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ISSUE 105
JULY 2002

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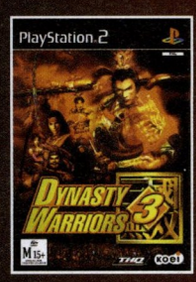

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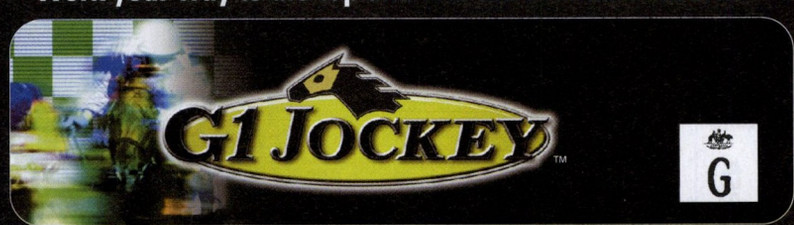

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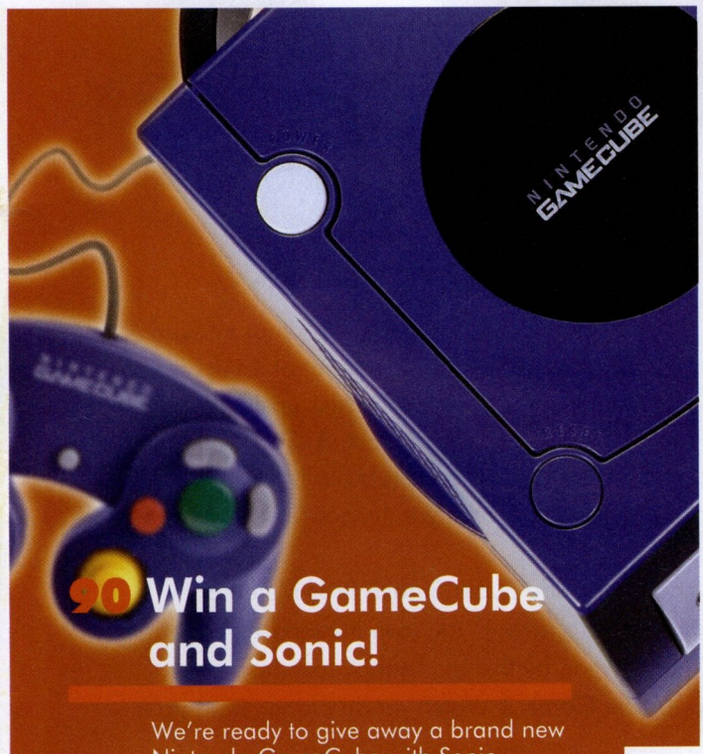

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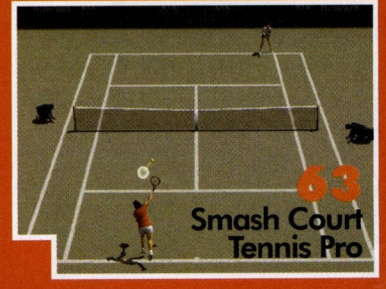

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ISSUE 105 JULY 2002

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EDITORIAL

>> "With great power comes great responsibility". I keep telling that to Cam every day, but it falls on deaf ears. You see, you can learn a lot of things from going to see *Spider-Man* – 1. Girls just love a guy who can kiss upside down; 2. Never invite an insane evil mastermind over for pot roast, 3. Shooting fluid everywhere in public isn't illegal; and 4. Spider-Man is just really, really cool. Oh, and that thing about being responsible in case you forgot. Just whatever you do, don't miss this great movie.

Other things not to miss this month include Super Smash Bros Melee on GameCube which is a must for Nintendo fans. If you love Nintendo's huge array of characters, then you'll be smitten by this big fanboy love fest. The game gets a big rubber stamp for the Game & Watch mode alone. Get into it.

Eliot Fish >>Editor

Vampire slayers unite

Load up with ammo and join the quest to release a medieval village from the grip of bloodthirsty vampires. Blast away with one or two players through waves of immortals intent on spreading their cursed bloodline. But beware, as you near the climax of your hunt, a horrifying secret will be uncovered. Arm yourself with Vampire Night, also available bundled with the G-con™2 gun. It's the only shooter with bite and it's only available on PlayStation®2. www.vampire-night.com

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PlayStation 2
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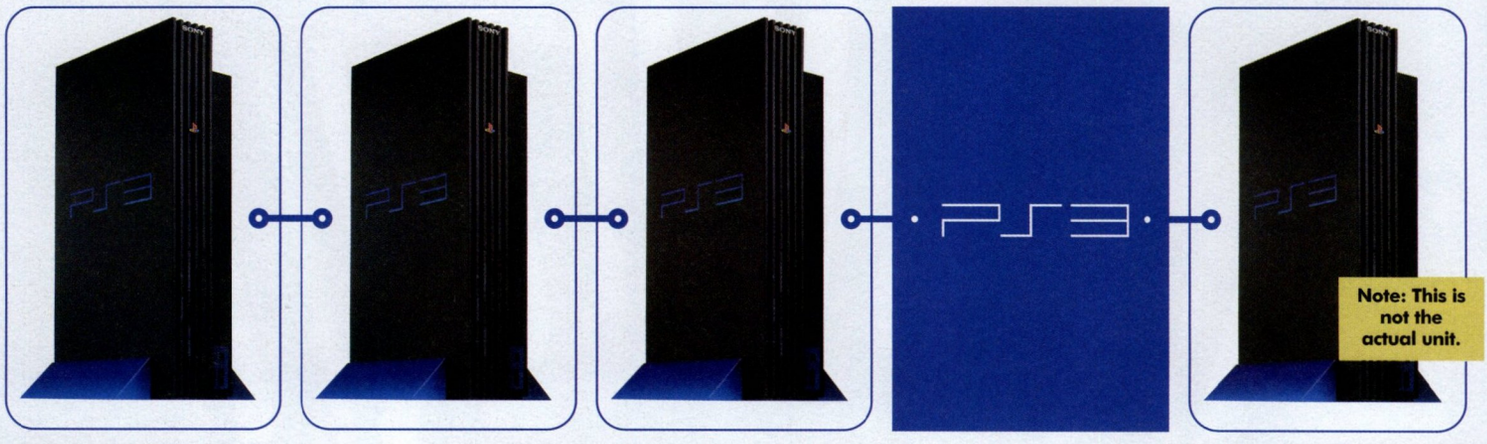
NEWS

IN THE NEWS: PS3 details ■ EverQuest II ■ Nintendo goes Retro ■ GameCube sells well in Europe ■ Brute Force of Xbox



PlayStation 3!

The plan to revolutionise the way we play games

Distributed computing. Ever heard of it? It's where a series of networked machines share software, processing power and the transfer of data. That's right... why limit the power of the next PlayStation console to only the hardware in the box, when it could in fact become a terminal in a more powerful global computer network.

THE POWER OF ONE (MILLION MACHINES)

Sony's chief technical officer, Shin'ichi Okamoto, spoke recently at the Game Developer's Conference on the fact that research efforts on the PlayStation 3 are focusing on distributed computing. Okamoto said that Sony are working together with IBM in research on "grid computing", that could in effect boost the performance of the PlayStation 3 by a thousand times; something that could not be achieved with mere advancements in hardware design. A good example of distributed computing is the way the SETI@home screensaver (http://setiathome.ssl.berkeley.edu) allows the average Joe to help contribute to the search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence by processing data sent to their computer by SETI when the screensaver kicks in. It's a way of maximising the use of idle processing time on computers all over the world. Now translate the same idea to networked games machines.

Okamoto was so carried away with the potential advancements in technology that he was also reported to have said, "Maybe the PlayStation 6 or 7 will be based on biotechnology".

STOP MAKING SENSE

How long will it take Sony to develop this kind of technology to the point where it is a realistic and viable form of gaming? Sony say as early as 2005, at the cost of $400 million. We have a few things to say about this. Frankly, this sounds more like scare tactics to niggle at their opponents in the market. Surely, the kind of technology they are talking about would not be feasible for PS3. Why? Because it is a plan that relies on:

A) A huge install base. There would have to be a phenomenal number of machines connected to the network so that at any one time there is enough computing power to go around.

B) The twitch nature of videogames relies on data being processed and returned very quickly. The strength of distributed networking (at the moment at least) is in massive number crunching, not in speed. SETI gives your computer some data to crunch, but it does it over time then sends it back to be collated - time is not of the essence, unlike in videogames.

C) Affordability. The infrastructure needed for something like this would be insane, and although possible eventually, we are definitely not one generation of console away from such a paradigm shift.

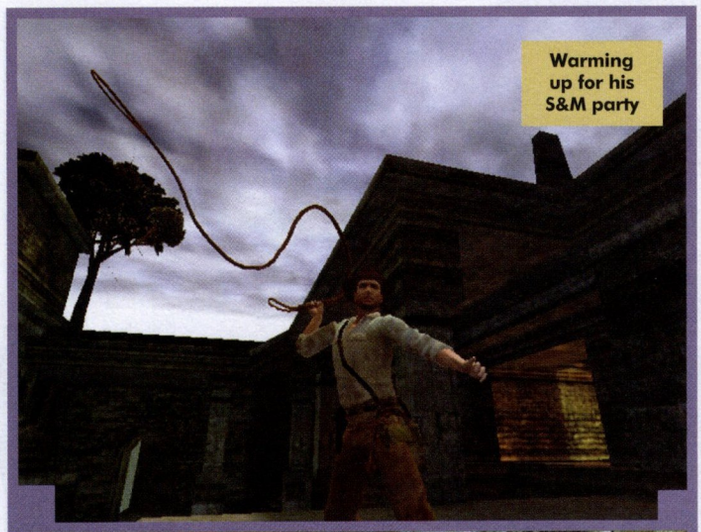
D) Data pipes will inevitably become blisteringly fat, but so too will our ability to use the bandwidth. As long as the speed available is finite, so are the stresses that can be placed upon the network. Will Sony buy up a slice of all the optical cable worldwide to guarantee speed?

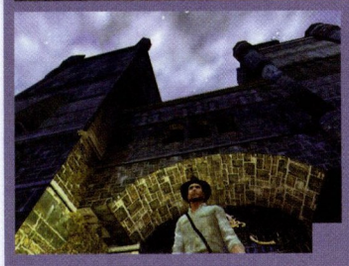
>> It could mean the end of the disc drive as we know it.

To sum up, we think the concept is an exciting one, but it's ridiculous talk from Sony to think any of it is possible to achieve for PlayStation 3 in 2005.

The more realistic outcome of investigating this kind of technology will probably result in the PS3 utilising a few simple threads of the concept. For instance, it could mean the end of the disc drive as we know it. All the games you play could be streamed via the internet. The games software would be stored on a series of Sony master computers – a move that would crush piracy with one swift stroke, and even allow Sony to update the games software (much like you patch PC games) without the user even knowing.

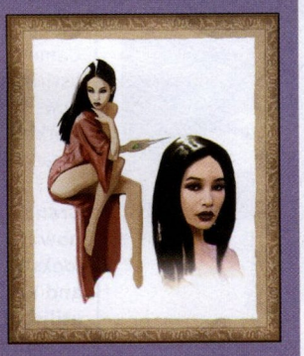
Certainly, a lot of very interesting research is going into making the PlayStation 3 somewhat revolutionary. All we really know, is that we'll see the results in 2005.





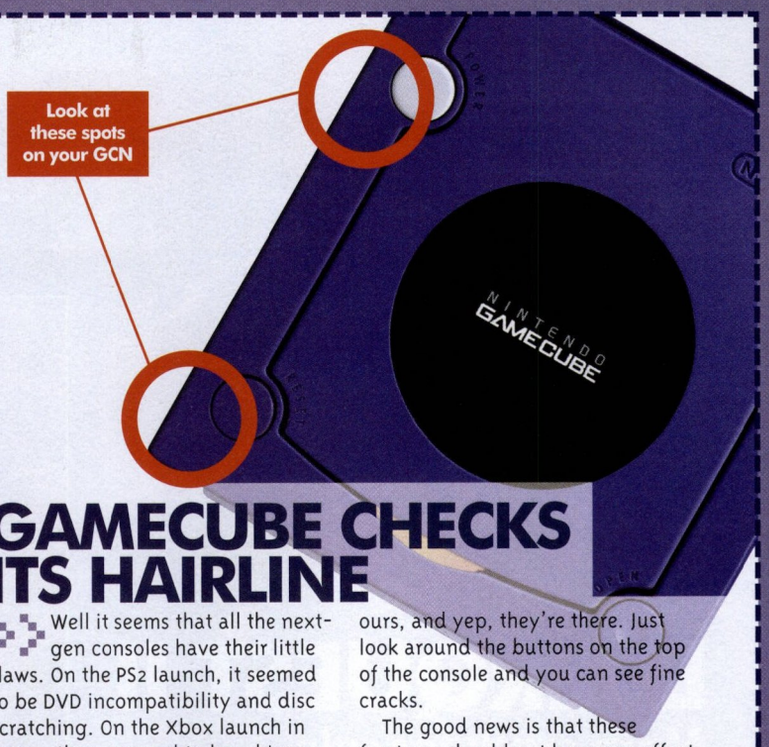
JONESING FOR AN ADVENTURE

Indiana returns to whip it good



Much loved action hero, Indiana Jones, will return this year in a game for PC, Xbox and PS2. Indiana Jones and the Emperor's Tomb is the title and it looks to be a major step-up from the last highly-flawed adventure.

Set in China in the year 1935, Indy is once again in search of a powerful artifact before it falls into evil hands. The game promises more hand-to-hand combat and exciting set-piece action scenes just like a good old Indiana Jones movie. The game is being developed by The Collective, the same developers who brought the gaming world Men In Black, Deep Space Nine and the upcoming Buffy the Vampire Slayer for Xbox, so it seems they're accustomed to movie-based property.



GAMECUBE CHECKS ITS HAIRLINE

Well it seems that all the next-gen consoles have their little flaws. On the PS2 launch, it seemed to be DVD incompatibility and disc scratching. On the Xbox launch in Japan, there seemed to be a bigger problem with disc scratching. Now with the Nintendo GameCube, it has come to light that the manufacturing process on the unit itself causes hairline fractures in the casing. The fractures are apparent on every Cube manufactured – we just looked at ours, and yep, they're there. Just look around the buttons on the top of the console and you can see fine cracks.

The good news is that these fractures should not have any effect on the strength and durability of the Cube. The simple fact being, that if you dropped it hard enough to crack, you would have far more problems internally with the machine than a little crack opening up on the casing. Rest easy.

EUROPE PREFERS CUBE OVER BOX

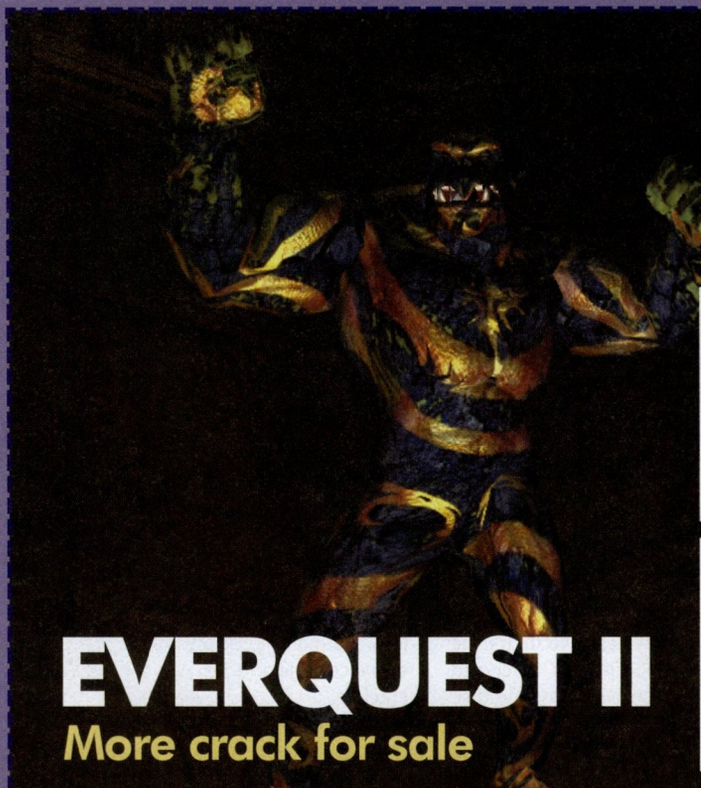
Initial GameCube sales in the UK and the rest of Europe are looking extremely healthy indeed. In the UK, Nintendo were boasting 75,000 units sold in the first two days, although this was disputed by other industry sources. Still, there is no doubt that sales are hot, and the GameCube has been received far more interest than the Xbox in Europe. For instance, in Germany, the GameCube sold roughly 50,000 units almost instantly, whilst the Xbox sold less than half that amount in the same period of time.

Still, the Xbox price cut has only just come into effect over there, and since the price drop, the Xbox is now matching PlayStation 2 weekly sales figures. The battle is raging!

CAPTION THIS!

Hey there faithful readers – think you have the wit to make the Hyper team chuckle? Then think of your best caption for this screenshot and email it to Captionthis@next.com.au with Caption This Part 32 in the Subject line.

Very funny Doctor Jones! Verrry funny!



EVERQUEST II

More crack for sale

Looks like it's time to upgrade again

Coming in 2003, EverQuest II is set to rock the online gaming world. EverQuest II uses a completely new, cutting-edge 3D engine developed in-house with a host of technological features allowing the development team to generate an unparalleled visually stunning 3D world. Features include the ability to own real estate, ride horses, command ships, and experience all-new enhanced spells, quests and events.

EverQuest II returns to the culturally diverse world of Norrath in the future of the original EverQuest, with the sheer size and graphical detail greater than ever seen before. Also promised is a completely revised and enhanced Quest system, completely new and tactically rich combat, increased character customisation, and deeper character development that includes a new branching class structure. It seems that as soon as PS2 owners get their hands on the console version of the original EverQuest, PC gamers will be off escaping into the lush new worlds of EverQuest II. Lucky devils!

THE BRUTE FORCE OF XBOX

Halo Shmalo!

My what big guns you have

You can tell that Microsoft have been busy looking for their next "Halo". A game to thrill Xbox devotees and potential initiates with some serious eye candy and hardcore shooter action. Could a game called Brute Force be the one? Developed by Digital Anvil (StarLancer) this is an action-packed sci-fi squad based shooter for up to four players that is going to give Halo multiplayer a serious run for its money... Until Halo 2 of course.

Besides the multiplayer potential, there is also an extensive single player campaign that spans six different worlds and a very good looking co-op mode that could kick Halo's co-op play totally out of the park.

Gamers will have their choice of a huge array of spanking weapons, equipment and gadgets. Equip teams with Miniguns, Sonic Cannons, Stealth Suits, Sniper Rifles, Psychic Blasts, and the like. Each weapon is specifically designed to take advantage of both the environments and your enemies so you can fully exploit their weaknesses. Get ready for some pretty hefty BLAU factor in Brute Force. We should have hands-on impressions for you next issue in our big whopping E3 feature.

WINNERS

HYPER» 103

C&C RENEGADE

Andrew Yang, VIC
Anthony Brooks, VIC
Donna Wilkinson, QLD
Douglas Smith, VIC
Glenn Slaven, NSW

JEDI STARFIGHTER

Rodney Chapman, NSW
Tim Buchanon, NSW
Justin Thompson, WA
Simon Andrew, SA
Paul Wighton, NSW

OVERFLOW

Who else heard the news that the World Wrestling Federation has changed its name to World Wrestling Entertainment? The WWF just became WWE. Weird, huh?

We're hearing more solid information on a Zelda Director's Cut game coming to the GameCube sometime in the near future. The disc would include Zelda: Ocarina of Time from the N64 with tarted up GameCube graphics along with the 64DD missions, a making-of CD, a music CD and some cool Zelda bonus items.

Infogrames, in another move to get them that much closer to owning the entire planet Earth, have just recently purchased games developer, Shiny Entertainment. Shiny have produced classics such as Earthworm Jim, MDK and Messiah.
The next product from Shiny will be a series of games based on The Matrix for multiple platforms.

Namco are developing a Star Fox arcade game for Nintendo using the TriForce arcade board technology. The game will then be released for the GameCube – so chalk up two Star Fox games on your GameCube wanted list! This follows the news that Sega are working on the F-Zero arcade game.

Grand Theft Auto 3 should be out on PC about now if development hasn't slipped. The game looks stunning compared to the PS2 version and Rockstar have done their best to fully utilise the capabilities of the PC platform and tune the game to be even better than the PS2 incarnation. It'll rock. Get it.

Konami have confirmed Silent Hill 3 and Suikoden 3 for the PlayStation 2.

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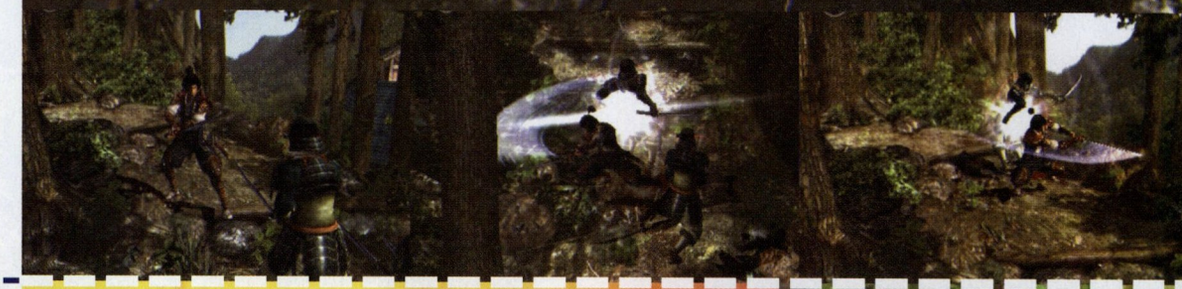
BUILD YOUR OWN DUNGEON!

The Dungeon Siege editing tool has been released on the official website, giving you the opportunity to create your very own Dungeon Siege quests, maps, dungeons and more. You can even mess with the monsters, NPCs, lighting, sound and in-game movies. Re-create the entire game differently if you so desire. You can download the Siege Editor and a bunch of tutorials at www.dungeonsiege.com!



FIRST LOOK!

ONIMUSHA 2: SAMURAI'S DESTINY FOR PS2

CAPCOM

NINTENDO SECURES DEVELOPER

Retro studios, the American development house currently working on Metroid Prime for GameCube, has just been snapped up by Nintendo for $1,000,000 (Nintendo purchased the remaining 55 million shares). Retro are now wholly owned by Nintendo in a move we can only consider paranoia in the face of news that Nintendo's other development partner, Rare, are going multi-platform. We'll have more news on Rare's Xbox and PS2 games for you next issue, but in the meantime, Nintendo fans can at least sleep peacefully knowing that Retro studios will only ever make GameCube and GBA games. Metroid Prime should be here in time for Christmas according to Nintendo.

FIRST LOOK!

JURASSIC PARK FOR PS2, XBOX & PC

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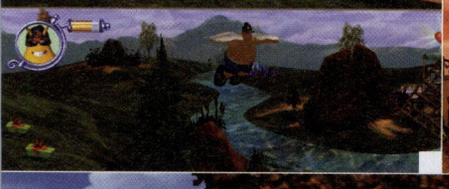
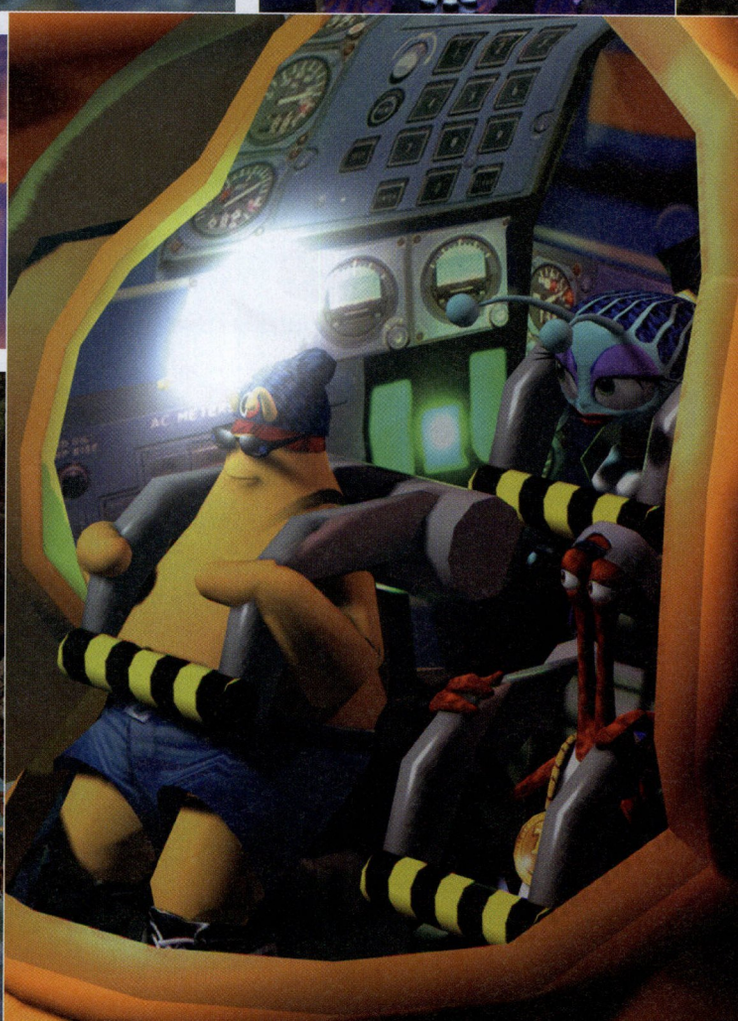
TOE-JAM & EARL III

»XBOX SEGA

Back in the days when we had a Sega Megadrive, if someone had told us that in a few years time we would be playing the sequel on a console made by Microsoft we would have laughed. Possibly punched them out. Amazingly, here we are, with Toe-Jam & Earl III on the horizon for the Xbox. Wonders never cease.



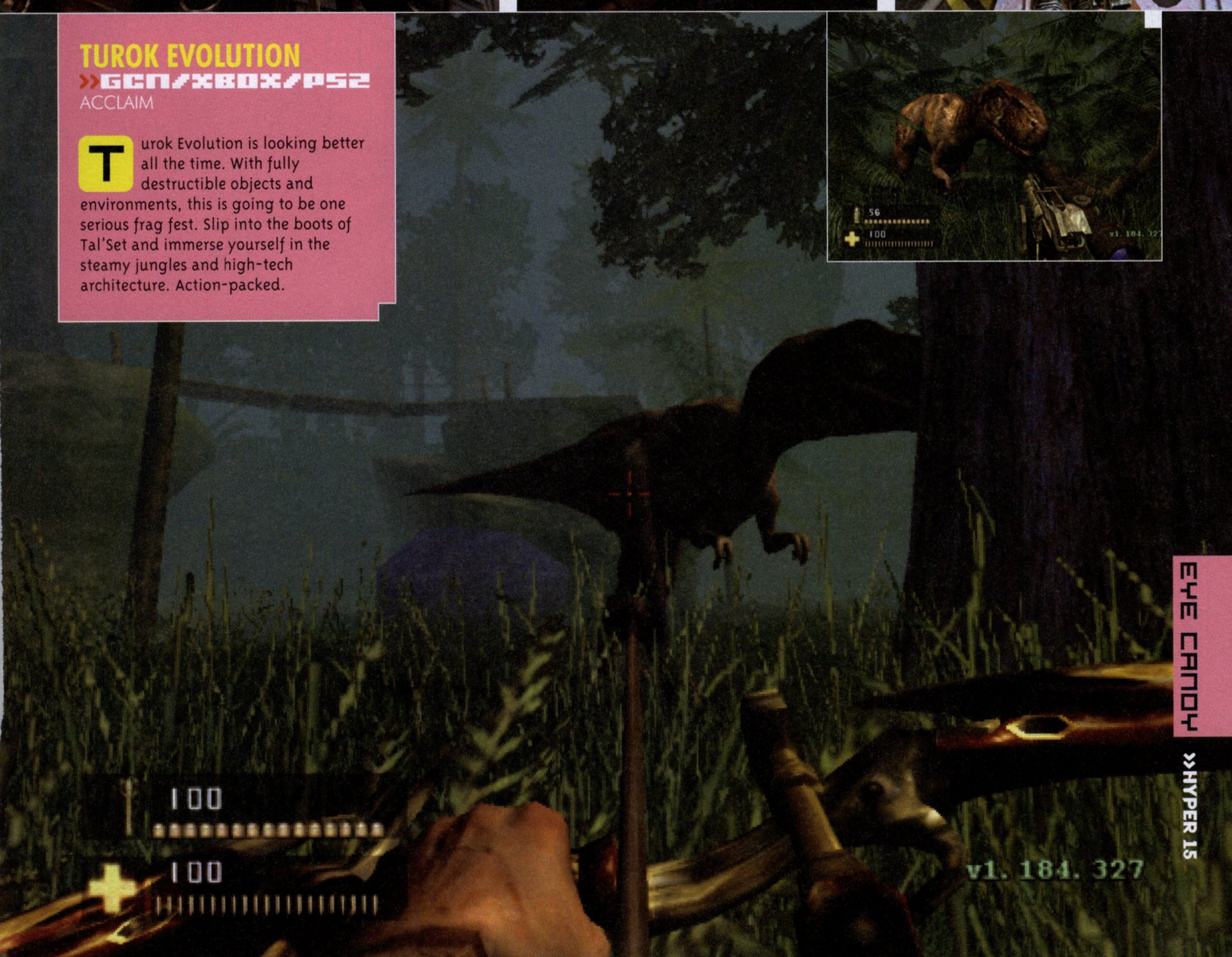


TUROK EVOLUTION

>>GCN/XBOX/PS2

ACCLAIM

Turok Evolution is looking better all the time. With fully destructible objects and environments, this is going to be one serious frag fest. Slip into the boots of Tal'Set and immerse yourself in the steamy jungles and high-tech architecture. Action-packed.



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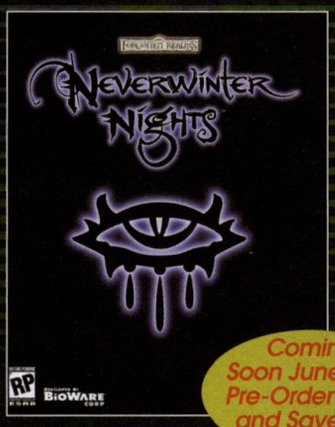
PC GAMES



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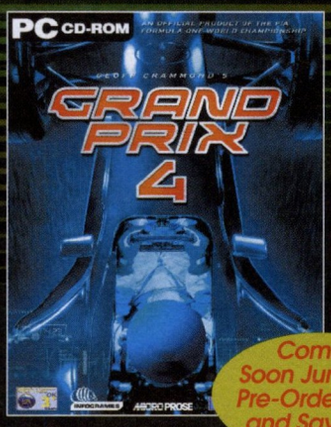

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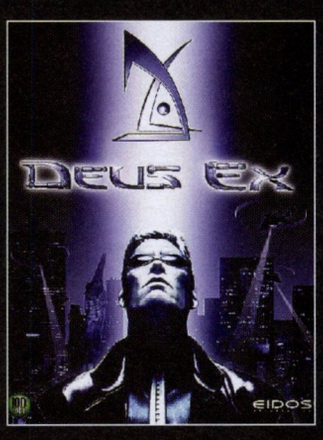

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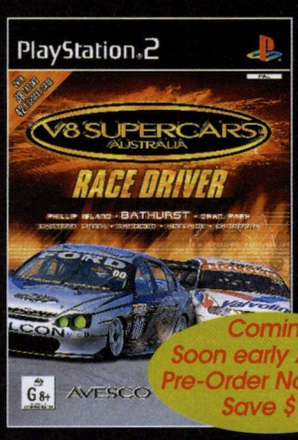

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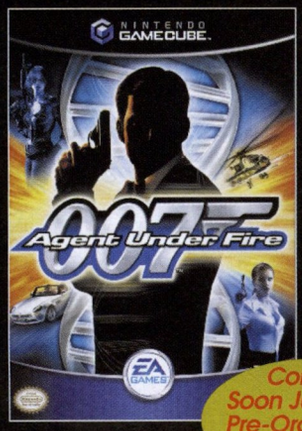

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MEDAL OF HONOR: FRONTLINE

WAR GAMES

Lincoln Hershberger, Senior Product Manager for the Medal of Honor franchise chats to Hyper about the debut on PlayStation 2 and the return of the ever improving series.

Come on men, we need to secure this beach for our volleyball training!

HYPER: What does Medal of Honor: Frontline share with Allied Assault in terms of technology, design, art, etc?
Lincoln Hershberger: Not much. Two completely separate teams created the games. Pretty much the only thing the two games share are the services of our military consultant Captain Dale Dye and the music composition of Michael Giacchino who has done all the music for the Medal of Honor games. And of course, your OSS mission briefings are delivered by the one and only Col. Hargrove!

HYPER: What is your design approach for a first-person shooter like Medal of Honor on the PC and consoles? What are the crucial differences between platforms you need to think about?
LH: As the next-gen consoles have become more powerful, the principles behind designing a game like MOH have become very similar. Not only has the controller become more advanced, but the processing power and memory of the console has come closer to the PC enabling it to provide larger more complex environments with more action in the picture. Though we're still essentially creating a linear game experience, we are finding ways to give the player more freedom. Firstly, the levels in Frontline are huge. Some of our biggest are in the French border town, the Lorient shipyards, Dutch pastures and manor house, as well as downtown Arnhem.

We're able to show much more geometry at one time than we could before, so this allows us to give the player plenty to see, and plenty of space in which to move around and explore. The manor house is like a big maze filled with Nazis preparing for a big political rally; the Dutch countryside is made up of a number of wide-open green spaces for exploration linked by roadways to occasionally propel the player along; and the border town and Arnhem are beautiful (artistically that is) bombed out cities where we allow wider exploration and rewarding gameplay choices throughout the area, while guiding the player around rubble-blocked areas to eventually suggest the direction we need him/her to take.

This is for all the bad food you cooked!

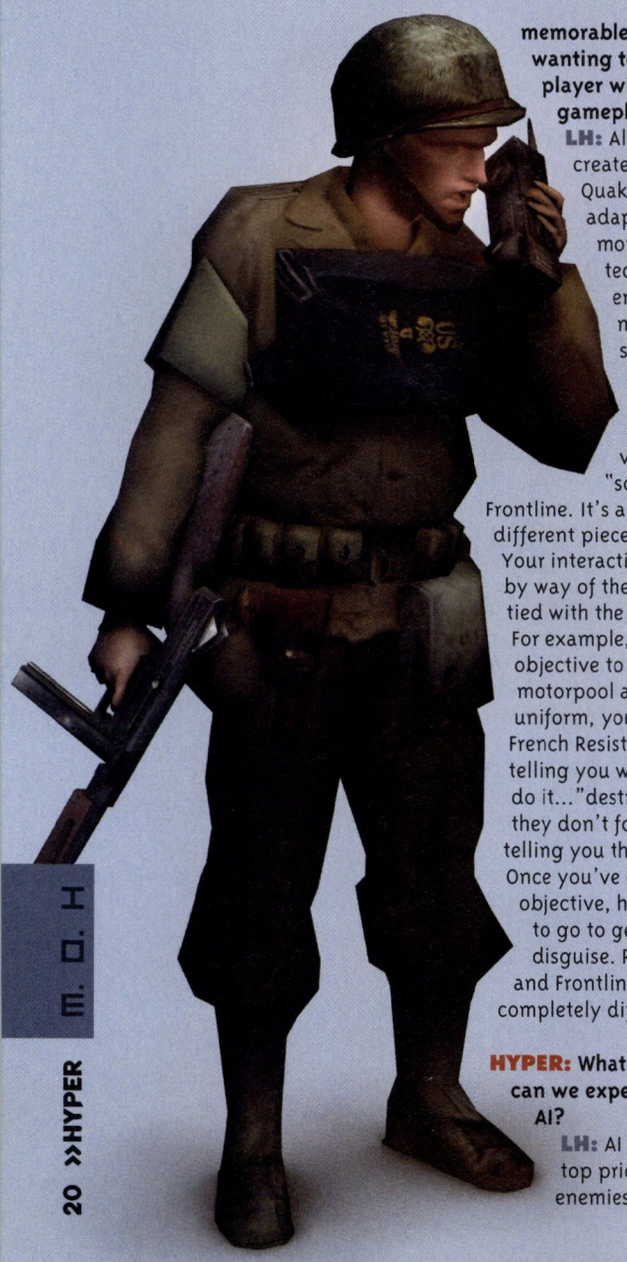
HYPER: FPS games on the PC generally rely on the quicksave/quickload routine, while those on a console typically utilise a checkpoint save system. What are your thoughts on the two methods? How do they affect the gameplay and the way you design a level?
LH: I believe MOH works best uninterrupted. I despise mini loads! Level geometry as well as audio and music will be streamed on the fly as it's always been in MOH.

HYPER: Allied Assault relied upon some very heavy scripting to create its memorable set-pieces, leading to criticism of its replay value. I assume Frontline will be similar in this regard, is this correct? How do you balance the desire to create these

MEDAL OF HONOR: FRONTLINE WAR GAMES

Can you guys hear Mr. Whippy?

Above is a still from *Saving Private Ryan*, and on the right is Medal of Honor: Frontline!



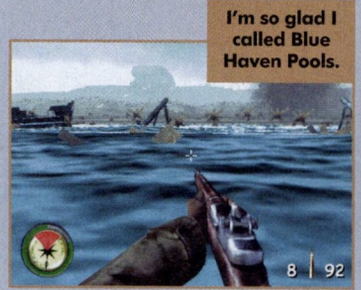
memorable sequences without wanting to frustrate the player with trial-and-error gameplay?

LH: Allied Assault was created with a modified Quake engine which we adapted to incorporate more scripting technology that enabled us to tell a much more epic story. Replay value is in the multiplayer side of the game. There are not very many "scripted" events in Frontline. It's a completely different piece of technology. Your interaction with NPCs comes by way of their AI and how that's tied with the objective system. For example, if you have an objective to sabotage a German motorpool and then steal a Nazi uniform, your partner from the French Resistance would be telling you what to do until you do it..."destroy those cars so they don't follow us!" He'll keep telling you that until you do it. Once you've completed that objective, he'll tell you where to go to get the uniform for disguise. Really, Allied Assault and Frontline feel like completely different games.

HYPER: What kind of behaviour can we expect to see from the AI?

LH: AI is always one of our top priorities. If our enemies don't seem aggressive, alert, alive, and most importantly – smart, then we're in trouble. To accomplish this we've always supported the philosophy that animation needs to be married to AI. Our animation lead Sunil has developed what he calls a state-based animation system that works with AI to create a tremendously complex series of possible animations for any given character based on stimulus provided by the user or environmental conditions. The result will be even greater enemy and other NPC interaction with the world and with the player. This, coupled with full facial animation and lip-synch will make our NPC characters more realistic and intelligent as ever.

The most obvious kind of behaviour you can expect to see from the enemies in Frontline is the number of animations we've got in the game. Enemies will react differently all the time, running for cover, falling off balconies and climbing back up, it is truly a great experience to feel like you're part of a living world with literally hundreds of different enemies and NPCs who all have so many different animations tied to their AI that they react like real living people.

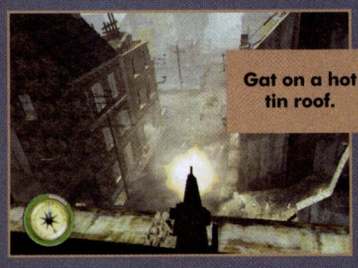


I'm so glad I called Blue Haven Pools.

HYPER: Frontline will feature friendly AI soldiers to fight alongside you. What do you feel this adds to the experience?

LH: It adds a much more epic feel to the game. Anyone who's been in the military will tell you how important the camaraderie is to a soldier. War is hell, and it helps to have your buddies watching your back. We've met a lot of Medal of Honor recipients and read interviews with a lot more. The common thread between all of them is that they feel like it's not them that deserve the medal, it's all the soldiers who fought and died for their country that deserve it.

HYPER: The film *Saving Private Ryan* is an oft-quoted source of inspiration for the Medal of Honor games, but what other research materials have you used during the design process?



Gat on a hot tin roof.

Here's a jeep and nasty joke

LH: In addition to all the incredibly valuable time we spend with Capt. Dale Dye going over infantry procedures and methodology, we still utilise many other avenues of research. For instance, as we have Dutch civilians in Frontline, we had a consultant by the name of Curt Lowens come in and speak to the team regarding what it was like living as a Dutch civilian waiting to be liberated during the days of Market Garden. He was a teenager at the time and had a number of amazing stories and details to share with us. The Art Director and Associate Producer also went to the Netherlands to research the locations we cover in Frontline as well as take 1200 art reference photos for the game environments. And our Lead Sound Designer, Erik Kraber went out into the field to record all of the Frontline weapons live and in action, not to mention the fact that the artist building these weapons for the game, Scott Eaton, toured numerous museums and sites to get the details just right.

Hollywood veteran Capt. Dale Dye, who served as technical consultant on the original Medal of Honor, Medal of Honor Underground, and Medal of Honor Allied Assault, again worked with the Medal of Honor Frontline team to certify the authenticity of the game, taking the entire team out for paintball combat training sessions to ensure everything from artificial intelligence and map design were authentically designed to represent real combat situations.

And of course the game designers used countless WWII books and movies for additional inspiration. *A Bridge Too Far* of course. We even have one entire mission entitled "Several Bridges Too Far". The entire mission takes place against the backdrop of Market Garden. The first level is at Nijmegen Bridge, the second is within the residential row-houses of Arnhem, and the third takes place with the battle-torn Brits in downtown Arnhem as they try to hold out against the Germans.

We also love the movie *The Train* starring Burt Lancaster. We have another mission entitled "Rolling Thunder" wherein the entire three level mission surrounds getting aboard and riding your new nemesis Sturmgeist's armoured train and speeding your way into the heart of Germany. We followed up watching *The Train* by watching Buster Keaton's *The General*, which provided a much-needed respite from the seriousness of most war pics.

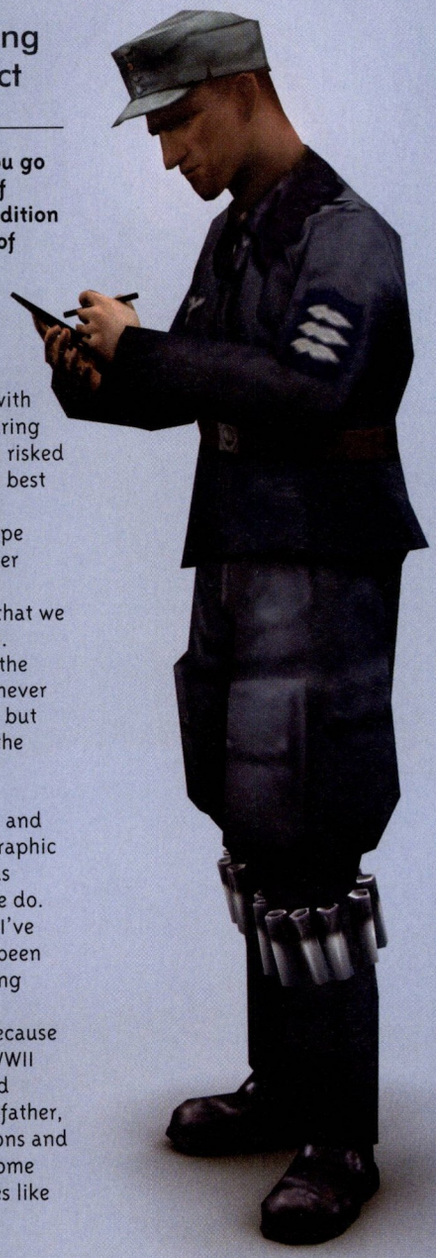
There are plenty. And believe me, we reference *Saving Private Ryan* often. Oh, and I forgot to mention... the entire team's been glued to Spielberg's and Hanks' *Band of Brothers* on HBO – especially the Market Garden scenario. It seems there's always something available to check out.

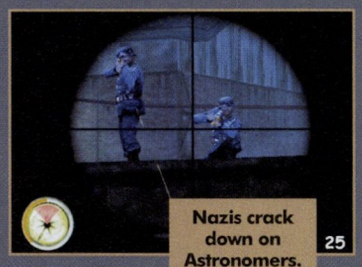
>> The subject matter that we're dealing with requires a great deal of respect

HYPER: The Medal of Honor games have always doffed their cap towards realism – the settings, the weapons, the player's vulnerability, etc. How do you go about reconciling this kind of semi-realism with the FPS tradition of a lone hero versus hordes of enemies?

LH: We're well aware we are producing a form of entertainment. However, the subject matter we're dealing with requires that we treat it with a great deal of respect; honouring all that these men and women risked and sacrificed. We believe the best way to do this is through authenticity – and real-life type scenarios. Reality is a lot scarier than fiction.

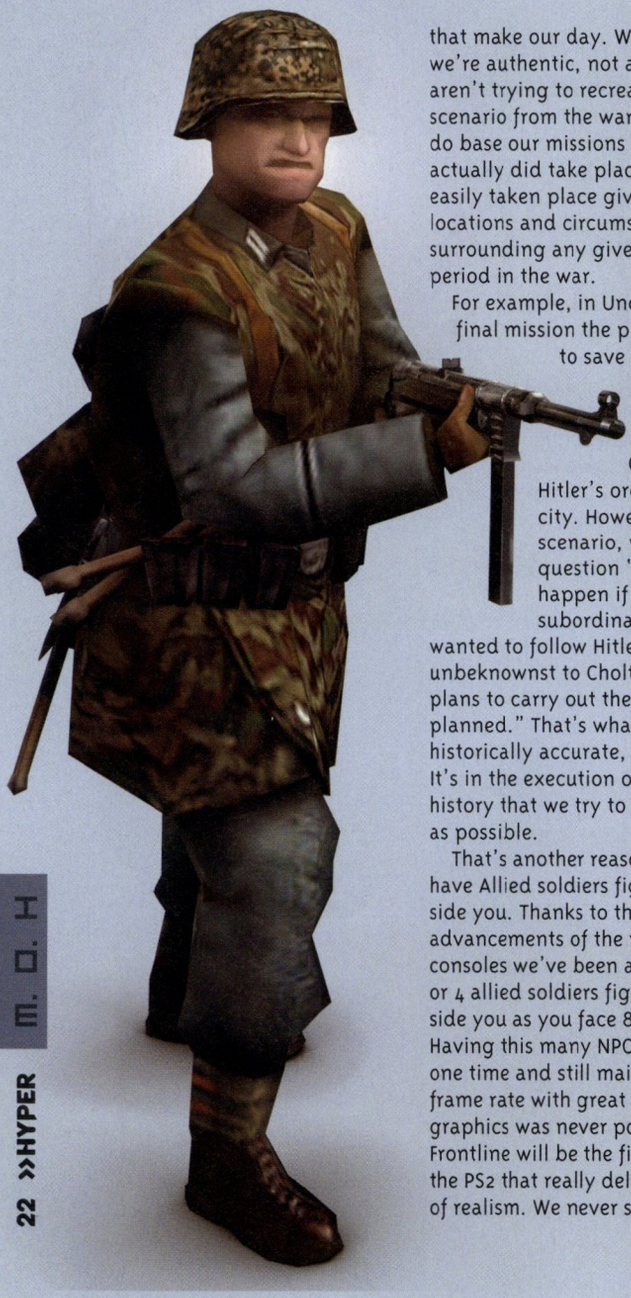
That isn't to say, however, that we don't have elements of fiction. Jimmy Patterson, Manon and the missions they've undertaken never existed, they were made up – but embody the real thing. Also, the many levels of research, field consultants, Smithsonian scholarship, archival footage, and historical written and photographic documentation we utilise adds legitimacy to the work that we do. One of the greatest pleasures I've had working on this title has been emails from gamers. One young man wrote us that he was so thankful to Medal of Honor because through his exposure to the WWII content he began reading and asking questions of his grandfather, spawning numerous discussions and storytelling, and they've become much closer as a result. Stories like





Nazis crack down on Astronomers. 25

Above, a still from *Saving Private Ryan*, and here the same scene from the game.



that make our day. We always say we're authentic, not accurate. We aren't trying to recreate any specific scenario from the war. However, we do base our missions on those that actually did take place, or could've easily taken place given the locations and circumstances surrounding any given location or period in the war.

For example, in Underground's final mission the player is asked to save Paris from destruction. In reality, General Choltitz refused Hitler's order to burn the city. However, in our scenario, we asked the question "what would happen if some subordinates of Choltitz wanted to follow Hitler's order and unbeknownst to Choltitz formulated plans to carry out the destruction as planned." That's what we did. Not historically accurate, but plausible. It's in the execution of our adjusted history that we try to be as authentic as possible.

That's another reason why we have Allied soldiers fighting along side you. Thanks to the advancements of the next gen consoles we've been able to have 3 or 4 allied soldiers fighting along side you as you face 8 or 9 enemies. Having this many NPCs on screen at one time and still maintain a fast frame rate with great looking graphics was never possible. Frontline will be the first game on the PS2 that really delivers this level of realism. We never say we're trying to teach anyone history – books are a far better source for that.

If the weapons and enemies aren't smart and tuned, it's not MOH

HYPER: How do you think the two games compare visually?

LH: The texture space for the character has increased while the space to store animation data has ballooned, and there is more room for "luxury items" like goggles, shades, monocles, badges on the characters. We are also using PS2 to power our facial animations. Every face in Frontline is animated with morph targets, visemes, phonems and interesting dialog. The character range has increased as well – we are busy creating peasants, old townsmen and women, dogs, cats, workers, and very unique characters in addition to a wide variety of soldiers.

Both games have a different colour pallet and look better than each other in different spots of the game. Frontline was actually in development before we started work on Allied Assault and has a massive library of textures, animations, and special effects that we were able to pull from the previous games and make better, in addition to creating entirely new ones. So in the end, I'd have to agree that Frontline edges out Allied Assault in the graphics category, but only by a slight margin.

HYPER: What are the strengths and weaknesses of the PS2 when it comes to writing a first person shooter for the format?

LH: Originally, we were all smiles and laughter, but eventually, we hit some strong pull-your-hair-out frustrated moments. One of them was our war on memory – everybody on the team had so much content they wanted to put in their levels, and there's only so much memory to go around. I can't say that all of these moments can be tied back to the PS2, however, creating a monster this big for this system certainly required much more manpower than any of us ever expected. The team grew from about 40 to 60 pretty quickly once we hit hardcore production, and they are the hardest working and most selfless group I've ever worked with. We've put together an amazing group of talented people. The biggest challenge we've faced has been getting all of our characters and player weapon features into the game – some 300 different variations of NPC character – all with swappable everything, facial expressions and lip-sync! Now we're down to the crunch of giving the designers the time they need to tune the gameplay, while giving animation and AI time to tune the NPC interactions with the player, and the players use of the weapons... because in MOH, if the weapons and enemies aren't smart and tuned, it's not MOH. That's where it all begins... <<

WHAT

WILL

YOUR

LEGEND

BE?

WARCRAFT III®

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HARDWA

SONY ERICSSON P800

Sony Ericsson

Price: TBA

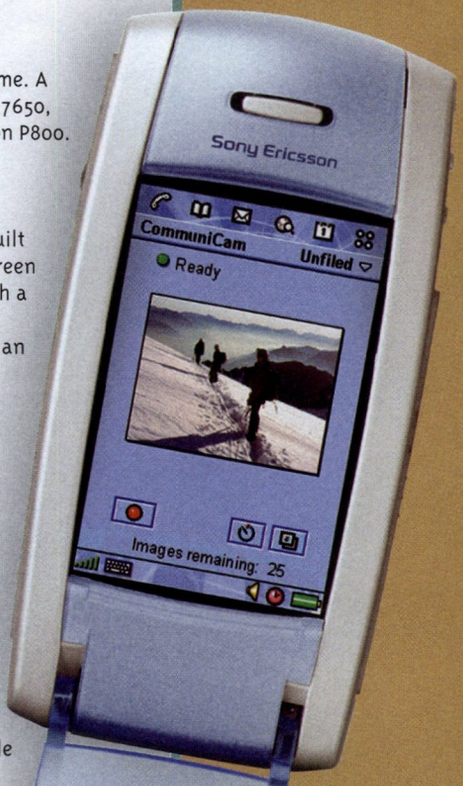
>>Mobile phones are getting funkier and more useful all the time. A couple of months ago we showed you the awesome new Nokia 7650, and recently we've had the announcement of the Sony Ericsson P800.

DICK TRACY EAT YOUR HEART OUT

In many ways the P800 is similar to the 7650 – it has an integrated digital camera, huge colour screen and MMS built right in. But thanks to its large 208x320 touch sensitive screen (and UIQ pen-based user interface), the P800 is very much a phone/PDA hybrid. In fact, the new term is "multimedia smartphone". The P800 has a calendar, an e-mail client, an address book (that can store up to 1000 contacts) and a notepad for to-do lists. The P800 can synchronise with common Windows suites like Outlook and Lotus Notes, and if your PC is Bluetooth capable it can all be done wirelessly.

Better still, you can record notes to yourself thanks to the built in recorder, not to mention view Word, Excel, Acrobat and PowerPoint documents (plus support for another 20 viewers). The P800 runs on the latest iteration of the Symbian OS (v 7.0), and because it's open you'll be able to download games and apps written in C++ and Java. Thus you'll be able to customise your phone to the way you want to use it. Oh, and did we mention that it has a built-in browser which supports HTML, xHTML, i-mode and WAP 2.0? Plus, the P800 runs on triple band GSM/GPRS (900/1800/1900) networks, so it can be used across 160 countries.

We want the inclusion of a happy button.

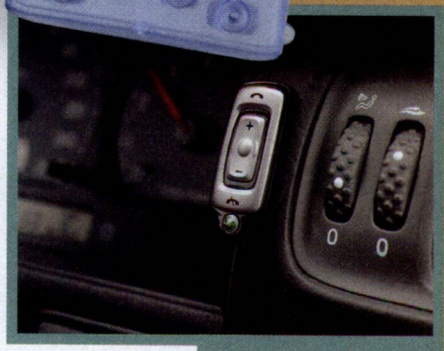


DOWNLOAD STUFF

You can do all sorts of nifty things with the P800. Take a photo of your girlfriend and assign it to her number, so whenever she calls the picture pops up. You can also design you own wallpapers for the phone, and screen savers too. Sure, mobile phone screen savers have been around for a while, but not in colour! You can even download video clips and view them on your phone. This will be facilitated by a number of worldwide partnerships with Sony Group's content companies, so you will be able to download stuff like ringtones (through Sony's music divisions) that will actually sound good thanks to the P800's polyphonic sound capabilities.

The P800 is certainly an exciting phone to look out for, and it will be available sometime in the third quarter 2002.

A digi-camera and touch-screen in one!



The Bluetooth wireless car kit. Amazing.

PSONE LCD SCREEN

Sony

Price: $289.95 (or bundled with the PSone for $409.95)

Do I stick my mail in here or what?

>>Although the age of the PlayStation has long since passed, the PSone is still a hugely desirable piece of gaming technology. It's tiny, it's cute and it's small enough to fit in your back pocket (if your pants are "phat" that is – Ed). Best of all, although PlayStation releases have dried up, there are so many classic games in the back catalogue that it's still somewhat essential to own a PlayStation in one form or another.

SERIOUS PORTABILITY

Even so, it seems like a strange time to launch a new accessory for the PSone market, especially one as inexplicable and expensive as this – even if there are 6 million PSones across the PAL territories. This LCD screen is for PSone owners who want some serious portability. It plugs in at the back of the console, and hugs it seamlessly, forming a Voltron-esque gaming unit. The screen really is tiny, measuring a mere 5 inches across diagonally. Sony definitely could have made it larger while still fitting it to the PSone. Oh well. Underneath the screen are left and right speakers, and brightness and volume controls. The sound quality from the stereo speakers is pretty reasonable - a little tinny, but sharp enough to do the job. You can also plug headphones into the headphone jack at the back. The best part, however, is that when you've finished gaming, simply fold the screen down onto the PSone, and the unit is ready to carry around – and still very compact.

The advantages of the LCD screen are obvious - size, and hence portability. However, LCD screens have their drawbacks too. They don't manage fast movements on screen all that well and they tend to have a narrow viewing angle. Fortunately, in creating the PSone LCD, Sony have done their homework and minimised these issues. The TFT LCD panel is based on new technology, so the picture quality is excellent and the screen is bright. Plus, with the image shrunk down so extensively, the PlayStation's trademark jaggies are barely even noticeable. However, working in the opposite direction, some games that are quite text heavy (RPGs we're looking at you), are next to impossible to play as the screen size makes it quite difficult to make out the text. Also disappointing is that all the games we tested with the unit had letterboxing at the top and bottom of the screen. Dear Sony, if you're going to make a screen this small, the least you can do is let us use the entire thing!

Rediscover your love for low poly gaming!

CUTE UNIT

On the plus side, the PSone connects to the screen via an RGB connection (as opposed to the standard composite connection most people use), so the colour definition is excellent. However, you still need to be perpendicular to the screen to get the best image clarity.

As cute as this unit is as a whole, it's by no means an essential purchase, nor even a truly affordable purchase (weighing in at only $40 less than a GameCube). And as it requires a power supply, it's not all that portable either – although you can play it in the car by plugging the power into the lighter slot. This is one for freaky collectors, or people with massive PlayStation game collections who want to be able to play their games in bed. Cool, but overpriced for what it can do.

THE SPECS

Dimensions: 182 x 186 x 34mm (L x H x D)
Weight: 335g
Stereo Speakers: 40 x 28.5mm, 1.0W type

Connectors:
- AV IN mini-jack
- DC IN 7.5V connector
- AV MULTI OUT connector
- Headphone jack

You haven't heard of *Spider-Car*?

AUTO MODELLISTA

>>PS2 **CATEGORY:** Arcade Racing >> **PLAYERS:** 1-Multi >>
PUBLISHER: Capcom >> **AVAILABLE:** TBA >>

WOW-O-METER

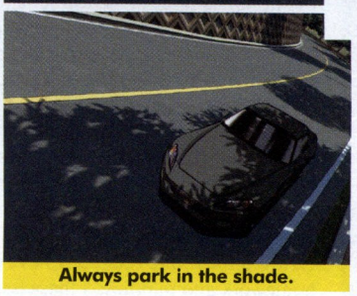
Cel shading is undoubtedly this generation's lens flare – a visual effect that becomes so popular that developers throw it into their games willy nilly, without much regard for whether it's actually necessary. Cel shaded games are everywhere at the moment, and it won't be long before every genre and sub-genre is swimming in them. A cel shaded RPG, flight sim, Army Men game and beat 'em up can't be far off. Of course, when used well - to stylishly complement an already great game design, cel shading can be a very good thing. Auto Modellista for instance, takes the art form to new heights, creating one of the funkiest looking games we've ever seen. The marriage of arcade racing and cel shading is one that we are very excited about, and after seeing the game in motion it looks like Capcom Japan are the ideal celebrant.

Cruisin' wid ma homies.

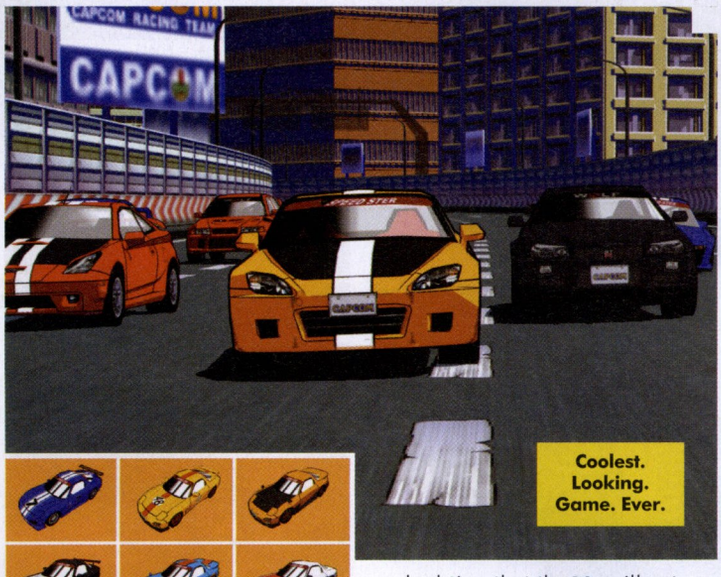
NO SIGN OF THE HONDA MOCHA LATTE...

Although it's not from Namco, Auto Modellista seems to take a fair bit of inspiration from the Ridge Racer series. The environments that we've seen so far are very much like the city courses of Ridge Racer and RRV in particular. The driving model also seems much like that of RRV – the cars have weight and a degree of driving realism, but with arcade handling and over the top powerslides. Fine by us.

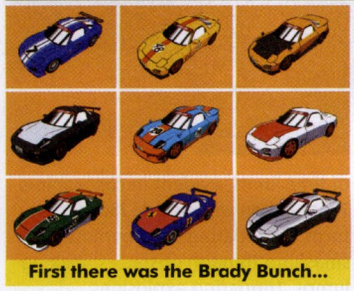
It will be interesting to see how well Capcom walk the fine line between arcade and simulation. At face value it looks like they have chosen a good blend. For instance, Auto Modellista boasts a roster of fully licensed vehicles, including the Nissan Skyline GT-R, Suzuki Cappucino, Toyota Celica, Subaru Impreza, Honda S2000, Mazda RX-7, Mitsubishi Lancer Evolution VII and the Daihatsu Move. There will be various levels of customisation possible for the vehicles in the game. In addition to extensive paintwork options, you'll also be able to get under the hood, tinker with settings and swap parts. To that end, Auto Modellista also boasts body parts from licensed tuning companies, so rev heads will really be able to get their rocks off turning their car into an over the top street machine.


Always park in the shade.

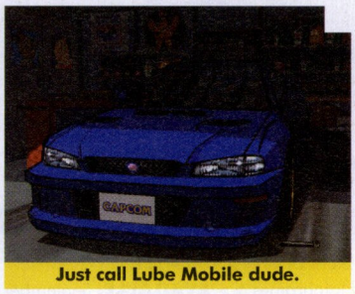
Perhaps the biggest feature that Capcom are pushing, however, is network play. Auto Modellista will have a wide variety of network racing features, from online chat to full-on racing competitions. You'll



Coolest. Looking. Game. Ever.



First there was the Brady Bunch...



Just call Lube Mobile dude.

Talking cars! Eeek!

You'll also be able to get under the hood, tinker with settings...

be able to hop online and chat to prospective opponents, arrange races, possibly show off replays of your latest victory and form teams with other players. If Capcom execute this well and PS2 users embrace playing online, the combination of ultra fast racing and sheer style could make Auto Modellista the trendiest online game for car freaks and gamers alike.

Of course, Auto Modellista will also have a fully featured offline mode, which is a relief for those of us doubting that the PS2 will get online here any time soon. Only the standard offline modes have been confirmed so far, and we're hoping that the game doesn't stop at a standard championship, but includes a full on career mode too.

WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE: A return to the glory days of powerslide fuelled arcade racing!

IS CEL SHADING A CEL-OUT?

Regardless of how meaty the long-term appeal is, one thing is certain – Auto Modellista's visuals are mindblowing. This is cel shading at its very best. As opposed to games like Cel Damage or Wacky Races, where the technique is used purely for comic effect, in Auto Modellista, it gives the game a streamlined hardcore anime styling. Playing Auto Modellista is like watching a super-smooth chase sequence from a classy anime. Drift around a corner and a white spray jets up from the tires, illustrating the ferocity of the powerslide. As you gain velocity, speed lines build up on screen, emphasising how fast you're going, and giving this game an intimidating sense of speed.

Particularly surreal are the night races, where the track is bathed in a yellow glow from the streetlights, and the surrounding buildings radiate a strange neon green. Perhaps the coolest graphical effect in the game is when you're racing in the rain and it's pounding down onto the car and illuminated in the headlights – we've never felt a sensation of rain this intense in a game before. We also love the clean lines and sheen of the reflections off the car windshield, and the dim outline of the driver's oblong head and seat inside.

Everything in Auto Modellista is executed with great style. The colours are bold and bright on the track, whereas the roadside scenery – particularly the trees and shrubs, set an impressive backdrop thanks to soft lines, daubed colours and subtle shadows. The game engine is sophisticated too, with the trees casting real-time shadows over the cars and the track. Simply put, this is the coolest looking racing game we've ever seen – an effortless combination of power and design. Auto Modellista is arcade racing reborn! <<

STUNTMAN

WOW-O-METER

»PS2 **CATEGORY:** Stunt Driving >> **PLAYERS:** 1-2 >>
PUBLISHER: Infogrames >> **AVAILABLE:** September >>

Picture a man... a stuntman. In the centre of a stadium with assorted wrecked vehicles lined up beyond a ramp, this man sits astride a motorcycle revving the beast, waving to the thousands of some hushed, some terrified, all excited onlookers. Loudspeakers blare the poor devil's name as he soars over the vehicles - he is at the same time stunning, brave and amazingly stupid. Some seconds later, he's heading to the hospital. Is this something I want to do? Of course... but only on screen. Games take us places we dare not go. With all this in mind, Reflections Interactive has achieved the apparently impossible and created a promising new concept for a driving game.

"My name is Man. Stunt Man..."

BOND STYLE

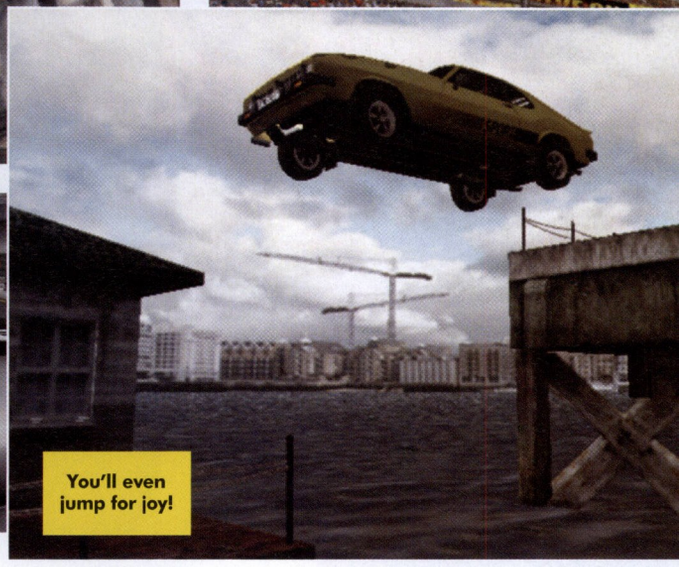
Inspired by the annals of stunt history, Stuntman is a precision driving experience with a few different avenues to explore. One is the Career Mode with a healthy cinematic flavour, another is the Stunt Constructor Mode and the last is the two player games to go head-to-head. All feature a physics and driving engine that enjoys a good two years of development – something not many PS2 titles can claim.

The Career Mode is the centrepiece. Six films need a stuntman to complete their action sequences, each requiring some five extended stunts, or levels, which amounts to about 30 levels in the game. Stunts are made up of a string of individual maneuvers that must be completed under the duress of time limits, evident in checkpoints. These action will include 180-degree turns, negotiating tight corners, smashing through obstacles, making jumps, triggering explosions, burnouts, the works. Through each level the director of the film calls out – via radio – the stunts required.

Reflections wanted a highly realistic simulation of a stuntman's experiences. For the sake of clarity though, on-screen icons appear (similar to racing arcade games) at the same time as the director's "calls", to help cue the actions. The result is a playable but nicely challenging driving experience.

The cinematic connection fills in the gaps between play sequences and serves as an all-purpose flavouring. Each level is a pastiche of

You'll flip over this game!



You'll even jump for joy!

You'll call the cops! Er...

ANY EXCUSE TO GO TO THE PUB!

The two-player mode, like the knowing film references, will appeal to the older segment of the PS2 audience, after a couple of drinks down the pub, as they say. These games are Precision (avoiding speed cones), Speed, Stunt (icon collection) and High Score. Sadly, there will be no split-screen two player mode.

> At the completion of a film, reward comes in the form of a trailer for the blockbuster, complete with ficticious characters...

a famous film, styled after a well-known classic. So one feature is a Hong Kong style, guns-ablaze action film (think Jet Li), another is a lad's own heist film (think Lock Stock) and yet another is a 1940s adventure romp (think The Mummy).

This naturally affects the vehicles available, the scenery and terrain encountered. In the Bond-style spy film, players take control of a snowmobile on the slopes; a fat American car is driven through the country byways of the Dukes of Hazzard film. Also promised is a tuk-tuk through crowded markets in Hong Kong, amongst others. Over 40 vehicles feature in the game and hopefully some can be used in unlikely situations – perhaps a tank driven through the streets of London? Handling of the vehicles varies but it's yet to be seen whether stunts demanded will be tangibly different between these levels.

At the completion of a film, reward comes in the form of a trailer for the blockbuster, complete with fictitious characters and one-liner dialogue. Rather than a simple reel, Reflections chose to splice the player's own gameplay footage of stunts into the trailers. This is a minor touch but Reflections are hopeful it's enough to prevent the undesirable habit of skipping cutscenes.

IMPRESSIVE PHYSICS

The danger in this style of game is that replay can be short. Tightly linear, choreographed action sequences in short bursts can become repetitive. Reflections' solution is to include, what could have been, an entirely separate game. The Stunt Constructor is an Arena that allows the free form assembly of stunt elements including cars, stacks of cars, boxes, ramps (in different styles and configurations) and flaming hoops. All cars can potentially be driven in the arena, from giant monster trucks to slicker speedier models. Stuntman also has a two-player mode.

WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE: A stuntman health meter that shows you which bones were broken after a stunt gone wrong!

The impressive physics engine enables real time shadowing onto everything in the game: scenery onto cars, cars onto the ground - cars even onto themselves. The physics engine calculates the movements of debris and damage to vehicles at 200 times per frame. For example, the monster truck rolls over and crushes other cars in a satisfying level of detail, rocking and swaying as different parts of the car collapse; boxes can sit on the bonnet of a speeding car until a turn sideways causes them to fly off.

In Stuntman, Reflections promise the thrill of high speed, dangerous driving with three separate modes and a vast array of cars, settings and options. The Career Mode alone was a stand out in the preview code seen by Hyper but the inclusion of the Stunt Constructor bodes well for Stuntman. All will be revealed in September. <<

MECH ASSAULT

>>XBOX **CATEGORY:** Action >> **PLAYERS:** 1-4 >>
PUBLISHER: Microsoft >> **AVAILABLE:** TBA

WOW-O-METER

It's the 31st Century, and it seems that the only way to get people to take you seriously is to get around town in a 40 foot tall walking tank! You just knew Microsoft would do something with their Mechwarrior license for the Xbox, eh? Well, not only does Mech Assault look like a damn fine battlemech action title, but it's another Xbox game that is pushing for online multiplayer console action.

BATTLEFIELD EARTH

Choose from over twelve different mechs, configure and customise your baby, and then unleash hellfire on your opponents with everything from particle projection cannons to the gauss rifle's magnetically accelerated slugs. You can even get the drop on your opponents with the highly convenient jump jets.

Spread across 20 single player missions, Mech Assault seems to be all about creating as much carnage as possible. All the environments in the game – from futuristic cities, to swampy wasteland – have been created with obliteration in mind. Every structure and object has been designed to be destroyable, to allow for a more immersive and realistic battlefield. In fact, destroying buildings can even be a tactical advantage. Suspect that there are snipers on a rooftop? Then simply blow-up the building and see them get wiped out in the process. Or how about collapsing a wall on an unsuspecting enemy who's camping out for easy targets? The range of targets in Mech Assault appears to be truly promising.

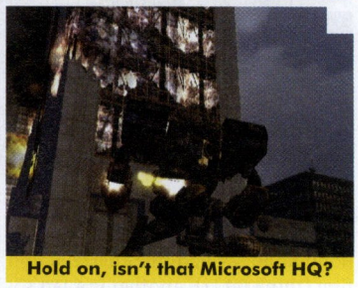
WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE: Microsoft announce their online plans for Australia so we have an idea about local online play.

GETTING HAMMERED

Unlike the more sim-heavy PC mech titles, Mech Assault will be a more forgiving action game. You won't have to worry about overheating, nor fiddle with a plethora of strategical overlays – there's more a focus here on the firefights, which should make for a pretty entertaining multiplayer frag fest. The game is strictly third-person, which is a minor disappointment, but it makes it easier to see what is happening to your mech during fights, and which limbs are getting hammered, plus it enhances the impression of scale. Human soldiers run around on the ground under the feet of your giant robot of death, and buildings loom around you. The visuals look like a treat.

"Just going to the shop for milk."

You out of gaol again Chopper?



Hold on, isn't that Microsoft HQ?

The online modes of play are still being worked on, but we can expect to be able to participate in a variety of team versus team play modes such as "Base Assault". In this mode, you have to spend money on either good base defenses such as reinforced walls and armed turrets, or put more of the money into building more powerful mechs to circle and defend a weaker base structure. We're not sure how many players the game will support online, but there will be four-player split-screen built in from the word go, much like Halo. This is going to be a blast. <<

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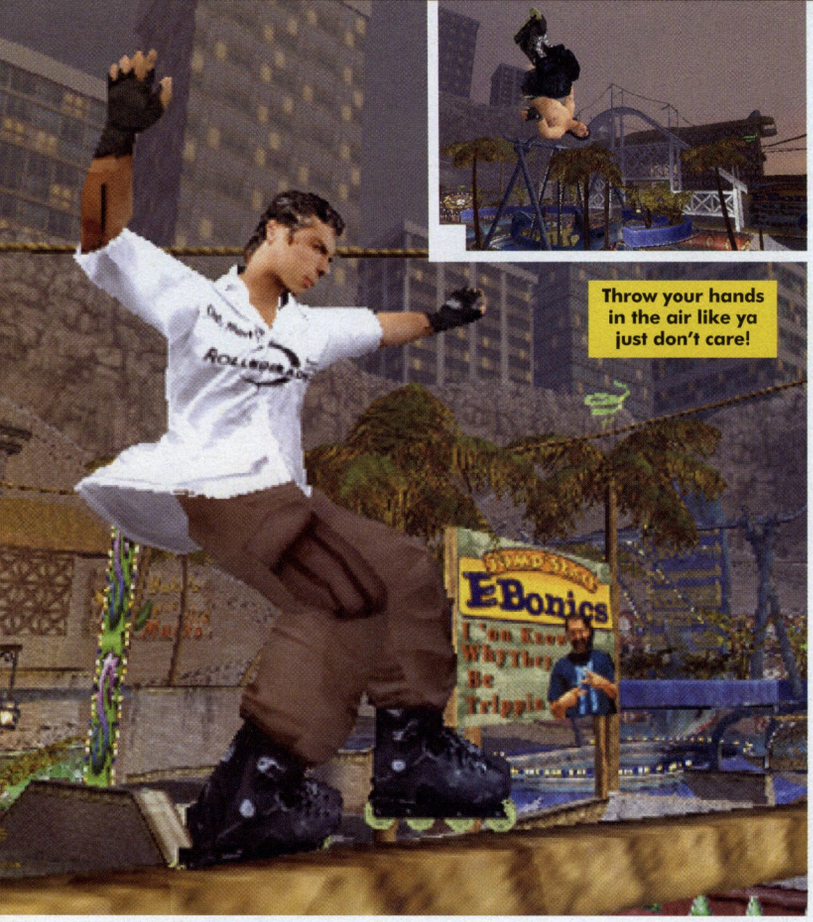


Throw your hands in the air like ya just don't care!

AGGRESSIVE INLINE

»PS2/GCN/XBOX

CATEGORY: Extreme sports dude! >> **PLAYERS:** 1-2 >>
PUBLISHER: Acclaim >> **AVAILABLE:** TBA

WOW-O-METER

To most skateboarders that play videogames, Tony Hawk has become the Holy Grail of their world. However (and most of them will be skeptical) the Hawk is about to be challenged in his field of expertise, and we don't mean on a deck. Vying for your hard-earned cash is a newcomer to the extreme sports field - Aggressive Inline. Inline takes the niche pastime of aggressive skating and lands it on your home console – all three in fact. We've given the PS2 version a run for its money, and although still early in development, this game is set to redesign the way you think about this genre. No more timed levels - an innovative 'Juice Meter' means you can traverse the huge levels indefinitely. No more stats either, they've been replaced by a much more natural experience system. As for the trick mechanics, Aggressive Inline brings a number of refinements to the genre that suit inline skating perfectly. Should be hot!

Skate or fly.

DINO STALKER

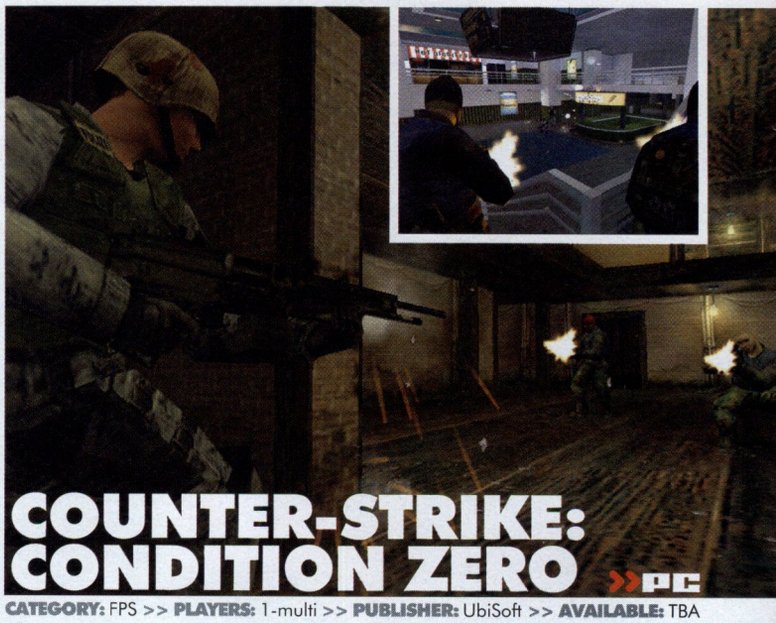
»PS2

CATEGORY: FPS >> **PLAYERS:** 1 >>
PUBLISHER: THQ >> **AVAILABLE:** TBA

WOW-O-METER

Dino Stalker is actually the third game in the Resident Evil spin-off series known as Gun Survivor. Gun Survivor was a light gun based first person shooter, and if you didn't know that then consider yourself lucky. We gave the first Gun Survivor game 39%, and that was probably a little on the generous side. Fortunately however, it looks like the series might come good with Dino Stalker. The action promises to be unrelenting, with all sorts of prehistoric nasties to blast, and a huge range of firepower to do the blasting with. The game's tropical setting is already looking quite lush, and the dinosaurs are nicely detailed. Of course, ease of control is going to be the big test, as navigating a 3D world using a light gun tends to be quite tricky. If this aspect can be streamlined, and the rest of the game falls into place, this new hybrid genre might finally start to show its teeth.

Just scratch it under the chin and you'll be fine.



COUNTER-STRIKE: CONDITION ZERO

»PC

CATEGORY: FPS >> **PLAYERS:** 1-multi >> **PUBLISHER:** UbiSoft >> **AVAILABLE:** TBA

Condition Zero is the next big step for Counter-Strike. Indeed, while keeping all the old stuff that made Counter-Strike so great, Condition Zero is going in a number of new directions... the most significant of which is including a single player component. Gasp!

The game is set across six hot spots – North America, South America, Urban Europe, Asia, The Middle East and Arctic Russia. Each setting will have around four maps, with 12 objectives in each. As you progress, you'll unlock better weaponry and be able to recruit AI to take into missions. Better yet, there's an experience system of sorts that will allow you to train your AI teammates in a number of areas, essentially allowing you to "upgrade" them.

All the maps will be playable in multiplayer games as well, so essentially the single player game is like an advanced training mode where you can learn maps and weapons inside out and become familiarised with the new game types. The big test, of course, will be in the bot AI. Gearbox know this and are working hard on producing absolutely convincing AI. They're also making it so that end users can easily script their own bots to play with or against. Add in the much-improved visuals and you have an essential purchase.

WOW-O-METER

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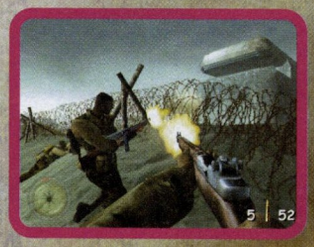
WIN MEDAL OF HONOR: FRONTLINE!

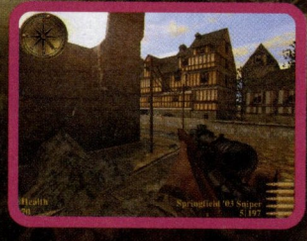
FOR PS2

We almost didn't get the magazine finished this month because we were all crowded around the TV watching each other play Medal of Honor. This PS2 game is chock full of entertainment and a credit to the now very respectable Medal of Honor name. To win one of five copies we have to give away, answer the following question:

>> Which world war is Medal of Honor Frontline set in?

Put your answer on the back of an envelope with your name and address and send it to: **Achtung Freebies, Hyper, 78 Renwick St, Redfern, NSW 2016.**





WIN MEDAL OF HONOR: ALLIED ASSAULT

FOR PC

If any of you gamers missed this great PC game, then shame on you. Don't worry though, because we want to give away five copies to make sure you get to enjoy this gripping shooter. War, what is it good for eh? Well, videogames at least. To win one of five copies we have to give away, answer the following question:

>> Which year did World War II officially end?

Put your answer on the back of an envelope and send it to: **Winning for Winston, Hyper, 78 Renwick St, Redfern, NSW 2016.**

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For **DSA**, a Hip Hop band from Perth it was all about keeping control and doing things their way. They produced their own CD but used all their money doing it. With the $20,000 they won from **NESCAFÉ Big Break** they could press the CDs and market them themselves.

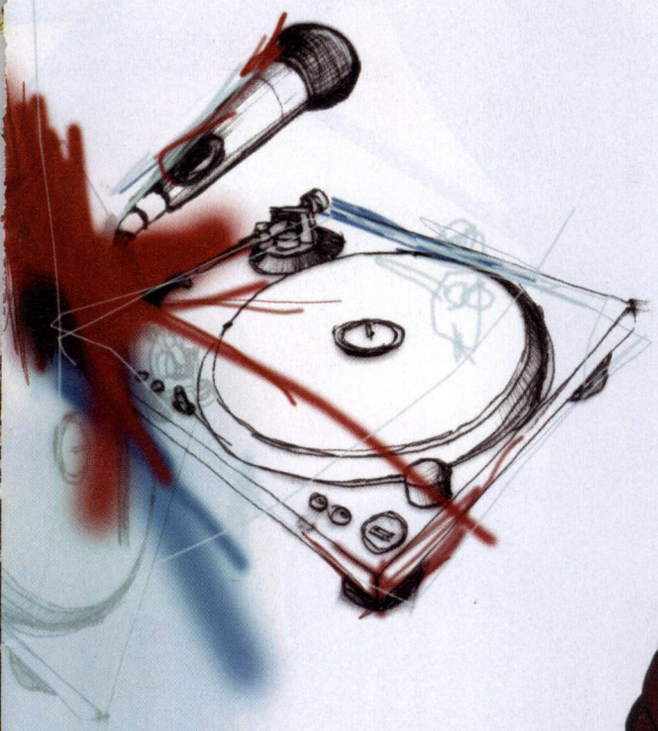

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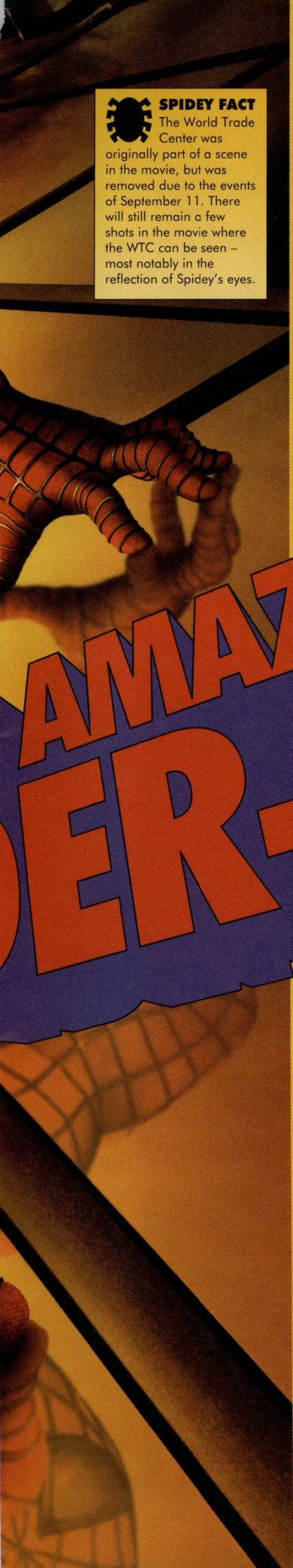
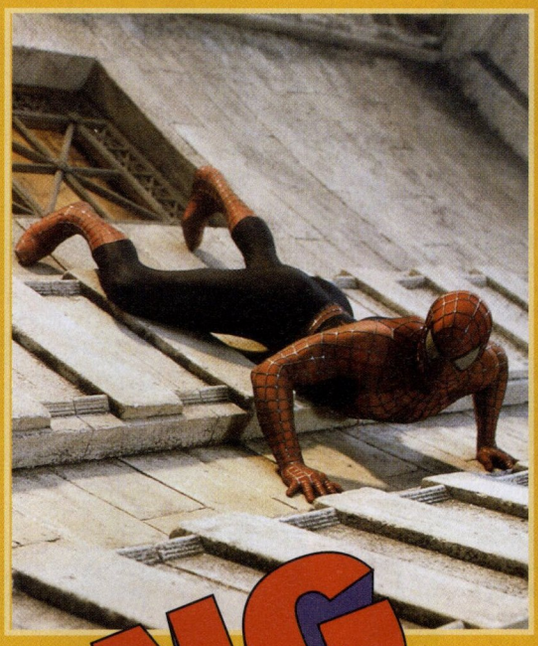
Photo by Lisa Tomasetti



SPIDEY FACT
The World Trade Center was originally part of a scene in the movie, but was removed due to the events of September 11. There will still remain a few shots in the movie where the WTC can be seen – most notably in the reflection of Spidey's eyes.



AMAZING SPIDER-MAN

THE WIDE WORLD'S FIRST WEBMASTER IS CRAWLING ALL OVER CINEMAS EVERYWHERE. GET INTO THE SWING OF THINGS WITH THE HYPER GUIDE TO SPIDER-MAN!

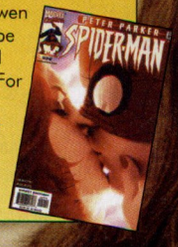
Thanks to the success of *X-Men*, it looks like Hollywood studios have their eye on comic book adaptions once again. Projects in the pipeline include *Hulk*, *The Sub-Mariner*, *Daredevil*, *The Fantastic Four*, *X-Men 2*, *Ghost Rider*, *Iron Fist*, and of course as you read this, *Spider-Man* is swinging his way onto screens in Australia. When they'll get around to making a movie of our personal favourite, *The Silver Surfer*, who knows? Who can resist the box-office power of an alien being with a surfboard? Anyway, we digress... we're here to talk Peter Parker. Spider-Man. Spidey.

You all probably know the origin of Spider-Man – and if you don't, then go see the film, we won't spoil it for you. What the Marvel comic captured so well was the torment that a young man would go through balancing his normal life with his superhero responsibilities. Peter Parker and his life, loves and losses were as much a part of the Spider-Man comics as the superhero stuff. Spider-Man was a true comic book soap opera, and as a result, is probably one of the more appropriate comic book characters to be given the big screen treatment. There are characters and themes here that transcend the hero in the red suit punching out the bad guys. Spider-Man is the hero we could relate to. Any one of us could be Peter Parker. Anyone one of us could be Spider-Man. That's the hook... And so our imaginations run wild.

SPIDEY FACT
Spider-Man Director, Sam Raimi, is the man who directed the *Evil Dead* series!

SPIDEY FACT
Did you know that Stan Lee, Marvel comics chief and co-creator of Spider-Man, helped screenwriter David Koepp draft the preliminary screenplay for *Spider-Man*? He is Executive Producer on the film. Stan also appeared as an ice-cream vendor in *X-Men*, one of his other Marvel creations to hit the big screen.

SPIDEY FACT
In the comics, Peter Parker actually had a girlfriend by the name of Gwen Stacy and it was Mary Jane who would try to get Peter's attention, not the other way around! Gwen would later on be killed by the evil Green Goblin. For our money, Spidey's coolest girlfriend was Felicia Hardy, The Black Cat!



Mary Jane Watson
– *Kirsten Dunst*

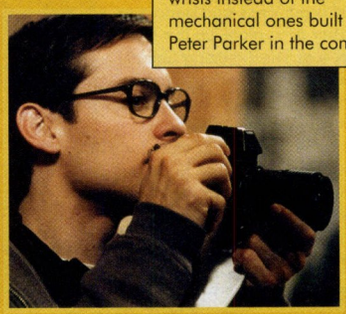
» Mary Jane is the girl who lives next door that Peter Parker longs to be with, but unfortunately, she's Harry Osborn's girlfriend! Of course, it doesn't take her long to fall for Spider-Man...

Peter Parker/Spider-Man – Tobey Maguire

» Orphaned at an early age, Peter Parker lives with his Aunt May in Queens, New York. Peter leads the life of a normal student, working as a photographer for the Daily Bugle newspaper. The newspaper job gives him the opportunity to keep track of crimes taking place around the city, and as Spider-Man he can get himself into position to take some pretty awesome photographs!

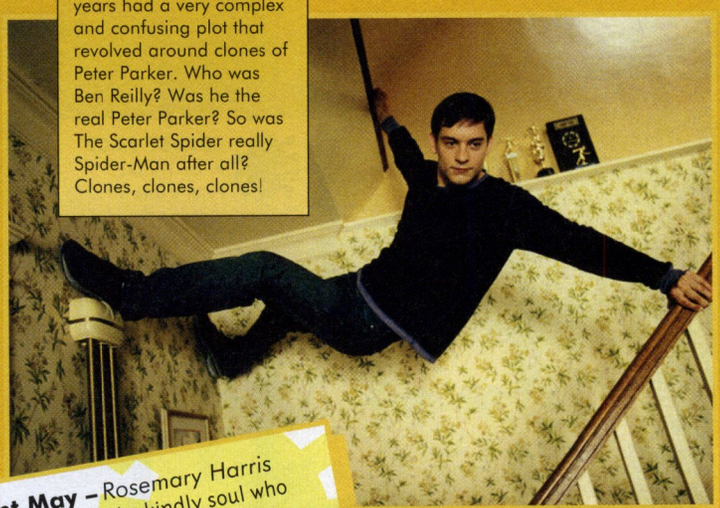
SPIDEY FACT

In the comics, Peter was bitten by an irradiated spider, yet in the movie the spider is "genetically engineered". As a result, Spider-Man in the movie has organic web-shooters from his wrists instead of the mechanical ones built by Peter Parker in the comics.



SPIDEY FACT

Star Wars isn't the only place for clones! The Spider-Man comics for many years had a very complex and confusing plot that revolved around clones of Peter Parker. Who was Ben Reilly? Was he the real Peter Parker? So was The Scarlet Spider really Spider-Man after all? Clones, clones, clones!

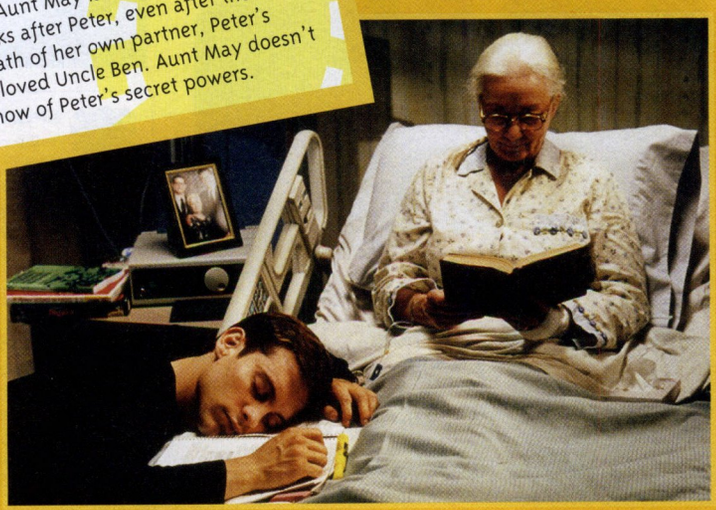


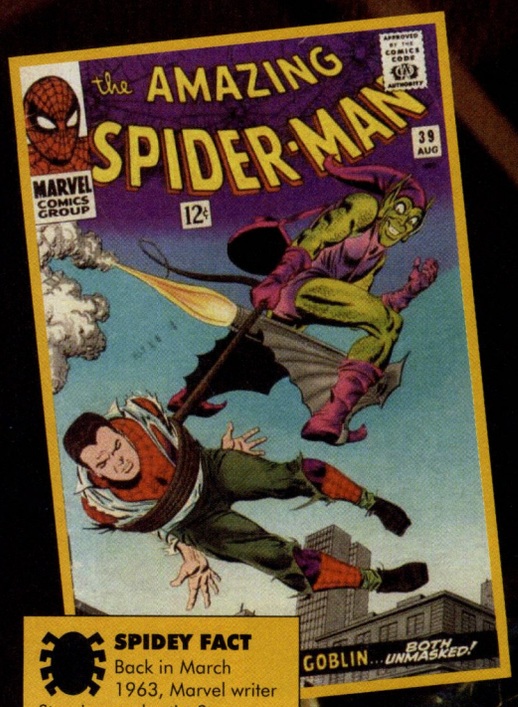
SPIDEY FACT

Yes, *Spider-Man 2* is in the works already. Tobey Maguire and Kirsten Dunst have confirmed they will return, and we can expect an all-new villain. Let's hope it's Doctor Octopus!

Aunt May – Rosemary Harris

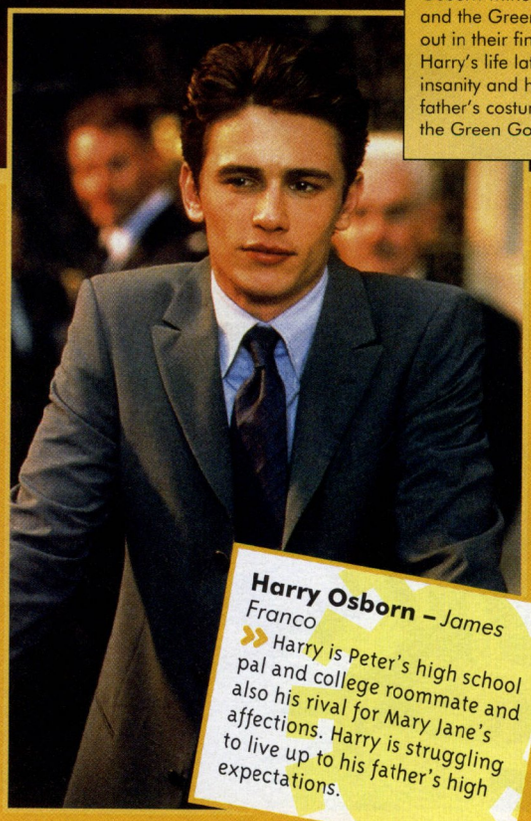
» Aunt May is the kindly soul who looks after Peter, even after the death of her own partner, Peter's beloved Uncle Ben. Aunt May doesn't know of Peter's secret powers.





SPIDEY FACT
Back in March 1963, Marvel writer Stan Lee and artist Steve Ditko put pens and pencils to paper to conjure up the first issue of The Amazing Spider-Man. Funnily enough, in his first issue, he's trying to join up with the Fantastic Four! By issue 39, John Romita Snr. had come on board to do pencils, and Spidey was defeating the Green Goblin and unmasking him as Norman Osborn.

SPIDEY FACT
In the comics, Peter's friend Harry Osborn witnesses Spider-Man and the Green Goblin duke it out in their final battle. Sadly, Harry's life later slides into insanity and he picks up his father's costume to become the Green Goblin II!



Harry Osborn – *James Franco*
» Harry is Peter's high school pal and college roommate and also his rival for Mary Jane's affections. Harry is struggling to live up to his father's high expectations.

SPIDEY FACT
In the comics, they tried to resurrect the concept of the Green Goblin character by creating a new arch-enemy to Spider-Man called the Hobgoblin, who wore a similar costume.

Even stranger, the actor who voiced the Hobgoblin in the animated Spider-Man TV series, was none other than Mark Hamill – Luke Skywalker from *Star Wars*!

Norman Osborn/The Green Goblin – Willem Dafoe

» Norman Osborn is the father of Peter's pal, Harry, and a powerful business man and scientist. In an experiment gone wrong, Norman Osborn is endowed with increased intelligence and strength, but as a side effect, he goes insane and now thirsts for power and destruction.

SPIDEY FACT
Composer Danny Elfman, who has written the score for *Spider-Man*, also was behind the music of Tim Burton's original *Batman the Movie*. Oh, and he wrote *The Simpsons* theme music as well!

SPIDEY FACT
Hyper Ed, Eliot, has a collection of over 300 Spider-Man comics from the 60s, 70s and 80s.

SPIDEY FACT
The year 2002 is Spider-Man's 40th anniversary! He first appeared in Marvel's "Amazing Fantasy" issue #15 1962.

J. Jonah Jameson – J.K. Simmons

» J. Jonah Jameson is the cranky editor of the Daily Bugle, the paper that employs Peter as a photographer. Ironically, Jameson looks upon Spider-Man as a dangerous vigilante and uses the paper as a vehicle to publicise his opinions, much to Peter's dismay.

TRAWL

>> JACKSON GOTHE-SNAPE

Citizen Zero

WWW.CITIZEN-ZERO.COM

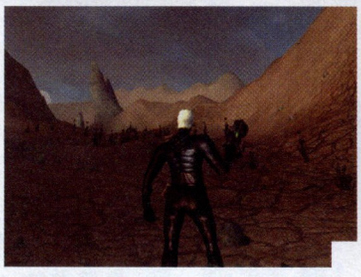
The world of massively multiplayer online games is becoming increasingly competitive. EverQuest 2, Star Wars: Galaxies and Asheron's Call 2 are all fast approaching, while the tried and tested continue to maintain their footing. MicroForte are a relatively small Australian technology and game development studio based both in Canberra and Sydney who believe that they have something to offer the genre. They have developed new server technology called BigWorld, and are well on the way to completing the first title to make use of it.

Grim. Bleak. Desolate. Yet... Fun!

MEMORY WIPE

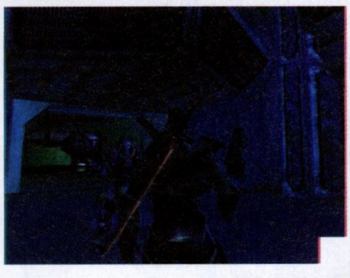
Citizen Zero is, officially, a third-person massively multiplayer online action-adventure game with strong role-playing elements. MicroForte have created an intriguing scenario to drive the story for the game, which offers the possibility for each player to unravel their own history and directly involve themselves in the world's major happenings. The setting is the Ulruan system of planets, based around the former penal colony of NE6744, sarcastically named Neo-Eden by its inhabitants – set free following extensive rioting. However news of this has not yet reached Earth, so there remains a continuous flow of new 'prisoners' to the planets, with each having their memories wiped on arrival.

The player will get to choose between human, Cybrid (cyborg) and the tribal alien Beziel races, all of which limit the player's potential for development, as each offers the usual natural advantages and disadvantages. The game offers plenty of player appearance modifications, ranging from clothing to a dynamic body development system. Each human controlled character makes up the select group of around 5% of the population called 'Zeroes', who have freed themselves from most constraints of a chip planted inside their head. By taking advantage of the freedom the Zeroes enjoy, the player's goal is to unravel the mysteries of Neo-Eden and themselves, by investigating the past and present of both themselves and the land.



There is a great skill development system that allows both the casual player and obsessed nutter to enjoy the game. Apart from certain bonuses you get from carrying out tasks, there is a constant stream of skill points distributed to chosen areas in real-time, even when offline. A player who plays an hour a day should receive around 40% of the points that a hardcore player gains. Thankfully, CZ offers more than the standard one-dimensional success-scale. In other games, skills are both the measure of achievement and the prime determinant of competence. In Neo-Eden however, the player may wish to seek out his past, study the mysterious clouded planet, develop one's inner strength to eradicate all effects of your chip or climb the corporate ladder for the Overarchy

Can we stop for a frolic in the grass? Ooh, delightful! Happy times!



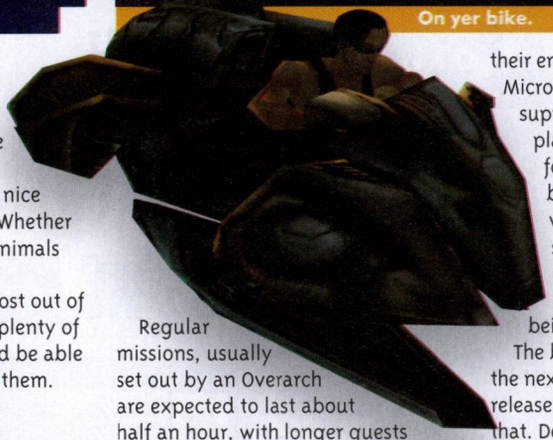
On yer bike.

– skills only measure competence, not achievement.

There's plenty to do in the Ulruan system as well, and players will no doubt create nice little niches for themselves. Whether it's stealthily hunting wild animals for their pelt, or liasing with mechanics to squeeze the most out of your racing vehicle, there's plenty of lifestyles, so everyone should be able to find something that suits them.

IT'S A BIG WORLD

The combat system, from the little information available, also appears to be shaping up nicely. Players choose whom, when and for how long to shoot on a second to second timeframe, and whether or not to incorporate any of the special skills they may have learned. Skill and weapon ratings will determine how quickly they can get a decent shot off, and its damage. MicroForte are committed to making CZ socially safe, so player combat will only be allowed between players if they both agree or if they are in frontier areas.

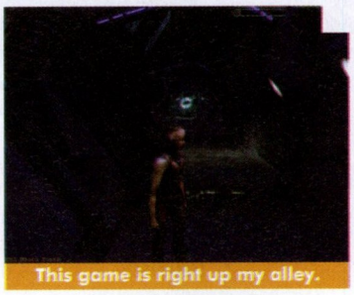


Regular missions, usually set out by an Overarch are expected to last about half an hour, with longer quests banding together several missions. They may force the player to go it alone, keeping in the shadows, or banding together with allies and packing some serious firepower. Broader stories will be woven into the missions so that a player will see directly the effects of significant events or developments.

Whether CZ is a success or not, MicroForte seem to have secured their future with the BigWorld technology they have developed. Good reviews from developers' conferences in the US and Australia mean that licensing their engine could be fairly profitable.

MicroForte claim BigWorld can support an unfathomable 500 000 players per universe, with 10 000 for each 'shard'. The real benefits however come from the very logical resource allocation system it offers, where servers can dedicate their power to where it's needed, instead of being restricted to a virtual area.

The beta process is due to begin in the next few months, with the actual release some three to six months after that. Despite this, the game seems to be developing the sort of following required for a MMOG to be successful, with several fansites already popping up, and the forums packed.



This game is right up my alley.

MS. INFORMATION

AGATA BUDINSKA

>>"Doubleudoubleudoubleudotagatadotbudinskadotname"

Why would I want to? It seems the gold rush is now over for .name registrations, and it's first come, best dressed for names on the net.

Apparently this is the way of the future – where you register your .name domain, alias it onto the email account of your choice, and keep renewing it till you're at a ripe old age. No more calling around trying to find your friends email address cause they went from dialup to cable. Wow. Is it that simple? Well, at the moment it seems to be, but as new domain extensions are released, the web might become a much more confusing place to be.

We started with 3 - .com, .net and .org – and anyone with the dosh can register one of these. Then we started adding on countries with .com.au, .co.uk and many other variations. Today domain extensions are growing fast – not only do we now have .name, .us, .info, .tv and .biz, soon we'll have .pro, .coop, .museum and .aero

Like the Australian laws that say you have to have a registered business name to have a .com.au, or be a registered charity for a .org.au, new domains will have similar kinds of restrictions as to who can register them. At the moment, .aero is only available to airlines, airports, aviation industry associations and the like, it will soon be available to pilots, air freight companies and eventually recreational aviation groups. The .pro domain will only be for accredited professionals such as lawyers and doctors, and .museum, well, it speaks for itself really.

If these new domain extensions catch on, I feel it will be goodbye to the days of blind surfing – entering a word and 'Ctrl+enter'ing to see what you get. Which can only be good.

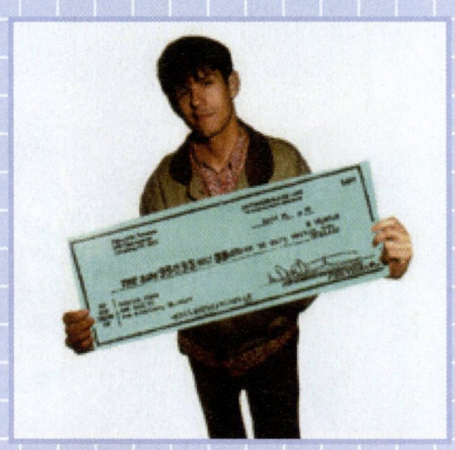
happymealwithoj@hotmail.com

LINKS

THE BLADDER

www.thebladder.com.au

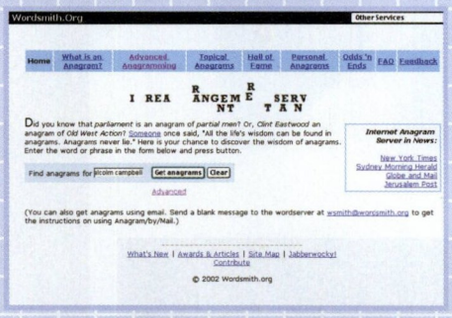
>> There's nothing quite as ridiculous as the clichés that dominate sports journalism. The Bladder is a great site that highlights many of these through satirical, up-to-date Aussie sports stories and headlines. Some of the stories may well fly over your head, but even the mildest of sport-followers should enjoy headlines like "Pat Rafter named Bermudan Of The Year" and "Casual bobsled fan upset at John Candy's absence from Jamaican team".



FREE MONEY

www.goodthink.com/$$tablecontents.html

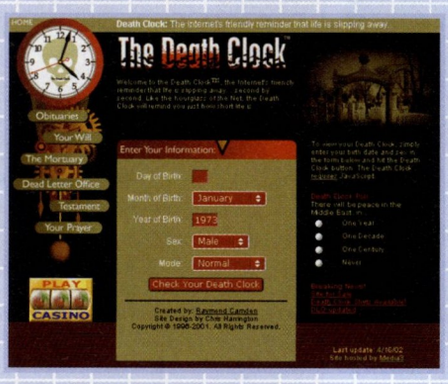
>> Everyone's seen those annoying novelty cheques that pyramid scheme or sweepstakes companies send you in the mail. Is seeing your name on a cheque written out for ninety-five thousand dollars really so great a marketing ploy? This is the story that describes how one guy gave one of these junk mail companies what they deserve. In the mid-nineties, Patrick Combs was mailed a fake cheque for nearly a hundred thousand big ones – the only thing is, his bank accidentally cashed it.



ANAGRAMS GALORE

www.wordsmith.org/anagram/index.html

>> Explorers of the web usually encounter endless forum signups and site memberships. Normal folk are faced with the very serious dilemma of what to call yourself if your username has already been taken. Instead of trying the uber-lame UserName49 technique, why not enter an anagram! This site's handy, as it lists potentially hundreds of anagrams for anything you type in. Sure, most are effectively illegible but there is the odd golden discovery. Look out for Eliot and Cam's secret identities "Oh it flies" and "Ace sham" in message boards across the internet today!



DEATHCLOCK

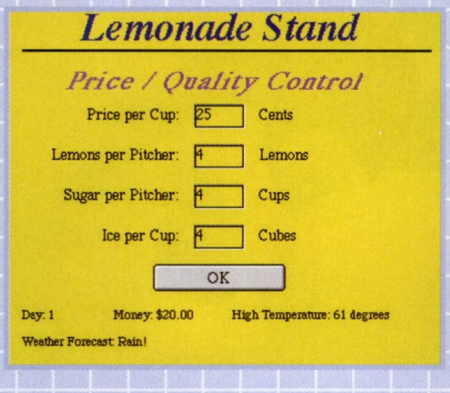
www.deathclock.com

>> Everyone's fairly used to the idea that we'll all die sometime in the next century or so. Whether it's 2040 or 2090, throwing around meaningless years is hardly enough to motivate us all to stop wasting time and get up off the couch. This site, morbid as it is, might remind us how short life really is! Seriously though, it's daunting watching the seconds tick by, knowing that early on Monday morning, May 8th, 2056, your time will be up.

HOLLYWOOD STOCK EXCHANGE

www.hsx.com

>> The Hollywood Stock Exchange! This brilliant site offers you the chance to create your own portfolio of shares of famous film and music stars. Their stock price will fluctuate according to HSX market forces. Can you spot the starlet in a film, or predict the year's sleeper-hit? How much (imaginary) cash can you make? The site offers rankings, and prizes for the elite. Definitely worth the time it takes to acquaint yourself with everything.



LEMONADE GAME

www.lemonadegame.com

>> As a failed lemonade stand owner myself, I would have benefited immensely from playing this highly realistic game, before I had opened the business. This site allows you to set prices, lemon, sugar and ice content with a goal to maximise profits. The catch is, customers' tastes vary depending on the weather. Ugly and basic, it's still strangely addictive, and offers the youth of today a chance to see how Ginger Meggs earned his pocket-money.

RATING SPOT

www.ratingspot.com

>> This site is the worst the web has to offer. It has links to sites containing pictures of people, pets, cars and art, posted for no other reason than for them to be rated. What has the world come to when people require some sort of anonymous reassurance of an artificial self to quell insecurities? Having said that, it is devilishly fun trolling through pictures of the opposite sex, either dismissing them with just a click on 'three out of ten', or seeking 'more info' of any that tickle your fancy. Just remember, Hyper reckons visuals aren't everything.

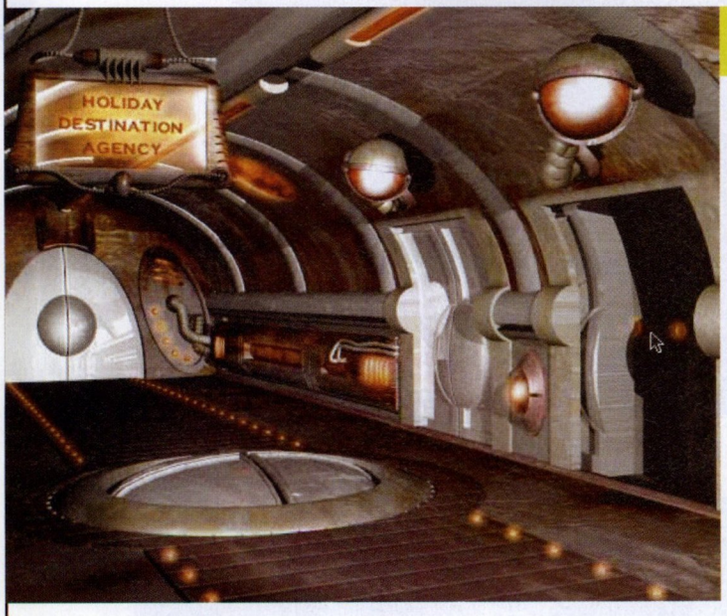
SOCCER ADS

homepage.mac.com/soccerad/

>> It's World Cup time and football fever is at its most contagious. In the last few years many global corporations have channelled plenty of funds into their advertising campaigns, with some entertaining results. Here in Australia we don't get the chance to see many of them, so for football fans this site is a must-visit. Some of the ads, like the Pepsi sumo one, may be familiar but amongst those that didn't make it down under, there are some real gems. Long live King Cantona!

real

Computer Game Design



IT & Communication Design Degree

QUT's double degree in Information Technology and Communication Design could take you into a career designing computer games and entertainment, post-production and special affects.

The degree will help you develop creative, technical and professional skills needed to succeed in this exciting international field.

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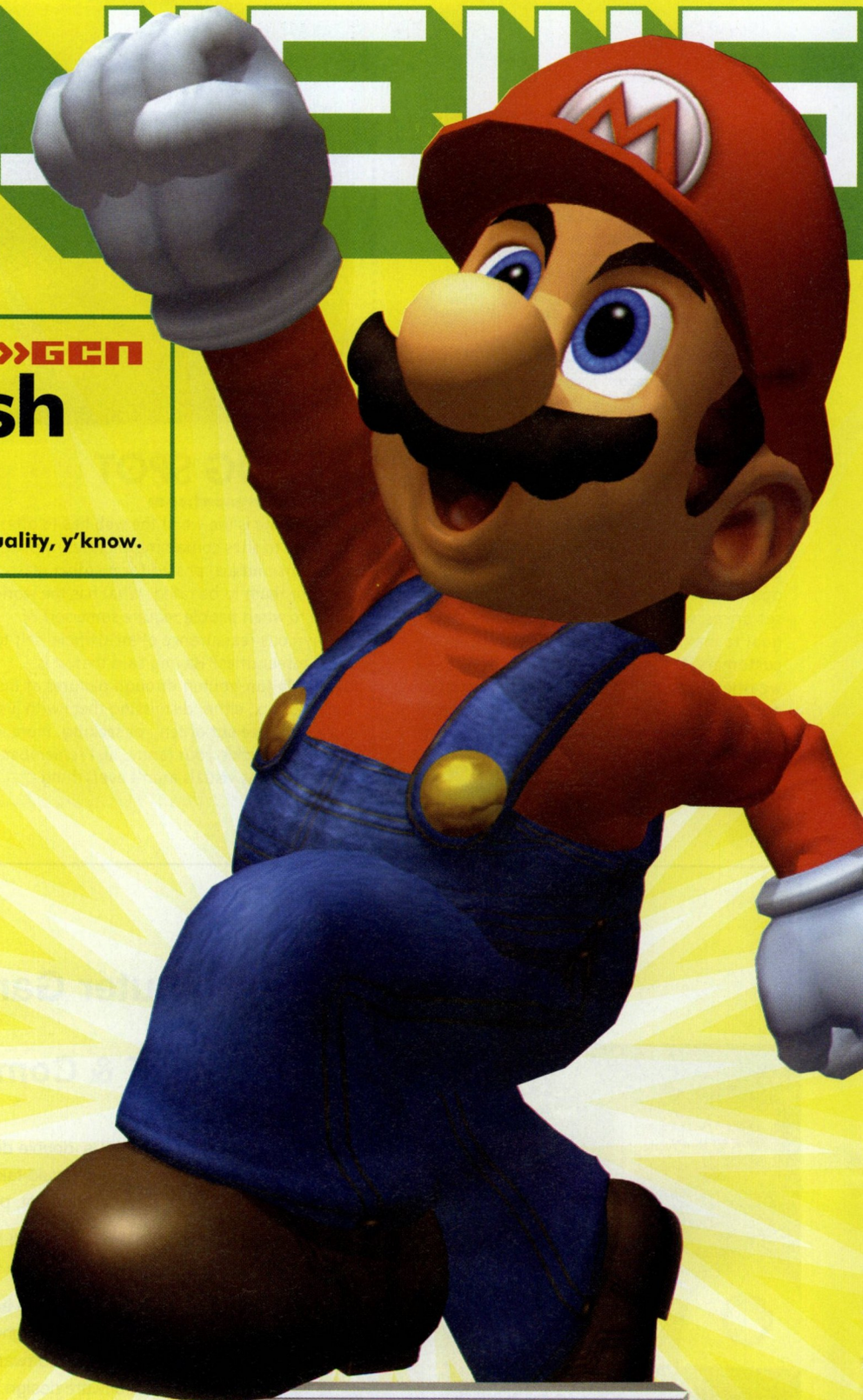
REVIEW

GAME OF THE MONTH »GCN

Super Smash Bros Melee

They weren't kidding about that seal of quality, y'know.



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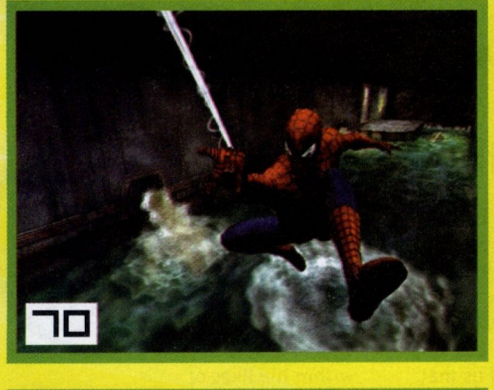
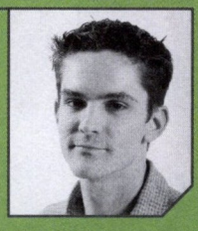
HYPER»

All console games are tested on the Samsung Plano CS29A200 TV.

SAMSUNG ELECTRONICS



GAME THEORY



DAVID WILDGOOSE

>> Recently a judge in the US passed a ruling denying videogames were covered by their Constitution's First Amendment granting the right to free speech. In videogames, U.S. District Judge Stephen N. Limbaugh Sr. found "no conveyance of ideas, expression, or anything else that could possibly amount to speech. The court finds that video games have more in common with board games and sports than they do with motion pictures."

In reaching his finding, Judge Limbaugh viewed rolling demos of just four games, namely the conceptually similar Doom, Fear Effect, Mortal Combat (sic) and Resident of Evil Creek (sic). That he managed to misspell two of the games' titles in his verdict betrays his level of understanding of the medium.

To assist the judge, the plaintiff (the Interactive Digital Software Association) provided written materials detailing the stories and scripts of said games in an effort to have such character development and interaction qualify as speech. Ultimately, the judge ruled that they did not. Indeed, he determined such elements were "inconsequential" to the game and relegated them to mere "background expression".

I think three points need to be raised in objection. One, how can four games (especially those four games) be representative of the medium? What about Metal Gear Solid, Vagrant Story, Munch's Oddysee and The Last Express, to name but another (albeit far more socially and politically aware) quartet at random?

Two, a game's plot, dialogue and characters cannot be simply detached from the game itself. Would you analyse a film divorced from the motives of its protagonists?

Three, the judge did not actually play the games as part of his research. Instead, he simply watched them, as if they were films, and read their scripts, as if they were novels.

In sum, the judge did not interact with these games to experience how all these factors, in turn, interact with each other. He only viewed the games from a developer's perspective and ignored the player's contribution. He did not attempt to understand them. In doing so, he removed them from their context and thus we believe abdicated his responsibility and right to pass judgement.

hyper_game_theory@hotmail.com

THE HYPER CREW'S TOP 5

Eliot Fish – Editor

1. Chrono Trigger – SNES
"I thought I'd go back and play this before the new one comes out..."
2. Dungeon Siege – PC
3. Statbuilder – PC
4. Medal of Honor: Frontline – PS2
5. Gunvalkyrie – Xbox

Cam Shea – Deputy Editor

1. Super Mario Sunshine – GCN
"I'm at E3 playing this now. Heheh."
2. Auto Modellista – PS2
3. Metroid Prime – GCN
4. Unreal Championship – Xbox
5. Medal of Honor: Frontline – PS2

Malcolm Campbell - Art guy

1. Medal of Honor: Frontline – PS2
"Achtung! Das Brot ist köstlich!"
2. Pikmin - GCN
3. Final Fantasy X - PS2
4. Gunvalkyrie – Xbox
5. Spiderman - GCN

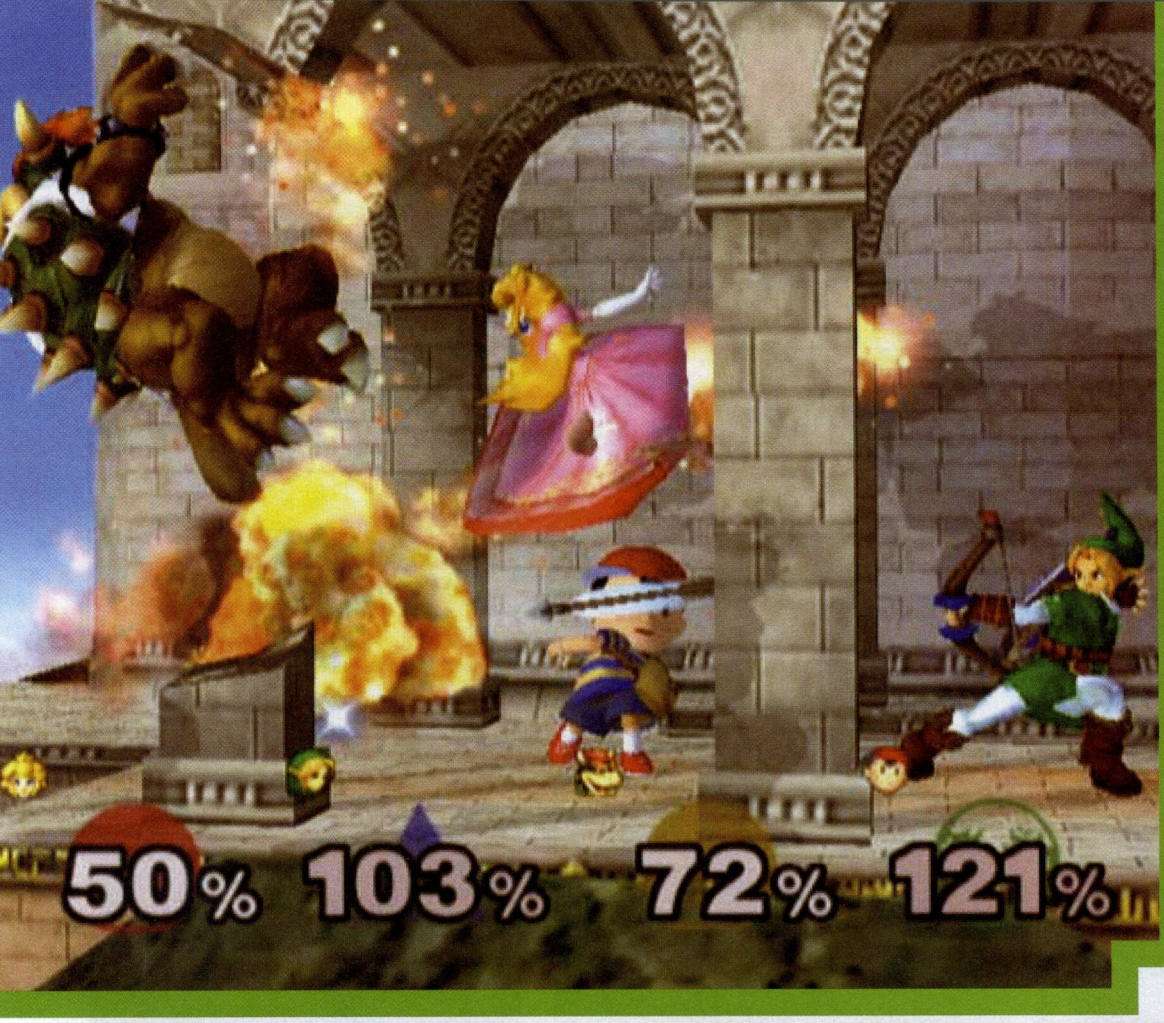
David Wildgoose - Reviewer

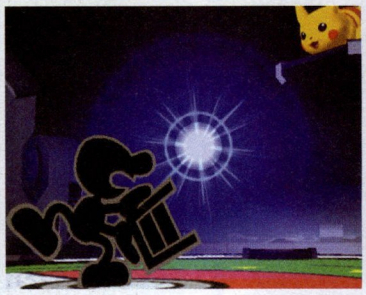
1. Advance Wars – GBA
"Perfect for the 14 hour flight to Los Angeles for E3."
2. Grand Theft Auto 3 – PS2
3. Kohan: Ahriman's Gift – PC
4. Halo – Xbox
5. ICO – PS2

THE HYPER SCORING SYSTEM

The Overall Score – what's it all about?

90+	Excellent and worthy of a Big Rubber Stamp. Buy it!
80-89	Very good. This is a quality game, but not perfect.
70-79	Good, verging on average. Try before you buy.
60-69	Average, verging on bad. This game is badly flawed.
50-59	Bad game design and possibly not even worth renting.
0-49	These games simply suck. A total waste of money!





»GCN

Super Smash Bros. Melee

CATEGORY: Fighting/Party game >> **PLAYERS:** 1-4 >> **PUBLISHER:** Nintendo >> **PRICE:** $99.95 >> **RATING:** G8+ >> **AVAILABLE:** June 14th >>

STEPHEN FARRELLY smacks Pikachu upside the head...

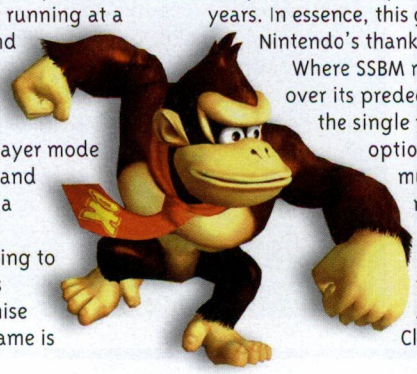
HYPER BIG RUBBER STAMP OF APPROVAL

Not content with following the rules (unless they made them), Nintendo delivered their own take on the fighting game genre on N64 with Super Smash Bros (SSB). SSB was an awesome multiplayer experience that combined elements of fighting games, the fun of four player battle royale and the undeniable charm of Nintendo characters. Who's never dreamed of using Link or Mario to knock Pikachu off of the roof of Hyrule castle? Not many we think. Still, despite its strong points, SSB was a very shallow single player experience, and even the most hardcore Nintendo fan won't deny this aspect. SSB left fans of this new gaming formula begging for more. Now we've been blessed with a next-gen follow-up: does it deliver the kind of depth we've been hoping for?

HISTORY: 101

At E3 2001 it was revealed to the world that one of GameCube's first strong titles was going to be a follow up to SSB in the form of Super Smash Bros. Melee. Given a full treatment worthy of the 'Next-Generation' moniker, SSBM comes complete with slick detailed visuals, fast and furious gameplay running at a constant 60fps and a new and improved single player mode. In fact, the single player mode is now so refined and deep, it could be a game on its own.

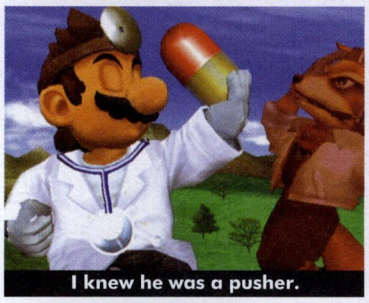
A word of warning to anyone that hates Nintendo's franchise characters, this game is jam packed with nothing but Nintendo past, Nintendo present and Nintendo future. SSBM is literally bursting with fan-boy love. Nintendo knows who their audience is and has delivered the most ambitious and rewarding game for all of us that have endured their unrelenting crazy-ass business practices over the years. In essence, this game is Nintendo's thank you.



Where SSBM rules supreme over its predecessor is with the single player options. You have a multitude of menu options in single player, ranging from Adventure and Classic to Event and Stadium modes as well as exploratory value hidden within the likes of Trophies, Training and Options. Every record, event and score you make is saved, and you can view them all. Also, the game has an extensive in-game bonus menu that breaks down what every bonus means and how it can be attained. Almost nothing is overlooked in this gem, and when you sit down with it for the first time, on your own, this becomes truly apparent.

SECRET GUYS

Classic mode follows in the footsteps of the original SSB; you battle it out

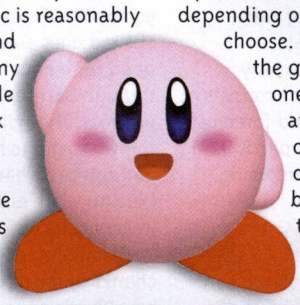


GOTTA COLLECT 'EM ALL!

>>One of the coolest things in SSBM is the Trophy collection. Throughout the game you'll earn coins that can be used in a lottery to attain trophies for your collection. According to Nintendo there are well over 250 trophies to collect, and each one is a small piece of Nintendo history, as well as hinting at a few possible future games. You can even look at the trophies up close, change the background light-source, and view them from any angle!

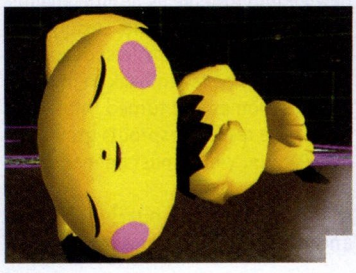
with computer opponents – eight to be exact – and thrown into the mix are three enduring mini-games. One has you attempting to break a number of targets in character-themed levels, another allows you to catch at least three new trophies, whilst the final is a race in a huge maze to try and reach the farthest door possible. Classic is reasonably easy to complete, and doing so with as many characters as possible will put you on track to unlocking those secret guys.

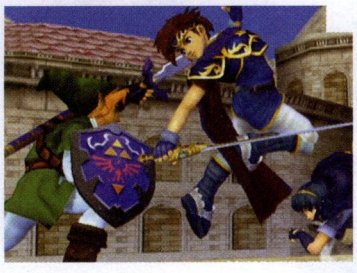
Adventure is where the real fun starts, as you charge your way through a huge array of side-scrolling bash-em' up styled levels, each varying slightly depending on the character you choose. This addition to the game is by far one of the best, and is really only overshadowed by both mutliplayer and the real cream (in our opinion anyway) of the game – the Events mode. Events offers players over 50 pre-designed fights and missions, all gradually becoming harder and harder. Throughout most you'll be able to choose your own character, however, some require using a particular character. Be warned to keep your eye on the Zelda inspired Events, as these can be really hard (especially when fighting your evil form – Shadow Link!).



!!! If you work hard, you'll unlock the coolest bonus ever...

>> Be warned to keep your eye on the **Zelda inspired Events**, these can be really hard...





Super Smash Bros Melee is without a doubt the best game on the GameCube to date, it has a tonne of options, huge replay value, and we didn't even touch on the unlockables. It's just so big, with great visuals to drool over, and presented with such polish, that it spells big bucks for Nintendo. Shell it out people! <<

PLUS: Nintendo love all 'round. Lots of unlockables.

MINUS: Really nothing unless you don't like Nintendo... Bryce.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
92	90	90

OVERALL

93

If you need a reason to own a GameCube, SSBM is it!

»GCN

Pikmin

CATEGORY: Strategy gardening >> **PLAYERS:** 1 >> **PUBLISHER:** Nintendo >> **PRICE:** $99.95 >> **RATING:** G8+ >> **AVAILABLE:** June 14th >>

MALCOLM CAMPBELL sows the seed, nature grows the seed...

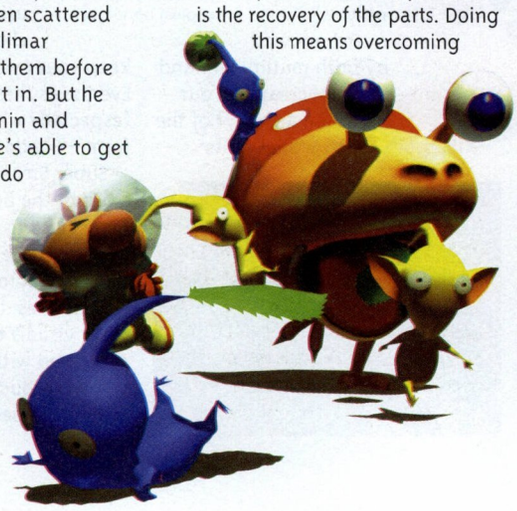
After perusing the screenshots above, with those cute bug-eyed flower creatures and funny little spaceman, you would be forgiven for thinking Shigeru Miyamoto has made another game aimed at the younger audience. You know the ones – no one really gets hurt, there's lots of bright happy colours and the gameplay isn't too taxing. Well, yes, the colours are still nice and bright, but the gameplay turns out to be quite a challenge. And the game's denizens, specifically those cute little Pikmin, don't just get hurt. They die! By their hundreds! That is, unless they can kill first, then drag the fresh carcass of their enemies back to base to be recycled into more lethal soldiers for the unstoppable Pikmin army! Muahahaha.

BACKYARD BLITZ

Pikmin is the story of Captain Olimar, an intrepid space traveller whose spaceship has crash-landed after an asteroid collision. Various parts of his rocket (the Dolphin), thirty in total, have been scattered over a wide area and Olimar despairs of recovering them before his life-support packs it in. But he soon discovers the Pikmin and becomes fascinated. He's able to get the little plant guys to do his bidding and quickly finds the first part of his spaceship. With new hope, Olimar sets out to find the remaining parts...

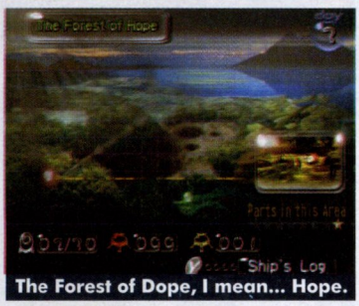
Taking control over Olimar and through him the Pikmin, you have thirty days to find the thirty parts. One a day. Piece of cake. Well, it starts off that way.

Each day (there are too many predators to work at night) consists of a number of tasks. First and foremost is the recovery of the parts. Doing this means overcoming various obstacles set in the way by using the different coloured Pikmin. The red ones are the basic grunts – good for manual labour like bashing through barricades or fighting enemies. The yellow Pikmin can be thrown to get to hard to reach areas and can carry handy bomb-rocks. The blue guys are essential for the many water obstacles.



The other task that will eat up huge chunks of the day is the growth of new Pikmin to serve as reinforcements for Pikmin killed in battle. Luckily, along with coloured pellets, dead enemies can be taken back to the Pikmins' homes and turned into seeds. The resulting sprouts grow into new Pikmin, which must be manually uprooted by Olimar.

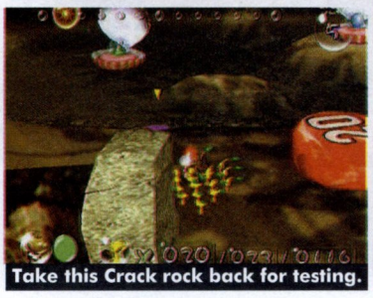
This tricky mix of puzzle solving and resource management is



The Forest of Dope, I mean... Hope.

We can make a tin can telephone!

Serves you right, sticky beak.


Take this Crack rock back for testing.

complicated further by the presence of the many creatures that roam the forest floor, most of which seem intent on eating, crushing, burning or just plain killing the Pikmin. Others aren't so deadly but provide great annoyance, like blowing the Pikmin everywhere or re-planting them. Overcoming these animals soon becomes a major priority.

GROUND FORCE

Pikmin's convincing organic environments are a credit to the graphics team at Nintendo. There's nothing too flashy, in fact the beauty is in the subtlety. One day you'll be standing there, watching while your hundred or so Pikmin go about their task. The way the shadows from overhead trees move lazily on the ground tells you there's a gentle breeze blowing, but you're distracted by the patterns the water is making. A couple of young Bulborb's are snacking on the grass in the distance, not bothering your team. You realise suddenly the light has changed. Sunset's not far off, time to get back to the ship. All this time the graphics processor has been running hot, but there's not even a hint of slowdown or glitchiness to show for it. The only downside is the occasional dodgy camera angle.

The sound effects complement the graphics nicely. Subtle, and again, suitably organic. The dynamic soundtrack (it changes depending on the action) is classic Nintendo, but some of the tunes are more silly than whimiscal.

> Most of them seem intent on **eating, crushing, burning** or just plain killing the Pikmin.

MIYAMOTO'S BACKYARD

The further into Pikmin you get, the more you appreciate how good a game it is. Becoming emotionally attached to its characters is almost unavoidable. Olimar's journal entries about his family are quite touching and we discover he's not quite the intrepid starship pilot he once seemed. As he becomes fond of the Pikmin so do you, forgiving them their stupidity even when they accidentally set off the bomb-rocks, killing half your squad. Even the beasties become more like neighbours as once strange surroundings seems more like home... and then the game finishes. If there's one major criticsim of Pikmin, it's that it's too short. The thirty days fly past in under fifteen hours real-time and you're left with a Challenge mode which, while fun, doesn't have the attraction of the evolving story.

!!! We'll have more news on the latest Miyamoto games next issue.

Games with the level of innovation and quality of Pikmin don't come along often enough, so it's a shame it can't fill the gap. Still, better an excellent short game than a long bad one. <<

PLUS: Innovative, original, beautifully designed and made.

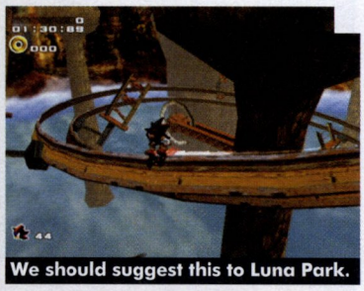
MINUS: Like Luigi's Mansion, it's much too short.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
91	85	90

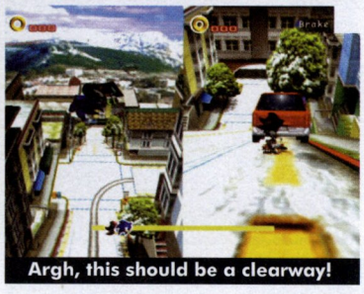
OVERALL

90

This is what they mean by the Nintendo Difference.


We should suggest this to Luna Park.

Don't mech me angry!


Argh, this should be a clearway!

>>GCN

Sonic Adventure 2: Battle

CATEGORY: Platformer >> **PLAYERS:** 1-2 >> **PUBLISHER:** Ozisoft >> **PRICE:** $99.95 >> **RATING:** G >> **AVAILABLE:** Now >>

CAM SHEA (insert speed joke here)...

Down in the Hyper cryogenics laboratory (we are part owned by the Umbrella Corp y'know), we recently revived a little experiment. His name is Greg and he's a Sega fanboy who wandered into the Hyper office five years ago to accuse us of being biased towards Nintendo. Obviously we didn't take too kindly to his remarks and put him into deep freeze on the spot (and let that be a warning to anyone else who thinks they can just wander into our office). In any case, we figured that Sonic's first appearance on Nintendo's latest console was reason enough to wake him up. After laughing at him freaking out over the news that Sega are making games for Nintendo systems, we sat him down to play Sonic Adventure 2: Battle.

AS WE SUSPECTED

The results were just as we suspected. Greg loved the Sonic/Shadow levels, but felt that Battle could hardly be called a Sonic game – there was so much other crap in there to wade through. We couldn't agree more. The Sonic levels amount to roughly one third of the game, and whilst not without their problems, they're certainly the highlight. The rest of the game is spent in clumsy "exploration" levels and simple "shoot 'em up platform" levels. Sonic Team have done nothing to rectify the gameplay imbalance with Battle on the GameCube.

So what has changed for Sonic's trip over to GameCube? Well, the graphics have been improved somewhat – texture quality is a little sharper, colours are a little richer and the game runs at a blazing 60fps, which results in the Sonic/Shadow levels being faster than ever. Always a good thing.

Sonic Team have expanded on the two player options - hence the "Battle" on the title. There are now twelve players to choose from, including Metal Sonic and Chaos. There are several new modes, and each style of play has a wide selection of stages (mostly taken from the single player game) and run very smoothly. Whether you enjoy the multiplayer aspect will depend on how much patience you have for appalling camera angles and the non-Sonic modes of play.

!!! For more info check out the official site at http://www.sonicteam.com/sonic2b

HERO OR DARK

Perhaps the biggest new addition for Battle is in the chao department. Chances are you'll either love this addition or hate it. We actually found it quite amusing for a while - especially the fact that your chao can grow to be Hero or Dark depending on your actions. Of course, we did our best to raise an evil-ass gangsta chao.

There is now a Chao Kindergarten (no, seriously), where you can get advice on raising chaos, check on your chao's health, buy and sell items, and leave your chao behind for lessons! Your chaos can also compete in chao races and chao karate, which are cute but ultimately just a gimmick. Best of all, if you have Sonic Advance and a GBA-GCN link cable you can upload your chaos to the GBA and keep training them while out and about. For the tamagotchically inclined this is a pretty cool feature. Plus, even if you don't have Sonic Advance you can still save your chao and a very basic training mini-game to the GBA. Worth a look.

PLUS: The Sonic stages are damn fast. Grinding rules.

MINUS: The other stages just let down the Sonic name.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
85	70	77

OVERALL

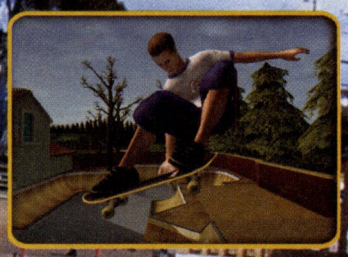
77

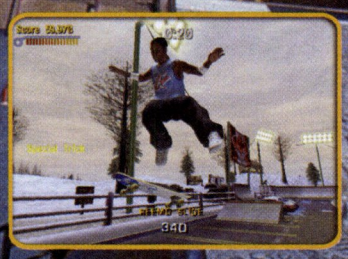
Sonic needs a fresh new perspective.

"GAMECUBE VERSION RATED 90.1% - WWW.GAMERANKINGS.COM"

«WELCOME TO MY WORLD»

Screenshots from the GameCube version





TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 3

Enter the ultimate skater's world. Weave through traffic, avoid annoying pedestrians and cause natural disasters as you shred through 8 massive living levels in the ultimate skating challenge. Master new tricks and check your skills by taking it online against your friends across town or around the globe. Welcome to my world.

G8+ M15+

GAME BOY ADVANCE PlayStation.2 NINTENDO GAMECUBE XBOX PC CD ROM NEVERSOFT

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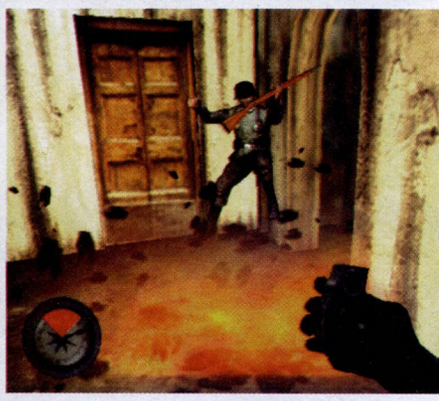
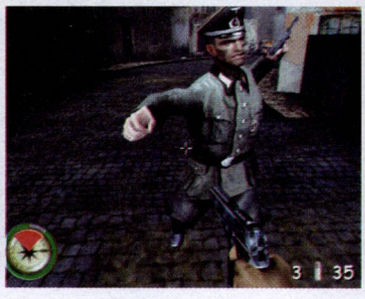




>>PS2

Medal of Honor: Frontline

CATEGORY: FPS >> **PLAYERS:** 1 >> **PUBLISHER:** EA >> **PRICE:** $99.95 >> **RATING:** M15+ >> **AVAILABLE:** TBA >>

In **CAM SHEA'S** mind, the war never stopped...

With Frontline, the Medal of Honor series is finally back where it started – on console. It's also back with its original developer, EA LA, formerly known as Dreamworks Interactive. While 2015 did a great job with Allied Assault (AA) on PC, EA LA are the guys that know how to make a console FPS sing.

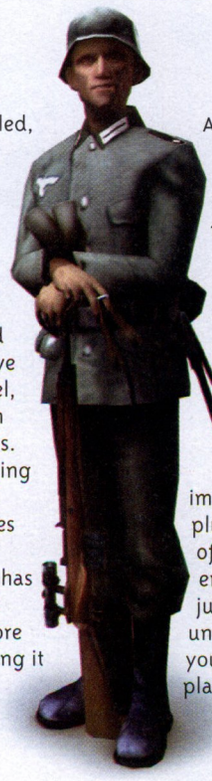
Once again you're cast in the role of LT Smash, sorry, Lt. Jimmy Patterson, a deadly one man killing machine, taking part in some of the most crucial special operations of World War II.

LASHINGS OF DETAIL

Frontline starts you out nice and slow... storming the beaches at Normandy. Okay, so it throws you head first into the action, but the effect is superb. Your first concern is survival and helping out the other soldiers, with confronting Nazi soldiers coming later in the mission. So in that sense it works well as an introduction. This is the only mission that really heavily parallels the PC game, and its impact is just as great.

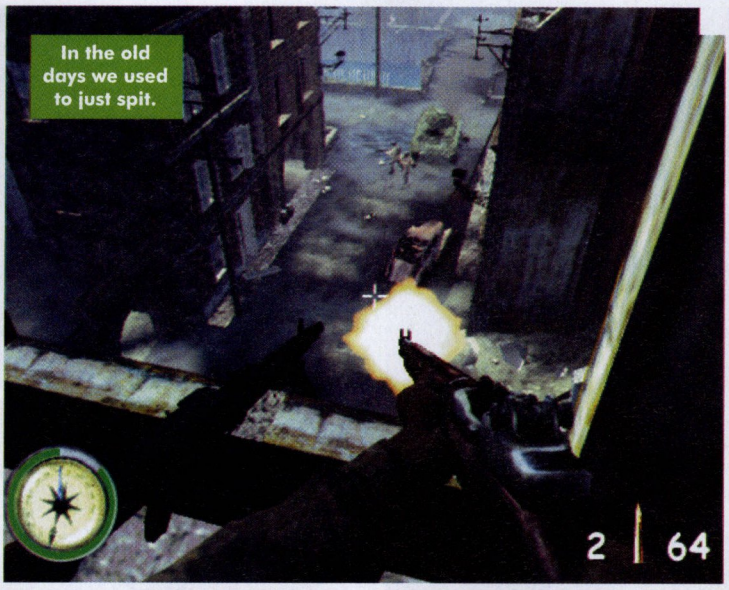
Frontline is divided into six overall missions and roughly 20 levels. The environments are quite varied and will definitely test all your FPS skills. From a day in the Dutch countryside to the claustrophobic confines of a submarine, through to sniper shootouts on a bridge and taking on nightgown clad Nazis in an elegant manor, for FPS fans Frontline will certainly entertain. It's quite stunning in the visual department too, sporting highly detailed, large environments, authentic texturing and lashings of incidental detail, which results in a truly immersive atmosphere.

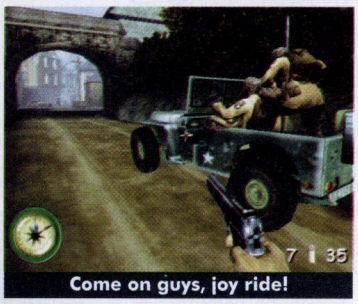
Although the missions differ, Frontline and Allied Assault unsurprisingly have a very similar look and feel, and share a fair amount in terms of mission objectives. Like AA, you'll be sabotaging Nazi car pools with wire cutters, sinking submarines and searching for hidden plans. Frontline generally has a few more objectives per level than AA did, with more exploration required leaving it feeling more interactive.



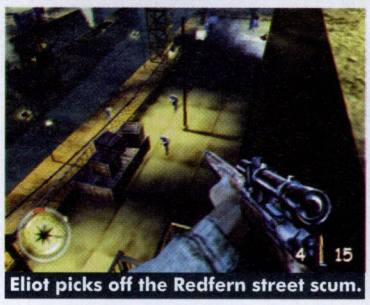
Adding further to this sensation, Frontline has far fewer sections on rails, which definitely works in the game's favour.

Although Frontline starts out at a mild enough difficulty level, it rapidly gets quite tough, as the levels can be quite long and demanding, and you have no mid-mission save points at your disposal. For pure immersion this is definitely a plus as you value every iota of health far more than in an environment where you can just auto load over and over until you get it right. Instead, you're constantly on guard, playing it safe, fearing an

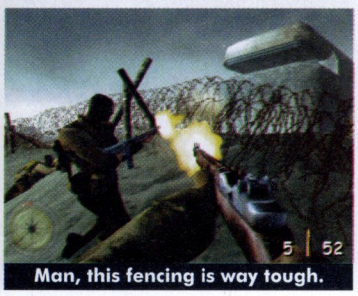




Come on guys, joy ride!



Eliot picks off the Redfern street scum.



Man, this fencing is way tough.

Don't worry it's not loaded... D'oh!

ambush and really living the experience. It's not all perfect, however.

IT'S QUITE MAGICAL

Indeed, the reason the game rapidly gets quite difficult is not so much through brutal level design or cunning AI, it's because the enemies simply get harder to kill. Early in the game a head shot with the sniper rifle will kill an enemy – just as it should. However, a couple of missions in and suddenly enemies have head armour. You assume they're dead, only to have them back on their feet a few seconds later when you're aiming at something else. It's a cheap tactic, and not appreciated.

The weapon selection is probably in keeping with the war, who knows, we weren't there. Our expertise is in videogames, and in that domain, the weapons on offer range from bloody brilliant to why bother. The silenced pistol, for instance, would have to be one of the most useless weapons ever. It's quite magical, in that half the time it shoots invisible bullets, and the other half of the time it shoots candy canes, making killing anything with it rather tricky! Similarly, the shotgun is more of a chore to use than anything, which made us cry inside, what with our unhealthy love for playing FPSs with nothing BUT the shotgun. In the middle of the arsenal is the Thompson sub machine gun, which would be good if it had clips larger than a pack of tic tacs, and the MP-40 which is a good all round weapon. The most enjoyable guns in the game are probably the two sniper rifles. Yes, two! The Springfield '03 is back, but you can also pick up the Gewehr 43. Sniping with analogue sticks is a little unwieldy, but it works well enough.

> The Thompson sub machine gun, would be good if it had clips **larger than a pack of tic tacs**

!!! Medal of Honor: Frontline has now been announced for GameCube!

In actuality, our concerns with the weapons basically boil down to their relative strength in the game. It's fair enough to make the weapons realistic, with the aiming, reloading and accuracy issues that brings, but to pair that with super human enemies?

The AI of the enemy soldiers on the whole is pretty daft. They're tricky through heightened accuracy, alien armour and numbers, rather than through actual smarts. On the surface they seem intelligent enough, setting off alarms, running to man gun turrets and kicking your grenades away, but dig a little deeper and it's all pretty basic stuff. With better AI, Frontline would be a rubber stamper several times over. As it is, this is still far and away the best FPS available on PS2. <<

PLUS: Impressive visuals, immersive atmosphere.

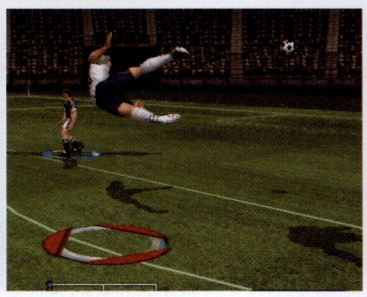
MINUS: No blood, average AI. And it can get tough!

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
89	88	87

OVERALL

88

Frontline sets a new high watermark for PS2 shooters.



RedCard

CATEGORY: Soccer >> **PLAYERS:** 1-4 >> **PUBLISHER:** Midway >> **PRICE:** $89.95 >> **RATING:** G >> **AVAILABLE:** Now >>

JACKSON GOTHE-SNAPE hands out a red card alright...

Midway have always been the masters of turning a shy, unassuming sport such as basketball or American football into an outrageously undiluted extreme roller-coaster ride of intense adrenalin-packed next-generation action through their extensive range of titles like NBA Jam and NFL Blitz. Admittedly, most of their titles are good fun and great for a laugh, especially for a multiplayer session, so for soccer fans, adding Midway to the beautiful game can only be a good thing...surely.

DOLPHINS AND APES

RedCard is the latest title to jump on the World Cup hype bandwagon. Soccer is truly the flavour of the month, as every kid and his grandma scrambles to reproduce the biggest sporting event in the world on their PlayStations and Xbox systems. Despite offering no official license, RedCard does feature a few real Asian stadiums and most actual player names, although their likenesses could be a lot better. Having said that, you probably wouldn't want to replicate the grandeur of the World Cup with the regular Cantona-kicks and flying elbows that provide the meat to the RedCard meal.

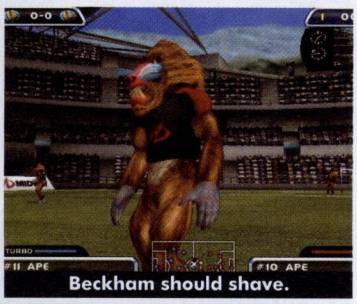
The game offers a fairly basic feature set, the most interesting mode being World Conquest. Here you can unlock teams by beating the best that each continent has to offer. The special teams are a highlight, while each is accompanied by a new novelty stadium. You'll take on dolphins, SWAT teams, and apes among others. Although there are some very simple team creation options, a comprehensive football title RedCard is not. The game appears to have one very elementary goal – action.

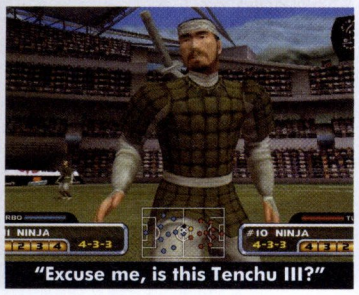
This is why playing RedCard might confuse a little at first. The field, stadium and kits are definitely intended to resemble the actual game, and essentially, the rules are the same as FIFA's. Similarly, your eleven players can all perform the usual pass, through pass, normal tackle, slide tackle and shoot actions. For a while you'll probably wonder whether Midway have softened up their outrageous outlook in their old age.

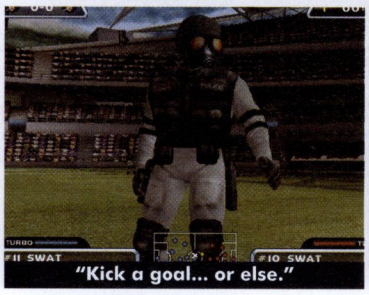
Reassuringly, at around this time, a player with Steven Gerrard's name, but with a relatively normal forehead will launch himself, two-footed with studs up, straight at your Adam's apple. Stunned for moment as you marvel at the quality of the simulation, you'll realise what's actually going on as even Gary "my-Mum-says-I-have-a-moustache" Neville, blatantly pushes you off the ball. Slowly it becomes clear that you, too, can destroy the opposition with a nice variety of Extreme™ moves. Shooting, shimmying and hurdling are also tinged with the taste of adrenalin, yet the effects of the real-world foundation prevent the game from ever getting out of control – something the game desperately needs.

INSANE MOMENTS

This truly Midway approach continues in the game's appearance. Despite the realistic intentions, the







players come across as very robotic, particularly while running. They do offer a few great animations, such as over-the-top tackles and shots, but the integration is far from seamless. The stadiums are fairly standard, filled with the odd waving flag and tragically dull crowd. The goal-celebrating firework is a nice touch, although the raining confetti is perhaps pushing it too far. Overall the visuals just lack polish and detail, with lazy field textures and simultaneously rotating advertising boards that offer identical images.

The dire lack of action isn't helped by the near total absence of extreme graphical touches. There is a great slow-motion super-zoom shot effect, and some smaller nicely done touches like burning feet and ball trails, but they are too few and far between. The sound is strangely mild for a Midway game as well, with terribly professional commentators who rarely get excited. When I mangle an opponent's face with a violent elbow, I want more than just: "wins the ball nicely". There are some decent crowd noise and truly appropriate groans and bumps, but overall it's aurally average.

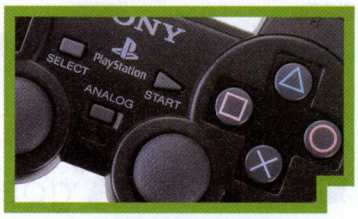
> The problem... is that between insane moments of action, there is **plenty of mediocre football**

The problem with RedCard is that between insane moments of action, there is plenty of mediocre football, full of terrible collision detection, laughable refereeing decisions, inconsistent goalkeepers, and inexplicable AI – and good luck trying to work out the heading system. These problems wouldn't be so bad if you were struggling to keep control of fast-paced footballing chaos, full of emotion, adrenalin, burning hopes and shattered dreams, it's just that RedCard rarely raises your pulse-rate.

!!! RedCard is also available on the Xbox.

If Midway were so desperate to maintain the realistic basis for the game, they should have got the gameplay mechanics right. It would have been far easier though for them to make the field smaller, bump up the speed and cut down on the players – at least then we could have had something that might have kept people interested a little longer than five minutes.

It is perhaps appropriate that RedCard is not successful in its attempts in turning the beautiful game into an action-extravaganza. In soccer, a red card is shown for actions against the spirit of the game, and this Midway effort certainly deserves one. <<



PLUS: The odd graphical effects, unlockables.

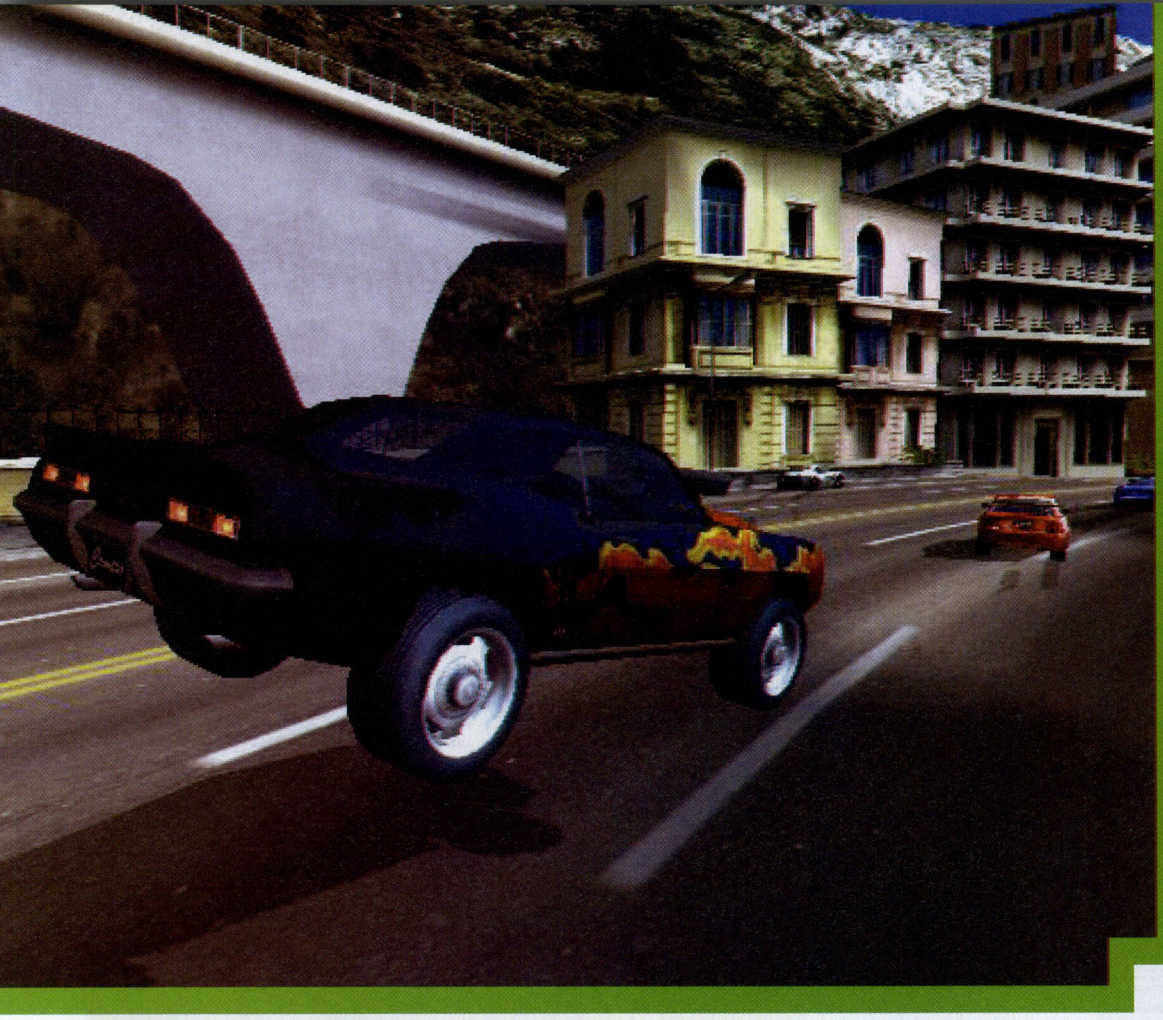
MINUS: Animation, mechanics, the whole approach!

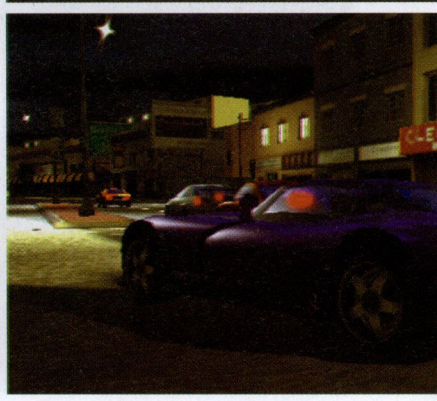
VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
73	71	63

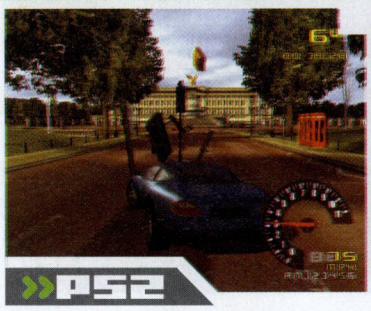
OVERALL

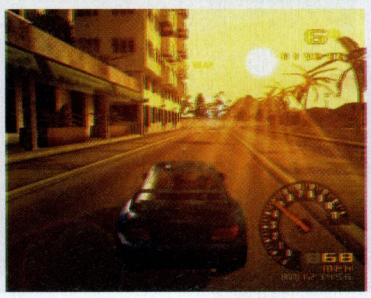
65

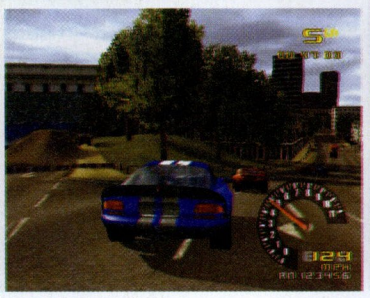
A red card to you Midway.











»PS2

Test Drive: Overdrive

CATEGORY: Racing >> **PLAYERS:** 1 >> **PUBLISHER:** Infogrames >> **PRICE:** $89.95 >> **RATING:** G >> **AVAILABLE:** Now >>

CAM SHEA goes into overdrive... but finds it undercooked.

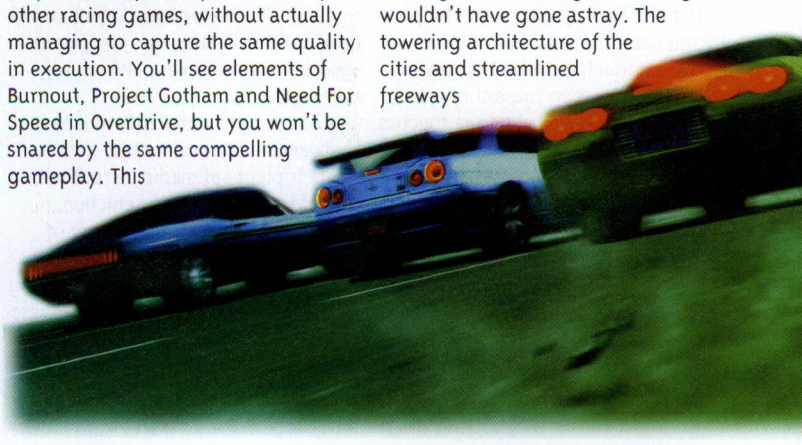
Test Drive. In recent years this name has been synonymous with averageness in all its forms. Average racing, average graphics, average design... you name it, the Test Drive series has achieved it. Now, for the first time, The Pitbull Syndicate is taking its expertise in averagidity onto the PS2. Could Test Drive: Overdrive be the title that redeems the series?

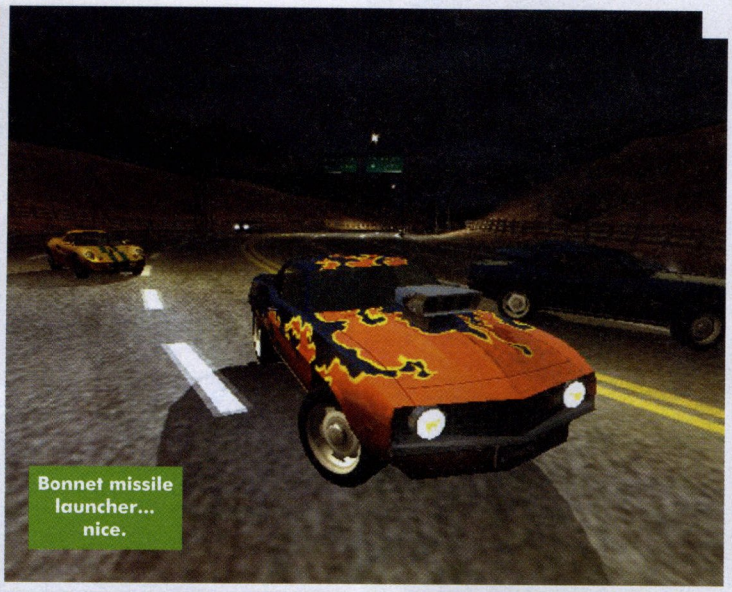
RACING FOR MONEY

Overdrive gets off to a reasonable enough start. The main play mode is called "Underground", and the basic premise is that you're a hotshot driver racing for money in an underground racing competition. Yes, this is a story driven racing game (to the extent that this is possible), and in between races there's plenty of banter between the various drivers, presumably to bring some personality to proceedings. Unfortunately for you, your character seems somewhat post-lobotomy in charisma levels, and your manager is very keen to demonstrate just how good his impression of Q from the Bond films actually is. We soon found ourselves skipping the cutscenes in search of the next race.

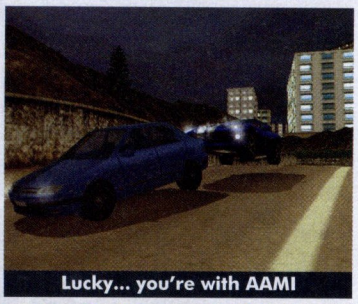
The game starts out in San Francisco, where you must progress through a series of challenges, earning cash and cars along the way. Most of these involve racing against a field of five other racers, with the top three finishers scoring prize money. Races are mostly either circuits around the city or linear races from A to B. There are 45 challenges in all, spread between four locations – San Francisco, Tokyo, London and Monaco. You'll need to beat all the challenges in San Fran before you can move on to Tokyo and so on.

Unfortunately for Test Drive: Overdrive, the style of gameplay is very much inspired by a number of other racing games, without actually managing to capture the same quality in execution. You'll see elements of Burnout, Project Gotham and Need For Speed in Overdrive, but you won't be snared by the same compelling gameplay. This is a shame because Overdrive does get close. The selection of vehicles all feel weighty and realistic in their handling. Although blocky, they look good too, showing off a nice sheen and environment mapping... although some damage modelling wouldn't have gone astray. The towering architecture of the cities and streamlined freeways

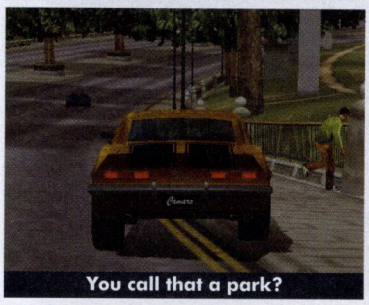




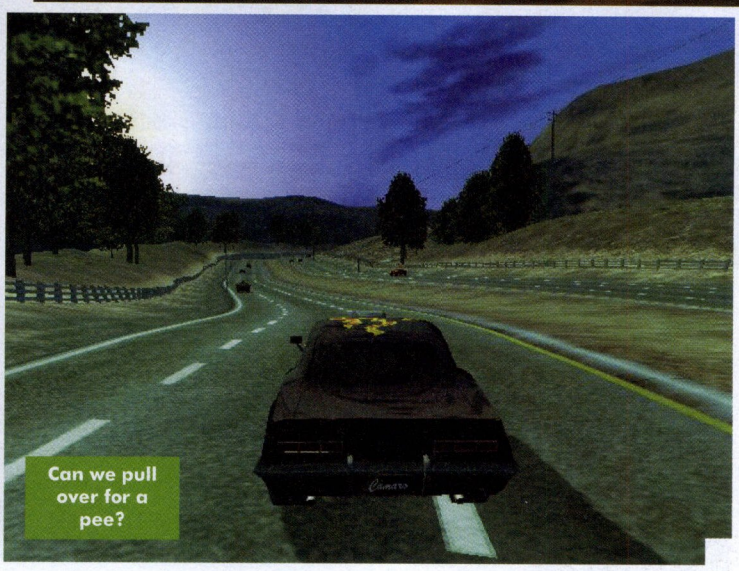
Bonnet missile launcher... nice.



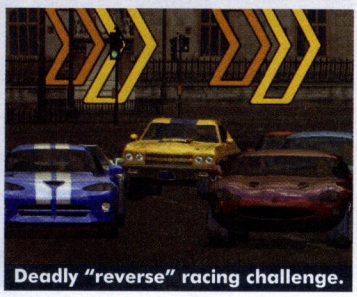
Lucky... you're with AAMI



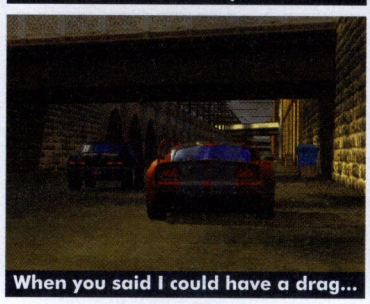
You call that a park?



Can we pull over for a pee?



Deadly "reverse" racing challenge.



When you said I could have a drag...

are well realised, and the sensation of speed is good enough. The problem is that along the way the developers have taken too many shortcuts, resulting in a game that hovers between fun and frustration.

STOP YOU DEAD

The course design is largely a conglomerate of cliches, and there are far too many design elements that shouldn't be there. There are countless objects by the roadside, trees on the median strip and buildings jutting out into the road that will stop you dead and force you to reverse and lose time if you hit them. The freeway and city racing in the game is mostly very good, but there are a few other sections that are really poor. For instance, there's one offroad section in San Francisco that is simply shaped like a squiggly line. This shows no regard for the handling of the cars and ultimately is just a lazy approach from the developers. The cities don't exactly feel alive either, as you'll see the same cars in the same spots each time you play a course. With some random populating of the world, the experience would have been far more dynamic.

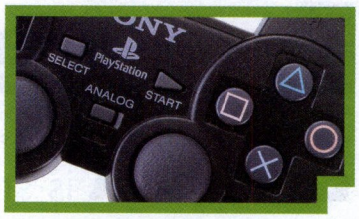
The style of gameplay is very much inspired by a number of other racing games

Perhaps the biggest flaw in the game is the AI of the other racers. On one hand there's nothing quite like watching everyone weaving madly through traffic, or hooning past a competitor who has crashed, but ultimately they do more to ruin your experience and expose cheats in the game design than anything else.

!!! Overdrive is also available on the Xbox.

For a start the catch up logic in this game is quite ludicrous. You can simply stop in one spot for ten seconds then start up again and the pack will still be just be in front of you. But then when you're in the midst of the pack they'll have far superior acceleration and demonstrate an aggressive tendency to ram you whenever possible. The other competitors largely serve as an obstacle in the real race – against the clock. Most of the time you're battling running out of time, and just hoping that by the time you reach the finish line you'll also be out the front of the pack. Another element we should mention is the inclusion of the police. They set up puny roadblocks and make half-hearted attempts to chase you, but ultimately they play an insignificant role in the game, and seem to be included for no reason other than the developer's whim.

Overdrive is by no means a bad game. It is more than competent visually, has good handling, plenty of courses, and offers a reasonable challenge. However, the ultimate irony for this "next generation" game is that the most fun we had was playing Pong during the loading screens!



PLUS: The cars feel quite decent. Pong during the loading times.

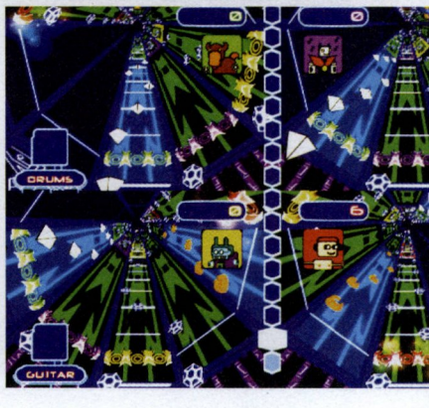
MINUS: Poor course design. Poor opponent AI.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
79	76	76

OVERALL

76

Overdrive follows the mediocre tradition of the series.



Frequency

CATEGORY: Music >> **PLAYERS:** 1-4 >> **PUBLISHER:** Sony >> **PRICE:** $99.95 >> **RATING:** G >> **AVAILABLE:** TBA >>

CAM SHEA is struck down by a severe case of headnod-itis...

Frequency is the latest evolution in the genre of music driven gaming. The basic idea is that you cruise along a tunnel divided into a number of paths representing all the elements of a song, and must unlock each part of the song. Controls are simple – use the three buttons to match the on-screen cues for a couple of bars, then that part of the song becomes locked in and you can move on to another one.

WHERE DO YOU WANT TO GO TODAY?

Every song has one or two drum, vocal, synth, bass and guitar lines to unlock, and a whole series of stages to work your way through. This has allowed Harmonix to keep it from getting too repetitive, as the songs go through distinct builds, peaks and lulls as you progress through the stages, with the song elements changing correspondingly.

Although you're not actively creating anything – just following cues, it's the freedom of building the song in the order you want that makes Frequency more appealing than other games of its ilk.

There are also another couple of channels that we haven't mentioned yet – the scratch and axe channels. These become available when you've locked in all the standard channels in a stage. In the scratch channel, the three buttons correspond to three different samples, but you can also use the left analogue stick to "scratch". It's pretty weak but still kinda cool. The axe channel is similar. It might be an acid line and using the analogue stick you can play with the pitch.

Spicing things up further are powerups you can earn – the multiplier and the autocapture. The autocapture is particularly cool as it automatically locks in the channel you release it on. Once you start getting proficient, you'll get into strategies like letting the autocapture go on the second drum track then manually unlocking the bassline at the same time – making for a nice little kick in. So that's the normal play mode.

Frequency also has a remix mode, and this was where we found ourselves spending most of our time. It's pretty much the same deal, except instead of preset cues to follow in each channel, you're given the raw ingredients and have to mix the track yourself. Every element that was present in the original song is there for you to play

Why am I captioning up here?

WHAT'S UNDER THE HOOD?

Artists included in Frequency are Paul Oakenfold, Orbital, The Crystal Method, DJ QBert, BT, Dub Pistols, Lo Fidelity Allstars, Ethan Eves, Freezepop, No Doubt, Fear Factory, Orbit, Akrobatik, Powerman 5000, Curve, Roni Size & Reprazent, Meat Beat Manifesto, Funkstar De Luke, Juno Reactor, Jungle Brothers, The Symbion Project, Toni Trippi, DJ HMX and Komput Kontroller. Bloody hell!

And yet, what IS Roni's size?

Can you see the music??

How Tron looks after a few drinks.

with, and just like the normal mode you arrange all the stages, allowing you to really build the song and try out different approaches.

A mode like this will always be a tradeoff between ease of use and power, and Frequency finds a reasonable balance. On one hand it's easy to hop into, you can erase mistakes easily and it's very cool reconstructing popular songs. Each channel even has individual effects you can turn on and off like chorus, echo and stutter, which work well and give you a little more scope to reinvent the song. On the other hand, this mode could have been so much more fulfilling as you're still very limited in what you can do. Perhaps decreasing the number of stages and giving you a number of different sample options for each element would have worked better. More annoyingly, many of the components in the songs included simply don't work all that well in a more freeform environment.

WELCOME TO GAME CRITIQUES 101...

Of course, we're over analysing the game a little – Frequency is meant to be accessible entertainment, and it is. Unfortunately, in the quest to make it as accessible as possible, Frequency possibly spreads itself too thinly across too many styles of music. Plus, the selection of tunes could definitely be better. Putting personal music preferences aside, Frequency's selection of music simply isn't suited to the gameplay as well as it could be – especially in the remix mode. Frequency takes tracks and breaks them down to their core components, so in order for the remix mode to really work, those components need to be versatile, with plenty of room for experimentation. This isn't exactly the way it has worked out. Although almost every track has redeeming features, and some are a complete blast to play around with, there are plenty that don't work at all in the remix context.

!!! Frequency also boasts an awesome 2-4 player game!

It's fair enough to build the game on the strength of big name artists, but picking existing songs and slotting them into the game inevitably limits the possibilities much more than building tracks specifically for the game. Perhaps the developers could have included a secondary set of tracks produced for the game by up and coming producers. Or at least some "DJ tool" style sound collections.

Despite our criticisms, Frequency still managed to suck us right in. It feels much more freewheeling than games like Beat Mania, offers up a real challenge on the higher difficulty levels, and the remix mode will keep your head nodding for some time to come. Definitely worth a look. <<

» Almost every track has redeeming features, and some are a **complete blast to play** with...

PLUS: Great idea. Good execution.

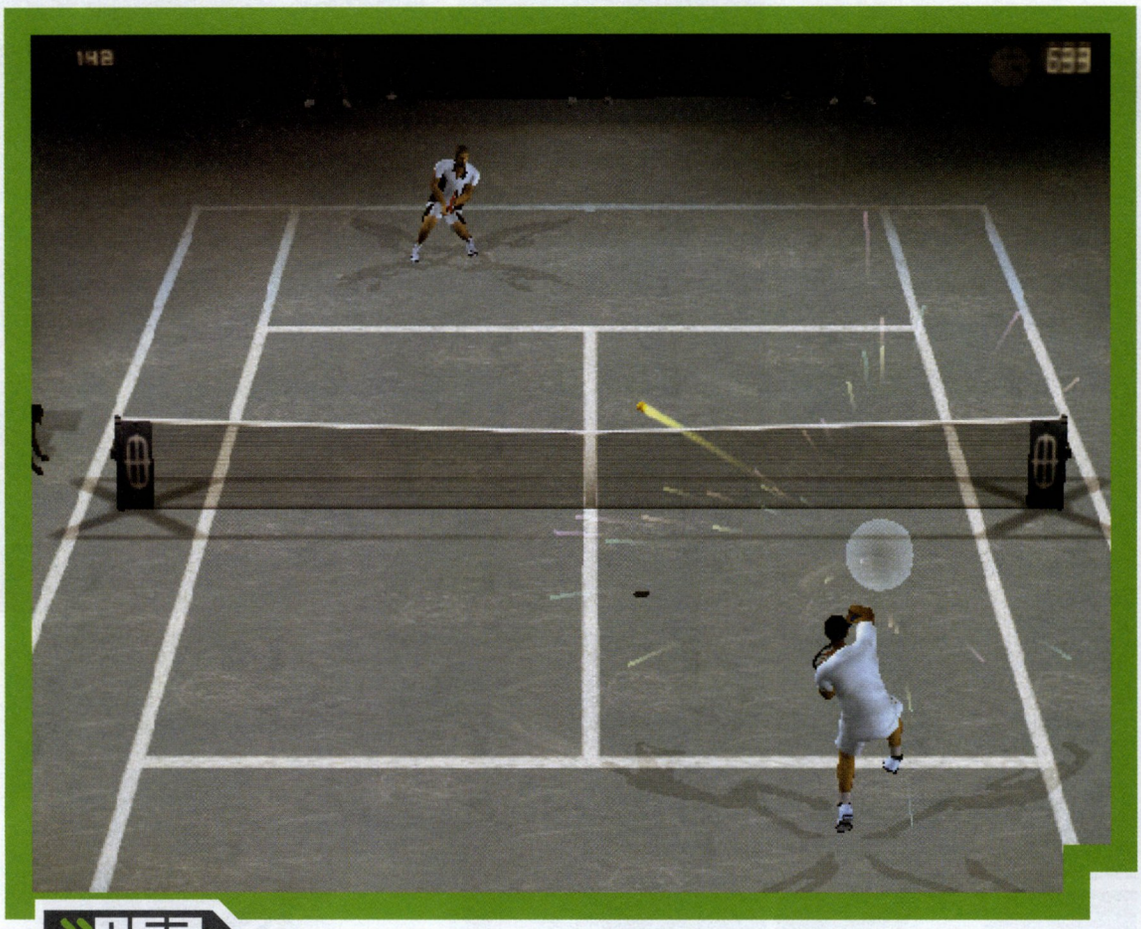
MINUS: That Lo Fidelity Allstars track is wearing very thin.

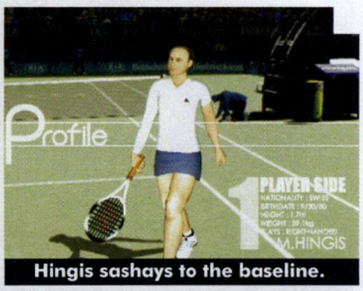
VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
79	85	83

OVERALL

83

A funky slice of gaming.





Hingis sashays to the baseline.

Is that her waist and bust size?

But nice guys always come last!

>>PS2

Smash Court Tennis Pro

CATEGORY: Tennis >> **PLAYERS:** 1-4 >> **PUBLISHER:** Sony >> **PRICE:** $99.95 >> **RATING:** G >> **AVAILABLE:** TBA >>

CAM SHEA gives Namco's latest a serve...

Smash Court Tennis Pro Tournament is the latest in the long running Smash Court series from Namco. From Smash Tennis on SNES through to Anna Kournikova's Smash Court Tennis on PlayStation, we're long time fans of this series. Pro Tournament moves the series away from its ultra anime roots and towards a more realistic representation of tennis... but is it fun?

ANNA IS A CABBAGE PATCH KID...

It starts out on solid ground, with a selection of eight pro players to choose from – Agassi, Rafter, Kafelnikov, Sampras, Hingis, Davenport, Seles and Kournikova. Each player has realistic strengths and weaknesses, and even moves authentically - one look at Sampras' serving technique and he's immediately recognisable.

There are plenty of play modes too. Arcade mode you've met countless times before; Pro Tournament expands upon Arcade mode but adds in a point system that lets you unlock extra goodies; Exhibition lets you customise your game a little more; Time Attack is a battle to beat opponents as quickly as possible; and Challenge mode consists of a number of tasks designed to hone your skills in all areas of the game.

Smash Court plays a good game of tennis, but not a great one. The serving game, for instance, is ridiculously tough. It seems almost impossible to consistently serve with any accuracy, with some players being much more reliable than others. Most gamers will give up trying to outwit their opponents and simply serve into the middle – negating the advantage that service is meant to bring. This lack of serving versatility almost ruins the multiplayer game, and certainly leaves you at a disadvantage in the single player game. Serving is such an important part of a tennis game's strategy that it seems strange that Namco didn't make the mechanics a little more relaxed, or at least intuitive. To compound this, the difficulty level is very poorly balanced.

!!! Some of the music in the game seems inspired by bad 80s porn soundtracks...

TENSE AND HARD FOUGHT

Pro Tournament is undercooked in a wide variety of other areas too. Namco haven't taken the rules very seriously. Ever heard of a match won 6-5? Neither had we until Eliot and I played some multiplayer. The game was a tense and hard fought affair, and a long set was looking likely as we reached 5-5. Then Eliot won his service and it was game, set and match. Turning tie-breaks on rectifies this, but winning by one is the default setting. Other common sense options are missing too. Even something as small as changing your viewpoint in single player games so that you're always at the bottom of the screen has been omitted. Aargh!

Pro Tournament looks reasonable enough. The tone of the visuals is very much toward realism, which is fair enough, but it does leave the game looking a little flat.

This is a competent game, but the lack of options and gameplay finesse lets it down. With a bit more thought, this could have been a much stronger contender. <<

PLUS: Smooth animations, actual pros.

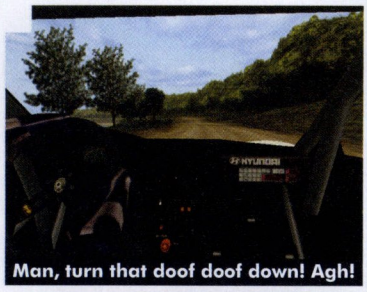
MINUS: Gameplay is not as flexible as it should be.

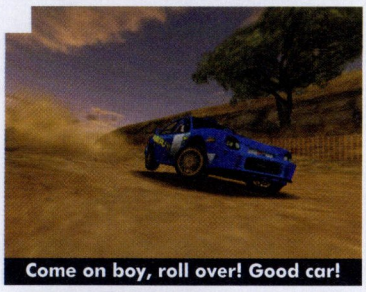
VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
78	60	81

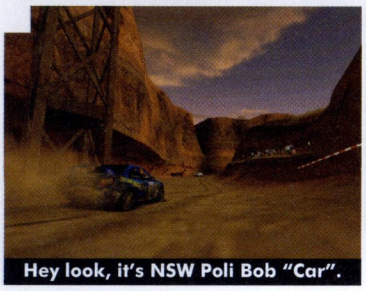
OVERALL

77

The best PS2 tennis game, but it's no Virtua Tennis.


Man, turn that doof doof down! Agh!


Come on boy, roll over! Good car!


Hey look, it's NSW Poli Bob "Car".

»PS2

Rally Championship

CATEGORY: Racing >> **PLAYERS:** 1-4 >> **PUBLISHER:** Ozisoft >> **PRICE:** $89.95 >> **RATING:** G >> **AVAILABLE:** Now >>

FRANK DRY thinks up a "rally" bad pun for his intro...

Before we get started, let's make sure everyone's on the same page. This game has nothing to do with World Rally Championship (WRC) that we reviewed a few issues ago. Rather, this is the first appearance of the long running PC series Rally Championship on PS2. In fact, it's something like the sixth game in the series, so one would assume with all that experience this would be a pretty tidy racer.

ARTIFICIAL FEEL

Unfortunately, Rally Championship starts a little behind the eight-ball. Whereas WRC had the full official WRC license, meaning all fourteen real life rallies, Rally Championship is somewhat more limited. It features six different rallies across 24 stages – roughly one third the number in WRC. The variety in terrain and weather is quite good though, taking you from drizzly conditions alongside lochs in Scotland, through to icey terrain in Finland, the canyons of Arizona and the dusty trails of Africa.

Rally Championship's driving model blends arcade and realism into a brew that isn't unsatisfying... but there's nothing exceptionally tasty about it either. This is another one of those games where it feels like the car is turning from a central pivot point, resulting in an artificial feel to the handling. It's not bad, it just pales in comparison to the authenticity of games like Colin McRae.

The game structure is just as you would expect, with the main game modes being Arcade and Career. In Career mode you start with a $25,000 bank balance to purchase your first vehicle. From there you compete in a couple of local rallies to earn enough money to buy a 1600 class car to enter the first full championship. There are three major championships to work through, and as you earn more money and buy better cars, this game gets very fast indeed. Not Rallisport Challenge fast (it is running at only 30fps after all) but fast enough to get you on the edge of your seat loving the sensation.

!!! This game is endorsed by Australian rally champ "Possum Bourne". His parents were hippies for sure.

DEADLY EH?

The game sports 29 officially licensed cars, including all your rally standards – the Subaru Impreza class A8 cars, the Peugeot 206 class A8 car, the Ford Escort and the Mitsubishi Evolutions. Once you're racing, the game uses an incredibly complex process to model the internal workings of the car and let you know if they get damaged. Here it is: get hit on the side = cooling problem; get hit on the front = headlight problem. Deadly eh?

On the whole the course design is good, but there are a few elements that don't really mesh like detours through airfields and construction sites. Rally Championship also often hems you in with invisible barriers. Oh well. The sections of track with room to move off the path are definitely the more immersive.

Rally Championship is perfectly competent, but in terms of content, there's very little here that we haven't seen before. <<

PLUS: Who doesn't love rally games?

MINUS: Hardly on the bleeding edge in gameplay or graphics.

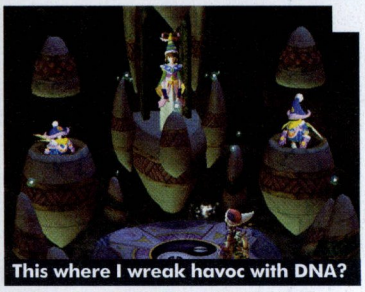
VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
80	79	82

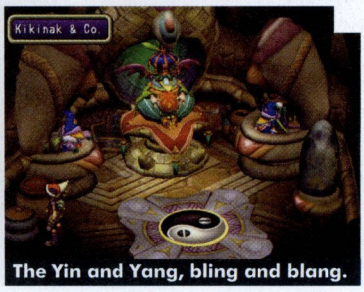
OVERALL

80

Rally Championship is fun, but it's hardly a shining light.

C'mere and let me play God.


This where I wreak havoc with DNA?



The Yin and Yang, bling and blang.

>>PS2

Jade Cocoon 2

CATEGORY: Breeding/Battle >> **PLAYERS:** 1-2 >> **PUBLISHER:** Ubi Soft >> **PRICE:** $79.95 >> **RATING:** G >> **AVAILABLE:** Now >>

FRANK DRY likes experimenting with animals.

From Tamagotchi to Pokémon, through to Digimon and even games like Etherlords, the crazy elemental pet breeding and combat sim is the kind of thing you either love or truly hate. It all comes down to whether it's in your imagination to want to care for and nurture virtual pets. The thing is, there's definitely something distinctly addictive to it, and in many ways, it's not really that different to levelling up your character in a game such as Diablo or graduating in certain schools of magic in a dungeon crawler. It's all about the lust for power, and watching your characters grow into a bunch of serious arse kickers.

BEAST MASTER

In Jade Cocoon 2 we see monster breeding take centre stage. In order to become a cocoon master, you need to venture into a variety of forests and battle beast against beast, capturing eggs to hatch back at home base, collect weird and wonderful items, and follow the somewhat curious storyline which revolves around cleansing the world of Kalma. Before you know it, you've been cursed and the only way to save yourself from evolving into something truly horrid is to try to collect a bunch of forest orbs – one for each element. Each orb is held within a forest of its elemental type – there's a forest of fire, wind, water and earth, each with multiple levels of difficulty. Eventually, you'll have opponents seeking to gain the orbs before you do, so the race is on to become the ultimate Cocoon Master.

The creatures that you find throughout your adventure were created for Jade Cocoon 2 by Katsuya Kondou, the same artist who designed the creatures in the amazing anime, Princess Mononoke. There's a seriously cool collection of monsters, and the artists have really let their imaginations run wild. You may even find yourself getting quite attached to your little freaks. Awwww.

!!! The developers boast that there are over 200 monster types.

HEY BABY, WANT TO MERGE?

Not only do you evolve these critters by levelling them up during combat, but you can take them back to your village and merge them together to create hybrid beasts that share elemental powers. You place your creatures in a certain formation, to not only protect yourself from enemy attacks, but so you can strategically use their powers to win each round of combat. Creatures of the fire elemental type are your basic attack units, whereas water is the element of healing, wind is the element that can inflict status change (like blinding your enemies, or putting them to sleep) and earth is a protective element that can raise your defences. There's so much strategy you can employ, that combat is always pleasant fun.

Really, the bulk of play in Jade Cocoon 2 is in the combat and monster breeding. Be prepared to click through many odd conversations that just tend to slow things down. Working your way through the forests is a fairly linear process also. So unless you love these types of pet games, you'll be hard pressed to stay patient with what Jade Cocoon 2 has to offer. <<

PLUS: Lovely graphics, crazy and cute monsters.

MINUS: Not a very endearing story and linear adventuring.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
87	80	78

OVERALL

78

Not for everyone, but solid pet breeding fun.

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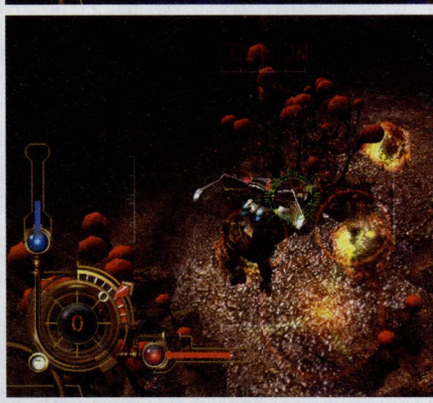
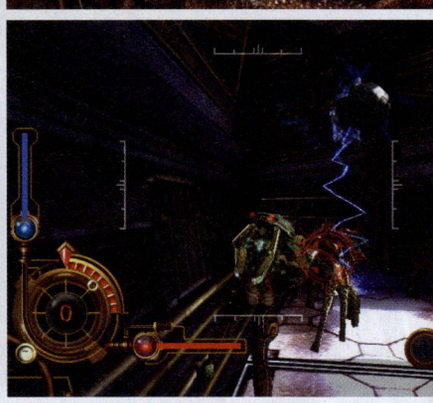




>>XBOX

Gunvalkyrie

CATEGORY: Third Person Action >> **PLAYERS:** 1 >> **PUBLISHER:** Sega >> **PRICE:** $99.95 >> **RATING:** M15+ >> **AVAILABLE:** Now >>

ELIOT FISH gets out the flyswatter.

Anyone with a bug phobia is going to absolutely love this game. If you're the kind of person who runs around their bedroom at night, rearranging furniture just so you can crush the little cockroach you saw crawl behind the bookcase, then this is your dream/nightmare scenario. Think Starship Troopers on acid. The planet Ti na Nog (what happened to Ti Ra Nog, I'm not so sure) is crawling in giant insectoid aliens, and equipped with your plethora of weaponry, it's your task to obliterate every overgrown creepy crawly in sight.

SUITABLY ALIEN

This is very much a Sega game. Developed by Smilebit (the folks responsible for Jet Set Radio), there are shades of classic Sega shooters, shades of Panzer Dragoon, shades of Sega arcade games and there are even a few elements that will remind you of Nintendo's Metroid (though in a very vague way). It's all about action, although a smattering of brain-power is needed to discern how to conquer your environment. The objectives are simple, but the process required can be somewhat tricky.

Your character (and you can choose between two, male or female), is controlled in a fairly convoluted way with the Xbox pad. You jet around with one stick, with many of the important moves requiring you to click in the stick and yank it in one direction. Regularly, you just won't nail the moves you're attempting, and you'd mostly have the control set-up and Xbox pad to blame. For instance, simply turning around quickly isn't really made as an option, rather, you have to execute a 180 spin in order to turn around. Little annoying control woes such as this certainly get on your nerves, but if you stick with it, you eventually adapt to the point where you don't have to fumble too much to keep yourself alive. But it does take time to master the controls. Probably too much time. And it remains somewhat unreliable for the rest of the game. The pay off though, is that the action you get yourself into is engaging enough to make you stick with it.

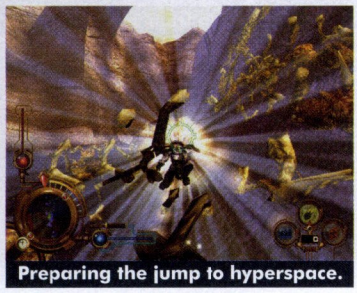
The environments are all suitably alien and otherworldly, with many

Flick employees of the future.

I can't get my shoe off in time!

Luckily, I put out those roach traps.

I hope these illegal fireworks do the trick.


Preparing the jump to hyperspace.

That flare ain't gonna signal nobody.

locations out of reach unless you employ your boosters. Strange whirlwinds can carry you across chasms, your grappling hook can grapple specific electrohooks and pull you up to walkways and ledges, and sometimes you'll be free-falling with the aid of your boosters all the way down deep chimney-like interiors. The game has been designed well in the sense that the variety is well paced and you slowly learn how to tackle increasingly difficult situations without having to labour through repetitive hordes of bugs.

A MIXED BAG

Some of the missions are timed, which simply puts more pressure on the player to get through the session without losing patience with the control issues. Sometimes the control problems can even screw up your mission if it means that a failed jet-boost loses you that crucial 15 seconds. Persistence pays out in the end, but it's doubtful as to whether many gamers will actually have the patience to conquer it. It seems that

It's your task to obliterate every overgrown creepy crawly in sight...

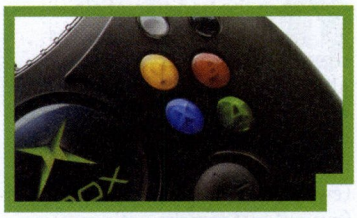
some of these new console controllers have so many buttons – sticks that click in etc. – that developers feel the need to use everything on the pad, rather than trying to think of an intuitive and more streamlined control set-up. Oh well.

!!! It's now looking like Sega will release Shenmue 2 on Xbox here.

The better you are in the mission, the more money you earn, which can be used to purchase power-ups for your suit or better guns. It's a nice touch, and again, it's a reward system that will keep most gamers playing. Whilst you would expect the story to get you interested, it comes down to whether you're willing to read the paragraphs of text between missions to figure out what's going on! It's not necessary, and really, you can just kind of push your way through the game and enjoy it simply for the challenging action. Boss fights will definitely give you a run for your money.

The game's visuals are a bit of a mixed bag if you look closely. On the whole, the graphics are good, there are some glitzy effects and the animation is all nicely executed. However, some of the texturing is a little ugly and there's a strange mixture of colour that comes across somehow messy. Still, there's polish here that will keep you grinning as you waste a whole planet full of skittering creatures.

Gunvalkyrie was a good fun romp, plagued by controller problems. If you execute some patience and invest some time in getting to know the game, you should have a good challenging week of gaming. <<



PLUS: Some tense action, interesting environments.

MINUS: Clunky controls and no controller set-up options.

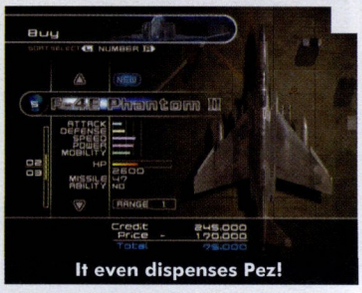
VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
84	72	79

OVERALL

80

A real mixed bag, but enough thrills to keep you happy.

Bingo? What about BLAU!?



It even dispenses Pez!

We will refrain from Sep 11 jokes.

>>XBOX

Deadly Skies

CATEGORY: Air Combat >> **PLAYERS:** 1 >> **PUBLISHER:** Konami >> **PRICE:** $99.95 >> **RATING:** M15+ >> **AVAILABLE:** Now >>

ELIOT FISH is pretty fly for a white guy.

In the tradition of air combat classics such as Afterburner and Tomcat Alley, Konami has graced the Xbox with a traditional air combat sim that's big in Japan – Deadly Skies. It's all about picking off bogeys (eww) and riding another man's tail (ewww), yet somehow it's quite a bit of crazy fun. Look out, Thrustmaster peripheral at 2 o'clock!

NO FLY ZONES

As important military missions appear on the map, it's up to you as the hot shot pilot to fly through enemy zones and kick the required arse. The way the map works is that you have to fly along specific routes and clean out areas along the way. The airspace you win over will only stay friendly for a certain number of "turns" so sometimes you have to fight through certain zones again on your way back from missions. The incentive to choose longer, more dangerous routes, is that upon winning dogfights you gain cash which can then be spent on new aircraft with better capabilities.

If you get shot down during a mission, as long as you have more aircraft in the hangar that you have previously purchased, you can continue on without losing progress – although you have lost that particular aircraft. The easy solution is just to re-load and fly the mission again. And why wouldn't you? Deadly Skies is very simple arcade fun and pretty high on the replayability scale.

Flying from a tasty third-person perspective, or more realistic HUD-equipped first-person mode, the action in Deadly Skies is very straightforward. You wait for your missiles to lock-on and then you press the button. You can also attempt to pepper your targets with machine gun fire, but it's actually quite tricky learning how to lead your shots properly. You don't need to operate any flight functions of the aircraft other than general steering, acceleration and airbrakes. It's all very simple and super easy to pick up and play. Naturally, this results in a fairly shallow arcadey experience, but it's fun for a quick blast when you're feeling like it.

!!! Thrustmaster have an Xbox flight peripheral specifically for use with this game!

WISPY CLOUDS

Whilst you spend a lot of your airtime zooming over vast potions of ocean, the game still manages to look remarkably pretty at times. You can thank the Xbox visual processor for some seriously nice eye-candy – wispy clouds, flashes of sunlight reflecting off the rippling water, great aircraft models and some quite realistically textured terrain. If there were a few more technical requirements to the flying, you'd think Deadly Skies was quite the simulator.

The main problems with the game revolve around the fact that essentially, you can do very little with your aircraft other than point it in the right direction and press your buttons when you get a missile lock. A small amount of skill is required in knowing how to judge trajectory of your targets, or how best to tackle a boat equipped with anti-aircraft weaponry – but it's really not that challenging.

As long as you're only playing in short bursts, Deadly Skies is a fun game to have in your collection. <<

PLUS: Quick load times. Some intense dogfights.

MINUS: Repetitive gameplay, no two-player mode.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
88	72	75

OVERALL

78

Good, easy, simple air combat action.

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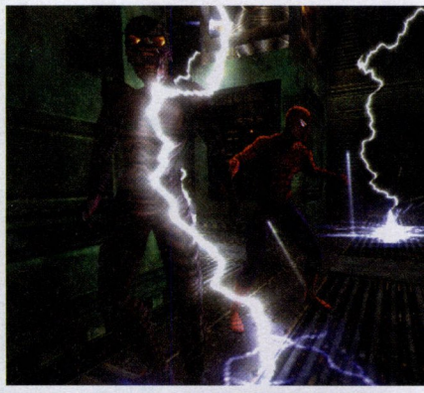
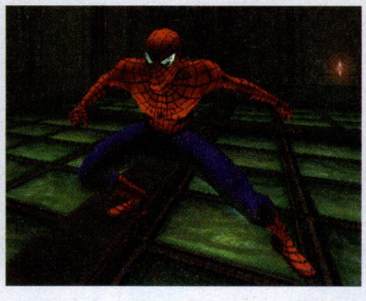
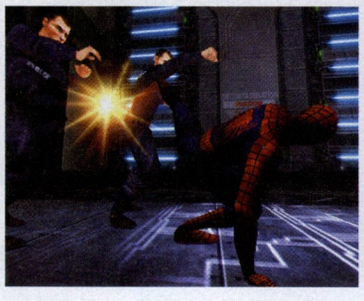






»PC

Spider-Man: The Movie

CATEGORY: Action >> **PLAYERS:** 1 >> **PUBLISHER:** Activision >> **PRICE:** $89.95 >> **RATING:** M15+ >> **AVAILABLE:** Now >> **REQUIRED:** PIII 500, 128MB RAM, 3D card

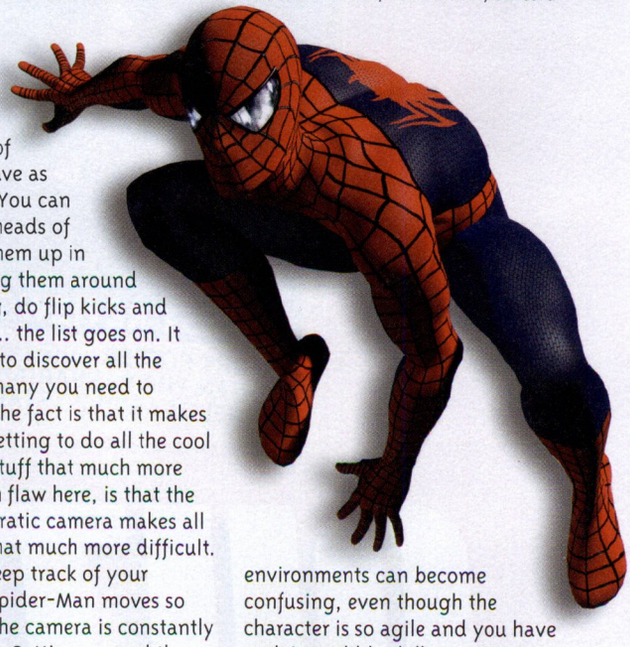
ELIOT FISH does what a spider can...

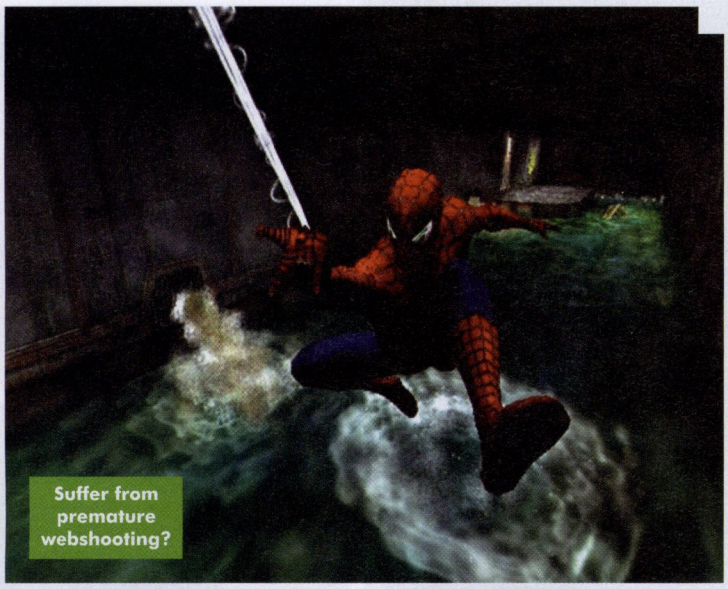
Let's get something clear before we go any further with this review. See the movie before playing this game. Spider-Man is an awesome flick and your appreciation of this game will sky rocket post viewing the movie. The fact is, on leaving the cinema you just want to BE Spider-Man, he's that cool. And this game from Activision gives you that opportunity – if you're willing to excuse its many flaws.

BIFF BAM POW BLAU!

You start the game out wearing Peter Parker's first Spider-Man suit, which is more like a pair of pyjamas with a red balaclava. You'll appreciate this simply as the training level where you can get used to the tricky controls, learn a few combos and figure out how to use your webbing amongst other Spidey tricks. The sense of webslinging between buildings is very well done, and as Spider-Man you know that you can flip around and stick to any surface you find. The only annoying thing about webslinging is that you can't go any lower than a certain point amongst the buildings, you can see the street below, but you can't go there! Anyway, you'll soon feel pretty confident with your Spider-Man abilities, and pleased that you can do whatever a spider can, just like we're told (other than explore the street level like other human beings that is). Oh well. It helps that the frame-rate is good, the animations are smooth and the scale of everything is believable.

One great thing is the pure variety of moves you have as Spider-Man. You can jump on the heads of crims, bind them up in webbing, fling them around with webbing, do flip kicks and handsprings... the list goes on. It takes a while to discover all the moves, and many you need to "learn", but the fact is that it makes the thrill of getting to do all the cool Spider-Man stuff that much more fun. The main flaw here, is that the jumpy and erratic camera makes all the combat that much more difficult. It's hard to keep track of your enemies, as Spider-Man moves so quickly that the camera is constantly flitting about. Getting around the environments can become confusing, even though the character is so agile and you have such incredible skill at manoeuvring



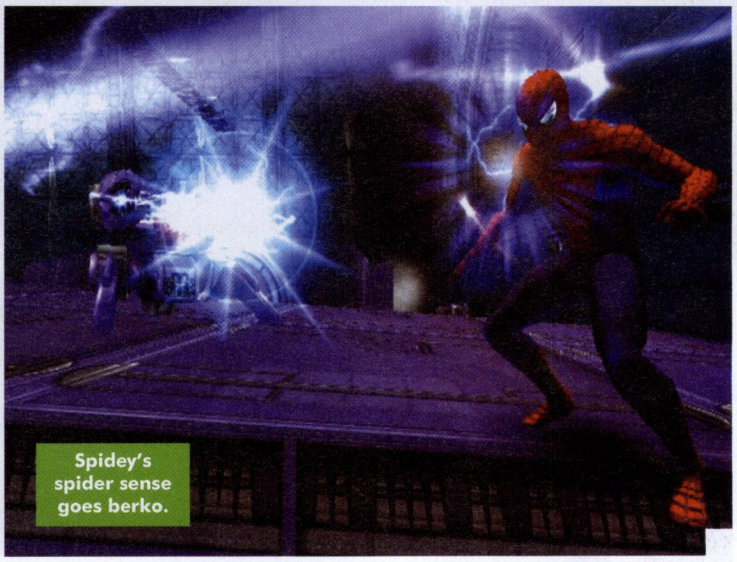


Suffer from premature webshooting?

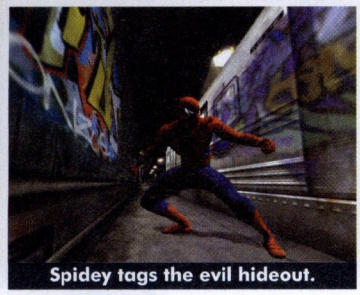
Spidey counts the millions he's making...

People look like sprites from up here.

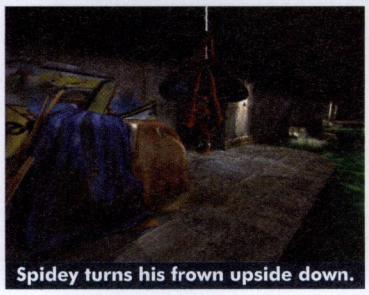
Watch out, it's the Goblin fart attack!



Spidey's spider sense goes berko.



Spidey tags the evil hideout.



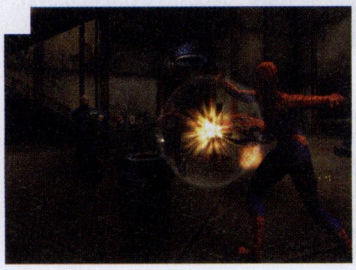
Spidey turns his frown upside down.

around your environment – ironic. Possibly this has been made worse by some of the very grim textures and bad lighting in the levels that make it hard to discern where to go next.

DESIGN FAULTS

The story does follow the film, but it has been padded out with lots of stuff that certainly was not in the film. All the added story and concepts that are presented are quite ridiculous, and are way below the quality of the movie's storytelling. They've even brought in a bunch of new villains that weren't in the movie, which is one good thing that helps keep it interesting.

More problems with Spider-Man include annoying mission design – there's one where you have to prevent civilians from being hurt, but the annoying control/camera issues can mean you fail more times than you should due to circumstances that feel out of your control. Battling objects in mid-air whilst you're swinging is also prone to control problems.



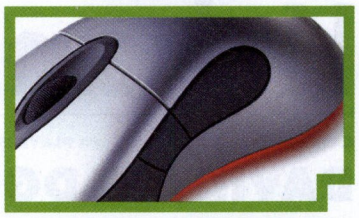
It just seems that for all the cool Spidey stuff, there are **annoying design faults.**

It just seems that for all the cool Spidey stuff, there are annoying design faults to bring you back to Earth and spoil the fun. And on the PC at least, you're going to need a good console-like controller – preferably one with analogue sticks – which is a minor concern.

The developers have done their best to alleviate some of the problems, by equipping you with a camera control and enemy lock-on feature for instance, but these features simply don't help that much. Spider-Man tends to devolve into frustration more times than not and the fun factor is constantly being stifled. If you're a big Spider-Man fan and/or you really enjoyed the movie, then this game would probably be worth trying out. It's almost like the old Star Wars rule – the games are generally below par, but the entertainment value is heightened by the fact that you're a fan and you can appreciate the smaller details. For instance, the voice acting is great and actually features Tobey Maguire, Bruce Campbell and Willem Dafoe.

Spider-Man: The Movie isn't a brilliant action game, but it's good, and if you're a fan it'll make you smile. <<

!!! Spider-Man: The Movie is actually available on all next-gen platforms – we simply reviewed the first version to arrive.



PLUS: The Spidey moves are fun and quite authentic.

MINUS: Camera problems, and disorientating level design.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
84	79	78

OVERALL

80

Flawed, but a decent enough action romp.

Kohan: Ahriman's Gift

CATEGORY: Real Time Strategy >> **PLAYERS:** 1-Multi >> **PUBLISHER:** Strategy First >> **PRICE:** $89.95 >> **RATING:** M15+ >> **AVAILABLE:** Now >> **REQUIRED:** PII-233, 64MB RAM

DAVID WILDGOOSE rediscovers a classic in the making.

Shhh, let me tell you a secret. Kohan: Immortal Sovereigns was the best realtime strategy game since Age of Empires II. Yet sadly few people have even heard of it, let alone had the immeasurable pleasure of playing it. Hyper itself stands guilty of contributing to the widespread ignorance, but hopefully this two-page review of the follow-up, Ahriman's Gift, can go some way towards compensating.

SUBTLE INTERPLAY

Developed and published by Timegate Studios and Strategy First, Kohan: Ahriman's Gift is a game that demands considerable strategic forethought and tactical initiative, as well as the juggling skills of a circus performer to manage the various economic and military facets of a medieval fantasy empire. It's a realtime strategy game in the sense that it offer strategic choices to be made whilst the clock is ticking. In another sense, it's as far removed as it can be from what we have come to expect from the RTS genre. If you find Empire Earth too simplistic, or Red Alert 2 feels like an action game, then Kohan is the game you've been waiting for.

The world of Kohan is steeped in fantasy tradition. There are wizards, priests, knights, crossbowmen, undead armies, lizard beasts, demons, and mighty heroes. There are villages, castles, forts, temples, gold mines, marketplaces, and monster lairs. There are forests, deserts, rivers, mountains, arctic scapes, volcanic plains, and dense jungles. So far, so predictable. Yet what distinguishes Kohan from the madding RTS crowd is the subtle interplay between all the elements.

First, it's a game of supply. Everything from the Mage College you construct in your city to the footman you recruit to your army relies upon a steady supply of resources, whether it's stone, wood, iron or mana. However, you don't stockpile resources extracted from quarries, sawmills or blacksmiths. Instead, if you're producing more than you need of a certain resource, you can sell the surplus off for more gold. If you produce less than you currently need, the deficit is automatically purchased with your gold. Further you don't have to concern yourself with peasants ferrying resources throughout your kingdom or deposits depleting over time. All told, it's a unique (if abstract) concept that not only removes much unnecessary micro-management, but actually makes a lot more real-world sense when you think about it.

Additionally, each town you construct offers a

The 2nd and 3rd holes are par 3.

War and pieces.

Click. "Yes m'lord?" Shut up!

We have the fog of war surrounded!

certain supply range within its borders. This means your armies can replenish health and morale when in the vicinity of a friendly base.

CRUCIAL VARIATION

Second, it's a game of companies. All military units are recruited into groups of seven units. These companies comprise four slots in the frontline, two for support units, and one for a leader. Regular infantry, archer and cavalry troops slot into the frontline, while support units such as Wizards, Necromancers and Paladins possess a range of special abilities including spells and magic items. The leader (or Kohan) is an exceptional unit who can either engage the enemy directly or command the company, thus conferring a host of bonuses (and penalties) on his troops.

Since companies are recruited at a specific town, the types of structures present affect which units are available. For instance, a Temple provides Clerics, while a Temple and Barracks allows Paladins. Also, each town can only supply a small number of companies, meaning important strategic decisions have to be made when recruiting. Supporting a frontline of infantry with a Ranger and Wizard might provide some crucial variation in attacks, but maybe that Ranger might be more useful boosting the ranged prowess of your company of Elite Archers. Companies can also be grouped together into regiments and then arranged into various formations to give advantage to their respective characteristics.

Third, it's a game of territory. Population zones around each base preclude the development of other bases inside these limits, thereby placing terrific importance on where you build. Thus to expand your army, you need to expand your territory, too. Terrain gives offensive and defensive advantages, while companies which guard an area for long enough eventually set up camp to receive further defensive bonuses. Scenarios tend to concentrate on border wars where outlying villages are swapped to and fro, yet you still need to be aware of the action across the entire map as holes punctured in your defences may cut off supply lines and leave you fighting on multiple fronts.

Kohan: Ahriman's Gift is a game of incredible depth. Its crowning achievement is its deft play balance: there's no winning tactic, just an infinite series of vital strategic decisions. Absolutely brilliant. Tell everyone about it. <<

There's no winning tactic, just an infinite series of vital strategic decisions

!!! All you need to know is at www.kohan.net

PLUS: Gameplay that will test your wits, not your reflexes.

MINUS: Coarse visuals and amateur speech.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
64	58	93

OVERALL

89

Absorbing strategy on a grand scale.

>>PC

Might & Magic IX

CATEGORY: RPG >> **PLAYERS:** 1 >> **PUBLISHER:** 3DO >> **PRICE:** $89.95 >> **RATING:** M15+ >> **AVAILABLE:** Now >> **REQUIRED:** PII 400, 64MB RAM, 1GB HD space

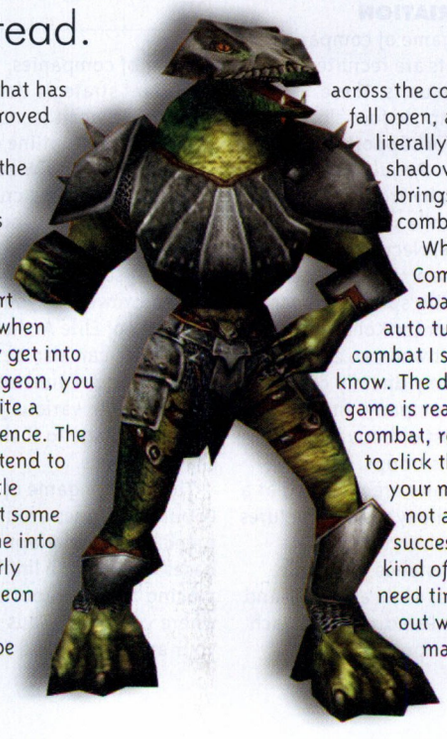
ELIOT FISH wants swords and sorcery instead.

Another year, another Might & Magic game. This is almost reaching Army Men proportions! It doesn't seem like very long ago that we were playing through Might & Magic VIII – another instalment in the series that played it very safe and stuck to the formula. With Might & Magic IX we see a complete reinvention of the Might & Magic formula. This is in many ways unlike any other game in the series. Strangely, the creator mentions in the manual that this is "the best" game in the series yet. Unfortunately, we'll have to agree to disagree...

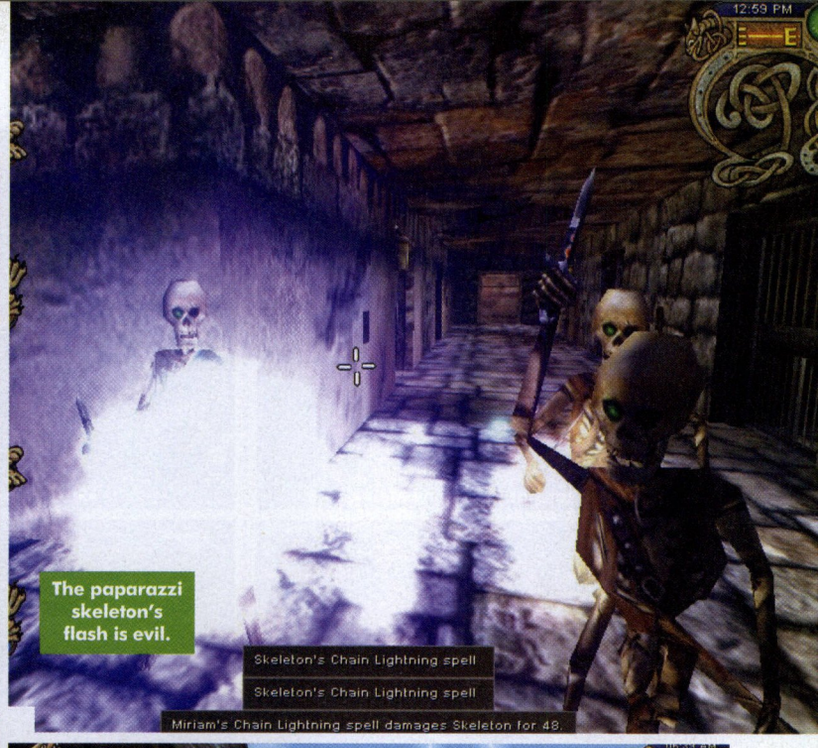
WOW, IT'S 3D KIDS

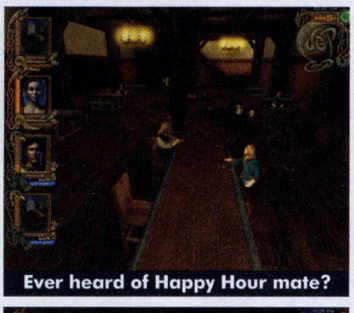
Finally, the Might & Magic series goes fully 3D. As you would expect, the 3D engine allows for a better sense of true exploration, but the size of the environments has meant that generally the quality of the visuals is pretty darn low. There's more to poke around, but textures are bland and polygon counts are low. This 3D RPG business has not yet been handled all that well (we're hoping that Elder Scrolls III: Morrowind is now going to be the first beautiful 3D RPG). The upside in any case, is that this is the richest Might & Magic game yet in terms of your surroundings. When you enter a tavern, it no longer defaults to a little static window. Now you can wander between tables and talk to specific locals who are enjoying a brew. Now you can even wander upstairs and poke around their bedrooms like in every other RPG. Rejoice!

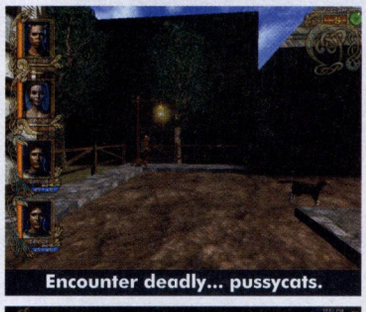
One thing that has certainly improved with this instalment is the atmosphere. Whilst there is almost no believability to the first part of the game, when you do finally get into your first dungeon, you will find it quite a creepy experience. The graphics still tend to come off a little simplistic, but some effort has gone into creating a fairly realistic dungeon experience. Cobwebs drape across the corridors, doors fall open, and monsters literally lurk in the shadows. Which brings us to combat.



Why New World Computing abandoned the auto turn-based combat I simply do not know. The default in this game is real-time combat, requiring you to click the hell out of your mouse. It's just not a good way to successfully win any kind of combat! You need time to figure out what your magic users




Ever heard of Happy Hour mate?


Encounter deadly... pussycats.

We've come to collect your $89.95.

Oh grandma so good to see you.

should do – hot key spells are fine, but the beauty of RPGs really should be about switching tactics during battle and utilising your full array of spells. Maybe it comes down to personal taste, but the apparent need to make this kind of RPG more action based is just dumbfounding. There is a turn-based combat mode, but there's no way to set it to automatically initiate when monsters are within range. You have to manually hit a key to enter turn-based combat, which is infuriating. Especially considering you can get attacked and badly hurt by monsters in real-time before you even have a chance to hit the turn-based combat key!

DUMBED DOWN

Other parts of the game have been "dumbed down" in an effort to make the experience easy for first time RPG gamers. You only start as either an initiate (spell caster) or warrior (weapons user) and your character will branch off during the game depending on the skills you acquire and develop. Again, this results in the first portion of the game to get off to a really slow, and even dull, start. Prepare yourself for many a "courier" job. If you hang in there, it does pick up, but it never really feels like a satisfying RPG. Part of this problem is that the way the story is told is convoluted and confusing. You get so many names thrown at you, it takes a long time to figure out what your ultimate objective is.

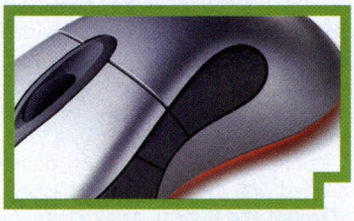
The paper doll system is still there, but the inventory layout is nowhere near as comfortable to use as the previous games and takes a bit of getting used to – in fact it looks lazy. All the changes that have been made are understandable if you consider that New World Computing were trying to make a game that would be easier for newbies... but why? This is number nine in the series, and as far as we can tell, the only people buying this will be those we enjoyed the previous (more complex) games in the series!

!!! We'd have to recommend Heroes of Might & Magic IV as a better buy.

Ultimately, new World Computing have kind of broken something that was tried and true – they obviously tried to evolve the game and improve on what was a rapidly ageing concept, but what they've ended up with just seems to be no better. And in the process, they're going to disappoint their hardcore fanbase that has been weaned on the earlier games.

To be honest, any RPG fan might get something out of this game. But you're going to need a shit-load of patience and quite a bit of imagination. <<

>> The apparent need to make this kind of RPG more action based is just **dumbfounding.**



PLUS: Interesting dungeon design. Some cool-lookin' monsters.

MINUS: NPC interaction is lame. No auto turn-based combat.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
78	75	74

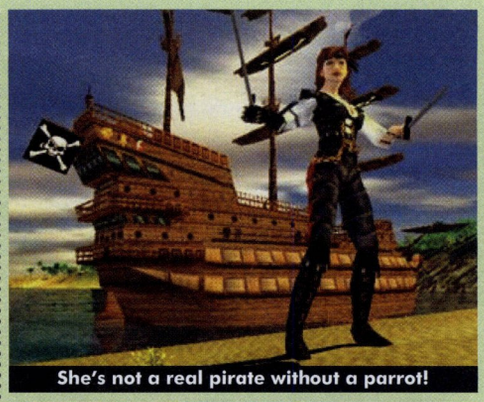
OVERALL

75

It just might not keep you entertained to the end.

Tanks a lot for another Army Men game.

Extreme extremeties!


She's not a real pirate without a parrot!

»PC

Army Men RTS

CATEGORY: RTS >> **PLAYERS:** 1-8 >>
PUBLISHER: 3DO >> **PRICE:** $79.95 >>
RATING: G8+ >> **AVAILABLE:** Now >>
REQUIRED: A love of Army Men

Any review of this game is rendered redundant by its name. The newest addition to the interminable Army Men series is exactly what it says on the box. It's Army Men. It's real time strategy. It's Army RTS.

To accomplish such a spectacularly tautological feat, also-ran publisher 3DO has recruited the eminent talents of Pandemic Studios, developer of the acclaimed Dark Reign and Battlezone titles. Both parties should be pleased with the outcome. Army Men games still sell by the truckload, which is good news for the developer. And — surprise, surprise — the publisher will be pleased to hear this is the best in the series by a long margin.

Commercially successful RTS games haven't messed with the formula established eons ago by Warcraft and Dune II. Army RTS follows this predictable route. From the first mission til the last, it's a game of production efficiency. You build your base, harvest your resources, churn out your troops and march them into the enemy's base — and all as fast as humanly possible. Fret not about the tactics of unit formations and terrain advantages, they're an unnecessary distraction. This is as simple as PC gaming gets.

If Pandemic has hardly stretched itself with the design, at least they appear to be having fun with the setting. Warzones comprised of garden ponds, breakfast tables and sandpits are a refreshing change to the usual hackneyed RTS scenarios. In fact, the presentation of the whole game is first-rate — cutscenes, in particular, are a hoot.

Army Men RTS is none-too-taxing, but it's fun while it lasts. - **David Wildgoose**

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	OVERALL
73	68	69	70

»GCN

Extreme-G 3

CATEGORY: Futuristic Racing >> **PLAYERS:** 1-4 >>
PUBLISHER: Acclaim >> **PRICE:** $99.95 >>
RATING: G >> **AVAILABLE:** Now >>

The GameCube's lineup is completely smothered by ports at the moment, and here's one of the latest. Extreme-G 3 has made the transition, and although nothing much has changed in the game structure — you'll find the same teams, the same leagues, the same courses and the same options — Extreme-G 3 on GCN is actually a marginally better game than it was on PS2. One of the main reasons for this lies in the improved handling. Acclaim have given the bikes a little more weight, so the response isn't quite as twitchy as it was before. This is definitely a good thing, making the crazy corkscrews and sharp turns in the track design a more conquerable proposition. Acclaim have also implemented a four player split-screen mode for GCN owners, which is a nice bonus.

As you would expect, the game looks and runs a little better too. The frame rate now sits on 50/60 fps far more reliably (although there is still some slowdown), the overall look of the courses is more "solid", and there are better lighting and particle effects to help immerse the player. Oh, and Acclaim have added in one other thing. In our Auto Modellista preview, we mention that cel shading is the new lens flare. Well, there's actually another contender, and that is the trick we know as the "rain droplets hitting the screen during a rainy race effect" that Wave Race has brought to prominence. For some reason Acclaim felt compelled to throw this one in. Perhaps to balance all the lens flares on the sunny courses. Hehe. - **Cam Shea**

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	OVERALL
81	79	79	80

»XBOX / PS2

Pirates: The Legend of Black Kat

CATEGORY: Action/Adventure >> **PLAYERS:** 1-2 >>
PUBLISHER: Electronic Arts >> **PRICE:** $TBA >>
RATING: G >> **AVAILABLE:** Now >>

Pirates: The Legend of Black Kat marks a notable stylistic departure for C&C creators Westwood Studios. Instead of tesla tanks and camp Commies, here we're treated to swashbuckling swordplay by a buxom buccaneer. While X may not quite mark the spot for this Xbox version, nonetheless there are several pieces of eight buried within.

Islands are home to copious treasure chests, assorted keys, crystals and seashells, traders and merchants, and enemies such as brigands, skeletons, gorillas and giant crabs. The method of progress is simple: keys give access to chests which contain maps that unlock routes to other islands. You can return to previous islands to discover previously inaccessible areas, although the impetus of the regular story-related objectives provides a worthy incentive to press onwards.

On foot, Pirates is lacklustre. It steals the basic formula from Ocarina of Time, yet neglects to add several key ingredients. As a result, the combat is awkward, the puzzles sorely lacking, and the rewards seemingly random.

Things fare somewhat better at sea. Ship-to-ship skirmishes are a constant delight; the combination of sail/hull damage, speed bursts and side cannons makes for a beguiling tactical challenge. Ship-to-land combat is inherently less interesting, but — hey — just take another look at those magnificent water textures. It's official: water effects are the new lens flare. (I thought that was cel shading — Ed.)

Let's hope Westwood leaves the tanks alone for a bit longer. - **David Wildgoose**

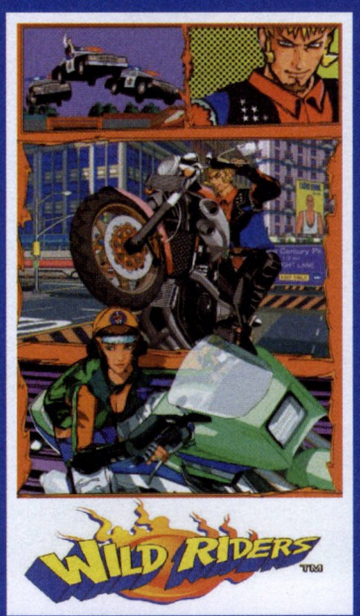
VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	OVERALL
80	65	72	74

ARCADE

>>TIM LEVY

Wild Riders

SEGA



After having your pretty boy bikie meet spoilt by ugly unstoppable hordes of cops bent on locking your arse in gaol ("jail" for you Americanised folk – Ed.), you take off rapidly on your powerful motorcycle in the hope to elude your pursuers. Unfortunately, there is one hardcore cop (The Captain) who is totally determined at following you even if it means chasing you through a whole city and destroying half of it in the process.

DEATH DEFYING

Fortunately, you possess the skills of seven Evel Knievels and are not afraid to drive your bike off death-defying jumps or slide it sideways under the odd parked petrol tanker to take a shortcut and gain some ground from the Captain (who has to take the long way around in his car). But beware, this ain't no pre-silicon 1930's living Bonnie & Clyde getaway. The Captain has radioed ahead and set up road barriers to hinder your escape with a veritable army of cops.

Yes, Wild Riders IS a good getaway game based in a heavily stylized comic book world environment, which is a draw card in itself. But the thing that is addictive about the game is the innate desire to make it to the end of the three stage game, as it ain't easy, especially without a replay feature.

The real novelty to the game is that by pulling up the handlebars, you enable enough 'lift' to launch your bike successfully off ramps to jump over a variety of obstacles such as a fountain, off a car transporter ramp, a spilt bridge, between buildings etc. If you are confronted by barriers, you can slide your bike under the obstruction by pressing the handlebars down.

Your jumping/sliding skills and timing rewards you with extra distance (+5, +10, +15 metres) on the 'Distance from the Captain-O-Meter'- which at the beginning of the game starts at 50 meters. Conversely, if you crash into a barrier/oncoming police car/miss a jump/collide with object tougher than you, the distance between you and the Captain diminishes correspondingly to the severity of the accident (-5, -10, -15 meters). Once the distance closes to 0 meters... Yo arse is in gaol.

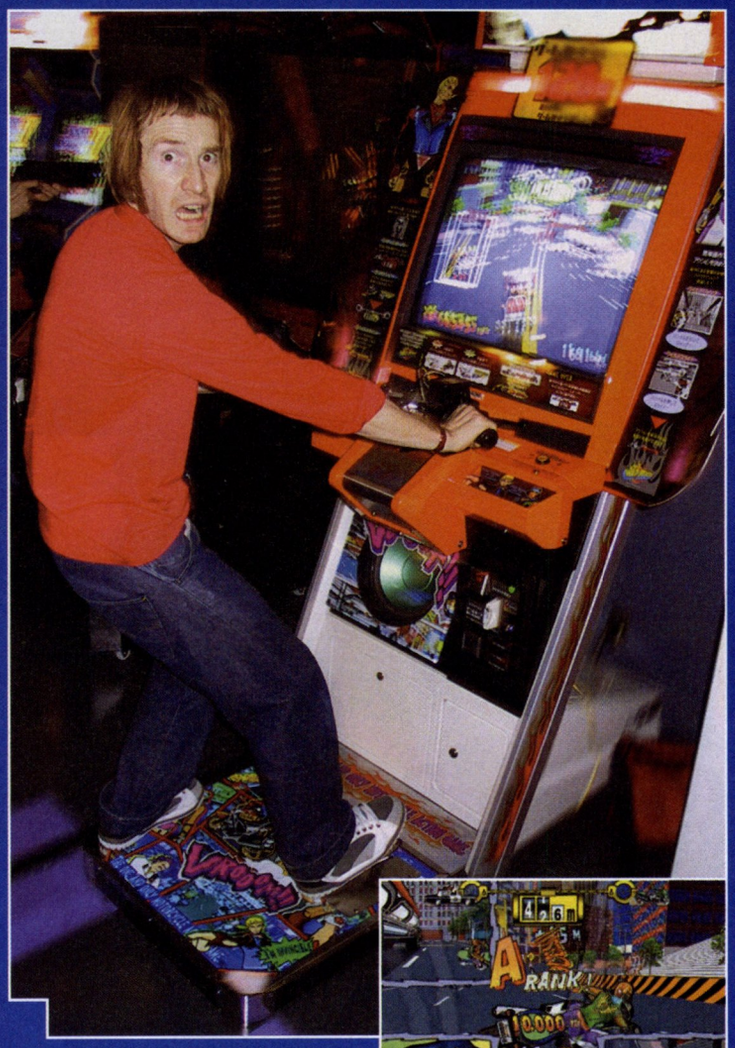
ARCADE ODYSSEY

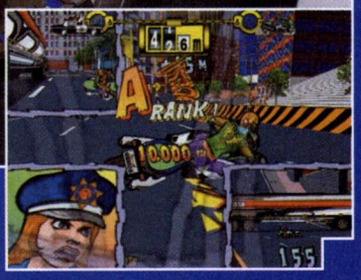
The road to freedom is a long one and will take you through the suburbs, the city and the Bay Area. Often there is little chance from really straying off the course, but when the road widens up, in sections such as the freeway, the game seems to be lifted a little off its 'rails'. Most occurrences (especially traffic patterns) in the game happen like clockwork, which is great for those who like to have a little learning experience mingled with split-second Mr Motorcross heroism.

So don't play it once or twice, play it a few times before you personally judge this one, cause to elude the Captain and make it to freedom is a modern arcade odyssey that only a few skilled gamers can make.

OVERALL

7.5/10





Don't worry – just skidding.

>>GBA

Broken Sword: THE SHADOW OF THE TEMPLARS

CATEGORY: Adventure >> **PLAYERS:** 1 >> **PUBLISHER:** Bam! >>
PRICE: $79.95 >> **RATING:** G >> **AVAILABLE:** Now >>

It's almost seven years old, but Broken Sword feels like a breath of fresh air on GBA. We're so swamped by poxy 8-bit ports and arcade game "revivals" that it's nice to play something with a little substance for once. It's also nice to sink our teeth into the classic point and click adventure genre once again... although ironically on GBA there isn't much pointing or clicking to be had.

In Broken Sword you take on the role of an American named George Stobbart, on holiday in Europe. He's chilling out the front of a café when a freak dressed as a clown blows the place up, killing a man inside. Being your typical proactive American, George resolves to bring the murderer to justice. But being an adventure game, the plot soon spirals out to a tale of conspiracy and intrigue.

Revolution Software have obviously worked hard in translating Broken Sword to such a different format. The controls are simple and surprisingly effective. The visual package as a whole has lost little - the backgrounds are detailed and engaging, and the character animations accent the scenes well. As an adventure game Broken Sword is definitely up there — the dialogue is often hilarious, the plot is intriguing, and there's a lot of playtime on offer here. Plus, you can save at any point, which is invaluable for short stints on public transport! For those of you who prefer their gaming at a meditative pace with lashings of puzzles and humour, Broken Sword is well worth the price of admission. - **Cam Shea**

Just gotta wait here for my dealer.

Stuff this, I'm gonna get trashed!

Voulez vous couché avec moi ce soir?

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	OVERALL
86	74	74	82

>>GBA

Crash Bandicoot XS

CATEGORY: Platformer >> **PLAYERS:** 1 >> **PUBLISHER:** Vivendi
PRICE: $79.95 >> **RATING:** G >> **AVAILABLE:** Now >>

Crash Bandicoot is an odd beast. Although presented in 3D, the Crash games are anything but. Indeed, the first title was essentially nothing more than a very basic 2D platformer set it in a tunnel. It makes sense then, that Crash should lose very little gameplay in the translation to GBA. After all, Crash has always been a 2D platformer pretending to be 3D, and here we have the proof.

Vicarious Visions have done quite a stellar job with Crash Bandicoot XS. Most of the game is side scrolling, and Crash can jump, spin, slide, crawl and belly flop his way through. In keeping with previous Crash games, level design is very simple, consisting of crates, fruits to collect, moving platforms, crates, the odd easily dispatched enemy, crates, crystals to collect, explosive crates, nitro crates, TNT crates, checkpoint crates and a few more crates for good measure. The game is broken into four worlds, each with five levels and a boss battle. It's not all standard side scrolling, however, as Crash XS also features underwater side scrolling levels, air combat sequences and "3D" sequences much like the previous games, with Crash being chased into the screen by a yeti or something similarly irrelevent. Although these sequences contain about as much gameplay as an inanimate carbon rod, technically they're very nice indeed.

With Crash Bandicoot XS you should know what to expect — simple, but polished platform action. For a very young gamer it will no doubt entertain, but the fact is that Super Mario World's gameplay is infinitely more interesting. — **Cam Shea**

We "forgot" to refill Crash's airtank.

Crate moments in gaming.

Woah, Crash is spinning out.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	OVERALL
83	80	81	77

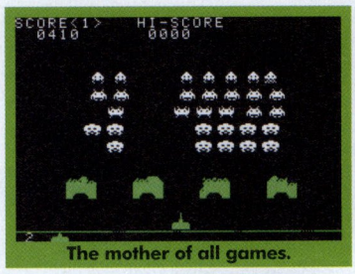
>>GBA

Space Invaders

CATEGORY: Classic arcade >> **PLAYERS:** 1-2 >> **PUBLISHER:** Activision
PRICE: $79.95 >> **RATING:** G8+ >> **AVAILABLE:** Now >>

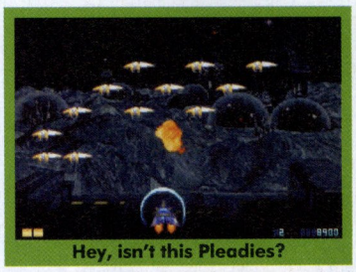
The art of the classic arcade game remake is a tricky one, with unique limitations placed on developers. Take Space Invaders. It's a hugely influential game, but in remaking the game for a modern market, the developer can't change the fundamentals too much, or the game ceases to be identifiable as the original property. So while the genre has come so far, many of the gameplay evolutions can't be incorporated. How then, does a developer go about updating a classic game, retaining the core essence, whilst still making it appealing to modern gamers?

Well, Australian developers Torus have made a pretty good go at it. They've taken the original model, and added in a host of different alien ships and a well thought out power-up system. If you shoot four aliens of the same colour in a row, you'll get a special attack. Say you shoot four red aliens in a row, this will give you a vertical blast that will take out an entire vertical row. If you shoot four blue aliens in a row you'll get a special that fires to the left from the first alien it hits. There are quite a few varieties of aliens, and hence, quite a number of powerups. What this means for the gameplay is that it introduces a strategic element, and the ability to chain special attacks. There are 100 screens to clear in the game, including ten boss battles, and you can save your progress at any time, which is an essential inclusion. Plus, there's a couple of two player games and the mandatory inclusion of the original arcade game. Good fun. – **Cam Shea**



The mother of all games.

The aliens finally researched "colour".


Hey, isn't this Pleadies?

Get off our planet scumbag human!

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	OVERALL
79	79	79	79

>>GBA

Rainbow Six: Rogue Spear

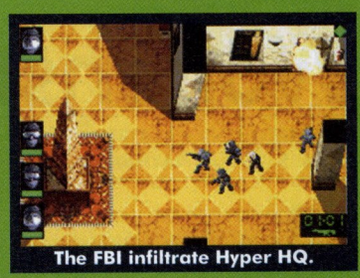
CATEGORY: Action >> **PLAYERS:** 1-4 >> **PUBLISHER:** Ubisoft >>
PRICE: $79.95 >> **RATING:** M15+ >> **AVAILABLE:** Now >>

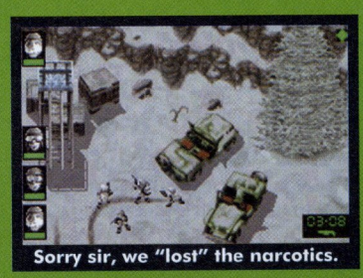
It seems anything is possible on the GBA these days. Squad based tactical action? Sure, no problem! Although many concessions have been made, Rogue Spear on GBA retains enough elements to keep it true to the series. The game is viewed from an almost top down perspective, which has allowed the developers to build quite large maps, with multiple ways to approach most situations. After debriefing, you choose a four member team (from a total of 24 – although as you lose members in the field that number rapidly dwindles) to take into the level. Each team member falls into one of four classes (including Sniper!), has a set of skill ratings, and you can switch between them in game at will.

The objectives in the levels are straightforward, and are mostly to kill all the terrorists and rescue all the hostages. Although dumbed down, there's something very compelling about guiding your team throughout the levels and in mastering the somewhat complicated controls. Firefights are mostly straightforward affairs, but little touches like manual reloading adds a much appreciated tactical element.

Some persistence will definitely be required to get through Rogue Spear. You can only save between missions, and since they can be quite long - and a single stuff-up will force you to start all over again, less patient gamers might get a little frustrated. That said, Rogue Spear is a very good example of how to intelligently redesign a game for a portable system. Meaty gaming. – **Cam Shea**

Where's the toilet around here?


The FBI infiltrate Hyper HQ.



Sorry sir, we "lost" the narcotics.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	OVERALL
86	74	74	82

NBA Jam 2002

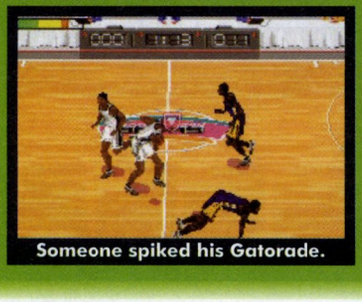
CATEGORY: Sports >> **PLAYERS:** 1 >> **PUBLISHER:** Acclaim >>
PRICE: $TBA >> **RATING:** G >> **AVAILABLE:** Now >>

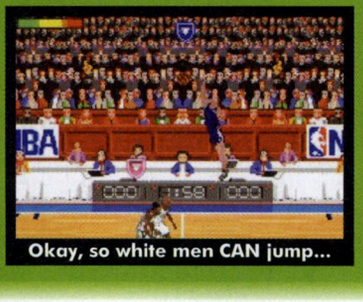
One would assume that NBA Jam would be a perfect candidate to port to GBA. The series had a couple of stellar outings on both SNES and Megadrive, and features 2D graphics, big sprites and loud but simple gameplay. A great match eh? Uh uh. Not only did DC Studios somehow screw up the port and spit on NBA Jam's heritage, but they did so in the most spectacular way imaginable. There are simply no redeeming features in this game whatsoever.

The graphics are awful – the players glitch about on screen and you can't see the ball against the background of the crowd when shooting. The sound is abysmal – every single pass that you make in the game results in the commentator saying "nicely received" whether the pass finds your team mate or not. You'll hear the same comments over and over and over and it will drive you mad. That is, unless the gameplay doesn't drive you mad first. You can consistently sink three pointers from full court, but somehow manage to stuff up dunks regularly. Dunking is no longer flashy either, with the players seemingly dropping the ball into the net from a couple of metres up. There is no passing game, you can't see the game timer, going "on fire" is laughable and there's only a password save.

As if this wasn't enough, the coup de grace for this steaming pile of digital dung is that there is no multiplayer. Isn't that the whole point? It may carry the NBA Jam name, but there are no shenanigans to be had here... only pain, misery and frustration. Worst GBA game ever. – **Cam Shea**

How about a game of Baseketball?


Someone spiked his Gatorade.


Okay, so white men CAN jump...

Spot the ball.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	OVERALL
20	9	5	6

Wolfenstein 3D

CATEGORY: FPS >> **PLAYERS:** 1 >> **PUBLISHER:** Bam!
PRICE: $69.95 >> **RATING:** MA 15+ >> **AVAILABLE:** Now >>

Welcome to the latest unnecessary port of a classic game to GBA. Don't get me wrong, it's cool to play through all of the original game's 60 plus missions again. It's just that I can do that on my PC for free and it runs a whole lot better than this. It's amazing that even with the simplicity of the maps, the barren rooms and the lack of floor or ceiling textures, that this game still can't handle a few enemies on screen at once. If you're going to port a game like this – at least do it properly!

It does have a few things going for it. Unlike other ports of Wolfenstein 3D, the nazi banners aren't censored. Unlike the recent sequel, you get to take on Hitler and kick his ass. Unlike most games, Wolfenstein 3D lets your character eat dog food. Good times.

However, the fact is that Wolfenstein pales in comparison to Doom. Doom just has this intensity and atmosphere that leaves Wolfenstein's environments and enemies for dead. In Wolfenstein 3D, the FPS genre was finding its feet, with Doom it broke into a run.

On one hand we respect the decision to port the game wholesale, but on the other it's just a cheap grab for cash. Some aspects of the game should certainly have been updated. The sound, for instance, consists of a few bleeps and buzzes – very much what used to emanate from my soundcard-less 386 back when this game was fresh. Updated sounds wouldn't have hurt would they? And the idea of playing a FPS with only three weapons and no shotgun seems far too primitive when compared to games like Doom and Ecks Vs Sever. No shotgun? No thanks. – **Cam Shea**

Hands off yer frankfurter, Nazi.

Just like Harry's Practise!

Achtung this, baby!

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	OVERALL
60	40	70	65

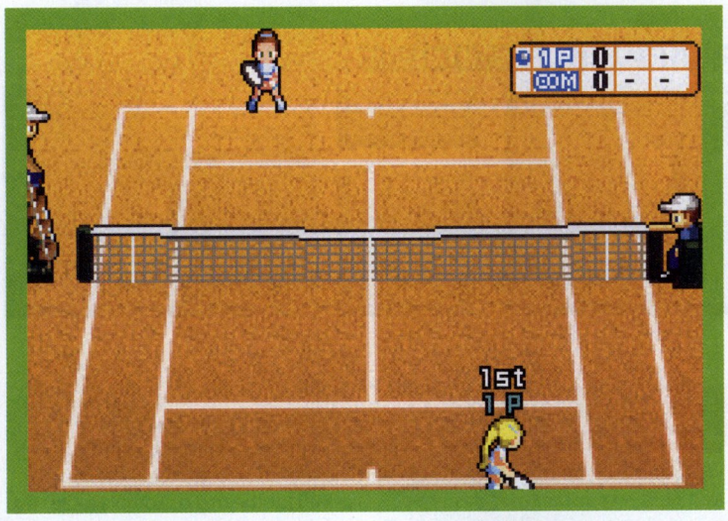
>>GBA

Power Pro Tennis: WTA Edition

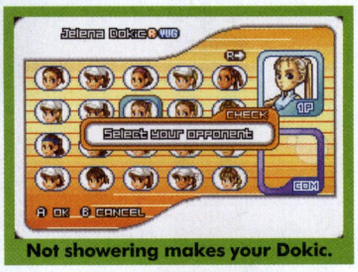
CATEGORY: Tennis >> **PLAYERS:** 1-4 >> **PUBLISHER:** Ozisoft
PRICE: $99.95 >> **RATING:** G >> **AVAILABLE:** TBA >>

In the tradition of the classic 16-bit tennis games, WTA Tour Tennis is a cute anime take on the sport that plays a surprisingly tough game of tennis. As the "WTA" in the name would suggest, the players in the game are comprised of the best female tennis players in the world. All the big guns are here: Serena Williams, Lindsay Davenport, Jennifer Capriati, Martina Hingis, Monica Seles, Jelena Dokic... the list goes on. They've all been given anime makeovers and look great. In fact, the game in general looks very cool – simple enough that everything is easy to see, but nicely stylised.

Modes in the game are basic, and consist of Exhibition, WTA Tour and Link. In the WTA Tour mode you play through a number of tournaments, improving your ranking along the way. Link mode allows you to play multiplayer games with up to four people – although you'll all need a copy, which is a real disappointment considering how expensive this game is. Surely it would be feasible to at least have a one cart two-player mode? There are a few other options missing that would have given this game a bit more meat. A practice/tutorial mode would have been appreciated, as would a create-a-player career mode.



Fancy a bit of group action?



Not showering makes your Dokic.

Booo! Booo! Hissss!

The gameplay is basic, but tough to master – perhaps overly so. Timing and positioning are everything, but unlike other tennis classics, it's too easy to hit the ball out. The difficulty should be in out-maneuvering your opponent, not worrying about hitting the ball out or into the net. WTA Tour Tennis is still fun, especially in doubles, but unless you're a tennis freak, it's probably best to wait for Mario Tennis. – **Cam Shea**

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	OVERALL
81	76	80	80

>>GBA

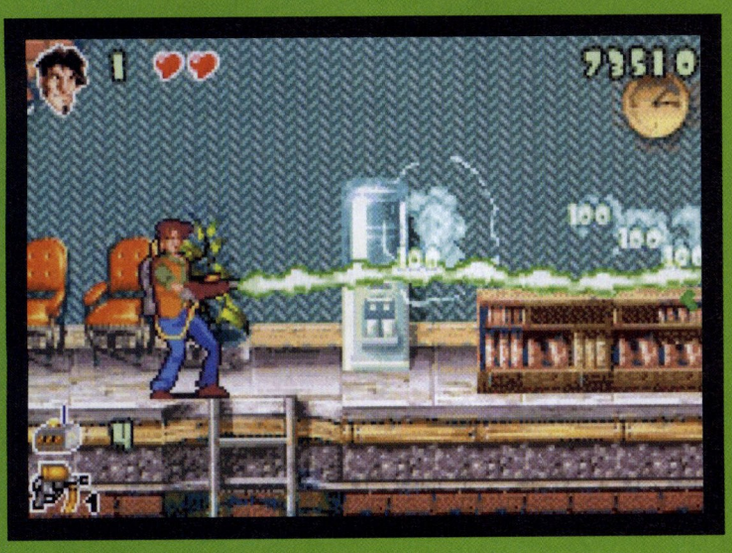
Extreme Ghostbusters: Code Ecto-1

CATEGORY: Platform/racing >> **PLAYERS:** 1 >> **PUBLISHER:** Take 2 >>
PRICE: $79.95 >> **RATING:** G >> **AVAILABLE:** Now >>

Yo, stand back dudes, because the EXTREME ghostbusters are here on GBA, and they're EXTREMEly pissed off. It seems that in between playing EXTREME sports and reading EXTREME romantic novels, two of their team have been kidnapped by the totally EXTREME Count Mercharior. No way! As either the rebellious and EXTREME Eduardo, or braniac to the EXTREME Kylie, it's time to waste some serious ghost scum with EXTREME prejudice!

Code Ecto-1 is very much a stock standard licensed title. It combines flimsy top down racing levels (you have to drive through the city to reach each level) with side scrolling shoot 'em up platform action. Fortunately however, the platformy bits are quite well executed. You can switch between the main characters at will, and each has their own weapon and abilities. This gives the game a little more strategy than you might expect, and the gameplay is well balanced between exploring the relatively sprawling levels and all out action. There are plenty of secrets to uncover too. Another factor that helps lift this title out of the realm of mediocrity is that it is quite slick graphically. The levels are detailed, the characters are well animated and nicely cartoony and there's a reasonable enough range of ghosts.

Obviously this isn't a game for the average Hyper reader. However, if you have a younger brother or sister who is crazy for the TV series, then Code Ecto-1 is a game that they will probably lap up. – **Cam Shea**

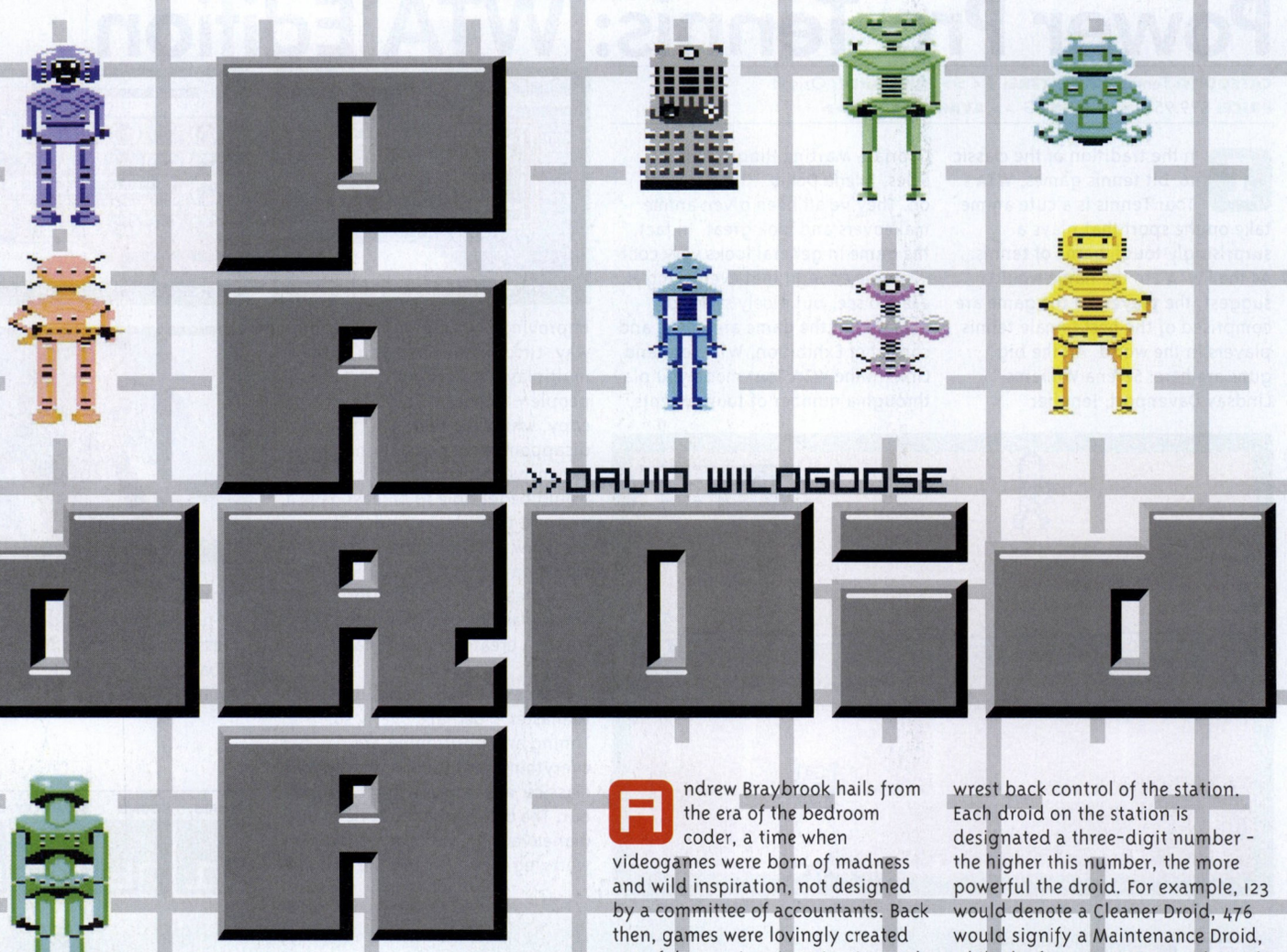


Try to pretend it's Luigi's Mansion.

Woah! Extreme screenshot!

Remember the old C-64 game?

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	OVERALL
82	84	74	75



paradroid

>>DAVID WILDGOOSE

Andrew Braybrook hails from the era of the bedroom coder, a time when videogames were born of madness and wild inspiration, not designed by a committee of accountants. Back then, games were lovingly created out of the passion, imagination and wide-eyed excitement of young men (often teenagers, but usually early twenty-somethings) hunched over their Spectrums, Commodore 64s and Amstrads in dingy offices or, more likely, their parents' living rooms. According to many nostalgic industry veterans at least, these were halcyon days.

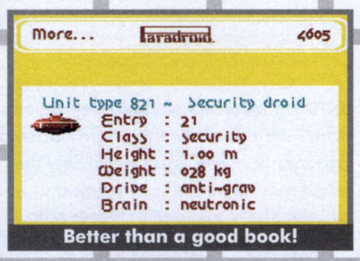
A DIZZYING ARC

Through Gribbly's Day Out, Uridium, Ranarama, and Quazatron on the Spectrum and C64, to the spectacular conversion of Rainbow Islands and accomplished platformer Fire & Ice on the Amiga, the career of Braybrook (and long-time collaborator Steve Turner) traced a dizzying arc. Key to his success was a disarmingly efficient approach to game design; every one of his games was based around a very simple concept, yet Braybrook's genius imbued such a concept with formidable depth. Nowhere was this ability more readily apparent than in his 1985 classic, Paradroid.

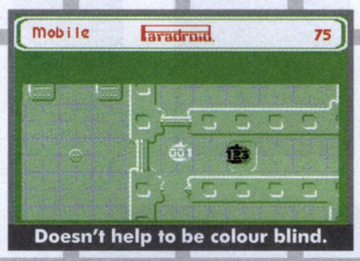
The setting is a vast space station on the cusp of catastrophe, its robot crew having malfunctioned and killed all life forms on board. An Influence Droid is beamed aboard to eliminate the rogue droids and wrest back control of the station. Each droid on the station is designated a three-digit number - the higher this number, the more powerful the droid. For example, 123 would denote a Cleaner Droid, 476 would signify a Maintenance Droid, while the fearsome Command Droid sports an ominous 999. The Influence Droid is numbered 001. This is you.

At the outset, destroying every errant droid on the station's twenty floors appears as a futile objective. The 001 Influence Droid is weak – its plasma bolt armament is only slightly less ineffective than its porous shields. Several collisions with a 300-level droid is enough to put it out of business on the early floors, let alone a direct hit from a 700-level droid's triple lasers later on. However, your Influence Droid possesses a unique ability with which to turn the tide: it can take control of other droids.

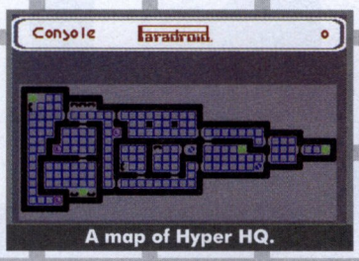
When you hold down the fire button, your droid enters Transfer mode. Colliding with another droid then activates the transfer process, transporting you to a mini-game of quite exceptional cleverness. When transferring, you are presented with a screen depicting the circuit boards of the two droids – your current host and your new target host. The two sets of circuits meet in a series of coloured squares in the centre of the screen. To transfer to the new host, you have to turn a majority of those squares to your colour by firing a number of pulses along the circuit's conduits.



Better than a good book!

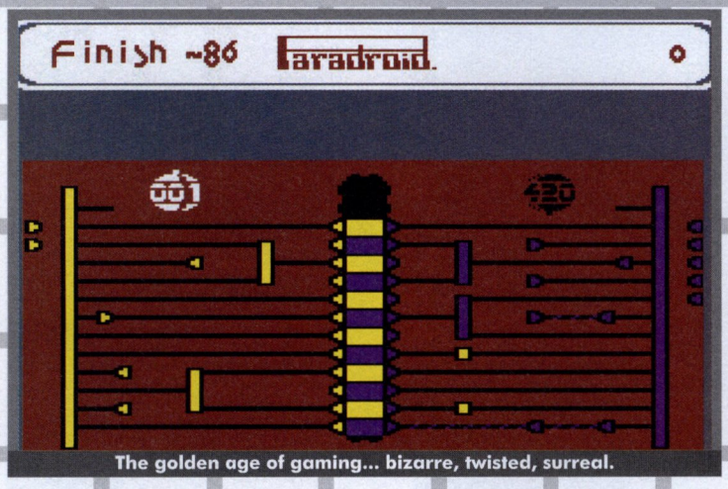


Doesn't help to be colour blind.



A map of Hyper HQ.

A lonely droid ponders his existence.



The golden age of gaming... bizarre, twisted, surreal.

Do I need a GeForce 4 to run this?

DEEP AND COMPELLING

Complicating matters a little, the more powerful the droid, the more pulses it is able to utilise. This means you need to keep transferring to a droid slightly better than your current one – the 001 can comfortably take over a 200 or 300-level droid, but would get fried by a 500-level droid. Also, the conduits come in different forms: the good ones split to hit multiple squares or emit an irreversible pulse, while the bad ones join together to hit only one square or even fall short of the squares altogether. Fortunately then, you get to choose which side of the circuit board you wish to control before the transfer process commences. The dual-layered strategy comes in deciding which side offers you the best chance and then which conduits are best for your limited supply of pulses. It's a deep and compelling contest, made all the more tense with the addition of a strict time limit.

By this point, you're probably thinking the way to win is to work your way up to a 900-level droid then blast the rest into scrapmetal. But you'd be wrong. You see, the Influence droid can only control another droid for a certain period of time before its energy is depleted, and – yes – the high level droids deplete faster than the low level ones. Damage from laser fire can be replenished at various points around the ship, but eventually you'll have to transfer to another droid to stay alive. If you fail, then you revert back to the 001 droid; if its energy runs out, it's game over.

It's here, in the delicate balance between destroying the droids while still conserving enough to be able to keep transferring, that Braybrook's genius shines through. For the game's entirety there's this constant dilemma: you need to clear each floor of the ship to win the game, but doing so means fewer opportunities to successfully transfer when you're inevitably reverted to the original 001 droid.

The formula is strikingly simple: evolve or die. The difficulty curve is utterly transparent: get better and it gets harder. The abstract graphics are timeless: the top-down view and crisp sprites are perfect for a GBA conversion. The gameplay is insanely addictive: there are no bonuses, secrets or hidden areas, just an irresistible incentive to progress hardcoded into the game base mechanics. Believe me, I was playing it only this morning.

So whatever happened to Andrew Braybrook? Well, after Graftgold endured a series of publisher mishaps, aborted projects and prosaic console conversions during the 1990s, his company eventually folded a few years back. Apparently he now works for an insurance firm somewhere in England. But I'm sure he still finds the time to tinker with new graphical routines, quirky gameplay ideas and AI algorithms. Who knows, maybe he even does it from his bedroom...

PARADROID RESURRECTED?

>>Not too many months back, a UK-based publisher and developer called Jester Interactive announced it had snagged the rights to many of Graftgold's classic titles, Paradroid among them. At the time most speculation centred round the likelihood of an update of Paradroid released on Game Boy Advance. Given the nature of the game and the limits of the GBA hardware, this seemed like a logical choice. To this end, they'd probably do no better than to do a straight port of the Amiga version (released in 1990, it was larger, more colourful and displayed more of the ship on screen). In fact, if you poke around the Jester website (http://www.jesterinteractive.co.uk) you'll find a bunch of screenshots taken from a surprisingly 3D version of Paradroid prototyped on the PlayStation2. In a far cry from the original's polished, primary coloured graphical sheen, this work-in-progress resurrection rather resembles the sets of Alien 3. As long as Jester doesn't fiddle with the core game mechanics, it should be something to watch out for.

Cheese, Gromit?

>>VICTORIA FLANAGAN

dvd

DVD is the format of choice for anyone who's serious about their home cinema experience. Every issue we review the latest movies as well as the latest in anime. Kick back and let Hyper help you decide what you should watch!

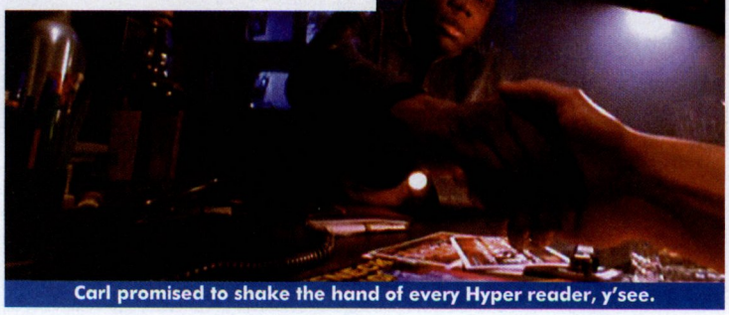
All scores out of 10

Human Traffic

MAGNA PACIFIC, RATED R

Jip, Koop, Moff, Nina and Lulu hate their boring and mundane Monday-to-Friday lives, existing purely for weekends filled with "clubs, drugs, pubs and parties". *Human Traffic* is the story of one of these weekends, and as such is a refreshing and funny look at the British club scene. The film's enthusiasm and energy is infectious – the characters are endearingly likable and their passion for partying and music will have you jiggling in your seat and making mental plans for next Friday night. Although it isn't exactly Oscar material, *Human Traffic* is guaranteed to put a smile (or a delirious grin, dependent on the mental state in which you watch it!) on your dial. The bonus features won't rock your world, but are better than average. They include cast and filmographies, cast interviews, the mandatory trailer (although why these make it into the "special features" category is a mystery to us), a TV promotion for the film and a music video. All in all, *Human Traffic* is well worth watching. Oh, and keep an eye out for the cameo by legendary DJ Carl Cox.

MOVIE: 7.5 EXTRAS: 6



Carl promised to shake the hand of every Hyper reader, y'see.

Riding In Cars With Boys

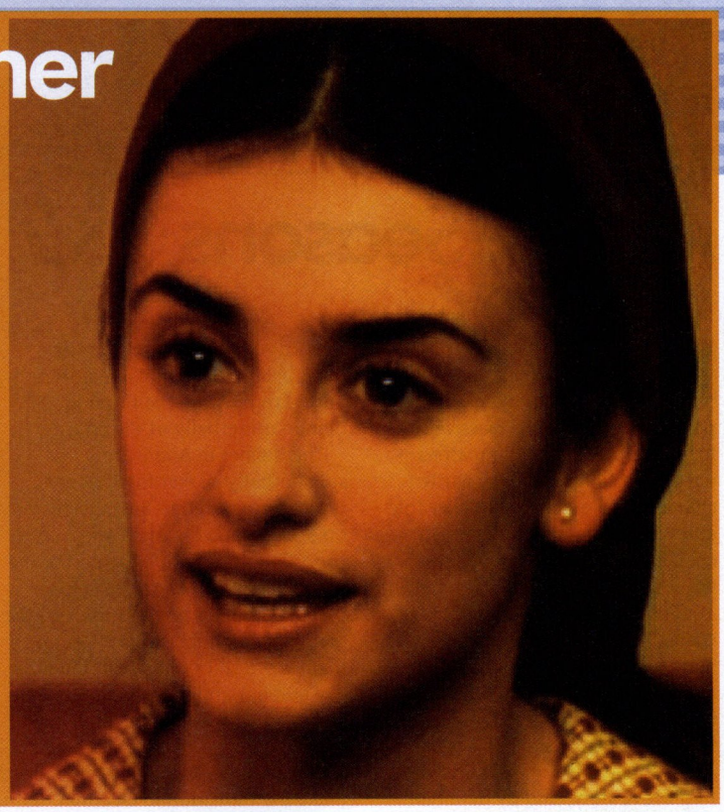
COLUMBIA TRISTAR, RATED M

As you can see from my letter, I think I may have a flair for writing", says 15-year-old Beverley to her bewildered (and conservatively Catholic) parents, who have just discovered from this same missive that their daughter is pregnant. *Riding In Cars With Boys* is based on the memoirs of Beverley Donofrio, and her struggle to become a New York journalist. Unless you're a huge Drew Barrymore fan, however, *Riding In Cars With Boys* is probably best avoided. It's not that there's anything terribly wrong with the film, it's just that there's nothing exceptional about it, either. Its purpose is basically to lament the hardships Beverley had to suffer in order to get an education and succeed in her chosen profession, and although it's not difficult to sympathise with her, you do wish that she'd stop blaming herself and her son for every little thing that goes wrong. Drew's performance is a highlight, cleverly blending feistiness with tragic comedy. The extras are enjoyable precisely because they focus on the (cute as ever) Drew, including commentary from her and a tour of her trailer.

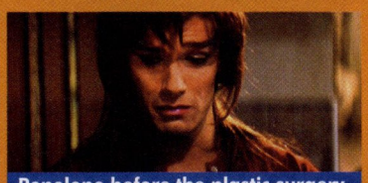
MOVIE: 5.5 EXTRAS: 6

All About My Mother

MAGNA PACIFIC, RATED M15+



The eyes of pure evil.



Penelope before the plastic surgery.

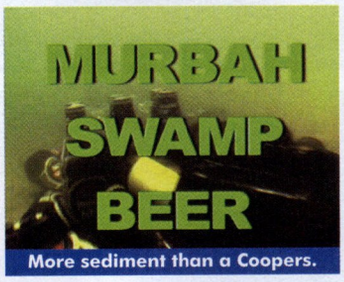
Pedro Almodovar is a rather unusual director. His films (*Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown*, *Kika*, *Tie Me Up, Tie Me Down*) are quirky and peculiar - containing colourful characters, a zany sense of humour and a healthy dose of tragedy and melodrama. *All About My Mother* is no exception. Released in 2001 - a year in which politics didn't appear to suffuse the major Hollywood award ceremonies - it was deservedly awarded the Oscar and Golden Globe for Best Foreign Film. The story begins in Madrid with the death of Esteban, a 16 year-old boy. His mother, Manuela, then travels to Barcelona so that she can inform Esteban's father, a transsexual prostitute, of his death. While trying to locate him, Manuela comes across an old friend who is also a transsexual prostitute, Agrado (meaning "agreeable"), who introduces her to Sister Rosa (Penelope Cruz) - a pregnant nun whose baby, coincidentally, has been fathered by Esteban's father. If it sounds wacky, it's because it is, but at the same time *All About My Mother* is a wonderfully warm and charming film.

MOVIE: 9 EXTRAS: 5

Give the dog a bone... er sorry, bong.

Tropfest 2002

PRODUCED BY INTEL, MA15+



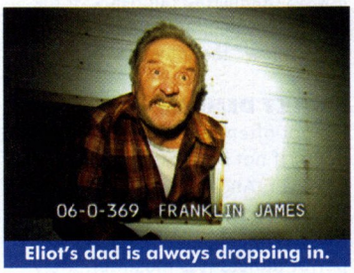
More sediment than a Coopers.

Tropfest was originally a humble short film festival, which started off screening in the Tropicana café in NSW's Darlinghurst. Over the years, however, it has snowballed into a major event, complete with celebrity judges, an audience of thousands, and screenings in cities other than Sydney. There's also that person (who shan't be named) who manages to act like a wanker each year without fail, shooshing the crowd and generally fostering a nice little spirit of hostility in the hearts of the people who have just come to be entertained. Which brings me to my next point: A huge fuss is made each year about the monumental number of entries received for Tropfest, yet on the basis of some of the films that make it into the finalist category, you could only surmise that a lot of them must be complete shite. Thankfully, 2002 remedied this situation somewhat, with an impressing array of amusing and clever films (okay, there are still some stinkers) that definitely make this DVD worth a peek – especially for only $20.

MOVIE: 5 EXTRAS: 4

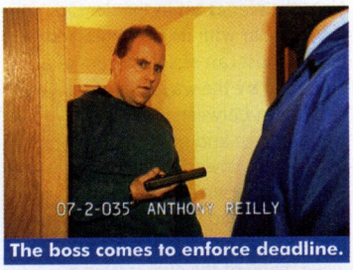
Series 7

MAGNA PACIFIC, RATED R



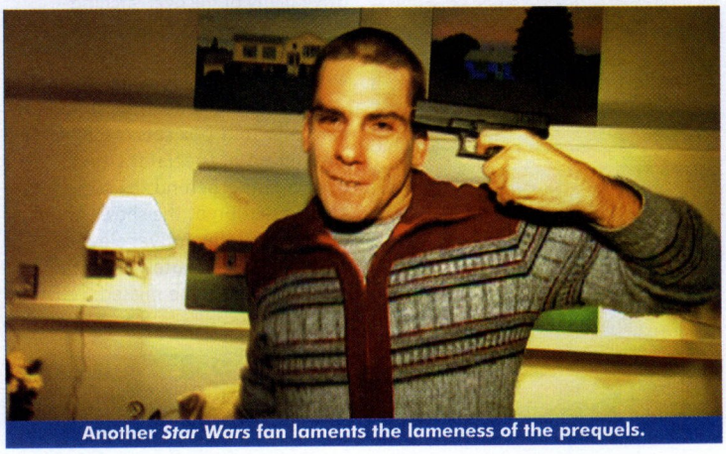
Eliot's dad is always dropping in.

Series 7 is a clever satire of that odious genre of television show that we all love to hate - Reality TV. "The Contenders" is the name of a program, in its seventh series, which randomly selects competitors from a particular city and then loads them up with firearms and ammunition. The winner is the last person left alive. *Series 7* does an admirable job of sending up reality television - from its selection of contestants (including a woman who is eight months pregnant and a man dying from cancer), carefully constructed climactic ad breaks, hilarious "re-enactments" of crucial scenes and lashings of cheese. The only problem here is that although making a serious comment on the tawdry nature of reality TV shows and the lengths to which some people will go when pushed, the impact is a little underwhelming. Extras include Q&A with the director and deleted scenes. Although entertaining, *Series 7* lacks a certain punch.



The boss comes to enforce deadline.

MOVIE: 6 EXTRAS: 0



Another *Star Wars* fan laments the lameness of the prequels.

Angel: Seasons 1&2

20TH CENTURY FOX, RATED M15+

First there was Buffy the Vampire Slayer, an imaginatively kooky program that gained a massive cult following for all the right reasons – not least of which was well written characters who were both believable and compelling. One of the driving characters in the first few seasons was Buffy's love interest, the vampire with a soul - Angel. A dark and complex character, Angel was atoning for a hundred years of unspeakable atrocities as the vampire Angelis, and had come to Sunnydale to help the slayer. Long story short – Buffy and Angel's relationship was written as a tragic love story, and by definition, always doomed to fail. Thus, at the end of season 3, Angel left Sunnydale, and "Angel" the show was born.

FREAKY DEMONS

It's not often that a spin-off is as good, if not better than the original. However, Angel manages to be just that. In terms of conceptual framework, storylines and performances it is most definitely Buffy's equal. Set in Los Angeles, the "city of angels", the story centers around Angel's mission to save those around him who are suffering or in danger from the thriving demon underbelly of the city.

The themes in Angel are substantially darker than those typically featured in Buffy, focusing on apocalyptic disasters and prophecies relating to the end of the world - in which Angel, of course, plays a prominent role. However, the gritty city setting and more adult themes are still paired with the same dry humour and wit which permeate Buffy, as well as the multitude of freaky demons and monsters. Angel wasn't the only Buffy cast member to make the transition to LA either. Both Cordy and Wesley are core members, and both have matured into essential and hugely likeable characters. Completing the ensemble in season one was half-human half-demon Doyle, and in season two vigilante street kid Gunn was introduced. As in Buffy, interplay between the cast members is always well written and fun, providing comic relief and a grounding for the show the audience can relate to.

One of the things that made Buffy such great drama was that it blurred the lines between good and evil, and Angel takes that several steps further. Demons and monsters aren't necessarily all evil, as can be seen from the scenes set in the demon karaoke bar with its congenial red-horned host (an absolute gem of a character by the way); in Angel's own oscillation between states of benevolence and inner darkness; and in the most powerful enemy in the city being not supernatural, but a sinister law firm named Wolfram and Hart. Indeed, it's Wolfram and Hart that drive many of the over-arching narratives during the first two seasons, and a more omnipresent, utterly evil villain we couldn't imagine.

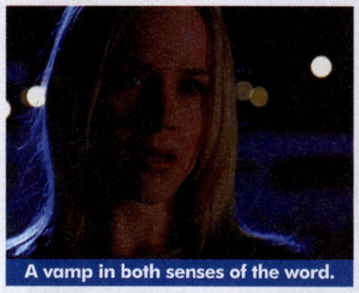
The first two seasons of Angel are split into four box sets, each with a smattering of special features, giving fans a behind the scenes look at the creation of the show. Angel is dark, funny, inventive, cleverly written and absolutely essential viewing - not to be missed.

Season 1:
MOVIE: 9 EXTRAS: 4

Season 2:
MOVIE: 9 EXTRAS: 4

The Hulk's little brother, Bud.

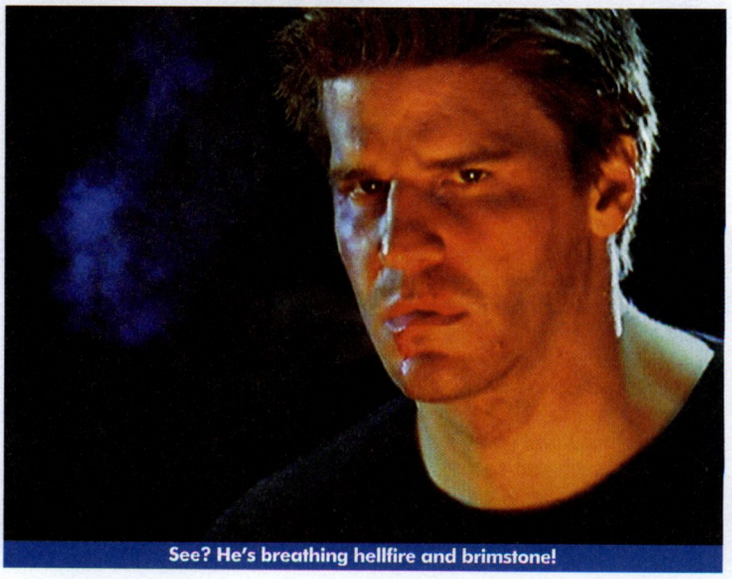
The world's first demon drag-queen.



A vamp in both senses of the word.

Cordy – not as dumb as she looks.

That's what happens if you frown too much.



See? He's breathing hellfire and brimstone!

ANIME

Bastard!! COMPLETE COLLECTION

CATEGORY: ACTION/COMEDY
PRODUCTION COMPANY: KAZUSHI HAGIWARA/SHUEISHA

Old-schoolers will love this Complete Collection DVD, containing all six episodes from the OAV based on the cult manga, Bastard!! It's unfortunate that, given the time of its original release, it should've been completely overshadowed by the Lodoss Wars series – which in turn owes much to The Lord of the Rings – because Bastard!! has a much more original story, with a unique Japanese take on the fantasy genre. In a sentence? Think Lodoss Wars meets Slayers, mixed with a number of truly hilarious moments of the Dragon Half kind.

HOOKED TO THE END

The story's a little complicated, though, and will require some explanation. Dark Schneider is a cruel, all-powerful magician intent on conquering the world. In his heyday, his forces destroyed countless kingdoms until one magician managed to beat him. To most people he was dead, but he was actually sealed within the body of a small boy. 15 years later, when Dark Schneider's old colleagues decide to continue his work and lay siege upon a castle, the magician resurrects Dark Schneider to defend his home and save the world.

Why would Dark Schneider help his old enemy? Because his mind and spirit are one with the boy, and the boy is in love with the magician's innocent daughter – ultimately making Dark Schneider the unlikely saviour of the world.

What's more, Dark Schneider can only be summoned when he is given true love's first kiss from a virgin. The story is approached from a thoroughly grave and serious perspective, but given Schneider's insatiable thirst for lithe young women, and an ego to match his seemingly limitless powers ("My obvious charms and god-like powers always dazzle the simple, ordinary folk") this is a formula for comedy gold.

Bastard!! is over the top and at times ridiculous – Dark Schneider is more of a vehicle for metaphor – but it'll have you hooked to the end no less.

ANIMATION 7 PLOT: 7 OVERALL: 8

Mouthing off I guess.

The 4 bastards of the apocalypse.

Starship Girl Yamamoto Yohko

CATEGORY: SCI-FI/COMEDY
PRODUCTION COMPANY: SEISAKUIINKAI/KADOKAWA SHOTEN

The scenario in which Earth finds itself in Starship Girl Yamamoto Yohko is quite possibly the equivalent of Star Trek-style intergalactic diplomacy gone completely stupid. In the race to claim dominion over planets with lucrative mining resources, opposing alien civilisations don't wage wars against each other: they compete for the rights in space-based gladiatorial leagues.

OFF HER NUT

These competitions usually take the form of races and free-for-alls. The pilots of the alien starships needn't fear death too much thanks to the latest teleportation technology, so these competitions are really a pure test of skill, often producing wreckless and extreme tactics.

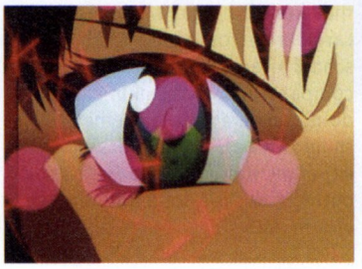
In a bid to get the best pilots around, Earth resorts to travelling back in time to find its pilots, and they end up selecting a group of highschool girls with a huge talent for – wait for it – playing videogames. Yamamoto Yohko is the last girl selected. She's the most egotistical of them all, but also the most talented; and she pilots the funky new prototype starship that's tipped to win it for Earth.

Starship Girl Yamamoto Yohko is mostly light-hearted humour, at times intelligent; but most fans will find immense satisfaction in listening to Megumi Hayashibara going off her nut as a supporting character. Enjoyable, provided you can look past massive plot holes like the whole time-travelling issue.

ANIMATION 7 PLOT: 8 OVERALL: 7

Two dolla love you long time.

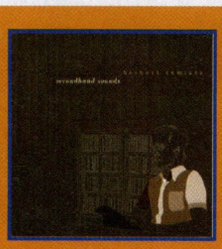
John and Yohko. Maybe.



MUSIC

MUSIC REVIEWS SPONSORED BY Blunt

Whether it be on the soundtrack to the latest videogame, getting high rotation on the airwaves or tagged on the credits of the latest blockbuster movie, the latest music releases are everywhere. Want to know what's hot and what's not? Our **Hyper CD reviews** should keep you in the loop.



HERBERT
Secondhand Sounds

PEACEFROG

>>Herbert, programmer/performer/DJ, has packaged an incredible collection of remixes into this 2 disc set. His style represents the true cutting edge, where electronic music and eclectic sensibilities merge into one. Ever the visionary, Herbert makes beautiful music out of anything that he can whack against a mic, and he does it well. This wild interest in raw sounds is incredibly fresh and thought provoking, and it's become Herbert's trademark. With a wide ranging selection of remixes including Furry Phreaks, Motorbass and Moloko, it's obvious his sounds have intrigued the industry as a whole. A required purchase for any electronic music fan. **CD**

X-ECUTIONERS
Built From Scratch

SONY

>>In recent times, the cutting and scratching DJ is more often sighted supporting metal bands than in their traditional habitat - providing the beats for MCs. On 'Built from Scratch', New York's finest DJ crew attempt to correct the balance by reminding us where it all started. Reworked versions of seminal DJ cuts like Globe & Whiz Kid's 'Play that Beat' mix it with guest vocals from the likes of Pharoah Monche and Large Professor in a decidedly old school affair (best to ask the record company just what Linkin Park are doing on here – because they shouldn't be). Though lacking in the experimentation of Rob Swift's solo outings, this is a solid and reliable album. **MC**

BENJAMIN WILD
With Compliments

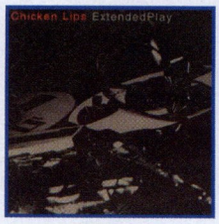
INERTIA

>>Benjamin Wild has been on the scene since 1992, and has been dishing out tasty slices of minimal house for most of that time. With Compliments is his first full length release, and a great showcase for his top-notch production and understanding of the groove. Although fitting broadly into the minimal tech-house genre, With Compliments shies away from more abstract soundscapes in favour of a deep, grinding exploration of house, taking the listener from booty shaking grooves driven by tight percussion and warm synth stabs through to more laid back deep house peppered with warbling analogue sounds and fragmented rhythms. Elegant, funky and bass heavy. Another great release from Forcetracks. **CS**

RUISORT
Acapulco Now!

INERTIA

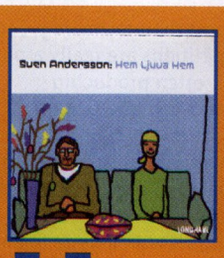
>>This album could perhaps best be described as post-lounge electronic dance music, Mexico style. From playful tropical rhythms to shuffling slower jams, Acapulco Now! is the product of Ruisort's collaboration with fellow Mexican Andres Sanchez (from Titan), and is the sort of album that you can throw on just about any time. This is electronica imbued with funky beats, rich bass, tasteful piano lines, crisp production and a sense of space that demands you listen to it outside in the sun with a cocktail in hand. While not wildly original, Ruisort's sound has an infectious vitality about it that is very appealing. Highlights include the grinding groove of "Dios Mono" and the chilled funk of "Cos Coppertones". **CS**



CHICKEN LIPS
Extended Play

INERTIA

>>Since they first emerged as Bizarre Inc back in the early 90s, Andy Meecham and Dean Meredith have come a long way, but their musical sensibilities are still very much grounded in the sounds and production techniques of earlier dance eras. That's by no means a diss, mind you, as Chicken Lips have established their own unique sound around those aesthetics, and certainly have funk to spare. The sounds on Extended Play are built around long tracks that play out like the boys are recording a studio jam session, as opposed to painstakingly mapping every bar. It's quite an under-produced sound, mixing live instrumentation, deliberately analogue sounds, and a little old school Chicago house for good measure. **CS**



SVEN ANDERSSON
Hem Ljuva Hem

INERTIA

>>Following up on his 2000-07-02 single, Sweden's Sven Andersson is back with an exceptional album. Hem Ljuva Hem explores many elements of contemporary dance music, seamlessly moving from dark moody techno (They All Come) to jackin' house (2001-04-15) and briefly dipping into more Aphex Twin inspired electronica (2001-04-19 Edit). Okay, so he's not big on inventive track names, but the music speaks for itself. Created not as a holistic work, Hem Ljuva Hem is gripping from start to finish. Every bit as slick as the work of fellow Swede Hakan Libdo, but a little more accessible than Libdo's ultra deep explorations. **CS**

NORMA JEAN BELL
Come Into My Room

PEACEFROG

>> God this is a good album, and is it any wonder? When Norma Jean Bell - jazz musician, producer and diva, teams up with Kenny Dixon, aka (the much respected) Moodyman, you know the result is going to have some serious tech-soul. No surprises then that Come Into My Room is an aesthetic masterpiece —lo-fi house tenderly simmered in the rhythms and flavours of Detroit, seasoned with Bell's unique vocal presence and haunting sax lines. Every track is built around a minimal lock groove beat, and regardless of whether it's paired with a dirty bassline and whispered vocals, or a melancholic ethereal melody, this is a sensuously hypnotic album. **CS**

YOU AM I
Deliverance

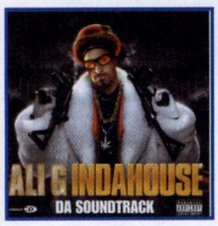
BMG

>> After waiting an age for last year's Dress Me Slowly to arrive, You Am I fans are now able to reap the benefits of a divine creative rush from Tim Rogers and the boys which has enabled the precipitation of their sixth studio album in ultra quick time. The laid back approach that Rogers' has settled into on recent releases continues with the instant air of familiarity that surrounds your first listen demonstrating how deeply imbedded in the collective conscious the band's style has become over the years. Subsequent listens have me convinced that these tunes will ensure that the collective conscious ain't likely to escape this time around either.

THE MELVINS
Hostile Ambient Takeover

IPECAC/SHOCK

>> If I have learnt one thing from listening to the Melvins over the years it is to abandon all expectations 'cos this band ain't afraid to fuck with you. They love that shit. On Hostile Ambient Takeover they drag you through another steaming heap of seriously warped rock sludge of a similar type to that which they have been wallowing in for years. From the very start it's unmistakably Melvins, but the constant variation and innovation ensure that it is never generic Melvins. Heavy as ever (read: very) and continuing to explore the nether depths of dynamic experimental rock, Buzz, Kevin and Dale command your maximum respect.



VARIOUS ARTISTS
Ali G Indahouse Soundtrack

UNIVERSAL

>> Booyakasha! Sacha Baron Coen attempts to cash in on hilarious creation Ali G in his big screen debut, Ali G Indahouse, the soundtrack of which is suitably comprised of everything you'd imagine Ali's posse, the West Staines Massive, would shake their booties to. The tunes are as good you will currently find in hip-hop and rap, however, I fear for the fate of the film if the 'funny' bits in between songs are any indication. Ali's introductions on imaginary pirate radio station, 'Drive-by FM', leave a bit to be desired and the first single, "Me Julie" (a duet with rapper Shaggy), gets old in about five seconds flat.

1200 TECHNIQUES
Choose One

SONY

>> Australian hip-hop is starting to find its feet, and Melbourne collective 1200 Techniques are one of the leaders in the new push for respect. The nice thing about 1200 is the fact that they sound original — their grooves owe as much to cut and paste mayhem of the Avalanches as they do to American hip-hop. But when they kick it out, on tracks like first single "Karma", these guys prove it isn't all gimmick and noise. With live guitars and the inimitable turntablisms of DJ Peril, frontman Nfamas has some smooth platforms to launch his vocals from, and launch he does.

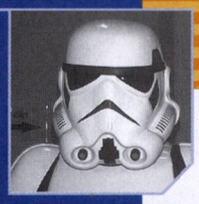
GRINSPOON
New Detention

UNIVERSAL

>> With Chemical Heart having already proven the level Grinspoon are looking to take things, it will come as no surprise that Detention is a staggering album, loaded not only with amazing songs, but also with a production and sound that will impress anybody.

Packed full of drop dead stunners — from the raucous "Lost Control" to the smooth groove of "Reason" to the over the top, rock & roll of "1000 Miles" — this album will be producing hits for the next six months. With Phil sounding as bored as ever and Pat still trying more tricks than Houdini, this is Grinspoon at their best.

JUNK



FRANK DRY

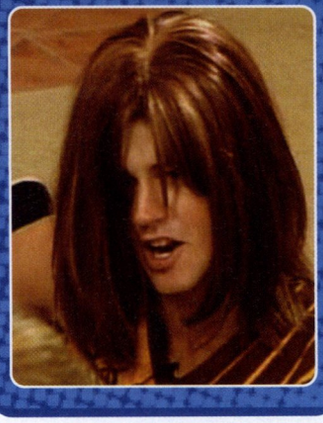
>> Is Big Brother really watching us? I think the ratings will show that we're all watching Big Brother! What is it with Reality TV? Why is it so easy to become addicted to watching some bunch of norms fuss and feud over a left over piece of bread? Do we really enjoy watching them sit around sucking back beer, instead of sitting back and sucking down beer ourselves? Although, I guess we could do both at the same time...

There is definitely some kind of voyeuristic pleasure to be derived from observing how someone else folds their toilet paper, but is this really healthy television? Are we really learning something from objectively viewing these goldfish bowl social interactions? I know I'm posing a lot of questions here, but it feels like shows like Big Brother are attempting to pass themselves off as having some kind of educational value, when really it's the pits of commercial television.

Getting some hack psychologist on the show to analyse whether Marty is sexually inexperienced or not is really of very little value to the rest of us. At least other forms of passive entertainment sometimes leave us with questions to ponder later. Reality TV offers nothing more than the pleasure of making yourself feel morally superior to the nutcases on the television. Maybe that's all it is – it makes us feel better about ourselves. Unless you're envious of someone's abs or your partner fancies someone on the show...

If we're going to have useless television, how about bringing to Aussie TV some of those outrageous and dangerous Japanese game shows? People immersing themselves in vats of cockroaches, or letting spiders crawl down their trousers. At least it would provide more regular laughs.

Junk mail (but no junk mail) to freakscene@next.com.au



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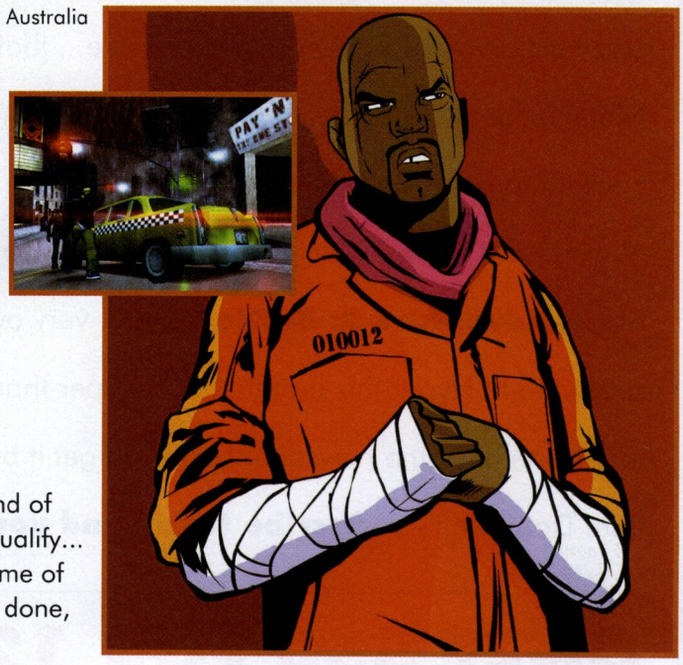

Q. WHAT WAS YOUR FAVOURITE GAME OF 2001 AND WHY?

Everyone had very different gaming experiences last year. One friend of ours only played ROMs all year, so his comments couldn't exactly qualify... For our money, Grand Theft Auto 3 was clearly the best console game of 2001, and takes our 'award' for our favourite game last year! Well done, Rockstar! Now on to our readers' opinions...

HYPER FORUM

We all have a different opinion and the Hyper Forum is where you can get your thoughts out of your head and onto the page for all to see. Don't forget that we have a new topic every issue! The next topic of discussion...

? "Are you happy with your next-gen console? Why or why not?"

Responses will be printed in Hyper 107.

E-mail: FREAKSCENE@NEXT.COM.AU with Hyper Forum in the subject line, and the topic of discussion at the top of your response. Please note that very long contributions may be edited.

WHAT A WAG

What was your favourite game of 2001 and why? Considering the arrogance of the Essendon supporters, I would have to say that Brisbane Lions beating Essendon in the 2001 Grand Final was my favourite game of 2001! Oh you meant video game...

Steve
Magic_19_@hotmail.com

ACHTUNG!

I believe the best game of 2001 is Return to Castle Wolfenstein. I can remember playing Wolfenstein 3D when I was 4. I had to wait almost ten years for a sequel and it was worth the wait. RTCW comes close to the most FUN game I have ever played. Just the feeling you get from mowing down Nazis! Truly unstoppable entertainment.

Michael
Michaelgabrielsen@hotmail.com

TRAIN OF THOUGHT

That's gotta be Microsoft's Train Simulator. Why? Because it's completely different to anything else made before. And I LOVE trains!!!

Regards,
Clinton Taylor
Clinton1051@hotmail.com

NOSTALGIA PIE

My favourite game of 2001? Well, it would have to be Final Fantasy IX for the PSX. I've been a devoted FF fan ever since the very first one on the NES way back in 1990 (I'm probably one of the few people who can remember that it was even available here, in very limited numbers), so it's only natural, that FFIX would appeal to me.

Sure, it wasn't groundbreaking like FFVII, or as graphically impressive as FFVIII, but that's not where the magic lies. Rather, FFIX gets back to its roots; a huge nostalgia trip that any true FF fan would savour like a fine wine. And, although FFIX's story may appear on the surface to be all 'swords and sorcery', by the end of disc 3, it soon thunders straight into sci-fi territory concerning such things as the meaning of life, evolution, genetic engineering (who would have thought Zidane's a clone?), memories, what it means to be human, and a misguided plan to re-generate a dying Earth.

Garnet. Grrrr. Mmm. Rowrrl.

The characters are also a hoot. All the great FF 'Job' classes are there; Zidane's a Thief, Garnet and Eiko are White Mages/Summoners (Garnet is also, to quote the game, 'the most babe-ellicious beauty' in the entire FF series!), Vivi's a Black Mage, Steiner's a Knight etc.

And while the character designs may not be realistic in size, I pefer them to FFVIII's hyper-realistic look. This is meant to be FANTASY after all, so why not go all the way? FFIX's characters look just like how master artist and character designer Yoshitaka Amano designed them; fluid, beautiful and surreal.

Finally, as I mentioned previously, FFIX remembers and celebrates ALL the earlier FF games, so it's no suprise to find there are literally HUNDREDS of references to the earlier games in FFIX's world. From the character classes, such as Vivi's Black Mage persona; the White Mage robe Garnet wears for a short time; and the Red Mages wandering around; to the names of certain NPCs and other characters, such as the ruthless Garland and Garnet's REAL name, both tips of the hat to FFI, to Beatrix's sword 'Save The Queen' which is a weapon

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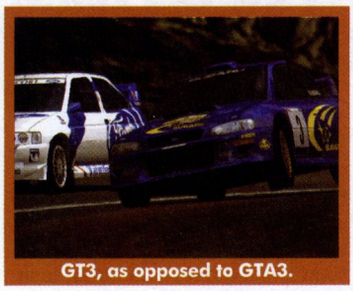
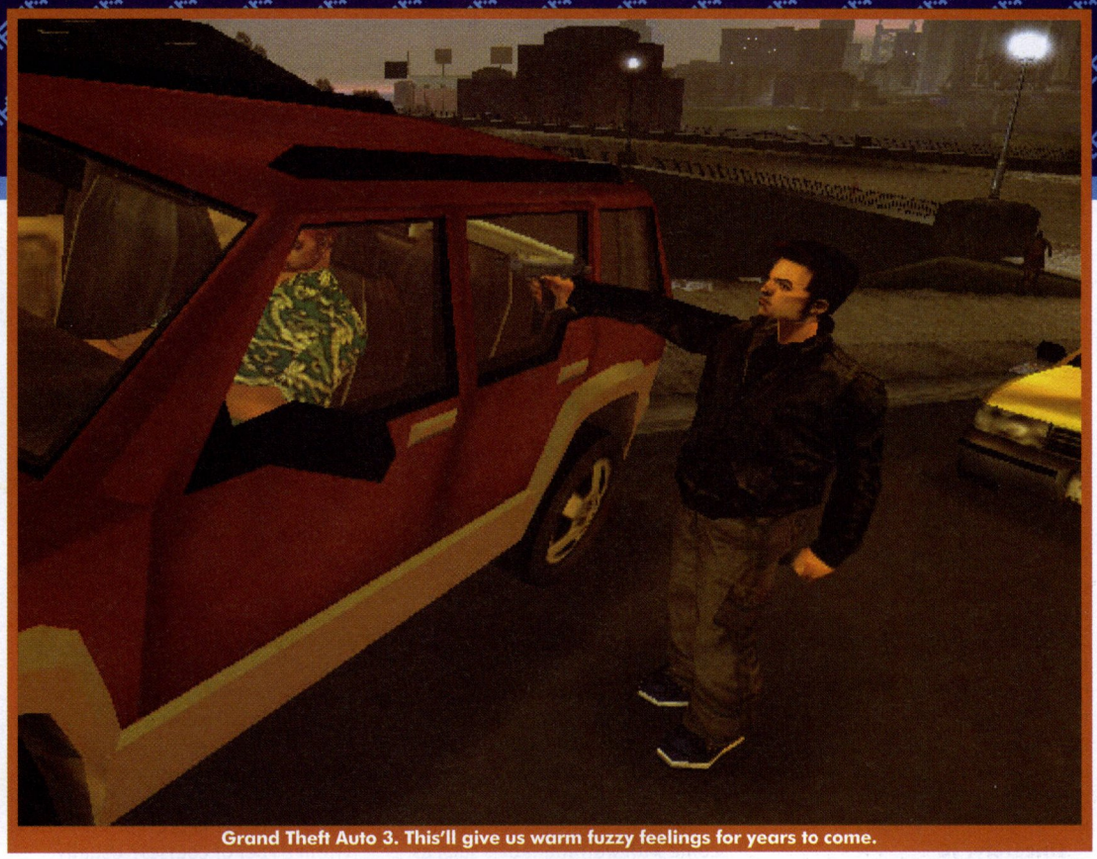


GT3, as opposed to GTA3.

Advance Wars was a surprise hit.



Grand Theft Auto 3. This'll give us warm fuzzy feelings for years to come.

from FF Tactics, and the airship Invincible from FFIII, it's a blast to take some time out from the main story and just spend a few hours taking note, and a chuckle at all the little FF references. Even Cloud's sword is found hanging in a Weapon store!

In a time when the market is flooded with a whole pile of sub-standard 'me too' RPGS, it's a huge relief to be able to play FFIX; an RPG which, although in keeping with the benchmark its PSX brothers have set, warmly looks back to its roots with a friendly wave and a smile. If you consider yourself a TRUE Final Fantasy fan (and who isn't these days?), go out, buy FFIX, and indulge yourself in a warm, generous helping of Nostalgia Pie!

Marcus Cracknell
(Level 4 White Mage)

PERSONAL PROBLEMS

First of all it must be said that I can only choose from PS2 games as it's the only up to date gaming platform I have (my PC is lagging behind big time!) But enough about my problems and onto the games.

My favourite game in 2001 would have to be GTA3... how can you go past it? Just the absolute freedom you have to do anything you like (well, within reason) was, and still is, fantastic. I mean getting involved in gang wars, doing hits for gangs, picking up prostitutes, stealing cars, sure it might be just a regular weekend for Cam in Redfern but for others it's a really unique experience.

Seriously though, having been a huge fan of the first GTA, and after the average second installment, I'm glad to see this game advancing and leading the way. I'm sure GTA4 will have even greater success... especially if it's equipped with multiplayer options!

Runner up of 2001 for me would have to be Jak and Daxter.

Scott Little
Scolit@hotmail.com

TOO COOL

Sup Hyper, I think there is only one contender for best game of 2001 and that would have to be GTA3. I mean the graphics are awesome, the gameplay is truly immersive, and well, it's just 2 cool.

Jim Jim The Wonder Chicken
Zeeknovak@hotmail.com

P.S. Man who stand on toilet, high on pot.

CONFUSED

Er, you mean games that were released in 2001 or games I played in 2001? Either way, it's very unlikely for me to remember all of the games I played in 2001 (whether they were released in 2001 or not) cos' I have a really short memory. So, after searching my recent memory for about a minute, I come up with not just one, but several games in 2 different categories:

Favourite games played in 2001 :

Chrono Trigger, Winning Eleven 2000 U-23, Mario Tennis, Golden Sun, Advance Wars, Worms World Party.

Favourite games released in 2001 :

Golden Sun, Advance Wars, Zoo Tycoon, Worms World Party

Bear in mind that I only have a GBA & a really crappy PC to satisfy my gaming needs. Why I choose these games? Because they made me smile, laugh, angry, amazed and sometimes made drops of tears came streaming down my cheek (well, almost), and only great games does that sorta things to us human beings.

Rizky Chandra

(still hasn't forgiven Hyper for giving 5/10 to Samurai X)

GIVES GOOD LOVE

Hey Hyper,

After thinking long and hard, short and soft, I've come up with my favourite game of 2001 on console and on PC. For sure, Gran Turismo 3 was the best console game. It was just sweet. And it still gives me love.

For PC, I think Arcanum was the coolest game of last year. It had retro flavour and was a really engrossing RPG.

Cheers, keep making a sick mag,

Pete Repeat
Repeatergun@yahoo.com

Golden Sun... still golden!

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MAIL

HYPER LETTERS:

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X-64

Greetings to ye people there. I would just like to congratulate you on those Xbox stickers a few months ago. Once I attached them to my aging N64 (I wanted it to be nicknamed nsf but it never caught on) it received a new lease on life. Frame-rates are much faster and the animation is smoother. I believe that the AI must also have improved as I have had to drop the skill level of the simulants I train against in Perfect Dark. All this is entirely thanks to Hyper and I am very grateful to you for extending the use-by date on my beloved N64.

Sincerely, JC
Jcelestri@hotmail.com

P.S. What are Eliot's feelings about the creation of a character named Lord Seafood? (I'm going to be a famous author, of course) I am offering you now the chance to tell me what sort of person you want him to be. I won't write under the name you see here, but with any luck you'll recognise Lord Seafood in a few years time (Subject to the Almighty Editor's approval of course).

Dear JC,
The name Lord Seafood is my trademark – you'll have to pay me lots of money if you want to use it. LOTS of money.

WARNING WILL ROBINSON!

Hey Hyper,

I recently read an article on an Everquest player who recently suicided (the article: http://www.jsonline.com/news/state/mar02/31536.asp).

There are now calls for it to literally come with warning labels such as 'Warning, extensive playing could be hazardous to your health.' This seems ludicrous to me, after all, why don't we stick up signs on every wall saying "Warning, banging your head on me can cause serious injury" while we're at it? I admit I have never played Everquest. But given what I've heard and some of the screenshots I've seen, I'd say it's really good. So aren't these proposed warnings essentially punishing games for being too good?

This does however, bring up an interesting point on who is responsible. On one hand, we have the manufacturer who could be seen as having been negligent, however, on the other hand we have the consumer, who, to put it in simplistic terms, should have known better. Is it really right for the consumer to punish the manufacturer because they can't control their own lives?

Just one last point I'd like to put in is whether the warning labels will really be effective. How many of us actually bother to read anything about a game, except for the reviews (from Hyper of course)? Usually when we play a game, we expect to be able to learn by playing and not by reading. So, if we slap on a sticker, will that really help? I guess it'd just be like the Macca's coffee where they have "Warning: Contents hot", but nobody really pays attention to that (unless they're really bored).

Kami

Dear Kami,
Warning: This response could be hazardous to your feelings.
We all know how hard it is to tear yourself away from something as enjoyable as a good videogame. But I think you can blame anything as extreme as a suicide solely on someone's mental health, not the game. However, there should be more study into whether games are addictive, as I'm starting to wonder where the last 10 years of my life have gone.

PS2 PARANOIA

Hey Hyper,

Great mag you got there but recently I have really been annoyed with people bagging the PS2, saying that it has no hope against the Xbox and the GameCube. They all say that it is not powerful enough and that the games aren't any good. I do admit that the Box and the Cube are both impressive and I plan on buying one of them soon, but the PS2 is still very strong against them and won't go down without a good fight. I researched through my past Hyper mags and have seen that in the past 13 issues there have been an amazing 23 PS2 games that have received the Big Rubber Stamp of Approval. How can a machine that is failing receive such accolades? Not to mention some great games coming up such as Virtua Fighter 4, The Getaway, Tekken 4, FFXI and Auto Modellista. They are just a few of the great PS2 games coming. So people don't give up on the PS2, it's still alive and kicking!

From Chazza
Chazza27@hotmail.com

Dear Chazza,
It's funny how the launch of new consoles can distract people from the fact that the PS2 is the world leader in terms of user base. There are now something like 30 million PS2s sold worldwide and only a few million GameCube and Xbox systems sold. The PS2 is in no danger...

CENSORED

Hi,

I am 14 years old. My worry is that if the R18 rating reaches video games, it won't be long before any game with a tiny bit of blood is given the rating. There's always going to be someone saying "Final Fantasy taught my kids to kill," or "Tony Hawk 3 killed my hampster" and eventually all decent games will be inaccessible to people like me. This would mean that I wouldn't be able to play great games like MGS2 and maybe even FFX. That's my opinion anyway.

Great mag, keep up the good work.

From Sam
Bigmonkey38@hotmail.com

Dear Sam,
The introduction of the R18 rating would not affect how software is classified. If anything it broadens what is available – it does not mean that M15+ games would suddenly get rated R18. For a game to be rated R18 it would have to be sexually explicit or so graphically violent that it would otherwise be banned. Don't worry. What you should be worried about, is if an R18 category does NOT become available for when you turn 18!

CAPTION THIS!

PART 30 WINNER

Some of you thought the vamp in this pic is Spike, but you're wrong, so those captions went in the bin. Our winner is Anthony Angwin for his observation.

Javelin and Discus: Two of the exciting events in the upcoming "Buffy Olympics game".

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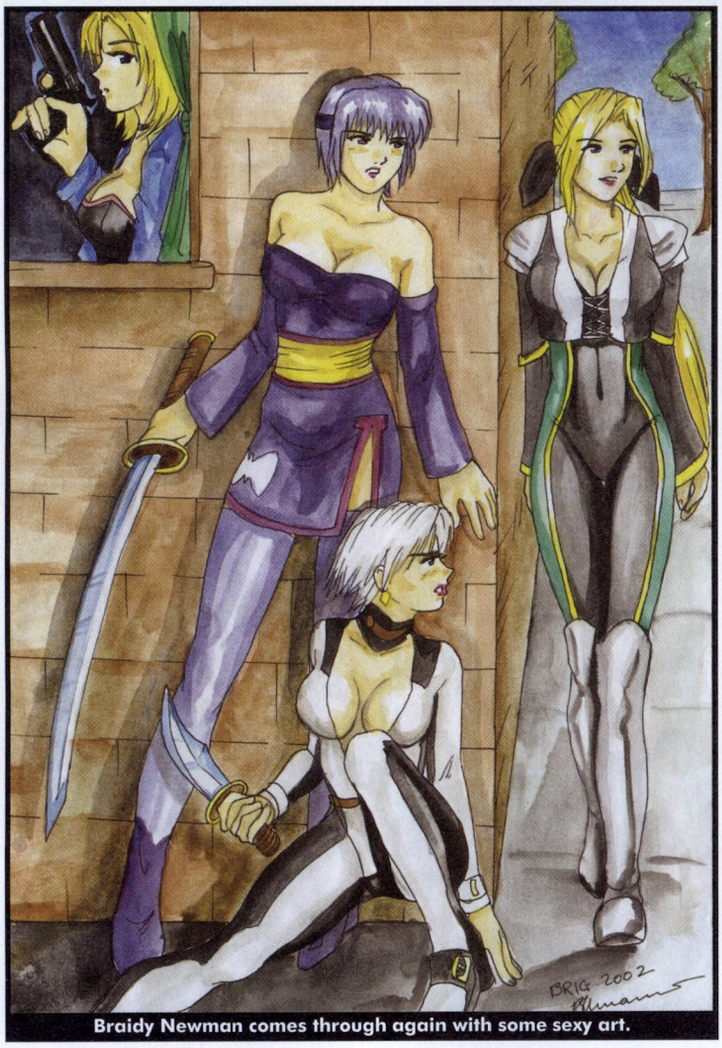

Braidy Newman comes through again with some sexy art.

GAME OR MOVIE

Dear Hyper,

The release of Metal Gear Solid 2 has got me thinking about the issue of games becoming more "cinematic". I'm all for game designers adopting a more mature approach to plot and characterisation, which might gain gaming a bit more mainstream acceptance. It just seems to me that some designers are unsure as to whether they are making a game or a movie. Hideo Kojima is one of my heroes, but MGS2's lengthy cut scenes and constant loss of control are irritating.

Several years ago, cut scenes were necessary to tell a story. The graphics were simply too crude for the player to identify with. However, with graphics becoming more sophisticated and realistic, and game environments becoming more immersive, interrupting gameplay with lengthy CG sequences is jarring and distracting.

I like it when the story is revealed through the use of in-game sequences and scripted events, used most effectively in Half-Life and more recently Medal of Honor: Allied Assault, a technique so dramatic and engaging, I am baffled as to why it isn't used more often. I think that game designers should try to make gaming an in-depth and unbroken experience, seeing a total removal of player control as a last resort.

Of course, integrating total interactivity and freedom with a complex narrative is opening a whole new can of worms... but I'll leave that to people like Kojima-san. :-)

Thanks,

David Swain
Swains@iprimus.com.au

Dear David,
Just wait until publishers start sticking annoying advertising and trailers for other games at the start of their games...

You've won an exclusive 360 Modena Racing Wheel for PC! Replica of the wheel in a Ferrari 360 Modena.

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THE CURIOSITY SHOW

Yo Hyper,

I'm a 12 year-old gamer who's been wondering a few things.

1. How many people work at Hyper?
2. Will Munch's Oddysee be on PC?
3. What happened with the 3DO?
4. Does the Dreamcast at Hyper sit there and collect dust?
5. When will Spyro for PS2 come out and what will it be called?
6. Will there be a Dragonball Z game come out in Aus?
7. Do you think that handheld graphics could get as good as PSone or N64?
8. Will Conker make an appearance on GCN?

Hope you can answer these,

Jake
Jake_7953@hotmail.com

P.S. what happened to Hypermart?

Dear Jake,

1. *There are three of us who make the magazine you read, but plenty of other countless production people who make sure it gets printed. The Hyper "crew" is just Eliot, Cam and Malcolm.*
2. *Doubtfully.*
3. *It sucked.*
4. *Unfortunately, yes. But we get it out every now and then to play Soul Calibur.*
5. *Spyro for PS2 is called Spyro: Enter the Dragonfly – due later in the year.*
6. *We are aware of one coming to the GBA.*
7. *One of these days, sure.*
8. *Rare are keeping hush, but I guess it depends on how well Conker's Bad Fur Day sold. We'll give you a more definite answer after the E3 expo.*

PROBING

To the most holy ones,

With an intro like that you can probably already guess that I'm a fan of Hyper so let's bypass the extra compliments and get on with the questions.

1. When you give scores for visuals and sound, do you take into consideration the abilities of the machine? Eg: If a PSone game was released and then reviewed by you, do you base your visuals/sound score on how well it compares to current games (i.e. MGS2), or on how well it utilises the PSone's power?
2. How come you'll give a game a great preview then a mediocre review (E.g. Parrapa the Rappa 2)?
3. On a completely unrelated subject, do you guys like Holden or Ford better?

That's all for now.

Liam
newtonjg@bigpond.com

Dear Liam,

1. *Yes, we take into account the abilities of the machine. We would not compare PSone to PS2.*
2. *Because when we preview a game, it's not finished and we're unaware at that stage what will be fixed or improved. So we give the developer the benefit of the doubt and look at what kind of potential the game has. Unfortunately, sometimes when the game does get finished, we discover they fixed nothing and made no improvements...*
3. *Neither.*

THE POWER OF THREE

Dear Hyper,

Your magazine gives me a reason to live. But apart from that, I'd like some questions answered.

1. Will there ever be a Fallout 3? I need to know.
2. In a life or death struggle between plastic action figures of Rob Zombie and Ozzy Osbourne, who do you think would win?
3. Has Suikoden 3 been released yet?

Answer me these questions three ere the other side you see. Oh yeah, and thanks for your time. Eliot for President!!

I'll get me coat.

The Bridgekeeper
Eringe@beatlemail.com

Dear Bridgekeeper,

1. *Yes, it's been confirmed!*
2. *Easy. Ozzy would bite Rob's head off after all that practise with*

chickens and bats.
3. *It's coming out in Japan in July.*

IT'S ALL GOOD

To the legends at Hyper,

First up, Great Mag. I've been a dedicated reader since day one and it's good to see it still going strong. Anyway, enough of the sucking up. My reason for writing is the consistent bickering of sorts between all the various console loyalists.

Now, I too was once a SEGA loyalist, being that one of the first systems I ever got was the Megadrive (which I still have and play on a regular basis). That was until one birthday, I was lucky enough to get my SNES. This opened a whole new world of games to me. Over the many years I've played video and computer games, I have heard this slagging off between people about which console is better. And while they're off having hissy fits at each other, I have been lucky enough to play all the systems and see how great all the games are. To these people I say, it's got nothing to do with the company, or the hardware... a console is nothing without great games, and all systems have their great games (they also all have their duds, but we wont go there). So even if you're a hardcore Sony fan, a Nintendo fan or one of the few Sega fans left, always keep in mind that a system is nothing without great games.

Ok, now I've had my say a quick question: In your Reverse Engineering section, could you do an article about the Nintendo Virtual Boy? I am lucky enough to have one and would like to know more about its history.

Thanks for your time, keep up the great work.

JT

Dear JT,
Wise words once again. Hopefully we won't need to say it again. As for the Virtual Boy, we did a Reverse Engineering on that a year or two ago... sorry you missed it!

SWEET SWEET MUSIC

G'day Gaming Gods at Hyper,

My motive for writing in this time around is in relation to the underrated and downplayed role of music in games. Essentially, my argument is that despite the odd few game developers who go out of their way to deliver the "complete" gaming experience, music is undoubtedly the most neglected facet in a game's production. Developers seem more concerned with pumping a few thousand extra polygons to Lara's already freakishly perky bosoms instead of focusing on one of the most integral catalysts for player immersion – a strong, suitable soundtrack which doesn't make you reach for the mute button...

You need only watch any blockbuster film to realise that music plays a crucial role in the entertainment experience. It has the ability to subconsciously shape our moods and emotions in such a way that we identify more profoundly with what's happening on screen and establish a true sense of presence.

Fortunately, some game developers have realised this correlation between music and immersion and cleverly grasped it with both hands. Most recently KCEJ who are responsible for the outstanding MGS2. It was Hideo Kojima's fixation with "cinematic" presentation that led to the unparalleled sensory magnetism of MGS2. Ultimately, this isn't just a critique of music in games, it's a tribute to those developers who purposely go that extra yard to bring us the most immersive gaming experience possible - rock on fellas.

Paul Simao

Dear Paul,

We've got a cool feature on game music coming up real soon. We'll interview some Japanese composers and take a closer look at this oft neglected side to videogames.

Stay tuned!

Braidy Newman's second piece of art this month. Mmmm.

LATE ADDITIONS

>> Considering the number of gaming systems out there, sometimes we never get to review everything that comes into the office, especially if it's a port or niche title.

Late Additions is your quick reference guide to whether these games are worth getting. This way you have an even more complete guide to what's getting released on all the platforms. Enjoy!

TITLE	PLATFORM	CATEGORY	PUBLISHER	PRICE	RATING
Soldier of Fortune	PS2	FPS	Codemasters	$89.95	OK
Headhunter	PS2	Action	Sega	$99.95	OK
All-Star Baseball 2003	Xbox	Sports	Acclaim	$99.95	OK
Dave Mirra BMX 2	GCN	Sports	Acclaim	$99.95	OK
Gauntlet Dark Legacy	GCN/Xbox	Action	Acclaim	$99.95	BAD
Spy Hunter	GCN	Action/Racing	Acclaim	$99.95	GOOD
007 Agent Under Fire	GCN	Action	EA	$99.95	OK
Driven	GCN	Racing	Bam!	$99.95	BAD
Trainz	PC	Sim	Strategy First	$89.95	GOOD

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The Official Australian Games Chart

Compiled by Inform in association with AVSDA

TOP 10 PlayStation 2 Games Over $50

W/E 5 May 2002 RETAIL SALES

1	◆	Grand Theft Auto 3	Adventure
2	◆	Metal Gear Solid 2	Adventure
3	◆	FIFA 2002	Sports
4	✪	Blood Omen 2	Adventure
5	▼	Dynasty Warriors 3	Action
6	✪	G1 Jockey	Sports
7	▼	Crash Band 5: Wrath/Cortex	Adventure
8	▼	WWF Smackdown!	Sports
9	◆	Max Payne	Action
10	▼	Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3	Sports

TOP 10 PlayStation Games Over $40

W/E 5 May 2002 RETAIL SALES

1	◆	Harry Potter & Philosopher	Adventure
2	◆	Peter Pan	Adventure
3	◆	Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3	ports
4	◆	Monsters Inc	Adventure
5	▲	FIFA 2002	Sports
6	▼	Who Wants To Be A Millinre?	Family
7	◆	Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2	Sports
8	◆	Syphon Filter 3	Adventure
9	◆	WWF Smackdown! 2	Sports
10	✪	Rayman Rush	Adventure

TOP 10 Game Boy Games Over $40

W/E 5 May 2002 RETAIL SALES

1	◆	Pokemon Crystal	RPG
2	◆	Harry Potter & Philosopher	Adventure
3	▲	Pokemon Gold	RPG
4	▼	Pokemon Silver	RPG
5	◆	Zelda: Oracle Of Ages	RPG
6	▲	Monsters Inc	Adventure
7	▼	Zelda: Oracle Of Seasons	RPG
8	✪	Super Mario Brothers Dlx	Action
9	◆	Pokemon Red	RPG
10	▼	Pokemon Yellow	RPG

TOP 10 Xbox Games Over $40

W/E 5 May 2002 RETAIL SALES

1	◆	Halo - Combat Evolved	Action
2	◆	Project Gotham Racing	Racing
3	◆	Dead or Alive 3	Action
4	◆	RalliSport Challenge	Racing
5	▲	FIFA 2002	Sports
6	✪	Blood Omen 2	Adventure
7	◆	Star Wars Obi Wan	Action
8	▼	Oddworld: Munch's Oddysee	Adventure
9	▼	Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3	Sports
10	✪	Max Payne	Action

TOP 10 PC Games Over $30

W/E 5 May 2002 RETAIL SALES

1	◆	The Sims Vacation	Strategy
2	▲	Star Wars Jedi Knight 2	Adventure
3	▼	Heroes Of Might & Magic IV	RPG
4	◆	Dungeon Siege 1.0	RPG
5	◆	The Sims	Strategy
6	◆	The Sims Hot Date	Strategy
7	▲	The Sims Collectors Edition	Strategy
8	✪	FIFA 2002	Sports
9	▼	Medal Of Honor Allied Asslt	Action
10	▼	Harry Potter & Philosopher	Adventure

TOP 10 Game Boy Advance Games Over $40

W/E 5 May 2002 RETAIL SALES

1	◆	Super Mario World Adv 2	Adventure
2	▲	Sonic Advance	Adventure
3	▲	Mario Kart Super Circuit	Racing
4	▼	Crash Bandicoot Big Adv	Adventure
5	◆	Golden Sun	RPG
6	▲	Super Mario Advance	Adventure
7	▲	Star Wars Jedi Pwr Battles	Action
8	▲	Harry Potter	Adventure
9	▼	Jimmy Neutron	Adventure
10	◆	Monsters Inc	Adventure

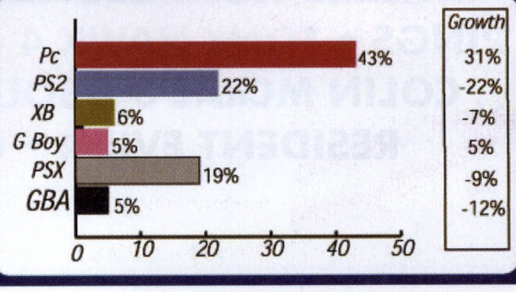
TOP 10 All Full Priced Games

W/E 5 May 2002 RETAIL SALES

1	◆	Halo - Combat Evolved	Xbox
2	▲	Grand Theft Auto 3	PlayStation 2
3	▼	Project Gotham Racing	Xbox
4	▼	The Sims Vacation	PC/MAC
5	▲	Metal Gear Solid 2	PlayStation 2
6	▲	Dead or Alive 3	Xbox
7	▲	Star Wars Jedi Knight 2	PC/MAC
8	▼	Heroes Of Might & Magic IV	PC/MAC
9	✪	FIFA 2002	PlayStation 2
10	▼	Dungeon Siege 1.0	PC/MAC

MARKET WATCH All Games by Platform

Apr Vs Mar 2002 RETAIL SALES



✪ New Entry
◆ Non Mover
▲ Up from last week
▼ Down from last week

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PREVIEWS EXPLOSION!

Our complete E3 blowout, with hands-on coverage of DOOM III • SUPER MARIO SUNSHINE • DEUS EX 2: Invisible War • CLONE WARS • UNREAL 2 • LORD OF THE RINGS • TONY HAWK 4 • METROID PRIME • RED FACTION 2 COLIN MCRAE 3 • SOUL CALIBUR 2 • MARIO KART GCN RESIDENT EVIL 4 • GTA 4 and many many more...

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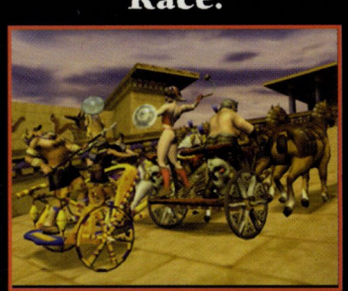

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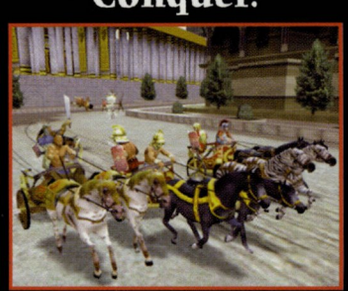

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