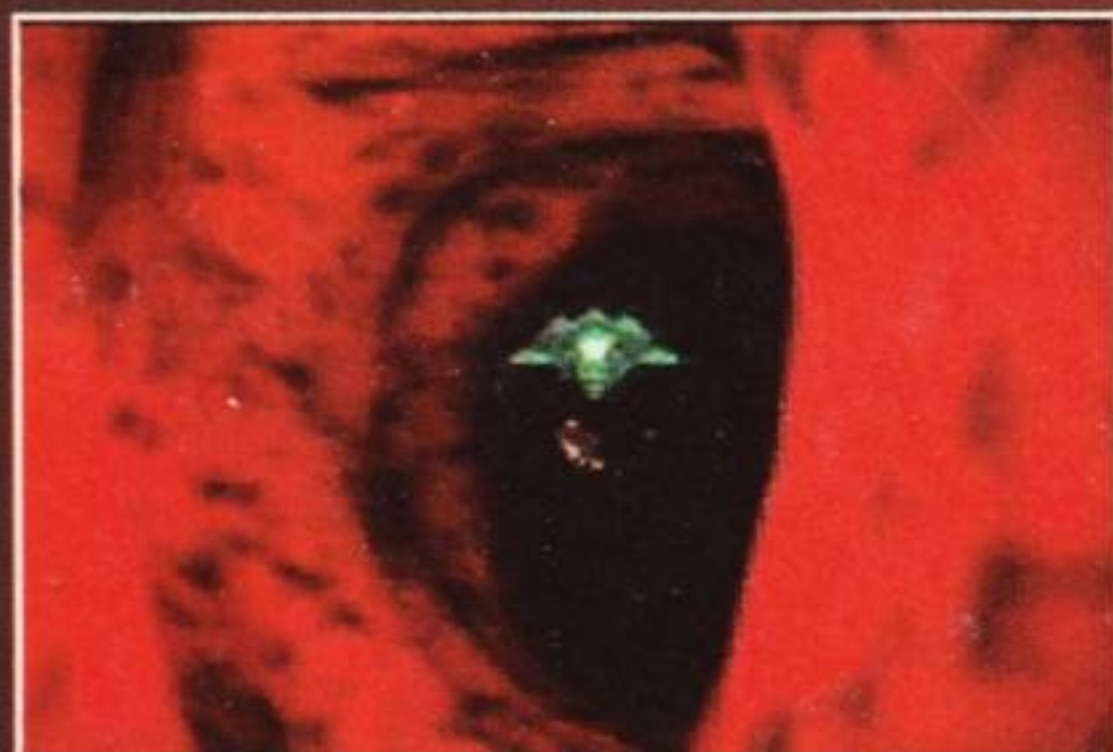


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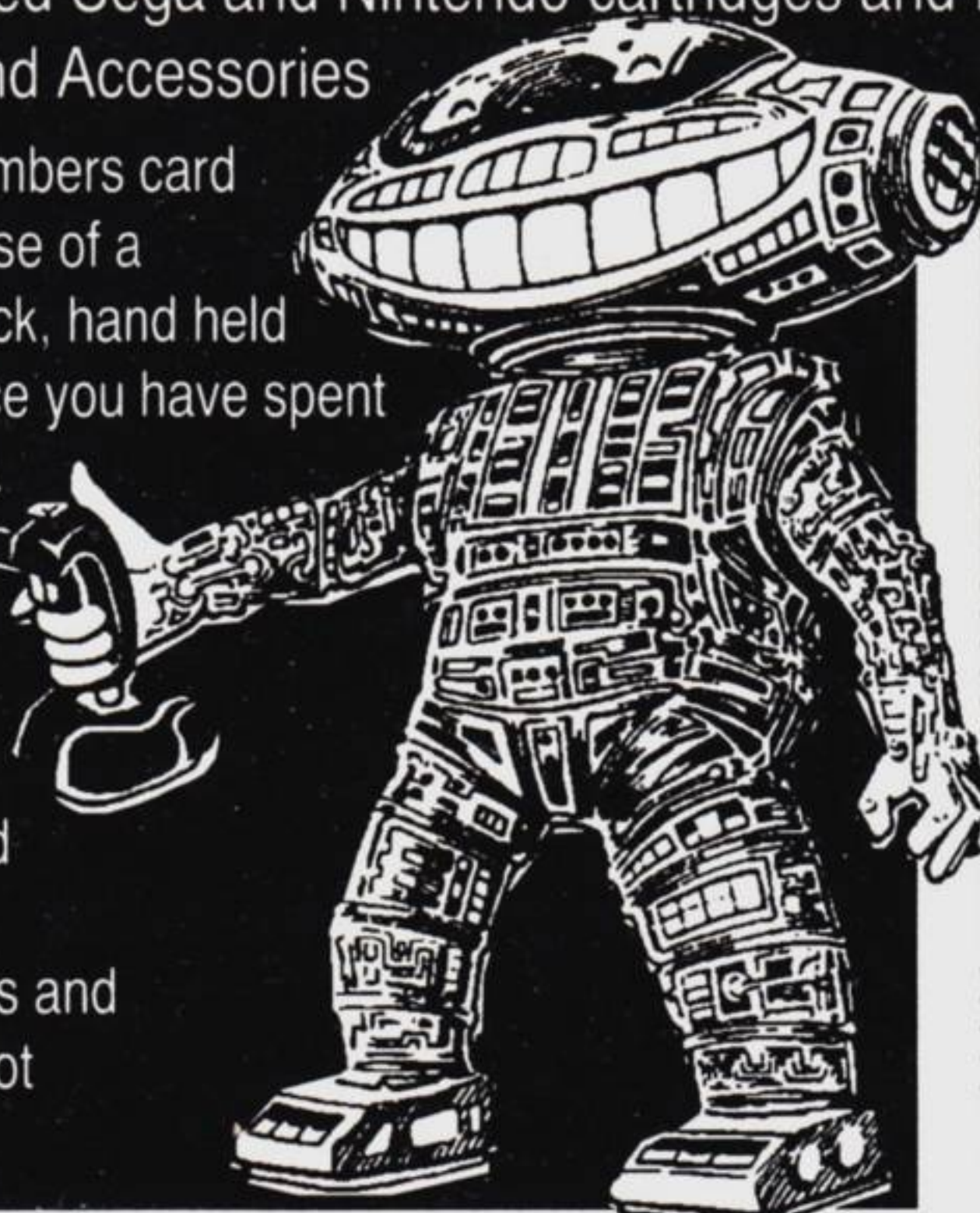
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AMIGA CD 32

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hype

Issue number 3. Welcome to it! We've got another big one for you, but did you really expect anything less? The wave of **huge titles** that came out just in time for Christmas seems to keep going and going with the months ahead looking just as promising as well.

Actually **1994** is shaping up to be a **very interesting year** for video games in Australia (and world-wide).

Not only are **Nintendo** opening their own offices Down Under, and reputedly spending big to cut down **Sega's** dominance, but all the "**super consoles**" should be launched on the local market as well.

The **Amiga CD32** is already out (we'll review games as soon as they send us a machine and some good software gets released), and the **Atari Jaguar** and the 3D0 are only months away.

Sega have also taken up the challenge to Nintendo, and their new machine, the **Saturn**, is now a 64-bit machine (of sorts), and it will be out early next year all going well. We've got a bit of a treat for all those interested in the upcoming choices with a review of the first **3D0 game**, **Crash 'n Burn**, which comes packed with the machine. Hmmm, **very spunky**.

But back to the here and now, and there's some awesomely hot games floating around. **NBA Jam** has hit both the **Mega Drive** and **SNES** in amazingly good conversions that will have **arcade junkies** foaming at the mouth. The SNES is hitting high gear with **Skyblazer**, **Aladdin** and the veediotic **Ren & Stimpy**, while Mega Drive owners finally get a chance to play an old Nintendo favourite in **Castlevania** - the New Generations. **James Pond** will also have Sega owners smiling in his third (and best) adventure, Operation Starfish, while Mega CD players will be drooling over the long awaited **Microcosm**. PC users have been saturated by titles over the last couple of months and we take a look at some of the best, including two outrageously excellent LucasArts games, **Sam & Max Hit the Road** and **Rebel Assault**.

Apart from that, we've got a look at computer animation and the world of **Silicon Graphics** with Australian company Animal Logic, who are responsible for many of the TV commercials that rate highly on the HYPER "Wowometer" chart. **Mr Virtual Reality**, **Jaron Lanier**, also downloads his thoughts, and we get **inside his head** for a look at the future direction of VR. As if that's not enough, we take a sneaky perve on **Sonic 3**, and Mega Drive kids should start going berserk now because this is the one you've been waiting for! It's high time for me to get out of here and start raving somewhere else, so **tune in, turn over and get off** on **HYPER**.

Stuart

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Logical Illusion Enter the amazing world of computer animation with Animal Logic, an Australian company who are creating wonders with Silicon Graphics machines
Through the Looking Glass The "founder" and main proponent of VR technology talks to HYPER about the future of cyberspace.



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Mega Drive/SNES

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Stuart's still stuck in the kiddies playground (no Michael Jackson jokes please!), but he's somehow found the time to read through all your letters. And guess what? He's even answered some!

If you want your letter in HYPER, keep it under 300 words (approximately), keep it funny (not a prerequisite) and keep it clean (well, not totally). When you've finished, send it to:

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Preference will be given to people with previous sales experience. Applicants should have excellent

Letters...

Ridiculously High

Dear Hyper,

I just bought the first issue of your mag and, having read it, want to congratulate you on producing a first class publication to rival anything overseas.

I am writing to show my disgust at the ridiculously high prices of games for consoles compared with those for other formats (PC, Amiga, etc). Take, for example, Flashback and Street Fighter 2. On the Mega Drive, the games cost \$90-\$120 and \$160 respectively. On the Amiga, if one buys these games (and let's face it, who does buy Amiga/PC games these days with the rampant piracy that goes on?) they cost about \$70 each. I can't for the life of me understand how console games manufacturers can justify the huge difference in pricing. Sure, SF2 is stacks better on a MD, but after shelling out another \$40 for a 6-button joystick, the price difference is \$130. THAT is absolutely scandalous.

Sure, cartridges cost more than disks, but this is itself does not justify the price difference. Judging by the quality and massive scale of most PC games these days, they take just as long to programme as console games so there should be no argument there. To add insult to injury, PC games are often infinitely better packaged with very professional manuals whereas console games often get a folded piece of paper.

With the games market targeted at the teenage group, ie. those least likely to be able to afford the games, the exorbitant pricing of console games must amount to the biggest rip-off along with recorded CDs/cassettes!

I want to know the reason for these prices and what can be done about them.

Thank you and keep up the good work.

Yours sincerely,
Kevin Ong
Toorak, VIC

I can only say that I totally agree with your comments. The mark-up on console games is unbelievably high, and the only justification is that the distributors want to make huge profits. CDs cost only a few dollars to press, so technically CD titles should be a lot cheaper than carts, but that is not happening. However having said all that, games now cost an absolute bundle to produce so the manufacturers have to make their money back, through the high pricing of the titles. I think you'll find a bit more discounting over the next year, as more third party distributors get into the Australian market.

Celebration & Rejoicing

Dear HYPER,

This is the best news for a long time...

Much celebration and rejoicing, a mag to replace the once venerable Megazone. The minute I saw Stuart Clarke's name on the editorial I knew I'd found the magazine I'd been waiting for to come back into existence. HYPER.

I own an NES and a PC. Maybe one day I'll fork out for a Mega Drive, but at the moment I satisfy my hunger for new adventures with the likes of the Prince of Persia series, Waxworks and Flashback for PC. I like the format of the new mag, but please broaden your section on PCs to include tips. Got anything on Waxworks? Please, please. Being a gaming fan I like to read about all types of games. Even if I don't own a super new console I still want to keep up to date with what's available. It must be hard to cover everything, but for me, that's what makes your mag essential reading. Thanks for a great first issue. You've won me over.

Tony Norris
St Ives, NSW

Thanks Tony, and I think you'll find we've already increased our PC coverage. But I've got nothing on Waxworks at the moment, and it seems to be stumping quite a few people, so a solution would be very nice (hint).

Child Abuse

To the Editor,

I was extremely displeased at your article, "Virtual Sex" in Issue #1 of your magazine. I feel for a magazine whose target audience is male and possibly between the ages of 10 and 15, the article was most inappropriate. The graphic description of "Virtual Valerie" and your promotion of it as a form of enjoyment, represents a gross degradation of women in general. As two females aged 16 and 19 years who happened to flick through their 14 year old brother's magazine, we were disgusted at such an obvious promotion of pornography in a magazine designed for young teenage boys.

As something that can only be described as pornography, "Virtual Valerie" and disks of the like cannot be viewed for their "novelty value" as was stated in your magazine, as it can only lead to further hard core pornography and eventually to a total abuse of the system (ie. child abuse).

As a magazine whose aim is to promote fun and enjoyment through technology for young teenage males, the article was totally out of context. Please take this into consideration in publishing further issues, as your magazine is otherwise of a very high standard.

Sincerely,
Anonymous
W.A.

For a start, our "target audience" is not males aged 10 - 15, and our readers surveys have confirmed a wide and diverse audience (including women and over 18s). But you're right, when you say that this magazine aims to promote fun and enjoyment through technology, and Virtual Sex (when it eventually happens) will hopefully contain a lot of fun and enjoyment and very little exploitative pornography. The article did not seek to promote Virtual Valerie or any other "porno" software, but was an objective coverage of sex-oriented software that is available (most of it is hard to get, even if you are over 18).

I don't know where you get the idea that viewing 'pornography' leads to child abuse but this magazine is probably not the forum to debate this question.

written and verbal skills, an aptitude for organisation and be commercial-minded and highly self-motivated.

The position is located in Sydney.

If you think you have the qualifications call

Phillip Keir on 02 310 1433 or write to PO Box 634, Strawberry Hills NSW 2012

Hyper Kicks

To Ed,

I was walking down to the newsagency to get the latest Megazone. That's when I saw Hyper. Hyper kicks Megazone so I bought your mag and ran home. I read it. It was good.

But a few things get me cut. In theme review of Mortal Kombat Andrew Humphreys said "In terms of depth and gameplay it was no match for Streetfighter 2". Get a life. Mortal Kombat's gameplay spits on Streetfighter. Let's face it. Streetfighter is too old and boring.

I now have a few questions for you.

1. Is World Heroes 1 or 2 coming to Mega Drive?
2. Is Fatal Fury 2 coming to MD?
3. Could you show us a few more combos for each character in Mortal Kombat?

Thanks for the space.

From Richie Benuad

Ah Richie (nice name choice by the way). The Mortal Kombat/Streetfighter debate is a very subjective thing, but we still believe that Mortal Kombat is merely a Streetfighter clone with nice graphics. Each character has the same basic moves and a few special moves - none of which you need to use. It's shallow and too forgiving. Streetfighters requires precision timing and strategy. By way of explanation then, I'll answer question 3 first - there are no real combos for Mortal Kombat!

As for 1, World Heroes should be hitting the MD and SNES in a couple of months. 2. It's not confirmed yet, but we'd be very surprised if it wasn't.

One Question

Dear Ed,

Your mag is the best thing since Street Fighter 2, much better than other magazines. It has good reviews, cheats and the poster was excellent. One question: will Super Street Fighter 2 be coming out on Mega Drive?

Scott Sullivan

Woronora, NSW

P.S. Your mag is great (I had to say it again)

Thanks Scott, and if you turn to the news pages you'll see my fearless prediction that Super Street Fighter 2 will be hitting the Mega Drive just in time for next Christmas. That's not confirmed or anything - just an educated guess.

Pornographic

Dear Sir,

I have a 12 year old boy who saves his pocket money every month to buy the Nintendo Magazine. This month he decided to buy your magazine instead. I was appalled at what he showed me on pages 16 and 17. I could not believe a magazine marketed to attract the younger generation could print such pictures and print such information about what the game Virtual Sex would be. I have since spoken to the newsagent who sold my boy the magazine and he of course had no idea what was in it.

He, along with all the many parents I showed, was shocked and called it pornographic. I do hope this magazine will become more responsible with the information it prints. You are influencing our children.

Yours sincerely,

K. Mears

Murdoch, W.A.

I'm sorry that the Virtual Sex article offended you, but it was hardly hidden away inside, as there was a very large cover mention and graphic. And if you call an intelligently written article about the possibility of computer technology being able to simulate sex, pornographic, then I suppose it was. Fortunately the vast majority of our readers appreciated the article, and we have had the grand total of three complaints compared to hundreds of compliments via our readers surveys. While the graphics used were obviously sensational, the same "cybersex" suit and the Virtual Valerie CD have been given far more explicitly coverage by other magazines and TV programs such as "Donahue" (at 7.30pm) which your son could easily watch.

Mega CD Admirer

Dear Ed,

I bought your new Hyper mag and I think it's great, except that it hasn't got many Mega CD reviews.

I have a few questions for you:

1. Can you put more Mega CD reviews in your future magazines?
2. How much does Night Trap and Wonder Dog CD cost?
3. Can you get Day of the Tentacle for Mega CD? If so, how much is it?

Jeffrey Rossington

Charleville, QLD

Well Jeffrey, the reason we don't have many Mega CD reviews is because there's not that many games being released for the Mega CD. We are covering all the releases so just stick with us. 2. Night Trap is around \$120, but Wonder Dog has never been officially released in Australia (you could pick it up at importers for around \$100) 3. No. I wish.

The Ed Has An Admirer

To my darling Eddykins,

I love you with all my heart, Stuart! Let's get married right now - hey! Let's just skip the wedding and go straight to the honeymoon... Ha! Ha! Had you going there for a minute, didn't I? Okay, okay, here are my questions:

1. Do you know the release date for Leisure Suit Larry (LSL) 6 (please review it)?
2. I wanna subscribe! There was no form in #1.
3. A software prize (or cash!) would be nice for the author of the best letter (me! me! me!).
5. Notice how I skipped Question 4? Just like LSL4: The Case of the Missing Floppies!
6. Any news of LSL7?
7. How about Legend of Kyrandia 2?
8. I'm stuck in LSL 2 and 3 and Kyrandia 1. Please print solutions (go on!).
9. Who were the two hornies in the photo from the article "Virtual Sex" (naughty, naughty) in Issue #1?

What a waste of time,

Tayla Ashcroft

Shorncliffe, QLD

Why was that a waste of time? Your letter was printed, and my heart has been touched, but onto the questions 1. It's already released and you'll find a review inside 2. There was a subscription form in the first issue and there's

another one in this issue. If you don't want to cut up the magazine, just photocopy it. 3. Get knotted 5. Very clever 6. I hope not. 7. Yes, it should be out now 8. No 9. Contrary to popular belief I was not one of them. Honest.

Lucky Victim

Dear HYPER,

Not knowing whom to write to concerning computer and video games, you are the lucky victim of this request. I would like more information concerning the 3DO multi-player. That is, who built it, where and when and that sort of thing. Do you have, or know who else may have the address of the 3DO company ("Palo Alto" doesn't really tell me much)? How do I contact somebody such as Trip Hawkins, who runs it?

Secondly, how do I find out more about Virtual Reality? I am hoping to somehow get a job designing the graphics inside VR environments, but cannot find how to become a part of the industry. The Lawnmower Man inspired me to go into graphics of the sort and preliminary experiments in graphics have also inspired me more. The magazine's article on Virtual Reality in the sex industry is not quite my style (I'm not worried about the sex bit or the physical interfacing or anything like that...), though the industry interests me (VR, not sex). Would it be wise to contact animators or "Reactor Inc" for further information? If so, then where do I contact them?

Thanks for your time.

Bye!

Tim St Clair

Manilla, NSW

What! You want more info after our feature article? If you want to contact the 3DO company give Electronic Arts a call, and they will give you the details. E.A's NSW office number is (02) 911 6662, and ask for the lovely Jane. But don't be under the impression that Trip Hawkins will answer your letters though - he has a multi-national corporation to run. As for Virtual Reality, try contacting the Australian distributor of the Virtuality system, the Virtual Reality Corp. in Melbourne on (03) 827 0333.

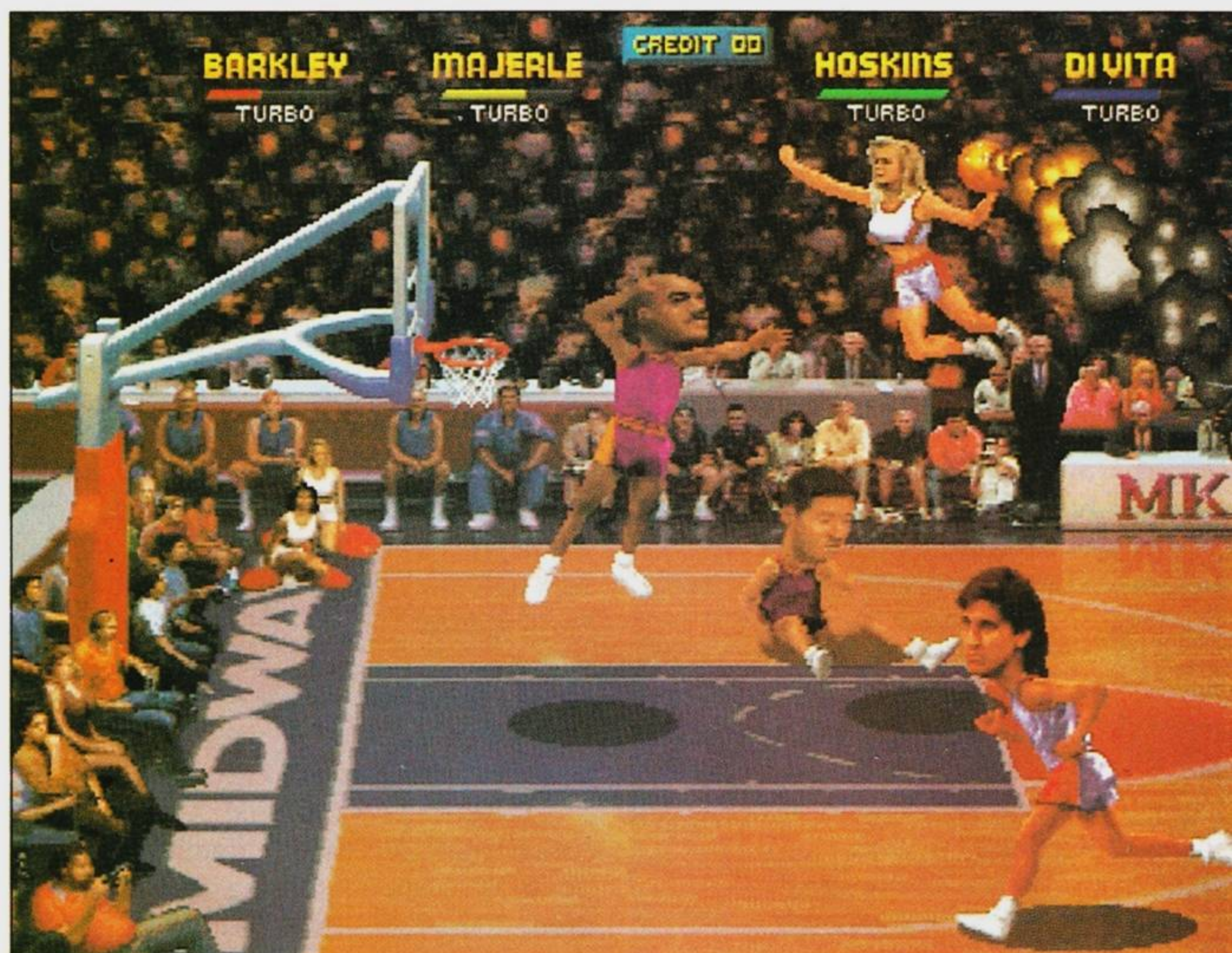
NBA Jam Bunnies No Bunnies

Cast your mind back to last issue's Cheat Mode. Remember we told you that there are 5 hidden characters in *NBA Jam* (the arcade game) who have requested that their names and birthdates be kept secret and that 3 of them are females? Well, here's one in action - yep, it's one of those forever smiling cheerleaders! Both of them appear in the game.

But it seems that their appearance has caught them by surprise and that Midway are now caught up in a bit of a legal battle with *Playboy*. You see the girls are *Playboy* models.

Mark Turmell, *NBA Jam*'s chief designer, isn't willing to discuss the matter. All he'll say is this: "It's become a legal thing with *Playboy*. I don't think the girls realised that when they posed in the magazine we might include them in the game". Needless to say, Midway will still not release the initials and birthdates of the Basketball Bunnies.

Will they make it on to the home versions of the game? Hmmm. Check out a very suspicious screen grab of the SNES version on page 33.



The Sega Saturn goes 64-bit. Or does it?

Sega is trying to get the media to understand that its Saturn, due late in 1994, is neither a 3DO-style 32-bit System nor a 64-bitter like Nintendo's Project Reality, but a hot MULTI-PROCESSOR system.

The Saturn game system's main processor will be a custom 32-bit RISC chip developed by Sega and Hitachi, but the video processor is going to be at

least 64-bits, ensuring super-smooth graphics.

Multi-processing doesn't end there, though, as there are reports of seven different processors in the Saturn, each with different responsibilities.

The new machine will have 24 megabits of RAM and a further 32 megabits for the CD-ROM drive to work with.

Sega of Japan is report-

edly a tad peed off about all this talk of 64 and 32-bit-ness (Aren't we all? All this "I've got more bits than you" stuff is getting radically out of control. Just remember that a machine's technical specifications mean nothing without a good library of games. Games matter - bits don't!) and has announced a whole list of advanced design features for the Saturn.

These include high performance CG processing, glow shading, texture mapping, 60 minutes of full-motion video, a 16-million colour palette and optional wide-screen display mode.

The Japanese press, responsible for hyping up the 64-bit story, have come out with a whole lot of Saturn rumours themselves, like a quadruple speed drive with a rewriteable CD sys-

tem for saving data, both of which would be phenomenally expensive and not very likely.

More credible rumours say the Saturn will be directly compatible with 5th generation Sega arcade games, though not compatible with Mega CD or Megadrive games, and will cost about US \$275 for a cartridge-only system and US \$460 for the CD version. Ten games for »



Bill & Ben?



No, but weed makes a conspicuous appearance in a new PC game currently doing the rounds on bulletin boards everywhere. The game is

HappyWeed, a modern

day version of *Pacman* on pot.

Instead of that ugly *Pacman* thing, you play the part of a dooper (represented by a Smiley face) with the task of collecting as many cannabis leaves and joints as you can while being chased by an assortment of villains from the drug squad (the Ghosts in *Pacman*). Swallow a super-drug and you can chase them back to their base. Needless to say, we don't approve of this sort of thing at all.

Where do all the international Hip Hop acts go when they're in town? To the HYPER office of course. Yep, we've been hobnobbing with the stars again. The Young Black Teenagers (YBT to their friends), one of America's hottest rap groups, took time off from their recent Australian tour to play some games with the HYPER crew.

These four guys - Kamron, First Born, ATA and DJ Scribble - are serious game heads. They know their stuff, and they know their systems. In fact, the only other place they'd been before we met them was the arcade around the corner from their hotel to rattle the local *NBA Jam* machines! They would've played 2 on 2 all night, but the \$1.00 a quarter put them off - it's only 25 cents a go in the States.

Lounging around the luxurious HYPER quarters, Scribble would not stop talking about *Aladdin* (on Mega Drive) and the new 3DO wonder system. *Aladdin*'s smoother than silk animation blew him away ("I thought *Tazmania* looked like a cartoon - this is 10 times better") but he couldn't wait to get his hands on a 3DO.

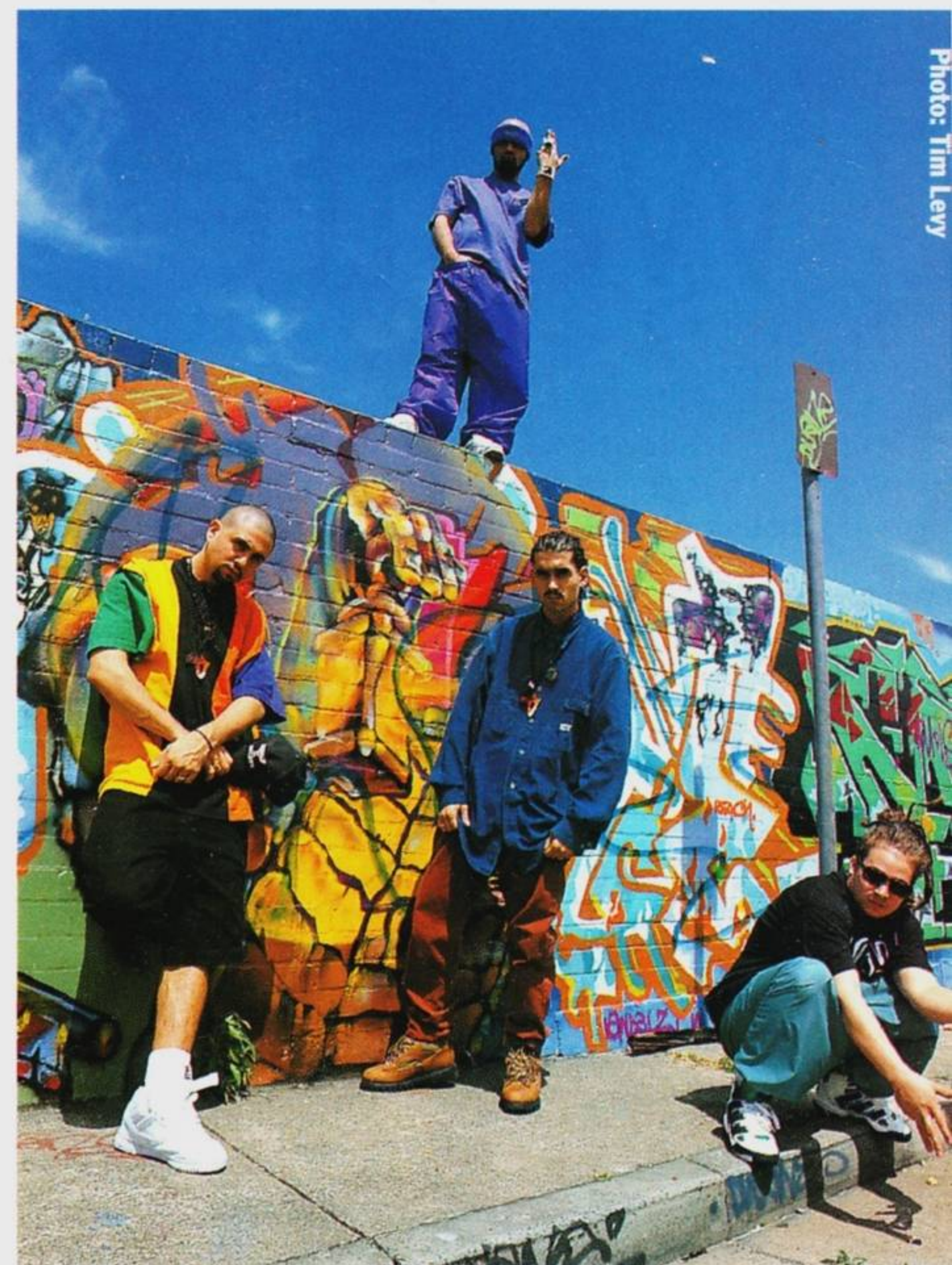


Photo: Tim Levy

Young Black Teenagers In Australia and Playing Games

They're on sale back home, and he's already started saving.

The biggest games freak of them all was Kamron (who you may have seen in the movie *House Party II* - he played Kid's funky college roommate). Kamron is the perfect HYPER reader. A self confessed game junkie, he's got a Super Nintendo and a Genesis (Mega Drive) at home, and he obviously missed them, because we couldn't get rid of him. After we finished the photo shoot and the other guys went back to the hotel, Kamron came back to the HYPER pad

with us just to play *Joe Montana's NFL Football* on the Mega CD. Once he got the hang of it he was good too, taking Dallas (his favourite team) to victory over Miami, 37-7.

But, with the day coming to an end, Kamron had to leave us - after all, he had a show to do the next night. The HYPER crew were there though and YBT went off. Their current album, *Dead Endz Kidz Doin Life Time Bidz* is one of the best rap albums we've heard for years. Support your fellow gamers - go out and buy it!



the new wonder-console are rumoured to be underway, including *Virtua Fighters* and *Sonic the Arcade Game*!

Is the Mega CD dead?

With Sega of Japan's focus firmly on the Saturn, what's to become of the Mega CD? Rumour (supposedly from within Sega of Japan) has it that software development for the Mega CD has come

to a halt and that in-house development proposals for Mega CD games are no longer accepted! All their energies are being channelled into Saturn development. Yep, you heard right. Once the current crop of games (around 10) are coded, that's it for the Mega CD from Sega of Japan.

Where does that leave those of you who shelled out big bucks for the Mega CD?

Crying in a dark corner of your bedroom I suppose. But take heart - there's still third party developers out there and Sega of America are still enamoured with the machine. Oh, and it is only a rumour.

on the bandwagon

Meanwhile, Sony of Japan is planning to join the Sega-Nintendo-Atari-3DO fray with a new CD-based system due at by

the end of 1994 or mid-'95.

Nobody really knows what they've got planned, but it should be a 32-bit RISC system able to process 3-D software with rotation and scaling built in, and "graphics processing capabilities on par with workstations".

That's according to Sony and its subsidiary, Sony Music Entertainment Japan anyway. They're forming the Sony Computer

Entertainment Company to release the system after Nintendo dropped their joint Play Station/SNES venture.

"It will go beyond the 64-bit class systems under development by Nintendo and Sega," boasts Sony, who are apparently doing deals with the best 3DO licensees for software development. Whew. Next please...

OzCon #3

Wanted Sega Masters

So you've been hanging around the house all day, glued to the chair in front of the telly with a control pad in one hand and a packet of chips in the other, wondering how on earth a person of your obvious talents can land a job in the games industry, have you? It's a tough nut to crack - but not impossible, just look at the shambling individuals that make up the HYPER crew. Well, here's the foot in the door you've been waiting for: Sega are on the lookout for the "Ultimate Sega Masters".

Yep, they're actually willing to pay you to play games - providing you're willing and able to communicate your awesome knowledge of all things Sega to

callers on the Sega Hotline. To be in the running you *must*:

- » Be over 17 years of age
- » Have an extensive knowledge of Sega products and games
- » Be computer literate (real computers - the ones with keyboards!)
- » Have good oral and written communication skills

And remember that Sega's HQ is in Mascot, NSW, so you'll have to be able to get there too!

Send your resume, with a list of the games you've played and finished, to the ever-lovely

Karen Collins
Sega Ozisoft
Locked Bag 7
Rosebery NSW 2018.

We know there's a lot of comic fans out there - you keep bombarding us with letters and artwork. So you should all be happy to know that OzCon III, Australia's biggest and best Comic Book Convention (and successor to the highly successful OzCons I and II) is just around the corner.

OzCon features comic creators, dealers, merchandise, and thousands of crazed fans all under one roof - and it's a pretty luxurious roof too,

because it's at the Sydney Hilton Hotel.

Here's your chance to pick up rare back issues, promotional copies, signed copies, original artwork, or that elusive pair of *Incredible Hulk* underpants you've always wanted.

Of course, all the big overseas publishers will be represented, so Marvel and DC

fans can get all that hero worship out of their systems.

Confirmed special guests include Archie Goodwin (a DC editor famous for his work with *Batman*), Dave Sim (creator of cult comic hero *Cerebus*) and his offside Gerhard (he doesn't have a second name, he's kind of like Iman), and Wolverine - yes, the hairy X-person himself.

But local talent won't be neglected either. The Australian comic industry is growing all the time, and with quality publishers like Issue One and Rat Race, the future looks very healthy.

Cyclone, Aaargh!, Kronos, ARC and Xpress will also be there. Make sure you say hello to Sam Young and John Horvath from Issue One who drew the first two HYPER covers. Ask Sam all about him and Elle McPherson while you're at it.

OzCon III is on at the Sydney Hilton between the 5th and 6th of February. A one day pass will cost you a measly \$15; a two day pass is only \$25. Family passes are available too.

Contact OzCon (ask for the lovely Christine) on (02) 267 1693 for more information.



More Like A Movie...

Ground Zero, Texas is a \$3 million Hollywood production directed by Dwight Little whose film credits include *Halloween 4* and *Home Alone*. But don't go looking for the movie in the cinema - you'll have to own a Mega CD to see this sci-fi action flick. While *Night Trap*, *Sewer Shark* and *Return to Zork* have all used live actors and location shoots, *Ground Zero, Texas* is the first game to use full-on Hollywood production values and talent - directors, writers, actors and producers.

While it seems to play a bit like *Night Trap*, in that you control cameras hidden

around a small Texas border town and have to scan between them to find enemies, it also looks far more interactive. An alien race, the Reticulans have begun to infiltrate the town as the first step in a full-scale invasion of Earth. You are an undercover agent sent in to save the world!

There are four Battlecams set up in town, each armed with a state-of-the-art particle beam disruptor with which to stun the aliens. When you identify them, crosshairs will come up and you'll have to target and shoot the enemy within a short time frame, otherwise they'll escape, abduct humans and the plot will change for the worse. If you subdue all the aliens then you can activate a remote camera so you can search the town for the alien's weapons. If and when you find them, there is safe with an ingenious puzzle lock. To open

this you need to piece together clues you would have picked up from the stunned Reticulans. Once you do this though, the Reticulan storm-troopers will find out and from here on in it's a full-scale shoot 'em up, with the aliens exploding in spectacular green goo when you hit them.

Ground Zero looks very promising indeed, and while the Mega CDs grainy video is a constant downer, this looks set to be the first interactive movie for the Sega system. It will be released in Australia in late February so we'll have a full review for you next issue.



WINNERS ARE GRINNERS



After almost three months, the sackloads of reader's surveys from our first issue have finally stopped coming in and we've had time to read them all and take in the comments (well, some of them anyway). To all those who were confused at the lack of space to fill in your address, and didn't tell us - bad luck, you just failed our intelligence test (it sounds better than saying we forgot to leave room) and there's no way we can give you the prize.

Luckily 98% of HYPER readers are highly intelligent (we knew you would be), and included all their details. One of those people was **Ken Baylis, from Sunnybank Hills in Queensland,** and he was the one drawn to win the **Sony entertainment system worth \$700** Onya Ken!

But there were also 10 Suede CDs and 10 Pearl Jam CDs to give away, and these tasty discs were won by:



Pearl Jam

R. Kiseljev, Mt Druitt NSW
Evan Pearce, Hallett Cove SA
Jeremy Francis, Hawthorndene SA
Neil Francis, Wanneroo WA
Tim Ward, North Bondi, NSW
Matthew Brooks, Maryborough, VIC
Mrs C. Balkin, Boronia Heights QLD
Craig Jensen, Greenway ACT
Michael Voulgaropoulos, Redfern NSW
Ellie Leiters, Howard Springs NT



Suede

Chris McMahon, Eungai Creek NSW
Russell Rohde, Bribie Island, QLD
Aaron Kirsh, Toronto NSW
Dave Heslin, Nth Rockhampton QLD
Kevin Desa, Wantirna South VIC
Andrew Quay, Farrer ACT
Amanda Garvey, Cairns QLD
Joe Mettam, Wulagi NT
M. Rimmer, Albany, WA
Michelle Tate, The Channon NSW




**TOP RATED US ARCADE
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II

AKkaim

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Super Street Fighter 2 Mortal Kombat 2

The Blood's Back and it's Redder than Ever!

Mortal Kombat isn't the only hot fighting game to get a sequel. The best fighting game in the world has spawned another spin-off in *Super Streetfighter 2 - The New Challengers*. If you haven't seen it or played it already, you're not missing out on too much - it definitely isn't Streetfighter 3. It's basically just a tarted-up version of the old favourite with four new characters to play with.

There's a new female fighter, Cammy who represents England. Her best special move is a "spiral arrow" which is very similar to Dhalsim's "spear attack". The giant Thunder Hawk hails from Mexico, and is particularly brutal with his "Tomahawk Buster", as well as a "Condor Dive" and the very tricky "Mexican Typhoon." Fei Long from Hong Kong is a very tough character with his burning special move, the "Shien Kyaku". And while Dee Jay, the kick boxer from Jamaica probably isn't the most power-

ful character, he's the favourite of the HYPER office because he's cool and smiles alot (there's too much hostility in fighting games, don't you think?). His special moves include the "air slasher" and the excellent "machine gun uppercut".

All the old favourites are back and have been given a bit of a face lift as well, as have the backgrounds. The backgrounds for the new locations are all stunning, but apart from that there's not much else to tell. There's nothing really new here, and Streetfighter 3 remains a dream for beat 'em up fans the world over. While it's not 100% confirmed, Super Street Fighter should be porting over to the Mega Drive and Super Nintendo,

ooh, I reckon about next Christmas.

Even as we speak, some budding little psychopath is having the time of his life, splashing blood around and ripping out spines in *Mortal Kombat*

2. Yep, perhaps the most eagerly awaited arcade sequel ever hit the streets in early December with a big

splash of the tomato sauce. Midway's seriously disturbed programmers (chiefly Ed Boon and John Tobias) have cranked up the sounds (it's digitally compressed you know), wacked in 7 new characters, and pumped the graphics to extremes.

The plot? Who cares, as long as you get to hit people, right? It's as silly as the first one anyway: Shang Tsung, defeated at the Shaolin Tournament by Liu Kang, flees into the netherworld to face his master, the even uglier Shao Kahn. Together, they lure their adversaries into their mystical realm for the rematch of the year (at least until *Streetfighter III* comes along anyway).

So what's new? There's 12 playable characters, 5 from the original *Mortal Kombat* (Liu Kang, Johnny Cage, Scorpion, Raiden, and Sub-Zero), and 7 new ones. The new characters include Shang Tsung (who seems to have reversed the aging process considerably), The Reptile, a

beefcake warrior called Jax, the deadly Sonya ring-in, Kitana, and a blade-wielding candidate for major dental surgery called Baraka.

The controls remain exactly the same, but there's plenty of new special moves to master and each character now has multiple (yes, MULTIPLE - up to 5) fatalities. As soon as word leaks out we'll let you know. And home versions? Well, no confirmation as yet, but we're willing to bet large sums of money that MK2 will appear on home consoles around Christmas '94.



Game Charts

Hyper's game charts supplied by the Gamesmen

Mega Drive

Aladdin
FIFA International Soccer
John Madden Football '94
Ecco the Dolphin
PGA Tour Golf 2
F1
Mortal Kombat
Rocket Knight Adventures
Flashback
Dick Tracy
Sensible Soccer



SNES

Super NBA Basketball
Mortal Kombat
Streetfighter 2 - Turbo
Jurassic Park
Carl Ripkin Jnr Baseball
Nigel Mansell Championship Racing
Striker
Flashback
WWF Royal Rumble
Batman Returns



PC

Streetfighter 2
IndyCar Racing
Leisure Suit Larry 6
Jurassic Park
Aces Over Europe
Rally Network
Sam & Max Hit the Road
Privateer
Frontier - Elite 2
Strike Commander



Mega CD

Sherlock Holmes 2
Final Fight
Sonic the Hedgehog
Ecco the Dolphin
INXS - Make My Video



HYPER's Feburary Chart Predictions

These hot titles should all be available in February

NBA Jam (SNES/Mega Drive)
Ground Zero, Texas (Mega CD)
Aladdin (SNES)
Mechwarrior (SNES)
Eternal Champions (Mega Drive)
Stimp's Invention (Mega Drive)
Mechwarrior 2 (PC)
Microcosm (Mega CD)
Yoshi's Cookie (SNES)
F117 Night Storm (Mega Drive)
Mutant League Hockey (Mega Drive)
Aero the Acrobat (SNES)
Sim City 2000 (PC)
Alone in the Dark 2 (PC)
Castlevania - New Generation (Mega Drive)



THE BEAT FROM THE DANCE DEPARTMENT '93

'High - A Dance Compilation'

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

'Texture' - Vision Four 5

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

'Fanatical' - South End

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

"Universal Hymn" - Boxcar

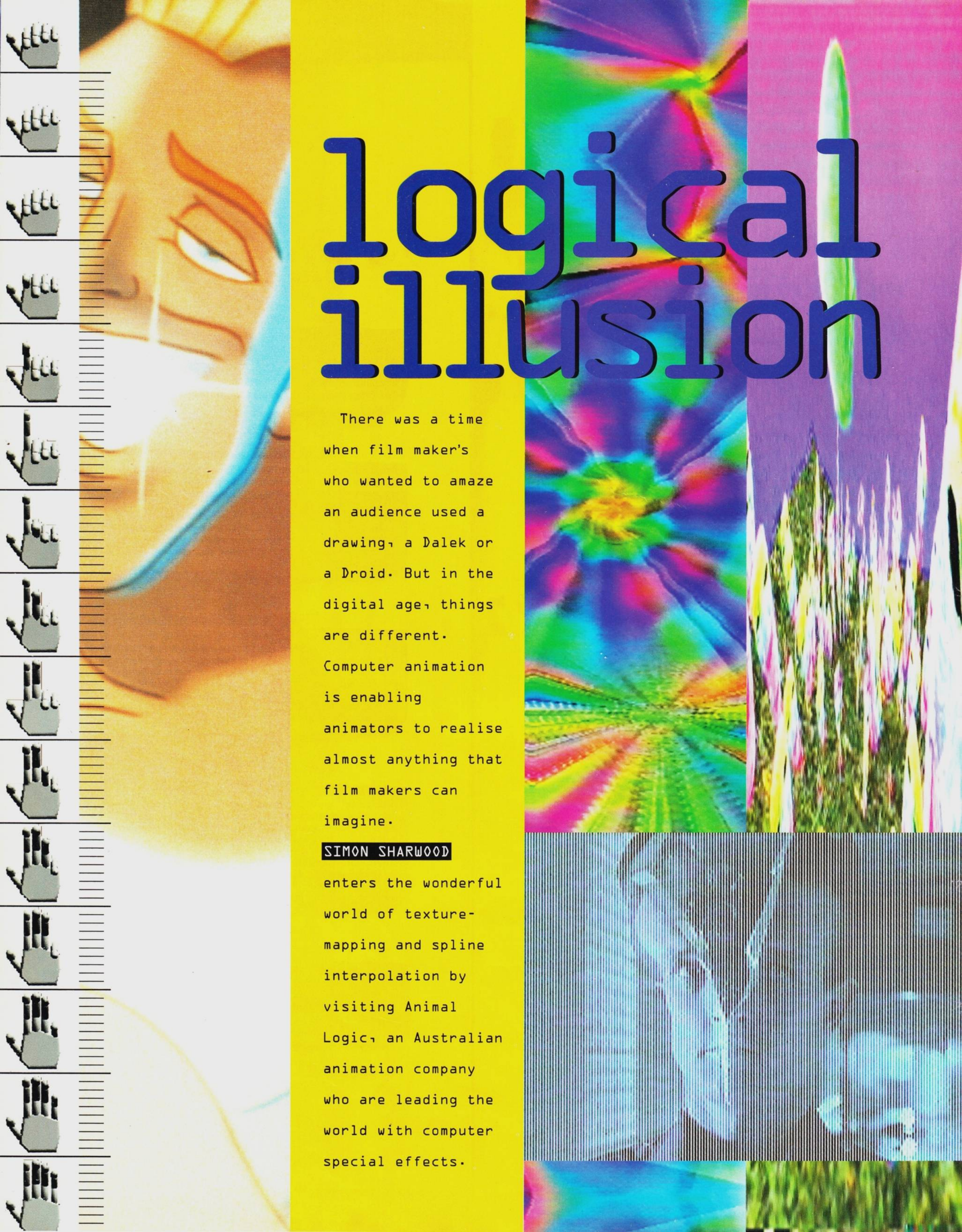
The great new single from the forthcoming album 'Algorhythm'. Four pulsating punchy mixes - two courtesy of top U.K. remixer Justin Robertson (aka Lion Rock) - further proof of the band's international standing with remixers far and wide. Already a club hit in the U.K., the track has also claimed rave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

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

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

LEADING THE REVOLUTIONS





logical illusion

There was a time when film maker's who wanted to amaze an audience used a drawing, a Dalek or a Droid. But in the digital age, things are different. Computer animation is enabling animators to realise almost anything that film makers can imagine.

SIMON SHARWOOD

enters the wonderful world of texture-mapping and spline interpolation by visiting Animal Logic, an Australian animation company who are leading the world with computer special effects.



The worlds of film-making and animation have certainly undergone radical change over the last ten years. Where *Star Wars* featured models, *Terminator 2* featured morphs, and the *Flintstones'* cute Dino has been eaten alive by *Jurassic Park's* amazing Velociraptors. But now with a big film budget behind them, the Bedrock kids are getting their own back, with the upcoming *Flintstones* movie featuring the same animation team and software engine that were behind the *Jurassic* monsters.

Computer animation is now the Hollywood standard for effects, and hot new animation technologies - and the staff who devise and operate them - are Tinseltown's most fought over commodities. Digital effects are now sometimes the main reason to see movies, *The Lawnmower Man* being the most obvious case-in-point. But the technology and the time the animation takes does not come cheap. Indeed, James Cameron (the director of *Aliens*, *The Abyss* and *Terminator 1 & 2*) spent U.S. \$10 million on computers alone for *T2*, and Spielberg is rumoured to have shelled out almost double that to create *Jurassic Park's* dinosaurs. A new film version of *Casper the Friendly Ghost* will employ around 50 ani-

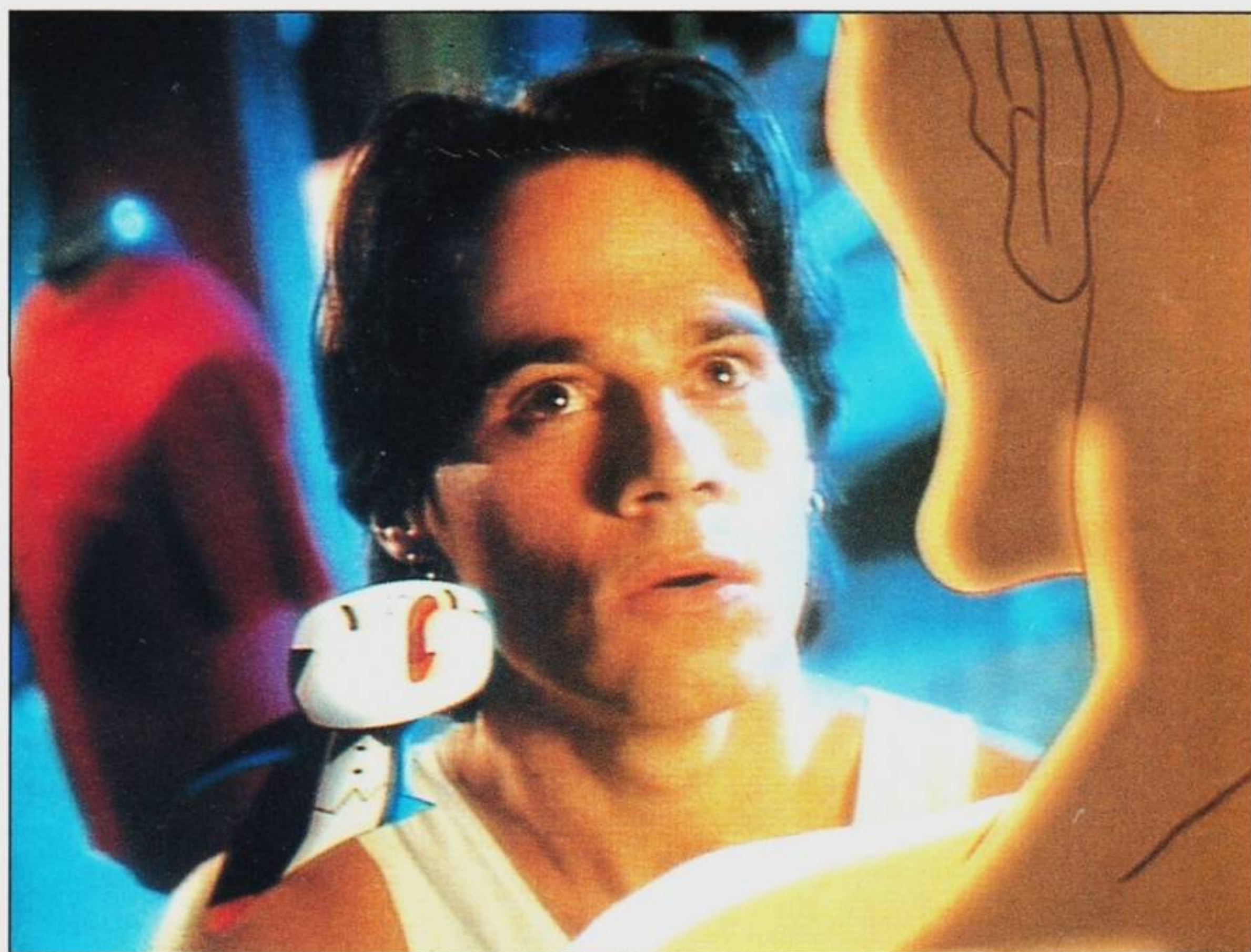
maters and has an animation budget of at least US. \$20 Million.

Yet computer animation is not, according to Chris Godfrey, the most essential ingredient in film making. Godfrey, the Director of Animation at Sydney's Animal Logic, asserts that "A good concept beats anything. Whether we can enhance the concept is another thing altogether."

And Godfrey should know. Animal Logic is a world leader in the field, while he has been personally responsible for the creation of work such as ABC TV's three tiered station IDs that are still impressive even after the hundredth viewing.

Some of Animal Logic's other work has probably entered your life without you ever having noticed it, as the company is responsible for some of Australia's most striking commercials, including Paul Mercurio's Bonds' ads, Schick's Square Head, Mazda's impressive Eunos ads and 7 Up's Fido Dido spots. They also did the titles for Channel 7's *Tonight Live* and Channel 9's *Wide World of Sports*.

Yet Godfrey feels that the techniques which his company uses to produce their work are not outstandingly complex, and that the processes used are essentially just more advanced versions of those used on machines such as



the Commodore Amiga. And as he explains, through the agency of the SoftImage 3D animation package that Animal Logic run on their fridge sized, million dollar Silicon Graphics "Predator", the initial steps involved in creating animation are fairly simple.

To begin, Godfrey selects one of the package's many stored shapes, in this case a doughnut, and it appears on the screen as a wire frame. With another point and click of the mouse, he colours it grey and sets it rotating over a receding matrix.

Starting again, Chris makes an odd looking potato shaped object, and with a few mouse clicks it too suddenly appears in wire frame 3D, as well as in another section of his screen, this one coloured grey and shining on it's corners. Creating other shapes is just as easy and all can be altered in any way simply by dragging at any one of the lines of the wire frame.

But creating realistic looking objects takes greater effort. One of Animal Logic's more recent jobs, a Spanish advertisement for Milky Bars, features a grotesque chess set of dragons, gargoyles and other monsters coming to animated life. Creating images of such complexity and making them move smoothly is far more difficult.

Doing so requires the animator to start with a basic shape, and contort and join it with others until the desired image is created. In the case of the dragon, Animal Logic's animators worked with the actual chess piece itself on their desk, and fiddled with the image until it was perfect.

This is a very time consuming process, and there are no short cuts; in the words of



Chris Godfrey, the only way to do it is "to keep on trying until you get it right." Once the image to be used has been perfectly created and plotted it must be animated and told where to go and how to behave.

Doing so requires a different approach for each job. Animal Logic's Berocca advertisement, in which a power cord is seen to rise from a glass of liquid, required the creation of four different images, each further from the liquid than the other. SoftImage then shifts the image from each position to the next, while an operation called a "spline interpolation" brought about the image's final horizontal turn.

The creation of effects such as morphing happens at this stage too, and to do this Animal Logic use their own software, a package known as Eddie.

Eddie, which is rapidly becoming a world standard, is capable of numerous effects, and also of layering and other tasks usually done with a video editing suite. And if Eddie cannot handle the task, AL's 4 C++ programmers will create new software to do so, a research and development facility unmatched in Australia.

Once animated, the image then needs to be given it's various attributes, such as colour and texture. Again, this is done in the software, with various colours and textures easily imported to the system from any source. Putting the image in it's correct visual context also takes place at this stage, with animators going through the complex process of determining in which ways light should reflect off the image, and what this will do to the colour of the animated object.

The finished product, once plotted, animated and given it's attributes can then be rendered and put into a useful form such as film. This is done by a device known as a Solitaire film recorder, which exposes film in accordance with instructions delivered by AL's computers, at the rate of about two

frames a minute, making this the slowest part of the process, and one which is often left to be done overnight.

Alternatively, the finished animation can be left in its digital form, and transferred directly to either of AL's Quantel editing suites, Harry and Henry. There, additional effects can be added, and layering of various digital components takes place.

The finished film can then be put to any number of uses. If the project is one involving animation only, the job is over, save for the transfer of the film to video. But if the animated sequence is to be included in another film, the fun has only just begun, as the computerised footage must then be incorporated into the other footage, a process known as compositing.

Doing this, especially when live action footage is to be used, requires extremely careful long range planning, as the crew shooting the live action footage must do so twice.

Initially, the actors use either props or other actors, which will later be replaced by the animation. In Animal Logic's Bond's advertisements, Paul Mercurio danced with other performers. In other such situations, usually those in which actors are required to interact with animated characters, actors use props. The film crew will then film exactly the same scenes again, this time without any of the actors. It is at this stage, with the actors' performances and the extra background footage complete, that Animal Logic step in and begin to design and devise the film's animated component.

Firstly, the unwanted part of the live action film is eliminated using a device known as a RotoScope, which superimposes the "blank" parts of the background film over the top of that featuring the actors. (The Rotoscoping technique has also been used with great success in video games like Flashback). The resulting film is then transferred from film to digital video, a form in



which it can then be manipulated by Animal Logic's editing suites.

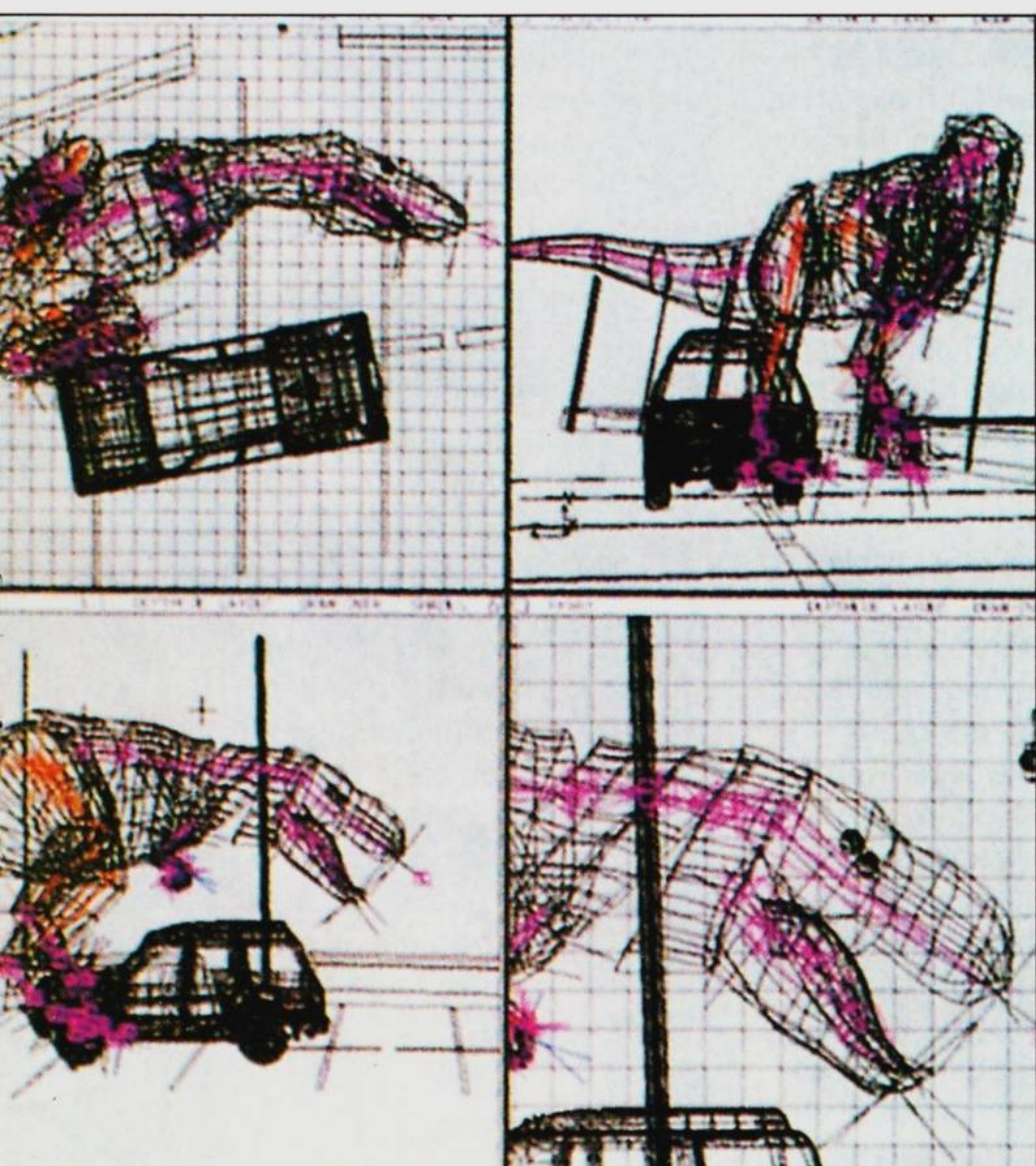
The animated component of the film is then inserted, but the fun hasn't finished yet, as the animated portion is not necessarily complete. Indeed, it is not uncommon for different parts of the animation to have been done separately, and these must be layered into the final product with great care.

And the final cost of this process? Anything between \$10 000 and \$350 000, depending on the complexity of the work.

It's a cost that's justified not only by the quality of the work but by the need to constantly update the equipment that produces it; the computers used to produce the ABC's logo are fifty times slower than those Animal Logic use today, and are so outdated they have been donated to Sydney's Powerhouse Museum at the venerable age of ten. And there's also the fact that the process takes time: Industrial Light and Magic started work on *Jurassic Park* more than eighteen months before the film's release, and Animal Logic aim to produce about ten seconds of work a day, and feel that even that is pushing it.

But the company's perennially growing clientele, in concert with the fact that experienced animators are nigh on impossible to come by, means that AL are just about run off their feet making even that little work. It's a situation which, according to Chris Godfrey, makes a basic grounding in both traditional and computer animation most useful skills to have.

He's always got more work coming in, and feels that where his company leads, others will follow. So if you can dream it, sit down, grasp your mouse firmly, and learn to start doing it.



Silicon Graphics

Computer animators worldwide depend on the brain burning speed and awesome power of hardware that is made by California company Silicon Graphics, the undisputed world leader in the field. Nintendo like them so much they are going into partnership to create the much-hyped "Project Reality" 64-bit wonder machine, which isn't due for a couple of years but has already got gamers wetting themselves in anticipation.

Why? Well just in case you haven't figured it out, Silicon Graphics specialise in graphics, and do them at levels of speed and sophistication that make a SNES or Mega Drive look about as sophisticated as an electric can opener. Even their smallest, wimpiest machine whips along at 100 Megahertz, 15 times faster than any console and twice as fast as any Amiga, Mac or PC. If even that ain't fast enough and you lust after serious speed and power, their fridge sized Onyx series gets up to 150 Mhz while running up to 24 CPU's in parallel, and that's before SG plug in their "Reality Engine" specialised graphics hardware.

The Onyx also services at least 64 meg of memory, although should you desire it to do so it will comfortably provide you with access to 16 gigabytes, which is pants-wetting stuff.

All of which begs the question: What can you do with such incredibly hot machines? Asking what you can't do is probably the better question, although Silicon Graphics gear is most commonly used in the production of images, be that for film, video, print or, with Nintendo's involvement,

games. They are also used in industrial design, molecular graphics, virtual reality research and anywhere else you may need to draw hugely complicated stuff in one hell of a hurry.

But can you play with one?

Not unless you're rather wealthy. The Onyx series will cost you so close to half a million dollars that you won't need to worry about counting your change, and the Indigo series will cost you tens of thousands of dollars.

Yet intending users should not be dismayed by the bogus enormity of these figures, as Silicon Graphics' newest baby, the Indy, is more reasonably priced.

Selling for around \$8000, the Indy maintains the speeds of SG's other machines and provides a wealth of features for the home and business user, including a RISC CPU (as used by 3D0), 16 meg of memory, a nifty point and click user interface, Mac and Windows emulation and a floptical disk drive capable of handling both magnetic and 20 meg optical disks.

It even comes with a video camera, which plugs straight in and will put a real time full motion picture of yourself on the screen as you sit in front of it, making it a multimedia platform that has Apple quaking in its boots and Commodore wondering how to offload about a million Amigas.

But despite the Indy's impressive specs, it suffers from one glaring and enormous problem; at the time of writing, not a single game has been released to take advantage of its immense powers, a sad and sorry waste indeed.



LANIER

THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS

It's taken just 12 years for Jaron

Lanier to kickstart the technology that may well redefine human interaction in the next century. At the same time he's built and lost the business he started to bring virtual reality to the masses and executed the first ever musical performance in VR.

MARCUS LEADLEY taps in on his phone line for a journey into our future.

"The great thing about virtual reality is that it's a way to be in another place with other people where anything is possible," says Lanier. Even though he's probably said these very words a thousand times, his excitement fills the little world inside my telephone. "It's like being able to have a dream that people can share at the same time."

While the appearance of a virtual world may have more in common with dreamscape than anything else, that's where the similarity ends. Few people control their dream. In VR you call the shots. However, Lanier believes we'll have to get over the novelty aspect of VR before we really see its full potential. And signs that the VR circus is already here (its full impact will be felt by Americans long before it rocks us) can be found in the new generation of arcade

games. A cyberspace Star Trek adventure has already been trialed and VR theatres in the US and Japan are probably less than a year away. Home games will start to become available at roughly the same time and while their cost may initially mean a slow start, they will supersede all other game forms before we know it.

Not surprisingly every company from Sega to Sony is throwing major investment dollars into product development. Following an initial wave of 'virtual hysteria' that these games will generate (along with profits large enough to accelerate the pace of development), a new face of VR will start to emerge around the turn of the century. For the next six years we'll be exploring the worlds of others - from there on in we'll be building our own.

"In order to share the dream you have to have a way to make up what's inside that virtual world," says Lanier. "If you can only experience things that others have created you really have no freedom. To interact, people have to be able to program the computer and sculpt the environment they're in, while they're in it. If the tools are very good everyone will be able to use them - after all, everybody learns to read and write and that's pretty hard. This led me to wonder what programming might look like in the future. I believe it will look a lot like playing a musical instrument - not a physical one, but one in VR. In performance you have to use your sense of intuition and that will become true of programming. There will be these instruments you play that spew out cities and mountain

ranges and all the content of the virtual world. This thought was driving me forward so I built a set of instruments in VR and tried them as a performance - to be particularly nutty about it I did it for the first time in front of an audience. I didn't even do a trial run and the performance worked out great."

Talking with Lanier and realising the full potential of VR requires a large mental leap. Being a musician or becoming Sonic or Mario to play a game from inside is one thing - becoming a cat or a meteor and then exploring a distant star cluster with your friends disguised as an equally bizarre cast of self-defined superheroes is quite another.

"In the first decade when the gadgets are available nothing much is going to happen. The big impact of VR will come when there's a generation of kids who are really fluent in how to make up their own worlds. The availability of the tools is one thing but teaching people to use them is something else. When they grow up they'll have a new form of communication.

"The idea is simple but to imagine it is a real challenge. In the future people will be able to spend time in a world where language and symbols are no longer so important. Words and numbers just refer to the things you can't really do or show. They're just references. In VR you can do and show everything. You can't have this in the physical world because it's so stubborn - you can build or paint »»



but when you've finished your mind is in another place. In VR you can reformulate the world without limitations as you think and feel," says Lanier.

"When will this generation be born? It has to be after the technology's been around for a while so I place it as far as maybe five generations out - three at the earliest. To me that doesn't seem long - one of the problems of the 20th century is that we only think of things right in front of our noses. The fact is that we are connected to each other. We live on through our children and we all have a sense of shared experience," he comments.

The big impact of VR will come when there's a generation of kids who are really fluent in how to make up their own worlds. When they grow up they'll have a new form of communication.

The Life Of Lanier Like Einstein, Lanier's background does not conform to the normal route of a talented youngster into the scientific community. After his mother's death Jaron was bought up by his father in the cultural wasteland of small town New Mexico, where his time was absorbed with music and imaginative science projects. Having dropped out of high school he managed to ease himself into the local university's maths department with a grant from the National Science Foundation to study the necessity for notation in mathematics. He was 15 and obsessed with the idea that interactive computer graphics could replace the clumsy symbols mathematicians have used for thousands of years.

Having found that programming was as limiting as the symbols he was trying to replace, Lanier set out to design an alternative, visual method for communicating with computers. He set up a workshop with the money he made from writing an Atari game called Moon Dust. The ground breaking work earned him a cover story in Scientific American and he made up a company name (VPL Inc) for credibility. Soon people were calling him with offers of investment and without any pre-planning Lanier

pulled together a group of friends to build a system to demonstrate the language. However investors were more interested in the glove and the TV headset Lanier's team designed to aid their work than they were in his new language.

In coming years VPL grew into the first producer of commercial VR systems and despite several confrontations with NASA, who had also designed but never registered a set of VR goggles, the company succeeded in securing patents for VR equipment. Had it not been for a certain amount of mismanagement, like the staking of these patents in loan negotiations and

moving from development into production, the company would be around today. As it was VPL went bankrupt and the patents fell to the investor - the French electronics giant Thomson-CSF.

As in the past when knockbacks or failures have presented themselves, Lanier returned to his career in music. He's currently completing an album of acoustic music and a full length 'virtual music' composition. He's also been using his skills in VR on a little freelance work - designing a surgical simulator for gall bladder operations. One of these days he'll finish his book on the social implications of VR.

Quite what comes next we can only guess at - and that's one of the reasons why 'Jaron watchers' exist.

Virtual fashion Maybe one day we'll be able to enter virtual reality simply by walking into a room - until then the explorer needs the appropriate attire. Commercial full body suits will come, but until then gloves and goggles, now called eyephones, are required. Lanier pioneered both.

"VR is a world where anything can happen - so you have to come up with an interface that's as general as possible," he says. "This

takes the form of clothing that directly covers your body. A glove gives you the same degree of dexterity as a human hand so you can throw a ball or play an instrument.

VPL data gloves (which sense motion via fibre optic cables) originally cost a cool US \$8,800. Not that long ago Mattel introduced its own Power Glove for use with Nintendo systems with roughly similar specs for US\$29. An incredibly successful aid, it's unceremonious dumping as a product line is one of the real mysteries of the new VR industry. No doubt others will take up the gauntlet...

Eyephones have small visual displays which work like miniature but very sophisticated TVs. For a start they have to provide a convincing 3D image, preferably in colour, that makes you believe you're really some where other than you living room. However the eyephone is much more than a visual aid. Sensors in the set register your movements enabling you to move around. Then there are speakers which allow you to hear 'virtual' sounds - and don't forget the sensors that monitor your face - enabling your virtual partners to see you smile.

At the current level of technology the world you enter will have been constructed using a commercial graphics program (like Swivel 3D for Mac). Having created this representation the information is loaded into two suitcase-sized Silicon Graphic computers - one for each eye. All it

takes is imagination, advanced programming knowledge, a couple of hours and a *great deal of money*.

Virtual reality vs reality

As with most new technologies, especially those that imply major social change, some commentators have voiced fears such as VR addiction, mind control and even VR retirement homes where the elderly live out there last years in minimal surroundings and virtual dreams. Lanier believes that if people actually understood the technology such fears would evaporate.

"Virtual Reality is pretty good news for reality. VR is intrinsically a lower quality place than the physical world. A lot of people now use VR in order to experience the moment when they leave it. It creates a sense of super detail and sensuality in the physical world - something we are so used to we normally miss it. In comparison to VR the real world is much more wonderful. I don't believe people will ever get trapped in virtual reality. The thing is it's not a withdrawal. People don't go in alone; they go to meet other people. If you look at the pattern of use by kids on computer networks now they don't just sit there in isolation - they get together for games and stuff. VR is a new way to share with others - not a retreat."



Right: Two VR headsets. The first produced by NASA, the second by the company Jaron Lanier founded, VPL.

FLASHBACK



BORED OF WAITING?
WELL, FINALLY THE GAME IS ON SNES!
FLASHBACK...YOU WON'T BELIEVE YOUR EYES.



Available from all leading video game outlets
For Hints 'n' Tips on Flashback and information about the latest video games releases from
Sony Electronic Publishing, ring **0055 33135** *70¢ per minute. If under 18, parents OK required.

PREVIEW»





Sonic

All but the most fanatical Sega gamers will have probably overdosed on the antics of the spiny blue one by now, with both *Sonic Spinball* and *Sonic CD* hitting the shelves a month ago. But hold on to your tails and hype yourself up once more because *Sonic 3* looks set to be the biggest and baddest adventure the hedgehog superstar has ever undertaken.

Let's be honest here. The HYPER crew are hardcore gamers, but we're also the cynical, world-weary types and very few titles raise our interests (or our voices) past a moderate enjoyment level. However, *Sonic 3* had the entire office crowded around the screen making fools of themselves, right from the beginning of the mightily impressive intro. And we hardly got any sleep the first night we had it in our grubby little hands.

We're not going to bother relating the new story or describing the many different levels here. Suffice it to say that *Sonic 3* is about as close to perfection as a 16-bit platform game can get. The graphical detail is astonishing, the levels are long and challenging, and the gameplay is everything we've come to expect with Sonic, plus that little bit more. And the extra good news (for some of you) is that *Sonic 3* is quite a deal harder than the first two Mega Drive adventures, so there's no way that you'll be finished this one in the first few hours of playing it.

Tails is back to keep our hero company again, and the split-screen two-player mode also returns, this time without the annoying flickering and slowdown. Sonic also has some very groovy new power-ups, including flame power (which turns Sonic into a fireball), an invincible air bubble and a lightning strike which will attract all nearby rings. As always, the bonus stages are very special, and can also get very difficult.

We were dying to review the whole thing, but as its release is nearly three months away we thought we'd wait and let you drool over some of the gorgeous graphics instead. Please don't get the magazine too wet.



Eternal Champions

MEGA DRIVE

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

You'd think we'd all be sick of one-on-one fighting games by now, wouldn't you? I mean, no one can top *Streetfighter II* can they? Well, Sega think they can. They're billing their 24 meg *Eternal Champions* as the fighting game to end all fighting games (yeah, yeah - we've heard it all before) and if the number of options are anything to go by, they might be right. There's nine playable characters, three training modes, a deadly Battle Room full of mines, grenades, buzzsaws and a host of other obstacles (18 in all!), a practice mode (where you select your enemy, the background stage, speed and skill level) and a tournament mode too. There's even three instant

replay modes - manual, auto or highlights!

Each fighter has around seven special moves plus an insult to drain the opponent's "inner strength" (which appears as a Yin/Yang symbol next to their energy bar). All moves require a certain amount of inner strength, so the insult move can come in very handy. But if all that hippie-type stuff bothers you, you can always turn the inner strength requirement off.

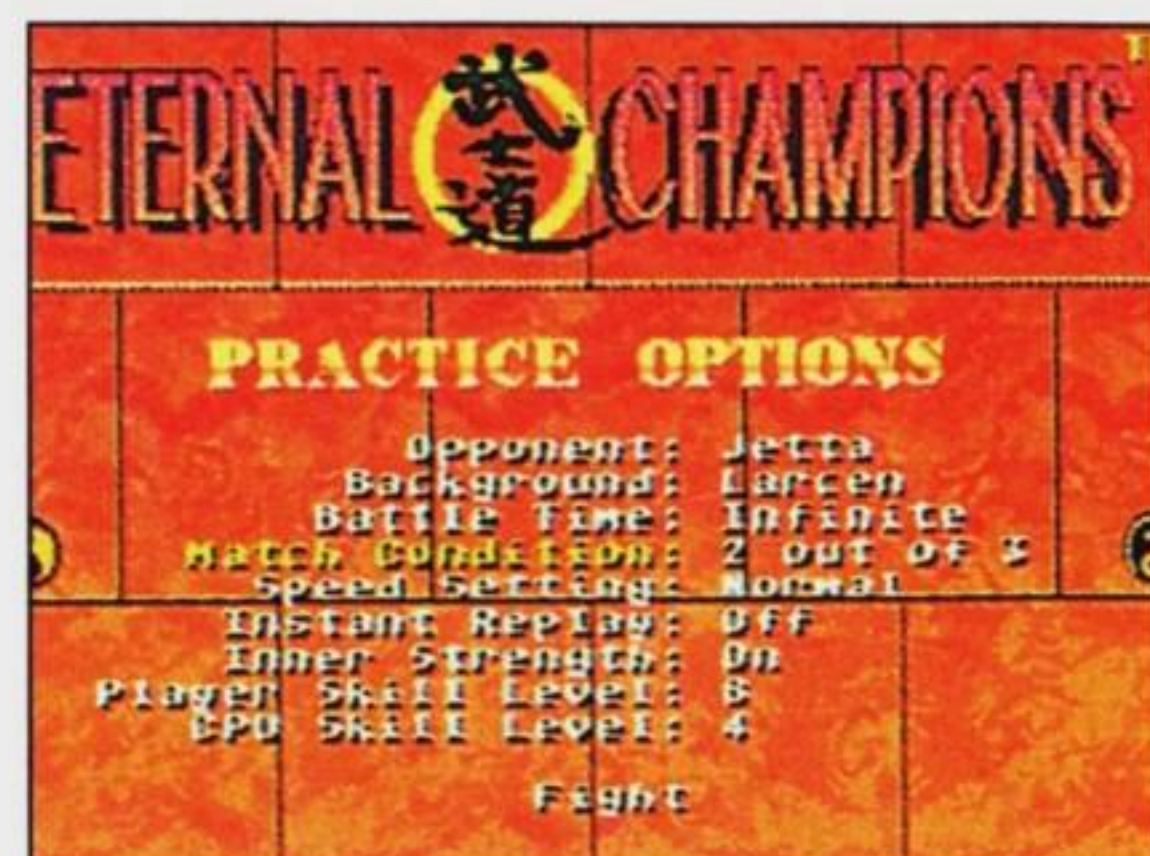
To get the most out of *Eternal Champions* you'll need a 6-button control pad - without it, you'll have to

toggle between punch and kick with the start button, just like *Streetfighter II SCE*. It's also fully compatible with Sega's new Activator control system, but if you're sane and stick with a control pad, you'll have to perfect charging techniques - all special moves are either charge moves (back or down) or button combinations (like A+B+C).

As for the fighters, they all look interesting enough and they're supposedly the greatest fighters of history - from 699 BC to 2345 AD. They've been drawn together in the year 2225 by the Eternal Champion,

a God-like entity responsible for maintaining the cosmic balance between good and evil. When it finds itself dying (not very eternal really), the tournament begins to find a worthy successor. If you can defeat all 8 characters, you win the right to challenge the Eternal Champion.

It sounds pretty involved, huh? Trust us, it is. By the time we got our hands on a copy it was too late to review it, but let's just say it looks very promising. It'll be on the shelves soon but don't buy it until you read the full HYPER review next issue!



Inspector Gadget

SNES

Available: May
Category: Platformer
Players: 1
Publisher: Hudson Soft

Go go Gadget game! SNES owners could soon be battling Doctor Claw in the role of the world's clumsiest bionic cop, Inspector Gadget. Dr Claw's M.A.D. organisation has kidnapped Gadget's niece, Penny, and it's up to the Inspector to free her. Fans of the TV show will know a scenario like this means a whole lot of bumbling from Gadget, with Penny and Brain, her dog, coming to the rescue at the last minute.

Just how the programmers propose to capture Gadget's utter incompetence remains to be seen, but they seem to have done a fairly decent job of portraying his... well, his gadgets.

He performs attacks with his limbs-on-springs and the punching glove in his hat. There are also a few extra gadgets to find, like a plunger for climbing walls and an extra-long hand.

The platform-style action portrays all the characters from the show, with plenty of vicious M.A.D. henchmen running around to block Gadget's progress.

If you're hoping at long last to find out who Dr Claw really is, prepare for disappointment. But if you're a Gadget freak and this sounds like your cup of whatever... always remember *never* to ride in a car without wearing a seat belt and you'll still be around to read the HYPER review when we get the game.



Dungeon Master II: Skull Deep

PC/MEGA CD

Available: May
Category: RPG
Players: 1
Publisher: Interplay

Way back when the Amiga 500 and Atari ST-FM were the ultimate in gaming technology, a Californian company called FTL Games released *Dungeon Master*, the fantasy RPG game that launched a thousand imitators.

Its first person, hit-you-on-the-nose interface had games reviewers keeling over in shock, gibbering about "The best game I've ever played". Nowadays, after *Captive* and the *Eye of the Beholder* series, *Dungeon Master* is long forgotten and Origin's *Ultima Underworld I & II* rule the RPG roost.

But high up in the San Diego hills, FTL have spent the last two years working on something called *Dungeon Master II: Skullkeep*, with gameplay that may well beat the crap out of anything that's gone before on the PC, the Amiga and the Mega CD.

Screenshots HYPER has seen don't compare graphically to *Underworld*, but FTL President Wayne Holder says that's not the issue: "We made a decision early on to just forget about things like graphics and CDs and that stuff that everyone else is chasing, and just focus on the key issues - the simulation aspects, basically... For example, in our system in *Skullkeep*, a creature is a whole collection of data which is handled through a sort of intelligent scripting program where they all run their own self-contained little programs."

Three quarters of the data for *Skullkeep* is game code - only a quarter is graphics - which is highly unusual for a modern game.

Skullkeep is due, on both PC and Mega CD, in a few months time and FTL have already started work on two follow-ups, *True Identity* and *Secret of the Void*. So they must be confident.

PeleSoccer

MEGA DRIVE/SNES

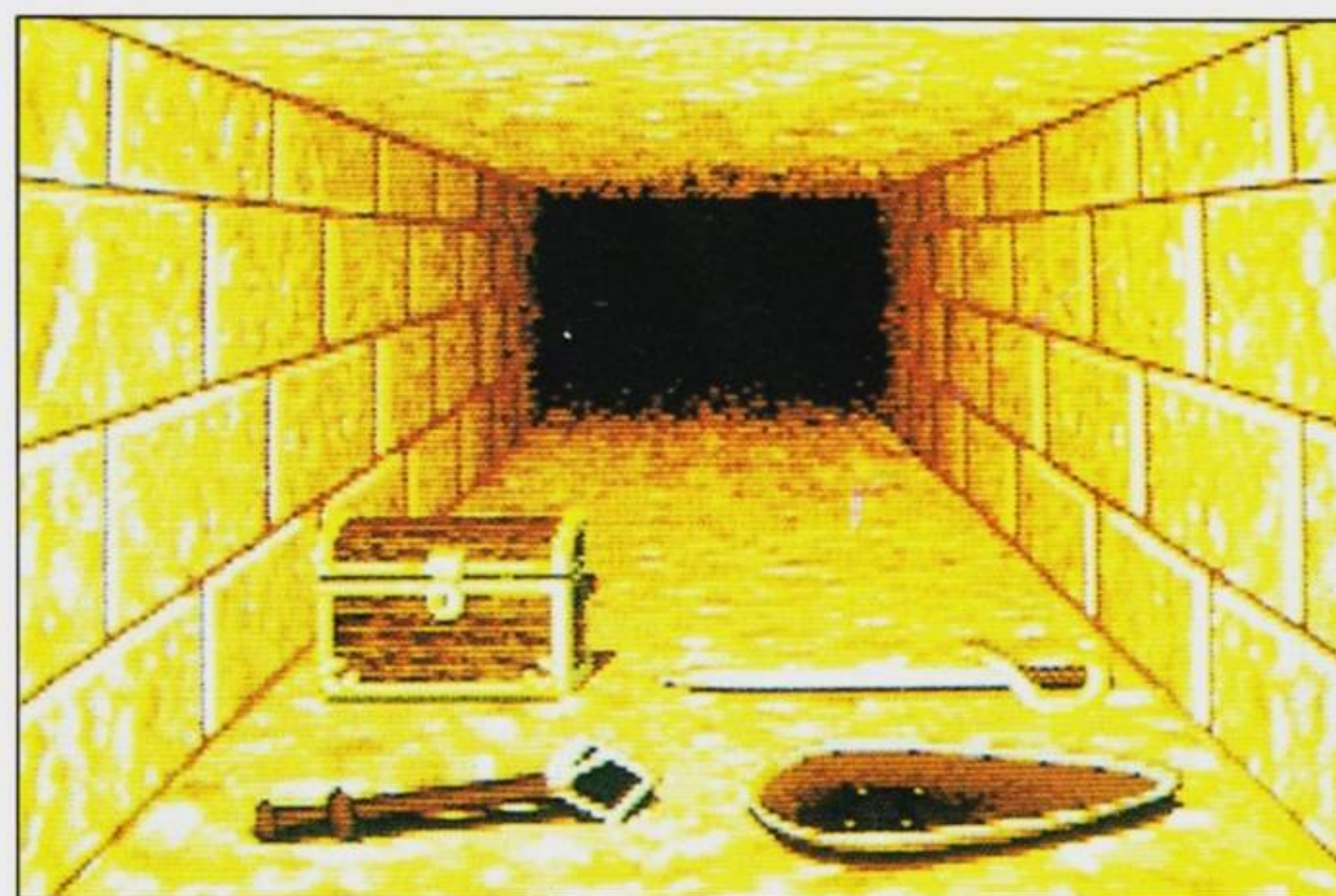
Available: March
Category: Soccer Sim
Players: 1-2
Publisher: Accolade

Well, we've finally got our hands on a copy of the Mega Drive version of Pele

(too late for last issue's Soccer feature, but never mind), and we're not sure what to do with it. Originally we were going to review it, but after playing it and seeing the big "For Preview Only" on the cart label we decided that it couldn't possibly be a completed game. So, rather than scoop the review, we've opted to be fair to the game, and its producers.

We can only hope that what we played was an unfinished version - it really is very smelly as it is. Sure the static screen grabs look OK, but you have to see it move to appreciate how dodgy it is. And the play control is absolutely terrible - the players skid around like chooks with their heads cut off and don't pay much attention to what you want them to do. Accolade's Canadian programming team (Radical Entertainment) have a lot of work to do if they want this to be a hit.

Anyway, take a look at the grabs and keep your fingers crossed. Oh, and we haven't seen the SNES version at all so it could be an entirely different kettle of fish.



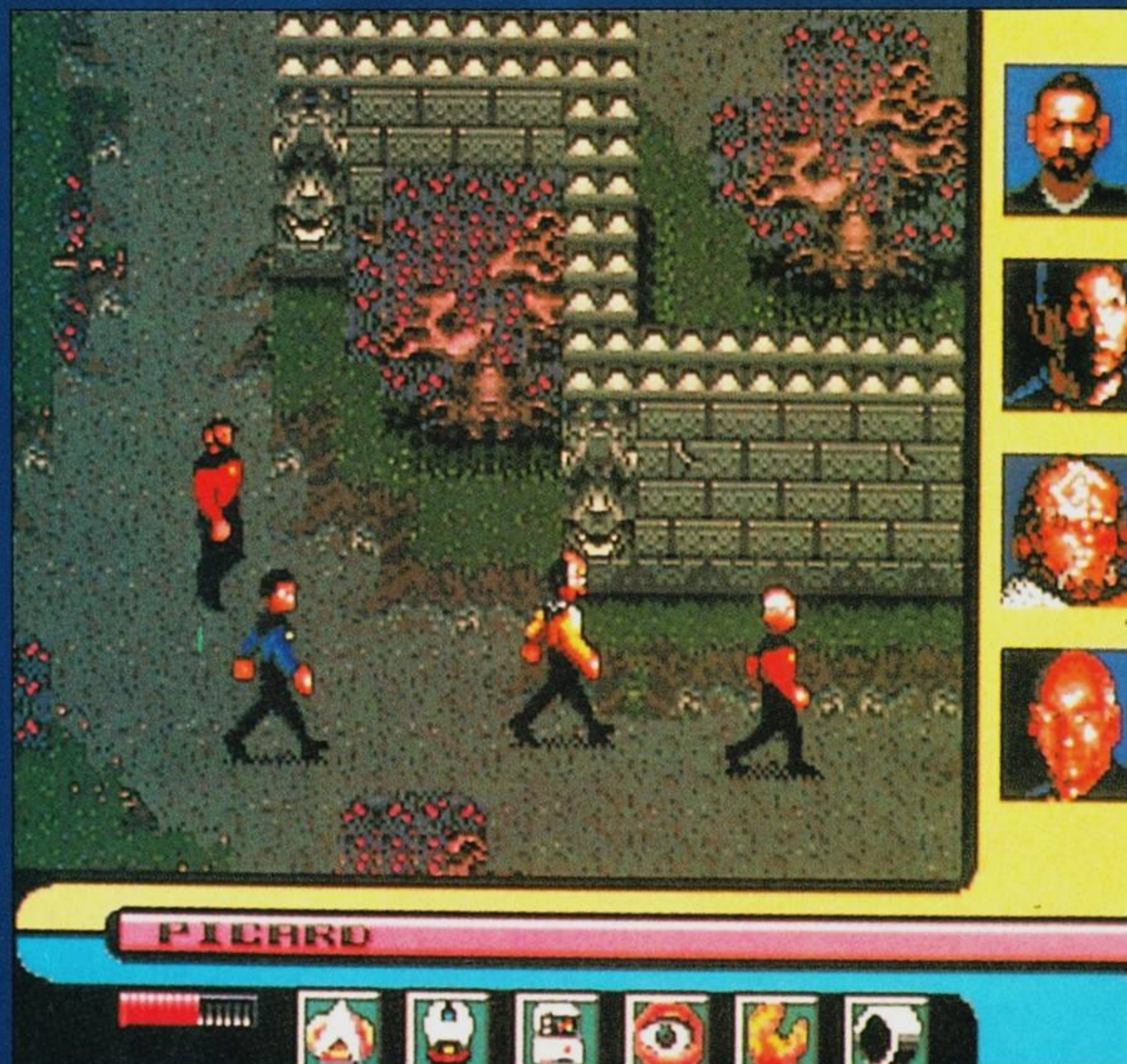
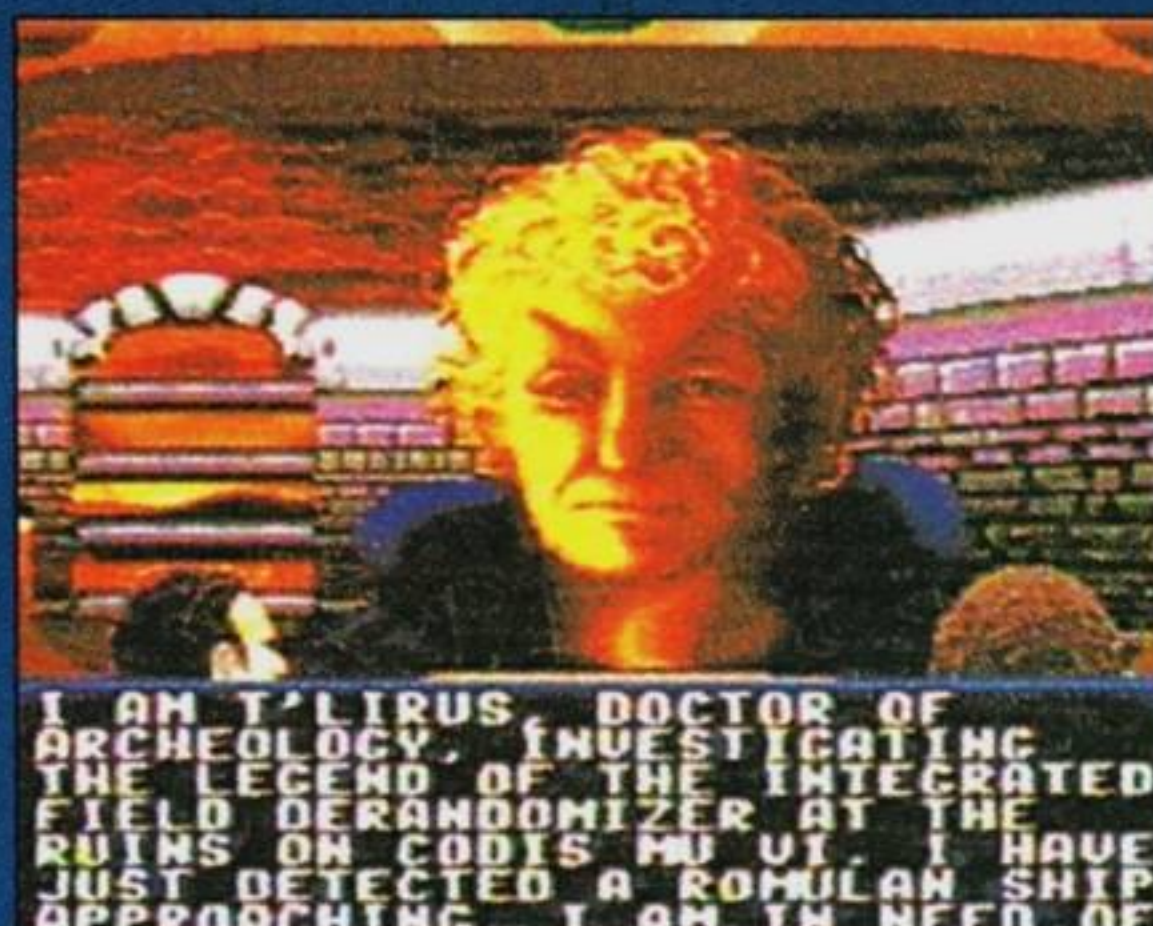
Star Trek The Next Generation

SNES/MEGA DRIVE

Available: March
Category: Going Boldly...
Players: 1
Publisher: Spectrum Holobyte

Star Trek fans tend to go to extremes to prove their love of the show. They wear the uniforms (Stuart's Mum spent weeks on his Captain Kirk outfit), talk the talk, walk the walk and all that. In a word, they're freaks. But don't let this put you off Spectrum Holobyte's *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, which looks set to be an involving action/adventure game that even well-balanced members of the community can enjoy.

You control the Starship Enterprise and its crew, tackling a series of missions assigned by the Federation. Yes, intergalactic harmony is in your hands. The action takes place on the Enterprise itself (there's even some space combat to get excited about) and on alien planets too. The gameplay is a nicely balanced mixture of RPG and action elements so it should please just about everyone. Trekkies will be foaming at the mouth just at the thought of it all.



Virtua Racing

MEGA DRIVE

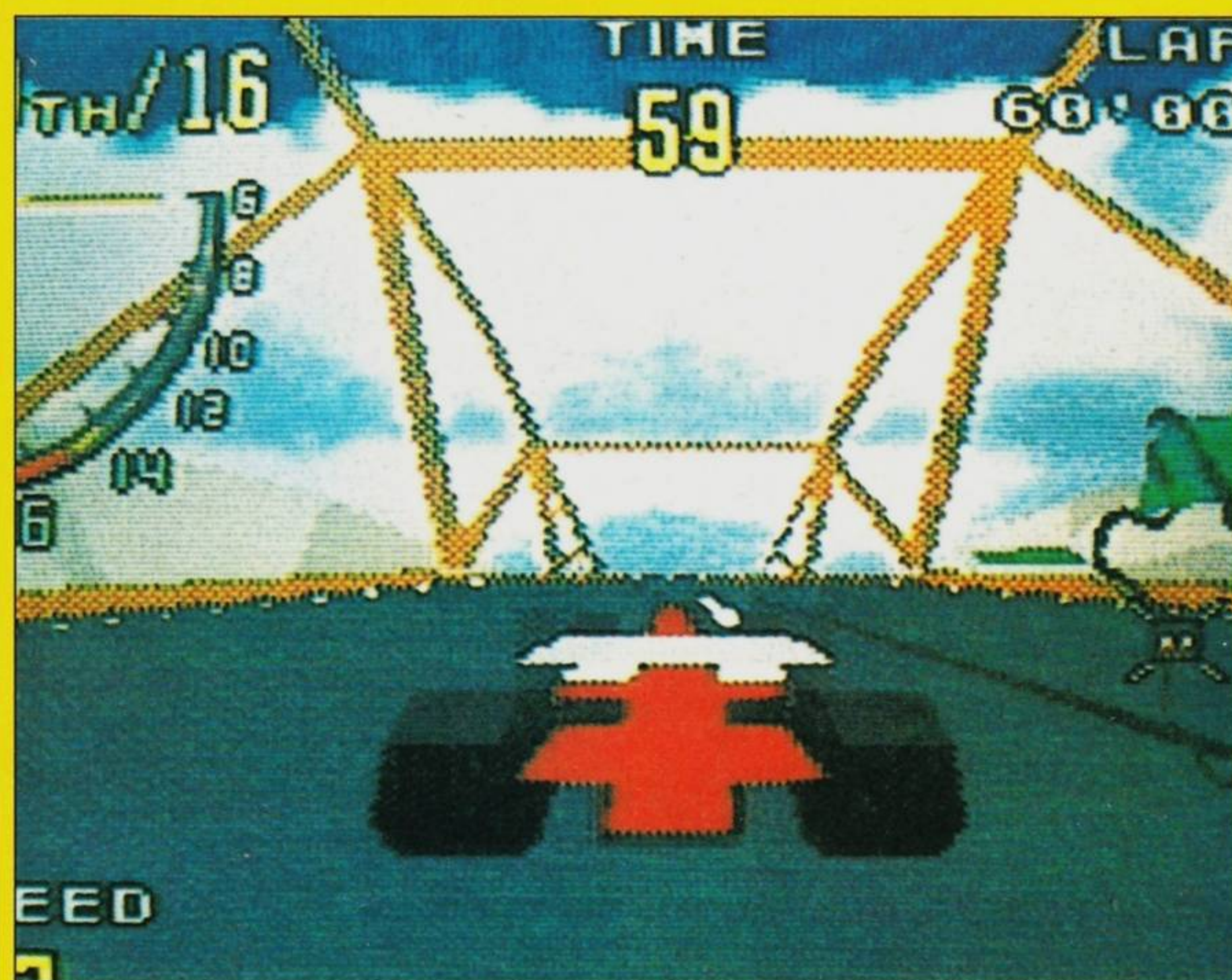
Available: May, maybe
Category: Race 'em Up
Players: 1
Publisher: Sega Japan

Virtua Racing has revolutionised arcade racing. It's fast, smooth, and it plays beautifully. Link a bank of the beasts up and race against your mates - there's nothing quite like it. How did they do it? Well, the coin-op's graphics board is packed with extra-hard hardware - like a V60 processor (the chip Sega's Saturn is rumoured to revolve around) and five Digital Signal Processors (DSPs) to animate around 180000 polygons per second. It's all done with 16.7 million colours too.

So how can a puny Mega Drive hope to capture the wonder that is *Virtua Racing*? With it's own DSP chip, running at an impressive 26M Hz. It's Sega's answer to Nintendo's SFX chip, and it drives the polygons in *Virtua Racing* at over 15 frames per second, making a game that is much,

much closer to the coin-op than you ever could've imagined. In fact, after it was shown at the recent Amusement Machine Show in Japan (JAMMA), developers queued for miles to get their hands on the DSP chip. Hopefully, they'll use it to create the Mega Drive titles of the future.

Check out the screenies. All four arcade viewpoints will be included in the finished game and it really is very fast.



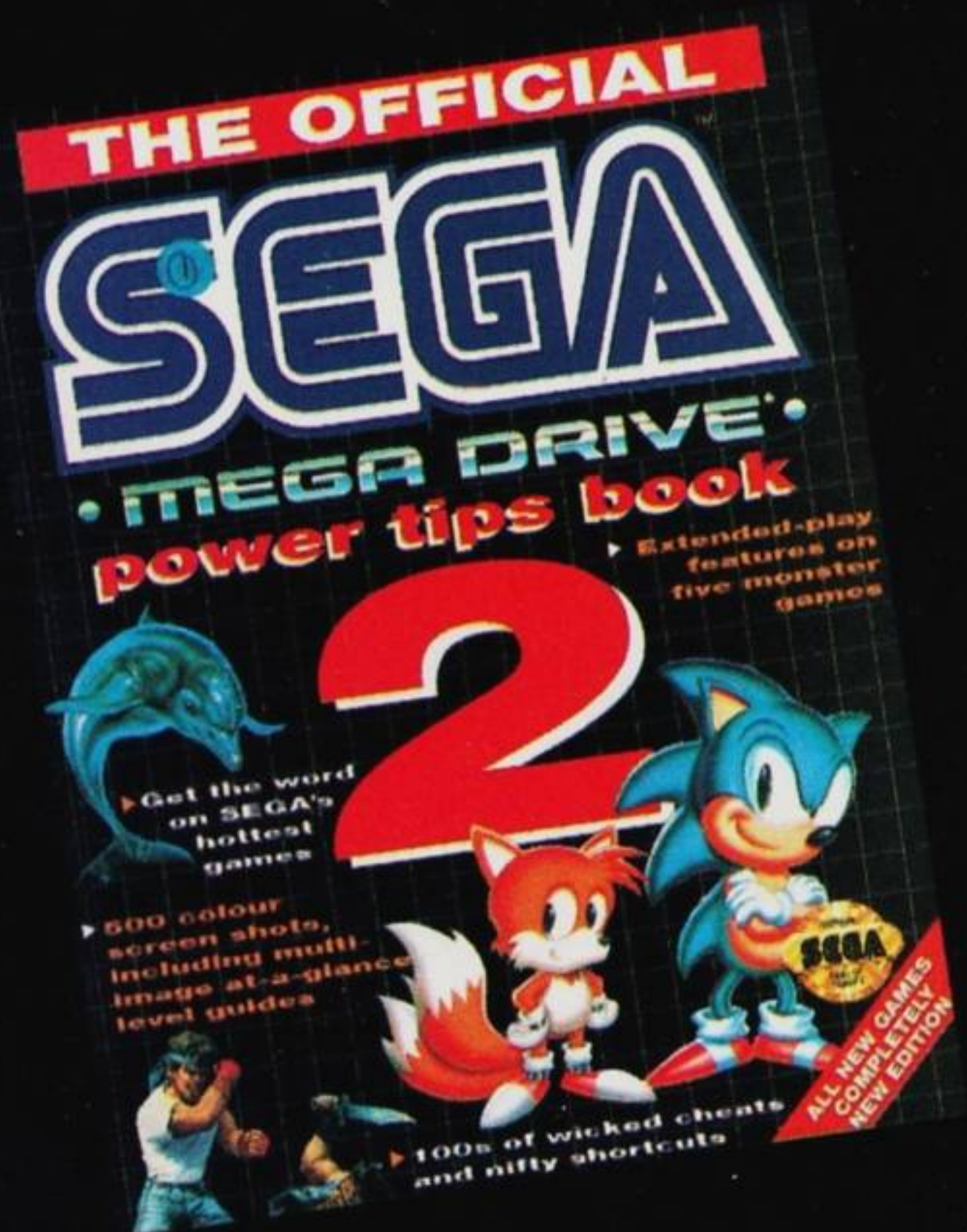
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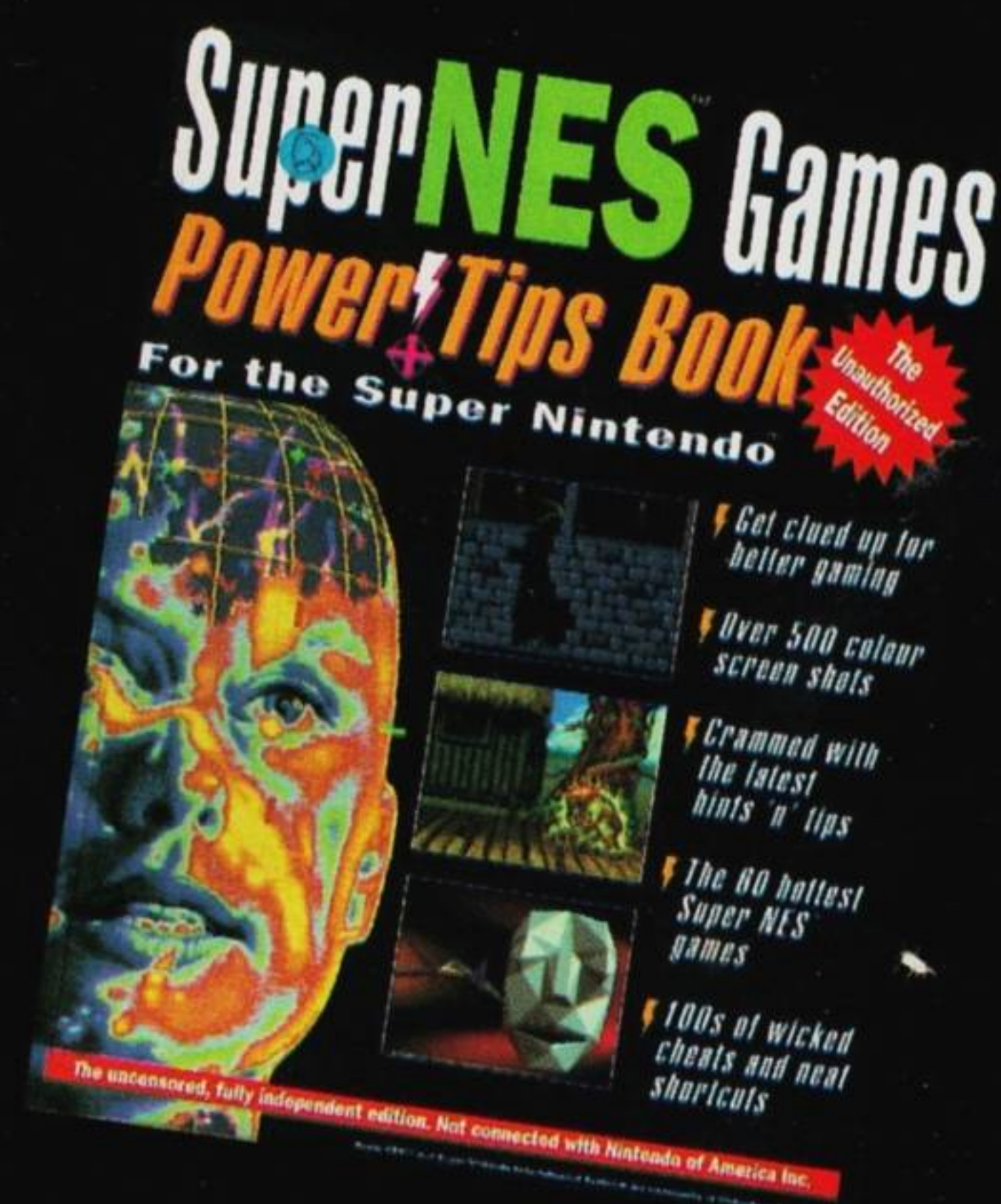
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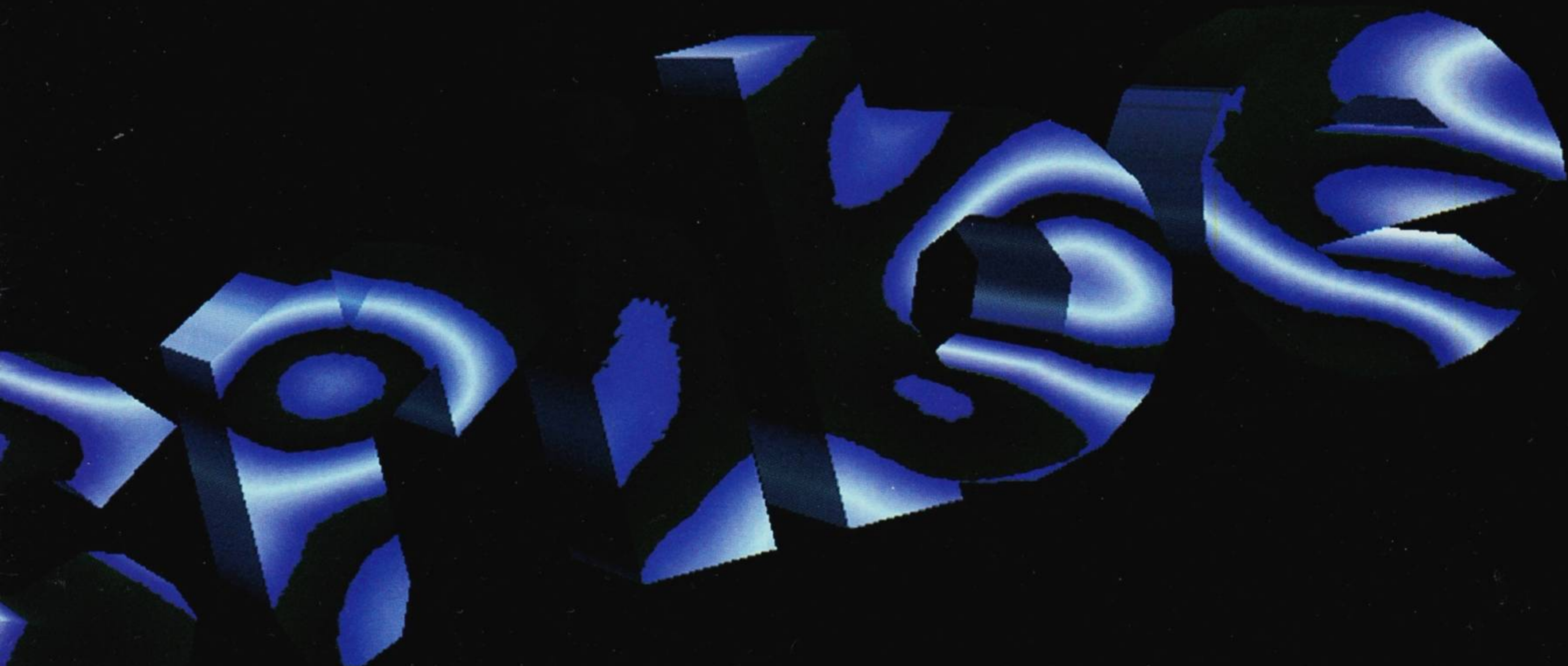


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SNES

equosqns





How did the HYPER crew get to be the veritable games wizards that they are today? With skill, practice, and natural charm - and with the help of the *Super NES Power Tips Book* and *The Official Sega Mega Drive Power Tips Book 2*. They're chock full of cheats, Action Replay and Game Genie codes, and of course, enough power tips on all the latest games to keep you gaming till the wee hours (not that kind of wee you moron). For Super NES gamers, there's full coverage of 60 titles, including *Mortal Kombat*, *Pugsley's Scavenger Hunt*, *Starwing*, and *Shadowrun*. Mega Drivers get tips on games like *Jungle Strike*, *Mortal Kombat*, and the *X-Men*, as well as 8-page extended tips on *Flashback*, *Ecco*, and *Rolo to the Rescue*. Learn the cheats, follow the tips, study the maps. You might even get as good as us.

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HYPER»

0003

NBA JAM

It's here! NBA Jam is the fastest, wildest, and most intense basketball game ever. Do the 16-bit systems have what it takes to match the excitement of an arcade classic? Andrew Humphreys dribbles on...

When I first saw *NBA Jam* in action I peed my pants with joy (we do a lot of that here at HYPER - the cleaners complain, but hey, who cares?). The graphics, the sound, and the game itself just blew me away. Two thoughts filled my mind: I must remember to wear my rubber undies when in public, and there's no way the Mega Drive or the SNES can handle this game. But I was wrong - both the MD and the SNES can handle it and handle it well. I don't know how, but what we're looking at here are two fantastic conversions of a ground-breaking game. Love it? Of course we do.

For the Cave Dwellers *NBA Jam* is fast paced, two-on-two basketball. With only two-players a team, you get more speed, more breaks, and a flowing game. It's a great one-player game, but it's pure magic with four players. Thanks to new multi-player gadgets, both the Sega and Nintendo

versions can be four-player games too. Oh joy!

It's not just the pace of the game, the amazing graphics, and the incredible commentary that makes it such a blast to play - it's the dunks. There are over 50 spectacular dunks hidden away in the game. Some players can do them all, most can't - it all depends on your dunk rating.

Being the first arcade game with an official NBA license, it has all 27 NBA teams and real NBA superstars to play with, as well as a host of "secret characters" (we told you the codes in the first two issues). Each team has its own strengths and weaknesses: some have good speed, but can't shoot from outside; others shoot well but are slower than a pensioner on Mogadon. Each player is rated for speed, dunks, 3 pointers and defence.

The ultimate aim is to defeat all 27 teams - then the computer throws up new teams to challenge. There's thousands of possible combinations, including all the secret characters.

For the cheaters So, is everything in the home versions? All the

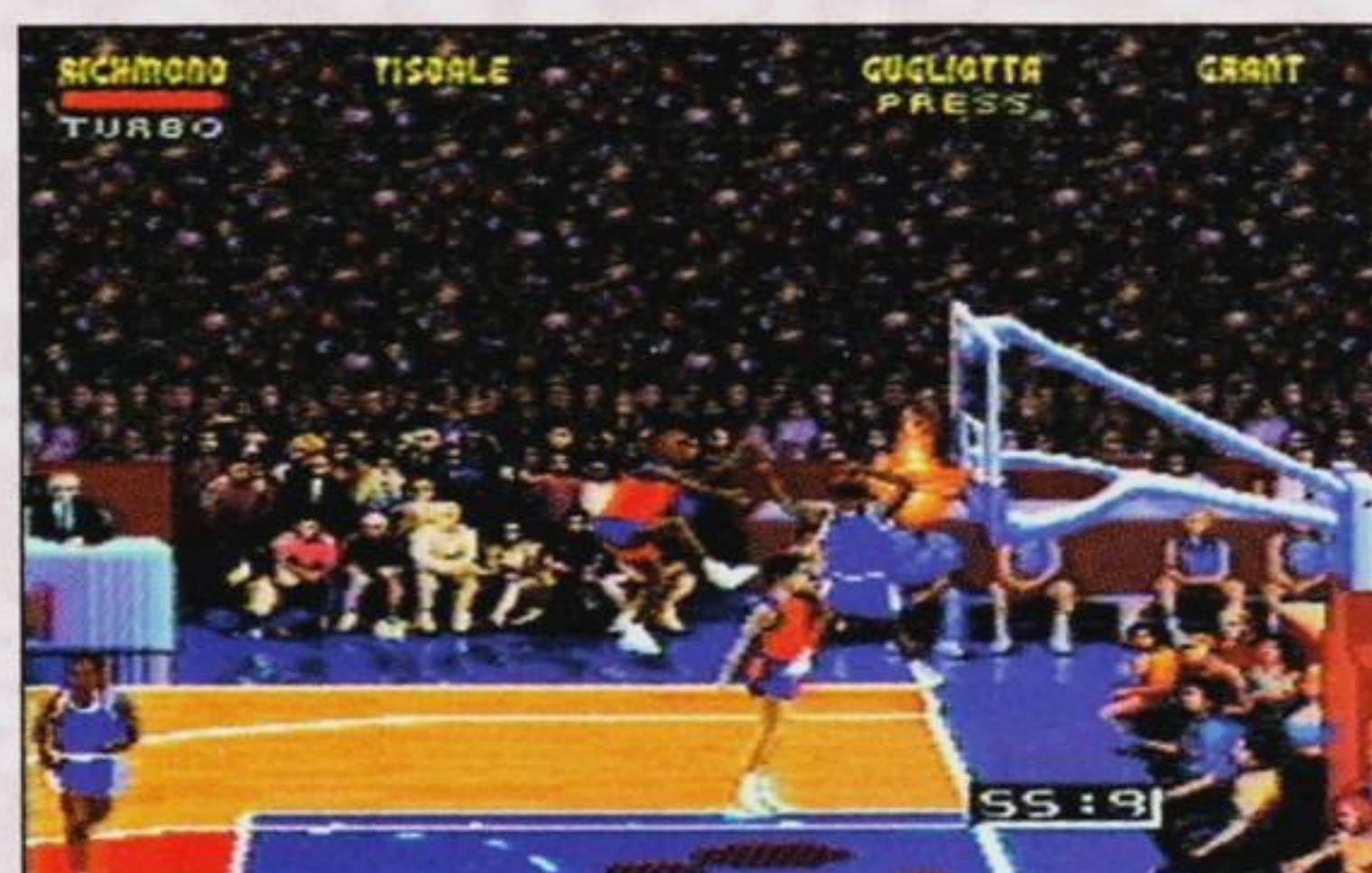
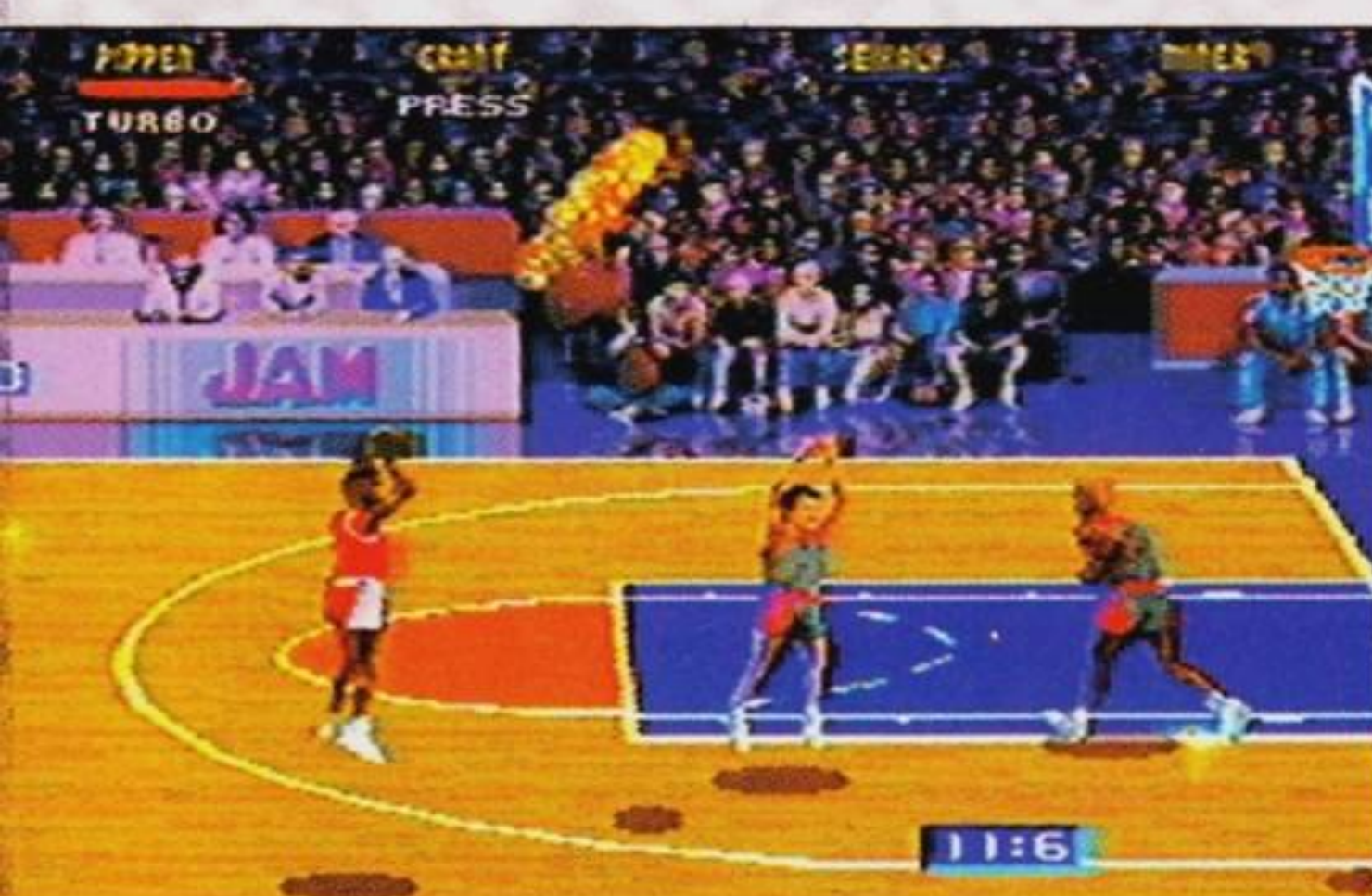
secret characters? All the cheats? To be honest, we're not sure yet. We tried all the arcade cheats on both versions, and we only got one to work (power-up defence on the SNES) - but turning off computer assistance is an option for both. We couldn't find the secret characters either. The Autostat feature is there, but it's been modified: instead of entering your initials and birthdate, you have to enter your initials and a password. You probably need the right password.

We defeated all 27 teams on the Mega Drive version and didn't get to play any special teams or secret characters. That doesn't mean it won't happen on the finished carts though (in fact, the hot rumour is that all the cheats will be there on both versions) - we'll have to wait and see.

Oh, and where the hell is the Shaq? He, and other players like Dan Majerle, have been replaced in both versions. The stats aren't as comprehensive either - all the numbers are there, but the percentages are gone.

But these are small niggles. Both the Mega Drive and SNES versions of *NBA Jam* are better than you could have hoped for. Honest, you won't believe how good they are.

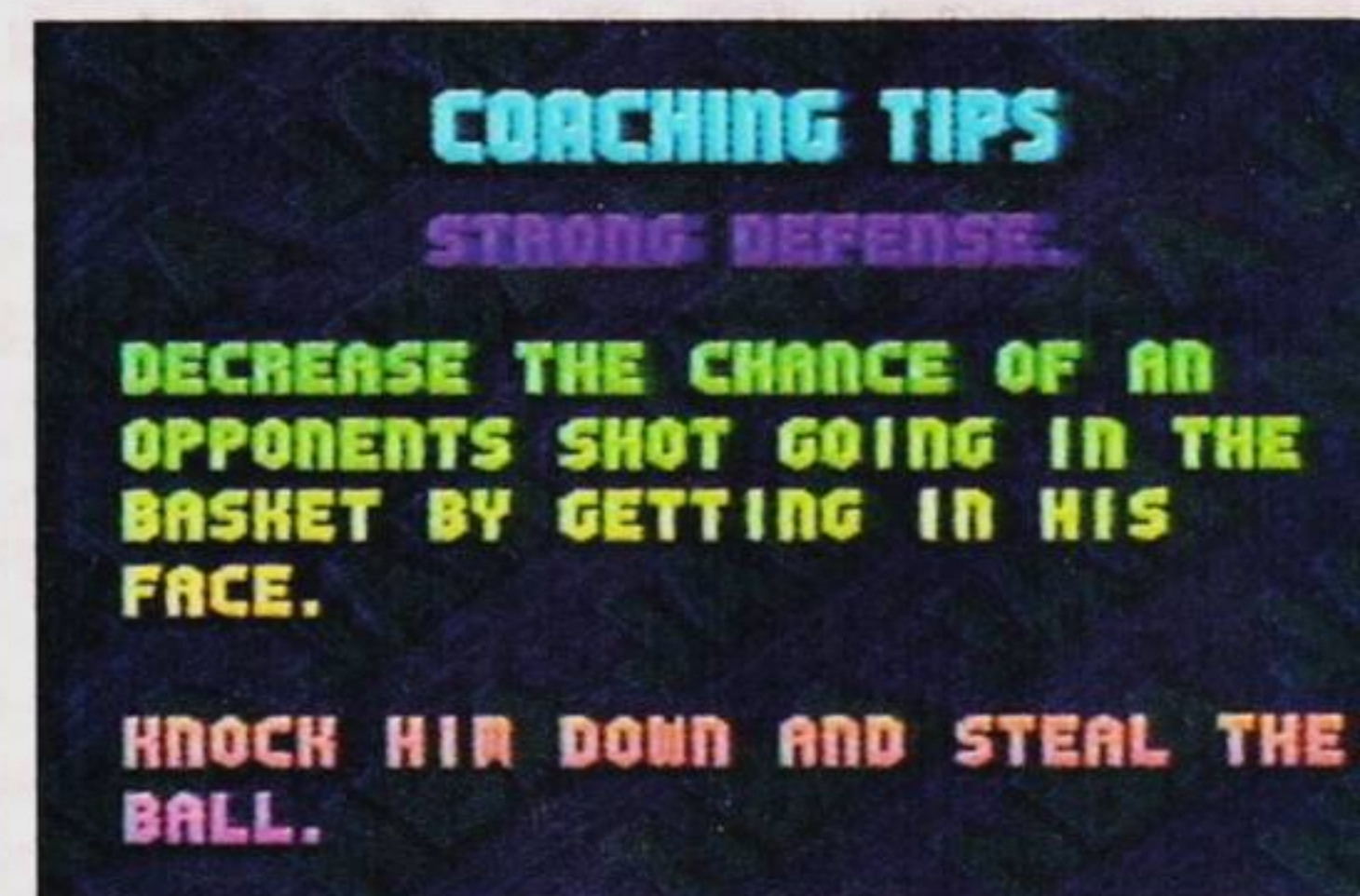




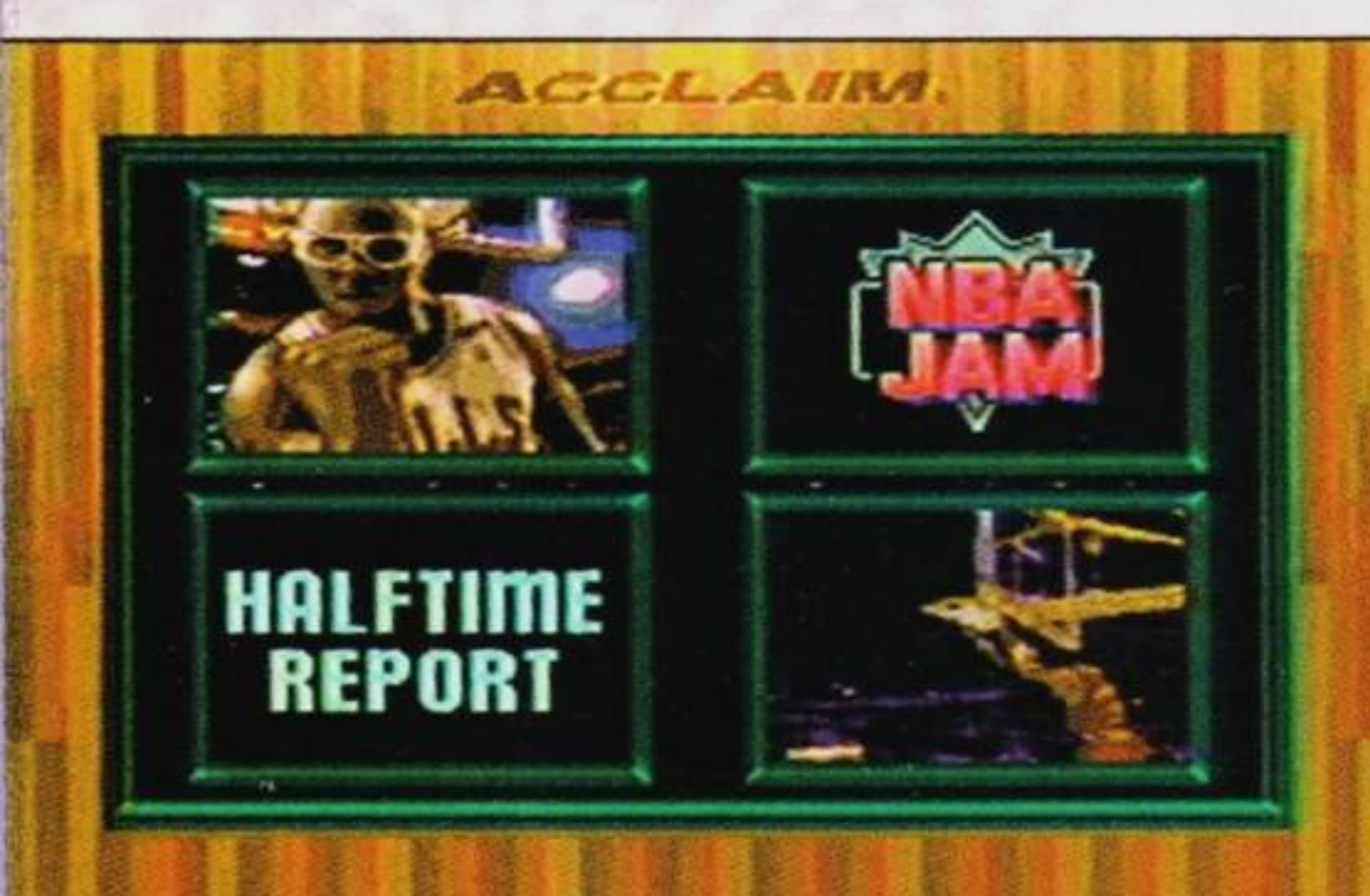
Hit three baskets in a row without the other team scoring and you're *on fire*! You can go to your heart's content and your scoring percentages dramatically increase. Occasionally you can shatter the backboard (right on SNES). Far left is the MD, and left the SNES.



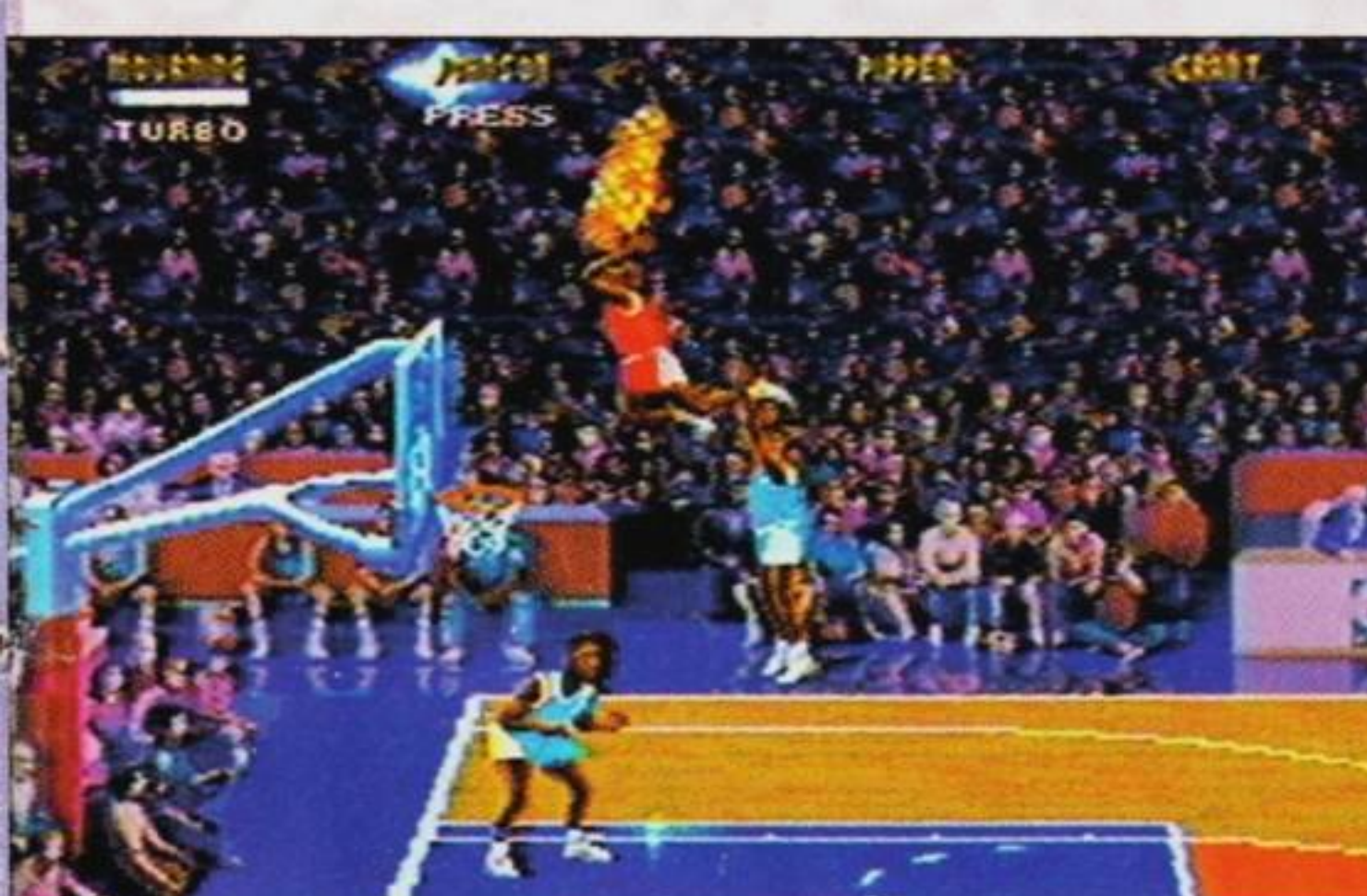
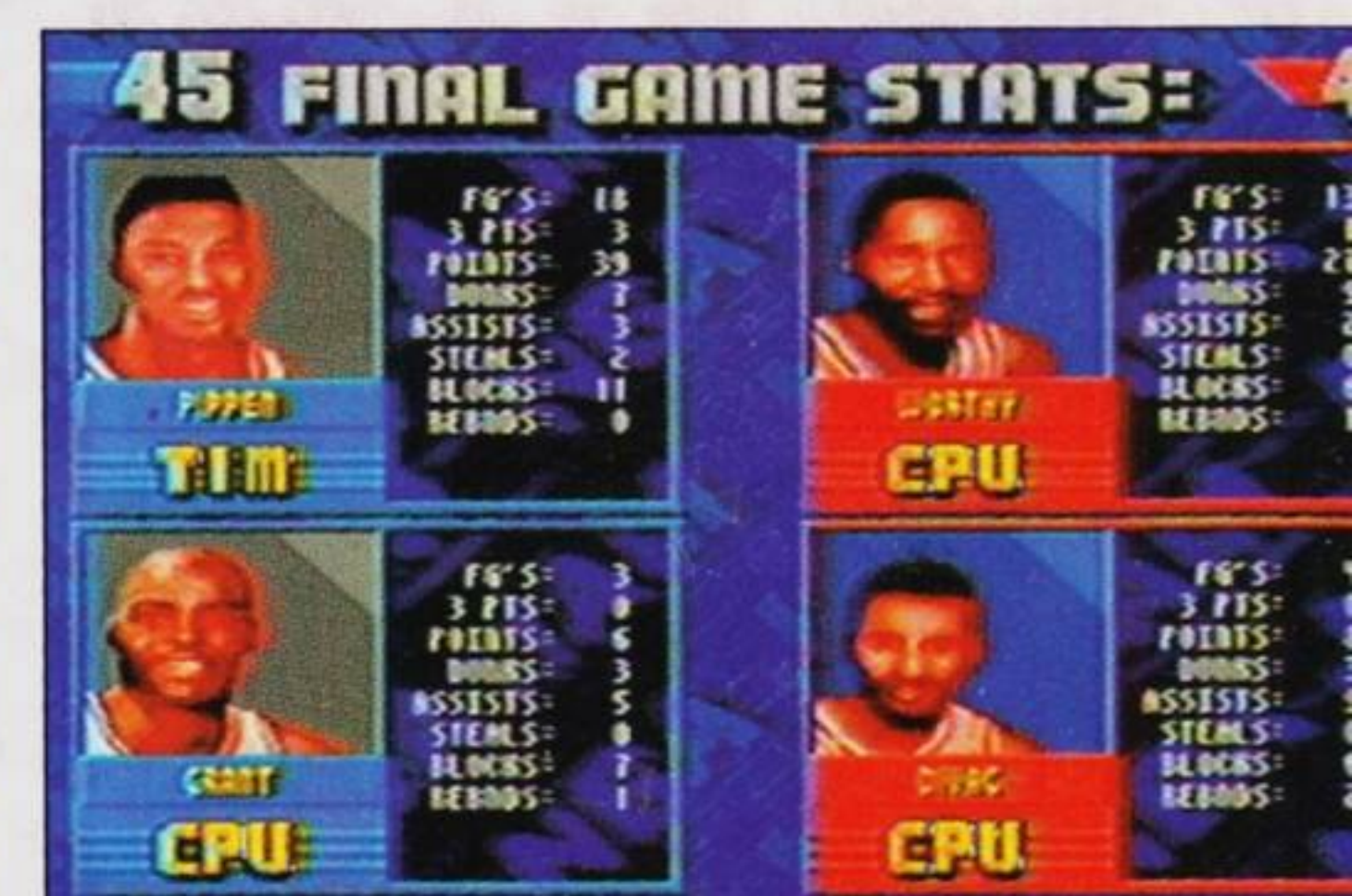
Left: Entering initials, followed by a password on the MD. The SNES version is exactly the same. Right: Coaching tips pop up in between quarters. Read them well my followers. This is the MD version. Far Right: SNES coaching



The quality of the stills is much better on the SNES. Far Left: A big win on the MD. Left: A close one on the SNES. Right: Team selection on the MD.



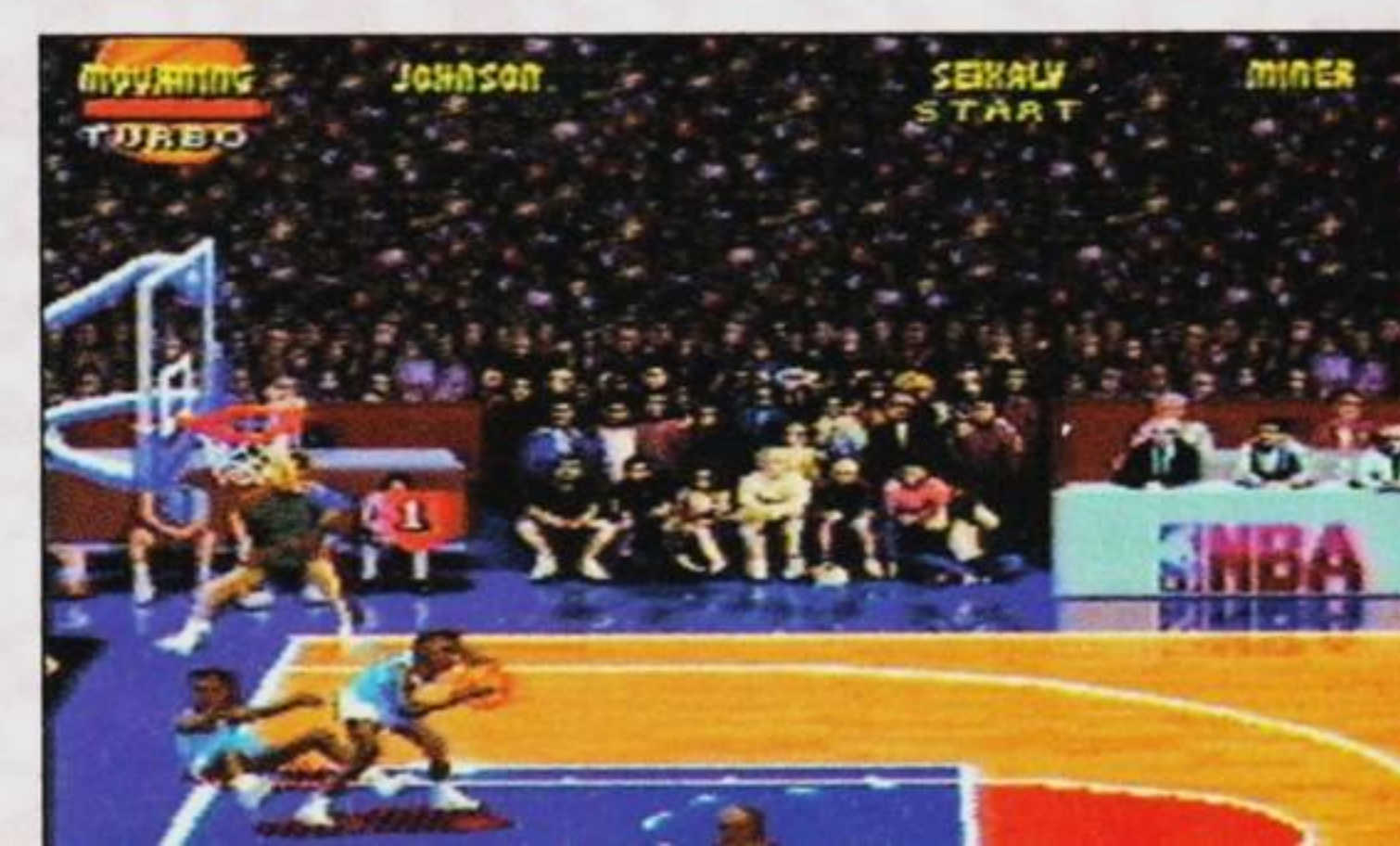
Left: You even get the Halftime Report (without the speech). MD shown. Right: Stats galore on the SNES. Far Right: Final stats on Mega Drive. The still screens really show the MD's limited colour palette.

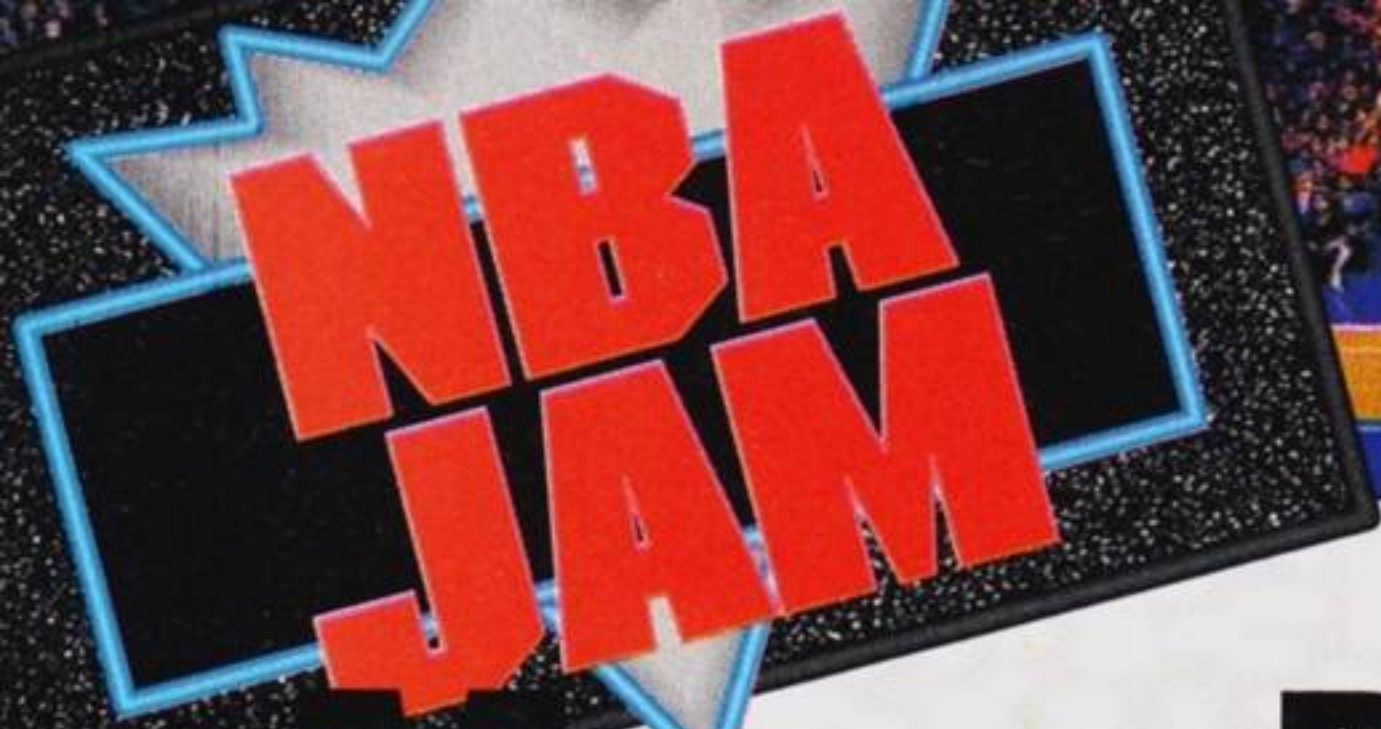


A good dunker can let loose with a cannonball dunk. Right: Smokin' on the SNES. Left and Far Left: On the Mega Drive, where there's smoke there's fire!



Left: Make sure you keep track of the score. (MD) Right: SNES Far Right: MD Tap the turbo button and you'll start throwin' elbows.





Mega Drive

Acclaim (under their Mega Drive sub-label, Arena) like to farm out the programming of their top titles to crack programming teams. For *NBA Jam* they've used a team called Iguana Entertainment. I'd never heard of them, I don't even know where they're based, but I want to hug and kiss them all. If any machine was going to struggle with *NBA Jam* it was the Mega Drive (with only 64 colours from a palette of 256), but Iguana have ignored any technical limitations and produced an amazing conversion.

The Options Just like the arcade game, *NBA Jam* is a four-player game if you've got a Sega Tap. If you've only got two control pads though, you can either play a Team Game, which puts you both on the same team against the computer,

or a Head to Head match - you and the CPU against your mate and their computer friend.

There's plenty of options. You can set the timer speed from extra-slow to extra-fast (5 speeds in all) and the difficulty from extra-easy to extra-hard (5 difficulty levels). You can also turn the computer assistance feature off. Leaving computer assistance on makes for a more even game - if a team is behind, the computer will increase their chances of scoring by boosting their scoring percentages and reducing the percentages of the other team. The further the team is behind, the bigger the boost. It can be frustrating when you see a huge lead cut down, but remember, it works both ways.

There's also a thing called Tag Mode, which you can turn on or off. The default setting is off and it only affects one-player or two-player, head to head games. With Tag Mode off, the game plays just like it does at the arcade: you control your guy and the CPU controls your team-mate - but you can make him pass or shoot when you want to. With Tag Mode on, you control the player with the ball. If

you pass to your team-mate, you then *become* that player. I prefer it off, but it's a handy option to have.

The Game When you're ready to press start, you get the "Welcome to NBA Jam" from the commentator and the option to enter your initials and password. It's all very familiar.

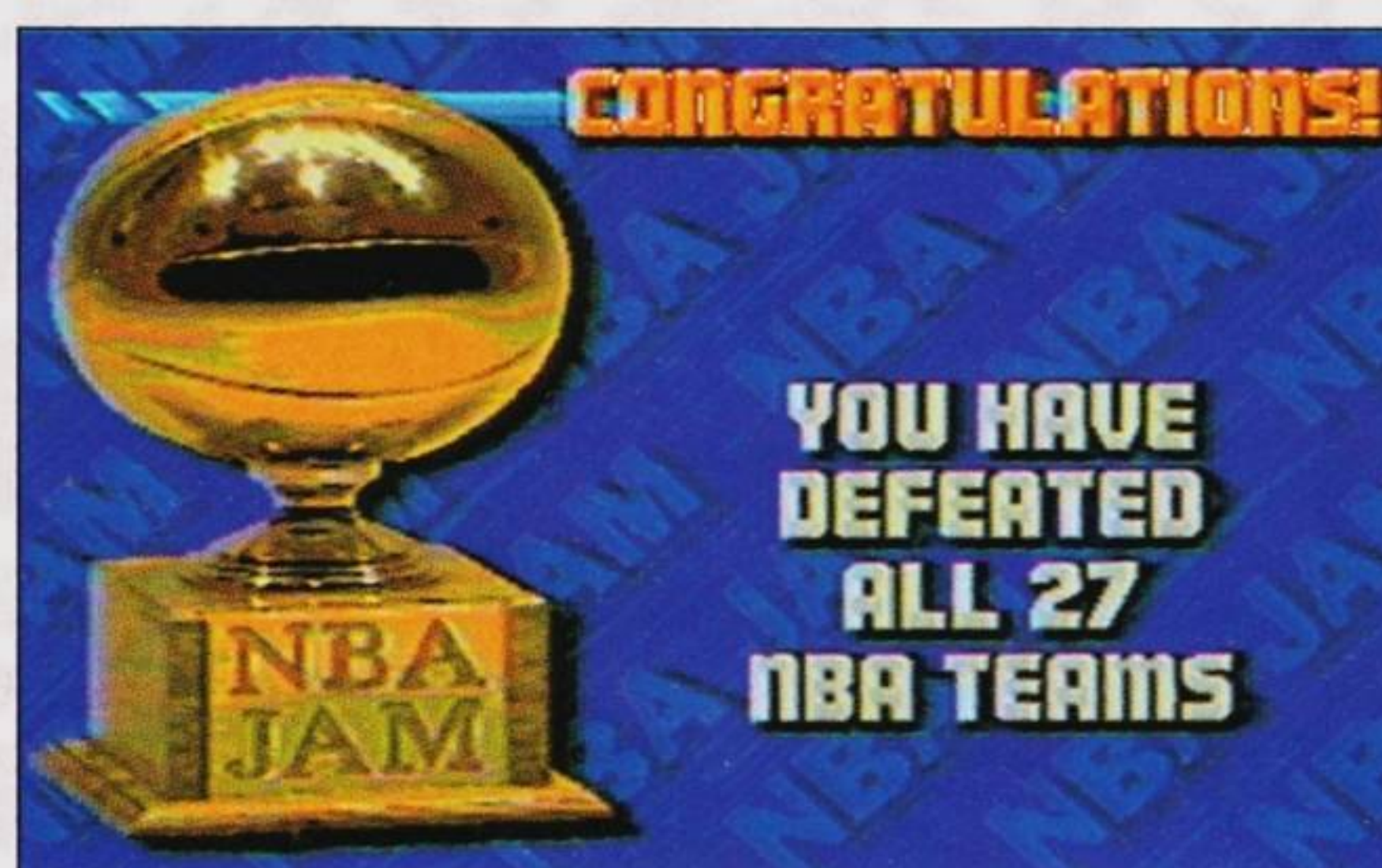
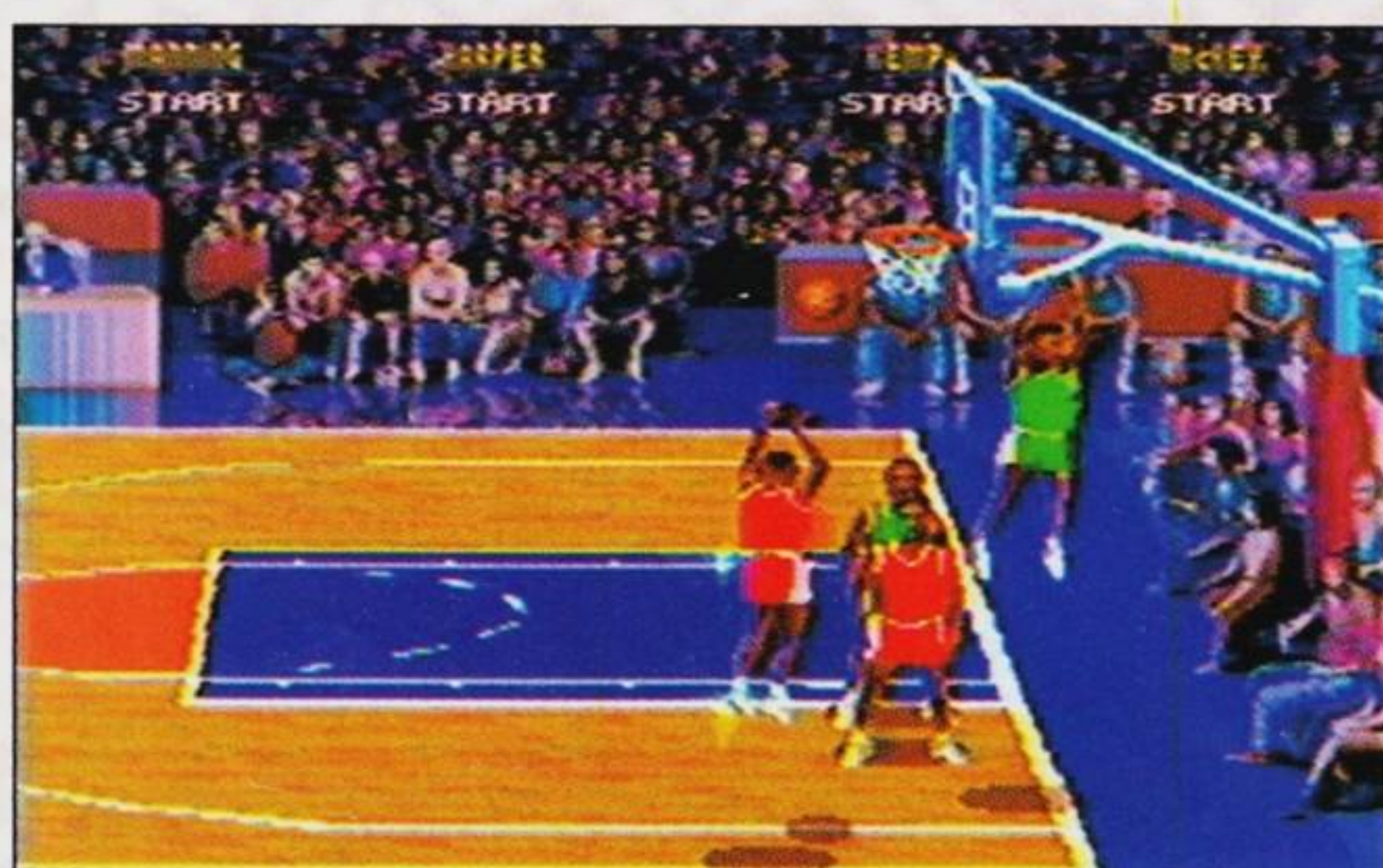
At the tip-off ("Here's the tip!"), you begin to realise just how close to the arcade game this is. The animation is superb, the detail on the crowd and court is excellent, and the dunks are incredible. It's so like the arcade game that you even get to break the backboard every now and again. The graphics are as good as they get - the only slightly dicky bit is the player stills - the SNES stills are much better. But in-game, it's hard to tell them apart.

The sound is spot-on. The music's been lifted straight from the arcade game and all the in-game speech is there too, including my favourites, "Is it the shoes?" and "The nail in the coffin". You get it all - "Swish", "Head fake", "Boom Shakalaka", and even the Tarzan yell and rotor blade noises for super-slams. The quality is excellent.

The gameplay is just like the arcade game. In fact, it might even be a little smoother. The speed is incredible (try a turbo pass) and the controls are excellent - with an Arcade Power Stick they're perfect. All the features that make the arcade game such fun - the steals, the knock downs, fakes, the sweetly-timed passes, and of course, the dunks -

are on the Mega Drive. It's as good as having the machine at home. Only one thing bothered me - three pointers, especially in two-player games, were too easy to hit. Even players with the worst three-point ratings could make the shot simply by standing at the edge of the court.

NBA Jam is an amazing game and the Mega Drive conversion is so good you just have to have it. It's the best sports game ever and a top contender for the best game of all time. Like I said, buy it.



FORMAT: MEGA DRIVE

AVAILABLE: FEBRUARY

CATEGORY: IT'S NBA JAM

PLAYERS: 1-4

PUBLISHER: ACCLAIM

\$149.95

visuals

The heavy-duty scaling of the arcade game is gone, but otherwise, this is spot-on. The detail and animation are wild.

94

sound

All the music and nearly all the speech - the commentary is as good as ever. Great FX too.

93

gameplay

Plays just like the arcade game - maybe better. Great control, heaps of room for strategy and skill. Amazing with 4 players.

95

longterm

To get the most out of it you should buy the 4-player Tap. It's such a blast you'll never want to stop.

95

overall

If you don't get this game you really don't deserve to own a Mega Drive - give it to someone who'll use it properly.

95%

SNES

Iguana Entertainment have been very busy. Not only did they program the Mega Drive's *NBA Jam*, they landed the job for the Super Nintendo too. And guess what? They did it again. Just like the Sega version, this is a near-perfect conversion of the coin-op.

The Options All the options are exactly the same as the Mega Drive, so take a look left for all the info. Oh, and instead of using the Sega Tap for the four-player game you use the Super Multitap.

The Game Hit the start button - straight away you'll notice something missing. Where's the "Welcome to NBA Jam" voice? It's gone. In fact, a lot of the speech is gone, but we'll get to that later.

Whack in your initials, choose your team and your way.

It's tip-off time. Just like the Mega Drive version, the animation is fantastic. All the players move beautifully and the dunks are as spectacular as ever. The detail on the court and

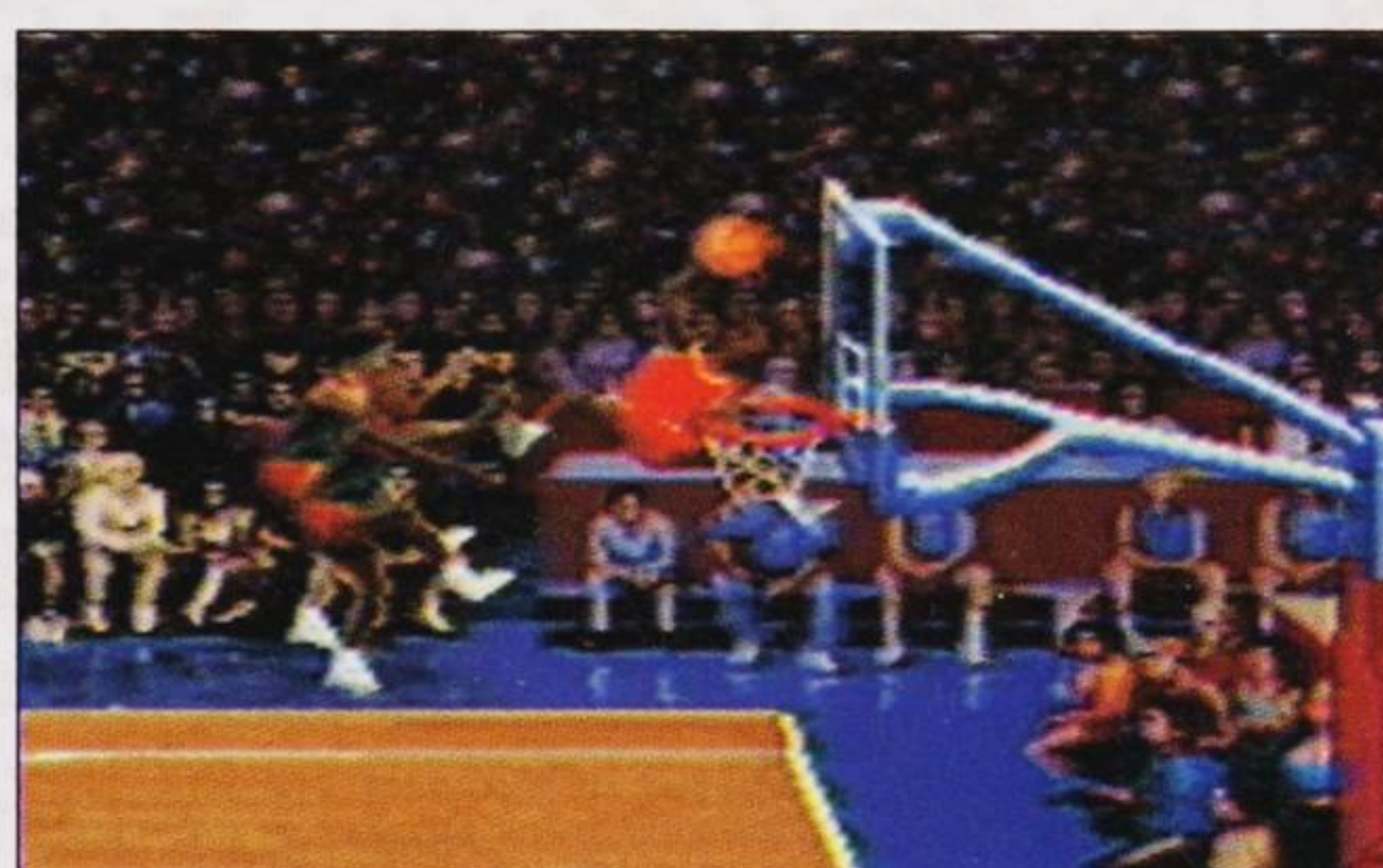
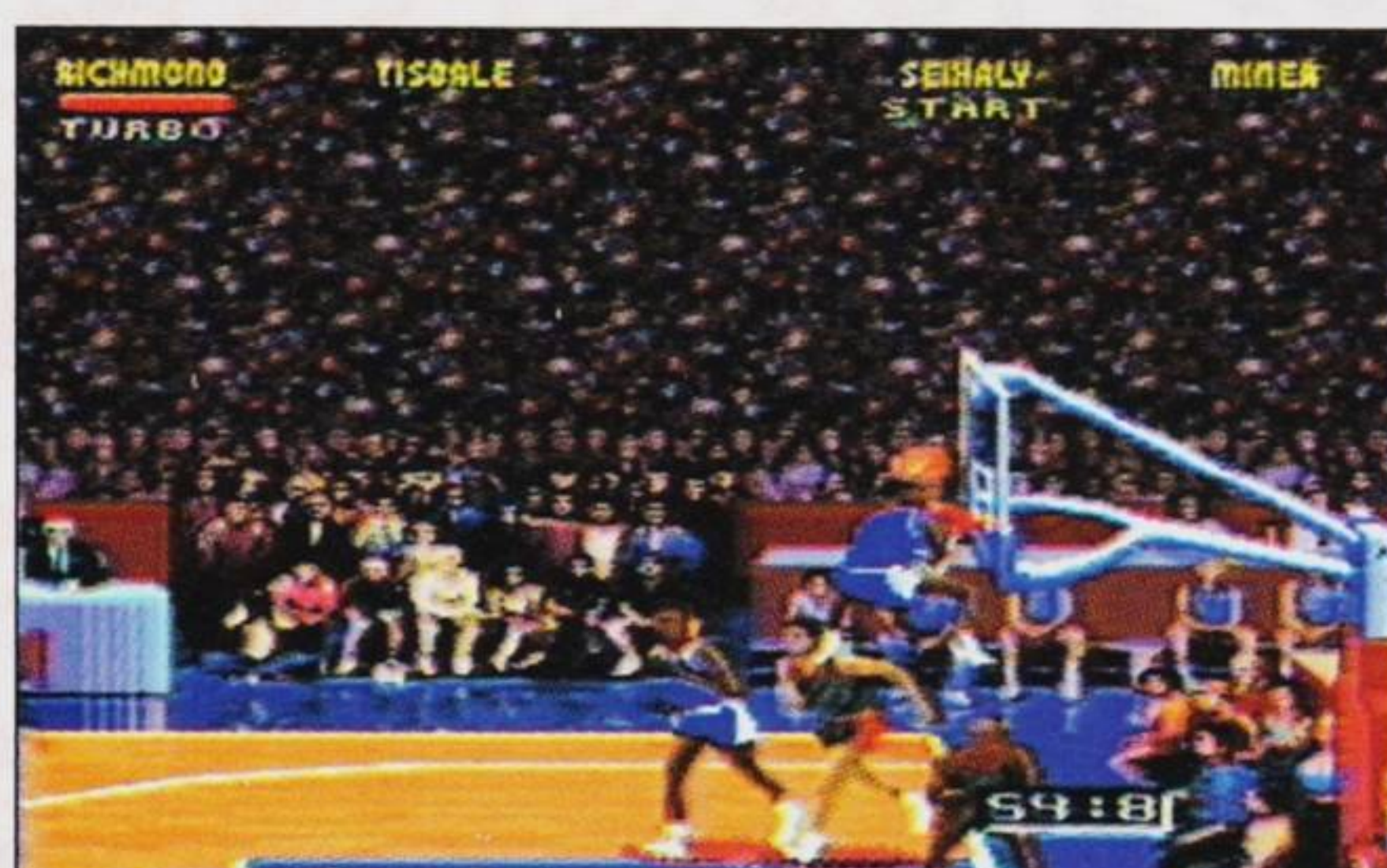
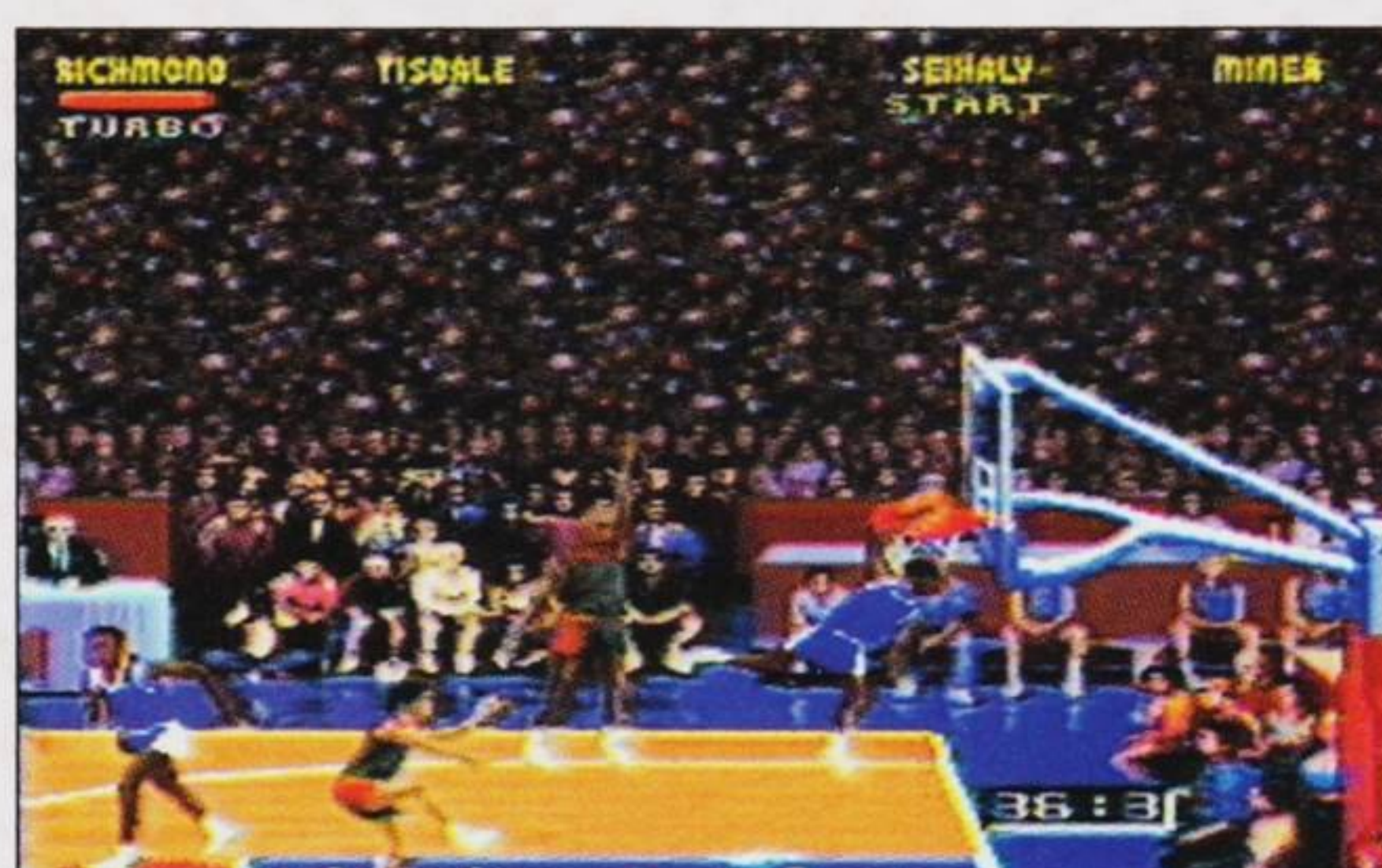
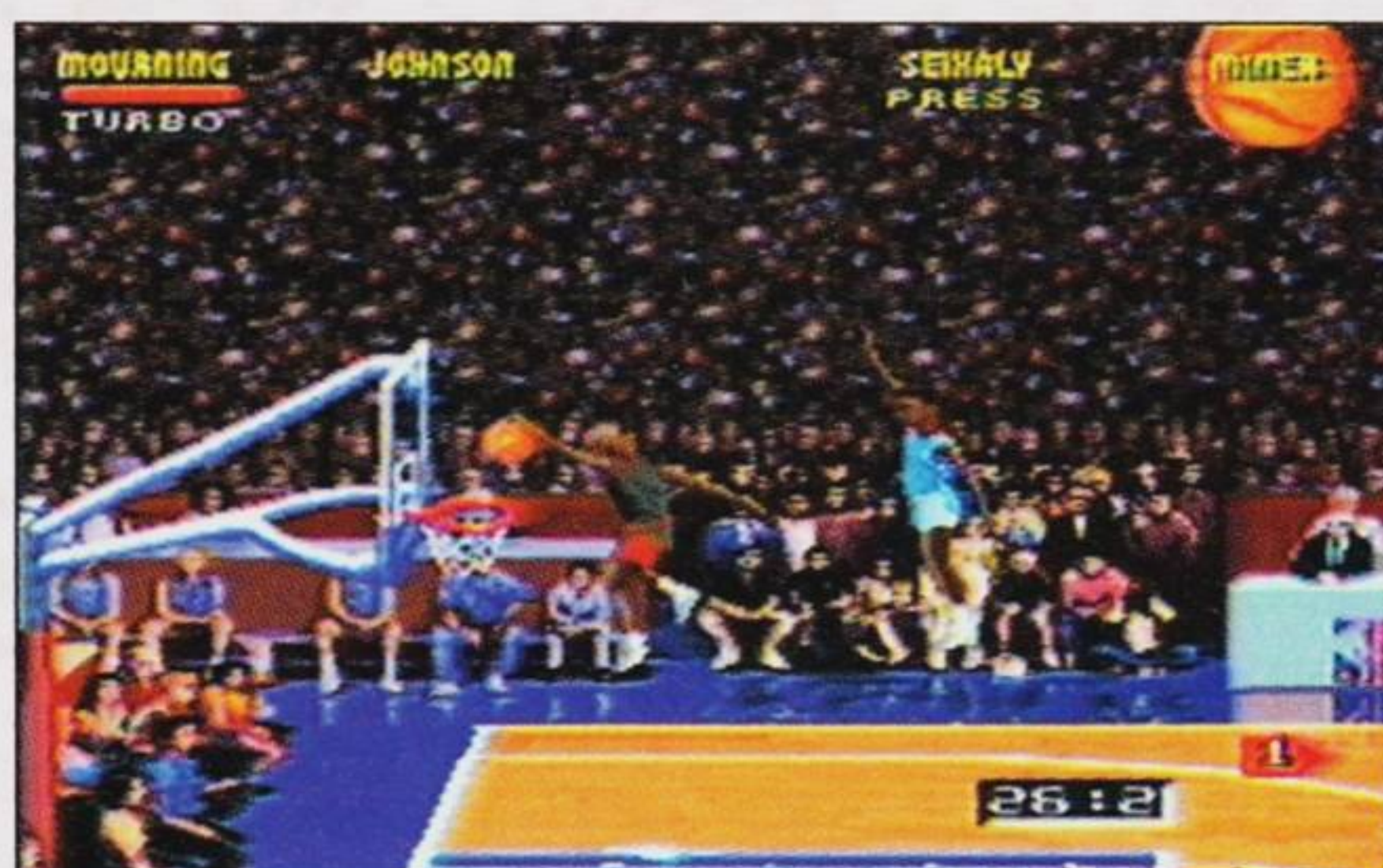
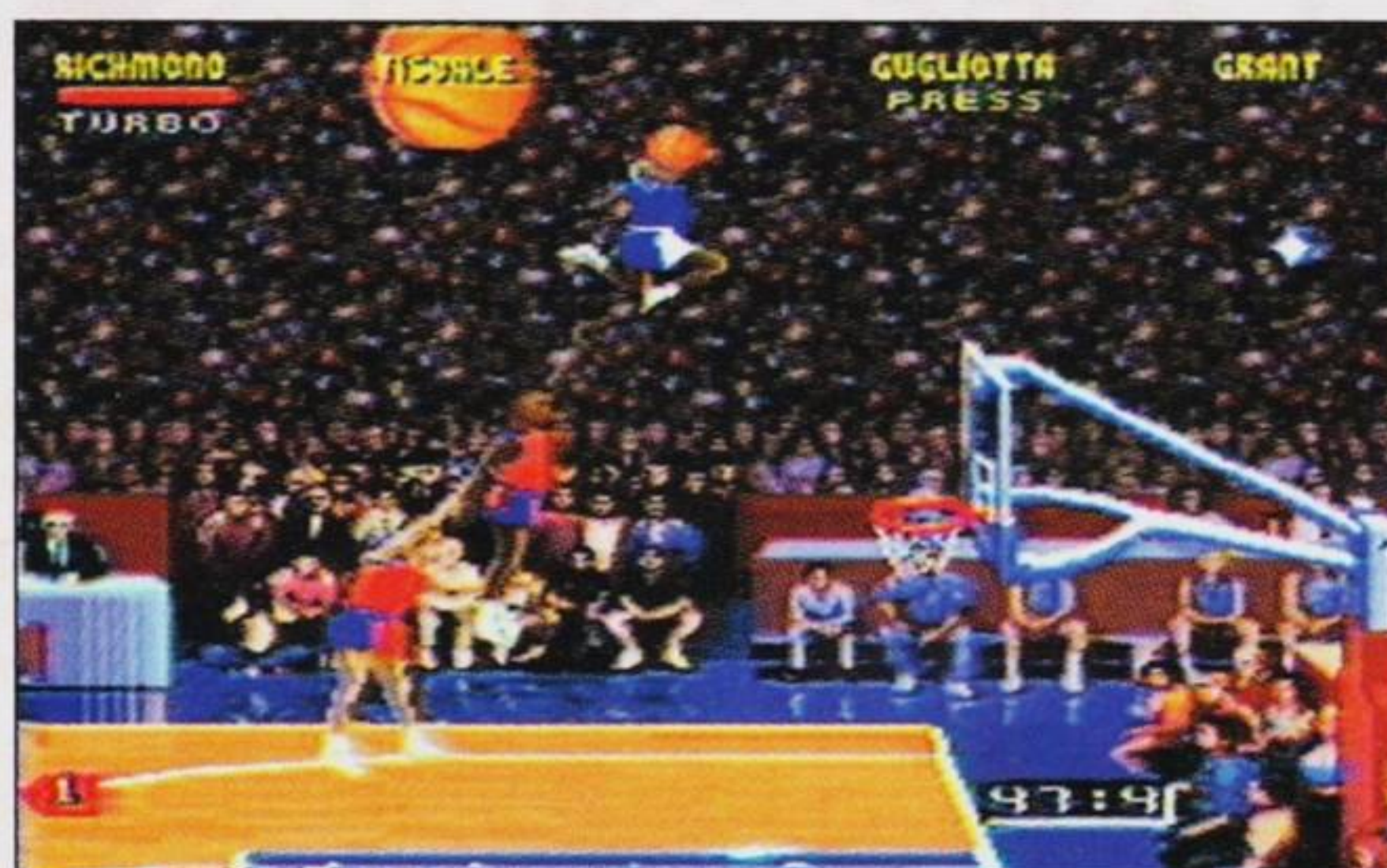
the crowd is excellent too. In-game, it's hard to pick any real differences between the graphics of the two versions (everything is just a touch sharper on the SNES). Only the still-screens (the team selection and match-up screens) show the SNES's big, 192 colours advantage over the Mega Drive. They look great - just like the arcade machine, and much better than the Mega Drive's stills.

But the sound is disappointing. The music's straight from the arcades but the crowd noises don't match the Mega Drive's and a lot of the commentary is missing. In fact, aside from the "He's heating up/on fire" and "At the buzzer" bits, the commentary seems to consist of "Wild shot", "Two points", "Intercepted", "The rebound" and "Jams it in". The Mega Drive version has heaps more speech. Why?

Never fear though, the game plays just as smoothly and as quick as the Mega Drive version does. The controls are perfect - excellent touch, and excellent response. All the action

- the dunks, the rejections, the knock-downs - from the arcade game is right here on the SNES too. There's no easy three-pointer zone either.

Aside from the mystery of the missing speech, this is another fantastic version of a fantastic game. If you've played the arcade game, or even admired it from a distance, you'll know why you've gotta get it. If the world was as beautiful as it should be, we'd give every HYPER reader a copy. But it's not, so you'll have to buy your own.



FORMAT: SNES

AVAILABLE: FEBRUARY

CATEGORY: MORE NBA JAM

PLAYERS: 1-4

PUBLISHER: ACCLAIM

\$149.95

visuals

Just like the Mega Drive (ie brilliant), but the player stills are heaps better.

95

sound

All the music from the arcade game, but what happened to the commentary? Crowd noises are lame too.

89

gameplay

Oh yes, this is what it's all about. Mindblowing, four-player mayhem.

95

longterm

You'll get more fun out of this cart than you could ever deserve.

95

overall

Buy it and you'll turn you into a 7 foot tall dunking machine, which comes in handy in most social situations we can think of.

95%

America

NFL Football [without Don Lane]

The popularity of American Football in Australia is growing every day. Eager fans religiously watch the Tuesday night replays on the ABC to check on the progress of their favourite teams and even people with no idea about the game know that a Raider's cap is a nifty fashion accessory. No wonder American Football games are big sellers.

Last month HYPER checked the ball weight of the latest Soccer games. This time Andrew Humphreys steps into the Goodyear Blimp for an aerial view of American Footie games. (Bet you can't wait for next issue's special on Croquet).

What's out there? In a word, shitloads. But only some of them are good enough to get the HYPER Big Rubber Stamp of Approval.

The John Madden series (the original *John Madden Football*, *Madden 92* and *Madden 93*) of games on Mega Drive are generally regarded as the cream of the crop - in fact they're two of the best games ever made. *Madden 93* on SNES is very good, but it's not quite as slick or as playable.

Bill Walsh College Football (for Mega Drive) is also excellent. EA used the Madden team to produce this one and it shows - it looks and plays like a warm up version to *Madden 94*. However, *Mutant League Football* is best forgotten.

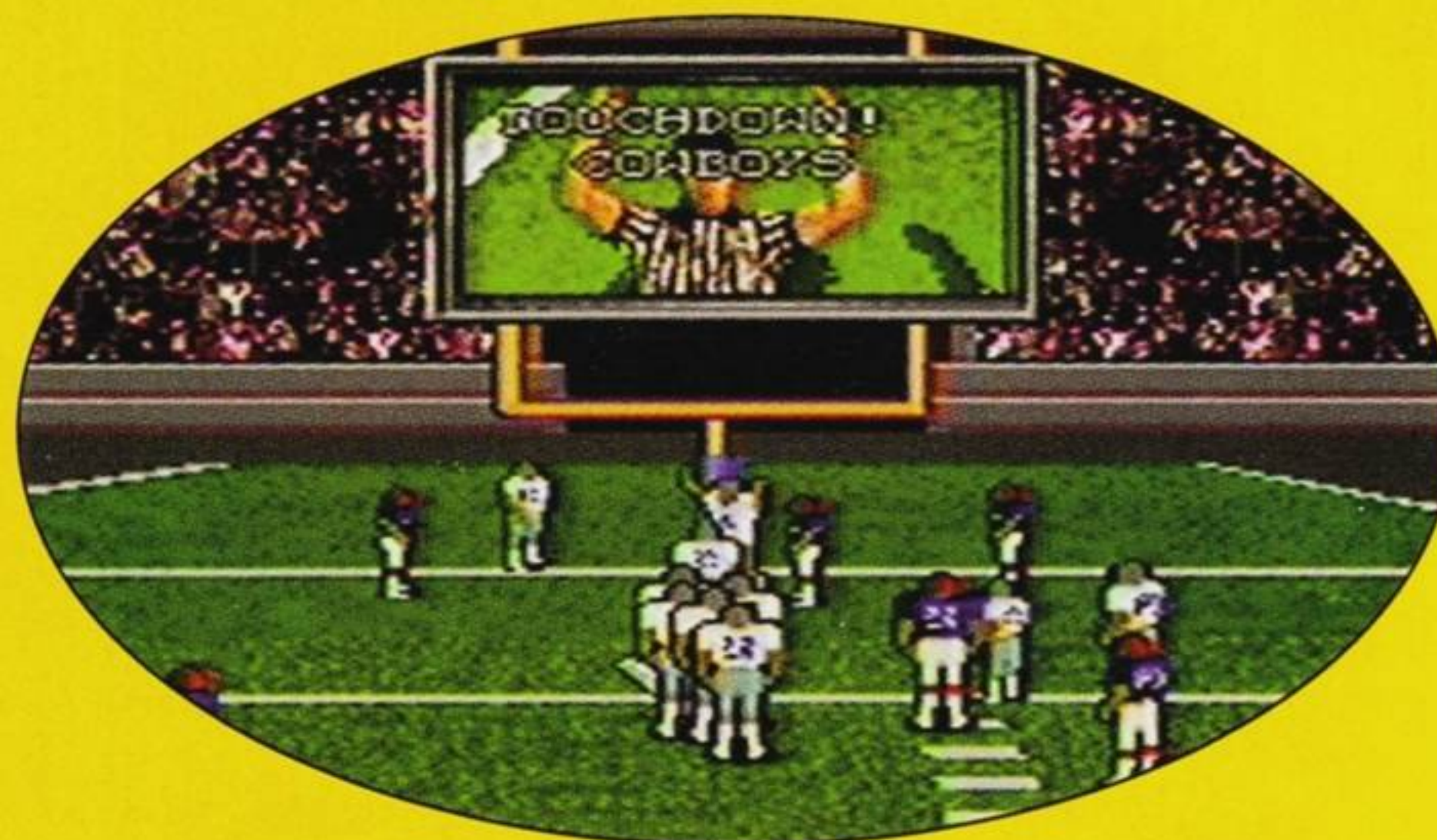
Sega's first two *Joe Montana Football* games lack playability, but the "Sports Talk" commentary of *Montana II* is impressive. *Montana 93* was a lot better, with multiple views and much tighter play control.

For a more arcade-style approach, check out *Super High Impact* on both Mega Drive and SNES. It's loud and flashy, but for longterm fun, it's suspect. The SNES version is definitely the pick of the two.

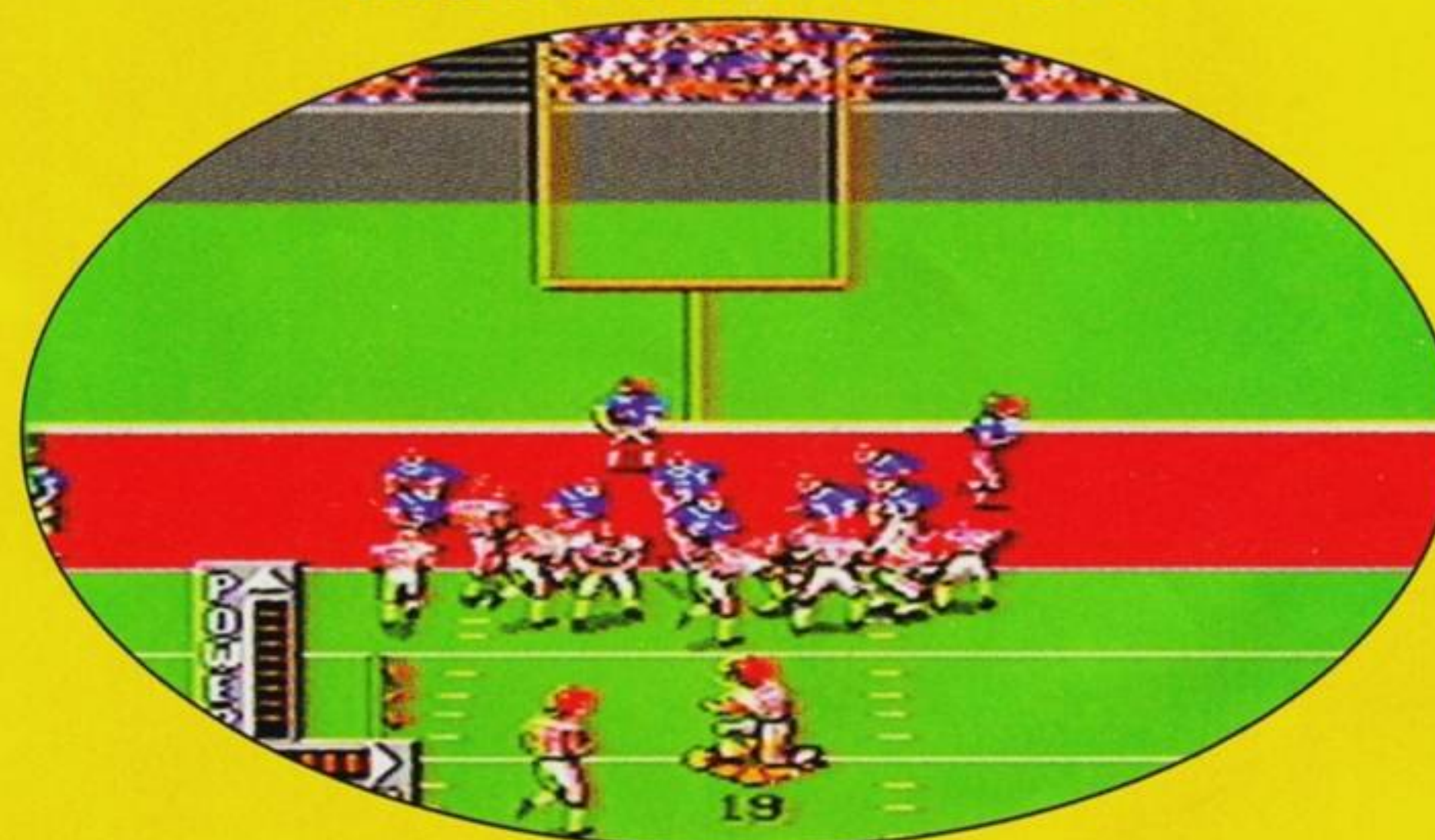
What's Coming? More footballing confusion is on the way. Whether or not Sega's *NFL Football 94 Starring Joe Montana* (for Mega Drive) will ever make it to Australia is anyone's guess, but it's out now in the States. Two other Sega Sports titles are in the pipeline: a *College Football* cart and *NFL's Greatest: San Francisco Vs Dallas* for the Mega CD.

EA have a Mega CD version of *Bill Walsh College Football* to flog, with added video footage and play-by-play commentary. Keep an eye out for *Tecmo Superbowl* (an updated version of the old NES hit) for SNES and Mega Drive and the two-in-one *Sports Illustrated Football/Baseball* cart for the SNES too. Oh, and don't forget *John Madden* for the 3DO - it looks hot!

NFL Quarterback Club



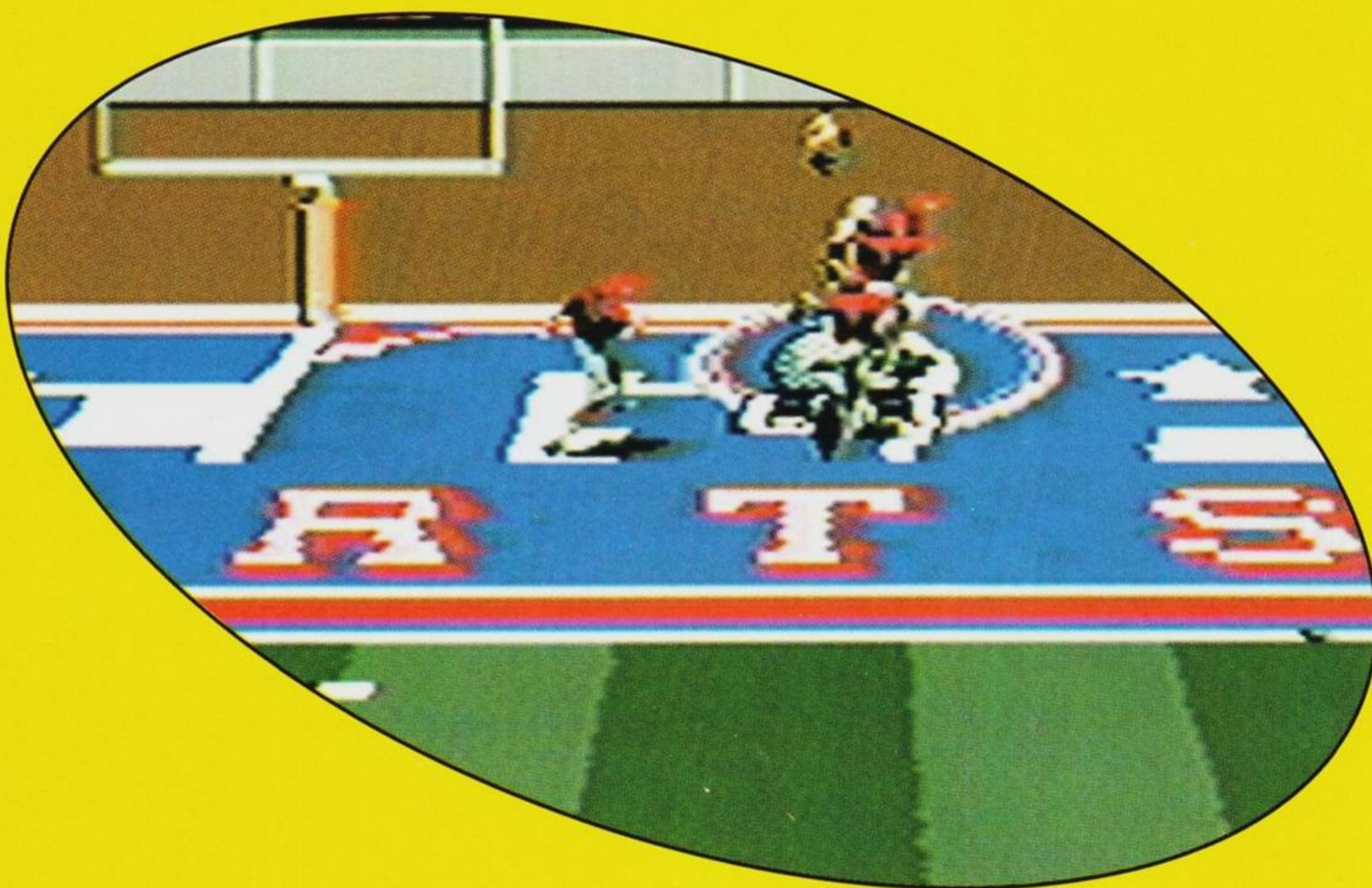
Madden NFL '94



Joe Montana's NFL Football



an



NFL Quarterback Club

Like the other two games in our feature, *NFL Quarterback Club* has an official NFL license (do they give them to anyone who asks politely?). But Acclaim, who love a big name more than anyone in the business, have got individual licenses with some of the NFL's biggest Quarterbacks too - Troy Aikman, Randall Cunningham, John Elway, Jim Kelly, Steve Young, Boomer Esiason, Phil Simms, Mark Rypien and Bernie Kosar.

Why did Acclaim need to sign them all up? Because aside from being a normal, 28 team NFL Football game, *NFL Quarterback Club* also contains a special "Quarterback Challenge". It's a sub-game which puts two of the

above QBs (represented by poor quality digitised stills) through their paces to determine who's the better man (well, the better Quarterback anyway).

There's four "events", testing Accuracy, Speed and Mobility, Distance and Read and Recognition. It's all about hitting targets and pushing buttons. Much like other "event" based games (*Olympic Gold* for instance) once you get the timing down, you're unbeatable.

As for the real game (you know, the Football bit), basically it's a Madden clone - which is hardly surprising as it's been developed by Park Place Productions, the guys responsible for the original *John*

Madden Football. You can play exhibition matches or a playoff series under two difficulty levels (beginner or advanced) but you can't play a full NFL season. If you want season play, you'll

have to go for *Madden 94* or *Montana* on CD.

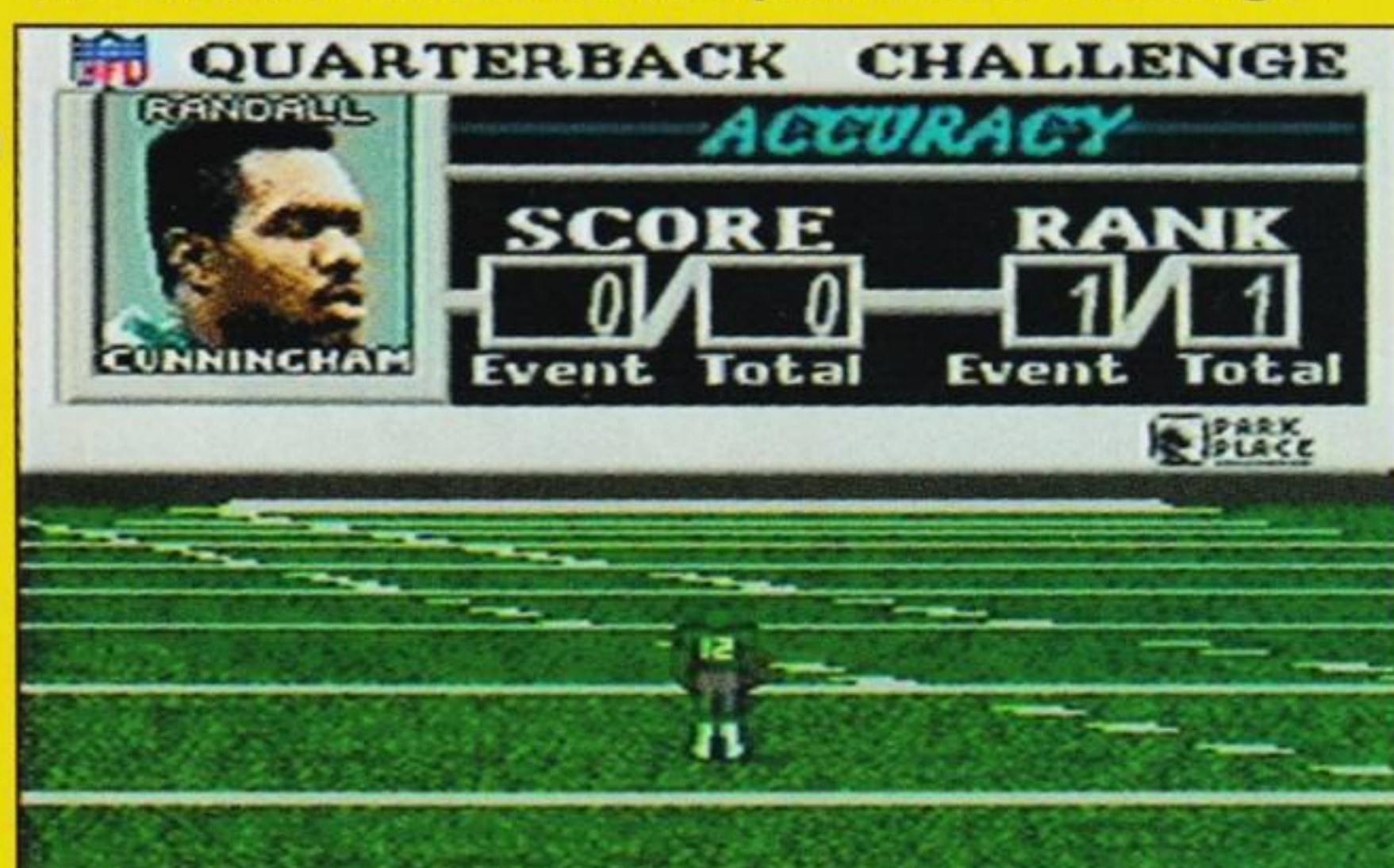
The graphics are fairly uninspiring on both SNES and Mega Drive - the scrolling and screen-updates on the Mega Drive are particularly ugly. The sound is nothing to get too excited about either. There's some good crowd samples and the odd bone-crunching hit, but it's all a bit tame.

The gameplay, using the familiar Madden-style behind the Quarterback perspective, is solid. *NFL Quarterback Club* does play a decent game of football. The controls are simple and responsive. Calling and executing plays is easy - in fact, it plays just like a Madden game. The only difference is that for passing plays, instead of passing windows, the receivers have coloured circles marked A, B or C over their heads.

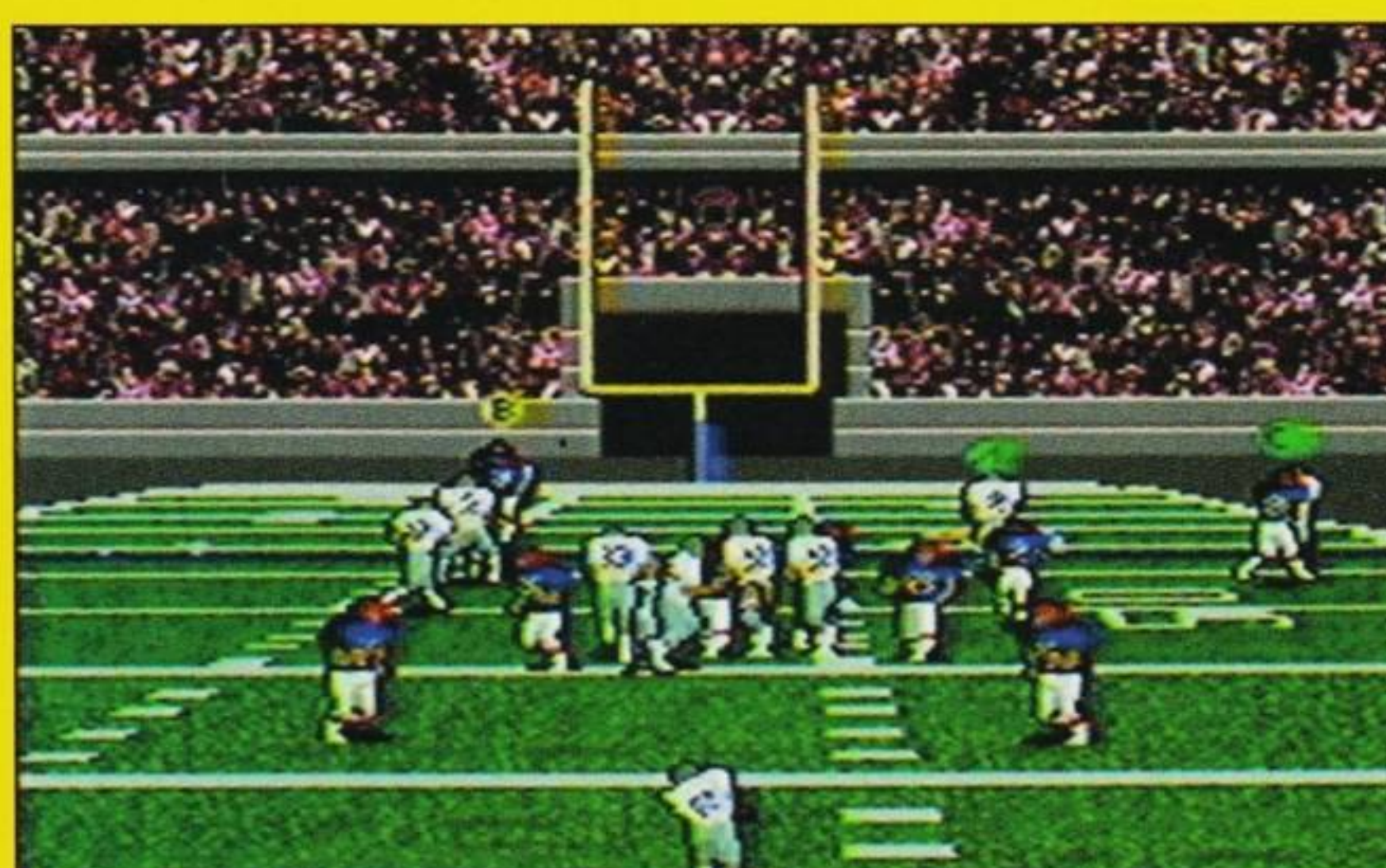
Aside from the Quarterback Challenge mode (which is a dodgy addition to say the least) though, there's nothing that marks *NFL QB Club* as anything special. If you want a Madden game then buy a real Madden game - you'll get more plays, more features and more teams for your money.



The selection screen for the Quarterback Challenge.



The first event in the Quarterback Challenge.



A passing play. There's no windows, but each receiver is clearly marked.

FORMAT: MD/SNES

AVAILABLE: TBA

CATEGORY: SPORTS

PLAYERS: 1-2

PUBLISHER: ACCLAIM

PRICE: TBA

visuals

It's all a bit plain to be honest. The scrolling on the Mega Drive version sucks.

78

sound

Nothing to get terribly excited about here either, I'm afraid.

78

gameplay

Solid, that's the word for it. A few more plays would've been nice though - and don't bother with the QB Challenge.

82

longterm

No season play, but, as always, a good honest waste of time for two.

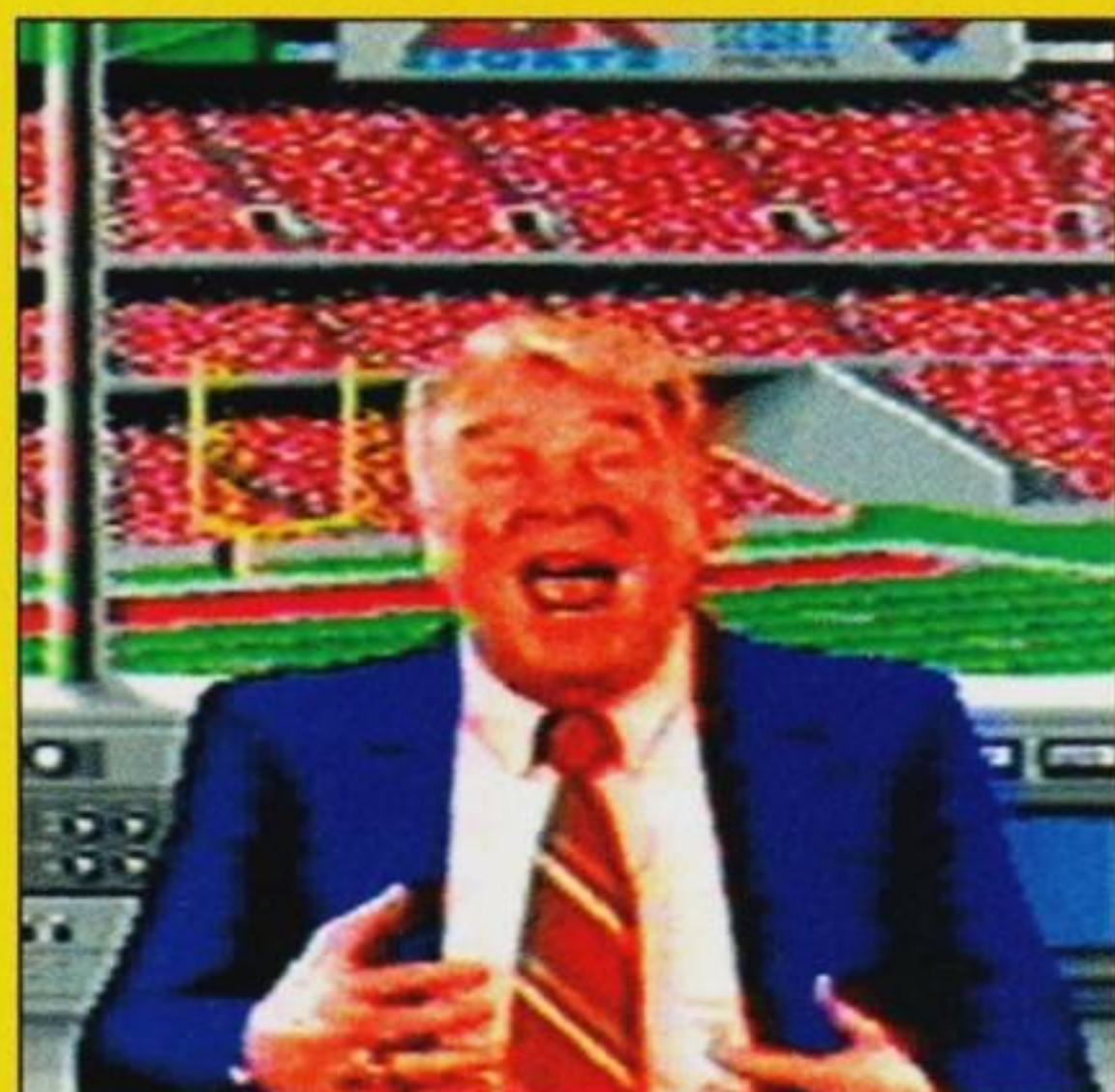
79

overall

Put two "7s" together and you get 77. Not a great game, but not a bad one either.

77%

Madden NFL '94



Feeling a little confused lately? Got a sense of personal disorder? The world seems to be spinning inexorably towards chaos, does it? What you need is something to reassure you - something familiar enough to be comforting, but new and exciting enough to bring you out of your shell. What you need is *Madden NFL '94*.

Every year EA trot out the latest incarnation of *John Madden Football*, and every year they make it

just a little bit better. But underneath it all it's always the same game. Whether or not you need this game if you've already got a copy of an earlier Madden game is up to you. It depends on how keen you are and how much money you've got. I'll tell you what's new and improved and you can take it from there.

1. It's finally got an NFL license so you get real teams, updated for the '94 season, and real team logos and helmet designs to admire.

2. It's multi-player. With EA's "4 Way Play", the more, the merrier.

3. It's got Season Play. You can play a full NFL season, storm through the Playoffs and take out the Super Bowl - and it's all saved to battery backup.

The NFL Season adds a lot to the one-player game, but even though the computer has smartened up, it's still too easy. You won't get too many blowouts any more, but you shouldn't lose too many. I'm 10 and 0 in my

Joe Montana's NFL Football

We previewed this last month. The screen grabs looked good, didn't they? Well, it turns out that the game itself is actually rather good too. Yep, *Joe Montana CD* is the real surprise packet of the NFL pretenders.

Sega have crammed a lot of stuff onto the CD. There's three difficulty levels (Rookie, Normal and Pro), all 28 NFL teams, and you can play a full NFL season too. Actually, the only way to qualify for the playoffs and have a shot at the Superbowl is by playing a full season. Win the Superbowl and you can face 10 All-Time Great teams, like Joe Namath's '68 Jets, the unbeaten '72 Dolphins, and Montana's '84 49ers.

The graphics are a real standout. It's one of the first games to use

Cinepak technology (we told you about it in Issue #1) and it shows: the colours are nice and clean and the scrolling and scaling is very smooth. Even the "TruVideo" of Joe looks OK. The sprites may be a bit blocky (and as they're scaled, the bigger they get, the blockier they get), but the animation is good and the action is speedy so it shouldn't bother you too much.

You can see the work Sega's programmers have put into the game when you fiddle around with the instant replay feature. There's 4 camera angles to choose from: normal, close up, an overhead blimp view (which is cool), and Helmet Cam (which is cooler). Even Don Lane can't deliver coverage as good as this.

As you'd expect, the CD sound is pretty nifty. The crowd's nice and noisy (there's even some idiot with a trumpet), the hits are as big and hard as the HYPER crew, and the commentary is fantastic. Here's a particularly satisfying example: "Well

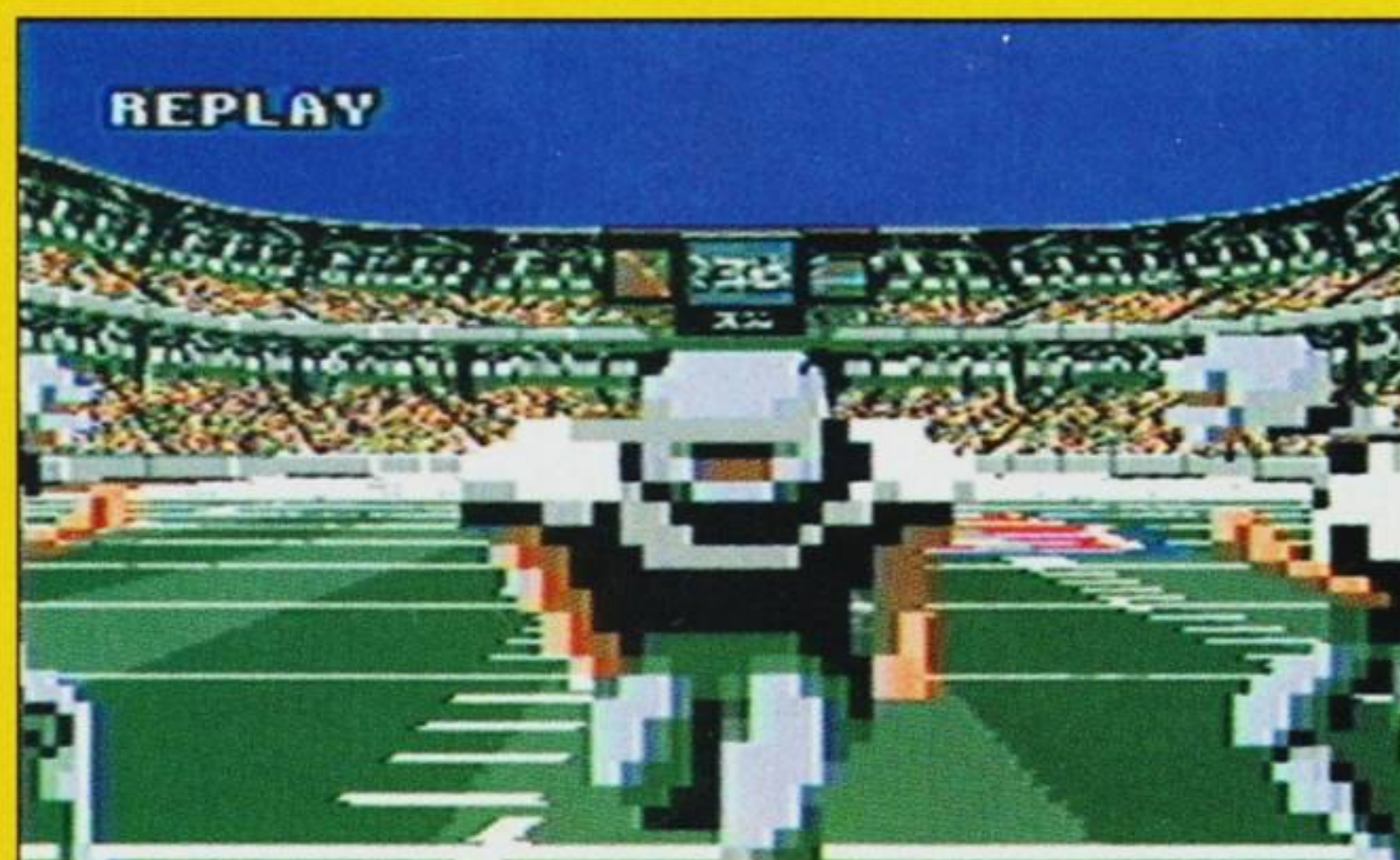
the receiver was covered and there was no one to throw to so the Quarterback had to eat the football". It's almost as if (and I apologise for being a bit Zen) you, the game, and the commentator become as one for a fleeting moment.

I've saved the biggest surprise till last - the gameplay is good too. The behind the Quarterback perspective (it really is the only way to go) works very well. You can even scan the field to the left and right before the snap to check out the defence. There's lots of plays (each team has its own Playbook) and they're easy to call. You can flip every play too. Player control is good (and very much like a Madden game - you can spin, dive, throw a lob or a bullet pass) and after a while you should be able to run and pass with the best of them.

Joe Montana on CD is a much better game than I expected. In fact, I'd even recommend it to diehard Madden fans - the gameplay's not as good, but it comes close. I hate to end on a sour note, but there are a few niggles: the computer's AI seems very low (I've won every game by a big margin) and the CD access time makes it a bit of a stop/start affair. Check it out though. This could be the NFL game for you.



Blimp view!



Helmet Cam! You're about to be sacked.



This is your standard view from the pocket.

FORMAT: MEGA CD

AVAILABLE: NOW

CATEGORY: NFL PERHAPS?

PLAYERS: 1-2

SEGA AMERICA

PRICE: TBA

visuals

A great perspective, scaling galore and more instant replay angles than you really need. "Helmet-Cam" is a winner.

93

sound

Good FX and a genuinely annoying US commentator give it a lot of atmosphere.

89

gameplay

Lots of plays and good player control. It's a nice change for a Montana game.

84

longterm

It might be too easy for 1 player but there's seasons to play and Superbowls to win! 2 player challenges are the go.

84

overall

Surprise, surprise! Joe finally scores. A worthy game in any sports fan's collection and a top Mega CD title.

85%

season with Kansas City. Some of them have been close, but against All Madden All Time ("the ultimate challenge" according to John), I racked up 42 points in a 20 minute game with Dallas. Where Madden really shines (and has always done so) is as a two-player game. With four players it's even better. Besides, I'm not sure that people want to lose to computer opponents anyway.

4. Aside from the 28 current NFL teams you get 38 Super Bowl teams,

12 All Time franchises, and 2 All Madden teams to play with too, which makes (for those of you struggling with the mathematics) a total of 80 teams.

5. More Formations, More Plays, and Play Flipping. There's 2 new formations (Single back and the I form), heaps of new plays, and every one of them can be flipped (just like a *Montana* game). You can send a man in motion at any time and it's easier to run a no-huddle offence

too. The old 3 step play calling has been replaced with a 2 step method (formation and play), but I miss the realism of swapping Normal, Fast, Big and Hands sets.

6. It's got a re-worked graphics engine. In fact, it's got the *Bill Walsh* graphics engine. The perspective is a bit lower, the players are bigger and there's more detail. It's also got reverse angle instant replay and the set your own audibles feature.

7. More Madden. You'll either love the new "Maddenisms" in the commentary or you'll hate 'em (hearing John say "Pow!" for the 452nd time gets on the nerves). Thank God you can turn them off.

Needless to say, if you don't own a Madden game you really should buy this one. For realism, gameplay depth and long term value, you can't beat it.



First Down! Run by #34 for 1 yard.



Season Play. The Chiefs are well on the way.



The Play Selection screen. Nice presentation, huh?



The new reverse angle instant replay. Touchdown!

Madden '94 on SNES

Electronic Arts will not be officially releasing *Madden NFL 94* for the SNES in Australia - in fact, all EA SNES releases are up in the air at the moment. Why? Because EA are having a few licensing disagreements with Nintendo. Given the strength of the yen and Nintendo's strict control over the manufacturing of SNES carts (third party producers give their game's code to Nintendo and then buy back the finished cart), EA feel that, in all but the biggest markets (like America), it's not profitable enough to sell SNES games.

The good news is that you should still be able to get a copy of *Madden '94* on import, and if you do, you'll live happily ever after. Features-wise, it's exactly the same game as the Mega Drive version. It's multi-player too: using Hudson Soft's Super Multitap up to 5 players can compete at once!

Visually, the SNES version has the edge on the Mega Drive. The graphics are sharp and detailed, using the SNES's 256 colours to the full. For Mode 7 fans the screen rotates during punts and turnovers and the 360° instant replay camera lets you review every single angle of any play. The only weak spot is the animation - it's a bit choppy.

It doesn't quite match up to the Mega Drive version in the gameplay department. *Madden '94* on Mega Drive is faster, smoother and the controls are more respon-

sive. Don't get me wrong, the SNES version plays well, it's just that the Mega Drive plays a bit better.

Madden '94 is still miles ahead of any other SNES NFL game. As for scores, take the Mega Drive box and add a few marks for the Visuals but take a few away from the Gameplay. Leave the Overall score where it is. Now go and try to find a copy!



The 360° instant replay camera. Love that Mode 7.

FORMAT: MEGA DRIVE

AVAILABLE: NOW

PIGSKIN PUNISHMENT

PLAYERS: 1-4

ELECTRONIC ARTS

NO RRP

visuals

Seen Bill Walsh College Football? Then you've seen this too. The presentation is excellent.

sound

Great in-game FX and heaps of digitised Madden-speak. The quality could be better though.

gameplay

Classic Madden gameplay and perfect controls plus new plays and features to fiddle with.

longterm

With the multi-player option, 80 teams, and Season play, you'll never tire of it.

overall

Still the best American Footie game in town and one of the best Mega Drive games ever.

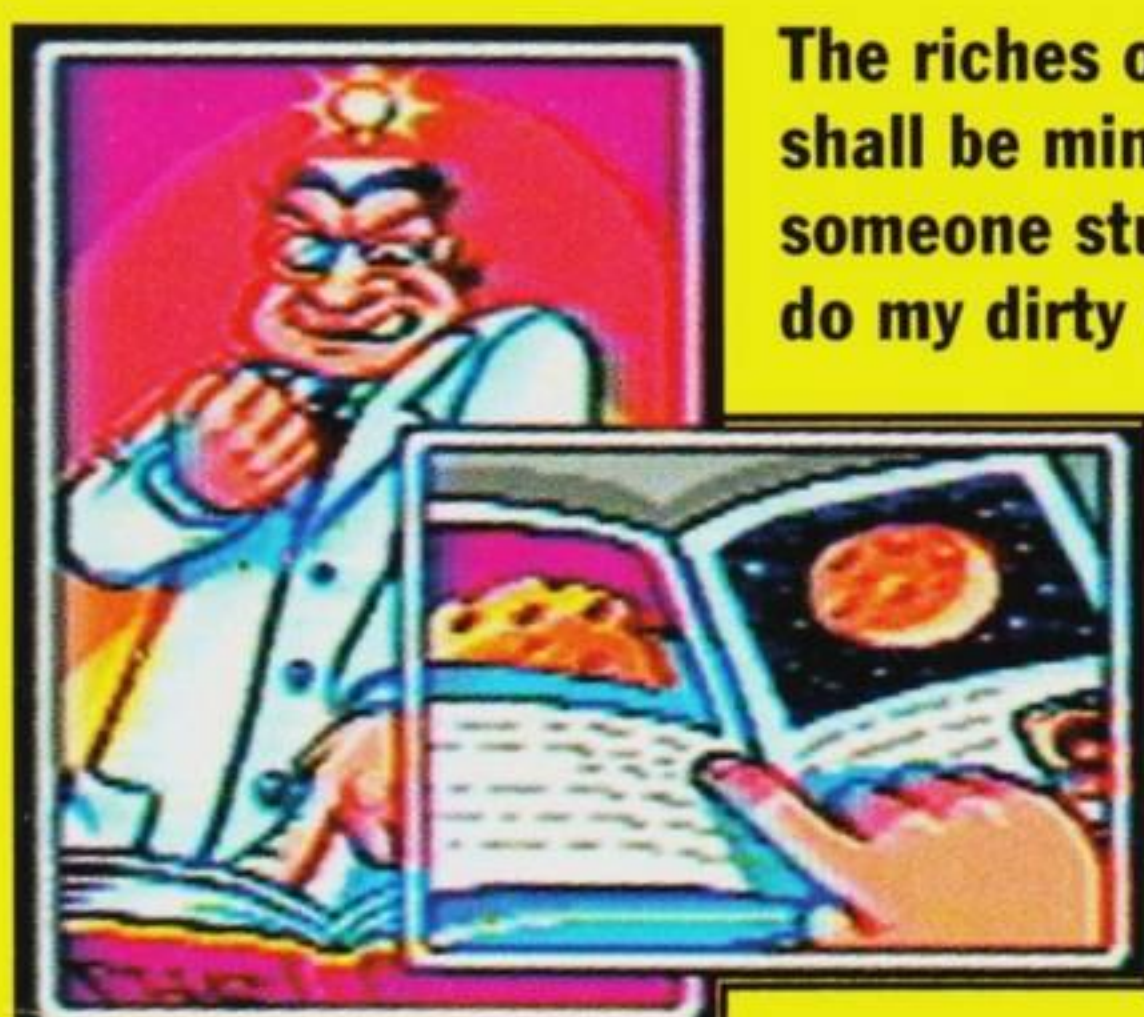
93%



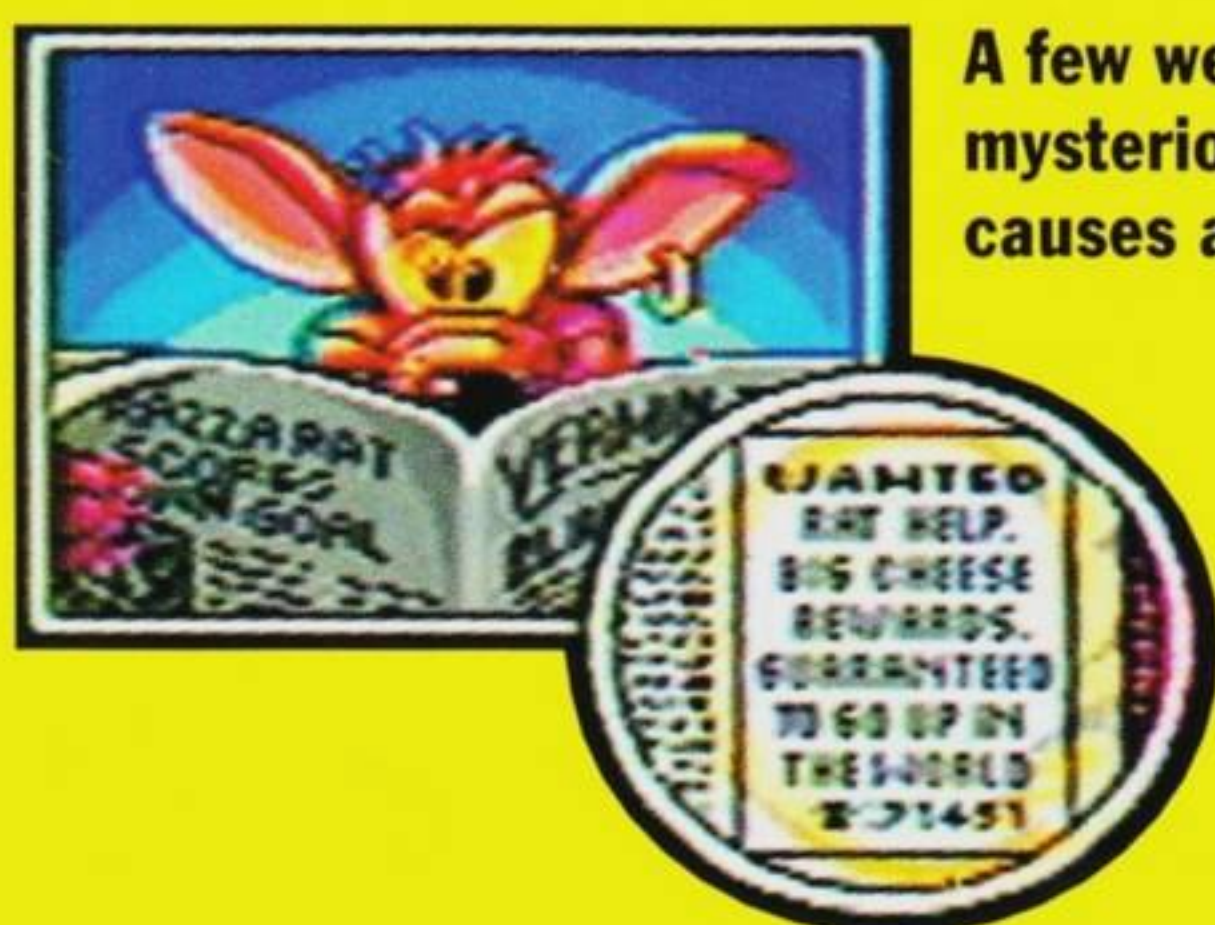
Defeated by James Pond, Dr Maybe leaves the North Pole... intent upon revenge...



Before long his scheming mind hits upon a dastardly new plan...



The riches of the moon shall be mine! I must find someone stupid enough to do my dirty work...



A few weeks later... a mysterious advertisement causes a stir in Rat City.



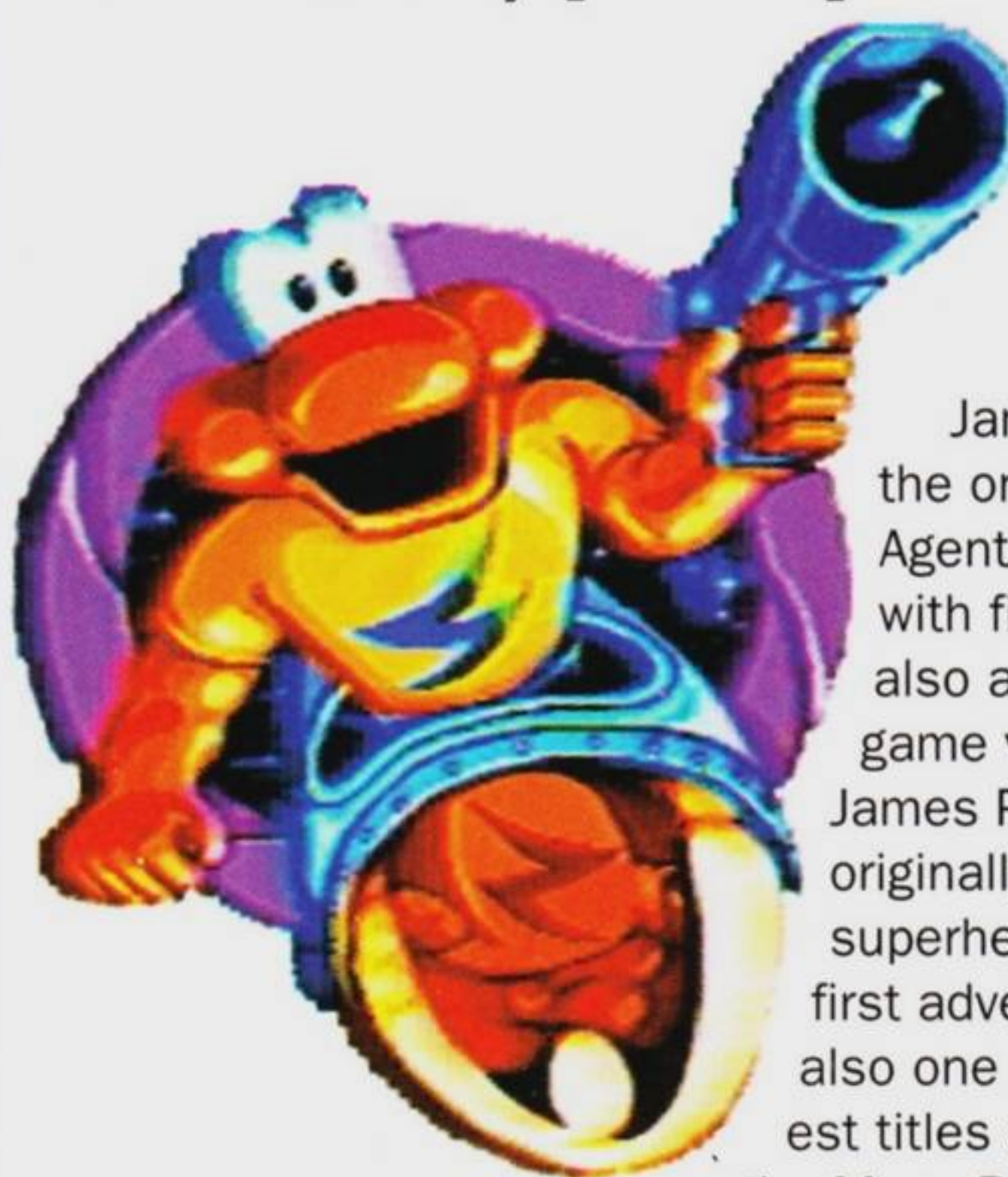
And so, Dr Maybe arrives on the moon with his army of rodents.



At last my mines are operational! With this high-grade processed cheese I will corner the global markets and the earth shall be at my mercy.

James

How do you like your fish? Crumbed? Pan fried, perhaps? With chips? How about in a platform game? Andrew Humphreys develops a taste for cod...



James Pond is the only Special Agent in the world with fins. He's also a bit of a game veteran. James Pond was originally an Amiga superhero, but his first adventure was also one of the earliest titles available for the Mega Drive. It was

fairly average (and that's being kind). James Pond II: Robocod was better. James Pond 3: Operation Starfish is better still. It's a seriously large, seriously playable platformer. If the guys at Vectordean keep it up, James Pond 4: The Driftnet Escape will be a doozy.

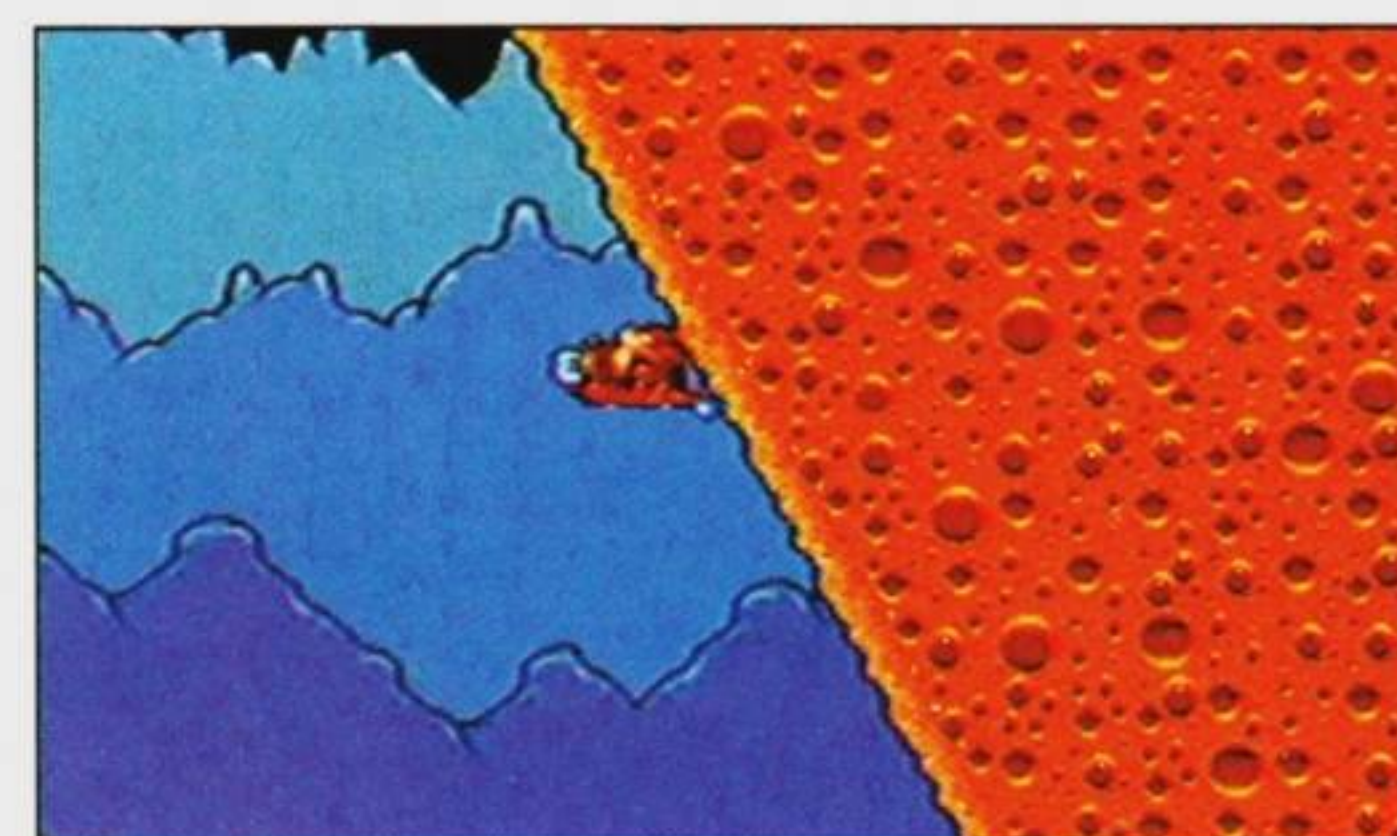
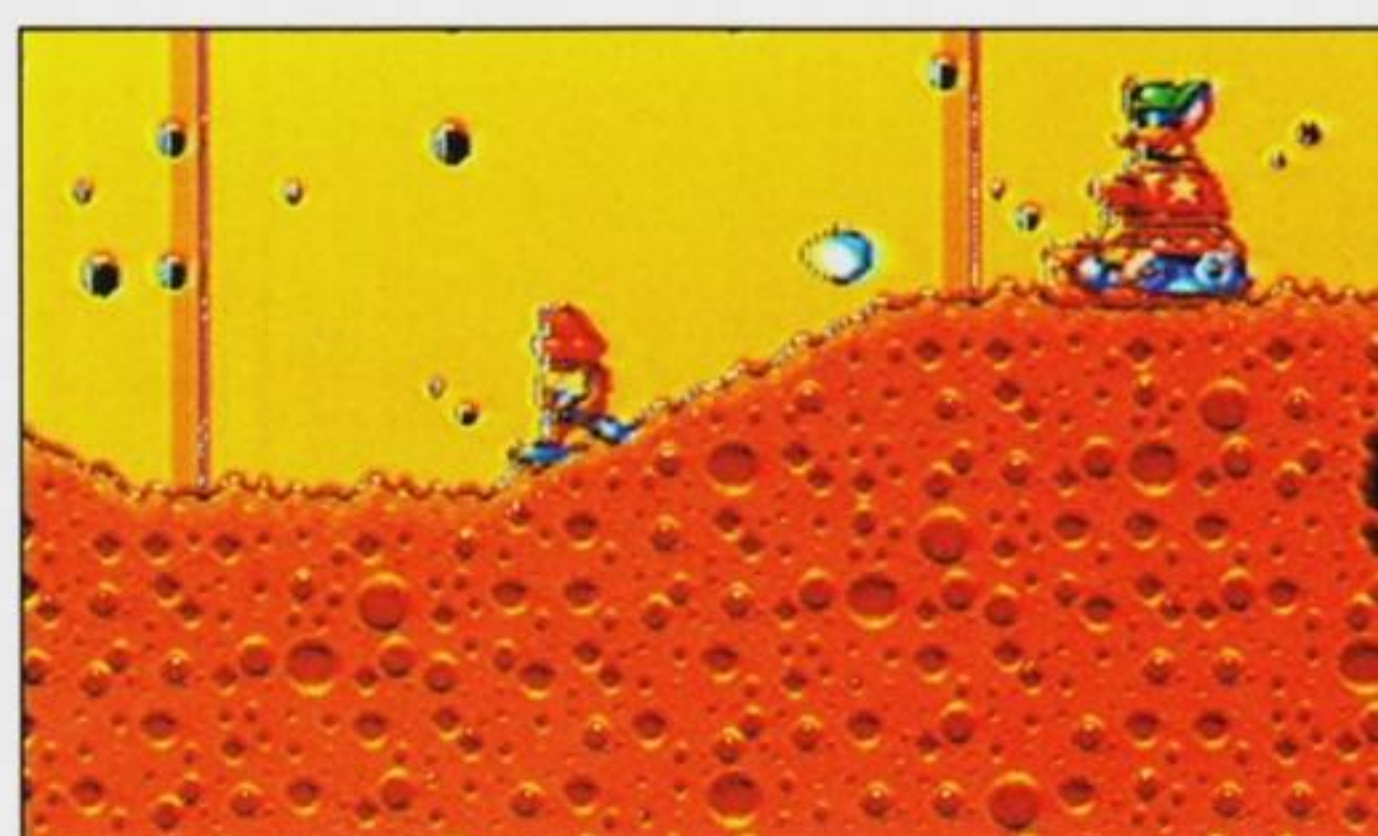
Mullet Pond's old enemy, the dastardly Dr Maybe, is trying to monopolise the world's dairy market by strip-mining the Moon - which, as we all know, is made out of green cheese. Only Pond can save the world's supply of milk fat. So, armed only with his anti-gravity boots and a rather nifty Flash Gordon signature range spacesuit, the Courageous Cod heads to the Moon on a mission of destruction.

It all turns into a platform game with agents to rescue, evil henchmen (well, they're rats mainly) to waste, mines to destroy, hundreds (literally) of levels to clear and masses of fun to be had. A password-backed map screen charts your progress. The basic objective in

each level is to reach the exit (one of Maybe's communication beacons), but there's also weapons to find, items to collect, and puzzles to solve along the way. Just like a Mario game, it's packed with enough challenging gameplay to put it in a class above the usual platform-fodder.

The controls are simple and responsive. There's a jump button (obviously enough), an action button (to pick up/use/ and drop items) which doubles as a punch button (hold it down and use the direction pad), and a speed button which lets James move his fishy feet at a frightening pace. Once he's built up speed, Pond could outrace Sonic with one fin tied behind his back. He really is fast, and with his anti-G boots, he's just as fast upside down. Yep, Pond clings better than Glad Wrap.

This is Gameplay with a capital "G". The levels are big, there's loads to do, and combining the various items to get to where you want to go is a lot more fun than simply pushing a jump button. The only slightly frustrating bit about the game is the password system. You don't get a password until you find a surveillance beacon. That's fine, it's just that the passwords are so long and complicated you need an entire foolscap page and 5 minutes of your time to jot one down.



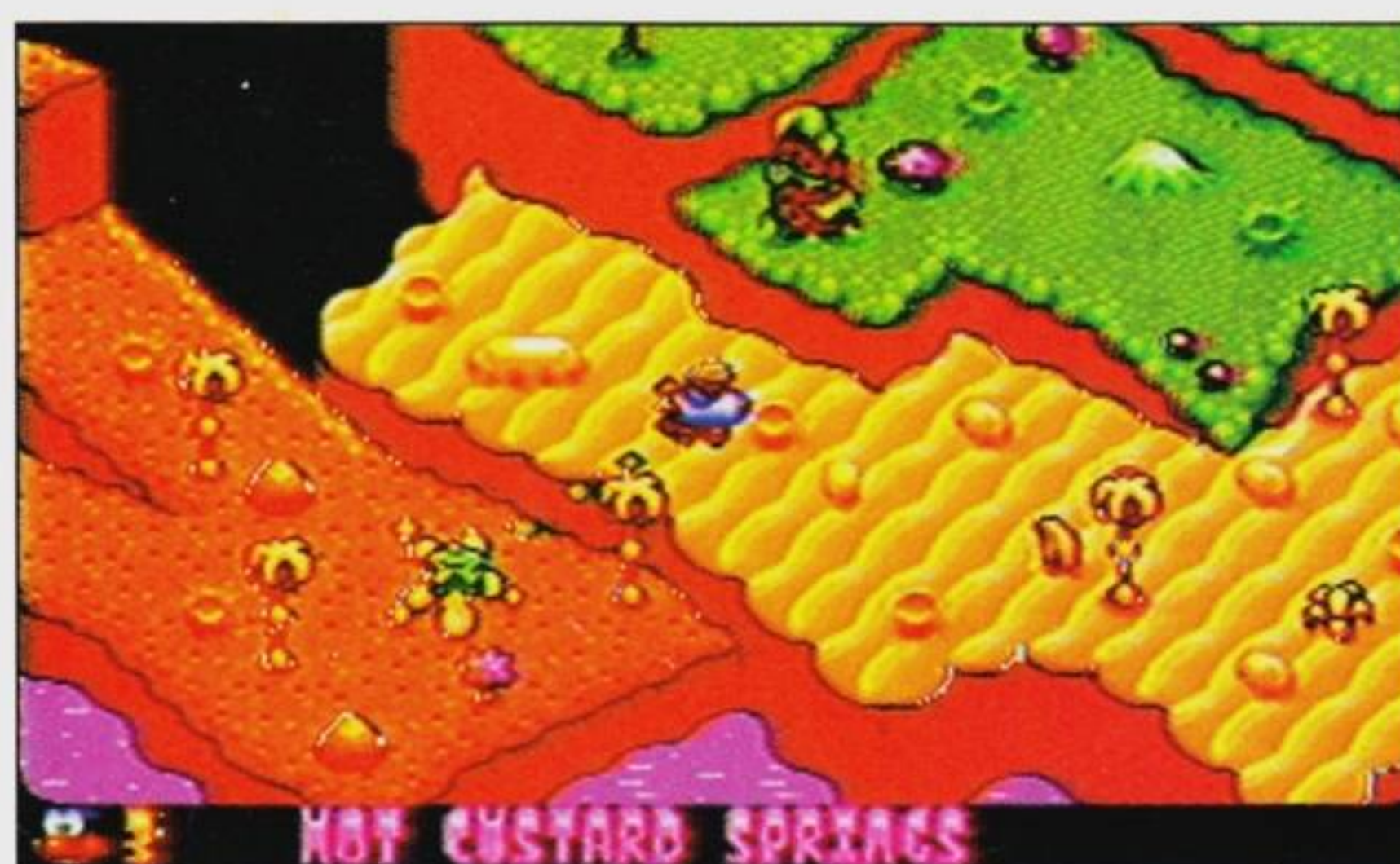
Pond 3

Operation St★rfish

Flathead Not only does James Pond 3 play better than the first two games, it looks and sounds better too. It's not the best looking game in the world, but Pond is well drawn and animated and the graphics have a distinct style and character all of their own. They're colourful, varied, and everything scrolls smoothly even at full speed. The music's good too (in a very secret-agentish way) and there's some clear, stiff-upper-lip speech ("We're counting on you Pond") before each level.

This is a very professional, slickly produced and programmed product. Even if you didn't like the first two Pond adventures (I'm not crazy about them myself), you'll like this one. There's so much to do that you'll be at it for ages and you'll enjoy doing it too. James Pond 3 is one of the biggest, fastest, fishiest platformers around. Go on, play with the

Big Kipper. And when you're finished with him, sprinkle some lemon juice on him, wrap him in foil and bake him in a low oven for about an hour. Mmmm. Lovely.



The map screen as you go into Hot Custard Springs...



...where you find hot custard...



Hit this to complete a level.



Find the springs and fly high. In the sky.



...and even some big 'nanas.



Pond's got his fins on the apple gun!



Helpful messages guide you through the game.

MEGA DRIVE

available

NOW

category

PLATFORMER

players

1

publisher

ELECTRONIC ARTS

price

NO RRP

visuals

Full of colour and character. Pond is well animated and bursting with flavour too.

84

sound

Good FX, clear speech samples and some cloak and dagger on the Moon type tunes.

83

gameplay

Lots to do and it's a joy to do it too. Classic, Mario-rivalling platform fun. Am I the only one who's getting hungry?

90

longterm

Hundreds of BIG levels and some tricky tactics to figure out to boot.

85

overall

The best Pond game by far. An excellent platformer with all the right ingredients. Just like a good fish recipe really.

87%

Skyblazer



What's this? A new kind of hero in an old kind of game? Does Skyblazer have enough up his jockstrap to cut it?
Andrew Humphreys
has a peek and comes back with all the answers...

Growing up can be tough. It can be even tougher if your parents see fit to burden you with an unfortunate name. Schoolyard taunts can ruin a young man's psyche. Take a look at Sky, our hero. "Sky" might be an OK name for a girl (even then it's just a bit, well, *hippie*), but for a dashing young boy it's less than appropriate. Sky was teased, beaten up, and after a while, he began to question his own manhood. He reacted as all of us would - he went to the gym, pumped himself up,

and set out to prove his true butchness to the world.

When the evil Ashura returns to the land of the Mystic Pantheon (Sky's home), captures the young sorceress Arianna and starts turning everyone into evil warlords, Sky seizes the opportunity to clear up any lingering doubts over his masculinity. He will rescue Arianna! He will destroy Ashura and end his tyrannical rule! And he'll be back in time for afternoon tea with Mumsy.

A Silly Old Duffer *Skyblazer* has a bit more to offer than your standard badly-scripted fantasy platformer. It's basically a side-scrolling affair, where you jump around and beat people up along the way but there's also some first-person perspective flying sequences to break things up. More importantly, thanks to the nicely paced gameplay, it's a hell of a lot of fun to play.

To reach the evil Ashura, Sky must travel across three continents and fight his way through twenty one levels filled with bizarre enemy creatures and challenging bosses. A map screen and a very strange password system keep track of your journey. At the end of each level a silly old duffer pops up to call you names (like "Whelp") and to tell you not to get too cocky. He also shows you the "Mystic Pattern" (the password) and at certain points in the game he gives you new super-powers to play with.

At the beginning of the game, Sky's magical abilities are pretty weedy - all he's got is the Dragon Slash as a special attack. As you get further on in the game, your powers and your Energy Bar increase. Soon you'll be able to use the Comet Flash to fly across the screen and wipe out bad guys and once you gain the Healing power, there should be no stopping you. But, although you can switch between your special powers, their use is not unlimited. Once your Magic Gauge is empty, that's it - unless you can find a Red Potion power-up to refill it.



Spiderman? All that weight training has made our Sky quite a versatile sort of a hero. He swims, he jumps and just like Spiderman, he's pretty handy at sticking to walls. Yep, Sky can do almost anything with ease. The controls are excellent. Everything feels just right so you can jump (you stick to walls automatically), attack (pound away on the button for combos), and fire off magic to your heart's content. Because the controls are so tight it really is fun to play right from the start.

It looks and sounds just dandy too. Sky isn't the biggest platform sprite around but his animation is very smooth so he looks pretty cool when he's running and jumping around. The backgrounds are exceptional. This is one game that makes the most of the SNES's 256 on-screen colours - the depth

is excellent and everything is bright and very vibrant. There's also some good scaling and rotation throughout the game (check out the Tower of Tarolisk and the expanding boss inside) and some smooth Mode 7 effects in the first-person flying stages.

The music is very good and quite ambitious (the pompous, cymbal-crashing theme has really grown on me) and the sound effects are just as effective.

Gameplay-wise, it's a very solid game. It's big (21 levels), it's quite tough, and the programmers have done a good job at packing in some much needed variety. The way your powers keep increasing keeps up the interest level as you progress too.

But... So why haven't I been raving on about how fantastic

Skyblazer is from the first paragraph of this review? And why, even though I did enjoy playing it, has it left me a bit flat? Nothing is missing - it has everything a good game should - it's just that in the end, *Skyblazer* is not exciting or original enough to be truly great. It's a slick package though and it's definitely good value for money so check it out - you might love it. I didn't. But I did like it. A lot, I think. Oh, bugger it - just read the score box and look at the pretty screen grabs.



SNES

available

JANUARY

category

PLATFORM ADVENTURE

players

1

publisher

SONY IMAGESOFT

price

\$89.95

visuals

Superb back-grounds - full of colour and depth. The screen positively glows with pride. Some good Mode 7 custom effects.

90

sound

The effects are solid-sounding enough and the music is very good. And I really dig those cymbal-crashes, honest I do.

89

gameplay

A lot of good, old-fashioned platform fun to be had thanks to the fab controls but don't expect your telly to shatter with excitement.

83

longterm

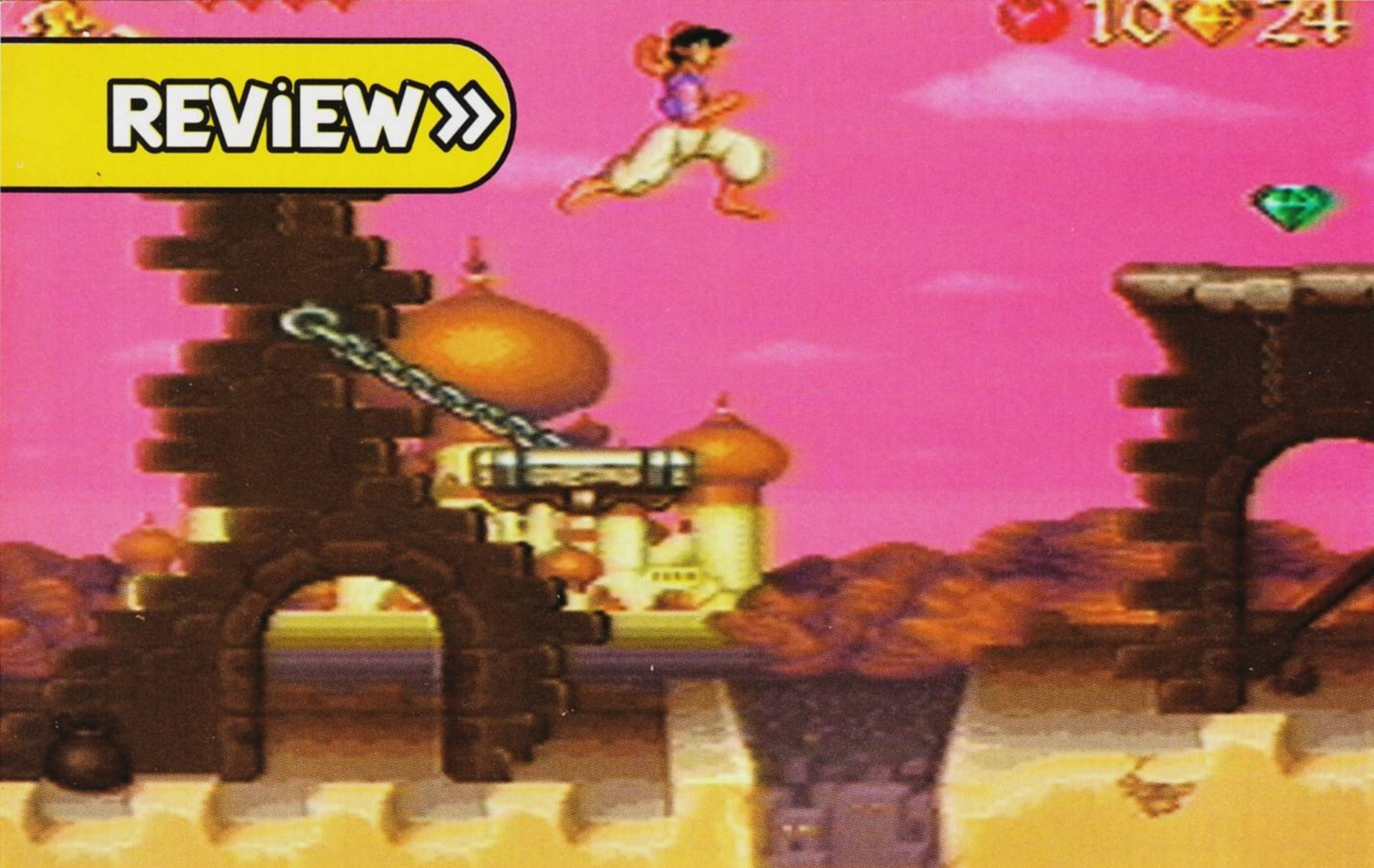
Twenty one levels with password support and some of the bosses can be a real pain in the arse. But will you play it over again once you knock them all off?

80

overall

Big, colourful and generally a lot of fun to play. But if your after a new gaming experience, look elsewhere.

82%



Aladdin is possibly the most beautiful game ever released on the Mega Drive. Can the Super Nintendo compete? You bet your bottom dollar it can. STEVE POLAK joins the coolest street rat in Agrabah.

Aladdin on SNES

There is a veritable smorgasbord of new releases available for the SNES at the moment, but few are as amusing, inspired and downright sexy as Aladdin. Just when you thought the genre had been as flogged to death as jokes about Bronwyn Bishop's hairstyles, Capcom have come up with a platform quest which is nothing less than a masterpiece. This game is so complete with "magical" touches that it is hard to know where exactly to start.

Where to Start? I suppose one of the most significant factors in Aladdin's brilliance is that it was put together by the same Capcom/Disney team that was responsible for *Mickey's Magical Quest*. As a result the cartoon animation is excellent, and the nimble dude in his oversized "trakky daks" runs, glides, slides and generally zooms around the ancient Arabian kingdom of Agrabah with startling fluidity of movement. It might not quite have the flair of the Mega Drive, but it's so close that it's nothing to grumble about.

Added to the main character's animation is Abu the monkey, who points, gestures and generally provides comic relief throughout the quest. One of the best bits of "street theatre" Abu performs is at the end of the first main stage, where Aladdin faces a rotund machete wielding maniac. Abu cowardly hides out of the range of the battle and

makes some hilarious boxing gestures, in order to spur you on.

But there is much more! Aladdin is brilliant in so many other ways, as the cinematic (or should I say cartoon) sequences

in between stages are extremely colourful, and add a realistic element of story to the platform action. For those who are interested in more malevolent sequences, you should check out the scene where the mischievous Abu touches the Holy relics in the Cave of Wonders and incurs the wrath of the gods.

The sonics are also quite effective in that they map the progression of the adventure quite well, providing appropriate thematic elements depending on the landscape Aladdin is moving through. I haven't heard such a wide use of musical styles, and atmospheric vibes since the days of *Castlevania IV*. The backgrounds are also beautifully sculpted. Such fantastic use of light, shade and the colour palette is quite tantalising.

There are also some rather nice touches, like the end of game/continue screen where Aladdin has to pull a "yes" or "no" rope, depending on whether you want to continue. If you look like quitting, both the Genie who is holding the rope and Abu make pathetically sad faces, and if you decide to continue, the Genie beams a big "yes I'm overacting" smile and the monkey does little jumps for joy. This bit is not only very cute but proves to be a strong inducement to keep playing. Also at the end of each section of the game if you are lucky enough to grab the magic scarab you are rewarded with a spin of the Genie's wheel where

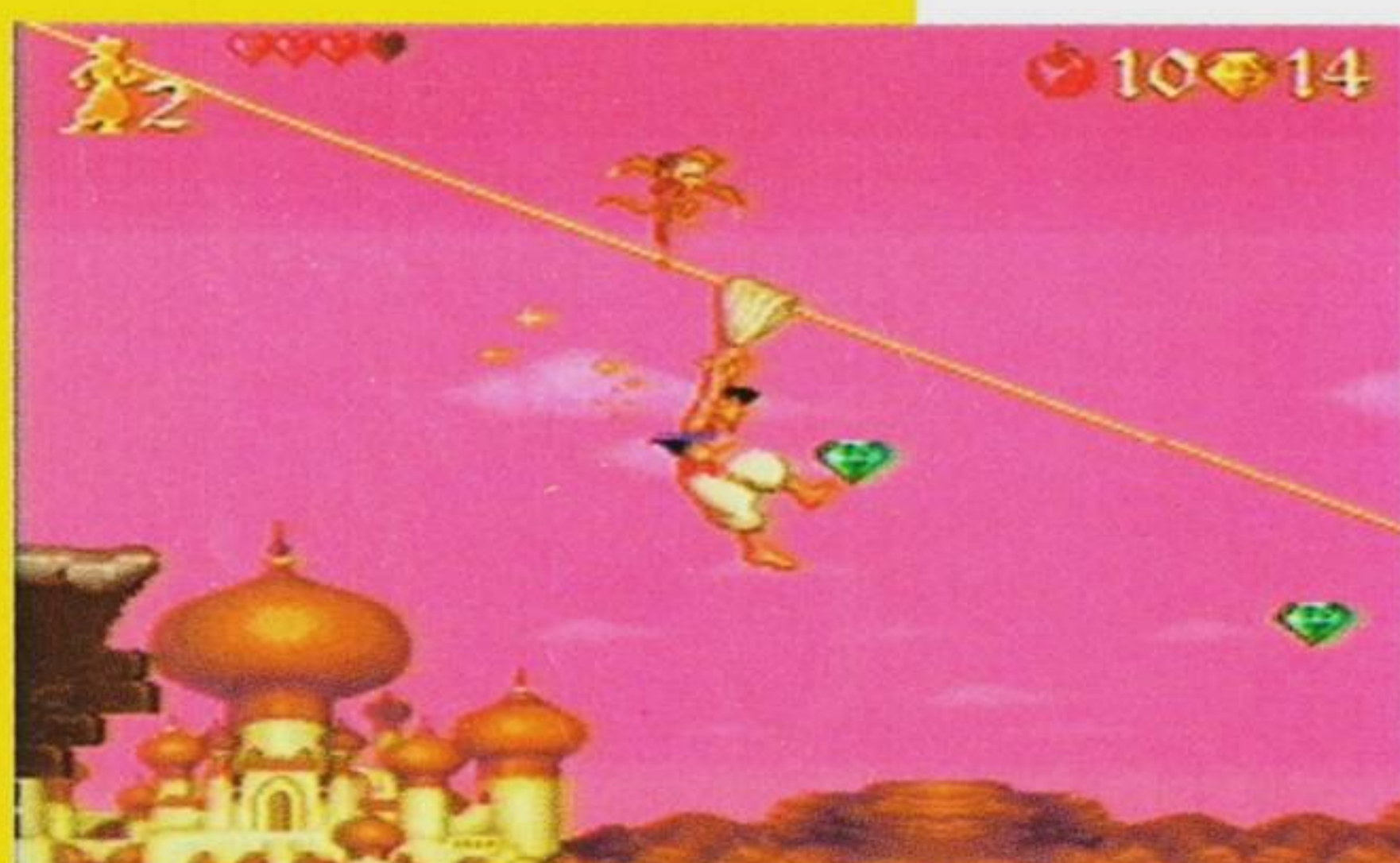
you can be given additional hearts, lives or other bonuses.

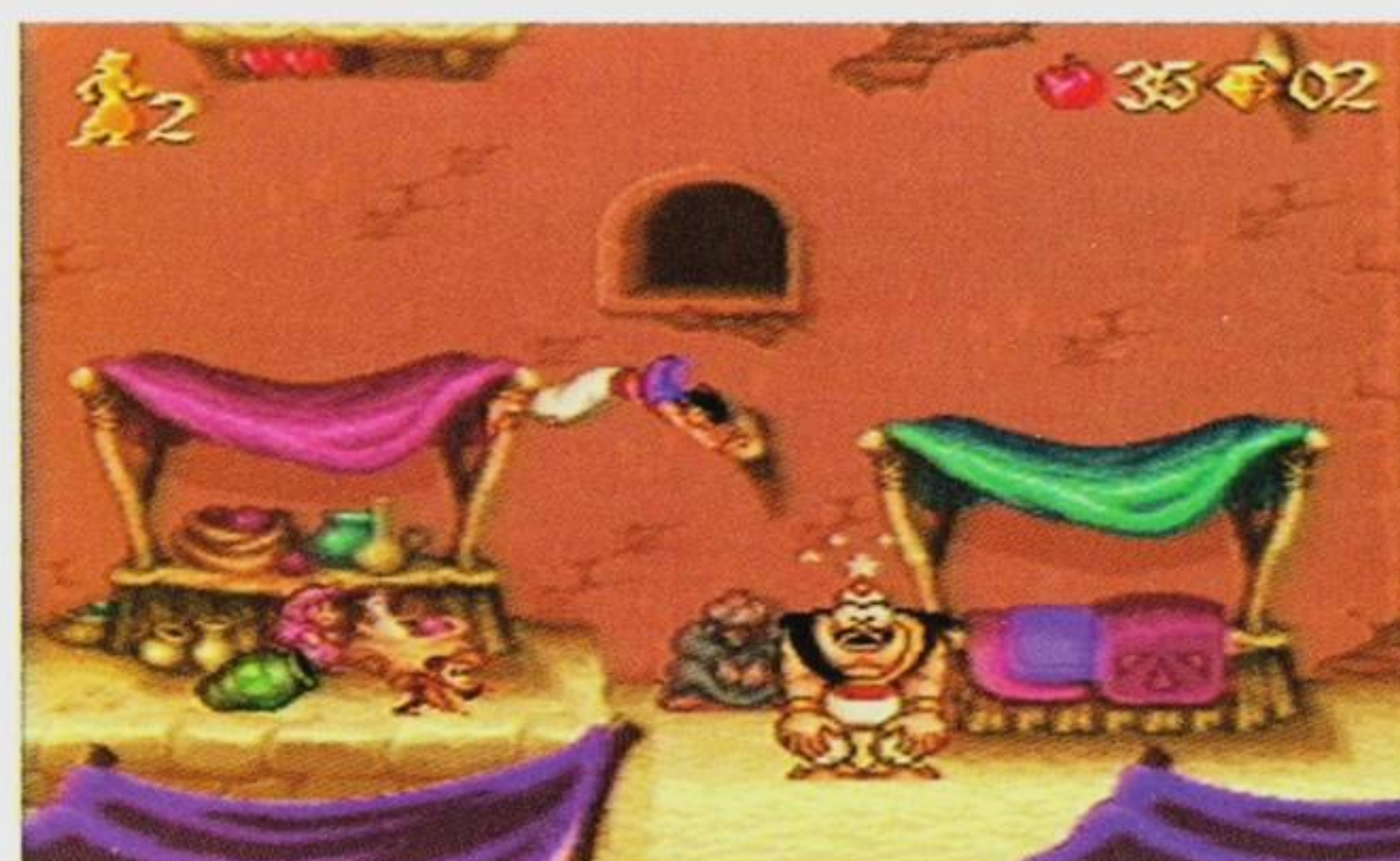
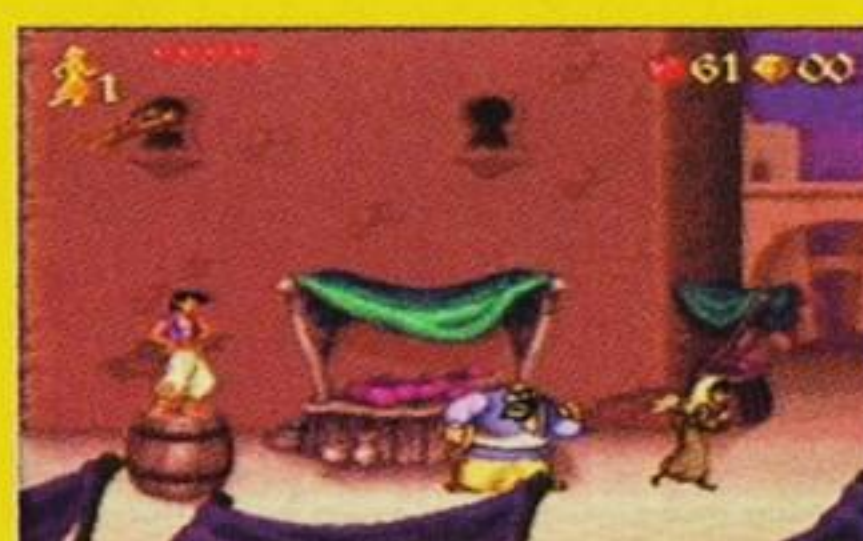
Leaps Out of the Screen This game just keeps leaping out of the screen with additional new bits to excite and amaze! Stage 3, inside the Genie's lamp, is very ethereal as you wander from cloud to cloud surrounded by some dopey looking Genie faces and other comic creatures. This section is preceded by some seriously hard stuff though as you are required to go surfing with the magic carpet, as you try to escape the lava flow that is just inches behind you (very similar to the Mega Drive). After the bit inside the Genie's lamp you are set for the ultimate showdown with the evil Jafar (and no, he isn't a candy coated chocolate snack!).

A word here about gameplay is also worth it, as Aladdin is one of the few platform games where you actually have a nice balance between nimble sprite movement and tolerable playability. The little dude can flit about the screen in quite a manoeuvrable way, but he is not so fast that he (and subsequently your temper) is out of control. Aladdin gets full marks on this most critical point.

So there you have it! A quick jewel-encrusted sprint through one of the real gems available on the SNES for this month.

Thanks to Mega Games (03 894 3611) for the cart.





SNES

available

FEBRUARY

category

PLATFORM

players

1

publisher

CAPCOM

price

N/A

visuals

In a word
"bedazzling". You'll
think you are playing the
cartoon!

93

sound

The music is very
Middle Eastern,
although at times lacking
in bass. The effects are
very realistic, particularly
the deep rumbling bits in
the lava cave.

85

gameplay

You'll only wish
you could be as
nimble as this little dude.
The gameplay is an
absolute treasure!

90

longterm

Not sure here. I am
either very good
(which I doubt) or it
should have been longer.
Still, a fantastic short
journey is much better
than a long, tedious one!

82

overall

Scintillating stuff!
It might not look
quite as good as the
Mega Drive version
but it certainly plays
as well.

90%

The Ren and Stimpy ^{Veediots} Show

Andrew: You Eediot Stuart! Didn't you say this was a "pile of stinky old nose goblins"?

Stuart: No, I said that it was rumoured to be a pile of stinky old nose goblins. And watch your tone of voice.

Andrew: It's actually not bad at all, is it?

Stuart: It's pretty good, in fact. Have a banana and review it for the kids, will you?

Andrew: OK.

If you can remember back to our last issue (yes, I know that's asking a lot), you'll remember our Ren and Stimpy preview for the Mega Drive. We hadn't seen the SNES game but we'd heard it was pretty bad, and we told you so. BUT - we also said (and I quote) "that this could vicious misinformation". Well, lucky for SNES-owning lovers of the cat and dog team it turns out that it was just that - vicious misinformation.

Points for Originality The game is split into four sections, each based on an episode of the *Ren and Stimpy Show*. In the first two sections you play Ren, the asthmatic chihuahua; then it's time to play Stimpy. Basing each section (there's about four levels in each) on a specific episode is a smart idea. Each section has a totally different look and theme to the last. It also means that die-hard fans like the HYPER crew will sit there chuckling insanely to themselves as they remember

those classic moments of Ren and Stimpy mayhem.

All your favourite characters make cameo appearances too. Powdered Toast Man flies through every level dropping powdered toast (what else?) to protect you and little whirly things so you can fly. Watch out for Muddy Mudskipper and the Horse too. You'll also come across items like smelly cheese (to turn your breath into a lethal weapon), old band-aids and toothpaste (for your health), and some extra-stinky socks for big jumps. All the time, you know you could only be playing a Ren and Stimpy game.

Stimpy Style Animation purists will love the graphics job the programmers have come up with. Everything remains faithful to the show - that 1950's sharp-edged style shines through. Take a look at the lounge room from "The Boy Who Cried Rat" and you'll see what I mean. Ren and Stimpy and all their friends are well drawn

and animated and the music and effects are top-notch too. The voices ("I'm so happy!") are nice and clear.

As for the gameplay, it's pretty standard platform stuff but it plays well and there is a bit more to it than just running and jumping. There's heaps of objects lying around just waiting for Ren and Stimpy to pick up and use. In "The Boy Who Cried Rat" there's flower pots and logs to throw at Stimpy and "In the Army" gives you grenades (to blast through walls), umbrellas (to glide with and to protect yourself from falling watermelons!) and cannons to play with.

As the game progresses there's even a slight puzzle element that creeps into it. In "Stimpy's Invention" you'll need to figure out switches and even make an explosive. And just what is that blowtorch for? Oh - and don't listen to people who tell you the controls are bad - they're fine. It's just that some bits are tricky. A bit of practice makes perfect.

Ren and Stimpy: Veediots isn't the best game around, but it's not the worst by any means. In fact, it's probably a bit of a milestone for T.H.Q. when you consider their previous efforts (*Wayne's World*, *Home Alone 2* and *Rocky and Bullwinkle* to name but three). What we have here is a great looking, solid platformer when we could have ended up with something much, much worse. *Veediots* breaks no new gaming ground, but it'll keep fans of the show happy for weeks (or days if you play it heaps).



SNES

available

NOW

category

PLATFORM

players

1

publisher

T.H.Q

price

\$119.95

visuals

88

Bright, colourful and very close to the style of the Ren and Stimpy Show. The wiggly tooth nerves inside Stimpy's mouth are particularly cool.

sound

84

Good soundtracks (nice bugles for "In the Army"), effective effects, and clear Ren and Stimpy samples.

gameplay

79

Solid platformin' fun with a little bit extra besides. And variety is always good for a few marks.

longterm

69

Once you've got them sussed out, the four sections are relatively short and sweet and there's unlimited continues too. Fans will play it again just for the thrill value.

overall

A treat for Ren & Stimpy gamers and a decent platformer for the rest of you. Now all we need is Channel 10 to put the show back on. Steempy!

78%

Castlevania The New Generation

Vampire hunting anyone? The gaming joy that is Castlevania hits the Mega Drive with a big red splash of something that looks remarkably similar to blood.

Andrew Humphreys dons a garlic necklace, grabs his wooden stake (will he ever let it go?) and leaps into the action...



Konami are famous for their Castlevania games (well, they're famous for a lot of games really, but you get my point). After a series of successful NES titles, they released *Super Castlevania IV* for the SNES and hit the jackpot. Serious SNES gamers rate it as one of the best

platformers ever. And why not? It's big and beautiful (the parallax is amazing) and the soundtracks create incredible atmosphere. Now Mega Drivers can get in on the fun with their very own Castlevania game: *Castlevania - The New Generation*.

whip, but what he chooses to do in the privacy of his own home is really none of our business. Eric is from Spain and he carries a spear.

Johnny and Eric meet in a bar and become close friends. They team up to defeat the evil Elizabeth Bartley who is gathering allies in a bid to revive Count Dracula. The year is 1917. With a hearty cry of "Vampires Suck", Johnny and Eric, hand in hand, set out to save civilization as we know it.

You get to play as either Johnny or Eric as you travel across Europe killing vampires and assorted other forces of darkness. Yes it's a platformer, and yes, it's a good one. The playing area is large and each level (it's password backed) has a distinct stylistic theme. From Atlantis to the Leaning Tower of Pisa, you'll meet a host of enemies and a stack of gruesome bosses. Both Eric and Johnny have some nifty moves to master and there's plenty of power-ups and special weapons (like axes, boomerangs and holy water) to keep you interested.

Bloodlines Some of you might be thinking, "Hang on, what happened to *Castlevania - Bloodlines*?" Good question. Have a jelly bean. Well, this is the same game, only it's been renamed. Why? Who knows. Just don't get confused by it and don't let it worry you. Concentrate on the plot instead...

Castlevania - The New Generation focuses on the descendants of the Belmont family - two strapping young blokes called Johnny Morris and Eric Lecarde. Johnny is from Texas and he carries a rather large whip (he calls it his "Vampire Killer" but we all know it's just a plain old bull-whip). It's rumoured that he can do many wonderful things with this





Nosferatu is a good movie

Visually, it's a dark and moody experience. The detail and colouring on the backdrops is excellent and the parallax is all that we've come to expect from Konami. There's even some gory stuff for the bloodthirsty among you. The Johnny and Eric sprites are kind of small, but they're well animated and the bosses are wild. Think of *Rocket Knight Adventures*, only with a much harder, less cartoony edge, and you'll be close.

The soundtracks are good too. Everything is eerie enough (just like a good B-grade horror movie) but they don't match the ambience and malevolent feel created in *Super Castlevania IV*. Comparisons aside though, they might be scary enough to give you a mild case of goosebumps if you're ever playing the game alone in the dark.

But will you stay up late into the night playing it? Hmmm. The game-play is solid - there's lots of moves and plenty to do - but it isn't as compelling as it should be. The controls are good but (and this is the main problem with the game) the game plays a little too slow for my liking. Call me sentimental, but I'd much rather plug in *Revenge of Shinobi*.

Nevertheless, this is a good debut for Castlevania on Mega Drive. Overall, it doesn't quite have the impact of *Super Castlevania IV*, but it's a slick, challenging, professionally produced game that should keep you out of mischief for a good few weeks. Unless of course you use the cheat we've got in Cheat Mode...



Above: Bosses galore in Castlevania: The New Generation

MEGA DRIVE

available

FEBRUARY

category

PLATFORM SLASHER

players

1

publisher

KONAMI

price

\$119.95

visuals

Great backdrops (check out the Leaning Tower of Pisa) and some extra ugly bosses. Kind of like mine. (Oops, sorry Stuart!)

84

sound

Nice music - not enough to scare the pants off you (thank God), but it might get to the spineless amongst you. The effects are sparse though.

80

gameplay

Good controls and some nifty moves, but the pace of the game is just a little too slow to really grab you by the goolies and twist.

78

longterm

Big enough and tough enough to keep you going. Just about interesting enough too.

79

overall

If you liked *Dracula* you'll love this 'cause it's heaps better. Then again, if you liked *Dracula* you're a total moron.

79%

Aero the Acrobat

The games industry must be running out of “cutesy” animals to use as platform heroes. Aero the Acrobat closes the door on yet another species. What will be next? STEVE POLAK hangs upside down and reviews the little bugger before the blood rushes to his head.

The industry hype for Aero has been strong in America and he is supposed to succeed where the rather disappointing Bubsy failed. Yep, he's supposed to be the new Mario/Sonic! Once the wheel is invented though it's hard to be innovative with it - I mean, even with the addition of chrome alloy mags or whatever, it's still a wheel. And this is basically Aero's problem. Now don't get me wrong, Aero does do some pretty exciting stuff, but basically he's here too late to be inspiring, and we've seen it all before.

Halfway Decent But there are some good points. Firstly, there is some semblance of a plotline for Aero's quests, and the thematic feel of the game is quite effectively portrayed. Aero's Circus has been taken over by the Evil Edgar Ektor (we somehow knew with a name like that, he wouldn't be nice) Aero's job is to entertain the crowd, whilst at the same time dealing with Edgar's minions and eventually tracking the malignant baddie to his lair for a showdown. The circus vibe is well created, and the music, although a little annoying after an extended session, is quite appropriate.

Aero also tries to give you some diversity and challenge in the “tricks” you are required to make him perform. One minute you have to find a key, the next there are a group of hidden stars, and then you are flying through circus rings, with some quite impressive Mode 7 bits to boot. The game benefits from not being too linear. You have quite a large playfield and it is not simply a case of jumping along and running right. Aero is required, as an “Acro-Bat”, to jump on trampolines, ride unicycles, suspend himself from the high wire, and of course be fired out of the obligatory cannon. All of these features do help distinguish Aero from the long line of fairly dismal platform fodder for the SNES, currently being used as doorstops across the nation.

The Little Bat-ler But unfortunately (I bet you knew this was coming) the little bat-ler (groan!) just doesn't have quite enough originality and playability to stand

out from the crowd. Also, there are some parts of this game that are downright annoying.

Aero is quite fast, but his speed is largely a waste of time because it is often hard to get moving at a decent pace without having that “I've just hit another thing I couldn't see coming because it was impossibly hidden off-screen” feeling. Also, a game as long and diverse as this would have benefited from a password system or a greater number of continues. And Aero doesn't really have any decent firepower of note, so he has to mince about the

screen being terrified of cute piggy things carrying balloons! I kept wishing the little beggar had been watching his Arnie vids, so that at least once he could whip out a real weapon and incinerate his cuddly foes in a hail of napalm death.

So there you have it, Aero is better than most, but not quite inspiring enough to take its place in the “Hall of Fame”. But it is still probably worth a look - you might not get all the fun of the fair, but the little beggar does have a little flair.

Thanks to the Game Squad (03) 882 7828 for the cart.



FORMAT: SNES

AVAILABLE: JANUARY

CATEGORY: PLATFORM

PLAYERS: 1

PUBLISHER: SUNSOFT

PRICE: N/A

visuals

The colourful backdrops convey a circus atmosphere, but some of the enemy sprites are too silly to be taken seriously.

78

sound

This is again quite convincing, but I'm definitely not going to be looking for the CD soundtrack.

70

gameplay

Again competent, while not being stunning.

76

longterm

Things would have been better if there weren't so many frustrating ways to die early on. No passwords either.

73

overall

Nice try on Sunsoft's part, but I expect this to be iced by Claymates and Aladdin.

74%

Greatest Heavyweight

We couldn't possibly use that line about big, sweaty men beating each other about the ring for the third issue in a row, could we? Oh look - we just have! When will Andrew Humphreys learn?



First the bad news. This is basically just a tarted up version of *Evander Holyfield's Real Deal Boxing*. Anyone who's ever seen *Evander Holyfield* will know why that's bad news. Here's the good news. *Greatest Heavyweights* is better than *Evander Holyfield*. But, and this is the really bad news, it's still not good enough.

Pulls no punches Here's what you get: 8 of history's greatest Heavyweight Champs to knock the crap out of in exhibition, tournament, and career matches. There's Jack Dempsey, Joe Louis, Rocky Marciano, Floyd Patterson, Muhammed Ali, Joe Frazier, Larry Holmes, and Evander Holyfield plus a host of unknowns to hit too. Sounds dandy, doesn't it? The problem is that you've only got three punches to hit them with.

That's right, three. Button A throws a straight left, B's for defence, C throws a round right, and A+B (or B+C) throws an uppercut. Sure, you can throw them high or low (it all depends if you're standing up straight or crouching), but there's no hiding from the fact that your entire punching repertoire consists of a left jab, a right cross, and an uppercut. The gameplay is hopelessly shallow - all you do is move back and forth (it's a side-on, left to right perspective) and wallop each other with one of three punches.

Things get a bit better with a 6 button control pad (there's no need to hit two buttons at once) but your range is still too limited.1

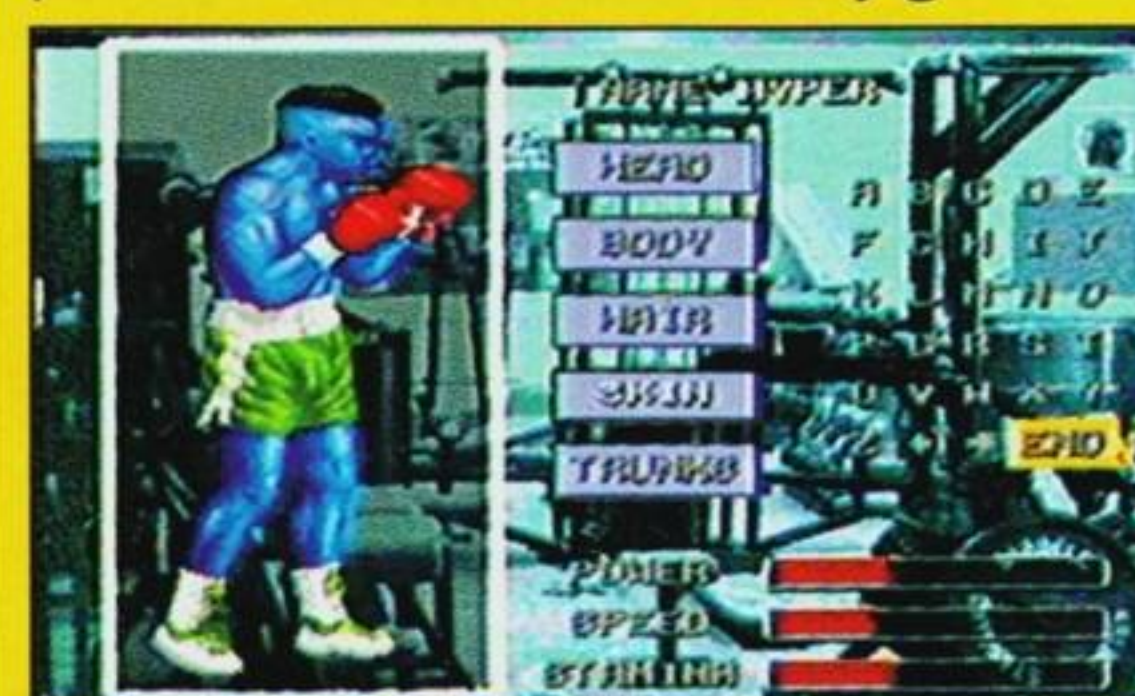
It's a bit of a shame really, because if you ignore the lack of gameplay, *Greatest Heavyweights* is an OK game. It looks good - the sprites resemble the fighters they're meant to be and they move well enough too. The Sega Sports (set up by Sega of America to rival EA Sports) presentation, including the much needed bikini-wearing bimbo between rounds, is excellent.

As for the sound, the hits will make you grimace, the crowd noises are great, and there's heaps of quality speech from the ring announcer - stuff like, "Let's get ready to ruuummble!". Even the boxers have their own special taunts - they'll call you a Mama's boy, and Ali will tell you how pretty he is.

In the end though, this is a very ordinary game. A game needs to do more than just look good and sound nice. The career mode is a welcome feature and the two-player game will keep dribbling idiots happy for a few minutes but there's not enough game in here to make it worth the money (and it's a lot of money too!). If you want a good boxing game, get *Legends of the Ring* (reviewed last issue) - it's got the looks, the sound, the career mode, and some gameplay to boot.

Return of Hitman Hyper

Just like *Legends of the Ring* (see Issue #2), *Greatest Heavyweights* has a Career mode that lets you create your own boxer. It's the game's best feature. Have a look at Hitman Hyper's comeback. First you create a "look", picking his head, body shape, hair colour, skin (blue's such a lovely colour) and the colour of his trunks. Next you allocate energy between power, speed and stamina. Then you're ready to rumble. HYPER met a bum called Jimmy Wheeler and KO'd him in the first round. What a guy. But after the celebrations, it's off to the gym for some training to boost your powers. How far can this boy go?



FORMAT: MEGA DRIVE

AVAILABLE: FEBRUARY

CATEGORY: BOXING

PLAYERS: 1-2

SEGA AMERICA

PRICE: \$169.95 (WOAH!)

visuals

Nice detail and animation on the boxers. Excellent presentation too.

83

sound

It makes a nice WHACKing noise, the crowd's lively and the speech is great. Good intro music too.

85

gameplay

Desperately in need of a few more punches. A six button controller helps, but it's still not enough.

50

longterm

Always fun with a friend with a low IQ, but despite all the options, it's just not enough fun.

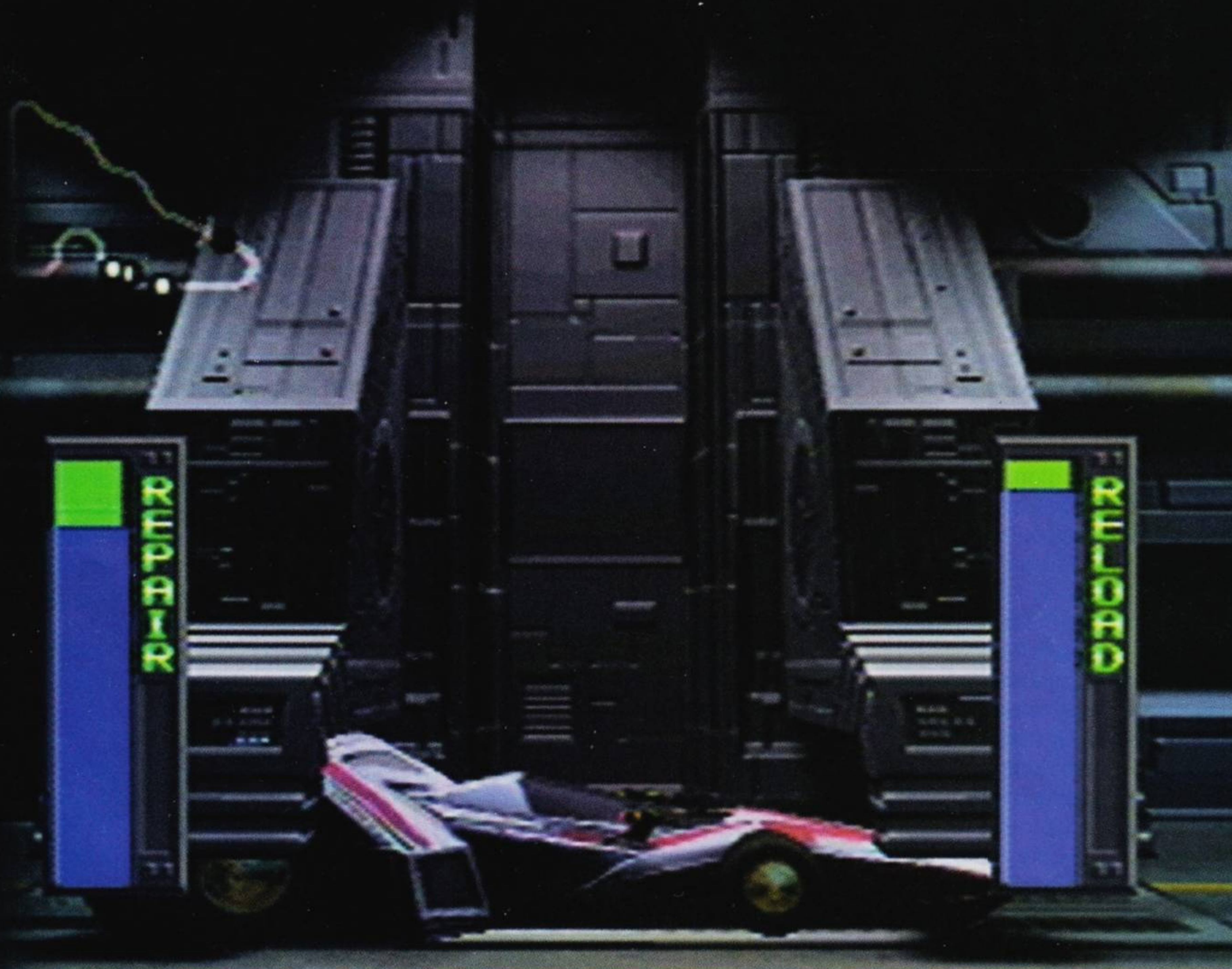
68

overall

Looks nice, sounds great, but it's let down by overly simple, repetitive gameplay and it's way too expensive.

62%

Crash 'n Burn 3DO



***Crash 'n Burn* is the pack-in disc with the Panasonic R.E.A.L 3DO unit. Thanks to the lovely people at Electronic Arts, we've got our hands on one, and we thought you might like a review.**

We're still not sure when Panasonic will be releasing their 3DO player in Australia (May is a likely target), but keen gamers are already starting to import the machines themselves.

Be warned - you'll need an NTSC compatible TV or monitor and a power converter. EA will be importing 3DO disks for those lucky (or rich) enough to grab a machine from the States.

The best advice is to wait for a local release; by then, 3DO should have the kind of software support it needs to be a successful machine. But, because interest in the 3DO is so high, here goes the review.

The future. 2044 AD. In a nuked-out world, car racing is as popular as ever - only now you get missiles to play with too. Oh, bugger it. You don't want an intro, do you? It's the 3DO!!!! Go on, look at the piccies, and if you've got time, read the review - Andrew Humphreys worked very hard on it.

Remember Altered Beast

I want to start with a reminder: this is the first game ever for the 3DO. Things will get even better - I mean try comparing *Altered Beast* to *Aladdin* on Mega Drive. *Crash 'n Burn* is a very, very promising start for 3DO software. But it might not be the wonder game you were expecting. Underneath the flash graphics (actually, they're very flash) is a fairly standard racer - it's got lots of extra touches, but as a gaming experience, it's not revolutionary.

And what about that CD access time? Don't think that just because 3DO uses a double-speed drive that those annoying access delays will go away. They're here to stay. Bottom line is, a conventional hard drive will always give faster access than a CD drive. Cartridges are even faster. If CD storage is the future of gaming, we're going to have to learn to live with its limitations. But I digress...

Crash n' Burn is a racing combat game.

Take the driving bits in *Batman Returns* on

Mega CD and make them about 3 times better and you've got *Crash n' Burn*. There's 6 tracks to race on and 6 characters to play with, each with their own custom vehicle. Some go for speed, others go for firepower. Your best bet is to go for balance. Be patriotic - try the Aussie hooligan with the Mohawk.

There's two ways to play: Rally Mode and Tournament Mode. No matter which mode you choose, your aim is to take out the Deathdrome crown. But if you want to get the most out of the

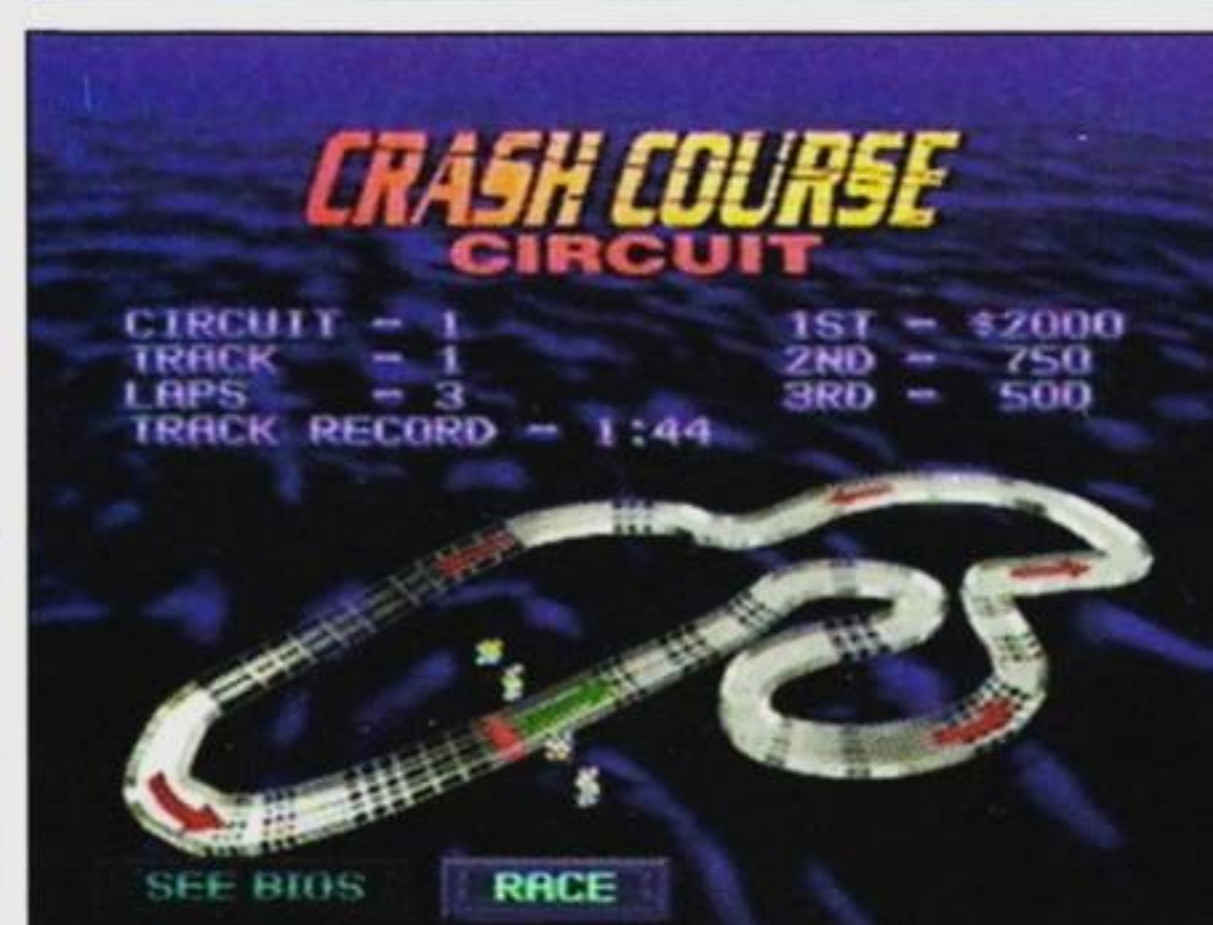
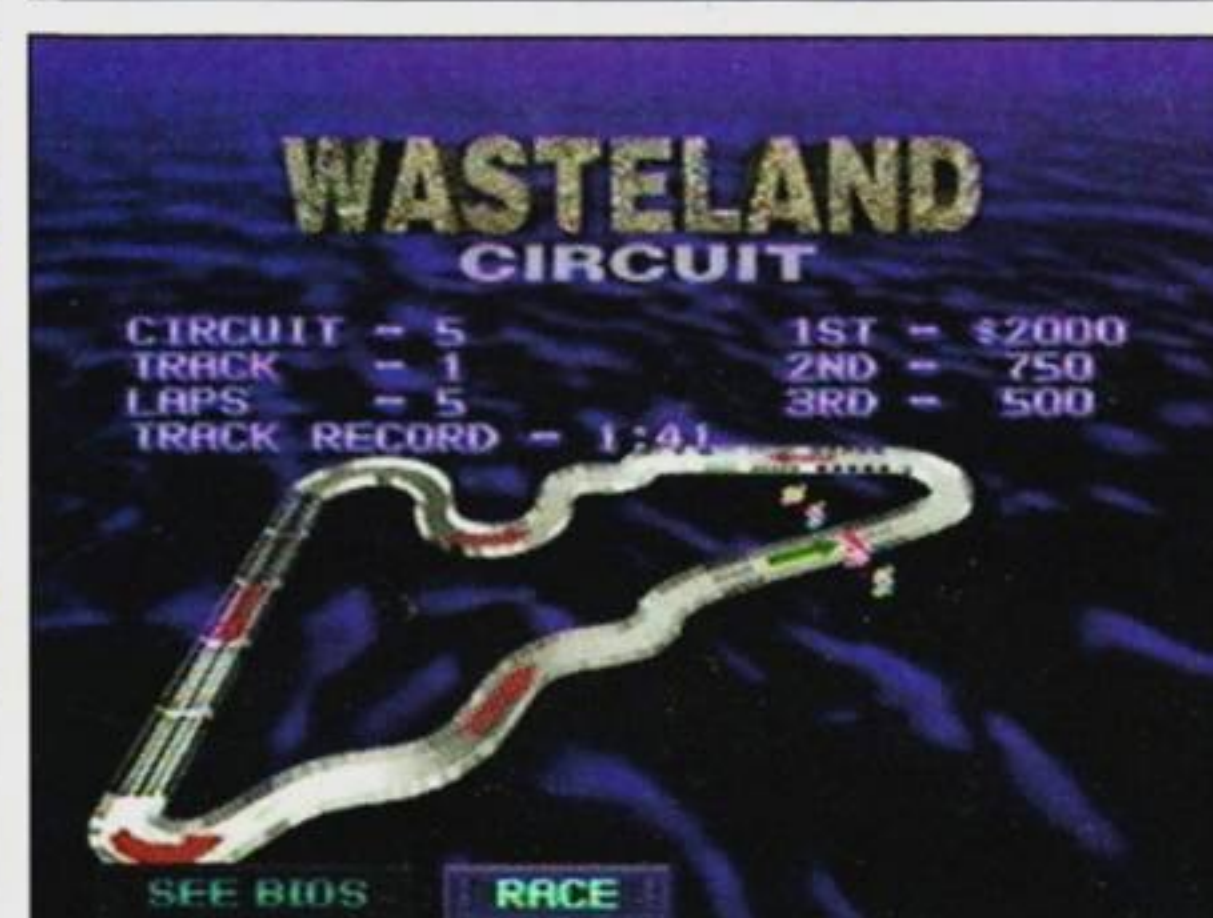
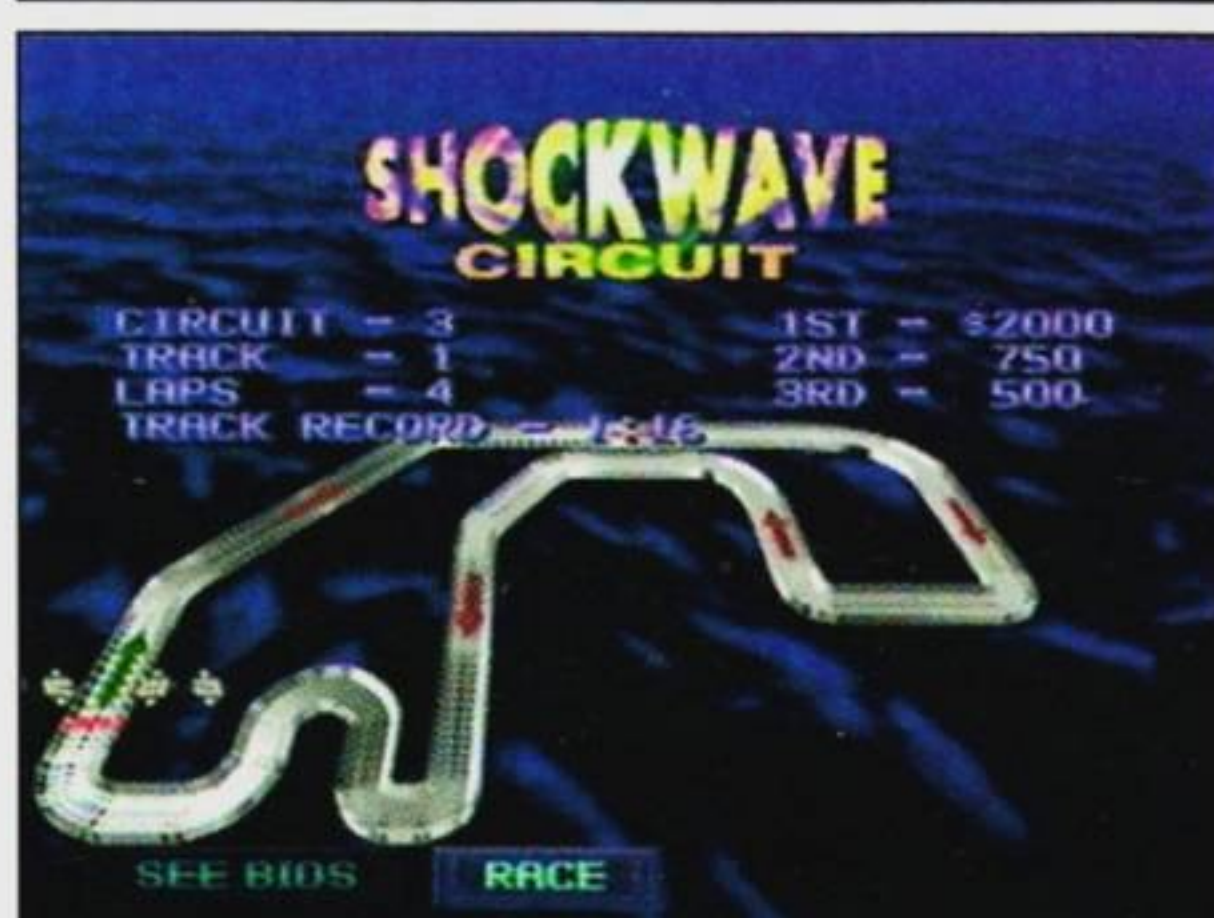
game, you want the Tournament mode. As you qualify in tournament races (1st, 2nd or 3rd) and your winnings grow, you can visit Floyd's Auto Shop and upgrade your car. Floyd has everything you want - guns, lasers, mines, missiles, nitro, armour, custom enhancements - you just have to have the cash. If you're good, you can build the ultimate machine.

Tournament play quickly becomes complex, involving, and exciting. You need to win on every track to become the Deathdrome champ, and to do that you'll have to take your strategic thinking cap with you into Floyd's. For example, a rear-mounted flash laser will blind any driver on your tail without a polarised windshield. More generally, is good armour or devastating firepower more important? Do you need more speed? Whatever you decide, your certainly spoiled for choice. The only bummer about it (and it's a big'un) is that you can only save one tournament at a time - that's a serious flaw.

The Wow Factor Visually, this rates high on the HYPER Wowometer. There's scaling, rotating and texture-mapping all over the place, and it's as »

The Circuits

You get to choose from a selection of five tracks blah de blah...





fast as it is beautiful. One track seems to be made of glass - and even though it reflects the sky, you can still see through it. Everything about it - the digitised actors, the intro and presentation screens - blows anything a SNES, Mega Drive or Mega CD could ever do out of the water. And you'd need some serious hardware in a home PC to compete.

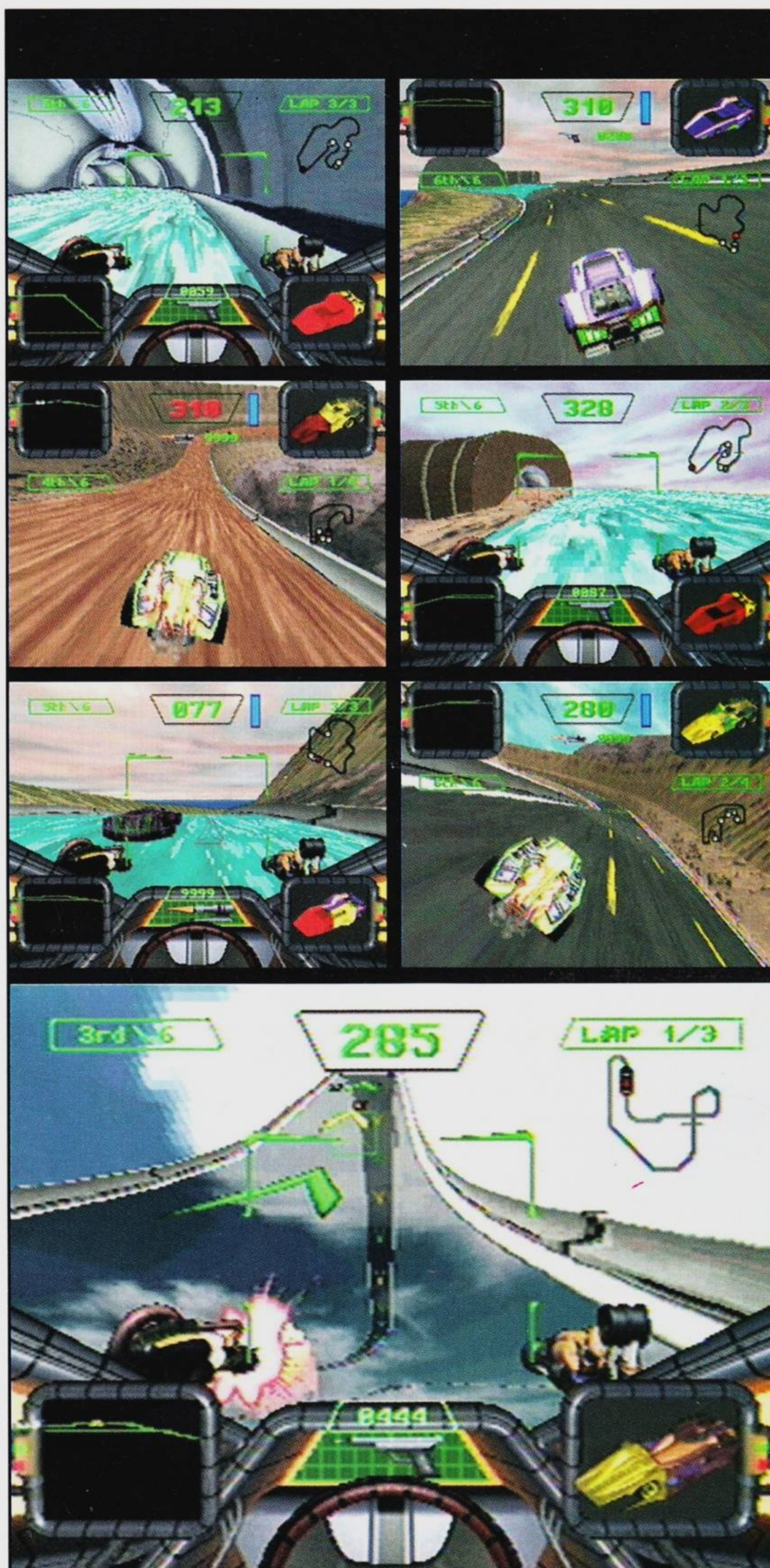
The sound is great too. The speech is clear, the effects are meaty, and the music doesn't suck. But then again, even the Mega CD can deliver that.

Then there's the gameplay. A lot of the guys around here weren't that impressed. It does play like a standard racer. The controls are nice and responsive and the layout is good (Panasonic's 3DO pad is a cross between a Mega Drive pad and a SNES pad - three buttons on the front, two on top) but, they cried, "Been there done that - it just never looked as good". But the more you play this game, the better it gets. Like I said, in tournament mode, things really start to heat up.

And there we have it - I loved *Crash 'n Burn*, but I'm not quite sure how to score it - I mean, I know it's only the tip of the 3DO iceberg. If it was on any other system it'd score big time, but on 3DO, it's only a hint of things to come.

Right: Some fantastic texture mapping turns the road to glass in the Tournament.

Below: The stunning graphics and sound capabilities of 3DO technology is shown off superbly in the character select stage.



3DO

available

TBA

category

COMBAT RACER

players

1

publisher

CRYSTAL DYNAMICS

price

N/A

visuals

There really is nothing comparable to this on any other home system. Flashy effects galore, excellent detail, great colour and smooth, fast scrolling. Great intro.

sound

A bit of CD music, great effects and clear speech.

gameplay

Even if it is only a standard racer, it's a very good one. The controls are responsive and there's plenty of action to keep you busy. Lots more depth in the Tournament mode.

longterm

Even after you're the Deathdrome Champion, you'll probably play it again (Sam) just for the thrill of it. But why can you only save one game at a time?

overall

An action-packed race game and an excellent start for 3DO software. Can't wait for the really good stuff.

82%



Spiderman vs The Kingpin

There's something to be said for dressing up in a lycra bodysuit and shooting sticky fluid all over the place. Hmmm, but we'd better not say it. SIMON VANDORE has the good taste to keep it clean...



Spiderman vs The Kingpin is a game for dog-lovers everywhere. Tumbling wildly across the screen, beating the living daylights out of the bad guys, gorillas and a couple of little white bats, there is no way I can find to inflict any harm on the Kingpin's guard dogs.

All Spidey can do is wrap them up in a shower of web, allowing the brutes to unravel themselves and surprise him later on.

Air Spidey But there's nothing like flying through the air with the greatest of ease like Spiderman can. This game's strongest point lies in Spidey's manoeuvrability - once you've mastered throwing out webs left, right and centre to swing on, standard platform action gains a new acrobatic dimension.

Spiderman vs Kingpin is a Mega Drive game that's been somewhat

pointlessly updated for the Mega CD. The graphics have been pumped, there's some new moves and even the level design has changed, but the basic gameplay remains the same. The only real addition is a beautiful cartoon-style intro sequence (and other animated sequences), with speech, featuring Peter Parker in plain clothes sensing trouble and bounding out the window in his trademark red and blue suit.

Starting up, my first reaction was to switch off the sound - "CD-quality music" boasts the packaging. Well, yes, it's crystal clear and there's lots of it, but it's by Eric Martin of Mr Big, one of those one-hit American soft metal bands. It's very irritating and would never have accompanied a real Spiderman cartoon. Worst of all, you find yourself singing along.

The Key, the Secret The action takes place in New York City, where the Kingpin has hidden a bomb and blamed it on

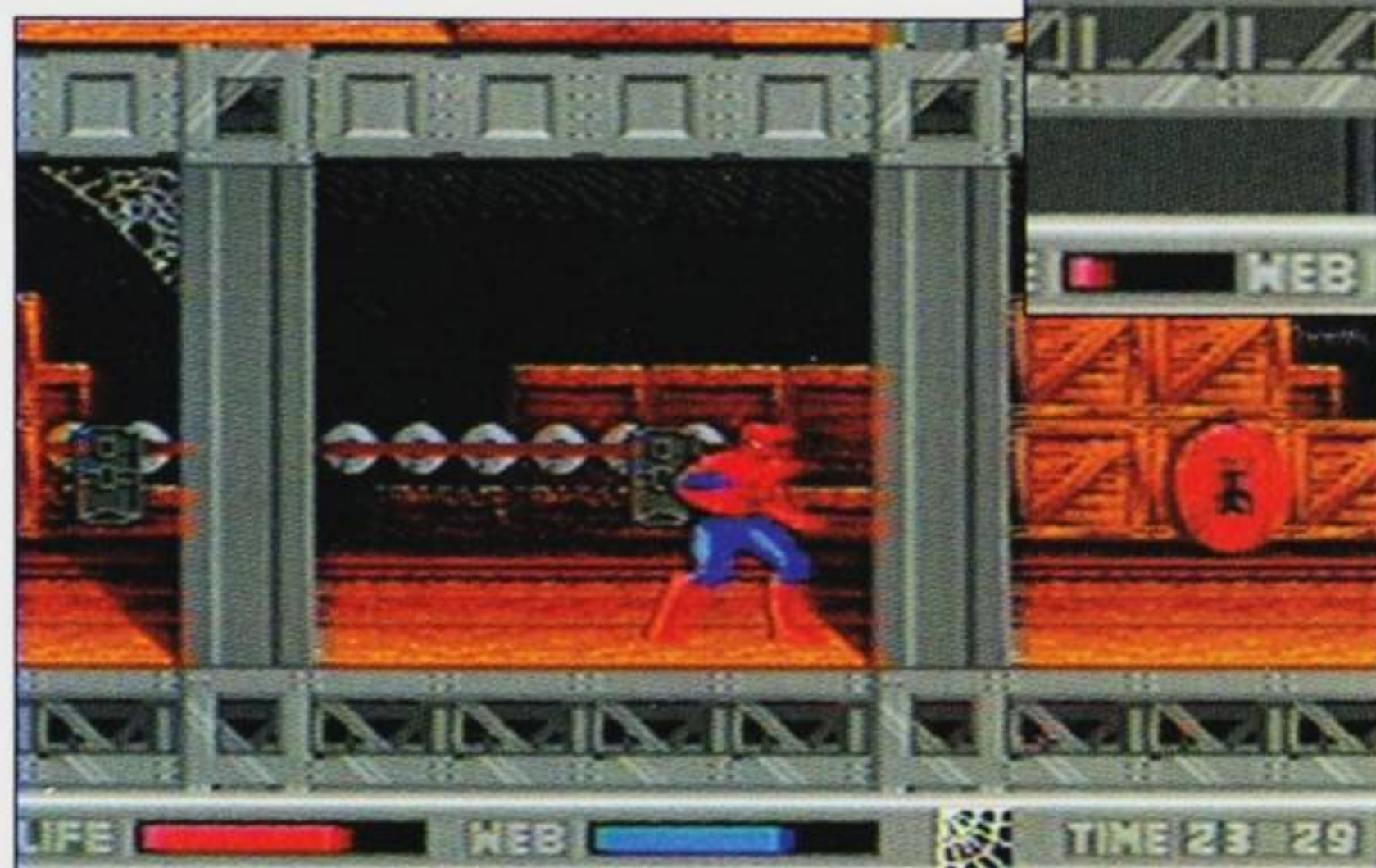
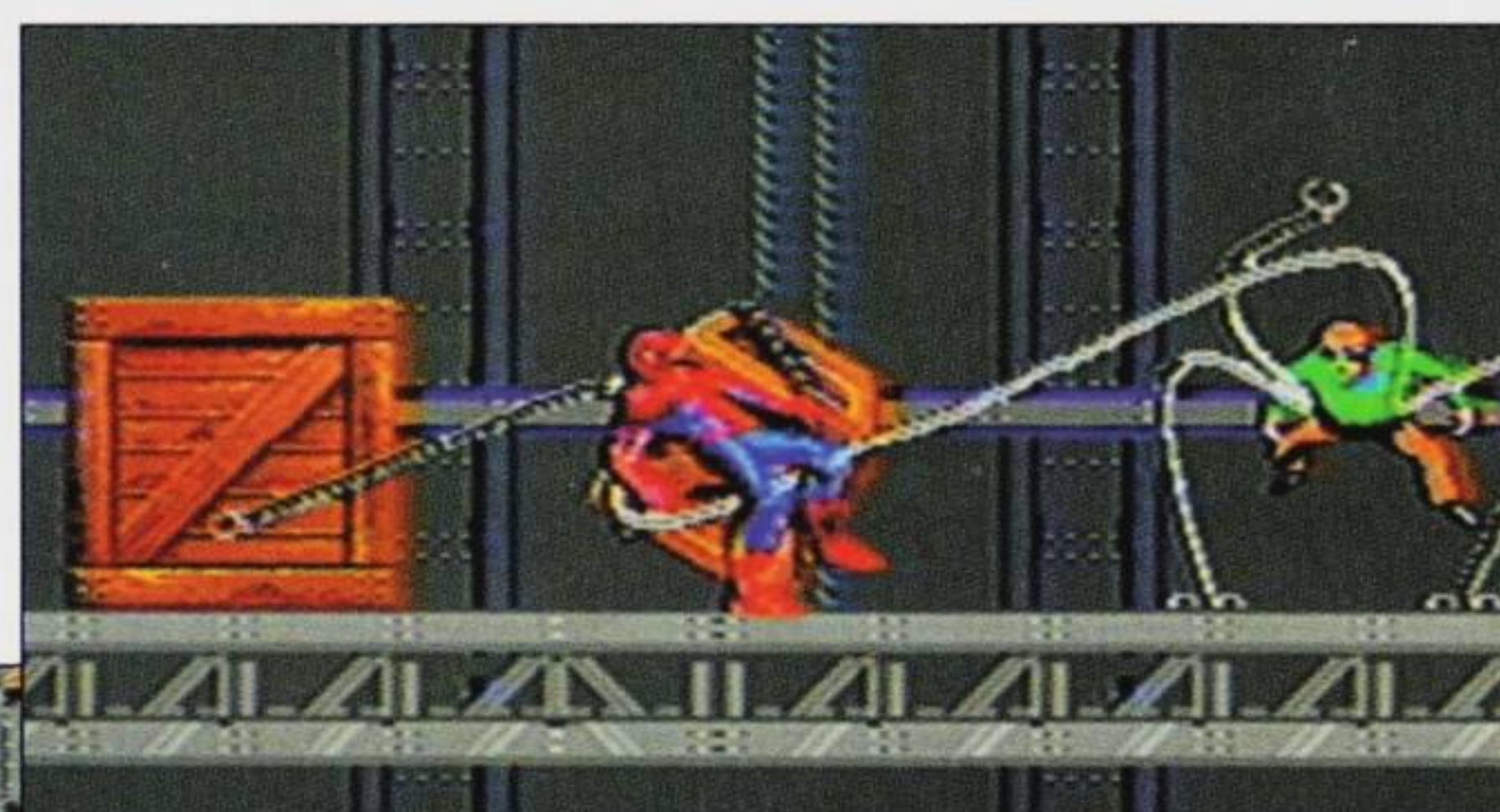
Spiderman, distributing five keys for its defusing among ten vicious bosses. The player must use Spiderman's gadgets to battle through Kingpin's hired guns, as well as through the police, who are convinced Spidey's gone bad.

From a map, the player chooses a location and the action is underway.

Unfortunately, the gameplay leaves a lot to be desired. Running along platforms punching bad guys and picking up ammo is hardly an original concept. Web-swinging aerobatics are this game's only saving grace. Combat is boring, with limited moves and an annoying tendency for a sprite taking a hit to vanish for a second and reappear in a slightly different place - even closer to the enemy, for example. Fighting the bosses can be particularly frustrating.

Thanks to the capacity of CDs, Spiderman vs The Kingpin has a well-designed front-end and is one of the biggest platform games I've

ever come across. Trouble is, it's unbearably repetitive - I'm sure only die-hard Spidey fans could persevere to the bitter end.



FORMAT: MEGA CD

AVAILABLE: FEBRUARY

CATEGORY: PLATFORM

PLAYERS: 1

SEGA OF AMERICA

PRICE: TBA

visuals

Cartoon-quality intro and interludes. Varied quality backdrops and average sprites.

78

sound

CD-quality soundtrack is annoying and the in-game effects are nothing special.

65

gameplay

Above-average platform action, but it gets repetitive. Occasionally seems pointless.

75

longterm

It's a big challenge, kinda' like banging your head against a hundred brick walls.

70

overall

Better than Spiderman and the X-Men, but not a patch on all those good Mega Drive platform games

73%



MICROCOSM

Being injected inside someone else's body is an experience that makes Stuart Clarke feel just a bit queasy. But he's going to review *Microcosm* anyway, just because it looks so spunky.



Microcosm is the "BIG CD GAME" that Psygnosis have been slaving away on for the past three years. It is scheduled to appear on the PC CD-Rom and the Amiga CD32 (as well as other formats no doubt), but its debut into Australia is via the Mega CD. This is quite unfortunate. The limited colour palette of the machine really fails to do the absolutely superb graphics justice, and combined with the relatively shallow gameplay, I was initially quite disappointed.

But I suppose I had been looking forward to it for quite a while, and had let my expectations run wild, because when I looked at it

again I realised that *Microcosm* really is a stunning game. It's not a classic by any stretch but for its graphic style alone, it is a milestone in 16-bit gaming.

Plagiarised Plot Ripping the plot straight from movies such as *Inner Space* and *Fantastic Voyage*, *Microcosm* takes place inside a human body. You have been miniaturised and injected into the bloodstream in a micro submersible craft. The twist is that you're not the only foreign object in there. In the cyberpunk future, two multinationals, Cybertech and Axiom are fighting

a vicious corporate battle which has resulted in two agents, the president of Axiom and the vice-president of Cybertech being injected into the one body. Which happens to be the body of the president of Cybertech. So not only is it a fight for survival, but for total corporate domination as well. Ooh, how exciting!

However when it comes down to it and you strip away all the fancy touches, *Microcosm* is a simple shoot 'em up, and that's not necessarily very exciting at all. While the veins and arteries twist and flow around you beautifully, all you really have to do is blast

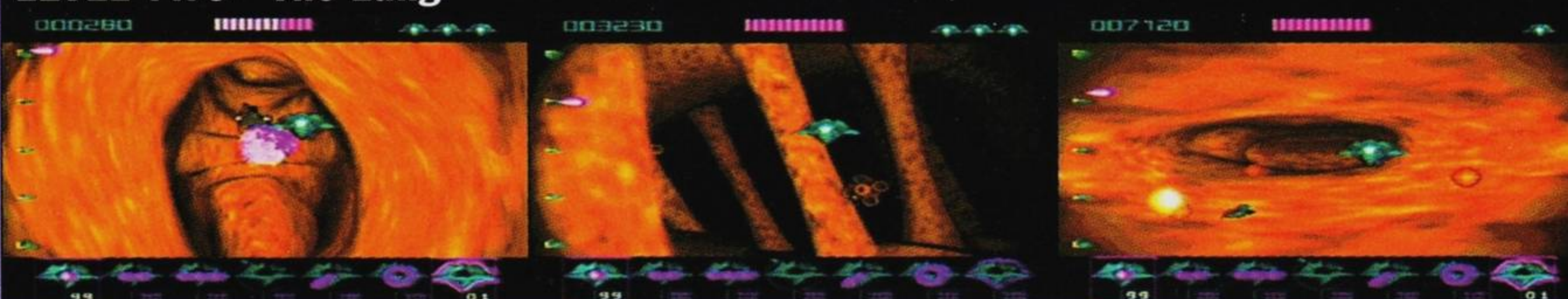
the evil cells and viruses that come flying by, and avoid the red and white blood cells. If you do choose to shoot the relatively harmless blood cells, the balance of the body will change and the patient will die, taking you along with him.

And for what basically is a shoot 'em up, the controls are quite loose and unresponsive. Your craft has the tendency to drift all over the screen and it is quite hard to line up enemies and give them what for. Early on this was very annoying, but you gradually get used to it and learn how to compensate.

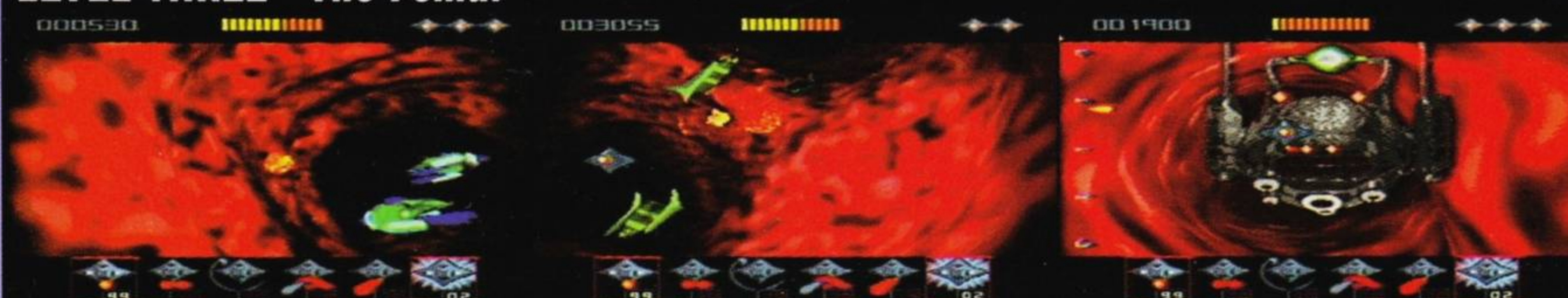
LEVEL ONE The Vein



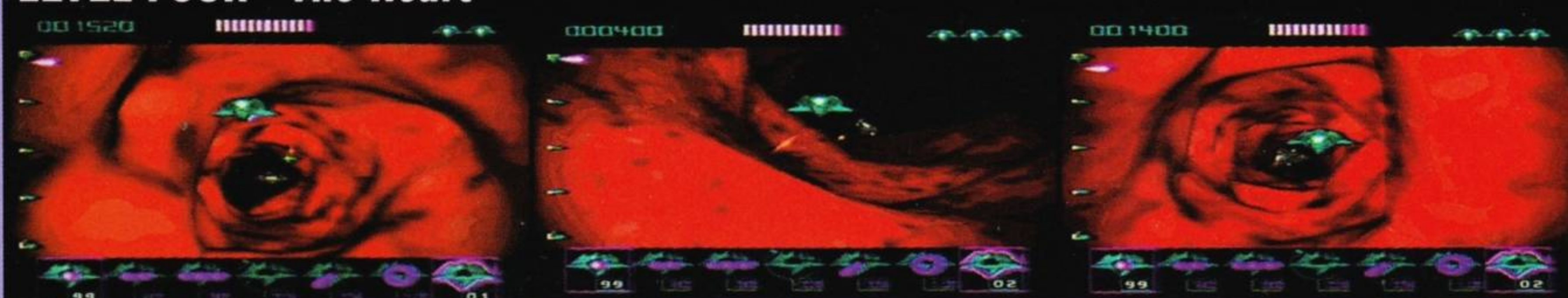
LEVEL TWO The Lung



LEVEL THREE The Femur



LEVEL FOUR The Heart



LEVEL FIVE The Brain



Like all shoot 'em ups, there are power ups for your weapon that you can collect on the way. You start with the standard single shot laser, but can graduate to double shots, orbiter shots (laser fire spins all over the place), homing missiles, heavy duty lasers and, of course, the ubiquitous smart bombs. The enemies you meet in the veins (how did they all get there?) are increasingly well armed and shielded, so tarted up weapons are definitely the items to be seen with. You are also given more powerful pods at various stages of the game, when you call into supply stations (do all bodies

have supply stations inside them to rearm microscopic invaders? Hmm, I wonder?), and these are essential for survival in later levels. The bosses are all very impressive, and in a couple of cases quite tough.

Catch Me If You Can Apart from the simple shoot 'em up action there are also several chase levels where the action really hots up. These are races against the clock, where you are in pursuit of the rival probe which you must destroy before the occupants can activate the self-destruct device which will open

your host's arteries and kill him. The enemy craft dodges and weaves in the surreal surroundings and it is an amazing inner-body experience (like, wow man), although not a particularly interactive one. Still it got me going and that's what counts.

So while *Microcosm* does have problems (it's a basic shoot 'em up, the controls aren't the best, and there's probably not enough levels) I would still recommend a good hard look at it. This one may just push all the right buttons for you, and the graphics just have to be seen to be believed.

MEGA CD

available

JANUARY

category

SHOOT 'EM UP

players

1

publisher

PSYGNOSIS

price

\$109.95

visuals

Even though the pathetic colours on the Mega CD ruins the full effect, the in-game graphics and cut-aways are truly wonderful.

92

sound

Rick Wakeman is a dag, but he's come up with a good, atmospheric soundtrack. However the weaponry effects suck hard.

88

gameplay

This is where the game falls down. It may get addictive, but basically it's very simple. A bit too simple. Controls are lacking too.

78

longterm

But you'll be playing this one over and over just for the graphics.

84

overall

Not the game I was hoping for, but a superb looking shoot 'em up that everyone should have a perve at. Should be amazing on PC CD-Rom.

83%

Simon the Sorcerer

Simon is a 12 year old Sorcerer with Attitude. He's also the star of one of the funniest graphic adventures since Monkey Island. Surprised? DAVID WILDGOOSE is.

Brat. Brat. Brrrraaaatt. Say it to yourself a few times... no really, I mean it. It's a horrible word isn't it? But that's fair enough, I guess, since a "brat" itself is actually a pretty horrible thing. Think about it, every American sitcom has one, there's that little... nnnghh... from *Home Alone* and, of course, "the fat kid from Hey Dad!". And we hate them all, don't we?

Simon the Brat? I thought that Simon was going to be a brat - all the ingredients are there. For a start he's young, obscenely cute and is the "...bad boy of sorcery (with an) adolescent vitality and juvenile curiosity...", according to the box. He's also just celebrating his 12th birthday and Marvelo the Washed-up Magician is performing at his party for the twelfth year in a row. Simon's parents have bought him a scruffy little puppy who arrives with a mysterious book in its mouth. One night, up in the attic, Simon begins to read the book and accidentally triggers a



ish appearance, Simon does deliver some genuinely witty lines which I've, er, forgotten for the moment, but I do remember that I did laugh a lot.

Tears and Laughter The best bits (and by that I mean funniest) tend to come in the extended sequences when Simon first meets a particular character. Two such incidents immediately spring to mind.

There's the woodworms in the forest who want you to collect some more wood for them, but they cannot decide what sort. They argue over the merits of oak, teak, balsa and driftwood before someone mentions mahogany and, finally, they all agree. Then there's the troll who goes on strike because he keeps

getting thrown off his bridge before he gets to eat the billy-goats. The goats themselves (who are reading their lines off a script) insist that he's not following the story properly and demand that he lets them pass.

You will laugh, honest. And you'll cry as well. The Swamping's story is so sad that only the most heartless of players will be able to keep a dry eye. He's having a birthday party like Simon, only his birthday was actually two weeks ago and none of his invited guests have turned up yet. Sob. Then you arrive and... oh, just wait until you see those tiny tears roll down his cheeks... sob...

Truly, this is a gorgeous game all round. Graphically, it is the best of its kind and right up there alongside the more cartoon-styled *Sam & Max*. What makes the graphics so good is the amount of detail they include. The animation is great and the backgrounds are exquisite. Wherever you look, from the butterflies darting among the flowers to the squirrels scrambling up the trees to the unicorn prancing on the distant hillside, there is always something happening to catch your interest. The music is a bit of a treat too.

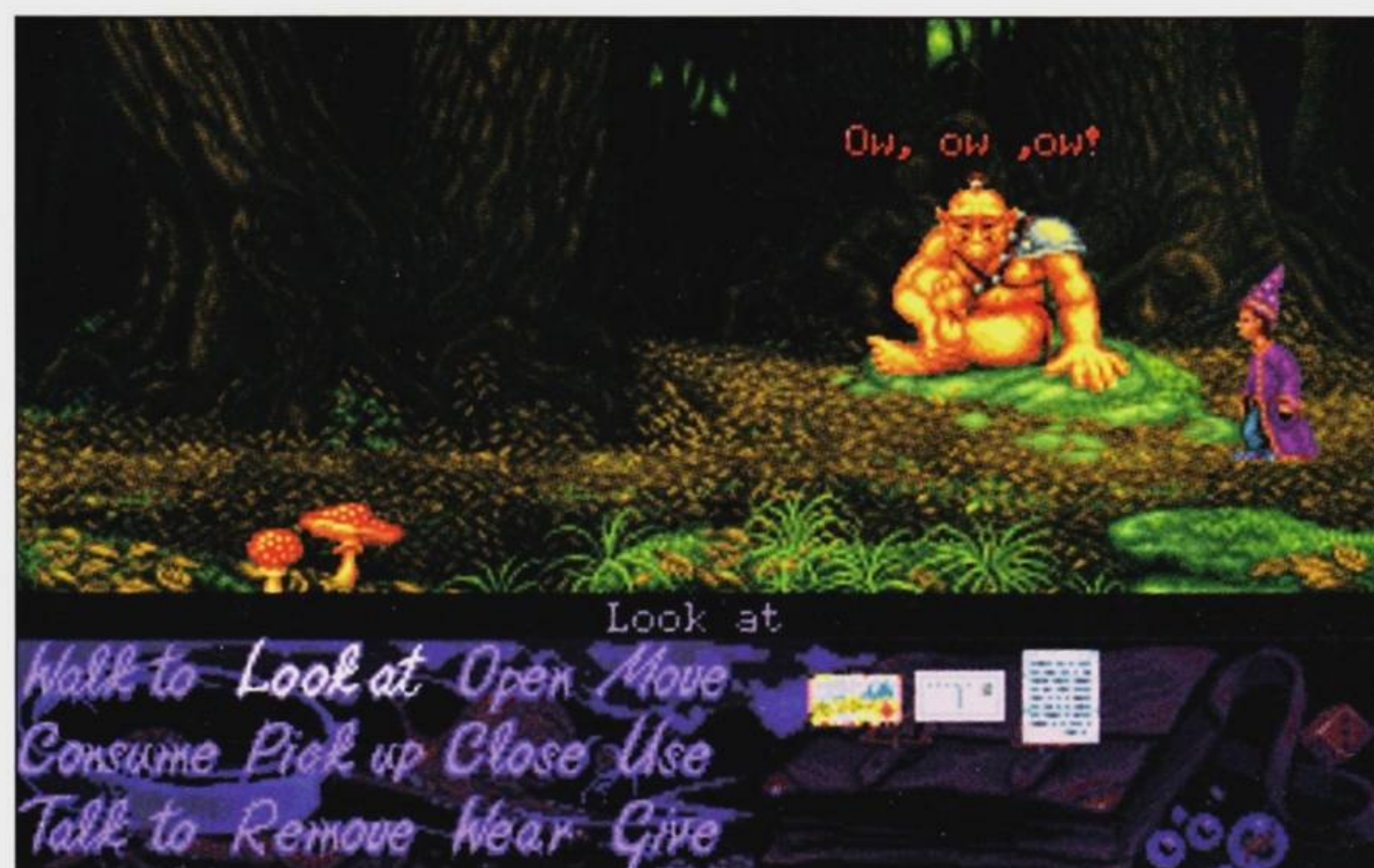
Simon the Sorcerer is a lovely game and definitely more of a traditional adventure than *Sam & Max*, so if that's what you prefer, this could be a better buy. Whatever, you certainly won't be disappointed.



spell which creates a magical portal. He steps through and into another dimension, drawn into a quest to rescue the nice wizard, Calypso, from the clutches of the evil wizard, Sordid.

Simon's not a brat though, and I don't really know why. Maybe it's because he didn't irritate me as much as I thought he would. Or maybe it's because he's actually amusing. Hmm, I think that's more like it.

Simon The Sorcerer is an arcade adventure game in which you, unsurprisingly, play Simon. It uses an interface essentially identical to *Monkey Island*-era LucasArts games and is very funny indeed. Despite his brat-



FORMAT: PC

AVAILABLE: NOW

CATEGORY: ADVENTURE

PLAYERS: 1

PUBLISHER: ACTIVISION

PRICE: N/A

visuals

Exquisitely detailed backgrounds and locations, and the animation is pretty special too. Beautiful.

92

sound

The music is a treat, and fits in perfectly with the in-game action.

90

gameplay

If tongue-in-cheek adventuring is your thing then you'll find plenty of it in Simon.

92

longterm

Depends how good you are, but you'll keep coming back to this one.

89

overall

Amazing! Simon's not a brat, and this is a great game! It just goes to show you should never judge a game by its box.

91%

Leisure Suit Larry VI

Leisure Suit Larry is a bit of a legend in the computer game world. DAVID WILDGOOSE wonders why.

It's a fine line that Leisure Suit Larry and his creator, Al Lowe, have attempted to walk throughout the entire series of his adventures. Is a Larry game sexist, degrading and insulting to women? Is it just good-natured fun with a few rude bits to attract the "blokes"?

Or is it something else, something much more sinister and subversive? Is it, in fact, a viciously savage satire steeped in razor-sharp subliminal messages and delicious irony as it relentlessly rips apart the male ego and patriarchal system? Ha, ha, ha, if only. No, mostly it's a somewhat precarious combination of the first two. That is, while the way women are portrayed is highly dubious, generally the jokes are at Larry's expense and rarely will he come out better than second best in any encounter.

Shape Up Back about four billion years ago when the original *Leisure Suit Larry In The Land Of The Lounge Lizards* was released it was (subject material aside) quite a ground-breaking game. The EGA graphics in particular were very advanced for an adventure game. However, since then nothing has changed all that much. Apart from a few graphical refinements, Larry looks as he always has, resplendent in white polyester and bald spots. He's still searching for the perfect woman, having met with only limited success with his previous, erm, relationships in the

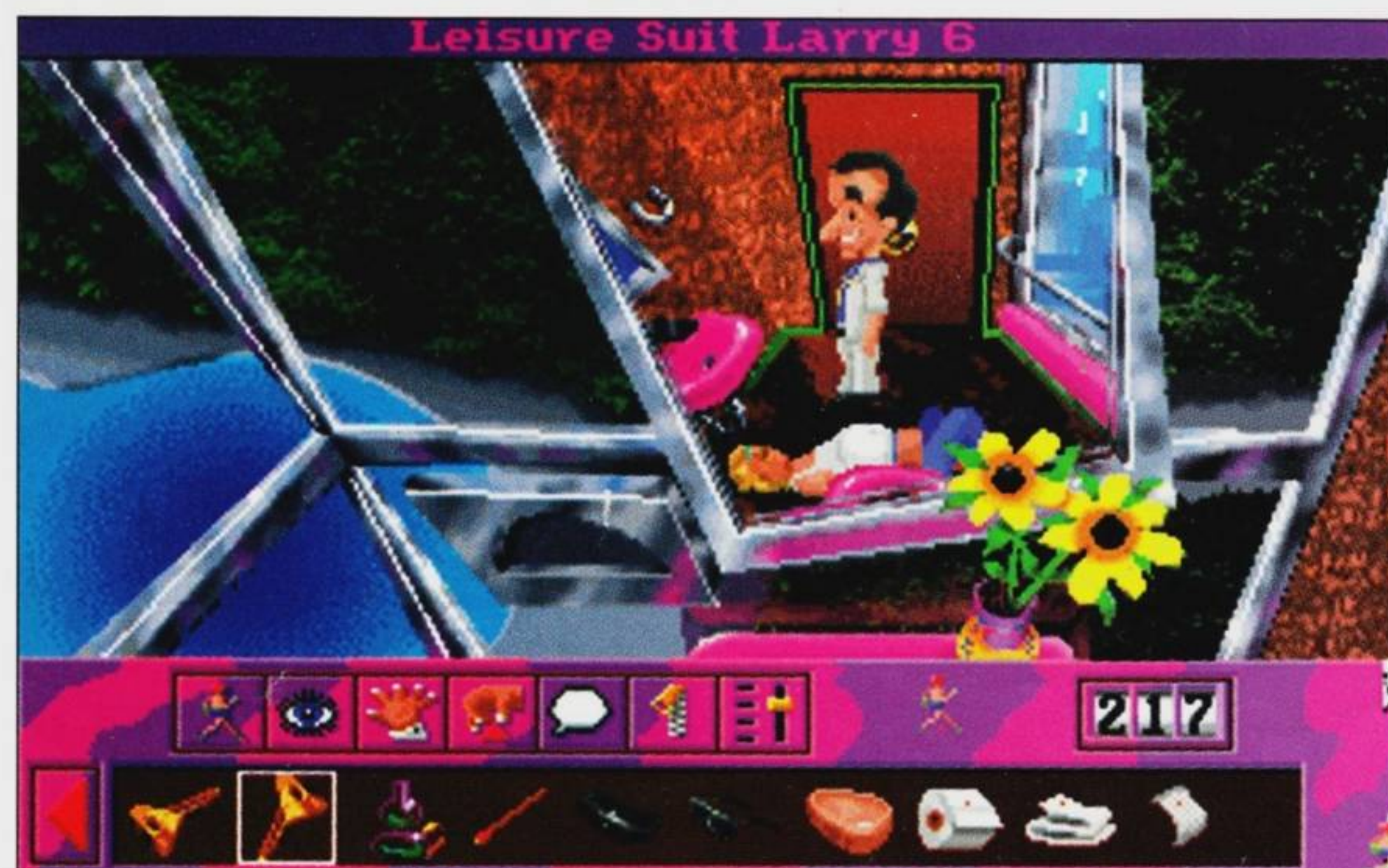
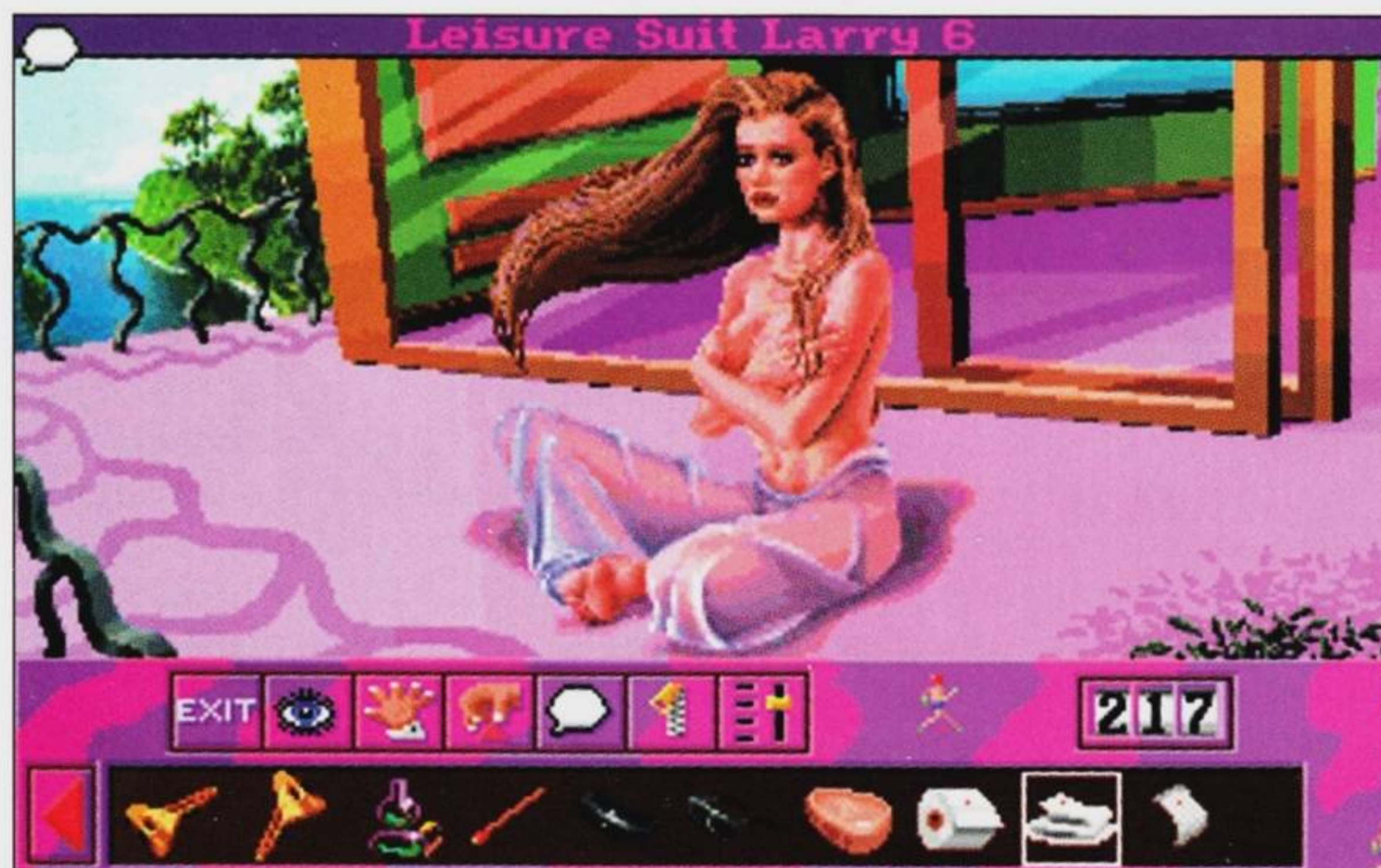


earlier Larry adventures. I mean, surely he's getting too old for this sort of thing?

The plot of *Leisure Suit Larry VI: Shape Up or Slip Out* isn't terrifically new. At the start, Larry is plucked from obscurity to appear on a cheap 'n' nasty TV game show called Stallions, a parody of the execrable Studs which somehow made it onto Australian TV last year. Naturally, Larry loses but he does manage to win the second prize, a two week holiday at the La Costa Lotta Health Resort. At the resort Larry will meet up with (and this is where the blurb on the box

gets ridiculously excited) "NINE - COUNT 'EM - NINE breathtakingly beautiful babes!" and you have to "Help Larry on his quest to conquer nine intensely beautiful women, all rendered in an amazingly life-like fashion". Oh dear, I'm still wondering if I was playing the same game.

Slip Out This is really desperate stuff. The jokes are tired and predictable variations on the ones from the original game which, to be honest, were only vaguely amusing the first time. Unless, of course, you're the sad, sweaty, suited businessman type, in which case, you'll love it.



The actual gameplay is the typical Sierra object-manipulation fare (i.e. give object A to person A, person A will give you object B, take object B to person B, et-bloody-cetera) which does absolutely nothing for me. The graphics are only average for this sort of game, but the music is appropriately sleazy and really quite good.

Leisure Suit Larry VI is one of the first games to receive one of the new MA-17 ratings, which means that it's not suitable for minors. That's good. Anything to restrict the sale of crap games is fine by me.

FORMAT: PC

AVAILABLE: NOW

CATEGORY: ADVENTURE

PLAYERS: 1

PUBLISHER: SIERRA

PRICE: \$99.95

visuals

An ugly man in a polyester suit surrounded by digitised "babes". Hmmm, excellent!?! **60**

sound

The best part of the game - low-down, sleazy and tacky, just like Larry. **85**

gameplay

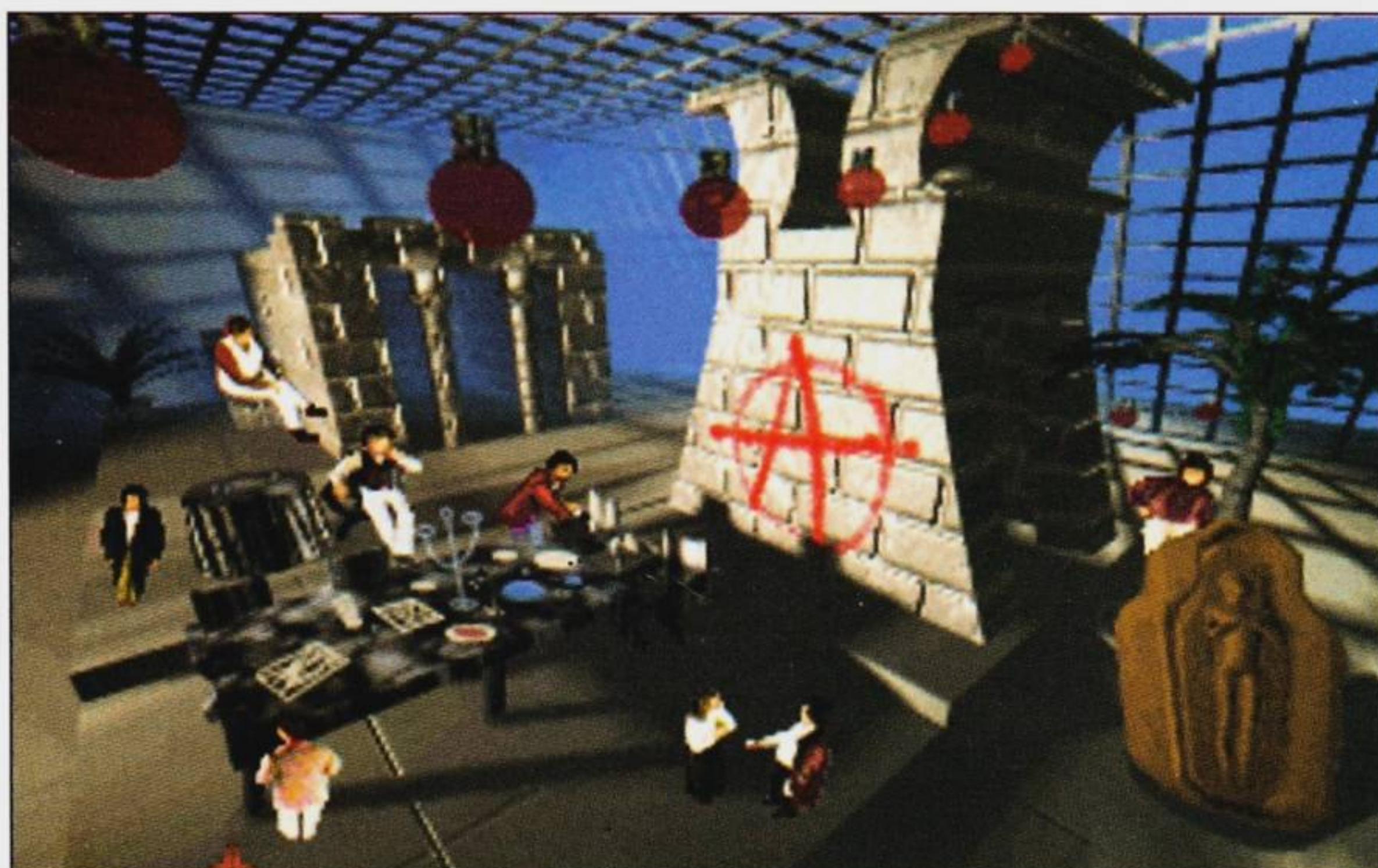
It's a typical Sierra adventure. You've done it all before - about four or five times. **50**

longterm

It will last longer the sadder or more desperate you are. **45**

overall

Larry was funny when he had some novelty value. Now he's just a sad old sexist pervert. **50%**



In *Bloodnet* you assume the role of Ransom Stark. A few years ago you were an employee of Trans Technicals where you were constantly exposed to cyberspace. You developed a condition where you had difficulty in distinguishing the difference between reality and virtual reality. Luckily you were discovered by a teenage street gang and taken to the hidden laboratory of Deirdre Tackett, who had a vendetta against Trans Technicals. She inserted a neural implant into your brain, allowing you to retain your grasp on reality. Unfortunately you now have a new problem to deal with; you have fallen prey to a vampire. The neural implant is the only thing which stands between you and the threat of becoming a full vampire. You must find a way to purge yourself of the vampiric disease while at the same time thwarting the vampire lord and his plan to dominate cyberspace. William Gibson eat your heart out!

Complicated The first thing you have to do in *Bloodnet* is generate your character. This allows you to choose Ransom Stark's various skills along with his career type. While it does allow you to fine-tune your character, it can also become

rather complicated and confusing. During the game you also have the chance to recruit up to six other characters. Thankfully the game designers have incorporated a system where characters actually speak up and volunteer for tasks when they are the most qualified.

This is a map-based game. You have access to a map of New York, just move the cursor to a destination and click. Bingo, you're there. This means that you don't have to tramp around for hours just to get from A to B. Unfortunately this is one of the only user-friendly aspects of the game. Hi-tech equipment is prevalent throughout, and you must learn how to use it if you are to get through the game. While this means that *Bloodnet* has a very cyberpunk feel, it doesn't necessarily make for exciting gameplay. Almost from the word go you find a whole heap of equipment with very little explanation of what it actually does. If you have the right combination of skills you can attempt to construct or "jury-rig" objects from component parts. Thankfully the manual contains a list of what goes where or you'd soon be thinking of rather rude but creative places to shove that irritating piece of circuitry.

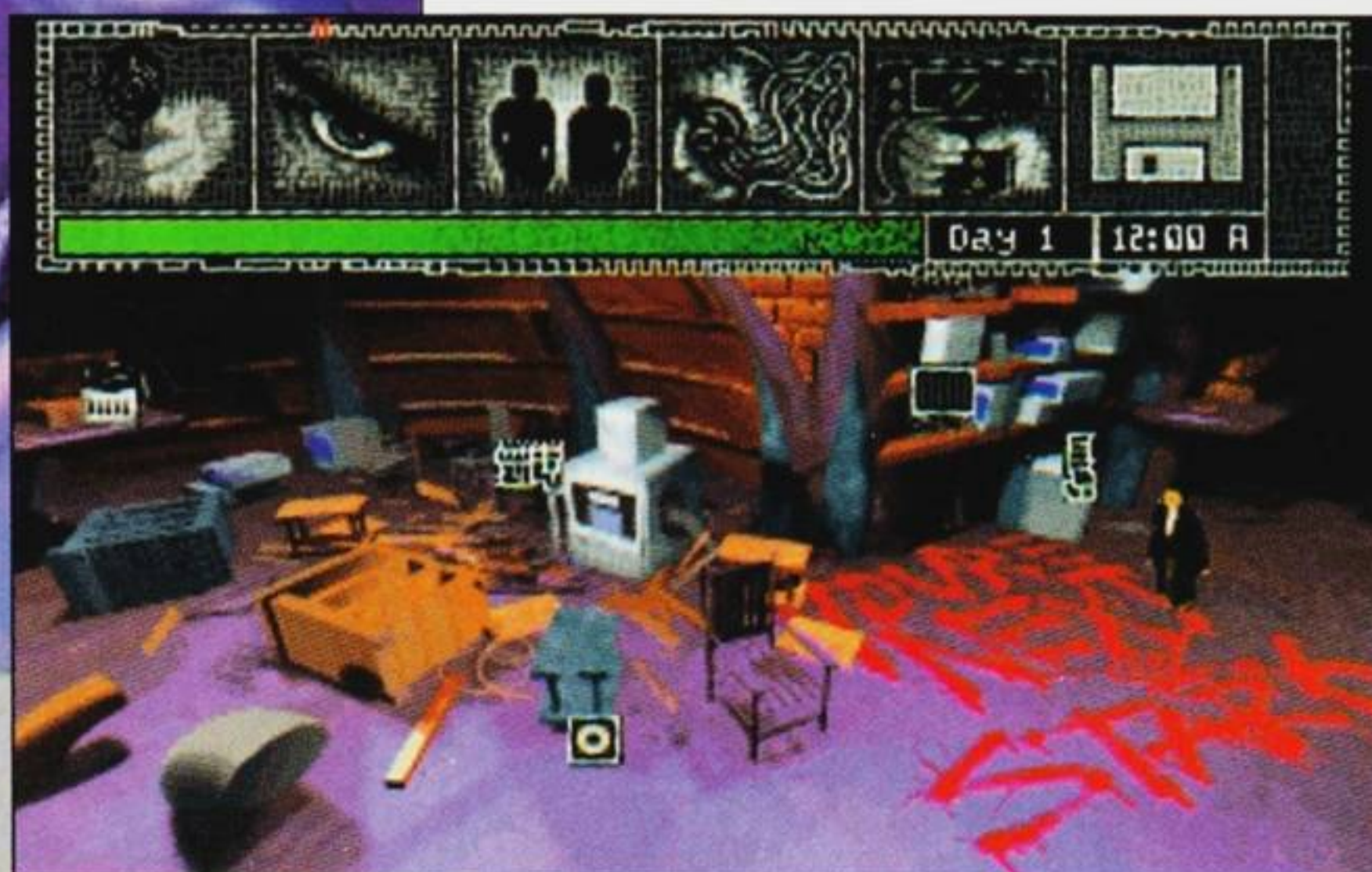
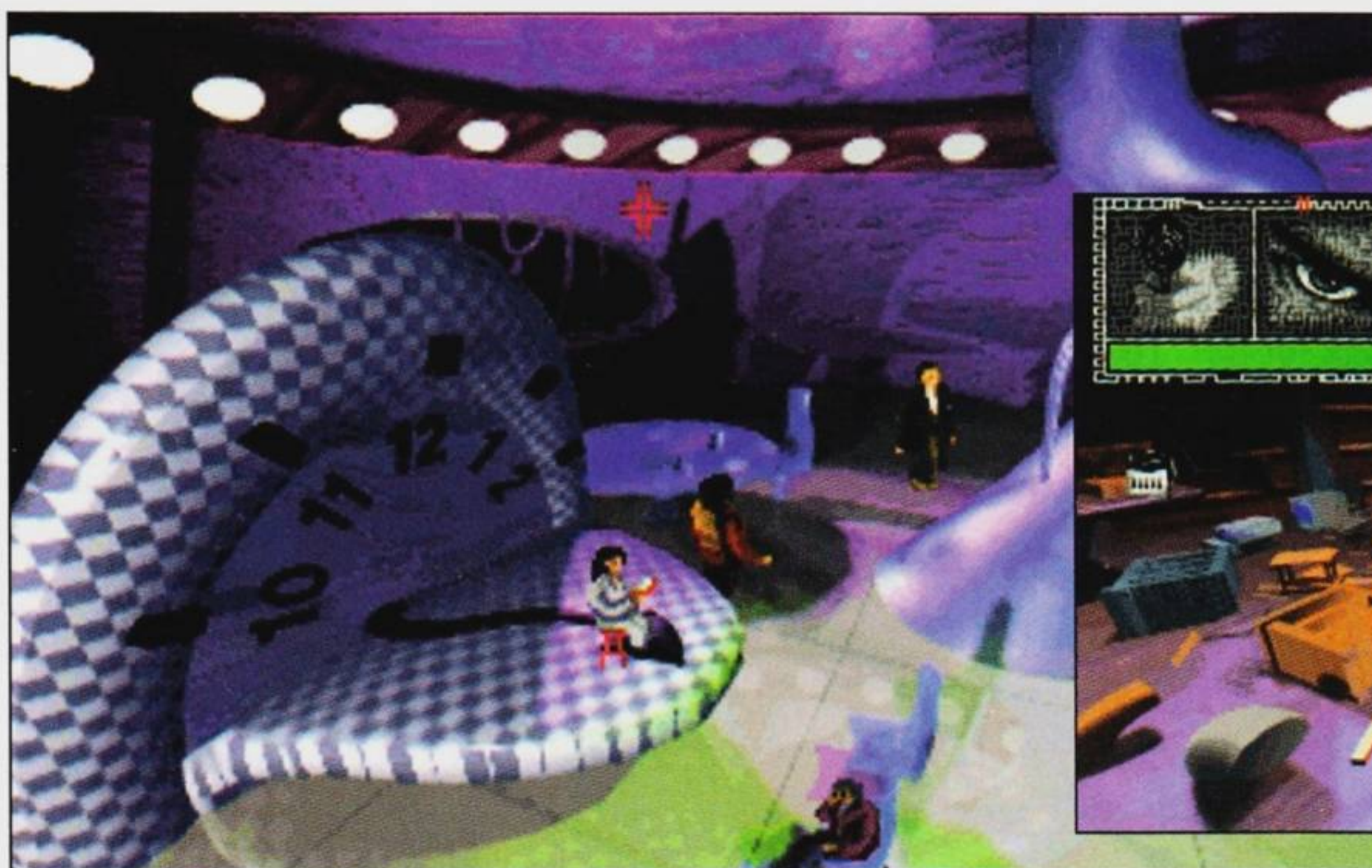
Manhattan, 2094. A claustrophobic nightmare where buildings block out any view of the sky. People search for alternative existences by fusing their minds with computers and exploring the infinite possibilities of cyberspace. JULIAN SCHOFFEL downloads a gothic cyberpunk future.

More Complications Navigating through cyberspace is crucial to the successful completion of *Bloodnet* and it can be a royal pain in the ass! I found myself wandering in different directions for ages and finding absolutely nothing. What's more, cyberspace can't be mapped because it changes every time you enter. While this makes the game seem a whole lot bigger, it also adds another very complicated element.

Combat is either done automatically by the computer or performed manually round by round. I usually used the quick combat option because manual combat was too long-winded and yes, you guessed it, complicated. There are a heap of weapons to use, but you have to assemble most of the better ones yourself.

Graphically, *Bloodnet* is quite impressive. Each location has been beautifully drawn and all the characters move using rotoscoped animation. This adds up to a very atmospheric game, albeit a rather user-unfriendly one. The music and sound-effects lacked something and mostly consisted of a fairly annoying variety of techno-tunes.

If you are looking for a simplistic, user-friendly game then *Bloodnet* is to be avoided at all costs. If, on the other hand, you want something you can really get your teeth into (ha ha), it may be the game you've been waiting for.



FORMAT: PC

AVAILABLE: NOW

CYBERPUNK RPG

PLAYERS: 1

PUBLISHER: MICROPROSE

PRICE \$99.95

visuals

Nice, moody graphics really give the game a cybertech, gothic feel.

80

sound

Not too bad, but not really great either.

65

gameplay

Innovative, but clunky and overly complex.

65

longterm

If the atmosphere grabs you and the gameplay doesn't get to you then you'll may just stick it out to the end.

70

overall

Quite an innovative game for Microprose. Cyberpunk fanatics will love it.

70%

Innocent - Until Caught

Clever phrase that, Innocent - Until Caught. It brings to mind all sorts of devious, immoral and illegal activities, which, of course, creates a great premise for a game. As luck would have it, Divide by Zero have written such a game, Psygnosis have had the good sense to release it, and DAVID WILDGOOSE has reviewed it...

Nice Plot Jack T. Ladd has gotten himself into a spot of bother. He's just been hauled in to face the IRDS (that's the Interstellar Revenue Decimation Service or, as they are more commonly known, the Taxman) and been asked to hand over more money that you knew existed, within 28 days. I wouldn't advise that you ask too many questions about it either as the penalties for non-compliance involve torture, followed by the sale of internal organs and, finally, death.

Why is this happening? Well, Jack's a Master Thief, you see, and has never paid tax in his life. Jack was fleeing the tragically-named planet of Bagapoo, hotly pursued by some pirates, when he became caught in the tractor beam of a giant IRDS spaceship conducting a roving

puzzle there's nothing to do but endlessly wander round the various locations and have the same word-for-word conversation with everyone you meet. I can't think of anything that shatters the atmosphere or credibility of any situation better than this.

There's also the unfair and unreal restrictions placed upon your actions. One occurs in the empty subway where you are prevented from getting onto the platform because you don't have a token to put in the ticket-gate. There's no one watching, so why can't you simply jump over the waist-high gate? Sure, performing these actions may

not get you anywhere, but at least let us do them! Or, if not, give us a valid reason why we can't.

Moving onto a more subjective criticism, I found the style of humour pretty irritating. Every character in the game is either sexist, stupid or a smart-ass (Jack himself manages to be all three), but, more importantly, not very funny. Or maybe I have no sense of humour.

I know this review hasn't been particularly favourable so far, but *Innocent...* is no worse than many adventures around at the moment. Obviously, it's no match for the LucasArts titles like *Monkey Island*, *Day of the Tentacle* and now *Sam & Max*, but it's well ahead of anything Sierra has to offer. The graphics are lovely, although slightly indistinct in places, and the soundtrack is quite darkly sinister. These both combine well to create a gloomy, moody and cyberpunk atmosphere which is pretty cool. The interface is perfectly adequate and offers a nice zoom-in window when you use the "look" icon.

Innocent - Until Caught is a reasonably good adventure (due to a clever story-line more than anything) which suffers from all the usual adventure game faults, but doesn't attempt to fix them in any way. It's OK, but get *Sam & Max* instead.



tax inspection. Now he's been dumped onto a dingy little asteroid called Tayte to drown his sorrows and somehow manage to come by a heap of money. Except he won't. It's up to you instead. Good luck, and remember the friendly IRDS slogan — "You Have To Pay".

Shame About the Game Nice plot guys, shame the rest of the game didn't quite live up to it. *Innocent - Until Caught* falls down in a number of areas. The most frustrating aspect is the linear nature of the game, which means that until you manage to solve the current



FORMAT: PC

AVAILABLE: NOW

CATEGORY: ADVENTURE

PLAYERS: 1

PUBLISHER: PSYGNOSIS

PRICE: \$89.95

visuals

Very pleasant in general, but dull and indistinct in places.

78

sound

Moody, sinister, dark... just what a good cyberpunk wants to hear.

82

gameplay

The strictly linear gameplay really lets it down.

65

longterm

The clever storyline keeps your interest for a while, but underneath it's just a reasonable adventure game.

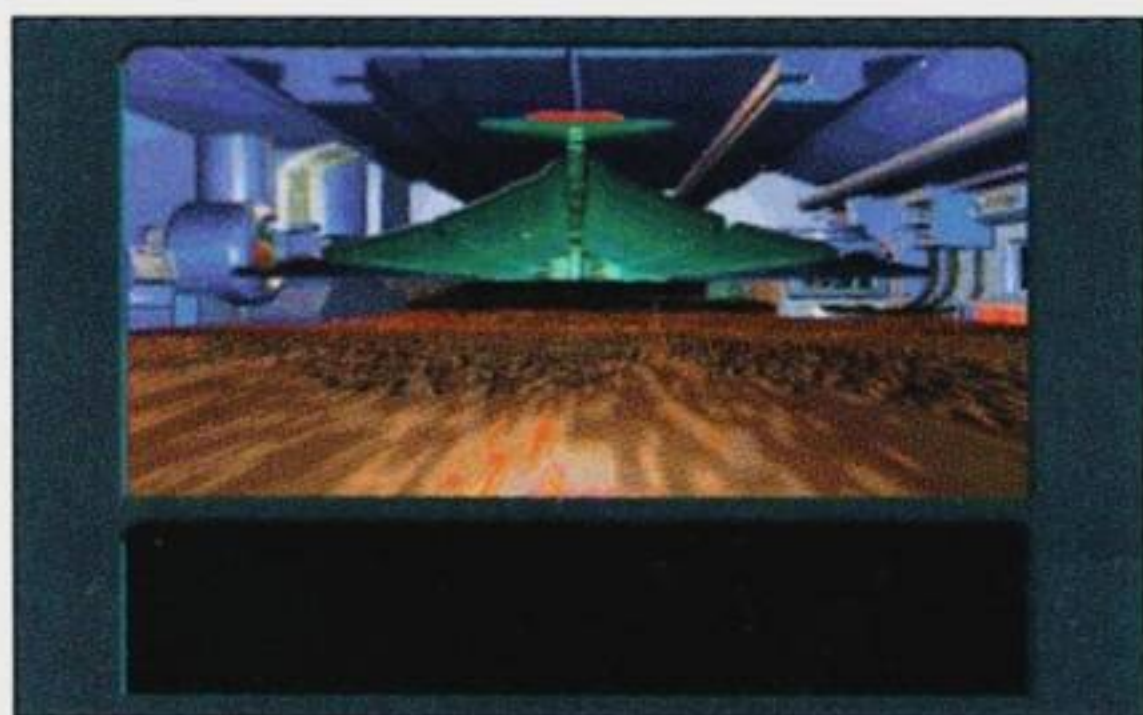
60

overall

It's got several pluses and several negatives, which adds up to a very average score.

70%

In the future there will be no war. Instead, representatives of opposing governments will take to the track in Cyber Race, a short dash around a sign-posted race-course in a ground-hugging "sled". The winner determines the outcome of the dispute. BEN MANSILL straps himself in and goes for a ride.



War swept across the Galaxy and entire Solar systems died as the most powerful weapons ever developed ripped a hole in the very fabric of the universe.



How does it feel to do nothing while your father's murderer gains control of the Galaxy? Drive a sled for Terra and avenge him.



People believe if you can control the black hole, you can control the galaxy.



It's just a hole. It's not a multidimensional portal some hidden source of power. Anybody who believes otherwise is a fool.

This is no ordinary challenge. You represent the Terran Empire (Earth and her colonies in a few lifetimes) and your primary foes are the unlikeable Kaladasians, with whom Terra has warred endlessly at the cost of millions of innocent lives. In your hands is the fate of Earth. Billions depend on your skill, and even worse, your reputation is at stake. Can you do it? And is CyberRace good enough to make you want to?

A No Frills Big One CyberRace is a classic example of what can go wrong when a game that should be a no-frills occasional bit of good fun, is attacked by a team of spirited programmers with a massive budget and the desire to make a "big one". There used to be an arcade driving game years ago (it took 10 cent pieces), where you had to steer a bonnet through a continuous stream of green edge posts that twisted and turned as they came at you. This same basic concept has been transplanted with minimal creative improvement to the age of fast PCs and consumers with high expectations.

Taking the role of Shaw (with no option to add your own name!) you must repeatedly contest an endless sequence of short races. Each race is a short circuit of varying length and complexity, and you must accurately steer your sled through a tightly twisting course laid out by "holographic" markers. Your sled can go

in any direction, but to finish you must keep it between the extremely narrow markers for the entire race. To further complicate matters, it's also a combat situation - all sleds are armed, including yours, and the blood flows freely.

Great on Paper That's the gist of the game, it's very simple stuff. Great arcade concept on paper, but the CyberRace that's hit the shelves has the most widely contrasting good and bad points seen since the safe sex crusade began.

The good is phenomenal, the bad a sad shame. Graphically, CyberRace is stunning - the style is all *Comanche*, beautifully sculpted 3-D landscapes with no straight lines to be seen. The terrain and colours change with every race, and the effect is sensational. The terrain graphics are easily the game's best feature. They are also its biggest problem. To run in the best of three selectable levels of detail you need a PC that hasn't been invented yet. I've run it on a variety of the fastest local-bus 486s, and every time the motion was as fluid as concrete. For true control there is no choice but to select the lowest detail level, and this trade off between potential and playability is almost criminal. Compounding this problem, the similarity between what you do to the joystick and what happens on-screen is minimal. Keeping your sled between the flags is hard and funless enough without the added bother of an awful joystick routine.

CyberRace is an agonising combination of potential and overkill. Still, the beautiful graphics and well scripted storyline are reason enough to take a look. Give it time, even if it means having to sacrifice quality gameplay in the process.



FORMAT: PC

AVAILABLE: NOW

CATEGORY: RACING

PLAYERS: 1

PUBLISHER: CYBERDREAMS

PRICE: \$99.95

visuals

Cutting edge and sensational, with a Cray Supercomputer. Sadly wasted on a game with little substance.

92

sound

Nothing to complain or rave about. Digitised speech during intro sounds muffled, although there's lots of it.

80

gameplay

If grim satisfaction is all to look forward to with a win, then what's the point?

74

longterm

The graphics will keep you interested for a while, but the shocking playability will finish you sooner than you think

70

overall

Dazzling graphics, painful playability. Worth having in the collection, but you won't be joining the fan club.

75%

Driving a car round and round an oval circuit may not sound particularly excit-



ing, but Indycar racing has a huge following in the United States. Then again, most Americans are crazy. Just like BEN MANSILL.

For over a year now, Formula One Grand Prix from Microprose has reigned supreme as the premier serious driving sim for the PC. But now GP must hand over the crown, for Indycar has arrived, and aside from being superior in every respect, it's a knockout game that was admitted to the TRULY GREAT Hall of Fame the day it was released. Sensational in all the important departments, Indycar is the new definitive driving sim for the PC.

Win - at any cost That this American flavour of motor racing is far less popular in this part of the world than its European cousin matters not, the task at hand is a universal thing - win at any cost. A combination of twisty Formula One style tracks and the oval circuits that the Yanks love but the rest of the world finds so incomprehensibly dull are available for you to prove your skills in these two completely different types of driving, in a car that's guaranteed better than the real thing.

God bless the clever programmers at Papyrus who developed this outstanding driving model, it's a real gem. Your car responds and handles just as a real car would, a real Indycar that is. A delicate hand and enormous skill are required to win at the highest difficulty levels. During prac-

tice sessions it's hard enough to put in a few consistent fast laps without hitting the wall on every second corner, and in a race situation when the heat is on, every win will be a thoroughly deserved one. A lightly sprung joystick with lots of range is the right tool for this job. I use and recommend the Gravis joystick, but however you choose to control your car, this is a game that is so difficult, yet so addictive, that it will drive you on to a very satisfying perfection.

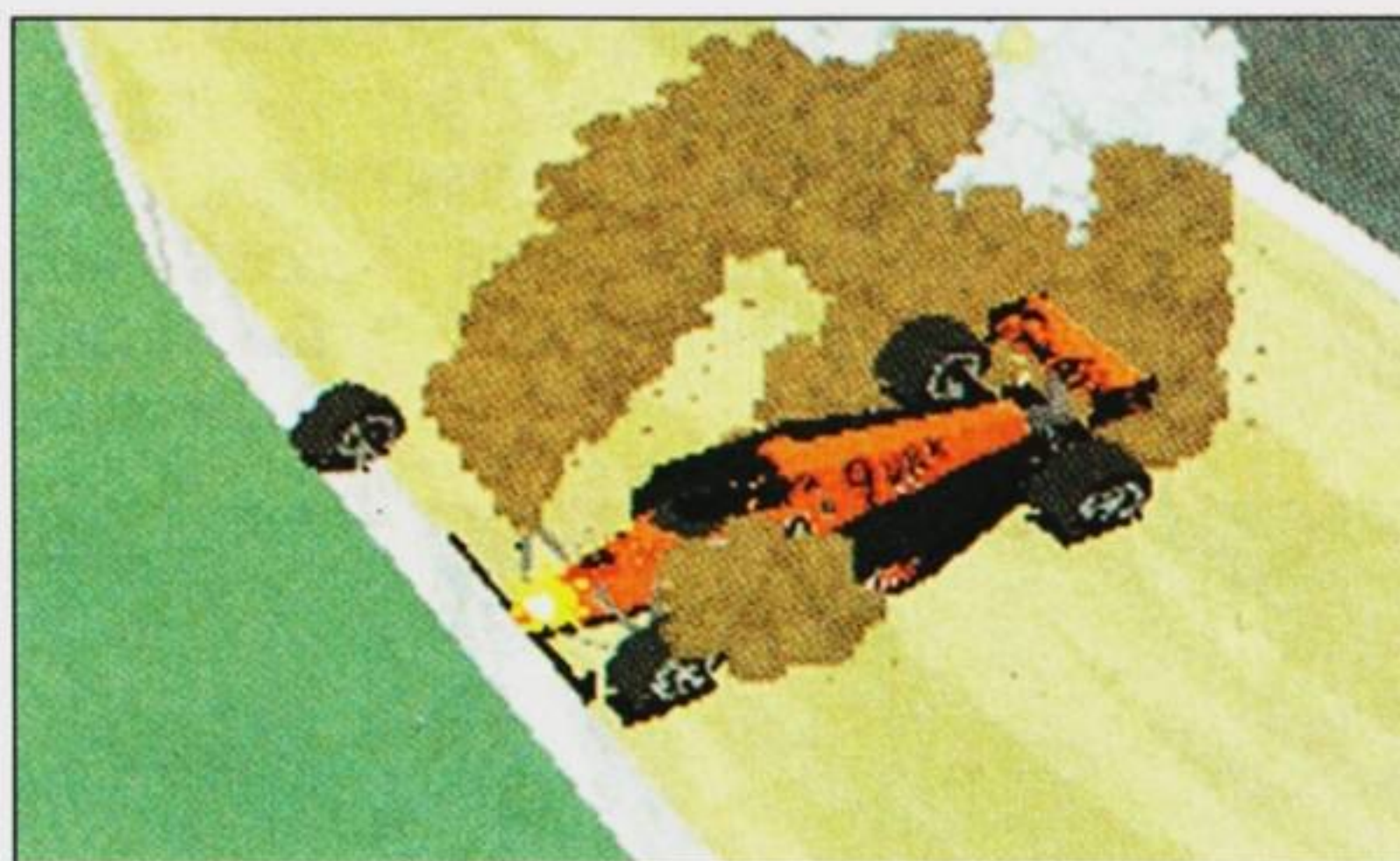
Although your various difficulty options allow you to set the race to match your abilities, the computer driven opponents can be reliably expected to give it their best fight every time. This is a very pleasant change from the parades we are used to, these guys will block you, take spectacular risks with passing moves, and happily, screw up and spin off regularly.

Sponsors & Billboards

Visually, Indycar is a feast. Each car is richly detailed with even the sponsor names and ads included. Splines, struts and even the

Goodyear name on the tyres make the cars look fabulous, and they whip around on precisely modelled tracks festooned with a huge variety of great looking billboards, which surely brought in some extra cash for Papyrus. Naturally,

all this detail being moved around in such quantities places huge demands on your system, so fast 486 owners will have the biggest



smiles on their faces. Even so, lowly 386ers will not suffer too greatly due to selectable detail levels and sharp programming techniques.

It's time to trash those crappy free speakers and plug into some decent amplified hardware - Indycar screams, wails and roars with the most hormone-tickling engine sounds ever heard. The cars sound meaty and powerful and the sounds provide essential feedback for car control. The most sensational experience, though, comes from entering a swarm of enemy cars: they Doppler effect you from all directions in a frenzied cacophony of screaming power that will bring a big dumb grin to your face. Soundcard essential, play loud.

Indycar is a stunning package, whether you are showing off your dazzling skill on the best replay facility I've ever seen (just like watching TV and it makes you look really good!), being mesmerised by the hypnotic effect oval racing can have on you, or giving it 100% at the very Bathurst style Laguna Seca track. A must for all racing fans.



FORMAT: PC

AVAILABLE: NOW

CATEGORY: RACING

PLAYERS: 1-2 (ON-LINE)

PUBLISHER: VIRGIN

PRICE: \$79.95

visuals

As close to the real thing as VGA can provide.

92

sound

Pump up the horniest engine sounds ever and drive your neighbours insane.

92

gameplay

Smooth, exciting, loud, big, fast, awesome. Get it!

91

longterm

The "perfect lap" beckons, until you've done it you'll never be satisfied.

94

overall

A classic, it will be a long time until this one is bettered.

92%

Sam & Max Hit The Road

Sam & Max is the adventure game that promises to put hair on your back. This is a good thing... or so DAVID WILDGOOSE tells us.

Sam: "I can't think of anything more relaxing than being locked in a moving car with a delusional psychotic like yourself, little pal."

Max: "That's really sweet Sam. I may weep openly."

LucasArts can't put a foot wrong at the moment, can they? *Indiana Jones & the Fate of Atlantis*, *Monkey Island 2*, *Day of the Tentacle*; they all were the best adventures you could get at the time of their release and are all still wonderful games. Now, there's *Sam & Max — Freelance Police: Hit The Road* (but I think I'll just call it *Sam & Max*) and it is at least as brilliant as the others.

Charmingly Endearing One of the many great things about LucasArts games are the plots, and *Sam & Max* is no exception. Sam (the charmingly thick dog) and Max (the endearingly sadistic rabbit) are members of the Freelance Police force and have been assigned to investigate some bizarre occurrences at a nearby carnival. It is revealed that both star attractions of the carnival, Bruno the Bigfoot and Trixie the Giraffe-necked Woman, have gone missing and you must get them back. Solving the case will take you across America as you visit every tacky tourist attraction know to man (er, and dog and rabbit), from the

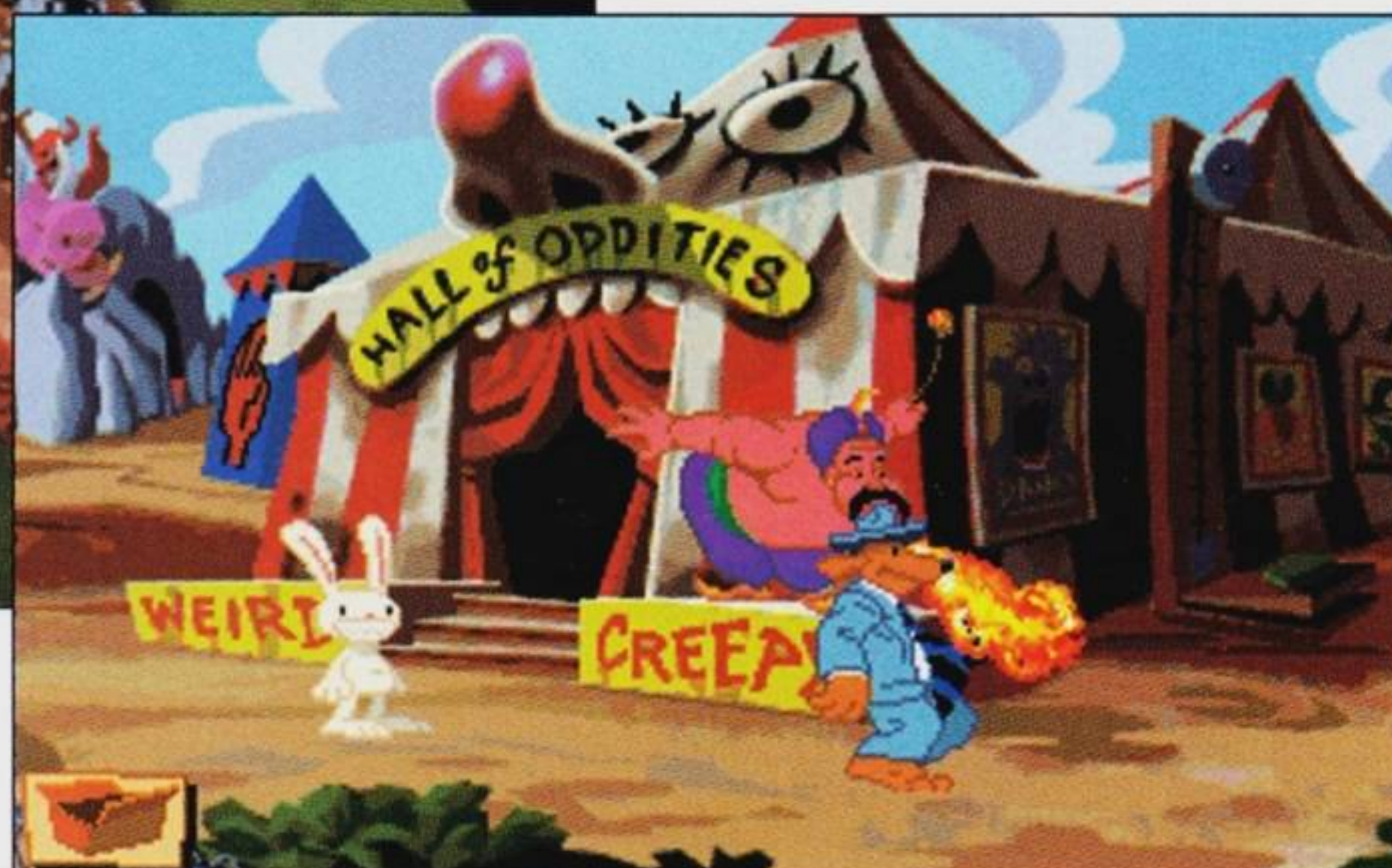
World of Fish to Mt Rushmore via the World's Largest Ball of Twine.

Max: "Gratuitous acts of senseless violence are MY forte!"

Sam: "You're such an adorable urchin, Max."

Since *Day of the Tentacle*, the LucasArts team have bought some new clothes for the interface. Now everything is hidden off-screen and the icons can be cycled through using the right mouse button. An inventory box is located at the bottom left and a full display is shown when you click on this. Besides the obvious slickness, the most notable improvement from this is that the graphics now take up the whole screen.





Dirty & Weird Speaking of the graphics, aren't they utterly fabulous? The same style of lunatic architecture used so effectively in *Day of the Tentacle* is present here, but in a much dirtier and plain weirder way which borders on *Ren And Stimpy*-esque surrealism. (In fact, the whole game had a kind of *Ren and Stimpy* feel to it, for some reason).

The animation is of an astonishingly high quality and much of the humour is derived from the hilariously detailed range of facial expressions and bodily movements of the characters. Witness the dumbly innocent look on the face of the carnival fire-eater as he accidentally burns your investigation authorisation papers. Or when Sam thumps Max on the head while playing a game of Wack-A-Rat in one of the sideshow tents. You will laugh, I can assure you.

Sam: "You're looking hale and hearty, lil' buddy."

Max: "I'm a coffee achiever, Sam."

Combine all of the above — the groovy plot, the superb graphics and the slick 'n' intuitive interface — and you've got the perfect adventure game, right? Well, not quite, there's still something missing — "Atmosphere". Yep, that's right, it's "atmosphere" (you have to whisper

when you say it) that makes or breaks a game and, naturally, *Sam & Max* has got it in bucket loads. And then some.

Cute, Coolly Unfashionable & Funny Some of it (the "atmosphere", that is) undoubtedly comes from the main characters. Sam and Max are two of the most appealing and downright lovable characters in gaming history. They're cute, they're coolly unfashionable and they're most definitely extremely funny — what more could you wish for?

The biggest portion of the "atmosphere" though, is created by the fantastic music. There's a different tune for each location you visit, but they're all played by this really cheesy-sound-

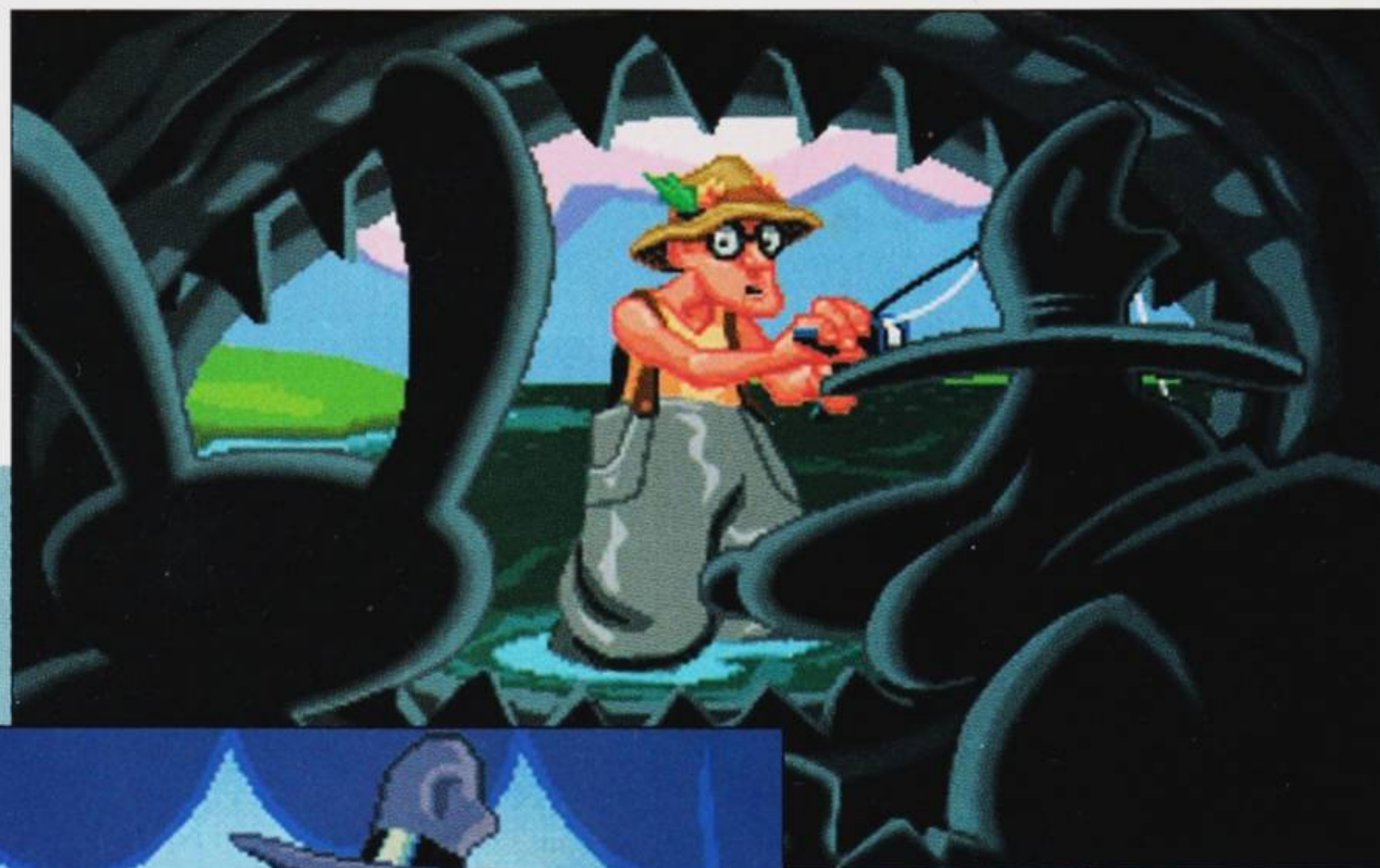
ing organ-type instrument and sound simply excellent in an appropriately retro kind of way.

The whole game looks, sounds and feels like you'd expect a greasy American roadside diner to... well, look, sound and feel like. Not surprisingly, you can visit one in the game. It's called "Snuckey's" and I'd swear that the assistant is Bernard from *Day of the Tentacle* after he'd grown a mo.

Sam: "Computer games are your best entertainment dollar value."

Max: "Go buy some computer games right now. Especially those funny LucasArts ones."

Cheers, Max. I couldn't agree more.



PC

available

NOW

category

ADVENTURE

players

1

publisher

LUCAS ARTS

price

\$89.95

visuals

Utterly fabulous. Brilliant cartoon graphics with truckloads of humour and personality.

93

sound

One of the games best features - the tune changes for every location.

94

gameplay

Fantastic adventuring in the winning LucasArts style.

93

longterm

You'll be playing this to death until the next LucasArts release (Can this company do any wrong?).

90

overall

Arguably the best adventure on the market. If you liked *Day of the Tentacle* or *Monkey Island*, you should buy this immediately.

93%

Rebel Assault

Rebel Assault is the latest in a long line of Star Wars games from LucasArts, and is their first title exclusively designed for CD-Rom. JULIAN SCHOFFEL gazes in awe at one of the most visually stunning games to hit the PC.



Perhaps the first thing I should say about *Rebel Assault* is that it's bloody hard. It took me ages just to get through the training missions and this was in easy mode! But hey, I'm not complaining, because the game is so good that I didn't mind being stuck on it for hours.

It is essentially an arcade game with absolutely magnificent graphics and sound. You take on the role of a rookie pilot flying for the Rebel Alliance in this 15 level extravaganza. You fly a variety of vehicles from the Star Wars universe, including a T16 Skyhopper, a snowspeeder, an X-Wing and an A-Wing, and take on the wicked Imperial forces in a variety of locations, like Tatooine, Hoth, the Death Star and, of course, deep space.

Some Different Perspectives

The gameplay is viewed from four different perspectives. The first is third-person flight, where you view your ship from behind (similar to a chase plane camera view), then there is third-person bombing, where you view your ship from behind and above. You also get the standard first-person flight perspective, where you are in the cockpit. And finally, third-person shooting, where you view yourself from behind as you run through passages frying Storm Troopers with your hand-blaster. While this creates varied gameplay, it also

makes it damned difficult to get used to piloting a ship. I found myself successfully completing a level in the first-person flight perspective, only to get nailed in the next level because I had to re-familiarise myself with control in third-bombing perspective. This is especially irritating when you only acquire the passcode to a game-section every four levels or so.

Another slightly annoying aspect of *Rebel Assault* is the *Inca*-like control of your ship. For those of you who played *Inca* you'll probably remember how frustrating it was to find yourself in a gorgeous space-combat sequence, only to discover that you had little or no control of your craft. *Rebel Assault* suffers from the same malady. In one level where you have to take out a Star Destroyer, you find yourself doing a huge sweep around the enemy ship, while everything looks stunning, just try moving your ship out of the set flight path; you get little or no response. This is bearable until you have blown up all of the Star Destroyer's defences except the two shield generators on the top of the ship, you then have to endure long periods where absolutely nothing happens until your X-Wing completes another complete circuit of the Destroyer.

Star Wars Strikes Back By far the most impressive features of *Rebel Assault* are the beautiful graphics and sound. Some of the animated cut-scenes will leave you gasping in awe! There are also full screen video clips from the movie, which although slightly grainy, add a lot of atmosphere. But it's the in-flight graphics that really count,



and they are more akin to a movie than anything previously seen in a PC game. Just check out the detail of the asteroids, canyon-walls and Tie-Fighters! The sound of the game is also incredibly atmospheric, with plenty of crisp speech and orchestrated music straight from the Star Wars movies.

The game can be controlled with a mouse or joystick but I would definitely recommend the latter. I was using a Flightstick and found it to be a little too loose when navigating an X-Wing through a tight canyon. Control would probably be a lot easier with a slightly stiffer joystick like the Gravis Analog Pro.

Being a CD game, you must own a CD-Rom drive to run *Rebel Assault* (Doh! -Ed). If you want to get the most out of the game you should also have a good sound-card and a joystick. But you don't need a 486; *Rebel Assault* chugs along nicely on a good old 386. If you want a solid, stunning-looking arcade game which will make your friends jealous as hell, then *Rebel Assault* definitely fits the bill.



PC/CD-ROM

available

NOW

category

ARCADE/ACTION

players

1

publisher

LUCASARTS

price

\$99.95

visuals

They don't come any better than this. Absolutely mind-blowing!

97

sound

You'll think you're in a Star Wars movie.

95

gameplay

Control is often fairly limited, and is reminiscent of the game Inca.

80

longterm

The graphics and sound alone will inevitably keep you coming back for more.

85

overall

You must see this game! A state-of-the-art title that bodes well for the future of PC games on CD.

90%

1993 YEARBOOK ISSUE

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If you were out of it in '93, then get into the Rolling Stone Yearbook.

ON SALE NOW

MAKE MY VIDEO: INXS MEGA CD

Available: Now
Category: Video Editing
Players: 1
Publisher: Digital Pictures
Price: \$140



Just like the previous Make My Video attempts (Kriss Kross, Marky Mark, C & C Music Factory), this CD is basically a collection of digitised video sequences masquerading as a game. And like the previous duds, if you're not into the band's music you won't get more than an hour's enjoyment out of this (and consider yourself lucky if you get an hour).

The story (if you can call it that): Two girls playing pool in a bar challenge you and a collection of bar-room losers to edit an INXS video. These women are strutting around in their swimming cossies, playing a shot occasionally to show a bit of cleavage for the camera... Yes, you guessed it, this is one of those weak-as-water teenage titillation games.

The approximation of a professional mixing desk shows three screens with a constant stream of cool and trendy images to choose from, as well as a variety of special mixing effects like strobing, slicing and running the words along the bottom of the screen (minus the bouncing ball).

The only incentive offered to do well is the girls' promise of affection, including appearing "in a whipped cream bikini". But why would you want them to when the Mega CD's video quality is as dodgy as ever.

There are just three songs included: *Heaven Sent*, *Baby Don't Cry* and *Not Enough Time*. I've never liked INXS and having to listen to them over and over was hell. The badly acted bar-room sequences and speech get boring very quickly. Some of the images included are spectacular, but never innovative. You'd hardly give them a second look if they were on *Rage*.

If for some reason you still find the concept interesting, go to your local video store and hire an INXS vid and something B-grade along the lines of "Porky's". That won't even cost you ten bucks.

Simon Vandore

VISUALS	78	SOUND	86	GAMEPLAY	50	LONGTERM	52	OVERALL	58
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BLADES OF VENGEANCE MEGA DRIVE

Available: Now
Category: Platform/Slash em up
Players: 1-2
Publisher: Electronic Arts
Price: No RRP



Blades of Vengeance is a platform/hack em up that was coded right here in Australia by Beam Software. As for the storyline, I have no idea. It's bound to be one of those Good vs Evil in a far away, mystical land thingies. All you have to do is push the Start button for a one or two-player game, choose one of three characters, and start slashing all over the place. It's that simple.

Actually, it's not quite that simple. We may have been a tad harsh when we previewed this game last issue. We said that all you had to do was keep walking to the right and kill a few creatures on the way. Fortunately, there's a bit more to it than that. You have to go up and down too and you may even need to backtrack to the left occasionally. Plus, there's bosses to beat, ladders to climb, hazards to negotiate and heaps of secret passages and rooms to discover.

The three characters (your standard Warrior/Amazon/Wizard) all have their own strengths and weaknesses and you get loads of magic to play with too. You can find the potions in chests or buy them at the end of a level if you've got enough silver (which you collect as you go).

The graphics are almost good. The sprites are big, detailed, and the animation is smooth. As for the backgrounds, the further you get into the game, the more impressive they start to look. But, and the same goes for the sound, there's nothing very special about any of it.

And that's where things start to go wrong. If it went to a high school formal, no one would ask *Blades of Vengeance* to dance with them because it's got absolutely no personality. It'd be left sitting in a corner all night. Sure, it looks alright and anything you can play with your mates is bound to be fun for an hour or so, but it's slow and generally very dull. However if fantasy romps and *Golden Axe* style slash 'em ups are your thing, then *Blades of Vengeance* might just be what you're looking for.

Andrew Humphreys

VISUALS	75	SOUND	69	GAMEPLAY	68	LONGTERM	64	OVERALL	66
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THE ADDAMS FAMILY MEGA DRIVE

Available: February
Category: Platformer
Players: 1
Publisher: Acclaim
Price: \$119.95



Up till now, Mega Drive owners have suffered the humiliating and painful misfortune of not having an Addams Family game for their system. They've had to sit back and watch their SNES owning friends have all the fun with the original *Addams Family* and the excellent *Pugsley's Scavenger Hunt*. But now, thanks to Acclaim, the Addams have hit the Sega console. And guess what? It's a carbon-copy of the SNES game.

Here's the (tenuous link with the film of the same name) plot: Morticia has been kidnapped, and it's up to Gomez (that's you, meathead) to rescue her. Regular HYPER readers will know that this can only mean one thing - a platform game. And that's exactly what you get. Gomez runs around, exploring the platform-packed Addams Family Mansion and its grounds in search of his beloved 'Tish.

Of course there's a lot of jumping and climbing to be done, heaps of enemies to overcome (like his son, Gomez favours the bum-jump as a weapon), and bosses to beat too. Gomez can also pick up some useful items to help him in his quest, like the Fezi-copter (a flying hat), swords, and golf-balls (handy for throwing) - all of which help to break-up the usual platform monotony.

The graphics are good (some sections are actually very good), the music is nice and ooky and the controls are fine too. As for gameplay, well, it's just the same as it was on the SNES: a good, challenging platformer that should keep you entertained for a while. But, just like the SNES game, it's nothing special. If you haven't been there, done that by now you might like to think of taking up another hobby.

To my mind, *The Addams Family* is just too old to make an impact on Mega Drive gamers. It's overpriced too. Rent it if you must.

Andrew Humphreys



ASTERIX AND THE GREAT RESCUE MEGA DRIVE

Available: Now
Category: Platform
Players: 1
Publisher: Sega
Price: \$129.95



I can't get no satisfaction when a platform game frustrates me into telling my Mega Drive where to get off. That's why *Asterix and the Great Rescue* is so good - every time I'm about let fly with the vitriol, pieces fall into place and I'm just hanging for another go.

In the highly unlikely event you don't already know, Asterix hails from a small cartoon village of Gauls holding out against the Romans in 50 B.C. The secret of the villagers' success is a strength-increasing elixir provided by Getafix, their druid.

The Great Rescue begins when the Romans capture Getafix and Dogmatix, a tough little dog belonging to Asterix's rather large friend, Obelix. Deprived of the magic elixir, an outraged Chief Vitalstatistix sends Asterix and Obelix into action.

The game is divided into six levels, comprising up to four "huts" of about three rooms each. One room alone of this pleasant platform action can be a hefty challenge.

As a beautifully-drawn and animated Asterix or Obelix, the player tackles enemies with a visible "Paff!", using objects and four secret weapons to negotiate everything from Sonic-style water sequences to the finale in Rome itself.

Unfortunately, this is another one of those games where the main sprites tend to disappear for a couple of seconds after taking a hit, which can be quite disorienting. This isn't state-of-the-art and I'd rather be playing a Sonic game, but the graphics are magical, the sound doesn't irritate, control is friendly and the difficulty levels are just right.

It would be more fun to have a two-player mode and be able to use both pals at once, but as it stands, *Asterix and the Great Rescue* is a happy little game for younger players.

Simon Vandore



DR ROBOTNIK'S MEAN BEAN MACHINE MEGA DRIVE

Available: January
Category: Puzzle
Players: 1-2
Publisher: Sega of America
Price: \$99.95



Yes, it's another Sonic spin-off game - this time it's a puzzler starring Sega's own Merv Hughes lookalike, Dr Robotnik. Robotnik and his minions are planning to use their mean bean-steaming machine to turn the peaceful little beans of Beanville into robot slaves. What is it with this guy and robots? Did he have a nasty but maybe slightly pleasurable experience with an automatic pool cleaner as a child, or what?

The game itself is a simple, but nevertheless involving, puzzle affair. If you've played *Columns* (and who hasn't?) you'll know what you're in for. As the beans fall into the chambers on either side of the screen (you compete against the computer or a human opponent), you have to arrange them so that four beans lock together. It doesn't matter if they're not in a straight line - they only have to be touching each other. Once they're grouped, they lock together and disappear. If you don't liberate the beans, then your chamber fills up and you lose.

The graphics are nothing fancy (although the presentation is excellent) and neither is the sound but there's a lot of gameplay hiding under the surface. The one-player mode actually has an aim (ie, beating all 5 of Robotnik's henchmen and finishing the game) and the two-player mode can be fiercely competitive.

Dr Robotnik's Mean Bean Machine is not an original concept - it's been around for ages in Japan under the name of *Puyo Puyo* (Sega added Robotnik and other characters from the new Sonic TV series to help it sell outside of Japan) - but it works. For some reason (and I have no idea why) the simple gameplay is strangely compelling. If you're the right type of gamer, it can be addictive and a lot of fun. But if you hated *Columns*, you'll hate this too.

Andrew Humphreys



HOOK

MEGA DRIVE

Available: Now
Players: 1
Category: Platform
Publisher: Sony Imagesoft
Price: \$89.95



Remember when there were only two certainties in life? Well, it would appear that those hardy perennials, death and taxes, have been joined by crap video games which accompany blockbuster movies (I'm exempting, of course, *Aladdin* and SNES *Jurassic Park*). It's becoming a popular refrain, and I'm not bucketing capitalism per se, but games ain't cheap and you would hope that the merchandising boffins spend a little more time on the games than they do on the lunch boxes and erasers. The evidence seems to suggest otherwise.

Take *Hook*, for example - a left to right scrolling platformer - phew, those boys really went out on a limb there, didn't they? Sure, it has a *Hook* logo on the box but Julia Roberts, Robin Williams and Dustin Hoffman (or their reasonable digital equivalents) are nowhere to be seen. Yes, we've got Pan, Wendy and a motley selection of Lost Boys, but they actually look more like the top 15 players from *Davis Cup World Tour* for the Mega Drive than anyone who ventured onto the Spielberg lot during the heady days of *Hook* filming.

Here, you join our moonlighting tennis pros as they comb through Neverland, fighting pirates and laying waste to blue porcupines (must have slept through that bit of the movie) in their quest to save Peter Banning's kidnapped children.

There's eleven levels of action, each one designed to simulate a different part of the Island of Neverland and, as Peter Pan, you'll be relying on your sword, jumping, your sword, swimming, your sword, Tinkerbell's magic dust and your sword to see your children and yourself to safety. This is not a dead loss by any means, the problem is that it's just another example of a functional but completely unoriginal platformer tarted up to cash in on the success of a movie that was designed more for its ability to sell bonus Coke cups than to entertain. No wonder Peter chose not to remain a boy for ever.

Stretch Armstrong



BRAM STOKER'S DRACULA

MEGA DRIVE/SNES

Available: Now
Category: Platform action
Players: 1
Publisher: Sony Imagesoft
Price: \$99.95



Well here's a twist - a dull licence of an even duller movie! These bad reviews of movie-to-game conversions must be becoming a little tedious. Maybe you're wondering how they fitted all that world weary cynicism into just one person, but hey, here at HYPER we call 'em as we see 'em.

First, it's pretty hard to get excited by a game based on a movie that you thought was complete rubbish. Gary Oldman, labouring under eight pounds of latex and calling himself "Drarcooola" in an accent of unknown origin, Keanu "English accent? No problem!" Reeves and the increasingly insipid Winona Ryder romping around in period costume, desperately in search of a plot, is not my idea of a good night out.

But if you were able to discern some merit in the film, then perhaps your view of the game will be different. Perhaps also, Erik von Danniken was right and the pyramids were constructed by aliens. But I digress... as with *Hook*, this is not a completely worthless game. It is, however, a reasonably dull, excruciatingly predictable platformer with just enough tenuous links to the movie to allow the makers to slap on a trademark, stick in a digitised movie style opening and, fingers crossed, ride the hog to merchandise heaven.

If you like platform games you may very well like this - it looks okay, there's quite a few levels and young John Harker (the Keanu character, as opposed to the leading Sydney rugby league caller) has a nice turn of phrase with a knife. You'll be trying to save Mina/Winona from nothing less than she deserves. Of course, this will involve walking, jumping, killing things and fighting large bosses (Francis Ford Coppola?) at the end of each level. As I said, it's okay, but I need more than rats and howling wolves to convince me this should have Bram Stoker's name on it.

Stretch Armstrong



CLIFFHANGER

MEGA DRIVE/SNES

Available: Now
Category: Action
Players: 1
Publisher: Sony Imagesoft
Price: \$89.95



I can remember speaking to a friend just after he'd seen *Cliffhanger*. After a mournful "What was I thinking?", he perfectly encapsulated one of the great dilemmas of Hollywood in the 90s, as studios pursue franchises instead of art: "Why," my friend asked, "would anyone spend \$40 million on special effects and scenery, and 12 cents on a script?"

This may seem a roundabout way of beginning a game review but, dear readers, if we can successfully plumb the mentality that has made Sly Stallone a respected Hollywood player, we'll be a long way to understanding why movie licenses are usually a load of bollocks.

All of which makes it a pleasant surprise that *Cliffhanger* is the best of the sorry lot of movie games. It's not great, but at least an effort has been made to create a "plot" which coincides, at least vaguely, with that of the movie. As a beat 'em up, it's no *Streetfighter* but there is a reasonable array of moves and a bunch of extras too. As the well built, well hung, well tough and not particularly well educated Gabe Walker (Rocky Mountain rescue ace) you must rid your beloved mountains of the dastardly Qualen, find a bunch of moolah and save your critically injured soulmate Hal. Despite the fact that you are Gabe "Strength of Ten Tigers" Walker this will be no easy task, as you will be faced with a never ending stream of Qualen's morally bankrupt henchmen, not to mention chasms, avalanches, rabid bats and kung fu experts. I expect that this game is not endorsed by the Rocky Mountains Tourist Authority.

The game is quite well drawn and animated and although the fighting action can become monotonous it's a pretty good frolic, especially the realistic knife swishes. You also have to jump ice chasms and indulge in some enjoyable climbing action, complicated by ugly brutes trying to shoot you at the same time. There's seven levels of play and even if the movie added nothing to the sum of Western thought this is a better than average movie tie-in. The bad news is that the average movie tie-in is unusually lame, but here Sly has, to a qualified extent, come up trumps.

Stretch Armstrong



LAST ACTION HERO SNES/MEGA DRIVE

Available: Now
Category: Pile of Poo
Players: 1
Producer: Sony Imagesoft
Price: \$89.95



There's a very good reason why this game was in the shops before any magazine in the world had a chance to review it: fear. The logic must go something like this: we've got an absolute stinker of a game on our hands here - how the hell are we going to flog it? It's not as if we can rely on the movie to flog it for us - that was a bomb too. Our only hope is to sneak it onto the market and hope some idiot buys it. One thing's for sure: we can't let those scrupulously honest, no-bullshit types at HYPER get their hands on it - they'll murder it. Which is exactly what I'm about to do.

Sadly, this warning may come too late for some of you, but here goes nothing: *Last Action Hero* is one of the worst games I've ever played. It's a hopelessly dated, utterly pointless farce of a beat 'em up that should never have been made. Actually it's more than just a crappy beat 'em up - along with 5 of the most excruciatingly slow and painful levels of punching "fun" I've ever had the misfortune to come across, it's got 2 ball-numbingly dull car chase levels too. That's what I call value.

As if the pissy number of moves (you can punch - but only if you're standing up, kick, crouch kick, jump, and do a ridiculous jump-straight-up-and kick with both feet move), the sluggish controls and the pedestrian pace weren't bad enough, it's full of glitches too. You can walk through enemies and they can't hit you, you disappear when you're hit, and the best strategy is to stand at the edges of the screen and keep punching - that way you can kill the bad guys without needing to see them.

Don't buy, rent, steal or even look at this game - you'll go blind. At the very least, you'll lose your faith in the wonders of video games.

Andrew Humphreys



HYPER» 70

ALIEN VS PREDATOR SNES

Available: Now
Category: Beat 'em up
Players: 1
Publisher: Activision
Price: \$119.95



The "Alien" and "Predator" movies are two of my favourites in the sci-fi action genre, and I must admit to getting a tad excited when I saw this game on the release schedule. Mind you, I didn't get *that* excited, because knowing the history of movie-game conversions and the relatively sad effort that was *Robocop vs Terminator*, *Alien vs Predator* was almost bound to disappoint. And unfortunately it does.

But like *Robocop vs Terminator*, if you're a fan of the characters, you'll get a few hours of enjoyment out of the game before you chuck it. It looks good and plays well, but you just can't get away from the fact that the style of gameplay (scrolling beat 'em up) is so tired and dull now that it really needs something special to liven it up. And *Alien vs Predator* has nothing special about it.

You are the Predator, hunting alien skulls on the human colony planet, Vega 4. The screen scrolls to the right (mainly) and you punch, kick and shoot your way through the hordes of prowling xenomorphs. You have a laser which you can charge up, and if you manage to charge it high enough, the orbiting Predator mother-ship sends down a blast that will knock out all aliens on the screen.

There are extra weapons like spears and discs to pick up, as well invisibility. You would think that being invisible would be very handy, but unfortunately you can hardly see where you are (because of the dull backgrounds) and more often than not you run into aliens, rather than launch surprise attacks. The aliens come in many different forms and are impressively large and gruesome, especially the bosses. They have different attacks, like spitting corrosive acid, or biting out with their double jaw, but the face huggers are the most annoying, and should be killed quickly with a sliding kick move.

As I've said, the controls are responsive, the graphics are good (the backgrounds are uninspiring though) and you'll have a bit of fun if you like beating up extra-terrestrials. But it's all been done a thousand times before.

Stuart Clarke



DUNGEON HACK PC

Available: Now
Category: RPG
Players: 1
Publisher: SSI
Price: n/a



Dungeon Hack gives a new twist to the *Eye of the Beholder* series. Basically it allows you to generate your own dungeon, tailoring it according to your likes and dislikes. At the start of each game you get to choose the level of difficulty of the dungeon you are about to face. This can be done either by selecting the easy, moderate or hard settings or alternately, you can customise your own.

I must admit *Dungeon Hack* looks suspiciously like SSI trying to squeeze a few more dollars out of the aforementioned EOB series. Luckily for them the EOB game engine was very good, even if it is a little long in tooth by today's standards.

If you choose to customise your own dungeon you are presented with a myriad of options. You can dictate monster and treasure frequency, decide whether you want illusionary walls or magical traps, along with just about any other detail you can think of. Now comes an important question; does this justify playing what is essentially another EOB game over and over again. After the three original games I was quite happy to lay the series to rest.

The gameplay of *Dungeon Hack* is identical to EOB except that they have at last included an automap feature. Why didn't they do this earlier? I certainly would have given EOB 3 another couple of points if it had included an automap feature. You control one character in your quest to survive whatever the computer decides to dish up. Thankfully *Dungeon Hack* contains none of those inexplicable pauses in gameplay which plagued EOB 3.

Graphically, it is fairly primitive, using the stepped movement of its predecessors, and because it doesn't really contain a storyline, it lacks something in the atmosphere stakes. The sound-effects are straight out of EOB 3.

My advice is to wait for Twin Dolphin's *Forgotten Castle* or Interplay's *Stonekeep*. Don't fork out the cash for yesterday's leftovers served up as today's dinner.

Julian Schoffel



ACES OVER EUROPE

PC

Available: Now
Category: Flight Sim
Players: 1
Publisher: Dynamix
Price: \$89.95



Aces Over Europe is the new holder of the Kellogg's Just Right award in the Flight Sim category, and just like its predecessor, Aces of the Pacific, it has an all too rare combination of true challenge, painless accessibility and mad fun.

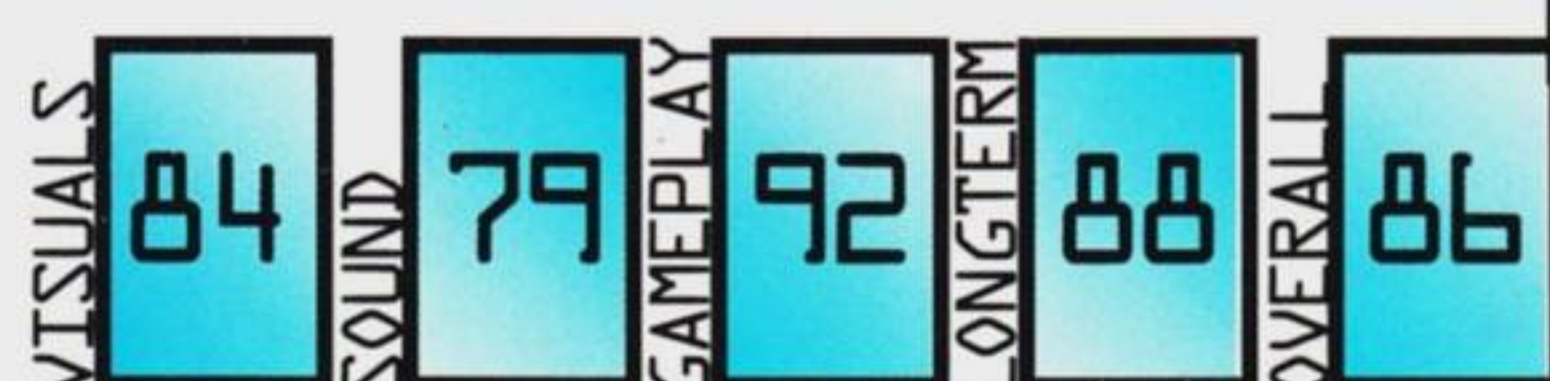
This time it's the Battle of Britain that needs your attention. The RAF, US Air Force and the Luftwaffe all beg your services, and your weapon of choice comes from a collection of the finest war planes the Big One ever produced.

Having carefully memorised half a dozen keyboard commands, take to the air. If you feel acrobatic then go on a Fighter Sweep in the beautiful Spitfire, or perhaps the phenomenal Focke-Wolfe 190 D-F is more to your liking. Including variants, there are 16 aircraft for your pleasure, each with a flight model that displays a dynamic accuracy with the real thing. It won't be long before you discover your personal favourite.

There are either stand alone missions or a campaign mode to choose from. The single missions let you bomb, strafe or rocket to your hearts content, or try a dose of air combat, dog-fight an ace or take out a formation of bombers. Campaign mode will come as a disappointment if you have come straight from Falcon or any other serious sim. Randomly selected missions are repeatedly thrown at you with no tactical regard, although the final outcome is dependant upon a winning streak of achieved objectives. Still, it's great fun and a pleasant challenge, and that's what Aces is all about.

A sour point is the lack of a linked-play option, modem or direct cable. This is an ideal game for two players and hopefully Dynamix will rectify this with later scenario disks. But Aces is satisfying fun at whatever level you choose to play it. Everything non-essential in a flight sim has been left aside, and all that's left is an addictive package of fun that will continue to test you until the next scenario disk.

Ben Mansill



B-WING

PC

Available: Now
Category: Flight sim/shoot 'em up
Players: 1
Publisher: LucasArts
Price: \$29.95



X-Wing fans have good reason to be happy; new scenario disks continue to arrive, and more are being developed to further enhance this deservedly successful game. The *B-Wing Tour of Duty* disk adds 20 new missions and a hot new fighter, as well as lots of very attractive in-between graphics. It's a quality enhancement to an already brilliant game.

Space combat in *X-Wing* has traditionally been extremely challenging, even with the Force with you. This is no arcade shoot-em-up; sharp dog-fighting skills and cunning tactical planning are the only tickets to success in this universe. *B-Wing* holds faithfully to these admirable yet frustrating values. To actually finish a Tour of Duty is a great achievement and by the time you get there you'll have played certain killer missions countless times.

The invulnerability/unlimited weapons option must be turned off during missions, or you won't advance. This may seem a little harsh to some, but it forces you to work very hard for success, so when it comes, it is enormously satisfying. In the process you will become awesomely proficient at X-Wing combat and will yearn hungrily for more, which is why LucasArts keep pumping out the mission disks.

The B-Wing fighter is a tasty combination of the best features of the other (X, Y and A) Wings. It has meaty firepower that exceeds anything previously seen and it can almost turn with an X-Wing. The B-Wing is good for any job, like heavy assault against a target heavily protected by escorting Tie fighters, which is as hard as it gets. One of the single missions, which are available any time (and are the only opportunities to use the indestructible mode!) lets you fly the legendary trench run to destroy the Death Star and the B-Wing has just the speed, firepower and armour to do the job. Just.

Everything about *X-Wing* radiated quality, the sensational music and effects, dazzling graphics and a lavish variety of missions designed by Nazi war criminals, and happily *B-Wing* is more of the same.

Ben Mansill



THE BEVERLY HILLBILLIES

PC. OH, THE SHAME OF IT

Available: Yes, unfortunately
Category: Rubbish
Players: 0 (if you're wise)
Publisher: Let's not embarrass them
Price: \$59.95



No doubt you've already taken a peek at the miserable rating that this game has received, so if you're still reading this I can only assume that you are: a) a Beverly Hillbillies fan, b) a complete sadist, or c) incredibly bored. If you fit into the first category, stop reading now and try to forget that this game ever existed. If you answered b), stick around you might enjoy it, and as for c), well, I'll do my best.

Cynical, cash-in and crap were the words which sprung to mind after I'd been playing The Beverly Hillbillies (TBH) for about, ooh, two minutes. During this time I had witnessed the opening titles (complete with an awful rendition of the show's equally awful theme tune) and had been dumped into the game without a clue as to what I was supposed to do. This didn't worry me greatly as after a further twenty, maybe thirty, minutes of intensive play-testing I had almost completely lost my will to live.

TBH is bad. Very, very bad. The control interface is so stupidly basic that it removes the need for the player to actually think about the puzzles in the game. Solutions are generally stumbled upon by randomly clicking the mouse on the few objects which the player is allowed to use. I hate that. Many of the objects displayed cannot be used at all. Like, when you enter your house at the beginning there are two open doors (apart from the front door) but, inexplicably, you can't go through them. Why?

The graphics are laughably primitive. Jed, himself, looks like a cardboard cut-out as he wobbles from side to side to give the illusion of animation. The "jokes" are corny, unfunny and hideously all-American. But this is to be expected, I guess, as the show itself lacked any degree of humour whatsoever.

Look - just don't buy the bloody thing, okay?

David Wildgoose



Aladdin

Play Guide

From the streets of
Agrabah to Jafar's
Palace, it's HYPER's
Aladdin Play Guide
for the Mega Drive

Level Skip:

If things get too tough or even if you just don't want to start at Level 1 every time, use this handy level skip. Play the game and PAUSE it. Then hit these buttons to skip the level: A, B, B, A, A, B, B, A.

Basics:

1. Look before you leap. Remember you can scroll the screen up and down if you're not sure what's above or below you.
2. Throw them apples. Sword-fighting is butch, but apples are a

good distance weapon.

3. Collect all the gems you can, but save them up to buy Wishes (continues), not extra-men, at the Peddler's.

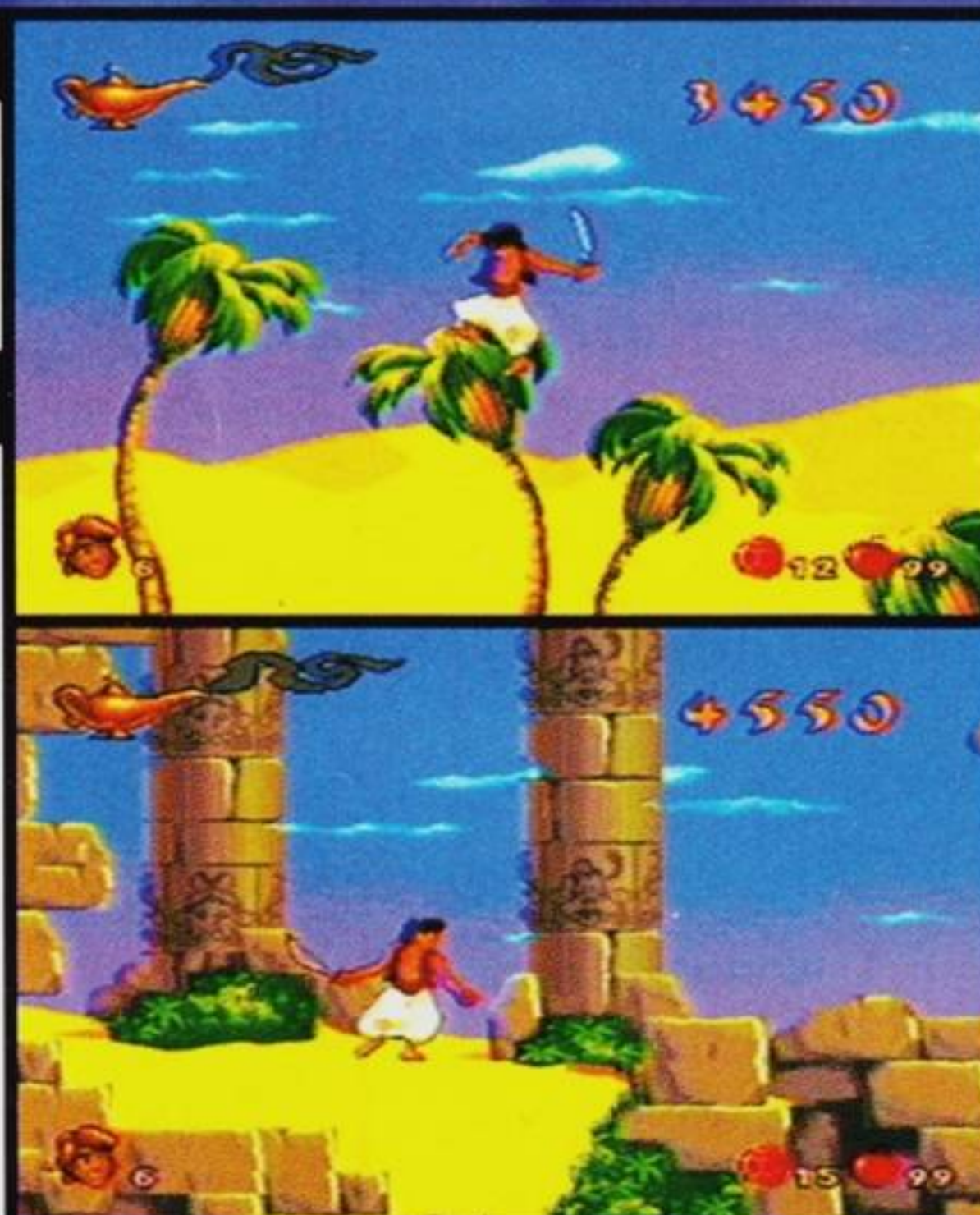


Level 1: Agrabah Market

If you can't get through this, you need more help than we can ever give you.

Level 2: The Desert

You need all three pieces of the scarab before you can exit. Start Looking! Look for secret passages and jump on the tops of the palm trees if you're stuck. Stand behind the Goofy column and jump up to get to a Peddler. The last two pieces of the scarab are near the exit - one's to the left, one's straight up.



Level 3: Agrabah Rooftops

Find the flutes you fool! You shouldn't have too many problems with this one. At the end you'll face the Thief. Just stay on him and madly swing your sword and you'll get him in no time. When he's gone, you'll get the

scarab and a flute. Ride the rope to the Boss. To defeat him, stay on the top platform, jump over the barrels, and hit him with apples (there's more down below if you run out). You'll need to throw them at the top of your jump.



Level 4: Sultan's Dungeon

It's dark and cold and it's starting to get tricky! Watch out for bats (they can be hard to see at times) and exploding skeletons - get them before they can get you. Most of the hazards, like the swinging balls and the disappearing platforms, are all timing. Make your way to the bottom right hand corner and go up the disappearing stone steps. All the way at the top is the exit.



Level 5: Cave of Wonders

Hit the statues. There's lots of bats around, but there's also lots of hearts too - be sure to take them. Don't forget you can hang from the ceiling! There's an Abu bonus symbol to collect in this level - it's to the left of the falling rocks. A bit further on you'll come to a halt: a wall blocks your way to the right. Head up and left and you'll find the statue you need to hit - jump from the cable and swipe. There's a Peddler to the right of the apple-throwing statue.

The Boss is easy. Just run

back and forth and stand under the two pedestals. When he appears, start swinging. Take the magic carpet for a spin. When you land, jump right on the stones in the water till you hit solid ground. The lamp is at the top.



Level 6: The Escape

This could take you a few attempts to get right. When the first rock chases you, keep running. When you come to the edge, JUMP! At the second set of rocks, you'll need to jump over two holes (so the rocks fall down) then

across to a ledge. When you come to a fork in the tunnel, go down - if you go up, you're dead. When the last rock starts to chase you, run like crazy and jump off at the end - don't worry, a magic carpet will catch you. Have fun with Rug Ride!



Level 7: Inside the Lamp

Another tough level - if you do this one on your first go you're either very good or very lucky. All I can say is you'll need perseverance and timing to finally reach the exit. Take your time and remember you can float around in the blue bits.



Level 8: Sultan's Palace

Jump on the flamingos - but be careful a fish or parrot doesn't knock you into the water. Ride the rugs and free Abu from the cage (stand underneath him and jump up). Follow him down and drop down the hole to face Iago. Iago is the first kind of tough boss. The easy way to beat him is to run to the right, jump up and stand on top of the ladder. Jump up and throw apples at Iago. When the lightning strikes turn into ghosts (they should be just in front of you), swing that sword!



Level 9: Jafar's Palace

Stay on the platforms to avoid the pesky fire. At the end, drop down and head to the left. Be careful not to slip off any of the platforms (they're slippery). Take the rug up and head right. Drop down the rope and you're almost there. Head left to the rug that will take you straight to Jafar!

Jafar is incredibly tough. Stay away from his vacuum and chuck apples at him until he turns into the dragon. Now you need to carefully time your

jumps over the flames and throw apples at the dragon. Stand close to the edge of the first platform. It's very easy to get burnt, so concentrate. If you run out of apples, you'll need to jump up the platforms to get them - but if you do you'll get burnt UNLESS you keep moving and jumping in the same direction! Keep chuckin' and you'll do it!



CHEAT MODE

ZOMBIES ATE MY NEIGHBOURS SNES

LEVEL PASSWORDS

Level 05: FHRX
 Level 09: NGBW
 Level 13: RFCR
 Level 17: RKYL
 Level 21: PXBG
 Level 25: XYLZ
 Level 29: XLZG
 Level 33: WJQK
 Level 37: BZVG
 Level 41: BRPK
 Level 45: VLHX

ZOMBIES ATE MY NEIGHBOURS MD

LEVEL PASSWORDS

The beginning will no longer be at the start, if you get my drift, when you enter these passwords for this slice of horror/humour:

Level 05: CYZQ
 Level 09: GBRS
 Level 13: DCFK
 Level 17: BMLK
 Level 21: PQBR
 Level 25: LLNN
 Level 29: QNKR
 Level 33: SDHM
 Level 37: BKVR
 Level 41: BZPM
 Level 45: BNYZ
 CREDIT LEVEL: QSDZ



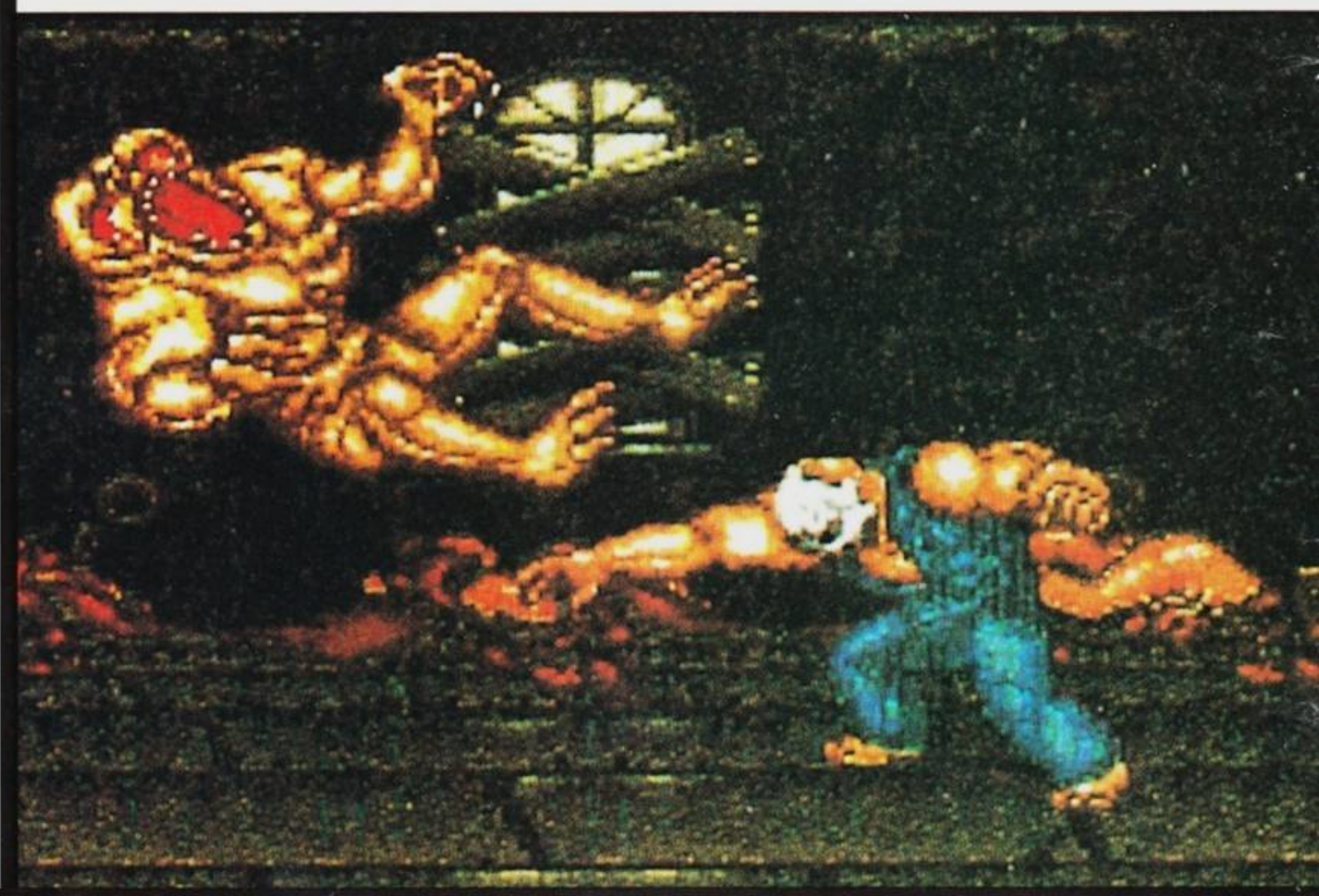
If you think you're a bit of a game master, then send your best cheats into Hyper for national and maybe international recognition. (What this really means is that we're not giving out prizes or anything, but we'll credit you with sending us the juicy hint.)

After making sure it's correct and that we can follow the instructions, send your cheats to:

HYPER Cheats
 PO BOX 634
 Strawberry Hills NSW 2012

SPLATTERHOUSE 3 MEGA DRIVE

Stage 2: REISOR
 Stage 3: ETLBUD
 Stage 4: TEKROH
 Stage 5: ELP0EB
 Stage 6: LILITH
 Stage X: GOFMTS



SUPER BOMBERMAN SNES

SHRINKING CODE

Want to be small? Really small? Your character will be tiny if you move the cursor to the password option on the title screen then press start, entering 5656 as your password. Go to normal or battle game. In the battle game, use the Tap to reduce all contestants.

SILPHEED MEGA CD

LEVEL SELECT

To help you get past the harder levels in this excellent CD blaster, make sure you press these buttons in order when the demo/cinema screen appears: DOWN, DOWN, UP, UP, RIGHT, LEFT, RIGHT,



LEFT, A, B. Now press START and there will be a third menu option called STAGE SELECT. Select it to gain access to any level of the game and all the cinema sections.

SPIDERMAN VS THE KINGPIN MEGA CD

You want the passwords to relieve your frustration, Spidey fans? You got 'em

Level 2: ELECTRO

Level 3: WALLABY

Level 4: GALLON66

Level 5: FALCON499

Level 6: HELPINHAND

Level 7: PUBLIC45

Level 8: KIDNEY2

Level 9: PENCIL6



WAYNE'S WORLD SNES

LEVEL SELECT

Bored? Thought you might be. Well cheer up, because you can select any stage to start on with this secret code. Press START and go to the title screen, where you should wait for Wayne and Garth to start singing. While they croon along, press X, button L and button R together, let go of them and hold UP, Y and B at the same time. Some white numbers representing levels and stages will appear along the bottom of the title screen. Use the SELECT button to cycle through them all.

Choose the one you want and press START to begin at that level.



STREET FIGHTER II SPECIAL CHAMPIONSHIP EDITION MEGA DRIVE

ONLY USE SPECIAL MOVES

This is a cheat for people who actually want to make the game harder for themselves!

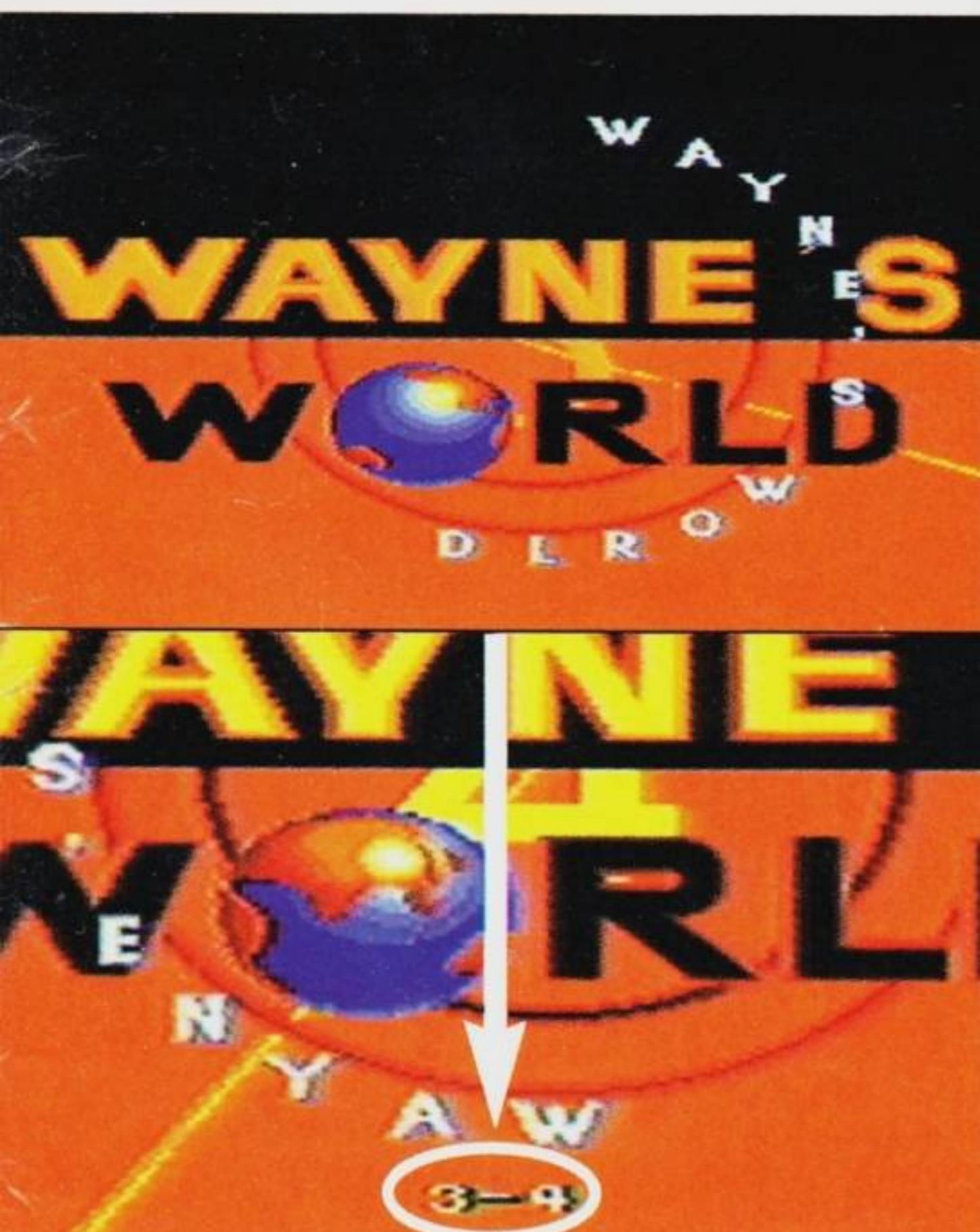
If you've got one of those tricky 6-button control pads, press these buttons in order when you're at the Capcom logo screen: DOWN, Z,

UP, X, A, Y, B, C. When you hear Chun Li say "Ya Tai", you can choose Game Start and you can play a game with one or two players where only special moves or throws work.

SAME CHARACTER IN GROUP BATTLE

Another cheat for those with a 6-button control thingy. Choose a Champion or Hyper game and then a Group Battle. On the Battle Mode selection screen, press the following in order on control pad #2: DOWN, Z, UP, X, A, Y, B, C.

After Chun Li says her stuff, choose Match Play or Elimination, then the number of characters. At the Match Play or Elimination Screen, you can choose the same character to fight for you and against you in battles. Very interesting, and very equal.



ALIENS VS PREDATOR SNES

STAGE SELECT

You'll need 2 control pads for this one. Go to Config Mode and press START. When the option menu appears, take control pad 2 and hold the top L and R buttons, X and A at the same time. Keep them held and press START on control pad 1 to gain a new menu that allows you to choose levels with control pad 1.



CHEAT MODE



B.O.B.

SNES

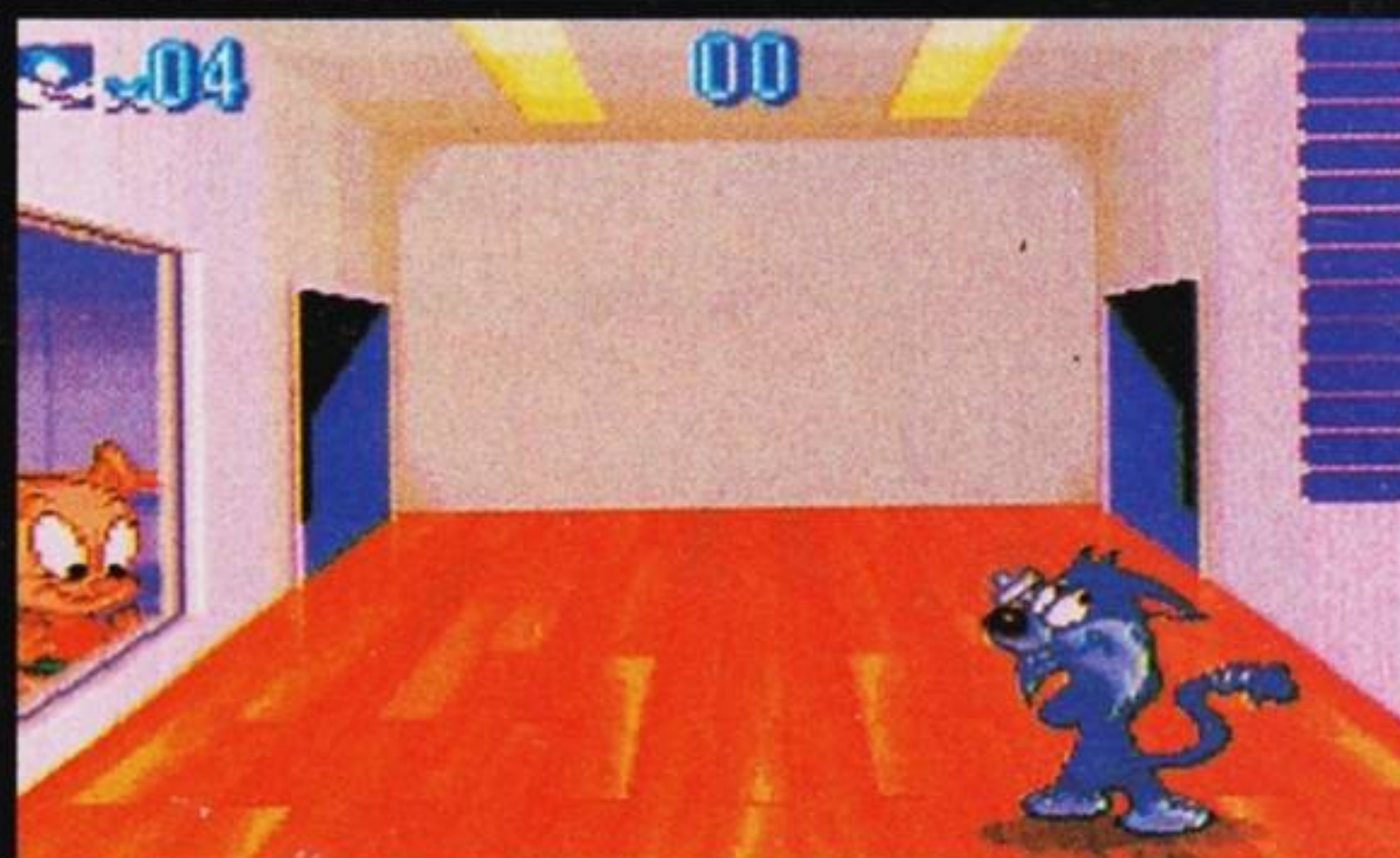
MAXIMUM POWER UP

Go to continue and put in 196420 as your password. The game will tell you that this is an invalid password but don't listen to it! (It's only a machine after all). You'll start the game with all weapons powered up fully and all your remotes filled to nine.

MORTAL KOMBAT SNES

GAME GENIE BLOOD CODE!

Don't get too excited - this won't give you all the arcade fatalities. What it does do is turn all that white "sweat" a lovely red colour - just like BLOOD! You need a Game Genie and you need to enter this code: BDB4-DD07.



TINY TOON ADVENTURES: BUSTER BUSTS LOOSE SNES

At the password option, press START and put Plucky Duck in the first box, Babs Bunny in the second one and Bookworm in the third. Now, if you run out of lives, you'll have infinite continues to play with so you can keep goin' and goin' and goin', so to speak.

CASTLEVANIA: THE NEW GENERATION

MEGA DRIVE

INVINCIBILITY AND LEVEL SELECT

We've only just reviewed the bugger but still we manage to uncover a hot cheat for you. How do we do it? Who knows - just brilliant I guess. Here's the cheat. Plug it in and press Start. On the screen that reads Player 1/Password/ Options, press these buttons in this order: UP, UP, DOWN, DOWN, LEFT, RIGHT, LEFT, RIGHT, B, A. You'll hear a sound to tell you it's worked (if you've done it right) and at the top of the screen you'll see an 0 (for the level), which you can change by pressing button A. One slight problem - we're not exactly sure what number takes you where, so you'll have to experiment a bit. You'll also be invincible when you start the game!



PRINCE OF PERSIA 2 PC

To start up this wonderful action/adventure in its cheat mode, type PRINCE YIPPEEYAHOO instead of PRINCE and you gain access to features like these during play:

+ (plus) adds a minute to the timer

- (minus) subtracts a minute

F6 makes a line appear and follow your movements.

K is for... KILL, destroying every bad dude on the screen and resurrecting them with another press.

SHIFT-R gives the number of the room you've reached

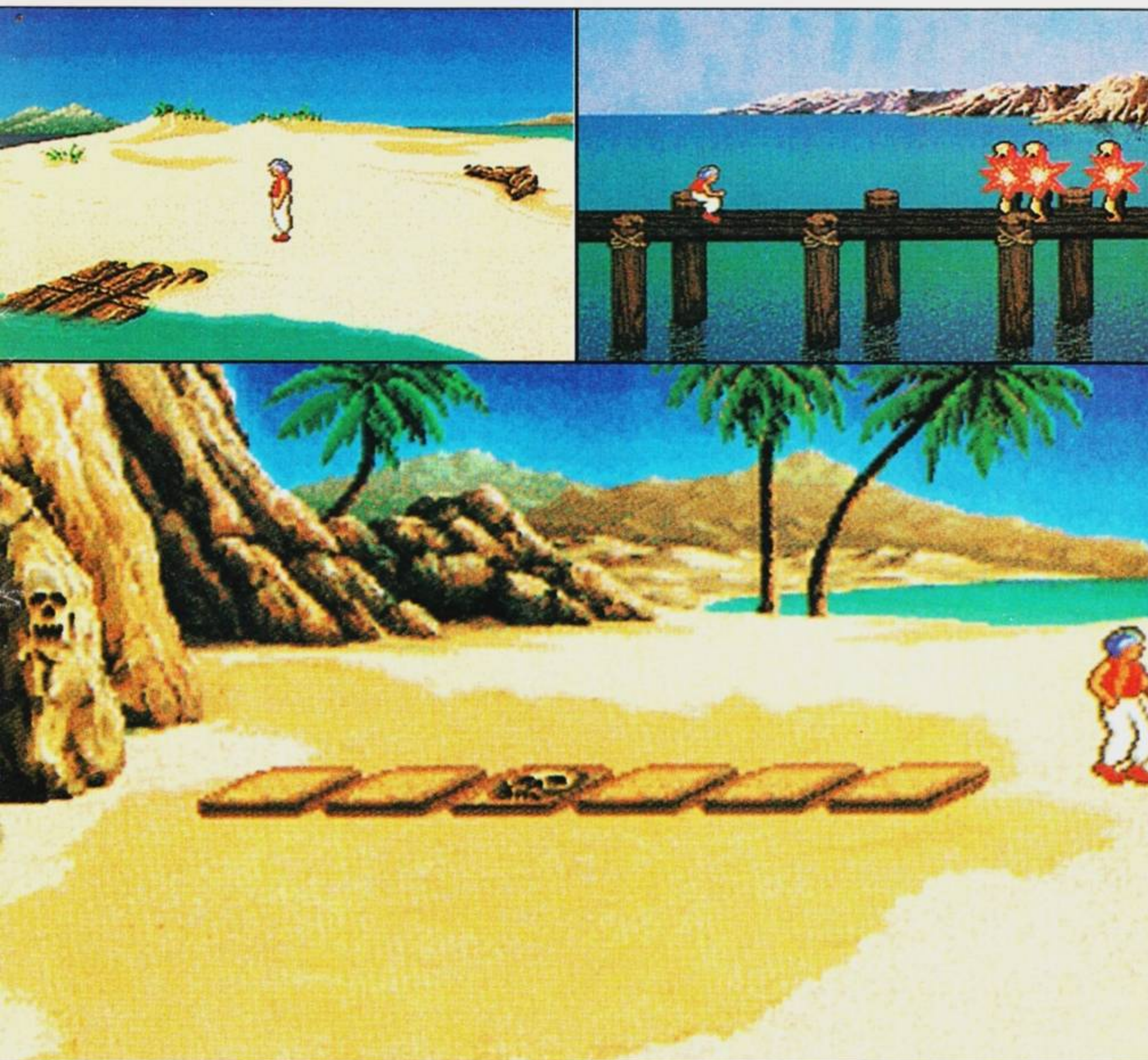
SHIFT-W plays a tune.

SHIFT-B switches the backgrounds on and off.

SHIFT-I makes you stand on your head (press it again to restore normality).

SHIFT-T adds a health bottle, while **SHIFT-K** drops one.

ALT-D is probably completely useless to you, but it dumps a file called DUMPO.TXT to your POP2 directory, with data about memory and byte numbers. Tech talk, that.



X-MEN

LEVEL SELECT

On the title screen (where it says 'Push Start') on CONTROL PAD 1 hold Buttons A and C and DOWN on the control pad and push START.

When Magneto appears, press START on CONTROL PAD 2. Choose your character with control pad 2. You will use control pad 2 to play a one player game. In the Danger Room, there's eight panels and six tiles on the floor (to the right of the hero selection screen). Each of the large floor tiles represents a level. To start at the level you want, stand on the tile, pull down on the control pad and press button C.

MEGA DRIVE

PRO ACTION REPLAY CODES MEGA DRIVE

SIDE POCKET

FFC09400XX

Balls in stock. (XX ranges 0-10).

FFC0A200XX

Total score X100

SPLATTERHOUSE II

FF00F70004

Unlimited life

FF00F80003

Unlimited energy

TERMINATOR 2

FF80CA0004

Unlimited lives

FF80190025

Unlimited missiles for player 1

THUNDER FORCE IV

FFF2DD00FF

All weapons

FF80030001

Gives you the claw

FF80040001

Gives you the shield

TINY TOONS

FFFB0B0003

Infinite energy

FFFB090002

Infinite lives.

FFFB0F0032

Gives 1 special helper each time you pick up a carrot (1 carrot = 50 carrots). Switch the Action Replay off at the end of level and back on at the beginning of the next one.

FFFB110009

Pick one special helper up to get infinite helpers

FFFB0B0002

Infinite hearts

FFFB110002

Infinite mates

FFFB11000X

X can be replaced with 2-E to give lots of power

PRO ACTION REPLAY CODES SNES

BUBSY

7E02-0D08

Unlimited men

7E00-DF59

Infinite time

7E00-A104

Invincibility (NB: Turn on then off during game to become invincible)

7E00-281X

Change colours of Bubsy (where X is 0,2,4,6,8) i.e

- 7E00-2812 - Bubsy's grey with a green "I"

- 7E00-2814 - Bubsy's now black

STREETFIGHTER 2 TURBO

7E05-30B0

Infinite Energy Player 1

7E07-30B0

Infinite Energy Player 2

7E1C-880E

Super Turbo Edition

SUPER BOMBERMAN

7E0D-7D09

Unlimited Bomberman Player 1

7E0D-BD09

Unlimited Bomberman Player 2

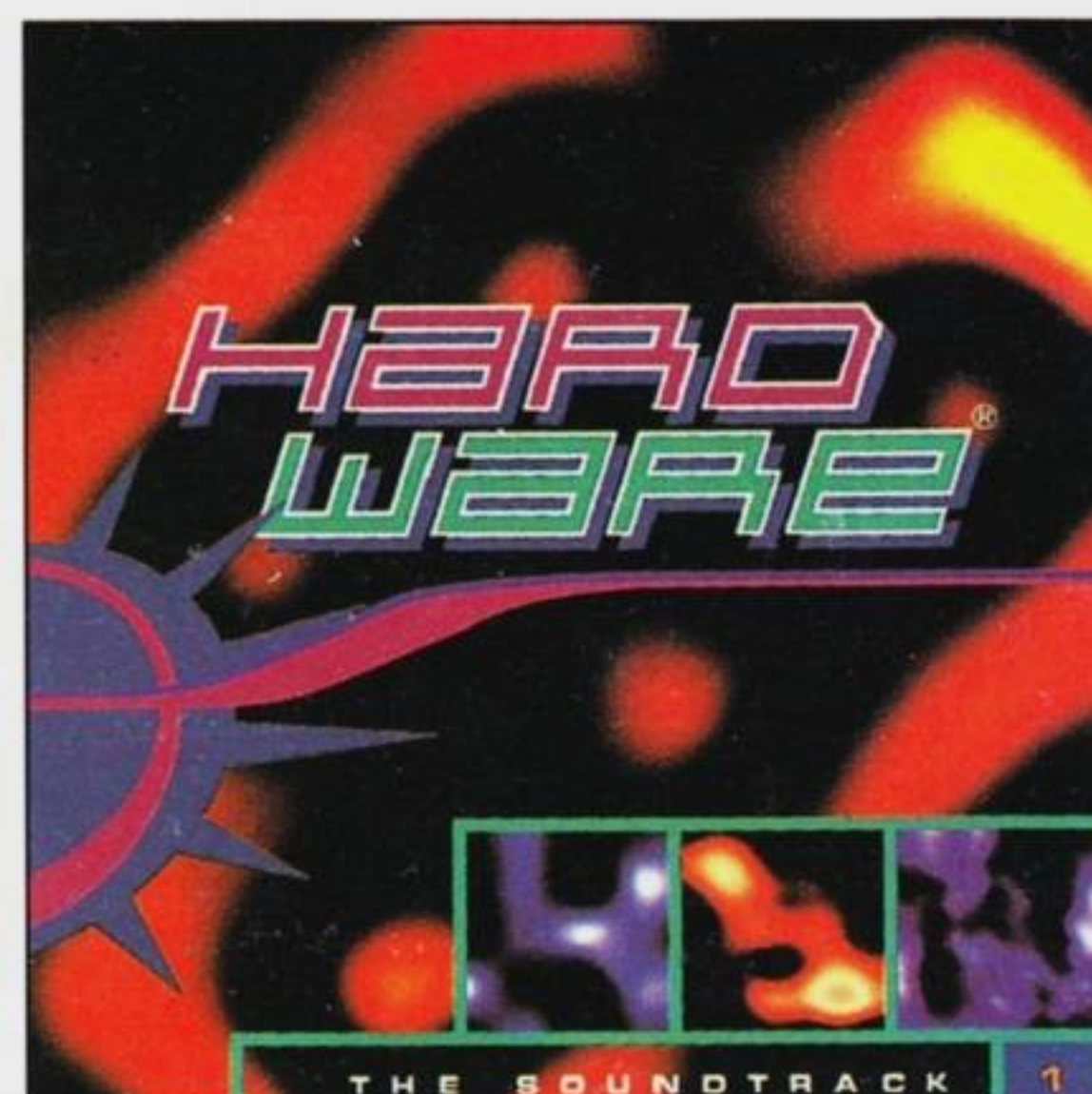
Thanks to Kingsley Caplick for the SNES codes



SONS

George Clinton Hey Man Smell My Finger (WAR)

The fat Pharaoh of funk himself, America's REAL president, Mr George Clinton is back in the house again, and he wants you to take a deep sniff of the funky syrup he's been dipping his notorious groove finger in. This LP, whilst not being the most heavyweight of GC's career,



HARDWARE VARIOUS MDS

YES, IT'S TECHNO COMPILATION TIME AGAIN. THERE ARE SO MANY OF THESE DISCS AROUND, IT'S KIND OF HARD TO KEEP TRACK. THE CLAIM TO FAME OF HARDWARE IS THAT IT IS LOCALLY COMPILED, AND FEATURES BOTH INTERNATIONAL AND AUSTRALIAN ACTS.

THE CD IS NAMED AFTER A SERIES OF PARTIES CALLED HARDWARE, ORGANISED AS FUNDRAISING EVENTS BY TRY YOUTH AND COMMUNITY SERVICES IN MELBOURNE, WITH THE HELP OF LOCAL DJs AND MUSICIANS. THE PARTIES WERE SUCH A SUCCESS, THEY DECIDED TO MAKE A CD (A BOOK AND MOVIE ARE IN THE PIPELINE).

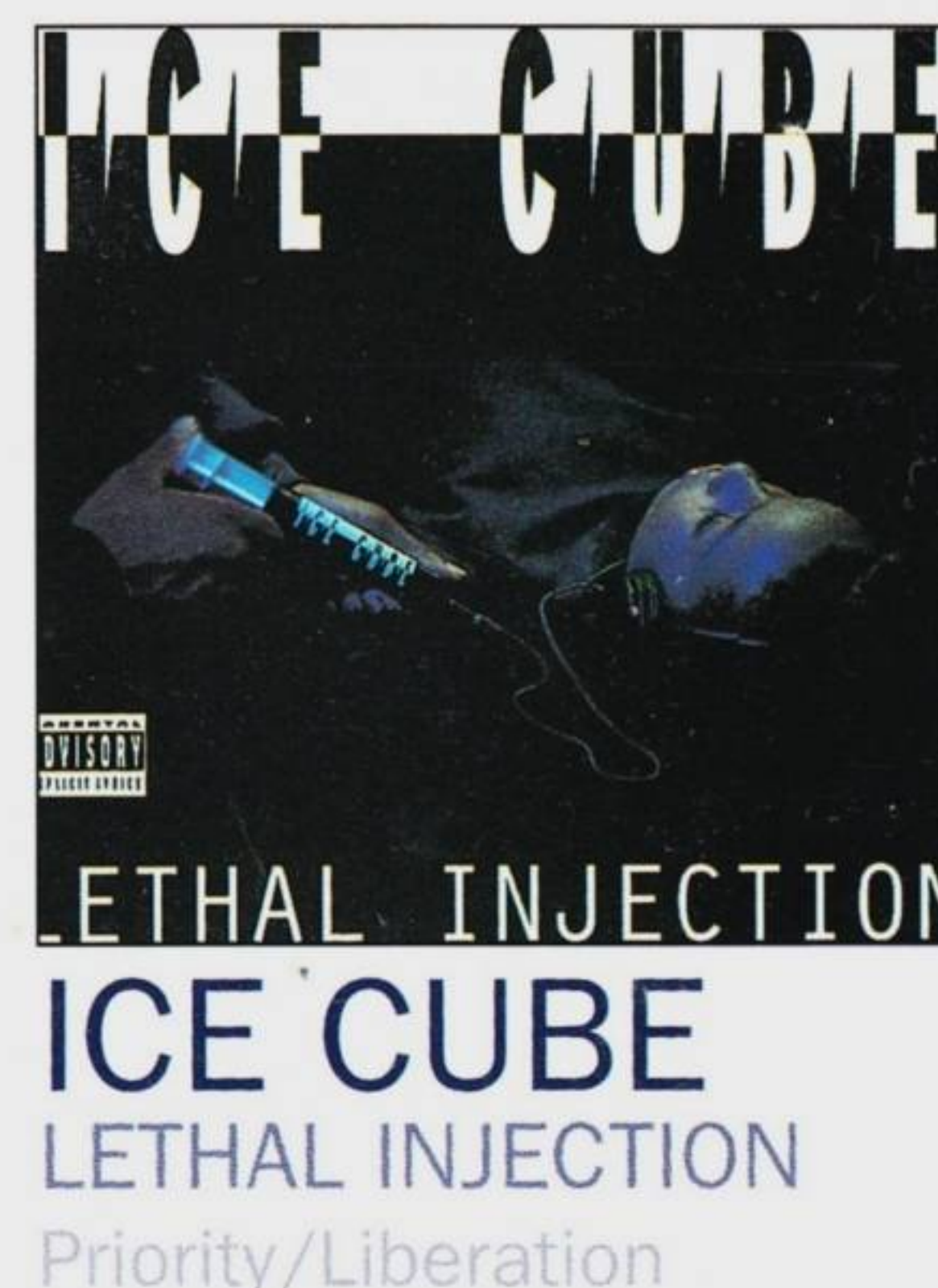
THE CD IS A COMPILATION OF SOME OF THE BETTER TRANCE AND TECHNO AROUND. THE INTERNATIONAL ARTISTS INCLUDE DJ HELL, VISIONS OF SHIVA, ORBITAL AND COSMIC BABY. OUR LOCAL REPRESENTATIVES ARE THE SPIRITUALIST, THIRD EYE AND HYBRID ICON, AMONG OTHERS. THE CD WORKS WELL AS A COMPILATION, BECAUSE THE TRACKS ALL HAVE A TRANCEY, SPACED OUT FEEL. WORTH CHECKING OUT.

7.5/10 JAD MCADAM

still drops bombs by the standards we use to judge normal artists. With Clinton's almost unparalleled influence on the evolution of Funk, Hip Hop and other innovative urban musics, some of the artists Clinton has inspired have helped out on this LP. Ice Cube, Chuck D, Dallas Austin, Flavour Flav, Dr Dre, Yo Yo, Digital Underground and others too numerous to mention, drop some flavour on the Clinton sound system, with devastating effect on tunes like *Rhythm and Rhyme*, *Dis Beat Disrupts*, and the outstanding *Paint The White House Black*.

OK, so it's obvious that I love the man, but I have to make one small critical point. Clinton's alliance with Prince's Paisley sound seems to have slightly diluted the toxic shock funk meltdown that normally accompanies a Clinton jam. To this effect there are at least two limp ones on the LP, the House cut (*The Big Pump*) and the love ballad (*If True Love*). These both stink by Clinton's standards. Still, on the whole I reckon your nostrils should be flared in anticipation, 'cos y'all needs to whiff where that rigid digit has been!

8/10 Steve Polak



When Shaquille O'Neal chose who to play with on his Australian tour he chose Ice Cube. Above all else, Ice Cube has major credibility. This latest release, *Lethal Injection*, proves why. Ice Cube has moved in many new and different musical directions on this album. If Cypress Hill can slow the beat right down and hold it together, Ice Cube is not one to scoff. My guess is that Mr Cube has realised that the straight, bare, hard core rap act wears a little thin after a spell. There is a heap of room for broadening and developing the rap genre. Again, Cypress Hill have shown us that you don't have to be fully aggressive to get it right. And now Ice Cube is beginning to experiment with it too.

There are two outstanding tracks on the album. There's the single "Really Doe" which dares to explore some female vocal sounds against an eyrie back beat: And there's "Bop Gun (One Nation) Featuring George Clinton" which it does. Basically, it's a cover of Parliament's classic "One Nation Under a Groove".

Lethal Injection didn't shake my tail feathers, but it is an important step in the rap movement and should not be ignored.

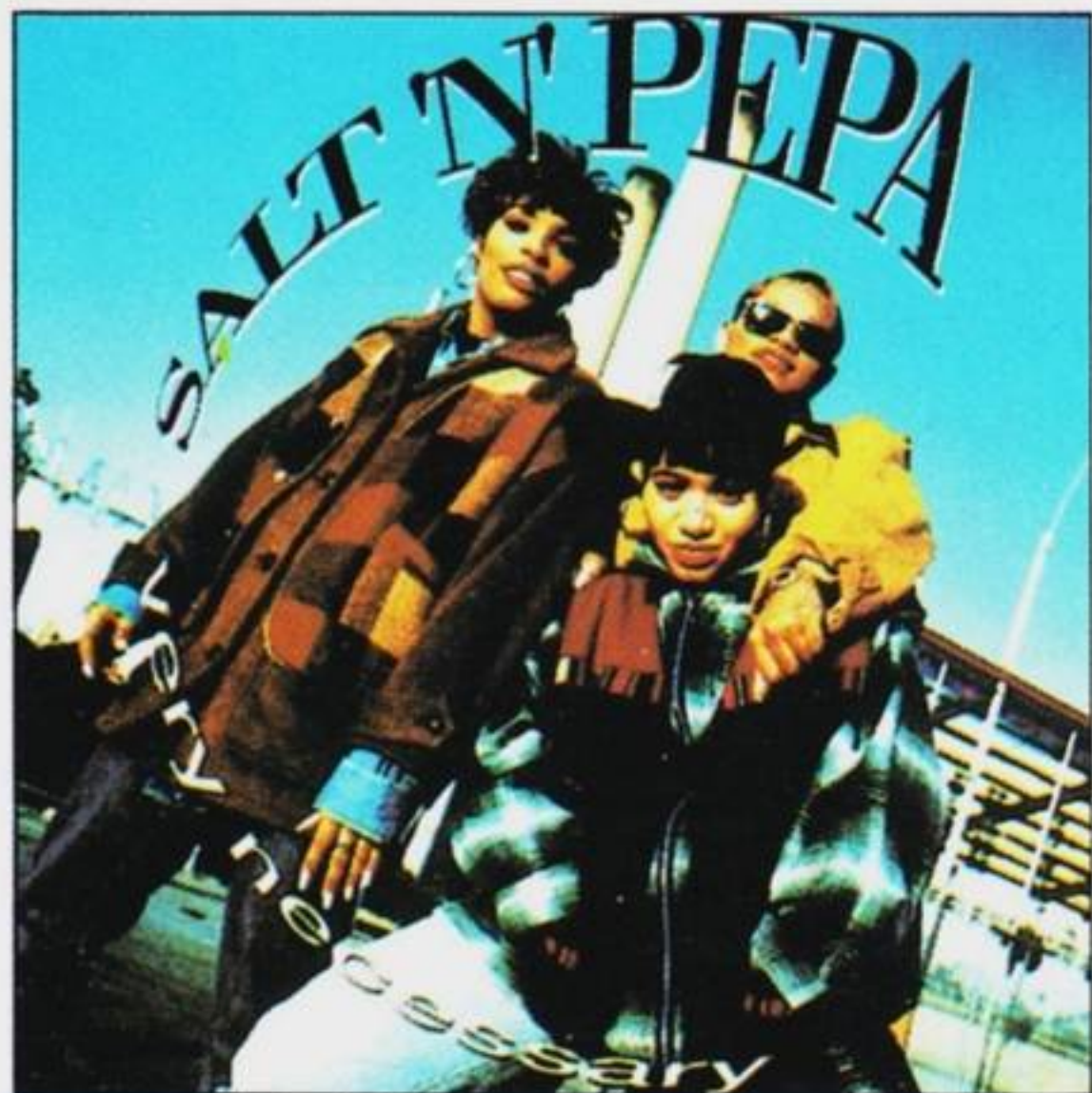
7/10 Sarah Longhurst

Shaquille O'Neal

SHAQ DIESEL

Jive/BMG

Before Shaq's live Sydney performance he looked down a long, long way at me, upset about something and said, "Who's this littl' white babe anyway?". Man was I scared and I bet when he walked into Jive



Salt 'n' Pepa

Very Necessary

(ffrr/polygram)

Since their success with *Push It*, the classic hip-pop track of a few years ago, Salt 'n' Pepa have been about the raunchiest thing in rap. That hasn't changed with their new CD, *Very Necessary*. They come across like En Vogue on a hormone rush, with track titles like *no one does it better*, *somma time man*, *start me up* and *sexy noises turn me on*. They rap about sex, men, sex, AIDS, sex and sex again. It works pretty well, providing a welcome antidote to the bragging and swaggering of a lot of male hip-hop.

Amidst all the raunch, it's easy to overlook the music. To do so however would be a mistake, as the album has some great tracks, including the two best known, *Shoop* and *Whatta man*. Salt 'n' Pepa are at their best on tracks such as these, where they rework already sexy funk guitar into their own irresistible thang. With 15 tracks on the album, the majority based on this formula, the album is either gonna grab you or get boring, depending on your tastes.

7.5/10 Jad McAdam

Records and said "Hey you, one of my dreams is to be a rap star", Mr Jive was scared too and signed him right away. And why not. I mean hell, this huge black basketballer has got to be one of the most saleable items of all time.

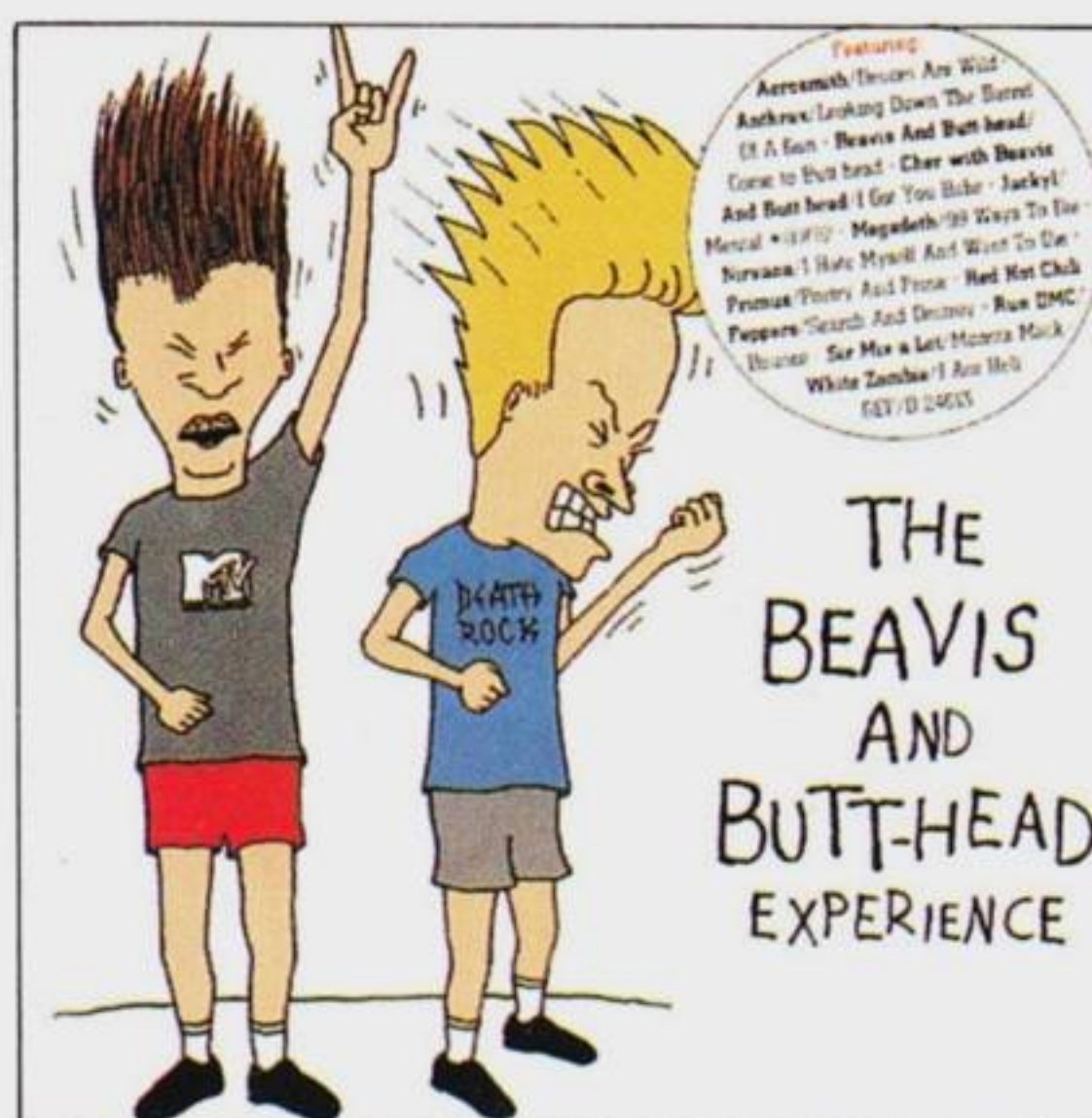
At first he hung out with the Fu Schnickens and they appear on the album "What's Up Doc". But now Shaquille's gone solo and *Shaq Diesel* is his first album release. Credibility? Yeah there's some hard core stuff here, but the cold wet fish-across-the-face is the fact that as a rapper, he's a great basketball player. To his credit Shaq has written the lyrics, which are based on his life experiences rather than the usual angry socio-political rap perspective. Some of the rhymes are pretty cool. The sampling, production and mixes are great. Highlights of the album occur when Shaq ups the pace on the rapping front.

Wave your hands in the air for the tallest rapper ever recorded!

6/10 Sarah Longhurst



PICK OF THE MONTH



BEAVIS AND BUTT-HEAD

THE BEAVIS AND BUTT-HEAD EXPERIENCE

MCA/GEFFEN

Ren and Stimpy have their own CD so it's only natural Beavis and Butt-Head, America's favourite dysfunctional teenagers, have demanded one too. It features bands they think rule (and so do we). If you've heard Beavis, Butt-Head and Cher crooning "I've Got You Babe" and thought this album was a whole heap of golden oldies "helped" along by the boys, think again. This is not a novelty number: it's a compilation CD with some real heavy duty tracks. You can't single any one number out for special attention, but the Megadeath track is a personal favourite. Bands include Aerosmith, Anthrax (doing a Beastie Boys cover with their new lead singer), Primus, Sir Mix-a-Lot, Run DMC and White Zombie. Nirvana offer an out-take from *In Utero* and the Red Hot Chili Peppers have covered an Iggy Pop number, "Search and Destroy".

Beavis and Butt-Head chat away during the breaks in their now famous fashion and when they invite themselves onto Anthrax's tour bus it makes for a sidesplitting couple of minutes. Their own number, "Come To Butt-head" is a throw away, but as there's only one, what the heck!

8/10 Sarah Longhurst

Machines of Loving Grace

Concentration

White/Festival

The press release accompanying this CD is a little on the scary side. It talks of the bands chaotic visions of suffering and a search for transcendence in this modern life. It announces that the band creates infectious music with the soul of a serial killer, which isn't a bad line really!

Yeah, well, I don't know about all that psychological stuff, but what I do know is that *Concentration* catches your attention and is an interesting addition to the CD collection. Their single, "Butterfly Wings", is receiving deserved attention. It's a fair indication of the talent of the band and the general feel of the album. They mix fairly harsh driving guitar sounds with keyboards, which is not the norm these days. The resulting sound is quite industrial with splatterings of grunge pop and as a whole it's strangely inviting.

This is dead set serious stuff and there is certainly nothing to suggest these boys ever enjoyed a joke, not even a puerile dick or fart number. But if you're into taking music seriously or you just enjoy a challenge then *Concentration* is worth the effort.

7/10 Sarah Longhurst





Striking Distance

There will come a time when Bruce Willis is too old to make action films - someday soon he'll have to admit that a fast-balding man with a paunch could hardly rescue the world from terrorists without a little help. That time hasn't come yet though, and Bruce is still the biggest action hero we've got after Arnie. This time, Willis plays a policeman whose father is murdered by a serial killer. While a man is behind bars for the killings, Bruce doesn't believe that they've caught the right man - he thinks it was another cop that did it. He goes a bit mad and is demoted to working as part of the water police and continues his fight along with his new partner, Sarah Jessica Parker, but when the killings start again, this time it looks like he might be the man responsible - someone is out to get him! So it's good cop/bad cop time and you just don't know who to believe, as bodies are dredged up from the river and boats go whizzing along the waterways in spectacularly clichéd chase scenes. Still, it's all rather entertaining and I had a great time watching it. But then again, I saw it for free, didn't I?!

4/5

Innocent Moves

OK, so it's a movie about chess. Yes, I admit I had my reservations - let's face it, chess isn't exactly a thrilling spectator sport - but *Innocent Moves* turned out to actually be OK. I mean, hey, this is no Terminator, but it has some great moments. In America, this was called *Searching For Bobby Fisher*, but they changed the name of it here because, I guess, they thought that people wouldn't know who Bobby Fisher is. So let me tell you - he was the young chess champion who one day just disappeared, came back to win a championship a couple of years ago and then just disappeared again. Riveting stuff. People in chess circles (imagine those parties - whoo!) have been looking for him for years and looking for someone to take his place as a young chess champion. This film is the story of a young boy called Josh Waitzkin, who is a chess genius, just like

»all reviews by
Amanda Hugginkis

Bobby Fisher was. The very first time he plays chess, you know he's good, and the film follows his progress as he learns from a guy on the street (played by Laurence Fishburne) and his chess teacher (Ben Kingsley) how to win and win well. It's one of those films that kind of creeps up on you - soon you are really interested in how well Josh is doing, even though the thought of telling your friends about a film about chess is kind of hard to imagine.

3/5





BEVERLY HILLBILLIES

ONE DAY HOLLYWOOD WILL GET TIRED OF MAKING FILMS TAKEN FROM "THE SERIES OF THE SAME NAME", BUT UNTIL THEN WE'LL HAVE TO PUT UP WITH THIS KIND OF THING. NOT THAT BEVERLY HILLBILLIES IS BAD, IN FACT IT'S OFTEN QUITE AMUSING, BUT LET'S FACE IT - ERIKA ELENIAK JUST ISN'T GOING TO WIN ANY OSCARS FOR HER "RIVETING" PORTRAYAL OF ELLY MAY CLAMPETT. STILL, SHE DIDN'T WIN ANYTHING WITH BAYWATCH EITHER, BUT WE STILL LOVED HER ON THAT, SO WHO CARES WHAT I SAY? HER HAIR, IT MUST BE SAID, LOOKS ADORABLE IN PIG TAILS, AND THE FUN THAT JED CLAMPETT HAS SEARCHING FOR HER HUSBAND IS VERY ENTERTAINING, BUT SURELY THERE IS SOMETHING IN THIS WORLD BETTER TO LAUGH AT THAN A BUNCH OF TASMANIAN POTATO FARMERS? OH, HAVE I GOT THE RIGHT FILM?

2/5

Heart And Souls

A feelgood movie if ever there was one, *Heart And Souls* will have you weeping buckets, chortling to yourself and having a fairly good old time in the cinema. Robert Downey Jr. plays a fairly nasty yuppie bloke called Thomas, who was born at the exact same time as four other people died in a bus crash. Each of them was killed before they had fulfilled their lives, and so they are left hanging around Thomas as his spiritual guides from the moment he is born. After realising that they are a distraction, they make themselves invisible to him, and he grows up pretty normal, although not very nice at all, especially to his long-suffering girlfriend Elisabeth Shue. However, one day they find out why they are hanging around him - to resolve the lives they left unfulfilled - and they quickly get him to help "finish" all of their lives, even though he doesn't really want to. Of course, in the tradition of all the best feelgood movies, this turns him into a much nicer person and we all learn something from it. Great performances from Kyra Sedgwick and Alfre Woodard make this a very watchable movie and you will once again be amazed by Robert Downey Jr.'s cleverness. Here's a tip - buy a big hankie and take someone you want to snog.

4/5



Hard Target

Jean-Claude Van Damme is *always* a good thing - I always say that if Jean-Claude is in a film. You should see it, because otherwise he might come looking for you. *Hard Target*, it must be said, is the best JC film I've seen for ages - probably because it was directed by the martial arts film guru John Woo and therefore looks bloomin' spectacular. The story is pretty irrelevant - hey, this is Jean-Claude - it's basically about a drifter called Chance who drifts into the life of a young woman when she is looking for her father. Chance is a merchant seaman (and we all know that women and seamen don't mix) who needs money to pay his union fees, so when she offers him a tidy sum to help her, he can't refuse. It'd be a short film, I guess, if he did. Turns out her father is one of many homeless men who have been hunted by a group of rich businessmen for a bit of a laugh. Of course, it's up to Chance and his uncle Douvee (who came up with these names?) to put an end to the games and they do it with a mixture of groovy high kicks, explosions and sundry other effects that'll leave you gasping. The photography is amazing - very MTV - and some of the effects are stunning, so it's worth seeing if you're a Woo fan, although most of the people who'll go and see it will be either the blokes who love a bit of a rough stuff and the gals who want to see JC's butt. Sorry girls - it doesn't get a look in.

4/5

Tombstone

It's the new era of Westerns. Soon our screens will be flooded with more gunfights than you can poke a stick at and it'll all be pretty sad. Until then, though, they are still a bit of a novelty, and novelty value alone is a good enough reason to go and see *Tombstone*. After all, it's got loads of spunks in it - Jason Priestley (moving to a different zipcode for a minute), Val Kilmer, Billy Zane and, um, Kurt Russell - and it's about the most famous gunfight there ever was - the shootout at the OK Corral.

Russell plays Wyatt Earp, Kilmer plays Doc Holliday and apparently, the gunfight against the Clanton and McLaury brothers left a bit of an impression with young Earp. *Tombstone* tells us what happened and why. Jason looks very dusty as he plays Billy Breakenridge, a young deputy sheriff, and Billy Zane just looks weird playing Mr Fabian, the "flamboyant" star of a travelling theatrical troupe. Well worth checking out, um, pardner.

3/5



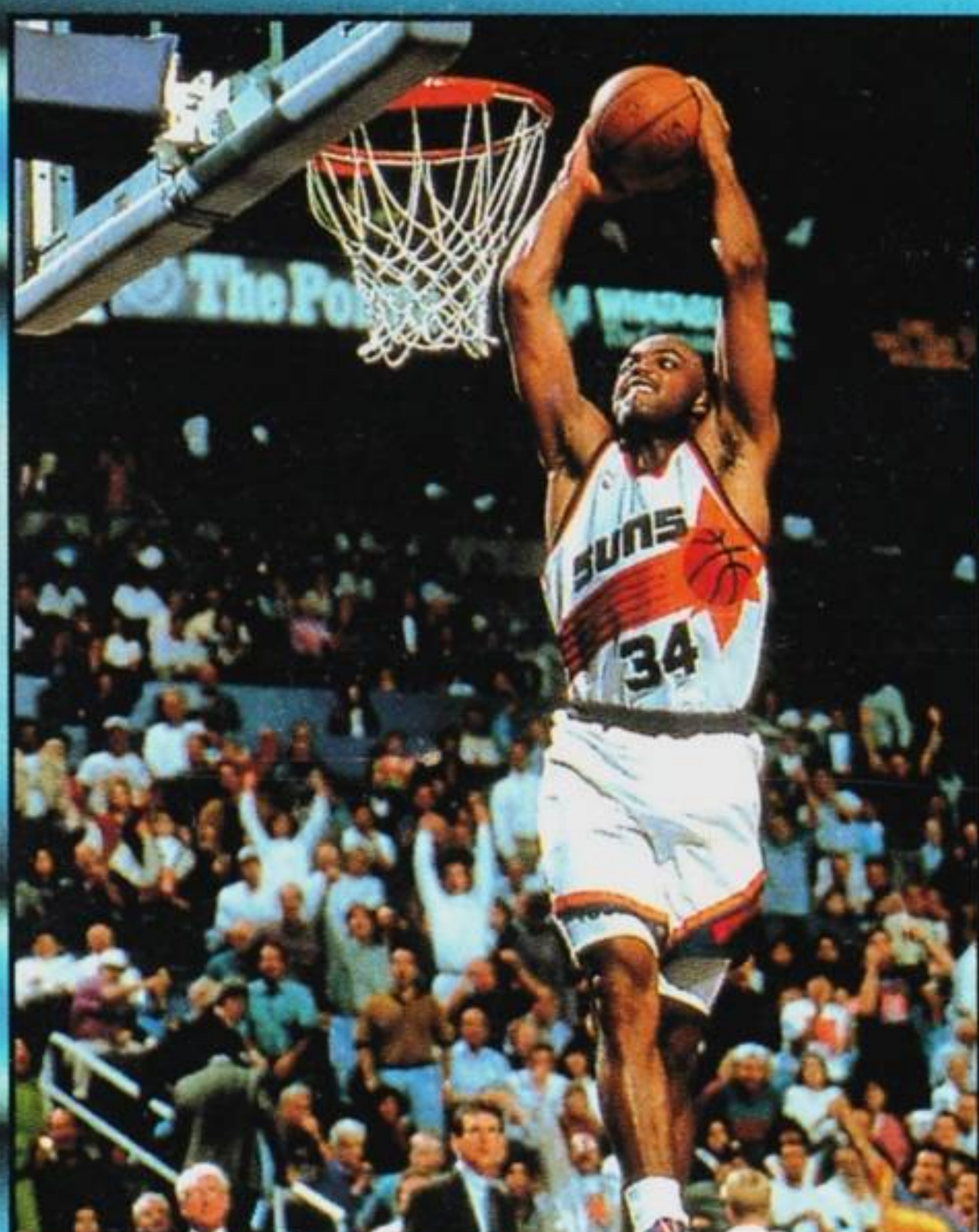
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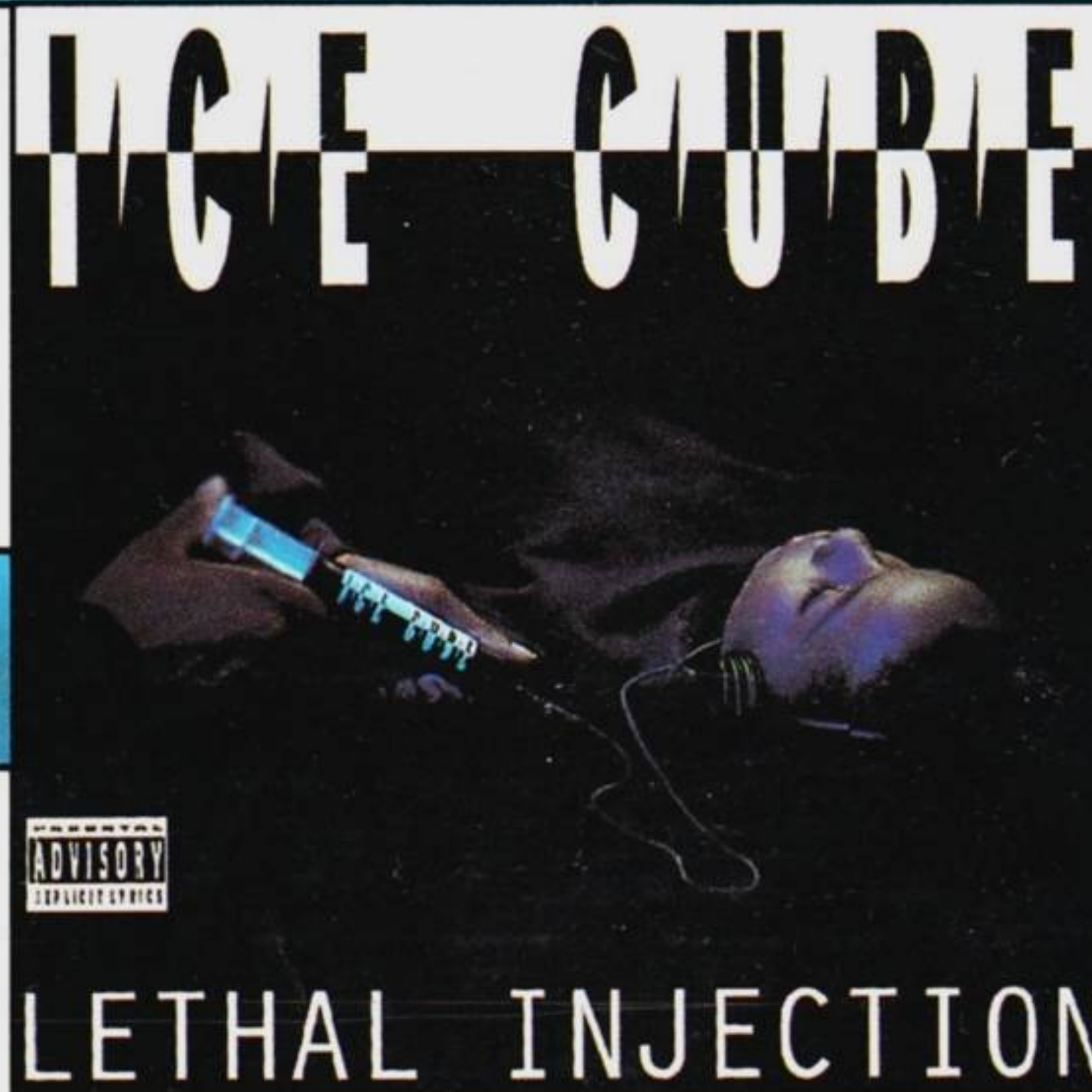
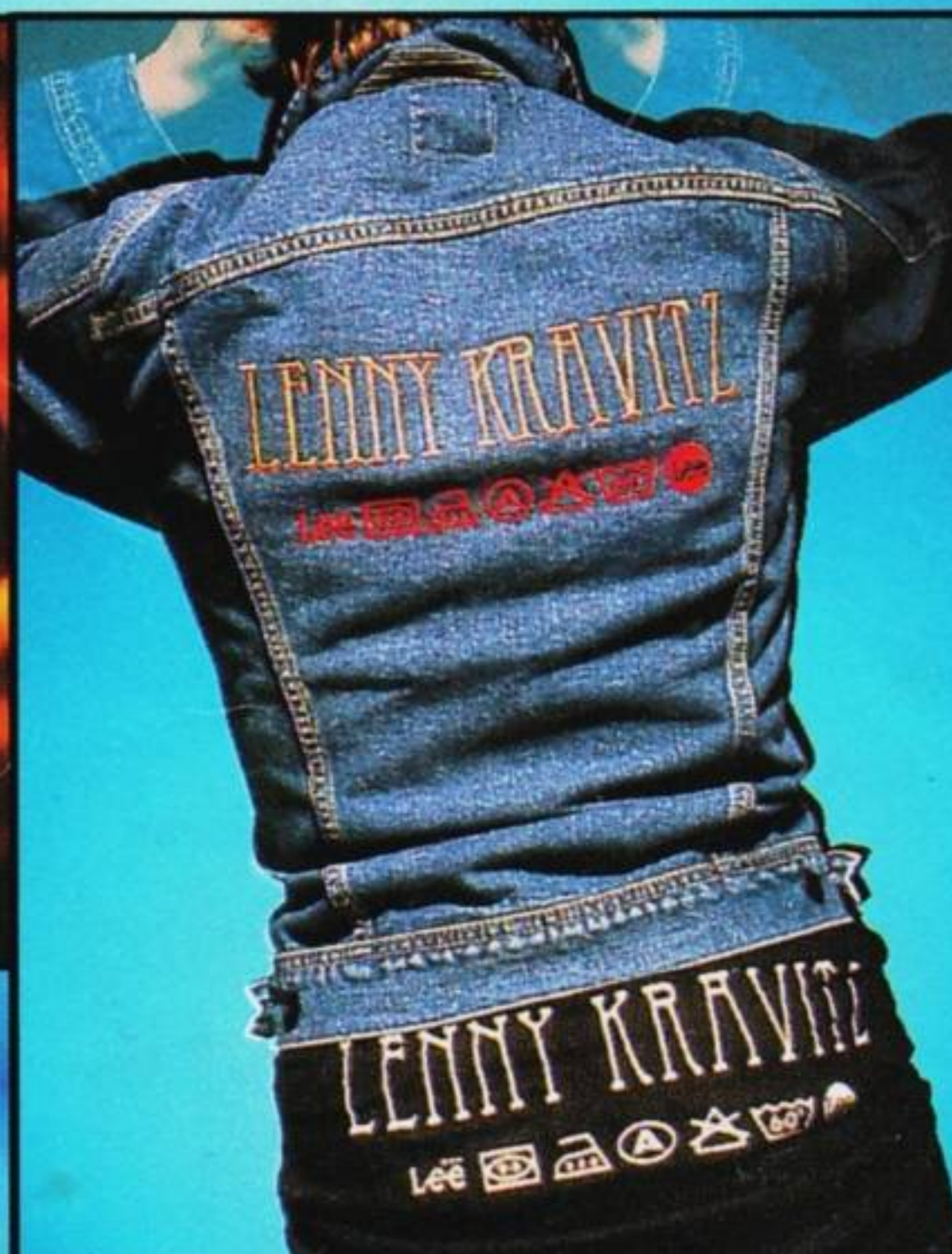
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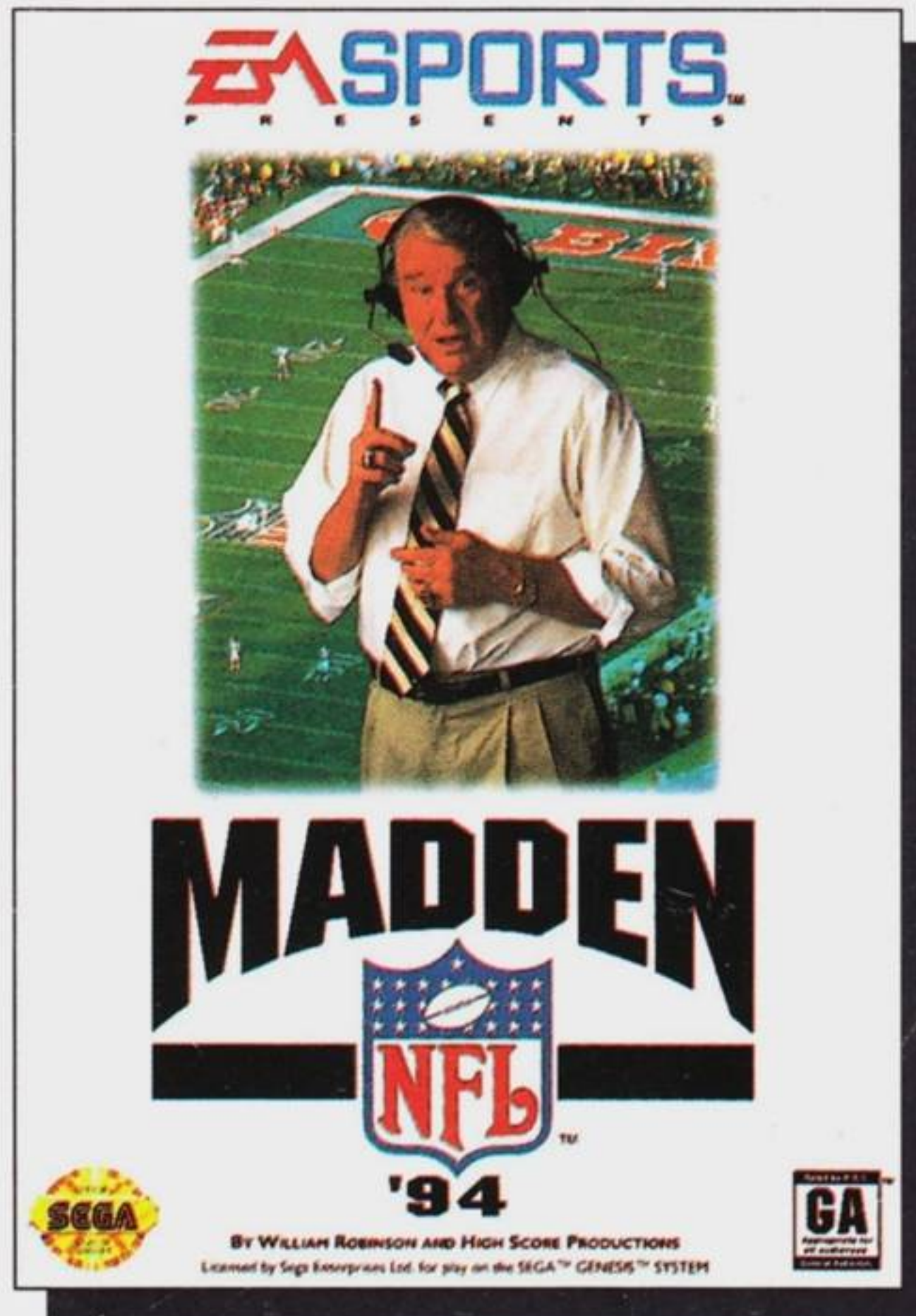


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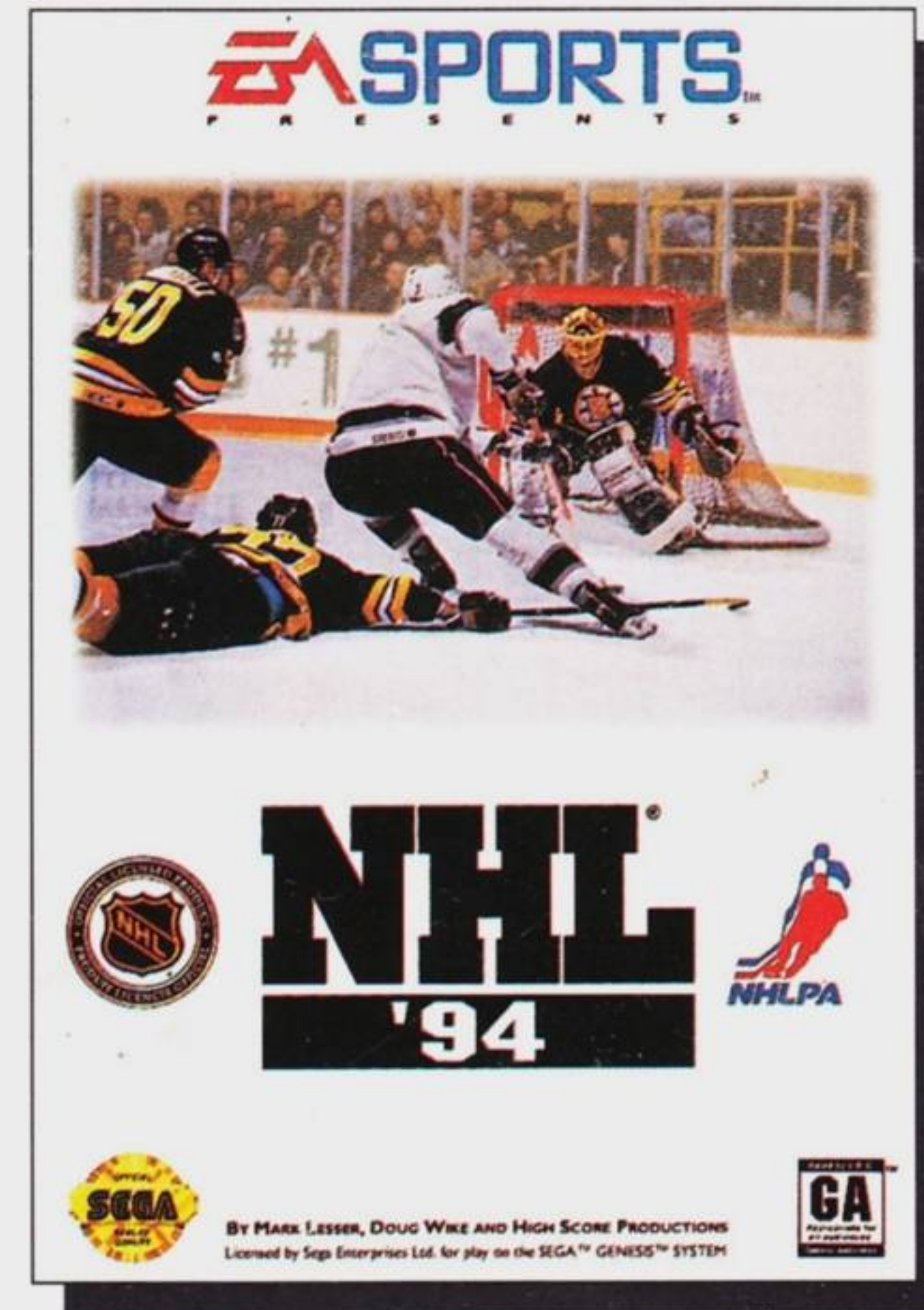
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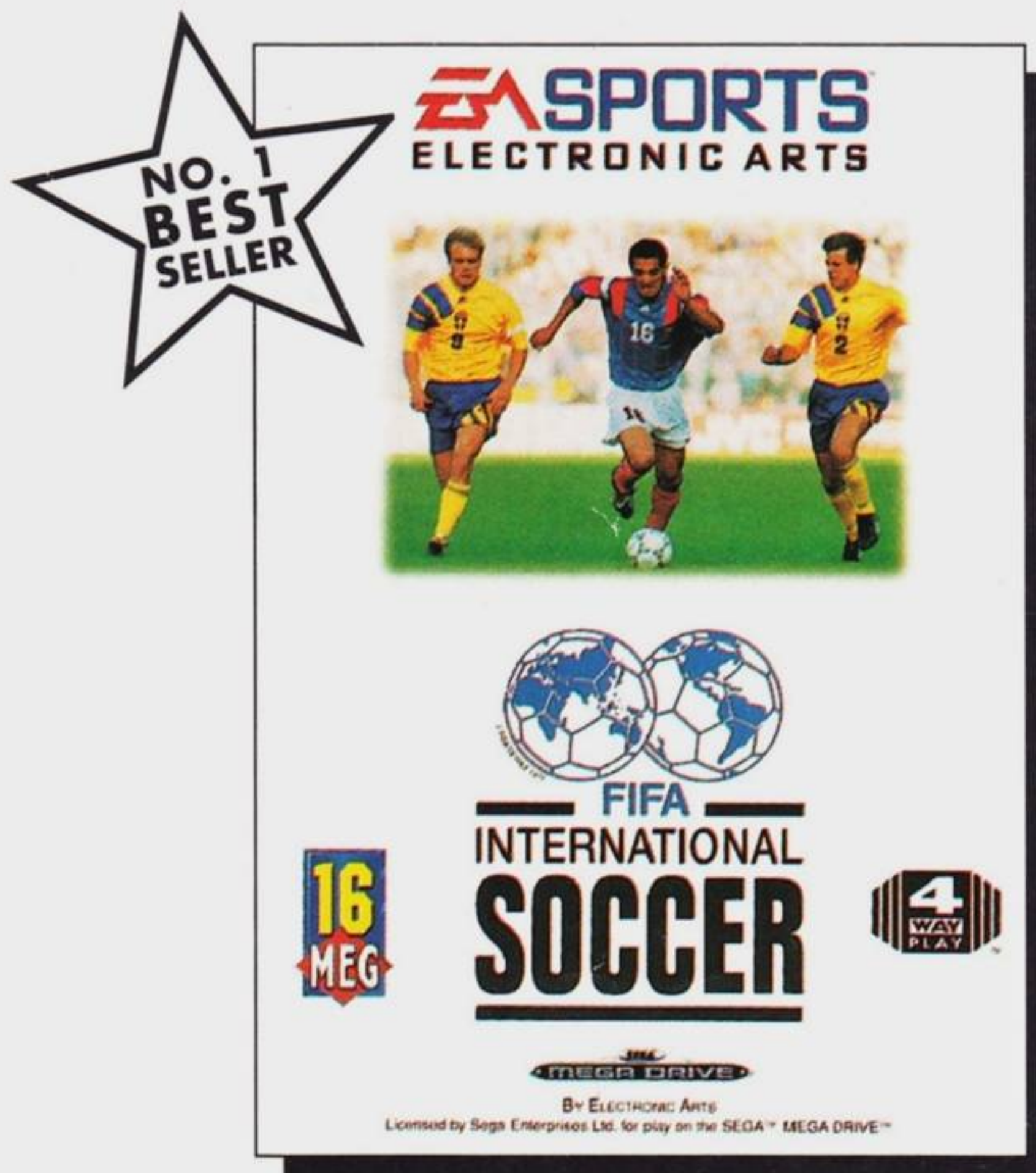
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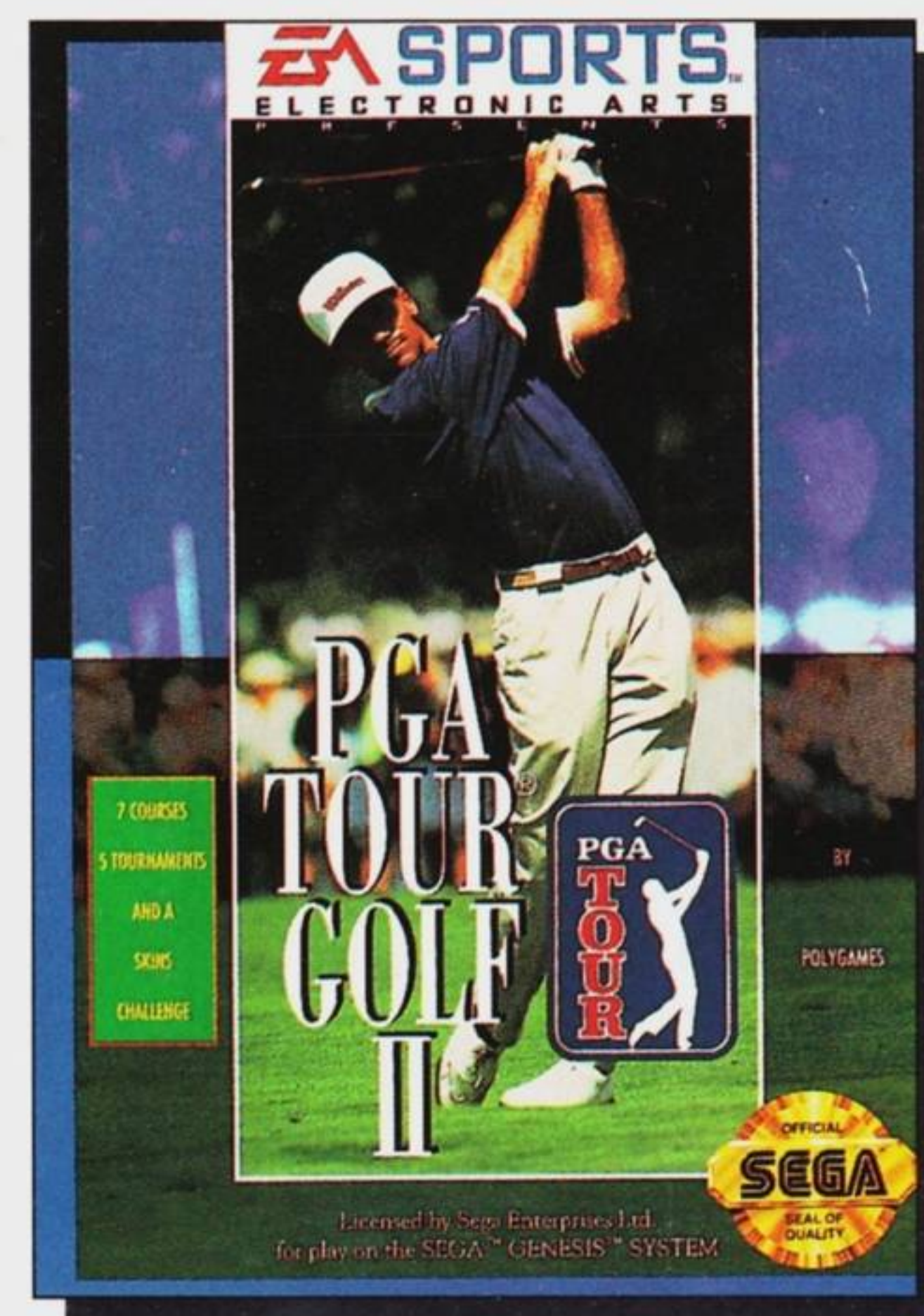
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