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GAME INFORMER®

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ISSUE #99

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GAME INFORMER®

TABLE OF CONTENTS

COVER STORY

18 THE NINTENDO DIFFERENCE

A next-gen console finally comes from Nintendo, and with sexy results! We poked, prodded, and played this Cube in order to give you all the answers you need come November. You'll thank us, you'll thank Nintendo, and you'll never leave the house again.

FEATURE

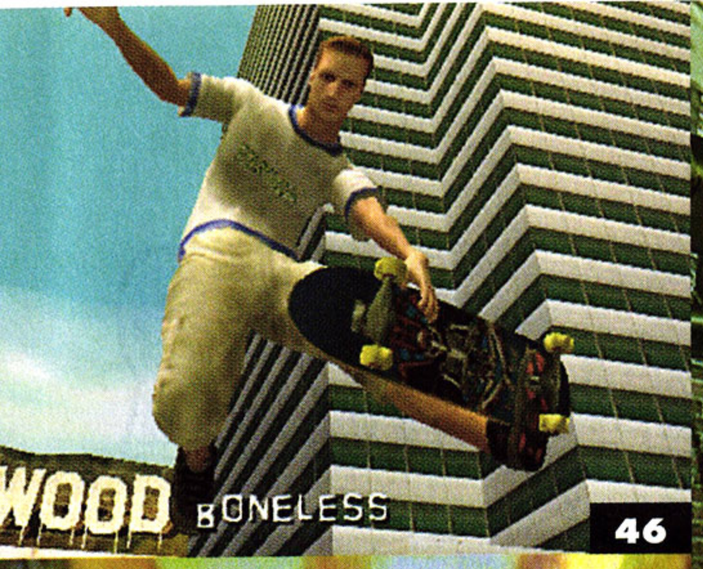
28 ELECTRONIC ENTERTAINMENT EXPO 2001

Presenting unrivalled coverage of the annual trip to the world's largest gaming convention, Game Informer runs wild in the streets of L.A. and lives to tell about it. Hear the tales we've got to share about who's won, who hasn't, and which titles were deemed our Best of Show.

FEATURE

38 GAME BOY ADVANCE

The king of the handheld realm, Nintendo, is readying the greatest portable player the world has known to date, and we give you an in-depth look at what to expect on June 11. No need to pre-order or wait in line, feel free to come and get this goodness.



46

76

66

60

64

8 EDITORS' FORUM
GI endures the cavalcade that is E3, and comes back a little worse, but certainly wiser, for the wear. Unfortunately, the trip had an adverse effect on the GI editor formerly known as Matt. He no longer responds to his given name, but he'll follow you home if you feed him some peanuts.

9 GI SPY
The Game Informer paparazzi stalk the video game industry, declaring all those who are or are not born to rock (and bring you candid photos of all the action).

10 DEAR GI
The GI backlash begins here! The readers have spoken and we have listened. Sit in on a heated session of anger management as we try to counsel a few hot heads on their litany of complaints against your humble editors.

12 GI NEWS
E3 2001 was as big an event as ever, but it was the announcements before the show that really rocked the house. The big three laid their gloves on each other as the next-gen console war officially got under way.

44 PREVIEWS
Wow, we're stuffed. Feast your eyes and mind on a long list of exciting games that you haven't sampled yet. Naughty Dog gloriously returns with Jak and Daxter, Disney and Square do their own dance with Kingdom Hearts, and we give you the word on Xbox's Project Ego. Yes, you did hear it here first.

68 PHOTOPHILE
Purdy as pigtails and twice as sweet, this month's Photophile is as good as ever. Don't even bother shaking a stick at this bunch, 'cause you simply don't have enough arms to grab hold of all these goodies.

74 REVIEWS
We've hyped it up for some time now, and we've not been proven wrong. Twisted Metal: Black garners Game of the Month status by scaring us silly. Meanwhile, GI gives you over a dozen reviews of Game Boy Advance titles for you to take in and love. Finally, we have two words for you: Top Shop.

94 CHARTS
Keep up with the Joneses while they try and keep up with each other. Don't like what you see? If you were in Japan right now, you could be playing anything from Tottoko Hamster Big Adventure 2 to One Piece Grand Battle! – so consider yourself lucky.

98 SECRET ACCESS
Give Ulala all the right moves with our complete code for Dreamcast's Space Channel 5 or have even more fun with Taneo and his family in Incredible Crisis for PS-X. Code of the Month goes to Zone of the Enders for the PS2, but we give plenty of love to all our fans that need a little help.

102 CLASSIC GI
GI staked out every nook and cranny of PS-X's Castlevania: Symphony of the Night, and we actually don't know if we're coming or going! Watch as we get our rhythm back courtesy of Michael Jackson and the crack of Indy's whip.

108 ETC.
If you read only one book this year, and see only one band – boy, do we have the answers for you. A new edition of the gamer's bible (Phoenix: The Fall & Rise of Videogames) is coming out, and get on Creepazoid's crazy train before it implodes on the stink of its own pretentious Jim Morrison-wannabe feces.

52

GAME INDEX

GAME	PAGE #
Advance Wars	42
Air Blade	71
Banjo-Kazooie: Grunty's Revenge	42
Barbarian	42
Batman Vengence	42
Battle Realms	68
Breath of Fire	42
Capcom vs SNK 2	71
Castlevania: Circle of the Moon	89
Cel Damage	66
Chu Chu Rocket	90
Civilization III	61
Command & Conquer: Renegade	68
Cool Boarders 2001	78
Crazy Taxi 2	84
Dark Arena	42
Dark Cloud	79
Dark Summit	51
Dave Mirra Freestyle BMX 2	68
Dave Mirra Freestyle BMX: Maximum Remix	83
Dead to Rights	65
Diddy Kong Pilot	43
Donkey Kong Coconut Crackers	42
Drakan II	66
Dynasty Warriors 3	73
Earthworm Jim	92
Echelon	87
Extreme G 3	72
F-Zero: Maximum Velocity	89
Final Fantasy Chronicles	82
Final Fight One	43
Fire Pro Wrestling	93
Fortress	42
Frequency	70
Fur Fighters: Viggo's Revenge	80
Golden Sun	42
GT Advance Championship Racing	93
Gun Valkyrie	63
Heroes of Might and Magic	80
ICO	53
Iridion 3D	88
Jak and Daxter: The Precursor Legacy	44
Jet Grind Radio Future	62
Kameo: Elements of Power	25
Kao the Kangaroo	42
Kinetica	69
Kingdom Hearts	50
Klonoa: Empire of Dreams	43
Krazy Racers	90
Legend of Zelda: Oracle of Ages, The	91
Legend of Zelda: Oracle of Seasons, The	91
Luigi's Mansion	21
Mad Dash	73
Magical Vacation	43
Mario Kart Advance	42
Mat Hoffman's Pro BMX 2	72
Max Payne	60
Maximo	48
Metroid Prime	26
MLB 2002	83
Mobile Suit Gundam: Journey to Jaburo	73
Monkey Ball	72
Monster Rancher 3	69
Monsters Rancher 2 Go	43
Mummy Returns, The	71
Myst III: Exile	87
Namco Museum Arcade	43
NBA 2K2	70
NFL 2K2	70
NHL Hitz 2002	72
Phantasy Star Online Version 2	58
Pinobee: Wings of Adventure	88
Pikmin	23
Pitfall: The Mayan Adventure	90
Project Ego	52
Rainbow Six: Rogue Spear	43
Rayman Advance	92
Rayman M	65
Ready 2 Rumble Boxing: Round 2	93
Return to Castle Wolfenstein	67
SabreWulf Rumble in the Jungle	43
Sega Bass Fishing 2	69
Shadow Man: 2econd Coming	71
Shrek	69
Silent Scope 2	72
SimsVille	70
Snoopy Tennis	92
SOCOM: U.S. Navy SEALs	64
Sonic the Hedgehog Advance	43
Spec Ops: Ranger Elite	83
Spider-Man: Mysterio's Menace	43
Splashdown	69
Spyro: Season of Ice	42
SSX Tricky	71
Star Fox Adventures: Dinosaur Planet	22
Star Wars Galaxies	59
Stuntman	54
Super Dodge Ball Advance	88
Super Mario Advance	91
Super Smash Bros. Melee	20
Super Street Fighter II Turbo Revival	43
Tarzan	73
Tennis 2K2	70
Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2	89
Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2x	67
Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3	46
Top Shop	82
Tropico	86
Twisted Metal: Black	76
Unreal Championship	73
Wario Land	43
Wave Race: Blue Storm	24
WWF SmackDown!: Just Bring It	64

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EDITORS' FORUM

THE BIG QUESTION

It was quite an E3 show. Before we got there, everyone was saying to me how it was Xbox's show to lose, but I think after it was all said and done, it was Sony's show to take. Certainly the sweetheart of the show was GameCube, as fanboys everywhere almost wet their pants when they saw it in action, but I'm not convinced Nintendo is a contender yet. Yet.

This all makes the console war very interesting. Xbox is certainly the most powerful of all the machines, but its developers (other than Molyneux and Big Blue Box) aren't really showing that they know what they're doing, since the software overall is pretty mediocre. Nintendo, on the other hand, has some software, but until I see third-parties seriously backing it up, I have a feeling it will be N64 all over again with games coming few and far between. This leaves Sony as the monster that rules the video game roost.

I would have to say that, as of today, PlayStation 2 still has a leg up on the competition. Sony's software line-up for the second half of the year has a lot of games I really want to play, with perhaps Halo getting me to play some Xbox, and Rogue Squadron and Wave Rave getting me on the Cube. Everything else I want to play, at least for the moment, is on PS2.

Maybe it is indeed the year of PlayStation 2, but I don't know that I would count Xbox out yet, and you can never dismiss Nintendo. Everyone and their dog will buy one, if for no other reason than to play Zelda.

This leaves me with just one simple question. Will Sony be able to slam the door shut on Xbox before its developers get the chance to show some of its power and make a move? Hmmmm, I guess we will just have to wait and see.

Andy McNamara
Editor
andy@gameinformer.com

Golfing gamers left to right: Kato, Reiner, Kristian, Jay, Justin, Matt, Arthur, and Andy.

REINER, THE RAGING GAMER
reiner@gameinformer.com

I always say, I won't live past 40. Of course, this is a joke. Yet after attending this year's E3, there may be some truth behind this statement. Every night, I partied until the wee hours of the morning, forgot to sleep, and digested nothing but carbonated beverages. In the five days I was at the show, I probably lost 15 years of my life. Was it worth it? Most definitely. I was blown away by GameCube, completely entranced with Tony Hawk 3, and baffled by how amazing Rogue Leader looks. Naughty Dog's new game, Jak and Daxter, is everything I hoped it would be, and the Xbox…well…I like the logo. Microsoft aside, it was a great show. Come this holiday season, there will be great reason for cheer.

MATT, THE ORIGINAL GAMER
matt@gameinformer.com

Two years ago, when I was a bright-eyed, bushy-tailed new recruit here at Game Informer, my reviewer blurb seemed like an invaluable forum for me to express my thoughts and feelings to the world. Some 26 months on, I've quickly come to realize that I have absolutely nothing that even borders on an original thought left in this withered noggin of mine. Let's see…umm…E3 was…uh…cool. I saw a lot of games that…mmm…rocked! I…had…fun? Sigh. Nice weather we're having. Hey! Remember that show the A-Team? What's up with that crazy Mr. T guy? What a cut-up! In closing, let me say, think before you drink. See you later, alligator! In a while – oh, forget it.

JAY, THE GONZO GAMER
jay@gameinformer.com

Some may say this is a dream job, and up until this month, I'd be inclined to agree with that sentiment. For some reason, though, this month my fellow employees have chosen to make working at Game Informer quite torturous. For a week they made me live in an urban land of horrors. While there, I was forced to walk all day in front of flashing lights and blaring noises. At night, I would be taken to large buildings filled with people dancing to horrible bands. I was allowed only three hours of sleep, and upon awaking I would discover that the beverages forced upon me had made me sick. How cruel.

KRISTIAN, THE GAME DAWG
kristian@gameinformer.com

I'm convinced that "E3" was an elaborate hoax concocted by Jay and Reiner. I mean, would people really pay $200 a pop just to get in the doors of some huge nerd convention? I think not. I do have to hand it to the entire GI staff for laying the groundwork to this, the king of all practical jokes, for months in advance. I knew as soon as we landed in what was probably Omaha that the whole thing was bogus. Sure I walked around a cavernous "convention center" and saw "games" with thousands of other people, but they were obviously all extras. Nice try, fellas. Next time spend a little more money on the "booths."

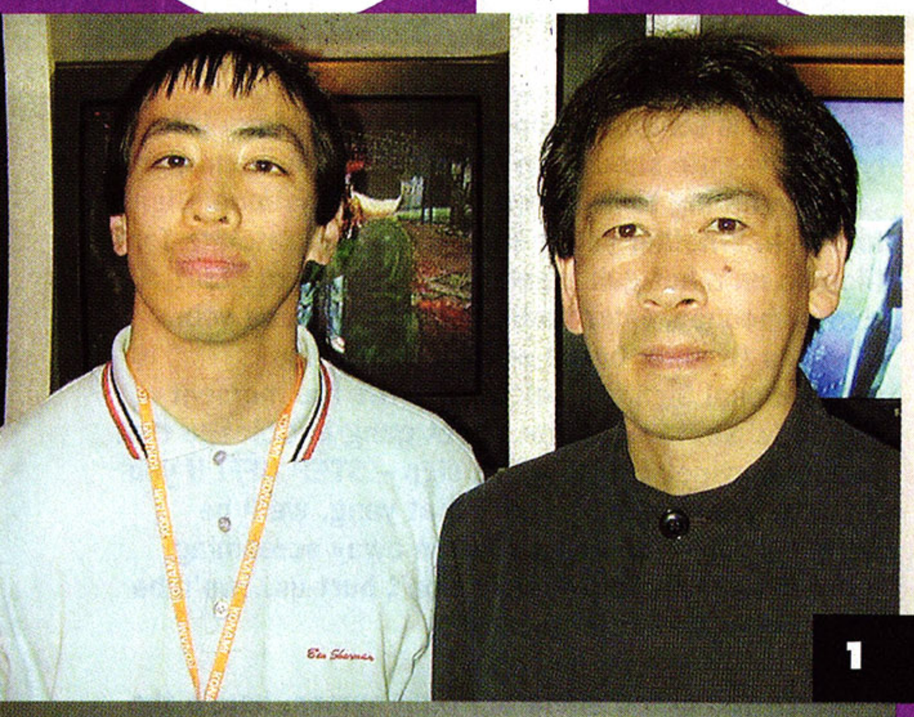
JUSTIN, THE DIGITAL DEVIANT
justin@gameinformer.com

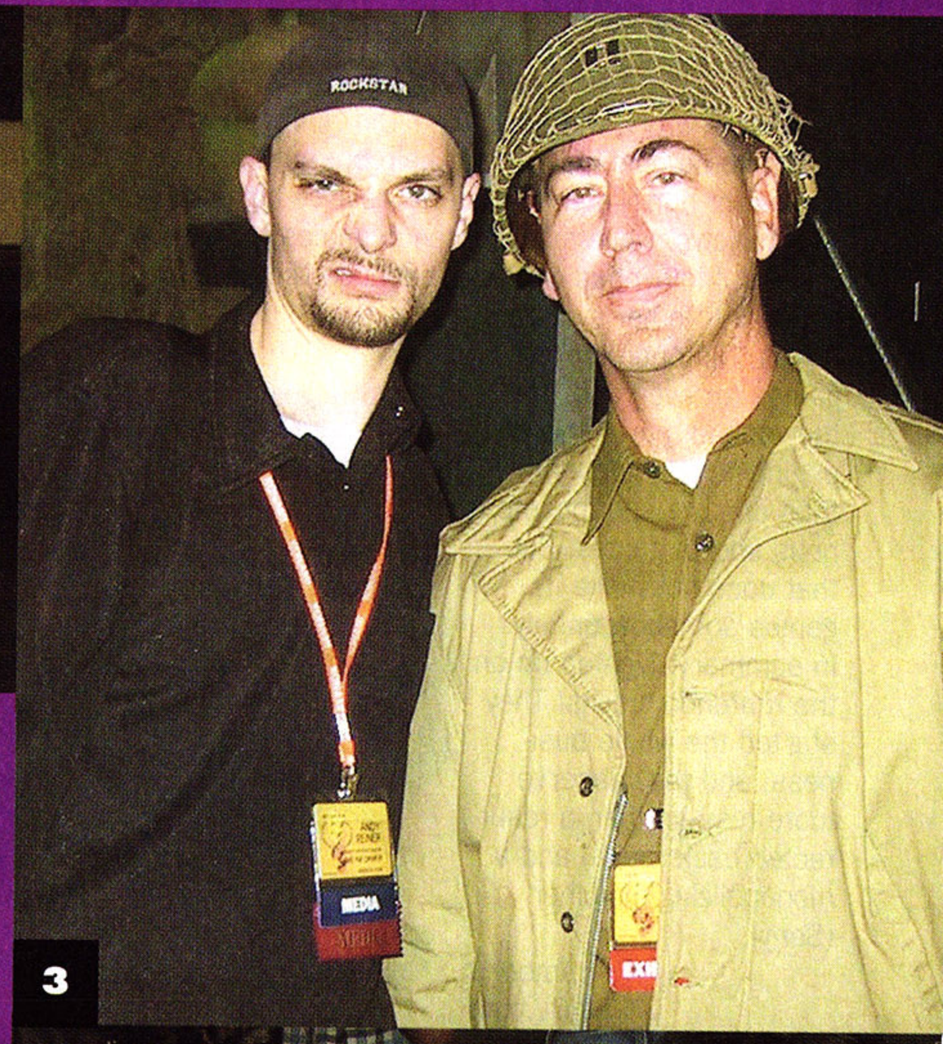
Just waking up in the morning, gotta thank God/ I don't know, but this mag seemed kinda odd/ No sequel to Pen Pen. No Army Men/ Jay's mohawk taught us how to laugh again/ E3 is over now, and I survived it/ Even got to hang with Lita in the mosh pit/ Saw more great games than you can shake a stick/ Some of us got drunk, but nobody was really sick/ We had to go 'cuz we got us a deadline/ And if you check the scores, we dished out a lot of nines/ You want to know what was good? Well, uh/ I liked FF Chronicles and the two Zeldas/ Crazy Taxi 2 kept up the series well/ Mario and Dodge Ball for GBA are fun as hell/ This month I didn't even have to rip on crap games/ I gotta say it was a good mag.

KATO, THE GAME KATANA
kato@gameinformer.com

I just got back from my second E3, and I've got to say I'm surprised. I passed through only ONE fart cloud out on the floor during the three days I was there. Can you believe that!? Geez, given all the bad sleep, junk food, and free booze, I expected more out of myself even. Anyway, standing in line just to play a couple minutes of Rogue Leader was completely worth it. The C-stick camera function will blow your mind. Actually, I take that bit back about the golden fart. GameCube's Nov. 5 launch sure blew a nasty one in the face of Microsoft.

GI SPY





CANDID PHOTOS FROM THE SEAMY UNDERBELLY OF THE VIDEO GAME INDUSTRY

1 Kato has a very serious meeting with Yu Suzuki about possibly being his long-lost son. **2** "My new game is so cool," says Shinji Mikami, the man behind Devil May Cry. "It's cooler than the Fonz! Want to see my Leather Tuscadero impersonation? Ayyyy!" **3** "Boot camp!?" Snarls Reiner to Electronic Arts' Steve Grohl. "I thought you said booty camp. Wait, where's your hand?" **4** Andrew Hoolan of Terminal Reality tries to act sober with Andy, while Chris Charla from Digital Eclipse shows he was born to rock. **5** From left to right, Justin Monast, Erick Pangilinan, Joe Labbe, and Adam Marquis of Naughty Dog pose with Kiera, a character from Jak and Daxter. **6** It's the battle of the retarded hairdos as Rob "Pickle King" Fleischer faces off with Jay "Punk Poseur" Fitzloff. The match is declared a draw. **7** Microsoft's Shon Damron looks happy. PR goddess Jenn Shannahan looks fearful. Matt and Justin look like they were born to rock.**8** President of Rockstar Games, Sam Houser, sees a Wal-Mart executive. Violence ensues. **9** Kjell Vistad and Bryan Davies from Eidos help Dave Dienstbier of Acclaim keep Andy away from the only drink left after last call at the Microsoft party. Anatole Brown from Tips & Tricks shows he was born to rock.

DEAR GI

GI + NINTENDO = TRUE LOVE ALWAYS

What is wrong with you guys? Did Nintendo wrong you in some past life? I can't help but notice most games for non-Nintendo systems receive high ratings in your reviews, while most Nintendo games receive low reviews. I know this can't be, because Nintendo is superior to other systems.

Yes, Nintendo makes games for everyone. Yes, they spend more time on originality and gameplay than on gore and monotonous sports games. But that does not make its games somehow unholy. In summary: Lighten up on the Nintendo cracks! They started the whole business, and they deserve more respect than a resurrected hack (Sega) and a monopolizing moocher (Sony).

Amooke
Via AOL.com

Au contraire, mon frère. The Game Informer staff are bona fide Nintendo boosters. From the stuffed Pikachu that Andy cuddles with every night to the tattoo of Shigero Miyamoto on Reiner's rump, the evidence of GI's love affair with Nintendo is everywhere. Heck, why wouldn't we love the company that brought us Donkey Kong, Mario Bros., and The Legend of Zelda? Sure, the company delays games for eons on end, and keeps putting out those annoying Mario Party games, but that doesn't negate the fact that the quality of its first-party software is unparalleled in the industry.

Let's break down the math. Taking a look at the reviews archive in issue #97, 38% (12 out of the 32) of Nintendo 64 games listed received a rating of eight or higher. In the PlayStation and PlayStation 2 sections, only 27% (58 out of 215) of the games listed received a rating of eight or higher. How's that for love? If that wasn't enough, just check our cover for an example of how much Nintendo butt we kiss. Smooch!

NATTERING NABOBS OF NEGATIVISM

I am going to cut straight through the crap and say what I have to say. I think that all of you over there at GI are nothing but a bunch of pessimistic liars who do nothing but bad-mouth video games. I am sick of your pessimistic ways of reviewing video games. It gets repetitive to read nothing but pure pessimism. You make me want to hate video games. That is why I don't like your magazine.

Take a look around and read a different magazine's review on a game. They never start by pointing out the bad things about a game. They only talk about good things in a game. You guys should take a hint from magazines such as Tips & Tricks, Expert Gamer, Gamers Republic, Nintendo Power, and so on. Those magazines are 100 times better than yours. You are never going to be huge, that is why your booth was empty at E3 last year. The only good thing about your magazine is the previews. You might have previews on a game before anyone else does, but everything else in your mag just sucks. If I had the opportunity to say this all to your faces, I would gladly do it. I am disgusted with everyone that reviews the games and with the editors. If I were the owner, I would fire all of you and get someone else with experience to do your jobs properly. You suck. If you have balls like you say, then print this letter for everyone to see.

Vassil Nenov
Via cs.com

Jeez! The accusations are really flying this issue! We'd better get through this Dear GI as quickly as possible, before somebody implicates us in the Kennedy assassination. Given that we've all devoted most of our meaningless existences to writing about video games, it might be safe to assume that we actually do like them a great deal. Unfortunately (for us), there are many "bad" video games that are released each year. As "reviewers," it is our job to try to present our opinion on the relative quality of each game we write about. As such, many of our reviews are "negative" because there are a great many video games that are – how you say? – "not fun to play." It has not generally been our policy to give good reviews to games that are not fun to play. If you would prefer to read a magazine that gives positive reviews to bad games, you might want to look elsewhere. As for our balls, they're just fine, thanks.

GANG INFORMER MAGAZINE?

I've noticed Reiner in some pictures throwing up a three-finger sign, like in your May issue #97 in the GI SPY section, and in an older issue behind "white face" Sable. I don't know what you mean by only extending the thumb, pinky and index finger but, you see, I'm from Chicago and here that sign is only thrown up by a well-known street gang. You should let me and everybody else know what you mean by it, because there are rivals out there who don't like people representing that, especially in a popular magazine like GI. Just lookin' out. I've also seen the Staff's thug pictures, what's all y'all's street names?

Edgar Salvatierra
Via hotmail.com

Yo chill, E! Even though we're bling bling, marinatin' and flamboastin' like the Cash Money Millionaires, when it comes to gangs, GI is str-8 colorblind. Where we're from (mostly the lily-white suburbs of Minnesota), the hand-sign you're referring to is known as the International Sign for Rock. Whether you're using it to congratulate Tom Morello on a hot guitar solo, or to rejoice the fact that someone's older brother bought you and your friends a two-liter bottle of wine cooler, the International Sign of Rock always fits the moment perfectly. So, to whatever street gang in Chicago that may or may not be using this sign – STEP OFF! If you come to Eden Prairie poppin' that yang, we'll be forced to...pee our pants and run away screaming like little schoolgirls. (Please don't hurt us...we'll be good from now on, we promise.)

Since you asked about our thug names, here's the 411. On the street, the GI posse is known as Baldy Loc (Matt), Dungeon Master Flash (Jay), Suave Calamari (Andy), Ol' Dorky Bastard (Reiner), Dell Tha Funkee Homecomputer (Kristian), Ayatollah Ninja (Kato), and Trey J Da Eight-Finga Snot Rocka (Justin). Ya heard?

THE MYSTERY OF THE ASS MONKEY

I've been wondering about Donkey Kong for the longest time. Why "Donkey" Kong? He doesn't look like a donkey. He doesn't act or smell like a donkey. Nintendo had a purpose for this name. Please hear me out. Donkey means mule or ass; Kong means ape or monkey. That would make him an ASS MONKEY! You see what I'm saying? Is this a possible explanation?

Michael B. Kopp
Via snail mail

Sorry Michael, but we're afraid that there is no Ass Monkey conspiracy. Donkey Kong, Nintendo's first real hit arcade game, actually marks the legendary Shigero Miyamoto's (The Legend of Zelda, Mario 64) debut as a game designer. Working with Gumpei Yokai (the creator of the Game Boy), Miyamoto envisioned the still-classic tale of a carpenter trying to save his girlfriend from the clutches of a nasty gorilla. Miyamoto wanted to name the game "Stubborn Gorilla" after the large simian, and was looking up the two words in a Japanese/English dictionary. "Donkey" was listed as a synonym for stubborn, and "Kong" was listed as a synonym for gorilla. Miyamoto liked how the words sounded together, and the rest is history. By the way, how do you know what Donkey Kong smells like?

THE TIMES THEY ARE A-CHANGIN'

I have just received the final issue of my subscription to your magazine, and every time I look throughout the preview and reviews section, I hardly see any PlayStation games. I do understand that the PlayStation 2 and Xbox are taking

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over, but why the lack of PlayStation game reviews? I like your magazine, but it disappoints me to barely see any PlayStation game reviews. I know that the game reviews archive is exactly for what I am complaining about, but I like to actually read about the new games coming out for the PlayStation console. In your last issue, you previewed only one PS-X game and reviewed only three PS-X games.

Stephen Czabaranek
Via yahoo.com

There's an easy answer to your question, Steve – the PlayStation has nearly reached the end of its life. Now that most game companies' development dollars are tied up in PlayStation 2, Xbox, and GameCube titles, there just aren't many new PlayStation games being released. Of those that are, most of them are not high-quality titles. If you've already bought Mat Hoffman's Pro BMX, the only true triple-A PS-X titles on the horizon are Final Fantasy Chronicles and Syphon Filter 3. After that, we're afraid it's going to be a swift ride into the sunset for our old friend the PlayStation. We'll miss you, pal.

DOGGIE IN DISTRESS!

I have kidnapped Arthur. Here is a list of my demands:

- 1 Xbox
- 1 PlayStation 2
- 1 Game Boy Advance
- 1 GameCube
- $10,000 video game shopping spree
- 10-year subscription to Game Informer

Failure to comply results in Arthur being thrown into the pits of doggie doom!

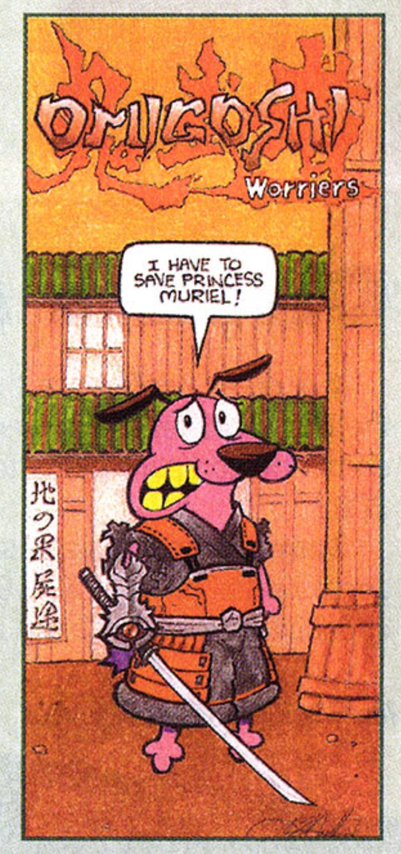
Anonymous
Via ransom note

Game Informer does not negotiate with terrorists. Period. We have already dispatched a crack commando unit to your home, and they are probably breaking down your door as we speak. If you so much a harm one flea on the hide of GI's beloved mascot Arthur, rest assured you will be dealt with in the harshest possible terms. As for your demands, we have just mailed out a box containing the following items to your residence: 1 Atari Jaguar, 1 broken Nintendo 64 controller, 17 copies of Shrek for Game Boy Color, and a $3 gift certificate to Sizzler. Also, you've been signed up for lifetime subscriptions to Reader's Digest and Rosie magazines.

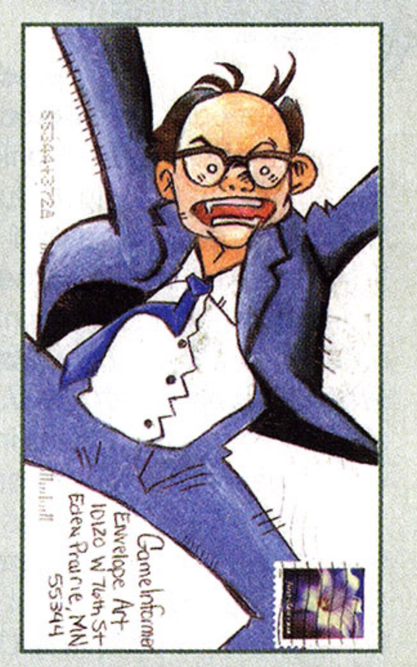
ENVELOPE ART

JULY WINNER!

Jason Rodriguez
Trish Stratus finally left that loser Mr. McMahon and has brought her lovely boo...blond hair to our pages.



Leonard Griffin
Omigoshi Worriers? Obviously some of our readers don't know to say no to drugs.

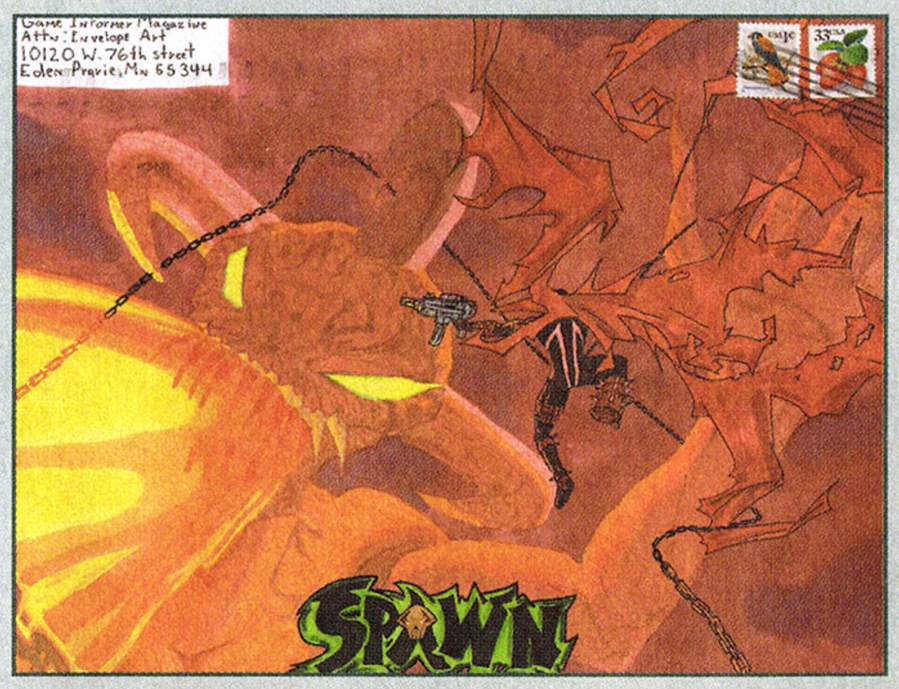


Melanie Finch
It's Incredible Crisis – need we say more?

Enter the Game Informer Envelope Art Contest. All you need to do is draw, paint, scratch, spit, or carve the best darn envelope art you can think of and send it to us. Please include your name, phone number, and return address on the back of the envelope. If you're the monthly winner, we'll feature your work in GI and you'll receive a video game prize from the Game Informer vault.

Send to:
Game Informer
Envelope Art Contest
10120 W. 76th St.
Eden Prairie, MN 55344

Alec Barnes
Breath of Fire art is always good since it features a sentient turnip.



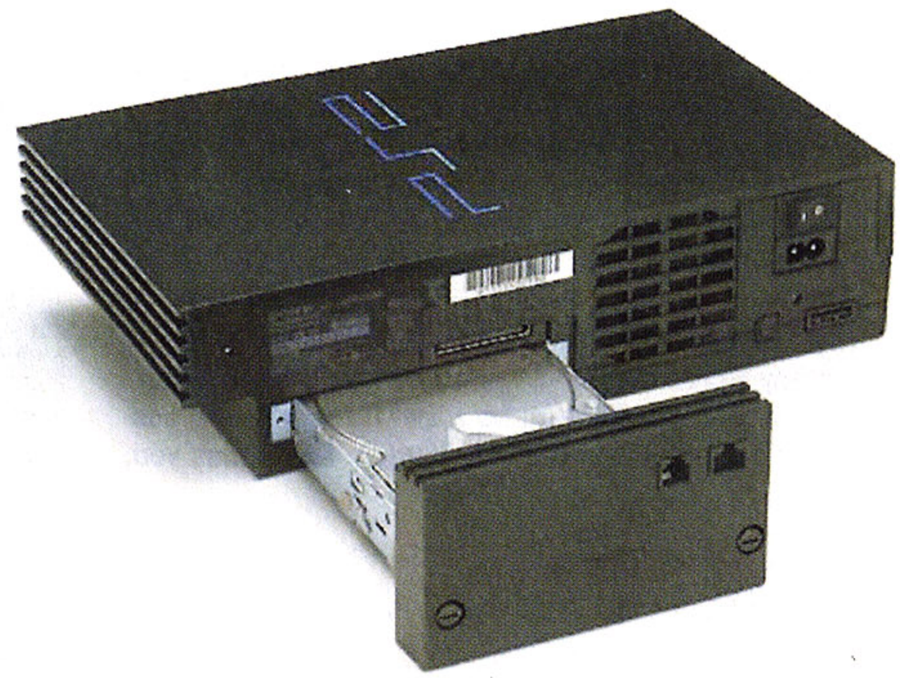
Dean Bryant
Spawn's black and red outfit is growing tired, perhaps he should talk to Outkast about a little help with his wardrobe.

GI NEWS

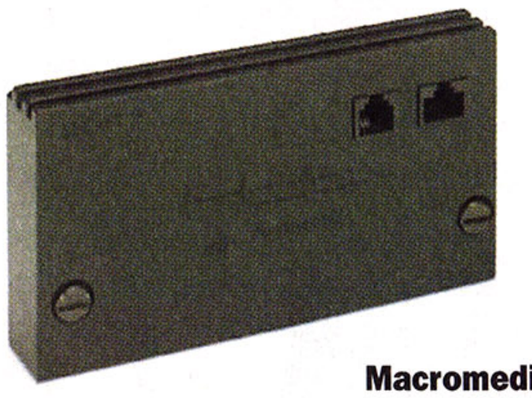
ONLINE ARRIVES FOR PS2

At a press conference the day before **E3**, **Sony of America** finally unveiled its online plans for the **PlayStation 2**. Encompassing everything from corporate partnerships to games and peripherals, the company plans to start the hoopla this year and have things "fully implemented" by 2002.

Sony's online designs start with a **Network Adapter** to come out in November for the suggested retail price of $39.95. This will provide both a 56K analog modem and enable Ethernet capabilities for broadband access. Also coming in November will be a 40 Gigabyte **Hard Disc Drive** that is sold separately, although a price has yet to be announced.



Network/Modem Adapter

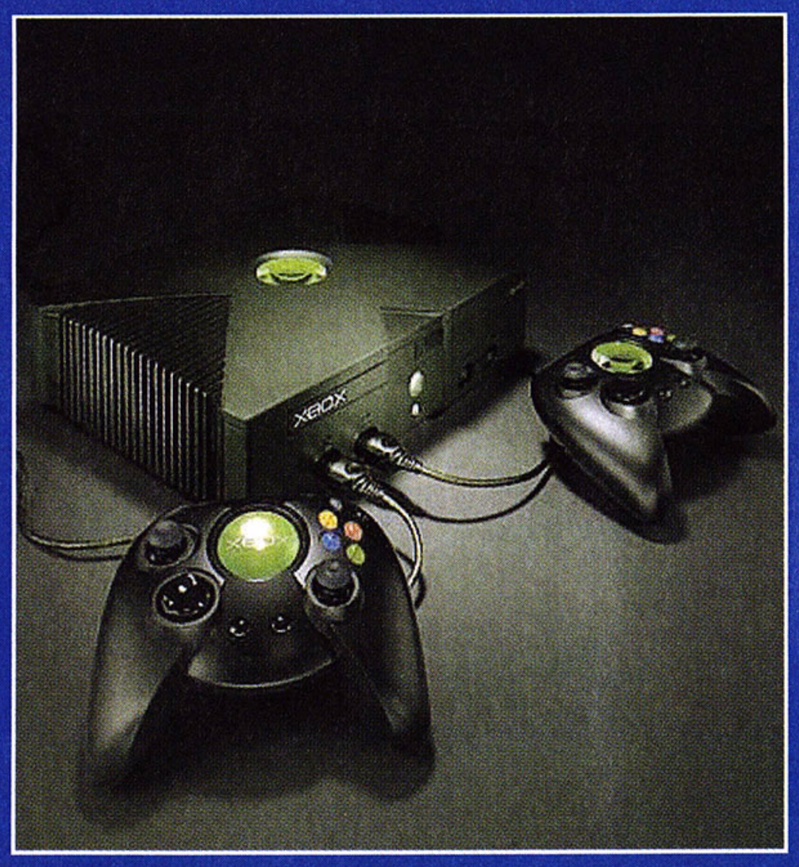


Helping to fulfill the PS2's potential to be a significant portal into the Internet, Sony has teamed up with **America Online** so it can reach multitudes of users (unlike the **Dreamcast**, which was not compatible with AOL). AOL will bring with it established features such as instant messaging, chat, and e-mail, while a PS2-specific **Netscape** browser is in the works. Anyone not wanting to join the club can rest easy in that Sony is making the platform ISP neutral, so you can keep your current provider.

Macromedia's Flash Player, **RealPlayer 8** for streaming media, and **Cisco's Ipv4** software have also gotten on the console's bandwagon to optimize both online gaming and browsing. The latter company is currently developing an Ipv4/Ipv6 dual protocol stack for future use with the broadband era. Your online experience will be completed with Sony set to offer an NTSC, PAL, and XGA compatible **LCD screen**, **keyboard**, and **mouse** late this year.

More importantly, in winter you'll get your first taste of PS2 online gaming via such notable games as ***Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3***, ***Tribes***, and the add-on disc ***Twisted Metal Online***. ***SOCOM: U.S. Navy SEALs*** and the techno beats title ***Frequency*** are also on course to appear in the system's first wave. All in all there are 30 first-party vids in development with online gaming being the focus.

In other news, Sony has also announced a DVD wireless remote for the PS2 to be released in September, and a ***Gran Turismo 3*** bundle pack that throws in the console for a price of $329 at GT3's launch on July 10. Meanwhile, **PSone** will get a little help from a first-party LCD screen ($129 for the basic version and $149 for one with more features) and a new line of color controllers.

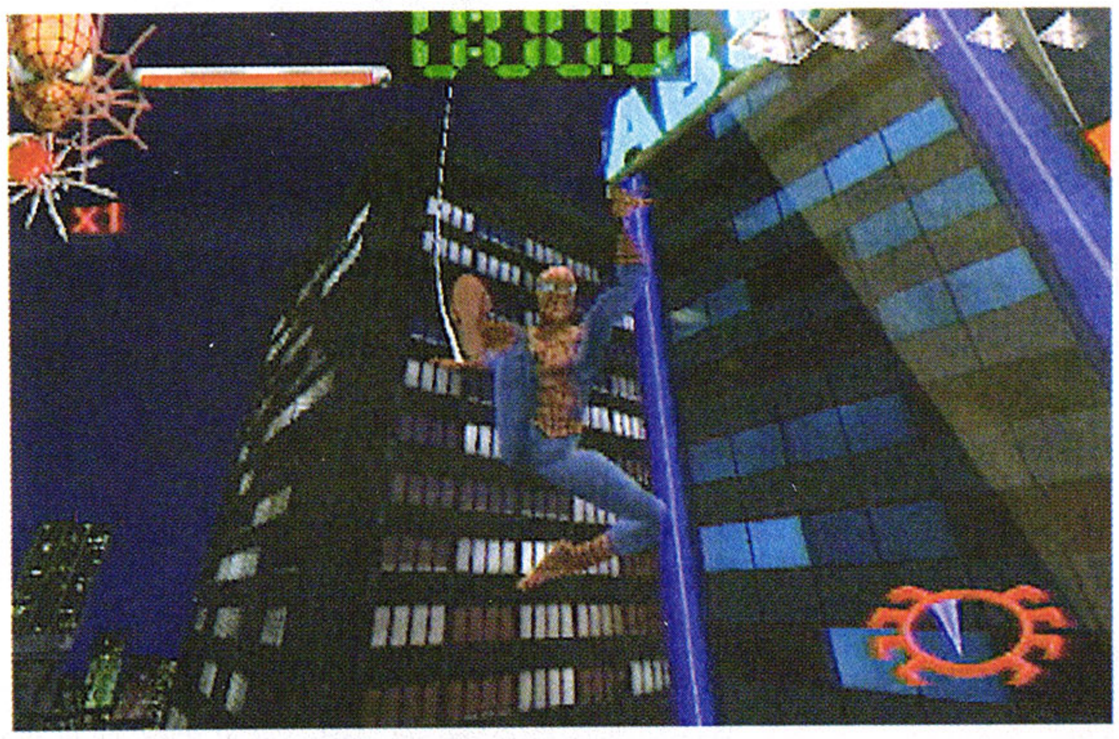


XBOX COMES OUT SWINGING

Microsoft has announced that its official foray into the home console market will occur on November 8 at a price point of $299. Chief **Xbox** officer **Robbie Bach** told us that production on the unit is finished, and that the company thinks it'll have between 600,000 and 800,000 systems available for launch – the coveted million mark isn't expected to be reached until Christmas 2001 is over. Fifteen to twenty titles are being touted for the initial period, including ***Munch's Oddysee***, ***Halo***, and ***NFL Fever 2002***.

Rivaling **Sony's** online plans, Xbox boasts broadband capabilities straight out of the box, and claims that 25 companies (including **LucasArts**, **EA**, **Konami**, and more) are currently developing titles for broadband service which will launch in summer of 2002. Accordingly, **Sega** is bringing the ***2K*** sports line to the system, starting with ***NFL 2K2***, ***NBA 2K2***, and ***World Series Baseball 2K2***, as well as an NCAA college football title. Breaking away from the text talk of the **Dreamcast**, however, Microsoft has designed an online voice headset called the **Xbox Communicator**.

At a pre-**E3** media event, the company also announced that ***Crazy Taxi Next*** and ***House of the Dead 3*** from Sega will eventually be joined by **Capcom's** ***Genma Onimusha*** (an upgrade of the **PS2** version), ***Dino Crisis 3***, and **BRAIN-BOX** (from **Shinji Mikami**, the man behind ***Resident Evil***, ***Dino Crisis***, and ***Devil May Cry***) as Xbox exclusives. Also being unveiled was the original action title ***Bruce Lee: Quest of the Dragon*** (by **PC** developer **Ronin Entertainment**). In total, first-party titles for the platform should reach around 35% of the Xbox's total games.

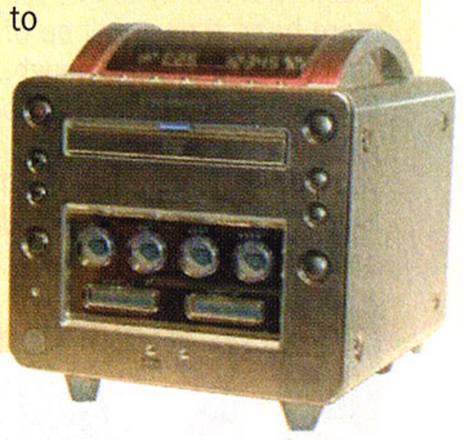


GAMECUBE BEATS XBOX TO STREET

Nintendo has been notorious for delaying consoles, but if there's one time when it needs to be on the ball, it's November 5 of this year. This is when the video game empire will release **GameCube** in the US – three whole days before the **Xbox** comes out. Better yet, Nintendo's system beats both **Sony's** and **Microsoft's** prices by $100, being initially set to retail at only $199.95.

Unfortunately, the console will have the same anemic numbers as the **PlayStation 2**, with only 500,000 systems planned to be available on its first day at retail. Production will ramp up and provide another 500,000 within the first two weeks, however. An exact roster of launch titles isn't available, although it is believed that ***Super Smash Bros. Melee***, ***Luigi's Mansion***, ***Star Wars: Rogue Leader***, ***Wave Race: Blue Storm***, and more will be in attendance.

Getting in on the DVD stakes, **Matsushita** (**Panasonic** over here) has come up with a hybrid **GameCube/DVD** player to be available in Japan come their launch day in September. It isn't yet known if this combo will make its way to the States.



SNEAK PEEK AT NEW SPIDER-MAN

Following up on *GI*'s coverage of the ***Spider-Man*** movie and **Activision's** great support of the series in general, we come at you this month with a few shots of the work being done on the **PlayStation 2** video game based on the upcoming May 3, 2002 film. Scheduled to release in summer of next year, we don't expect a big change in the action/web-slinging format from previous *Spider-Man* titles. It's interesting to note that **The Shocker** will be in both this title and **PS-X's *Spider-Man 2***. We eagerly await facing up with the **Green Goblin** in what could be quite a classic confrontation.

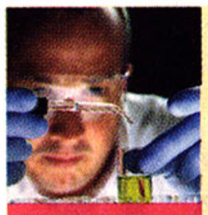
JEDI BATTLES RAGE ON

Baldur's Gate vets **BioWare** showed what it was up to behind **LucasArts' E3** doors – a real-time ***Star Wars*** RPG slated for consoles and **PC** in the fall of 2002 called ***Knights of the Old Republic***. Bristling with six classes, three races, and 100 skills, this gorgeous new story takes place 4,000 years before ***Episode I***. Far from a click-and-point affair, we were witness to Jedi/Sith battles and environments that were very large in scale. You can choose your path similar to the PC ***Jedi Knight*** titles. Dark or light Force powers will be accumulated according to your actions.

A.I. COMES TO LIFE ON XBOX

Making some elbow room for itself in the content jungle, the **Xbox** has secured the exclusive console licensing rights for **Steven Spielberg's** summer film ***A.I.*** Both **Microsoft's** upcoming platform and the **PC** shall see renditions of the blockbuster, although the genre specifics of the Xbox version are unknown.

Watching a brief clip at **E3**, *GI* saw levels mixing traditional third-person action/adventure with some aerial combat. The movie itself revolves around an android in the 21st century who may be the first of his kind to experience and feel like humans do. ***A.I. Puzzler*** will offer PC players 130 game boards from the mind of ***Tetris*** creator **Alexei Pajinov**.



R&D

Game Informer's research and development operatives search the globe, seeking out the untapped licenses that will become tomorrow's killer games. If you have any great ideas for games of the future, be sure to drop us a line. Maybe we'll use our godlike power over the video game industry to turn you into a millionaire – or just steal your idea.

TEDDY BEAR JUNKIE

It's late on Sunday night. The tattered remnants of used Teddy Bears are scattered all over your bedroom. There's only one thing on your mind: Where your next fix will come from. It doesn't matter who gives it to you, or how much it costs. Your next Teddy must be found, and soon. Withdrawal can be a very unpleasant sight indeed. Those beady eyes, those fuzzy arms...you must have them. A local toy shop will be your first target. A rapid button-pressing sequence, coupled with split-second timing, is your only hope for confusing the addle-brained security enough to gain entrance. You soon find that the three bears they have in stock are simply not enough. After battling numerous street toughs for your coveted Teddy Bear cash, you're forced to go to the infamous Teddy dealer, Jimmy "The Threads" Barker. You beg and plead with Jimmy to get you just one bear. One more bear, then you'll be off them forever. Jimmy knows you too well, though. He gives you a Care Bear key chain to satiate your desire, then forces you into single combat with his Teddy Gladiators. If you win, you'll have all the Teddy you can handle. Highly graphic and gory, Teddy Bear Junkie is not a game for the meek.

NAME THAT GAME

Developed by Delphine Software for a number of systems (including the Genesis and SNES), this side-scroller boasted a cinematic experience with a moody soundtrack to match. Taking the role of a scientist after a nuclear experiment gone wrong, your job is to platform, solve puzzles, avoid traps, and shoot your way to freedom with the occasional help of a reoccurring alien friend. That is, if you don't die in the game's first playable scene.

(Answer on page 17)

TOP 10 THINGS ON A GI EDITOR'S E3 TO-DO LIST

10 Be less than 10 minutes late for your appointments

9 Stay the %#$* out of Kentia Hall

8 Order not-rated hotel movies for "research"

7 Drink refreshing alcoholic beverages in a responsible manner

6 Get a receipt

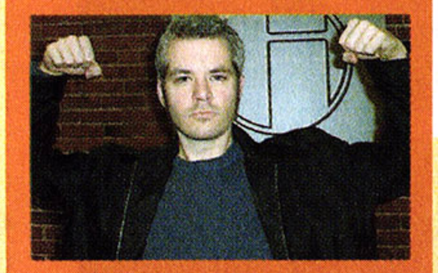
5 Try and represent GI in a professional manner while there's free liquor about

4 See a really, really bad L.A. band called Creepazoid

3 Try to get more than five hours of sleep per day

2 Repeat number 7 as often as possible

1 Sit down



DEVELOPER **TOP 5**

IAN VOGEL
Lead Designer, Irrational Games

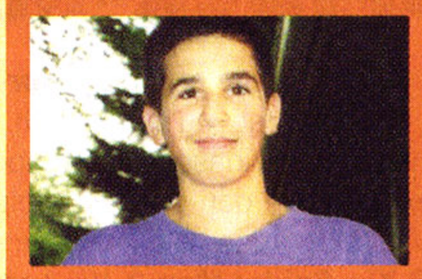
1 X-Com – PC

2 Heroes of Might and Magic III – PC

3 Tony Hawk's Pro Skater – DC

4 Civilization II – PC

5 GoldenEye – N64



READER **TOP 5**

BRAD NERHEIM
New Brighton, MN

1 Metal Gear Solid 2: Sons of Liberty – PS2

2 Final Fantasy IX – PS-X

3 EverQuest – PC

4 Typing of the Dead – DC

5 Armored Core 2 – PS2

Game Informer is looking for your Top Five favorite games. Please send your Top Fives to:

Game Informer Magazine
Attn: Top Five
10120 West 76th Street
Eden Prairie, MN 55344

Everyone that enters every month will be entered in a drawing to win a GI T-Shirt! So get writing!

TENCHU 3 SNEAKS UP ON PS2

Two shots of **Activision's** stealth-master, ***Tenchu 3***, have surfaced. Preparing for a release in late 2002 on the **PlayStation 2**, *T3* is set one year after the first ***Tenchu*** (***T2*** was a prequel), and is delivering all-new moves, Stealth Kills, cool weather effects, and the return of playable multiple characters (Rikimaru and Ayame). Developer **Acquire** is being replaced by **K2**, but we don't think the game will skip a beat. Activision tells us that expanded draw distances let you plan your routes and strategies to greater success.

TIMESPLITTERS 2 LOCKING, LOADING

Word was that **Free Radical Design's PS2** launch game, ***TimeSplitters***, wasn't everything the developer wanted it to be. Thus, work is well underway on a sequel which will easily surpass the first. Going back to its roots from working on ***GoldenEye*** and ***Perfect Dark***, Free Radical will imbue ***TimeSplitters 2*** with a more involving story that will be broken down into real-time cutscenes and multiple objective-based episodes.

The MapMaker will return, and online play is being fiddled with, but isn't definite just yet. Still, 16-player **I-Link** support looks to be making the roster. Nineteen new characters, a slew of never-before-seen weapons, and improvements in every possible aspect round out the docket.

ONE SEEKER, TWO BEATERS, THREE POTTER GAMES

Graduate from Hogwart's school of hard knocks in three Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone vids coming to the **PC** (top picture), **PlayStation** (middle), and **Game Boy Advance** (bottom) this fall. This School of Witchcraft and Wizardry can only be passed if you succeed in mastering your spells, the games' platforms, and various minigames – including a magical chase for the Remembrall through the Forbidden Forest. Play Quidditch, meet over 20 characters from the book, and swing through Gringotts in a speeding railcar. Any fan of R.K. Rowling's world cannot afford to miss these titles!

THE GOOD, THE BAD, THE UGLY

GOOD – **3DO** chairman **Trip Hawkins** says that the publisher will not be bringing his games to the **Xbox**, preferring to focus on the **PlayStation 2** instead. It looks like Bill may have found a way to stop the forward advance of the ***Army Men*** forces. Hip, Hip, Hooray! Hip, Hip, Hooray!

BAD – A 12 year-old boy fell from the 18th floor of his apartment building after an argument with his father over a **Game Boy** cart he had bought. The kid had just admitted to spending half his monthly food allowance on an unnamed game.

UGLY – In an interview with UK newspaper *Financial Times*, **Sony** pres. **Ken Kutaragi** claimed, "**Microsoft** was finished before it even got started. They have no games." He went on to say, "The next game platform belongs to **Sony** and **Nintendo**."

UGLY – Using the piss campers that were set up by **Sony** at its Friday night **E3** bash. Rickety, cramped, and with people using the sinks as toilets, it was not quite the high life you'd expect from a night out mingling with L.A.'s beautiful people.

LOOSE TALK

Wherever there's a juicy rumor in the industry, Game Informer experts are on it like a fly on stink. If loose lips are spraying hot gossip, we're sucking up the secret saliva and drooling it all over this section. Loose Talk exposes inside rumors for all to see. These leads may turn out to be 100% untrue, but then again, they could also be dead honest, and you've just learned about them months before anyone else!

GI was happy to hear talk from **Disney** that a **Tron** game is currently in the works. It is unknown if the title will be based on the first movie, the reported sequel to the film (***Tron 2.0***), or the arcade cabinet.

Hate the **Xbox** controller already? *Loose Talk* is hearing that if the post-**E3** fallout is bad enough, **Microsoft** may rush to change the controller before launch.

Don't be surprised if a **PlayStation 2** price-drop occurs before November 5 rolls around. It isn't likely to sit around while **GameCube** flies off shelves for a $100 less.

Strategy/RPG fans will be licking their lips when they hear rumors that **Atlus** is bringing the cult series ***Ogre Battle*** to the ***PlayStation 2***.

Shinji Mikami's robot-sim from **Capcom**, ***BRAIN BOX*** (on **Xbox**), may be an entirely new phenom. If the ***Devil May Cry*** creator gets his way, there may be a multi-paneled control cockpit peripheral for the title.

Simpsons fans will get another stab at their favorite show when **Fox Interactive** begins work on a *Simpsons* action title for undisclosed consoles this year.

Given **Capcom's** habit of bringing famous franchises to multiple platforms, *GI* believes that the now **Xbox**-exclusive ***Dino Crisis 3*** title will not stay so for long.

GI was on hand to see **Universal's GBA** version of ***Crash Bandicoot***. Although early, Mode 7 scaling will allow for cool boards like the Indiana Jones-esque rolling bolder stage as seen in the original game. No story or release date are known yet, however.

VIDEO GAME TRIVIA

Game Informer's supercomputer predicts that in the next ten years, you'll either be fired or laid off from your job. Rather than leaf through the classifieds or panic early on, why not answer all ten questions in our 100% accurate Future Job Placement Recommendation (a.k.a Video Game Trivia) to see where you'll need to apply next?

Question 1: Created by Jaleco, what was the Mega Man-inspired NES title featuring a Native American as the main character?

A. Teepee's Revenge
B. Whomp 'Em
C. Hatchet Harry
D. Bingo: The Adventures of the Corn Huskers

Question 2: Which hip-hop superstar was not featured in Motown Games' Super Nintendo basketball game, RapJam: Volume 1?

A. Warren G
B. Coolio
C. Queen Latifah
D. Kool Moe Dee

Question 3: In the famed NES game, Golgo 13, FIXER agent, Duke Togo, did his best James Bond impersonation as he slugged it out with a sinister terrorist organization. Which of these explosive scenarios actually took place?

A. While infiltrating a subterranean stronghold, a gigantic sewer alligator eats his car, leaving nothing but the bumper.
B. In pursuit of an ancient artifact, Duke is ransacked by a ninja assassin who slices off our hero's pinkie finger.
C. As a reward for saving a hapless and beautiful vixen, the slightly unattractive Duke puts on the charm and shares an intimate moment in a moonlit room.
D. Duke changes the trajectory of a nuclear warhead by jumping on it as it launches.

Question 4: Which of these titles was not a part of the scant Jaguar CD library?

A. Primal Rage
B. Out of This World
C. Blue Lightning
D. Dragon's Lair

Question 5: Considered the John Williams of video games, the eccentric Tommy Tallarico started small. After quitting his cushy job at Guitar Center, he composed his first soundtrack. What was it?

A. Aladdin for Super Nintendo
B. Prince of Persia for Game Boy
C. Spot Goes to Hollywood for Genesis
D. Surf Ninjas for Game Gear

Question 6: What was the name of the two-headed, goat-faced boss in Rareware's arcade game, Killer Instinct?

A. Eyedol
B. Gargos
C. Hornac
D. Beliahl

Question 7: In the Game Boy game, Skate or Die: Bad 'N Rad, the nefarious fool, ElRad the Evil One, attempted to capture the minds of boarders in hopes of dominating the skateboarding world. In what town did this sinister plot unfold?

A. Rad City
B. Aerial Tucks
C. Vileville
D. Grindopolis

Question 8: What bouncer from King of Fighters defied the gender role by cross-dressing?

A. Rugal Bernstein
B. Mature
C. Mean Tina
D. King

Question 9: The brilliant minds at Atari spent countless years constructing the 7800. What was the name of the 7800's graphical chip?

A. The Gopher
B. The Pac-lum
C. Marie
D. The Killer Bee

Question 10: Which ECW personality made his/her first video game appearance in Anarchy Rulz?

A. Paul Heyman
B. C.W. Anderson
C. Jazz
D. Simon Diamond

0 Space Custodian

1-3 Space Dog Catcher

4-6 Space Kelp Farmer

7-9 Space Civil War Reenactor

10 Space Video Game Journalist

Video Game Trivia Answers: 1. B 2. D 3. C 4. B 5. B 6. A 7. C 8. D 9. C 10. A

LEGENDS OF THE FALL

Acclaim is getting back in the ring, and bringing some old school stars with it. ***Legends of Wrestling's*** November entrance on **PlayStation 2** (shown) and **GameCube** will be flanked by the likes of Bobby "The Brain" Heenan, Jerry "The King" Lawler , Jimmy "Superfly" Snuka, and a host of others (30 in all). Hopefully Acclaim's old ***ECW*** engine has been retired in order to do justice to all the features *Legends* is bringing. Ladder, Barbed-Wire, and Eight-Man Elimination Bouts will be a part of more than a dozen match types. Don't worry, we'll get resident grappler Justin on this one as soon as it comes in.

BREAK DOWN

30% of GI editors' time at E3 was spent almost getting into fights

100% of Andy's sleep time is spent snoring loudly

21% of the time Kato puts his underwear on backwards in the morning

5% of the contest entries we receive don't actually have addresses

82% of children are pleasantly amused by Jay's new mohawk

DATA FILE

➤ With **WCW** bowing to **WWF**, **EA** has begun to make a wrestling title with unlicensed talent for the **PS2**. The developer is said to be a Japanese outfit who has worked with **THQ** in the past. We'd be happy as a pig in slop if **Asmik/Ace** was back at the helm of another great title.

➤ **Ubi Soft** has outbid its competitors to snag the rights to make ***Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*** games over several consoles for spring 2002. An in-house development studio is being considered for the action project.

➤ **Sega's Game Gear** is returning thanks to **Majesco**. **Toys R' Us** will stock the 8-bit, backlit handheld for the nice price of $30, with ten games including ***Pac-Man***, ***Sonic Spinball***, and ***Super BattleTank*** going for only $15.

➤ Wanting to move out of its **Sony** cocoon, **Square** has announced that it is in negotiations with **Microsoft** to appear on the **Xbox**. With talks occurring for the last two years, President **Hisashi Suzuki** says this move is a part of a larger strategy to also cozy up to **Nintendo**.

➤ A **GBC** ***Resident Evil*** has reappeared on the radar. **Virgin Interactive UK** has picked up the ***S.T.A.R.S.*** property for release over there, although no US version is known. Entitled ***Resident Evil Gaiden***, the title is said to be an all-new adventure featuring **Barry Burton** on a wild zombie boat ride.

➤ **Vivendi Universal** has snagged the rights to **J.R.R. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*** books. This is notable because **New Line Cinema**, makers of the upcoming film, are negotiating separately to see who will make vids based on the movie. Let's hope that all this commotion produces at least one worthy game.

➤ **Namco's E3** booth proved to be a double-headed tease. Not only was a trailer being dangled in our face of ***Tekken 4*** (it's currently being arcade tested in Japan), but ***Soul Calibur 2*** was also on hand to get our juices going something fierce. Stay tuned for more details.

➤ **TV Anime** license ***Robotech*** has been taken over by **TDK** from **Mattel**. The former has hired on **Vicious Cycle Software** to design an appropriate 3D engine for the action. The first offerings will be out Q1 2002 and will be based on the ***Macross*** era of the show.

➤ Which is higher: a **UFC** fighter's pain tolerance or your desire to see the series continue on the **PS2**? **Crave** says "uncle" in early 2002 and gives you PS2 exclusive ***UFC: Throwdown***. Twenty five combatants, create-a-fighter, and much more will soon be coming your way.

Name That Game Answer:

Out of This World

PHANTASY STAR CUBED

With the **Dreamcast's** light fading, it has fallen upon ***Nintendo's GameCube*** to carry the torch for fans of **Yuji Naka's *Phantasy Star Online***. **PSO *Version 2*** is slated for a debut this fall, and despite the mundane title, it will not only deliver more features than the first, but GameCubers will get to exclusively enjoy a four-player split-screen mode. Appearing for the first time is a deathmatch-esque Battle mode, a lobby soccer game, new areas, day/night changes, and the Ultimate Difficulty setting. Holy Shnikes!!!

SEGA DREAM TEAM AT E3

After last year's **E3**, many thought that **Sega's** booth had taken the show with its games and online kiosks. This year, however, Sega didn't even allow the public access to its area. Instead, a more unique opportunity presented itself. Gathered together in one legendary ensemble (as presented by new president **Hideki Sato**) were the brains behind Sega's various internal development studios. Taking a look at so many amazing gaming figures on that stage, it took us less than a second to realize all the great games that would flourish from the companies' new strategy.

Consider this: If **Microsoft** had command of all 11 developers below, just how momentous would its E3 have been? Wouldn't **Sony** be undisputed king by now with them on its side? While no one gets to lay claim to all of this tremendous talent, all three console manufacturers must be giddy that they now have Sega in their camp. To let each team's individual skills come to light, Sega has removed the shadow of the **AM** umbrella (where a team like **Hitmaker** was known as **AM3**) and let them pursue which system best suits their talents. While Sega fanboys might cringe at seeing the Sonic Team logo pop up on GBA's screen for Sonic the Hedgehog Advance, for example, we think this new direction will make for some pretty creative output; something that's benefits everyone – developers included.

Seeing the likes of **Smilebit's *Jet Grind Radio Future*** on the **Xbox** or **Yu Suzuki's *Virtua Fighter 4*** on **PS2**, it's going to be exciting to see these developers let their visions take them to where they need to go, irrespective of platform. Some might say that Sega's lack of a public booth at E3 meant a quiet funeral for the Dreamcast and its creator. Instead we saw a whole new party revving up.

Here's a list of the Sega developers at the momentous E3 get-together, and examples of where they've been and where they are going.

BACK ROW (L TO R):

TETSUYA MIZUGUCHI – United Game Artists
Space Channel 5 (DC), K-Project (Xbox), New SC 5

GREG THOMAS – Visual Concepts
NFL/NBA 2K (DC), NFL/NBA 2K2, Floigan Brothers (DC), Ooga Booga (DC)

HISAO OGUCHI – Hitmaker
Crazy Taxi (DC), Virtua Tennis (DC), Crazy Taxi Next (Xbox), Virtua Tennis 2K2, Confidential Mission (DC)

TOSHIHIRO NAGOSHI – Amusement Vision
Planet Harriers, Daytona USA (DC), Monkey Ball (GC), Virtua Striker 3 (GC)

RIKIYA NAKAGAWA – WOW Entertainment
Vampire Night, Alien Front Online (DC)

KENJI SASAKI – Sega Rosso
Star Wars Racer Arcade, Sega Rall (DC), Unknown

YUKIFUMI MAKINO – Wave Master
Wave Master provides music/sound for many Sega titles

FRONT ROW L TO R:

TAKAYUKI KAWAGOE – Smilebit
Jet Grind Radio (DC), Jet Grind Radio Future (Xbox), Gun Valkyrie (Xbox)

YU SUZUKI – AM2
Virtua Fighter, Shenmue (DC), VF 4 (PS2), Shenmue 2 (DC), Propeller Arena Online (DC)

HIDEKI SATO – President of Sega of Japan

NORIYUKI OHBA – Overworks
Skies of Arcadia (DC), Sakura (PS2)

YUJI NAKA – Sonic Team
Sonic the Hedgehog, Phantasy Star Online (DC), PSO Ver. 2 (DC/GC), Chu Chu Rocket (GBA), Sonic Adventure 2 (DC)

THE NINTENDO

DIFFERENCE

THE POWER WITHIN

The GameCube's graphics processor, the "Flipper" chip, is designed by ATI. This powerful processor includes a 2D and 3D graphics engine, system I/O functions, a DSP for audio processing, an on-chip bandwidth frame buffer, and optical disk, flash card, modem, joystick, memory, and video interfaces.

In an attempt to avoid piracy, Nintendo enlisted the help of Matsushita to develop a unique proprietary disc drive and optical disc. This DVD-based system is smaller in size than that of a CD or DVD.

IBM designed and manufactured the 485MHz "Gekko" microprocessor. This little device is actually an extension of the IBM PowerPC architecture, utilizing 0.18 micron copper chip technology.

The GameCube's memory function is created by MoSys. The embedded 1T-SRAM makes the Flipper chip and Gekko CPU work together. The ATI-designed graphics chip, another of the unit's memory components, is built by NEC.

A FIRST PARTY SOLUTION

"If you strike me down, I shall become more powerful than you can possibly imagine." A timeless quote, but one that speaks volumes – pinpointing Nintendo's current position within the video game industry. Striking while the market was hot, Sony ushered in the future of gaming through the release of PlayStation 2. Nintendo's tired old console, despite a surge of quality software, couldn't compete, and as it stands now, the N64 appears to be deceased.

Sony may have won this battle, but Nintendo is determined to fight back with a vengeance, fend off the Microsoft sneak attack, and reclaim its crown as king of gaming. On November 5, a war to end all wars will begin, and while Sony has the advantage of building up an installed base, Nintendo's unit will hit retailers at an incredibly low price point of $199. This is exactly $100 less than PlayStation 2 and Xbox, but as we all know, the battle isn't won through hardware, but rather the quality of software. Nintendo has always been heralded for its impressive first-party support, and the initial GameCube offering (as you'll soon see) is representative of this. Almost every one of Nintendo's popular characters will be present and accounted for come launch.

The future also looks very bright as some of the biggest third-party software developers have signed on to create games for this powerful new machine. Those who haven't, like Square Soft, are currently in negotiations and may ink a deal before the end of the year. When you combine phenomenal first- and third-party support with a retail price that's 10,000 pennies less than the competition, Nintendo is poised to take this industry by storm. Perhaps a year or two from now, Nintendo will look down at the forces it has conquered and victoriously voice, "The circle is now complete. When I left you, I was but the learner, now I am the master."

Still skeptical as to how Nintendo will win over the hearts of gamers? Simply turn the page and feast your eyes on the first-party games Nintendo has in store for this powerful little box. Mario, Samus, Luigi, oh my!

PROFITABLE SPECULATION

J.P. Morgan speculates that the initial cost of GameCube will hit Nintendo with a loss of $82 per unit. However, by 2002's fiscal year end, if Nintendo does in fact make an impact, the cost per unit should lower to around $137. Countering the early hit, the cheap manufacturing costs of the optical disc software should give Nintendo a gross profit of over 90% per game.

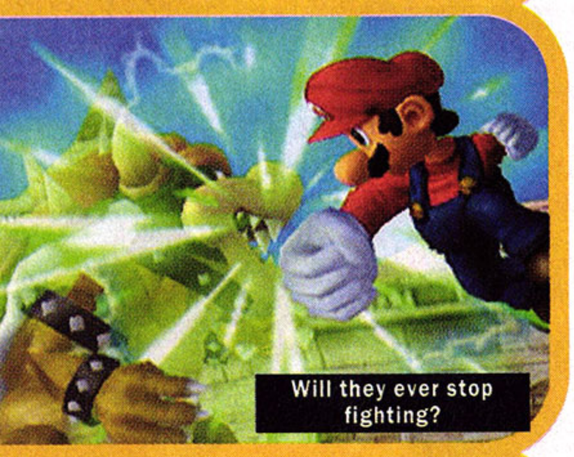
IN CONTROL

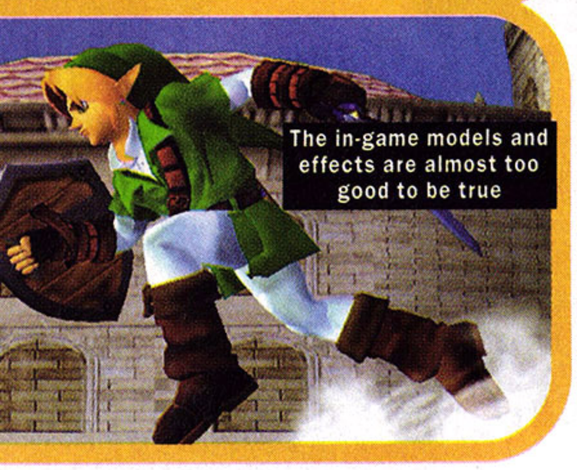
Certainly, this controller looks awkward, but once you wrap your hands around it, you'll see that it fits comfortably, much like the Dual Shock. The analog stick is nice and tight, and the button layout on the face makes it easy to operate – although we really don't understand why the A button had to be twice the size as everything else. Much like the N64's C-Buttons, the C-Stick will primarily be used for secondary moves and camera placement. The digital pad is incredibly small, yet thus far, hardly any of the games have incorporated any functionality to it. The shoulder buttons are conveniently placed, and the Z button, which is now mounted above the R button, is designed for quick taps, thus its small size. Thankfully, Nintendo has built in the rumble function, and the memory card slot is now assembled on the unit, rather than the controller.

SUPER SMASH BROS. MELEE

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER FIGHTING ■ **PUBLISHER** NINTENDO ■ **DEVELOPER** HAL/NINTENDO ■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 5

He may be cute, yet we wouldn't think twice about knocking him silly


Will they ever stop fighting?


The in-game models and effects are almost too good to be true

Busting at the seams with star power, the first title presented at Nintendo's E3 press conference was Super Smash Bros. Melee – the long awaited sequel to the 1999 Nintendo 64 blockbuster. As we so eagerly anticipated, we were absolutely blown away by the number of polys and blazing effects that shot across the screen. What we quickly noticed, however, was that we were watching a DVD-quality FMV rather than actual gameplay. We've never really associated Nintendo with CG cutscenes before, and looking back, we wish the N64 had the capacity to deliver scenes like these. In this sensory overload of a sequence, almost every famed Nintendo character made his or her presence known with remarkable texturing and incredibly smooth movements lighting their every step.

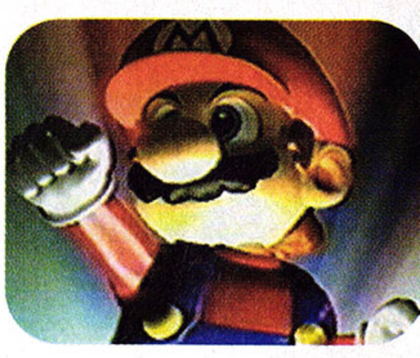
Amazingly, the visual onslaught continued when actual gameplay commenced. We expected to see a drastic change here, thinking Nintendo would move this series to the third dimension, but thankfully, Melee stays true to its 2D heritage. While we'd like to say that the gameplay would make you convulse, the design is very similar to that of the original 64-bit release. On the graphics end, however, we were shocked to see that the in-game character models were identical to those within the FMV. Just to give you an idea of the detailing you can look forward to, one can actually see the stitching on Mario's pants, reflections on Bowser's shell, and thousands of individual hairs on Fox McCloud.

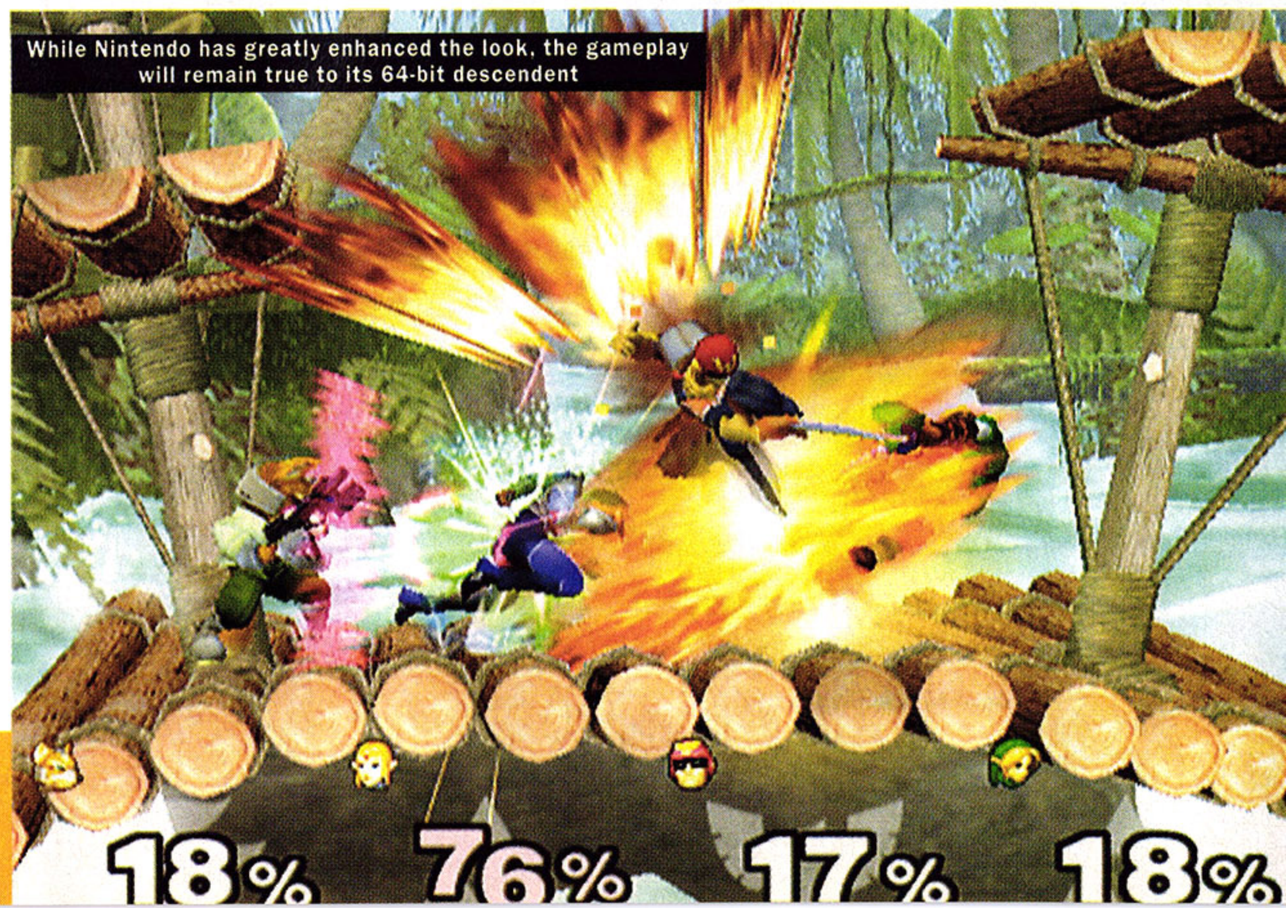
While it was nearly impossible to tear our eyes away from the combatants, our focus quickly changed to the backdrops. Holding true to Hal's Laboratories conceptual basis, each stage is themed after a specific character in the game. Within Captain Falcon's stage, F-Zero cars zoom by under the multi-tiered battlefield, appearing as though an actual race is underway. Cameo appearances also take place from time to time. When war erupts within Hyrule Castle, the map man Tingle floats by and merrily waves to the players.

When it comes to combat, the experience is faster and much more explosive. Depth has been added to each character, mainly through the broadening of exclusive special moves. Many of these moves reflect those from previous games, however, when the going gets tough, you may need a helping hand. Some of these moves actually summon additional characters to the fray. For example, Pikachu summons a swarm of Unown to quickly wipe the theater of war clean. Multiplayer is definitely the main focus, but this time, Nintendo is expanding on the single-player mode – an area where tons of additional characters, arenas, and secrets are hidden.

All of the characters are decked out with new special moves

Mario does his best Matrix impersonation as Kirby and Pikachu fly by




While Nintendo has greatly enhanced the look, the gameplay will remain true to its 64-bit descendent

FROZEN IN TIME

Hey! Who are those cute little guys wearing parkas? Most people would call them Eskimos, but we know better! After paging through our archived Nintendo chronicles, we learned that these smiley-faced lads are actually from the 1985 arcade and NES game, Ice Climber.

Who ya gonna call? Luigi!

Learn tricks of the ghoul trade from a poltergeist expert

When Luigi gets spooked, he drops to all fours and scampers across the floor

LUIGI'S MANSION

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** NINTENDO ■ **DEVELOPER** NINTENDO ■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 5

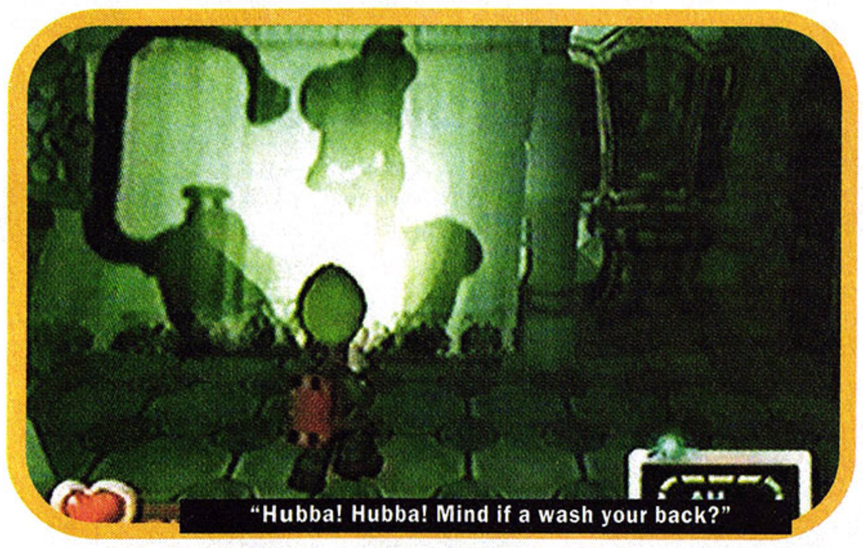
THE NINTENDO DIFFERENCE

Trapped behind the expansive shadow cast by his big brother, Luigi has played the role of loyal sidekick for far too long. While Nintendo plans to unveil a new Mario game later in the year – possibly at Spaceworld – the cowardly Luigi is finally the center of attention.

A perfect fit for platforming, Luigi's debut as the lead man is actually a great departure from the formula that put the Mario brothers on the map. Certainly, the campy humor we've come to expect is alive and well, but darker and a tad spookier than you'd anticipate. Adding justification to the name of the game, the premise is centered on Luigi inheriting a luxurious mansion. All seems well until Mario mysteriously disappears within the dimly lit halls of this estate. As Luigi sets out to locate his companion, he quickly discovers that his lovely abode is in fact haunted and crawling with supernatural activity. With a flashlight in hand, and a Ghostbusters-esque Proton Pack strapped securely to his back, Luigi's lot in life quickly becomes that of a ghoul exterminator.

The scope of gameplay is basically broken down into two aspects: hunting down ghosts and then vanquishing them. As you explore the highly-detailed rooms of the mansion, you'll need to point your flashlight at just about everything. In the dark, a rocking chair may look completely ordinary, but once the light hits it, you'll see that a ghost is quietly lounging on the wooden seat. Since ghosts thrive on shock value, you'll need to keep a close eye on your back. You never truly know when a spook will sneak up on you and scare poor Luigi to death. Much like Sony's Ape Escape, Luigi's movements are controlled with the analog stick, and the angle of the flashlight is set on the C-stick. When a specter is illuminated, stopping it dead in its tracks, simply pull out your vacuum tube, aim, and then suck it up. This action is a blatant Ghostbusters rip-off, but it's absolutely hilarious and a marvelous gameplay element.

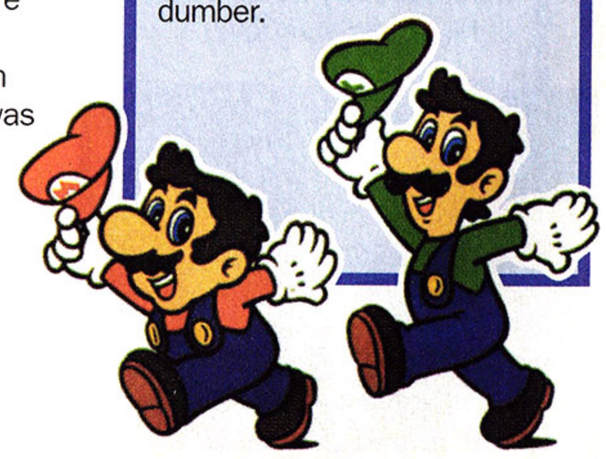
Even though it is a far cry from what you'd expect, the gameplay can best be described as intriguing, and the environment detailing, simply breathtaking. Nintendo has incorporated a great deal of character interaction within each room. In the bathroom, it appears as though there's a silhouette of a gorgeous woman bathing behind the shower curtain. When you use your vacuum to pull the curtain away, an action accompanied by fascinating rippling and lighting effects, you'll be disappointed to see that there really isn't a naked lady in your tub. It was a ghost! Eeeek!



"Hubba! Hubba! Mind if a wash your back?"

GROWING PAINS

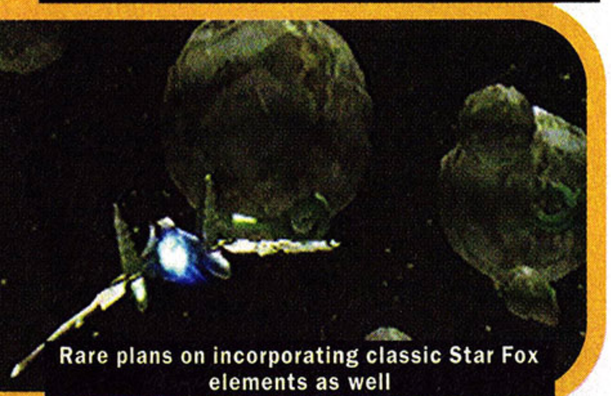
Since Mario made his video game debut in Donkey Kong, he'd already established a large fan base, which in turn knocked Luigi out of the spotlight when Mario Bros. hit arcades. At first, it appeared as though the brothers were in fact identical twins. Through the years, however, Mario has grown wider and wiser, while Luigi has grown taller and dumber.



STAR FOX ADVENTURES: DINOSAUR PLANET

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/ADVENTURE/SHOOTER
■ **PUBLISHER** NINTENDO ■ **DEVELOPER** RARE LTD.
■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER

The troublesome Prince Tricky is Fox's sidekick



Rare plans on incorporating classic Star Fox elements as well

A good majority of play deals with exploration and discovery

64-BIT TIES

Toward the end of the Nintendo 64's life span, and after investing over a year of development time into Dinosaur Planet, Rareware canceled the project. Why? After viewing the game, Nintendo's think tank, Shigeru Miyamoto, met with Rareware and delivered a proposition that, amongst other things, mainly focused on Star Fox and GameCube. Rare obviously thought highly of Miyamoto's advice.

Hell bent on conquering the universe, the corrupt General Scales has dispatched his troops to seize control of the savage paradise of Dinosaur Planet. Forming a resistance, Fox McCloud and his trusty wingmen, Slippy and Peppy, rush to the scene and clash with Scales and his forces.

Upon touchdown on this dangerous world, an infant dinosaur confronts Fox and looks up to him as a father figure. Seeing that the child has great knowledge of the land, Fox takes it under his wing. Like most children, however, this little dino has a knack for getting into trouble. It'll be up to you to nurture the little guy and keep him out of harm's way. As the adventure unfolds, Fox soon learns that his little buddy is actually royalty, bearing the name Prince Tricky. Oddly, this dino has the ability to spit fire. He also has a slight attitude problem. Maybe Fox should have left the tyke behind?

Expanding greatly on the Star Fox universe, the majority of gameplay takes place on foot. Even out of the cockpit, Fox proves to be a lethal weapon capable of combating the most hostile of adversaries. Judging by the numerous similarities and sheer scope of the design, Star Fox Adventures appears to be Rare's answer to Zelda. Item management and combat hold all of the Zelda qualities. Exploring the expansive worlds and locating specific tools to unlock new routes also seems to be an ode to Link's legendary journeys.

Showcasing environments much like those in the Jurassic Park movies, neutral NPC dinosaurs roam the landscapes and interact with one another. Taking a closer look at these thunder lizards, you can see defined musculature and realistic skin that crinkles and forms to the large bodies.

Tapping into the mysteries of the land, Fox will learn how to command magic. Of course, when the going gets tough, he can toss his wand aside and hop into his trusty Arwing. Don't worry, though, Prince Tricky is stowed safely in the Arwing's cargo hold. Whether the action unfolds along the planet's terrain or in space, many of the bosses and stages hold true to the original Star Fox formula, and the Arwing should be as agile as ever. Never without support, Fox will receive mission updates from Peppy, and supplies, when needed, from Rob the Robot. As for Falco, Rare says he's pursuing a solo career. Hmmm...

In situations like these, the best strategy is to retreat

From the letterbox screen to Fox's evasive maneuvers, the battles unfold just like they do in Zelda

What? Did you seriously expect General Scales' army to be cute and cuddly?

When the sun sets, the Pikmin feeding frenzy begins

The cute little guy in the astronaut helmet leads the Pikmin troops

PIKMIN

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/STRATEGY
■ **PUBLISHER** NINTENDO ■ **DEVELOPER** NINTENDO
■ **RELEASE** DECEMBER

In what quickly became the best press conference of E3, the legendary Shigeru Miyamoto unveiled his plans and his excitement surrounding the elusive GameCube. During this blockbuster event, numerous games were debuted to raucous applause. It was one little game – Pikmin – that seemed to capture the imaginations of the many fans crowding the meeting hall. Some were concerned that Miyamoto had perhaps begun smoking certain substances from his garden for the inspiration which led to Pikmin's inception.

Whatever the case may be, it's certain that Pikmin will win the hearts of many the world over.

You'll find yourself taking on the role of a spaceman who crashes onto an unfamiliar planet after a comet collides with his ship. You must collect your ship's lost parts, which have been scattered around the planet.

Each Pikmin color represents a different colony

While attempting to do this, you'll depend on your silver spacesuit to protect you from the poisonous atmosphere on this strange new world.

Luckily, you won't have to fend for yourself on foreign soil. All manner of help is readily available in the form of Pikmin sprouts. These small, indigenous plant-like creatures may not look like much, but they've got it where it counts.

You'll be able to control Pikmin sprouts individually, in groups, or in gatherings of larger than 100 – all onscreen at one time. With a little practice, you'll be able to rear Pikmin sprouts of different colors, then train them and watch them grow into three different forms – leaves, buds, and flowers. You'll find your new little friends to be most helpful when it comes to defending their nests, defeating enemies, and building roads and bridges. Also present in the Pikmin's world are native beasts who will impede your progress. It's your job to find the best way to safely utilize your Pikmin to thwart these obstacles, and rebuild your broken ship.

With real-world imagery and dynamic backgrounds, this title springs to life on your screen. Scenery changes as the sun moves across the sky, plants waver as objects brush past them, and dust clouds rise from the pitter-patter of little feet. You'll find yourself immersed in lush landscapes that are home to hundreds of creatures and objects – all of them moving and reacting in different and unique ways.

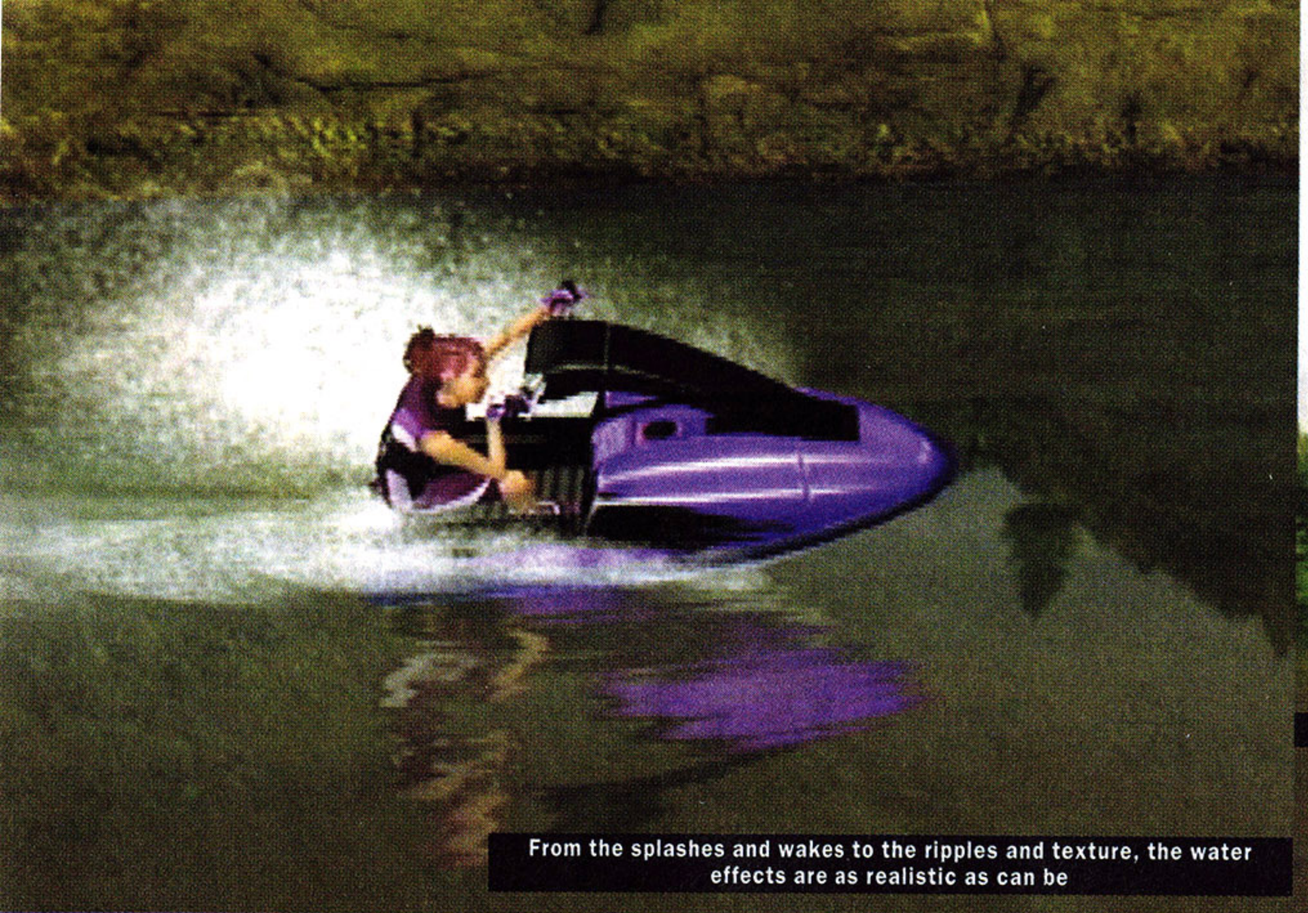
We saw a lot of games at E3, but this was one of the few that played as well as it showed at the press conference. Sure, the big lines were all gathered around the more well-known titles, but after playing a few minutes of Pikmin, it quickly became an underground favorite of many on the GI staff. The launch of GameCube is looking better and better, and with games like Pikmin debuting in December, Nintendo is likely to give the Xbox a run for its money.

If you leave the Pikmin in the ground long enough, they'll evolve and sprout flowers on their heads

If their numbers are great enough, the Pikmin can overpower the bugs. Unfortunately, there will always be losses

THE GREEN THUMB

When Miyamoto unveiled his latest creation, Pikmin, he told the gaming press that he came up with concept while he was tending to his garden. Miyamoto gathered all of Pikmin's environment resources by snapping photos of his neighborhood. One can only wonder what inspirations he draws from the bathroom.

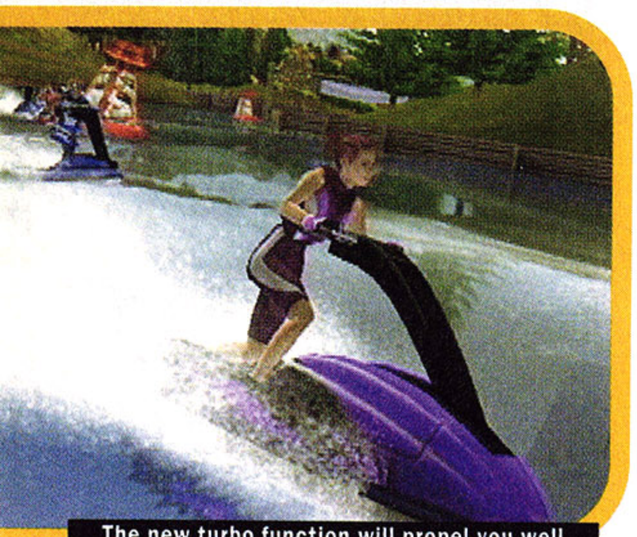


From the splashes and wakes to the ripples and texture, the water effects are as realistic as can be

Every object in the environment is reflected on the water

WAVE RACE: BLUE STORM

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER RACING ■ **PUBLISHER** NINTENDO ■ **DEVELOPER** NINTENDO SOFTWARE TECHNOLOGY (NST) ■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 5



The new turbo function will propel you well ahead of the competition

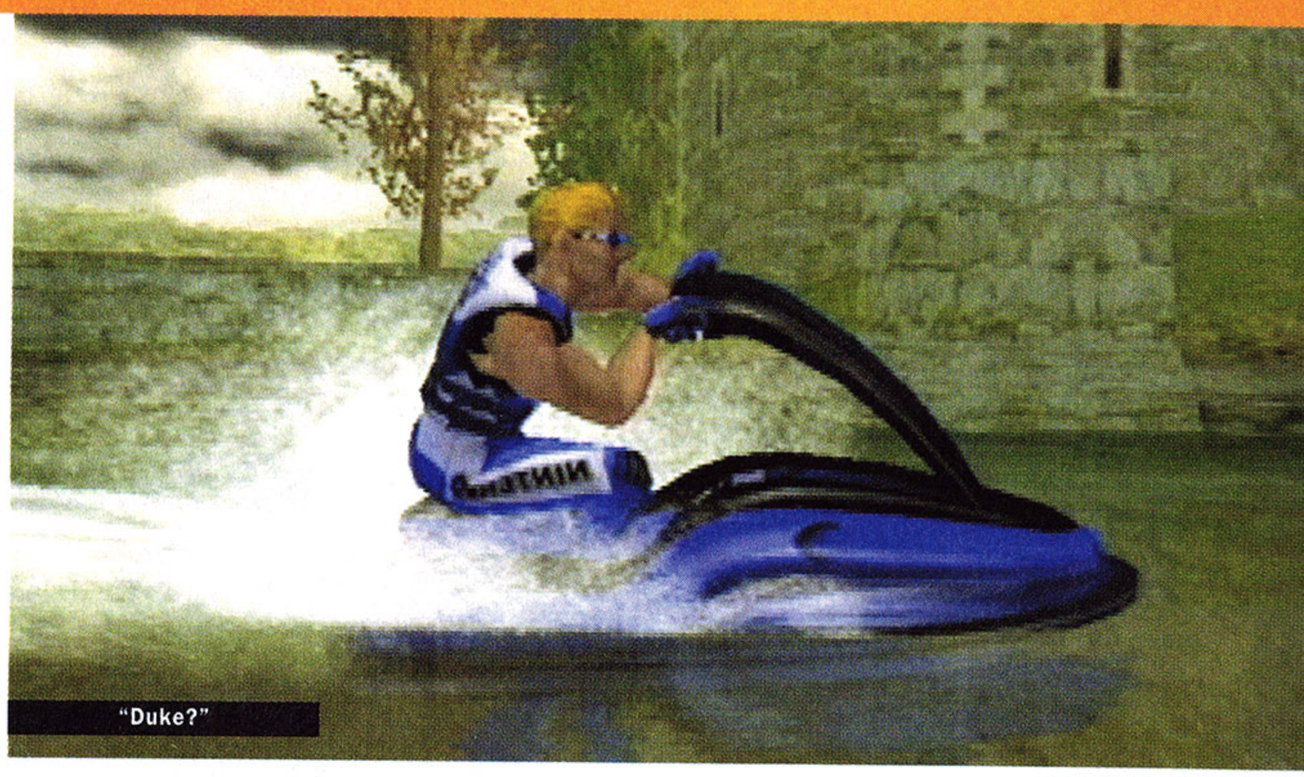
We always drool whenever we see amazing aquatic effects in video games. The first game to really make us want to plunge headfirst into the office water closet was Wave Race for the Nintendo 64. It truly captured the visual essence of H_2O, as well as the physics behind it. The game went on to become a top-selling cartridge, and its long-awaited sequel – Wave Race: Blue Storm on GameCube – is not too far off.

Blue Storm features water everywhere, but not a drop to drink. It's much more fun to race around in the stuff, anyway. Hop on your high-powered aquatic hooptie and race for the finish line. Weave in and out of the buoys to gather speed, and soak computer-controlled suckers or your beach bum buds. The environments are absolutely amazing, with scenery both rural and industrial, and conditions both calm and stormy. Of course, those who aren't too wet behind the ears may discover alternate paths and shortcuts in every one of the game's many levels.

The realism of the sea spray behind your craft may have you instinctively shielding your eyes. Raindrops won't fall on your head, but they will splatter on the screen. Almost everything you see above the surface will be reflected onto sea level. If you look closely, you can even see schools of fish beneath the surface. But don't get too caught up in the GameCube's stunning graphics or you'll be sent tumbling over your handlebars; water isn't quite as soft when you go skidding across it on your forehead.

Master the basics, and an interactive trick feature will give you plenty of ways to have fun in the sun. A well-timed handstand or bar-hop will add insult to injury for any rider lagging behind you, with electric eels stinging their bare legs and seaweed stuffed in every conceivable orifice. Adding an arcade quality to the title, developer Nintendo Software Technology (NST) has incorporated a turbo function, allowing you to freely skim across the water and launch to new heights. Ramping up the competitive edge, you'll be just one of seven riders in a race.

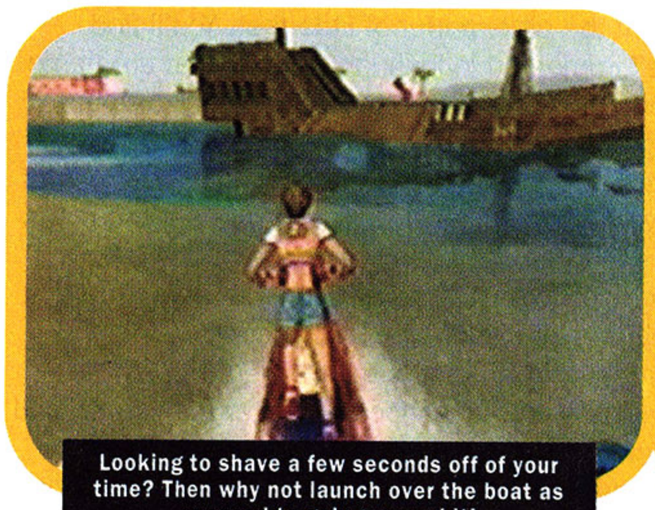
Wave Race will be a welcome launch title for GameCube, and the good times will roll once again.



"Duke?"

RACING ROOTS

While Wave Race looks to be a true sequel, an entirely different company in fact develops it. Before securing the Wave Race license, development house Nintendo Software Technology got its racing groove on through the creation of Ridge Racer 64.



Looking to shave a few seconds off of your time? Then why not launch over the boat as opposed to going around it!

Performing outrageous tricks is still a large portion of play

KAMEO: ELEMENTS OF POWER

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/ADVENTURE ■ **PUBLISHER** NINTENDO ■ **DEVELOPER** RARE LTD.
■ **RELEASE** 2002

This is the device Kameo uses to lure beasts her way

If you squint, you can see Kameo is actually inside the monster, replacing its skeleton

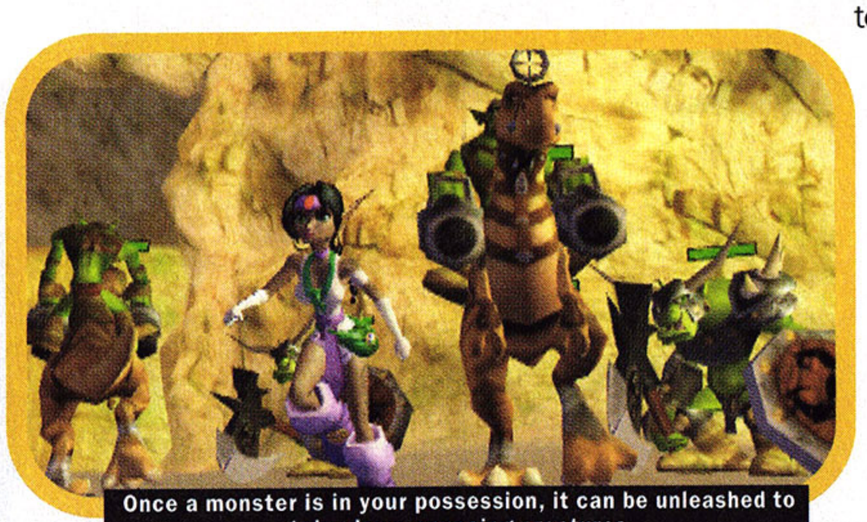
We were hoping against hope that the foul-mouthed squirrel Conker would be in attendance at E3 as Nintendo's spokesman, spewing lines like, "The GameCube is the best *!#%ing machine ever!" Of course, he's probably locked away in rehab, never to return. Oddly, rather than dipping into its pool of recognized franchises, Rare continues to expand upon its arsenal of hot properties and characters through the development of Kameo: Elements of Power.

Telling the tale of the young fairy princess named Kameo; players will embark on a mystical quest as they try to rescue the six Elemental Children from the Dark Troll King, Thorn. Unlike most games, however, Kameo really doesn't do much. She's mostly static, relying on creatures of the world to lend a hand. Through mental telepathy and a strange bubble device, Kameo can stop monsters in their tracks, then imprison them within a gooey bubble shell. If Kameo stays focused, a feat that is demanding of your reflexes and patience, the beast will shrink and enter her mind. While the majority of the game is delivered through a third-person perspective, it does zoom down to first-person for this technique – which might be brought to life visually with psychedelic colors and mind-altering effects.

Players control the monsters when Kameo enters their body

Over 60 different monsters can be stowed away to eventually be used for performing a number of actions. Through the click of a button, the beasts reemerge onto the landscape as loyal warriors, trouncing anything that stands in your way. The further away a summoned monster gets, the more the mental bond diminishes, and if it's not reestablished the beast will turn on you. Disturbing indeed, Kameo can also combine monsters' DNA with her own. While the monster looks the same on the outside, its internal makeover is altered greatly. If you look closely, you can see that its hide is partially transparent and Kameo is tucked away inside, forming the beast's skeletal system. Freaky!

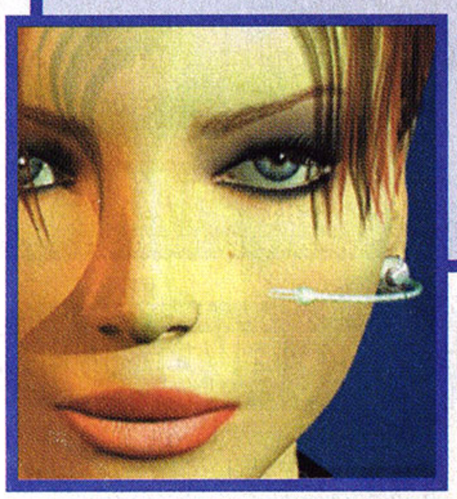
As each beast is varied in talents, the transformation process will be vital to your quest. Tucking inside of a lizard will allow you to scale up walls, and the bird will let you soar over the entire land. Kameo's telepathy is weak at first, but as the game unfolds, she'll become stronger and will be able to capture just about anything – no matter the size.



Once a monster is in your possession, it can be unleashed to take down opposing creatures

FEMME FUTURE

There's no place for men in video games! After Kameo shakes her booty in 2002, another of Rare's female leads is gearing up for a GameCube escapade of her own. In the forthcoming release, Perfect Dark Zero, expect to see Joanna Dark armed to the teeth and itching to eradicate all of the foul-smelling males that cross her path.



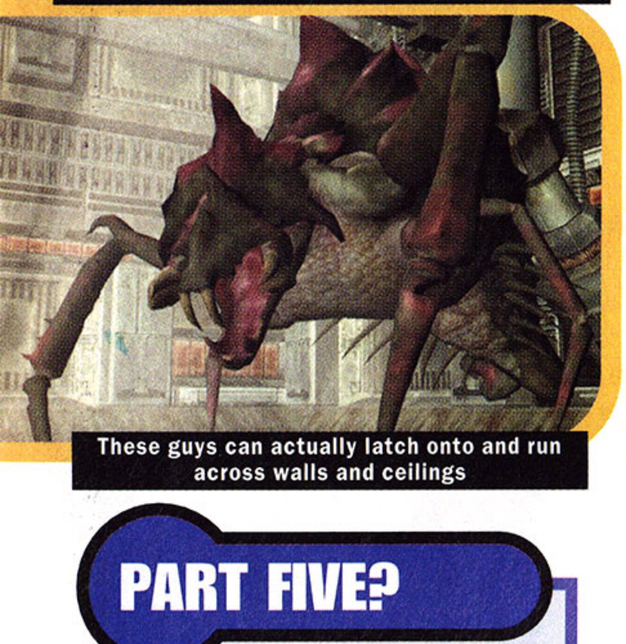
Over 60 monsters can be captured and commanded

Through vibrant colors, Kameo's mental telepathy can be used to coerce monsters and make them her allies

METROID PRIME

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/ADVENTURE ■ **PUBLISHER** NINTENDO ■ **DEVELOPER** RETRO STUDIOS ■ **RELEASE** 2002

We can already see how this game ends. The base begins to crumble and you have to hightail it back to your vessel before time expires



If only we could see this side of her more often

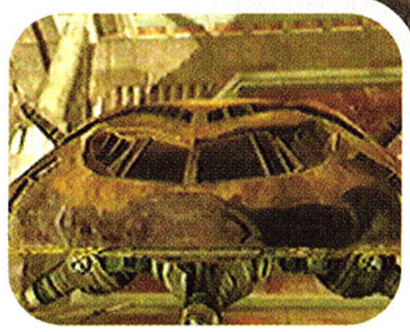
These guys can actually latch onto and run across walls and ceilings

PART FIVE?

While you'd like to think Metroid Prime is the next installment in the series, it's actually the fifth chapter. So where is IV? Before making its GameCube debut, Nintendo plans on releasing a new side-scrolling adventure for the Game Boy Advance, properly titled Metroid IV.

Tucked away in cryo-freeze for an entire generation of gaming, Nintendo has finally issued the order to reanimate Samus Aran. Like most of you, we've been dreaming about this day for nearly a decade now. Knowing a new Metroid game is on the way, we're actually more nervous than we are excited – almost more so than we were when we heard George Lucas was working on a Star Wars prequel. Historically, Nintendo always seems to come through with its games, and Metroid should be no exception. There's a catch, though. Instead of developing the game internally, Nintendo has handed this golden license to the upstart subsidiary, Retro Studios. While this development house is overflowing with talent, the fact remains that they haven't made a game together – and their first project is one of the biggest in the entire industry.

The rumor on the streets is that Miyamoto recently visited Retro Studios to check on how Metroid was progressing. Apparently, he was quite displeased with what he saw, and came to the conclusion that Retro should change the format of the game into a first-person shooter. What?! We love just about everything Miyamoto has been associated with, and we're sure there must be some logic to his decision, but to us, this action is almost sacrilegious. If this FPS is destined to tie in with the Metroid series, then how in the world will Samus flip off of walls and tuck and roll? Surely, these movements will do nothing more than disorientate the player. If you leave them out of the game, then the true sensation Metroid delivers will be stripped away. Don't get us wrong, we love first-person shooters as much as the next guy, but Metroid doesn't fit this bill. Why does every developer have to transform its classic franchises into 3D games?

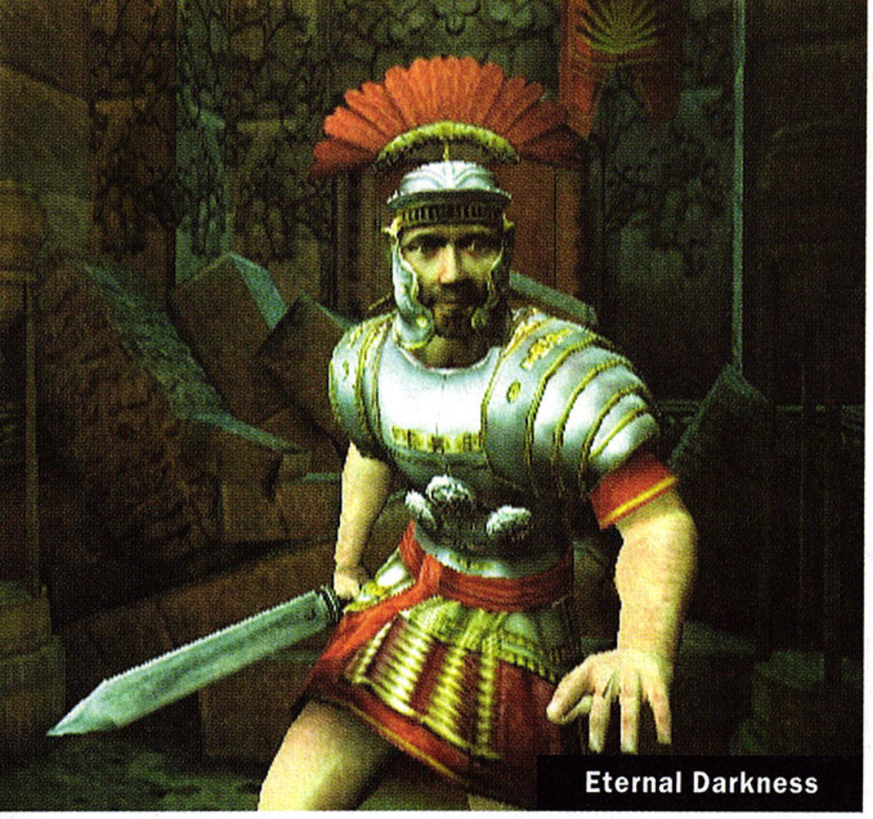


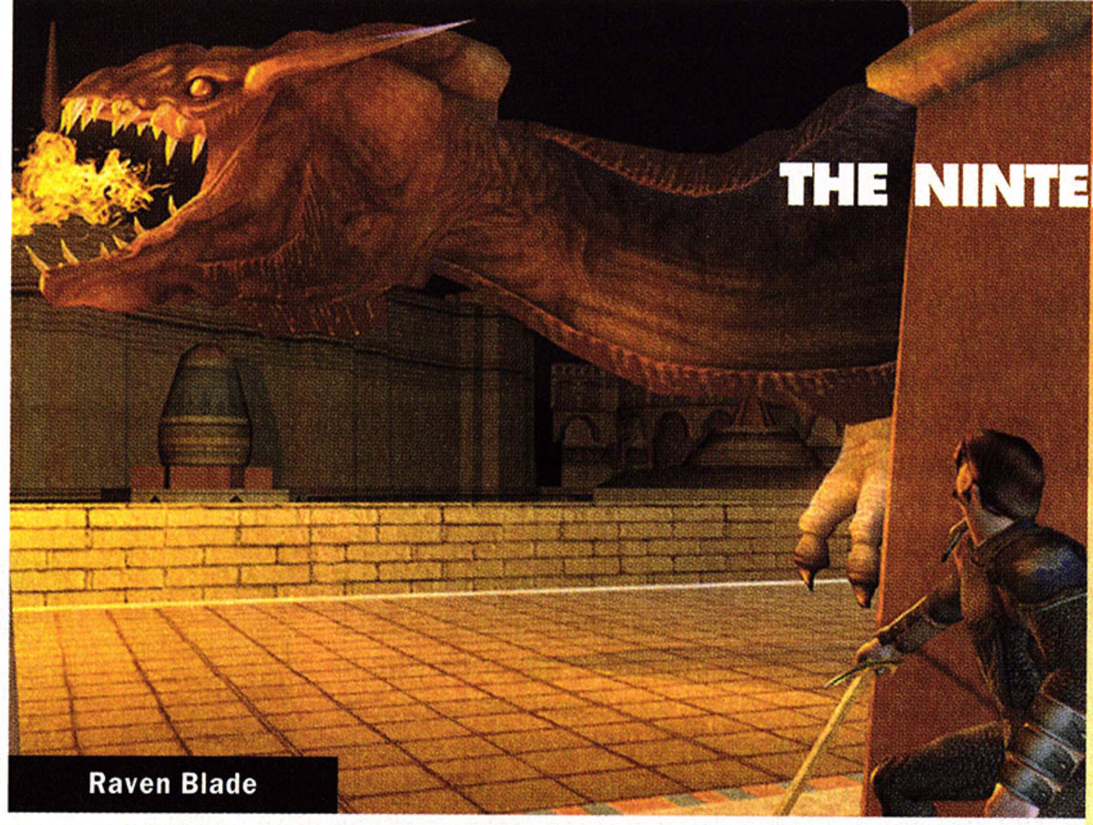
During a recent Nintendo interview, Miyamoto was asked about the progress of Metroid Prime. He said he was very happy with how things were looking. For the time being, we'll save our smiles until we actually see the game in action. Almost mimicking its movements from last year's Spaceworld show, the only signs of life Metroid Prime showed at E3 were reserved to that of a short video clip. Of course, the visuals were amazing, but it appeared as though all the footage was taken straight from full-motion video rather than gameplay.

While we're a tad bitter as to the decisions Nintendo has made up this point, we are actually excited beyond belief. Who knows, maybe Retro will come through and forever change the way we look at first-person shooters!

Surrounded by a swarm of blood-thirsty aliens, Samus readies her rocket launcher and takes evasive action

This may in fact be the first shot of actual in-game graphics. If every environment looks like this, then there may be reason to rejoice


Eternal Darkness

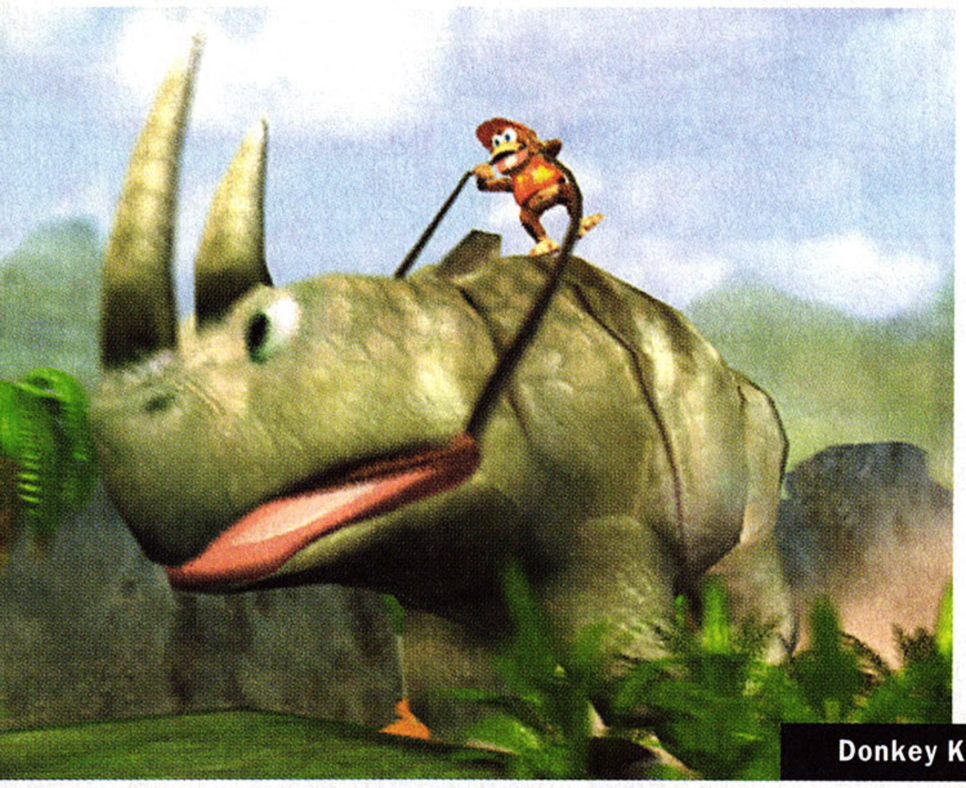

Raven Blade

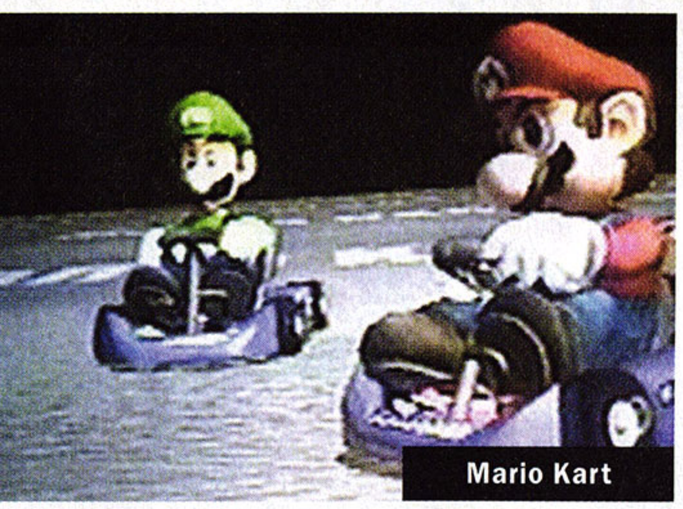
ON THE PLATTER

Here's a listing of games currently in development for GameCube.

FIRST-PARTY

Animal Forest
100 Marios
1080° Snowboarding 2
Disney's Mickey
Donkey Kong Racing
Doshin the Giant
Eternal Darkness
Kameo: Elements of Power
Legend of Zelda, The
Luigi's Mansion
Marionette
Mario Kart
Mario Party 4
Mario Sunshine
Metroid Prime
NBA Courtside 2002
Perfect Dark Zero
Pikmin
Raven Blade
Star Fox Adventures: Dinosaur Planet
Super Smash Bros. Melee
Too Human
Wave Race: Blue Storm


Donkey Kong Racing


Mario Kart

Disney's Mickey

Animal Forest

NBA Courtside 2002

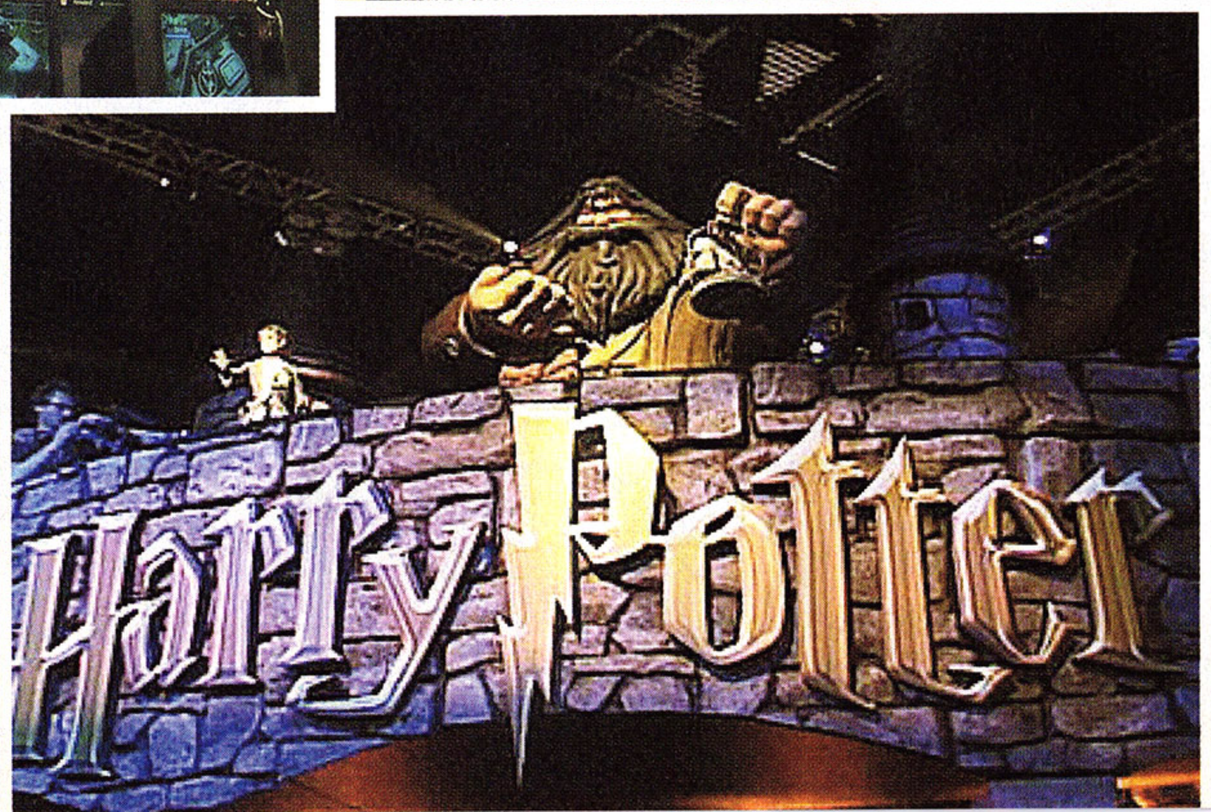
THIRD-PARTY

18 Wheeler: American Pro Trucker – Acclaim
All-Star Baseball 2002 – Acclaim
All-Star Baseball 2003 – Acclaim
Batman: Dark Tomorrow – Kemco
Crash Bandicoot: The Wrath of Cortex – Universal
Crazy Taxi – Acclaim
Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon – Ubi Soft
Dave Mirra Freestyle BMX 2 – Acclaim
Die Hard: Next Generation – Fox Interactive
Disney's Tarzan – Ubi Soft
Donald Duck – Ubi Soft
Duke Nukem Forever – Take-Two Interactive
Extreme G 3 – Acclaim
FIFA 2002 – EA Sports
Galleon – Interplay
Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone – Electronic Arts
Hot Wheels – THQ
Jackie Chan Adventures – Activision
Jeremy McGrath Supercross World – Acclaim
Jimmy Neutron Boy Genius – THQ
Jinx – Acclaim
Largo Winch – Ubi Soft
Legends of Wrestling – Acclaim
Madden NFL 2002 – EA Sports
Monkey Ball – Sega
NBA Street – EA BIG
NFL Blitz 2002 – Midway
NFL Quarterback Club 2002 – Acclaim
NHL 2002 – EA Sports
NHL Hitz 2002 – Midway
Phantasy Star Online – Sega
Picassio – Promethean Designs
Powerpuff Girls – bam!
Rainbow Six: Rogue Spear – Ubi Soft
Rally Simulation – Ubi Soft
Rayman Tribe – Ubi Soft
Resident Evil: Zero – Capcom
Rugrats – THQ
Saffire (Young Olympians) – Saffire
Scooby-Doo – THQ
Spider-Man: The Movie – Activision
Spyro the Dragon – Universal
SSX Tricky – EA BIG
Star Wars: Rogue Leader – LucasArts
Tetris Worlds – THQ
Thornado – Factor 5
Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3 – Activision
Turok Evolution – Acclaim
Virtual Striker 3 – Sega

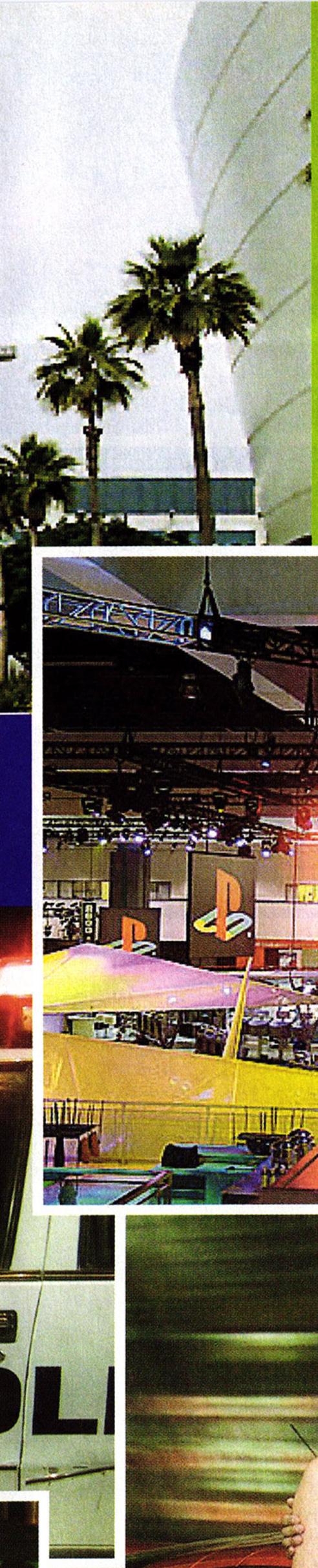
Once again, Game Informer traveled to Los Angeles to cover the yearly Electronic Entertainment Expo in Los Angeles. With over 400 exhibitors from 70 countries showcasing thousands of new products, attempting to make sense of the madness is a daunting task. Walking the show floor amid the booth babes, flashing lights, and blaring speakers, the experience approaches near sensory overload. Part circus, part Las Vegas, and wholly centered around games, no other exhibition can come close to matching the size and importance of E3 in the video game industry.

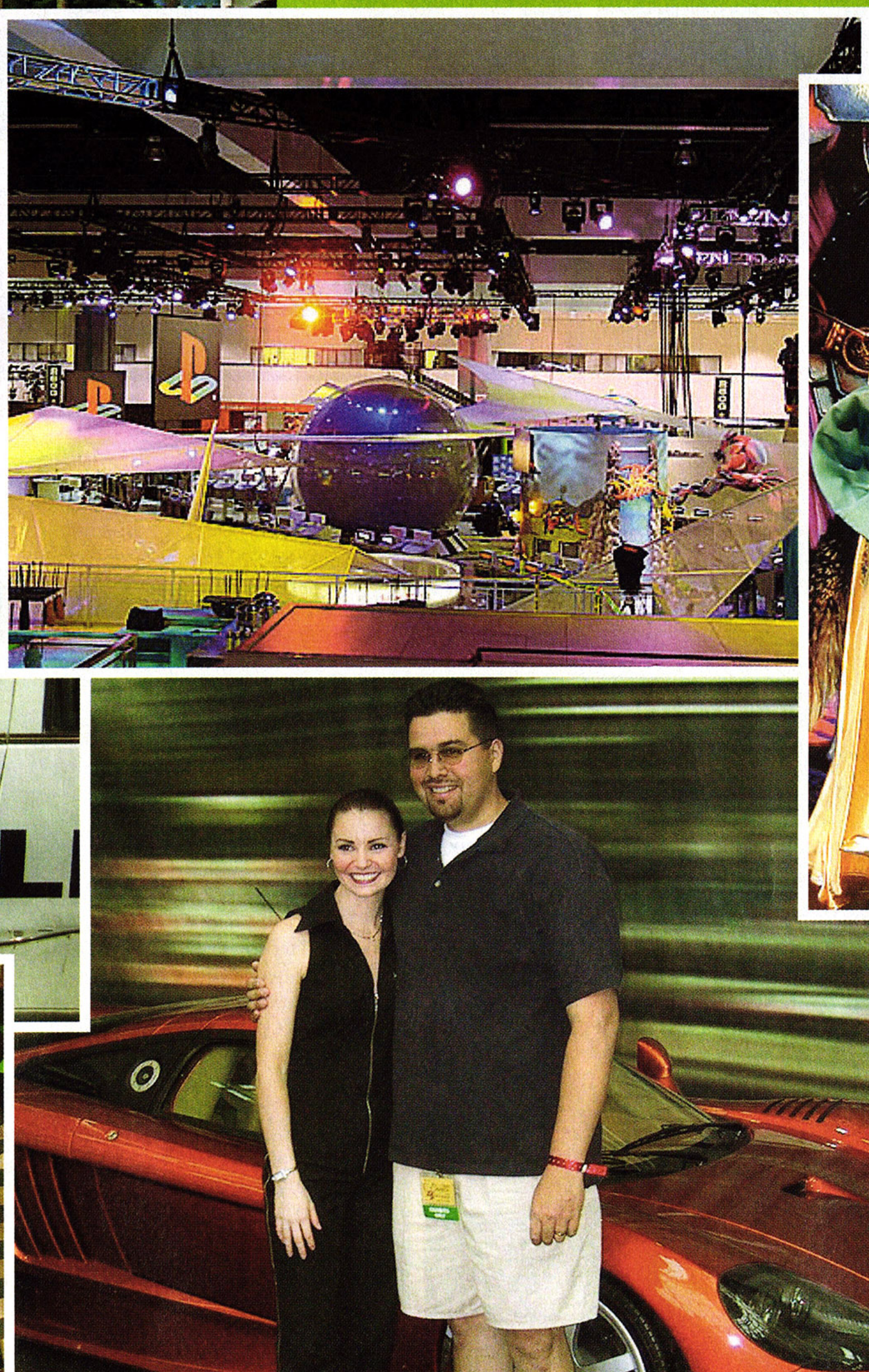
Despite the chaos, each year patterns start to emerge, as the best and brightest of the interactive entertainment industry separate themselves from the pack. Eventually, a consensus is formed in the minds of the faithful. At E3 2001, the three major players in the video game industry – Sony, Nintendo, and Microsoft – came into the show hoping to set their agendas for the year, and capture the imagination of the world. With the console wars shaping up to be a three-way grudge match for the dollars of consumers this holiday season, the stakes were high indeed. Did Microsoft bring enough firepower to blast the PS2 from its pedestal? Did Nintendo finally show its cards? Has the PlayStation 2 recovered from the controversy that surrounded the first year of its life? Read on to find out the answers to these questions and many more. The show is over, but the war has just begun. E3 2001 was merely the first step in what should be a groundbreaking six months for the video game industry.

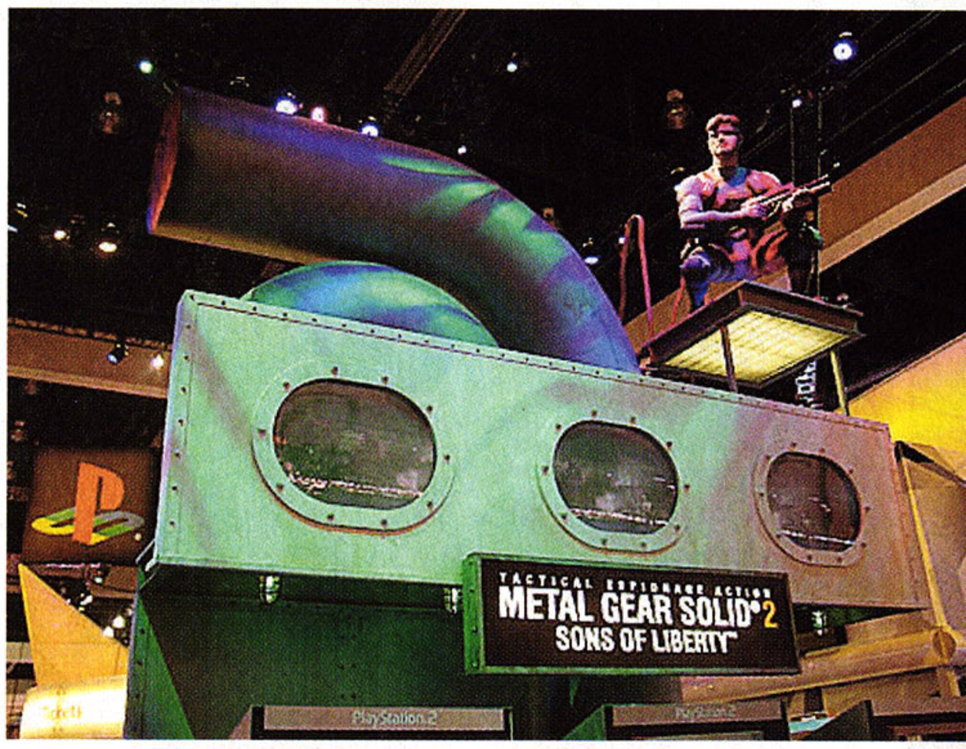
E3 UNCOVERED



Nintendo Shocks The Show, Sony Brings The Big Guns, & Xbox Comes Up Short







SONY

At E3, at least in the minds of Sony, size matters. As such, the company did everything in grand style: the biggest parties, the biggest booth, and by far the largest press conference of the big three. Late in the afternoon of the 16th, hundreds of journalists and industry insiders packed a soundstage in downtown Los Angeles to see if Sony could recapture the momentum many felt it had lost in the past year.

Last year's show was clearly a disappointment for Sony, and was the beginning of what would be a hard six months for the company. Starting with the mishandled launch of the PS2, and the less-than-stellar games that followed, the perception that Sony was vulnerable to Microsoft and the Xbox became increasingly widespread in the industry. Seeking to address this issue, SCEA COO Kaz Hirai and Senior VP Jack Tretton spent a good portion of the press conference dispelling what they felt were press-created "myths" about the PS2.

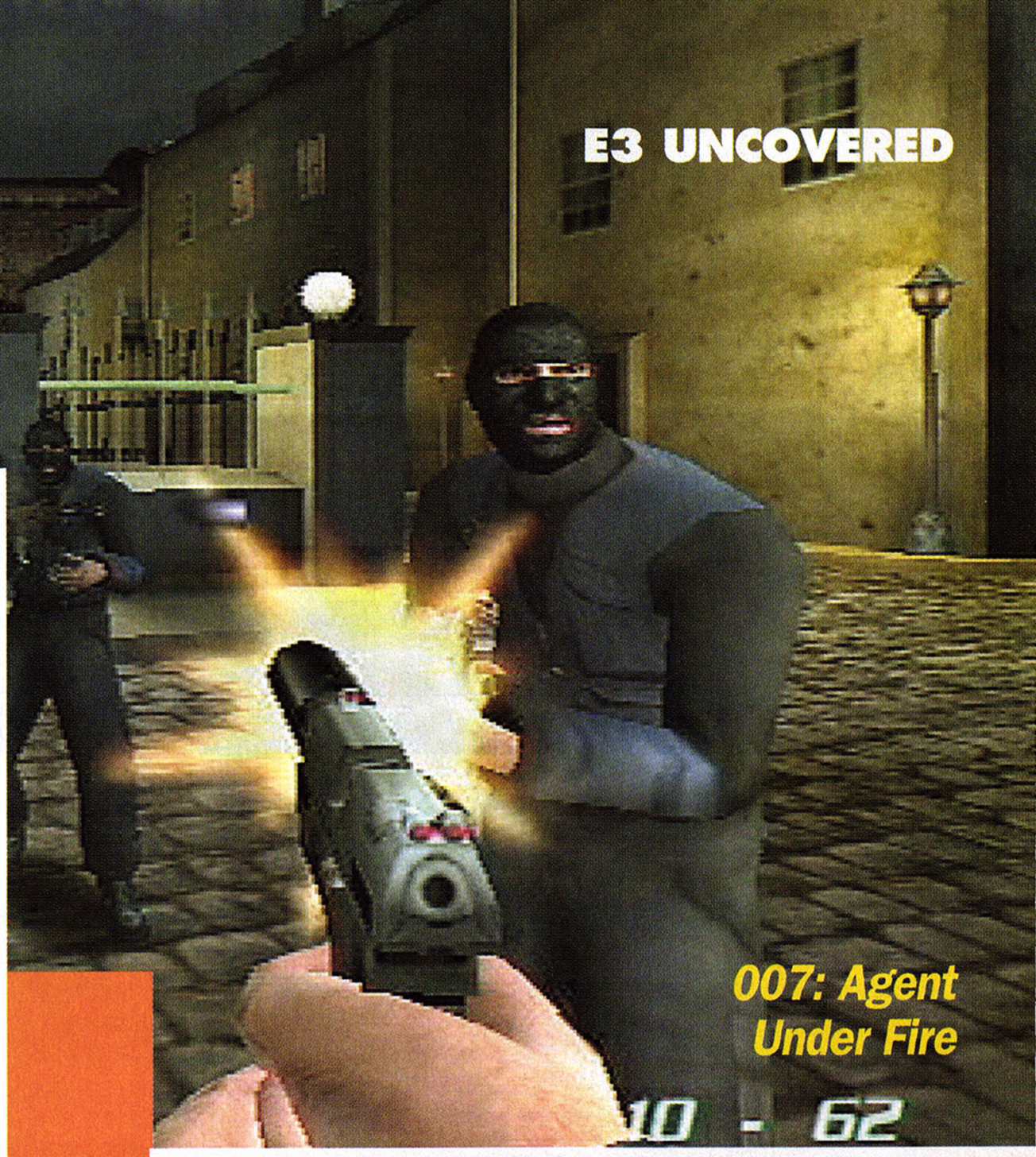
Whatever the intention, what followed was an uncomfortable mix of arrogance and insecurity. Hirai started things off by boasting that the real question was, "Who is going to be in the number two spot?" A remark that came off as a bit mean-spirited and needlessly dismissive of Microsoft and Nintendo. Tretton followed up with a speech entitled "Fact vs. Fiction" that seemed to be an example of specious logic at best ("Fiction: The PS2 is hard to develop for. Fact: There are over 300 developers working on PS2 in North America alone."), and an exercise in double-think at worst. While this section of the conference was meant to paint a picture of Sony as the unstoppable force in video games, it better served to show just how shaken the company has been by the fallout from the unit shortfall at launch and the onslaught of the Xbox hype machine.

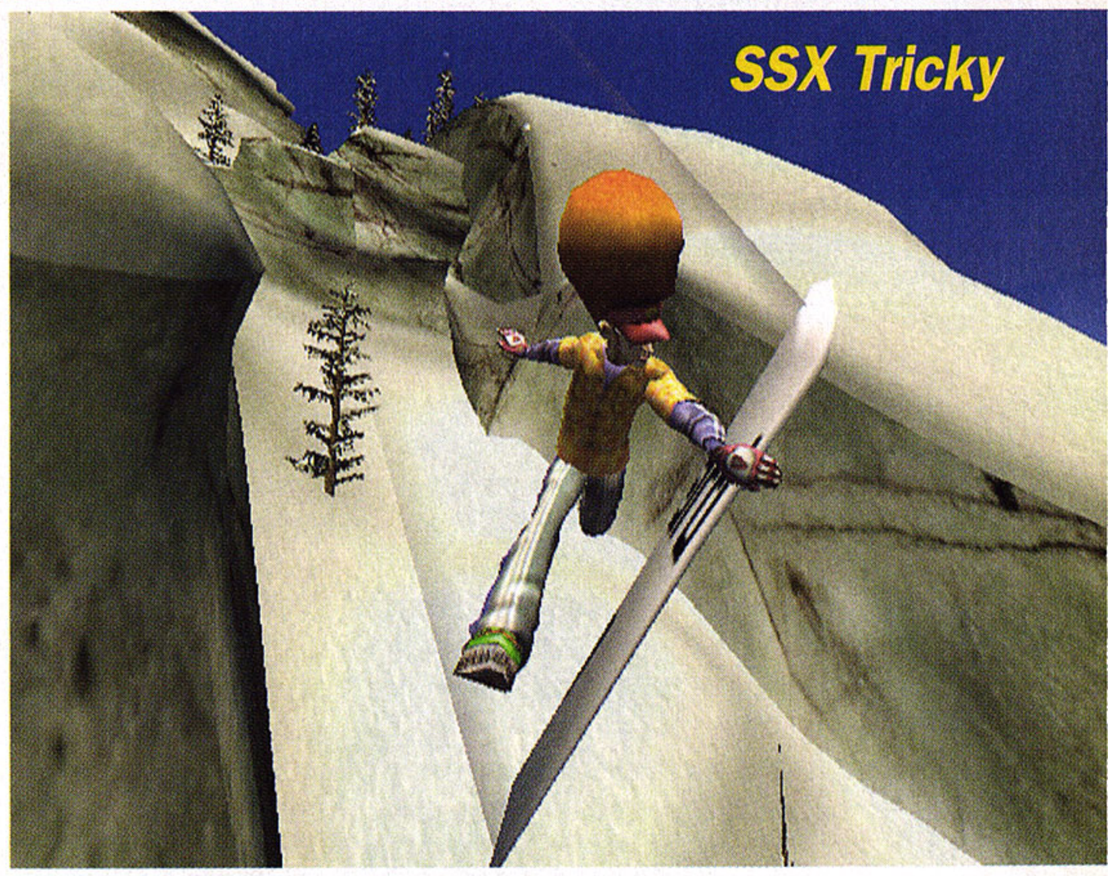
Despite the slightly bitter tone, Tretton did back up his claims with an impressive array of statistics and charts that provided proof that the PS2's birthing pains were behind the company. He went on to unveil several new hardware peripherals, including a wireless DVD remote, an LCD screen for the PSone, and a new PS2/Gran Turismo 3 bundle package. He also announced an impressive $250 million marketing campaign for the PS2, and a promotional tie-in with the upcoming Tomb Raider motion picture.

The next hour or so of the presentation centered on games, which were clearly Sony's strong point at this year's show. In both video and demo form, Sony showed a tremendous slate of triple-A titles set to be released in 2001, including GT 3, Twisted Metal: Black, Final Fantasy X, SSX Tricky, NBA Street, Jax and Daxter, Devil May Cry, and Metal Gear Solid 2.

Unfortunately, many of the guest speakers seemed stiff and unprepared, a situation that was exacerbated by a terribly incompetent Japanese translator. The conference reached a low point during the Silent Hill 2 demo, which went on for what seemed like hours and showcased gameplay consisting only of the main character running through darkened hallways with a flashlight. Thankfully, Konami's legendary Hideo Kojima soon took the stage and recaptured the attention of the audience with a jaw-dropping Metal Gear Solid 2 trailer that revealed, among other things, the return of Liquid Snake.

The event ended with Hirai detailing Sony's online plans, as well as new strategic partnerships with America Online, Cisco Systems, Real Networks, and Macromedia. A prototype of the PS2 hybrid analog/ethernet Network Adaptor was shown, along with pricing details and new information on the upcoming PS2 hard drive, LCD monitor, and keyboard. To demonstrate the PS2 modem, Seth Luisi took the stage and demonstrated his new game SOCOM: U.S. Navy SEALs, running live with eight-player networked play.





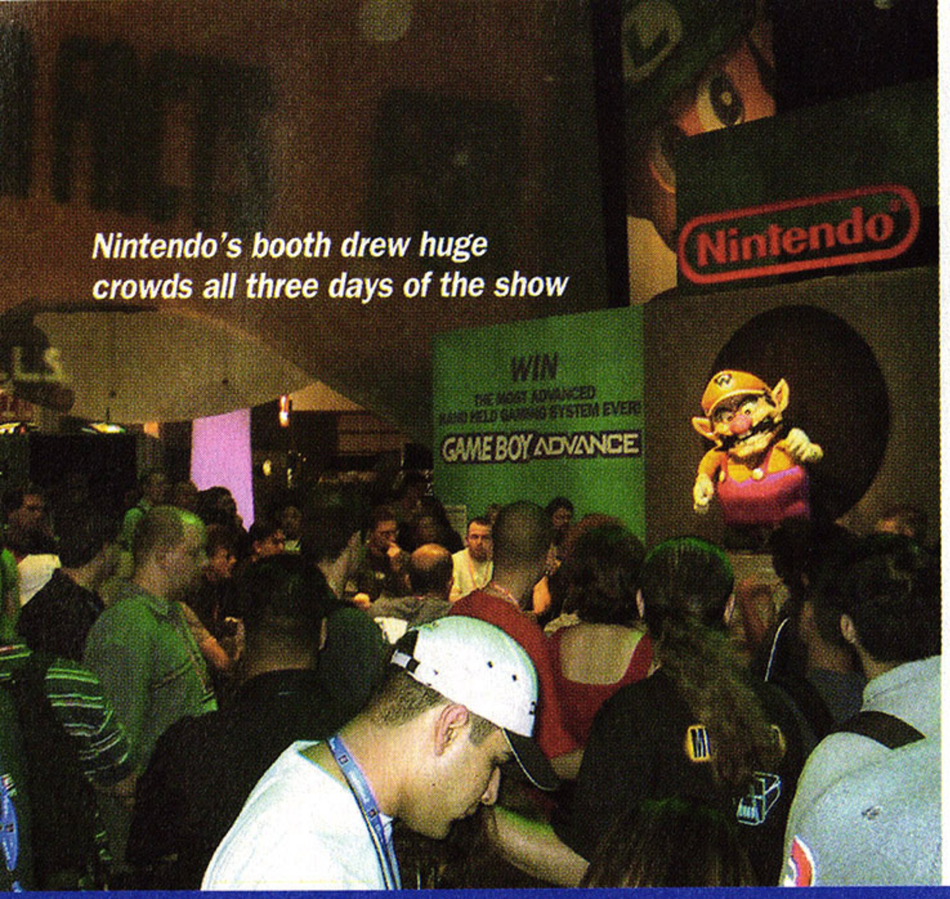
If Sony's press conference was uneven and overlong, its showing on the floor was nearly flawless. If the oft-repeated cliché "it's all about the games" is true, then Sony delivered the goods in spades at E3 2001. There were over 100 new PlayStation 2 games at the show, and many others making the return to the show in a more polished form. The expansive Sony booth was generally not as crowded as the Microsoft or Nintendo displays, but this was largely due to the fact that the PS2 was the known quantity to those in attendance.

Even the most cynical showgoer had to be pleased with the breadth and quality of titles that were on display for PlayStation 2. Sure hits like Devil May Cry, Metal Gear Solid 2, and Final Fantasy X looked better than ever, and there was a slew of debut titles, like Square's Kingdom Hearts, Capcom's Maximo: Ghosts to Glory, and Rockstar's State of Emergency, that proved to be as popular with the crowd as the more established franchises. Naughty Dog's Jak and Daxter, which looked amazing at the press conference, was even more impressive after we experienced its brilliant control and character physics. So far, J&D looks to cement Naughty Dog's reputation as the best action/platform developer outside of Nintendo. At the Activision booth, Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3, our odds-on favorite of the show, again demonstrated Neversoft's ability to constantly reinvent its mega-popular extreme sports franchise.

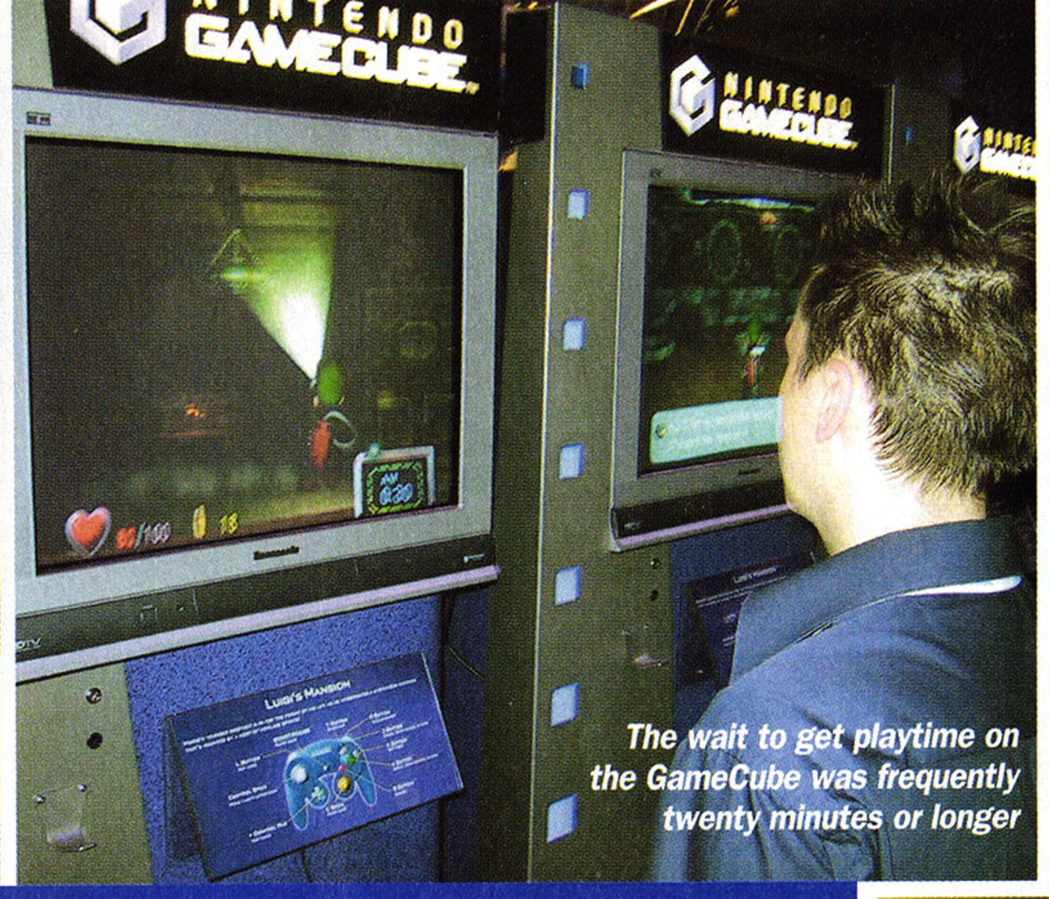
Third-party support has always been a given for Sony, but it was encouraging to see its solid first-party lineup. Besides aforementioned releases like Twisted Metal: Black, Jak and Daxter, and GT 3, games like ICO, Drakan II, and Dark Cloud showed Sony's commitment to creating quality first-party software.

Sony E3 Report Card: A

The champ has been knocked around in recent months, but is still firmly in possession of the belt. Unduly confident? Perhaps; but the company is certainly in an enviable position. It currently controls over 60% of the market with PSone and PS2, and should have a worldwide installed base of close to 15 million units by the time either of their chief competitors' consoles hit retail. After a shaky launch, and some setbacks in terms of public and retailer relations, Sony seems to finally have its affairs in order. If it can continue to keep bringing scores of high-profile titles to market, the PlayStation 2 should reach "must-have" status for gamers by year's end. That's not to say Nintendo or Microsoft are not capable of making a serious bid for the top spot, but at this point it would be hard to bet against the seemingly unstoppable Sony machine. It is Sony's game to lose and, barring any gross miscalculations or flaws in its online strategy, it looks as though the company is in a great position to pull off a repeat.



Nintendo's booth drew huge crowds all three days of the show



The wait to get playtime on the GameCube was frequently twenty minutes or longer

Shigeru Miyamoto takes the stage to a standing ovation at the Nintendo press conference

NINTENDO

If E3 is about making a big splash, then consider Nintendo's mission accomplished. While everyone in the industry was handicapping the showdown between Xbox and PlayStation 2, Nintendo walked into the convention and stole the show. Years from now, E3 2001 will no doubt be remembered for the debut of the GameCube. As Xbox struggled, and Sony solidified its position as the dominant company in the console business, Nintendo won the hearts of almost every showgoer with its unique blend of innovation, left-field creativity, and familiar characters.

The company's pre-E3 press conference set the tone for what would be a triumphant show for Nintendo and the GameCube. The capacity crowd, many of whom had grown up playing Nintendo's NES and SNES consoles, was clearly eager to see what Nintendo had up its sleeve. The room bristled with excitement, resulting in a mood that was almost celebratory. Kicking things off was Nintendo VP Peter Main, who outlined the company's strategy for the next year. Main also mentioned "the Nintendo Difference," a theme that would be hammered home again and again throughout the presentation.

Citing impressive statistics, particularly regarding the company's dominance of the handheld market, Main commented that, "Nintendo is absolutely convinced that both Game Boy Advance and GameCube are going to be huge marketplace successes no matter what any other manufacturer is planning to do." In a surprising move, especially to those who feared that the GameCube launch was going to slip into 2002, it was revealed that the system would launch on September 14th in Japan and November 5th in the US. This announcement dealt another blow to Microsoft, who had just confirmed a November 8th release date for the Xbox.

Following Main's comments, Nintendo Head of Planning, Satoru Iwata, gave a detailed explanation of "the Nintendo Difference." Speaking with no interpreter, Iwata decried the industry's obsession with technology, as well as the cookie cutter mentality that permeates the development community. The message, which would be reiterated frequently, was that Nintendo is not competing directly with Sony and Microsoft, but rather carving out its own niche as the last pure video game company.

Next, the legendary Shigeru Miyamoto took the stage, seeming every bit the conquering hero. After Miyamoto's preliminary remarks, an amazing Super Smash Bros. Melee trailer was played, which brought the crowd to its feet in applause. Featuring almost every recognizable Nintendo character, as well as eye-popping GameCube graphics, the video demonstrated without a doubt that the GameCube, despite its modest technical specs, is very capable of presenting games that are amazingly detailed and lightning fast.

Miyamoto went on to introduce a number of new titles, including Luigi's Mansion and Pikmin, an odd strategy game that requires the player to command an army of ant-like creatures. As the conference went on, almost every major Nintendo franchise was revealed to have an upcoming GameCube title, from Wave Race to Donkey Kong to the beloved Metroid. The only disappointment was the absence of a new Mario title, which will most likely make its debut at the Nintendo Spaceworld convention in Tokyo this August.

As the show began, the enthusiasm for GameCube continued unabated. Nintendo's booth was thronged with showgoers, creating a claustrophobic scene inside. The crowd was so large, in fact, that security was forced to close off the entrance to the Nintendo exhibit twice during the first day of the show.

Reaction to Nintendo's showing seemed to be positive across the board. One pleasant surprise was the GameCube controller, which had appeared to be quite odd in design based off pictures that had been released to the press a few months ago. With hands-on inspection, the controller proved to be quite comfortable, although many felt that there should have been four shoulder buttons instead of the three included in the final design.

Of the games that were playable at the show, all were at least solid, and most seemed to reflect the high standard of excellence that is the hallmark of Nintendo's first-party software. Super Smash Bros. Melee was easily the most polished of Nintendo's lineup, and should definitely be ready for launch. Star Fox Adventures, a reworked version of the aborted N64 title Dinosaur Planet, seemed very early in development, as early as we've ever seen a Nintendo game shown to the public. Luigi's Mansion and Pikmin both appear to be promising, but will probably fall short of being blockbusters due to their rather quirky gameplay. On the third-party side, LucasArt's Star Wars: Rogue Leader looked absolutely amazing, fully showcasing the GameCube's graphical abilities. Other titles on display included Wave Race: Blue Storm, Kameo: Elements of Power (a strange third-person action/adventure game developed by Rare), and Eternal Darkness, another N64 refugee enhanced for the GameCube.

The Game Boy Advance, which is almost certain to be a success of mammoth proportions, also drew the interest of many and had a number of blue chip titles on display the likes of Super Mario Advance, F-Zero: Maximum Velocity, Castlevania: Circle of the Moon, and Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2. In this area, third-party support for Nintendo is extremely solid. Throughout the Convention Center, one quickly noticed that nearly every developer had at least one or two GBA titles on display.

While Nintendo was certainly the toast of E3, there are some questions regarding its future. The most obvious concern raised was the lack of any third-party GameCube titles, save for Rogue Leader, in the Nintendo booth. Although a good many development houses have officially signed on to develop for the system, at this point the GameCube seems to be taking a back seat to the PS2 and Xbox in most companies' development plans. While the GameCube will probably be a financial success, third-party support or not, this trend could spell trouble for the Nintendo faithful that suffered through severe software droughts in the N64 era. Also, despite Main's promise that Nintendo is going to be more aggressive in going after teen and adult gamers in its marketing of GameCube, most of the titles we've seen so far seem to cater to Nintendo's traditional audience of pre-teens and middle-schoolers.

E3 Afterhours

The mean streets of Los Angeles hold a variety of dangers to the mind and body of a young video game editor, but somehow the Game Informer staff managed to make it home alive. On our journey through the seedy nightlife of E3, we saw many things, not all of them pleasant. From the homeless LA legend Mr. Sidewalk to Ben Stiller to a mysterious character known only as "Hollywood" who threw up in the fountain of the Bonaventure Hotel, we managed to rub elbows with nearly every element of the LA underworld. Here's a recap of the long, strange trip that was E3 2001.

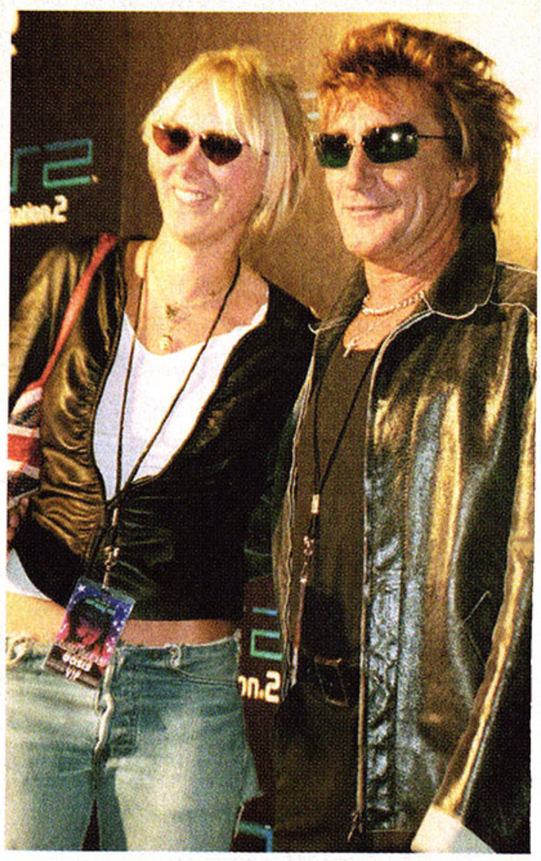
E3 week started out with a bang, as Sony threw an unprecedented pre-E3 celebrity bash on the Tuesday before the show. Coincidentally, this surprise party was announced right after Microsoft had confirmed that its press conference was scheduled for 8 AM on the following Wednesday. Hmm. In any case, the gala event featured a live performance by freakadelic funksters OutKast, and was attended by many of Hollywood's A-list celebs, including Tobey Maguire, Crispin Glover, Jennifer Lopez, and Leonardo DiCaprio. Unfortunately, only two members of the GI staff (Reiner and Andy) were deemed "cool" enough to get in. Reportedly, the party was really lame and nothing cool happened (or so most of us would like to believe). We do know that Andy and Reiner spent most of their evening fawning over guest DJ Boy George.

Sony's Friday night bash boasted well over 5,000 in attendance

Things picked up on Thursday, at the Microsoft soiree at the Palladium in West Hollywood. More low key, and less-celebrity oriented than either of Sony's big parties, this was the party where geeks ruled the roost. Although most of the action took place in the smoking area on the back patio, the near-capacity crowd was entertained (or just slightly amused) by the rock star preening of Third Eye Blind and the kiddie punk antics of Blink-182.

Hungover and haggard, the GI posse rose to the occasion the next night for Sony's traditional Friday party. With a guest list that supposedly numbered between six and eight thousand people, the event seemed less a party than an upscale State Fair. Still, there remains no better place to schmooze with the heavyweights of the industry, and the free drinks held out until well past one. The only two problems in the planning were pro-forma grunge has-beens Everclear as the musical entertainment and a severe shortage of bathroom facilities. Also, Sony should definitely give a raise to whoever's idea it was to have a mini-donut stand. Yummy!

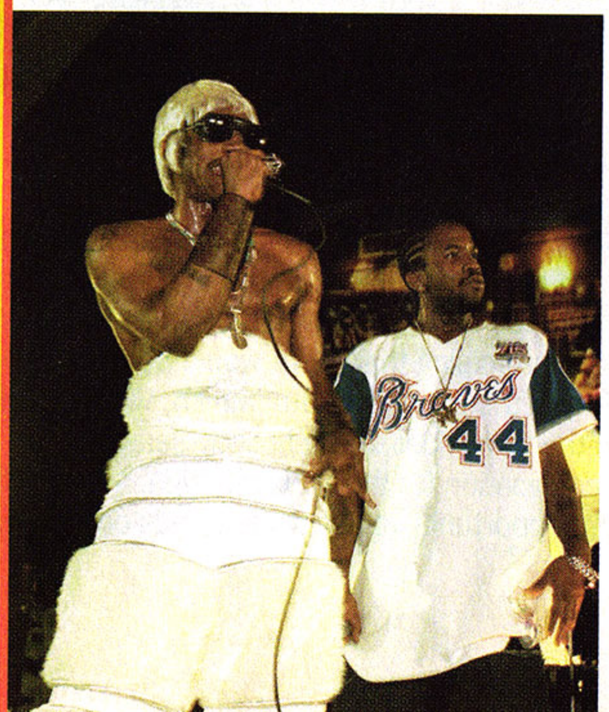
As last year, Sony was nice enough to throw a mellow post-show cocktail party at the ultra-ritzy Mondrian Hotel on the Sunset Strip. Sporting the best appetizers of the show (the barbecue shrimp skewers were to die for!), the event gave the exhausted journalists and PR folks a chance to rub elbows with the beautiful people of Los Angeles. Boy, are we ugly compared to them! Despite the rather snooty waitstaff (NO TIP FOR YOU!), the affair was a blissful end to a hectic week.

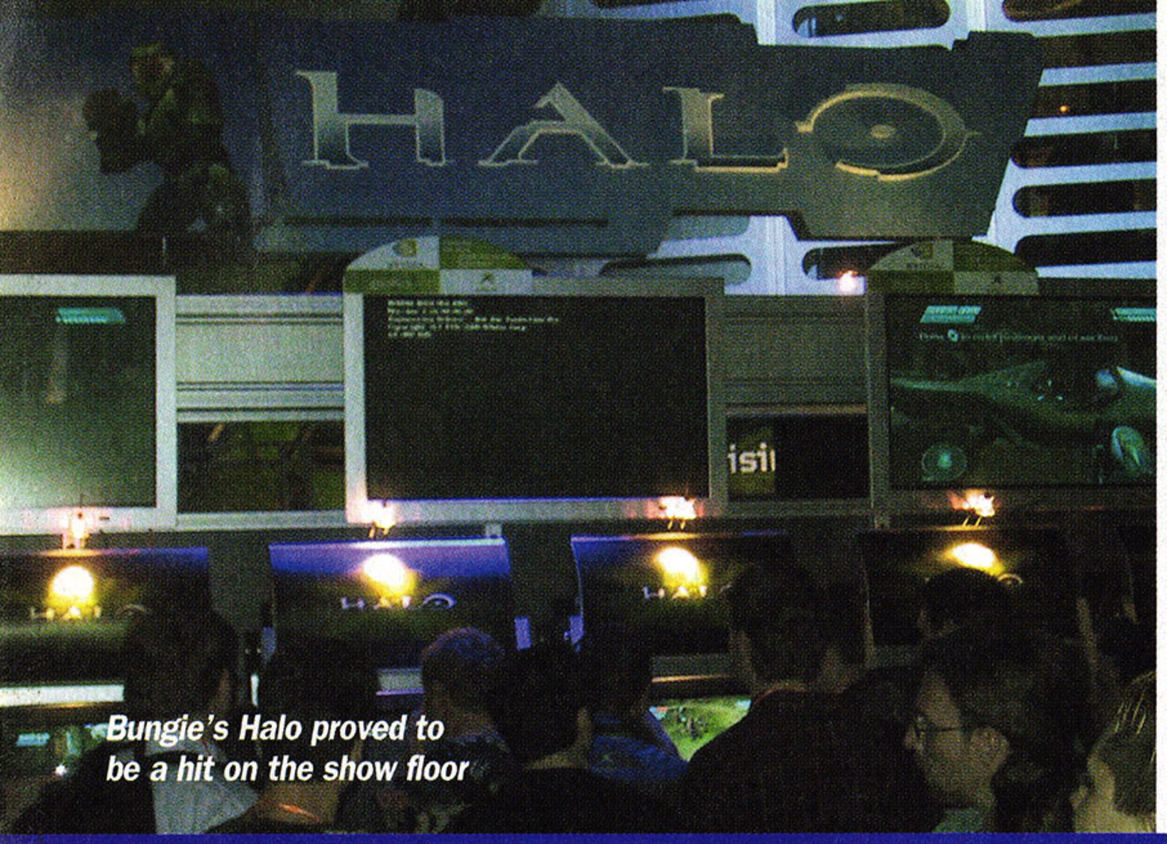


Boy George DJed, OutKast funked, and the toast of Hollywood schmoozed at Sony's pre-E3 party

Nintendo E3 Report Card: A

In the war of public perception, Nintendo was the clear winner of this year's E3. The post-convention revelation that the GameCube was to retail at a very competitive $199 price point only served to confirm its public relations victory. In some ways, Nintendo had an easier job than Sony or Microsoft, as so little had been revealed about its plans for the GameCube prior to the show. Also, Nintendo, with its 20-year history and stable of established characters, still enjoys an emotional connection with gamers that the other of the big three can't hope to claim. This surely was at least partially responsible for the warm reception it received from most attendees. Coming out of E3, it is clear that Nintendo is intent on doing what it always does – ignoring the competition, playing to its strength as a first-party developer, controlling the lucrative handheld market, and building on its tradition of long-standing franchises. The company that ruled the video game industry in the '80s now seems content to be a strong (and profitable) number two while letting Sony and Microsoft fight to the death. For those of us who spent our formative years as Nintendo players, it's somewhat discouraging to see the company settle for such diminished expectations. On the other hand, it's comforting to know that Nintendo will likely endure, providing us with amazing games for years to come.





Bungie's Halo proved to be a hit on the show floor

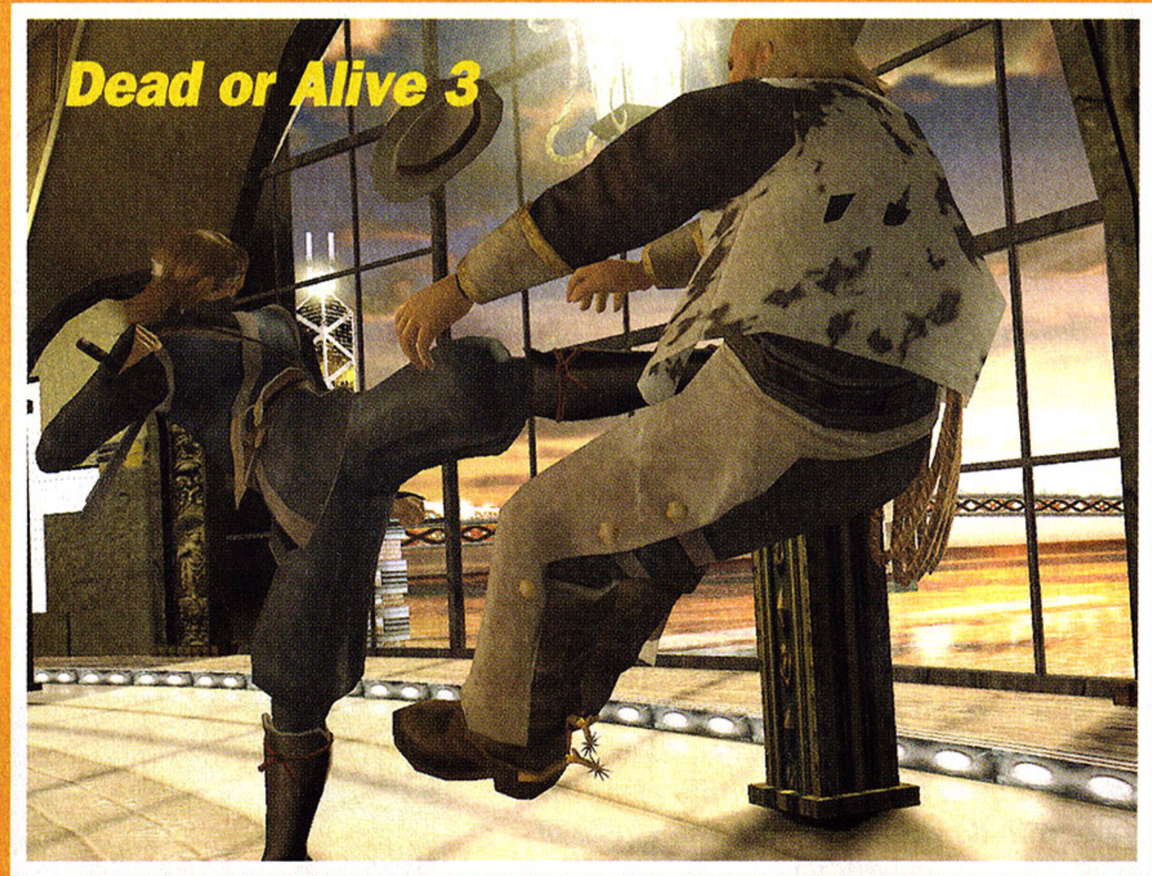
Microsoft Senior VP Robbie Bach addresses the crowd at the Xbox press conference

MICROSOFT

If Microsoft had intended E3 2001 to be the coronation of the Xbox as the heir apparent to the video game throne, it came out of the show humbled, and perhaps more aware of the mammoth task that lies ahead of it. While the show was by no means a disaster for the computer giant, it did serve to crystallize the doubts many had about the viability of its Xbox gameplan.

The problems for Microsoft started at 8 AM on the Wednesday before the start of the show. Journalists from all over the world came to the company's Xbox press conference hoping to be wowed, and instead witnessed an hour and a half of lackluster speeches and technical difficulties. The first, and most embarrassing, of these glitches occurred at the outset, when Microsoft Chief Xbox Officer Robbie Bach attempted to show the crowd the Xbox boot-up display, and found that he was unable to bring it up on the big screen. Another sour note was struck at the end of the presentation, when a demonstration of NASCAR Heat's online play failed to work properly.

Even as Microsoft unveiled its new slogan, "Your games will never be the same," and claimed that the Xbox would revolutionize video games as MTV had the music industry, many of the titles that were part of the press conference failed to excite the crowd. Some, like NASCAR Heat and Mad Dash, seemed to be merely competent genre exercises, while EA's Pirates of Skull Cove appeared to be much too early in development to be a part of such a high-profile presentation. However, there were some definite bright spots for Microsoft – Tecmo's awe-inspiring DOA 3 video, Bungie's demo of Halo, a rousing speech by Sega CEO Peter Moore, and the announcement that the venerable Japanese publisher Capcom was bringing some of its bankable franchises to the system (including Dino Crisis 3 and Onimusha: Warlords). Also of note was the premiere of the Xbox Communicator, a device that will reportedly allow owners to talk to each other during online gameplay via the unit's broadband modem. Microsoft also vowed that the Xbox launch would be free from the trouble that plagued the debut of the PS2, promising that there would be 600,000 to 800,000 units available for $299 on the November 8th launch, with a total of 1 to 1.5 million units to ship through the remainder of the holiday season.

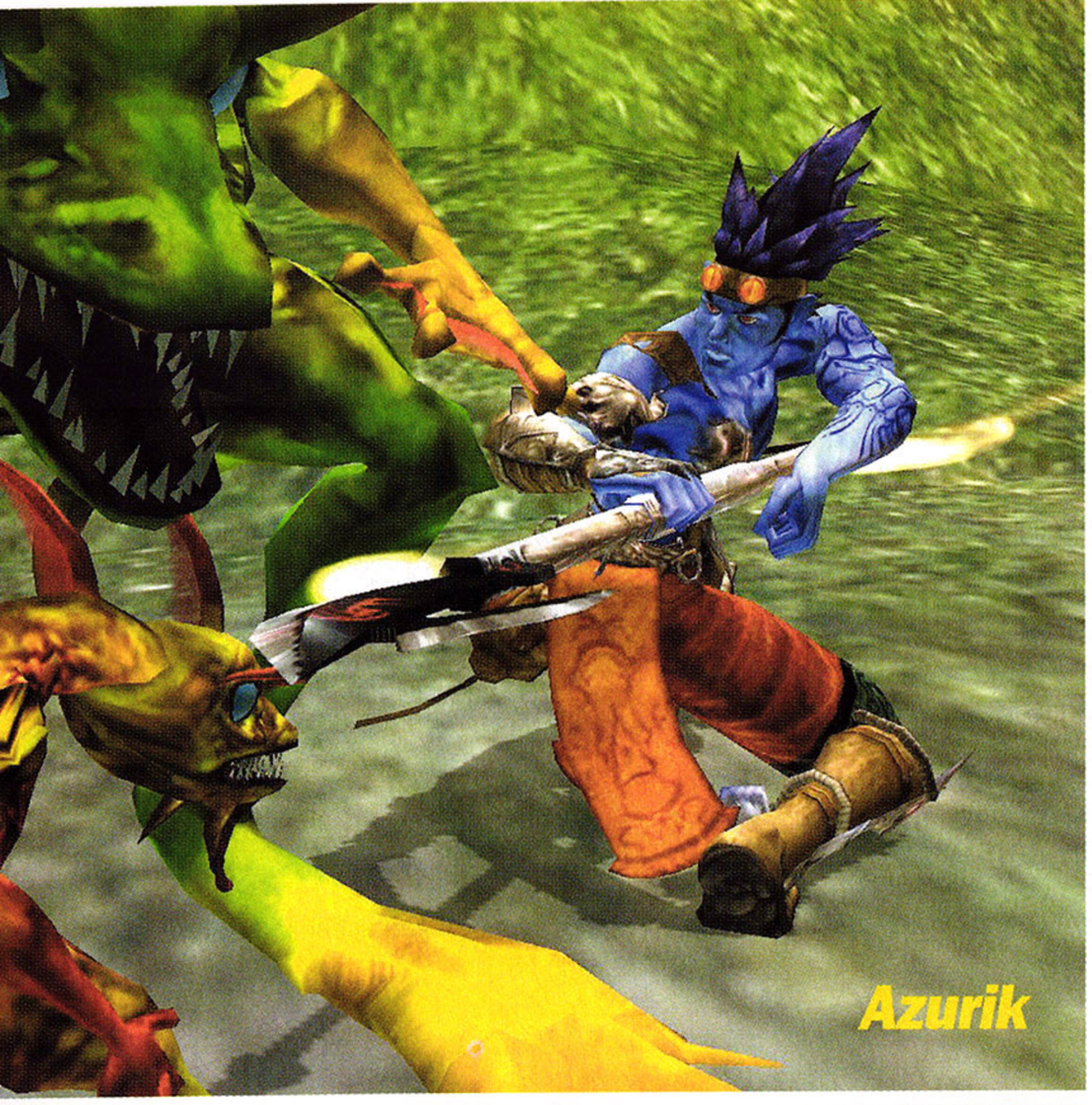


At the show, it was clear that anticipation for the Xbox ran high. Microsoft's booth, which gave many their first opportunity to get some hands-on time with the unit, saw high attendance throughout all three days of the convention. Microsoft's understated display put the focus squarely on its games, although it did look a bit modest in comparisons to Sony and Nintendo's mammoth sets in the Convention Center's West Hall. While the crowds were enthusiastic, the Xbox controller received decidedly mixed reviews, many citing its bulky size and closely-placed buttons as being problematic.

If most of the Microsoft games on display demonstrated a polished graphical look, they also appeared to fall short of being the "killer-apps" that Robbie Bach touted at the press conference. Halo, a fast and furious first-person shooter, looked to be the cream the first-party crop. Oddworld Inhabitant's Munch's Oddysee, which famously defected from the PS2 some months ago, seemed a good deal less groundbreaking than expected, perhaps due to the relentless hype that has surrounded the title for almost two years.

Perhaps more troubling was the lack of games that might appeal to the Japanese market, where first-person shooters and PC-oriented titles like Azurik are not traditionally strong sellers. On the surface, Munch's unique puzzle-based platforming would seem to be a perfect title for Japan, but most felt that the game's rather grotesque character designs would be a turn-off for many Japanese gamers. Conspicuous in its absence was Argonaut's Malice, which had thus far been one of the best-looking titles in the Microsoft stable.

With Microsoft trumpeting its strong third-party support for Xbox, we were surprised not to see more triple-A titles on the floor. Sega's policy of keeping its booth closed to the public was particularly detrimental for Microsoft, as it meant that two of the best Xbox games at E3, the graphically stunning Jet Grind Radio Future and Gun Valkyrie, were seen by only a handful of showgoers. Activision showed the impressive Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2x, which unfortunately paled in comparison to the three-level demo of Tony Hawk 3 being shown for PS2. THQ had a couple of Xbox standouts in its lineup, including the snowboarding title Dark Summit and the upcoming WWF blockbuster Raw is War. Flying under the radar of most was Peter Molyneux's Project Ego, shown only to a select few journalists, perhaps the most astonishing Xbox title we've seen to date.


Azurik

Halo

Microsoft E3 Report Card: C+

Microsoft didn't have a bad E3; it just wasn't nearly as good as it needed to be. After a year of positive feedback from the press and the hardcore gaming community, the honeymoon appears to be over for Xbox. While Microsoft clearly lost this battle, the war is far from over. It might be instructive to remember last year's show, where Sony was lambasted for a lack of quality games and disappointing support from third-party developers. By all accounts, Microsoft is in this for the long haul. It has what is probably the most powerful console ever made, it has a strong roster of developers signed on to create games for it, and, most importantly, it has the deep pockets that come from being one of the world's most successful corporations. That's not to say it will be easy to knock Sony off its perch. However, with a better feel for the console market and more support from Japan, Microsoft just might be the company to do it. One thing is sure – it's going to take a much better effort than we saw at E3 2001.

PC

With three consoles vying for the attention of showgoers, it was a bit of a quiet year on the PC front. Some E3 veterans grumbled that the number of PC titles on the show floor seemed to be down slightly from years past, and that the games on display seemed to get lost amid the uproar surrounding the imminent console wars.

There were some exceptions to this rule. Those with the patience to endure the hour-long wait at EA's Medal of Honor: Allied Assault theater were rewarded with a 15-minute trailer and gameplay demo that packed a visceral punch no game at E3 could match. Watching the audience file out of the screening, their faces a mix of shock and elation, it was apparent that Allied Assault's first-person re-creation of the opening sequence of Saving Private Ryan made a tremendous impact on all who had a chance to see it.

Another clear crowd favorite was Return to Castle Wolfenstein. Whether the mob was driven by a desire to witness the return of one of gaming's most beloved franchises, or a desire to cuddle with the very comely Wolfenstein girls is debatable. Either way, the game looks to be an impressive return to form for the series.

While some developers seemed content to continue perfecting existing genres (Warcraft III, SimsVille), the most striking trend of the show was the proliferation of PC titles that aim to cross-pollinate familiar gameplay formulas in an online setting. Obviously, the unprecedented success of Verant's EverQuest has not gone unnoticed by the industry. Several ambitious online games at the show suggested that we are getting closer to realizing the dream of a virtual universe, where players are free to choose from a variety of different experiences, than we might have dreamt.

Foremost among these was Star Wars Galaxies, shown only behind closed doors at the LucasArts booth, a game many cited as the best of show. The developers promise that players will be able to choose a character from one of eight races in the Star Wars universe, from Mon Calamari to Wookiee, and work their way towards Jedi knighthood in a massively multiplayer online environment. Also announced was a planned Galaxies expansion pack (to follow six months after the release of the first) that will add space travel and fighter combat to the already complex equation. Planetside, another standout, looks to expand the EverQuest formula to include first-person gun combat. A host of other online titles, including Anarchy Online, WWII Online, and Midgard, should exploit the possibilities from online play in every epoch from the distant future to the Iron Age.

SimsVille

While there will most certainly be a place in the PC market for innovative single-player games (Black & White's recent success is proof of that), this year's E3 made it clear that the online era is upon us, and there is no going back. In the coming years, it will be interesting to watch as the home console begins its journey down the online path. Many may have overlooked the PC as they wandered about the LA Convention Center. Had they taken a second glance, they might have seen a bit of the console's future in the PC games of the present.

PC E3 Report Card: B

While few of the PC games this year could get out of the shadow of the console heavyweights, there were a great many promising games on display for those inclined to seek them out. Coming out of the show, it's clear that PC will probably never again challenge the console for mainstream acceptance. However, until the console systems have their online strategies implemented, PC will continue to be the place where hardcore gamers seek out innovation and communal gaming experiences.

BEST OF SHOW

GI picks the

Console 10 Ten of E3

1

1 Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3 – PS2

Was there ever any doubt? Last year, Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2 earned the only perfect 10 score ever given out by Game Informer. At the time, Jay claimed, "Games just don't come better than this." Well, they do. Once again, Neversoft has found a way to almost exponentially improve a game that many felt was already perfect to begin with. Gigantic levels, scripted events, and a new revert move that allows you to connect almost endless strings of tricks into one long combo all help Tony 3 soar above its predecessors. Like Spinal Tap, Game Informer might soon have to find out if its scoring system goes to 11.

2 Jak and Daxter: The Precursor Legacy – PS2

2

We were a little disappointed when Naughty Dog turned up MIA at last year's show, but Jak and Daxter erased any doubts we had that the creators of Crash Bandicoot may have lost a step. Surveying J&D's breathtaking, hand-modeled environments, and testing out the brilliant playcontrol and realistic character physics, it was easy to see why the Dogs didn't make it to E3 2000 – they were too busy working on what might be the most promising platformer we've seen since Banjo-Kazooie. Breaking out of the Crash mold, Jak and Daxter should set the new standard in next-gen action/adventure.

3 Star Wars: Rogue Leader – GC

3

What do you get when you combine the long-awaited Nintendo GameCube and a gorgeous Star Wars space shooter? Answer: fanboy heaven. Everyone had already seen the impressive Rogue Leader footage LucasArts released a few months ago, but we were surprised to see that the clip didn't even come close to capturing the magic of this next-gen update of the N64 classic, Rogue Squadron. Seemingly made for the GameCube controller, this baby plays just as good as she looks. No game at the show had longer lines than Rogue Leader, which was inexplicably only showing on two screens in the Nintendo booth. Those that were lucky enough to get on couldn't stop talking about the experience that is Rogue Leader.

4 Metal Gear Solid 2: Sons of Liberty – PS2

4

Is it possible to be the buzz game of E3 two years in a row? Despite stiff competition from Devil May Cry and Final Fantasy X, Hideo Kojima's long-awaited masterpiece made a huge impact on the show floor. After last year's trailer whet our appetite, this year's Konami booth allowed us to satiate ourselves with hands-on gameplay. A brand-new trailer (hand delivered from Japan by Kojima himself) also provided a much-needed jolt of excitement to the dreary Sony press conference. Can the most-anticipated game of all time possibly live up to the hype? Based on what we've seen, we'd bet the farm on it.

PC TOP 5

While PC might be down, it is most certainly not out. Throughout the show, PC developers provided us with a welcome reminder that games, not console wars, are what this job is about. Even as the hype surrounding the PS2/Xbox showdown raged on, the overall quality of the PC software on hand was undeniable. Had we not decided on creating a separate PC list, most of these five games would have likely made our overall Best of Show.

2

3

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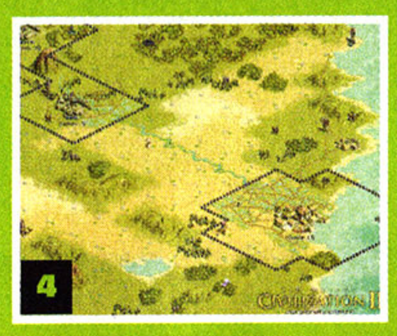
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5

1 Medal of Honor: Allied Assault

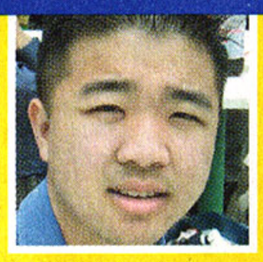
2 Star Wars Galaxies

3 WWII: Online

4 Civilization III

5 Return to Castle Wolfenstein

VIEWS FROM THE FLOOR



Eric Chan

"Overall, the show was good. I had a good impression of the Xbox. As for Nintendo, I thought that the GameCube just looked like a beefed-up version of the N64, and most of the games seemed pretty childish."

Keith Levine

"Nintendo definitely had the best showing. I'm very excited for GameCube. I'll still buy an Xbox, but I'm not nearly as excited about it as I was before the show. I was disappointed with Munch's Oddysee; it just wasn't what I thought it was going to be. Rogue Leader, ICO, and Wave Race were my favorite titles of the show."

ten games that rocked E3 2001

5 Final Fantasy X - PS2

5

Following its unveiling at the Tokyo Game Show, Square brought the first PlayStation 2 addition to the legendary Final Fantasy series to E3 in playable form, causing a sensation amongst the RPG faithful at the show. Harnessing the power of the PS2, Final Fantasy X takes the art of FMV to a level that simply defies belief. Never before has a video game demonstrated such artistry and beauty. While some were disappointed that the gameplay seems to conform to the well-worn Final Fantasy formula, most were too awestruck by the indescribable graphics to care. If this is truly the last traditional Final Fantasy game in the series (Square is planning on bringing FF XI into the online realm), it will be a fitting end to the franchise that redefined the RPG experience. Barring a surprise defection to the Xbox, Square should remain the biggest ace in Sony's deck.

6 Devil May Cry - PS2

6

After Onimusha proved to be little more than Resident Evil with swords, many were wondering when Capcom was going to take us to the next level of survival horror. After running Devil May Cry through its paces, the answer became clear. Building on the foundation created by Resident Evil, Devil May Cry breaks free from the genre's static camera angles and clunky combat with acrobatic flair. There may have been prettier games on the floor, but none could provide us with a more satisfying gameplay experience than Devil May Cry's mix of swordplay and heavy weaponry. Chalk up another PS2 hit for Capcom.

7 Halo - Xbox

7

Halo was the one game at the show that could make the most stalwart Sony supporter believe in the "power of Xbox." Bungie's live demo of the game at the Microsoft press conference showed Halo to be a first-person shooter of the highest order. Detailed character models, nice textures, cool plasma particle effects, and dozens of NPCs roaming the landscape were a testament to just how technologically advanced the Xbox really is. Not content to create a standard FPS, Bungie also showed off levels that feature vehicles driven from a third-person perspective. Five months before the release of Xbox, Microsoft already has one sure blockbuster in its hands.

8 Super Smash Bros. Melee - GameCube

8

In brilliant fashion, Super Smash Bros. Melee delivered the message to one and all that Nintendo is back. Sure, it would have been nice to see a new Mario or Zelda title at the show, but it's hard to argue with a game packed with more star power than the Oscars. From popular favorites like Mario and Donkey Kong, to obscure Nintendo heroes like Ice Climber and Captain Falcon, Super Smash Bros. Melee is almost guaranteed to hit the top of the sales charts on November 5th. Its N64 predecessor was amazing, but this sequel ups the ante with incredible visuals, creative level design, and the rock-solid gameplay that can only come from Nintendo.

9 Project Ego - Xbox

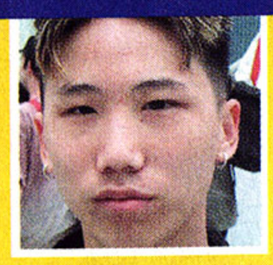
9

Still basking in the critical accolades received by Black & White, god game guru Peter Molyneux's new project should make his previous classics like Populus seem like mere sketches compared to the Sistine Chapel that is Project Ego. After seeing the game behind closed doors at E3, the notoriously cynical Andy McNamara was literally awestruck by Project Ego, citing the game as, "The most gorgeous-looking game I've seen to date." Project Ego's in-game graphics put most CG to shame, setting the player loose in the largest fully-rendered 3D world we've ever seen. With 18 months to go in development, this deep and complex RPG is already a front-runner for the number one game of E3 2002.

10 Maximo - PS2

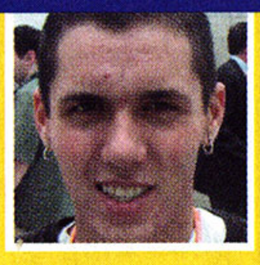
10

Everyone was expecting Devil May Cry to be Capcom's standout title at this year's E3, but the venerable Japanese company also provided us with a welcome surprise in Maximo, a game that we'd heard absolutely nothing about before the show. While every other game on the floor seemed to be obsessed with framerates and poly counts, Maximo was a welcome throwback to the days of 8- and 16-bit action games. Essentially a 3D version of the arcade standby Ghouls N' Ghosts, Maximo won our hearts with its frenetic combat, eye-catching fire effects, and old-school charm. Although to call a game that looks this nice "old-school" might be a bit misleading, as Maximo's graphics can easily stand toe-to-toe with any upcoming PS2 game.



Kevin Park

"My highlights of the show were the Game Boy Advance and Warcraft III, which I've been waiting for and is the most impressive game here. Everything was great, except for the long lines."

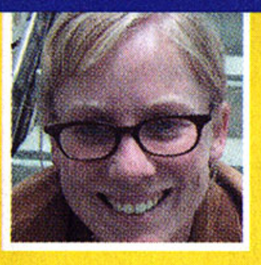


Marcus Burciaga

"I think that Nintendo and Xbox put a lot of effort into their exhibits. I think Nintendo is going have to show more launch games for GameCube, but I thought they did a great job with the Game Boy Advance. A big disappointment for me was that Sega's booth wasn't open to the public."

Sammie Prescott

"Sony's booth was obnoxious. They wouldn't really let you take pictures or play games first; they always let the corporate people on first. Also, the passes for the show are way too expensive. As far as games, I'm really excited for Star Fox and Luigi's Mansion on GameCube."



Chandra Conway

"E3 is always overwhelming, but it's very well organized. It seems a little more mellow this year. It doesn't seem too frantic; everyone's been pretty cordial. It hasn't been the feeding frenzy I felt it was last year."

The Future In Your Hands

Game Boy Advance Now Yours To Love

When the Game Boy released back in 1989, not even the most optimistic minds thought it would be the phenomenon it is today. With a more compact design in the Game Boy Pocket, a variety of color styles, and the updated graphics of Game Boy Color, the handheld has gone on to sell more units than any other video game system ever. In fact, during the past two years, the portable segment of the video game industry was the only one to show growth. None can deny that Game Boy was the dominant reason this was the case, and as Nintendo head Peter Main said during an E3 press conference, "Nintendo doesn't just have leadership in this area, we have absolute ownership." This legacy shows no signs of slowing down for Game Boy Advance. In honor of its US arrival, we give you the best and worst of the system, recap its launch titles, show you a slew of accessories, and highlight dozens of games you've never seen before. The future is in your hands, and we're about to read your palm.

What Makes This Boy Better?

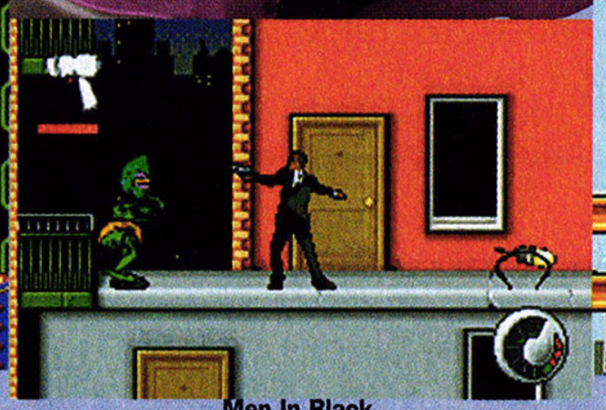
Nintendo went all out to make sure the jump from Game Boy Color to Game Boy Advance was one small step for video games, and one giant leap for handheld technology. Every aspect of the system is an improvement over GBC. The CPU has gone from 8-to 32-bit, and the onscreen color number is up to 511 in character mode, which is crystal clear in the screenshots you'll see in this story's pages. For all those colors, it's easy to see why the screen size has been drastically increased. All previous Game Boy carts will work with GBA, and can even be formatted to take advantage of this longer screen.

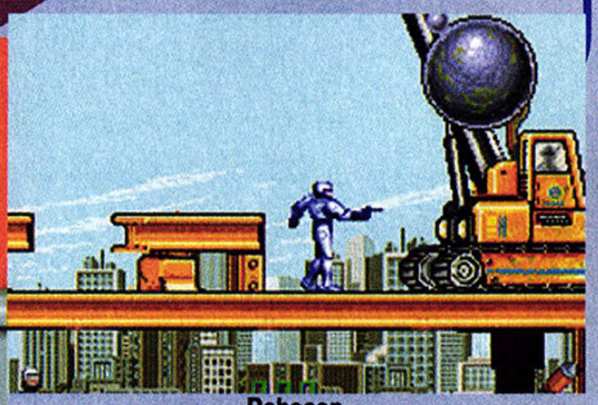
Your ears will no longer curse portable audio, as sound effects, speech, and music are nothing like the hive of angry bees that provided the audio for your original Game Boy. You'll be able to hear this music to your ears in stereo and Dolby Surround. For once, a handheld's headphone jack will serve a practical purpose.

All this technology weighs in at under $100. That's a great value considering the original black and white Game Boy retailed for $170 when it first came out.

Lady Sia

Mega Man Battle Network


Men In Black

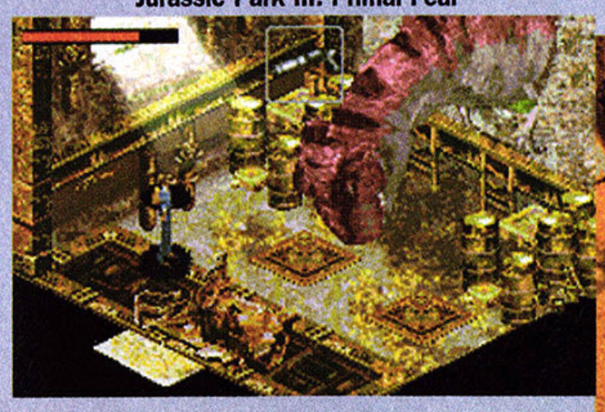

Robocop

Game Boy Advance Report Card

GBA instantly has a library of hundreds of carts, thanks to its backward compatibility with every Game Boy game out there. However, the first wave of Advance titles are some of the best ever in portable gaming. We've given a verdict to 15 first-gen games in this issue. For your convenience, here are the scores they were given, along with the page where you can find the full review.

Title	Score	Page
Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2	9.25	89
Dodge Ball Advance	9	88
F-Zero: Maximum Velocity	9	89
Castlevania: Circle of the Moon	8.75	89
Fire Pro Wrestling	8.5	93
Super Mario Advance	8.5	91
Chu Chu Rocket	8	90
Pinobee: Wings of Adventure	8	88
Rayman Advance	8	92
Pitfall: The Mayan Adventure	7.5	90
Earthworm Jim	7	92
Krazy Racers	7	90
GT Advance	6	93
Iridion 3D	6	88
Ready 2 Rumble Boxing: Round 2	4.25	93

Jurassic Park III: Primal Fear



Top Gun

X-Men: Reign of Apocalypse

Prehistorik Man

What Rocks

Better Graphics

The games on Game Boy Advance look better than anything seen on a portable video game system before. Its processing power rivals that of the Sega Saturn and other 32-bit consoles, and its superiority to Nintendo's own SNES is evident in many first-generation titles. Handheld games shouldn't be able to look this good.

Higher Resolution

Nintendo claims that the 2.9" Game Boy Advance LCD screen gives a sharper picture than a PlayStation does when displayed on a 27" television. We're not about to heap that much praise onto the unit, but none can deny the picture looks infinitely better than the dot matrix monitor of the old Game Boy, and just about every other portable system.

Great Games

The initial library for GBA puts a lot of home console launches to shame, with instant classics like Dodge Ball and Mario. We eagerly anticipate future titles like Diddy Kong Pilot and Magical Vacation, and it appears every genre is represented. You can't forget the hundreds of Game Boy and GBC carts, either.

More Buttons

Adding shoulder buttons to GBA really opens up gameplay possibilities. They're in the perfect place for strafing in first-person shooters like Dark Arena, or as strikes in fighting games like Super Street Fighter II Turbo Revival. The other buttons keep the same quality as Game Boy Color.

Longer Battery Life

Even with all that graphical muscle, Game Boy Advance was designed to require fewer trips to the convenience store for batteries. Not having a backlit screen is a major factor in this. Two AAs will last you around 15 hours, which is 50% longer than you'd be playing with the same coppertops on Game Boy Color.

What Blows

No Polygon Power

The downside to GBA's great graphics are that, for the most part, they're stuck as two-dimensional sprites, rather than the rotating, scaling polygons we've grown accustomed to. Instead of true 3D play, you will see clever tricks like Mode 7 and extra frames of animation to give the illusion of three dimensions, but it's not the same.

Screen Glare

With so much gaming on the tiny, non-backlit Game Boy Advance screen, it's harder than ever to see what's going on. The extended color palette and hi-res visuals are great with optimal lighting, but without it you'll be squinting your eyes and tilting the unit to capture every ray of light. This is especially true in dark games like Castlevania.

Lame Game Threat

Game Boy Color was a dumping ground for rushed, primitive, and just all-around crummy games. The system attracted pathetic platformers and asinine action games like trailer trash to a Jerry Springer taping. We can't help but be fearful of this same disturbing phenomenon happening on Game Boy Advance, too.

Cramped Hands

If you're not used to playing a portable, GBA can easily give you a nasty case of the sore fingers. Even seasoned handheld heroes will experience a little pain while trying to both hold up the system and use the shoulder buttons.

Expensive Games

All that coin you'll save on batteries will be sorely needed for buying games, since they'll retail for between thirty and forty dollars. This means a game like Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2 may cost more on Game Boy Advance than it does on PlayStation. Is it really worth so high a price to be able to take it with you?

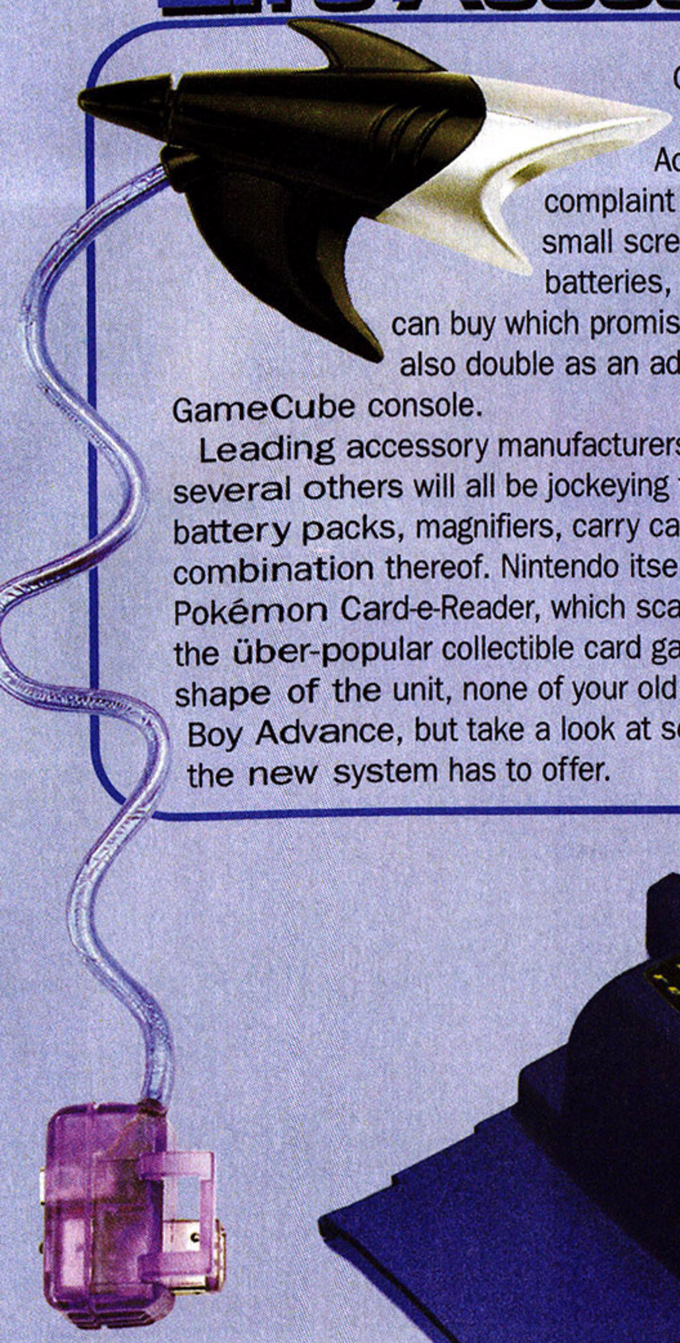
Bomberman Tournament

ESPN Championship Golf 2002

Graffiti Tournament

Razor: Freestyle Scooter

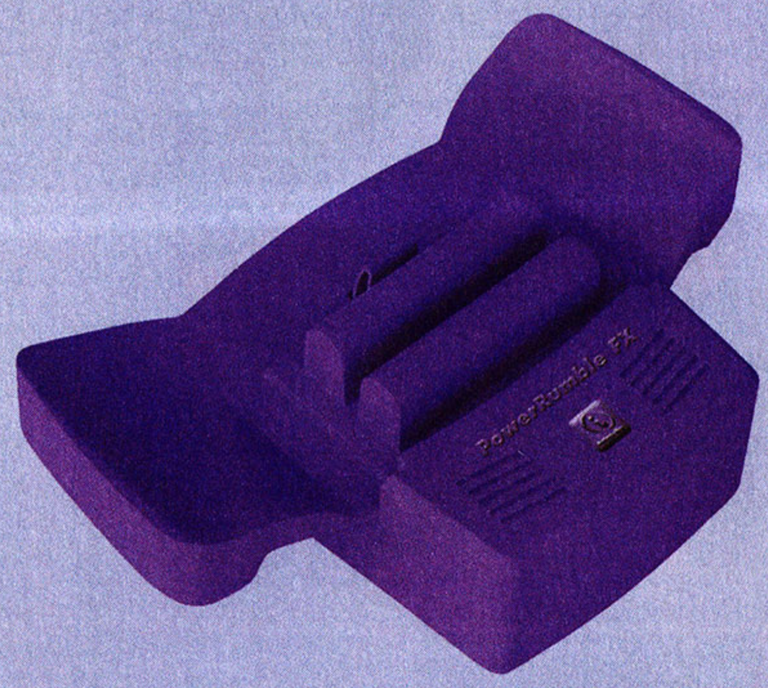
Life Accessorized



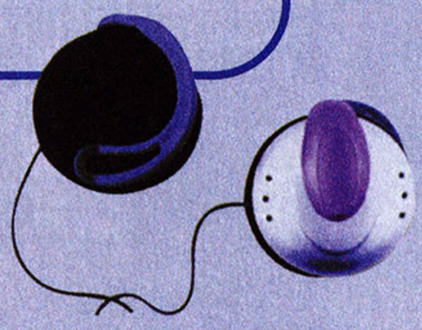
Game Boy had an endless stream of accessories for it, and Game Boy Advance promises just as many. For any complaint you may have about the unit, be it small screen, lack of backlighting, or expensive batteries, rest assured that there's an item you can buy which promises to remedy the situation. GBA will also double as an add-on itself for Nintendo's upcoming GameCube console.

Leading accessory manufacturers InterAct, Nuby, Pelican, Mad Katz, and several others will all be jockeying for your gaming dollar with lights, battery packs, magnifiers, carry cases, link cables, and any combination thereof. Nintendo itself will be releasing the Pokémon Card-e-Reader, which scans in data from new cards in the über-popular collectible card game. Due to the different shape of the unit, none of your old GBC stuff will fit on Game Boy Advance, but take a look at some of the sweet accessories the new system has to offer.

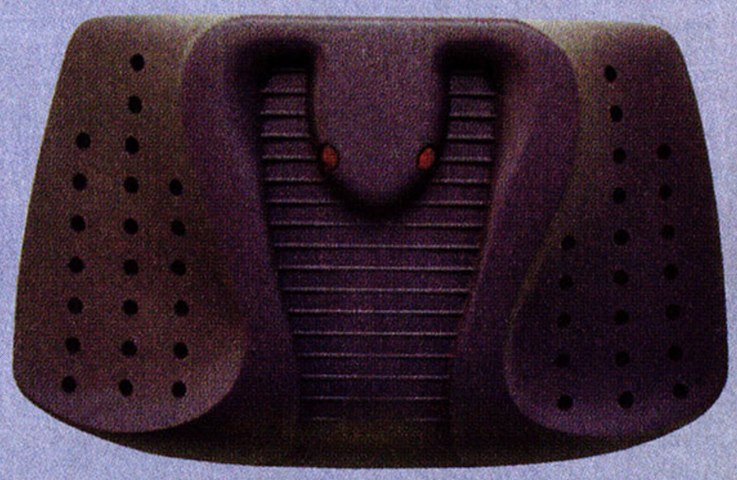
Nuby Cobra Light Advance



InterAct PowerRumble FX



Mad Katz Headphones



Nuby Cobra Power Deluxe

InterAct SharkLight

Nintendo Pokémon Card-e-Reader

Nyko UFO Light

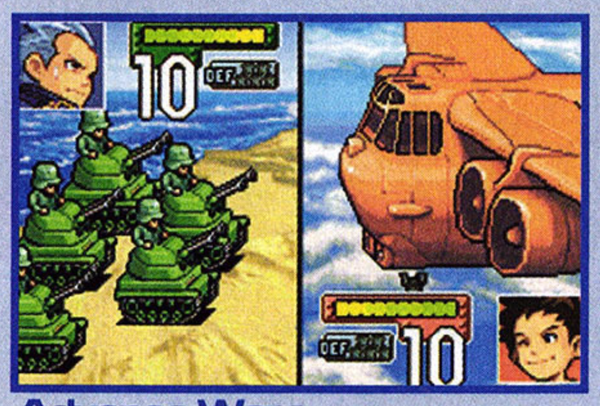
Mad Katz Battery Grips

Release List

Game	Publisher	Release Date			
High Heat Baseball 2002	3DO	Jul-01	Breath of Fire	Capcom	Sept-01
Fortress	Majesco	Jul-01	Jurassic Park III: Park Builder	Konami	Sep-01
Bomberman Tournament	Activision	Jul-01	Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone	EA Games	Oct-01
Pac-Man Collection	Namco	Jul-01	Dark Arena	Majesco	Oct-01
Aerial Aces	Majesco	Jul-01	Mat Hoffman's Pro BMX	Activision	Oct-01
Final Fight One	Capcom	Jul-01	Shaun Palmer's Pro Snowboarder	Activision	Oct-01
Jurassic Park III: DNA Factor	Konami	Jul-01	Batman Vengeance	Ubi Soft	Oct-01
ESPN Final Round Golf 2002	Konami	Aug-01	Street Fighter Alpha 3	Capcom	Nov-01
Spider-Man: Mysterio's Menace	Activision	Aug-01	Bonx	Ubi Soft	Nov-01
F-14 Tomcat	Majesco	Aug-01	No Rules: Get Phat	TDK	Nov-01
Super Street Fighter II Turbo Revival	Capcom	Aug-01	Planet of the Apes	Ubi Soft	Nov-01
Lady Sia	TDK	Aug-01	Frogger Advance	Konami	Nov-01
Klonoa: Empire of Dreams	Namco	Aug-01	Jurassic Park III: Chaos Effect	Konami	Nov-01
Mega Man Battle Network	Capcom	Aug-01	Razor: Freestyle Scooter	Crave	Nov-01
X-Men: Reign of Apocalypse	Activision	Aug-01	Bass Fishing 2002	Konami	Nov-01
ESPN X-Games Skateboarding	Konami	Sep-01	Spyro: Season of Ice	Universal	Nov-01
Men In Black	Crave	Sep-01	Rainbow Six: Rogue Spear	Ubi Soft	Dec-01
Caesar's Palace	Majesco	Sep-01			

It Got Game

Want to play a few games? Nearly every third-party publisher has a handful of Game Boy Advance titles in the works. Add in Nintendo's own developing power, and you'll see 60 games available by year's end.



Advance Wars
Nintendo

Bring this game with you to history class, and tell your teacher it's helping you learn.

Breath of Fire
Capcom

This SNES RPG is one you may have missed. Now that it's on GBA, you have no excuse.

Kao the Kangaroo
Titus

Titus' Dreamcast 3D platformer loses a dimension but keeps that ol' Aussie charm.

Fortress
Majesco

An original, clever variation on the Tetris theme, with four worlds to battle in.

Batman Vengeance
Ubi Soft

That weird caped guy is back to stop thugs and their conniving thuggery.

Dark Arena
Majesco

Who says GBA can't do 3D? This FPS looks just as good as SNES Doom.

Spyro: Season of Ice
Universal

Our favorite purple dragon makes his first handheld voyage, but keeps all the fire-breathing fun intact.

Golden Sun
Nintendo

Up-close combat and nifty role-playing puzzles keep GBA's library varied.

Banjo-Kazooie: Grunty's Revenge
Nintendo

Bear and bird leave the cloudy textures of Nintendo 64 to strike out in portable fashion.

Barbarian
Titus

Rendered sprites have this hack n' slash title reminding us of Killer Instinct and X-Perts.

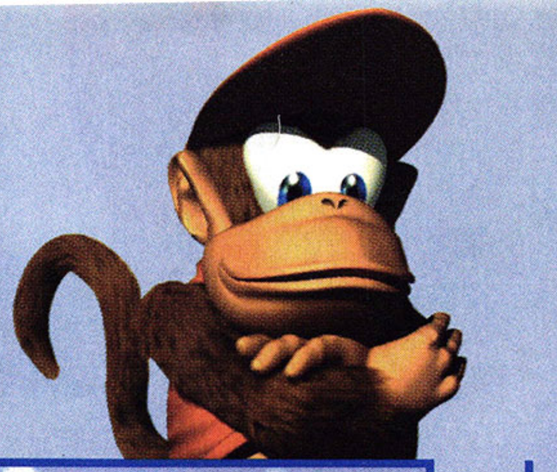
Donkey Kong Coconut Crackers
Nintendo

A puzzle game with Donkey Kong? Has Nintendo gone bananas?!

Mario Kart Advance
Nintendo

This port is nearly as fun as it was on SNES, and this time four players can cruise.

THE FUTURE IN YOUR HANDS



Diddy Kong Pilot

Nintendo

Diddy Kong Racing was a kart tour de force, and in this game the cast flies again.

Magical Vacation

Nintendo

It's a real RPG! Made by old Square employees to boot! Thank you, Lord.

Final Fight One

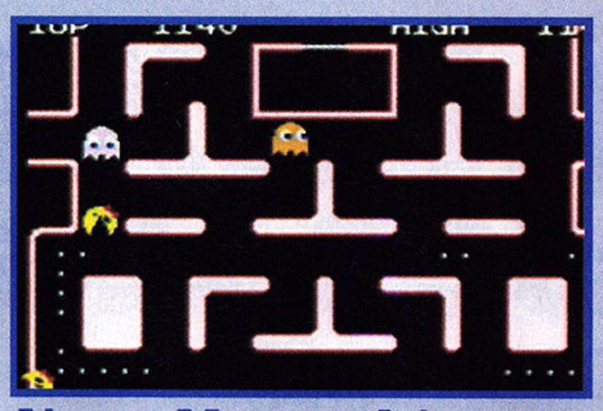
Capcom

This beat-em-up has two-player co-op, a feature missing on the first SNES version.

Klonoa: Empire of Dreams

Namco

The long-eared platform star breaks from his PS2 duties to make an appearance on GBA.



Namco Museum Advance

Namco

The best that classic gaming has to offer, now more arcade-perfect than ever before.

SabreWulf Rumble in the Jungle

Nintendo

The Killer Instinct fighter returns as the nemesis of a khaki-wearing doctor and his pets.

Monster Rancher 2 Go

Tecmo

Beating Pokémon to the punch, Monster Rancher has both training and fighting of critters.

Rainbow Six: Rogue Spear

Ubi Soft

Command a small (literally) army in the portable version of the PC hit.

Wario Land

Nintendo

Mario's most comical archenemy has the deck stacked against him in a promising platformer.

Super Street Fighter II Turbo Revival

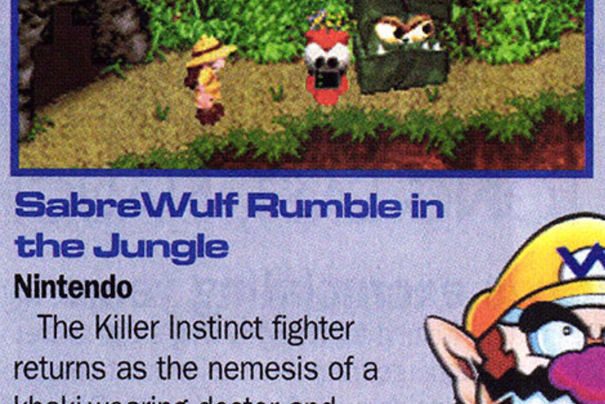
Capcom

Throw fireballs and dragon punches against your favorite World Warriors.

Sonic the Hedgehog Advance

Sega

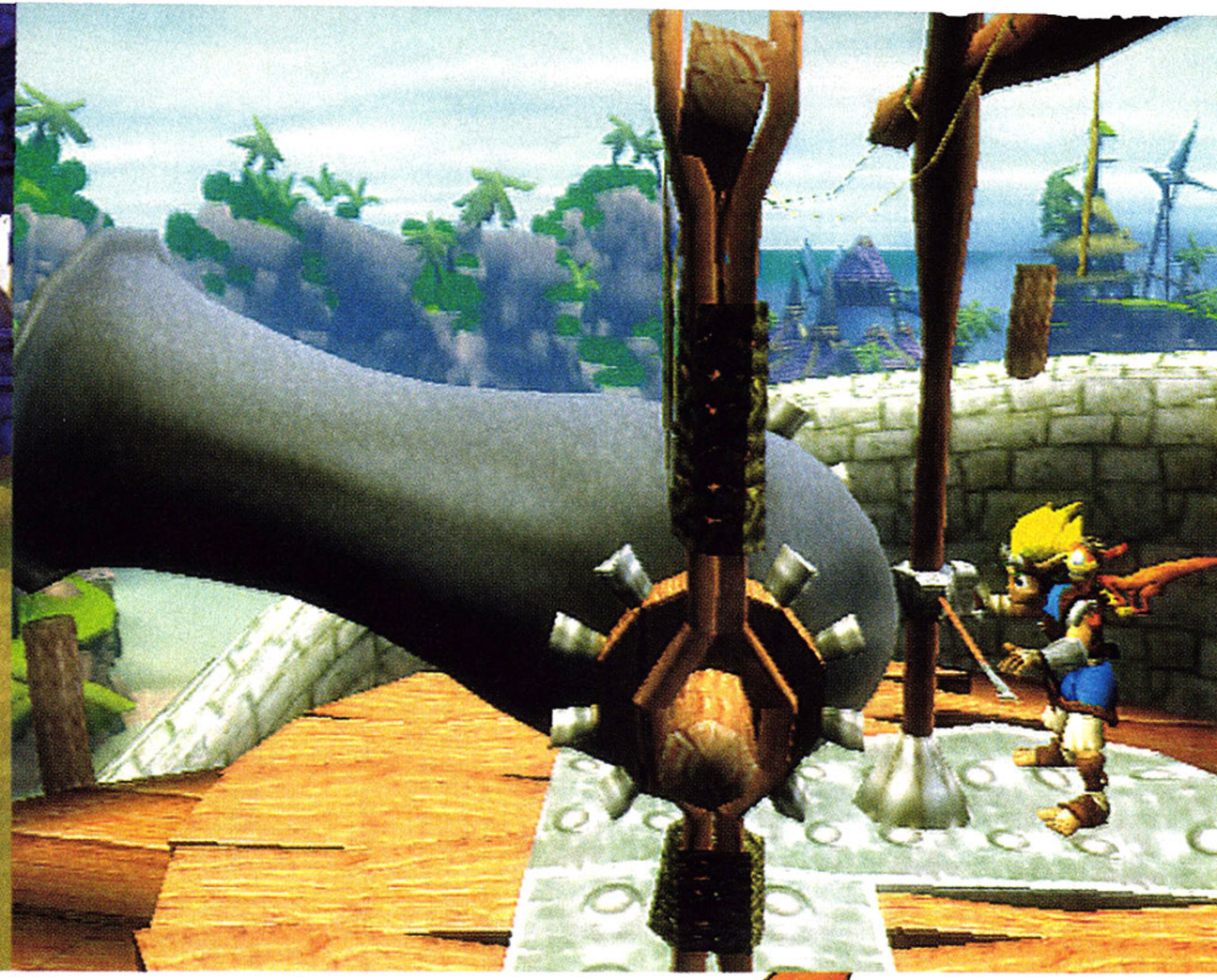
Seeing our blue bud on a Nintendo machine is just eerie, but we rather like it.



Spider-Man: Mysterio's Menace

Activision

We love Spidey, and wear his Underoos to bed every night. This game looks stunning.



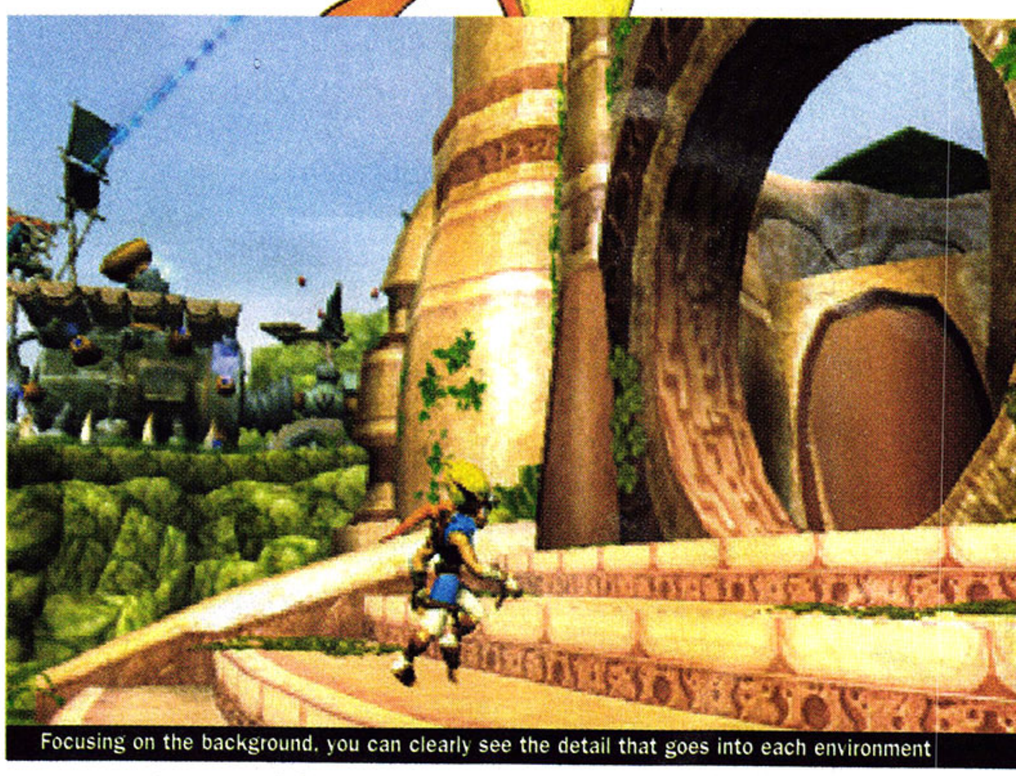
PLAYSTATION 2

JAK AND DAXTER: THE PRECURSOR LEGACY

AT LONG LAST, NAUGHTY DOG LIVES AGAIN

For two excruciating years, we've held our breaths waiting for Naughty Dog's top secret project to finally emerge from its development chamber. Early on, industry insiders confirmed Naughty Dog would no longer be attached to the Crash Bandicoot license, and more exciting yet, its upcoming project would be a completely original property. Jason Rubin, Naughty Dog's head honcho, has always desired to create a game featuring an animated gangster clam that rides around in monster trucks and blows stuff up. While Rubin could probably pitch this concept to Rockstar, we guarantee Sony would kill it within a matter of seconds. Furthermore, the talented crew at Naughty Dog, one that is multiplying faster than guppies, desires to blow the lid off the PlayStation 2 through the presentation of the most awe-inspiring and technologically advanced game ever assembled.

Showing that two years of development time can construct one hell of a game, Naughty Dog's top secret title was finally unveiled at this year's Electronic Entertainment Expo. Bearing an obscure name, Jak and Daxter: The Precursor Legacy, the gameplay shows that Naughty Dog has matured as a company and is ready to tackle anything that is thrown its way. The technology used, which combines GOOL with Andy Gavin's newfangled program, GOAL, pushes serious polys. As far as the eye can see, the lush environments are loaded with ambient life, NPCs, animated objects, intricate detailing, and the smoothest texturing around. Never once, even if the object is roughly three kilometers away, will you see pop-up or graphical flickers. The worlds are very colorful, combining the realism of Zelda with the cartoon aspects of Rareware's stable of games. If you can tear your eyes away from the breathtaking imagery, you'll see that Jak, the main character, blends into the settings quite nicely. With realistic physics and gravity at work, his movements are very lifelike, and it actually appears as though he's mounted to the ground, not floating across it. When he runs down a hill, he gains speed and his animation changes. When he grabs onto a ledge and hoists himself up, you can actually see him struggling with his weight. Even his jumps are undeniably realistic.



Focusing on the background, you can clearly see the detail that goes into each environment

Unlike the Crash games, Naughty Dog spent a great deal of time building an interesting story that intertwines with the play. The game begins with Jak and his buddy Daxter spelunking through ancient ruins on a forbidden isle off the coast. The place is off limits for a specific reason, as Daxter quickly finds out as he slips and plunges into a vat of Dark Eco. This substance, which if unleashed could corrupt the entire world, transforms Daxter into a weasel-like rodent. Not wasting any time dillydallying, Jak returns to his village to ask the sage, Samos Hagai, how to convert his friend back to normal. The elder tells Jak that only one man can save him, and thus, the adventure is afoot.

Along the way, Jak will run into Precursor technology – highly powered vehicles and structures left behind by an ancient civilization. As players manhandle the smooth control scheme, they'll want to be on the lookout for power cells. There are 100 of these in the game, and the benefits they offer will only make your quest easier. While Jak handles most of the hard work, the shoulder mounted and highly animated Daxter offers advice and solutions to many of the perplexing puzzles. Masters of the platform realm, the game will offer a healthy dose of Crash-like perils. Jak performs a roundhouse kick just like Crash's spin, and he can also link several roll and jump moves together to create super moves. You'll also unearth several minigames, many offering different styles of play, like racing and puzzle. Since the world is open to you from the beginning and you're not stuck in a stage, vehicles and a trusty bird named Flut Flut will make navigation easier.

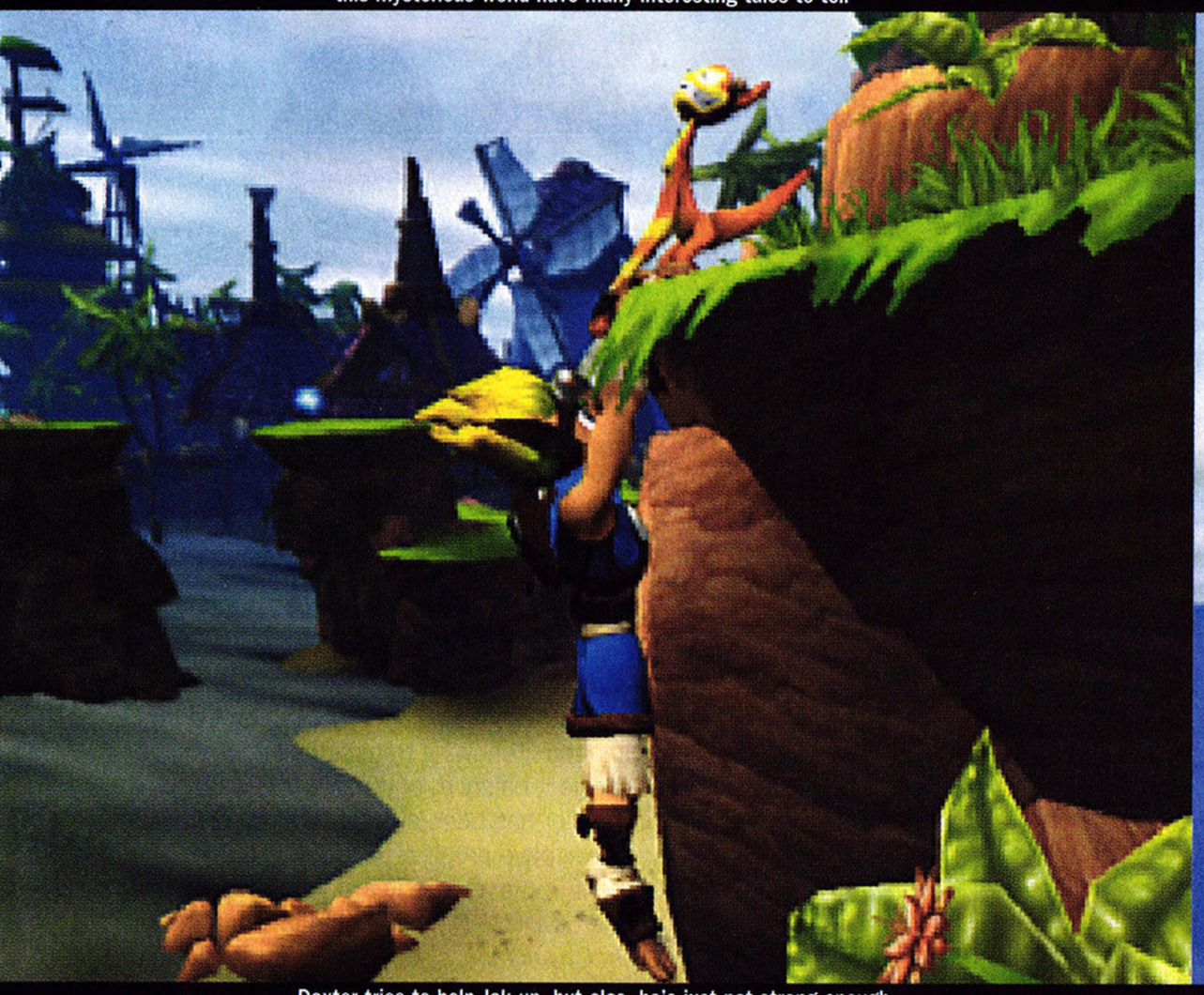
Naturally, Jak and Daxter made Game Informer's Top 10 Games of E3 list, and come this winter, we have a feeling it'll be a serious contender for game of the year as well.

As if navigating the harrowing platform portion isn't tricky enough, you'll also have to combat these snaggle-toothed grease monkeys

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/ADVENTURE ■ **PUBLISHER** SONY ■ **DEVELOPER** NAUGHTY DOG
■ **RELEASE** WINTER

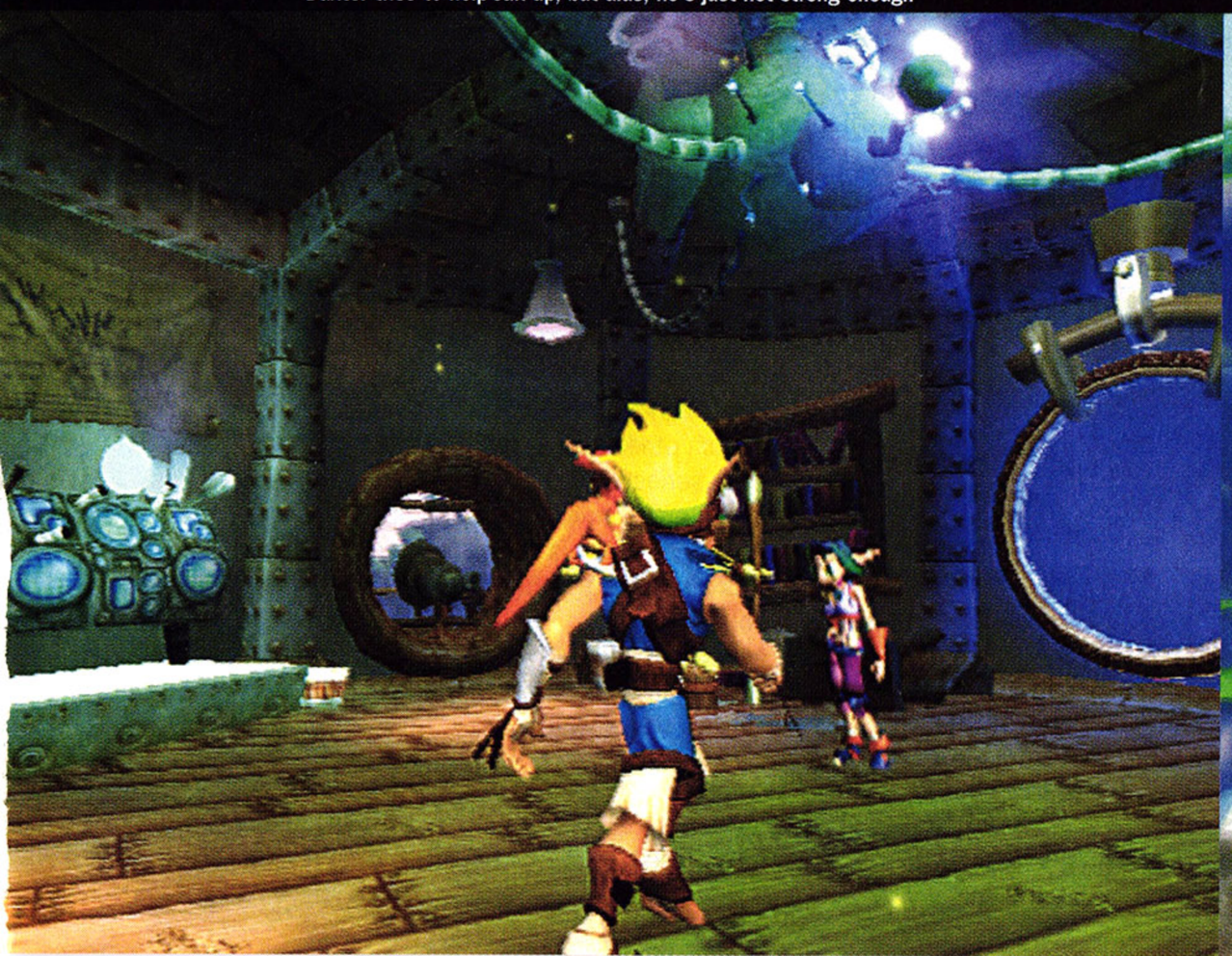
With lip-synched voice-overs and amazing facial animations, the denizens of this mysterious world have many interesting tales to tell

Ambient life can be viewed and confronted across every inch of Jak and Daxter



Daxter tries to help Jak up, but alas, he's just not strong enough

The unlikely heroes, Jak and Daxter



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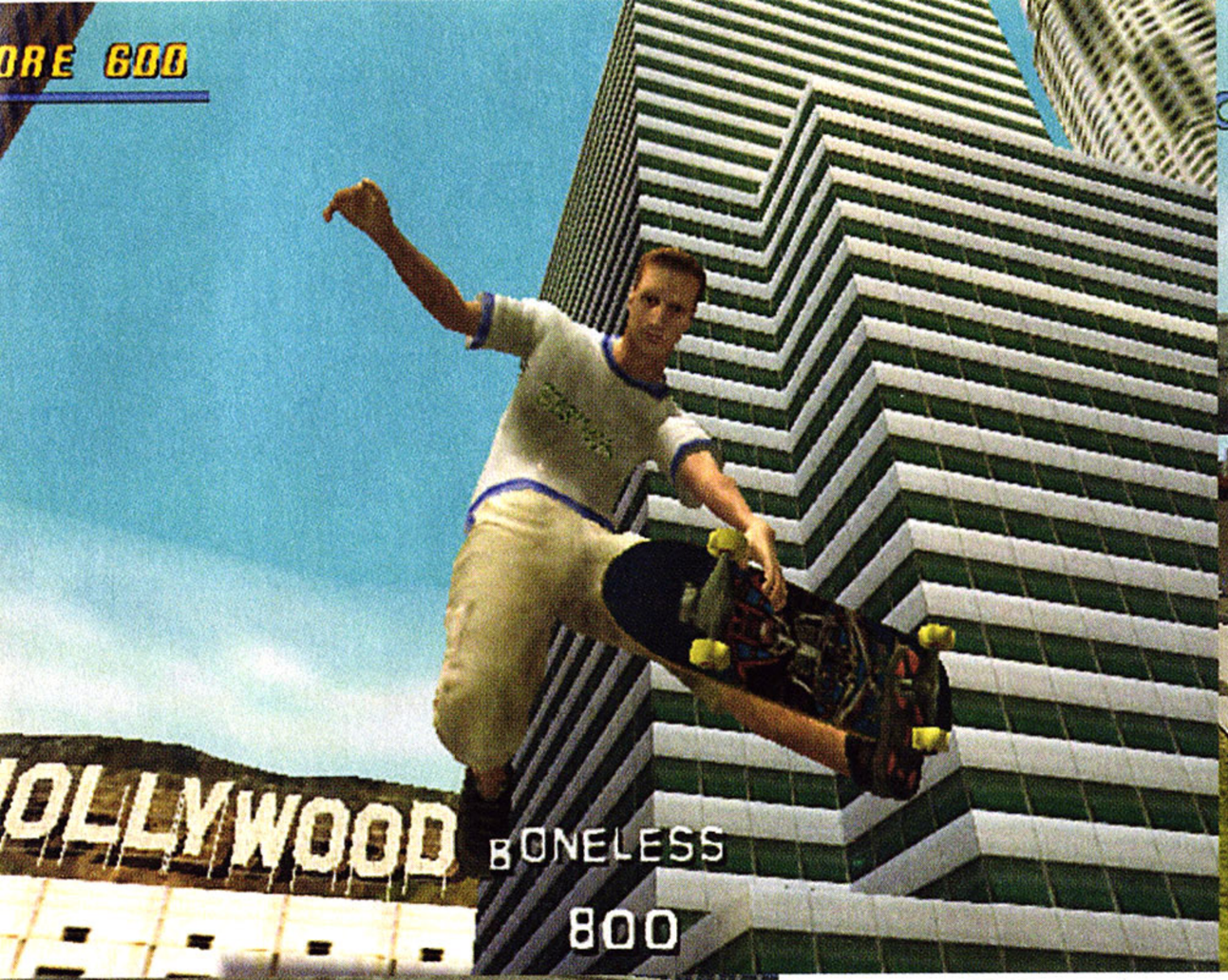
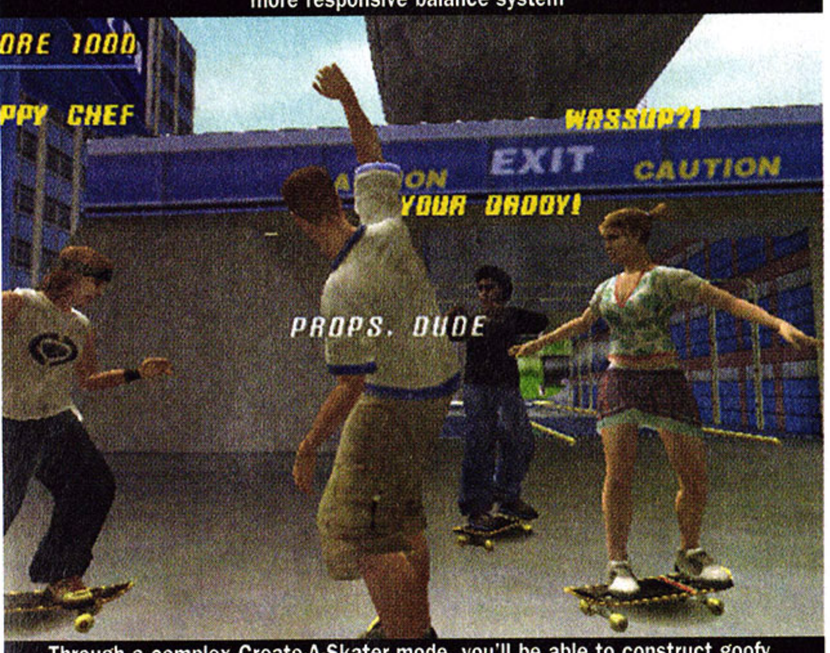


The grind physics have been completely redesigned with a more responsive balance system



Through a complex Create-A-Skater mode, you'll be able to construct goofy characters and if you're lucky, skaters that look just like you!

Striving for the utmost realism, every environment is decked out with stunning effects. Pictured here, you can see articulation in Tony's fingers, perfect collision between the board and feet, and reflections on the damp car wash floor

PLAYSTATION 2

TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 3

THE REVOLUTION BEGINS

Sparking a digital phenomenon

and forever changing the face of gaming, Neversoft's overnight success with the Tony Hawk franchise has topped retail charts and transformed professional skateboarders into pixelated icons. Around the globe, gamers are counting the days until the release of Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3, praying that Neversoft is successful in evolving to the greener pastures of PlayStation 2.

As sad a day as the passing of a great-grandparent, Neversoft has retired the PS-X engine, and has started from scratch for the PS2 debut. Certainly, the gameplay formula will closely mimic its underpowered forefather, but it won't feel exactly the same. In achieving the highest level of realism possible, each skater is composed of over 3,000 polygons, and their animations are much more fluid. With the smoothness of movement, the timing in performing tricks will vary. The speed of gameplay is much quicker than it was before, yet with the game running at a constant 60 frames per second, the responsiveness is better than it's ever been. If you look closely at the skater models, you'll see windblown garments, articulated fingers that wrap around the board, and perfect musculature.

Neversoft also spent a significant amount of time capturing the authenticity of real-world environments. All the levels are actually living worlds that feature intelligent pedestrians who interact with the skaters, and traffic that obeys stoplights and hits the brakes when a skater illegally crosses the street. For each level, Neversoft is scripting events that occur within the environments. In the lushly detailed Los Angeles stage, you'll witness a robbery that leads to a high-speed pursuit with two police cars chasing a white van. Wouldn't it be nice to help the cops? Well, you can. If you skate in front of the van, it'll run you down; however, if you grind on a specific railing, which causes a scripted earthquake, the bridge in the center of the level will fall apart, opening a new area. As you skate on top of the bridge debris, you'll see a green car hanging from the side of the bridge. A man inside the vehicle screams for your help. Why not? Rather than opening the door and letting him out, you grind on the car, sending it (and the man) tumbling to the ground. Amazingly, just as the car hits the ground, the van smashes into it and the police apprehend the marauders. This unselfish act is one of the level goals.

In the gameplay department, Neversoft has reworked everything from grinding to linking tricks. Again, animation plays a vital role. When grinding on a rail, the skaters display a wide variety of animations, showing transitions between subtle unevenness, perfect balance, and being totally out of control. The balance meter has been altered to show players which side the skater will have problems with. If you look at the shots, this feature is represented by the yellow dots.

Always one to up the difficulty, Neversoft has implemented two additional moves. On vert tricks, when the skater lands, the player can press R2 to perform a Revert. If you're quick enough, you can link this move to a Manual or flip trick, thus expanding your combo arsenal. Speaking of which, players can link together vert tricks to create Custom Combos. For example, if you perform two Kickflips, it won't score you twice, but rather the trick move will be called a Double Kickflip. Trying to up the pain factor for sloppy trick performance, you'll bear witness to some insanely grotesque bails. The blood is also more dynamic, staying where you sprayed it until the end of a session.

Saving the best for last, Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3 has a much broader multiplayer appeal. As one of the first PS2 games to run online, up to four players can jump on and skate with each other in one park. All the multiplayer games from the PS-X series should be included, and if a skater gets on your nerves, you can wind up and knock them silly. The wildly popular Park Editor is making a triumphant return, and if all goes as planned, the player-created parks will be available for online play.

Even in early form, THPS3 crushed all our expectations, and literally dropped our jaws to the floor. The realism and intuitive controls will blow you away.

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER ACTION/SPORTS ■ **PUBLISHER** ACTIVISION O2 ■ **DEVELOPER** NEVERSOFT ■ **RELEASE** WINTER

Completing specific tasks will oftentimes alter the living landscape, exposing additional routes and secrets

No longer hampered by pop-up and fogging, the draw distance in Tony 3 allows players to see everything in a level in the finest of detail

Hop online and compete against three friends. Along with a hilarious dance move, which Rune is performing to the right of Tony, skaters can beat each other bloody

Players can create custom combos by quickly linking two moves together. When landing, if you press R2, you'll perform a Revert – a new multiplier trick that can be linked to manuals and flip tricks

Just like last year, this installment will feature a Gap Checklist

Realistic animations accompany the poly-heavy skater models

PLAYSTATION 2

MAXIMO: GHOSTS TO GLORY

WHERE GHOULS N' GOBLINS TREAD

Although the Electronic

Entertainment Expo is filled with amazing sights, there are actually very few surprises for those in the know. By the time one steps foot onto the show floor, the eyes have been inundated with hype ranging from screen shots to full-blown press conferences. Hitting the convention like a stealth bomber armed with nuclear warheads, Maximo: Ghosts to Glory came out of nowhere to shock all the jaded journalists that found their way to Capcom's booth. With character design being handled by Capcom Japan and programming put together by Capcom US, this cross-continental effort had long been poo-poo'd by the press as a splintered effort doomed to failure. The playable game at E3 succeeded in turning everyone's opinion in the opposite direction.

Taking place in a medieval world seized by the evil Achille and his undead minions, players control the knight Maximo, helping him to rescue the four sorceresses that can quell the havoc which surrounds him. With Achille in complete control of the landscape, Maximo will have to face undead hordes rising from the ground, and playfields that will suddenly collapse beneath his feet.

To make it past these obstacles, players will have to make wise use of Maximo's power-up system. Enemies defeated leave behind coins. This money can be used in certain places to buy armor, weapons, and continues. Over 40 ways to improve your character can also be found and purchased. These range from new moves, like the ability to throw your shield, to equipment upgrades, such as a flaming sword. You can't have it all, however, since Maximo can only have three of these power-ups equipped at one time. More slots for these specials are earned by defeating bosses, giving Maximo the potential to be stronger as the game progresses.

Unabashedly drawing inspiration from Ghosts 'N Goblins, many components of the source material find their way into Ghosts to Glory. If he takes too many hits, Maximo's armor will fly off his body, leaving him only in his boxer shorts. Certain traps will temporarily transform the knight into an old man or a baby. Even the soundtrack will send ripples of nostalgia through the minds of many.

Not trying to reinvent the 3D action/platform wheel, merely perfect it, Maximo: Ghosts to Glory delivers fast and immediate fun that can be appreciated by both novice and veteran gamers. Its novel look and thrilling play made it one of the top games at E3, and is sure to put it at the top of many a wish list this holiday season.

The fully-3D polygonal environments are not only huge...

...they're beautiful

MAXIMO

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/PLATFORMER ■ **PUBLISHER** CAPCOM ■ **DEVELOPER** CAPCOM ■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER

Special moves can take care of a sticky situation in spectacular fashion

By felling enemies, coins are earned that can buy equipment and continues

When Maximo's health gets low, he's left with nothing but his Valentine's Day boxers

Both treasures and traps can be found in chests

Defeating bosses gives Maximo more room for power-ups...

...such as the flaming sword

Combat will have some amazing spectacles. Here, Sora faces off with a huge boss...

...runs up the beast's arm...

...and gets close enough to give it a key thwack in the noggin

PLAYSTATION 2

KINGDOM HEARTS

A TEAMING OF TITANS

When Square announced it was teaming with Disney to create a new game over a year ago, the reaction of the public could best be described as sedate, rather than ecstatic. At this year's E3, the fruits of this union – Kingdom Hearts – was revealed in video form, and even though Final Fantasy X was playable but a few feet away, those who took in both games were hard-pressed to declare which was the better of the two.

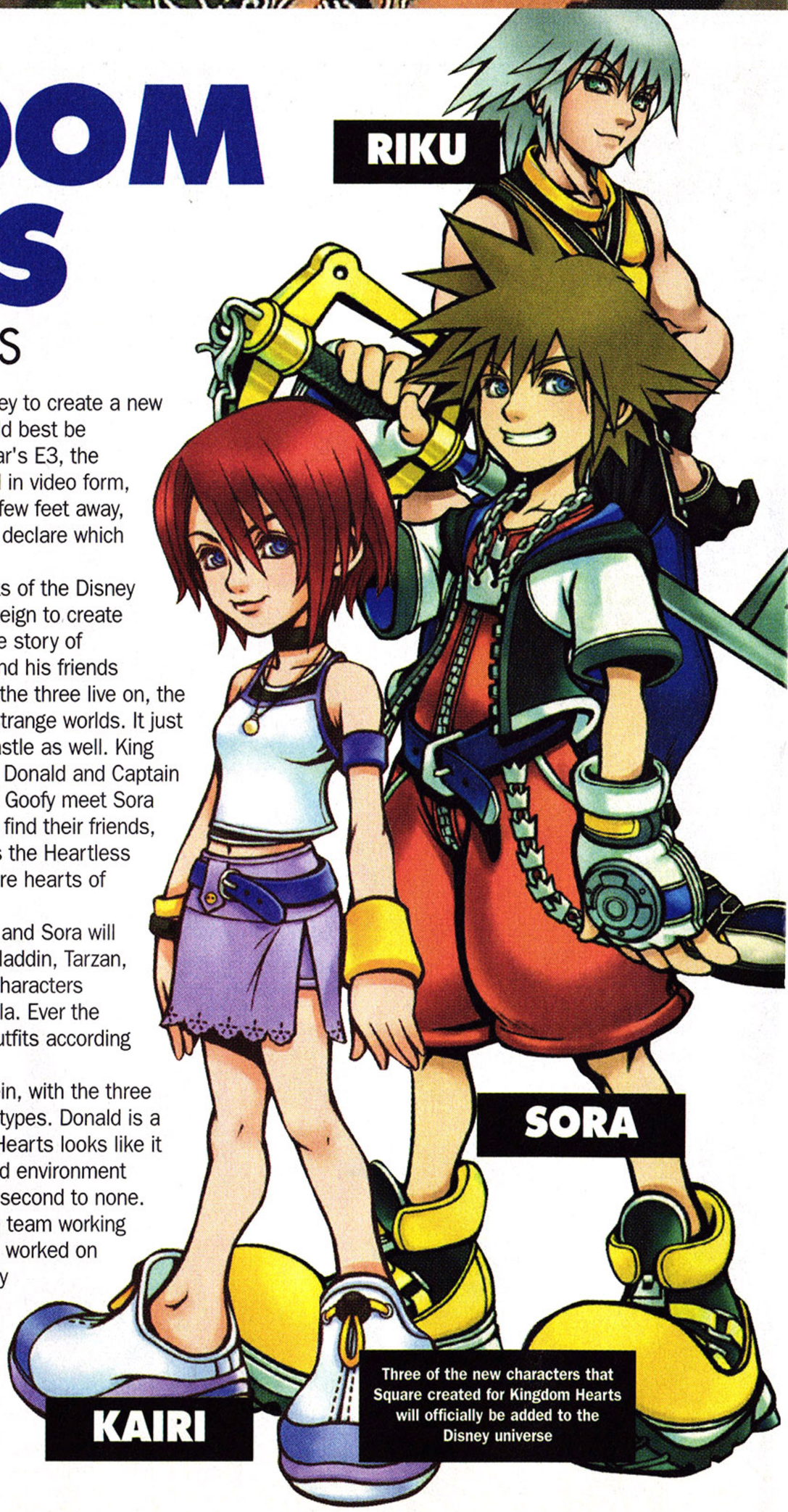
Rather than being shackled down by the constraints of the Disney universe, Square has been given a surprisingly free reign to create new characters that will interact with Walt's crew. The story of Kingdom Hearts focuses on Sora and his quest to find his friends Riku and Kairi. After a storm hits an island paradise the three live on, the trio find themselves scattered across different and strange worlds. It just so happens that things have gone awry at Disney Castle as well. King Mickey is missing, and his two guards, Court Wizard Donald and Captain Goofy, are given the mission to find him. Donald and Goofy meet Sora in their travels. The three decide to team together to find their friends, and to defeat the extra-dimensional beings known as the Heartless that are recruiting Disney villains and stealing the pure hearts of others.

In their quest to save the universe, Donald, Goofy, and Sora will visit the worlds of different Disney movies such as Aladdin, Tarzan, and The Little Mermaid, and interact with over 100 characters from those worlds, including Jafar, Clayton, and Ursula. Ever the fashion plates, Goofy and Donald will change their outfits according to what world the player is in.

Gameplay will be very much in the Final Fantasy vein, with the three main characters taking the roles of the classic archetypes. Donald is a wizard, Goofy a warrior, and Sora a rogue. Kingdom Hearts looks like it will play second fiddle to FFX in terms of texturing and environment detail, but its collision and character animations are second to none.

Square is pulling out all the stops for this one. The team working on Kingdom Hearts – an A-list culled from those who worked on the Final Fantasy and Parasite Eve series – is actually bigger than that on Final Fantasy X. Its ideas, gameplay, and look are nothing short of amazing, and definitely something to look forward to.

- **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ROLE-PLAYING GAME
- **PUBLISHER** SQUARE ELECTRONIC ARTS
- **DEVELOPER** SQUARE SOFT/DISNEY INTERACTIVE
- **RELEASE** FALL 2002



Three of the new characters that Square created for Kingdom Hearts will officially be added to the Disney universe

Gameplay will be much like Final Fantasy

The main villains of the game are the Heartless

PLAYSTATION 2/XBOX

DARK SUMMIT

NICE MOGULS

Dark Summit is a rather unique take on the heavily saturated snowboarding genre. Rather than relying on realistic physics, multiple courses, and compiling tricks to compose a gameplay package, this title concentrates on mission completion, unlocking more of one gigantic mountain, and a storyline. The resident ranger of your slope of choice, Mount Garrick, has inexplicably closed the summit to all boarders. It's your character's task to overturn this twisted ruling the only way she knows how – by stirring up the powder!

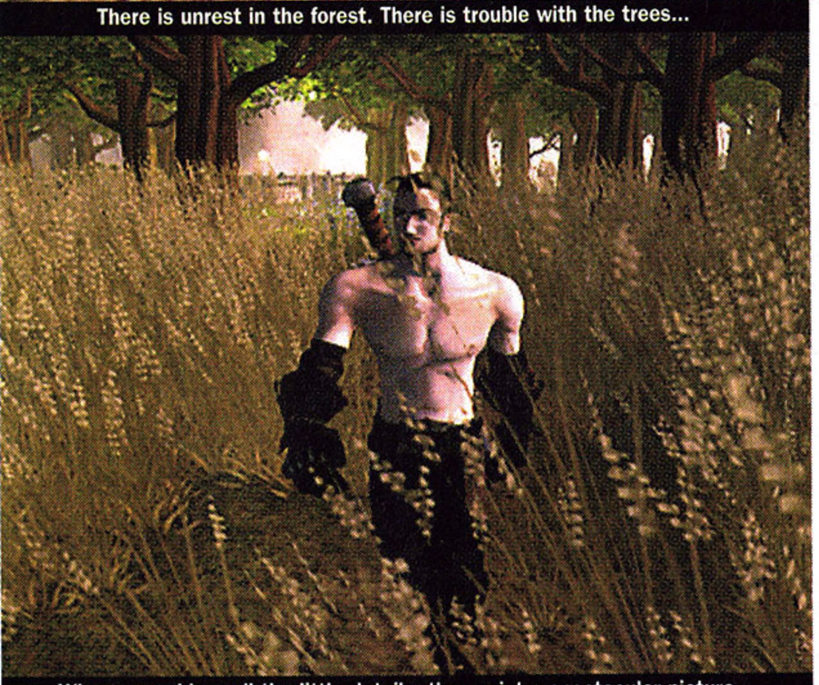
Players are given missions to perform – such as busting through a certain amount of billboards or outperforming all competitors on a halfpipe – which will earn reputation points if completed. Reputation can be used to upgrade equipment or unlock new areas and runs along Mt. Garrick's huge surface, or simply give you a sense of accomplishment.

Just because Dark Summit is mission-based, however, don't think that Radical Entertainment is ignoring the basics. Quite the contrary. The controls are tight, with a plethora of tricks and grinds available. The game has a nice Tony Hawk vibe to it, and should bring a welcome change of pace to the snowboarding scene on Xbox and PS2 this winter.

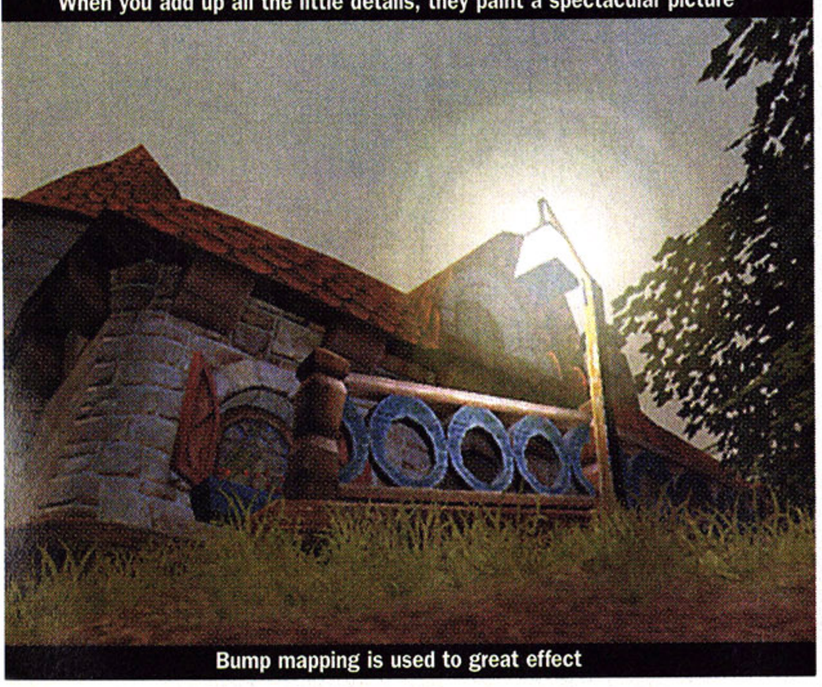
Earn respect to get new equipment and find new parts of the mountain

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER ACTION/SPORTS ■ **PUBLISHER** THQ ■ **DEVELOPER** RADICAL ENTERTAINMENT ■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER

There is unrest in the forest. There is trouble with the trees...



When you add up all the little details, they paint a spectacular picture



Bump mapping is used to great effect

XBOX

PROJECT EGO

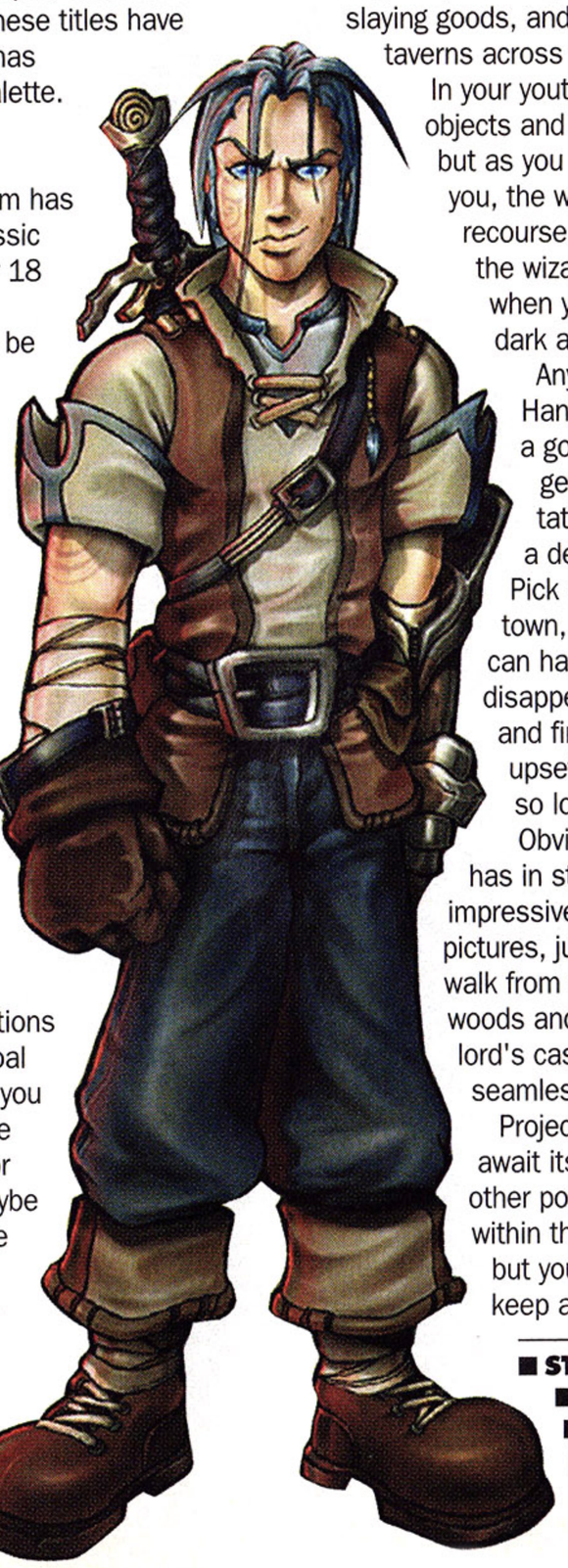
SO REAL YOU CAN TASTE IT

Lionhead Studios founder Peter Molyneux has been making hit games in the computer market for over 14 years, including such gaming staples as Populous, Theme Park, Dungeon Keeper, Magic Carpet, and most recently Black & White. While many of these titles have been ported to the console realms, he has never used one of these units as the palette. Until now.

Working with Big Blue Box Studios, a satellite developer for Lionhead, the team has set out to create a new twist on the classic RPG. Still early in development and over 18 months from completion, Molyneux promises the graphics you see here will be improved 100% from where they are now, but as it is, Game Informer was more than a little impressed by the world this team has created on the Xbox.

The game itself will feature many of the real-world aspects that Molyneux loves to incorporate into his games. Most notable of all is the use of time throughout the quest. The protagonist, a male or female adventurer, starts at the age of 15 and grows older throughout the story until he or she hits 70 or 80 years of age. And we mean this literally, as the character will physically grow wrinkles, lose hair, and even grow weaker as he or she ages.

Not only will time affect the way your character looks, it will influence your actions and the environment itself. Since the goal of Project Ego is to let you do whatever you like, you can lead your character to a life of crime as an assassin if you see fit, or follow the noble path of a knight, or maybe somewhere in-between. If you see some pants you are interested in, or another item on any character, kill him and take what you like. But beware, the townfolk don't take kindly to murderous tyrants, and will avoid and fear you, which in certain situations might actually be used to your advantage. Follow the noble path and the children of the town will try to look like you, perhaps even follow you on an adventure to see if you live up to the hype. Disappoint, and they may lose faith in you. Deliver the dragon slaying goods, and the townsfolk will sing of your praises in taverns across the lands.



In your youth, you could spend time moving heavy objects and buff yourself up into a Conan-like warrior, but as you age and your ability to swing an axe fails you, the way of the wand may be your only recourse. Or perhaps you choose to just follow the wizard way and lose your hair at an early age when you spend too much time studying the dark arts.

Anything and everything is open to you. Hang around outside and get your character a good tan, or head to the barber shop and get yourself a fancy haircut. Perhaps the tattoo artist can adorn your bald head with a design that will strike fear in your enemies. Pick a flower and bring it to the pretty girl in town, woo her, and get married. Perhaps you can have kids and then be a deadbeat dad; disappearing for 15 years, only to come back and find your children older and perhaps a little upset that dear old dad has been gone so long.

Obviously, the level of detail that Big Blue Box has in store for us in this adventure will be impressive enough, but as you can see from the pictures, just the world is a feat unto itself. You can walk from the local township, through the dark woods and fields, to the mountain peaks where the lord's castle sits ominously in the mist, all in one seamless, gorgeous world.

Project Ego may still be early, but we eagerly await its completion. At this point, combat and other portions of the story, and how it will work within this grandiose world, are still in the works, but you can rest assured Game Informer will keep a close eye on this revolutionary title.

- **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ROLE-PLAYING GAME
- **PUBLISHER** TBA
- **DEVELOPER** BIG BLUE BOX STUDIOS
- **RELEASE** TBA

No time to smell the flowers, there is adventure in dem der hills

The texture quality and detail in the face is truly amazing

Remember, this is not Photoshop lens flare

PLAYSTATION 2

ICO

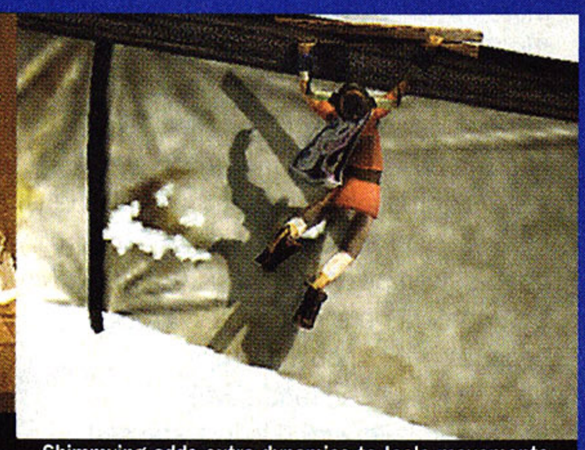
HONK IF YOU'RE HORNY

Sony looks like it's just starting to come out of its first-party coma with excellent titles like GT 3 and Dark Cloud on the horizon. Coming all the way back from the grave is ICO, a game which was left for dead on the PlayStation. Of course, Dark Cloud had similar circumstances surrounding it, and now it resides in the upper echelon of vids for the PS2. So just what is the mystery of ICO?

Ico's village sacrifices one boy per generation. This is because the one born with horns is believed to be possessed by an evil spirit. Buried alive, Ico manages to escape his tomb, but knocks himself unconscious in the process. Visited by what he thinks is a dream of a princess in distress, he soon finds her predicament to be reality. What is the meaning of his horns? And why was he chosen to care for this princess? Such mysteries are causing ICO to sparkle in quite an alluring way.

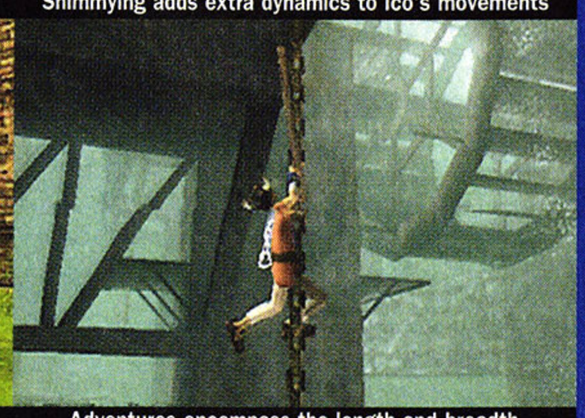
Gameplay revolves around protecting your female friend. Whether it be disarming traps and puzzles, navigating the castle, or defeating monsters, it takes two to tango. This fact isn't just in principle, but you'll actually have to grab hold of her at times using the R1 button. What once was merely a plot point has now become an integral part of the ICO experience. While not extraordinary looking, the game has come a long way from its PlayStation origins, and should continue to go much further still.

"...And here is my own personal sunset. Pretty cool huh?"



Shimmying adds extra dynamics to Ico's movements

Ico soon realized his picnic plans were awry with no tunes and no wine



Adventures encompass the length and breadth of the castle

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/ADVENTURE ■ **PUBLISHER** SONY
■ **DEVELOPER** SONY ■ **RELEASE** AUGUST

PLAYSTATION 2

STUNTMAN

HELMET ABSOLUTELY REQUIRED

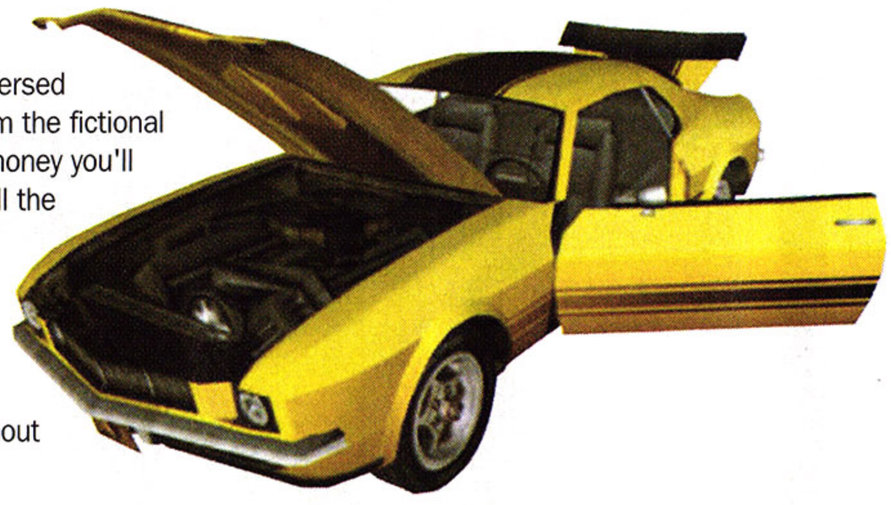
Reflections' Driver series

made you the wheelman and injected a serious amount of cool into a genre that had been taken over by nerdy sim-junkies. Even the second title for the franchise pushed the doors open on the PlayStation and the original itself. Now Martin Edmondson and his crew once again have the task of blowing up video game racing and setting the trend on the PlayStation 2. Stuntman demands all the precision of the Driver series while taking that franchise's cinematic tendencies to very literal conclusions.

Lee Majors may have made Redford such a star in *The Fall Guy*, but this stuntman is no laughing matter. Taking Gran Turismo's license tests to more involving heights, you must complete all of the 20-plus individual scenes that comprise one of the game's five or so movie sets. Each location has you driving varying vehicles. Filming in Monaco has you driving a hot sports car, standing in for some international spy. On the set in Louisiana, however, you are called upon to barrel roll your way past a swampy creek (à la *Live and Let Die*). These environments aren't just filler, though, because after shooting wraps up, you get to see (and save) the film's trailer which is interspersed with your stunts and scenes from the fictional movie. Rewards also lie in the money you'll pocket and spend on items to fill the Stuntman Arena (such as pyro effects, flaming hoops, and vehicles). Here you can design your own daring concoctions. Otherwise, you can spend time cruising the title's locations without the cameras in Free mode.

GI recently got a behind-closed-doors look at Stuntman, and there's more than enough here to elicit a few oohs and ahhs. You will always be visible in the driver's seat, and the cars themselves will be 3D rendered in their entirety at all times. Fuzzy dice will sway with every sharp turn (visible with Stuntman's third- or first-person views) and blown-off hoods shall reveal fully articulated engines. The director may want to get everything in one take, but you'll enjoy pummeling the bejesus out of your car in each attempt, and watching it over and over again on replay. Meanwhile, real-time shadows always cast true according to the source lighting and the object receiving it. Reflections seems to have solved PlayStation 2's anti-aliasing problems for itself. While Stuntman's Swiss Alps location may be filled with the noise of your slush-spitting snowmobile, it won't be bothered by an invasion of ugly jaggies.

Driver's missions may have had all the grit and the glory so far, but we're just as excited about donning our helmets for what feats Reflections has lined up for us later next year.



That '70s bubble chopper craze never really took off, although Lamborghinis always remain in style

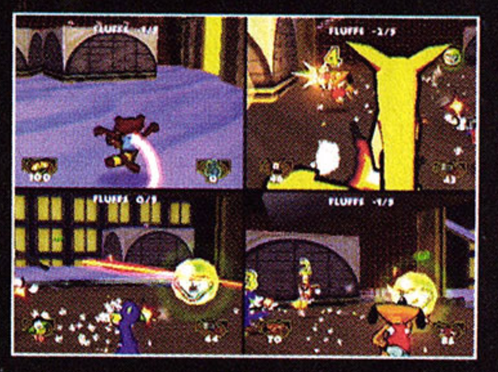
Your stunt vehicles won't always be hot cars

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/RACING ■ **PUBLISHER** INFOGRAMES ■ **DEVELOPER** REFLECTIONS
■ **RELEASE** 2ND QUARTER 2002

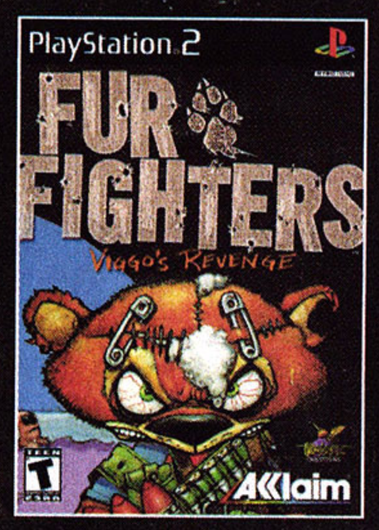
HELL TO PAY

Over 30 levels of pure, unadulterated animal anarchy!

Stalk & destroy Viggo's goons with over 20 weapons!



Go head-to-head in 15 multi-player Fluffmatches!



The villainous General Viggo has kidnapped the Fur Fighters' families as part of his vile, megalomaniacal plan for world domination. Now, it's revenge time, as you lead the Fur Fighters against Viggo and his horde of psycho animal terminators.

TEEN
T
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Comic Mischief
Mild Language
Violence

PlayStation®2

Acclaim®

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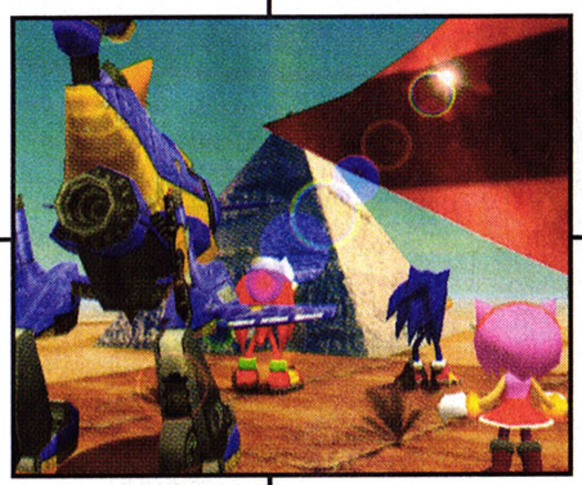
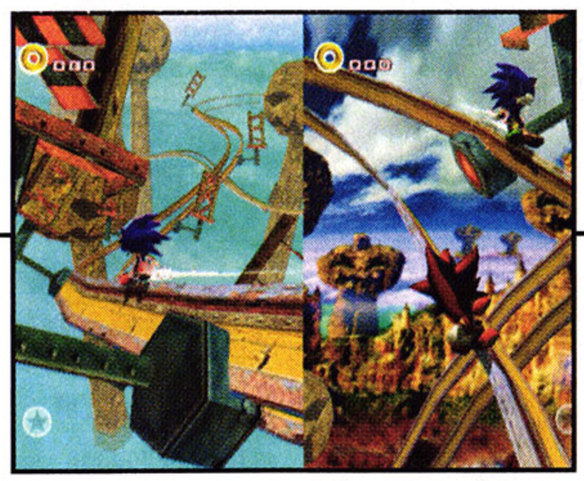
GOOD HEDGEHOG.





Play as Sonic and board, swing and grind to save the world.

SEGA.COM/SONICADV2

SONIC TEAM™

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EVIL, SINISTER, MALCONTENT HEDGEHOG.

SONIC ADVENTURE 2™

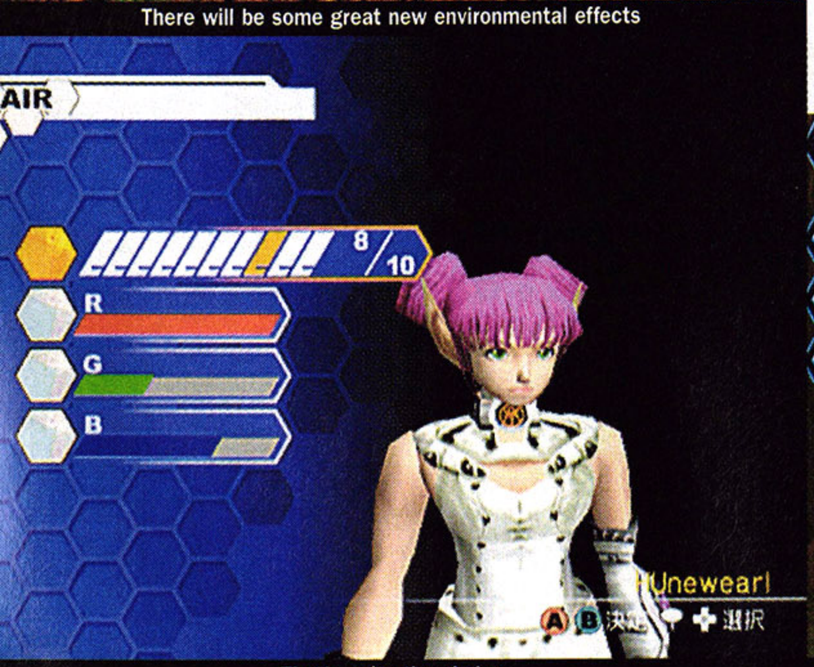
EVERYONE
E
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
Violence

Play as Shadow, Sonic's evil double, and conquer the world.

Dreamcast™

We're not sure what this person is saying, but it's probably dirty

There will be some great new environmental effects



That's quite the choker

DREAMCAST

PHANTASY STAR ONLINE VER. 2

ONE OF DREAMCAST'S LAST DREAMS

A global phenomenon erupted when Phantasy Star Online debuted in late January of this year. As the first console-based massively multiplayer RPG title, Dreamcast players the world over were finally able to team up and fight alongside each other as they improved their characters and social skills. Indeed, a few of our own here at GI were swept up in the whirlwind, and plunged headlong into hours of online play. The ever-resilient and groundbreaking Dreamcast found an outpouring of support. Then came the demise of Dreamcast, and with it, the hopes of a long life for PSO.

Fear not, Sega lovers! The Dreamcast may be issuing its death rattles, but there's more PSO to come. With the tentatively titled Phantasy Star Online Ver. 2, players will have the opportunity to explore original levels, features, and fight updated and dangerous monsters. The old levels you've grown to know and love have been kept as well, so if you're feeling overwhelmed in a new area, you can go back to Forest 1 and feel right at home. Since Sega wants you to get as much as you possibly can out of this expansion, they're increasing the level cap to 200. Just imagine the havoc you can wreak by the time you've invested five months of your life into leveling up your character!

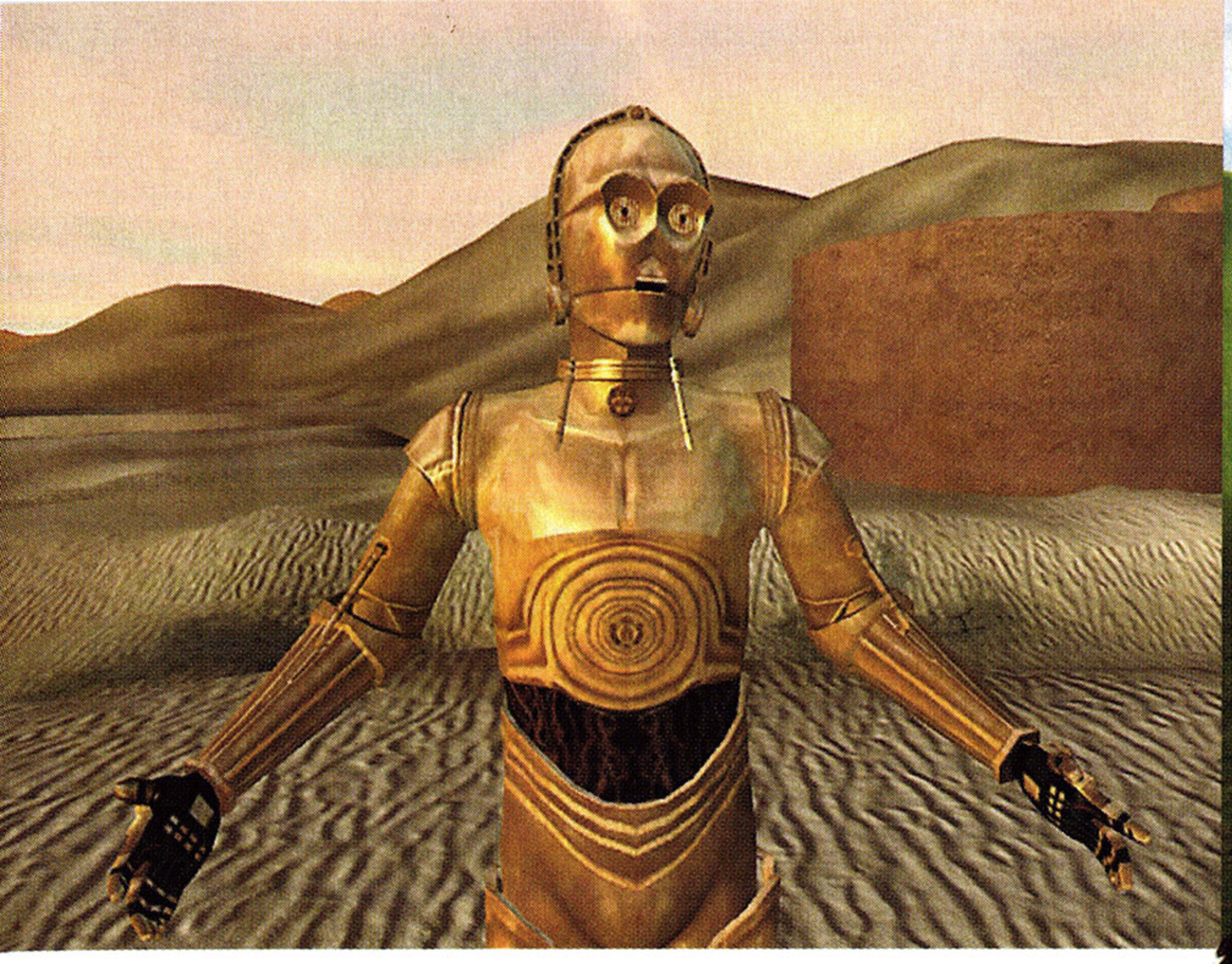
Also added for all you bloodthirsty heathens out there will be a Battle mode where you can take a buddy on to see who's best, or set up a grudge match with that one idiot who won't leave you alone. Lobby Ball will be available for play with up to 12 players while you chat and get a game going. Once you do find a party to roll with, you'll find rare and wonderful new items, as well as witness day passing into night as you adventure throughout PSO Ver. 2's expansive and persistent environments. If you're still not satisfied, don't worry – Sega's got an ace up its sleeve. Let's say you do make it to level 200, tough guy. And let's say you are kicking some major heinie. You ain't nuthin' until you take on the Ultimate Difficulty mode. We guarantee it'll cut you down to size faster than a lumberjack dispatching a sapling.

We're hoping for an early summer release for this highly anticipated title, but you can't rush Sega. It has to take its time to make sure everything is bug free and looking great. Goodness knows it hit the nail on the head the first time. Now please hold onto something as we invoke the name of GameCube. Nintendo gamers will be able to partake in this PSO offering as well. Will it get lost in the GameCube launch shuffle? Perhaps, but it certainly won't go unnoticed.

■ **STYLE** MASSIVELY MULTIPLAYER ONLINE RPG ■ **PUBLISHER** SEGA ■ **DEVELOPER** SONIC TEAM ■ **RELEASE** SUMMER

Open sesame!

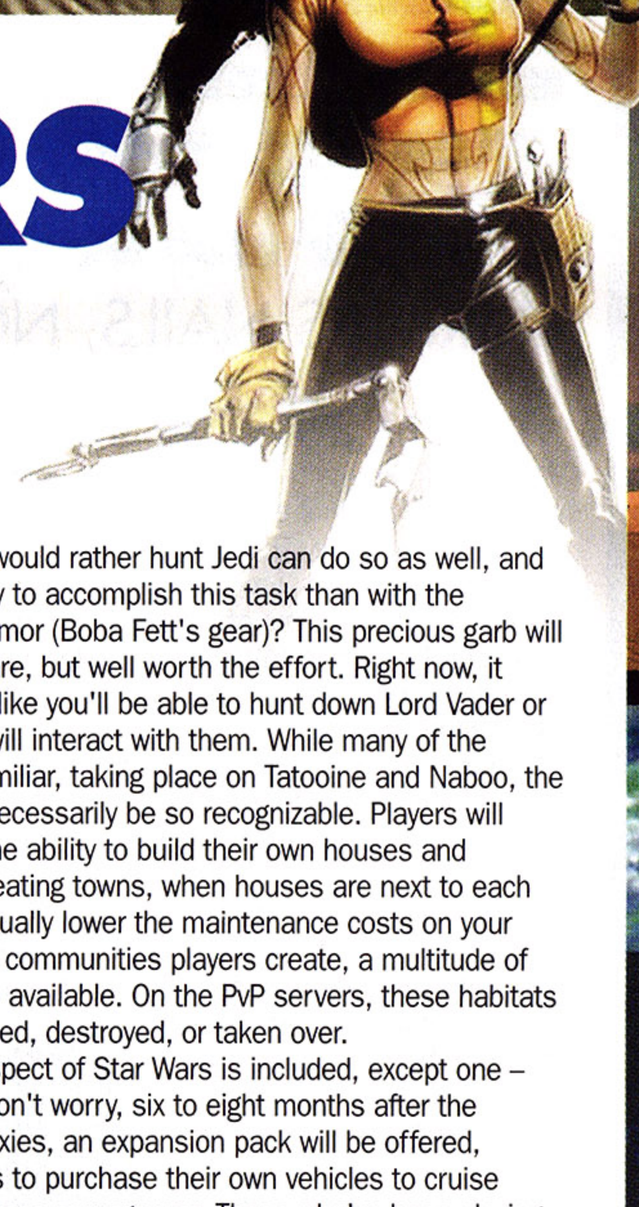
"Note to self: Don't play with fire"



PC

STAR WARS GALAXIES

20 YEARS IN THE MAKING



After signing a peace treaty, talented developers from EverQuest and Ultima Online, the two most successful massively multiplayer online ventures to date, have united in hopes of bringing George Lucas' vision to life with the utmost authenticity. Those fortunate enough to catch a glimpse of this dream team's work herald Star Wars Galaxies as the most sophisticated project in gaming history.

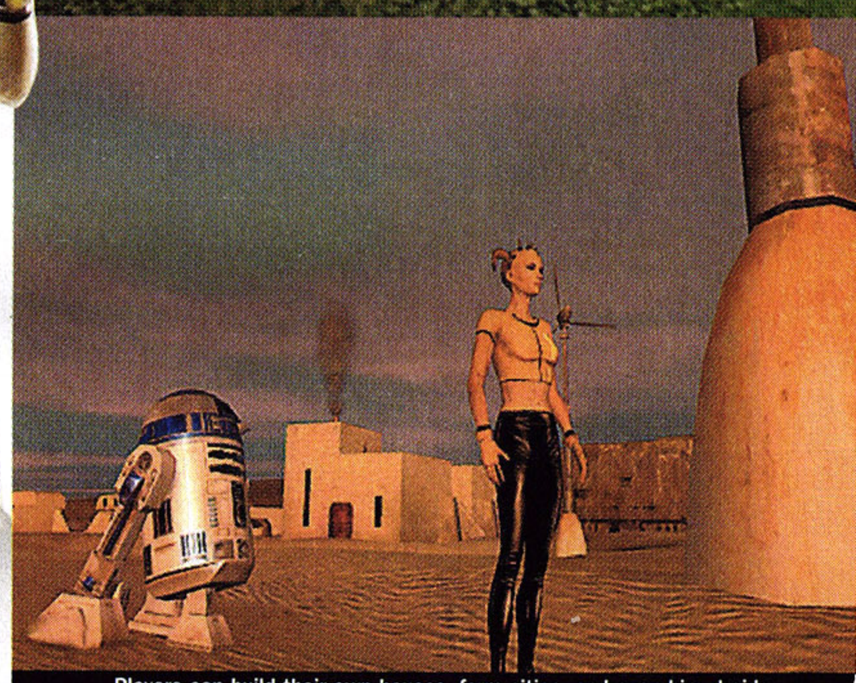
Taking place after the Battle of Yavin, players are thrust headfirst into the Galactic Civil War. As the Alliance clashes with the Empire, you'll be asked which affiliation you wish to side with. Will you join the Emperor's ranks and hunt down the last of the Jedi? Help Mon Mothma restore peace? Or remain neutral and watch the war erupt from a safe distance? Rather than make every player human, the predominant species within the Imperial army, you can, if you choose to, play as a Wookiee, Rodian, Twi'lek, Mon Calamari, Trandoshan, Zabrak, or Bothan. Each species has something different to offer. Just to give you a taste, the Twi'lek race communicates through the secret head-tail language, Wookiees possess great strength and intellect, and the high mental willpower of the Zabrak translates into skill enhancers and attribute bonuses.

While everyone desires to play as a Jedi, Sony and LucasArts won't let just anyone achieve the rank of Jedi Knight. The journey to this esteemed status will be very difficult. There won't be a cap on the Jedi populace either, yet LucasArts and SOE are working on an organic system that will create fluctuation over time. Of course, Force powers are based on a skill system that is divided into several different trees. Much like training, you'll have to select which powers you want to focus on and learn. Just like Luke in *Return of the Jedi*, players can construct their own lightsabers, complete with different blade colors, and yes, Sith Lords can build a double-bladed saber. The saber can block laser fire and cut through just about any material. Since the game features item decay, you'll need to be knowledgeable to prevent your saber from breaking over time.

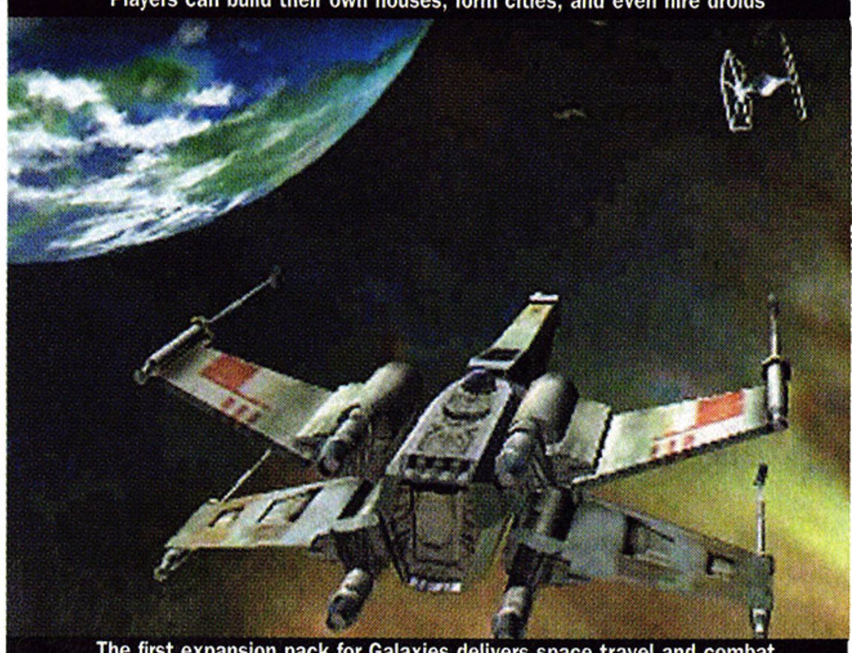
Players who would rather hunt Jedi can do so as well, and what better way to accomplish this task than with the Mandalorian armor (Boba Fett's gear)? This precious garb will be extremely rare, but well worth the effort. Right now, it doesn't sound like you'll be able to hunt down Lord Vader or Luke, but you will interact with them. While many of the settings are familiar, taking place on Tatooine and Naboo, the locales won't necessarily be so recognizable. Players will actually have the ability to build their own houses and buildings. In creating towns, when houses are next to each other, you'll actually lower the maintenance costs on your pad. Within the communities players create, a multitude of services will be available. On the PvP servers, these habitats can be ransacked, destroyed, or taken over.

Every little aspect of Star Wars is included, except one – space travel. Don't worry, six to eight months after the release of Galaxies, an expansion pack will be offered, allowing players to purchase their own vehicles to cruise across the cosmos or wage war. Those who've been playing from the beginning will surely have the funds available to jump right into this aspect.

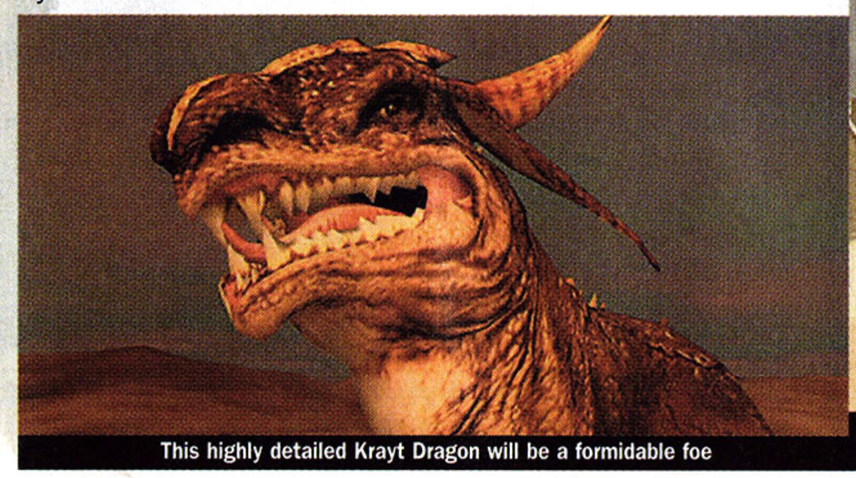
This truly is an ambitious project, and everything we've seen or heard about it leaves us in awe. LucasArts hasn't solidified a release date yet, and since the game utilizes creatures and items from Episode II, there's a good chance we won't see it until late 2002. In the meantime, enjoy life and see the world. When this game launches, that's the last you'll see of it.



Players can build their own houses, form cities, and even hire droids



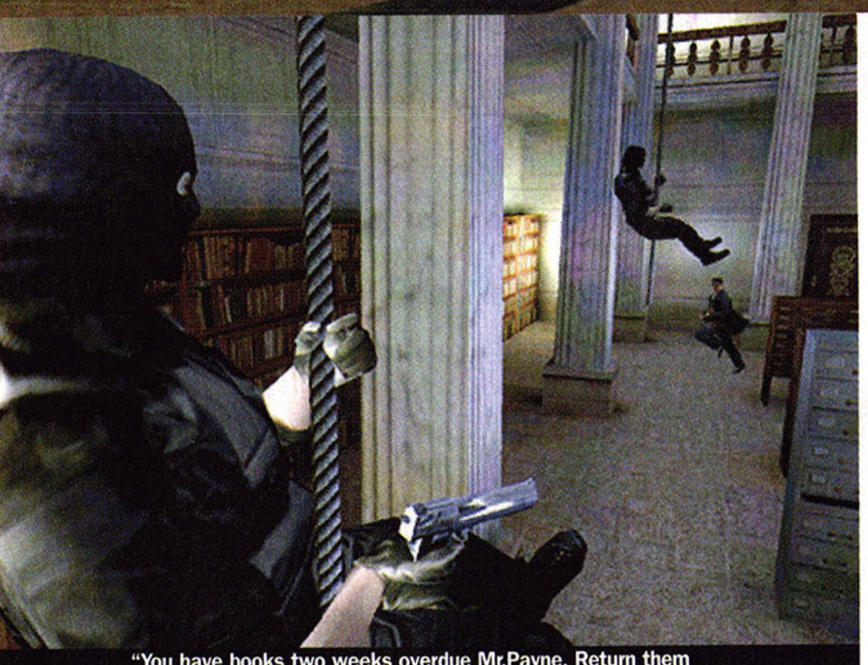
The first expansion pack for Galaxies delivers space travel and combat similar to that in the X-Wing series



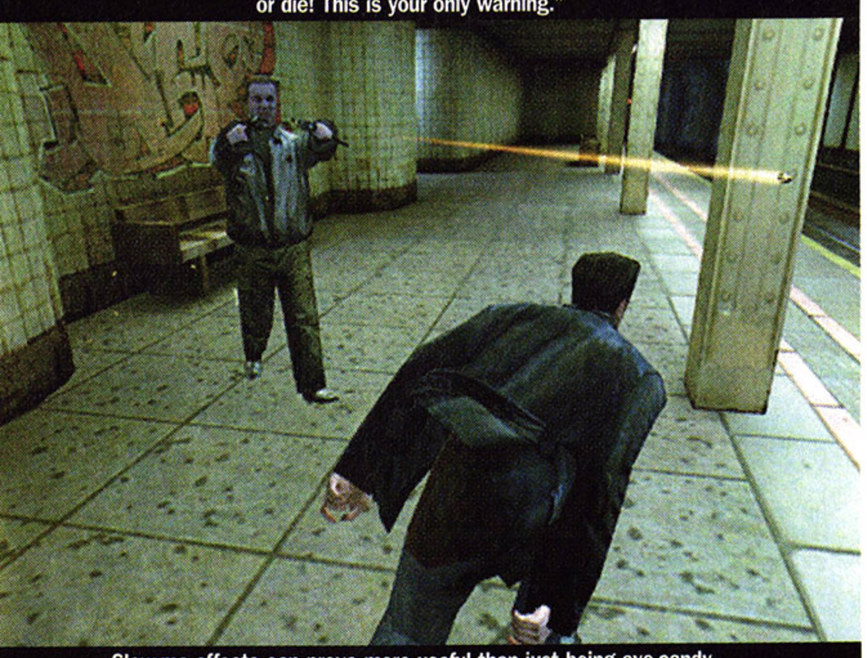
This highly detailed Krayt Dragon will be a formidable foe

After retiring from Hellraiser, Pinhead took a trip to Tatooine and became one of the cantina's most decorated bartenders

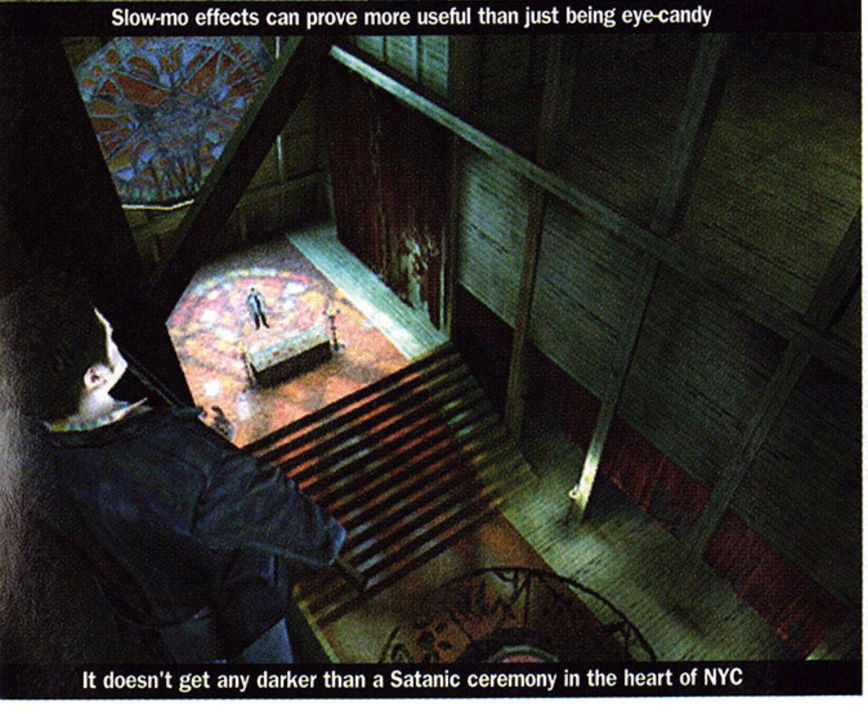
- **STYLE** MASSIVELY MULTIPLAYER ONLINE RPG
- **PUBLISHER** SONY ONLINE ENTERTAINMENT/LUCASARTS
- **DEVELOPER** SONY ONLINE ENTERTAINMENT/LUCASARTS
- **RELEASE** LATE 2002



"You have books two weeks overdue Mr.Payne. Return them or die! This is your only warning."



Slow-mo effects can prove more useful than just being eye-candy



It doesn't get any darker than a Satanic ceremony in the heart of NYC

PC/PLAYSTATION 2

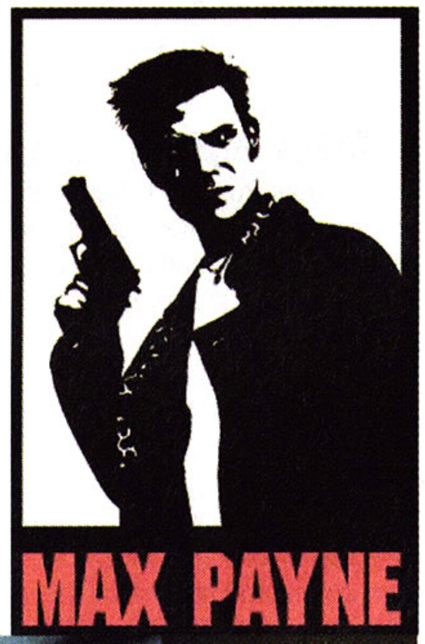
MAX PAYNE

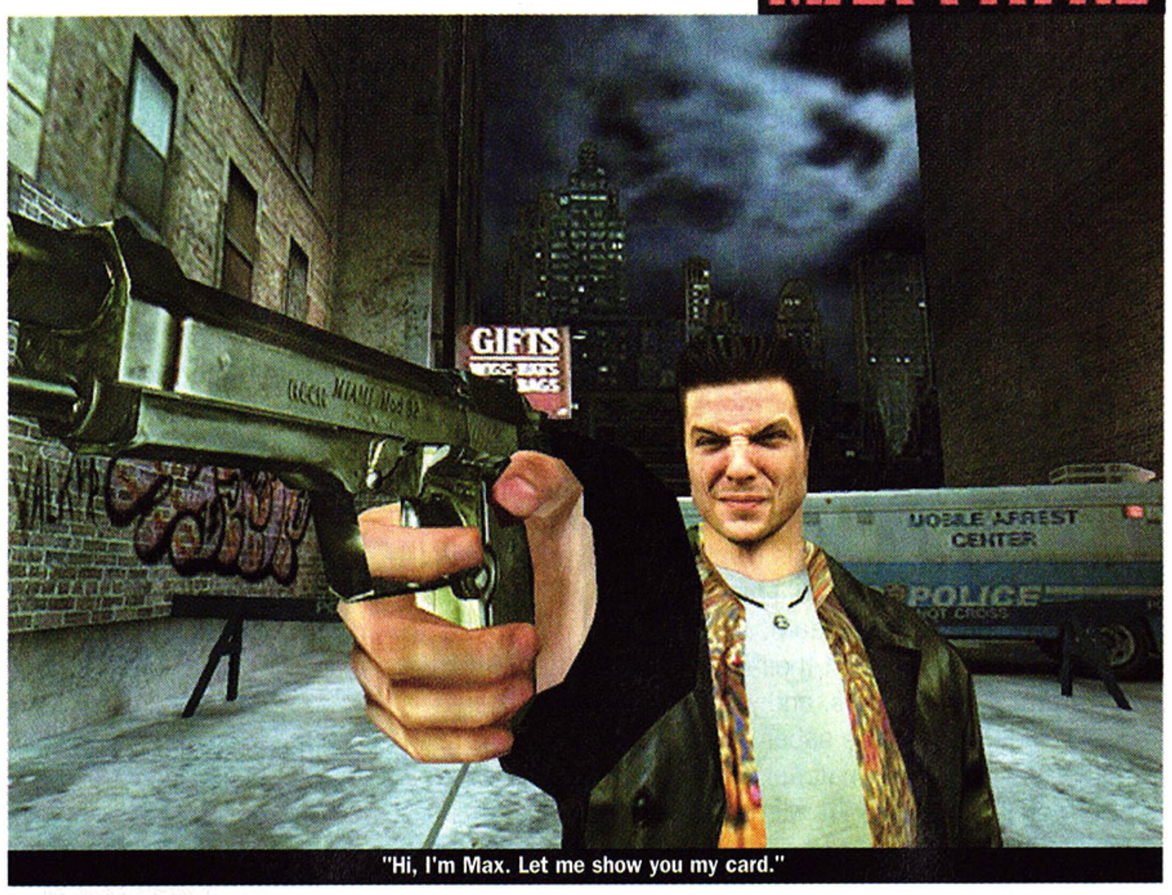
HARD AS NAILS, NO CHANCE TO FAIL

True to Rockstar's rock star image, Max Payne again shows the publisher as a company who wants to break the rules at every turn and have the gamers screaming for more. This anti-hero's exploits will be told in typical action, shoot 'em up fashion, but will be painted with thick, dark strokes of cinema that range from *The Matrix* to the classic film noir style. Max doesn't want to save the world, he just wants to deliver justice with his own hands.

A man with no family and nowhere to run, he owes this current situation all to the New York mob. Deep undercover in their midst, burning with vengeance, and implicated in a murder of a fellow cop, his only option is to come out with both barrels blazing hot. What transpires is a mission-based title which attempts to merge smooth gameplay with movies, and even the drama of comics. New York's mean streets serve as more than just setting, with her bombed-out subways, graffiti-tagged walls, and ever-present grime enveloping you in Max's predicament. Similarly, on the visual front, Payne will utilize slow motion and multiple camera angles to imbue fight scenes with effects made popular by *The Matrix*. These will be combined with our hero's stylized shooting and dodging motions to help make the game more than just a burst of gunfire. Between missions, graphic novel-like picture panels provide yet another piece that attempts to set this puzzle apart.

Remedy and 3D Realms are taking their sweet time on this one, and this caution could mean all the difference in a world filled with third-person bad-asses toting guns. We'd love to see perfect bullet impact physics on walls, a twisting and involving plot, and gun play that has all the bite of *Reservoir Dogs*. The PlayStation 2 has yet to see any serious attempt at this sort of modern, urbane crime nightmare. Max Payne's a man who has nothing to lose, which just might make him the most dangerous man on the system.





"Hi, I'm Max. Let me show you my card."

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** GOD GAMES/ROCKSTAR GAMES ■ **DEVELOPER** REMEDY/3D REALMS
■ **RELEASE** SUMMER (PC)/WINTER (PS2)

PC

SID MEIER'S CIVILIZATION III

HERE'S TO HOPING

Civilization is one of the best strategy series the PC has ever known. There are genre-bending elements in every installment that have intrigued and wowed fans for years. That said, many things have hampered Civ gamers from fully enjoying the Civ experience. Bugs have been a constant problem and worry. Call to Power II was released in such a buggy state that it was almost unplayable in some instances.

From what we've seen at E3 this year, Firaxis is putting its heart and soul into delivering a game that will not only build on the success of its older cousins, but in a way that won't frustrate and alienate the target audience.

The first thing that comes to mind when we think about the Civilization series is depth. Sid knew what he was doing when he built a game that could be tweaked and modified six ways from Sunday.

From irrigating the land around your communities, to building transportation throughout your empire, you always had the ultimate control over how, when, and where your territories grew. The newest Civilization is sticking to this strategy and building on its strengths, while attempting to eliminate its weaknesses.

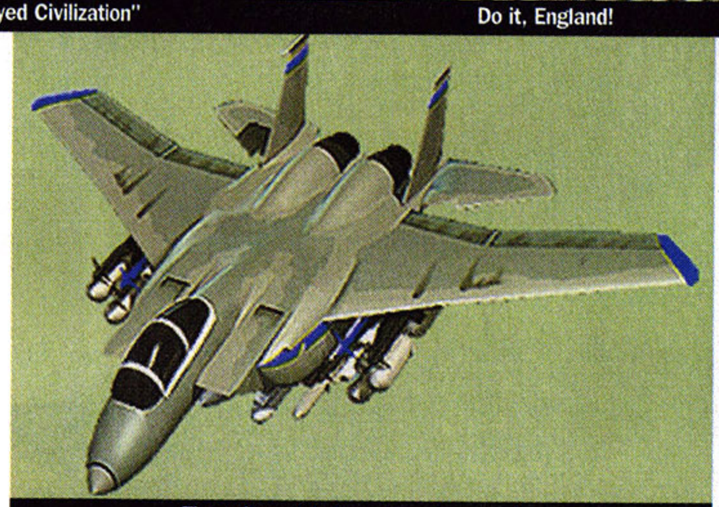
One of the most complicated and delicate functions of previous Civilization titles has typically been the ornate and complex diplomacy system. It's hard not to anger your neighbors as you manhandle their cities. There was always a delicate balance that needed to be reached to avoid a multiple-front war. To help facilitate easier negotiations, Civ III will feature a bargaining table with more options to interact.

Additionally, should you find yourself entrenched in a conflict, you'll be given new combat options for your armies. You'll also have detailed air missions at your disposal, as well as the option to lay siege to a city and bombard its citizens with merciless artillery assaults. Should the unthinkable happen and you are forced to retreat from a battle, you'll find new ways to cut your losses and regroup for another try. As leader, you will find access to new wonders, units, and resources which significantly alter how you expand your empire. The wonder system has been altered to allow for small wonders that each civilization can build, plus the massive structures that everyone races to build first.

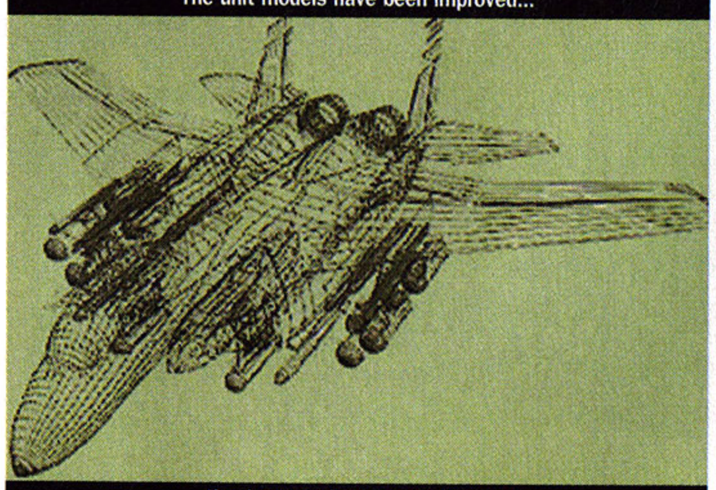
Firaxis seems to have a good grip on what makes a well-built Civ game tick. The company has streamlined the interfaces of all the menus, and implemented intuitive features which will allow even the newest player to jump in and start having fun. The aim of Civilization III can best be summed up in the voice of one producer we met: "When you learn fast, you start to win. When you win, you start to have fun."

"Four score and seven years ago, I played Civilization"

Do it, England!

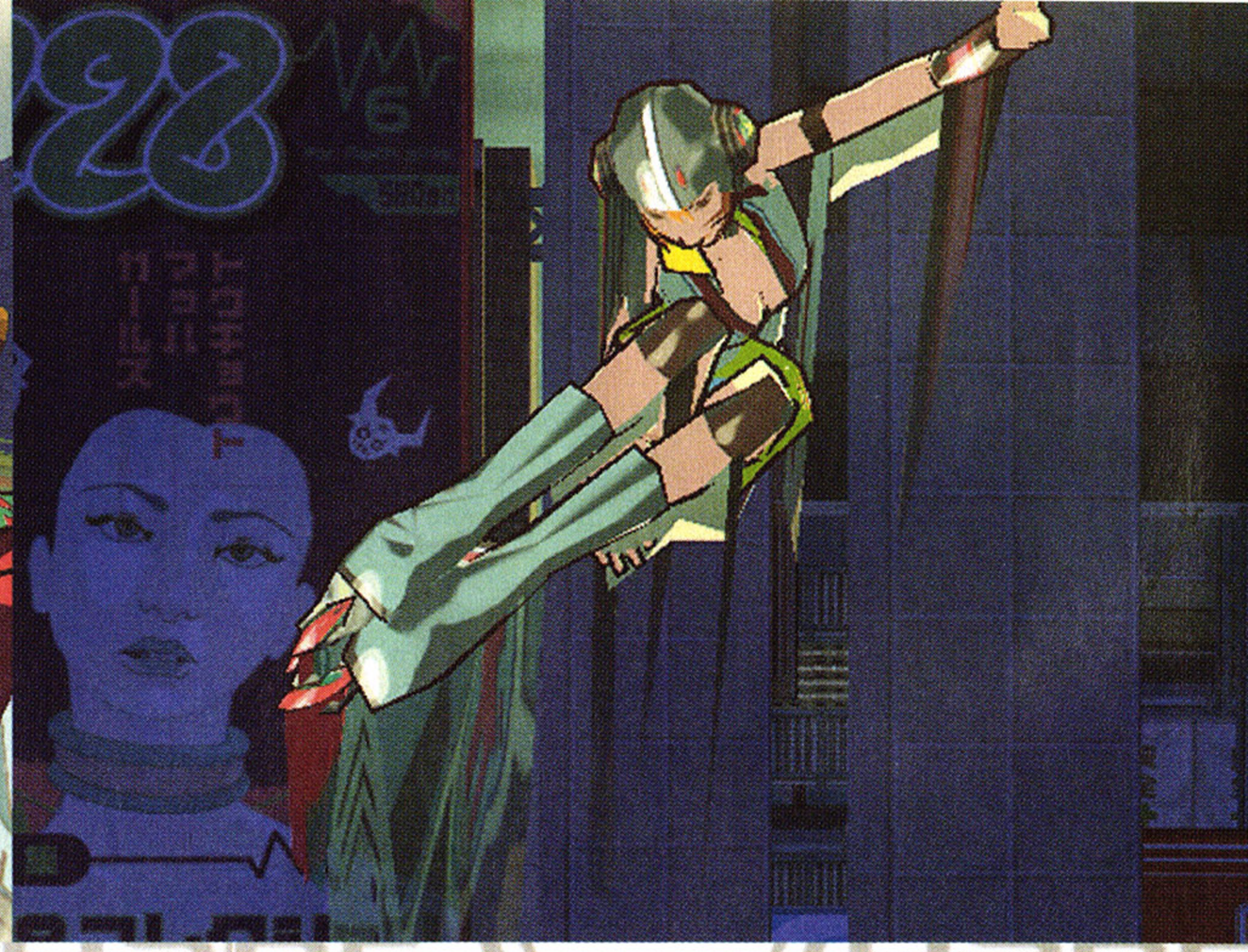


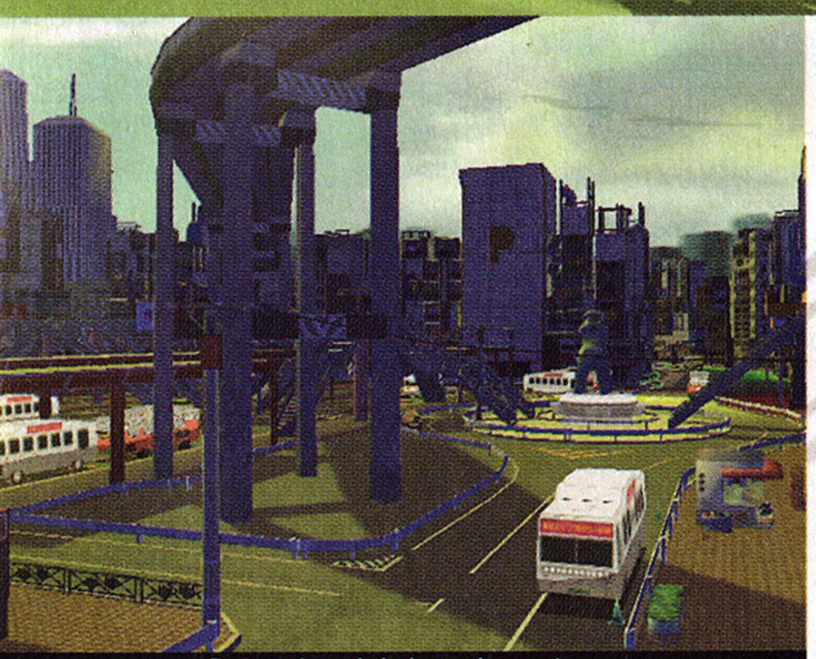
The unit models have been improved...



...thanks to an increased poly count

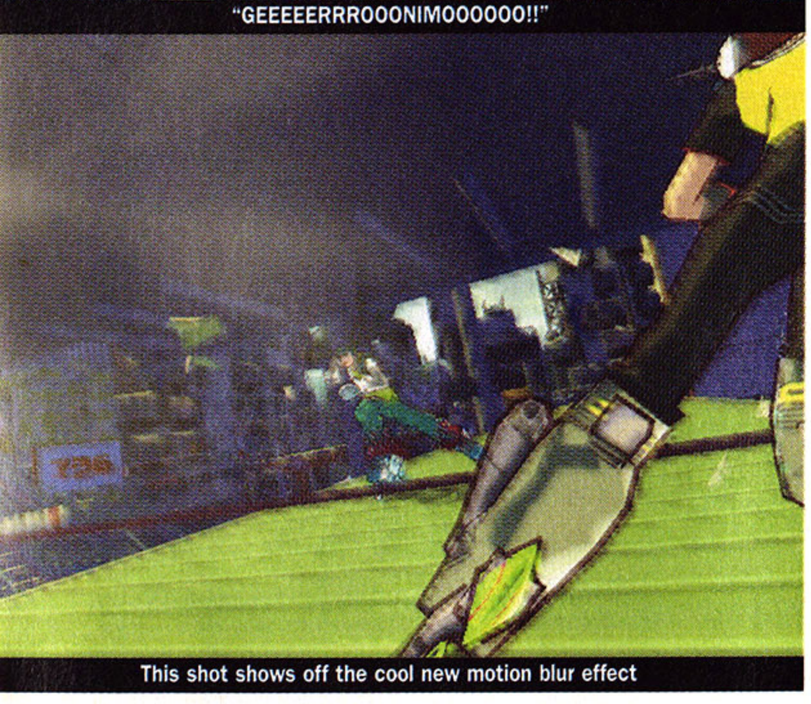
■ **STYLE** 1 TO 16-PLAYER STRATEGY ■ **PUBLISHER** INFOGRAMES ■ **DEVELOPER** FIRAXIS GAMES ■ **RELEASE** TBA





Features boner-inducing environments

"GEEEEERRROOONIMOOOOOO!!"



This shot shows off the cool new motion blur effect

XBOX

JET GRIND RADIO FUTURE

SKATING THE LIGHT FANTASTIC

Reportedly, Jet Grind Radio was a bit of a disappointment in terms of sales, but that didn't stop the game from becoming one of the most influential titles of last year. The game's brilliant use of cel shading overlaid on 3D characters and environments was a revelation, combining the best elements of classic 8- and 16-bit character design with the breathtaking detail possible with this new generation of consoles. Its futuristic look and hip-hop influenced attitude, not to mention its infectious gameplay, made it one of the standouts of last year's Dreamcast lineup.

Walking around the floor at E3 this year, it was easy to see just how many developers had taken inspiration from Jet Grind Radio. Cel Damage, Fur Fighters: Viggo's Revenge, and Klonoa 2 all displayed variations on JGR's visual style, while Koei's Yanya Caballista featuring Gawoo was an out-and-out rip-off of the game. What few people saw (due to Sega's booth being closed to the public this year) was that there is a new edition to the series, entitled Jet Grind Radio Future, scheduled to release for Xbox sometime this winter.

Now, it's no secret that we're sick of the phrase "the power of Xbox," but when faced with the sheer beauty of Jet Grind Radio Future, it's hard to argue that the Xbox isn't capable of creating huge and intricately detailed environments. As impressive as the original Dreamcast version was, it just doesn't compare to what Sega has in store for you this time around. The detail is fantastic, as is the fact that every single object in the environment is fully 3D. Although the game revisits some familiar locales from the first, much of the cityscape is brand new, and waiting to be explored. Other new graphical touches include a nice motion blur effect and tracers that take hold when the action reaches high speeds. As for the gameplay, things should remain essentially the same, but Sega is promising to implement some changes to add more depth to a formula that some felt wore thin after a few hours of playtime. There are a host of new moves, as well as cooperative combos that allow two players to team up together to reach new heights of radness. Sega has hinted that it might even try to take the game online, but its plans are not solidified at this point.

At least some of the gang from JGR will return for tagging duty, including Beat, Gum, and possibly Tab. Needless to say, there will also be several new b-boys and b-girls added to the cast by the time the game ships. Packed with new features and graphics that boggle the mind, Jet Grind Radio Future will be one of the premier Xbox titles of this year. Want proof? Just check out these screens.

Sega promises there will be a ton of new solo and cooperative moves

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** SEGA ■ **DEVELOPER** SMILEBIT ■ **RELEASE** WINTER

XBOX

GUN VALKYRIE

WAGNER WOULD APPROVE

Everyone knows Germans love shooting at stuff. Especially if whatever they happen to be shooting at that day is moving. We're basically shocked that they lasted so long in World War I, what with all of the boring trench warfare and all. With Gun Valkyrie for the Xbox, Germans and all of the rest of us will have the chance to mow down baddies with reckless abandon in fast-paced, action-packed environments. It seems the Xbox will be put through its paces with this extensive title's anime-style graphics as well as its high poly count and demanding audio features.

The game will open on a planet not dissimilar to Earth, in a time reminiscent of the 19th century. Your adventures will center around a lone scientist, Dr. Hebble, who has made a string of incredible technological breakthroughs. It was his intention to keep these advances controlled and contained, but they begin to accelerate beyond his own intentions, thereby resulting in a revolutionary form of energy that could propel humanity into a golden new era or lead to complete destruction. The government immediately steps in and assembles a group of scientists who create Gun Valkyrie, an organization charged with protecting these new breakthroughs and policing their use. Suddenly, Dr. Hebble disappears, and wave after wave of horrifying creatures begin appearing. You, as part of the Gun Valkyrie unit, are called upon to rescue the good doctor, defeat the monsters, and return order to the world.

Massive battlegrounds await exploration as you make your way through frenzied firefights and atmospheric hazards. You'll need to master a new control scheme which will utilize both the left and right thumb sticks that enable you to run in one direction while shooting in another. This will all be portrayed with the help of a state of the art graphics engine. Smooth, realistic texture models and impressive environmental effects will all enhance the highly stylized anime graphics seen in the pictures.

It's hard to tell what's actually happening in this shot, but rest assured, it's cool

Crazy teeth face!

That couldn't have felt good

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** SEGA ■ **DEVELOPER** SEGA ■ **RELEASE** FALL

PLAYSTATION 2

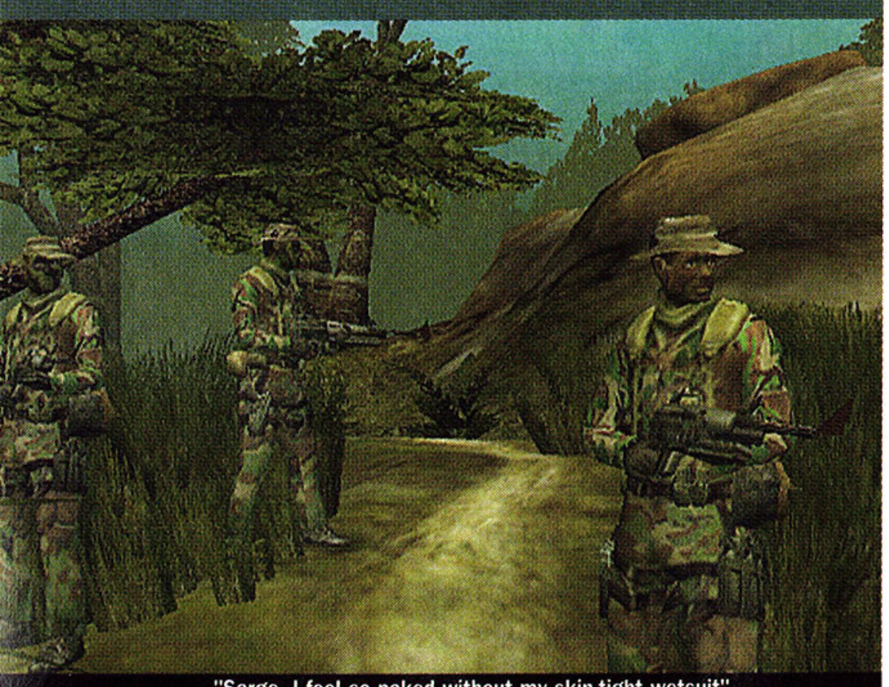
SOCOM: U.S. NAVY SEALS

ROCK 'EM, SOCOM ROBOTS

With ex-Navy SEAL Jessie Ventura as our governor, we in Minnesota have been told just how tough and cool they are. The harsh training, looking death in the face, and the hunting of men (a personal favorite of Jessie's) are all run-of-the-mill activities for these special soldiers. In fact, Sony thought highly enough of this online video game treatment to give it the spotlight while recently announcing its network plans.

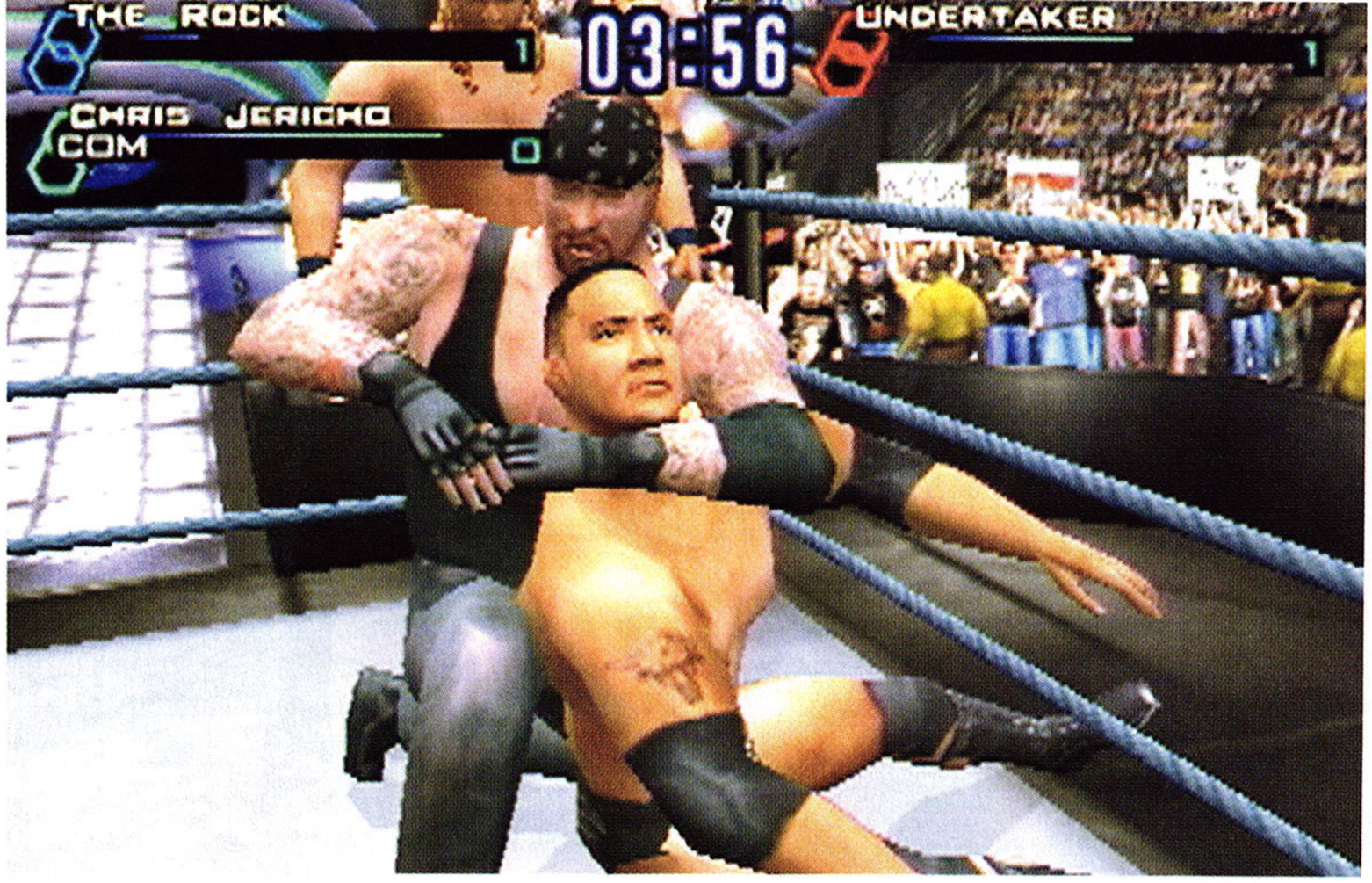
Seeing an early copy of SEALs in action didn't bust the mold for the genre, but the game does have its advantages. With access to the training methods and procedures of their real-life counterparts, Sony's soldiers put a high emphasis on the team nature of the troops' work (you can also be a terrorist). This manifests itself through the ability to give voice commands via a headset, as well as in text.

If Zipper can get the AI to perform perfectly for the NPCs, Navy SEALs has a very good chance of performing distinguished service in its four worlds (17 missions). On the other hand, trying to get someone with the handle of KillemAll666 to follow orders may blow this premise clean out of the water. Still, there's plenty of time to make the title visually stand out above the pack. The E3 version was pretty early, so options like positional body damage or more dynamic firefights can still be explored to great effect.



"Sarge, I feel so naked without my skin-tight wetsuit"

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 16-PLAYER ACTION/STRATEGY ■ **PUBLISHER** SONY ■ **DEVELOPER** ZIPPER INTERACTIVE ■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER



PLAYSTATION 2

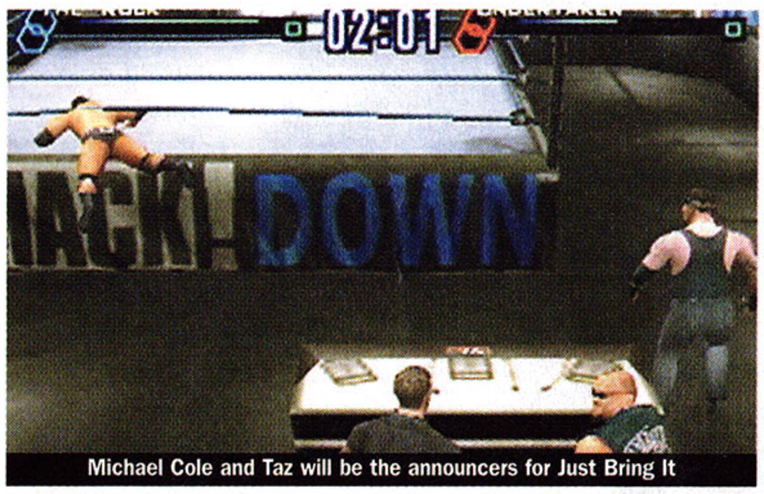
WWF SMACKDOWN!: JUST BRING IT

THE UNBESMIRCHED SERIES

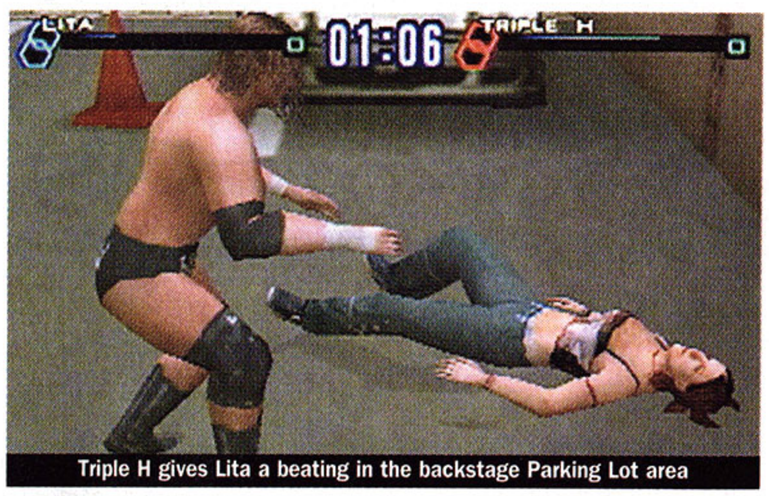
As a follow-up to our Brothers of Destruction cover story from last month, here are the first screenshots of WWF SmackDown!: Just Bring It for PlayStation 2. Although there are only six pics to gander at, they not only give a fair idea of what the final product will look like, they also illustrate some previously unknown info. As can plainly be seen in the shot where the action has gone outside the ring, the announcers in Just Bring It are Michael Cole and Taz. Further, the menu screen shows a bit of the lightning that will flash across the background hexagons. Menu screens aren't normally considered that interesting, but it is the developer's goal to make the dancing lightning a kind of minigame as you make character and match selections.

After having played the third in the SmackDown series at E3, we can safely say that those who have played either of the first two will feel right at home with the gameplay. The button mapping and move methods are the same, but with a graphic presentation that's much improved. The wrestler movements are smooth and fluid, and their in-ring mannerisms have been well captured.

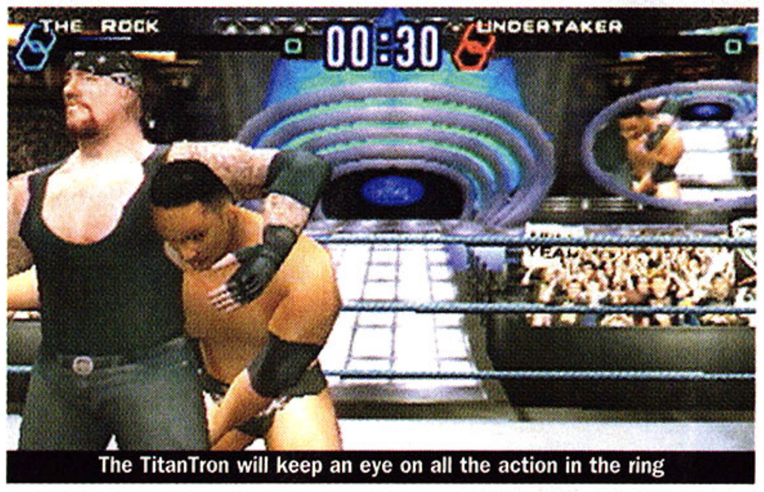
Perhaps the most appreciated new feature will be the pop-up, picture-in-picture window that appears when something of note is transpiring somewhere other than in front of the main camera. From the action we saw, the window was used mostly to show a wrestler considering a run-in at the top of the ramp. It would also appear after a particularly brutal move, cutting to the announcers, presumably to show them discussing what was just seen. A lot of advancement has been made with SmackDown!: Just Bring It in the month since we saw it last, and if this level of progress is maintained, it's sure to be another surefire winner for Yuke's and THQ.



Michael Cole and Taz will be the announcers for Just Bring It



Triple H gives Lita a beating in the backstage Parking Lot area



The TitanTron will keep an eye on all the action in the ring

Yuke's hopes to make the frontend a game unto itself

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 8-PLAYER FIGHTING ■ **PUBLISHER** THQ ■ **DEVELOPER** YUKE'S ■ **RELEASE** OCTOBER

PLAYSTATION 2

DEAD TO RIGHTS

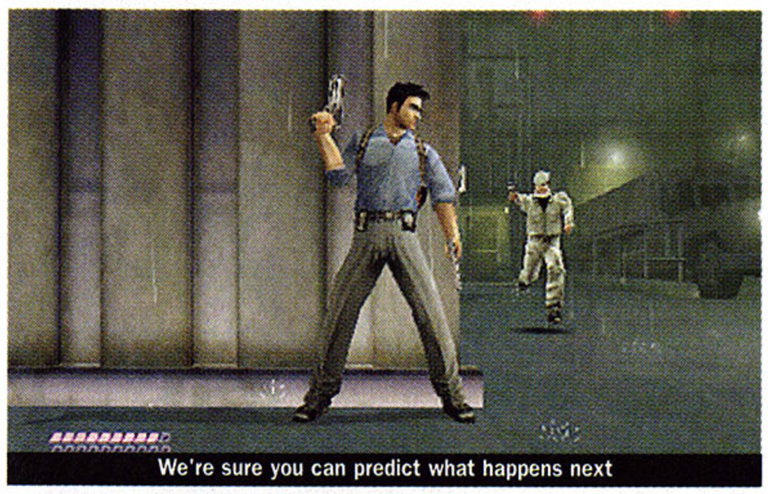
GLEEFULLY GRATUITOUS

When we first saw Dead to Rights at a Namco press event, it showed promise. Yet, we had no inkling of the playable spectacle that would greet us in the South Hall of E3. Much has happened since we last left our pal Jack Slade. First off, his world has become much more violent. It appears that there was no way to get a Teen rating from the ESRB, so Namco instead decided to take full advantage of its Mature themes, with splashes of blood and point-blank head shots.

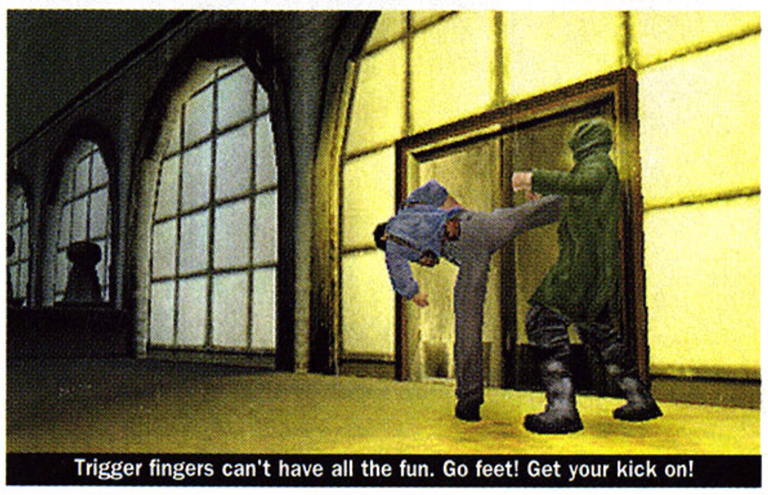
The targeting system in DTR is extremely intuitive. You must lock onto an enemy to shoot your weapon, and the cursor changes color depending on how good of a shot you have. This even works when you're doing forward or backward leaps with guns ablaze. If you find yourself surrounded with no cover in sight, snatch the nearest body and use him as a human shield. You even get a display showing how much life he has left, as the opposition keeps taking shots at you at the risk of hurting their partner. Compare this to Metal Gear Solid 2, where bad guys hold their fire like pansies when you take a captive.

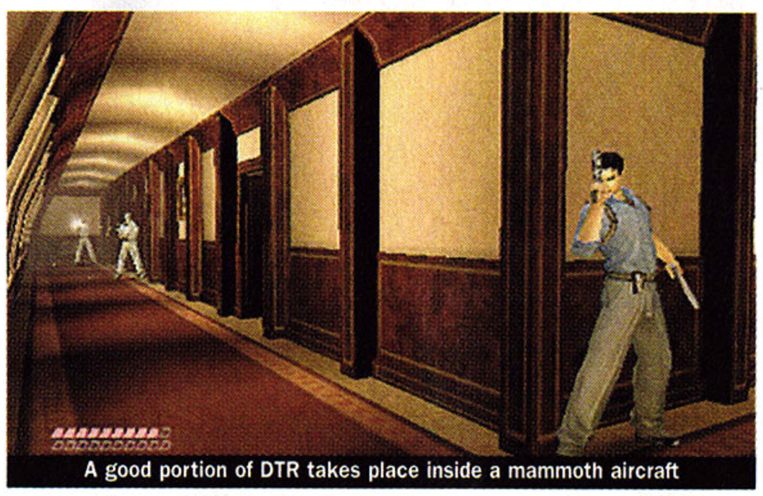
Aside from just capping your enemies, there is a plethora of alternative means for their demise. Our favorites are the disarms, which use a variety of camera angles to show bad guys being relieved of their weapons, then getting handily disposed of. For example, Jack approaches a foe with a machine gun, grabs hold of it, and smacks him in the face with its butt. While the poor sap is on the ground dazed, our hero imbeds a few rounds into his skull. These sequences play out much like Tenchu's stealth kills.

Dead to Rights has definitely caught our attention. The scary thing is that it still has a lot of time to get better, since it's not going to release until 2002. More gameplay innovations will be added, and the graphics will get more attention. We'll be sure to give some attention of our own to DTR in the coming months.


We're sure you can predict what happens next

"I paid you to SPANK me, not SHOOT me!"


Trigger fingers can't have all the fun. Go feet! Get your kick on!


A good portion of DTR takes place inside a mammoth aircraft

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** NAMCO ■ **DEVELOPER** NAMCO HOMETEK ■ **RELEASE** 2ND QUARTER 2002

PLAYSTATION 2

RAYMAN M

THE MULTIPLAYER RAYMAN COMETH

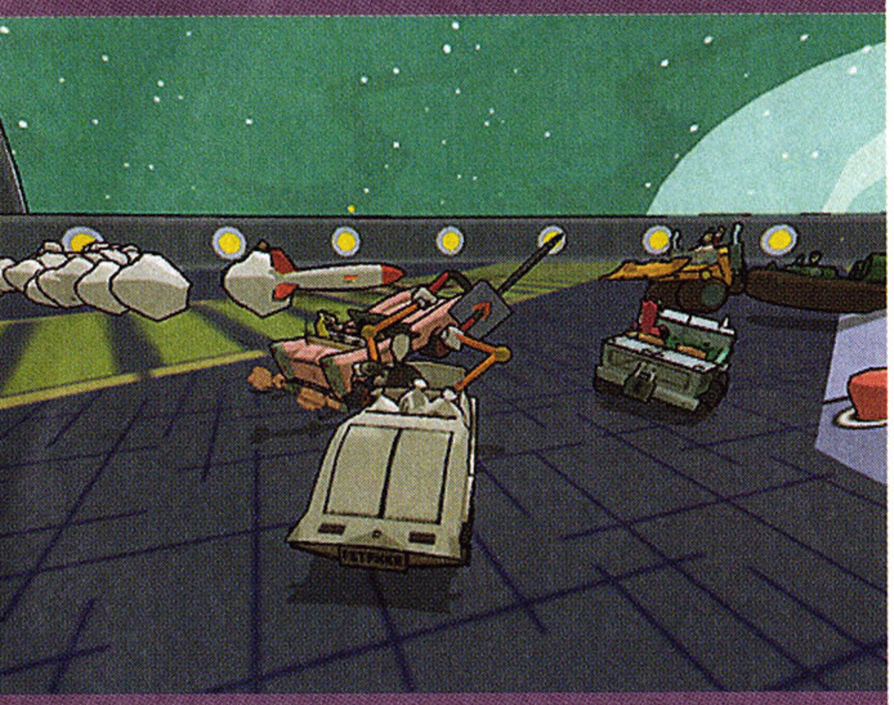
Ubi Soft kills two birds with one stone, but will this come at a price? Instead of delivering a solid, non-ported PlayStation 2 platforming Rayman adventure, Rayman M is the series' first multiplayer and online game. Thus, it forms itself more around the party antics of a Race mode and the free-for-all Shooter feature. While we'd love another of the limbless wonder's solo exploits, Ubi Soft is sure to import plenty of trademark flavor to juice this one up.

One thing that fans are sure to welcome is the chance to now play as Ly or Globox (as well as Rayman) in the title's two mercenary challenges. Race mode is a true fight to the finish, with vehicles, shortcuts, and sabotage added to make the journey a little more exciting. Slightly more sinister is when the lums fly fierce in Shooter mode. Collect the most through any means necessary in Rayman M's dozen levels and earn enough money to unlock new areas and characters.

The online component supports only four players, but hopefully this will keep lag to a minimum and keep all the onscreen detail intact. No doubt about it, Ubi Soft will be shooting a proper Rayman installment our way soon. Until then, who knows, maybe this can earn a place as a solid multiplayer niche for the franchise.

Play with multiple players and go online for the first time in the Rayman series

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** UBI SOFT
■ **DEVELOPER** UBI SOFT ■ **RELEASE** WINTER



XBOX

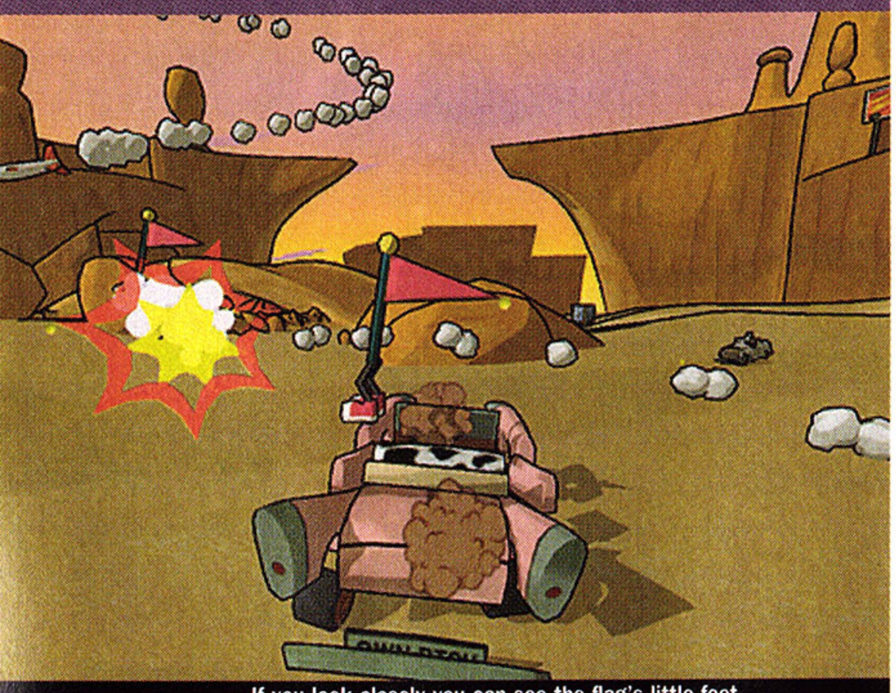
CEL DAMAGE

P-P-P-PLEASE!

Welcome to a universe not unlike Roger Rabbit's – toons and a lot of fast cars. In this vehicular combat title, you'll pilot your toon through crazy courses and a number of different modes. You'll have the choice of six main characters at the game's onset, each with their own unique vehicle and abilities. You'll have over ten levels to wreak havoc on your foes, and the chance to unlock an additional four characters with their respective rides.

Gameplay modes will include classic deathmatch and capture-the-flag scenarios, but with some toony tricks. In capture-the-flag mode, for instance, the flag will actually run around and try to avoid being captured. You'll have 36 weapons to explore including giant axes, portable holes, shrink rays, mallets, and more. The fast cel shading and cartoon physics engine will give you the feeling that you're operating a living cartoon episode rather than a kart racer offshoot.

The assorted characters will reflect their animation backgrounds. For example, a film noir duck plucked from a '30s picture show will be shown in black and white, where as the Tank Girl-type character will be portrayed in an anime-style representation. Cartoon and racing game lovers alike will rejoice when Cel Damage debuts sometime this fall. Whether or not anyone else will remains to be seen.



If you look closely you can see the flag's little feet

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER RACING ■ **PUBLISHER** ELECTRONIC ARTS ■ **DEVELOPER** PSEUDO INTERACTIVE ■ **RELEASE** FALL

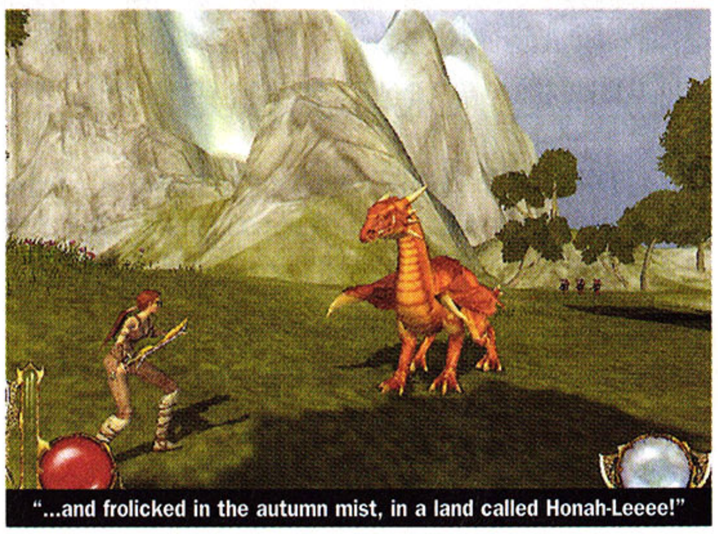
PLAYSTATION 2

DRAKAN II

RETURN TO THE AGE OF DRAGONS

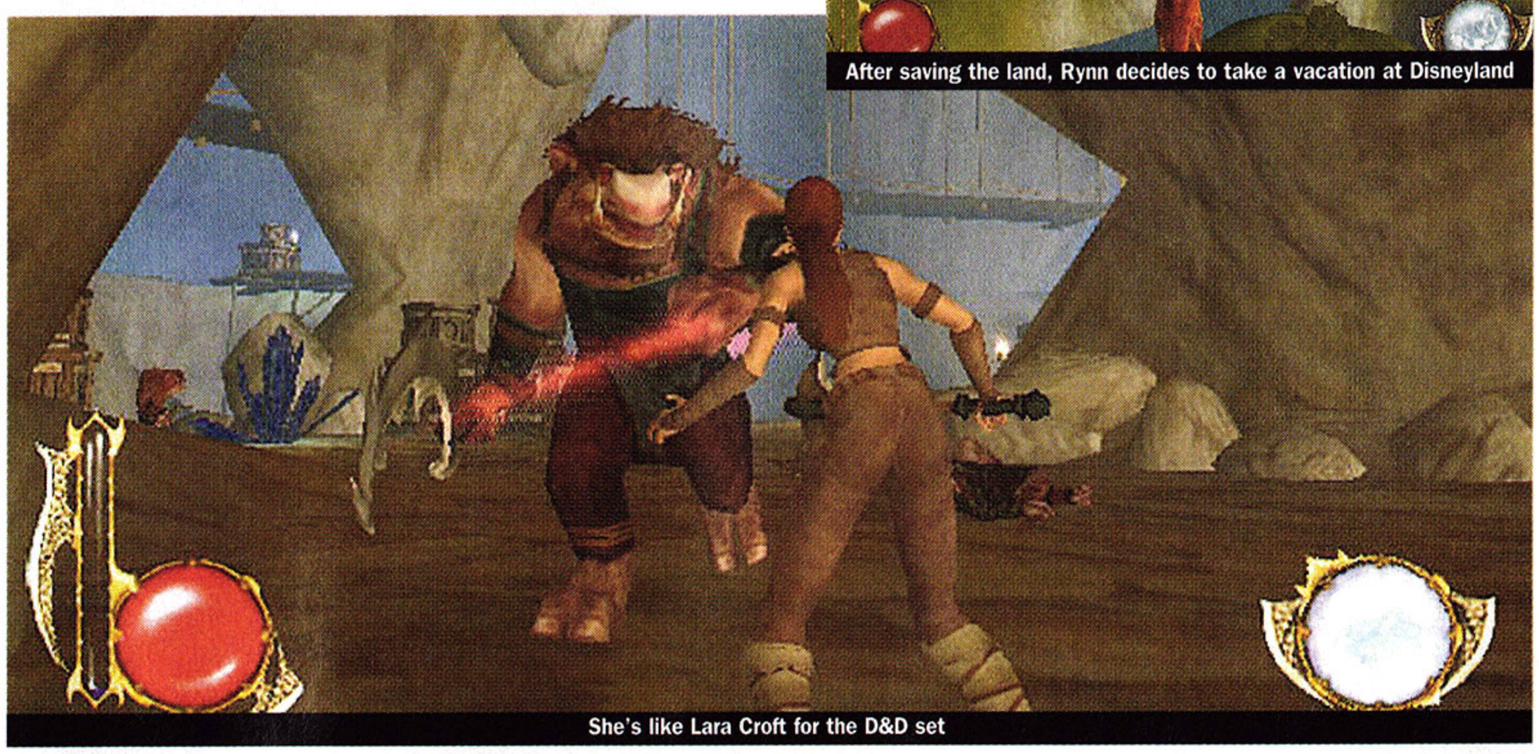
Here's an example of the kind of game that tends to slip through the cracks at E3. With hype surrounding Jak and Daxter and Devil May Cry, it was quite possible to make your way through Sony's booth without taking notice of Drakan II, which was showing on only two screens. Basically, it's a sequel to the PC game from a couple years back that combines traditional third-person action/adventuring with dragon flight and aerial combat. For Sega Saturn fans, it should bring back pleasant memories of the legendary Panzer Dragoon series.

The game stars Rynn, a female warrior who also dabbles in spell casting as a sideline. As the fantasy world of Drakan has been overtaken by an unknown evil force, it's up to her to liberate the realm. Rynn roams about the land, dealing out death with one of 12 weapons, as well as her aforementioned spells. Not content to be grounded, Rynn can call her trusted dragon Arohk at any time during gameplay and take flight. Once in the air, the team can travel about the world, or engage enemy dragons in a fierce firefight. So far, both the ground and air combat seem extremely fluid, with nice graphics to match. With the Xbox bringing so many of these PC oriented titles to market, Drakan II looks like a wise pick-up for Sony.



"...and frolicked in the autumn mist, in a land called Honah-Leeee!"

After saving the land, Rynn decides to take a vacation at Disneyland



She's like Lara Croft for the D&D set

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/ADVENTURE ■ **PUBLISHER** SONY COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT AMERICA
■ **DEVELOPER** SURREAL SOFTWARE ■ **RELEASE** FALL

PC

RETURN TO CASTLE WOLFENSTEIN

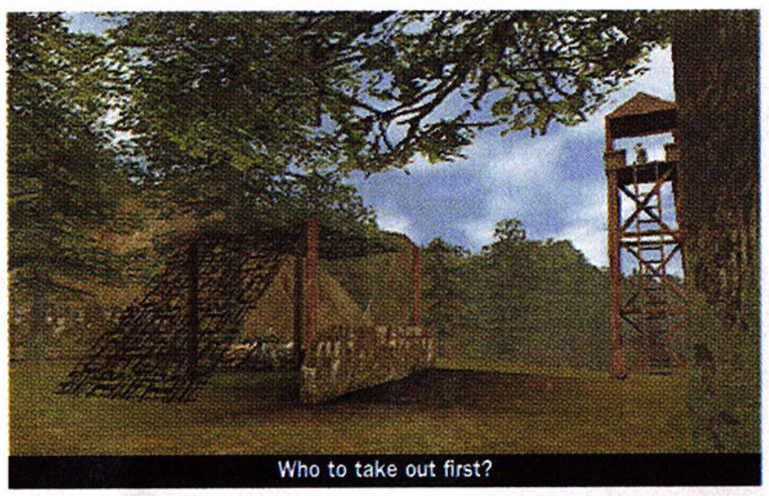
PUT HITLER ON ICE

Did you catch that History Channel documentary about how Hitler was obsessed with the occult, the living dead, and genetic mutations? What do you mean you missed it? It was on right after the special on the rise and fall of the Ottoman Empire and before the three-part series on the Boer War. It seems that Gray Matter was tuned in. In fact, it's based the long-awaited Wolfenstein title around that very premise. Too good to be true? Nope, it's going to happen. When it will happen is probably a better question.

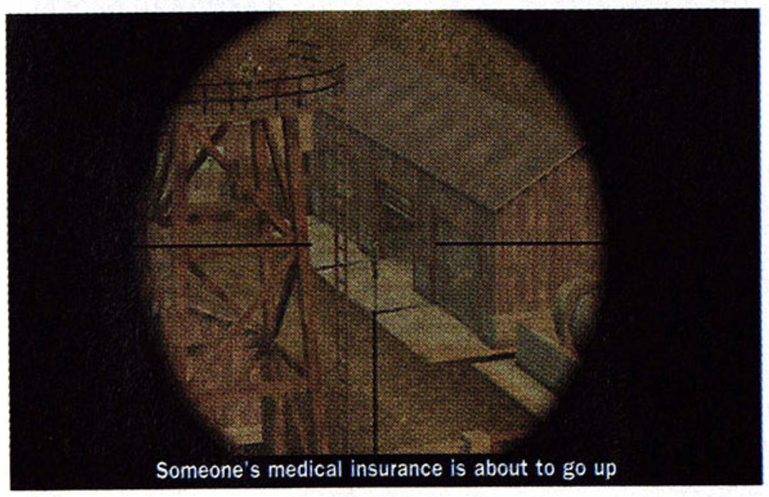
Resting on the laurels of the Quake III engine, Return to Castle Wolfenstein looks as awesome live as it does in the pictures you see here. As one of the highlights of E3 this year, throngs of people gathered around the elaborate RTCW exhibit to get their rocks off by playing the part of B.J. Blaskowitz and wasting Nazis. It seems Gray Matter has captured the pulse-pounding action that previous id offerings of this franchise so aptly conjured up. There will be plenty of cannon fodder for you to wade through in your quest to end the evil wave of undead Nazis, but you'll also be called upon to use your noodle as you wind your way through the corridors and passageways of the Castle.

Hope for a fall release, but don't be shocked if it gets moved back. The single-player mode still needs a lot of work, and then the multiplayer components need to be added on. Online play for this game should be a big selling point, seeing as how there will be so much material Gray Matter will have to use in concocting suitable horrific and complex level designs. Will it be worth the wait? We think so. It looks sweet as honey right now.

You won't need that bag where you're goin', Fritz



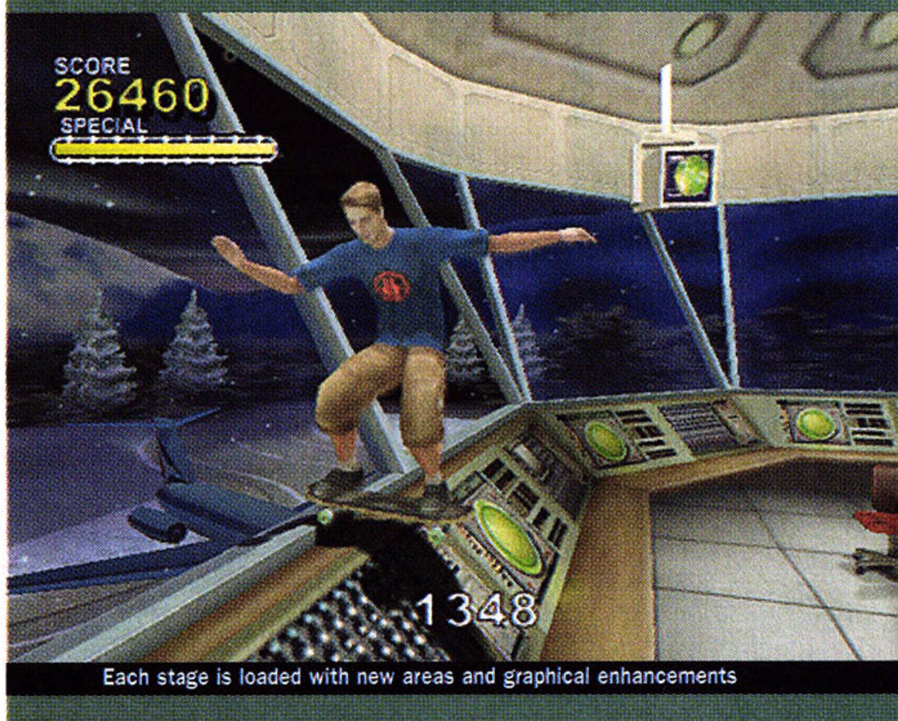
Who to take out first?



Someone's medical insurance is about to go up

Flame on!

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION (ONLINE CAPABILITIES FORTHCOMING) ■ **PUBLISHER** ACTIVISION ■ **DEVELOPER** GRAY MATTER INTERACTIVE STUDIOS ■ **RELEASE** FALL



Each stage is loaded with new areas and graphical enhancements

XBOX

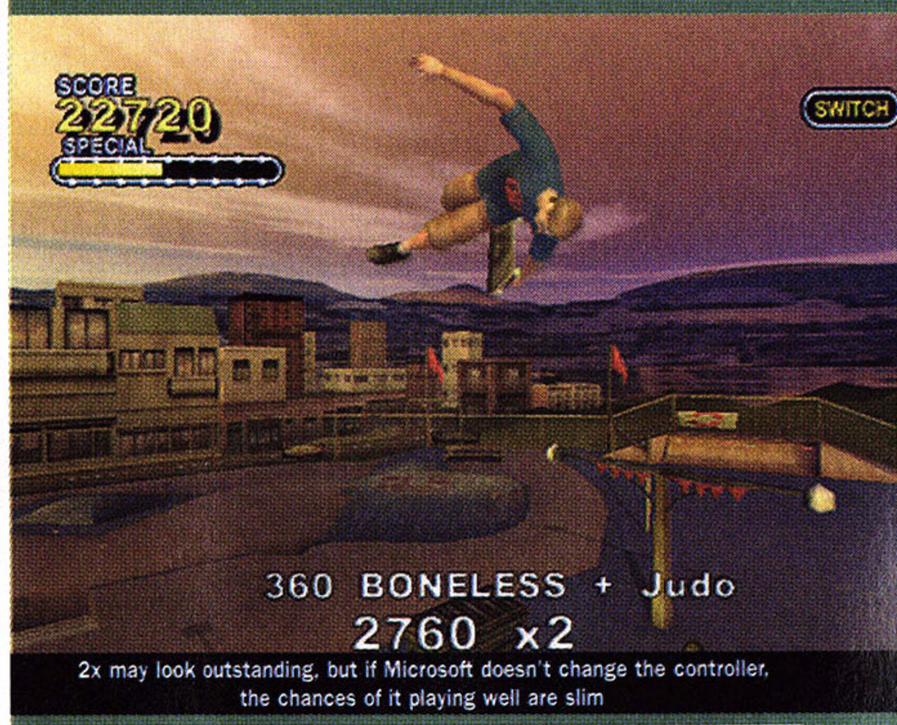
TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 2X

WHEN WORLDS COLLIDE

Through the tiresome tagline "the power of Xbox," everything you know about Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2 can more or less be tossed out the window. For this is not just a port, but rather a ground-shaking evolution of the hottest sequel of 2000. The development team, Treyarch, has greatly enhanced every aspect of the game. All the levels now feature additional zones or graphical improvements – such as the interactive control tower in The Hangar or the distant mountain range in Marseille. Many of the levels also house ambient life, like flocks of seagulls that flutter away as you approach.

For some, this may justify a purchase, but to ensure that everyone will want to get their hands on this game, Treyarch has upped the ante 100-fold. All the original levels from THPS are included, but sporting significant changes. Three brand-spanking new parks, yes three, are a part of the package as well. We only had the chance to play one of these stages, which was a flashy disco hall that really pumps out some amazing lighting effects.

Saving the best for last, THPS 2x will be one of the first games compatible with Xbox's online capabilities. Treyarch is still determining how many skaters can inhabit a park, but it sounds like the minimum will be four, with the maximum probability stretching to eight.



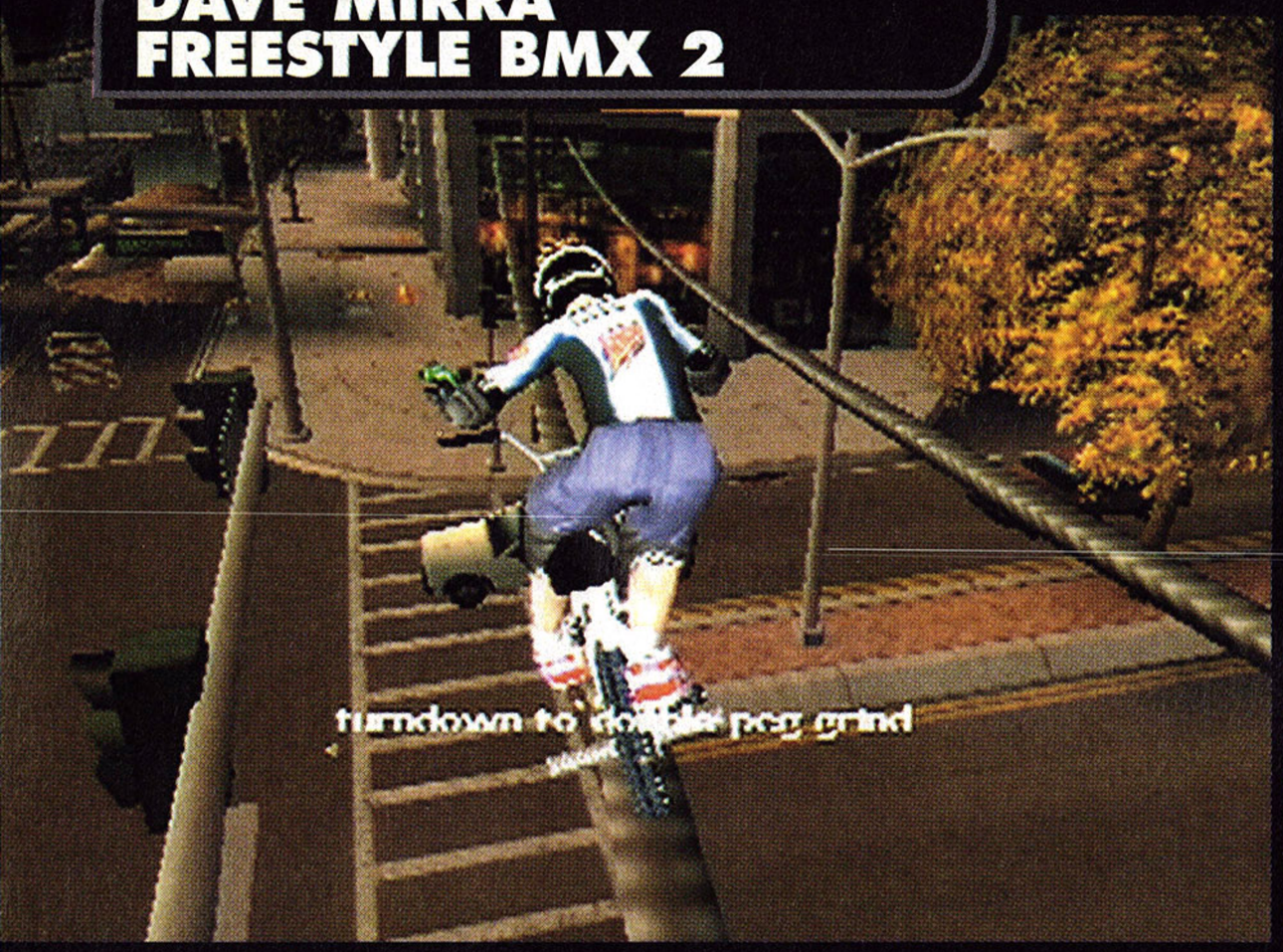
2x may look outstanding, but if Microsoft doesn't change the controller, the chances of it playing well are slim

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER SPORTS/ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** ACTIVISION ■ **DEVELOPER** NEVERSOFT/TREYARCH ■ **RELEASE** FALL

PHOTOPHILE

PLAYSTATION 2

DAVE MIRRA FREESTYLE BMX 2



Acclaim's top-selling BMX game returns in next-gen fashion, with sprawling real-world environments and AI traffic. A new manual modifier gives you even more tricks to fool around with, and the game also includes an amazing park editor that makes Tony 2's look like Duplo Legos.

PC

BATTLE REALMS

Real-time strategy is being brought back to the people. This Crave/Liquid project focuses on several distinct clans and their unique characters as they struggle to dominate their vast world. Unlike most RTS games, managing your village is only a small part of BR, and fighting takes the forefront with extensive, detailed combat scenarios.

PC

COMMAND & CONQUER: RENEGADE

For everyone who has ever wanted to crawl inside their favorite Command & Conquer missions, C&C Renegade is right up your alley. From the Hand of Nod to Harvesters, you'll have first-person access to all the structures and units you loved in C&C.

XBOX

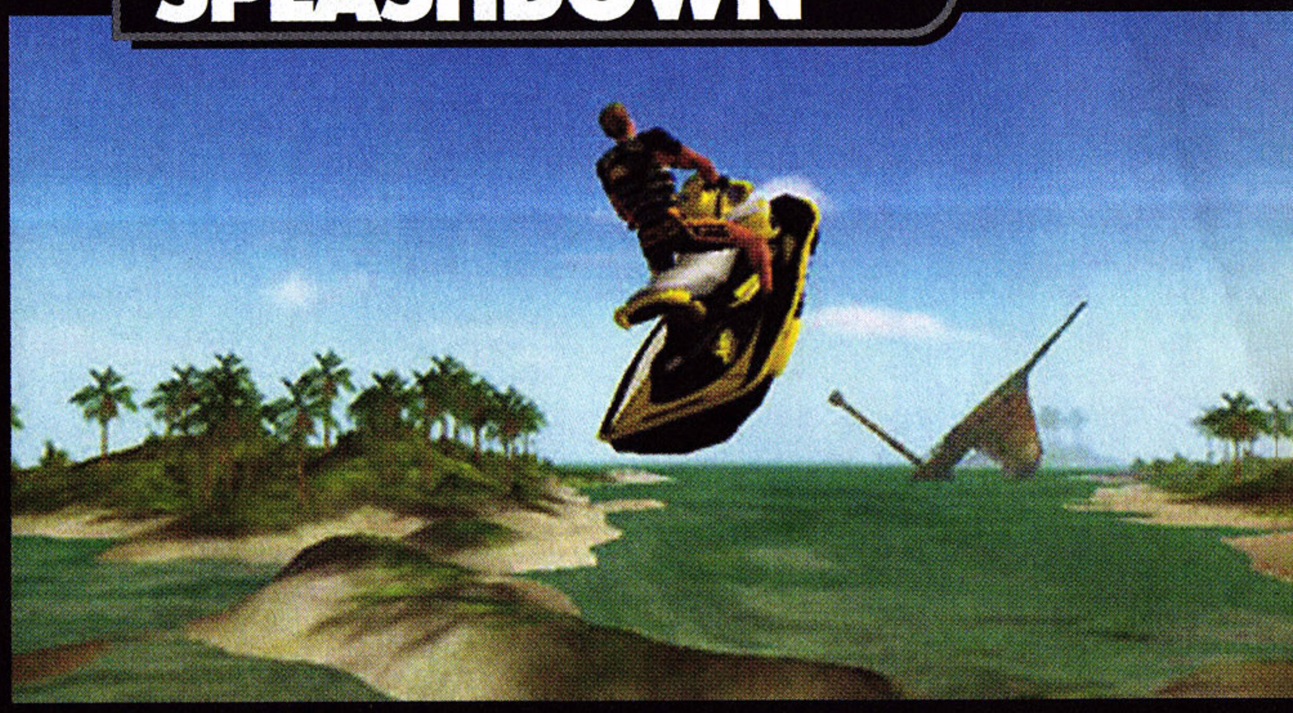
SHREK

After the debacle that was Shrek Fairy Tale Freakout for Game Boy Color, we're more frightened than ever of the massive green ogre. From what we've seen of this TDK title, we may warm up to the big guy after all. Taking place shortly after the movie ends, Shrek is reluctantly forced to help out his neighbors with their daily problems the only way he know how: breaking stuff.

PHOTOPHILE

PLAYSTATION 2

SPLASHDOWN



Wave Race may be getting all the press, but this Infogrames waverunner game deserves more than just a casual look. Splashdown strives for realism in both graphics and physics, having a feel much like a flooded version of another PS2 racer, ATV Offroad Fury. Hit a rolling wave to go airborne, or lean into it to absorb the impact.

PLAYSTATION 2

KINETICA

Kinetica's high-powered racing coupled with a stunt system which will reward the player for executing the most dangerous moves is set to release in November. With the solid graphics we've seen, Kinetica should be a popular release by the time Turkey Day rolls around.

PLAYSTATION 2

MONSTER RANCHER 3

The monster breeding franchise is back with a cel-shaded sequel. Not only can you create creatures with your CDs, but PS2's DVD player allows you to use data from your movies as well. Tecmo has an agreement with Sony to make Monster Rancher 3 the first US game to support PictureParadise, which lets you scan digital pictures into the game.

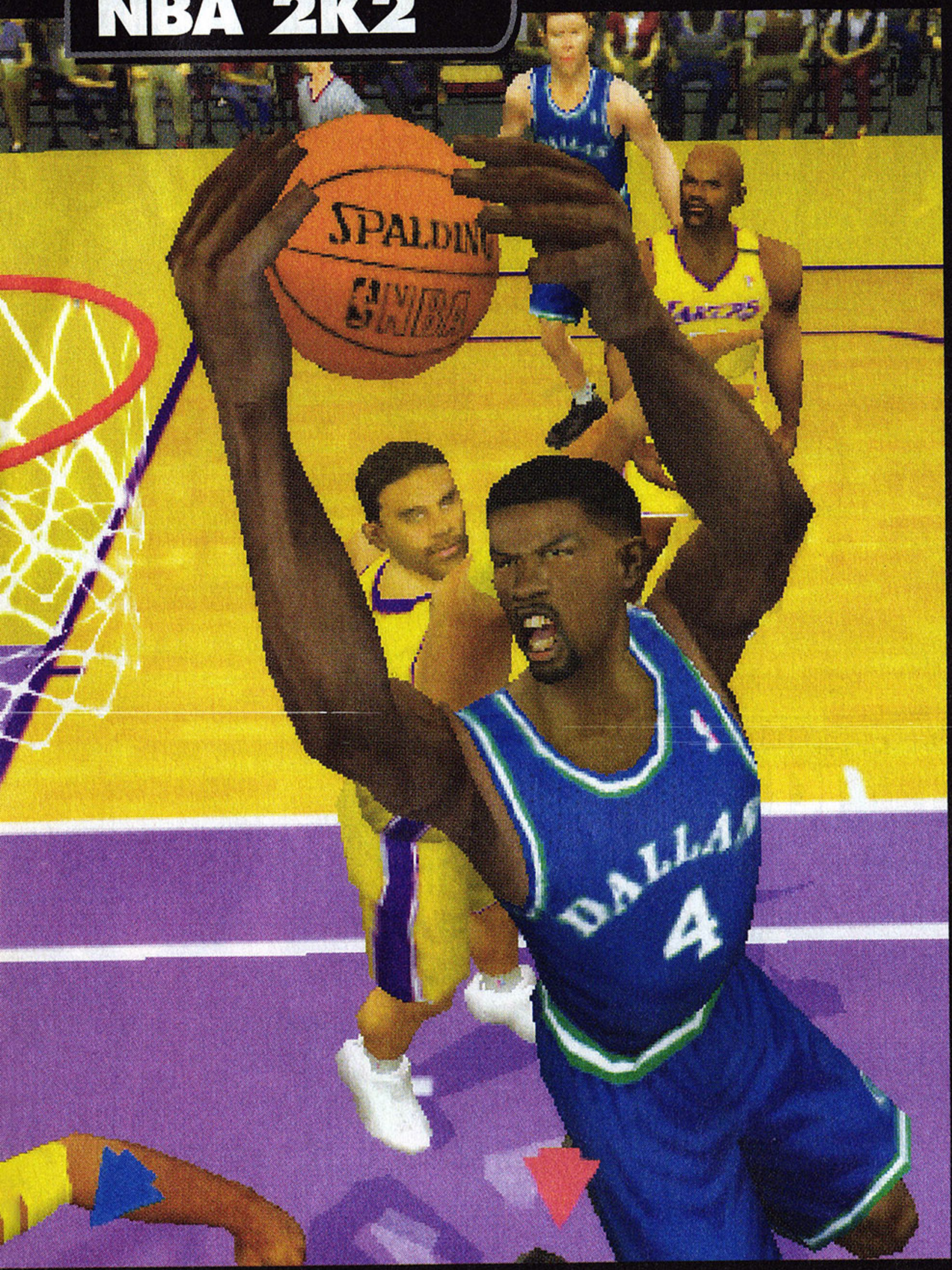
DREAMCAST

SEGA BASS FISHING 2

Get out your worms, dust off your reel, and get that outboard crankin' because it's time for another round of hot bass fishing action. Drawing on the success of the Bass Fishing franchise, Sega is looking to get you back in the boat – hook, line, and sinker.

DREAMCAST

NBA 2K2



The NBA season is over, but that doesn't mean your thoughts have strayed from hoops. Next season zone defense will be legal, so it's time to ponder some new plays other than the pick-and-roll. A sequel to last year's best basketball game, Sega Sports NBA 2K2 strives for a three-peat, and bids farewell to the parquet floors of Dreamcast.

PC

SIMSVILLE

The best way to describe this game is as a cross between SimCity and The Sims. You'll have ultimate control over how your town grows and what your citizenship is like. If you play the Sims, your families will be automatically uploaded into your SimsVille neighborhood. You know you want it. Don't deny it.

DREAMCAST

NFL 2K2

Sega has updated all of the rosters, stadiums, and team uniforms for the 2001 season. Improved quarterback AI, enhanced passing and catching systems, updated online functionality for head-to-head play with eight gamers, and online rankings will surely keep heads turned toward this time-tested franchise.

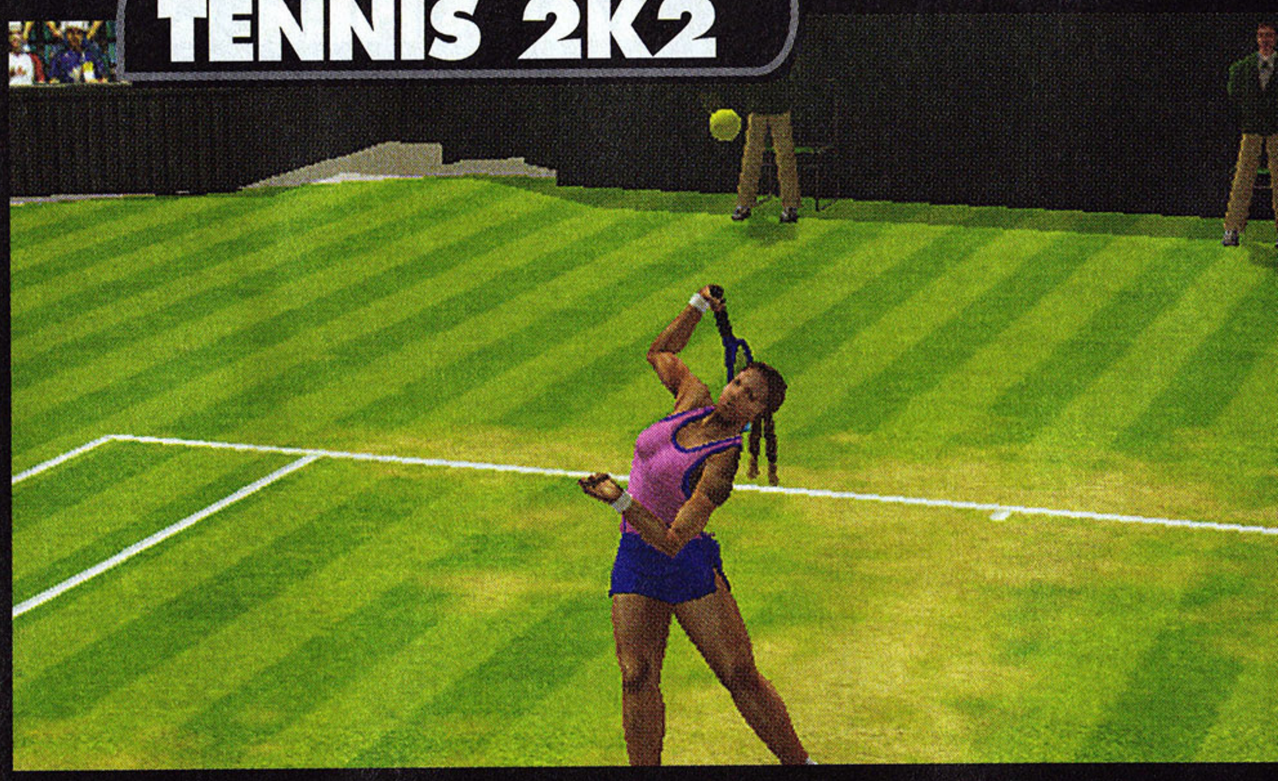
PLAYSTATION 2

FREQUENCY

You may think you can rock. You may think you can roll. Frequency will unlock all of the untapped musical talent you've been hiding from your football buddies. Find your groove as you remix the musical stylings of groups like The Crystal Method and Juno Reactor. You'll have to wait for the Creepazoid edition. We hear it's in the works.

DREAMCAST

TENNIS 2K2



You will shriek like Monica Seles or grunt like Andre Agassi when you feast your eyes on all the yellow balls flying around the screen in this sequel to the best-selling Virtua Tennis. Choose from 16 top-ranked tennis players, then call three of your buddies over to play a heart-racing doubles match. Don't get too excited, you'll have to wait until fall to ogle Jelena Dokic from the privacy of your own Dreamcast.

PC

UNREAL CHAMPIONSHIP

Unleash the fierce first-person shooter action of Unreal Championship on your PC and your life may never be the same. There are reports that small Eastern European countries are near collapse due to their leaders being so addicted to beta versions of this game that they can't rule their own nation. Proceed at your own peril!

PLAYSTATION 2

DYNASTY WARRIORS 3

Look out! Look out! Big elephants on parade! Riding horses just isn't enough in some cases. When battles are as heated as those in Dynasty Warriors 3, you need to step up to the big boys: the pachyderms. Aside from ivory-adorned cohorts, DW3 has a new co-op feature for even more militia maiming mayhem.

XBOX

MAD DASH

Running isn't the pinnacle of good times, but that doesn't stop Eidos from walking the walk with Mad Dash. An odd amalgam of a platformer and a racing game with a pinch of Xbox power, Mad Dash hopes its alternate paths and heated competition will have you sprinting to stores this November.

PHOTOPHILE

PLAYSTATION 2

MOBILE SUIT GUNDAM: JOURNEY TO JABURO

Cartoon Network has helped make this classic anime series more popular in the States, as videos, models, and t-shirts make mecha more mainstream. This Bandai PS2 action title will only serve to enhance the brand's fame. Plus, the explosions are really cool.

PLAYSTATION 2

TARZAN

Tarzan isn't content just swinging from vine to vine anymore. In Ubi Soft's PlayStation 2 offering, Tarzan will not only explore the jungle, he will go bungee jumping, surfing, and barefoot water-skiing. This isn't the Tarzan you might expect, but right now it looks great. Me Tarzan, you PlayStation 2.

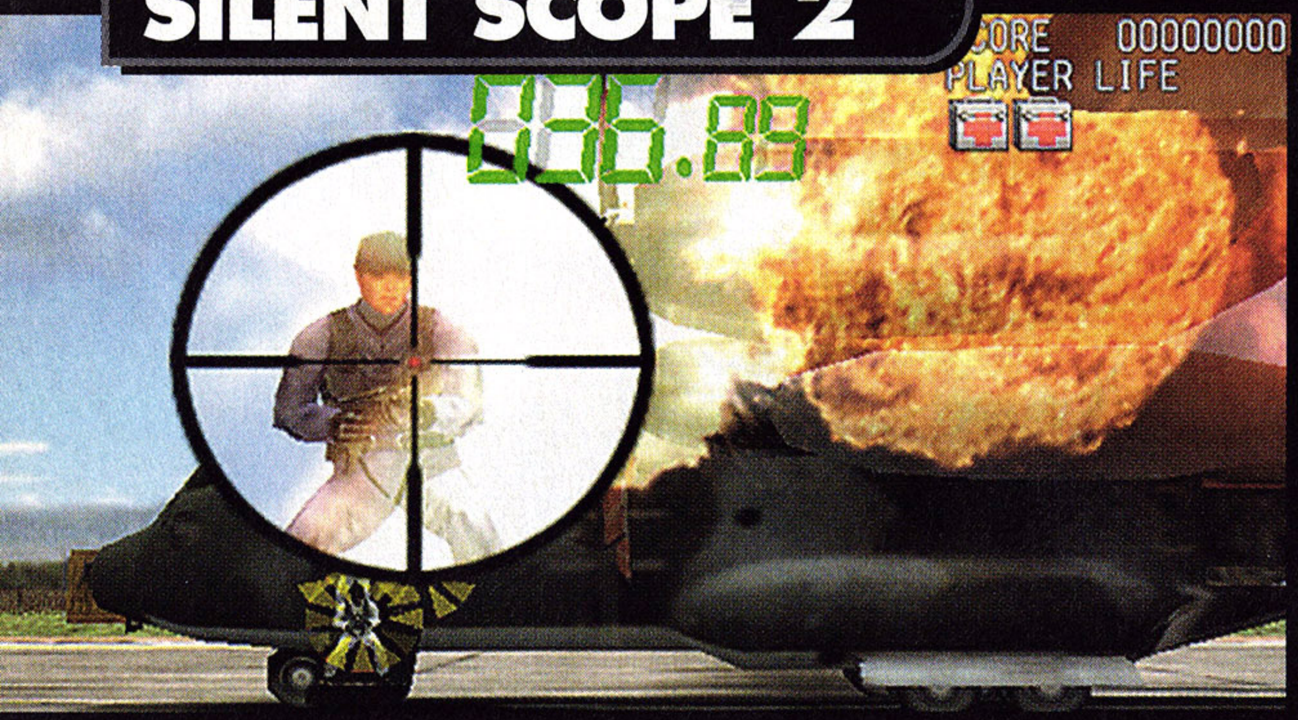
PLAYSTATION 2

MAT HOFFMAN'S PRO BMX 2

Breaking away from the Tony Hawk mold, Mat Hoffman's PS2 debut is spearheaded by Rainbow Studios and running on its famed ATV Offroad Fury engine. As expected, the physics are incredible and the look of the game is simply remarkable. If development continues as planned, this sizzling property should hit retailers this winter.

PLAYSTATION 2

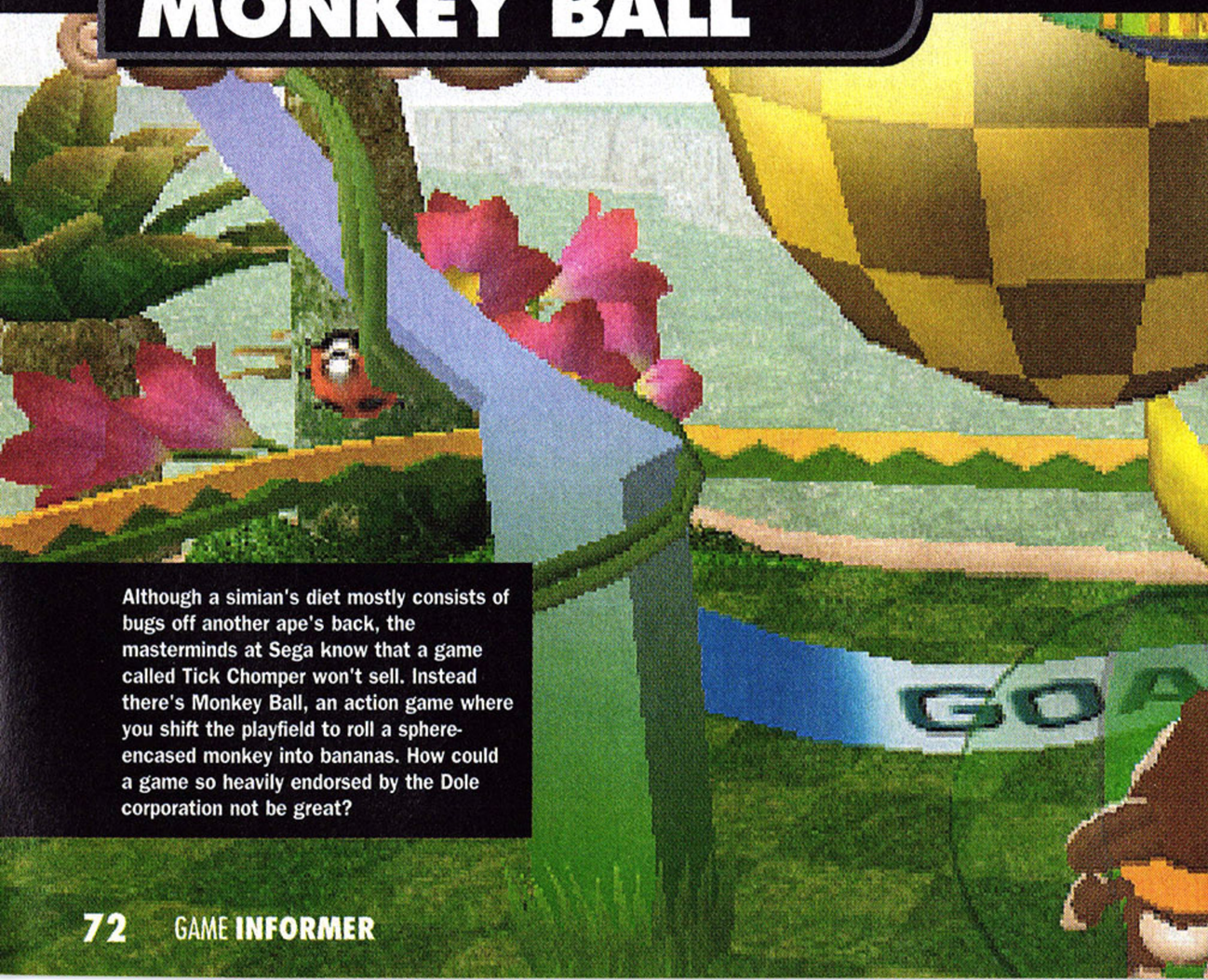
SILENT SCOPE 2



Konami has made some cool enhancements to this shooter, one of which is a proposed gun peripheral that dodges according to your body movements. 3D stages with enemies all around and new thermal Vision and X-Ray scopes keep this one shooting straight and true. Look for it this fall.

GAMECUBE

MONKEY BALL



Although a simian's diet mostly consists of bugs off another ape's back, the masterminds at Sega know that a game called Tick Chomper won't sell. Instead there's Monkey Ball, an action game where you shift the playfield to roll a sphere-encased monkey into bananas. How could a game so heavily endorsed by the Dole corporation not be great?

PLAYSTATION 2/GAMECUBE/XBOX

NHL HITZ 2002

If Midway continues its trend of having all of its sports games rhyme with Blitz, we'd hate to see what they name a WNBA title. After disappearing for a few years, Midway's Open Ice series has been redesigned and renamed, yet the bone-crunching formula remains intact. Through four-on-four play, you'll witness 125 mph slap shots, head-rattling hits, and the rowdiest crowd to ever step foot in an arena. They'll bang on the boards, throw stuff onto the ice, and even leave if they dislike the way a game is being played.

PLAYSTATION 2

EXTREME G3

You think you're fast, Johnny T-Bird? You don't know speed until you've stepped into the sleek, svelte stylings of one of Extreme G3's futuristic vehicles. These babies cruise the strip at well over 1,000 mph, and Acclaim's game conveys those speeds brilliantly, in what is perhaps the fastest video game ever created.

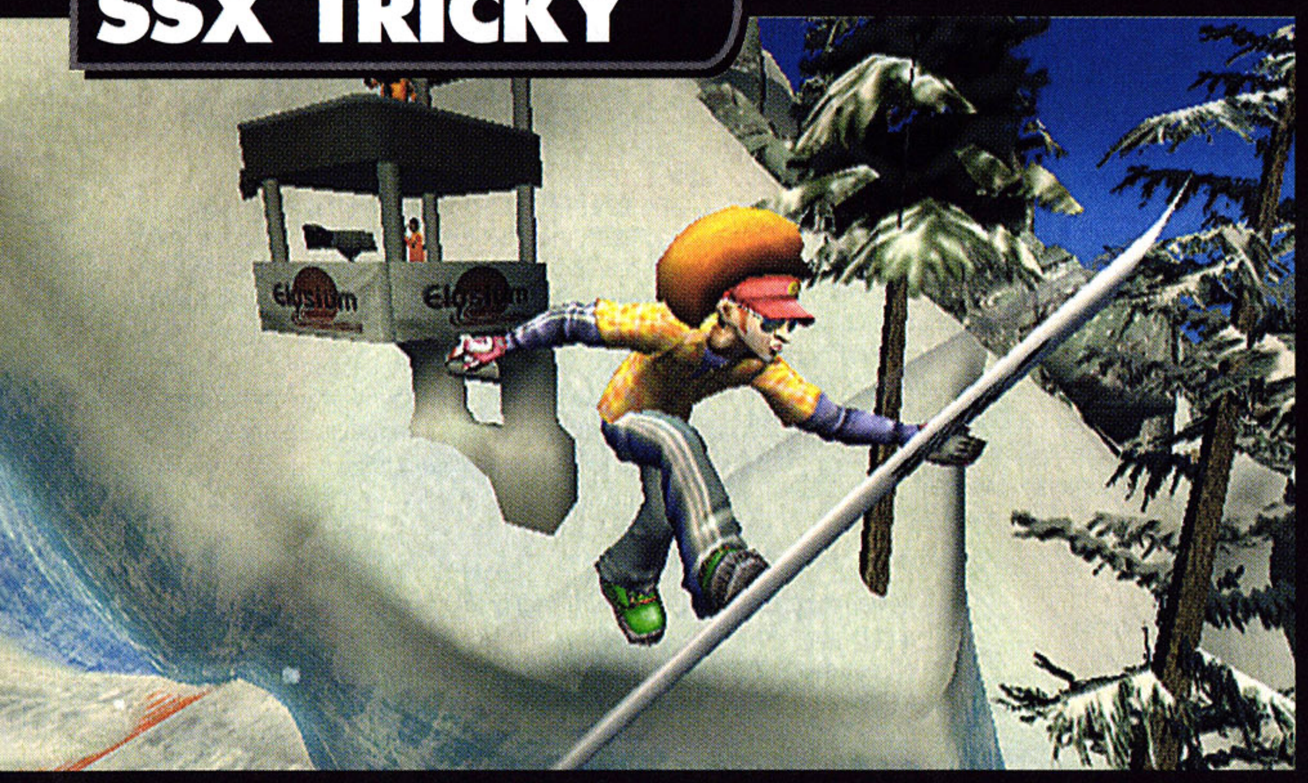
PLAYSTATION 2

THE MUMMY RETURNS

Man, we loved this movie! Really, how could we not? Brendan Fraser is the sexiest man on earth, and the best actor ever! As for the game, you'll be staring directly at Brendan's rear for countless hours. Yes!!! If you don't care for Brendan's work, which we find hard to believe, you can always play Imhotep instead. As Brendan, you'll save the world. As Imhotep, you'll destroy it. As you probably know, the PS-X Mummy game stunk worse than a sun-baked 1,000 year old corpse. Hopefully, this winter release won't share the same fate.

PLAYSTATION 2/GAMECUBE/XBOX

SSX TRICKY



A year after shredding the PS2 slopes, EA BIG's runaway hit, SSX, makes its triumphant return. Fashioned as a director's cut, much like a DVD movie, the game will feature a Making Of supplemental, redesigned tracks set up in two ways (race and trick), six outrageous new riders, and amazing über-tricks inspired by BMX and motocross. Each character will feature enhanced AI and changing emotions. For example, if you bump into Moby, he'll hunt you down and exact revenge. All of this can be yours come this November.

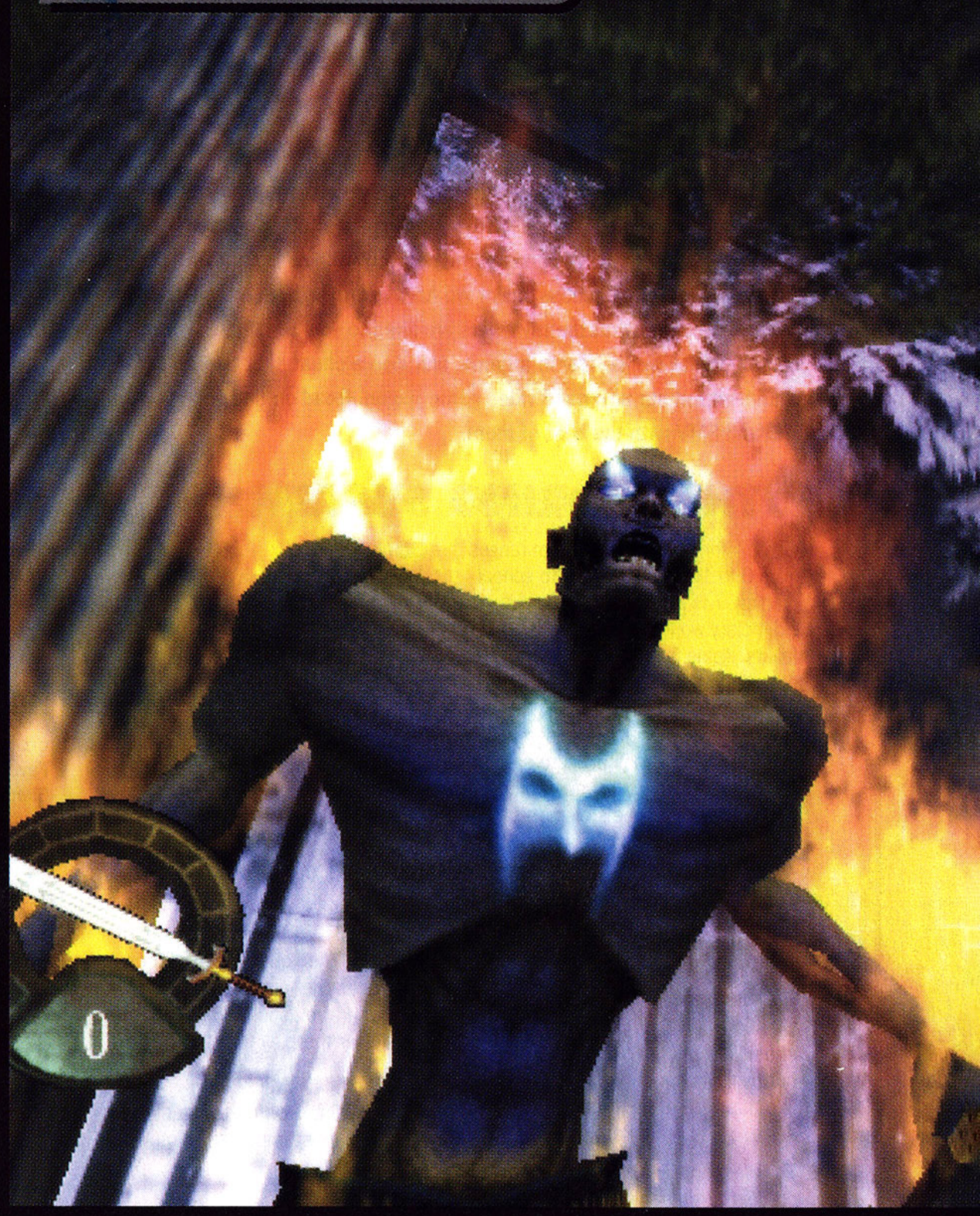
PLAYSTATION 2

AIR BLADE

Tony Hawk may be cool for those grounded souls, but Air Blade isn't limited by such a boring thing as friction. Much like a young Marty McFly, the characters in this game get their vert kicks whilst riding hoverboards. THPS fans will be able to pick this one up in a jiffy, and will be surprised at how much fun you can have without wheels.

PLAYSTATION 2

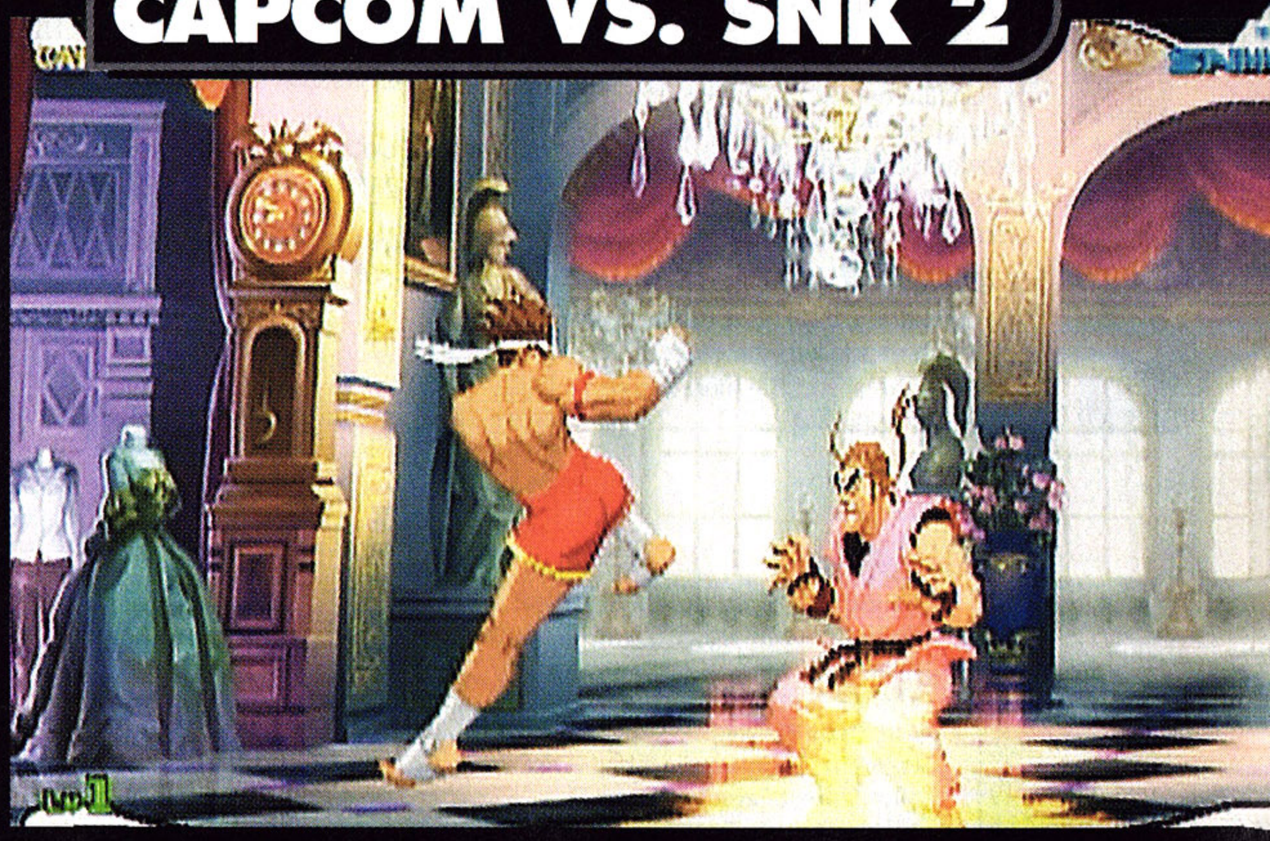
SHADOW MAN: 2ECOND COMING



In this Shadow Man offering, you'll assume control of the undead demon-hunter Mike LeRoi and battle against the Grigori, a group of demons who have been masquerading as demons for the past two millennia. You must stop them from being reunited with Asmodeus, their leader from the Pit. If you fail, humanity will perish.

PLAYSTATION 2

CAPCOM VS. SNK 2



The clash of the fighting game titans continues in this expansive sequel. The addition of ten characters brings the roster to 44 playable combatants. While this arcade conversion isn't as easy to port to the PS2 as it was the Dreamcast, Capcom assures us it will be arcade perfect and ready for consumption this September.

REVIEWS

Our crack (or crackhead, we can never decide which) review team rates games in a number of categories to help you sort out the great from the stuff you hate. Each game is reviewed by at least two staff members, and you will find both their opinions on each review. To make things a little easier we have put together some definitions of what the numbers mean, what the reviewers are like (so you can find the reviewer most like yourself), what we look for in a game, and also a cheat sheet so the newbies can understand our advanced video game jargon. Read on and soon you will be talking FPS and FMV with the best of them.

THE SCORING SYSTEM

10
9
8
7
6
5
4
3
2
1

Game Informer's rating system ranges from 0 to 10, and is similar to school grading. 7 is average, 9 and above is exemplary work, 5 and below is a failure. Aside from concept, entertainment, graphics, playability, sound, and replay value (all explained to the right), other factors that influence a game's final score are how much game you get for your money and how all the game's elements come together.

10 - Perfection. One of the best games of all time, if not THE best game of all time. This game has no flaws, and thus this rating is rarely given out.

9 - Worth owning. Fans of the genre should definitely enjoy this game, but even those who don't normally like this type of game may find themselves getting hooked.

8 - Worth playing. Still a great game, but arguably so. It may not be the best ever, but there's enough to keep your fingers wrapped around the controller for some time.

7 - Worth renting. Unless you're a fledgling gamer, you've probably seen everything this game has to offer before. Still, just checking it out won't ruin your weekend.

6 - Limited appeal. There are always a few people that will fall in love with a game of this caliber, but for the most part, those playing it will be yearning for something more.

5 & BELOW - Garbage. From this point down, it's just a matter of how much of a failure the game is. The lower the score, the more you're hating life for playing it.

CONCEPT
What new ideas the game brings to the table and how well old ideas are presented.

GRAPHICS
How good a game looks, taking into account any flaws such as bad collision or pop-up.

SOUND
Does the game's music and sound effects get you involved or do they make you resolve to always play with the volume down?

PLAYABILITY
Basically, the controller to human interface. The less you think about the hunk of plastic in your hands, the better the playability.

ENTERTAINMENT
Flat out, just how fun the game is to play. The most important factor in rating a game.

REPLAY VALUE
The longevity of the title.

- **High** - You'll still be popping this game in five years from now.
- **Moderately High** - Good for a long while, but the thrills won't last forever.
- **Moderate** - Good for a few months or a few times through.
- **Moderately Low** - After finishing it, there's not much reason to give it a second go.
- **Low** - You'll quit playing before you complete the game.

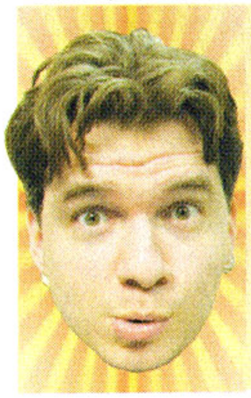
EC — Content suitable for persons ages 3 and older.
E — Content suitable for persons ages 6 and older.
T — Content suitable for persons ages 13 and older.
M — Content suitable for persons ages 17 and older.
AO — Content suitable only for adults.
RP — Product is awaiting final rating.

ANDY
Handle: The Game Hombre **Expertise:** RPGs, Action/Platform, Driving, Strategy, FPS **Interests:** The Lord Of The Rings Trilogy, The New Tool Album, Fishing **Dislikes:** Fart Machines, Dr. Laura, The New EQ Character Models **Current Favorite Games:** EverQuest, Twisted Metal: Black, Top Shop

When Andy's not yelling at a game for "rippin' him off," he plays drums in Minneapolis indie rock band, Unbelievable Jolly Machine. A longtime fan of Metroid, Andy has been reviewing video games professionally since the days of the 8-bit NES. While a big sports fan in real life, Andy isn't the first to line up for sports titles, but is always willing to put in the extra hours to play a good RPG or strategy game.

REINER
Handle: The Raging Gamer **Expertise:** RPGs, Fighting, Action/Platform, Sports **Interests:** Comic Books, Star Wars, Kato's Fascination With Fart Clouds (Chew On This, Brother!) **Dislikes:** Sony's "Rule The World" Attitude, The Xbox Controller, You (Yes, You!!!) **Current Favorite Games:** Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3, Star Wars: Rogue Leader, Pikmin, Twisted Metal: Black

Reiner considers himself the biggest Star Wars fan in the world. Along with his impressive collection of Star Wars action figures, he has seen the trilogy 514 times. A fan of all game types, role-playing games are his strong suit. In his six years as a professional gamer, Reiner has achieved the impossible. Penetrating the pixel boundary, he not only plays games, he's in one, and can be shot daily in the epic N64 release, Perfect Dark.

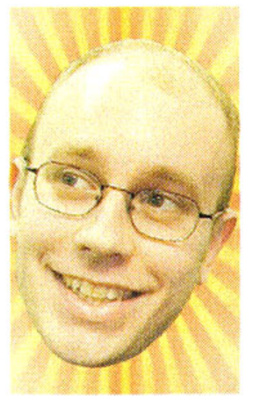


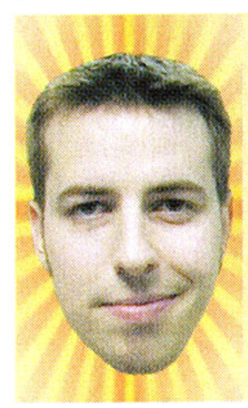
JAY
Handle: The Gonzo Gamer **Expertise:** Strategy, Puzzle, RPGs **Interests:** Dungeons & Dragons, Comic Books, Wrestling, Mini-Donut Machines **Dislikes:** KFC's Lemon Parfait Being Pulled Because Someone In Florida Choked On One. Say What? **Current Favorite Game:** Top Shop, State Of Emergency, Maximo

Jay lives in his mom's basement just like you. Adding further fuel to his archetypal nerd fire is his love for comic books, metal miniature painting, and twice weekly pencil-and-paper RPG sessions. In fact, he's such a D&D fanatic, he hates professional football simply because it interrupts his Sunday gaming schedule. Par for the course, his favorite games are often obscure ones. He is also one damn handsome man.

MATT
Handle: The Original Gamer **Expertise:** Racing, Puzzle, Action/Adventure **Interests:** Breathing, Sleeping, Eating, Infogrames' E3 Theme Song **Dislikes:** Weezer's New Record, Diapers, The English Language, Not Eating At In-N-Out Burger **Current Favorite Games:** Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3, State Of Emergency, Cool Boarders 2001, Drakan II

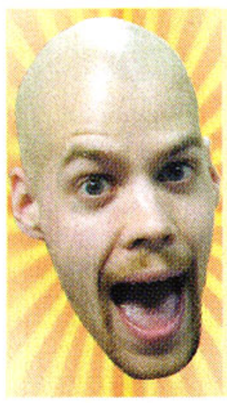
While record collecting, watching reality television, and playing video games might sound like a state of retarded adolescence, Matt manages to scrap together an almost meaningful existence out of these activities. His encyclopedic knowledge of pop culture is either amazing or annoying, depending on how close your desk is to his. Less esoteric than his colleagues, Matt prefers traditional action and platform games.





KRISTIAN
Handle: The Game Dawg **Expertise:** RPGs, Strategy, Sports **Interests:** Sleep, Gary Coleman, How Long Justin's Old Car Will Rust In Our Parking Lot **Dislikes:** His Roommate's Hair Dryers, The Sega Booth, Asparagus **Current Favorite Games:** Metal Of Honor: Allied Assult, Pikmin, WWII Online

Kristian enjoys opening a can of whoop-ass on his buddies at the ping pong table, then running off to the driving range for a lesson in humility and anger management. The original text-driven Zork started Kristian on the gaming road; Ultima 6, NES Baseball, and Zelda made sure he stayed. Still an avid RPG fan, he can always find time to pound out a good sports game.



JUSTIN
Handle: The Digital Deviant **Expertise:** Action/Platform, Fighting, RPGs **Interests:** Preacher Curls, Frozen Cheese Tortellini, Barbed Wire, Eric B. And Rakim **Dislikes:** Forgetting To Tape Wrestling, Sticky Floors, Taking DDTs, Mice **Current Favorite Games:** Soul Calibur, Dead To Rights, Zelda: Oracle Of Ages, Chrono Trigger

Unlike most gaming jabronis, Justin knows there's life outside video vegetation. He doubles as wrestler Helmut Von Strauss in the Minnesota independent scene, where he violently bonds with other sweaty males – a practice that just gets blank stares when attempted on other GI reviewers. Though the youngest on staff, Justin's tastes are highly old-school, and he plays 16-bit classics as often as he plugs into the latest titles.

KATO
Handle: The Game Katana **Expertise:** Sports, Action/Adventure, RPGs **Interests:** Watching Lions Catch/Eat Dinner, Honey & BBQ Fritos Flavor Twists, Flat Pillows **Dislikes:** Hotels Without Mini-Bars (Ever Been To The Hyatt In Downtown LA?), People With Lots Of Carry-On Luggage **Current Favorite Games:** Rogue Leader, Top Shop, Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3, Stuntman

When not buying copious amounts of records, Kato can be found exercising good taste, feeding the goats, and trying in vain to update his wardrobe into the 21st century. Like other young men of his generation, he quickly found out that the one true real world application of good grades was the free arcade tokens that were given out at as reward. With allegiance to none, he takes on every game with an equal eye.

GAME OF THE MONTH
TWISTED METAL: BLACK

Twisted Metal: Black is perhaps the darkest, most perverted game this magazine has ever seen – and we love it. Heralding the return of the original design team, Twisted Metal: Black takes the old car combat play mechanics to a whole new level with the power of the PlayStation 2. The game is like a car accident. You don't want to look, but you can't help it. Welcome to the world of Twisted Metal: Black. Pg. 76

NEWBIE CHEAT SHEET

For our newer readers, here is a glossary of terms and acronyms that commonly appear in the magazine. Video game veterans should move along (these aren't the droids you are looking for).

action – A term we use for games like Zone of the Enders and Gauntlet

adventure – A term we use for games like Myst and Escape From Monkey Island

AI – Artificial Intelligence. Usually used to refer to how well the computer reacts to a human opponent

board – A term we use for games like Jeopardy and Mario Party

CG – Computer Generated Graphics

DC – Sega Dreamcast

E3 – Electronic Entertainment Expo. The world's largest convention for video games

fighting – A term we use for games like Street Fighter and Dead or Alive

FMV – Full Motion Video. Usually refers to an animated CG cutscene

FPS – Frames Per Second. How many animation frames happen in one second. Also used to denote First Person Shooters like Doom, GoldenEye, & Unreal Tournament

framerate – The frames of animation used to create the illusion of movement

frontend – A game's menus and options

GB – Game Boy

GBA – Game Boy Advance

GBC – Game Boy Color

GC – GameCube

I'm 5000 – I'm leaving

isometric – Three-quarters top down view, like Starcraft or Red Alert 2

ISP – Internet Service Provider. The company that provides you with access to the Internet

LAN – Local Area Network. Connecting computers or consoles together within a small space to allow communication between them. Provides fast, simultaneous gameplay

minigame – A small, simple game within a larger one

motion-capture – Using human models and infrared cameras to record movement for game animation. Also mo-cap

N64 – Nintendo 64

NES – Nintendo Entertainment System

platform – A term we use for games like Super Mario and Crash Bandicoot

pop-up – When onscreen objects, usually distant, suddenly appear

PS2 – Sony PlayStation 2

PS-X – Sony PlayStation

puzzle – A term we use for games like Tetris and Chu Chu Rocket

racing – A term we use for games like Gran Turismo and Mario Kart

RPG – Role-Playing Game. A game that involves character improvement through collecting and spending points. A term we use for games like Final Fantasy and Dragon Warrior

SG – Sega Genesis

shooter – A term we use for games like Mars Matrix and Gradius

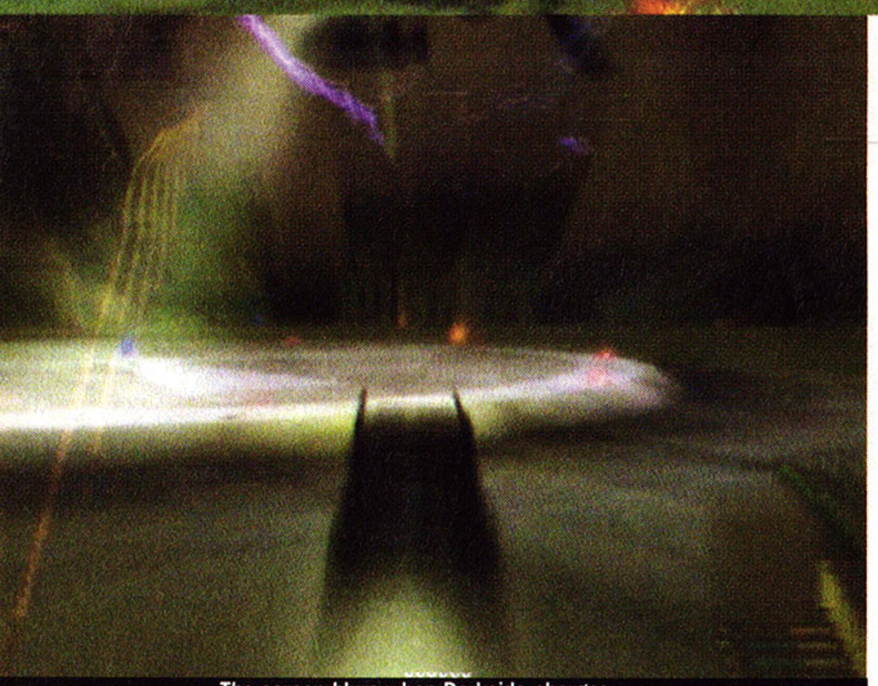
SNES – Super Nintendo Entertainment System

sports – a term we use for games like, well duh, Madden Football

SS – Sega Saturn

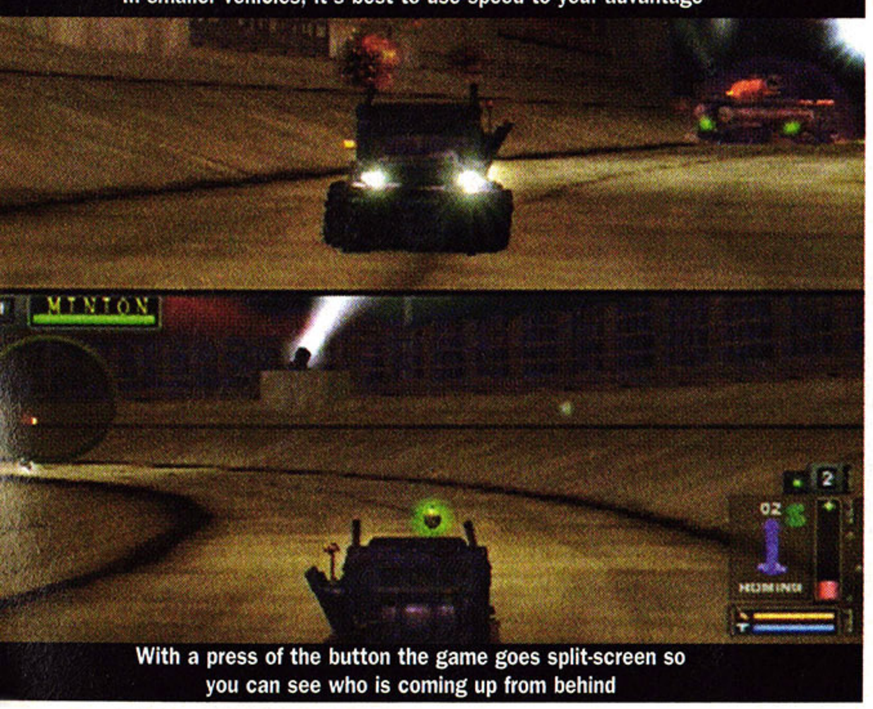
strategy – A term we use for games like Command & Conquer and Fallout Tactics

third-party – Something made for a console by a company other than the console manufacturer



The screen blurs when Darkside charges

In smaller vehicles, it's best to use speed to your advantage



With a press of the button the game goes split-screen so you can see who is coming up from behind

PLAYSTATION 2

TWISTED METAL: BLACK

NONE MORE BLACK

As the company logos fade and the menu screen blurs into view, you begin to sense the art direction in Twisted Metal: Black. It's dark. Every character has a twisted tale of hatred, betrayal, and bloodlust. Every level throughout the entire game is eerily set with music that keeps the mood dismal. Twisted Metal: Black is evil through and through, and I wouldn't want it any other way.

As a long-time fan of the Twisted Metal series, even the less popular third and fourth editions, this game had me from the opening screen. For fans of the first two, you will be happy to hear the original team that worked on those games, from long-deceased Singletrac, is back in action and are the brains behind this PlayStation 2 edition.

The control is rock solid, and has lost those annoying realphysics of previous games. The run and gun style that made the first two such hits is back. Great detail has gone into the vehicles, with some spectacular special attacks. While everyone has talked about Sweet Tooth transforming into a mecha and unleashing a barrage of missiles, this signature move pales in comparison to the Preacher's special. In this attack, the poor soul who is impaled on a cross strapped to the hood of Preacher's car launches off, lands on your opponent's car, does a little dance, and screams "Repent!" before blowing himself up. It's bloody brilliant.

Other classic control nuances are also here, including combos, energy attacks (jump, shield, and freeze just to name a few), the quick turn, environment weapons, and turbo. To fans, picking up the controller feels like coming home to a long-lost friend, but the enemies themselves bring a whole new level of pain. The computer AI has been bumped up quite a bit, and the boss encounters are just evil. As a matter of fact, my only complaint about this game is that the boss encounters are almost too much, as they turn into epic battles that can last up to 30 minutes.

Luckily, the long and difficult boss encounters aren't enough to stop you from wanting to beat the game with every character. Each tale is well worth watching. After the somewhat humdrum opening FMV sequence, a background movie is shown after you defeat the mid-boss, Minion, and an utterly brutal closing FMV is played after you beat the final boss...wait. It's probably best that I don't reveal this, as the end boss is a surprise that is just too sweet for long-time PlayStation fans. (I will say this, however. Think old-school Singletrac, and then think about the fact that he can be unlocked.)

I could go on and on about Twisted Metal: Black, as it is everything I could have wanted on the PS2 and a little bit more. From the expansive, interactive environments to the delightfully evil characters, Black is a car combat lover's dream and nightmare come true. – **ANDY**

The weather effects, like snow or rain, are pulled off quite well

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** SCEA ■ **DEVELOPER** INCOGNITO ■ **RELEASE** JUNE 11

GAME OF THE MONTH

TWISTED METAL: BLACK

That's got to hurt

"Twisted Metal: Black is evil through and through, and I wouldn't want it any other way."

Hmmm, all that stained glass and you're armed to the teeth. What do you do? What do YOU do?

You can fight in Story, Challenge, or Endurance modes

As you fight on this ship, the waves crash over the top of the railings

THE BOTTOM LINE

MATURE M — CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

9.5

- **Concept:** Twisted Metal taken to the next level
- **Graphics:** No slowdown, a fireworks display of particle effects, and environments that you can blow to hell and back...need I say more?
- **Sound:** Think Trent Reznor...on crack!
- **Playability:** Silky smooth
- **Entertainment:** You'll want to beat this game with every character, and then destroy your friends in multiplayer
- **Replay Value:** High

SECOND OPINION

Conceived within the darkest pits of the netherworld, Twisted Metal: Black intertwines visceral vehicular combat with highly disturbing visions taken straight from a serial killer's mind. A good majority of the original development team has reunited to bring this series to the PlayStation 2. Using Twisted Metal 2 as a template, then expanding on the action tenfold, the controls are very precise and the graphics are to die for. Accompanied by incredible effects, the battlefields are eerily realistic and the vehicular designs are simply ingenious. Not for the weak of heart, or anyone under the age of 18 for that matter, the competitive edge and gore factor have been greatly increased. The visuals will shock you. The special moves will leave you breathless. But best of all, the ramped up difficulty and lengthened battles will keep you playing for eons. Simply said, Twisted Metal has never looked or played better.

REINER – 9.5

"Cool Boarders lacks polish, but not style. The varied gameplay proves to be savagely addictive and just as wild as SSX."

PLAYSTATION 2

COOL BOARDERS 2001

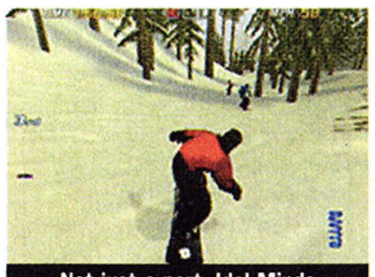
THE COMEBACK KID

Buried beneath an avalanche of snowboarding games, the hysteria surrounding Cool Boarders has been iced. Most gamers condemned the series when UEP Systems lost the development handle. Others grew tired of the mediocre yearly updates. In an attempt to chisel out of its frozen grave, Sony and Idol Minds have radically redesigned the product for its PlayStation 2 debut.

Even though it wears the same name as its 32-bit brother, Cool Boarders 2001 is a completely different game, sharing just as many similarities to SSX as it does to its family roots. This time, realism has been partially sacrificed as many of the hills come to life through worldly obstacles and cartoon-like appearances. From painted arrows in the snow to moving pylons, I'd imagine EA's lawyers will keep Sony's phone lines tied up for years to come. Even with 300 motion-captured animations, the character movement isn't as dynamic or fluid as SSX. On hard turns, the riders don't lean to the side, nor does their clothing ripple under great speeds. The snow effects, or should I say lack thereof, never jump off the screen, yet your eye does occasionally focus upon the stunning reflections on the board. The most impressive graphical achievement is the draw distance. In full detail, players can see great lengths down the hill, and never once will you see pop-up.

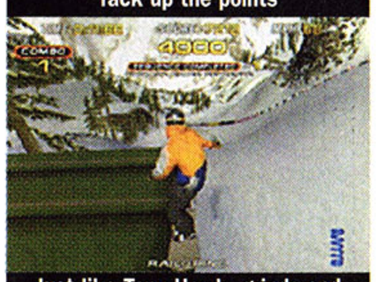
Where SSX wins accolades for its look, Cool Boarders will be remembered for its gameplay. Instead of just asking players to race and trick out, nine different events are included. Idol Minds has also inserted a slew of additional challenges. With each passing level, you'll be asked to complete a different objective. Whether it be learning new moves from the Trickmaster, or soaring down a hill in an attempt to secure 150 coins, the gameplay always manifests into something new – pushing players to oftentimes change up their strategy. The controls are very slick, and designed for tricks. You can tweak moves, perform complex specials, and grind on just about everything. Just like Tony Hawk, players must scour the slopes for well-hidden scoring gaps.

While the gameplay is easy to manhandle, the physics are suspect and the collision fields are sometimes off the mark. Cool Boarders lacks polish, but not style. The varied gameplay proves to be savagely addictive and just as wild as SSX. — **REINER**



Not just a port, Idol Minds completely redesigned the game for the PS2

Complex special moves rack up the points



Just like Tony Hawk, grinds and gaps are located everywhere

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER ACTION/SPORTS ■ **PUBLISHER** SONY ■ **DEVELOPER** IDOL MINDS ■ **RELEASE** MAY 22

Following the leader, many of the courses hold several SSX qualities

Cool Boarders may not be the most impressive PS2 snowboarding title, yet it captivates with its variety of modes and gorgeous look

THE BOTTOM LINE

EVERYONE — CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

8.25

- **Concept:** Cool Boarders collides with SSX
- **Graphics:** The animation and collision fields are a tad disappointing, yet you can't help but gaze in disbelief at the draw distance and environmental details
- **Sound:** A decent soundtrack with Stone Temple Pilots and Fear Factory
- **Playability:** The control is a tad fidgety, but the trick system is solid, and the challenges are fantastic
- **Entertainment:** With a handful of different game modes, you never really know what to expect next
- **Replay Value:** Moderate

SECOND OPINION

Well, well, well – this is certainly a surprise. After reaching 32-bit snowboarding perfection with Cool Boarders 2, a string of sequels suffered a severe decline, both in terms of quality and sales. Given just how horrific most of Sony's in-house PS2 sports lineup has been (FaceOff 2001, GameDay 2001), I wasn't expecting much from CB 2001. And at first glance, it doesn't look like much, especially compared to SSX. However, when you start to make your way through the lengthy Career mode, this game's modest charms begin to reveal themselves. There are just so many different kinds of levels and challenges to tackle. While some may be quick to write this game off due to its lack of visual flair, I prefer to think of Cool Boarders as an aging big league hurler, making up for its lack of heat by relying on smarts, craft, and nasty curveballs.

MATT – 8.5

"Dark Cloud combines the town-building elements of Sim City with the luxurious, real-time combat system of Zelda: Ocarina of Time."

PLAYSTATION 2

DARK CLOUD

AND NOW FOR SOMETHING COMPLETELY DIFFERENT

All-encompassing and rarely mundane, this is the perfectionist's role-playing game and a throwback of sorts to a Super Nintendo classic. Constructed as a next-generation Actraiser, Dark Cloud combines the town-building elements of Sim City with the luxurious, real-time combat system of Zelda: Ocarina of Time.

Within the introductory cutscene, an ancient evil is resurrected and summoned to cleanse the land. Role-players are all too familiar with this plot – one that has been trampled to death in every game. Applying the shock factor, the story in Dark Cloud takes an unexpected turn. Rather than combating the forces of evil before they engulf the land, the antagonist succeeds and obliterates every habitat across the planet. Amidst the desolation, players assume the role of Toan, the sole survivor, and are asked to rebuild the land.

While Toan is merely mortal, he receives a special gift – a gem that allows him to retrieve the villages and townsfolk that were annihilated. To do this, Toan must enter monster-infested dungeons, then hunt down the desired items. All the dungeons are randomly generated – meaning the item locations and structure change each time you enter. While this feature sounds exhilarating, it's actually somewhat of a curse. To generate these dungeons, the design must remain basic, consisting of little more than a series of hallways and rooms. While the texturing and surroundings in these stages are grand, the structuring is entirely two-dimensional.

Thankfully, Sony covered up this annoying aspect with variety. As the game progresses, five additional allies join the party. All these characters possess unique abilities and weapons. After hacking your way through a handful of levels with Toan, you'll come to a spot where you switch to a different character. While the combat is a carbon copy of Zelda, differentiation is expressed through complexity. All the weapons will break after extended use, so you'll need to repair when needed. Lacing magic and combining swords are also enhancement options.

After securing a handful of items, you'll return to the overworld and be asked to build a town. While this mode is a tad simplistic, it does get your creative juices flowing. Stick a few trees next to a cabin, place a pond behind a temple, do whatever you please. Then, with the click of a button, you can drop into the town and interact with the locals.

The overall design may not be the best, yet you'll be completely engrossed with Dark Cloud's play. Completists will want to obtain every item and weapon. Action fans will drool over the combat. Sim junkies will admire the town building. A rarity for RPGs, Dark Cloud truly does have a little something for everyone. – **REINER**

As always, fishing is an addictive minigame

Five different allies will aid your cause...

...and use different techniques and attacks within the dungeons

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ROLE-PLAYING GAME ■ **PUBLISHER** SONY ■ **DEVELOPER** LEVEL 5/SCEA ■ **RELEASE** MAY 25

Link...er...Toan can lock onto enemies, string together combos, and use items on the fly

Excavate items from dungeons, then place them in your town

THE BOTTOM LINE

EVERYONE

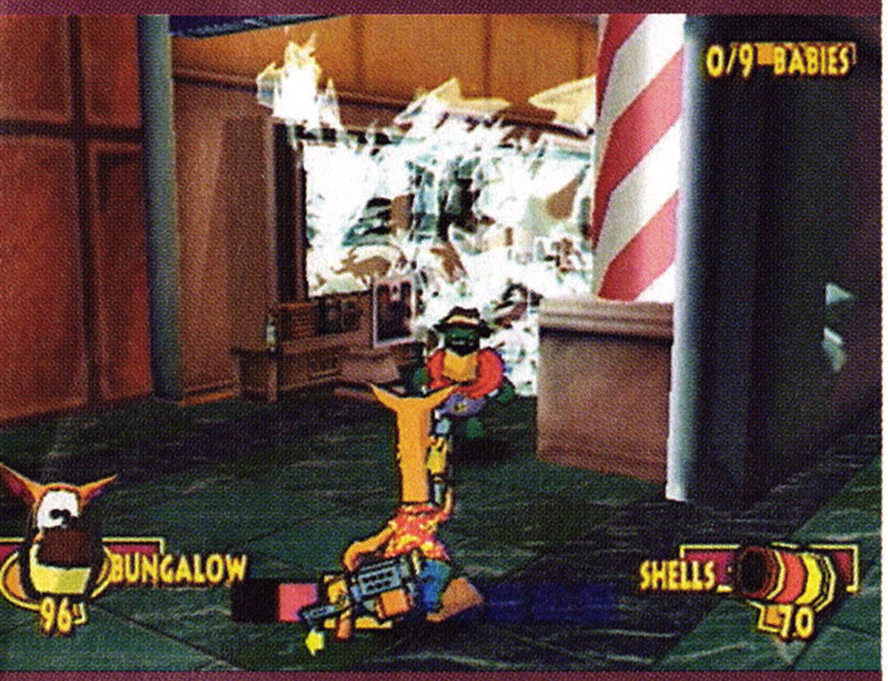
9

- **Concept:** Dark Cloud is to Sony what Actraiser is to Enix
- **Graphics:** The randomly generated dungeons lack style and flair, and the character animation is a little stiff. However, all of the models, effects, and textures are sumptuous
- **Sound:** Typical for an RPG
- **Playability:** Ingenious and complex, the city building and real-time combat couldn't have been executed better
- **Entertainment:** With the variety of play, Dark Cloud offers a hefty challenge and a lengthy quest
- **Replay Value:** Moderate

SECOND OPINION

You're probably flipping through GI, avoiding other responsibilities like homework or scraping off the dog-doo that's stuck to the driveway. Think you've got things to do?! Dark Cloud's Toan is single-handedly responsible for rebuilding the Western continent – with no allowance! While length has been a problem for other PS2 titles, it won't be here. I estimate you could easily invest around 50 hours into Dark Cloud. Even more, considering the random dungeons and the chance to redesign towns whenever you please. The downside of this is the action portion of Dark Cloud can get tedious. Monsters and level layouts are repetitive and lack imagination. Also, your fighting techniques don't evolve much (even if your weapons do), although using allies for specific tasks does break things up. The game's story, scenes, and Georama portion do keep you involved, however. As for getting paid to do it, sometimes a great deed really is its own reward.

KATO – 8.75



PLAYSTATION 2

FUR FIGHTERS: VIGGO'S REVENGE

ANIMAL MAGNUM-TISM

THE BOTTOM LINE

TEEN T CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

6.5

If I made a list of Dreamcast games I'd most like to see ported to PS2, I have a hunch Fur Fighters wouldn't make the cut. However, Acclaim saw fit to do just that, spawning Viggo's Revenge. The gaggle of mangy varmints bring their cute but deadly antics onto a new system, with a couple enhancements to show for the switch.

Maybe sitting next to Jay for this long has fried my sense of humor, but I don't find animal puns every minute of gameplay to be litterbox-filling funny. You roam around New Quack City, and visit stores with video game parodies like Shen Moo (get it?!). These bits get repeated like a bad SNL sketch, but at least Fur Fighters' gameplay mechanics are solid. The control scheme is familiar to first-person fans, and lends itself well to the platforming aspects of the title.

The thing keeping Viggo's Revenge down is the same reason you don't hang out with the family goldfish – it just isn't much fun. You'll find yourself retracing your steps way too often in the massive environments to change characters, explore opened areas, etc. Fur Fighters is an old dog with some new tricks, but methinks it should've been put to sleep rather than being moved to a new home. – **JUSTIN**

- **Concept:** Fur flies as an elite animal brigade rescues their kinfolk
- **Graphics:** New cel-shaded polygons highlight a mediocre visual package
- **Sound:** The added voice-overs are peachy, and gun blasts are a good contrast to the fuzzy facade
- **Playability:** Controls work nicely on the Dual Shock 2 in FPS fashion
- **Entertainment:** Lots of game here, but that's at least in part due to the constant back-tracking
- **Replay Value:** Moderately Low

SECOND OPINION

Back in August of 2000 I gave this game a 7.5 on Dreamcast, and I will admit it was mildly entertaining then. But now, even with the improvements, I just don't think there is much to get jazzed about. Old technology with a new gloss is still old technology, and Fur Fighters was never that great to begin with.

ANDY – 6

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** ACCLAIM
■ **DEVELOPER** BIZARRE CREATIONS ■ **RELEASE** MAY 29

PLAYSTATION 2

HEROES OF MIGHT AND MAGIC

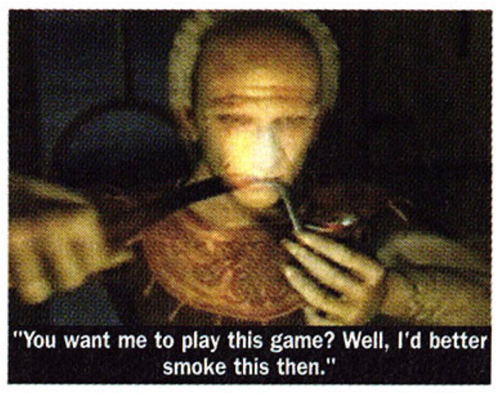
STRATEGY MADE SIMPLE

THE BOTTOM LINE

EVERYONE E CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

4.5

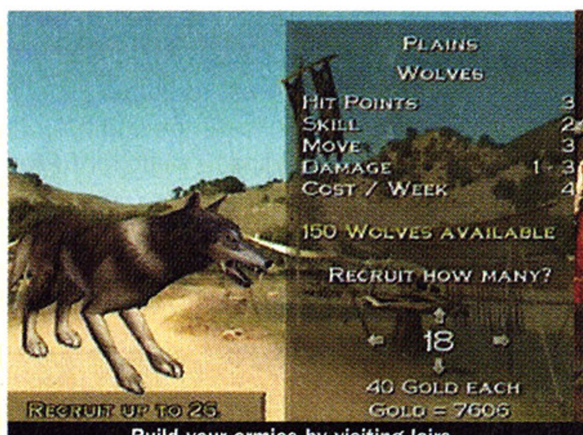
At first while playing Heroes of Might and Magic, you really feel that you are playing a good game. Then a few facts start to sink in. You always battle on a 5x5 grid. The only real strategy is to outnumber your competition. The battle animations are always the same. A quick boat rental and subsequent treasure hunt will almost assure victory. The only challenge in the game is to finish it in the least amount of time.



"You want me to play this game? Well, I'd better smoke this then."

You may think all this sounds a bit archaic for a PlayStation 2 strategy game, and you're right. Heroes of Might and Magic is nothing but a touched up King's Bounty. And when I say it's King's Bounty, I mean it IS King's Bounty. Justin, King's Bounty fan that he is, was able to name verbatim the creatures, continents, and leaders found in the game without ever having played it.

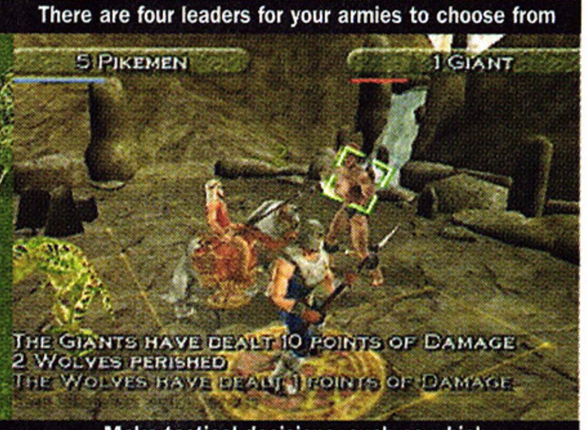
Was King's Bounty good? Yes. Is Heroes of Might and Magic good? No. Not only are people's graphical expectations at a much higher level than they were ten years ago, so are their gameplay expectations. Heroes will fail you in both categories. Anyone that would choose this over games such as Kessen (or the upcoming Kessen II) is suffering either from nostalgia for simpler times or severe brain damage. – **JAY**



Build your armies by visiting lairs

There are four leaders for your armies to choose from

Travel by land, sea, or air!



Make tactical decisions, such as which square to stand in

- **Concept:** King's Bounty with better graphics...barely
- **Graphics:** You would think that with only ten character onscreen at once, the animations would be smooth. You'd be wrong
- **Sound:** The grunts and groans of creatures dying on the battlefield are just wonderful
- **Playability:** If you didn't have to wait for loading to check stats and maps it would be better
- **Entertainment:** Just making it through one full game is a challenge
- **Replay Value:** Moderate

SECOND OPINION

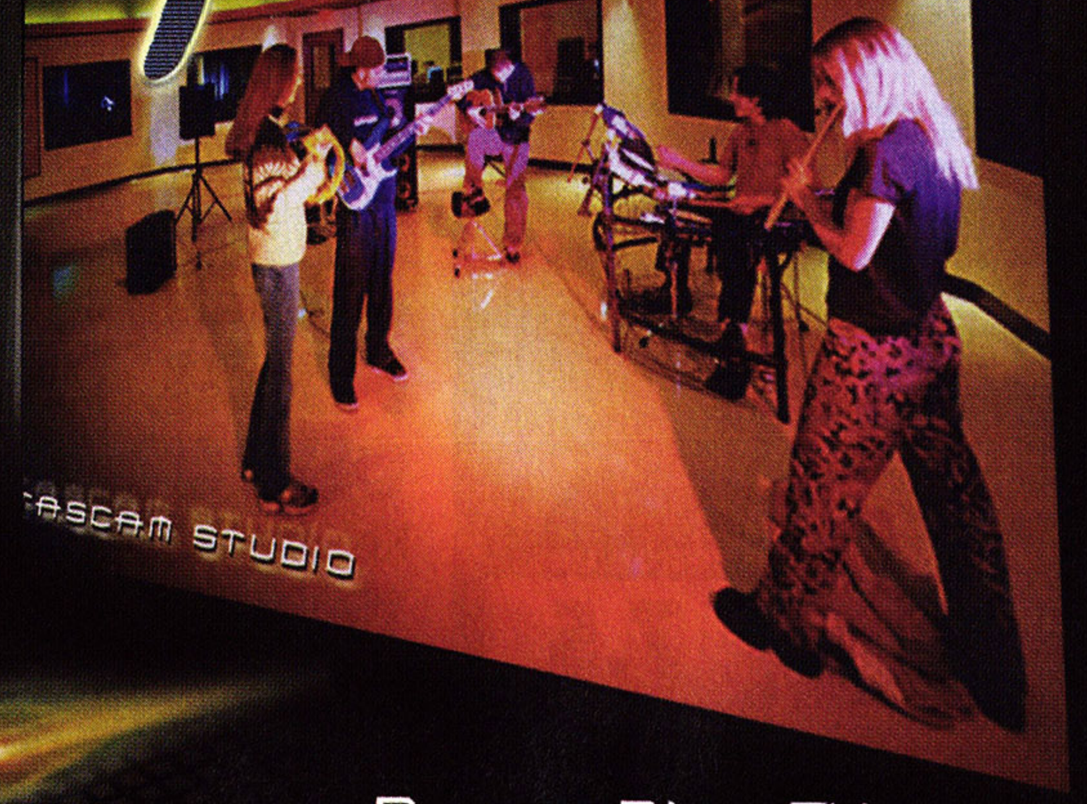
I never thought I'd say this, but thank you 3DO for releasing this game. Heroes of Might & Magic is a mildly spruced-up version of the little-known Genesis gem, King's Bounty (see May's Classic GI). I probably played more King's Bounty than anyone on Earth, and it's still one of my favorites. I won't say Heroes looks PS2 worthy, and it doesn't play as well as the 16-bit classic. However, it retains just enough of King's Bounty's charm to keep it out of the dungeon where most 3DO scores reside. Heroes is definitely an acquired taste, which some will spit out immediately. It won't make much sense for the first few hours, as there's a lot going on. Survive this period, though, and you'll learn the joys of army recruiting, exploration, and status promotion. I won't stake my life that you'll enjoy it, but it definitely gave me some sentimental warmth.

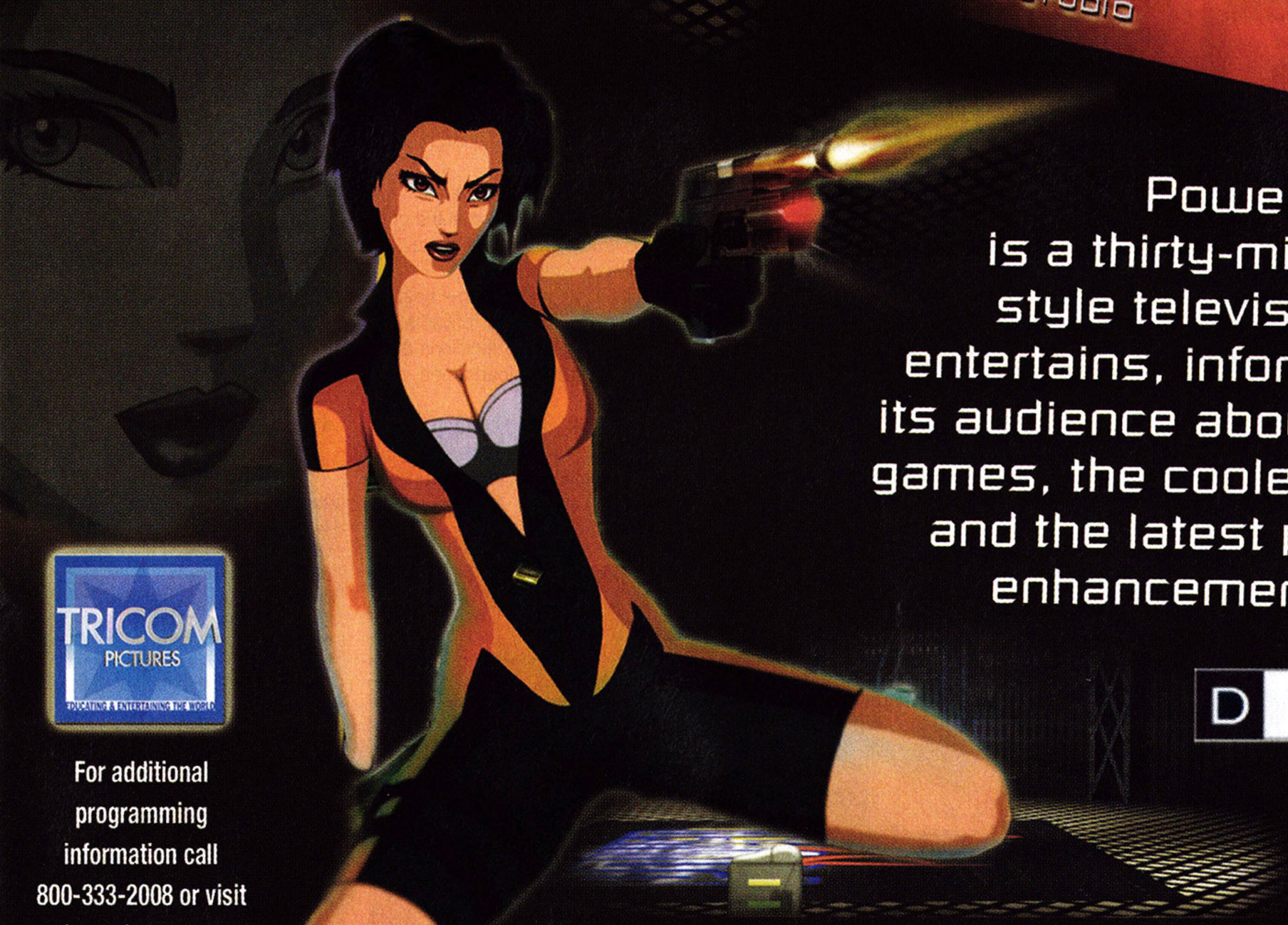
JUSTIN – 7

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER STRATEGY ■ **PUBLISHER** 3DO ■ **DEVELOPER** NEW WORLD COMPUTING ■ **RELEASE** APRIL 18

on the next edition ...

POWER Play





Power Play TV
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Sure, it's hard to tell from the cute graphics, but retail domination is the name of the game

PLAYSTATION

TOP SHOP

RULE THE RETAIL REALM

THE BOTTOM LINE

EVERYONE

7.5

With generic games like Snowboarding and Bowling, Agetec's A1 value-priced game line has been avoided here at GI, but when the oddly named board game Top Shop hit our PlayStation, we just had to make an exception.

In this one- to six-player board game, characters move about a mall opening shops with their starting cash in the hopes of selling lots of goods to reach a cash goal and win the game. By claiming adjacent spots to your stores, you can expand your location and fill them with more merchandise, creating a kind of monopoly in an area of the mall.

But beware, all stores are subject to a hostile takeover if all the merchandise is bought out before the player gets a chance to restock it. It creates the slippery economics of trying to maintain your stores and your cash, and still send your opponents into bankruptcy.

There are other card-based events that happen to mix it up, as well as player-created disasters that are purchased with points earned as you move around the board. Top Shop is a fun little game that is great for all ages and really can't be beat for ten bucks. All your Fish Markets are belong to me! – **ANDY**

- **Concept:** A video game hybrid of Monopoly and Sorry
- **Graphics:** Cute anime characters aren't the cutting edge of computer graphics, but for this game I wouldn't have it any other way
- **Sound:** Catchy Japanese keyboard cartoon rock that...umm...rocks
- **Playability:** A simple command interface makes Top Shop easy for any player
- **Entertainment:** For ten bucks, Top Shop offers a great board game alternative
- **Replay Value:** Moderately High

SECOND OPINION

Top Shop's cutthroat economics gameplay appeals to the nasty side that I like to explore when hanging around with friends. Mario Party, Sonic Shuffle, and Crash Bash be damned! Top Shop is the only board game worth playing on any console under the sun, and a steal at only ten dollars.

JAY – 7.75

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 6-PLAYER BOARD ■ **PUBLISHER** AGETEC
■ **DEVELOPER** KINDLE IMAGINE DEVELOP ■ **RELEASE** APRIL 28

THE BOTTOM LINE

TEEN

9

PLAYSTATION

FINAL FANTASY CHRONICLES

KNOW YOUR ROLE-PLAYING AND SHUT YOUR MOUTH

SNES was the breakthrough console for RPGs, and Square spearheaded the movement. Nowadays, finding the classics is a tedious and expensive chore, which is why two Square classics, Final Fantasy IV (Final Fantasy II in the US) and Chrono Trigger, are being paired together and released on PlayStation.

Final Fantasy IV may be an antique, but that doesn't stop it from packing a gigantic, ever-changing quest. As a pawn of an increasingly cruel king, Cecil flees his homeland of Baron, and searches for the reasons behind its newfound bad attitude. He amasses a party of fellow outcasts and travels a huge universe, sometimes on Chocobo.

I've been waiting forever to see Chrono Trigger re-released. Its story is one of the best, with a sublime time-travel plot and characters designed by Dragon Ball's Akira Toriyama. CT stands up incredibly well to PS-X RPG competition, and features in-game decisions that impact the rest of the tale. Unfortunately, it also has longer than expected load times, especially if you're used to the cartridge.

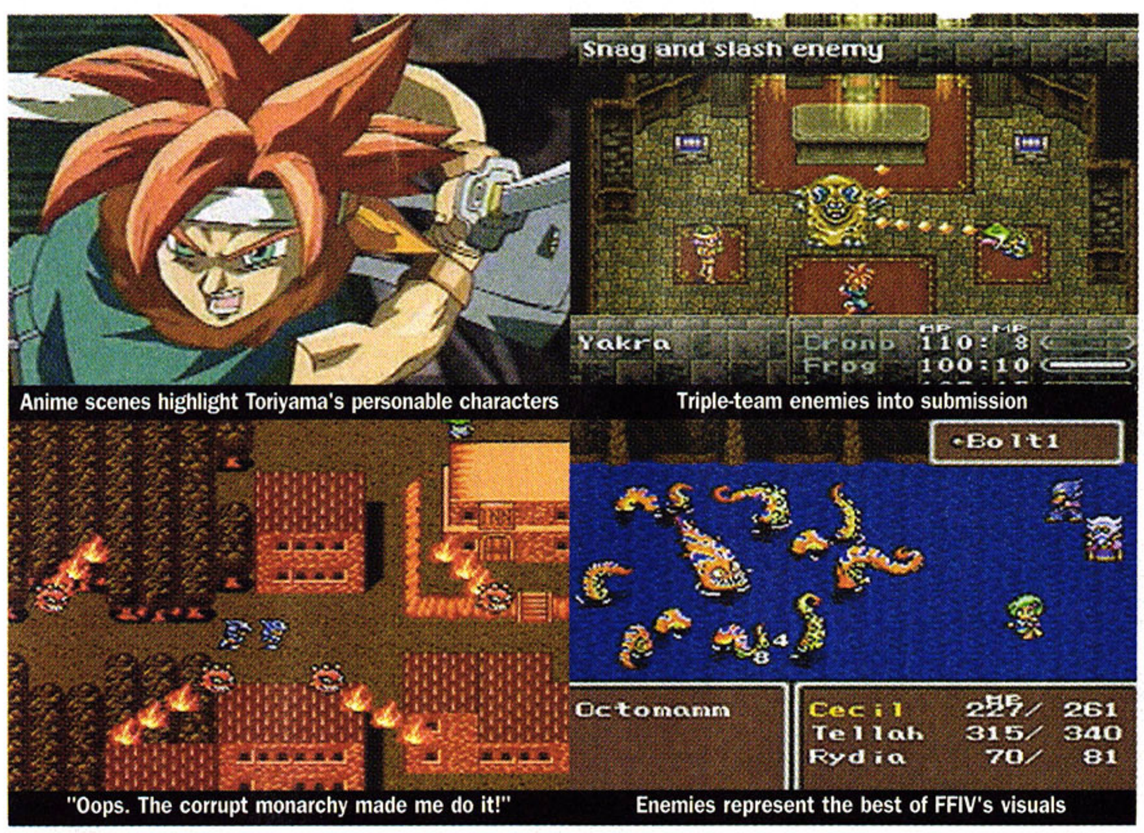
Buying both SNES games on eBay would run you about $130. That's a little steep, but I order anyone with an affinity for RPGs to get this compilation. It's like suggesting that a punk fan listen to Black Flag, or having a hip-hop aficionado check out Eric B. and Rakim. – **JUSTIN**

- **Concept:** Two of 16-bit's greatest RPGs are brought back for more long nights
- **Graphics:** Chrono's graphics rival PS-X games like Alundra, but FFIV is looking old
- **Sound:** Both games have amazing music, setting the mood for each storytelling scene
- **Playability:** Path choosing, multiple endings, vehicles, and Chocobo riding started here
- **Entertainment:** There still aren't many role-playing titles out there that are better than these two
- **Replay Value:** High

SECOND OPINION

This is one of the best compilation sets I've ever played. I can remember spending hour upon hour completing each of these games in my friend's living room every day after school. The really amazing part is I jumped right back into the menu interface like I had just played each title yesterday. For anyone out there who hasn't played these two games to their completion I say this: Do yourself a favor and buy this compilation. It's an education on what makes an RPG great. There are hours and hours of play packed into these humble looking games. You'll be hard pressed to find better storylines than those in Chrono Trigger and Final Fantasy IV. Maybe I'm having a nostalgia attack, but I loved these games then, and I love them now.

KRISTIAN – 9.25



Anime scenes highlight Toriyama's personable characters

Triple-team enemies into submission

"Oops. The corrupt monarchy made me do it!"

Enemies represent the best of FFIV's visuals

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ROLE-PLAYING GAME ■ **PUBLISHER** SQUARE/ELECTRONIC ARTS
■ **DEVELOPER** SQUARE SOFT ■ **RELEASE** JUNE 11

PLAYSTATION

SPEC OPS: RANGER ELITE

BLUE LIGHT SPECIAL OPS

Our military budget may be in the billions, but all it takes to get things done on the PS-X is a ten spot. For this nice price you'll do everything from rescuing hostages to disabling nuclear weapons using only the cooperation of two Rangers and their specialties (like sniper or grenadier). I found that the best plan was to use my sniper's FPS scope to clear hidden enemies, while the machine gunner would then lead the charge ahead (keeping an eye out for mines). Spec Ops' posturing function (stand upright, crouch, or lie prone) also saved my skin. I only wish combat was further made easier by a 180° quick turn, but no dice.

Ranger Elite is a well-functioning trooper, but this title merely gives extra missions to the series. The shadows and draw distance are still atrocious, and this Spec Ops even takes away Stealth Patrols' red targeting square, leaving you to fire in spurts at foes until you finally make contact. Regardless, you'll come away feeling you could run the whole military with just the change in your pocket. – **KATO**

SECOND OPINION

Spec Ops has some good ideas that are poorly implemented here. Of course, the game is only going to run you $10. You'll get some bang for your buck, but not much.

KRISTIAN – 5.25

THE BOTTOM LINE

TEEN

6

- **Concept:** Give gamers as much stealth and action as ten bucks allows
- **Graphics:** Poor. Sometimes they even give the PlayStation a bad name
- **Sound:** Nice report from your cache of guns, and good mood music for back up
- **Playability:** Control scheme easily allows for all the weapon/character switching and sneaky stalking required
- **Entertainment:** A solid buy considering the price and quality
- **Replay Value:** Moderate

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** TAKE 2 INTERACTIVE ■ **DEVELOPER** RUNECRAFT ■ **RELEASE** MAY 1

PLAYSTATION

DAVE MIRRA FREESTYLE BMX: MAXIMUM REMIX

RETREADING THE WHEEL

Dave Mirra Freestyle BMX was a good first strike in the two-wheeled core sports category. It took elements from Tony Hawk while keeping its own identity. Mirra had plenty to improve on, but isn't that what true sequels are for?

New levels are the biggest and best additions in Remix. Mirra already had stellar level designs, so I was happy to see more of what Z-Axis had to offer. Effects have been thrown into existing courses to keep them fresh, too. This is all well and good, but Remix hasn't fixed the actual complaints from Mirra. Vert tricks are still a beautiful thing (good ol' modifier button), but grinds still have that ugly magnetic feel, and manuals are way too sloppy. Also, I hate having to complete every stage objective to progress. Forced replay isn't cool.

Maximum Remix makes Mirra a better franchise, but I couldn't see fans of the first buying this update in full-priced sheep's clothing (shame on you, Acclaim). Even with the additions, I still have to give the nod to Activision's Mat Hoffman. – **JUSTIN**

SECOND OPINION

This semi-sequel sports some nifty new levels, and a refreshing absence of Sublime. Fun to be sure, but after having played Mat Hoffman, the control scheme seems lacking in terms of flow.

MATT – 7.5

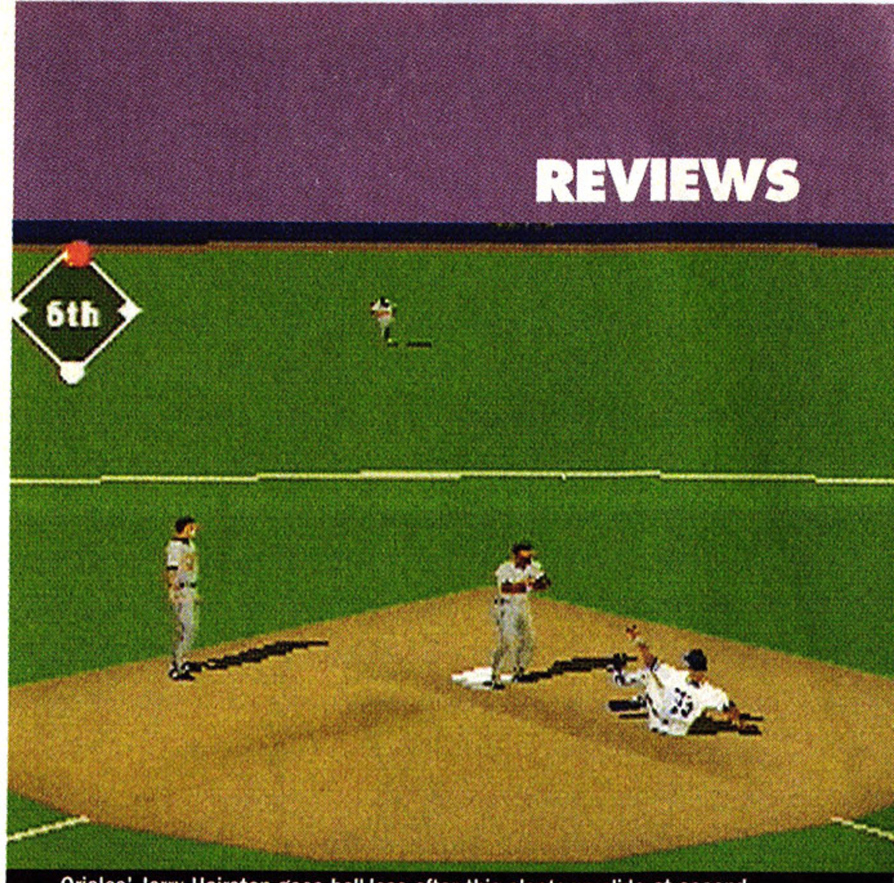
THE BOTTOM LINE

TEEN

7.25

- **Concept:** Building off the original with new levels, objectives, etc.
- **Graphics:** Smooth animation, but the models lack detail. I love the Matrix-style replays
- **Sound:** The soundtrack has taken a turn for the worse
- **Playability:** The modifier button is a great idea, but grinds and manuals are still problematic
- **Entertainment:** More to love for Mirra faithful, but Hoffman still has the smoothness edge
- **Replay Value:** Moderately High

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** ACCLAIM ■ **DEVELOPER** Z-AXIS ■ **RELEASE** MAY 15



Orioles' Jerry Hairston goes ball-less after this cleats-up slide at second

PLAYSTATION

MLB 2002

7TH INNING STRETCH & YAWN

I admit that I'm usually partial to EA Sports' products over others, but this time around 989 hasn't made me feel shameful of this in the least bit. This version of MLB is a disappointment simply because it's exactly the same as last year's. We all love baseball's traditions, but c'mon, I'd bet that anyone who says they prefer MLB's continuing lack of visual cinematics is high as a kite (no running to the dugout after an inning or other such luxuries). I guess this makes MLB the Darryl Strawberry of PS-X baseball games – it just can't learn its lesson.

That being said, the title's actual gameplay is nothing to complain about. Diving stabs in the infield and running down balls all the way to the track is fun, and means that MLB has earned itself the solid 6 I gave it, without the help of any added sweeteners. It's just too bad MLB 2002 doesn't go out of its way to leap off of the shelves and into your hands or anything. It would have been nice to have had a chance to change my pitching speed or be given a real Franchise mode. Instead, you have to earn and buy players from a Fantasy roster that you start out with. What?! Why not just give me both features seperately?! The lack of additions to this year's title makes you wonder what 989 has been doing with its time. Working? We think not – just ask anyone who's played any of the other sports games by the studio. – **KATO**

THE BOTTOM LINE

EVERYONE

6

- **Concept:** To create an almost exact duplicate of MLB 2001 and foist it upon the public
- **Graphics:** That there are no cinematic animations between innings, for strikeouts and homers is a shame. No dust for base stealers, either
- **Sound:** Kudos for the handclaps, stadium announcer, vendor yells, and songs. Unfortunately Woolly Bully, Respect, and Takin' Care of Business were poached from GameDay 2001
- **Playability:** In/outfielding is solid, and batting and pitching offer a variety of outcomes. Aggressive base running will usually pay off for you and the computer
- **Entertainment:** MLB's foundation makes this title hard to knock, but the lack of improvements reeks of 989
- **Replay Value:** Moderate

SECOND OPINION

I can honestly say that the background image on the main menu is different than it was last year. I may be going out on a limb here, but you may see a handful of fresh fielding animations as well.

REINER – 6

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER SPORTS ■ **PUBLISHER** SONY ■ **DEVELOPER** 989 SPORTS ■ **RELEASE** MAY 8

THE BOTTOM LINE

TEEN T CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

8.75

DREAMCAST

CRAZY TAXI 2

I'M GOIN' OFF THE WHEELS ON A CRAZY TAXI

"It's the game's ability to accommodate any skill level that makes Crazy Taxi 2 all things to all gamers."

After a year and more thankless hours as a San Fran cabby than I'd like to recall, I thought it was time to hang up my fuzzy dice for a much-needed break from the business (and the Offspring). Then the opportunity came to ply my craft in surly New York City. A guy's gotta feed his pet scorpion, so I took the job, and Crazy Taxi 2 is born. New York is a much bigger place, at least from Crazy Taxi 2's point of view. You'd be hard-pressed to see every nook, cranny, and crack house in a single Sunday drive. The skyscrapers add to the big-city atmosphere, but there's plenty of green grass to make skidmarks in, too. Pop-up is more of a problem than in the original, with buildings, and sometimes even vehicles, appearing out of nowhere. It appears that – this soon after Dreamcast's inception – the system's graphical limitations are already being reached. Still, as these shots show, Crazy Taxi 2 is a handsome game.

The new jump move adds depth to the gameplay, allowing for more secrets and shortcuts to explore. You'll still be called on to Crazy Drift, Crazy Dash, and do all the other psychotic special moves you mastered in the first game. It's the game's ability to accommodate any skill level that makes Crazy Taxi 2 all things to all gamers. A rookie driver can just tool around town and be satisfied, notching a D license; whereas a hardcore junkie can get his driving zen honed to a diamond tip, and go for the S and Awesome licenses.

Aside from better scores, improving your play will allow you to work your way up the Crazy Pyramid: a tower of minigames. The first row requires basic driving skill, but knowledge of the special maneuvers is essential to progression. You'll have to drift down multi-tiered scaffolding in one game; in another, haul ass with a carload of pimps to destinations high and low. You'll definitely need your A game for many of these challenges.

I could go on and on about things I would've liked to see in a Crazy Taxi sequel: vehicle damage/explosions, more indoor excursions, and some police presence. It seems Sega took the road more traveled, though, and went for a simple fixer-upper with number two. Again, Crazy Taxi's fun can't be beat. A bigger world means a larger variety of runs. You won't tire of taking the same guy to the church, then swinging by the heliport like you did in the original. Even the smaller course has quite a bit within its city limits. You loved Crazy Taxi, I know you did. As such, you'll love Crazy Taxi 2 – **JUSTIN**

- **Concept:** More chances to make some crazy money – this time in New York
- **Graphics:** Pop-up galore, but good otherwise. Better car models and more varied environments
- **Sound:** No...more...Offspring... <death rattle>
- **Playability:** The jump adds to gameplay, and is mercifully easy to execute. The other techniques require heavy practice
- **Entertainment:** The series is showing age, but hasn't lost its appeal
- **Replay Value:** High

SECOND OPINION

If you're still playing Dreamcast, you have no choice but to buy this game. It's a sequel to one of the games that defined the console, and a great one at that. The original's outrageous sense of humor remains (listening to a carload of mimes hoot and holler at my driving was a particular highlight), as does the vibrant, comic-influenced visual look. It's the same old ride, enhanced with a new, larger city, group fares, and the ability to jump your cab. Crazy Taxi 2 is a great deal of fun, and that's mostly due to the flawless design of the game. Where many racing games ramp up the challenge by making it difficult to tame the vehicles' incredibly accurate physics and control, Crazy Taxi does the reverse. Control is simple; the difficulty comes from tackling kamikaze traffic and ludicrous minigames. Two opposite approaches – the other might be more ambitious, but I say Crazy Taxi's is more fun.

MATT – 9

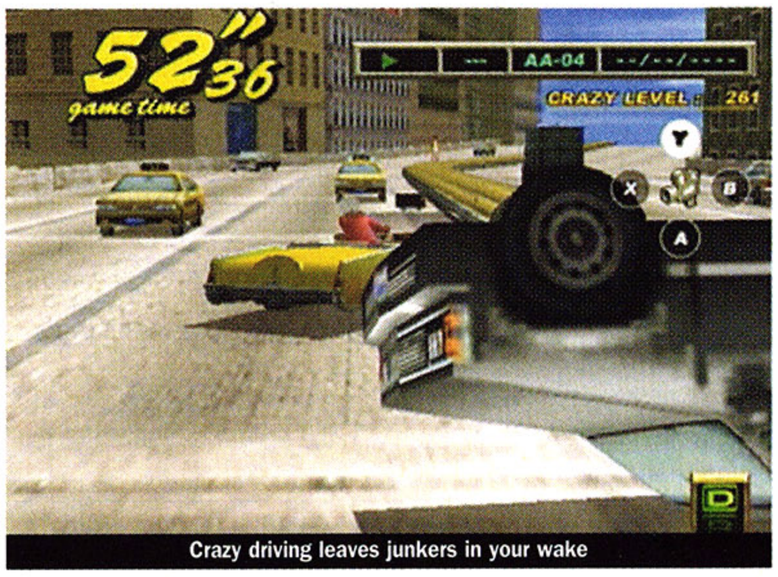
You can smash most things, but not product placement

Some parts of the Big Apple are very rural

A view of the back seat (is that Andy Mac?)

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER RACING ■ **PUBLISHER** SEGA ■ **DEVELOPER** HITMAKER ■ **RELEASE** MAY 29

The bride gives way to the bumper



Crazy driving leaves junkers in your wake

...Are you receiving this?..

encrypted the frequency
in this message,
you must decode

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BATTLE ONLINE - IN TEAMS
OR ON YOUR OWN!

FRANTIC SPLIT-SCREEN COMBAT
IN A WIDE VARIETY OF LOCALES

CUSTOMIZE YOUR CHARACTER
WITH INSANE FIREPOWER AND
TACKLE OVER 40 MISSIONS

TEEN
T
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
Animated Violence

Dreamcast™

ONLINE
MULTI-PLAYER

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PC

ECHELON

OUT OF NOWHERE

"The mix of story, action, and graphics is shockingly good to say the least."

First of all, where did Echelon come from? You probably haven't heard of it, and you're probably wondering why I've given a no-name title such a high score. To tell you the truth, I almost passed over this game in favor of something I thought would be a little more high octane. Thank God and baby Jesus I didn't kick this one to the curb. Echelon is a flat-out winner. The mix of story, action, and graphics is shockingly good to say the least. This title doesn't try to live beyond its means. There's no lame first-person mode and there's no intricate landing sequences. All you'll find is an engrossing flight sim experience and hours of gameplay.

Set in the distant future, you'll do battle with a sect of humanity which has been missing for centuries. Lulling your populous into a false sense of security with the offer of peace, the lost race begins to ravage the Federation's unsuspecting planets. You are called on as a pilot in one of the Federation's elite combat units to suppress their advance. You'll start your rise in rank as a lowly Junior Lieutenant, and move up as you successfully splash enemies and complete your missions.

Echelon's real strengths start to come to light when you complete the training and embark on your second mission. The first one is all about learning the sometimes confusing and frustrating control scheme. Numerous buttons and bizarre control options may stall your enjoyment of the game, but once things have worked themselves out you'll find yourself ensconced in a game that makes wonderful use of story and simulation. The proportions of each are very reminiscent of the formula X-Wing was able to exploit with such success – a healthy injection of story coupled with an intoxicating flight adventure and a surprisingly addictive rewards system.

If you're fortunate enough to get through a mission with some kills under your belt, you'll be given a breakdown of how many baddies you snuffed, and what kind of units they were. You're given points for each kill, which then translate into rank improvements. I would go through missions two or three times just so I could get into the action before my wingmen did. When you're given your own squadron to command, there are numerous orders you can issue to ensure you'll get the first shot at any bogies in the vicinity. On the downside, the AI of both sides is spotty at times. Sometimes you can just sit behind someone and tee off on him until he explodes, and other times a ground unit will get a bead on you and pick you off before you know what hit you. Additionally, there's no way to name your character. I don't get that. It can't be a terribly intricate bit of programming to implement, but there we are. I've always wanted my name to be "Player" I suppose.

Echelon is a necessity for anyone who loves a sci-fi flight sim romp. It's got all the ingredients you need to have a good time for a long time. Multiplayer only makes this game all the sweeter. Buy! Buy!! Buy!!! – **KRISTIAN**

THE BOTTOM LINE

EVERYONE — CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

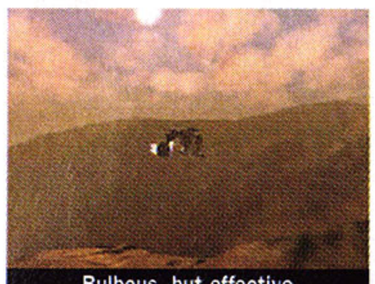
9

- **Concept:** It's a flight sim that shouldn't be fun, but is
- **Graphics:** Vast environments, detailed terrains and ships, great particle effects, and beautiful backgrounds come together quite nicely
- **Sound:** The voice work is very mechanical, but it adds to the experience
- **Playability:** There are a ton of controls to learn for all of you finesse freaks out there, but only a few you'll really have to know
- **Entertainment:** This is the most fun I've had with a flight sim since Tie Fighter
- **Replay Value:** High

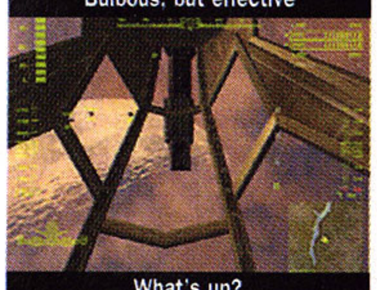
SECOND OPINION

With the complexity of a hardcore flight simulator and the simplicity of a basic arcade shooter, Echelon's gameplay mixture proves to be extremely addictive and nearly impossible to put down. Through lush environments and intricately detailed vehicular designs, the realism in the worlds is staggering. The interaction with wingmen and fellow ground troops is also something to behold. Whether it be protecting convoys, asking permission to land, or creating attack formations with your squadron, the missions are quite varied and rarely repeated. Sound also plays an important role as NPCs constantly keep you informed of the events at hand. I really didn't have any expectations for this game, yet it turned into one of the most irresistible PC titles I've played in quite some time. If you enjoyed the Wing Commander series, Echelon is right up your alley.

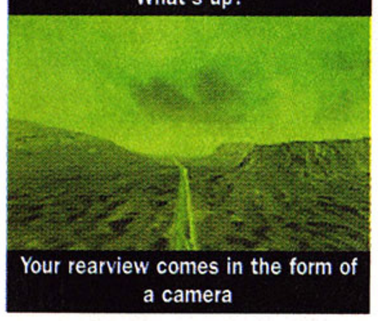
REINER – 8.5



Bulbous, but effective



What's up?



Your rearview comes in the form of a camera

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 16-PLAYER SHOOTER ■ **PUBLISHER** BETHESDA SOFTWORKS ■ **DEVELOPER** BUKA ENTERTAINMENT
■ **RELEASE** APRIL 26

Ship went boom

Getting ready for a mission

PC

TROPICO

VIVA LA REVOLUTION!

"Hello, my friends. Here we are once again debating over whether or not to give these capitalist pig-dogs our hard-earned dinero. Is this not what is keeping the world down? Why spend money on a silly game when you should be spending it on bread crusts and toilet paper for your family? You have not stood in the shivering cold for hours on end waiting in line for your weekly meat ration, my young Yanquis. You have no idea what real hardship is."

That was, of course, my Tropican alter ego Generalissimo Alejandro Miguel Juantxiki Koldobika Castro III. He becomes incensed at the thought of meaningless spending, yet had it not been for the PopTop team and their revolutionary (no pun intended) game, he never would have come to power. The staggering amount of detail, the numerous customization options, the funky music, and the razor-sharp graphics make Tropico a game not to be missed.

Tropico's amalgamation of numerous genres serves to heighten the gameplay offered in this title, as well as dish up fun by the boatload. When you're not busy placating the US because of the amount of aid you're receiving from the USSR, you're trying to construct an infrastructure your citizens can use and enjoy. This game is an absolute must-have for anyone who found anything from SimCity to Zeus even moderately interesting. – **KRISTIAN**

Swimming pools attract tourists

Flaws will help define what kind of leader you are

From humble beginnings...

...to a bustling tourist trap

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER STRATEGY ■ **PUBLISHER** GATHERING OF DEVELOPERS
■ **DEVELOPER** POPTOP SOFTWARE ■ **RELEASE** APRIL 28

THE BOTTOM LINE

TEEN T CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

9.25

- **Concept:** Despotism is fun, kids! Now where's my little red book...
- **Graphics:** Highly detailed and intricately modeled graphics are incorporated into a wonderfully intuitive camera system
- **Sound:** Tropico uses a good amount of voice work and entertaining music, but Day-O was conspicuously missing
- **Playability:** The tutorial makes it easy to get started, but the complexity of island management is left up to you
- **Entertainment:** I've never had more fun pretending I was a dictator
- **Replay Value:** Moderate

SECOND OPINION

The balance one must strike between economic advancement and political stability in Tropico is unlike any other sim game out there. Just when you think there are enough papaya fields and luxury hotels for you, as dictator, to make a decent living, some rebels who want a high school will attack the capital. It makes for an always interesting play session, and quite a difficult one as well. The only problem with Tropico is that, as supreme ruler of a small island nation, it really doesn't seem that you have enough opportunity to utilize an iron fist. Where are the secret police and illicit substance plantations? Even with these oversights, however, Tropico manages to consistently captivate. Sim fan or no, there's just something charming about building your own island paradise (or humid sweat shop with no escape). Viva, Fitzloff!

JAY – 8

PC

MYST III: EXILE

GET THE POINT

The Myst series has become a very cult-like phenomenon. There are players the world over who salivate at the mere thought of a sequel to their beloved puzzle games. They wait in line for hours to be the first person on their block to solve Myst's intricate situations. They love the challenge and the excitement produced from a door unlocking after hours of figuring out what gear works which tube that activates a certain switch at a certain time of day. I say bully for you. If you like it, that's cool.

However, there is another part of the gaming world who can't stand sitting there staring at the same puzzle clues for hours on end and still going nowhere. What it comes down to is how cerebral you want to get with your game. Myst III gives you every chance in the world to feel like you'd make a good MENSA candidate. It's also improved the game to give you more immediate rewards for solving puzzles instead of making you tramp across an island to see the fruits of your labor. Myst III is a point-and-click puzzler that looks incredibly good. If you're a Myst fan, you'll love this. If not, don't bother. – **KRISTIAN**

THE BOTTOM LINE

EVERYONE E CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

7.5

- **Concept:** Walk around great looking environments and solve puzzles...again
- **Graphics:** Gorgeous backgrounds and highly detailed areas are the jewel of Myst's crown
- **Sound:** All of the interactive sounds and ambient noise you'd expect from a Myst sequel
- **Playability:** Point and click – It doesn't get much easier than that
- **Entertainment:** If you're a fan of the series, or you really love puzzle games, this is the game for you
- **Replay Value:** Low

SECOND OPINION

On an aesthetic level, I can appreciate Myst III's gorgeous, windswept vistas and complex puzzles. However, there's a difference between appreciating something and actually enjoying it. Fans of the series will eat this one up; everyone else could probably get by with some new desktop wallpaper instead.

MATT – 7.5

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ADVENTURE ■ **PUBLISHER** UBI SOFT
■ **DEVELOPER** PRESTO STUDIOS ■ **RELEASE** MAY 7

GAME BOY ADVANCE

SUPER DODGE BALL ADVANCE

HERE'S MY SCANDAL

It's the quintessential middle school story: Your fifth-grade gym class is about to start the basketball unit, but it's Friday and you can't start a new unit at the end of the week. So what's a poor phy-ed teacher to do? Bust out those useless volleyballs and play dodgeball, of course! Your dodgeball probably never looked anything like Super Dodge Ball Advance, and it probably wasn't as fun either.

Playing this game with four players is an absolute must. At the Game Boy Advance event I attended in March, it was the most-played game there. That's saying a lot, seeing as how we had our pick of basically any big-name GBA title you could have thought of at the time. This game has action, strategy, and enough addictive qualities to keep you squinting at the screen for hours on end.

It doesn't seem like a title based on such a basic childhood activity would be that complicated, but Atlus has pulled it off. To move up in ranking and increase your stats, you'll need to learn to execute your Super Throws in tandem with passing and player movement. Get used to referring to the instruction booklet quite a bit during your maiden voyage, as you will flounder during the higher-level matches without it. – **KRISTIAN**

THE BOTTOM LINE

EVERYONE

9

- **Concept:** See person, get ball, knock person down – repeat
- **Graphics:** I'm still amazed a handheld system is capable of this
- **Sound:** I wasn't expecting much, and that's what I got
- **Playability:** This game is the classic example of a title that's easy to play but hard to master
- **Entertainment:** This is one of the best handheld games I've ever played
- **Replay Value:** High

SECOND OPINION

My fondest memories of gym class come to a portable system. Ah, sweet nostalgia. Few games bring unadulterated fun like Dodge Ball. The gameplay is glorious, and you can customize a lot. It's a little shallow on modes, but what's there will last you through countless road trips, plane rides, and prison sentences.

JUSTIN – 8.75

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** ATLUS
■ **DEVELOPER** ATLUS ■ **RELEASE** JUNE 11

GAME BOY ADVANCE

PINOBEE: WINGS OF ADVENTURE

NOT YOUR AVERAGE ROBOT BEE

Pinobee is a bit of a mixed bag. On one hand, it's a run of the mill platformer, especially in the level designs, which recycle hoary video game clichés the likes of conveyor belts and falling platforms. On the other, it implements a beautiful watercolor look and a unique play mechanic that allows you to fly by way of a rocket boost. At first, it amounts to a double jump, but as you increase the number of boosts available to your character, you'll be able to fly for longer periods of time. And, although the levels aren't terribly innovative, there are a ton of hidden areas that often require you to replay stages.

Par for the course, right? Actually, there are a couple of additional quirks that lift Pinobee above the ordinary. One is an item screen that makes you play bingo for power-ups, and lets you trade items with fellow players. Even stranger are Pinobee's diary entries, which recall an acid-baked Jack Handy. In fact, let me sum up Pinobee with a quote: "Cricket was so happy that he cried. I saw tears for the first time in my life. It was very weird." Indeed. – **MATT**

SECOND OPINION

It says a lot that you can become engrossed in Pinobee even though it only uses one button. Is it the diary, or the deep levels? You can ponder Pinobee's power for a while.

KATO – 8

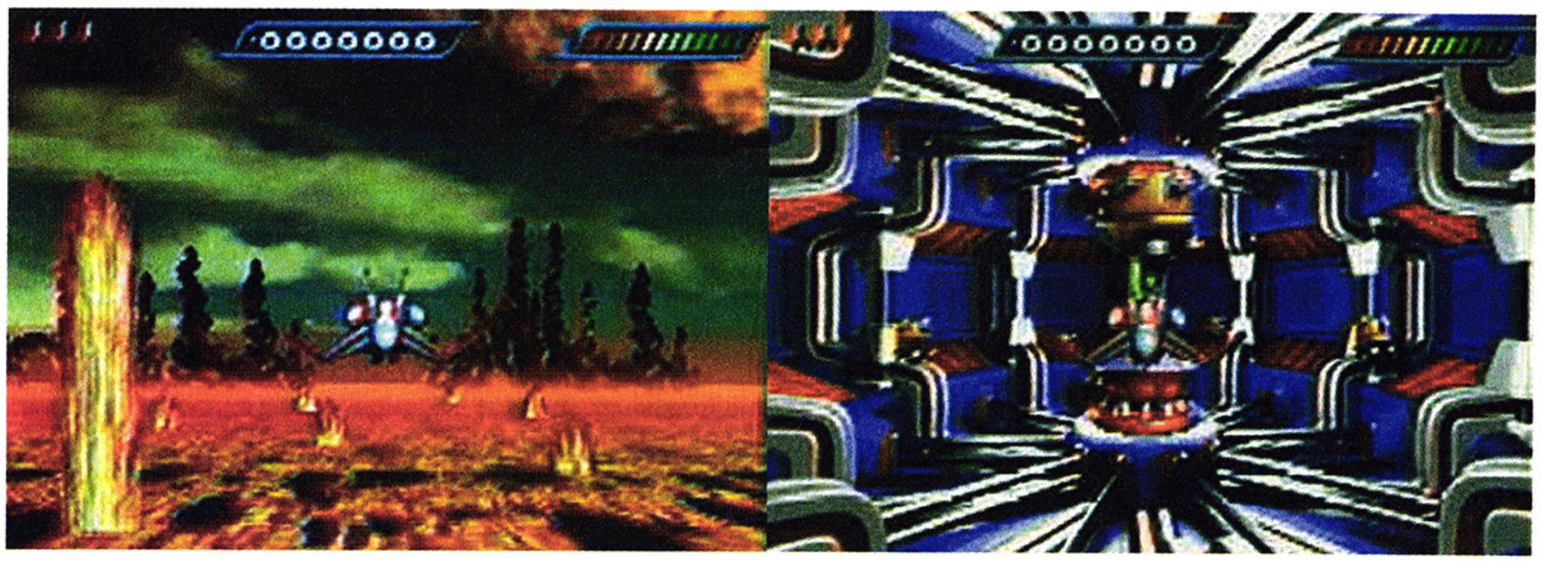
THE BOTTOM LINE

EVERYONE

8

- **Concept:** Send an existential robot-bee on a quest to find his missing grandfather
- **Graphics:** The diffuse pastel backgrounds are either a tribute to impressionism, or just blurry
- **Sound:** The usual "tiptoe through the tulips" of happy handheld platform tunes
- **Playability:** Once you get the hang of the jump boost, it's all good
- **Entertainment:** Just creative enough to separate itself from the pack, Pinobee succeeds with charm to spare
- **Replay Value:** Moderate

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/PLATFORM ■ **PUBLISHER** ACTIVISION ■ **DEVELOPER** ARTOON
■ **RELEASE** JUNE 11



GAME BOY ADVANCE

IRIDION 3D

HANDHELD MISERY

Amongst the initial Game Boy Advance library, Iridion 3D is somewhat unique as being one of the few games that's not a port or a sequel, and as the only shooter. Unfortunately, originality is one of the few things it has going for it. Like Space Harrier, your craft moves in two dimensions at the forefront of the screen, while enemies come at you from the background. The psuedo-3D graphics, especially during some of the boss battles, will put you in awe of what Nintendo's new handheld can do. After about half an hour, however, you're no longer enamored with the graphics, but annoyed with the mediocrity of the gameplay.

You shoot, you dodge bullets, and that's about it. The different kinds of power-ups are nearly indiscernible from each other, and once you get the pattern down for levels, there's nothing to come back for. Perhaps the most annoying feature of the game is that your ship takes up so much of the screen, it's all too easy to get hit by a bullet you can't see. The prospect of a 3D shooter on Game Boy Advance seemed thrilling to me, but after I've experienced the final product I think something more traditional would have been better. –**JAY**

SECOND OPINION

This is the first GBA game I've seen that looks worlds better than a SNES title. Backgrounds and bosses will knock your socks off, which you'll then use to wipe up the puddle of pee under you. The power-ups didn't wow me and the shooting was over-simplified. It's no StarFox, but Iridion gives shooter fans a worthy GBA purchase.

JUSTIN – 7.25

THE BOTTOM LINE

EVERYONE

6

- **Concept:** As basic as they come. Whatever you see, shoot it. If it doesn't explode, shoot it again
- **Graphics:** Really makes you appreciate the leap that's been made from GBC to GBA. Boss battles are especially pretty
- **Sound:** The music is good, if not a bit repetitive
- **Playability:** You can move and shoot. Perfect!
- **Entertainment:** Once the thrill of the game's look wears off, all that's left is a barely adequate shooter
- **Replay Value:** Moderately Low

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER SHOOTER ■ **PUBLISHER** MAJESCO ■ **DEVELOPER** PSHIN'EN
■ **RELEASE** JUNE 11

GAME BOY ADVANCE

F-ZERO: MAXIMUM VELOCITY

JUST FIVE MORE MINUTES, MOM!!

After F-Zero's debut in 1991, the world of video game racing was never the same. We've waited ten long years for our old friend to come around on a handheld system, and our wait is finally over. I can truthfully say that F-Zero for the GBA is closer to the original than I could have dreamed. The Mode 7 graphics are firing on all cylinders, and the gameplay is just as intense as it was when I was avoiding doing my homework in my parent's basement at the tender age of 15.

The only thing holding this game back is the GBA itself. As most of you know, using the shoulder buttons is a must in F-Zero. I found that after five minutes of intense play, my hands began cramping as I attempted to lean into the turns with the L and R buttons. Of course, I didn't really care. The game had me captivated from the beginning, and no amount of digit discomfort was going to stop me. The multiplayer capabilities are phenomenal – you can play a four-player game with only one cartridge (with limited tracks and vehicles), or you can play any track with any vehicle if you all have carts. Chalk up another great release for the GBA. – **KRISTIAN**

SECOND OPINION

"It's a classic," they scream at me. Fine. It looks cool and all, but truth be told, so do a lot of things on the GBA. I guess racing around a space track has a tendency not to blow my mind.

KATO – 6

THE BOTTOM LINE

EVERYONE – CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

9

- **Concept:** The SNES version of F-Zero in the palm of your hand.
- **Graphics:** The Mode 7 effects are well implemented, and the car models are solid
- **Sound:** The speaker may be tiny, but it pumps out some pretty impressive noises for this title
- **Playability:** Anyone who's ever played F-Zero will feel right at home
- **Entertainment:** Good clean fun for hours on end
- **Replay Value:** High

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER RACING ■ **PUBLISHER** NINTENDO ■ **DEVELOPER** NINTENDO
■ **RELEASE** JUNE 11

GAME BOY ADVANCE

TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 2

TEENSY-WEENSY GRINDAROONI!

Vicarious Visions has created polygonal skater models that not only harness the highest level of detailing, but also move incredibly smoothly. Amazingly, each skater is composed of over 300 polygons. The environments are two-dimensional, yet you'd swear they touch on the third dimension. Another of Vicarious' graphical achievements is the use of transparency effects. If you skate behind a building, it'll turn translucent so you can see where you're skating.

The top-down isometric view works, but I think you'll agree that being able to see the horizon and surroundings in front of you is an essential piece of the THPS formula. Believe me, the play may seem obscure at first, but once you get to know the levels and controls, you'll see it's as deep and comprehensive as its big brother. Not every level made it into the game, but as compensation, Vicarious brought the Warehouse back. All the goals are still intact, and the Gap Checklist is included as well. Every time I play this game, I find myself in a state of bewilderment, staring in awe at its graphical prowess and magnitude of play. Don't miss it! – **REINER**

SECOND OPINION

Although it will take a while to get used to the isometric camera view and new control scheme, Tony Hawk is really the only GBA title on the shelves that's pushing the limits of the hardware. Very nice.

MATT – 9.25

THE BOTTOM LINE

EVERYONE – CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

9.25

- **Concept:** Honey, I shrunk the skaters
- **Graphics:** The first GBA title that truly shows the potential of the hardware. From the polygonal characters to the transparency effects, it looks fantastic
- **Sound:** Surprisingly rocking
- **Playability:** The isometric view is a tad confusing, but the trick system is still easy to manipulate and loaded with combo options
- **Entertainment:** Have a supply of batteries ready, because you'll be playing for countless hours
- **Replay Value:** High

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/SPORTS ■ **PUBLISHER** ACTIVISION ■ **DEVELOPER** VICARIOUS VISIONS ■ **RELEASE** JUNE 11

GAME BOY ADVANCE

CASTLEVANIA: CIRCLE OF THE MOON

WHIPS & CHANGE

Most would agree that the Castlevania franchise has been floundering since Symphony of the Night for PlayStation. The series' move to 3D on Nintendo 64 was not only met with indifference, but downright hostility. Konami has now put the title back where it belongs – in two dimensions – in its first foray into Game Boy Advance territory.

With whip in hand, it's the player's task to defeat that pesky Dracula guy once again. The basic gameplay formula will be familiar to any who have played a Castlevania title in the past, with the RPG elements from Symphony of the Night, such as leveling up and equipping items, thrown into the mix.

New to Circle of the Moon is the combining of cards for power-ups. Throughout the game, players will find Action and Attribute cards. By selecting one of each type, different powers – like a fiery whip that uses magic points – are gained.

In my opinion, Circle of the Moon is the best title amongst the Game Boy Advance launch library. Sadly, the cart doesn't have any features to lengthen its life once completed, but the trip to the end of the game will be a memorable one indeed. – **JAY**

THE BOTTOM LINE

TEEN – CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

8.75

- **Concept:** Castlevania returns to its 2D roots, and there is much rejoicing
- **Graphics:** The characters are a bit small, but the detail is sharp enough that you're always aware of what's happening
- **Sound:** Amazing. The operatic opening will send a chill down your spine
- **Playability:** Tight and responsive, and can be set up however the player likes
- **Entertainment:** Just frustrating enough to make it fun the entire way through
- **Replay Value:** Moderately Low

SECOND OPINION

If the controls weren't so stiff, this pocket-size vampire slayer would be just as irresistible as Symphony of the Night. Complete with RPG elements and stunning sprite graphics, this is the GBA title to get.

REINER – 9

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/PLATFORM ■ **PUBLISHER** KONAMI ■ **DEVELOPER** KONAMI ■ **RELEASE** JUNE 11

GAME BOY ADVANCE

PITFALL: THE MAYAN ADVENTURE

SUCCESSFUL SWINGER GETS AROUND

THE BOTTOM LINE

EVERYONE — CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

7.5

It looks like the GBA is going to be a portable second-coming for the SNES, and if Majesco's edition of Pitfall is any indication, I'm certainly not going to rock the boat at this stage. While points may be taken off because it's a port, there's a lot that is brought over flawlessly. This is to your advantage not only because crawling, pushing objects, etc. give you other things to do than platforming, but also due to the cool visuals of seeing Harry Jr. shimmy down ropes and bounce up and down on bungee cords. And Pitfall's health meter (in which a gator gets closer and closer to chompin' your behind till it eats you up) is the coolest I've ever seen.

Pitfall nicely plays the fore and background off of each other for strategic as well as visual reasons. If anything, the deep amount of detail, when combined with the GBA's non-backlit screen, can mean that foes often appear hidden. I, however, welcomed the challenge of being surprised by enemies – not to mention the level designs that incorporate backtracking and the need to occasionally think. Mayan Adventure uses the Pitfall name to its advantage in more ways than one, and it also gives the GBA a sweet pair of alligator-skin boots to kick booty with. – **KATO**

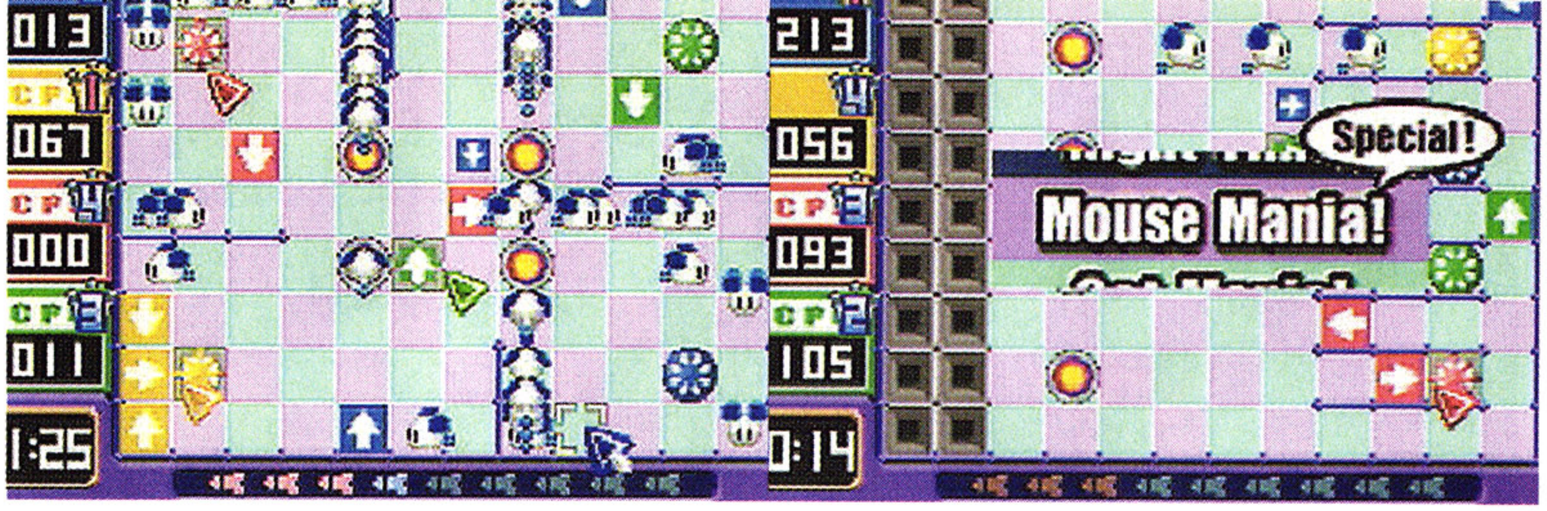
- **Concept:** SNES update of the Atari classic makes for a mold that does right by the GBA
- **Graphics:** Lush environments and a plethora of movements for Harry Jr. make this one easy on the eyes
- **Sound:** Forest birdcalls and enemy hisses surround you and involve your ears in the experience
- **Playability:** Four different attacks don't complicate the simple controls
- **Entertainment:** Your pleasure may alternate with frustration, but it's all good
- **Replay Value:** Moderate

SECOND OPINION

Graphically, there isn't a whole lot to complain about in Mayan Adventures, as the environments are lush and the characters and enemies are well animated. So you would think the gameplay would be pretty rock solid as well, but once you dig a little deeper, the inconstancies start to get annoying. I like the Earthworm Jim-esque qualities but the execution is not as solid.

ANDY – 6.5

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/PLATFORM
■ **PUBLISHER** MAJESCO ■ **DEVELOPER** PIPE DREAM INTERACTIVE ■ **RELEASE** JUNE 11



GAME BOY ADVANCE

CHU CHU ROCKET

I HATE THOSE MEECES TO PIECES!

THE BOTTOM LINE

EVERYONE — CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

8

People laughed at the fact that Chu Chu was the Dreamcast's first online game, but as a launch title and one of the first puzzlers for the GBA, this makes so much sense. Newbies will become frustrated and hell-bent on shepherding mice into safety, and Chu Chu vets will now have a portable option that loses none of the original's speed, mazes, or features (but throws in the chance to create characters).

Whether you've played the title or not, I first suggest you switch the default controls to allow you to place and rotate your arrows more quickly. Then I'd say you'd better forget you're playing this on the GBA, 'cause the vivid colors, music, and most importantly the manic pace, are all in place. The only thing that may hold this one back for fans is that some of the mazes are from the DC version. I still enjoyed it, and I suggest you do the same. Just remember, if you're losing, it's not their fault – the mice's stupidity is all your own. – **KATO**

SECOND OPINION

Although arrow placement isn't as quick without a four-button interface, it matters little since all others are at the same disadvantage. Fun for four on one cart, Chu Chu is a winner.

JAY – 8

- **Concept:** Place arrows on the board to direct your mice to safety. Getting those critters to cooperate is where it gets hard
- **Graphics:** Simple, vibrant forms and colors. Cheers to the GBA for replicating the 3D rocketship take-offs
- **Sound:** Handheld's speakers give you the full Chu Chu tunes
- **Playability:** D-Pad serves well in moving the cursor and placing arrows
- **Entertainment:** Alone or with friends, Chu Chu will stimulate your brain and your fingers
- **Replay Value:** High

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER PUZZLE ■ **PUBLISHER** SEGA ■ **DEVELOPER** SONIC TEAM
■ **RELEASE** JUNE 11

GAME BOY ADVANCE

KRAZY RACERS

"PRETTY OK RACERS" MIGHT BE A MORE APT TITLE

THE BOTTOM LINE

EVERYONE — CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

7

In my two-year tenure here at Game Informer, I've reviewed somewhere around 87 million kart racing games for a variety of systems. Boy, are my arms tired! My feeble mind is even more exhausted from trying to come up with new ways to say, "This is an average racing game." Krazy Racers is basically Mario Kart with a cast of unknowns pinch hitting for the Nintendo gang. Konami, one of the best development companies on earth, definitely nails the basic gameplay, but it's really hard to get excited about a game that will have the distinction of being the third- or fourth-best GBA racer released on launch day.

As I said, all the core elements of the genre are ably done. The control is solid, and the Career mode has implemented a license system obviously inspired by the Gran Turismo series. Also, you can earn money to buy weapons for your next race by collecting coins during gameplay. There are some nice track designs, a funny power-up attack that turns enemies into pigs, but nothing that hasn't been done better many times in the past. Looking at the list of games that will be on store shelves, I'd be hard-pressed to find a reason to purchase this one. – **MATT**

SECOND OPINION

I would suggest both Mario Kart and F-Zero for the GBA before I would suggest Krazy Racers. This game is definitely fun, though. Pick it up if you can't find the other two.

KRISTIAN – 7.5

- **Concept:** A Mario Kart clone that features 16 tracks and a nice Career mode
- **Graphics:** Nothing too krazy, but there are some fairly nice animations and Mode 7 scaling
- **Sound:** The game's menu music is a bizarre combination of Daft Punk, Sammy Hagar, and Sam & Dave
- **Playability:** Instantly familiar to anyone who's ever played a kart racer
- **Entertainment:** Fun, but it will be interesting to see if anyone actually buys it
- **Replay Value:** Moderate

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER RACING ■ **PUBLISHER** KONAMI ■ **DEVELOPER** KONAMI
■ **RELEASE** JUNE 11

GAME BOY COLOR

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: ORACLE OF AGES

THE TIME TRAVELIN' JAVELIN

THE BOTTOM LINE

EVERYONE

9.5

If it's Zelda and it's on a Nintendo console, you know it'll be good. I thought Link's first Game Boy epic was gold, but Oracle of Ages blows Link's Awakening out of the water. Just like SNES' Link to the Past, the time travel aspect brings forth a separate-but-parallel worlds gimmick which doubles the map size. Of course, you're only able to access scant portions of the land until you find new items. The power bracelet, jump feather, and bombs are all back, and it's as exciting as ever to attain them and uncover new areas. Capcom did Miyamoto proud by capturing the concept of level design that keeps you hooked. Planting trees and finding rings only served to make me more enthralled with the package, and it's nice to see a story where Princess Zelda is just a member of the supporting cast.

I know I'll get heat for this, but I still prefer the classic overhead gameplay to the 3D we see on N64 Zelda games. Don't judge a quest by the size of its console, and get this game by any means necessary. – **JUSTIN**

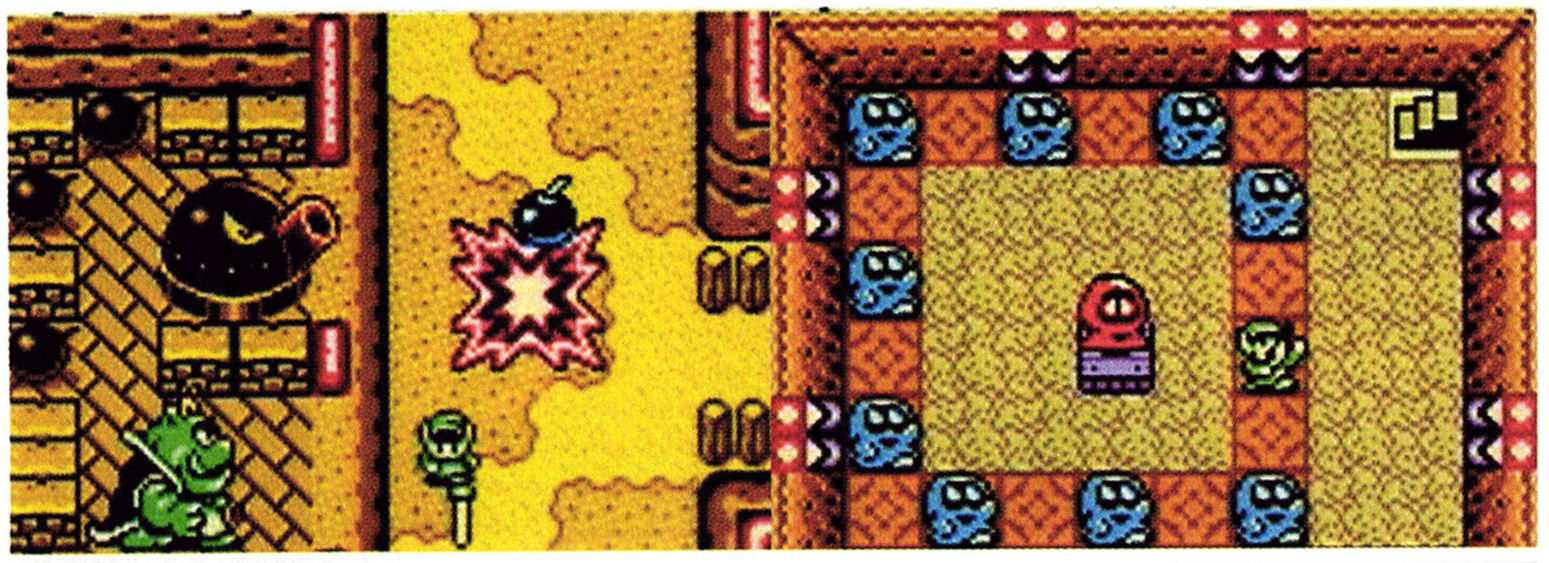
SECOND OPINION

If you only want to pick up one of the new Zelda titles, this is the one to get. The time travel aspect is very similar to that in A Link to the Past, and the action is delivered with the hardcore Zelda gamer in mind.

REINER – 9.5

- **Concept:** Link travels through time via a magical harp
- **Graphics:** Are you sure this isn't Game Boy Advance?
- **Sound:** Heroic ballads and the classic Zelda theme
- **Playability:** Perfect as always, with classic items of old
- **Entertainment:** Holy crap is this some fun stuff
- **Replay Value:** High

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/RPG ■ **PUBLISHER** NINTENDO ■ **DEVELOPER** CAPCOM ■ **RELEASE** MAY 14



GAME BOY COLOR

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: ORACLE OF SEASONS

HARSH WEATHER...YET THE SUN SHINES

THE BOTTOM LINE

EVERYONE

9.25

Miyamoto has always kept his pointy-eared child on a short leash, yet with the release of Oracle of Seasons and Oracle of Ages, the family tie has been broken, and Capcom has temporarily adopted Miyamoto's baby. Skittish as always, I was fearful that Capcom would butcher this property or commingle the play with its own wealth of franchises. After days of cold sweats and nail biting, I can happily say this is not the case.

Capcom is obviously well studied in Hyrule lore, as both titles mimic Miyamoto's design without flaw. Oracle of Seasons harnesses the feeling of the 8- and 16-bit titles, while Ages ties in closely to Link's most recent adventures. You'll notice this aspect within the puzzles and dungeon mapping, and the classic combat, sound, and graphical qualities. The stockade of monsters (especially in Seasons) is heavily weighted with old-school beasties. Both games feature a dynamic look and a gameplay engine fashioned exactly like that in Link's Awakening. Each game is brilliant, yet I personally enjoyed the frantic play in Ages more than the somewhat slow weather changes in Seasons. For Zelda fanatics, however, both games are a must – especially since you cannot truly finish your quest without completing both. – **REINER**

SECOND OPINION

Seasons is more old-school than Ages, with many classic enemies and layouts. The changing seasons spice up the game, and give you even more to uncover. Each game rocks, so buy them both.

JUSTIN – 9.5

- **Concept:** The design in Seasons ties in with the Zeldas of yesteryear, offering gameplay with much more of a classical bite than Ages
- **Graphics:** Capcom really made this game jump off the screen. The environments are loaded with phenomenal detailing
- **Sound:** You'll be humming the Zelda theme for months after the adventure ends
- **Playability:** The puzzles, dungeons, and stable of monsters will be familiar to Zelda fans
- **Entertainment:** Not quite as action-packed as Ages, yet still irresistible
- **Replay Value:** High

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/RPG ■ **PUBLISHER** NINTENDO ■ **DEVELOPER** CAPCOM ■ **RELEASE** MAY 14

GAME BOY ADVANCE

SUPER MARIO ADVANCE

THE POCKET PLUMBER

THE BOTTOM LINE

EVERYONE

8.5

Never one to miss a party, a game with Mario's mug plastered on it has accompanied the launch of every Nintendo handheld and console. Taking a chapter out of his legendary crusade, Super Mario Advance is merely a compilation of two forgotten classics: Mario Bros. and Super Mario 2. Rather than porting both titles in their original forms, Nintendo has completely restored and slightly enhanced both games. Along with crisp, high-resolution graphics, new environmental effects, and a drastic boost in color, Super Mario 2's audio delivers new voice-overs and a catchy soundtrack similar to that in Super Mario All-Stars. Furthermore, Red Coins are hidden within each level, and when the game is completed, a second quest featuring Yoshi's Eggs becomes available.

Flashing back to the plumber's infancy, Mario Bros. is retrofitted with pristine graphics, new character models, and multiplayer support. Up to four players can terrorize the pipes and dump opponents off the playfield with the new Trash Can maneuver. Riding the wave of new technologies, only one game cartridge is needed to link four units together.

Whether it be the tingly nostalgic sensation, the competitiveness of multiplayer, or the thrill of hunting down the secrets, Super Mario Advance, while nothing new, is a phenomenal release and a great waste of time. – **REINER**

- **Concept:** Enhanced versions of Mario Bros. and Super Mario 2 complete with new secrets, four-player support, and additional quests
- **Graphics:** Displayed in high-resolution, the classic environments are overhauled with vivid colors and effects
- **Sound:** Mad phat Mario beats
- **Playability:** The gameplay is identical to the classic brethren, yet depth has been added within the hunt for the Red Coins and Yoshi Eggs
- **Entertainment:** A high-powered stroll down memory lane with addictive multiplayer games
- **Replay Value:** High

SECOND OPINION

I smiled the entire time I played Mario Advance. A perfect port of Mario 2 would've sufficed, so every new area, huge enemy, and clever voice-over was a bonus to me. Mario Bros. has become a glorified minigame, and doesn't stand the test of time. Sure, this is a recycled classic instead of a new game, but I don't seem to care.

JUSTIN – 9.25

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER ACTION/PLATFORM ■ **PUBLISHER** NINTENDO ■ **DEVELOPER** NINTENDO ■ **RELEASE** JUNE 11

GAME BOY ADVANCE

EARTHWORM JIM

NOT AS GROOVY AS IT USED TO BE

In all its absurdity, the comical classic Earthworm Jim is but one of many 16-bit titles to grace the Game Boy Advance. While the video game press praised the game for its imaginative gameplay and resplendent graphical appeal, sales were only mediocre. Apparently, the challenge was too great for the gaming masses. Really though, how can you renounce a game that has an antagonist named The Evil Queen Pulsating, Bloated, Festering, Sweaty, Pus-filled, Malformed, Slug for a Butt?

Without any fancy enhancements or bonus items, Majesco is porting this legendary adventure to the Game Boy Advance. Every little color and animation has been shrunk down without the slightest alteration. Of course, the rigorous gameplay returns in its original state as well. This time, however, the control is a tad more chaotic. Using the shoulder button to perform the head whip maneuver is very awkward. Tie this move together with a jump and the percentage of success diminishes greatly.

On the GBA, I'd say the difficulty has escalated threefold. If you've played the original, you know full well that this game was tricky enough to begin with. Furthermore, without additional material, why play it again? Especially if it's going to kick your butt up and down each level. – **REINER**

THE BOTTOM LINE

EVERYONE

7

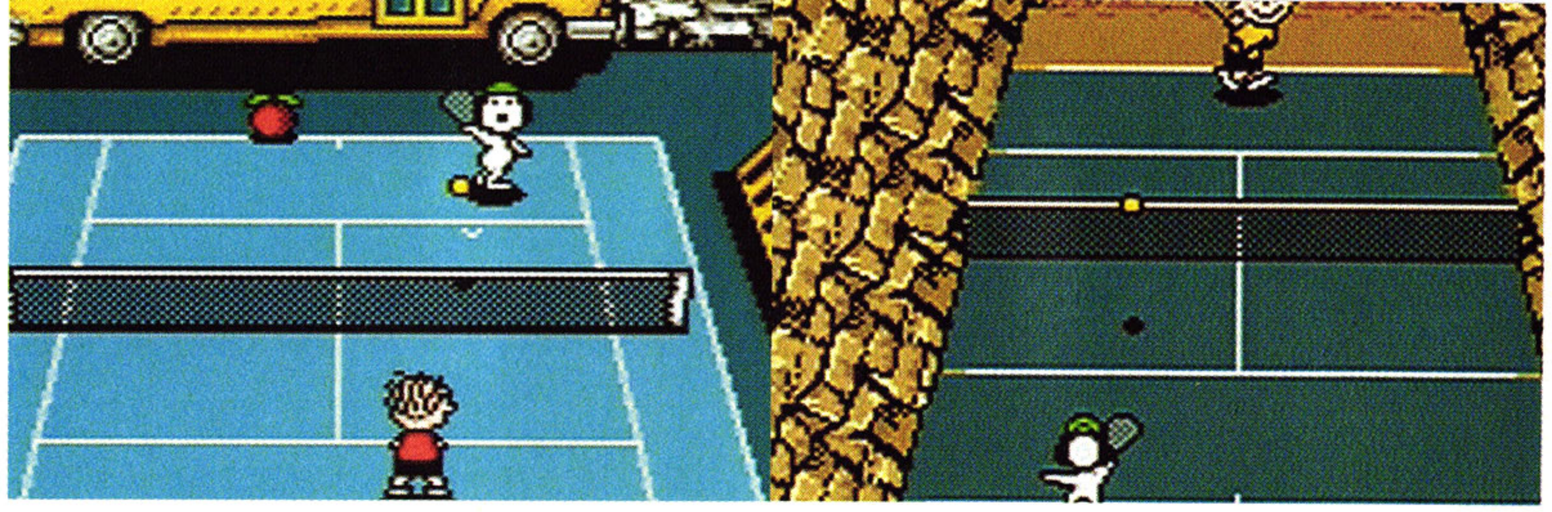
- **Concept:** A direct port of the 16-bit game
- **Graphics:** The colors really jump off the screen, and the character animation is incredibly smooth
- **Sound:** What happened here? The soundtrack is muffled and the effects are atrocious
- **Playability:** The control is manageable, but it's not as finely polished as it used to be
- **Entertainment:** If you've already played this game, there really is no reason to venture through it again
- **Replay Value:** Moderately Low

SECOND OPINION

I can't say anything very bad about Earthworm Jim, but I can't really say anything good about it either. The graphics are about what I expect out of a GBA title now, the gameplay is mediocre, and the control is average. If I was really bored and had nothing else to do I might play EJ, but that would be about it.

KRISTIAN – 6.5

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/PLATFORM ■ **PUBLISHER** MAJESCO ■ **DEVELOPER** PIPE DREAM INTERACTIVE ■ **RELEASE** JUNE 11



GAME BOY COLOR

SNOOPY TENNIS

NO GRIEF BUT GOOD GRIEF

There's just about nothing wrong with Charlie Brown and his pals. Okay, Chuck may be neurotic and Peppermint Patty surely has her own issues, but combine this license with the underrated video game sport of tennis, and you're on the right road. Snoopy Tennis is a fine title at what it does, but what it lacks may be a problem. Frankly, Mario Tennis gives you more options (like court surfaces, minigames, and training segments), but the original Snoop Doggy Dogg rarely hits a bad shot. I liked having to cover the court from sideline to sideline, and enjoyed the option to use backspin or dropshots to confuse foes. Opponents fired back with quick passing shots when I charged the net or got out of position. Snoop's Power mode made good use of this fact by making you decide whether to run up and grab a power-up or risk getting burned by a ball down the line in the process. Get this one if you love all things Peanuts, or if you don't already own Mario Tennis – or buy it anyway. – **KATO**

SECOND OPINION

When it comes to providing no-frills handheld tennis, Snoopy Tennis gets the job done. Overall, it's as average as average can get, with a few neat touches like the inclusion of a squash court.

MATT – 7

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER SPORTS ■ **PUBLISHER** INFOGRAMES ■ **DEVELOPER** MERMAID STUDIOS ■ **RELEASE** APRIL 21

THE BOTTOM LINE

EVERYONE

7

- **Concept:** Portable tennis fun with the old Peanuts gang
- **Graphics:** Game captures your fav characters well, and everyone's got a smile on their face regardless of the score
- **Sound:** Those tennis crowds are always nice, polite clappers
- **Playability:** No complaints here. You're allowed to make a variety of shots without any problems
- **Entertainment:** A good time as always with Joe Cool and the crew
- **Replay Value:** Moderate

GAME BOY ADVANCE

RAYMAN ADVANCE

LOOK MA, NO LIMBS!

My first reaction to Rayman was that of disappointment. After Ubi Soft released a great (and completely new) Game Boy Color Rayman adventure last year, it was sort of a letdown to be handed a mere port of the original PlayStation game. However, I soon became bewitched by the intricate animations and amazingly difficult platforming all over again.

The first thing that strikes you about Rayman is the graphics. Of all the launch games, this one truly shows off the GBA's power to produce potent visuals. Though the unit has been tagged as an SNES in handheld clothing, it's encouraging to note that this is a first-generation 32-bit title being handled by the unit's pint-sized processors. All the lush color backdrops and the fluid character movements have been perfectly rendered. There was a bit of slowdown in some of the flying levels, but that is about the only weakness I could find in the graphics department.

Sure, I wish Ubi Soft would have gone the extra mile and given us a brand new Rayman opus, but the overall quality of this port makes up for the lack of innovation. – **MATT**

SECOND OPINION

Rayman Advance is setting the precedent for handheld animations. If you're at all curious as to the amount of power one little system can muster, I suggest you take in 30 seconds of Rayman Advance. Impressive. Most impressive.

KRISTIAN – 8.75

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/PLATFORM ■ **PUBLISHER** UBI SOFT ■ **DEVELOPER** DIGITAL ECLIPSE ■ **RELEASE** JUNE 11

THE BOTTOM LINE

EVERYONE

8

- **Concept:** A GBA port of the original PlayStation Rayman
- **Graphics:** Absolutely fabulous; the parallax scrolling and intricate backgrounds are a welcome reminder of the glory days of 2D platformers
- **Sound:** Although the French aren't known for great music, Rayman's bouncy score excels, veering from ominous to whimsical
- **Playability:** Dead solid control made deeper by gradually learning new abilities and moves
- **Entertainment:** Although there's not much new for fans of the original, Rayman is still a top-flight platformer on any system
- **Replay Value:** Moderate

GAME BOY ADVANCE

GT ADVANCE CHAMPIONSHIP RACING

GBA GUTCHECK

When I first picked this one up, I was pretty impressed with the create-a-track, number of cars (40), and real-life speedways. After playing it a few times and getting the hang of using the brakes to negotiate corners, I thought the game was pretty solid...and it is. However, upon reflection, I can't help but think that I've been a little fooled.

I suggest doing this: Tool around a bit on GT and then take a step back. Is cruising around a track the first thing you want to be doing with your new best friend, the GBA? I'm not dissing racing, but it's limited in this form. Oh, and another thing: While playing, it's good not to go off the track or touch another car – it'll slow you down like a peg-leg.

Johnny down the street's gonna get Fire Pro Wrestling. Suzy can't wait for Super Mario Advance, and Tyrone will be jamming on Tony Hawk 2. These titles will take their owners to new handheld lands and beyond. GT Advance has solid roots, but they'll never make you leave the ground. – **KATO**

SECOND OPINION

Other than its look and track creator, there's nothing in GT Advance that couldn't have been done on Game Boy Color. Gameplay, options, and challenge are all average.

JAY – 6

THE BOTTOM LINE

EVERYONE E CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

6

- **Concept:** Mode 7 scaling and extras make racing more real on GBA
- **Graphics:** Night and rain environments offer variety
- **Sound:** Despite changing the gear ratio, an engine sounds like an engine
- **Playability:** Gas. Brake. Within these two is the key to winning
- **Entertainment:** The GT circuit and create-a-track will pique interest, otherwise we suggest multiplayer for kicks
- **Replay Value:** Moderately Low

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER RACING ■ **PUBLISHER** THQ ■ **DEVELOPER** MTO CO. LTD.
■ **RELEASE** JUNE 11

GAME BOY ADVANCE

READY 2 RUMBLE BOXING: ROUND 2

DOWN FOR THE COUNT

Well, it had to happen at some point. Finally we see that the GBA isn't invincible, and that Midway can find new and interesting ways to pinch off Ready 2 Rumble stinkers for multiple systems. In this, the GBA offering, not only are we slapped in the face by horribly subpar graphics, but we're harangued by a control scheme that is so abysmal I actually found myself winning bouts by hitting nothing but the A button over and over again.

I suppose every system needs its first dung heap, just to get it out of the way. I happen to have the honor of warding you away from this one. Only if you're the hardest of the hardcore Ready 2 Rumble fans should you partake in this Midway offering. I suppose there might be some weird sense of accomplishment to know you own the first GBA release that really sucks, but probably not. No need to write in and thank me for taking the brunt of this one for you. That's what I'm here for. That, and to laugh hysterically at the Fart Machine we recently activated in the office. Did I mention we're all Oxford graduates here? – **KRISTIAN**

SECOND OPINION

Don't listen to Kristian, camels ARE cool...In fact, I'd almost rather get spit on by one than play R2RB:R2. Still, Michael Buffer's baritone is particularly sonorous on the GBA.

KATO – 4

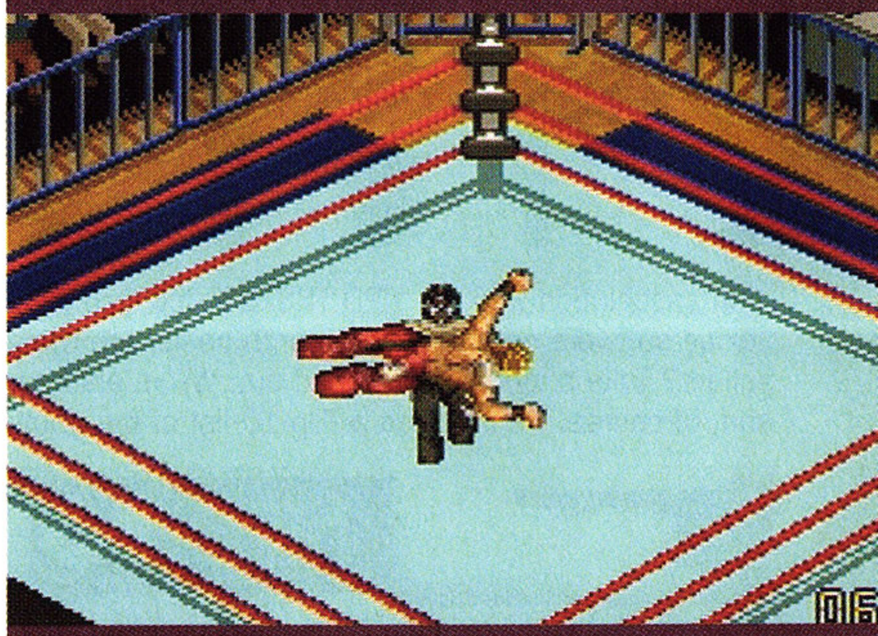
THE BOTTOM LINE

EVERYONE E CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

4.25

- **Concept:** Press buttons as fast as you can, then hope for the best
- **Graphics:** This is the most graphically lackluster title yet seen for the GBA
- **Sound:** There's some pretty good voice work crammed into this game, but the sound effects stink
- **Playability:** If you can handle mashing your fingers into the buttons repeatedly, you're on your way to victory
- **Entertainment:** I think I'd probably have more fun watching a PBS documentary on camels
- **Replay Value:** Low

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER SPORTS ■ **PUBLISHER** MIDWAY ■ **DEVELOPER** MIDWAY
■ **RELEASE** JUNE 11



GAME BOY ADVANCE

FIRE PRO WRESTLING

SLAM, BAM, THANK YOU JAPAN

A favorite series amongst import fiends, Fire Pro Wrestling is finally making its Stateside debut with the launch of Game Boy Advance. Compared to the lackluster handheld grapplers fans have been forced to suffer during the Game Boy's tenure, Fire Pro proves that the hardware can no longer be blamed for shoddy product.

The game boasts over 150 wrestlers (many of which look and act suspiciously like recognizable stars), a wrestler create that rivals No Mercy, over 1,000 moves, and a wide variety of match options. All this goodness is wrapped in a graphics shell that's as sweet as can be.

The only thing holding this product back is its interface. Although workable, and eventually enjoyable, it will likely take hours to retrain your mind to Fire Pro's timing system, and a day or more to win your first match. Also, long matches require you to rest, which, despite being realistic, doesn't make for a fun 30-minute match. Despite this drawback, wrestling game aficionados will adore Fire Pro. If you fall into this category, I can't recommend it enough. –**JAY**

THE BOTTOM LINE

TEEN T CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

8.5

- **Concept:** Puts all other handheld, and many console, wrestlers to shame with good gameplay and unbelievable options
- **Graphics:** Other than many characters looking too similar, very solid
- **Sound:** The smack of a chop to the chest is easily differentiated from a punch to the face
- **Playability:** Difficult to learn, time consuming to master, but worth the effort
- **Entertainment:** Wrestling fans must buy this one. It could be years before a better handheld wrestler comes along
- **Replay Value:** High

SECOND OPINION

The Fire Pro Wrestling series is arguably the best, so it's about time we get our share. This game packs more into it than most console wrestlers (THQ's included). The engine is solid, there are lots of great moves, most WWF and WCW superstars are here (with new names/colors), and it's got some challenge to it. Like wrestling? Pick it up.

JUSTIN – 8.5

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER FIGHTING ■ **PUBLISHER** BAM! ENTERTAINMENT ■ **DEVELOPER** SPIKE ■ **RELEASE** JUNE 11

CHARTS

In association with the NPD TRSTS Video Games Service, Charts presents an in-depth listing of the best-selling software on a month-to-month basis. Are the games you spend your hard-earned dollars on top sellers? Take a look below to find out. We've also compiled a listing of the top-selling Japanese software, and, of course, we included a Top 10 list of the games the GI staff is currently enjoying.

NPD TOP 20

Listings Based Upon NPD Data For April 2001
Based On Units Sold

RANK	L. MO	GAME	SYSTEM	RELEASE DATE	PRICE POINT
1	1	**Pokémon Stadium 2**	N64	Mar-01	$60

After playing the small rooms of the GBC, the Pokémon gang is in the midst of a highly successful stadium tour. While packing N64 arenas nationwide, the crew is also taking part in some very naughty backstage hijinks. The National Enquirer recently broke a story involving Beedril, a pair of stilts, a quart of 10w40, and the Dallas Cowboy cheerleaders, but the scandal hasn't managed to slow sales of Pokémon Stadium 2.

2	4	**Pokémon Silver**	GBC	Oct-00	$29

Back in the late '80s, rapper King T gave us this sage advice: "I used to wear silver, till I was told, that you're not a real b-boy without real gold!" Sadly, few of us seemed to listen to T's dire warning, as Pokémon Silver still outshines its more precious counterpart on the charts.

3	5	**Pokémon Gold**	GBC	Oct-00	$29

Gold, once the world's most treasured mineral, has apparently fallen from grace in the minds of video gamers. Sure, it's been huffing on Silver's tailpipe for months, but now its taking a backseat to Pokémon Stadium 2 as well! Is there any Pokémon game that can't sell more units than Gold? Unless Nintendo suddenly decides to release Pokémon Gravel or Pokémon Used Toilet Paper, the outlook is pretty bleak for our old buddy Gold.

4	N/A	**Kirby Tilt 'N' Tumble**	GBC	Apr-01	$29

Yay! A new game in the Top 5! Our favorite pink puff is back in this innovative new GBC game. Some other naughty mags panned the genius that is Tilt 'n' Tumble, but the common folk are clearly in our corner. Next month, we wouldn't be surprised to see the Kirbster burn rubber all the way up to number one. Let the revolution begin!!

5	2	**Onimusha: Warlords**	PS2	Mar-01	$51

What's this? A game in the top five that's not published by Nintendo? How did this happen? While we're still suspicious that this might be a misprint, we have to agree with consumers, as we are all still hopelessly in love with Onimusha: Warlords.

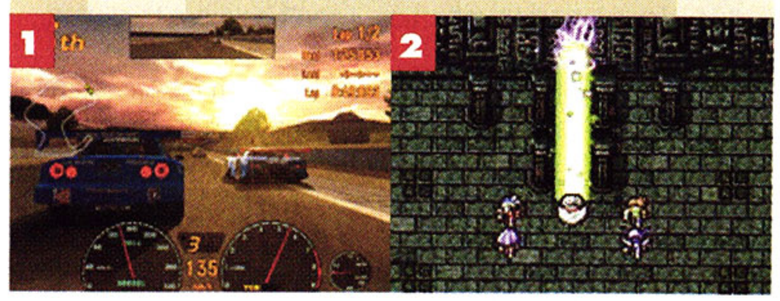
RANK	L. MO	GAME	SYSTEM	RELEASE DATE	PRICE POINT
6	11	**ATV Offroad Fury**	PS2	Feb-01	$50
7	8	**Madden NFL 2001**	PS2	Oct-00	$50
8	6	**Zone of the Enders**	PS2	Mar-01	$51
9	N/A	**Dr. Mario 64**	N64	Apr-01	$30
10	N/A	**Tomb Raider: The Last Revelation**	PS-X	Nov-99	$10
11	9	**Paper Mario**	N64	Feb-01	$50
12	7	**Triple Play Baseball**	PS2	Mar-01	$50
13	14	**Gran Turismo 2**	PS-X	Dec-99	$20
14	N/A	**Super Mario Bros. Deluxe**	GBC	May-99	$30
15	N/A	**Digimon World 2**	PS-X	Mar-01	$41
16	N/A	**Rocket Power: Gettin' Air**	GBC	Mar-01	$28
17	16	**Mario Tennis**	GBC	Jan-01	$28
18	19	**Spec Ops**	PS-X	Apr-00	$10
19	N/A	**SSX**	PS2	Oct-00	$50
20	13	**Tiger Woods PGA 2001**	PS2	Feb-01	$50

Source: NPD Interactive Entertainment Service • Kristin Barnett-Von-Korff (516) 625-2481

JAPAN TOP 10

Source: Game Japan
Based On Monthly Units Sold

POS.	L. MO	GAME	SYSTEM
1	N/A	**Gran Turismo 3: A-Spec**	PS2
2	N/A	**Final Fantasy II**	WS
3	N/A	**SD Gundam Generation F.I.F.**	PS-X
4	1	**Dragon Quest Monsters 2: Iru's Adventure**	GBC
5	6	**Dragon Quest Monsters 2: Ruka's Travels**	GBC
6	N/A	**Tottoko Hamster Big Adventure 2**	GBC
7	8	**One Piece Grand Battle!**	PS-X
8	4	**Super Mario Advance**	GBA
9	3	**Super Robot Big Battle Infinity**	PS-X
10	N/A	**Bomberman Story**	GBA



GAME INFORMER TOP 10

The Staff's Favorite Picks

POS.	L. MO	GAME	SYSTEM
1	N/A	**Twisted Metal: Black**	PS2
2	N/A	**Gran Turismo 3**	PS2
3	1	**Red Faction**	PS2
4	N/A	**The Legend of Zelda: Oracle of Ages**	GBC
5	N/A	**The Legend of Zelda: Oracle of Seasons**	GBC
6	N/A	**Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2**	GBA
7	N/A	**Final Fantasy Chronicles**	PS-X
8	5	**Castlevania: Circle of the Moon**	GBA
9	N/A	**Top Shop**	PS-X
10	6	**Dark Cloud**	PS2

PC TOP 10

Based On Monthly Units Sold. Source: NPD Interactive Entertainment Sevice Kristin Barnett-Von-Korff (516) 625-2481

POS.	L. MO	GAME	MONTH	PRICE
1	10	**The Sims: House Party**	Mar-01	$26
2	4	**Black & White**	Mar-01	$41
3	1	**The Sims**	Feb-00	$40
4	N/A	**Tribes 2**	Apr-01	$44
5	2	**The Sims: Livin' Large**	Sep-00	$27
6	3	**Roller Coaster Tycoon**	Mar-99	$26
7	13	**Sim Theme Park**	Nov-99	$20
8	8	**Age of Empires II: Age of Kings**	Oct-99	$42
9	N/A	**Lego Island 2**	Apr-01	$24
10	5	**Diablo 2**	Jun-00	$38

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REVIEWS ARCHIVE JULY 2001

MOTO GP

■ **FORMAT** PLAYSTATION 2 ■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER RACING
■ **PUBLISHER** NAMCO ■ **REVIEWED** DEC-00

Certainly, the gameplay is solid and has options for difficulty, as well as settings for adjusting the bike's handling. However, I found it essential to use analog controls on both steering and acceleration to get the most out of this title. I also found it necessary to play in the Sim mode, as the game is far too easy if you don't. There is plenty to like about Moto GP, but I think the only people who may appreciate it are those who actually know the name Kenny Roberts, Jr. Others may just want to take it for a short spin. – **PAUL**

E 7.5

PLAYSTATION 2

4X4 Evolution	8	May-01
Adventures of Cookie & Cream, The	8.75	Mar-01
All-Star Baseball 2002	8	May-01
Armored Core 2	9	Nov-00
Army Men: Air Attack 2	3.5	Jun-01
Army Men: Green Rogue	1	Jun-01
Army Men: Sarge's Heroes 2	5.5	Jun-01
Aqua Aqua	6	Mar-01
ATV Offroad Fury	8.5	Mar-01
Bouncer, The	8.5	Feb-01
Championship Surfer	7	Jan–01
Crazy Taxi	8.25	Jun-01
Dead or Alive 2: Hard Core	9	Nov-00
Driving Emotion Type-S	8	Feb-01
Donald Duck: Goin' Quackers	7.5	Mar-01
Dynasty Warriors 2	8	Nov-00
ESPN International Track & Field	6.75	Dec-00
ESPN MLS Extratime	6	Jun-01
ESPN NBA 2night	4.25	May-01
ESPN NHL National Hockey Night	6.25	May-01
ESPN Winter X Games Snowboarding	8.25	Jan–01
Eternal Ring	7.5	Nov-00
Evergrace	7	Nov-00
F1 Championship Season 2000	7.75	Feb-01
F1 Racing Championship	8.75	Apr-01
Fantavision	6.75	Dec-00
FIFA 2001	8	Dec-00
GameDay 2001	3	Dec-00
Gauntlet Dark Legacy	7.75	Jun-01
Gradius III & IV	5	Dec-00
Gungriffon Blaze	7	Nov-00
High Heat Baseball 2002	7.75	May-01
Kengo: Master of Bushido	7.25	Mar-01
Kessen	8	Nov-00
Knockout Kings 2001	9	Mar-01
Madden NFL 2001	9.75	Nov-00
MDK2: Armageddon	7.5	May-01
Midnight Club	7.5	Dec-00
Moto GP	7.5	Dec-00
MTV Music Generator 2	8.5	Jun-01
NASCAR 2001	8.5	Dec-00
NBA Hoopz	5.75	May-01
NBA Live 2001	8.25	Feb-01
NBA ShootOut 2001	6.5	Apr-01
NCAA Final Four 2001	3	Feb-01
NCAA Gamebreaker 2001	3.25	Feb-01
NHL 2001	8.5	Nov-00
NHL FaceOff 2001	1	Apr-01
Oni	6.5	Mar-01
Onimusha: Warlords	8.75	Mar-01
Orphen	4.25	Dec-00
Q-Ball: Billiards Master	4.5	Jan–01
Quake III Revolution	7.75	May-01
Rayman 2: Revolution	8	Apr-01
RC Revenge Pro	5.5	Feb-01
Ready 2 Rumble Boxing: Round 2	7.25	Dec-00
Real Pool	5.25	Dec-00
Red Faction	9	Jun-01
Ring of Red	9	Apr-01
Rumble Racing	7.75	May-01
Shadow of Destiny	6.75	Mar-01
Silent Scope	7.75	Nov-00
Silpheed	6	Nov-00
Sky Odyssey	7.75	Dec-00
Smuggler's Run	8.5	Nov-00
SSX	9.25	Nov-00
Star Wars: Starfighter	9.25	Mar-01
Star Wars: Super Bombad Racing	2.5	May-01
Street Fighter EX3	6	Nov-00
Summoner	8	Dec-00
Super Bust-A-Move	7	Nov-00
Surfing H3O	3	Jan–01
Swing Away Golf	7.75	Nov-00
Tekken Tag Tournament	8.5	Nov-00
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2001	6	Apr-01
TimeSplitters	9.5	Dec-00
Theme Park Roller Coaster	7.5	Jan–01
Tokyo Xtreme Racer: Zero	8	Jun-01
Top Gear Dare Devil	2	Dec-00
Unison	7.75	May-01
Unreal Tournament	9	Dec-00
Warriors of Might and Magic	7.75	Apr-01
Wild Wild Racing	7.5	Nov-00
Winback: Covert Ops	7.5	Apr-01
World Destruction League: Thunder Tanks	7	Mar-01
X-Squad	7.5	Nov-00
Zone of the Enders	9.25	May-01

PLAYSTATION

007 Racing	7	Jan–01
102 Dalmations: Puppies to the Rescue	6.5	Feb-01
Action Bass	7	Sep-00
Alien Resurrection	6	Nov-00
Army Men: Air Attack 2	1	Dec-00
Army Men World War: Land, Sea, Air	1	Dec-00
ATV: Quad Bike Challenge	6	Nov-00
Ball Breakers	3.5	Sep-00
Batman Beyond: Return of the Joker	0.5	Dec-00
Bedrock Bowling	3.5	Oct-00
Blade	4	Jan–01
Blaster Master: Blasting Again	5	Dec-00
Breath of Fire IV	8.5	Dec-00
Bugs Bunny & Taz: Time Busters	8.5	Feb-01
Bust A Groove 2	7.25	Sep-00
Buzz Lightyear of Star Command	5.5	Dec-00
Championship Surfer	7	Jan–01
Championship Motocross 2001 Featuring Ricky Carmichael	6.5	Feb-01
Colin McRae Rally 2.0	7.75	Jan–01
Cool Boarders 2001	5	Dec-00
Crash Bash	6.5	Dec-00
Dance Dance Revolution	8.75	Apr-01
Darkstone	7.25	Apr-01
Dave Mirra Freestyle BMX	7.75	Nov-00
Destruction Derby Raw	7.5	Oct-00
Dino Crisis 2	8.75	Oct-00
Dinosaur	2.25	Sep-00
Disney's Aladdin In Nasira's Revenge	6	May-01
Disney's The Emperor's New Groove	8.25	Dec-00
Dragon Valor	7.5	Nov-00
Driver 2	8.75	Jan–01
Donald Duck: Goin' Quackers	7	Jan–01
Ducati World	5.5	Feb-01
ECW Anarchy Rulz	4	Nov-00
ECW: Hardcore Revolution	8.25	Mar-00
Eternal Eyes	7.75	Dec-00
Evil Dead: Hail to the King	4.5	Feb-01
Fear Effect 2: Retro Helix	8.5	Mar-01
FIFA 2001	7.5	Dec-00
Final Fantasy IX	9.75	Dec-00
Freestyle Motocross: McGrath Vs. Pastrana	3	Jan–01
Golden Tee Golf	5	Jan–01
Grinch, The	5	Feb-01
Harvest Moon: Back to Nature	6.75	Dec-00
HBO Boxing	3	Feb-01
Incredible Crisis	7.5	Nov-00
Jarrett & Labonte Stock Car Racing	7.75	Jan–01
Jeremy McGrath Supercross 2000	4	Oct-00
Knockout Kings 2001	7.5	Dec-00
Koudelka	4.5	Sep-00
Lego Rock Raiders	1.5	Oct-00
Looney Tunes Racing	6.25	Dec-00
Lunar 2: Eternal Blue Complete	7.5	Jan–01
Madden NFL 2001	8.75	Sep-00
March Madness 2001	8.25	Feb-01
Mat Hoffman's Pro BMX	8.5	Jun-01
Medal of Honor: Underground	9	Nov-00
Mega Man Legends 2	8	Nov-00
Mega Man X5	7	Feb-01
Mike Tyson Boxing	5	Dec-00
Mortal Kombat: Special Forces	1.75	Sep-00
Moto GP World Tour	7	Jan–01
MTV Sports Skateboarding featuring Andy Macdonald	3	Nov-00
MTV Sports: Pure Ride	6.5	Nov-00
Mummy, The	0.75	Feb-01
Muppet Racemania	5	Nov-00
NASCAR Heat	6.5	Feb-01
NBA Live 2001	8	Dec-00
NBA ShootOut 2001	5.5	Nov-00
NCAA Final Tour	5.5	Jan–01
NFL Blitz 2001	5.5	Nov-00
NFL GameDay 2001	7	Sep-00
NGEN Racing	7.25	Sep-00
NHL 2001	7.75	Nov-00
NHL Face Off 2001	6.5	Nov-00
Parasite Eve II	8.75	Sep-00
Persona 2: Eternal Punishment	8	Feb-01
Point Blank 3	7.25	May-01
Polaris Snocross	5.5	Nov-00
Power Spike Pro Beach Volleyball	5	Jan–01
Rampage Through Time	4.75	Sep-00
Raycrisis: Series Termination	7.25	Nov-00
Razor Freestyle Scooter	8	Jan–01
RC De Go	7.5	Jan–01
RC Revenge	5.5	Oct-00
Resident Evil Survivor	4	Nov-00
Road to El Dorado, The	1	Feb-01
Simpsons Wrestling, The	2	Jun-01
Sno Cross Championship Racing	6	Nov-00
Spider-Man	8.25	Oct-00
Spin Jam	3.5	Oct-00
Spyro: Year of the Dragon	8.75	Nov-00
Star Trek Invasion	8.5	Oct-00
Star Wars: Demolition	7	Jan–01
Strikers 1945	6.75	May-01
Supercross	5.75	Apr-01
Supercross 2000	4	Oct-00
Surf Riders	6.75	Oct-00
Sydney 2000	2.75	Oct-00
Team Buddies	7.25	Oct-00
Tenchu 2	8.75	Sep-00
Time Crisis: Project Titan	7	Jun-01
World is Not Enough, The	7	Dec-00
Tiger Woods PGA Tour Golf	8	Feb-01
Tomb Raider Chronicles	7	Jan–01
Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2	10	Nov-00
Torneko: The Last Hope	2.75	Dec-00
Toy Story Racer	5	Apr-01
Triple Play Baseball	7	Apr-01
Ultimate Fighting Championship	7	Jan–01
Valkyrie Profile	7.75	Sep-00
Vampire Hunter D	5.25	Sep-00
WCW Backstage Assault	3	Dec-00
Woody Woodpecker Racing	3	Jan–01
World Destruction League: Thunder Tanks	3	Dec-00
WWF SmackDown 2: Know Your Role	9	Dec-00
You Don't Know Jack: Mock 2	5	Mar-01

NINTENDO 64

Aidyn Chronicles: The First Mage	0.5	May-01
Banjo-Tooie	9	Jan–01
Cruis'n Exotica	6	Feb-01
Conker's Bad Fur Day	9	Apr-01
Donald Duck: Goin' Quackers	7.5	Feb-01
Dr. Mario 64	8.5	May-01
Duck Dogers	3.5	Oct-00
Fighter's Destiny 2	2	Sep-00
Hercules: The Legendary Journeys	4.75	Feb-01
Hey You, Pikachu	4	Jan–01
Indiana Jones: The Infernal Machine	6.75	Jan–01
Indy Racing 2000	8	Sep-00
Legend of Zelda: Majora's Mask, The	9.75	Nov-00
Madden NFL 2001	8.75	Sep-00
Mario Party 3	4	May-01
Mario Tennis	8.25	Oct-00
Mega Man 64	7.25	Dec-00
Mickey's Speedway USA	6	Jan–01
Ms. Pac-Man Maze Madness	7.5	Dec-00
Ogre Battle 64	9	Oct-00
Paper Mario	7.5	Feb-01
Pokémon Puzzle League	8.5	Dec-00
Pokémon Stadium 2	6	May-01
Quarterback Club 2001	4	Nov-00
Rally Challenge	4.5	Sep-00
Star Wars: Episode I Battle for Naboo	8.5	Jan–01
Spider-Man	8	Jan–01
World is Not Enough, The	9	Nov-00
Turok 3: Shadow of Oblivion	8	Oct-00
Walt Disney World Quest: Magical Racing Tour	7.25	Oct-00
WCW Backstage Assault	3.5	Dec-00
WWF No Mercy	9.5	Dec-00

DREAMCAST

18 Wheeler: American Pro Trucker	8.5	Jun-01
4X4 Evolution	8.75	Dec-00
AeroWings 2: Air Strike	7.5	Sep-00
BANG! Gunship Elite	8	Jan–01
Cannon Spike	7	Sep-00
Championship Surfer	5	Mar-01
Chicken Run	5	Jan–01
Confidential Mission	5.5	Jun-01
D2	4.75	Oct-00
Dave Mirra Freestyle BMX	8	Feb-01
Daytona USA	7	Apr-01
Demolition Racer: No Exit	8	Nov-00
Dino Crisis	6.5	Jan–01
Ecco the Dolphin: Defender of the Future	7	Oct-00
ECW Anarchy Rulz	3	Mar-01
Evil Dead: Hail to the King	4.5	Mar-01
F355 Challenge: Passione Rossa	7.5	Dec-00
Frogger 2: Swampy's Revenge	7	Dec-00
Grandia II	8	Jan–01
Gunbird 2	5.5	Oct-00
Hidden & Dangerous	7	Oct-00
Illbleed	5	Jun-01
Jeremy McGrath Supercross 2000	3.75	Nov-00
Jet Grind Radio	8.25	Dec-00
Kao the Kangaroo	7	Apr-01
Kiss Psycho Circus: The Nightmare Child	4.5	Feb-01
Looney Tunes Space Race	7	Jan–01
Mars Matrix	8	May-01
Metropolis Street Racer	9	Dec-00
Ms. Pac-Man Maze Madness	8	Jan–01
Namco Museum	7.75	Sep-00
NBA 2K1	9.5	Jan–01
NFL 2K1	9.5	Nov-00
NFL Blitz 2001	5.25	Nov-00
Next Tetris: On-Line Addition, The	7	Dec-00
Nightmare Creatures II	5	Sep-00
Omikron: The Nomad Soul	5.5	Sep-00
Outtrigger	6.25	Jun-01
PBA Tour Bowling 2001	6.25	Jun-01
Phantasy Star Online	9	Mar-01
Pod: Speedzone	3.5	Jan–01
Project Justice	7	Feb-01
Quake III Arena	9.25	Jan–01
Quarterback Club 2001	2.5	Nov-00
Railroad Tycoon II	5	Nov-00
Record of Lodoss War	8.5	May-01
Ready 2 Rumble Boxing: Round 2	7.5	Jan–01
Red Dog	7.75	Dec-00
Resident Evil 2	8	Jan–01
Resident Evil 3: Nemesis	8	Jan–01
Royal Rumble	6.75	Sep-00
Rush 2049	7	Oct-00
Samba De Amigo	5.5	Dec-00
Seaman	7	Sep-00
Sega GT	9	Oct-00
Sega Marine Fishing	8	Nov-00
Sega Smash Pack	9	May-01
Shenmue	6	Dec-00
Silent Scope	7.5	Jan–01
Silver	8	Sep-00
Skies of Arcadia	8.5	Jan–01
Sonic Shuffle	7	Jan–01
Spawn: In the Demon's Hand	6.5	Nov-00
Speed Devils Online	7.5	Jan–01
Spider-Man	8	Jun-01
Starlancer	7	Dec-00
Star Wars: Demolition	7	Jan–01
Star Wars: Jedi Power Battles	8	Jan–01
Street Fighter III: 3rd Strike	8.25	Nov-00
Street Fighter III: Double Impact	7.75	Sep-00
Super Runabout: San Francisco Edition	8	Jan–01
Surf Rocket Racers	5.5	Feb-01
Sydney 2000	3.5	Oct-00
Test Drive Le Mans	4.75	Jan–01
Test Drive V-Rally	1	Jan–01
Tokyo Xtreme Racer 2	8.5	Nov-00
Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six: Rogue Spear	7	Feb-01
Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2	9.75	Jan–01
Toy Story 2	7	Sep-00
Typing of the Dead	9	Feb-01
UFC	8.5	Oct-00
Unreal Tournament	8.5	Apr-01
Vanishing Point	7.5	Mar-01
Virtua Athlete 2000	7	Oct-00
Virtua Tennis	9.25	Sep-00
Wacky Races	6	Sep-00
World Series Baseball 2K1	5.75	Sep-00
Worms World Party	8	May-01
Xtreme Sports	7	Jan–01

PC

Age of Empires II: The Conqueror's Expansion	9	Nov-00
America	6.5	Apr-01
American McGee's Alice	9	Feb-01
BANG! Gunship Elite	7	Oct-00
Baldur's Gate II	9.5	Nov-00
Black & White	9	Jun-01
Blade of Darkness	8.25	May-01
Blair Witch Volume One: Rustin Parr	6.75	Dec-00
Breakneck	6.25	Oct-00
Call to Power II	6	Jan–01
Clive Barker's: Undying	8	May-01
Colin McRae Rally 2.0	6.5	Apr-01
Command & Conquer: Red Alert 2	9.5	Dec-00
Crimson Skies	8.25	Nov-00
Escape From Monkey Island	8.25	Jan–01
Evil Islands	5.25	May-01
EverQuest: The Scars of Velious	9.5	Jan–01
Fallout Tactics: Brotherhood of Steel	8.75	May-01
Fate of the Dragon	6	Jun-01
Freedom: First Resistance	5.75	Mar-01
Giants: Citizen Kabuto	9.25	Feb-01
Gunman Chronicles	8.25	Feb-01
Half-Life: Counter-Strike	9.75	Jan–01
Heavy Metal: FAKK 2	6.75	Oct-00
Hitman: Codename 47	6.75	Feb-01
Homeworld: Cataclysm	8	Nov-00
Icewind Dale: Heart of Winter	9	Apr-01
Insane	7.25	Mar-01
Jagged Alliance 2: Unfinished Business	5.75	Apr-01
Kingdom Under Fire	6.25	Mar-01
MechWarrior 4: Vengeance	8.75	Jan–01
Midtown Madness 2	7.75	Dec-00
Moon Project, The	7.75	May-01
NASCAR Racing 4	8	Apr-01
No One Lives Forever	7.75	Dec-00
Project IGI: I'm Going In	3.5	Mar-01
Quake III: Team Arena	3.5	Mar-01
Rainbow Six: Covert Ops Essentials	8.75	Dec-00
Rune	7.75	Dec-00
Sacrifice	8.5	Jan–01
Sanity: Aiken's Artifact	5.25	Nov-00
Sea Dogs	8.5	Mar-01
Serious Sam	8.5	Jun-01
Sheep	7.5	Feb-01
Simcoaster	7.75	Apr-01
Sims: House Party, The	7.5	May-01
Sims: Livin' Large, The	7	Nov-00
Soulbringer	6.5	Oct-00
Squad Leader	6.25	Jan–01
Starpeace	7	Apr-01
Starship Troopers	7.75	Jan–01
Star Trek: Away Team	4.5	Jun-01
Star Trek New Worlds	5	Nov-00
Star Trek: Starfleet Command Vol.2	8.5	Mar-01
Star Trek Voyager: Elite Force	8.25	Dec-00
Timeline	5.75	Feb-01
Tomb Raider Chronicles	4	Feb-01
Tribes 2	8	Jun-01
Warlords Battlecry	8.75	Oct-00
Wizards & Warriors	5	Dec-00
You Don't Know Jack: 5th Dementia	8	Jan–01
Zeus: Master of Olympus	8.5	Jan–01

GAME BOY

Aladdin	7	Feb-01
Action Man: Search for Base X	2.5	Apr-01
Batman: Chaos in Gotham	6	Mar-01
Buffy the Vampire Slayer	2	Dec-00
Chicken Run	4	Jan–01
Croc 2	6.5	Apr-01
Donald Duck: Goin' Quackers	7.5	Jan–01
Donkey Kong Country	8.75	Jan–01
Dragon's Lair	6	Dec-00
Dragon Warrior I & II	7	Dec-00
Frogger 2	7.5	Dec-00
Galaga Destination: Earth	2	Feb-01
Hoyle Card Games	9	Mar-01
Inspector Gadget	6.5	Jan–01
Kirby Tilt 'N' Tumble	8.75	May-01
Lion King: Simba's Mighty Adventure, The	7	Mar-01
Little Mermaid II: Pinball Frenzy	7.5	Dec-00
Looney Tunes Racing	4.25	Mar-01
M&M's Minis Madness	6	Dec-00
Magi Nation	8.5	May-01
Mario Tennis	8.75	Feb-01
Marvin Strikes Back!	6	Apr-01
Mega Man Xtreme	7	Mar-01
Metal Walker	7.75	Dec-00
Mickey's Speedway USA	6	May-01
Monster Rancher Explorer	7.5	Nov-00
MTV Skateboarding Featuring Andy Macdonald	6.75	Dec-00
MTV Sports Ultimate BMX	7	Apr-01
Perfect Dark	4	Nov-00
Pokémon Puzzle Challenge	8.5	Feb-01
Pokémon Silver & Gold	9	Dec-00
Power Spike Pro Beach Volleyball	6.5	Jan–01
Q*Bert	6.5	Feb-01
Road Champs BXS Stunt Biking	7.75	Apr-01
Road Rash	6	Feb-01
Road to El Dorado	4.5	Sep-00
Shrek: Fairy Tale Freakdown	0.5	Jun-01
Simpsons: Night of the Living Treehouse of Horror, The	7.5	Jun-01
Spider-Man	4	Nov-00
Star Wars: Episode I Obi-Wan's Adventures	8	Mar-01
Tech Deck Skateboarding	3	Jun-01
Toki Tori	7.5	Apr-01
Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2	6	Jan–01
Toonsylvania	7	Sep-00
Toy Story Racer	4	May-01
Trouballs	8	May-01
Turok 3: Shadow of Oblivion	3.5	Oct-00
Warlocked	8	Sep-00

FALLOUT TACTICS: BROTHERHOOD OF STEEL

■ **FORMAT** PC ■ **STYLE** 1 TO 18-PLAYER STRATEGY
■ **PUBLISHER** INTERPLAY/14° EAST ■ **REVIEWED** MAY-01

Hypothetical situation: You and I are in a firefight. You have a bat, I have an AK-47. Who do you think will win? I'd say the smart money is on me, even though I'm a terrible shot. Not so in Fallout Tactics. In fact, in most instances, if you can get close enough to an enemy with a melee weapon, you'll take them out faster than you would with a rifle or pistol. The skills you gain through leveling are varied and interesting, your fighting abilities increase at a good rate, and the open-ended mission structure leaves all sorts of room for improvisation and invention when it comes to tactical strategy.
Kudos to Micro Forté for putting together a great sequel. – **KRISTIAN**

M 8.75

SURFING H30

■ **FORMAT** PLAYSTATION 2 ■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER SPORTS
■ **PUBLISHER** ROCKSTAR GAMES ■ **REVIEWED** JAN-01

A surfing game with a unique surfboard controller, filled with hot babes and some kooky alien characters. Bitchin', dude! Unfortunately, the surfboard peripheral doesn't help overcome the horribly tuned turning mechanics. Also, the trick system is nearly impossible to master. Even worse, it's possible to win the game without doing any tricks at all. All you have to do is master the lame physics, stay on your board, and collect weird globe objects for points. After 15 minutes, I ripped the tiny surfboard off my controller and began using it to saw at my wrists, begging for sweet oblivion. – **MATT**

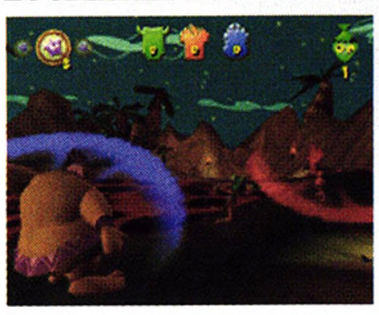
E 3

NEW RELEASES ALL DATES SUBJECT TO CHANGE. CALL YOUR LOCAL RETAILER FOR MORE DETAILS

Release Date	Title	Publisher/ Distributor	System
6/12/01	Castlevania: Circle of the Moon	Konami	GBA
6/12/01	Krazy Racers	Konami	GBA
6/12/01	Razor: Freestyle Scooter	Crave Entertainment	GBC
6/12/01	Roswell Conspiracies	Ubi Soft	GBC
6/12/01	Anachronox	EIDOS Interactive	PC
6/12/01	Dragonriders: Chronicles of Pern	Red Storm Entertainment	PC
6/12/01	Emperor: Battle for Dune	Electronic Arts	PC
6/12/01	Legends of Might & Magic	3DO Company	PC
6/12/01	Ripley's Believe It or Not!	Vivendi Universal Interactive	PC
6/12/01	Disney's Atlantis The Lost Empire	Sony	PS-X
6/12/01	Roswell Conspiracies	Ubi Soft	PS-X
6/12/01	Time Crisis: Project Titan	Namco	PS-X
6/12/01	Tiny Toons: Plucky's Big Adventure	Crave Entertainment	PS-X

OOGA BOOGA

■ **FORMAT** DREAMCAST ■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER ACTION/STRATEGY
■ **PUBLISHER** SEGA ■ **RELEASE** AUGUST 14



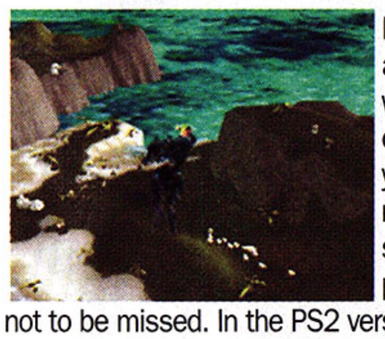
Hot on the heels of Floigan Brothers will be Ooga Booga, an oddly titled collection of minigames. The game is set on a magical island, where the Volcano Goddess dwells. She has decreed that the four tribes of the island compete for the Heart of the Ooga Booga. Each tribe must select a witchdoctor (called a Kahuna) to represent its clan in the tournament, which consists of games like Scavenger Hunt and King of the Hill. Up to four players at a time can compete in split-screen mode, but the real draw of Ooga Booga is sure to be online play. In addition to multiplayer battles, there will also be online tournaments, which allow players to compete for the honor of being called the number one witchdoctor on Earth.

6/12/01	MX 2002 Featuring Ricky Carmichael	THQ	PS2
6/15/01	Half-Life: Blue Shift	Vivendi Universal Interactive	PC
6/15/01	Vietnam 2: Back to the Front	ValuSoft	PC
6/15/01	LEGO Stunt Rally	Lego Media	PS-X
6/15/01	NASCAR Heat	Infogrames	PS2
6/19/01	Dragonriders: Chronicles of Pern	Ubi Soft	DC
6/19/01	Reel Fishing Wild	Crave Entertainment	DC
6/19/01	Soldier of Fortune	Crave Entertainment	DC
6/19/01	Sonic Adventure 2	Sega	DC
6/19/01	Hostile Waters: Antaeus Rising	Interplay	PC
6/19/01	Independence War 2: Edge of Chaos	Infogrames Entertainment	PC
6/19/01	Startopia	EIDOS Interactive	PC
6/19/01	Motorcross Mania	Take 2 Interactiveactive	PS-X
6/19/01	World Destruction League: War Jetz	3DO Company	PS-X
6/19/01	Escape From Monkey Island	LucasArts	PS2
6/19/01	Motor Mayhem	Infogrames	PS2
6/19/01	Twisted Metal: Black	Sony	PS2
6/19/01	World Destruction League: War Jetz	3DO Company	PS2
6/20/01	Digimon Card Battle	Bandai	PS-X
6/20/01	In Cold Blood	Dreamcatcher	PS-X
6/21/01	Diablo II: Lord of Destruction	Vivendi Universal Interactive	PC
6/22/01	Space Ace	Digital Leisure	PC
6/22/01	Disney's Goofy's Fun House	NewKidCo	PS-X
6/22/01	Sesame Street Sports	NewKidCo	PS-X
6/25/01	Atari Anniversary Edition	Infogrames	DC
6/25/01	Jekyll & Hyde	Dreamcatcher	PC
6/25/01	Ultimate Egyptian Adventure Pack	Dreamcatcher	PC
6/25/01	Atari Anniversary Edition	Infogrames	PS-X
6/26/01	Alone in the Dark: The New Nightmare	Infogrames	GBC
6/26/01	Alone In The Dark: The New Nightmare	Infogrames	PC
6/26/01	Gadget Tycoon	Monte Cristo	PC
6/26/01	Gamefest: Chess Classic	Interplay	PC
6/26/01	Gamefest: Forgotten Realms	Interplay	PC
6/26/01	Gamefest: Strategy Classics	Interplay	PC
6/26/01	Shogun: Total War Warlord Edition	Electronic Arts	PC
6/26/01	Top Shot 2: Lock & Load	Activision	PC

Release Date	Title	Publisher/ Distributor	System
6/26/01	Alone in the Dark: The New Nightmare	Infogrames	PS-X
6/26/01	Sky Diving Extreme	Crave Entertainment	PS-X
6/26/01	Bloody Roar 3	Activision	PS2
6/26/01	NBA Street	Electronic Arts	PS2
6/26/01	Stretch Panic	Crave Entertainment	PS2
6/27/01	Anarchy Online	Funcom	PC
6/29/01	Sports Jam	Tommo	DC
7/2/01	Guilty Gear	Tommo	DC
7/2/01	High Heat Major League Baseball 2002	3DO Company	GBA
7/2/01	High Heat Baseball 2002	3DO Company	GBC
7/2/01	Buffy the Vampire Slayer	Fox Interactive	PC
7/2/01	MS Flight Sim 2000: Real Air Traffic Center	World Air Simulation Group	PC
7/2/01	Planet of the Apes	Fox Interactive	PC
7/2/01	Star Trek: Star Commander 2: Orion Pirate	Interplay	PC
7/2/01	Arc the Lad: Collection	Working Designs	PS-X
7/2/01	IHRA	Bethesda Softworks	PS-X
7/2/01	Tic Tak Chicken	Tommo	PS-X
7/2/01	18 Wheeler: American Pro Trucker	Acclaim	PS2
7/2/01	Dinosaur	Ubi Soft	PS2
7/6/01	Bomberman Tournament	Activision	GBA
7/10/01	Conflict Zone	Ubi Soft	DC
7/10/01	Phantasy Star Online Version 2	Sega	DC
7/10/01	Pac-Man Collection	Namco	GBA
7/10/01	Land Before Time	Crave Entertainment	GBC
7/10/01	Disciples II: Dark Prophecy	Infogrames Interactive	PC
7/10/01	Final Fantasy Chronicles	Square Electronic Arts	PS-X
7/10/01	Ephemeral Fantasia	Konami	PS2
7/10/01	Gran Turismo 3 A-Spec	Sony	PS2
7/12/01	Harpoon 4	The Learning Company	PC
7/16/01	Pipe Dreams 2	Talonsoft	PC
7/16/01	Schizm	Dreamcatcher	PC
7/17/01	Jurassic Park III: The DNA Factor	Konami	GBA
7/17/01	Dragon Warrior III	Enix	GBC
7/17/01	Galleon	Interplay	PC
7/17/01	Max Payne	Gathering of Developers	PC
7/19/01	Mech Commander 2	Microsoft	PC
7/23/01	Mega Man Legends	Capcom	PC
7/24/01	Outtrigger	Sega	DC
7/24/01	Klonoa 2: Lunatea's Veil	Namco	PS2
7/24/01	NCAA Football 2002	Electronic Arts	PS2
7/24/01	Rune: Viking Warlord	Take 2 Interactiveactive	PS2
7/25/01	Gundam: Journey to Jaburo	Bandai	PS2
7/27/01	Green Berets	Talonsoft	PC

GIANTS: CITIZEN KABUTO

■ **FORMAT** PLAYSTATION 2 ■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/PLATFORM
■ **PUBLISHER** INTERPLAY ■ **RELEASE** AUGUST 15



In the age of the port, Giants has a lot to live up to. The PC game was, for all intents and purposes, one of the best games of the year thus far. Its unique style of role-playing coupled with real-time strategy and a small amount of platforming was a combination not to be missed. In the PS2 version, we are very interested to see what will become of this lovely interface, and if the game will keep its original integrity. The life of a port is often a rocky one. What this particular port has going for it is the enormous success of its sister title. If the feel of the original is transplanted with care and talent, we could be looking at another PS2 game bound for the personal libraries of many.

7/30/01	Pokémon Crystal	Nintendo	GBC
7/31/01	Floigan Brothers	Sega	DC
7/31/01	World Series Baseball 2K2	Sega	DC
7/31/01	Lufia: The Legend Returns	Crave Entertainment	GBC
7/31/01	Commandos 2	EIDOS Interactive	PC
7/31/01	Throne of Darkness	Vivendi Universal Interactive	PC

Release Date	Title	Publisher/ Distributor	System
7/31/01	Dave Mirra Freestyle BMX2	Acclaim	PS2
7/31/01	Extreme G3	Acclaim	PS2
7/31/01	NFL Quarterback Club 2002	Acclaim	PS2
7/31/01	Paris Dakar Rally	Acclaim	PS2
7/31/01	Shadowman: 2econd Coming	Acclaim	PS2
8/1/01	Last Blade	Tommo	DC
8/1/01	Barbie Pet Rescue	Vivendi Universal Interactive	GBC
8/1/01	Portal Runner	3DO Company	GBC
8/1/01	Capitalism 2	Red Storm Entertainment	PC
8/1/01	MS Flight Sim 2000: American Airlines	World Air Simulation Group	PC
8/1/01	Red Faction	THQ	PC
8/1/01	Stars! Supernova Genesis	Empire Interactive	PC

ALIEN FRONT ONLINE

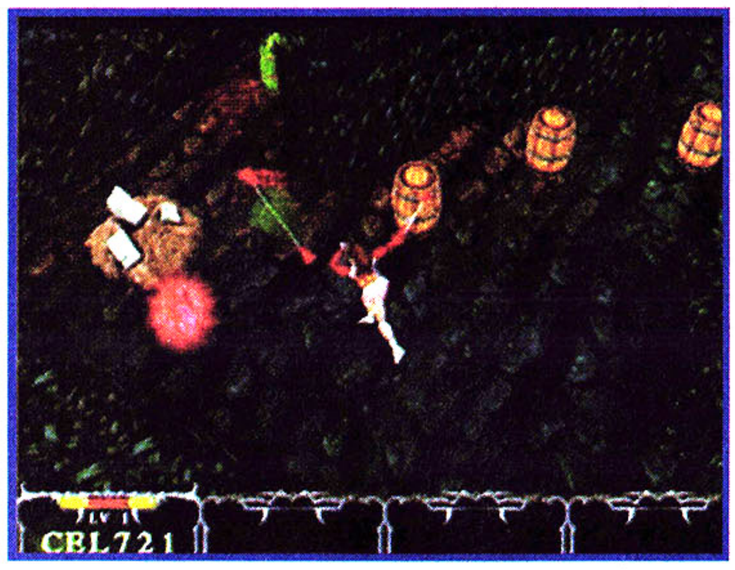
■ **FORMAT** DREAMCAST ■ **STYLE** 1 TO 8-PLAYER ACTION
■ **PUBLISHER** SEGA ■ **RELEASE** AUGUST 7

With online play, console vs. arcade battles, and the chance to wreak wanton destruction across the board, AFO does a lot with what little new features it offers. The gameplay is as simple as choosing a side (Army or Aliens), one of three vehicles per team (tanks like the M1A1 Abrams or a multi-legged Triclops craft), and pulling the trigger on an arsenal of weapons. AFO's controls are simple, and lend themselves well to the across-the-board, universal nature of the title. Online play and the in-game chat features are what will really make this title shine, even if it doesn't have the sophistication of Counter-Strike. Screw Kristian, let's kill!

8/1/01	X-Com: Alliance	Hasbro Interactive	PC
8/1/01	Portal Runner	3DO Company	PS2
8/7/01	Alien Front Online	Sega	DC
8/7/01	NFL GameDay 2002	Sony	PS-X
8/7/01	Stunt GP	Titus	PS2
8/9/01	Sesame Street Sports	NewKidCo	GBC
8/9/01	The Mask	Dreamcatcher	GBC
8/9/01	Woody Woodpecker	Dreamcatcher	GBC
8/9/01	Dragon's Lair II: Time Warp	Digital Leisure	PC
8/14/01	Ooga Booga	Sega	DC
8/14/01	Razor: Freestyle Scooter	Crave Entertainment	DC
8/15/01	Duke Nukem Endangered Species	Gathering of Developers	PC
8/15/01	Steel Panthers: World at War	The Learning Company	PC
8/15/01	Sudden Strike Add On	Infogrames Interactive	PC
8/15/01	Fisher Price Rescue Heroes	Vivendi Universal Interactive	PS-X
8/15/01	M & M's Shell Shocked	Vivendi Universal Interactive	PS-X
8/15/01	Carrier	Jaleco	PS2
8/15/01	Giants: Citizen Kabuto	Interplay	PS2
8/15/01	Half-Life	Vivendi Universal Interactive	PS2
8/15/01	Resident Evil Code: Veronica X	Capcom	PS2
8/20/01	ESPN Final Round 2002	Konami	GBA
8/20/01	Dragon's Lair	Digital Leisure	PC
8/20/01	Rune Gold	Talonsoft	PC
8/21/01	NCAA Football 2K2	Sega	DC
8/21/01	Propeller Arena	Sega	DC
8/21/01	Klonoa: Empire of Dreams	Namco	GBA
8/21/01	Destroyer Command	The Learning Company	PC
8/21/01	Empire Earth	Vivendi Universal Interactive	PC
8/21/01	Madden NFL 2002	Electronic Arts	PC
8/21/01	Madden NFL 2002	Electronic Arts	PS-X
8/21/01	Le Mans 24 Hour Racing	Infogrames	PS2
8/21/01	Madden NFL 2002	Electronic Arts	PS2
8/21/01	Test Drive Off Road: Wide Open	Infogrames	PS2
8/30/01	International Rally Championship	Interplay	PC
8/30/01	Silent Hunter II	The Learning Company	PC

SECRET ACCESS

PS2 PLAYSTATION 2



Gauntlet: Dark Legacy

Enter all of these codes at the Name Entry screen.

10,000 Gold – 10000K
Alien (Wizard) – SKY100
Anti-Death – 1ANGEL
Baseball Stick Player (Jester) – KJH105
Cheerleader (Valkyrie) – CEL721
Football Player (Knight) – RIZ721
Grim Reaper (Valkyrie) – TWN300
Horse (Warrior) – RAT333
Invisibility – 000000
Invulnerability – INVULN
Large Jester (Dwarf) – ICE600
Max Turbo – PURPLE
Ninja (Knight) – TAK118
Nine Potions & Keys – ALLFUL
Ninja (Knight) – SJB964
Normal Guy 1 (Knight) – STG333
Normal Guy 2 (Knight) – CSS222
Normal Guy 3 (Knight) – ARV984
Normal Guy 4 (Knight) – DIB626
Ogre (Warrior) – CAS400
Orc (Warrior) – MTN200
Punk Stick Man (Dwarf) – PNK666
Pharaoh (Wizard) – DES700
Pojo the Chicken – EGG911
Racy Gear (Dwarf) – NUD069
Reflect Shot – REFLEX
Roman Centurion (Knight) – BAT900
School Girl (Valkyrie) – AYA555
Shrink & Grow – DELTA1
Sith (Knight) – DARTHC
Sith (Wizard) – GARM99
Smiley Guy (Dwarf) – STX222
Summoner (Wizard) – SUM224
Super Shot with Crossbow – SSHOTS
Super Speed – XSPEED
Super Throw – QCKSHT
Triple Shot – MENAGE
Undead (Wizard) – GARM00
Waitress (Knight) – KAO292
X-Ray Vision – PEEKIN

All FMV Sequences – As the game loads, hold ✕ until the Midway logo disappears. All the FMV sequences will now be available.

"GI Droid"
(Location unknown – last seen in a Nevada desert burying large stacks of Weezer's new album)

Rumble Racing

To enter these codes, head into the Options and highlight Load and Save. Press Right to bring up the Password menu.

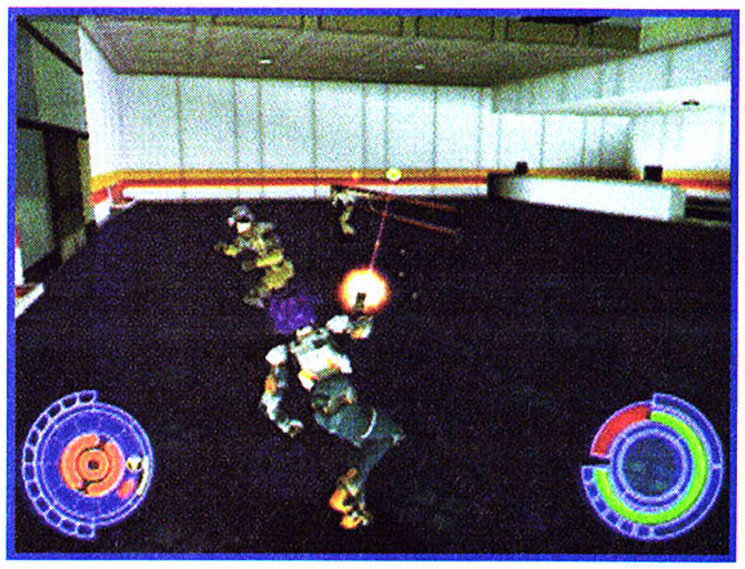
Buckshot Car – UBTCKSTOH
Championship Mode – KOZIEC1PU
Circus Minimus Track – ZEAGTLUKE
EA Elite Cup – LEAITEPUC
EA Stunt Cup – YEAMPLOWW
Elite Cup – AEPPROPUC
Elite Cup 2 – ILETEC1MB
Elite Cup 3 – ILCTEC2VB
Elite Cup 4 – ILQTEC3PU
Gamecus Car – BSUIGASUM
High Roller Car – HGIROLREL
Interceptor Car – CDAAPTNIA
Pro Cup 2 – P1PROC1PU
Pro Cup 3 – Q2PROC2YT
Revolution Car – PTOATRTOI
Road Trip Car – ABOGOBOGA
Sporticus Car – OPSRTISUC
Stinger Car – AMHBRAAMH
Thor Car – THTORHROT
Van Itty Car – VTYANIYTT
Vortex Car – 1AREXT1AR
XXS Tomcat Car – NALDSHHSD

"Master Mew"
Salt Vine Lakes, NH

Silpheed: The Lost Planet

All Weapons – Head to the Name Entry screen, then type in GLOIRE to unlock a powerful arsenal consisting of nine weapons.

Harley Williams
Redmon, WA



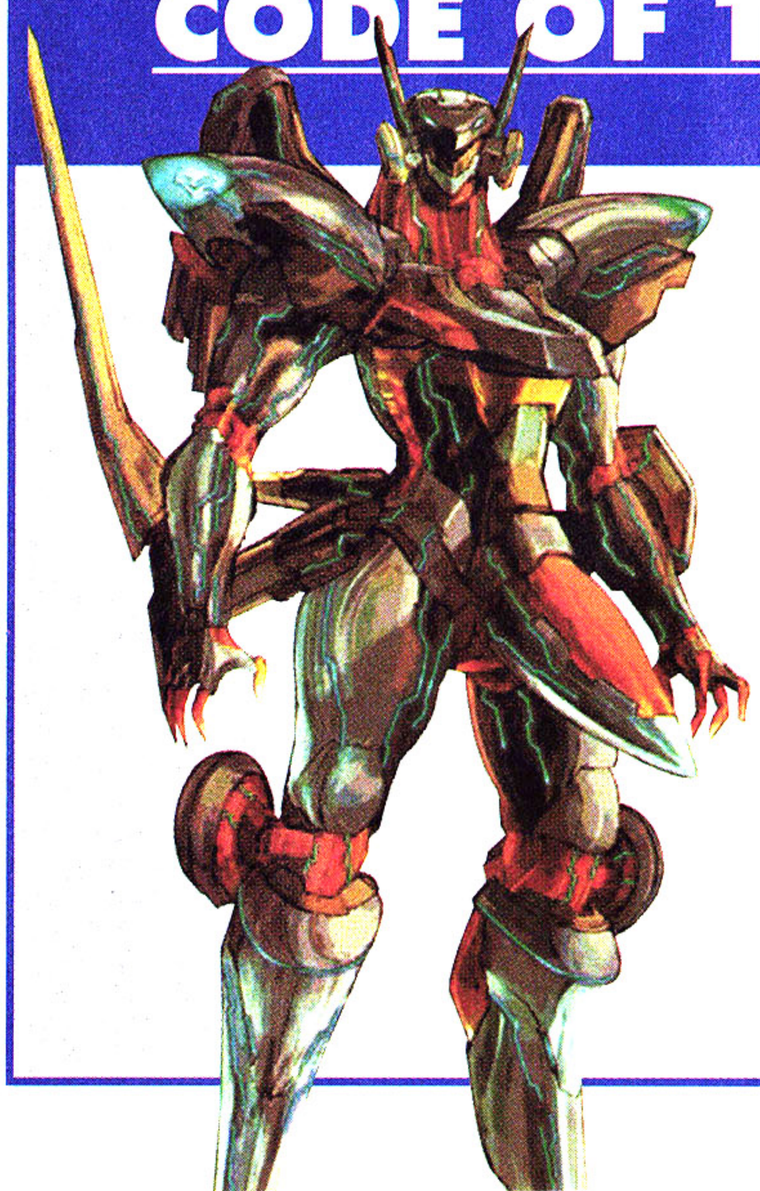
Oni

Level Skip – Hit Select during gameplay. Highlight Help then press L2, L1, L2, □, ○, □, L3, R3, L2, L1.
Powerful Punches – Hit Select during gameplay. Highlight Help then press L2, L1, L2, □, ○, □, R3, L3, ○, □.
Unlimited Ammo – Hit Select during gameplay. Highlight Help then press L2, L1, L2, □, ○, □, L2, L2, L1, L3.
Unlimited Phase Clock – Hit Select during gameplay. Highlight Help then press L2, L1, L2, □, ○, □, L1, R3, L2, L3.

Vinny Vestaz
Toronto, Canada

CODE OF THE MONTH

Zone of the Enders



Full Health & Ammo – During gameplay, pause, then press L1 (x2), L2 (x2), L1, R1, L1, R1, R2, R1. Be wary, though; each time this code is entered your level will drop by one.

Versus Mode – At the Title Screen, press ○, ✕, Right, Left, Right, Left, Down (x2), Up (x2).

"The Rhino"
Toledo, OH

Army Men: Sarge's Heroes 2

Enter all of these codes at the Input Code screen.

All Levels – FREEPLAY
All Weapons – GIMME
Invincibility – NODIE
Invisibility – NOSEEUM
Short Mode – SHORTY
Tall Mode – IMHUGE
Test Info – THDOTEST

Jeffry Salmon
Chicago, IL

Star Wars: Super Bombad Racing

Battle Tank – At the Main Menu, press ○, △, □, ○, △, □.
Boba Fett – At the Main Menu, press □, ○, △, ○, □.
Kaadu Racers – At the Main Menu, press L1, R1, L2, R2.

Sam Shepherd
Webville, COM

PLAYSTATION

Metal Slug X

Chat Mode – Enter Combat School, and then as this mode loads, rapidly jam on □ until a menu appears. The instructor will then ask if you would like to chat.

Mission Select – Complete the Arcade Mission mode and this handy option will become available at the Main Menu.

"Virtua Gap Boy 2002"
Phoenix, AZ

Mat Hoffman's Pro BMX

8 Additional Minutes – During gameplay, pause, then hold L1 and press □, Up, ○, ✕.
Fat Tires – During gameplay, pause, then hold L1 and press Down, ○ (x2), Down.
Huge Points – During gameplay, pause, then hold L1 and press □, ○ (x2), Up, Down (x2).
Infinite Special – During gameplay, pause, then hold L1 and press Left, Down, △, ○, Up, Left, △, □.
Perfect Balance – During gameplay, pause, then hold L1 and press □, Left, Up, Right.
Special Grind Meter – During gameplay, pause, then hold L1 and press Left, ○, □, △, □, ○, ✕.

Grandma — Last month we dropped a hint as to how to unlock this witch, and now, we're bringing you the goods. Within the first few seconds of each run, pause, then hit Retry. Do this 10 times and Grandma will replace your rider of choice.

THPS Warehouse – Simply score over 200,000 points on one trick. If you suck, use the codes above to improve your chances.

Carl Hawkins
Williamsboro, MA

Incredible Crisis

Big Head Mode – During gameplay, pick up controller two and hit Up or Down.
Flat Mode – During gameplay, pick up controller two and hit Left or Right.
Wacky Sounds – During gameplay, pick up controller two and hit ✕, □, △, ○.

Tommy James
Black Hills City, UT

Muppet Monster Adventure

Enter all of these codes at the Main Menu.

10 Muppet Tokens – Left, Up, Down, Right, □, R2, ○, □, L2, ○
99 Lives – Up (x2), Down, Left, Right, □, Up, Left, Right, ○
All Levels – Up (x2), □, Down (x2), ○, Left, □, Right, ○
All Morphs – ○, R2, ○, Left, Right, R2, Up, Down, ○, R2
Ballistic Chicken – □ (x2), ○, □, ○ (x2), □ (x2), ○, □
Camera Rove – □, Left, R2, Up, R1, L2, R1, Up, R2, Up
Consecutive Levels – L2, L1 (x2), R1, R2 (x3), □, Left, Up
Debug Mode – Up, Right, R2, □, Left, R1, Left, Up, Left, R2
Gallery Items – □, Left, ○, Right, Down, Up, □, Down, ○, Down
Infinite Time – Down, L2, R2 (x2), Up, L1 (x2), R1, Down, Up
Invincibility – L2, R2, R1, L1, R2, L2, R2, R1, L1, R2
Level Select – R2 (x4), R1, L1 (x3), R1, R2

"The Vidman"
Uptown, MN

DREAMCAST

Space Channel 5

Auto Mode – During gameplay, hold the L and R Buttons, then press Up, Left, A, Left, A, Down, Right, B, Right, B. The computer will now control your every action. If you let it play through the entire game, you'll receive a perfect rating.

Kelly Belly
Washington, DC

Giga Wing 2

Bonus Levels – Complete Arcade mode and a slew of new levels will become available in Score Attack mode. Believe us, you gotta see these stages! They're crazy!

Marian Andrews
Whickers, IN

Daytona USA

9th Car – For all eight mirrored tracks, beat the track records.

Barchetta Car – Using all four of the original cars (Lightning, Falcon, Grasshopper, Hornet), place in any position in the 777 Speedway to unlock this fast ride.

Barchetta Super Car – Using the Barchetta Car, enter Single Race mode, set the laps to two, then enter any track. At the start of the race, spin your car around and drive the entire race backwards.

Cat Car – Simply win a battle on the Internet, or rack up over 20 hours of gameplay.

Javelin Car – If you love this game more than life itself, accumulate over 100 hours of play and this sweet car will become available.

Unicorn Car – Complete Championship mode and this hilarious car will be waiting for you in the garage.

"The Rhino"
Toledo, OH

Illbleed

Scantily Clad Eriko – Rather than saving your friends, don't rescue anyone. Each time you pass on helping a friend in need, Eriko will lose a piece of clothing. By the end of the game, she'll be wearing nothing but her undergarments.

"Mr. Monday Night"
Fargo, ND

NINTENDO 64

Conker's Bad Fur Day

Enter these codes at the Cheats screen in the Options menu.

All Chapters & Scenes – WELDERSBENCH
Baseball Bat in Multiplayer Race – DRACULASTEABAGS
Debug Mode – XFYHIJERPWAL IELWZS
Easy Mode – EASY
Fifty Lives – BOVRILBULLETHOLE
Frying Pan in Multiplayer Racer – DUTCHOVENS
Sergeant & Tediz in Multiplayer – RUSTYSHERIFFSBADGE
Very Easy Mode – VERYEASY
Weasel Henchmen in Multiplayer – CHINDITVICTORY

"Daddy Fat Sax"
Memphis, TN

GAME BOY ADVANCE

Super Mario Advance

Instant Reset – If you want to restart the game, simultaneously press A, B, Select, and Start.

Sleep Mode – If you want to conserve some battery power as you take care of your household chores, simultaneously press Select and R Button. To resume play, press Select and L Button.

Super Mario 2
World 4 Warp – Head to Level 1.3, and locate the area with the brick background. Stand just to its left and unearth the plants until you find a bottle. Head past the brick wall, then toss the bottle onto the pot. Enter the door, and press down on the pot to warp to World 4.

World 5 Warp – Head to Level 3.1 and enter the first door. Fall all the way down – sticking to the middle of the screen as you plummet. When you land, enter the door, then unearth a bottle from the plants. Toss the bottle on the ground, then enter the door. Now, slide down the pot to warp to World 5.

World 6 Warp – Head to Level 4.2, and maneuver to the area with the whales. Snag the bottle from the grass, then throw it next to the pot. Enter the door and descend into the pot to warp to World 6.

World 7 Warp – Head to Level 5.3, then ascend the ladder, and jump onto the ledge directly above. Grab the bottle out of the grass on the right. Toss the bottle on the ground, then pass through the door. Now, descend through the jar to warp to World 7.

"The Kramer Gamer"
White Fish, MT

Earthworm Jim

Level Select – Pause the game, then press Right, R Button, B, A, L Button (x2), A, R Button.
Buttville – Pause the game, then press L Button, A, Up, R Button, A, R Button, A, Select.
Down the Tubes – Pause the game, then press Up, L Button, Down, A, R Button, A.
For Pete's Sake – Pause the game, then press R Button, L Button, A, B, B, A, L Button, R Button.
Snot a Problem – Pause the game, then press R Button, Up, Select, L Button, R Button, Left.
What the Heck – Pause the game, then press Select, R Button, B, Down, L Button, B.

Tina Rogers
Fargo, ND

F-Zero: Maximum Velocity

Hidden Demo Mode – At the Title Screen, press Select to view a training exercise that shows you how to brake and boost and achieve the perfect lap.

Kevin Newbanks
Alpena, MI

Pitfall: The Mayan Adventure

Level Select – At the Title Screen, press L Button, Select, A, Select, R Button, A, L Button, Select. To change levels, press Select and either of the shoulder buttons.

Jeffrey Bosnoff
Houston, TX

PC PERSONAL COMPUTER

The Moon Project

During gameplay, type in cheater 1 to bring up the console window. Now, enter one of the codes below.

Damage All Visible Opponents – tromaville
Destroy Own Buildings – gohome!
Disable Fog of War – moonlight
Display All Opponents – judgementday
Enable Fog of War – hide
Everything Researched – nobelprize
Free Research – sciencefornothing
Free Weapon Unit – newone [units/weapons]
Full Map – beautifulmoon [0-1]
Increase Cash – moneyfornothing [00-99]
Kill All Units – smash
Lose Scenario – byebye
Max Health – idkfa
Meteor Shower – shower
Place Mines – hotground
Quick Research – ultrascience
Set Unit Number – limit_up [00-99]

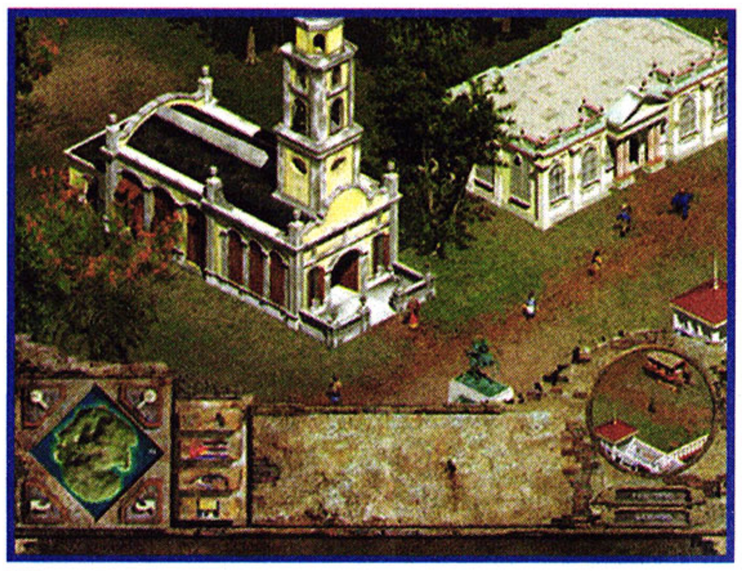
Carl Henderson
Silicon Valley, CA

X-COM: Enforcer

To activate these cheats, press ~ during gameplay, then type in the desired code.

All Levels – open map00 (00-40)
Conquer Level – icandoit
Fly Mode – fly
Ghost Mode – ghost
Invincibility – xgod
Level Up – upgrademe 1 (1-4)
Normal Mode – walk

Tino Walles
Oakland, CA



Tropico

During gameplay, hold [Control] and type in one of the following codes below.

10 Extra Happiness – contendo
$20,000 – pesos

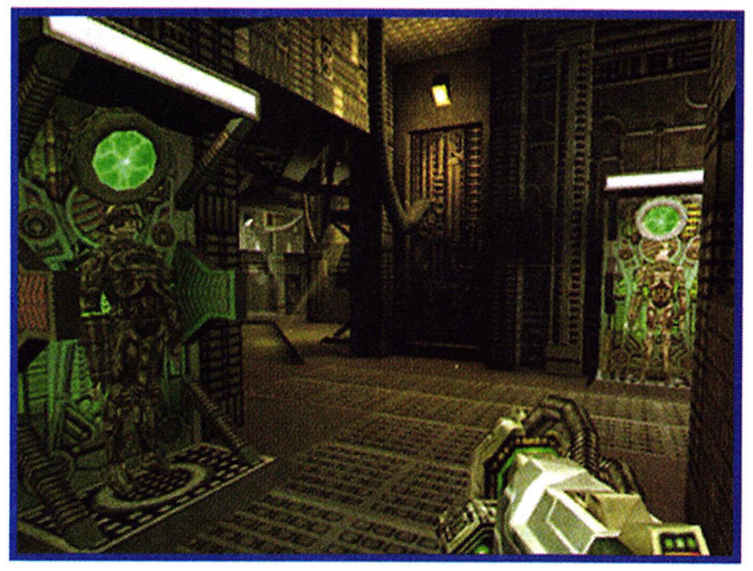
Luke Warm
Webville, COM

Clive Barker's: Undying

During gameplay, press [Tab], then enter one of the following codes.

God Mode – eh
Infinite Health – satan
Infinite Mana – infinitemana (0-1)
Additional Light – becomelight (0-1)

Grace Winding
Desmond, IL



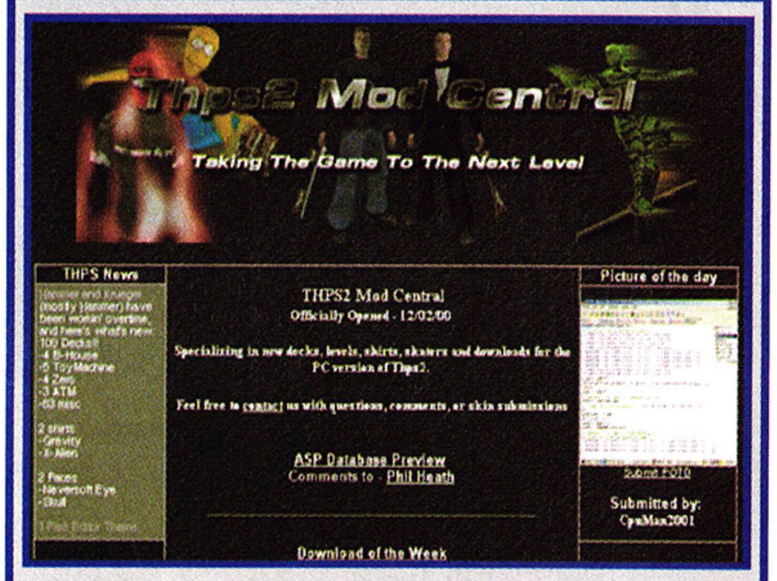
Star Trek Voyager: Elite Force Expansion Pack

During gameplay press ~ to bring up the console window. Now, type "sp_cheats 1" to enable the codes below. At this point, any of the codes may be entered.

999 Health & Armor – undying
All Weapons – give weapons
God Mode – god
Invisibility – notarget
Level Select – map [level name]
No Clipping – noclip
Obtain Indicated Item – give [item name]
Set View – cg_thirdpersonrange [1-100]
Third-Person View – cg_thirdperson 1

Jacob Levins
Sarasota, FL

DOWNLOAD OF THE MONTH



Game: Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2
Site: http://www.planettonyhawk.com/mods
You say you're getting bored with Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2 for your PC? If so, you obviously haven't been to Mod Central at planettonyhawk.com. A plethora of eye-popping, giggle inciting mods await your perusal 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. Some hot skins have been a Bart Simpson-esque motif, a James Bond skater, a boarder decked out in full camo gear, and the Slateman skin complete with three shirts, three decks, two faces and one custom icon. Additional effects such as your board issuing a stream of flame as you complete a trick, or your character skating in a prison are also available for you to take advantage of. There are new downloads featured every week on the site, as will as a chat room and a members-only discussion forum. It's a THPS 2 extravaganza! Hardcore fans, you must check this out.

GAME SHARK

PlayStation 2

Rumble Racing

Access Code (Must Be On) –
ec8df8101456e60a

All Cars –
1cb508681355e6a6
1cb5086c1355e6a6
1cb508701355e6a6
1cb508741355e6a6
1cb508781355e6a6
1cb5087c1355e6a6
1cb508801355e6a6
1cb508841355e6a6
1cb508881355e6a6
1cb5088c1355e6a6
1cb508901355e6a6
(Note: The second car set must be entered as well)

All Cars 2 –
1cb508941355e6a6
1cb508981355e6a6
1cb5089c1355e6a6
1cb508a01355e6a6
1cb508a41355e6a6
1cb508a81355e6a6
1cb508ac1355e6a6
1cb508b01355e6a6
1cb508b41355e6a6
1cb508b81355e6a6
1cb508bc1355e6a6
1cb508c01355e6a6
4cb508d41456e6a6
(Note: The first car set must be entered as well)

Crazy Taxi

Access Code (Must Be On) –
ec907fe0143c2534

1 Balloon (Crazy Drift) –
4cd23c3c1456e7a6

Always Axel –
0cd248c01456e675
3cba4fc01456e7a6

Always B.D. Joe –
0cd248c01456e675
3cba4fc01456e7a7

Always Gena –
0cd248c01456e675
3cba4fc01456e7a8

Always Gus –
0cd248c01456e675
3cba4fc01456e7a1

Infinite Fare Time –
4cba872c1456e00c

Massive Drift Combo –
4cd23a781456e404

Max Cash –
1cba840817e9c70c

Gun Griffon Blaze

Access Code (Must Be On) –
ecb198f01438bba0

All Weapon Systems –
1cac1d6861dfb00c
4cac1d6c1456b00c

Huge Score –
1cdf09f017e9c70c

Infinite Firepower –
4cd3e9ec1456e79e

The Adventures of Cookie & Cream

Access Code (Must Be On) –
ec8d408814403fc4

Infinite Time –
1cb69674145677a5

Low Time –
1cb696701456e7a5

PlayStation

Dave Mirra Freestyle BMX: Maximum Remix

All Levels (Dave Mirra) –
300832f8 0015

All Outfits (Dave Mirra) –
300832f9 0005

All Bikes (Dave Mirra) –
300832fa 0005

Point Blank 3

Infinite Health –
800ad990 0003

Infinite Health (Player 2) –
800ad992 0003

Dreamcast

Project Justice

Access Code (Must Be First!) –
9c5d88f8

Access Code 2 (Must Be Last!) –
245eeca9

Infinite Health –
89bc616e000000c8

Infinite Health (Player 2) –
75e32ab0000000c8

Low Health –
89bc616e00000000

Low Health (Player 2) –
75e32ab000000000

Giga Wing 2

Access Code (Must Be First!) –
9c5d88f8

Access Code 2 (Must Be Last!) –
245eeca9

All Gallery Pictures –
c6d864e0e0703041
9721ae1e
862c69bf0000ffff

All Score Attack Stages –
85cc69b500000006

All Secret Options –
d8aa88640000ffff

All Ships –
F794886f000003e0

Infinite Bombs –
86cc4b7000000003

Infinite Lives –
656dd7b800000003

Max Score Multiplier –
fd9488010000ffff
78b300b00000ffff

Confidential Mission

Access Code (Must Be First!) –
9c5d88f8

Access Code (Must Be Last!) –
245eeca9

High Score –
2d1c6fa5000f423f
25fc6af3000f423f

Infinite Credits –
5875ea8d00000008

Game Boy Color

The Legend of Zelda: Oracle of Ages

All Secondary Items –
91ff9fc6
91ffa0c6
91ffa1c6
91ffa2c6
91ffa3c6
91ffa4c6
91ffa5c6
91ffbfc6

Infinite Health –
9140abc6

Infinite Rupees –
9199adc6
9109aec6

Invincibility –
91152bd0

Master Sword –
9103b2c6

Max Health –
9140aac6

The Legend of Zelda: Oracle of Seasons

All Nature Essences –
91ffbbc6

All Secondary Items –
91ff96c6
91ff97c6
91ff98c6
91ff99c6
91ff9ac6
91ff9bc6
91ff9cc6

Infinite Health –
910fa2c6

Infinite Rupees –
9199a5c6
9109a6c6

Spider-Man 2: The Sinister Six

Infinite Health –
91ff19c1

Infinite Lives –
9106ffc9

Infinite Webbing –
910f43c9

One-Hit Kills –
910199c1

ENTER TO WIN

Send in your codes and passwords, and if we choose your entry as Code of the Month you'll win a wonderful prize from the Game Informer Vault! All other entries printed within these hallowed pages will receive a Secret Access T-shirt.

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CLASSIC GI

SIX MILLION MINUTES B.G.

HANDHELDS BEFORE GAME BOY

The arrival of the Game Boy Advance will mark a dozen years of handheld dominance for Nintendo. In its time, the Mario mastheaded company has had its share of competitors vying for a piece of its portable throne – most notably Atari Lynx, Sega Game Gear, and Neo Geo Pocket Color – but none have been able to even put a dent in the profits of the various incarnations of Game Boy.

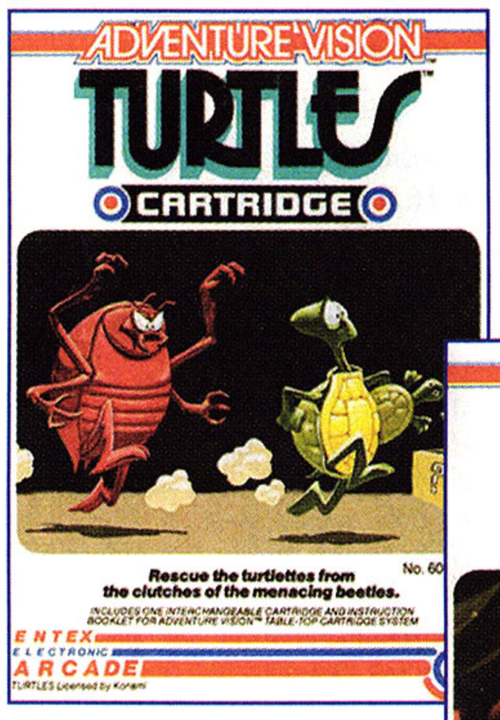
Just because Nintendo has struck best, though, does not mean it struck first. Years before anyone had an inkling of what a Game Boy was, there were a variety of portable electronic games on the market. Simple LED-powered handhelds such as Mattel Electronics' Football and Parker Brothers' Merlin were selling millions in the late '70s and early '80s. A few companies of the time got the idea that a portable system with interchangeable cartridges might take the country by storm. They were right, but they didn't know it would be a decade before technology would make such a concept viable in the marketplace. Here's a look at two portables that were ahead of their time, and one that never was.

ADVENTURE VISION

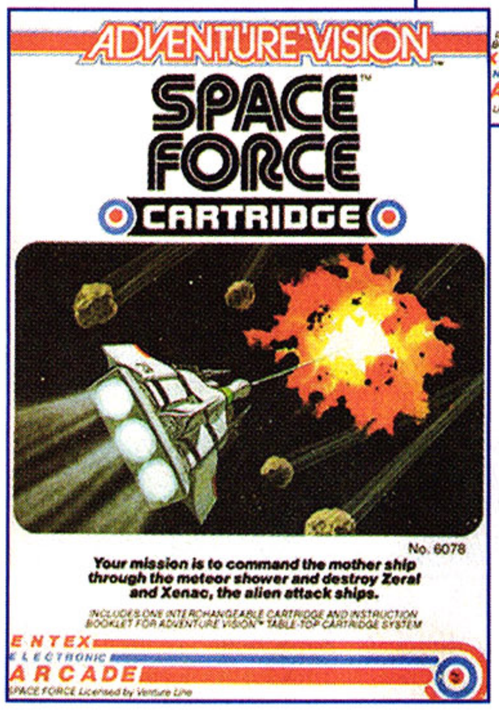
Released in 1982, Adventure Vision was more a tabletop game system than a handheld. Sitting 10 inches high and 8.5 inches wide, the Adventure Vision had a joystick with four buttons on either side, and a mono speaker capable of producing a surprisingly diverse array of sounds. Powered either by batteries or an A/C cord, the console also had a headphone jack, a skill level switch, a storage compartment for (appropriately enough) four games, and an expansion port that never saw any use.

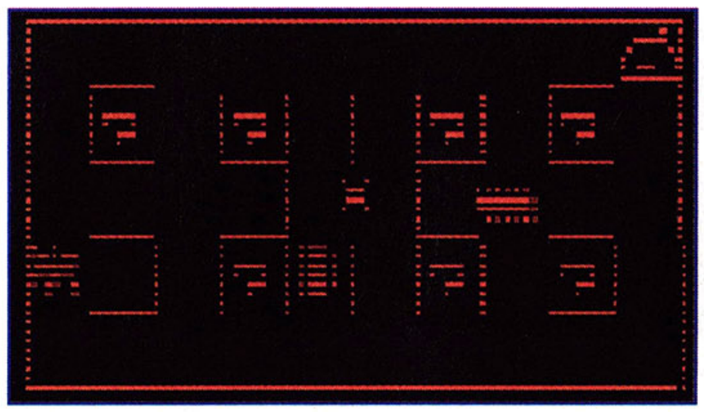
Graphics were created upon its 6.5 x 4.5 inch screen with a vertical row of 40 LED lights and a spinning mirror. The result was a flickering, red, 3D-ish, dot matrix display against a black background. It was best played in dim lighting or complete darkness, being near impossible to play in daylight.

Unfortunately its $79.99 price tag didn't exactly cause the Adventure Vision to fly off the shelves. Its chief competitor, the Vectrex, was released in the same year, and sold much better with its sharper graphics and similar level of portability. With only four games to its name and around 60,000 units sold, Adventure Vision lasted less than a year in stores.



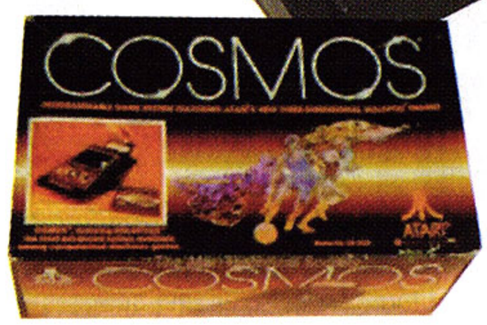
The box art certainly made Adventure Vision's games look exciting





Turtles on Adventure Vision

The Adventure Vision



Only five Cosmos units have been discovered by collectors

COSMOS

After years of snapping up every hologram patent it could get its corporate mitts on, Atari finally revealed a handheld that would use the technology at the New York Toy Fair in May of 1981. Dubbed Cosmos, the system's graphics would consist of a green, holographic image overlaid atop a red LED display. The console would also have a microprocessor devoted entirely to sound, allowing for unprecedented audio delight.

The plan was for Cosmos to retail at around $100, with games going for $10. Eight cartridges would be initially available, including such titles as Asteroids, Road Runner, Space Invaders, and Superman. Each cartridge would have two holograms, which would switch accordingly with what was happening in the game.

As fate would have it, however, Cosmos was never released. Early reviews of the product were mostly negative, the main gripe being that the holograms served no purpose other than fancy screen decoration. Atari announced at the end of 1981 that it was redesigning Cosmos so the holograms would be more interactive. The project was never heard of again.

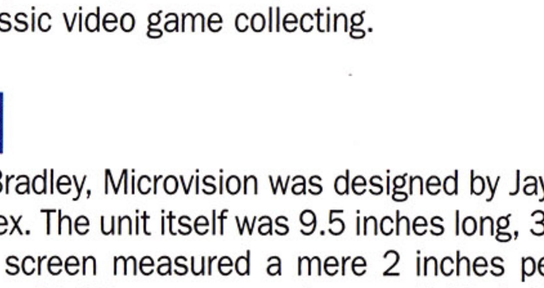
Atari employees working in the holographic lab at the time recall stacks of Cosmos units and boxes against the wall, but to date only five units have surfaced – three just empty shells, two fully assembled and functional. Should you ever see one at a flea market or garage sale, be sure to snap it up. This piece of vaporware has become one of the ultimate pieces of classic video game collecting.

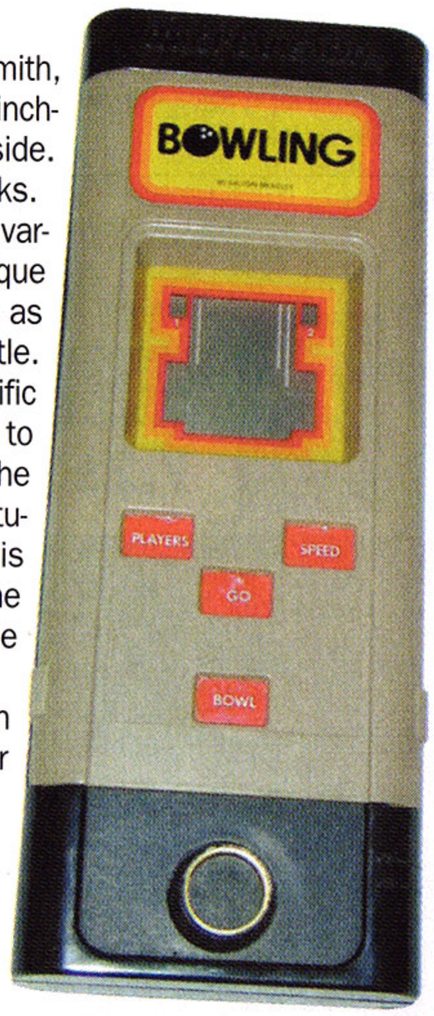
MICROVISION

Put on the market in 1979 by Milton Bradley, Microvision was designed by Jay Smith, who would later go on to create the Vectrex. The unit itself was 9.5 inches long, 3.5 inches wide, and 1.5 inches thick, but the screen measured a mere 2 inches per side. Further, the graphics displayed on the small LCD screen were but small black blocks.

Despite these drawbacks, however, games on Microvision managed to be both varied and comparable to other handhelds of the time, largely thanks to the unit's unique architecture. Snap-on faceplates nearly as long as the Microvision itself were a part of every title. This allowed game designers to create specific button configurations and screen overlays to enhance what little they had to work with. The unit itself had no CPU, with the cartridges actually housing the required microprocessor. This would have allowed larger chip sizes than the standard 4-bit to be used for added complexity, but sadly such a game never came to pass.

Although Microvision seemed an initial success, reportedly grossing $8 million in the first year of production, sales quickly fell off. Consumers just weren't ready for the concept (or cost) of a cart-based handheld. Compounding this cooling reception was a lack of software. Six games were made available in the system's first year, but two per year were released after that. By the end of 1981, Microvision was nothing but a fading, perhaps fond, memory to a few.





Microvision was the first handheld unit with interchangeable games

THIS MONTH IN GAMING HISTORY

During this month in 1989, Atari unveiled and held a developers' conference for its Lynx handheld that it was sure could compete with Nintendo's recently announced Game Boy. The advantages the Lynx had over the Game Boy were numerous, but the most obvious were its processor that was twice as fast and its larger, backlit, color screen. It was 16-bit (compared to Game Boy's 8), which wasn't even a console staple at the time. The handheld also boasted some superflous features, such as the ability to flip the screen to accomodate left-handed gamers. Lynx may have become a serious contender if not for Game Boy having two distinct trump cards – Tetris and an uncontested '89 holiday season. By the time Atari had production up to national market speed, Nintendo already had things locked down.

CLASSIC GI

GREATEST GAME OF ALL TIME

By Andrew Sommer, a.k.a. VIC at the arcades in Rockford, IL

Every month one of Game Informer's readers picks his or her personal choice for Greatest Game Of All Time.

YIE AR KUNG FU

■ **FORMAT** ARCADE
■ **PUBLISHER** KONAMI

My favorite classic game of all-time was Yie Ar Kung Fu. I dropped an infinite amount of quarters in this game, at my local mini putt, with my desire to kill Blue, the big boss.

Yie Ar Kung Fu was a precursor to Street Fighter and all the other clones out there. Yie Ar may not have had the two-player action that Karate Champ boasted, but with over 12 different moves and fast-paced action, it easily grabbed my attention as the deepest fighter.

A joystick and two action buttons – punch and kick – controlled you on your journey to whooping ass. Control was very tight and the combination of your joystick direction and punch or kick would pull off some pretty sweet moves. Flying across the screen was another great option – just diagonal up and the direction you want to go and you're flying through the air.

Yie Ar also had an excellent learning curve. The game starts you against a fat slob who's a basic fighter, and adds something to every enemy after that, each one getting a new weapon and better AI. Finally, it ends on just a boss with no weapon, but a penchant for demoralizing you with his quick, fancy kicks and punches. No rookie is going to win this game.

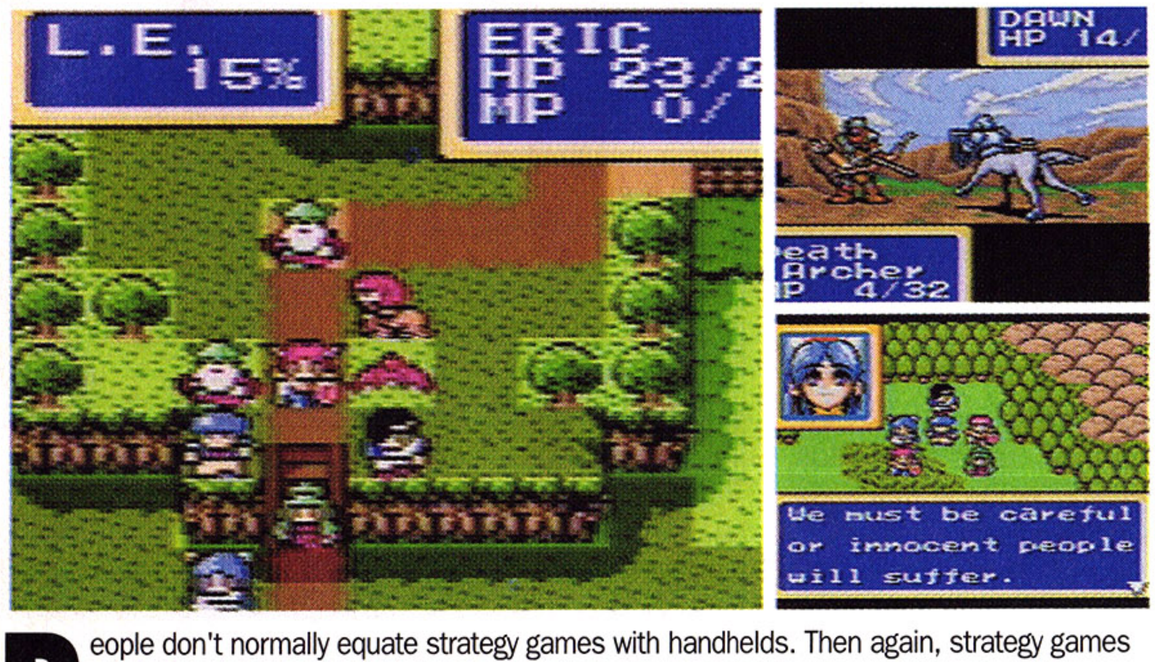
I loved the soundtrack – a quick beat to get your rhythm going in the game, and it intensified as your health dropped. Graphics were my last concern in those days, but it did boast some pretty impressive backdrops to your fighting plane. A strong emphasis on scoring was also important; I just had to get my handle "VIC" on the top of the high scorers screen.

I spent two summers of my youth scouring the grounds for quarters and begging Mom for a few bucks to play this game; a fun, fast fighting title with a replay value that was unmatched. Show me an arcade with this game in it and I will show you an old-school gamer digging in his pockets.

GAME GEAR

SHINING FORCE: THE SWORD OF HAJYA

RETRO RATING 9



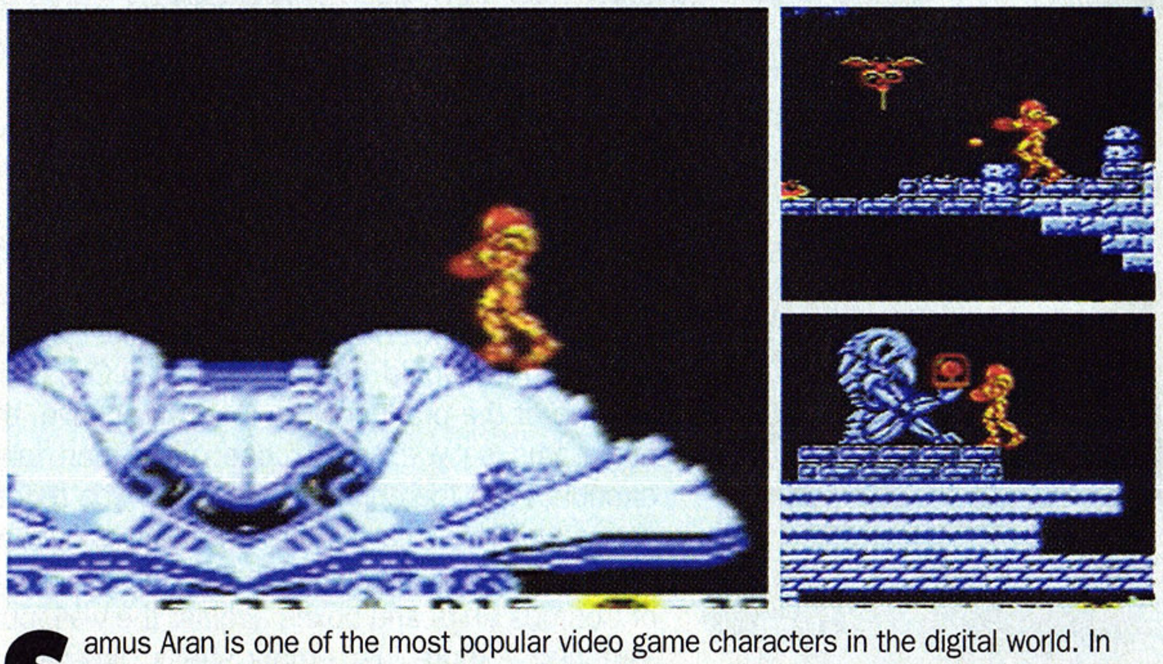
People don't normally equate strategy games with handhelds. Then again, strategy games aren't normally as good as Shining Force: The Sword of Hajya. The beefy cart comes complete with huge maps, evolving characters, and a wide variety of enemies. Not to be mistaken for anything role-playing, Shining Force is 99% combat. A story unfolds between fights, but you are a mere observer. The only exception is shopping, which you do every once in a while. This one-dimensional gameplay may turn gamers off, but only until they play it themselves. The turn-based battles move smoothly and quickly, even when 20 characters are waiting their turn. During attacks, a close-up of the action shows the strike or spell in beautiful detail. In fact, most of Shining Force looks 16-bit, except for the battle map sprites. They have that constantly moving, two frames of animation look, but that was the sign of the times. Shining Force may be the best handheld strategy game ever, and a definite diamond in the Game Gear rough.

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER STRATEGY ■ **PUBLISHER** SEGA ■ **DEVELOPER** SEGA
■ **YEAR RELEASED** 1994

GAME BOY

METROID II: RETURN OF SAMUS

RETRO RATING 8.5



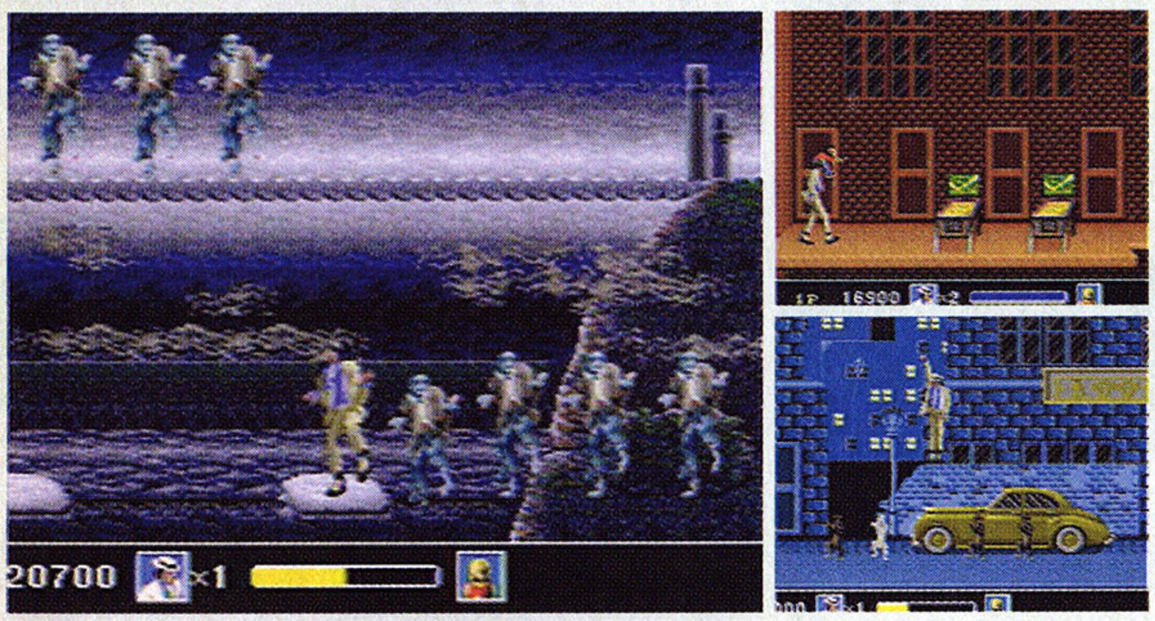
Samus Aran is one of the most popular video game characters in the digital world. In fact, today she's as hot as ever, despite not having a starring role in the last seven years. Metroid II marks her lone portable appearance. For a Metroid game, it didn't receive a lot of hype, which is a shame. This is a good title, and stays faithful to the franchise. The world is large, and your path is basically non-linear, as you search for new abilities and weapons to progress. Killing the dreaded Metroid creatures will also open new paths on SR388. The one thing lacking, compared to NES Metroid and SNES Super Metroid, are hidden areas and secrets. You'll try to roll into every crevice and bomb every wall just like in the other games, but it will yield much less reward. Still, with graphics and gameplay that are near-perfect, Metroid II represents the series fittingly. That is, until Metroid IV for Game Boy Advance surfaces.

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/PLATFORM ■ **PUBLISHER** NINTENDO ■ **DEVELOPER** NINTENDO
■ **YEAR RELEASED** 1991

SEGA GENESIS

MICHAEL JACKSON'S MOONWALKER

RETRO RATING 7.25



This is a strange, strange piece of video game lore. Moonwalker is a side-scrolling action game starring Michael Jackson. He battles gangsters, dogs, and even zombies to rescue children in stages themed after music videos. These wayward tots are found in automobile trunks and sewers, and scream the King of Pop's name when found. Jacko's primary means of attack is a magical sprinkling of fairy dust. If the going gets rough, he can unleash an attack that forces all enemies onscreen to bust out a dance number. When they can't keep up with Michael, it kills them – literally. Moonwalker is amusing, not only from all these obscure mechanics, but also the exploration aspects and level designs. The music is actually amazing, and the animation is well done. Being Michael loses its luster eventually, though, especially if you wear that surgical mask thing while you play. Worth checking out just to see Jacko doing the two-step with a bunch of dogs, but it won't stay in your Genesis for long.

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** SEGA ■ **DEVELOPER** SEGA
■ **YEAR RELEASED** 1990

SUPER NES

INDIANA JONES GREATEST ADVENTURES

RETRO RATING 8.25

JVC had a successful run on the SNES with LucasArts properties. All three Star Wars movies were turned into great-playing action titles. For the Indy trilogy, JVC decided to put all its eggs in one basket and, instead of releasing three separate titles, mesh them all together in Indiana Jones Greatest Adventures. Much like Super Star Wars and its successors, Indiana Jones featured several genre-spanning, movie-based stages. Some have you traversing horizontally and vertically scrolling platform levels, while others put Indy behind the wheels of a biplane or stuck on a wild inner tube ride. All your favorite scenes are here (sans the feast of the monkey brains), and use all the muscle Super Nintendo can muster to make it feel like you're playing the classic films. Like the daunting duties Dr. Jones had to accomplish, your gaming goals are sometimes of near-impossible proportions. Nobody said being Indiana Jones would be easy, but it's pretty darn fun.

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** JVC ■ **DEVELOPER** FACTOR 5
■ **YEAR RELEASED** 1994

CLASSIC **CODES**

JAGUAR

DEFENDER 2000

Plazma Pong – To play another classic, get a high score and enter your name as **Nolan**. You'll now be treated to a round of Pong.

Level Skip – Have your name be **BEEST**. During gameplay in 2000 mode, hit **3** to go to the next level. Hitting **6** will let you warp.

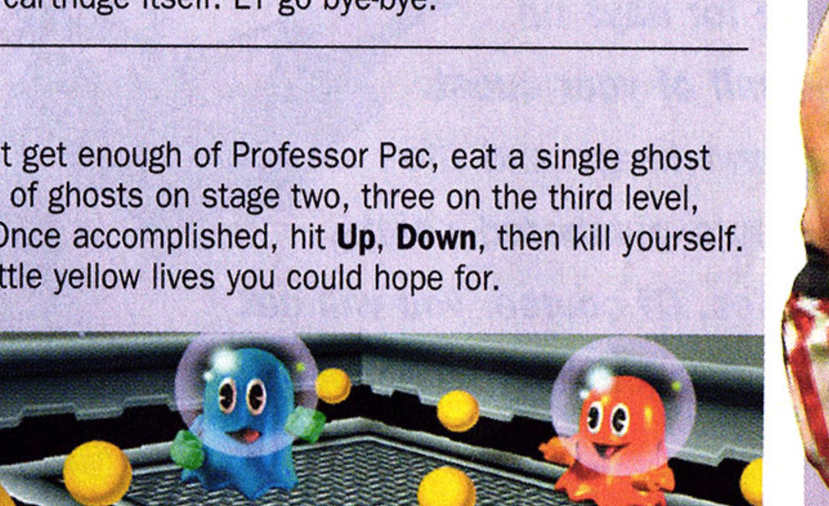
TEMPEST 2000

Cheat Mode – To enable the following cheats, you must first be at the main menu and hit **1**, **4**, **7**, **A**.

Level Skip – Hit **Option** while playing to go on to the next level with ease.

Rotate Web – During web selection, press **Up** or **Down** to change your level, and hit **Left** or **Right** to switch up the rotation of the web.

Warp Bonus Round – To enable this extra level, just hit **6**.



BATTLEMORPH

Quake Weapon – To attain this powerful new weapon, blow up most of the first system's trees.

CHECKERED FLAG

Night Racing – When in the **Options** menu, go to **Weather Selection** and hit **8**, **4**, **7**, **3**. A new selection called **Dark** will be available, and turns you into a night rider.

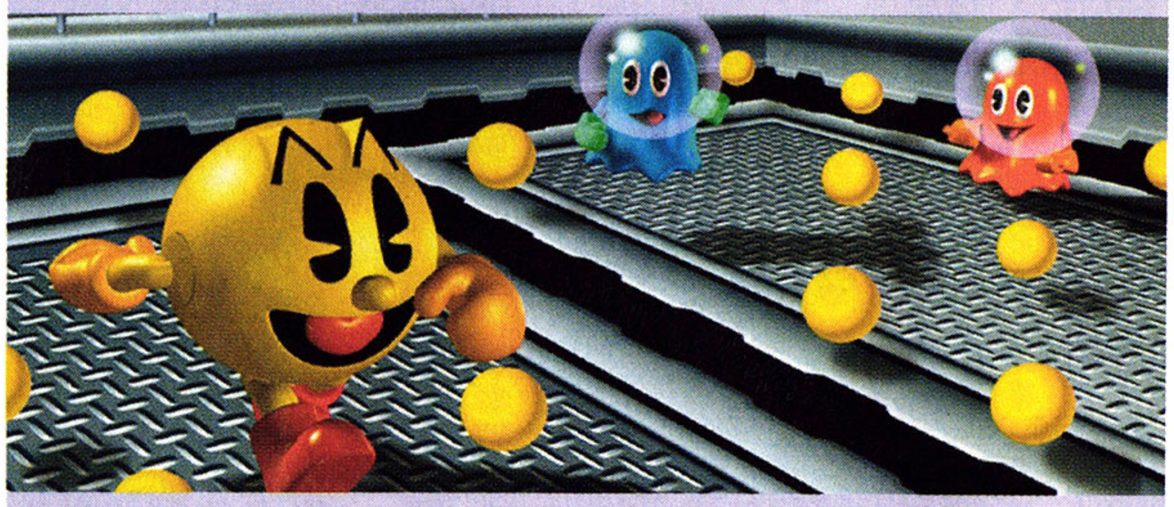
ATARI 2600

ET

Kill ET, Ship, Game – To basically crash the entire game, make ET die while waiting for the ship. If Elliot can't save you, but is on the screen, the ship will go down, as will the cartridge itself. ET go bye-bye.

PAC-MAN

Infinite Lives – If you can't get enough of Professor Pac, eat a single ghost on the first stage, a pair of ghosts on stage two, three on the third level, and four on stage four. Once accomplished, hit **Up**, **Down**, then kill yourself. You'll now have all the little yellow lives you could hope for.



TENNIS

More Powerful Shot – For a speedier smash, try to hit the ball with your racket's edge. Now you have the hitting power of Andre Agassi, minus the receding hairline.

GENESIS

MICHAEL JACKSON'S MOONWALKER

Start With 15 Lives – While on the **Start** screen, hit **Up**, **Up**, **Down**, **Left**, **Right**, **A**, **A**, **C**. You'll now have much more Michael to rescue poor, neglected children with. Huzzah!

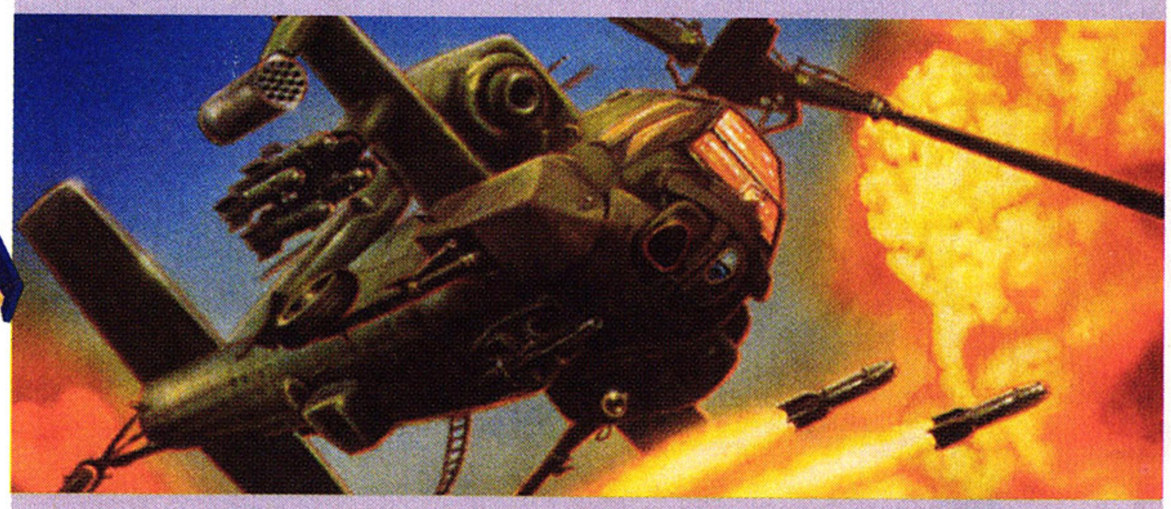
Level Select – Before you turn on your Genesis, hold **Up/Left** and **A** on the second controller. Hit **Start** on this controller, then on the player-one controller, then pick a one-player game. The words **Round 1** will come onscreen. Hit **Left** or **Right** to toggle your stage.

DESERT STRIKE

Begin With 10 Lives – To add more choppers to your fleet, go to the Password screen and input **BQQQAEZ**.

Level Passwords – Enter one of these to start on the stage of your choice.

Level 2 – LQAHQRL
Level 3 – ILLBWBY
Level 4 – BTOBKLW



TOKI, GOING APE SPIT

Invincibility – On the game's title screen, hit **Up**, **A**, **Right**, **B**, **Down**, **C**, **Left**, then **Start**. You will now be one tough monkey.

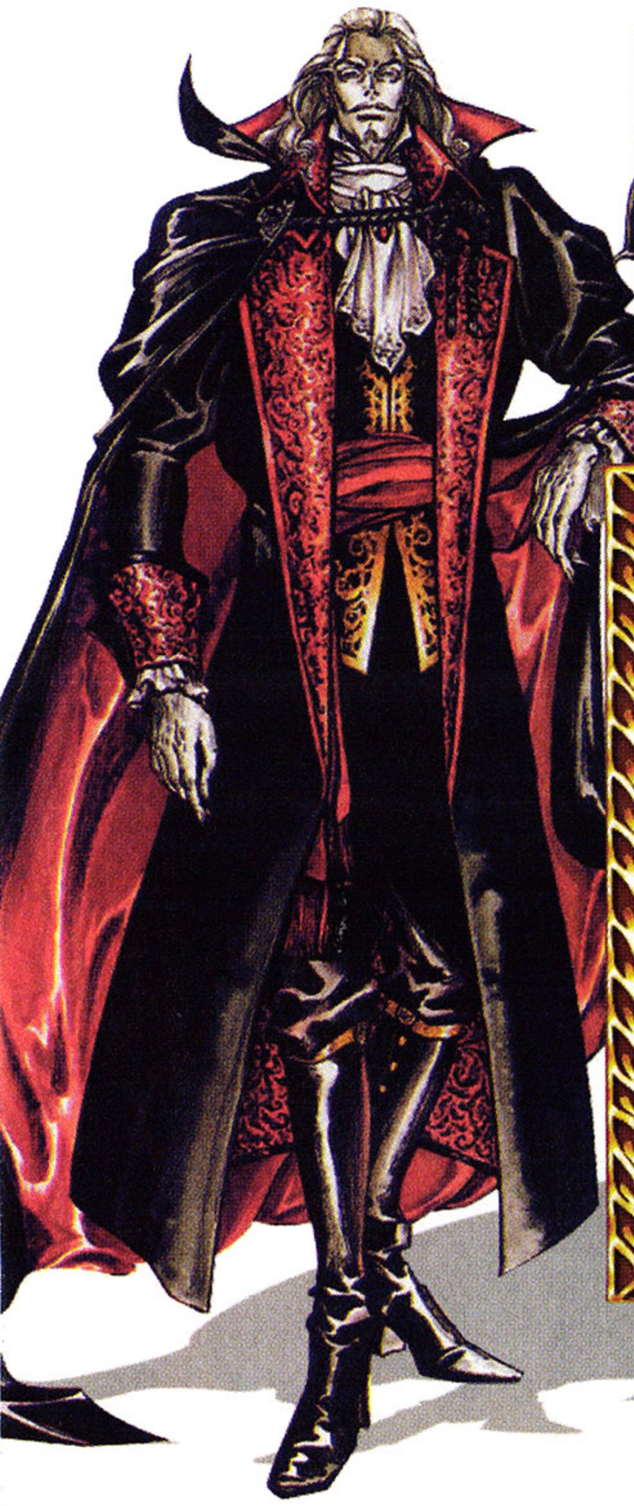
PIRATES! GOLD

Free Info From The Ladies – Hide your nasty ways in towns long enough to make the womenfolk swoon over you. Now, whenever you enter the town, they'll give you tidbits of information for little more than a smile. It pays to be a gentleman, sometimes.

TOUGHMAN CONTEST

Weird Opponents – To fight these truly strange boxers, go to **Restore From Password** and enter in these codes.

Decapitated Fighter – RUBE
Shadow Boxer – FQSTER
Boxing Midget – WEASEL
Trippy Fighter – NUCLEAR

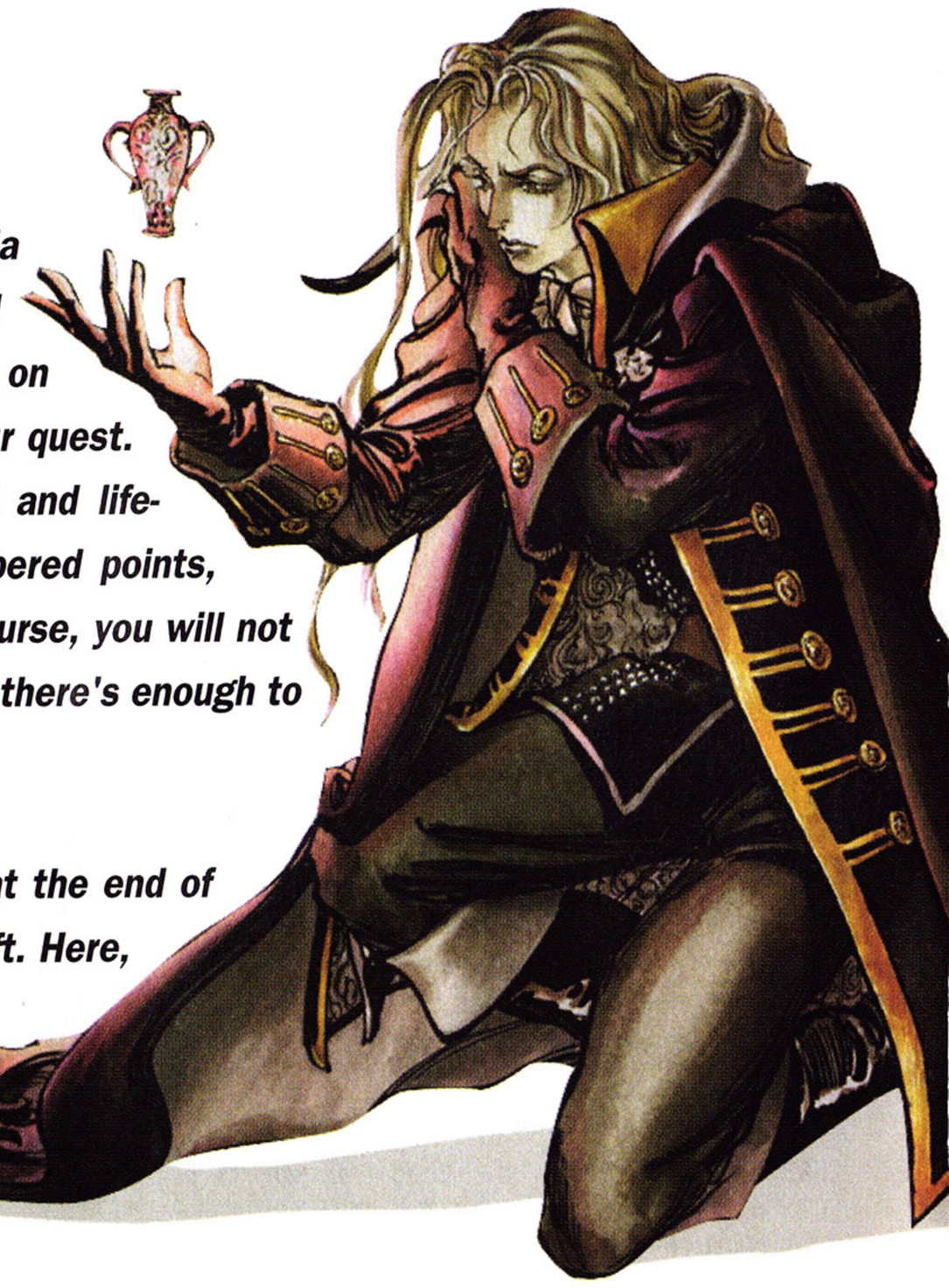


PLAYSTATION

CASTLEVANIA: SYMPHONY OF THE NIGHT

BASIC TRAINING

1. Save whenever possible. It refills your life and magic bars.
2. Always search every corner of each room. Relics and Familiars can be well hidden.
3. Learn to use your shield. Your butt will thank you.
4. When you receive a new item or weapon, make sure to check it out in your equip screen to see if it will help you out right away.
5. Break all the candles and vases you see. They'll give you the hook-up.
6. Pick up all the money laying around. Purchasing all the librarian's wares will require a load of cash.
7. Once you find Power of Mist, you can cruise through enemies without nasty fights.
8. If a certain area is giving you problems, don't hesitate to retreat and go to another place. You can always come back.



Exploring every nook and cranny of Konami's 1997 Castlevania release for PlayStation is no easy task. Its non-linear play and increasing skills and abilities will have you searching for days on end. This map shows all the locations possible in the first half of your quest. Not only that, but we've outlined every save, transport, and heart and life-increasing area. The key will also correspond with the map's numbered points, showing you where to locate the important weapons and relics. Of course, you will not be able to reach all destinations right away, so don't get discouraged; there's enough to do in the meantime.

A second castle (an upside-down version of the first) will appear at the end of your quest. At that point, you should have exactly seven relic slots left. Here, enemies – especially bosses – will be much more difficult. We advise you to turn this map upside down, since the save and transport stations will be located in the same rooms.

THE SACRED MAP

MAP ITEM KEY

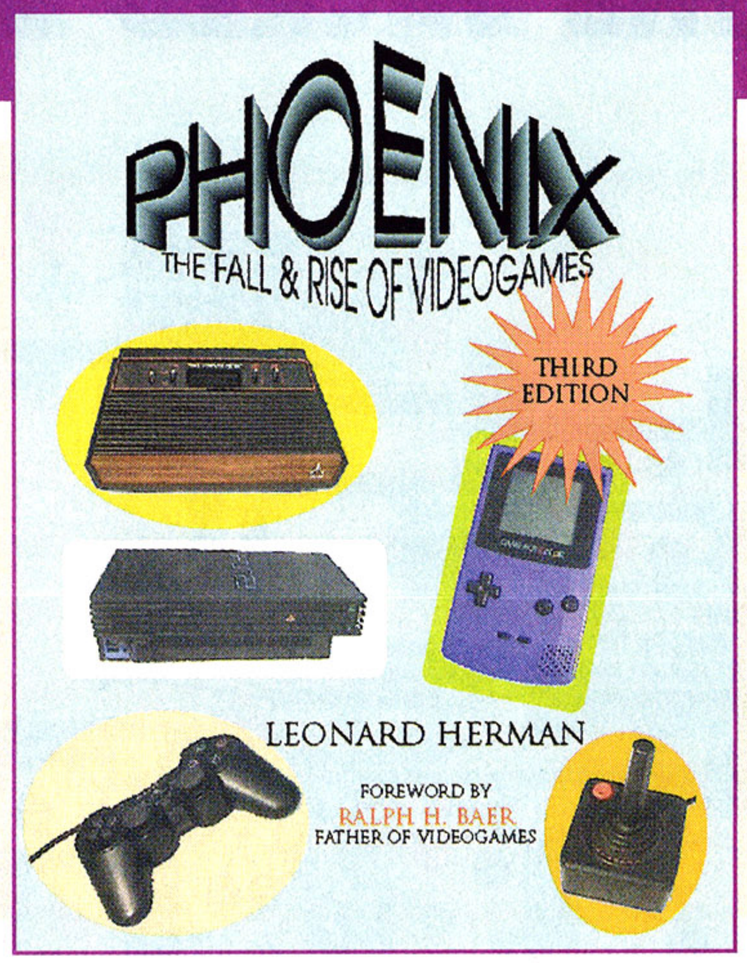
1 – Goggles
2 – Morning Star
3 – Boomerang
4 – TNT
5 – Ankh of Life
6 – Shuriken
7 – Magic Missile
8 – Mystic Pendant
9 – Bat Card (1)
10 – Skill of Wolf (2)
11 – Holy Mail
12 – Power of Wolf (3)
13 – Manna Prism
14 – Resist Fire
15 – Lucky Drug
16 – Estoc Sword
17 – Iron Ball
18 – Echo of Bat (2)
19 – Holy Sword (use Axe Heart weapon through Coliseum ceiling)
20 – Hammer
21 – Wonder Drug
22 – Gravity Boots
23 – Bandana
24 – Holy Symbol (snorkel)
25 – Knuckle Buster
26 – Claymore Sword
27 – Meal Tickets
28 – Moonstone
29 – Gold Ring
30 – Nunchaku
31 – Resist Ice
32 – Herald Shield
33 – Demon Card
34 – Ring of Ares
35 – Power of Sire
36 – Sword Card (use Holy Book Heart weapon to break ceiling below room)
37 – Karma Coin
38 – Combat Knife
39 – Bloodstone
40 – Cross Shuriken
41 – Karma Coins
42 – Spike Breaker Armor
43 – Library Card
44 – Monster Vile 3
45 – Ballroom Mask
46 – Ice Brand Sword
47 – Walk Armor
48 – Mormegil Sword
49 – Secret Boots
50 – Silver Ring (use Spike Breaker Armor)
51 – Strength Drug
52 – Hammer
53 – Holy Glasses (use Gold Ring and Silver Ring at clock)
54 – Alucart Shield (use Stop Timer Heart weapon at clock)
55 – Alucart Mail
56 – Alucart Sword
57 – Resist Stone/Resist Dark/Resist Holy
58 – Platinum Mail (hit switch below room to open stairs)

ETC

PHOENIX: THE FALL & RISE OF VIDEOGAMES 3RD ED.

Manufacturer: Rolenta Press
Website: www.rolentapress.com • List Price: $24.95

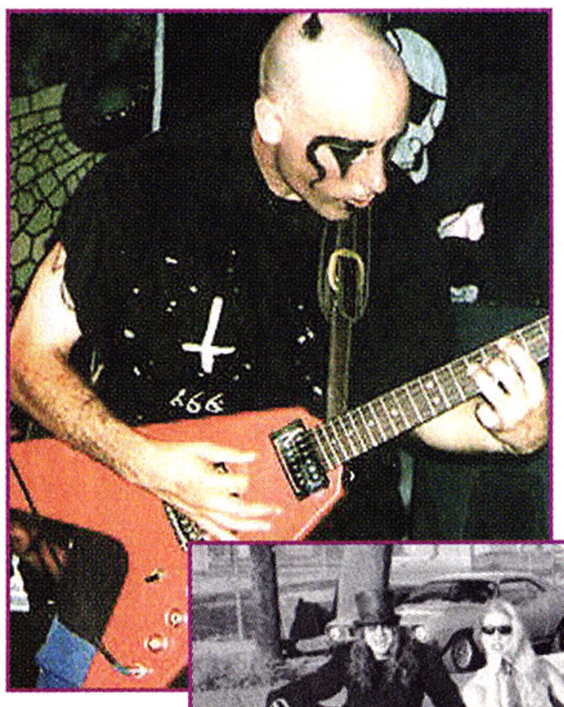
If there is a bible in video game journalism, this is it. Leonard Herman is the undisputed master historian of the tumultuous beast known as video game history, and this is his lexicon of knowledge. The third edition of Phoenix is now out, and not only is it in a larger 8.5 x 11 inch format, it has a foreword by Ralph Baer, more photographs, Focus-On sections, a magazine cover gallery, updates through the year 2000, and is 388 pages large. Phoenix is required reading here at Game Informer, and, in our opinion, should be on the bookshelves of all serious vid fans. You can order the book through the web address above, or can get details on how to order by writing Rolenta Press at P.O. Box 1365, Springfield, NJ 07081.

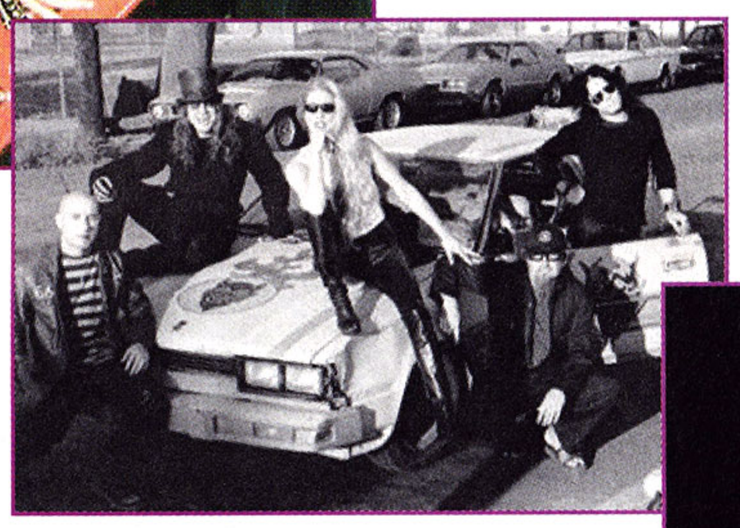


CREEPAZOID

Manufacturer: Landru, Moore, Pieter, Devilbra, and Zeke
Website: www.creepazoid.net • List Price: Your Immortal Soul

Some might say that the place to be on Tuesday, May 15 was Sony's heavily Hollywood attended pre-E3 party. Five GI staffers knew better. Rather than attend what they came to dub "the stupid party," these brave souls ventured to the Dragonfly to see what would become their least-favorite band, Creepazoid. To give you an idea of how deep and dark this quintet is, we quote their bio from their webpage: "Five carrion souls, creeping from the shadows of a superficial society, slitting its throat wide open with the horror of a suppressed subculture that it created within the confines of its greedy capitalism." Eek! As an added torture, the GI attendees were given a free copy of the group's CD, which is not entirely dissimilar from being shot for attending an NRA meeting. If you are ever in L.A. (or as they like to call it, HELL.A.) make sure you don't see Creepazoid. May God have mercy on their tortured souls.





GAMEWALLPAPERS.COM

Manufacturer: Many Artists
Website: www.gamewallpapers.com
List Price: FREE!!!

By being buddies with foreign mags and some of the bigger video game companies, the webmaster of GameWallpapers.com has an amazingly extensive gallery of beautiful video game art that can be downloaded at no charge. Whether you're a fan of Metal Gear Solid, Dead or Alive, Gran Turismo, Tenchu, or about 100 other games, you'll find some amazing sights to put up on your computer screen. Definitely, definitely, definitely check this site out.

PICTUREPARADISE

Manufacturer: Sony
Website: www.sony.com/pictureparadise
List Price: A Sony digital camera and a PS2

Quite a few neat ideas (as well as many, many lame ones) were revealed at E3, and this is probably the most interesting of them. PictureParadise is a technology that can be included on any PlayStation 2 title. It allows those with a Sony digital camera or camcorder to place their picture on characters in the game. The first game to use this technology will be Tecmo's Monster Rancher 3, but the site lists a load of companies that plan to incorporate PictureParadise into future products. Sounds cool. Let's just hope it doesn't go the way of Perfect Dark's Game Boy Camera feature.

GT FORCE

Manufacturer: Logitech
Website: www.logitech.com
List Price: TBA

That Gran Turismo 3 A-Spec became an instant million-seller upon its release in Japan surprised no one. The shocking success story behind this game, however, is how many gamers purchased a Logitech GT Force steering wheel to go along with this fine game. At last report, over 100,000 units of this force feedback controller were being clutched by PS2 owners across the Pacific. A repeat performance of this success seems likely when the wheel releases with GT 3 here in the States. Will you be amongst the proud owners?

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E
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Animated Violence

Dreamcast™

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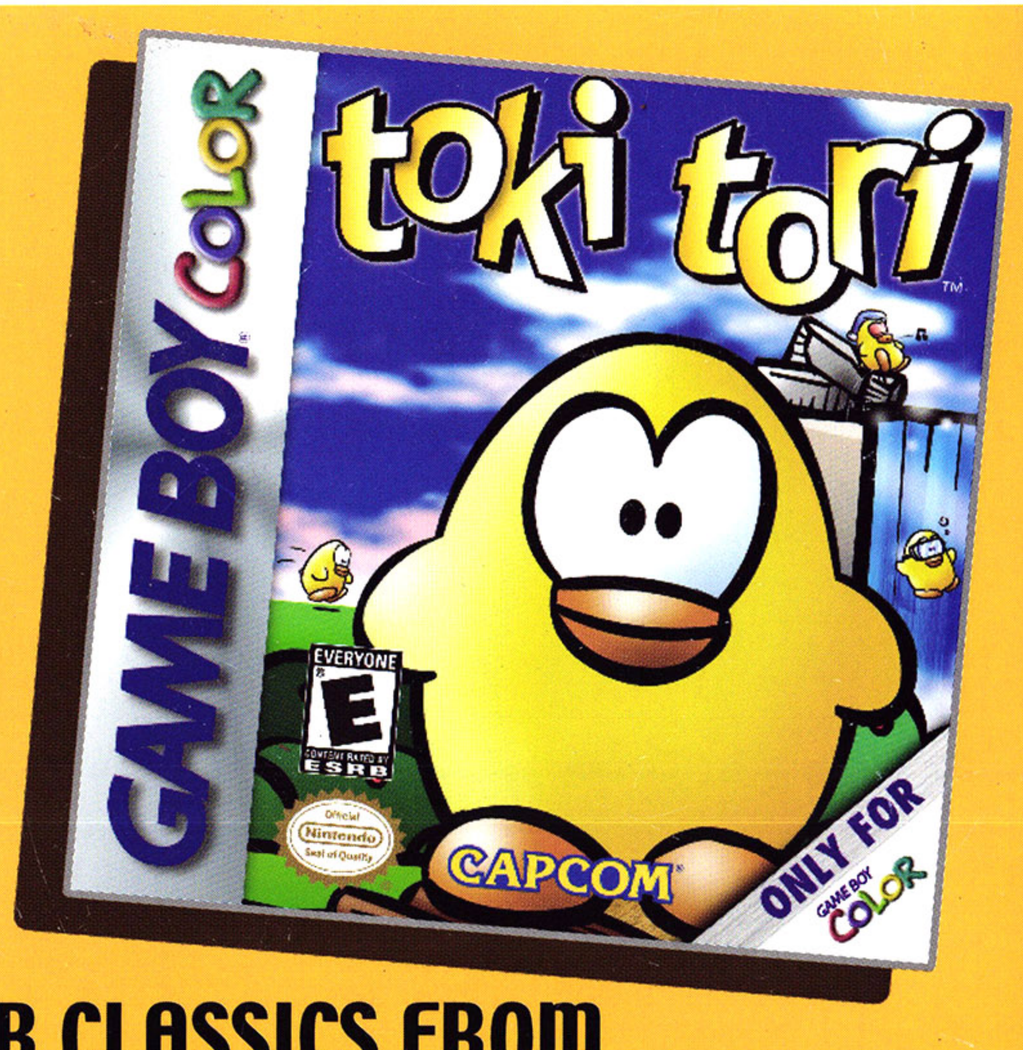

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