

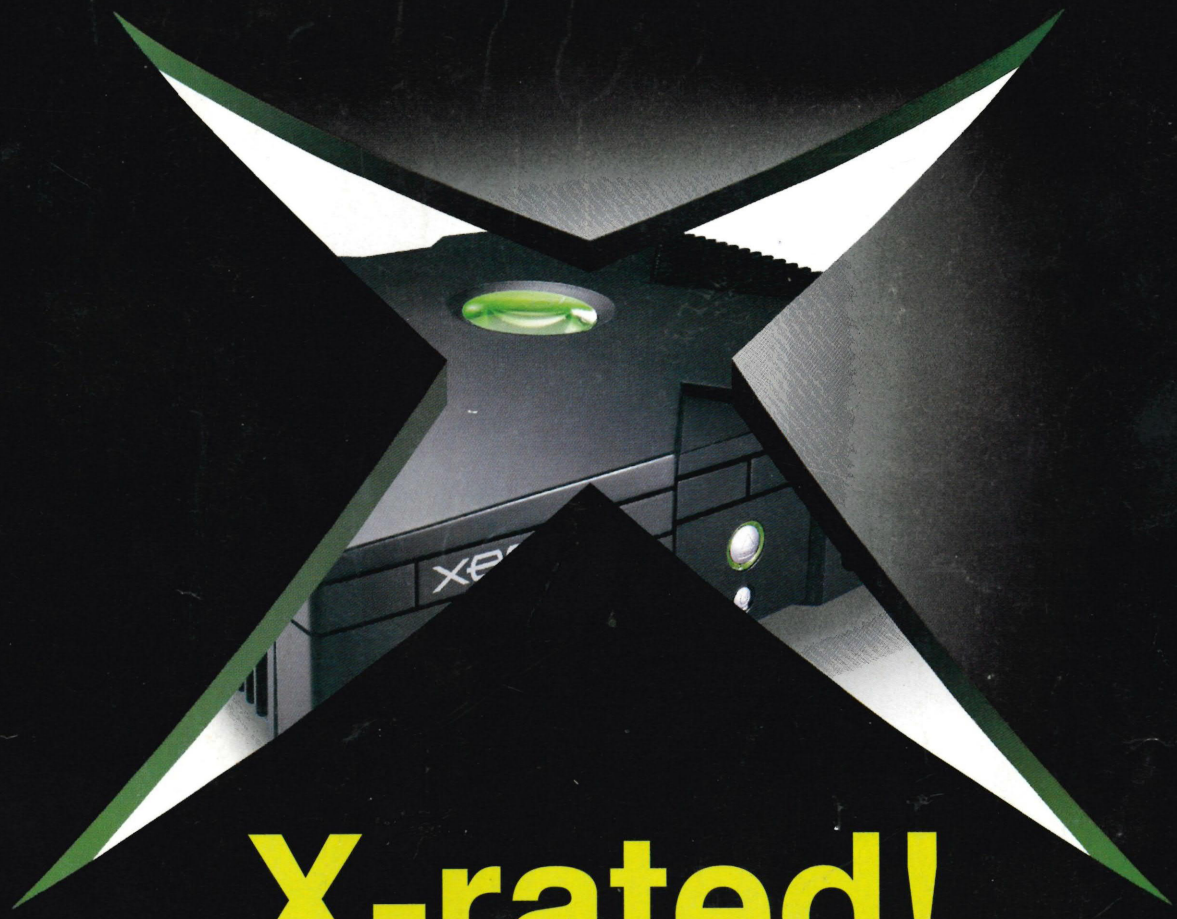
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O F F L I N E

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FEB ISSUE 013

FREE



X-rated!

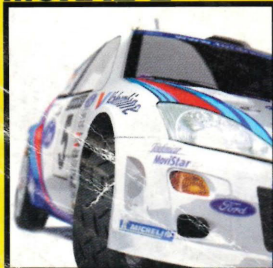
Explicit details of Microsoft's new console inside

INSIDE THIS MONTH...

ONI



COLIN McRAE 2



FEAR EFFECT 2



SOUND SYSTEM GIVEAWAY



Final Fantasy IX

It's hip to be Square

Quake III: Team Arena

More frag-tastic fun

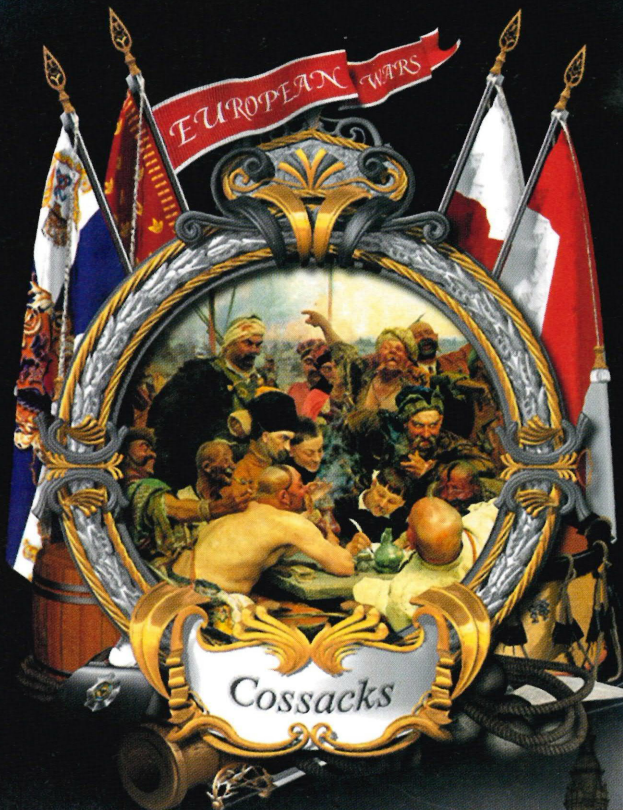
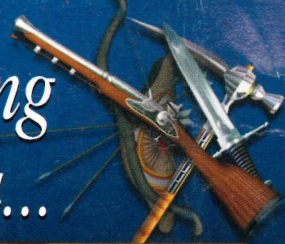
Banjo-Tooie

Take a trip to Cloud Cuckoo Land

Cossacks

- European Wars

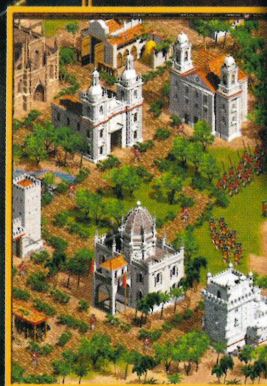
The Beginning
of a New Era...



Cossacks: European Wars is a Real Time Strategy game of truly epic proportions. Based on historical events that took place during the 16th-18th centuries in Europe, it's your chance to take part in grand, historic battles, fighting it out between 16 nations and with over 8000 units.

FEATURES:

- Up to 8000 individual units incorporating a fully functional 3D landscape.
- 16 rival nations with their own original graphics, unique economic and technical development differences.
- More than 85 real historical large scale wars and battles.
- A huge technological hierarchy of more than 300 upgrades.
- Unlimited variety of tactical and strategic methods of land or sea war against the enemy.



- Up to 7 players in Multiplayer mode (Internet/LAN).

For further information visit the website www.cossacks.com

- Epic battles with up to 8,000 units
- 16 rival nations
- Real 3D landscapes
- Over 300 upgrades
- Extensive historical encyclopedia of the time

"I was expecting to see a good Age of Empires clone. What I found was totally beyond my expectations..."

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Cossacks

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REGULARS

News	06
Cheats	10
Forum	11
Insite	42
Win a UFO!	14
Win a home cinema sound system	66

PC GAMES

Anachronox	16
Desperadoes	18
Tribes 2	20
Cossacks: European Wars	22
Mech Warrior 4	23
Oni	24
Quake III: Team Arena	26
Giants: Citizen Kabuto	28
Colin McRae 2	30
American McGee's Alice	32
Theme Park Inc.	38

HIGHLIGHT

The Xbox Unveiled	44
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CONSOLE GAMES

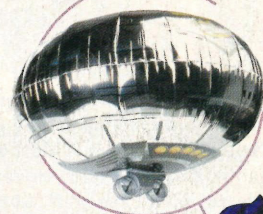
Kengo: Master of Bushido	50
Roswell Conspiracies	51
Rainbow Six: Rogue Spear	52
Fear Effect 2: Retro Helix	53
Shadow of Memories	54
ISS 2	56
Spawn	58
Final Fantasy IX	60
Banjo-Tooie	62
ESPN X Games Snowboarding	64
Inspector Gadget & Batman: Chaos in Gotham.	65



Fear Effect 2
Page 53



Spawn
Page 58



Win a UFO!
Page 14



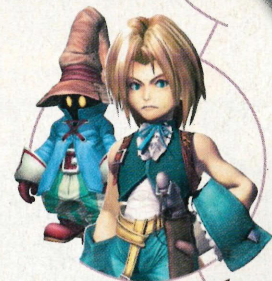
Oni
Page 24



Quake III:
Team Arena
Page 26



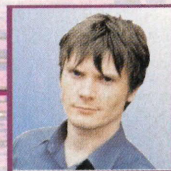
Xbox
Unveiled
Page 44



Final Fantasy IX
Page 60



Banjo-Tooie
Page 62



GDO NOTE

It was the day of the ISS tournament in GDO's massive underground bunker complex. The arrival of ISS2 had promoted the long overdue contest that would answer a question many had speculated over for years: who was the GDO ISS King? I was running a little late as I made my way to the event to participate in a friendly match against console editor Gaz, which would act as a curtain-raiser to the contest proper. As I approached the football sim testing lab aboard the GDO monorail, I passed poster after poster advertising the tournament. I was struck again by the rider text which stated in bold red ink on each one: "Shoulder-patting and gone-ness prohibited from tournament matches."

"Sorry I'm late," I said as I entered the packed room. "Let's get on shall we." A cheer went up as I took my seat next to Gaz in front of the PlayStation. Remembering the posters, I turned to my opponent. "There's one thing before we start Gaz. What are shoulder-patting and gone-ness and why are they banned from the tournament?" I asked. "You'll see: they're not banned from friendlies," he said giving the crowd a knowing wink.

Three minutes into the game Gaz was already two goals to the good; he doubled his tally before half-time and found the net again with a neat lobbed effort when play resumed. I found myself boiling with internal rage and frustration. As the replay feature displayed his goal again he turned to me, apparently amused, reached out his arm and tapped me on the shoulder. "Never mind James," he said; I was shocked by my own response. "To hell with this," I shouted, throwing my controller to the ground. Suddenly the room was filled with delirious laughter. As I looked round I saw that the office manager, Matt, was trying to speak. As he did, the words on the tournament posters suddenly became clear to me: "James - you've gone!" he said, fighting back tears of mirth.

James Kelly

WHAT'S THE SCORE?

GDO's prestige award system explained

GDO is committed to accurate and fair reviews. We're well aware that you might only buy one game a month, and hopefully you trust us to tell you which one is most worth your hard-earned cash. So, following remedial arithmetic classes for all the staff, GDO carries marks out of ten on each review - but we are stingy with our top marks.

That said, we are prepared to offer 10s to a certain select few games. Our criteria for this are as follows: it must meet the standards of its time in every area, excel in at least one, and not fall down in any; it must contain at least one element which can be described as "exceptional"; and it must also contain significant originality and assure long-term gameplay. Each game receiving a 10 is rewarded with the GDO Gold award.

Marks of 9 are given to games which fall short of the above criteria due to one or two minor flaws, and specifically for games which meet the Gold criteria but don't offer a significant quantity of originality and/or innovation. These games are rewarded with the Silver award.

So this means that you won't often see a game getting a 9 or 10 - but don't let this put you off. An 8 or a 7 is still a good mark, and if the game appeals to you it should be well worth buying.

We've thought long and hard about this marking system, and we're confident it makes our reviews clearer and your buying decisions easier to make. But if you have any suggestions or comments, send them to us at the usual address.



GDO GOLD AWARD

This award is only given to the top 'must have' game. It's GDO's highest award, and is given for a perfect score of ten out of ten.



GDO SILVER AWARD

This award is given to games achieving a score of nine out of ten. It is bestowed upon games that are highly recommended for purchasing.

PC SCORE STYLE

JUDGEMENT

SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS

MIN: Minimum system requirements to play

GDO SUGGESTS:
Suggested system requirements for acceptable play

- PUBLISHER:** Game publisher
- DEVELOPER:** Game author
- RELEASE:** When the game is available to buy

GD ONLINE: The URL you should type in for the extra information found on our web site.

+ Positive points about the game

- Negative points about the game

THE REVIEW SCORE OUT OF TEN **6** OUT OF TEN

CONSOLE SCORE STYLE

JUDGEMENT

- FORMAT:** Console
- PUBLISHER:** Game publisher
- DEVELOPER:** Game author
- RELEASE:** When the game is available to buy

GD ONLINE: The URL you should type in for the extra information found on our web site.

+ Positive points about the game

- Negative points about the game

THE REVIEW SCORE OUT OF TEN **7** OUT OF TEN

uk charts

ChartTrack UK all format charts - week ending January 00, 2001

ChartTrack

All information printed above is strict copyright of ChartTrack Weekly Reports. Contact ELSIPA at Station Road, Offenham, near Evesham, Worcestershire WR11 3LW. Tel: 01396 850642

ChartTrack collects sales data from more than 4000 UK outlets. Supporting retailers include Argos, Asda, Blockbuster, Comet, Currys, Dixons, Electronic Boutique, Game Ltd, HMV, John Lewis, MFC, New Line, PC World, Staples, Timp's, Virgin, WH Smith, Woolworths and a small selection of independents.

1	Who Wants To Be a Millionaire? Eidos Interactive
2	FIFA 2001 Electronic Arts
3	WWF Smackdown 2 THQ
4	Driver 2 Infogrames
5	SSX: Snowboard Supercross EA Sports
6	Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2 Activision
7	The World is Not Enough Electronic Arts
8	Medal of Honor: Underground Electronic Arts
9	Championship Manager: Season 00/01 Eidos Interactive
10	Theme Park World Electronic Arts

WHAT ARE YOU PLAYING AT? The reviewers reveal all...

They review games for a living - but what do they actually choose to play when they're relaxing at home. Here's our fab four reveal what are their top three games this month.



Gaz

Currently playing: ISS Pro Evolution 2 (PSX), Timesplitters (PS2), Driver 2 (PSX).
"ISS2 has its flaws, but it's still the best footie game out there - and I'm still the office champ. Bring on the GDO tournament!"



ISS 2



Jayne

Currently playing: Alien Resurrection (PSX), Dino Crisis 2 (PSX), Chicken Run (PSX).
"Alien Resurrection still scares the pants off me. Chicken Run? Well, you fire Chickens out of a rocket launcher - what's not to like?"



DC2



Mike

Currently playing: Counter-Strike (PC), Final Fantasy IX (PSX), Colin McRae 2 (PC).
"Until shady Shamus from the King Edward VII comes up with the goods, I'm going to have to continue making do with pretend gun-related violence on Counter-Strike."



FFIX



Kevan

Currently playing: American McGee's Alice (PC), Counter-Strike (PC), Virtua Tennis (DC).
"Alice may not play that well, but it is a work of art when it comes to level design. I'm still lame at Counter-Strike but I can't let it go."



Alice



KINGDOM UNDER FIRE

www.kingdomunderfire.com

"Kingdom Under Fire favours neither RTS nor Role-Playing, preferring to excel at both."

PC Gamer

"Kingdom Under Fire may be one that upsets the traditional strategy apple cart... Powerful magicians and witches give the game its own unique sense of style."

83% – Strategy Player

"Once you have done the first few levels, you will be met with a surprising, but welcome addition to the RTS genre."

UK Gamers Online

OUT NOW!!!

Kingdom Under Fire is developed by Phantagram Ltd., published by Phantagram (Europe) Ltd. and distributed in the UK by Zablac Entertainment

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www.phantagram.com

blue
GAME ENGINE

WAR
GATE

ZABLAC
Entertainment

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THE CONCEPT BECOMES A REALITY AT LAST XBOX IS UNVEILED



Photos: M Smith

Crowds of eager journalists got their hands on Microsoft's Xbox for the first time at a press conference in London recently.

Not only were attendees able to get to grips with both the console and a controller, Microsoft also chose this moment to announce another classic franchise moving to its platform - one of the best driving games around, Codemasters' Colin McRae Rally.

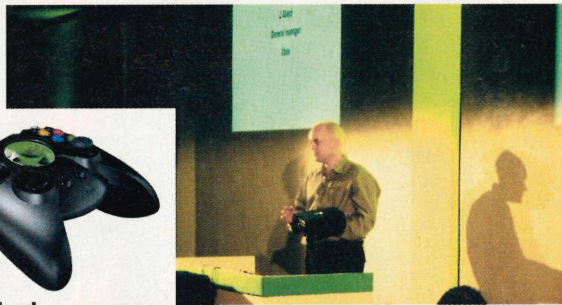
Both the console and controller proved surprisingly large to handle. The console is significantly larger than its competitors, and much heavier than expected, thanks in part to a hefty power supply.



(l&r) J Allard shows off the Xbox at a recent press conference

Though the controller looks similar to the Dreamcast pad, in handling it's more akin to traditional PC offerings like the Sidewinder or Logitech Wingman - the V-shaped configuration make it more natural-feeling than Sega's much-criticised pad.

Microsoft's J Allard also revealed, contrary to speculation, that Xbox games will carry some form of regional lockout, making it impossible to play 'grey import' software from other countries. "Chipping is a real problem for the industry," Allard said.



VIEWPOINT

Anyone who reckons Microsoft shouldn't be in the console race better think again.

With its impressive technical specifications and the weight of the big M's money backing the console you can expect some top quality titles.



The only thing that Microsoft has to watch out

for is a condition known as 'PC-itis'. Console gamers are a different breed to their PC cousins; bringing The Sims to the Xbox because it was a top seller on the PC doesn't mean it will be a hit on consoles.

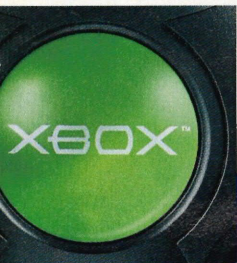
Many publishers will tell you success on PSX doesn't equal PC success. Fortunately Microsoft did manage to achieve the impossible by making Metal Gear Solid, a PSX game, a must-buy on the PC.

So will they be able to perform the magic both ways? Only time will tell. Check out the Xbox feature on page 44 for more info.

Other cracking news is that a shed-load of games, like American McGee's Alice, are being made into films by top directors. That's all my Saturday nights sorted out then.

If you want to have you say, email: kevan@gamesdomain.com

EA BOX BOOST



The unveiling of the Xbox followed confirmation Electronic Arts had joined the growing list of developers for the console.

The video games giant has signed a 'multi-year' agreement with Microsoft to commit its worldwide studios to Xbox games development.

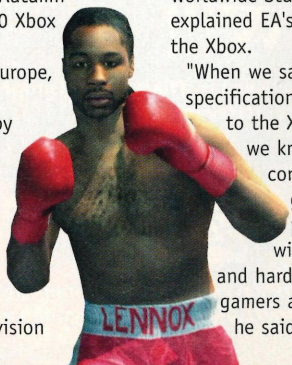
EA expects to publish up to ten titles in time for the launch of the next-generation console, which is scheduled for release in Autumn 2001, and has already ordered 500 Xbox development kits from Microsoft.

David Gardner, the head of EA Europe, was enthusiastic about the deal.

"We're excited about Xbox and by Microsoft's commitment to the platform," he said.

"Microsoft has the vision, the technology and the resources required to make a significant impact on our industry."

Robbie Bach, senior vice president of Microsoft's Games Division

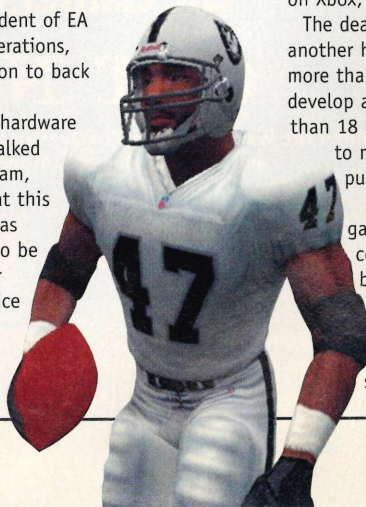


and Chief Xbox Officer (CXO), said EA was recognised as the world leader in game software.

"With them on board, it further ensures gamers around the world know that the best and brightest developers will be delivering previously unforeseen possibilities in gameplay on the Xbox."

Don Mattrick, president of EA Worldwide Studio Operations, explained EA's decision to back the Xbox.

"When we saw the hardware specification and talked to the Xbox team, we knew that this console was going to be popular with novice and hardcore gamers alike," he said.



JAPANESE YEN FOR GBA

Nintendo has finally revealed details of the Japanese launch of the Game Boy Advance. The revolutionary handheld will hit Japanese stores on March 21, 2001, retailing at 9,800 Yen, which is about £56.

A link-up cable, which allows up to four players to play simultaneously, and a mains adaptor will cost approximately 1400 Yen (£8) each.

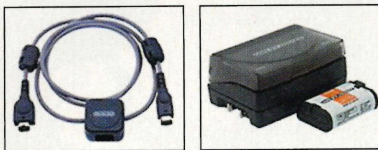
As an alternative to using normal batteries, a battery pack allowing up to ten hours of gameplay on a recharge time of just two hours will



also be available. This will retail at approximately £20.

The GBA will initially come in three colours - violet, white and sky blue. Four titles have been confirmed for release at launch: Mario Advance, a fantasy platform adventure; Kuru Kuru Kururin, a puzzle action game; F-Zero, a futuristic racing game; and Napoleon, a real-time strategy game.

Tekken is also heading to the Game Boy Advance handheld console. The popular beat 'em up game will be released under the title Tekken Advanced and will mark its debut appearance on a Nintendo console.



CHIPS OF FUTURE WILL BE SMALL FRY

Intel has revealed it has made a breakthrough in chip manufacturing. The processor manufacturer has built the world's smallest and fastest transistor, a component essential to the creation of microprocessors.

The company says it can now develop chips that contain 400 million transistors, running at 10GHz (10 billion cycles per second) and operating at less than one volt.

Intel's fastest current processor uses 42 million transistors running at 1.5GHz.

To put it in physical terms, the new processor can perform 400 million calculations in a blink of an eye - or two million in the time it takes for a speeding bullet to travel one inch.

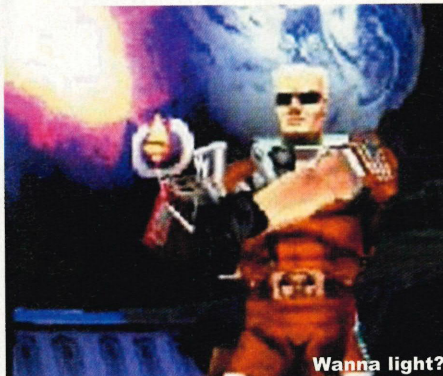
DUKE NUKEM TURNS TO GOD

Gathering of Developers will publish forthcoming Duke Nukem titles following the purchase of the Duke back catalogue.

The rights were transferred as part of a deal between Take Two and former Duke publisher, Infogrames.

In addition to Duke Nukem Forever, Take Two has acquired the complete catalogue of already-released Duke Nukem products for multiple platforms including PC, PlayStation, Nintendo 64, Nintendo Game Boy and Game Boy Color as well as certain rights to future products.

Duke Nukem welcomed the move and said: "Hail to the new king, baby."



Wanna light?

ALICE IN MOVIELAND?

American McGee's Alice is being made into a motion picture.

It is rumoured Wes Craven (*A Nightmare on Elm Street* and *Scream*) has signed on to direct the film based on EA's twisted tale of Alice's return to Wonderland and John August (*Go* and *Charlie's Angels*) will write the script.

Dimension Films (*Scary Movie* and *Hellraiser V: Inferno*) are thought to be the proposed distributors of the picture.

If the film turns out to be anything like the game, movie-goers can expect to be immersed in a sinister and macabre world that is about as far removed from the Wonderland of the famous Lewis Carroll story as can be imagined.



The third-person action-adventure title features a dozen weird locations including the Mad Hatter's Manor, the Vale of Tears, the Chess Village and the Psychedelic Funhouse.

WOULD THE REAL ISS PLEASE STAND UP

Football fans across the world rejoice! We have managed to grab the first details and screens of the 'real' ISS footie sim for the PlayStation2.

The game has been developed by Konami's KCET team, responsible for the massively-popular ISS Pro Evolution for the PlayStation last year and the recently completed ISS Pro Evolution 2, also on PSX (see our review on page 56).

The new PS2 game, currently titled as 'Winning Eleven 5' in Japan, will be released over there on March 15. It will include incredible likenesses and even more club and national teams than in previous versions.

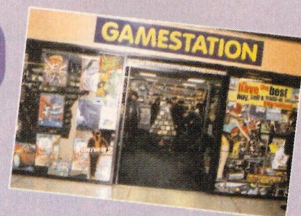
No title has yet been confirmed for the European version, but expect a release date around October time. Though ISS has already debuted on the PS2 it was a version developed by Major A and proved disappointing when compared to KCET's PlayStation creation.

It is hoped KCET's PS2 effort will match up to the reputation ISS has set itself as the king of the beautiful game. We can't wait!



Can KCET finally do ISS justice on the PlayStation2?

WHAT'S THE WORD?



Not satisfied with bringing the best in all things games-related to you our loyal army of reader [Shouldn't that be readers? - Ed.] Oh yes, readers, of course. Not satisfied with bringing the best in all things... [Get on with it! - Ed.] Okay, okay. Basically we've decided that if we're going to keep it real with da GDO massive [That's it; I quit! - Ed.] we're going to have to listen to the word on the street. So what better a way to find out than hassling innocent customers as they mind their own business in one of the hundreds of fab UK indie stores that stock GDO? This month we went to Gamestation in Birmingham city centre and asked punters what were their gaming highlights of 2000 and what they are looking forward to in 2001.



Jemma Brannon (21)

Paraolympic track and road athlete from Telford

What were your best games of 2000?

Spyro on PSX and Sonic on DC.

What are you looking forward to this year?

I'm looking forward to new Sonic games, but I've been too busy recently competing so I'm catching up on the gaming scene at the moment.

My dad's got a PS2. It's good, really easy to play PSX games - they are a lot brighter and easier to see."



Richard Bamber (26)

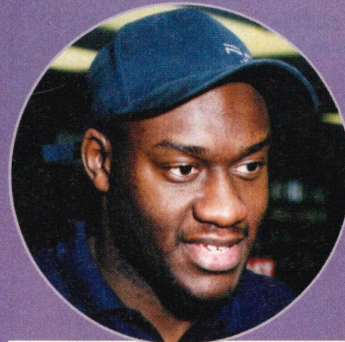
Warehouse worker from B'ham

What were your best games of 2000?

Shenmue and Ferrari F355 on Dreamcast.

What are you looking forward to this year?

I'm a DC boy at the moment. Once Metal Gear Solid comes out I might be tempted to buy a PS2, but at the moment I'm not bothered at all. I'm a massive fan of the Ridge Racer series, but I saw it running and was well disappointed. The games are done to death, that's why I love DC - the games are fresh. Oh, may I add that I'm ranked number two in the world on Hang On, I can prove it. My name's Bamb. I was last time I checked anyway. Honest.



Richard Bailey (26)

Gamestation staff

What were your best games of 2000?

MSR on DC and Half-Life and The Sims on the PC. PSX didn't have much going on in 2000; Resident Evil 3 wasn't too bad, but it's too easy. American McGee's Alice - that's good and Project IGI was good, but some people have completed it in six hours - not very impressive for a £30 game.

What are you looking forward to this year?

Xbox and to see if it's compatible with all the old PC games - if it is Microsoft will clean up. I want to see what Half-Life on DC looks like compared to the PC version too.



Philip Prat (35)

Area sales manager from Swadlingcoat

What were your best games of 2000?

Gunman Chronicles. It's the best shoot 'em up about; the graphics are great and the storyline is so in-depth. Medal of Honor Underground was really good too; I finished the first one, sat up one night - all night!

What are you looking forward to this year?

The PS2 looks good but consoles are more of a laugh for me. You can't get the same kind of games you can on the PC. I'd like to see the new Microsoft Xbox - it's going to go up against the PS2 so that should be fun.



Lee Barnes (29)

Graphic Designer from Wolverhampton

What were your best games of 2000?

I'm still playing FIFA 2000 but I'm trying to get hold of a pre-owned copy of ISS Pro Evolution. I've always been into PSX since I got rid of my Megadrive and it's more than matched up to what I wanted. Now the PS2's coming out I'll be going for that.

What are you looking forward to this year?

Metal Gear Solid on the PS2 and more football games, but nothing at the moment matches up to what we've got on the PSX.



Chris Chambers (17)

Gamestation Staff

What were your best games of 2000?

Diablo II. I love role-playing games, they're really entertaining and you can meet a lot of good people on the net. On PSX it's Parasite Eve and on the N64, GoldenEye - I play it quite a lot even though it's an old game.

What are you looking forward to this year?

I'll definitely get a Diablo II expansion if they release one.

DON'T CALL ME BABY



ONi

WWW.ONI-GAME.COM



PC CD-ROM

PlayStation®2



CHEATS

I wandered lonely as a cheat
That floats on high o'er console & PC,
When all at once I saw a game,
A host, of golden difficulty;
Beside the letters, beneath the news,
Fluttering and dancing for you to use.



Alice - PC

Turn on console mode in the options menu of the game. While playing, bring up the console and type the following code:

Code	Result
give all	All weapons and ammo



SSX - PS2

Unlock It All: Access the Options menu and hold all four shoulder buttons (L1, L2, R1, R2) and enter in the following code: **DOWN, LEFT, UP, RIGHT, X, SQUARE, TRIANGLE, CIRCLE.** Every Track, Outfit, Board and Character will be unlocked.



Tomb Raider Chronicles - PSX

For both these cheats, press **Select** to go into inventory screen, then highlight the Timex.

All weapons, unlimited ammo & health packages:

Hold **L1 + L2 + R1 + R2 + Up** and press **Triangle.**

All items:

Hold **L1 + L2 + R1 + R2 + Down** and press **Triangle.**



Hitman: Codename 47 - PC

Open up your **Hitman.ini** file located in your Hitman directory and add the line '**enableconsole 1**'.

When playing a mission, simply hit the '**~**' key and type any of these codes for the desired effect:

Code

god 1
giveall

infammo
invisible 1

Result

God mode
All weapons and max
ammo
Unlimited ammo
Invisibility



Ready to Rumble 2 - PS2

To box as Michael Jackson and Freak E Deke:

Go to arcade mode and on the select character screen push **R1** 13 times, **R2** once, **R1** ten times, then **R2**.



Red Alert 2 - PC

Trojan Bus

When playing as the Soviets, use a Yuri to mind control a school bus. Load five infantry units into the bus and drive it inside an enemy base. The Allies will not fire at the bus.

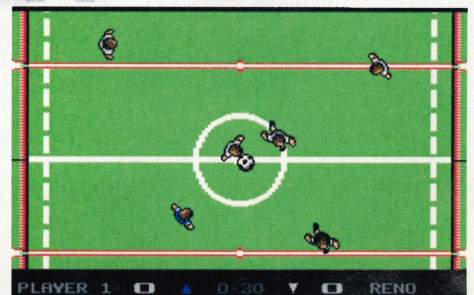
REPLAY

Do-dit, do-do-do. Do-dit, do-do-do. Ahhh...Microprose Soccer: it's in-game music will live long in the memory. This game was a masterpiece of 8-bit football wizardry. Developed by Sensible Software, with music by Martin Galway, Microprose Soccer was in a Champions League of its own when it arrived on the home computer scene in 1989. The Commodore 64 version was perhaps the most impressive with way-before-their-time arcade-quality visuals and hugely addictive gameplay. This game had the power to destroy close friendships, wreck exam results and leave all your other games gathering dust for months on end. It came with a number of options to keep you glued to the screen for days without food or drink. You could take part in the Microprose International Challenge (a structured win-to-progress league against 16 computer-controlled teams), a world cup tournament (with group stages), a league or a two-player friendly. On the flip side of the Commodore tape there was the added bonus of a 5-a-side tournament with American-style organ riffs to accompany the frenetic gameplay. In both versions a host of neat little touches ensured Microprose



Can I kick it - yes I can. Liquid football Microprose-stylee. Boom! Eat my goal etc...

Soccer's position at the top of the table. The ball animation was great for its day. It could be bent or lobbed and it got bigger as it went higher into the air to give you a nice sense of perspective. When the weather option was enabled, storms (complete with thunder and lightning) could break out mid-game and your fat little players would spin wildly if you attempted slide-tackles in the wet. All-in-all Microprose Soccer had everything: gameplay, graphics, infuriatingly addictive music and, of course, the all-important action replay feature which gave you time to turn to your mate after scoring a goal and rub their nose in it until they attacked you. Great days!



Every month we will give the reader who sends in the best letter a game of their choice* - so get scribbling!

Write to us at Letters, Games Domain Offline, 435 Lichfield Road, Aston, Birmingham B6 7SS. Or email gdo@gamesdomain.com (remember to enclose your address)

*prize games will be up to a value of £50 and subject to availability

PSYCHO

I'm getting pretty annoyed with this whole console war thing. Currently its DC vs. PS2; later its going to be PS2/DC vs. Nintendo Gamecube; then it's going to be PS2/DC/GC vs. Xbox, and so on, and so on. I just don't get why people have to slag off another console just because it can't do that, or that. Isn't the whole point of buying a console to play some good quality games? I think if Sony concentrates on its great PS2 titles, the DC goes for Internet/network gaming, the Gamecube focuses on those great wacky games Nintendo are so good at and the Xbox targets those who want a low-cost PC we will have an idea environment for gamers and developers alike. But that will probably just another fairy tale, after all, if you had the right motivation you wouldn't hesitate to kill your own brothers and sisters, right? Anyway I'm going to sit around killing time with my Dream-making white box until I can afford that sexy black box, then the GC, oh, and not to mention the Xbox....

Leo Tong,
Leeds

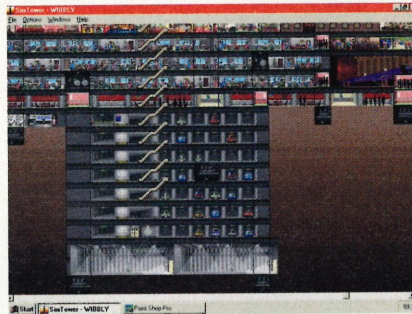


Hi Leo,

I was right with you up until the killing your brothers and sisters bit. A little bit frightening that bit. A little bit Anthony Perkins if you catch my drift. Any road, you are right about the soon-to-be-realised panacea for unfulfilled gamers. The variety of consoles either already in the stores or poised to hit the market in the near future means 2001 could be a great year for interactive entertainment junkies. Having said that, I've got nothing against mindless 'My console's better than your console' arguments, or even the old favourite, 'Console games are better than PC games (and vice versa)'. So come on, write in and tell us what you think on these hugely important topics. If we get two people who disagree strongly enough we'll invite them down to the GDO bunker to wrestle each other until one concedes (probably).

Cheers, James

james@gamesdomain.com



TALL ORDER

My PC is crap so I only play old(ish) games. As an 11-year-old reader with a crap PC I think you should either put reviews of a few older games in your mag or more PlayStation reviews. More to the point I've been searching for Sim Tower demo for about a week now and I cannot find it. Can you help me GDO?

Michael

Email address supplied.

Hi Michael,

Sim Tower? Oh dear! Your PC really is pants isn't it? You've got two chances of finding a demo. None and Slim - and Slim's out of town. We do have a review of this 1995 high-rise building thriller on our encyclopaedic site though which you can find at:

www.gamesdomain.co.uk/gdreview/zones/reviews/pc/june/simtower.html

As an alternative to playing ancient games might we suggest you ask your folks for a better PC or you start saving up your pocket money now? If GDO was filled with old reviews we might be accused of being behind the times. If retro's your thing though, check out our Replay feature (opposite page) which looks even further back than the Sim Tower era. As for PlayStation reviews, we try to include the best releases on the PSX but with so many competing platforms out there we have to be picky about what we choose. Good luck in your demo hunt.

Cheers, James

matt@gamesdomain.com

LORD OF THE JUNGLE

Hi my name is Faye and I have just got Tarzan for my PlayStation; I love it!

Faye

By email

Erm...excellent!?!?

Cheers, James

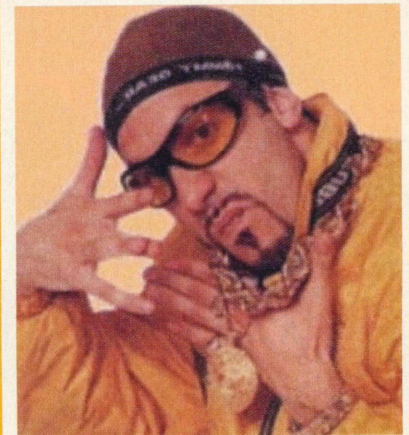
james@gamesdomain.com

Star Letter

ALI G-ENIUS

Ah mate! What a day! I purchased my PS2 exactly 10:16am on November 24. Why that late!? Well me freakin' mate woke up late! You see me wanted a lift to the store so that I don't get mugged on me way home innit!! Anyhow, I purchased mine from the local Dixons store and the dude who was serving tried forcing me into this P2 Insurance Coverplan. And when I say forced, me saying FORCED! I musta gave him about four to five continuous NO! NO! NO! NO! NO! NOOOO! He said: "I know you have one year guarantee, but if your P2 don't work you are going to have to take it up with Sony, who are short in units as it is." He says I can cancel it within 14 days so I signed up and cancelled it the next day. I mean, I'd rather spend £90 on two games than a coverplan thing! Besides, 1yrs guarantee is more than enough...these machines are built either to last or to cock up before you even start the damn thing! But that guy certainly was the B****S!!

Ciao!
Maz Man
London



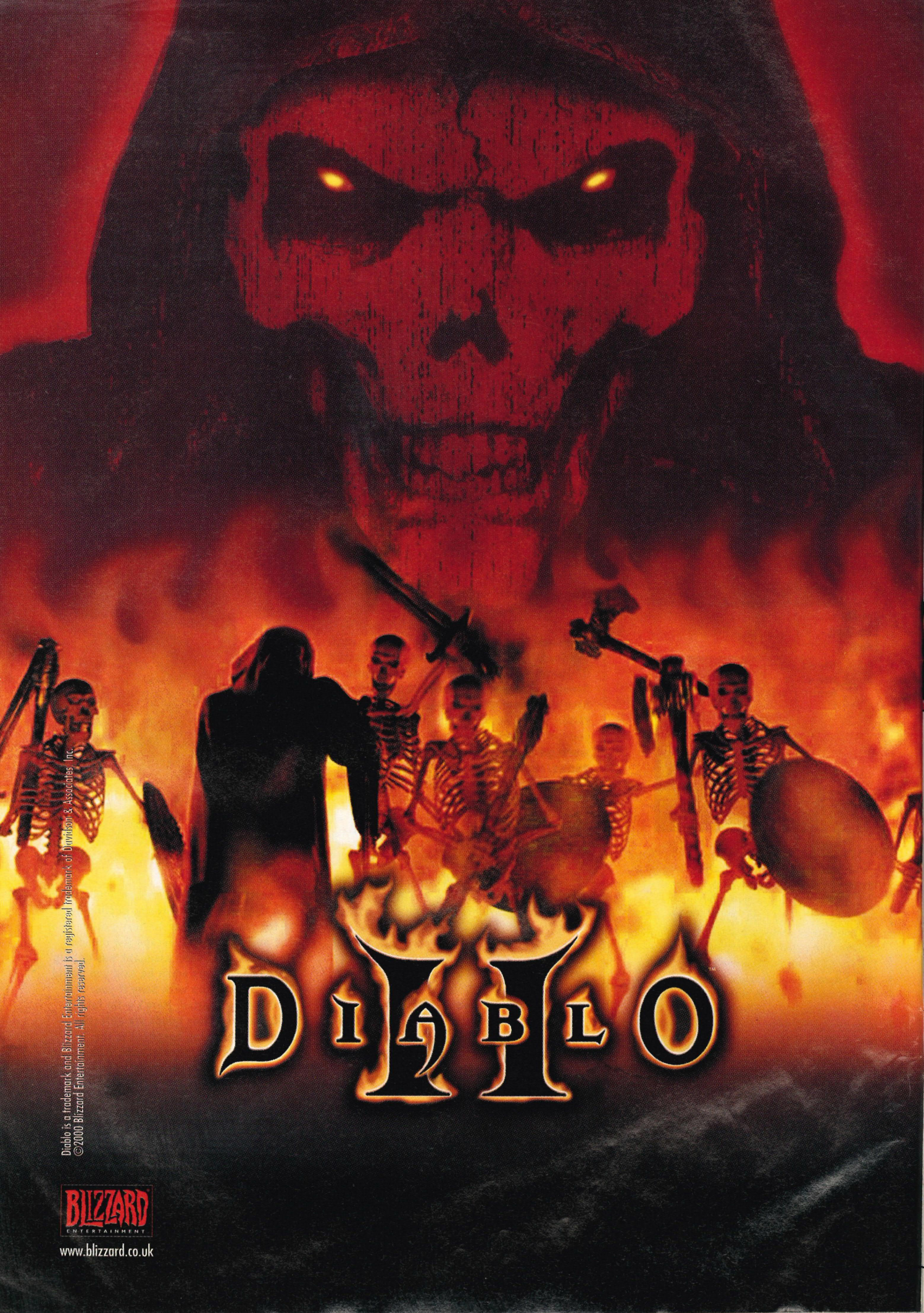
Ali G in da GDO house - Flava! Bo!

Hi Maz Man,

Me never realised dat some people actually talk like Ali G - Bo! Anyway, getting back to the real world, glad to hear you got your PS2 and managed to escape the dreaded Coverplan. That shop assistant was talking a load of cobbles when he said you would have to take it up with Sony if your machine was busted. Here's a tip for all GDO readers: When goods are defective shortly after being bought it is the supplier, not the manufacturer, who has to honour your statutory rights to get redress. If goods go wrong, the supplier must return your dosh, replace the goods or repair them - and you make this choice, not them. How do I know? Because I'm freakin' genius that's how. (Erm...and I read Gary Jacobs' 'Justice with Jacobs' column in a recent copy of the Mirror.) So don't take any nonsense when you're going 'next-gen'. Selecta! James.

james@gamesdomain.com

NOVEMBER ISSUE COMPETITION WINNERS: The 40 lucky readers who won prizes in our November issue - including the Tachyon watch competition, the Driver 2 competition and our monster budget giveaway - will be notified by post. Details of all the competition winners from our November issue are available by writing to GDO at the usual address.



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DIABLO



www.blizzard.co.uk

A lot has been said over these past few weeks about the death of PC gaming. With the unveiling of the Xbox, many people seem to have decided as soon as the Xbox appears all developers will promptly switch over to making Xbox games, abandoning the PC community to a diet of lame, late Xbox ports. But Xbox, as Microsoft knows, isn't going to tempt developers or hardcore gamers away from PCs.

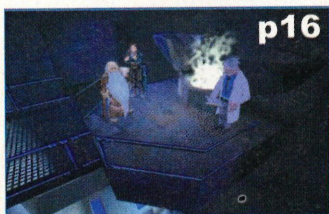
Why? The TV. TVs are limited to a screen resolution of around 500 lines, lack detail, and only manage frame-rates an FPS player would consider totally unworkable. There's no way to produce a PC-style strategy game on a console with any degree of success - TVs just can't display the many units and small text these games need to work well. This will eventually change, when the new high-resolution broadcasting standard, HDTV, becomes widely adopted - around the time of the PlayStation3 and Xbox2.

And what are the most popular games on PCs? You guessed it - FPSs and real-time strategy games. Companies like Westwood and Id are successful as they are - there's no need for established PC developers to ditch their winning formulas because a new console has hit the market.

Though Xbox games will certainly be technically superior to PC games for a year or two, we'll be looking at Xbox games in three or four years' time and laughing. And in the meantime, we've still got some great games to play. mike@gamesdomain.com

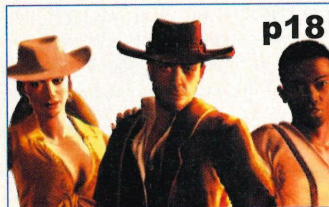


PIPELINES



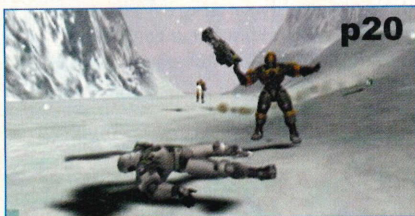
p16

Anachronox



p18

Desperadoes



p20

Tribes 2



p22

Cossacks

REVIEWS



p23

Mech Warrior 4



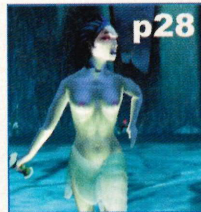
p24

Oni



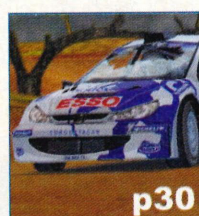
p26

Team Arena



p28

Giants: Citizen Kabuto



p30

Colin McRae 2



p32

Alice



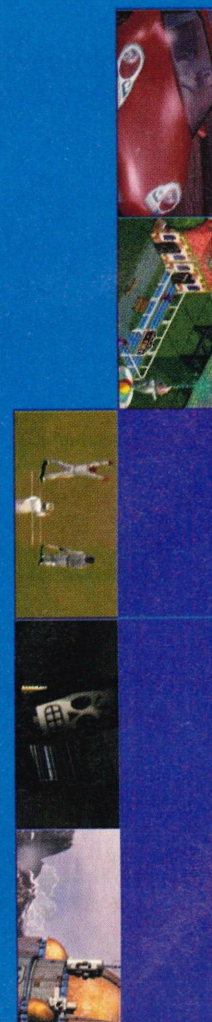
p38

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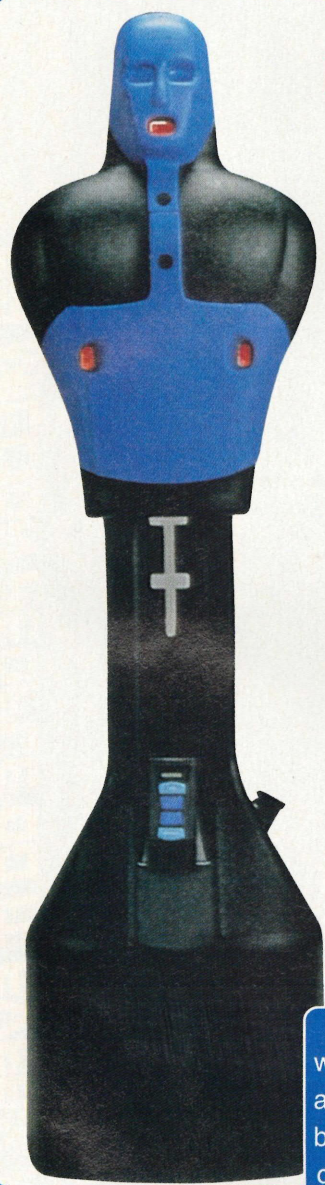
BoysStuff.co.uk

The One Stop Shop For Big Boys Toys

Games Domain Offline has teamed up with top gadgets and gismos site www.boysstuff.co.uk - the one stop shop for big boys toys - to bring you a competition that will knock you out. The boys at Boysstuff have given us three stunning prizes to give away to GDO readers.

1st Prize: Slam Man

Ever felt like kicking the seven shades of sense out of someone but held yourself back at the last minute after realising actual bodily harm can carry a lengthy custodial sentence? Well the answer to your violent fantasies is here in the shape of Slam Man. You can beat the living daylights out of a Slam Man and he won't bat an eyelid. Designed to train Martial Arts experts and boxers to speed up reflexes and hone punching and kicking techniques, Slam Man usually costs £299. A sequence of flashing lights guide your punches and the indestructible polyethylene body with soft 'target area' foam absorbs your blows. It even includes an impact resistant built-in training computer, offering the choice of 15 routines to suit your punch weight. Height adjustable up to 6ft, Slam Man is a sure-fire hit.



2nd Prize: Radio Control UFO

Usually it only takes a frisbee to pass the window of a Wichita wacko and alien invasion articles appear in every stateside supermarket tabloid. Now you can spread such scare stories this side of the pond with your very own radio control UFO. Powered by two micro-lite motors that sit on the underside of a 38" helium filled, super tough, metalised nylon membrane (raaaaaaa!), it's more agile than a double-jointed ferret..erm..that can fly.



3rd Prize: Remote Controller Watch

Are you a fat sloth who's too bone idle to search down the back of the sofa for the TV remote control? Yes? In that case it's your lucky day. We've got an amazing remote control watch to give away. Housed in a cool silver body, this amazing watch will automatically learn how to operate just about any remote controlled device around your house including your TV, video and stereo. You'll never lose the remote again.

The question:

www.boysstuff.co.uk is the one stop shop for:

- a) big boys' toys
- b) big girl's blouse
- c) big man's pants

www.boysstuff.co.uk

COMPETITION HOTLINE:

0906 302 1007

Entry to this competition is by competition hotline **only**. Follow the instructions on the line and remember to speak clearly. Calls cost 50p per minute and should take just over a minute. Always ask the person who pays the phone for permission before making your call. Closing date March 15, 2001.

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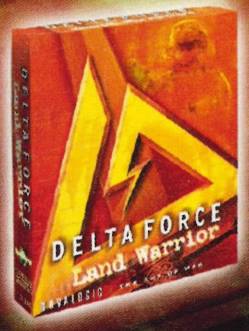


DELTA FORCE

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ANACHRONOX

Tom Hall plays Square at its own game



Let's face facts: Eidos always manages to moderately botch-up the conversion of the fantastic Final Fantasy games to PC - and no one has really come close to the vision of the Square series. However, allow us to introduce a man by the name of Tom Hall. Looking like comedian Bill Bailey in a slimmed-down form, Tom has decided to give the role-playing action game genre a kick in the ass. We recently had a chance to sit down with him and chew the fat about his latest game in development.

Tom's been making games since the Apple II was doing the rounds (you might remember such classics as Wolfenstein 3D, Doom and Terminal Reality). Tired of doing the same old thing, he co-founded the both highly derided and highly praised studio Ion Storm, makers of the rather dire Daikatana and also the rather wonderful Deus Ex.

"I'm more interested in character and story", Tom said. "Making first-person shooters is nice but not what I'm really into." So three years ago, a 460-page design document was written and thus began the development of Anachronox. The game was originally massive, but two years ago the team realised that it was going to be far too big to concentrate on the detail they wanted to put in. The decision to chop the game in half was made and this is the result.

The story stars Sylvester "Sly" Boots. Sly's world is rapidly collapsing in on itself - literally. Other worlds across the galaxy are suffering a similar fate. To find out just what the heck's going on, our intrepid hero sets off on his way to Anachronox, a city on a far-off planet which holds the key to the mystery.

The Anachronox universe is filled with weird

and wonderful characters. One, for example, comes from a planet of superheroes - all the normal people left, as they were bored with being asked if they needed saving every other second! Unfortunately, this particular superhero has lost his powers.

The title of Anachronox is derived from two words: anachronism (something "out of time") and noxious (poisonous). Both words have a relevance to the dead city of Anachronox as well as the in-game characters. Each of the seven main characters have something rotting away in their past that makes them what they are. The adventure is as much about saving these characters as it is saving the universe.

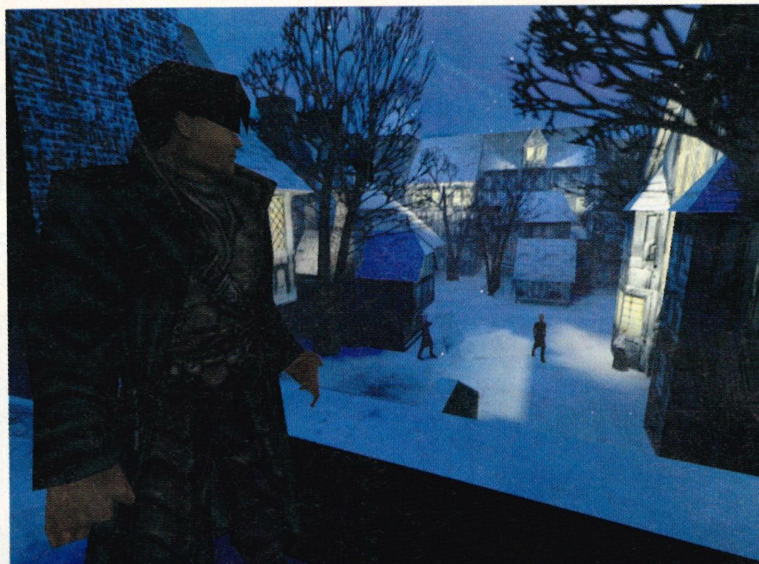
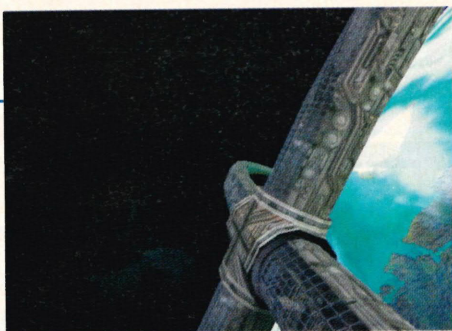
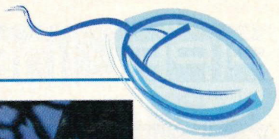
Tom Hall's love of Chuck Jones cartoons and his acting experience are both evident in the game's cinematic approach. Short-film director

"A game without a good battle system is like a barbecue without beer"

Jake Hughes has created over four hours of cut-scenes, including Fifth Element-style car chases and emotional scenes between characters. The Quake II engine, on which the game is based, has been given a near complete overhaul and facial animation allows the team to bring more character, emotion and comedy to the scenes.

In terms of gameplay, Anachronox is very similar to the Final Fantasy series. You control one character out of your team, which is limited to three members. You can switch freely between team members, but their skills can only be used when active.

The skill system is fairly complicated but is introduced to you slowly, making it easy to get to grips with. As characters earn experience they can learn new abilities; performing these skills increases their experience. There are also some special character skills like the "yammer" skill,



allowing one of the characters to whitter on about their general problems in life before the recipient of this useless information breaks down and lets you have what you want. Another skill includes the robot character's ability to talk to computers. These skills sometimes require the playing of a puzzle or an action game to continue.

The game is littered with mini-games, including a missile-shooting game in a similar vein to Terminal Velocity, and a dancing game, which is similar to Konami's Bemani series.

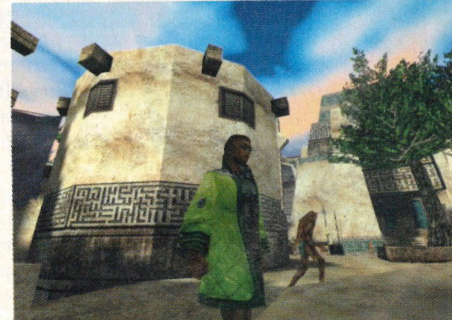
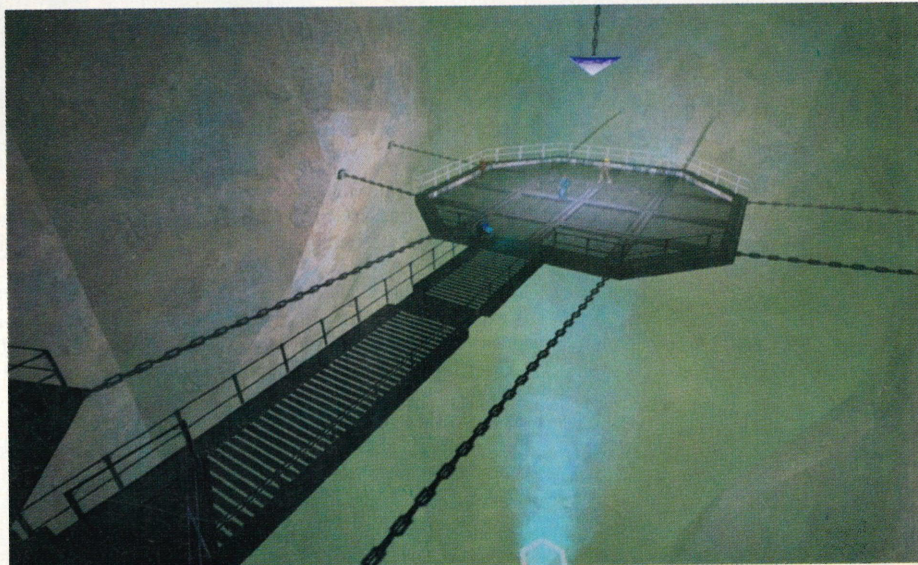
Of course, a game without a good battle system is like a barbecue without beer and, once again, Anachronox takes its cues from Final Fantasy. Your team and the baddies all line-up and take turns to smack each other around the head with weapons and spells. One of the weapons includes the mysterious technology, Mystech. This technology is still not fully understood; some of it heals and other times it can kill. Once you have learned how to use and construct it, over 200 combinations exist for you to try out and abuse.

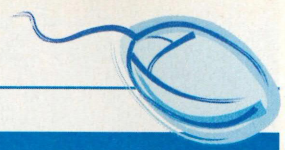
While the main quest is to find out what is crippling these worlds, there are many side-quests to keep you occupied and also to expand on the characters. The game will provide over 40 hours of gameplay and, if you fancy it, the game will ship with a tool to create new cities for you to put on the net as separate adventures or as part of the main game. There will also be a way to create your own mini-games.

It looks as though Tom Hall and Anachronox are going to do the action-adventure genre some justice on the PC - and maybe, just maybe, they will show Square how it's done.

■ The six gigavolt light bulb had a strange attraction to beards

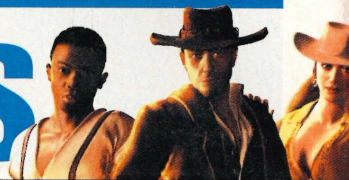
■ (Below) Sly regretted ordering his trampoline in XXL



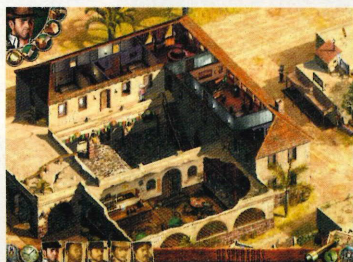
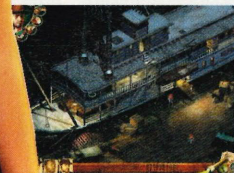


■ PUBLISHER: EIDOS ■ DEVELOPER: SPELLBOUND ENTERTAINMENT ■ RELEASE: MARCH 30

DESPERADOES



Get off your horse and drink your milk



Yeeehawww! Infogrames and Spellbound Entertainment Software are set to bring high-adventure back to the Wild West with the rootin' tootin' *Desperadoes*.

Set in the dusty town of El Paso after the War of Sessions, the local Railroad Company Twinnings & Co is experiencing a little trouble with increasing raids upon its rolling stock.

Enter John Cooper, bounty hunter, hired to stop the raids for the grand sum of \$15,000 - a whole lotta of money in those days. Our hero quickly recruits five of his old allies and sets forth to shoot down those no good stinkin' raiders. This mix of stereotypical thugs include dynamite expert Sam Williams, charlatan Doc McCoy, Mexican tough guy Sanchez, poker player Kate O'Hara and Mia Yung, a petite Chinese girl with a monkey. These killers-for-hire dispatch the raiders and then they learn of a new threat.

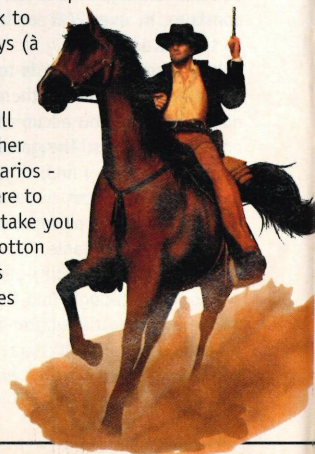
A bandito by the name of El Diablo is trying to recruit robbers from around New Mexico to build an army. It turns out it was this scurrilous gentleman who was behind the train raids. On returning to El Paso to collect his money, Cooper is framed for murder by El Diablo and has to escape the law with his group while also tracking down his train-robbing nemesis through the wilds of New Mexico and Louisiana.

The game looks and feels very close in heritage to Eidos' classic real-time strategy game *Commandos*, but it's the story that is the main focus of the game.

There are 25 levels in which you have to sneak and shoot your way through. Each of the characters has their own tobacco-chewing characteristics, behaviour and voices. To support the story there will be 25 cut-scenes to keep the action flowing and show off the lifestyle of John Cooper and friends. The enemies haven't been left out either - each one will have ten stats, including courage, intelligence, sense of duty, shot precision, idleness and resistance to booze.

Players will be able to take in such cowboy pastimes as knife-throwing, brawling, blowing things up, jumping on horses, drinking whisky, hiding, unlocking doors and going to whorehouses (oops, that one's not in there). John Cooper will also have a little timed musical clock to use to distract the bad guys (à la spaghetti western *A Few Dollars More*).

Realism in the game will be added by variable weather effects and day-night scenarios - bringing a sense atmosphere to the levels. The action will take you to places such as towns, cotton fields, caverns, steamboats and fortresses. *Desperadoes* should be riding the high plains around March 30, 2001.





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Measures 3ft wide!

If you want fun, this comes top on the remote control want list. Powered by two independent micro-lite motors that sit on the underside of the Helium filled, metallised nylon membrane (crikey!), it's incredibly agile. The Flying Saucer will turn 360 degrees, go backwards and forwards, rise, descend and hover. Great for parties and exhibitions - stick your name on the side! Filled with Helium that's lighter than air and readily available from balloon shops, party shops and florists. Comes complete with 27MHz Radio Control Handset.

RADIO CONTROL UFO £59.00

Put A Name to the Arse

"There's something called a 'visual databank' which allows you to enter, say, a brief description and the phone number of the person you're snapping. Always good if you're drunk or p****d up on booze. Oh and it also tells the time." Said Loaded mag.

A 1MB memory allows you to store 100 images and after you record an image you can input up to 24 characters of memo text. The images can also be downloaded onto your computer via infra-red which means you can e-mail the evidence taken at the bar, on that night to remember!

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The original California Sport Go-Ped that started the whole craze. This model can be seen on the marinas, beaches and race tracks the world over as the mode of personal transport. Used by Formula 1 drivers to scout circuits, it has gained a global following and respect.

The Sport model is easy to use. It starts with a simple pull on the rip cord and will give you over 10 miles on a full, but tiny tank of petrol. Easy to store, it folds down in seconds and will fit in the boot of a car or a holder on a boat. With a top speed of 20mph+, it's a real buzz.

Go-Ped Sport £499.00

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Go-Ped Big Foot

ALL TERRAIN

Super tough and made to be ridden, the Go-Ped Big Foot has chunky pneumatic tyres that allow you to plough through leaves and dirt and with a drilled disc and full calliper brake - same as a motorbike - it allows you stop reassuringly quick.

Big Foot £649.00

Hey MR DJ

Put a record on (well 2 CD's actually) and dance to the music. This amazing CD mixer makes it super easy to mix your favourite tunes and impress the ladies. It comes with 2 x 25 watt speakers, the same power as the internal amp, headphones and dare we say it a microphone so you can annoy the hell out of everybody!

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Beware...

...one glance of this Tiger Tarantula from Singapore will put you in therapy for years. It's big, it's mean and thankfully this chunky 8 legged Tarantula with 1/2 inch fangs is behind glass. Comes in a black hardwood presentation frame ready for hanging.

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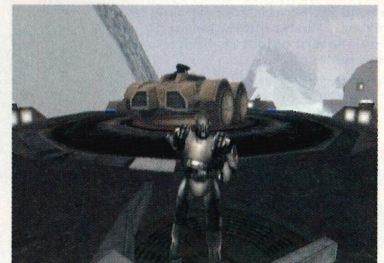
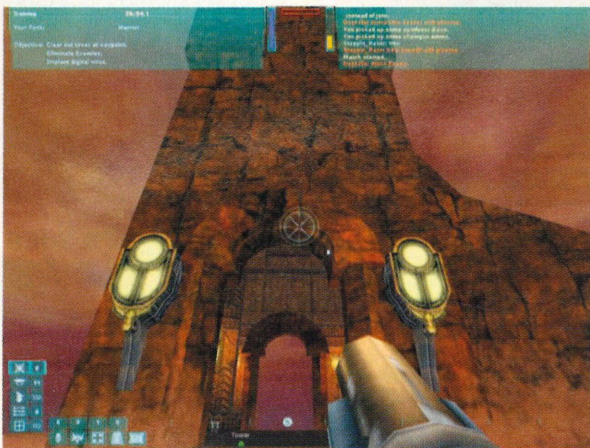
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TRIBES 2

Can Tribes 2 capture the imagination of a new generation of gamers?



■ The police of 3060 use nuclear-powered speed guns on the M25

■ 'The Weakest Link' gets a make-over for the 31st century

Tribes set most of the world's online gaming community ablaze when it was released in 1999. Unique in scope, style and infamously difficult to learn, this team-based first-person shooter gathered a loyal following very quickly. While it never really took off in quite the same way in the UK, the sequel looks set to catch the imagination of a whole new generation of gamers.

Rather than the class-based approach of similar games like Team Fortress, Tribes 2 - like Tribes - lets you choose between heavy, medium and light armour. Your choice dictates which weapons you can carry, how much ammo you can take with you, and how fast you can move. Powerful heavy weapons like mortars can only be carried by those with the strongest armour - making mortar-equipped players slow and vulnerable to lighter-equipped scouts. Each variety of armour is equipped with a short-burn jetpack, making semi-aerial combat the norm in the Tribes world.

To help teams move about Tribes 2's expansive

outdoor maps, a variety of vehicles are provided for the joyriding pleasures of players, many of which are crewed by more than one individual. The Beowulf Assault vehicle, for instance, carries one driver and a gunner housed in a turret firing either a mortar or plasma cannons. The airborne HAVOC Heavy Transport carries a pilot and tail-gunner, but comes complete with seating for four passengers who can fire their weapons through the windows. Imagine flying a mini-van through the Bronx, and you're probably halfway there.

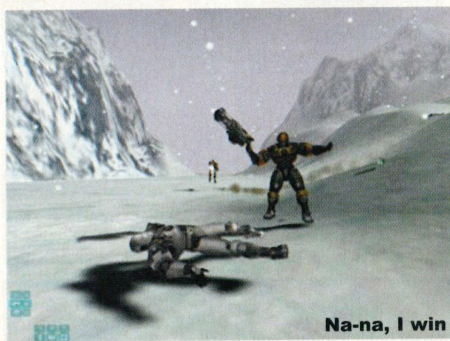
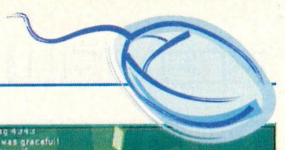
The Wildcat-class Grav Cycle hugs the ground and moves like lightning, making it perfect transport for lightly armoured scouts and snipers, or those out for quick points in a capture-the-flag match. There's even a forward base vehicle, carrying an inventory station for supplying troops, and a sensor jammer to hide it from your foes: a handy thing to have tucked away behind enemy lines. Vehicles can be a real challenge to fly or drive, and the difference in handling between the smaller and larger craft is

huge. It doesn't help to know you've probably got a cabin full of Tribes maestros sitting behind you groaning every time you bounce off a hill.

Weapons remain similar to those in the original, but a melee weapon has been added for stealthy kills - it's more effective from behind, paired with the invisibility-creating stealth pack. The targeting laser is still there, and still just as good: for the uninitiated, this allows one player to 'paint' a target with a targeting beam, allowing rockets fired by another player to home in accurately on it.

Some of the beta game servers support up to 64 players - this makes 32v32 matches a realistic possibility, especially given the expansive size of the maps. It remains to be seen what speed of connection you'll need to make this feasible, but it'll probably make 56k modems cry at the mere thought. On a related point, playing on the (admittedly sparsely-populated) beta servers, no problems with lag emerged; it seems that the Tribes team has made a good job of the netcode, which was criticised at the original

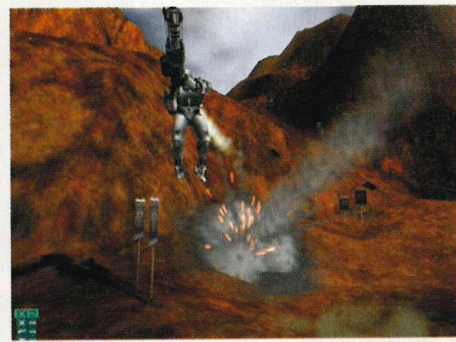




release.

Communicating between players is made easy with the inclusion of voice chat facilities and a flexible command map. Plug a mike into your sound card, and you'll be able to shout instructions to your team; whether they'll listen to you or not is another matter. Perhaps Tribes 2's built-in email and forum technology will help foster clanning behaviour, but if this becomes widespread an already newbie-unfriendly game will run the risk of becoming even more hostile to outsiders.

Easing the difficult learning process for said newbies, however, is a new single-player training campaign - similar to Unreal Tournament - where a simplified and progressively difficult single-player game is provided to give novices a gentle and friendly environment in which to make mis-



■ Right, I'm in a bit of a spot. Need back-up quite soon. Whoa! That was close. I'm really quite scared now. HeIIIIIIppppp!!!!



■ Thank you for travelling with Shiny Blue Airlines. In a few minutes we will burn to a crisp on the Sun's surface

takes. Of course, such a feature will stand or fall on the strength of the artificial intelligence of friend and foe - it didn't appear to be functional in our beta, so we'll see.

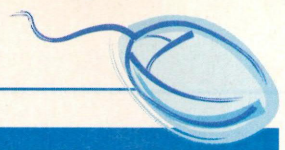
The fully-featured map editor will help increase the sequel's already huge appeal to Tribes devotees. Thanks to the sequel's inclusion of "infinite" maps (generated from a set of terrain tiles) players can create enormous arenas in which their tribes can fight. They will also be able to modify almost all the variables (governing environmental features as well as weapon and vehicle behaviour) meaning the possibilities for varied maps are almost unlimited.

Hopefully the almost-simultaneous UK/USA retail release for Tribes 2 will help Sierra avoid the pitfall into which the first game fell. Many UK gamers, in the position of reading wonderful things about Tribes and not being able to get hold of it, opted to download an illegal copy rather than waiting for the box to hit local shelves. Unsurprisingly this led to disappointing sales, and a limited uptake in Europe - this time, things should be different. Tribes 2 is currently in closed external beta, and will probably appear in shops in spring.



■ Some commented that Jack Straw's proposals to re-equip the police as a response to rising violent crime were a little heavy-handed

WORDS: MIKE SMITH



COSSACKS

Leading the renaissance of 2D real-time strategy



If 2000 was the year of 3D real-time strategy games then, so far at least, 2001 looks more like being a step back to the genre's 2D roots. *Cossacks*, developed by Russian team GSC and published by CDV, is just one of the many classic-styled 2D RTS games due this year.

Cossacks is similar to *Age of Empires* but much more historically accurate. The single-player missions are based on actual campaigns, and the maps on which you fight are rough representations of the actual battlefields. The politics and units of the game also bear a fair resemblance to the 16th to 18th century period on which the game is based. Players can take the role of one of 16 nations, each with its own set of buildings and units reflecting its architectural style.

Though the game is 2D, a great deal of work has gone into ensuring the units look right from every angle. Larger ones, such as the ships, have 64 rotational frames to help them appear to move smoothly. Buildings are cleanly drawn and many are instantly recognisable as national landmarks like England's Houses of Parliament.

Whereas *Age of Empires* battles (and those of most other RTS games) barely qualify as skirmishes, *Cossacks* can display up to 8,000 units on screen at once for huge battles. Unsurprisingly, it has a heavy emphasis on formations and large-scale organisation of soldiers. It also differs from other, similar games in that the landscapes, while displayed from a fixed perspective, vary in height - so troops with projectile weapons can stand on hillsides to fire over the heads of their compatriots. Troops also march faster downhill.

Formations need an officer and a drummer to be created, and can only be made with certain quantities of troops. They receive benefits when holding their ground in formation, thanks to the stronger defence an organised group creates. Once 50 per cent of the units are destroyed or the commanding officer is killed, however, discipline breaks down and the soldiers flee.

Cossacks also has a heavy emphasis on naval warfare. Basic ships can fish for food, but more expensive and complicated ones can carry troops and cannons to cause serious damage to enemy coastlines. Galleons can fire inland, posing a

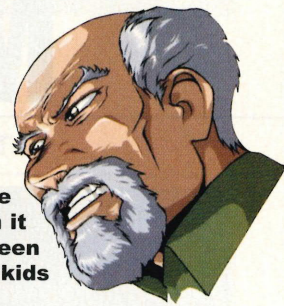
huge threat to coastal settlements - so on maps with vulnerable coastlines your harbour will need protecting well.

Though it certainly shares a lot with the *Age of Empires* series, the formation management and interesting racial divisions give *Cossacks* a novel twist. And as the screenshots show, it's got a clean, appealing and varied look to it. It's already out in Germany and Russia, but is due in the UK on March 30.



Ruined buildings hang around for ages, as a reminder of your failure to protect them

ONI



And I would have got away with it too if it hadn't been for you pesky kids

Smooth graphics, vast levels and a chick with a gun. There can be Oni one

Approximately three years ago, game developers realised that the unexpected success of the Tomb Raider series could be combined with the action of the console hit Goldeneye to create a new genre of game - the third-person action game.

This new genre promised to take the tired first-person games into new territories. Developers envisioned John Woo two-fisted shooting with Jackie Chan jumps and rolls, all made possible with a third-person perspective. Thus, anime-styled Oni was conceived and born to bridge the gap between action and adventure.

Oni's most innovative feature is undoubtedly the hand-to-hand combat system. The third-person perspective allows the player to battle enemies with fluidity and grace. It's almost like playing Street Fighter from a Tomb Raider-esque perspective in that you can execute Hollywood-style punches, kicks and throws with relative ease. In that respect, this is one truly

"Oni's most innovative feature is the hand-to-hand combat system"

innovative game.

The character animations are among the best in any game. Oni's heroine, Konoko, doesn't simply run, she runs like an anime character - leaning far forward with sharp accentuated movements exactly as expected. Konoko's combat moves are fluid and smooth without any



Konoko lets her outfitter know exactly how she feels about her new Lego armour

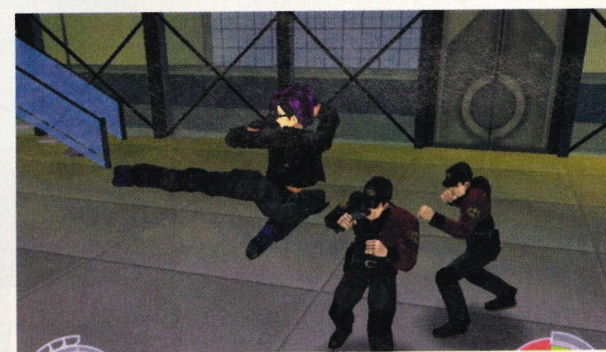
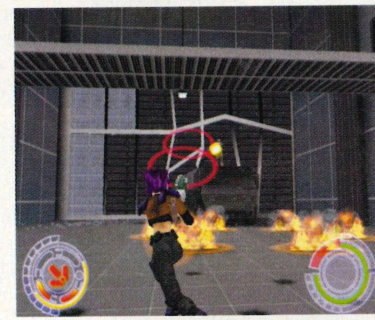
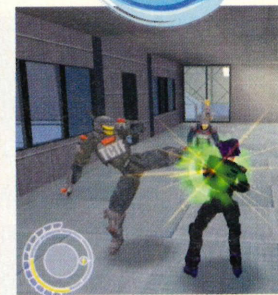
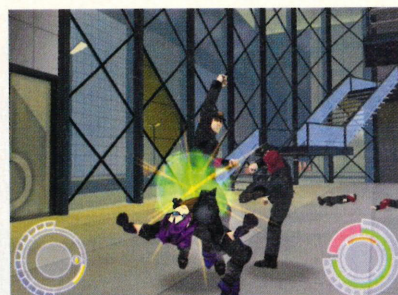
It is also important to inform you up-front that Oni doesn't allow the player to save the game in progress. Instead, Oni notifies you that it has saved the game at various pre-determined points. While this paradigm certainly works well when properly implemented, the save points in Oni are unintelligently placed and too far apart, making many sections very frustrating. Too often you'll find yourself running low on health, and thinking, "Surely it must have saved by now?" only to die and have the hard work of the last half hour undone.

Considering all the work that went into the game engine, the level design appears rather elementary. If you've played the demo, then you've seen a typical level: sparse, barren, boring and square. They are among the least memorable of any action game in the past couple of years, and don't come across as the work of paid professionals. You can envision the line of thinking: "Obtuse angles, caves and castles get in the way of her punching and kicking. We need lots of warehouses to maximise the hand-to-hand combat potential. Do that for all 19 levels."

Oni sells itself as an innovative action game featuring hand-to-hand combat. In those words, the game succeeds. But Oni also sells itself as fun. To say that Oni succeeds in this attempt would be an overstatement, for the developers threw too many kinks into the equation and they just don't add up. Oni would be an above-average game if Bungie hadn't blown the in-game save feature. A patch could help turn the game around, but thanks to Bungie's recent buyout this seems unlikely. Sadly, Oni is little more than a series of missed opportunities.

Graphics performance ranks among the best for smooth frame-rates and consistent performance.

In keeping with console-style thinking, however, Bungie failed to include any method for players to configure the keyboard or mouse controls. Sure, Bungie included a default WASD layout for right-handed players and even a left-handed layout - both are fine, but don't take into account that PC players have grown accustomed to picking their own keyboard layouts. The lack of mouse sensitivity adjustment is unforgivable.



JUDGEMENT SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS

MIN: PII-266, 64MB RAM

GDD SUGGESTS: PII-400, 64MB RAM

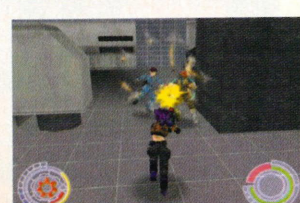
- PUBLISHER: GATHERING OF DEVELOPERS
- DEVELOPER: BUNGIE
- RELEASE: OUT NOW

GD ONLINE: Demo at: www.gamesdomain.co.uk/demos/demo/1344.html

- + Nice combat system
- Can't save the game when you want
- Little variety in combat: always resorts to fists
- 1995 era level design

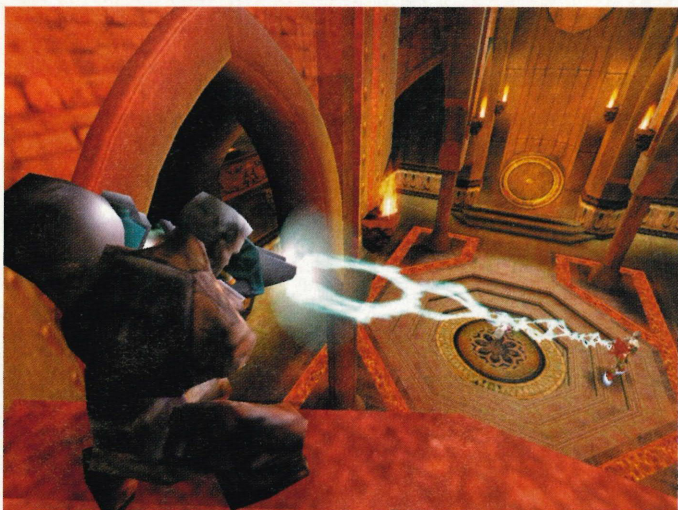
COMING TO THE
PS2
OUT OF TEN

Konoko found that if she pursed her lips tight, her mouth resembled a small peanut



QUAKE III: TEAM ARENA

New games, maps and weapons - but is Team Arena worth paying for?



So, you bought Quake III. You played it, you liked it. And you'll probably be wetting your pants at the thought of this expansion pack. But, first things first, what does Team Arena add to Quake III? On the face of it, quite a lot.

The most substantive change is the addition of three new game types, Harvester, Overload and One Flag, all focussed on team play. There's a selection of new power-ups aimed at introducing a class-based structure similar to Team Fortress. There's three new weapons: a nailgun, a chaingun and a proximity mine launcher. There's a batch of new levels, and a few graphical and sonic tweaks like the inclusion of Doppler-shift effects when rockets streak past your head. And finally there's a set of one-use items like Kamikaze (kills you in a colossal explosion,

"Team Arena is resource-hungry, dull - verging on lazy - and overpriced"

taking out anyone nearby) and Invulnerability, which freezes you in mid-air and surrounds you with a near-impenetrable shield.

Of the new game types, Overload proved to be our favourite. In each base, there's a skull-shaped obelisk; to score, teams must penetrate the enemy base and destroy the obelisk. One Flag was also entertaining. Instead of the traditional CTF layout, a room containing a single white flag separates each team's base. Each team must attempt to grab this flag, and take it to the enemy base to score.

Harvester, though novel, appealed rather less. When a team member is killed, a skull of that team's colour pops out of the skull generator in the middle of the level. The opposing team must collect this and take it to their opponents' base to score. The matches often deteriorate into dull camp-fests, with players gathering round the



generator waiting for skulls to emerge.

Rather than designing maps specifically for each game type, as in Unreal Tournament, each Team Arena map can be used for any of the game styles. However, as certain combinations of game type and map just don't work very well this looks like a lazy oversight when contrasted with UT's expansive and innovative Assault maps.

The new power-ups are obviously intended to add a class-based dimension to the game. They are found scattered around team bases, and have a variety of effects: Doublor will double the damage your weapons can inflict; Scout increases rates of fire and speed, but means you can't wear armour;



■ **It's Quake all right, and there's plenty of new stuff, but at a time when equally impressive add-ons are free TA doesn't pay its way**

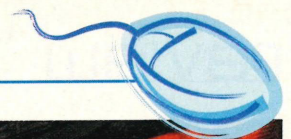
and Guard gives you 200 health - which regenerates when lost - and 200 armour, turning players into veritable walking tanks. The drastic effects of these items can leave players without them at a significant disadvantage.

Of the one-use items, Kamikaze is definitely the best. With a little team co-ordination, spectacular captures can be made as one player sacrifices himself in a colossal black vortex of death, taking out any number of defenders with him and leaving the flag clear for his teammates. The Invulnerability item lets you hang in mid-air firing rockets with impunity, until your opponents realise they can lob proximity mines through the shield. Your gibbs will coat the inside of the shield.

The new weapons will probably provide something for everyone. The chaingun is like a faster-firing machine-gun, the nailgun is perhaps most similar to the shotgun and good for close-up work, and the sneakier types will enjoy throwing proximity mines all over the shop - fellow team members won't set them off.

Outdoor, terrain-based maps are also an interesting addition but are so expansive as to be mind-numbingly boring - there's just no point in playing them without plenty of comrades. Who wants to have to traipse across dull samey hills for five minutes to reach the enemy base, get sniped and have to start all over again? Not me.

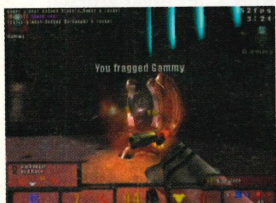
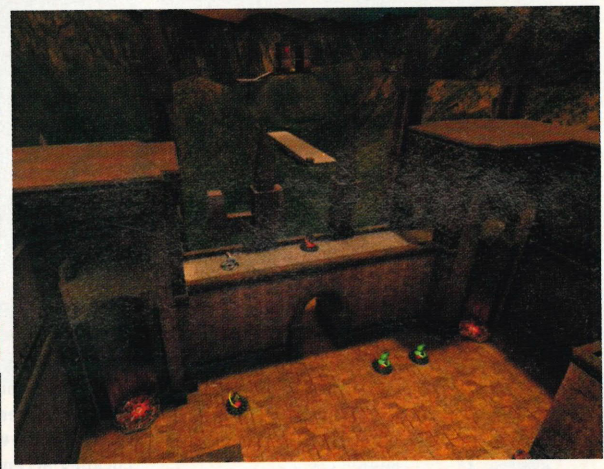
The graphical enhancements, though, improve on an already gorgeous game but come at a price. On our standard test-bed PC (PIII-500, 128Mb, Geforce 2 MX) Team Arena often fell to unacceptable frame-rates. Kitting it out with double that amount of RAM produced no improvement. On certain maps, peaks were about 30 and the numbers often dropped below 20 with many settings on minimum. Considering



■ Although Team Arena is a graphical step up from Quake III, the new visuals don't come anywhere near accounting for its poor performance on our test-bed PC.



I've got the flag - coming through!



■ New weapons will probably provide something for everyone



JUDGEMENT SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS

MIN: PII-233, 64MB RAM

QDC SUGGESTS: PII-600 128MB RAM

- PUBLISHER: ACTIVISION
- DEVELOPER: ID SOFTWARE
- RELEASE: TBC

GD ONLINE: Demo at: www.gamesdomain.co.uk/demos/demo/1323.html

- + Fantastic graphics
- + Much-needed new modes
- + Terrain levels are bold
- + New weapons provide something for everyone
- Just doesn't hang together well
- Slow on mid-range PCs
- Some mods offer more
- Should be free

OUT OF TEN 5

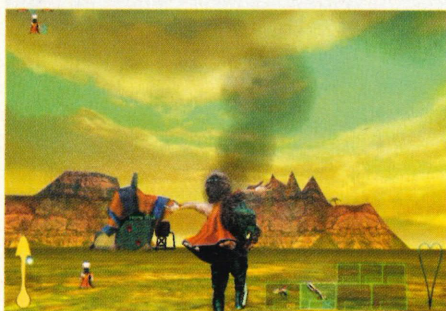
WORDS: MIKE SMITH

this machine had no difficulty sustaining 80-odd frames-per-second with vanilla Quake III and much higher visual quality settings, this is odd, to say the least. It also makes the published minimum requirements seem a bad joke at best, and grossly misleading at worst. Running a non-dedicated multiplayer server on this PC, with three or four clients was completely unworkable. You certainly wouldn't consider playing competitively with that setup - to run at anything approaching a reasonable frame-rate, you'll probably be wanting at least a 1Ghz PC and a top-end video card, and to be

honest it's hard to see why. Although Team Arena is a graphical step up from Quake III, the new visuals don't come anywhere near accounting for this performance gulf. Unless you're a die-hard Quake obsessive, you'll be disappointed with Team Arena. It's resource-hungry, dull, verging on lazy and most of all, it's overpriced. There's absolutely no reason to pay full price for this expansion when free mods like Quake III Fortress offer much more. Even commercial teams like Epic can release expansions for Unreal Tournament for free - why can't Id do the same?

GIANTS: CITIZEN KABUTO

A giant of a game or a PC pigmy? Read our tall story...



Giants: Citizen Kabuto was developed by Planet Moon, a band of mostly ex-Shiny members, masterminds behind MDK. Giants lets you play as any one of three different races or creatures: the Meccs (Meccaryns), which are humanoids with Cockney accents trapped in spacesuits; the Sea Reapers, who are blue-skinned, half-naked women; and (Citizen) Kabuto, who is a cross between William Randolph Hearst and a giant monster.

The single-player game takes you through a long, involved story that is actually both interesting and funny. You start out playing the Meccs and control a single creature that is lost on a desert island searching for his spacesuited compatriots. You can play in either third-person or first-person mode and you'll end up using a variety of different weapons and items - like a handy jetpack, flares to deploy heat-seeking missiles or even a Gyrocopter. Controlling the Sea Reapers is next followed by Kabuto himself.

The races play quite differently, especially Kabuto. The Meccs and Sea Reapers can use Smarties (little guys with oversized skulls) to build bases for them and produce new items to use, while Kabuto can eat these same Smarties to create offspring that become creatures under his control. He also eats Vimps (cattle-like creatures) to maintain his power. It's a great

idea, but suffers from the fact that the linear, platform-like campaign limits the usefulness of different strategies, while the multiplayer isn't up to the task of maintaining an interesting, balanced, and stable game for these separate races to fully utilise their different abilities.

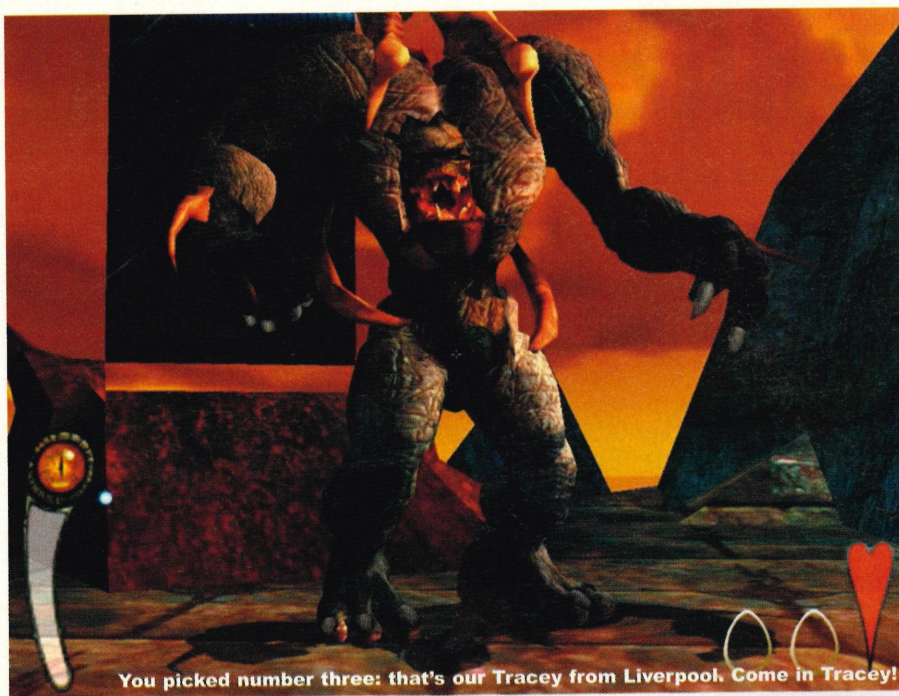
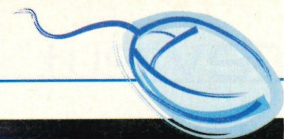
Giants: Citizen Kabuto is a gorgeous game. The technical excellence combines with a superb artistic design to make both individual items and the environment as a whole look and feel top-notch. Engaging cut-scenes raise the aesthetic standards further. The blue "ice planet" graphics are a little disappointing, but hey.

“Giants is a gorgeous game combining technical excellence and superb artistic design. It looks top-notch”

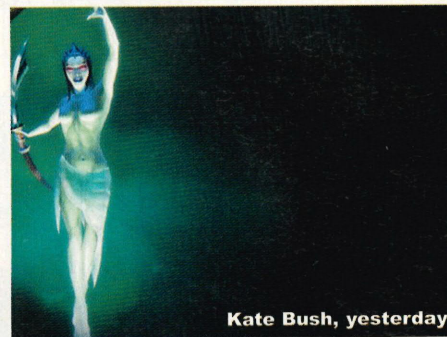
The concept is also great: three separate races, one of which is just a single creature, with gameplay that ranges from platformer to real-time strategy.

Giants does not come without its problems though. The first is that there is no in-mission save. This makes the game ideal for full-time students or the unemployed but for everyone else it's just a pain in the backside.

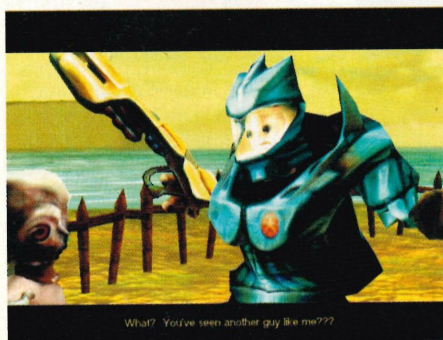
The second is that the game has no skirmish AI whatsoever, so if you want to play the single-player game after you've completed it, you'll have to replay one of the campaign missions. This also hurts Giants in multiplayer, which is



You picked number three: that's our Tracey from Liverpool. Come in Tracey!



Kate Bush, yesterday



What? You've seen another guy like me???



Uh, I don't have a sister

■ Who are you calling weird looking? You bug-eyed, short-assed freak ya!

■ Anyway I grabbed him like this and squeezed as hard as I could...



the third problem.

Playing one-on-one Giants in multiplayer is about as interesting as playing one-on-one Mechwarrior 4, except without a lot of cool laser zapping sounds and gauss cannons. The problem is that while in Mechwarrior 4 you can just build a mech, join a game, and start blasting, the original structure of Giants makes it difficult to just join a game in progress. Since Meccs, Reapers, and Kabuto are all quite different, achieving a proper balance is hard and because there is no way to fill in empty slots with skirmish AI you need four (or more) live bodies. You're also stuck with the horrific mess that is Mplayer.com, with its proprietary downloads (without which you can't play), voluminous advertisements that slow a 56k connection to a crawl, and sluggish interface that makes joining a game a thoroughly unpleasant experience.

All of this is really irrelevant, though, because of all the Internet games we tried, approximately 75% ended in premature exits or outright crashes. The single-player game also had some problems, the most annoying of which was a tendency for weapons and monsters to lose their ability to do damage. This would result in missions where you just walked around the map, unable to kill or be killed. These missions never ended, either, even after you

completed the objectives. The only solution seemed to be to quit out of the game completely and re-launch Giants from the desktop. Sometimes the game would do this for you by crashing, albeit when the game had previously been running normally and you were close to completing a mission.

Those are three pretty big strikes against Giants. Possibly the biggest strike against Giants, though, is that much of the gameplay is, well, kind of boring. Things only get interesting with the Meccs when you get access to the base-building facilities. Otherwise, Giants plays like a really pretty action game in both first-person as well as third-person mode; after a half-dozen missions you'll be looking forward to the next cut-scene more than the next game level. That's a problem. If I want to sit and watch amusing animations, I'll put on Wallace and Gromit.

It's a shame that the flaws in Giants end up making it a mediocre game, because the effort that obviously went into making it something different is admirable, and almost succeeds. What Giants ends up proving is that games have evolved along certain lines for specific reasons, and while breaking out of these constricted clichés is an admirable goal, it's extraordinarily hard to do.

JUDGEMENT

SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS

MIN: PII-350, 64MB RAM

GDO SUGGESTS:
PII-450, 128MB RAM

■ PUBLISHER: INTERPLAY
■ DEVELOPER: PLANET MOON STUDIOS
■ RELEASE: OUT NOW

GD ONLINE: Demo at: www.gamesdomain.co.uk/demos/demo/407.html

- + Gorgeous environments
- + Excellent story and cut-scenes
- + Gameplay is engaging for a while...
- ...but then it wears on you.
- No in-mission save
- No AI skirmish mode
- Buggy multiplayer with balance issues

6

OUT OF TEN

WORDS: BRUCE GERYK

COLIN MCRAE RALLY 2.0

Colin McRae - The fastest thing out of Scotland since Gail Porter



■ Stages range from tarmac in Europe...



■ ...to sand in the Kenyan desert...



■ ...to Swedish snowfields

Two years ago, Codemasters produced the groundbreaking and hugely popular Colin McRae Rally, but since then Rally Championship and Rally Masters have raised the standard. Now Codemasters has stamped the name of the world's fastest rally driver onto a feature-packed sequel that we've been eagerly awaiting all year.

Much like in CMR, most of the countries are locked and you need to finish in the top six in championship mode to unlock the next set. CMR2 now gives you ten stages per country as opposed to six in the original; each is set across two or three days to give the feel of a real event. Most of these stages are superb. Australia's slippery gravel stages require flat-out rallying, whilst the mountainous asphalt events in France and Italy set the scene for some of the most technical and intense driving you'll ever do on a PC. The events in Greece, Kenya and Sweden are all about applying good driving technique, but it's a pity that the excellent Monte Carlo and Indonesian events from the original have been dropped.

CMR2 is a good-looking game. Everything from the chic menus to the car models has been refined extensively from CMR1. The cars in particular are stunning: on full detail with cubic mapping enabled, they shine and reflect the scenery beautifully. The landscapes are fully detailed and varied, but it's similarly pleasing to see so much variety in the roads themselves. They twist and lurch and dip unpredictably with many stages featuring at least one vicious section ready to take you by surprise, and tight reflexes are required to keep the car out of the scenery. To this end, it's vital that you listen to Nicky Grist, Colin's long suffering co-driver, who reads out "pacenotes" that describe the

oncoming road.

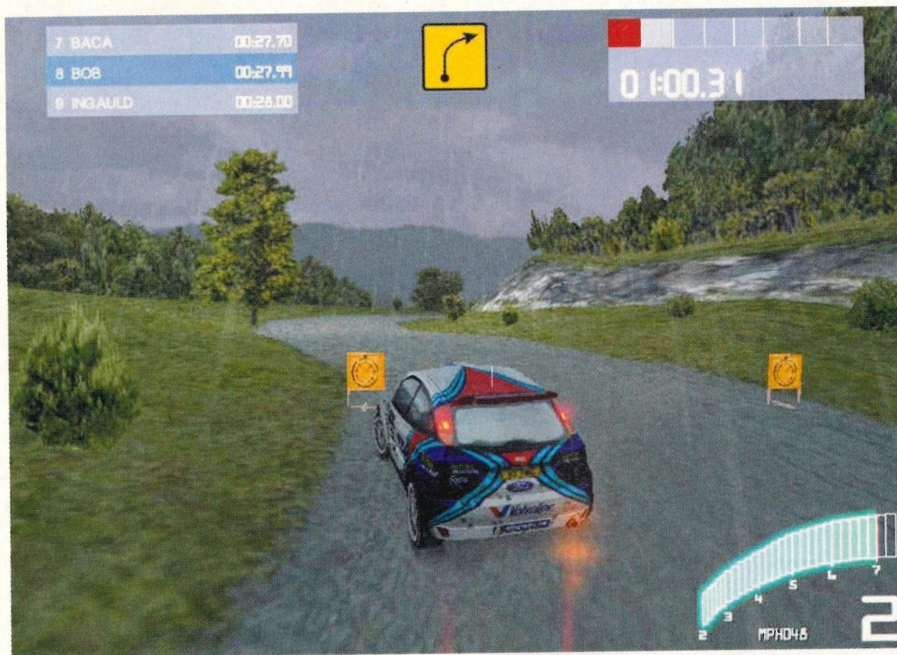
For the most part, the in-game audio is also very good. Engine sounds have been realistically sampled but, strangely, the Ford Focus - the car that the game is centred on - sounds awful. It lacks any sense of power and ruins all feeling of being strapped into a rally car.

Another low point is with the graphics engine itself. Whilst it can shift plenty of detail at a high rate, the technique of using lots of 2D bitmapped trees to cover up a landscape-wallpapered barrier on either side of the road just doesn't cut it today, especially when the likes of Pro Rally 2001 offer fully rendered 3D landscaping as far as the eye can see.

Where the original really paid off though was in the brilliant car handling, giving us cars that could slide freely at a time when all other rally games made theirs run on rails. CMR2 has thankfully retained this and tweaked it in order to enhance the effects of different set-ups and road conditions. Controlling the car is bearable with a keyboard or gamepad, and brilliantly precise with a decent steering wheel. Unfortunately we couldn't test the force feedback (which played such a large part in the original) as it resulted in a large performance hit that made the game stutter.

Sadly CMR2 doesn't feature the front wheel drive F2 cars which made excellent learning aids in the original, nor the rally school - novices are effectively left to figure it all out for themselves. However it does feature some entertaining rewards for the successful driver in the way of some superbly modelled extra cars and a new arcade mode. This mode allows you to take on up to five other cars on wide closed circuit stages.



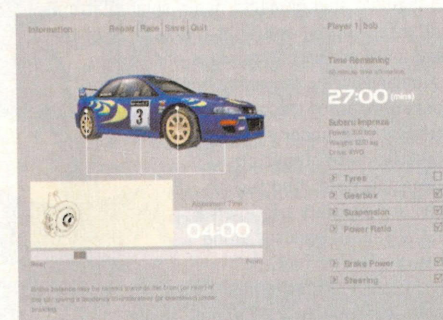
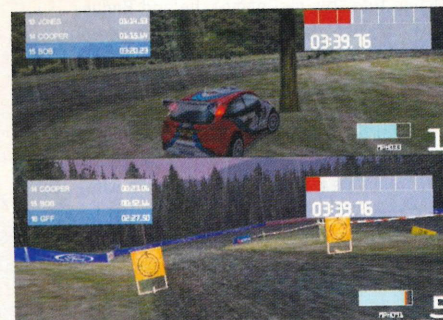


It also has several sub-options including mixing computer and human players (via LAN play - the CD allows restricted network installations - or an excellent split-screen mode), racing for points and trying to stay within a certain percentage of the leader's time. Against friends, this mode works very nicely, but when racing the AI, one slip will leave you trailing at the back of the pack.

Another nice option is the challenge mode, where players can race head-to-head in a series of elimination heats on the double-looped Super-Specials, but the bulk of CMR's gameplay is securely locked away in the Simulation mode. Codemasters have made it easy to set up multiplayer games in most of the simulation modes, so two or more people can race on a single stage and keep track of the other person via a ghost car. CMR2 hasn't been optimised for Internet play, but if you have a LAN then you're in for a treat.

The opportunities to wreck your car are endless; you'll be glad that CMR2 provides a service area after every two sections to repair all that damage and adjust the setup of the car to account for the nature of the next two stages and the variable weather which has become a standard feature in racing sims these days.

CMR2 is not the perfect rally game, but then nothing else currently is either. But it is the most absorbing and thrilling rally game you'll currently find. CMR was my game of 1998. Rally Championship was my game of 1999. Does CMR2 make it as my game for 2000? Almost.



■ Though some of the effects are starting to show their age, there's no doubt Colin McRae Rally is a mighty fine bit of work

JUDGEMENT

SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS

MIN: PII-233, 32MB RAM

GDO SUGGESTS:
PII-400, 128MB RAM

■ PUBLISHER: CODEMASTERS
■ DEVELOPER: CODEMASTERS
■ RELEASE: OUT NOW

GDO ONLINE: Demo at: www.gamesdomain.co.uk/demos/demo/1343.html

- + Good stage design
- + Excellent car handling model
- + Arcade mode and loads of features

- No replay controls
- Graphics engine beginning to show its age



9 OUT OF TEN

WORDS: REHAN ALI

AMERICAN MCGEE'S ALICE

Not so much a hallucinogenic story, as a hideous, nightmarish adventure



Ever wondered what it would be like if Lewis Carroll's infamous Alice were to revisit Wonderland several years after the original tale ended? Me neither, but that's precisely what has happened in EA's latest release, *American McGee's Alice*.

All is not well as we first meet our heroine in the stylish FMV introduction; lying comatose in a mental asylum bed, poor Alice has been traumatised by the death of her family in a house fire, which only she escaped alive and was then forced to stand back helplessly and listen to their final screams. Clutching at her last shred of sanity, Alice appears to have journeyed back to a very different Wonderland, deformed and macabre. Old friends, the white rabbit and Cheshire cat, are pleading for her help - can she rescue her familiar yet altered fantasy world from the evil Red Queen's clutches and perhaps save herself along with it?

Intriguing plot, wouldn't you say? Dreamt up by ex-Id Software level designer, American McGee (yes, his real name), he and Rogue Entertainment (creators of several successful Quake/Q2 mission packs) chose the third-person action/adventure format to tell this exciting new chapter based on the Alice in Wonderland story.

As you begin the game, Alice finds herself once again chasing after the white rabbit - he's no longer the adorable bunny people will remember from the Disney cartoon. His face crinkled menacingly, ears bent back behind his head and an overbite that looks like fangs is just an example of how things in Wonderland have been skewed. It's Alice's job to traverse the 15 massive environments, jump some platforms, pull a few levers, and fight the hazards of the land and Red Queen's minions once again.

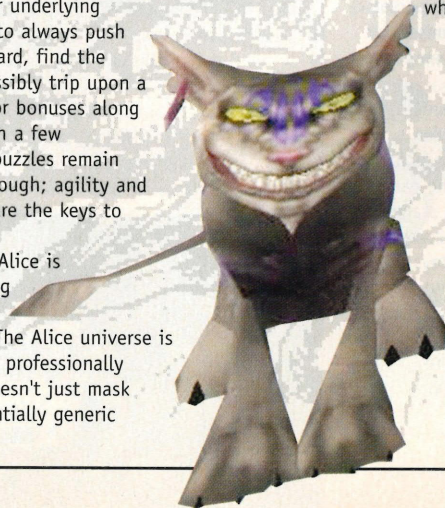
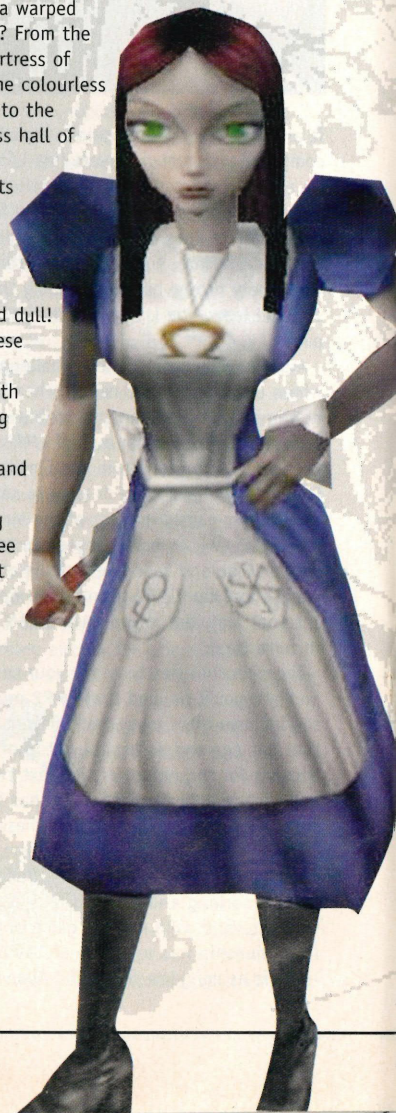
Fundamentally, gameplay remains pretty conventional for the genre. In true Tomb Raider fashion, your underlying objective is to always push linearly forward, find the exit, and possibly trip upon a few secrets or bonuses along the way. With a few exceptions, puzzles remain simplistic enough; agility and exploration are the keys to progressing.

But wait - Alice is far from being easily dismissible. The Alice universe is so finely and professionally crafted, it doesn't just mask what is essentially generic

gameplay, it makes it completely irrelevant. The story, characters and overall attention to detail in the many wondrous environments is the driving force behind what is otherwise a tried-and-tested gameplay formula, and that's why Alice is a significantly more exciting title to play over other offerings in the genre.

So, what makes it special? Firstly, Alice utilises the Quake3 engine in probably the most stunningly impressive way to date. Although technically superb, the creative side of things makes you literally gawk at the screen. There are not many action games where you'll find yourself wishing some sections weren't so fast paced, because you really just want to stop and take a look around. The endlessly unique and inventive level designs are constantly a sight to behold, and what better theme is there for levels like these than a warped Wonderland? From the floating "fortress of doors" to the colourless chess land, to the looking glass hall of mirrors, the environments almost make the levels in MDK2 seem common and dull!

Combine these fantastical locations with an absorbing plot and characters, and Alice keeps you pressing on just to see what



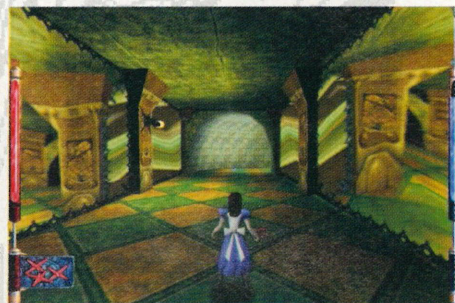
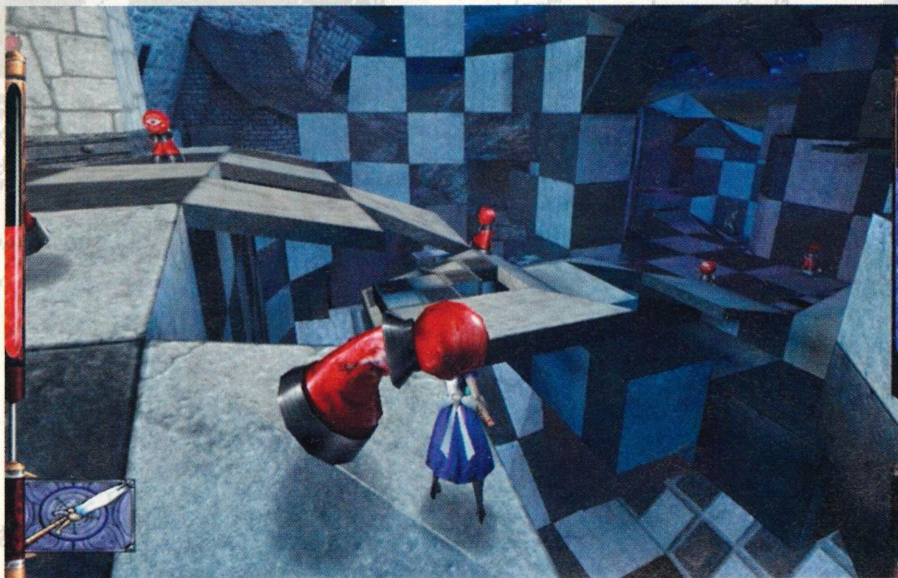
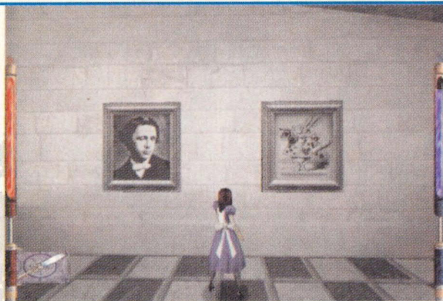
I'm sure you'll get on fine with the natives, once they get to know you!

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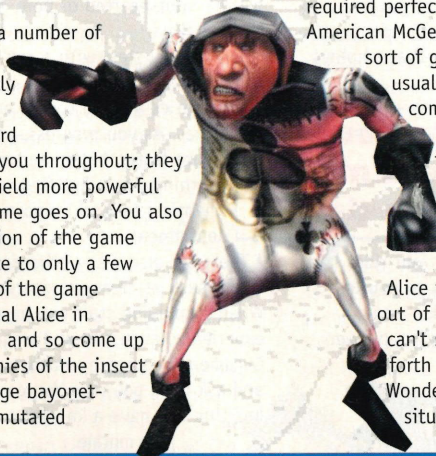
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happens next.

Alice's ambient soundtrack (composed by ex-Nine Inch Nails member Chris Vrenna) possesses a fantastic chilling quality that perfectly compliments the dark and sinister atmosphere of the game. While there are no real scare moments, the chorus of young voices and creepy instrumentals in the score keeps tension levels high. Sound effects, on the other hand, do not have as much presence and the voice acting is a little stilted.

There are quite a number of enemies vying for Alice's blood, mostly from the Red Queen's army of card guards that chase you throughout; they get tougher and wield more powerful weapons as the game goes on. You also spend a good portion of the game shrunk down in size to only a few inches tall (much of the game parallels the original Alice in Wonderland story), and so come up against many enemies of the insect variety, such as huge bayonet-carrying ants and mutated



ladybugs. On the weapons side, from vorpal blades to mallets, playing cards and Jack-in-the-boxes, things remain just as imaginative and bizarre.

Admittedly, underneath the incredible level designs, absorbing original storyline and constantly delightful visual assault is your standard third-person action-adventure, with a few of those familiar frustrations, like having to reload and nauseam when you keep missing that required perfectly-timed jump. But what makes American McGee's Alice stand out is that it's the sort of game that you don't play for the usual satisfaction and ego-boost of completing the last level. You play because, like any expertly crafted tale, you want to know what happens next and see more of the fascinating, seemingly alive world of Wonderland in its new, depraved form.

Alice is suffering and she needs help out of her dementia - and even if you can't save her, you still get to venture forth through an obscenely twisted Wonderland. It's really a no-lose situation.



JUDGEMENT SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS

MIN: PII-400, 64MB

GDD SUGGESTS: PII-400, 128 MB

- PUBLISHER: ELECTRONIC ARTS
- DEVELOPER: ELECTRONIC ARTS
- RELEASE: OUT NOW

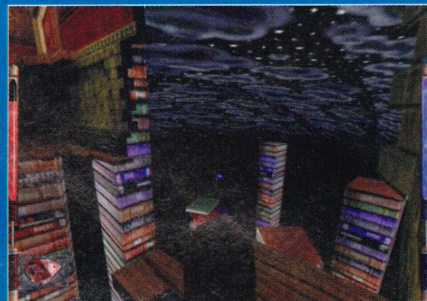
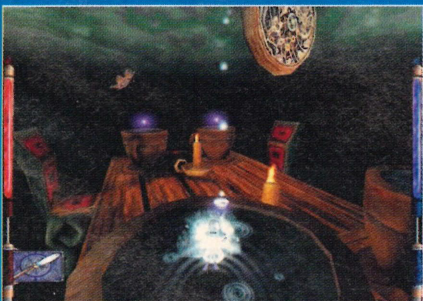
GD ONLINE: Demo at: www.gamesdomain.co.uk/demos/demo/1332.html

- + Fantastic and creative environments
- + Interesting storyline
- + Great auto-aim system
- + Has to be seen to be believed
- Still a frustrating 3rd-person action/adventure in places
- Multiplayer would have been nice

8

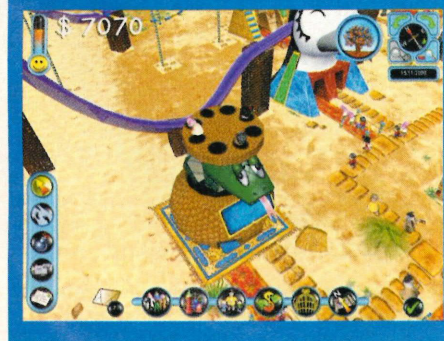
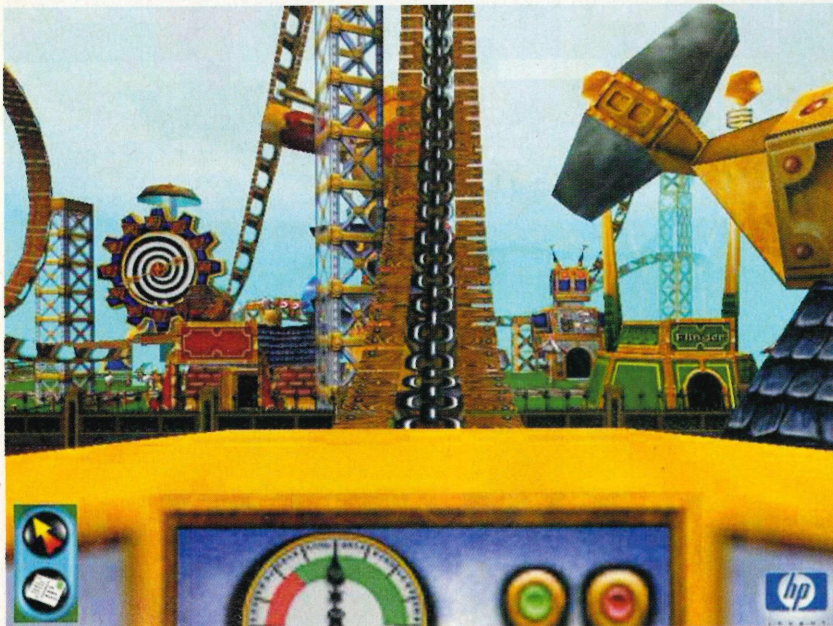
WORDS: RICHARD GREENHILL

The thought and attention to detail that has gone into the level designs in Alice can at times be breathtaking - makes you want to sit back and take a look around!



THEME PARK INC.

Time to chuck-up your candy-floss



What is there to like about roller coasters? The only time I ever risked seeing my breakfast again at a funfair was by riding on a waltzer - and that was just to sit next to a girl I fancied. So would Theme Park Inc. cure me of my fears?

Theme Park Inc. is an attempt to bring a more cohesive storyline to Bullfrog's previous attempt, Theme Park World. If you haven't experienced a Theme Park game before, it is your job to design and run, you guessed it, a theme park. But in 'Inc.' you also have the final goal of jumping into the president's seat by buying 50 per cent of the share stock of the company that employs you.

"As you progress you will be able to create more stomach-churning rides"

To begin with you have three or four rides laid out on a nice grassy field. It is up to you to develop this land of half-assed rides into something approaching Alton Towers - or even Drayton Manor Park if you prefer.

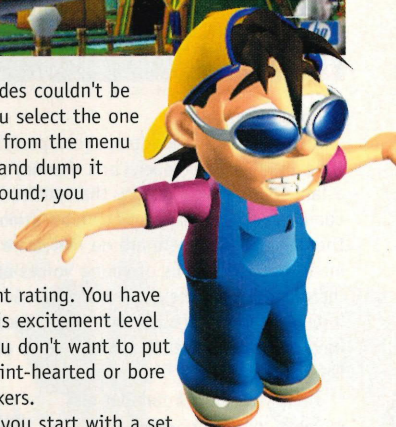
Placing rides couldn't be easier. You select the one you want from the menu provided and dump it on the ground; you then set its entry price and excitement rating. You have to get this excitement level right - you don't want to put off the faint-hearted or bore thrill-seekers.

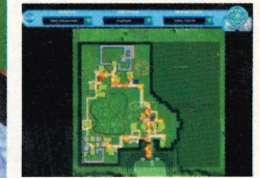
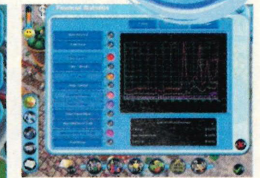
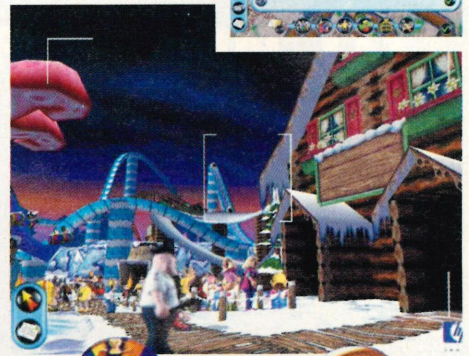
At first you start with a set of basic rides and facilities at your disposal.

Facilities include toilets and money-making stores. As you progress, you will be able to create faster, better and more stomach-churning rides. But first you have to hire scientists to work in your research department.

There are also many other jobs that need to be filled, such as cleaners, guards and gardeners. When employing staff you must balance experience, necessity and wage cost. Occasionally a bolshy worker will cut up rough and ask for a pay rise. You can always sack them but this will have a knock-on effect on staff morale.

Staff members are also useful when it comes to completing challenges - such as working out how to drain a lake to get more land space - which earn you golden tickets that open up special rides. As you complete these challenges, new areas are opened and more golden tickets are collected.





As your park becomes more popular you can hike up the prices for the entrance and individual rides. The cash soon starts to flow in - then you have to start buying up shares in the company and get the all-important 50 per cent share so you can claim the presidency. This part of Inc., which is the crux of the game, is so deadly boring we'd rather play without the added story and just get on with making people merry.

Creating roller coasters which, let's face it, is the best thing about theme park management games, is as easy as pie. Just dump down the main building and plot out your track then adjust the height, camber and curve in your tracks. Theme Park Inc.'s roller coaster designer is easier to use than that of Hasbro's Roller Coaster Tycoon because you can force the track to work by bending it once it is in place rather than sticking to a set of reasonable physics. Because of that, though, riding your own design doesn't feel particularly authentic.

The game's visuals haven't really changed all that much as EA has used the same graphics engine as Theme Park World. A few problems also still remain though, such as the rides passing through each other when they are close together. The developer, Bullfrog, has spruced up the interface and made it easier to use through a series of icons at the bottom of the screen, which are an improvement on the small side-bar icons that appeared in Theme Park World.

The first-person view allows you to walk around the park, but is rather bemusing - we tried it once, and found it a bit of a gimmick, really. Using the first-person view to see what

the rides are like is great but which player would want to walk around the park all day?

The sound is suitably jaunty but completely forgettable. Help provided by the pop-up assistant starts to get a bit annoying as the game goes on. Fortunately we decided to switch it off before we went completely insane due to its inane and repetitive jabbering.

Theme Park Inc. is another stab at the Theme Park series and really provides no major changes. It's fun to play, but not as involving and time-grabbing as its long-lived rival Roller Coaster Tycoon. It seems that Bullfrog is

“Seems Bullfrog is reduced to churning out endless and pointless sequels”

reduced to churning out endless and pointless sequels to games that never made the grade; a sad state for what was, in its heyday, one of the most exciting developers in the country. I still hate roller coasters.



JUDGEMENT

SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS

MINI: PII-233, 32MB RAM

GDD SUGGESTS:
PII-233, 64MB RAM

■ PUBLISHER: ELECTRONIC ARTS
■ DEVELOPER: BULLFROG
■ RELEASE: FEBRUARY 9

GD ONLINE: www.gamesdomain.co.uk/gdreview/zones/reviews/pc/jan01/tpinc.html

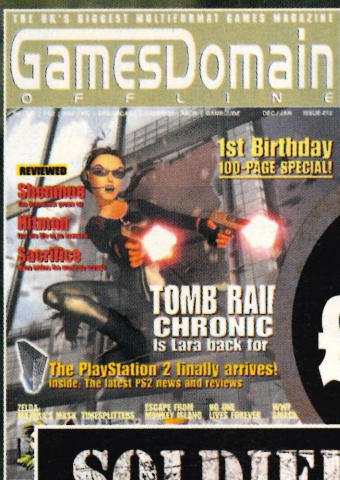
- + Theme parks are cool
- + Effective cartoony graphics
- Same old, same old
- Music is forgettable
- Clipping problems
- Not as much fun as it should be

OUT OF TEN

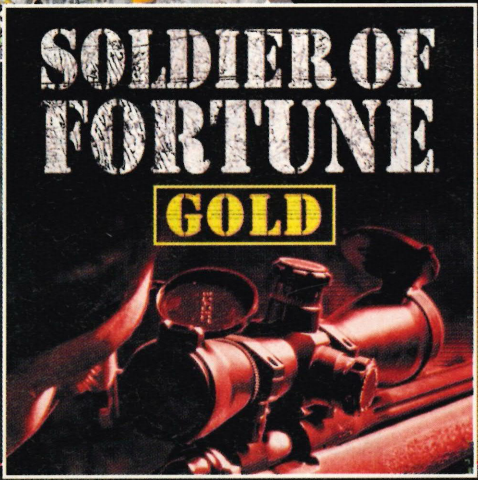
WORDS: KEVAN MANDER

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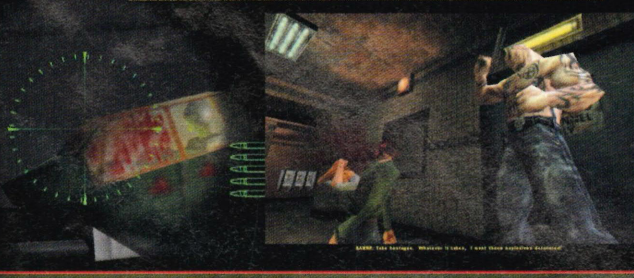


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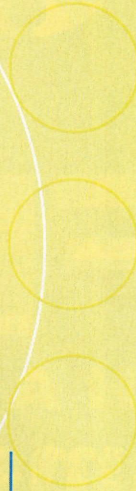
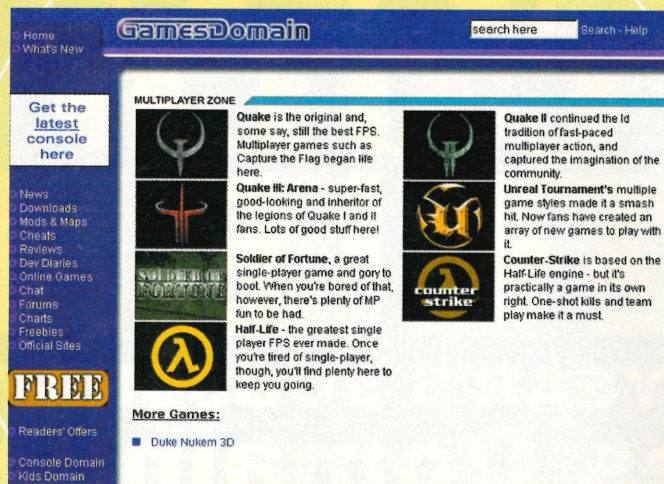
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order online at:
www.gamesdomain.co.uk/gdoffline/index.html

mods and maps

Thought mods were people who wore suits, rode Vespas and got into fights with rockers? You've come to the right place. Mods are a way of changing existing games into new and exciting variations. Usually produced by teams of enthusiastic amateurs, they can have effects as small as introducing a new weapon into the game (or changing the behaviour of an existing one) to completely changing the game's style or theme. At Games Domain, we feature mods for each incarnation of Quake, both Unreal and Unreal Tournament, Soldier of Fortune and Half-Life. Counter-Strike (see opposite) also has its own section. Apart from mods, we also carry other enhancements for these games - new levels, replacement "skins" (which let you change your character to look like anything from Bart Simpson to the Terminator) and utilities to help you get the most from your favourite first-person shooter.



Mods

Every mod known to humanity. Well, almost.



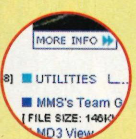
Skins

All the skins you could ever need.



Maps

Find new maps for your favourite games here.

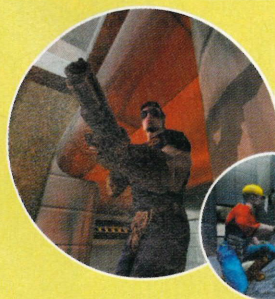


Utilities

Make your life easier with these tools.

mods

Quake III Fortress



The Fortress range is almost as old as mods themselves. One of the many team-based mods, this style of play has participants choosing from a range of character classes, each one coming with unique weapons, abilities and stats - almost like an RPG. Maps usually consist of variations on familiar capture-the-flag situations, and each character is suited to a particular role within the team. Recons are fast but weak, and ideal for rapid flag-stealing raids, while snipers are tightly armoured but carry a bad-ass accurate rifle. Among the rest of the nine classes are medics, flametroopers and secret agents.

Rocket Arena UT



Are your 'mad skills' not up to competing online? Rocket Arena is purpose-built to sharpen you up. It gives you, and a single opponent (bot or human) all Unreal Tournament's weapons, with full ammo and plenty of armour. It also comes with a new suite of maps designed specifically for this type of combat by various big names in level design, including Cliff Bleszinski, the maestro behind many of the original UT levels. Put some time in on this and you'll soon have your friends in awe of your '133t'-ness

action zone

Games Domain's new, revamped Action Zone is your first stop for up-to-the-minute action gaming news. It's updated hourly, so you won't miss the latest bits of hot gossip, and carries Games Domain's usual mixture of previews and reviews into the bargain. Why bother with other sites, when GD can bring you everything you need?

The screenshot shows the GamesDomain website interface. At the top, there's a navigation bar with 'GamesDomain review' and a search box. Below this, a sidebar on the left lists various categories like 'What's Hot', 'News', 'Reviews', etc. The main content area is titled 'ACTION / ARCADE' and features several articles. The first article is 'Gunman Chronicles demo released' with a sub-headline 'Curious about this Half-Life-based futuristic FPS? Download the just-released demo and give it a try.' The second article is 'Quake III: Team Arena review' with a sub-headline 'Looking for some multiplayer action to keep you entertained over the holiday season? Unless you're a Quake die-hard, don't go for Team Arena.' Below this is a quote: '"With the worthy exception of Tribes, all multiplayer FPS games have taken place in interior or small-scale environments. Sadly, Team Arena helped us understand why. The outdoor maps are so expansive as to be mind-numbingly boring, and although given well-coordinated teams of twenty or so it's possible to see how they could be enjoyable, there's just no point in playing them without plenty of comrades. Who wants to have to traipse across dull samey hills for five minutes to reach the enemy base, get sniped and have to start all over again? Not me."> more'. The third article is 'Get SoF Gold for nowt' with a sub-headline 'Ever wondered how good it would be to read your favourite website whenever you wanted - on the train, the bus, or even on the khazi? You might not be aware of this, but for a while now Games Domain has been publishing a paper, multiformat magazine. Sounds interesting? What if we told you you can get a 12 month subscription for a mere £14.99, and we'll throw in Soldier of Fortune Gold for free? Click here for more details. (NB: This offer is only available in the UK)'. To the right of the main articles is a 'Latest Additions' section with a list of links to other content, including 'The Grinch', 'Quake III: Team Arena', 'Dungeon Siege', 'Cannon Fodder Mini-Site', 'Giants: Citizen Kabuto', 'Severance: Blade of Darkness', 'Typing of the Dead', 'Sheep', and 'Star Trek Deep Space Nine: The Fallen'.

Reviews, Previews, Awards, Past Editorials

Use these links to find older pages we've archived. Games Domain has been around for almost seven years, so if you can't find it here, it's a good bet it doesn't exist.

Latest Additions

The hottest content in the Action Zone is listed here, in an easy-to-digest series of snapshots. Select any one for a faceful of our trademark in-depth coverage.

Breaking News

Here you'll find the latest hot action gaming news, gossip and downloads. Stop by daily, and you're guaranteed to be up-to-date with this fast-moving genre.



NEXT GENERATION IN CONSOLE



XBOX™

On January 6, 2001, Microsoft finally put an end to all the speculation regarding the design of its Xbox console. Visitors to the Consumer Electronics Show (CES) in Las Vegas were treated to a keynote address by Microsoft supremo Bill Gates and a first glimpse of the console and its controller. The Xbox will be Microsoft's first step into the lucrative console market, where Sony has already proved newcomers can steal the show when it launched the PlayStation back in 1995. Could it now be Sony's turn to move aside as another player aims to take centre stage?

As members of the press amassed to quickly fill the auditorium, anticipation peaked higher than Bill Gates' bank balance. A presentation case stood in the centre of the stage, masked by a black sheet; all attendees knew exactly what lay underneath, it was just a case of how much longer they'd have to wait to see what could well prove the future of console gaming. Following what seemed like an eternity of words about the future of computing and the Internet, Microsoft's head honcho finally unmasked the console to a collective gasp from the eager onlookers and talked through its development process and awesome potential for the future.

Gates then handed over to Seamus Blackley, Xbox Technical Director, to provide a full rundown of the system's capabilities via a video presentation. While the gaming industry was still catching its breath, stunning footage of *Oddworld: Munch's Oddysee* and *Argonaut's Malice* demonstrated the Xbox's ability to display unbelievable lighting effects and jaw-dropping visuals in real-time.

To round off the show, the people's favourite wrestler, The Rock, made a surprise appearance to promote THQ's upcoming *WWF Raw is War* game for the Xbox. Though not sporting the usual star-spangled spandex, The Rock did make his traditional entrance, much to the entertainment of the crowd.

While the Xbox may well seem a long way off, the hardware is now

complete and ready to roll, as confirmed by Gates himself during the speech. Everything now rests on how long it will take to add the finishing touches to the first breed of titles. With so many disgruntled gamers up in arms at the farce that was the launch of the PlayStation2, Sony has got some serious bridges to build if it wants to remain undisputed market leader. The clock is ticking and Sony will be breaking its back to get PS2s into our homes and fast. In the meantime, sit back and enjoy what is shaping up to be the industry's bloodiest ever battle.

DVD or not DVD?

Since its launch in Japan, way back in March 2000, the PS2 has taken a lot of stick by critics claiming it is being mainly used as a DVD movie player, due to a shortage of quality games. Perhaps wanting to avoid this situation - or snapping up the chance to make even more money - Microsoft will not include functions for DVD movie playback with the Xbox. Instead customers will have to buy the DVD player and remote control separately. Microsoft has stated the reason for this is to encourage more Xbox owners to play games, rather than using the system to watch movies. Hopefully this will allow the Xbox to retail at a lower price, although the RRP has yet to be confirmed.

GAMING FINALLY UNVEILED



X marks the spot

As can be seen from these photos, the Xbox is shaped much like a regular DVD player with the "X" used to style the top of the unit and the characteristic green circle, from the Xbox logo, situated within it. The front of the unit hosts four controller ports, similar to the Dreamcast, so there's no need to shell out for a multiplayer adaptor. In a similar vein to the PS2, the disc tray will be front-loading and DVD compatible. An Ethernet port will allow rich, fast-action multiplayer gaming.

Speaking about the design, Gates commented: "It's very sleek and very straightforward. If you want to play a game, you simply push the eject button, stick the disk in, slide it and 'boom'. In eight seconds you're up and running." Gates went on to explain that information would not have to be continuously loaded from the inserted disk - such as when changing between in-game levels - thanks to the Xbox's hard drive which can store and sort game information as it plays.

Getting to grips with the Xbox

The Xbox controller bears a striking resemblance to that of Sega's Dreamcast in both the top-down and side-on perspectives. Two joysticks, a D-pad, a 'Start' and 'Back' button and six action buttons can be found on top of the controller, while two small analogue triggers are situated on its undercarriage - sounds even more familiar! The controller will have built-in rumble feedback and will include two slots for add-on peripherals like memory storage packs and a voice-recognition device.

X Specs: How does the box measure up?

	Xbox	Sony PlayStation 2	Nintendo Gamecube
CPU	733 MHz	300 MHz	405 MHz IBM-made "Gekko"
Graphics Processor	250 MHz custom-designed chip developed by Microsoft and Nvidia	150 MHz "Emotion Engine"	202.5 MHz "Flipper" custom chip
Total Memory	64MB	32MB	43MB
Memory Bandwidth	6.4GB/sec	3.2 GB/seC	3.2GB/sec
Polygon Performance	125 M/sec	75 M/sec	6-12 M/sec
Storage Medium	2-5x DVD, 8GB hard disk, 8MB memory card	4x DVD, 8MB Memory card	Propriety 1.5GB disc, Digicard - 1/2 megabyte
I/O	Game controller x4 Ethernet (10/100)	Game controller x2 USB, IEEE1394, PCMCIA	Game controller x4 High-speed serial port x2 High-speed parallel port
Audio Channels	256	48	64
3D Audio Support in Hardware	Yes (64 3D channels)	No	Not known
MIDI+DLS Support	Yes	Yes	Not known
Broadband enabled	Yes	Future upgrade	Optional
DVD Movie playback	Remote control accessory required	Yes	No
Maximum resolution	1920x1080	1280X1024	Not known



Who the f*** is Malice?

Following the unveiling of Xbox's design at the CES in Las Vegas, we spoke to one of the men behind flagship Xbox game Malice, Jez San, Chief Executive of Argonaut Games. In the past, Jez wrote one of the very first 3D games, Starglider, and developed the Super FX chip for the SNES, making himself a not-so-small fortune along the way.



GDO: How long has Malice been in development?

JS: Malice has been going a little over two years, and it's had plenty of pre-production and design work done on it prior to that.

GDO: At what point in Malice's development did you decide to go with the Xbox?

JS: The writing was on the wall about a year ago, but it took a few months to make the brave move of pulling the plug on a game that was nearly finished and could've shipped by Xmas 2000 to delay it a whole year while simultaneously re-inventing the technology and re-designing all the art and levels to make it shine on Xbox.

GDO: How are you finding developing on Xbox? How does it compare to the other platforms on which you've worked?

JS: The system is more powerful than other consoles we've worked with to date. Even on Phase 1 Xbox devkits (without pixel shader hardware) you can just about taste how good a game Malice could be on the final Xbox console, which is graphically and audibly more powerful than any PC you can buy today.

GDO: In three years' time, which console will be dominating the market?

JS: Good question. I know which one it won't be! We're committing large resources to Xbox, so we obviously feel that it has a good shot at the title, but I wouldn't write off Sony or Nintendo just yet!

GDO: How do you think the Xbox will change the console market? Will it lead to increasing numbers of "PC-style" games on other platforms, or will the arcade game still be king?

JS: Microsoft people know it could be the death of their console if they let PC games go over onto Xbox without major overhauls. They've been very explicit with us that the Xbox is a game console that just so happens to be made out of PC-style parts.

GDO: Is that mysterious green blob in the middle of the Xbox controller really a Pop-O-Matic dice?

JS: It's actually a fingerprint reader for secure saved games...or maybe it's just a place to leave your gum during long screen-breaks...

GDO: Thanks Jez.

GATES' GAMES: WHA

The CES show was a slight disappointment on the games front as no playable Xbox software was available, but this has been promised for May's E3 trade show in LA. Running on an Xbox development kit, attendees were taken through a demo of Oddworld: Munch's Oddysee and Malice. Also revealed to be in development were Tony Hawks Pro Skater 2X from Activision and WWF Raw is War from THQ.



Oddworld: Munch's Oddysee

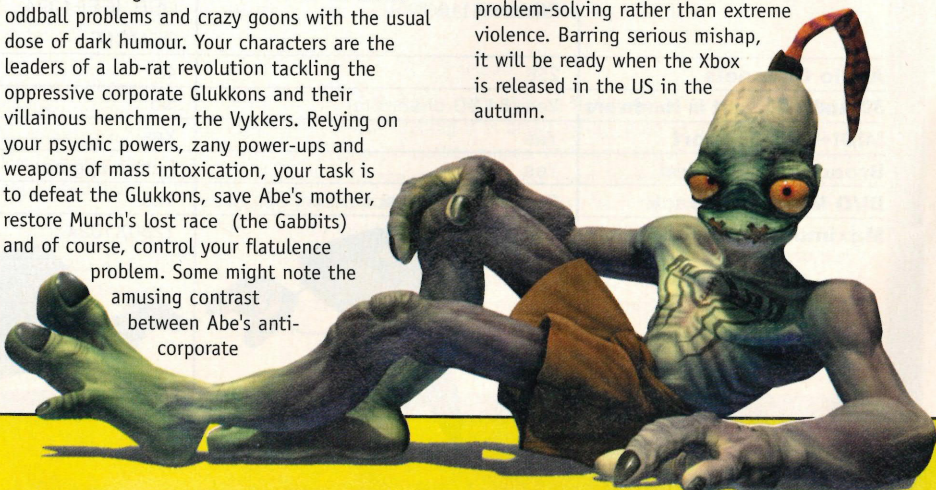
Oddworld president Lorne Lanning surprised many people with his announcement back in October that Munch's Oddysee, originally intended to hit PlayStation2 in the spring, would be an Xbox exclusive. Though Lanning stopped short of directly criticising Sony's machine, many observers were shocked that such a promising PS2 game had been lost to Microsoft. He was keen, though, to focus on the capabilities of Xbox, saying it had three times the graphical horsepower of any competitor, and praising its streamlined architecture.

In his 3D adventure, players step into the roles of Oddworld regulars Abe and Munch to tackle oddball problems and crazy goons with the usual dose of dark humour. Your characters are the leaders of a lab-rat revolution tackling the oppressive corporate Glukkons and their villainous henchmen, the Vykkers. Relying on your psychic powers, zany power-ups and weapons of mass intoxication, your task is to defeat the Glukkons, save Abe's mother, restore Munch's lost race (the Gabbits) and of course, control your flatulence problem. Some might note the amusing contrast between Abe's anti-corporate

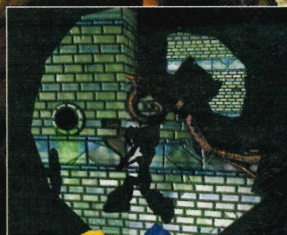
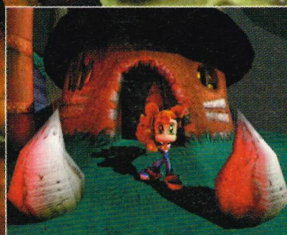
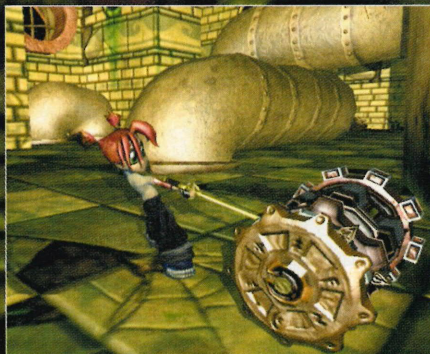
mission and the alliance of Lanning with monolithic Microsoft - far be it, though, for GDO to be so cynical.

The game will boast dynamic lighting effects and detailed, varied textures, and characters will be more detailed and realistic than in previous Oddworld titles. Xbox's graphics hardware will let Abe and Munch control armies of friends and creatures and negotiate crowded environments.

Though it's not yet clear exactly how the gameplay will work, from the demos we've seen so far it's clearly going to be based around problem-solving rather than extreme violence. Barring serious mishap, it will be ready when the Xbox is released in the US in the autumn.



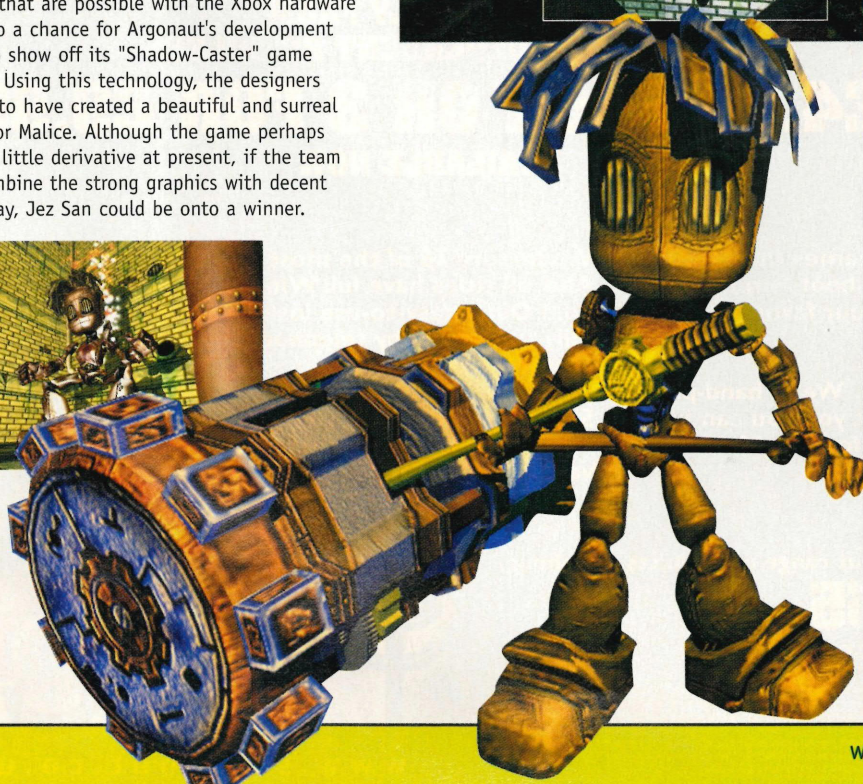
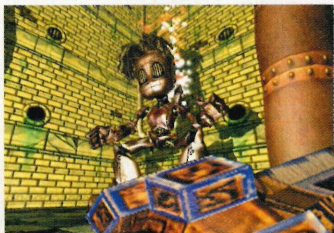
T YOU CAN X-PECT



Malice

Malice is a cartoony adventure, where the main character Alice must evolve through different incarnations to defeat a god gone mad. She wields weapons including a mammoth-sized mallet made from cogwheels, which has the ability to open locks and transform into a lawnmower to squish enemies.

The game is a dark and comic modern-day-myth of cataclysmic proportions with a character-driven, quest-based plot. The main purpose of the CES demo was to show off the lighting effects that are possible with the Xbox hardware and also a chance for Argonaut's development team to show off its "Shadow-Caster" game engine. Using this technology, the designers appear to have created a beautiful and surreal world for Malice. Although the game perhaps looks a little derivative at present, if the team can combine the strong graphics with decent gameplay, Jez San could be onto a winner.



Availability

As yet Microsoft has announced no official date for the launch of the Xbox. Early indications are pointing towards an Autumn release in the US and Japan, whereas us Europeans will once again get the short straw, having to wait until early 2002.

THE X-FILE

March 10, 2000

Xbox announced at the Games Developers' Conference

May 14, 2000

Xbox wins best console hardware award at E3

June 19, 2000

Microsoft buys Bungie Software to develop for Xbox

September 1, 2000

Microsoft lists 150 developers for Xbox

September 21, 2000

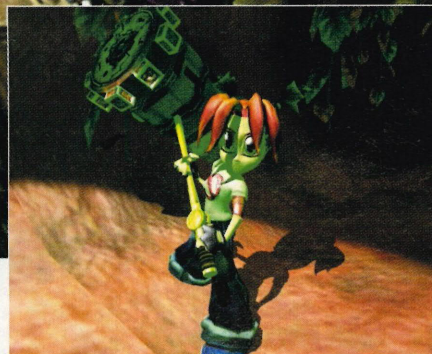
Konami signs up for Xbox and brings Silent Hill, MGS and Crash Bandicoot

December 13, 2000

Electronic Arts signs up for Xbox with FIFA and SSX planned for release

January 6, 2001

Microsoft reveals the design and games for the Xbox at CES.



What's Next?

No images were available for either Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2X or WWF Raw is War, but some early indications of these franchises' potential on the Xbox were revealed.

Activision's David Stohl commented: "Fans of Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2 are going to be blown away when they see the Xbox version." The game looks certain to be Internet compatible.

Meanwhile, THQ's Mike Rubinelli enthused: "You're going to see muscular bulge like you've never seen before; you'll probably see veins pulsing, cloth will be waving, hair will be flowing. You might even see someone get goosebumps if the game calls for it." As The Rock then appeared, no-one was prepared to dispute these claims!

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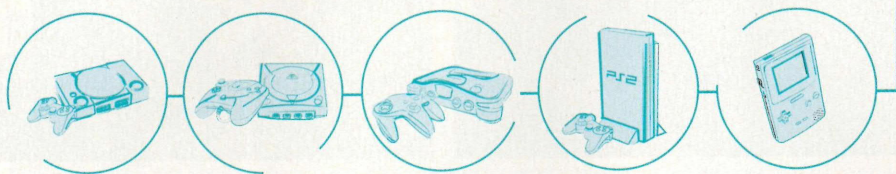
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CONSOLE GAMES



OK, so I didn't unwrap a shiny new PlayStation2 on Christmas Day, but then again I didn't pre-order one so what's new? However, you may well be shocked to learn that on January 4, I walked into my local branch of Currys and simply bought one. No filling out forms, no queuing up, no mouthing off at a Sony Customer Service rep and no visiting a certain auction site to pay a ludicrous amount to someone who had been bothered to pre-order one. Nope, I just walked right on in, and within minutes was joyfully driving home, PS2 securely by my side. As they say, good news travels fast, and when you get a tip-off about a secret shipment of PS2s hitting UK shores, you have to act fast. But firmly clutching my PS2, I gazed at the range of games on the store shelf, pondering how to dent my bank balance further. In front of me was a collection of mediocre releases, none of which really screamed out for my cash. Ridge Racer, Tekken, FIFA and ISS; been there, done that. In the end I settled for a copy of Timesplitters, although it just doesn't have quite the same appeal that Rare's Goldeneye had back in its day, no matter how much you tell me about next generation technology! Buzz well and truly over, I have now resorted to playing through my old PlayStation collection and of course, watching DVDs. As far as I'm concerned, the Dreamcast is still the closest we've come to next generation console gaming with its Internet capabilities and numerous arcade-perfect conversions. No doubt I'll change my mind when the likes of Gran Turismo 3, Wipeout Fusion and Metal Gear Solid 2 are released, but that's still some way off yet. Tell me what you think by contacting me at: gareth@gamesdomain.com

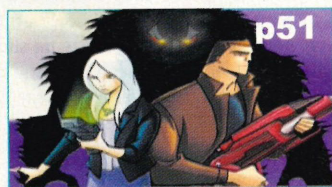


PIPELINES



p50

Kengo: Master of Bushido - PS2



p51

Roswell Conspiracies - PSX

REVIEWS



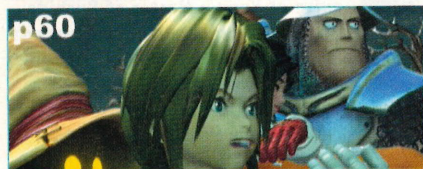
p56

ISS 2
- PSX



p58

Spawn
- DC



p60

Final Fantasy IX
- PSX

PREVIEWS



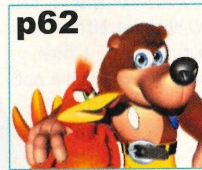
p52

Rainbow Six:
Rogue Spear PSX



p53

Fear Effect 2:
Retro Helix - PSX



p62

Banjo-Tooie
- N64



p64

ESPN X Games
Snowboarding - PS2



p65

Inspector Gadget
- GBC



p65

Batman: Chaos
in Gotham - GBC



p54

Shadow of Memories
- PS2

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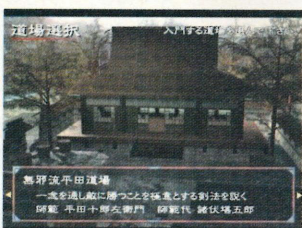
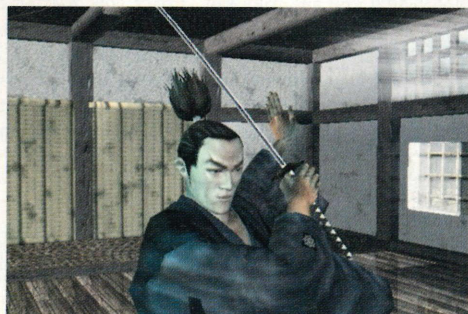
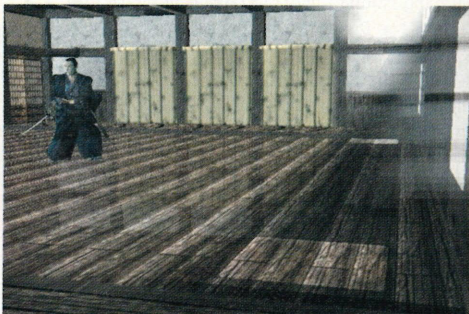
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■ PUBLISHER: UBI SOFT ■ DEVELOPER: LIGHTWEIGHT ■ FORMAT: PS2 ■ RELEASE: TBA

KENGO: MASTER OF BUSHIDO



Bushido Blade sequel heads for PlayStation2



Following on from two sword-slashing outings as Bushido Blade, Ubi Soft is now preparing gamers for a third bout under the guise of Kengo: Master of Bushido. The first two instalments achieved a cult following offering a unique style of combat designed to simulate the real thing.

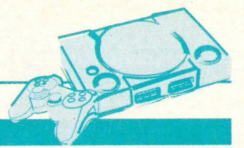
Too many fighting games allow characters to jump back to their feet having been slashed about the head with an axe, but Bushido Blade offered the opportunity to actually kill off your enemy with just one deadly blow. Without either energy bars or a time limit, a fine line determines whether you came out triumphant or were simply torn to shreds.

Making full use of the

PS2's raw power, Kengo promises to take fighting games to a whole new dimension of realism - not that you'd want to actually simulate slicing someone into salami, would you? However, fans of the previous two incarnations may be slightly disappointed to learn that energy bars will now be used, evaporating the edge-of-the-seat dramatics evoked by their exclusion. It will still be possible to use one-strike-kills attacks, although these will be limited as before.

Kengo will play in a similar style to its predecessors incorporating moves like frontal downward swings and thrusts, reverse horizontal swings and twisting attacks. Your variety of attacks will increase through simple button-push combinations and employing special moves. A new addition will allow you to dodge enemy attacks by either rolling to one side or jumping back out of reach. It will also be possible to injure different parts of your opponent's body according to where you manage to land your attacks and graphics will detail lacerations with gruesome authenticity. We hope to have a full review soon when we'll be fighting for our lives, but until then, feast your eyes upon these spectacular looking screenshots.

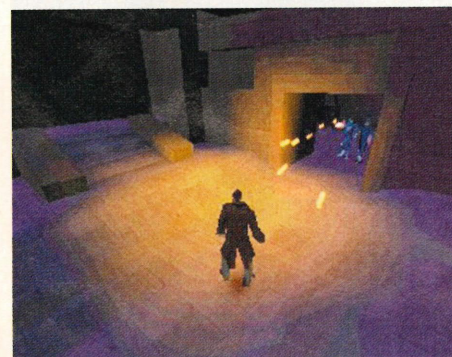
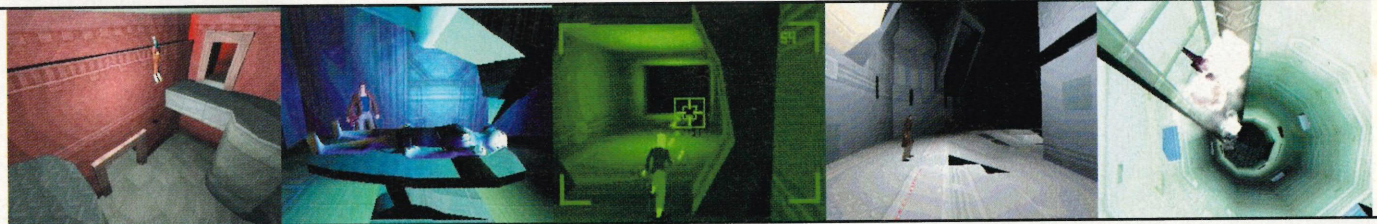
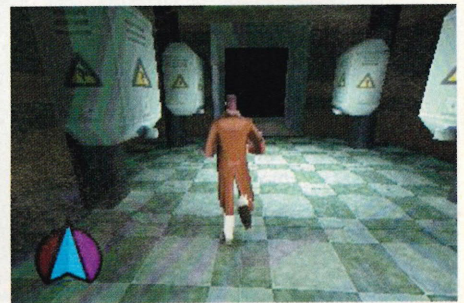
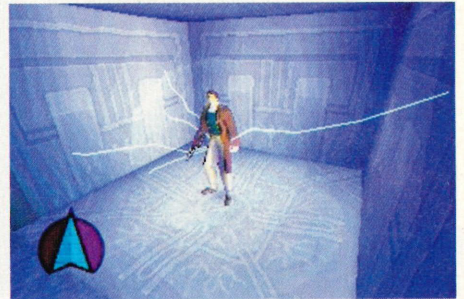




■ PUBLISHER: UBI SOFT ■ DEVELOPER: RED LEMON STUDIOS ■ FORMAT: PLAYSTATION ■ RELEASE: SPRING 2001

ROSWELL CONSPIRACIES

The hit cartoon series is coming to a PlayStation near you



The Roswell Conspiracies are unravelled when a group of intelligence experts come across a rather bizarre discovery - extraterrestrial beings are roaming the earth!

Stalking humans for food, sport and even more sinister agendas, these aliens must be stopped. To achieve this, the agents form an underground multinational movement called The Global Alliance. Based in the secure confines of a bunker deep in Roswell, recruited members include FBI personnel, elite police officers, military forces and even the British Special Air Service. Setting off on a mission to protect the earth, a true nightmare begins with aliens coming in all sorts of disguises, from vampires to werewolves.

Players step into the shoes of Nick Logan, a 25-year-old persistent detective, and the main character from the cartoon series on which the game is based. The aim of the game is, put simply, to negotiate 3D worlds and hunt down and capture the aliens. Relying on your puzzle-solving, exploration and fighting instincts, it won't be long before a boss stands in your path. To add detail to the plot, in-game engine cut-scenes are used; a series of mini-games, viewed in first-person mode, will also break up the tense action.

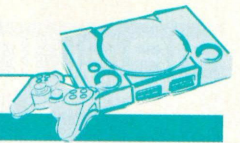
As you discover new weapons or puzzle objects

they will be deposited in your inventory. Here you can examine your finds or combine them to solve in-game puzzles. Weapons can be upgraded as you progress and there'll be the opportunity to try out some alien technologies too. According to the developers, characters will be fully 3D modelled, looking identical in style to the animated series, and will include Nick's partner Rinaker, zombies, vampires, werewolves and banshees.

Five game environments will feature gorgeous textures and details, carrying over the characteristic feel of the cartoon series. These will vary from Victorian London to Ireland, San Francisco and, of course, the Star Alliance headquarters. Annoying backtracking will be kept to a minimum, as natural breaks in the gameplay will stop players from retracing their steps.

The Roswell Conspiracies will play in a similar vein to the ever-popular Tomb Raider series, but with more intuition so that there's less chance of you wanting to demolish your control pad in sheer frustration. You'll be able to walk, run, shimmy, crouch, punch, kick and fight with a selected weapon.

Expect all to be revealed when the game is released on the PlayStation in Spring 2001.



■ PUBLISHER: UBI SOFT ■ DEVELOPER: RED STORM ■ FORMAT: PSX ■ RELEASE: APRIL

RAINBOW SIX: ROGUE SPEAR

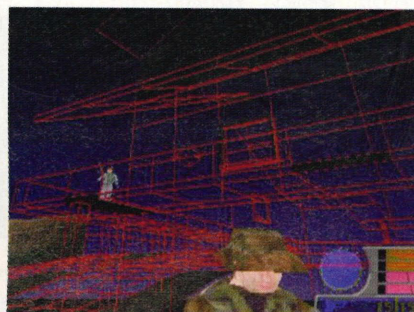
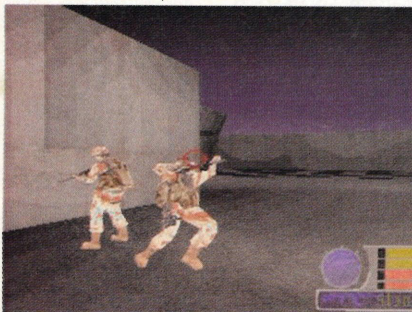
Play your way through a Tom Clancy novel



After a bowl of Ready Brek, Dave set off to work at Sellafield



George realised his stiff neck had been caused by the coathanger he had left in his shirt that morning



Camouflage your PlayStation and prepare to hide in the shadows because *Rainbow Six: Rogue Spear* is creeping through the undergrowth to a grey box near you.

Rainbow is a successful military group with expertise in diffusing major terrorist threats. As is the way with this type of game, it's up to you to save the world from nasty men who just aren't happy unless they're causing global aggro.

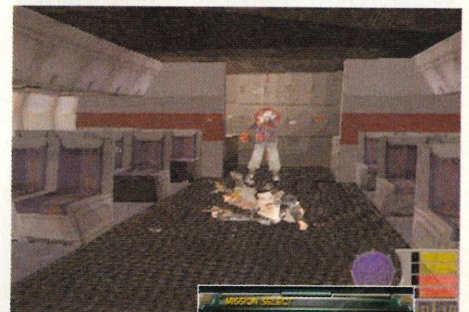
Players will be able to sneak and shoot their way through 16 missions, three specifically designed for the PlayStation version of the game (the PC version was a top seller a year or two back), and play against a friend in a series of Goldeneye-like scenarios. You will have a host of weapons to choose from including the M16 and Beretta 90 assault rifle, as well as other equipment like night-vision goggles and grenades. Picking the best men for the job from a wealth of soldiering heroes, you will then be able to sort them into teams, equip them with the most suitable artillery and items for the mission, go through your plan of attack and then execute it.

Before you go out into the field you will be

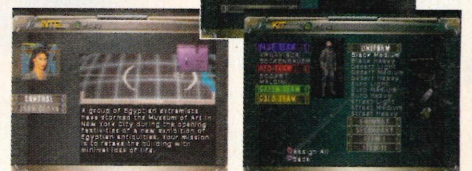
given a full video and audio mission briefing and be walked through your plan of action on a 3D map. Missions range from escorting hostages through a terrorist situation to disarming an enemy bomb on an ocean liner and successful completion requires you to use a combination of strategy, stealth and action-orientated gameplay.

You will have to navigate your team safely and speedily down the most efficient route to achieve your objectives with the least amount of fuss and without unnecessary attention being drawn to you. The auto-aim function is fantastic: point your gun in the general direction of your enemy and you will snap round to target him with accuracy. Then it's up to you to pull the trigger.

At the moment the game looks great with plenty of realistic-looking levels for you to play your missions through. We'll have to wait and see what the final version holds, but if your idea of fun is sneaking around being a hero then look no further because *Rainbow Six: Rogue Spear* has got a whole lot of world to save.



Some terrorists, yesterday





■ PUBLISHER: EIDOS ■ DEVELOPER: KRONOS ■ FORMAT: PLAYSTATION ■ RELEASE: MARCH

FEAR EFFECT 2: RETRO HELIX

Top tottie, big guns and excessive violence - what more could you want?



Mrs Bobbit, yesterday

Fear Effect drew some criticism when it was released last year for being too short. It also received flak for having huge loading times when you died during the game. On the other hand, the pre-rendered streaming animated backgrounds drew plenty of praise, and made the game into perhaps the closest thing to a manga cartoon on PSX.

For Fear Effect 2, developer Kronos has listened to the critics and appears to have solved most of the problems, while keeping everything which made the original game good. Sounds like the perfect recipe for a sequel to us.

Fear Effect 2 comes complete with everything a growing lad needs: guns, unfeasibly proportioned young ladies and violence. So, Eidos expects the game to carry a 15 certificate, but thanks to the cartoony nature of the content, the publisher is not too concerned about censorship. The complex plot is set during the late 2010s in locations from New York City, to a military base in Afghanistan, to the lost Tomb of the First Emperor of China. It concerns the Human Genome Project, a deadly disease threatening to wipe out mankind and, you guessed it, the end of the world. You take control of one of four characters - the three from the original Fear Effect return, and are joined by Rain Qin, a "very close companion" of

Hana. And as you can see from the screenshots, our female leads are top tottie, in true manga style.

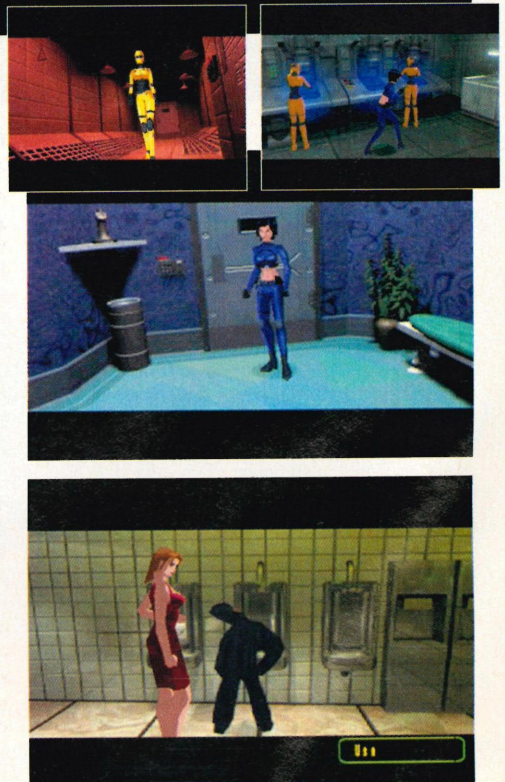
While Fear Effect 2 invites comparison with Resident Evil - both games have a similar control system, viewpoint and horror theme - this title has a much closer focus on character interaction and loses the isolated, lonely feel of past Resident Evil games.

Of course, this approach will only work if the characters and script are strong enough to provide interest, but from our time with the game it seems the four diverse individuals are suitably engaging. The strong cut-scenes break up the gunplay well, and are atmospheric and appropriately cinematic.

The abstract puzzles featured in the original game return, but this time they are more closely integrated into the action. They are still just as abstract, though - one we saw was a sliding block game of the easy-to-understand-but-hard-to-master ilk.

The advantage of this approach, however, is that plenty of variety can be injected into the gameplay, and it provides a simple way to vary the pace from the fast, combat-based core.

And yes, that load time after dying is gone.

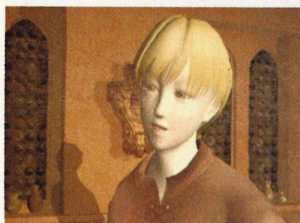




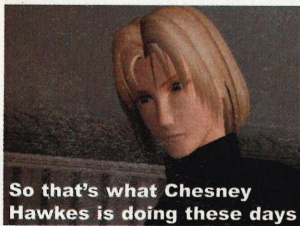
PUBLISHER: KONAMI ■ DEVELOPER: KCET ■ FORMAT: PLAYSTATION2 ■ RELEASE: SPRING 2001

SHADOW OF MEMORIES

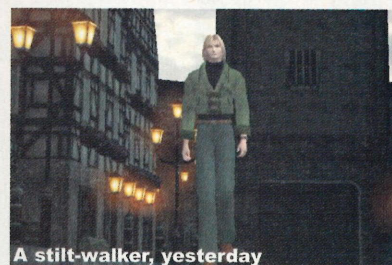
Time travel? I didn't think the PS2 was that powerful!



Why am I in black and white but the rest of the room is in colour?



So that's what Chesney Hawkes is doing these days



A stilt-walker, yesterday



Susan was shocked by the bald man's suggestion

The concept of time travel has spawned many a creative piece of work over the years. Take, if you will, H.G. Wells' classic *The Time Machine*, cult TV dramatisation *Dr Who*, or Michael J Fox in the *Back to the Future* trilogy.

It's an idea that intrigues and tempts us into thinking that, although seemingly complex, the actual possibility of us traversing down time lines and crossing continuums isn't totally out of reach. In fact time travel could be close enough to touch this spring when *Shadow of Memories* leaps on to the PlayStation2 and the controller is placed firmly in the palm of your hand.

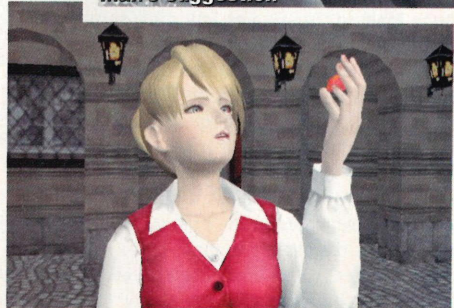
Shadow of Memories is split into ten chapters or levels; each sees main character Eike trying to evade an attempt on his life made by an unknown killer. Helped by the mysterious Homunculus and the time-travelling device that he gives to Eike, our hero must move back and forth in time, solving puzzles and making alterations that will eventually change his destiny and ultimately save his life.

The game's brilliant interwoven narrative builds throughout the game as you piece together the history of your ancestors and

friends. As you play you have to backtrack across times that you have already visited and altered. At these points you will see either yourself in another time frame or what your efforts further back in time have accomplished. For example, an attempt on your life might fail because you prevented the tree the killer is hiding behind from being planted or retrieved something from another time to help you defend yourself.

Check out some of the screenshots, and you'll see *Shadow of Memories* certainly looks great. Effects like the tarnished brown colour on old photos are used to relate which era you're in and the characters facial expressions, clothes and even the way they breathe in the cold is detailed. The soundtrack is eerie and effective enough without being obtrusive.

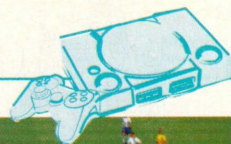
Shadow of Memories looks like it could gather a cult following when it's released this spring. If you need a gun in your hand to have a good time, it definitely won't impress, but if an ever-expanding, brilliantly sculpted storyline and some challenging puzzles are more your scene you won't be disappointed.



The giant boiled sweets were tempting but proved fatal when swallowed whole



games.
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that both Ronaldo and Roberto Carlos were
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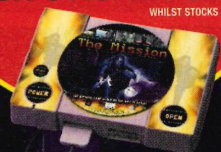
The Mission

THE ALL-ACTION FOOTBALL ADVENTURE

PURCHASE

The Mission
FROM YOUR LOCAL INDEPENDENT
RETAILER AND GET A
FREE
PSX STICKER SET

WHILST STOCKS LAST



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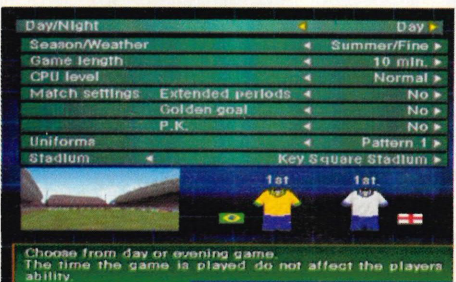
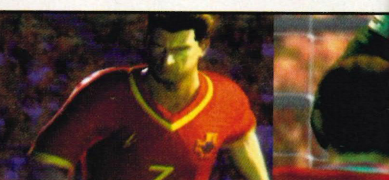




■ PUBLISHER: KONAMI ■ DEVELOPER: KCET ■ FORMAT: PLAYSTATION2 ■ RELEASE: SPRING 2001

SHADOW OF MEMORIES

Best footy game ever gets a bit of a facelift



For the true football connoisseur, it doesn't get much better than Konami's ISS series. ISS '98 was simply superb but the refined ISS Pro Evolution was better still. Without doubt, Electronic Arts' undisputed dominance with the fast-and-furious FIFA series had come to an end. Beneath GDO's twin towers, ISS has always been the firm favourite, combining strategy and sexy football for unbeatable playability.

Now, after a wait longer than the walk up the famous Wembley steps, we can finally lace up its boots to put ISS Pro Evolution 2 through its paces. Will it be tears of joy or simply Paul Gascoigne-style blubbing? Let's head out on to the field of play to find out.

Booting up the game reveals an impressive intro movie with a computer-generated Luis Figo, Michael Owen and others showing off silky skills to build the tension and wow the crowds. The title screen offers exactly the same modes of play as the previous game, albeit upon an aesthetically improved background. There's even an option detailing the significant improvements included this time round.

Notable changes range from tweaks to the already impressive gameplay to a revamped Master League competition and some obvious cosmetic enhancements. In more detail, it's now possible to build up the power for a shot while your player is expecting the ball and then cancel

it at the last moment by pressing the triangle button. This can be used to devastating effect to buy space in a tightly-packed opponent's area, perhaps even encouraging a penalty from a defender's rash lunge. In addition to a new method of pulling off a chipped shot, by holding the joy pad back when shooting, the gameplay has been changed to improve player movements and footwork when receiving and distributing possession, for a more polished feel to the proceedings.

As before, players have the choice of various international cups and leagues, organised by territory, but now the Master League has a second division. Starting out in the lower division, the aim is to win points according to your performances and then use these to buy better players, strengthening your squad. In a parallel with the real game, you only receive half the player acquisition points in the lower division than in the top one, making it harder to build up a team of superstars. The number of teams included has also been boosted to 24 to add extra competition and an all-new injury feature further simulates the stress of managerial duties.

After a particularly nasty challenge, recipients may receive either a light or heavy injury; this determines the speed of a player's recovery. Sometimes an injury is so serious an immediate substitution is required and a recovery period of several matches. Vinnie Jones wannabes can use this as a underhand tactic to tip the balance in

■ The world, yesterday

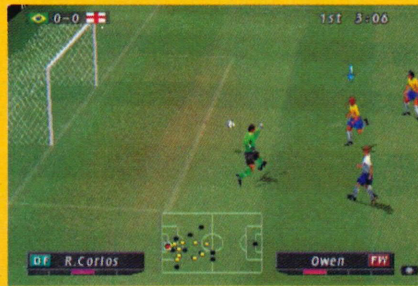


tight games.

Player attributes have also been altered to reflect real life. In the previous game, we all knew that both Ronaldo and Roberto Carlos were ludicrously faster than any other player and recognising this, Konami has toned down their pace. And the acquisition of the FIFA Pro licence at last ensures the game now uses correct player names.

Stepping out onto the field for the first time, the most obvious change is that more polygons have been used on players, the turf, goalposts and stadiums to give a much sharper appearance. It's possible to designate your captain and sure enough, he'll sport the captain's armband. Even the ball physics have been refined so that it reacts more like a real one, rather than a cheap plastic flyweight.

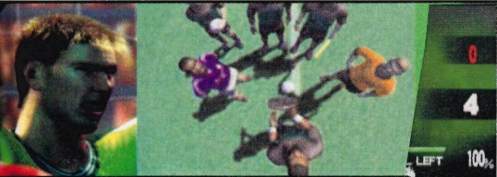
In terms of gameplay, with the ball having a weightier feel and the increased polygon count all round, the action is slowed down significantly, even on the fastest game setting. Though still incredibly playable, it doesn't quite match up to the high standards to which we've become accustomed. On a more positive note, many of the subtle tweaks make the action more lifelike, such as when your defender performs a diving header to desperately clear the ball from his penalty area. Fouls can now be conceded for a simple shirt pull and the ball often bobbles out of challenges, rather than being glued to the foot of the successful sliding tackler.



■ The goose-stepping goalkeeper must have slipped through QA



Believe in your dreams. If they involve football, that is. Not that dream about your Maths teacher and the ostrich.

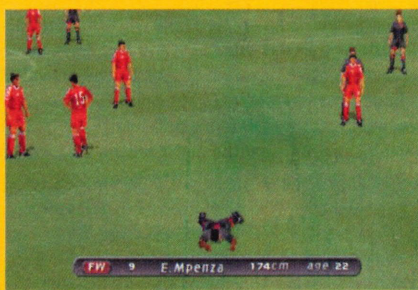


Another area desperate for improvement is the commentary, which is still abysmal and doesn't offer any improvement over the original version. At least the ball now sounds meatier when you kick it, rather than as if you've just burst it!

At the end of the day, ISS Pro Evolution 2 is like its title suggests, more of an evolution rather than the revolution many were expecting. You still encounter furious tactical battles with your buddies and there's no better fun to be had than in a four-player match-up, but we still prefer the original version. For us, the slower pace takes a critical edge off the original's addictive gameplay. This aside, ISS still rules the park and don't let anyone tell you otherwise!



■ The international Morris dancing contest was a roaring success



■ Sadly, the new "play dead" feature detracts from the realism



JUDGEMENT

- FORMAT: PLAYSTATION
- PUBLISHER: KONAMI
- DEVELOPER: KCET
- RELEASE: MARCH

GO ONLINE: www.consoledomain.co.uk/playstation/reviews/ISS_Pro_Evolution_2.html

- + New injuries feature
- + Solid gameplay
- + Visuals enhanced
- + New Masters league
- Not enough improvements over original
- Bit of a wasted opportunity

7

WORDS: GARETH HOLDEN



SPAWN: IN THE DEMON'S HAND



CIA Agents, pacts with the devil, huge weapons - "just doing my job, ma'am"



Todd McFarlane's blockbusting comic book anti-hero has finally blasted onto console format. Following the huge success of the comic book series, Spawn is now ready to tame Sega's Dreamcast for adrenaline-charged arcade action aplenty. Surely, then, gaming genius Capcom has yet another top title to add to its collection? Read on for the verdict.

Damned ex-CIA agent Al Simmons makes a pact with the devil after he finds himself in hell following his murder at the hands of his treacherous ex-boss. The deal: Simmons will be resurrected as the multi-morphing Spawn if he leads hell's army. However, Al soon decides to use his newly acquired supernatural powers for the pursuit of all things good instead. Nice fella.

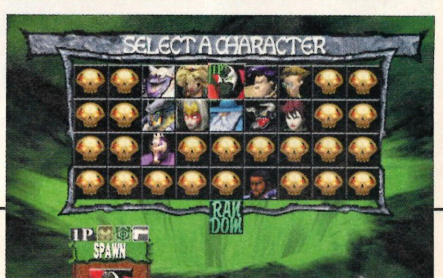
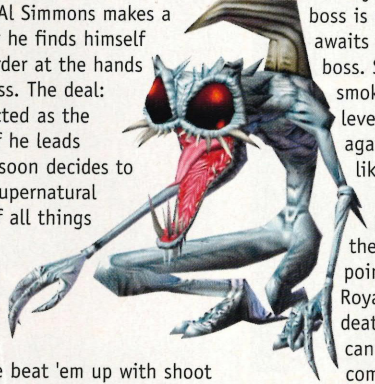
As one of the comic industry's most popular and intriguing characters, Spawn plays as an arena-based arcade beat 'em up with shoot 'em up elements thrown in for explosively good measure. Selecting one of 36 different characters, 24 of which have to be unlocked, players have the choice of two different modes of play within the game's arcade and tournament sections.

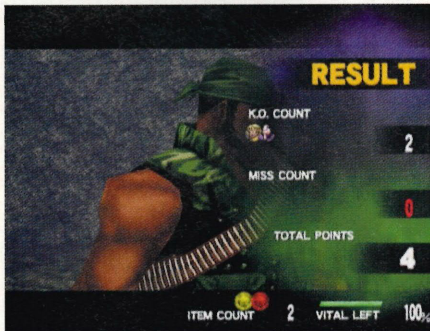
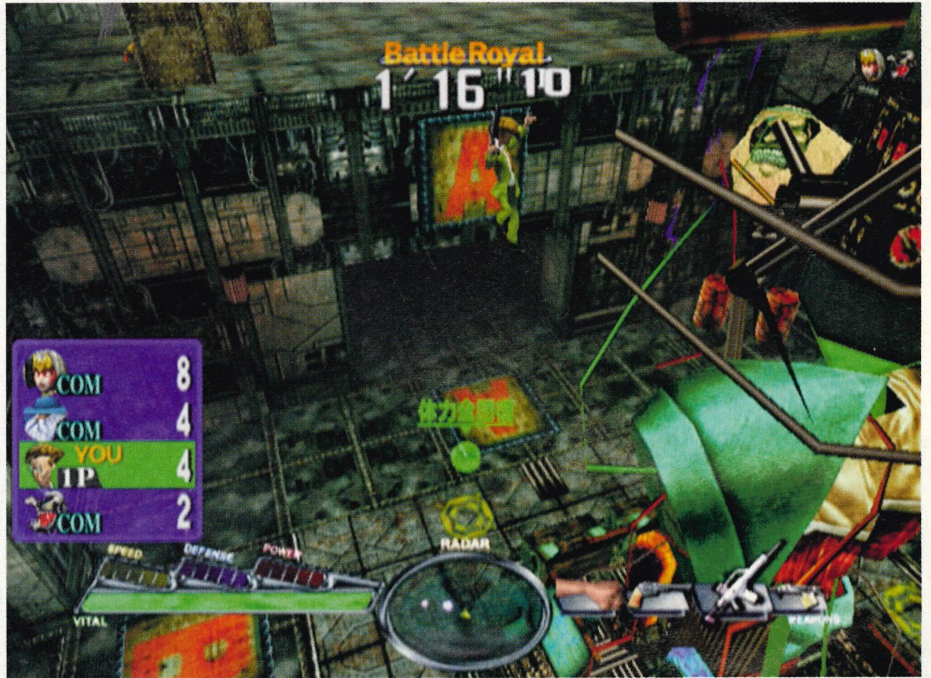
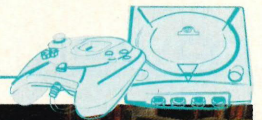
Within the arcade section, the first mode is Boss Attack. Playing exactly like the successful coin-op, players can either set out alone or call on a computer-controlled ally or friend to help

out. The aim is to battle it out within a series of different arenas against many bad guys before your main attention is switched to the arrival of a huge boss character. Power-ups - like new weapons, stronger defence and health replenishments - can be collected by blowing up scenery, such as the crates and boxes scattered liberally around each arena. Once each boss is defeated, a whole new arena awaits with an even uglier and scarier boss. Starting off with a butch, cigar-smoking bloke in a suit, for the Mafia level, it's not long before you'll be up against huge robotic gorillas and the like.

Taking on a slightly different perspective to the proceedings are the arcade multiplayer modes, where points mean pride! There's Battle Royal, which is geared towards a deathmatch style confrontation and can be played alone, against three computer opponents, or facing up to three other humans, and Team Battle, which offers players the chance to form teams of two to co-operatively take on the opposing team.

The tournament section offers Team Battle and Battle Royal modes of play only, which differ slightly from their arcade counterparts. Both modes can only be played in single player format, where you either team up with a computer player to take on a pair of enemies in Team Battle mode or simply take on three





computer opponents in the Battle Royal. Each mode is structured with a ladder system, where you have to defeat a certain set of enemies before progressing on to the next lot.

Within the heat of the battle, the gameplay remains simple. Infinite continues mean even inexperienced gamers will be able to complete Spawn first time round. However, the scores of weapons and items to collect along the way - from knives and rocket launchers to steel bikinis - keep the action interesting. Each time you complete the game, you also unlock a new character to add to the initial line-up of 12.

Graphically, Spawn is a joy to behold and matches the arcade sprite for sprite. The frame-rate is locked at a rocksteady 60fps and will totally blow you away the first time you play! Even in split-screen four-player mode, the game maintains a decent frame-rate, while still displaying credible aesthetics.

Levels range dramatically from a heliport to a forest of gloom, a secret sewer and even six different labyrinths. Each provides either different rooms or rock outcrops and the like to shield yourself from enemy attacks. What impressed us again was the non-existence of any loading times when travelling between different rooms - it's even possible to fire a rocket through a door and kill an enemy you can't even

see, which often proves a nasty surprise for the victim!

Several elements slightly hinder the enjoyment factor, the worst of which is the camera angle confusion. Too often you can be caught out trying to shoot at an enemy you can't actually see, which can be especially frustrating when you're in a tightly-spaced room. At least you are able to switch to a first-person view though. Secondly, certain characters are limited by their short-range moves, which makes attacking a bazooka-wielding enemy nigh on impossible. Thirdly, there is no option to link up to the Internet to battle against other gamers, which would have massively improved its longevity.

All in all, Spawn is a quality arcade conversion, but treat it as no more than that. Its awesome visuals, fast and furious gameplay and highly addictive formula will make it a comparable contender to the mighty Powerstone for some. While true fans of the comic may hunt around to collect every possible weapon, the majority of beat 'em up fans will tire of this before long, making it a classic case of try before you buy.

■ **Bazooka-wielding enemies, frenzied fire-power action and arcade quality levels - from the Forest of Gloom to secret sewers to labyrinth hell.**

JUDGEMENT

- **FORMAT:** DREAMCAST
- **PUBLISHER:** EIDOS INTERACTIVE
- **DEVELOPER:** CAPCOM
- **RELEASE:** OUT NOW

GD ONLINE: Cheats at: www.consoledomain.co.uk/cheats/Playstation/525.html

- + Excellent graphics
- + Fast-fire gameplay
- + Loads of weapons to collect
- + Four-player mode is a blast!
- Replay value could be greater
- No online facility
- Occasional camera problems

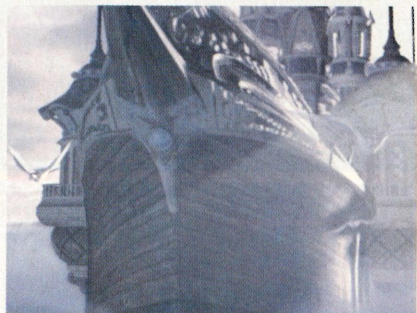
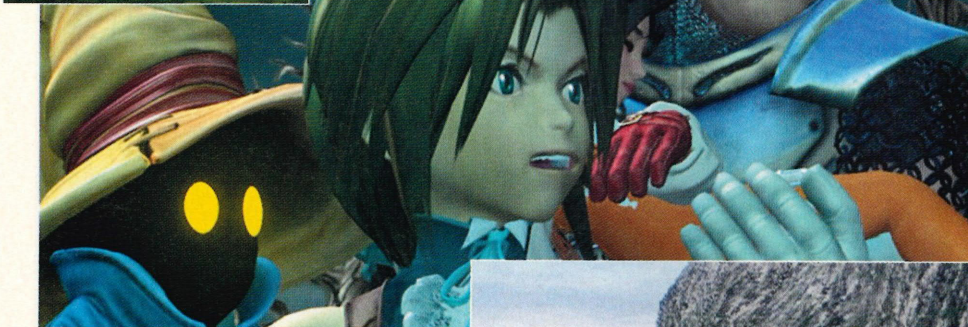
COMPILED BY THE EDITORS OF TEN OUT OF TEN

WORDS: GARETH HOLDEN

FINAL FANTASY IX



Onwards and upwards - Square shoots from the hip



Zidane - World Footballer of the Year turned game character - was not amused by the design of his sword's hilt



The Final Fantasy series has been a staple of videogaming ever since the first was released back in the days of the NES. Since then, they have changed from simply-drawn but immersive RPGs into vast four-CD epic adventures, with budgets rivalling the most expensive of Hollywood thrillers. But many people felt the most recent instalment, Final Fantasy VIII, wasn't one of the best.

So Final Fantasy IX (FFIX) marks a return to the more abstract style of Final Fantasy VII. Instead of the cyberpunk-esque theme of VIII, we have floating islands, steam-powered airships and wizards, rather than gun-toting soldiers. The plot follows a young thief, Zidane (he's the one with the tail), and opens with his troupe performing a play for the local royal family as a cover for kidnapping Princess Garnet. Turns out she wanted to be kidnapped anyway, and Zidane and friends are drawn into an international conflict which threatens to swallow up the whole of civilisation. Such is life in RPGs.

But, although the theme of FFIIX is a throwback to earlier Final Fantasy games, the core gameplay has stayed untouched throughout the entire series. Your party (now expanded to a maximum of four characters) moves through a linear storyline with a number of optional side-quests, guided and encouraged by strong plot threads and fantastic FMV sequences. In many areas, random encounters pit your team against

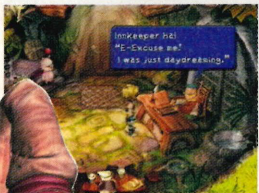
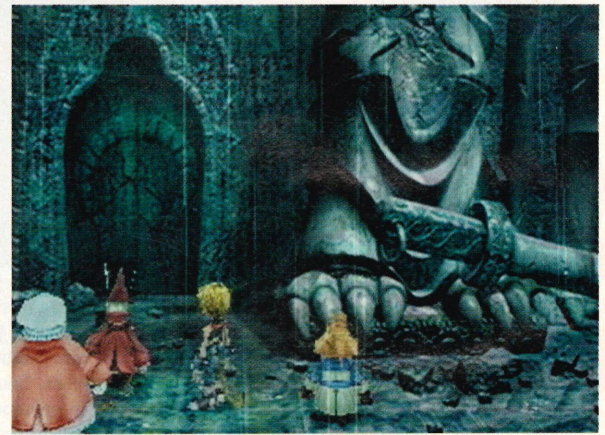
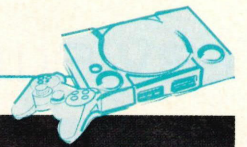
■ Jaw-droppingly awesome pre-rendered video sequences

one or more imaginatively designed (or often downright weird) monsters - as you fight, your characters gain experience and new skills. They also get new abilities from the armour and weapons they bear. Once practised sufficiently, these can be permanently learned, and include special attacks, spells and passive defensive bonuses. Only a certain number can be active at once, however.

Without going into too much detail, the plot is

"The graphics are, as always, superb"

just as engrossing as we've come to expect with Square games. New in this game, though, is the Active Time Event - almost like a cut-scene - which serve to give the player a view of what's going on elsewhere, generally with a different character. They are optional, but do a good job of fleshing out the personalities involved and giving the impression of a living world. The difficulty level is well-judged - hard enough to make many of the battles a challenge, but not so difficult as to be frustrating. It's not always



enough, though, just to play through the campaign and it can occasionally be necessary to detour to an enemy-rich area to level-up for a few hours, gaining more experience and skills - something that was more-or-less unnecessary in FFXIII. If this sort of progression annoys you, you should look elsewhere.

Thankfully the battles have been speeded up, and many of the longer animations are skippable. The Active Battle System has always combined the best elements of turn-based and real-time combat, and this implementation is probably one of the best yet. While the animations are great, they used to pale rather after the novelty wears off - thankfully, this problem has been removed.

For some reason, though, the characters seem rather less well-developed than in past Final Fantasy games. Square has always relied on creating interesting heroes and villains to carry plot and there's nothing in FFXIX to rival Cloud's slow spiral into insanity which made the seventh game so compelling. The motivations and actions of the protagonists are perhaps a little too obvious at times, but good characterisation is so rare in videogames it's always welcome to play something where some thought has gone into personality.

That said, the graphics are, as always, superb. Backgrounds, character animations, enemies and spell effects are among the best in their class, not to mention the jaw-droppingly awesome pre-rendered video sequences which continue the high standards set in the game's predecessors. The musical score and sound effects, while perhaps a little forgettable, complement the graphics well.

It's also worth mentioning the quality of the translation. When playing the other games in the series, there have always been a few niggling oddities serving to remind the player that English was not the language in which they were developed. That strangeness is absent from FFXIX, and the translation is unnoticeable - surely the ideal situation.

Despite its few lingering problems, many people will find FFXIX to be the finest Final Fantasy game to date. While the characterisation isn't totally perfect, most other aspects of the game are top-notch. But, they ought to be - Square has, after all, had eight tries to get it right. Although Final Fantasy IX is a superb game, and will delight fans of the series, it doesn't make much progress much over FF existing games. It'll be fascinating to see what Square can come up now the Japanese firm's undeniable creative flair has been let loose on PlayStation2, and until then, this makes a fantastic, if unoriginal, stopgap.

■ Not exactly a giant leap for mankind, but FFXIX is still an excellent game

JUDGEMENT

- FORMAT: PLAYSTATION
- PUBLISHER: SQUARE EUROPE
- DEVELOPER: SQUARE
- RELEASE: FEBRUARY 16

GD ONLINE: Movie at: www.consoledomain.co.uk/playstation/movies/63.html

- + Beautiful graphics and sound
- + Well-realised, believable environments
- + Engrossing battles
- + Coherent and immersive
- Characters slightly disappointing
- No real step forward

COMING TO THE PS2

OUT OF TEN

8

WORDS: MIKE SMITH

BANJO-TOOIE

Banjo-whoie? Ah yes, now I remember why I bought that N64!



Are you looking at my bird?



Adventuring with a furry companion has always been a premise worthy of development for entertainment purposes. Take, for example, heart-rending Lassie episodes, the hitchhiking Littlest Hobo or the friendship between Gentle Ben and that blonde, gappy-toothed kid.

Gaming too has seen its fair share of animal adventurers including Sonic, the Fur Fighters and Spyro to name but a few. It's around two years since the release of the hugely-hyped Banjo-Kazooie and the sequel to the game, which once again follows the exploits of the quirky bear and bird combo, is almost upon us. Banjo-Tooie (get it?) is about to do its thing on the N64, so get ready for some fur-ntastic feather-flying fun.

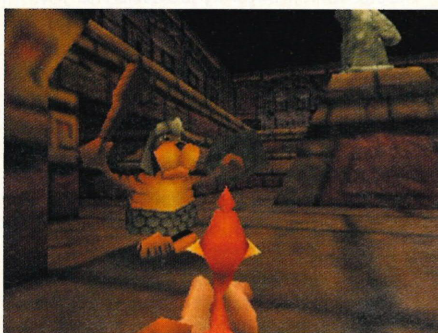
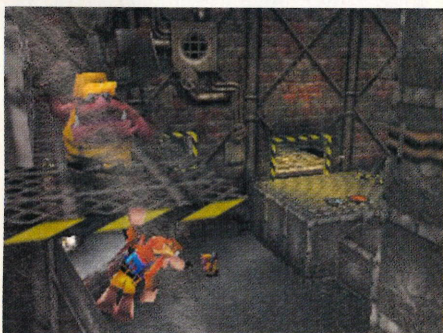
In their last outing our daring duo put the evil witch Grunty to rest under a massive rock. However, following a daring escape she's back to cause more havoc and reap revenge on the meddling pair. After destroying Banjo's house and killing his friend, Bottles, Grunty escapes to her castle, Cauldron Keep, and leaves Banjo and

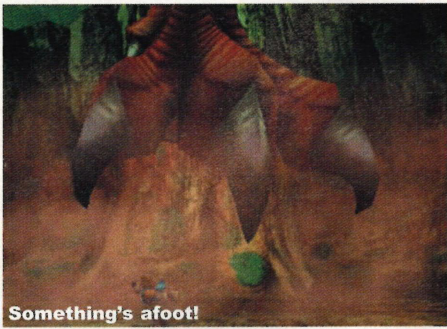
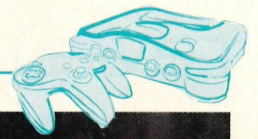
Kazooie at the beginning of an adventure. Their aim: to avenge their friend's death and restore peace to their home, Spiral Mountain.

Banjo-Tooie is absolutely jam-packed with content. The range of pick-ups, power-ups and characters is amazing enough, but get into the game a little deeper and you realise that it holds a massive amount of puzzles, challenges and tasks for you to complete. Banjo and Kazooie have a whole host of moves for you to lock down and you also get to control some of Banjo's friends and get morphed into other useful creatures and items to aid your quest.

The game is set over nine massive levels full of puzzles to solve, creatures to help and mini-games to play. Problems you face include getting a steam train back on its tracks and controlling a huge golden statue with voodoo magic. The action and interaction in the game is great, as is the freedom that you have to explore your surroundings, which seem virtually limitless.

Banjo and Kazooie's moves are effective and inspired. As you go along you'll learn more and





Something's afoot!



Banjo gets attacked by a giant saveloy-wielding purple monster, as you do



more about what the friends can do, but if you played the first game you'll definitely have an advantage as the moves from Banjo-Kazooie are used again, right from the off. Aside from controlling Banjo and Kazooie in a series of running, attacking, climbing, swimming and special moves, you will also have to visit your mate, the shaman Mumbo Jumbo, and Humba Wumba, his rival, for some help. When you visit them and hand over a magic Glowbo - don't ask - they will transform you into a form that is more suited to the task in hand. For example, in Glitter Gulch Mine you will be morphed into a detonator, which allows you to jump around the mine blowing stuff up - useful if there's a pile of rubble in your way. When you've finished, you return to your shaman and get transformed back to your original self. In the same way you can also control different characters including the



brilliantly cute little Mumbo.

As you've probably figured out, the game is full of weird and wonderfully named characters, levels and worlds. Aside from the aforementioned, there's King Jingaling and Master Jiggawigg - who both rule different worlds within the game - and Jamjars the informative mole and his brother Bottles, who gets it in act one. Worlds range from Jolly Roger's Lagoon, where Kazooie will learn how to perform a Wing Whack, to Cloud Cuckoo Land, where the landscape is scattered with cheese wedges and Banjo can use a Sack Pack move to catch a few Zs. But for all its off-the-wall characters and surroundings, Banjo-Tooie hasn't got a twee bone in its body. The game has a dry and even a quite dark edge to it, as well as a sense of humour: Kazooie lets rip with some sharp one-liners at every opportunity.

Graphically the game looks great with some fine interjecting movies and animation. The music is bearable, but outshone by the voice talent that consists of a selection of woofs, grumbles and bleeps translated by the subtitles.

Banjo-Tooie is a marvelous romp through some of the most imaginative, interactive levels in a game of this genre and it has enough meaty content to keep you coming back for more. If you're a bit of a Spyro or Rayman fan, but want a bit more mental stimulation, Banjo-Tooie is a fantastic sequel that dishes out some real animal magic.

JUDGEMENT

- FORMAT: N64
- PUBLISHER: NINTENDO
- DEVELOPER: RARE
- RELEASE: SPRING 2001

GO ONLINE: Movies at: www.consoledomain.co.uk/n64/movies/224.html

- + Seemingly limitless surroundings
- + Incredibly imaginative level design
- + Top sense of humour
- + Jam-packed with gameplay
- + Great animations and movies
- Bearable sound

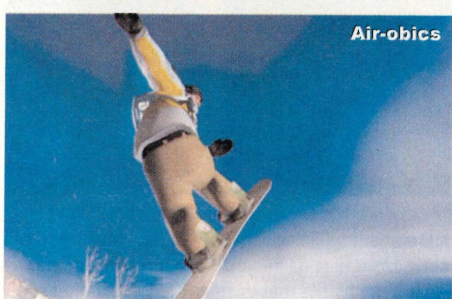
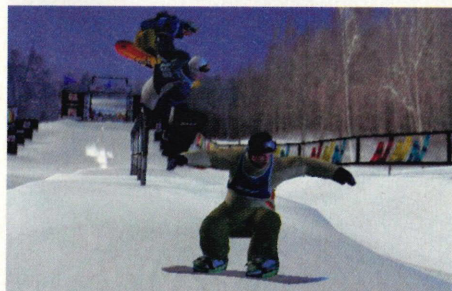
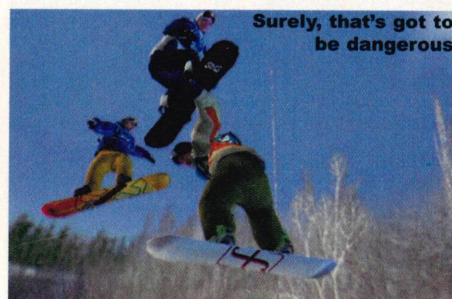
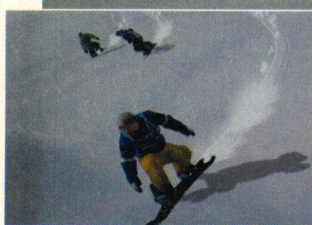
8 OUT OF TEN

WORDS: JAYNE BOWEN

ESPN WINTER X-GAMES



Big air, and even bigger puffer jackets - it has to be snowboarding



Successful snowboarding games have been released for every console since the Saturn. But, ESPN Winter X-Games Snowboarding presents perhaps the most realistic console adaptation of snowboarding ever.

All of the X-Games' snowboarding events are featured in the game, from the ubiquitous half-pipe, to the always-exciting boardercross. The game lets you jump right into any of the events from the opening menu, but the real meat of the game is found in the aptly-titled Snowboarder mode. Here, you create a custom boarder (select from different male and female models, then pick height, weight, and a few other variables), and take them through their career. You start off with a base board and boring clothing, but earn money by completing photoshoots and by winning competitions.

There are a number of competitions that can be entered into, ranging from timed runs down tricky trails, to a test of skills in the pipe. None of these are exactly easy to win, and the later levels of competition have entrance fees, so you'd better practice up. Winning in one level of competition allows you to compete in the next higher level, and winning will almost always gain you a sponsor. This game's developers have seemingly digitized the entire inventory of

boarding manufacturers like Burton, K2, Sims, and about a dozen others. Gaining any as a sponsor will give you access to their entire line of goggles, boots, boards, or whichever area they're sponsoring.

The game looks gorgeous and has an excellent soundtrack. It also manages to strike the difficult balance between being too easy and infuriatingly tricky to master.

In case you haven't figured it out by now, this game is a snowboarder's dream come true in a virtual world. Everything that pro boarders get to do in real life and wannabes like me can only dream about, players will get to do in this game.

That said, we couldn't recommend it to everyone out there. The learning curve is a bit steeper than its competitor, SSX, and in the multiplayer modes it lacks a two-player competition where the two elements of stunts and speed are successfully blended together.

However, combined with the authentic look, feel, and events of ESPN's Winter X-Games, and an obvious desire to be the ultimate snowboarding game ever, ESPN Winter X-Games Snowboarding succeeds in being just that. Now, if only more people would stop buying that other game, and figure out where the real action's at.

JUDGEMENT

- FORMAT: PLAYSTATION2
- PUBLISHER: KONAMI
- DEVELOPER: ESPN INTERACTIVE
- RELEASE: OUT NOW

GD ONLINE: Cheats at: www.consoledomain.co.uk/cheats/Playstation2/pages/6408.html

- + Solid graphics
- + Great soundtrack
- + Incredible depth of play
- Multiplayer leaves a bit wanting
- Steep learning curve

8

WORDS: TIM STEVENS



INSPECTOR GADGET

■ PUBLISHER & DEVELOPER: UBI SOFT ■ RELEASE: OUT NOW

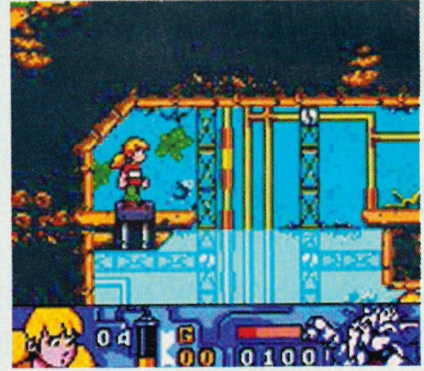
One Inspector Gadget has go-go-gadget-legged his way onto Game Boy Color and once again is on a mission that only his special talents can cope with, helped of course by his computer whizz-kid niece Penny and Brains, her trusty dog.

We find Gadget fighting his arch-enemy Doctor Claw and another of Claw's fiendish inventions, the MadKaktus! But while the fate of the world in your hands, the go-go-gadget roller skates may make staying upright your main priority.

Gameplay is aggravatingly difficult, yet addictive enough to keep gamers coming back for more. Players can really get stuck into this challenging platform game where adopting the most suitable character is essential.

Visuals are superb, from the little animations of Gadget's extending head, right through to his inflatable jacket. Sounds are also as impressive, with a few catchy tunes thrown among the mundane ones.

This one is bound to keep you coming back, again and again. It is, by far, one of the most annoyingly difficult games there is and that's the key to keeping players returning for more.



WORDS: DAVE O'DONOHUE

BATMAN: CHAOS IN GOTHAM

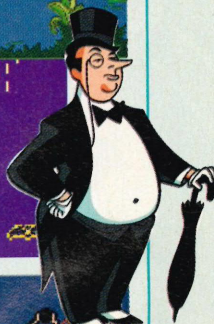
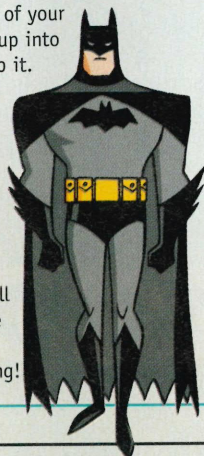
■ PUBLISHER: UBI SOFT ■ DEVELOPER: DIGITAL ECLIPSE ■ RELEASE: OUT NOW

The caped crusader is back and this time he's winging it on to the Game Boy Color. *Batman: Chaos in Gotham* is a title full of Zaps, Pows and Ker-bams, offering owners of the handheld a colourful romp through Batman's action-packed antics.

Gotham is under threat once again. As degenerates roam the streets causing trouble, that all-so-familiar warning light shines into the sky and Batman is already on his way to the city's underbelly to get busy with the baddies.

He has an array of special punches, kung-fu moves and, of course, his trademark utility belt. This is well equipped with bombs and other weapons and a grappling hook, which proves handy when an item is just out of your reach, as you can pull yourself up into the middle of the screen to grab it.

The action in the game is great, as is the animation and fluid movements of the our masked hero. Tricky little gaps to jump and ledges to hang off make for interesting gameplay and the diverse nature of the level design means that there's always something new to try. All in all it's a bat-tastic adventure with some great content; ideal for all superheroes in the making!



WORDS: JAYNE BOWEN

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And with more woofers and tweeters than a pigeon-infested dogs' home, about the only people who couldn't possibly enjoy this prize are your neighbours.

So what do you have to do to get your hands on this stunning system? Simply answer the question below and call our competition hotline* to register your details.

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- c) Decibels

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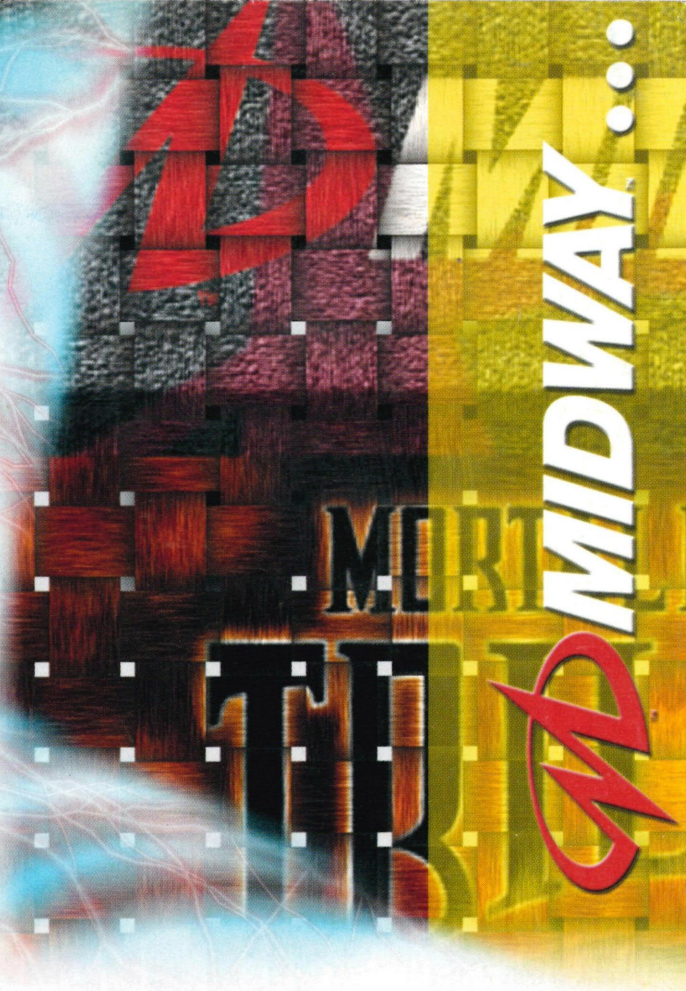
COMPETITION HOTLINE:

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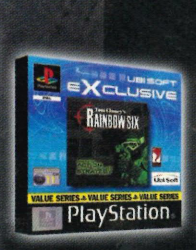
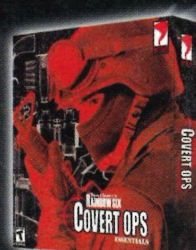
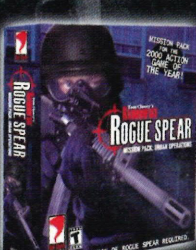
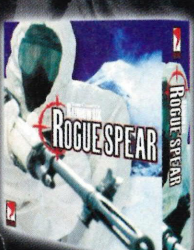
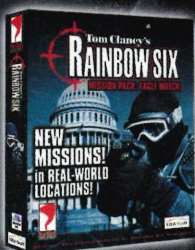
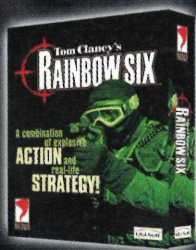
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