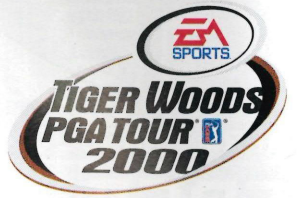# Win UEFA Champions League final tickets
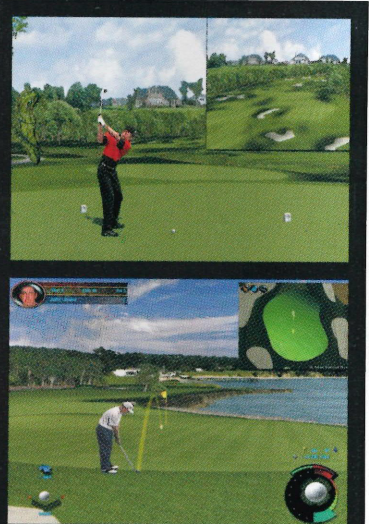with Eidos' latest footie sim

Lara's Dreamcast Debut

Over 30 Pages of Reviews

Syphon Filter 2
Full Review

GIMME AN AIR-SCORCHING-FASTER-THAN-SOUND BALLISTIC-DRIVE GIMME EAT-YOUR-GREENS-PICK THAT-OUT-PRECISION GIMME A SWING-LIKE-A WRECKING-BALL-18-HOLE-ASSAULT GIMME TIGER

DOGMEAT

YOUR EQUIPMENT IS OBSOLETE AND THE BLACK GUARD ARE ON YOUR TAIL.
ATTACK IS YOUR ONLY DEFENCE.

www.starlancer.co.uk

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Reviews: Evolva, Superbike 2000, Nox, Final Fantasy VIII, Asheron's Call, Zombie Revenge, Beat Mania, Dance Dance Revolution, Tomb Raider: The last Revelation, Die Hard Trilogy 2, Theme Park World, Micro Maniacs, SmackDown!, Sega GT, Syphon Filter, Ridge Racer 64, Cool Boarders 4, Star Wars Episode I: Racer, Carmaggedon, Winter Games, International Track and Field.

WHOEVER SAID 22ND CENTURY SPACE COMBAT WAS FAIR?

OUT OF DESPERATION, COURAGE IS BORN

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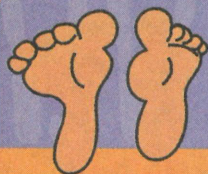
Go on, you know you want to!

To cheat or not to cheat, that is the question.

Whether it is nobler in the mind to suffer the slings and arrows of outrageous learning curves or to tap in a few codes?

If you decide on the latter then may we recommend for your pleasure a fine selection from the vineyards of Games Domain.

If **Cool Boarders 4** on the PlayStation sends a chill down your spine - but its challenges are proving a little steep - then try these and soon you'll be gliding along.

To unlock all mountains, characters and boards: Select one player mode and enter "ICHEAT" as your name.

If you have entered it correctly you will hear the confirmation sound of a man saying: "Hey, no cheating!" This code will also give you more creation points for boards

To unlock all special events: Select one player mode and enter "IMSPECIAL" as your name.

If you have entered it correctly will hear the confirmation sound.

If **NOX** is knocking you back, and you need some divine intervention to aid you in your quest, then hit F1 to bring up the console, type "racoiaws" to enable the cheat mode and enter the following codes.

To list all cheats just type "help cheat" to list all the codes that you can use. Entering these codes performs the following tasks:

Cheat ability - Reset user abilities

Cheat health - Refills your Health Bar

Cheat mana - Refills your Mana Bar

Cheat level # - Pumps you up to a specific level (# = level you wish to acquire).

Cheat spells # - Sets all spells to a specific level (# = level).

Cheat gold # - Adds gold (# = amount of gold you want).

Set god - God mode and unlimited mana

Cheat goto (x y) - Teleport to the specified (x y) co-ordinates

If you're in the army now and **Delta Force 2** isn't obeying direct orders then bring up the console by pressing ` (the tilde key) and type in the following for different effects.

Typing "thetrooper" puts you in God mode while entering "sunandsteel" will reload your ammo.

"diewithyourbootson" will give you unlimited ammo.

Tapping in "stilllife" will endow you with mystical ability of invisibility and entering "revelations" will allow you eight artillery shots.

If you a bit snookered with **Jimmy White's 2:**

Cueball on the Dreamcast then try this. Enter the snooker room and use explore mode to look at the mouse hole.

This should take you into a mouse hole. Look around to see the "Cheat Mode Activated" message. You can now play against all characters.

If life in **The Sims** is getting you down then simply press CTRL+ALT+SHIFT+C and type these codes for a more beneficial and fulfilling existence. "Klapaucius" will give you 1000 dollars. "Autonomy # (0-100)" will set how much your Sim thinks on their own. Typing in "Interests" will let you see what floats your Sims boat.

replay

Back in the twentieth century, in a land not too far from your living room, there was a computer called the Commodore 64 and it ruled supreme.

One of the classic games available on the C64 was a release from Bally Midway called Spy Hunter and those who know it will already be whistling its Blue Brothers inspired soundtrack.

The concept was simple - race up roads and rivers dodging enemies that included heavy trucks, roadsters with wheel spikes and a bomb-dropping helicopter, all intent on your destruction.

At your disposal you had a white car, which I always imagined was the Lotus Espirit from the James Bond adventure The Spy Who Loved Me.

Level design was simple, an endless road for you to drive up, occasionally veering left or right. Sometimes it would throw in the odd Speed-style bridge under repair.

If this was the case then, rather than jumping it, you would simple drive into the handy boathouse and turn your car into a boat and more

mayhem would ensue on the white waters as you dodged landmasses and enemy boats.

A truck that was very reminiscent of the movable base in the Knight Rider T.V. series delivered weapons to you.

The truck had a certain wow factor in that it would relentlessly follow you and then pull in front of you and drop a ramp for you to zoom up and collect your weapons.

It had everything you needed, two-dimensional graphics, no save games and three lives. Ah, you kids, you don't know what you've missed. In my day...
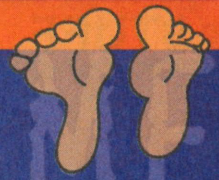
Pen & Ink

Hello all, thanks for your response to our request for feedback in last month's Games Domain Offline. I'm sorry we couldn't answer all your letters, but we'll try to get through the backlog as quickly as we can. If you would like to see your name in our ever growing magazine, please write to: **Richard Sutcliffe, Games Domain, Cuckoo Wharf, 435 Lichfield Road, Aston, Birmingham, B6 7SS**. Or, you can email me at: **rs@gamesdomain.com**

Dear Games Domain Offline,
I have just picked up your magazine, but having bought myself my very first console, you are lacking in a couple of departments, namely reviews on N64 and GameBoy games.
And could you please tell me if it is at all possible to get hold of a copy of Monopoly on the gameboy format? I saw it advertised in a magazine somewhere but I haven't been able to get it - yet. Can you help?
Dave Burton, Leicester

reckons that I should wait for the PlayStation2. What do you think?
Jonathan Hall, Devon

**Hi Jonathan,
In a recent survey of gamers we asked whether the Dreamcast was lacking in new titles and the resounding response was yes. Unfortunately, delays and a lack of lengthy games, relying more on arcade conversions to fill out its software catalogue, has plagued the Sega console.
PlayStation2 on the other hand has numerous software developers behind it, producing various styles of game, from adventure to action.
If you like arcade action then go for the Dreamcast, but if you want longevity out of your console games you might want to wait for the PS2.
And, of course, you will be able to play DVDs on Sony's new console, so if you're a film fan then that's another argument in its favour.
But, to be honest, if you can afford it, get both! Then you've got the best of both worlds.
RS**

**Hi Dave,
Thanks for your feedback on our new magazine. It's good to know where we can make improvements for next time. As you can see, we've got a couple of pages of GameBoy reviews in this month's edition, and we've even managed to cram in a review of Ridge Racer's move over to the N64.
And in answer to your question yes, you can get Monopoly on GameBoy and, as you were our first letter back this month, we're going to send you a copy of the game free. So, watch out for it dropping through your letter box soon.
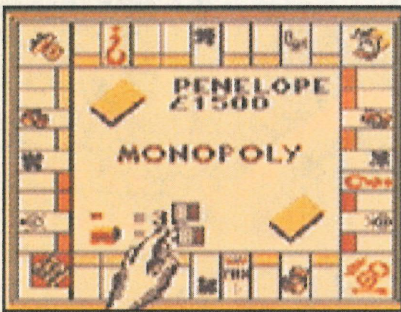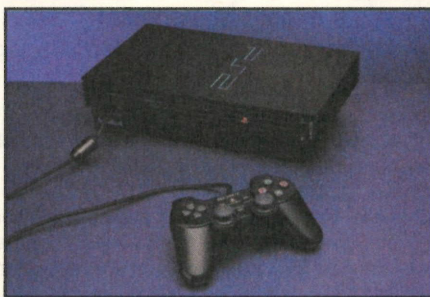You've got Konami to thank, as they kindly supplied us with the game. Happy hotel building!
RS**

Dear Games Domain Offline,
First of all, congratulations on the magazine, it is about time somebody brought out a free games mag.
But anyway, I was writing to you in the hope of finding out some information.
Can you tell me if you think that buying a Dreamcast is worthwhile? A friend of mine

WELCOME

Well, here we are again. Our fourth issue, and better than ever before, if I do say so myself.
In store for you this month, we've got a shed load of reviews of some top titles.
Syphon Filter 2 (ooohh!), Tomb Raider: The Last Revelation on Dreamcast (aaahh!), not to mention the wrestling mayhem that is SmackDown (wahey!).
And believe me, getting it all together is not easy. Especially when you're planning an almighty bender in the West End to celebrate your sixth birthday. That's right, Games Domain is six years old. Doesn't sound a lot, but it does make us the oldest games site on the Internet. The original and still the best.
Oh yes, on March 16, we will be meeting and greeting the games industry's great and good who are coming along to help us celebrate at our birthday bash.
Now, at this point I should really say come along, but to be honest by the time you're reading these words, I'm afraid you will have already missed the do.
Don't worry, next month we'll bring you a full report on how it went and hopefully we'll have plenty of pics to show you just how bad we look!
If you haven't already checked out the website, go to www.gamesdomain.co.uk where you'll find the ultimate resource for information relating to our beloved pastime.
If you're a Toy Story fan then you should also have a peek at www.kidsdomain.co.uk because we've managed to put together a mini-site devoted to our favourite animated friends. You will find downloads, reviews and even a top competition to enter.
If you've been reading the magaizne very carefully, you should have noticed we now have a new editor, James Kelly. Due to the success of GD Offline we've been able to increase our staff to take the magazine to the next level. You can contact him at: **james@gamesdomain.com.**
As for me, well I'm still going to be around, and look forward to hearing more of your feedback too. Enough already, enjoy!
Rich Sutcliffe - **rs@gamesdomain.com**
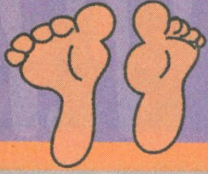
Win tickets
Champions

Get under! - artwork from Eidos's latest footie sim.
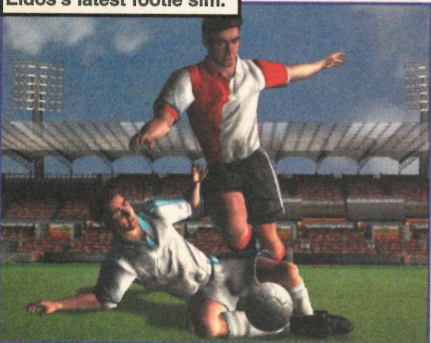
Who can forget the thrilling climax of last year's Champions League final? Fergie's mighty Manchester United took the Germans to the cleaners in a smash-and-grab raid that Ronnie Biggs would have been proud of.

With Bayern Munich 1-0 to the good, United scored two in the dying minutes of extra time to bring the silverware back to Old Trafford.

The nation saluted the Reds on their incredible achievement. Okay, so a lot of those salutes were of the two-fingered variety, but anyone who watched the game on TV will remember its drama forever.

Picture, then, actually being at the Champions League final. The lights, the atmosphere, the pies! Well, fantasize no more because Games Domain Offline has teamed up with publishing giant Eidos to bring you a prize draw that could ensure you a seat at Europe's biggest footballing occasion.
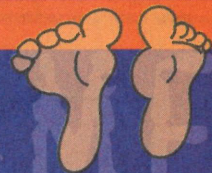
to the UEFA League final

To mark the launch of Eidos' top new footie title, UEFA Champions League, GDO has got together with the publisher and independent games retailers across the country to offer a pair of tickets to the final, exclusively to readers of Games Domain Offline.

The all expenses paid trip to the spectacular Stade de France, in Paris, on May 24, will include a pair of tickets, travel to the game itself and accommodation in a cracking hotel.

All you have to do to enter is complete the coupon to the right of this page and have it stamped by the independent retailer who has lovingly furnished you with the UK's only free magazine for genuine gamers - Games Domain Offline. And let's face it, you'll probably be in your local games shop picking up a copy of UEFA Champions League to get you in the mood anyway, so getting your form stamped should be no problem whatsoever.

Then cut out the coupon, stick it in an envelope and send it to the address on the form.

And just think, come May you could be watching Manchester United, or even Chelsea, stride away from European competition in triumph with a huge, fat silver cup to stick in their already bulging trophy cabinets. All your entries need to reach Eidos by May 1, when the draw will be made.

And remember you will need a valid passport if you win, so if you haven't got one, now is the time to pop down the post office and sort yourself out.

If you want to read about Games Domain Offline's trip to see Silicon Dreams, the developer of UEFA Champions League, then turn to page 46 and 47 for our full report.

Oh yeah, and Good Luck! GD

EIDOS
INTERACTIVE

PlayStation
PAL

UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE®
SEASON 1999/2000

Silicon Dreams

EIDOS

PlayStation
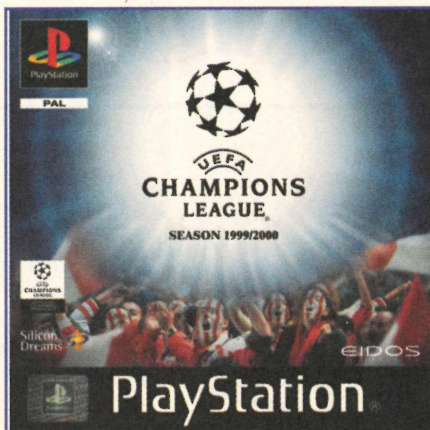
Please enter me into the prize draw to win two tickets to the UEFA Champions league final.

Name:_____

Address: _____
_____
_____
_____

Tel No:_____

send your entries to: **UEFA Champions League Prize Draw, c/o Kelly McAdden, Eidos Interactive Ltd, Wimbledon Bridge House, 1 Hartfield Road, Wimbledon, London, SW19 3RU, England.**

Retailers stamp here:
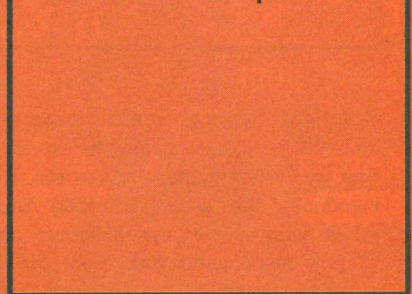
Closing date for entries is May 1, 2000. The draw will be held on May 7. Winners' names will be published in Games Domain Offline. No purchase necessary.
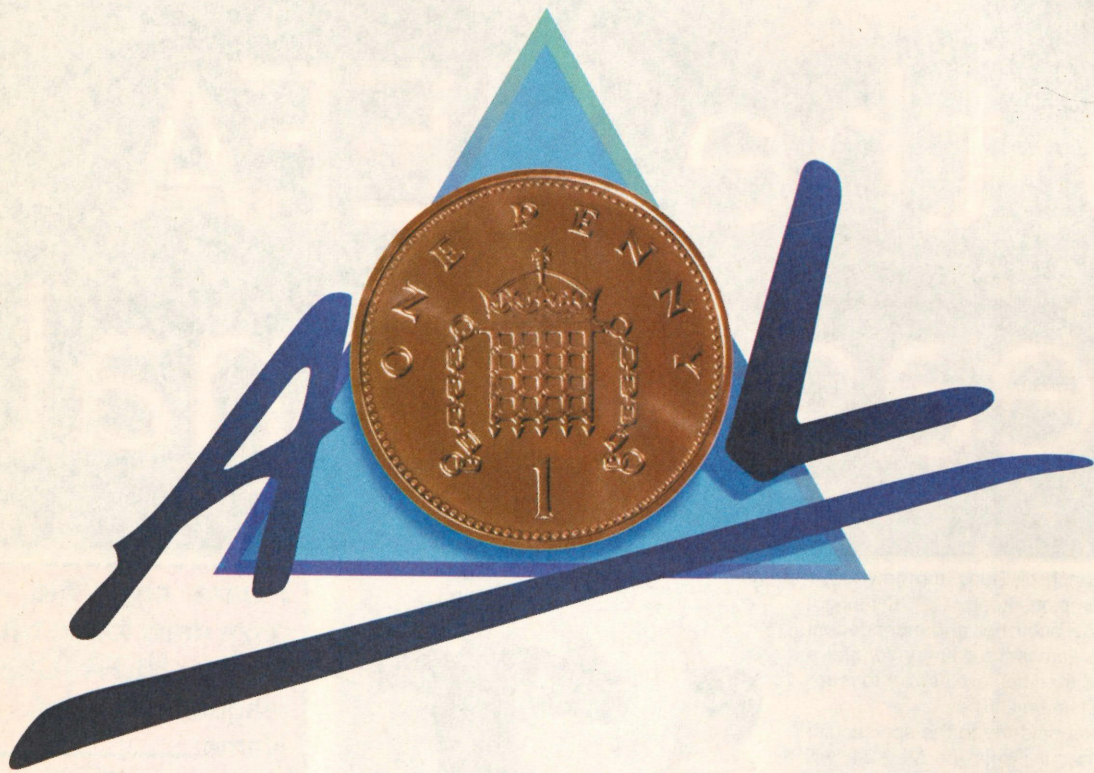
Now your Internet phone calls will never be more than 1p per minute.

Huge

Brian Reynolds, who has worked on Civilisation II, Colonisation and Alpha Centauri, has left games company Firaxis to create Big Huge Games.

The company will focus on the mass market and cutting-edge technology.

In a statement, Reynolds said Big Huge Games would emphasise excellence in all aspects of game development, including design, artwork, technology and production values.

"Our name accurately describes the opportunity and commitment we have to creating the best strategy games in the world," he said.

Tim Train, the producer on Alpha Centauri, has joined Reynolds at Big Huge Games taking the role of vice-president.

Jason Coleman - who engineered the Jackal development library that powers Alpha Centauri - and David Inscore, who created stunning visuals on several best-selling games including Gettysburg and Alpha Centauri, are also joining the new company.

L-R: Tim Train, Dave Inscore, Jason Coleman, Brian Reynolds

DOA2 on DC

Acclaim has acquired the rights to publish the new Dreamcast beat 'em up - Dead or Alive 2.

The company believes the game is poised to set a new benchmark for Sega Dreamcast graphics by providing near-CGI quality human movements and personalities.

A combination of hand-drawn and motion-captured animation will ensure subtle gestures, emotions and complex attack sequences are delivered with startling reality. Characters will fight in traditional arenas but will be able to use their surroundings - such as climbing platforms and vertical surfaces - to launch surprise attacks and manoeuvres.

Multiplay functions will include two player tag team and simultaneous four player action.

Dead or Alive 2 is set for release on the Dreamcast on May 26.

A PS2 version of the game should be out in Japan on March 30.
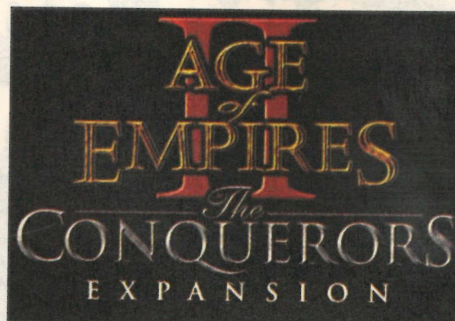
Age of Kings

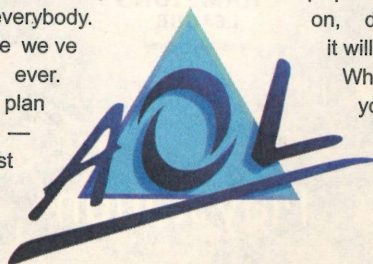Bruce Shelley has revealed information about the latest direction for Ensemble Studios, creator of the Age of Empires games.

An expansion for Age of Empires 2: Age of Kings, which has shipped over two million copies since its release, called The Conquerors is under development.

The expansion will add five new civilisations to the game and each race will now possess a unique skill or technology.

Four hero-centric campaigns are to be included as well as multiplayer features including capture the flag.

More details are going to be released at the E3 show later this year.

Watch out

Sega and the Swiss watchmaker Swatch have announced their plans for a joint venture to produce a range of special watches.

The timepieces will focus on Internet compatible functions, such as download compatibility via the Dreamcast's Network.

Users will then be able to upload data back to a Dreamcast console.

Although the watches will not allow you to surf the web, they will be most useful for downloading information such as concert tickets.

Watches will be based on Swatch's Access model, which are already used for ski passes in 500 ski resorts in 30 countries, and in places like museums.

The watch will retail at about $130 - $180 (around £90 - £130) when it is released in May.
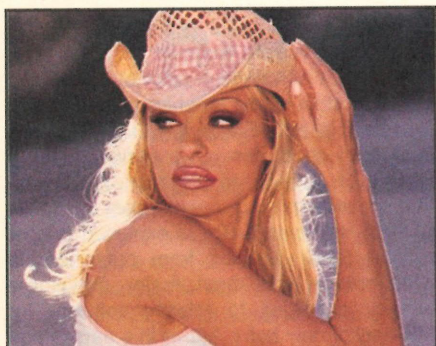
Pammy

Former Baywatch babe Pamela Anderson is about to join the world of gaming when Ubisoft create the title based on her latest series, VIP.

In the Sky One show Pam plays Vallery Irons, bodyguard to the stars of Hollywood. The show has proved a hit among American teenagers, pulling in the ratings with its humour and action.

The game will be out on the PC, PlayStation and PlayStation2, Nintendo 64, Dolphin, Game Boy Color, Game Boy Advance, Dreamcast and X-BOX.

Hasbro to the rescue

Games Domain Offline has teamed up with publishing giant Hasbro Interactive to bring six lucky competition winners hundreds of pounds worth of fabulous software prizes.

The competition winners were left empty-handed when the company behind a word search competition, published in the second issue of Games Domain offline, fell into liquidation.

Determined not to disappoint the winners, we got in touch with Hasbro who were only too happy provide to replacements for the prizes.

Now each of the lucky half-dozen will be sent a copy of Thomas the Tank Engine & Friends, Tonka Raceway, Furby, Monopoly Jnr, Rollercoaster Tycoon, Monopoly 2 and Trivial Pursuit 2 - over £140 worth of top PC kids software.

Games Domain senior editor Richard Sutcliffe said he was delighted Hasbro had stepped in.

"As well as the best news, reviews and previews, Games Domain Offline prides itself on its excellent competitions," he said.

"This month, for instance, we've teamed up with Eidos to offer our readers the chance to win a pair of tickets to the UEFA Champions League final.

"We would never disappoint our competition winners and, thanks to Hasbro, they will now all receive fantastic prizes from a great range of children's software."

Causing a stink

Ever wanted to experience the burning rubber of a Formula one car? Do you love the smell of napalm in the morning?
That's what US-based company Digiscents is hoping to bring to gaming by plonking a little box on your desk and letting you experience the smell of various multimedia. DVDs, research programs and games are all being targeted by the company as viable recipients of the hardware.

Joel Bellenson, Digiscents' chief executive officer, said: "Just as sound has become an integral part of the online entertainment experience - and soundtracks have become a necessity in movies - we believe that, over time, digital scent will also become ubiquitous in most forms of media.

"The same way you can click on and hear a song over the internet, now you can click on an image and smell it with a computer speaker-sized device."

Visit www.digiscents.com for more information.

Star Trek Elite Force

Star Trek Elite Force is being converted into a comic book courtesy of Wildstorm comics.
The home of Jim Lee's Gen 13, Superman and Batman will release the comic series after the game has hit the shops. The exact date is yet to be released.

Player's of Elite Force will be able to delve deeper into the storyline as the comic expands on the situation on the Voyager, as well as providing hints for players who are stuck.

E3

E3, the largest computer trade show in the world, has sold out in record time and will cover more space than ever before.

The event, which will run from May 11-13 in Los Angeles, is a showcase for major games and education software developers and publishers across the world.

A staggering 548,000 sq ft of space will be taken up by E3 - enough room for 14 jumbo jets to stand wing-to-wing.

More than 400 exhibitors will be showing off what they have in production for the coming year and - with nearly 2,000 titles revealed at the last exhibition - this year is expected to be big.

Naturally, Games Domain is going to be there and we will bring you a round-up of the all the E3 news and big releases.

Games Domain intend to have around 20 reporters at the show who will post regular updates on the web site, and of course give GD Offline readers an in-depth look at what was hot and what was not at this year's event.
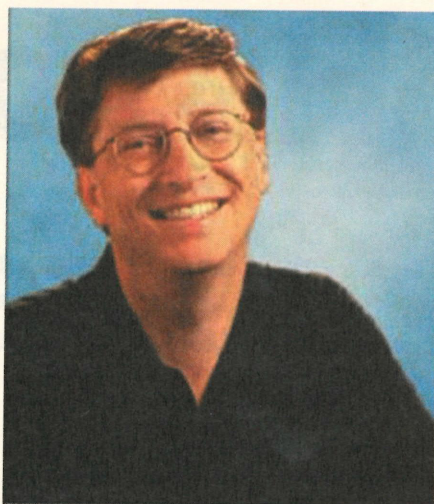
X-Box exposed

Megacorporation Microsoft has finally unveiled its new games console.
Rumours about the X-Box's existence and specifications have been circulating since September, when it was apparently shown to a small number of industry insiders.

X-Box will feature a standard 600MHz processor - reports suggest an Intel chip, although an AMD Athlon has not been ruled out - a custom Nvidia graphics chip expected to resemble a GeForce, 64MB of RAM, an 8GB hard drive, network support and a 4x DVD drive with movie playback. A PC with that specification today would cost in excess of £900, whereas X-Box is expected to cost around $299. Support from publishers is widespread, with most major publishers already expecting to release software for Microsoft's new baby, but at this early stage the only confirmed release is a boxing game from Climax provisionally called Title Defence.

Endorsements from industry giants were numerous. Gregory Fischbach, Co-Chairman of Acclaim, said: "We are very impressed with the technology and are looking forward to creating games that will leverage the power of the system". And Activision's executive vice president said: "X-Box is positioned at the leading edge of next-generation technology". Microsoft head honcho Bill Gates was reported as saying: "When it comes out in the fall of 2001 [it] is going to define a whole new experience".

X-Box will be the first console to combine out-of-the-box networking, a DVD drive, and substantial non-volatile storage capabilities - making PC-style multiplayer gaming possible on a console for the first time. And Microsoft certainly has the marketing clout to make it work.

UK All Format Charts - week ending 8th March 2000

CHARTS

	TITLE	PUBLISHER
1	Resident Evil 3	Eidos Interactive
2	Gran Turismo 2	Sony Computer Entertainment
3	Toy Story 2	Disney Interactive
4	Pokemon Red	Nintendo
5	Pokemon Blue	Nintendo
6	ISS Pro Evolution	Konami
7	The Sims	Electronic Arts
8	Crazy Taxi	Sega UK
9	Medal of Honor	Dreamworks Interactive
10	Superbike 2000	Electronic Arts

ChartTrack

www.gamesdomain.co.uk

Is this war?

Although we are going to have to wait a while before it graces our living rooms, Sony's new beast, PlayStation2, has finally hit the streets of Japan.

Now, you can read Console Domain's take on the machine elsewhere in this magazine, but how will it affect the PC market?

Okay, the PS2's vital statistics sound good compared with today's PCs, but by the time the consumers are beating down the doors of Dixon's, how will it measure up?

By then, it's likely that top-end machines will be running CPUs at well in excess of a gigahertz, with substantially more powerful graphics cards.

Roughly speaking, in six months time we can expect a top PC to be about 50% faster than today's machines.

And PC games have the advantage of being typically played on expensive monitors - the PS2 will be restricted to TV quality, and even when HDTV finally appears, it won't cut the mustard next to a good VDU.

But it's not all about hardware. Some have said the coming of the PlayStation2 will draw developers away from the high-investment, low-yield PC market, and as a result, PC games will become more niche-appeal and marginalised.

But how many good FPS or RTS games have there been on the consoles? The present design of console controllers just doesn't suit games needing close control, and all the Emotion Engines in the world won't change that.

And now Sony has decided not to roll out network play until broad-band home networking is in place, online gaming - perhaps the key advantage of the PC - won't happen for some time to come. Sleep easy my friends.

Meanwhile, this month we have an RPG-tastic selection of delights to tug at your wallet. Asheron's Call comes to UK shores at last, PlayStation fave Final Fantasy VIII makes its PC entrance, and

Nox shows itself to have all the polish we expect from Westwood.

If RPGs don't light your fire, Microprose prove themselves to be alive and well - contrary to certain predictions - and EA Sports serve up another cracking racing sim.

And as always, if you have any suggestions or comments to make, drop me a line at mike@gamesdomain.com. Enjoy!
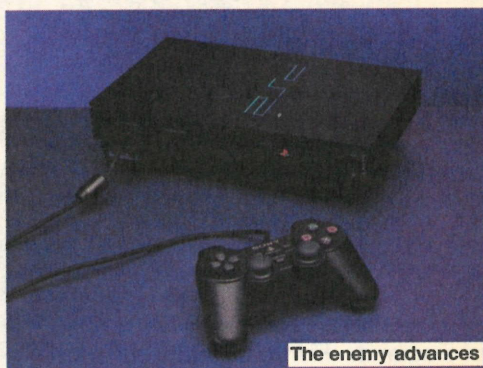
The enemy advances
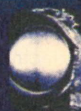
Monopoly Tycoon
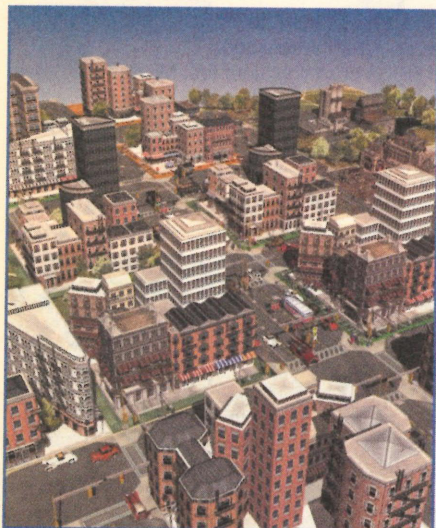
Ah, beautiful Milton Keynes, armpit of England. Home to many rows of square featureless buildings, traffic lights, and emerging Britsoft developer Deep Red.

Games Domain's **Mike Smith** was lucky enough to join in the festivities after the Deep Red crew finished their conversion of the strategy board game, Risk II.

But while our eagle-eyed man in Milton strolled round Deep Red's offices, he caught a glimpse of something rather different.

Deep Red has been working on Monopoly Tycoon for a while now.

We first saw it last year, when it was little more than a concept and the beginnings of an engine, but now the ground work is in place and the team can start on what Project Leader Steve Beverly described as "the fun stuff" - putting the gameplay together.

It is presented in full 3D - unlike the isometric approach traditionally adopted by these games - and players can zoom right down to street level, following the inhabitants of the city as they go to work, school, or out for an evening at the cinema.

Monopoly Tycoon is firmly set in the traditions of both Monopoly and the Tycoon games. Players choose one of the classic Monopoly characters to play as - the top hat, racing car, dog and so on - and the appearance of their figure reflects their choice.

Play starts in the 1930s, with each player having come into a large amount of money, and the first order of business is to buy up some land.

Each block in Monopoly City is named after the streets of the board game.

Your block will probably already have buildings on it, but more can be added.

Each one can have a use specified either residential, or commercial from a long list of businesses - including entertainment facilities, shops, beauty salons, ironmongers and toy shops.

You name it, it's probably in Tycoon.

Having built your house, you can invite applications from prospective businesses or start your own.

Siting the businesses is crucial to success. Placing an upmarket coffee shop next to a downtown subway station is probably a good idea - unless one of your competitors has already got one.

That said, you could always open another across the road and undercut his prices.

As time goes by, the city develops along the lines of a typical US city.

The ports - which start off as vital trade corridors - gradually decline, and ultimately it will become more profitable to redevelop them as luxury flats.

TV comes along to spoil the success of the city's cinemas.

When the game begins, it is prohibitively expensive to construct tall buildings.

But as time goes on, and new building materials become available, the increased floor space of skyscrapers makes them a must.

All the inhabitants of the city - don't you dare call them Sims - have their own individual names and characters.

They each have a set of goals - get a good job, get married, have children - and you will be able to follow them as they leave home in the morning and travel to work.

Tycoon's traffic is properly modelled. Each car belongs to a citizen and will get old and be replaced over time.

Each vehicle has a different speed, capacity and braking distance.

Monopoly Tycoon invites comparisons with games such as Sim City and the other Tycoon games.

But, from first impressions, it seems to be rather more closed-ended. Less a software "toy", more a traditional game.

It is scheduled for a Christmas release, and already looks promising. **GD**

Publisher: Hasbro **Developer:** Deep Red Games **Format:** PC **Release:** Christmas

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Insane
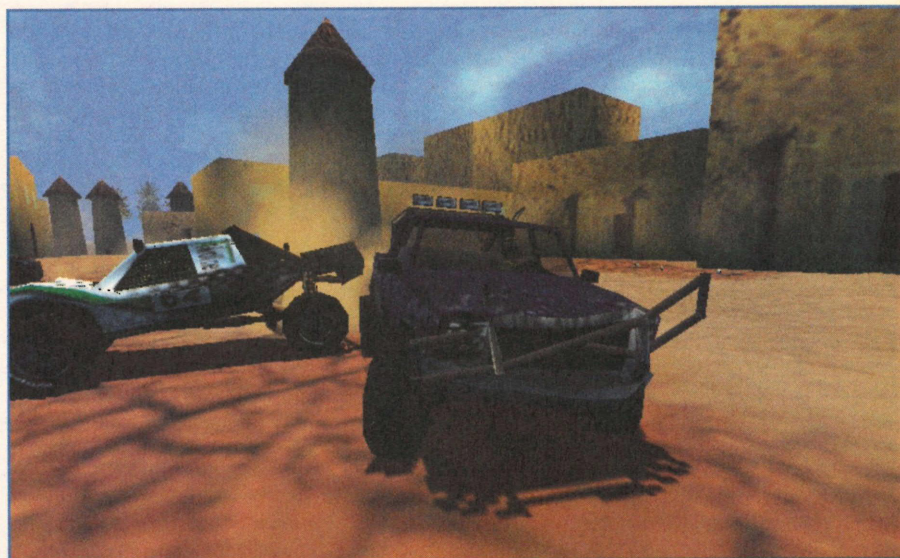
With racing games arriving in the shops faster than a Ferrari on an autobahn it's difficult not to suspect a good number will be about as thrilling as an England friendly.

But, occasionally, a familiar theme can be spiced up enough to catch the interest of even the most hardened gamer.

On a recent visit to Codemasters' country HQ in Warwickshire we had a cheeky look at Insane - Codemaster's first stab at an on-line game.

But will Insane drive its players round the bend, or will PC enthusiasts be mad for it? Games Domain's **Kevan 'mental' Mander** tells all.

When I was first shown into a darkened room at the Codemasters' offices I had no idea on-screen motorised mayhem was about to ensue. But when I saw Insane I realised how it had earned its title.

The principal idea behind the game was to produce an intense racing action experience that people can play over the Internet and LAN.

Of course, racing endlessly around a track is a bit boring so Codemasters has decided to fuse elements of Quake into the game and has produced something rather special.

What the developers have done is taken the features that made Quake and its sequels great and bunged them in Insane. So Deathmatch, Capture the Flag, Jamboree and various other competitions are available to challenge people with.

The execution of the game is simple - pick a race style, a terrain, a car and off you go. Of course anything so simplistic would be boring, so the team has packed out Insane with loads of options.

There are a total of 20 roadsters, ranging from stock cars to big eight-wheeler trucks, with various strengths and weaknesses.

The terrain can be chosen from a list of 25 countries around the world, so whether the scorching deserts of Africa are your thing or the mist-bound trails of Ireland there should be a course for you.

Well, course is a relative term, and no such thing really exists as all the action is off-road. Steep mountains and deep gorges are the terrain you will have to navigate so if you're scared of heights you will have to take care.

The game not only uses set terrain but also features an editor so you can create a super terrain of either flat land or highly mountainous land.

The race styles are based around various adaptations of the Quake games.

In Capture the Flag you have to grab the flag that appears on the map and while you have it you get points. Take a knock, or roll the car, and you will lose the flag. Jamboree is a gate race and the person who gets through will get a point - then another gate appears and it's a race to that one. Deathmatch is a simple bash the bumpers until the other cars are smouldering wrecks.

Insane - you would have to be crazy not to like it. **GD**

Publisher & Developer: Codemasters **Format:** PC **Release:** Spring/Summer
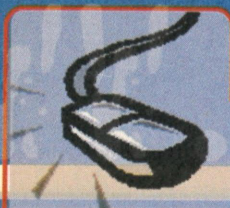
B17 The Mighty Eighth

The original B17, released eight years ago on PC and Amiga, let players follow the fortunes of ten of America's finest young airmen, sent to the UK to fly dangerous bombing missions over Northern Europe.

As well as being a traditional simulation of this giant of an aircraft, the game made it essential to manage and control each of your team members to be successful.

Nose cabin shot up? Better hope your navigator escaped injury, otherwise you'll need to move a gunner to repair the crucial bomb-sighting equipment, losing protection for the duration of the repairs.

Most vulnerable, though, was the unfortunate ball-gunner.

Slung below the fuselage in a goldfish bowl-like structure, he was exposed to enemy fire and, worst of all, the strawberry jam unpleasantness of a wheels-up landing.

How I laughed as Nobby bought it again and again - the ability to rename your crew was supposed to encourage attachment to them,

but in my case just lead to a succession of amusingly-named cannon-fodder lieutenants. The revamped release takes a group of the original designers and lets them loose on modern PCs.

Although the original looked good for its time, "The Mighty Eighth" looks set to hold its own among modern 3D games.

Added, too, is the ability to control your entire wing of 12 B17s and the escort fighters, Lightnings, Thunderbolts and the celebrated P51 Mustang.

Although your crew members are capable of performing most tasks on their own, jumping into their shoes and taking charge will bring rewards in the form of improved skills and AI - so hopefully they'll be better able to cope in future.

Microprose promises the game will include a full set of training missions and, like the original, a complete campaign taking a crew from rookies to retirement in true Memphis Belle tradition.

In another welcome addition, LAN and internet multiplay features will be present - both co-operative and competitive, so you'll be able to take on the Hun with your mates at your side.

Mission planning uses an intuitive drag-and-drop interface to make bombing your enemies just as easy as you always wished it could be. B17 "The Mighty Eighth" is set for release in May. **GD**

Advanced Squadron Leader

Stand up straight, soldier! Advanced Squad Leader lets you take part in a 'Shaving Ryan's Privates' style set of turn-based strategic combat scenarios.

Hang on, that's not quite right.

A series of 'Saving Private Ryan' missions - that's better.

If you ever wanted to be on the beaches of Normandy, or get up to your neck in mud and blood at the Battle of the Bulge, ASL is your one-way ticket to a soldier's grave in North France.

Although the game is turn-based, it uses a system of action points to give the impression of being in real-time.

The team is keen to preserve the spirit of the 'definitive WWII tactical board game', but in an effort to make it more approachable it does not use the exact rule set.

Paratroopers, tanks complete with their crews, and subtitled foreign voice actors will be used, to add realism to the campaigns.

Your squad, too, will be full of detail, each member having a unique biography and ability set which will improve as they move through missions.

Their actions will in part be based on human emotions such as courage or - more probably - fear.

You will be able to fight them on the beaches sometime in the last quarter of this year. **GD**

British paratrooper

British infantry

B17 - Publisher: Hasbro **Developer:** Microprose **Format:** PC **Release:** May
ASL - Publisher: Hasbro **Developer:** Microprose **Format:** PC **Release:** year end
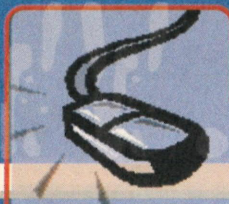
Starship Troopers

"Everyone fights, no-one quits. If you don't do your job, I'll shoot you myself."
Starship Troopers had some of the best one-liners (and Dina Meyer moments) of 1997 when it hit our cinema screens.

Now, finally, Hasbro has decided to bring the film to PC, as a 3D real-time strategy game. Sadly, the game seems to be based more-around the more serious book than the tongue-in-cheek, American-bashing style of the film.

Your squad is comprised of Mobile Infantry Troopers of varying ranks, from Captain down to Rookies.

Yes, that's rookies as in cannon-fodder.

If your troopers are lucky enough to survive the onslaught of the Arachnids, they will gain new skills and improve their abilities.

Although the game is aimed more towards single player action, a multiplayer mode will be included - so the bloodthirsty among you will be able to take command of the Arachnids and suck out some brains. **GD**

X-Com: Alliance

Microprose is also working on bringing the X-Com series up to date.
Alliance uses a heavily modified Unreal engine to introduce the traditional concepts to a new generation of gamers. A research ship - the UGS Patton - is marooned far from Earth and, to survive, the crew joins forces with the friendly inhabitants of their new home to fight an old enemy.

Troopers are everything in X-Com: Alliance. Using them as cannon-fodder, as was possible in the older games, will result in mission failure, and each one has emotional and physical conditions that change over the course of a mission.

Preserving their lives will make more men available to research your stolen alien technology on board ship.

X-Com's AI is able to cope with characters performing more than one action at once.

The team were keen to show us their range of animations, showing troopers walking cautiously forward next to an air vent, covering and checking it carefully before passing it, reminiscent of SWAT 3.

Troopers become more cautious when an opening has been identified as a threat - once one alien has leapt out of a side passage there could be more hiding. **GD**
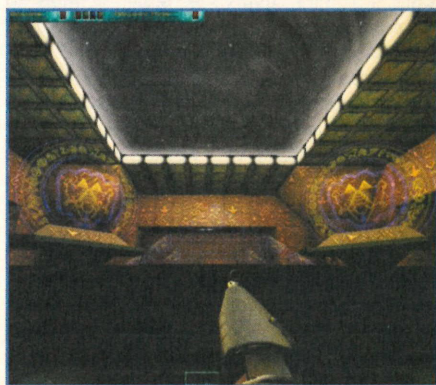
PREVIEW

ST - Publisher: Hasbro **Developer:** Microprose **Format:** PC **Release:** September
X-Com - Publisher: Hasbro **Developer:** Microprose **Format:** PC **Release:** September

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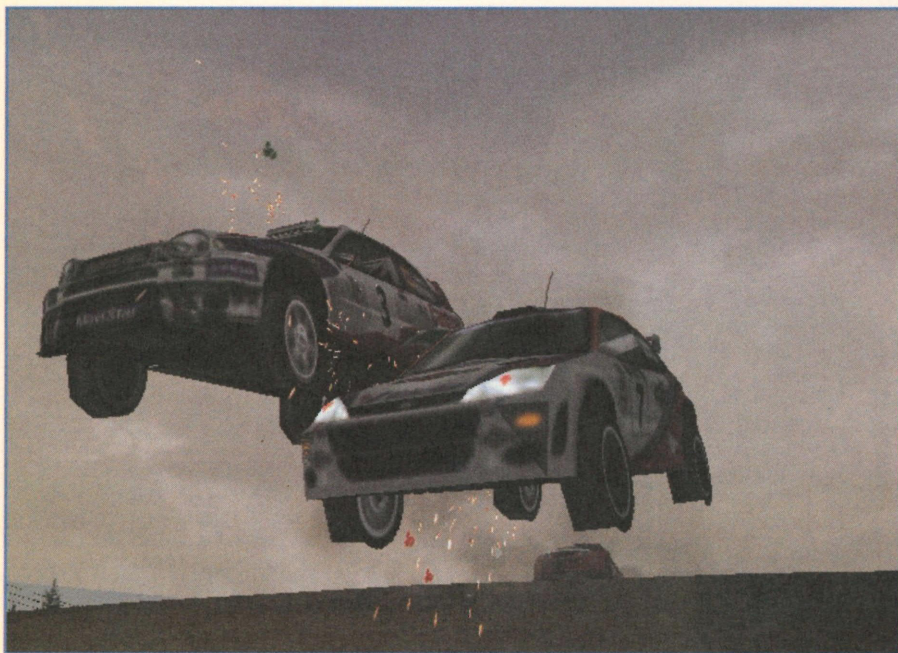
Colin McRae V2

While Gran Turismo and its sequel continue to dominate the PlayStation racing field, a lot of people still prefer the hot rubber, flying dust action of of the World Rally Championship.

So when Guy Wilday, the producer of Colin McRae 2.0, offered to let us take a peek under the bonnet of his latest project, Games Domain's **Kevan Mander** put his pedal to the metal and off-roaded to Codemasters HQ in the luscious countryside of Warwickshire to find out more.

For many, Colin McRae Rally set an unassailable standard in rally race gaming. It was raw, realistic and spat dirt and exhaust fumes into the face of its opposition.

But, as a good racing team knows, constant improvements ensure you stay ahead of the pack and Guy told us exactly what we wanted to hear.

"It's not just going to be Colin McRae one with more tracks or different tracks or different cars. I think everyone really wanted to improve every single area of the game that we possibly could," he said.

The great thing about the original Colin McRae was that it mixed arcade style action with the physics engine of a simulator. Most of the original team who worked on the game have shifted over to work on this sequel with the aim of repeating the same winning formula.

But, first things first, and the new front end deserves a special mention.

Completely redesigned from the original's garish arcade style it now sports a minimalist design that wouldn't look out of place on a flyer for a nightclub.

The menu system leads to various options in the game.

Most people will be familiar with the options that came with the original but, for those who aren't, here's the rundown.

The game is split into two sections - arcade and rally.

Rally is the more traditional sense of the sport with a solitary car bombing around tight tracks and dead man's curves.

Arcade is the newest feature on the starting grid and comes from requests of the fans of the original.

It features more car-on-car action with six vehicles racing each other on the same thin tracks and vying for the top position.

"Everyone wanted Colin McRae physics in an arcade environment," Guy explained.

One of the most interesting features is that the AI on the cars has been trained using a neural network, which means they won't religiously follow the racing line but will make mistakes, act aggressively and vary their path every time you play.

A new features of the game is the rally challenge, which allows two players to go head-

to-head in a knockout tournament providing more fun with your mates. Also included is the ability for four-players to go alternately.
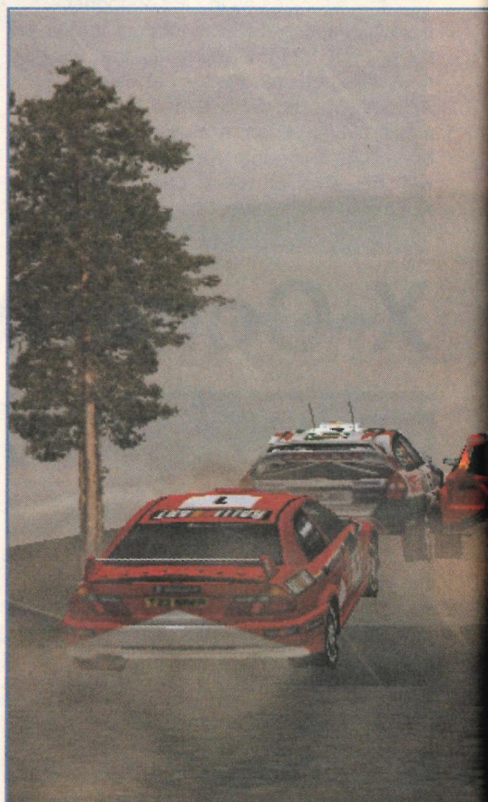
Guy said: "A lot of people were playing single stages alternately with one guy having a go and then another guy having a go and just sort of passing it around. So we put in two, three and four player modes."

The most important decision a McRae gamer makes is selecting the way his car is set-up and Colin McRae 2 is no different.

The system of changing the set-up is still the same, each tweak takes a little time and you only have a limited amount of that.

PREVIEW
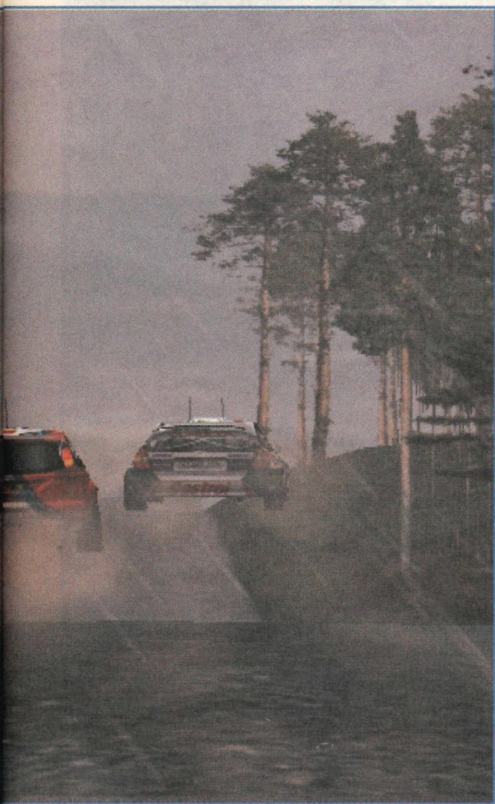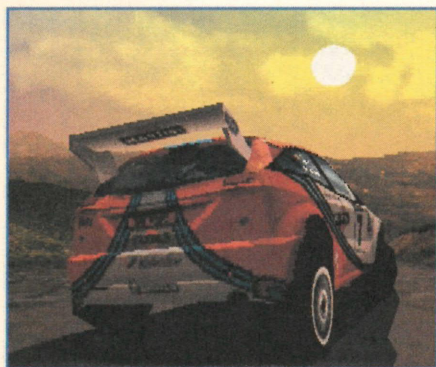
Such care and attention towards the previous version's realistic engine hasn't stopped Guy adding a new damage and physics engine.

To ensure greater realism, the Codemasters team has taken data directly from real rally cars during races to create a virtual car model which directly mimics the actions of the genuine article. The team at Codemasters have modified the game engine from Colin McRae and you'll see the car move about a lot more. "We've got proper suspension on each of the four wheels this time, so you'll see the car moving and rolling and it does affect how it slides around corners. It's quite an exciting change really," Guy said.

Cars will now wheel-spin if you're too eager with the accelerator when coming out of corners.

The damage they sustain also makes a more realistic impact on the handling of the game. Fortunately during the arcade mode the damage system has been reduced, so slamming a car off the track won't reduce your vehicle to a smoking hulk in the bushes.

The graphics look top-notch and while they aren't up to the standard of Gran Turismo it's a damn sight faster.

Car bodies have more polygons than they

> **"Improved AI on cars means they won't always follow the racing line but make mistakes, act aggressively and vary their paths every time you play"**

used to: 400 was the standard in Colin McRae but that has been increased to 750.

Shading that follows the path of the sun has been introduced so trees now cast shadows on the tracks creating a realistic feel to the courses.

Another feature is the flickering of the sun behind the trees.

As you zoom along the sun flashes through the trees providing one of those important atmospheric touches, raising the game from the rest of the herd.

The sound has also taken leaps and bounds over the original. The throaty cough of the exhaust as you slam up the gears and speed away, as well as the growling of the engine on the starting grid, is now far more realistic than before.

The replay feature that is now standard on many racing games has been adjusted to give the feel of watching a television replay.

Cameras zoom in and track the other cars, providing a visceral feel to the replays. Dodgy focusing is the only thing that is missing from these recorded moments of genius or idiocy.

In terms of track design, Codemasters hasn't left anything to chance. Three new tracks: Italy, Kenya and Finland have been added along with five familiar faces from the original. Guy said: "We flew artists and track designers out to each of the countries we wanted to include with digital cameras and DV camcorders.

"They have taken lots of footage of the way the tracks work, the textures on the ground and the objects. So we really tried to get the tracks as authentic as we can." **GD**

What counts most in this game is preparation. Dynamic weather reports have been included and driving conditions can change rapidly leaving you stranded in mud with tyres designed for hot dusty climates.

"You've got to fix your set-up to the optimal for both, so you might have to make compromises and every time you race a championship it will be different. So the real challenge here is to get your set-up right," Guy said.

"We haven't changed the mechanics too much. It's probably the area of the game we were most cautious about changing," he added.

Publisher: Codemasters **Developer:** Codemasters **Format:** PC & PSX **Release:** April 14 (PSX) May (PC)

Combat Mission: Beyond Overlord

Combat Mission is a game which many of you probably haven't heard of, but one which is causing quite a stir in the strategy camp at Games Domain.

Tim Chown got to grips with a wargame which is already shaping up to be one of the genre's titles of the year.

Traditionally wargames have been geared around hex-based maps where players take turns to give orders to their units, be it charging cavalrymen at a line of pikemen or trundling a Tiger tank towards a platoon of trembling Shermans.

Games like Sid Meier's Antietam! have shown that the wargaming mould can be broken, in Firaxis' case with an innovative real-time ACW wargame.

If you think of WWII wargames then the excellent, but very traditional, Steel Panthers or Panzer General 2 spring to mind. Good, solid, turn-based wargames.

The problem with turn-based games is that they encourage you to play the system rather than adopt realistic battlefield tactics. By using an expendable truck to draw opportunity fire from an enemy tank, you can drive one of your own tanks right up to point-blank range and blow him away.

Close Combat addressed this problem, making the transition to real-time WWII action, but had shortcomings that included a 15 unit per-side limit.

Combat Mission is a game that casts aside traditional wargame design. Most striking are its 3D graphics, present not for gratuitous effect but to help players visualise the 3D terrain and devise appropriate tactics to suit them.

You can view the action from shoulder level

> **"Combat Mission is a game that casts aside traditional wargame design"**
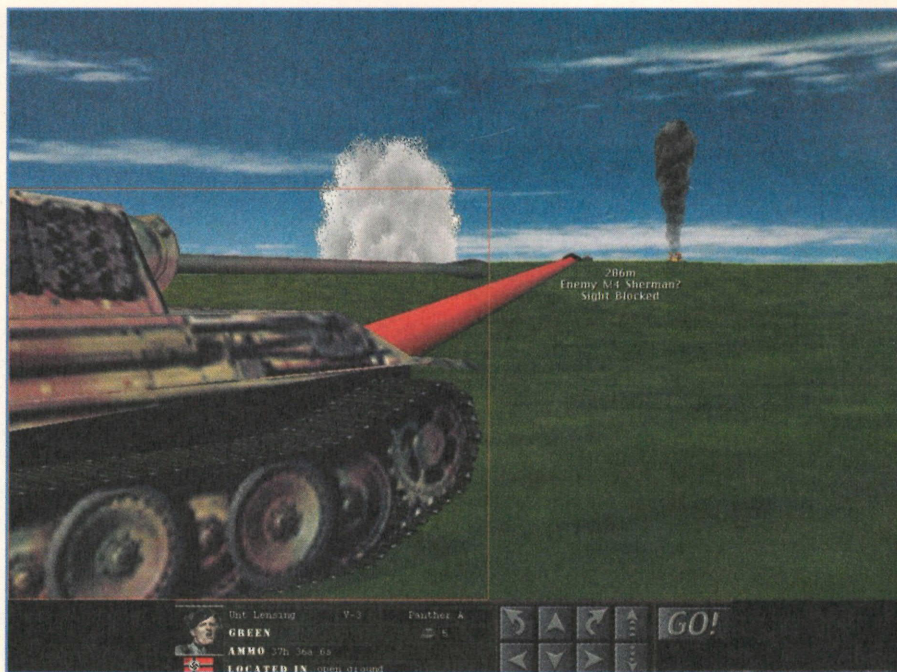
or zoom right out to a bird's eye view, rotating and panning the camera position at will. The level of detail in the buildings, trees and other terrain is impressive, considering the battlefields can stretch for thousands of yards in each direction and feature dozens of units on each side.

Snow, rain, fog and night-time conditions all add to the atmosphere.

Sound effects also play an important part, both in detecting enemy vehicles and in the thunderous effects of tank fire or heavy artillery bombardments.

A more important feature of the game is the use of simultaneously resolved game turns. Both players, or one player and the AI, plot their orders while time is frozen.

When ready, the clock starts ticking and the battlefield springs into life for 60 hectic seconds.

You're powerless to intervene while your virtual army dukes it out with the enemy, until the 60 seconds are up and you can again issue new orders. The fact that you're a helpless spectator only adds to the tension and enjoyment. While this isn't the first game to use simultaneous turns, the ability to rewind or replay a turn's action, and to review events from any camera angle, is superb.

It also makes the game an ideal play-by-

email vehicle.

Combat Mission features infantry and weaponry from 1944 onwards on the Western Front, with every detail thoroughly researched. Armour and shell penetration effects are faithfully modelled.

The feature list for the game is impressive - queued orders spanning multiple turns, AFVs that can carry infantry (a feature Close Combat lacked), off-map artillery, airstrikes, smoke effects, a command and control system, troop morale and varying levels of spotting are all present.

A scenario editor and random battle generator offer extended gameplay on top of the 40 included scenarios.

On the evidence of the latest version Combat Mission will be a candidate for Wargame of the Year.

Look for it later this summer. GD

Publisher: Big Time Software **Developer:** Battlefront
Format: PC **Release:** Late Summer

Rollcage Stage II

Rollcage Stage II follows hot on the heels of its high speed, gravity-defying predecessor and offers a range of new doomed-planet racing challenges to fans of the original.

With new cars, weapons and extended modes of play this Rollcage looks set to have a longer shelf-life than its older brother.

Games Domain's **Kevan Mander** had a look at what makes the latest Rollcage rock.

When you load up Rollcage Stage II it looks like the original with lots of FMV of planets falling to pieces and cars racing around shooting the living hell out of each other.

Then it is into the menu screen and, to keep people familiar with the system, the graphics and way of selecting the races hasn't changed.

Styles of play have been expanded upon to provide more longevity to the game.

These are split into single and multiplayer. In one player mode the league system has been expanded, giving five groups rather than the three in the original, each comprising of three races and a knockout stage.

There is also an arcade mode to pit your wits against the computer and a training mode which provides you with the facilities to get used to the control system.

Scramble and Survivor are single player games which offer different, but equally tricky, challenges. Scramble is a nightmare with some of the trickiest courses I have ever seen. Survivor, available once you have completed the league, demands you finish each track first to be allowed to progress to the next. Should you fail to finish in the lead then you will be forced to start from the first track.

The multiplayer options include Demolition, Pursuit, Time Attack, Combat and Rubble Soccer.

Demolition, is a little lacking due to its requirement to destroy every object on the racetrack. Fun in two player mode, but uninspiring on your own.

Pursuit sees you race around a ring and try to overtake your opponent.

Time Attack is a race against other players for the best time but with no weapons included, only boosters.

Combat mode is a straight out blast 'em up and Rubble Soccer translates as motorised football with a lump of debris. There is also the facility to play across a network.

So there are plenty of options, but what this preview version lacks is a thumping soundtrack.

A few of the courses have music but it's more swirly ambient than hardcore breakbeat.

The graphics haven't changed that much from the original and what the game could also do with is a few animated textures.

Rollcage 2 should fill in the gaps in the original by providing long-term gameplay through the leagues and challenges, while the arcade mode and multiplayer modes will give that fast and furious fix other games cannot reach. **GD**
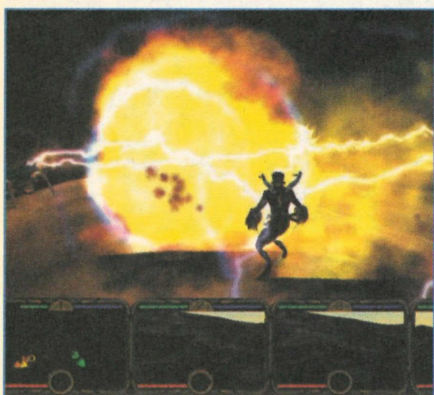
Evolva

Weird DNA-grabbing hunter-killers, alien life forms and the sort of plantlife that would make Alan Titchmarsh soil his corduroys.

But enough about the last Games Domain office party, let's talk about Evolva, Computer Arts' latest innovative offering which immerses the player in a bizarre futurescape of deadly vegetation and genetic mutation.

Armed with only a pair of secateurs, Games Domain's **Kevan Mander** blasted off into the unknown and got up to his neck in callous crops and fiendish foliage.

son remote control.

Four of these gene-suckers are at your disposal and they're strong, clever, agile and quick creatures.

The whole concept behind the game is absolutely amazing.

Various creatures live on the planet and by getting your little army to kill them, and then slice up the bodies, you can extract DNA from their remains. Nice.

Using the dead creature's DNA you can then mutate your Genohunters to your advantage. The more DNA for a certain skill you pinch, the more noticeable the skill.

This means you can tailor your warriors to your needs at any time so, for instance, if you need to make a long jump, then all you need to do is mutate the warrior until you see his jump skill rise up. Simple or what?

The game is split into levels where you must complete various missions over the planet. The general mission structure is like a thread. For example, in one mission you have to proceed to a herd of indigenous creatures and protect them from the bug-like creatures the plant uses for its protection.

These missions are quite varied in their style but have a very steep difficulty curve.

The first mission is very simple to get through because there is little in the way of enemy resistance. The second level requires you to

Evolva is one weird game. Let's face it though, Computer Arts is primarily known for its work with organic art so things were bound to be a little skewed.

The story goes like this.

You're sitting on a spacecraft watching the stars and the only company you've got is a bunch of DNA-sucking Genohunters.
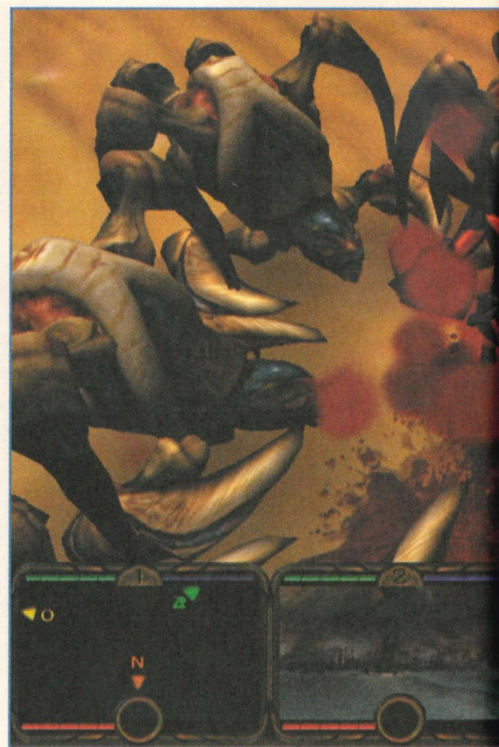
Then, all of a sudden, things go a bit pear-shaped and a world destroying, space travelling plant lands on one of the planets near you.

Of course, being the only sad lonely idiot in vicinity - and having left your weed killer at home - you decide to take this vegetable on with your Genohunting buddies.

All the action takes place on the planet and you direct these Genohunters via a third per-

REVIEW

pass through a valley that swarms with the bugs and looks like one of the brutal scenes out of Starship Troopers.

The control system is very simplistic and a dream to use. You can only control one creature out of your team of four at any one time, but all four can be ordered around by a few key controls.

The mouse controls the rotation of your chosen character and the camera that sits behind your team.

The rest of the controls can be adjusted as you please, but the favoured keys will probably be your standard Quake set-up.

Beneath the main view screen there are four cameras which relay the view behind the other three members of your team, but the update of these screens is more like a web-

cam it is so jerky.

In terms of weaponry the whole thing is geared around some very unusual genetics. I could understand being able to leap higher and run faster, but being able to fire-breath, shoot bullets out of your arm or even use electricity seemed a bit far-fetched in what could have been a very realistic game based on the genetic make-up of the creatures that surround us.

Which brings us to the enemy creatures. All of them show a degree of intelligence when they pick on individual members and not the first person they reach, but even a bug would

think twice about facing down four fire-breathing psychos intent it's destruction.

Graphically, and rather surprisingly as we are talking about one of the premier computer graphics companies in the world, things are rather dull.

The entire planet is based on browns and greys and looks like a dump.

There is no intelligent life on the planet and - while this narcissistic view might grate across the moral conscious of many of our soft-hearted readers - I say let the planet rot.

The game makes use of some horrendous fog and really doesn't push any graphical boundaries.

Aurally there is very little going on and the sound effects are very limited to perhaps the odd grunt of your Genohunters when injured. There is nothing to suggest this is a thriving planet, but more a world on its last legs just waiting for the plant of Armageddon to plonk itself down and pull it apart.

I couldn't hear any music during the game only the odd sting when a battle was taking place.

If, however, you fancy pitting a Genohunter against another then there is a very basic multiplayer system.

This is a simple deathmatch system where you can mutate your character into a lethal, far too powerful for his own good, killing machine and blow the DNA out of other Genohunters.

The level design is uninspired although it does seem to reflect the organic art style of Computer Arts. But one thing should be noted here: landscapes make great art but great art doesn't make landscapes.

Evolva deserves high regard for such an astounding concept, and it actually works well, but in the final analysis it is an idea that doesn't have the courage of its convictions.

Its system of play and simplistic approach belie the potential for a groundbreaking move forward in computer games.

Basic graphics and low quality sound really don't help what is possible one of the most inventive games, dare I say it, of the year. The potentially millions of DNA combinations for your characters should provide long-term play and is intriguing enough to make this a worthwhile purchase. **GD**
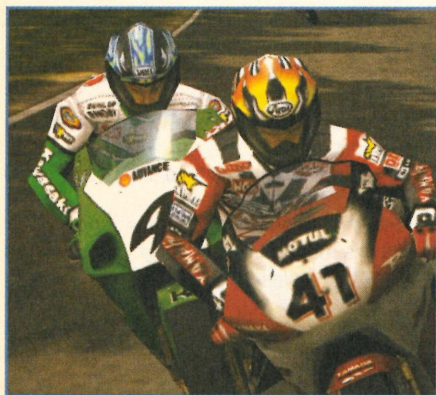
PROS

- Innovative and original
- Good long-term value
- Excellent control system

CONS

- Poor level design
- Dull graphics
- Limited sound effects

Superbike 2000

With the official license from the World Superbike series, EA Sports has the chance to bring one of the only sports we Brits are any good at to your PC.
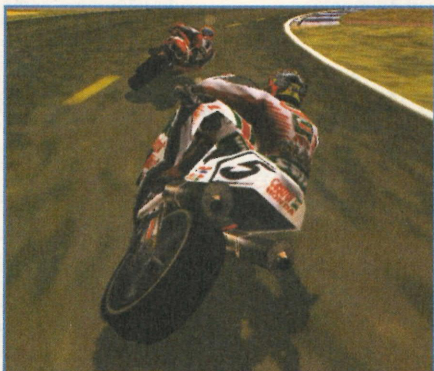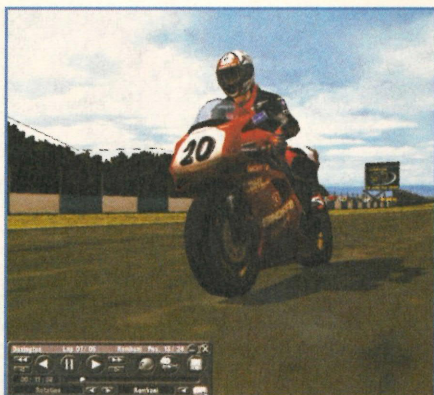But does the game match up to the skills of four-times World Champion Carl Fogarty?
Games Domain's **Mike Smith** climbed aboard Superbike 2000 and hit the track.

EA Sports has taken simulation to a new level with Superbike 2000.

As the bikes line up on the grid, the nasal tones of Keith Huewen take me back to sitting in the pub last summer watching Carl Fogarty take on the world's best - and the graphics make the impression still more convincing.

Often the camera angles and sense of reality are so strong I'd rather be watching Superbike 2000 than the real thing.

Motion capture is spot-on and the riders all handle their machines convincingly. Even the slightly awkward, lumbering run of a man dressed in a full-body leather suit looks just right. The inevitable downside of this is Superbike requires a ninja PC to look its best. On a PIII-500 and TNT1, it would only settle at 800x600 with the options turned down.

A GeForce is really where the action is at, allowing flawless draw distance and consistent frame rate at high resolution, even at crowded moments like the always-hectic first corner.

In the best tradition of racing sims, Superbike allows players to control the level of difficulty by modifying the amount of assistance the computer offers.

Automatic gearboxes, steering, braking and accelerating help are on offer, and your rider can be set to lean forward and back to control the bike. Without these options, even moving off in a straight line is a challenge - without proper throttle and weight control, the front wheel will lift and ultimately flip the bike.

Rider assistance is a welcome addition. It makes racer-boy automatically try to correct minor wobbles and losses of control - useful on those gravel-trap diversions.

> "Sometimes the sense of reality is so strong I'd rather watch Superbike 2000 than the real thing"

Aggressive and convincing AI riders provide yet more difficulty.

Take a dodgy line around one of them, and he will shake his fist at you as you touch fairings. I remember in my first race, seeing Colin Edwards give it too much, too soon straight in front of me.

I was forced to pick the bike up before slamming on the brakes to avoid running wide, laying black marks all over the apex and scattering other competitors in my wake.
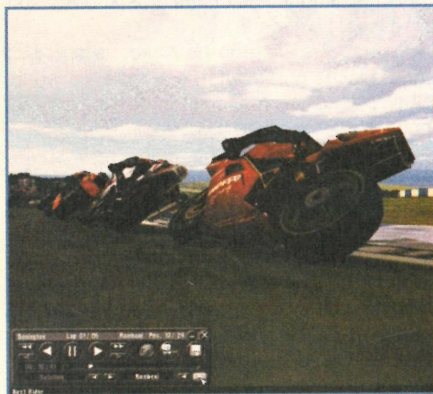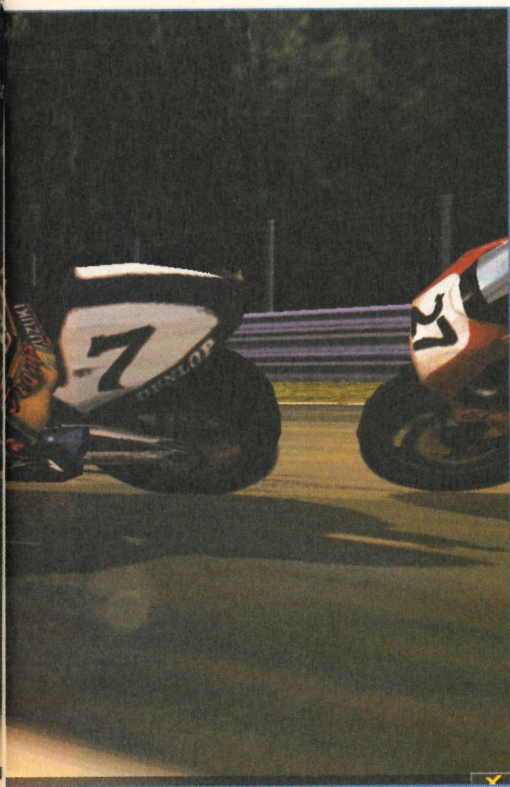
As I leant back into the racing line, another rider forced me sideways and the back wheel touched grass. Down I went.
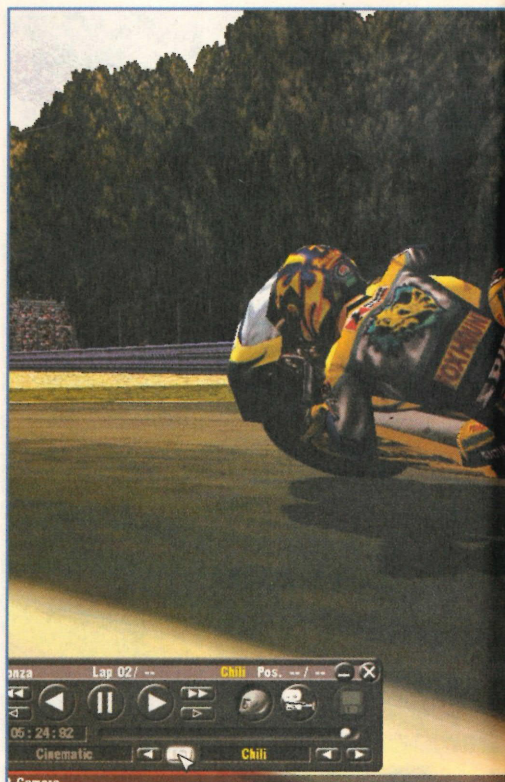
Turning on "real crashes" results in many a humorous moment. If you throw your precious toy down the track - something you will find yourself doing very often on harder levels - the rider will get up, dust himself down, and run back up the track to find his bike.

On reaching it, he will pick it up and re-mount, performing what looks like a bump-start, but strangely the engine noise remains constant throughout.

When racer-boy is running alongside the bike, steering away from him results in the bike falling over and flipping him up in the air.

Championship	Round 12 Quality	DUCATI

Bike Selection

DUCATI

Layout: V-twin
Displacement: 996 cc
Valves: 4 per cylinder
Valve Gear: camshaft
Power:

154 bhp @ 11200 rpm
Top Speed: 293 kph

DUCATI   Kawasaki   HONDA

How I laughed - until I remembered doing almost the same thing with my first real bike, albeit in less glamorous circumstances, and not in front of so many people.

This option, unfortunately, is less than practical in a full race.

As your rider runs back to his bike, another bike will often hit him - resulting not in hideous injury but just being batted down the track. The other riders are not smart enough to stop or avoid fallen riders, so often you'll end up thrown some distance from your original crash and have to run for ages to reach your bike.

Sadly, the bikes are all but impossible to highside, and the tracks are disappointingly smooth, making Donington's twists less arseclenching than they should be. Because of this in some places lines are possible that would probably tip you off in reality.

It would also have been nice to see a bit more detail in the damage effects.

Instead of seeing fairings crumple and engine blocks wear through as bikes slide off the track you see nothing. There is damage as an option but it is not visualised. I wish my bike was as resilient as Superbike's.

Sonically, although the two and four-cylinder bikes sound suitably different, there is something missing from the samples.

Twins just don't raise the hairs on the back of the neck like they should, and although pinning the throttle wide makes the fours scream, this area lacks the passion that shows so strongly in the graphics.

Taking on your two-wheeled friends is made socially acceptable with Superbike's multiplayer modes. Internet, LAN and an all-toorare split screen, two player mode.

Bearing in mind the PC needed to see the game at its best, perhaps finding two PCs of suitable specification will prove tricky.

SBK2000 takes a different route to games like GP500. There is little effort made here to provide a comprehensive and fully accurate motorcycle simulation - which is arguably impossible in any case. Instead, SBK2000 is aimed at providing a satisfying playing experience rather than being a training aid for wannabe racers.

But, to its credit, Superbike manages to make a good arcade racer, with assistance options on maximum, as well as a semi-realistic simulation.

The fantastic graphics - which provide a strong initial appeal - just put the icing on the gameplay cake. **GD**
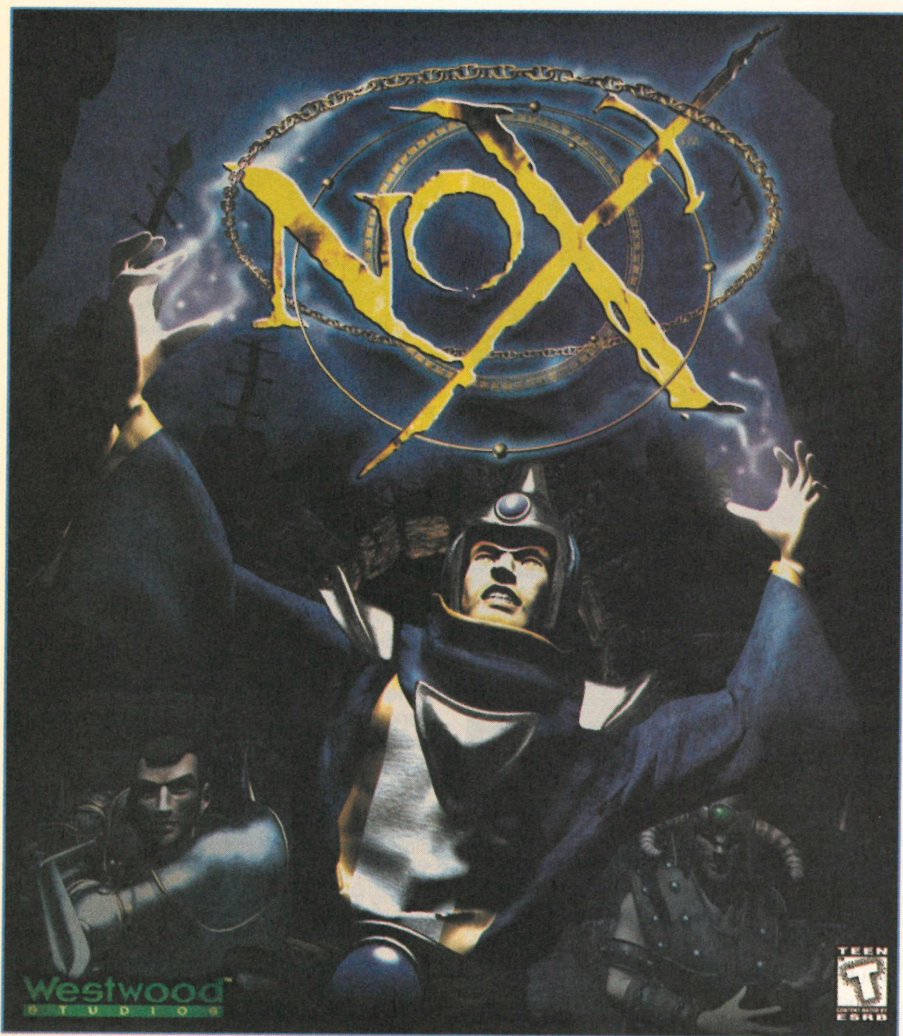

PROS
- Top-notch graphics
- Strong sense of reality
- Playable as sim or arcade

CONS
- Difficult to pick up
- Sound could be better
- Damage effects poor

27

Nox

Famed for the Command & Conquer series of real-time strategy games, Westwood is beginning to move into new areas of development.

First out of the door is Nox, ahead of eagerly-awaited first-person shooter C&C: Renegade.

Games Domain's **Mike Smith** knocks it down to see if it gets back up again.

You have all played Diablo, haven't you? This isometric tale of medieval swords-and-sorcery made quite an impact when it was released three years ago.

Essentially a revamp of an age-old, text-based dungeon romp called Nethack, its mix of exploring and action sucked many people

in, and the multiplayer facilities became legendary - or notorious. Player-killing, theft and outright cheating all became rife, spoiling the party for many people.

Now, as the Blizzard marketing machine gears up for Diablo 2, Nox steps out into the sunlight.

It takes the isometric view and basic, mouse-driven interface of Diablo, gives it a fresh lick of paint, and offers up a different take on multiplayer action.

Your character, Jack, can choose to play either as a Warrior (strong, fast, and stupid), a Conjurer (weak, but can summon monsters to do his bidding) or a Wizard (a bit girly, but uses magic and traps to mix it with the rest). Jack can use different weapons and armour according to his choice, and each class has its own single-player game.

The objective is the same for each though.

Transported to the realm of Nox by a mysterious orb Jack must rid the world of the evil sorceress Hecubah. Where would fantasy plots be without mysterious orbs and evil sorceresses, I wonder?

As usual, the weapon he needs is split into three pieces and scattered across the world. Cue the usual round of monster-bashing, potion-collecting and level-upping.

As Jack progresses, he gains new spells, abilities, or becomes able to summon stronger creatures. The quest is heavily stage-managed though, so it's not possible to accumulate a powerful character too quickly. Wandering round the dungeons and cities of Nox, you will notice the game uses an unusual line-of-sight system - only the things Jack is able to see are drawn. So you won't be able to see the crowd of flesh-eating zombies waiting for you around the corner.

It also has some subtle but effective light-sourcing - fireballs will light up the corridor as your wizard throws them at the skeleton horde.

Nox allows much more interaction with the player's environment than in other titles.

Most objects that litter the levels can be pushed about, hacked to bits or thrown about, leading to some Tomb Raider-style block puzzles. These serve to break up the action a bit, but are a bit old hat these days, and it is a shame not to have made better use of this feature.

REVIEW

aged, and the number of power-ups and top weapons lying about mean you'll be kicking some warlock butt in no time. Variety is the spice of multiplayer gaming, and there is plenty here to be going on with.

But Nox misses out the co-operative multiplayer modes Diablo did so well.

It would be great to be able to take your single player character adventuring with a group of others - but this is missing. Perhaps Westwood wanted to keep something back for the inevitable Nox 2.

Initially slow, Nox has a hook like a shark fisherman.

Once you find your ideal character class, you are guaranteed to be spending many late nights hacking and slashing your way through fellow warlocks.

Westwood's servers will even keep track of your performance, so you can measure yourself against the world's best.

If you are tired of the usual Unreal Tournament and Quake 3 action - or can't wait for Diablo 2 - Nox will fill the hole in your gaming heart. **GD**

Single player Nox tends to grow tiresome and lacking in variety after a while, especially if you have spent some time on Diablo.

It isn't a RPG, by any means - there is no character development or depth to speak of, and incidental characters don't really react to you other than to give you instructions and quests.

None of the different character types get on with each other, as usual, so if your warrior wanders into Wizardville he will go down like a bacon sandwich at a bar mitzvah.

Like other three letter words ending in X, Nox is best enjoyed with a few good friends - and in multiplayer it starts to show its originality.

Nox combines the traditional overhead perspective of action RPGs with game styles more reminiscent of Quake than anything else.

Deathmatch, team play and capture-the-flag all feature, along with a couple of more novel modes.

Flagball sees teams chasing a ball round the map, trying to throw it at each other's flag. First to hit it, wins. And King of the Realm gets players competing for possession of a crown - only when wearing it do kills count.

Be aware though that Nox's close-in, fast-paced combat will make life very frustrating for high-ping players.

Players always start out with a top-level character so there is no way to enter multiplayer games with any advantage and, as the games are set up via Westwood's own servers, cheating is unlikely to become a problem. Player-killing, anyway, is encour-
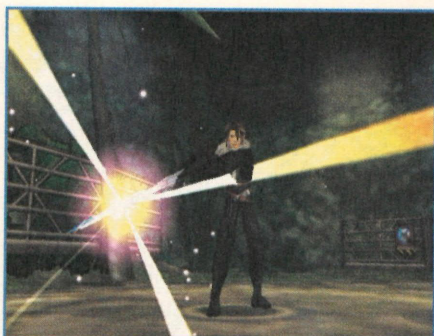
PROS
● Original multiplayer features
● High hookability factor
● Effective light-sourcing

CONS
● No co-op multiplayer mode
● Tiresome single player mode
● High-ping frustration

Final Fantasy VIII

Moody teenagers, anime monsters and spectacular graphics? Must be a Final Fantasy game, then. Games Domain's **Chris McMullen** examines the eighth incarnation of Squaresoft's epic series.

FF8 follows the story of Squall Leonhart, a 17-year-old soldier attending mercenary school in a world in which magic does exist but where technology has pride of place.

Things start off innocuously enough, with Squall having to prove his worth by taking on a giant fire-breathing creature (as you do) and then having to defending a small town from attack.

But things soon take a turn for the worse when a particularly nasty sorceress raises her peacock feather-clad head and starts causing trouble for all and sundry.

FF8's story is actually a little cliched, inferior to the more entertaining and surprising plot of FF7. Still, any excuse for wandering around getting into brightly coloured anime-style fights.

To be fair FF8 does, on reflection, have something in common with its predecessors, namely the RPG format of the game.

The game requires you to lead a party of characters through a variety of locations in search of victory against the evil Empire - well, something like that anyway.

These characters all have their own motivations, as well as their own strengths and weaknesses.

Most of them are quite likeable although the exception is Squall, the 'hero' of the piece, who starts off as a stroppy teenager with a dislike for everyone and everything and the habit of annoyingly shrugging his shoulders and turning away from every other character when they try to talk to him.

He becomes more amiable as the game progresses but you get the impression he'd rather be spending time sitting in his darkened bedroom listening to Morrissey and The Cure.

You view your self-bemoaning character and his compatriots from a third person perspective as you guide them through various locations in the world they inhabit.

These locations are scattered around the world map, which you can traverse on foot or by using one of the vehicles you can hire at certain locations or, later in the game, a big flying thing.

Once you turn up a significant location, you need to spend a fair bit of time there to accomplish your mission, hacking your way through some monsters or soldiers, triggering a certain event and then battling a big monster.

Then, you get an animation sequence and a new location to hack your way through. If you think this sounds a bit linear, then you'd be right.

You do occasionally have to nip back to an old location, and you can wander freely between locations at will most of the time, but there's not really much reason to do so as advancing the story usually requires you to visit one particular location at a time.

It would have been nice to have more sub-quests and sub-plots to make the game a little more interesting.

Your characters become stronger by duffing up their foes, gaining experience as they go, and when they gain enough they level up - becoming stronger in true RPG style.

Magic spells can be assigned to your stats to boost them, but punch-ups are the best way to go. Still, you don't make an omlette without breaking a few brightly-coloured heads.

Once you actually get into a scrap against one of the many coloured and, in some cases truly bizarre characters in FF8, you'll be impressed by how graphically stunning the fights are - especially if magic is involved.

But while in FF7 you needed to equip your characters with magic 'materia' to use spells, in FF8 you have to gather magic spells by collecting them from draw points scattered

One of Final Fantasy VIII's revolutionary cut-scenes

"Oh yeah, my name's..."

around, or drawing them in a sort of vampiric way from your opponents in a fight.

In a fight, each of your characters has an action gauge.

These action gauges are drained when you perform and you then can't perform an action till the gauge refills.
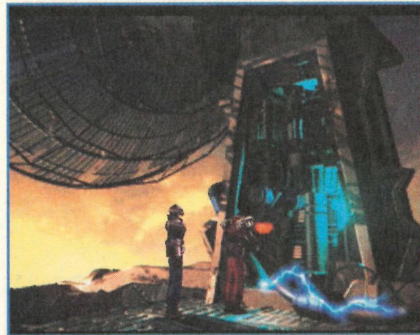
You can protect yourself against your enemy's attacks, or boost the effect of your own attacks, by allocating spells to the 'elements' section of your inventory which offers you defence against magic of a certain type such as fire, air, water and so on.

There's a lot of strategy involved in FF8's fights, even though the fights themselves do take place in semi-real time - with the enemy's action gauge charging at the same time as yours does.

For extra firepower, you can summon the Guardian Forces - huge, hulking characters who can wipe out weaker enemies with a single attack. The catch is that because your energy gauge takes longer to charge up with Guardian Forces, you're left even more vulnerable while using them.

While the aforementioned in-game fights look quite good, the rest of FF8 isn't quite as sharp.

The game backgrounds and locations, which are pretty well drawn and certainly aren't ugly, nevertheless look a bit blurry on the PC com-

pared to how they appeared on the PlayStation - but this isn't usually off-putting. Until, that is, you get onto the world map where you move between individual locations because, for some inexplicable reason, this has to be the ugliest, slowest and most frustrating implementation of an RPG world map there's been in ages.

Not only is it a bit blocky, it runs like a legless dog in treacle, even on a fast PC. Even if you've hired your characters a car it jerks along like nobody's business.

FF8 is certainly a big game - it's spread over a total of four CDs. And since there's no actual recorded speech - the dialogue appearing as surprisingly well-translated text - there's enough space for the game to contain a myriad of locations, a skip-full of objects, and a menagerie of monsters for you to tackle.

In fact, fighting your way through the game could take you a good couple of weeks.

The trouble is there's really no incentive to play the game again once you've completed it (even counting the couple of not particular-

ly enthralling sub-games) unlike the current RPG king Planescape or indeed some other RPGs which offer loads of different quests, different classes and other gameplay extending features.

FF8 is a decent enough addition to the Final Fantasy series and will no doubt appeal to fans of previous games and anyone who's particularly into Japanese anime-style art.

As an RPG in its own right, it's worth a look, especially given the size of the game, and there's a fair bit of character customisation to keep stat-heads happy (although strangely you can't put armour on your characters).

What some some RPG fans might find frustrating is the use of save-points to save your game, and the overall linearity of the game.

Also, the game itself isn't particularly original, being very similar to its predecessor.

As it stands, FF8 is worth a look and will keep you occupied for quite a while, but die-hard RPG fans prefer to go for the more entertaining, more flexible and just as long Planescape Torment. **GD**
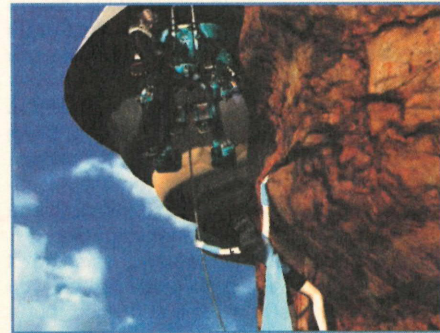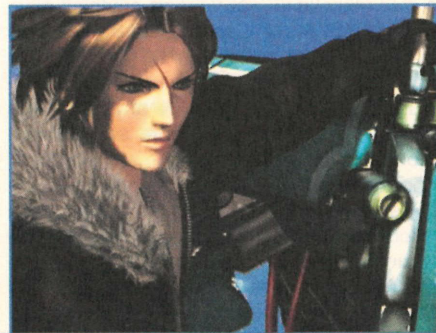
PROS

- Addictive to the end
- Takes time to complete
- Graphically stunning fights

CONS

- Uninspiring plot
- Too linear
- Blurry backgrounds

As battle rages in the air and on the ground, Squall drops in to save the girl

Asheron's Call

And so it came to pass that Asheron, son of Turbine, son of Microsoft, son of Gates, did challenge the almighty EverQuest, Lord and Saviour of all on-line RPG's, Defeater of Ultima the Weak, giver of 3D graphics and flashy Direct3D spells.

Lo, there was a terrible battle that raged for seven minutes and seven seconds. The earth trembled as these mighty giants fought each other until, eventually, a winner emerged.

Games Domain's **James Kay** kept a discerning eye on proceedings.

Asheron's Call is the latest pretender to EverQuest's on-line RPG crown. Although it began development at around the same time, AC suffered some pretty serious delays that resulted in it being released a good few months off target, having being scheduled for release around the same time as EverQuest. One of the first things you notice when playing Asheron's Call is the graphics. OK, they're better than Ultima Online and light-years ahead of Meridian 59, but EQ has set the new standard, and these just don't match up.

The textures are dull, the skins are lifeless and there's an awful amount of jerky scrolling when more detail is drawn on the screen. Another feature that detracts from the experience is the fact that it's almost impossible to play in any other mode than third person.

You can control the camera, spinning it around and zooming in and out as you please, and this is all well and good, but it makes it feel more like an action game than an RPG.

You can select a first-person mode but it isn't really effective as it feels like you're sat on a moving platform and the camera moves with significant inertia.

This is one of the biggest let-downs as it makes the game feel like more of a big arcade game with stats but without any action. The sound, like the graphics, is also of a more functional nature than anything else. Everything's present and correct but it's done without any real enthusiasm.

AC also sticks with the tried and tested formula of not being able to be anything but a human. Instead of races there are 'heritage groups' which are, to you and me, 'races'.

The basic premise behind the game is the three races, whoops, 'heritage groups' have discovered the island of Dereth at roughly the same time. These three 'heritage groups' are the Aluvians (medieval European types) the Sho (ancient Japanese Samurai types) and the Gharu'ndim (ancient Arab types).

Naturally, each of these races is better at dif-

ferent things - some make good spellcasters, for example, whereas others make better warriors.
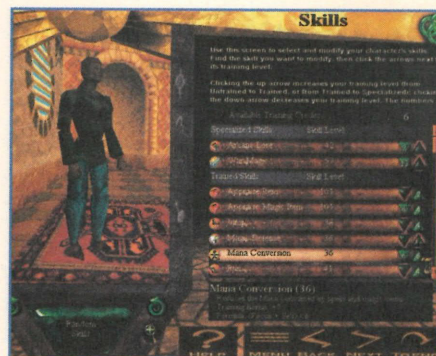
Turbine also have an interesting way of making guilds politically correct.

For example, guilds are now called 'Allegiances', or if you want to team up temporarily with someone else you can form a 'Fellowship'.

The idea behind an Allegiance is that you are following the ancient feudal system. You are loyal to your Lord, and in return he helps you out.

Your Lord is another player of a higher level than your character. Although it's been dressed in fancy clothes, this is the basic guild system and it works just as well as any other basic guild system. If it didn't have quite
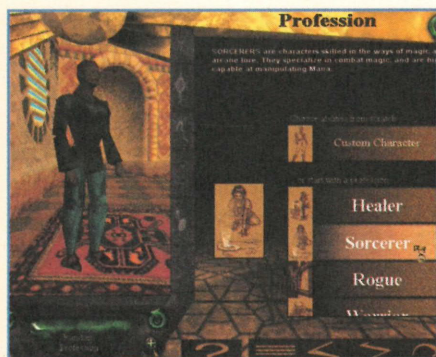
so many needless frills it might have even been better.

AC's character creation element is one of the game's strong points.

Although you've only got three Heritage Groups to choose from, there are plenty of character classes to pick from and oodles of stats to play around with.

You can raise or lower certain stats as you wish, train in special skills all according to the type of character you wish to play.

Unlike UO you don't have a career to follow. The game concentrates more on the adventuring side of things using the same philosophy of EQ, in that constantly chasing rabbits just to get enough to eat is boring.

You get experience points from killing monsters. The more you kill, the better you get at it. Simple, really.

Again like the mighty EQ, you can't go around slaughtering each other willy-nilly.

If you do want to exercise your murderous tendencies you have to complete a special quest, which then allows you to kill, maim and destroy the other folk who have also completed this quest.

As with EQ this system works pretty near perfectly, allowing those who want to live life more on the edge to enjoy themselves without spoiling the fun of others.

What is worth more of a mention is the combat system.

The only choices you have to make during combat are whether to aim your blow high, mid or low and how fast you want to strike - the faster the blow meaning the less powerful it is.

Unfortunately this only serves to make the game seem more like a cross between an on-line RPG and an action slasher.

The system is slightly too elaborate for an RPG but nowhere near detailed enough for a slasher. Like the rest of the game it's a failed compromise between the two.

Perhaps it's this interface which makes the game seem so arcade-like. It uses the traditional cursor keys to move your character around but the use of text boxes, as if to balance it out, makes the game more like the traditional on-line RPG - just click on the character you want to talk to and type away.

The magic system is also of interest. All spells are cast using a mixture of reagents (items), gestures, and incantations.

It's easy enough to use and there are a wide variety of spells for the three different types of spellcaster.

What all this boils down to is an on-line Action/RPG that has all the right ingredients but instead of making a gorgeous cake makes a bland mish-mash of what could have been. Sure, there are plenty of NPC's knocking about, a good amount of other players for you to team up with, but the world just doesn't feel alive.

The game world is massive and reasonably designed but everything is compromised by the aborted attempt to cross-breed with an action element. Not a bad game by any means, but certainly disappointing. **GD**

PROS
- Guild system works well
- Varied character creation
- Big, well-designed world

CONS
- Failed RPG - slasher hybrid
- Bland graphics
- Third person camera

PlayStation2

So, PlayStation2 has finally arrived, and with somewhat of a bang.

Shoppers queued for over 30 hours to get their mits on Sony's new megaconsole, fans even flying into Japan in a bid to pick up the sought after machine.

And pick them up they did, with reportedly one million PS2s changing hands in the first weekend.

Back here in good old Blighty, imported consoles were fetching in excess of £1,300, and even a week after release certain retailers still had price-tags of over a grand stuck to their precious stock.

But, while the launch was still over a week away, this year's Playstation Festival served as the perfect stage for Sony to showcase its latest box of tricks.

Within the confines of Tokyo's Makuhari Messe, Sony representatives flaunted the PlayStation2 machine, its packaging, and the various peripherals that would be available from the Japanese launch date of March 4, 2000.

Retailing at ¥39,800 (approximately £235), the PlayStation2 system is bundled with a DualShock 2 analogue controller, an 8MB memory card and a PlayStation2 demo disk. Other peripherals available from launch include additional DualShock 2 controllers, vertical and horizontal system stands and the PlayStation2 Multitap.

With over 80 publishers signed up for PlayStation2 development, Sony has once again proved its PlayStation bandwagon is something third party developers and publishers are only too keen to jump aboard.

As well as Sony's own software division, SCEI, third party Japanese software giants Namco, Capcom, Square and Konami were all at the show displaying their latest wares.

With PlayStation2, Sony will be pushing a state-of-the-art gaming platform that has the capability to run PlayStation titles, audio CDs and DVDs, making it essentially an all-in-one entertainment unit!

Strong whispers are circulating throughout the industry, speculating the UK launch will be as early as September 29 - the original PlayStation's fifth anniversary. So, it's probably best to stick your granny in the Bargain Pages now!
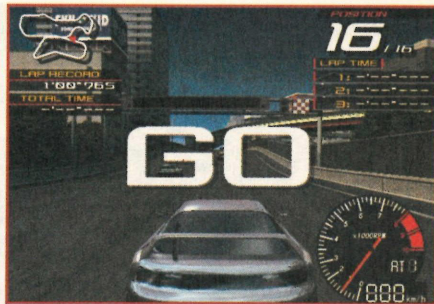
Can Ridge Racer help put PS2 on the map as it did with the original PlayStation
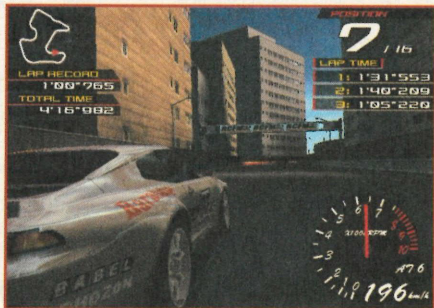
Ridge Racer V

When the original PlayStation was launched five years ago, there was one title that was the difference between gamers choosing Sony's machine over a Sega Saturn, namely Namco's Ridge Racer.

With Ridge Racer V, Sony is hoping the fifth instalment in the hugely successful series will have the same effect.

Featuring stunning 'next-generation' visuals and refined gameplay, Ridge Racer V will be the machine's flagship title.

Recently reviewed in Japanese weekly gaming publication, Famitsu, the game was awarded an impressive 36/40 by their notoriously stringent review team.
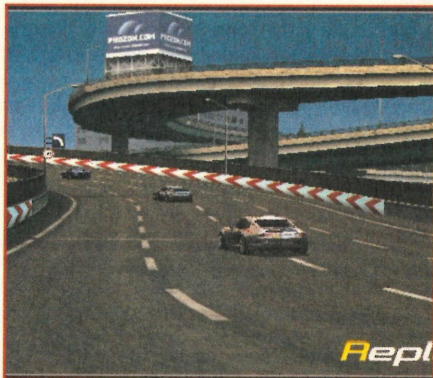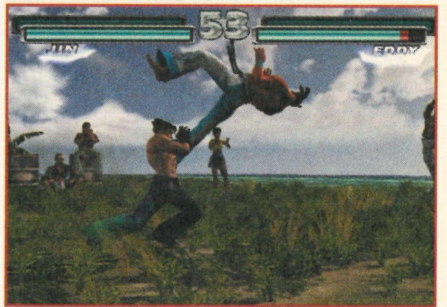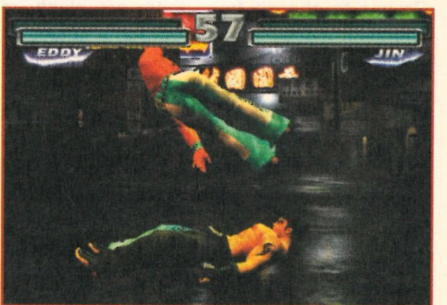
Tekken Tag Tournament

Featuring more characters than any other game in the series - well over 30 - Tekken Tag Tournament's delayed release should add even more hype to its name.
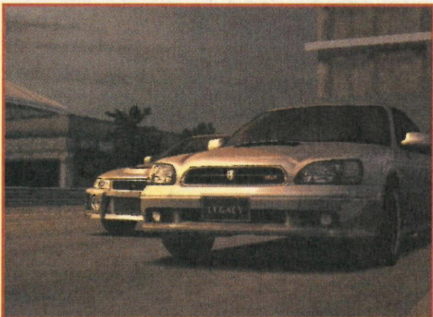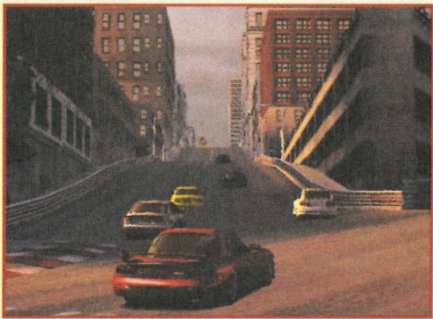
Due for release in Japan at the end of March, Tekken Tag Tournament is an upgraded version of the arcade game, featuring beautiful graphics set to surpass those featured in the Dreamcast version of Soul Calibur.

Expect the gameplay to remain largely the same as in Tekken 3, and to be so polished you can see your face in it.

Stunning visuals and relatively unchanged gameplay should make Tekken Tag Tournament a must have title

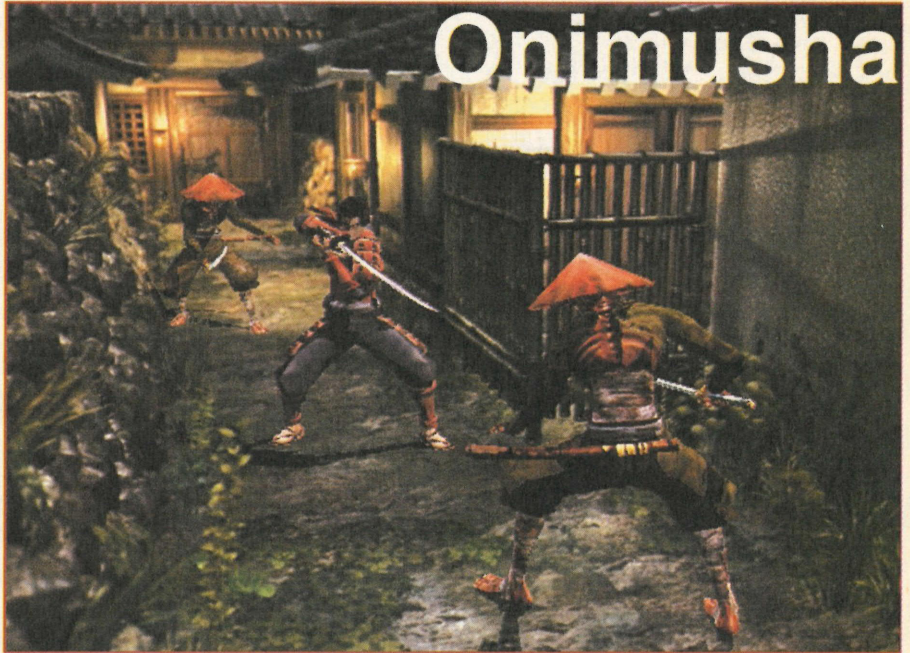# Onimusha

One of the more interesting looking titles is Onimusha from Capcom.
However, not an awful lot is known about this intriguing looking title at the moment.
Originally planned as a PlayStation game, Capcom abruptly cancelled it with the intent to release the game on a more powerful platform.
From the little information that has surfaced, it looks as if Capcom is aiming to create a Last Ninja of the new millennium.
Expect the game to feature a fair bit of swordplay, stealth and even a bit of magic.

GT 2000

Following the success of its latest PlayStation incarnation, Gran Turismo 2000 was the title that stole most of the limelight at the Festival.
Polyphony Digital has done everything in its power to combine the realistic handling of the previous two titles with the visual processing power PS2 has in abundance.
And the team look to have passed the test with flying colours, producing one of the best looking video games ever seen.
The sense of realism is unbelievable, and none more evident than in the spectacular replays.
As always, Sony has secured a huge number of vehicles licenses, which means, come the end of the year, you'll be test driving the latest and greatest horseless carriages.

Dead or Alive 2

Believe it or not, in Japan at least, Tecmo's Dead or Alive 2 is said to be even more highly anticipated than Namco's Tekken Tag Tournament.
Whether it's the fact that Japanese gamers have had the chance to play Tekken Tag Tournament in the arcades, or that the game features scantily clad women, remains to be seen.
From the look of the early screens, Dead or Alive 2 will be as impressive as the Dreamcast version.
The game is scheduled for a March 30 release in Japan.

Never trust a woman with big hands
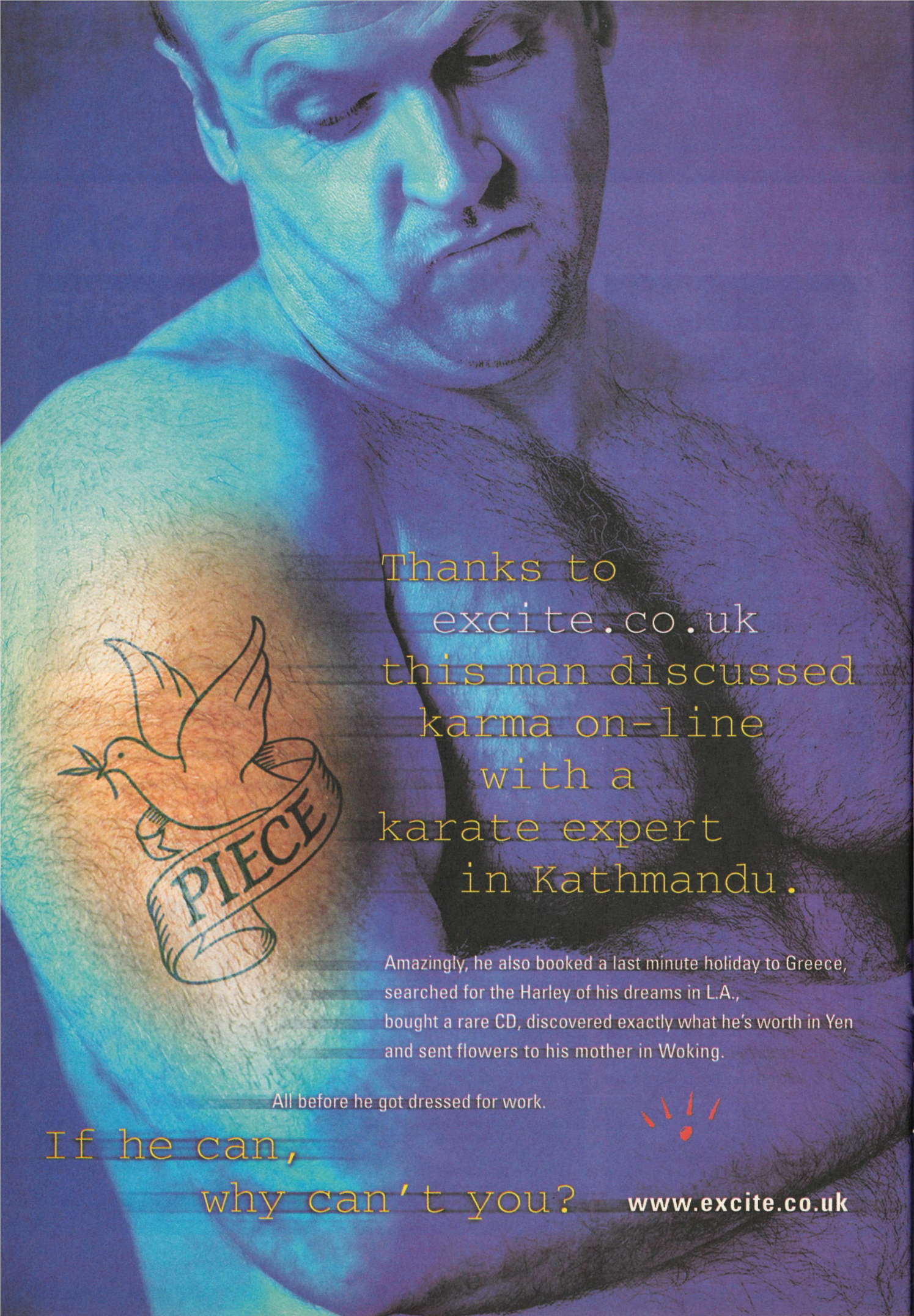
Thanks to
excite.co.uk
this man discussed
karma on-line
with a
karate expert
in Kathmandu.

Amazingly, he also booked a last minute holiday to Greece,
searched for the Harley of his dreams in L.A.,
bought a rare CD, discovered exactly what he's worth in Yen
and sent flowers to his mother in Woking.
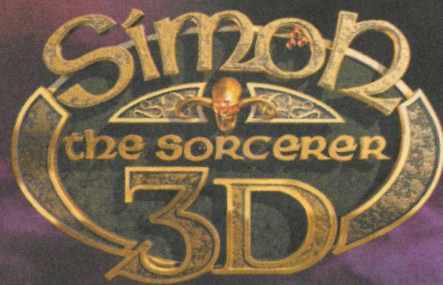
All before he got dressed for work.
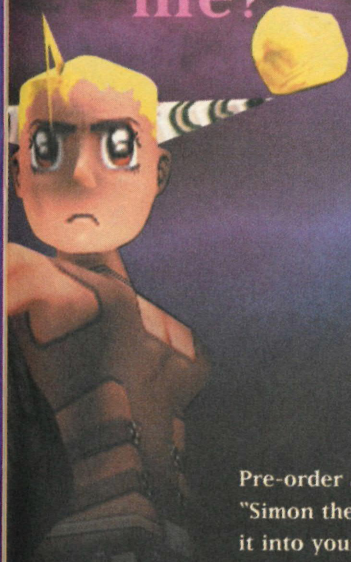
If he can,
why can't you?

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PIECE

Introduction

With Easter lurking on the horizon, Console Domain has been inundated with stacks of top releases and we, as ever, endeavour to bring you the cream of the crop for this month's edition of GD Offline. And if you like what you read here, be sure to visit our web site, **www.consoledomain.co.uk**, updated daily for all your gaming needs.

Shaping up to steal the limelight, Metal Gear Solid-style, comes one of the most ambitious titles of the year.

In Cold Blood is an espionage thriller, from the makers of Broken Sword, which promises to deliver an even more tantalising storyline to create a true blockbuster.

Read our first impressions of the game along with some jaw-dropping screenshots.

At the forefront of this month's review line-up is the sequel to Sony's stealth combat action title, Syphon Filter 2.

989 Studios has managed to cram even more content into a multitude of new levels to ensure you'll continually be kept on the edge of your seat.

With a two player mode now included, this is a must have for fans of the original and those of the action adventure genre.

Following a hugely successful return for her Last Revelation, gaming goddess Lara is back, but this time to exploit the mighty capabilities of the Dreamcast.

Featuring in recent ads for both Lucozade and Nike, and with a forthcoming appearance on the big screen, it seems as though Core's cultural icon can do absolutely no wrong.

Mike even found the time to write a poem about Lara, although a censored version wouldn't quite capture the same hilarity.

Just days after its Japanese launch, Console Domain managed to get behind the wheel of Sega's challenger to Gran Turismo, Sega GT. Pushing the Dreamcast to a whole new dimension, the visual delights on display are some of the best around and the handling's pretty impressive too!

Whether it is worthy of snatching Gran Turismo's racing crown though, is a matter of personal preference regarding your driving style.

Still in the racing forum, Namco's classic arcade game Ridge Racer spins onto the N64, some four years after first appearing on the PlayStation.

Featuring a super smooth framerate, crisp visuals and plenty of gorgeous light-shading and reflections, this title looks certain to ride high in the charts.

Plenty of light-hearted entertainment is guaranteed this month with the likes of WWF SmackDown!, Beatmania, Micro Maniacs, Theme Park World and Cool Boarders 4 under the spotlight.

For me SmackDown! weighs in as the pick of the bunch and is without doubt, the best smack inducing game to date.

Where else can you force an opponent to eat their own words by shoving a microphone down their throat?

Rounding up the action, comes the terror-inducing world of Zombie Revenge and the classy UEFA Champions League.

Hope you enjoy reading this month's crop of titles and remember to keep the letters flowing in, with your comments and questions. Alternatively, feel free to email me at: **gareth@gamesdomain.com** GD
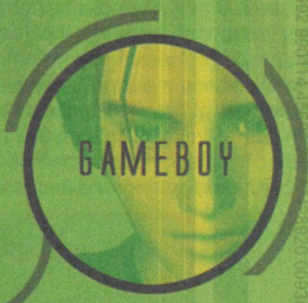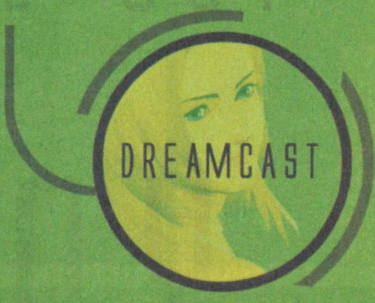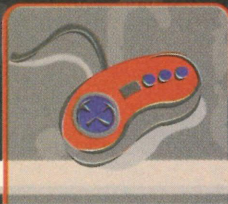
In Cold Blood

When Konami's masterpiece Metal Gear Solid was unleashed, the whole of the video gaming industry stared on in awe of this ground-breaking release. Now the Revolution development team, famed for developing the Broken Sword range of games, is preparing to achieve the same effect with their latest title, In Cold Blood.

Set on a global stage, the US and People's Republic of China are on the verge of war. The CIA has requested a favour from the British MI6 Secret Service.

An American agent has disappeared while investigating a uranium mine in a small former republic of the USSR. The region is run by hardline racist general, Dmitri Nagarov, who relied on genocide when first seizing power, several years ago.

British secret agent John Cord is allocated to the assignment. Cord's epic espionage adventure begins with him hallucinating, having been brutally tortured.

As the torturer begins the interrogation, players learn about Cord's character as he recalls his recent past, remembering that he has been betrayed, but unsure by whom. The identity of the betrayer is finally revealed as the engrossing plot reaches a climax at the end of the game, but there's guaranteed to be a multitude of twists and turns involved.

Trapped in a hostile country and forced to rely

> ## "The game blends graphical wizardry with innovative gameplay"

upon fragile relationships, Cord has to infiltrate the increasingly dangerous locations, sneaking around and relying upon stealth combat techniques for survival.

Cord has to piece together the full story by integrating with other characters and environments. He soon learns about the ruthless mastermind behind the plan to trigger a nuclear holocaust.

Spanning over two discs, the game blends graphical wizardry with innovative gameplay and employs a plethora of hi-tech weaponry to create a truly unique gaming experience.

Pre-rendered backgrounds with multiple camera angles and advanced high-polygon characters will further help to ensure that the game expands into a new dimension of realism. **GD**

Shadows not yet fully implemented

Shadows not yet fully implemented

PREVIEW

Publisher: Sony **Developer:** Revolution Software **Format:** PSX **Release:** Summer
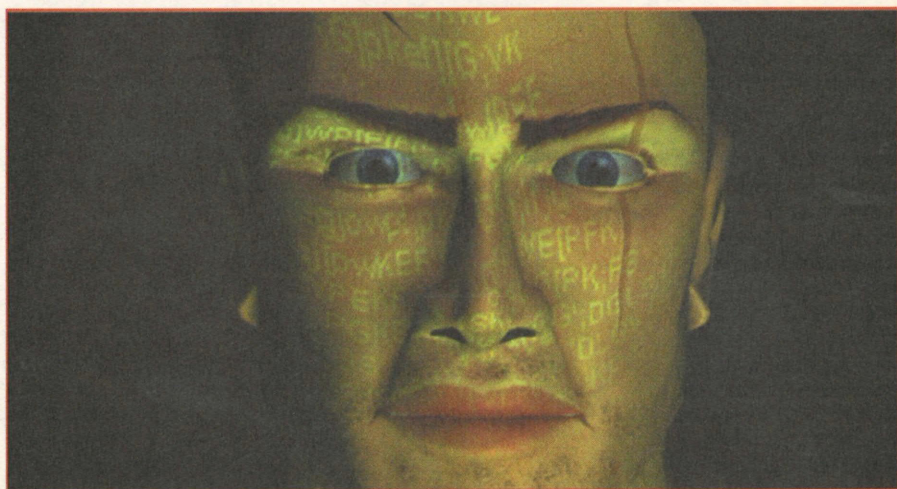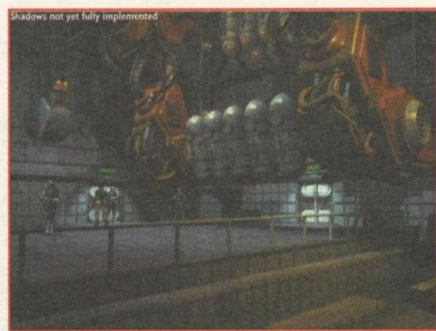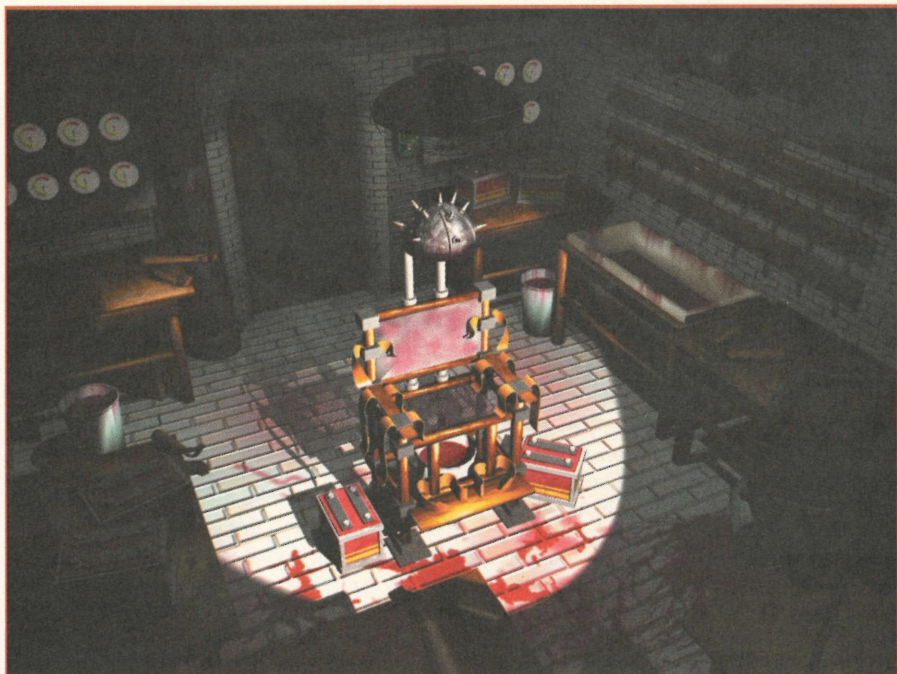
Zombie Revenge Dreamcast
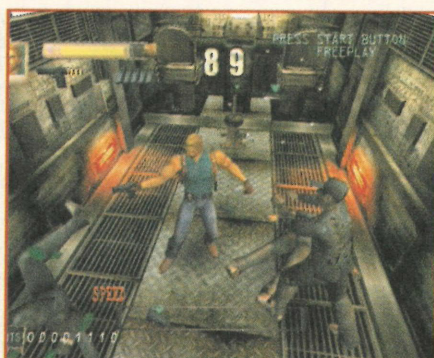
From the early days of video gaming, the idea of beating seven shades of the proverbial out of someone, without risk of personal injury, has always proved popular. From the birth of beat-'em-ups - with games such as Double Dragon - it was up until the likes of Street Fighter 2 that side-scrolling fisticuffs continued to rule the arcade roost. With the exception of Fighting Force and Die Hard Arcade, the genre hasn't really had much of a look in of late. Until now that is - cue Sega's Zombie Revenge. Console Domain's **Matt Vickers** went toe-to-toe with the undead.

Converted from the Naomi arcade version of the same name, and based loosely upon Sega's House of the Dead series, Zombie Revenge is another attempt at bringing the side-scrolling beat-'em-up into 3D.

The aim, as always with games of this nature, is to successfully guide your character through a series of levels, maiming anything that happens to cross your path.

Although Zombie Revenge doesn't take the genre to a new level in terms of gameplay, it makes up for lack of originality by ensuring everything is executed in spectacular fashion. From the Hollywood style explosions to the gratuitous annihilation of the zombies, everything in Zombie Revenge is stylistically consummated.

Weaponry, which has always played a major part in games of this type, is strewn around the game's environment generously.

Even at an early stage of the game, you'll be presented with the opportunity to make mincemeat of your undead adversaries with a collection of Uzis, sawn-offs and grenades.

If you're skilful enough to proceed to the later stages of the game, you find yourself hollowing out zombies chests with a pneumatic drill, and torching them with flame-throwers. Zombie Revenge is not for the faint of heart! Whilst not straying too far away from the likes of Streets of Rage, Zombie Revenge does feature a number of refined gameplay elements.

Perhaps the most novel gameplay addition is the unique targeting system that Sega have employed. With weapon in hand, facing an undead opponent will automatically bring up a target around your enemy.

Depending on the length of time you leave your character to take his or her shot the colour of the target will change, resulting in a more powerful shot.

Although fairly basic, this does add a tactical element to the game - ammunition is scarce, but at the same time the action is hectic.

Featuring a choice of three characters, multiple routes throughout the game, a two-player mode, and a number of Dreamcast exclusive features, Sega have obviously made an effort to add a little more longevity to the home version.

Despite its arcade heritage, the amount of time it takes to complete Zombie Revenge's quest is a little surprising.

Featuring a variety of levels set in some of the grittiest locations ever seen in a video game, each level features a boss character blocking your progress to the next level.

Some of the boss characters are simply stunning - from the Predator-inspired level two boss, through to the gigantic end-of-game guardian.

Converted from the Dreamcast-based Naomi arcade hardware, it comes as no surprise that the home version of Zombie Revenge is a flawless translation.

Featuring superb graphics and excellent

animation, shop owners could do worse than run this title in their demo booths.

Everything is depicted in glorious detail, from the flies that circle lamps (they even crawl across your television screen), to the butchered limbs that fly across the screen.

Zombie Revenge is a great title, although, as with many titles of this genre, it suffers from becoming too repetitive for its own good.

It's definitely worth checking out if you are a big fan of the side-scrolling beat-'em-up genre, just don't expect it to last forever.

While it does last, though, Zombie Revenge is an exemplary specimen of retro video gaming with state-of-the-art visuals. **GD**

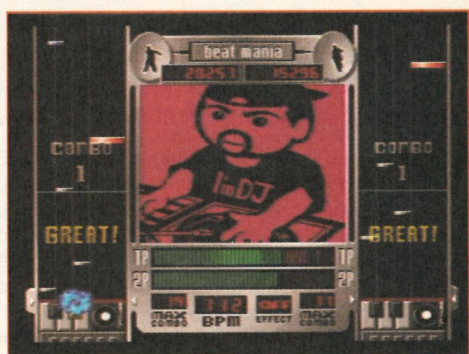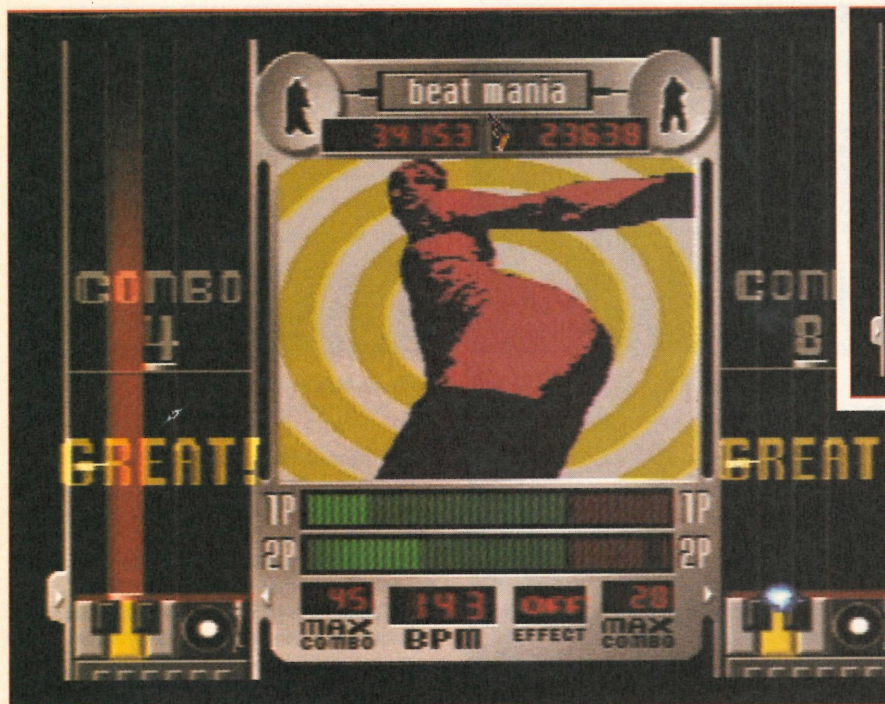| PROS	CONS
• Flawless arcade translation	• Repetitive
• Stunning boss characters	• Dated gaming genre
• Excellent visuals and animation	• Short lifespan

REVIEW

Publisher: Sega **Developer:** Sega **Format:** Dreamcast **Release:** Out Now

Beatmania

It seems as though now, more than ever, almost everybody wants to be a DJ. Mind you it's not surprising, seeing as top DJs get treated like royalty, paid mega-bucks for partying every night and get to play their favourite tunes to a bunch of ratted revellers.

Using Beatmania - Konami's latest musical offering - might not be the ideal way to forge a career in this industry but…who knows?

With this in mind, Console Domain's **Gareth Holden** grabbed his copy and started dreaming of Top of the Pops.

Although it is dubbed a DJ simulator, Beatmania is more about keyboard skills than excellence behind the decks. So rather than practising to be the next Carl Cox or Paul Oakenfold you're more likely to learn the skills of the ultra cheese-tastic pop sensation, Sash.

To start with you get a choice of heading into the main game, having a training session or just a free jam session. I'll say it now - this game is absolutely rock so don't even think about progressing to the main game without some vital practice.

Konami has included plenty of tracks in Beatmania with genres ranging from techno, rave and trance to acid jazz and vibe grooves. You can also choose the speed at which tracks are played, although I found that slowing the music down too much made it harder to stay in rhythm.

The gameplay is basically as follows.

As the tune plays out, a scrolling bar at the side of the screen tells you which keys to press. Timing is crucial to success and you have to press the right key just as the specified note is about to disappear off screen.

In addition to the notes, there is also a turntable button that allows you to perform scratch sounds when prompted.

> ## "Beatmania's gameplay makes it one of the hardest games I have ever experienced, but don't let this put you off!"

Hitting the right notes not only completes the song, but also gives you a ranking for your timing and rhythm.

Beatmania then scores every note, giving a rating from poor to great.

At the end of each performance, the number of great, good, poor and bad notes are totalled up alongside an overall performance graph to see whether the stage has been cleared or not. Just don't be surprised when you continually fail! Embarking on the main game, you have the choice of practising (again), normal mode or expert mode. Normal mode is based over four stages where you have to clear each stage.

Expert mode allows you to select your favourite course through five stages, by choosing your preferred tracks from those unlocked.

Practice and normal game modes allow you to continue if you fail to clear a stage, whereas the expert mode is harsh enough to cut your performance short as soon as you start missing the notes as the crowd jeer you to a stop.

If you are skilled enough to clear one stage, more tracks become available within a variety of different musical styles. Each track is graded on difficulty, spanning up to the dizzy heights of five stars. As you jam to your heart's content, the centre of the screen fills with fountains of colour and rapidly moving images relevant to each musical genre.

However, there's absolutely no chance of observing the show if you are taking part - this feature is purely to keep spectators happy.

PlayStation

beat mania

GOOD

Dance Dance Revolution

Dance Dance Revolution is just one of the latest crazes to hit Oriental arcades. Somewhat different to the usual run-of-the-mill driving and shooting games, DDR makes players strut their funky stuff to music to score points. Perhaps not ideal fare for a PlayStation conversion, but Konami didn't let this stop them.

Choose your track, and step onto DDR's special 36in square mat. This takes the place of the PSX controller for the game and stepping onto the different areas of the mat has the same effect as moving the D-pad. As the music plays, arrow icons move up the screen. When they reach markers at the top, you step on the relevant direction on the mat. Simple.

Or perhaps not. Although the idea is so easy even your granny could understand it, playing the game is likely to give Nanna a heart attack.

Hopping from arrow to arrow is surprisingly energetic - yes, even more so than a few rounds of Track and Field - and the Console Domain crew were soon groovin' on down big style. DDR's simple concept proved highly addictive - at least, when we could take our minds off how silly we looked. Although some of the tracks on the DDR CDs fall firmly into the category of "weird Japanese pop", there are some classic Western tunes on there too. But, you'll need a fat wedge of notes - about a hundred - to pick up a copy on import. Probably best to stick to the arcades for now.

players to either co-operate by playing different notes, vocals and scratches or by competing simultaneously on the same track.

My main complaint about the game is that when you're in the thick of the action, key presses annoyingly switch between activating different sounds, such as vocals and beats, which makes it harder to stay with the musical flow.

All in all, Beatmania is a highly enjoyable experience that is definitely best tried before being bought. Timing, concentration and co-ordination are needed, making lightning reactions and lots of practice essential.

There are plenty of tunes to jam along to and persistence will see you being able to play the keyboard with your eyes closed.

It's readily accessible and for those music maniacs with plenty of spare dollars, this represents a sound investment. **GD**

Beatmania's gameplay makes it possibly one of the hardest games I have ever experienced, but don't let this put you off!

If you've got the special controller for the game, Beatmania becomes strangely addictive and you'll definitely be coming back for more until you finally manage to unlock all of the game's tracks. The two player mode is great fun, spicing up the action by allowing

PROS

- Plenty of great tracks
- Challenging and addictive
- Cool visuals

CONS

- Lots of patience needed
- Hard without special controller
- Music fans only

UEFA Champions League
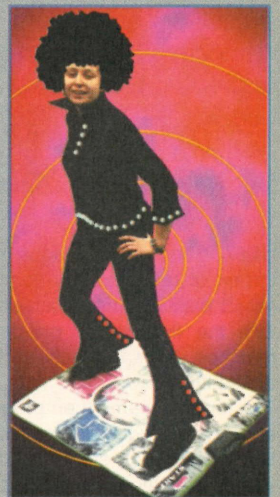

When Manchester United beat Bayern Munich 2-1 in the dying seconds of last season's Champions League final a piece of football history was made.

Silicon Dreams' latest kick-about focuses on this season's UEFA Champions League, with all the correct teams and groups in place.

But with competition in the footie games market almost as intense as that of the European cup, might the developers have scored an own-goal with this release.

Console Domain's **Gareth Holden** was refereeing.

UEFA Champions League takes the exact format of this season's competition. Players select their favourite team and get underway with the first set of pre-determined group matches, playing each of the three other teams twice.

The top two teams then progress onto a second group stage, which leads onto the nail-biting knockout stage of the competition, where often all of the greatest drama is seen. As you'd expect, comprehensive team man-

agement options are available and, for those requiring a more passive role, an auto-manage feature ensures your line-up includes the best selection of players and substitutions available.

Besides the championship, Silicon Dreams' game gives you a chance to rewrite history with a fantastic scenario mode based on the competition's finals of years gone by. Last season's drama is included, where you start the game as Man United 1-0 down with Sheringham arriving on the field as a sub on 86 minutes. Their last-ditch attempt to clinch

> **"Gorgeous visuals are immediately apparent with genuine stadia accurately recreated"**

the historic treble lies in your hands!

For those requiring a warm-up before heading into the dizzy heights of a full-blown championship, a practice mode allows you to get a feel for the game. Other game modes include friendly matches and even custom tournaments, where every conceivable option can be changed.

Stepping out on the pitch for the first time, gorgeous visuals are immediately apparent with real life stadia realistically recreated, from the towering stands to the crisp green

turf and fully animated crowds.

The players themselves look relatively realistic thanks to extensive motion capturing, although they are slightly angular as in FIFA 2000.

As the match kicks off, you instantly get a feel for the unique style of gameplay.

With realistically paced players UEFA Champions League helps to ensure plenty of midfield battles occur and when you do manage to make a run into the opponent's penalty area it is a special occasion.

Players generally spread out well around the pitch and this helps you to build attacks from anywhere on the field.

Although players are sometimes reluctant to run into space, or overlap on the wings before you play the ball, they will at least run onto through balls played in behind opposing defenders.

Players are equipped with the usual range of moves and shots but I was disappointed to see the old ball glued-to-the-feet as you run around the pitch, which can look slightly false as you make sudden changes in direction. This also means it's harder to tackle opponents without using a full-blooded challenge to regain possession, risking severe punishment from the ref.

In terms of scoring, with shot assist option on it is far too easy to make the back of the net bulge with a simple diagonal run followed by

PlayStation

a touch of the shoot button.

However, the real skill comes into play, when this option is disabled and you have to precisely aim shots. For the more skillful, one-two passes and lobs can be used to great effect especially in tight situations, like after corners.

For me, the quality of gameplay is not quite up to the high standards of a game like Konami's ISS Pro Evolution, although that's not to say it doesn't play a sound ball game. There are a few touches that that do need a little bit more work though.

Players do appear to slide around the pitch rather than run and it can be too easy go on a ball-hog run, which will take you one-on-one with the keeper.

On the plus side there are plenty of nice-touches, such as the weather changing during the match so that when the pitch is water-logged, the ball leaves a water trail as it travels along the sodden grass.

Another splendid feature is the camera work within the game. You can select absolutely any angle to play from, which will suit any-body from fans of Sensible Soccer to those of the original isometric FIFA game on the Megadrive, to those of the standard ISS side-on view.

In replays, you can even watch the action from the eyes of a linesman, ref or any of the players so that you can actually view a goal from the eyes of the scorer - an incredible feature.

Within the game, Clive Tyldesly gives an impressively accurate commentary, while current England boss, Kevin Keegan, provides analysis from the studio when the game is not in progress

Overall, UEFA Champions League achieves pretty much what it sets out to. It is a comprehensive football game based around the sheer excitement of the European competition. There's loads of detail and a superb scenario mode and, while the gameplay isn't as addictive as that of ISS Pro Evolution or FIFA 2000, it is still an enjoyable kick about which deserves a scouting from any serious footie fan. **GD**
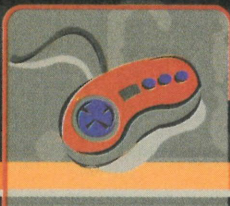
PROS	CONS
● Classic match feature	● Sliding, angular players
● Loads of competition detail	● Ease of scoring
● Excellent viewing options	● Better alternatives (ISS, FIFA 2000)

Tomb Raider: The Last Revelation

The Last Revelation took Lara Croft back to the top of the PC and PlayStation charts at Christmas.

Amazingly, despite being the fourth game in the Tomb Raider series, the public's thirst for Ms Croft's remarkable adventures and unfeasible proportions seems as strong as ever. With a movie and a fifth game set for the end of the year, Dreamcast owners are now being lured into the cult of Croft. Console Domain's **Pete Oliver** examined Eidos' prompt conversion of Lara's most recent outing.
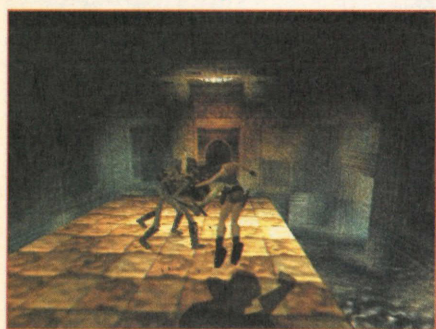
Like a record penned by the Gallagher brothers, the Tomb Raider games tend to stick to a familiar and populist formula.

The Last Revelation brings a few new tricks to the table, but ultimately it treads the well-worn path of exploration, puzzle-solving, and a fair whack of gun-toting violence.

While it may win few points for originality, The Last Revelation proves that Core Design can still produce one of the largest, best-designed, and most enthralling games of this genre. In true Britney Spears-style, Core begin the game with Lara learning her trade at sweet sixteen.

This brief and fairly mundane training level is quickly dispatched, but should prove useful practice for the minority who've never seen a Tomb Raider game before.

With training complete, the adventure begins in earnest.

Set entirely in Egypt, Core have focused The Last Revelation on providing an atmospheric and convincing gaming experience. Gone is the globe-trotting and violent bloodbaths of Tomb Raider 2, and equal short shrift has been given to Tomb Raider 3's sprawling level designs.

The Last Revelation harks back to the original Tomb Raider with a decent balance between puzzle-solving and combat.

This is, perhaps, the best designed Tomb Raider game to date. Puzzles are more varied and logical, while combat has also been tightened up with other human opponents finally possessing some basic grasp of tactics.

The standard action is broken up nicely by some driving sections where Lara rips across the Egyptian deserts avoiding gunfire and jeep-threatening pits.

The combination of aggressive Arabs and ravenous animals is now further supplemented by a horde of undead opponents awakened by Ms Croft's uninvited raiding of their tombs.

Lara now climbs poles, swings on ropes, crawls through holes, and kicks open doors. She can also combine objects and weapons, to make new or more useful tools.

For example, skeletons are immune to normal bullets, but if Lara combines a revolver with a laser sight, she can aim for their heads, shattering their skulls with a single shot.

This still does not kill them, of course, but it renders them only able to stumble around

blindly.

Sharper and with much richer lighting effects, this Dreamcast version of the game is unsurprisingly in a different visual league to its blocky PlayStation brother.

Sadly, it disappoints slightly due to the occasional slow-down when the screen gets busy. Core's 3D engine still has the odd glitch as well - sometimes part of Lara's body or fallen enemies will partially disappear into nearby scenery. Nevertheless, these are minor gripes and the superb visual design of the levels helps build a rich atmosphere.

The game's narrative starts off slowly, but is well driven by lavish rendered video clips every few levels. In-game audio is pretty standard stuff - Lara's weapons are realistic, her distinctive upper class voice makes the occasional comment, and the driving sections are accompanied by suitably pacey music

kicking in.

Although it's not the most spectacular game currently available on the Dreamcast, The Last Revelation is certainly no slouch when it comes to creating an atmospheric gaming experience.

Often overshadowed by the Lara Croft phenomena, the main draw of the Tomb Raider games is their massive, lasting challenge.

The Last Revelation must be the largest game to date with in excess of 40 levels. It is also possibly the hardest game in the series, and yet it never seems to become excessively frustrating.

A VMU is essential to save your progress throughout the game - with fiendish traps around every corner, you never know when Lara's fragile figure may next be hanging limply from an unexpected spike.

There is an argument that the Tomb Raider series has been rehashed too often, too quickly. This seems somewhat unfair as fans of the games still rush to buy the latest installments and each version of the game has introduced subtle refinements, a new story, and a fresh set of levels.

The Last Revelation is a worthy sequel to its predecessors without ever bringing anything radically new to the gaming public.

As the Dreamcast fights to establish itself as a major gaming format, The Last Revelation is a welcome addition to its line-up.

The occasional lapse in frame-rates is disappointing, but possibly the odd glitch is to be expected with such a rapid conversion.

Mixing action and adventure into a game that provides one of the longest challenges currently available for the Dreamcast, The Last Revelation should be an essential purchase for fans of this genre. **GD**
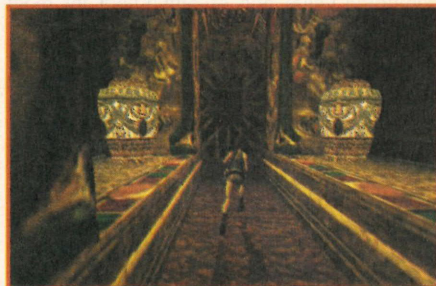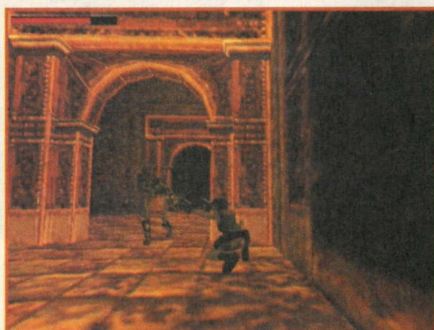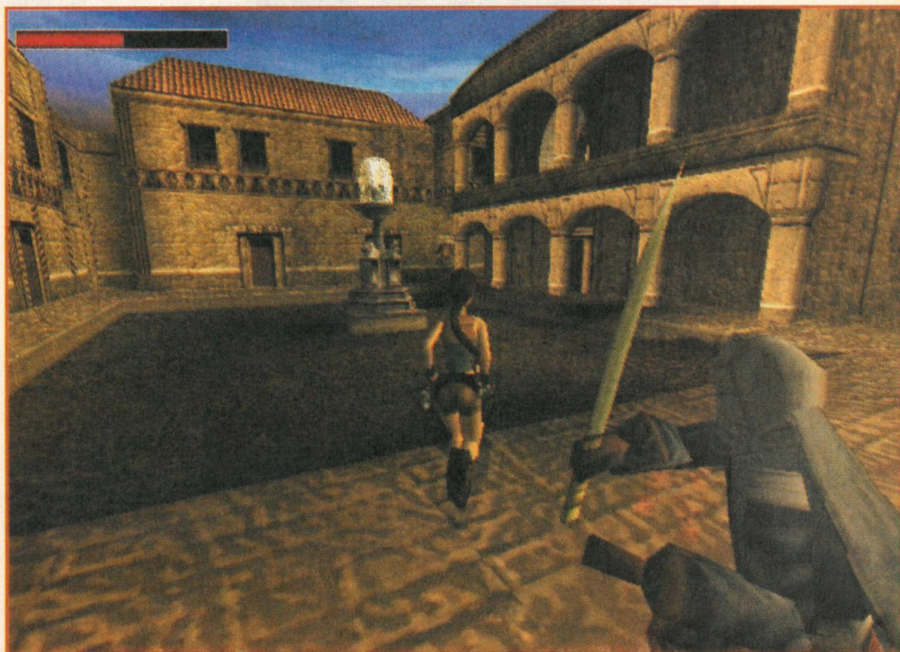

PROS

- Best designed Tomb Raider yet
- Different visual league to PSX
- Massive 40+ level challenge

CONS

- Occasional slow-down
- Odd graphical glitch
- Old format rehashed

Die Hard Trilogy 2

Following on from an already successful Die Hard Trilogy release, n-Space Inc. has revamped the original with a complete overhaul for the three game engines. For those that missed out on the first bout of sheer destruction, the game was highly praised for including a set of driving levels, a third person exploratory mode and first person shoot 'em up, representing the three Die Hard films.

Not worried about taking bullets, Console Domain's **Gareth Holden** had a look to see whether McClane kept his ego in tact in Die Hard Trilogy 2. Yipee-ka-yeh!

Although none of the original Die Hard Trilogy games were exceptional by themselves, the combination of all three on one disc provided top-notch value and entertainment for most gamers.

This follow-up packs even more explosive content into just one disc, with 28 new levels and six bosses, as you don McClane's filthy string vest and prepare to save the world from terrorist activity.

As the most notable addition to the prequel, the game now features a full story mode, which combines all of the three types of level into a central plot, alternating them to provide more of a movie feel.

Starting off in third person mode, you are dumped right in the middle of a prison riot and must brave it right through the thick of the fracas, seeing events through the eyes of McClane.

This will take you into the vermin-infested overhead air vents, presenting plenty of rats to gnash away at your ankles.

Making your way out of the prison, an inevitable car chase begins, where McClane is forced to ram enemy vehicles off the road, and a shoot-out level then results. And so the plot unfolds through a series of video clips as the different levels merge together.

Even though the differently-styled levels are now joined back-to-back, they can still be played individually within the arcade mode.

In addition, a practice mode allows you not only to fine-tune your skills, but also to unlock bonus levels that are not available in the story mode.
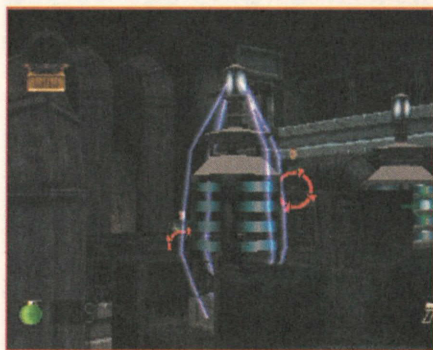
The developers have really had some fun with these bonus levels, one of which allows you to play as a rat in the ventilation ducts, annihilating other vermin with an arsenal of weapons.
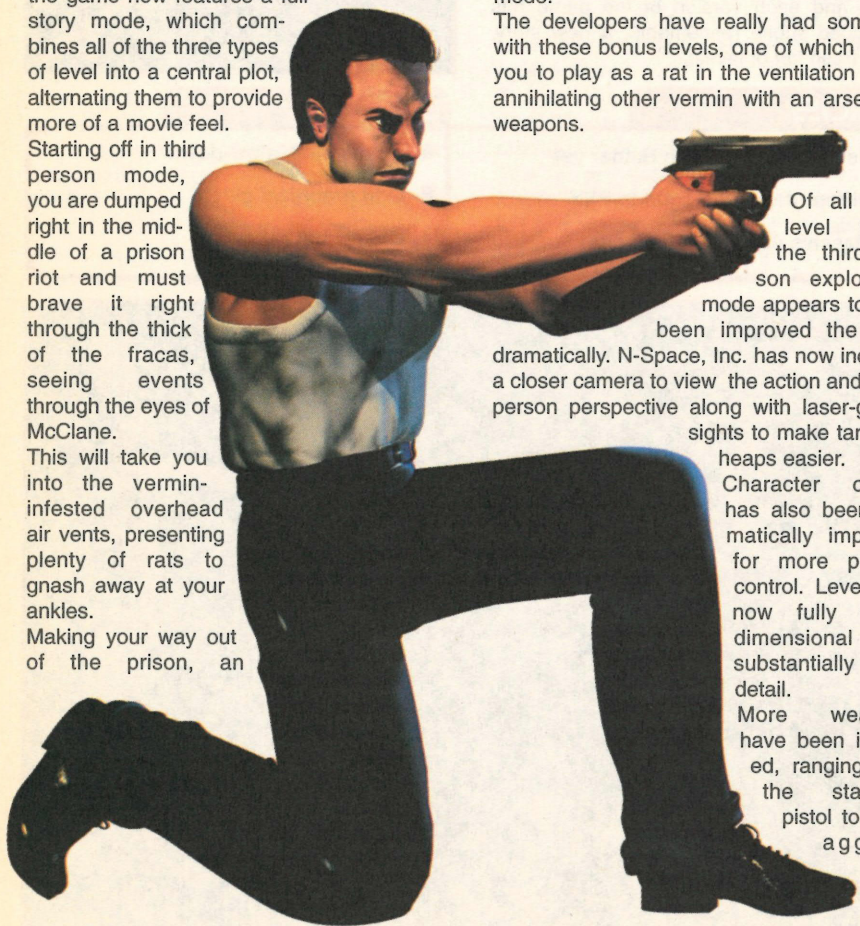
Of all three level types, the third person exploratory mode appears to have been improved the most dramatically. N-Space, Inc. has now included a closer camera to view the action and a first person perspective along with laser-guided sights to make targeting heaps easier.

Character control has also been dramatically improved for more precise control. Levels are now fully three-dimensional with substantially more detail.

More weapons have been included, ranging from the standard pistol to more aggres-sive automatic weaponry and smoke grenades for creating distractions.

More puzzle-solving is on offer to give added direction to the missions, the lack of which was a problem in the previous version. The environments are fully interactive, so anything from an empty bottle of beer to a light panel can be exploded, which neatly blacks out that particular area of the level.

Although there are a few graphical glitches, this is definitely the most comprehensive of game modes. I did find the character movement slightly jerky and, if this type of action is your bag, games like Syphon Filter and Metal Gear Solid are leagues ahead.

For many gamers, the first person shooting
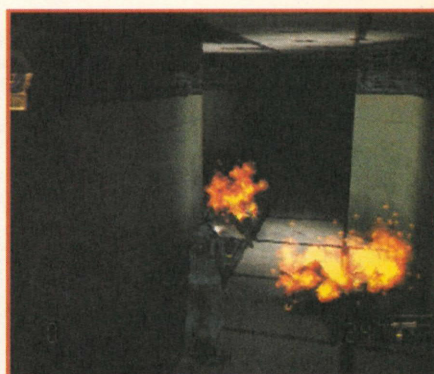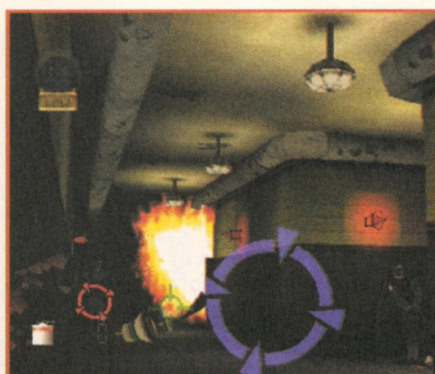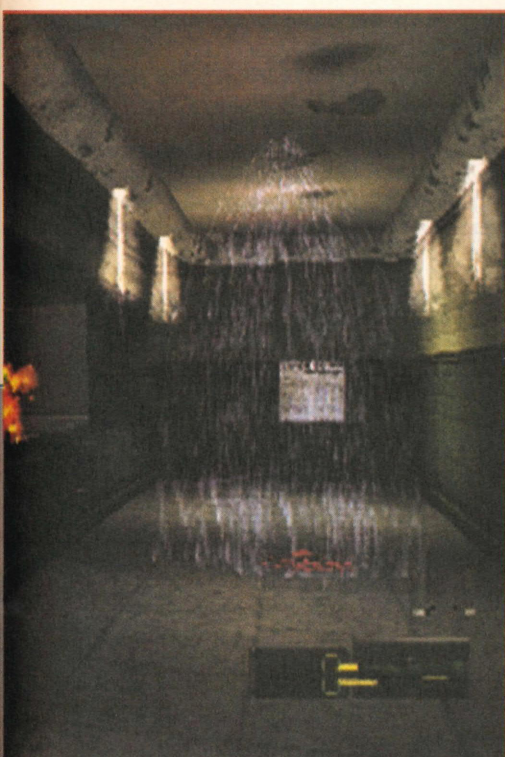
mode in the prequel was by far the most entertaining of the three games.

Now fully compatible with all current lightguns, this mode remains spectacular with problematic graphical glitches replaced with more realistic looking visuals.

The number of secret rooms and alternative routes have been radically increased and the environment is fully interactive with exploding objects, such as oil drums, often working to your advantage.

Unfortunately this mode is highly challenging to play with a standard controller. Another niggle is the camera jumping around wildly at times denying you the opportunity to completely clear an area. However, I would heartily recommend this mode if you own a lightgun.

I found the driving levels far less entertaining than those in the original trilogy primarily because the beautiful sights of a packed New York have been replaced with more gloomy looking countryside and downtown backdrops.

Making for a more realistic experience, car damage can now be sustained until destruction and handling attributes have been improved to reward sharper driving.

Unfortunately, it's not possible to switch cars, as in the original game, but there are different vehicles to use within different missions.

On the bomb defusal stages, explosive devices can either be taken to a safe house or the enemy can be intercepted by ramming their car off the road, Chase HQ style. When carrying a bomb, avoiding collisions is a necessity, which definitely requires both luck and agility. There is even a taxi stage where you must collect your fare and take them to the correct destination within a strict time limit, as in the film.

Fans of the previous outing will be pleased to know people and livestock can still be ploughed down and the blood splatters on to the windscreen - that is until the windscreen wipers clean it off! Apparently, n-Space, Inc. had many pleas to retain this feature and so duly obliged! As before, players have a free role to drive wherever the level allows them to, but tight time restrictions means sight-seeing is simply not an option!

When chasing enemy cars, it can be really frustrating to continually bash into them, as they tend to veer off at the last moment. Although you are equipped with a handbrake and nitro meter, often you'll get trapped behind rocks and, by the time you've turned around, the enemy is way off in the distance. We all know our ageing grey friend does not have the capacity to deal with a Gran Turismo, a Time Crisis and a Metal Gear Solid all in one game.

Developer n-Space, Inc. has used elements of these games as their inspiration to improve the already fantastic Die Hard Trilogy game. The fact the same development team worked on all three games this time has helped ensure consistency is present throughout.

However, except for the third person exploratory mode, I actually preferred the levels within the original trilogy game to these revamped versions.

Although the game again provides superb value for money, there are far better games available for the driving, first person and third person experiences represented here. GD
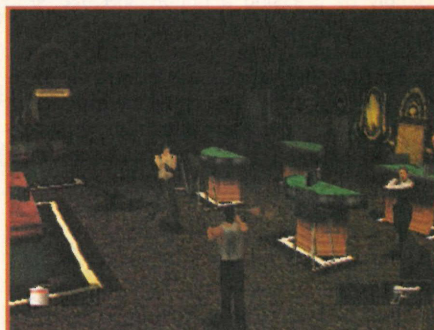
PROS	CONS
● Varied gameplay	● Some graphical glitches
● Fun bonus levels	● Difficult without lightgun
● Improved graphics	● Better games for each genre

Theme Park World

PSX

Conversion maestros Climax have brought the PC classic Theme Park World to the PlayStation. But will this tale of ride-building and micro-management translate any better than other recent disappointments? Console Domain's **Mike Smith** picks up the theme.

Typically, PC-to-console conversions stand or fall on how well the keyboard and mouse combination is translated to a joypad. Arguably, no game has ever got it quite right. PlayStation real-time strategy titles have always been a little awkward and although the recent Railroad Tycoon was better, there are still inherent problems in any game which attempts to use a traditional icons-menus-pointers system on a console.

Theme Park World suffers from none of these.

Building your theme park is made simple with an effective control system - the button assignments are even displayed permanently in the corner of the screen to remind you. Even building long, complex roller-coasters is made quick and easy.

Parks are built around one of a number of themes - Aztec, horror, space and so on. You start off with just one accessible to you but, as you progress, more are opened each with their own respective themes and sets of rides.

Reaching set targets within the levels earns 'gold tickets' which can then be spent on opening new levels, or purchasing special rides and items.

Unfortunately, it is never quite clear exactly what these goals are and you will be playing blind - although this makes for a nice surprise when a gold ticket flies across the screen.

Four tickets buy the camcorder, enabling perhaps the most unique feature of TPW.

Simply by pressing a button, the overhead view changes to a first-person perspective. You can walk round your park, go on the rides, play the sideshows, and get a first-hand feel for the level of vandalism and litter. Although the graphics in the first-person view

look a bit like Legovision, it makes a novel and useful addition.

Staff management is a crucial part of making a successful park.

Employing scientists allows you to research new rides and attractions, cleaners keep the litter down and mechanics keep the rides in working order.

If you don't treat your staff well, they will go on strike but regular wage increases and building a staffroom will help to keep the workers in line.

If only it was that easy to keep the Games Domain crew quiet.

If all this sounds a little complex, fear not - the advisor is here to help.

He sits in the corner of the screen, offering

tips, advice and praise as appropriate, in his Sean Connery tones.

And although he can get irritating after a while, he is useful to begin with and younger players will probably love him.

Although Theme Park World doesn't match up to the PC version's graphics, the underlying gameplay shines through to make it a thoroughly enjoyable and immersive way to spend a few hours. **GD**
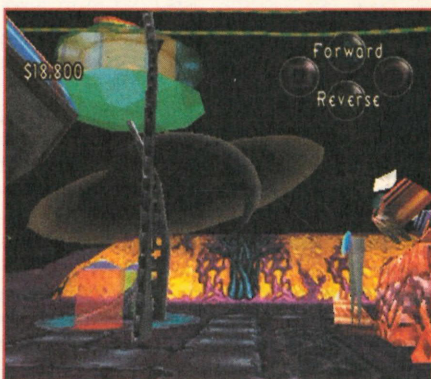
PROS	CONS
● Excellent conversion	● Graphics blocky at times
● Easy control system	● Undefined level goals
● Absorbing gameplay	● Advisor feature soon irritates

Publisher: EA **Developer:** Climax **Format:** PSX **Release:** March 24

Micro Maniacs

PlayStation

Fans of Micro Machines will be surprised to see what Codemasters has done to its classic format. Instead of cars, Micro Maniacs features little people legging it around the usual bizarre range of makeshift race tracks.

Console Domain's **Kevan Mander** hot-footed it to the nearest Playstation to give the new concept a run for its money.
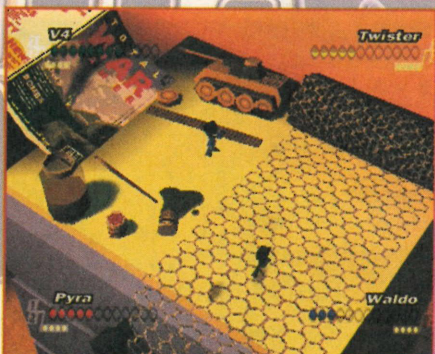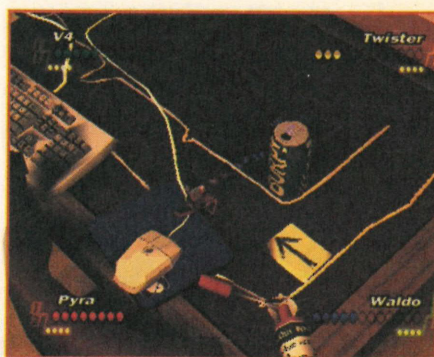
Micro Maniacs from Codemasters is a rather twisted version of the ultra-popular Micro Machines series.

Little miniature people or, let's be honest, freaks run around courses set in various indoor and outdoor scenarios in an attempt to win races.

Collecting power-ups, nudging your opponents off the track and jumping over the tiny little pests to pip them at the post is the name of the game.

There are various games for you to try your hand at including a simple challenge league, which unlocks new bonus levels and opponents, and a time trial mode to pit yourself against the clock.

Micro Maniacs also features a team-play multiplayer option and a standard multiplayer option which alows you to race against up to eight opponents at any one time.

The courses are well designed and their little features are great - one race around a photographic darkroom features a flashing camera as you cross the finish line.

The races aren't confined to running either. Jumping on bumblebees, skateboards or jet-skis are all included, each with their own different handling.

Riding around on the skateboard across a course made up of a series of drainpipes where you must leap from pipe to pipe is my personal favourite.

There are checkpoints throughout the courses but, annoyingly, if you miss these you get sent back to the point where you left the track which usually sets you behind the rest of the pack.

Situated along the courses are power-up lights and crossing one of these will give your character the opportunity to fire off one of two special individual attack tecniques.

Graphically the game is excellent, fast-paced, uses the PlayStation well and boasts a lot of well-made bright and bubbly textures.

Whether Micro Maniacs is suitable for the younger end of the console market is questionable though. The characters are resoundingly horrible - the worst is Mesme, a small girl clutching a teddy bear but with her brain on display - and among the various deaths on offer are decapitation and drowning.

Laid back jazzy tunes accompany the game and the sounds effects are also impressive, such as the rustling of paper as you run across it or the little metallic dink of a can as you bounce into it.

One of the problems with Micro Manics is the camera angle doesn't shift so you constantly have to check your direction and the way you have to turn. A camera tracking behind the characters would have been better, but this only a small point which can easily be overcome with lots of practise.

What makes the game a joy to play is the way it all comes together.

Graphics and gameplay are fantastic and the sound is superbly done. For fans of the series, and for those who fancy a twisted look at racing games, Micro Maniacs foot-stomping action will provide a sole lot of fun. **GD**
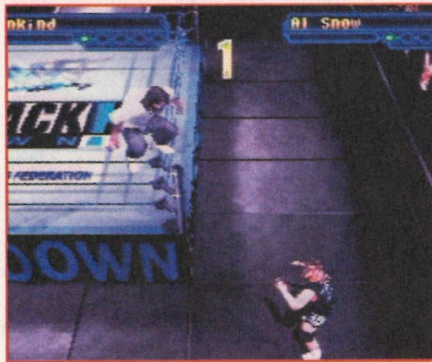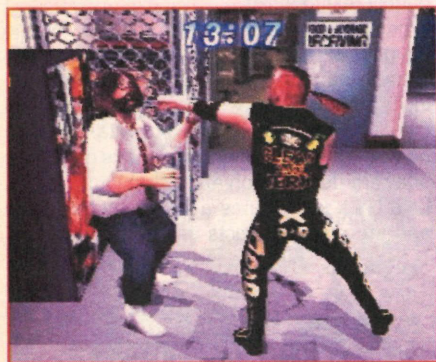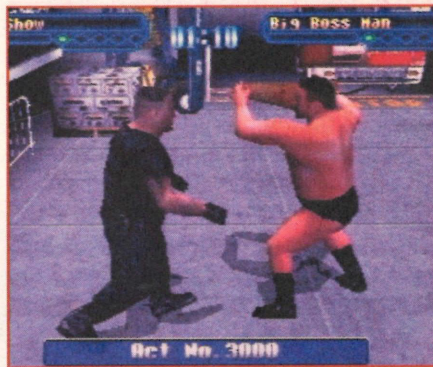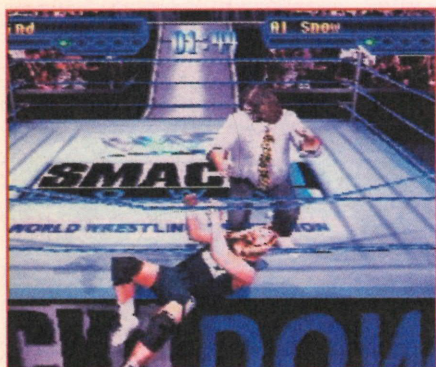
PROS

- Original revamp
- Great fun to play
- Bright, bubbly graphics

CONS

- Short-term appeal
- Dodgy camera angle
- Micro Machines on foot

Publisher: Codemasters **Developer:** Codemasters **Format:** PSX **Release:** March 31

SmackDown!

Know your role, shut your mouth and get ready to lay the smack down!
Never before have so many gamers wanted to see big hairy American men,
dressed in fluorescent lycra outfits prance about in a wrestling ring, sweat-
ing profusely and shouting obscenities at the crowd.
SmackDown! is THQ's latest spine-crunching game since it grappled the
highly-coveted WWF license from Acclaim.
Console Domain's **Gareth Holden** climbed into his star-spangled leotard,
hyped up the crowd and headed straight to the heart of the ruckus to get the
juice on Smackdown!

Every so often a game comes along that real-
ly lays down a new benchmark standard all
other games should aspire to.
WWF Smackdown! is definitely one such
game.
Much hyped as the game to throttle the living
daylights out of its competition, SmackDown!
opens up with a hefty three minute video of
our favourite freaks in the heat of the action.
Screaming into microphones, smashing
heads onto tables and chairs, pile-driving
opponents into submission and forming
alliances with fellow competitors are all
accepted as the norm, as each star bids to
win over both the crowd and the highly
sought-after world title belt.
At the core of WWF SmackDown! lies a game
engine based on the world-famous Toukon
Retsuden wrestling, helping to translate the

muscle-clad superstars into realistic looking
Playstation counterparts and ensuring the
action gels together without a glitch in sight.
For lone players the obvious choice is a sea-
son mode, whereby newcomers take control
of their favourite superstar. Month by month,
events are automatically scheduled to match-
up different wrestlers in a variety of bouts,
depending on their overall ranking.
For those players who have no particular pref-
erence towards any of the 36 muscle-bound
grapplers available, there's always the oppor-
tunity to create your very own genetic experi-
ment with various wrestler body parts.
It's then possible to train your freak with a
selection of moves, from any of the healthy
choice already present within the game.
You can then proceed into the pre-season
mode to build up skills and form alliances with
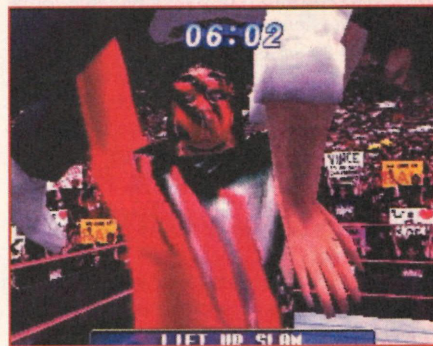
other wrestlers.
This is critical to ensuring you have some
friends to rely on if you're in trouble in the ring
or need a tag-team partner. You can, of
course, tell people to sling their hook, which
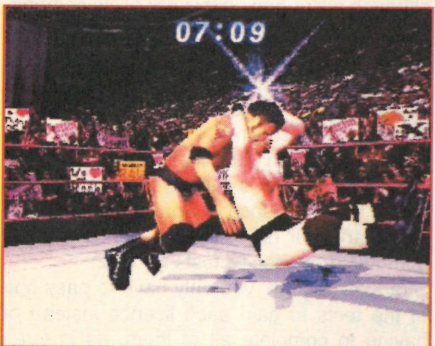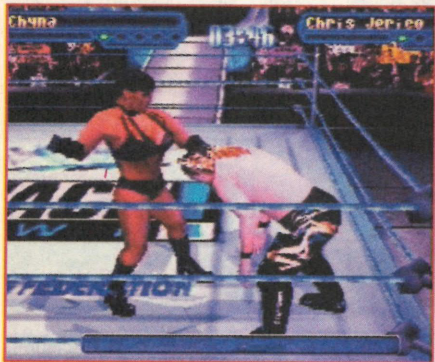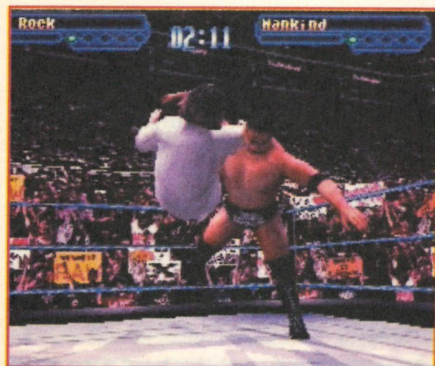is great for creating rivalries.
For me, the absence of variety in single play-
er mode for every wrestling game to date has
thwarted what could potentially have been
great entertainment.
THQ has no such limitations, integrating
depth and variety that span the whole season
and depend upon which character you
choose and your rate of success.
For those not willing to go for the full-blown
seasonal commitment, there are plenty of
event types to practice within the exhibition

mode.

Every type of match you see at the actual events can be played, including no-holds barred Cage match-ups, Tag Team, Royal Rumbles, guest referee matches, King of the Ring, Survival and "I quit" matches.

The latter of these match-ups always guarantees laughs as you try to beat your opponent into submission and then use the microphone on them as a cosh, before forcing them to utter the words, "I quit".

You can take the brawling anywhere within the arena confines by hurling your opponent through doorways to go into one of the many linked backstage areas. Equally so, guest referee matches nearly always wind up with the referee taking an active part in the fight and

are certain to provoke arguments if played with friends. The referee certainly will have the final say!

Hardcore wrestling fans will be pleased to know that pay-per-view events can also be organised to incorporate any type of match-up with any of the available 36 wrestlers.

Following the actual events live, you can then recreate that exact line-up to ensure that the end result is to your approval - that is if you're confident enough to layeth the smack down.

Preparing for battle, each wrestler has an impressive entrance movie, which plays as the actual game character parades individual mannerisms in the foreground and talks smack.

Within the ring the graphics are nothing short of excellent. The level of detail that has gone into the characters, the ring and the rest of the arena is definitely one of the game's major strengths.

WWF SmackDown! plays fluently without slowdown or clumsy collision detection being allowed to sneak in - even when four players are going hell for leather in the ring.

But there are three main areas that aren't quite polished in this otherwise well-rounded slugfest.

Firstly, the grunge-style music that blares throughout the bouts. It's a shame more effort couldn't have been spent on some impressive sound effects and voices to compliment the frantic action.

Secondly, when you are dishing out a pasting

> "Truly, there are simply too many gorgeous touches to mention in full."

to your opponent and one of their allies comes to the rescue, your character is frequently left confused as to whom to attack.

More often than not you'll wrongly face the enemy outside of the ring while the one inside lays into you, which can become slightly frustrating.

Thirdly, having delivered a spine-compressing body slam for the n'th time, your opponent is often too quick to rise to his feet, when really he should be paralysed with agony.

Also, the computer AI can be slightly dubious at times. For example, while playing as Steve Austin, with The Rock as my manager, the inevitable brawl broke out and I ended up fighting him rather than my designated opponents. None of these faults really serve to take an edge off the massively enjoyable gameplay though.

Truly there are simply too many gorgeous touches to mention in full and WWF SmackDown! will certainly be an essential addition to any wrestling or beat 'em up fan's collection.

I believe the graphics are some of the best seen on any console wrestler and the gameplay is spot-on. The speed at which characters launch into moves makes quick reactions a definite requirement for success.

There's so many game modes in addition to the pay-per-view and full season events that no longer will the game be left to gather dust until your mates are next around. GD

PROS

- Best console wrestler yet
- Exceptional graphic detail
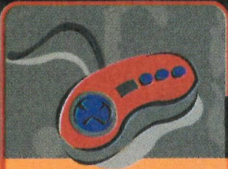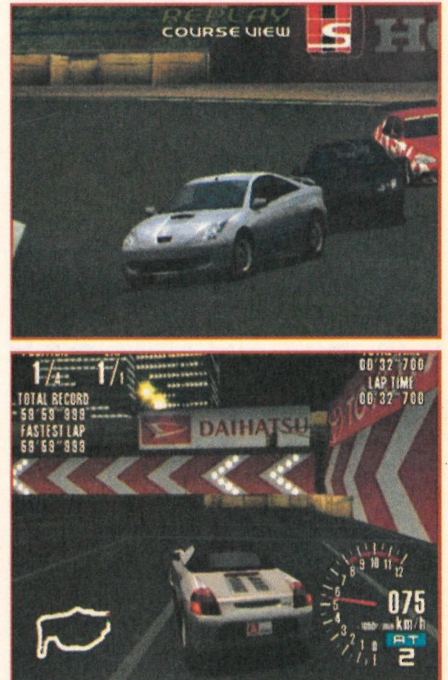- Good single player variety

CONS

- Mediocre music and SFX
- Unrealistic recovery times
- Occasional dubious AI

Publisher: THQ **Developer:** THQ **Format:** PSX **Release:** April 14

Sega GT

With Gran Turismo 2 currently riding high in the charts, Sega's reply to Polyphony Digital's masterpiece has just sped into Japanese stores.
Ever since word was first leaked of Sega GT's development, rumours have been rife that Sega's reputation to produce top quality racing games coupled with the Dreamcast's awesome power could be the formula needed to topple Sony's champ.
Now, the waiting is finally over, and Console Domain's Gareth Holden has taken a lengthy test drive with Sega's challenger, in a head-to-head battle of the GTs.

Building up the hype, an introductory video provides a guided tour around the Solid Circuit.
From first impressions, the game appears absolutely awesome, from the lifelike scenery of the bordering mountains and trees, right down to the sophisticated light shading, which creates sparkling reflections off the cars.
Road surfaces, advertising banners and rows of buildings gel together with ease to create a realistic environment, so much so that the temptation to head straight into the action is simply too great.
Quite simply, this is the best looking console racing game to date and although the game only maintains 30 frames per second, proceedings glide along smoothly without even the slightest hint of any pop-up scenery.
Within the main menu, rookie drivers have the option to embark on the full championship, a single race, time attack, dual race, view replays or hook-up to the Internet.
The single race is a self-explanatory quick

blast with the car of your choice on any of the available tracks - recommended as car handling is not as immediately accessible as Sega Rally or Gran Turismo.
Drivers can choose from three sets of cars depending on the difficulty of the opposition. Easy class incorporates the slowest cars, such as the Suzuki Alto, Mitsubishi Toppo and Honda Z Turbo.
Going up a grade, normal class sees you competing with the likes of the Toyota Celica, Honda S2000 and Mitsubishi FTO, whereas the hardest class pits the Nissan Skylines, Subaru Imprezas and Toyota Castrol Supras against one another.
Time attack again acts as more of a practice option and dual race is simply a re-badged two player, split screen mode but, promisingly, without the age-old problem of slower gameplay and reduced graphical details.
Due to our review code being Japanese, we

couldn't test out the Internet facilities, although we're hoping this will allow competitive link-up play when the European version is released.
Moving into the full championship the similarities with Sony's Gran Turismo are obvious.
As with Gran Turismo, before you can race you have to earn your licence. Unfortunately the testing system is cumbersome and fails to match the excellence of Sony's method.
There are four difficulties of licence with six manufacturer specific tests for each.
Strangely though, you only have to pass one of the tests to gain each licence instead of having to complete all of them, as in Gran Turismo.

Having demonstrated your ability to hurtle even the fastest of machines around the most challenging of circuits, it's time to take on the competition within the numerous race challenges on offer.
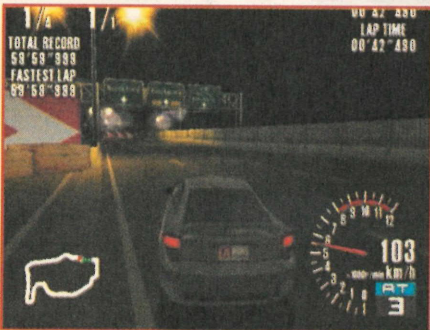Starting out with one million credits, you have just enough to purchase a second-hand small hatch, which can be tuned to oblivion once you earn enough prize money.
As in Gran Turismo, if you can be bothered to qualify, extra cash is awarded for achieving pole position and bonus prizes and new cars are awarded if you complete each race in first place.

> **"This is the best looking console racing game to date"**

Thankfully, I didn't have to put up with the super-mini for too long, as a win in the first race rewarded me with a Mazda MX-5 convertible.

Be warned though - initially there is quite a lot of completing the same race over and over to build up enough cash to tune your car, so that you can comfortably win the next race.

Races are plentiful, ranging from single events to a series of consecutive races, within a small league system. Certain companies even sponsor races providing a handy cash injection when you win.

The tracks are not as immediately impressive in structure to those seen in Gran Turismo, even though the scenery is much more realistic.

However, the night stage is especially eye-catching, with some truly amazing lighting, including the magnificent effect that allows brake lights to leave a blurred trail.

Skyscrapers line the route, which again provides a chance for the Dreamcast to exhibit fantastic reflections along the sides of the buildings, far surpassing anything seen within Gran Turismo.

Equally impressive though are the superb lens flare effects within the daytime stages.

In all there are ten circuits and this incorporates reversed tracks.

Unfortunately, as seen previously in the Ridge Racer series, corner signs are not changed for the reverse tracks, which can be confusing.

However, the range of events makes up for this, as once again it appears that Gran Turismo has been used as a platform of inspiration for Sega GT.

A 400 and 1000 meter drag race allow the most powerful of cars to compete head-to-head and the huge oval test track is used for a top speed challenge.

An endurance race also features, although it's only a measly 15 laps compared to the massive 120 laps of some races within Gran Turismo.

Initially, the car handling is slightly disappointing and if you hit the side walls, you come to a complete halt and it seems to take forever to catch up with the race leaders.

As such, within the confines of a two lap race, it's unlikely that you'll win if you do make such an error.

As previously mentioned, there is a full upgrade shop at your disposal, with turbos, engine upgrades, tyres, suspension, brakes and weight reduction all designed to race tune your dream machine.

You can even tamper with the factory set-tings, such as chassis layout and engine displacement settings.

In-game sounds range from the excellent growlings of high-spec engines to a poor soundtrack.

To say the soundtrack is passive would be a huge compliment, as the rock-influenced vibes combine effectively with cheesy electro sounds to make your ears bleed.

I only hope the European release gets a revamped set of sonics.

To sum up, Sega GT is a must buy for Dreamcast and, graphically at least, trounces Gran Turismo. However, gameplay is always the key factor and this is where Sony's racer moves into a higher gear.

Although, there are licence tests, over 136 cars from real manufacturers, spectacular graphics and plenty of challenge, much of it is unoriginal and owes a huge amount to the mighty Gran Turismo.

If Gran Turismo 2000 on the Playstation2 can produce graphics of this quality and maintain the addictive, realistic gameplay of the previous versions, it will surely assume pole position on the grid. **GD**

PROS
- Best graphics yet
- Loads of races
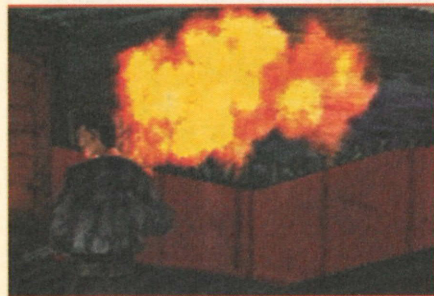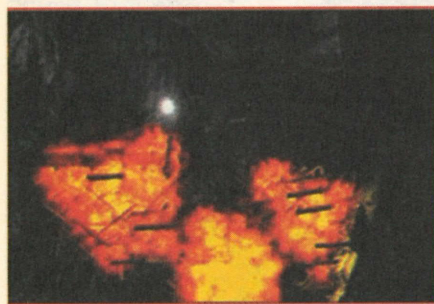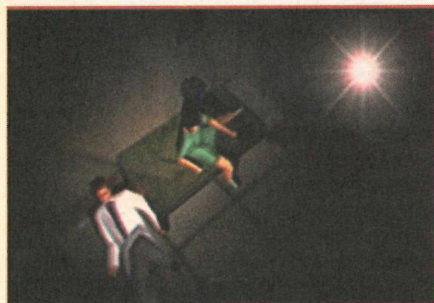- Excellent two player mode

CONS
- Dreadful soundtrack
- Unoriginal idea
- Handling not precise

Syphon Filter 2

Following the success of Syphon Filter, 989 Studios is poised to release a sequel to its block-busting stealth combat game.

Yes, Syphon Filter 2 is upon us and promises to be another smash hit with a heap of new features, another ludicrous storyline and more over-the-top shoot-outs than an episode of the A-Team.

Console Domain's **Gareth Holden** double-checked his parachute and ammo, hastily packed a spare pair of underpants, and prepared to save the world - again.

As the cold mist descends, you raise the sniper rifle up to eyesight level.

Fighting against your body's desire to tremble in the sub-zero temperatures, you zoom in your weapon's scope, squeeze back the trigger and watch as the enemy guard slumps to the floor without a sound.

Momentarily the coast is clear for you to sneak forward under the cover of darkness.

Suddenly, an enemy shrieks: "It's Logan, kill him!" Your cover has been blown.

Bullets whizz pass your head from all angles, the controller rumbles vigorously as your flak jacket absorbs a spray of bullets and you know it could be seconds before a sniper locks onto your head and the lights go out for good.

This is a typical situation in 989 Studios' second installment of Syphon Filter action.
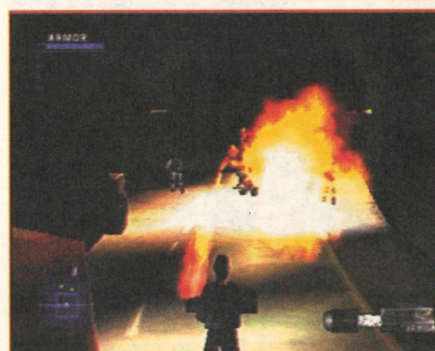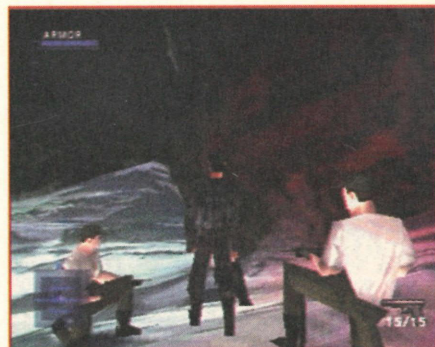
You begin as crack special forces agent Gabriel 'Gabe' Logan, the star of the original, but later in this game you get your first opportunity to complete objectives as intelligence expert, Xian Ling.

As with the original, central to the plot is the Syphon Filter virus which, as you probably remember, can be programmed to attack specific human targets - a devastating weapon in the wrong hands.

Again the storyline offers plenty of twists and turns - including a conspiracy involving top government officials - although I'll try not to spoil things by revealing them.

The game is spread over two discs and includes more than 20 levels spanning a plethora of global locations.

The action begins with Gabe returning by plane from Kazahkstan.

When the plane is blown out of the sky by Agency fighters you find yourself parachuting out into the cold night air over the Rockies and into the first real-world, 3D environment the game offers.

As you delve deeper into the riveting plot the level consistency enriches, engrossing you into the action.

Interspersed video clips ensure you are kept up-to-date with the storyline.

Levels are well varied, so some may see you in a bloody fire-fight with both snipers and foot soldiers, while others will see you unarmed and having to rely upon stealth techniques to infiltrate enemy territory and buildings undetected.

It's especially nice to see the AI so crisp and well defined.

For example, when you're progressing within a tunnel section accompanied by two allied GIs, they'll readily fell the enemies you've missed.
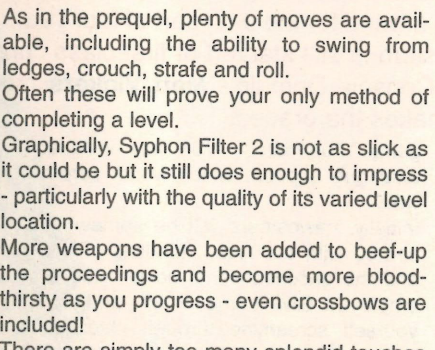
If, however, you simply cower back and leave them to fight alone, your mission will be terminated if one of them bites the dust.

Also, if you are spotted attempting to sneak up on the enemy, they'll shout out a warning

> **"To add a two player mode to a game that already oozes sheer class is like a dream come true"**

to others resulting in absolute mayhem.

The difficulty level is spot-on, enough to provide a testing challenge but not so much as to be terminally frustrating.

Continue points are offered after each objective is completed and save points are available at the end of each level as before.

One of the beautiful aspects of the game is there is not always a set way of completing tasks.

So whether you decide to take down an enemy from distance, or creep up behind them and knock them out, is entirely dependent on your confidence and ammunition quantities.

Gabe moves realistically smoothly, although his style of running occasionally looks as though he is impersonating a lard boy.

As in the prequel, plenty of moves are available, including the ability to swing from ledges, crouch, strafe and roll.

Often these will prove your only method of completing a level.

Graphically, Syphon Filter 2 is not as slick as it could be but it still does enough to impress - particularly with the quality of its varied level location.

More weapons have been added to beef-up the proceedings and become more bloodthirsty as you progress - even crossbows are included!

There are simply too many splendid touches to mention, but one that definitely deserves attention is the accuracy and intelligence of the sound effects.

As you close in on guards, their conversations become more audible - stay too far away and you could miss out on some crucial info.

Likewise, explosions are suitably deafening from close-quarters but are muffled by adding both distance and obstacles between Gabe and the action.

989 Studios has certainly saved the best until last with the inclusion of a two-player death match mode.

Weapons and armour are littered around the floors of heaps of specially designed arenas, ensuring there's plenty of bloody combat and more arenas are unlocked as you progress through the main game.

At times the two player action can become slightly sluggish and when you strafe the camera doesn't always keep up, causing your player to disappear off the screen.

However, to add this mode to a game that already oozes sheer class is like a dream come true.

Syphon Filter 2 is a must-have title for fans of both the original version and for those of action-adventure games.

Although it adopts a slightly more arcade-style of play than Metal Gear Solid, you'll be continually on the edge of your seat.

This is definitely a special experience deserving your full attention right to the end. **GD**

PROS

- Added death match mode
- More weapons and levels
- Completely engrossing

CONS

- 2P mode can be sluggish
- Occasional graphic glitches
- Visually not as slick as MGS

Ridge Racer 64

N64

Having just released the fifth Ridge Racer title for Sony's PlayStation2 console, Nintendo owners are just about to experience what has been, up until now, exclusive to the Playstation for the last five years.
Considering the Nintendo 64 has been around for the best part of four years, it's still a little surprising to see the system is still starved of first class conventional racing titles. Thankfully, as Console Domain's **Matt Vickers** discovered, Ridge Racer 64 more than makes the grade.

For those of you unfortunate enough not to have experienced Ridge Racer, it is an arcade racing game based around high-octane thrills and exaggerated car physics, rather than realistic simulation.

Licensed from Namco, Ridge Racer 64 is the first Nintendo 64 title to be developed by Nintendo-owned developer, NST.

Starting from scratch, rather than a direct conversion, NST has earned itself a reputation that will have Nintendo fans looking forward to future Dolphin and N64 projects with high expectations.

The first thing that will hit you about Ridge Racer 64 is the game's speed.

Not since the release of F-Zero X has the sensation of speed in a video game been so spectacular. Even at the beginning of the game, when you pilot the relatively slow beginner vehicles, the pace of the race takes a while to adjust to.

When you uncover some of the hidden vehicles in the game, you get a real sense of what a technical achievement NST has made.

Fans of the series won't need much time to adjust as the controls remain pretty much the same as the PlayStation versions of the game. Fortunately, NST has included full analogue support, which works surprisingly well.

Initially, newcomers will be somewhat concerned with the loose handling of the cars and the unconventional power-slide system employed. Give it time though, and you'll find yourself screaming through chicanes and power-sliding even the most intimidating of hair-pins at full speed.

Visually, despite the N64's low resolution, Ridge Racer 64 looks far superior to any of the PlayStation versions of the game. Featuring typically Neo-Tokyo style buildings, tunnels and cliff faces, there's no doubting the game's arcade heritage.

Unfortunately, as with many versions of Ridge Racer, the game suffers from a distinct dearth of courses. Although the box boasts

that nine are available, there are in fact only three courses, the other six being variations of the original courses.

The three courses that are available are brilliantly designed, but at the end of the day, Ridge Racer experts will get to see pretty much all the game has to offer in a day or so. For Ridge Racer fans, this is the first home version of the game you'll be able to play against three other human opponents. While the two player mode is excellent, fans who have experienced F-Zero X's four player mode in action will be disappointed by what Ridge Racer 64 has to offer when more than two human opponents are racing against you. Frame rates are reduced considerably.

One of the things that made the original Ridge Racer so appealing, was the 'techno' style soundtrack.

Whilst not to everyone's taste, the up tempo nature of the tunes were perfectly suited to the fast paced gameplay. Despite not having the advantage of a CD-ROM drive, the N64 renditions of the in-game tunes are surprisingly authentic.

Overall, Ridge Racer 64 is a title that will appeal to pretty much anyone who owns a Nintendo 64.

With its high speed arcade thrills and multiplayer modes, it seems a pity that a Nintendo 64 version of Namco's racer wasn't released a little earlier in the system's life, as it have surely boosted its flagging sales. Ridge Racer 64 is a title that will appeal to everyone, bar simulation fans. **GD**

PROS	CONS
● Speed	● Slowdown in 3P and 4P mode
● Soundtrack	● Too few courses
● Visually excellent	● Too little, too late

Publisher & Developer: Nintendo **Format:** N64 **Release:** March 10
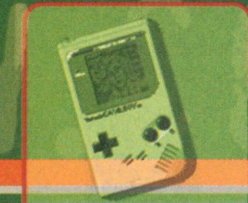
LIFE IN THE ZONES

vzones

Hannah was wasted.
Last night she'd partied in four
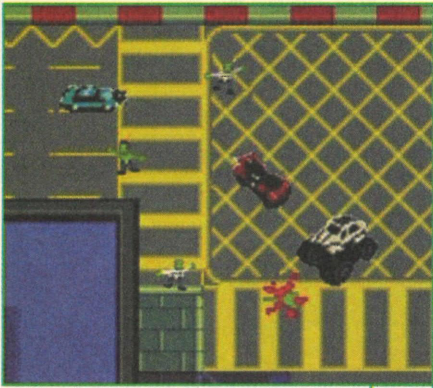different time zones.

www.virtualzones.co.uk
THE NET JUST GOT PERSONAL - THE ULTIMATE AVATAR COMMUNITY
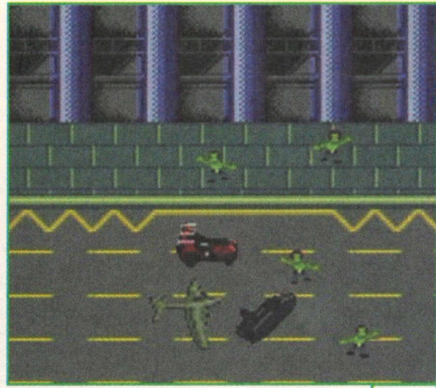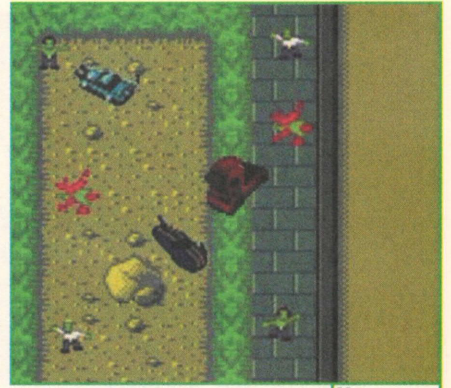
thus

Carmageddon

GameBoy

Mirror

Signal

Manoeuvre

With all the controversy that surrounds Carmageddon, I was surprised to see it was due a release on Nintendo's colourful handheld, allowing the often sick and twisted gameplay to fall into the clutches of sweet, innocent-minded children everywhere.

The best way to describe Carmageddon is as a combination of Combat Cars' top-down view, the total carnage of Destruction Derby and GTA's habitual slaughter of innocent pedestrians - with an assortment of missiles, landmines and oil slicks thrown in. The

result is a fantastically violent and sickeningly satisfying gorefest of a driving game. Carmageddon offers enough variety to keep any player enthralled, with eight different environments to challenge the avid driver. There are three enormous yet action-packed courses, plus an end-of-level mission, making up a total of 32 individual tracks.

The missions range from purging the city of zombies to hunting down and destroying rogue vehicles.

These too come in a range of shapes and sizes, with everything from combine har-

vesters to snow ploughs, not to mention a plane that screams around the streets at 400 mph. The Game Boy's modest screen becomes a showcase for aesthetically pleasing graphics, with bold, sharp colour and an impressive frame rate despite the plethora of sprites that populate the game's vast levels. Sadly, the audio doesn't impress quite as much and the game is flawed by a poor navigation system, although they do little to distract from the amazing gameplay Carmageddon has to offer. In short, this is one game that is hard to put down.

By Jamie Long

Star Wars Episode 1: Racer

Star Wars Episode 1: The Phantom Menace has given LucasArts the perfect excuse to create a rip-roaringly fast, futuristic racing game for the GameBoy Color.

Based on the podracing scene from the film, StarWars Episode 1: Racer sees you pilot your podracer through 20 courses to try and defeat each of the 20 champions.

Each podracer you beat is added to your collection, and can be used in subsequent races.

This game cartridge is larger than normal, boasting short video clips from the film, loads of large colour graphics, lots of long tracks, battery backed-up savegames, oh, and a rumble feature.

Every time you crash, or drive over bumpy ground, a small motor in the cartridge shakes the whole GameBoy.

This is actually quite effective and although the novelty does begin to wear off eventually, it's a welcome addition.

There is also a two player option and a choice of five planets, each of which has a total of four stages.

The race is a 2D top view with your pod sitting at the bottom of the screen. A helpful arrow at the top warns you of impending corners.

Graphically the game is superb, the game features good music and pod engine sound effects and the controls are pretty good once you get the hang of them.
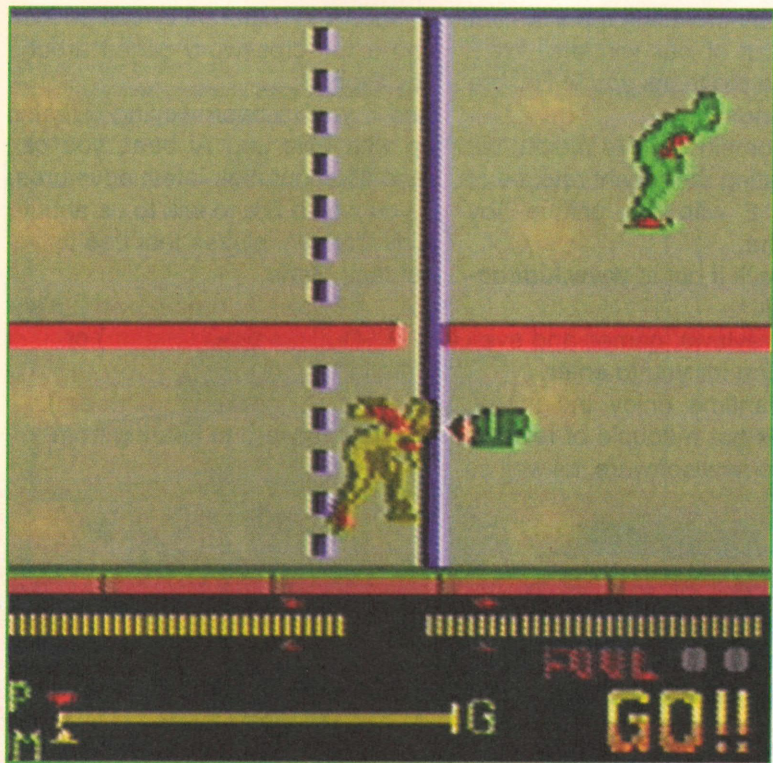
All 20 pods look and handle differently, which should ensure longevity, and the game runs very fast and smoothly. Overall, I was very impressed with this title. May the force be with you.

By Andrew Gower

YOU WON A NEW POD!
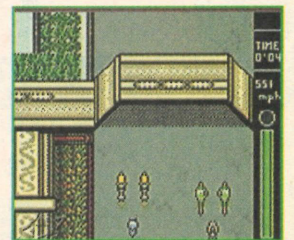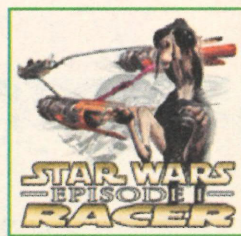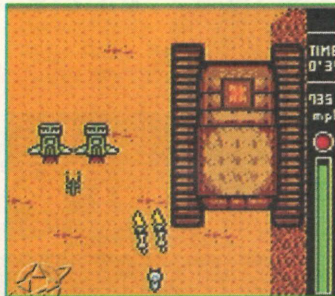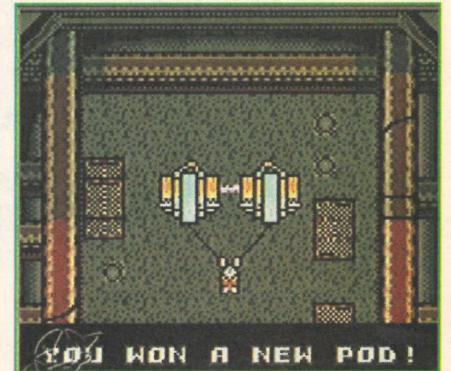
Winter Games

Konami Winter Games gets ten out of ten for its debut on GameBoy. A follow-up to the idea set in place by Track and Field, this game offers a variety of competitive games for you to get stuck into.

Contained within the game are two methods of play - Challenge and Championship mode.

Challenge Mode will have you hitting the snow and ice to compete in one of four events - ski-jumping K:90, downhill, speed skating and half-pipe.

Championship Mode sets you up for a head-to-head contest with all the other nations for the coveted prize of being named champion nation of the winter games. And you have the added bonus of being able to play the remaining four events - aerials, giant slalom, four-man bobsled and ski-jumping K:120 - along with other previously mentioned challenges.

Gameplay is second to none with excellent speed and some superb handling controls.

Music and sound effects are not wonderful to listen to but I did not have any high expectations for the format on this point.

Graphics are good although the speed of the game is not sacrificed in a vain attempt to make everything look pretty.

The only let down is the short life-span the game suffers from, with only eight competitions in total.

Apart from that, if you enjoy competing in any sport - not necessarily track and field - this is a must-buy. It has almost everything you could want from a game of this genre, from speed right down to the repetitive button-bashing.

By Dave O'Donohoe

International Track and Field

The GameBoy version of Konami's International Track and Field, originally released in arcade format in the mid-eighties, is based on the decathlon.

Featuring ten events, you complete against a number of computer-controlled opponents for medals.

Certain strategic elements have to be respected if you want to be in the running for a medal. For example, the 100 metre sprint is just a test of how quickly you can press the buttons in sequence, but 1,500 metre success relies on correct pacing.

The hammer and high jump events require careful estimation of angles and the long jump requires rapid button-bashing, careful timing and good angle estimation.

In the game's Hyper mode, you take the events in the original arcade version order. Konami, however, have added an all new 'Career' mode which is where the meat of the package lies.

Here you can set up your character details and set out a training schedule to build up your personal statistics.

Neglect any one of your characters attributes and your performance will suffer, indulge one and you could end up with a career-threatening injury.

Throughout your 'career' you'll be invited to training sessions and occasionally a major competition will materialise.

More often than not you will be melting the plastic buttons of your GameBoy, only to see your character trailing behind like he's got his kecs round his ankles. On the plus side, International Track and Field's visuals are almost an improvement on the arcade version and, frustrating though it is, remarkably it is still quite enjoyable.

By Matt Vickers

100m

1500m

Discus

Longjump

Highjump
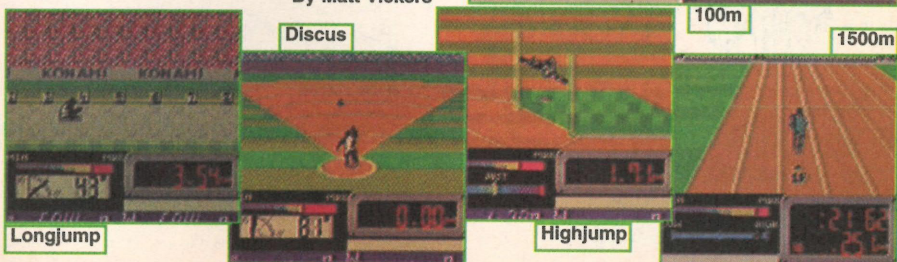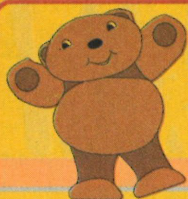
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Welcome

Welcome to the Kids Domain area.

We hope, now that you've seen a couple of editions of the magazine, you'll be keeping up to date with all the news, reviews, games, stories and activities on our website, **www.kidsdomain.co.uk**.

In our February edition, we ran a competition to win prizes from the Virtual Puzzle Company.

Unfortunately, the company ceased trading and was unable to provide us with the games they had promised. Hasbro Interactive luckily came to our rescue by providing replacement prizes for all of our winners. We'd like to say a big thank you to Hasbro for their generosity.

On Kids Domain UK this month, we are celebrating the recent release of Toy Story 2 with our unique Toy Story 2 zone.

Go and check it out at **www.kidsdomain.co.uk**.

We've got reviews, games and even a competition for you to enter.

In the meantime enjoy the magazine! We've got a couple of reviews of some top new software, as well as

a spot the difference competition and a fun crossword based around Toy Story 2.

And if you've been waiting to catch up with Ellie and Al bear, you can read all about their latest adveutures. If you would like to talk to us about Kids Domain, please feel free to contact: Maria (**maria@gamesdomain.com**), Kate (**kate@gamesdomain.com**) or Caroline (**caroline@gamesdomain.com**). We look forward to hearing from you soon.
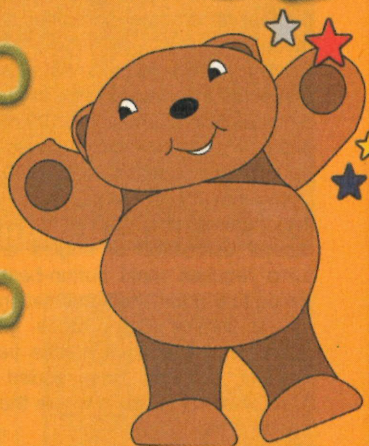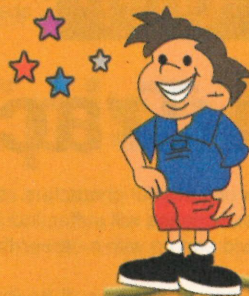
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Newsletter
Book reviews
Film reviews
Toy reviews
Days out guide

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Spot the difference

Publisher Dorling Kindersley has kindly given us five copies each of Bananas in Pyjamas (3-6 years), My First British Isles Explorer (5-9 years) and The 20th Century day by day (10+ years) to give away in this month's competition.

All you have to do is spot the eight differences between the two pictures. Write them down on a postcard and send it to us at: **Spot the Difference Competition, Kids Domain, Unit 2, Cuckoo Wharf, 435 Lichfield Road, Aston, Birmingham, B6 7SS**. The closing date for the competition is April 17, 2000.
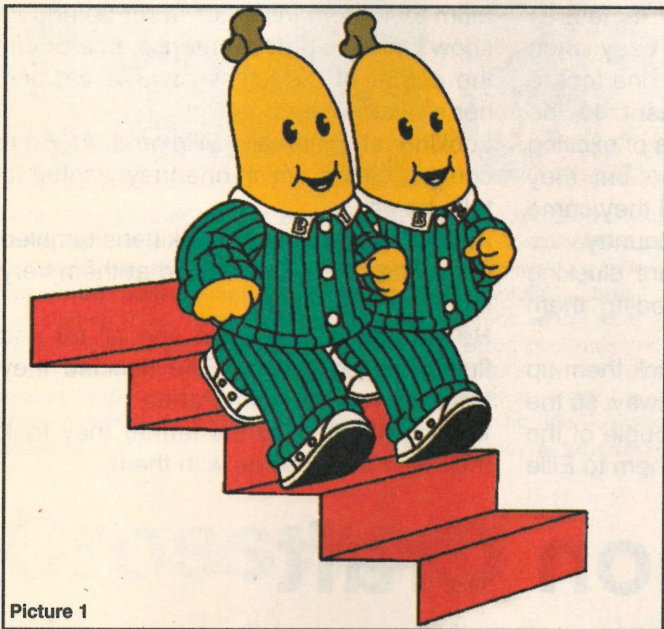
Picture 1
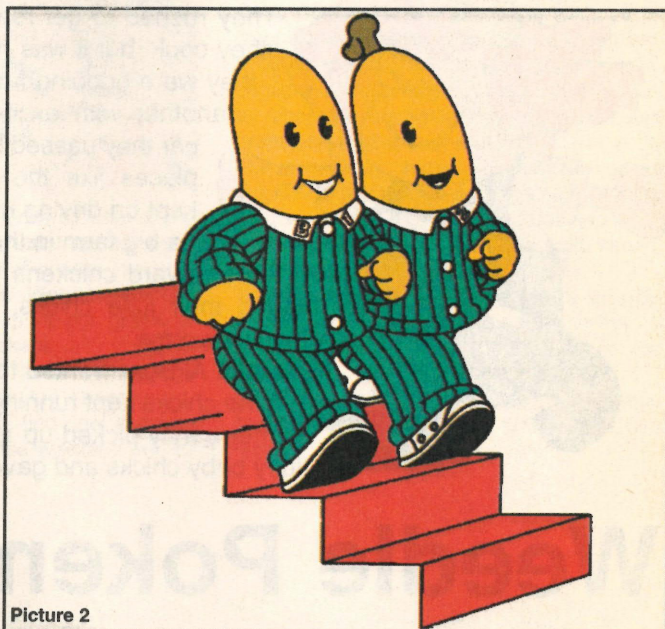
Picture 2

My First Amazing British Isles Explorer

The aim of the title is to become a British Isles Explorer and visit locations throughout England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales.
You do this by following the clues left by your friend Joe.

He tells you where he'll be next, but you're always one step behind and have to follow the clues until you catch up.

There are two difficulty levels, requiring you to know about compass directions and general locations of major towns.

There are a couple more activities to be played in the home - a weather report that allows you to choose different weather types for the British Isles and then play your choice through the TV.

And Raise the Flag, a quiz game that raises a flag every time you get an answer right.

One of the most useful features was the Index.

This is a list of topics the game has information on, from towns and cities to animals, natural wonders and famous places.

This would be a useful tool for anyone wanting to learn a little more about things they find

on their Explorer journey.

The replayability issue was slightly irritating.

I finished the Explorer Challenge and wanted to play again, but to start over, I had to go to the registration page (where I entered my name initially) and change the details.

I would have liked to be able to replay the game without doing all of this first.

In the end, though, this is a solid, interesting title, which provides useful details about the British Isles and should prove useful to any 5 to 9 year old.
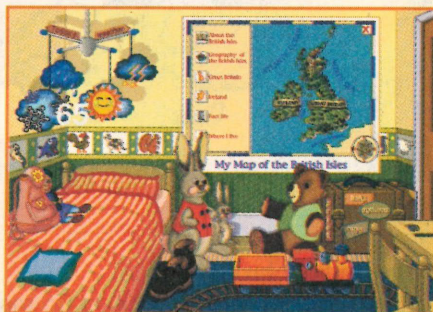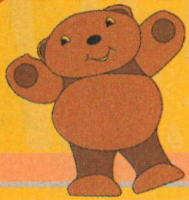
The New Friend

Ellie and Al Bear were both very excited. Mum had been organising a surprise for them all week and today they would find out what it was.

They rushed to get ready as fast as they could but it was not easy when they were hopping from one foot to another with excitement. In the car they passed lots of exciting places like the zoo but they kept on driving until they came to a big farm in the country.

In the farmyard chickens were clucking around their little chicks, feeding them with juicy worms.

Ellie and Al Bear wanted to pick them up but the chicks kept running away, so the farmer gently picked up a couple of the fluffy baby chicks and gave them to Ellie and Al Bear to hold. They had to be very gentle with them so they put them back on the ground and watched as the chicks ran to their mothers.

Mum took them inside to warm up and to show them the proper surprise. In a box in the corner of the kitchen was a cat and her six little kittens.

Looking at them all, Ellie and Al Bear couldn't decide which one they wanted to take home.

All of a sudden one of the kittens tumbled out of the box and miaowed at them very loudly.

He was black and white and all fat and fluffy. Picking him up Ellie decided they would have to call him Panda.

Waving goodbye to the farmer they took their new friend home with them.

Weedle Pokemon Craft

- Glue
- 13 small red beads or stickers
- Two black beads or stickers
- White felt

Instructions:

Glue the seven small beads together to make Weedle's body.

Glue the larger bead to one of your smaller beads to make Weedle's head.

Glue two of the small red beads/stickers on each side of the small brown bead.

Glue the last red bead/sticker on the head to make Weedle's nose/mouth.
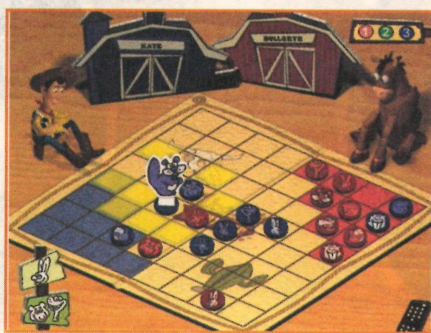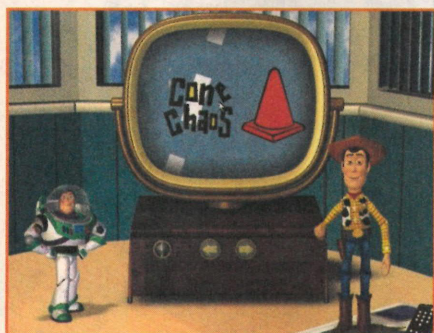
Glue on the two black beads/stickers to be the eyes.

Cut two small triangles out of the white felt and glue one on the top of Weedle's head and one at the end of the body to be a tail.

Materials Needed:

- Seven light brown beads
- One larger light brown bead (to make the head)
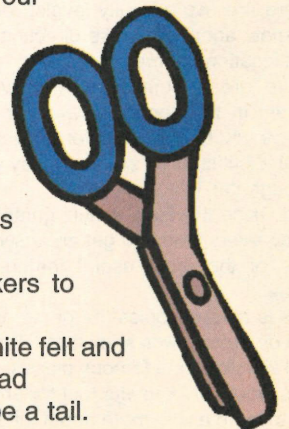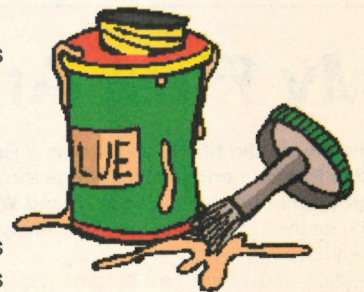
Toy Story 2 Activity Centre

Help Buzz rescue Woody from the suitcase, challenge Bullseye to a game of Critters Coral, and help the toys cross the road in this collection of activity games.

You start off in the TV room, where Buzz and Woody introduce you to the games available. There are six activities in total - two based around Woody with a cowboy theme, two space games featuring Buzz and two general activities.

Woody's games include Critters Coral - a single or multiplayer game that challenges you to move your collection of critters into your opponent's coral - and Woody's Printing Press which sees you print out greetings cards, postcards and stickers.

Buzz's space games include Luggage Lunacy where you guide the space-ranger around the luggage to find the suitcase Woody is trapped in while watching out for the exploding cases. In Toy Shelf Showdown you help Buzz to collect the pieces to his spacecraft.

As well as these, there are two more activities included.

Cone Chaos - where you guide the toys (in disguise under traffic cones) across the road, avoiding the cars and lorries - and Create-a-comic where you make up your own toy story by choosing backgrounds, characters and props and writing your own text.

The presence of characters - such as those in Toy Story - will always sell a game, but that's no guarantee the game will be any good.

Here though, you get a solid title, with varied, fun and entertaining activities.

The navigation around the game is straightforward, and Buzz and Woody are always on hand to provide advice and help, should you need it.

Overall, a well-made title with no obvious flaws and plenty to keep fans of the film happy.

Crossword

Across

1. He's Andy's Favourite cowboy. (5)
2. He's the pork with the cork. (4)
4. She's a rootin', tootin' cowgirl. (6)
7. He's Buzz' dad. (4)
10. She's always losing her sheep _ _ Peep. (2)
11. _ _ _ Story 2. (3)
13. How many Toy Story films have there been? (3)
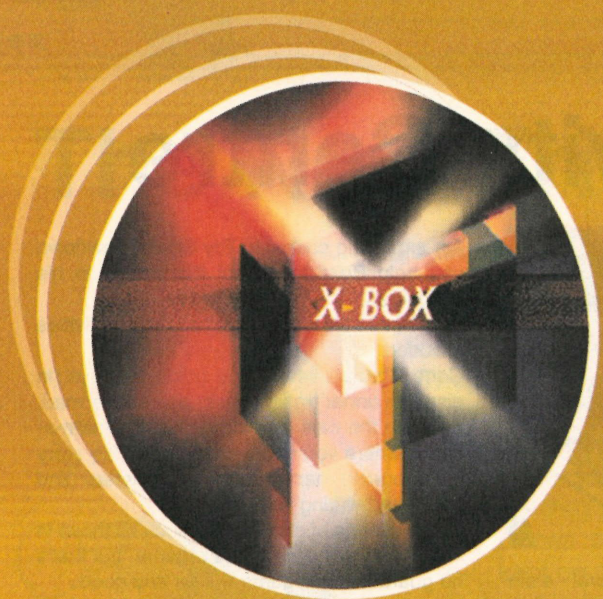**14.** The horse that's right on target. (8)

Down

1. He's a penguin with a bad throat. (6)
3. The Claw is its master. (5)
5. The dog with a spring in his step. (6)
6. He's Lightyears ahead. (4)
8. This dinosaur knows how to use his head. (3)
9. He's stinky. (4)
12. He owns the Toy Barn. (2)

notes: