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Next Generation Magazine















News

All the news that's fit to print, and only one or two stories that aren't (just to keep our edge)

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Every game design process ends the same way — with a painful, often sleepless, sometimes ridiculous final push. Laugh and cry as key developers tell their tales of "Crunch Time"............80

01/00



■ EDITORIAL

Millennium? What do you mean, millennium?











₽Finals

Unbiased reviewing at its best

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Welcome to 2000 — only one year to go until the nomillennium. Other folks may try telling you it starts January i, 2000, but you come to Next Gen for the truth. That's what we give you, and have been giving you for the past five years. For a look back, check out Retroview and page 25 of News.

By now, the year's big games have either shipped or slipped to February and March. Meaning crunch time is either over, or it's been extended for 60 more days. For an insiders' look at the brutal task of shipping a game — the 18-hour days, the endless meals of pizza, the fistlights — check out the war stories on page 80.

Capcom's clearly been in the threes of crunch time for a while. Resident Evil. Code Veronica not not plooks scary as hell, it's also a good example of just what nepect from Dreamcast in the coming months. And what can you expect from Next Generation in the coming months: Exactly what we've been giving you for five years: honest, hype-free reporting on the most important topic on the planet; zames.



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■ A SPORTING CHANCE

ESPN and Konami join forces Can Konami finally make the ESPN brand work in videogames?

Disney owns ESPN. And for all of Walt's company's ability to make the best animated feature films the world has seen, it has spent millions on videogame development to no avail. So when Disney/ESPN decided to partner with developer Radical Entertainment two years ago, the partnership made sense. Radical would deliver quality sports titles, and Disney would provide the marketing and distribution muscle.

But then Disney changed strategies

and backed out, leaving Radical holding the bag with no distribution and even less cash. It was nearly a deathblow to the company; while Radical is restructuring, the company is a shadow of its former self, and it seemed the falled deal left Disney management even less interested in marketing and distributing videogame software, which is probably part of the reason the company has partnered with Konami. As a full-blown publisher, Konami has the development, marketing, sales, and distribution

teams in place to deliver ESPN sports products; all Konami needed to



compete with the bigs guys was a brand. Enter ESPN, widely respected by sports enthusiasts, and arguably the only license that can really compete with EA's years of branding efforts. Videogame publishers have been after the license for years, but Disney Interactive kept it closely guarded during the years it aspired to have its own sports studio. In this partnership, Konami gets exactly what it needs: instant credibility after years of poorly branded sports titles. Despite several great games like J-League soccer and NBA in The Zone, the company hasn't been able to cap-ture the audience that EA's titles have won over. However, with a new marketing team on board at Konami that is

"I just got off the phone with [Sonys] Phil Harrison 10 minutes ago," says a top third-party development executive who asked to be kept anonymous, "and now I'm thinkling even more about doing Dreamcast games."

The statement goes a long way to explaining the frustration U.S. developers are feeling at the continuing delays they're facing getting PlayStation development kils (Although, to be honest, it also goes a long way towards explaining how surprised most developers have been at Dreamcast's rapid sales — rumors about EA rampling up development are even

running around again.)
It seems that Sony's development
kits are still very difficult to come by.
And those select developers that do
have kits have very preliminary ones.
"The early dev kits don't have the
I/O." says another developer, 'so all we

BREAKING THE CODE

PlayStation2: Hardware heaven or hell?

developers are feeling at the continuing delays they re facing getting PayStation? Developers with "the kit" share their development kits. (Although, to be honest, it also goes a long way towards opinions on the new system

can do is put small code snippets onto the system and run them."

According to the developer, as of press time, no US team had a full development kit. And it would be the new year before anyone had one. "I need a launch title," said the executive we quoted at the top, "and if I don't get a dev kit soon, I'm screwed." Despite the frustrations, most of the developers we talked to were still enthusiastic about the system itself, even with early kits.

"The raw horsepower is unbelievable, even on these preliminary systems," says Alex Hastings, VP of Software at Insomniac Games. "Whenever you get a new console, you start thinking, 'OK, how can I get this system to do the absolute maximum that it can do? With a system this complex and this powerful, it's an overwhelming task. People like me have to change our perspective a little bit, and not say, 'How can we get this to run 100%?" but "How can we come close?"" The answer comes from gaming's past: assembly-level programming is the only way to manage the multuple parallel systems of PlayStation2, "When you're up in C, you're a step removed from the hardware, and it's much trickier to keep track of what everything's doing."

Another programmer points out that the graphics chip, specifically designed for vector processing is made for assembly. "You can take an entire vector of four numbers, and multiply it by another vector of four numbers, in one operation. That's a lot more than you could do in C.

So how will vector operations improve games? Naughty Dog cofounder and chief programming guru

Andy Gavin gives some examples.

"There's a lot more opportunities to
do fancy computations," Gavin says,

WHAT IS IT?

■ This legendary Silicon Valley engineer helped Nolan Bushnell make *Pong*, then taught Steve Wozniak the RF hack that made the Apple II's graphics possible.



"and that's overall what's meant by behavior synthesis and emotion synthesis. It's now possible to do things like detect where the ground is, and move the characters' legs to stand on the ground correctly, inverse kinematics, or blend multiple animations on top of each other correctly, Or do fancy collisions of many particles, and fancy multipless rendering like surface effects that look really cool. What happens is each off those things is very complex, and there's a lot of math involved, a lot of programmer and artist time."

What about middleware? No one we spoke to said they were interested. "We've never been a big middleware believer," says Gavin, "largely because [middleware developers] have to develop something that works in many games, so it can never be a tuned or as precise and fast as the thing we might build no work only in our game."

might build to work only in our game." Our development executive had a

"I need a launch title, and if I don't get a development kit soon, I'm screwed"



■ In the sequel to Abe's Oddysee, Munch's Oddysee for PlayStation2, Mudokens are still being persecuted by those evil Sligs — only now in a realtime, fully 3D world. Lorne Lanning of OddWorld decribes Munch's Oddysee as a "gene splicing of action, adventure, RPG, strategy, and emulation, with Hollywood storytelling and production value sprinkled all over it." It is scheduled to be ready for the US launch

spearheading the sports effort, that may change. Seasoned personnel are in position to better direct Konami's sports efforts in the US, and now there just may be another sports contender in the market besides EA and 989 Studios.

ESPN games will launch in spring 2000 with Major League Baseball and NBA Basketball, both for Sea Dreamcast, and Major League Soccer on Sony PlayStation. More titles will be launched in the fall, including "officially licensed league sports, as well as titles based on exclusive ESPN programming." However, the company's already However, the company's already

going head-first into Track and Field for PlayStation2. Already done is the motion-capture with top-ranked athletes who will be competing in next year's Olympics, including Maurice Greene (see above photo for details). Ato Bolton, who took the Bronze in Atlanta in the 100 and 200 meters, is very close to Maurice's record: he was also on hand to lend his moves to the game. Bolton may have an edge: he's not only an avid videogame player, he's also a subscriber to Next Generation. Konami spent two days at the LA Coliseum with House of Moves, capturing motion data for the high jump, long jump, pole vault, hammer thro and II0-meter hurdles, and more Sadly, there's no word yet on what effect pressure-sensitive but tons will NextGen have on the game.



News

similar opinion. In a nutshell, he told us middleware was essentially a Catch-22 that ensured mediocrity. 'Developers who are going to be making the best games have the technical talent inhouse to develop their own code,' he says, while 'those who rely on middleware don't have the expertise to deliver anything inspired anyway'.

Hastings disagrees: while middleware is something he'd be unlikely to use, he doesn't necessarily think 'it's a bad idea what Sony's doing, not requiring companies to be really good at the technical stuff 'fou could have a very creative company that just needs some technical heit.

So what about the notion that with its multiple chips, PlayStation2 is more akin to development of the Saturn? "The Playstation2 architecture is very elegant, and extremely functional," Hastings says, "and that's a big difference versus the Saturn, which was sort kludgey, and never quite worked the way it was supposed to." Unlike Saturn, which had its extra processors added at the last moment, PS2 has been engineered from the ground up to be parallel. "Sure it's going to be challenging to take advantage of that," he continues, but "I think Sony is going to great lengths to make it pretty easy for programmers to get good performance, and then for those who really want to dig in, the sky's the limit."

Already, ambitious development

houses like Naughty Dog and OddWorld Inhabitants have begun to develop the tooblests required to get top performance. Perhaps the finest example is Gavin's new language, GOAL (Game Oriented Assembly Lisp) the latest incamation of his GOOL (Game Object Oriented Lisp) used to create the Carsh Bandicoot series.

"GGAL is, without a doubt," he boasts, "the most sophisticated games language ever written. Compiled-only, fully-interactive, full realtime, mixedmode scheme in assembly language that supports every PlayStation2 feature. And we're writing one-hundred percent of our game in GGAL.

Gawh started writing GOAL. In months ago. This is the "south or seventh" game machine he has written for, and he considers it by far the best, not only in power, but also in design. Odd/World President/Creative Director. Lorner Lanning's sentiments are the same. His company has been planning a massive 3D world for Munch's Odd/world has made a big investment in building proprietary tools.

Considering the ambitious design



■ OddWorld is modeling intricate behavior models for the many NPC characters, as well as large landscapes that the developer wants players to feel "as if they are alive"

"I imagine six years from now, people will still be increasing performance on this machine"

plans for Munch's Odysee, a new tooket will be required to simulate the ecosystems and character behaviors Lanning is hoping to achieve. "Camespeak will also now allow you to move around and manipulate a large number of characters," says Lanning, "in order to have them do your bidding and re-shape your landscape."

While the few demo movies Odd/World has released to the world show *Munch's* impressive level of detail, Lanning admits that there's still a lot to learn. "There are still things that we don't know about its tools and development kits," he says, "like audio."

In fact, none of the developers contacted for this article had yet to spend any time on the audio. We turned to composer/sound developer Tommy Tallarico, who has been preparing for audio work on the system.

"There's are really no limitations as to what can be done with sound on PlayStation," says Tallarico, "it's a 2MB sound chip, at 4-to-1 compression, so it's actually 8 Megs of sound memory." Add to that the DVD storage capacity, and he has what he feels is room for everythine.

"The excuse in the past has always been there hasn't been enough space," Tallarico says, "but now if you don't hear a sound effect for every single thing onscreen, then somebody is doing something wrong."
Although Tallarico felt the original PlayStation sound driver provided by Sony was the best on any platform up to that point, he notes the the company is opening up the field to other audio technology partners.

"Sony is saying, "If any of you other guys want to write kick-ass sound drivers also, by all means do that." There are a couple of companies in the industry who rock for sound drivers, and they're working on PlayStation2 right now."

So, will the audio be more timeconsuming to develop? Tallarico believes it may be for some people, but he feels that given the amount of time he spends trying to squeeze sound effects into the PlayStation, his work will be easier

"The bulk of the work on PlayStation," he says, "is actually going in and chopping up the samples as small you can get them, so that they sound OK. Put them in the driver, downsample the shit out of them, and do all these tricks to get all the stuff to fit. That takes a termendous amount of time. [On PayStation2], we'll just be able to drop it right in."

Apart from sound, the Dual Shock2 is something the developers are just beginning to work with as well. Gavin admits the Naughty Dogs have begun



to experiment. "Because this machine comes with the Dual Shock," Gavin says "we're free to use the analog and the second analog at will, without excluding anyone. I think the analog control won't be as stiff, so characters will move more fluidity and appear lifelike with better blended animation."

Creating more lifelike, organic gameplay scenarios is the mantra at OddWorld. And Lanning is the type of visionary who can't wait for more of the technology that will enable games to break out of their box, replacing movies as the number-one form of entertainment.

"We always wish we had more VRAM, and we always wish we had more processing power, and we always wish we had better documentation," Lanning says, "but given the year we are liking in and what else is available out there, this machine is truly amazing."

We'll give the last word to Hastings: "I imagine six years from now, people will still be increasing their performance on this machine. It's not going to plateau like other consoles." Sounds good to us.

NextGen



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Next Generation Online

"88%" PC Gamer















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Radio Controlled Revolution



Black-market game sales run rampant in Moscow

Garbushka flea market: a Russian smorgasbord of PlayStation piracy

There may not be a proliferation of Wal-Marts or Electronic Boutiques in the former Soviet Union. but that hasn't kept Russian gamers from waiting too long for the latest PC and PlayStation titles. On the contrary, they can pick them up almost immediately at a black-market superstore called Garbushka. Located in Moscow, Garbushka is a thriving flea market of pirated movies, games, and music CDs. It is a large park lined with merchants selling goods from rows of orange tents. It is a wellmanaged chaos with uniform prices

and merchandise in almost every tent. Garbushka is the place to go for a VHS copy of Star Wars: Episode I: nearly every stand had it. It's also a great place for CD-based games. As of October 28, you could find Alpha Centauri: Alien Crossfire, Resident Evil 3: Nemesk. Metal Gear Solid: VR Mission, Age of Empires II. Ready 2 Rumble (PlayStation), Crash Team Racing, and other new or soon-tobe-released games selling for 70 rubles - approximately US\$3.

The creative merchants at Garbushka also sell multi-game CDs.



■ A seemingly normal Russian flea market is in fact a veritable den of pirated entertainment software

One disk, for instance, featured the PlayStation games MDK, Tenchu, Excalibur 2555 A.D., and Batman & Robin all on one disk for 70 rubles. The games were in Russian and all of the games used the Batman & Robin soundtrack, but the games were otherwise perfect.

While the Soviet economy does remain in shambles, Next Generation doesn't believe this gives their citizens the right to openly peddle pirated software. Note to IDSA's Doug Lowenstein: with the help of George Lucas, your calls to the Kremlin might just be - Steve Kent

With a new handful of cards can 3Dfx pull

ne next

Speed or beauty, frames-per-second or color-depth — that's the conundrum that has fueled the intense marketing propaganda in the 3D graphics wars during the last year. On one side, 3Dfx has been championing gamers, declaring that nothing less than 60 frames-per-second will do. On the other side, Nvidia and ATI are claiming that games are more fun when the 3D is more realistic with more colors and higher-resolution textures. Recently, cards such as the TNT 2 and the GeForce have done an effective job of muscling their way into the realm of high-end 3D cards - an area once dominated by 3Dfx alone. With the company's next generation of accelerators, 3Dfx aims to do nothing less than steal back the "3D power" crown.

First up is the Voodoo4. The Voodoo4 line consists of two nearly identical boards - one for AGP slot installations and one for PCI slot installations. Dubbed the Voodoo4

to push out a heft 332 megapixels per second for some nice visuals. The Voodoo5 5000 series is virtually a repeat of the Voodoo4 4500 each comes with 32MB of RAM, and there are also AGP as well as PCI versions. The big difference is the addition of an second on-board graphics chipset running in SLI (Scan Line Interleave). 3Dfx expects the SLI mode to double the already impres sive fill rate to 664 megapixels, which

allows new features like the innova-

tive T-Buffer technology that greatly smoothes out motion effects and

allows full-screen anti-aliasing, which

support 32-bit color rendering and

3Dfx's FXT1 texture compression format for clearer 3D visuals. On the

power front, the boards also manage

eliminates jagged edges in 3D games. Moving further into the 3D highend, the AGP-only Voodoo5 5500 raises the amount of RAM to 64MB, and its SLI chipsets are likely run at an even faster MHz speed that the 5000. Topping out the new line is the Voodoo5 6000. In a consumer graphics card first, the 6000 packs four Napalm chips onto one card to get a fill rate of a mindblowing 1.3 gigapixels per second, and also increases the on-board RAM to 128MB. Unlike the GeForce chip, the Voodoo5's power is accessible by any game - not just ones specifically programmed for the card. For processing-mad gamers who won't settle for second fastest,

this card is the Holy Grail. When contacted by NG, 3Dfx would not comment about its new cards prior to their official unveiling. It is rumored that several of these SKUs could hit before the holidays providing some heat for Nvidia's much-touted GeForce cards (see review, pg. 20). - George T. Chronis





support T-Buffer motion smoothing

■ BITS FROM THE EDGE

The US government is celebrating the end of the

millennium by toppling Microsoft. In federal court this November, ludge Thomas Penfield Jackson declared that the company has and wields monopoly power in the computing industry. Next, the judge found that the Earth is mund the sun rises in the east and Keanu Reeves "isn't very talented." The industry is all abuzz that Infogrames General Director and CEO Bruno Bonnell is planning to ring in the New Year (which also happens

purchase of GT Interactive. The floundering New York company had been spotted in rumored buyouts by Hasbro, Flectronic Arts Hayas Interactive and French publishing giant Vivendi, but Bruno popped the question first (or at least, had the best dowry). If you plan on playing games while traveling by air, better pack your favorite handheld system. The Federal Aviation Administration has banned US airlines from installing the same type of entertainment system (which included

on January I in France) with the

videogames) installed in the MD-II Swissair plane that crashed off Nova Scotia in September of 1998. The ban applies specifically to MD-II planes. As a precautionary measure, Swissair has disconnected the in-flight entertainment systems in its 15 remaining MD-IIs as well as three Boeing 747s. The Canadian government is still investigating the crash and has yet to determine the cause. Diablo fans will have nothing to celebrate this New Year. Blizzard has announced that Diablo II won't be out until early next year. The only person

surprised that Blizzard didn't make a ship date was Judge Thomas Penfield Jackson. Sony has big plans for the new century, including a launch of PlayStation2 on the Internet. Sony has announced that starting March 4, 2000. its new console will be available online to Japanese consumers. The company will also sell games, both for PlayStation and PS2. Sega's console plans may end with the New Year. At a recent posh soiree in San Francisco, the chairman of CSK (primary holder of Sega Ltd. stock), Isao Okawa, proclaimed

Sega's future direction revealed

Sega Chairman Isao Okawa ruminates on a post-hardware future for Sega

At a recent reception honoring the 1999 grant recipients of Okava Foundation (see boxout), Sega Jounder, Chairman, and EEO Isao Okava revealed both his thoughts on the future of manifold in the 21st century is the network — and the future of Sega. Not surprisingly, the future of Sega is also the network, said Okawa_

Before we got to the future, though, we had to ask about the present. So, how does Okawa feel about Dreamcast's rapid sales in the US? "Generally, I am happy," he said. "But our manufacturing is not keeping up with the demand! I'd like to apologize to all the consumers who want our products and are having a hard time finding them! Mr. Irimajiri has recently been on several trips to see our suppliers in Korea and Tawain to see what he can do to expedite the supply chain." And the software? "Again, I am happy, but what I am really excited about and have high hopes for are the future titles that will have network functions."
"Our expertise

remains games and entertainment," continued Okawa, "but how the games are delivered may change. We may form a .com company in the US to lead these efforts - we are leading a lot or research in audio and video delivery mechanisms." Does that mean Sega is finished with hardware? "I can't really comment on that, but I will say the future doesn't necessarily lie in the hardware business. I think in the future there is the possibility of Sega becoming a softwareonly company — if you look in the future, after e-commerce, I think eservices will be the next trend. I want Sega to be there, and I think games may be one of the major reasons for that trend to take off, so we will still

THE OKAWA FOUNDATION

Founded by Isao Okawa, head of CSK — an electronics and IT holding company that controls more than 60 command in the command of the co

NEW SEGA TECHNOLOGY

At the reception, Sepa also unveiled its 250 drive add-on (if comes with the USB ports, a 10 and 100-base 1 for patible Ethernet module that replaces the standard modelm and can be used for cable modien or DSL connection, and if pretrippes withoutment that produced extends the standard of the connection of the standard of the connection of the standard of the connection with the connection of the standard of the connection when the standard of the standard of the connection when the standard is not standard the connection when the standard is not standard to the standard of the standard is not standard to the standard of the standard is not standard to the standard of the standard is not standard to the standard in the standard is not standard in the standard in the standard is not standard in the stand

be making a lot of efforts in games and entertain-ment, but that role may be redefined in time." So if Dreamcast were to fail, Sega would become a software-only company? "Well, regardless of how Dreamcast sells, we will make this shift! Online and networked entertainment are the future. and that is how we will compete in the future. It really doesn't matter how fast we sell hardware in regards to the speed with which we insition ourselves into the new networked century. But the bottom line is that the Dreamcast machine has a huge competitive advantage right now."

Speaking of competitors, what about Sony's and Nintendo's new systems? "Sony's machine has very high specs, but I'm not clear about just what their strategy is, Is it a game machine? Plus, Sony's price is not competitive to Dreamcast, and with Dreamcast using a .25 micron process and Sony using .18 for PlayStation2, I think they will face manufacturing challenges. And with no modem included, I think they face other challenges."

And Nintendo? "Nintendo's focus is on Game Boy and small electronic games. Again, I don't see Nintendo's threat in networking or interactive online games. Sega is at least one year ahead of Sony and two years ahead of Nintendo in this area." And are online, multiplayer games really the key to success? The answer seems to be yes. "I think even with major oneplayer titles like Final Fantasy, there may be one more major iteration and that will be it. The entire landscape of what games are will change NextGen

RUN RAYMAN RUN!

Ubi Soft may be headquarted in France, but the company's heart was clearly in the San Francisco office this fall, as Rayman hosted the city's road race to benefit "Prevent Child Abuse — California." Ubi Soft donated \$20,000 to the organization. Local resident, all-around superbabe, and star of Nash Bridges, Yasmine Bleeth (formerly of Baywatch) was on hand to help Rayman and Ubi Soft VP Laurent Detoc carry the oversized check. Nice work. guys, and ahem, superbabe.



HARDCORE

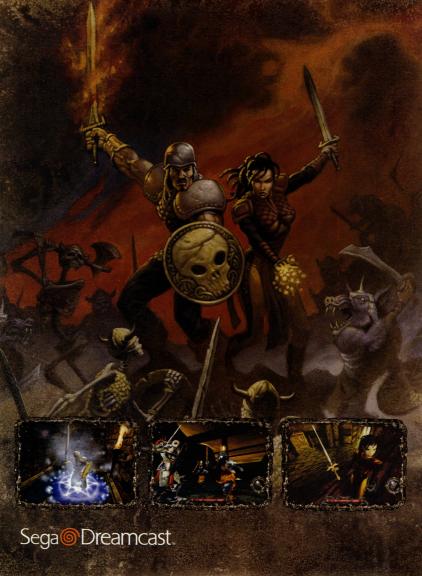
Ny brother and I are so hardroom we developed works that we used only in reference to games. I'm not just writing this to show how hardcore I am, but also because this word totally rocks and with water developed to start using it. The water weep not start using it. The law of the start water w

Chris Sparks

to a stunned crowd of journalists that Dreamcast may be Sega's last console, even if it is wildly successful. (See story, above.) How this jibes with rumors we've heard about Dreamcast 2 already being in development in Tolkyo is unclear One thing is thought our source insists Sega is taking a page from Sony's book Dreamcast 2 would be backwards compatible with Dreamcast software. Whether there will be a console

Whether there will be a console after Dreamcast or not, Sega does have a New Year's gift for its fans. lomega has now confirmed that the Dreamcast Zip drive will come to the US. The drive, which at one point seemed unlikely to make it to America, will allow Dreamcast Internet users to store files and web favorites, cache websites, and archive email. 3DO just can't leave well enough alone — at least, not if you ask federal District. Court Judge John S. Martin. Last year, the Battel'anxy publisher ran a hilarious advertisement for the game that featured a Snuggle Bean-look-alike (the one from the fabric softener commercials) getting blown up by a tank. 3DO voluntarily yanked the ad when Snuggles' owner, Unilever, Bief for an injunction against the ad. In its advertisements for the game's sequel, BattlerTame. Global Assault, 3DO brought back the Snuggle look-alike who, once more, was termoized by tanks, Judge Hartin ruled that 3DO acted willing in putting the bear back in ads and ordered 3DO to stop showing the ad. And the company with the biggest plans for the new millennium is Interplay. Recently acquired by Titus, Interplay has gone on to lose buckets of money — \$17 million last quarter, to be exact. The CEO of the company, Brian Fango, announced with the losses that Interplay's turnaround plan centers on a revitalization as a console publisher. This is a new approach for the games industry. Everyone else who loses mountains of green reorganizes as an "internet technology" company.

Compiled by Aaron John Loeb,
 Executive Producer,
 www.DailvRadar.com



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*22 spells, each with dramatic effects.

 Play as a warrior or sorceress and take advantage of their unique abilities.







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Prom Claney's RAINBOWSIX









SHOT

TO SAVE THE WORLD.

Rainbow Six is as close as it gets to the intensity of real-life tactical operations. You'll control an elite multi-national strike force battling international terrorism.

Rainbow Six's explosive real-world action is coupled with spine-tingling tactics to create a gaming experience you won't soon forget. Rainbow Six is so real you'll find yourself yelling "Tango down!" in your sleep for weeks.







www.redstorm.com





Aliens, Guns, Namco's Luge Run, and a Sega Safari

DON'T LUGE YOUR HEAD

Namco has such an incredible R&D department of its own in Japan that when it licenses an outside game, you know it's got to be impressive. Rolling Extreme DX, a "street luge" simulator developed by Gaelco of Spain, was so good that Namco transformed it from an upright to a deluxe sitdown simulator. You actually sit on a luge that has foot pedals and attack buttons on the bars. The game flings you downhill at a blistering pace, letting you collect power-ups to boost speed and punching force. A variety of six tracks (each with hidden routes) adds to the fun.

CAN WE GIVE THE PEOPLE WHAT THEY WANT?

Arcade videogame manifacturers have — understandably, perhaps — become increasingly schizophrenic about gun games in recent months. On the one hand, gun games have been among the most popular arcade fare, with titles like Konami's spectacular silient Scope topping the colin-oppopularly charts for half of 1999. On the other hand, arcade factories are super-nervous regarding all that negative publicity about video.

negative publicity about violent games — a public relations backlash that started even before the Columbine massacre and vastly accelerated afterward.

in giant glass capsules.

As a result, gun games whose R&D began two years ago are still in the pipeline, but factories are downplaying them to the public — and sometimes even to the arcades. Silent Scope was shown in a closet, literally, at its debut US trade show last spring, while Midway Games brought only two units of its new shoot-'em-up game Invasion: the Abductors to the arcade industry's fall expo (and Midway didn't put them out front, either). Namco, for its part, has been tooling the horn — weakly — for its new Crisis Zone, which features spectacular machine-gun bullet sprays and realistic damage. Experts are predicting that as state legislatures go back into the 1999-2000 session, some states will likely pass strict regulations or outright bans against video gun games in arcades.

MIDWAY'S LATEST INVASION

Midway's new 3D gun game, Invasion: the Abductors, is notable for using real American cities as backgrounds - Chicago, New York, and Los Angeles instead of generic urban scenes. You'll see real landmarks like L.A.'s Santa Monica Pier and Manhattan's famous skyline; you'll also see some especially nasty aliens invading your home turf. They look like a cross between barracudas and frogs, and those are the pretty ones. Their mission is nasty, too: steal human brains and integrate them into alien machines as a power source. This two-player upright features a couple of futuristic silver pistols that can, of course, be poweredup as you progress through the storyline. Action starts when motherships descend on various cities and the aliens hop out to "harvest the human crop." The game offers only four missions, but each has substantial depth, basically offering "a game within the game." Obviously one city represents one mission, so what's the fourth challenge? It's a secret excursion aboard one of the motherships, where (we hear) the alien boss baddies are the ugliest yet and may have captive humans stored



■ Set in recognizable US cities, Invasion: the Abductors lets you save people from aliens bent on harvesting their brains (so why are they in LA.2)

EARN YOUR (ZEBRA) STRIPES

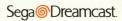
Can an action game really be exciting without blood and guts? A wild African adventure from Sega shows what the future of arcade videos might be like if anti-violence bills are passed by any of the halfdozen state legislatures that have threatened to ban gun games. Sega's Jambo!Safari is a deluxe sitdown simulator with a 50-inch monitor, running on a Naomi board. You drive a Jeep through a variety of terrain, chasing, capturing and subduing everything from lions to elephants to ostriches. There are 28 animals total, all of which are beautifully rendered. The idea is to get close enough to launch your rope snare via the control lever, then ierk the lever backward at precisely the right time to reel in the prey. Hint: they don't submit tamely. Also, you can only catch specified animals by quota, so there's a definite strategy required. Ready, set, Mogombo!





EGG TM









Hatching







January 2 0 0 0

the ultimate RPG fantasy comes to life





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■ These shots of developer WXP's Dagoth Moor Zoological Garden demo show off the company's Experience engine running on a GeForce 256 card. It is an excellent display of the chip's geometry capabilities as well as some of its flashier DirectX 7 features like cube environment mapping

■ HARDWARE REVIEW

Does GeForce and Guillemot harness Nvidia powerful new chip

harness Nvidia's

After what seemed like an eternity Nvidia's GeForce 256 has arrived. Speculated to be the driving force behind Microsoft's still-unannounced home console, X-Box, PC video cards using the GeForce technology are the most nowerful we've seen to date Each card is capable of rendering up to 15 million full-feature-enabled tri-

angles with a fill rate of 480

megapixels per second, while taking on the entire 3D pipeline in OpenGL and D3D games written to make use of the feature. This frees up one's CPU to worry about other, less strenuous, instructions.

As we go to press, two reviewable GeForce cards have arrived: Creative's Annihilator and Guillemot's 3D Prophet. Both are AGP 4X cards (though both work in AGP 2X sys-

tems) and have 32MB of single-data rate (SDR) memory, GeForce cards using double-data rate (DDR) memory should arrive within two months. and such boards will be considerably faster in 32-bit color than their SDRbased siblings, but they could also cost as much as \$100 more. Keep this information in mind when considering an upgrade to GeForce.

In terms of raw power, the

Annihilator and the Prophet perform very similarly, with the Annihilator pulling slightly ahead in our benchmark scores, due largely to the fact that Creative Labs manufactured GeForce reference boards for Nvidia from the very beginning, and has therefore spent a bit more time with the technology. Given a few more driver updates, our guess is that the performance gap between the two cards will shrink considerably. And although the Annihilator is the less expensive of the two boards, it doesn't offer the TV-out capabilities of the Prophet. So, if you want to play games and watch DVD-movies on your television, the extra green you'll shell out for Guillemot's offering will be well spent. If you are a PC gamer looking for the fastest, most powerful 3D card around, your money will be well spent on either of these fine NextGen

All benchmarks run on PIII 450MHz-based PC. To give you a frame of reference for the GeForce numbers, we also tested the current 3D champ, a standard TNT2 Ultra. What you'll notice is that in 3DMark, a test of DirectX 6 performance, the TNT2 Ultra is actually a hair faster, but in OpenGL, the GeForce cards dominate, making GeForce the card of choice for Quake III. We expect D3D performance to increase with subsequent driver revisions

TNT2 UITRA

Quake III (32-bit col with all graphical effects set to their max) 640×480: 58 9 800x600: 45.1 1024×768+ 30 5 1600x1200- 9.2

3DMark 99 MAX 4,560 3DMarks Game I Race: 49.3 Game 2 First Person: 42.4 Fill rate w/ multitexturing 230.5M Texels per second

ANNIHII ATOR: Quake III (32-bit color with

graphical effects set to their may) 640×480: 74.5 800x600: 56.0 1024v768- 36 0 1600x1200: 78

3DMark 99 MAX 800x600 (default settings) 4,375 3DMarks Game I Race: 47.3

Game 2 First Person: 40.7 Fill Rate w/ multitexturing: 423.4M Texels per second

Creative Labs Annihilator Manufacturer: Creative Labs Suggested Retail Price: \$249

3D PROPHET:

Quake III (32-bit color graphical effects set to oir may) 640x480-73.4 800x600: 54.7 1024×768-35 0 1600x1200+76

3DMark 99 MAX 800x600 (default settings) 4,310 3DMarks Game I Race: 46.2 Game 2 First Person: 40.4 Fill Rate w/ multitexturing: 412.7 M Texels per second

Guillemot 3D Prophet

Manufacturer: Guillemot Suggested Retail Price: \$289

NVIDIA GeFORCE 256 can show you the time of your life.





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- Random Track Generation System Provides Endless Possibilities. With Point To Point Racing, Tou Won't Be Going In Circles.
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- Cool Racing Effects With Realistic Weather And Windsheld Conditions... Where Every Bug, Rock And Mud Splat Impairs Your Vision
- Command 14 Cars, Upgrading as you Gain Sponsors And Prize Money - PLUS 3 BONUS CARS After You Win In Champ Mode
- Every Bump, Knock And Crunch Does Real Damage To Your Car And Could Send You Scurrying Back To Your Support Van For Repairs
- Customize Your Paint Job And Decals For The Coolest Looking Car







88129.











In the Studio

Development news as it develops

RED STORM FINDS FREEDOM

With Rainbow Six and Rogue Spear, Red Storm Entertainment may seem locked into Tom Clancy's brand of covert operations. But that is about to change. The company has agreed to develop a game based on the work of another wellknown author, fantasy novelist Anne McCaffrey. Currently in the



orks is a third-person adventure game codenamed "Maeve," based on McCaffrey's Freedom novels, about a resistance force battling aliens on a conquered Earth. Stealthy gameplay is an portant part of the title - no Red Storm design surprise there. Sources indicate McCaffrey's other series of fantasy novels, The Dragonriders of Pern, has been licensed by roller. The Freedom game is scheduled for November 2000 release, and coincidentally, a TV show based on Dragonriders is set to air roughly the same time.

FLYING HIGH

Late this fall, champ onship BMX rider Dave Mirra got vertical, horizontal, and even inverted in his motion-capture session with Acclaim for the company's upcoming BMX game. Currently the game is unnamed, but it will arrive on PlayStation in the third quarter of 2000.

BLACK OPS GOES PS2

Black Ops Entertainment has been busy with KnockOut Kings N64. Jurassic Park: Warpath, and Tomorrow Never Dies for PlayStation. But

ose are done. So what's next? According to Black Ops President John Botti, the company will be working on PlayStation2 and plans to develop an original action/adventure product. Personally, we're hoping for a sequel to Black Ops' underappreciated undersea adventure, Treasures of the Deep.



DREAMWORKS IN EXILE

DreamWorks Interactive is working on a new game, tentatively called *Exile*. The PlayStation2 title has been in development for more than six months, and insiders believe it has spawned a motion picture deal as well.

DUKE-ING IT OUT AGAIN While Duke Nukem Forever is finally

showing signs of life on the PC, another third-person Duke game for PlayStation will likely beat it to the market. Duke Nukem: Planet of the Babes will be available in April, and is being developed by N-Space, which developed Duke Nukem: Time to Kill. Expect better graphics this time around, when Duke's mission is to save a planet of women from those aliens - only Duke.

BUILDING CHARACTER

In a unique move that only furthers the idea that game development will become increasingly apportioned in the future, enter Infinexus. This new Arizona-based company was founded by former Surreal Lead Animator Mel Guymor (Drakan) to provide custom content solutions for game developers. Infinexus has already created everything from concept characters to realtime 3D models for developers who don't have the in-house art resources. But Guymon isn't stopping there at deadline he told NG that he is spinning-off the Infinexus busi ness to focus on Leviathan games, a new development house with plans to develop an online-only PC game, due to release 18 months from now. Leviathan's current team includes two former Zombie team members and another former Surreal employee. Expect to hear more from this group in the future, as Guymon mentions the possibility of a future partnership.

X-BOX: THERE ARE DEVELOPERS

All may be quiet at Microsoft as the company plots the next move in its monopoly game. So you may be asking, is X-Box a system, or isn't it? What if we told you several top PC developers in the US and UK had already started developing games for it, well then - it would be a system, wouldn't it? No one's saying anything specific yet, but there are development geniuses out there who've mumbled a few things. Stay tuned.



FANTASY ADVENTURE GAME

IT IS A TIME FOR HEROES

reetings, fellow adventurer! I am Rodrigo—a professional hero for hire.
Welcome to my island home—enchanting Tol Andar, nestled in the Sea
of Infinity. Here you will be awed by the aerial displays of dragons,
dazzled by the beauty of princesses, and inspired by the deeds of true
fieroes. We islanders are also keepers of an ancient magical treasure known
as the Gloomstones. We have learned to use the extraordinary powers of
these stones to help us in our daily lives.



But now chaos threatens our magical island. Tales of the power of the Gloomstones have traveled throughout the kingdom. Pirates and other nefarious characters are converging on Tol Andar to seize the stones.

Dark destruction threatens my enchanted home, but I will not stand idly by and watch my world torn asunder. It is time to make a stand—to finally prove myself as a true hero.



Join me in this great adventure! Together we will outwit pirates and battle dragons. Together we will journey on a quest to solve the mystery of Tol Andar.

FEATURES

- Over 100 spectacular scenes set in 37 different locations.
- Award-winning full-screen animations completely rendered in 3D.
- Over 30 individual characters to meet and interact with, plus numerous non-interactive characters.
- Breathtaking camera movement and animated lighting effects.
- · Vivid character animations with life-like facial expressions.
 - Inspirational soundtrack composed with the support of Werner Hink, leader of the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra.











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**Fig. 18 of the Intending to the Inte



Next Generation

celebrates anniversary

Five years ago this month, Next Generation revolutionized game-magazine coverage

Normally, we at Next

Generation pride ourselves on looking forward to the future of the game industry, but this month, having reached our five-year milestone, we decided to take a page to look back. The game industry has changed draregarded as a mainstream entertainment form, and games are also closer than ever to being recognized as a legitimate, interactive art form.

Game magazines have changed a lot since 1995, too, and we like to

It's *Mario'*s year

TOP STORIES: The year began with

Sony and Sega slugging it out as lesser play

ers like 3DO and Jaguar slowly exited stage

left, and gamers everywhere waited impa-

name change and many delays. Mario

tiently for Mario as Ultra 64 went through a

eventually scored two covers and our pro-

nouncement as "best videogame ever." We

Bill Gates ever did with a gaming magazine.

also scored the first (and only) interview

most game magazines were simply hype machines for game publishers, aimed at children. Then we arrived with a smart, sophisticated magazine aimed at intelligent readers,

coverage across the board, in all magazines. Still, there's only one Next Generation, and while pretenders may ape our style (and sometimes borrow heavily from our old features list), just as we've led the past five years, we plan to continue to lead for

started asking the tough questions, think a lot of that has to do with us. and cutting through the hype. The a long time to come. matically since 1995; it's now widely Before Next Generation launched, result: fairer reviews and better

The battle begins

TOP STORIES: Beginning the year vith an overview of the nine players in the 32-bit race, we continued with in-depth cover stories on the radical new PlayStation system, a lawsuit-generating article on laguar, and the first word on top games like Virtua Fighter 2, Wipeout, and Destruction Derby



THE QUOTES:

"I'm ready for Sony,

sure. I look forward to

product."

the battle.'







Jaguar has a long life ahead of it . . . it will be a very successful - Sam Tramiel, Atari

THE OUOTES: 'We don't have a

strategy to do a \$200 game console."

in terms of 3D, 32-bit machines aren't good enough to do the job property." - Trip Hawking, 300

"If you painted things in the bleakest possible way [for Nintendo], I'd look at you and smile and say three words: Super Mario 64." _ n

THE GAMES: Quake, Tomb Raider, Super Mario 64, Wave Race, Fighting Vipers

TOP STORIES: As Dreamcast

TOP STORIES: As PSX solidified its lead and Saturn wilted, the 3D-accelerated PC took the games innovation lead. N64 had its own problems, which we revealed in our most controversial cover story ever; some say Nintendo still hasn't forgiven us. One thing is for sure, though: we'll never forgive ourselves for putting Blasto! on the cover. We also gave both sides of the videogame violence issue equal time





THE OUOTES:

you want to control violence, I don't think you start with videogames

"[My original idea for Quake] would have been great, but nobody else had any faith in trying it." - John Romero, lor

"I'd like to see less truly violent videogames, but the ratings have been quite responsibly applied." - Senator Joseph Liet

THE GAMES: GoldenEye: 007, Dark Forces II Total Annihilation San Francisco Rush, Final Fantasy VII, Ouske II

TOP STORIES: As PSX and N64

entered their prime, we did a massive feature on the top players in the game industry. We then got busy waiting for Zelda and gearing up for the next generation with Sega's oddly named "Dreamcast." We kept the controversy meter high with a take-noprisoners interview with 989's Kelly Flock







THE QUOTES:

Vintendo expects us to produce great games, and that's what we're here for.

Liquid AI is the crap that ran down [EA's] leg when they saw GameDav." - Kelly Plock, 999

"I work every day that I am near a computer. It's what I do. Programming is the major motivator in my life. It's the thing that I most enjoy . every day I wake up excited to go to work." - John Carmack, ld Sc

THE GAMES: Zelda, Half-Life, StarCraft, Gran Turismo, Tekken 3, Metal Gear Solid, Resident Evil 2

great hardware, and great marketing. Whether by skill, luck, or just deep pockets, Sony has scored three out of three" - No 12 THE GAMES: Wipeout, Virtua Fighter Remix, Ridge Racer, Tekken

The PlayStation is here, and it

looks as if it's here to stay. You

need three things to succeed in

the game industry: great games,







picked up momentum, Sony revealed its stunning PlayStation2 technology. Despite naysaying and a lack of support from key players like EA, Dreamcast managed to sell more units in 30 days than Sony, Sega, 3DO, and Atari sold in all of 1995. Microsoft's rumored X-Box added a new wrinkle to the hardware horizon. and Next Generation, in preparation for the next console generation, relaunched with a bold new design

and a brand new logo.

THE QUOTES:

- Bing Gordon, EA, on whether Dreamcast can succeed with

"What's interesting is doing something no one else is talking about yet. Without these ideas, I don't think there is any point to making a next generation of hardware.

"It's us, the influencers and early adopters, who will determine which machines succeed and fail in the next generation.

THE GAMES: Homeworld, Soul Calibur, Tony Hawk's Pro Skateboarder, EverQuest, NFL 2K







tandard Burro Prison Bus.

Fully Ungraded Bus with Hovering Power-Us

Now upgrade any Vigilante 8: 2nd Offense vehicle with extra speed, armor, target avoidance and more!



Get back on the bus for even more blistering, off-road auto combat insanity in 10 totally destructible arenas.



Cruise, bruise and pick-up hidden weapons, plus special power-ups that let you float, hover and tread on snow.



Control 15 all-new, fully loaded '70s and futuristic vehicles with special attacks and on-the-fly morphing upgrades.



Blast 'em sky-high in one and two-player modes, or up to four-player on Sega

"Vigilante 8: 2nd Offense leaves the competition in the dust!" - PSM



IF IT DRIVES BY, BLOW IT UP!

■ DREAMCAST

Darker, scarier, and more evil than ever before

■ Release Date: February 2000 ■ Origin: Japan







■ Stay away from the windows when you see zombies outside! Finally, Capcom has realized that a filmsy glass window may hold out the rain, but not the undead masses



Specia

been freed from the technological restraints of PlayStation, but with that freedom comes more problems. How do you go about redefining for the next generation a genre that you helped pioneer?

It doesn't help that few titles in history have been as massively anticipated as the Resident Evil series on Dreamcast. Since it was announced more than a year ago, rumors have run rampant about what can be expected in the game. Excitement especially in America, where Dreamcast has shattered all sales projections - is building to levels usually reserved for the games of Shigeru Miyamoto, but Capcom's development team in Osaka has remained silent. Until now.

So, can Resident Evil do for Dreamcast what it did for PlayStation?

Yes, it can, And more.

Stories of darkness

Players pick up the story where Resident Evil 2 left off. After narrowly escaping death, Claire Redfield goes in search of her brother (Ex-STARS member Chris Redfield), who is off investigating Umbrella Corp. in Europe. Although she succeeds in sneaking into Umbrella's lab in France, she is discovered and captured. then transferred to Umbrella's secret prison facility in South America. Unfortunately for Umbrella, an explosion in the lab allows Claire to make an attempt at regaining her freedom. But where is she? And why are there zombies everywhere?

ous Resident Evil games as well as several w faces of evil. The hell are so well animated it's eerie to watch "We are very excited to offer people game will switch between the two

two very different locations to explore." says Mikami. "This will give more depth to both the story and gameplay." While Capcom is unwilling to divulge how the

locations, we do know that players will be able to play the parts of both Claire and Chris in different parts of the game. Possibly, since the game is 2 GD-ROMs in size, the storyline will play out as in Resident Evil 2, with players completing a character on the first disk and then switching for the second.

Luckily, both characters are equally

"I think Code Veronica will scare people in different ways than before"

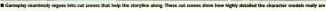




















CRACKING THE CODE

One of the greatest Resident Evil: Code Veronica so far is the title. Just what the heck does Code Veronica mean. anyway? Shinji Mikami, the game's producer, shed some light on the subject when NG queried. "We cannot give you too much information on this," he said, "but a noble family called the Ashford family appears in the game. Veronica is the name of a woman who was the original head of the Ashford family." Hmmm ... what does that have to do with evil corporations and

compelling and functional in the heat of battle. One new feature in the game is the ability to wield two of the same weapons at one time. So not only can you double your firepower, but when you step into a room you can target more than one enemy at a time. Realistic? Maybe not, but definitely one step closer to living the dream of being a Hong-Kong-style action star.

Envisioning horror

Mikami likes to think it will be the graphics that will immediately make the game stand out. "For the first time, the entire game is at a 'pre-rendered CG movie' quality," he says. "The graphics are truly outstanding, and the textures and light sourcing will blow you away." He's right. Step into the world of Code Veronica and you will be blown away.





■ Some of the puzzles are much more advanced than what we're used to, but you'll still find remnants of the old game designs, like this puzzle where you must push several boxes together

Using the power of Dreamcast and a little technological help from Sega of Japan, the environments are more believable and more frightening than ever before, with all sorts of hidden evil lurking deep in the shadows, just waiting for the slightest misstep. Besides the high resolution and 60fps framerate, the

environments also manage to look as detailed as in the previous games, despite the fact that they are all now rendered in realtime. "The game is close to Resident Evil since it is a sequel," Mikami confides, "but at the same time, it is close to Dino Crisis [a game Mikami also produced] since it is a fully 3D game. I truly believe













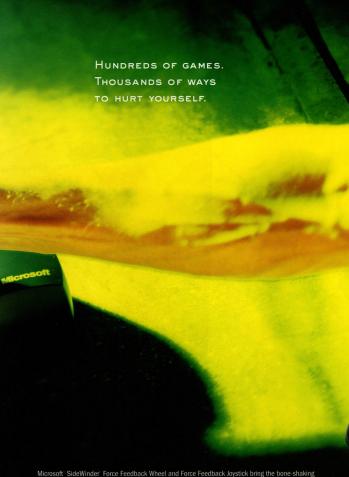


■ This worker is trapped in one of the experiment labs, but unfortunately he isn't alone. Check out Claire's expressions as she realizes what is happening









Microsoft SideWinder Force Feedback Wheel and Force Feedback Joystick bring the bone-shaking vibrations of ForceFeedback to PC games. Experience the kick of the afterburners as you punch through Mach 2 in Flight Simulator 2000. Wrench your nervous system as you hurtle your way through the streets of Need for Speed High Stakes. Get your hands around them. If you can.

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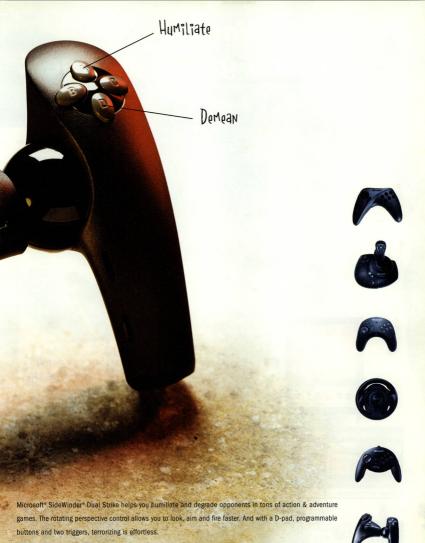
Holly Monaco Grand Racing Simulation Monster Truck Madnes Motocross Madne DO UNTO YOUR
OPPONENTS BEFORE
THEY DO UNTO YOU.

Terrorize

Microsoft

DUAL STRIKE

WHO WANTS SOME MORE?



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> Alphas

B

All the best and brightest of the next generation of titles, up to date and to the point



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→ Dreamcast

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→PC

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→ Arcade

Gauntlet: Dark Legacy Out Trigger

→Milestones

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Giga Wing											7
Koudelka											7
Soul Reaver											7



■ Publisher: Sega ■ Developer: Black Box ■ Release Date: February 2000 ■ Origin: Canada

Can Black Box's hockey game make the all-star lineup along with NFL 2K and NBA 2K?



When Next Generation visited Vancouver, Canada, the city's hometown pro hockey team known as "the Canucks" was leading the Northwest division by two points. But we were there to see Vancouver's other leading hockey team — Black Box, which has entered the figurative third period in

development on NHL 21 you've had one or two serious play sessions with either NFL 2K and NBA 2K. sitting down to NHL 2K on Dreamcast is as you might expect it to be. The topdown gameplay camera is a familiar one, and the framerate is sharp (although not locked at 60fps, yet.) The players move with the grace of 1,000 motion-captured moves, which is coincidentally currently the number of animations implemented. Each player is a well-detailed model composed of 1,400 polygons, and each player's face has been modeled to match his real-world counterpart.

"This is really the first console game,"

This is really the list console game, asys Black Box Producer Doug Tronsgard, "where you" be able to look at the guy and go, 'Hey that's Lindros." To keep these players animating reallistically, Black Box motion-captured skaters of three different sizes over II days. During a three-day session on

rollerblades and eight more days on the ice, different goalie styles were also



Fighting has never been as realistic as it is in NHL 2K: all the fisticuffs have been motion captured, so when you give Nedved a good drubbing, he'il definitely feel it

→ Alphas

captured — the goalie even sustained a concussion during the action.

As one might suspect after seeing NFL 2K and NBA 2K, NHL 2K also brings the same "TV-style" camera cut-aways to the game found in a real hockey broadcast.

"Whenever the puck stops," says Designer Clint froward, "we want to have the camera cut to, say, the guy that just scored the goal, show his face, let the announcers talk about him. Then maybe cut to the crowd or to the coaches. Let's look at the opposing coach getting mad, or the other coach congratulating one of the players."

During a penalty in the game **Next Generation** is playing, the camera
switches to a shot of a player as he
skates his way over to the penalty box,
raising his arm as if in protest. Or, in a
remarkably life-emulating moment, the
camera zones in on two players staging







Subtle animations include hopping over downed players and reaching for a behind-the-back pass. But the particle-

each other down, and then, boom, they drop their glows. The game then proceeds to let you and your opponent fight it out hockey-style. NG's first fight on the ice was against a roolde web-site journalist, who was mercliessly pounded to his knees after we grabbed hold of his sweater and hammered him repeatedly with right cross-

Animating realtime facial damage that may be sustained during a fight is on the B-list of features the company is planning to implement, as well as other realtime facial expressions. Currently the team is focused on implementing gameplay features such as icon passing, tuning the

Al and animations, and adding the sound effects and play-by-play.

Expect a high-quality sound experience as well. The team has secured the voice of Hockey Night in Canada Hall-of-framer Bob Cole, who's been calling hockey action for 27 years. Together with color commentator Harry Neil, the two recorded 13,000 sound clips for use in play-by-play. There are 17,000 total sounds in the game, including ambient noise and a separate rink announcer.

"This is really the first console game where you'll be able to look at the guy and go, 'Hey, that's Lindros"

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This is really the first console game where you'll be able to look at the guy and go, 'Hey, that's Lindros"

Burker of the first console game the first console game where you'll be able to look at the guy and go, 'Hey, that's Lindros"

Burker of First Heam more of a butterfly style, like Curtis Joseph or Batrick Roy, and a third style, which is more of a Dominik Hasek or Grant flural alove the place, do-whatey buck, or Grant flural alove the place, do-whatey buck.

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ide the box



Black Box started NHL 2K from scratch last winter, and it's been a race against the clock to implement every feature by the ship date, and it is incredible the team has accomplished as much as it has. ("Visual Concepts had two years to work on football and basketball," says one Black Box employee. "We're getting barely more than one.") Although the name Black Box may be new to you, 13 members of the 21-person development team are former Radical Entertainment employees, and many of them worked

on the fantastic NHL Powerplay series for PlayStation and Saturn. During the re-structuring of Radical (after Radical's deal with Disney/ESPN fell apart), the founding 12 members of Black Box opted to leave and form their own group, forfeiting their positions within Radical before any further layoffs in hopes that others might keep their jobs.

The team's experience is evident in everything from the particle system that generates the spray of ice carved from a player's skate to the glass reflection of two players as they tussle for a puck

along the boards. From what they've managed thus far, it would be hard to argue that anyone other than this team of hockey veterans could put together such a comprehensive nextgeneration title in so short a period of time. At one point in the demo, Tronsgard zooms the camera in tight on the puck, so close you can read the "Made in Canada" label. The irony wasn't lost on us. -Tom Russo

SEEMS LIKE OLD TIMES

Remember Ice Hockey for NES? We do. The game featured three sizes of characters — the fast, skinny guy, the fat guy who could hit stees of characters — the fast, skinny gay, the fat goy who could hit hand but skated show and the medium-laved gay who was a well-law of the state of the state. On the state of the state







■ When zoomed in, the replay camera reveals just how detailed everything is, including the





■ The game features 28 different arenas, with a sprite-based, animated crowd. Most are the actual rinks with all the proper signage. However some stingy arena owners, such as the owner of Bostoris Freet Center (note: Reet is a bank) are looking for licensing fees to use arena likenesses. Hey Ebenezer fleet, it's not about your arena, it's about the game. Our addict Spate Reet and put in the Carrien!



■ PC

REPUBLIC

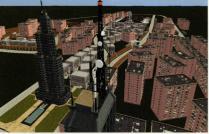
■ Publisher: Eidos ■ Developer: Elixir ■ Release Date: TBA ■ Origin: UK

Fancy world domination? Start with Novistrana



Twelve months after he left Peter Molyneux's Lionhead studios, the cat is out of the bag: Demis Hassabis is working on what may be the most ambitious virtual world ever. To demonstrate, Hassabis shows a tech demo with row upon row of incredibly detailed buildings, stretching out to the horizon. "We've got 10,000 of those buildings lined up and that's billions of polys onscreen, because each building is ten million polys. But just to prove we aren't cheating, we can zoom in on any one," he adds, before closing on a randomly chosen balcony. Each of the railings is built with polygons, even down to the individual scrolls and curves of the wrought-iron work. "I call it fabric and fiber," he says, "We

"I call it fabric and fiber," he says. "We have this hugely detailed fabric, but you can take a microscope to any part and see the fibers. To give you an example of



■ This sequence of pictures shows a row of Soviet-style apartment blocks. The camera zooms in from top to bottom to reveal a perfect polygonal flower pot. Although this is just a tech demo, it gives a flavor of how most of the cities may look in the post-Soviet "republic" of Novistrana





how hard this was, Sim City 3000 looks exactly like Sim City 2000 but it took three-and-a-half years to make. The reason was, for two years Mask was trying to make an engine that could show a city in full 3D. They basically gave up and said it was technically impossible. We managed to do it in four months." While the game isn't yet playable, the core engine behind it is highly impressive. Elikir expects to get enough components ready to make Republic playable by January, but until then it is concentrating on maxing out the technology base

Gameplay should be straightforward: Hassabis says the inspiration for Republic came from a little-known board game called Junta. Based in a banana republic, the goal is to make as much money as

possible by becoming the president. Essentially, it's a game about the pursuit of power.

Set in the fictional former Soviet republic of Novistrana, a 2,000-squarekilometer area, players start out in a randomly selected small town, then build up their base until they gain control of a local city. From there they start to consolidate influence until they move to the capital to take on the president. Hassabis estimates it will take around 10 hours to get enough power to make that jump. However, there are many obstacles in the way, not the least of which are the 16 other factions also out to take over the country. Of course, the president will be attempting to hang on to power himself, too. Controlled either by other players or Al opponents (the president is always Al-controlled), these factions will exert their influence over the 50 cities scattered throughout Novistrana.

The Al that controls the million people that populate the country is currently running on a 2D testbed to demo advanced path-finding techniques: the citizens can intelligently move through the city, avoiding traffic and other pedestrians, using the Metro, posting letters, and naturally finding their way to their destinations. One interesting scenario displayed was the intervention of the police force in a riot. Although the forces were only represented by colored triangles, the results were startlingly naturalistic. As the rioters fanned out, trying to escape, small-scale encounters developed. Some

PLATO'S Republic

Sure, Republic: The Revolution lool pretty impressive so far, but why hasn't anyone made a game from Plato's Republic? Just look at all the great stuff n there, Instead of philosophical crosssee a Tekken-style lighter with Socrates busting an uppercut on Glaucon Adelmantus, or Thrasymachus. There's a cool sim game to be made raising the Guardians rom birth. And the Allegory of the Cave has got at least a c shooter and a Tomb Raider game in there somew Developers should stop wasting their time with mushminded sci-fi novels and move up to philosophy. After all, we can think of some pretty cool stuff to do

ith Nietzsche's The

Anti-Christ.





The Republic team is working on what may be the most ambitious virtual world ever attempted







■ Will you end up with a bullet in your brain at the secret police HQ or with a plaza dedicated in your honor? The choice is yours

rioters escaped scot-free while one unlucky character ended up with six policemen on his tail.

To keep the game controls as straightforward as possible,

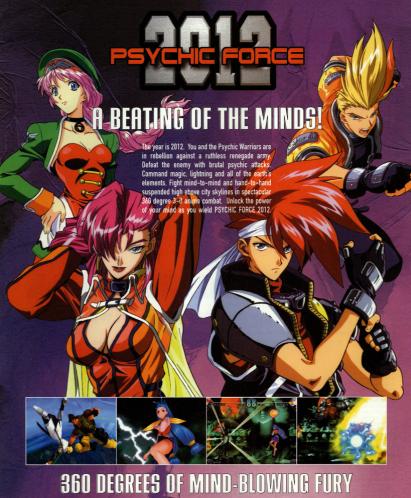
everything that occurs in Republic is organized using one mechanism and one resource. The mechanism is charactercontrolled actions; the resource is influence. "As a faction leader, you don't actually do things yourself — it's not an RTS," explains Hassabis. "But at the start of the game you have one key character, your Peter Mandelson figure. He's your right-hand man." Beyond that, you have to recruit new characters that will allow you to order additional actions. For example, with a union leader and a rabblerouser under your command, the ability to organize a rally becomes available.

While the game is designed to be entirely open-ended, it is being made with five specific "career paths" in mind-political, religious, military, criminal, and business, with each path possessing inherent advantages. Playing religiously, your key characters will be very loyal in obeying all your commands, whereas criminal-based groups will be less loyal but possess more money with which they can buy influence. However, there won't be any choice of playing style per se— it will all be implicit in the game design.

Although his team has worked diligently to design the gameplay at the same time as the technology, Hassabis admits that balancing as ambitious a project as *Republic* will take most of next year. If team Elixir can pull it off, however, he may find that Theme Park World's 3.5 million copts were just the beginning.

— Nigel Edge









Sega Dreamcast..

TAITO



■ Publisher: Sega ■ Developer: Sega ■ Release Date: Spring (Japan) ■ Origin: Japan

Swashbuckling pirates rule the skies — care to join them?

■ Exploration is encouraged. Who knows what wonders you will find as you search out uncharted regions of the skyscape

PHANTASY STAR

No RPG name enflames the hearts of Sega fans so much as Phantasy Star. Starting on Master System and spawning several sequels on Genesis, the series is revered for its ingenuity as well as sheer size (later games covered several generations of characters). Originally, due to its lineage, Eternal Arcadia was thought to be Sega's revival of the series on Dreamcast. Truth is stranger than fiction, however, as Yuji Naka and Sonic Team have secretly been working on the next in the series -Phantasy Star Online - for release sometime in late 2000.



■ Combat can take place either ship-to-ship or at a more personal level. At some points in the game, you may have to even fight against an enemy armada

Once the excitement of those first-generation beat-'em-ups and racing games subsides, every platform needs its classic RPG series to survive. Final Fantasy. Suikoden, and Wild Arms have all done immeasurable good for PlayStation, just as Final Fantasy, Secret of Mana, and Chrono Trigger once kept SNES buoyant. With the RPG, the classical elements of story and characters, rather than visuals, serve to attract fanatics. If Sega can set the foundations of an epic series now, it could have many thousands of swordand-sorcery fans on board - no matter how PS2 performs.

As may well be the thinking behind Eternal Arcadia. Produced by Rieko Kodama, who previously worked on Phantasy Star (and who was a designer on the first Sonic title). Eternal Arcadia is billed as a truly epic roleplaying adventure set in a mythical realm of floating islands and inhabitable clouds. The game, which revolves around a buccaneer explorer named Vyse, is



■ Once you hook onto an pirate ship, you can grab onto the rope and swing down to engage the enemy pirate crew

essentially a reworking of all those old stories of pirates and hidden treasures, but here the boats fly and the ocean is a totally 3D skyscape.

The approximation of all those old characters, characters, characters, characters, in the literary, famous for a famous for a

It's a pretty astute set-up. Flying ships have a firm place in japanese RPG tradition, while the Columbus era of discovery — which the plot allegedly minics. — Is rife with possibilities. However, while it is known that 'Jyse is a "pirate" who must do battle with bad pirates as he explores the skies for new lands, little else is known about the story. Sega is, characteristically, keeping its cards close to its treasure chest.

One thing about the project is clear, though: it is massively ambitious. It may even be an attempt to redefine the RPG for a whole new age. Consequently, the designers claim not to have been influenced by any other RPG titles (although, naturally, they have played them all), as what they are attempting to do is create an innovative new game system—one, more importantly, that can be picked up by newcomers to the genre. Kodama is looking for fresh perspectives on this most esoteric of gaming styles. She's looking for the next Final Fantas.

As for gameplay, while Eternal Arcadia is not a free-roaming multi-scenario RPG, the designers don't want players to feel hemmed in by an obviously linear narrative. One of the team's key aims is to create a game in which players can express their feelings through the main characters, rather than simply move them around like mindless automatons. Kodama and her team want this to be a bright, wibrant world — a world of possibilities rather than instructions. Ships are thus piloted in realtime, with players moving from island to island as they see fit.

Battle, of course, is intrinsic to the genre, and it's not being sidelined here. The team is planning some massive

encounters, not just between individual characters, but between boats and even armadas, recreating the epic encounters the literary genre of swashbuckling is famous for it will also be possible to use magic and special attacks in the game, both of which are set to be accompanied by the usual cast of glossy effects.

Eternal Arcadia certainly has its sights set on grandiose achievements. The map is gargantuan, the sky can be navigated in true 3D, and the designers are even considering some sort of modem



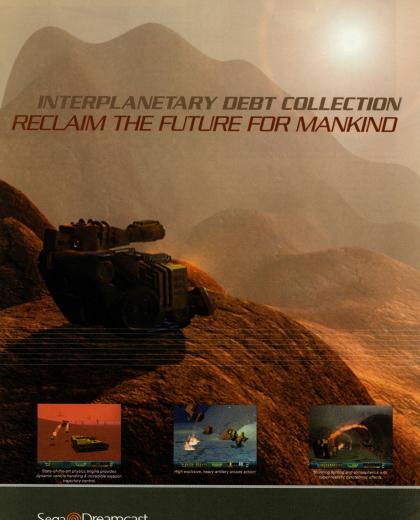


■ Vyse is a member of the Blue Sky Pirates. Much like Robin Hood, they prefer to attack the strong and protect the weak and helpless

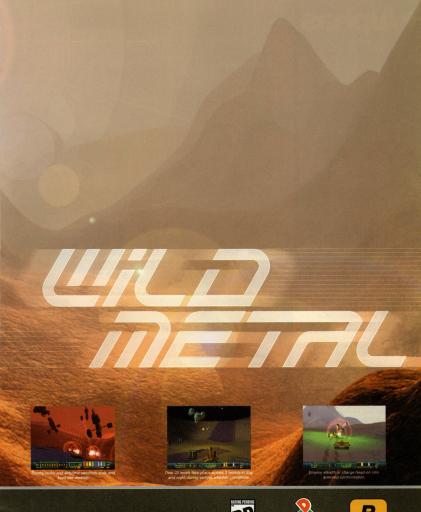
support — multiplayer roleplaying a la Ultima Online! It's possible. With this and Shenmue on the horizon, the possibilities are starting to reach beyond all known parameters. For RPG fanatics, this is the time to be alive. — Nigel Edge

If Sega can set the foundations of an epic series now, it could have thousands of fans on board — no matter how PS2 performs





Sega@Dreamcast.











When you say 'realtime strategy', people think of lots of base management, lots of resoursce management, lots of or armies at each other," says Rob Pardo, the producer of Bitzzards 'WarCraft III. "We're trying to get away from that." So lik sardy surprising that what's on the screen in front of him doesn't look at all like a realtime strategy game. In fact, it looks like a Diablo clone in a 3D engine.

"We want to emphasize tactical combat, in really interesting worlds, without fodder units." he explains, "so we brought in a lot of role-playing elements." More than once, Pardo points to N64's Legend of Zelda and the latest Final Fantasy games to explain the effect they're trying to achieve. Blizzard has been showing off an early build of the game; actually, it's little more than a heavily scripted press demo, a canned launt through an orc town, a human encampment, a spider temple, and a bone dragon lair. It's a nice showcase for their new 3D engine (which boasts some incredibly detailed trees that are all the more surprising considering the game will run in software on a P200), but it makes it clear that this is dramatically different from earlier WarCraft titles.





st of the units in WarCraft III will be immediately familiar to ran users, and great care has been kept in keeping the look tent despite the fact that they are all now polygonal instead of

Gameplay centers around heroes, who can recruit a number of followers based on their leadership skill. A player will eventually control several parties: "You'll probably get up to four heroes at a time, each with their own subgroup," says Pardo. Since the camera is always attached to a hero and it's limited to what the hero can see. WarCraft III has an intimate feel. But Pardo insists it will have the trappings of a realtime strategy game. "We still want you to have this fastpaced gameplay with two- or threepronged attacks," he says. Waypoints, formations, and minimaps? "Yeah, I think



players with older machines can play too, with a hefty software mode that can run on a P200

you'll see a lot of those elements."

The resource management feels more like an RPG, since gold and hero experience will be the measure of your power. Heroes go up levels and acquire skills, while gold is used to improve the keep that gives you followers and to

research their special abilities. For instance, the orc grunt can learn a berserker mode, the troll hunter will be able to track creatures by their heat signatures, and the wolf riders will snare enemies in their nets. At first, you'll get gold by killing creatures, but Pardo explains how "a more interesting way of showing resourcing" will kick in: "As you transition to the middle or later parts of the game, you want to spend your time questing or killing your opponent, so you'll be building self-contained resource nodes that give you money." Docks and lumber mills can be built to generate an income.

"We're going to make this game really customizable," says Pardo, after noting Quake's incredible longevity from thirdparty modifications like Team Fortress. "Almost everything we're doing as far as art and code formats is non-proprietary. We're actually exposing a scripting system, a Javalike language for people to script their own units, spells, and encounter areas, their own races, virtually their own game with their own rules." As if WarCraft III didn't have enough of an identity crisis without people digging their fingers into its - Tom Chick

"When you say 'realtime strategy,' people think of lots of base management, lots of resource management, and throwing a lot of armies at each other. We're trying to get away from that."



THE CASE FOR WARCRAFT III'S TITLE

Why it should be called Diablo III: I. Emphasis on exploration and

- hero development
- 2. Different classes of heroes
- 3. Heroes gain experience to go up levels and get new abilities
- 4. Your sole resource is gold, which
- you use to buy things
- 5. Combat is tactical-level hand-to-hand
- fighting and spell casting
- 6. You go on quests to gain magic items and advance the storyline
- Why it should be called Warcraft III:

I. It's got orcs

The verdict:

Who cares, it's Blizzard. They could call it Trespasser II and not only would it sell 500,000 copies, but it would be good.

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■ The camera is flexible so you can fight monsters from a *Diablo*-esque overhead perspective or get up-close and personal with this over-the-shoulder view





■ There are more than 50 types of monsters that you will fight ranging from enemy soldiers to demonic creatures

- DC DDEAMCAST

LEGEND OF THE BLADE MASTERS

■ Publisher: Ripcord ■ Developer: Ronin Entertainment ■ Release Date: March 2000 ■ Origin: US

Classic RPG style. Modern RPG technology

If you're going to mention other games as inspiration, you might as well use the best. Ronin President Kalani Streicher admits that with Legend of the Blade Masters Your goal was to get the look and magic effects of Zeida and the gameplay and interaction of Diablo." Two very popular and distinctly different games, but Legend actually looks to be a successful hybrid yielding

a unique and compelling experience.

As Eric Valdimar, you play a young adventurer who stumbles across one of the five magical Dragon swords — weapons with the spirits of guardian dragons entombed within — who takes it upon himself to find the remaining four swords and rid the lands of the malignant evil that has crept in since the dragons were captured. Along the way, other

adventurers will join up with your party, providing some extra firepower as well as new abilities. As Fire and friends traverse the gigantic game world, they will be confronted with dozens of quests — and, as in any well designed RPG, any single quest may consist of several subquests. Completing these will allow players to figure out the deep backstory laid out for the land, as well as provide clues and

Items necessary to complete the game. Combat is also an integral part of the game. Characters have both close and ranged weapon attacks (watching players fire arrows into monsters to have them stick for the whole battle is a nice touch, and each possesses a certain range of magic abilities. There are more than 100 unique spells in the game, and, while each character is capable of casting magic, they all have unique spells. Effects

OTHER MASTERS OF

THE BLADE While you're waiting for Legend of the Blade Masters to be released, check out Muugen Nop Juunin, (released in the US as Blade Of The Immortal by Dark Horse Comics) The story revolves around a Ronin who has slain his master in disgust at his deeds, only to be cursed with immortality until he slays 1,000 more people as punishment for his crime. With stunning artwork, deep characters, and an involving storyline, it's a comic book that no fan should miss



Alphas

seen in the early build previewed shied away from the traditional flash and sparkle found in most RPGs and included such crowd pleasers as a set of monstrous hands that come out of the earth to grapple your enemies to the ground and an unyielding stone golem who smashes through everything in his path.

The backbone of all these effects is fully 30 engine that allows users to play from a wealth of different camera views depending on the situation. If you place the camera high, you can strategically place your characters in optimum positions for battle against the chaotic hordes, Place the camera down low behind your characters, and you can adventure from an almost Zelda-like perspective. Either way, the little details like firefiles that buzz angrily around at night or the characters and you can inelect on the characters.



■ Spell effects range from the mundane to the spectacular. One spell summons these giant hands from the earth to do your bidding

forest (only to be eaten by the fauna) instill a sense of wonder as you explore further and further into the living world.

behind your characters, and you can adventure from an almost Zelda-like perspective. Either way, the little details like fireflies that buzz angriy around at night, or the toakstools which grow in the

Effects include such crowd pleasers as

a set of monstrous hands that come out



your party members so that they can help you carry out an effective battle strategy

pick one of the five main characters from the game and fight their way through single-quest scenarios as a group. As players progress, tactics will no doubt evoke based on the differentiating abilities of each character, which is sure to lead to some interesting game scenarios.

One thing is for certain: with Dreamcast lacking in both multiplayer games and action/RPGs, *Legend of the Blade Masters* could make quite an impact when it ships in March. — *Blake Rischer*





























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Distributed by:

SOUTH PEAK"



GAUNTLET: DARK LEGACY

■ Publisher: Midway ■ Developer: Atari ■ Release Date: Spring 2000 ■ Origin: US

A new, darker, legend is born

The success of Gauntlet Legends is, well, the stuff of all the standard

legend. When faced with the daunting task of updating this arcade (and home) hit, Atari — now a development arm of Midway Games — decided to take a new approach to the traditional series. By adding a layer of noir, goosing up the werindress quotient, doubling the settings, and quadrupling the cast of characters, the latest edition of this sword-and-sorcey epic sheds its earlier mainstream flavor and picks up a distinctively contemporary edgy tone.

"Our intention was to give *Legacy* a darker feeling, hence the name," explains Art Director Steve "Scat" Caterson. "The

1999 version, Gauntlet Legends, featured all the standard characters — the warrior, Vallkyrie, wizard, and archer," he adds, "but we gave them a pretty vanilla flavor last year since we didn't want to

alienate anyone. This time around, we've spiced up the cast with unique, cool characters like a twisted jester or a highly stylized knight."

■ The new character designs are much darker than the originals. Each character will also look different depending on which color you choose

One thing that hasn't changed is your





■ The game uses the same hardware, but the second-generation engine allows for an unprecedented amount of detail

→ Alphas

RUNNING THE GAUNTLET

The name Gauntlet appropriate than you may think. The phrase running the gauntlet refers to the practice of running down a path while men on either sides beat you with sticks In Gauntlet, you get beat with a lot of sticks, so we're going to dispel the rumor here and now that you're looking for the piece of armor known as the gauntlet.

mission, which has been remained consistent from the 1985 version of the game up through the last 1999 remake. Once again, four heroes set out to liberate four kingdoms from an intimidating menagerie of mythic beasts, bosses, monsters, and demons. This time around, however, depth and complexity have increased exponentially. So while you'll see all the original environments from Legends again, you'll be forced to discover alternate paths through these newly-darkened settings. Thanks to an added layer of animation, you'll also confront twice as many interactive elements and challenges as you battle your way through the fiery lava caverns of the Mountain realm, the misty crypts of the Pyramid's tombs, or the lush swamplands of the Forest world.

For our money, the real fun starts when you arrive in the five new realms — Town World, Siç World, Ice World, Dream World, and Battlefield World — each of which offers three or four subworlds to conquer. Compelling oddittes include the Town World's farmland setting, which is populated by undead zombles, "grunts," and "ground critters" (in this case, maggots that emerge from dead cows).





■ This installment of Gauntlet evidently takes some influence from the 16-bit platformer. Look, a mine-cart level! And an ice level!



■ This graveyard is the spawning point for many undead horrors. The Dream World is filled with plenty of places like this from your nightmares

One highly imaginative environment is inspired by M.C. Escher's mindbendingly surrealistic art

Once you enter the Dream World, your last link to everyday reality goes right out the window. The unsettling trip through the land of dreams features a haunted house and a twisted carnival. The climax of the world occurs on the "M.C. Escher level," a highly imaginative environment inspired by Escher's mindbendingly surrealistic art. Watch out for sudden, shocking shifts of perspective - one minute you're walking on walls instead of the floor, forcing you to cope with unsettling perspectives and spacial relationships. You'll also find paths that flip over to reveal their physical opposites at the touch of a hidden switch, and possibly even some

■ This disgusting plague slime boss is the final hurdle you must face in the Town World

disorienting challenges inspired by famous icons like Escher's endless-loop circular stairway.

The cast menu for each main character is subdivided by color (red. blue, green, yellow) with each color having a different texture and appearance, but the same basic powers, for each character. In addition to the returning cast of characters including the warrior, the wizard, the elf, and the Valkyrie, players can also choose the dwarf, the knight, the jester, and the sorceress - all of whom are also multiplied into four color suites. It looks as if the team has indeed gone way beyond Gauntlet Legends' vanilla; Dark Legacy offers an intriguingly strange mocha brew. - Marcus Webb





Based on the wildly popular animated series,
Monkey Magic for PlayStation* takes its storyline
from an ancient Asian folk tale.
Kongo, the magical monkey, travels
through 30 levels of mind-warping
puzzles and traps in his attempt to
save the universe.

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■ Rheon presents the only hope for humanity against the machines that wa om the face of the Earth



imagery when it wants to make a point

■ PLAYSTATION

GALERIANS

Taking the phrase "off with his head" to new levels



■ Mercilessly gaze upon your enemy as he crumples to the floor burning. While this may bring satisfaction to you, it also brings you another step closer to death in the karmic cycle of the game

Crave has an uphill battle to fight. With the US release of its upcoming Galerians, the company must convince an already skeptical US audience that, even though the game features pre-rendered backgrounds and 3D characters, it isn't just another Resident Evil knockoff. Fortunately, in this case it's true. Galerians looks to be the game that breaks the survival horror mold instead of taking players into a world of

horror, it transports them to a stark future with nothing less than the survival

of the human race at stake. According to game designer Hiroshi "Punk" Kobayashi, the game draws its imagery from a distinguished list of stylized classics. "We drew inspiration from movies like Blade Runner, 12 Monkeys, and The Crow," he admits, "although we did start working on the game right after BioHazard shipped, so we obviously drew some inspiration there too." The story line follows a young boy named Rheon, who awakens in a darkened lab sometime in the vague future. This future, however, has its share of problems. Namely, a sentient supercomputer called Dorothy has created a new race of artificial humans called "Galerians" and is now attempting to wipe out the human race and replace it with her own handiwork.

Alphas

You, as Rheon, are the key. The creators of Dorothy knew that it might get too powerful, so they created a failsafe. Rheon holds half of this fail-safe (a computer virus) deep in his mind; throughout the game, he must find the other half. What distinguishes this from your standard adventure game is that Rheon is far from helpless. At his disposal is a set of psychic powers that can be used to take out anyone who gets in his path. You can make enemies burst into flame, fly across the room, or even have their heads explode Scanners-style.

"The violence is necessary for the story," says Kobayashi when confronted by the sheer horror of the visual imagery. There is a balance, however; for every time that Rheon uses his powers to kill, he damages himself, "We wanted to show that there is some sort of backlash for killing others," he says, "so killing everything else is the same as killing yourself." This imagery plays throughout the entire story, with players always aware of the fact that, to survive in this harsh world they must always keep themselves on the verge of death.

With three CDs of storyline - many scenes told through some incredibly well-produced CGI FMV - Galerians looks to forge new ground in the burgeoning action/adventure genre. With its dark portrayal of the future (not postapocalyptic, though, we'd like to point out), it's poised to bring in a whole new set of sci-fi adventure fans who just weren't that excited by the prospect of zombie blasting. - Blake Fischer



■ And you thought your childhood memories were bad. This shot looks like was inspired by the

FLAME ON! use his powers to make people burst into flame spontaneous human combustion isn't a problem that most people worry about in real life. Scientists body (made mostly of water) is not very flammable in general and that most cases

of SHC are actually instances where investigators have mistaken people that have accidentally lit themselves on fire. Still, if you suddenly feel a searing 212 degree heat inside of you (hard to miss, we figure), seek care!



You can make enemies burst into flame, or even make their heads explode





■ When the scientists try to apprehend you and it looks like you can't run away, you can always stand back and make their heads explode





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→ Alphas



■ Fear Effect masterfully combines futuristic sci-fi visions with traditional horror themes for a startlingly fresh action experience

■ PLAYSTATION

R EFFECT

IRRATIONAL FEARS

Rypophobia

Fear of sharks Fear of the number 13

Fear of dirt Fear of pregnancy

Fear is only the beginning

With a new name (see our preview of Fear Factor, NG 56) and a new release date, one thing that hasn't changed about Fear Effect is that it stands to outgun the suspenseful, but sometimes draggy, pace of Resident Evil by way of a visceral, thrill-a-minute action/adventure. With an anime look, and some innovative technology to execute dynamic camera angles and zero load-

■ Release Date: Q1 2000 ■ Origin: US



■ No, this isn't a cut scene. Fear Effect uses a ndering technique that makes the 3D look like an anime cartoon. Really

shaping up to be one of the slickest and most stylish games for PlayStation.

Occupying a hefty four discs, the game's setting ranges from a futuristic Hong Kong (complete with Blade Runnerstyle flying cars and pervasive dynamic video screens), to a primitive riverside fishing settlement overrun by possessed villagers, to a surreal vision of the Chinese conception of hell.

The set-up is fed to players in jumbled pieces, with the starting animation depicting a scene that takes place twothirds of the way through the game. But the story fragments come together for you and your ragtag team of three mercenaries, a French-Chinese belle, Hana, a brawny loose cannon of an Aussie named Deke, and an honorable ex-US military man named Glas. Your team is hired to find the missing daughter of a wealthy Chinese businessman, and as the game progresses, objectives change, from



making some serious cash to simple selfpreservation.

The story has an impressive narrative, but in keeping with the anime style, it is distilled into the hyper-realistic shorthand of comic-book imagery. Fear Effect proves that Kronos has finally come into its own, complementing its competent artwork creation with daring and highly playable game design. - Jeffrey Adam Young



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THE OLD FIVE-FINGER

DISCOUNT In Garrett's world, if you get caught with your hand in the till. you get killed nice and quick. Unfortunately for thieves in modern Kabul, life is not so easy. Recently, hundreds of Afghanis gathered in an openair stadium to watch as doctors complete with hospital masks. cut off the right hands of four thieves. They were being punished for

stealing \$50, 12

teapots, and I5

dinner plates.

PC

THIEF II: THE METAL AGE

■ Publisher: Eidos ■ Developer: Looking Glass ■ Release Date: Late Q1 2000 ■ Origin: US

Thief II stands out by staying back in the shadows

Thief may have missed out on maintream success last year but it remained a title to watch because of its focus on steath instead of fragging. With Thief II, master thief Garrett is back in a world that promises to be more beautiful and maleficent this time around with more backstory, more political inrigue (a rogue band of religious finatics called the mechanists' provides the game with its subtitle: the metal age), and — literally—a new sherriff in town.

As for gameplay, project leader Steve Pearsall promises us that the emphasis this time will be on skulking rather than smitting. "Thief! for us was really an experimental title, because we really didn't know if the whole 'stealth gameplay' dynamic would be interesting enough to carry a whole game. But the feedback we got was that people liked the core 'stealth missions' so that's really what we are going for [with Thief II]."

With this in mind, the new level designs focus on the player developing more realistic thiewing skills as opposed to just stumbling through each mission. There will be specific parts of the map that will provide an overview of the grounds, allowing players to plan their routes, and lockpicking (an essential skill for breaking into houses) has been even turned into its own minigame requiring players to experiment and memorize different lockpick combinations for different kinds of locks.

With new 16-bit textures, colored lighting, and transparency effects, the graphics in *Thief II* outshine those of the original game. Polygon counts for the



■ You'll also have to stay hidden from the servants in each household. If you get spotted, you'll have to put an arrow through the informer's throat before the alarm gets sounded

character models have gone from 330 to the Al, so that the easier modes are more accessible and the expert modes are more accessible and the expert modes are more difficult. The Al in the game will hopefully be better than Pearsall, though — we swiped his watch and wallet on the ___im Preston ___im Preston.

"Thief I for us was really an experimental title, because we really didn't know if the whole 'stealth gameplay' dynamic would be interesting enough to carry a whole game"

-sum Parada, load designed, l





Hunt Elves CHAPT, 5



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"An interesting slice of anime" -Gamer's Republic

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Original Dirty Pair





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"Get one gun-wielding babe, get the second free!"

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0 2040

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It's a CIA triple-cross that kicks off with a gorgeous blonde begging the ever-eager City Hunter to protect her. Caught in a web of international intrigue, Ryo must rely on his one unquestionable impulse to foil a relentless assassin, uncover an insidious double agent and score with the girl of his dreams. With a million dollar price tag, this is a job



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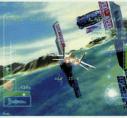
he won't soon forget.











■ There are 38 types of planes, from trainers to the exotic "X" fighters like the X-29 — hence

IN A FORMER LIFE...

Curly M around of core of six off from the Wipeout team at Psygnosis, including producer Satterthwaite And what does he say about anyone who might try to draw let: X and that other game? "Obviously it's an airborne racing game, so people are going to say it's Wipeout," Satterthwaite says but we don't think it feels or plays or has Wipeout," Fair

■ PLAYSTATION

■ Publisher: Infogrames ■ Developer: Curly Monsters ■ Release Date: March 2000 ■ Origin: UK

Aim high by flying low

When Curly Monsters started work on its first game, currently going by the working title Jet: X, the concept was simple. "We jokingly called it Jet Turismo," recalls producer

Andy Satterthwaite. But the joke became serious as they realized that taking everything good about Gran Turismo and adding the speed of jet fighters could make a hugely exciting game.

■ let: X will also afford the head-to-head two player split-screen mode



"Check me. I'm crankin' and bankin'!



■ The flight courses are bounded by lines of flashing lights, and after three seconds an autopilot cuts in to bring you back into line (which slows you down considerably)

The Championship mode borrows Gran Turismo's idea of starting out with the slowest, unmodified plane and working your way up. Players also have to earn flying licenses and pass exams to gain access to different races. As money is won, planes can be upgraded to make them faster and stronger, or equipped with weapons or stealth capabilities.

Another aspect that will separate casual and hardcore gamers is the handling: Arcade mode operates just like a car, with left, right, up, and down working to an universal axis, no matter what the orientation of the plane. Pro handling, however, maps the commands to the plane's actual orientation, making it far harder to control, although it's the only way to complete the game.

Unlike Gran Turismo, the aircraft are not organized by manufacturer, but by countries. Thus only the French will offer Mirages, and Swedes the Drakan.

The 14 racing tracks themselves are optimized for extremely low-level flying. In fact, altitude is one of the key features of the game, since the lower you fly, the faster the plane goes, and anyone expecting to win a race will need to master flying below 100m. Conversely, the ceiling of 1,000m is enforced by making a plane's airspeed bleed off until it stalls.

Currently, work is concentrated on signing up a DJ for the music, and working with a design agency to complete the overall look. The history of plane racing games is spotty at best (Plane Crazy, anyone?), but Jet: X may buck the - Nigel Edge

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TRIKER PRO

No MLS? No problem, says Infogrames

Is Striker Pro the NFL 2K of soccer? Infogrames hopes so. And while the game is still early, developer Rage is planning a complete suite of bells and whistles for the game, including super-realistic models and motion capture (although they look quite good, the players in the screenshots are only placeholders, the producer was quick to inform us.)

Rounding out the package will be full play-by-play and color analysis, fully modeled stadiums, and a complete UEFA license. UEFA? Union of European Football Associations? Why not MLS, Major League

Soccer? The problem with soccer games is that while there's a large enough audience to justify releasing them here, there's rarely a game that a company feels is worth localizing for the US market, so if you're into European club teams, you're in luck. If not, you'll only find one US team, the national team. Infogrames reasons that if you're into soccer, you don't mind getting to play as a European team, and it's probably not a bad argument.

MLS license or not, the game will be hitting US Dreamcasts in February, making it the first soccer game on the system. If it can equal Konami's and EA's best efforts on PlayStation and Nintendo 64, Infogrames may have just created an additional reason to pick up a Dreamcast. - Chris Charla



Renders (above) give an idea of the graphics Rage is promising. Models below are placeholder 9:26 ARS 0 - AST 0





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ARCADI

OUT TRIGGER

■ Publisher: Sega ■ Developer: Sega ■ Release Date: Q4 1999 ■ Origin: Japan

Brutal free-for-all multiplay hits the arcade

The multiplayer deathmatch hasn't had much success in the arcade so far Whether it's the generic conversion of GL Quake or Atar's respectable WAR- Final Assault, arcadegoers just haven't been biting. Now, with the advent of the Naomi board, developers are giving the idea a second chance with games like Sega AVE'S Out Trigger.

You play a member of INTERFORCE, an international anti-terrorism force, and you basically run around, grab coins and weapons off the ground, and shoot people. Sound mindless? Well, maybe, but let's face it: Quake III isn't exactly known for its depth. What makes Out

Trigger fun is its use of the Naomi link-up for up-to-four-player simultaneous play. With three friends, Out Trigger becomes an insane context of skill (Winner is the player with the highest score at the end). Experienced PC gamers will feel right in home with this style of gameplay, its control scheme of a Joystick and trackball feels natural after only a few minutes of play. The biggest change from the status quo (besides the absolutely stunning



■ The combination joystick/trackball combination gives the same feel as the mouse/keyboard combination PC gamers are used to



■ The third-person view gives an entirely different feel to the standard shoot-'em-up action, but the camera may swing around too much for those who are more motion-sensitive

Naomi graphics) is the ability to play the game from a choice of first- or thirdperson perspective.

While no Dreamcast port has been announced, were fairly confident that Sega will be bringing this one home once it gets its network infrastructure wired for Internet multiplay. With games like this and Spawn (previewed MG II/99), fans of the deathmatch may find a new home in the arcade and (eventually) in front brief TV sets.

— Bloke Fischer

BORN IN THE USA While deathmatch games seem quite common to US

audiences, they are something of a novelty for Japanese gamers. Why? Because PCs (the deathmatch platform of choice) aren't terribly common in the home in Japan.



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DRFAMWORKS











→ Milestones

Next Generation's monthly update on tomorrow's games







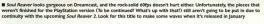


■ This sword-and-sorcery epic improves every time we take a look at it. Even better, it features tons of different techniques and spells that will take your breath away

DREAMCAST

DRACONUS: CULT OF THE WYRM





■ DREAMCAS

SOUL REAVER



Fantasy adventuring enters the next generation with two sword-and-sorcery games on

Dreamest and the fantastic-looking. Vampire: the Masquerade on PC (pray for a Dreamest port). In the meantline, Sega's new Virtua Tennis game looks to make waves with one of the most underrated of sporting-game categories. Then, we wrap up this month with some shots of the coming generation of PlayStation games: Alundra 2, Die Hard Trillogy 2, and Koudelka.





→ Milestones







undra 2 features a new 3D engine (the first game was sprite ba more quests than ever before. Look for this game in March























■ SNK is taking the horror concept and fashioning a full-featured RPG. Great effects and creepy environments make this a game to watch when it comes out in March

■ PLAYSTATION

KOUDELKA





■ This game has us slavering with anticipation. The quest portion is huge, involving, and spans several centuries, while the multiplayer mode is revolutionary in its own right

■ PC

VAMPIRE: THE MASQUERADE-REDEMPTION









■ ARCADE, DREAMCAST

VIRTUA TENNIS





■ Tennis? Leave it Sega to not only pick an obscure sporting genre, but to redefine it with this spectacular-looking effort. Even better, this one's scheduled to come home next year. Can you say internet rankings? We sure hope Sega can



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Ever cram all night for a test? Work a double-shift? Tough, huh? Remember the physical and mental exhaustion you felt? But it's bush league stuff compared to what goes on in the world of game development. How about working a month - or two months, or three - without a day off? The final phase of game development is brutal, more than a month straight of doubleshifts. It's known and feared industry-wide as...

CRUNCH TIME





In the final period of a game's production, development houses transcend their normal work environments and become third-world sweatshops. Next Generation explores the nearly-infinite cram session that only ends with a finished game

Crunch time. The term sends shudders down the spines of embattled game developers everywhere. Any developer will tell you that the final stretch of work on any game is the toughest, most demanding, and most time-consuming part of the job. Look at the catalog of titles that just made it to store shelves this holiday season, and we guarantee you'll see

some titles that have taken years off of the lives those who made them.

It's a tough road, but we already we hear you doubters: "These guys make games, they play with Nerf guns at their offices, they get big royalty checks when the games are done. We're not crying over how hard life is for them."

But foam projectiles and big money notwithstanding, game development teams aren't very big (outside Japan, anyway), and everyone carries their share of the workload. More often than not, game developers in the US and UK are working weekends, as well as shifts

that average from about 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. The über-casual dress and intraoffice LAN fragfests may be nice perks, but the demands of the job push game development beyond the realm of a 9-to-5 position; it's a career choice with serious repercussions on family and social life. Those who have been in the industry long enough have seen their fair share of marriages end, and this always comes back in large part to the time demands of the job. If you don't believe us, see what 989 Studios President Kelly Flock has to say in his response to crunch time on page 84.

Here Comes the Crunch

So what is it exactly that makes the closing period of game development so difficult? More often than not, certain problems in development get pushed aside to be fixed at the end. As a game undergoes its transformation from a bare engine to a working prototype, more problems arise. Basically, the more of the game there is developed, the more there is that can go wrong with it.

"It will all come together in the end" is perhaps the most over-used expression in game development. Many features and control issues are tied up at the end of development. According to Shipy Entertainment President David Perry, when a developer says, "It will all come together in the end," that actually means, "Things are buggy, broken, or not implemented yet and they had better all come together at the end!"

Almost universally, a game quickly goes from "just functional" to "playable" in the last month of development. At this point in time, a lot of late nights are required to debug and tune the game and finish it on schedule. The development team must tie up all the loose ends behind the graphics, music, sound effects, gameplay mechanics and increasingly, story and character development. When these elements first come together, the game is said to be in its alpha stage. The elements are there, but the code is still very buggy, the camera may be wonky, and character Al may be flawed. Once these bugs are worked through, the game enters the beta stage. It is during the beta stage when the final crash bugs are exorcised and tuning begins.

"Tuning," Perry says, "setting variables



CRUNCH TIME

Sex, wives, and programmers...

We had all been working 100-hour weeks, people were living in their offices. I was trying

to get a programmer some new info related to a bug, I knocked on his office
door — no response. I knocked a little louder —

no response. I could hear soft music from within.
Through slits in the window blinds, I could see
that the room was, as usual, barely lit by the pale
blue glow of the Christmas lights strung in big
loops across the ceiling.

So I opened the door, and the programmer was in — so was his wife. They were having sex on the Pershar rug. It was like she had come up for a conjugal visit, because her husband was in the prison of game development. (But, hey we've all been there, right?) I have many more crunch time stories, but — wouldn't you know it — Pm in crunch right now on Deus En work.

Harvey Smith, lead designer on Deus Ex, Ion Storm

Crunch time stories...

When it comes to "the make or break" period of game development, more often than not it is the developers themselves that are made or broken. And in the crazy world of crunch time, crazy things happen. We polled every industry veteran whose email address we could find and asked for their best crunch time stories. These are their responses, true tales of superhuman endurance married with bizarre circumstance What more could you ask for?



Testing courage...

I was working for a publisher back in England.
We were trying to finish a PC port of an Amiga game
In time for the holidays. In order to get through the final
bit of testing, I took three testers down to the developer,
which was in the middle of nowhere, and set up camp.

We were there for a week before we had a game that we felt was finished, Just before we drove off with the final set of master disks (shows you how old the story fs.)? If thought it would be a good leds to have the settlers play through the game, start to finish, one more time. This states about the house of playtime — remember, the tester finesy the game better than the back of his hand. He got to the last level, finished the last boss, and pow — nothing happened.

We went and woke the programmer (it was about midnight), and told him the problem. He looked at the code, instantly spotted the problems, and in five minutes the poor tester was back playing the game from the start again. Six hours later (five, he was getting tired), he got to the final boss, killed it, and uh-oh, nothing happened again. The player was just left on the screen by himself — no ending animation, no rolling credits, not even music.

So we politely woke the programmer from his slumber and explained the problem. He looked at the code and muttered, "God, that would never have worked!", typed some more lines of code, and blam, we got a new version.

I looked at the tester. He looked like he'd played this game for weeks, and just after completing an eleven-hour stint, I asked him to do it again. He did. He finished the game, and thankfully it worked right this time. We got in the car and took off, never to come back. We got the game done, just in time, and the poor lead tester spent the next week in bed.

So while a lot of 'crunch' stories will talk about how much dedication the programmers had, I think testers probably have the worst part of crunch — they get paid peanuts, are expected to work a 24-hour shift when it comes to finishing product; and they don't even get any credit for it. If it wasn't for the test groups working like crays, then "crunch mode" would all be for nothing Colin derodon, vice president of product development, BOSS studios.

like difficulty, lives, ammo, and energy can't really be done until the debugging — making it so the gun works or that your enemy is not blind — is out of the way."

Developers are forced to iron out programming bugs, make modifications to the gameplay, iron out the bugs that arose from making the modifications, and then modify some more. The pressure becomes twofold: to deliver the best gameplay possible within the time limit and iron out all the bugs that occur. Often times, new features are added, or planned features are dropped within this time frame. It is the make-or-break period for a game's development.

"Neglecting either tuning or debugging," says Perry, "will simply ruin your years of hard work."

This is the reason for crunch time. After months of work, teams can see the end of the tunnel. But if they don't want to ship an unfnished or unpolished game, the amount of work done per day has to increase dramatically. Unfortunately, the long hours means that productify usually goes down, necessitating even longer, less productive hours. It a vidious cycle that ends (rarely) when the team decides the game is finally finished — or funch more frequently) when the publisher demands that the game ship no matter what.

This is the beginning of the marathon sessions. As the days before deadline get closer, the development team ceases to go home, often falling asleep at their keyboards, wearing the same clothes for several days, eating take-out food (mostly pizza) three meals a day. To quote Colonial patrict Thomas



David Perry, president, Shiny Entertainment

Paine, these are the times that try men's souls. Crunch time kills friendships, ends marriages, and causes the occasional fistfight.

"There are lots of discussions, lectures, and software products declaring their solution to this 'cramming' at the end," Perry says, "but I think it's now infused into our genetics forever, after years and years of our parents and parents' parents cramming at school."

Of course, developers feel an overwhelming urge to continue adding to a game until the very last moment. But a month or two before a game is completed, it undergoes a "feature lock," which means that the developers cannot add any more features. They must simply debug and tune the game with its current feature set in order to get the project finished. As debugging and tuning commence, particularly in a product is that is really running late, features and levels that are proving hard to fix are sometimes unceremoniously chopped. One of recent example of a game that had its feature set frozen was Legacy of Kain: Soul Reaver. As the project was running a year later than its first scheduled release date, several later levels were cut from the game. As a story-driven adventure, the cutting of the

levels required the design team to amend the story. (This decision came after the voice-over for the project had been recorded, and several sound files for the originally planned ending were buried on the PC version. A group of hardcore gamers found the files, extracted them, and posted them on the Web.)

It's disappointing to hear stories such as the one with Soul Reaver But the truth of the matter is, part of the reason developers work so feverishly during crunch time is to get the tuning down and the gameplay right. Nobody intends to ship a bad product. But as this magazine has reported far too often for our liking, sometimes a development team's reach exceeds its grap.

Can the Crunch be Stopped?

Why not add more people at the end to a project to help alleviate the crunch? Sounds like a good idea, but unfortunately, because the creation of software is a very intimate process, adding team members near the end just won't speed development.

"More people just ask too many questions," says Perry. "They actually decrease the efficiency of the people that were really getting the work done. For example, hiring 20 programmers to work with the three you already

have will just swamp them with problems, questions, and

Crunch flights...

Spec Ogs 2 Just ween gold, so I am all too familiar with crunch time. My senior programmer literally study of the office (and sady) wore the same clothes for four days straight (although he was nice enough to actually run them through the washing machine we have at least once). After we got the official OK that it was approved, he was also somehow to meet me at the airport at 7 a.m. the very next day to fy to San Francisco for a Dreamcast developers' conference. Now that is declarion above and beyond the call of duty.

Now when I was at Virtual IO (the company that made the VR headsets), some of our people missed a flight from Seattle to Tolyo and were unable get another flight. Rather than move the meeting to a new day, they flew decided to fly around the world — the long way. They went from Seattle, to New York, to London, to Bombay, to Japan. They still got there sooner than if they had waited until the next direct flight — but not in any condition to make a good presentation.

John Williamson, producer, Zombie

CRUNCH TIME

Boogie nights...

This is a valger story; the given indigence in advance. We were in the closing hours of Odd/Worlde Abe's Odd/yee. The game was complete and on the disc, which was getting a final run-through by designers jet? Brown and Paul O'Contor (we didn't have a test staff on that job, so the designers did the in-house testing), jet! discovered a crash bug in one of the later venue; "It might have been the forest Temple ender," so of course everything care to a halt while we tried to track it down.

Eric Yiskis fired up the debugger and Paul played through the game, trying to reproduce the crash. Things were painfully slow. Eric was watching the code one line at a time, translating to a slow-motion, fractured play

experience for Paul, meaning his timing was all off and he kept making dumb mistakes. Add that to the accumulated fatigue of several weeks of crunch time, and we weren't act our most efficient. Still, Paul played through the sequence multiple times and we couldn't find anything wrong with the code or reproduce the crash.

Meanwhile, on the other side of the room, Jeff continued to repoduce the bug by playing off the disc. So, we have a real mystery on our hands: a game that crashes off the disc but runs just fine on the development station, and code that looks correct despite a line-by-line examination by our programming staff.

Impass. Deadline. Creeping panic.

And then Craig Ewert, another of our programmers, pops the disc out of the matchine, turns it over, and sees there's a bit of crud (well, to be flair, it was... a booger) on the disc. He wipes it off, pops it in the machine, and the level plays just fine. Bug solved. Instead of running it through the de-bugger, we should have run it through the de-boogree:

Lorne Lanning, President/Creative Director, OddWorld Inhabitants

third-party bugs."

Ask any painter, sculptor, musician, photographer, or director, and they'il tell you the creative process first always orderly. Even a game with a soild design document will still change during production. As games increasingly grow into cinematic, story-driven vehicles that cost more and more to produce, design documents, and pre-production planning are playing a more important role in development, as is asset management during a project.

"I use to waffle on about 'dynamic design,"" Perry says, admitting that there was never a design doc for

Earthworm Jim or MDK.
"It was my way of explaining that

No love...

I don't know anyone that has fond memories of crunch time, when firedniships end over whose fault the delays were, marriages end because one of the spouses (almost without exception the husband father) spends too much time at work, and co-workers end up in the occasional fistlight. It's hard to be nostalgic for marathon work sessions created by poor planning, bad management, indecision, insecurity, created parajois, and stress.

Kelly Flock, president, 989 Studios

I had shipped tons of games without ever having a design document of any form. Basically we knew the direction we wanted to go in and then just kept enhancing the bits that were working best." A logical philosophy, sure. But perhaps one that is best left with the days of smaller development reams

"Once teams get over about nine people," Perry says, Things start getting messy. You need to track progress as different people work at different speeds and keep everyone guided. Without a design, this gets out of control really quickly."

Perry makes the inevitable comparison to the more detailoriented world of Hollywood. We need to think of our staff as the expensive celebrities that we don't want sitting around while we re-design stuff*, be says. "Certainly our focus at Shiny is turning towards tons more pre-planning and a lot more really checks along the was".

Even the film industry — with its 90year history, its unions and production positions organized down to the minutiae of who's refilling the potatochip bowl on the snack truck — still has its share of nightmarish production over-runs (Waterworld, anyone?).
Still, Perry's suggestion is valid, and a model where in-game development is further segmented into pre-production/ production is one we'll likely see many other developers making as

well.

But unlike film, game development is an entirely different beast — some seventy years younger and evolving a much faster pace. So much faster, that game developers' staffing needs have changed tremendously with each new

generation of hardware.

"Over the past few years," says Chris
Taylor, president of Gas Powered Games,
and designer of the original Total
Annihilation, "team sizes have gone from
to 20 people, and so much more is
required. it's crazy, it's like taking the
same team that built a speedboat, and
asking them to build a battleship. You
can't use the same hull design, and those
who try are going to have an extremely
difficult time getting things to work."
Taylor, who's busy with his

haylor, wino sub with rils forthcoming action-RPG for Microsoft titled *Dungeon Siege*, remembers a time fairly recently when "you could have guys working on one aspect of the game with very little communication with others, but now everyone needs to work

Die hard developer...

When it came to crunch time, I had the bright idea of staying in the office the entire week just to get things done. It was the early hours of Tuesday morning when I hit the sack. I laid out my sleeping bag on the floor in my office, and sprawled out in nothing but my jean shorts. The floor wasn't comfortable, so I decided to grab the cushions from the couch in our lounge area. I took all but one pillow, and constructed a fairly satisfactory bed. Still, my feet were dangling, so I went back to the lounge for that last cushion.

This particular company has tight security; all employees have security cards that allow them in and out of certain areas in the building. Heading back to my office, I realized I had left my security card on my desk! I was stuck; doomed to be discovered later that morning, half-naked in the lounge. Can you say screwed? It was like one those dreams where you're in school wearing only your underwear.

I couldn't sleep (there were no cushions on the couch). Then I remembered the scene in Die Hard when John McClane climbed through the ceilings. My first thought was "Are you nuts?" But why not, it worked for him.

I stacked a chair on top of the refrigerator, climbed up onto it, and eased the tile aside. The light seeping through the cracks was my only guide through a jungle of metal, cables, and pipes. I started to make my way across, fearing I would come crashing down through the fragile tiles. Fortunately, having worked in construction for a few years, I had a good idea where to crawl and which pipes would support my weight.

After making my way over air ducts and under network wires, I reached the other side of the security door - sweating profusely, I began climbing down and realized how dirty I had become as my foot left a long black smudge on the wall. Then I jumped, landed in a cloud of dust, and kissed the carpet.

I had to take a shower and do some major cleaning up. But I learned my lesson — don't leave the office without your card! Needless to say I finished out the week, getting all my work done, and now I have a great story to tell my grandchildren. I'll just have to add the part about me saving the company from terrorists. "John McClane," game developer

together and stay very informed about all the changes going on with the project."

With the fairly recent 3D graphics revolution, developers have faced new challenges, specifically cinematic ones. And as has been obvious to anyone who's played a game in these past couple of years, in-game cameras have largely been problematic. Does this mean teams will begin to hire cinematographers? Perhaps, but they won't necessarily be part of the core development team.

"Team sizes will continue to grow and key members will get more valuable until it becomes impossible to sustain," Perry predicts, "The nuclear meltdown will result in many teams going bust and the survivors contracting the best studios in specific areas such as motion capture, concept art, facial acting, etc. That way we all 'share' and only pay for work when we need it. Then when later we are spending months on design, for example, we don't have the carry the burden of all that staff."

When Does It End?

lust as with professionals in many different trades, it's easy to see many veteran game developers become

accustomed to (and perhaps addicted very intense time, and afterward it's easy to remember it through a fog of nostalgia. Certainly teams can give it their all in a heroic effort to produce the gold master, but how playable the

to) the adrenaline and pressure created entirely another matter. Companies like by deadline situations. As horrible as Rare are sticklers for perfection, with a crunch time is when you're in it, it's a reputation for big-budget, high-

appreciate our position on its validity.

quality titles. Nintendo has

Tuning and timing...

game is when it is considered "done" is

It was April, and I was working onsite at Pumpkin Studios in Bath, England, finishing the altime strategy game Warzone 2100. Basically we had to make the quarter and the team of about 14 people worked nearly 16-hour days for the last three weeks. We had to do an English version, as well as localized French, German, and Italian versions.

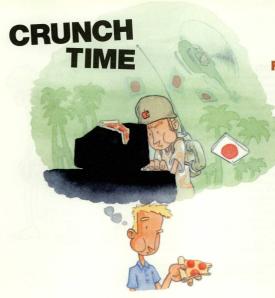
Toward the final week, testers were complaining that the game was too hard. As an RTS game, proper balancing and tuning is crucial. Add into the mix over 2,000 units that can be created, and it was extremely complicated to change the values for tuning. However, Jim Bambra, the project director, did it to appease the testers. Two days before the final master was due, the test team now found that the campaign and skirmish were too easy. Jim gave us this "I will kill you" look, and then called a company meeting with the whole test team. People were split on the difficulty, but several campaign missions were flagged. Jim then did a final edit, prayed to the tuning gods, and thankfully it turned out fine - everyone was happy with the balance.

However, there was one major complaint from users, resulting from a feature we added in the final month. It was the mission timer. This basically was an Eidos idea. We wanted a one- to two-hour time for each mission. This would prevent users from refining endless supplies of resource, attacking the computer, and then repairing the unit to gain experience points. If you set your forces to do this automatically, after about eight hours, you were nearly invincible for remainder of

the game. The programmers could not easily limit the resource, so the timer was enacted to stop cheating. Our testers always had enough time to finish the mission, however — some missions were tight with the time limit. A large percentage of RTS crowd and some review editors bemoaned the timer as an unnecessary annoyance. This was frustrating, because they did not

As an American producer working with a UK developer, one of my contributions was providing a magical elixir that propelled the team to finish the code and put out a quality title. It came from the newly opened and previously-never-heardof Starbucks Coffee of Bath, England.

Eric Adams, producer, Eidos



Full development iacket...

When I think of crunch time, I think of pizza. Basically, pizza equals crunch time. If I go some where that makes pizza, I feel like it's crunch time. It's like Nam. You start hearing helicopters and people shouting at you that there isn't enough room on the hopper for any more wounded. You start seeing bullets whipping past your head, and then somebody siaps you in the face, right there in Pizza World It can get ugly. On yeah, and then there is chinese food, and the properties of the chinese the chinese food, and the properties of the chinese the c

Chris Taylor, president, Gas Powered Games

often delayed Rare titles just to give the team the required time to perfect the game before it ships. And while Rare might have been able to finish Perfect Dark in time for the holidays, Nintendo opted to delay the title until spring, citing the developer's preference to meet the expectations of the millions of gamers who enjowed GoldenEye.

Concert bound...

The Turbine art department was in crunch to get its bugs killed on Asheron's Call. By Co-worker, Pete and I had spent several days in the Office from early morning until around 2 am. to get as much done as possible, After a few days of this, I realized that our tickets for the big Tom Walts show were on the night of the "true-and-horsel-treally-menal-this-time" dealers.

I came in early, 10 a.m., and Pete came in sometime later, He gave me the tickets and sald we'd meet at the show, then he left to pick his brother up for the concert. My wife and I drove into Boston and got to the venue. The show started — and no Pete or Prother. There or four numbers in, I began to wonder if I had asked Pete to pick PEU as at the office before the show, orwhether we had agreed to meet here. I started to get REALLY nervious, But then they showed up. Traffic.

The show was great, ending around II p.m. My wife and I drove home, and I immediately got back in the car and went back to work, finishing around 3 a.m. The next day I was told that the REAL deadline wasn't for another day or so — of course.

Sean Huxter, lead artist, Turbine Games

Even more to the extreme is Id Software. The developer of Quake refuses to set a release date for Quake lik Arena, and simply argues the game will ship when it's done — according to the company, making a projected date early in development would be as valid as pulling a random date out of a hat. Does that mean everyone at Id works 9 to 5 and goes home! Quite the contrary, according to Id President Todd Hollenshead: If don't think people on the outside can really understand," says Follenshead, "what a pressure cooker people are put in when they work at Id."

Aside from the scrutiny the Id developers receive from the exposure in magazines worldwide and with millions of Internet users, Hollenshead suggests the pressure is on internally as well. He

tells Next Generation that Id set

a company revenue record in 1997, bringing in twenty-eight million dollars.

"And that's with 13 people," says Hollenshead. "It's pretty easy to do the math, it's well over two million dollars per employee in revenue. So it's a pretty high productivity bar when you ask your co-workers and yourself, "Have you made

your two million dollars in revenue for the company this year?""

While Id has the unique luxury of funding its own game development, most developers rely on installment payments from publishers that come in when the game meets developmental milestones. Finishing a game when it's due to the publisher is important in that the developer may require the final milestone payment to maintain payroll and general business expenses.

And at the end of the day, some titles need to ship for financial reasons. Often times a publisher needs to make a judgment call on whether added development time will actually add significant improvements to the gameplay experience or simply tack on more development costs while insignificant effects are added. Gabe Newell, president of Valve, has told NG that Half-Life could have gone out the door a year earlier when it was intended to ship. But he intimates it would have been merely the shadow of the hit game it was. Sierra made the wise decision to allow Newell's team the extra year required to make Half-Life great. There are other external factors that

often lead to shipping decisions made regardless of the developer's opinion on



Mark Long, founder, Zombie Studios

SETH & FURESTER 99

how finished the game is. Many publiclyheld publishing companies, including Electronic Arts, Activision, GT Interactive, and 3DO, need to show profits to shareholders every quarter. If a game fails to ship during its scheduled quarter, the company cannot record the subsequent revenue the game generates for that quarter. Failing to ship a game may result in a loss for that period, which in turn usually has a negative effect on the stock price. This far too often leads to the "ship now, patch it later" mentality that plagues so many PC games.

When I talk to developers working for public companies," says Perry, "the common thing they hear is 'Just ship it! Adding that effect won't sell us another copy!" Perry accepts that his company's Messiah project is late, but is confident as the team just keeps pushing ahead quarter to quarter. "It would have been very easy just to license the Quake engine and whack out a few Ouake clones," he says, "but we choose to try new stuff. Some public companies like Interplay see the value in hiring and nurturing creativity."

Crunched Out

It is unlikely that game development will be organized to the point where crunch time will eliminated in the near future.

Long hours will undoubtedly remain the method to this madness. Yet with all the pressures, deadlines, and problems developers must overcome on a daily basis, a finished game is undoubtedly the miracle of science married to an incredible work ethic. Although it sometimes seems like a game will never be finished while you're working on it and in fact one developer tells us, "I once figured out, statistically, that no game should ever ship" - it seems that for every last-minute disaster that requires a marathon session, in most games there are an almost equal number of last-minute miracles; hacks that double the framerate, brilliant gameplay tweaks, and so on. (Chris Taylor reveals to us that he keeps a grocery list of miracles he expects from his staff. Unbeknownst to them, he secretly crosses off these miracles as his team completes them.)

So the next time you walk down the aisles at your local game store, think about all the cups of coffee and stacks of pizzas that have been consumed in the

production of each game. Even more importantly, think about the programmers, designers, and testers who can't remember certain months of their lives because every moment was lived in a fog of bug-reports and variable tweaking. We're not saying you have to like all their work, (Good lord, no.) But as their own stories suggest, don't let us catch you thinking they had it all too easy.

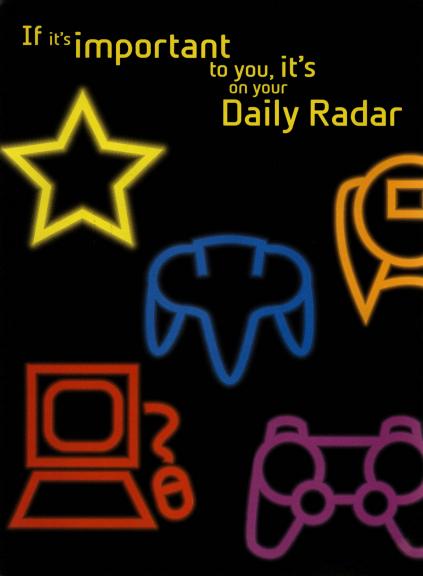
NextGen

A very short story...

I'm in crunch time right now! AAAAAAH!

Tom Hall President and Anachronox designer, Ion Storm

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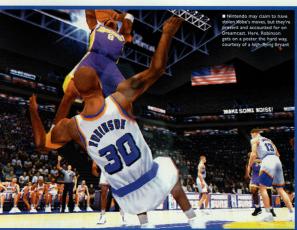
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Finals

Just when you start to think you're seeing the dregs of the holiday season, a whole bunch of great games show up on your desk. It's a good month after all...







■ There are lots of camera views to choose from, but this classic *Run and Gun* perspective works best (above). Shaq backs an opponent down low (below)



Dreamcast

NBA 2K

The best basketball game ever? Mmm, could be...

NBA 2K is easily the best-looking and best-playing baskethall game to date (which still means it has a few glitches, but hey), with graphics that even go beyond those of NFL 2K from the courts to the crowd animations, players on the bench, and a coach who paces up and down the sideline, everything looks perfect.

Players' faces look so close to their real-life counterparts that it's downright eerie. Their expressions even change depending on their action when Shaq dunks, he gives you a look so mean that you want to apologize just for being on the court. Players' bodies are done to perfection as well. When you put a smaller point guard next to a 7-foot center, the size difference is extreme. Not only does this look realistic, but it really affects the gameplay, too. If John Starks ends up covering David Robinson in the paint, forget it — Starks is getting pushed under the basket and dunked on. Likewise, a small and speedy point guard will blow past a center if he

POUNDING IN THE PAINT

Right away, one of the best things you'll notice about NBA 2K is its amazing post game. Once you've passed the ball down low to a bruiser like Shaq, just press the Left Shoulder Button to start backing down your opponent. If a smaller guy is guarding you, it won't take much to push him out of the way and jam it home.



Earthworm Jim 3D	94
Lego Racers	94
NBA Showtime	95
Ready 2 Rumble	95
Turok: Rage Wars	95
Winback: Covert Operations	95





Ar	my Men Air Attack	9
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	percross Circuit	
Th	rasher: Skate and Destroy	10
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Freespace	2	10
Septerra C	ore	10
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Silver	•	
Nocturne		10

The Rating System

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

**** Revolutionary

★★★☆ Excellent

★★☆☆☆ Fair ★☆☆☆☆ Bad

Denotes a review of a Japanese product

tries to cover him tight on the outside. This is one of the game's main strengths, because it so accurately represents how the game is really played. It's all about individual matchups and finding ways to exploit them in your favor.

Shooting, passing, stealing, and all other major actions are done just like they are in every other basketball game. Free-throw shooting is radically different, however. You have to gently press both shoulder buttons to get two arrows to line up over the basket. and depending on how good a shooter you've got, the buttons' analog sensitivity makes it easier or harder. This could be a controversial new addition, since many people either seem to hit their shots every time, or just can't get the hang of it at all. It is kind of cool, though, and kudos should always be given to developers who try something new.

The game's dunks look great, but still, a Direct Dunk-type feature would have been much appreciated. As it is, the dunk you

pull off depends on your player and his spot on the court, and it's nearly impossible to consistently pull off a favorite slam on purpose. Alley-oop dunks are included, and usually work well. Just tap any direction on the digital D-Pad simultaneously with the Right Shoulder Button, and if you've got a man down low with a clear path to the basket, he'll jump up to catch the lob. The only problem with alley-oops is that many times your teammates will act plain stupid. They'll get wide open inside, raise their arm to call for the lob, and as soon as you toss it, they run away from the basket, despite the fact they were still open. Wha?!

Unfortunately, that isn't the game's only rough spot. Half of the time, your guard on the right side of the court will stand with one foot out of bounds. You dribble down the court, pass him the ball, and — instant turnover. There are plenty of little problems like this, but the only other really bad one is that





■ NBA 2K does a great job of blending a sim with fast paced arcade-style action

during a game, you can only check out player stats for that single game — you don't get to see any season averages. So, if you're trying a team with player that you're unfamiliar with, there's no way to find out what they're capable of. Two seconds left and you need someone who can nail the three? Eenie, meenx.

miney, mo...

Overall, though, hoops fans will be blown away by NBA 2K. The best thing about the game is that it does a great job of meshing a true basketball simulation with a smooth, fast-paced arcade feel, without going overboard into NBA Jam territory. — Chris Slate

ENextGen ★★★☆

Bottom Line: It's easy to pick up and get into, and looks flat-out gorgeous. If you're an NBA fan, this game alone is worth the price of a Dreamcast.

Players' faces look so close to their real-life counterparts that it's downright eerie







Rippin' Riders

■ Platform: Dreamcast

■ Publisher: Sega ■ Developer: UEP Systems



■ Without a doubt, Rippin'
Riders is the best-looking
snowboarding game on any
platform. It's just too bad the
gameplay is so dated

Rippin' Riders has all the elements necessary for a kickass snowboarding game except once innovation. UEP Systems produced the first snowboarding game for the PlayStation, the original Cool Boarders, and it was good. But games have moved on since 1997. Gamers expect more than just a visual update — unfortunately, Rippin' Riders inth' much more than that.

The gameplay found in Rippin'
Riders is nearly identical to that
found in Cool Boarders, right

down to the scoring and trick execution. The core of the game is still racing down a mountain, and tricks are still restricted to trick areas. You can execute tricks at other places within the level, but you won't receive any points for them. Tricks are still somewhat canned, in that you must hold down the proper buttons before jumning. After release, the trick

There is a nifty two-player mode included in the game that gives new meaning to "crushing" your opponent. Every time you perform a successful trick, your portion of the split screen gets larger and your opponent's gets smaller. You can win a match by reaching the goal first or by crushing your opponent's screen.

simply plays out until you land.

In the end, RIppin' Riders is just Cool Boarders on Dreamcast, albeit with a few new tracks and an excellent graphics upgrade. While enjoyable, it's still decidedly average. — Adam Pavlacka

which takes a bit of getting used to.

creativity in how you respond to

the hordes being thrown at you.

There's a guided missile upgrade that lets you shoot around corners and over obstacles, and the levels

are filled with odd cubbyholes and

platforms, all for sneaking around

and sniping from a distance. It's a

different gameplay dynamic, that's

for sure. Not better but not worse

vague lack of polish: busy layouts

with smeary textures and frame

programming, level design, and

almost never an issue. However,

the controls are then so complex

that while you can do things like

pick up cars and throw them, it's

player control, the camera is

rates that are only functional. But

through a combination of intelligent

On the technical end, there's a

either. Just different.

However, it also forces a certain

NextGen★★★☆☆

Bottom Line: Here's hoping the next boarding game to come out of Sega is a follow-up to Steep Slope Sliders.

Slave Zero

■ Platform: Dreamcas

■ Publisher: Infogrames ■ Developer: Accolade



■ You have to stick with it, but in the end you may find Slave

A 3D shooter with a few minor pretensions, Slave Zero is a strange beast filled with odd design choices — not bad ones, necessarily, but odd.

At heart it's your basic mech game in a dystopian urban setting. However, the mech you pilot (the "slave" of the title) is a far cry from the sleek suits found in some games, or even the lumbering behemoths in others. Instead, it sort of clomps along with this odd rhythm all its own,

with this odd rhythm all its own, mostly impractical. — Jeff Lundrigan ▶ NextGen ★★☆☆

Bottom Line: Slave Zero may not be to everyone's taste, but it does offer a different sort of challenge for those so inclined.

Evolution

■ Publisher: Ubi Soft ■ Developer: Sting

Sometimes, good looking is good enough



■ Much of the game is a dungeon crawl, but since you can see the monsters and avoid attacks, it's less tedious than it might have been

As Ubi Soft likes to point out, this is the first RPG for Dreamcast in the Us. As an RPG, it is, ultimately, pretty average. As an RPG for Dreamcast, though, it's a

First, the notes between the relationship of t

son, there are a new dent gameplay touches. The battle system and the way the characters gain new abilities are slightly different and interesting. Best of all, as in

artifact of great power.

Square's Chrono Trigger, you can see the monsters and avoid them if you choose, and it's even possible to sneak up on them from behind — a very, very nice feature.

But what sets Evolution apart is its glossy, remarkably sharp graphics — in some ways are the best yet for an RPG. The game has the advantage of undeniably cute, with a wealth of facial expressions and a depth of personality that adds a lot. No slight against developer Sting, but it does make you wonder what could be accomplished in the hands of a major RPG powerhouse, and what other goodles can we expect in the



■ This is, however, one great-looking game, with glossy environments and characters that have plenty of character

ENextGen ★★★☆☆

Bottom Line: A case of style with just enough substance to back it up, *Evolution* is a charmer despite a few unimpressive edges.

■ Dreamcast

peed Devils

Dreamcast gets a next-gen racer worthy of the name





■ The lighting effects are nice. Rain in the desert (right) creates d, and the jungle (left) can get spook

New systems are usually soaked with ocre racers, and Devils more than makes up Monoco. The game is a partial upgrade from Ubi's under-appreciated Speed Busters for PC, and it has the is solid, and although there are only four other cars on

rally tracks, but each race is three laps. While the texturing isn't overly impressive (perhaps due to the game's PC roots), the tracks are packed with decrepit casino signs in Nevada - that make for equally tracks exciting are the random events. While some, like car in the Hollywood studio.

ENextGen ★★★★☆

Bottom Line: Simply put, it's the best racing game you can find on Dreamcast today

Canada, can change how you have to race, keeping the long tracks interesting

Throw in everything else you expect from a console

upgrading your car, unlocking tracks (which can be raced

you've got a game with serious staying power. The only downsides are that

a lot to be desired — it's just

though, Speed Devils still

Psychic Force 2012



■ Psychic Force 2012 manages ce even the most extre special effects seem boring

What can you say about Psychic Force 2012? Well, not much, except that it ain't very good.

A fighting game, Psychic Force 2012 does the usual, pitting you against a series of opponents or against a friend in Versus mode. The catch here is that it copies the Dragon Ball Z series - why, we have no idea - and sets the action in an open-air arena with the two characters flying around. This means that for the most part. you have to throw fireballs and other special effects at one another, since getting close

enough to actually land a physical punch is mostly an exercise in sheer frustration.

Besides the frustration factor there's not much here to distinguish the game. The graphics are strictly OK, with only the bare minimum of creativity shown in the design of the special attacks. Also, given that the only 3D things on screen are the two characters (the backgrounds are simple 2D backdrops), you'd think the designers would at least throw a gazillion polygons at them and make them look good, but no, they're barely above the level of your average PlayStation brawler, and not even in the same league as Power Stone, Soul Calibur, or even the three-yearold characters from Virtua

In short, Psychic Force 2012 is a good example of a bad idea, done badly. Avoid at all costs - Jeff Lundrigan

NextGen ★☆☆☆☆

Bottom Line: A waste of money and time.

Sega Rally 2



■ No! Don't look! It's Sega Rally 2, and if you're not careful, it will take over your life too

A word of caution here: Sega Rally 2 is not the sort of game you beat. Instead, it beats you.

This is a rather realistically challenging (although not necessarily realistic) rally racing game, with a short list of courses and a slightly longer list of vehicles. Much like AM 2's Virtua Fighter series, which rewards the dedicated purist. Sega Rally 2 is brutal on the casual gamer. It will take you weeks, if not months, to even finish a course much less win

oper: Sega/AM 2

place, or show. The idea here is to ever more finely hone your skills, learning every curve and bump in the tracks, and gradually shaving split seconds off your time. You start to actually dream about the perfect powerslide, Vknow?

It's not fun, exactly, but it is oddly compulsive in a masochistic kind of way, It looks pretty good, with a number of strange details, like little animals that run across the road. You can also customize the cars in a number of ways - the slightest advantage can be the difference between hitting the check points and failing miserably.

Several different play modes include a split-screen two-player. option that's great for torturing guests at parties. The thought of the ten-year Career mode, though, is enough to make you wet the bed. - Jeff Lundrigan

NextGen ★★★☆☆

Bottom Line: This is a mountain, a test of will, Don't confuse it with a game. It was never meant to be a game.

Finals in

Earthworm Jim 3D

■ Publisher: Rockstar Games ■ Developer: VIS Interactive



■ Even the most diehard Earthworm Jim fans (and we know there must be some) should stay away from this N64

Hey Jim. Been a while - and either it's been too long, or not nearly long enough.

The worst thing about Earthworm lim 3D is that it really is a good-looking game, with bright colors, clean textures, and cleaner lines, with barely a hint of the murky fuzziness that's common to so many N64 games. All the gloss, however, does little to hide the lazy control, arbitrary goals, annoying camera, and level designs that are painfully simplistic when they

aren't infuriatingly obtuse.

Trapped inside his own brain, Jim has to find the "udders of lucidity" and as many of his scattered marbles as he can. while defeating the memories of his old enemies. Not a bad premise, but the process seems to involve a lot of running back and forth over the same beaten areas, or repeating tasks because some vital bit of information (like a time limit) isn't mentioned. Although there is some variety to the gameplay - it isn't all run-jump-shoot much of the variety is provided by sections that are only challenging because they're difficult to control, exemplified by the very first boss, Psy-Crow. Jim has to pick up blue balloons (Why? Who knows?) while riding a kind of jet-ski pig that handles like a brick. At some point you wind up asking yourself: who in their right mind would think this was fun? - Jeff Lundrigan

→ NextGen ★☆☆☆☆

Bottom Line: Oh, and the music is annoying too.

Lego Racers

ner: Lego Media

Developer: High Voltage



■ It would seem that Lego blocks defy easy simulation or maybe Lego blocks just have a Y2K problem, or something

Lego blocks rule. And it would be nice if this game, which lets you create your own race cars using virtual Lego blocks, ruled too, but unfortunately it doesn't Far from it While creating and testing your own cars is really a lot of fun especially since the way you put your car together has a major effect on how it controls - the actual racing is awful.

Not only is the framerate nauseatingly slow, the track

designs are weak. While you need to use typical kart racing tactics like powerslides, a lot of the cars (both those you make and the premade ones) feel top-heavy somehow. Al also leaves a lot to be desired. Each track has a boss character who is always in first, and while you can end up in second place without any effort, beating the first-place character is far too demanding a challenge, especially given that the game is obviously aimed at

Add a frustrating interface, and almost all the benefits of creating your own cars, which really is a great feature, are gone. This isn't a terrible game, and to be fair, there are a lot of tracks to race on, but despite being able to make your own cars, the overall experience is uninspiring. - Chris Charla

younger kids.

NextGen★★☆☆☆

Bottom Line: Save your cash and buy real Lego blocks instead.

■ Nintendo 64 ayman 2

A plucky little guy with 🐸 no arms hits a high note





■ It's cute, it controls well, it doesn't require you to do the same thing over and over, and yes, we like it a lot

indeed. The Rayman underappreciated, doomed 3DO system, then segueing to the even-moreplatformers of the late 2D

Rayman 2 brings the series into 3D, but it's lost ramps up at a steady pace, almost never asking for developed. Although it certainly doesn't feature anything in the way of done before, it does boast a thoughtful, intelligent level design. Together, they keep the action varied and never leave you lost or feeling cheated. There's no need to backtrack, no fruitless to reward careful exploration and clever

In fact, with its cute polished gameplay, Rayman 2 is one of the few titles have something to offer any gamer of any age or won't be disappointed. - Jeff Lundrigan

ENextGen ★★★★☆

Using the N64 Expansion Pak,

the game is about as pretty as

system, with sharp textures

place. The camera isn't

the way, and the challenge

Bottom Line: Did we mention how very nice a game this is?

■ Nintendo 64

Winback: Covert Operations

Hide, Sneak, Shoot, Everything a game needs

Imagine a combination of gameplay ideas from Populate said environment with lots of terrorists to shoot. Mix in a few simple not be the most original are you going to play until Perfect Dark ships?

foot pedal from Time Crisis understand the basic mechanic of Winback Pressing the action button against it (a la Solid Snake). around the side of the object to fire at your target and then duck back when the button is released. Despite the fact that you're a gung ho SWAT-type, you canno time, so protecting yourself during firefights becomes

Winback's environments game itself is blurry. You've to beat. Despite these manages to entertain, mostly because there's nothing else can stalk each other, but it's definitely an extraneous - Chris Krame





E NextGen ★★★☆☆

Bottom Line: The action is simple and the environments are not very detailed, but Winback is fun in an arcade-like fashion.

NBA Showtime: NBA on NBC

NBA Showtime would probably best be called NBA lam 64. Created for Midway by several of the developers responsible for the NBA Jam arcade smash, NBA Showtime features the same two-on-two style of basketball, solid gameplay, outlandish slam dunks, character animations, and scores of hidden secrets that made the coin-op title such a hit.

The standard control scheme remains: there are shoot, pass, and turbo buttons: combinations of these will lead to accelerated throws, dekes, and jams with players soaring three times the height of the basket. All of the current NBA

teams are present, though the differences between the courts seems to be purely a matter of plunking down a different team logo. There is a thorough create-a-player option for modifying everything from height, weight, shooting ability, dunking ability, and defense. The only downside to this game is that it's pretty repetitive for a single player (the gamer dunks the ball, the computer dunks the ball, etc.) but it's a blast



■ Tight graphics, voiceove and corporate logos make NBA Showtime closely resemble an actual NBC broadcast

when played with a group of - Doug Trueman friends.

NextGen ★★★☆☆

Bottom Line: Arcade-style basketball action captured remarkably well on Nintendo 64.

Ready 2 Rumble Boxing

Originally developed for Dreamcast, Ready 2 Rumble is still the same game on Nintendo 64, it just isn't quite as polished.

Visually, the game is running at a lower resolution and the characters are not composed of as many polygons. During a heated match, the framerate also drops a bit, leaving you with a jerky screen instead of the smoothly animated one we've come to expect.

Some of the "unnecessary" animations have also been removed. The game still plays the same, which is ultimately what matters the most, but it was the little things that added personality and much of that character has heen lost

Most of the music and voice tracks have been kept, but they have been downsampled. Trying to compare the sound of the N64 version to the Dreamcast version is like comparing a mono AM radio to a Harmon Kardon stereo system.

If you've never seen the Dreamcast version before the Nintendo 64 port should be more than enough to keep you happy. Once you make the



■ Due to the limitations of N64 Ready 2 Rumble is missing some of the little touches that made the Dreamcast version unique

comparison, though, Ready 2 Rumble on N64 looks - Adam Paylacka

NextGen★★★☆☆

Bottom Line: After playing the Dreamcast version for months, it is hard for us to accept an inferior version of the game, even if it does play just as well.

Turok: Rage Wars

■ Platform: Nintendo 64 ■ Publisher: Acclaim ■ Developer: Acclaim The very definition of a "quickle," Rage Wars feels a bit desperate. as if Acclaim needed something to fill out the holiday season. The guts of the previous Turok titles have been ripped free, leaving a bland multiplayer game with very little reason to play. There is a single-player game, but it's merely a ladder-like competition where you face off against bots of dubious intelligence. You can open up secret levels and hidden skins by completing mission trees, but the rewards are not worth the time or the effort they demand.

Sure, there's no fog., but that's because each of the teeny-tiny levels are roughly the same size as the kiddle play areas at McDonalds, and about as much fun explore. The four types of play - Deathmatch, Team, Capture the Flag, and Frag Tag (in which one person is a helpless monkey or chicken) - quickly become tedious as you realize that almost every one of the levels is exactly the same square block of corridors

In a nod to family values, you can play co-op with your buddies as well as shoot at them, but it's still not much fun. The splatter



whether alone or with friends

has been scaled way back, even for the Cerebral Bore, one of the nastiest weapons to ever shred flesh in a FPS. — Chris Kramer

→ NextGen ★★☆☆☆

Bottom Line: If you want a good multiplayer N64 game, pick up Quake II or go back to GoldenEye.

Finals Rysulion





When you play a lot of first-person shooters, sometimes it seems like

any new wrinkle is a godsend. The really cool thing about Medal of Honor, though, is that its new wrinkles add up to a complete package

The game puts you in the role of an OSS officer during WWII, and sends you on missions into Nazi-occupied territory that vary from search-and-destroy to undercover operations. The DreamWorks developers put a lot of effort into making this

■ PlayStation

ledal of Honor

Because nothing is more fun than killing a whole bunch of Nazis

seem as authentic as possible, and they nailed it. The music, graphics, voices, and everything else combine perfectly, making it feel like you're playing through one of those classic WWII action movies, like Guns of Navarone or Where Eagles Dare.

particular are a real treat, and very different for this kind of game (on a console, anyway). Since you're in disguise, you can walk right up to guards and fool them with a phony ID - and the sound of that clipped German accent barking, "Show me your papers!" is almost enough reason in and of itself to pick up this game. Of course, this just gives you the perfect opportunity to quickly pull a silenced pistol and cap them before they can react, which is a major thrill. Enemy Al is also interesting (not smarter or better, exactly, but interesting) in that enemies will do things like pick up your grenades and throw them back at you.

Little things keep the game from being perfect, though: there are some clipping



■ There's a nice mix of both large, open areas and tight quarters, and sometimes the fighting is pretty intense problems, plus you can get stuck

on the walls and, especially,

ladders. Also, in later levels when the Nazis start shooting bazookas at you, it's all too common to poke your head around a corner and, "Bang! You're dead! Start the level over," which is every bit as aggravating as it sounds. - Jeff Lundrigan

THE OSS

The organization you work for in the game was created in 1942 as an intelligence gathering tool, and later went on to work with resistance groups in Nazi-occupie territory. Headed by William "Wild Bill" Donovan, the OSS recruited not only from the armed services of many countries, but among civilians as well. Although disbanded in 1945, many of its duties (and personnel) were taken over by the CIA



ENextGen ★★★★☆

Bottom Line: The best PlayStation first-person shooter in ages, Medal of Honor proves that few things are more satisfying than shooting a Nazi in the face.

MTV Sports: Snowboarding

What's this? A good snowboarding game?



With 46 individual tricks, and hundreds of possible combos, MTV Sports: Snowboarding will keep you occupied for

different boarders. Each has

ENextGen ★★★★☆

Bottom Line: If you've tired of the Cool Boarders series and snowboarding game has arrived on PlayStation.

Army Men Air Attack

The green plastic army marches (or rather flies) on in this latest could ask for, and the two-player installment of 3DO's popular modes are, well, fun. franchise. Perhaps "inspired" by

EA's Strike series, the choppers in the radically varying level of Air Attack come equipped with difficulty, and the overall length. machine guns mockets and a Although the control is winch that is used for both grabbing power-ups as well as hauling various objects around. The game's hest feature exciting. Worse, we breezed

is the immersiveness of its environment, which is surprisingly organic: winching a discarded doughnut into an enemy camp causes ants to invade it and wreak havoc, for example. The 15 missions are fairly varied in both visual design and objectives, the

control is about as intuitive as you The down side is in its pacing,

responsive, the framerates aren't very impressive, and everything moves just a hair too slow to be through the first 10 or 11 missions in under two hours, until the last one or two levels proved replay value.



Army men take to the air and move really, really slowly all but impossible. This plus the fact that the level layouts are relatively tiny, doesn't give it much - leff Lundrigan

NextGen ★★★☆☆

Bottom Line: It's got lots of cool ideas and good looks. All it needs is more levels, better gameplay balance, and a faster pace.

Ballistic

■ Platform; PlayStation ■ Publisher: Infogrames ■ Developer: Mitchell Corporation

It takes a lot of cajones to try and develop an action puzzle game these days. Number one, it's virtually impossible to top the prototype that started it all, Tetris and two, there aren't many new wrinkles that are both intuitive enough for someone to catch on to quickly, yet offer enough depth to keep them coming back

Ballistic actually combines elements of two other already successful puzzlers: Bust A Move and Puvo Puvo. A string of colored balls slowly move inward along a spiral path. You play by shooting additional colored balls into the spiral, and if three or more of the same color fall consecutively, they disappear (much like Bust A Move) and the string collapses together to fill the gap - should this, in turn, cause three or more balls of the same color to line up, these disappear and so on The goal, especially in two-player games, is to build up the string so that massive chain reactions can he set off (much like Privo Privo)

a minute or two, but once you

familiar, but it plays familiar, and sometimes, that's plenty good enough And it actually works. It takes

get it, it's as addictive as you could ask for. - Jeff Lundrigan



NextGen ★★★★☆

Bottom Line: OK, so it's an ultimately derivative action puzzler; but give it a shot and we guarantee you won't want to put it down

Boombots

■ Platform: PlayStation ■ Publisher: Southpeak Interactive ■ Developer: The Neverhoo

Imagine Power Stone ported to PlayStation, substitute "wacky" robots, then add Claymation cut scenes that tell no story and are only vaguely related to what's going on, Finally, take everything that was good about Power Stone and put it somewhere else.

That, in a nutshell, describes Boombots. Oh, and it's also frustrating as hell.

A "fighting" game, Boombots pits you against a series of enemy robots, but although the bots vary in appearance and speed, they're all equipped exactly the same: a guided missile, a homing missile, and a machine gun. Of these, only the homing missile is of much

use, since the machine gun does little damage and the guided missile requires you to stand still while you steer it.

Enemy AI seems to consist mostly of making them faster than you are and able to take more damage. The tiny, minimalist combat arenas present little room to move or much in the way of opportunities for strategy. The cut scenes (which probably took twice as much time and energy to produce as the actual gameplay) are typical Neverhood



■ Boombots goes to show why gaming systems are made from silicon, not clay

goofiness. Maybe you'll think they're funny, but certainly not enough to put up with everything else. - Jeff Lundrigan

→ NextGen ★☆☆☆☆ Bottom Line: Just stay away



Cool Boarders 4

Publisher: 989 Studios ■ Developer: 989 Studios



It may not be the greatest but it's not even PlayStation's greatest. Oh well

It's a shame that 989 Studios spends so little time or effort on innovation for their sequels From the utterly boring front end to the average graphics and strangely silent audio, Cool Boarders 4 does little to warrant purchase

The single biggest problem is

with the questionable collision detection, which is especially nasty when passing between trees. Coming within a few feet of a tree will trigger the "oof" noise (the same sample is used for both the male and female riders) and slow you down, even when you've clearly got room to maneuver. Banging into one tree will often send you bouncing uncontrollably into the next, while the Al racers glide by, blissfully unconcerned with your fate. Crouching to gain

speed is of little use, since it's almost impossible to catch up to the other riders once they've passed you. It seems a little easier to perform tricks this year. but the various grabs, spins, and flips don't really stand out from each other With the loures graphics, it's hard to tell a tailgrab from an Indy or a Mute Grab.

Hopefully, next year will see a dramatic improvement after they spend some quality time with Activision's near-perfect Tony - Chris Kramer

NextGen★★☆☆☆

Bottom line: Cool Boarders still lacks energy, and even Nintendo's three-year old 1080° Snowboarding is a better game.

Killer Loop

ublisher: Crave Developer: VCC Entertainment



not even WipeOut 2), it's Kille Loop. Yeah, it confused us too ...

Rule of thumb: whenever a game is delivered to the office along with a sheet comparing it point for point with some other game, you can safely assume it will not be a "Game X Killer," but will instead be a blatant ripoff that's not nearly as good as

the original. Killer Loop proves this rule rather nicely.

Aping the WipeOut series close enough to risk a lawsuit, Killer Loop does have a few points in its favor (especially given that WipeOut 3 failed to outdo any previous entry in the series): it's colorful, and the tracks are fairly well designed. Beyond that, however, there's not much here. The handling is

OK, but a little "floaty." The music is terrible, and the menu screens actually take a few minutes of thought to figure out. In Championship mode, you can't advance to the next class without placing first in every race - annoying. Even worse, while the tracks might be nice, there are only a half dozen of them, which you repeat over - Jeff Lundrigan

NextGen ★★☆☆☆

Bottom Line: Six tracks and six vehicles spread over four classes with no two-player mode - you do the math. Although a competent effort, this is the definition of a placeholder title, and you've seen it all before.

Knockout Kings 2000

blisher: EA Sports ■ Developer: Black Ops Entertainment



Knockout Kings is a decent boxing sim, but if you're ing for arcade action, you'll eed to look elsewhere

With the recent exception of Ready 2 Rumble, game platforms haven't seen much in the way of good boxing games in a long time. EA Sports aimed to change that with the original Knockout Kings. It didn't work, Now it's

time for round two with Knockout Kings 2000.

A sport sim, this game is grounded in reality, with none of the arcade feel of Ready 2 Rumble. Instead Knockout Kings 2000 presents the player with a slower but more deliberate. match. You won't win a game here by button mashing. Fighting in Knockout Kings 2000 actually takes a bit of skill. There are 25 featured fighters, including greats such as Muhammad Ali and Sugar Ray Leonard, and you can also create a custom boxer.

Although the game has a solid fighting engine, overall the whole thing oddly lacks polish. The character select screen has a distinct lag time as you flip from character to character. and during a match it is not unusual to witness a boxer moving partially through his opponent. - Adam Pavlacka

NextGen★★☆☆

Bottom Line: Knockout Kings 2000's biggest strength lies in its realism. The lack of arcade play is going to turn off a lot of potential fans

■ PlayStation The X-Files Maybe this should have been called Fox Hunt



■ The X-Files should really have been titled Adventures of Some FBI Guy You've Never Heard of

For anyone who thought (or hoped, or prayed) that FMV-based

actually isn't bad. A few

Seattle office, trying to track brain. Even so, the game creaky adventure-game

NextGen ★★☆☆☆

Bottom Line: Although well produced and faithful to its





■ PlayStation

Crash Team Racing

The simple fact is, kart

Naughty Dog delivers the best kart racer since 1992

racing games haven't really progressed at all since Miyamoto released Mario Kart on Super NES. Until now. This looks like a traditional kart game, but Naughty Dog has simultaneously stood the genre on its head and improved it immensely. Unlike other kart games, where staying on the track is everything, and one screw-up will cost you the race, in CTR staying on the track is easy, and maintaining a constant

stream of turbos is essential to victory. You get turbos by hitting turbo pads, executing perfect powerslides, and getting air. There are multiple levels of turbo-charge, and while you'll probably beat the single-player mode in a couple of days, learning to maximize your turbos means you can continue to improve your times almost indefinitely, meaning the fourplayer mode should stay fun for months, if not years - we're talking Bomberman quality here.





■ Even right up against a wall (right), there is no "rez-out" of blocky graphic The draw-in distance is also impressive (left) thanks to hand-tweaked levels

WHAT'S NEXT FOR CRASH?

hough Crosh has become synonymous with developer Naughty Dog, this is the time the team will work with the bandicoot it helped create (which is owned tive, and under long-term lease to Sony). The next Crash will though – flush with Crash royalties, the team doesn't plan to release anything that isn't a gaming "masterpiece," according to a source at Naughty Dog.





The graphics are also amazing: thanks to a radically improved engine, there is almost no popup, and even up close, walls and other objects don't get too pixelated. The lighting effects on the weapons are also top-of-theline for PlayStation, although they're not up to PC quality.

As you'd expect, there is an Adventure mode, Time Trial, Versus, and Battle mode. The Battle mode has special tracks. tons of options, and is probably complete enough to stand out as a full game in its own right. We like the fact that most of the

tracks are available immediately in Versus mode, even if you haven't unlocked them in the adventure - Rare could take a lesson from this. (Don't worry, though, there're plenty of other secrets hidden in the Adventure that make it worth playing through.)

Overall, this is a stunning achievement: it looks great, it advances the genre by changing (and we'd argue improving) the challenge, and it's about the best four-player game on PlayStation. Oh yeah, and the Al doesn't cheat - Chris Charla

ENextGen * * * *

Bottom Line: Naughty Dog's best effort to date, this brilliant kart racer is both a technological and gameplay milestone.



SuperCross Circuit

Platform: PlayStation ■ Publisher: 989 Studios ■ Developer: Idol Minds



■ SuperCross is definitely worth your time until something better comes along

SuperCross Circuit is 989
Studios' latest racing title, and, although the control and animation are a little loose, the developers have managed to pack enough motocross action on this disc to justify giving it a spin. There's an Arcade mode, a lengity Career mode, Quasi-

RPG mode, a free-ride Stunt mode, a Two-Player season, a Time Trial mode, and (nice touch here) even a track editor.

nere) even a track cellor:
The core of the game is the
Career mode, in which you
compete against seven other
real-life BMV experts. Aside from
having to negotiate turns,
knowing when to gun your
engines before hitting a ramp and
avoiding failen riders, you're also
responsible for the maintenance
of your bike. Proper confliguration

of shocks, engine balance, tires, and brakes is necessary to have a vable shot at winning the current course. Your blee's components also degrade over time, so extra cash must always be on hand for a new set of tires or an engine overhaul. The tracks themselves range from rock quarries to indoor arenas, and the possible mid-air tricks and combos will keep you bury almost as much in the siy as on the ground. — Doug Trueman

▶ NextGen ★★★☆☆

Bottom Line: There's more than enough in this title to engross even the most cynical racing fan until the first 128-bit motocross game is released.

Thrasher: Skate and Destroy

■ Platform: PlayStation ■ Publisher: Rockstar Games ■ Developer: Z-Axis



■ Throsher attempts to re-create the skating experience, but falls way short of the mark

The idea here was to make a skating sim — you need to learn new tricks, and do difficult combos to pull off the best ones. While there are plenty of moves to learn and you have allower them, they do you over them, they do you

absolutely no good when they must be accessed by the unresponsive controls. The gameplay is also really slow, failing to capture the speed of the sport, and the difficulty ramp means it will take you hours to even puil off a simple maneuver (except for railstice, but it isn't fun. In fact, the game even purishes experimentation — hit the game even you'll just if yoff your board. If playing Thrasher were anything like real stating,

the X Games would end early because everybody would be horribly crippled after attempting their first tricks.

Further pulling the game down is an uninspired firstgeneration PlayStation look and some mismatched music (how many skaters today really skate to songs like "White Lines" and "Rapper's Delight"). Ultimately, the game falls because it doesn't recreate the feel of skateboarding or make it fun. Without that, what's the point! — Blake Rispire — Blake rispire.

→ NextGen ★★☆☆☆

Bottom line: A sim that's tedious, not fun.

Vandal Hearts 2: Heavenly Gate

■ Platform: PlayStation ■ Publisher: Konami ■ Developer: Konami



■ For those up to the challenge, Vandal Hearts 2 well worth the effort

Vandal Hearts 2 follows much in the same fashion as its original: it's graphically underwhelming, but it packs in the challenging and engrossing gameplay.

While the storyline of a young boy who fights an evil empire may not be so different from those found in most other strategy RPGs, it's the way in which the story is told that really draws the player in deep. And in VHZS favor, the themes of class war, political strife, and forbidden love mostly ring true.

But the battle engine is what really makes or breaks a strategy RPG, and the one found in VH2 is a mixed bag. Featuring an innovative "dual-turn" system that allows enemies to move across

the battefield at the same time as your party, combat is bugh and relies on your ability to closely predict the enemy's behavior. While this is a bold step forward, the system does make battles overly drawn out and often more fustrating than they need be. But the inclusion of an tern system that levels up with characters in battle, inbuling herm with special attacks, adds a welcome amount of complexity. — Francesca Rews

NextGen ★★★☆☆

Bottom Line: With its steep learning curve, VH2 may not be ideal for novices, but because it has a strong story and clever battle features, it proves to be a great challenge for veterans.

V-Rally 2

■ Publisher: EA ■ Developer: Infogrames

Here's one game that really makes tracks



■ There's some very nice scenery if you get the chance to

Offering both arcade radius time other cars, and the more called simulation of racing alone for the lowest overall mine. Well 2 attempts to include rally driving to suit every racer's state With its 84 (court tem) separate stages held in 12 different countries, terrain variation is impressive and has a real effect on car handling; ignore the car setup screens at your peril. The 16 cars available at startup are faithful re-creations of their re-radius with the country of the country

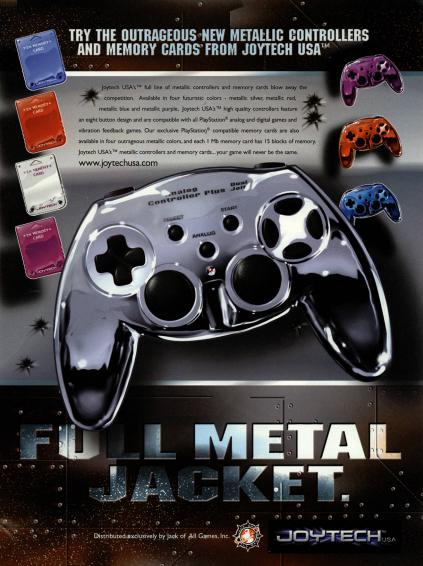
these powerful machines. Happily, it's entirely possible to temporarily leave the main route without running into the dreaded invisible wall, but, just like last year's game, it's way too easy to turn the cars over. Even the tiniest roadside bump is capable of launching you into the air and the subsequent recovery will see you not impossible. Worse, the unbalanced difficulty levels mean that you're more when going for a trophy making unlocking the 10 hidden cars more of a outstanding features: cars take real-time damage, for one, and between stages you have limited repair contention Also the included track editor extended replay time. You have control over everything from track elevation to prevailing for serious race fans. And to forgive the game its faults and take it out for a

only lose your place but, in

Trophy mode, make a

E NextGen ★★★☆☆

Bottom Line: It looks good, it plays fine, and it has a lot of tracks. Only a few annoying quirks keep it from really flying.



∃Finals **∃**



Boldly going where no space game has gone before



■ While the Human/Vasudan alliance may have a super-powered capital ship that is gigantic, unfortunately so do the bad guys, the Shivans

With Freespace: The Great War, Volition showed it was more than ready to take on the Wing Commander series with a game that featured incredible graphics, a great storyline, and some of the best space action anywhere. And you'll be glad to know that this time around Volition has upped the ante even more and built the

best playing and looking space combat game ever.

Picking up 20 years after the first game, you start as the typical no-name pilot making his way in the world. Where this differs from, say, Wing Commander, is that you're not a hotshot taking out the entire enemy fleet by yourself. As part of a wing, you must use your co-pilots (who

■ If you've got the killer gaming hardware, Freespace 2 will push it hard, but the reward is visuals that are second to none

THE DESCENT CONNECTION

Developers Outrage (Descent 3) and Volition (Freespace 2) are the two halves of what was originally Parallax, the company that made Descent 1 and 2. Part of the deal with the split is that the Descent license will alternate between the two.

actually have decent AJ) to cover cortain ships or help you take out targets. The wingmen provide a lot of the storyline through their interaction and chatter (with excellent voice acting). As you progress you'll hook up with new squadrons, different fighters, and a wide variety of missions, so the game never stagnates.

Graphically, this is second to none. Huge capital ships (and we mean huge) dwarf your fighters, and when they engage in combat around you it's like flying against the Death Star. Even better, many of them now have giant beam weapons for anti-fighter coverage or simply to cut through other ships. You haven't seen spectacles until you see a six-kilometer long cruiser fly into battle against enemy forces. If the action wasn't so intense, it'd be entertraining to just sit back and watch. This isn't a short game either — expect many hours of conflict and plot twists. Even after you beat the game, some nifty multiplayer

Attention has been paid to every single detail, and there is no weak link, from the storyline to the awesome sound to the control to the graphics. In fact, we'd have to say that the game's only quirk is its huge install size (over one gig!). — Blake Fischer

options keep you coming back.

ENextGen ★★★★

Bottom Line: No self-respecting space-combat junkie should live without it.

Septerra Core

■ Publisher: Monolith ■ Developer: Valkyrie

A little anime flavor goes a long way — like anchovy paste

Computers rule, baby.
The Core in Septerra revolve seven floating continents, rotating one

and castoff machinery who live extravagantly on

the level above you through trash and using various monsters to the the Creator, dormant for

Septerro Core is a well-

solving, and a few surprises





■ Fights and magic spells can be very colorful on your way to the Core

ENextGen ★★★★☆

Bottom Line: You don't see many console-style RPGs on PC, but Septerra Core should make you look

Silver

■ Platform: PC ■ Publisher: Infogrames ■ Developer: Infogrames

Ah, maidens in distress, just the thing for long winter nights. Silver is a stirring action/adventure tale in the mold of a console-style RPG that starts strong and runs deep. The evil sorcerer of the title, Silver, seems to be a roué, having ordered his henchmen to kidnap all the women of larrah. The old magician says it's part of a pact with the god Apocalypse. Yeah, Sure, Dirty old man.

You play David, a promising young knight who lives near Jarrah, whose wife is among the kidnapped. That's no good, so David sets out with his grandfather to rescue the women and rid the land of Silver forever

Then it's explore, cut-and-slash, and explore some more. Every level is stocked with monsters. and the only way to move on is to kill them. The simple combat system takes place in realtime, and it works fine when it's just David and his granddad. As the party grows, however, the good guys get either bunched up in combat, or hard to control. Although not to worry - like the console RPGs it's modeled after, anyone who dies comes back to life after the battle.



■ Monsters are tough in Silver, but evil magic can be just as

pleasant music and good voice acting, with nicely detailed graphics and an interesting cast of - John Lee characters.

Silver has its charm. You get NextGen★★★☆☆

Bottom Line: A good way to spend a promising (k)night.

Deer Avenger 2: Deer in the City Platform: PC/Mac # Publisher: Simon & Schuster # Developer: Hypnotix

The original Deer Avenger spoofed Deer Hunter and other games of its ilk that let you snipe away at defenseless wildlife by letting the deer turn the tables and hunt rednecks. Predictably, this brought howls of outrage from hunters and sports writers that had little to do with its relative merits as a game (which, we admit, were few). Their humor-impaired ravings somehow rankled the Deer Avenger team, though, since this time it comes festooned with disclaimers about it being "just a game," and uses tranquilizer guns instead of blow-'em-away hard stuff. Sigh.

Also, this time you shoot at office workers, neighborhood

denizens, and bar patrons, which kind of kills the joke. The game is set up like a shooting gallery: you pan right or left, aiming with your mouse, while humans pop up and run to and fro through the scenery. But unlike the Deer Hunter games it spoofs the hunted shoot back.

There are jokes and surprises galore, but after you've tranquilized your way through three locations, you're just about done. There are no hidden levels. and no secret weapons to



■ No sylvan woods here blast away in offices, bars, and suburban neighborhoods

unlock About all that's left is to really do after that is keep shooting and watch your score - John Lee

NextGen★★☆☆☆

Bottom Line: Deer Avenger 2 is woefully short on gameplay, no question, but at least it's good for chuckles. Unless, of course, you're a hunter or a sports writer.

Nocturne

■ Platform: PC ■ Publisher: Gathering of Developers ■ Developer: Terminal Reality

Nocturne wants to be Resident Evil really badly, It isn't, A collection of four different action/adventures, Nocturne follows "Stranger," a trenchcoatand-sunglasses-clad anti-hero who hunts down supernatural beasties with his two blazing handguns. And, unfortunately, the gameplay is as tired as the clichéd character it features.

In its attempt at spookiness. the graphics are practically all different shades of gray, but it does look good, except for the stiff character animation (oddly though their coats and cloaks billow impressively - some 3D animator must have gotten a new plug-in for Christmas). The gameplay, however, consists entirely of the "find the item. open the door" style of puzzle you've played a thousand times.

During the item hunting, Stranger gets jumped by all kinds of monsters, which is actually more annoying than challenging. One or two beasties would suffice, but the game often throws them at you eight at a time, giving you no room to move. So you stand there, guns blazing, until they keel over Otherwise, the pace is pretty slow - even the



■ Shoot a few zombles, find a few keys, open a few doors that's about all there is to Nocturne

voice acting just drones on and on - but rarely builds to any kind of tension. - Jeff Lundrigan

NextGen★★☆☆☆

Bottom Line: Nocturne isn't terrible, but neither is it especially terrifying.

Gamer's Guide

What's black and white and not nearly as red as you'd think?

→ Welcome to the Gamer's Guide, your insanely popular resource to what's worth buying and what's not even worth a glance. Each month, we update the list with every game we've reviewed since the last

time, and cull out older stuff. Which older stuff? Well, mostly bad PC games, but a few first-generation console titles, too. We leave in reviewed in, since time and technology march just about every title that ever got **** though, since they're almost always a good

bet, no matter old they get. (Although it is worth taking note of which issue it was on, and a game that scored *** a couple of years ago might only score *** today.)

itle	publisher	rating		Robotron 64 Rocket: The Robot on Wheels	Crave Entertainment	***	39	Crash Bandicoot: Warped Croc: the Legend of the Gobbos	SCEA Fox interactive	***	
Dreamcast				Rocket: The Robot on Wheels Rush 2: Extreme Racine USA	Midway	***	49	Croc the Legend of the Goods Croc 2	Fox Interactive	***	
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Road to the World Cup 64	Electronic Arts	****	38	Bloody Roar	SCEA	****	41	Jet Moto 3	989 Studios	****	
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	Atlus	***	11/99		Pormosis	****	30	Streets of Sim City	Maxis		40
Tail of the Sun Tales of Destiny	SCEA Namco	***	31	EF2000 v2.0 Emergency: Fighters for Life	Ocean of America, Inc. WizardWorks	****	36 48	System Shock 2 Sub Culture	Electronic Arts Ubi Soft	****	36 51 43 40 11/99 37 44
Tarzan	Disney Interactive	***	10/99	Emperor of the Fading Suns	SegaSoft	**	32	Swarm	Reflex Entertainment	**	44
Team Losi RC Racer	Fox Interactive	*	47	Excalibur 2055 A.D.	Sr Tech	**	37	Temujin	SouthPeak Interactive	***	38
Tekken 2 Tekken 3	Namco	*****	42	Expendable Extreme Assault	Rage Software Blue Byte	**	56 35	Terminator: SkyNET Tex Murphy: Overseer	Bethesda Softworks Access	•••••	38 26 42 52
Tenchu	Activision	****	48	Extreme Tactics	Piranha Interactive	***			Eldos interactive	****	52
Ternis Arena Test Drive 4	Ubi Soft	**	43	F-15 F-16 Aggressor	EA Bethesda Softworks	****	43 11/99	Tiger Woods Golf '99 Tomb Raider Gold	EA Sports Bidos Interactive	****	48
Test Drive Off Road 3	Accolade Infogrames	**	12/99		Ubi Soft	***	39	Tomb Raider III	Eidos Interactive		48 43 49
The Fifth Element	Activision	**	50	Facry Tale Adventure II	Encore Software			Total Annihilation	GT Interactive		
Theme Hospital Thousand Arms	EA Atlus	****	43 12/99	Facry Tale Adventure II Fallout Fallout 2	Interplay Interplay	****	40 38 50 45 44 51	Total Annihilation: Kingdoms Trespasser	GT Interactive Dreamworks Interactive	****	10/99
Thunder Truck Rally	Psygnosis Working Designs/Spaz	***	33		SegaSoft	***	45	Twinsen's Odyssey	Activision	****	34
Thunderforce V	Working Designs/Spaz	**	46	Forsaken	Acclaim	***	44	Ultimate 8 Ball	THQ	****	34 56 43
TigerShark Time Crisis	GT Interactive Namco	****	29 38	Gangsters Game, Net & Match	Eldos Interactive Blue Byte		45	Ultimate Race Pro Unreal	MicroProse GT Interactive	*****	44
Tiny Tank TOCA 2: Touring Car Challenge	MGM interactive	****	50	Get Medieval	Monolith	***	48	Unreal Tournament	GT Interactive	****	09/99
TOCA 2: Touring Car Challenge Tomb Raider II	Codemasters Eldos	****	12/99	GPolice Grand Prix Legends	Psygnosis	****	38	Uprising Urban Assault	Cyclone Studios Microsoft Games	*****	37
Tomba	Eldos SCEA	****	45	Grand Prix Legends Grand Theft Auto	Sierra Sports Take 2	****	42	Urban Assault Uprising 2: Lead and Destroy	300	****	51
Tomba Tony Hawk's Pro Skater	Activision	*****	11/99	Grim Fandango	LucasArts	****	50		Buka Entertainment	***	37 49 51 46 38 40 49
Trap Gunner Triple Play '98	Atlus EA Canada	****	47	Gulf War: Operation Desert Hammer	300 Sarra	**	11/99	Virtual Pool 2	Interplay Sirtech	*****	38
	EA Sports	****	55	Heavy Gear	Activision	***	39	VR Baseball 2000	VR Sports	***	49
Turbo Prop Racing Twisted Metal 2	SCEA	****	45	Heavy Gear II	Activision	*****	10.99	WarCraft 2: Tides of Darkness WarGames	Bitzzard Entertainment		15
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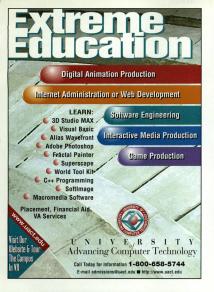
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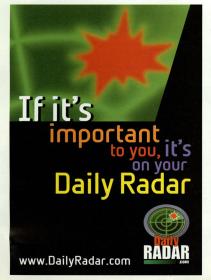


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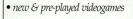
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Letters

Mail bashing ramblings of the **Next Gen** reader

l've been a loyal reader since NG 01, and until recently I agreed with the contention that Shigeru Miyamoto was the be-all and end-all of game design. Well certainly, Miyamoto is a Hall-of-Famer of game design, creating some of the most memorable characters in games history. Anybody would be hard-pressed to find a game that ranks higher than any Zelda, Mario, or Donkey Kong title, on any system (Mario 64 was a bit overrated, but that's just me)

But when you weigh those titles against those of Yu Suzuki they sadly just don't stack up. The most comprehensive, realistic, fighting game in history? Virtua Fighter. The best racing games? Daytona 2 and F355 Challenge. The most ambitious RPGadventure game to date? Shenmue. And when you add to that list instant classics like Space Harrier, Outrun, the first Daytona, and the genre-busting revolutionary 3D fighter Virtua Fighter 1, it becomes painfully obvious that Miyamoto is a very, very close 2nd to the always innovative, revolutionary Yu

vivace6@pop.gateway.net

Damn — fighting words from Vivace6. We'll say this: we can't give Suzuki credit for Shenmue until it ships and succeeds - Blasto! was ambitious too, but that didn't make it good. Here at Next Gen, we can only agree on one thing: if we don't think Miyamoto is # I, then we all think he's #2. So, one editor thinks it's Meier then Miyamoto, one gives it to Lebling then Miyamoto, one to Kojima then Miyamoto. Start to see a pattern? If Miyamoto is number two on a lot of lists

where number one keeps changing, it's easy to see where the idea of Miyamoto as the one #1 that everyone can garee on comes from.

Ever since Sega made the announcement that it would develop a new system. I have seen letters from people asking if you think Sega will last, if the game developers will climb aboard, and if the system will last. Even in your last issue there were the same questions. Well, what I say to all those "wait and see" people is: QUIT WAITING. If everyone waits to see if it is going to succeed, it won't. If nobody buys the console because they are afraid that developers aren't going to be on board, then there won't be any. Buy the system, It is great. The more of us who buy Dreamcasts the better. Why do you think that every game designer in the known world wants to develop for PlayStation? Could it be the 60 million units sold? If there were even a quarter of that many Dreamcasts sold, there would be as many developers as there are for PSX. So guit waiting and wondering and just buy the Dreamcast. If you are afraid that once PS2 arrives, DC will go by the wayside, just stop and ask yourself this: How many people are going to shell out almost \$400 and still not even have a game to play on that new system?

Hmm... we like this logic. Look, if everyone just read Next Generation, there would be no need for them to read any other magazines. So, please, just read Next Generation.

I read your article but was a little confused with your description of Sony's Internet

Buy the system. It is great. The more of us who buy Dreamca wondering and just buy...

strategy. It said PS2 will have an expansion set that includes Ethernet and a hard drive for use with cable modems. The article implies that it won't be usable with DSL. But the interface for DSL (at least mine anyway) is Ethernet. I thought this was pretty standard. Is there some reason that Sony's Ethernet solution won't work with DSL?

spoke to seemed very up on cable and very down on DSL. While they conceded that DSL could be used with the system, it seems clear that Sony's strategy will be to pursue cable

And don't forget, this isn't a PC. Unless Sony (or an approved third party) wants it to happen, and writes drivers for it, there won't be DSL on PS2 — it's not like consumers will simply be able to choose to do it themselves.

Girl trouble?

Only that the Sony execs we

I've subscribed to Next Gen for a while now, and I have a large problem with the magazine that bothers me more and more the types of pictures you put on the cover. From NG 55 to the 11/99 magazine, out of those seven magazines, five of them have had some girl on the cover, wearing whatever it is that would attract male attention. I know they must bring in some of the audience, but how much of your audience are they turning off? I may be a 16-year-old-boy, but I know I don't like to read magazines that use these girls on the cover just to attract a buying audience. No quality magazine should need to paste girls to the cover to sell. I find it insulting and somewhat embarrassing that I am getting a magazine in the mail that almost always has some girl on the cover.

hartfan12@hotmail.com

What's the matter, afraid of cooties? Since NG 53 (the Dreamcast issue), we have had four men, five women, one monster of indeterminate gender, and five consoles on our covers. Yes, whenever possible we use high-quality CG renders of individual characters, since it's visually striking and helps set Next Gen apart at the newsstand. Frequently those renders are of women (if you think about it, if they weren't of women at least half the time, that would be even stranger, wouldn't it?). Are these characters, in general, attractive? Of course. OK, one hideous monster for contrast, but after all, course, OK, one macous insures. On every? And it's not like who wants to put ugly people on a cover? And it's not like we're alone — Entertainment Weekly, Spin, Premiere, in fact just about any entertainment magazine puts good-looking women on its cover more than half the time. Women appeals to see the condition of the properties of the condition of the conditi



■ So we put attractive women on our covers. So do a lot of magazines. Why would anyone have a problem with that?

One of the specs you gave for the chipset doesn't sound very powerful at all. 15 polygons/sec?

You guys need to stop referring to 12-year-olds as immature little brats. I am 12, and I'm a hardcore gamer. Now I bet you are saying "Yeah, sure, he probably owns about three games." That is not true. I own N64, PlayStation, and Dreamcast, also have a P3 600 with a G400. I also buy all and I mean ALL games that you give a five-star rating and some that you gave four stars. I own no one- to three-star games. I hated Kingpin. It sucked. After the 40° utterance of the word "fuck" or "motherfucker," I was already bored. How long did the damn thing have to load!? Remember the "Hardcore Gamer Test?" I scored Next Gen level, and I would have scored "Sad" if I had a car and a job. So the next time you feel the need to address 12year-old gamers as immature, refer back to this letter. Thank you for your time.

OBanarchy@aol.com

Are you sure you're writing to the correct magazine? We've never, ever, looked down at someone because of their age — we know better than anyone that a 12-year-old can be hardcore. How? We were all hardcore when we were 12. That said, our magazine is almed at people 18 and over, but if you can keep up, you're welcome to come alona.

) JVMy does Dreamcast have fever buttons than the other leading consoles? I need more destructive control! 20 At the end of *Disruptor* on PlayStation, Insomniac mentions that the sequel is on its way. What happened to that 30 How about a bi-monthly or quarterly magazine devoted to videogame and CG production techniques? Thanks for your time!

gardner@jps.net

I) We're not sure, although we think at least part of the reason is that Sega figured the analog triggers would be enough to make up for a lack of buttons. 2) Sadly, Disruptor didn't sell well, so don't expect a sequel. 3) Keep an eye out for Computer Arts, a US version of the English magazine that Imagine Media is bringing out soon as a one-shot. It may become a regularly scheduled magazine if it does well.

There are a lot of people who read your magazine here in Canada; how come your sweepstakes are only valid in the States and not in Canada?

Unfortunately the logistics of dealing with an international sweepstakes are just way too complex to make it practical. Malheureusement, logistique de traiter des sweepstakes internationaux est trop complexe pour le rendre pratique.

In your November issue, you mentioned n'i/dia's Geforce 256 as a possible graphics chip for X-Box. One of the specs you gave for the chipset doesn't sound very powerful at all. Is polygons/sec? I could probably get my Ti-99 to do that! I think that calls for a correction or something, right?

Alan Kruger aktruger@kent.edu

Well, we never said that was the maximum, did we? Anyway, we punched a million tiny zeros into the offending editor using an awl to remind him to always check the decimal place.

When I hear everybody complaining about the prices of games, it makes me sick. You guys have it made in the States. Up in Canada, we pay 570 for games. That is \$30 more than what you guys pay. Instead of paying \$199 for Dreamcast at launch, I paw \$299.

I feel as if Canadians are being screwed. I plan on getting Playstation2, and I can't wait to see how much that costs up here. If there are any other reasons, aside from the crappy exchange rate, could you please tell me why the prices

Feel like a tool?

I was just wondering that if I were to have enough money, would I be able to get my hands on a PlayStation2 Tool? I hear it costs about two grand, but is it available to the public?

segaboy182@hotmail.com

Actually, the cost of the Linux-based Tool is closer to \$20,000. Sony won't sell them to you unless you're a developer, but the company is planning a line of workstations based on the Emotion Engine processor. See our news story last issue for details.



are so high in Canada?

Greg Canton kickass@ignmail.com

Well, with today's exchange rate (USS I = CS.68), \$70 Canadian is only US\$47 per game (and \$203 for the Dreamcast), which is about right, since most US games actually cost around \$45 when new. The difference is easily made up by Canada's high sales tax, but hey — you guys

get free health care and generous welfare benefits while we starve in the gutters, so don't complain. (Unless you're in western Canada, in which case you can complain because you pay more in taxes than you get in benefits, but since we have a lot of readers in the Maritime provinces, we really don't want to be a forum for that kind of discussion. Take it to Macleans.)



Next Generation Letters,

150 North Hill Dr., Brisbane, CA 94005. Email us: ngonline@imaginemedia.com Note: email is vastly, vastly preferred

→ Retroview

January 1995

It was the dawning of a new era in games — and magazines

January, 1995: Following the release of both the Saturn and PlayStation systems in Japan, Sega and Sony geared up for their US launches, leaving other hardware developers in a desperate race to grab market share before their competitors arrived. Philips' shifting their focus from allpurpose systems to hardcore gaming machines, while Atari would slash the price of Jaguar. All would fall drastically short on the software front and be dead within 18 months. Nintendo, with Ultra 64 far from release, would try to keep US gamers' attention with the release of Rare's Donkey Kong Country for Super NES. Revealing all the hardware companies'



Killer Instinct. The game Nintendo said would make Ultra 64. Yeah, forget that Miyamoto guy

attempts to avoid the Sony hammer was the premiere issue of Next Generation, a different kind of magazine, one dedicated to covering hardcore gaming issues for intelligent readers with an insider's perspective. It was a bold move, and one most publishers content to put out kiddle pubs thought would fail. Five years later. we're still proving them wrong.



What we were rating

What we reviewed while waiting for PlayStation and Saturn

FIFA INT'L. SOCCER



- System: 3DO

ALIEN VS. PREDATOR DOOM 2



- System: Jaquar
- Publisher: Atari ■ NG rating: ★★★★



- Publisher: GT
- NG rating: ★★★☆☆
- SHAQ FU



- System: Genesis
- Publisher: EA ■ NG rating: ★★☆

LITIL DIVIL



- System: CD-I
- Publisher: Phillips

Rank	Movie	Total Gross (in millions)	Release	Opening (in million	
	Toy Story	\$191.75	11/22/95	\$29.14	
	Batman Forever	\$184.03	6/16/95	\$52.78	
	Apollo 13	\$172.06	6/30/95	\$25.35	
	Pocahontas	\$141.57	6/23/95	\$29.53	
	Ace Ventura: When Nature Calls	\$108.36	11/10/95	\$37.80	
	GoldenEye	\$106.43	11/17/95	\$26.21	
	Jumanji	\$100.48	12/15/95	\$11.08	
	Casper	\$100.28	5/26/95	\$22.09	
	Seven	\$100.11	9/22/95	\$13.95	
10	Die Hard: With a Vengeance	\$100.01	5/19/95	\$22.16	



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- Trent Ward, reviews editor
- Laura Morris, art director:
- Jonathan Simpson-Bint, publisher:
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Integer Mode is alread of procele with the all passion. A per specific process of the design of the passion of

BackwardsCompatible

We watched the PR manager die II times in a row as he tried to get to a special spot. See the screen he finally enabled us to capture on page 30. Fifth anniversary? Don't you mean guinguennial? Of course, Read all about it on page 25. We spent 60 hours straight at the office producing NG 24, but all we got was a T-shirt. Read about what some developers' girlfriends will do to help them survive crunch time on page 82. 23 Dreamcast ratings in two inches. Page 104. We review a game with the atomic symbol Ag on page 103. These dogs have legs. Er, wheels. Page 99. So that's why that kid is smiling - he's standing in the bushes. Page 2. This team took their name from the one thing that survives a crash. And they used to work at Radical. Page 40. We called Doom II "more of the same" in NG 01. Find out how many stars it got on page 110. Trespasser IP. We raise the specter on page 51. In a nod to the gameplay scourge of NG 01, we review a modern FMV game on page 98. The capital of Michigan is Lansing. Find out how you can control the capital of Novistrana on page 42. Last issue, PlayStation3. This issue, Dreamcast2. See the rumor report on page 13. No. they're not mothballs, they're actually like shiny duct tape. Page 6. Is it rendered or hand-drawn? You make the call on page 64. Every time we see this particular bit of "hardware," we can't help chuckling. See for yourself on page 109. The only people who'd be offended by this are other Nazis - and who cares what they think? Page 96. The screenshot that made us all go "Woo!" is at the bottom left of page 29. Would referencing Backwards Compatible in Backwards Compatible cause an infinite loop? Find out on page III. Would referencing Backwards Compatible in Backwards Compatible cause an infinite loop? Find out on...



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