

RETURN TO CASTLE WOLFENSTEIN WITH A VENGEANCE!

Lifecycle 2 Vol3 #9 09/01

Next Generation Magazine



# NextGen

## DEVIL MAY CRY

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**FIRST LOOKS:**

**Shenmue II**

**The Thing**

**Sled Storm 2**

**Aliens vs.**

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GameCube ■ PlayStation 2 ■ Xbox ■ PC ■ Dreamcast



PlayStation 2



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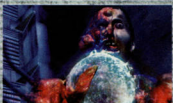
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# NextGen

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# 09/01



## EDITORIAL

### It's all in the games

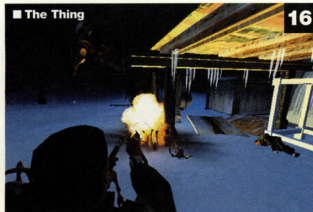


Forget GameCube, Xbox, Dreamcast, PS2, and PC. Now think *Rogue Squadron 2*, *Blood Wake*, *Shenmue II*, *Devil May Cry*, and *Return to Castle Wolfenstein*. As much as it's talked about, hardware is simply the foundation on which great gaming experiences are built. Though with fall right around the corner, we face the impending launch of GameCube and Xbox, as well as a hot round of PS2 titles, those of us close to the industry have already witnessed the preliminary round of hardware jockeying. After years of planning, Microsoft, Sony, and Nintendo will finally be vying for that top position on the hardware sales charts. In the months to come, expect egos to rise and fall, executives to explode, and probably a few recalls of one rushed product or another.

Soon enough, the rest of the world will become wise to the event at hand, and you'll see "console wars" stories appearing all over. As the hype reaches a deafening crescendo, we'll be here keeping an eye on the all-important stuff, the games — high-profile games like *Devil May Cry*, *Shenmue II*, and *Return to Castle Wolfenstein*, and groundbreaking music-based games such as *Rez* and *Frequency*. All of these games, by the way, you'll find right here, in this very issue.

*Tom*

— Tom Russo



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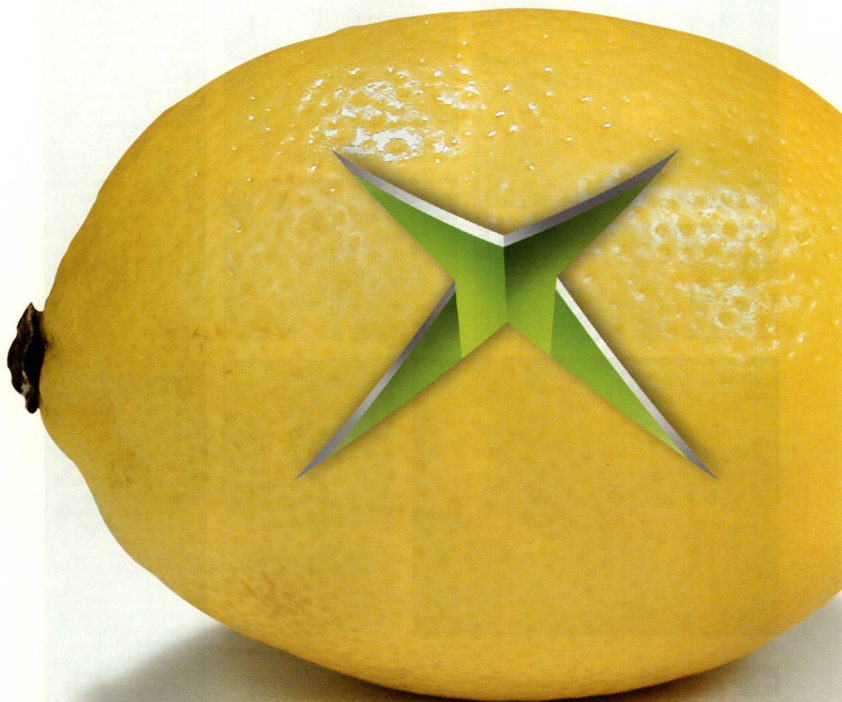
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Game industry news and analysis





■ COUNTDOWN TO A CRISIS...

# Has Xbox Gone Sour?

With less than three months to launch, Microsoft is running out of time to turn lemons into lemonade



When Bill Gates announced Xbox at the 2000 Game Developers Conference, the industry froze in awe. Microsoft stood to change the industry for the better, with incredible hardware and a fantastic support mechanism for developers. Now, 18 months later, after last May's Electronic Entertainment Expo, game designers, publishing company executives, and retailers are beginning to express concern.

Sony got a boost out of E3 by showing a wide-ranging library that featured surefire hits. Millions of people have already bought PlayStation 2 because of *Gran Turismo 3*, and games such as *Metal Gear Solid 2* and *Final Fantasy X* will push millions more. Nintendo surprised even its toughest critics with a solid collection of GameCube titles, including guaranteed system sellers like *Rogue Leader: Rogue Squadron 2* and *Luigi's Mansion*.

Microsoft, on the other hand, lost ground. Even the top Xbox titles, *Munch's Oddysee* and *Halo*, did not show well against the competition's "killer apps," and would gamers choose Xbox on the strength of a *Nightcoster* or even a *Dino Crisis 3*? **Next Gen** editors felt, and sources close to Microsoft agreed, that with the exception of a few titles, the Xbox games at E3 featured dark, gritty color palettes. Aesthetically, they looked like PC titles, and more than likely will alienate console gamers.

## The Fix is in

"What Microsoft should have done was buy a bunch of exclusive content," explains one top game designer who asked not be identified. "We advised them early on to acquire exclusive content, but for the most part, they ignored us. They are failing to make

**"We advised [Microsoft] early on to acquire exclusive content, but for the most part, they ignored us."**

— Anonymous game designer

mass-market videogames."

These comments clearly rile Xbox General Manager J Allard, a genuinely affable person who takes a frustrated tone as he addresses the concerns people have with Xbox. "Over 50% of the content in 2001 will be exclusive," responds Allard. "We think we are going to have great mass-market games. I look at EA Sports and Sega Sports, and they're totally committed to Xbox. I look at titles like *DOA3*, and it's exclusive to Xbox. Tony Hawk and WWF are on Xbox. What's not mass-market about those?"

Yes, there will be a THQ wrestling title and a version of *Tony Hawk* on Xbox, but those games have little impact on selling the system if they're also available on other consoles — which they will be. A popular game such as EA's *Madden* isn't a reason to buy Xbox because its presence on PlayStation 2 and GameCube neutralizes its effectiveness to push hardware. Having what everyone else has isn't a benefit — it only creates a level playing field.

Right now, Microsoft has a number of good games but lacks a great one. While we agree with Allard that Tecmo's *DOA3* will be a fantastic title, a much stronger move would be to lock up the exclusive rights to *Soul Calibur 2*. Beyond that, Microsoft should be exercising the strength of its rela-

tionship with top PC developers such as *id* and *Valve* to secure exclusive rights to the next *Doom* or *Half-Life 2*. Both deals are rumored to be in negotiations, and securing them as Xbox releases before they appear on PC would be a major coup for the console.

## Losing Control

Many E3 attendees were less than impressed with Xbox's cumbersome controller with its notably tiny buttons. The company insists the controllers were extensively focus-tested, but any hardened console gamer will tell you there's something about them that feels clunky. As Jim Preston reports in his X-philis column (page 14), Microsoft will likely eventually switch U.S. units to the controller designed for the Japanese markets — but the switch isn't rumored to take place until sometime after the holidays.

Microsoft also recently refused to participate in the 2001 Today Show Toy Test, which provides an open forum for the public to compare top game systems.

Microsoft claims the event's primarily teen and pre-teen audience isn't a priority for them right now, insisting the company is completely focused on the impending launch. But Dreamcast, PlayStation 2, and GameCube will all be there, making Xbox's absence all the more conspicuous.

Insiders believe the Xbox games aren't complete enough to go head-to-head with the more polished software of its competitors.

## Do It Our Way

It's not just gamers who may find problems with Xbox. Retailers are complaining that the console's large size will monopolize in-store real estate. But of more concern is Microsoft's controlling attitude toward units in the store. An executive at a top retailer, who also did not want to be identified, stated that Microsoft has become overbearing in dealing with retailers. "Microsoft has a 'contract' for retail partners that's the size of a small phone book," complains the exec. "It includes shelf-space requirements and co-op marketing agreements. I was impressed a year ago by all of the homework they were doing, [but] now they're trying to dictate policies to retailers."

According to this retailer, Microsoft has become more overbearing than any past manufacturer in the history of the industry. Of course,

over the years Nintendo, Sega, and Sony have all angered retailers at one time or another. Still, the ruffled feathers this time around contradict the image Microsoft wants to project: that they are in partnership with the entire industry.

## Shipping It

Not unlike the launch of PlayStation 2, Microsoft will only be able to produce a limited number of Xbox units in time for launch — between 600,000 and 800,000. With GameCube and PlayStation 2 also available, the demand may not be quite as crazy as it was for PS2, but Microsoft will likely sell out all its units before Christmas.

"I was not stunned by their software at E3," observed one CEO of a

game publisher who would not comment unless assured anonymity, "but they have a year to fix that. The real battleground is for next Christmas. That's when all the hardware is on the shelf and middle America has to decide what to purchase."

We feel we can safely predict that Xbox won't be the hardware or software leader in the months following launch. And yet, Microsoft is still to be commended for how far it's come for having started from zero less than two years ago. The company carries the burden of being a newcomer to the market, and nobody goes swimming without getting wet. Every hardware launch has seen the press, retailers, and even its own executives exasperated — Microsoft is simply no exception.

## THE WORD FROM JAPAN

### Sega Strategy Conference

Sega's multi-platform strategy came into sharper focus as all nine of the Sega Group CEOs gathered together with Sega COO Ietsu Kayama for the annual Sega Strategy Conference on June 5. Amusement Vision CEO Toshihiro Nagoshi revealed he was working on a new GameCube title, although he wouldn't elaborate with details. The company also announced "Open Device," a solution enabling compatibility between PC, PlayStation 2, GameCube, and Xbox. The first titles offering cross-platform gaming in Japan will be *Phantasy Star Online* and *OverWorks*. Guru Guru Onsen, followed by Sega's sport series, *Aerodancing*, and Hit Maker's *Derby Owners Club*.

### Onimusha II

Capcom held a special event on June 12 to announce an as-yet-unnamed sequel to *Onimusha*, slated for a March 7, 2002 release. Although the game still has medieval Japanese weaponry, the hero can now transform into a demon. At this early stage of development, no significant increase in polygons is apparent onscreen, but 3D and MPEG-2 style effects are being applied to the 2D backgrounds.

"Our business plan was designed by the publishing industry. Our retail program was designed by the retailers," says Allard. "The box was not designed by Microsoft — it was designed by the game development community." It's on points such as this that Allard becomes the most emphatic. "If it's the wrong hardware, the game industry was wrong — not us."

But it's not the hardware; it's the waiting for it that becomes the problem. With several months to go before launch, Microsoft and its partners will be working on the first wave of games right up until the last minute.

"Microsoft has been very supportive," says another industry executive who wished to remain anonymous. "What we need from them now is final dev kits



■ Sega looks to connect gamers of all platforms



■ Capcom plans to build on the commercial success of *Onimusha*

and debug stations so that we can actually deliver software when the hardware gets delivered."

According to Microsoft, the final hardware will be on publishers' doors in mid-August. Will that be enough time for quality launch games? We'll know for sure in November.

— Tom Russo and Kevin Toyama with interviews by Steven L. Kent

## REVIEW

# Final Fantasy: The Spirits Within

No live actors, and very little life

➔ Ever since the first *Final Fantasy* game, Hironobu Sakaguchi's attention to character and gripping storylines not only made his RPGs compelling — they also showed a clear cinematic ambition. Unfortunately, with his first film, *Final Fantasy: The Spirits Within*, he seems to have forgotten those very values.

In the year 2065, the Earth's spirit, Gaia, has been infected by a mysterious meteor. Spectral alien monsters feed on the spirits of earthly life-forms, and the few humans left live huddled under protective domes. So it's up to a small, typically "ragtag" group of stalwarts to save Gaia, including beautiful scientist (and *Maxim* cover girl) Dr. Aki Ross (Ming-Na), her mentor Dr. Sid (Donald Sutherland), and military captain Gray Edwards (Alec Baldwin).

Without question, *Final*

*Fantasy* is visually stunning. It revels in the possibilities of CGI, with painstakingly modeled "actors" and kinetic sequences that are at times astonishing, as even the camera gets into the act and performs its own dazzling waltz. It's a world in which troopers dive from airships into self-forming blocks of gel, or thousands of bizarre alien warriors join in battle across a blasted landscape.

Unfortunately, little about the rest of the film can match the dazzling visuals. With the notable exception of Aki, the characters are all one-note stereotypes. In particular, the main villain, General Hein (James Woods, who tries valiantly), is defined almost entirely by his perpetual scowl and neo-Nazi black leather trenchcoat.

In contrast to the characters, the storyline is so complex it's nearly impossible to follow. The film's nature-centered spirituality is offered sincerely, and as such is a refreshing change. Yet the plot hinges on a quest for the eight "signature spirits" of Gaia, which, despite large chunks of screen time spent on exposition, remains murky explained and uninvolved.

Many scenes are little more than hoary clichés given CG life, and the ending struggles to be deep and meaningful, but it's so poorly composed and edited the film doesn't so much end as just stop.

Perhaps it's ironic, but for a film that's theoretically about the triumph of the spirit, *Final Fantasy* is beautiful, but empty. — Jeff Lundrigan



# News Bytes

→ Just when we thought this industry couldn't get any wackier... To an outside observer, the videogame industry was humming along better than ever, but those of us on the inside were starting to see the signs. Of what, exactly, we're not sure yet, but there was one clear case:

The launch of Game Boy Advance precipitated the opening salvo in what is sure to be the worst plucking contest in the history of the videogame industry. It came when Nintendo announced that it had sold out the first 500,000 GBAs, making GBA "the most successful game system launch ever." Naturally, this caused a righteousness-indignant Sony to shoot back with actual sales charts clearly showing (really) that PS2 had sold "three times as fast" (along with a loud "Neener neener neener"). However, Sony's recent habit of historical revisionism undercut the message a little when, in an even more tersely worded follow-up, Sony claimed it could have sold three times the actual figure "had we anticipated demand." See kids, all those chip shortages and manufacturing problems last fall never actually happened; those loveable kids at Sony just didn't think so many people would want their little PS2s. Man, if things are flying this thick already, we can't wait to see how fast it's going to start piling up once GameCube and Xbox launch this fall (or, actually, maybe we can).

**Speaking of spin, Funcom was whirling like a carny ride after its release of *Anarchy Online*.** The massively multiplayer online RPG was released in such a bug-ridden, server-shortaged, unfinished state that even the automatic patch downloader would crash. Players are entitled to a month of free playtime after purchase, and Funcom was nice enough to not start counting that 30-day period until many of the more egregious problems had been fixed — a period that abruptly ended July 10, after which everyone had to start paying despite a raft of still persistent bugs. In fact, as of press time, neither our magazine nor any other publication had received a complimentary review copy. Indeed, in a press release Funcom asked that everyone "hold off on a full review until we have solved these problems." This marks the first time in the history of videogames that a product could be purchased without even being considered reviewable. Truth truly is stranger than fiction.

**The breasts that launched a thousand clones have struck again.** In the wake of *Lara Croft: Tomb Raider's* runaway success at the box office this past summer (despite generally lukewarm reviews — although somehow Roger Ebert, a professional who should know better, actually liked it; go figure), quite predictably just about every videogame-related movie project on the boards has been pushed into development. The most obvious potential Lara wannabe, Joanna Dark of *Perfect Dark*, is shedding her M rating and is actually now headed for the small screen as a children's TV show at Fox Kids, which is certain to kill any potential "tough chick, lotsa action" cachet it might have had. The *Resident Evil* movie, of course, is already nearing completion (see **NG 08/01**), while a potentially more artsy flick, *American McGee's Alice*, is in development by McGee's own company, Carbon Entertainment, and Miramax. Last, but certainly not least — in a bit of news that had us all hoping it must be a joke, but is apparently all too real — Sega's *Crazy Taxi* is also headed for theaters, helmed by none other than Richard ("Please remember me, I made *Lethal Weapon*.") Donner. No word yet on whether Robert DeNiro has been approached to star.

**Let us mourn the end of an era.** Midway officially closed the doors on its beleaguered arcade division this past June, and rumor has it the home division is on the block as well (with THQ and the omnipresent Microsoft as the most talked-about potential buyers, assuming anyone actually is buying it — er, we mean if Midway is actually selling it, of course). Citing that pesky, ever-changing U.S. arcade market, the house of *Mortal Kombat* is no more (although *MK* will live on).

**And shame, shame, shame on RedOctane.com** ("The World's Largest Online Game Rental Store") for taking advantage of gamers everywhere. When Konami included the *Metal Gear Solid 2* demo in *Zone of the Enders* this past May, RedOctane rented the demo all by itself, separately from ZOE, for the full \$6.95 rental fee. Despite being merely a demo and offering a mere hour or two of gameplay, it "merely" remained the sixth most popular rental that month. Actually, as business decisions go, we have to admit this was brilliant — it isn't every day you can get someone to actually pay you money for something you got basically for free — but still, we hope their ill-gotten gains bring them nothing but misery. So there. **NextGen**

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# GameCube Watch

09/01

## Will Mario be on hand at Nintendo's Spaceworld this August? Absolutely, and in more ways than one

→ At this year's E3 in Los Angeles, Nintendo previewed only nine playable GameCube titles and a handful of others on video. This, despite the fact that the event was to provide a worldwide first look at GameCube software, and, with any luck, to wow gamers into adding the next-generation console to their holiday shopping lists. But as always, Nintendo had other unforeseeable plans. The idea, said the firm's Director and General Manager Satoru Iwata in an interview with **Next Gen**, was to unveil a portion of GameCube titles at E3 and then reveal more at the August 2001 Spaceworld show in Tokyo, Japan — a kind of one-two punch, if you will. So in typical form, Nintendo held back and promised more good things to come. However, some slip-ups were unavoidable...

### More Marios for Your Buck

At E3 2001, the Big 'N' surprised everyone by barely muttering Mario's name. Designer Shigeru Miyamoto said only that he might show something of a top-secret title starring the mascot character at Spaceworld. But official company product lists, handed out at the show and featured on Nintendo's web site, revealed a little more. Three Mario-themed titles made the list, all of them mysterious: *Mario Sunshine*, *Marionette*, and *100 Marios*.

*Mario Sunshine* is speculated to be Nintendo's big 3D platformer, though no concrete details regarding the game have been unearthed yet. **Next Gen** asked NQA's VP of Corporate Affairs, Perrin Kaplan, about the title. She jokes that it's "something that will make Mario very happy, and players very happy too." Got any guesses? *Marionette* is believed to tie-



■ *Wave Race: Blue Storm* should hit stores at launch on Nov. 5

in to Nintendo's online plans ("Mario Net"), and *100 Marios* is thought to be the Spaceworld 2000 demo that featured 128 Mario characters running around a 3D board. Shigeru Miyamoto once commented that he would like to include the demo as a pack-in with GameCube. Here's hoping that happens. It's very possible that *Mario Sunshine* or

*Marionette* could ship with GameCube in Japan this September. Satoru Iwata recently told the Japanese press, "We've got some [GameCube games] that we didn't show you at E3." When asked if these unrevealed products could be GameCube launch titles, Iwata-san replied only, "Perhaps."

There is no doubt that Spaceworld 2001 is shaping up to be just as important to Nintendo fans as E3 was. Kaplan sums things up for **Next Gen** readers: "I would say that while E3 whetted your appetite, Spaceworld is going to give you that much more. I don't think anybody is going to be disappointed."



■ Our monthly GameCube Watch columnist, Matt Casamassina, is the editor of IGNGame.com

### Two for Japan?

Spaceworld may not disappoint GameCube fans, but Nintendo might when it launches in Japan with only two Nintendo games. Only *Luigi's Mansion* and *Wave Race: Blue Storm* will arrive with GC in September, while other in-house products will trickle out in the months to follow. *Pikmin* will ship Oct. 26, while *Super Smash Bros. Melee* and *Eternal Darkness* have been moved to November. *Animal Forest* will follow in December. It's interesting to note that all of the above games, save for *Eternal Darkness*, will likely be ready by launch. However, Nintendo feels that releasing so many first- and second-party titles at launch would dilute the sales of each game. Be aware that a few third-party offerings will also ship at system launch in Japan. **NextGen**



■ The launch of GameCube this fall might result in dueling Mario brothers, assuming one of Mario's currently secret projects is ready for launch



■ TOM RUSSO'S

09/01

# In the Studio

Development news as it develops



## CHARIOTS OF PS2

→ Move over Ben Hur — Kodiak Studios has been quietly developing *Circus Maximus*, a combat chariot racing game for PlayStation 2, in development for just over a year, the game takes place during the age of the great Roman Empire. Your goal? Become the champion chariot racer of Rome, of course. Kodiak is currently in negotiations with several publishers on the title. It is expected to be finished by October.



## PRESTO GOES BOING

→ We were all more than a little impressed with the job Presto Studios did with *Myst III*, which has prompted us to ask, what's next for the company? Presto President Michel Kripalani offered us a firm and official "No comment." But according to our sources, the developer is working on a character-based party game called *Boing!* The game will be an Xbox exclusive, as it will be published by Microsoft.

## ION CLOUDS

→ John Romero and Tom Hall are at it again. The two founders of Ion Storm may have completed work on *Anachronox* and been all but banished from their Dallas-based, 54th-floor Ivory tower. Still, the two are collaborating on a new PC game and shopping it to publishers, including Eidos. According to sources, the game is being described as *Sin* meets *Rollercoaster Tycoon* meets *Age of Empires*. It's being planned for Xbox and Game Boy Advance.

## MONSTERS INC. MONSTROSITY

→ *Monsters Inc.*, the next movie from Pixar, is being developed for PlayStation by an internal team within Disney Interactive. The fact that it's a PSX title should be enough of a warning, but our inside sources who have seen it say, "You should put a cloth napkin on your nose if you're planning to go near it." While it's still in development, we're beyond giving this one any chance of finishing strong.



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09/01

# The X-FILES

## When Xbox launches on Nov. 8, it will literally come out fighting

➔ The hottest time for movies is the coldest time for videogames. The summer doldrums are officially upon us, with only a few notable game releases and a lot of developers cranking up the AC while cranking out games for the holiday season. A quick telephone call to various third-party Xbox developers reveals that everything seems to be going fine. There was some concern that "third-wave" XDKs didn't get out soon enough for E3,

but all the developers I spoke with said that they had near-final hardware and that schedules were back on track.

### Fighting Mad

Xbox is routinely criticized for being a near-PC — despite the fact that PS2 is the one that supports a mouse and keyboard, has an expansion bay for the upcoming hard drive and modem, and has deals in the works with AOL, Netscape, and RealNetworks. But

Microsoft is making strong inroads into a traditional console genre: fighting games.

At launch, Xbox will have two stellar but vastly different brawlers. *Dead or Alive 3* has been in development at Tecmo for some time, and the *DOA* series has been steadily growing in popularity here in the States. Although we've only seen video of the game's hyperactive and gorgeous visuals, all indications are that it will definitely be ready to go on Nov. 8.

At the opposite extreme is *Ultimate Fighting Championship: Tapout*, a game as brutally realistic as *DOA3* is fanciful. The game is being developed by Dream Factory (*Tobal 2*, *Ehrgeiz*, *The Bouncer*), and is thankfully building on the core of the excellent Dreamcast version, rather than the execrable PlayStation one.

Dream Factory is the current home of Selichi Ishi, who worked with

Yu Suzuki on *Virtua Fighter* and was the lead on *Tekken 1* and *2*. Surprisingly, the company is not using motion capture on *UFC: Tapout*, but is instead taking high-resolution photos of actual fighters, creating 10,000-polygon models of them and hand-animating them for more flexibility and detail.

Dream Factory is also working on *Project KX* (working title), which made its video debut at Bill Gates' presentation at Tokyo Game Show this spring. Little is



■ X-philes columnist Jim Preston is a regular contributor to Next Generation

known about *Bruce Lee*, the super-secret knuckle muncher from *Ronin*. It supposedly uses the Havok physics engine and is closer in realism to *UFC* than *DOA3*.

And while we will

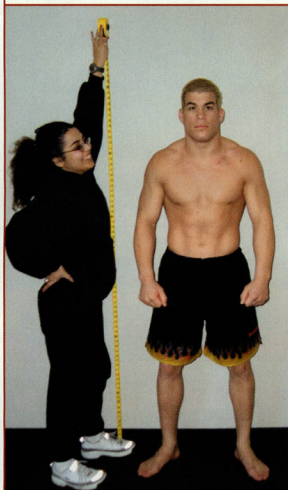
**All the developers I spoke with said that they had near-final hardware and that schedules were back on track.**

known about the game other than that it certainly won't make launch and clearly takes advantage of Ishi's experience with motion capture.

It's unlikely to be a weapons-based game, and from the few whispers we've heard, it is closer in spirit to *Tekken* than *Virtua Fighter*. But even less is

undoubtedly learn more in the coming months, we do know that three of the games are exclusive to Xbox, while *UFC* will be appearing first on Xbox, then on PS2. With at least four very promising fighting games in the works, Xbox will certainly be able to hold its own in a dark alley.

NextGen



■ UFC champion Tito Ortiz measures up not only as an *Ultimate Fighter*, but as a character in the upcoming *UFC* game

### XBOX I.I?

Platform makers don't want to draw attention to it, but they seem to have quietly accepted the reality of different versions of a console. The PS2 has already gone through three slightly different manifestations in Japan, and the next version will have the hard drive and modem built in. Nintendo is allowing Panasonic to release a chrome-plated GameCube in Japan that will have DVD support. And Microsoft? While firm denials are the order of the day, don't be surprised to see, late next year, an Xbox "bonus pack" that will include a version of *Halo* with online support and a redesign of the universally maligned controllers.







PlayStation®2

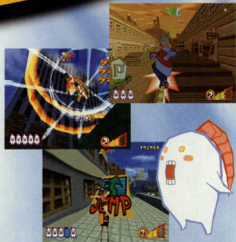
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# → Alphas

**Next Generation** braves the icy Antarctic to find you the latest and greatest game previews

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■ PLAYSTATION 2, XBOX, PC

# THE THING

■ Publisher: **Universal Interactive** ■ Developer: **Computer Artworks** ■ Release Date: **Q2 2002** ■ Origin: **UK**

**Can an ambitious developer and a 19-year-old movie redefine survival horror?**

➔ If ever you have the desire to feel tense and afraid, picture yourself in the blood-testing scene from John Carpenter's *The Thing*. Your team is slowly cracking up, not knowing who's real and who is a deadly, "perfect imitation" alien. One by one, samples of each person's blood are touched with a hot wire — the theory being that the alien blood will try to crawl away. Could the guy tied up next to you be one of those things? Could the guy you worked with yesterday be one? Or could it be the person you trust the most, your leader?

It's exactly that feeling of uncertainty and terror created by

Carpenter in his 1982 film starring Kurt Russell that Computer Artworks hopes to recapture.

"*The Thing* is essentially a survival horror game," explains Computer Artworks Senior Producer Chris Hadley. "But we've included a number of elements that we think make the game unique compared to all the *Resident Evil* clones out there."

As in the film, players will be forced to fight off alien lifeforms inhabiting a remote, Antarctic research lab. But don't expect an experience based on a scene-by-scene breakdown of the flick; this game picks up where the movie ended. "Rather than playing out the

same events," Hadley says, "players find themselves on a mission to Antarctica following reports of strange occurrences, and the story will unfold from there."

**Although the game** still plays in the third person, Computer Artworks has spent a lot of time reworking the genre's tired combat conventions. Players will be able to move and shoot at the same time, rather than having to stand still, take aim, and then fire.

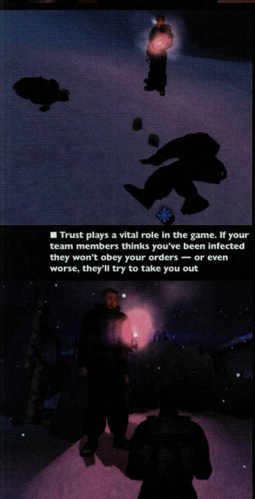
"Control during combat has been important to us right from the outset," says Computer Artworks Lead Designer Andrew Curtis. "We're





**"We want the player to feel cocky in certain parts of the game, so when they face something they haven't seen before, they're overwhelmed with a sense of fear."**

— Andrew Curtis, lead designer, Computer Artworks



■ Trust plays a vital role in the game. If your team members think you've been infected they won't obey your orders — or even worse, they'll try to take you out

aiming to have a simple, fluid combat system that makes the game flow much faster than previous examples. How fast a player is moving will affect their accuracy in combat. We want the player to feel cocky in certain parts of the game, so when they face something they haven't seen before, they're overwhelmed with a sense of fear because they don't know how to deal with it."

The most effective weapon at the player's disposal (as in the film) will be the flame thrower. Other weapons of choice will include grenades, pistols, shotguns, and rocket launchers.

More important than the selection of weapons, however, is your ability to issue commands to NPCs. It's this unique focus on teamplay that's the game's strongest selling point. A player can send other team members to guard certain positions or help carry out tasks via a simple onscreen interface. For example, send an engineer to fix a certain object, and then you can send a soldier to protect him.

"We feel that NPCs in many games already on the market act like drones — even in *Half-Life*," Curtis explains. "They just seem to act out little cut scenes as if they're fixed on rails. Ours are very different. They each have

trust and fear meters. Ideally you have to make sure that their trust meters are always high, because if they don't trust you as their leader, they'll turn and attack, believing you're the one who is infected."

And you will need their trust. As the leader, you're also given complete control over weapon distribution to the team. You decide which teammates get which weapons. "Should you give a rocket launcher to an NPC who is showing high levels of stress in an enclosed environment?" Curtis rhetorically asks. "Probably not, as he might get scared and accidentally squeeze the trigger, causing damage to the whole team."





■ Environments will be heavily based on the research compound seen in the movie



The NPCs have been programmed with three fear levels: Low, High, and Crack Up. "When an NPC has reached the Crack Up point, they'll completely lose it and just end up weeping in a corner," says Curtis. "You could try and jolt him out of it, but you should also take his weapons to avoid retaliation later on — he won't forget that. Trust can be earned while the player shoots enemies in the presence of NPCs."

Perhaps the area of most interest to fans of the movie is the manifestation of the "Thing" itself — another area

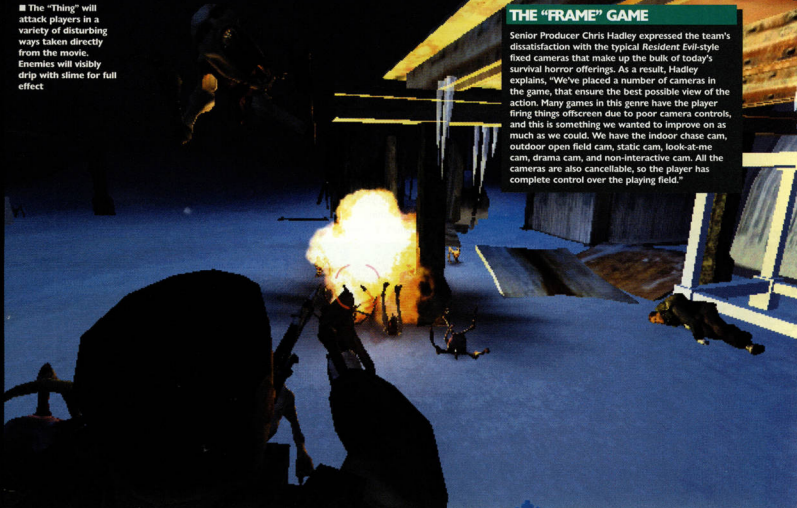
on which Curtis spent a lot of time. "We wanted to have the whole soft-bodied, wet look to the enemies, similar to what we've previously done in our organic polygon approach with *Evolva*," he says. "We've stayed true to the film in terms of gore and its uniquely grotesque imagery." Computer Artworks will also include something special right at the end to really make your stomach turn — just in case it hadn't already.

To create a game based on a cult horror movie could be viewed as an easy way of cashing in. THQ tried with

its *Evil Dead* project, and the results were marginal at best. However, everyone at Computer Artworks knows the pressure it's under to deliver an experience that remains faithful to the movie, while at the same time pushing survival horror in new directions. While the game still requires another year of production — it has been in development for just about a year — what we have seen is the early implementation of some very good ideas. This is certainly worth keeping a close eye on.

— Gavin Ogden

■ The "Thing" will attack players in a variety of disturbing ways taken directly from the movie. Enemies will visibly drip with slime for full effect



## THE "FRAME" GAME

Senior Producer Chris Hadley expressed the team's dissatisfaction with the typical *Resident Evil*-style fixed cameras that make up the bulk of today's survival horror offerings. As a result, Hadley explains, "We've placed a number of cameras in the game, that ensure the best possible view of the action. Many games in this genre have the player firing things offscreen due to poor camera controls, and this is something we wanted to improve on as much as we could. We have the indoor chase cam, outdoor open field cam, static cam, look-at-me cam, drama cam, and non-interactive cam. All the cameras are also cancellable, so the player has complete control over the playing field."

# → Alphas



■ PLAYSTATION 2

## SLED STORM 2

■ Publisher: EA Sports BIG ■ Developer: EA Canada ■ Release Date: Q4 ■ Origin: Canada

### A meaner, faster, grittier trip back up the SSX mountain

➔ There are millions of Americans who would swear that NASCAR is the ultimate test of racing ability. And there are at least as many Europeans who'd fight for Rally racing. However, EA Canada's Marketing Manager Peter Royea maintains that the most frenetic, visceral racing of all requires a snowmobile.

"Being on a sled is like being on a mechanical bull," explains Royea. "SSX

was a very smooth experience. You could get into the rhythm of it. In Sled Storm 2, you're gonna get beat up. Our goal is that after a race, you're going to feel absolutely spent."

That's quite a claim, but EA Canada intends to justify it with 12 larger, shortcut-laden tracks, more stunts, and plenty of destructible elements you'll actually be rewarded for smashing through. The game also offers a renewed

focus on what makes snowmobile racing unique: the strength of its mechanized steeds, and their ability to conquer the wild frontier.

"When you've got a sled," Royea continues, "that weighs 400 pounds and has 180 horsepower, it's incredible what they can do — scaling steep hills, blasting over really rough terrain, and pounding off jumps, always on the verge

■ Enemy AI, already vicious in the first game, is being reworked to give each racer a unique style and strategy



■ In the finished build, you'll be able to pull tricks while airborne

#### SLED WRONG

While it's obvious that the sleds in Sled Storm 2 are actually snowmobiles, here's how well we think some other "sleds" might do in the races.

##### BASIC SAUCER SLED (DISC OF DOOM):

Nice and cheap, but you can't steer and usually end up going down backwards. Points for being lightweight, though. Last Place.

**FLEXIBLE FLYER:** A timeless classic that even offers a minuscule amount of steering. However, it's useless on light powder and a real chore to lug back up the hill. Second Place.



**RED SUMMER SLED:** A sled with wheels! We don't think so. Useful only for those times when you've died and gone to Hell, but it hasn't quite frozen over yet. No Place.

**DOG SLED:** Our least favorite, despite its usefulness during the Iditarod. It's maneuverable and it actually goes uphill, so it would surely win First Place by default. But it has the worst view ever.







■ The tracks are filled with alternate routes. A fork in the path on this track leads you right through a small cottage and onto the roof of the building on the left.

of going out of control." More impressive than this conceptual focus on sled racing's physical nature is how well it translates into the game. The course geography is punishing, and the realistic driving model (with plenty of Dual Shock 2-

thing from bales of hay and "Route Closed" signs to entire buildings is an integral part of gameplay, as it fills your turbo meter. When the meter is full, you can unleash a S.T.O.R.M. Boost, making yourself temporarily invulnerable, more

personalities will be more developed than in SSX, fueling what Royea hints is a much more pugilistic approach to rider-to-rider interaction. "The heart of racing is competition," he says, "and competition at its best is aggressive. SS2 needs to be 10 to 20 times as aggressive as SSX for us to feel like we're succeeding."

Although considerably less violent, tricks also play a big part of Sled Storm 2, though they won't earn you a speed boost as they did in SSX. Instead, nailing stunts will increase your rider's rep and will earn you faster sleds.

Given EA Canada's recent track record and the fact that this game plays so well with five months of development time left, the biggest storm this winter may take place in your living room. —Eric Bratcher

**"SSX was a very smooth experience. You could get into the rhythm of it. In Sled Storm 2, you're gonna get beat up."**

— Peter Royea, marketing manager, EA Canada

enabled rumble planned) had us mashing the analog stick this way and that in an all-out struggle to guide our motorized beast across the line.

You also have free reign to smash through and destroy anything that gets in your way as you charge toward the finish. In fact, busting up every-

powerful, and able to do better tricks (like a barrel roll).

This being a BIG-branded game, there's plenty of human-on-human aggression in the mix as well. The six selectable riders are as hip as the SSX gang, only tougher, and each boasts a unique skill set and attitude. The riders'



■ The soundtrack will be dynamic as in SSX, but with heavier music



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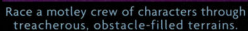
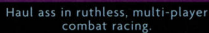


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■ The third-person fighting mode from the first game is back, but there's also a first-person fighting mode we have yet to see

■ DREAMCAST

# SHENMUE II

■ Publisher: **Sega of America** ■ Developer: **AM2** ■ Release Date: **November** ■ Origin: **Japan**

## Can Yu outdo Shenmue?

➡ Size matters. And with the sprawling Dreamcast adventure *Shenmue*, talented game designer Yu Suzuki created a monster. Now, sitting in a small conference room with an interpreter at his side, he's self-deprecating enough to chuckle about it. "He always aims too high," his

interpreter explains. Suzuki stops laughing for a moment, spreads his hands apart and says, simply, "Too big."

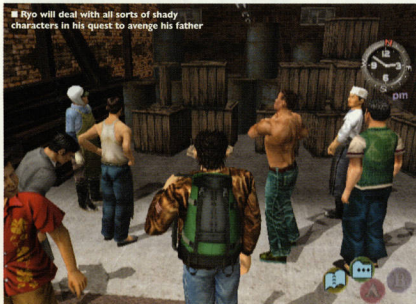
*Shenmue* may well be Suzuki's magnum opus — the videogame equivalent of poet Geoffrey Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. Suzuki conceptualized

*Shenmue* as an epic, multi-part story with a cast of thousands and a storyline that follows young Ryo Hazuki as he travels the planet hunting for his father's killer. When released in 2000, *Shenmue* covered the first chapter in the saga. Now, as its four-disc sequel nears completion, Suzuki finds himself (as Chaucer did hundreds of years ago) grappling with a story that might be too titanic to tell.

**Chaucer never finished** his *Tales*, and Suzuki has begun condensing his. *Shenmue II* will include chapters two through six of Ryo's tale, but will certainly not complete the story. Once again, Ryo serves as the game's protagonist, and the plot follows him as he moves from Japan to China in an attempt to run down the vile Lan Di and recover the strange and curious Phoenix Mirror.

This new game begins with an introductory movie that highlights the events from chapter one. From there, the

■ Ryo will deal with all sorts of shady characters in his quest to avenge his father





# → Alphas



standard buzzwords apply: bigger, badder, better, longer. *Shenmue II* features more than 1,000 characters and approximately 150 different action-sequence Quick-Time Events (QTEs) as compared to the original's 350 characters and 70 events. Suzuki says the sequel will feature longer play time and will progress in a more dynamic way.

"The biggest complaint about *Shenmue*," he says, "was that players who like to rush through a game had to stop and talk with each person they met on the street." Players will now have the option of dashing to the finish, but Suzuki offers the following caveat: "If you rush through *Shenmue II*, you won't get to see one-third of it — or maybe even half."

While a stranger in the strange land of China, Ryo will get to venture into Hong Kong, the thieves' den known as Kowloon (which holds the massive, sky-obscuring Kowloon Towers), and the island town of Gullin. Ryo can earn money, Suzuki says, by getting a part-time job, gambling, or selling off items at a pawnshop. *Shenmue II* will hold three different types of dice games, and our hero can also win money by playing Pachinko and darts, or by squaring off



■ *Shenmue II* is a much larger game than the original, but better pacing should make it more exciting

against burly men in arm-wrestling contests.

**With an eye toward** creating a more exciting experience, *Shenmue II* adds a first-person fighting mode in addition to its already established third-person perspective brawling, and a new system has been implemented for QTEs. Instead of being prompted to push a single button or make a solitary tap on the controller's analog stick at each phase of a QTE challenge, players will now be presented with a series of button choices and directional options. A new, icon-based Action Key system will allow Ryo to pose specific questions to in-game characters, thus speeding up investigation time.

As for the rest, even without context it seems like a high-polygon dream: Ryo handcuffed to a mystery man, both of them fleeing for their lives in a frenzied QTE; a perilous chase through a forest with our hero trying to catch up to the enigmatic woman Shen Hua; brutal cage fights; an orange-haired woman named Joy riding up on a motorcycle, her eyes



alight with mischief.

Back in the real world, Suzuki remains optimistic about the series, despite the fact that Dreamcast will be in its death throes when *Shenmue II* sees release. Still, Ryo will not go gently into that good night, and Lan Di may yet get his comeuppance. "The story will not end here," Suzuki says, "and if the market requests it, we will continue with the adventure." — Greg Orlando



## MORE CLASSICS, FROM YU TO YOU

*Shenmue II* features not one, but two emulated Suzuki classics, *Out Run* and *Afterburner*. "On the fourth disk, you'll be able to drive," Suzuki's interpreter intimates. "You'll have to look carefully for it, though. You might pass it by."



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PlayStation 2



# Evil Twin

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October 2001

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Violence  
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■ Simple, yet addictive: The green line leads you to the next crystal, which you must grab by pressing the appropriate button, thereby playing the song

■ **PLAYSTATION 2**

# FREQUENCY

■ Publisher: **Sony** ■ Developer: **Harmonix** ■ Release Date: **November** ■ Origin: **US**

## Sony generates a tuneful Tempest

➔ Although *Frequency* looks a bit abstract at first glance, it's quite simply the tunnel-traveling gameplay of *Tempest*, re-envisioned as a *Guitar Freaks/Beatmania*-style rhythm game. The player's icon speeds down an octagonal tunnel in which each wall corresponds to a different instrumental track (bass, drums, vocals, etc.). The player must press buttons to play that track's instrument in time to the rhythm of the song. If played properly, that track begins to play by itself

and the player must activate a new track. Unlock enough of the song before time expires, and you can then play a guitar solo, add a scratch track, or stream randomized synth notes into the mix. Quite frankly we are very impressed with its fresh approach. It's as intuitive and addictive as *Tetris* — with far superior audio.

The game offers six retina-searing visual themes, and most of the game's 20 songs are licensed from well-known electronic



artists like The Crystal Method and Meat Beat Manifesto. Some are even brand new. There's also a Remix mode in which you can lay down new beats, add effects such as echo and flange, or even replace entire tracks, completely de- and reconstructing each song. You can then upload (and download) these remixes via the Internet to listen to and play them as new levels. In fact, Sony hopes to create a robust online community around the game, with contests, mix-offs, and two- to four-player multiplayer (online or via a multtap).

*Frequency* will likely become a niche title, but it has a staggering potential to broaden the minds of those inside and outside of the game industry. And isn't that what music is all about? — Eric Bratcher

■ You can add scratches, a guitar part, or synth notes



### THE RHYTHM OF THE RIGHT

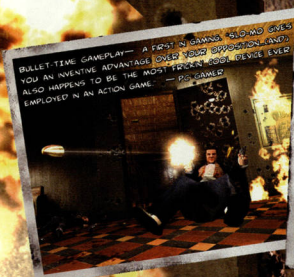
"Your game will only be as good as the music that goes into it," declares Harmonix Co-founder and CEO Alex Rigopulos. Thus, it's no surprise that the game's songs are being chosen (very well chosen, we might add) with the utmost care. This is critical, as Rigopulos explains: "In most traditional games, music is used to create atmosphere and as a tool to enhance the player's overall experience. With *Frequency*, the music is the experience."



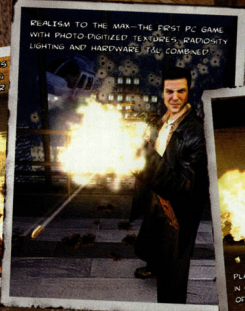
■ There will be at least 20 songs in the game, including totally new titles from Fear Factory and Paul Oakenfold



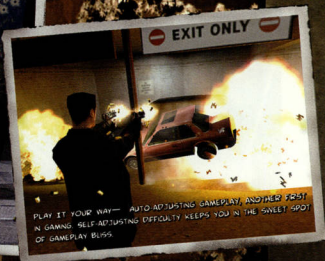
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■ GAMECUBE, XBOX

## DAVE MIRRA FREESTYLE BMX 2

■ Publisher: Acclaim ■ Developer: Z-Axis ■ Release Date: November ■ Origin: US

### BUILD IT AND THEY WILL COME

Should you get tired of the 10 included levels, you can create your own with the built-in park editor. What distinguishes *Mirra*'s editor from the one found in other games is the sheer amount of content you have to work with. Not only can you play with the terrain height, but there are thousands of pieces for you to put in the game. You can even name gaps! And while you can't actually place challenges (the team confides that's something they'd like to put in the third installment), players can still create near-professional quality parks.



## Mirra 2 proves that in the world of BMX — size does matter

→ The original *Dave Mirra Freestyle BMX* may not have been huge with the game press, but it sold over a million units and ruled the BMX sports category. With no intention of allowing the competition to catch up, the Z-Axis team has dedicated itself to redefining



■ Despite the scale and beauty of the game, it still manages to run at a steady 60fps



■ Every level has tons of hidden areas — many of which are actually pretty big

the BMX gaming experience for the next generation.

The most striking thing about this sequel is the size and scope of the levels. According to Lead Designer Tin Guerrero, they're easily four to five times the size of the levels in the previous game. Even better, the new game engine also enables the team to build vertically, so levels can have tons of content that's over or under other areas. The Xbox and GameCube versions even have two extra levels beyond the eight that were available in the PS2 versions, so we don't expect players to get bored anytime soon.

The control is still fairly close to the Tony Hawk standard, with a jump button, a grind button, and another that does tricks, and shoulder buttons that rotate you in the air. One handy new addition to the control scheme is the ability to do a 180-degree skid so you

don't have to slow down and slowly turn around like in other games.

The "trick modifier button" was one of *Mirra*'s distinguishing features, enabling players to change tricks midway through in a variety of ways. In *Mirra 2*, the modifier button's functions have expanded to cover grinds, stalls, and manuals as well as air tricks, so there are literally thousands of possible combinations. Guerrero laughs when we ask how many tricks there are in the game. "There are still tricks I haven't done," he admits. "I play this game constantly, and I still come up with something new every few days."

— Blake Fischer



■ The levels in *Mirra 2* are absolutely huge



■ The trick modifier button enables players to come up with hundreds of potential combos





## WEYLAND-YUTANI BLUES

*Aliens vs. Predator 2's* storyline is slightly convoluted — which is inevitable given that it needs to tell the same tale from three perspectives. The aliens have nested on the remains of a human civilization on LV-1201. Once again, humans from the Weyland-Yutani Corp. arrive and begin "weapons research" involving convicts as hosts for facehuggers, provoking the aliens to attack. Colonial marines are sent to the rescue, and as if things weren't complicated enough, a pack of predators chooses that moment to drop in and enjoy its favorite hunting grounds. Incredibly, most of the predator pack is captured by the human researchers, so in that storyline you play a lone predator trying to rescue them. These three plot lines weave together to create the larger story tapestry. "You're always finding nuggets of story that pertain to the other species," says Fox Interactive Producer Dave Stalker.



■ A LithTech engine, which made *No One Lives Forever* campy and colorful, now makes *Aliens vs. Predator 2* gory and gruesome

■ PC

# ALIENS VS. PREDATOR 2

■ Publisher: **Sierra/Fox Interactive** ■ Developer: **Monolith** ■ Release Date: **November** ■ Origin: **US**

Welcome back to LV-1201. Life still sucks here

➔ *Alien vs. Predator* was one of the few Jaguar games worth owning. Both it and the PC rebuild that followed defied the caffeinated, Doom-spawned FPS paradigm by slowing the pace down and subsequently increasing the tension. Now in the hands of Monolith, Fox Interactive's second installment is simultaneously bringing the graphics up to current standards (courtesy of the latest LithTech

engine) and incorporating more modern FPS gameplay techniques.

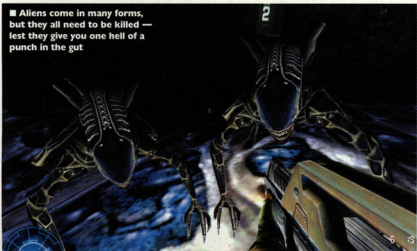
Perhaps the most significant addition is a well-told storyline (see sidebar). Relayed through in-game cinemas and plenty of scripting, the plot details three intertwined perspectives on the events that take place, one for each race.

Each race also handles the action in a unique way. As a marine, you have a

shotgun, a knife, a grenade launcher with tracking mines, and an EMP shell that can reveal cloaked predators. You can also use welding torches and drive a specially modified loader with machine guns in place of vice grips. The aliens come in several playable flavors, ranging from the standard drones to the dog-like quadruped from *Alien 3*. If you thought alien wall-walking from the original *AvP* was a gamebender, wait until you see their powerful pouncing ability, in which they suddenly attack from a distance or leap from one wall to another. The predator is equipped with a net gun and spear, as well as a portable charger for the cloaking device.

*AvP2* clearly isn't trying to beat *Half-Life* at its own game, but it doesn't have to. If the team at Monolith can keep the tension high and the story tight and involving, the game's great license will more than handle the rest. — Tom Chick

■ Aliens come in many forms, but they all need to be killed — lest they give you one hell of a punch in the gut





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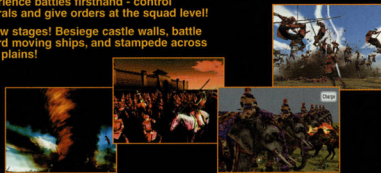
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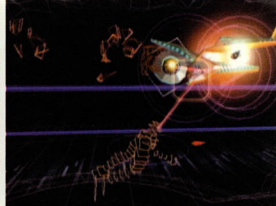
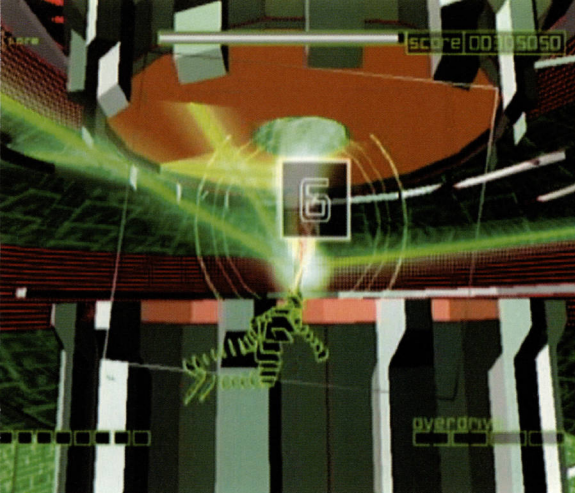


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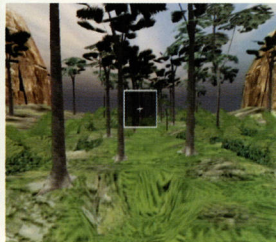


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■ Both the hero and environment in *Rez* begin as little more than wireframe images and evolve into full realization (in first-person, below)



## ■ PLAYSTATION 2

# REZ (FORMERLY KNOWN AS K-PROJECT)

■ Publisher: **Sega of Japan** ■ Developer: **United Game Artists** ■ Release Date: **Fall (Japan), TBA (US)** ■ Origin: **Japan**

Is it a music game, or is it a shooter? Well, it's both

▶ When United Game Artists President Tetsuya Mizuguchi first showed us *Rez* in March of last year, it was simply known as "the Sound Project." But that doesn't begin to describe the game; a unique outer-space shooter, *Rez* combines *Panzer Dragoon*-like, rail-shooter gameplay with an amazing interactive sound experience. The enemies give off musical sounds as you blast through them, thus generating strings of percussion and melodic noises that come together in something vaguely

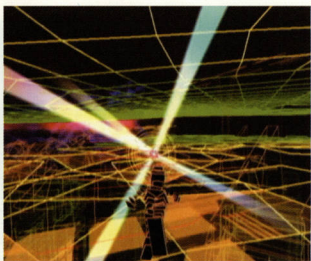
resembling Chinese opera.

"We wanted to create a nonviolent shooting game," says Mizuguchi. "It's long been my dream to have a game in which you create melodies by shooting objects. I want to allow players to concentrate on one thing: shooting enemies in a way that produces music that they enjoy."

Offering counterpoint to the aural over-stimulation is the game's stunning, techno-industrial visual style, which evolves as you move through the game's six stages (plus bonuses). While most of the game elements are only wireframes at first, they gradually become more solid and detailed as the game progresses.

Though Mizuguchi is known for making tough games (*Sega Rally*, *Manx TT*, *Space Channel 5*), he thinks that skilled players will beat *Rez* fairly quickly, then discover that it has exceptionally high replay value. "The game portion of *Rez* is just a game, but the experience is something new," he concludes. "Every time you play, you will have a different experience with the music. I think this will make the game fun to play again."

— Steven L. Kent



■ These still frames can't quite do justice to the game in motion. Its frenetic pace and psychedelic look are absolutely hypnotic

## THE ANDROMEDA STRAIN

*Rez* ought to behave a lot like *Panzer Dragoon*; United Game Artists includes seven members of Team Andromeda, which created the flying dragon classic for Saturn. Other members of the fabled Sega team have ended up at Polyphony Digital (where they worked on *Omega Force*) and at Smilebit (*Gun Valtyr*). The good news is that there is a *Panzer Dragoon* sequel in the works for Xbox from a team at Smilebit — though Sega has yet to announce whether it will be a shooter or an RPG.







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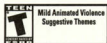
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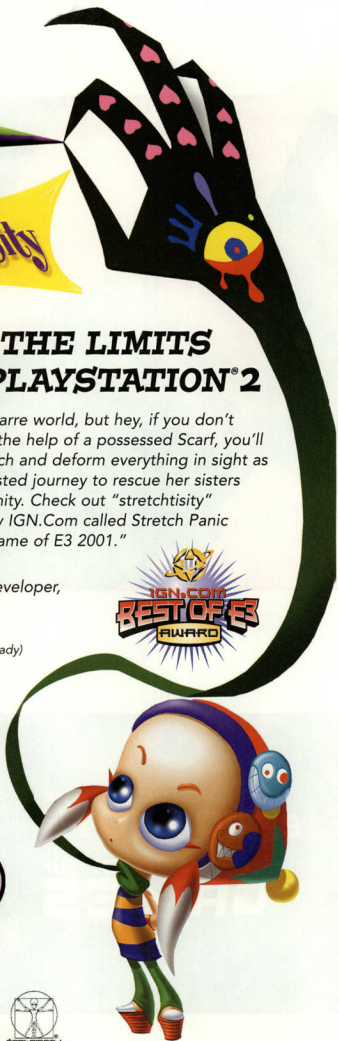


PlayStation.2



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■ Performing tricks earns speed boosts throughout the game



#### THE GREAT DEBATE

"Rubber banding" is gaming's dirty little secret, where losing players are given an artificial advantage to prevent losing (or winning) players from getting bored. But is it good, or simply cheating? Here's one developer's take: "Rubber-banding maintains tension and keeps things exciting," says Kinetica designer Quintin Richards, "but some games overdo it, so we're trying to keep the effect subtle."

#### ■ PLAYSTATION 2

# KINETICA

■ Publisher: **Sony** ■ Developer: **SCEA Santa Monica** ■ Release Date: **October** ■ Origin: **US**

## Sony is going to drive you up the wall

➔ Remember that sense of insane speed during the Lightcycle scenes in the film *Tron*? That's the sensation evoked in *Kinetica*, which takes racing to a new frenetic level by eliminating vehicles and using kinetic "skins" — mech suits designed for racing.

What sets *Kinetica* apart from other racers is that your skin can head straight into a wall — and go straight up, defying

gravity. This feature, as well as riding along walls to cut corners and shave time from your score, is enabled during several points within each of the 12 tracks, but not throughout. "Initially we had more open track designs that allowed the skins to drive just about anywhere," explains Sony Designer Richard Foge. "The problem with this was that the gameplay ended up feeling too exploratory, almost like a high-speed platform game."

Although the player moves at a rapid pace throughout the game, performing freestyle tricks while on the ground or in the air (tricks and free falls) provides

speed boosts. Power-ups are also planned for the final version, but it's undecided whether they will allow only speed bursts or if offensive weapons will be included to add a combat aspect.

With its gravity-defying gameplay, *Kinetica* could become more than "just another racing game." But it needs an injection of light; the dark look of the game creates a *Blade Runner*-esque feel, but it also makes it difficult to successfully react to obstacles and turns. If a few of those dark alleles can be brightened, *Kinetica* should be a solid racer for PlayStation 2.

— Kevin Toyama



■ As in *SSX*, free falls are great opportunities to perform freestyle tricks and build speed, but moves must be completely finished to land safely

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-PC Gamer 2001



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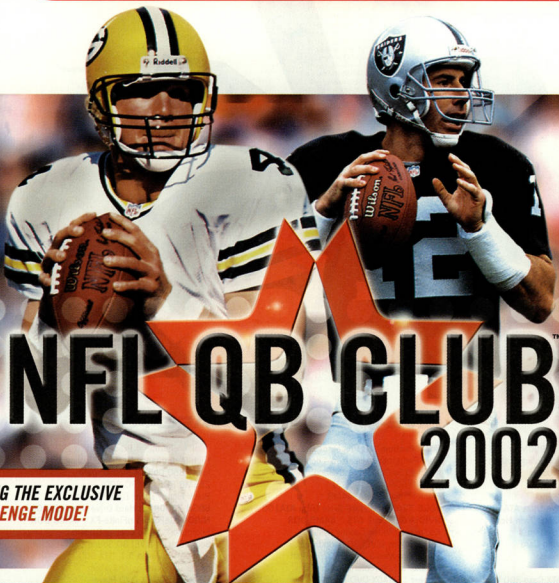


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■ PLAYSTATION 2

# Devil May Cry

■ Publisher: **Capcom** ■ Developer: **Capcom** ■ Release Date: **November** ■ Origin: **Japan**


Watch out Konami. Capcom has a new hero on par with Solid Snake, and he's ready to shake the PS2 chipset to its core



➔ With GameCube and Xbox launching this fall, it's too easy to forget about PlayStation 2 — especially given its underwhelming first year of software. With the pressure to perform or perish, Sony's platform — the one supposedly destined for world domination — is finally picking up steam. Aside from all the attention being lavished on some high-profile sequels (*Metal Gear Solid 2* and *Gran Turismo 3* in particular), a few upcoming original titles have proven they can hang with the big boys and give PS2 the unique identity it so desperately needs. At the top of this list? Capcom's PS2 tour de force, *Devil May Cry* — an action game that is as stylish as it is intense.





# → Cover Story



Throughout the game you'll be able to purchase more moves using the souls you collect from vanquished enemies. You'll need them too, since many enemies can block your gunfire.


## THE DEVIL'S ADVOCATE



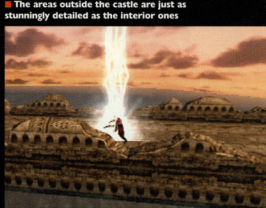
When it was originally revealed (almost a year ago in *NG 12/00*), *Devil May Cry* was thought to be a spiritual successor to the *Resident Evil* franchise. The project leads, Producer Shinji Mikami and Director Hideki Kamiya, are both veterans of the horror series, and the gothic castle where the game is set seems to fit right in with their previous scare-fests. This character-based action game, however, introduces us to a new hero named Dante — a dual-

pistol-wielding, half-devil/half-human swordsman with a chip on his shoulder and a score to settle.

And it was a long road between the hero featured in these screen-shots and the game as it was originally conceived. The project began right after Kamiya and Mikami finished *Resident Evil 2*. Fresh off his first directorial stint, Kamiya was given *Resident Evil 4* for PlayStation. That game, which ultimately would become *Devil May Cry*, was actually going to take place on a boat. "The






"The areas outside the castle are just as stunningly detailed as the interior ones."



But it wasn't long before PlayStation showed signs of coming to an end, and Kamiya was charged with moving the game to PS2. At Mikami's urging, Kamiya also took the opportunity to shift the gameplay to a style different from *Resident Evil*.

"I prefer real action gameplay to gothic horror," says Kamiya. "I really think that is what I do best. Mikami



This shadow demon cat is one of the coolest bosses we've ever seen. Its primary form resembles a cat, but when it attacks, it actually melts and morphs into different shapes. Hit it enough times, and its heart will be exposed. We admit it looks odd in these screenshots.





■ Dante's dual pistols are fast and pack a nice punch, but nothing beats the shotgun if you want to just mow through a huge lineup of demonic horrors.

understood this. *Resident Evil*'s main theme is fear, right? He told me to forget about fear and build the project on a new theme."

With new hardware and a new mission statement, Kamiya and crew went about re-inventing the game. "I

bevy of dodges, rolls, and jumps, and he becomes more anime super-hero than typical videogame character.

Despite what we've learned from the previous demos — the one on display at E3, and before that, bundled with Japanese release of

**"I decided to give up the central concept of the *Resident Evil* series — you know, with the vulnerable hero against powerful enemies."**

— Hideki Kamiya, director, Capcom

decided to give up the central concept of the *Resident Evil* series — you know, with the vulnerable hero against powerful enemies," he says. "I preferred to keep the player focused on combat in a very cool style. I decided to keep a few things like the gun sounds, the moves, and the motion animation, but I wanted to use all these realistic elements in a very different style of game."

At some undetermined point in mid-2000, the project ended up evolving beyond the *Resident Evil* framework, and that's when Kamiya and crew knew they had a potential new franchise on their hands. "Last year we understood that the project wasn't looking like *Resident Evil* anymore," he admits, "so we decided to rename the project to the one you know now."

## RUNNING WITH THE DEVIL

Kamiya cites everything from *Starfox* and *Zelda* to manga as his influences on the project, but he has also added his own twists. Perhaps taking a lesson from the grandmaster Miyamoto himself, Kamiya has instilled Dante with that magical in-game presence. Like Mario, Dante is just as fun to run around with even when there isn't much else to do. Add to that highly stylized gunplay, sword moves, and a

Code: *Veronica X* — Dante doesn't actually start off with very many moves. Instead, moves are purchased using souls that Dante collects from fallen enemies. Each of the four swords in the game has its own repertoire of moves that are not unlike *Street Fighter*-style special moves combined with shooter-style power-ups. The blade named Alastor,

## MIKAMI'S BRAIN BOX

Shinji Mikami, the producer behind the *Resident Evil* series, *Dino Crisis*, and now *Devil May Cry*, has several projects cooking on the next-generation systems. One of them is a giant robot simulator for Xbox. During a very informal interview, he told us, "It's actually a project the former director of Clock Tower brought to me." From what we understand the project, codenamed Brain Box, is actually a giant robot simulator. Now, by "simulator" we don't mean *Armored Core* or *Gundam* — we mean a real simulator. Mikami and crew are trying to create a realistic and "accurate" game in which you drive a giant robot. He compared the experience to that of driving an AT-AT in *Star Wars*. The team has even gone so far as to build a huge proprietary controller for the game.

"The controller really is the best part," Mikami enthuses. "There are so many realistic buttons on it. Gauges, two levers to control the moves, etc... The Eject button is contained in a special clear plastic box you have to open to trigger the eject process!"

We're not quite sure what to make of the project so far, but Mikami seems excited by the fact that it is breaking new ground. "I'm tired of this very conservative industry," he admits. "I would like to make crazy things — and this is one hell of an example. The advantage to being famous is you can come up with crazy projects, and people will be curious about them. I really think the industry needs more fun! I think that is what videogames are about."



# → Cover Story



for example, offers moves with names like the Air Hike, the Round Trip, the Stinger, the Vortex, and the Air Raid.

Each move can be pumped up several levels too. Combine this with the different guns in the game — we've seen pistols, a shotgun, and a rocket launcher so far — and the wealth of moves at your disposal is staggering. Kamiya actually cites a 16-bit shooter, *Valken* on Super NES, as a source of inspiration because every combination is valid.

"I usually use the shotgun, but others use different ones," Kamiya cites by way of example. "You understand each weapon's merit according to the situation. You also understand their limits as well."

While Kamiya wouldn't budge on the subject, Capcom insiders have indicated that Dante isn't the only main playable character. Trish, a

blonde woman shown in a teaser movie, will also be playable for part of the game. Curiously, the same teaser also showed Trish standing in front of a bar called "Devil May Cry." We admittedly have no idea how this titular locale ties in to the main story.

## THE DEMO WON'T CRY

Gamers across North America will finally get their hands on the playable demo of the game in late August when it ships piggybacked with *Code: Veronica X*. Like the *Metal Gear Solid 2* demo packed in with *ZOE*, this demo alone practically justifies the entire purchase — even if you are only marginally interested in the latest *Resident Evil* game (see Reviews, page 83).

In the demo, players start off inside the castle where the majority of the gameplay takes place. As in the first *Resident Evil*, the game isn't

limited to a single area. Plenty of different areas lie hidden within the castle and in the immediate area outside. New areas are mostly accessed by finding items, including some weapons that are not used in defense, but actually work as keys.

Still, Kamiya is adamant in his belief

**"Resident Evil's main theme is fear. Mikami told me to forget about fear and build a project on a new theme."**

— Hideki Kamiya

that players should never be stalled by a puzzle. "DMC is an action game, so puzzles aren't important — they shouldn't stop the action flow," he explains. "For example, if you have to study a panel and think about how to make it right, in doing that, you simply make the game tension drop. This is all about the action, so the



Capcom insiders have indicated that Trish (above) will also be a playable character

## SPEAK OF THE DEVIL: AN INTERVIEW WITH DIRECTOR HIDEKI KAMIYA

**NEXT-GEN: YOU MENTIONED THAT DMC WAS ORIGINALLY A RESIDENT EVIL GAME SET ON A BOAT. WHY SWITCH TO A CASTLE?**

**HIDEKI KAMIYA:** I wanted to create an environment based on a castle — especially an overseas one. I find European castles to be very impressive — totally different from Japanese ones. I designed the game to recreate my impressions of walking inside such a place.

**NG: IS THE GAME SCENARIO LINEAR, OR WILL EVENTS MAKE ITS COURSE CHANGE IN A DYNAMIC WAY?**

**HK:** There is no change. The story follows a single path — when you go somewhere, you have a given event. I want the player to enjoy

the action more than the story. I want to imbue the player with the sense of being this very cool character. Even if the hero is wounded, he'll recover fast, or if he's heavily attacked, he won't die. He is a superhero, so you have to design the story to fit the character image. I have this image of Dante fighting in a very cool way and defeating the enemy in a powerful way, to the point where the enemy compliments Dante, saying, "You really are a legendary fighter!" — that kind of stuff. I want the player to feel flattered, so I built that into the story and cut all the unnecessary stuff that slowed the action.

**NG: ARE THERE ANY HIDDEN OR SUB-CHARACTERS IN DMC?**

**HK:** Dante has a hidden past and a secret truth to be discovered as the scenario

unfolds. I'd like the player to enjoy playing DMC many times, so in that sense, I had to come up with bonuses. I wanted to put in [the hidden character] Tofu from *Resident Evil 2* in DMC, but it won't make it.

**NG: HOW IS WORKING ON PS2?**

**HK:** Well, when we got the PS2 specifications at the very beginning, it appeared that the system was very powerful. But when we started to work on it, we quickly understood that it isn't that powerful. DMC is fully polygonal, so we wanted to maintain a high visual quality with great backgrounds and characters. This hasn't been possible in both aspects. So when we understood the limits, we had to make choices in sharing resources between backgrounds and characters. To increase the visual quality, the game runs at 60fps. At one





player will focus on defending himself

*with the sword, jump, and so on. I refused to put in extensive text or stuff like that."*

The game itself is broken up into goal-specific sub-missions. After achieving each goal you'll be allowed to purchase new moves (or, in some cases, items such as the vitality star), and your health will be replenished for the next mission.

The U.S. demo comes on the heels of the one released in Japan in March, but it includes several new areas. A brief trip outside the castle to read some ruins gives way (literally, after a bridge collapses) to a brief but visually impressive trip through an underwater tunnel populated by flying skulls. Players will also seek out a mace found in a crypt area beneath the castle. The mace (you guessed it) is used as a key to get into another area.

## DEVIL IN DISGUISE

According to Kamiya, there will be about 15 different types of enemies in the game and each new type will be introduced to the player in a short cinema. For example, the first time a player sees a ghost that wields giant scissors as a weapon, the game cuts to a scene where it emerges from a painting on the wall and slowly slides into place for attack. The effect? Certainly more chilling and engrossing

**"Devil May Cry is an action game so puzzles aren't important — they shouldn't stop the action flow. I refused to put in extensive texts."**

— Hideki Kamiya

than random encounters with new enemies.

Unfortunately, the Lava scorpion showcased in the E3 demo doesn't make an appearance in the sample version created for the U.S., but you will fight a demon panther which (trust us) is far cooler. Just imagine a panther composed entirely of fluid darkness, and you'll get a pretty good idea of the visual effect used here. Nor are its attacks limited to feline leaps and pounces; the creature actually morphs into whatever will hurt you the most. For example, if the cat is in the air, it will become a knife on its way down to slice you. While we have no doubt that some of the bosses in MGS 2 will be incredibly

cool, this one takes the prize as the best special effect we've seen on PS2 thus far. Screenshots just do not do it justice — you need to see it moving.

Indeed, the game in general already looks spectacular. According to Kamiya, the Japanese release is pretty much done and is now in quality assurance testing. If the rest of the game can live up to the promise of the early demos, *Devil May Cry* will easily contend for the top spot this Christmas. Kamiya has high hopes as well. "I hope this will become a series," he exclaims. "Anyway, I can't speak too much on this subject — you know, it is Capcom. But you can be sure there will be no *Super Devil May Cry Turbo!*" — Blake Fischer



■ The best way to deal with a three-story demonic bird boss! How about a handy rocket launcher (above). Meanwhile, Dante's reflection comes to life, changes into the black knight, and then jumps out the window to wait for Dante's challenge (right sequence)



point, we were talking about 30fps, but I always thought 30 wouldn't be sufficient. Moves aren't smooth enough, especially when the action ramps up. I wanted the game to look cool, and at 30fps it wasn't cool at all. So I chose 60fps, even if it forced us to lower the characters' polygon counts.

**NG: CLEARLY THE POLYGONAL SACRIFICE HAS BEEN WORTH IT. WHAT WILL BE DIFFERENT IF DMC IS DEVELOPED ON ANOTHER PLATFORM, LIKE XBOX OR GAMECUBE?**

**HK:** I haven't been able to study other hardware, so I can't say specifically. I would say the game would look prettier on Xbox. As for GameCube, I have a feeling it isn't the right kind of

game for this platform.

**NG: HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE TO BEAT THE GAME?**

**HK:** Since it's an action game, you can't expect the game to last that long, but as I made several additions to give the game more depth, the game has become bigger in volume. However, it should be similar to *Resident Evil* for the first play — around 10 hours. As of now, the fastest guy on the team can clear it in less than two hours. So if you know the game very well, you could clear it in a day.

**NG: IS IT POSSIBLE TO CONTINUE TO COME UP WITH FRESH CONCEPTS BASED ON THE ORIGINAL RESIDENT**

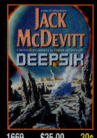
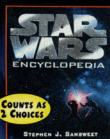
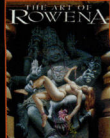
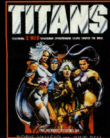
**EVIL? DO YOU HAVE OTHER PROJECTS IN MIND?**

**HK:** When I designed DMC, it was first intended to become a new *Resident Evil* episode, but DMC is in fact an original game that suddenly appeared from this design work. So maybe we can re-create this kind of process. I would like to make something less confrontational next time. At this time, I only have DMC in mind, so I still don't know what my next move will be. But as the development is reaching its end, I'll have more time to think about my next step. However, I would like it to remain an action game — no RPG or simulation. When you touch the controller, it has to deliver immediate action on screen.

NextGen







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```
(define (compose f g)
  (lambda (x) (f (g x))))
(define (compose f g x)
  (f (g x)))
(compose abs 1)
```

You framed Hossman  
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Universities have opened their doors to the videogame industry, and you may be surprised at what they're teaching

## ■ Reading, Writing, and Rocket-Launching?



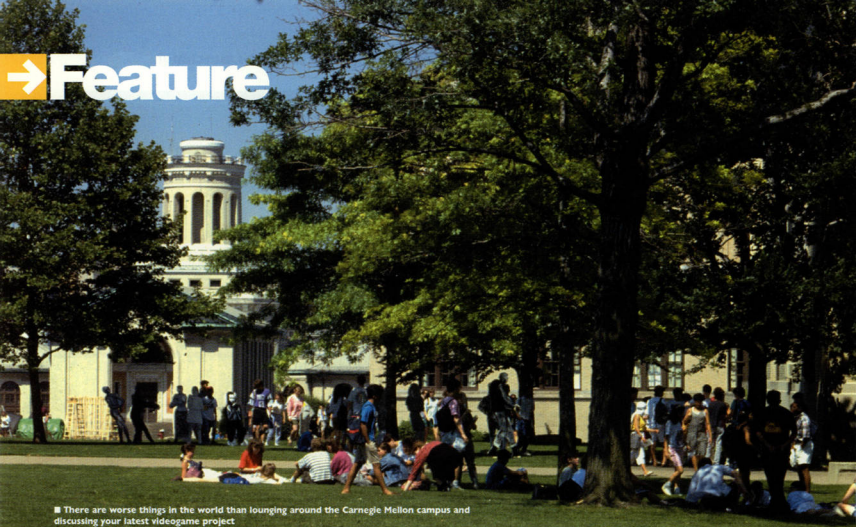
“Getting schooled in games” is taking on a whole new meaning. Can a specialized college degree get you in the door at a game company? Just like *CliffsNotes*, **Next Generation** brings you the answers...



Close your eyes and imagine yourself in a classroom with 39 other hardcore videogame addicts, discussing the character development of *Final Fantasy VIII*'s Squall Leonheart, analyzing *EverQuest* online communities, and debating the virtues of first-person shooters. Sounds great, eh? Now open your eyes and realize you're not dreaming: Classes such as these are being offered at colleges and universities around the country, and some schools even offer a degree in videogames.

If ever there was an indicator that videogames are gaining acceptance, it's their inclusion in classes at academic institutions like UC Irvine, DePaul University, and the University of North Texas. There's even a Master's program available in gaming at Georgia Tech and Carnegie Mellon, as well as a new Master of Fine Arts in game design program being introduced at USC in the fall of 2002. School has never been this interesting, and while videogame classes are still a work in progress, they reflect a maturing industry and an increasing student interest.

"We've seen a growing number of MIT students who want to go into the games industry," explains MIT's Henry Jenkins, the school's Director of Comparative Media Studies. "A decade ago, they wanted to be the next David Lynch or Quentin Tarantino," Jenkins continues. "Now, they want to be the next Will Wright or American McGee."



■ There are worse things in the world than lounging around the Carnegie Mellon campus and discussing your latest videogame project

## WHO'S GOT GAME?

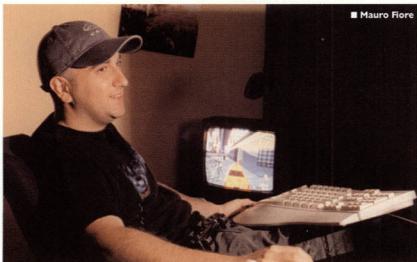
Today's students are demanding courses of study in gaming, much like they did decades ago with the study of film, and the administrators are beginning to listen. (In fact, **Next Generation** readers are constantly asking editors about the availability of such curricula.) The videogame classes offered by traditional universities take both a theoretical and practical approach. Professor Ian Parberry teaches two game programming classes at the University of North Texas, and some of his students have landed jobs at Ritual Entertainment, Terminal Reality, and Paradigm Entertainment. The University of Michigan offers a Computer Game Design and Development class covering everything from interactive fiction to AI.

Pittsburgh, PA-based Carnegie Mellon University offers a Master of Entertainment Technology graduate degree that is jointly offered by CMU's College of Fine Arts and School of Computer Science. Led by co-directors Don Marinelli and Randy Pausch, the program exposes students to the different disciplines that go into making a game. Marinelli and Pausch realize it's not just programming zeros and ones that creates a great game; it takes a plan that accounts for everything from aesthetics to story to interface. Thus, the program was developed with cross-disciplinary classes including drama, psychology, English, computer engineering, and art.

"When we spoke to companies about what they wanted in potential employees,"

explains Pausch, "we were stunned to find that they didn't want people who knew how to use a specific set of tools. Instead, they needed people who have learned how to work with people from other disciplines, because that's the main reason they rarely hired people out of college. They wanted someone with the experience of working well with teams, both in success and failure. It's really hard to make something, especially in the context of a team, and see it through to the end, and that's what it's all about in gaming."

The Carnegie Mellon program, which started in 1999, currently lists 35 students and should expand to 40-45 students this fall. Six team projects are required during the two-year program, and the curriculum teaches many different facets of pro-



■ Mauro Fiore

**"I learned how to interact with different groups working on the same project, which is crucial because that back-and-forth compromising happens on every game."**

— Mauro Fiore, former CMU game student and current lead designer for Angel Studios

ducing interactive software, including how to create and manage a production schedule. Students have also taken field trips to such sites as the Sony Metreon in San Francisco to learn about commercial possibilities of entertainment technology, and the Dave and Buster's arcade in



Chicago to explore the social impact of immersive simulations and arcade games in a restaurant venue.

## GAMING UNDER THE MICROSCOPE

Not all schools have developed entire programs with an eye on preparing a student for the game industry, but gaming courses are slowly making their way onto campus nonetheless. Are you going to pursue an English degree but want an elective more attractive than American Political Theory? You just might be surprised at what you find hiding in your course catalog.

Deep in the hallowed halls of Stanford University is STS 145: "History of Computer Game Design: Technology, Culture, and Business." In this course, instructor Henry Lowood has built a syllabus around such books as Geoffrey R. Loftus' *Minds at Play: The Psychology of Video Games*, David Sheffield's *Game Over*, and Steven Poole's *Trigger Happy: Videogames and the Entertainment Revolution*. Last year's class featured a lecture on virtual worlds that used *Asheron's Call* as its model, as well as guest speakers including Dennis "Thresh" Fong of Quake tournament fame.

At Indiana University, Associate Clinical Professor Robert Appelman is leading the charge to use gaming as a means to study human behavior and learning. Appelman will oversee a series of classes, such as "The Impact of Games and Simulations in Instruction." This course examines the immersive qualities of videogames, and how they can be applied to teaching. "We've found that the information received through interactive games had longer-term residual effects [than non-interactive information]," says Appelman. "The content flow was less, but people retained information longer. We're studying how we can take that learning element from games and apply it to the learning process."

## GET A JOB!

Can you take what you learned at a university and slide into a comfy chair at a game developer or publisher? For Mauro Fiore, that transition was a seamless process. He went from the Carnegie Mellon program to an internship at Angel Studios, where he's currently a lead designer. While majoring in computer science during his undergraduate work at CMU, the Master's program conveniently made its debut, and after graduation, he jumped on board. "The program gave me a glimpse of what it was like to work on actual game projects," explains Fiore. "I learned how to interact with different groups working on the same project, which is crucial because that back-and-forth compromising happens on every game. An understanding of what

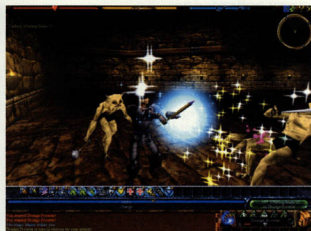


■ Students Zachary Pogue and Rene Patnoe (top) work with Stanford's Dr. Henry Lowood on the research project "How They Got Game: The History and Culture of Interactive Simulations and Videogames." *Asheron's Call* (right) is a case study for virtual worlds in Lowood's videogame history class

someone can and cannot do, to determine limitations, is important because you can then challenge those limitations."

But for most prospective students interested in a videogame career, an academic gaming background is nowhere near an automatic ticket to landing a game development job. Game companies weren't beating down Fiore's door after graduation, but he did use his school's connections to land an internship at Angel Studios, where he designed races, tuned controls, and balanced AI settings on games such as *Midtown Madness 2* and *Midnight Club*. The internship opened a door, and Fiore made the most of his opportunity.

Don't fool yourself into thinking that current videogame classes will put you on the fast track to the industry. Although videogames have grown up enough to gain the respect of universities, university classes haven't grown up enough to gain the respect of game companies. These classes and programs are, by and large, too early in their development to warrant a free pass to the office adjacent to Sid Meier's. Most professors are just



trying to get game companies to recognize they even exist.

"[Game classes] are comparable to where computer graphics were 10 or 15 years ago," suggests Angel Studios CCO Michael Limber. "Back then, it was unusual to be trained in computer graphics at a university. Now, most of the artists in the industry have gone to art school."

For those looking to enter the game industry, university classes can provide a foot in the door. The Carnegie Mellon program is at the forefront of schools that have established game company connections, having connected students with internships at Angel Studios and also with Maxis. Many top developers know MIT's Jenkins and USC's Celia Pearce, and if you do well in their classes, they might help you get a head start over the thousands who also want game industry jobs.

## THE BATTLE FOR THE CLASSROOM

### ■ Mark Siebert



Despite the growth of courses over the years, it's still a battle to get classes established. However, videogame courses have evolved through a combination of professors pulling from the inside and the industry pushing from the outside — although each has its own agenda.

"Our courses came out of a desire to raise the standard of practice of those who make games," explains Georgia Tech Professor Janet Murray. "Universities have a role to play in understanding [games] and creating an informed critique that can raise the standard."

Not all universities have embraced Murray's progressive view. Despite offering a few game classes, UC Irvine's administration recently shot down a proposal to offer a major in videogames. But the industry's clout is growing. The University of Washington has approached Sierra Producer Mark Siebert for suggestions on how to meet the needs of game companies.

"Developers are frustrated that it often takes college graduates three months to a year before they're productive in game development," asserts Siebert. "The development community is looking for people to come out of school understanding a lot of [game-related] things you can't get from basic C++ classes."





■ The USC School of Cinema-TV will add an Interactive Media program in the fall of 2002. The program will feature popular and experimental game design components.

## NUTTY PROFESSORS

According to some developers, one area of concern is how qualified a school's faculty may be. Each year at GDC and E3, aspiring developers flock to hear the wisdom from the likes of *Ultima* series creator Richard Garriott or *Total Annihilation/Dungeon Siege* creator Chris Taylor. Most attendees figure that these industry veterans have been through just about everything associated with the design and production of a game, and the experience they can share is invaluable. But you'd be hard-pressed to find Westwood founder Brett Sperry or LucasArt's legend Hal Barwood with a lesson plan in hand.

"I think the biggest problem right now is a lack of qualified teachers," suggests Maxis Lead Designer Will Wright. "Our industry is so young that there aren't many who are qualified to teach, and those who are qualified are still making games."

When asked, Wright and Ion Storm Studio Director Warren Spector (who recently hired a University of Texas grad



■ Will Wright

who studied interactive fiction) expressed interest in helping to guide the next crop of gaming legends. Both are attracted to the prospect of teaching the unusually enthusiastic group of students that a game class would attract. But Wright and Spector are simply not ready to teach — not in the sense that they're not qualified,

**"Our industry is so young that there aren't many who are qualified to teach, and those who are qualified are still making games."**

— Will Wright, lead designer, Maxis

because any university would be extremely lucky to include the designers as faculty, but because Wright and Spector are still having too much fun creating games.

The concept of a university-based videogame education raises an eyebrow with Wright, who cites Chris Crawford's *The Art of Computer Game Design* and a few Internet bulletin boards as the only resources available during his formative years. And though Wright describes himself as a self-learner and admits he might not have gone down an academic videogame path had it been available to him, he does see the merit in such classes.

"Perhaps these courses can open people's eyes," explains Wright. "Most people get their [game] education playing games — someone plays a first-person shooter and loves it, and they want to make one because that's all they've been exposed to. By exposing people to different levels, [aspiring game designers] can realize that design has been happening for hundreds of thousands of years, and a lot of it's applicable to videogames, not just playing Doom. That can benefit the industry in the long run."

## GETTING IT DONE AT DIGIPEN

Are you looking for an entire school dedicated to cranking out game makers, or an alternative to university life? Look no further than Digipen, located in Redmond, WA. Founded in 1988, Digipen offers classes in subjects such as Physics, Creative Writing, and Animation, as well as the chance to build a game from start to finish.

"Our graduates are working for EA, Valve, Konami, Sony, Interplay — the list just goes on," boasts Digipen COO Jason Chu.

Closely aligned with Nintendo (the school actually rents space from the company), Digipen offers an AA degree in 3D animation and both an AS and a BS in Realtime Interactive Simulations. Of the 800 applications received per year, 130 students are admitted. Although Digipen and Florida-based Full Sail, which offers an AS degree in game design, are set up to teach game development skills, they still aren't one-way tickets to the videogame industry. But with a little luck and a lot of hard work, the skills you learn can get you in the door.



■ Digipen alum Wing Cho worked on *Dragonworld 3D* (left) as a class project during school and has moved on to the role of lead designer for *Smuggler's Run 2* (right)

## POOLING RESOURCES

The views expressed by Wright and his peers are exactly what the International Game Developers Association ([www.igda.org](http://www.igda.org)) hopes to collect, as it helps school systems formalize legitimate programs in the study of games. Ion Storm's Spector is co-chairing the IGDA's Education Committee with Doug Church, who is known for his work with Spector on *Undersworld* and *System Shock*, as well as with Harmonix on the upcoming PS2

(continued on page 56)



GORGEOUS

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# → Feature

(continued from page 54)

game Frequency (see Alphas, page 29). Spector and Church are creating a framework for teachers on how to approach gaming, whether in the form of a single lecture, or in the development of an entire department devoted to gaming studies.

"Specific tools and software packages aren't the areas in which we're lacking," explains Spector. "The abstract and analytical components are what we need, but at the least I hope a shared knowledge base and shared vocabulary come out of these programs, and the development of some analytical tools on which the industry can agree. We could also benefit from a more analytical way of thinking, so we can get beyond the word 'fun' as the be-all, end-all of game criticism."

The committee is also working on projects such as reaching out to high school and college guidance counselors who may not even realize that careers in

to think about what it means to be a developer," says Church. "That's something we [as professional game designers] rarely get to do from within the industry, because we're desperately doing it. We can train people to build levels — that's not the hard part. The hard part is training them to think about what games are, why they're fun, and what's interesting about them."

## THERE WILL BE A QUIZ

Will an emerging curriculum help you get a job in videogames? We reiterate that you won't get a job just by showing up to class and collecting a diploma.

"I don't think it'll ever be to the point where we'll hire someone just because they have a Master's degree in game design," says Jon Storm's Spector. "Just as a cinematography degree from USC won't get you a job as Spielberg's cam-

**"We could also benefit from a more analytical way of thinking, so we can get beyond the word 'fun' as the be-all, end-all of game criticism."**

— Warren Spector, studio director, Ion Storm

videogames are possible. Many kids aren't interested in school because the subjects don't cross into their spheres of interest, but everyone wins if games can provide a motivational spark that makes education more appealing. And it's the learning part, the exploration, that is really what college life is all about.

"The goal of the university experience is not the chance to be a developer, but

eraman — you still have to prove yourself before you get that first job."

However, any students who are serious about working in games and apply themselves to these courses will undoubtedly be taken more seriously as potential job candidates. Even if you take just one game class during college, you'll be able to speak at a more "insider" level than most gamers during an interview,



■ Yes, this is research: Last year, students in the Master of Entertainment Technology program at Carnegie Mellon University took a field trip to the IAAPA (International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions) convention

and that's a big advantage.

And over the next few years, there is little doubt the academic world will further embrace videogames as a valid area of study. There is simply too much interest and too much money involved in gaming, and it's developed to the point that there is actually some history to the craft. We'll not only see a new crop of game designers, but a new crop of gamers who can better articulate what games they like, and why these titles are so attractive. Only through the process of understanding games and the elements that make them interesting, exciting, and (sorry, Warren) fun, can the industry continue to innovate and evolve. Finally, here is a notion worthy of homework.

— Kevin Toyama

## THE COLLEGE LIFE

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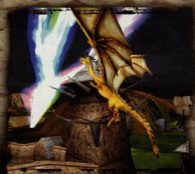
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■ PC

# RETURN TO CASTLE WOLFENSTEIN

■ Publisher: **Activision** ■ Developer: **Gray Matter** ■ Release Date: **TBA** ■ Origin: **US**

The granddaddy of all 3D shooters is back to once again make Hitler its bitch

→ Ask any truly hardcore fans of the first-person shooter genre about their personal wish lists, and at the top will most likely be a high-tech, modern-day remake of that most classic of all first-person actioners, *Wolfenstein 3D*. Sadly, while Id's 1992 shareware shooter paved the way for the



292







## A TRIP DOWN WOLFENSTEIN LANE

Return to *Castle Wolfenstein* will be but the latest in a proud gaming lineage of Nazi-bashing that goes back two decades. So in case you're just joining us...

### Castle Wolfenstein — 1981, Muse Software



Here's where it all began. Written by Silas S. Warner, *Castle Wolfenstein* made its debut on Apple II and had you navigating a series of static single screens in search of Hitler's secret plans. Ammo was extremely low, but you could always try to hold up a Nazi with an empty gun and then steal his ammo. One cool feature for the time: The Nazi guards actually spoke to you thanks to the miracle of digitized speech.

### Castle Smurfenstein — 1983, Dead Smurf Software



Although not an official — or even an authorized — sequel, this *Castle Wolfenstein* remake gained some notoriety when it was released in 1983. Basically, a group of talented hackers went into the game with a sector editor and replaced all the Nazis with Smurfs, both graphically and audio-wise. They also changed the opening and closing narration, as well as the title screen. This time, evidently, the mission was set in Canada.

### Beyond Castle Wolfenstein — 1984, Muse Software



This sequel didn't really advance the series too much. You're on a mission to assassinate Hitler, but those pesky Nazis are, of course, still in the way. This time, however, you can't hold up the guards (a shame) but witnesses will sound an alarm if they see you killing someone, and you can actually pick up security passes to get into different rooms.

### Wolfenstein 3D — 1992, id Software



When Apogee Software boss commissioned an up-and-coming id Software to write a 3D game, the developers looked to one of their favorite old Apple games for inspiration. The result was *Wolfenstein 3D*, and nothing was ever the same again. Released in May 1992, the six-level shareware game caused a sensation with its cutting-edge (for the time, at least) 3D environments and fast-paced play. Since then, *Wolfenstein 3D* has been re-sold in various forms, most recently in 1998 as a compendium edition that included both the original game and the complete *Spear of Destiny* missions.

### Spear of Destiny — 1993, id Software



Introduced a scant four months after the original, *SOD* was the real sequel to *Wolf 3D*. Besides new maps and new episodes, *SOD* also introduced strange mutant Nazis that were far more formidable than those you fought in the first game.

FPS explosion that was to come, these days it's been largely forgotten by all but these same diehard fans who have been yearning, vainly, for its rebirth.

That's all about to change. As *Wolf3D* approaches its 10th birthday (on May 5, 2002), original creator id Software and developer Gray Matter are nearing completion on *Return to Castle Wolfenstein*, a full-blown redux of the classic that threatens to be much more than a nostalgia trip. Gray Matter and id aren't content to coast on the good will that accompanies the *Wolfenstein* name; they're going all-out to create a story-based, single-player adventure that will topple the long-standing genre leader, *Half-Life*.

The new game's story will once again see the player in the guise of one-man Allied army B.J. Blazkowicz, sent behind enemy lines to investigate reports of mysterious occult experiments taking place inside *Castle Wolfenstein* — but this time out you'll move beyond the boundaries of the castle itself and into local villages, Nazi air and submarine bases, cable-car stations, and more. "Each mission contains multiple levels, and some of the levels are just simply huge," explains Gray Matter Creative Director Drew Markham.

And while *Return to Castle Wolfenstein* will provide no shortage of sausage-sucking goosesteppers just begging to be blasted back to Berlin, you'll also come up against the unspeakable results of Himmler's sickening "Dark Knight" project: zombies, voodoo monsters, and other abominations brought back from the sucking depths of Hell. Fortunately your arsenal for dealing with necromancer and Nazi alike has been greatly expanded this go-around, including a mix of traditional period firearms (pistols, sub-machine guns, and rocket launchers of both Allied and Axis flavors) to experimental German



■ Players will get to use both Axis and Allied weapons throughout the course of the game

weapons like the dreaded Testa gun and a blistering water-cooled chaingun. We were particularly impressed by the flame thrower, which has to be the best we've ever seen in a first-person game. Its fire effect is full volumetric 3D, which allowed us to kick down a door and fill the room beyond with waves of flame that expanded to engulf the place from floor to ceiling. The effect is so cool that Gray Matter claims that other FPS developers have already expressed an interest in using it in their own projects.

Gamers looking to see molten flesh dripping from the faces of torched German soldiers in high-res 3D glory, however, will be disappointed. Even though the recent trend has been toward ever more graphic dismemberment and "pain skins," and while the Gray Matter team is composed largely of the same developers who gave us the shockingly violent *Kingpin*, *Return*



■ Now you can sneak up on Nazis and take them out with a stealthy slice of your knife



■ The sniper rifle is ideal for larger levels

to *Castle Wolfenstein* has its targets set squarely on a Teen rating. "This is a mainstream title, so we've approached this almost from a '60s WWII movies standpoint," says Markham. "We didn't feel that, for this game, gruesome pain skins make the gameplay any better or more compelling." (The editors of this magazine completely disagree. Note to *Soldier of Fortune* creators Raven Software: We'll pay you to make a "pain skins" patch.)

After playing through the new game extensively, we're happy to report it's shaping up to be a stellar combination of cutting-edge FPS techniques and old-school *Wolfenstein* Nazi-stompin'. Getting that balance right was a key consideration from the get-go, as Markham explains: "We've put everything up to the 'Wolf microscope' to see if it seemed like it was in proper context with what the game was about, and our memories of the original game figured prominently in the design. One common thread that was shared by a lot of the people we talked to was that we all seemed to remember more going on in *Wolf 3D* than was actually there. It was such a seminal, groundbreaking title that it pumped all of our imaginations up to new levels. So one of the great things we were able to do was capitalize on that fact and make some of the 'imagine' events into reality."

The game's two major innovations take place in the areas of graphics and AI. *Return to Castle Wolfenstein* is the first game to make full use of the *Quake III: Team Arena* engine, which boasts improved texturing and other effects over the original *QIII* code. Gray Matter has even taken the technology a step further by replacing the engine's traditional segmented character animation routines with a full skeletal system. This has enabled the team to enhance enemy movements with a far more organic look, resulting in gameplay and scripted sequences that

■ Gray Matter assembled this panorama to illustrate the sheer size and scale of the game areas — and this isn't even a full level!

imbue a great deal of character. With the incredible artistry of Gray Matter's graphics team pushing the engine to its limits, *Return to Castle Wolfenstein* looks poised to redefine players' expectations of just how stunning an FPS can look. "The overall look and feel of the game is something that I'm very proud of," says Markham. "We've taken a lot of time and effort to make some really compelling, immersive environments." And as an added blessing, Markham is keen to point out there will be none of the irritating crate-stacking-and-jumping "puzzles" that blighted even games like *Half-Life*.

**When they're not** admiring the scenery, players will be contending with some of the smartest AI enemies they will have encountered since *Half-Life*. You can forget about mowing down legions of dumb Nazis who have barely enough brain power to cry "Mein Leiben!" as they get shot full of holes. These new guys are governed by complex behavioral routines that allow them to track you, take cover, launch coordinated attacks, retreat, and constantly surprise you. Not unlike in *Medal of Honor*, if you throw a grenade at a Nazi guard, he might kick

it back at you. But more impressively, the guards have been programmed to tactically evaluate your weapon and will respond accordingly. For example, if you break into a room and you're carrying a pistol, two guards may attempt to take you out. Show up with a chaingun, and they may flee.

While the version of *Return to Castle Wolfenstein* we played looked to be in great shape and near completion, there's no firm commitment about a release date — staying true to id's traditional claim that a game will be released "when it's done." The multiplayer mode, which has been farmed out to an unnamed developer so Gray Matter can focus on the main game, is in progress. Other details about play modes, however, are being kept under wraps. But even if *Return to Castle Wolfenstein* shipped without multiplayer, it'd still be on target to blow people away with its startling AI, beautiful environments, and thoroughbred story. And when we get right down to it, let's be honest — there's nothing more compelling than vanquishing hordes of hapless Nazis, and *Return to Castle Wolfenstein* will let you do that in bigger and bloodier detail than ever before.

— Gary Whitta



# Before armies, you covered your own back.



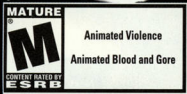
Delve deep into Viking mythology as you navigate your way through over 40 vast and picturesque environments.



Choose from a variety of axes, hammers and swords to send your enemies to Hell.



Graphics so good, you can savor the demise of your vanquished rivals with every thrust of the sword.



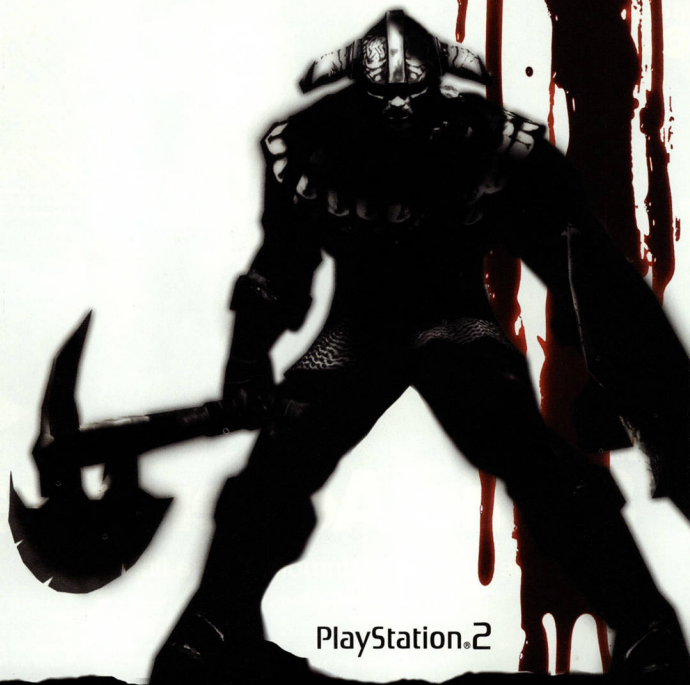
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# RUNE

## VIKING WARLORD

One unstoppable Viking on the road to Valhalla.



PlayStation.2



# → Finals

The hedgehog returns, as does street ball and a desert planet — all with varying degrees of success



## → PlayStation 2

NBA Street	66
Klonoa 2: Lunaea's Vell	66
Motor Mayhem	66
Dark Angel: Vampire Apocalypse	66
MX 2002 featuring Ricky Carmichael	83



■ The Sonic levels represent some of this game's finest moments. Unfortunately, they're over too quickly



■ DREAMCAST

# Sonic Adventure 2

■ Publisher: Sega ■ Developer: Sonic Team

Sega's blue speedster stumbles at the finish line



■ Knuckles' levels just aren't fun at all

→ When Dreamcast launched in the U.S., *Sonic Adventure* stood out as a work of artistic and technological know-how. It was also quite a bit of fun, even though it was marred by some uneven gameplay and technical glitches — namely, framerate and camera problems. With

Dreamcast going the way of the dinosaur by the end of this year, it's appropriate that it departs with the sequel to one of its earliest showcase products. Unfortunately, Sonic Team's final Dreamcast title seems to have lost some of the gameplay and technological zing that made the last game enjoyable.

That's not to say it's a bad game — or even a technologically inferior one. But it falls in many of the same ways its predecessor did. For example, the graphics on many of the levels are simply mind-blowing, yet they suffer from the same occasional drop in framerate, and it's hard to appreciate the detail in



## The Rating System

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

★★★★★ **REVOLUTIONARY**  
★★★★☆ **EXCELLENT**  
★★★☆☆ **GOOD**  
★★☆☆☆ **FAIR**  
★☆☆☆☆ **BAD**

● Denotes a review of a Japanese product

Resident Evil Code: Veronica X.....83	Soldier of Fortune.....87
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<b>Dreamcast</b>	
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Hostile Waters: Antaeus Rising.....88
Merchant Prince II.....88
Microsoft Train Simulator.....90
Redneck Off-road Racing.....90
WWII Online.....90
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### THE EXTRAS

There are so many extras in Sonic Adventure 2 that it's almost as if Sonic Team was aware of the game's shortcomings. Numerous multiplayer modes and mini-games abound, including mech battles, kart racing, and even foot racing. The Chaos are also back in full force for some pet-raising action, but honestly, not one of these is in itself an especially compelling reason to buy the game.

many instances due to what we've dubbed the "Wildly Careening Camera of Doom." If you're prone to motion sickness, this may be a game to avoid. When everything works in harmony, the game is a sight to behold, but this only makes the errors even more glaring.

The same goes for the gameplay. When you're speeding along as Sonic (or his nemesis, Shadow — you can play the light or dark sides), the game is at its brilliant best; it's not the deepest platformer around, but it makes

up for its shortcomings in intensity and spectacle. Sadly, though, these flashes of joy are now intermingled with other characters who are far less fun. The simple shooter levels, featuring Robotnik and Tails piloting mechs, quickly get boring and the "gem hunts" that make up the Knuckles and Rouge levels are tedious at best and frustrating at worst. Lots of aimless wandering does not a fun game make.

In fact, the one signature characteristic of a Sonic game — speed — is notably lacking through much of the game. While we were pleased to see that Sonic Team has integrated a lot of characters and created a lot of levels, most of them just aren't very interesting. And ironically enough, when things are fun and fast, the speed of the game characters makes them go by all too quickly. Go figure.

Sonic Adventure 2 isn't bad,



■ Tails' plane now turns into a mech so he can shoot enemies



■ You can choose to play either the good characters or the evil ones

but it unfortunately fails to improve on the two-year-old original, and in many ways it's actually worse. Much like Sonic 3 on Genesis, the formula is in place, but that's all; there's no passion to be found. What we're

left with is a mishmash of gameplay ideas and pretty textures that simply aren't very compelling. Let's hope this Hedgehog's next outing on GameCube will bring back the magic.

— Blake Fischer

**ENextGen** ★★★★★

**Bottom Line:** Fun, but also frustrating. Ultimately, it lacks the excitement and innovation we've come to expect from Sonic Team.





PLAYSTATION 2

## NBA Street

Publisher: EA Sports Big Developer: NuFX/EA Canada

You can't beat the street



Forget about fundamentals; NBA Street is all about the backtops

→ NBA Street is everything a basketball purist hates — minimal teamwork, a reliance on dunking, and fancy moves with little purpose. But it's also one hell of a game.

EA's latest "Big" basketball title moves from the simulation of NBA Live to a three-on-three, arcade-style game, creating the type of frenetic action last seen in Midway's NBA Jam, with full NBA rosters and skill levels to match.

On offense, players have the standard pass-dribble-shoot options, as well as the ability to call for picks to dislodge defenders. Button combos result in fancy moves to shake off opponents, as well as an array of dunks and alley-oop passes that are difficult to block. The more fancy the moves and dunks, the higher your momentum meter ticks. When the meter is full, you can score a Game Breaker that



Don't be a ball hog like Allen Iverson. When your teammates break for the basket, pass!

increases your points and decreases your opponent's.

But playing defense is just as cool, where goaltending is not only allowed but encouraged. Against a team with shot-blockers like San Antonio's Tim Duncan, you'll quickly see why goaltending was outlawed in real basketball.

The biggest drawback of the game is its "rubber-banding" — if one team jumps out to a lead, the opponent's chances of scoring increase to keep the game close. And while the flamboyant dunks are very cool, the outside shots look like the players are just throwing at the backboard. — Kevin Toyama

NextGen ★★★★★

**Bottom Line:** Despite a few small imperfections, NBA Street delivers a basketball experience even sports game cynics can't help but love.

## Klonoa 2: Lunatear's Veil

Platform: PlayStation 2 Publisher: Namco Developer: Namco

Like cotton candy washed down with Mountain Dew, Klonoa 2 is sickeningly sweet but gives a powerful, if brief jolt. Its appeal lies largely in its truly spectacular visuals, taking cel shading to the next level and combining it with gorgeous 3D level design and rich colors. Klonoa 2 doesn't stray far from the spirit of the original.

The move to 3D is largely irrelevant; mostly you're stuck on a 2D path, only able to move left or right. A few times, Klonoa takes to a snowboard and swishes downhill, but mostly your freedom is limited. The challenge is limited as

well. Clearly aimed at younger gamers with silly characters and childish dialogue (spoken entirely in Japanese with only English subtitles), it's a rather easy game. We completed its 24 beautiful stages in a few hours. With the exception of two ingenious puzzles and one pesky end boss, you can breeze through, no trouble.

Younger players may enjoy that level of play, but older gamers will likely be disappointed. Although its world



He's cute, he's silly, he runs from left to right — he's Klonoa!

design does enable you to explore all levels once you've unlocked them, Klonoa 2's flavor lasts as long as bubble gum's. — Jim Preston

NextGen ★★★★★

**Bottom Line:** Worth renting for its first-rate visuals, but this is short, sweet, and shallow.

## Motor Mayhem

Platform: PlayStation 2 Publisher: Infogrames Developer: Beyond Games

Had it been released three months ago, when the best of PS2 car combat was the multi-player modes in Smuggler's Run, Motor Mayhem would have found its niche in the market. But now, Infogrames has to compete with Twisted Metal Block (NG 08.01) and suffers terribly by comparison.

Not a bad game by any stretch, Motor Mayhem is graphically splendid but otherwise unremarkable. The multi-player modes are limited to only two human players, which implies that the focus of the game is single-player. The char-

acters, however, have no story-lines associated with any of them, so Career mode is simply the three main game modes (Endurance, Deathmatch, and Last Man Standing) strung together.

In combat, driving around is easy, but thanks to loose controls and a lack of any auto aim, scoring a hit is not. Much of the game is spent attempting to make minute corrections to your aim or the direction



Motor Mayhem isn't bad; it's just average — which is bad enough

your vehicle is facing. Ultimately the shiny textures and pretty explosions just aren't enough. — Daniel Erickson

NextGen ★★★★★

**Bottom Line:** An inoffensive offering that falls short of the competition.

## Dark Angel: Vampire Apocalypse

Platform: PlayStation 2 Publisher: Metro 3D Developer: Metro 3D

In terms of longevity, few games can compete with Dark Angel, an action RPG offering many, many months of gameplay. Unfortunately, it will only take most players a couple of days to realize it's also a monotonous exercise.

Mostly, you guide the lead character, Anna, through hacking and slashing at hordes of monsters in randomly generated dungeons. To its credit, Dark Angel provides you with numerous weapons and spells, as well as a large list of objectives to accomplish, which creates the illusion of depth. However, after killing your

thousandth monster, you'll realize you never left the shallow end of the pool.

Perhaps if the combat had been more fleshed out, requiring more precision and skill, the fighting wouldn't become so tired so quickly. Further, the random dungeons are rather generic, only intensifying the monotony.

While the story is interesting, the sheer length of Dark Angel forces the plot along in parts. If you're the sort who



It's long, and there are tons of monsters to kill, but can you do that for months?

genuinely appreciates long action RPGs with tons of things to collect, this may suit you. Mostly, though, it's an exercise in tedium. — Chester Barber

NextGen ★★★★★

**Bottom Line:** Dark Angel manages that rarest of feats: an epic game with shallow gameplay.

Brought to you by the makers of **Next**Gen

# XBOX™

Official Xbox Magazine

**EXCLUSIVE!**

# HALO

*Seeing is believing*

- Astounding new vehicles
- Devastating new weapons
- Breathtaking new screenshots

**PLUS!**

Dead or Alive 3  
New Xbox controllers  
How to get out of a well  
(using only an Xbox)  
Xbox Game Disc  
An ultra-sexy Q&A  
and  
Sea Monkeys!

**imagine**  
MEDIA WITH PASSION



***A console and a magazine for the new millennium***



## Contents



WHAT'S THIS

September 2001 mini-magazine

# OFFICIAL IN ALL THE RIGHT PLACES



This is the part of our little mini-magazine where I'm supposed to personally greet you (so you'll feel comfortable and trust me) and utilize the power of prose to sway you into believing exactly what I

want you to believe – it's like selling you a car, only without the optional undercoat. But I think that you're probably way too smart for that and would see right through my blatant sales pitch.

Instead of hiding behind feel-good phrases, though, I'm going to give it to you straight. Here is a breakdown of what my Editor's Letter might have been (if it had been what it usually is – which it isn't).

**WHAT I'D WRITE:** We are the only magazine with an Xbox Game Disc and the only place you can play amazing, exclusive Xbox games for free.

**Evil intention:** If you own an Xbox, you have to buy this magazine. Muhahaha.

**End result:** You buy our first issue because you have to – but then sign up for a lifetime subscription because you fall deeply, madly in love with the magazine.

**WHAT I'D WRITE:** We're Official, which means we have unrivaled access to the Xbox, the games, and the people behind the games.

**Evil intention:** I want to convince you that the other magazines are poor imitations and that all of your money belongs to us.

**End result:** Magazine monogamy. You won't have to stray because we'll satisfy you on every single level.

**WHAT I'D WRITE:** We're 100% independent, and we won't pull any punches when it comes to reviewing games or covering the Xbox. We even have carte blanche to call Bill Gates names.

**Evil intention:** To show that you can have your cake and eat it too. With frosting!

**End result:** Our honesty will inspire your devotion, love, and possibly expensive electronic gifts sent directly to the editors.

**WHAT I'D WRITE:** Official Xbox Magazine will serve as the ultimate guide to Xbox gaming.

**Evil intention:** To make you feel stupid for not buying our magazine. After all, what kind of dolt wouldn't want the "ultimate" guide?

**End result:** We'll arm you with knowledge that will impress your friends, woo the ladies (or fellas), and possibly lead to the lavish lifestyle normally enjoyed by wealthy gadabouts and international millionaire playboys.

**WHAT I'D WRITE:** The magazine will entertain and inform you on every page. The irreverent tone of voice, creative stories, and stunning design will gel together to form a magazine so amazing and so powerful that it'll likely bring people to tears.

**Evil intention:** To make you cry.

**End result:** You'll find out that crying doesn't make you weak at all – in fact, it'll make you look sensitive, like Matt Damon, only less annoying.

Then I'd wrap it all up with a snappy conclusion that would excite you about the magazine, the Xbox, and life in general. Enjoy and feel free to contact me with any suggestions (and be sure to include your evil intentions).

— Mike Salmon, Editor in Chief





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It's that bit over there to the left – read it if you get a second, would ya?

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## DEAD OR ALIVE 3 04

Oh, the best-looking fighting game ever is an Xbox exclusive? How terribly delicious!

## BIZARRE



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What can't your Xbox be used for? A look at the peripherals – and the peripheral uses – for your next console.

## HEAVENLY!

## PREVIEWS 08 HALO

Nothing to see here, folks, please move along. We certainly don't unveil two completely new and amazing levels of what could be the best-looking videogame ever made. Nope, not here.

## ANSWERAMA!



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Still trying to figure out why there is a beautifully designed, brilliantly written mini-magazine dealing solely with the Xbox right smack-dab in the middle of your beloved *Next Generation*? Check out these pages to get the inside scoop on what the hell this is all about and why you should care.

## PLAY ME!



## THE DISC 14

We're not just a magazine (although there are worse things than magazines – *Olestra*, *Showgirls*, and *O-Town* spring to mind). Our disc full of playable games and cool extras delivers all you'll ever need to enjoy your Xbox.

## THE END

## SUBSCRIBE ALREADY 16

Our final page is devoted to giving you the opportunity to come along for the ride. If you're not interested, then all you have to do is stupidly ignore this whole thing – we won't take it personally if you don't have the brains to see a good thing when it hits you in the face.



## MISSING CONTENT

Here's a few of the things we'd likely get into a full-sized issue. Maybe.

- Exclusive looks at games so top-secret that even Bill Gates doesn't know about them
- Use your Xbox to win the lottery
- Free money: We're just giving it away!
- J-Lo versus *Halo*: Will Puff Daddy make the right choice?
- How to use your PS2 as an ashtray
- Achieving world peace one violent game at a time
- That thing you really wanted to read about – written just the way you like

## First Look

### From Old School to New School

Tecmo has revealed three of the new characters you'll find in *DoA3*. Luckily, two of them are hotties.

■ **Hitomi (at right):** A young karate proponent with a flappy white *gi*.



■ **Christy (above):** Tall, platinum blonde, and the bustiest new addition.

■ **Brad Wong (not shown):** The new drunk guy. He's all about the booze.

NOTE: Character names were not final at press time and are subject to change.

## Only on Xbox

The only system in the world capable of delivering the graphical punch of *DoA3* is the Xbox and the only way to play this game is to buy an Xbox.





EXCLUSIVE

# Dead or Alive 3

DEVELOPER: Team Ninja | PUBLISHER: Tecmo | RELEASE DATE: Launch

Also known as: Killer App

## First Look

### PITCH IT

The perfect combination. The lightning-pace combo strings of Namco's *Tekken* series and the intelligent strategy found in Sega's *Virtua Fighter* games.

### WIRED

A terrific place to go for info and screens of *DoA3* is [www.tecmo.co.jp](http://www.tecmo.co.jp) – it's all in Japanese, but what's that to a die-hard fan?

**K**nowing that a game is so technologically advanced that it can only be properly done on Xbox is a pretty satisfying feeling. Seeing that game in action is even more satisfying. *Dead or Alive 3* will be available on Xbox at launch, and few games will demonstrate more ably what we can expect from the amazing Microsoft console.

When the game was first unveiled at the Tokyo Game Show this spring, the only noise heard above the techno din of the trailer soundtrack was a collective gasp. An audience well prepared to be amazed by games like *Metal Gear Solid* and *Virtua Fighter 4* was visibly shocked by the graphics in the real-time demo – and it wasn't even running on finished hardware.

Tecmo's *DoA* series has grown in scope and stature since it first arrived on the fighting scene. The gameplay – a fast-paced mix of the best from *Tekken* and *Virtua Fighter* – has its own style, which is then drenched in sex appeal, thanks to its arsenal of busty dominatrices. Although the jiggling has been toned down somewhat for number three, the graphics have not – this is a genuine showstopper.

Some scenes in the game are literally breathtaking – tough-guy Bass falling from a broken window, then smashing through a towering neon sign before hitting the ground in a shower of sparks and broken glass – or the Ninja, Hayabusa, appearing in a whirlwind of autumn leaves in a gloriously realized forest scene – or perhaps most tellingly of all, Kasumi being smashed through a stalagmite in a perfect demonstration of how graphics and gameplay can complement each other.

*DoA3* is going to redefine what people expect from fighting games – the use of environment, the attention to detail, and most of all, the perfect, beautiful graphics. When the game arrives at launch this November, it will be more than prepared to take on the competition.

XBOX

### WHAT'S IN STORE

Our special Preview Issue (Sept. 25) is going to have a gigantic blowout feature on this and every other launch title. Plus! The game disc for our Premiere Issue (Nov. 6) will feature a five-minute trailer of *DoA3*, which highlights the new characters and fighting styles. Don't miss it.



# News

News, notes, columns, and the kitchen sink

## Battling for control

Game makers aren't the only ones vying for a piece of the Xbox pie



**N**o period in a console's life is more important to third-party developers and hardware manufacturers than the critical launch period. Game publishers, for instance, strive to bring their titles to market during the first few months of a console because it's the best time to make a splash in the market. Recently, EA created an instant franchise with *SSX* by releasing the game before the PS2 market was flooded with competing snowboarding games.

Third-party hardware manufacturers face a similar battle for market share. And considering the fact that console makers are notoriously bad at meeting demand for peripherals at launch (in the case of the PS2 launch, Sony came up short on everything), third-party hardware manufacturers know that this is the time to carve out their own portion of market share on the Xbox. Plus, as always seems to happen during the pre-launch phase of a console, some gamers are complaining about the Xbox controller – sight unseen. While the grumbling will certainly die down after the public gets its hands on final hardware, it still makes the launch period a crucial time for third-party hardware developers.

## Here are the main contenders

### InterAct

#### PowerPad



InterAct's PowerPad is very similar to Microsoft's own controller. In fact, the PowerPad shares the best attributes of the Xbox Game Controller, including a 10-foot cable, rumble support, and eight analog buttons. Unlike the official controller, however, the PowerPad comes in three translucent colors: black, blue, and green.

#### Other Peripherals:

**ShadowBlade Arcade Stick**  
This shiny control stick brings the feel of the arcade home. It works especially well with fighting games, thanks to its programmable combo buttons.

**Rumble Stick**  
This flight stick features rumble support, a twist handle, and fully programmable buttons. Should go perfectly with Konami's *Air Force Delta Storm*.

### Thrustmaster

#### Upad



Thrustmaster's first entry into the Xbox peripheral market is certainly one of the most unique third-party control pads currently in development. Named after its peculiar "U" shape, this controller may be the most drastic alternative for all those who complain that the Xbox controller "doesn't feel right."

#### Other Peripherals:

**FreeStyler Board**  
Compatible with skateboarding and snowboarding games, this peripheral makes games feel more like real life – without all the nasty spleen injuries.

**NASCAR Racing Wheel**  
Although steering wheels for NASCAR games really only need to turn left, this wheel offers left and right turning directions – plus foot pedals and programmable buttons.

## How to escape from a well

...using only an Xbox – and 33 feet of climbing rope

Did you know that more people were injured last year from falling into wells than were injured in rogue circus-elf attacks? Thankfully, the Xbox is the perfect solution to this rampant problem. It's not just the world's most powerful videogame console – it may also be the tool that saves your life.

Stay tuned to the **Official Xbox Magazine** for more survival uses for the Xbox. Until then, here's what to do if you find yourself stuck in a well with nothing but an Xbox and 33 feet of climbing rope.

### Step One:

Get your bearings. The bottom of a well can be dark and confusing. First of all, determine which direction is "up." Generally, it is the direction you just came from.



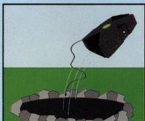
### Step Two:

Slowly climb in the "up" direction. Form your body in an "L" shape with your back flat against one wall. Take small "steps" up the wall with your hands and feet. Don't forget the Xbox and rope.



### Step Three:

Toss the Xbox outside the well. Make sure you're near the top of the well – and remember to hold onto the power cable or controller as you throw the Xbox.



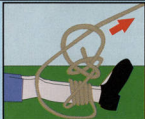
### Step Four:

Wait until others approach. Children and college students love two things most of all: hanging out near wells, and playing with new videogame consoles. Before long, someone will come by and try to take your Xbox home.



### Step Five:

Tie cord around body. New Xbox owners develop a strong attachments to their console. Even the smallest child will be able to drag you out of the well. **WARNING: DO NOT LOOP CORD AROUND NECK.**



### Step Six:

Escape. Use the 33-foot climbing rope to subdue and immobilize your rescuer so that you can escape with your Xbox.

## Control Freaks

People are always trying to revolutionize the way you control games. Here, we look at the absolute weirdest peripherals ever created.

### ■ Powerglove (Nintendo NES)

**The idea:** Controlling games with the clench of a fist – the kids will go crazy for this one. **But they didn't count on:** ...Very few teenage boys in the Eighties had a spare fist. Besides, it even *knew* it was uncontrollable and so featured a full joystick on the forearm.

### ■ R.O.B. the Robot (Nintendo NES)

**The idea:** It's a pet. It's a cybernetic buddy. It's the ultimate peripheral. **But they didn't count on:** ...All it could do was pick things up, swing around on its plastic hips, and drop things – like an old man buying chicken at a supermarket. And only two games ever took advantage of it – the desperately bad *Gyromite*, and another game so bad we forgot what it is.



### ■ 32X/Sega CD

**The idea:** You can plug anything into your Genesis. Including a separate console. **But they didn't count on:** ...If you stacked all the ill-fated Genesis peripherals (the 32X, the Sega CD, the Activator, a Game Shark, etc.), you could not only cause a rolling blackout, but you'd realize primitive man's dream of building a ladder to the moon.

### ■ TV Tuner (Game Gear)

**The idea:** Game Gear games are blurry and unplayable, so you may as well use the thing for something useful. **But they didn't count on:** ...at the time, all there was on TV was *Diffrent Strokes*, *Who's the Boss*, and very early episodes of *Saved by the Bell*. Good stuff like Fox's *When Cars Attack* and *World's Scariest Open Sores* hadn't even been invented yet.

## MadCatz

### Advanced Control Pad Pro



MadCatz's entry into the Xbox controller arena is the most rugged-looking of the bunch and perhaps the most versatile. It has all the features we'd expect from an Xbox game controller with the addition of macros that enable players to program combos, special commands, and other goodies onto a single button.

### Other Peripherals:

#### Light Gun

Although there aren't any light-gun games due for the Xbox, when they do get here, this gun will be ready. Until then, don't point it at people. It's impolite.

#### Panther X

The Panther X has been around for years on the PC market, so it seems natural that it would show up on the Xbox.

## Gamester

### Vortex Controller



The sleekest controller of the bunch is Gamester's (Radica's console hardware group) Vortex Controller. The key feature that stands out on this polished steel controller pad is its unique indented digital pad. After a few hundred rounds of *Dead or Alive 3*, your thumbs may thank you.

### Other Peripherals:

#### Pro Racer Hand Held Wheel

Gamester certainly isn't playing by the rules when it comes to controller design. Judging by the look of the steering-column-less Pro Racer Hand Held Wheel, this

company is into trying new things. The steering mechanism works as follows: the right side of the Pro Racer is locked in place while the left half moves a full 50 degrees in either direction.



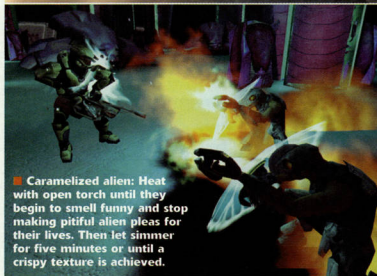
## After seeing Halo, the real world looks ugly

# Halo

**M**icrosoft's declared intention is to blur genre boundaries with its Xbox

portfolio and promote every title in its own right. While it would be ridiculous to argue that *Halo* does not largely conform to the first-person shooter genre, it does have plenty of other strings to its bow. Third-person elements, the control of mounted weapons, seamless transition between the great outdoors and the subterranean depths of complex bases, and the ability to pilot a variety of vehicles all punch satisfying holes in the confining walls of accepted shoot-'em-up rules.

*Halo* may need little introduction to anyone who has an interest in PC games. Originally announced for that platform nearly two years ago, *Halo* will now shine first on Xbox. It's no exaggeration to say that Bungie's *Halo* was already one of the most hotly anticipated shooters in the market well before Microsoft absorbed Bungie into its Seattle headquarters, and it's difficult



■ Caramelized alien: Heat with open torch until they begin to smell funny and stop making pitiful alien pleas for their lives. Then let simmer for five minutes or until a crispy texture is achieved.

to imagine a bigger or better launch title for shooter fans. No pier-end, knuckle-ugly bantam-weight, *Halo* is shaping up to be a real prizefighter: to say that PC owners are a little bit jealous is like saying that outer space is a little bit big.

And of course space is far more than a little bit big. However, in *Halo*, it isn't big enough to keep humans from running into a wide variety of hostile alien races. At the tail end of an intergalactic war, the cybernetically enhanced Marine

warrior that you play in the game is pursued across the cold heavens to crash-land on an artificial ring-world, or Halo. Imagine the flat rim of a spokeless wheel. Imagine that it's 10,000 km in diameter and floating in space. Imagine living on the inside plane of that wheel in a terraformed, multi-climatic landscape of seas, beaches, mountain ranges, forests, and plains, with high-tech military bases worming deep into the artificial crust. This ring is Halo, and it's here that you and a desperate army of scattered Marines must make a stand against the alien horde, discovering the secrets of this world as you fight to survive, using proprietary – as well as captured – weaponry, technology, and vehicles.

Bungie has now got the enemies to a stage where they

### TRACK RECORD

DEVELOPER: Bungie PUBLISHER: Microsoft RELEASE DATE: Launch

**ALSO WORKING ON:** Rumored to be working on a Xbox-only title based on the *Halo* engine that involves castles and catapults – but you didn't hear that from us.

**WHO ARE THEY?:** A basement shop that's made it to the big time. Their decade of work spans from Mac shooter *Marathon* to games on next-gen consoles such as *Oni* and *Halo*.

GAME: SYSTEM: SCORE:

*Myth series* PC/Mac 7/10

*Oni* PC/Mac/PS2 8/10

AVERAGE: 7.5





■ See a cool weapon on an alien and wish you had one yourself? No problem, just figure out a way to kill 'em and the weapon is yours.



■ Back-seat drivers are actually welcome in *Halo*, since they provide much needed cover fire as you career through levels.



■ Bored by the dull human vehicles? *Halo* lets you "borrow" some alien craft.



## In Detail: The power of Xbox



**PARTICLE EFFECTS**  
(snowflakes)

**BUMP MAPPING**  
(ice and armor)

**REFLECTION MAPPING**  
(helmet and ice)

■ This is a brand-new vehicle, the human tank. Six Marines can hop on this massive tank – it features a giant turret controlled by the driver and a manned chain gun for that extra firing power.

# Previews

## Gunning for glory

On a recent trip to Xbox HQ, we got an opportunity to play a couple of amazing new levels and rip-through alien enemies with the (as-of-now) complete *Halo* arsenal. To wit:



**SNIPER RIFLE:** Alien heads were popping with the precision of the multiple levels of zoom sniper rifle.



**ROCKET LAUNCHER:** Loads two rockets at once and animates beautifully as you clear entire rooms with the massive, fiery explosion.



**FLAMETHROWER:** Possibly the most impressive (and outright fun) weapon, we spent

some time deep-frying aliens with this tasty (or should we say tasty) weapon.



**NEEDLER:** This alien weapon (which you can lift off the bodies of dearly departed alien freaks) fires multiple charges that track down the target and explode in its body for a satisfying, stunning kill.

**ASSAULT RIFLE:** This is the standard weapon of all standard weapons. It has a real-time ammo display, a built-in flashlight, and you can even use the butt of the rifle on heads of enemies up close.

Filling out the armory for *Halo* are the fuel rod gun, a gravity rifle, and the trusty shotgun.

react to sound and light. They are also seeking cover if they see you doing so first, searching in packs, retreating in squad formations, and focussing searches intelligently. When an alien is killed, the AI decides whether it will drop its weapon for you to pick up or go into a gripping death spasm and loose off dangerously random volleys of ordnance. An ultra-realistic animation system

(inverse kinematics, which allows body models to react to impact) should make these scenes morbidly convincing.

AI also plays an important part with your fellow Marines. In the single-player game, you will encounter plenty of soldiers who will help you out using cooperative AI. The best example yet demonstrated concerns the buggy, which has a rear-mounted high-caliber

machine gun. While you drive, an AI Marine can operate the turret and give great protection from any aliens encountered en route. The single-player missions will also be playable in multiplayer cooperative mode – an exciting promise indeed. In four-way split-screen set-up, you can play with friends as a Marine squad, all riding in vehicles (including tanks and drop-ships) with one driving, others riding shotgun, and one using a mounted gun. You can even play 16-players over an Xbox LAN network as shown at this year's E3. There will also be more standard deathmatch and capture-the-flag games along with a rumored multiplayer racing game.

*Halo* is as ambitious as it is intelligent and beautiful. It has the potential to be the best shooter ever made for any platform, but happily for us, it's chosen to touch down on Xbox. There's no better reason to strap yourself in and count down to launch.

— Nathan Jones

■ It's okay for children to mercilessly kill aliens, Nazis, and boy bands because they are bad.





## GAME POTENTIAL

### LOOKS GOOD

- Deformable terrain – create real craters
- Real physics – hit a tree, and get thrown through the windshield
- Active camouflage – Predator-style semi-invisibility
- Umbra effect – sun shines realistically through leaves and branches
- Minute detail – spot, if you can, the names and firing-pin dents on shell casings

### NEEDS WORK

- Adjustable turning speed on vehicles – presently set very slow
- Full AI implementation is needed – it's already impressive, but we want more.
- The game – every time we see *Halo* it looks better; now we want to start seeing more gameplay
- Umm, that's all we can think of.

### FINAL THOUGHTS

Although there's still a lot to be polished in *Halo*, the fundamental structure is impressively solid and the visual skin absolutely kissable. After your first encounter with the game, you can't help wanting to return for a good long snog.

### ODDS ARE...

*Halo* will be literally out of this world.

### WANT MORE?

Tune in to our first issue (on sale September 25) and get a full hands-on report on *Halo* and 11 other Xbox launch titles.

■ Just another day at the office for a cybernetic Marine on a planet full of aliens. Ho hum.

## Freeze-frame

LEVEL: 3 HOURS IN: 3.5

OBJECTIVE: Rescue a captain from alien clutches

As we join the game, you've just come around a quiet corner and been ambushed by a pack of aliens.

**1** You are here – and in a boatload of trouble. At this point you need to find cover behind some rocks and fast.

**2** Thankfully, these little aliens tend to congregate in packs – perfect for a grenade or rocket launcher. Toss a grenade into the crowd, watch 'em hopelessly dive for cover, and then blow it all sky high.

**3** The manned (err... aliened) alien turret is deadly and accurate. After finding cover, you should zoom in and take out the alien in the turret. Beware: other aliens will jump in the turret if you give them a chance.



# The Magazine

Since this is only a sixteen-page sample of what you can expect to see in the full-fledged debut issue of **Official Xbox Magazine**, we thought we'd address some of your burning questions about the new publication. And what better way than an informal, yet deliberately sexy, Q&A session?

**Q: If you're official, won't that affect the way you guys cover games? Are you working for "the man"?**

**A:** Being official will *definitely* affect the way we cover games. Because we're "official," it means we'll get the big exclusives, have inside information, and generally know what the hell we're talking about. Additionally, being official gives us the power to be absolutely independent. We won't back down because an advertiser wants a "nicer" score, and we will always be able to deliver the absolute truth. We answer to the readers and nobody else.

As for working for "the man," well, of course we are. Everybody works for "the man," because "the man" gives out paychecks. We like paychecks. But as with

Mr. Burns and Homer Simpson, "the man" has no idea what we actually get up to...

**Q: What will you guys have that other magazines won't?**

**A:** An Xbox Game Disc, which is the only way you can test out Xbox games (details below). The most in-depth information on everything Xbox – and we'll have it first. We'll also be the most engaging, entertaining, and informative magazine on the planet. Of course, this is all talk and doesn't mean a thing, so we urge you to pick up a copy of our first issue and see for yourself. We guarantee you that we are the only magazine Xbox gamers will ever need.

**Q: What's it going to look like?**

**A:** It'll be pretty and it will have content in it. The magazine is being put together by sensitive, tumultuous artist and *Next Gen* veteran Mike Wilmoth and his intrepid Associate Art Director Juliann Brown, formerly of radical hipster magazine *TokyoPop*. It'll look like this, only more fabulous.

**Q: How much will it cost?**

**A:** What's money when it comes to art? Each month you'll receive little pieces of our lives printed neatly on dead trees then delivered to your doorstep (if you subscribe) – and



## The Xbox Game Disc

**Q: What do I get on my Official Xbox Magazine Game Disc?**

**A:** The Premiere Issue of the **Official Xbox Magazine** (on sale Nov. 6) will contain an Xbox Game Disc, which means you can pop it in and play it on your Xbox. Want to see Xbox games in beautiful full-screen crystal-clear motion? Be prepared to hit the floor when you

view our trailers and peruse our slickly styled interface. It's just the thing to get you up-to-speed about Xbox right when the console launches.

So you think that sounds good? Well, our second Xbox Game Disc (on sale Dec. 4) is fully loaded with amazing (and did we mention playable?) demos, jaw-dropping in-game footage, and a ton of very cool surprises.

Every single month after that we will deliver a top-notch magazine *and* a disc full of games you can play. What else do you want?

**Q: Is the disc a DVD or a CD?**

**A:** Although Microsoft has officially labeled it a "Game Disc," underneath it all, the **Official Xbox Magazine** Game Disc is (to get technical for a moment) a DVD-9. This hefty format allows for an impressive 8.5 GB of storage. Each DVD-9 disc is single-sided, but dual layered, allowing for roughly twice the amount of



storage of a standard DVD-5. So, are you imagining how many stunning demos can fit onto one of them? As you may have guessed – a helluva lot.

**Q: Do I have to subscribe to get the disc?**

**A:** Nope. The disc and magazine will be available at newsstands if that's your preference. However, in order to get the disc, you *do* have to buy the magazine (which isn't so bad, is it?) – discs are not sold separately.



really, what kind of value do you put on our lives?

Seriously, though, we'll have different prices for the magazine depending on your level of commitment. At newsstand, our special Preview Issue (without disc) will be a paltry \$4.99; our Premiere Issue and beyond will be retailing for \$7.99 with our exclusive Xbox Game Disc. We're still working on subscription prices, but we do know that "you'll save [blank] off the cover price if you act now," and there will also be the option to subscribe to an ultra-cheap "naked" edition that comes without a disc. No matter what you pay for our magazine it'll be worth its weight in gold for what it saves you in the long run. Test out games on our disc, steer clear of the unthinkable "bad" Xbox games with our bluntly honest reviews, and wring every last drop of enjoyment out of your Xbox with every single issue.

#### Q: Where can I subscribe?

**A:** Go to [www.xbox.com](http://www.xbox.com) and see our special offer – or simply fill out that postage-paid card that just fell out of the magazine a few seconds ago. Either way, do it now before we're all sold out.

#### Q: How will readers interact with the magazine?



**A:** By holding it, caressing it, and whispering sweet nothings to it. Actually, that's a little weird, so stop it already. One of the big ideas behind the **Official Xbox**

## Meet the Peeps

### Q: Who's writing this stuff, and what makes them qualified?

**A:** Without blowing our own horn, this is an all-star team, made up of some of the longest-serving veterans in the industry. Mike Salmon heads up the team, having worked previously on beloved magazines like *PC Accelerator* and *Ultra Game Players*, and he's supported by Francesca Reyes, formerly of *Official Sega Dreamcast Magazine*, and (gasp!) Sony Computer

Entertainment. Joining her are Dan Egger of *Daily Radar* and *PC Accelerator* infamy, Frank O'Connor, also from *Ultra Game Players*, Daily Radar, and trade magazine *Games Business*, and Dave Rees, DVD Disk Editor extraordinaire, hailing from *PC Gamer* and *Incite PC Games*.

Between them, these guys have more than 30 man-years of reviewing, previewing, and playing games on every system from the Magnavox Odyssey to the very pinnacle of gaming – the Xbox.



■ Left to right: Mike Salmon, Francesca Reyes, Dan Egger, Frank O'Connor, Dave Rees

**Magazine** is to make a magazine that truly serves the readers and becomes the written word for the growing Xbox community. We want the magazine to make your games better and we want you to make the magazine better.

That means meaningful letters (as well as the occasional insane rant), reader challenges, rich, elaborate strategy guides, as well as quick and dirty cheats... all this



and a bunch of disc interaction so secret and ambitious, we'd have to kill ourselves for even thinking of telling you now.

You can start getting involved by going to [www.xbox.com](http://www.xbox.com) to subscribe; very soon we'll be asking you to participate in polls, forums, letters, and Q&A on our own site.

## Just Answers

In an effort to save time and avoid any sort of real communication, we've anticipated other questions you will have come up with while reading this fine mini-mag and answered them for you. It's kinda like we're seeing into the future or something. Anyway, feel free to think of any questions and then simply match that question with the most suitable answer from below:

- Yes, it does play DVD movies, you need to buy the remote.
- Yup, for movies and games.
- Porn DVDs are the same as regular DVDs.
- It's just the layer switching, it happens on normal players too.
- Sure, as long as it isn't too heavy.
- Well, it wouldn't hurt the Xbox – but it does sound a bit dangerous for you.
- Nope, the discs are the wrong size.
- Try blowing on it.

## Game Reviews

### Q: How are you guys going to review games?

**A:** Reviews will be the cornerstone of the magazine, with a simple-yet-elegant "out of ten" scoring system, but backed up with very detailed information on things like graphics, sound design, and immersion. They'll always be written by genre experts, who know the themes and styles of game types they're reviewing, and they'll be packed to bursting with exactly the information you need to make the right purchase decision. Add to

that the fact that you'll often be able to actually play the game on our demo disc, and it's clear that **Official Xbox Magazine** is the best place to go for reviews.





## Game Disc

# The Magic Disc

*There are probably some technical experts who could explain in bore-iffic detail how we manage to stuff an 8.47GB disc full of Xbox goodness, but to the technologically retarded (that'd be us), it all seems like black magic. Either way, we think you'll find that the Xbox Game Disc is the single best thing ever invented by man or beast. Pick up the Premiere Issue and judge for yourself.*



#### On your Official Xbox Magazine Game Disc every month:

- Playable game demos
- Crystal-clear DVD audio and video
- Cool, hidden goodies
- Amazing game trailers
- Interviews, features, and more!

#### Not on your Official Xbox Magazine Game Disc every month:

- PlayStation2 playable games
- The *Kamautra*
- Subliminal messages to control your mind (or are there?)

## Your only source for Xbox game demos and trailers

Behold the **Official Xbox Magazine** Game Disc and prepare to experience the games you've been drooling over for months. Every issue (except our Preview Issue - see below) of **Official Xbox Magazine** comes with an Xbox Game Disc packed with trailers and playable demos that you won't get anywhere else. And forget everything you've come to understand about interactive interfaces. Our easy-to-use interface is presented in a brilliant Xbox-quality 3D display.

## Your First Time

It's been said over and over again... the Xbox is the most powerful system ever. Want proof? Just wait until you take a gander at what's around the corner... Our special Preview Issue (on sale September 25) will hit store shelves several weeks before the Xbox is available, and it will showcase all the wondrous glory that is Xbox. Exclusive screenshots, useful strategies, in-depth features, and more Xbox games than you can even fathom. Since you couldn't possibly have an Xbox yet, our Preview Issue won't contain a disc. However, it will have every morsel of information on the Xbox, the games, and why you should care.



■ Shrek



■ Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2X

## It only gets better

When you finally pick up that Xbox and a copy of *Halo* this November, there'll be plenty of reason to rejoice. But let's face it: one game is never enough. Grab our Premiere Issue of **Official Xbox Magazine** and feast your hungry eyes on game footage from the whole range of Xbox titles you'll be drooling over. Only here will you be able to see jaw-dropping previews of *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2X*, *Arctic Thunder*, *Dead or Alive 3*, *Cel Damage*, *Project Gotham*, *Lord of the Rings*, *Air Force Delta Storm*, and *NHL Hitz*.

\* List is subject to radical changes at our whim.



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**XBOX**  
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# XBOX™

## Official Xbox Magazine

# Be prepared. Be very prepared.

On November 8, 2001, Microsoft will unleash the Xbox Video Game Console – the most powerful, flexible, and staggering entertainment system ever conceived. But to immerse yourself fully in the world of Xbox, you're going to need the **Official Xbox Magazine**. On sale September 25, the magazine will be available even before the console. Why? To give you a chance to

beef up your Xbox knowledge, preview the games, and see why the Xbox is oh-so-deserving of that spot under your TV.

After the system launch, you'll have to check in with the ultimate Xbox authority – the **Official Xbox Magazine** – to really keep up to date on what's happening in the Xbox world. It's a publication dedicated to Xbox gamers, presenting the very best

news, interviews, and previews of jaw-dropping new Xbox software. We'll have the in-depth features, comprehensive reviews, and secret access that only the Official magazine can bring you – with the independent editorial voice of a true fan. Paired with the **Official Xbox Magazine** Game Disc (see below), newsletter, and website, it's the ultimate Xbox source.

### The Official Xbox Magazine Newsletter

There's one simple way to keep up to date with what's going on in the world of Xbox, and the Official Xbox Magazine, and that's to sign up for our free email newsletter. Packed full of hot gossip, cool information, and razor-sharp screens from the latest Xbox games, it's the essential tool for any Xbox fan, and it's delivered free to your email inbox. Too good to be true? Find out for yourself by signing up at:

[www.xbox.com](http://www.xbox.com)

### The Official Xbox Magazine Game Disc

One of the things that makes the **Official Xbox Magazine** unique is the inclusion every month of the Xbox Game Disc packed with game movies, demos, and downloads. Making full use of the incredible Xbox hard drive and online technology, the Game Disc will also interact with you, the reader, featuring downloadable cheats, game challenges and essential secrets. The **Official Xbox Magazine** Game Disc will become the ultimate gaming resource for Xbox players. The Xbox Game Disc is going to be available in our Premiere Issue (on sale November 6) and will be the only way you can test-drive the best the Xbox has to offer.



### SUBSCRIBE!

The easiest, cheapest, and fastest way to receive your **Official Xbox Magazine** is to subscribe. That way you can make sure that no undeserving miscreant snags the last copy at the local newsstand.

To subscribe to the magazine, check out the subscription offer available at:

[www.xbox.com](http://www.xbox.com)



## NASCAR Heat

■ Platform: **PlayStation 2** ■ Publisher: **Informatics**

■ Developer: **Monster Games, Inc.**

While there's more to NASCAR than simply going fast and turning left, there isn't a whole lot more. *NASCAR Heat* tries valiantly to bring the sport to a wider audience and the nice thing is that it largely succeeds. One of the most enjoyable features is "Beat the Heat," in which you complete 36 challenges for bronze, silver, or gold cups.

However, despite the imaginative efforts of the developers and the actual NASCAR drivers who helped them, even those challenges soon wear thin, as they consist almost entirely of coming from the back of the pack with a few laps to go. A "Beat the Pro" section enables you to race against phantom cars driven by AI pros and gives you tips on how to drive that perfect line. Naturally there's also a Career mode that lets you create a driver and race a full season.



■ If driving in a big circle is your idea of fun, *NASCAR Heat* pulls it off pretty well

Yet there are also some small but important details missing. Only 19 of the 23 tracks in the Winston Cup circuit are featured, although it includes the big ones like Daytona. It's also rather bland visually with minimal reflection-mapping on the cars, few details around the tracks, generic sky textures, and mediocre sound. Yet the physics model is forgiving in normal mode, and spot-on in expert. Overall this is a solid and accurate driving sim that will challenge casual players and mesmerize NASCAR junkies. — Jim Preston

**NextGen** ★★★★★

**Bottom Line:** It lacks the complete details to be the best, but it's still an accurate and fun way to drive fast and to the left.

## MX 2002 Featuring Ricky Carmichael

■ Platform: **PlayStation 2** ■ Publisher: **THQ**

■ Developer: **Pacific Coast Power & Light**

Pacific Coast Power & Light deserve some credit. *MX 2002 Featuring Ricky Carmichael* is an excellent balance of fun and realism. The basic setup will be familiar to any race fan. Exhibition, Career, and various extra challenges make up the bulk of the game.

But the real beauty of *MX 2002* is the superb control of the bike itself. To pull off a wheelie, you have to realistically work the clutch and the gas, rather than simply press a button. Likewise, powersliding and clutch-popping are handled wonderfully. There is also a metric ton of extra unlockable tracks, and the fun Trick and Challenge modes keep the replayability high.

Graphically *MX 2002* is nice, but not extraordinary. Many of the tracks do indeed look and play like their real-world counterparts, but



■ The trick system is remarkably flexible, but they can be kind of difficult to pull off

the tracks are mostly barren of any significant level of detail — a sacrifice likely made to keep the game running at a solid 60fps.

Our other complaint is that the trick system is too cumbersome. Tricks require holding down L2 or R2 while trying to press multiple buttons with your thumb. Even after hours of practice we still couldn't reliably execute some moves — though when we did, it was a ton of fun. — Jim Preston

**NextGen** ★★★★★

**Bottom Line:** Ordinary graphics and an awkward stunt system are the only drawbacks in an otherwise fast and fun day in the dirt.

■ PLAYSTATION 2

PLAYSTATION 2 **Finals**

## Resident Evil Code: Veronica X

■ Publisher: **Capcom** ■ Developer: **Capcom**

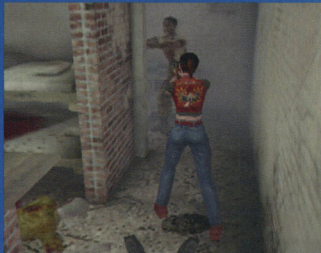
Zombies can only scare a gal for so long

■ If you played the Dreamcast version, *Veronica X* offers barely enough extras to warrant attention. Of course, if you didn't, it's still a hell of a ride



→ H. P. Lovecraft once said, "The oldest emotion known to man is fear, and the strongest fear is fear of the unknown." Unfortunately, that adage pegs *Resident Evil Code: Veronica X* as less than frightening. A port of the original Dreamcast incarnation of the latest in the *Resident Evil* series, *Veronica* on PS2 offers nothing unknown. The graphics that were once splendid are beginning to seem dated; the gameplay is unchanged since *Resident Evil 2*; and we've all long ago become desensitized to the sight of the living dead and their shuffling. Mostly, this will appeal to fans of the series who missed *Veronica* on Dreamcast.

In many ways this is still a terrific game, but it hardly represents any progress for the genre. The control scheme is increasingly annoying in an action title, allowing the bare minimum of maneuverability. The levels are non-interactive, pre-rendered



■ Actually, we are getting a little tired of killing zombies

works of art, and the camera is still the worst enemy in the game, constantly blocking your view of the attacking hordes. Most importantly, though, we're just not scared anymore of the same demonic dogs jumping out at us in the same way. Still, for diehard fans of *Resident Evil* or anyone who missed it on Dreamcast, this definitely delivers. With higher polygon counts during in-game cut scenes, new plotlines, and over 10 minutes of footage not seen in the Dreamcast version, there's enough here to lure fans of the original into at least a rental. Plus, if you're just looking for more zombies to blast, *X* certainly marks the spot.

— Daniel Erickson

**NextGen** ★★★★★

**Bottom Line:** It's just more of the same, but that's probably more than enough for most.

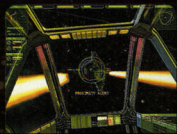


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# PLAY OR BE PLAYED



## the electric playground

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## Soldier of Fortune

■ Platform: **Dreamcast** ■ Publisher: **Cave**

■ Developer: **Runehart/Raven**

Now that *Half-Life* will have no life on Dreamcast, fans of the fading platform have to make do with *Soldier of Fortune*, a ridiculously violent shooter ported from PC. The original developer, Raven, created a new skeletal system that allows limbs and heads to be blown off in a colorful spray of blood. However, this level of gore is the only thing that distinguishes *Soldier of Fortune* from its competition.

The move to Dreamcast means lower resolution, sparser environments, thin sound, and long, long load times. *Soldier of Fortune* thankfully supports the Dreamcast keyboard and mouse, which is the ideal way to play the game, but most will be stuck using the standard gamepad. Nonetheless, the developers have done a fine job with the controls, with one exception: There is a "next weapon" button, but no "previous weapon" button. So switching weapons during a firefight means having to rotate forward



■ **It's fast-paced and laughably violent, but sometimes you need a game like *Soldier of Fortune***

through your entire arsenal — and heaven help you should you switch accidentally while in the heat of battle. Considering that such an easy mistake usually means death, and considering that the game will even rotate to weapons for which you don't have any ammo, the result is rather irritating.

Beyond that, the gameplay is straightforward and rather fun: Gather weapons and shoot at the bad guys. It's hardly revolutionary, and certainly not for younger gamers, but Dreamcast owners looking for that last shot of action will be satisfied. — Jim Preston

➔ **NextGen** ★★★★★

**Bottom Line:** An OK port of an OK game.

## Sports Jam

■ Platform: **Dreamcast** ■ Publisher: **Agetec** ■ Developer: **SNK**

Reminiscent of the classic Games series from Epyx (*Winter, Summer, and California*) that were the ruin of many a Commodore 64 joystick, *Sports Jam* from Agetec is a collection of 12 mini-games, each with its own rule set, tacked together to form a semi-cohesive whole.

The games include events from major sports like golf and tennis, and a few wildcards like a two-lap bicycle race. Most of them are easy to get the hang of, requiring little more than aiming with the D-pad and timing the button presses. Some of the games, though, demand the incessant tap-tapping of the A-button — a task the Dreamcast controller doesn't accommodate very well. You have to shift the controller around so that the index finger does the work in order to play these games.

As you might expect from a product that tries to jam (pun



■ **Taken in small doses, *Sports Jam* makes a nice little diversion**

intended) too much baloney into too small a sack, the games vary in quality both in how they look and how they play. However, none are notably bad enough in either category that you would want to avoid them (assuming you don't mind a sore tapping finger). Credit must also be given to the Custom mode, which gives you 12 slots to fill in as you choose, since the Arcade mode limits you to four challenges only (and features one of the most annoying announcers in gaming history). — Rob Smoak

➔ **NextGen** ★★★★★

**Bottom Line:** Essentially a group of sports-based Java applets, there's enough charm and challenge to keep you coming back to improve your score.

■ DREAMCAST

## Floigan Brothers: Moigle's Secret Project

■ Publisher: **Sega** ■ Developer: **Visual Concepts**

**Brother, can you spare a paradigm?**



■ **The graphics are undeniably pretty, but the gameplay sure is muddled. Oh, and the Floigan junkyard is also being invaded by evil cats (below right) — go figure**

➔ *Floigan Brothers* aims for a new style of gameplay, but never quite gets there or lives up to that promise. You control Hoigle Floigan, the smaller and nominally smarter of the two brothers. Moigle Floigan is bigger and dumber but is also, as they say, "mechanical." He has plans for a mysterious device and needs a total of seven parts to complete it. So being the good brother you are, you go scavenging around the Floigan junkyard.

The game is one part action and two parts adventure as you spend most of your time indirectly manipulating Moigle (who has a mind of his own) into opening up new areas. Some of the solutions are creative, if odd: Insult him until he cries enough tears to literally fill a river, or punch him until he's angry enough to throw you up to an inaccessible platform. He also gets hungry from time to time, and has a deep-seated need to play games like *Tag* and *High Five*. If you win these games, you get



points you can use to bribe him or teach him new skills.

For the most part, the goals are sort of obscure but not hard to figure out after enough running around. The character animation is actually excellent, and the voice acting is pretty good, although the humor never rises above sophomoric.

In fact, *Floigan Brothers* might have come up a winner if it weren't for a couple of things. First, it really needed further tuning and balancing. The contextual control is a little loose,



and some tasks are just kind of tedious and not much fun. Perhaps worst of all, though, it just doesn't last long, and a reasonably seasoned gamer can beat it in a day or less. We'd say this would be great for younger kids, except that the esoteric gameplay is likely to be a bit beyond them. — Jeff Lundrigan

➔ **NextGen** ★★★★★

**Bottom Line:** This obviously needed to cook a bit longer.



■ The cool thing is that you can take command of any unit at any time and blast stuff yourself

■ PC

## Hostile Waters: Antaeus Rising

■ Publisher: Interplay ■ Developer: Rage

**Uplifting warfare**

→ In 30 years, peace will reign on Earth. Thanks to the miracle of nanotechnology, anything people could want is free for the taking. But some people are never happy, and in *Hostile Waters: Antaeus Rising*, you're given command of an aircraft carrier in charge of coordinating attacks against those who feel peace is detrimental to their plans.

As a rule, the strategy in an RTS involves building hordes of troops and

sending them in wave after wave against the enemy. In *Antaeus Rising*, you have a limited number of "Soulcatchers," chips encoded with the brain functions of dead soldiers, which you implant into military units such as helicopters and tanks. The Soulcatchers have distinct personalities and abilities that increase the more you use them, so instead of waves of anonymous units, you have to carefully manage individual (if vaguely undead) heroes.

Players use a map screen to order the troops, then watch the battle either from the deck of the carrier or by following an

individual unit. It's also possible to take direct control of any unit at any time, and the gorgeous 3D graphics and fantastic sound add such an ambience to the game that it feels as if you're actually in the middle of combat. Enemy AI is merely adequate, but the Soulcatchers often seem as if real people are behind the controls. Add in a unique interface and a great storyline, and even the surprising (and disappointing) lack of a multiplayer mode can't keep *Antaeus Rising* from being one of the best, most original realtime strategy games to come along in some time.

— Carla Harker

NextGen ★★★★★

**Bottom Line:** You'll feel like a real battlefield general when you take to the field in *Antaeus Rising*.



■ The Salamander hovercraft is just one of the many units available

## Gangsters 2

■ Platform: PC ■ Publisher: Eldos ■ Developer: Hot House Creations

Much like the original, *Gangsters 2* again proves a brilliant idea can be bungled. Its tale of bloody revenge and the thrill of building up a criminal empire from scratch are again overshadowed by faulty game design and terrible AI.

This is a realtime strategy game in which nothing happens for long stretches, and there's no way to speed up the clock. The results are such stimulating situations as waiting around for a particular gangster to arrive or just killing time until you heal.

To be fair, some problems from the original have been cleaned up, especially the level of feedback. Instead of waiting for weekly meetings to find out how your empire is doing, you can check the papers every day or check in with your advisor any time.



■ This should be an easy drive-by, but thanks to terrible pathfinding it's a near-impossible chore

What you cannot do, however, is force your gangsters to behave at all intelligently. Tell a group of gangsters to shoot someone and one of them will, without fail, spin in a couple circles first. Tell a car on stakeout to move a couple feet so as not to be seen, and the driver will insist on going around the block, drawing a hall of gunfire. It'd almost be funny if it weren't so annoying. — Daniel Erickson

NextGen ★★☆☆☆

**Bottom Line:** Another bad stab at a goodfella's idea.

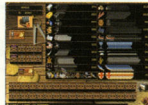
## Merchant Prince II

■ Platform: PC ■ Publisher: Talonsoft ■ Developer: Holistic Design

In 1993, a turn-based strategy game was released for DOS called *Merchant Prince*. It was a very good political and economic strategy game that eschewed the idea that all conflicts had to involve war. Eight years later, we have *Merchant Prince II*, a Windows version of the same game with a few enhancements. That's not necessarily a bad thing.

Gameplay is much the same as in the original. You buy low and sell high, develop trade routes, pay off politicians, bribe other players, and even cause the occasional plague if you're so inclined. It's a solid lesson in supply and demand, with political intrigue and backstabbing thrown in.

About the only thing new to this version is a tech tree, but you don't even have to research anything. Everything can be bought if the price is right — and why research for better ships when you can just buy them outright? There's no army development, as all the conflicts are handled off-



■ Believe it or not, this is as exciting a screenshot as you're likely to find for *Merchant Prince II*

screen and you're told the results, which depend on how much you spent on your army (rather than time spent training, for example), whether you bribed the opposing leaders, etc. It's actually an interesting twist on a familiar style.

Graphically, though, don't expect anything that wasn't there in 1993. There are a few flourishes, but this looks like the same game from almost a decade ago. There are new scenarios, a random scenario generator, the tech tree, and that's it. Still, if you're looking for a challenge and don't mind the lack of visual pizzazz, this ends up being good enough. — Kevin Rice

NextGen ★★★★★

**Bottom Line:** It's virtually the same game it was eight years ago, designed to run under Windows instead of DOS, but in the end it's still an entertaining, unique turn-based strategy.



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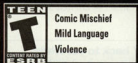
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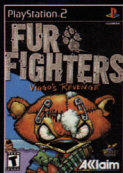
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■ If the Allies and Axis had been as disorganized as the typical schmoes here, the war would either never have ended or never begun



■ PC-ONLINE

## World War II Online: Blitzkrieg

■ Publisher: Strategy First ■ Developer: Cornered Rat Software

### Overwhelming options, underwhelming fun

→ Cornered Rat Software labels this game an MM-FPS, which it's not. Strategy First is known for its quality RTS titles, but this isn't one of them. So what exactly is WWI Online? It's a realtime, massively multiplayer, realistic wargame set in a persistent world with real geographical locations set in 1940 that happens to have a first-person view. It also offers the ability to play as infantry, a tank driver or gunner, a bomber, or nearly any other frontline position you can think of. It's a great concept, but the result is a muddled, mediocre mess.

The very first problem here is the immediate need to download a whopping 70MB patch to even play it. Then you have to learn how to play, but while the manuals are thick on paper, they're thin on content. Nearly every position in the

game requires a completely different control scheme, and piloting tanks and planes is really only viable if you have a joystick. Instead of making the game accessible, the developers opted for strict adherence to realism, making the time spent learning to play unnecessarily long.

Once you're comfortable enough to actually join a game, finding a set of teammates with a good level of coherence is a struggle. Most FPS-style games allow for 32 players maximum per side, and it's often difficult enough to get that many working together. Now try that with a few thousand players at once. The game is like high school. There are cliques of people

that get along, but if you're not in one, you either form your own groups with the other "outcasts" or go it solo. Neither option will prove very fruitful.

Everything is very accurately modeled and located, down to actual airfield placements and tank and aircraft dimensions. Even major buildings are recognizable. The graphics themselves are merely adequate, though perhaps that's to be expected in a game that can handle so many players at once.

Turn-based wargames may get a kick out of this attention to authenticity, but obviously it's aimed at the action market.

Unfortunately, it's missed its mark.

— Kevin Rice

E<sup>Next</sup>Gen ★★☆☆☆

**Bottom Line:** A huge learning curve coupled with low gratification and zero organization make this a title only for those with the patience of a saint.

## Microsoft Train Simulator

■ Platform: PC ■ Publisher: Microsoft ■ Developer: Microsoft

A train simulator? Isn't that a trifle mundane? What's next? School buses? Ferry boats? Before you begin sneering, take a closer look. After all, these are the same folks who brought us Microsoft Flight Simulator, and oddly enough, they're on the right track with this train sim, too.

Wait until you barrel down the track with 6,000 tons behind you, rolling landscapes ahead of you, changing weather and light conditions overhead, and realistic sounds in your ears. You can settle back as a passenger and explore the route, or take charge as an engineer for several special missions on each line. You'll transport royalty, or try to make scheduled stops in lousy weather, or even solve a murder mystery on the Orient Express.



■ This ain't your daddy's choo-choo set — yet strangely, it carries a lot of the same thrill

You get to choose from some of the world's most famous steam engines, diesels, and electric bullet trains over six different American, European, and Japanese rail routes. If nostalgia is your thing, you'll be positively giddy. So bring on those buses and ferry boats. A train sim may seem tame to hardcore gamers, but it's sure to build a head of steam for regular players and train fanatics. — John Lee

E<sup>Next</sup>Gen ★★★★★

**Bottom Line:** All aboard for HO scale fans, trainpoters, and nostalgic rail buffs. Train haters, however, may prefer the old cliché, "Run for the roundhouse, boys. They can't corner you there."

## Offroad Redneck Racing

■ Platform: PC ■ Publisher: Interplay Entertainment

■ Developer: Rage Software

Want a racing game with a twist? How about yahos tearing up the Everglades with loud, ugly 4x4s? If that's appealing, then Offroad Redneck Racing may be your guilty thrill of the month.

This is simple as hell. You drive jeeps, buggies, pickups, and off-road Beetles, busting through sand, mud, gravel, boxes — we're talking backwoods. You race a circuit of six locations, and if you finish with sufficient points, you might be lucky enough to have the Horny Toads or the Polecats invite you to join their teams. As you advance in circuits, the competition gets better and your trucks get meaner.

The courses are good-looking bits of Southern scenery, but despite the variety, ORR's gameplay suffers from a boring similitude.



■ Backwoods, marry-your-cousin style racing at its finest — whatever that means...

Whether you're racing in dunes or dirt, you're still just racing around. Another problem is the seriously dragging framerate, especially when all six cars are onscreen.

What you see here is what you get: redneck sim. Eventually the novelty wears off and the smell of grease and chaw is too much to handle, but for a decent length of time it's a fun, different little racer. — Emmett Schlovene

E<sup>Next</sup>Gen ★★☆☆☆

**Bottom Line:** Not bad for gettin' back to yer white-trash roots, but it certainly doesn't have the staying power of a great racer.

HEY!!! Do you need some

# Cool Looking Artwork?

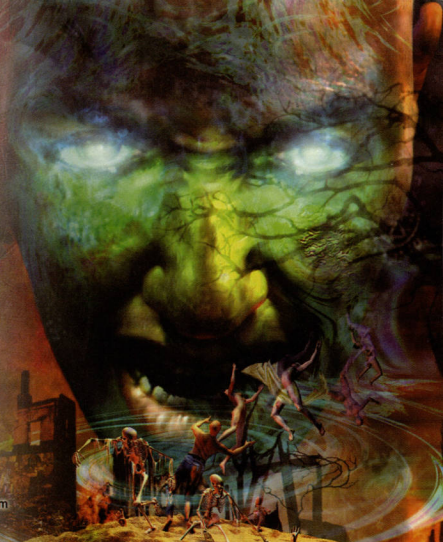
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■ PC

## Emperor: Battle for Dune

■ Publisher: EA Games ■ Developer: Westwood Studios

### A 10-Year Journey Ends

➔ Westwood Studios has finally created the ultimate Westwood-style realtime strategy title with *Emperor: Battle for Dune* and, in doing so, has come full circle from its humble beginnings almost 10 years ago. The developer has elevated a particular approach to an

interface, a certain style of building and management, and a certain look of live-action cinematics to their absolute pinnacles. However, this is also the game Westwood should use to retire from the realtime strategy market, because even with the game's new

features (a great-looking 3D engine and a board-game-like mission generator), at its heart, *Emperor* is exactly the same as every other Westwood RTS of the past 10 years.

*Emperor* is based upon a war of succession for the throne of the known universe. Three great houses (Atreides, Ordos, and Harkonnen) fight each other to gain control of the fabled desert planet, Arrakis. You pick a faction and then battle across the map of Arrakis, conquering territory and defending gains. This translates into a series of relatively quick but unimpressive RTS battles — you build up a base and then attack and destroy the enemy. There are a few special missions that don't



■ House Atreides represents honor, and blue and white stripes

involve this type of skirmish battling, but for the most part it's the same gameplay repeated on plain-looking desert maps. You can make allies of various sub-houses along the way by helping them in battles, which will also unlock new units, but this is not required.

The game offers three

modes of play: a single-player campaign that can be played from any of the three different houses, single-player skirmish, and multiplayer. This variety guarantees enough gameplay for even the most hardcore RTS fan but still leaves *Emperor* a tired, if solid RTS. — Jason Samuel

➔ NextGen ★★☆☆

**Bottom Line:** Fans who can't get enough of Westwood's particular brand of RTS or anyone who has missed a Westwood title from the past three or so years will enjoy *Emperor*. Everyone else needs to decide if they want more of what they've seen before.



■ *Emperor* may be set on Arrakis, but if you squint, can you really tell it apart from any other Westwood RTS?



# → Letters

Write, good, and proper

➔ As a chess aficionado and (of course) **Next Gen** reader, I must point out how you've treated my favorite game in **NG 06/01**, "Sega's Next Move."

Opponents face each other with a white square at their right hand. In the smaller photos featuring Peter Moore, the board is backwards. Then in the large photo on page 66, the image has been clearly flipped, since upon closer inspection the nameplates of the characters he is using as pieces are reading backwards. Furthermore, he is using two different characters for his bishops! Checkmate!

**Sid Crowe**

Barrie, Ontario, Canada

Aw gee whiz. You caught us. You're right, we reversed the picture in question so it would fit the layout better. It happens. However, saying that the pieces are set up "incorrectly" is a bit of a stretch, as the Sega-themed pieces aren't from any

chess set (they were toys from the **Next Gen** office). To his credit, Peter Moore moved the pieces on the board to appear as much like a chess game as possible. In this game, however, visual variety won out over chess authenticity.

In your recent issue (**NG 6/01**) on page 87, you state that *Strikers 1945* is over a decade old, which it's not. The original arcade version, by Psilyo, was released in 1995. I think you may be confusing this game with the older (and similar) *194X* series, from Capcom. Also on page 94, you state that the Neo Geo home cart system uses the same carts as the Arcade (a.k.a. MVS) setup. This is false. The two are not compatible. I speak as an owner of both a home cart and Neo Geo arcade MVS system. The carts are specifically made to not be compatible.

**Aaron Schlieve**

Via email

Thanks for the *Strikers* correction — you're right, the reviewer was most likely thinking of *1941* from Capcom. However, five years or a decade, the game is still pretty old by console standards. And stating that the carts for Neo Geo home and arcade versions were "the same" was misleading, although not intentionally so. True, the arcade and home versions used vastly different form factors, so no, you couldn't fit a home cartridge into an arcade cabinet, and they weren't "compatible" in that sense. The ROMs themselves inside the carts, however, were identical, so the actual games were exactly the same as in the arcade.

Hey guys! I have a few questions. First I have an argument I want to win. A friend of mine says that the Linux OS can run Windows applications and games, but he doesn't own a copy. I think he's

full of it but what do you guys have to say? My other question has to do with my next console to buy. What console do you think will carry the majority of Sega's games? I'm a guy who loves *Shenmue* and *Sonic* as well as the occasional original title, and if you could tell me your prediction I would be thankful.

**Trey Pratt**

Via email

We don't know what kind of mushrooms your friend must put on his pizza, but he's cracked. We suppose that very, very simple Windows games, or something written entirely in machine code that talked directly to your hardware, might run under Linux, but applications that make any DirectX or other Windows API calls (like most games) wouldn't work at all. We suppose, given the nature of Linux, someone out there might have rigged some kind of

## SNATCH THIS

What with all the gamers out there trying to get *Snatcher* and *Pollicenauts* released for PlayStation (or any other console in America), do you think you could help us out? How about some kind of feature on *Snatcher* and *Pollicenauts* and why they're two of the greatest games of all time, and make it

known that these great games from the makers of *Metal Gear Solid* haven't yet been released in the U.S. on a major console. You know how certain movies are always being re-released on video to promote the new theatrical releases from the same director or actor? This could be the same deal with *Metal Gear*

*Solid 2*, and Konami really seems to be ignoring the fans on this one. We could use some help — so email Konami! Those of you who have never played these games are really missing out. I consider them even better than the *Final Fantasy* series or *Metal Gear Solid*.

**Dan Richey**

Pittsburgh, PA

numbering, consisting entirely of choosing actions from a menu. In fact, you could beat the whole game simply by choosing every available action until you got to the right one. "Wrong" choices just led nowhere, with no other negative consequences. *Pollicenauts* (the PlayStation sequel to *Snatcher*) was more of the same in all respects and was never released here in any form (although rumor has it Konami did produce a full English translation before deciding to can it). In any case, as always, we encourage gamers to push to get the games they really want to see, and we're happy to relay the information. And just a thought for Konami: Including *Snatcher* and *Pollicenauts* as Easter eggs on the *MG52* disc wouldn't cost much, take up much room, or really hurt anyone...



**Metal Gear**  
...Jean?

■ *Snatcher* sure seems to have a lot of fans

We reviewed *Snatcher* when it was released here for Sega CD, wooaaaay back in the very first issue of *Next Generation*. At the time, the game was given three stars. Although we deeply appreciated the excellent storyline, well-developed characters, and generally mature and adult approach to its material — and you're right, in that regard it's easily among the best games ever — the gameplay was sort of basic and even a little mind-

DirectX emulator, but we doubt that would confer any advantage. In general, you have to deliberately write the code to use with a given OS (which is why it's always a big deal when someone announces a Linux version of the *Quake III* engine, for example).

And if you're a Sega fan, we don't know what to tell you as far as your next console purchase. Yuji Naka has been

and still is a big Nintendo fan, so you can expect most *Sonic* titles to probably hit GameCube first. On the other hand, Yu Suzuki has already committed *Virtua Fighter 4* to PlayStation 2, although he has yet to make a decision about any future *Shenmue* titles (other than the fact that the series will continue, on some platform). In all probability though, you can doubtless expect that all future

Sega titles will be released for every viable platform eventually. Some versions will just take longer than others.

I am a huge gamer and like to keep all my equipment in good shape. It pains me to see videogames come into a store all scratched up. So I have a word of warning: Do not buy a vertical stand for your PlayStation 2. This causes rings of scratches on your

CD and is really not worth it just to make a little more shelf space for your **Next Gen** back issues... well maybe.

**Nolan Bolknag**  
Via email

Thanks for the tip — we've heard similar stories elsewhere. We also can't help but be slightly tickled at the image of someone using PlayStation 2 as a bookend.

## ADVANCED NOTES

I read your review of Game Boy Advance (**NG 07/01**) and you said it wasn't the technological leap you had hoped for? C'mon! Let's see you try to get PSX graphics in a 14.4 x 8.2 x 2.5cm machine. Can you? No! Nintendo tried their best to fit the best technology into the smallest space, and I think they did a good job, so don't question their authority! I know, having a backlight would be cool, but that would make it expensive. (I'm not sure by how much but that's why they didn't include one.) And they eat batteries, but you know that. I think you should've at least added an extra star and a half to the Hardware Power rating, but I don't blame you because you are, after all, coming into contact with consoles, which is almost like comparing a Hot Wheels car with a Ford.

But what's up with the color translation guide? Indigo = blue? Are you colorblind? The Indigo GBA is an obvious purple color, very similar to (I wouldn't doubt exactly like) the grape Game Boy Color and GameCube. You show it right across the page right in the color translation sidebar!

**Tim Dybevik**  
Via email

First off, you're right. If pressed, we probably couldn't design a handheld game system with PlayStation-level graphics. In case you didn't notice, we're editors and artists, not electronics and software engineers. On the other hand, there are plenty of other folks who can — and for that matter, have. Ericsson Business Innovation's Red Jade project, headed by the designer of the Atari Lynx, Amiga, and 3DO system, R. J. Mical, managed to put together exactly such a

■ The "Indigo" Game Boy Advance sure looks blue to us...



handheld, which even included "Blue Tooth" technology that would have enabled wireless multiplayer gaming. It all fell through when the high-tech market crashed and Ericsson decided it couldn't afford the marketing, but by all reports, the system would have worked and been reasonably affordable.

From our point of view, Nintendo took 10-year-old technology they had on hand (SNES) and repackaged it. Of course, in all seriousness that still makes it the most powerful handheld ever made — just not one that's terribly exciting technically, or perhaps all it could have been. And frankly, we don't care how many batteries it would eat or what it would add to the cost — squinting at that dark GBA screen is a royal pain. (The more cynical among us even believe that was a deliberate design choice, so Nintendo can release a "Light Boy Advance" in a couple of years, sporting an "advanced low-power backlight technology" like you can find in any digital watch or Palm Pilot, and get everyone to buy the system all over again. And don't tell us you won't.)

Second, according to the dictionary, indigo is "a dark blue to grayish purple color," named for the indigo plant (genus *Indigofera*), which was

used for thousands of years to make that shade of dye. (Levi Strauss' original "blue jeans" got their color from it, incidentally.) A number of early, rendered representations of GBA did look distinctly purple, but actual units (see picture) certainly look blue. Besides which, even assuming the color was the same as GBC's and GameCube's "grape," it just shows how whacked Nintendo's color names are; if it's the same color, why is one called grape and the other indigo? It's just dumb, which was the point of the sidebar.

In your Game Boy Advance game reviews you seem to contradict yourself. In the *Rayman* Advance review you refer to *Super Mario 2* as a "classic" and insinuate *Super Mario Advance* is the better of the two. But then, in the *Super Mario Advance* review itself you claim *Super Mario 2* is the "weakest in the series" and question Nintendo's reasoning behind it?

Personally, I have to say *Super Mario 2* was one of my favorites as it seemed to deviate the farthest from the standard cast of

characters. I also like how the characters had distinct abilities, and it was practically four games in one.

Out of curiosity, what is your "official" stance?

**John Blanco**  
Via email

Point of clarification: Just because *Super Mario 2* is a "classic" doesn't necessarily make it the best of the series. In fact, as we pointed out, we feel it's the weakest — though you're entitled to your own opinion. And we still think *Rayman* was better.

I enjoyed your Game Boy Advance launch reviews — very informative. However, I think there might be a mistake in the *Super Dodge Ball* Advance review. *Super Dodge Ball* was mentioned in the review as a *Super NES* masterpiece, but I thought the original *Super Dodge Ball* was a *NES* game. Am I dreaming here?

**"PBlade666"**  
Via email

Not exactly dreaming. The original *Super Dodge Ball* was an 8-bit *NES* game. However, the reviewer mistakenly (though understandably) believed the GBA version was based on the Japanese-only SNES version (it was actually re-coded from the ground up). Sorry for any confusion. For the record, Eric's favorites were the two *Battle Dodge Ball* games (also never released here), which showcased characters from *Ultraman*, *Gundam*, and *Kamen Rider*.



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# Retroview

## September 1989

### The stuff of legends

→ Nintendo's NES dominated 1989. Both NEC's TurboGrafx-16 and Sega's Genesis began shipping in limited quantities, but neither would be entrenched by the holiday season. Then came Game Boy, which Nintendo hoped would command the handheld market.

Nintendo was also bolstered by the most successful game of all time, Tetris. An incredibly addictive puzzle game developed by Russian programmer Alexey Pajitnov, the game actually graced NES in two different versions. A businessman named Robert Stein purchased worldwide rights to the game and promptly sold them to Mirrorsoft. The U.S. rights were licensed by Atari Games/Tengen, which immediately released the game for NES. Meanwhile, Nintendo was negotiating over the Japanese rights, and a



■ The story of Tengen's Tetris (widely considered the superior version) has become something of a legend

huge error was uncovered: Stein's original transaction had only granted him the computer rights to the game. The worldwide console rights were still up for grabs. Nintendo immediately purchased them and released its own Tetris. Tengen's license was now invalid, and while it had published the better of the two versions, the company nonetheless had to recall and destroy over 268,000 carts.

The Ultimate Genesis and TurboGrafx-16 Launch Guides

# NextGen

Next Generation Magazine

# TETRIS™

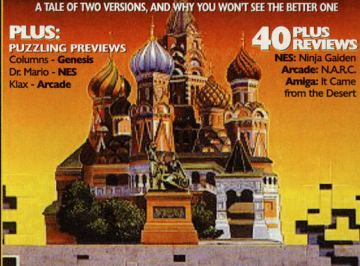
A TALE OF TWO VERSIONS, AND WHY YOU WON'T SEE THE BETTER ONE

**PLUS:**

**PUZZLING PREVIEWS**  
Columns - Genesis  
Dr. Mario - NES  
Klax - Arcade

**40 PLUS REVIEWS**

NES: Ninja Gaiden  
Arcade: NARC  
Amiga: It Came from the Desert



COMMODORE ■ APPLE ■ TURBOGRAFX-16 ■ GENESIS ■ ARCADE ■ NINTENDO ■ ATARI

## What we were playing

### 16-bit systems arrive to combat the successful NES

■ **BLAZING LASERS**



■ Platform: TurboGrafx-16  
■ Publisher: NEC

■ **FINAL FIGHT**



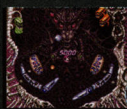
■ Platform: Arcade  
■ Publisher: Capcom

■ **TECMO BOWL**



■ Platform: NES  
■ Publisher: Tecmo

■ **ALIEN CRUSH**



■ Platform: TurboGrafx-16  
■ Publisher: Naxat Soft

■ **PHANTASY STAR II**



■ Platform: Genesis  
■ Publisher: Sega

## 1989 Prime Time Schedules

Wed.	8:00	8:30	9:00	9:30	10:00
ABC	Growing Pains	Head of the Class	Anything But Love	Doogie Howser, M.D.	China Beach
CBS	Peaceable Kingdom		Jake and the Fatman		Wiseguy
NBC	Unsolved Mysteries		Night Court	The Nutt House	Quantum Leap
Thurs.	8:00	8:30	9:00	9:30	10:00
ABC	Full House	Family Matters	Perfect Strangers	Just the Ten of Us	20/20
CBS	Snoops		Dallas		Falcon Crest
NBC	Baywatch		Hardball		Mancuso FBI

## ...and in the real world

■ The Energizer Bunny debuts, outlasting an underpowered adversary and continuing on through additional (mock) commercial sets.

■ TV Guide finds itself swirling in controversy when its cover photo displays a newly slim Oprah Winfrey. The problem? Oprah's dramatic weight loss is reportedly the result of her head being transplanted onto Ann-Margret's body.

■ "Cold fusion" is announced in March and is hailed as a revolution in electricity production. The cancellation of the revolution is televised and its progenitors derided as quacks when the "successful" experiments that led to the announcement cannot be replicated.

■ The Northrop Grumman B-2 Spirit, also known as the Stealth Bomber and infamous for its staggering \$45-billion developmental costs, finally begins test flights.

■ A magnitude 7.1 earthquake rocks San Francisco during rush hour on October 17. It destroys over 100,000 buildings, injures 3000 people, and kills 67. Authorities claim the death toll would have been much worse if so many slackers hadn't left work early to watch game three of the San Francisco Giants/Oakland Athletics World Series, thus finding themselves on the open road when the quake hit instead of inside crumbling buildings.

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BlawewouldjustlikeeveryonetoknowthatMountainDewRULES™ (he fell off the wagon). Number of heated discussions that took place this month about reader awareness of the musician BT = two. Arcade machine auctions rock, but why oh why didn't we buy Space Invaders for \$350? Thanks Professor Blatnick for letting us add to your conspiracies. Nothing funny from the Art team but Jan loves her Hello Kitty spork. And finally, we'd like to observe a moment of silence for all those writers that don't ask make it.

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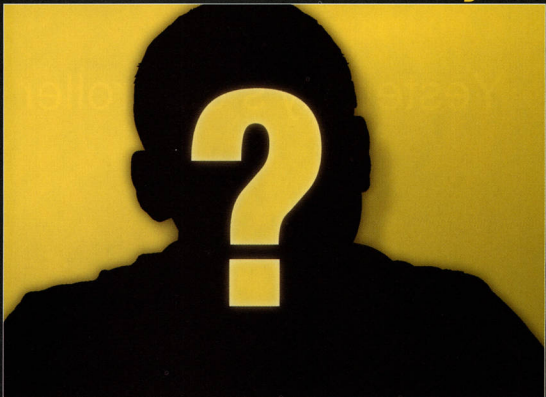
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## 09/01

What's the second best game Konami could put on the Metal Gear Solid 2 disc? Page 92. 4 out of 5 Next Gen editors prefer strawberry jam. It tastes less like feet. Page 87. Go ahead — make fun of the guy with flames on his underpants. We dare you. Page 14. Never mind, Kenneth. We figured it out. Page 29. Sunshine... Marionette... 100... Find out what these three words have to do with Nintendo. Page 12. Yes, it's a woman with wheels wearing a thong. Looks like the dev team's been watching anime again. Page 39. You know, Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom wasn't nearly as good as Raiders of the Lost Ark — we should have seen this one coming. Page 64. Our second Lovecraft reference in five issues, and it's even relevant. We're so... literate. Page 83. 2001: A Space Channel 5 Odyssey. Page 35. Number of Next Gen editors who will vehemently argue the difference between white trash, hicks, and hillbillies, claiming kinship with the latter group: one. Page 90. So, you've mastered Tony Hawk. How about a game with over 10,000 tricks? Page 32. Can this eagerly awaited sequel to the original forklift racing game survive without forklifts? Page 25. Michael Jordan's return to basketball (sort of), and the most poorly timed vehicular combat game ever released. Page 66. Guess what Sony didn't realize anyone wanted a PS2. Page 11. Incredibly obscure trivia fact: The late Baron Harkonnen's wife is nicknamed Kitty. Eric knows her. Page 91. Where are Ripley and Arnold when we need them? Page 33. According to www.encyclopedia.com and our calculator, 180 actual thoroughbred horses would weigh around 198,000 pounds. In case you were wondering. Page 20. The only videogame series ever to address the age-old quandary, "Is it more fun to kill Nazis or Smurfs?" Page 60. Psst! Wanna major in game design when you go to college? Page 50. "Sin meets Rollercoaster Tycoon meets Age of Empires" — will this game make us its bitch? Page 13. Don't think about what it is. Just burn it as fast as you can. Page 18. Bad giant, shapeshifting, living shadow, demon kitty! Bad! Page 44.

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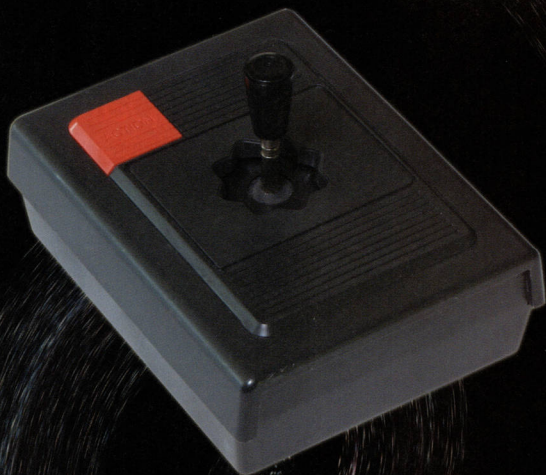
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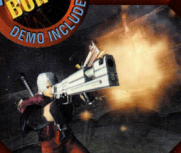


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