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HYPER

ISSUE 104
JUNE 2002

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- GC: Rogue Leader
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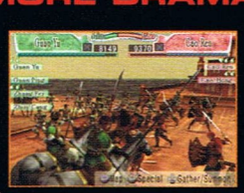

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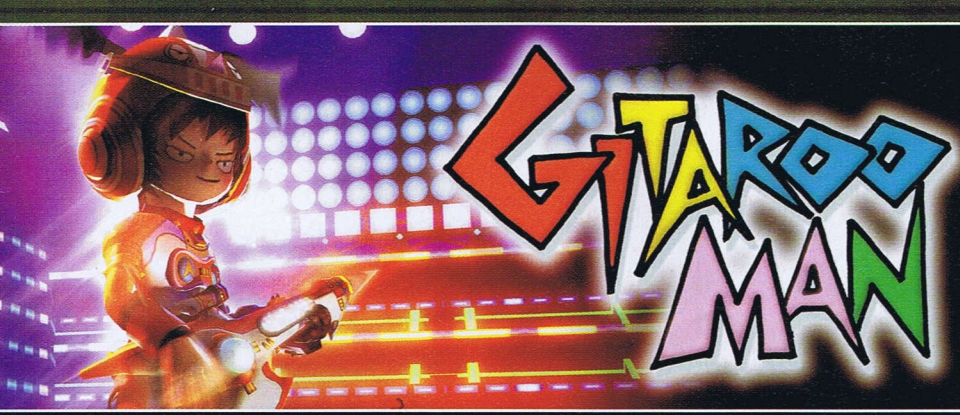

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NOW SHOWING

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Check out our whopping huge feature on the new movie, games and toys!

Jango Fett cover image © Lucasfilm Ltd. & TM. All Rights Reserved. Photo by Sue Adler

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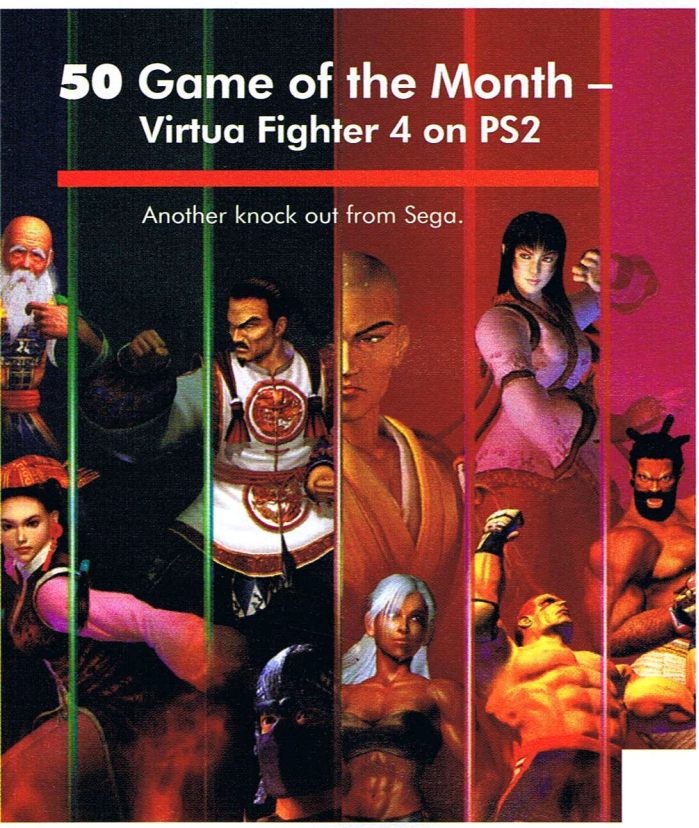

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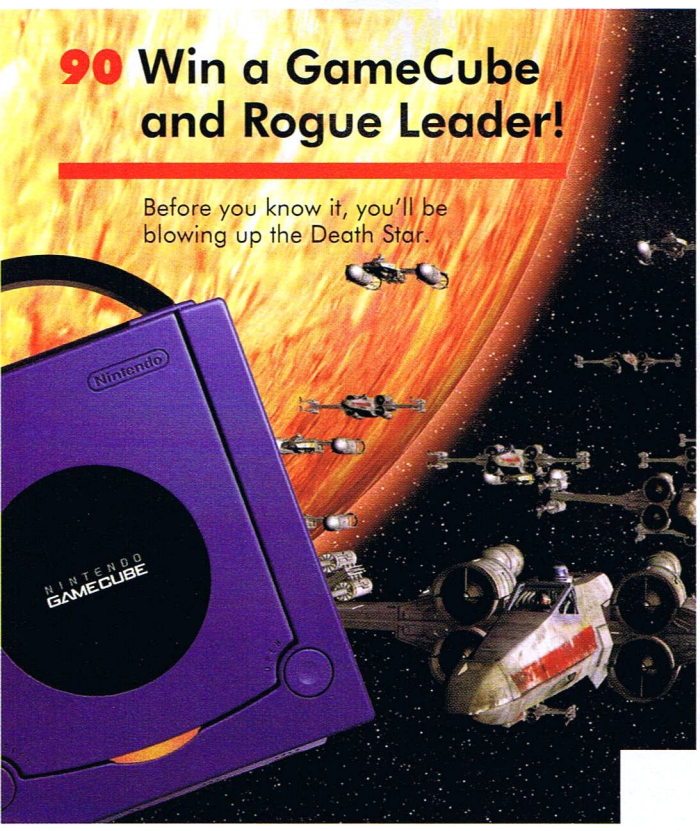

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HYPER»

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JUNE 2002

WRITE TO HYPER!
78 Renwick St, Redfern
NSW 2016, Australia
Ph: (02) 9699 0333
Fax: (02) 9310 1315
E-mail: *freakscene@next.com.au*

EDITORIAL
Editor: **Eliot Fish**
Deputy Editor: **Cam Shea**
Art Director: **Malcolm Campbell**

ADVERTISING
National Sales Director: **Sue Ostler**
E-mail: *sue@next.com.au*
Ph: (02) 9699 0346
Advertising & Creative Co-ordinator: **Mariam Dib**
E-mail: *mariam@next.com.au*
Advertising Manager: **Chris C. Davey**
E-mail: *chrisd@next.com.au*
Ph: (02) 9699 0342
Production Co-ordinator: **Monique Layt**
E-mail: *moniquel@next.com.au*
Ph: (02) 9699 0300
Fax: (02) 9310 2012

SUBSCRIPTIONS
For all enquiries phone: 1300 36 11 46
E-mail: *subs@next.com.au*
Fax: (02) 9699 0334

MANAGEMENT
Chief Executive: **Phillip Keir**
Finance Director: **Theo Fatseas**
Operations Manager: **Melissa Doyle**

CONTRIBUTORS
David Wildgoose, Dan Toose, Jackson Gothe-Snape, John Dewhurst, Stephen Farrelly, Daniel Wilks, Narayan Pattison, Frank Dry, Tim Levy, March Stepnik, Agata Budinska, Victoria Flanagan, BRUTUS the chosen one, and Northy.

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EDITORIAL

» A long time ago, in a galaxy far, far away... (cue Console Wars logo). Issue 104: A New Hope. It is a period of interactive war. Nintendo GameCubes, striking from a hidden base, have won their first victory against two evil corporate empires... well, almost!

It's true, the GameCube is upon us and Nintendo fans everywhere are finally getting their hands on the follow-up to the Nintendo 64. We've had to suffer quite a long wait for PAL units, but finally, everyone can now choose between all three next-gen consoles. GCN, PS2 or Xbox. Which do you choose? We've never seen a tougher choice.

At least you can go kill some time at the cinemas seeing *Star Wars: Attack of the Clones* whilst you make up your mind, eh?

Eliot Fish » Editor

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NEWS

IN THE NEWS: E3 Countdown ■ Big time console price cuts ■ Xbox HDTV probs ■ Tomb Raider 6 screens

STOP PRESS!

PRICE WARS!

Microsoft announce unprecedented price drop and Nintendo hit back

$649 ↓$399

$399 ↓$329

In an astounding move announced just as this issue was heading off to the printers, Microsoft unveiled one of the biggest price drops in the industry's history. You are now able to stroll down to your local games store and pick up an Xbox for the paltry sum of $399! Yes, that's a $250 reduction! Gamers in Europe are getting a similar deal, with the price of the machine cut from 479 to 299 Euros. Indeed, there's little doubt that the machine's poor performance in Europe is the chief reason for the price drop.

The savings won't be limited to prospective Xbox owners either. If you've already bought a unit, you'll be able to pick up two Microsoft Xbox games of your choice and a spare controller, worth over $250, for free. To take advantage of the offer, go to www.xbox.com.au, fill out the form and send it in before the 31st of May.

No matter which way you look at it, this was a ballsy move by Microsoft, and an indication of how determined they are to see the Xbox succeed. As Alan Bowman, Regional Director for Xbox puts it: "Since our launch the market has changed - and will continue to change – and we are now being unashamedly aggressive in changing it ourselves... this will enable more customers to enjoy Xbox". Unashamedly aggressive is right. Xbox is now amazing value for money.

» Nintendo simply had to keep the GameCube priced cheaper

It was no surprise then to see Nintendo hit back only days later with a price cut of their own. The GameCube dropped from $399 to a mere $329, which is now the official launch price. Seeing as the Xbox is offering DVD playback at $399, Nintendo simply had to keep the GameCube priced as the cheaper, games-only alternative to the other next-gen systems.

But what about the PS2? Well, at the time of going to press, it was still sitting at $499, making it the most expensive next-gen console on the shelves. We hope Sony respond with a price cut of their own.

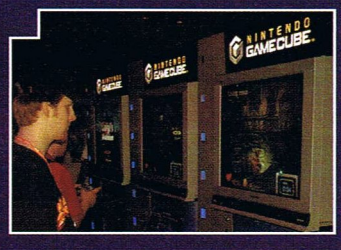
Looks like gamers win big time.

CHECK OUT:
www.hyperactive.com.au for all the latest news on next gen pricing.

E3'S COMING RIGHT FOR US!

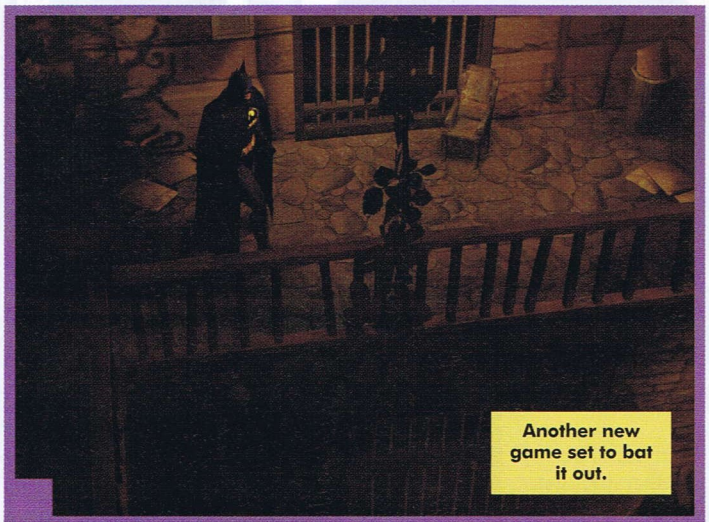
Games galore and so much more...

» If you thought last year's E3 was exciting then just wait until the starting gun fires this year. Now that all the hardware is out in the open, it's all about the games. This year's E3 promises to be a crucial one for Xbox and GameCube, with the PS2 happily cruising along on a mound of great software already. Whilst it will certainly be interesting to see what's in the pipeline for Sony's next-gen console, the real focus will be on how Xbox and GameCube plan on catching up. Xbox had a strong line-up at launch, but now the world wants to know what's next. Nintendo may not have as strong a launch line-up, but we know that they have some huge games queued up in Super Mario Sunshine, and Zelda et al. What we'll be seeing at E3 however, is a vague outline of what 2003 will be like for the three consoles. Are developers supporting Xbox? What about GameCube? How many games will be on show for these systems? How many exclusive games? What will be the big surprises? Exciting isn't it?

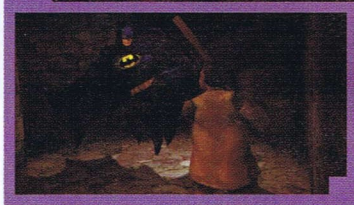


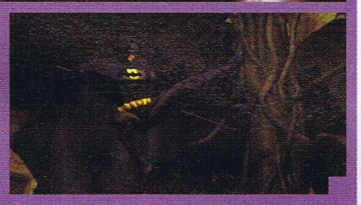
We'll have a full E3 report in Hyper 106... so stay tuned over the next few issues.

Meanwhile, we'll also be taking stock of the PC games on show. Just prior to E3, it feels like PC gaming has picked up a bit more momentum again after what felt like a very slow start to the year. Will we get to see any more of Doom 3, Deus Ex 2, Thief 3, *Star Wars: Galaxies*, Warcraft III and all the other PC games that we hope will give the industry a boost? Consoles are taking over the world, it seems, with developers pouring more money into console development ahead of PC projects. We're hoping this E3 will show some balance return to the force.



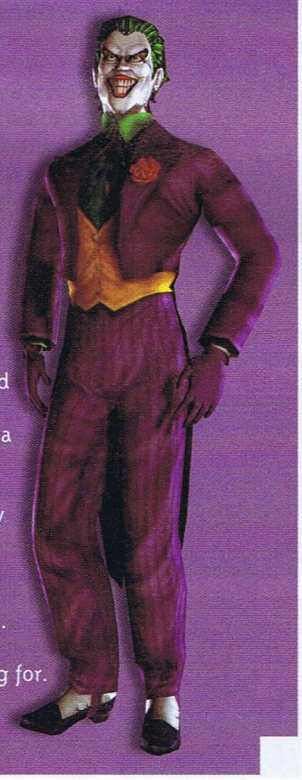
Another new game set to bat it out.





BATMAN'S FUTURE LOOKING DARK

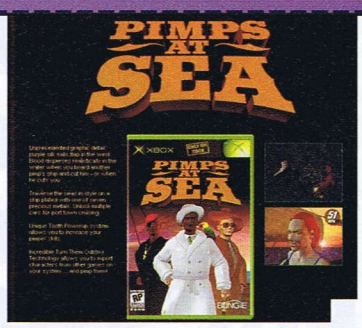
Kemco bring back the Dark Knight



Fans of Batman may have enjoyed UbiSoft's fun Batman Vengeance on PS2, Xbox and GCN, but Kemco have a followup Batman game that takes a far more serious approach to the franchise. Much like comparing the wacky TV show with the Tim Burton movie. Just take a look at how this game is looking! The character models are highly detailed, going for realism over comic-book style. This could be the Dark Knight game hardcore Batman fans have been waiting for. Batman Dark Tomorrow will be released for GCN, Xbox and PS2.

APRIL FOOLS!

The Booty Call



Probably our favourite games industry April Fools joke this year was Bungie's announcement of the Xbox game, Pimps At Sea. Boasting the unique tooth-powerup system to increase your pimpin' skills, this game is all about sailing the high seas for boot-ay. It promised that you could import characters from your other games – and pimp them! You can still visit the website and check out the screenshots at www.bungie.com. Big it up for Bungie!

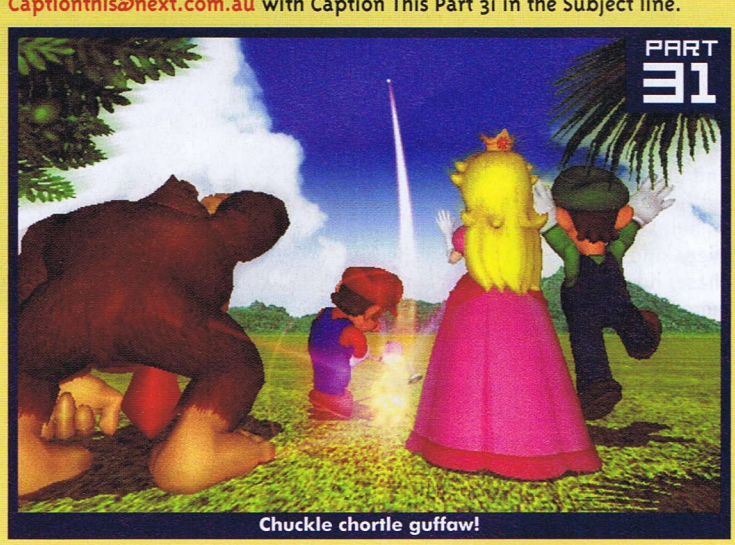
SEGA CLASSICS ON THE BOX

Want to continue to play some old MegaDrive, Saturn and Dreamcast games well into the next generation? Well, maybe you should buy an Xbox. Confused? Well don't be! Sega are planning on re-releasing a whole range of their classic games from each console era for the Xbox system. We're not yet sure whether games will be released as anthology compilations or not, but after the news that Shenmue 2 and Sega GT 2 were on Xbox, to follow with a plan such as this actually makes some kind of sense. The Xbox could be somewhere for all the Sega fans in the world to retreat to. At least we know the Xbox won't suddenly vanish from the scene. Microsoft are going full boar pushing this system, and they won't stop until it's a success...

SEGA®

CAPTION THIS!

Hey there faithful readers – think you have the wit to make the Hyper team chuckle? Then think of your best caption for this screenshot and email it to Captionthis@next.com.au with Caption This Part 31 in the Subject line.



Chuckle chortle guffaw!

PAL XBOX = NO HDTV SUPPORT

Gee, what a surprise - we get screwed again

Some very strange news has come to light that not only does the PAL Xbox not support progressive scan in DVD playback or games, but that there is no actual High Definition TV support at all! Here in Australia, Microsoft ceased all future shipments of the HD AV Pack after complaints began to surface from users that the PAL Xbox wasn't actually able to support the HD video modes. One of the features that was most appealing in initial promotions of the Xbox system, was that it was "future-proof" for digital and HD TVs. The NTSC hardware has full HDTV support, so why the feature was removed from the PAL unit is quite mystifying. Upon reading a document on converting NTSC games to PAL for GameCube, we noticed that developers are required to remove Progressive Scan support in PAL games. So there's a clue. The lack of HDTV support in the PAL Xbox probably has more to do with the PAL format and the restrictions upon it, than it has to do with Microsoft seemingly altering their product arbitrarily. However, we must admit that it's very sloppy for Microsoft to not inform PAL gamers on this change before they purchased their consoles...

JUST WHAT IS THIS PAL THING?

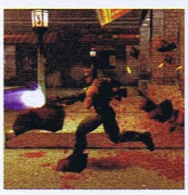
America's television standard was developed under the guidance of the National Television Standards Committee, thus it is called NTSC. In most of Europe, Asia and Africa the power frequency is 50Hz so they developed 2 television standards which better suit the needs of these countries. One of the 50Hz Standards is PAL (Phase Alternating Lines) and the other is SECAM (SEquential Color Avec Memoire). While PAL is used in most of Europe and former territories of the British Empire such as Australia, SECAM is primarily used in France, Eastern Block and Middle Eastern Countries.

DUKING IT OUT IN MANHATTAN PROJECT

Seeing as Duke Nukem Forever is literally taking forever to get finished (it's actually on our release schedule for July, but I wouldn't hold your breath), Duke Nukem fans have probably been looking for something else to get their cigar-chomping teeth into. Well, why not another cheesy Duke Nukem game? The Manhattan Project is here in all its side-scrolling, platforming, gun-toting glory, as Duke battles his way across towering skyscraper rooftops and through gritty subway stations on the hunt for power-hungry villain, Mech Morphix. Mutants of every kind are thrown at Duke as he chases down Morphix through eight huge environments and avoids the green slime called G.L.O.P.P. that is causing all the chaos.

But radioactive slime isn't Duke's only problem – there over 25 uniquely dangerous mutated enemies hell-bent on making a meal of him. Whether it's Uzi-sporting alligators or ten-foot tall roach beasts – Duke's in town to blast bad guys and save babes. Sure, pipe bombs, a machine gun, a rocket launcher and a pulse cannon are gonna make a goo-filled mess in the Big Apple, but what's a hero to do? Duke Nukem: Manhattan Project is out now for PC.

The BLAU factor is pretty high in this one.



WINNERS

HYPER 102

RACER REVENGE

Chris Nixon, WA
Michael Pincott, NSW
Tristan Rust, SA
Paul Taylor, NSW
Peter Rowe, WA

HALO

Blake Maddick, NSW
Alexander Henry, ACT
Scott Savage, SA
Michael Moonen, NSW
Nelson Hua, ACT

OVERFLOW

Nescafé Big Break is back on again. This year there is more prize money with a total of $256,000 across Australia and New Zealand. There are 12 cash prizes of $20,000 and 8 cash prizes of $2,000 to be won. The age range has now been extended to 16-24 years with prize money awarded in 2 age categories. Lots of original ideas are entered every year. The final judging is done by NESCAFÉ Big Break past winners from Australia and New Zealand. It's easy to enter, and you can do it www.nescafe.com.au or by mailing in your entry.

THQ has signed a worldwide agreement with Marvel Comics to publish videogames based on Captain America, The Punisher, and Nick Fury. THQ will have rights to not only the comics, but any related TV and film versions of those characters for use in games on all systems until the year 2007.

It looks like the PC smash hit online RPG, Everquest, is coming to the PlayStation 2 sometime in the near future. No doubt requiring the PS2 broadband adapter, Everquest on the Sony console will certainly be a blow to Sega's hopes of establishing Phantasy Star Online as the big online console RPG experience. Evercrack is the way to go.

Despite some depressing Xbox sales in Europe and Japan, the big black beast is doing extremely well in the United States. Halo recently broke a record for reaching one million units sold faster than any other next generation video game ever. It sold something like six copies per minute to hit its million unit mark.

While we're waiting for Medal of Honor: Frontline for PS2, we can start drooling over the funky information which is surfacing for Medal of Honor: Underground for the Game Boy Advance!

Word is that Sony have figured out a way of combining the Emotion Engine and graphics processor into a single microchip. This would cut costs in manufacturing the PS2 and allow further future price drops. However, it would also affect current software development, so plenty of notice would need to be given to developers.

FAKE NEVER LOOKED SO REAL.

Fantasy has a new reality in Dead or Alive 3, the next instalment in gaming's most popular "beat'em up" series. Experience multi-tiered fighting environments, a kinetic "tag-battle" feature and some female opponents that'll knock you for dead.

DEAD OR ALIVE 3

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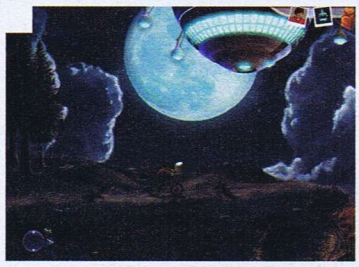
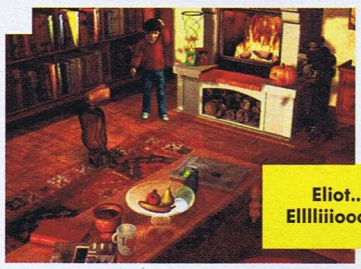
McCANN XBOX32/DOA3/A





Eliot... Elllliiiooottt.

E.T. NEVER WENT HOME!

E.T. The Extraterrestrial, fresh from a return to the silver screen, has now reappeared on a variety of gaming systems in a whole new range of games. Spanning the Game Boy Color, Game Boy Advance, PlayStation and PC, E.T. gets up to all the mischief from the movie in an action and adventure game from UbiSoft. Whilst definitely one for the younger gamers in the family, it's nice to see a bunch of E.T. games that have a lot more going for them than previous efforts... which will remain unnamed.

FIRST LOOK!
SIM CITY 4 ON PC!

LARA GETS HER GEAR OFF!

On April 26th, Eidos Interactive auctioned off the original Lara Croft costume worn by spunky model Nell McAndrew. With the money going straight to the international charity, UNICEF, we hope lots of rich geeks signed onto Ebay to bid for the costume over the 10 day auction period.

The items being auctioned were:

- Lara's 'trademark' circular Sunglasses
- Green rubber all-in-one vest
- Open-backed leather gloves
- Military-style shorts
- Backpack
- Twin leather holsters with large buckle belt
- Twin Colt Delta Elite 10mm replica pistols
- Thick woollen calf-length socks

Just think, you could dress up as Lara in the privacy of your own bedroom... ahem. Not that we would do that kind of thing. Er...

To see what Lara is looking like these days, just take a look at these Tomb Raider: Angel of Darkness screenshots. Looks like they're borrowing some ideas from Metal Gear Solid 2...

HOT!
TOMB RAIDER: THE ANGEL OF DARKNESS! FOR PS2!

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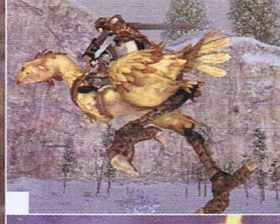
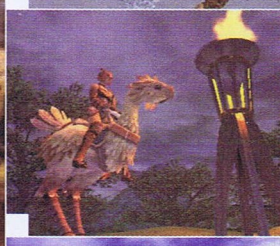
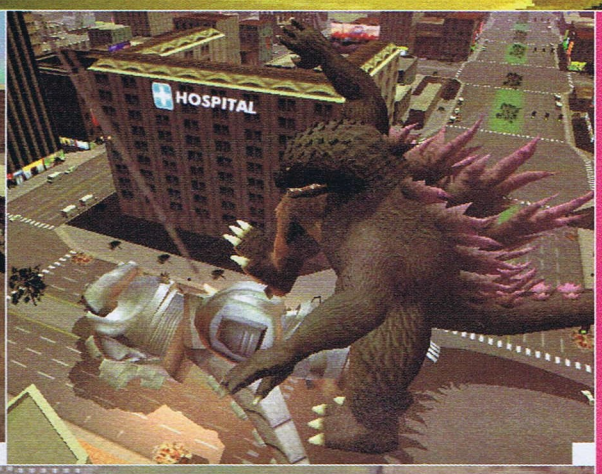




FINAL FANTASY XI: Online

>>PS2 SQUARESOFT

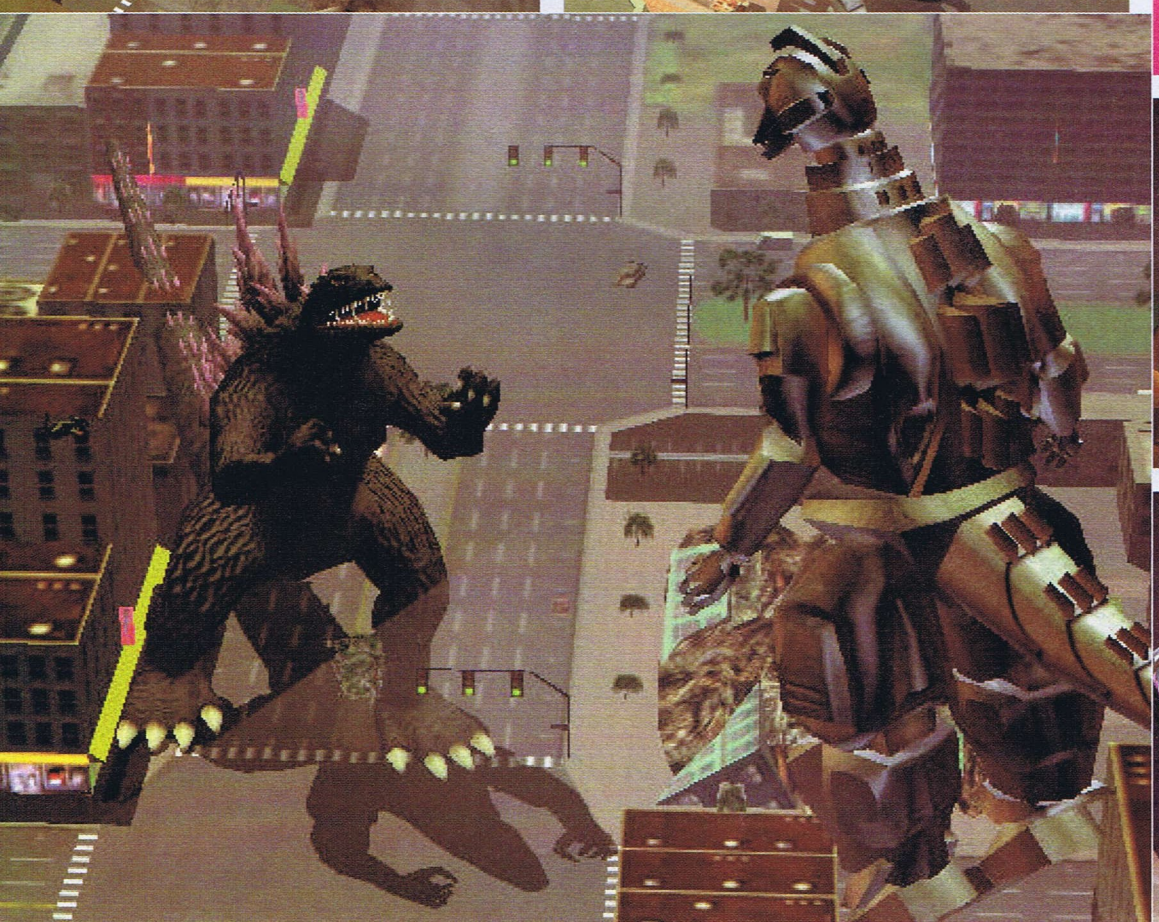
Whilst we still don't know how this online Final Fantasy game will work in Australia, considering the pathetic state of broadband in this country, we can at least sit back and drool. If we're lucky, Sony will set up a cool local server and before you know it we'll have our very own local Aussie Final Fantasy land to play in. By the time you read this, FF XI will be about to launch in Japan.

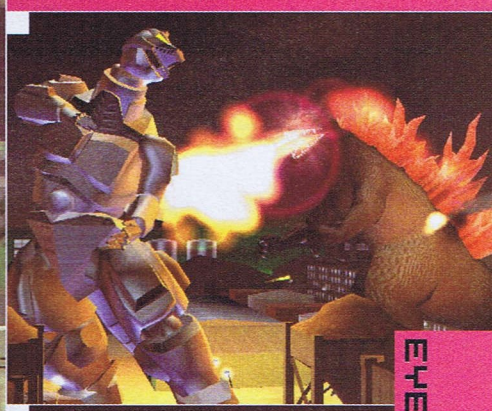


GODZILLA: DESTROY ALL MONSTERS MELEE

>> GCN INFOGRAMES

Infogrames have worked closely with the makers of the original Japanese Godzilla movies to bring to life a one to four player smash 'em up that looks like monster fun. There will be 10 real-world locations, from Los Angeles and Seattle to Tokyo, and a bunch of the classic monsters such as Mothra, Ghidora and Mecha-Godzilla. Sweet!





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Metal Gear Solid 2 (MA15+). 8430

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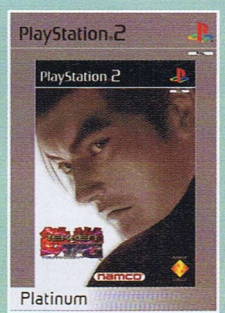
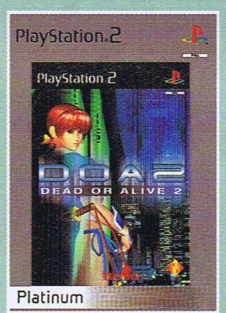


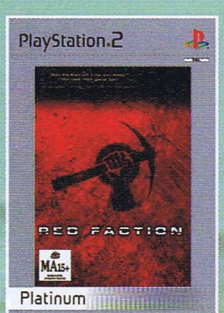
Tekken Tag Tournament Platinum PS2 (M15+). 9348320

Formula 1 2001- Platinum PS2 (G). 9349624

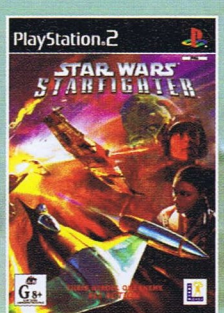


Dead Or Alive 2- Platinum PS2 (M15+). 9350422

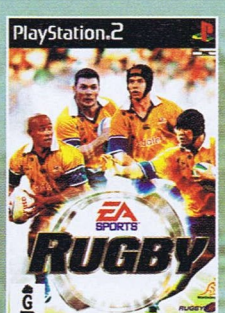
Gran Turismo 3 Platinum PS2 (G). 9347521



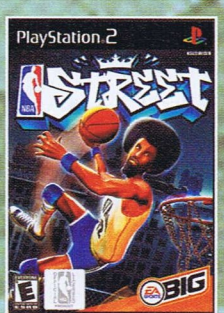
Red Faction Platinum PS2 (MA15+). THQ90034



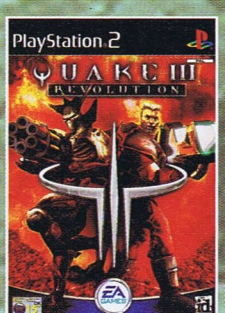
Star Wars Starfighter PS2 (G8+). 460944



Rugby 2001 PS2 (G). 460947



NBA Street PS2 (G). 4614310



Quake 3 Arena PS2 (R). 4614285

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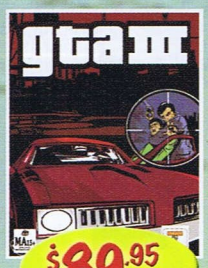
Soldier Of Fortune 2 (MA15+). 22860



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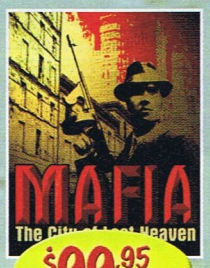
Grand Theft Auto 3 PC (MA15+). 1052CD



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Mafia (MA15+). 0983CD

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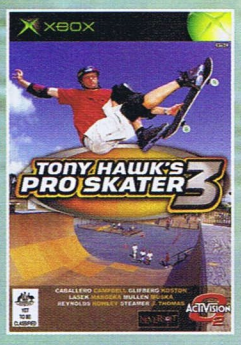
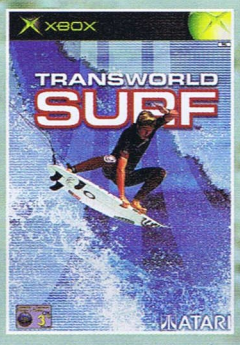
Neverwinter Nights PC (M15+). 10898

XBOX



Tony Hawk Pro Skater 3 XBOX (G8+). 22868



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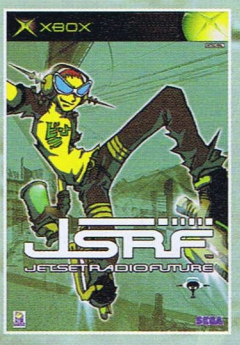
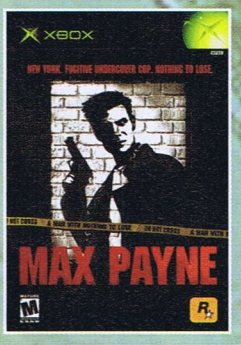
Wreckless- The Yakuza Missions XBOX (G8+). 22869



Jet Set Radio Future XBOX (M15+). 10820



Max Payne XBOX (MA15+) 0914XB.

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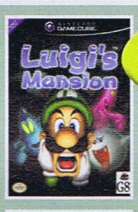

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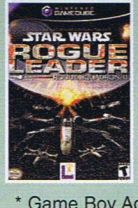

Star Wars Rogue Leader: Rogue Squadron GC (G8+). 531120

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* Game Boy Advance and GameCube Game Boy Advance cable sold seperately.

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The Hyper GameCube La

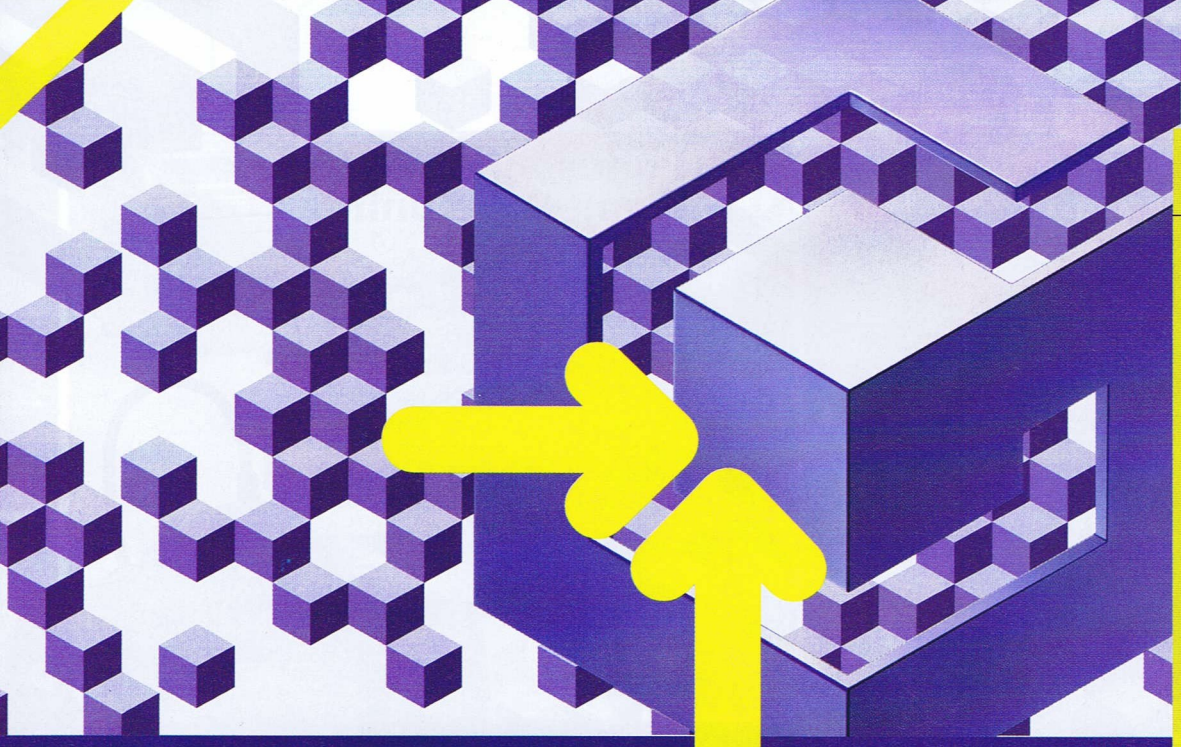
Australian gamers rejoice – Nintendo's new baby is about to hit the streets! Do long suffering Nintendo fans have a reason to get excited? Find out with our GameCube launch guide!

The Unit

PRICE: $329
COLOURS: Indigo, Black
AVAILABLE: May 17

The Nintendo Difference

While the GameCube may not have DVD playback and a hard drive, it has one massive advantage over the competition – its price. Since it was designed to do only one thing – play games, Nintendo have been able to keep the hardware streamlined and the manufacturing costs down. At $70 less than an Xbox, GameCube is still an attractive proposition.



nch Guide

BUT FIRST SOME HISTORY...

It's been five long years since the launch of the N64, and over that time the industry has changed a great deal. Sony have had immense and ongoing success with the PlayStation, and now have a good head start with the PlayStation 2. Sega have disappeared off the hardware radar after releasing a great new console which inexplicably died... and ironically enough, this ex-arch rival could now potentially become Nintendo's trump card. Microsoft surprised no one with the announcement of their entry into the console race, then surprised everyone when they nailed it. And then there's Nintendo. The N64 certainly saw its share of quality, and at times genre defining games, but the releases were too few and far between, and any momentum the machine managed to build has gradually wound down over the last two years.

Simply put, Nintendo did not keep up with the times. Their treatment of developers in the 8 and 16 bit eras meant that as soon as another viable option was available, developers jumped ship. Their decision to stick with the cartridge medium for the last generation fought against the flow of technology, annoying developers and resulting in higher game prices. The machine, while certainly a 3D powerhouse for its time, made programming good results a chore, and the many delays before the launch of the N64 gave Sony ample time to get a good foothold in the marketplace. The lack of games even led to a poor performance in the motherland. That said, the system was still popular outside Japan, and their stranglehold on the quality games meant that ultimately the N64 was a very profitable system for Nintendo. As the N64 died and technology marched along, however, Nintendo have been content to ride on the continuing success of the Game Boy and the phenomenal success of Pokémon. But now it's time for Nintendo to show who's boss.

THE NEXT-GEN FACE

Going into this generation, Nintendo is in a very different position to hardware launches past. This is the company that once held the market in the palm of its hand – an unsurpassable juggernaut with almost total market share, that dictated terms to developers, and inspired the most fanatical of fans. For 20 years now, they have held strong in the home console market through great hardware, even greater games and shrewd business moves.

That said, Nintendo have been losing ground since the birth of the 16-bit machines, and are entering this generation with less control than ever. In many ways, the GameCube represents the birth of a new era for Nintendo. The company has finally moved away from cartridges, embraced third party support, and is starting this generation without a clear market leadership. Plus, it looks like Nintendo's president Hiroshi Yamauchi is finally going to retire, which ultimately can only be a good thing for the company.

With all that back story out of the way, how is the next gen race shaping up for Nintendo? Well, things have been a little slow overseas, and the lack of a true "killer app" at launch was surprising, but the second half of the year promises to be huge. And with the European launch of GameCube, Nintendo are finally back on track worldwide. This year certainly is an exciting one for Nintendo fans.

Tech Specs

MPU ("Multi Processing Unit"): Custom IBM Power PC "Gekko" (0.18 micron IBM Copper Wire Technology)
Clock Frequency: 485 MHz
CPU Capacity: 1125 Dmips (Dhrystone 2.1)
Internal Data Precision: 32-bit Integer & 64-bit Floating-point
External Bus: 1.3 GB/second peak bandwidth, 32-bit address space, 64-bit data bus, 162 MHz clock
Internal Cache:
L1: Instruction 32KB, Data 32KB (8 way)
L2: 256KB (2 way)

System LSI: Custom ATI/Nintendo "Flipper" (0.18 micron NEC Embedded RAM process)
Clock Frequency: 162 MHz
Embedded Frame Buffer: Approx. 2 MB Sustainable Latency: 5ns (IT-SRAM)
Embedded Texture Cache: Approx. 1 MB
Texture Read Bandwidth: 10.4 GB/sec (Peak)
Main Memory Bandwidth: 2.6 GB/sec (Peak)
Pixel Depth: 24-bit Color, 24-bit Z Buffer
Image Processing Functions: Fog, Subpixel Anti-aliasing, 8 Hardware Lights, Alpha Blending, Virtual Texture Design, Multi-texturing, Bump Mapping, Environment Mapping, MIP Mapping, Bilinear Filtering, Trilinear Filtering, Ansitropic Filtering, Real-time Hardware Texture Decompression (S3TC)
Other Features: Real-time Decompression of Display List, HW Motion Compensation Capability

Audio Processing: (Part of the System LSI)
Sound Processor: Custom Macronix 16-bit DSP
Instruction Memory: 8KB RAM + 8KB ROM
Data Memory: 8KB RAM + 4KB ROM
Clock Frequency: 81 MHz
Performance: 64 simultaneous channels, ADPCM encoding
Sampling Frequency: 48KHz

PERFORMANCE

Floating-point Arithmetic Capability: 10.5 GFLOPS (Peak) (MPU, Geometry Engine, HW Lighting Total)
Real-world polygon: 6 to 12 million polygons/second (Peak) (Assuming actual game conditions with complex models, fully textured, fully lit, etc)

System Memory: 40MB
Main Memory: 24MB MoSys IT-SRAM Less than 10ns Sustainable Latency
A-Memory: 16MB 81 MHz DRAM

Disc Drive: CAV (Constant Angular Velocity) System
Average Access Time: 128ms
Data Transfer Speed: 16Mbps to 25Mbps
Media: 8cm Disc based on Matsushita's Optical Disc Technology
Capacity: Approx. 1.5 GB

Dimensions: 4.3"(H) x 5.9" (W) x 6.3" (D)

Hardware & Peripherals

The Controller

PRICE: $59.95
COLOURS: Indigo, Black, Spice, Indigo/Clear
AVAILABLE: May 17

What more can we say about the GameCube controller? It's quite a brilliant piece of design and is so ergonomic that most of the time you'll forget you're holding it. That said, it's not perfect. Some of the comments we've heard around the office include - the triggers feel a little clumsy, the z trigger is oddly positioned, the D pad is too small and although great for some games, the button layout will be an issue for others. This is still the most innovative controller on the market, and just like with the N64's controllers, they come in 4 colours.

Panasonic DVD/ GameCube unit

PRICE: N/A
AVAILABLE: Possibly on import

This funky little unit is made by Matsushita (Panasonic) and incorporates a GameCube with full DVD playback capabilites. At this stage it's only available in Japan, and may remain that way. Even so, this is a funky piece of tech.

GBA Connector Cable

PRICE: $19.95
AVAILABLE: May 17

Nintendo are playing very heavily on the interactivity between GBA and GameCube and have a number of titles in development that will bring that feature to market. But in order to link Nintendo junior and Nintendo senior together, you'll need one of these babies.

Component Video Cable

PRICE: TBA
AVAILABLE: May 17

Why settle for anything less than the best picture quality? If you have an HDTV or your TV supports component inputs, then this is the cable to have. Don't expect progressive scan, however, as we hear PAL games have this removed.

Memory Card 59

PRICE: $59.95
COLOURS: Grey
AVAILABLE: May 17

An odd name yes? The 59 refers to the number of blocks of memory on the card. We suspect that Nintendo call it this simply to make the card sound like it has more capacity than it actually does. After all, this card has a meagre 4 megabit capacity, equal to roughly half a MB (512KB to be precise). Not much, especially given the fact that the PS2's cards are 8MB, the Xbox has an 8gig HD and even an old school floppy disc holds 1.4MB! And the number is largely irrelevant because almost all games require more than one block to save! In fact, depending on what games you play your card may not last long at all. For instance, a FIFA 2002 save takes up a whopping 29 blocks, Pikmin takes up 19 and Wave Race takes up 12. Fortunately, Nintendo have announced "Memory Card 251", which should be out soon.

Wavebird wireless controller

PRICE: TBA
AVAILABLE: TBA (out in USA late June)

We don't have a firm release date on the Wave Bird yet, but we do know we want one! Say goodbye to tripping over cords, and say hello to playing games at the dinner table!

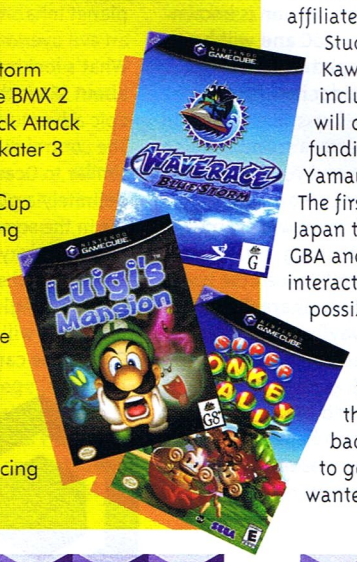
Hyper's Most Anticipated GameCube Games!

One of the mantras here at Hyper has always been to pick your system based on the games you want to play, not on brand name. Here are some of the titles coming to GameCube that we're most excited about.

The Launch Games!

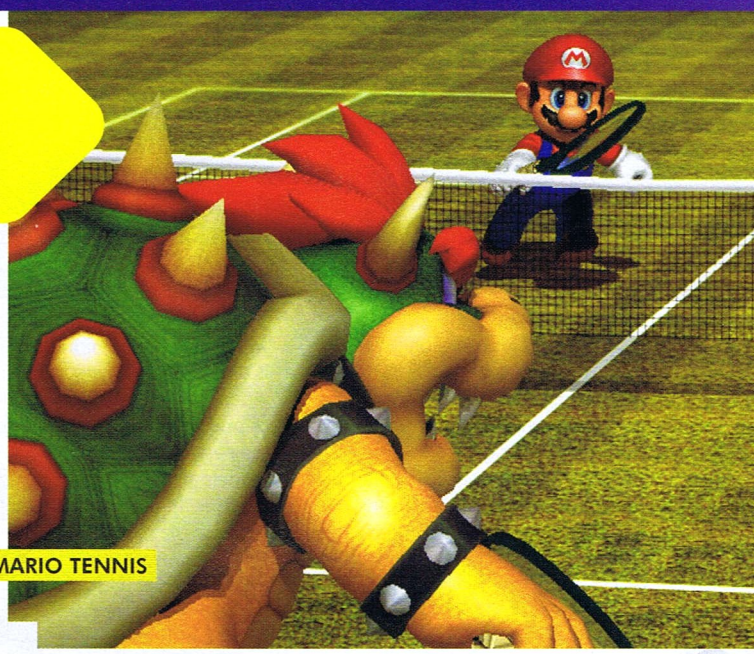
The GameCube's launch lineup for Australia is undeniably huge, and a welcome contrast to the N64's launch. However, take a closer look at the actual games, and you'll see a disturbing pattern. Of the 27 launch titles, over 20 have already been released on another console or will be released simultaneously. Let's hope the GameCube exclusive content picks up soon.

- 18 Wheeler American Pro Trucker
- Batman Vengeance
- Bloody Roar: Primal Fury
- Star Wars Rogue Squadron II: Rogue Leader
- Universal Studios Theme Park Adventures
- Jeremy McGrath Supercross World
- Cel Damage
- Crazy Taxi
- Spider-man The Movie
- Burnout
- Dark Summit
- Wave Race: Blue Storm
- Dave Mirra Freestyle BMX 2
- Donald Duck Quack Attack
- Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3
- Driven
- FIFA 2002 World Cup
- Legends of Wrestling
- Luigi's Mansion
- NHL Hitz 20-02
- Red Card Soccer
- Simpsons Roadrage
- Sonic Adventure 2
- Super Monkey Ball
- Tarzan Freeride
- Worms Blast
- XG3 Extreme G Racing



Mario Golf & Mario Tennis

>> The boys over at Camelot are busy at the moment. In addition to a secretive GCN RPG project, they're also making GameCube sequels for Mario Golf and Mario Tennis. Camelot absolutely nailed both these games on N64, with Mario Tennis, in our opinion, being the best tennis game ever. We have high expectations then for the GameCube sequels, and as you can see, they're already looking awesome. The cartoony visual style of the N64 games has been carried over beautifully, and running at 60fps these games will rock! Plus, after the critical and commercial success of Mario Golf and Mario Tennis on Game Boy, we strongly suspect that Camelot will be working on GBA sequels to be released at the same time as the GameCube sequels, with full interactivity between them.



MARIO TENNIS

MARIO GOLF

Final Fantasy GCN

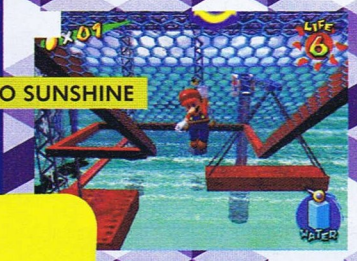
>> Nintendo and Square have finally buried the hatchet, and made an agreement that will see Final Fantasy games on GBA and GCN. Hooray! A new square affiliate called Game Designers Studio, led by Akitoshi Kawazu (whose background includes Legend Of Mana), will develop the titles, with funding through Hiroshi Yamauchi's Q Fund venture. The first title will be released in Japan this Christmas, for both GBA and GCN. The games will be interactive with one another, possibly allowing you to swap between the two at will. This is all we know at the moment, but just the thought of Final Fantasy back on Nintendo is enough to get this game on our most wanted list!

As an aside, Square are also working on two other GBA games, including a remixed version of Final Fantasy Tactics (led by Yasumi Matsuno, director of the original FFT and Vagrant Story), and an unannounced game. We should also mention Sony's position in the Square/Nintendo deal. After all, they recently purchased 21% of Square (spending US $116 in the process), and are its second largest shareholder. Apparently, they're happy for the company to make GBA games, since they have no direct competitor to GBA, but news that Square will develop GCN games has reportedly made a few Sony suits extremely, extremely "unhappy".

Super Mario Sunshine

>> This game is teasingly close, yet we still don't know much about it. There's a "Super" on the title now, and the basic storyline has been revealed. Nothing all that interesting, mind you. Mario and Peach take a holiday on a beautiful, remote island. However, as soon as they get there, Mario notices graffiti/scribbles messily plastered all over the village. No, he hasn't stumbled into Jet Set Radio Future, but he is implicated in the affair, as whoever has been leaving the trails is disguised as Mario. So Mario must clear not only the graffiti, but his name. He puts

SUPER MARIO SUNSHINE



STAR FOX ADVENTURES

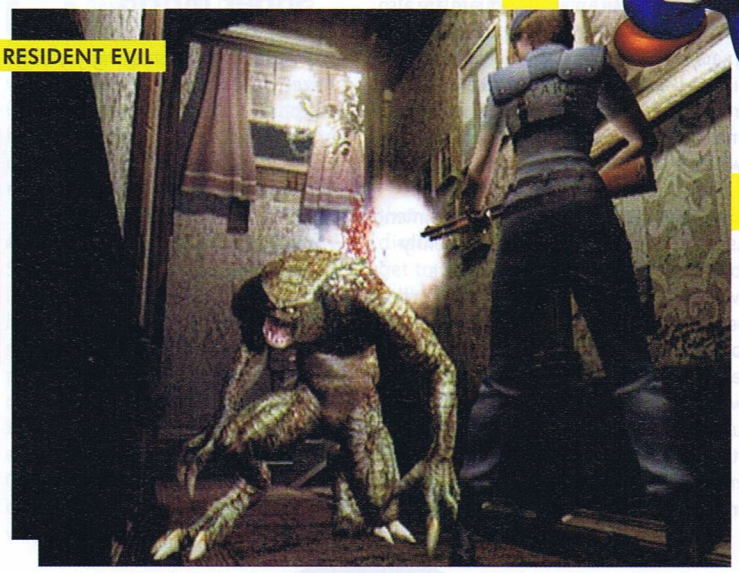
on his water pumping backback and sets out to uncover what's going on. Ho hum. It remains to be seen how well this intruiging gameplay concept works, and whilst the screenshots aren't all that impressive, Nintendo owns this genre and we're expecting great things from Super Mario Sunshine.

Resident Evil series

>> With exclusive rights to the Resident Evil (RE) series, purchase of a GameCube will be a must for survival horror fans. In an unbelievable move, Capcom are remaking and re-releasing every RE title to date on GameCube. Could there be such a thing as too much RE? We were a little sceptical about playing through the original again, but after seeing what Capcom (and returning director Shinji Mikami) have done with it, we're loving every minute of it! This is an unbelievably good looking videogame. It utilises a combination of pre-rendered backgrounds, real-time effects, high resolution models and smooth creature animation to produce the most spine tingling horror experience yet. Plus, the gameplay has been significantly tweaked, and the storyline extended. Resident Evil will be out in the USA by the time you read this, and should see a local release later in the year.

Out of the other Resident Evil titles coming soon, Resident Evil 0 is perhaps the most interesting. You may remember that it was originally planned for N64, then disappeared into development limbo. The good news is that it's back on track for GameCube, and unlike a remake, the team can let their imaginations run wild.

RESIDENT EVIL



F-Zero GCN

>> In a recently announced partnership, Sega and Nintendo will bring the world the next F-Zero game, for both the arcade and the home respectively. The Triforce based arcade game is tentatively titled F-Zero AC and will be developed by Amusment Vision (Daytona and Super Monkey Ball), and the GameCube version is known as F-Zero GC and will be developed by Nintendo.

Consider how fast and awesome F-Zero X was, then factor in a huge leap in hardware and Sega's arcade expertise and you have a game that is going to be mindblowing! Gamers will even be able to trade data using a standard GCN memory card between the home and arcade! The teams are dubbing it "home and away", which is kind of scary, but the feature will be interesting. We'll get our first look at the game at E3, and both versions will be out in Japan before the end of the year! Another reason to buy a GameCube? You bet!

Zelda GCN

>> There's been little to no new information on this game since its drastic change in visual style was unveiled at Spaceworld last year. It will be playable at E3 and Miyamoto has repeatedly told the doubters to just wait until they see it in action. We're inclined to side with Shiggy on this one.

Metroid Prime

>> Another wait and see game, but all indications point to a spectacular rebirth for this much acclaimed series.

Star Fox Adventures

>> The return of Star Fox is going to be huge. The game has been delayed until September in the USA to ensure that it meets Rare's high standards. Although there will be traditional shooter sequences, SFA is mostly an adventure game. The storyline revolves around Fox trying to save a planet inhabited by dinosaurs from an evil overlord called General Scales. What's looking most impressive about SFA is the balance between epic adventuring and solid combat. The control scheme is somewhat similar to Ocarina of Time, which is definitely a good thing. As you can see in the screenshots, SFA gets more detailed every time we see it. In particular, check out Fox's realistic fur. Amazing! In fact, if nothing else, this game will show just what the GameCube can do visually.

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www.apple.com

Eve tempted Adam with an Apple y'know.

>>For all you Mac lovers out there, here's further proof of Apple's consistency in staying on the cusp of technology and design. Yes, we know the iPod has been out for a while, but since it has just been relaunched in a 10gig format, we thought this was the perfect time to take a formal look at this funky, and very expensive bit of kit.

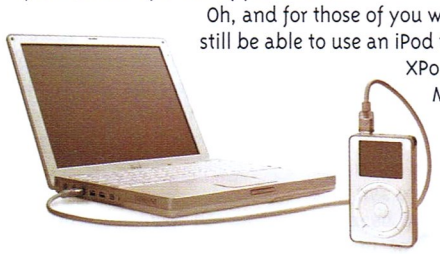
VERSATILE

On aesthetics alone, the iPod is highly desirable. However, its snow white colouring, tiny size, slick interface and light construction belie a very powerful and versatile system. In addition to letting you carry around 100 to 200 full CDs (depending on encoding quality), it also doubles as an external Firewire drive, so you can plug it into your Mac and use it as a secondary HD for data storage (and recharge it at the same time we might add).

Purely as a music machine, the iPod is definitely worthy of the hype, pumping out excellent sound quality. The entire spectrum is represented well, and those of you who encode your tunes properly will definitely benefit. We should also mention the headphones. While we prefer ours phat and bin-style, the iPod's are undeniably good quality. They've been engineered with "Neodymium transducer magnets" which doesn't mean a whole lot to us, but it does translate to headphones that sound fantastic.

The new iPod also has a comprehensive graphic equaliser, and can store 20 presets, so you can switch between different sound stages for different styles of music. Oh, and it also has a huge 20 minutes of skip protection thanks to 32MB built in solid-state memory cache, so your tunes will never skip a beat. The LCD is crisp too, and although not huge you can easily view enough text to get by. Plus, it has a white LED backlight so you can see what's going on in low light conditions.

In addition to a wealth of music related features, the new iPod also has a Contacts application that allows you to sync your address book from a host of other applications.



Oh, and for those of you who don't have Macs, you'll still be able to use an iPod thanks to software called XPod, being developed by Mediafour *(www.mediafour.com)*, that will allow FireWire equipped PCs to read and trade data with an iPod. Check out the site for more details.

DUAL PLAY HW-DAH

Rome

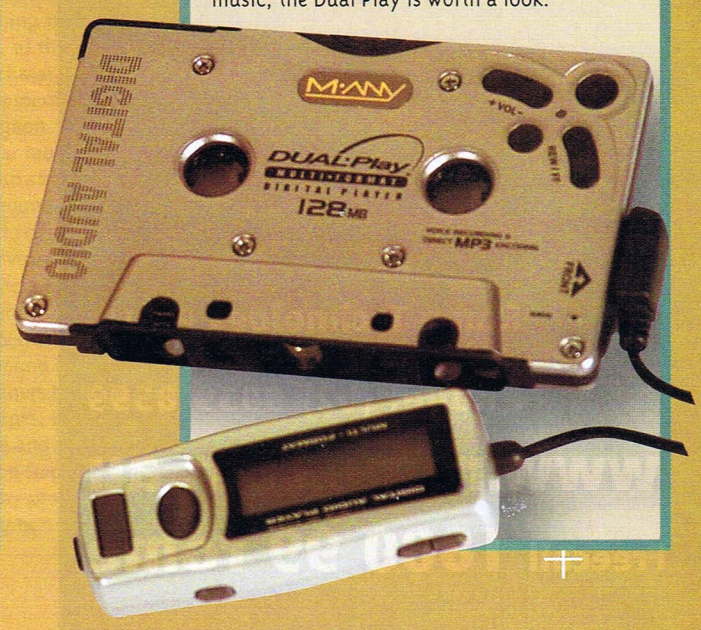
Price: $395 (64MB); $440 (128MB); $649 (256MB)
www.rome.com.au

>>If you're not in the market for one of the very pricey HD-based mp3 solutions, then the Dual Play may be just what you're looking for, as this is a very versatile little unit.

STRAIGHTFORWARD

For starters, although it's a fully digital player, it's shaped like a cassette and can function as an analogue cassette in any cassette deck without the need for any wires or adaptors! This in itself is a big plus, as you have the convenience of transferring files to the system digitally and the sound quality of digital formats, married to the ability to plug it into your car's tape deck. Of course, the Dual Play also functions as a stand alone mp3 portable, with all the features you would expect, like voice recording, a straightforward interface for transferring files from your computer via USB, direct encoding, Windows Media plug-in support etc.

There are three models available, representing three sizes of built-in storage. We tested the 128MB variety, and this is probably the most cost-effective model. Plus, you can expand your player's storage with MultiMediaCard (MMC) flash memory sticks. All up, if you want a small, cost effective portable player, and aren't too concerned about carrying around hundreds of hours of music, the Dual Play is worth a look.



ARCHOS MULTIMEDIA JUKEBOX

Archos

Price: TBA

www.archos.com

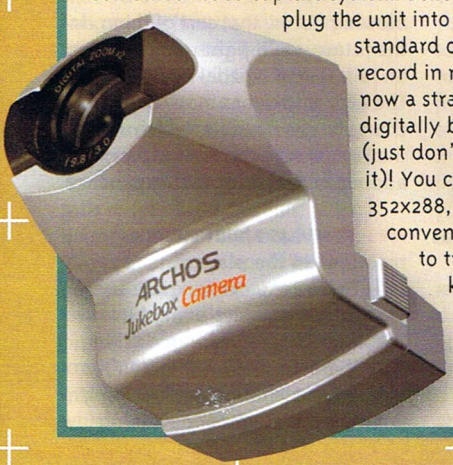
>>The Archos Multimedia Jukebox is very much the iPod equivalent for PC owners. Although it doesn't look as slick, what's exciting about the Multimedia Jukebox is what it has the potential to do. Plus, it will definitely be cheaper than the iPod when it comes out here.

SNAP HAPPY

The basic model has 10gig of storage, but there's a 40gig version on the way. In addition to the standard range of music-related features (including recording straight to mp3 in real-time from any audio source – including your CD player), the Archos is hugely expandable to take further advantage of all that space.

At a basic level, you can pick up SmartMedia and CompactFlash Photo Module expansion kits, so you can download images from your digital camera into the Jukebox. Now while this may seem to have no real advantage over simply uploading them to your PC, think about it in the context of a long overseas holiday. Instead of blowing lots of money on expensive memory cards, you could just use the one and store your images on the Jukebox. Plus, you can view them on the Jukebox's LCD too. On the other hand, if you don't have a digital camera, you could pick up the Camera Module expansion which turns your Jukebox into a 1.3 mega-pixel digital camera and MPEG4 camcorder. While 1.3 mega-pixels is not at all high these days, and the camcorder is only VHS quality, as an all in one solution for music lovers that would like the convenience of digital photography, this is a sweet solution indeed.

Perhaps the most exciting add-on for this system, however, is the Video Module, which turns the Jukebox into a self-contained video capture system. Believe it or not, but you can plug the unit into any video source using standard composite cables and record in real-time! Yes, there's now a straightforward way to digitally back up The Simpsons (just don't tell Fox you're doing it)! You can only capture at 352x288, but the sheer convenience of then being able to transfer it to your PC and keep your favourite shows in a digital format is a big bonus.



SONY NET MD MZ-N1

Sony

Price: $899 (Also available MZ-N707 for $699 and the MZ-N505 for $599)

>>To round out our hardware section this month, we thought we'd take a look at Sony's latest offering in the much-underrated Mini-Disc format. The Net MD MZ-N1 Walkman comes with OpenMG Jukebox music management software for drag and drop transfer functionality, full tracklist editing, fast CD ripping and up to 32x transfer speed via USB. It even comes with MiniDisc Long Play (MDLP) technology (using ATRAC3 compression), so you can store up to 320 minutes of music on a single 80 minute MiniDisc. The system also uses a combination of a rechargeable battery and a single AA Alkaline battery for up to 110 hours playback! Most importantly, the sound quality is fantastic, thanks to Digital Signal Processor (DSP) Type-R, which has twice the signal processing capability of previous MD Walkman models. A great buy for technology fetishists, but ultimately, HD based products are much more versatile.

Of course, Sony doesn't condone piracy...

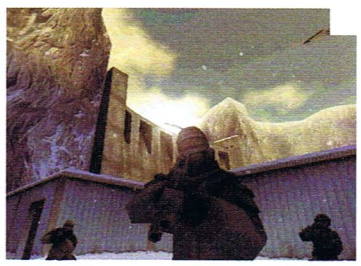
TIMESPLITTERS 2

>>PS2 **CATEGORY:** FPS >> **PLAYERS:** 1-4 >>
PUBLISHER: Eidos >> **AVAILABLE:** TBA >>

WACKOMETER

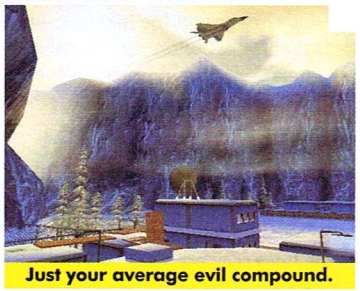
Hyper visited the Manchester offices of Free Radical Design recently to find out about the long awaited sequel to Timesplitters. Managing Director David Doak found the time to not only lead us through a couple of memorable levels but to also wax lyrical about games, guns, fun and monkeys.

HYPER: What was your approach to Timesplitters 2?
DAVID DOAK: With the first game, we wanted to make a solid multiplayer experience, and create flexibility in the map maker. Our main focus with Timesplitters 2 is the single player. There's a more immersive, cohesive narrative experience and although you're jumping through time, there's a continuous thread in the game to pursue the Timesplitters. Each level has its own unique story as well as set of characters, objectives and weapons. You play a different figure in each period of history.



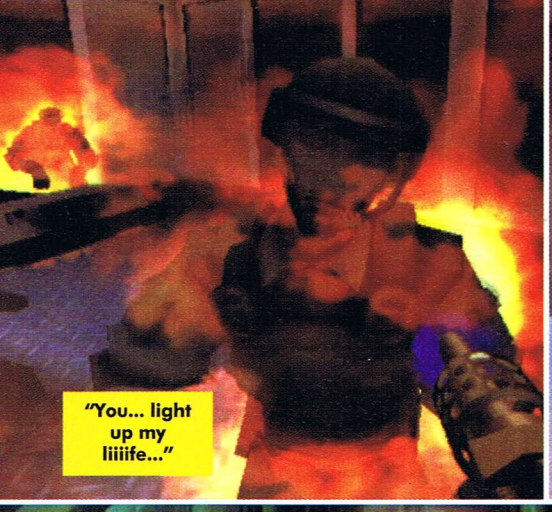
HYPER: Tell us about some of the levels.
DD: The range of levels is from 1850s all the way through to very futuristic stuff and along the way, you're taken through a number of different themes. There's a very contemporary, militaristic level set in Siberia; there's a cyberpunk Neo-Tokyo level; a 1930s Chicago gangsters level; and a turn of the 19th Century Notre Dame level amongst others.

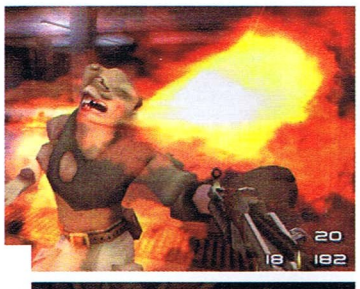
HYPER: And the enemies vary as well?
DD: There are the usual soldier types but in the lighter hearted levels you'll fight against little monkeys with pea shooters. They do acrobatics, sound alarms by blowing horns, that sort of thing. In the future you'll fight robots, some on rails, some bipedal or floating. The idea is to get as many enjoyable characters as possible, which can then be used in the multiplayer, adding to the fun of that experience.

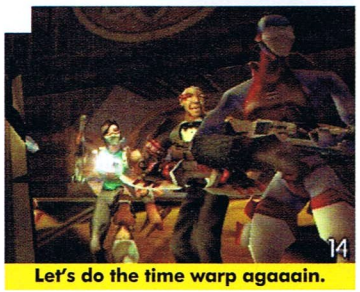


Just your average evil compound.

HYPER: What about enemies' reactions to the player?
DD: There are more tangible reactions in enemies being hit. You'll see them flinching, ducking, they'll run around on fire. You'll also see them hiding behind things, jumping out at you and running







Let's do the time warp agaaain.

away. In the arcade part of the game you'll also see a range of acrobatic things. So live enemies can jump around and pull certain moves that the bulkier enemies are incapable of.

The story game will see a wider range of awareness. It'll incorporate shooting but also stealth and evasion, tracking people, even interaction with NPCs or protecting them from hostiles. There's a higher level of immersion than the first game.

HYPER: What about interaction with the environment?

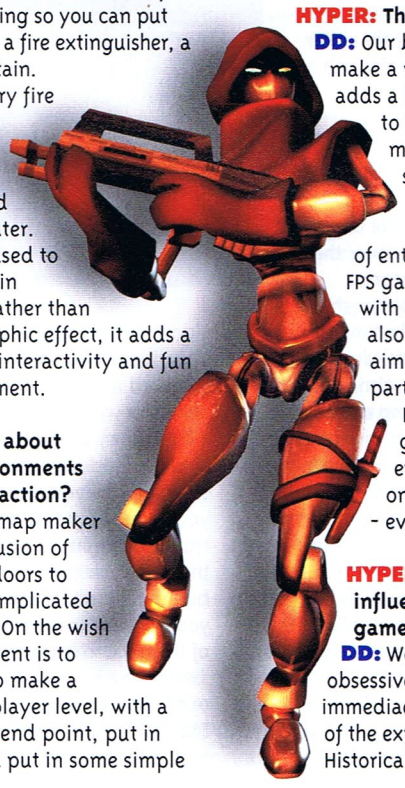
DD: Well, the flamethrower is a good example. This is a weapon that changes the whole game - everything in the environment that should be flammable is affected by it including enemies. So you can set a lot of the world alight. Even the player can be set alight, so often it's a matter of finding something so you can put yourself or out: a fire extinguisher, a shower or fountain.

The secondary fire mode is laying a trail of gasoline that can be laid down and lit later. This could be used to protect a base in multiplayer. Rather than just a pure graphic effect, it adds a whole layer of interactivity and fun to the environment.

HYPER: What about creating environments with this interaction?

DD: Well, the map maker allows the inclusion of windows and doors to create more complicated environments. On the wish list at the moment is to allow people to make a simple single player level, with a start point, an end point, put in some NPCs and put in some simple objectives like finding a key. These could be saved to a memory card, taken to a mate's house and you could play it in a time trial mode.

The enjoyment of creating in the game is an important thing - not leaving players entirely passive.



HYPER: The humour?

DD: Our big thing is to make a very fun game. It adds a layer of enjoyment to it and helps to make first person shooters more accessible.

There is a barrier of entry to enjoyment in FPS games which starts with the controls but also many of them are aimed at a very particular audience. Ideally we want a game that everyone can play on the easiest setting - even your mum!

HYPER: What about influences for the game?

DD: We've always been obsessive about the immediacy and accessibility of the experience. Historically, a number of the founders of the company worked on GoldenEye, which is a badge you can wear with honour but it's also a bit of an albatross. It's almost possible to persuade people that things are better than that game. The ethos of GoldenEye in enjoyment, depth, immersion and game story is what we're trying to bring to Timesplitters 2.

Also we want to make a game with something for everyone, which is a reason for the humour. We're very strongly motivated by making games that we like to play ourselves. Most of the development hell stories that you hear are from people making a game that they don't want to play. If you're doing that then you don't have the critical faculties to make it a good game.

That's very much our thing: to make games that are fun and represent value to people. Games that have longevity.

» There are the usual soldier types but in the lighter-hearted levels you'll fight against little monkeys with pea shooters.

WOW-O-METER

KNIGHTS OF THE OLD REPUBLIC

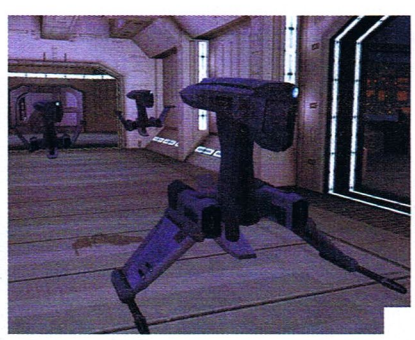
>>XBOX/PC **CATEGORY:** RPG >> **PLAYERS:** 1 >>
PUBLISHER: LucasArts/Bioware >> **AVAILABLE:** Late 2002

This is a very exciting new *Star Wars* game on the horizon from LucasArts and BioWare. It's the *Star Wars* RPG fans have always wanted (besides the Massively Multiplayer *Star Wars*: Galaxies), and it's being developed by the folks who brought us Baldur's Gate no less.

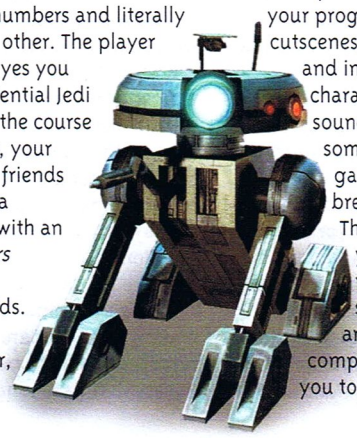
THE DARK SIDE

Launching on Xbox roughly six months before the PC, the game is set thousands of years before the Prequel Trilogy, when the Jedi and Sith were both in greater numbers and literally at war with each other. The player takes control of, yes you guessed it, a potential Jedi Knight and over the course of the adventure, your character makes friends (and eventually a playable party) with an array of *Star Wars* creatures, from Wookiees to Droids.

Besides the central character, you will be able to take control of any members of your party at any time, with the AI taking care of the other characters. Possibly this will be required to solve various puzzles, as different character will have varying abilities. A limit of three characters in the party has been imposed to allow BioWare to invest more detail and character depth over the course of the adventure.

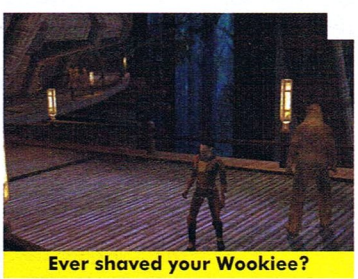


The Ebon Hawk is your ship, and it will exist as the kind of "tavern" of the game where you save your progress, witness certain cutscenes, dump excess gear and interact with other characters. Interestingly, it sounds like there will be some space combat mini games to spice up the break between quests. The Ebon Hawk will take you from planet to planet as you explore strange new planets and get mixed up in a complex story that allows you to cross over to the dark side if you tend to play dirty.



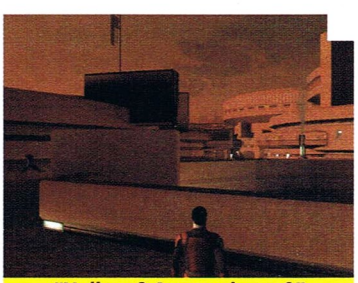
Besides a huge array of guns and standard melee weapons, your human character will not start the game with a lightsaber. One of the quests will actually require you to find all the appropriate items and then assemble your own unique lightsaber, just like a true Jedi Knight. At the beginning of the game you can select certain skills, but under the tutelage of a Jedi Master you will have to slowly learn the ways of the Force to become a true Jedi.

We have huge hopes for Knights of the Old Republic, and with BioWare at the helm, we're sure our high expectations will be well met.



Ever shaved your Wookiee?

Let's have a picnic!



"Hellooo? Anyone home?"

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WIN WIN WIN

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FIRST PRIZE
Mathew Nicholls
Berriedale, Tasmania

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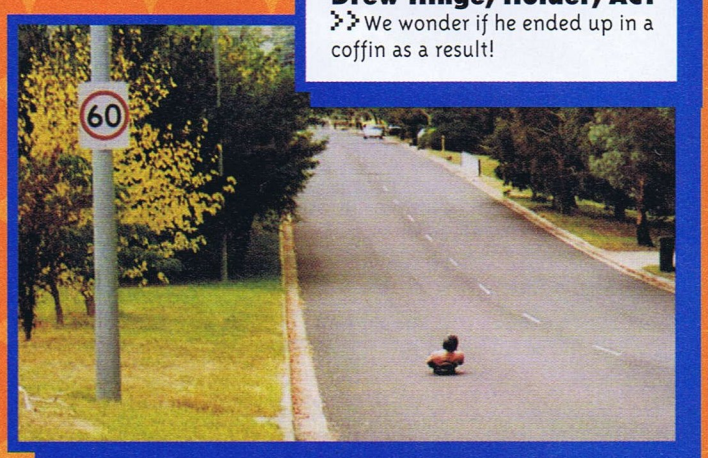
SECOND PRIZE
Tyrone Obramski
Aberfoyle Park, SA

>> Tyrone seems to be performing a far more deadly kickflip, but we suspect he might have suffered some major internal injuries upon impact. Still, we admire his bravery.

RUNNER UP
Drew Hinge, Holder, ACT

>> We wonder if he ended up in a coffin as a result!



RUNNER UP
Wai Hoong Tan,
Broadbeach, Qld

>> This guy is obviously pretty damn cool.

RUNNER UP
A. Noller, Kuraby, Qld

>> A very amusing piece of work.

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STAR
ATTACK OF

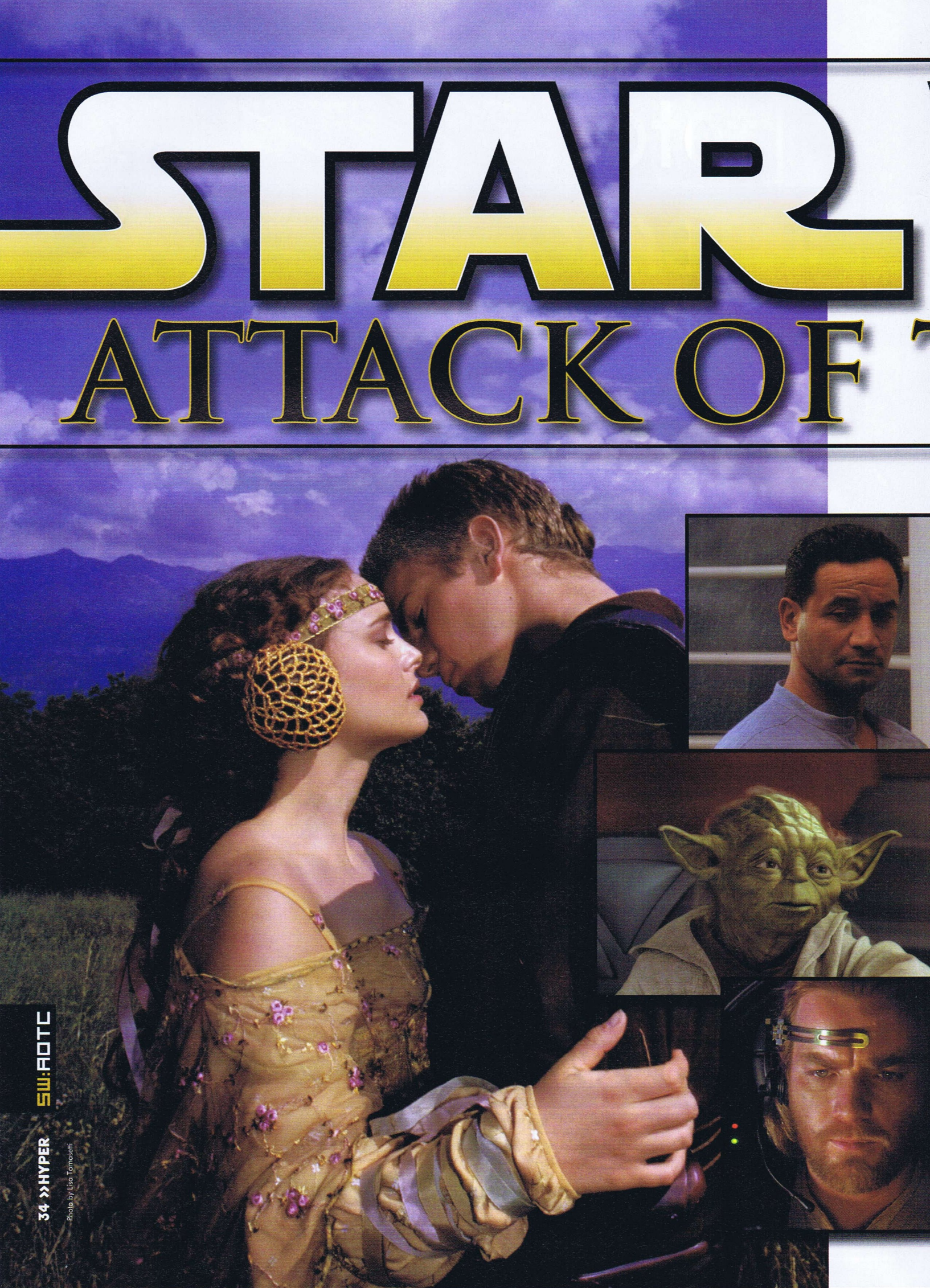


Photo by Lisa Tomasetti

WARS
THE CLONES

THE SAGA CONTINUES WITH EPISODE II...

When webmaster Harry Knowles (editor of the movie site Aint It Cool News) was ushered into a dingy hotel room to secretly view a bootleg of *Attack of the Clones*, he had stumbled across one of the biggest movie scoops of the year. Knowles proceeded to post a review of the movie on his website back in March, before the film was even complete, declaring it "the most entertaining *Star Wars* movie yet". Whilst Lucasfilm were somewhat disturbed that the film had somehow been leaked into the hands of their greatest enemy – the internet geek elite – they were at least relieved to see that the response to the movie was an overpoweringly positive one. The marketing machine had been running a little quieter this time around after the over hype of *Episode I: The Phantom Menace* and the critical mauling it received from fans and professional critics alike. The internet buzz that Harry Knowles created as a result of his sneak review was the kind of positive word-of-mouth that Lucasfilm had probably been praying for.

A 20-minute preview of *Lord of the Rings* shown at the Cannes movie festival a few months before the film opened back in 2001 resulted in frenzied word-of-mouth, and eventual box office success in all corners of the globe. The hype surrounding that movie snowballed out of control on a street level. It proved that the internet can be a powerful marketing tool in itself – if you have a quality product to begin with.

As *Lord of the Rings* grows as a serious contender for "best fantasy trilogy of all time", there was no doubt that repairs were needed to the *Star Wars* franchise after *The Phantom Menace*. To an extent, the series had lost its "cool" factor. The smart-talking characters and general retro hip of the Original Trilogy had been replaced with visual slapstick and an over reliance on cartoon-like CGI. It seems it's been left up to *Episode II* to return some cred to the *Wars*-verse.

The difference this time around is that Lucasfilm now have that street-level buzz for *Attack of the Clones* that Peter Jackson enjoyed with *Lord of the Rings*. Those who have seen *Attack of the Clones* before its release have loved every minute of it. It's been described as "smart", "sinister" and "exciting". So, is this the *Star Wars* movie we all hoped for when the lights went down back in May, 1999? Well, seeing as the movie opens a week after this issue goes on sale, we can't give you a definite answer to that question. But what we can do, is give you a look at all the cool things to get excited about this time around in that galaxy far, far away.

All images © Lucasfilm Ltd. & TM. All Rights Reserved. Mace Windu photo by Sue Adler

THE OPENING CRAWL...

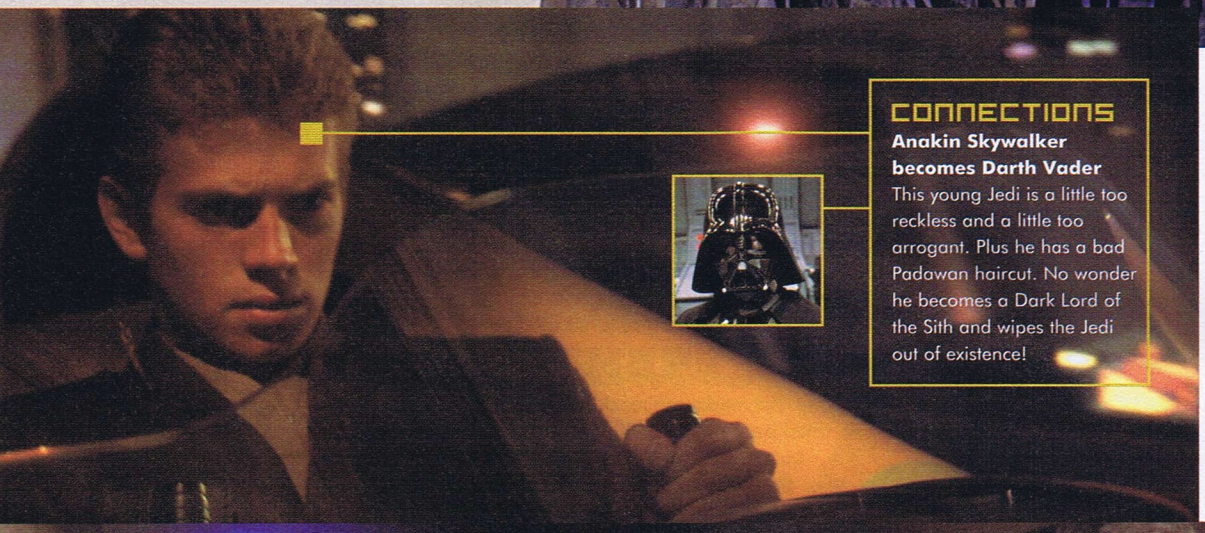
Affectionately known as "the crawl", here's what you'll be reading as soon as the Main Title appears:

There is unrest in the Galactic Senate. Several hundred solar systems, under the leadership of the Rebel Leader, Count Dooku, have declared their intentions to secede from the Republic.

This separatist movement has made it difficult for the limited number of Jedi Knights to maintain peace and order in the galaxy.

Senator Amidala, the former Queen of Naboo, is returning to the Galactic Senate to vote on the critical issue of creating an army of the Republic to assist the overwhelmed Jedi...

Photo by Lisa Tomasetti



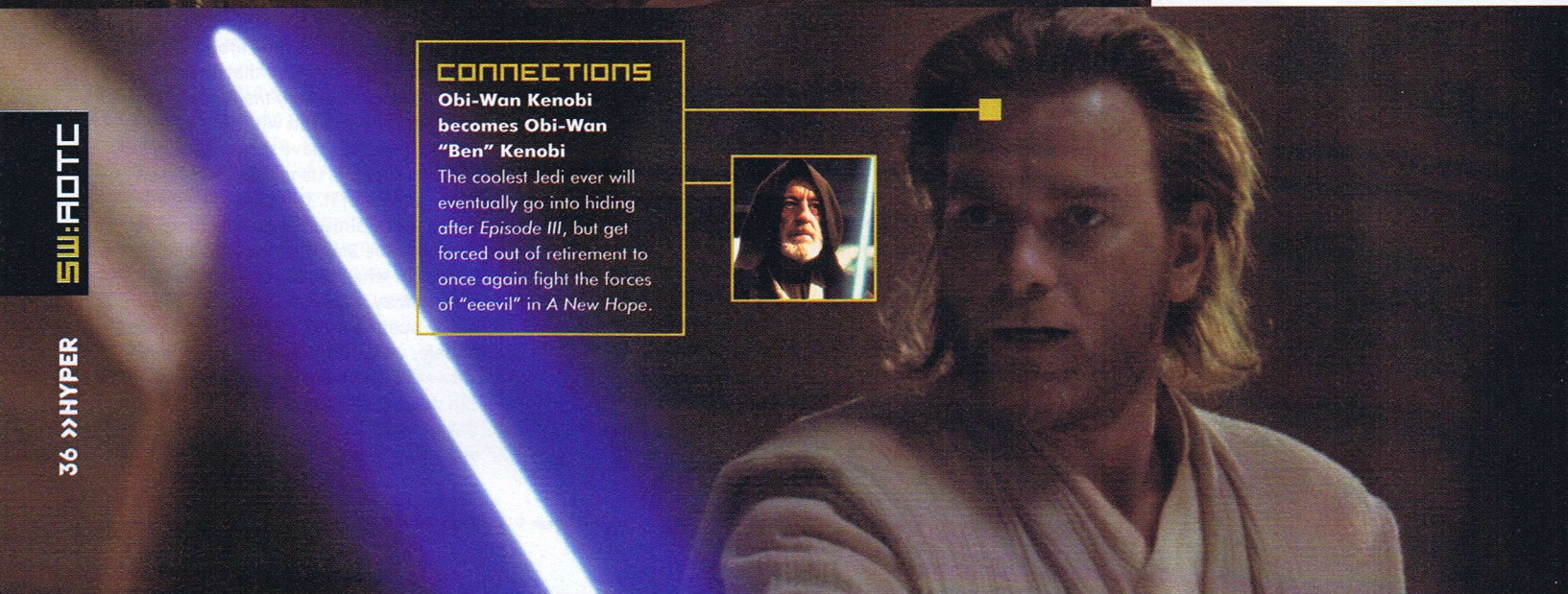
CONNECTIONS

Anakin Skywalker becomes Darth Vader

This young Jedi is a little too reckless and a little too arrogant. Plus he has a bad Padawan haircut. No wonder he becomes a Dark Lord of the Sith and wipes the Jedi out of existence!

TUSKEN RAIDERS OF THE LOST STORY ARC

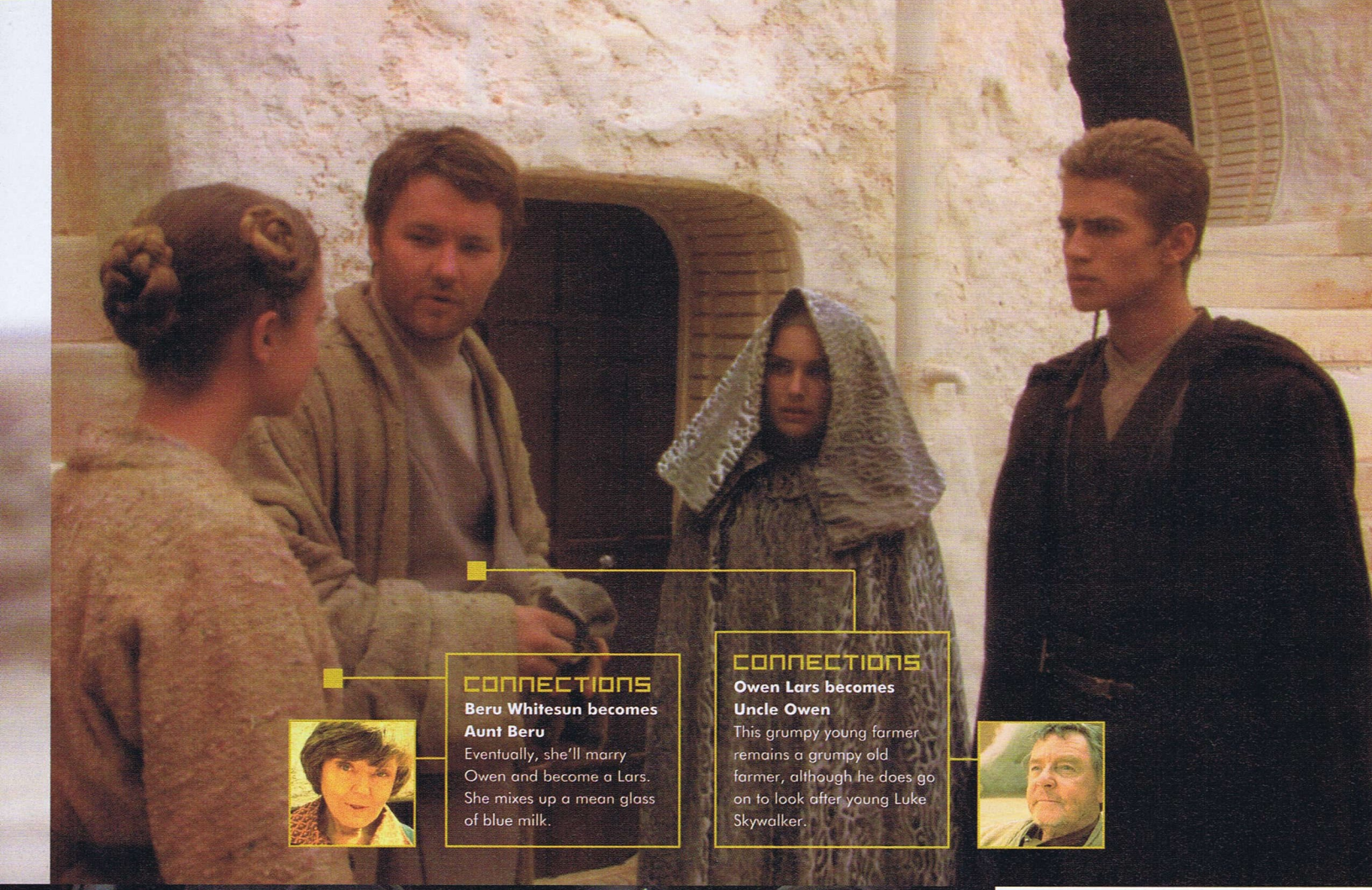
For the first time in a *Star Wars* movie, we get to see what a female Tusken and Tusken child look like. In fact, we get to see a whole Tusken camp for the first time, as Anakin Skywalker has somewhat of a run-in with these tribal desert warriors. Rumour has it that this scene was longer and more violent than what was cut down for the final film.



CONNECTIONS

Obi-Wan Kenobi becomes Obi-Wan "Ben" Kenobi

The coolest Jedi ever will eventually go into hiding after *Episode III*, but get forced out of retirement to once again fight the forces of "eeevil" in *A New Hope*.



CONNECTIONS

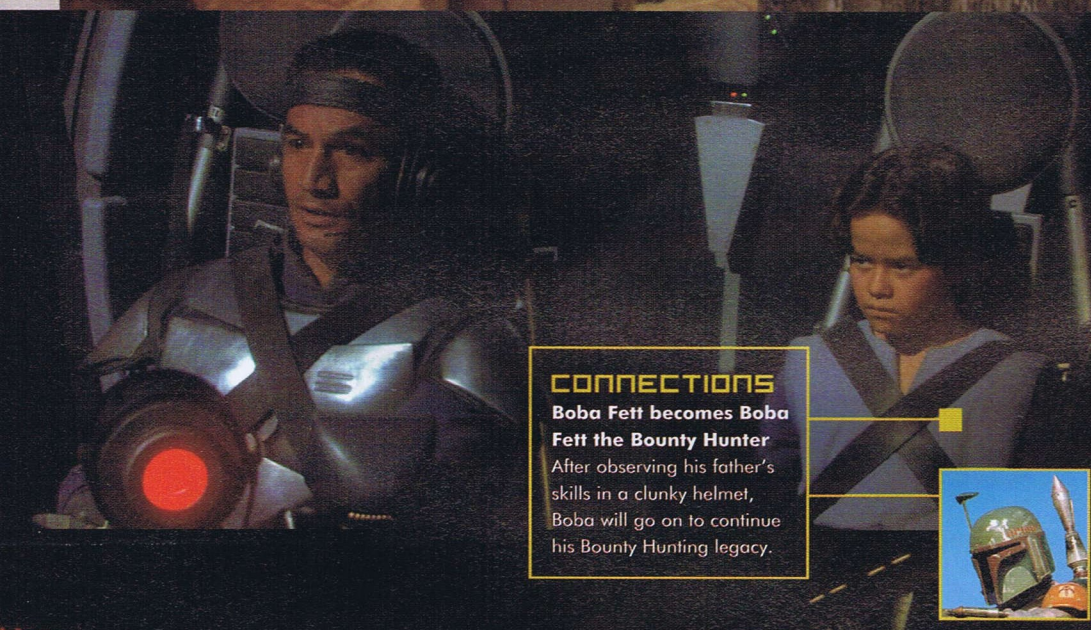
Beru Whitesun becomes Aunt Beru

Eventually, she'll marry Owen and become a Lars. She mixes up a mean glass of blue milk.

CONNECTIONS

Owen Lars becomes Uncle Owen

This grumpy young farmer remains a grumpy old farmer, although he does go on to look after young Luke Skywalker.



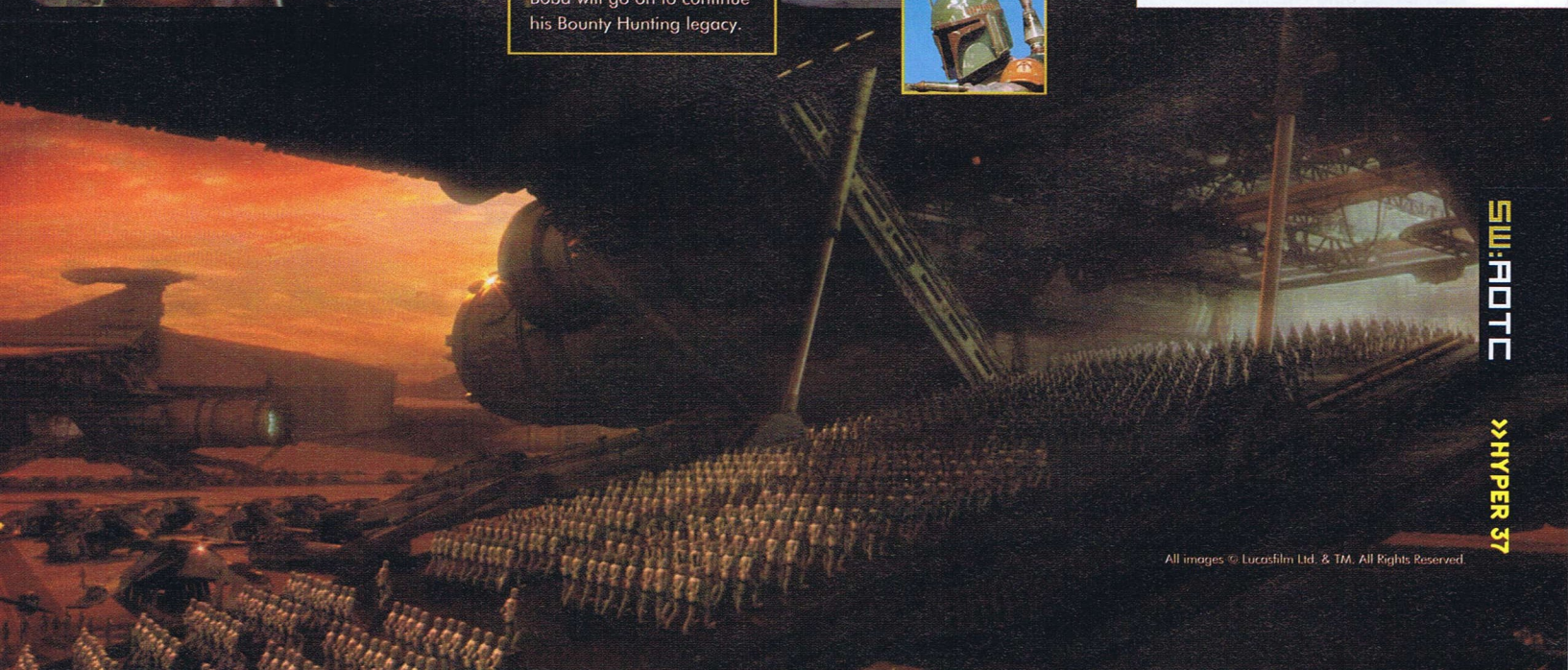
CONNECTIONS

Boba Fett becomes Boba Fett the Bounty Hunter

After observing his father's skills in a clunky helmet, Boba will go on to continue his Bounty Hunting legacy.

CLONEHEADS

>> So how does one go about creating an army of clones? First, find yourself a powerful Bounty Hunter... in this case, Jango Fett. Jango has been enlisted to be the "blueprint" for every solider in the army. Essentially, every Clonetrooper is a younger Jango Fett fitted out in special white Republic armour.



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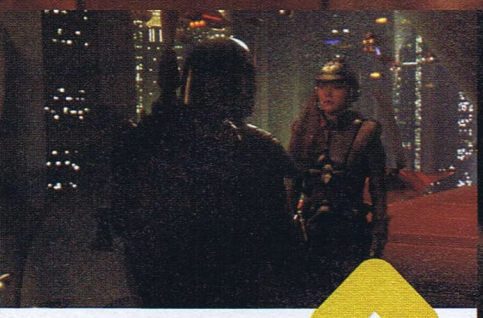
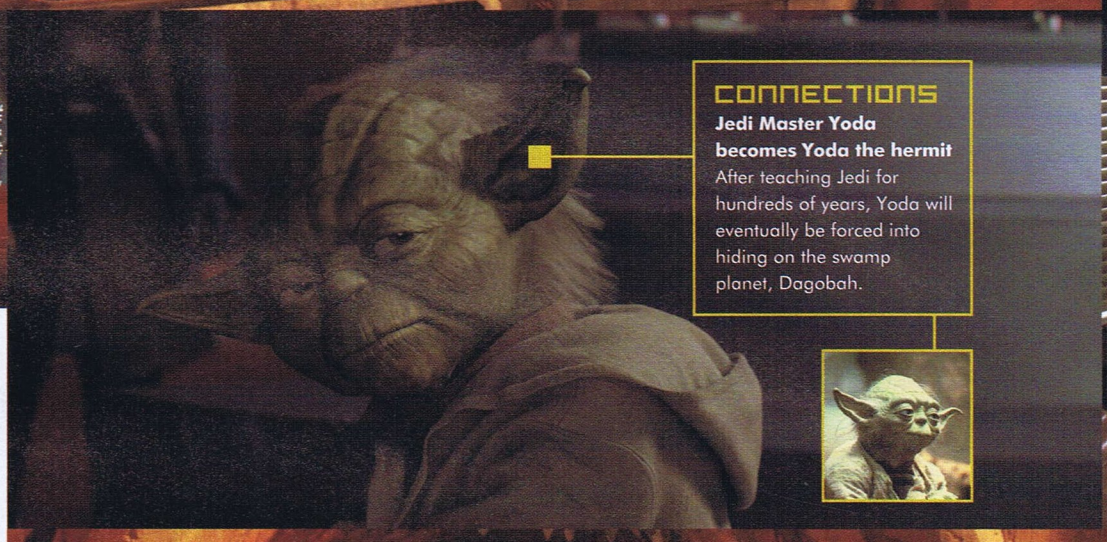
CONNECTIONS

C3-PO (rusty) becomes C3-PO (Golden)

At some stage, this nervous protocol droid will find himself gold plated.





CONNECTIONS

Jedi Master Yoda becomes Yoda the hermit

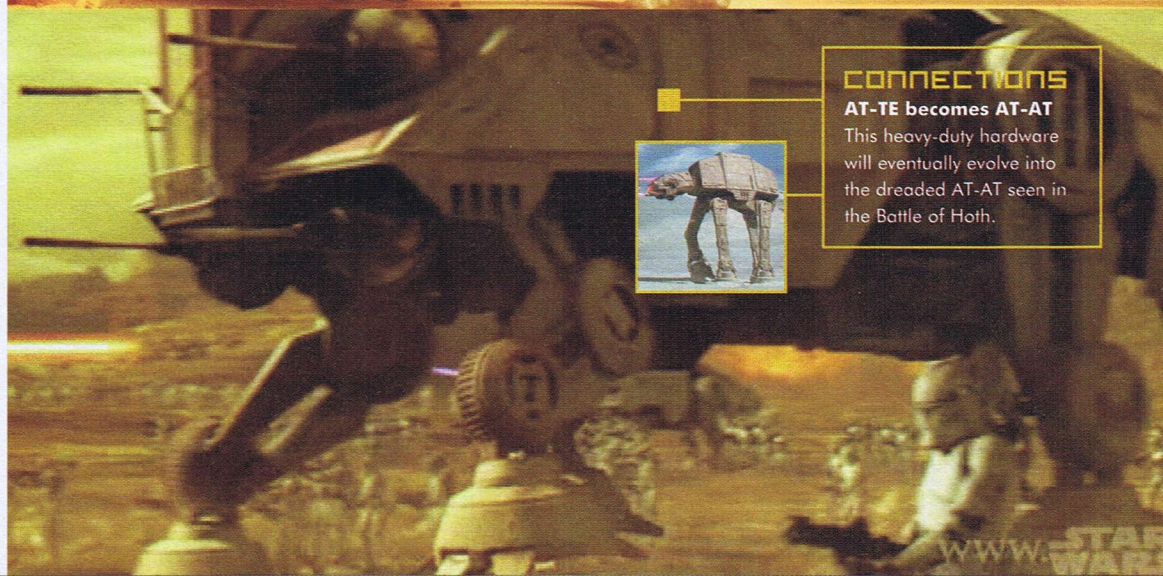
After teaching Jedi for hundreds of years, Yoda will eventually be forced into hiding on the swamp planet, Dagobah.

PUT ANOTHER SITH ON THE BARBIE

As *Episode II* was shot mostly at Fox Studios in Sydney, much of the cast is Australian. Look out for...

- **Jay Laga'aia** *(Water Rats)* as Captain Typho
- **Rose Byrne** *(Two Hands)* as Dormé, Padme's handmaiden
- **Joel Edgerton** *(Secret Life Of Us)* as Owen Lars
- **Bonnie Piesse** *(Blue Heelers)* as Beru Whitesun
- **Leeanna Walsman** *(Looking For Alibrandi)* as Zam Wesell
- **Jack Thompson** *(Breaker Morant)* as Cliegg Lars
- **Claudia Karvan** *(Secret Life Of Us)* as Sola Naberrie
- **Graeme Blundell** *(Don's Party)* as Ruwee Naberrie
- **David Bowers** *(Water Rats)* as Mas Amedda
- **Marton Csokas** *(Lord of the Rings)* as the voice of Poggle The Lesser
- **Matt Doran** *(Home And Away)* as Elan Sleazebaggano
- **Ronald Falk** *(Burnt Piano)* as the voice of Dexter Jettster
- **Alethea McGrath** *(Dead Letter Office)* as Jocasta Nu
- **Trisha Noble** *(Blonde)* as Jobal Naberrie
- **Anthony Phelan** *(Babe: Pig in the City)* as the voice of Lama Su
- **Susie Porter** *(Better Than Sex)* as Hermione Bagwa
- **Matt Rowan** *(various theatre work)* as Senator Orn Free Taa

Plus many more Aussie extras!



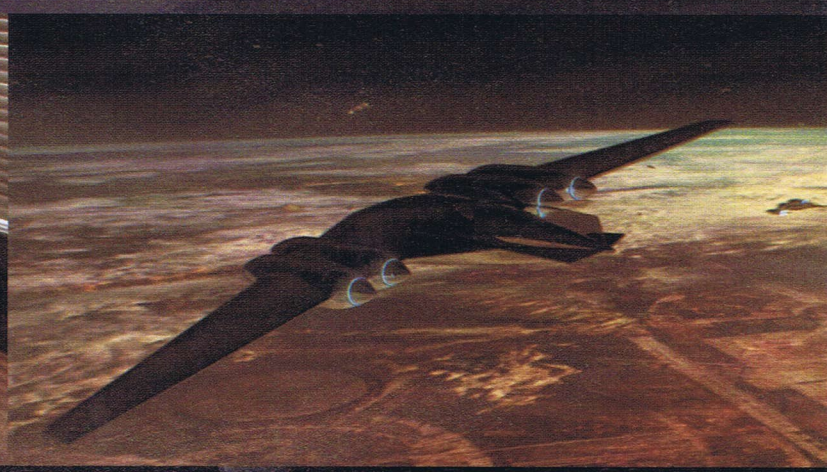
CONNECTIONS

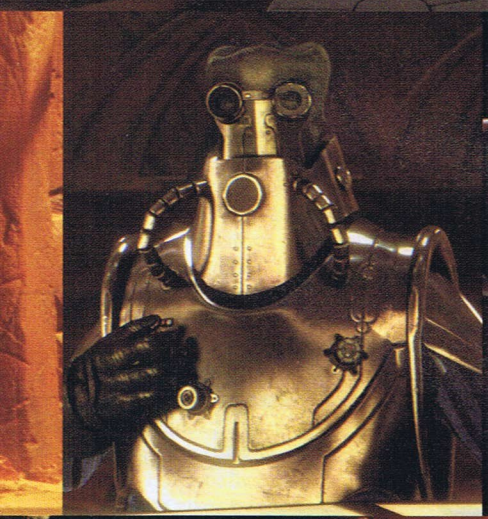
AT-TE becomes AT-AT

This heavy-duty hardware will eventually evolve into the dreaded AT-AT seen in the Battle of Hoth.

PUTTING A LID ON THE JAR (JAR)

You either love him or hate him, but Jar Jar Binks is back in *Episode II* if only for a few minutes. Since 10 years have passed, Jar Jar is actually mature enough now to mix it with the politicians in the senate! Who would have thought? After a few small scenes, the rest of *Attack of the Clones* is a Jar Jar free zone.

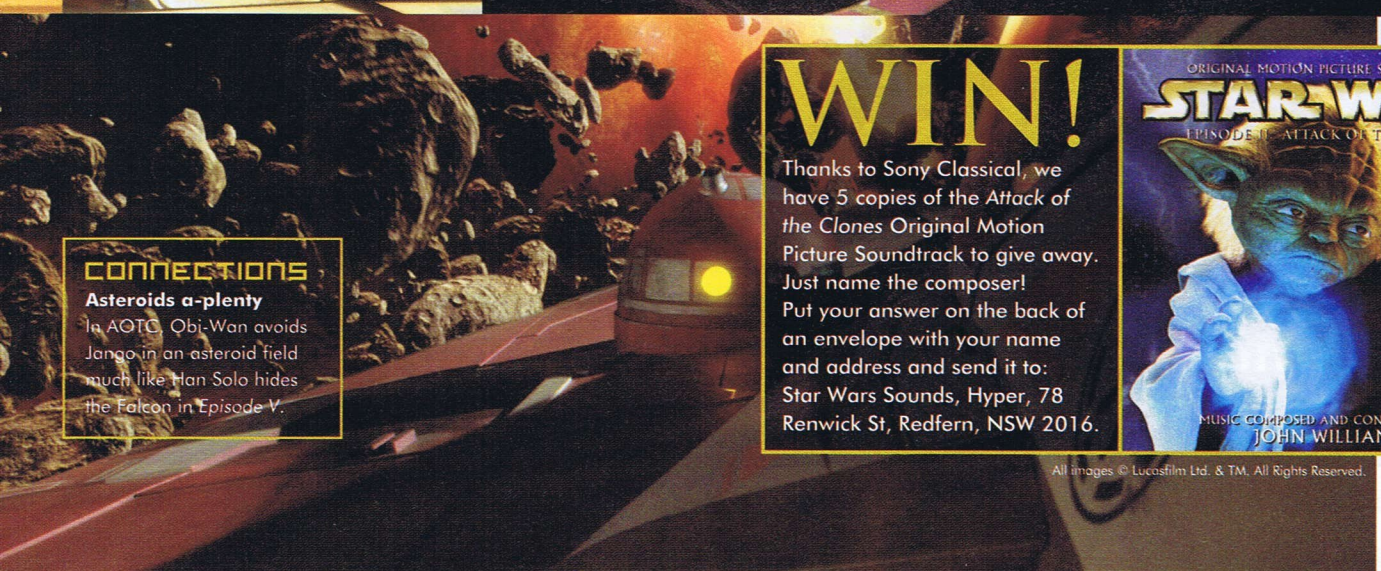




CONNECTIONS

Here come the A-Wings

The red wedge-shaped Jedi Starfighter has hints of the Rebels' A-Wing fighter from the classic trilogy.



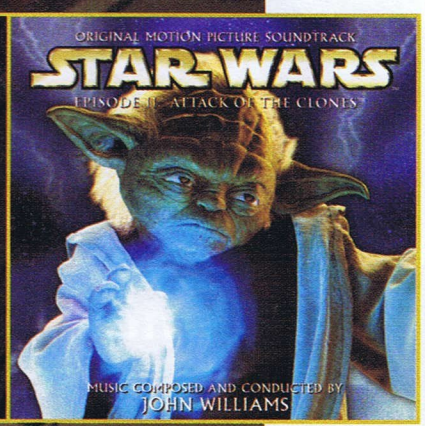
CONNECTIONS

Asteroids a-plenty

In AOTC, Obi-Wan avoids Jango in an asteroid field much like Han Solo hides the Falcon in *Episode V*.

WIN!

Thanks to Sony Classical, we have 5 copies of the *Attack of the Clones* Original Motion Picture Soundtrack to give away. Just name the composer! Put your answer on the back of an envelope with your name and address and send it to: Star Wars Sounds, Hyper, 78 Renwick St, Redfern, NSW 2016.



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ATTACK OF THE GAMES!

Now what would a new *Star Wars* movie be without a sandcrawler full of new videogames?

BOUNTY HUNTER

WOW-O-METER

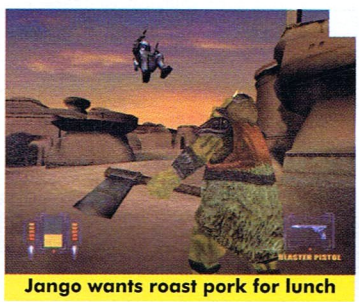
>>PS2/GCN

CATEGORY: Action >> **PLAYERS:** 1-TBA >>
PUBLISHER: LucasArts >> **AVAILABLE:** June

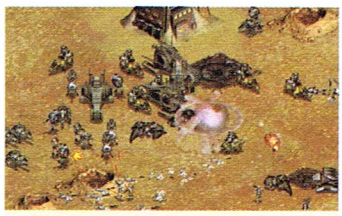
If there's one character that will forever remain the anti-hero from *Star Wars*, it's the Bounty Hunter – in the case of *Episode II*, that Bounty Hunter is Jango Fett. He's a bad guy, but he looks so damn cool you just wish you could be him. After seeing *Episode II*, you may even sympathise with his plight. After all, he's just a simple man trying to make his way in the universe.

This GameCube and PlayStation 2 game puts you in the boots of Jango Fett in a third-person action/adventure that just might turn out to be Tomb Raider with blasters. The most interesting thing about Bounty Hunter, is that it is the first LucasArts game to be developed with help from ILM and Skywalker Sound, the two arms of Lucasfilm that usually leave the production of game elements solely up to LucasArts. ILM are producing the cutscenes, and Skywalker Sound will be designing sound effects for the game, which should result in some truly dazzling results. It's strange to think this is the first time this has ever happened over at LucasArts!

From what we can tell, you play as Jango Fett on a whole new adventure that is set before the events of *Episode II*. You'll be going up against your rival, Zam Wesell, to delve into the seedy underworld and no doubt kill lots of scum and villainy with your trusty sidearms in your quest for the mysterious leader of a cult. Jango's jetpack is going to get a workout, as you can use this to get the drop on your opponents. Explore new environments such as Mos Gamos – a strange new location on Tatooine – and face off against enemies such as the slimy Gamorrean Guards and pistol-happy Rodians. There will be six different worlds in total, for a total of 18 missions. Besides your blasters, you'll also get to grips with a deadly flamethrower! Goody.



Jango wants roast pork for lunch



SEND IN THE CLONES!

CLONE CAMPAIGNS Expansion Pack

Star Wars: Galactic Battlegrounds on PC was the RTS that fans had been hankering for. Good, solid, Age of Empires style strategy – but with Stormtroopers! Well, any day now you'll be able to pick up the Clone Campaigns expansion pack so you can play out the Geonosis battle amongst other new campaigns, with all-new units and tech trees!

THE CLONE WARS

>>PS2/GCN

CATEGORY: Combat/Action >> **PLAYERS:** 1-4 >>
PUBLISHER: LucasArts/Pandemic Studios >> **AVAILABLE:** TBA

If the battle of Geonosis doesn't get your blood pumping, then nothing will! The chaotic land battle from the end of *Episode II* will be the centrepiece of this new game and the beginning of an exciting action game that explores the unexplained legend that is the Clone Wars. Taking the role of a Jedi Knight you will be engaged in a series of battle scenes that take you from Geonosis at the beginning of the game, to the Kashyyyk moon and beyond.

With over 40 combat units including the Republic Gunship, Speeder Bikes, Fighter Tanks, Assault Tanks and Assault Walkers, you'll experience unique vehicular combat, as well as command squads of troopers. Pandemic created a similar hybrid of combat and action in their PC hit Battlezone, so that might give you a vague idea of just how awesome this game is going to be. Spanning around 20 missions, this game will seriously push the visual capabilities of both the GameCube and PlayStation 2, as well as offer multiplayer modes for up to four players. We simply cannot wait! Begun, this Clone War has...

WOW-O-METER

ATTACK OF THE CLONES

WOW-O-METER

CATEGORY: Action >> **PLAYERS:** 1 >>
PUBLISHER: LucasArts/THQ >> **AVAILABLE:** Late May

>>GBA

In all the excitement, you'd almost expect the little handheld to be forgotten... but no, the Game Boy Advance will have its very own *Attack of the Clones* game. This is a side-scrolling action game that combines fighting game and beat 'em up elements to recreate some of the coolest fight scenes from the movie. Play as Mace Windu in the Geonosis arena, or duke it out with Jango Fett as Obi-Wan Kenobi amongst other slices o' action. You'll also get to fly a swoop bike, the Jedi Starfighter and more in a selection of awesome first-person sequences.

It's a good old slice 'em up.

STAR WARS

ATTACK OF THE TOYS!

Hasbro and Wizards of the Coast join the Alliance!

No matter what age you are, if you're a fan of something, there's always that desire to collect, horde and marvel at all the little items of merchandising that accompany a film. The classic action figure has evolved over the years from a piece of plastic that couldn't stand up let alone even resemble the character, to these great new figures from Hasbro that not only stand up, but flip, do tricks and look identical to the cast. Here's some of the cool stuff that will release to coincide with *Attack of the Clones*...

OBI-WAN WITH DROID

>> Ten years after losing his master at the hands of the Sith, Obi-Wan Kenobi has become Anakin Skywalker's Jedi mentor. Given the mission to protect Senator Amidala after an attempt on her life, Obi-Wan finds himself hanging from a fleeing ASN-121 assassin droid as it tries to escape through the maze of Coruscant's cityscape!

• Awesome Force™ action! Hold Obi-Wan's right hand over lightsaber and the weapon is attracted to his hand! Place right hand on droid – it attaches!

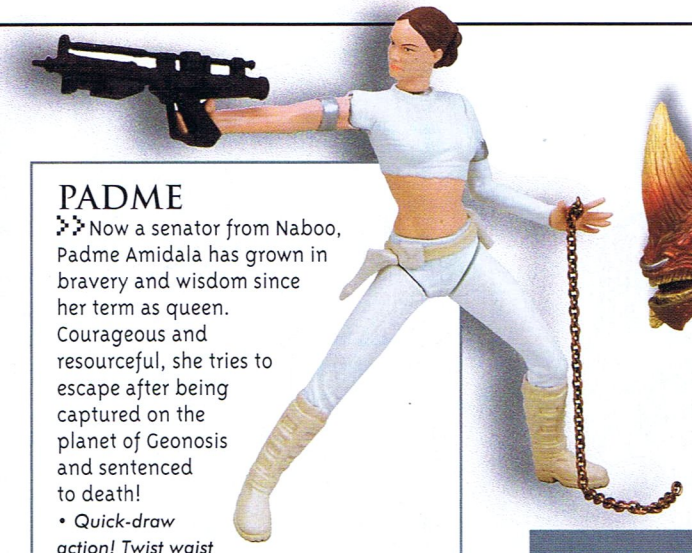
CLONE TROOPER

>> Trained specifically for military combat, Clone Troopers are virtually identical. They're created in the cloning facilities of Tipoca City, a luminescent center of industry emerging from the raging seas of Kamino.

JANGO FETT'S SLAVE 1

>> Resourceful and dangerous, Jango Fett is known as the best bounty hunter in the galaxy. His ship, Slave I, is just as dangerous and deadly as its owner, with an arsenal of weapons powerful enough to capture any prey. This highly modified Firespray-class patrol-and-attack ship was originally used in law enforcement, but Jango rebuilt it with hidden weapons systems, sensor masking and tracking systems, and powerful shield generators. When he's chased by Obi-Wan Kenobi, Jango makes full use of the ship's technology and weapons in an attempt to destroy his pursuer.

• Secret reveal multi-missile launcher! Press weapons-control knob to reveal rotating concussion missile launcher, then turn knob to launch missiles!



PADME

Now a senator from Naboo, Padme Amidala has grown in bravery and wisdom since her term as queen. Courageous and resourceful, she tries to escape after being captured on the planet of Geonosis and sentenced to death!

• Quick-draw action! Twist waist to lower her arm, then release – her arm swings up and she's ready to fire the blaster!

BEAST – REEK

The reek is a massive beast with three deadly horns protruding from his head! Unleashed in the Geonosian arena, this ferocious beast is more than a match for the brave warriors and innocent captives who are unaware of their horrible fate!

• The action comes alive with cool electronic effects! Press button for attack sounds, stomping attack and head-ramming action! Pull the horn for a mighty battle roar!

JEDI STARFIGHTER

The Jedi Starfighter is a unique, wedge-shaped craft capable of quick maneuvering. It looks like a standard scout vehicle on the outside, but is outfitted with hidden defense weapons in case of attack, as well as flight stabilisers. But Jedi pilots don't rely solely on its technological features – they use the Force to take full advantage of the fighter's capabilities, as we've seen in the PS2 game, Jedi Starfighter.

• Features include opening canopy, adjustable headrest, retractable front landing gear, firing missile launcher and deployable flight stabilizers!

STAR WARS TRADING CARD GAME

DISTRIBUTOR: WIZARDS OF THE COAST

Trading card game players and *Star Wars* fans will be interested to learn that world-renowned game designer Richard Garfield created the *Star Wars* TCG. Garfield, who originated the trading card game concept when he developed Magic: The Gathering in 1993, has taken the TCG concept to a new level by developing a single game that will appeal to players of all experience levels.

ANAKIN'S SPEEDER

Pursuing the mysterious bounty hunter Zam Wesell, Anakin and Obi-Wan Kenobi "borrow" a civilian airspeeder to chase the assassin across the Coruscant skyline! The frantic chase ends with a crash and a surprising confrontation between the Jedi and their quarry!

WIN A HUGE PACK OF STAR WARS TOYS!!!

Hasbro and Hyper want to give away a whole bunch of awesome *Star Wars* toys! One lucky first prize winner will receive an incredible pack including three basic figures, one beast, one vehicle and an electronic lightsaber! Another five runners-up will receive a pack of three basic figures.

To enter to win these great prizes, just answer the following question:

Who co-wrote *Attack of the Clones* with George Lucas?

Put your answer on the back of an envelope along with your name and address and send it to:

Hyper for Hasbro, Hyper, 78 Renwick Street, Redfern, NSW 2016.

Entries close June 4th.

First Prize:
3 basic figures
1 Beast
1 Jedi Starfighter vehicle
1 Electronic Lightsaber
VALUE: $217.80

5 runners up will receive a pack of three action figures each.
VALUE: $47.99 PER PACK.

Terms and conditions:

- Offer is open to residents of Australia and New Zealand except employees and the immediate families of Next Publishing Pty Ltd and its agencies associated with the promotion.
- Only entries completed with these Terms and Conditions will be eligible.
- Competition begins at 9am May 7th and entries close at 6pm June 4th.
- In determining eligibility the judge's decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into.
- Winner(s) will be drawn at Next Publishing at 9am June 5th and results published in Hyper 106 on July 3rd.
- One winner will receive a Hasbro pack RRP$217.80. Five runners-up will receive a Hasbro action figure pack RRP$47.99 each. Total prize pool is $457.75.
- The promoter is not responsible for lost or misdirected mail.
- The promoter is Next Publishing Pty Ltd ABN 88 002 647 645 of 78 Renwick Street, Redfern, NSW, 2016.

TRAWLIN'

>> DAVID WILOGOOSE

Warcraft III: REIGN OF CHAOS

WWW.BLIZZARD.COM/WAR3

Blizzard is a developer synonymous with quality. In a world where innovative gameplay and bleeding edge technology consume the most column inches, Blizzard has captured the public's imagination with a series of highly polished and expertly designed, yet conservative, genre titles. Their games are pioneering, not in any gameplay sense, but in bringing the art to the masses. To many, Starcraft is the definitive real-time strategy game and Diablo is the definitive roleplaying game.

All of which explains why the recent public beta test of the imminent third iteration of the Warcraft franchise has met with such fevered excitement and intense scrutiny. Warcraft is a formidable institution of PC gaming. It took the RTS template established by Westwood's Dune 2, tweaked it once (for Warcraft: Orcs vs Humans) and then to perfection (for the sequel). The anticipation for Warcraft III is understandable: it's Blizzard's first RTS since Starcraft; their first game to use a 3D engine, and a return to their most popular universe. It's also the first Warcraft game to be released since Battle.net, Blizzard's online gaming service, was founded (excluding the Warcraft II: Battle.net Edition re-release, that is). Which is where this beta test has been happening for the past couple of months, and why we're able to bring you this report in Net Trawlin' this month.

"Height-challenged" heroes!

BEWARE THE PANDERAS

Despite only a few multiplayer modes available for play across a handful of maps, the response thus far has been overwhelmingly favourable, as could be expected. Nonetheless, the test has proved valuable to Blizzard, with one major patch, issued halfway through the beta period, implementing a raft of additions and alterations based on player feedback. The work-in-progress that is Warcraft III at the moment only reinforces the notion of it as the next evolutionary step beyond Starcraft. Blizzard is toiling away within the accepted confines of the RTS genre, tunnelling out new avenues and revealing greater gameplay depth with each excavation.

All the talk of "roleplaying strategy" that accompanied the game's initial announcement nearly three years ago only disguises the developer's efforts to eke out every conceivable possibility inherent in the RTS formula. Warcraft III isn't about ultra-efficient base-building, although it is. Warcraft III isn't about assembly line grunt-rushing tactics, although it is. Warcraft III isn't about ingenious troop deployment on the battlefield, although it is. Warcraft III isn't about perfecting the economic model, although it is. Warcraft III isn't about heroes turning the tide of war with judicious use of a special ability, although it is. Indeed, Warcraft III is all of these things, and yet none of them.

The Red and the Blue. Now that was a TV show.

I smite thee with blobs of artificial colouring!

"Bald patch targeted, sir!"

Blizzard is hoping to create a real-time strategy game where balance is the key, where there's no single correct strategy and certainly no single correct counter-strategy, where players must constantly adapt their tactics on-the-fly to changing circumstances. They want to put the "strategy" back in the RTS.

To do so, the limiting rock-paper-scissors formula has been iced. The four playable races are distinctive and each caters to a variety of playing styles. Crucially, there's little doubling up of units and fewer obvious counter units amongst the dozens on offer. The Humans are the most traditional race, of at least average ability at everything yet truly excelling at little; they're the race players will find most familiar and be most comfortable with at the start. The Orcs underwent numerous changes in the major mid-test patch to become the fiercest ground warriors; Orc grunts have been beefed up and their pig farms replaced by defensive burrows in an attempt to further distinguish them from the Humans.

With their unique manner of resource collection, emphasis on ranged attacks, and cloaking ability at night, the Night Elves operate almost as a guerilla outfit. Blizzard has also doffed its cap to Tolkien and provided the Night Elves with Ents, walking trees that double as base structures. Finally, the Undead race has a few unusual tricks up its sleeve, too; their bases can only be built on blighted land, while the Meat Wagon unit is a necromancer's delight.

A REFRESHING CHANGE

With a scaled-back and simplified base-building aspect, the focus here is clearly on the tactics of battle. Unit supply and upkeep (basically, the larger your army, the greater the strain on your economy) combine to enforce a natural unit cap on proceedings and diminish the returns on rushing strategies. A further consequence of this is to bring the hero units to the fore. Heroes essentially lead your troops into battle, gaining experience and greater power and abilities with each successive victory. This is sure to be a refreshing change for the many jaded generals out there.

Away from the game itself, Blizzard has notably updated its matching service on Battle.net to deliver a more streamlined process. Now all you need do is select which race you like to play as, what type of game you prefer, and any particular maps you aren't so keen on, and the software will automatically log you into a new game. Of course, you can still hunt for games manually, if you prefer.

Blizzard is a company that knows what it's good at and what its audience wants. The evidence thus far suggests Warcraft III is set to deliver on both counts. Just don't expect a revolution when you log on to Battle.net later this year. <<

MS. INFORMATION

AGATA BUDINSKA

>>How long did that take!? It feels like only yesterday I was writing about Telstra Wholesale DSL dropping in price. Well, according to Australian IT, 3 ISP's have signed up for 'Layer 2' ADSL and should start implementing in the very near future. Justine Milne, CEO of OzEmail Internet confirmed that a test run was being carried out with customers, with no ETA as to if, or when, the finished product will be available.

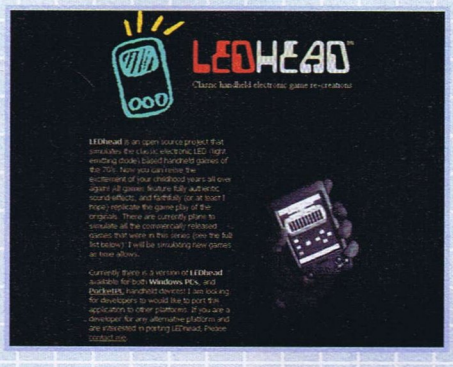
As OzEmail is Australia's second largest dial up ISP provider, many people see their entry onto the market as 'real competition for Telstra'. But how much competition will yet to be seen, as they will be buying off the source. To a certain extent, it seems like the excitement of more providers is a way of compensating for the *classic* April Fools Joke Whirlpool played on the media, posting a convincing article that Optus would start putting caps on their cable and ADSL plans. So effective was the joke, and such a plausible subject matter, that there are still many people out there who think it true. Personally, I wouldn't want to have been part of the Easter Monday skeleton crew at the Optus call centre when the article was posted.

Optus is probably not feeling very threatened by the appearance of OzEmail, iiNet and AAPT - they'll probable continue to be the most sought after broadband ISP, even though their network covers such a small area. I doubt that any of the new runners will be able to afford the possible volume of downloading per account that Optus does.

In the meantime, at least we're starting to see a little more choice on the market - something that has been lacking in the broadband market for a very, very long time.

happymealwithoj@hotmail.com

LINKS



LEDHEAD

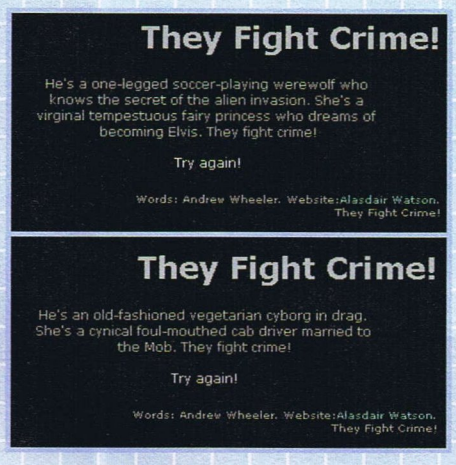
peterhirschberg.com/handheld/ledhead/index.htm

>> Dedicated to the restoration of classic handheld electronic games, this site is clearly a labour of love for creator Peter Hirschberg. You can download Windows and Pocket PC versions of Autorace, Baseball, Soccer and Space Alert. All the available games were originally released on Mattel handheld systems.

GAME CRITICS

www.gamecritics.org

>> Since The Gaming Intelligence Agency closed down on April 1st this year (and, no, it wasn't a joke), Game Critics now stands as one of the last bastions of insightful game writing on the web. The news page may be a link farm, but it directs you toward genuine news rather than merely the latest batch of Project Ego screenshots or where to download the Blue Shift patch v2.39745. However, the reviews are the real highlight; knowledgeable, analytical and level-headed – rare commodities indeed.



THEY FIGHT CRIME!

www.rain-street.org/fightcrime.htm

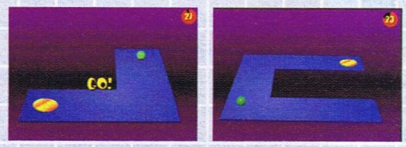
>> Silly spoof on the cliched "unlikely male/female duo who join together to... fight crime" scenario of numerous TV shows and films, exemplified by The X-Files. Sample: "He's a suave day-dreaming card sharp from the 'hood. She's a mentally unstable winged soap star with only herself to blame. They fight crime!"

THESPARK

www.thespark.com

>> According to themselves, "TheSpark was among the first companies on the Internet to innovate. By combining unique strategies and potential for real-time growth, we practically destroyed ourselves."

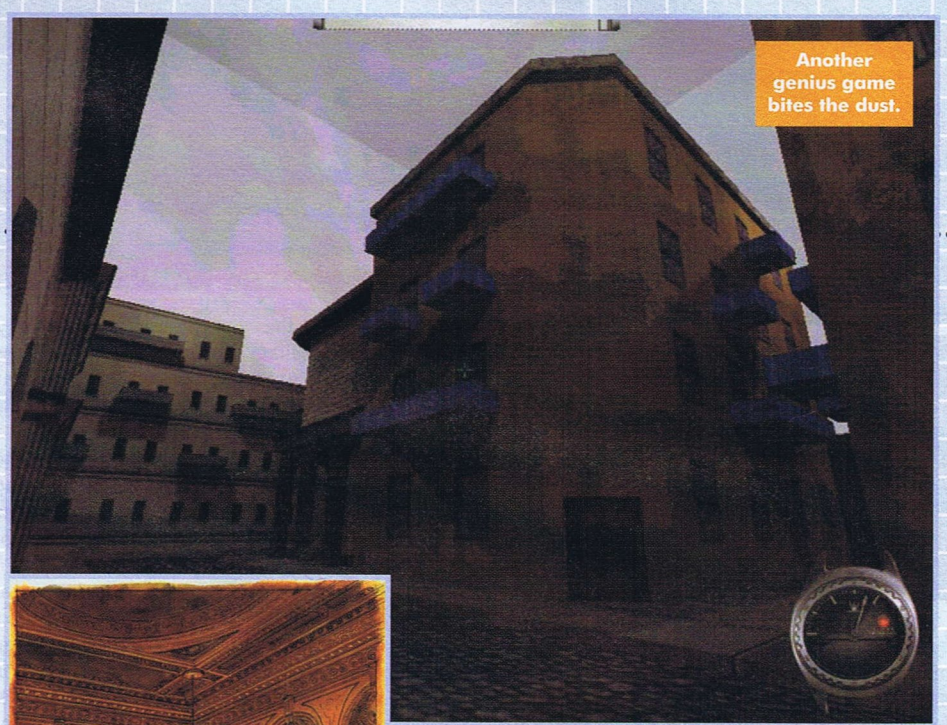
Changing tack, they introduced a series of online tests to the site and have never looked back. Test yourself on everything from your IQ to how bitchy you are. You may discover things about yourself you never wanted to know.

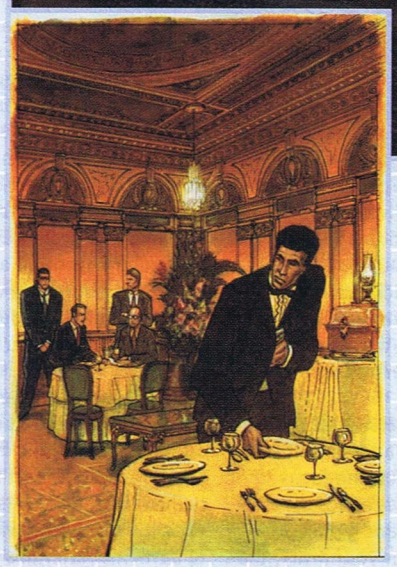


MARBLE MAYHEM

spikything.com/games/marblemayhem/

>> Can't afford a Gamecube to play Super Monkey Ball? Try this neat little web game instead. Guide the marble to the target by tilting the platform using only the mouse. It's tougher than it looks, and will keep you occupied for... well, minutes, at least.





DEEP COVER

www.something-strange.com/ttlg/deepcover/

>> When seminal PC developer Looking Glass Studios shut its doors in mid 2000, work had begun on a title known as Deep Cover. Although a deal had been agreed with Microsoft, the game had never been officially announced, and died when LGS went under. Recently, some ex-LG designers posted some never-before-seen screenshots of the work-in-progress game. An espionage thriller set in the 60s, it was to use the Thief engine and incorporate System Shock 2 style RPG elements.

SEGA

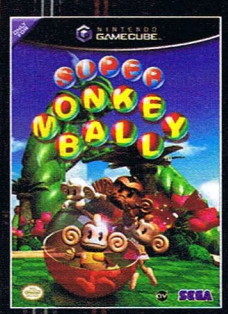
Ever played chicken with a monkey?

You're the monkey in the ball.

Defying gravity, rolling right to the edge, careering from corner to vertigo inducing corner without plunging screaming to the depths. One false move and it's over.

So what's the choice?
Play chicken, or you're roasted.

- Get addicted to totally intuitive gameplay
- Manoeuvre through over 90 challenging stages
- Battle it out with up to 4 players with
  - 3 multi-player party games
  - 3 extra multi-player mini-games



Take Monkey Ball to the edge

NINTENDO GAMECUBE

Distributed by INFOGRAMES

www.gamenation.com.au

G 8+ LOW LEVEL ANIMATED VIOLENCE

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REVIEWS

GAME OF THE MONTH »PS2

Virtua Fighter 4

Sega knock us off our feet with the fourth game in their legendary fighting game series.

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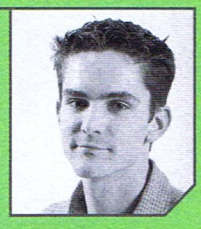
HYPER»

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

SAMSUNG ELECTRONICS

GAME THEORY



DAVID WILDGOOSE

>> When unveiling the first Gamecube titles at last year's E3, Shigeru Miyamoto highlighted what he called The Nintendo Difference. With the Gamecube now arrived in Australia, let's examine what this phrase really means. What is the Nintendo Difference?

Some would argue it's the Japanese giant's vast wealth of instantly recognisable characters. This school of thought is exemplified by a title such as Smash Bros Melee, in which lightweight and short-lived gameplay is carried to success by a stellar cast, including Mario, Luigi, Link, Donkey Kong, Samus, et al. One cannot imagine any other company being able to get away with it.

Others might vouch for the immediate and accessible nature of each in-house Nintendo release. The Mario games have always endorsed the pick-up-and-play ethos, right from his 2D debut as Jumpman to the revolutionary 3D expanses of Super Mario 64. The fact that Miyamoto himself oversees the design of each new system's control pad is an important factor here. The symbiotic relationship between hardware and software made apparent in the interface of his games not only explains why Mario 64 perfected the 3D platformer, but why Nintendo's competitors have notably failed to scale the same heights.

Meanwhile others, again, would promote the finely-honed reward system at the heart of all Nintendo's best games. They never tell you everything up front; the tutorial, if indeed there is one at all, details the protagonist's most basic actions, no more. Gradually, throughout the course of the game, you gain new abilities and learn how to adapt those same primitive moves to new ends. Mario's Cape or Zora's Flippers don't change the fundamental gameplay, but rather expand its possibilities, allowing you to access areas that were always there but seemingly forever just out of reach. The best reward systems don't simply make the protagonist more powerful, but give the player more power over the game world.

Of course, the Nintendo Difference isn't just one of these factors, but all three. Are they present in the Gamecube launch titles? I'll leave that for you to decide...

hyper_game_theory@hotmail.com

THE HYPER CREW'S TOP 5

Eliot Fish – Editor

1. Final Fantasy III – SNES

"A true epic in every sense of the word. Great characters."

2. Metal Gear Solid 2 – PS2
3. The Adventures of Lolo 2 – NES
4. Freedom Force – PC
5. Dungeon Siege – PC

Cam Shea – Deputy Editor

1.Yoshi's Island – SNES

"The best 2D platformer of all time!"

2. Virtua Fighter 4 – PS2
3. Resident Evil – GCN
4. Super Metroid – SNES
5. Worms World Party – PC

Malcolm Campbell - Art guy

1. Final Fantasy X - PS2

"Besaid Aurochs for Blitzball World Cup 2002!"

2. Virtua Fighter 4 - PS2
3. Yoshi's Island – SNES
4. Street Fighter 3: 3rd Strike - DC
5. Tekken 4 - PS2

The Northlander – ICQ guy

1. Metal Gear Solid 2 – PS2

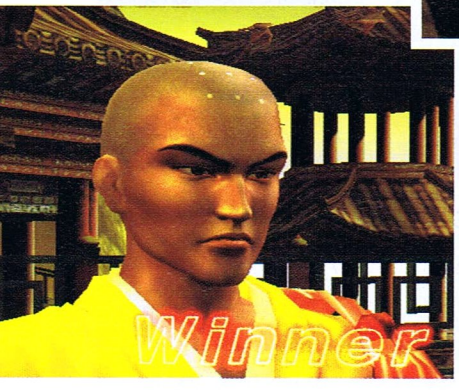
"At least Maximo got to wear boxers... Raiden just gets a box!"

2. Maximo – PS2
3. Final Fantasy VII – PSone
4. Space Paranoids – Arcade
5. Final Fantasy X – PS2

THE HYPER SCORING SYSTEM

The Overall Score – what's it all about?

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



Virtua Fighter 4

»PS2

HYPER GAME OF THE MONTH

CATEGORY: Fighting >> **PLAYERS:** 1-2 >> **PUBLISHER:** Sega >> **PRICE:** $89.95 >> **RATING:** M15+ >> **AVAILABLE:** Now >>

DAN TOOSE does his best not to be beaten around the ring.

It may be ironic that this game is being released on a system Sega were once competing with, but Virtua Fighter 4 on PS2 delivers what its predecessors failed to. This is a fighting game with enough long term appeal to make it worthwhile not just for multiplayer bouts, but solo gamers as well.

Virtua Fighter 4 returns to a style of play more similar to VF2 than VF3, with the "evade" button out, and an eight-way movement system in. Taka-Arashi of VF3 is also out, but two new characters, Vanessa (butch cop from Brazil) and Lei-Fei (Shaolin Monk) are there to add to the ranks of virtua fighters. On top of the new characters come new moves for all the old characters as well, adding extra depth. Despite all this, the real step forward for VF4 is in the quality of the arcade-to-console port.

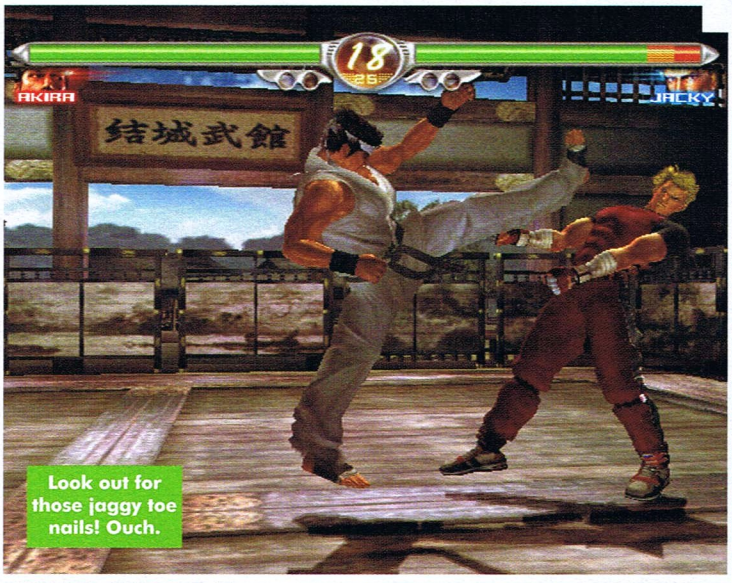
BACK TO SQUARE ONE

The PlayStation 2 version of Virtua Fighter 4 delivers close to arcade perfect visuals. However, it is not the flashy piece of eye candy that Dead or Alive 3 is on Xbox, nor is this game likely to wind up looking prettier than Soul Calibur 2 once it arrives. Besides the reasonably blatant jaggies, Virtua Fighter 4 is still a very pretty game, with the best character models in the series to date.

The arenas have once again been simplified to a standard square, but they reside in much larger 3D environments that feature enough dynamic effects to impress. Bolts of lightning smash statues, tiles break under the weight of fallen combatants, and water, sand and snow make way as feet plough through. None of these effects are mind-blowing, but they help keep VF4 on par with other 3D fighters.

On the audio front, VF4 takes some small steps forward. English speaking characters sound a little less like complete tools now, and most importantly, the sound effects for all the various impacts and collisions sound a bit richer than in the past (which wouldn't be hard). Unfortunately the music hasn't taken a discernable step forward from the widdly-widdly 80's guitar-rock & techno that no one would dance to, but two out of three isn't bad

Where VF4 really breaks away from the standard "Was that all?" single player scenario is its selection of practice modes, and the Kumite tournament. Firstly, there are three types of practice mode, which when put to good use, can teach a



Look out for those jaggy toe nails! Ouch.

"Hungry like the wooooolf..."

Oh what a feeling, Toyota.

Aoi's friends glued her hand to her face...

His drinking arm is deadly.

Village People auditions went well...

complete novice everything they need to know to master not only VF4, but help them understand fighting games in general.

FROM MASHER TO MASTER

"Command" mode demonstrates each individual move, and lets the player know when they've successfully executed it themselves. "Free" mode allows you to spar against a CPU opponent that you can set to perform certain actions. The last mode, "Trial" actually instructs the user on individual aspects of combat, so that the player understands why certain moves do certain things. This ranges from throwing simple attacks, through to learning how to string the most damaging combos together.

Of course, training is only really useful if you're going to apply it, and those playing on their own can do so in the Kumite mode. A simple way to sum up Kumite mode is to think of it as playing in an arcade, where people always challenge you, with the added bonus of having a ranking system and extra goodies. Since VF4 allows you to create a profile, you can use bonus items earned to customise the appearance of your character, since you find all manner of extra bits of clothing and accessories.

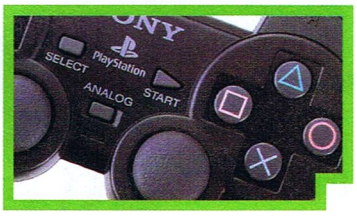
The real attraction here however is the endless series of challengers that Kumite mode throws at you, and how clear it is that you're facing suitable AI the whole time. If you can't figure out how to improve and defeat the opponents you're facing, the game will actually tell you which specific types of moves you're using too much or not enough, and more to the point, which ones are landing and which aren't.

> The game will actually tell you which specific types of moves **you're using too much...**

!!! You can unlock crazy stuff in Kumite, from nose rings to hats.

Achieving the top ranks will take a serious amount of effort from even the best Virtua Fighter players. So what to do from there? Well if you fancy your tactical prowess, you can create an AI player, which is basically Tamagotchi in a fighting game. Besides sparring with your virtual student, you can do things like show approval when they do something you think they should make a habit of, just like any real instructor would. This mode is definitely a time consuming novelty, but Kudos to AM2 for adding genuinely new features this time around.

Virtua Fighter 4 won't blow your head off with an audio-visual extravaganza, but it will win over anyone who takes a few seconds to appreciate the fantastic gameplay and incredible AI. To be beaten by a computer pulling cheap moves sucks, but to be pitted against an AI suited to your level of play is fighting game heaven... Such is Virtua Fighter 4. <<



PLUS: Brilliant AI, superb training modes, single player longevity.

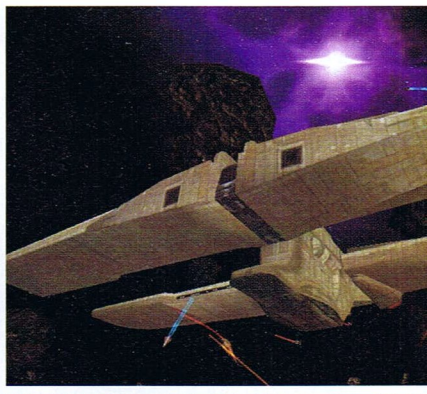
MINUS: The visuals are let down by lots of jaggies.

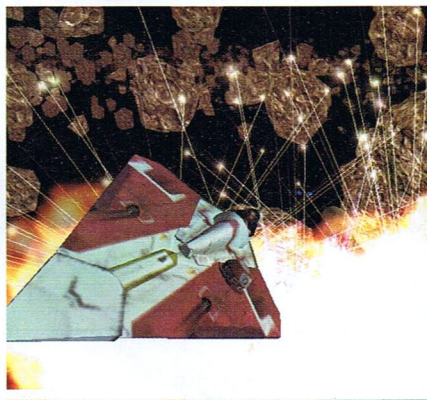
VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
87	82	95

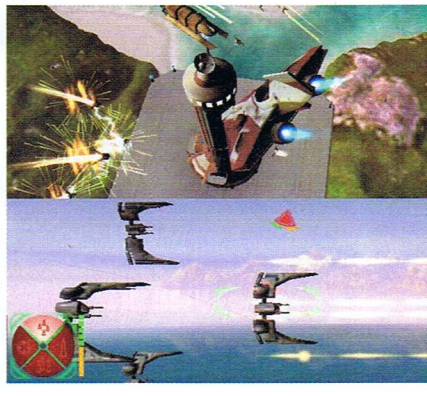
OVERALL

94

The best console fighting game since Soul Calibur.







Jedi Starfighter

»PS2

CATEGORY: Space Combat >> **PLAYERS:** 1-2 >> **PUBLISHER:** LucasArts >> **PRICE:** $89.95 >> **RATING:** M15+ >> **AVAILABLE:** Now >>

FRANK DRY only uses Force when necessary...

The clone-packed sequel to Starfighter is attacking PlayStation 2 consoles all over the world... Jedi Starfighter, featuring the similarly named spacecraft from *Episode II*, is an expansion upon the space combat we enjoyed in the impressive original. This is a worthy sequel, if slightly rough around the edges, but the bonus for fans is getting to play part in some of the action from *Episode II* – namely, the ground battle on Geonosis.

YOU'RE NOT ALL-POWERFUL, ANI, YOU BRAT!

Aside from some small flaws, Jedi Starfighter comes boasting plenty of hard and fast action that will seriously challenge your thumbs. You begin the game as Jedi Knight, Adi Gallia, who is testing the craft for the Jedi Council, but there is still quite a bit of craft swapping as in the original Starfighter. Mission variety is solved by popping you in Nym's "bomber" craft for some torpedo work and ground attacks, but the Jedi Starfighter is easily the most enjoyable to fly and we would have liked more of the game to revolve around this one craft.

The addition of new Force Powers adds quite a bit of zing to your combat capabilities. The powers allow you to slow everything around you for a limited period of time, or use Force lightning to fry a whole group of enemy craft amongst other Jedi tricks. There's a certain level of timing involved with using the Force, and you have to let go of the button at a very specific moment in order to achieve "Force Clarity" and get the maximum effect out of the power you have selected. Slowing everything around you is easily the most useful power, however it seems strange that you can only pivot and fire, whilst moving your craft is limited. In effect, slowing everything down, even slows down the movement of your own craft, so it's only your reflexes to target and shoot that really benefit. It becomes essential then, to be sure that your target is not obscured by another object before you "go slow", otherwise you're sitting there twiddling your thumbs until everything returns to normal.

There's also a problem in the lack of an "Critical Objective Target" button. You'll waste too much time during missions cycling through your targets to find the one you're looking for. At least you can listen

Let's try spinning, that's a good trick!

Dogfight over Temptation Island.

I prefer the old arcade Asteroids...

Torn between two lovers.

Blast! This is why I hate flying!

Blau blau blau blau blau!

Adi drops her midichlorian bomb.

to all the relentless radio chatter that peppers every mission whilst you're fiddling with your targeting.

WELL, I SHOULD BE!

Starfighter looked great over a year ago, and this is really no huge visual leap from Starfighter. The graphics in both games are pretty much on par, and it's only in some small details that there have been improvements. The redesign of the way you can flip between weapon selection and communications is a nice tweak, and there's just enough polish to make this noticeably a sequel. It'll be interesting to play Jedi Starfighter on the Xbox and see how it compares to this PS2 version, as this game suffers from quite a bit of slowdown. It doesn't impact too much on the gameplay, but it's certainly bothersome at times.

The real difference between the two games lies in the incorporation of a co-operative mode for two-players. Whilst two-player was very much an afterthought in Starfighter, this time around you can play through the single-player missions with a friend in split-screen, as the story conveniently has two major characters flying during each mission most of the time. Co-operative play definitely makes some of the missions easier. In single-player, it must be said that certain sections of the game are staggeringly difficult. Mission 11, for instance, feels almost impossible to complete until you fluke out on your twenty-fifth try, even though you know exactly what it is you need to do each time. Was this game playtested enough?

We also found a bug in the Geonosis mission where Battledroids continued to flow from the hangar doors in an endless loop for a good twenty minutes until we decided it was time to restart the mission. The second time through, there was no looping droid error. These kinds of problems really should have been caught during Q&A. It would be safe to say that Jedi Starfighter could have done with another month's worth of testing and polishing. Why LucasArts felt they needed to rush it out, we're not so sure, as the game itself is a good one and packed with plenty of enjoyable action for fans.

If you don't let the little flaws annoy you too much, and you're willing to stick through some awfully tough missions, then Jedi Starfighter is very much worth adding to your PlayStation 2 games library. <<

» Use Force lightning to **fry a whole group of enemy craft** amongst other Jedi tricks.

!!! There are a few minor AOTC spoilers in this game - beware!

PLUS: Relentless action, lots of cool unlockables.

MINUS: Too difficult at times and a few niggling bugs.

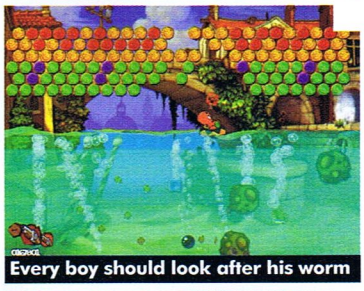
VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
85	87	84

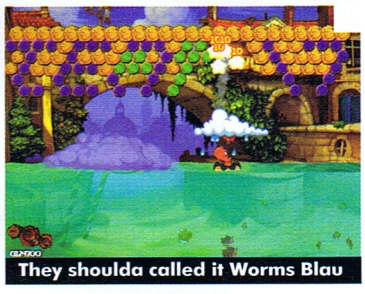
OVERALL

84

A fun romp that almost reaches its full potential.

He always had stars in his eyes.


Every boy should look after his worm


They shoulda called it Worms Blau

Worms Blast

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

CAM SHEA opens up a can of worms...

PS2

While fans wait for the next evolution in the Worms series, Team 17 have decided to take the franchise off on a tangent with Worms Blast. As opposed to a new Worms game, Worms Blast is like Super Puzzle Fighter II was to the Street Fighter series... except nowhere near as good.

CLEARING BLOCKS

On the surface, Worms Blast is a reasonable idea for a game. Start with Puzzle Bobble's mechanics, insert the charm and weaponry of the Worms games, then pair that up with a mission-based single player mode and a compelling two player game. Yep, it's a great idea in theory, but along the way Team 17 somehow forgot that the best puzzle games are often the simplest.

Worms Blast is set on water, and you control a character (not necessarily a worm) in a boat at the bottom of the screen. You can maneouvre left and right across the water, and you're armed with a bazooka that can be fired at any angle and power level to the blocks above. Clearing blocks is a matter of matching the block's colour with the shell's colour. Spicing things up are hinge blocks that can't be destroyed, bouncy blocks, neutral blocks, chain blocks and so on, not to mention bonus weaponry like shotguns, lasers, dynamite and grenades, and bonus items like health boosts, shields, and landmines.

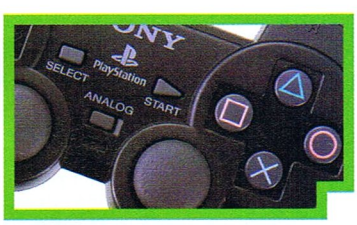
There are a number of play modes in Worms Blast. The main single player game is Puzzle Mode, where you progress through a large number of increasingly difficult puzzle screens. Team 17 seem to have stumbled their way through creating this mode, however, as the cleverly constructed challenges are few and far between, with most feeling pointless and gimmicky. Then there's the other single player mode, Tournament, which is comprised of a number of shooting games. Again, not a whole lot of love has gone into this mode. Despite these two modular abortions, however, one would assume that the no mucking around, splitscreen one-on-one variant of Worms Blast would be a whole lot of fun. Well, not exactly.

!!! Come on Team 17, where's the next-gen Worms game we all want?

TOO CLUMSY

It's not terrible, but the one-on-one mechanics in Worms Blast are just too clumsy, and come across as nothing more than a bastardised version of Puzzle Bobble, with none of the control or efficiency. Moving your boat about on screen is a pain in the arse, made even more galling when you clear a set of blocks but can't get out of the way before they fall and hit your character on the head. The different defensive and offensive weapons you can pick up have no real effect on strategy in the game and seem arbitrarily implemented, the opportunities to attack your opponent through the divider are largely pointless, the lack of penalty when your blocks reach the water likewise... and the list goes on. Even small things, like the speed of the pause menu (terribly sluggish) through to the utterly appalling music help Worms Blast gain speed down its slippery path.

Although the basic premise is sound, Worms Blast is little more than a mish-mash of poorly reasoned game mechanics. A shame. <<



PLUS: The cel shading is a nice touch. Cute animation.

MINUS: Simply lacks what is necessary for a good puzzler.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
77	48	66

OVERALL

63

Messy and dull. Go back to Worms World Party.

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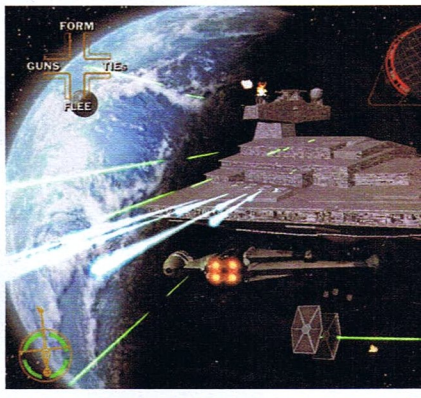
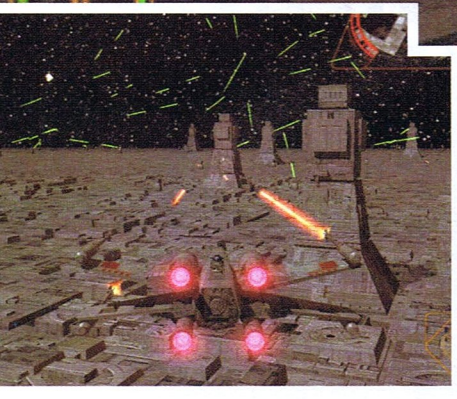
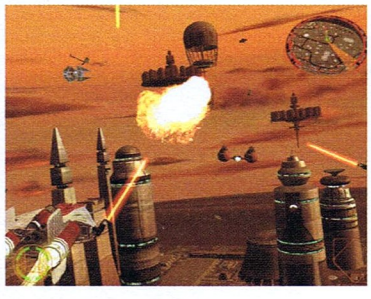
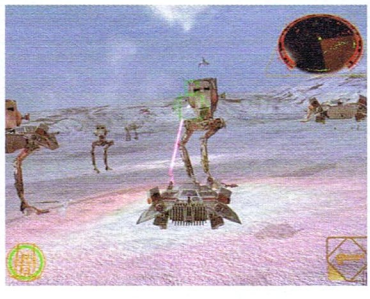
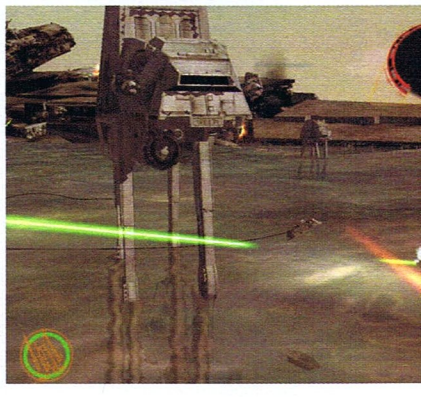








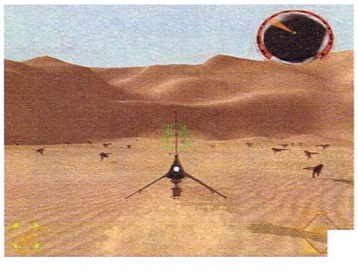


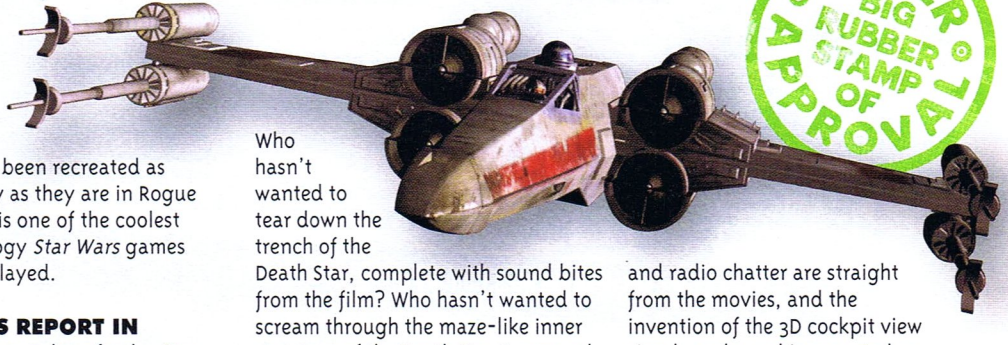
Star Wars: ROGUE LEADER »GCN

CATEGORY: Action >> **PLAYERS:** 1 >> **PUBLISHER:** LucasArts >> **PRICE:** $99.95 >> **RATING:** M15+ >> **AVAILABLE:** May 17 >>

ELIOT FISH shoots womp rats in his T-16 back home...

You may think the by-line to this review is just a fun *Star Wars* reference that doesn't have anything to do with this game. But you'd be wrong. Not only does Rogue Leader let you fly a T-16 Skyhopper and go shooting womp rats, but you'll race through Beggar's canyon and fly to Toshi Station too! Not only that, but you'll go on to take part in all the classic battle scenes from the Original Trilogy, along with some cool original missions. Never have these scenes been recreated as authentically as they are in Rogue Leader. This is one of the coolest Original Trilogy *Star Wars* games we've ever played.





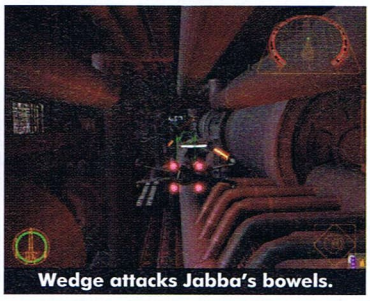
HYPER BIG RUBBER STAMP OF APPROVAL

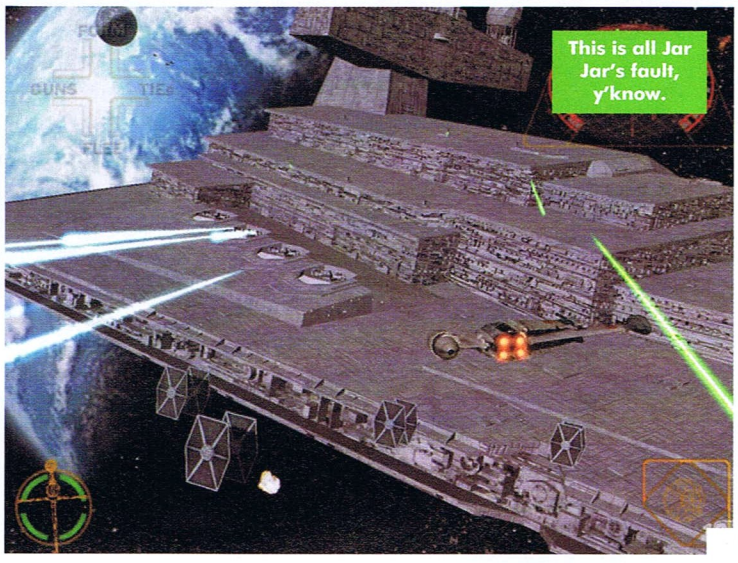
ALL WINGS REPORT IN

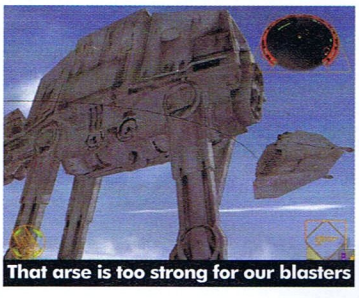
So do you have to be a freaky *Star Wars* fanboy to really enjoy this game? Is it one of THOSE *Star Wars* games? Well, I think we can safely declare Rogue Leader a great all-round action game, but being a *Star Wars* fan definitely helps. In fact, being a fan makes Rogue Leader one of the warmest, fuzziest gaming moments you could possibly have. Who hasn't wanted to tear down the trench of the Death Star, complete with sound bites from the film? Who hasn't wanted to scream through the maze-like inner structure of the Death Star II pursued by fearless TIE Fighters? And who doesn't think that the Battle of Endor from *Return of the Jedi* is the greatest space combat scene from any sci-fi action film – and now – action game? Rogue Leader has simply nailed these scenes like you wouldn't believe. The spacecraft all look perfect and to scale, the sound effects and radio chatter are straight from the movies, and the invention of the 3D cockpit view simply rocks and is executed so perfectly in this game.

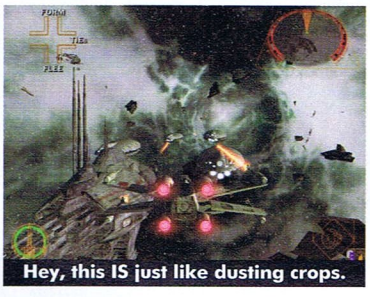
In some ways, you could say that Rogue Leader lacks the gameplay variety and control set of a space combat game such as Jedi Starfighter – as this is very much all about pure arcade style action – but it makes up for it with polish, style and general quality. Dogfighting in Rogue Leader

The core of the problem.


Wedge attacks Jabba's bowels.




That arse is too strong for our blasters


Hey, this IS just like dusting crops.

really does feel like dogfighting – the TIE Fighters duck and weave, barrel-roll and twist out of your line of fire. If Rogue Leader's aim is to reproduce the thrills and spills of the action from the original movies, then we have to admit that it's damn near perfect.

MAGENTA 5 STANDING BY

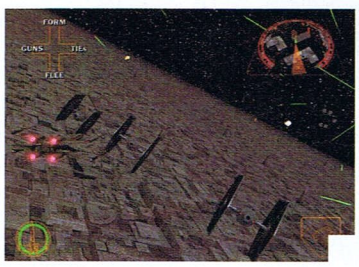
Because of the faithfulness to the movies, your actual control over the proceedings is fairly limited. For instance, you can't order wingmen to attack the Death Star II, because in the movie that simply wasn't possible. But hey, playing along with the script is half the fun. Some people may prefer the flexibility with the combat in Jedi Starfighter, but they would be missing out on Rogue Leader's pure quality of entertainment. This game has the goods. After taking down your first Star Destroyer, you'll be hugging your GameCube and swearing your undying devotion.

Factor 5 have stuck with the much-loved medal system, and achieving all the gold medals in this game will prove quite a challenge. Luckily, Rogue Leader is immensely replayable. The missions are loaded with some pretty tricky tough spots, and achieving 100% completion will be no cakewalk. If you stick with it though, you'll unlock some very cool bonus missions – one being the asteroid scene from the *Empire Strikes Back*, where you must pilot the Falcon to safety, complete with space slug cameo!

> You can't order wingmen to **attack the Death Star II**, because in the movie that simply wasn't possible.

!!! There is a cheat to unlock Jango Fett's Slave 1 in the game...

Casual gamers might get bored of Rogue Leader a little quicker than they may have hoped, simply because maximum enjoyment of this title comes from being a fan of the Original Trilogy *Star Wars* movies. All the details can only really be appreciated by those of us who know the movies well... maybe too well. However, there's no doubt that everyone will get off on this action-packed combat game in a very big way. At least once. <<



PLUS: The most authentic Star Wars experience yet.

MINUS: Dashes of midi-music, not enough missions.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
94	92	89

OVERALL

91

One of the coolest launch games ever.

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Luigi's Mansion

>>GCN

CATEGORY: Adventure >> **PLAYERS:** 1 >> **PUBLISHER:** Nintendo >> **PRICE:** $99.95 >> **RATING:** G >> **AVAILABLE:** May 17 >>

CAM SHEA sees whether Luigi has what it takes to be a star...

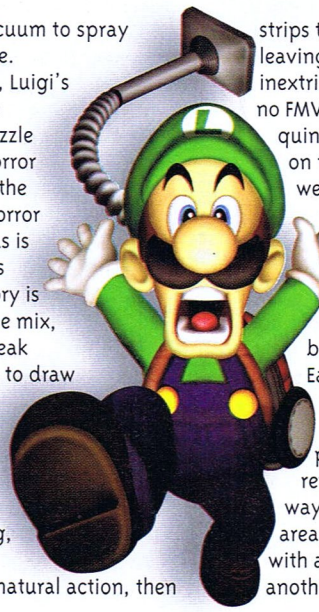
It's probably a good thing that Nintendo didn't attempt a full-blown Mario game for launch, given how long it took to perfect Mario 64. Instead, they've decided to give the Mario brother that could(n't) a go, and the result is the off-beat and engaging Luigi's Mansion.

Nintendo have dipped deeply into their bag of tricks to come up with the backstory for Luigi's Mansion. They've ditched old faithful (Peach being kidnapped by Bowser) in favour of a somewhat avante garde post modern experimental approach (Mario kidnapped by Bowser). It's innovative, we'll give them that. In any case, the game begins with Luigi winning a mansion in a competition he never entered. After arriving, Mario is nowhere to be found, so it's up to Luigi to explore the spooky mansion and rescue his bro. Fortunately, he gets some help from the resident mad professor who gives him a ghost busting kit, and this becomes the foundation of the gameplay.

FULL OF SURPRISES...

Controlling Luigi is relatively intuitive, with one analogue stick for movement and the other to control his vacuum/flashlight. You're eased into the gameplay with a tutorial that explains that vanilla flavoured ghosts can be caught by simply shocking them with the flashlight, then sucking them up. Of course, it gets more interesting, as different ghosts require different techniques, and as Luigi progresses he also gets extra elemental abilities for his vacuum, so by the game's end you can refuel the vacuum to spray water, ice and fire.

At a basic level, Luigi's Mansion could be described as a puzzle driven survival horror game. Of course, the typical survival horror game's main focus is on blowing things apart, and the story is usually thick in the mix, with a range of weak puzzles that serve to draw the game out and provide some structure. Luigi's Mansion, on the other hand, takes the spooky setting, the fixed camera angles and supernatural action, then strips the gameplay down, leaving the puzzles and action inextricably entwined. There's no FMV and no gore, but this quintessentially Nintendo take on the concept fares very well without it. In some ways Luigi's Mansion could be viewed less as an adventure game and more as a collection of puzzles based around a theme. Each room/area in the mansion essentially represents its own puzzle, almost all of which revolve around finding a way to beat the ghosts in the area, which then rewards you with a key, which then opens another room. In this sense the



If there's something strange...

...in ya neighbourhood...

...who ya gonna call?

Ghostbusters!

game is quite linear and simplistic.

What makes these relatively simple puzzle scenarios engaging is the personality embedded in the game. Luigi is animated brilliantly, and you'll crack up watching him shiver, tip toe and occasionally freak out. Luigi proves to be just as charming a character as Mario, and the game shines because of it. Fighting to suck up a ghost looks awesome too, with Luigi valiantly struggling to hold his ground, but usually being dragged all over the place by the enraged spirit. Each location in the house has been imbued with plenty of personality too, whether it be a gym, a bathroom or a dining room, but it's the ghosts that steal the show. Nintendo have come up with an eclectic range of characters, which makes working out their weaknesses all the more entertaining.

THE CHASE IS ON

In addition to busting ghosts, you're also collecting money, and Nintendo have hidden wad-loads of cash, items and hidden rooms to be uncovered by inquisitive gamers. Plus, there are 50 Boos hiding out across the mansion, and it's quite a challenge to catch them all. To help you do so, the Professor gives Luigi a handy Boo detecting radar a little way into the game. Chasing Boos around is good fun – you can narrow down their hiding spot well with the radar and then knock on objects and walls to flush them out. And unlike other ghosts, the Boos can't be locked onto with the vacuum - you have to chase and aim at the same time. Often the Boo will manage to escape through to another room, and then the chase is on! The Boo hunt is a good technique to reduce the linear room to room feeling in the game, plus it means if you get stuck there's usually something to do.

The graphics in Luigi's Mansion work well in the context of the musty manor theme, with some very clever transparencies, real-time lighting and animations of the ghosts in particular, but they're not all that outstanding otherwise. Similarly, the music works brilliantly in the context of the game – lo-fi and creepy, but there simply aren't enough variations on the theme to keep it from getting repetitive. Even so, it's impossible not to dig it when Luigi starts humming the tune when he's particularly scared.

Even though Luigi's Mansion is a little short and the gameplay doesn't vary much, the personality in the settings and ghosts are enough to carry this game. Super Mario Sunshine isn't far off, but those after something a little different from the Mario franchise should check this one out. <<

> The graphics in Luigi's Mansion work well in the context of the **musty manor theme...**

!!! Anyone remember the old game "Mario is Missing"? Hmmm...

PLUS: Charming Nintendo character. Fun exploration.

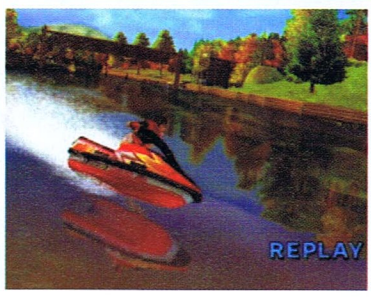
MINUS: It's over in the blink of an eye.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
88	90	83

OVERALL

86

Luigi's Mansion both sucks and blows... in a good way!



WaveRace: Blue Storm

CATEGORY: Racer >> **PLAYERS:** 1-4 >> **PUBLISHER:** Nintendo >> **PRICE:** $99.95 >> **RATING:** G >> **AVAILABLE:** May 17 >>

>>GCN

STEPHEN FARRELLY gets a little seasick...

With sports games today there's really only three ways to approach a project. You can attempt to make something as fantastical as possible, something completely unbound by any rules, or you can go in the complete opposite direction and create the most realistic experience possible. The third is an amalgamation of the aforementioned and is usually the most dominant in the market. WaveRace: Blue Storm is Nintendo's foray into the world of slightly exaggerated racers for Next-Gen consoles and also follows on from their widely acclaimed and successful Wave Race for N64. Second time around, does the game deliver the same feeling for players as the original?

AH-HARRGH, ME MATIES

Wave Race has always been about physics. Never mind the fact that you're racing around on a Jet Ski or anything like that, this franchise is all about working against your environment. With the original Wave Race, this was captured with quite incredible realism. To this end, Nintendo Software Technologies has attempted to not only recapture the feeling EAD did with Wave Race, but surpass it.

This time around there's more of everything in the game. More riders, more tricks, more stunts and more courses, which gives Blue Storm an incredibly strong start to topping its predecessor. However, as stated before, the aim of this game is to fight physics and feel like you're riding real waves, and this has been captured in Blue Storm with stunning realism. The best aspect though, is that what EAD gave us was really only a teaser of what NST has gone on to do. In Blue Storm, waves, wakes and weather are all random parts of the environment. What this means for you is that every time you re-approach a course, there's something different to expect. Certain events do happen in real time all the time, but these are overshadowed by the randomness of each race, and with the very tough AI, this is one of the toughest games to beat at GameCube's launch. If you mess up once in this game, riders are constantly biting at your heels, and if you come off your Jet Ski at any point, be prepared to have to work extremely hard to catch up to an advancing position.

The game is split into a series of different options that range from Championship and Time Trial to Free Ride and Trick. More options are available, but essentially the game

Night rider.

He's getting all wet for GameCube.

I shouldn't have watched Orca.

Stopping for a quick pee.

is about two things, the championship and performing tricks. This time around, riders have more static tricks they can perform, be it a handstand, riding backwards or doing some fairy-like spin, as well as more aerial tricks. Learning all of these tricks boosts the game's replay value somewhat.

TEEMING WITH LIFE

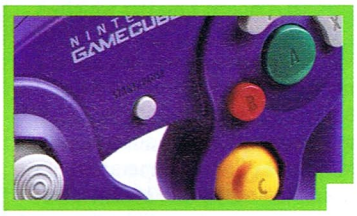
One thing that can't be overlooked is the great visuals – everything is teeming with life. Wave Race is a great vehicle for showing off what the GameCube hardware is capable of. Incredible water effects make up a large part of the overall viewing experience, but other touches like transparencies, particle effects, bump mapping, mirror mapping and multi-camera reflections really add to what's on screen. The game never slows down, making it one of the smoothest racers - in any genre - on the market. This makes for great gaming, and only the severe learning curve will turn some people away. Backgrounds are a bit blocky in polygon count, but that's hardly a gripe, it was done to complete the game in the shortest time possible, and to ensure the focus is on the riders and to make sure the game never slows down. The foreground on the other hand, has some incredible intricacies, with fish swimming beneath the surface of the water you're racing on, and even huge killer whales swimming and thrashing about in the Antarctic level.

Wave Race is **a great vehicle for showing off** what the GameCube hardware is capable of

The riders themselves are very well designed. The animation is realistic and the reactions to collisions or traffic jams are spot-on. Some familiar faces make an appearance as well, with the likes of Rob Haywood and Ricky Winterborn from 1080 making their Jet Ski debuts.

!!! Now all we need is for 1080 2 to get finished...

At the end of the day WaveRace: Blue Storm is either your cup of tea or not. If you're after a game that offers plenty of options, great realism mixed with over-the-top racing ideas (take that shortcut!) and an extreme challenge, Blue Storm is for you. It really is a lot of fun, and it's so damn pretty - a great way to show off your GameCube's power. But it can be too tough, and if you get frustrated with games easily, you might want to try before you buy. The AI in the game is relentless and one mistake can put you from first to last in a matter of seconds. But gaming should be about overcoming the seemingly impossible and as such, WaveRace: Blue Storm stands as an awesome gaming experience. <<



PLUS: Slick visuals and stunningly realistic water.

MINUS: AI is tough and the learning curve is fairly steep.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
90	86	85

OVERALL

88

The best water physics in any game. Ever.

You'll have a ball!

Monkey's balls? Ewww!

Poor chimp only has one ball.

Super Monkey Ball

CATEGORY: Multiplayer puzzle >> **PLAYERS:** 1-4 >> **PUBLISHER:** Sega >> **PRICE:** $99.95 >> **RATING:** G >> **AVAILABLE:** May 17 >>

NARAYAN PATTISON has the balls for the job.

>>GCN

It doesn't matter which console launch you look at, there always seems to be a rushed clone of Tetris or Puzzle Bobble just waiting to pounce on unsuspecting early adopters. Super Monkey Ball's last-generation graphics and Marble Madness-inspired gameplay will lead many to assume this is just another dud best left on the shelf, but those who give these primates a chance will find a gaming experience accessible and rewarding enough to make even the mighty Miyamoto proud.

BURSTING YOUR BUBBLE

For reasons known only to the Japanese developers, somebody has trapped a bunch of monkeys in bubbles and isn't letting them out until they succeed in rolling safely across every bump, twist and turn of the game's 90 courses. Getting used to the controls is a breeze because the analogue stick is the only thing on the pad you have to use. The first few levels have walls to stop you falling off and are pretty much danger-free, but before long you'll be seething with frustration at the game's tougher challenges. Gaps to jump, winding paths that are ridiculously narrow and some really annoying pinball-style bouncy things are just a few of the hazards trying to send your monkey plummeting to an early grave.

It's possible to be kicking back in front of Monkey Balls's credit sequence 30 minutes after selecting the Beginner mode but this is only a fraction of what the game has to offer. The much tougher Advanced mode and the merciless Expert mode will take another couple of days to conquer but even this fails to really scratch the game's surface. To really rack up the points, it's possible to find spots on most levels where enough momentum will let your monkey jump safely to lower platforms and skip entire sections of the map. Ambitious players can also try to unlock bonus levels by making it through the entire game without slipping off once.

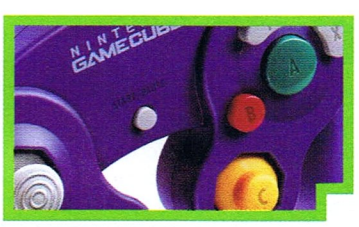
!!! Monkey Ball is the first Sega game to appear on a Nintendo console.

BUT WAIT, THERE'S MORE

Monkey Ball's main mode is a decent enough puzzler but those ballsy Sega programmers have gone and hammered out six different bonus games. Monkey Golf plops our perspex-imprisoned primates onto 18 holes of a bizarre mini golf course and is the best of the three sports-themed bonus games — although Monkey Bowling and Monkey Pool are both solid.

As well as the sporting events, the monkeys roll against each other in a Mario Kart-style race with power-ups like banana skins and snow flakes that freeze other balls in blocks of ice. Monkey Fight lets the chimps go at it with boxing gloves as they try to punch each other off small platforms. The last bonus game makes the monkeys cut their balls in half (don't try this at home kids) and use them as wings in a giant game of darts.

Monkey Ball packs a serious challenge, has more gameplay styles than you can shake a banana at and offers the best multiplayer action this side of Super Smash Bros. It may not have the jaw-dropping graphics of Rogue Leader or the instant recognition of Nintendo's popular characters but this deserves a home on anyone's GameCube. <<



PLUS: A refreshingly easy game to get into, with plenty of variety.

MINUS: Repetitive graphics that use little of the GCN's power.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
75	75	89

OVERALL

88

Simplistic but addictive puzzling-action. Genius!

My girlfriends are always batty.

Hadoken!

Quick, call Steve Irwin!

Bloody Roar: PRIMAL FURY

CATEGORY: Fighting >> **PLAYERS:** 1-2 >> **PUBLISHER:** Activision >> **PRICE:** $99.95 >> **RATING:** M15+ >> **AVAILABLE:** May 17 >>

FRANK DRY is going to call the RSPCA...

>>GCN

The Bloody Roar series has never really been considered by fighting game fans as a serious contender. The series has always been about big, glitzy graphics and fun character designs, with very little true depth to the fighting mechanics. The last game on PlayStation 2, Bloody Roar 3, was a step closer to being a competent fighting game, and now Bloody Roar: Primal Fury inches the series that much closer to being something more than just a button mash.

BANGERS AND...

Primal Fury features some great characters that's for sure. From the sexy kitten to the woolly-jumpered chameleon, this cast of crazy beasts is really entertaining. Character animation is quite fabulous and some of the special moves make for some hilarious gaming. There's no doubt about it — this is totally a party game. Casuals gamers are still the ones who will get the most laughs and enjoyment out of a fighter such as Primal Fury. Get some friends together, pick some crazy characters and enjoy the good graphics. It's really as simple as that.

Unfortunately, most of us are looking for a fighting game on GameCube that offers the same kind of depth as other brilliant titles in the genre such as Virtua Fighter 4 on the PlayStation 2 and this just isn't one of them.

!!! We recently heard that Capcom Vs SNK 2 is coming to GCN. Rockin'!

The main problem with a fighting game on GameCube, is that the controller is inappropriate. The button layout, whilst great for just about every other genre, just doesn't work well with fighting games in which you generally need four to six buttons which are all equally as easy to access. As you know, the GCN has one big fat button and lots of smaller, fiddly ones, making it quite unintuitive for performing button combos.

BESTIALITY AT ITS BEST

The beast transformations really add a nice twist to the gameplay. When in beast mode, you have access to some pretty engaging special moves, and it just looks damn cool too. If you're not careful though, transforming into your beast can waste valuable energy and leave you open to attack, so knowing when to whip out your animal instinct is something you have to learn through extended play. Most moves are executed with the usual double-taps and button combos, and there are quite a handful of moves for each character, but not as many as in Tekken, Virtua Fighter or Dead or Alive.

As the GameCube's only fighting game, it's almost worth recommending — who knows how many fighting games will come to the GCN! Just don't expect this to be anything other than a fun way to pass the time with friends. Not really a rewarding fighting game. <<

PLUS: Wonderful visuals, with fantastic player animation.

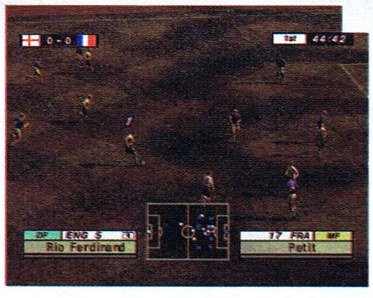
MINUS: Lacking in depth. GCN controller issues.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
89	82	75

OVERALL

79

An average fighter but a good party game.



ISS 2

»XBOX

CATEGORY: Soccer >> **PLAYERS:** 1-4 >> **PUBLISHER:** Konami >> **PRICE:** $99.95 >> **RATING:** G >> **AVAILABLE:** Now >>

JACKSON GOTHE-SNAPE slide tackles his review over deadline...

The International Superstar Soccer series has a long and unique history, full of love, betrayal and happy times. Back in 1995, the name was first used in a quaint SNES game known simply as ISS. Since then we have had ISS Deluxe, ISS Pro, ISS 64, ISS '98, ISS Pro '98, ISS Pro Evolution 1 and 2, and even simply ISS again. These were available for a variety of systems, and came from two different Konami development teams, one based in Osaka – the original ISS designers, and one based in Tokyo – the makers of the more realistic Evolution games that have recently branched off into Pro Evolution Soccer. ISS2 is developed by the Osaka team, which does have its fans, but has never received the critical acclaim of its Tokyo counterparts.

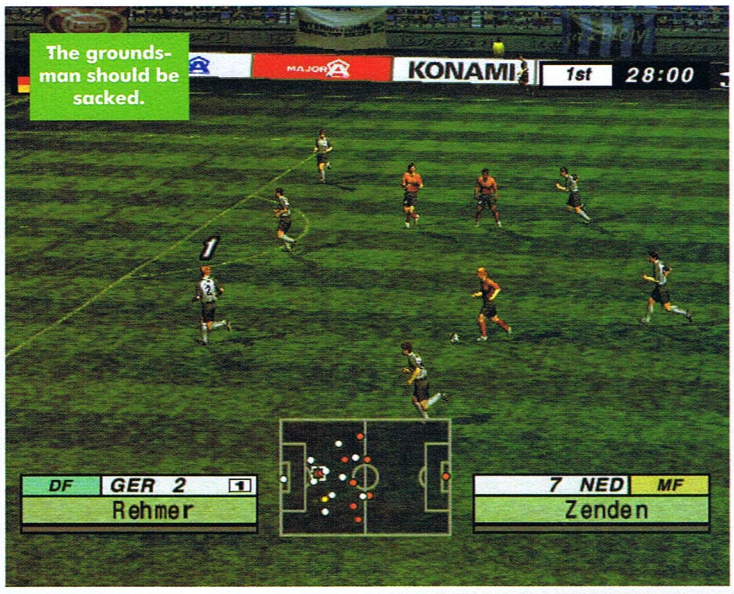
LIFELIKE PITCH

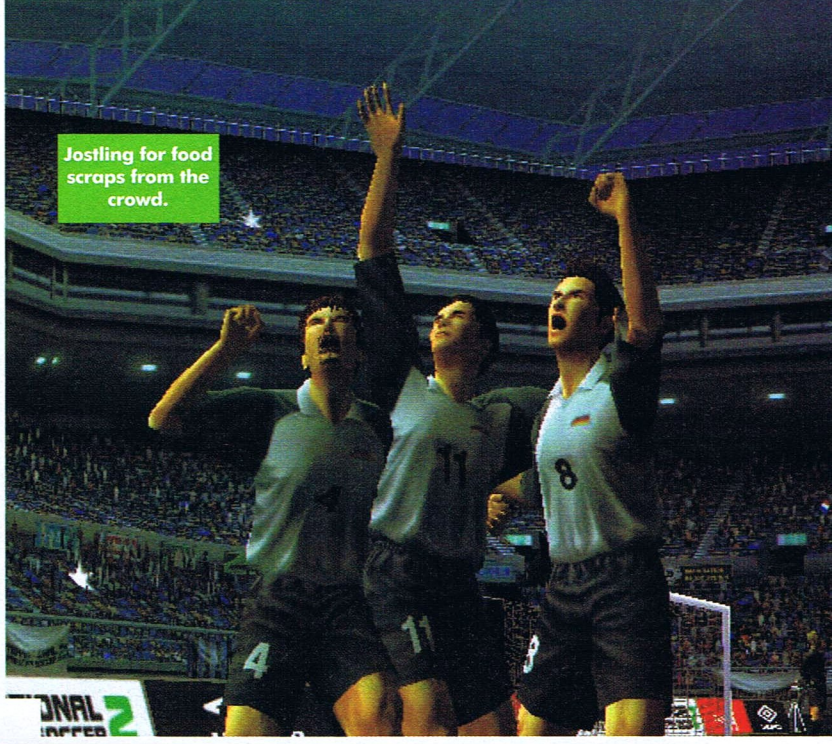
Konami's football games have always lacked the presentation of games such as FIFA, but ISS2 bucks the trend with some basic, yet unquestionably sleek, menus. There are no bonus materials or full orchestral soundtracks; ISS2 remains elegantly functional. Unfortunately, the "it's taking so long I think it's crashed" loading times are a big letdown. Following your cup of tea in the loading age, the stadiums don't disappoint with intricate architecture, and a blotchy, yet still lifelike pitch. The crowd lack some variety both in their animation and colour, but do help complete quite a scene as the dusk sun shoots through the stadium onto the sets of players. The coin toss makes a comeback, although with no atmospheric effect apart from some dreadful rain, it seems like a bit of a waste of time.

Thanks to the FIFPro license, the majority of teams contain real players, while many of the players also have fair likenesses. It's not quite up to FIFA's standards in terms of detail, but each player does look far more lifelike – at least when they're lining up before the match. Out on the pitch it's a different matter entirely, as everyone runs awfully robotically, while the goalies especially move terribly. Some animations are quite nice, but collision detection, particularly for fouls, looks atrocious.

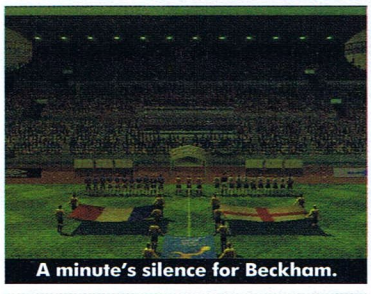
Crowd noise isn't the best, particularly with regards to timing. They absolutely erupt at full-time of most drab 0-0 draws. The commentary however was very appropriate for the result. Household names Jon Champion and Mark Lawrenson lack both wit and insight, and continue the magnificent tradition of abysmal Konami football commentary.

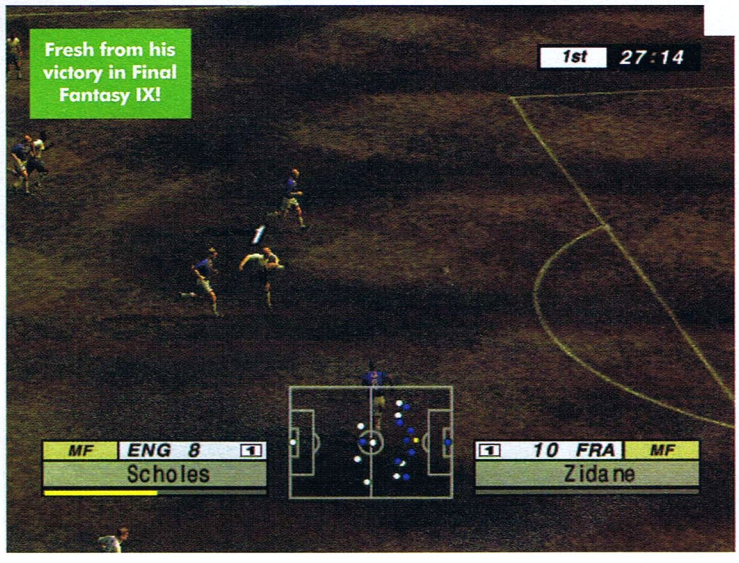
The ball does behave quite nicely, although it has a habit of strangely sticking to players' feet. Unlike





It's no Championship Manager.


A minute's silence for Beckham.



He's taking his ball and going home.

Go on, aim below the belt.

previous more action-oriented ISS titles, ISS2 attempts to simulate a game of football more like its cousin Pro Evo. Next to PES on PS2, ISS2 is far easier to get into, and smoother for the part-timer, but the game's mechanics with regards to player and ball collisions falls short of the mark. The result is a strange hybrid, where the game can be played with either a patient, or FIFA-style approach, but you will probably be let down either way. The default speed setting is three out of ten and borders on unplayable. Bumping the speed up to ten at least warrants having a bash.

FRILLS TO EXPLORE

The AI isn't exactly callous either, whether it's your teammates or the opposition. Off the ball runs appear non-existent, while you will be amazed at the number of inexplicable early crosses, that fly straight out. You may admire how a centre back positions himself perfectly to prevent a striker turning, but usually you'll be wondering whether your defenders actually have eyes.

> Usually you'll be wondering whether your **defenders actually have eyes.**

There is a nice range of game modes and frills to explore to keep time ticking over, but it would have been nice to see more extensive customisation options for the competitions, as well as club teams. There's a great kit editor however, as well as player creation facility.

!!! Once again, we're hanging for Controller S, 'cos the "Potato Pad" still irks.

ISS2 might have been better off to forget about the simulation side of football, as it requires great consistency over every element of the mechanics. If even one facet of the game is out, whether it be player collisions, or ball physics, a soccer-loving gamer will only get frustrated. As it stands, ISS2 doesn't really nail any, and it's slow, so it unfortunately gets tedious quickly. It is a decent bash multiplayer, and scoring goals is quite a rewarding experience, but really, it's one only for the football diehards.

For some, the game might be preferable to FIFA World Cup for more options and a title closer resembling the real sport. Yet a wise Xbox owner should probably endure the wait until something a little better arrives. Fingers crossed for Pro Evolution everyone. <<

PLUS: Kit editor! Fairly nice looking.

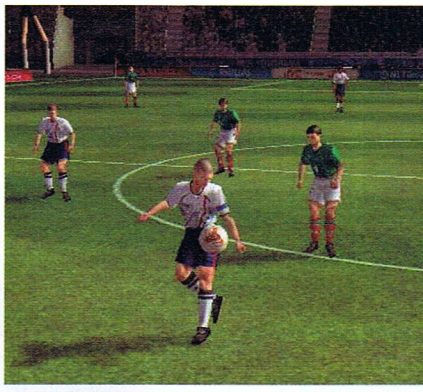
MINUS: Confused gameplay, lack of action.

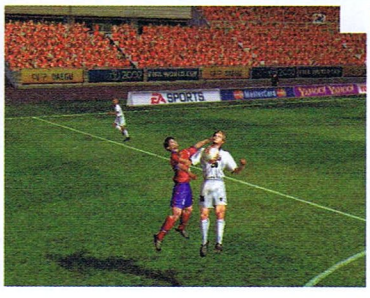
VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
79	71	70

OVERALL

71

World Cup also-rans.





2002 FIFA World Cup »XBOX

CATEGORY: Soccer >> **PLAYERS:** 1-4 >> **PUBLISHER:** EA >> **PRICE:** $99.95 >> **RATING:** G >> **AVAILABLE:** Now >>

JACKSON GOTHE-SNAPE breaks his nose...

It's World Cup time again folks, and of course things wouldn't feel right if we didn't have a videogame to go with it. Thankfully EA Sports have come to the rescue of football-lovers by bringing their semi-sequel to FIFA 2002 to Xbox. They have even had the generosity to include Australia, so we can virtually wipe out any memories we ever had of Black November.

The game focuses squarely on the World Cup. There are none of the features that the FIFA series usually offers, such as club competitions or international leagues, and gameplay very closely resembles last year's title. The question on everyone's lips is whether the magic of the World Cup can make up for these apparent shortfalls.

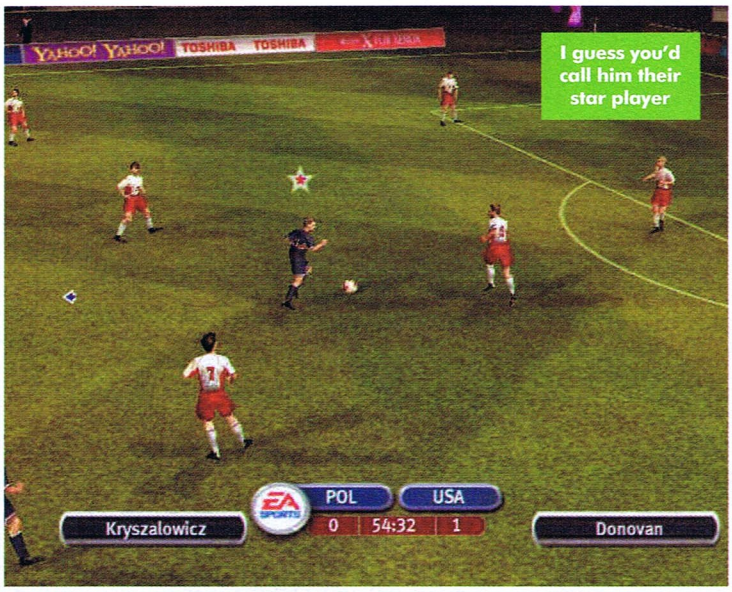
SLIGHTLY OVERSIZED

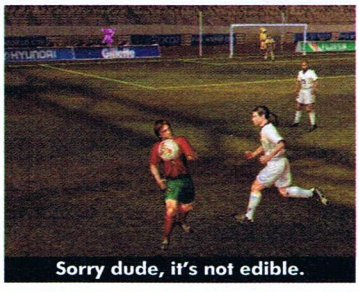
2002 FIFA World Cup does what it sets out to do very well. It is without doubt the most action-packed, ball-swervinglytastic game of football you will probably play (until FIFA 2003 comes out later this year). The World Cup license has been used effectively, and offers a superbly authentic experience. The whole presentation is exceptional, from the extended bonus features, to nations that include an extra page of players outside the squad, just in case there are some surprise World Cup inclusions and you demand perfection. Heck, there is even an actual Adidas ball used in the game.

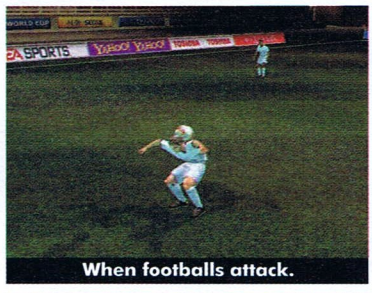
Jumping into the action you'll be treated to a swanky, yet pointless, pre-match laser light show. When it's over and the lights come back on, the first thing you'll notice are the detailed official stadiums. The crowds that fill them are fairly atmospheric, with limited animation, although they are decked out simply in one of the team's colours.

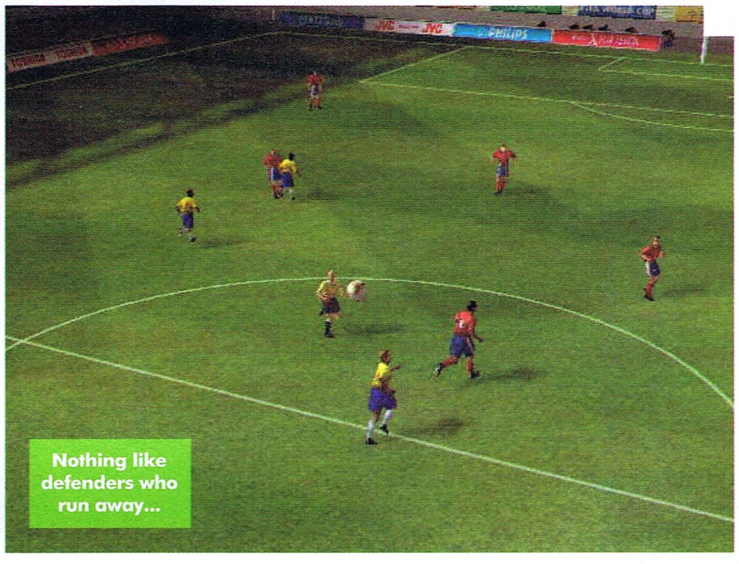
Zooming down into the action from one of the game's many customisable cameras, the player models will strike you as being odd in true FIFA style. Heads and hands do look slightly oversized, but on the whole they look better than in FIFA 2002 — especially with regard to player likenesses. The World Cup license has also given the developers use of all the correct kits, so although a bit blurry, all the correct details are included.

Animations are a bit of a mixed bag, with some elements, like the wonderful-looking control and volley, being let down by overused stumbling animations and the disappointing way the players run. Many of the non-playing animations like goal celebrations and receiving cards look rather funny, until you see the players' horrifying faces, with glistening teeth and soulless eyes. David Beckham in particular looks truly frightening. You'll see a fair bit of the players up close, with




Sorry dude, it's not edible.


When footballs attack.



Aiiee! It's those evil mascots!

Lining up for their paycheques.

a nifty in-game panning zoom to focus on a striker who just missed (usually Emile Heskey). Although overall things look fairly tight, there are some rare moments of slowdown, and the grass texture leaves a lot to be desired – like grass.

HAPPY TIMES

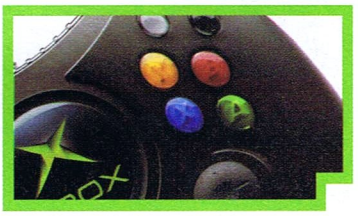
The sound however is truly epic, and captures the grand essence of the World Cup perfectly. A full orchestra has been used to record the soundtrack, and when you've won the World Cup final, you'll know it. The only problem is, the booming orchestra even accompanies early phase one goals, which seems slightly excessive. The commentary is terrific, from John 'Motty' Motson and Andy Gray – Andy's additions in particular, like when players first made their international debuts, or when a side last won the World Cup, are definitely classy. The crowd noise is also quite effective, with cheers coming at more or less the right time, although some chants and drums wouldn't have gone astray. Most of the effects are fairly suitable as well, although some, like the slide tackle, are a little cheesy.

It features truly arcade elements such as quick players like Michael Owen actually blurring

The gameplay is certainly not everyone's cup of tea. It features truly arcade elements such as quick players like Michael Owen actually blurring when you tap the sprint button, as well as ice hockey-like ball-trails for shots and even passes. The controls are fairly solid and straightforward, although there is a certain lack of freedom in terms of creating play. Because you have less control, the game can get repetitive, especially when playing against the computer. Grabbing a few mates and leading Senegal to the World Cup is certainly where the game is at its best.

!!! This year's World Cup has the worst mascots ever.

Unfortunately, the lack of club teams and missing game options are a bit of a letdown. Some variety is offered by unlocking Classic teams etc, but the game is designed with one thing in mind: to replicate the glory that is the World Cup. In this regard, it does succeed and that World Cup spirit largely makes up for what's missing. This, together with a game engine that offers plenty of action and spectacle, certainly makes 2002 FIFA World Cup a worthy purchase. It is, of course, the best Xbox soccer title out there. <<



PLUS: Slick presentation, World Cup license.

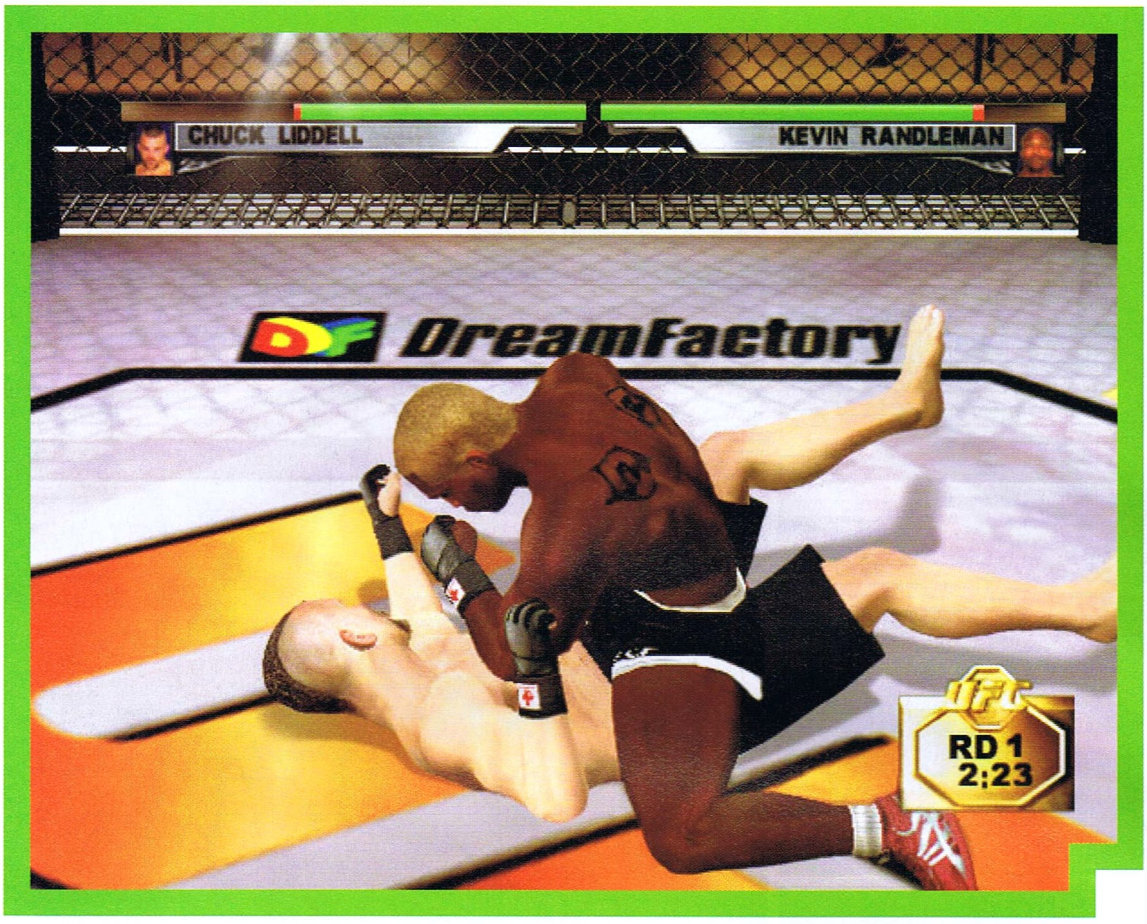
MINUS: Hardly revolutionary. Lazy animation.

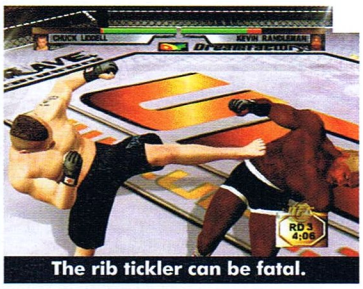
VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
84	90	80

OVERALL

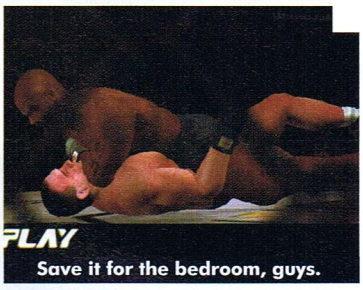
81

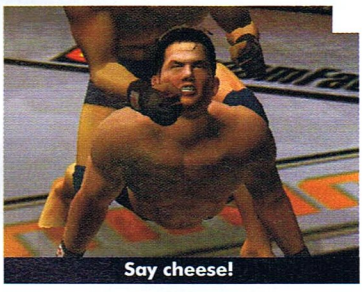
A solid World Cup performance.





The rib tickler can be fatal.


Save it for the bedroom, guys.


Say cheese!

UFC: Tapout

CATEGORY: Fighting >> **PLAYERS:** 1-2 >> **PUBLISHER:** UbiSoft >> **PRICE:** $89.95 >> **RATING:** MA15+ >> **AVAILABLE:** Now >>

DANIEL WILKS likes to butt things with his head...

>>XBOX

Have you ever imagined yourself as a big boofy looking man with a bad hair cut, a bad attitude and shorts tight enough that passers by can tell what religion you are at a glance? Well if you have, then UFC: Tapout is a game designed with you in mind. Taking the role of any of a number of real world fighters ranging from Dan "The Beast" Severn to Frank "Meatball" Shamrock, to Gary "Big Daddy" Goodridge or characters you've created for yourself, Tapout pits players against some of the best fighters in the world to find out once and for all who is the Ultimate Fighting Champion.

SIT ON MY FACE

Unlike the vast majority or fighting games available on any console, UFC: Tapout relies on tactics and planning rather than special moves or juggles. Each fighter has defining skills and characteristics making them better punchers, kickers, grapplers or what have you. Fights usually go one of two ways - players stay on their feet and pummel each other into the ground or one player takes the other to the ground and either beats them unconscious or tries to make them tap-out with a joint lock. Although the style may look simple it is deceptively deep and complex with each face button on the Xbox game-pad controlling a limb. Each fighter has a huge number of strike combo's they can pull off with the right button combinations and an equally staggering number of takedowns.

The lack of special moves and the fact that all fighters have a stamina bar means that players are forced to think about their attacks as they can't keep up a steady barrage without becoming worn out. It takes a bit of getting used to but after a while waiting for an opening and planting a devastating 1-2 punch on the other guy's kisser is immensely satisfying.

!!! Tapout is also a clothing label - check it out! www.inyerface.com

Gameplay becomes even more technical once the game goes to the ground. Depending on if the player is on the top or bottom, they can attempt a number of strikes and joint locks - of course your opponent will be trying to do the same thing so you need to be careful about defense.

AND TELL ME THAT YOU LOVE ME

A tome could be written on the complexities of the fighting system but suffice to say it is very in depth and becomes even more satisfying the more you play. Players are also given the option of creating their own fighter, mixing and matching skills to suit their personal style. The character builder is very thorough and should keep you occupied for a long time creating a digital Joey Tekken replica.

Unfortunately not all is wine and roses, as many varied flaws keep it from being truly great. There is no save option during tournaments or even a replay option so if you lose, it's back to the start. When you win a tournament there is no reward other than putting your name on the high score screen. It would be nice to get more skills for your character but no such luck.

UFC:Tapout manages to be a compelling and fun fighting game and by far the best in the series. <<

PLUS: Very complex and tactical fighting system.

MINUS: Poor sound, and no real rewards for winning.

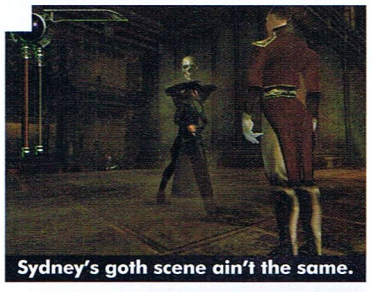
VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
80	68	79

OVERALL

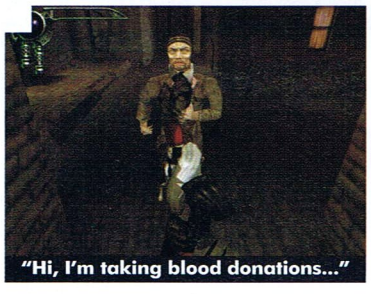
79

Not for all fighting fans, but you may be surprised.

Let me trim that head off your neck.



Sydney's goth scene ain't the same.



"Hi, I'm taking blood donations..."

Blood Omen 2

CATEGORY: Action/Adventure >> **PLAYERS:** 1 >> **PUBLISHER:** Eidos >> **PRICE:** $89.95 >> **RATING:** MA15+ >> **AVAILABLE:** Now >>

DAVID WILDGOOSE lurks in the shadows...

>>XBOX

It isn't often that a game casts the player in the role of villain. Sure, GTA 3 allows us to live a vicarious life of crime, stealing cars and murdering pedestrians with scant regard for the law and its consequences. But in Rockstar's tale of gang warfare, you're but a moral vacuum, selling your vigilante stylings to the highest bidder without pausing to consider what constitutes good or evil. In Legacy of Kain: Blood Omen 2, however, you are the epitome of evil as Kain, eons-old vampire and (literally) bloodthirsty killer.

SHORT AND SNAPPY

Away from the moral corruption, this is a thoroughly orthodox action/adventure in every way. Kain runs through a series of alarmingly linear levels, solving numerous lever-pulling and block-pushing puzzles and devouring anyone who gets in the way, including innocent civilians. In this respect, Blood Omen 2 falls into a familiar trap – the gameplay substance is utterly divorced from the story, instead serving as an abstract obstacle which must be overcome before permission is granted to witness the next revelatory cutscene.

Yet it's also a great lesson in how to pace a story so that the player's attention is regularly diverted from the glaring inadequacies elsewhere. Short, snappy cutscenes arrive at such frequent intervals to reward you with plot updates that it's almost forgotten that all you did to get there was open a few locked doors and slay a smattering of generic enemies.

If only the gameplay rewards were present in an equal measure. Kain possesses a handful of offensive and defensive manoeuvres, the master of which results in some reasonably satisfying combat exchanges. Blocking is the key, especially since it charges up Kain's rage meter, which allows him to unleash Fury, one of the seven Dark Gifts in his repertoire.

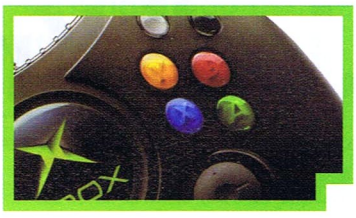
!!! Whatever you do, don't waste your money on *Queen of the Damned*...

INDUSTRIAL GOTHIC

These Gifts are special abilities gained by defeating each of the game's boss characters. In theory, they're the best part of the game – with Mist you can effect silent kills or sneak past enemies, Jump lets you leap terrific distances across rooftops, or you can Charm certain characters to do your bidding. In practice, they're potential is scarcely exploited. Their use is always prescribed by the demands of the level design – you must Jump here or Charm this person to do this in order to progress.

What should be a valuable addition to the player's tool set is instead just another piece of the puzzle. Couple this constraint with the linear nature of the levels (including countless instances of special case scenarios – you can jump onto this rooftop, but not that identical-looking rooftop) and you've got a game that proscribes exploration to its ultimate detriment.

Yet it stands as testament to the quality of the narrative, the industrial-gothic atmosphere, and the challenging combat mechanics that Blood Omen 2 remains as compulsively entertaining as it is. For all its notable flaws, it's still worth a weekend of your time. <<



PLUS: Great characters brought to life through a well-told story.

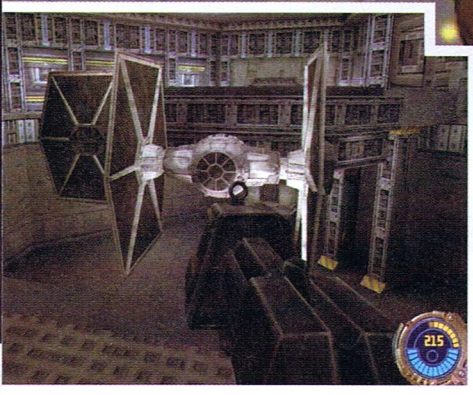
MINUS: Deeply uninspired puzzle-based level design.

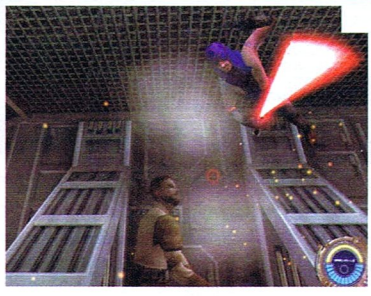
VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
81	86	72

OVERALL

75

A great adventure hamstrung by weak gameplay.





Jedi Knight II: JEDI OUTCAST

CATEGORY: FPS >> **PLAYERS:** 1-32 >> **PUBLISHER:** LucasArts >> **PRICE:** $89.95 >> **RATING:** M15+ >> **AVAILABLE:** Now >> **REQUIRED:** PII 500, 128MB RAM, 3D card

ELIOT FISH is rooting for Palpatine.

>>PC

The gaming world is still waiting for the next great first person shooter. Post Deus Ex, we've all had a taste of the possibilities within the genre and most of us have high hopes for the next generation of games. Sure, Deus Ex 2 and Thief 3 are coming down the pipe in the near future, but Warren Spector and his teams are not the only imaginative developers out there. If anything, Spector's Deus Ex should have educated other developers in the benefits of striving for non-linear gameplay. Linearity is this particular genre's greatest weakness. It's time for something new.

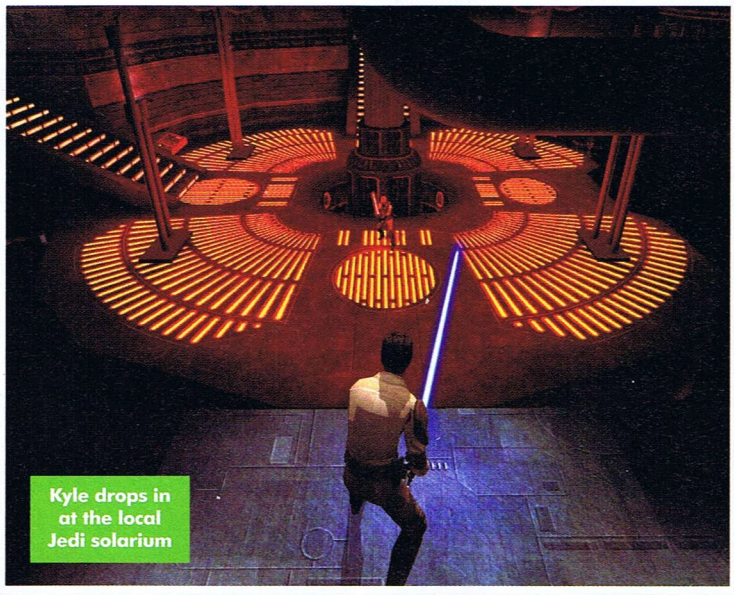
Raven software have been given the biggest opportunity to wow gamers in the shape of developing Jedi Outcast for LucasArts, the sequel to two true classics in the genre. If anyone had a good shot at delivering something out of the norm, developing this game was it. The two previous games have set the bar so high, that Raven couldn't really do anything other than ensure that Jedi Outcast was up to a certain standard in both design and execution.

MAY THE GEFORCE BE WITH YOU...

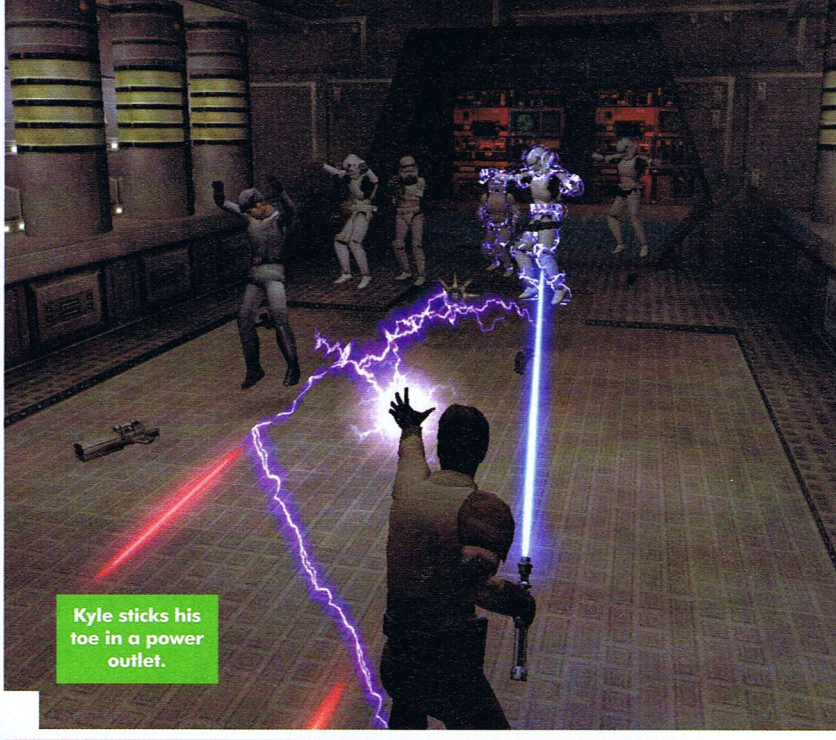
Jedi Outcast does most things right. The levels are mostly huge, you can tackle some puzzles in non-linear ways, the AI is challenging, and there's enough *Star Wars* cool factor to keep the fans happy. But even so, Jedi Outcast does not impress the same way the original two games did. A big reason for this is that Raven were happy to simply ape the last game and regurgitate ideas and scenarios that we've already played. There's even a level that is reminiscent of the "falling ship" level from Jedi Knight. Most of Jedi Outcast almost feels like treading old ground, even though it's dressed up in a pretty new Quake 3 engine. But first, the stuff that's really good...

Lightsaber combat in Jedi Outcast is a big improvement over the simple slash attacks in Jedi Knight. With the Force Powers in the mix, along with some new acrobatic Saber moves, duelling opponents (and there are plenty of lightsaber wielding grunts in this game) is cinematic and tense, just how it should be. It's not perfect, but it's fun enough to want to prefer the lightsaber over your other weapons which is a big tick for a game that revolves around being a Jedi. You can even lock sabers during a fight and try to button bash your opponent into getting knocked to the ground. There are lots of little moments in the saber duelling that will have you grinning like the freak you are (or should be!).

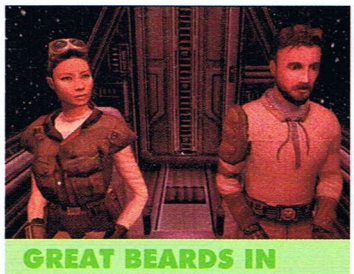
Force powers have also had more focus put on them. You'll need to use your powers regularly throughout the second half of the game to solve puzzles, and overcome overwhelming



Kyle drops in at the local Jedi solarium

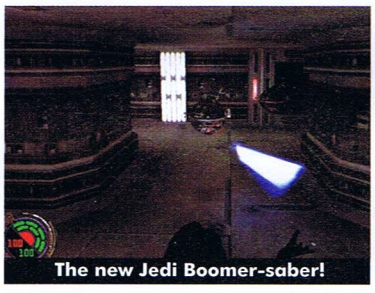


Kyle sticks his toe in a power outlet.



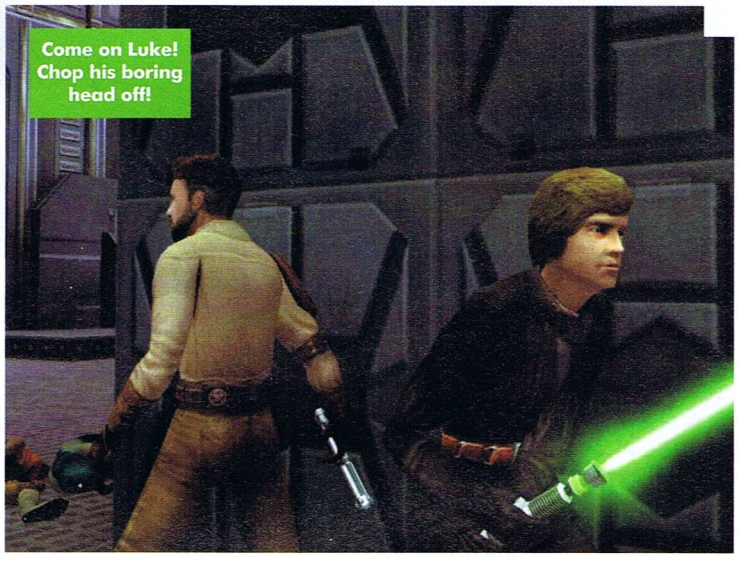
GREAT BEARDS IN GAMING PART XVI

>>There are beards a-plenty in Jedi Outcast. Kyle Katarn sports a fine one, bristling with Jedi potential. But there are more – imprisoned miners, Jedi adepts and even Kyle's dead dad. It seems that everywhere you turn in Jedi Outcast, there's a beard in your face. Or on your face.



The new Jedi Boomer-saber!

The Sith now employ chinese acrobats



Come on Luke! Chop his boring head off!

odds. Using Force Speed (everything slows down) and leaping around the room deftly avoiding blaster fire whilst you decapitate Stormtroopers is quite simply a blast.

BANTHA FODDER

The level design on the whole is fairly adventurous. Most areas are huge, and there are nice little nooks to discover through exploration and clever thinking. However, there aren't many levels that really feel that believeable. The design here is lacking the functionality of the levels in Dark Forces and Jedi Knight. Raven have tried hard to make it feel as if you're inside real locations, but there are quite a few dead-ends and empty areas that spoil the illusion. The level on Nar Shadda tries, but fails to feel like a bustling city of Bounty Hunters. Maybe more Non-Player Characters would have helped. There is plenty to do, however, and it's nice to have lots of puzzling scenarios to get your head around. Jedi Outcast never devolves into endless corridor shootouts which is a very good thing.

>> Leaping around the room deftly **avoiding blaster fire whilst you decapitate Stormtroopers** is quite simply a blast.

Unlike the lightsaber combat mentioned earlier, the gunplay in Outcast never really gets the blood pumping. A reason for this, is that you have to be quite methodical in your approach to clearing out sections of the levels, and you never really get into any cool set-piece gun fights. You're usually either picking enemies off from a distance, or you're in close with your lightsaber, and rarely are you forced to utilise your weaponry to its full extent.

!!! There's a hack out there to let you use two sabers...

Another weakpoint would have to be the cutscenes and dialogue. This really is below par, hammy b-grade stuff that makes no sense to a *Star Wars* fan whatsoever. If you can put up with it, then you'll at least enjoy the appearance of Luke Skywalker and Lando Calrissian.

Jedi Outcast is loaded with entertaining play, and there are definitely some inspired moments. The game is quite well paced, and they way you slowly become more powerful and fluent with your Force Powers over the course of the game works well. It's just a shame that many of the objectives are re-hashed ideas from earlier games and something about the game seems to lack a truly authentic *Star Wars* flavour.

Overall, this game should please everyone who was hanging out for a sequel to Jedi Knight. Just don't expect a game that will revolutionise or thrill in the same way the previous two games in the series did. <<

PLUS: Huge level design. Force powers aid gameplay variety.

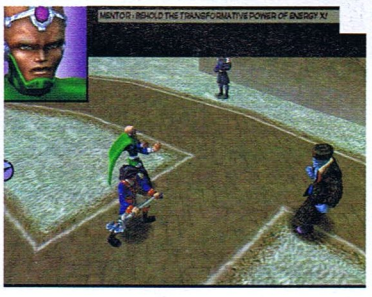
MINUS: An unconvincing Star Wars tale. Some bad levels.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
89	90	87

OVERALL

86

Impressive, Raven, but you are not a Jedi yet.



Freedom Force

»PC

CATEGORY: Tactical RPG >> **PLAYERS:** 1-4 >> **PUBLISHER:** EA >> **PRICE:** $89.95 >> **RATING:** M15+ >> **AVAILABLE:** Now >> **REQUIRED:** PII-300, 96MB RAM, 3D card

DAVID WILDGOOSE is always a hero on deadline...

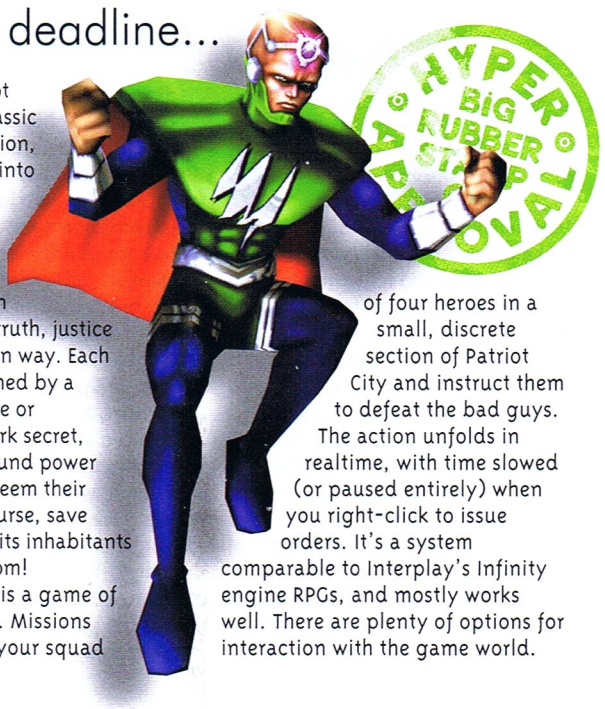
Comic book fans have endured a painfully long wait to see their favourite superheroes make a worthwhile transition from the printed page to the digital age. It's difficult to judge what's been worse: the string of average-to-dismal console games based on Superman, Batman, Spiderman and the like or the cancellation of at least three promising PC titles in recent years. Despite the heavy weight of expectation, Freedom Force delivers in style.

CERTAIN DOOM

Taking its cue from the so-called "Silver Age" of comic from the 1950s and 60s, Freedom Force plants it tongue in its cheek from the opening cinematic and leaves it firmly wedged there for the duration. From the over-the-top narration (think Batman, the 60s television series) and camped-up character voices, to the garish colour schemes and exaggerated animations (each superhero sports a very "heroic" running style), this is a game that never fails to not take itself seriously.

Yet it does so in a very serious way, and that's the key to why it works so well. Far from a postmodern update, full of witty asides drenched in irony and meta-textual subtext, Freedom Force is an earnest declaration of love for superheroes and super-villains of the era. It's nostalgia, folks, but in a good way – all wide-eyed and awe-inspiring. You'll feel like a kid again, I promise.

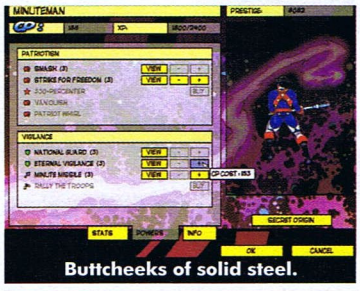
The members of Freedom Force begin the game as just average citizens of Patriot City. Then, in classic comic book fashion, they each come into contact with the mysterious Energy X and are transformed into superhuman beings bent on truth, justice and the American way. Each member, burdened by a guilty conscience or harbouring a dark secret, sees their newfound power as a route to redeem their past. And, of course, save Patriot City and its inhabitants from certain doom!



At heart, this is a game of tactical combat. Missions typically place your squad of four heroes in a small, discrete section of Patriot City and instruct them to defeat the bad guys. The action unfolds in realtime, with time slowed (or paused entirely) when you right-click to issue orders. It's a system comparable to Interplay's Infinity engine RPGs, and mostly works well. There are plenty of options for interaction with the game world.

These citizens are somewhat "icy".

The hulahoop club is on the loose again.



Buttcheeks of solid steel.

www.heromachine.com

"For truth, justice and wads of cash!"

We want Lord Seafood!

Besides using a hero's individual superpowers, you can pick up and throw streetlights, traffic poles, trashcans, dumpsters, even cars and huge snowballs. Or you set fire to trees, explode barrels of oil, and demolish whole buildings. Yet as entertaining as all this sounds, there's little reason to use anything beyond each hero's innate abilities – lobbing a car onto an enemy's head will sadly never do as much damage as a Wallop from Man-Bot or El Diablo's Tongues of Flame. It's disappointing, and feels like a real missed opportunity.

ABSURD TWISTS

Elsewhere, however, everything is just about perfect. Initially you take control of just the one hero, Minuteman, who assumes the role of main protagonist. As missions are accomplished, more heroes will join the ranks of Freedom Force, thus allowing you to take a full complement of four into the action. Prestige points are gained for successfully completing objectives (with bonuses gained for defeating enemies and finding secrets, yet lost for letting the innocent be harmed and Patriot City itself to suffer damage), and with these you can recruit new heroes to your cause.

Balance, in both your immediate squad and across the force as a whole, is thus crucial. All heroes possess a range of abilities and powers. They can be: fast, strong, tough, or infused with high levels of Energy X; resistant to ice, radiation or acid; specialists in melee, ranged attacks, mind control or harnessing the elements; and many more. The number of possible combinations is extended by an experience system that allows the upgrading of existing powers and the unlocking of new ones for each hero, as well as an editor in which you can customise your own hero (including name, attributes, powers, even what they look like).

!!! There's a host of cool "real" hero skins available online.

The pacing of the mission structure is brilliant. Surprising and absurd twists during each mission update the objectives regularly and ensure each task feels fresh. Meanwhile... most missions climax with a ludicrous cliffhanger ending that further enhances the Saturday morning cartoon atmosphere. And having the Freedom Force spin out of the screen during each cutscene transition is a touch of pure genius.

Freedom Force is about as polished a game the PC has seen in many years; developer Irrational Games seems to have thought of everything. It's challenging, thoroughly rewarding, and an enormous amount of fun to play. It'll knock you out.

Meanwhile... most missions climax with a ludicrous cliffhanger ending

PLUS: Combines instant playability with enduring charm.

MINUS: The game doesn't make more use of the environments.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
89	92	90

OVERALL

90

A stylish, uplifting and energising breath of fresh air.

Dungeon Siege

>>PC

CATEGORY: Action/RPG >> **PLAYERS:** 1-8 >> **PUBLISHER:** Microsoft >> **PRICE:** $99.95 >> **RATING:** M15+ >> **AVAILABLE:** Now >> **REQUIRED:** PII 500, 128MB RAM, 3D card

Clever clones besiege **DAN TOOSE.**

Let me start off by pointing out that creating a clone is not necessarily a bad thing, so long as it is done well. Keeping that in mind, know that Dungeon Siege is a clone of games such as Diablo, and to a lesser extent, Baldur's Gate. Diablo provides the basic feel and interface, while Baldur's Gate inspired a party-based game rather than control of a single hero, plus the ability to pause, assess, decide, and then resume. Dungeon Siege can be easily forgiven for mimicking these RPG greats, because it not only adds new ideas that genuinely improve things, but also does so in stunning 3D.

SIMPLY SUPERB

Like Diablo, Dungeon Siege has a single player mode, but a stronger emphasis on its multiplayer mode. The main game is started in the Kingdom of Ehb, where the player guides a simple farmer out on a quest to warn the nearest town of impending doom, and sets the mould for a character development system.

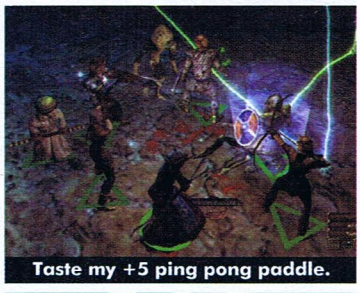
Unlike Diablo, the player does not choose a class for their character, but rather they determine which areas of skill they master by their actions. Attacking hand-to-hand increases melee skills, etc. The character's actions also determine which attributes they develop – strength, dexterity or intelligence. These stats determine whether or not a character may use a certain item, which is once again like in Diablo. Essentially, the skill tree of Diablo II has been replaced by an open-ended skill system, so it's a trade-off. It's a slight shame that there wasn't an open ended skill tree system, combining the best of both worlds, as this would have made character development in Dungeon Siege far more of an in-depth strategy feature.

In a roundabout way, it would be fair to describe Dungeon Siege's visual presentation being akin to having a helicopter camera to follow the Fellowship of the Ring. Much of the player's time is spent circling a view around a group of up to eight adventurers through medieval fantasy landscapes. In addition to the ability to zoom and tilt the viewpoint, Dungeon Siege becomes yummy eye candy by providing a seamless presentation from one environment to another. Being able to watch the characters enter a dungeon and come out the other side rather than stop to load up a completely new area really helps create a sense of progression and journey. An alternate overhead map viewpoint is even there at the touch of a button, making navigating through lush forests much easier.

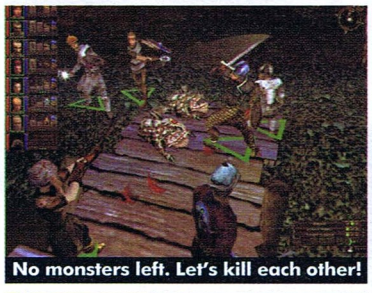
It's not just the cinematic viewpoints that make Dungeon Siege a looker, but also the sterling textures,

When they said we'd find some head around here...

Looks like this guy just wants to "rock".

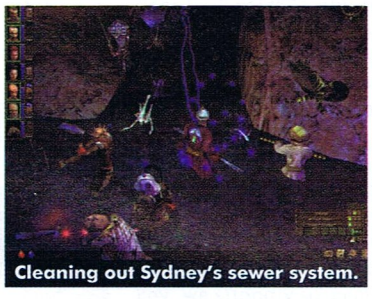


Taste my +5 ping pong paddle.



No monsters left. Let's kill each other!

They told us he was frigid, but...



Cleaning out Sydney's sewer system.

Our party goes in search of some nightlife.

models and effects that make up what the player sees. Even though the top resolution is only 1024x768x32, there's enough extra detail in the scenery to bring the game fully to life. Trees sway in the breeze, water drips into pools from cavern ceilings, and the lighting is simply superb. Character and monster animation is good in basis, but once the player has a full party, the frame rates can dive a tad, weakening the end result.

Dungeon Siege also has a dramatic, yet tastefully subtle soundtrack. More importantly, the combat and spell effects sound awesome, especially with environmental effects in play. Hats off to Chris Taylor and Gas Powered Games for saying no to speech acknowledgements for orders received, as it would drive anyone playing Dungeon Siege insane.

LOVE THE MULE

What helps Dungeon Siege feel like a game in its own right rather than a pretty clone is the way Gas Powered Games have addressed some issues that have been quite annoying in previous games. For example, when a character has an injury of say 100 hit points, but the healing potion they have can heal up to 500 hit points, it feels like a waste to use it. Dungeon Siege uses a system allowing a player to sip as much as they need from each vial automatically. A single hotkey allows the player to have all party members under 50% hit points to go for their potions and heal themselves up.

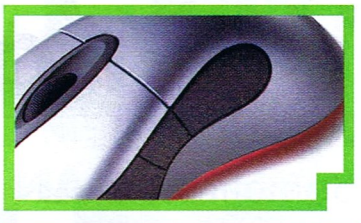
Those that hate running out of inventory space to hoard items to sell in town will love the pack-mule. This beast of burden can carry a whopping load of gear, and tags along behind the party safely for the most part. Dealing with a dead mule could be a drag.

As in Baldur's Gate, the player can choose their formations and set AI instructions for each character in the party. Occasionally the AI seems a tad sleepy, with characters failing to assist their buddies copping a beating beside them. Ironically this is a good thing, as it helps prevent the player from getting too complacent as they watch battles unfold. This is because AI works almost too effectively with a selection of melee fighters, archers and a couple of healers, often leaving the player with only the need to hit a hotkey to get their party to collect all the items.

This is a simplistic kind of RPG, more about building up your characters rather than playing through a detailed story. For that reason, think of it as Diablo II in 3D, with a whole party, and some nifty new features... Done about right.

> Those who hate running out of inventory space to hoard items...
> **will love the pack mule.**

!!! Chris Taylor has expressed interest in an Xbox port of the game.



PLUS: Awesome visuals, open-ended character development.

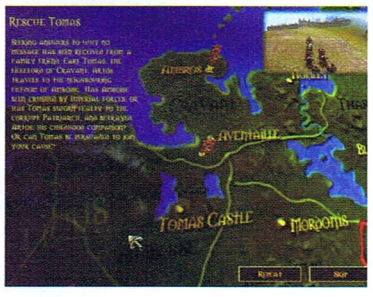
MINUS: Many battles are a tad too easy on the Normal setting.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
93	89	92

OVERALL

92

The best Action RPG since Diablo II. Addictive stuff.



Warrior Kings

»PC

CATEGORY: RTS >> **PLAYERS:** 1-8 >> **PUBLISHER:** Microids >> **PRICE:** $89.95 >> **RATING:** M15+ >> **AVAILABLE:** Now >> **REQUIRED:** PII 500, 128MB RAM, 3D card

Sometimes **DAN TOOSE** is the "worrier" king.

Real time strategy games have been 3D for a while now, with games like Myth and Dark Reign 2 having paved the way. Nowadays having a 3D engine is something we take for granted, but games like Warrior Kings remind us that taking small steps forward really does make a difference.

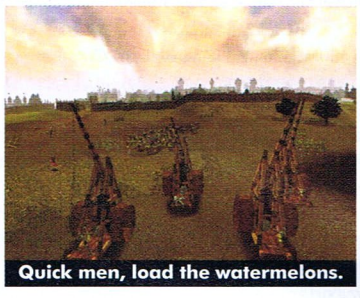
AN INTERESTING TWIST

Stopping this from swiftly turning into a same-old scenario is a branching development system that sends the player down different paths of research, depending on the choice of religious and industrious buildings built first. It's possible to end the game as a Pagan King, Holy Crusader, or siege warfare specialist of the Renaissance. This is a great way of diversifying the single-player game, and also adds an interesting twist in multiplayer. Spotting an enemy doesn't necessarily give away their particular alignment, and thus there's little way to know what you'll be up against till you see more of the enemy's forces.

Warrior Kings features an engine that lets you look in almost every direction you may care to. What you get to see are panoramic views of rolling hills, rivers, forests, mountains, villages, forts and vast cities. The freedom of viewpoint makes surveying terrain effortless, which is a good thing, since Warrior Kings allows the player to apply tactics such as picking higher ground to increase the range of fire, or forcing an enemy to approach uphill to slow any charges they make.

Marching units around in ordered formation over the landscapes looks brilliant, and although not stunningly realistic, their animations are appealing enough to make watching warfare in Warrior Kings a pleasant way to pass the time. Going down the road of Paganism can lead to summoning demonic forces, while researching military hardware like the trebuchet offers a variety of huge siege engines. The sense of scale in Warrior Kings leaves nothing to be desired, especially with clouds creating shadows on the ground below, making Warrior Kings tasty eye-candy indeed.

Resource management can be a fiddly chore in some games, making the whole experience much less fun. Warrior Kings avoids this with a system that is pretty to look at, easy to use, and which actually



seems realistic. The player's manor is their base of operations, with materials and food coming in from out-lying villages. At the villages, peasants build farms, collect lumber, and mine rocks. Seeing the individual peasants go about their jobs in rolling hills and fields on the outskirts of a city just feels right. Carts take resources back to the manor, which not only helps complete the image of a working settlement or people, but also creates strategic targets. Take out the driver and you can even sneak one of your own peasants into the driver's seat.

GRUMBLING PEASANTS

Idle peasants are easily rounded up and put to work, and they can be turned into useful defenders by means of a militia training upgrade. There are quite a number of possible upgrades for both military units, and more passive pursuits like trading and researching agricultural advancements. As mentioned before, what buildings the player erects affects the way their kingdom develops. It is quite possible to have combinations of the different alignments, such as Pagan-Renaissance (Unholy Tech), or Imperial-Renaissance (Holy Tech).

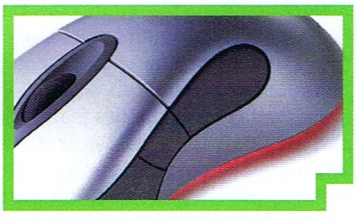
Warrior Kings is one of those few games that boasts a dramatic score that suits it so well, you'll never even think to adjust the music volume. Weapon sound effects and other noises all come through loud and clear. Unit acknowledgements are apt, where peasants grumble about their lot in life, warriors proclaim their eagerness for battle, and demonic forces summoned up by Pagan warlords do little to hide their contempt for humanity.

Although having numerical advantage always helps, Warrior Kings allows a tactician to use their brains to overcome the odds with its combination of easy-to-use formation controls along with environments that lend themselves to military planning. Troops are mainly made up of heavy infantry (melee), light infantry (archers), heavy cavalry (knights), and light cavalry (mounted archers). Different troops fare better against certain enemies, or in certain situations, and giving the right orders makes all the difference.

Goals appear dynamically within missions, and offer some interesting challenges

!!! Check out the website at... warriorkings.com

Warrior Kings offers tons of replay value. Goals appear dynamically within missions, and offer some interesting challenges, such as sneaking supplies into besieged cities, or busting an ally out of jail. About the only thing that would have been welcomed is a skirmish mode to allow a single player to practise multiplayer battles alone. <<



PLUS: Excellent dynamic kingdom development.

MINUS: A few pathing hiccups. No skirmish mode.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
92	90	93

OVERALL

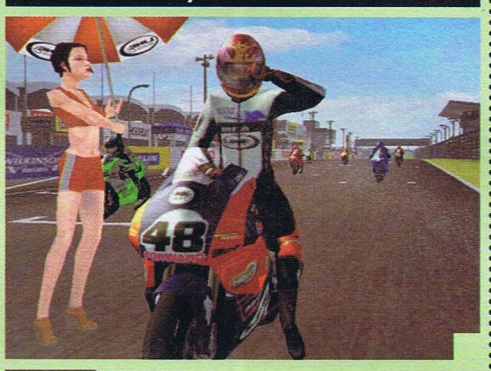
93

A serious contender for RTS of the year.

Will the fog of war ever lift?

Crusty demons of dirt.

Have at you, Nazi scumbags!



»PC

Heroes of Might & Magic IV

CATEGORY: RTS >> **PLAYERS:** 1 (patch coming) >>
PUBLISHER: 3DO >> **PRICE:** $89.95 >>
RATING: G >> **AVAILABLE:** Now >>
REQUIRED: PII-300MHz, 128MB RAM, 4MB 3D Card

There are three great turn-based strategy series on PC — Civilization, Masters of Orion, and Heroes of Might & Magic. New World Computing continue their fantasy conquest legacy with a title that develops in varying degrees of merit.

Once again the player guides armies around lands more colourful than a Teletubby convention, with a basic aim to conquer all before them.

For the first time, battles feature 3D graphics, and it's highly questionable as to whether or not this was a good move. There's nothing wrong with the artwork presented, but the charm of the 2D artwork in previous games in this series is now gone for the sake of catching up with the times.

Heroes of Might & Magic IV's greatest area of development is in the classes and skills, now providing a far more balanced army system. Heroes are also present on the field of battle, able to duke it out with creatures alongside their own troops.

There's no multiplayer out of the box, which is a poor effort by 3Do. A patch is coming to remedy this though, so try not to write the game off on this point.

While the core game remains almost identical to its predecessors, Heroes IV brings enough new material along with it to make it work for its target audience, its fans. - **Dan Toose**

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	OVERALL
78	87	88	88

»PC

Moto Racer 3

CATEGORY: Racing >> **PLAYERS:** 1-8 >>
PUBLISHER: Infogrames >> **PRICE:** $89.95 >>
RATING: E >> **AVAILABLE:** Late March >>
REQUIRED: P-III 450, 64MB RAM, 3D card

After developing the-oh so slick Moto Racer, followed by the oh-so reasonable Moto Racer 2, Delphine are back with the oh-so average Moto Racer 3. Right from install, Hyper's magic gaming eightball was screaming "all signs point to this game being rushed", and unfortunately we'd have to agree. The menu screens are really clumsy, there's no career mode, and to adjust important settings like graphics, audio and button config you actually have to exit the game and use an external utility!

Putting aside these structural deficiencies, what is Moto Racer 3 all about? Delphine have expanded on the previous games and included five different events to compete in. In addition to superbike and motocross, there's now a traffic mode where you take on one other racer through the streets of Paris. This is reasonably fun, but you're simply on a narrow, linear course thickly populated by absolutely moronic lane changing traffic.

Compared to the heady arcade brew served up in the first Moto Racer, the gameplay is much less consistent (as are the graphics). Indeed, the single best feature in the previous games — the turbo boost — has been ditched, which is a real shame, as taking the perfect line around a corner then unleashing the turbo as you straightened out was positively orgasmic.

While we commend Delphine for trying to give gamers so much variety, there are only three courses in each discipline — 15 all up. Compare this to the 32 courses in Moto Racer 2, and you have yet another reason why Moto Racer 3 is lacking.- **Cam Shea**

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	OVERALL
79	59	70	70

»PC

War Commander

CATEGORY: Strategy >> **PLAYERS:** 1-8 >>
PUBLISHER: CDV >> **PRICE:** $89.95 >>
RATING: TBA >> **AVAILABLE:** Now >>
REQUIRE: PII-450MHz, 64MB RAM, 8MB 3D Card

It's a good time to be a strategy gamer, there's stuff like Civilization III, Heroes of Might & Magic IV, Warrior Kings and other great games about. Thus it's going to be very hard for a humble WWII point and click strategy game like War Commander to win the war on your attention span.

War Commander is a tactical operations game, where the player must click on their respective grunts, and send them forth to take out objectives. There are two single player campaigns, both playing as the US invading forces at Normandy.

Besides featuring some nice particle and lighting effects, making artillery impacts look beaut, War Commander is visually dated. There's next to no ambient animation, so when you're not firing, things tend to look quite dull.

Lacking a tutorial mode, War Commander throws gamers in the deep end, and with troops dying so easily, things can get frustrating fast. The lack of this mode is really just a part of the bigger problem for War Commander, and that's presentation. There are no cinematic introductions to missions or speech featured for briefings, leaving little with which to charm the player.

War Commander may have some cleverly designed maps and a wide variety of troop types, but the bottom line is that it just doesn't match up to what else is on offer these days. - **Dan Toose**

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	OVERALL
61	70	57	60

ARCADE

>>TIM LEVY

Mocap Boxing

KONAMI

After receiving some staggering blows from the increasingly powerful home console market, the arcade developers are striking back with even more innovative designs that can't be replicated at home. Just look at the Silent Scope home job - what a lamey lame-o!

JABS AND HOOKS

Arcade Mode did get quite excited 18 months ago with the incorporation of motion sensors in the game EZ2 Dancer by AmuseWorld. We correlated the fact that these motion sensors could be used in fighting games to emulate some bruiseless biffo. Although distribution of Hyper is quite small in Japan, Konami R&D still obtained and absorbed the Hyper article and went ahead in an attempt to please our fickle tastes by creating an inspired Las Vegas pro-level super heavyweight boxing sim.

To play, you have to don special gloves that can determine the timing of your (hopefully) lightning fast punches. Then you have to assume a stance that will enable you to be directly under a motion capture system that relays the position of your body to the computer as you bob and weave against incoming jabs, hooks and uppercuts from your punch loving 'opponent'.

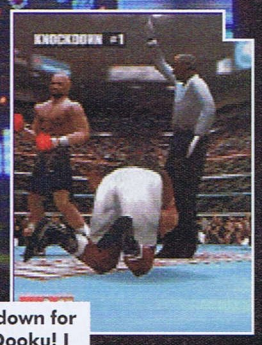
As your rival saunters in for what he thinks will be any easy bashing, he'll throw punches at you and leave himself open to some rib-ticklers and jaw-jabs from your gloves. The more shots you connect, the more his health diminishes and the higher your 'punch power gauge' increases. If you are really accurate, and are not wasting any punches (by hitting the on screen targets), or not being hit for a considerable time, you can ultimately KO an opponent with just one punch.

PUNCHING DUCKING WEAVING

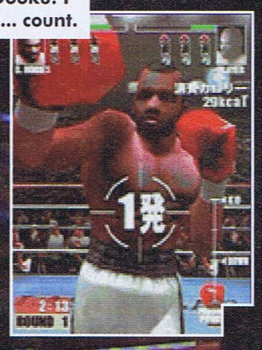
The key is definitely speed - and not power in this game. But as for power, you will feel very lacking in humanoid power if you make it through to the 6th opponent. Each match lasts up to 3 minutes and in some parts of the game you will be required to make a rapid succession of punches (15- 50) at a rate of about 4 a second to deck your opponent. All this constant punching ducking and weaving IS very tiring if you take this game seriously and throw real punches.

Whilst you have to knock down an opponent 3 times in a match, you are only allowed to be knocked down 3 times in a whole game, unless of course you wish to 'Continue'. At the end of the game you are awarded not only a point score - which can be entered on a web competition, but also ratings dealing with your punch hit/miss ratio, your reflexes, cleverness, stamina, ambition, calories burnt, pro-level boxing ability and would you believe charisma.

Whilst MoCap (short for MOtion CAPture) Boxing is a great boxing simulation and a real pugilists eye view of the real thing, it is still lacking the realism of actually being punched. We found a way to combat this lack of realism by having arcade assistants punch you in the head (or stomach) if you fail to evade the corresponding computer punches. Also, sadly missing is a 'special move' button (e.g. bite or dis). But rest assured, this is only the beginning and it is only a matter of time until someone comes up with a martial arts fight game with kicks and blocks- yes we can just see it now... a plasma surround screen multiple opponent game (sensors or 'light guns' on legs and wrists) called 'Shaolin Showdown' or 'Gang Bash' or sumpthing... Konami R&D - you still reading? <<



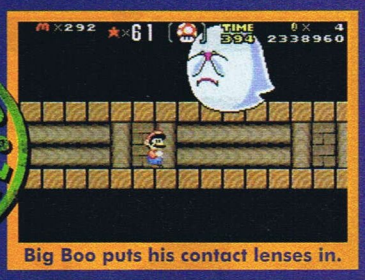
He's down for the Dooku! I mean... count.



Super Mario World:
SUPER MARIO ADVANCE 2

GBA **CATEGORY:** Platformer >> **PLAYERS:** 1-4 >> **PUBLISHER:** Nintendo >>
PRICE: $69.95 >> **RATING:** G >> **AVAILABLE:** Now >>

HYPER BIG RUBBER STAMP OF APPROVAL

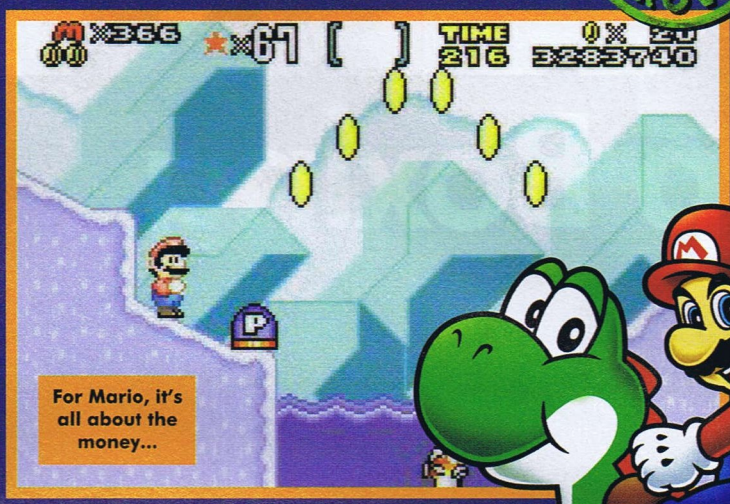


Big Boo puts his contact lenses in.

A brand new Mario GBA game may be what we all secretly want, but Nintendo's latest offering is the next best thing, a port of perhaps the greatest Mario adventure ever - Super Mario World. This is the title that debuted with the Super Nintendo system, so it's over ten years old, but Super Mario World (SMW) still represents the pinnacle of 2D platform gaming. Hurrah!

EXPLORATION IS KEY

Super Mario World's gameplay picks up where Super Mario 3 on NES left off. Mario can pick up powerups that boost his size, gives him fireballs to throw and a cape which he can use to fly. His abilities seem simplistic at first, but along with excellent level design and enemies, combine to create a game that feels remarkably open ended, where exploration is key. Nintendo have always rewarded the player for experimenting, and this is certainly the case in SMW. The cape alone expands the game enormously, meaning potentially any level could have secret platforms out of sight. Also new in SMW is the introduction of Yoshis for Mario to ride! Plus, different coloured Yoshis have different abilities, like flying and breathing fire.



For Mario, it's all about the money...

I shouldn't have pulled those cones

Unlike previous Mario games, Super Mario World introduced a somewhat non-linear progression system. There was a world map, and as you beat levels new pathways to other levels opened up. In terms of game design, this more sophisticated approach gave Nintendo much greater freedom in designing levels with multiple exits and multiple secrets, not to mention allowing the game as a whole to be enjoyed by players of different skill levels. Advanced players could attempt to find all the secrets and beat the extra levels, while beginners could stick to the basic path. Then there were extra features like the switch palaces which, when beaten, would solidify coloured blocks that were, until then, merely outlines in levels, opening up further possibilities.

VISUALLY PERFECT

Super Mario World on GBA brings a few extra features that were lacking in the SNES version. You can now save at any point on the world map (instead of only after boss battles), and hitting select on the world map brings up information on each level — how many exits you've found and whether you've collected all the Yoshi coins. Now you can easily keep tabs on how much of the game you've beaten. An excellent inclusion. You can also play as Luigi! He's very much like he was in Super Mario Bros 2 — slower than Mario with a much larger jump. We particularly like the way his legs keep running frantically during jumps — very endearing.

Super Mario World is a visually perfect rendition of the SNES classic, and stands up well aurally too. The music is some of the catchiest ever heard in a Nintendo game, and you've got to love the layers too — just like in the original, whenever you're riding Yoshi there's an added percussive bongo drum layer to the music that suits the vibe perfectly. Nintendo have also included extra speech samples for both Luigi and Mario, and they work really well. Whenever Mario picks up a mushroom for instance, he says "Just what I needed" in the most stereotypical Italian accent you could possibly imagine... but it still works.

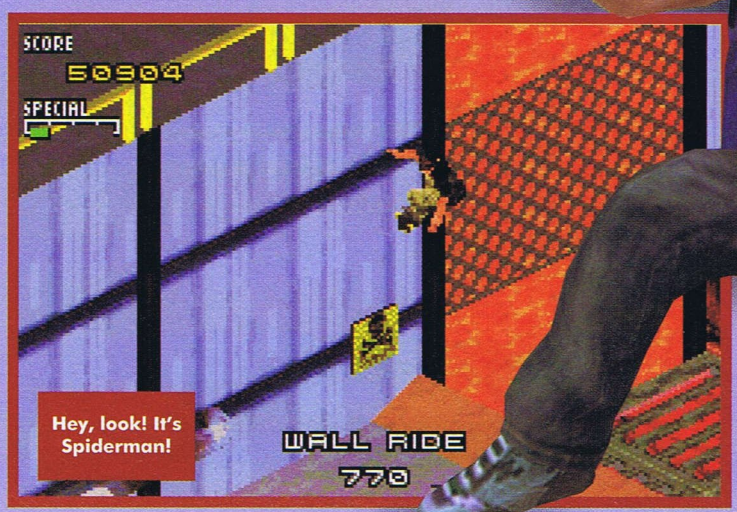
In short, this is a must-have game. The gameplay is tight, refined, inspired, elegant and varied, and with 96 exits to find, there's a huge amount of gameplay on offer. Now, bring on Yoshi's Island! - **Cam Shea**

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	OVERALL
89	90	94	93

Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3

CATEGORY: SK8 >> **PLAYERS:** 1-4 >> **PUBLISHER:** Activision
PRICE: $89.95 >> **RATING:** G >> **AVAILABLE:** Now >>

GBA



Hey, look! It's Spiderman!

Yes, you can play dress-ups.

SHALL WE EXPLAIN?

Things move quickly in the world of successful franchises, and in today's videogame market, Tony Hawk is about as successful as a franchise can get. This leads to two things: sequels get pushed out at a rapid rate; and the game finds its way onto every conceivable system. Fortunately, for Tony Hawk's first outing on GBA, Vicarious Visions were able to come up with an elegant solution that kept almost all the things we loved about the series intact. Indeed, Tony Hawk 2 was an eye opener in terms of clever design and technical know-how. Less than a year later, however, and we're staring down the barrel of the sequel.

Although this is a solid game that retains much of the freestyle flow and beauty of the franchise, if you've played the game to death on any other system, why would you want to play the same levels again in a more awkward format? Indeed, this is our main objection with Tony Hawk 3 - that it's a vanilla flavoured port. Handhelds by their very nature have different strengths to consoles, and that should be reflected in the game design. Now that the technical limitations have been overcome, surely Vicarious Visions should have been given the time to make a game that was entirely optimised for handheld gaming, that everyone would want to play – not just people who only own a GBA. A straight port seems very much like a cop-out, especially since for essentially the same price as a console version, all you're getting is a trimmed down, less rewarding version of the game.

MORE FRIENDLY

Levels that have been included in the game are The Foundry, Suburbia, Tokyo, The Airport, Rio and LA. Unfortunately Canada wasn't included in the game which is a shame as it was one of our favourites, eh. Also missing is The Airport and Skater Island. Each course layout has been adjusted to make it more friendly to play from an isometric perspective, but even so there are plenty of sections where it's difficult to see how the various levels, ramps and grinds intersect. TH3 on GBA introduces reverts and flatland tricks to the gameplay, and pretty much every trick you can do on console you can do on GBA, so there's a huge amount of open ended gameplay to explore.

One feature we were looking forward to was four-player link-up. Unfortunately, there's little reason to bother. Two of the multiplayer games revolve around chasing another player, one is simply a high score competition, and the final one (Horse) can be played on a single GBA! Where are the inventive multiplayer games? Even graffiti would have spiced things up considerably. Tony Hawk's appeal on GBA is wearing thin. - **Cam Shea**

Tony checks his underarm odour.

This deck is glued to my feet!

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	OVERALL
86	84	87	83

the

Nintendo's current elder status in the industry is seen both as Nintendo's greatest strength and its single greatest flaw – depending, of course, which way you look at it. Whether perceived as complacent and arrogant or wise beyond the years, Nintendo has earned its respect for still being a major player in the industry after all these years. After the arcade-like Atari years of home videogaming, Nintendo's NES console revitalised console gaming with its innovative first party software, d-pad equipped controller and strong marketing.

8-BIT BEAST

The NES was released in the US in 1985 and in Australia in 1986. It was, quite simply, a grey brick. Designed more to resemble the VCRs than the home game systems of the time, Nintendo created a straightforward, unassuming little box with the intent to put a bit of safe distance between the then popular "home computers" and their perceived complexity and the NES' purpose of instant entertainment.

A home personal computer this wasn't. The NES was a games machine, pure and simple. You plugged it into yer TV, popped a cart into the slot, hit the power switch and within moments were off in another world. This simplicity no doubt played a part in its incredible adoption rate – especially in the US where the NES at its height of power controlled 90% of the video games market.

By today's standards, there's nothing terribly exciting under the hood. The NES was a straightforward system with modest capabilities. At the heart of the NES is the 8-bit data path width Motorola 6502 processor, rated at approx. 1.79 MHz. It allows a 256x240 resolution, with a maximum of 64 sprites allowed on screen at any one time (a sprite being either 8x8 or 8x16 pixels). A palette of 256 colours was offered to the game designers, however only 16 different colours can be displayed on screen at any one time.

But the most defining characteristic of the NES is its separate 2KB of system RAM and 2K of video RAM. This meant that the NES had more visual grunt, and as a result, on screen action could now scroll quite effortlessly both in a vertical and a horizontal direction. This was quite the revelation, especially if you were watching Super Mario Brothers for the first time.

The release of SEGA's Megadrive in 1990 marked the beginning of the end of the NES' reign as the world's most popular console. The irony is that the NES was such a success that

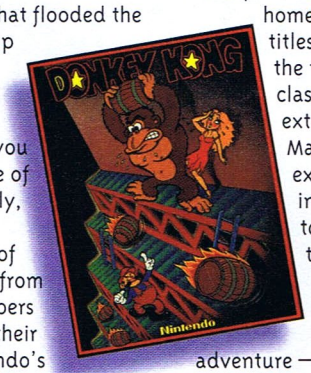
Nintendo®

>>MARCH STEPNIK

Nintendo felt so indomitable in their stranglehold, that they allowed SEGA to get their foot in the door. Indeed, the NES was raking in so much cash for Nintendo that they held off on releasing the SNES, and allowed the Megadrive an 18 month head start in the US market. The 16-bit console war had begun, and there were now two real players.

CART MAN

While Nintendo received some heat for a lack of cart numbers released for the N64, the NES was an entirely different matter. Nintendo of America claim that "officially", about 800 carts released for the NES in the west, while the Japanese Nintendo market trumped that with an official count of around 1200 titles. And then there were the "unofficial" titles that flooded the market, which pump these figures up into the 2000+ range.



But don't fret if you missed out on some of these, because really, most of them were crap. The majority of the dud carts were from third-party developers who somehow got their designs past Nintendo's (supposedly) ruthless Seal of Quality rating system – where only games which pass a set of "entertainment criteria" got the official endorsement and made it on shelves. It was a form of quality control, and it obviously had loopholes.

Mostly, this poor quality was simply the lack of design experience of the industry as a whole combined with an army of start-ups wanting to jump on the console bandwagon. There were no easy answers to what was – and still is – a most challenging question: "how can one use a limited technological palette to create something fun?".

Many of the duds were nameplay over gameplay movie tie-ins. Then there were the simplistic Super Mario Brothers clones. One hapless example is Bible Adventures – collect animals for the ark! Help baby Moses get to safety! Protect some sheep before facing Goliath! What the...?!

Yet for all the shite in the NES library, Nintendo themselves hit home with a plethora of titles – titles that have stood the test of time as gaming classics, survived as extended franchises (the Mario and Zelda series as examples), or assimilated into the design of today's most enjoyed titles.

That little fat plumber starred in his first side-scrolling adventure – Super Mario Brothers back in 1985, and Zelda first appeared on the NES in 1987. Yoshi appeared in puzzle games before joining Mario on the SNES. Samus (gender, unknown!) first graced us in Metroid during this era. Kirby too first appeared on the NES.

THE FAMICOM

>>The Famicom (a contraction of Family Computer) was released in Japan in 1983, and is essentially the Japanese version and precursor of the NES. Design-wise, it was quite different to the NES, with a shell more resembling the SNES. The cartridges were smaller and it wasn't designed to play outside of Japan.

The Famicom had its design quirks too – the two control pads were permanently attached to the system, and with little docking bays on the top of the machine for when not in use.

Mike Tyson's Punchout proved a knockout. Excite Bike captivated fans. Mega Man confounded us with sequel after sequel. Double Dragon provided addictive two-player gaming, while Tetris and of course Nintendo's spin Doctor Mario were considered essentials.

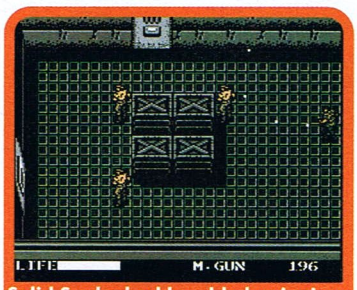
And it wasn't all kept in the family, either. Sony's highest grossing franchises of Metal Gear Solid and Final Fantasy had their beginnings with the NES. Castlevania also debuted on the grey box.

Yup, the NES had more than enough classics, and we're thankful for it. With Nintendo – bless 'em - it's always been about the games. Bring on the 'Cube!

Castlevania - it still rocks!

Biff! Bam! BLAU!

Compare this to FFX...



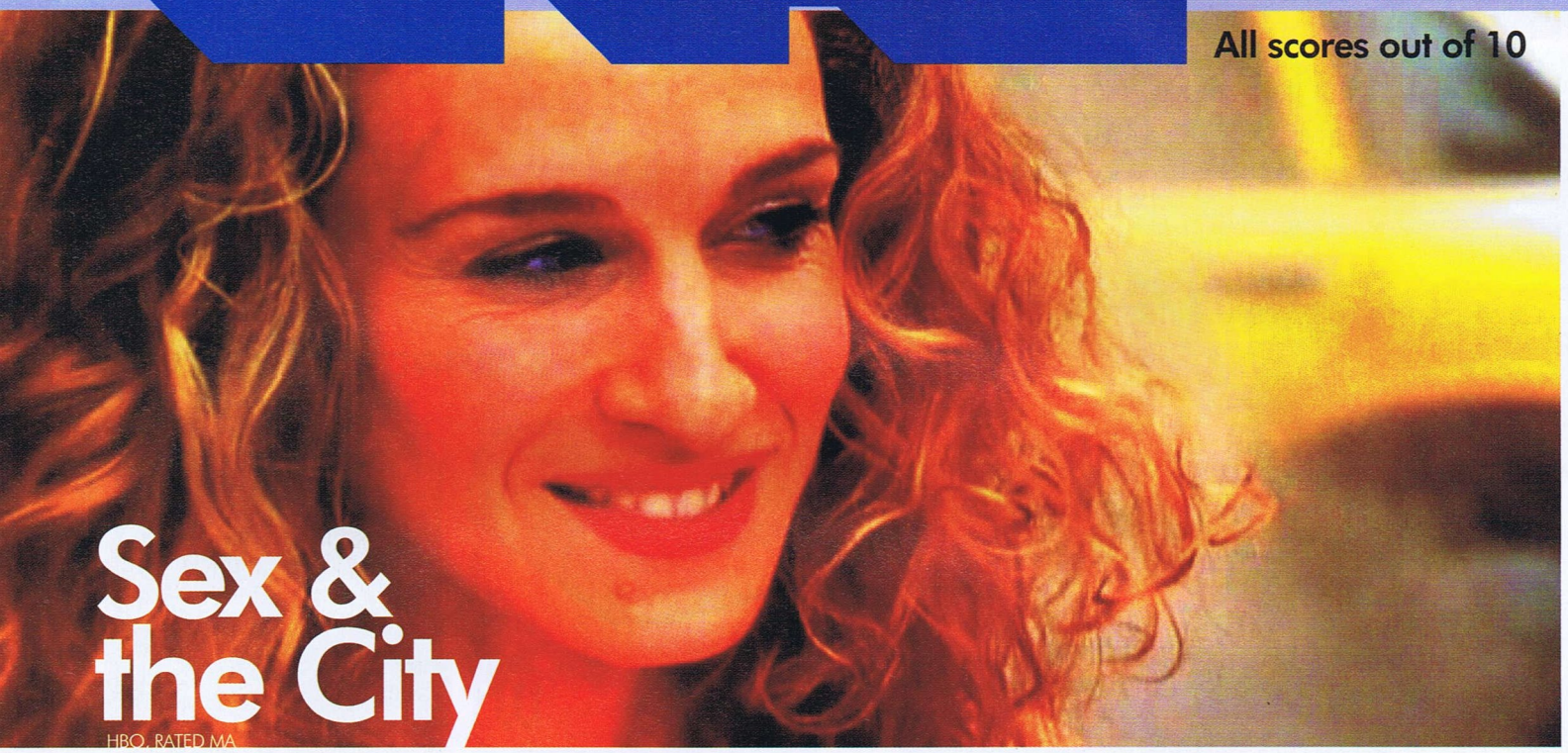
Solid Snake had humble beginnings

>>VICTORIA FLANAGAN

DVD

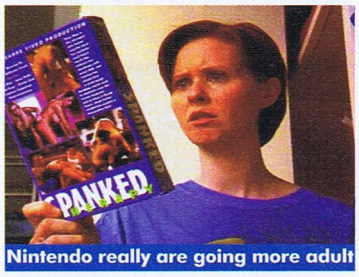
DVD is the format of choice for anyone who's serious about their home cinema experience. Every issue we review the latest movies as well as the latest in anime. Kick back and let Hyper help you decide what you should watch!

All scores out of 10



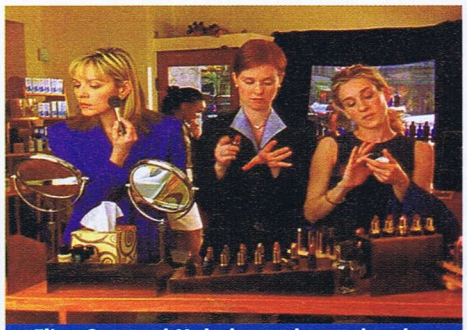
Sex & the City

HBO, RATED MA

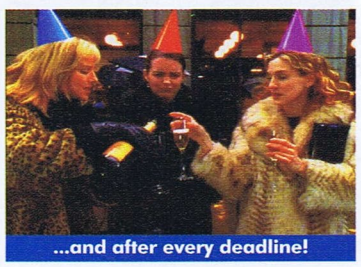


Nintendo really are going more adult

Whether you love or loathe Carrie, Samantha, Charlotte and Miranda (and most people should have worked out where they stand by now), it's difficult to deny the huge impact that Sex and the City has made to the way sex is portrayed on television. The lives of these four girls and their frank, often downright dirty, discussions about their sexual experiences have definitively opened the door to many formerly taboo sexual subjects in a refreshingly honest and often hilariously funny style. Season 4 is currently screening on Australian TV, so any new devotees (in addition to old fans who want to re-live earlier episodes) should really check out Season 1 and see where everything began. Enjoyment is guaranteed, as the episodes included on this DVD are a testament to the groundbreaking attitudes and script writing that have given Sex and The City an international cult following.

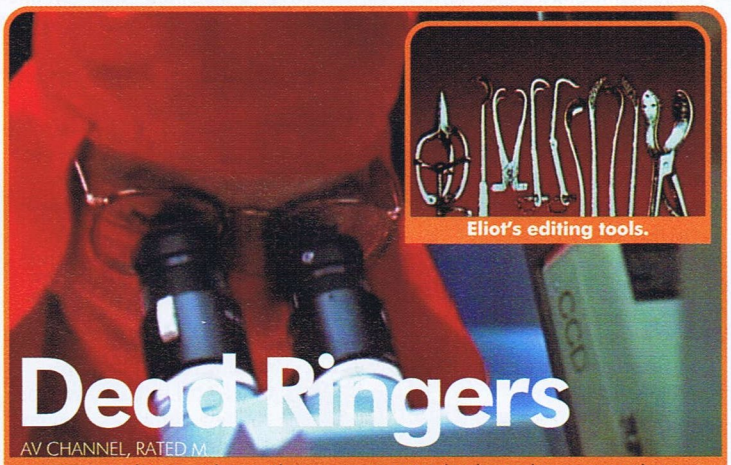


Eliot, Cam and Malcolm on the weekends...



...and after every deadline!

MOVIE: 9 EXTRAS: 2



Eliot's editing tools.

Dead Ringers

AV CHANNEL, RATED M

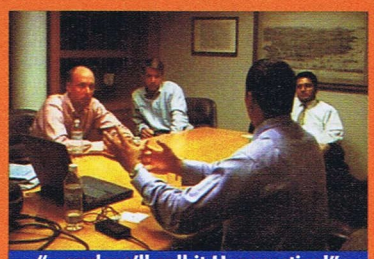
David Cronenberg, the director of *Dead Ringers*, has a reputation for being both confrontational and controversial. He is probably most infamous for his film *Crash*, which revolved around people who became sexually aroused at the sight of car accidents, but *Dead Ringers* (made 8 years earlier, in 1998) is similarly grotesque. Identical twins, Eliot and Beverly Mantle (both played by Jeremy Irons), are celebrated gynaecologists whose lives are implicitly entwined – they work together, live together and routinely share the women they bed. When an actress, Claire, enters their lives for fertility treatment, she falls in love with one and threatens the shared existence that has always defined the twins' lives. *Dead Ringers* is a disturbing and often gruesome film, yet as with Cronenberg's other work, it makes for compulsive viewing. Although not to everyone's taste (and unfortunately presented with no bonus features), *Dead Ringers* is an eerily interesting film.

MOVIE: 6.5 EXTRAS: 0

Startup.com

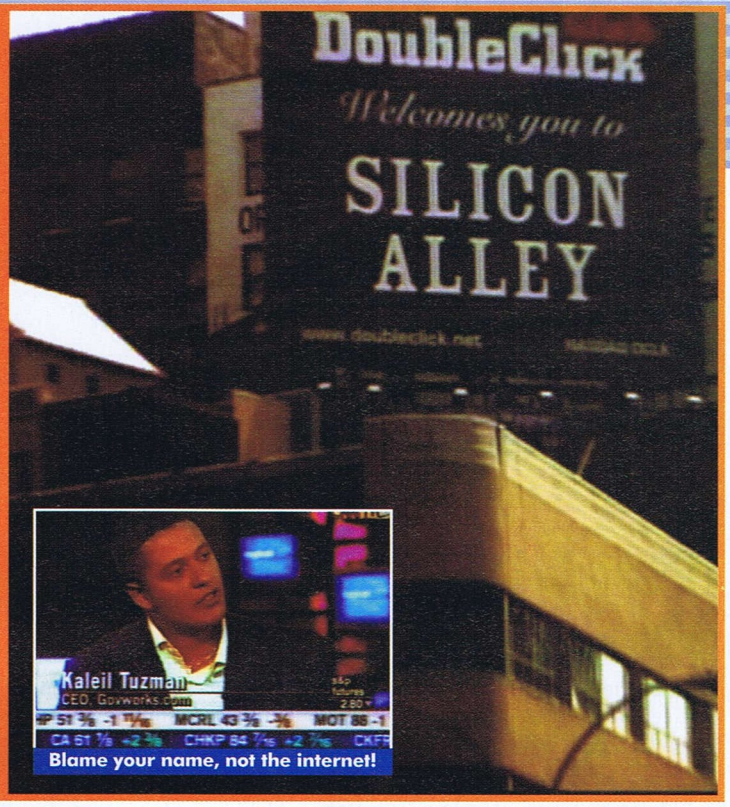
AV CHANNEL, RATED M

It's easy to see why *Startup.com* won the Grand Jury Prize at Sundance in 2001. Containing all of the elements essential to good drama – childhood friendships, dreams fuelled by youthful ebullience that are fulfilled and then bleakly shattered, mixed with a good dose of politics and personal heartache – *Startup.com* is the story of Kaleil and Tom, two young men with a dazzling idea for an internet business. The year is 1999, and the internet economy is just beginning to boom. Despite some initial setbacks, investors are soon pouring money into the new business venture and the boys seem assured of success. Until, of course, everything starts to unravel in a dramatic fashion. *Startup.com* is an engrossing documentary about the world of internet businesses that is as entertaining as it is tragic. Although the only bonus feature is audio commentary from the directors, this film is worth seeing purely for the typed information that appears on screen just prior to the credits, telling us that Tom and Kaleil have now started a new startup company... for distressed startups. Bloody brilliant!

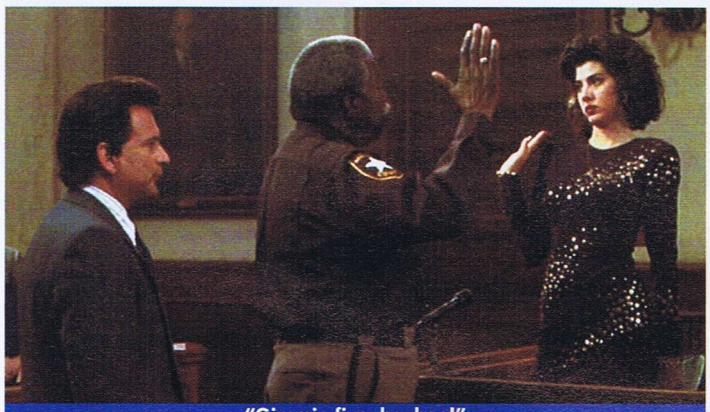


"...and we'll call it Hyperactive!"

MOVIE: 8 EXTRAS: 4



Blame your name, not the internet!

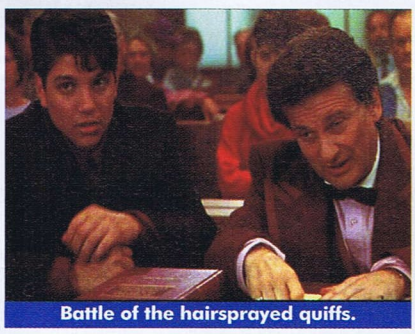


"Gimmie five, baybee!"

My Cousin Vinny

20TH CENTURY FOX, RATED M

Vincent Gambini is a smooth-talking, wisecracking, leather-clad native of Brooklyn, New York, who also happens to be a lawyer. The only problem is that it took him six attempts to pass his bar exams and in his six-week long career he's never actually had a case that's made it to trial. When his young cousin and a friend are wrongfully accused of murder in Alabama, Vinny is called upon to render his legal services as the boys' defending counsel, and the results prove pretty interesting! Directed by Jonathan Lynn (who also provides audio commentary), *My Cousin Vinny* is a hilarious tale of murder, mayhem and mishap. Joe Pesci is perfectly cast as the streetsmart Vinny, and Marisa Tomei, who plays Vinny's big-haired girlfriend Mona Lisa, won an Academy Award for her role (somewhat controversially we might add). Funny from start to finish, *My Cousin Vinny* shouldn't be missed.



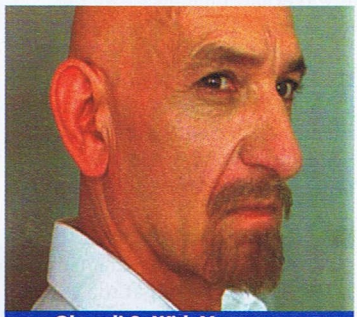
Battle of the hairsprayed quiffs.

MOVIE: 7 EXTRAS: 4

Sexy Beast

20TH CENTURY FOX, RATED R18+

Sexy Beast isn't a wholly original film, falling safely into the genre of British gangster flicks that involve bloody violence and thick accents. What sets it apart is its startling performances, particularly that of Ben Kingsley. Kingsley plays Don Logan, a raging cockney gangster full of venomous bile and capable of an almighty savage bite. He has come to Spain in search of Gary "Gal" Dove, one of his former hitmen who has since retired, in order to recruit him for a last job. Gary (an excellently cast Ray Winstone), however, doesn't want to come aboard. Ensconced in his Spanish hacienda with his former porn-star wife Deedee, the overweight and suntanned to the colour of leather Gary soon begins to realise that the old cliché about gangsters is true – this really is a family that you can never leave. Although disappointing in its lack of originality, *Sexy Beast* is nevertheless an eminently watchable film that offers standout performances from both Kingsley and Winstone.



Ghandi 2: With Vengeance

MOVIE: 7.5 EXTRAS: 0

Uurrgh... these outdoor toilets were a great idea!

The Dream & The Ice Dream

WARNER VISION, RATED PG

As far as we're concerned, Roy and HG should be classified as two of Australia's "living national treasures". As Rampaging Roy Slaven and HG Nelson, John Doyle and Greig Pickhaver have built a huge cult following over the last decade or so, and for good reason. From "This Sporting Life" on JJJ and the ABC, to "Club Buggery" and "The Channel 9 Show", Roy and HG have certainly paid their dues, and along the way honed a style of sporting humour that is hilariously base, yet also incisive and learned. It was about time these two got some serious recognition, and in September 2000 Roy and HG got all that and more. Simply put, the highlight of the entire Olympic games was the two hours we got to spend with these two loveable sports boffins each night.

SID, OLLIE AND DICKHEAD

As hosts of The Dream, Channel 7's late-night Olympic chat show that featured interviews with athletes and footage of some of the lesser-known sports sadly left out of the daily broadcasts, Roy and HG charmed and delighted the entire country (and plenty of international guests), and cleverly managed to take the piss out of the holier-than-thou Olympic movement in a manner that was nothing short of sensational in its audacity

There are just so many highlights on this double DVD set: Roy and HG's poetic interpretations of synchronised swimming; their ingenious gymnastics commentary (who could forget "the battered sav" and "the flat bag"?); their affectionate remarks regarding the boys of the Greco-Roman wrestling world; their attacks on Olympic merchandising (especially Sid, Ollie and Dickhead) and the Olympic movement in general ("the IOC can get stuffed"); and of course, the amazing success they had with their own mascot - Fatso the Fat-Arsed Wombat, aka "The Battler's Prince". Above all else, however, what makes Roy and HG such a great pair and such infectious viewing, is that it's obvious that they're loving every minute of it.

If you missed The Dream during its brief two week stint on air, now is definitely the time to catch up. Considering that there must have been approximately 28 hours of footage to wade through, the editorial team responsible for this DVD have done a fabulous job, skilfully incorporating elements from all the best segments. Bonus features on this 2-disc set include an hour of additional footage, plus extended interviews with a number of athletes.

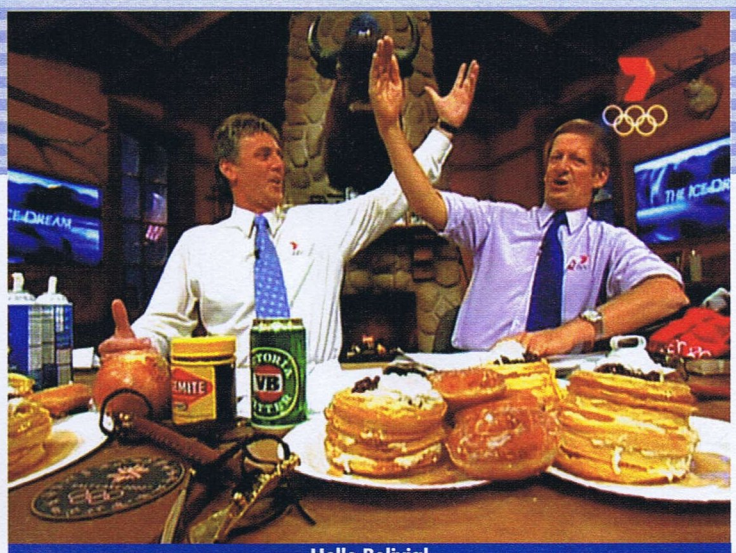
COMEDIC HEIGHTS

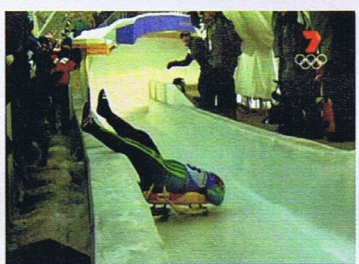
After their phenomenal success with The Dream, Roy and HG returned with The Ice Dream during the Salt Lake City Winter Olympics. Despite the more limited range of sports and a much narrower scope of interest for the Australian public, they managed to hit the same comedic heights, as well as pushing the limits of what they could get away with even further – such as "the love that dare not speak its name" with the brother/sister ice dancing team, constant references to how fat Americans are, disses of the Church Of Latter Day Saints, commenting to the IOC president that "gifts and the Olympic movement go hand in hand", not to mention their bid for the 2010 Winter Olympics in Smiggin Holes ("Unleash the Mighty Mongrel Of The Hole") that eventually inspired 27,000 volunteers and was built on a plan to dump millions of tonnes of rubbish onto Mt. Kosciusko. The Ice Dream is another must-have package, but no love to Channel 7 for shoving their logo in the top right hand corner for the entire three and a half hours.

The Dream:
MOVIE: 9.5 EXTRAS: 8

The Ice Dream:
MOVIE: 9 EXTRAS: 4

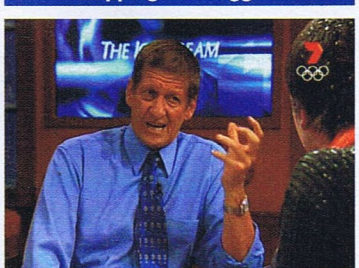
Roy tries to pry the channel 7 logo off.


Hello Bolivia!


Stopping for a quick nap.

Stripping for Smiggins.

Roy gets in a pickle.


HG spies Dave Grohl's dandruff...

The Britney lookalike contest.

All it took was 6 people to fall over...

The Hyper initiation ceremony.

ANIME

Perfect Blue

CATEGORY: DRAMA/SUSPENSE, PRODUCTION COMPANY: REX ENTERTAINMENT

They've done it before. Some marketing genius thought it really clever to call *Ninja Resurrection* the sequel to *Ninja Scroll* when in fact the two had nothing to do with each other, and the negativity surrounding *Ninja Resurrection* partly destroyed *Ninja Scroll*'s great reputation. These same braniacs are at it again, this time pitching their new 'animated psychological thriller', *Perfect Blue*, by plastering the packaging with quotes and recommendations – the most prominent being from Roger Corman, who says "If Alfred Hitchcock partnered with Walt Disney, they'd make a picture like this". Nice one. Anyone who's even familiar with *Psycho* will be able to guess the ending.

LOSES HER MIND

In *Perfect Blue*, Mima Kirigoe is a small time j-pop singer who redirects the course of her career by acting in a CSI-style TV series. Every step she takes, however, is shadowed by a stalker who posts every detail of her waking movements on a Kirigoe fansite. Eventually she's convinced that she's a murderer and nearly loses her mind trying to figure out why.

Perfect Blue will attract attention for all the wrong reasons, primarily for a simulated rape scene for the TV camera (ala Jodie Foster). The thing is, the male actors are shown 'boning up' for the scene. How anyone talked this scene through the Classification Board is a mystery. Even so, a seminal piece of anime.

ANIMATION 8 PLOT: 7 OVERALL: 8

Sid, Ollie and Dickhead. Hold on...

Freak of the Month

Knight Hunters

CATEGORY: ACTION, PRODUCTION COMPANY: PROJECT W

It's a misshapen male version of *Charlie's Angels*. By day, the Knight Hunters are a quartet of effeminate young men who run a small flower shop in the city. By night they're a crack squad of assassins who hunt down the masterminds behind social evils, and use deadly force to "deny these dark beasts their tomorrow".

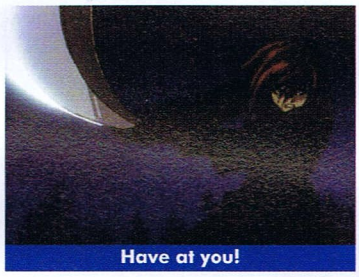
RECYCLED FOOTAGE

There's Aya, a sword-swinging Iori Yagami look-alike and Yoji, a smooth-talking playboy, both of whom dress remarkably similarly to Ky Kiske from Guilty Gear. Then there's the spritely computer hacker Omi and the former athlete Ken, who both probably shopped at the same boutique as Sion from The Bouncer.

Although each episode poses a new mission that predictably leaves all the good action scenes to the end, *Knight Hunters* escapes the *Voltron*-style formulaic mundanity by interweaving a small revenge sub-plot into each character. Unfortunately it's paced very sporadically, and a lot of the explanations that are given for plot twists make absolutely no logical sense. An extra month or two of post-production and editing would have benefited this series greatly.

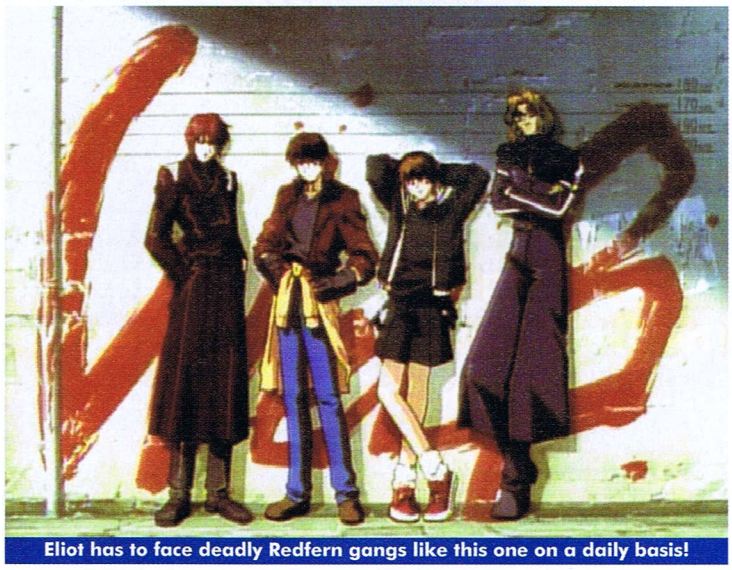
Does it work as a male version of *Charlie's Angels*? Well, yes and no. There are many conflicting themes in each episode, ranging from extreme violence, a homosexual subtext, and religious and gothic imagery. There was also great potential for a strong visual design, but the noticeable use of recycled footage really lets things down. Without any coherent direction, *Knight Hunters* is extremely generic.

ANIMATION 6 PLOT: 4 OVERALL: 5



Have at you!

I am NOT wearing eyeliner!



Eliot has to face deadly Redfern gangs like this one on a daily basis!

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If you take a squizz at our Dungeon Siege review this issue, you'll note that we think very highly of this Action RPG. This is one of the most addictive PC releases in a while, and we want everyone to be able to join in the fun. **Microsoft** and Hyper would like to offer **10 brilliant Dungeon Siege packs**. Each pack contains the **game**, a **t-shirt** signed by the creator of the game Chris Taylor, as well as a **play axe and sword** also signed by Chris. The lucky first prize winner will also take home the excellent **Microsoft Strategic Commander**. Don't miss out on this great game – subscribe today!

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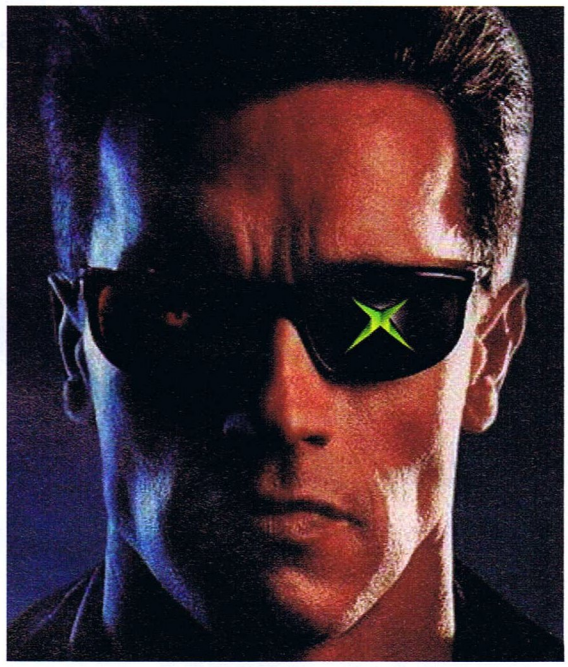


Q. IF CONSOLES WERE CELEBRITIES, WHO WOULD THEY BE AND WHY?

It seems that freaky minds think alike. We were surprised to see some of our readers being quite analytical, and ending up with the same responses. No wonder we get so attached to our consoles. It seems they really do have pretty strong personalities after all...

HYPER FORUM

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

? "If you could make a sequel to a game, what would you choose to do?"

Responses will be printed in Hyper 106.

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

RUSTY PLAYSTATION

Great question, and due to a severe lack of assignments from Uni, and an extreme lack of games from my hard drive, here is my opinion.

Dreamcast: River Phoenix - At a young age there was such great potential, but due to the negligence of their minders they end up in the grave. An unfortunate demise for both (a single tear rolls down my cheek).

PlayStation 1&2: Any Australian actor, but mainly Russell Crowe or Hugh Jackman. A few years ago, not many people had faith in them, but now, everybody wants a piece of the action.

Xbox: Arnold Swharzenegger - A powerhouse of a company backing him and it appears very high budget. Good visual effects and excitement will no doubt ensue. But will that be enough? Will the gameplay fall flat on its face like any of Arnie's movie plots do? Arnie also drives a jeep in a lot of his movies, just like Halo... whatever.

Nintendo 64: Any soap star. Smear a tub of vaseline onto your screen to fully realise the beauty of the N64!

GameCube: Christopher Walken - While everybody is gearing up for the next Mel Gibson/Hugh Jackman/Big Name actor movie, a small cult following of people are eagerly awaiting the next Christopher Walken movie, just like the new console war almost upon us.

Indrema: Michael David-Bonson - What? You've never heard of him either? I think he's dead now anyway. No big loss.

Lukasaurus
Lancer@idx.com.au

BIG AND DUMB

Great topic. First up I'd have to say our newest console, Xbox, is definitely Arnie. Big and dumb, with brute power and no refinement. He's in his Terminator 2 stage at the moment, which is fine, but look to the future and we'll see him get boring as we all tire of the sort of roles he's capable of. PlayStation 1 is a lot like Russell Crowe in his Gladiator days, absolutely on top of the world, the freshest new thing with no previous credibility. PlayStation 2 is like his current situation, really the best known and most wanted, quite a few good roles working well for him, but ego will be his biggest enemy, already too big for his boots he is in danger of losing it all.

Game Boy Advance would have to be a little bit like Kylie, she's petite and sexy and fits nicely in your hand but appeals more to a mature crowd.

I'd have to say that Super NES was Bruce Lee to Megadrive's Chuck Norris but N64 was Brandon Lee, successor to a great father but forced into a format that didn't suit him, not to mention a dramatic career cut short due to bad management.

Hopefully GameCube will be Hugh Jackman, not as muscular as Arnie, not as well known as Crowe, but with more substance and a wider range of future possibilities.

Matt Trembath
Nicenbouncy@hotmail.com

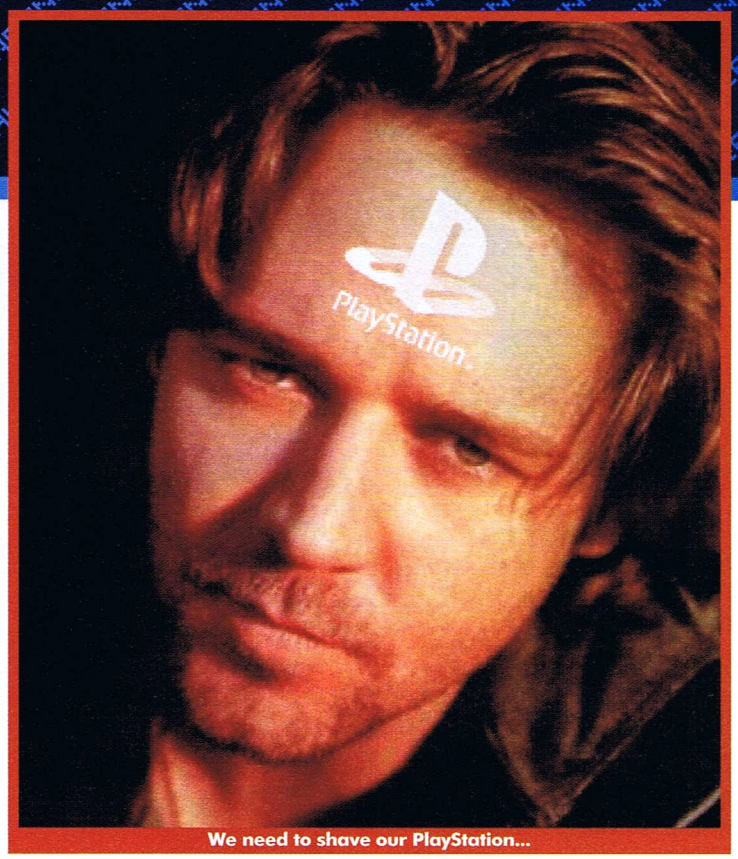
PAMSTATION

Well, Nintendo have been around a while and are therefore very reliable, but many people say they lean too much toward children with their games, so a suitable person for this would be say... Archbishop Hollingworth, who has also been around a while and who many people say leans too much toward children.

The PS2 however caters for heaps of people, offering its entertainment to all ages, be it kids or grandpas... so I'm thinking someone like Pamela Anderson or some other such supermodel who also lets just about anyone be entertained by them.

ENE@NEXT.COM.AU FREAKSCENE@NEXT.COM.AU FREAKSCENE@NEXT.COM.AU FREAKSCENE@NEXT.COM.AU FREAKSCENE@

Where do I plug in the controller?



We need to shave our PlayStation...

Now the Xbox however is something rather new, and although it's generally acknowledged that it is a pretty good console, it is also general knowledge that everyone hates the guy behind it. So for the Xbox I'm thinking someone like, say George Bush; his country is powerful and pretty good (sic), but the guy's a dick.

And finally, the Dreamcast... Need I say anything more than "Madonna"?

Phillip English
Phillip_english@yahoo.com.au

SEX IN A CUBE

The Gamecube, small, sexy and smooth would be Kylie Minogue!

A little machine that packs a huge punch. Who doesn't enjoy playing around with a GameCube? Or Kylie...

Stewy Falconer
neo2dark@hotmail.com

WOMAN OR MONKEY?

Dear Hyper,

Let's start off with the PS2 shall we? It's known worldwide for its wide range of titles, serious games like Grand Theft Auto 3 (for the adults) and it also has titles like Crash Bandicoot that weren't really successful with adults but appealed to children. So the PS2 has everything you want, from violence to herding cute little critters, then who better then Bruce Willis?! He starred in lots of films like Die Hard and even family crap like The Kid. Willis also appeared in more PS games than any other celebrity ever did.

Now the GCN. Britney Spears! Like the GCN, the 'overprotected' Britney is trying to look and act like a real mature woman, not a virgin (that's what they say although I think she must of gotten screwed a couple of times before her big fame!). She wants to get rid of the little innocent curly-girly look, in other words, she wants to have sex with big boys (huh?!). Nintendo are trying to appeal to the more mature side of the market, hence, Resident Evil is now GCN exclusive.

Big Bill's Box? Everybody should at least have taken a guess by now. Jocelyne Wildenstein? No... but you're getting close. Remember, the Xbox is new and Microsoft isn't, so try to pick someone from the 80's that is still popular and that looked good in the beginning but now developed a weird 'ape' look. Aooh! That's right. Michael 'the king of pop and plastic surgery' Jackson is our man! Uh, woman! No, um monkey? Whatever he is, he can be compared to the Xbox. Microsoft tried to make their baby look as cool and futuristic as possible which therefore lead us to having this flashy black case and the weird (uncomfortable) looking controller that looks as if it too went under surgery! But don't let the looks fool ya, like Mike, the Xbox delivers top A-class entertainment and will always come up with (odd) surprises.

Just one last thing. The Dreamcast. Surely you didn't forget the first 128 bit console did you? Simple, Dreamcast = Osama Bin Laden! Logical. Bin was the first person to get two planes and crash them into two big buildings, like him, the DC was the first 128 bit to 'hit' the market. After the attack, Bin was the most popular person in the universe but slowly lost his popularity because he did not have enough money to send entertaining videos of his threats anymore. Same thing for the DC, 'big bang to nothing', Sega couldn't support it anymore and ditched the DC.

So there you have it. All four next-gen consoles and their comparisons. Sorry if I offended anyone reading this, blame Eliot!

Anthony Palmer
Apalmer@vanuatu.com.vu

A MAJOR DRAWCARD

If consoles were celebrities? Okay starting with the GameCube, that would be Robert De Niro – not a major drawcard for the masses but his work is always guaranteed to be high quality.

PlayStation2 would be Brad Pitt – major drawcard for mainstream audiences, looks good, plenty of new titles, the majority of which are a bit below average but once in a while comes up with an absolute gem.

The Xbox would be THE ROCK from the WWF. He's powerful, exciting and when he speaks you sit up and take notice. "The Rock is the great one". Even if Bill Gates sucks.

Andrew
Aheinley@optushome.com.au

We should be so lucky.

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MAIL

HYPER LETTERS:

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HAPPY CONSUMER

Hi there Hyper People,

It's been just under two weeks since I have got my Xbox. I lined up outside a city department store for 5 hours on launch night. What can I say? In those 2 weeks I have not been getting my required eight hours per night my body craves.

As a 31 year-old who is not loyal to any console or platform, I just appreciate the best that each platform has to offer. I have been entertained by games since I was the proud owner of a C64 and TI994a. I have a PC, PS2, PS1, Dreamcast, N64 even a GBA, and I will most likely buy the GameCube.

I have never been so amazed and excited over launch titles before. I am lucky enough to have 5 of the launch titles and that includes the most sublime gaming experience of them all HALO. How good can a game be?

I shudder with excitement to think how good the second generation games will be. I find it hard to believe that Halo could ever be bettered. I have never been affected by a game as much as this. It sucks you in and takes you on the ride of your life.

It's so life-like, you actually have to think and use a trial and error approach in negotiating different situations. I believe a main reason, apart from the brilliant graphics and truly amazing sound, is the AI. Amazing. You feel so good when the enemy is running in fear, you just have to chase them down, and vice-versa when you are surrounded by the enemy because they actually found a way to flank you and come from many directions.

I could carry on for hours about how great I think this game is, and how excited I am about what games lie ahead for this new console. All I can say is that those who refuse to play a certain console for loyalty to another are just missing out! I still love my beloved PS2 and will continue to buy games. I still play my Dreamcast and enjoy the games that it has on offer, but we have a new kid on the block and I want to make friends with him.

All the best and keep up the overall unbiased reviews. All platforms should be appreciated for what they have to offer, not judged on the name of the logo on the plastic box.

Thanks again,
Mick Kelly
Pyrmont, NSW

Dear Mick,
It's always cool to get positive letters about how much someone loves their gaming. Makes a nice change from all the letters we get bashing everything under the sun.

Keiran Alexander is a pervert!

CAPTION THIS!

PART 29 WINNER

Our winner this month is Matt Lawrance (mattlawrance87@hotmail.com). Keep it up Matt, you're on a hat-trick!

"Hey Ico, check this out! It says 'For a good time, ring Eliot on...'"

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Hey Dudes,

In your latest issue of Hyper you said that on Xbox you couldn't rename single music tracks. Well, from the main menu, choose music then select a soundtrack that you have already ripped and then a little menu comes up with things like play and delete. Well if you choose edit there you can rename individual tracks.

Cya from,
Some Random Guy
Outfishin@bigpond.com

Dear Some Random Guy,
Yes... ahem. We seem to have somehow fumbled past that option. Thanks!

NOTHIN' BUT QS

To the Hyper guys,

I've been reading Hyper since issue 48 so I'm a pretty big fan. I've got a few questions for ya.

1. Do you think the PS2 will be forgotten when the Xbox and GCN arrive?
2. What score did you give Final Fantasy 9?
3. When will Dino Crisis 3 arrive and what systems will it be on?
4. What did you think of the Lord of the Rings books? I thought they were great.
5. Are you as sick and tired of the Tomb Raider games as I am?

Anywayz, thanks for your time and keep up the great work.

Mr. P
my_big_fat_shlong@hotmail.com

Dear Mr. P,
1. You're kidding right? The PS2 has so far outsold both the Xbox and GCN overseas... so it's Microsoft and Nintendo who have some catching up to do.
2. At the time, 95%. In retrospect, 90%.
3. Apparently, Dino Crisis 3 will be exclusive to the Xbox sometime later this year.
4. We all love them.
5. Yes, but at least the next one seems to be more like Metal Gear Lara.

TO HELL WITH A LETTER

I was sitting in my chair, controller in my hand thinking I'm going to send a witty, intelligent, inspiring, interesting e-mail to Hyper to get a chance at winning myself a steering wheel for my PS2. I was just about to think of what to write when suddenly the words GTA3 popped on

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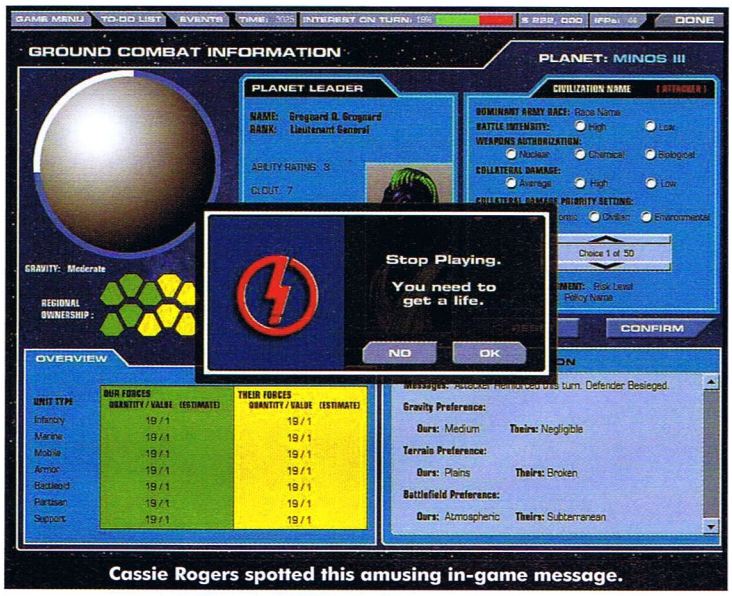

Cassie Rogers spotted this amusing in-game message.

to the telly and I thought "to hell with a letter, I'd rather be blowing the head off an innocent civilian than telling others about my pretentious self-righteous issues." I think all writers should take this into consideration before you put your finger to the keyboard.

Eric Shadbolt
erics@geis.school.nz

Dear Eric,
Thank you.

CUBE STUFF

Hey everyone at Hyper!

I've got my GameCube on order and I can't wait to get it but I was wondering what accessories will be released with it. I'm especially interested in the RF switch for the old TV that's in my room. I dearly need this otherwise I'm gunna have to fight for the TV that has the AV channel. There was one for the 64, so I don't see any reason that there shouldn't be one for the GCN. Anyway could you tell me if there will be an RF switch and what accessories will be released.

Thanks,

Ssj3gotenks
Ssj3gotenks07@hotmail.com

Dear Ssj3gotenks,
Just to answer your main question, yes, there will be an RF switch. In fact, you could use the one from your N64 on your GCN.

XBOX QUERIES

Hi Guys,

Great Mag. I've got some questions.

1. Does the Xbox DVD live up to expectations?
2. Were those expectations low?
3. Can we tell how the launch is going or is it too early?
4. What would you recommend as a first purchase, THPS3, HALO or JSRF?
5. How's the Jap pads, do you think they'll be available after launch?

Anyways, thanks for listening (and answering).

Azzaman
Azzaman6fn9@hotmail.com

Dear Azzaman,
1. We're still testing it out, and we'll bring you a result soon.
2. Actually, maybe they have been too high.
3. The Xbox launch here was fairly successful. It did okay.
4. Halo, then Tony Hawk 3, then JSRF.
5. The Jap pads won't be released here, but the Controller S will be, and it's even better than the Jap pad. We don't know when, though.

CUBE CONTROLLER WOES

Dear Hyper,

I've been an on and off reader of Hyper for the past two years now, and I love that you're the only good multi-platform game mag here in Australia. I've been tempted to subscribe a couple of times now, but the thought of damaging any part of the magazine while I cut out the little subscription form pains me too much.

Anyway, I was wondering whether the GameCube is set up to have any other controller other than the one that comes with the console. The buttons are all irregularly sized and all over the place. Nintendo's controllers are beginning to look like something out of the Fisher and Paykel range of toys. Don't get me wrong, I can see how the new-look controller is revolutionary for RPGs and adventure games, it's just that I've always been a fan of the fighting genre, you know, the type of games that just works way better with a d-pad. And with the way the controller is designed, it's starting to look really hard to play something like Soul Calibur 2 or Dead or Alive 3. Well, that's all I wanted to ask, hope you can answer it for me.

Susan
gyuniku@hotmail.com

Dear Susan,
We really like the GameCube controller, but agree that it's awful for fighting games. Actually, it sucks for fighting games. Hopefully, you'll be able to get an arcade stick anyway!

GAME HATER

Dear Hyper,

You are probably wondering why someone who extremely dislikes (well actually hates) video games (oh except for Yoshi's Island) is writing to your mag? Well, to put it simply, to settle a score.

My partner is obsessed with video games. He loves your magazine (I had to help him frame the poster of all the covers which you put in your 100th issue, and it is now hanging in his "Videogame Room").

My best friend's partner is also a computer games freak, so get the two of them together and it's either blissful peace or all out war!

For ages now the two of them have had this recurring argument over how computer game magazines "SCORE" the games. One argues that they are fair, based on individual comparisons to other related games and not based on personal opinion. The other argues that most game reviews are purely personal opinion and if a reviewer doesn't like a particular style of game (e.g. RPG or Racing) then the game can end up with a bad review even if it has excellent graphics, sound and structure.

I can understand where they are both coming from and have decided to find out exactly how the games are reviewed at Hyper. (And put an end to this war once and for all) I want to know how your games are reviewed, are they reviewed by a single person or by a group of say three or more? Do you play them all the way through or not? Who chooses the people to do the reviews (are they chosen because they like that particular style of game)? How fair are your reviews?

Anyway, I hope you can help me by answering these questions so I can lay this argument to rest once and for all!

Yours faithfully,
Name Withheld

Dear mysterious person,
Games are usually always played through to the end depending on time constraints, and yes, we'll select reviewers based on their fields of expertise. So, RPGs go to RPG lovers and First Person Shooters go to FPS experts and so on. Our reviewers are incredibly experienced, having played games for years on all systems, so naturally their personal experience and ability to evaluate games is what is key. Personal opinion is based on experience, but our reviewers are experts so isn't that opinion an informed decision? Your friend is certainly wrong if he thinks we would give a game to someone who we know doesn't like a particular style. Even so, after a game is reviewed, the Hyper editorial team discuss the score and make editorial changes in some cases based on our own experiences with the same game. So what you get a lot of the time, is a score that's been filtered by 2-3 people, meaning it's probably the most fair and objective score system out there. Of course, we usually agree with the reviewer's original score 95% of the time!

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MAIL

VARIOUS QS

Dear Hyper,

High kudos on an excellent magazine, I have been an avid reader since issue #2 and await each new issue with great eagerness.

1) The Xbox controller... after playing the system at my local EB, I found the controller to be quite comfortable (more so than the PS2 Dual Shock) and had no problems with the button layout. Am I the only one in the world who found it comfortable?

2) Are there plans for local releases of Xenosaga, Grandia Extreme and Suikoden 3? If so when?

3) PS2 hard drive, when and how much?

4) Does the PAL version of Final Fantasy X support the hard drive?

Thanks for the years of gaming information goodess.

Warloud
Warloud@yahoo.com.au

1. Well, we regularly have problems with the button layout... but the pad is comfortable, yes.
2. No.
3. Sony won't say!
4. No. Neither does the NTSC version! FFX doesn't need HD support for anything. Are you thinking of FFXI? In which case, we don't even know if it will be released in Australia considering the state of broadband here.

VIOLENT GAMER

Video games make me violent. It's true, they do and frankly, I'd have it no other way.

Let me explain myself. I have been working as a furniture delivery guy for the last 2 months now, and in that time, I have borne witness to the many forms of complete and utter frustration emanating from my main workmate.

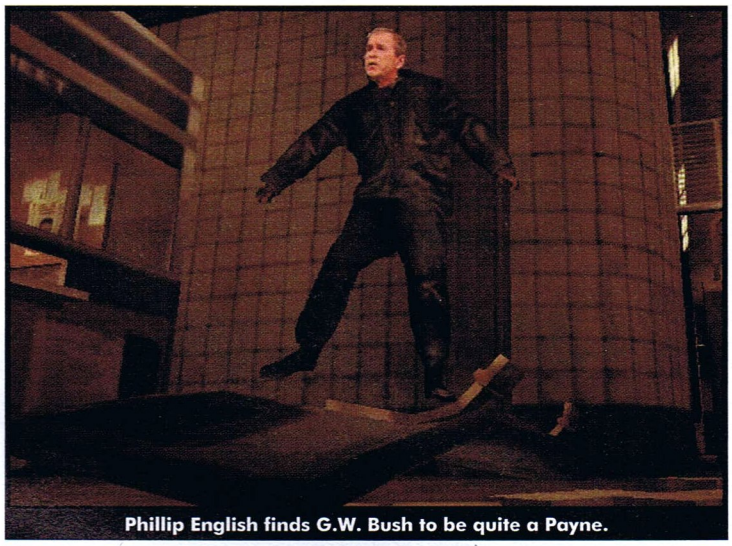
Seeing as we do the same job, I was intrigued as to why exactly is my co-worker getting so much more steamed up over a crises at work than I. I know this guy quite well, and generally he's an easygoing type.

Then it came to me - perhaps it has something to do with how we express our frustration. While he gets angry over a difficult delivery, I'll get the same feelings of rage when I get my butt kicked over and over again in Unreal Tournament. And I don't mean "tsk, tsk - why is this so hard?", it's like the Incredible Hulk going berko.

So yeah - games make me violent. But everyone gets hot under the collar, and frankly I think it better to be done playing something as silly as a game in front of the telly than down the pub after a few schooners, or in the car during peak hour traffic, or anywhere else where someone is going to get hurt. In the end the only thing hurt for me is my ego (and my right leg which I punch for lack of anything else as forgiving on the knuckles), which strengthens my resolve - come hell or high water, I'll beat that frickin' game if it's the last thing I do.

Yours, oh-so-serenely
Jim
Immol8@hotmail.com

Dear Jim,
Are you related to Russell Crowe? Actually, it's probably good if you vent your anger at games, as long as the anger ceases when the machine is switched off. Remember wise Yoda, "Anger leads to Hate, Hate leads to Suffering!"



Phillip English finds G.W. Bush to be quite a Payne.

MAC MAN

Dear Hyper,

A long time ago my family computer was a Macintosh. A slow, softwareless, damn ugly computer which I couldn't even watch quicktime clips on cause it wasn't good enough. I hated Macs to death and always begged my parents for an PC of some sort, anything but what we had (I know what PC means, but "those computers" don't really have name). Fair enough, Macs used to suck, but that was a long time ago. I now own an Indigo iMac, and I will never part with it (unless I buy a new, better Mac). I see no fault with Macs. In my opinion they're perfect, but the majority of people still claim "Macs suck". This makes me sad to see people are missing out because they base their beliefs on the past. So lets rule out a few of these claims. They aren't slow. They are some of the fastest computers on the planet, if not THE fastest. They aren't for people who don't know how to use computers. You may as well say "A computer has to be hard to use to be any good". They aren't too expensive. Their amazing free software more than makes up for this. The only thing that could be picked on is the lack of software. It has no lack of great software, hell no, just not as much software. So how about not knocking Macs, cause I, and many others around the globe, are 100% content with their stylish, compact, user-friendly, fast and powerful Macs. And if you gave it a go, I'm sure you would too.

Luke Orrin
imighttellyanexttime@hotmail.com

P.S. Did you know GeForce 4s come with the new Power Macs as standard?! I want one!!

Dear Luke,
Well what do you know. I just bought a new iBook. It's just perfect. We also make Hyper using Macs. Don't worry about what people think, because we know Macs are cool, brother.

LATE ADDITIONS

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

Late Additions will be your quick reference guide to whether these games are worth getting. This way we hope to be an even more complete guide to what's getting released. Enjoy!

TITLE	PLATFORM	CATEGORY	PUBLISHER	PRICE	RATING
Grandia II	PS2	RPG	UbiSoft	$79.95	GOOD
Herdy Gerdy	PS2	Platform	Eidos	$99.95	OK
Max Payne	Xbox	Shooter	Rockstar	$99.95	GOOD
Dave Mirra BMX 2	Xbox	Sports	Acclaim	$99.95	OK
Crazy Taxi	GCN	Driving	Sega	$99.95	GOOD
Burnout	GCN	Racing	Acclaim	$99.95	GOOD
Batman Vengeance	GCN/Xbox	Action	UbiSoft	$99.95	GOOD
Dark Summit	GCN/Xbox	Action	THQ	$99.95	BAD
The Sims: Vacation	PC	Sim	EA	$39.95	OK

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The Official Australian Games Chart

Compiled by Inform in association with AVSDA

TOP 10 PlayStation 2 Games Over $50

W/E 7 April 2002 RETAIL SALES

1	◆	Metal Gear Solid 2	Adventure
2	◆	Grand Theft Auto 3	Adventure
3	◆	Dynasty Warriors 3	Action
4	◆	State Of Emergency	Adventure
5	◆	G1 Jockey	Sports
6	▲	Crash Band 5: Wrath/Cortex	Adventure
7	✪	Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3	Sports
8	▼	Ace Combat Distant Thunder	Simulator
9	✪	Knockout Kings 2002	Sports
10	✪	World Rally Championship	Racing

TOP 10 PlayStation Games Over $40

W/E 7 April 2002 RETAIL SALES

1	◆	Harry Potter	Adventure
2	◆	Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3	Sports
3	◆	Monsters Inc	Adventure
4	◆	Peter Pan	Adventure
5	▲	Spiderman Enter Electro	Adventure
6	◆	Syphon Filter 3	Adventure
7	▼	Who Wnts 2 Be Millinaire?	Family
8	▲	WWF Smackdown! 2	Sports
9	▼	FIFA 2002	Sports
10	◆	Digimon	RPG

TOP 10 Game Boy Games Over $40

W/E 7 April 2002 RETAIL SALES

1	◆	Pokemon Crystal	RPG
2	◆	Harry Potter & Philosopher	Adventure
3	▲	Pokemon Silver	RPG
4	◆	Pokemon Gold	RPG
5	▼	Monsters Inc	Adventure
6	◆	Zelda: Oracle Of Ages	RPG
7	▲	Pokemon Yellow GBM	RPG
8	▲	Pokemon Red GBM	RPG
9	▼	Zelda: Oracle Of Seasons	RPG
10	✪	ET The Extra Terrestrial	Family

TOP 10 Xbox Games Over $40

W/E 7 April 2002 RETAIL SALES

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

TOP 10 PC Games Over $30

W/E 7 April 2002 RETAIL SALES

1	▲	The Sims Vacation	Strategy
2	▼	Star Wars JK 2: Jedi Outcast	Adventure
3	▲	The Sims Hot Date	Strategy
4	▲	The Sims	Strategy
5	▼	Medal Of Honor Allied Assit	Action
6	◆	Harry Potter & Philosopher	Adventure
7	▲	The Sims Collectors Edition	Strategy
8	▼	C & C Renegade	Action
9	✪	Diablo II: Lord Of Destrction	RPG
10	✪	The Sims Livin' Large	Strategy

TOP 10 Game Boy Advance Games Over $40

W/E 7 April 2002 RETAIL SALES

1	◆	Super Mario World Advced 2	Adventure
2	◆	Sonic Advance	Adventure
3	▲	Crash Bandicoot Big Adv	Adventure
4	▼	Mario Kart Super Circuit	Racing
5	◆	Golden Sun	RPG
6	◆	Harry Potter & Philosopher	Adventure
7	▲	Jimmy Neutron	Adventure
8	▼	Super Mario Advance	Adventure
9	✪	Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2	Sports
10	✪	Street Fighter 2	Action

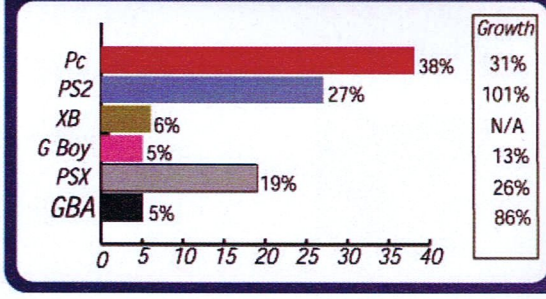
TOP 10 All Full Priced Games

W/E 7 April 2002 RETAIL SALES

1	▲	The Sims Vacation	PC/MAC
2	▼	Metal Gear Solid 2	PlayStation 2
3	◆	Grand Theft Auto 3	PlayStation 2
4	▼	Star Wars JK 2: Jedi Outcast	PC/MAC
5	◆	Halo - Combat Evolved	Xbox
6	◆	Super Mario Wrld Advnced 2	GBA
7	✪	The Sims Hot Date	PC/MAC
8	✪	The Sims	PC/MAC
9	▲	Dynasty Warriors 3	PlayStation 2
10	✪	Pokemon Crystal	GBC

MARKET WATCH All Games by Platform

Mar Vs Feb 2002 RETAIL SALES



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

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