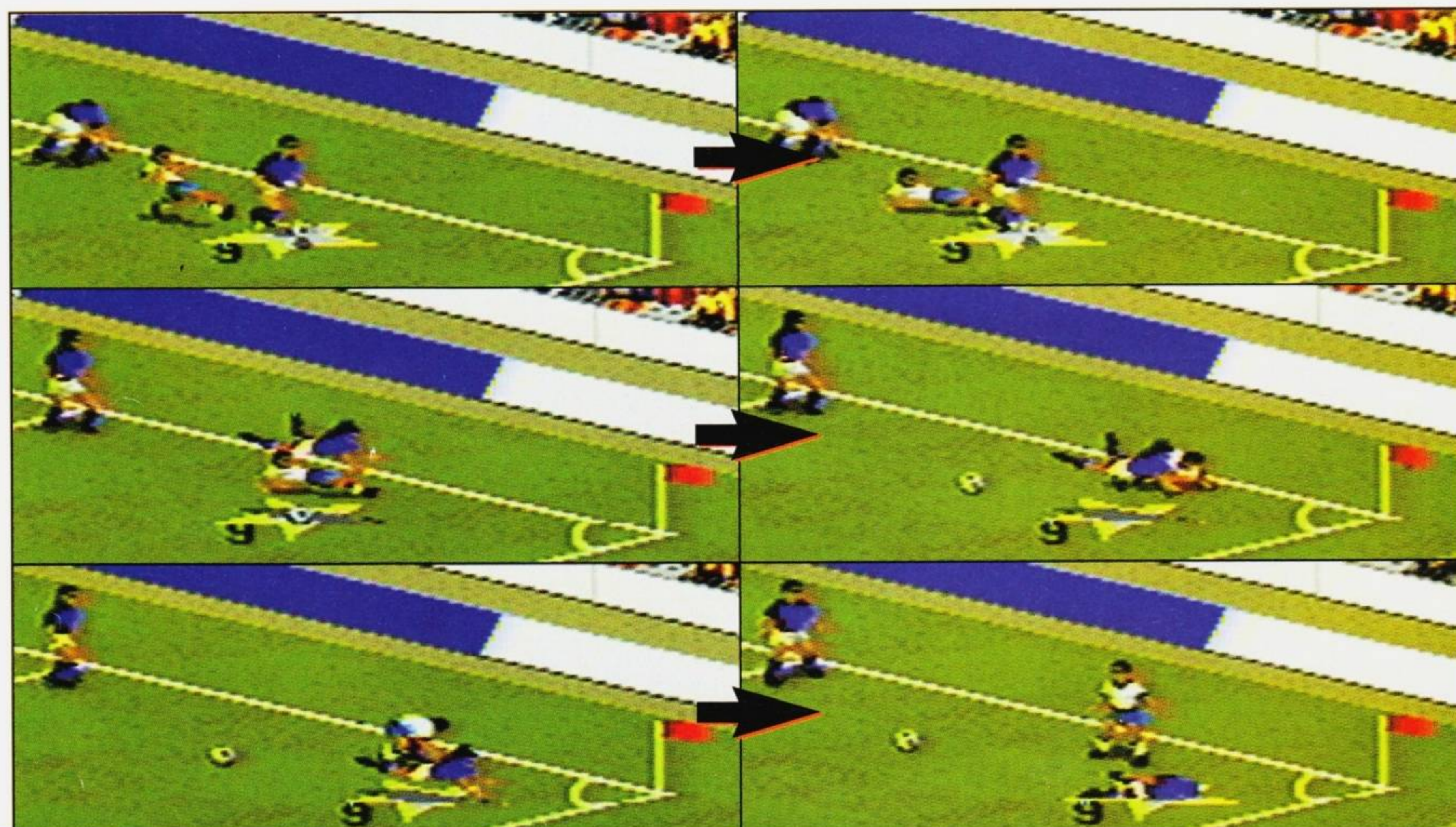
With the 1994 World Cup just around the corner there'll be more soccer games hitting the console market than you can shake a small Argentinian man with a cocaine problem at. Will any of them be any good? Andrew Humphreys inflates his balls and takes a look at some of the contenders...

Soccer is the biggest sport in the world. It's played and loved in almost every country you can think of. But translating this noble sport into a video game is a difficult and technically daunting task. How do you capture the skills and feel of the game? How do you provide for eleven sprites a side, each with their own

strengths, weaknesses and Artificial Intelligence? Is the quest for the perfect soccer game really an illusory goal? And what is an illusory goal anyway? Do they still count on the scoreboard? Questions, questions, questions. Lucky for you HYPER has all the answers.

Soccer

it to me baby



The kind of roughhouse play we like to see at HYPER. EA's FIFA International Soccer in all its glory.

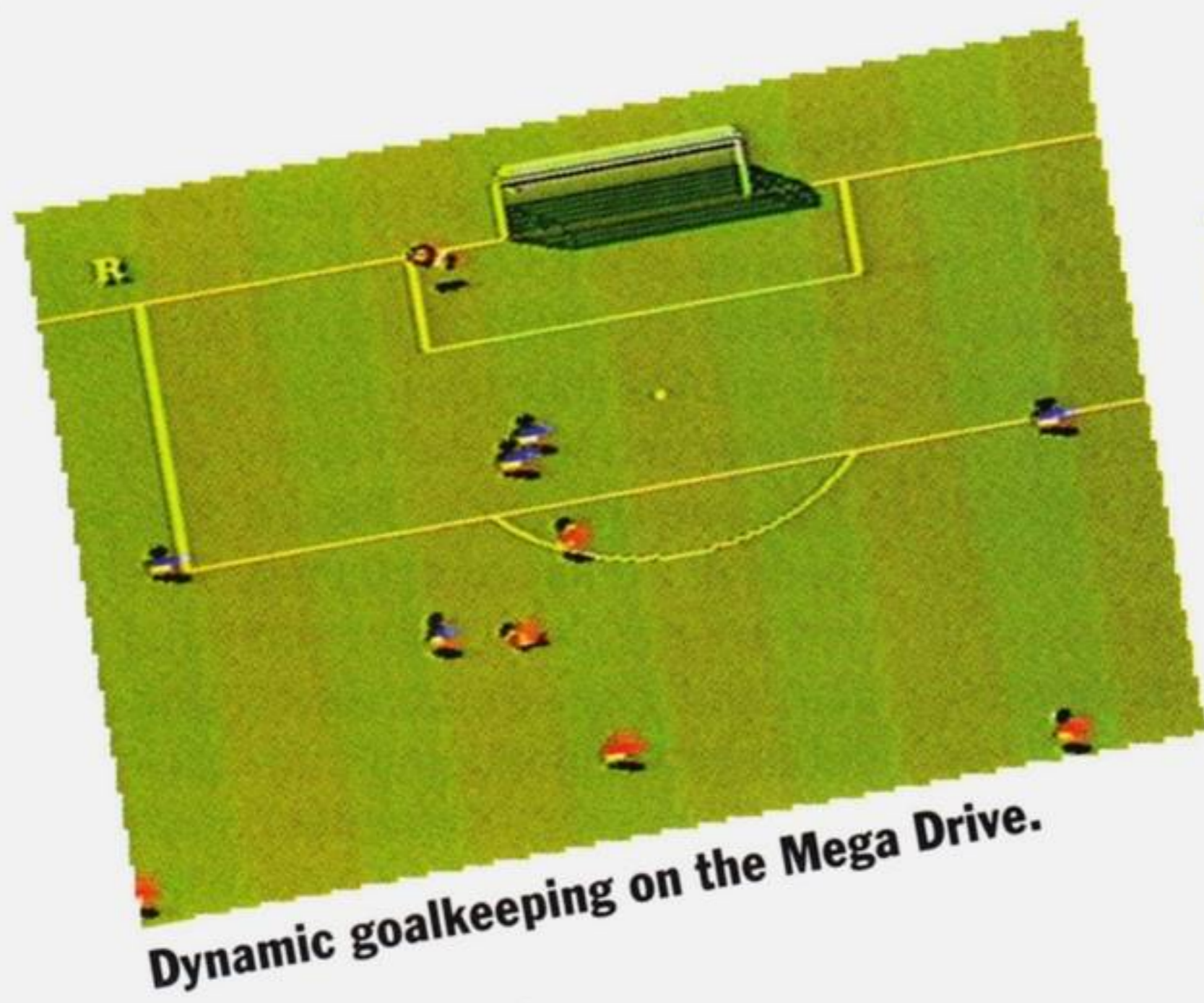
What Else is Out There? If you've got a Mega Drive, your choices have been fairly limited (up till now). *Italia '90* is the oldest and worst soccer game around. It's also the only one readily available in Australia. Other than that, you might be able to pick up import copies of *European Club Soccer* (which is fairly average) or *Super Kickoff* (which is better). There's no word yet of an Australian release for the 8 player (with two Sega

Taps) *Ultimate Soccer*. It's chock full options and the gameplay is very solid, but it lacks the excitement it needs to be a real winner. The situation isn't much better for the SNES. *Super Soccer* is out there and it's quite good. Other than that, you might be able to get your hands on Jaleco's *Super Goal* (a left/right scroller which is OK) or *Kick Off* (which is bad). The more tactically

mindful might be interested in *Player Manager* (it's basically *Kick Off* with a management bit added on) which is brand spanking new. **What Else is Coming?** This is where it gets confusing. Accolade's *Pele's Soccer* is obviously a contender. It's due out early next year for both the Mega Drive and the SNES. Using the same

3D perspective as EA's *FIFA International Soccer* and strategy from the great man himself, *Pele* looks quite promising, but it's really too early to tell. For the SNES, *Striker* (from Elite) should reach our shores soon. It's the SNES version of *Ultimate Soccer*, but the scrolling is much smoother. On the down side though, it's only for two players. It's been the number one SNES

game in the UK for a while now, so it's definitely worth checking out. SNES owners can also look forward to Hudson Soft's *Virtual Soccer* (which was developed by UK wizards Probe and looks pretty nifty). There are also countless J-League (the Japanese Soccer league) games in the pipeline for both systems, but this is getting silly, so I'll stop.



Dynamic goalkeeping on the Mega Drive.



A corner on the SNES. They look exactly the same don't they?



Is it the Mega Drive or is it the SNES? It's the SNES actually, but it doesn't make much difference.

Sensible Soccer

Sony's *Sensible Soccer* (for both the SNES and Mega Drive) has an impressive heritage. The original Amiga version was out aeons ago, but even now a lot of Amiga owners reckon that *Sensible Soccer* is not only the best soccer game ever, but the best Amiga game ever too. A lot of PC owners would also agree. *Sensi Soccer* never looked like much (a top down view of the field with tiny sprites running around) but it was fast, smooth, and it played beautifully. That's all well and good, but has it got what it takes to make it as a console game?

On both the Mega Drive and the SNES, it still doesn't look like much. Same overhead perspective, same tiny, blocky little sprites to play with. The simple graphics allow more of the carts' memory (and at only 4 megs, you need every last bit of it) to be spent on speed and player control. And guess what? It pays off. *Sensible Soccer* is very fast (much faster than any other soccer game), very smooth, and very playable.

The controls (for both systems) are excellent. The little guys on field respond to your every whim (within reason, of course). Passing is computer-assisted and the after-touch you can put on a shot is incredible. The only annoying bit is the amount of time you spend on the ground after a slide tackle (even a missed slide) - it seems like that player is stuck in the ground forever. But apart from that one niggle the gameplay

is first class. Your field vision is great so it's easy to string together all sorts of movements towards the goals. All up, it does feel like a speeded up version of the real thing.

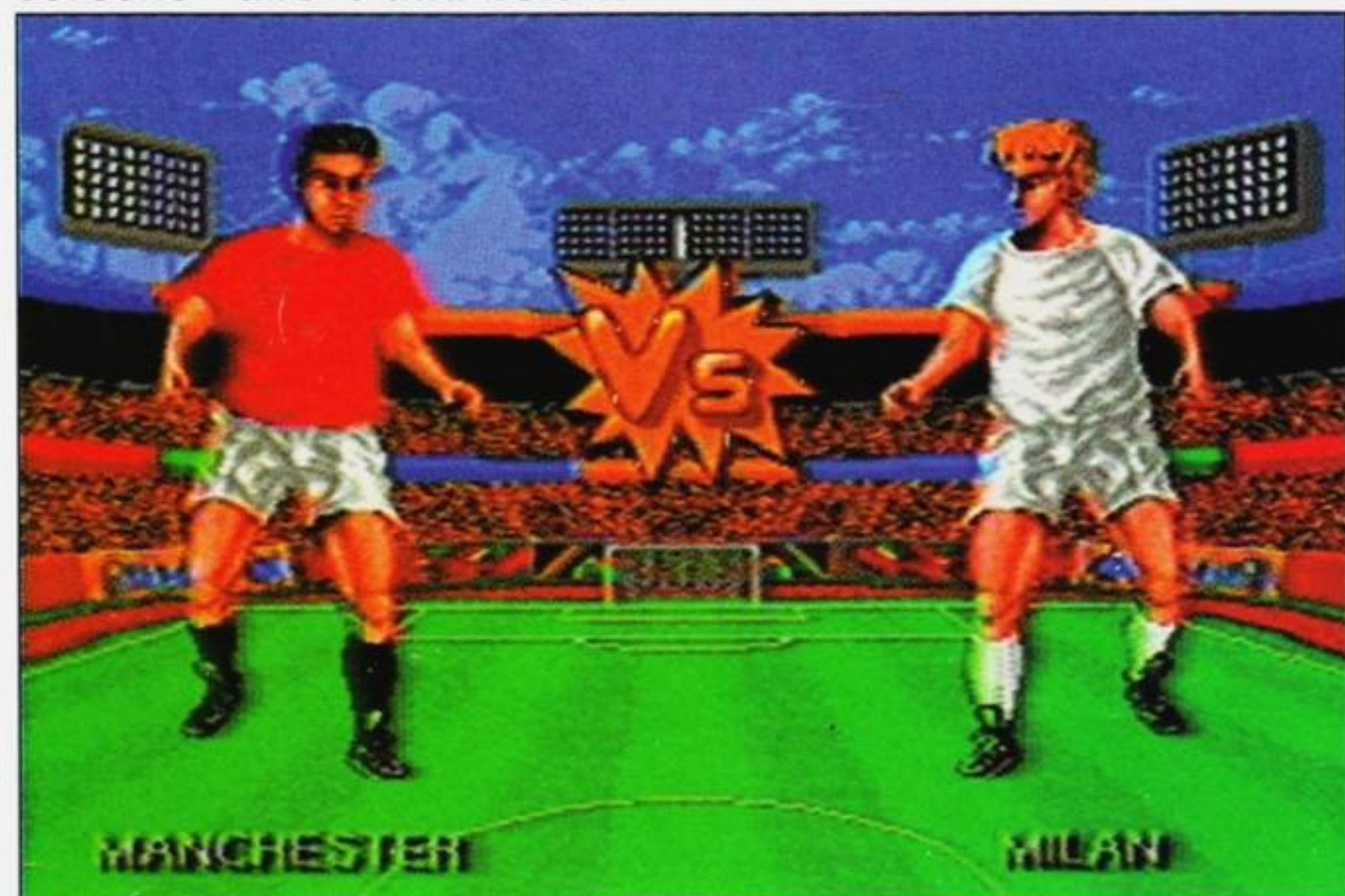
Just like the other games, *Sensi Soccer* is heavy on the options. It's got more teams than you could possibly want (more than I could count anyway) and even then you can make (and save) custom teams. You can play Friendlies, Tournaments, and Cup competitions (including the World Cup), and there's three difficulty levels too. Everything is saved to battery RAM, so there's no mucking about with passwords.

So, are there any real differences between the Mega Drive and SNES versions? None that I could see - they look the same (check the screenies), they play the same, and they run at the same speed (we didn't do scientific tests or anything, but you can trust us). They both sound good too, with some nice crowd samples following the action. Compared to the constant buzz of *FIFA International Soccer* though, it does sound a bit lame. The only difference seems to be that the Mega Drive gets a few more presentation screens (showing the controls in the demo for example). Otherwise, they're identical and the scoreboard is for both games.

Sensible Soccer is an excellent game. It doesn't look like one but it certainly plays like one. It's got all the features a soccer game needs and then some. But it might be showing its age. In this day and age, tiny little men kicking a ball who can barely see all over the place (no matter how quickly they do it) is a bit, well, dull. I might feel differently if I hadn't played EA's *FIFA Soccer* - but I have played it. *Sensi Soccer* is good, it just doesn't have the ball kicking excitement and all round sexiness of *FIFA International Soccer*.



Two of the Mega Drive's extra presentation screens - above and below.



MEGA DRIVE/SNES

AVAILABLE: NOW

COULD IT BE SPORT?

PLAYERS: 1-2

SONY IMAGESOFT

visuals

Very basic but effective. The presentation is good, the scrolling is smooth and the animation's fluid.

77

sound

Good crowd samples in both versions. The in-game music sucks but you can turn it off.

82

gameplay

Fast, fun to play, great controls and a real soccer "feel".

91

longterm

All the teams, all the options and great for two-players. Multi-players would've been nice though.

90

overall

An excellent soccer game on both systems. Pity it's just the tiniest bit dull now.

88%

FIFA International Soccer

No stuffing around with this one - *FIFA International Soccer* is practically the perfect soccer game. Which is just about what you expect from EA Sports. It's every bit as good a game as *John Madden Football* or *NHL Hockey*. EA's Canadian programming team crammed the 16 megs at their dis-

posal with fantastic animation, amazing digitised sound, great play control, and all the realism and excitement an armchair sports fan could want. I cried every night for a week after they made me send it back.

Seven Reasons You Need This Game

1. It's got the FIFA licence. *FIFA international Soccer* sounds much better than *EA Soccer*, doesn't it?

2. The Options - they're not too heavy, not too light. You can play as any of 48 national teams (plus a

team of EA All Stars) in exhibition games, a full league season (you can even create the league), or in the race for the World Cup. Plus, you can change your team coverage, strategy and formation at any time.

3. The Graphics. The 3D perspective works exceptionally well (you can see everything you need to see) and it scrolls perfectly. The detail and animation on the players (there's over 2000 frames) and even the crowd is incredible. There's diving headers, bicycle kicks and sliding tackles galore. The action is so fluid you'll proba-

FORMAT: MEGA DRIVE
AVAILABLE: NOW
CATEGORY: HAVE A GUESS
PLAYERS: 1-4
ELECTRONIC ARTS

visuals

A great perspective, superb detail, and more player animations than you can count. Top notch EA Sports presentation too.

92

sound

It seems like there's a real crowd of soccer fanatics hidden in the cart. One night, I heard one of them call my name...

93

gameplay

Everything you've ever wanted to do with a soccer ball and then some.

94

longterm

Heaps of options & teams, with enough excitement to keep you playing again and again. With 4 players it's even greater.

92

overall

With a mark like that do you suppose it's bad? What are you waiting for? Buy it.

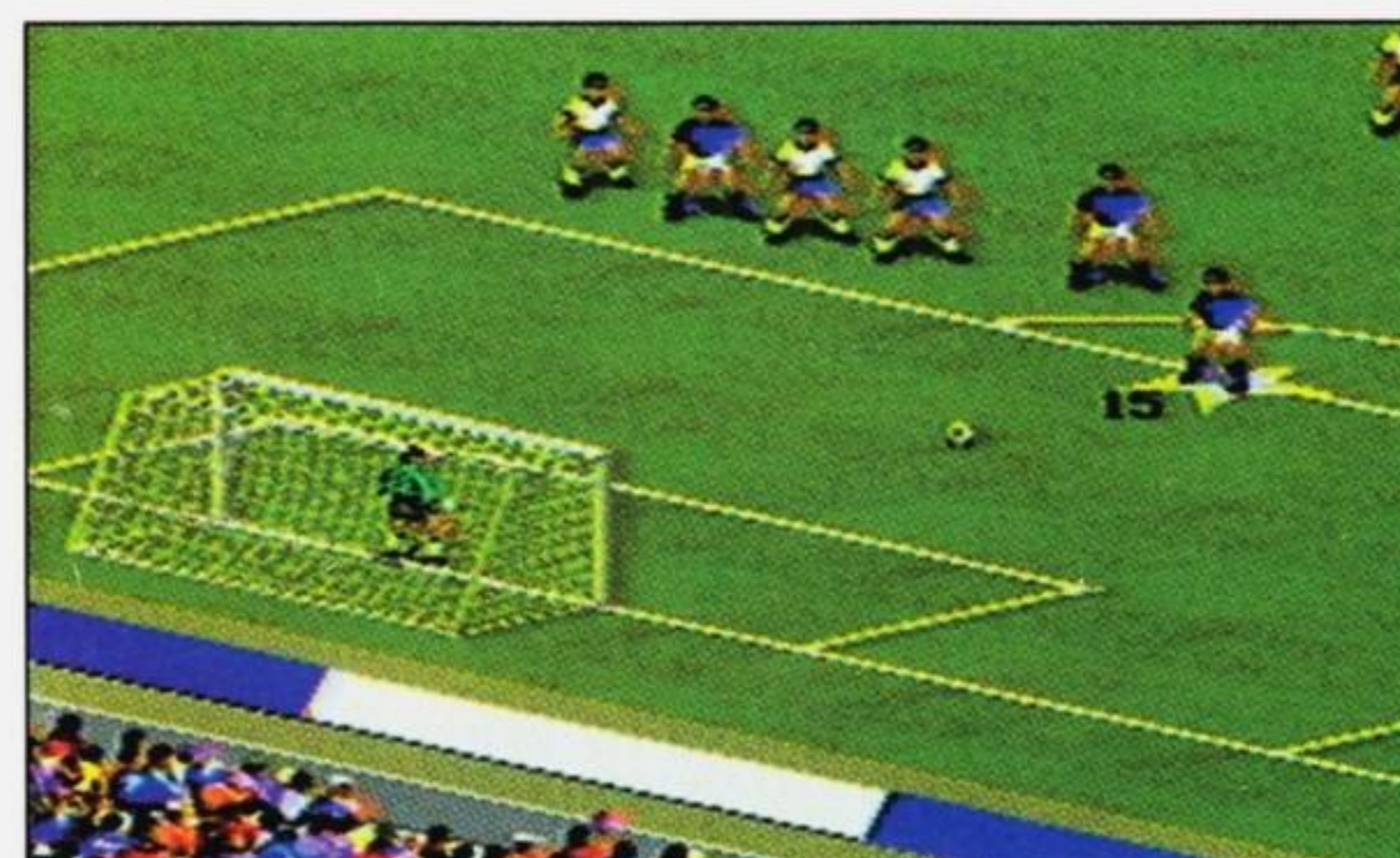
94%



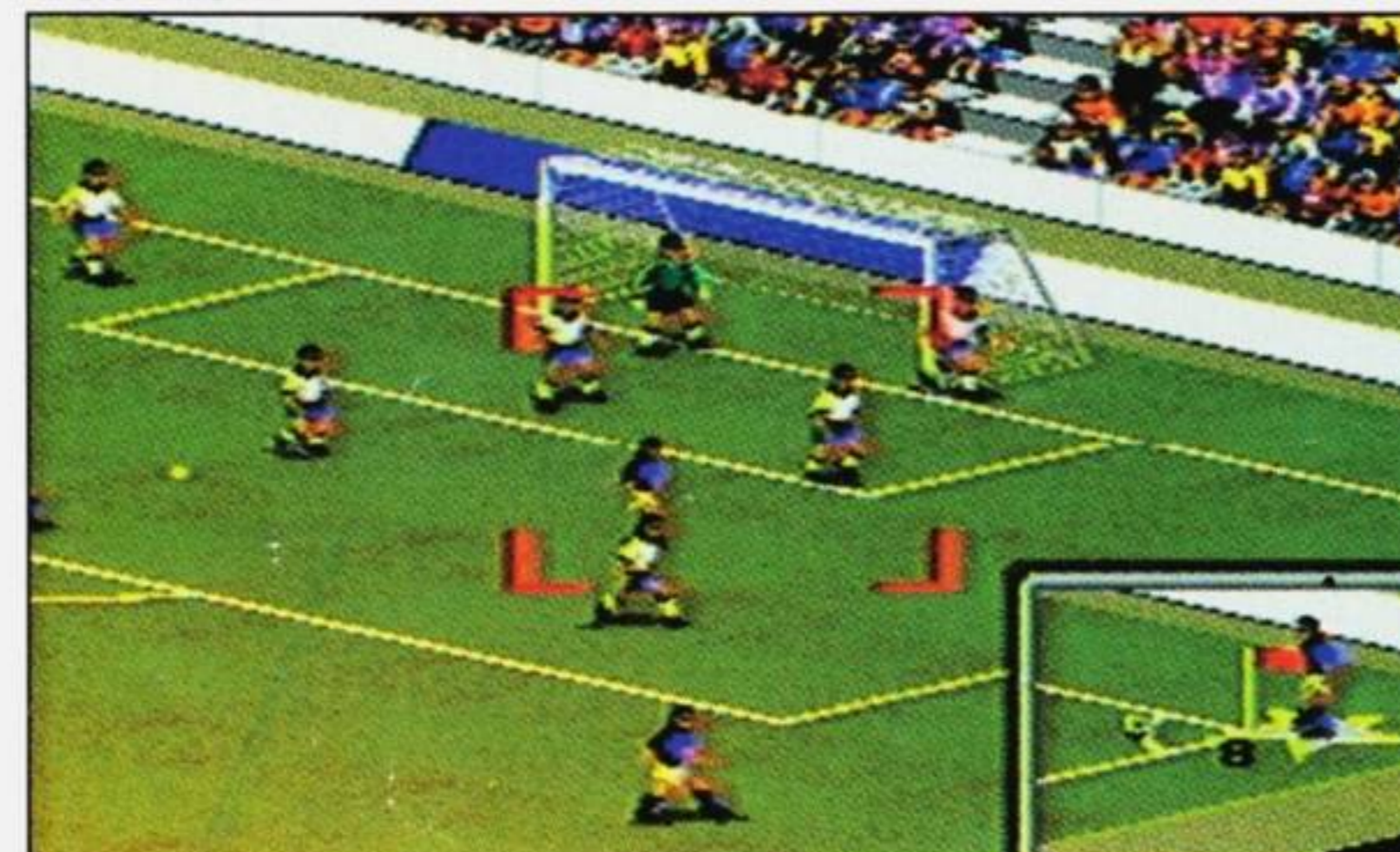
It's the World Cup Final between Italy and New Zealand.



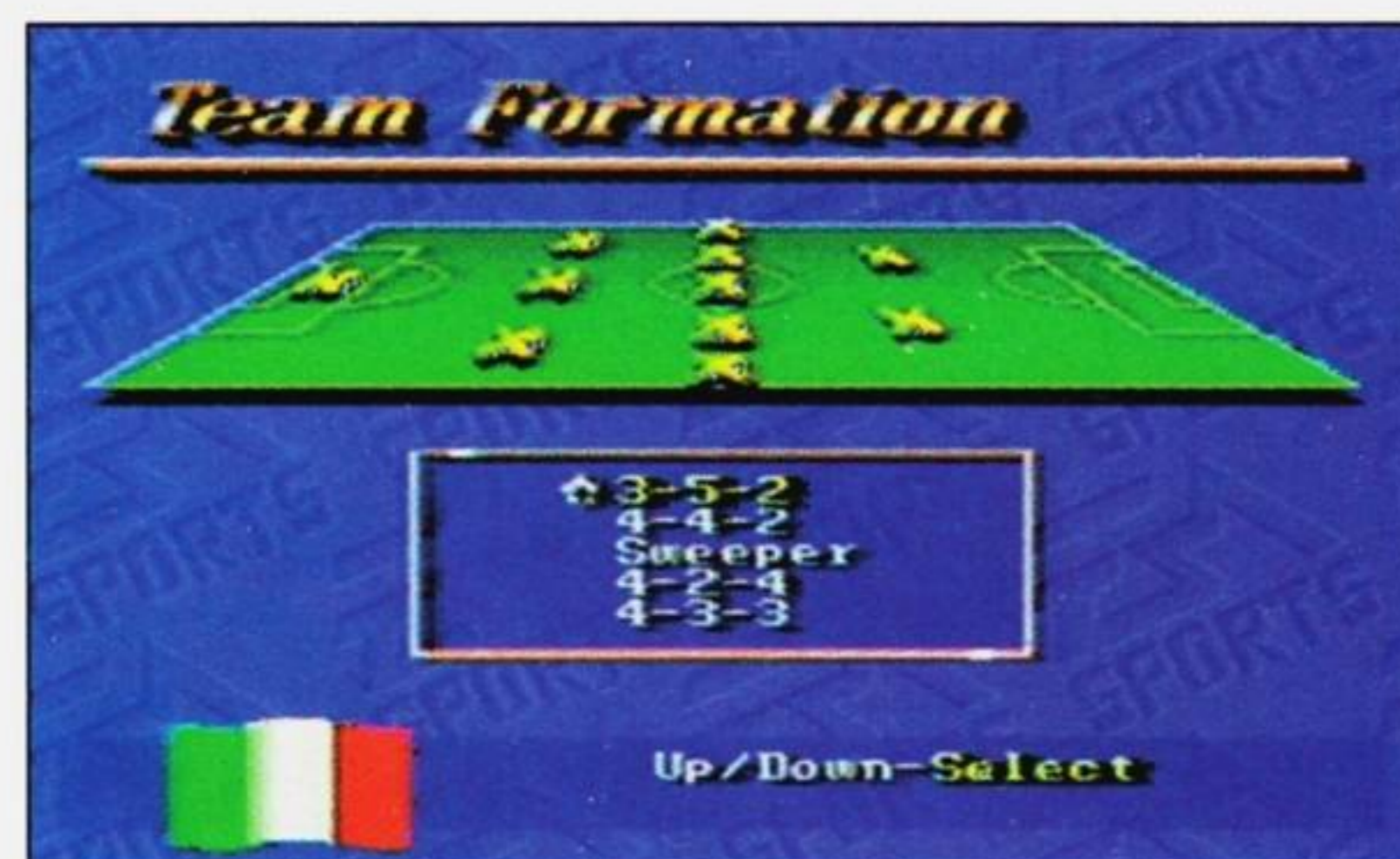
Then it's off to the game. Italy win the toss.



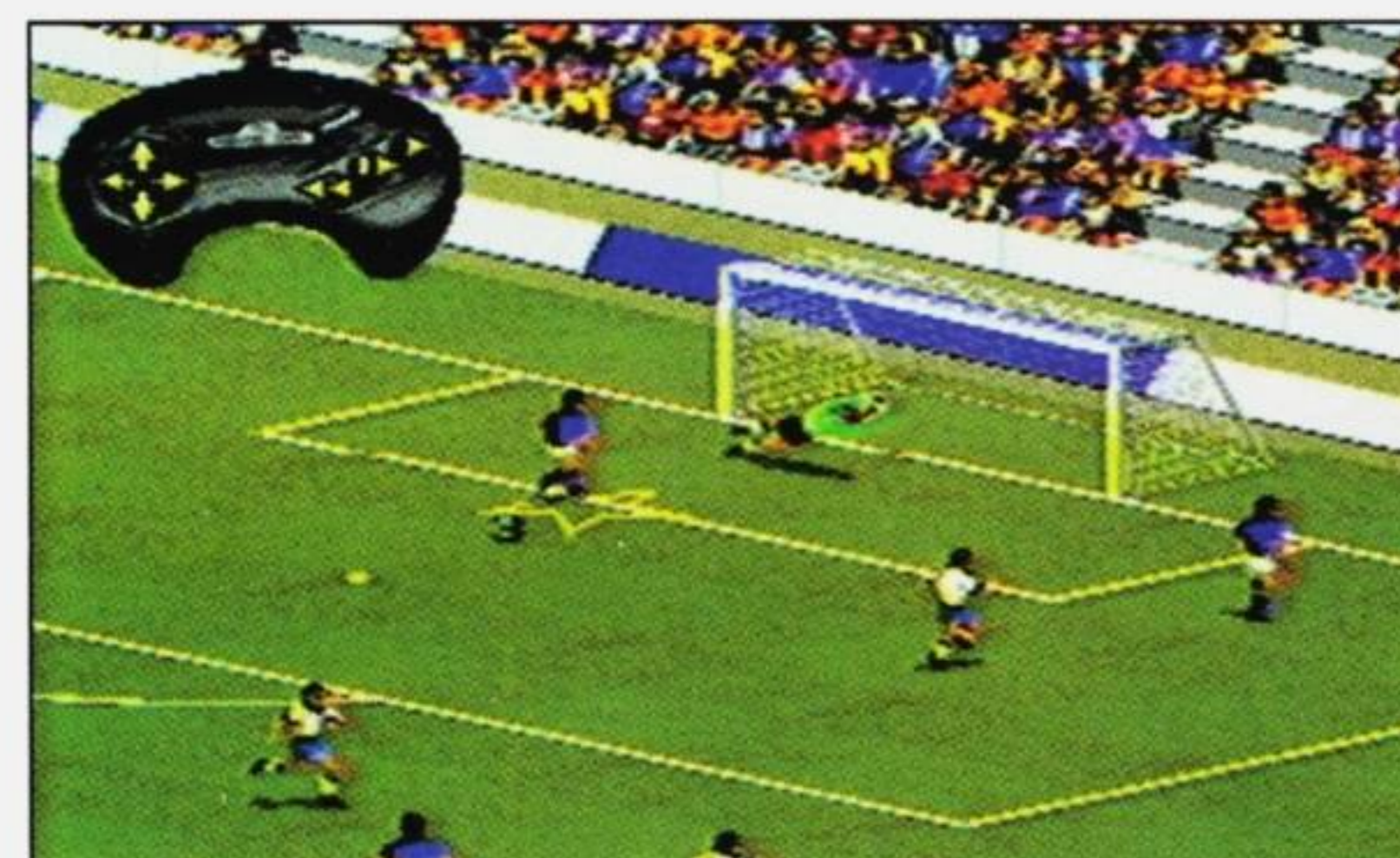
But it's Italy with the first scoring chance from a free kick.



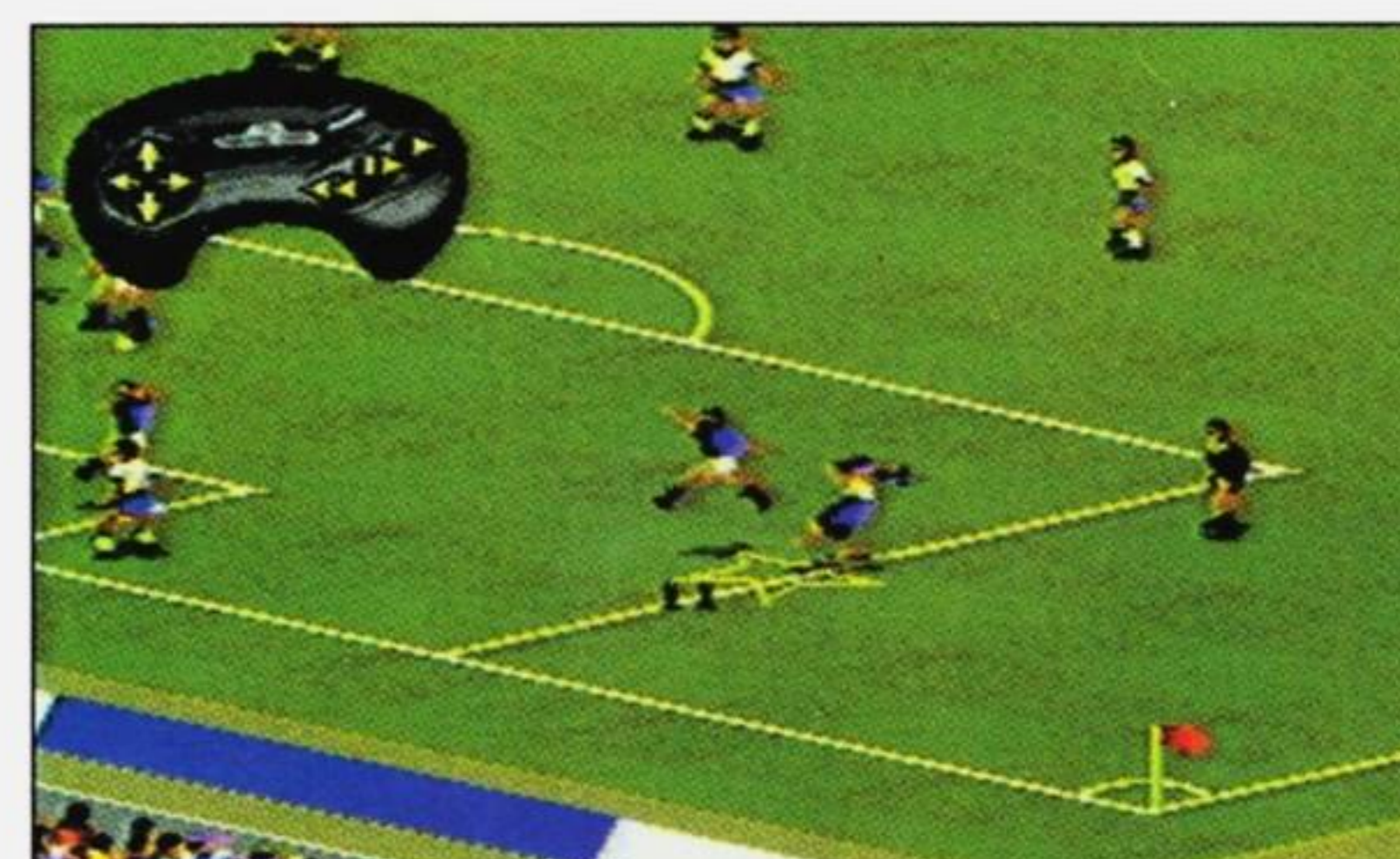
It's all Italy in the second half.



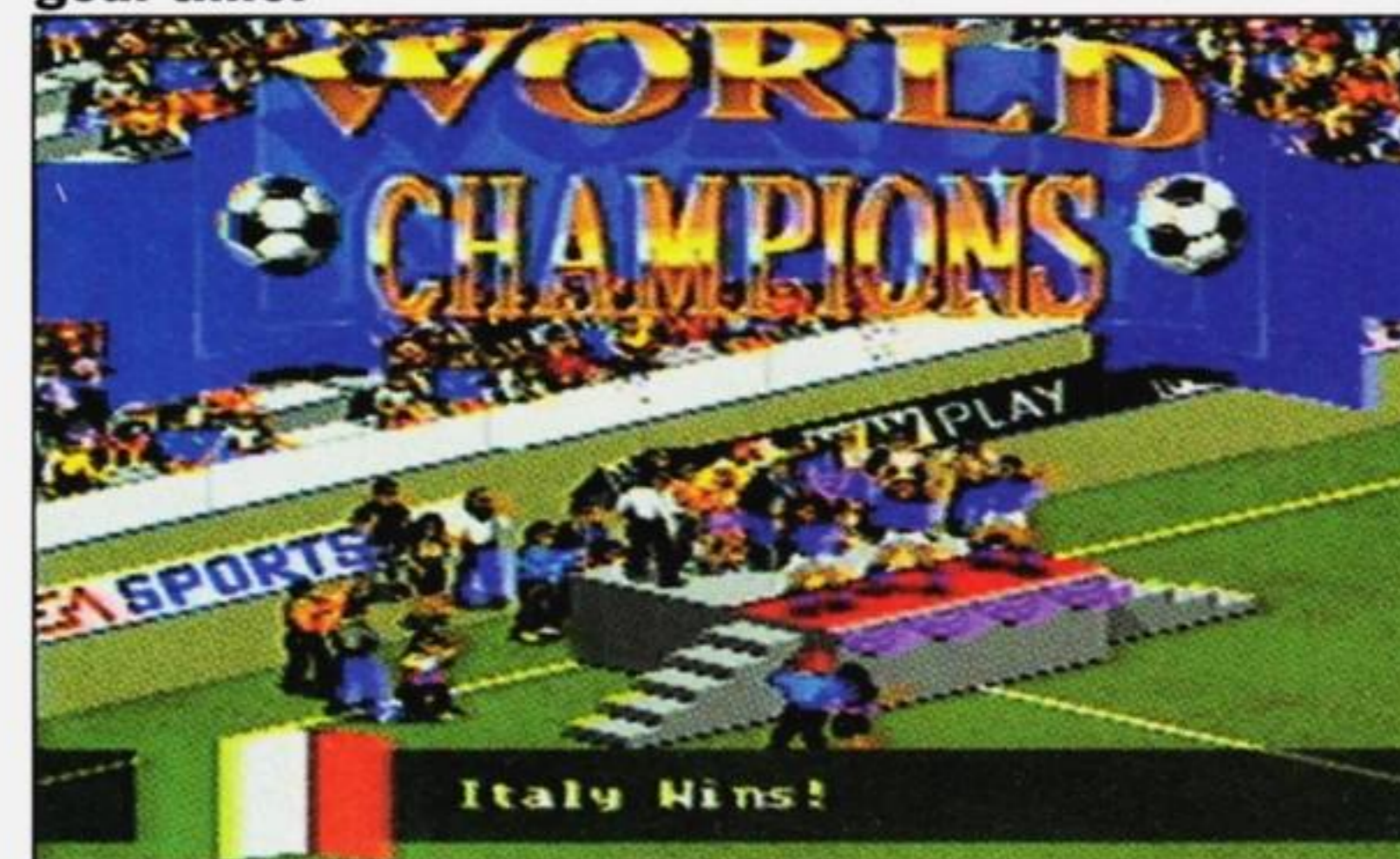
Set your formation, strategy, and coverage.



New Zealand challenge early.



They missed the free kick, but pretty soon it's goal time.



They wind up worthy World Champions.

bly wee yourself (just like you did with *Aladdin*).

4. The Sound. The sound effects, especially the digitised crowd chanting, are perfect. The crowd does everything but sing "Always Look on the Bright Side of Life". They cheer when you're good, boo when you're bad, and go wild when you score a goal. It all follows the in-game action, so you couldn't feel any closer to the action (unless of course you ran naked across the field). Even the music is pumpin'.

5. The Gameplay - which is nothing short of superb. The controls let

you do it all - backheel passes, shoulder charges, short passes, long passes, short lobs, long lobs, perfectly timed volleys and powerful shots on goal. The controls have both "touch" (the longer you hold the button, the more powerful the pass/lob/shot) and "aftertouch" (you can affect the ball's flight in the air). After a few games, they become second nature. And the "speed burst" is a masterstroke.

Strategy is not only possible, it's essential. The computer controlled goalies (you can control them manually if you like) don't make too many

mistakes and wild shots will never come off. Pass the ball and work to the strengths of your team.

With the 4-Way Play option it's even better. Which leads us to...

5. It's the perfect excuse to buy that 4-Way Play gismo and make new friends.

6. EA's Realism and Attention to Detail. All that's missing are some soccer hooligans and the odd streaker. There are no skill levels as such, but each team and each individual player is rated. Teams are rated in 6 categories (shooting, running, passing, defence, goalies, and

overall) and players are rated in 13 categories, all of which affect their performance. The players aren't real players (in fact, the stars have the programmers' names!), but each team plays according to their national style.

7. It'll last forever.

The bad news: at the moment, EA have no plans to bring the SNES version of FIFA International Soccer to Australia.

World Soccer



Check out the subtle product placements!

World Soccer tackles the Great Soccer Problem by relying heavily on Mode 7 technical wizardry. *World Soccer* (which also goes by the name of *Tony Meola's Sidekicks Soccer* in the US) was developed by Sculptured Software, the team who brought *NCAA Basketball* to the SNES, and it features the same rotating, behind-the-ball perspective.

Options-wise, *World Soccer* has everything you could ask for. There are 96 (yes, 96!) teams to choose from - 64 club sides (like Milan or Liverpool) and 32 national teams, including Australia. The players names are all made up, but their skills are all individually rated in four different categories for extra realism.

You can play a one-off exhibition game (either between regional or world teams), a full season in one of eight world regions (say, the Italian League), or enter a regional, continental, or World Cup tournament.

Once you choose your playing mode and team it's off to the game set-up screen. Now you've got even more decisions to make: game length, game speed (a choice of three), handicap, offensive and defensive formations and player substitutions. After about an hour of

impressive. But as impressive as it is, I'm still not convinced that a rotating first-person perspective is the right way to go. I found it confusing and disorienting, and I'm sure it ruins any chance of a flowing game. And that's the biggest problem with *World Soccer* - it just doesn't feel like soccer. Even on it's fastest setting the gameplay is slow and stilted.

The controls don't help things either. All the buttons work fine (and you can pull off some nifty

staring at a screen full of options and scratching your head it's time to play the game.

The much-hyped Mode 7 perspective follows the movement of the ball as you play. It's all very smooth and very

headers and the odd bicycle kick or two), it's just that there's no "touch" on them. A pass is a pass and a kick is a kick - you've got no greater control than that. And while we're being picky, there's no instant replay feature (a deadly sin on any sports game), the in-game music sucks, and the crowd noises are barely noticeable. It does have big sprites, but the detail and animation is not a patch on EA's *FIFA International Soccer*.

World Soccer might be more fun for two-players, but compared to the other two games, it doesn't stack up. For "My Mode 7's bigger than yours" freaks only.



All the options are icon based.



Goal! Pity there's no instant replay.

FORMAT: SNES

AVAILABLE:

CATEGORY: SPORTS

PLAYERS: 1-2

ELECTRO BRAIN

visuals

Impressive Mode 7 rotation and good icon-based presentation. The players are big but the animation is choppy.

80

sound

Repetitive, grating in-game music combined with minimalist crowd-cheering doesn't work at all.

64

gameplay

The perspective gets in the way of good gameplay. It's slow, stilted, and it just doesn't flow.

61

longterm

Heaps of options and play modes with 96 teams to play as and a good two-player game to boot.

72

overall

Take away the Mode 7 "Wow!" factor and you're left with a very average game.

69%

STOP Gunstar

To be a successful hero you need two things: a big weapon and good colour sense. The Gunstar Heroes have both. Andrew Humphreys may have a big weapon (or so he tells us) but his colour sense sucks. We let him review the game anyway.

Treasure software house are a newish Japanese team chock full of ex-Konami programmers. Which might explain the quality of this game. Gunstar Heroes is only an 8 meg cart, but it's got some of the best graphics I've seen on the Mega Drive and it's a genuine hell-for-leather blast for one or two players from start to finish.

Colour Gangs The plot is a colour blind reviewer's nightmare. Red and Blue are the two heroes. Their faithful techno-sidekick is Dr Brown and the token girlie-sidekick (well, someone has to be kidnapped) is Yellow. There's a few twists and turns as the game progresses, but your initial objective is to retrieve four powerful stones from the clutches of the bad guys, led by the evil Black.

You can tackle the first four levels (there's seven levels in all) in any order that you choose. First, select your mode of firing (you can either move and fire at the same time or stand still and shoot with greater accuracy) and your favourite weapon, all of which are explained by the friendly Dr Brown. You can carry two weapons at a time - button A allows you to select between the two or to combine them for some real firepower. Experiment with all the combinations and find the weapon of destruction that's right for you.

The final three levels see you stuck in the middle of a bizarre boardgame, piloting a spaceship (which takes a bit of getting used to in a one-player game - with two of you, one flies the ship, the other acts as the gunner), and battling your way through boss after boss before you can finally give the bad guys the kicking they so richly deserve. If variety is what you're after you'll find it in *Gunstar Heroes*.

A Manga 'Hood The basic gameplay is a combination of your traditional, side-scrolling, blast-everything-that-moves shoot em up and a platform game. Aside from shooting in every possible direction imaginable, you can also jump, hang off platforms, climb, slide, jump off walls and the edges of the screen, punch and even air-throw enemies. There's also a cool minecart section. The controls are excellent, so all of the moves are easy to perform as well as effective. Because it's so playable, taking on the constant steam of bad guys (they literally come from everywhere) is nothing but fun, fun, fun.

Aside from playing beautifully, the graphics, especially the design and animation of the bosses, are stunning. The screen is usually full of enemy sprites but there's never any slow-down and somehow, on a machine that's not supposed to have the capabilities, the programmers have things scaling and rotating all over the place. To top it all off, Red and Blue, drawn in that very Manga style, have more character than you'd care to shake a forest full of sticks at. Japanese gamers have already fallen for them in a big way.

Non-stop Body Count Thanks to the variety in both the gameplay and the level design (and to the non-stop body count), *Gunstar Heroes* is never boring. For two players it's even better. But if you play it on the easiest setting (there's four difficulty levels) you'll finish it in no time. You're given infinite continues and you'll be having so much fun you won't be able to stop yourself from using them. It's OK though - you'll want to finish it on the hardest setting too, and you'll still enjoy it long after most other shoot-em-ups have past their use-by date.

Gunstar Heroes is not the most ground-breaking game in the world, but it doesn't need to be. It's just a very good game. It's slickly presented, it's got enough flashy visual effects to make you want to get down on the floor and give your faithful old Mega Drive a big hug, and above all, it's a lot of fun to play. Action fans will love it to death.



A boss. Watch out for the extendo-arm and keep blasting



One of the many bosses from Black's boardgame. It's way easy though.



Love those explosions!

Heroes

At the end of the minecart section, it's boss time. This guy keeps changing shape. Once you destroy him in one form, he comes straight back at you in another. You'll need all the energy you can muster to get through this bit, but it also helps to keep moving. Jump from wall to wall if you're in trouble.



It's Captain Orange. Watch out for his "Break Wind" attack.



Rush and Go in the dice throw stage.



Two player mayhem.



It's Black's Hideout!



MEGA DRIVE

available

DECEMBER

category

PLATFORM SHOOTER

players

1-2

publisher

TREASURE

visuals

Great character animation, smooth scrolling, awesome bosses, and eye-popping effects.

92

sound

Lots of explosions and heavy-duty firepower to soothe the ears and some tunes that pump a bit.

86

gameplay

Excellent controls make it a joy to play. Don't expect any changes of pace though, it's blast, blast, blast all the way.

88

longterm

There's only seven levels but they're rather tricky and full of nasty bosses. But as a two-player game, you'll come back to it again and again.

84

overall

It's a shoot em up! It's a platformer! It's pretty darn nifty! Blaster boys need look no further than this.

88%

JURASSIC PARK

We waded through the foul smelling dino poo that is Jurassic Park on Mega Drive last issue. Luckily Super Nintendo owners fare a bit better on the most hyped movie-game of the year. **STRETCH ARM-STRONG** goes back to the island.

Conventional wisdom (ie. the first issue of Hyper) has it that the Mega Drive Jurassic Park game was pretty much crap. You know, a hastily cobbled together platformer geared toward a quick and painless cash free-for-all in the slipstream of "Dino Mania". It's as if, somehow, making the highest grossing movie of all time didn't make them enough money or, as the movie was "65 million years in the making", they only had three days left in the budget for games programming. But, and it's a big but, the Super Nintendo is a completely different game. And, unlike it's Mega Drive cousin, it's a bit of a corker.

To the Plot

You don't have to be a chaos mathematician to conclude that in this game you will be vigorously pursued by dinosaurs intent on rending you limb from limb. In the guise of Alan Grant (Sam Neill) you'll tour the island, attempting to turn on the power generator, reboot the computer, collect dinosaur eggs and kill dinosaurs of all persuasions with your impressive armoury of weapons. I'm presuming here that you've seen the movie (ie. that you're not the Dalai Llama or a nun) and that you know that due to a combination of John Hammond's megalomania, chaos theory and the evil fat guy, dinosaurs are loose and angry on this once idyllic tropical paradise.

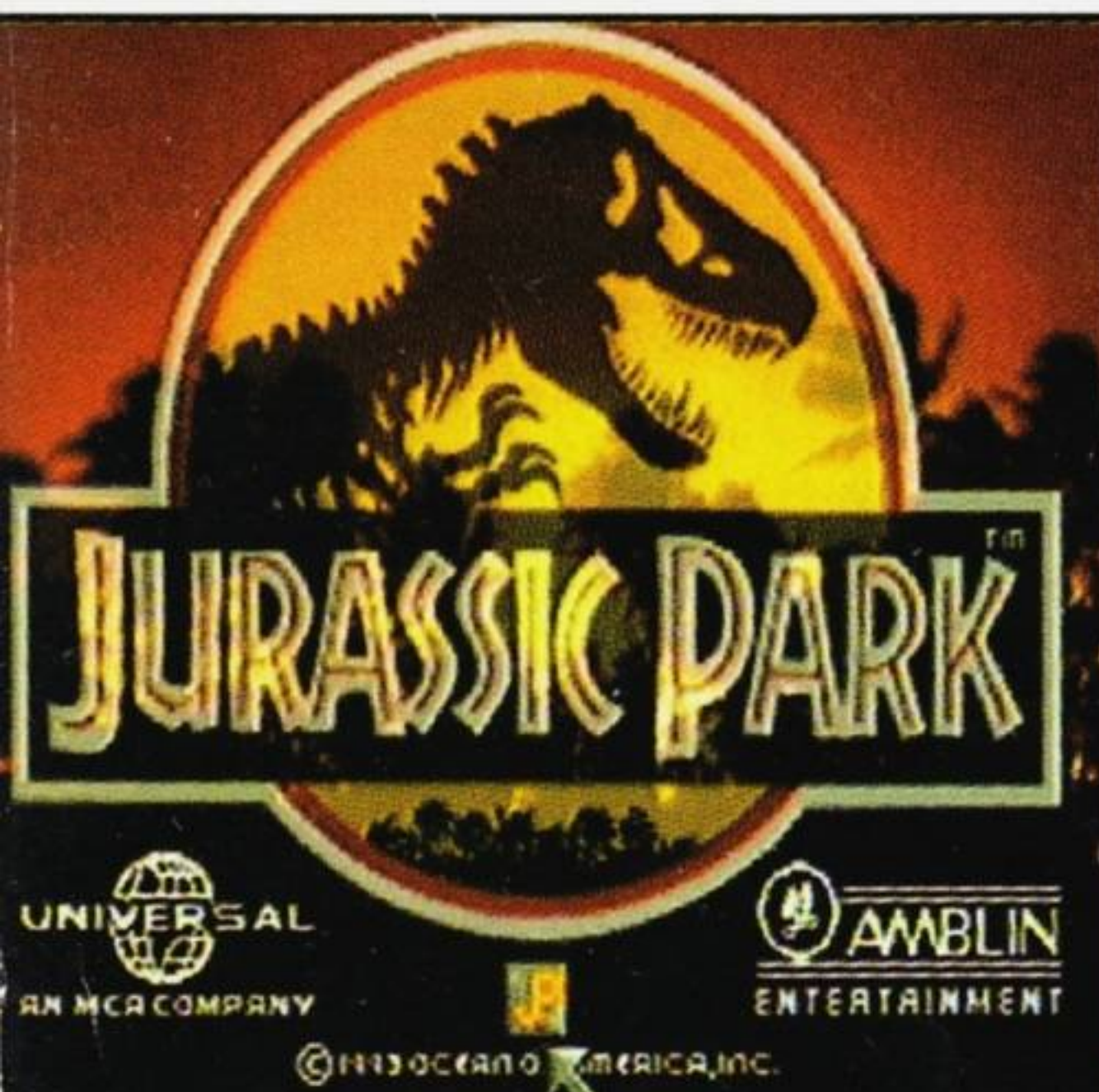
The excellent graphics (and indeed the game itself) are split into two distinct sections:

Outdoors

Here you take a bird's eye view similar to that of an RPG style game, and like those games, as you wander the island blasting dinosaurs, you have to pick up clues and security passes, search for eggs (to stop 'em breeding), ammo and first aid kits. You'll also have to activate gates and bridges, avoid getting fried on the electric fences and listen to subtle hints from the charismatic Dr. Malcolm, the lus-

cious and intelligent Dr. Sattler and the intensely annoying Timmy.

Weapons wise, I whole heartedly recommend the bolas which are so powerful that they don't even leave a dino-corpse to jump over. The stun gun can be recharged by walking so try the quick run around in circles to power up. If, however, you encounter a T-Rex, Raptor or a venom spitting Dilophosaurus you'll need more than a sorry stun gun if you want to avoid becoming tomorrow's dinosaur poop.



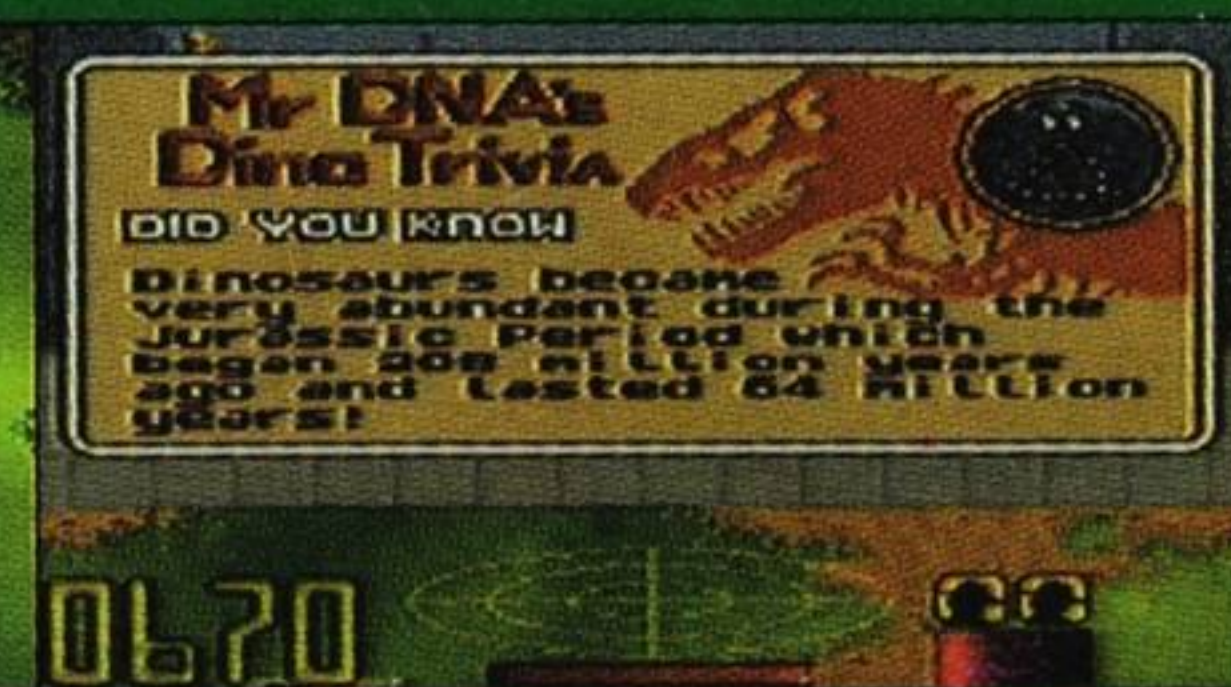
Warning!

These screens give you instructions as to dangers and your next task.



Trivia

When you pause the game you'll be bombarded with lots of dino facts.



Inside

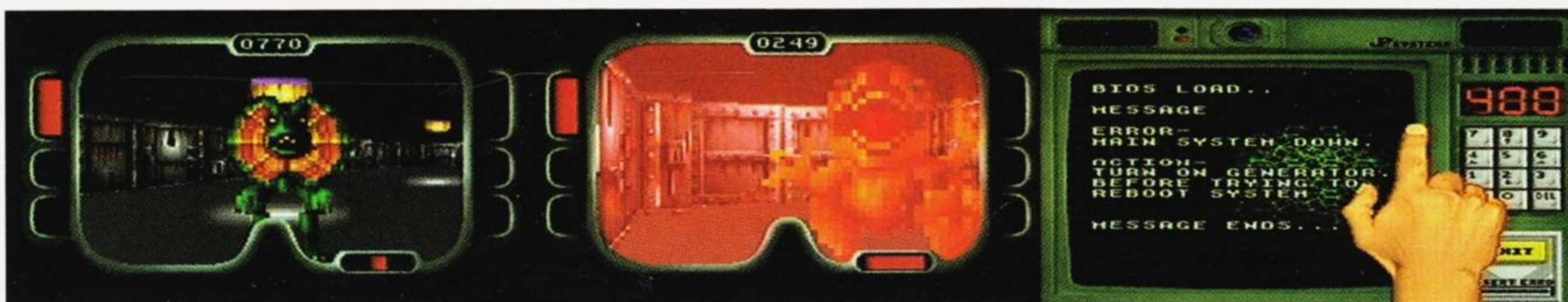
When you enter into the Visitor's

Centre (where the only visitors want to kill you), the Nublar Utility Shed or any other structure, the viewpoint changes to goggle-cam 3D. Swing left, swing right, turn around completely, and the spectacular graphics will come with you, revealing lifts, doors, new

rooms and very big (you guessed it) dinosaurs. It's exactly the same style of game here as Wolfenstein 3D, and while the speed and graphics might not be quite up to the PC standard, it's still pretty impressive.

There are a variety of tasks to perform indoors, and you'll have to figure out how to work the computers and generators. Sometimes

you'll need night vision goggles, in a genuinely eerie setting that lifts this game from the very good to the excellent. The exquisite thrill of blasting the crap out of a raptor as it bears down on you in lovingly crafted 3D, when all you wanted to do was get out of a lift, is something that everyone should experience at least once.



Stretching the Point

The scrolling and responsiveness of the game are generally first rate and it really is a delight to play. The music also works well, switching frequently from standard sub-dance thud to Enigma-style Madagascan (presumably) pipe music, and the inclusion of ersatz elevator music in the lifts is a very sweet touch. The game also has

unlimited continues (which you can simply ignore if you think it makes it too easy) and the fact that it's not a run-of-the-mill platform game means that you can simply wander off to whatever part of the island that you choose and still have fun. It's nice to see that someone has finally seen a film tie-in as something other than part of an extended money-making franchise. Undoubtedly, this will still make someone large wads of cash,

but at least it'll be because it's a very good game, rather than a tired after-thought. Of course, this game, like the movie, completely ignores Michael Crichton's examination of the morality of genetic engineering and whether, just because you can do something, you should. But hey, high brow intellectual debate has never been a match for having the collective shit scared out of the populous by animated beasts, has it?

SNES

available

NOW

category

ACTION

players

1

publisher

OCEAN

visuals

Excellent, with the two perspectives a big plus. Full of flashy custom effects too.

91

sound

More inventive than usual, especially in the lift.

85

gameplay

Generally first rate. The two modes are a killer idea but some people might find it all a bit on the slow side.

87

longterm

Once you've got it sussed it isn't too hard, but it looks so good you'll still want to play it.

80

overall

Incredibly good fun which, at the end of the day, is the whole point.

87%

REVIEW»

Wiz and Liz look old enough to be locked away in a maximum-security retirement home dribbling into their crocheted cardigans, but instead they're hopping across the galaxy rescuing escaped bunnies. How is this so? Well they're actually quite powerful wizards, which means you can look forward to lots of spells, lots of action and lots of speed. STRETCH ARMSTRONG tries to keep pace...



Each of these maps shows a complete level of Wiz 'n' Liz. Nice detail, huh? The sprites may be small (well they're tiny really) but that allows everything to move very quickly, even in split screen mode.





So what is it with rabbits anyway? I'm not even particularly fond of them (unless they're chocolate and wrapped in foil) and yet everywhere I turn I'm asked to rescue the little critters. Cracking open the evil Dr. Robotnik's pod and letting them run free was one thing but now we're asked to travel from our nice little retirement planet to galaxies far, far away to save hordes and hordes of the buggers.

But I'm getting a bit ahead of myself here. You'll probably want to know why you have to save the rabbits (won't you?). Well, You're Wiz (or

is hardly revolutionary, it is a lot of fun. As Wiz (equal parts Santa and Cat Weasel), or Liz, you run around like a headless chook, casting spells, making nonsense words (or are they?), catching rabbits and beating the clock, throughout a large series of worlds and levels. An initial spell gets you off Pum (a good spell to remember, by the look of Wiz's backyard) and into the atmospheric ether, from where you may access any of the variety of worlds through, in an old fashioned plot twist, a door. Each of the worlds is relatively similar in layout, though each has its own peculiar characteristics. Desertland, for example, features desert terrain, Woodland is relatively woody and Grassland's primary feature is grass. Stop me if you've heard this one before, but Snowland...

But anyway, each of the worlds has its own delightful scenery (check the giant rabbit in Deadland) and looks mighty fine. Wiz 'n' Liz are also drawn very well, and look especially cute when they skid to turn around, or grab their hats when the pace gets a bit too much. Of course, if you spend too much time looking at the beautiful scenery or the alluring sprites you'll have a lot of opportunity to consider their merits in the next life, because you'll be dead.

A Funny Spell Instead of landscape gazing, you should be running around flat chat casting those aforementioned spells and grabbing those rabbits. The spells, of course, are very important, because they'll unlock all sorts of secret and helpful bits and pieces, such as a trading shop to buy or sell items to assist your Bunnyquest and "Ye Olde Hint Shoppe", which sheds some light on the mysteries of the strange worlds you encounter. One particularly well

placed spell will also land you bang in the middle of a rip-roaring game of Space Invaders. The younger readers may not have heard of Space Invaders but it's a game which was around back when people used to wear platforms and flares and listen to really bad disco. Hang on . . .?

You'll also find it handy to pick up time icons and items to trade for time, because no matter how fearsome the beasts you encounter, the one that's most likely to kill you is the clock. After you slip through the worlds, depending on your level, you'll then meet one or other of the killer bosses, such as "The Freaky Flower", surely a plant that should be outlawed (*it should if it in any way inspired "The Freaked-Out Flower Children" - Ed*), and one with no interest in peace, love and understanding.

Thrills and Spills But that's not all. To our eternal gratitude Wiz 'n' Liz comes complete with a thrills and spills two player mode which, while ditching the magical hoo-ha, allows us the exquisite joy of causing our opponents' demise by spelling words and collecting rabbits before he or she can. Here you race both your opponent and the clock, to the sounds of second generation Pet Shop Boys rip-offs, and while it lacks the intricacies of the one player mode, it pumps the competitive juices like all good two player games. And it does look better and play better than the two-player mode in Sonic, so all fast-action junkies should definitely have a spin around the worlds.

All in all then, this is a mighty cute, fun little platformer which, despite the fact that I'd normally run a mile from a cliché, should go down a treat with both young and old.



his squeeze Liz, depending on your preference) and you live on a planet called Pum, casting spells, pottering around and doing all the kind of stuff that blokes called "Wiz" do. One day Wiz chucks a bit too much chilli sauce into the cauldron, there's a catastrophe of Ecco-like proportions and your beloved bunnies are spread to the far reaches of the Universe. You, of course, in the interest of domestic harmony, have to get 'em back.

Santa Claus & Cat Weasel What follows is a big slab of platform action and, while it's a format which

MEGA DRIVE

available

NOW

category

PLATFORM/ACTION

players

1-2

publisher

PSYGNOSIS

visuals

Great looking characters and nice, if a little repetitive scenery. Not that you can actually spare the time to look.

85

sound

Serviceable effects and better than average music, although no one will be begging for a soundtrack release

75

gameplay

Lots of fun, simple, responsive controls and hidden extras make this a treat.

87

longterm

In the long run, the 2 player option is always the pick. Will keep you busy for a while but once you've done it a couple of times, its appeal will wane.

80

overall

Bottom line, this looks great, and as my trusty assistant says, is "heaps good" - fast, fun and cute - a winner.

84%

Panic on Funkatron

Looks like Sega's programmers have been on acid again. Toe Jam and Earl are back and they're better than ever. It just goes to show you what a little imagination, a few George Clinton records and some good designer drugs can do. Andrew Humphreys certainly appreciates it...

Toe



As far as games go, *Toe Jam and Earl* was pretty well "Out There". Two hip teenage aliens crash on planet Earth. They set out to find the pieces of their ship, but they have a lot of fun making music along the way. It was a good game, but it wasn't flashy enough to sell big numbers. *Toe Jam and Earl 2* should make up for it. It looks amazing, it sounds great and it's got the gameplay and all the character it needs to become a genuine classic.

All Funked Up Toe Jam and Earl have made it home to Funkatron, but trouble has followed them. Some rowdy Earthling stowaways have returned with them and they're causing havoc. Funkatron is a peaceful planet and Earthlings just don't fit in. So it's up to Toejam and Earl to find them, jar them, and send them back to Earth. They've also got to unravel the mystery of the missing Great Funkapotamus - the source of all Funk as we know it - before the Earthlings drain all the funk out of Funkatron.

TJ and Earl 2 is basically a side-scrolling platformer. That fact alone may be enough to strike fear into the hearts of millions - at the very least it'll worry fans of the offbeat original game. But don't be afraid: when they're done right, platform games still have the power to bring tears of joy to the eyes of gamers everywhere, and *TJ and Earl 2* does just that.

Visually, this is one of the most impressive games ever to grace the Mega Drive. Only *Aladdin* is better looking than this. Like *Aladdin*, *TJ and Earl 2* is a 16 meg cart and (unlike *Jurassic Puke*) it shows. The backgrounds are stylised, super-colourful, and full of detail and

depth. Funkatron is truly a weird and wonderful world. On top of it all you find Toe Jam and Earl, all their Funkatronian friends, and those pesky humans - fat ladies and their poodles, annoying kids, camera-happy tourists, construction workers (no, not that guy from the Village People) and my favourites, naked men in wooden crates. They're all big, chunky, superbly detailed, smoothly animated and overflowing with charm.

Doing the Funky Junky The sound is even more impressive. The music is truly slammin', jammin', superfly and all those other words that mean funky. Pop a coin in the right meter and you can even jam with the boys. The effects are great too and the game is full of high quality speech and vocal samples. Each type of human has their own sample and when you score an extra-man you don't hear some crappy computer-twinkle, you get a booming chorus of "Hallelujah!" for your troubles.

Of course visuals and sound alone won't make a good game - what really counts is the gameplay. Well, *TJ and Earl 2* has buckets of the stuff. Your basic task is »



Jam & Earl 2



Guess what? One of these doors is good. Two are bad.

Springin' to the next level.



Funk Scan. Best ring the door bell and see who's home.



Earl in Lewanda's Cave.

Toe Jam and the Fat Lady. Those pesky poodles can't be too far away.



Another Funk Scan. The present is Good. The Bowling balls are Bad.



All the Earthlings are bagged, so throw them into the ship.

Oh no, the funk is draining from Funkatron!

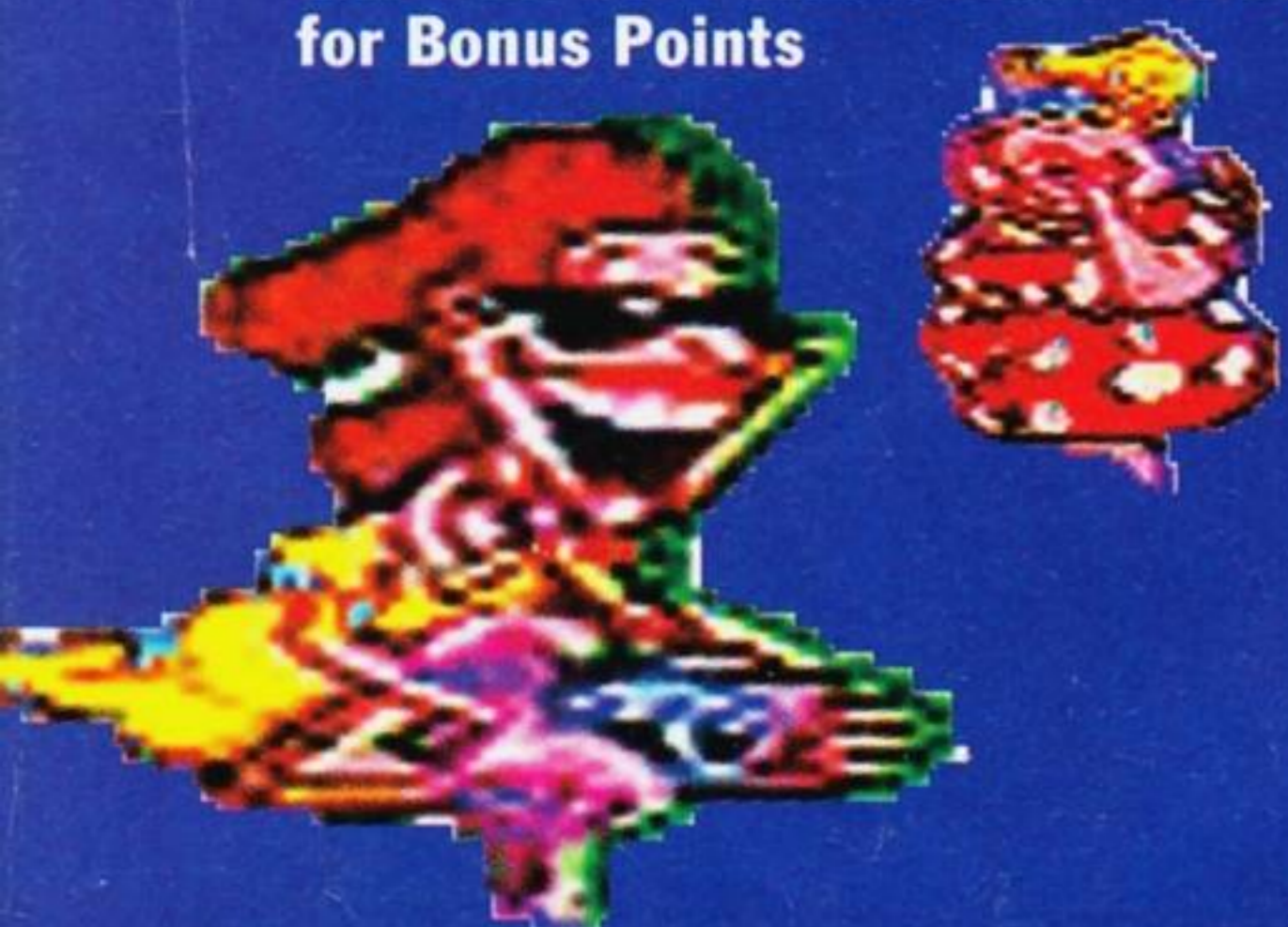


HYPER» Funk Zone!

» catching humans. You're armed with specimen jars - you throw them at the humans (some need more hits than others), then you pick em up, carry them to the rocket pad, and send them home. But you've got to *find* them first.



Jam with the Funkatronian Posse for Bonus Points



They could be anywhere - in trees or bushes, under rocks or man-holes, or high in the sky. Screen indicators and your Funk Scan (a kind of radar) will help you track them down, then it's up to you to flush them out by moving rocks, searching bushes, opening man-holes and shaking trees. You can interact with almost everything in your search for humans and presents, but you need to be careful - you might find bowling balls, garbage bins or tires landing on top of your head too.

The controls are superb. They're very responsive and they give you heaps of different moves. You can throw jars to the side, up in the air, you can shower them down as you jump, or you can place them on the ground. There's a special Funk Move too (button A) which lets you move through walls and escape enemies in a hurry. Pausing the game brings up the Funk Scan, a Panic Button, and a Funk Vacuum for emergencies.

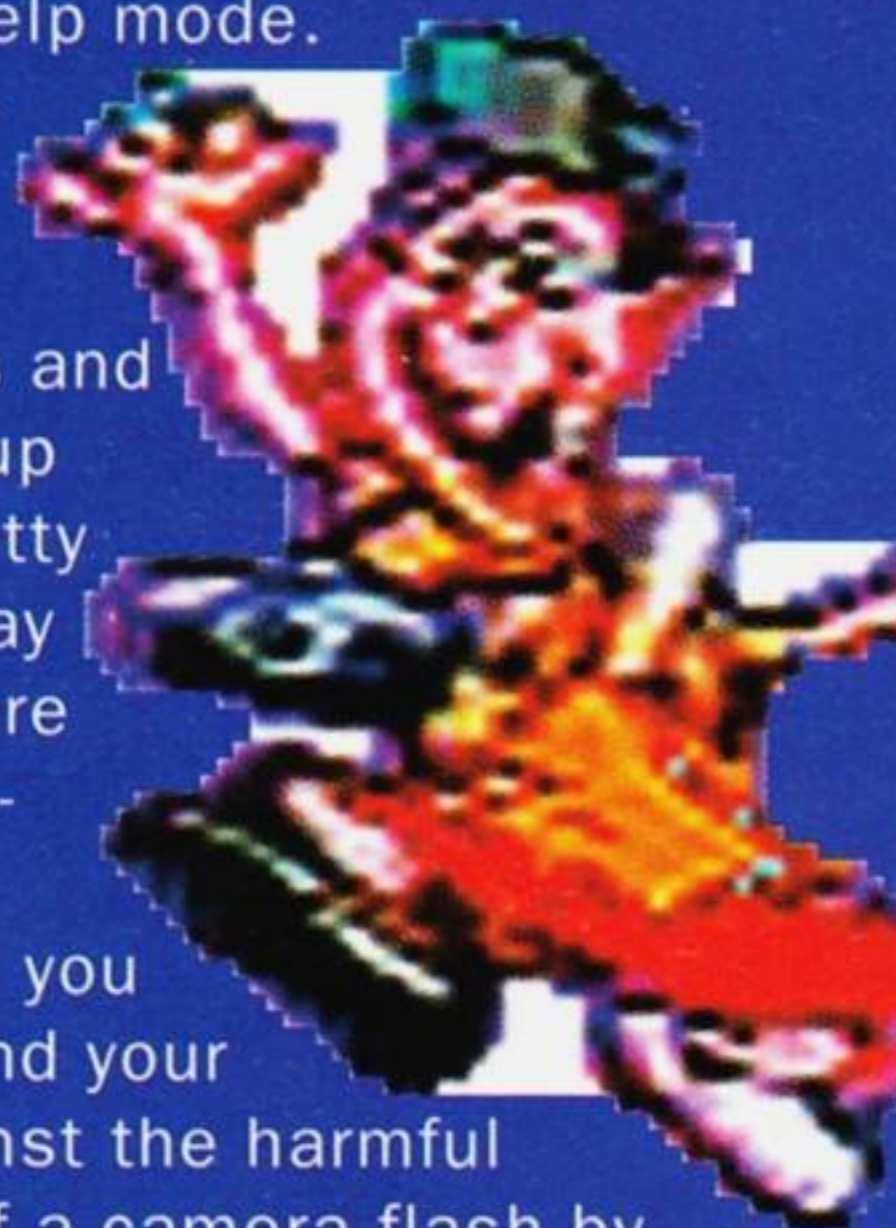
Friendly Funkatronians

A nice feature of the game is its built-in help mode.

By standing in front of fountains and pushing up some pretty useful playing tips are revealed - for instance, you can defend yourself against the harmful effects of a camera flash by pulling down on the direction pad at the right moment. Pulling down will also make you hit the deck when the flying Duck attacks. Friendly Funkatronians will lend you a hand (or tentacle) along the way too (you might have to ring their doorbells first though).

Add a host of sub-games, Hyper Funk bonus rounds, secret rooms and passages galore and some nifty underwater sections and you'll be busy for a very long time. It's a big game with lots to come back for and it's not going to be a push over. Those Earthlings can be very tough. Lucky for you, the game is password based. After every two levels you get a new password and can continue where you left off. Two-players can team-up for added jar-lobbing fun, so long term value (or lack thereof) is not a problem with *TJ and Earl 2*.

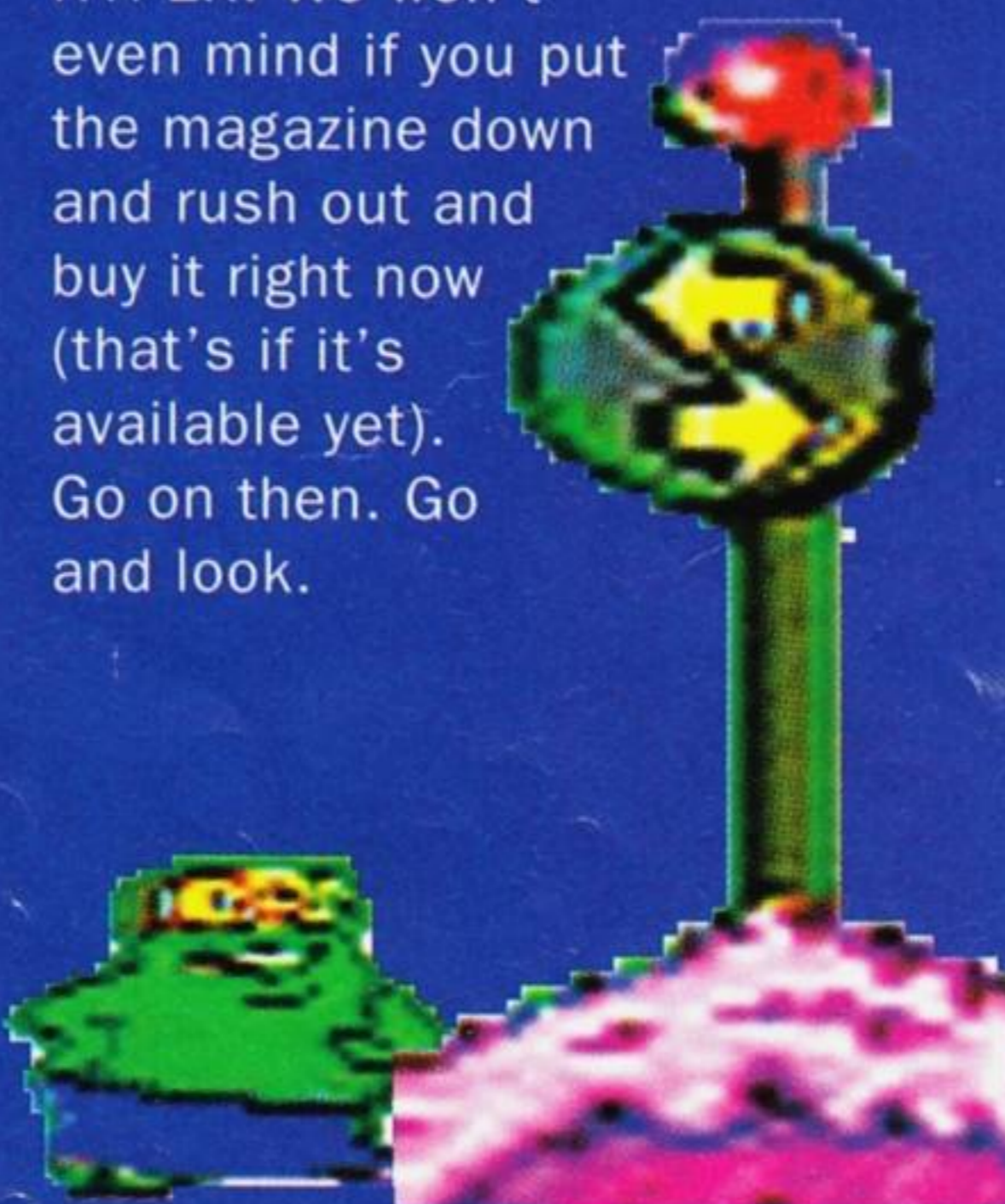
In fact, there are no problems with *TJ and Earl 2*. Any game that has flying cows in it is bound to be good. But when the cows fly into your ear and possess you for a few seconds, spinning your head around and making you go "Moo", you know you're playing a great game. The tripped-out atmosphere is incredibly refreshing, the endless sight-gags are always funny, and it's a constant joy to play. We love it here at HYPER. We won't even mind if you put the magazine down and rush out and buy it right now (that's if it's available yet). Go on then. Go and look.



Earl covers his eyes to avoid the flash from the Papparazzi.



Oh my God, what's the HYPER ed doing jumping out of a tree?



MEGA DRIVE

available

JANUARY

category

FUNKY PLATFORMER

players

1-2

publisher

SEGA AMERICA

visuals

One of the best looking Mega Drive games ever with a fantastic alien world and some of the coolest characters around.

94

sound

Slammin' tunes and excellent, clear samples make it as good to listen to as it is to look at.

95

gameplay

Fantastic controls and heaps more to do than just jump around and shoot things. There's lots of fun to be had going solo, but it's even better with a friend.

93

longterm

It's big, tough, with lots to come back for, the two-player mode is great and it's just so much fun you'll be at it for ever (well, for a while anyway).

88

overall

About as funky as you can get without a quart of Castrol GTX and a Rubber Chicken and a lot safer too. Buy it.

92%

Shadowrun



Cyberpunk hits the Super Nintendo! Shadowrun takes you to an ultra-violent post-Grunge Seattle, where karma, virtual reality and magic all co-exist. STEVE POLAK turns on, jacks in and doesn't want to come back.



Role playing games on the SNES usually have a fairly conventional feel about them. You wander around as a lonely Elf or Swordshero, looking for a seemingly endless series of 'special' objects, and kill almost everyone you came across. Most RPGs, such as Zelda and Mystic Quest take you back to a Tolkeinesque milieu and let you discover the bygone era of myths and magic. This can be fun, but at times the quests, characters, and opponents seem far too removed from reality to be engaging.

Shadowrun breaks this traditional mould, and the result is an adventure which is more engrossing, and downright addictive than most. This is the RPG for non-RPG players, as well as the hard core Elf and Orc freaks. Why? Firstly, the mystery of the story as it unfolds really gets you in. Rather than having to chase down the Holy Grail or whatever, you start Shadowrun with no idea of who you are or why you are here. All that you know is that someone is mess-

ing with your head (you have all these cybernetic wires coming out of it), and that just about everyone you meet is trying to kill you.

A Gibson-esque future The cool thing about Shadowrun is that it is set in Seattle in 2050, and so it is about a possible future, rather than an implausible past. Seattle has become a weird place where the science fiction of William Gibson comes to life in a disturbingly convincing manner. In Shadowrun technology and mysticism converge in the most bizarre ways. Bhuddist notions of Karma, are mixed with the world of Virtual Reality, Cyberspace and electronically-run corporate megaplexes with startling effect. If you really want to trip out and become immersed in a freaky, yet realistic world you have found it in Shadowrun.

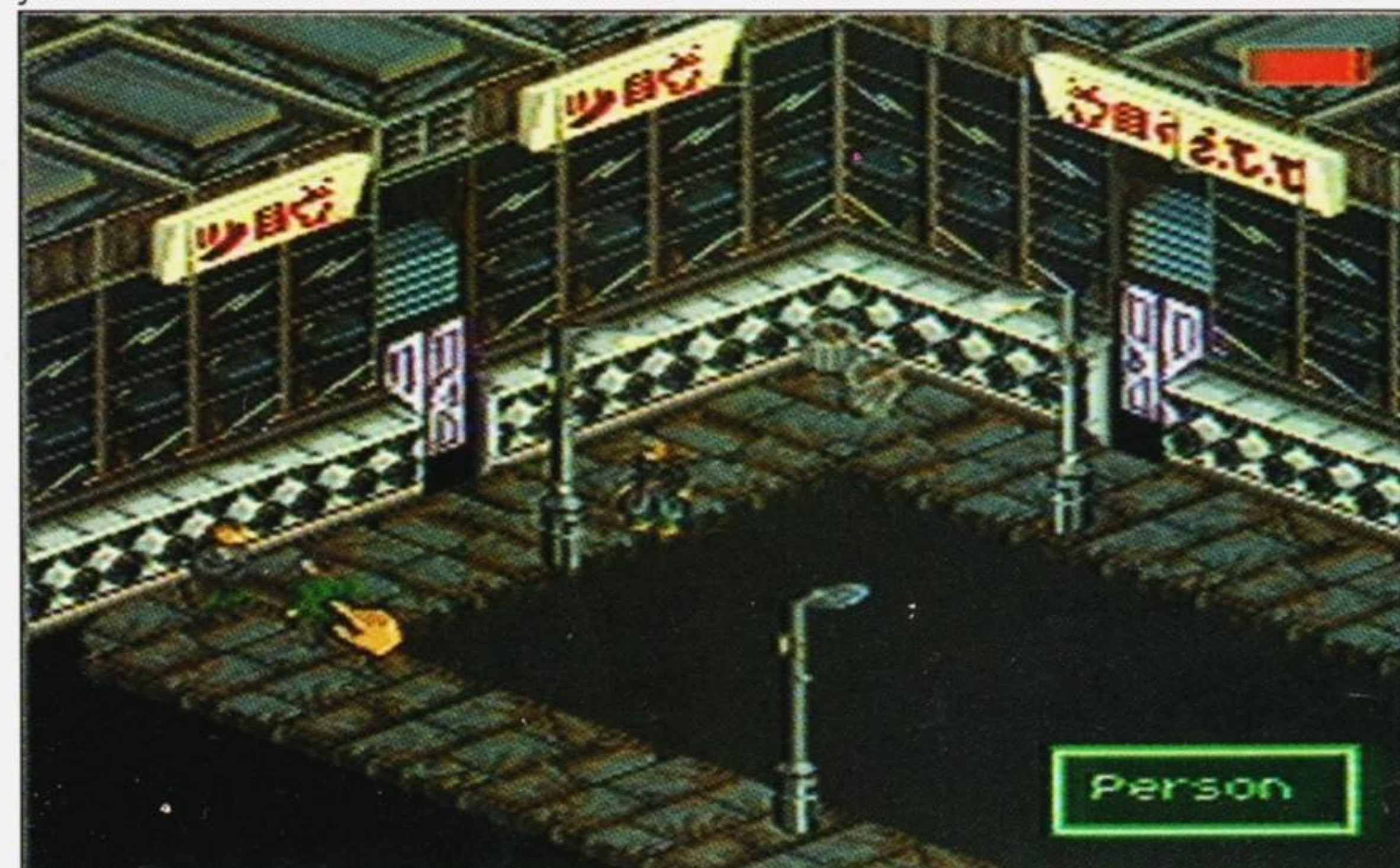
The game also enables you to get more immersed in your role as detective, because the conversations you have aren't as predetermined as other RPGs. You have to

actually ASK the right questions in order to get the information you need, and so the narrative flow of the conversations is two way and thus much more interesting. The Shadowrun sonics are absolutely spot on in their deep malevolent moodiness. And the graphics, although rather dark and at times crude, also give the player the feeling of being lost in a big mean world, where danger in the form of a psychopathic gunman, or crazed Shaman lurks just around the corner. This is done through the use of very small character sprites, an isometric perspective, and lots of 'shadows' (hence the name).

Also Shadowrun isn't bogged down with the mathematical tedium of most RPGs when it comes to the combat system. Instead of a relentless sequence of sub-menus, your man just pulls out his trusty Berretta, and blasts away until all opposition has been wiped out. This gives the game a nice mix of RPG style adventuring, and arcade style action.

Karma Points Shadowrun excels in interactiveness through the use of a 'mouse' style point and click icon. This means you are free to communicate with, shoot at, and examine anything in the room from a distance, rather than having to continually amble up to the things you want to examine. Character development in Shadowrun is also more interesting than most other RPGs because you can actually choose the abilities you develop. You are awarded 'karma' points for overcoming evil opponents, and with these points you can increase your strength, charisma, firearm skills, magical ability, and computer skills in any order you want. So you can develop in the game as a 'macho dude', a computer hacker, or a 'mystic' magician, and this will affect the way you approach the puzzles and challenges you are faced with.

To put it bluntly, Shadowrun is as infectious as rabies, and it will leave you addicted til the very end.



FORMAT: SNES

CYBERPUNK RPG

AVAILABLE: NOW

PLAYERS: 1

PUBLISHER: BEAM

visuals

Dark and moody. The 3D perspective works well and the detailed maps are excellent. Pity the sprites are just a bit small.

80

sound

What a surprise - it's dark and moody. The effects are OK and the soundtracks are excellent.

85

gameplay

Gripping and original RPG wandering mixed with intense action makes for a happy gaming experience.

89

longterm

Once you've finished, you've finished. But it's a huge and often difficult quest.

88

overall

A brilliant RPG with moody cyberpunk overtones.

89%

Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles Tournament Fighters



Streetfighting Turtles anyone? Yep, it's another one-on-one fighting game. Do yesterday's heroes have what it takes to make it in today's world? Andrew Humphreys doubts it...

Let's get this straight: if you've got *Streetfighter II Special Champion Edition* you don't need this game. You might want it, but you certainly don't need it. If you've got *Streetfighter* (and if you haven't, what are you waiting for - a price drop or something?), you've already got the best; *Tournament Fighters* is inferior in every way. That's not to say it's a bad game - it's actually pretty good - but it's strictly for Turtlemaniacs and the sad and rather lonely minority of the population who simply must have every fighting game ever released.

Come Out of Your Shell

What sort of plot device could get the Turtles into a fighting game? The trusty kidnap. Splinter is abducted by evil Turtle clones. It turns out that Krang is behind it all (or is he?) and has the rat stashed away in Dimension X. If the Turtles want him back (would you want a man-sized rat sprouting Eastern mysticisms in your living room?) they must fight for him on the planets of Dimension X.

But there's only four Turtles, and that's not enough characters for a

decent fighting game, so four of their friends go with them, making a total of eight characters to choose from. There's the four heroes in a half shell, plus Casey Jones, Sisyphus, Ray Fillet, and a heavily pumped April O'Neill.

In the one-player game, you fight all eight clones (ie each playable character) on a different planet before you move on to the bosses: Triceraton, Krang's Android and the awesome Karai. All the usual options are there - the number of rounds, time limits, eight difficulty levels - along with an instant replay feature. There's also a practice mode, a Tournament (how many bad guys can you beat with one energy bar?), and of course, the two-player head-to-head mode.

Don't be Shy

Now Each character has a number of basic moves and special moves. They look like *Streetfighter* moves, and they're performed like *Streetfighter* moves. We discovered all of them (we think) just

by using basic joystick rotating and charging techniques. There's only two buttons to contend with: button A is your punch and weak special moves button, button B is for kicks and strong special moves. Using only two buttons doesn't really cut down the number of moves. The problem lies with the responsiveness of the controls. They're slightly slow and moves (combinations especially) can be difficult to pull off in a tight spot. Winning a two-player battle is as often as not the result of good luck rather than skill.

It's a shame the controls weren't tweaked a bit more because everything else is top notch. The graphics are great. The sprites are large, detailed and well animated (although a few more frames would have been



nice). The imaginative backgrounds are especially good - some of them even split into two levels - and the sound is fine too. The effects are nothing special but there's a lot of speech, even if it sounds like it was digitised through an extra-grungy filter. But in the end, *Tournament Fighters* is no match for *Streetfighter*. It has its moments, it's just not as good.

Konami are bringing the *Tournament Fighters* to the SNES too. We haven't played the final version yet, but from what we've seen, it's a different game altogether. When it's in our grubby little hands, we'll review it.

FORMAT: MEGA DRIVE

AVAILABLE: JANUARY

CATEGORY: FIGHTING

PLAYERS: 1-2

PUBLISHER: KONAMI

visuals

Superbly coloured and detailed backdrops and chunky sprites, but the animation is choppy at times. **89**

sound

The effects are OK and there's a lot of speech. Unfortunately, it's not good quality. **79**

gameplay

Lots of characters with lots of moves but the shabby controls make them difficult to pull off. **72**

longterm

Loads of options and a good two-player game. If only the controls were sharper... **74**

overall

Don't look so surprised. It was never going to be as good as *Streetfighter II*, was it?

75%

Robocop vs Terminator

Hang on a minute, isn't there a slight problem here? If, in Terminator 2 the world goes nuclear in 1997 and Robocop is the future of law enforcement, in a dirty but not yet radioactive Detroit at the end of the century, how can the two metal monsters possibly coexist in the same fictional space. Well, wouldn't you know it, an alternate time-line scenario sprung up and so we have sci-fi's classic hero and anti-hero going head-to-head in another future altogether.

But is it our future? I certainly hope not because it's a pretty ugly place, but in game terms this means some very nice dark future backgrounds to look at. Inspired by Frank Miller's series of comics of the same name, *Robocop vs Terminator* positions you, the good guy (a half human/half machine Robocop) against the bad guys (half human-half machine Terminators). The exact plot...who cares?! This is just full on, shoot 'em dead blasting fun. And it *is* fun... for a while. The graphic deaths will liven up lounge rooms everywhere, and it all sounds and plays just fine, but that's probably not going to keep you pumping bullets into endoskeletons forever.

While you are playing though, there is lots of death and destruction to be had. Starting in the Detroit streets, Robocop mows his way through countless humans, terminators and rogue law enforcement robots in a twelve level battle to save mankind. Some levels have sub-plots like rescuing hostages and taking out security cameras, but mostly it's just shooting and trying to avoid getting shot. And luckily Robo comes across some truly awesome weaponry, so shooting never really gets that boring.

Getting these upgraded weapons, and keeping them, is the key to success. You start off with pissy little bullets, which take care of humans, but terminators and other robots aren't so concerned by them. You need lasers, homing bullets and

Oh no, not another bloody platform game!

Well, yes as a matter of fact. And this one's bloodier than most, but I suppose that's what you get when you cross a killer cyborg with a robotic cop. STUART CLARKE gets the plot confused (again).



high powered shots, some of which move in giant waves and terminate anything in their path - even terminators and end-of-level bosses.

Sometimes it's almost too easy with these outrageously good tools of destruction, but there is also lots of fun and graphic death to be had.

The levels do get harder as you progress, and you'll move through Toxic Farms, OCP offices, a Terminator Outpost, and an Underground bunker before you enter the Secret Streets where you'll face hordes of hostile Terminators. And if the streets don't get you, it's into the future where you'll decide the fate of humanity with

Terminator Spiders, Dogs and Robotic Killer craft.

So, there you have it. Diehard fans of Robocop and Terminator will be dribbling with excitement already, and will no doubt have a wild time, but really there's not much to this one. Graphics and sound are both great, but not special enough to make this game a real winner. My advice - see the blood, have some fun and then return it to the video store.



OTHER CONVERSIONS

Robocop vs Terminator is also out on the Master System and Game Gear, and a souped-up Mega CD will be out next year (what's the bet they only change the music?). A slightly different (bloodless?) version will be coming out the Super Nintendo, and we'll review it as soon as we see it.



FORMAT: MEGA DRIVE

PLATFORM/ACTION

AVAILABLE: NOW

PALYERS: 1

PUBLISHER: VIRGIN

visuals

Robo is nice and big, and moves well, if a bit stiffly. The gore is good for a laugh, but "concerned parents" mightn't like it.

sound

Nothing outstanding, but some of the effects are nice and chunky.

gameplay

You shoot, you move forward. Jump, rescue prisoners. Kill terminators. You get shot, you die. Simple.

longterm

It's fun for a while, but once you've finished and seen people explode a thousand times, what else is there?

overall

Not the best game that could have been made with these two sci-fi icons, but probably not the worst either.

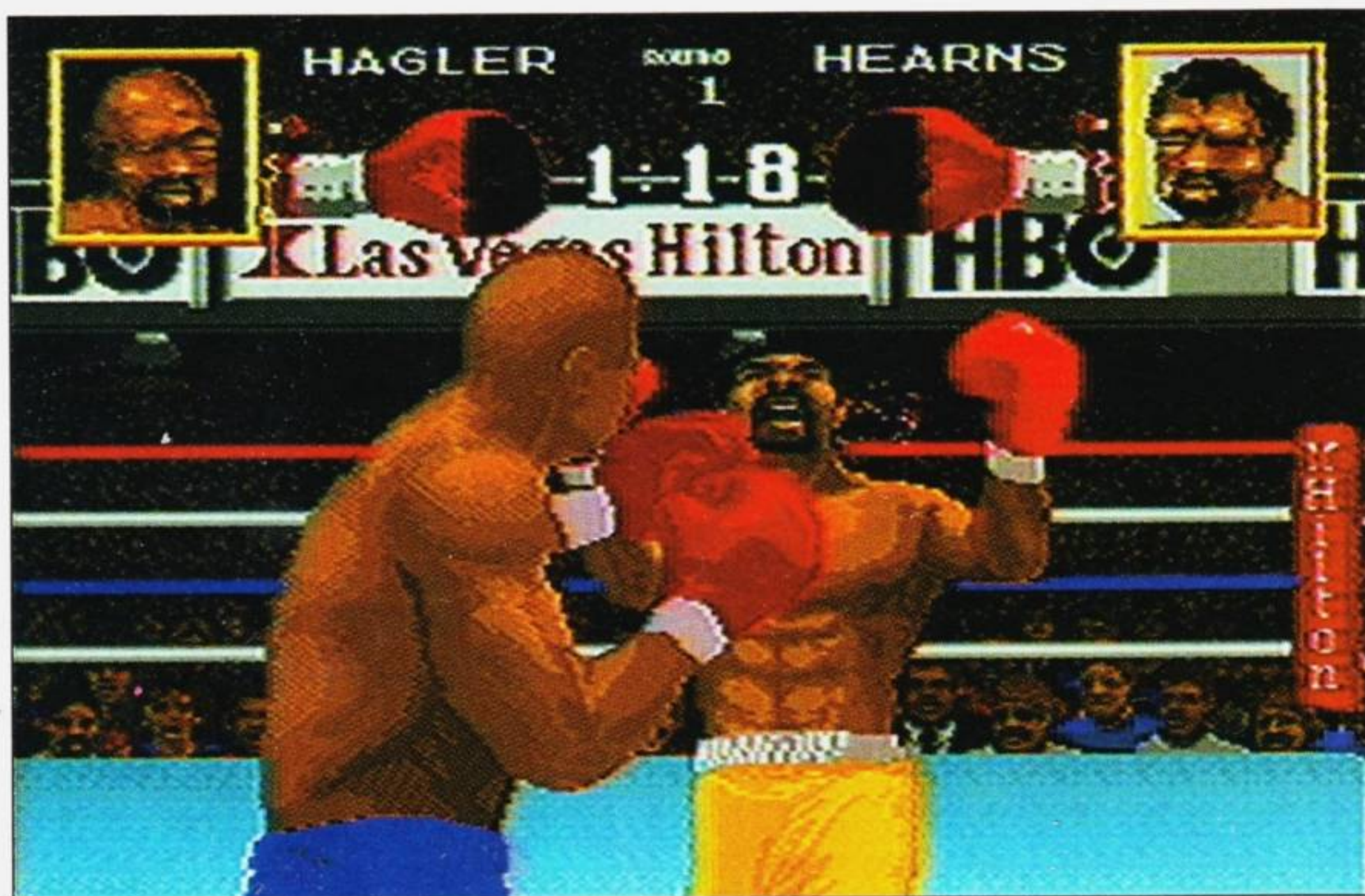
75%

Legends of the Ring

Andrew: Didn't we use a joke about big, sweaty men beating each other around the ring in the last issue?

Stuart: I believe we did. But you can never overuse a classic, can you?

Andrew: You're right. I'll get on with it then.



I've known some Legends of the Ring in my time, but I never thought they could make a video game out of it. Oh, it's a boxing game is it? My mistake (and your limit on ring jokes - Stuart). Actually it is a very good boxing game - in fact, the best I've played. Programmed by Sculptured Software (they did *Mortal Kombat* and *World Soccer* to name but two), *Boxing Legends of the Ring* has the graphics, the sound and the playability to make it a real heavy-weight contender in the biffa stakes.

Who the Hell is James Toney? There are eight middleweight legends to choose from - Roberto Duran, Rocky Graziano, Marvin Hagler, Thomas Hearns, Jake (The Raging Bull) LaMotta, Sugar Ray Leonard, Sugar Ray Robinson, and James Toney. Just who James Toney is, is anyone's guess. Each legend has his own distinct boxing style and individual strengths and weaknesses as judged by *Ring Magazine* (the game is officially licensed by "the boxing bible"). Diehard fans will love it.

There are three playing modes: Exhibition, Career, and the Legends Tournament. The Exhibition mode gives you a one-off exhibition match. It's a good place to start and to familiarise yourself with all the legends ("Hi Legend, my name's Andrew. Nice to meet you". WHACK!) and their styles. The Tournament mode puts you in the middle of a tournament

(who would've guessed it?).

But it's the Career mode that will provide the most fun for aspiring thugs. You create and name your own boxer (check out the awesome "Hitman Hyper"), picking his style (are you a Street fighter, a Military type, or Olympic quality?), his appearance (you can't make him better looking, you only pick his colour), and allocating energy to his various punches. Fight your way through nine matches to become the number one ranked contender (there's a long and complicated password system), then go for the title, using your very own fighter in the Legends Tournament.

There's heaps more options to play with, including various skill levels, perspective changes (you can be either the near or far fighter, or switch between both views every round), and a very cool "blackout" feature.

Inside Information The controls are excellent. With a combination of joystick movements and button presses you can throw jabs, uppercuts, hooks to the head or to the body with any hand you choose (left or right, stupid). You've even got a limited amount of "Super Punches". Land one at the right time and it's good night Legend. Plus, clear on-screen icons (the boxer's face and the glove) show how wobbly your legs are and how much energy you've got left.

The graphics are great. It's a first person perspective with HUGE,

Witness the creation of a boxing legend: Hitman Hyper. Once you name your fighter and pick his appearance and style, you can give him the punching power he needs to mix it up in the ring. After every bout (providing you win) you switch to a training session where you can increase any of your basic traits (power, stamina or chin).

Hypie's first fight against the fictional Kinikini was a one-sided affair - the Hitman KO'd him in the first round.



superbly animated sprites ready to kick the living shit out of you. The only drawback is that you can't really move backwards and forwards - you're limited to a side to side slug-fest. Crunching sound effects and some very nice digitised speech from the ring announcer and ringside bums add to the overall effect.

Like I said, it's the best boxing sim around. It's got a lot of depth and even after the initial thrill is gone, it'll still be a great two-player bash.

NEWS FLASH: The Mega Drive conversion may already be in the country! Hopefully it's as good. STOP...

FORMAT: SNES

AVAILABLE: NOW

CATEGORY: BOXING SIM

PLAYERS: 1-2

PUB: ELECTRO BRAIN

visuals

Massive sprites, great animation, and a nice "lights out" effect.

86

sound

A masochist's delight. You can feel all the hits. The speech (though sparse) is nice and clear. Even the music's good.

85

gameplay

Easy to use controls and just enough moves and strategy to stop it deteriorating into a mere button pushing contest.

81

longterm

Lots of depth for one-player; lots of fun for two-players.

82

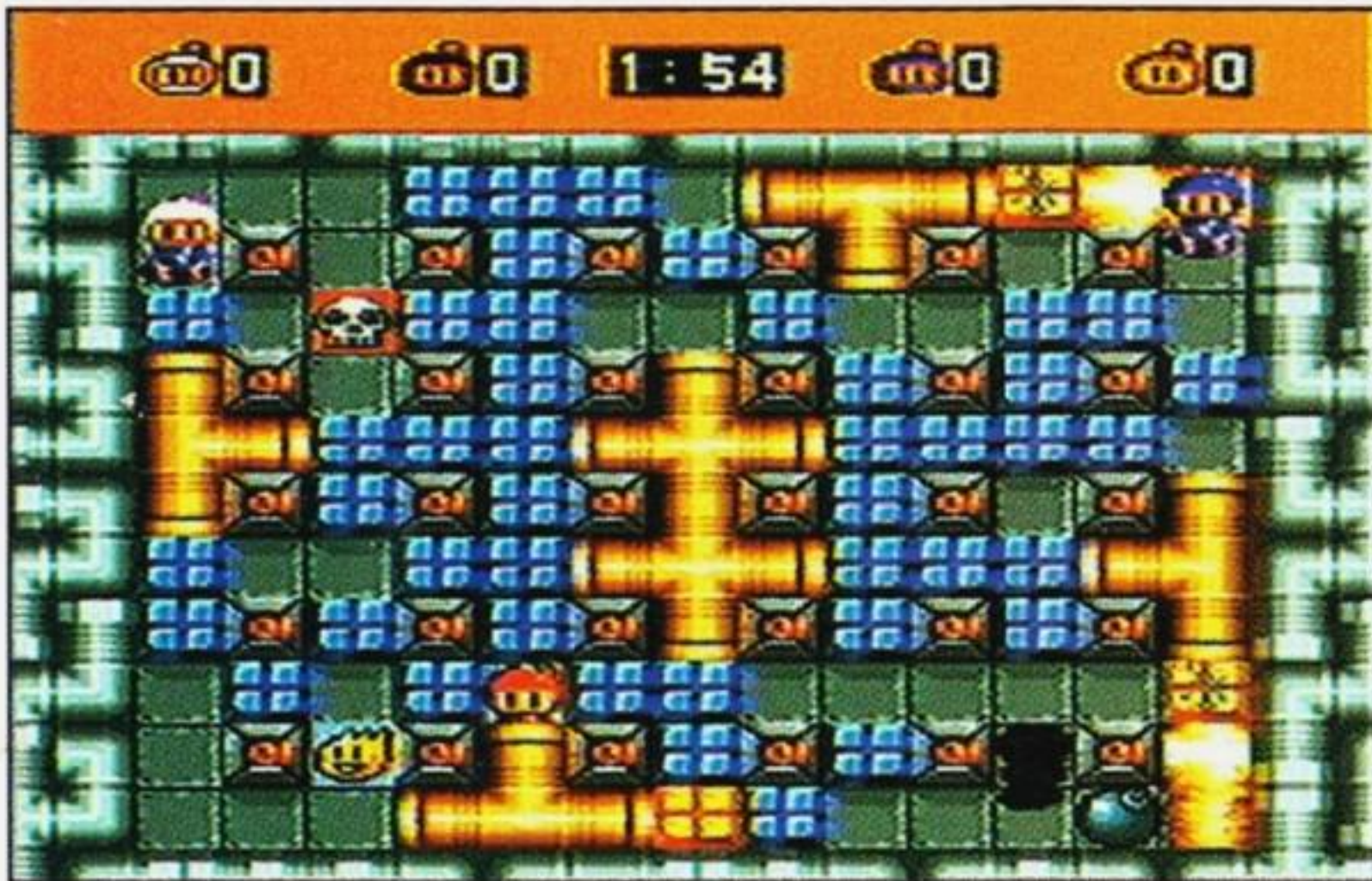
overall

A great looking, hard hitting, festival of brutality. The best boxing game yet!

84%

Super Bomberman

There's been a massive amount of hype surrounding this game overseas, especially in Japan where they've gone completely loopy over it. In fact, it topped the charts there for a month. Why? Could it be because it's utterly fabulous? Hmmm, DAVID WILD-GOOSE investigates...



The basic premise behind Super Bomberman is blowing things up. With bombs. In Normal Mode (for one or two players) you use these bombs to blow up a whole bunch of creatures and aliens and teacups. There are six stages in all, each one divided into eight levels with an end-of-stage boss at the end (natch), which makes for about 48 levels altogether, I'd say. Blimey, we're so good to you here at HYPER, we even do your maths for you!

Bombing Battles In Battle Mode — and this is where the fun really starts — you use the bombs to blow up each other and whoever is left standing at the end is the winner. You see, in Battle Mode there are no creatures or aliens or teacups, there are only Bomberman. Four of them, to be precise. This means that you not only have to worry about where/when/how your own bombs are going to explode but everybody else's too. Completely manic stuff.

There is more to the game though, than simply rushing around dropping bombs everywhere. Oh yes, there's plenty of bonus goodies to collect, like boxing gloves (so you can punch bombs away), boots (to speed you up), fireballs (for bigger

explosions), extra bombs (so you can lay more than one at a time) and armour (for protection). And in Battle Mode there are twelve totally different layouts so you'll never get bored. Particular favourites include Tunnel Zone, which has tunnels for you to hide bombs so no one can see them, and Belt Zone, which contains four conveyor belts that transport bombs around the screen. The Light Zone where the screen is almost black, save for the two moving spotlights, is an absolute bastard, so be careful.

A Multi-player Game Theory I've got this theory about multi-player games (David's Big Multi-player-Games-Are-Really-Great Theory). That is, no matter how rubbish a game might appear at first, if there's a two player option it instantly become several million times better. Don't believe me? Just play any tennis game, every beat 'em up ever written (yes, that does include Street Fighter II), Super Soccer, World Class Rugby

and loads more. Even Pong. Play these on your own and you'll find them fairly shallow and rather dull, but add another human player and they rise Phoenix-like out of the murky depths in a raging, flaming and, er, blazing blaze of glory to become, well, pretty good fun.

Happily, Super Bomberman can only strengthen my theory. In two player Battle Mode it is at least the equal of Super Mario Kart or Street Fighter II and also comes with the added bonus of being terrific fun when playing by yourself.

A Warning (Of Sorts) Most of you, I assume, will have two controllers (if not, please rectify this situation immediately). This allows you to control two Bombermen which is brilliant enough, you would think. But no. Hudson Soft, in their ingenious and infinite wisdom, have brought out a Super Multitap, which plugs into your controller port allowing you to plug a further four controllers into the 'tap itself. Cool! This means, of course, that you can control all four Battle Mode Bomberman at once. It also means that you probably have to fork out an extra \$100 for the Multitap and two controllers on top of the \$100 you've already paid for the game. Ouch! So be prepared to pay if you want multi-player fun. I reviewed Super Bomberman Multitap-less so it's good enough to stand on its own, but if you're loaded then you really ought to get both.



FORMAT: SNES
AVAILABLE: NOW
ACTION/STRATEGY/FUN
PLAYERS: 1-4
PUBLISHER: HUDSON SOFT

visuals 85
 Nice and simple, but full of character and variety.

sound 72
 The music's OK but all you really need to hear are the explosions.

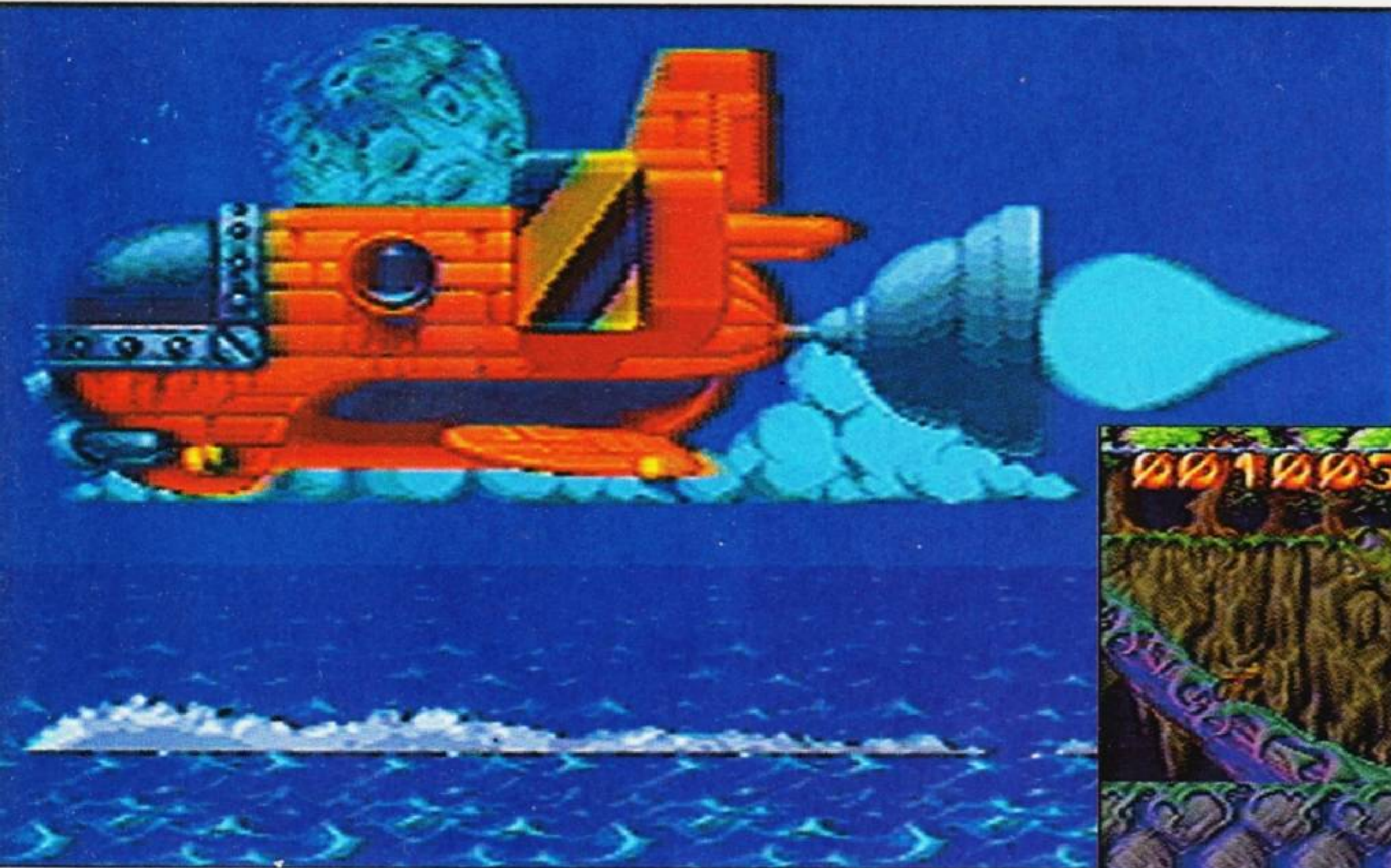
gameplay 93
 Absolute masses of the stuff.

longterm 92
 As a one player game it's a blast (chuckle), but with four players it's a time-bomb.

overall 92%
 An absolute must have and an instant classic.

Puggsy

An ugly, brown, blobby alien? A world ruled by tyrannical raccoons? Oh, God it must be another game with a stupid title! TIM SMITH (who looks a bit like Puggsy) takes a trip to another planet...



Puggsy is a bit of a loser. He lost his way in outer space and hit the time-space continuum. Landing on what he thought was a nice, peaceful planet to ask for some directions, he soon found out that things were not quite hunky dory. After exploring for a while, he returns to his ship to find it gone - taken as a gift for the Big Kahuna Raccoon. Of course, Puggsy sets out to get it back (did you ever doubt it?) and the game begins.

that all the items are all subject to the planets own gravity, which is similar to the moons. Real collision equations are used to determine the results to when items hit each other. You must be aware that all the levels are as new to Puggsy just as they would be to us, so you'll have to explore the levels first and see what items there are to use. There are over 40 objects to play around with

including barrels, balloons, axes and water pistols. can get to the King Raccoon. One in every three levels contains not just one exit, but two. The other exit leads to secret levels and is often very tricky to get to. It is not essential to find these to finish the game, but if you do there is a special ending for your troubles.

Puggsy is great to look at, and features some excellently animated and detailed characters. It uses the Mega Drive's colours very well and the backdrops all look great especially the Pyramid and Splinter Town stages. You thought that the Mega Drive couldn't do it, but Puggsy features some very good sprite scaling and rotation. As for sound, the tunes are great and grow on you very quickly. Puggsy contains more than thirty different tunes to compliment the different themes in the game.

Puggsy is the first dedicated Psygnosis game for the Mega Drive and is an excellent debut. The graphics show off the Mega Drive's many capabilities and the puzzles incorporated with the adventure make for the perfect balance. Well worth a look for those who not only enjoy a good looking, well-thought out game, but a brown, funky alien as well!



From Here to Raclantis Puggsy is an adventure like no other. He must make his way from the beach, all the way to the city of Raclantis to get his ship back. And lucky Puggsy, because the ship was parked right around the other side of the island, so he has to traverse 51 levels in order to reach King Raccoon. Puggsy's goal in each level is to reach the exit. Sound simple? Well, it's not. The exit could be blocked by a door, or high up on a mountain top. To help Puggsy are numerous items that can be used to solve these puzzles.

Puggsy uses what is pompously called "Total Object Interaction". The items that Puggsy finds have many different uses at different times. They can be picked up, stood on, piled up and thrown. Another unique feature is

The beauty of it is that there is not just one solution to the problems, and most of the time they can be solved in many different ways. There are many creatures that try to stop Puggsy, and some times they can be disposed of with a gun, or you can jump on their heads. There are also five world bosses that must be defeated along the way, including a parrot pirate, a badger, a giant raccoon and a floating raccoon. All must be defeated before you



FORMAT: MEGA DRIVE

AVAILABLE: NOW

PLATFORM/PUZZLE

PLAYERS: 1

PUBLISHER: PSYGNOSIS

visuals

Great, detailed animation and excellent backdrops. Puggsy's cute too!

88

sound

34 different tunes and lots of cool sound effects.

85

gameplay

Easy to get into, and hard to get out of!

86

longterm

Lots of levels, including many hidden ones that will keep you playing even after you've finished the game.

87

overall

A great mix of platform action and puzzles.

86%

“Where are you going, boy? Off with your fairy friends again?”
“Yes Dad. I’m going to rescue Shadax, my imprisoned fantasy-father.”
“Alright then, be home before dinner.”
ANDREW HUMPHREYS
assures us he will be...

I could start this review with a moan about how Role Playing Games are the most neglected sector of the console market, but it's been done before, hasn't it? The sad fact of the matter is this: if you're a fantasy-land fan you'll probably jump at the chance to buy a decent title (and Equinox is certainly that), and if you're not, you're probably already turning the page, muttering something about socially-challenged geeks. But don't turn the page too

quickly. Equinox is not an ordinary RPG.

Equinox (which is the sequel to the classic Solstice) has an obvious source of inspiration in Sega's Landstalker (reviewed last issue). It uses the same isometric 3D perspective (there's also some map-screen wandering to be done) and the basic gameplay (a mix of traditional RPG and platform elements) is very similar: an overly-cute sprite runs around, jumping, attacking, and solving puzzles along the way. On first impressions, Equinox looks to be a poor Landstalker clone, but the more you get into it, you begin to realise what a well put-together game it is. It's not as challenging or as gripping as Landstalker (and perhaps more suitable for less experienced adventurers), but Equinox is still a very good game with solid gameplay and a playing area large enough to keep anyone happy.

Tell Me a Story This is a story about a turban-wearing boy with the improbable name of Glendaal. Glen lives in Galendonia and is a happy boy - until his father, the great wizard Shadax, is imprisoned. Glen is upset by this - Daddy always told him he was an accountant. But he sets off to rescue him anyway. His quest will take him through eight levels of dun-

geon-packed, item-collecting, monster-bashing adventure.

Basically, you move about on a map-screen (which, thanks to some impressive mode 7 programming, you can rotate to your heart's content), fight a few giant bats, then fall into the dungeons of Galendonia. It's here that the action switches to the 3D perspective and the fun begins. Explore the various passageways to collect weapons, keys, spells and other tokens in order to get to the end-of-level bad guy. Defeat him and you can move on to the next island and a new set of challenges. Like Landstalker, once you get used to the perspective the controls are excellent. Everything is nice and responsive - even the menu system is user-friendly.

'bout a Man Named Glen

Visually, Equinox is impressive. It looks a lot like Landstalker, but it does have it's own feel to it. There's some flashy custom effects - like translucent sprites and the mode 7 rotation on the map-screens - and the 3D world is well designed and drawn. The detail and colour-rendering is excellent. As for Glen, he's way too cutesy for my liking, but he moves well and all of the bad guys do too.

The sound is even more impressive. The effects are good but the soundtrack is excellent. Most RPG's bombard you with a monotonous Medieval theme that loops over and over again. The soundtrack to Equinox fades in and out depending on what's going on on-screen. It's good too, in that Ecco the Dolphin New Age kind of way - very ethereal and "other worldly" and it helps to add a lot of atmosphere to the game.

If you're an RPG freak (and "freak" is the right word for most of you) go out and get it now. If you're not, give it a go and you might learn something.



FORMAT: SNES
AVAILABLE: NOW
CATEGORY: RPG
PLAYERS: 1
SONY IMAGESOFT

visuals 87
 A detailed, solid looking 3D world to play in with great characters and some good eye-candy.

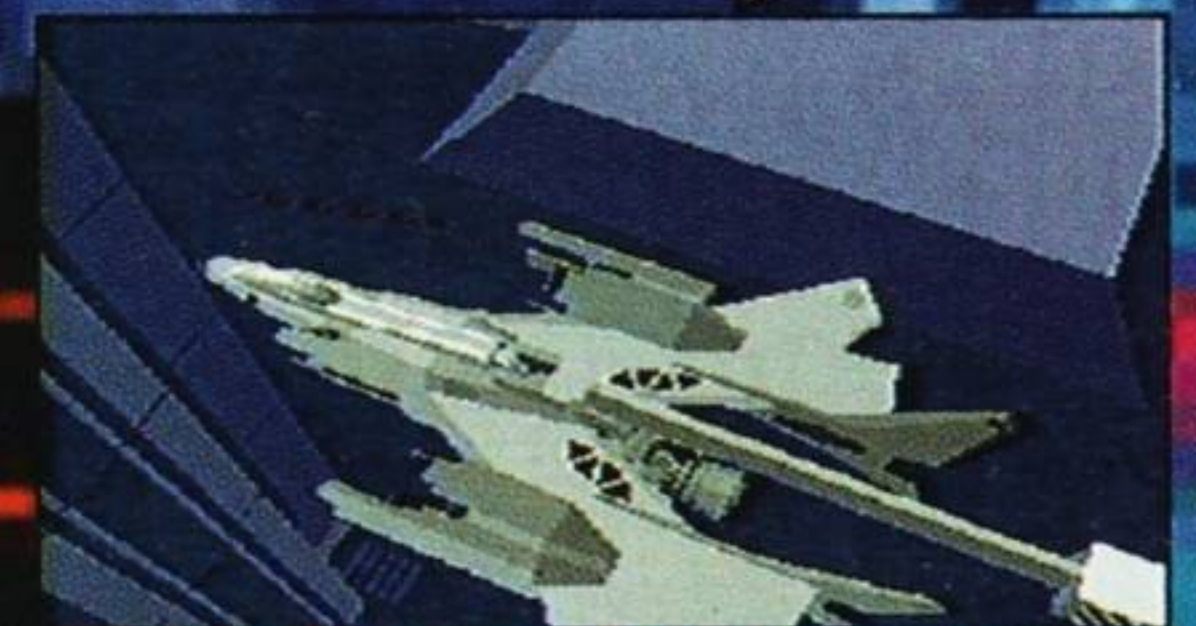
sound 90
 The New Age music is great. Very relaxing too.

gameplay 81
 Lots to do and plenty of places to do it. The controls are great too.

longterm 80
 It's very big but it's very friendly - maybe too friendly for some.

overall 83%
 A slickly presented game with good gameplay to match. Equinox should appeal to a wide range of gamers.

SILP



Remember "Galaga"? How about "Zaxxon"? Good fun, weren't they? Give those classic games the Mega CD touch and you'll get a game that looks a bit like Silpheed. STUART CLARKE climbs

back in the cockpit and keeps his finger firmly on the trigger...

The backgrounds are so good that they are a big distraction, but you can't totally ignore them, as sometimes they become a very important part of the action.



>> The video game that started it all was Space Invaders, which was closely followed by that other classic space shooter, Galaga. Then came Zaxxon, Truxton, Hellfire, Thunderforce, Xenon, Parodius... blah, blah, blah.

You would think that more than 10 years on from Space Invaders, with a whole bundle of average space shooters hanging around and all the technology available, programmers might get away from the basic premise of giving a spaceship a gun and letting it shoot everything in sight. But no, here comes Silpheed, which, no matter how you try to hide the fact, is a scrolling space shoot 'em up. And after playing it, I'd have to say it's a good thing that the programmers have stuck to the formula, because Silpheed, while not the revolutionary game some people claimed it would be, is damn good fun.

Network-jacking The plot is explained in stunning animation cut-ways at the beginning of the

NEED



game and between levels. Don't worry about the words though, because it's basically the same old crap story you get every time, so just gape in awe at the brilliant computer animation. To give you a brief summary of the situation, the year is 3076 and some cyber-punk intergalactic terrorists have network-jacked the Grayzon System, which is the central photon computer that integrates and controls the galactic network (which is, of course, based on Earth). You are the pilot of the SA-77 Silpheed, and must fly the tactical fighter craft some 12 levels back to Earth to put an end to the terrorist threat. In other words, the fate of the galaxy is resting in your sweaty hands.

You have a basic laser weapon which starts out shooting straight ahead, but as you get further into the game you graduate to Wide beam (an arc of 120 degrees), Phalanx beam (shoots forward in a V-shape) and Auto-aiming, which locks on targets when you fire. Your lifeline is your shield which can take up to six hits before you start to lose control. First your shield goes down, then your weapons fail and finally it's engine failure and an awful fade-to-red. It's all very tense and exciting while it's happening but then you realise that you're dead and you've got to do it all over again (sigh). The easiest way to avoid dying (apart from shooting everything immediately) is to pick up bonus repairs that come along at opportune moments. The various bonuses have the power to fix your shield, boost weapon power, give the Silpheed invincibility and even destroy all enemies on the screen (very handy).

There are also Optional Weapons which you earn as you pick up points. There are Anti-Matter

Bombs which will explode on impact, Graviton Bombs that explode in front of your ship taking out incoming ships and bullets, E.M Defense Systems which creates a shield that blocks enemy fire and awesome Photon Torpedos which fire in eight directions and have an automatic tracking function. Mass destruction - yahoo! Actually it's not totally mindless mayhem, because some Optional Weapons are better suited for particular levels, and you should choose carefully if you want to save your Photon Torpedos for a special situation.

Blasting Mania There is barely a second in the game where you can relax your trigger finger, and even the most seasoned gamers' reflexes will be tested to the limit with all the asteroids, laser beams, bullets, enemy ships and debris flying around you. And while the gameplay may be fairly simple, Silpheed can be very tough in sections (even on the Normal difficulty option), so use the very easy (and not particularly impressive) first level as practice, because you'll need it later on. It's often hard to concentrate on the job at hand though with all the stunning background effects - exploding spacecraft, a spinning

Earth and various other spunky sci-fi images - but make sure you do, because one slip and you may not recover.

Soundwise there are definite high and low points. The high points are some of the effects (when a huge asteroid hurtles past you almost physically move to avoid it) and the speech, which happens intermittently throughout the levels. While it's fairly simple stuff ("Turn right", "Evasive Manoeuvre" etc) it adds tension and realism to the action. The low points (or point, rather) is the music. While it's frantic and possibly adrenalin-inducing, it's tacky, boring and not what we should be getting from a CD game.

Don't Believe the Hype So, don't believe the hype about Silpheed. It's not a revolutionary game that will suddenly make the Mega CD an essential accessory, nor is it a Starwing-beater (in fact the two games should not even be compared). But it is a very, very good shoot 'em up that will have friends gaping in awe when the game kicks in. So if you've got a Mega CD and even a slight interest in frantic shooting fun then Silpheed deserves more than a quick look.



MEGA CD

available

DECEMBER

category

SHOOT 'EM UP

players

1

publisher

SEGA

visuals

Absolutely stunning. ⁹³
My only small gripe is that the end level bosses could have been bigger and better.

sound

The music's pretty tacky for a CD game, but some of the FX are very atmospheric. ⁸²

gameplay

It's a simple yet compulsive shoot 'em up. Blow away anything and everything that gets in your way. ⁸⁸

longterm

It's a tough bugger to crack, especially the final level. ⁸⁷

overall

Not the wonder game everyone was hoping for, but still a hell of a lot of fun.

85%

Air Warrior

Over the years the all important Flight Model in flight sims has been pushed into second place by the demand for dazzling graphics and thunderous explosions. However Air Warrior, from On-Line is a true flight sim. It adheres faithfully to the premise that unless it takes at least two weeks practise to get smoothly off the ground, then it's just not the real thing. The flight model in this sim seems as close to reality as virtual allows. As you may have gathered from the name though, a lot of aerial biffo is also involved.

To the Point In all but two key areas Air Warrior merely covers old ground with finesse, but this sim will be remembered as the first mainstream sim to run in Super VGA graphics mode, and that it is specifically designed to be played during network sessions with up to forty other modemed pilots.

SVGA has only been used previously for static screen displays and high end CDs. SVGA stands for Mind Blowing Amazingly High Resolution, and is capable of bring-

Feeling a bit lonely? Bored with solo action? Well, if you're a PC flight sim fan your problems are over. Air Warrior gives you the opportunity to take to the skies with up to 40 other joystick wagglers. BEN MANSILL doesn't

feel like such a Nigel any more.

how seems more real than a screen full of low-res clutter.

Group Modem Experience There is another feature though, that makes Air Warrior very different to all other flight sims. It was specifically designed as a multi player modem game. Apart from a few America-only Sierraprose services there is no real forum for PC pilots with great skill and greater modems to go head-on with groups of others who are similarly confident in their abilities.

But now anyone with a lowly 1200 baud modem can call from any capital city in Australia (except Darwin and Hobart), and for the cost of a

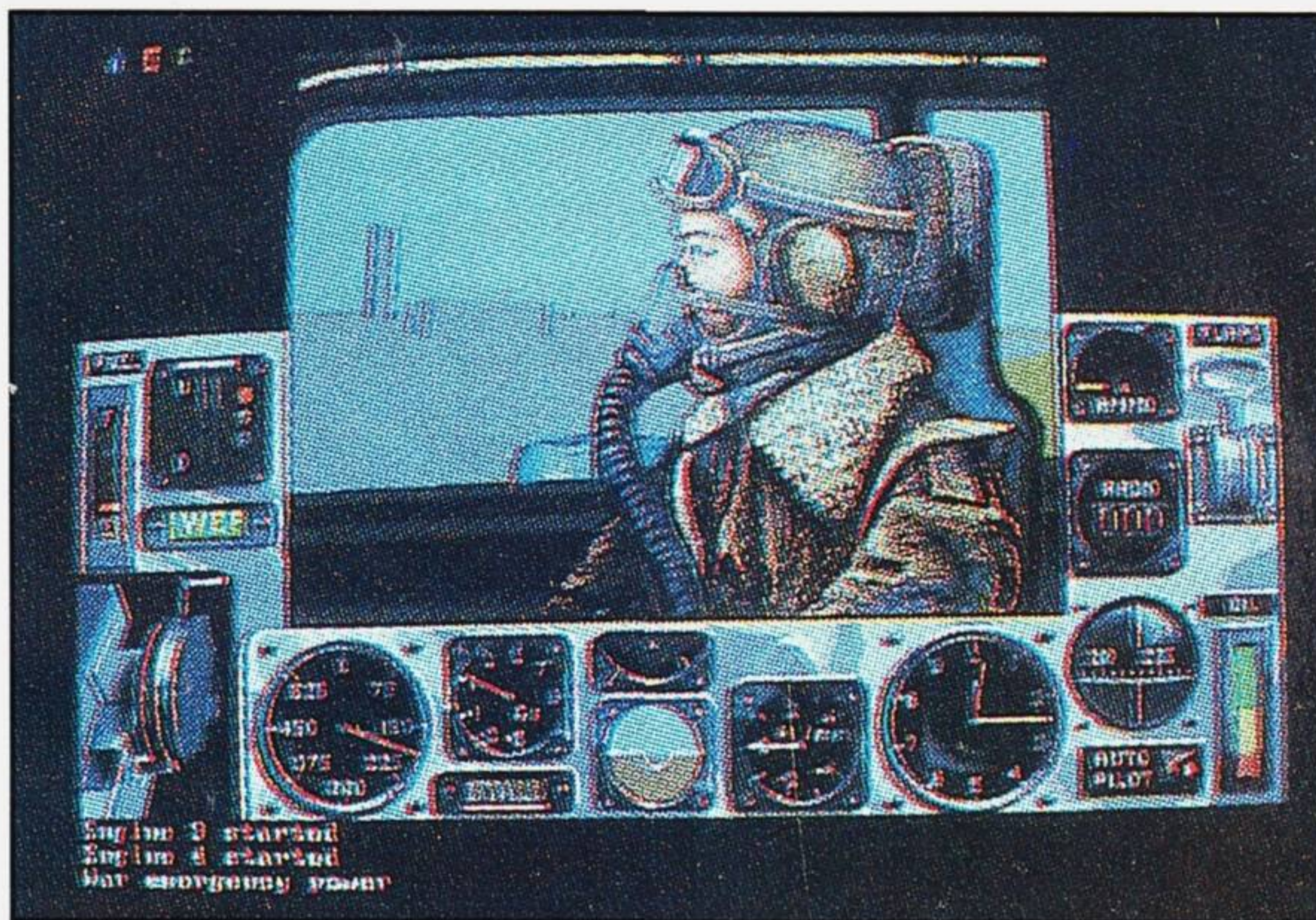
local call enter a real time world which is populated by people just like you, fighting the same war as you, at the same time as you. Jump in and anything could be happening, your country may be under imminent attack by enemy bombers, so go shoot them down! Or if the skies are clear go out on combat air patrol and bump into someone else doing the same thing, then kill them. It's amazing how much harder you try, and how much more seriously you take it when your reputation is at stake.

Please note though, that the makers of the game has kindly included a single player v. computer mode, and it's good enough to qualify it as a great PC sim, unto itself.

Also note, that this game takes itself rather seriously. There is NO MUSIC at all. No intro, no event graphics, no score, no pilot rosters and no medals. What it does have though is the horniest sounding engine start-up sequence ever heard. Plug your Sound Blaster into the living room stereo and close your eyes.

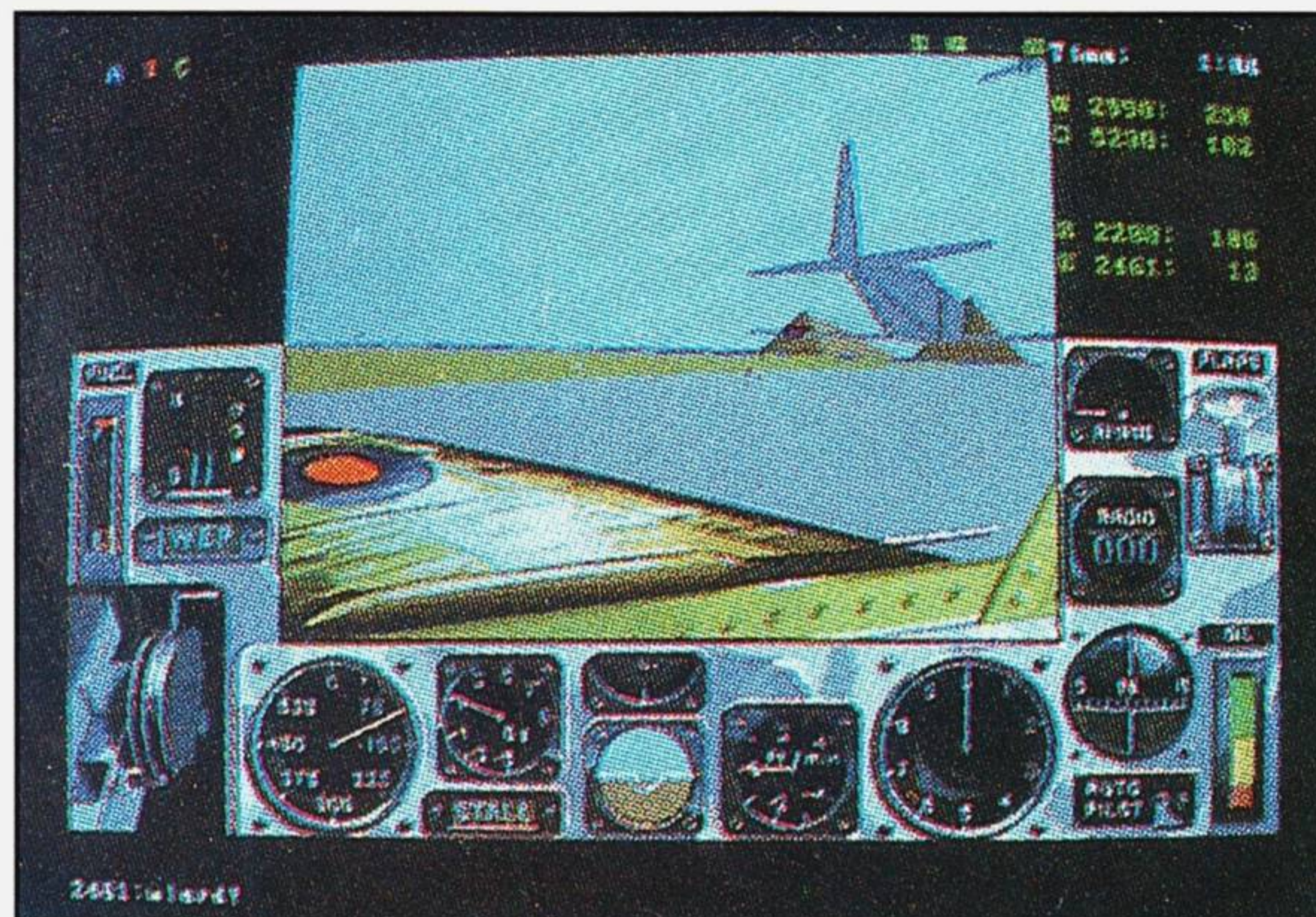
New experiences await, Air Warrior will please those who yearn for something fresh and different, this is a brilliant flight sim in its own right, and a forerunner of even greater things to come.

For info on logging on call Metro Games on (03) 329 1999



ing photo-realistic landscapes to your cockpit window.

Unfortunately, due to current PC processing power, Air Warrior keeps things very simple and to the point. Only the most basic representations are used for a few pyramid mountains and some occasional blue bits you can't land on. The cockpit window is only about a quarter of the screen, but it is all quickly forgotten, as the wonder of SVGA flight combined with a range of authentically modelled aircraft quickly hook you with their fresh new depiction of reality. It matters not that the only visible improvement is the absence of crooked edges to straight lines, it all some-



FORMAT: PC

CATEGORY: FLIGHT SIM

AVAILABLE: NOW

PLAYERS: 1-40 (TRUE!)

PUBLISHER: ON-LINE

visuals

Pyramid mountains never looked so real. Straight lines never so straight.

88

sound

An ME-262 engine start-up compensates adequately for the lack of any music.

84

gameplay

Single player v. computer equals much fun. Vs. forty real people equals new life experience.

85

longterm

If you can log on just once, and avoid addiction, then you are indeed a strong person.

82

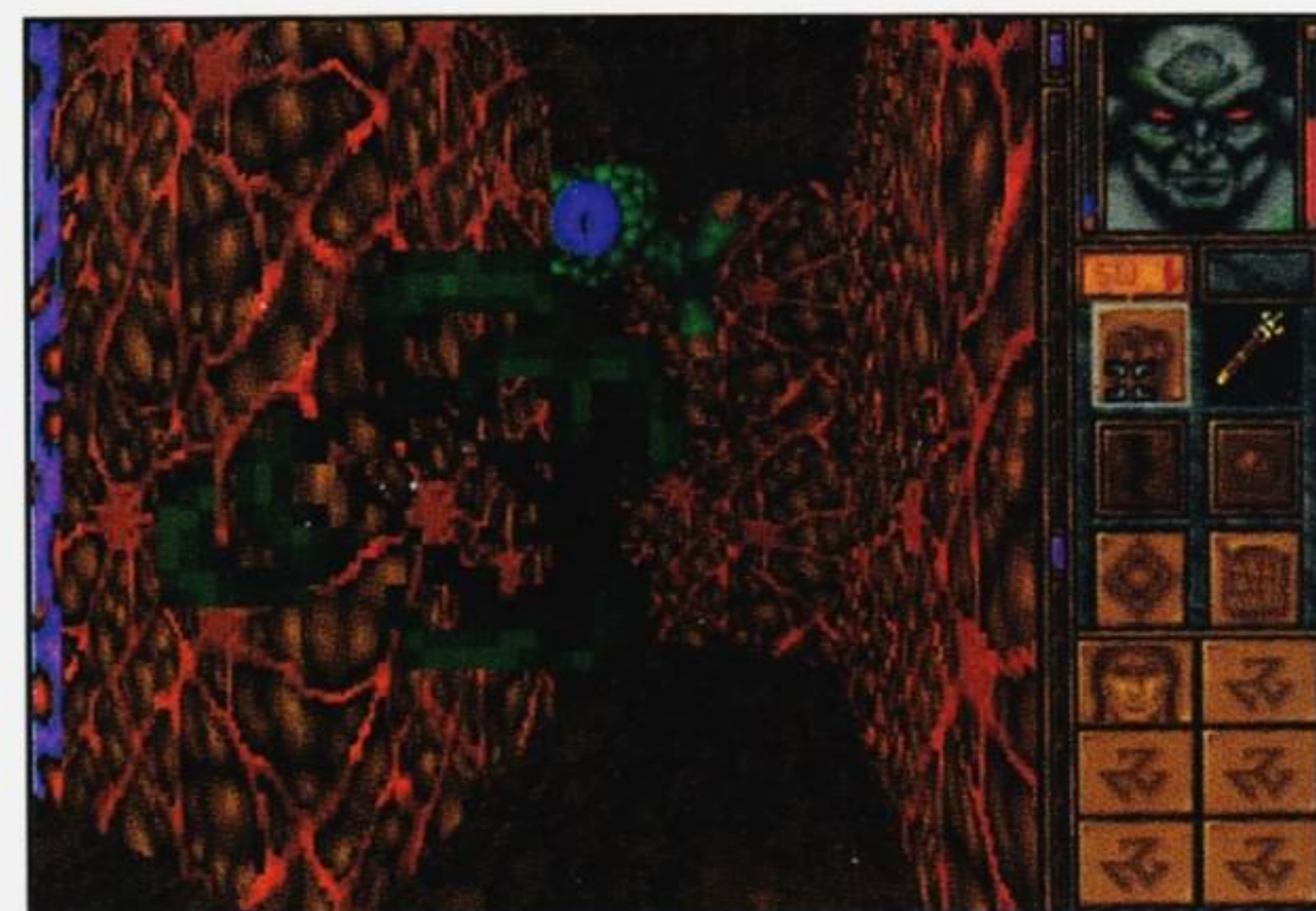
overall

A great flight sim and a truly excellent on-line experience.

85%

Shadowcaster

Shadowcaster aims to please everyone. It has the fast action of Wolfenstein, the fantasy and complexity of an adventure, plus the growth of character of an RPG. Only this time you're six different characters in the one body. JULIAN SCHOFFEL feels a bit schizophrenic.



Shadowcaster is an more of an action game than a true RPG. If you've ever played Wolfenstein then you'll know what to expect from Shadowcaster: fast and furious gameplay with lovely 360 degree scrolling graphics. As an added bonus though, Raven software have provided beautiful fantasy artwork to adorn the rapidly scrolling surroundings.

Transformation Powers You play Kirt, descendant of a magical race of shapeshifters. In the intro sequence you learn about your true heritage from your grandfather. As Gramps tells you his story, a stone gargoyle is animated by a bolt of lightening outside the window in a scene which could have been taken straight out of *Ghostbusters*. The gargoyle turns out to be an evil minion of the God Malkor. Gramps manages to teleport you to another world, before being kidnapped by the beast. Your objective is to track down and destroy the fiendish Veste, but to do this successfully you must first acquire the ability to transform into six different metaforms, which include the Maorin - a four-armed cat-like creature, the Opsis - a floating eye and the Ssair - a sort of flying dragon.

Shadowcaster has a whole heap of

don't have to worry about getting lost all the time. You can also change the size of the viewing window according to the speed of your PC.

Brawn not Brain Shadowcaster is fairly combat-oriented, so while there are plenty of objects to pick up and use, along with the obligatory quota of puzzles, you don't have to have a degree in Quantum Physics to successfully finish the game. Combat itself is very easy to master, the real trick of Shadowcaster is to work out which of Kirt's metaforms best suits the job at hand. The game is controlled via the mouse, but I would advise using the keyboard for movement and the mouse for combat.

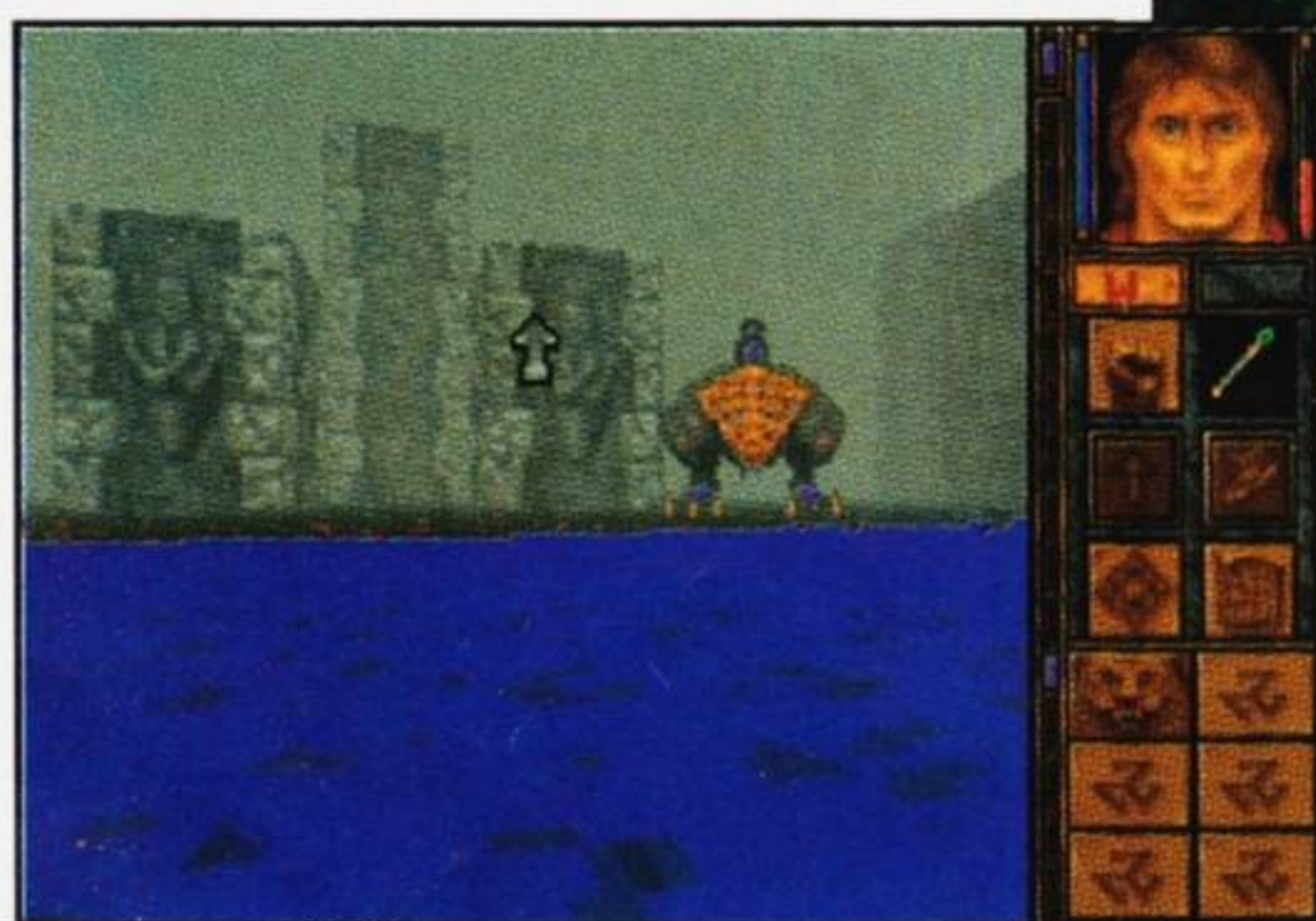
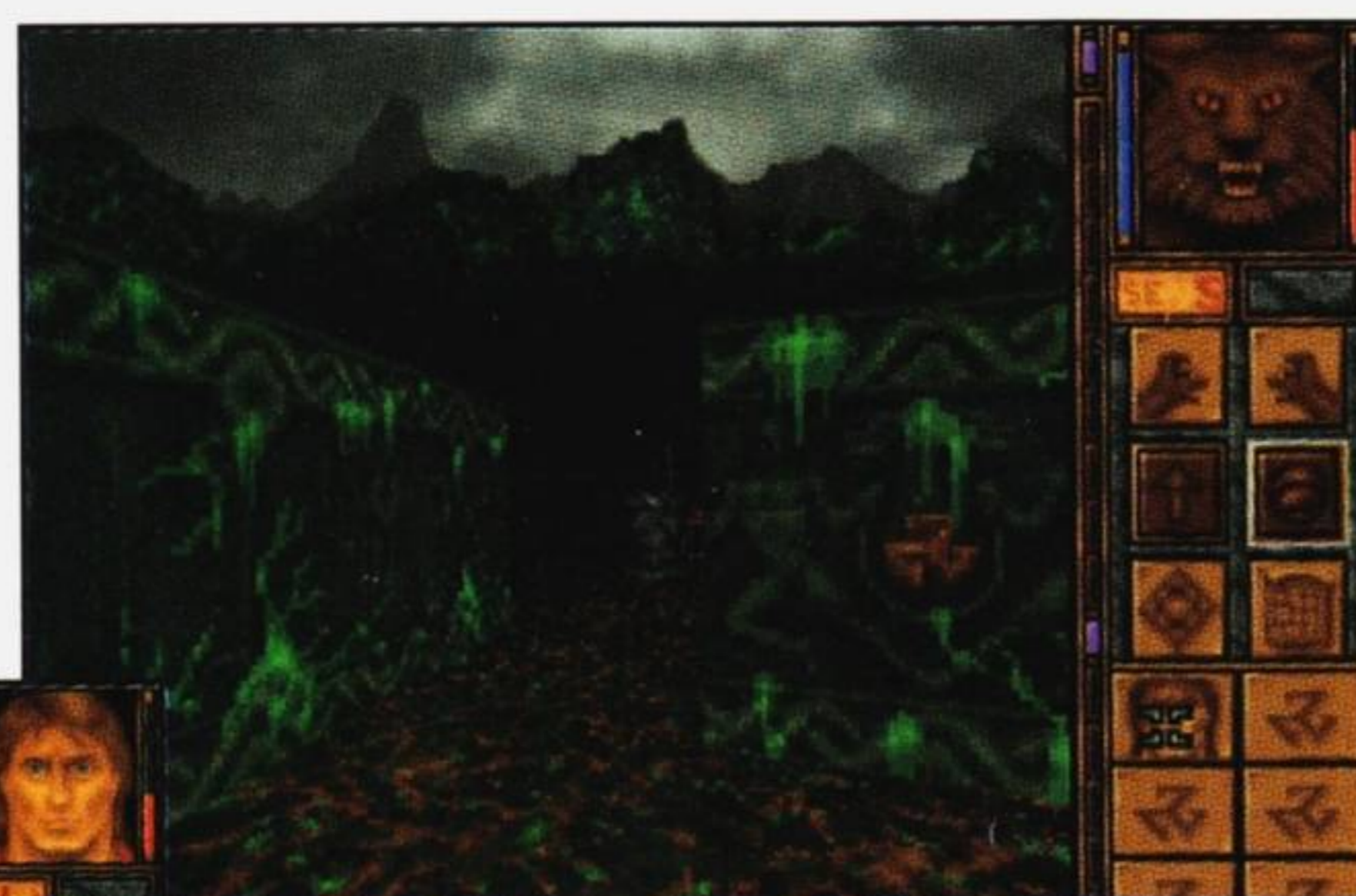
Visually the game shapes up as one of the best I have seen. The artwork of Raven Software is truly fantastic, check out the detail of the paintings on the

dungeon walls! The 360 degree scrolling is very smooth, just what you'd expect from the team at ID Software. The only problem I had was that monsters and walls become a bit blocky if you get too close.

Soundwise the game is certainly up to par. The music is appealing without being too obtrusive. The game-designers could have added a few more sound-effects, the sound of monsters moving around in the distance would have been nice. But what sound-effects there are do the job fairly well.

In summary Shadowcaster is a very entertaining little action game. You get to travel through a variety of different terrains; underwater labyrinths, fiery dungeons and creepy temples to name but a few. You can fly, swim or run depending on your current metaform which adds a new slant to the proceedings. The only real problem I had with the game was that you can get through it a little too

fast. I finished it in about 15 hours, and as it retails for around the \$100 mark, I expected something with a bit more longevity. Apart from that though, the sheer quality of Shadowcaster makes it well worth a look.



nifty features which make the game very user-friendly. These include a great savegame system which takes a picture of your surroundings when you save, making it a hell of a lot easier to remember which game to load. Unfortunately there are only four savegame slots so use them wisely. The game comes with an excellent automap feature so you



FORMAT: PC

AVAILABLE: NOW

CATEGORY: RPG/ACTION

PLAYERS: 1

PUBLISHER: ORIGIN

visuals

Tantalising artwork and flashy 360 degree scrolling mean this game is up there with the best of them. **90**

sound

Good music but there were too few sound-effects. **75**

gameplay

It doesn't come much better than this, simple mouse-controlled interface equals mondo action with no dull bits. **88**

longterm

Highly addictive - you'll play this game until the sun comes up, but by then you'll probably have finished it. **75**

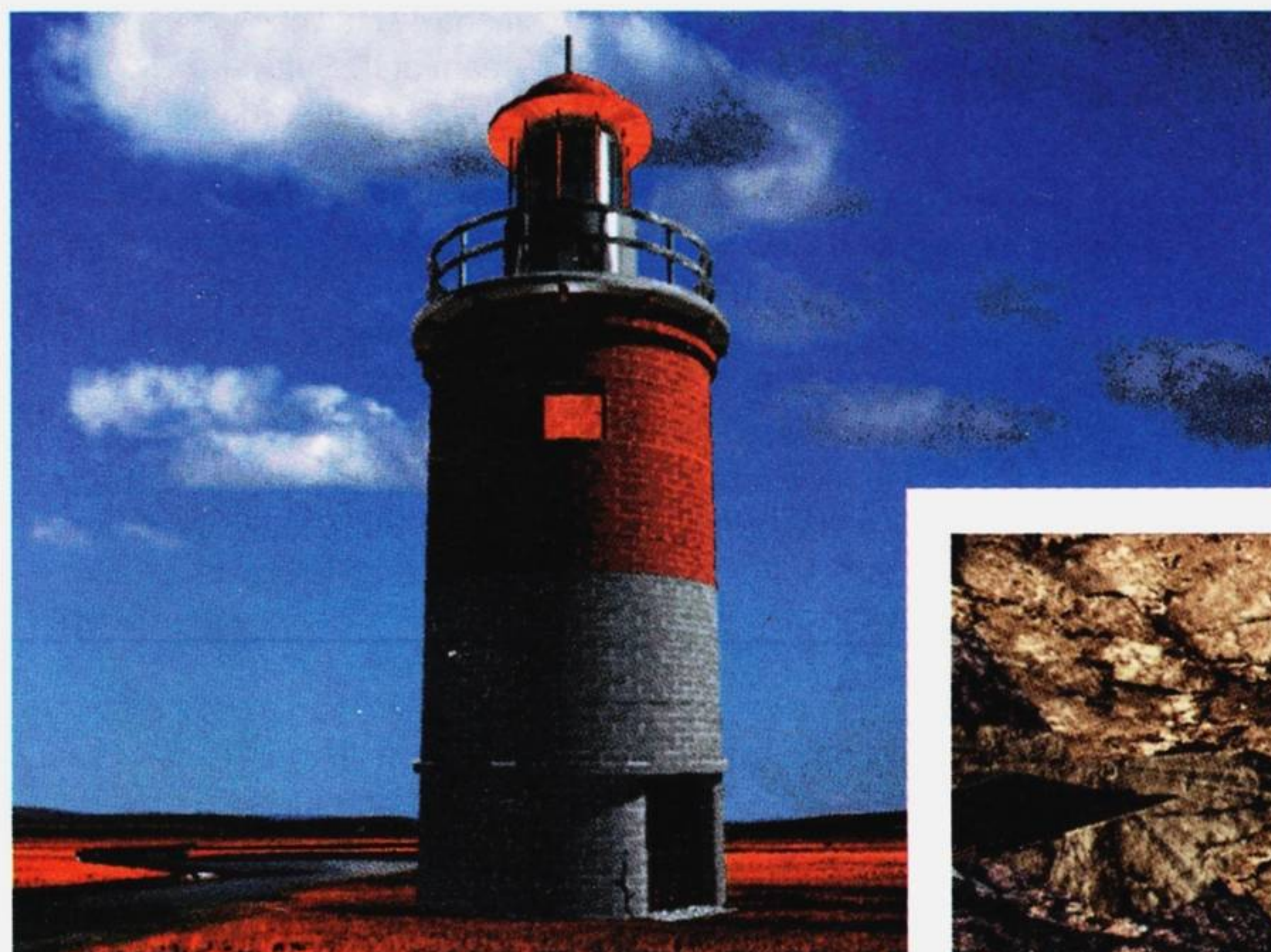
overall

A must for Wolfenstein addicts and most RPG fans, but consider the value-for-money aspect **85%**

Return to Zork

Zork is back, and this time there's some pretty pictures to go with it!

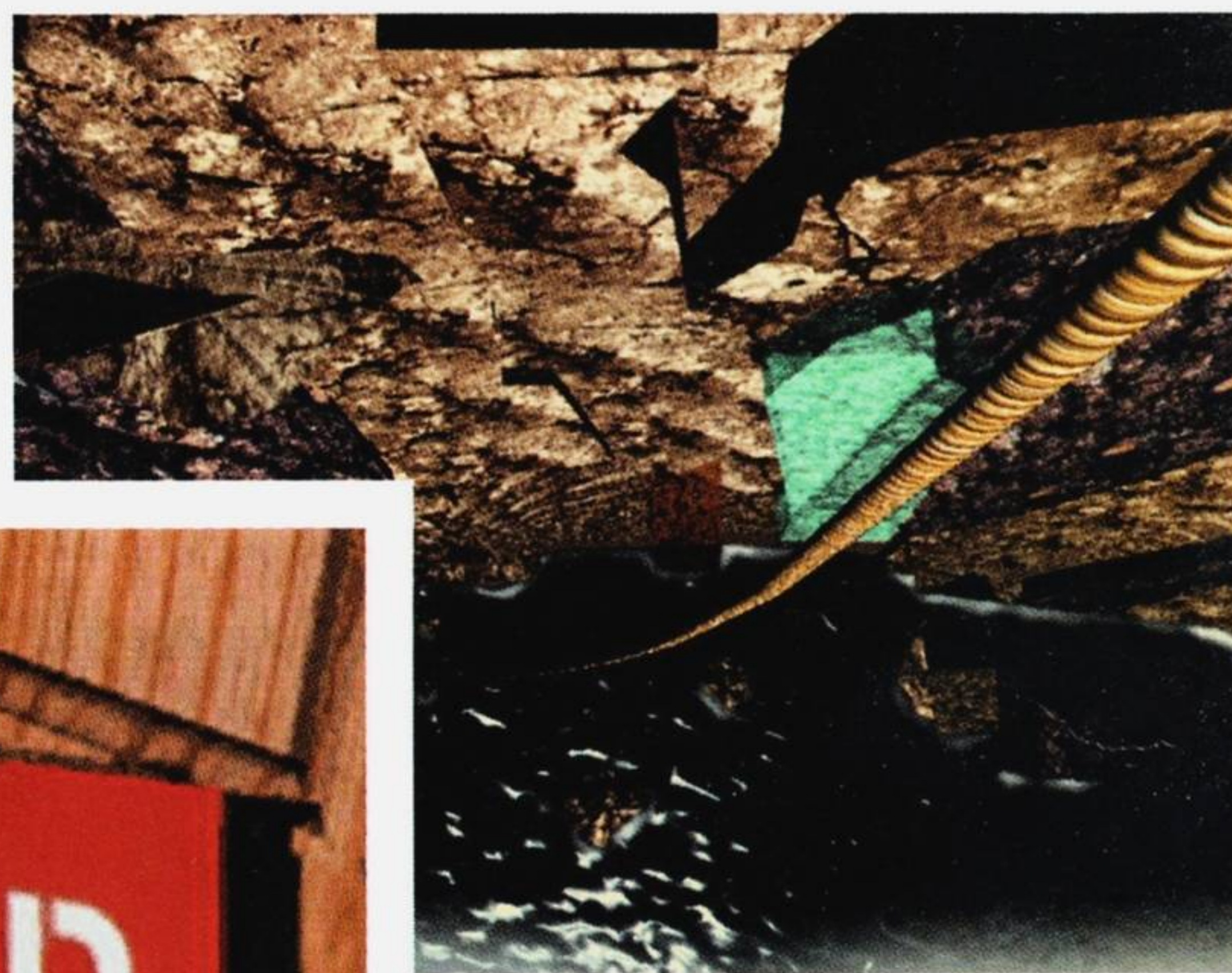
Some people are calling Return to Zork the world's first interactive movie, but JULIAN SCHOFFEL just calls it a bloody good adventure game...



The original Zork game was perhaps the Great Grandfather of all modern PC adventure games. It consisted purely of text. Riveting stuff like:

West of House: You are standing in an open field west of a white house, with a boarded front door. There is a mailbox here.

There were no flashy pictures and



You'll meet a crazy lighthouse keeper, a mute Blacksmith and a gun-toting bimbo to name but a few.



no digitised sound to accompany the text, it was entirely up to your imagination to embellish the scene; much like a novel really. As we all know PC games have come a long way since then, they are now cinematic extravaganzas with spectacular sound-effects and rotoscoped animation. But most of these visually stunning games somehow don't seem quite as captivating as the original Zork adventures...

Back Underground Return to Zork takes you back to the Great Underground Empire some 700 years after the original adventure. In that time technology has come a long way, and you have computer generated graphics, digitised speech and a unique icon-based interface which allows you to interact with the people and objects around you.

It is hard to classify Return To Zork. It plays like an adventure game, but it offers a number of innovative features which separate it from other games in the genre. For instance, you are able to take photographs of the characters you meet, as well as record the conversations you have with them. You can then play the recordings and show the photos to other characters in order to obtain new information.

I tested the CD-Rom version of the game, but the only difference between it and the floppy version are the number of cinematic sequences. Unlike other CD-Rom titles such as "The 7th Guest", Return to Zork allows for a high level of interaction within the game. At any time you can use the mouse to invoke an icon-based control system which allows you to manipulate your surroundings. This will come as a great relief to those who were disappointed at the limited amount of interaction available in other sophisticated graphical titles such as "The 7th Guest".

Ham For a while it looked as though CD-Rom releases were going to be all full motion video and dubious acting without any real gameplay. Although Return to Zork uses real actors from US TV shows such as "Twin Peaks"

and "The Wonder Years" (don't forget Sam Jones from "Flash Gordon"! - Ed), some of the performances rival "The 7th Guest" in the ham stakes. But this only adds to the quirky nature of the game (which Zork is famous for anyway), rather than turning the player off.

The plot is fairly standard adventure game fare; a great evil has arisen in the land and it is basically up to you to stop it. While the premise may be straightforward, some of the characters are fairly bizarre; you'll meet a crazy lighthouse keeper, a mute Blacksmith and a gun-toting bimbo to name but a few. I particularly liked the drunk in the old Millhouse, who whenever you enter says: "Want some Rye? Course you do". He then gives you a glass of Rye. The only way to discover the secret significance of his house is to keep making toasts until he passes out, but whatever you do, don't attempt to outdrink him!

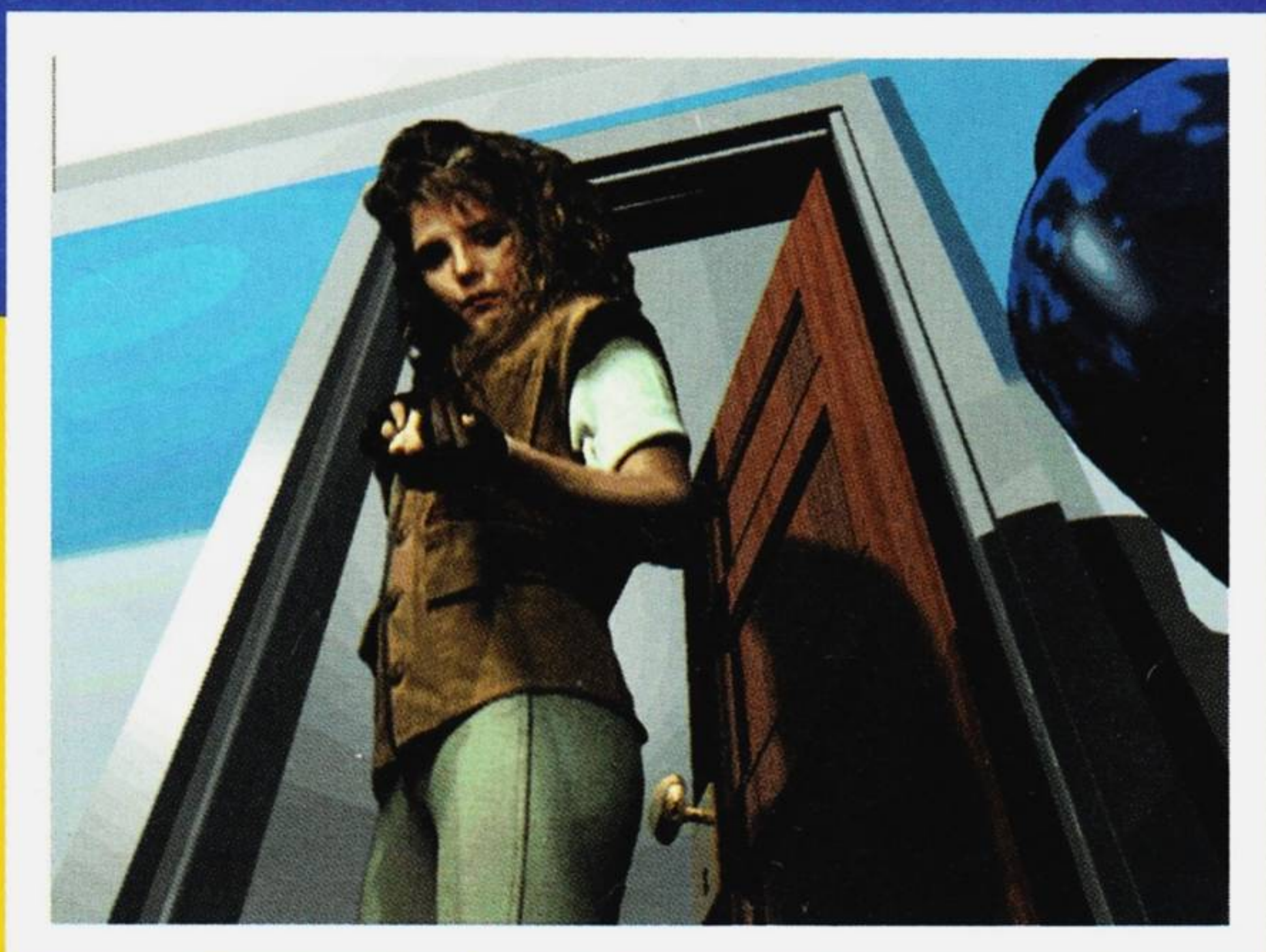
Graphical Highs and Lows Graphically speaking, the game has its highs and lows. Some of the animated cut-scenes are very impressive; like when you climb down the Cliffs of Depression, but some of the still-shots in the game are very ordinary indeed. While you might be mightily impressed at the screenshots on this page, don't expect the

mind-blowing visual standard of "The 7th Guest". The producers have filmed live actors and then superimposed the footage over computer-generated artwork and I have to say that on occasion, the two just didn't combine very well. But don't let this put you off, as there are moments in the game when you do find yourself gaping in awe at the spectacle on the screen.

The game supports a wide variety of sound-cards and luckily for me this included the Pro Audio Spectrum 16 as well as the Gravis Ultrasound. This is important because Return to Zork contains a huge variety of sound-effects, music and digitised speech, all of which sound 200% better on a 16-bit sound-card.

Unlike the original keyboard-controlled adventures, Return to Zork is totally mouse-driven; all you have to do is click on the object you wish to manipulate and you will be given the usual commands such as talk to, throw at, examine and so on. It is advisable to save your game at regular intervals because like the Sierra games, "Zork" has a habit of killing you at unexpected moments.

Perhaps the most important aspect of Return to Zork though, is that it heralds a new era of co-operation between game producers and the Hollywood film industry. There are an increasing number of titles under development which started their life as Hollywood scripts. LucasArts has one on the way from Steven Spielberg called "The Dig" and you've probably already played "Indiana Jones and the Fate of Atlantis". Thanks to compression techniques, there is increasing space for full-motion video and complex animations on CD-Rom, and with Zork leading the way, the future of PC-gaming looks very exciting indeed!



PC

available

NOW

category

PC/PC CD-ROM

players

1

publisher

ACTIVISION

visuals

Generally pretty good, with the occasional jaw-dropping sequence. 86

sound

Heaps of digitised speech and music punctuated by a myriad of sound effects. 90

gameplay

Very innovative and easy to play. 86

longterm

Quirky puzzles will have you pulling out your hair for weeks. 83

overall

Definitely the closest thing to an interactive movie we've seen yet. Take a look.

85%

DAILY

Urban Poets (from B to F)

Leeroy Brown - 19

Bullwinkle - 21

Junior - 21

Likes - Hip hop, hanging out, collecting things, short haircuts, and their Fila Runball Hikers.

Fila available from Footlocker (Nationally); Insport and Central Station Records (NSW); Alison's Sportspower (VIC); Rowe & Jarman (SA); Jim Kidd Sports (WA).



FILA
WALKING IN
YOUR GROOVE

BYTE SIZE

GAUNTLET 4

MEGA DRIVE

Available: Now
 Category:
 Players: 1-4
 Publisher: Tengen



Throughout the years, the classic arcade game Gauntlet has appeared on just about every computer system there is and has gone through many sequels, but now it is back, in what I think is the biggest and best version yet: Gauntlet 4 for the Mega Drive. For those who don't know what Gauntlet is about, the game is viewed from an overhead perspective and takes place in mazes jam packed with monsters. Choose from four characters, the warrior, valkyrie, elf and wizard, which all have the standard pros and cons.

The basic goal is to avoid the monsters and find the exit to the next level. The monsters include ghosts, demons, sorcerers and deaths that keep coming until you destroy the generators that produce them. In the mazes you will find different items that help in your journey such as keys, food and magic potions.

Gauntlet 4 includes four different game variations. It includes the original, plus "Record Mode" which gives you all the stats you'll ever need on your performance. It is "Battle Mode" and "Quest Mode" though, that make owning the Sega Tap (the 4 player adaptor) worthwhile. In "Battle Mode", up to four people can compete in up to 10 rounds of free-for-all to see who is the last one standing. The excellent "Quest Mode" involves a quest (surprise!) to get inside the castle and find the treasure. But, before you can enter the castle, you must first conquer the four towers around it, each with 10 levels and a dragon to defeat.

With the extra modes and 4 player capability, this is an excellent value for money package. The graphics are extremely faithful to the original, and all the sound effects and speech are present. It will guarantee you'll never be lonely playing a game again.

Tim Smith



HAUNTING STARRING POLTERGUY

MEGA DRIVE

Available: Now
 Category: Action haunting
 Players: 1-2
 Publisher: Electronic Arts



Aaaahhh, revenge is sweet. Especially if someone has just killed you.

Mr Sardini owns a company that makes dodgy skateboards, which caused our hero, Polterguy's death. To get even he plans to scare the entire Sardini family out of their wits and their house. To that end, he jumps in and out of furniture and other household objects and charges them up with his ectoplasm. The object will shake and when one of the Sardinis investigate, it results in a number of humorous (and more often than not, gross) events occurring. To help Polterguy he has various spells he can use from a Super-Scare, to Dog Off which makes the Sardini's pet dog bugger off (he usually calms the family down when they are freaking out).

Polterguy stays in the land of the living by collecting ectoplasm from the underworld dungeon. Once it runs out, or all spells have been used, he must go back to the dungeon to collect more. In the dungeon there are many nasties who try to stop Polterguy, so this is the only part of the game where you can actually die.

Graphically the game has some great touches, such as the half body in the shower draining of blood, the mother's dress falling down and the kids wetting themselves in terror. The big downers though are the pathetic beeps and bleeps which represent different screams and haunting type noises. And the game itself is so easy that if you haven't finished by your third go, or got very bored with it by then, it may just scare you enough to go out and get some fresh air instead.

A highly original and imaginative game hopelessly let down by repetitiveness and lack of any real challenge.

Nick Smith



SPLATTERHOUSE 3

MEGA DRIVE

Available: Now
 Category: Gory Beat 'em up
 Players: 1
 Publisher: Namco



"Warning: This game contains scenes depicting graphic violence which may not be suitable for younger players." Excellent! Give me a look.

Several years have passed since our hero was last troubled by the mysterious "primal forces" that haunt his life. But now, of course, they're back, so it's time to dust off the meat cleaver and baseball bats and reach for the mystic mask. Straight from the start you will realise that someone has thrown out the original program which is a big move for the better. Your only weapons at first are your fists, but collect the "Eldritch Orbs" and you'll be able to transform into a mutated version of yourself. This enables you to gain unbelievable strength till the power meter reaches zero. Other items that Rick can collect are 4 X 2's for that special splintered effect, Cinder Block to get the message through their head, knives and the mother of them all, the Meat Cleaver!

The levels are fairly long and you have about 5 or so minutes to finish them off. There isn't one set path to follow as you can choose to go through different rooms. Also the plot can change if you don't make it through the stage in time and it's usually a change for the worse, like a boreworm feasting on Jennifer's rotting carcass and other such delights! The screens don't look terribly different from number 2 but there is more variety, with even more savage looking back drops.

Basically what your left with is a cross between Streets of Rage 2 and the Immortal. The game is quite fun to play but it's nothing terribly new. However it's definitely not for little Johnny! Those of you who got excited at the second one will find Splatterhouse 3 a real bag of tricks, but unless you're after real blood and guts maybe you should consider one the other fighting games on the market. However a real treat for all you sick puppies!

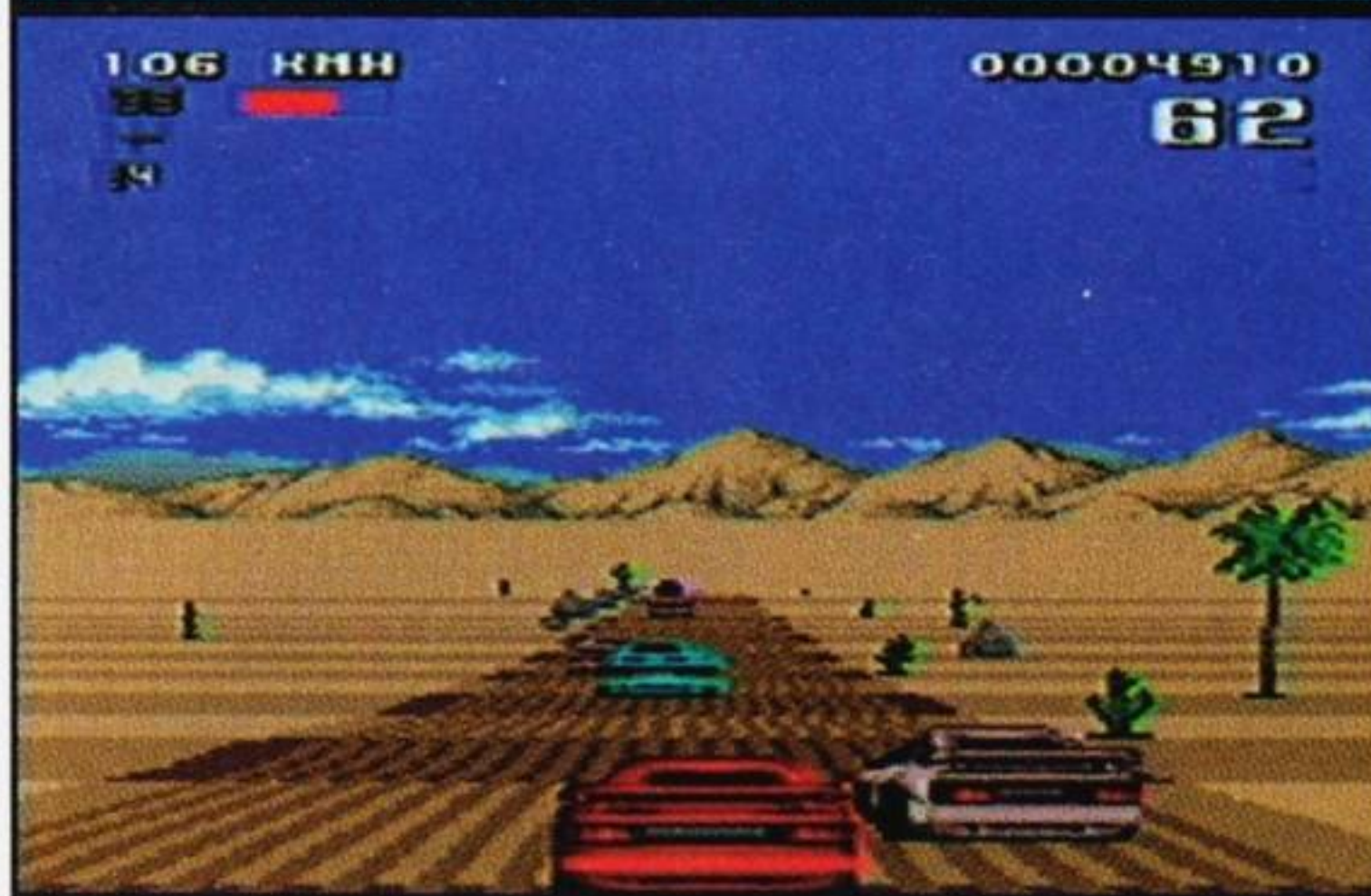
Brian Costelloe



LOTUS II

MEGA DRIVE

Available: Now
 Category: Driving
 Players: 1-2
 Publisher: Electronic Arts



There are a lot of racing games coming out before Christmas and so for a game to be competitive it has to offer something that makes the experience all that much better than the others. Unfortunately, Lotus II fails to deliver. Granted, it is better than it's predecessor, being much smoother, and the driving is easier, but it still reminds me of "Outrun" with it's scrolling track looking much the same.

As for features, these are the main things that stop it from really falling flat on it's face. It has a two player option which is good and also a track editor - just like the first Lotus game. With the track editor you can define the kind of track that you want, using the easy to use settings. If you want more corners, you can shift the corner level to max. The same goes for hills, for less hills just slip the hill level down to minimum. As far as the tracks go, they offer a wide variety of scenery and landscapes. You can choose from the desert track to the future track but these are exactly the same as the former edition so you wouldn't need to buy this one. As for driving music, there are either four tunes to listen to or the poor engine noise.

Unfortunately, Lotus II doesn't offer anything really new over it's predecessor. Electronic Arts have ironed some bits out, making it smoother and quicker but all the options including the course editor remain the same. If you want a great driving game then it would be best to get "F1", or better still wait for "Virtua Racing" which is on its way to the Mega Drive.

Tim Smith



NHL HOCKEY 94

MEGA DRIVE

Available: Now
 Category: Sports
 Players: 1-4
 Publisher: Electronic Arts



If I was stranded on a desert island and could take three games with me, *NHL Hockey 94* would be one of those games. Of course, it'd be no good to me without a Mega Drive, a TV and electricity, but that's beside the point - EA's Hockey games (the original *EA Hockey*, *NHLPA 93*, and now *NHL 94*) are classics.

So what's new in *NHL 94*? The game's manual lists over 20 "new" features, but I'll stick to the important ones. First up, it's got both the NHL and the NHLPA (the Players' Association) licence, so every NHL team (including two new teams), every logo, and every NHL player is included.

There's more stats (hooray!) plus an excellent, battery-backed "User Records" feature that'll keep track of win/loss and other records for up to 7 players on the same cart.

New checking animations make the big hits even bigger and for music lovers, there's over 70 new pieces of organ music to keep you humming with joy. Each stadium has its own special themes. I love it, but then again you might hate it.

On the gameplay front, *NHL 94* boasts a speed increase, penalty shots and a new Shootout mode, and manual control for goalies (although it's safer to let the computer handle it). Best of all, there's new "One-Timer" shots (they can really blast holes through the net!) and it's 4-Way Play compatible. With four players (two on two), *NHL 94* is too intense to be good for you, but you'll never stop playing it. The fighting and "blood on the ice" bits from *NHLPA 93* are gone, but that's nothing to cry about, is it?

Should you get it if you've got an earlier version? Depends on how fanatical you are, but in my view, the 4 player feature alone makes it worth the money.

Andrew Humphreys



THE INCREDIBLE CRASH DUMMIES MEGA DRIVE/SNES

Available: January
 Category: Crappy Platformer
 Players: 1
 Publisher: Acclaim



How about this for a Byte Size review? *Crash Dummies* is complete and utter crap. It's made by Acclaim. It's a platformer. Don't even think about renting it for a night. That's it. It's been a long day. Can I go home now Stuart? What do you mean it's not long enough? You've never said that to me before. Alright, alright - I'll finish it then.

In *Crash Dummies* you play a Crash Dummy. There may well be some logic to the game (besides Acclaim trying desperately to milk a licence for all it's worth), but if there is, it's unimportant. All you need to know is it's a phenomenally boring and hopelessly uninspiring platform game. The only thing that distinguishes it from the zillion and two other platformers out there is that when you get hit, instead of losing energy, you lose a body part. You get your limbs back by collecting screwdrivers and other tools. Hilarious, I'm sure.

The graphics are without doubt some of the duller ever to appear on the Mega Drive or SNES. The sprites are small, the colours (or lack of colours) are awful and the backgrounds are just there to hold up the platforms. Even rusty old 8-bit systems can do better than this. The sound is of the same exceptional quality - it's exceptionally bad too.

As for gameplay, let's just say you'd have more fun going through life with rubber bands wrapped around your testicles than you would playing this game for even a minute. It's not that the controls are bad (they're fine), it's just that it's all so relentlessly monotonous. Jump. Fire. Jump again. Next level.... Why people insist on churning out shit like this is beyond me. Don't they know that bad games just won't cut it anymore?

Andrew Humphreys



FLASHBACK

SNES

Available: Now
 Category: Platform adventure
 Players: 1
 Publisher: Sony Imagesoft



Flashback has been out on other gaming platforms (ie, Mega Drive, PC and Amiga) for some time now and it's been hugely successful. Now it's SNES owners turn to be in on the fun.

For those who don't know what Flashback is all about, to put it simply, it's one of the best platform games of all time. It's popularity was immediate for several reasons. Not only does it have a cool storyline that unravels as you play, it also features silky smooth, rotoscoped animation on the main character and fabulous backdrops on every level. Adding to the atmosphere are cinematic intermissions which really help bring the whole storyline together and make you feel as if you're in a movie. The controls are beautiful and very responsive.

Apart from the visuals, the Sci-Fi storyline is great. You play the role of special agent Conrad Hart. You wake up in a hot, steaming jungle. You don't know where you are, or how you got there. All you know is your head hurts and you'd like an aspirin. The game becomes a "voyage of discovery" that takes you from the jungle, to New Washington, to Earth, and finally to an alien planet as you struggle to unravel the mysteries of your existence. Conrad can run, climb, jump, shoot and roll around for screens on end - and he never runs out of breath.

As the plot thickens you really will find it difficult to drag yourself away from the game. Flashback was a stunning game on the Mega Drive, PC and Amiga, and the SNES version is no exception. While the sound may be a little better than the MD's, it plays identically and for the most part, it looks exactly the same. If action and adventure is your thing, don't miss it.

Tim Smith



COOL SPOT

SNES

Available: Now (Import)
 Category: Platformer
 Players: 1
 Publisher: Virgin



Take a simple shape like a circle and give it a personality. Animate it, and voila! An instant soft drink icon! Cool Spot (7 Up's lovable mascot) just had to become a video game hero. The Mega Drive version was one of the smoothest, hippest, and yes, coolest platformers of the year. Now SNES owners get a chance to play with the Spot.

Cool Spot's Spotty mates have been imprisoned and it's up to him to free them. The game's intro screen explains it all, so I won't bother - let's just say there's some things you'll need to collect, some things you'll need to shoot (with soda-fizz), and a lot of platforms you'll need to jump on.

The graphics are colourful and utilise Cool Spot's miniature size very well. The animation has been well done but strangely, it's not quite as good as the Mega Drive's. As for the gameplay, it's exactly the same. Just like Sonic or Mario, you keep running from left to right and collecting thingies - only Cool Spot's hipper and cuter. The controls are very responsive and Cool Spot is easily manoeuvred around his hostile world.

The sounds feature Cool Spot's tiny little voice (which is a laugh) and some rockin' beats to jive to. The 6 levels aren't overly difficult but they do get you looking around a lot! The only questionable aspect of this game is its instability. When this was released on Mega Drive it caused a bit of a stir, but it died down pretty quickly. The same fate awaits the SNES version. But Cool Spot is still an impressive looking game and it plays very well. Oh, and Mode 7 fans will love the intro which allows you to shrink, twist and rotate the Virgin logo (cheap thrills!).

You'll definitely like Cool Spot, but for how long? Great for kids though.

Thanks to the Gamesmen for the cart.

Brian Costelloe



DRACULA

PC

Available: Now
Category: Action adventure
Players: 1
Publisher: Psygnosis



Wolfenstein, eh? Don't you just love it? Psygnosis obviously do. First they bought Wolfenstein's sequel, Spear Of Destiny, then released it at full price and now they're offering Dracula to us. It's all a bit like that Remington ad from a few years back.

Dracula uses the Wolfenstein game engine and despite a few adjustments here and there, and the obviously different scenario, it is essentially the same game. Just not as good. The plot is based ever-so-tenuously on the recent film with the player having to step into the shoes of Jonathan Harker (the Keanu Reeves character) as he ventures on a perilous quest . . . blah blah blah . . . through a cemetery . . . blah blah blah . . . Dracula's Castle . . . kettle banana teapot . . . and the final confrontation! (Plots really are rubbish, aren't they?)

There are three vast levels to complete, each one divided into numerous sub-levels, with the object being to destroy all the coffins in each area. The coffins must be destroyed because they generate monsters (a la Gauntlet) and, until they are shut off, the nastiness just keeps coming.

There are also literally millions of doors on each level which all need separate keys for them to be opened. That is not my idea of fun. Er, which is a bit of a problem since beyond the actual shooting (with a simple hand-gun, unfortunately, and not the delicious machine-gun as in Wolfenstein) there's really nothing else to do. It's certainly not as tense or as single-bloodied-minded as Wolfenstein and suffers because of this. It is pretty sad when a full-price commercial game cannot compete with a bit of shareware that's close to — if not over — two years old, but that is exactly what we have here in Dracula. An utterly pointless release.

David Wildgoose



PRIVATEER

PC

Available: Now
Category: Sci-fi flight sim
Players: 1
Publisher: Origin



Privateer brings a whole new dimension to the Wing Commander universe, while retaining everything that made its predecessors great. You're still the galaxy's hottest fighter pilot, the Kilrathi are still mankind's most hated foe, only this time it's not the Confederation you work for. You're a free agent who answers to no one - a Privateer.

There is no "right" way to play Privateer, although after a while you discover there's definitely a "best" way. Central to the game is the need to make as much money as possible, as quickly as possible. There are lots of options on how to go about this - trading (legal and illegal), Guild missions, piracy and so on. While there are more than a few ways to go about getting rich quick in Privateer, there is only one reason you would want to, and it's name is the Tarsus - your ship. It's a dog. A 26th Century Volvo. Very soon (like immediately) you will be highly motivated to upgrade, perhaps to an Orion, a veritable tank with massive armour and shields, or maybe a Galaxy class merchant ship.

Personally, I wouldn't be seen dead in the uncharted void wearing anything less than a Centurion. But whatever you buy can be tailored to meet your needs through a visit to the Ship Dealer. A vast array of weaponry and add-on goodies also await your astrobucks.

Once you are kitted out you might be interested in checking out the plot. Early on you will come into possession of an ancient artefact. Tracking down it's origin and value will become an obsession and you'll have to search the known and unknown galaxy for information on the mysterious item. While the plot flows in a fairly linear path, you can leave and come back at anytime.

Fantastic music and graphics, absorbing and exciting gameplay, compelling atmosphere, an easy interface and a joy to get lost in. A winner.

Ben Mansill



RAILROAD TYCOON DELUXE

PC

Available: Now
Category: Strategy
Players: 1
Publisher: Microprose



It matters not whether you like trains. For they are incidental to the main appeal of Railroad Tycoon. Here is a superb game of strategy and empire building that has stood the test of time of time and built a loyal cult following.

The game is notable for its great scope, friendly learning curve, sheer addictiveness, and awful graphics. Tycoon has been around for years, and to the delight of its devotees has been re-released with major improvements as Railroad Tycoon Deluxe.

Apart from a few new trains to play with, and a little tidying up, the most obvious difference between the before and the after is the use of Super VGA graphics. Tycoon Deluxe looks great. The look on the face of an old fan as they see the terrain in close up for the first time is a funny thing to watch. Big stupid smiles and incoherent mumbling.

The basic idea behind it all is to build an efficient network of railroads transporting goods, mail, passengers, etc. to and from wherever you decide is best for the interests of sound corporate management and community well being. The real aim though, is total and ruthless domination of the entire country's economy, the environment and your competitors.

Managing and expanding your fledgling empire is a consuming business, should you build a new route to a far away city, or gamble on that small but promising mine off in the mountains? Is the profit better spent on upgrading the passenger trains, or to continue buying shares in the opposition, with the ultimate goal of take-over?

Tycoon may appear intimidating at first, but you will ease into it painlessly, then soon regret buying it, only because you will no longer have time for much else.

Ben Mansill



SEVEN CITIES OF GOLD, COMMEMORATIVE EDITION PC

Available: Now
 Category:
 Players: 1
 Publisher: Interactive Design



Like the music industry of late, the creative geniuses in some segments of the computer games world are beginning to run out of steam and are resorting to shiny remakes of established classics. This is not entirely a bad thing, as evidenced by recent efforts from Microprose. But this C-64/Amiga oldie was resting happily in peace, forever forgotten, and should have been left that way.

Whatever is supposed to be entertaining about Seven Cities of Gold escapes me. For a game packaged in such a grand looking box with a blurb that more than hints at greatness, Seven Cities is one of these games which would be more at home in a simple plastic sleeve on a revolving rack in the budget corner of the shop.

The idea is to take the role of a Spanish explorer (exploiter) charting unknown and dangerous waters. Dangerous that is, if you can't dodge a slow moving storm cloud every few screens, a cloud that stops moving when you do. Just keep heading West until you find land, then send some thugs into the nearest village for the only mildly amusing part of the game. A dozen or so loinclothed natives who look like they should be chanting "ooga booga!" will chase you around with no real risk to your chunky-style sprite until you find the Chief, who when threatened with your gleaming "threaten" icon will promptly and consistently hand over the village's entire wealth. There are options for trade, but when "threaten" works 99% of the time at no cost to yourself, why bother.

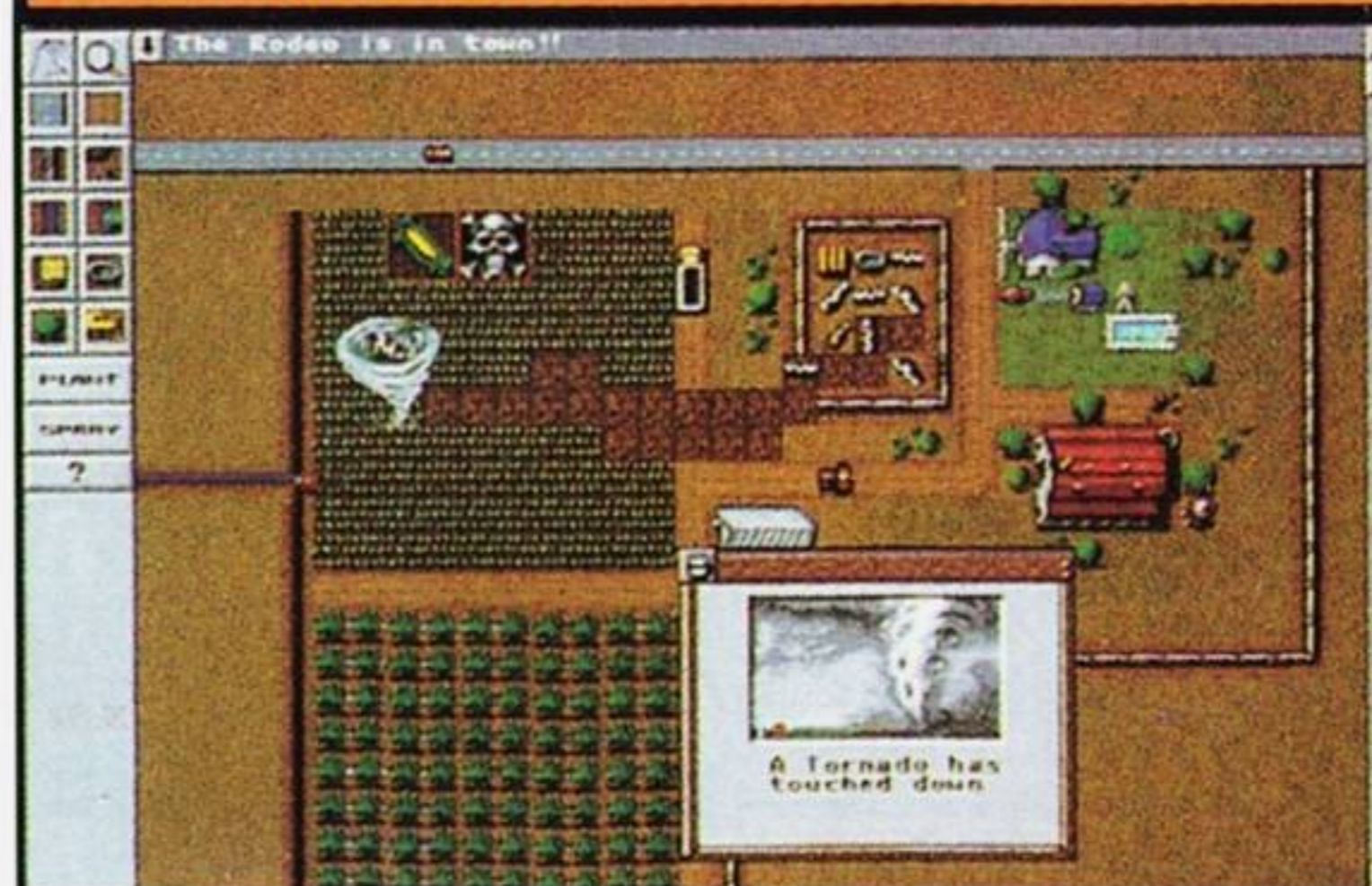
Keep doing this for a few tedious hours until you have wads of cash, then bring in the settlers and set up a colony, a mission and three forts and its all over, you have won the game and will probably never fire it up again.

Ben Mansill



SIMFARM PC

Available: Now
 Category: Strategy
 Players: 1
 Publisher: Maxis



Oh dearie me, Maxis, what has gone wrong? SimCity was such a brilliant game — an ingenious mix of serious yet accessible strategy which has resisted all challenges to its crown over the past four years. All in all, a glorious debut.

But . . . er, then came SimEarth and after that SimLife. Both of these had interesting ideas but were overly complicated, utterly tedious to play and thoroughly deserving of the "executive software toy" tag (i.e. rubbish games that only sad men in suits played). SimAnt promised a return to the more immediate SimCity approach, but failed by being more than just a bit silly.

And that's the state of affairs in Maxis' Sim world as we reach the end of 1993. One cracking hit followed by three very lame misses and now this one — SimFarm.

As the name suggests, SimFarm is a farming simulator and I can't imagine anyone getting too excited about that. Basically, what you have to do is grow crops and breed livestock then sell them to earn money. You must build your farm, buy machinery, choose which crops to grow and when to plant and harvest them, decide which animals to farm, organise food and water for the animals as well as chemicals for use on the fields and much more. Probably more than you think. And you may even learn something too. But so what? It's still just farming, and it's still not much fun. While technically there's nothing actually wrong with the game, whether you enjoy SimFarm or not really comes down to how interesting you find farming itself. Me? I lasted a week and even then it was only because I had to.

David Wildgoose



FANTASY EMPIRES PC

Available: Now
 Category: Strategy/RPG
 Players: 1-5
 Publisher: SSI



Fantasy Empires is a strategy/RPG game where you build an empire by conquering neighbouring regions and doing battle with other hostile forces. It features a computer controlled Dungeon Master, who oversees your progress and constantly gives you information and advice.

After generating a character, you are presented with a map which contains a shield with your symbol on it. You start off with a castle and a keep, along with some troops and a couple of heroes. You'll probably notice that there is a lot of empty space around you, and this represents neutral territories. So move some of your troops into one of these places and click the end-of-turn button. This simulates time, and must be done after you have finished each segment of gameplay.

It would then be wise to build a keep and armory in your newly acquired territory, this stabilises the region and gives you a chance to train some new troops. You must always train troops, otherwise you'll rapidly be decimated by hostile neighbours. All you need is an armory for general fighters, a wizard-tower for magic-users and a temple for clerics. You'll also need a castle if you want to train men to use catapults and the like. But don't be too over zealous with your cash or you'll soon run out.

You spend most of your time looking at a map, except in combat where you get the familiar top-down perspective. I was a little disappointed with the combat system, which has nowhere near the level of control of the old Gold Box series. The graphics of the game are good, but not spectacular, while there are some nice sound-effects and music. The DM talks to you the whole time, which is quite novel at first but as you have to wait until he shuts up before you can do anything, it can soon become slightly tiresome.

If you're looking for a sound and fairly intuitive AD&D strategy game, then Fantasy Realms should fit the bill nicely.

Julian Schoffel



Pocky & Rocky

Play Guide



We reviewed this cool Japanese shoot em up in the last issue.

Now HYPER proudly presents the Pock and Rock Play Guide...

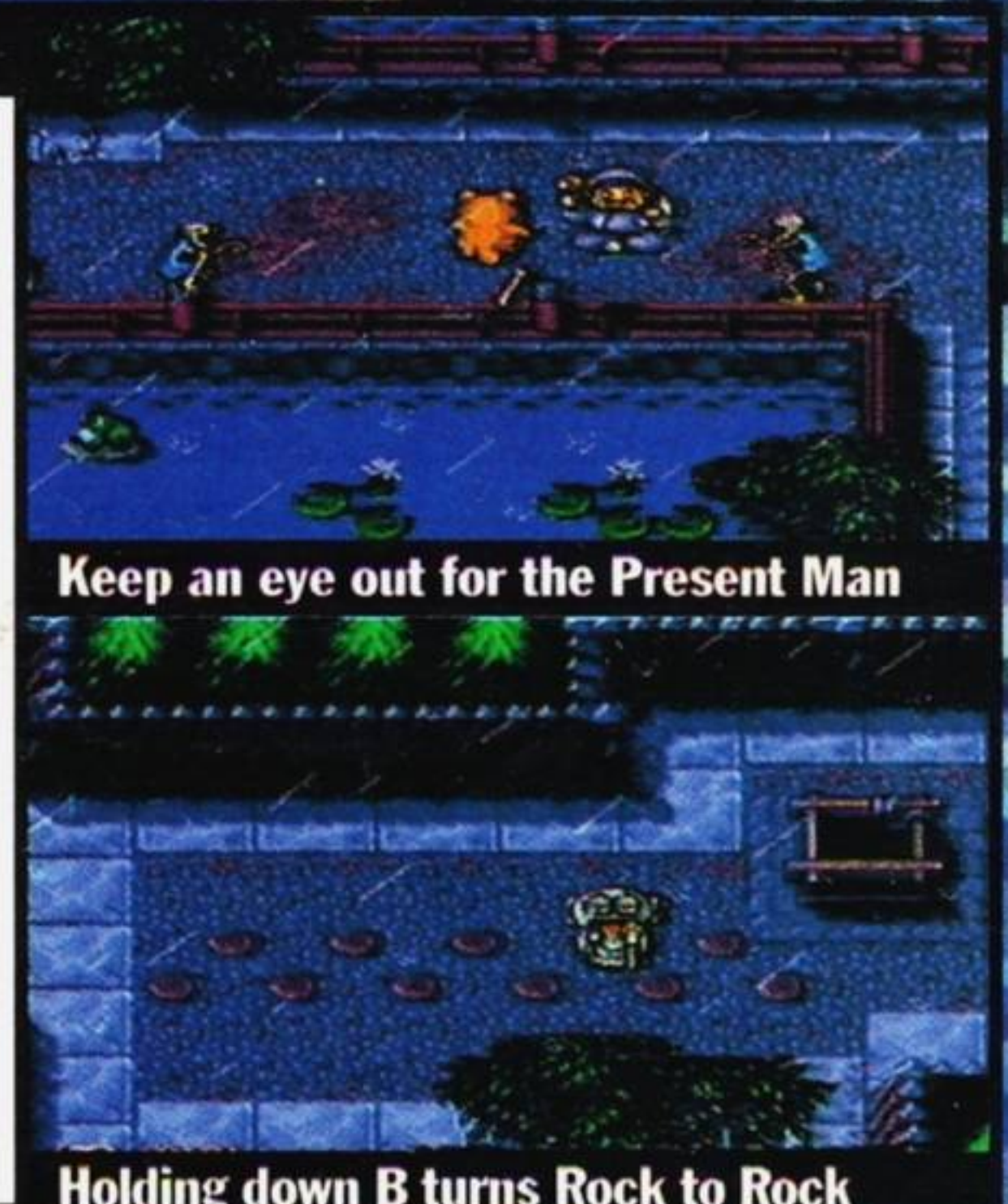
Level Select

Sick of starting from the beginning every time you play? You'll want this level select then. On the Player Select screen, hold down buttons X and Y then press A, A, A, A, B, B, B, B, A, B, A, B, A, B.



Basic Techniques

- 1. KEEP MOVING** When things get hectic always remember that (except when your facing a boss) if you keep moving forwards, the screen will scroll with you so you can outrun a lot of trouble.
- 2. SLIDE** Don't forget that you can slide out of trouble too and with two players, you can slide into each other for an extra attack.
- 3. DEFENCE** Pocky and Rocky both have good defensive swipes (button B). Use them and you'll go them.
- 4. SAVE YOUR BOMBS** Don't waste your bombs - keep them for the bosses.
- 5. KEEP SHOOTING** A bit obvious really, but some people never learn...



Keep an eye out for the Present Man

Holding down B turns Rock to Rock

Level 1: The Haunted Shrine

A nice, easy, introductory level that shouldn't cause you too much grief. Those Russian Doll Thingies can be pesky though - but concentrate your fire on the main body and they're a pushover.

BOSS: Mr Big Nuts

Keep shooting away at him. When he fires his nuts from his basket (ouch!) use your defensive swipe (continually press button B) to fire them straight back at him. When he starts to roll, slide out of his way. Keep it up and you'll soon be eating chopped nuts.



Level 2: Enchanted Forest

Some left/right scrolling here for a change, but again, you should'nt have too many problems. Just blast away until you get to a mid-boss, then stop and have a think.

MID-BOSS 1: Fire Breathing Giant

He looks tough, but he's thick as all hell. Fire at him continuously, draw him into breathing his fire at you (it's fixed, it won't follow you) then slide away and nail him.

MID-BOSS 2: The Bong Creature

Keep below him, in the centre of the screen and keep firing. Shoot or dodge his little off-shoots and

use the defensive swipe when he fires his leaves at you (again, you can send them straight back).

RAFT-RIDE

Don't get slide-happy or you'll end up in the water, and that's the last place you want to be.

BOSS: The Octopus

Bombs are a good idea here, but don't waste them - use them only when he surfaces. When his tentacles come up, try and stun at least one of them, then use your defensive swipe on the other one's fire. When his ugly head comes up, shoot it!



Level 3: The Cemetery Mystery

And all of a sudden things get a lot tougher...

MID-BOSS 1: Floating Bones

This skeleton is the toughest foe you've faced so far. Be nimble on your feet and don't get iced. Avoid him for long enough and it's into the building. The Green Blobs and the Joker are weeds, so you should make the next room pretty easily.

MID-BOSS 2: The Genie

Just keep shooting (you should know that by now) and slide from his fire. When he turns into a

cloud and chases you just run away. It's OK - really.

THE CAVES

This section's all timing. Slide and run when it's safe. Make sure you don't get caught between a rock (or a skull) and a hard place.

BOSS: Floating Bones Comes Back

Stay behind him as much as possible, fire away and slide when he shoots at you. As long as you're careful you'll soon get him.



Level 4: Battle In The Sky

Do I sense a battle coming on? The Cloud Monsters aren't too much of a bother, just blast and dodge (you can't swipe their fire). Same goes for the Pirate.

BOSS: Chicken Boss

Blast away at the Chook until he fires his feathers at you - swipe them away. When he charges you, dodge him by sliding from side to side. Don't slide forward or you'll end up over the edge.



Level 5: The Forbidden Castle

Lots of hazards along the way, but remember the basics and you'll be fine. Blast the Barrel Thrower in between barrels, or slide into him and blast (if you can spare the energy). When you hit the rolling balls, time your runs forward.

BOSS: Vampire Boss

Use the old blast and swipe technique and watch out for the electrified floor (look at the furnaces at the sides of the screen). It's also a good idea to go right up to him and just swipe away for some cheap hits.



Level 6: Battle With Black Mantle

Show time.

1ST BOSS: Samurai Armour

This guy can be tough, but if you get underneath him (behind him) and swipe away he can't hurt you.

FINAL BOSS: Black Mantle

At first, don't aim for Black Mantle - SHOOT THE STATUES! Only when their heads are blown off can you hurt the Big Guy. Dodge the fireballs, slide away (diagonally is good) from the electricity (you can slide under the beam, but not the point) and

don't get caught in his hands - just slide away at the last moment. He takes some punishment, but pretty soon it'll be all over. Cue cute Game Over screens...



My Grandma Pocky, what big eyes you have

CHEAT MODE



BATMAN RETURNS MEGA CD

LEVEL SKIP

Go to the OPTIONS screen and change the game type to DRIVING ONLY. Hold LEFT on the control pad and press BUTTON B. Move down to DIFFICULTY (Option 2) and again, HOLD LEFT and press B. Do this all the way down to Option 7, then repeat the procedure all the way back up to GAME TYPE (Option 1). If the cheat has worked, you'll hear a ringing noise. Now go and play the driving game. To skip a level, just PAUSE the game and hit BUTTON C.



BUSBY THE BOBCAT MEGA DRIVE

PASSWORDS

Chapter 2:	CKBGMM
Chapter 3:	SCTWMN
Chapter 4:	MKBRLN
Chapter 5:	LBLNRD
Chapter 6:	JMDKRR
Chapter 7:	STGRTN
Chapter 8:	SBBSCH
Chapter 9:	DBKRRB
Chapter 10:	MSFCTS
Chapter 11:	KMGRBS
Chapter 12:	SLJMBG
Chapter 13:	TGRTVN
Chapter 14:	CCLDSL
Chapter 15:	BTCLMB
Chapter 16:	STCJDH



EX MUTANTS

MEGA DRIVE

CHEAT MODE

Go to the OPTIONS screen and set the MUSIC to 05 and SOUND FX to 21. Move the cursor to EXIT the options and HOLD DOWN buttons A, B, and C and PRESS START. Shannon will say "Too Easy" and the Cheater Cheater Mode will come up. There's heaps of options, including a level select, maximum lives, and unlimited weapons, but you can only choose one!

NBA JAM

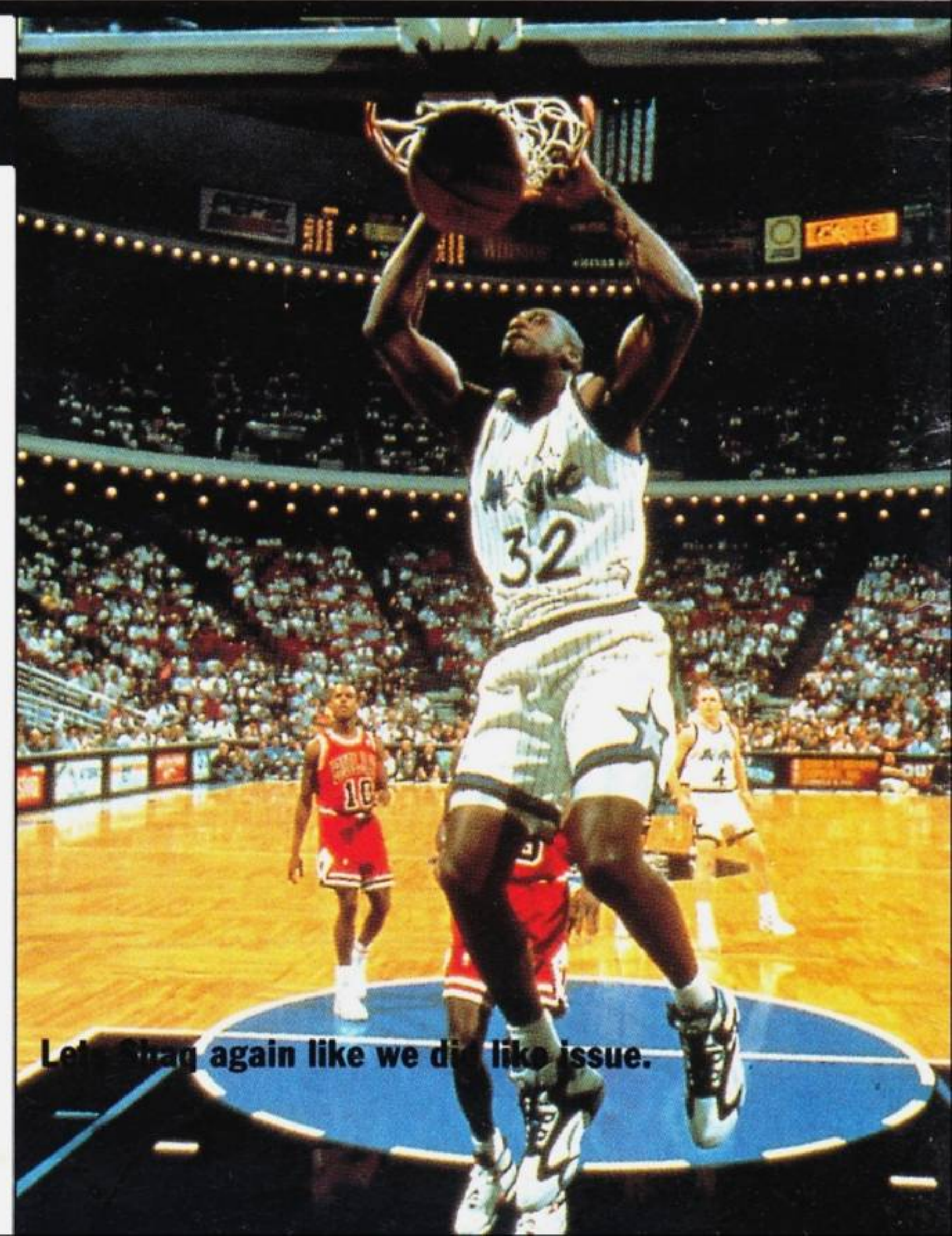
ARCADE

THE REST OF THE SECRET PLAYERS

Last issue we gave you all the cheats and a taste of the 18 secret characters you could play as. In the early stages of *NBA Jam*'s development there were between 30 and 35 hidden characters, including Michael Jordan, Magic Johnson, Godzilla (!) and Raiden from *Mortal Kombat* (!!). But, in order to conserve memory, many of the characters were removed from the final version of the game. Despite rumours to the contrary, the official word from Midway is that Michael Jordan and Magic Johnson ARE NOT IN THE FINAL VERSION.

Of the 18 characters that do exist, 5 have requested that their initials and birthdates be kept secret. All we know is that 3 of them are female. Here's the 7 other characters we do know:

- Shawn Liptak (programmer):** SL_ June 24
- John Carlton (animator):** JMC August 5
- Sal DiVita (animator):** SAL February 1
- Jon Hey (sound):** JWH September 20
- Jamie Rivett (ex-Beam programmer!):** RJR January 17
- John Newcomer (veteran hacker):** JRN June 18
- George Petro (hacker):** GNP October 8



Let's dunk again like we did in the issue.



STREETFIGHTER II TURBO

SNES

USE THE NTSC VERSION ON A PAL MACHINE

So you bought the US version of the game, but even with a converter, it keeps crashing? Never fear, if you've got an ACTION REPLAY cart, you can get around it. Whack in these two codes - the first will stop the NTSC message from coming up, the second will stop the game crashing:

7E00 6000
7E18 3E0F

TURN OFF SPECIAL MOVES FOR VS BATTLES

Here's a cheat to let you turn off individual special moves for every character in two-player games. Pick either a Turbo or Normal game. When both players have selected their fighter and you're on the HANDICAP and STAGE SELECT screen, enter this sequence with CONTROLLER 2: DOWN, R button, UP, L button, Y and B. You'll hear some music and the screen will scroll left to bring up the special moves menus for your characters. You can turn on or off any move - just like the Mega Drive version.

BATTLETOADS IN BATTLEMANIACS

SNES

5 LIVES AND 5 CONTINUES

A good cheat for a tough game. At the Battlemaniacs Title screen (or when the Tradewest logo appears), HOLD DOWN buttons A and B and PULL DOWN on the direction pad. Keep them held and press START. If it's worked, the Battletoads' flag will flash red. In a two-player game, you both get 5 lives and 5 continues too!



FINAL FIGHT 2

SNES

SAME CHARACTER CODE

So you both want to be Mike Haggar do you? Well now you can be, and you get different coloured clothes too.

At the TITLE SCREEN ("Game Start/Option Mode") enter this sequence with CONTROLLER ONE: DOWN, DOWN, UP, UP, RIGHT, LEFT, RIGHT, LEFT, then press buttons L and R (the top buttons) at the same time. The screen will turn a nice shade of blue. Now select a two-player game, let player 2 pick the character first, and get kicking.



DESERT STRIKE

SNES

10 LIVES CODE

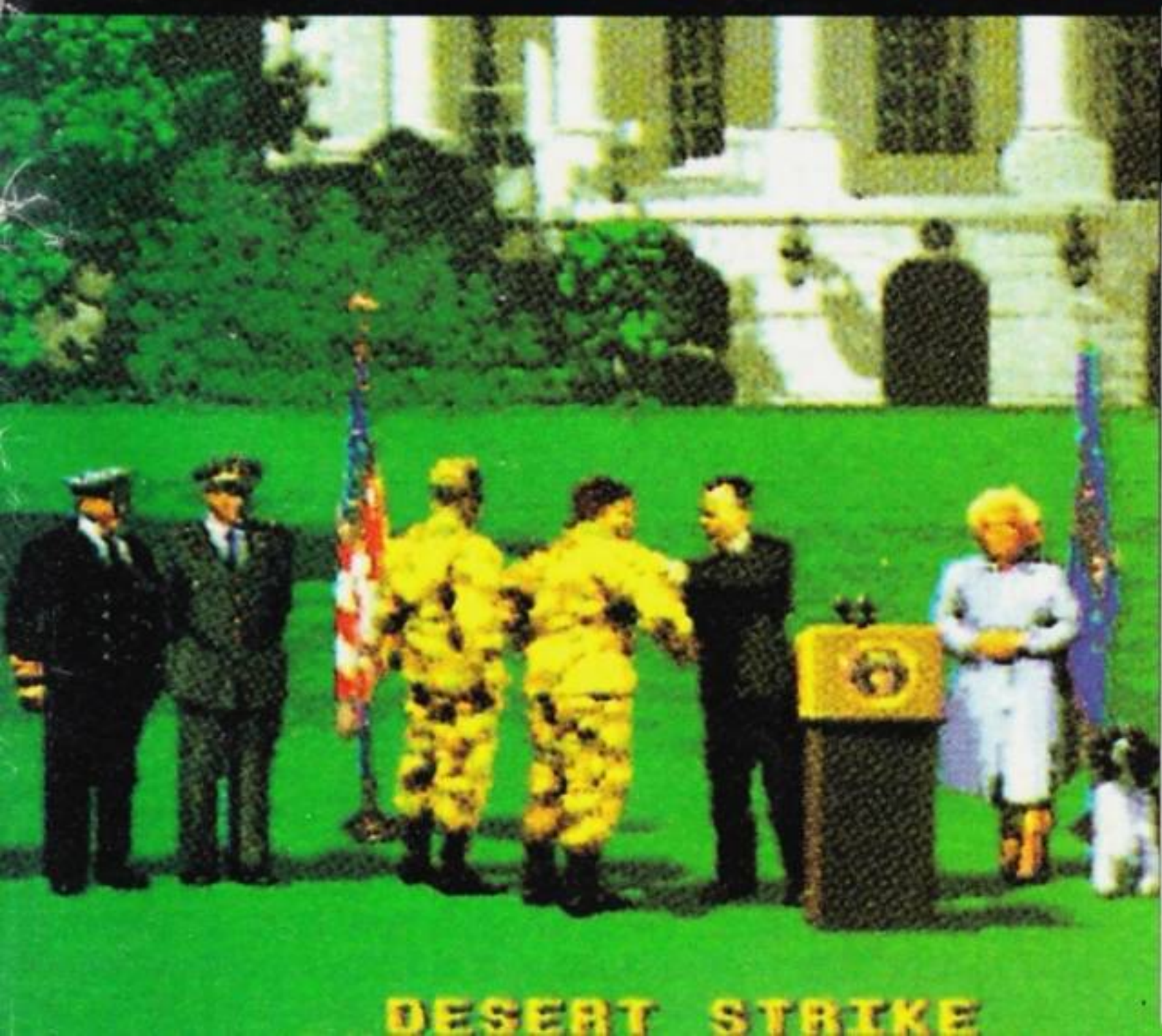
Yes, we know it's old, but this is a good one: on the Campaign menu, just enter the code as BS9JS27. Press start to begin Campaign 1 with 10 lives, or go back and enter another password for a later level - you'll still start with 10 choppers.

RIVAL TURF

SNES

CUSTOMISE NAMES

Play through the game till you get a high score then ENTER YOUR NAME as CHRCONF. This will take you to a character configuration screen where you can change the names of all the players and all the enemies. Useless, but fun anyway.



CHEAT MODE

B.O.B LEVEL PASSWORDS

WORLD 1 GOTH	WORLD 2 ANCIENA	WORLD 3 ULTRALAND
1. 000000	1. 672451	1. 743690
2. 530237	2. 361687	2. 614906
3. 960379	3. 570836	3. 863769
4. 171058	4. 272578	4. 103928
5. 670512	5. 481773	5. 574471
6. 862341	6. 605237	6. 605463
7. 950745	7. 652047	7. 144895
8. 110674	8. 633059	8. 704526
9. 901588	9. 683349	9. 713852
10. 472149	10. 265648	10. 775092
11. 072251	11. 302653	11. 905781
12. 711984	12. 370439	12. 575381
13. 361497	13. 462893	13. 481376
14. 671255	14. 382975	14. 635184
	15. 103495	15. 401139
	16. 583172	16. 845527
	17. 752790	17. 426081
	18. 574132	
	19. 923571	

RANGER X MEGA DRIVE

LEVEL SKIP

Play the game and PAUSE it (in any level). Enter this code with CONTROLLER 1: UP, DOWN, UP, DOWN, UP, DOWN, C, B, A, RIGHT, LEFT. The game music will start up again. Press button B and you'll skip to the next level. You can do it again and again until you reach the end of the game.



MEGA DRIVE



If you think you're a bit of a game master, then send your best cheats into HYPER for national and maybe international recognition. (What this really means is that we're not giving out prizes or anything, but we'll credit you with sending us the juicy hint).

After making sure it's correct and that we can follow the instructions, send your cheats to:
HYPER Cheats
PO BOX 634
STRAWBERRY HILLS NSW 2012

SUNSET RIDERS MEGA DRIVE

EXTRA CONTINUES

This is already an easy game but to make it just that bit easier, go to the option screen and play the sound numbered 0E. Exit the option screen and press START. Next select your player by pressing the A button. As soon as the character smiles at you, hold down button A, B and C Buttons until the game actually starts. If the cheat has worked you will have 100 continues. Happy shooting!



SILPHEED MEGA CD

GET AN EXTRA
10 CONTINUES!

This cheat is HOT. Play the game as normal and get as far as you can. You've got 5 continues to play with - use them until you've only got one left (the screen will show Game Start/Continue 01/Option). Wait for the cinematic intro to start up and while it's running, enter this sequence with controller 1: RIGHT, UP, A, B, C, LEFT, LEFT, DOWN, C, A and START. When the Title screen appears, press START again and you'll find yourself with 10 continues!

SECRET VOICE TEST

So you want to hear all the sampled voices do you? Well, now you can - although why you really need to is beyond me. At the TITLE screen ("Press Start Button"), press START on CONTROLLER 1. You now have a choice of Game Start or Options. Highlight OPTIONS then on CONTROLLER 2, HOLD DOWN A, B and C. Keep holding these down and press START on CONTROLLER 1. The Option Mode will now give you a voice test to play with.

JURASSIC PARK MEGA DRIVE

PASSWORDS

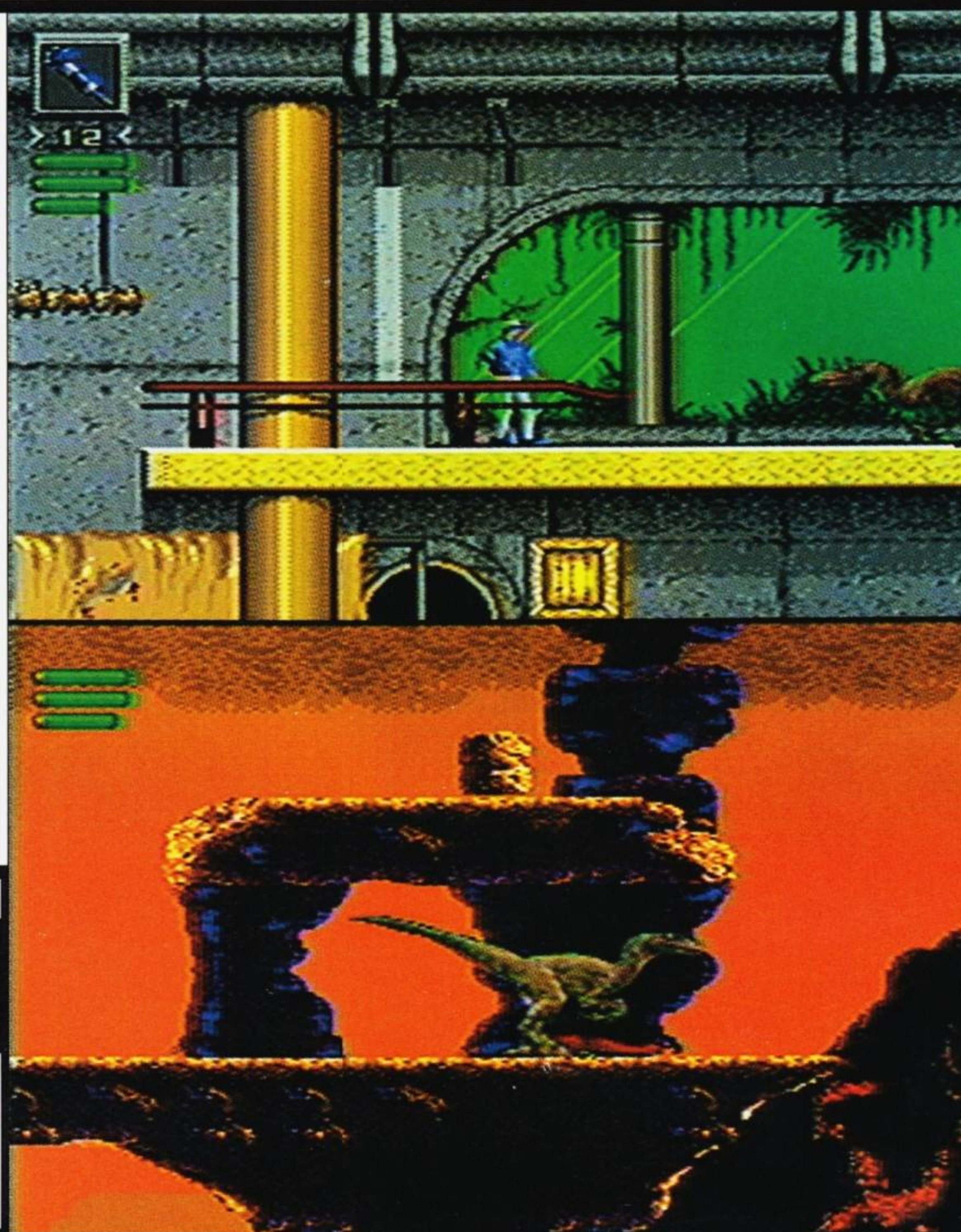
We know it's a crappy game, but a lot of morons bought it. Here's the passwords to every level.

As Dr Grant

Level 2: 277166RO
Level 3: 4BFP64VØ
Level 4: 64DHCDEF
Level 5: 85BGLNTH
Level 6: AH745EJC
Level 7: C7UBL67U

As the Raptor

Level 2: 121GØØ27
Level 3: K21GØØ29
Level 4: M21GØØ2B
Level 5: 021GØØ2D



ULTIMA 7 PART 2 SERPENT ISLE PC

When you load the game, enter in SERPENT PASS PS rather than just SERPENT if you want to get to a cheat mode.



FLASHBACK SNES

Thanks to Andres at Sony we have the level codes for you just as the game hits the shelves:

LEVEL CODES

1 BSCKT	2 JWLYX
3 RSVP	4 DXCPT
5 SLMN	6 ZTHRK
7 CRLQXZ	

END SEQUENCE PKRSLC

MORTAL KOMBAT MEGA DRIVE

THE REPTILE

This is for all those people like Andrew Turner of Queensland who sent us letters on *Mortal Kombat*. A lot of you wanted to know how to fight the elusive secret character, The Reptile.

The Reptile appeared in the original arcade version of *Mortal Kombat*. He is very, very fast and he's got the combined special moves of Scorpion and Sub Zero. In the arcade game, if you want to fight Reptile you must get a DOUBLE FLAWLESS FATALITY (you can lose one round) on the PIT STAGE WITHOUT USING BLOCK. You can't block at any time during the fight and you can't use block in your fatality - so Sonya is out. Scorpion CAN do his fatality without using block - stand in the same place, jump straight up, and while you're in the air, press UP twice (before you land).

But (and this is the key to it all) even if you do everything right, the Reptile will ONLY appear if there is a shadow passing over the moon (like Santa Claus and his Reindeer). With the arcade machines, this would happen every 40 games.

The same rules apply to the Mega Drive version: you have to see a shadow passing over the moon first - it won't happen every time you're at the Pit. But if you use the DULLARD cheat (from issue 1) you can make it happen every time!

Access the DULLARD cheat (when the fighters' faces scroll down the sides of the screen press DOWN, UP, LEFT, LEFT, A, RIGHT, DOWN) and set FLAG 2 to ON. Go to the very bottom of the screen and change the stage to THE PIT. Start the game. A shadow will appear every time. Now all you have to do is get a double flawless fatality without using block. If it's still too hard for you, set FLAG Ø to ON too - that way you'll beat your opponent with one hit.

blast INTO Multi (4) play

November

SUPER BOMBERMAN
ARCADE/ACTION STRATEGY

Watch out, it's an intense battle of wits, otherwise you're bombed! Across 12 crazy



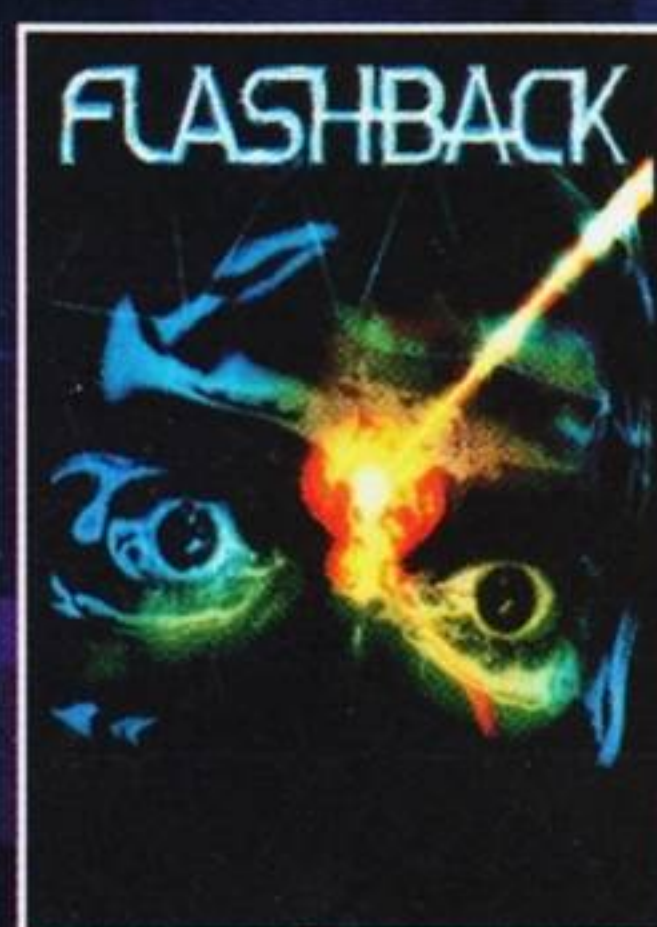
levels of action, all that stands between you and a fate worse than death is your supply of bombs, anything you can pick up on the way, and your wits! Drop bombs to blast a path through to the next level, but beware, a badly placed bomb could blow everything away!

blitz some alien nasties

FLASHBACK

ACTION/ADVENTURE

Good must triumph over evil! You are special agent Conrad B Hart in the year 2142, and have created an incredible machine, capable of analysing the molecular structure of all human beings. This leads to a startling discovery that certain top people in society are extra-terrestrials in disguise. When they uncover your discovery, you are kidnapped and awaken on the



December

extra-terrestrial's home planet with no recollection of your identity. The quest begins to explore the new surroundings, and find clues to unravel your past. Fight off the aliens and find a way to foil the aliens' awesome plot to destroy planet Earth.

Rule in Jammmin' adventures

January

EQUINOX

FANTASY/ADVENTURE

A magical 3-D fantasy role-playing adventure, in which you are Glendaal and must undertake a



quest to free your father, the great wizard Shadax. You'll fight your way through a dizzying maze of battle zones, plot strategies, decipher rotating maps, unlock mind puzzles and explore over 450 secret chambers.

and Quest for the BEST

SKY BLAZER

ACTION/ADVENTURE

Sky Blazer™ is the hottest new hero to hit the streets and he's tough on evil! With the incredible ability to transform himself into many different beings and summon the powers of nature at will, Sky Blazer™ gives you revolutionary new non-stop action with perilous journeys over many strange and



January

other-worldly lands. Players face an awesome collection of diabolical enemy bosses that can only be defeated by tapping Sky Blazer's strength and resources. You'll battle on.

Available on SNES from leading video game outlets

For hints 'n' tips on Flashback, Equinox and Sky Blazer™ and information about the latest video games releases from Sony Electronic Publishing Ring

0055 33135*

*70¢ per minute. If under 18, parents OK required.



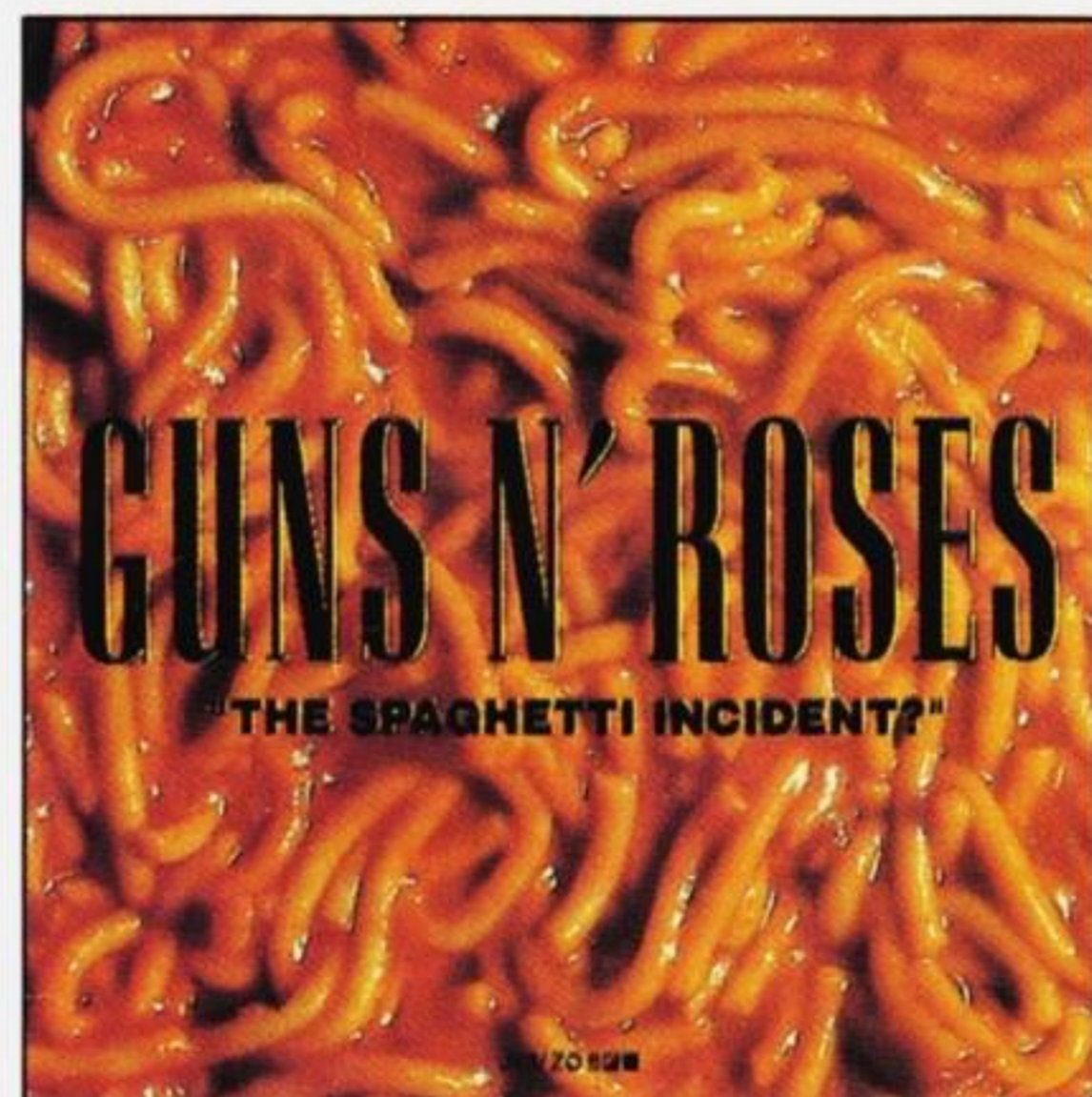


Guns N' Roses

The Spaghetti Incident?

MCA/Geffen

For you young folk out there consider it a history lesson in punk. If you saw a recent issue of *Rolling Stone* and wondered who Iggy



Pop was and did he always look so attractive, then "*The Spaghetti Incident?*" has all the answers. Guns N' Roses insist we travel back to a time when skinny white boy punk was it and the fat boy on the Triple M ads wasn't yet on solids. If you like the Gunners and the odd bit of punk, this could be the album to die for.

South End

Fanatical

Volition/Sony

This EP is a worthy follow-up to the South End tracks on *High*, the Volition compilation that came out a few months ago. South End have a full euro-techno sound: lots of bleeps and swirls, lots of analogue effects, and fairly fast too. And good local production means you can hear what's going on in the tracks, which is, in the main, plenty of good solid techno squelching.

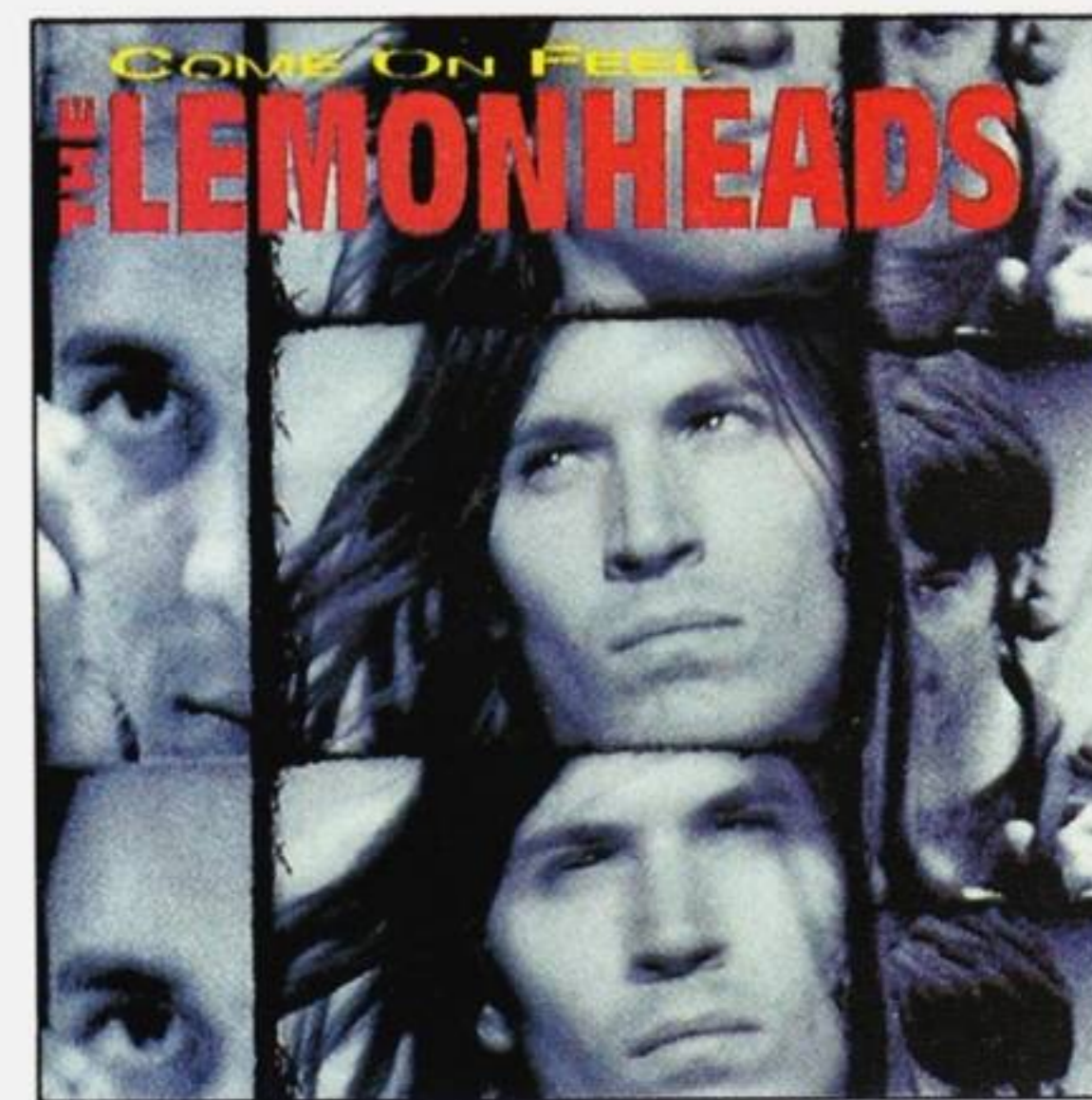
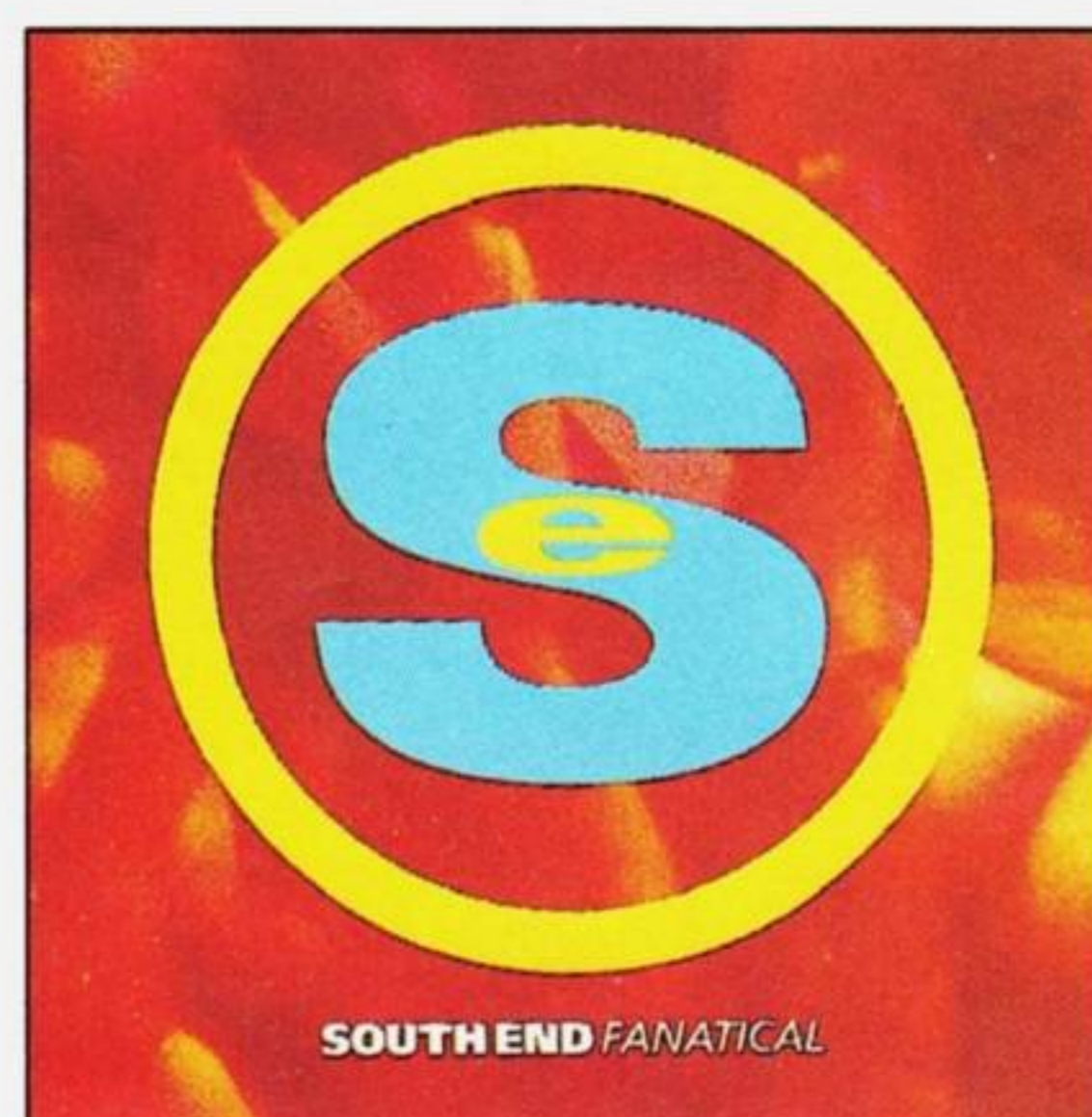
At times, this sits a little uneasily with the melodies South End get working (yes, Virginia, there is melody in techno). While their instrumentation is influenced by Europe, their tunes and vocals are local, which occasionally makes them sound like Kraftwerk meets Club Hoy.

The last three tracks on the CD are the strongest, *Stargazing*, *The Way We Groove*, and *Utopia*. All three take the band away from the pop-NRG feel of the first three, to something a little more acidic, with some jangly piano thrown in to sweeten the pill. And with Culture Beat getting airplay and making charts, there's no reason South End can't either.

Jad McAdam 7/10

The Spaghetti Incident? offers twelve punk covers but begins oddly enough with a heart rendering version of "Since I Don't Have You" first recorded in 1958. Since *Believe In Me* Duff McKagan is happy to stand in front of the microphone and he belts out four numbers, including Iggy And The Stooges' "Raw Power", as well as helping Axl out here and there. His voice is actually well suited to this style of music. There's never doubt that it's Slash wielding the guitar but he also lends his vocal talents on "Buick Makane" (T.Rex). Axl Rose and Matt Sorum are there in full flight and the result is a unique acknowledgment of the roots of the bad boys of rock n' roll.

6/10 Sarah Longhurst



The Lemonheads

Come On Feel The Lemonheads

Atlantic

If you're already a Lemonheads fan and enjoyed the direction taken in *It's A Shame About Ray*, then there is no doubt you'll enjoy this latest release. In *Come On Feel The Lemonheads* the band and their special guests will surround you with their sometimes hauntingly direct and othertimes downright quirky alternative pop/folk style. They have mastered the knack of making you feel as if you've stumbled into a very private world, and maybe you have. Smudge/Godstar's Tom Morgan has co-written much of the material with Evan Dando, but the first single "Into Your Arms" is written by Robyn St Clare and first popped up on the *Mrs Robinson* single. It's a beautifully simple track that suits Dando's voice and will have wide appeal. "I'll Do It Anyway" is a particular favourite and is dedicated to Belinda Carlisle who also sings backups. There's quite a variety of pace and sound on this album; distorted, acoustic and countrified pedal-steel guitar, as well as a weird collection of studio takes featuring Dando on piano called "The Jello Fund". It's good, but *Come On Feel The Lemonheads* does not mark a new development in the Lemonheads' sound. It lacks the sense of a fresh adventure that some of us were hoping for.

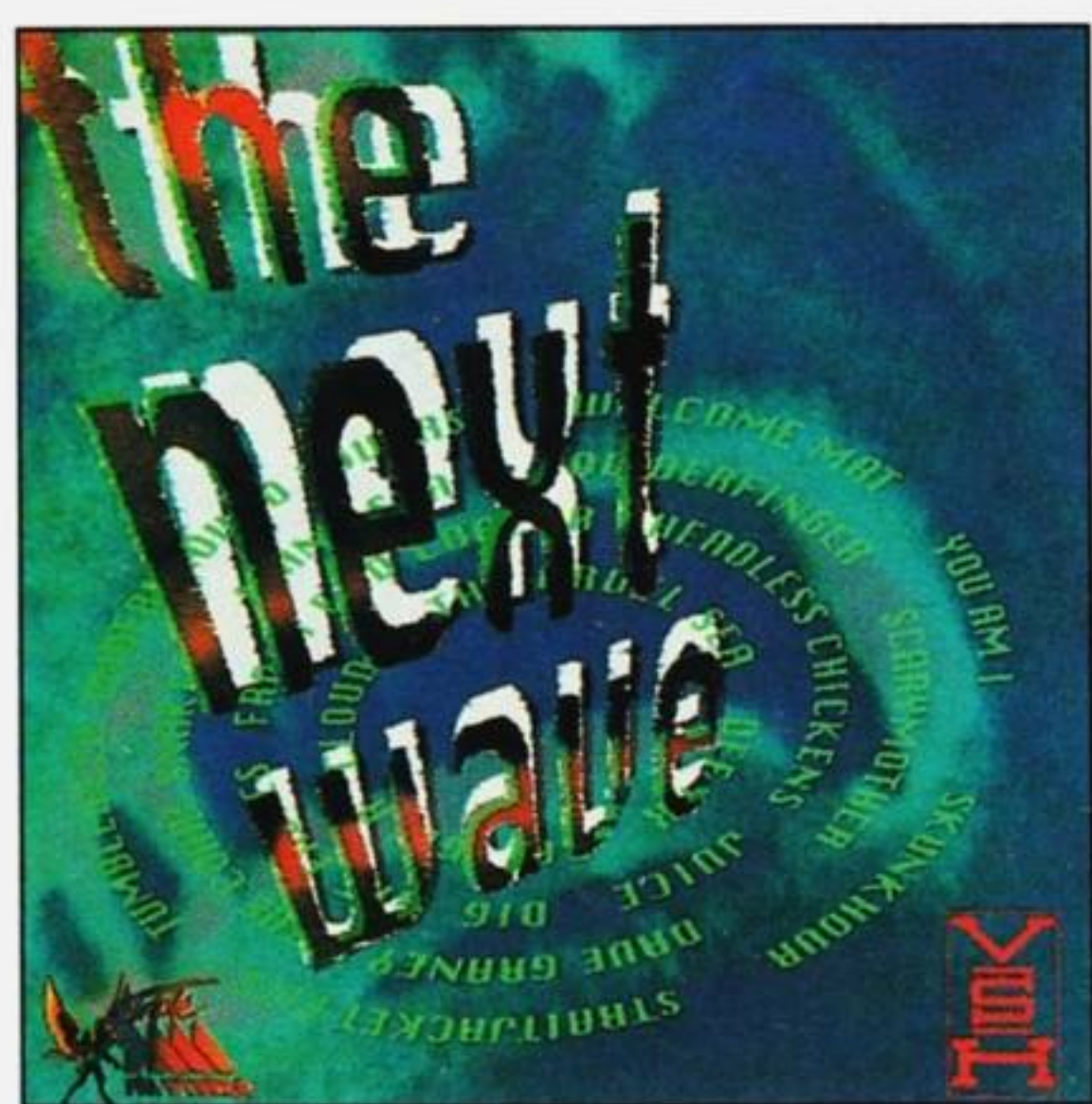
7/10 Sarah Longhurst



Itch-e and Scratch-e

Itch-e Kitch-e Koo
Volition/Sony

How could a band named after cartoon characters from Simpson's Land, do anything wrong? Especially when they've got Matt Groening's sense of humour, as their previous release on 12 inch, *Bastards* showed, sampling a guy abusing Telecom in no uncertain terms to an answering machine.



The Next Wave

Various Artists
POLYDOR

The theme of this compilation CD is refreshingly new and essentially Australian. Little else connects the diverse cross section of bands that appear on *The Next Wave*. It's a perfect introduction for the newcomer to the Australian scene because it swings from the acid jazz sounds of DIG to the unique power of You Am I and all that lies in between. It's an excellent choice for those who've been introduced to some of the more high profile stuff like The Cruel Sea's "The Honeymoon Is Over" and Def FX's "Space Time Disco", and want to dig a little deeper without buying a whole pile of CDs. And for the music enthusiast, no doubt you've heard it all before, but it's a fantastic record of what nineteen "on the way up" bands were doing in 1993, plus it will save you reefing through your own collection to put together a tape for that next after dinner session - Polydor have done all the work for you. Bands not already mentioned include Skunkhour, Clouds, Caligula, Headless Chickens, Front End Loader...the list goes on.

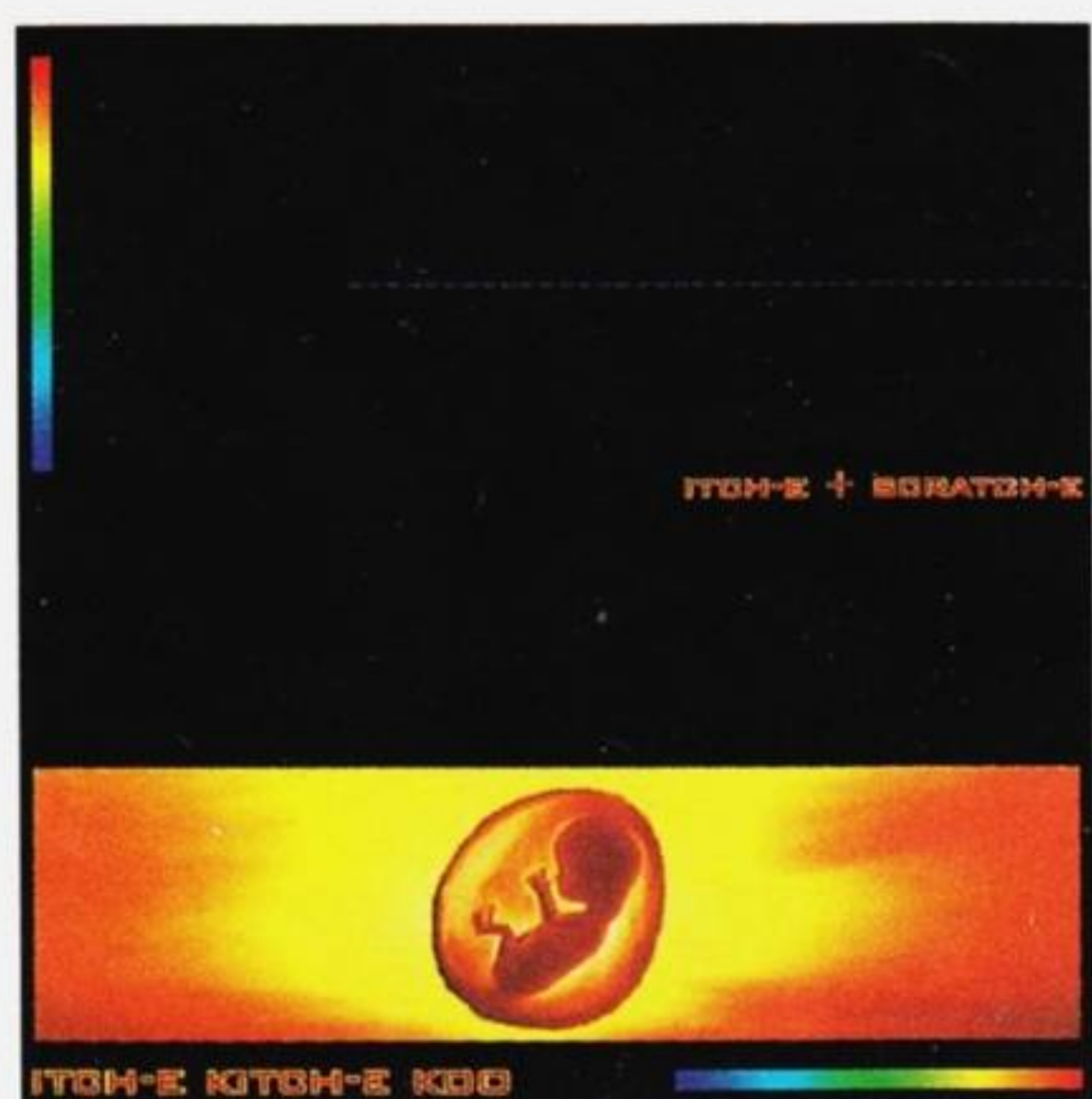
This CD is supported by Video Smash Hits, Channel 7 and Triple M and it's fantastic to see this sort of project supported by mainstream players.

8/10 Sarah Longhurst

Itch-e and Scratch-e get points all over the place from me. They get points for all the variety on the CD, which ranges in mood from sad and eerily beautiful to pure hardcore NRG. They get points for cleverly sequencing the tracks. Rather than attempting to produce a dance CD with a bunch of songs, which works more often with compilations than individual artists, they have taken the De La Soul approach, including little breaks and instrumentals to structure the CD like a trip. A wild trip it is too, structured into two voyages, 2.1 and 2.2, which take you from Detroit weirdness to British breakbeat madness. And they get points for featuring the vocals of Miriam, the receptionist at my old job, on three tracks.

They lose one point, however, for not calling the CD *Itch-e Kitch-e Koo*, which would have been much cooler.

8.437/10 Jad McAdam



PICK OF THE MONTH



Buhloone Mind State

De La Soul
Mushroom

Their first album, *Three Feet High And Rising*, was a revolution in hip-hop. Their Daisy Age lyrics, no guns politics, jazz feel, tasty beats and the use of samples to make the album a journey changed hip-hop for the better. With their second album, *De La Soul is Dead*, they parodied the traditional music industry hype and pressure that surrounds "the difficult second album" after an innovative debut. The album proved that they weren't then and they ain't now... dead, that is.

I don't know if De La Soul will ever make an album that sounds as weird and new as *Three Feet High And Rising* did, but who cares anyway? *Buhloone Mind State* is great in its own right. The De La sound has evolved, with a feel that is laid back like a deck chair, swinging like a hammock. Maceo Parker, James Brown band-member, works the horn and provides samples here and there, to give you something of the feel. The lyrics come from a committee of mellow hip-hop lyricists with zany names: Spoonie Gee and the Treacherous Three, Guru, Shortie No Mass (a home-girl, cool!), Biz Markie and the De La boys themselves.

Basically, this is De La Soul, back again and fatter than the bad guy in Jurassic Park. Pick of the month.

9/10 Jad McAdam

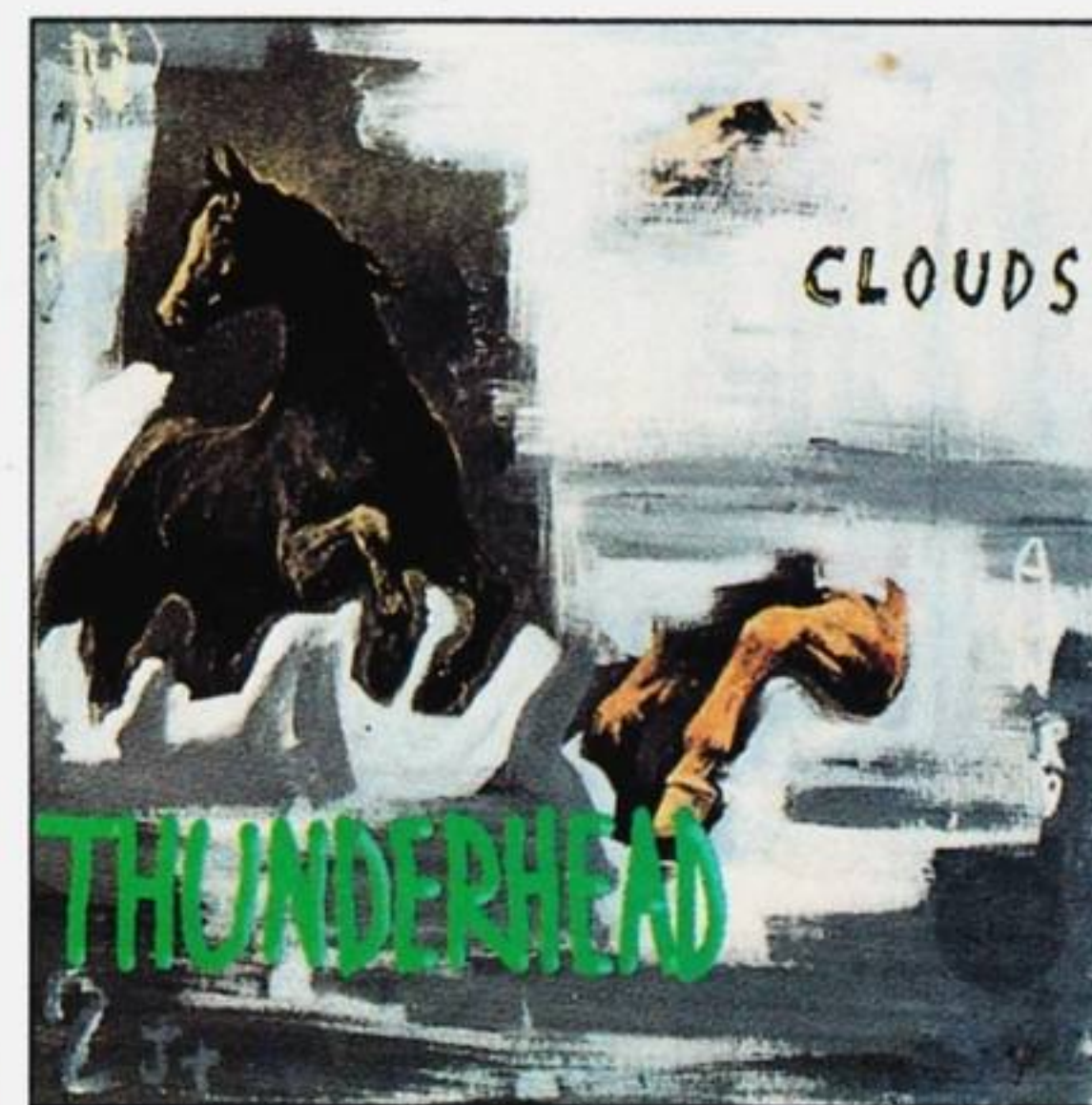
The Clouds

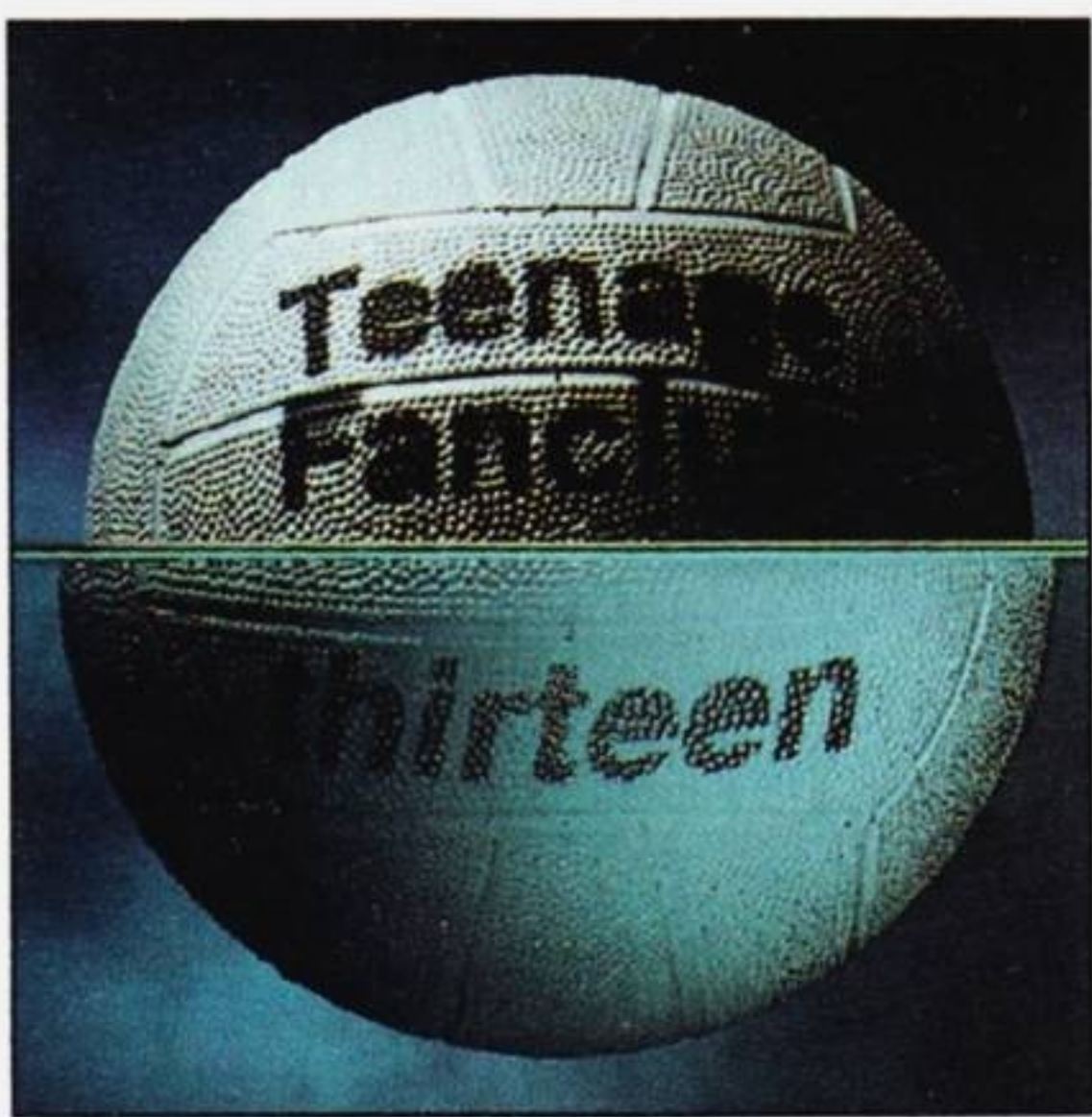
THUNDERHEAD
REDEYE/POLYDOR

The unmistakable vocal interplay gives it away as being the Clouds, but *Thunderhead* is not the distorted sweet pop of old. With this album the Clouds have extended their horizons and broken the confines of the formula so successfully employed on their first three releases. Some may have thought it risky to venture away from a winning streak but *Thunderhead* is a vital and challenging step for the band. And most importantly, it is a challenge they have gone a long way towards conquering.

It's guitar player Jodi Phillis and bass player Tricia Young who have fashioned the bold and incisive lyrics. Those lyrics are then presented through a distinctive combination of melodies and harmonies that sometimes almost clash, but veer clear at the last possible moment. There is more space allotted to the guitar work of David Easton, who has developed a harsher urban edge. The general feel of the album is at times confronting but also unusually inviting and peaceful. Tracks like "Bower of Bliss", "Kitten", "Kathy" and "Universal" are definite strengths where other tend to fall a little flat or become lost in a slow pace. Nevertheless *Thunderhead* is an achievement and the Clouds ought to be congratulated.

7.5/10 Sarah Longhurst





Teenage Fan Club

Thirteen
MCA/Geffen

What sticks out like dogs' balls on *Thirteen* is the slick production. In fact you may be forgiven for wondering if this is the same Teenage Fan Club that received attention with *Bandwagon-esque*. That raw, under-produced sound which kept you wondering whether they could really sing at all has vanished. A new chapter has begun. They have retained their laconic, relaxed style and polished the rest.

All members of the band have leant their vocal talents and created a blend of pleasant harmonies and melodies and smooth choruses. There are some unusual musical combinations involving violins, flute, saxophone and slide guitar, but the essential guitar based four piece remains. Stand out tracks include the harmony laden "Commercial Alternative", "Hang On" and the pacey "Radio".

If the Teenage Fan Club were ever classified as a grunge band, the label no longer fits. We're not talking about mainstream commercial rock here but left of centre folk/pop with an edge. Some may have an initial bad reaction to this album simply because it's so far from what may have been expected. But take off the crash helmet and grunge mind set and allow yourself to be wooed by the alluring sounds of *Thirteen*. And you get value for money with a second bonus tracks CD too!

8/10 Sarah Longhurst

Judgment Night

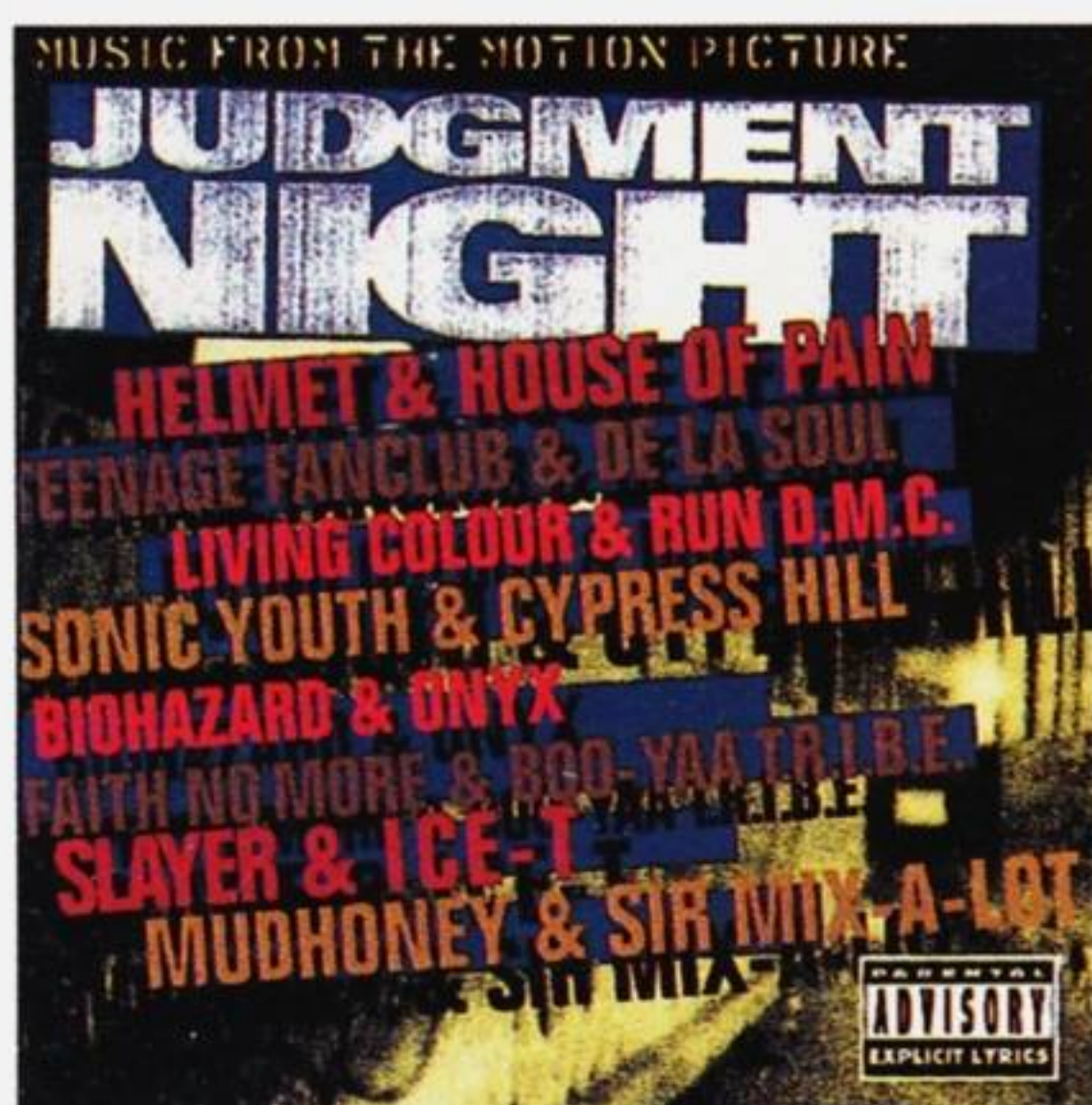
Soundtrack
Immortal/EPIC

What do you get if you cross Mudhoney with Sir Mix-a-Lot? Yep, yep, yep, a mighty strange question that could lead to all forms of obscene answers. But the truth is you get one of the hottest arse grabbing toons you could possibly slap about and a rap sequence that includes the gem "I wanna roll you in the mud, honey".

There's been a rush on the soundtrack front lately, what with *Coneheads* and *Singles* an' all, but throw the others into the microwave on high and make room for the *Music From The Motion Picture Judgment Night*. It is the ultimate in soundtracks, and if it's any indication of the quality of the movie, then it's not one to be missed either. Don't even question how or why, just accept that on this CD, rap meets metal and grunge. The result is spine tingling. Okay, so there's a danger in an experiment that locks Helmet & House of Pain, Biohazard & Onyx and Slayer & Ice-T in a studio together to "see what happens", but the result is a superbly interesting eleven track release.

Play it twice a day and you'll notice a dramatic difference in your health within fourteen days or your money back - guaranteed!

9/10 Sarah Longhurst



INXS

Full Moon, Dirty Hearts

Warners

On Full Moon... INXS tread a safer path than on their last album, the frisky and experimental *Welcome to Wherever you Are*. Kiss symphony orchestras, stripped back dance tracks and sitar-propelled mantras goodbye. This time around the sound may not be as interesting, but it's still one of the strongest and most consistent bunches of songs yet from the increasingly jowly Farriss brothers and their thirty-something sexgod buddies.

Prepare yourself for a relentless barrage of hit singles punctuated mid-way by a couple of token broody jobs just to remind us that they may be

Shara Nelson

What Silence Knows
EMI

While you may not recognise the name, you'll recognise the voice. Shara Nelson was the female vocalist with Massive Attack, whose album *Blue Lines* was huge. She claims Motown as one of her influences, but her voice is unique and distinctive. Shara conveys emotion in her voice like an actress through her characters, so that you feel like there's a story behind each song. Seeing as Shara wrote every song on the CD (with some help from, among others, Prince) there may well be.

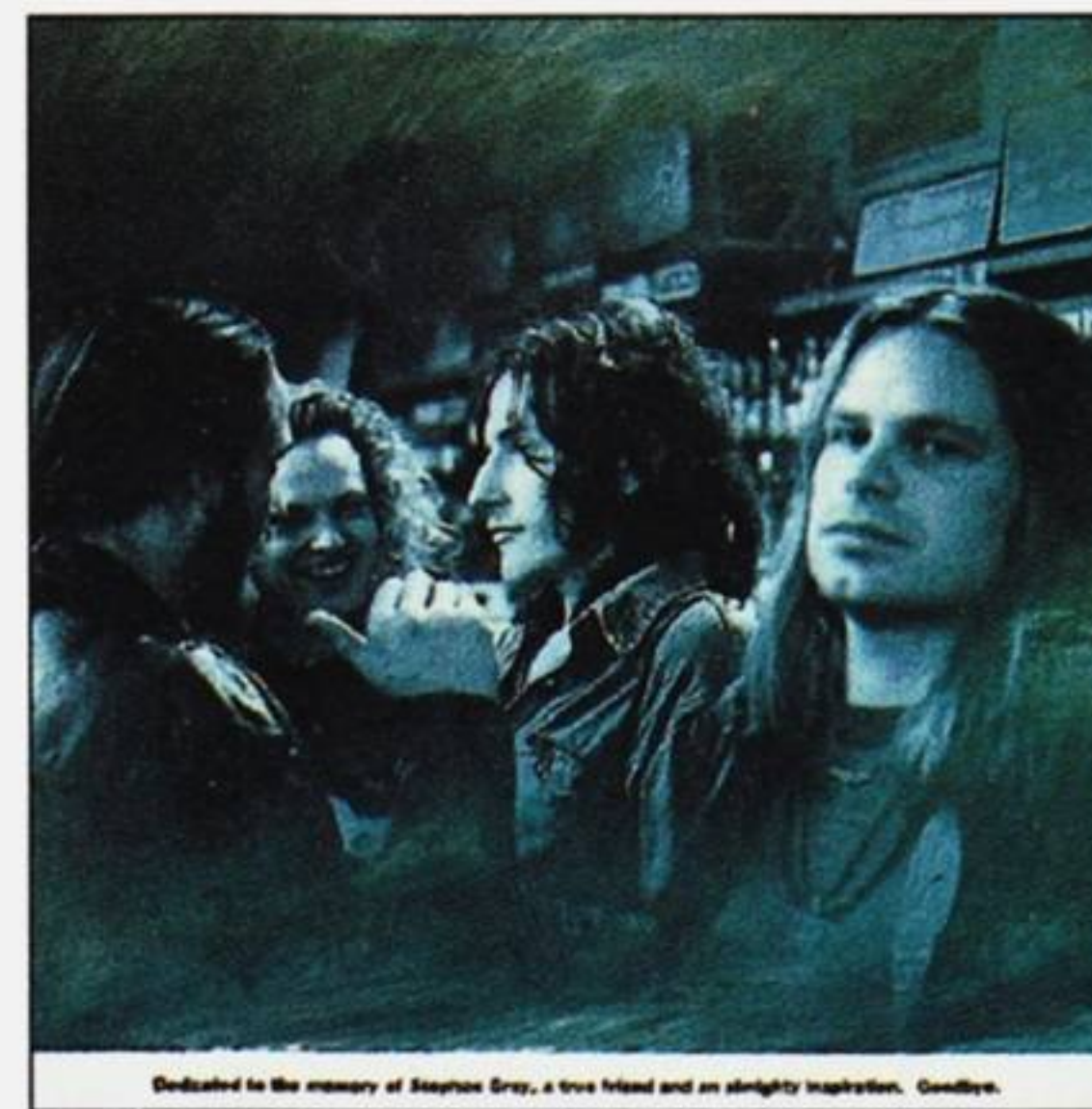
I wish she'd sing about something other than love, though. Not that I don't like songs about love or anything, but the album is kind of intense at times. Its the quirky upbeat songs like the single *Down That Road*, and the opening track *Nobody*, that work the best. Some of the sadder, more introspective tracks like *Pain Revisted* are excellent too. Overall the album is a really nice listen, and there will be times when you think "I've just gotta hear...". On the other hand, it might sound like Sade in a year's time. Who can say?

7.5/10 Jad McAdam

You Am I

Sound As Ever
RA Records

This is You Am I's fifth release and long awaited debut album. *Sound As Ever* may not be as focused and tightly constructed as the critically acclaimed *Coprolalia* EP, but this is not to its detriment. You Am I dare to explore another facet of their distinctive sound, and such a journey has created an album that is as powerfully melodic as it is filthy and loud. Tim Roger's voice is totally compelling. It's never been exceptionally strong but it has gained in range and strength and it hasn't been pushed back into the mix this time. This allows the listener to fully realise the craft that Rogers employs in song



writing, especially on the second half, which is slow, deliberate and (dare it be said)almost soft. This is no standard crappy love, loneliness & lingerie number. The lyrical content and delivery reveals a sensitive, perceptive and intelligent human who actually has something decent to say (which is no mean feat these days). Set in, but not limited to, their unique heavy grunge-like style *Sound As Ever* is an exceptional and challenging album of the 90's.

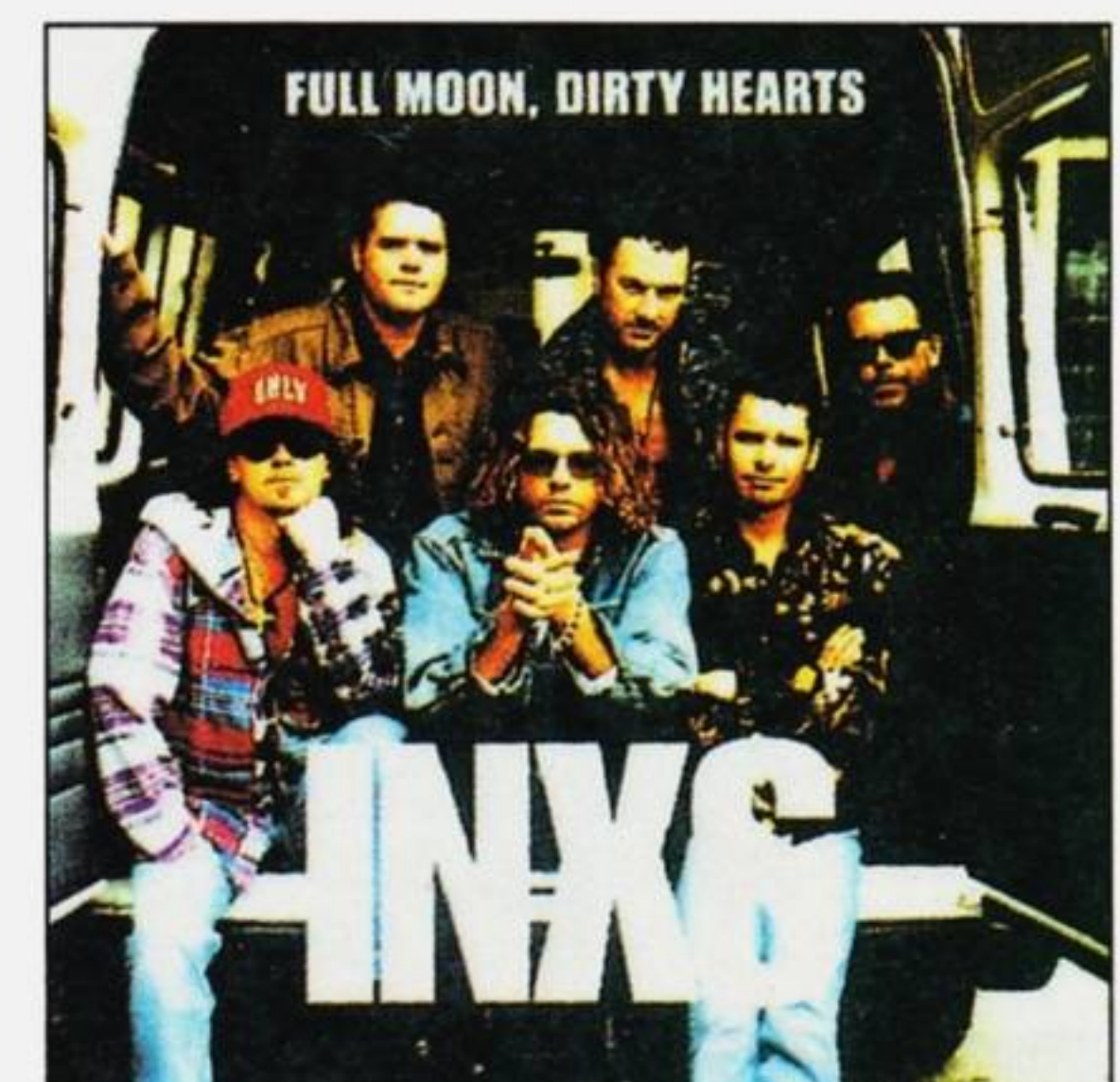
9/10 Sarah Longhurst

kickass rockstars, but they're sensitive guys too. *I'm Only Looking* is a totally seductive groove, dominated by a minimal, driving funk guitar riff and Hutchence's ever-lisping bedtime whisper. *Cut Your Roses Down*, *The Messenger*, and *Days of Rust* are all tasty Number Ones waiting to happen. Quibbles? The title track is a bit of a yawner, and *Time* wiggles its bum just a little too desperately for attention.

INXS are a bit like a Spielberg movie — slick, shallow, commercial as hell... but ultimately irresistible. They've been around for yonks, but

as Spielberg himself has just proved, there's a lot of life left in dinosaurs.

7/10 Patrick McIntyre



BIG SCREEN

Robin Hood

Men In Tights

Oh Mel Brooks. Don't you think it's time you stopped pretending to yourself that you are a genius? After all, we all know you're not, and it seems you really are the only one who thinks otherwise. Especially after this little fiasco. Maybe I'm getting cynical in my old age, but a man called Asneeze and another called Achoo, is not my idea of good comedy. Cary Elwes, who has been in lots of good films, certainly makes a nice looking Robin Hood, but the script, the script, the script... Oh dear. 1/5



Mrs Doubtfire

My first thoughts when I heard about this little screen gem were "Oh-oh. Robin Williams in a dress" and "I have to wash my jeans tonight." Of course, only one of these thoughts was relevant to the movie, but Robin Williams does often make me think of doing other things instead of seeing his films, especially after *Toys*, which was a major disappointment. However, this is pleasantly amusing. Robin tries for a job as a housekeeper but finds he can't get the job as a man, so he turns himself into a 65-year-old woman and calls himself Mrs Doubtfire. When his wife (Sally Field, another one of those people who make laundry suddenly a pleasant alternative) gets custody of the kids, the subplot comes into play and you realise this just isn't a film about a bloke dressed in a silly frock. Pity. 3/5

Wayne's World 2

It has to be said that Mike Myers is a comedy genius. No, really. And if you don't believe me, try and get hold of a video called the Best Of Saturday Live and watch him in a sketch called "Coffee Talk". I went through a stage of watching it nearly every day, which is sad in a way, but also shows you how funny old Mike is. As far as sequels go, this isn't as funny as "Coffee Talk" but funnier than, say, *Look Who's Talking Too..*

This time around, Wayne and Garth have turned into rock promoters and are

organising their own concert, Wayne-stock, headlined by their favourite dudes who look like ladies, Aerosmith. While Tia Carrere is back as Wayne's babe, the best thing about the whole film is the

dreamy bit where Wayne gets lucky with Drew Barrymore and Garth gets kinda close to Kim Basinger. I guess she needed the money. Party, er, on.

4/5



Son In Law

Pauly Shore is a funny lad — in the US he is a huge star on MTV, a huge star on the college circuit and one of those comedians whose weird way of speaking has leaked into everyday speech so everyone says things in Pauly's weasel speak — "Hey, Bud-dy, get a move o-on, I want to munch on some grind-age" and the like. His first outing on the big screen, *Encino Man*, was a strange film — half funny and half incredibly tragic.

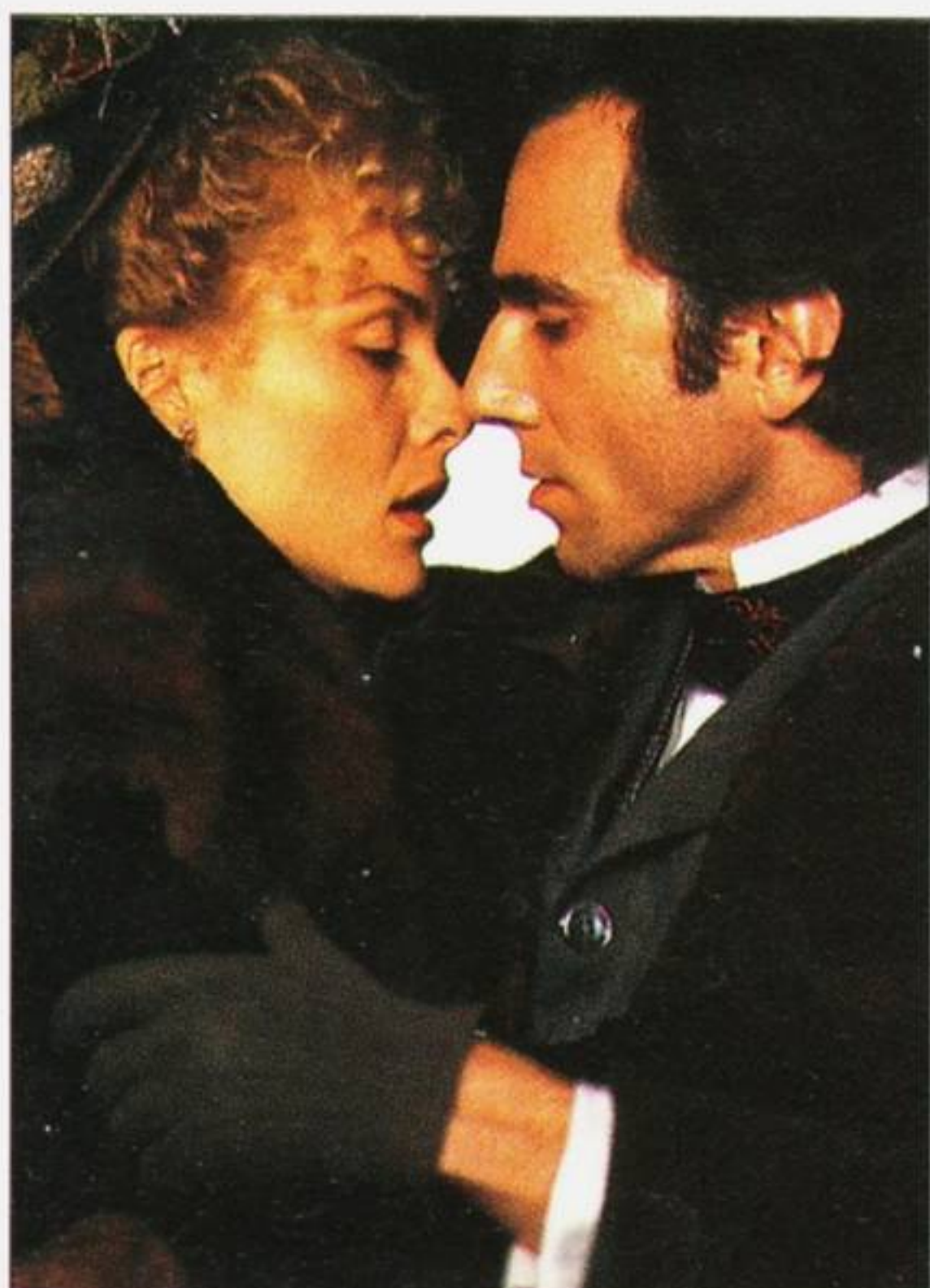
This time, Pauly carries the film

himself and is actually pretty charming. He is the resident adviser at a college in LA who takes pity on a poor lass from the country and turns her into a sexy babe. They are best bud-dies and when Thanksgiving comes around and poor old Pauly (his name is *Crawl* in the movie because that's how he normally gets home from par-ties, dude) has nowhere to go, off they fly to mum and dad's farm. Most of the comedy revolves around the fact that *Crawl* is a) a weirdo and b) a sweet lad who just wants to be a farmer too, but



Age Of Innocence

This is heavy going, this film. It's a period drama/romance type thing starring Daniel Day Lewis in his element as a stuffy bloke in a suit with the unfortunate name of Newland. He seems to like this sort of thing. Winona Ryder co-stars as his sweet little fiancée May, a girl who Newland is desperate to marry. But into the mix comes Michelle Pfeiffer, playing May's cousin Ellen, a countess separated from her European husband who comes back to New York and causes a scandal. Y'see, she and Newland fall heavily in lust and although they



keep it a secret, New York society seems to have a way of finding out these things. Damn nuisance. While Newland is torn between marrying May and forgetting Ellen, or running off with Ellen and destroying May, things are being worked out for him by higher powers, so in the end he is forced into marrying . . . well, I won't tell, but it's all sort of depressing and leaves you wondering just what is the point. It's actually very good and even Day Lewis, who lost my vote after *The Unbearable Lightness Of Being*, is enthralling, but it is very dark and you don't feel too chirpy afterwards.

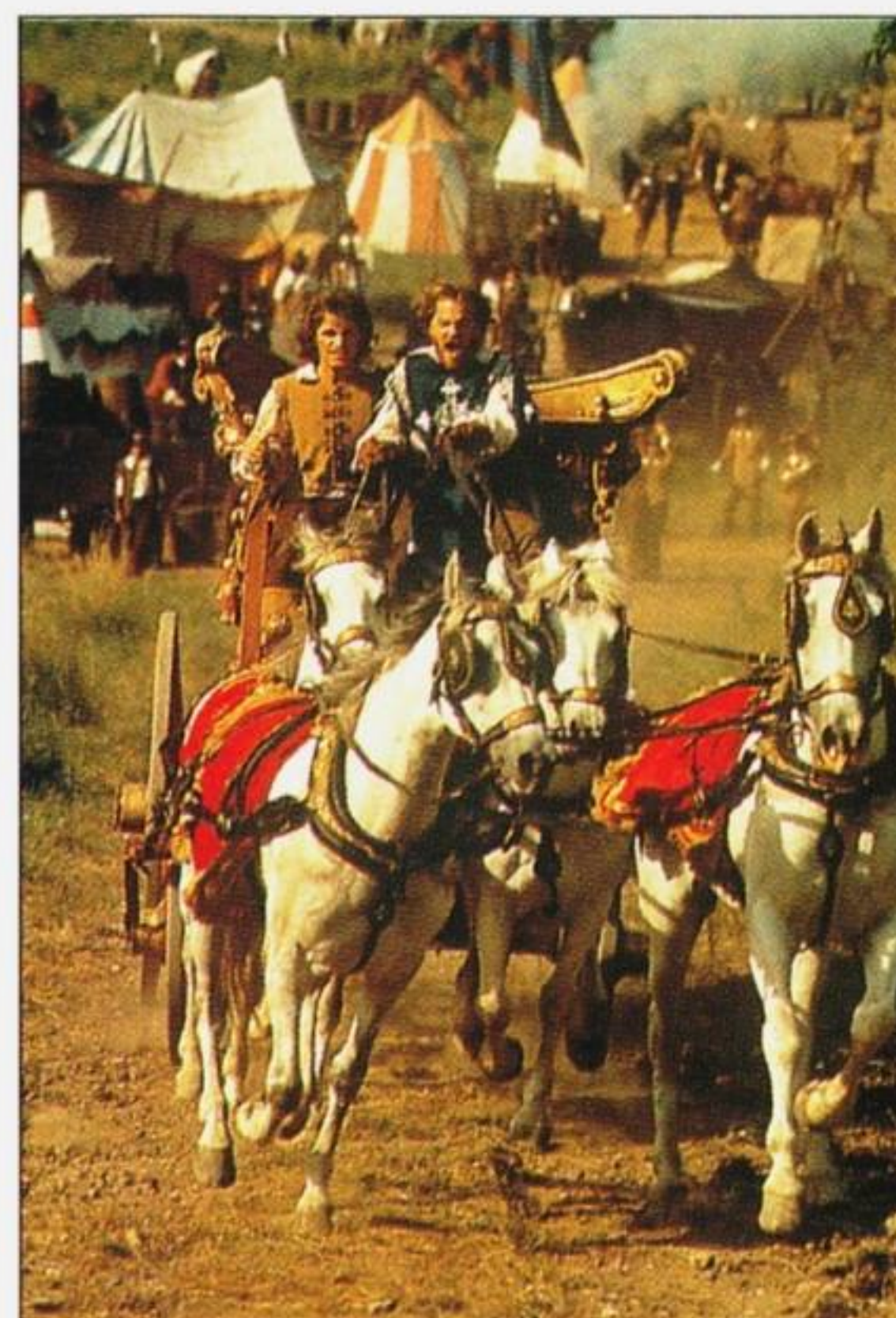
4/5

for some reason it works and you laugh out loud occasionally.

Cameos from Brendan Fraser and Flea from the Chilli Peppers are

cute touches, and even though Pauly could hardly be considered super cool, you do kinda like him by the end. Cool bud-dy. 4/5

Three Musketeers



If it has always been your desire to see Charlie Sheen in a pair of tights, then you are in for a treat here. Not only does Chuck wear 'em, but so do Kiefer Sutherland and Chris O'Donnell. Phew, wonder what they have stuffed down there? This is the classic Three Musketeers tale — D'Artagnan (O'Donnell, who is not only cute, he can act as well) is a country lad who helps the other Musketeers get enthusiastic about their jobs as swordfighting, swashbuckling heroes, joining them to defeat the rather nasty Tim Curry and save the king. Shot in Vienna, this is a grand and rather fabulous tourism advert for the place, but sadly the film does nothing for the story.

2/5

Free Willy

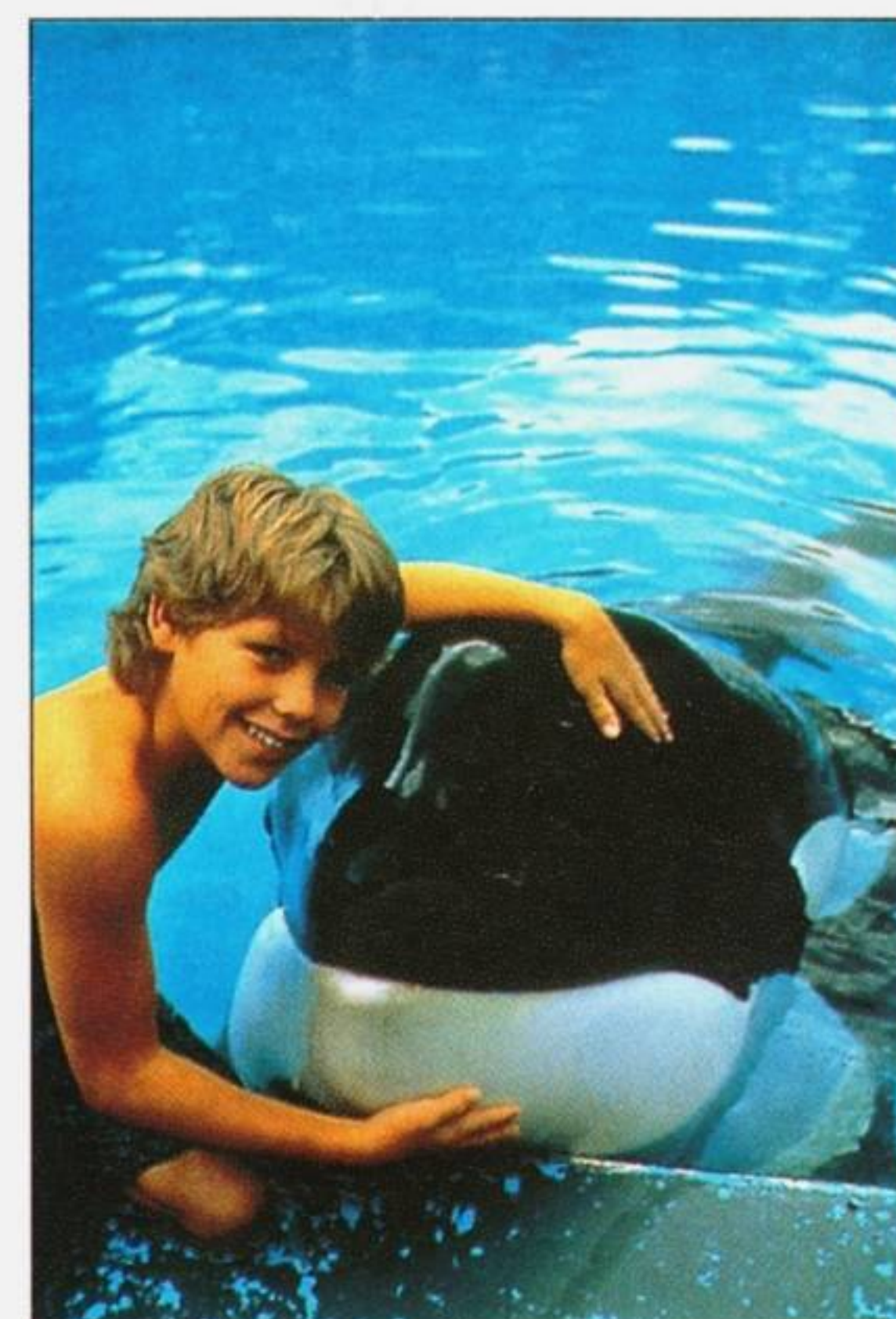
This is not, as the title may have you believe, a porno film. No willies are seen and certainly none of them are given away for nothing. No, it's a film about a whale. Sorry? You'd rather it *was* a porno film? Get real. See it first, OK? It's probably the nicest film you'll ever see and it takes you back to the times you watched *Bambi*, *Lassie* and all those other teary animal things.

It's the story of a young homeless kid, Jesse, (played with a lot of style from a newcomer called Jason James Richter) who is punished for graffitizing a theme park by having to clean it all off. While he is there, he befriends a huge Orca whale called Willy, who is usually very bad tempered and won't do tricks. However, Willy will do anything he wants and pretty soon the two of them are best pals, and Jesse is teaching Willy tricks by the bucketload. But, and of course there is a but, otherwise this wouldn't be Hollywood, Jesse soon finds out that the park owners have plans for killing Willy to get the insurance money, so he concocts a plan to help Willy go back to his pining family in the sea. Excuse me, I seem to have something in my eye.

It may all sound very soppy and silly, but it is truly sweet and the photography is amazing. The saddest part of the whole thing is that the whale who played Willy is stuck in a pool in Japan, needing thousands of dollars worth of skin treatment because it's very ill. Maybe Hollywood should fork out a bit.

4/5

» All reviews by Amanda Hugginkis

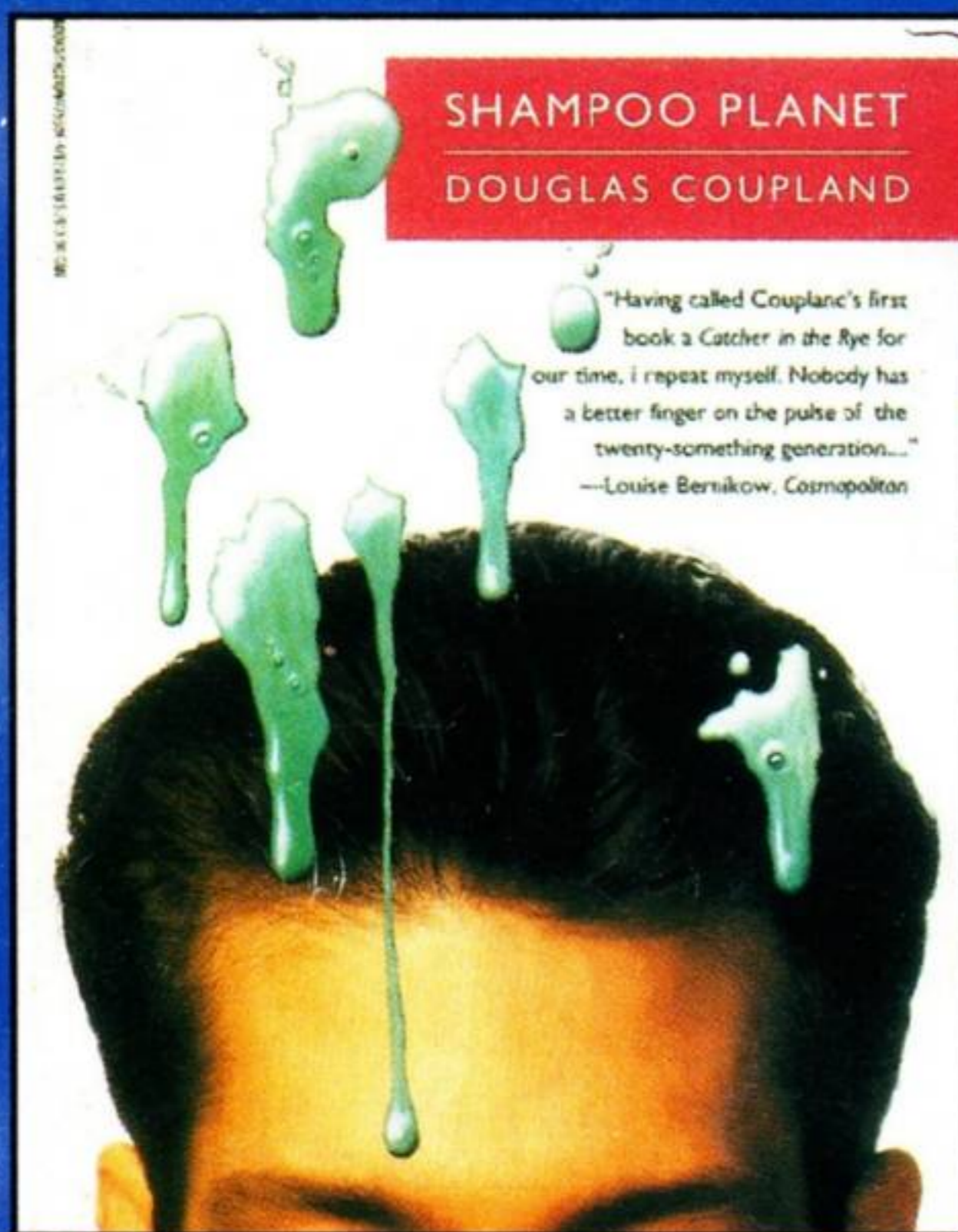


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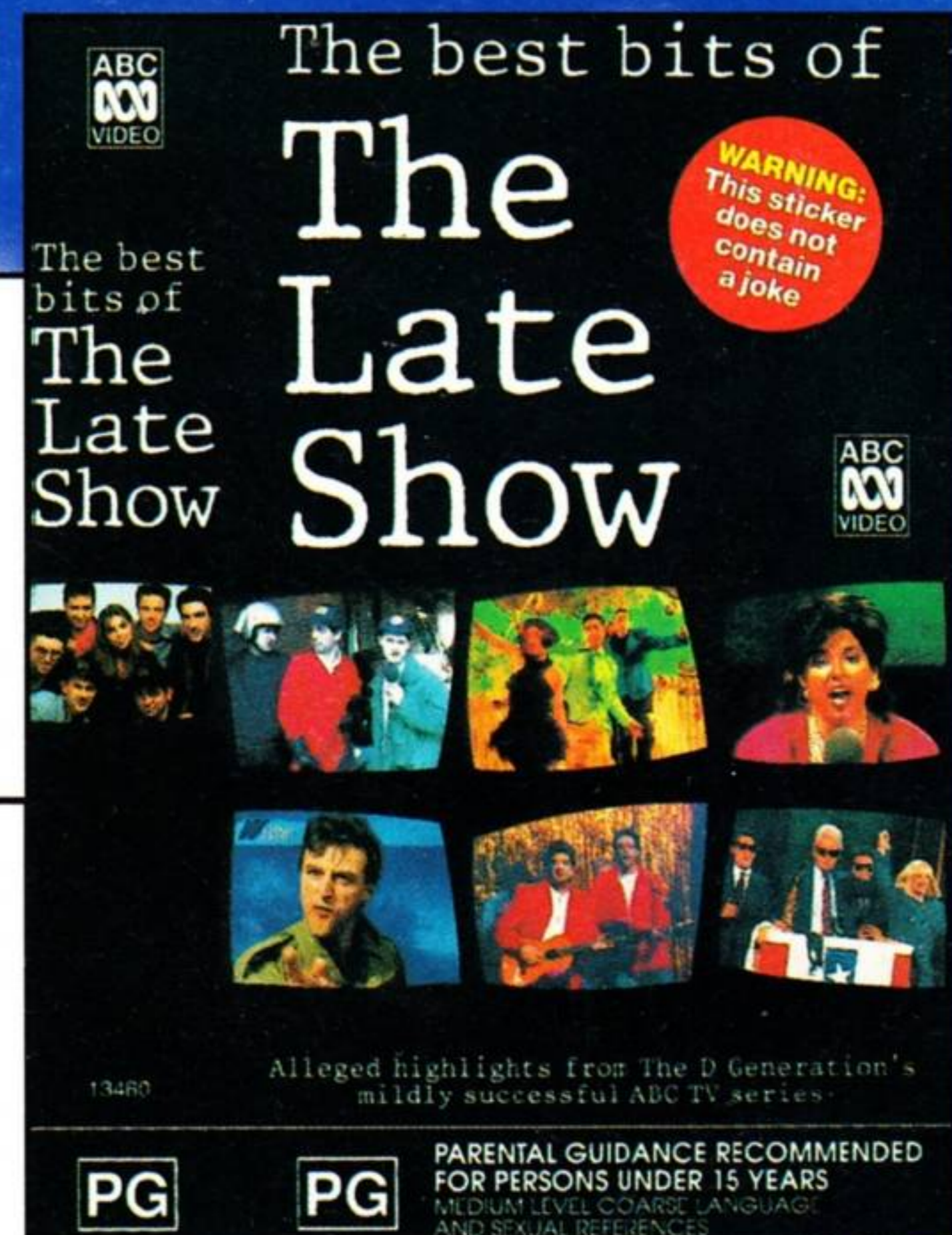
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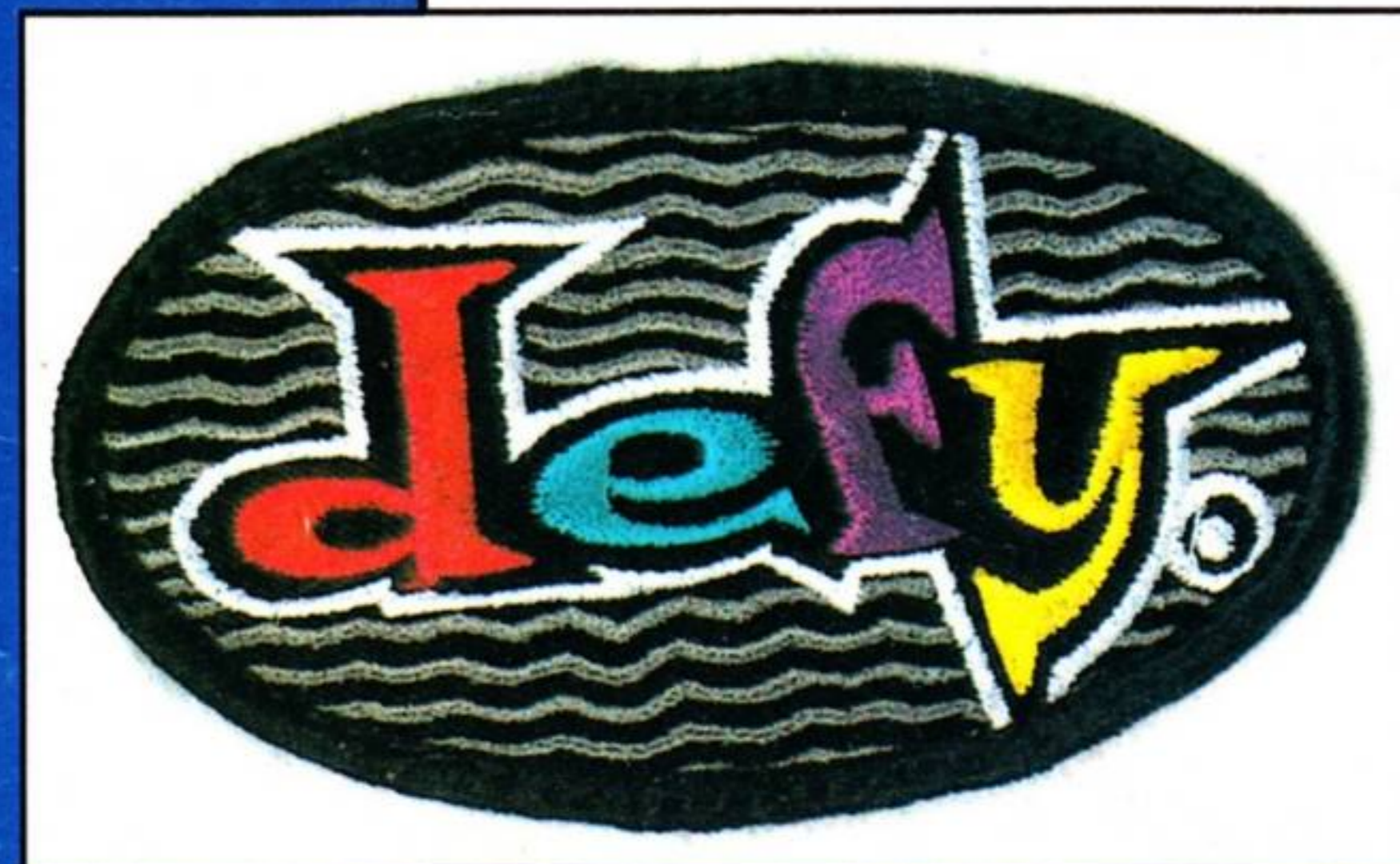
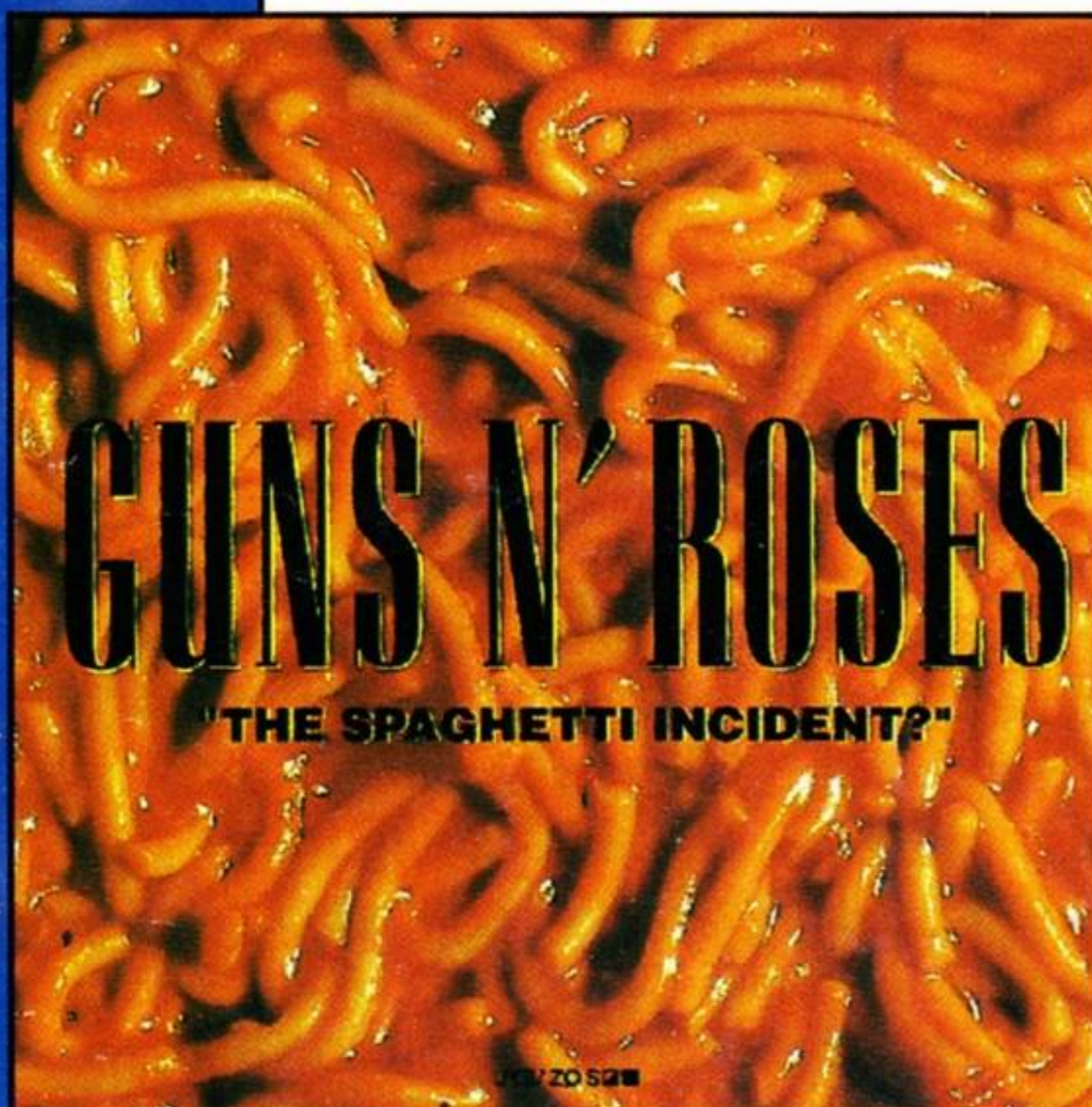
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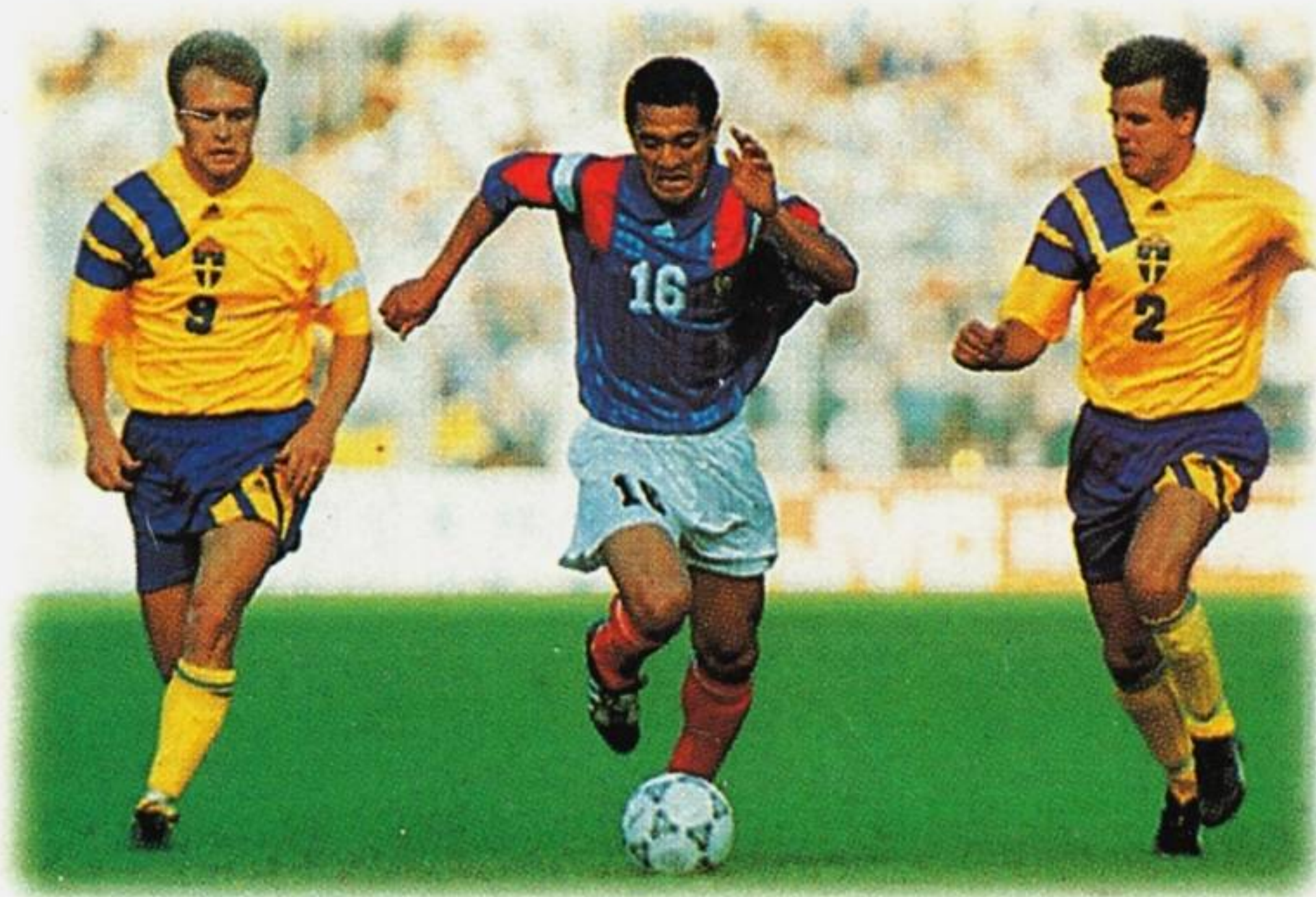
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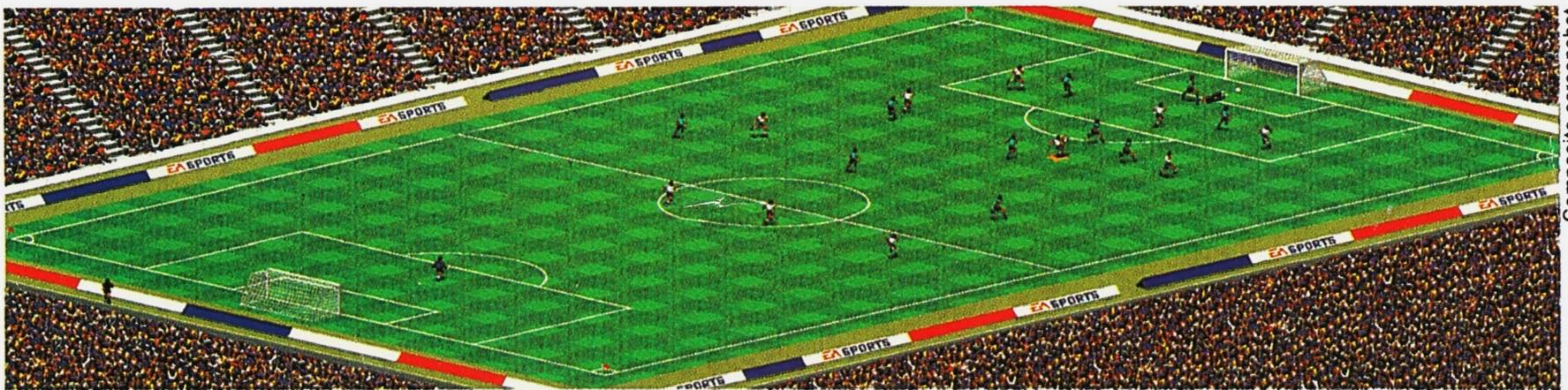
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