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and more!



7
ISSUES

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of '96
IG

Counts Down this Year's Finest Games

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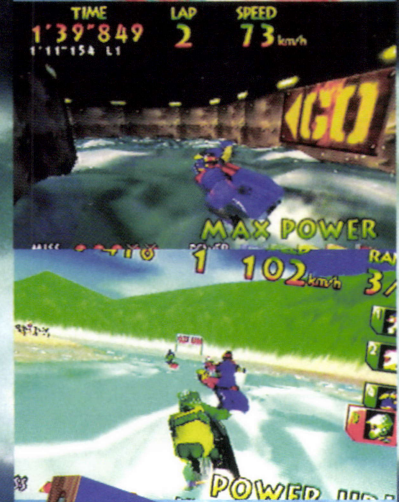
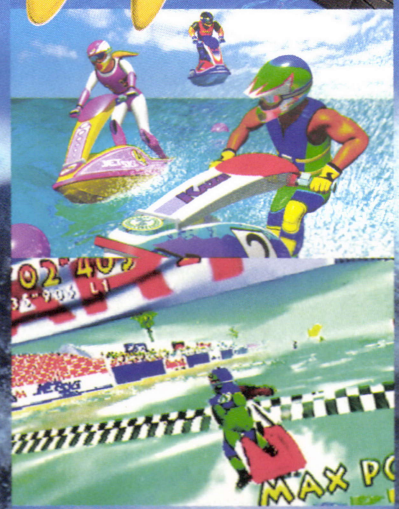
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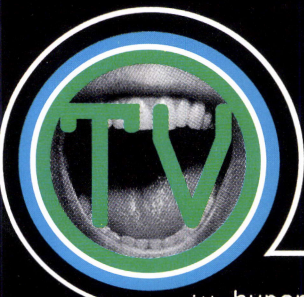
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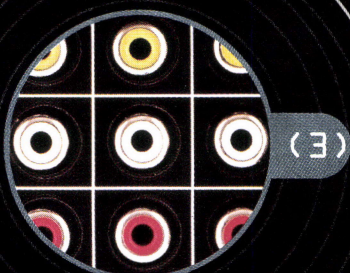


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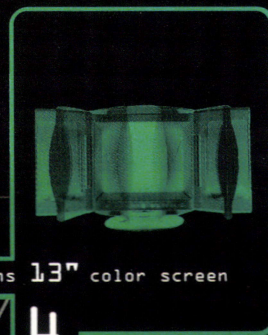
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The holiday season is upon us, and after a somewhat slow summer, it seems as if we're suddenly swamped with incredible game titles. As is the case every year, all of the game publishers are unleashing all of their top-quality software in time for the holidays, and advertising dollars are being practically thrown out the window in order for these companies to push sales of their games to record heights. All of this is good and well for the gamer, but it creates a small problem for magazines with short lead times such as *Intelligent Gamer*.

Some of the big-name games covered in this issue (Daytona CCE, Sonic 3D Blast, NFL GameDay '97, etc.) will be (should be) in stores by the time you're reading this—yet we were only able to offer previews on them rather than reviews. Now we could have gone ahead and reviewed incomplete versions of the games like some of the other mags do, but we feel that's unfair to the readers as well as the companies. In some instances, a company will give us the okay to review a game even though it's only 90 percent finished, as long as we "understand" what still needs to be done, but that's not nearly good enough for us. Unless it's 100 percent complete, it's not getting reviewed in *IG*, plain and simple.

Since we choose to take this bold and righteous path (sorry, I've got the Suikoden soundtrack playing; I'm feeling inspired...) of not reviewing games until they're completely final, situations like the aforementioned one occur: Games that should be getting reviewed in the mag are only receiving previews because final versions weren't prepared in time to meet our editorial deadlines. Now from the reader's perspective, quite frankly, this sucks. How can one make an educated buying decision when they have to wait upward of a month (sometimes more!) to get a solid review for the game they are interested in? Unless you've got hours to spare, filtering through tons of garbage posts on Internet newsgroups looking for initial game impressions, you're going to be pretty much out of luck.

For those of you who may be unaware, the main reason behind this problem is that a majority of today's game development is done using compact discs, which can be turned over from final code to store shelf in under two weeks, whereas cartridges take upwards of a month to complete the production stage. Since magazine lead times can vary anywhere from a month to three months, it's possible to have cartridge reviews done and on newsstands in a timely fashion, while CDs generally prevent that from happening. A good example of this would be our Wave Race 64 review last issue. We had the final rev of the cart-based N64 game in our hands for review over a month and a half in advance of the game's release, allowing for a perfectly timed review (and in this case, a cover) for one of the best games of the year. Yet this issue, we're only a month away from the release of Daytona USA Championship Circuit Edition and the game is still only 65 percent complete. Not much we can do about this.

Let me make it clear that this is not meant to be a complaint to game companies—not really anyway. My main reason for illuminating this situation is to keep you, the reader, aware of the reasons behind what some of those "not in the know" might consider to be lagging game coverage. What we ask is that, in the future, game developers and publishers make the magazines more of a factor in their overall marketing schedules so they can get us these games in a more timely fashion. The motion picture industry does it. The record industry does it. In the end, it's not only going to benefit us, it's going to benefit them as well.

We will continue to provide the most up-to-the-minute game coverage possible, and until printing technology allows for some means of cutting down the problems associated with magazine lead time and game production deadlines, we'll just have to make do with what we can. Knowing this, we hope you enjoy the mag more. We've got some interesting surprises planned over the course of the next six months, so be sure to stay tuned.

—John Ricciardi, Senior Editor

INTELLIGENT GAMER

December, 1996

Volume 1, Number 7

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Advertising
Inquiries
Contact:

Eisenberg Communications Group, Inc.
20700 Ventura Blvd., Suite 205
Woodland Hills, CA 91364
(818) 712-9400 or (630) 916-7222
ig@eisenberg.com
Jeffrey Eisenberg
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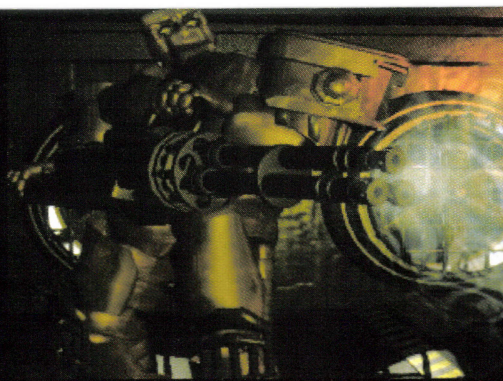
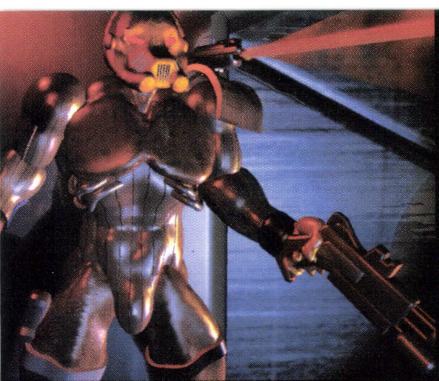
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Meatloaf (the food, not the singer)

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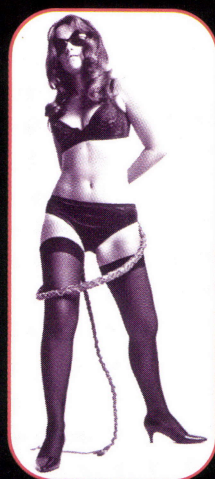


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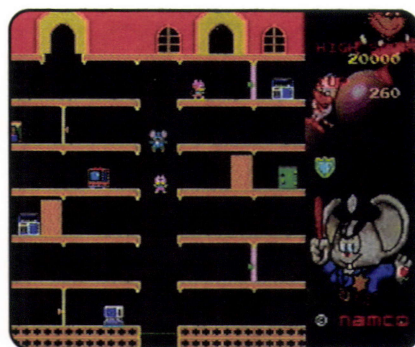
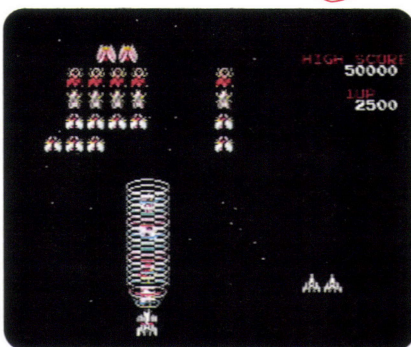
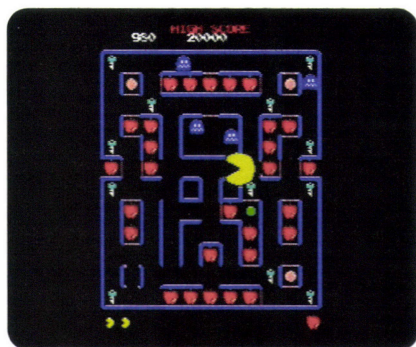
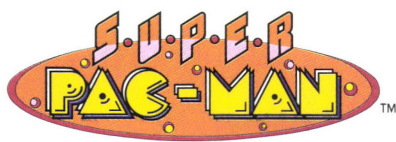


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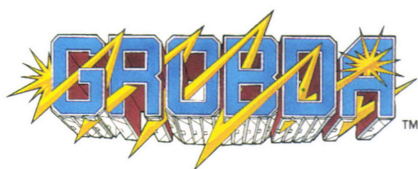
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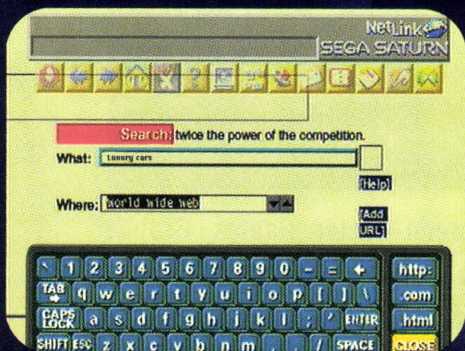




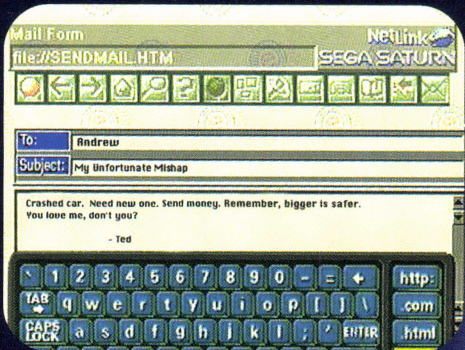
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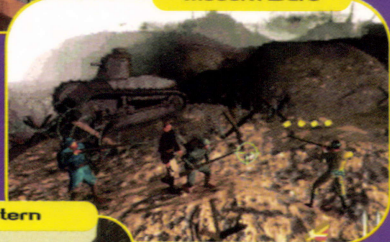
Medieval



Conquistador



Modern Wars



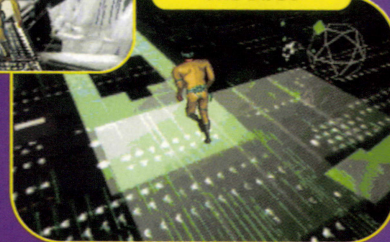
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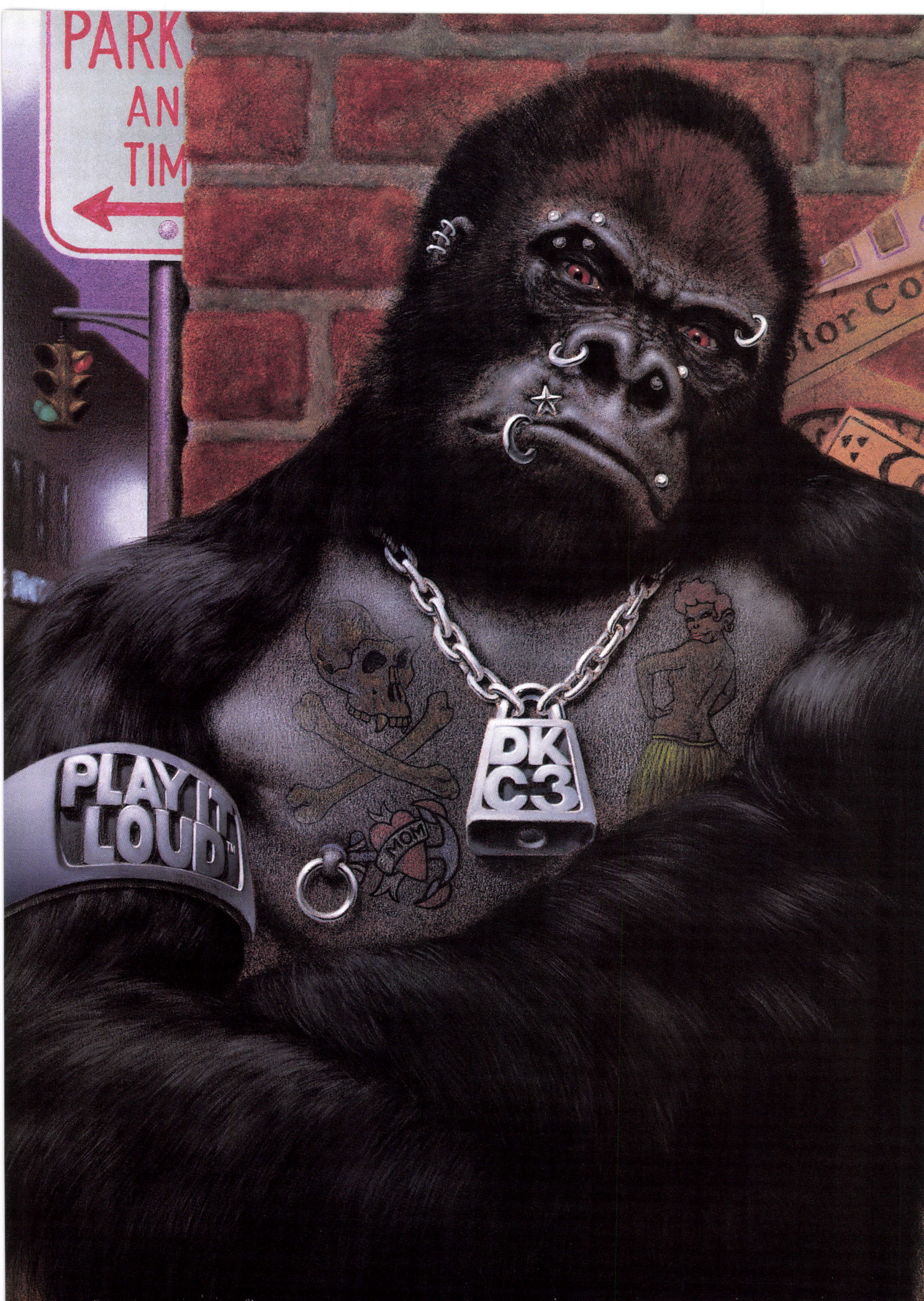
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52 Feature Preview: Sonic 3D Blast

Sega's blue blur finally makes his way to the wonderful world of 32-Bit in Sonic 3D Blast. But is it too little too late?

32 Feature: The Best of '96

We'll take you on a tour of the best games of what was easily the best year for gaming yet, 1996.

44 Feature: 1996 AMOA Show

IG was on hand to witness the U.S. debut of Virtua Fighter 3 and more at this year's AMOA arcade show in Dallas.

114 Nostalgia: NEC's SuperGrafx

Step backward in time as we take a look at NEC's 8-Bit super-system that never made it off the runway in Japan...



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	The Adventures of	
	Lomax	
	Worldwide Soccer '97	
	Tempest X	
	Samurai Shodown III:	
	Blades of Blood	
	2 Xtreme	
	TNN Motor Sports	
	Hardcore 4x4	
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Reviews at a Glance

A summary of the ratings given to games reviewed in past issues of IG, plus nine new minireviews.

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▲ As good as this screen grab of Wave Race 64 may look, it actually once looked a lot better—when it was still a fresh RGB image taken directly from the game's output. Since then, it's been converted to a new color scheme, brightened and color-corrected to try to atone for the losses during the conversion, and dropped in one of the Ziff toilets during deadline (kidding about the last one).

field in the spring becomes the dull green of autumn city parks in print. I encounter this problem often, producing ads for a distributor of PC and PlayStation games here in Norway.

Morten Ingebrethsen
Stavanger, Norway

[Ed.: Indeed, we did overlook the fact that the printing process takes away quite a bit from the original quality of a screen grab. Because screens are taken in RGB (Red, Green, Blue), and computers have no problem displaying RGB images, the screens generally look perfect when viewed on screen. However, when being printed, RGB images need to be converted to CMYK images (Cyan, Magenta, Yellow, Black) which can take away a lot of the picture quality, especially when the screen has a lot of red, green or blue tones in it. There are ways to touch up the pictures, of course, using expensive graphics programs like Adobe Photoshop, but ultimately, the picture



▲ Sony's Beyond the Beyond (left) was the first true 32-Bit traditional-style RPG, released for the PlayStation in September. Following it is Konami's awesome Suikoden (right), a much more engrossing quest with a fabulous story line (both games reviewed in this issue), and for the Saturn, Albert Odyssey from Working Designs (center) will be released in early 1997.

quality will never look as good as the RGB original did.]

Do you have any American release news on the 32-Bit world's RPG outlook? Please say yes...Thanks a million for your help!!

Neil Johnson
Via the Internet

[Ed.: Fortunately, the RPG scene is finally beginning to reignite here in the U.S. after it enjoyed a somewhat successful ride on 16-Bit systems before practically falling off the face of the Earth over the course of the last year. Currently, there is more of a selection of action- and sim-RPGs on the Saturn, but there isn't one traditional RPG available for the system (the first one, the recently announced Albert Odyssey by Working Designs, is coming in February). Otherwise you've got the great-looking sim-RPG, Dragon Force, coming in late November; Blazing Heroes II (sequel to Mystaria/Blazing Heroes) due



early 1997, Magic Knight Rayearth (gorgeous-looking action-RPG) coming in March, and the remake of the Sega CD classic, Lunar, coming in May. As for the PlayStation, Beyond the Beyond was just released in September, and Konami's Suikoden should be in stores by the time you read this (see the review elsewhere in this issue). Arc the Lad was reportedly canned for U.S. release (possibly so that the improved sequel could be released instead), and finally, of course, Square's Final Fantasy VII is due out sometime in 1997. That being said, RPG fans have a lot to look forward to in the coming months! Save your pennies!]

With the PC rapidly approaching the 32- and 64-Bit platforms in terms of graphics processing power, nearly on par with them in terms of sound quality, and already surpassing a library of past and current arcade hits, when are PC gamers going to get a multibutton (six, eight, even four would do!) arcade joystick? Gamepads are okay for fighting and some action games (i.e. sports simulators, adventure games and Doom-style shooters) and flightstick-type controllers are perfect for flight simulators and mech-type games, but the majority of arcade games being translated to the PC were made for a multi-button joystick configuration.

Microsoft's API will be responsible for bringing more arcade-perfect translations to the PC, but unless the game is played through a control system like the arcade original there will always be something missing, and often times the experience can be cumbersome and frustrating trying to adapt a different type of controller and button arcade joystick control system.

A fortune is waiting to be made,



▲ Well, for all you console guys out there who thought you had all the biggest sticks—think again. Look at this baby that runs only on the IBM-PC. Girls love it.

but apparently none of the major PC controller manufacturers are willing, or haven't figured out what a sizable portion of the PC crowd wants for a game controller.

When are we going to get an arcade-style joystick for the PC?

Gregory L. Walker
Saginaw, MI


[Ed.: Well, actually there are a few arcade joysticks out for the PC, but the challenge is finding them. The problem is that they are made by smaller, lesser-known companies. Some of them even have options that rival their console counterparts by sporting features such as programmability, rapid fire, etc. The latest such controller that has arrived in the lovely IG offices is the "Powerramp" stick manufactured by Act Laboratory Ltd. It's a bit surprising that more big-name companies haven't brought out large arcade-quality sticks, but the fact is that they don't see a large market for them as fighting games haven't taken the PC by storm yet. Many of them are just beginning to stake their claim into the PC gaming market with lesser gambles by making mainstream gamepads that have more potential buyers.]



Send your comments, concepts and theories to:
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You blasted your way through an onslaught of undead marines and

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of a cockroach and are

alive and kicking in Final Doom—the last of the ~~MI~~ legendary Doom products.

It's two new 32-level episodes complete with

new stories (Evilution & The Plutonia Experiment), new frighteningly realistic graphics and new pulse-~~KK~~

pounding music. It's time to finish what you started.

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THEY JUST TURN INTO
BLOODTHIRSTY

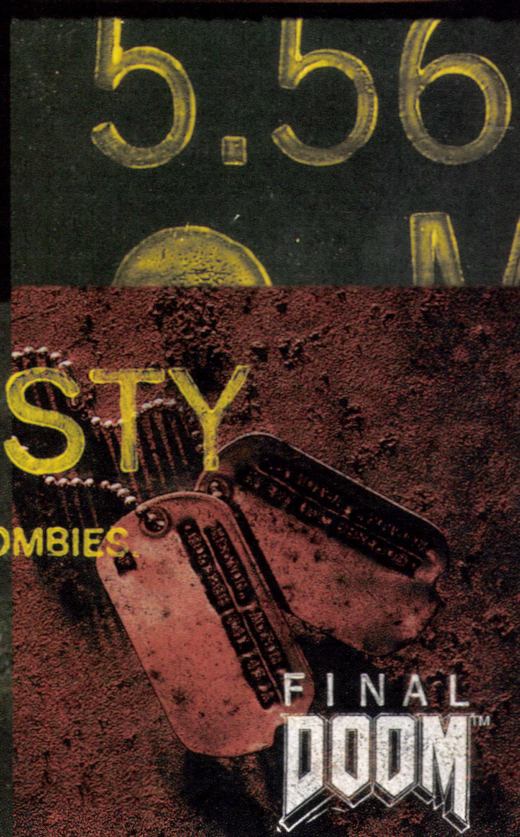
MUTANT ZOMBIES

MIDWAY

id
SOFTWARE


PlayStation

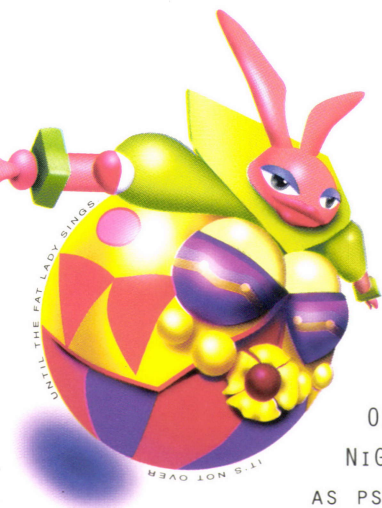
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Nintendo 64 Consoles Vanish in Record-Breaking Launch

By most estimates, the launch of the Nintendo 64 (N64) was a major success by any standard. According to initial estimates, 310,000 of the 350,000 hardware units shipped into the United States were purchased or reserved within 24 hours of the official launch. (A few stores began selling systems as early as Sep. 24, though Nintendo had requested that no units be sold until the official launch on Sept. 29.)

A press release circulated by Nintendo states that the launch of the N64 is the most successful U.S. launch ever. According to the release, it took Sony more than 13 weeks to sell 300,000 PlayStations, and Sega took more than 32 weeks to sell that many Saturns.

With only two games ready at release, the ratio of software sales-to-hardware sales for the N64 was obviously low. Nintendo sources say that Super Mario 64 cartridges sold at a 1-to-1 ratio with the hardware, but that PilotWings 64 only sold at a ratio of one-to-four.

The next scheduled software releases will be Wave Race 64, on Nov. 4, Cruis'n USA 64, on Nov. 18, and Killer Instinct Gold, on Nov. 25.

Because of the enormous demand for the N64, Nintendo of America executives have asked Hiroshi Yamauchi, president of Nintendo Co. Ltd., to increase the number of units coming into the United States before Christmas. At the Electronic Entertainment Exposition held last May, Nintendo announced that no more than 500,000 to 600,000 units would be available this year. Now there is talk that as many as 1 million consoles may be shipped to the

Going, Going, Gone!



United States in the coming year.

According to a Nintendo spokesperson, Nintendo is postponing the release of the Nintendo 64 in Europe to make more units available for the United States. There are roughly 4000,000 Nintendo 64s earmarked for the European market this year. By diverting those units to the United

States, Nintendo hopes to satisfy the overwhelming demand for the 64-Bit game system.

As many as 1 million consoles may be shipped to the United States this year.

Inventor of Game Boy leaves Nintendo

Gumpei Yokoi, the inventor of the Game Boy, has left Nintendo. Though it has not been confirmed, many outside sources speculate that Yokoi was blamed for the failure of Virtual Boy and left the company in disgrace.

When Yokoi began working at Nintendo in the '60s, the company only produced playing cards. Yokoi was hired to maintain an assembly line.

When Hiroshi Yamauchi, president of Nintendo Co. Ltd., decided to expand his company's activities, he asked Yokoi to design toys. The Ultra Hand, Yokoi's first try at toy making, established Nintendo as a toy company. He later combined photocells and light guns to make an indoor skeet shooting simulation, thus launching Nintendo into the electronics industry.

Yokoi emerged as the dean of Nintendo's engineers. When Yamauchi decided to enter the video game industry, he turned to Yokoi. Nintendo's first games were not well accepted in the United States. Yamauchi asked Shigeru Miyamoto, a company artist, to create a concept for a new kind of video game. Miyamoto came up with Donkey

Kong, and it fell upon Yokoi and his team of engineers to create the hardware to bring Donkey Kong to life.

Yokoi's success was not limited to hardware. His research and development team designed several successful games including Dr. Mario and Metroid.

His greatest success, however, is Game Boy, the best-selling portable video game system of all time. First released in 1989, Game Boy has sold more than 48 million units worldwide. After seven years, the hardware continues to sell with only minor revisions.



First released in 1989, Game Boy has sold more than 48 million units worldwide.

▶ The Nintendo 64 has been preselling like hot cakes in gaming retail outlets across the United States, from small specialty shops to the big boys, like Toys 'R' Us and Electronics Boutique.



Pac-Man finds a new home and a chance to place 3-D gaming into the mainstream

The man with a voracious appetite for power pellets and a fear of ghosts is back in the arcades, but in a way you've never seen before: in full-fledged 3-D.

Virtual reality machine maker Virtuality has crafted a new game around the little yellow fellow, entitled Pac-Man VR, for use in its entertainment machines. Virtuality developed the game after it struck a licensing deal with Namco, which created the original arcade Pac-Man.

The VR gameplay keeps "much of the classic look and feel of the original," according to the company. However, this time the user is thrown into the maze as Pac-Man himself, instead of watching him from a flat 2-D screen.

"We're very excited about bringing Pac-Man to the VR medium," said Virtuality Vice President Mike Adams. "For the first time ever, you'll be able to see the world through Pac-Man's eyes, running around the maze, picking up pills and avoiding the ghosts."

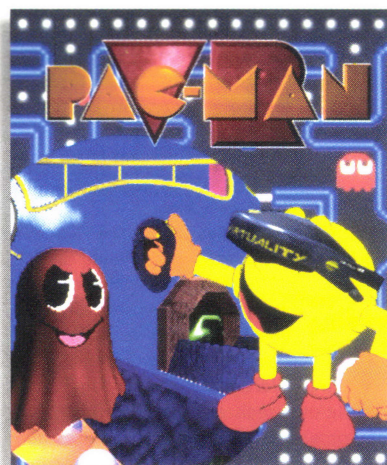
Aside from the virtual-reality setting, this game will be one of the first Pac-Man titles to support simultaneous multiplayer

participation. The game allows up to four players to see and talk to each other, as they navigate the mazes. Players can choose to cooperate with one another, or they can battle head-to-head instead.

Virtuality hopes the appeal of Pac-Man—an icon that owned the video-game scene in the mid-'80s—will entice more users (and vendors) to try virtual reality systems.

As a company, Virtuality has been one of the most successful: It has 1,400 of its VR systems installed in 41 countries—800 of them in the U.S. alone. But for all the successes in the virtual reality industry in general, it has yet to find a "killer game" that can turn VR machines into mainstream arcade staples. Both Namco and Virtuality officials believe Pac-Man VR can push toward that decisive turning point.

As a 2-D game, "Pac-Man set the standards for arcade gameplay," said Hideki Yoshimoto, a spokesperson for Namco. "We fully expect that Virtuality's new product will...bring virtual reality entertainment to a new high."



"For the first time ever, you'll be able to see the world through Pac-Man's eyes..."

—Mike Adams, vice president, Virtuality

Orchid Launches First "Voodoo" Chipset Graphics Accelerator

Orchid Technology, a subsidiary of Micronics Computers, launched the first consumer 3-D graphics accelerator card featuring the "voodoo" chipset in early October.

Although the hardware went officially on sale in the first week of October, many retail outlets have yet to see one production copy despite their mail

order counterparts receiving a limited supply. Despite this lack of immediate distribution, Orchid reportedly sold out of their first two production runs.

Largely known as the first of the "second-generation" of PC 3-D cards, Orchid's "Righteous 3-D" graphics board, has a retail price of \$299. The board will be packed in with several voodoo-capable games including Descent II, Hellbender, Monster Truck Madness, Scorched Planet, Whiplash, VR Soccer and MechWarrior II.

It appears that 3Dfx's chipset is gaining acceptance among developers. At press time it was officially announced that Psygnosis will bring out two popular racing games: Formula One and WipeOut XL. Lesser known Digital Image Design will produce a Voodoo-powered Eurofighter 2000, which is a top-flight PC simulation that will be published in the U.S. by Ocean

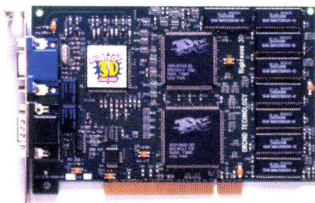


Deals are said to be in the works to use the "voodoo" chipset on Electronic Arts' Jane's Longbow.

software. Although Id Software is not making a voodoo-enhanced version of their popular 3-D game, Quake, the voodoo chipset will be the test platform for the Direct X version of the game, and will use many of the board's custom features.

Right now, many rumors are circulating concerning deals

that are in the works to sign game companies to produce special software that utilizes the "voodoo" chipset. Deals are said to be in the works with Electronic Arts regarding Jane's Longbow, and Sega of America, who is currently bringing a steady string of arcade translations to the IBM-PC.



After a long wait, the very first IBM-PC consumer graphics board sporting the powerful "voodoo" chipset has finally rolled onto store shelves in the form of Orchid's "Righteous 3-D" card.

No Cords? No Problem!

Just say no to wires! That's what Naki hopes gamers will be saying with the new Wireless Pro Controllers for the Sony PlayStation and the Sega Saturn.

The controllers look exactly like Naki's 32-Bit controllers, and offer similar features, such as a slow-motion button and turbo-fire functions. But instead of cords, the controllers send infrared signals to a receiver that plugs into the controller ports. An LED shows the battery power and ensures the controller is sending out signals properly.

According to Naki, the controller can be held at up to a 45-degree angle up to 14 feet away from the system—and up to 30 feet when pointed head-on with the receiver. For the most part, that playing range should work well with almost all gamers.

The controller doesn't have to stay at the same level as the system either; the pad worked fine several feet above and below



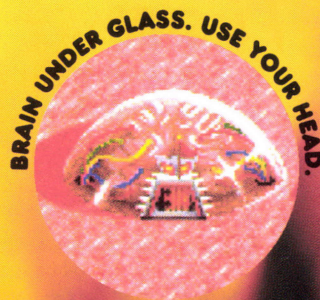
Instead of cords, the controllers send infrared signals to a receiver that plugs into the controller ports.

the system from a 10-foot distance. (A nice bonus: For those who have their PS hooked up to a stereo speaker system, the wireless pad becomes an audio CD remote control.)

Another plus for the controller is an automatic shutoff feature after no buttons are pressed for 140 seconds, which helps reduce battery consumption.

With games such as Doom, the PS pad worked fine, with no noticeable lag time or hiccups in responsiveness. However, the D-pad seemed unresponsive with fighting games such as Street Fighter Alpha. Moves such as forward jumps and fireball/dragon punch motions would only register about one-third of the time, which became rather annoying after a while. So while the controller would recommend for standard platform games, players will probably be better off not using it for fighting titles.

Both controllers should now be in stores. The PS version will retail for \$42.99, while the Sega Saturn version will sell for \$49.99. Each requires two AAA batteries, which the company says can power up to 40 hours of non-stop play.



BLOW UP COWS, EAT GOLDFISH, THEN GO TO HELL.

This is the bizarre world of Baldies. A world that you build and where lunacy reigns. The idea? Destroy the nasty little hairy guys before they destroy you—the Baldies. 15 devilishly clever weapons, 100 intense levels, hidden and bonus rounds, hot action graphics in five weird worlds (hell included). And it's the only multi-player, extended-play game with a chrome dome crew. Warning: May cause permanent hair loss.

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IG Shorts

■ RENT A' ME, MARIO:

Can the Nintendo 64 still be successful if no one buys it? Sure—at rental stores, anyway. The N64 and Super Mario 64 have muscled their way into the rental scene, according to sales figures from the Video Software Dealers Association. In its debut week, Super Mario 64 was in the top-three video game titles rented, overall with \$52,000 in gross revenue. That may sound like small potatoes, but if you figure an average rental cost of \$4, that comes down to one Mario 64 rental per minute—not bad, considering that it was just the first week of the N64's release.

■ FF7 TO HIT U.S.:

This news has been expected for a while, but in case you've been living in a cave...Sony has packed in a demo CD of SquareSoft's epic Final Fantasy VII game, with the 3-D fighting game Tobal No. 1—just as it was in Japan. It's not known yet if this demo disk will offer the same mini-plot as the Japanese version.

■ BACK TO THE FUTURE:

Seer Technologies and INFOgy have developed a new way to pay for Internet access: pre-paid debit cards. This may not seem important now, but they hope to apply the technology to video game machines—both home and arcade—when the service comes out in the United States in late 1997. The card, when stuck in a "video game box" with proper software, will give users instant access to the Internet and e-mail. Each card will cost \$15 for 100 minutes of connect time. The company hopes its route to the Web will prove more appealing than current options, which usually require monthly fees and sign-up hassles, officials from both companies contend.

■ WIPEOUT + MACARENA = ?:

If the next song you hear at a dance club gives you the urge to play video games, listen carefully: It might be a tune from the WipeOut XL game. Music publisher Astral Works is producing the soundtrack for WipeOut XL, which should be out in stores now. It'll feature techno music from groups such as the Chemical Brothers, Future Sound of London, The Prodigy, Underworld, Fluke and Photek.



HOT TOP 15

Top 15 Arcade Games



1. **Tekken 2**
Namco
2. **Soul Edge Version 2**
Namco
3. **Die Hard Arcade**
Sega
4. **Metal Slug**
SNK
5. **Golden Tee 3D Golf**
Incred. Tech
6. **Bust-A-Move Again**
Taito
7. **Striker 1945**
Worldwide Video

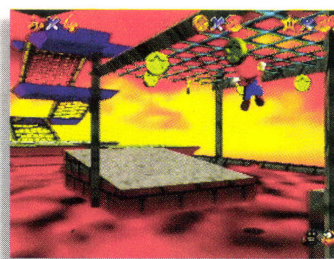
8. **Marvel Super Heroes**
Capcom
9. **Viper**
Fabtek
10. **Puzzle Fighter**
Capcom
11. **Street Fighter Alpha 2**
Capcom
12. **Ultimate MK3**
Midway
13. **Run & Gun 2**
Konami
14. **Raiden DX**
Fabtek
15. **Dungeons & Dragons '96**
Capcom

Readers Top 15



1. **Super Mario 64**
Nintendo/ Nintendo 64
2. **Die Hard Trilogy**
Fox Interactive/ PlayStation
3. **Tekken 2**
Namco/ PlayStation
4. **PilotWings 64**
Nintendo / Nintendo 64
5. **Madden NFL97**
EA Sports/ PlayStation
6. **Wave Race 64**
Nintendo/ N64
7. **Andretti Racing**
EA/ PlayStation

8. **NCAA Game breaker**
Sony CEA/ PlayStation
9. **Crash Bandicoot**
Sony CEA/ PlayStation
10. **Formula One**
Psygnosis/ PlayStation
11. **VF Kids**
Sega/Saturn
12. **Black Dawn**
Virgin/ PlayStation
13. **Ridge Racer Revolution**
Namco/ PlayStation
14. **Nights**
Sega/ Saturn
15. **Bogey Dead 6**
Sony CEA/ PlayStation



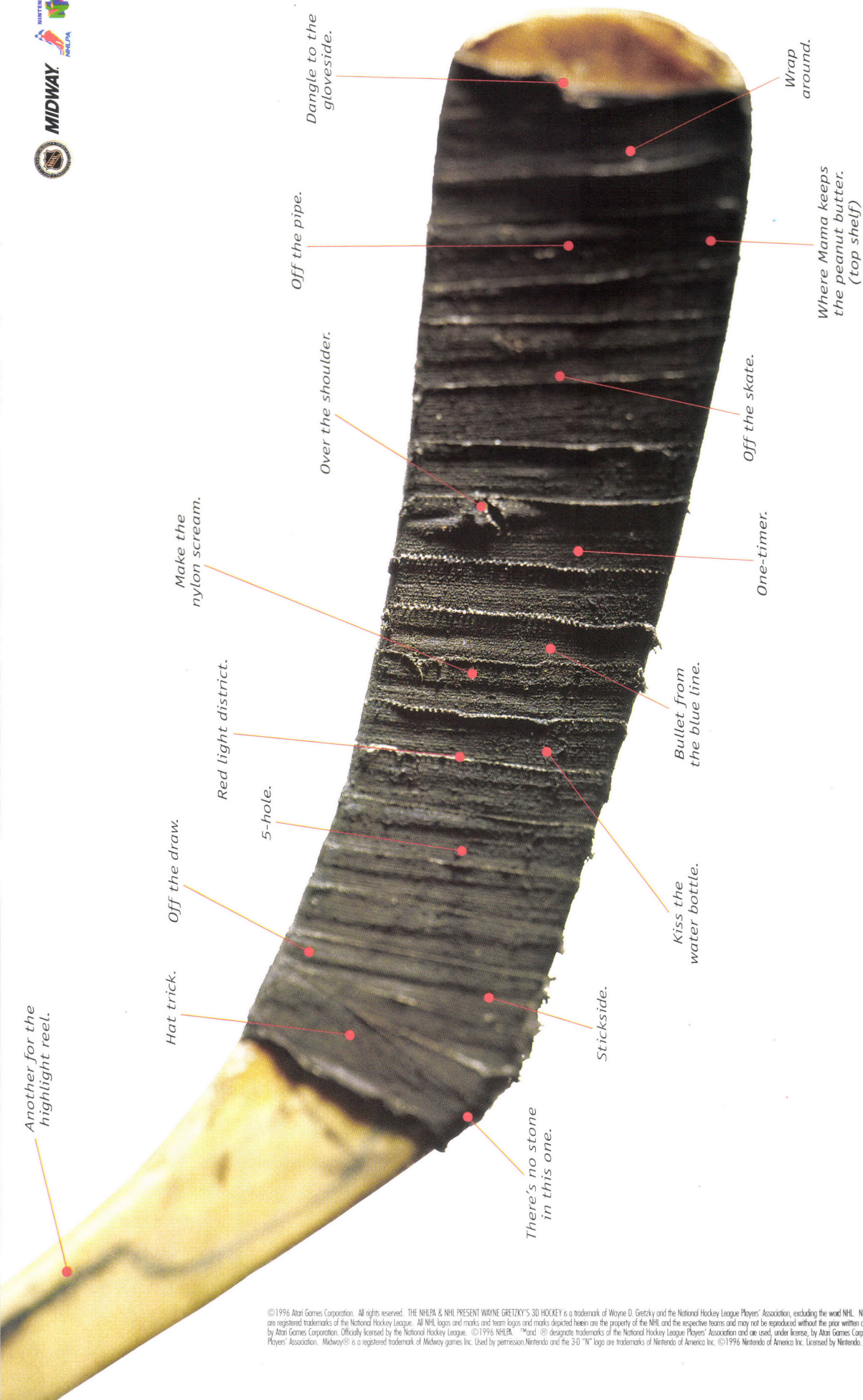
Current Release Top 15

1. **Super Mario 64**
Nintendo/ Nintendo 64
2. **SFA 2**
Capcom/ Saturn
3. **MK Trilogy**
Williams/ PlayStation
4. **Tekken 2**
Namco/ PlayStation
5. **Tetris Attack**
Nintendo/ SNES
6. **UMK3**
Williams/ Saturn
7. **Die Hard Trilogy**
Fox Interactive/ PlayStation
8. **Madden '97**
EA/ PlayStation
9. **Crash Bandicoot**
Sony/ PlayStation
10. **Nights**
Sega/ Saturn
11. **NFL Gameday '97**
Sony CEA/ PlayStation
12. **NCAA Gamebreaker**
Sony CEA/ PlayStation
13. **Decathlete**
Sega/ Saturn
14. **Iron Storm**
Working Designs/ Saturn
15. **Jumping Flash! 2**
Sony CEA/ PlayStation

IG's Editors' Personal Top 15



1. **Wave Race 64**
Nintendo/ N64
2. **NCAA Game breaker**
Sony CEA/ PlayStation
3. **Wipeout XL**
Sony CEA/ PlayStation
4. **NBA Live '97**
EA/ PlayStation
5. **Madden NFL 97**
EA/ PlayStation
6. **NFL GameDay '97**
Sony CEA/ PlayStation
7. **NHL Face Off '97**
Sony CEA/ PlayStation
8. **Formula One**
Sony CEA/ PlayStation
9. **Wayne Gretzky's 3D Hockey**
Williams/ Nintendo 64
10. **Daytona USA: CCE**
Sega/Saturn
11. **Destruction Derby 2**
Psygnosis/ PlayStation
12. **Pandemonium!**
Crystal Dynamics /PlayStation
13. **Street Fighter Alpha 2**
Capcom/Saturn
14. **World Wide Soccer '97**
Sega
15. **Black Dawn**
Virgin/ PlayStation

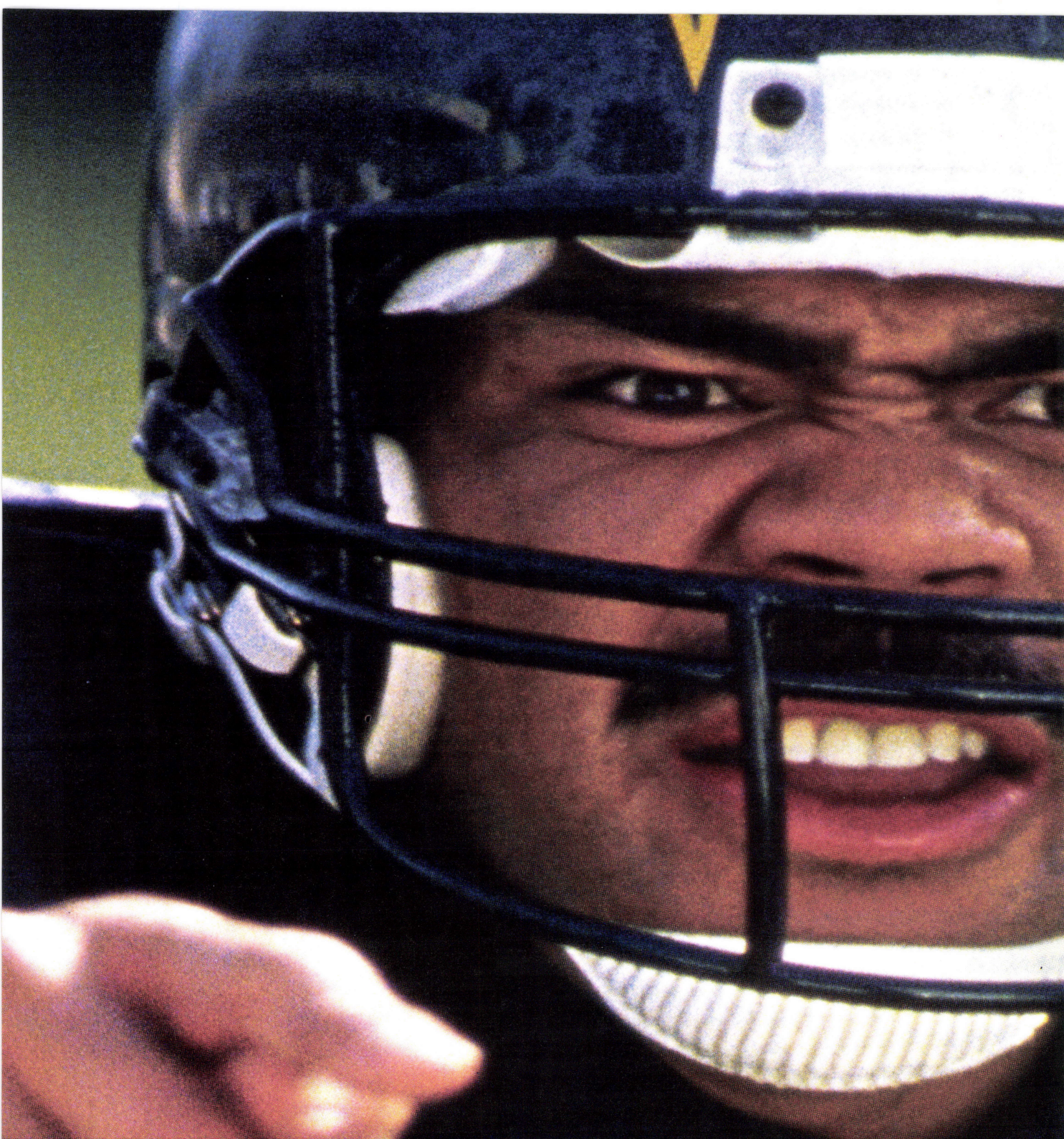


WAYNE IS IN THE DETAILS

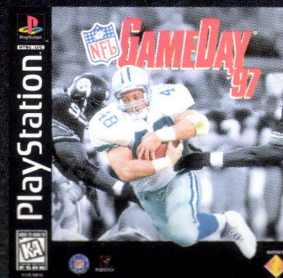
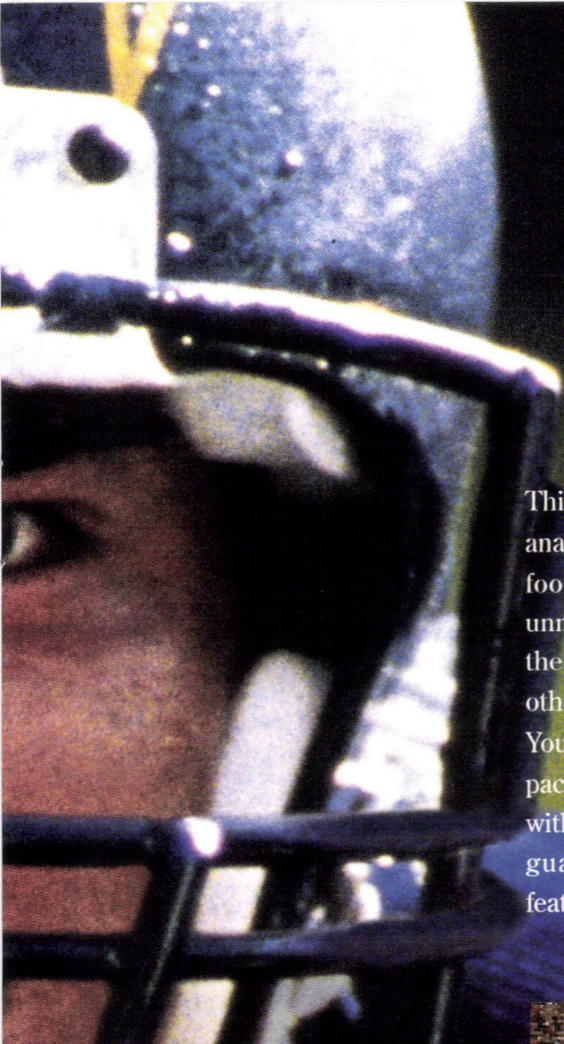
Wayne puree. Wayne concentrate. Essence du Great One. Call it what you will, this game is 100% pure Gretzky. In 3-D no less. With Wayne's own moves, strategies, and thoughts digitized for future generations. So you can use Wayne's skills plus his brains as you play 3-on-3, 4-on-4, or 5-on-5 against the best in the NHL. It's not just the monster arcade hit coming home, it's the most realistic 3-D hockey game ever. The way Wayne really plays. Fast. Furious. And in 3-D. Amen.



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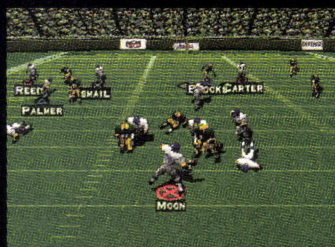
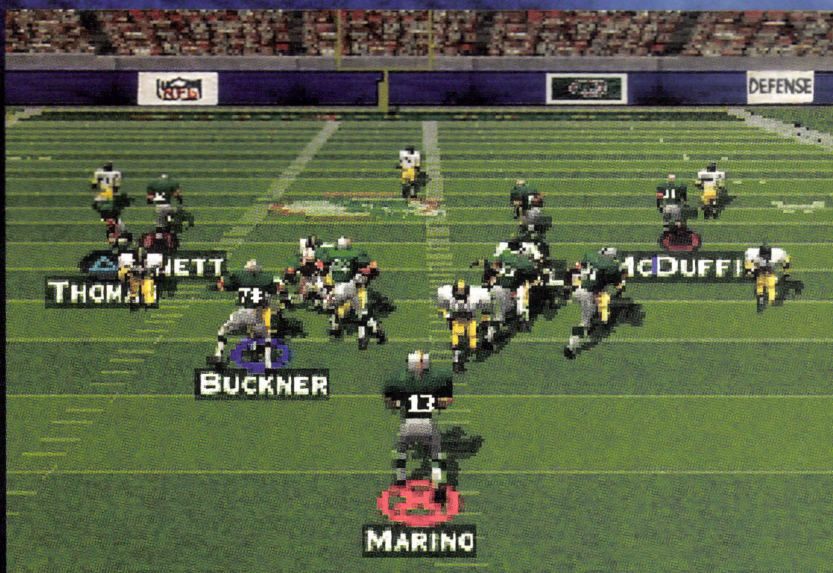


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This isn't a game, it's a war. So be prepared for battle. Now, enough military analogies, let's talk football. This is NFL GameDay '97. It's better than any football game ever created. The artificial intelligence in this game is unmatched. Players on the field think, react and perform like they do in the NFL. Defenses and offenses learn your tendencies and key on them. In other words, there are no bread and butter plays to go to on third and long. You'll go head-on with real defensive coverages, including nickel and dime packages and Dallas' Cover 4. Defensive fronts attack your offensive line with stunts and swim techniques. And with new, larger players you'll see guards and tackles trapping and pulling. This game is loaded with features, too. This is real football, baby. So welcome to the NFL.

YOU AND WHAT ARMY?



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©/TM 1996 NFLP. The Players Inc logo is an official trademark of the NFL Players. © 1996 Players Inc. Developed by Sony Interactive Studios America. © 1996 Sony Interactive Entertainment Inc. www.sony.com PANCAKE

By all accounts, 1996 must be considered an exceptional year in video game history. In the last 12 months, 32-Bit gaming finally became affordable. Sega misplaced its mascot, Sony got a mascot, and Nintendo's plumber came out of hiding just in time to deliver one of the best games ever made.

The year began painfully with many companies suffering from slower-than-expected Christmas sales. Electronic Arts received sharp criticism for not releasing a 32-Bit version of John Madden Football, and Sony was able to establish the PlayStation as the best next-generation platform for sports simulations based on GameDay '97 and NHL Face Off.

In May, Jim Whims, senior vice president of Sony Computer Entertainment of America, shocked the video game-loving universe by dropping the price of the PlayStation to \$199. Sega and Nintendo scoffed, talked about higher prices for better products then matched Sony's price.

May also marked the one-year anniversary of the Sega Saturn. Despite the release of Virtua Cop and Virtua Fighter II, the Saturn's U.S. sales figures still lagged far behind those of the PlayStation.

In June, Nintendo single-handedly created riots by releasing the N64 in Japan. Two 300,000-unit shipments disappeared from store shelves, then N64 sales slowed considerably, but not before Nintendo had grabbed a sizable chunk of the Japanese next-generation market.

INTELLIGENT GAMER'S TOP 10 OF '96



Pictured below are the best of the best; IG's cream of the crop of console video games that were released between Nov. 21, 1995 and Nov. 1, 1996. (100 percent final preproduction games received before Nov. 1, 1996 but released afterward still qualify).



1 Super Mario 64

Oh, come on, as if you thought that there was any game that could even come close to getting the number-one overall spot besides Super Mario 64? Easily the best game of the year, and a great sign of things to come on the Nintendo 64. Congrats!



2 Wave Race 64



3 Virtua Fighter 2



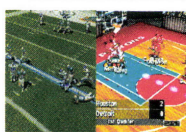
4 WipeOut XL



5 Tomb Raider



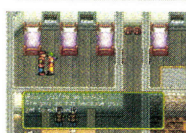
6 Sega Rally Championship



7 TIE: Madden NFL 97/ NBA Live 97



8 Worldwide Soccer '97



9 Suikoden



10 The Legend of Oasis

The Best

TOP 5 PLAYSTATION GAMES



Sony had a very impressive first full year, easily destroying their main competition (Sega) in terms of both hardware and software sales. Some would argue that there was less of a ratio of crap games to good games on the Saturn than there was on the PlayStation, but regardless—from the company's point of view, they really couldn't be doing much better than they are right now. Here are *IG's* favorites...

The biggest casualties of the game industry occurred during the summer. Tom Kalinske, the president of Sega of America, resigned and Shoichiro Irimajiri was named the new president and CEO. In response, Sony replaced its senior vice president, Jim Whims, with Shigeo Marayama.

Knowing that Nintendo would dominate the headlines in September, Sega launched *NiGHTS*, one of the biggest games of the year, in August. Created by Yuji Naka, who also designed *Sonic the Hedgehog*, *NiGHTS* was sold bundled with an analog/digital controller that looked suspiciously inspired by the controller of the N64.

(Continued next page)

1

WipeOut XL

Psygnosis' ultimate antigravity racing hit simply blows away all competition on the PS. Featuring an awesome soundtrack (in full surround sound no less) and the same blistering gameplay that made the original an instant hit, *WipeOut XL* was the unanimous winner for *IG's* PS game of the year. Even better with a neGcon.



2

Tomb Raider

Eidos' surprise hit has been turning heads around the office for weeks now. Other than M64, there's nothing quite like it.



Suikoden

Konami's RPG is one of the best ever. A great story, an award-winning soundtrack and great gameplay combine for a winner.

3

TIE: Madden NFL 97/ NBA Live 97

EA's one-two punch is sure to make the competition sweat. Both games are sports fans' dreams come true.



Tekken 2

Aside from *Virtua Fighter 2* and *SSF2T*, *Tekken 2* is probably the fighter with the most technique around. And it tops the arcade!

4

5

of '96

Predictably, September belonged to Nintendo. Sony attracted a little attention on the first anniversary of the PlayStation by releasing Crash Bandicoot and announcing that over 2 million PlayStations had been shipped in the United States, but all eyes were on the N64.

Though the N64 was not supposed to go on sale until Sept. 29, a few retailers began handing out presold units a few days early. Of the 350,000 units delivered to retailers, an estimated 310,000 units sold out in two days. Sales of Super Mario 64, one of two games available at the release of the system, were at an unmatched one-to-one ratio with the Nintendo 64 hardware.

(Continued on page 41)

TOP 5 SATURN GAMES



It's no secret that the Saturn has been playing catch-up for pretty much all of the last 15 months, but it'd be real hard to count the system out with such great games as Virtua Fighter 2, Sega Rally, NIGHTS, Virtual On and the Saturn's growing RPG library, not to mention the new NetLink modem. Without the arcade lineup, things might not be as rosy...



1

Virtua Fighter 2

One of Sega's "big three" arcade ports from last year, VF2 is still the highest-quality game available for the Saturn, when considering not only the incredible gameplay, but the astounding technical feats achieved by AM2 when porting the game. The only sad part is that it's been nearly a year now and there still hasn't been a game of equal strength.

2 Sega Rally Championship

Sega's awesome arcade racer came home with all the extras, including split-screen play and fantastic off-road gameplay.



4 Legend of Oasis

Sega's huge prequel to the Genesis best-seller Beyond Oasis is one of the deepest action-RPG quests around.

3 Worldwide Soccer '97

The recently released WWS '97 is the best sports game available for the Saturn, and the best 32-Bit soccer game around.



5 Iron Storm

Working Designs' World War II strategy game has been heralded by even the most stubborn of strategy/sim critics.

IG'S HONORABLE MENTIONS

Obviously, we couldn't include every game that we'd have liked to in our "Best of" lists since we're confined to listing only five titles per system. Therefore, we decided to put together a small list of honorable mentions, or "runners-up" for the games that didn't quite make it to our top 5s, but are worthy of mention nonetheless.

SEGA SATURN:
NIGHTS (Sega)
Night Warriors (Capcom)
Street Fighter Alpha 2 (Capcom)
Panzer Dragoon Zwei (Sega)
World Series Baseball II (Sega)
Virtua Cop (Sega)
Guardian Heroes (Sega)
NHL Powerplay '96 (Virgin)

SONY PLAYSTATION:
Formula 1 (Psygnosis)
NHL 97 (EA Sports)
Die Hard Trilogy (Fox Interactive)
NHL Face Off 97 (Sony CEA)
Jumping Flash! 2 (Sony CEA)
Resident Evil (Capcom)
Ridge Racer Revolution (Namco)
Namco Museum Series (Namco)

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Virtua Cop™ 2. Twice as lethal.

There's shooting. And then there's slaughter. Virtua Cop™ 2 is faster, deeper, more challenging, and more fatally engaging than its predecessor. And, like its predecessor, it was an arcade smash hit before being brought, faithfully translated, to the powerful multi-processor Saturn. For the full arcade experience and maximum mayhem, don't pack anything less than the optional Stunner™ arcade gun. It's just what your trigger finger itches for.



**VIRTUA
COP 2™**

Only On

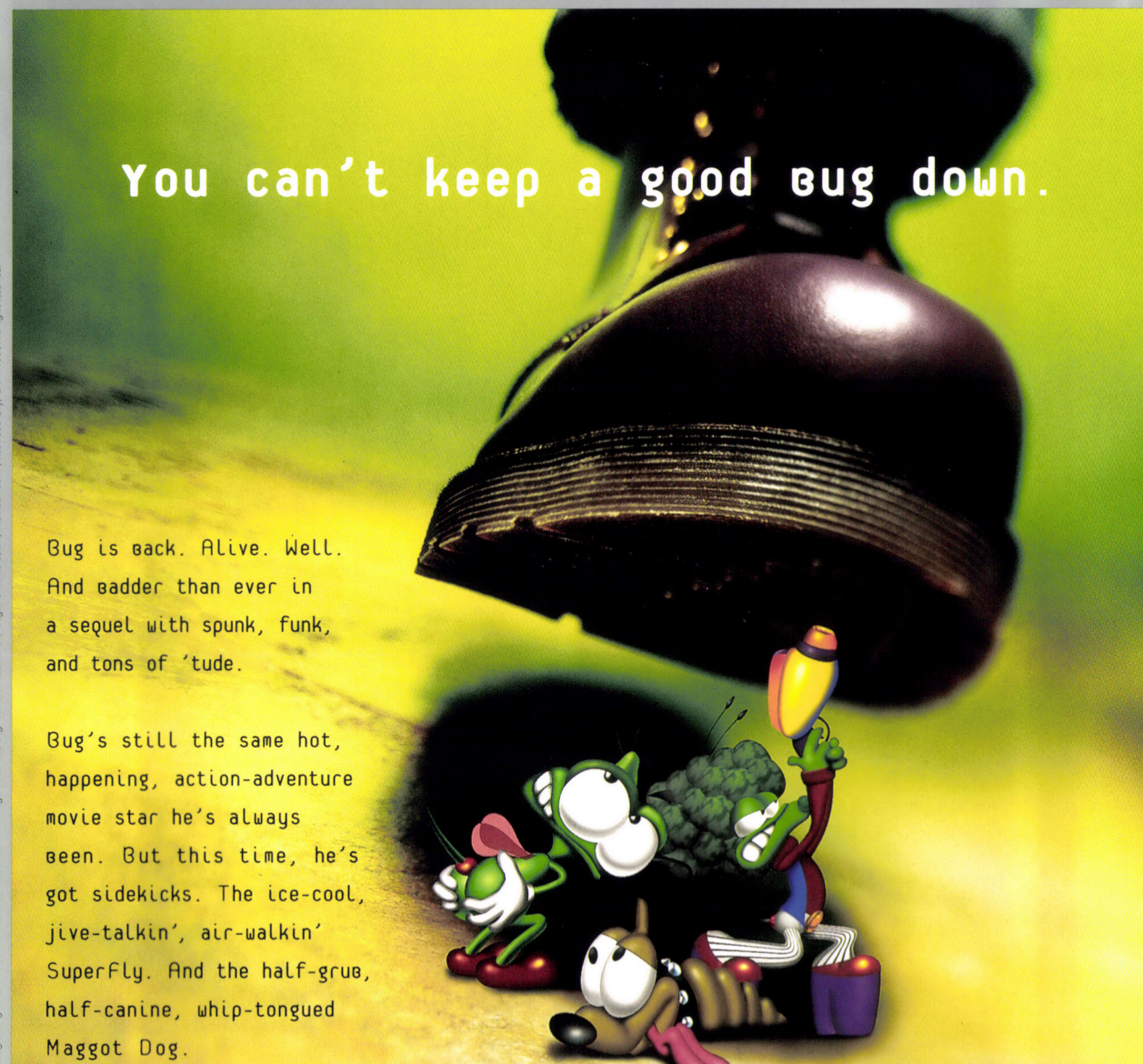


SEGA SATURN
www.sega.com



PLAY ON.

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You can't keep a good bug down.

Bug is back. Alive. Well. And badder than ever in a sequel with spunk, funk, and tons of 'tude.

Bug's still the same hot, happening, action-adventure movie star he's always been. But this time, he's got sidekicks. The ice-cool, jive-talkin', air-walkin' SuperFly. And the half-grue, half-canine, whip-tongued Maggot Dog.



Strut along with them as they sass-ass and wise-crack their way through knock-down drag-outs with Sandanistan Worms. Amazon Ant Women. Even Saturn-Headed Space Vampires. And, oh yes, be sure to keep the Bug Juice flowing.

**BUG
TOO™**

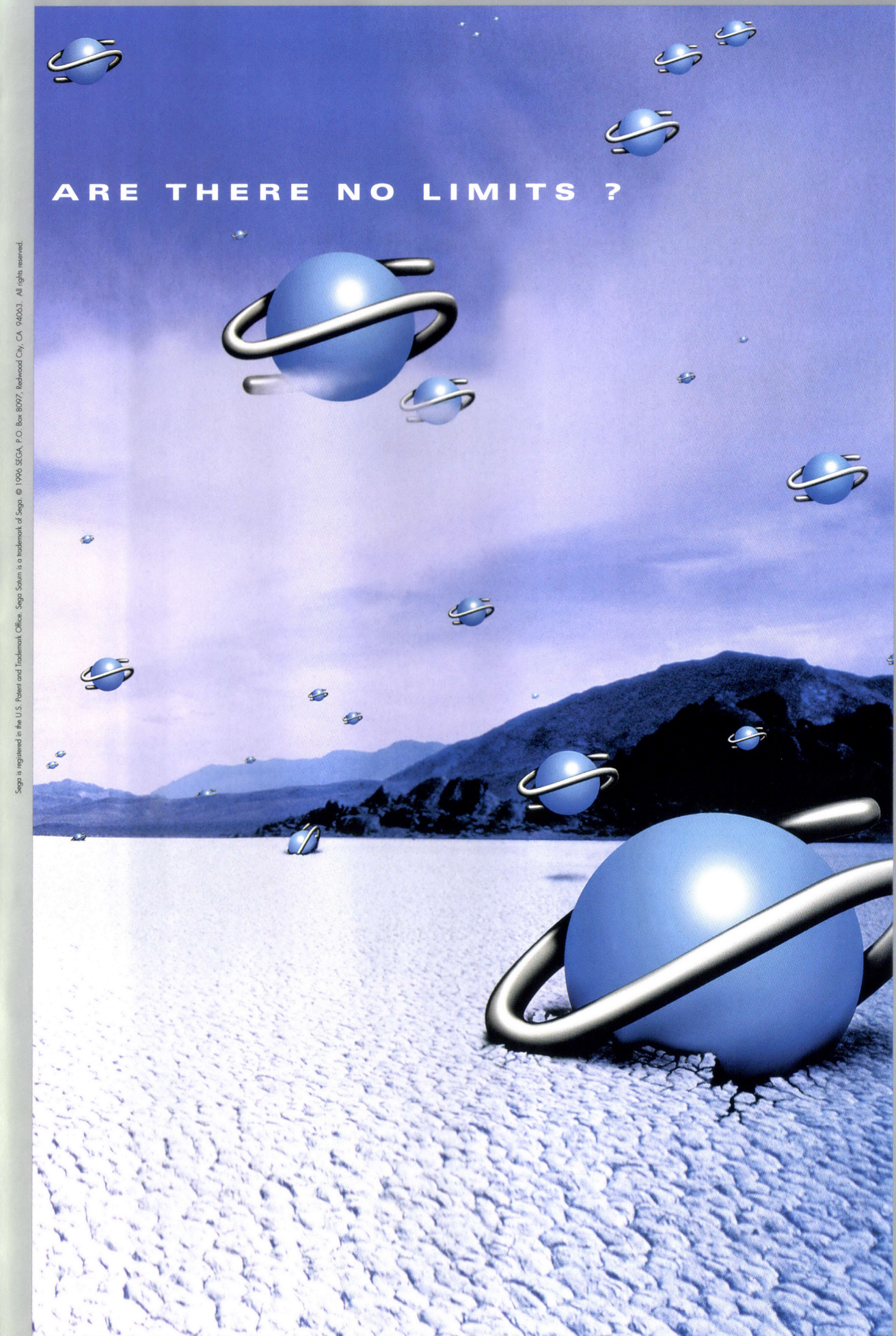
Cooler than a spit attack.



SEGA SATURN
www.sega.com



YOU JUST CAN'T BEAT THE SYSTEM.

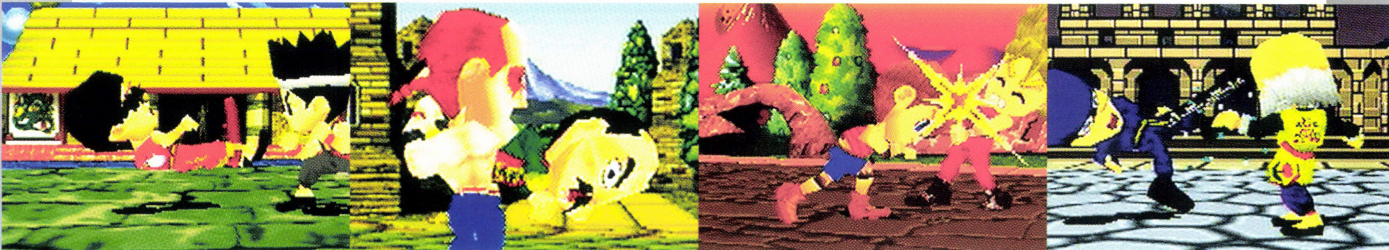


ARE THERE NO LIMITS ?

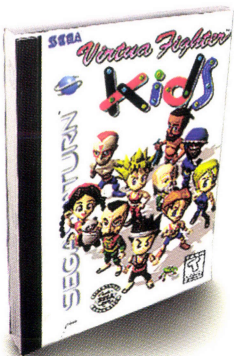
IF IT'S ALL ABOUT GAMES, THERE ARE NO LIMITS. OUR GAMES KEEP GETTING BETTER.

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They learned
everything from
their parents.
Except respect.

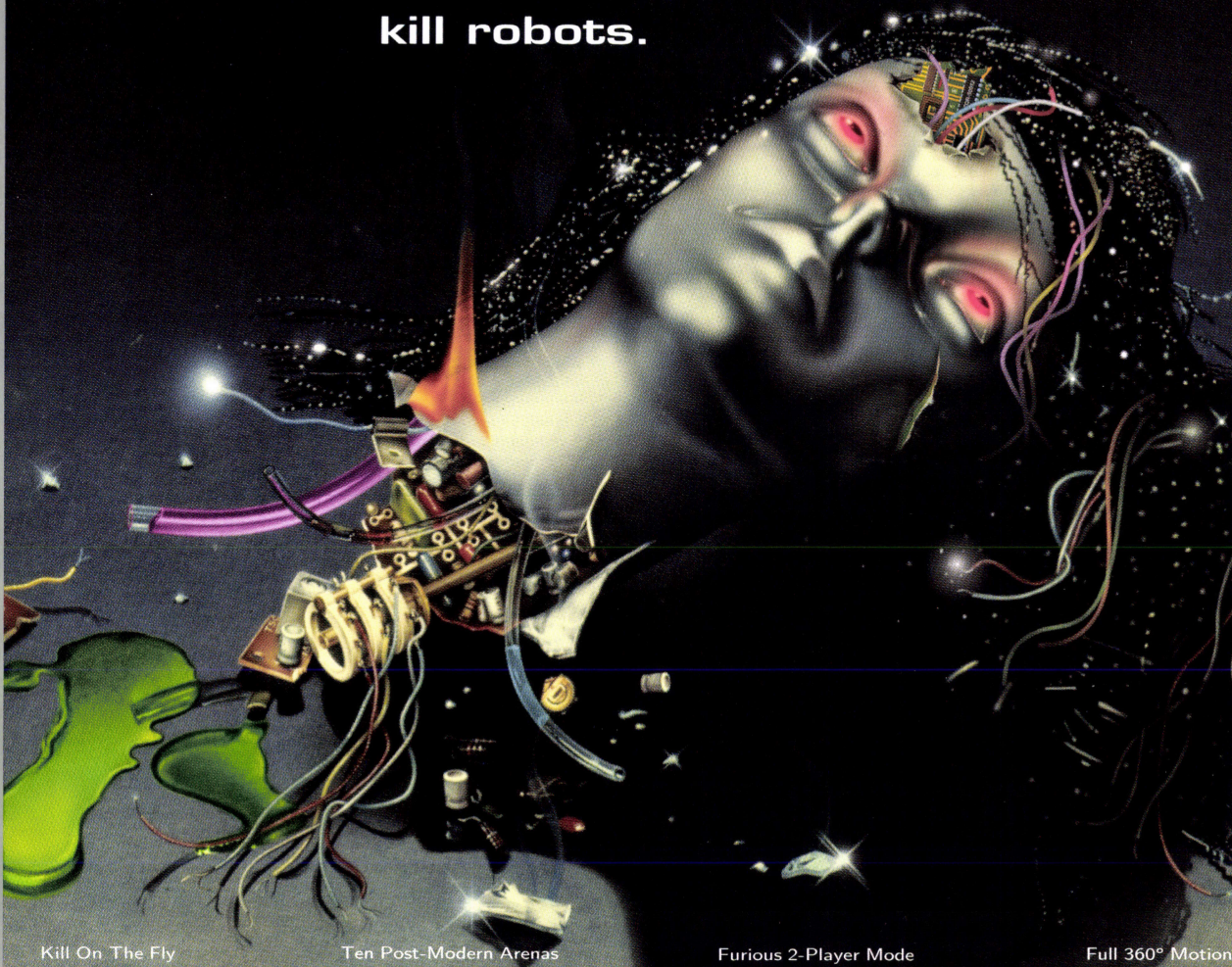


The next Virtua Fighter® generation has been born. Trouble is, somebody forgot to teach them how to be nice little boys and girls. These kids kick. They smash. They nail combinations their VF parents can't, and would probably never approve of. But don't worry. The only spankings in this game will come in the form of well-placed body slams. And when it's all over, you'll have the privilege of saying you slapped around some pint-sized punk.

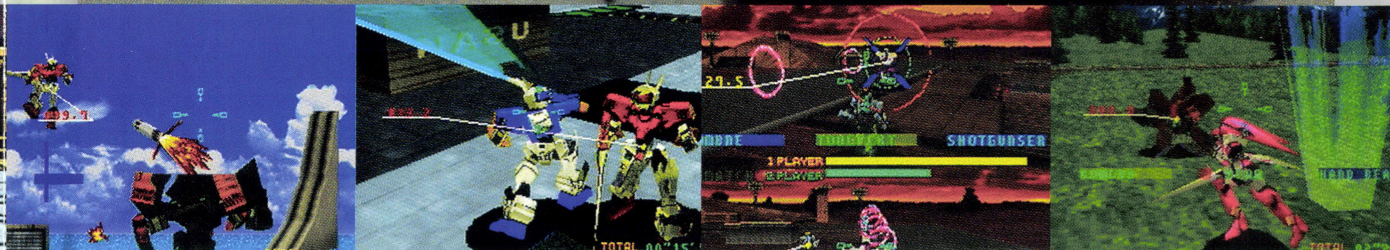


PLAY ON, FRIENDS.

Guns don't kill robots.
Cyber Troopers with napalm bombs
kill robots.



Kill On The Fly Ten Post-Modern Arenas Furious 2-Player Mode Full 360° Motion



You've got a battalion of cyborg centurions. They've got an arsenal of death-dealing weapons. They're on a rampage, hell-bent on your annihilation. And they prefer to kill at close range, with a certain in-your-face intimacy. It's warp-speed 3D mechanized combat at its absolute ugliest. And Sega Saturn's multiple processors give it all the adrenaline-pumping, gut-wrenching action of the arcade version.



AND ON.

Born in
arcades. Abused.
Caged. And brought
to your home.

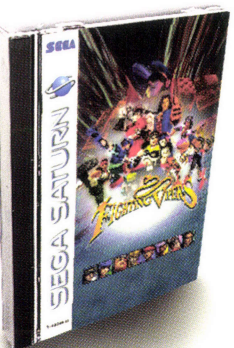


LEARN THE TRUE MEANING OF RAGE.

Fighting Vipers®, the most vicious arcade streetfighters ever, are now on their way to your home. Skatepunks. Rollerbladers. Axe-wielding rockers. Caged. Enraged. And ready to fight filthy, killer, armor-stripping slams. Nasty moves that blow combatants through cage walls. Brutality. Carnage. Kick-butt realism. Funky venues. Fatal distractions. Arenas with electric and razor-wire fences. It's all here. Wanna pick a fight?



Arcade Smash Hit Beat-Strip Opponent's Armor. Body-Spank Foes Through Cage Walls. Certifiably Psychotic Characters



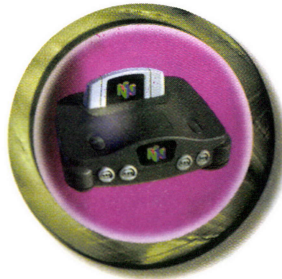
AND ON.

TOP 5 NINTENDO 64 GAMES

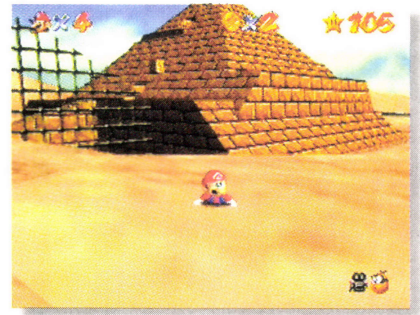
At the Electronic Entertainment Exposition, Nintendo of America CEO Howard Lincoln announced that only 500,000 N64s would be shipped to the United States by Christmas. Responding to the overwhelming response, Nintendo announced that 400,000 units allocated for European distribution would be rerouted to the U.S.

The final news of the year came when Sega announced that Sonic Xtreme, the highly touted Saturn introduction of Sonic the Hedgehog, would not be released this year. According to one Sega spokesperson, the game needs to be worked a bit more before its final release.

ig



With perhaps the most-anticipated system launch in video game history, Nintendo has done a fabulous job stealing the spotlight from 32-Bit competitors Sony and Sega. Selling over three times as many systems in its first weekend as Sony did during their first weekend last year, it looks as if Nintendo is back and here to stay.



Super Mario 64

Nintendo once again rewrote the book on video games with the amazing Super Mario 64. No other game has ever offered the same perfect blend of amazing gameplay, stunning visuals, and that tried-and-true Miyamoto magic that just keeps you playing...and playing...and playing...

TOP 5 PC GAMES

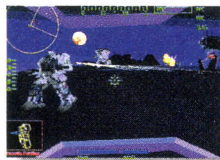


If there was a predominant theme that characterized PC gaming in 1996, it would be the evolution of multiplayer gaming and the fruition of the Internet as a viable gaming resource. Never before had so many games offered Internet competition right out of the box, and to think that this year is just the beginning...



2 C&C: Red Alert

Command & Conquer: Red Alert is an excellent realtime war sim that is doubly as terrific when played as a multiplayer game.



3 MechWarrior II: Mercenaries

This outstanding sequel solidifies Activision's domination of the robot simulation style of games.



2 Wave Race 64

Following right behind Mario, Wave Race 64 is easily one of the most impressive racing games of all time. Another instant classic.



3 Wayne Gretzky's 3D Hockey

Incredible realism and two completely separate modes of play (arcade mode and season mode) highlight this great game.



Quake

Id Software again redefined the 3-D genre of games in addition to setting the role model for Internet games to come. There is no better multiplayer game on the market and the one-player mode is a great deal of bloody fun too.



4 Jane's Longbow

See Jane's game, see Jane's game sell. EA's premier simulation possesses a great blend of gameplay, graphics and realism.



4 Star Wars: Shadows of the Empire

Several types of gameplay and stunning music (especially for a cart!) makes Shadows one of the finest third-party N64 games this year.



5 Daggerfall

Bethesda's unbelievably deep RPG may have broken records for software delays, but it may also break sales records too.



5 PilotWings 64

Not as intense as the first four N64 titles here, but regardless, PilotWings 64 is a flight sim fan's dream come true.



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SPORTS SERIES™



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**HIGHER RESOLUTION
GRAPHICS**

18 DIFFERENT DUNK SHOTS

**FULL SEASON AND
PLAYOFF MODES**

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SUBSTITUTIONS

PUMP FAKES

FOULS

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NO TRADING LIMITS

FULL 12-MAN ROSTERS



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**ALL 29 NBA TEAMS
INTUITIVE CROWD REACTIONS
POST PLAYS**



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IG Reports from the
AMOA Trade Show

COMING SOON TO AN

The Amusement and Music Operators Association (AMOA) held its annual trade show in the Dallas Convention Center in September. This is the show in which the leading arcade companies unveil their best games for the year.

Konami Reveals Revolutionary Arcade Hardware:

Konami unveiled Cobra, an impressive new hardware system, at the show which was developed in collaboration with International Business Machines (IBM). According to Konami executives, their new game hardware is capable of drawing up to 5 million polygons and as many as 250 million pixels per second. By comparison, most arcade hardware is only capable of drawing up to 300,000 polygons per second.

Because they did not have any finished games to demonstrate on their new system, Konami had a small room off the main floor of the show in which they ran video tape of an unfinished fighting game created with Cobra hardware.

The footage Konami demonstrated was very attractive and featured such special effects as mist, weather changes and rotating camera angles. A Konami spokesperson said the game was running at 1 million polygons per second, only one fifth of Cobra's maximum rendering speed.

According to Konami, the AM3 hardware running Virtua Fighter 3, Sega's new state-of-the-art fighting game, runs at a maximum rate of one million polygons per second. Cobra has the potential of working at five times that pace.

◀ The long-awaited U.S. debut of Virtua Fighter 3 finally took place at AMOA. VF3 features incredibly detailed graphics that make use of Sega's new Model 3 board.



◀ WaveRunner is a graphically impressive new Jet Ski racing game by Sega GameWorks. From what we've seen so far, none of the new arcade Jet Ski games look as good as Nintendo's Wave Race 64.

Several Companies Unveil Alpine Racer:

Last year, Alpine Racer—Namco's very impressive downhill skiing simulator—took the AMOA show by storm. Alpine Racer took the full-body experience of deluxe driving simulations and put them into a skiing game. It was named game of the show.

Because of the success of Alpine Racer, this year's AMOA was cluttered with deluxe simulations. One of the most popular themes was Jet Skiing. Sega GameWorks is releasing a Jet Ski game called Waverunner, Konami is releasing Wave Shark and Namco is releasing Aqua Jet.

With so many Jet Skiing, skiing and snow boarding games, the most innovative game in this category is Prop Cycle, from Namco. In Prop Cycle, players fly a pedal-powered gyrocopter along aerial obstacle courses. The game does not require too much physical exertion, it does require players to modulate their peddling speed while steering, however.



◀ Namco's AquaJet is just one of the many new Jet Ski racers that will be popping up in arcades soon.

The AM3 hardware running Virtua Fighter 3 runs at a maximum rate of 1 million polygons per second. Konami's Cobra has the potential of working at five times that pace.

ARCADE NEAR YOU...

Cruis 'N World Named "Best New Equipment"

Williams, Bally, Midway walked away from this year's judging with both the top video game and pinball honors.

Cruis 'N World, the sequel to Cruis 'N U.S.A., was picked as the top video game. Designed by Eugene Jarvis (creator of Defender and Robotron), this new Cruis 'N game features such new vehicles as a Hummer and mail carts. As one Williams employee put it, "You can do a lot of cool things now. You can even pop wheelies."

The game also includes several new kinds of terrain from around the globe. Another fabulous looking racing game was Atari's San Francisco Rush.

On the pinball side, Williams attracted a lot of attention with Scared Stiff, a new pinball table based on the world of Elvira, Queen of the Dark. The game features many electro-mechanical hot spots, and players hear the digitized



Cruis 'N World is the sequel to Nintendo's 1995 arcade (and soon to be N64) racing hit Cruis 'N U.S.A., and features many enhancements over the original game.

voice of Elvira throughout the game.

Capcom also came out with a highly innovative pinball table—Flipper Football, designed by veteran table designer Python Angelo. Flipper Football is a soccer simulation with goals at the top and bottom of the playing field. Every time players knock the ball through the goal at the top of the table, they score a point. Every time the ball rolls through the sinkhole at the base of the table, the opposing team scores.

Unlike traditional pinball games which end when the player goes through three balls, Flipper Football runs on a timer. Once the timer runs out, the team with the most points wins.



Another major new offering from Sega is the new Die Hard Arcade coin-op, which features awesome graphics and gameplay. Funny how all the Die Hard games are just NOW beginning to show up...



Sega showed off their hot new racing game, Touring Car Championship, which is somewhat of a mix of all of Sega's previous arcade-racing titles.



"You can do a lot of cool things now. You can even pop wheelies."

Our New Righteous Accelerate More T

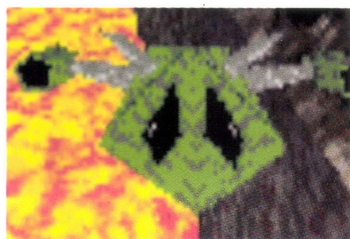
WARNING:

RUNNING PC GAMES
WITH RIGHTEOUS 3D™
ACCELERATOR
MAY RESULT IN
SHORTNESS OF BREATH,
INCREASED HEART RATE,
GIDDINESS.

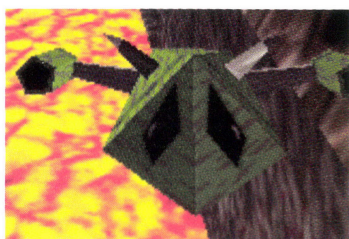


3D™ Accelerator Will Shout Your Graphics.

INTRODUCING RIGHTEOUS 3D. WHETHER YOU'RE INTO SERIOUS FLIGHT SIMS OR HARDCORE MUTANT-BLASTING, THERE'S NOTHING IN THE GALAXY THAT CAN PUMP MORE 3D REALITY INTO YOUR GAMES.



*Descent™II: Destination Quartzon 3D
Without Righteous 3D*



*Descent™II: Destination Quartzon 3D
With Righteous 3D*

That's because Righteous 3D has some of the most advanced features ever designed into a 3D accelerator. Like real-time interactive rendering, dual 64-bit memory architecture, advanced filtering and anti-aliasing,

built-in transparent and translucent effects and Windows® 95 Direct3D™ support, to name a few.

But all this rocket science is just technobabble if it can't make your games more fun. Which is exactly what Righteous 3D does. You not only get eye-popping visual effects—smooth textured images and outrageous atmospherics—you get full speed interactivity. Something no mere graphics board can deliver.

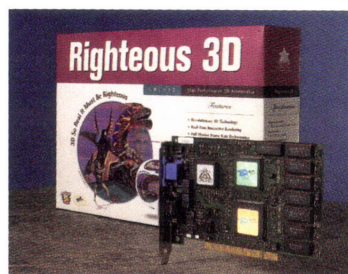
In fact, Righteous 3D is the first accelerator of its kind that can render complex 3D images at full-motion frame rates.

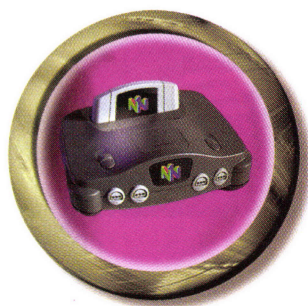
And much higher heart rates.

No more pixels. No more herky-jerky

stick figures. Just sharp, clear images that move like nothing you've ever seen on a monitor. Which can make good games great. And great games truly awesome.

So get a grip on reality. Visit your computer retailer or our website at www.orchid.com, or call us for more information at 1-800-806-9142. And see what a little adrenaline can do for your system.





RECENT RELEASES

Cruis'n USA [Nintendo]
Killer Instinct Gold [Nintendo]
Mortal Kombat Trilogy [Williams]
PilotWings 64 [Nintendo]
Super Mario 64 [Nintendo]
Wave Race 64 [Nintendo]
Wayne Gretzky's 3D Hockey [Williams]

DECEMBER

Blast Corps [Nintendo]
NBA Hang Time [Williams]
Star Wars: Shadows of the Empire [Nintendo]
Tetrisphere [Nintendo]

ANNOUNCED TITLES FOR 1997

Body Harvest [Nintendo]
Buggie Boogie [Nintendo]
Creator [Nintendo]
Dark Rift [Vic Tokai]
Doom 64 [Williams]
F-ZERO 64 [Nintendo]
FIFA Soccer 97 [Electronic Arts]
Freak Boy [Virgin]
GoldenEye 007 [Nintendo]
Ken Griffey Jr. 64 [Nintendo]
Kirby's Air Ride [Nintendo]
The Legend of Zelda 64 [Nintendo/64DD]
Mario Kart 64 [Nintendo]
Mission: Impossible [Ocean]
Robotech: Crystal Dreams [Philips]
Robotron X [Williams]
Silicon Valley [BMG Interactive]
StarFox 64 [Nintendo]
Super Mario RPG 2 [Nintendo/64DD]
Top Gear Rally [Kemco]
Top Gun: A New Adventure [Spectrum Holobyte]
Turok: Dinosaur Hunter [Acclaim]
Ultra Combat [GT Interactive]
Ultra Descent [Interplay]
War Gods [Williams]
Wet Corpse [Vic Tokai]
Yoshi's Island 64 [Nintendo]

This list is compiled from various sources including company releases and retail store guides. As such, all titles and dates are subject to change.

RECENT RELEASES

2 Xtreme [Sony CEA]
4X4 Gears & Guts [ASC]
Area 51 [Williams]
Batman Forever [Acclaim]
Bedlam [GT Interactive]
Black Dawn [Virgin]
Blast Chamber [Activision]
Bubsy 3-D [Accolade]
Contra: Legacy of War [Konami]
Darknet [ASC]
Dark Forces [Lucas Arts]
Disruptor [Universal]
Dragonheart [Acclaim]
FIFA Soccer 97 [Electronic Arts]
Floating Runner [T*HQ]
Formula One [Sony CEA]
Fox Hunt [Capcom]
Jet Moto [Sony CEA]
King of Fighters '95 [Sony CEA]
Legacy of Kain [Activision]
Magic: The Gathering [Acclaim]
MVP College Football '96 [Data East]
Namco Museum Vol. 2 [Namco]
NASCAR [Sierra On-Line]
NCAA Gamebreaker [Sony CEA]
NBA Jam Extreme [Acclaim]
NFL GameDay '97 [Sony CEA]
NHL 97 [Electronic Arts]
NHL Face Off '97 [Sony CEA]
NHL Powerplay Hockey [Virgin]
Pandemonium [Crystal Dynamics]
Power Move Pro Wrestling [Activision]
Power Pinball [Bandai Multimedia]
Powerslave [Playmates]
Perfect Weapon [ASC]
Pro Pinball [Interplay]
Raw Pursuit [Impact Racing]
Rebel Assault 2 [Lucas Arts]
Revelations [Atlus]
Ridge Racer Revolution [Namco]
Rocket Jockey [Rocket Science Games]
Samurai Shodown 3 [Sony CEA]
Soviet Strike [Electronic Arts]
Space Jam [Acclaim]
Star Gladiator [Capcom]
Star Fighter [Acclaim]
Star Winder [Mindscape]
Steel Harbinger [Mindscape]
Strike Point [American Technos]

Syndicate Wars [Electronic Arts]
Tecmo Stackers [Tecmo]
Tempest X [Interplay]
Ten Pin Alley [ASC]
The Adventures of Lomax in Lemmingland [Psygnosis]
Twisted Metal 2: World Tour [Sony CEA]
Tomb Raider [Eidos]
Viper [Ocean]
VR Pool [Interplay]
Wipeout XL [Sony CEA]
World Martial Arts Corp. [Bandai Multimedia]
WWF: In Your House [Acclaim]

DECEMBER 1996

BallBlazer Champions [LucasArts]
Command & Conquer [Virgin]
Cyber Gladiators [Sierra On-Line]
Daredevil Derby [Mindscape]
Deando Goes to George's [Party Corp.]
Deadly Skies [JVC]
Destruction Derby 2 [Psygnosis]
Dream Team Basketball [Eidos]
Grid Runner [Virgin]
Herc's Adventures [LucasArts]
Hyper 3-D Pinball [Virgin]
HyperBlade [Activision]
Incredible Hulk [Eidos]
Killing Time [Acclaim]
King's Field II [ASCII]
Major Damage [Capcom]
Mechwarrior 2 [Activision]
MVP College Football '96 [Data East]
NBA Hang Time [GT Interactive]
NBA In the Zone 2 [Konami]
NHL Open Ice [GT Interactive]
Oblivion [Eidos]
Onside Soccer II [American Technos]
Pitball [Accolade]
Rebel Moon [GT Interactive]
Spawn [Sony CEA]
S.T.O.R.M. [American Softworks]
Street Fighter Alpha 2 [Capcom]
Street Racer [UBI Soft]
Suikoden [Konami]
VMX Racing [Playmates]
Wing Commander IV [Origin/EA]
FIRST QUARTER 1997
Aaron Vs. Ruth [Mindscape]
Alien Striker [Atlus]
Ark of Time [Koei]
Atharion [Psygnosis]
Batman Forever: The Arcade Game [Konami]
Battlestations [Electronic Arts]
Broken Helix [Konami]
Burning Road [Playmates]
Castle of the Damned [Tecmo]
Codename: Tenka [Psygnosis]
Crypt Killer [Konami]
Dark Forces [LucasArts]
Deathdrome [Viacom New Media]
Discworld II: Missing Presumed...!! [Psygnosis]
Disruptor [Universal Interactive]
Fatal Fury Real Bout [Sony CE]
Hexen [GT Interactive]
Independence Day [FOX Interactive]
Iron & Blood: Ravenloft [Acclaim]

new releases



Island of Dr. Moreau [Psygnosis]
 Jack Nicklaus Golf [Accolade]
 K-1 Super Kick Boxer [T*HQ]
 Kumite: The Fighter's Edge [Konami]
 League of Pain [Psygnosis]
 Legends Football '97 [Accolade]
 Lethal Enforcers 1&2 [Konami]
 Marvel Super Heroes [Capcom]
 Mega Man 8 [Capcom]
 Mickey Thompson Virt Moto X [Playmates]
 Monster Rancher [Tecmo]
 Monster Truck Rally [Psygnosis]
 MTV's Aeon Flux [Viacom New Media]
 MTV's Slamscape [Viacom New Media]
 NBA In the Zone 2 [Konami]
 Near Death [Atlus]
 NFL Full Contact [Konami]
 Pandemonium [Crystal Dynamics]
 Peak Performance [Atlus]
 Perfect Weapon [ASC]
 Power Pigs [Titus]
 Reloaded [Interplay]
 Revelations: Persona [Atlus]
 Robotron X [Williams]
 Shining Sword [American Laser Games]
 Sign of Sun [Koei]
 Soul Edge [Namco]
 Speed King [Konami]
 Spider [BMG Interactive]
 Star Control III [Accolade]
 Suikoden [Konami]
 Tecmo Thoroughbred Derby [Tecmo]
 The City of Lost Children [Psygnosis]
 The Divide: Enemies Within [Viacom New Media]
 Tobal No. 1 [Sony CEA]
 Tomb Raider [Eidos]
 Tunnel B-1 [Sony CEA]
 War Gods [Williams]
 Werewolf: The Apocalypse [Capcom]
ANNOUNCED TITLES
 Air Combat 2 [Namco]*
 Aliens vs. Predator [FOX Interactive]
 Breath of Fire III [Capcom]
 Castlevania: The Bloodletting [Konami]
 Carnage Heart [Sony CEA]
 Deando's Escape [Warden Productions]
 Final Fantasy IV [Square]
 HardBall 6 [Accolade]
 Mega Man Neo [Capcom]
 Mega Man X4 [Capcom]
 Namco Museum Vol. 3 [Namco]
 Pitfall 3-D [Activision]
 Quake [GT Interactive]
 Raven Project [Mindscape]
 Rayman II [UBI Soft]
 Red Asphalt [Interplay]
 Resident Evil 2 [Capcom]
 Rune Master [Koei]
 Scorchers [Scavenger]
 Sentient [Psygnosis]
 Soul Master [Koei]
 Strange Golf [Mindscape]
 Surreal [American Softworks]
 Test Drive: Off Road [Accolade]
 Zero Divide 2 [ZOOM]
 Zork: Nemesis [Activision]

RECENT RELEASES

4X4 Gears & Guts [American Softworks]
 Area 51 [Williams]
 Big Bass World Champ [HOT-B]
 Bubsy 3-D [Accolade]
 Bedlam [GT Interactive]
 Big Bass World Champ [HOT-B]
 Black Dawn [Virgin]
 Blazing Dragons [Mindscape]
 Bubsy 3-D [Accolade]
 Bug Too! [Sega of America]
 Command & Conquer [Virgin]
 Darknet [American Softworks]
 Dead or Alive [Tecmo]
 Deadly Skies [JVC]
 Destruction Derby [Sega of America]
 Die Hard Trilogy [FOX Interactive]
 Doom [GT Interactive]
 Dream Team Basketball [Eidos]
 Fox Hunt [Capcom]
 Grand Theft Auto [BMG Interactive]
 Grid Runner [Virgin]
 Herc's Adventures [LucasArts]
 Highway 2000 [Natsume]
 Hyper 3-D Pinball [Virgin]
 HyperBlade [Activision]
 Hexen [GT Interactive]
 Impact Racing [JVC]
 Incredible Hulk [Eidos]
 Iron & Blood [Take 2]
 Jewels of the Oracle [Sun Soft]
 Lethal Enforcers 1&2 [Konami]
 Major Damage [Capcom]
 MVP College Football '96 [Data East]
 NBA Live '97 [EA Sports]
 NFL '97 [Sega of America]
 NFL Legends Football '97 [Accolade]
 NHL Open Ice [GT Interactive]
 mr. Bones [Sega of America]
 PGA Tour '97 [Electronic Arts]
 Pro Pinball [Interplay]
 Return Fire [Time Warner]
 Scorchers [GT Interactive]
 Soviet Strike [Electronic Arts]
 Street Racer [UBI Soft]
 Tecmo Stackers [Tecmo]
 Tetris Plus [Jaleco]
 Varuna's Forces [JVC]
 Water World [Ocean]
 World Wide Soccer '97 [Sega of America]
 Varuna's Forces [JVC]
 Water World [Ocean]
 World Wide Soccer '97 [Sega of America]
 Virtua On [Sega of America]
 VR Golf [Interplay]
 VR Soccer [Interplay]

DECEMBER 1996

Andretti Racing [Electronic Arts]
 Area 51 [Williams]
 Armed [Interplay]
 Battlegrounds [Electronic Arts]
 Broken Helix [Konami]
 Contra: Legacy of War [Konami]
 Crypt Killer [Konami]
 Dark Savior [Sega of America]
 Daytona USA: Championship Circuit Edition [Sega of America]
 Deathdrome [Viacom New Media]
 Descent [Interplay]
 Dragon Force [Working Designs]
 Extreme Pinball [Electronic Arts]
 FIFA Soccer '97 [EA Sports]
 Fighting Vipers [Sega of America]
 Jack Nicklaus Golf [Accolade]
 Legends Football '97 [Accolade]
 Loaded [Interplay]
 Mechwarrior 2 [Activision]
 MLBPA Bottom of the 9th [Konami]
 Oblivion [Eidos]
 Powerslave [Playmates]
 NFL Full Contact [Konami]
 NHL '97 [Electronic Arts]
 Policenauts [Konami]
 Project Overkill [Konami]
 P.T.O. 2 [Koei]
 Raw Pursuit [JVC]
 Robo Pit [T*HQ]
 S.T.O.R.M. [American Softworks]
 Shredfest [Electronic Arts]
 Sonic Blast [Sega of America]
 Spot Goes to Hollywood [Virgin]
 Tempest 2000 [Interplay]
 The Lost Vikings 2 [Interplay]
 The Sacred Pools [Sega of America]
 Three Dirty Dwarves [Sega of America]
 Tomb Raider [Eidos Interactive]
 Virtua Cop 2 [Sega of America]
FIRST QUARTER 1997
 Bubsy 3-D [Accolade]
 Independence Day [FOX Interactive]
 Magic Knight Rayearth [Working Designs]
 Manx TT: Super Bike [Sega of America]
 Mega Man 8 [Capcom]
 Reloaded [Interplay]
 Sacred Pools [Sega of America]
 VR Baseball [Interplay]
 Zork: Nemesis [Activision]
ANNOUNCED TITLES
 Castlevania: The Bloodletting [Konami]
 Criticom 2 [Vic Tokai]
 Heart of Darkness [Virgin]
 Kumite: The Fighter's Edge [Konami]
 Lunar: Director's Cut [Working Designs]
 Marvel Super Heroes [Capcom]
 Mega Man X4 [Capcom]
 Revelations: Devil Summoner [Atlus]
 TNN Outdoors Bass Tournament '97 [American Softworks]
 VR Basketball '96 [Interplay]
 Werewolf: The Apocalypse [Capcom]
 Wild Nines [Interplay]

* Working Title

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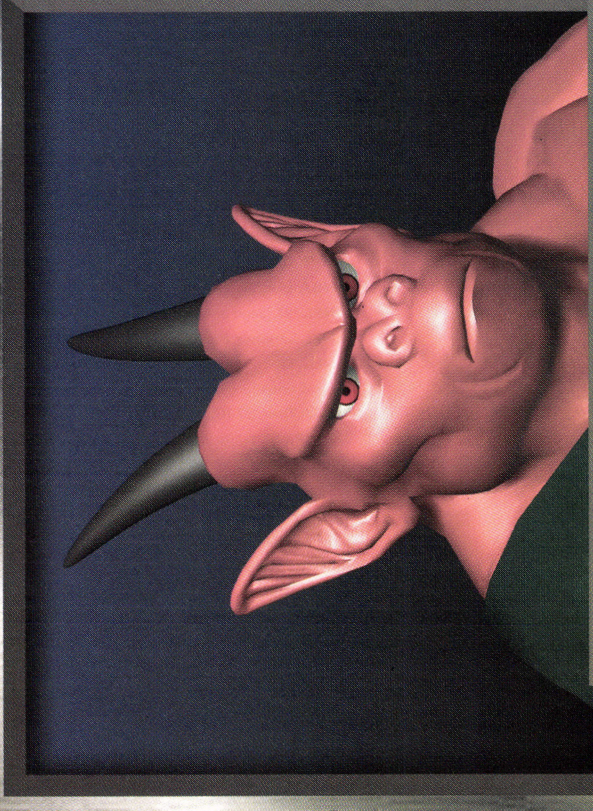
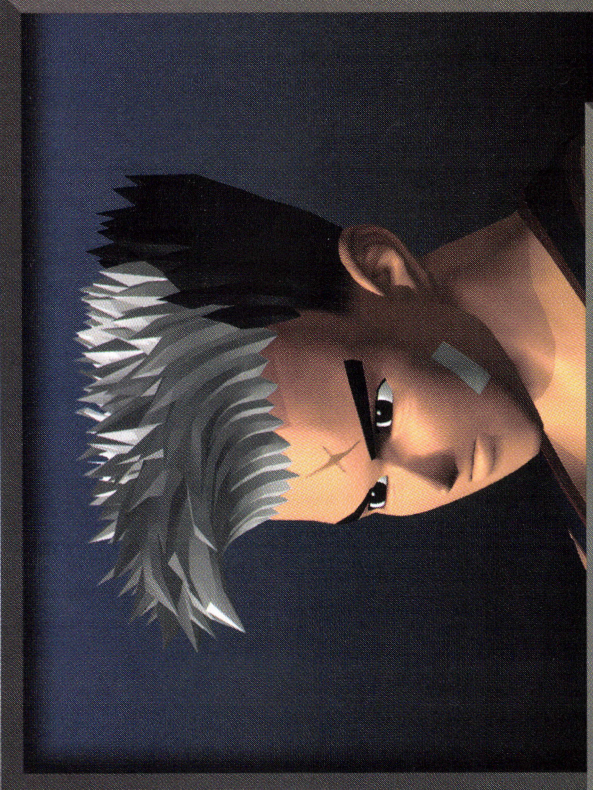
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After a mysterious absence, Sonic finally makes his first appearance on the Saturn. Hopefully for Sega, it's not too late for the little hedgehog to save the day.

Sonic 3D Blast

After being MIA from the 32-Bit scene for over a year, Sonic makes his Saturn debut

Publisher: Sega of America

Platform: Sega Saturn

Format: Single CD-ROM

Developer: Sega of America

Release: Late November



Exclusive to the Saturn version of Sonic 3D Blast are brand-new 3-D polygonal bonus levels that are light years beyond the rest of the game in terms of graphical quality.

He's been a long time in coming, but Sonic is finally ready to make his debut on the Sega Saturn, and it's not a moment too soon. Sonic helped propel the company into global success with the Genesis, and Sega has found itself in need of a savior now more than ever. If anything can help Sega find their way back to those glory days, a hit Sonic game would be just what the doctor ordered.

Some may be wondering what ever happened to Sonic's first announced Sonic game, Sonic Xtreme. Sega reportedly didn't feel too comfortable with the prospect of running Xtreme head-to-head against Crash,

Sonic has taken the new logical step in evolution, leaving the confines of his side-scroller world

Mario and even their own NIGHTS this holiday season, so they took the title back to the drawing board to beef it up as their future breadwinner. Meanwhile, Sonic is still showing up on six new titles this Christmas season, including both Genesis and Saturn versions of Sonic 3-D Blast.

With 3-D Blast, Sonic has taken the next logical step in evolution, leaving the confines of his side-scroller world for the freedom of an isometric playing field. Similar to what can be found in games like Super Mario RPG, Landstalker, and Spot Goes to Hollywood, the isometric view may be tough for some players to get a handle on.

3-D Blast represents a more refined adaptation of this confusing perspective for the

action-oriented play, though, and with a little patience, players will find themselves warming up to the game's control in no time. Sega plans to add an analog option to the final version, meaning players who shelled out for the deluxe NIGHTS package or the controller sold separately will have an even easier time with the control in this game.

This time out, Sonic has decided to visit his friends on Flicky Island. Upon arrival, he soon learns that the evil Dr. Robotnik has snatched up the little birds and transformed them into robots in order to carry out his scheme. The mad scientist plans to force the

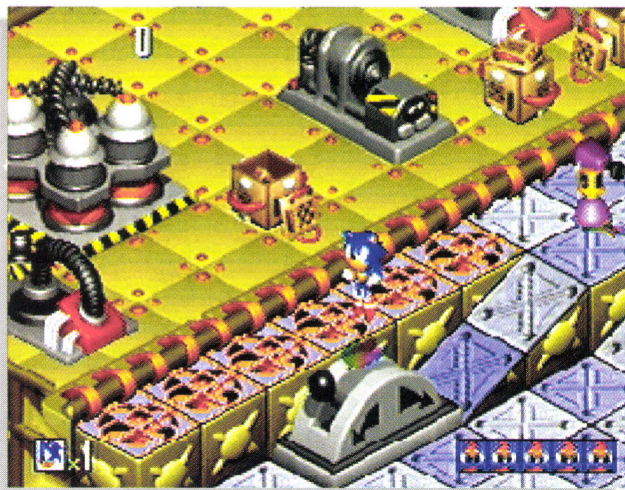
This isn't as simple as it sounds, though. The Flickies seem to have short attention spans, and lose interest in following their blue rescuer every time one of them gets injured. Fending off Flicky rights activists, the birds don't actually get killed, they just let out a little cry and then wander about aimlessly until Sonic reaches them again. To make matters worse, the birds scatter just as all of his rings do whenever Sonic gets nailed, now without the characteristic slowdown found in the early 16-Bit games.

But Flickies aren't a total burden on the hedgehog baby-sitter, since they'll help him reach new heights, enabling him to collect items otherwise deemed too high to get to with the springboard alone. The birds are also benefited by the power-up shields that Sonic plucks from any number of monitors spread throughout the levels. As long as Sonic makes it past the spikes, flames and enemies in his path unscathed, the fickle Flickies will stick by Sonic's side, allowing him to safely drop them in the large ring at the end.

It almost seems strange to see Sonic in this type of game.

dimension-traveling Flickies to help him recover all of the chaos emeralds, and of course, only Sonic can stop him.

To do so, Sonic has to make his way through all seven zones, each complete with two large levels and a boss. Sonic has to explore all of them in order to recover the Flickies, and deposit them into the large gold rings that stand fixed above each of the portal exits. When all of the birds have been collected, the portal will open up, Sonic will be whisked to the next section and then eventually on to the next level.



Each boss encounter with Robotnik requires you to find a certain weak spot (usually the head) to attack to drive him away until the final battle.

More than just an action game, 3-D Blast is like some bizarre and twisted game of hide 'n seek, where the player is constantly trying to either locate one of the missing Flickies or find his way to the exit door. Exploring these vast levels is a large task all in itself, as hidden areas, loops and tubes are more than a little disorienting to the mapless or hapless traveler.

The game begins with Green Grove Zone, a level that should be familiar to long-time Sonic fans. With its green grassy hills and swaying rope bridges, this zone seems like only a distant cousin to the Green Hill Zone of 1991's first Sonic game.

Mountains and trees form a Donkey Kong Country styled background as a textured marble surface defines the floor. Even Sonic himself is brought to new life as the pre-rendered character's details are sharpened by the Saturn's awesome color palette. From the wooden loops to the metallic insects,



▲ You need to find all five Flickies in each level before heading to the ring that lets you advance to the next area of the game.

everything in 3D Blast has been reworked with the magic of high-color computer rendering.

Moving on to further levels will take Sonic down ice-covered slopes, up springs and fan gusts, across balloons, and through stoned pathways as the bottom of the screen keeps a headcount of the elusive Flickies. Saturn exclusive weather enhancements like snow, fog and rain give the game so much atmosphere as to remind gamers why they'd finally demoted the Genesis from its long-term living

Sonic's Long and Checkered History

Sonic the Hedgehog single-handedly sent Sega of America soaring into the stratosphere during the early days of the Sega Genesis. Filling the void of a much-needed mascot for Sega, Sonic's popularity helped Sega to take over the number one spot in the video game market from Nintendo, who had previously been thought to be totally invincible. Sega's hoping those glory days will return...



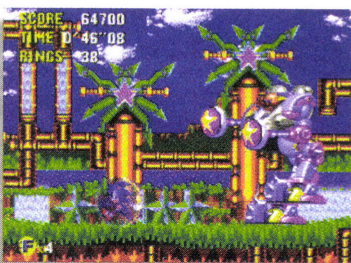
Sonic the Hedgehog - 1991

Yujo Naka and co. release Sonic for the Mega Drive and a mascot is born.



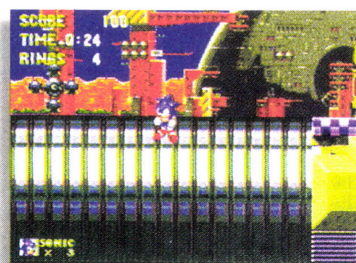
Sonic the Hedgehog 2 - 1992

Sonic 2 introduced the hedgehog's new sidekick, the two-tailed fox, Tails.



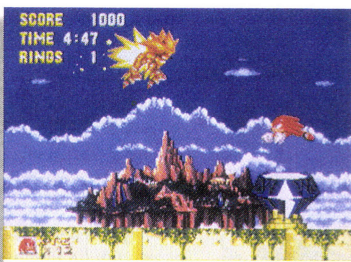
Sonic CD - 1994

Regarded by many as the best Sonic, but the U.S. version had crappy music.



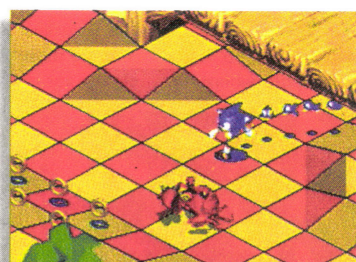
Sonic the Hedgehog 3 - 1994

Sonic 3 was the first cartridge Sonic game to include a save feature.



Sonic & Knuckles - 1994

Sega's new "Lock-on" technology made for piggybacking of older Sonic titles.



Sonic 3D Blast - 1996

The latest 16-Bit Sonic is the same as the Saturn one, just toned down a bit.

Additionally of course, there's Sonic Xtreme, the highly anticipated (and currently indefinitely postponed) all-new fully 3-D Sega Saturn title. After being shown in roughly 10 percent form at E3 and then again at Sega Gamer's Day, the game was shelved and may quite possibly never be seen again. We can hope, though!



Some of the level designs are a bit...strange? Despite the fact that the graphics look 16-Bit (it is, after all, a port of a Genesis game), the gameplay is still just as challenging.

It almost seems as if the Genesis version had been nothing more than an early blueprint for the effects-laden Saturn game.

room home to the closet. With flowers dancing in the background and gently flowing waterfalls, it almost seems as if the Genesis version had been nothing more than an early blueprint for the effects laden Saturn game.

Some of the levels will contain curious spinning discs on the floor. When Sonic steps on one of them, he begins spinning like a top, which is the only way he can break through some of the column barriers. Getting there won't be easy, either, as he has to travel down stairs while avoiding chained balls, bumpers, and various other obstacles. If Sonic is hit here, he not only loses all of his rings, but he stops spinning as well, forcing him to return to the spinning discs to get a spin going again.

This can be a tricky procedure, but it's necessary just to get through the level in some places. In others it will help Sonic get down a path where he



The traditional Sonic theme of having loop-de-loops and twists on the levels is kept intact in spite of the isometric viewpoint in Blast.

can meet up with his old pals, Knuckles and Tails who guard the entrance to the bonus levels. Apparently Sonic's capitalistic friends aren't above a little profiteering these days, as they both charge for admission. That's not



As in every previous Sonic, the basic way to stay alive is to collect as many rings as possible, losing a life if you run out of rings. This can be done with precision thanks to Sega's analog 3D Control Pad.

a very nice thing to do to someone whose lost most of his rings just trying to get there.

The bonus levels, once again, are a visual highlight of the game, and this is one area where the Saturn version really distinguishes itself from the Genesis game. This time, it's a remake of the classic half-pipe race from Sonic 2.

Players get a glimpse of what the next Sonic game might look like, as a polygon Tails grabs Sonic and carries him over to the half-pipe. Looking like he'd been ripped straight from his arcade fighting game, a small

control pad makes Sonic move down instead of ducking, the usage of the button for this function had been made necessary. If players aren't careful, they might forget and not use the button often enough, as it's often the only way hidden paths might be found.

The music in Sonic isn't in the latest preview version that IG received, but Sega promises that it will be CD quality, taking full advantage of its medium. Gamers everywhere are probably wishing for 3-D Blast's music to more closely resemble that of Sega's recent games, rather

A small polygon Sonic races down what almost looks like a futuristic track from WipeOut.

polygon Sonic races down what almost looks like a futuristic track from Wipeout.

The purpose of the race is to collect as many rings as possible. Sonic will need to keep getting more at each checkpoint until he ultimately reaches a Chaos Emerald.

Sonic's normal spin is still here, too, accomplished by either jumping, as usual, or by pressing a separate button on the control pad. Since down on the

than that of Sonic CD. The effects, on the other hand, seem to be enhanced versions of the trademark sounds players have come to expect from a Sonic title.

What might have first appeared to be only a Marble Madness clone, Sonic 3-D Blast is now shaping up to be something altogether different. If Sega can get the game on shelves by Christmas and receive a little help from their advertising department, Sonic may be instrumental in giving the Saturn a fighting chance this season. For hungry fans of the series, this spin-off title looks to be the perfect appetizer for next year's Sonic Xtreme.

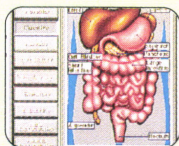
Like any good platform game, 3-D or not, there are numerous moving objects, obstacles, and platforms to try and deter the Hedge-man from reaching his ultimate goal on each stage.



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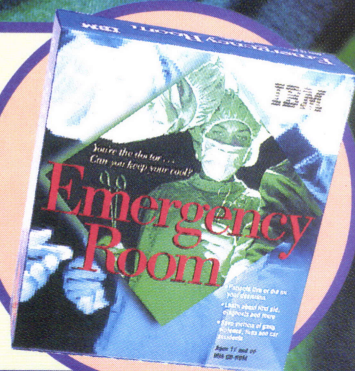
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While the version previewed is only 65-percent complete, Daytona CCE is shaping up to be a winner. That is, assuming the designers clean up all the slowdown, pop-up, and control flaws that are present in the preview version.



Daytona USA Championship Circuit Edition

Daytona USA returns with all-new features and two-player split-screen play

Publisher: Sega of America

Platform: Sega Saturn

Format: Single CD-ROM

Developer: Sega AM3

Release: Late November

All it takes is one trip to the arcade to show you that the gamerooms are flooded with two types of games: racing simulators, and fighting games. Of the racers, easily the most popular of them all has been Sega's Daytona USA. After all, NASCAR is as American as apple pie, and who doesn't like racing with seven other people out to rub you into the nearest wall?

So when Sega released their latest home console along with a single-player version of Daytona, many were understandably disappointed. Running at about 20 fps in low-res mode and plagued with noticeable pop-up, many advocates jumped on it as an example of the Saturn's inferiority, despite the fact that most of the gameplay and technique was still intact.

Sega faced similar problems with their original Virtua Fighter,



All the arcade action of the original Daytona USA is back, with all-new tracks and cars, higher frame-rate (for smoother animation), and an expanded soundtrack with remixed songs from the first Daytona, as well as new ones.

clean look to it, which makes the new tracks feel rather spartan compared to the old, despite the inclusion of a real rollercoaster on one track and

only 65 percent done, it's entirely possible that after some optimization, more scenery may be added to the tracks.

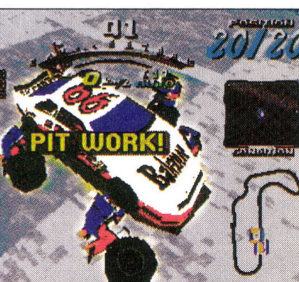
Music, a big sticking point for many, has been completely revamped. The old tunes are still present, but in a remixed form with no vocals. The three new in-game tracks are pretty good, ranging from acid-jazz/funk to straight bass-heavy techno. There are also new attract

The new Champion Circuit Edition features two new tracks in addition to the original tracks.

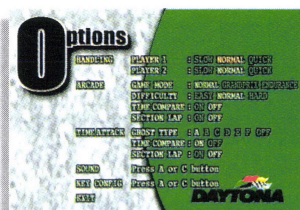
which was later rectified with the release of Virtua Fighter Remix. This started the rumor mill running, and sure enough, whispers of a "Daytona Remix" began to surface. Fortunately for us, Sega put the team behind the Saturn conversion of Sega Rally on Daytona, and the result is the forthcoming Daytona USA Champion Circuit Edition.

The new Champion Circuit Edition features two new tracks in addition to the older tracks, which, for whatever reason, don't feel as fully realized. The whole game has a very simple,

a moving train on the other. The first of the two new tracks features a nasty chicane, followed by a series of S-curves and an evil hairpin right before the end of the track. The second new track is a desert track, with lots of hairpin and 90-degree turns, making it hard to stay off the sand (which is impossible to get traction on). Since this version is



Getting smacked up? Head to the pits! But beware, the game tends to slow down quite a bit in the two-player mode when hittin' the pits.



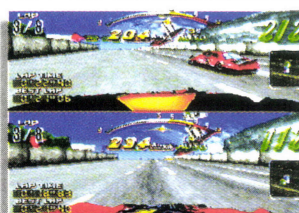
Daytona CCE offers an all-new interface, complete with new options (many similar to Sega Rally's), and new selection screens.



With the two new selectable tracks, it'll take a bit of practice to get used to going around the courses without stopping to check out scenery.

mode and ending tunes with vocals, in typical hard rock style. While those who liked singing "Day-ee-toh-nah!" along with the game may be disappointed, overall the music is still pretty good.

Daytona CCE has undergone a major overhaul in the graphics department, too. Generally running at 30 fps, the game itself appears to run in a medium resolution mode comparable to Fighting Vipers or Virtua Fighter Remix, and all of the splash screens are in the Saturn's 704x480 hi-res mode. Overall, the game does look quite a bit more polished than before, although the game still requires some more optimization before release, as the



The most substantial improvement in Daytona is, without a doubt, the new split-screen two-player mode.

frame rate is not always consistent when a lot of things are happening at the same time.

Of course, the most major improvement over the original is the new two-player split-screen mode. Now you can finally run your friends off the road, without having to drop \$1 at the

local arcade. As you might expect, however, the split-screen mode feels rather cramped, and there is no other traffic on the course besides you and your opponent. Sega did, however,

The split-screen mode feels rather cramped, and there is no other traffic on the course besides you and your opponent.

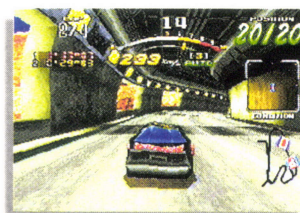
give you options similar to those found in Sega Rally—you can handicap your opponent and turn on an optional "slow car boost" that lets the computer give the player who has fallen behind a speed boost in an effort to keep the race close. As of press time, there are no

plans for Daytona CCE to have link cable or NetLink capabilities, even though Daytona CCE is being advertised as being compatible with the Saturn X-Band modem currently available in Japan.

Players also get a good selection of cars from the beginning, unlike the original Saturn Daytona which required players to earn the cars by winning races. Present but not accessible in an obvious fashion is the mirror mode, which allows you to race mirrored versions of the courses, and apparently gone entirely is the "Saturn" mode from the original, which allowed

you to race against the computer cars without worrying about running out of time. Those who bought NiGHTS will be happy to note that Daytona CCE does support the analog pad, as well as Sega's older Arcade Racer controller.

If you've somehow managed to avoid ever hearing about Daytona before this version, you probably should know that Daytona was never meant to be a completely accurate depiction of stock car racing. That was purely intentional on AM2's part, however—although oval track racing is certainly exciting in its own right, merely having a set of ovals to race on wouldn't give you much in the way of replay value. The actual technique in Daytona is somewhat different from real stock car racing as well, in that rarely will you see a stock car deliberately lock the wheels up and go into four-wheel drift around a corner. You'll need to do that often in Daytona however, especially



For some strange reason, the roads don't look as detailed as they did in the first Daytona USA.

have to impact the wall hard to wreck your car out.

Overall, Daytona CCE is shaping up to be a worthy successor to the original, which is still raking in the bucks at the arcade two years after its original release. Daytona fans will certainly eat this one up, and anyone looking for an adrenaline pumping two-player racing experience will almost certainly be interested. Now, if only it would support eight-player racing over the Sega NetLink... (as if we should be so lucky).

ig



"Rolllll-linnngggg STAAAAARRRRRRRRRTTTTT!!!" Some of the music has been changed for the better in Daytona CCE, but believe it or not, you might miss the lyrical versions of the songs that got so pleasantly annoying in the first.

▶ Like the Seattle Seahawks' Chris Warren (pictured right), Sony hopes to be able to hit the ground running with NFL GameDay '97. This time around, the competition will be a little more heated.

NFL GameDay '97

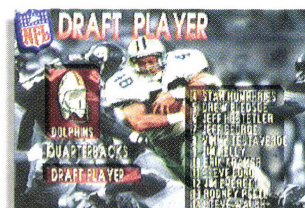
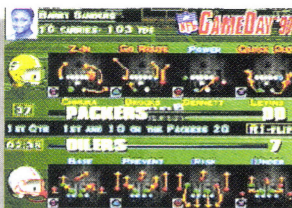
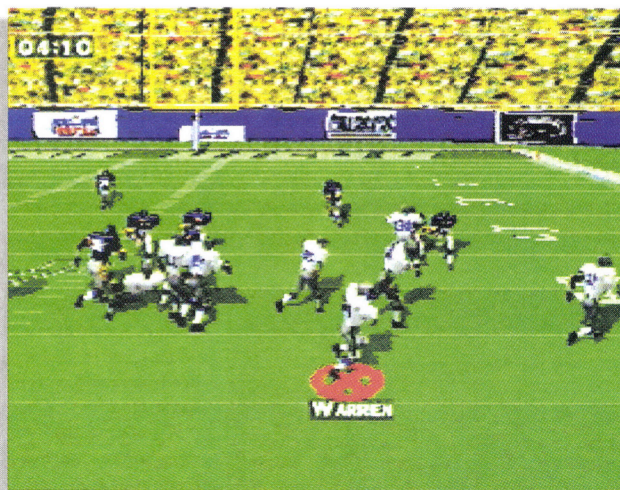
Sony prepares the sequel to one of the most successful PS games ever

Some thought it couldn't be done, especially from an industry newcomer like Sony, but it did. As EA was fumbling the ball with their unreleased Madden NFL 96, GameDay picked it up and scored with one of the best-selling PlayStation games ever. This time around, however, Madden 97 is already on the shelves, and the pressure is on for Sony to prove that NFL GameDay wasn't just a one-trick pony.

NFL GameDay '97 will be very familiar to fans of the original. A lot of things have changed since a year ago, but as you would expect with a Madden-like sports franchise, it

appears that nothing too drastic or risky has been added to the game's popular formula. The biggest change to the game is of no surprise. As witnessed by NCAA GameBreaker, Sony has sped up their football game engine considerably. Having said that, NFL

GameDay '97 continues in the same tradition, embracing the break-neck speed of NCAA GameBreaker and abandoning the sluggish gameplay of the original GameDay. In fact, GameDay '97 plays very much like the NFL version of GameBreaker (complete with the pitch ball button), but fixes many of the little bugs and unwanted quirks that have plagued Sony's first two football games. For example, balls no longer consistently pop up in the air when receivers are hit, thus making the number of



▲ The menus have been redrawn, and for the most part, look quite a bit better, especially the play diagrams (left). The ability to draft players may be one of the options that sets GameDay on top of the pack (right).

interceptions fall to a more realistic level. Also, many of the passing plays that were virtually unstoppable are no longer part of the playbook, or don't work as well as they used to (although avid players will probably also find others to take their place).

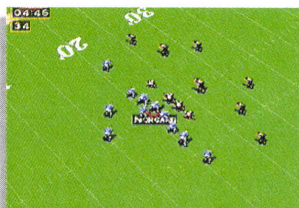
GameDay '97 continues in the same tradition, embracing the break-neck speed of NCAA GameBreaker.

Graphically, there aren't a whole lot of changes. The players now have visible jersey numbers on their uniform, and player photos and stats are displayed after big plays are made. Many of the menus have also been redrawn for clarity and functionality, such as play-call, audible selection and substitution screens.

Full-season features have been substantially expanded, providing very extensive databanks of player statistics. Seemingly, every type of imaginable football stat is tracked throughout the season on each

team. All of the normal categories such as receptions, yards, sacks, etc., are tabulated, but extra categories such as the complicated quarterback ratings and even team "power" ratings and rankings are updated as each week progresses. At the end of the season, Pro Bowl votes are tallied up to determine which players get to participate in the trip to Hawaii. The most notable and exciting new seasonal feature is the ability to draft your own team from the ground up. GameDay's "Draft Players" options dump all of the existing NFL players into a single draft pool, which are then drafted by round and position by all of the NFL teams. In addition, Sony took a page from Madden's playbook, and also included their own version of "create-a-player" that allows the creation of any player at any position, along with editing their abilities and skills.

Although it doesn't appear to be a big step forward at this present stage of development, it appears the Sony has markedly improved NFL GameDay '97 over its predecessor. It certainly appears that at the very least, GameDay will be good enough to give EA another substantial headache in the heated battle for the 32-Bit sports market.



▲ Here's a good example of the custom camera interface that allows you to create your own viewing angles from which to play (above).

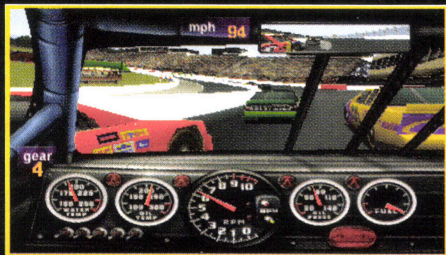
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▶ Sony seems intent on cornering both seasons in the extreme-sports gaming market. Cool Boarders takes care of the winter months, while 2 Xtreme rounds out the summer sports.



Cool Boarders

Tackle the cooler side of extreme sports with Sony's new snowy racer

Publisher: Sony CEA

Platform: Sony PlayStation

Format: Single CD-ROM

Developer: SingleTrac

Release: December



▶ The first-person view isn't as functional or exciting as the chase cam, mainly due to the fact that players cannot see the fancy tricks and maneuvers that they pull off.

With the release of several full-scale simulators from Namco, Sega and Konami in the arcades, it looks like "extreme sports" could be the next big thing in gaming. Sony's 2 Xtreme and JetMoto seem to follow this trend, as does Nintendo's fantastic Wave Race 64. So it's really no surprise that someone out there would develop a snowboarding game for the PlayStation.

Cool Boarders features three different slopes of varying difficulty. The Novice track is wide, with gentle turns and only a few

Once airborne, you have a ton of options, including several types of grabs and the ability to pull multiple rotations in the air.

difficult spots with rocks and such in the way, while the expert track is very narrow and steep, with sharp turns and different jumps out the ying yang. The game is very much like an arcade-style racer, with a timer counting down the number of seconds until your game ends. In arcade fashion time extensions are awarded at several checkpoints along the way.

Players can choose from several types of snowboards, from the easy-to-use freestyle boards, which have a low top speed but good controllability, to the alpine boards, which are fast, but only in a straight line. You can also choose the color of your board as well as the gender and outfit of your snowboarder, which is a nice touch. As you might expect, the real fun in this game is in the tricks and stunts you can pull. You can

do them any time there's a place to launch yourself in the air, but you'll only receive points if you perform tricks at designated spots. Once airborne, you have a ton of options, including several types of grabs and the ability to pull multiple rotations in the air, hopefully finishing your trick before you plow headlong into the snow.

The music in Cool Boarders



▶ Checkpoints are activated in arcade mode, otherwise time is not a factor unless players are engaged in a time trial.

may be ironed out before the final release. Overall, the graphics are adequate, running at a consistent frame rate and without any really objectionable pop-up or clipping errors.

One nice option is the ghost mode, borrowed from games like Sega Rally. Cool Boarders will save your best times and play them back for you to race against, which almost makes up for lack of a two-player option in this game.

Still, Cool Boarders does capture the feeling of snowboarding and there is quite a bit of technique required to successfully pull off the stunts. Real-life snowboarders and weekend fans of extreme sports will probably enjoy Cool Boarders when it hits store shelves.



▶ Using the most extreme skill level, speeds reach the boundaries of human sanity...well, not really, but it's pretty fast (Left). More sedate levels allow players to hone their maneuvering skills (Right).



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SUPER NINTENDO
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▶ In the Zone was a great arcade-style title, but Konami will still have something to prove to die-hard sports gamers who might be interested in a more in-depth basketball sequel.

NBA In the Zone 2

Konami strives to add more bench depth to their strong arcade title

Publisher: Konami

Platform: Sony PlayStation

Format: Single CD-ROM

Developer: Konami

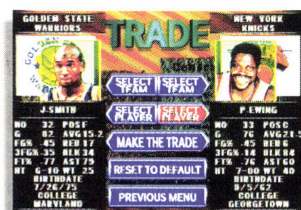
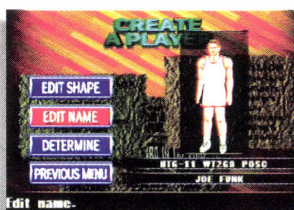
Release: Now Available



▶ There are four different selectable camera views (top), in addition to an optional replay camera that will occasionally highlight spectacular plays (above).

When it debuted on the market, NBA In the Zone was a posterchild for the PlayStation, showing off what polygons and 3-D rendered characters could do to bring sports games to the next level. Although the game woefully lacked many features and was questionably realistic, Konami's roundball title was excellent for what it intended to deliver—damned good-looking arcade-style basketball action.

Clearly, with the release of games such as Sony's NBA Shoot Out and EA's NBA Live 97, game companies have adopted these high aesthetic standards and are catching up with Konami quickly. Even with that being the case, IG hasn't seen better-detailed, 3-D rendered player graphics than what this incomplete version of In the Zone 2 offers. Zone's graphics are fully rendered: The players are comprised of fully texture-mapped characters that accurately replicate almost every player in the league. Attention to detail is very impressive—each player number and name is etched on their jersey, and the NBA team uniforms are perfect in almost every way. In fact, the faces of the players have been pasted onto their polygonal heads, making them resemble the real mugs of the players. Granted, the textured faces are a little angular, and often times ugly (sometimes that being the individual player's fault—see Patrick Ewing), but it's a good graphical feature to have. All of their movements are motion-captured, which isn't a surprise as most sports games are these days. Still, there are some impressive windmill dunks, cross-



▶ By looking at these two pictures, you can tell some of the major additions to In the Zone's repertoire. Illustrated above are the Create a Player and trade screens that fans have been clamoring for.

over dribbles and fadeaway shots that will keep the replay camera busy with the numerous different angles that 3-D graphics allow for.

After sports fanatics were finished drooling over the outstanding graphics in the original In the Zone, many of them

IG hasn't seen better-detailed, 3-D rendered player graphics than what this incomplete version of In the Zone 2 offers.

began complaining about the depth of the game. Lack of season play, and of realistic features such as player substitution made NBA In the Zone a one-dimensional game that catered solely to the arcade player while entirely ignoring any sort of avid simulation fan.

Many reviewers and fans screamed loud enough, and Konami listened. It

appears that the producers of In the Zone 2 have made a concerted effort to incorporate a healthy, but not a large staple of season, and realistic features without compromising the arcade-oriented nature of the game. Full NBA Season play is now an option in the game, along with additional features such as player trades and a player creation option. Unless some major additions are made, the season mode will be welcomed, but not applauded.

Amidst tough competition, In the Zone 2 looks like it will hold its own as an arcadish basketball game. How it will stack up as a great all-around title will largely depend on the development between now and when it is released in December.

ig



▶ Like any basketball game, free throws are a big part of the action, and In the Zone 2 offers an impressive, detailed free-throw perspective. It

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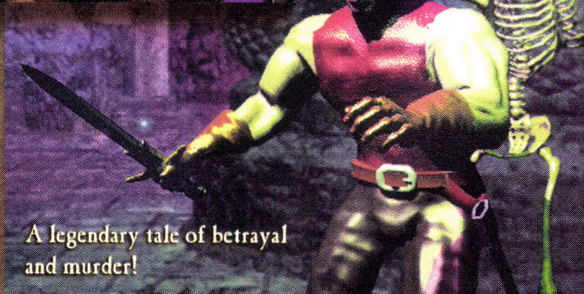
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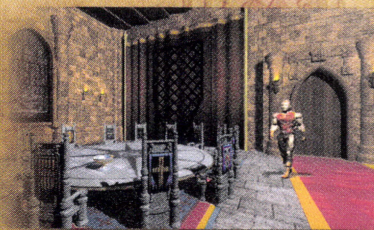


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After what seems like forever, Scavenger has finally had another one of their games published. Though it isn't a breakthrough of any sort, it might be a promising start for this group of coders.



Amok

Scavenger gets ready to unleash their thrilling first-person Saturn shooter

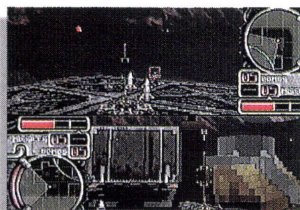
Publisher: Sega of America

Platform: Sega Saturn

Format: Single CD-ROM

Developer: Scavenger

Release: December



You know a game is tough when flames are spread throughout the battlefield like bird droppings (top). The split-screen duel is a welcome feature (above).

For months, the hype has been circulating about Scavenger's lineup. After all, it appears that they do indeed have some very sophisticated game engines going for them, like that powering European demo group Triton's forthcoming *Into the Shadows*. But the question is: Can these democoders write games as well as they can create unusual graphic effects?

Although *Amok* is still early, it shows promise. You are a mercenary, hired by a syndicate of weapons dealers to reopen old wounds between two rival corporations. This already is a twist—surely most of us are

used to playing the good guy, but in this game, your goal is to destroy the uneasy peace on the planet Amok. To do this, you set out in the "Slambird," a two-legged robot that can be converted into a submersible for those tricky

underwater missions.

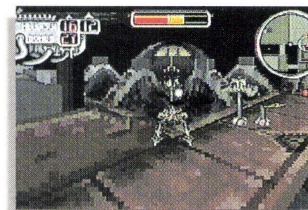
One look at *Amok* and you'll see that it's not using your standard polygon engine. Game characters are generated using polygons for your main character and the more complex enemies, and sprites for simple objects and soldiers. The end result is a game that certainly has an unusual look to it, but suffers somewhat from a blocky appearance due to the relatively low-resolution terrain.

Gameplay is similar to other "mech" games, like *Krazy Ivan*. Your mech can fire four different



types of weapons: a chain gun with unlimited ammo (that can be upgraded for rapid fire or more damaging projectiles), two kinds of missiles and bombs that act like grenades. You'll find yourself using the chain gun most of the time, while running sideways, strafing your targets. At the game's onset, your hull strength is rather weak, but its maximum strength can be boosted, and your current health can be replenished with the obligatory power-ups.

The game is broken up into several missions, each having multiple objectives in each mission. For example, you may be asked to destroy a fuel storage facility, followed by an ammo



As you can see from these screen shots, *Amok* is a very, VERY dark game.

true democoder fashion, every cutscene is done in realtime.

One nice feature is the inclusion of two-player cooperative and competitive modes. In the cooperative mode, play is on a split-screen, and if one player dies, his or her game is over, whether or not their partner manages to polish off the level. The competitive mode is just as you would expect: two mechs in a special level packed with power-ups and enemies.

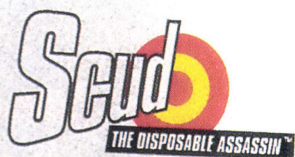
Although at this stage, *Amok* doesn't seem to have anything innovative going for it in terms of gameplay, it does deliver an intense 3-D experience. Hopefully, as it nears completion, the later levels will display more creative level design and mission objectives.

Surely most of us are used to playing the good guy, but in this game, your goal is to destroy the uneasy peace.

dump, then the enemy headquarters using the ammunition you liberated from the previous objective. Even if you forget what you need to do from the mission briefing, the next objective is clearly displayed both on your compass and on your radar map. Between missions, brief cutscenes are often shown. These aren't FMV sequences—in



Much of the action takes place in an environment similar to a *Doom*-style one, except the atmosphere and terrain are oh-so-much better.



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Objective: A full-time position shooting things

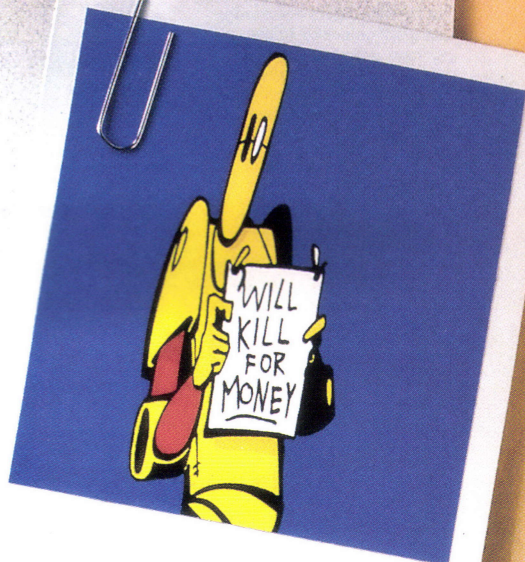
Education: Shooting things

Work Experience: Shooting zombies
Shooting robots
Shooting mutants
Shooting mafia crime bosses
Shooting mannequins
Shooting cult leaders

Special Skills: Shooting things with D-pad
Shooting things with gun
Shooting things with D-pad and gun
Shooting things with D-pad and partner
Shooting things with gun and partner
Shooting things with gun in each hand

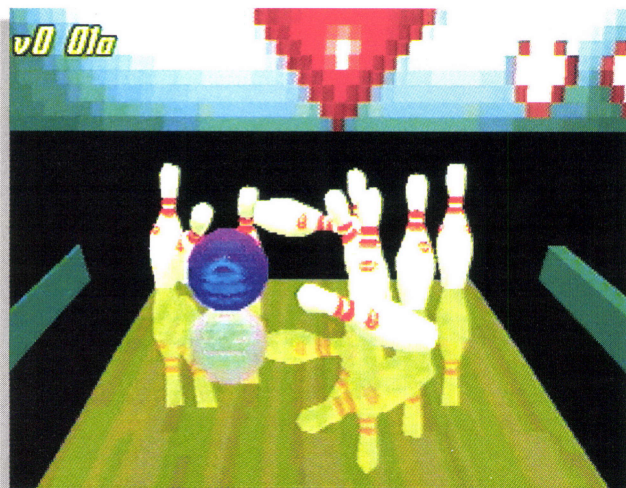
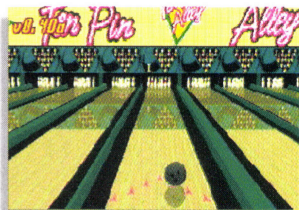
Interests: Guns, ammo, shooting things

References: Don Cortese: Deceased
Chuck Brown: Deceased
Barry Polipooy: Deceased



Available for employment starting November '96

▶ Ten Pin Alley offers personality and great gameplay in one package. Attention to detail is evident in everything from the glossy hardwood lanes to the colors offered in each character's clothing selections.



Ten Pin Alley

ASC spares nothing in this strikingly funny 32-bit bowling simulation

Publisher: ASC Games

Platform: Sony PlayStation

Format: Single CD-ROM

Developer: Adrenalin Ent.

Release: December

A long-time favorite at children's birthday parties and press events, bowling is about to take the second 32-bit plunge thanks to ASC Games.

Taking a tongue-in-cheek approach to the most realistic bowling simulation ever, Ten Pin Alley promises to provide multiplayer gaming parties and gaming newcomers with a fun new look at bowling that Nintendo's embarrassing Nester's Funky Bowling could never touch.

Ten Pin Alley has customization out the wazoo, letting players choose from 12 customizable characters, three different lanes and many varied

playing styles with up to six players sharing one controller, making Ten Pin Alley a great contender for a party game. Each of the exaggerated characters has its own bowling ability and style, as well as reactions to their bowling prowess (or

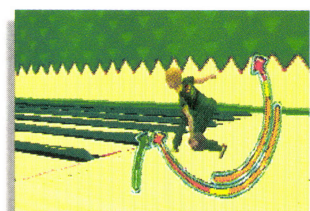
lack thereof), with cartoonish slapstick comedy rewarding completely botched turns. For example, if the large, Homer Simpsonsque bowler fails to release in time, the ball will fly into the air and promptly land on his forehead.

No one would expect a bowling game to be graphically excellent, which may be one of Ten Pin Alley's better surprises. The characters are fluidly animated in 3-D and textured to perfection in the rental shoes, bowling shirts, and wrinkly pants one would expect the



Bowling Hall of Fame to come in and endorse.

The lanes themselves are not as graphically stunning as the characters, but already show at this early stage a great ability to convey the cheesy retro ambience of a modern bowling alley, from the neon lights and corny logos to the glittery stars on the walls. As the ball travels down the lane, the camera



▶ A quirky and humorous cast of characters adds to the game's overall appeal.

No one would expect a bowling game to be graphically excellent, which is one of Ten Pin Alley's surprises.

changes angles to best show the collision. Players can see the reflections of the pins and ball off of the polished wood. The game's real "pin physics" show an extremely convincing set of pin collisions in 3-D as the ball

drops into the waiting void.

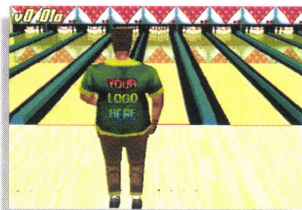
Ten Pin Alley's sound is equally surprising, providing realistic sounds from the bowling alley. Children play, strikes resonate down the hall and "lounge" music plays in accompaniment, completing an already acceptable atmosphere. In addition to all of this, Ten Pin Alley includes an amusing video tour of the Bowling Hall of Fame in St. Louis, Mo.

As humorous as it may sound, Ten Pin Alley is already shaping up to be a serious contender this holiday season, even in its current early form.

ig



▶ An example of what can go terribly wrong in a bowling alley. A little too much power and a botched release attempt can garner disastrous results.



▶ Creating a player is one of the best features in the game (top). Carefully line up the shot before you release the ball or you'll get one of dem gutter balls (above).

▶

Fig. 1: Electric chair



Fig. 2: Gallows

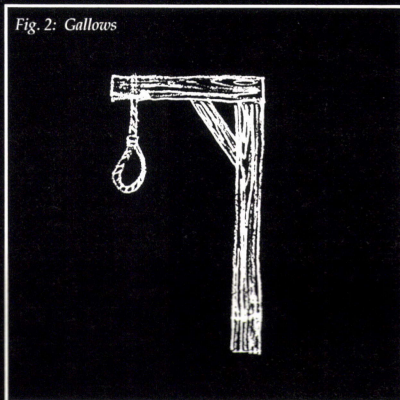


Fig. 3: Guillotine



Where's the sport in that?

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▶ Sega hopes that NFL '97 will jump start their system like NFL GameDay did for the PlayStation. Will they succeed? Judge for yourself until IG reviews the final product next issue.

NFL '97

Sega Sports goes on the offensive with their first 32-Bit football game

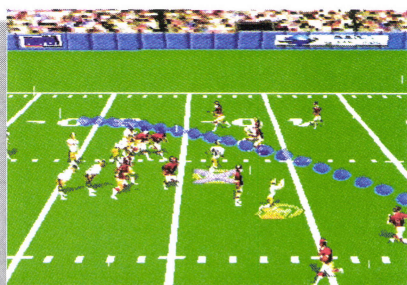
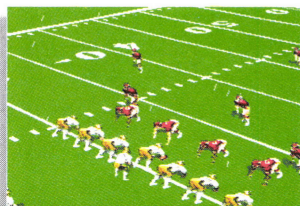
Publisher: Sega of America

Platform: Sega Saturn

Format: Single CD-ROM

Developer: Sega Sports

Release: Now Available



The new "blue laser" trick play is particularly effective in NFL '97. Actually, it's a passing aid which shows the trajectory of the ball from the QB to the receiver.



When you consider that the Sega Sports line of software helped carry the Genesis to glory, it's a little surprising that Sega hasn't brought out many of their sports titles a lot sooner.

After dumping the relatively useless (and expensive) Deion Sanders "Primetime" license, and enduring a hefty amount of delays, NFL '97, Sega's first entry into 32-Bit sports is almost ready for football-starved Saturn owners.

IG was given an early look at the pre-alpha version of NFL '97, and it is already clear that it has major roots back to Madden, which isn't surprising since many versions of Joe Montana Football on the 16-Bit systems were also very similar.

The interface is nearly identical, sporting a default camera view situated right behind the quarterback, while throwing to receivers marked as "X," "Y," and "Z." There is a bit more control in the running game, as you must physically make the quarter-

back handoff the ball by pressing the "A" button. If you press the button too late, the running back may run too wide to handle the hand off, thus fumbling the ball, and if you do it too early, the play's timing may fall apart. Some of the optional, unique features to this game are a transparent, blue "trajectory" arch which shows the path of the ball from your quarterback's hand to wherever the ball will land. A similar arch is also used



▶ The presentation of the playcall and team statistical screens aren't anything special, but they are functional. Either or both of these could change by the time the game is finally shipped to stores, however, so don't make any rash judgements now, ya' hear?

in punts and kickoffs. Other aides include transparent lines that cross the field showing the line of scrimmage and first down. Such features, in addition to several difficulty levels, are good for helping novice football players get the hang of the game.

The graphics are a combination of 3-D stadiums and 2-D sprites. The stadiums are only generic mock-ups, not attempting to re-create any particular football fields such as Lambeau Field or the Astrodome, although there are several types of unrecognizable domed

rare and overdue among console games, although it has become very mainstream in computer pigskin offerings. The play editor isn't all that complicated—it's much like a "construction set" of sorts. The materials consist of "pieces" of plays that you put together to make a complete play. For example, on offense, you select the formation for the play and then choose more detailed things like the quarterback's drop (shallow, deep, etc.), and what routes your receivers will run. The plays can then be saved and put into a custom

Sega rightfully stresses that one of the innovative features of NFL '97 is the customizable playbook.

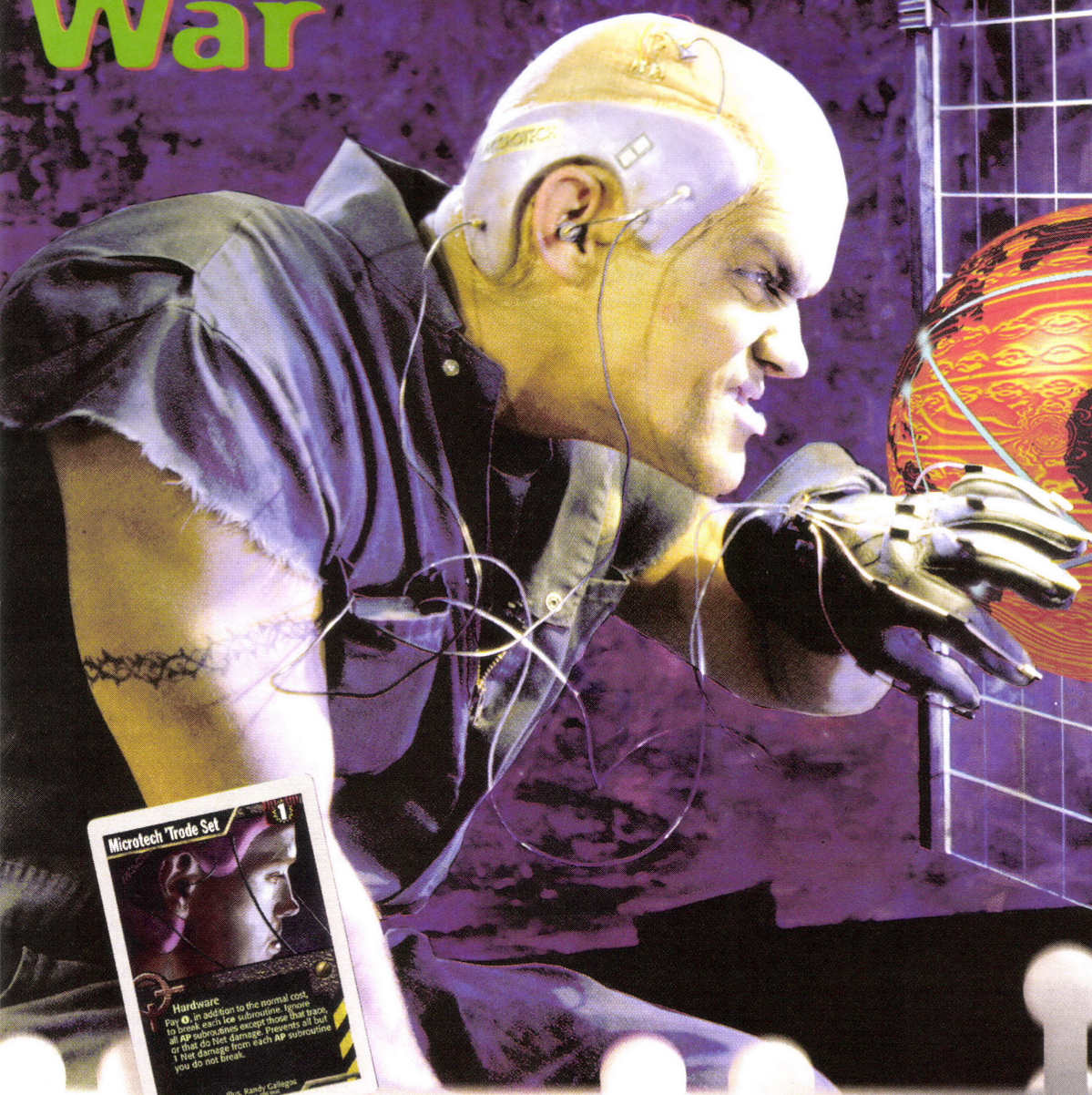
and outdoor stadiums. You can also change the type of turf and weather at each arena. The players are flat, 2-D sprites, whose detail is highlighted by each football player having individual jersey numbers easily read on the front and backs of their uniforms.

Sega rightfully stresses that one of the innovative features of NFL '97 is the customizable playbook and play editor. This is certainly a feature that is very

playbook, or into an existing one. Many of the teams in the game already have default playbooks that are slightly customized. The Oilers have an extra set of "H-Back" formation plays, and the 49ers and Packers have a set of "West Coast" plays.

Although some will argue that it is too little, too late, it appears that Sega is finally making a firm commitment to 32-Bit sports titles.

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League of Pain

Psygnosis wants to hurt you early next year

Publisher: Sony CEA

Platform: Sony PlayStation

Format: Single CD-ROM

Developer: Psygnosis

Release: 1st Quarter '97

Without having even played Psygnosis' latest game under construction, you'd have to appreciate an up front, sexy title like League of Pain. Of course, this title could be deemed appropriate for any sort of real sports game, especially football, but in this particular case, it's the label of a futuristic hi-octane, "action sports" game.

League of Pain bears a close resemblance to Accolade's Pitball, (reviewed in this issue) which is a two-on-two team-oriented scrimmage in which you must obviously score more goals than your opponents.



Ah, a lovely shot of the game's participants having it out with one another. Here you can see the 3-D rendered players in pain.



Notice the special lighting effects. If you look closely you can see the ball illuminating the right side of the screen.

League of Pain is very similar, except that its mood is darker and more serious. It also contains a different style of gameplay, though exactly what the end product will be, and how fun it will be is undetermined. To make the game interesting, various power-ups including weapons and defensive measures will be scattered about the playfield, adding to the carnage within the large, futuristic arenas.

At this early alpha stage of development that IG was given the opportunity to play, League of Pain's 3-D graphics were very unfinished, but were filled with potential. Glorious amounts of

light sourcing and other cool special effects that Psygnosis has shown an uncanny amount of expertise with were already working pretty well. There was only one 3-D rendered arena that contained the polygonal players within, but there will be several different ones created designed to vary gameplay in the end product.

While not due out on the market for quite some time, Psygnosis' early version of League of Pain looks like it has the potential to inflict some serious injury on the competition when it arrives on store shelves early next year.

ig



If this picture doesn't show the sheer amount of camera angles available in League of Pain, nothing will.

Codename: Tenka

This ain't your average Doom clone, tenka you

Publisher: Sony CEA

Platform: Sony PlayStation

Format: Single CD-ROM

Developer: Psygnosis

Release: 1st Quarter '97



With impressive level design and effects like the ones pictured here, Tenka should be able to withstand from falling into the "boring Doom-clone" category.

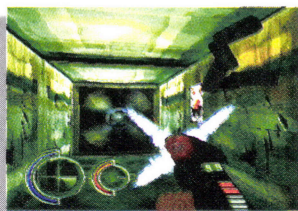
available looks pretty darned good. There are a lot of levels in Tenka, and most of them are very different. For example, one takes place in what is a large, sprawling ventilation system, while others re-create various futuristic locations. Tenka's 3-D engine is very versatile, and the level design reflects that. All of the movements available in Tenka's complex engine are there for a reason and will be instrumental to gameplay. Movements such as looking in different directions, jumping, and crawling will be part

of the repertoire. There are many creatures ranging from large spiders to floating eyeballs that possess varying personalities, something Psygnosis is particularly proud of.

The different weapons are ravaging, but what's interesting is that they morph from your original 3-D weapon. Change from a gun to a grenade launcher, and bingo—a new nozzle pops out, the weapon's shape changes, and you're ready to go.

Though Tenka's graphics are nearly complete, the gameplay is far from finished. If Psygnosis is up to this enduring task, this could become a premier 3-D action shooter.

ig



Moving fans of this magnitude have never been seen in a Doom game. Tenka is truly special.

As a result of all the 3-D games we've seen on the shelf, it's no doubt that developers have been more than happy to take advantage of the PlayStation's powerful 3-D hardware, which is tailor-made to serve as a Doom-clone factory. Upon a quick glance of Psygnosis' 3-D shooter, Codename: Tenka, it would be relatively easy to lump this title into that tired genre, but it appears that this game will have something new to offer PlayStation gamers when it is finally finished.

Tenka has been in development for a long time—almost a year now—and so far, it appears that it will pay off. Although the large level designs are not even close to being finished, what is

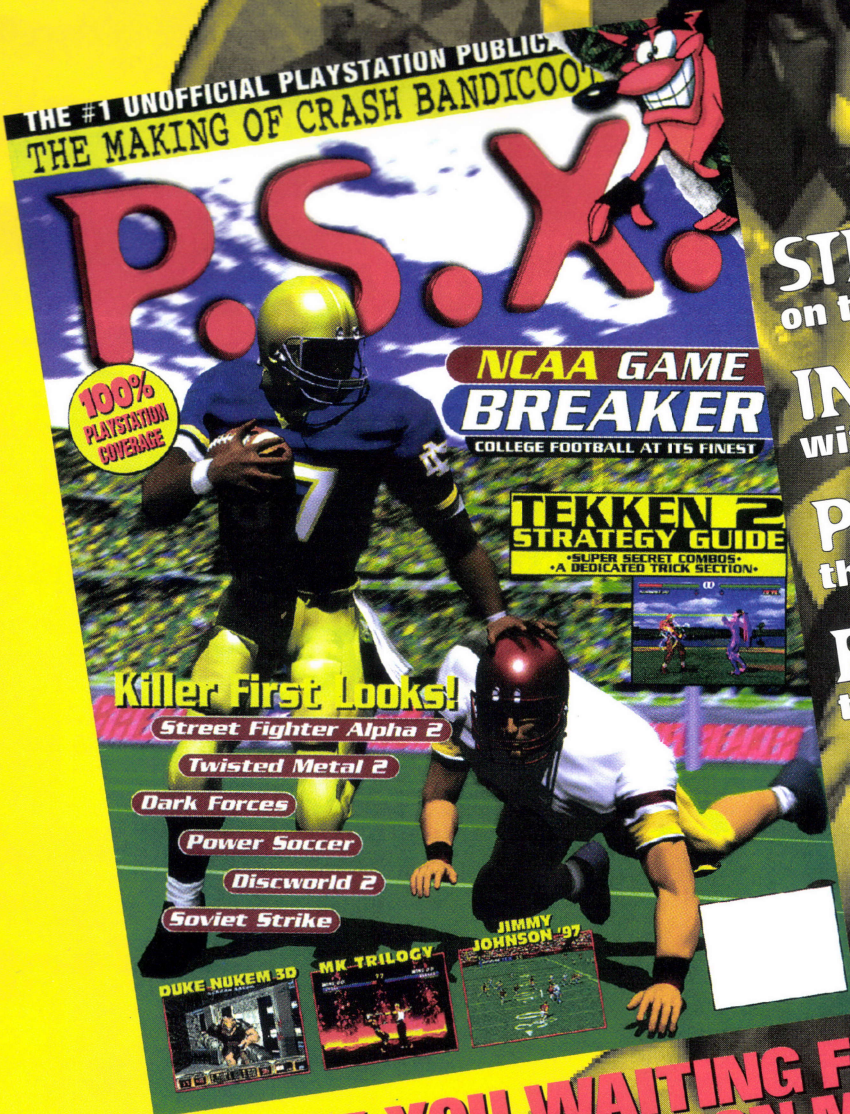


The ability to look up and down is a key element that is used often during gameplay (left). Huge, dark, red robots are really scary in 3-D games like this. Psygnosis must have known this, and used it to their advantage (right).



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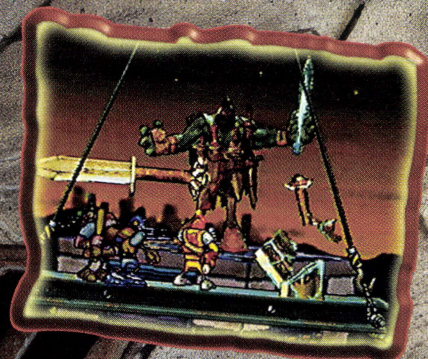
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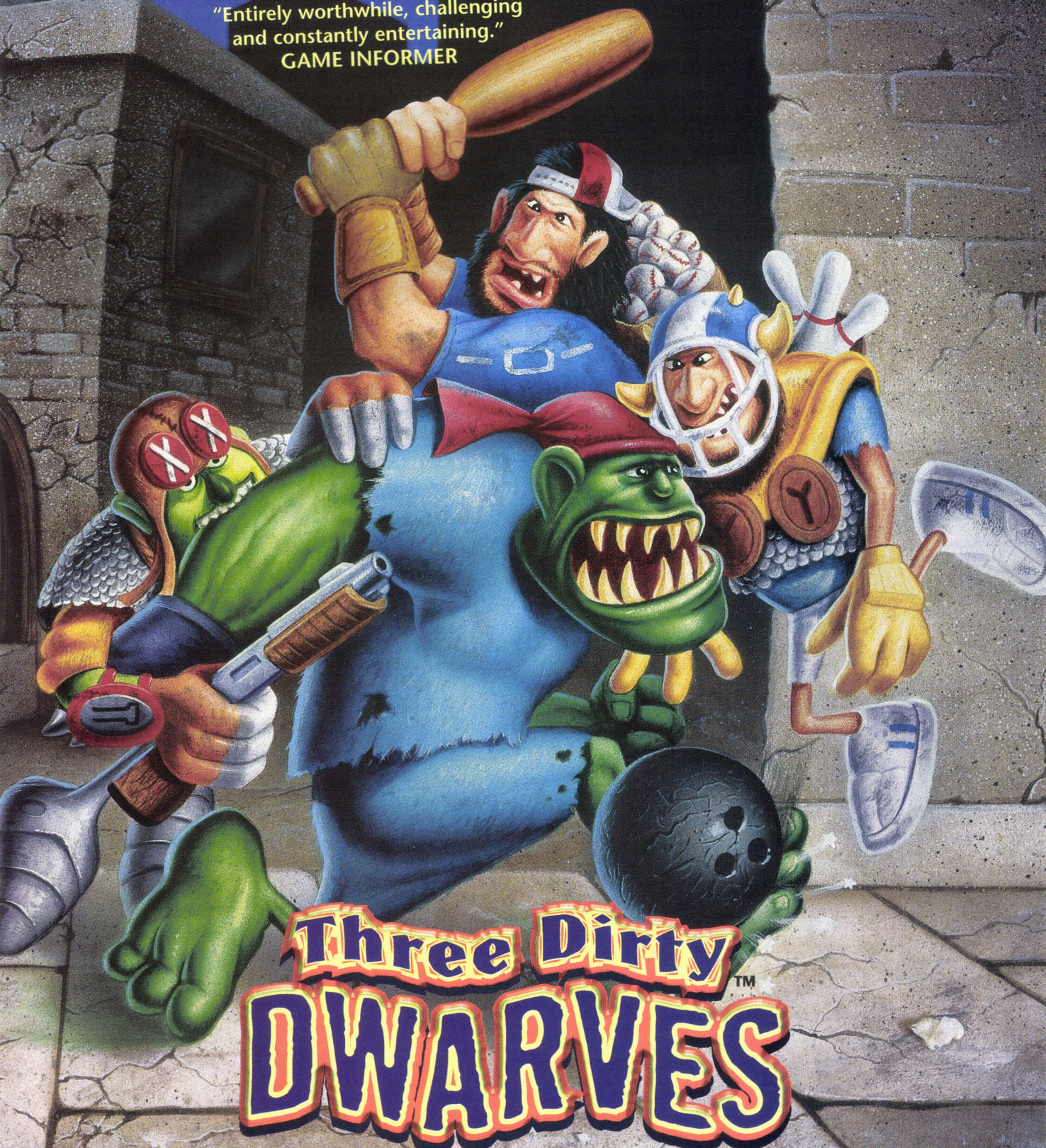
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Three Dirty DWARVES™

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▶ Suikoden is an amazingly deep story about a young boy's plight to overthrow a wicked, corrupt empire and free his land. The story is just great, with various plot twists and wonderful writing.



Suikoden

Konami's first-ever U.S. RPG is a true masterpiece from start to finish

Publisher: Konami

Platform: Sony PlayStation

Format: Single CD-ROM

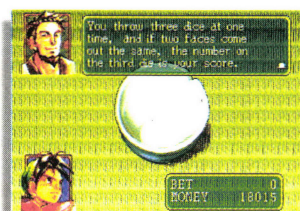
Developer: Konami

Release: November

For the longest time now, Sony PlayStation owning RPG fans have been yearning for a good role-playing game to be brought over to the U.S., but up until just recently, the well has been pretty dry. Besides the sluggish King's Field (a game that was popular among PC RPG fans, but was shunned by console "Japanese-style" RPG fans), there has been relatively nothing to tide gamers over until the long-awaited Final Fantasy VII (FF4 in the U.S.) is released sometime in late 1997. Yes, there's Beyond the Beyond, Sony's recently released straightforward RPG that just doesn't ever seem to pick up pace despite having a fairly lengthy quest, but other than that, there's squat.

Squat, that is, until now. Last December, Konami Co., Ltd. in Japan released a gem of an RPG for the PlayStation called Genso Suikoden. The game was received well in Japan, and was Konami's best role-playing effort since Madara 2 for the Super Famicom (one of the many 16-Bit SFC RPGs that should've come to the States, but alas never did). Since history would tell us that this game didn't have a chance in hell of coming out in the U.S., some game magazines went out of their way to express their interest in the game in hopes that Konami would snap out of their trance and start releasing more of their superior Japanese developed games such as this one. Believe it or not (you'd better sit down)—Konami listened, and by the time you read this, Suikoden (the condensed name of the U.S. version of the game) will be on store shelves.

Now, before we even get



▶ As is the case with most Japanese-designed Konami games, there are a number of mini-games that can be played throughout your journey. Many times you can be rewarded nicely—if you play well and luck is on your side.

into this review, we just want to make something totally clear (are you listening Konami?): This is the best move Konami has made since they entered this next-generation market, and if you're an RPG fan with any hope of seeing more RPGs in the United States (and more of Konami's Japanese games), then you should make it a point to check out Suikoden. While it's

Imperial Army named Teo McDohl. After a meeting with the King early on in the game, the boy (you from here on in) have to begin working for the empire when your father Teo heads north on an urgent mission.

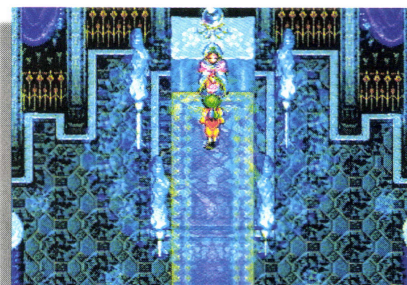
As the story proceeds, you inevitably end up learning that the Imperial Army that your father is so devoted to is

(Releasing Suikoden) is the best move Konami has made since they entered the next-generation market.

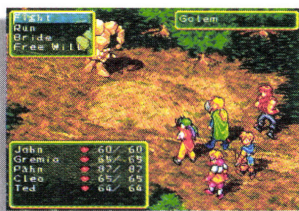
always been a policy of IG's to not directly instruct readers to go out and buy a game, we will say this: If you're one of the aforementioned RPG and/or Konami fans and you DON'T buy this game, chances are good that you'll never see another Konami RPG here. And judging by the quality of Suikoden... that would NOT be a good thing.

Suikoden is the story of a boy (who you name at the outset) who is the son of a powerful general in the

corrupt, and that there is a quickly growing underground movement to overthrow the Empire known as the Liberation army. Now don't worry, this all takes place within the first five



▶ Early in the game, you'll fly to an island to visit a powerful woman where you'll begin to learn a bit about your adventure.



▶ Battle scenes are somewhat similar to Breath of Fire III, except there's a little bit more in the way of camera movement during battle. Also, spell effects are awesome.



Suikoden's graphics are a tad bit underdone, but overall not bad. The game world's visuals are very nice, and despite looking a little "16-Bit," they portray realism well.

to seven hours of the game, and it's not even a glint of what's to come. We could go more in-depth on the story, but there's no need to ruin it for you—and besides, the story is the heart and soul of any good epic RPG.

The basic premise in Suikoden is like that of any RPG; travel from location to

members (yes, you read correctly—108!), all of which can contribute to your cause in their own unique ways. Early on in the game you'll need to begin building your headquarters, and as you move further along, the people you recruit can be left behind there where their specialty can be put to use in making your headquarters a more efficient place.

The magic system is rather unique, too. Your party will come across special crystal balls throughout the game that can be attached at special runemaster shops, allowing the "attachee" to perform magic spells depending on the type of crystal ball. Each spell can be cast a limited amount of times, but when you replenish your health at an inn, your spell count replenishes as well.

The battle system is very finely polished and runs smooth as silk, with excellent animation and hardly a hint of loading time before and after fights. The main battles are laid out in a three fourths overhead perspective view very similar to



Shown here are two scenes from Suikoden's visually impressive intro sequence. Amazingly, these few characters are nothing compared to the total amount of semi-important characters you meet in the game—108!



while your party members are in the middle of their own attack. The other two types of fights are one-on-one battles and huge army vs. army battles where your army is broken up into units that each attack once per battle, until a victor is crowned when one of the sides is out of strength. Quite a refreshing concept for a regular role playing game...

Graphically, Suikoden gets the job done. The visuals, while not entirely amazing, are definitely more realistic looking than your average RPG and the various areas of the game emit an atmosphere so believable you'd think you were actually in the game at times. There isn't much character animation though, and the overworld is somewhat lifeless, but these are minor gripes at best.

Musically, Suikoden is absolutely incredible. There are no two ways about it, this is one of the most beautifully orchestrated soundtracks ever created, and just really brings the game to life with emotion. Each new area and scenario brings with it a new track that truly sets the mood. Now if only the CD soundtrack was available outside of Japan...

Getting beyond all of this, the one thing that is most important in any good RPG is the story, and to properly convey the story as best as possible, the game is going to need some good writing. Fortunately, Suikoden's writing is done well—and while it might not sound like much to ask for, any avid RPGer will tell you that U.S. RPGs aren't known for having quality writing. Certain games, of which we won't mention names (Breath of Fire II and Robotrek come to mind) have had simply awful writing which just really hurt the game. In

Suikoden, however, the writing is the game's best asset, and paired with the very good use of humor, it delivers a winning, memorable combination.

Overall, for RPG fans, we can't recommend Suikoden enough, and if you're just thinking of getting into this wonderful genre of gaming, this would be a fabulous place to start out. Congratulations Konami, on a job well done.

ig



Early on in the game, you'll gain the assistance of a dragon that will fly you to an important destination where the story begins to unfold...

No two ways about it, this is one of the most beautifully orchestrated soundtracks ever created.

location, fighting battles to gain experience and gold as you move on, all while a huge story pans out before you. Dig a little deeper, however, and Suikoden reveals a lot more than just the basic elements of your average role playing game.

First of all, your party can ultimately contain up to 108

Capcom's Breath of Fire series. Instead of realtime action, you plan out all of your party's moves and then watch the battles pan out. The way that the battle animation takes place, however, makes the fights almost seem like they actually are taking place in realtime, with enemies attacking even



There are three different styles of battle in Suikoden. The regular "your party vs. the monsters" battle, a "one-on-one" fighting duel, and then perhaps the most enthralling of them all, the army vs. army "major battle," shown here.

GRAPHICS:

- + The whole world looks very realistic...
- ...but there's not much in the way of character animation.

SOUNDS:

- + Words simply can't describe this game's awesome soundtrack.
- +/- Release the game music soundtrack! Make it limited edition if you have to, but release it!

GAMEPLAY:

- + The best RPG to date for the PlayStation.
- + An enthralling quest will keep you glued to your television set.

LASTING POWER:

- + 108 total characters!!
- + Like most RPGs, this one is loooong—and fortunately, it won't put you to sleep.

OVERALL

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED

▶ Driving in the bowls can be a frustrating experience, especially when your car gets vaulted 200 feet in the air as a result of a massive 20-car collision.

Destruction Derby 2

Psygnosis lets loose the sequel to last year's 'smash hit' racing game

Publisher: Sony CEA

Platform: Sony PlayStation

Format: Single CD-ROM

Developer: Reflections

Release: Now Available

Don't let the usual preconceptions of a half-heartedly improved sequel with a few more options enter your mind with Destruction Derby 2. The engine has been completely redesigned, in every aspect, from its successful predecessor of just a year ago.

Changes over the first version are enormous, as a result of the game's entirely revamped graphics engine. The cars are substantially more detailed than their predecessors, now showing many more degrees of damage: wheels can be knocked off, hoods can be ripped away and hell, there's just more dents! What's even better are the



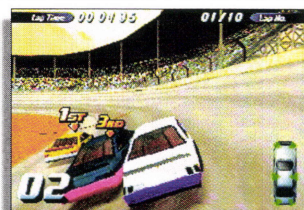
▶ No, these screenshots aren't messed up, they are actual first-person perspective screens that illustrate the massive carnage that you can expect in Psygnosis' Destruction Derby 2.

there simply wasn't enough to do. To alleviate this problem, the designers significantly added to each of the game's modes. Three more distinctively different bowls have been added to the Destruction Derby mode, where players have a choice between embarking on a

of this was possible before.

Game companies should pay closer attention to Psygnosis, using them as an example when creating the follow up to a successful game. Destruction Derby 2 isn't just a sequel, it's an entirely new racing game.

ig



Take it to the pits and pound out the dents (top). Straight stock car racing is as intense as it gets in any racing game; with or without the added bonus of mass destruction and carnage (bottom).

Changes over the first version are enormous, as a result of the game's entirely revamped graphics engine.

yummy effects that accentuate the carnage; smoke and flames pouring out of damaged cars, sparks caused by the combination of metal striking concrete and all sorts of mandatory track debris that includes wheels, hoods and such.

Additionally, the tracks are embellished with detailed backgrounds accompanied by variable driving conditions such as driving at dusk or cloudy weather effects. Even with all of these enhancements, the game speed is very brisk. In the first-person perspective, this seems as fast as any racing game we've seen this year.

Lastability was a problem that plagued Destruction Derby;

survival race or to traditionally play to rack up damage points. Seven new, larger racing courses are loaded with challenging features in an attempt to keep things interesting in the game's racing modes. These tracks have some new, drastic designs that include things such as twisty jumps, tunnels, large bumps and a pitstop that allows you to repair damage incurred during the race. All of these new obstacles make for interesting gameplay. Vaulting the car high over a ditch is a lot of fun, but must be done with a steady hand as hitting the ramp off-center makes straight landings next to impossible. Other jumps appear as slight bumps in the road, making the car do mid-air twists. Of course, none

GRAPHICS:

+ Greatly improved over the first version. Polygon usage is almost doubled in the cars and much of the backgrounds.

SOUNDS:

+ Engine sound is good, with realistic, loud effects.
+/- Music is the usual blend of rave/metal sounds.

GAMEPLAY:

+/- Actual car control is sensitive but nothing to get concerned about.
- Power-sliding could've been a bit more existent.

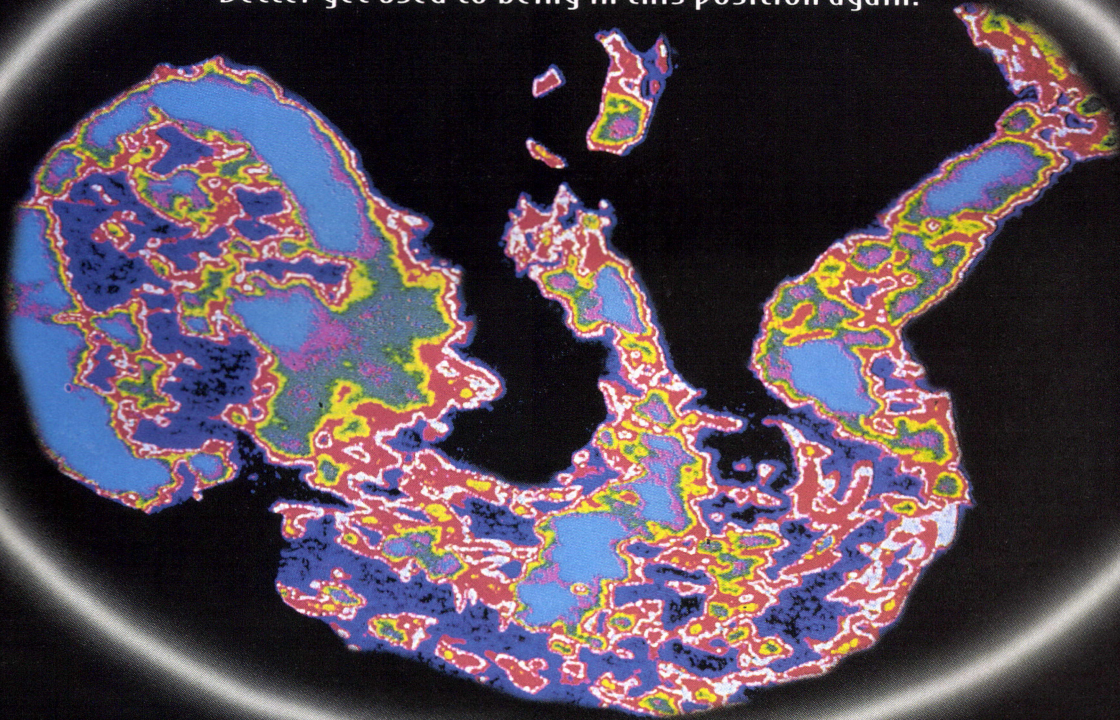
LASTING POWER:

+ Being a driving game, there is only so much to do after the tracks have been mastered.
- No more link option.

OVERALL

RECOMMENDED

Better get used to being in this position again.



This is more than Mortal Kombat. This is ULTIMATE MK3, featuring 8 new playable characters, 5 new backgrounds, 3 modes of play,

selectable ending sequences, new secret moves and combos and player selectable characters even the arcade version doesn't offer.



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MIDWAY



SUPER NINTENDO

GENESIS

Konami has taken a big risk in their drastic departure from the previous Contra games. Although it is a pretty good action title, gamers will have to decide if it lives up to the popular name.



Contra: Legacy of War

Konami continues the legacy of one of their most popular action-game series ever

Publisher: Konami

Platform: Sony PlayStation

Format: Single CD-ROM

Developer: Appaloosa

Release: Now Available



These two pictures are great examples of the interesting level layout. Notice on the top picture how the background and foreground seem to converge.

Although the latest addition to the popular series, Contra: Legacy of War, might disappoint those expecting another revision of the classic Contra games they loved on the NES, Super NES and Genesis, most gamers should be able to see through the nostalgia to find a solid and enjoyable fast-paced action shooter.

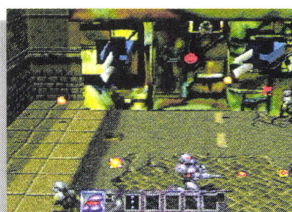
One of the few aspects of Legacy of War that does harken back to previous Contra titles is the story line. It seems that during the SNES Alien Wars conflict, a security guard smuggled one of the infamous Red Falcon alien embryos off a top-secret military base and sold it to Colonel Bassad—a dictator of a small country bent on world domination.

This time out, one or two players can choose from four characters, each with their own unique attributes and weapons.

Graphically, Legacy of War makes its boldest departure from its predecessors. Enemies still flood in from all sides of the screen, but the perspective has

Whether or not this Contra game lives up to its famous namesake is up to each gamer to decide.

changed from simple, 2-D side-scroller to a three-fourths overhead view with both polygons and sprites used for backgrounds and enemies. This effect serves the game well—all the enemies from the tiny soldier sprites to the huge polygon bosses look great and move smoothly. The backgrounds are varied and interactive—you can jump fences, stroll into huts, etc.



Remember those big walls from Contra? They're baaacckk!

All the Contra gameplay traditions are here—jump, duck, fire, strafe and super bomb, but within the context of the rest of the game they take on a whole new feel. The game features freedom of movement in any direction within a limited path, so not only do you jump and move in three dimensions, but enemy fire comes at you in three dimensions as well.

Because of the large amount of action on the screen at one time, however, it is often hard to tell exactly where you are in relation to bullets, especially when you jump and only have your shadow to judge your exact location. Control is also somewhat imprecise, which is

loaded with secret areas and power-ups for those clever enough to find them, and even has some entire "mini" arcade games hidden within it.

Audibly, Legacy of War scores well. A stirring musical score is accompanied by plenty of perfectly suited digitized sounds to help bring the player into the game's reality.

Whether or not the latest Contra lives up to its famous namesake is up to each gamer to decide. Legacy of War, "true" Contra game or not, has enough quality to stand on its own merits as a worthy addition to any PS owner's library.

ig

GRAPHICS:

- + Well-designed, complex backgrounds.
- + 3-D polygons and sprites are combined effectively.

SOUNDS:

- + Quality music and sounds fit the game perfectly, and are certainly above average for a shooter.

GAMEPLAY:

- + A large variety of different power-ups and gameplay techniques.
- Loose controls coupled with the perspective make the control a bit tough.

LASTING POWER:

- +/- A very difficult game, even on the easiest level.
- + Very few continues and hidden power-ups keep this game challenging and fresh.

OVERALL

RECOMMENDED

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▶ Although the first Virtua series of arcade games are starting to show their age, the lack of titles such as these on the PC keep them fresh and new nonetheless.



Virtua Squad PD

Load your mouse and take to the streets of Virtua City in Sega's new arcade port

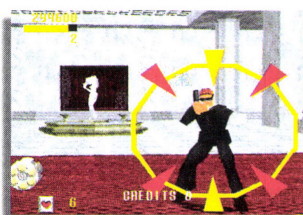
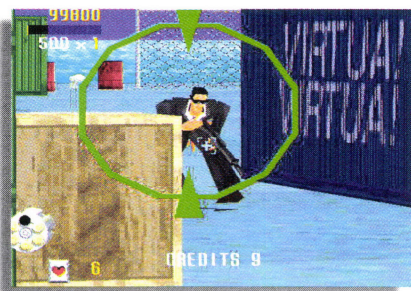
Publisher: Sega PC

Platform: PC

Format: Single CD-ROM

Developer: Sega

Release: Now Available



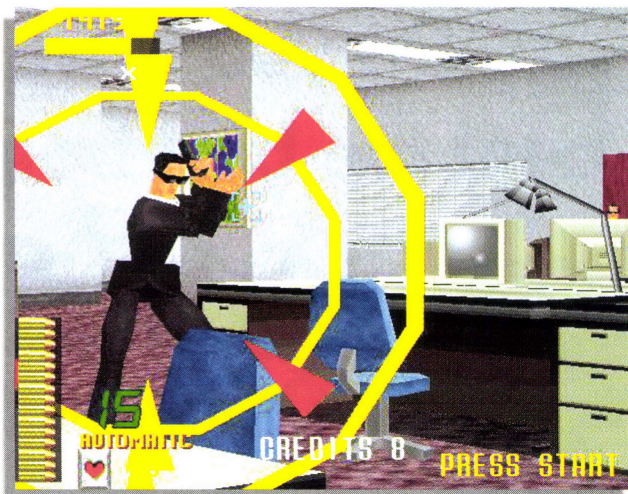
Taking out villains that pop up quickly from behind crates and other obstacles is a big part of the challenge in this fast-paced arcade conversion.

Sega has been wasting no time porting their older Saturn games to Windows 95, and the latest game to make the conversion is Sega's Virtua Cop (renamed Virtua Squad after it was discovered that another PC game was already using a similar name, Virtual Cop.)

Virtua Squad is virtually unchanged from the Saturn version, with the exception of the control scheme. Since there is no standard light gun for the PC, the aiming and shooting is done with the mouse (or a gamepad or keyboard, if you're the second player). The control works reasonably well, although you can't escape the feeling that

you're just pointing and clicking at your opponents rather than violently blowing them away with a semiautomatic rifle. Since you can't point the mouse off screen, reloading is accomplished by double-clicking the right mouse button.

VS PD requires some pretty hefty hardware to run, however. We tested it on a Pentium-166 with 32MB of RAM, and the game was quite playable in 640x480x8 Bit color, but got somewhat choppy when it was bumped up to the 16-bit color mode. Virtua Squad will also run in 320x200 low-res mode, and can be set to run in quarter-screen or full-screen mode, with two detail settings. The high-res mode is noticeably sharper than the Saturn version, however, and the PC version features some nice high-color backgrounds, especially in the



▶ The 3-D engine is good—but not great. Most of the enemies look identical.

second stage. The final graphical option allows players to toggle between "smooth" or "fast" motion, the first giving totally smooth motion at the expense of speed, while the other will keep the game speed high at the expense of frame rate.

Audio is completely identical

may have some problems running the game without driver updates for your various hardware components.

The biggest shortcoming of Virtua Squad is that it really seems like it was a quick port from the Saturn to the PC. Although it's understandable that Sega doesn't want to outdo its flagship console, I know the PC could do a close-to-arcade port with a fast processor and a nice 3-D accelerator.

Still, for those PC owners who want a solid gun-type shooter but are unwilling to fork over the \$200 for a game console, Virtua Squad PD certainly fits the bill.

The biggest shortcoming of Virtua Squad is that it seems like a quick port from the Saturn to the PC.

to the Saturn version, with Redbook audio providing the music and standard digital audio for the sound effects. One thing that isn't so friendly about the program, however, is the amount of hard drive space required—over 110 MB of program and data files need to reside on your hard drive to get the game to run. Personally, we fail to understand why half of those files couldn't be loaded off of the CD. Virtua Squad also takes full advantage of Microsoft's DirectX 2.0, which means that those of you with slightly esoteric configurations

GRAPHICS:

- + Hi-res modes, smooth motion capture and new background planes.
- Too bad they're not using the arcade 3-D models.

SOUNDS:

- +/- Unchanged and unimproved from Saturn.
- Music is below par by PC standards.

GAMEPLAY:

- +/- Solid arcade action, though not having a light gun hurts tremendously.
- This game is beginning to show its age.

LASTING POWER:

- + Selectable difficulty levels help a bit....
- But the bad guys always pop up in the same patterns regardless.

OVERALL

RECOMMENDED

ig

B+

B

B

B-

B

Area 51 does not exist.

And if you're smart, you'll stop asking questions.

This is not a game. This is a warning.

you can't get in but you can take it home.



MIDWAY

The #1 Arcade game shows you what your government won't.

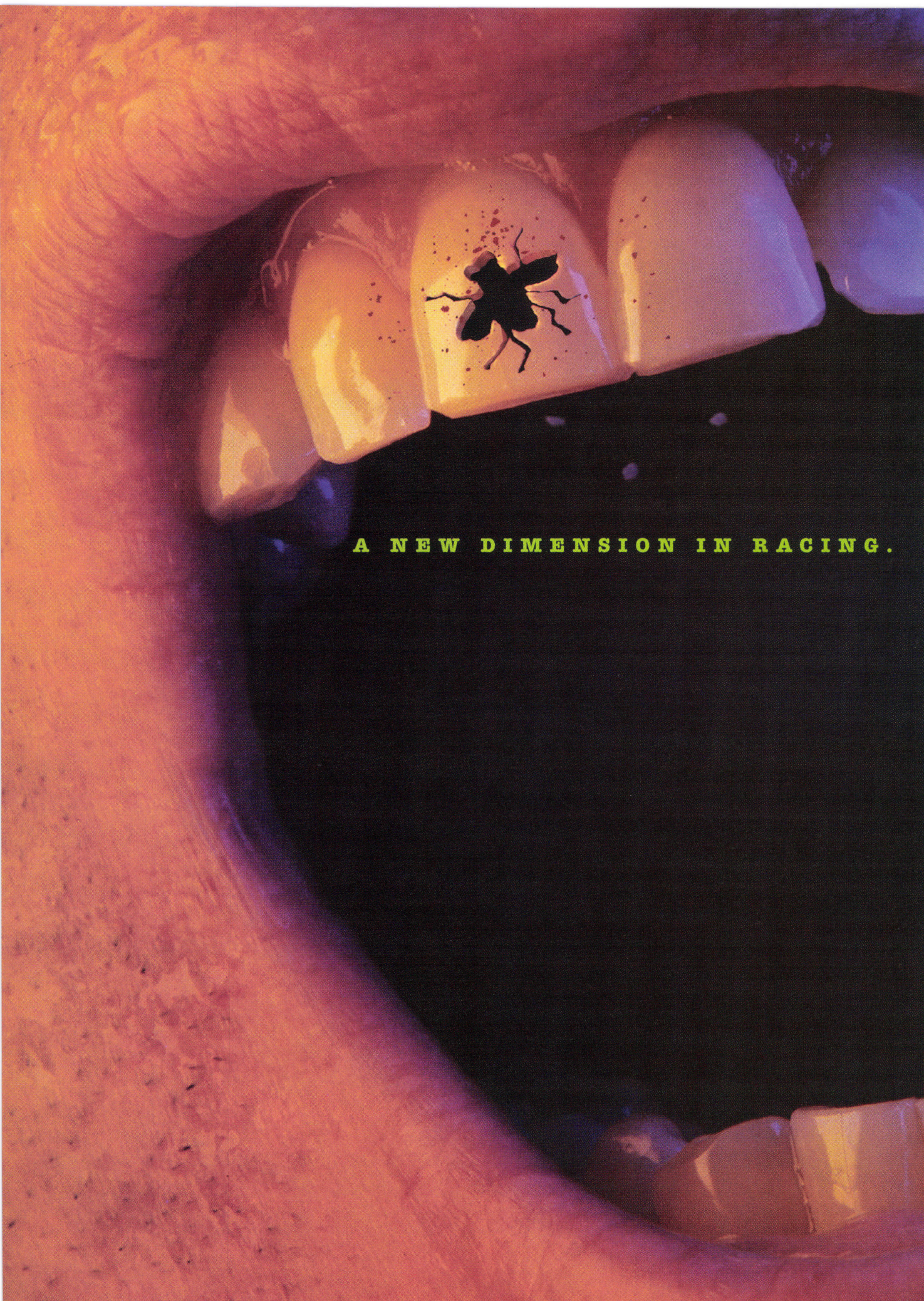


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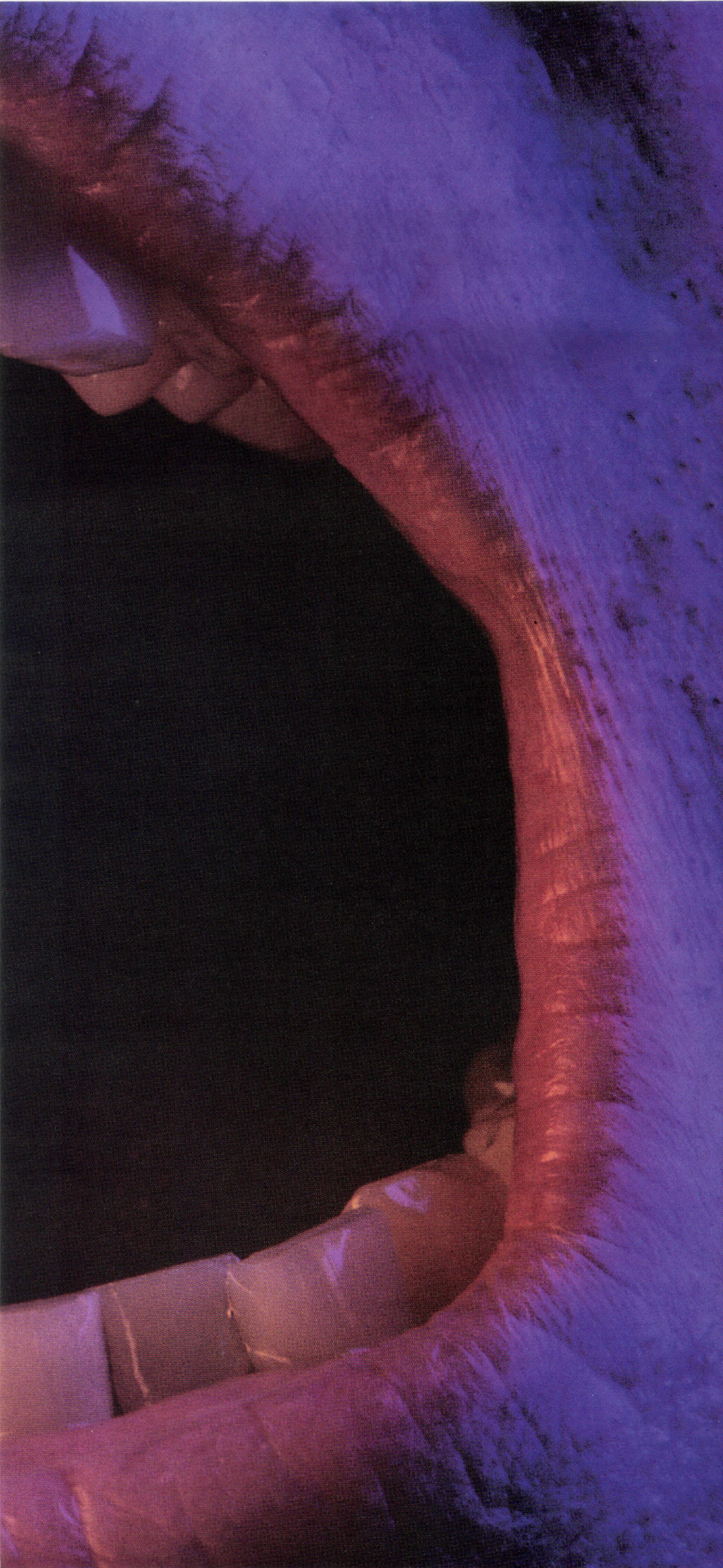


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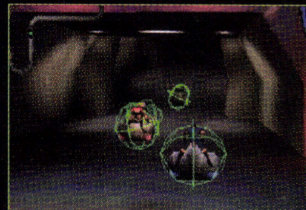




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PC CD-ROM



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▶ Those tried-and-true Toshinden characters are back (they're beginning to pop up more than Ken and Ryu...), and the overall game engine is basically the same as in previous Toshindens.



Battle Arena Toshinden URA

Takara's latest Toshinden port once again fails to impress on the Saturn

Publisher: Sega of America

Platform: Sega Saturn

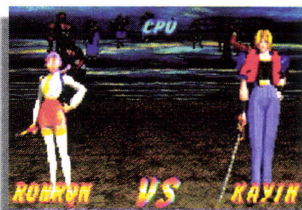
Format: Single CD-ROM

Developer: Takara/Tamsoft

Release: Now Available

When the original Battle Arena Toshinden came out for the PlayStation, it wowed many, despite its shallow gameplay. Since then, the high-water mark has been raised for console fighting games, with most moving at high frame rates and resolutions. Sadly, Toshinden—even in its latest incarnation, URA—has progressed little over the last year and a half.

Battle Arena Toshinden URA is the first Toshinden that doesn't take place in a tournament, but plot is typically window dressing anyhow. The two new characters Ronron and Ripper, are interesting...actually,



▶ The character select screen is extremely dull (top). The overdrive meter from Toshinden 2 is back, allowing for extra-powerful attacks when charged to maximum level (above).

The backgrounds are completely flat, a la VF2, and the animation is unacceptably choppy.

Ripper is interesting, but Ronron is one of the most hideously annoying character designs ever to surface in a fighting game. When we picked her to put her through her paces, we almost wanted to kill her ourselves! Noticeably absent are most of the characters that were new to Toshinden 2. Vermillion is gone but oddly, Tracy made the cut. Also missing-in-action are old characters; Sho and Gaia, although Sho has now been

replaced by an evil droid character called Repli.

Battle Arena Toshinden URA's major improvement over its



▶ With pixelization like this, why even bother? (top) Multiple viewpoints highlight the action (above).

you can't jump over them either. Special moves are grossly overpowered—they often take around a third of a lifebar, and a typical combo does 50 percent damage or more. It's obvious that little effort was made to balance the characters, much less the bosses—some characters have moves that are too powerful to keep the game even remotely fun.

The concept of a hi-res Toshinden was a sound one, provided that they also bother to move the characters smoothly. Alas, this version of Toshinden plays worse than the original, which really relegates it to the bottom of the barrel.

GRAPHICS:

- Ugh! Flat backgrounds and choppy character animations.
- + Hi-res mode saves this grade from being a C+.

SOUNDS:

- +/- Mediocrity sums up the audio in this game...
- ...but some character sounds are real annoying.

GAMEPLAY:

- Horribly balanced, with damage being on the excessive side.
- Boss characters are especially overpowered.

LASTING POWER:

- + Hey! It's a two-player game! If you can get anyone to play with you...
- Computer AI is dumber than a box of rocks.

OVERALL

BELOW AVERAGE

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S E R I E S



PS owners who are envious of Mario have something to cheer about. Eidos is sure to turn a few heads with what is a brilliantly conceived feminine cross between Indiana Jones and Mario.

Tomb Raider

Eidos and Core deliver with one of the best 32-Bit action-adventure titles ever created

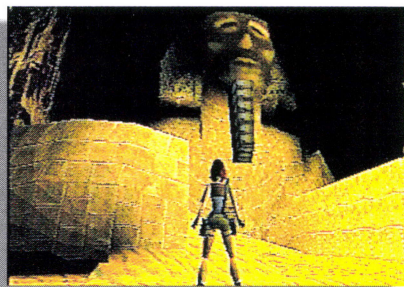
Publisher: Eidos Interactive

Platform: Sony PlayStation

Format: Single CD-ROM

Developer: Core Design

Release: Now Available



Breathtaking scenes like this one are not uncommon in Tomb Raider, and there is no doubt they give this game a tangible mystique.

Given the number of film-to-game tie-ins released in the last year, it would seem that both Hollywood and the game industry's ultimate goal is to make a game that looks and feels just like a movie. Ironically, most games based on movie licenses fall very short of this lofty goal, making it all the more fitting that one of the best games this year has no such tie-in, yet captures most of the elements that makes a good action flick such a visceral, thrilling experience.

Tomb Raider stars Lara Croft, a former heiress whose life was forever changed after her plane crashed deep in the Himalayas on the way back to England from a skiing trip. After surviving in the wilderness alone for several days, there was no way she could go back to "proper" British society, and so she began her career as an archeologist and freelance writer.

Now she travels around the world in search of adventure—and believe me, she certainly finds it, in a job for the head of one of the largest technology companies in the world.

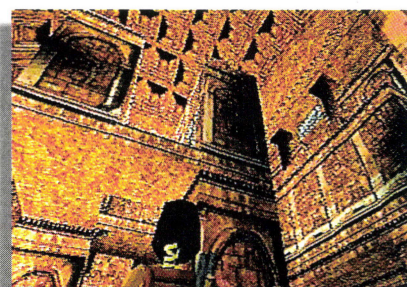
What sets Tomb Raider apart from games like Resident Evil or Perfect Weapon is the completely realtime 3-D polygon world. Nearly everything in the world has depth, and problems with confusing, fixed camera angles are nearly nonexistent. The frame rate in the game is, remarkably enough, consistently high, although the frame rate



does drop slightly in very complex rooms.

The audio in the game is generally spartan, but effective. Most of the time the only sound you'll be listening to is the patter of Lara's footsteps, although enemies and most traps do give audio cues that tend to extend your lifespan. There is music, and what is there is very good, but it is played very sparingly throughout the game.

The game system in Tomb Raider is, in many ways, reminiscent of Delphine's Fade to



Like Mario, Tomb Raider features a necessary "free look camera" that can be aimed freely, allowing you to survey the whole area.

Similarly, the control in Tomb Raider is much like that of Super Mario 64's. It differs in one significant way, however—the camera is nearly always behind Lara, and pressing up on the joystick

Tomb Raider's levels often have ceilings so high that you can't see them from the ground.

Black. But it departs in one significant way—instead of having flat floors and a modern building design, Tomb Raider's level designs are extremely multi-level, often with ceilings so high that you can't see them from the ground. Of course, the levels are designed so that you will eventually be on the uppermost platforms in that room, facing certain death with every jump.

always makes Lara move in the direction she is facing. Aside from the "Look" button (which is almost exactly the same as the look feature in Mario), the player has little control over the camera. The other buttons on the controller are used to control Lara's speed and direction of movement, as well as jumping and using objects and, of course, her weapons. Fans of John Woo



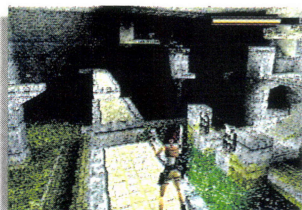
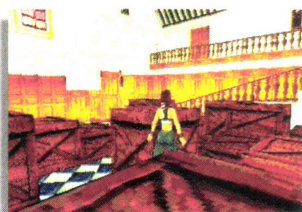
Tomb Raider's full-motion video sequences tie together each scene perfectly. The video is excellent because the renders look very much like the objects present within in the game which helps the game's cohesiveness.

movies will fall in love with Lara right away, as she starts the game with a pair of pistols with unlimited ammunition. Combat in Tomb Raider is made simple, as Lara intelligently targets her opponents and will actually train both guns on them, even while flipping somersaults in mid air.

Blasting enemies is not the emphasis in Tomb Raider, although you will be pressed into situations that will truly get the adrenaline pumping. The one thing that is stressed above all others in Tomb Raider is the jumping. At first, many players will be frustrated due to the not-quite-intuitive control system, but fortunately a quick run through the training level will familiarize the player with just about every technique needed to solve the game.

What is truly astonishing is the cleverness with which the designers have crafted each level—at first, some rooms seem impossible, but every puzzle has a logical solution, using only the basic moves. In addition to standard movement, Lara can also manipulate switches and levers, and can push or pull certain types of blocks to achieve her objectives.

Those accustomed to breezing through games will find a lot to like here, since Tomb Raider is a bit longer than the average game, with four worlds subdivided into a total of 15 levels. Each level will require about one to two hours to complete, which should give you an idea of the scale of this game.



A house is available that has a practice gym (top) so that you can tackle scenes like this (above).

Probably the best thing that can be said about Tomb Raider is that it simply feels like playing inside an actual *Indiana Jones* movie. Lara makes a perfect heroine, as she's acrobatic, fearless and tough, and throughout the game she cheats death in ways that would make a seasoned stuntman suffer from extreme pucker factor. Kudos to Core for designing one of the best and most satisfying titles of the year. Hopefully though, we won't start to see dozens of cheap imitations now...

ig



Some potential ways to die in Tomb Raider: Fall from one of the many deadly drops in the game or get eaten by a hungry wolf.

GRAPHICS:

- + Lots of polygons, with minimal slowdown.
- Some minor clipping problems.

SOUNDS:

- + Music and sound effects are very well done.
- You can't help but think that the game could've used some more music.

GAMEPLAY:

- + Very solid adventure/platform gameplay.
- +/- Not for the weak of heart, though the game is as tough as its female heroine, Lara.

LASTING POWER:

- + Fifteen levels, each taking one to two hours, gives you plenty to explore.
- + Plenty of secrets to keep you exploring further.

OVERALL

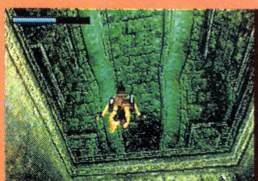
REVOLUTIONARY

Tomb Raider Raids the Sega Saturn

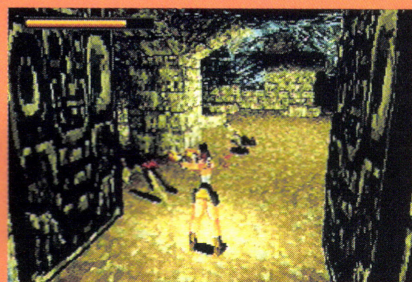
The Saturn version of Tomb Raider, although not quite as nice as the PlayStation version, is still very impressive, especially when compared to other Saturn games. You might expect the Gouraud shading and lightsourcing to be missing in action, but actually, they're both there. The effect is quite a bit more subtle than that found in the PlayStation version, however. The frame rate, although still good, is also not quite up to the standards of the PlayStation version when Lara steps into a reasonably complex room.

One major difference is the control scheme on the Saturn. Perhaps it is because we are used to the PlayStation version after playing it for over a week, but the Saturn's button layout doesn't seem to be as convenient for this type of game. In addition, there is no "edit controller" configuration option—there are only three controller options to choose from.

Sound is basically the same as the PlayStation version, although the sound effects sound fuzzy, as if the samples are at a lower rate.

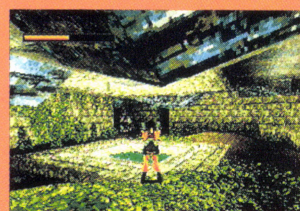


Saturn owners will be glad to see that their Tomb Raider is very close to the PS version.



Despite the obvious inferiority in the Saturn version of Tomb Raider's graphics, the gameplay is just as compelling as in the PlayStation one.

The differences won't make Saturn owners run out to buy PlayStations—but the Saturn version is still a fantastic game in its own right, and is still very highly recommended.



The double-gun wielding Lara looks almost as good as on the PS.

GRAPHICS:

- + A very impressive engine that blows away most everything else on the Saturn platform.
- Not quite as polished as the PlayStation version.

SOUNDS:

- + Music is still very good, if used somewhat sparingly.
- Sound effects sound slightly muffled.

GAMEPLAY:

- + From a gameplay standpoint, there's no difference whatsoever...

LASTING POWER:

- + A long, engaging quest makes this game tough to complete.
- + Again, there are a ton of secrets to keep you exploring well into the wee hours of the night.

OVERALL

REVOLUTIONARY

▶ Electronic Arts hopes that juicing up the game with high-quality 3-D graphics like these will help slam NBA Live 97 to the next level. We think they've done a pretty good job.

NBA Live 97

Electronic Arts delivers a "Hoop Dream" that has nothing to do with movies

Publisher: Electronic Arts

Platform: Sony PlayStation

Format: Single CD-ROM

Developer: EA Canada

Release: Now Available

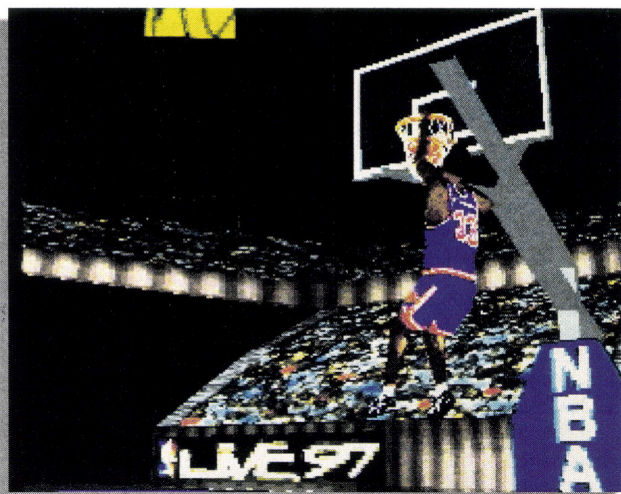


▶ Player creation is one of the highlights of NBA Live 97. Here you can see a very talented 5'3" guard named Newt with a lot of potential. Go get 'em kid.

NBA Live 96 was a great game that was often overlooked by many people because of its awkward mismatch of 2-D and 3-D graphics that was bested by Sony's aesthetically impressive NBA ShootOut.

With excellent gameplay already in place, and another eight months of PlayStation development experience under their belt, EA Sports focused on adding the graphical enhancements and bonus features that would make NBA Live 97 a more complete title. Mission accomplished.

Three major enhancements, along with a handful of minor ones, separate NBA Live 97



hair even changes from game to game, and, as we all know, that's pretty damn important.

Second, there is an immense amount of new roster manipulation options such as signing free agents, releasing players, and more importantly, an excellent "create-a-player" feature. This feature allows you to make a player from scratch. His looks, his abilities, his team and even the college he graduated from is fair game. If you want to make a mutant player who is 5'10", 300 lbs and plays center and has three-point range, it's possible. This feature is also very handy to create the unlicensed players in the game, such as Michael Jordan

defensive schemes and individual pressure options, such as double teams. To make all of this easy to digest, Live contains invaluable animated play diagrams.

Other minor improvements are tweaks to gameplay such as special "deke" moves that only certain players can perform, in addition to a button that lets you cross-over dribble. A few new season features have been added to make it more realistic such as trade deadlines, etc.

A few games may have something here and there that tops Live, but there is no denying that this game is the best overall 32-Bit basketball game currently available, bar none.

If you want to make a mutant player who is 5'10", 300 lbs and plays center, it's possible.

from last year's version. First, the player graphics are now entirely 3-D rendered and motion-captured, eliminating the cartoony feel of last year's version. NBA Live uses authentic arenas, dubbed "Virtual Stadiums," that look just like the real thing. From the claw prints on the Toronto Raptors' court to the traditional parkay Celtics floor, the arenas in Live look just like the real thing. The 3-D players resemble their counterparts, right down to their basketball duds, thanks to ample amounts of texture-mapping. Dennis Rodman's

and Charles Barkley.

Lastly, the strategic options in Live are better than ever, easily containing the most extensive of any console basketball game on the market. A wealth of offensive sets and quick plays are available, in addition to several



▶ EA seems dedicated to bringing in big television licenses. Here, you see the lovely TNT logo. Who cares? The game is so good it could have a PBS license and no one would care.

GRAPHICS:

- + Superb 3-D environment.
- + Wealth of camera angles helps to make some nice replays.

SOUNDS:

- + Good mood-setting music during menus.
- + In-game announcer sounds great.

GAMEPLAY:

- + The most entertaining and realistic console basketball game to date.
- Still a bit too easy to score.

LASTING POWER:

- + This game should last about a year—presumably until Live 98 comes out.
- + Season mode is in-depth, adding immense playtime to the game.

OVERALL

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED

ig

A

B+

A

A+

A

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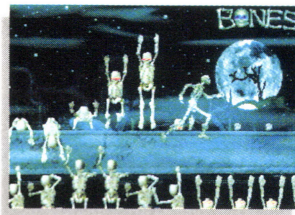


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CD-ROM



Sega's long-awaited Mr. Bones has finally arrived, but the level of difficulty brings back the memorable (or not so memorable) days of controller-throwing frustration from the NES days.

Mr. Bones

Sega's new action game fails to give Saturn owners a rise

One of this holiday season's most unique games is Sega's double CD game, Mr. Bones. This long-awaited title is a mix of puzzle game and platformer, fused together with an interesting tale of good vs. evil.

The story begins when the immortal DaGoulain plugs his demonic keyboard into a graveyard and raises an army of undead. The red-eyed skeletons march in unison to the beat of the evil lord's drum as he explains his plan for ultimate world domination.

Things go wrong for DaGoulain when Mr. Bones looks around and starts wondering where he is and what's going on. Without hesitation, the evil one takes note of Mr. Bones' unusual behavior and summons his minions of undead to do away with the poor non-conformist skeleton.

The whole thing is told in an entertaining horror movie cinema, held back only by the Saturn's shoddy FMV performance. With the introduction over, the game's first level begins with streamed video providing the background. This seemed like a worthy idea by itself, but the FMV seems to stumble along compared to the system's normal

silky-smooth parallax scrolling. Luckily, the parallax kicks in a couple levels later, and a

himself dropping and reattaching his parts constantly. Overall, Bones delivers an

Mr. Bones finds himself dropping and reattaching his parts constantly.

normal side-scroller ensues. Meanwhile, the calcium-loaded hero must keep himself intact via the art of skeletism, or skeleton magnetism. Skeletism is found in blue puddles, springs, bats and can even be sucked out of the other undead creatures, but there never seems to be enough of it and Mr. Bones finds

interesting experience that most players just won't have the patience to deal with.



Publisher: Sega of America

Platform: Sega Saturn

Format: Double CD-ROM

Developer: SegaSoft

Release: Now Available

GRAPHICS:

- + Layers of high-color backdrops add depth to the picture.
- + Lifelike animation brings the skeletons a new lease on life.

SOUNDS:

- + Evil music in all of the cut-scenes enhance the experience...
- But sound effects and music in the game are often lacking.

GAMEPLAY:

- + Puzzle elements provide for a large amount of both challenge and frustration.
- Awkward control of the character takes much getting used to.

LASTING POWER:

- +/- It takes a while to get through the game, but afterward there's no real reason to return.

OVERALL

AVERAGE

B

B

C

C

C+

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war is Hell.
(and it just got hotter)

It's time to live out all your power-mad dreams of world domination. See and experience the battle, work your twisted strategy against countless armies (and the weather). Set up fortresses and headquarters as you march mercilessly across the continents towards total victory. Who says war is hell?

RISK

CD-ROM WIN 95

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▶ ASCII's King's Field II continues the legacy—which isn't exactly a great thing. Although it is mildly better than the first one, the scale of improvement isn't overwhelming.

King's Field II

Wander through a fully 3-D world in ASCII's sequel to last year's best-selling RPG

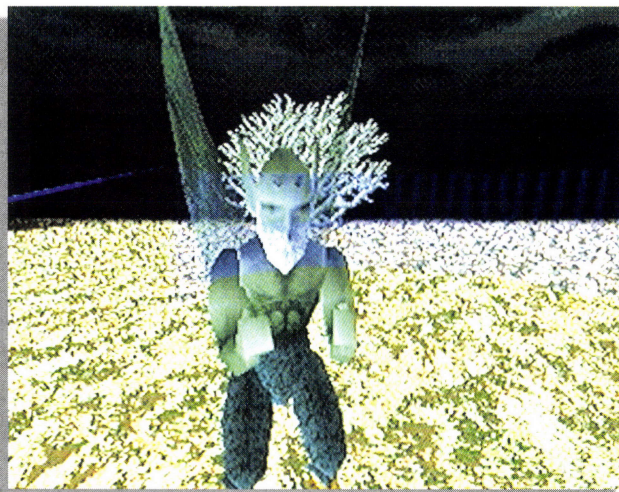
Publisher: ASCII Entertainment

Platform: Sony PlayStation

Format: Single CD-ROM

Developer: From Software

Release: Now Available



Following hot on the heels of the terminally frustrating King's Field, ASCII releases King's Field II. While better in many ways, King's Field II improves little on the problems that plagued the original's gameplay. King's Field II does make a valiant effort to conjure up a story to complement the game, but basically contrives nothing more than what is necessary to fill the game's intro FMV.

As the prince of the blackened realm of Verdite, players embark on a quest to recover various seals and artifacts in order to break the magic seal on the castle and slay the possessed King. While KF2 succeeds in giving players a sense of purpose from the very beginning of the game, it does very little to

will emerge and make short work of the player. Enemies capable of poisoning the player are everywhere, with limited numbers of antidotes to be had. King's Field II is difficult, and definitely not for the inexperienced player. Cheap hits such as this cause King's Field II to rely heavily on game saving, a problem since this is only available at sparsely located save points.

While beautiful, King's Field II's graphics engine actually manages to interfere with gameplay through rampant slowdown. During these lagged times, the player's timing is thrown off giving the enemies an unfair advantage in combat. Despite the slowdown, King's Field II is visually more impressive than its predecessor, giving the player a more detailed 3-D



▶ One of the things that RPGs have always clamored for is yellow blobs of magic. Wait no more.

and animated, and show far better texturing and attention to detail than the vast landscapes.

King's Field II is a slight improvement over the original, but only those severely desiring an RPG should bother with this frustrating 3-D adventure.

ig

GRAPHICS:

- + Detailed 3-D worlds and monsters.
- Weak textures and lots of slowdown.

SOUNDS:

- + Soothing music plays softly in the background.
- + Good sound effects for weapons and enemies.

GAMEPLAY:

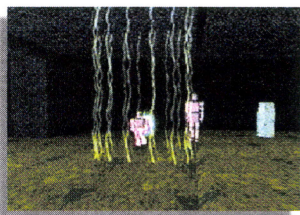
- + Solid 3-D-oriented gameplay.
- Lacking a bit in terms of story, which is important in any RPG.

LASTING POWER:

- + Long, challenging game quest...
- ...if frustration doesn't shelve the game first.

OVERALL

AVERAGE



▶ Don't get excited. This is just a snapshot from the full-motion video sequences which we all know are a key part of any really good RPG. Not (above).

While beautiful, King's Field II's graphics engine actually manages to interfere with gameplay.

aid that sense of purpose, giving players little in the way of useful information to make it through the game.

The original dropped the player into the heat of battle, whereas King's Field II does just the opposite, making the real battle seem distant. Even with this problem fixed, King's Field II is not beyond killing the player for making an "uninformed decision." For example, players will encounter a chest in a building very early in the game. When opened, a skeleton

world. The environments are still plastered with similar, plain textures, unfortunately, stealing the wind of what could have been exceptional graphics. The enemies are creatively rendered



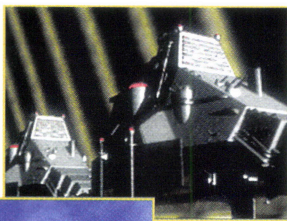
▶ To all of you RPG fans who have been desperately wanting to kill worms—here's your chance. This one's called a "Hell Worm." Joy.

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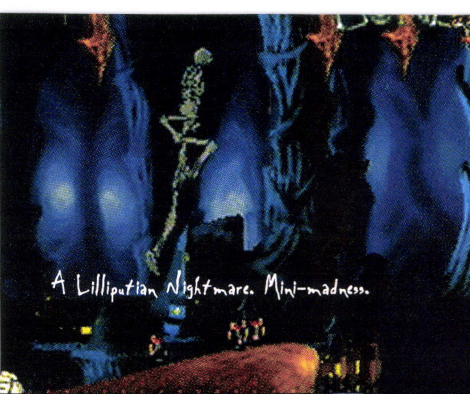
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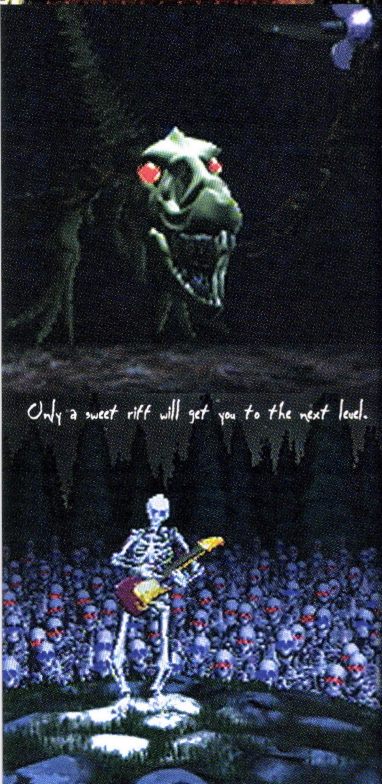
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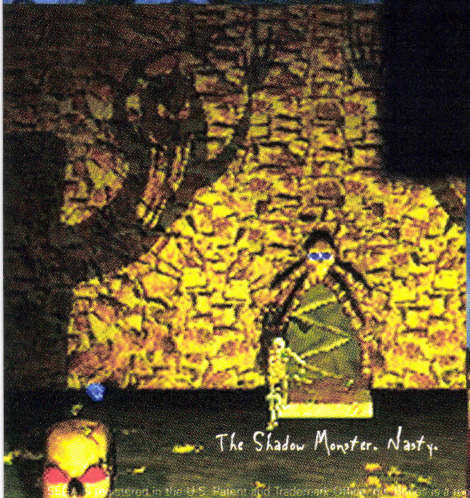


Only a sweet riff will get you to the next level.

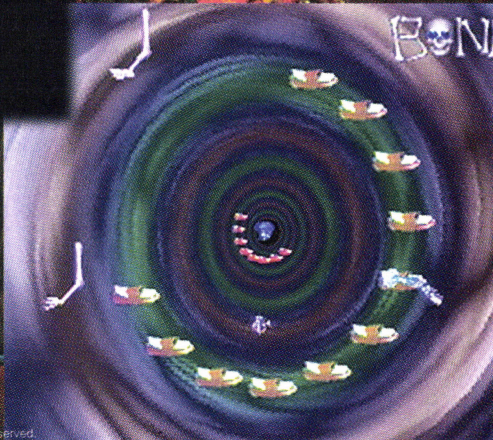
To win this game
you must play
from your heart.
Or any
available organ.



Mr. Bones chilling out on the ice.



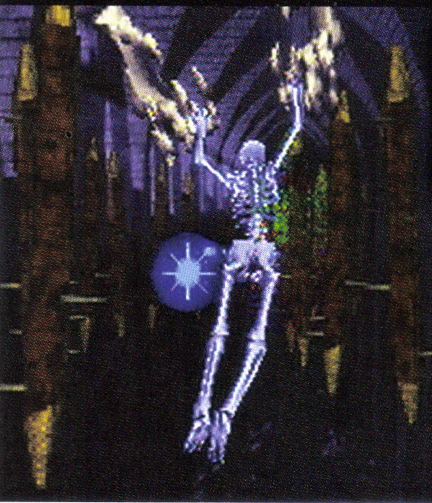
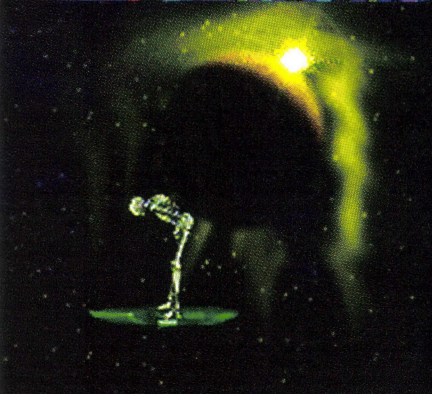
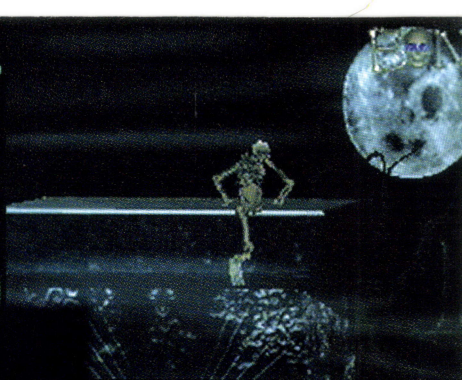
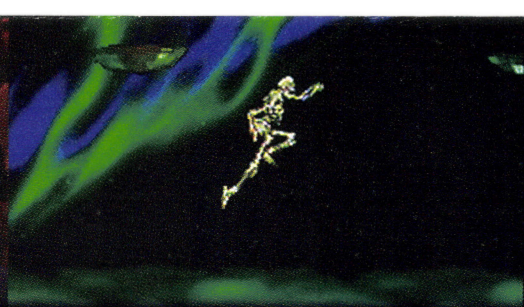
The Shadow Monster. Nasty.



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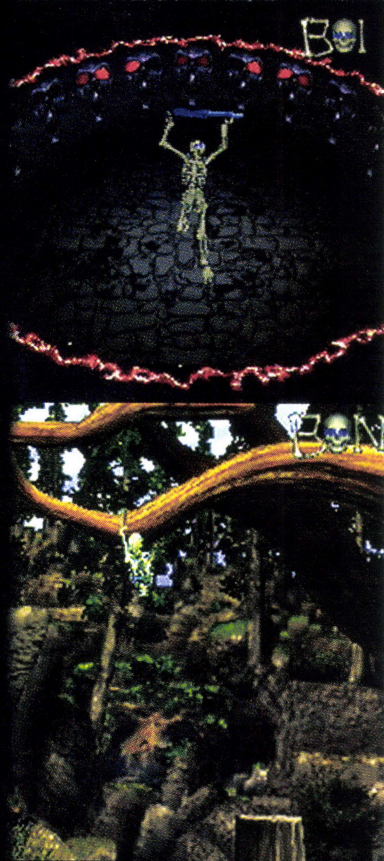


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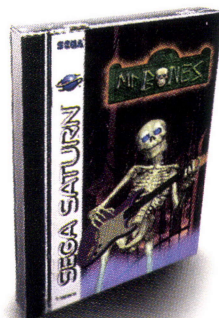


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▶ Pitball is a bit of a departure by Accolade, and with that in mind, they did a pretty darned good job with their first foray into this strange genre. How about them apples?



Pitball

Accolade scores high with their futuristic two-on-two sports game

Publisher: Accolade

Platform: Sony PlayStation

Format: Single CD-ROM

Developer: Warner Interactive

Release: Now Available

Futuristic sports games have taken the 32-Bit systems by storm lately, but neither Hyperblade nor Blast Chamber can claim any common ground with Accolade's extremely eccentric Pitball. Blending fighting game mechanics with an unscrupulous, nuclear-powered game of lacrosse, Pitball oozes originality and replayability despite its aesthetic flaws.

The game's concept is simple enough. Players must snag an energy ball from the appendages of the opposing team and launch it into the

Between games players can seek company endorsement, buy better equipment, hire new players, gamble on their other teams, and even fix the occasional game to better serve both one's ranking and wallet. Should arm-chair athletes feel unconfident about their slamming abilities, players can switch between human and computer control in an instant.



▶ Crazy, funky neon moves like this are just some of the tricks that will help you slam the glowing rock in the hole.

and go blind from staring at the game's neon glow, whetting one's competitive edge on Accolade's Pitball can be a rewarding experience.

ig

Players must snag an energy ball from the appendages of the opposing team.

opponent's goal as many times as possible before the clock runs out. Other than the time limit, defaulting to three minutes, Pitball has no rules. Each species comes equipped with many attacks, ranging from fireballs to finishing moves, in addition to a well-placed ball shot into the back of the opposition. Unfortunately, most players will want to master the basics before moving onto the more complicated special moves, as they will ultimately be valuable in the course of the game. Fortunately, the second player can keep a competent enough game to offset the initial learning curve on the easy setting.

Players can also battle against or with a friend, the latter which is very useful in the game's season mode. Pitball's season mode is one of the most comprehensive out there, serving almost as a full simulation.

Pitball's graphics, however, are neither as original or as pleasant as the gameplay. Each of the game's 12 stadiums is exactly alike except for their respective, extremely blocky textures. The characters' meshes themselves are not only extremely squarish but also have no shading to help counteract the horrid textures. As a result of these two flaws, the entire game shines in garish, dayglo colors, in addition to the decidedly 16-Bit portraits.

Pitball's techno soundtrack is average at best. Fortunately, the ample supply of sci-fi sound effects drowns out the stale tunes, making for a pleasant listening experience. In addition to those complaints, Pitball does have some fairly heinous load times, especially considering the short length of each match.

While one could grow old waiting for the game to load up

GRAPHICS:

- + Smoothly animated polygonal characters.
- Blocky characters and highly pixelated textures.

SOUNDS:

- + Excellent array of sci-fi sound effects.
- Average (at best) techno soundtrack.

GAMEPLAY:

- + Fast-paced, high-abuse sports action.
- Annoying load times make for unwanted delays.

LASTING POWER:

- + Twelve different characters to play with.
- + There are a huge number of options available in the season mode.

OVERALL

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED

A-



▶ As you can tell from the screenshots above, Pitball allows for several different camera angles from which to view the action in the arenas.

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▶ Pandemonium! portrays a seemingly endless number of viewpoints, with a constantly moving camera and many distinct-looking gameplay environments.



Pandemonium!

Crystal's colorful new platformer may single-handedly revolutionize the platform game market

Publisher: Crystal Dynamics

Platform: Sony PlayStation

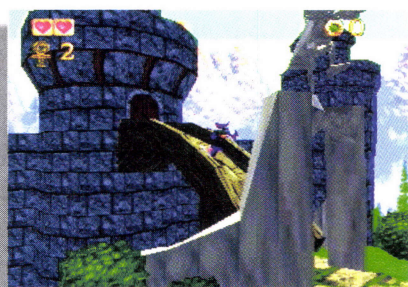
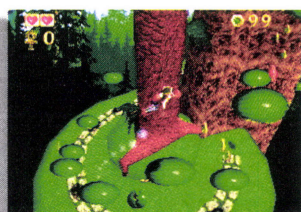
Format: Single CD-ROM

Developer: Crystal Dynamics

Release: Now Available

When Crystal Dynamics made Pandemonium!, they immediately answered the largest problem that has plagued platform games throughout the 32-Bit era. They created a game that offers the 3-D graphics that players have come to expect from their PlayStations, but without compromising the basic play mechanics of a traditional platform game.

Nicki is a magician and Fargus is a court jester, who together, accidentally summon a monster while casting spells of fireworks from atop a castle. This is all explained in the beautifully rendered cinematic intro

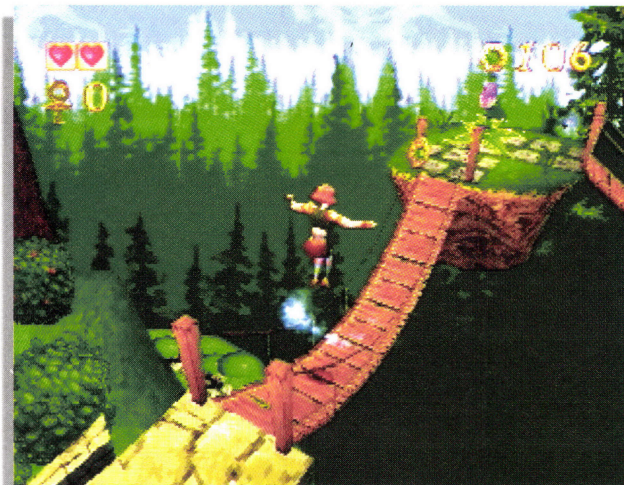


Each of Pandemonium!'s two main characters have different abilities that make certain stages a lot easier, assuming you've chosen the one that suits that stage best.

Beneath the mask of all these 3-D graphics lies the heart of a traditional side-scroller.

and exposes the personalities of the two young characters. It's also discovered here that in order to get rid of the evil monster, the two must reach the wishing well, and thus their adventure begins.

Once it does, those texture mapped 3-D graphics that have sold oh so many PlayStations, kick in and deliver a powerhouse of gently flowing polygons that illustrate a medieval world. With a single plane of paint-like 2-D scrolling in the distant background, the polygons take on the majority of the work in creating one of the most atmospheric games the PlayStation has had to date.



Beneath the mask of all these 3-D graphics, though, beats the heart of a traditional side-scroller. Buried within Pandemonium!'s enchanting shadowy lair is a feel that allows the user to forget all about the controls of the game and put forth that effort into finding its hidden areas instead. Although the timed leaps from slides and pounces on enemies

Depeche Mode performing medieval ballads, the rhythmic melodies never seem to get old. The sound effects deserve a similar credit with highly realistic bells and whistles throughout.

With all the elements accounted for, Pandemonium! makes an earnest attempt to fill the void that the "next generation" of gaming has created. They've made a platform game that has to sacrifice neither its sleek 3-D animation nor its intuitive gameplay. Hopefully it'll only be a matter of time before other companies awaken to Crystal Dynamics' simple solution and incorporate it in their own game designs.

ig

GRAPHICS:

- + Silky smooth polygon animation fills the screen.
- + The fantastic atmosphere is outdone only by Resident Evil.

SOUNDS:

- + Enjoyable music, even if it wasn't in a game.
- + Sound effects are as varied as the game's enemies.

GAMEPLAY:

- + The control feels natural and is intuitive.
- For polygonal characters, you'd think they could have a better variety of maneuvers.

LASTING POWER:

- + Good challenge and lots of hidden areas to explore.
- Like most platformers, there's not much to do once it's beaten.

OVERALL

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED

A-



Why is this cat smiling? We can't think of a single good reason since the game he stars in was an ambitious project that probably didn't turn out the way Accolade would have liked.

Bubsy 3D

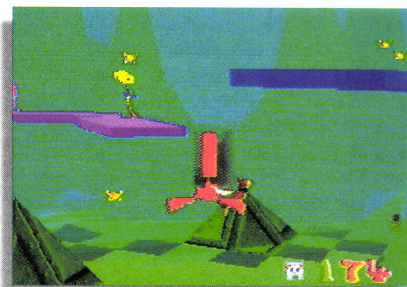
Bubsy has gotten a bad rap. Before the furball first appeared on the Super NES, many gamers were hoping it would be the Sonic-beater they'd been waiting for. When the bobcat hopped over to the Genesis a few months later, Sega followers were expecting Bubsy to take a seat next to their beloved hedgehog as one of the great mascot video game heroes.

It's not really fair, though, that the disappointment following Accolade's successful hype engine fueled so many of the exaggerated criticisms made by gaming elitists. So it's with this thought that Bubsy 3D should be considered with a clear and open mind, free of prejudice or expectation.

After the two-headed woolie leader explains the urgency of capturing the strange creature to his alien cohorts in the obligatory opening cinema, Bubsy

finds himself in the strange polygon world of Rayon.

In this high-resolution environment, Bubsy almost seems to glow with life as his character stands so distinguished from his flat-shaded and occasionally plainly texture mapped surroundings. Graphics are an easy target for criticism, but if gamers can get past the blocky aesthetics, they might find the surreal atmosphere of Rayon to be a unique alternative to the colorful textures of Crash Bandicoot.



Underwater scenes like this one give you a renewed appreciation for the ones in Super Mario 64.

game a little forgiving, allowing Bubsy to pull himself up on ledges, and hit objects easily.

As Bubsy strolls through the first level, he'll annoyingly explain various items and

Accolade's 3-D platform game results in a furry experiment gone wrong.

Publisher: Accolade

Platform: Sony PlayStation

Format: Single CD-ROM

Developer: Eidetic

Release: Now Available

Bubsy 3D has, with any luck, set the standard for how not to make 3-D games.

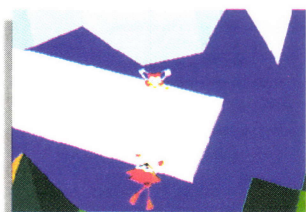
Blame should be better placed on the game's awful control. For the most part, Bubsy stands in the center of the screen as the environment pivots and rotates around him. Pressing the jump button shifts into a downward view that's a little like Jumping Flash, where a shadowy octagon will help players guide Bubsy to the next enemy or platform. Control almost seems to operate through a process of either-or movement, in which Bubsy moves forward, jumps or turns, but never does any of them at quite the same time. This makes for frustrating work, as the character never moves in a precise direction, nor lands in exactly the right spot.

It's probably for this reason that the designers made this

abilities in his grating voice. "Now what would a platform game be without any platforms?" is just an example of one of his quips.

The music's a little better, as it ranges from the cartoon-like to the more electronic. However, those repetitive tunes are never that enjoyable, especially when paired with irritating sound effects throughout the game.

There's not really much to like about Bubsy 3D, other than Accolade's valiant attempt at bringing platform gaming into a 3-D world. But where Super Mario 64 has set a standard in how to make 3-D games, Bubsy 3D has, with any luck, set the standard for how not to. PlayStation owners are advised to search elsewhere for less painful 3-D play.



Bubsy's control attempts to be forgiving by allowing fingernail grabs of ledges (top). Flat-shaded floors aren't exactly thrilling to look at (above).

GRAPHICS:

- + High-res graphics...
- ...are pretty much wasted on the bland 3-D game environments.

SOUNDS:

- +/- Music is average. Perhaps the game's best feature.
- +/- Bubsy's annoying voice can be turned off in the options screen.

GAMEPLAY:

- + While Bubsy's movements aren't complex, control is unbearable.
- The levels are even boring to just explore.

LASTING POWER:

- + The 15 game levels are of acceptable length...
- But there's not much interesting to do.

OVERALL

POOR

▶ Activision's modest changes of an overseas favorite worked out well. The most surprising thing is that it took over a year for a company to bring this great game to the U.S.



Power Move Pro Wrestling

Whatcha gonna do when Activision's new wrestling runs wild on you?

Publisher: Activision

Platform: Sony PlayStation

Format: Single CD-ROM

Developer: Tomy

Release: Now Available



▶ Power Move offers distinctively different wrestlers from all regions of the world (top). What the hell kind of name is "Area 51" for a wrestler, anyway? (top)

Already a big seller in Japan and a cult favorite among import gamers, Power Move takes the wrestling game back to its roots. You won't find any WWF licensed hoopla or impossible moves here; just some basic characters, simple play mechanics and real wrestling moves that add up to one of the only fun games in this genre.

Although the graphics in Power Move may seem plain at first, the simplistic look of the characters is due to the lack of texture mapping that allows them a much higher polygon count. As a result, the wrestlers' bodies truly look human. More importantly, the movement of the characters is remarkable, as every move is executed with plenty of smooth animation.

Each of the 12 wrestlers has dozens of moves that change depending on up to nine different situations.

Gameplay is both simplistic and deep. Each of the buttons on the controller performs a move, but exactly what that move is depends entirely on the situation that the two wrestlers are in. For example, the triangle button can be a headlock when you are facing your opponent, and an abdominal stretch if you grab him from behind. Each of the 12 wrestlers has dozens of moves that change in this manner depending on up to nine different situations. This control scheme allows beginners to



▶ Many different viewpoints are available to give you the best possible vantage point.

learn the game quickly, while more experienced players can concentrate on maneuvering their opponents and setting them up for specific attacks. There aren't any complicated

different rings available. Difficulty can be adjusted, but the computer's intelligence is sorely lacking and easy to defeat on all levels except the most difficult setting.

Power Move could have used some audio work. Most of the music is cheesy pop-rock which, although somehow oddly appropriate to wrestling, will probably have most players lowering the volume. Sounds are fair, but more distinctive noises for each move would have been welcome.

Overall, Power Move Pro Wrestling has enough moves and great gameplay to weigh in as the best 32-Bit wrestling game on the market.

ig

GRAPHICS:

- + All of the characters are large with no sign of blocky polygons.
- + Multiple views keep you close to the action.

SOUNDS:

- Music is overly cheesy and simplistic.
- Sound effects have room for improvement.

GAMEPLAY:

- + Tons and tons of great moves. Did I mention a lot of good moves??
- + Moves are easy to execute, with simple controls.

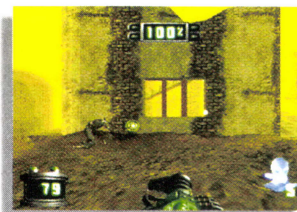
LASTING POWER:

- + Plenty of different play modes and other options.
- One-player mode hurt by the weak computer AI, which makes CPU opponents easy to beat.

OVERALL

B+

RECOMMENDED



Each of the stages in Disruptor is beautifully rendered with vibrant colors and highly detailed textures (left). Some of the graphical effects are quite brilliant (far left).

Disruptor

Let's face it—in general, Doom clones are pretty much a dime a dozen, with new ones seemingly popping up every week. What is kind of unusual, however, is the fact that consoles haven't really been swamped with endless first-person run-and-shoot games the way the PC has—perhaps because of the lack of RAM in the systems, or perhaps because the thing that really propels sales in the PC genre is multiplayer gaming.

Disruptor is one of those few games that manages to succeed despite being a single-player Doom clone. Actually, "Doom clone" is not an apt description of the game, as there are many



Graphically, Disruptor is intense, featuring completely new landscapes (and terrain textures) on every level—no boring same-old same-old stuff here. The immense level designs, based visually on storyboards by veteran production designer Catherine Hardwicke, are quite inspired, with a logical path to follow through each one, and many secrets for players who

players who tough it out get a special ending.)

The main innovation in this game are the psionic weapons implanted in your skull. These weapons are very powerful, and can be charged by using the psionic drain weapon on your opponent before killing them. The catch is that the drain weapon does very little damage by itself—a sure way to let your foes get a few free shots off at you. Additionally, you actually have to run and pick up the energy balls released by the drain weapon, so you can't hide behind cover all day.

Overall, Disruptor is certainly tops in its class, doing what few other single-player, first-person games in the genre have done: provide a fulfilling gameplay experience despite the lack of warm-blooded competition.



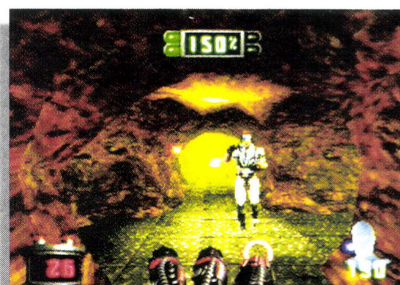
Disruptor is one of those few games that manages to succeed despite being a single-player Doom clone.

features added to it that significantly enhance gameplay beyond simply lurking around corners and blowing away mindless bad guys.

Tying Disruptor together is a storyline, something that is generally downplayed in the genre. The story is told via some slightly cheesy FMV sequences done by Universal Television. Although above average in quality (they are certainly better than, say, Warhawk), don't expect any of the players to win Emmys; we're talking strictly B-grade Saturday morning sci-fi stuff. You play Jack, a newly inducted member of the LightStormers, the government's elite fighting force. As you progress through the ranks, you discover that President Krieger, himself a former LightStormer, is not at all what he seems to be.

venture off the path to find.

Enemies are varied and reasonably intelligent. You may find, however, that without some knowledge of what lies ahead, you will get slaughtered pretty easily. Still, everything in this game is wholly reasonable, and it's usually safe to guess that behind that closed door lies a lot of really upset bad guys who want to make your life miserable. If you get killed, you get three shots to continue at every continue point, and passwords are awarded at the end of every level at normal difficulty. (There are no passwords in Hard, but



The enemies in Disruptor have a high level of AI, and won't hesitate to draw you into traps or gang up on you. If only there was a better variety of enemies...

Universal's new first-person shooter takes the Doom genre to new heights

Publisher: Universal Interactive

Platform: Sony PlayStation

Format: Single CD-ROM

Developer: Insomniac Games

Release: Now Available

GRAPHICS:

- + Beautiful, unique levels and good weapon effects.
- The enemies are not as varied as the terrain.

SOUNDS:

- + Nice, atmospheric movie-style soundtrack.
- + Good sound effects, especially for the psionics.

GAMEPLAY:

- + The psionics add a great deal to the game.
- It's still a run-and-shoot game at the core, not much brainpower needed.

LASTING POWER:

- + Two difficulty settings, two endings, and really long and involved levels.
- Single-player only, so once you beat it, that's it.

OVERALL

B+

RECOMMENDED

EA Sports returns to the ice with the long-awaited PlayStation version of the classic NHL Hockey, NHL 97. Featuring highly detailed polygonal characters and multiple camera views, this is the best NHL game yet.



NHL 97

With the new season just underway, EA unleashes their best NHL yet

Publisher: EA Sports

Platform: Sony PlayStation

Format: Single CD-ROM

Developer: Visual Concepts

Release: Now Available

As we go to press, we're just two weeks into the 1997 NHL season, and already PlayStation hockey fans have a lot to rejoice about. Both Sony's NHL Face Off '97 and now, EA Sports' NHL 97 are on store shelves, and both games are fantastic hockey simulations.

While we'll try to stray from talking too much about Face Off '97 in this review, it's going to be tough, because obviously most gamers are going to want to know, in comparison, which is the better of the two games. The only problem, however, is that neither of the two games is significantly better overall than its competing counterpart.

In case you've been living in a cave, EA's NHL series has been extremely successful ever since its debut back in the early '90s.

In NHL 97, the goalie AI is fantastic. In Face Off, it's a lot easier to score, and the AI seems a bit flawed...

Known for amazing graphics and even better gameplay, the NHL series quickly became the hockey simulation by which all others would have to live up to.

This year, NHL has been given the most significant upgrade yet, thanks to the powerful PlayStation hardware. Every NHL team and player is present, complete with all of the official logos, insignias, etc., right down to the lettering on the back of the player jerseys. The players themselves are made up completely of polygons, with motion-captured movements and animation taken directly from a real-life NHL player.

Graphically, the game looks



The menu interface in NHL 97 deserves mention, due to its attractive design and very user-friendly appearance.

beautiful. Each arena is finely detailed, the ice is completely convincing and the player animation is incredibly realistic, thanks to the aforementioned use of polygons (instead of 2-D flat sprites). The only downside to the great animation is that it seems to drain the CPU at times, making the gameplay in NHL 97 seem a bit slower than in its 16-Bit predecessors. Sound

practically unplayable in that view (and not much fun, either).

Most important, of course, is the gameplay, and we're happy to say that it does deliver. This is where the direct comparison can be drawn with Face Off—in NHL 97, the goalie AI is fantastic. In Face Off, it's a lot easier to score, and the AI seems a bit flawed in certain areas.

Otherwise, both are great games and only the most attentive gamer will complain about either of the two titles. Congratulations to EA Sports for effectively taking the NHL series to the next level...Now how about an NHL 64?

ig

GRAPHICS:

- + Crisp, vivid graphics and nine different (although not all that necessary) camera angles.
- + Great player animation.

SOUNDS:

- + Sound effects are suitable for the game; nothing amazing, but nothing bad.
- Ugh, the between-period recaps are just...off.

GAMEPLAY:

- + All the hard-hitting NHL action we've come to expect from EA Sports.
- Gameplay is arguably a bit slower because of the polygonal characters.

LASTING POWER:

- + Several play modes will keep you occupied for a good, long while.
- + It's hockey. It's EA Sports. 'Nuff Said.

OVERALL

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED

A



NHL 97 sports nine different camera angles, ranging from the classic overhead view to an all-new (and all-frustrating!) "helmet-cam" view.



It's too bad that Psygnosis and Sony don't realize how good this underrated Lemming adventure is, because with a little marketing, Lomax could have proven to be a surprise hit.

The Adventures of Lomax

Lemmings land in a very impressive 2-D platformer for the PlayStation

The best hand-drawn platformer this year has just arrived for the Sony PlayStation. Okay, so competition wasn't exactly fierce, but that's all the more reason why it doesn't deserve to be left in obscurity. Sony can't really be blamed for placing their attentions on the more graphically ambitious Pandemonium! and Crash Bandicoot, but it's always sad to know a game like this will be referred to as a failure by future producers, since its failings lie with its sheer lack of promotion.

Meanwhile, it's a safe bet that any store carrying the title will still have a copy left, since it's probably perplexing for most people to find that the lemmings are showing up in something other than their famous series of suicidal puzzle games. Rather, Lomax features the adorable lemmings in a traditional platform-style game.

Maybe traditional isn't the best word. Some might prefer copied or even ripped off, since some of the gameplay is borrowed from titles as recent as Ubi Soft's Rayman. But just as in music composition or culinary arts, it's the composition rather than the individual elements that make for an excellent

product in the end.

Lomax pulls it all together with class. The title's namesake stomps through level after level of pure platform gameplay, as the blond-haired hero busts opens pots and collects his lemming abilities. Lomax learns to build bridges, drop bombs, dig, torch and hover with the help of a few power-ups along the way. As standard commands, he can also crouch, run, hop, climb ropes and spin through possessed lemmings to free them of their curse.

If this doesn't sound familiar enough yet, collecting 100 coins will (you guessed it) result in an extra life. Originality may not be the game's forte, but its

giving the game just a hint of 3-D without actually having much effect on the gameplay. Unfortunately, those bridges do cause a little bit of pop-up, but it's as easily overlooked as the touch of slowdown that occurs when a barrage of boulders occasionally fills the screen.

These small graphical flaws can be forgiven quickly enough, as its graphical composition never dulls. Vivid forestry, western cliffs, enchanting castles and spooky graveyards provide some of the landscapes while its high colors and transparencies team up with blowing leaves and birds to give the game that extra touch of enhancement.

The music's not bad either,

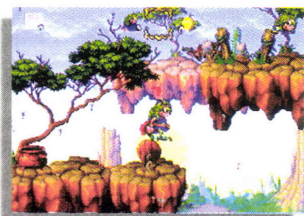
Originality may not be the game's forte, but its execution on the PlayStation is without equal.

execution on the PlayStation is without equal. The character animates beautifully as he hops past enemies and onto rocking ledges and boats, while four planes of colorful parallax scroll gently in the background.

Those backgrounds sometimes become linked with their foregrounds, as bridges will occasionally connect them,

owing more than a little credit to Enigma on some of the levels. Complete with Dolby Surround Sound, it never seems to get old, as the music in other games so often does. The sound effects are equally fitting and of high quality, even if that tiny lemming voice says "hop" and "yippee" a little too often.

With Rayman II still a few months away and games like this quickly making their way to the endangered species list to make room for 3-D titles, platformer fans looking for a hand-drawn fix will have only Lomax the Lemming to keep them company. Gamers are in luck though, since this enhanced-to-the-kilt version of The Adventures of Flink will provide hours of pleasure to its platform-starved fans.



The amount of parallax scrolling and 2-D effects in Lomax in Lemmingland are undeniably some of the best seen in any 32-Bit game. This is a little ironic since the PlayStation is a console system primarily known for its competence at 3-D graphics.



Publisher: Psygnosis

Platform: Sony PlayStation

Format: Single CD-ROM

Developer: Psygnosis

Release: Now Available



There's nothing like a little pat on the back for doing a good deed for ol' Lemmingland.

GRAPHICS:

- + Great, high-color, hand-drawn art packaged with fluid animation.
- Occasional pop-up and rare slowdown are minor blemishes at best.

SOUNDS:

- + Excellently appropriate music heard throughout.
- Some of Lomax's voices get a bit old.

GAMEPLAY:

- + The character is easily controlled and has a vast array of moves.
- Absolutely nothing in this game hasn't been done before.

LASTING POWER:

- + Slight variations in level paths help hide some of the items.
- + Lomax provides a good amount of challenge.

OVERALL

B+

RECOMMENDED

ig

World Wide Soccer '97 will grab players with its incredible player animation and hold them with its awesome gameplay. Far right: Scenes from the opening cinematic sequences.



Worldwide Soccer '97

Sega unleashes the soccer simulation that could break it all wide open

Publisher: Sega of America

Platform: Sega Saturn

Format: Single CD-ROM

Developer: Sega of Japan

Release: Now Available

If any one sports title truly shows off the processing power of the Sega Saturn, World Wide Soccer '97 is it. Offering 48 teams worldwide and a multitude of player and game options WWS '97 is also one of the most versatile.

Players may compete in Exhibition, World League, World Wide Cup or Cup Tournament for those who want to take it all the way. Also available is the Penalty Kick Shoot Out.

Three stadiums are available along with variable weather options and day or night play.

Sound effects are solid, with realistic stadium crowd chanting, as well as running commentary from the announcer. Several rocking music tracks are available, and both the announcer and

realistic, suggesting that Sega used motion capture in the design of this game. Many other elements in the game have been treated with the same perfectionism, including the overall difficulty. There is no easy way to win against the computer. Most games have soft spots or patterns that, once the player learns them, allows the player to continually score and dominate his opponents. Not so with WWS '97, as the computer AI is very smart, and defense plays a major factor in each game—most of the games we played at the office ended in either penalty shoot-outs (double



without fear of getting called for foul play.

Whatever the approach, it will be hard to do any better than this soccer game for a long time to come. It's only competition will probably come from a future title made for the N64.

ig



The closest view is just as playable as the maximum zoomed-out view. Players will want to use the close view at least once in order to admire the fine player detail.

The players look extremely lifelike and animate fluidly. A variety of movements can be performed as well.

background music can be toggled on or off at will.

Six camera angles provide just about every possible view one could ask for. Automatic zooming works well and does not hinder gameplay in any way. In fact, the higher the magnification, the more impressive this game looks. Even in the tightest view, characters look sharp and natural in all their actions. This brings us to player animation, which is probably the most impressive thing in the game; the players look extremely lifelike and animate fluidly. A variety of movements can be performed as well, including skid steals, headers, tripping, footwork and sprinting, all of which look very

overtime) or very low-scoring contests (usually 1-0 or 2-1). At the same time, there is room for those interested in a more arcade-like experience. Turn off penalties, turn on injuries and go head-to-head with a friend, sliding into and tripping your opponent as much as you like,



Night play is optional, along with wet or dry weather. Choose the combo that works for you.

GRAPHICS:

- + Hands down, the best player animation in a soccer game to date.
- + All camera views look exceptional.

SOUNDS:

- + Rumbling crowd chants sound quite good.
- +/- Rock sound track does the job, but not much else.

GAMEPLAY:

- + Also outstanding. Player control and multiplayer really make the game.

LASTING POWER:

- + Sports games usually have an advantage over other types of games, due to multiple variables and competition. This game is no exception and will last as long as you own your Saturn...and then some.

OVERALL

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED

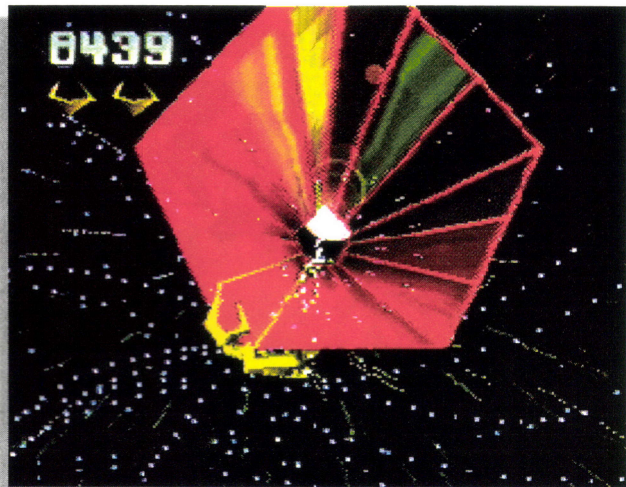
A+

A+

B+

A+

A



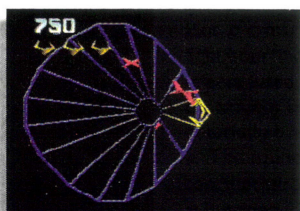
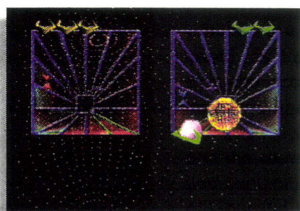
1 What many considered the main reason to own an Atari Jaguar is no longer valid, now that Tempest X will be storming onto the PlayStation this holiday season.

Tempest X

Attention Jaguar owners—all 250 of you—you now have clearance to throw your machines away or give them away to your favorite charity. They are now officially no longer needed since Interplay was kind enough to bring the best game on the system, Tempest 2000, to the Sony PlayStation. To make a great game even better, they went and enhanced it a bit.

For those of you who never played Tempest in the arcade during its glory days, the concept is quite straightforward: Shoot everything that moves and don't get killed. As if that wasn't simple enough, movement only takes place on various shapes of "webs" with controls consisting only of moving left, right and the occasional jump. Oh, and of course, the all-important fire and super-zapper buttons.

Tempest's simple design is



Nostalgic gamers will be happy to know that Tempest X includes an exact replica of the arcade. After playing the normal mode, we doubt you'll care (above).

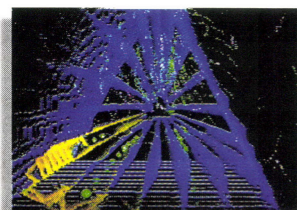
certainly a strength as witnessed by the addicting gameplay. The entire game is an adrenaline rush, giving you little chance to catch your breath or wipe the sweat from your palms. As you progress through each level, an increasing number of oddly angular baddies swarm after you from all directions. As you progress through the game, they become more lethal and cunning. For example, in the early stages of the game you are attacked by nothing but flipper-shaped enemies that flip around the web aimlessly. In later levels, sparkling bombs and flippers are some of the added enemies, along with newer, smarter "flippers" with

The entire game is an adrenaline rush, giving you little chance to catch your breath.

the I.Q. of Einstein.

The enemies sound a bit basic, but actually Tempest's graphics are top-notch. The game has a psychedelic feeling to it characterized by its soothing meshing of colors flowing within each web. The enemies and the clamp-like object that you control are all comprised of Gouraud-shaded polygons, giving the game a 3-D feel. Plus, a crazy amount of cool light-sourcing and "shatter" effects (used when things are destroyed) keep the screen colorfully busy at all times.

The sounds aren't anything too special, but the soundtrack is amazing. The techno tunes in this game were so good in the original, that Jaguar owners demanded that the Tempest soundtrack be sold separately



1 Interplay denies catering to any particular category of gamer by including the Trippy 2000 mode.

on a CD. Tempest X's music is no different, and serves as a perfect example of a soundtrack complementing the gameplay.

In addition to the normal game, there are several other modes that includes "Tempest Duel," a two-player competitive mode and "Trippy 2000," which

Interplay treats PlayStation owners to a nostalgic Jaguar delicacy

Publisher: Interplay

Platform: Sony PlayStation

Format: Single CD-ROM

Developer: High Voltage

Release: December

GRAPHICS:

- + The PlayStation hardware effects are on parade in this game.
- + Trippy 2000 will be a hit at certain parties.

SOUNDS:

- + One of the best game soundtracks around.
- +/- Sounds are mediocre, but that's trivial.

GAMEPLAY:

- + This is an outstanding, pure action game.
- + Two-player modes are a welcome addition.

LASTING POWER:

- + Six different game modes offer a variety of play.
- + A great classic game like this lasts for a long time—that's why it's back today.

OVERALL

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED

A

▶ Fans of SNK fighting titles should have been very pleased with the release of Samurai Shodown 3, but the poor translation will send them away very disappointed.

Samurai Shodown III: Blades of Blood

The PlayStation Sam Sho 3 conversion might be better titled 'Samurai Slodown'

Publisher: SNK

Platform: Sony PlayStation

Format: Single CD-ROM

Developer: SNK

Release: Now (Japan)



▶ They don't call it Samurai Shodown III: "Blades of Blood" for nothing!

character has their own unique special moves, this effectively doubles the number of playable characters. Adding further depth to the game are a whole slew of play mechanics like air blocking, super pow moves and pushing or pulling your opponent off balance. The characters and their moves are well-designed and moderately balanced so there is enough

have survived with all their animation intact from the arcade. Unfortunately, the intense slowdown makes the moves appear choppy although all of the animation frames might be there.

Possibly, the only aspect of SS 3 the slowdown couldn't mar, is the audio. The PlayStation version has all of the incredible remixed Neo-Geo CD music, most of which has an orchestrated traditional Japanese feel.

Simply put, Samurai Shodown 3 for the PS is a bad translation of a good game. Although close to the arcade in most respects, slowdown alone has pushed an A- game to a barely passable C-.

ig



There are a variety of characters to choose from, most returning from older SS games, but some entirely new. Additionally, with a special code you can play as the game's final boss.

Simply put, Samurai Shodown 3 for the PlayStation is a bad translation of a good game.

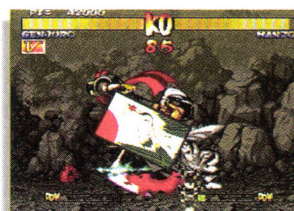
arcade-quality glory.

Or so it seemed. Samurai Shodown 3 for the PlayStation proves this is not necessarily the case. Although it is identical to the arcade in almost every respect—all of the moves, graphics, animation and sounds are intact—it unfortunately has one added feature: slowdown. Not the occasional type, but the nerve-grating, constant slowdown that ruins games.

Putting aside the speed problem for a moment, Sam Sho 3 itself is a great fighter. Players can choose from any of 12 combatants, then choose from either of two versions of that character—"Slash" or "Bust." Since each version of each

variety and subtlety to SS3 to keep fighting game lovers learning for a long time.

Graphically, SS3 is also impressive. Like the previous two games in the series, SS3 scales in and out to follow the action. The character sprites are huge and detailed and seem to



▶ Like most 2-D fighters, Sam Sho 3 is packed with special moves, but in this one, weapons are allowed.

GRAPHICS:

- + All of the graphics and detail from the arcade make it to the home version intact, but...
- The slowdown in Shodown is absolutely horrible.

SOUNDS:

- + Wonderfully orchestrated soundtrack from the Neo-Geo CD remix.
- +/- Sound effects are above average for a fighter.

GAMEPLAY:

- All of us SNES owners know what really bad slowdown does to a game.
- + It's a good fighting game engine, but see above.

LASTING POWER:

- + Lots of different characters and a variety of moves keep the game fresh.
- You can only try to ignore the slowdown.

OVERALL

BELOW AVERAGE

2 Xtreme

Sony's new racer gets extremely more creative

Publisher: Sony CEA

Platform: Sony PlayStation

Format: Single CD-ROM

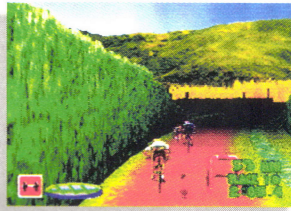
Developer: Sony CEA

Release: Now Available

The original version of Extreme Games was a semi-serious look at the cutting-edge sports made popular by ESPN 2.

Curiously enough, the ESPN license has been removed from the sequel, but it appears to have had a liberating effect on this extravagant title. Without having to cower to rules and regulations levied by using the former ESPN license, the developers of 2 Xtreme were able to make the races more interesting and much more playable.

Xtreme games consists of a wide variety of intense events. From inline skating to mountain biking to snowboarding, there's something to please any adventurous racer. Each event has its own flavor by being located in different parts of the world that fit the type of climate needed for the event. For example, mountain biking takes place in the jungles of Africa, while skate boarding takes place in the



Racing gets pretty intense out in the fields. Flying 100 feet off of ramps is not an uncommon sight. Perhaps ESPN left because things were a little too wild for them.

jungles of...Los Angeles. Each event features three slightly different tracks for a grand total of 12 courses.

Although racing for first place is a priority in these competitions, scoring points plays a key role in the game. Competitors must pass through point and power-up gates (health, speed, and, jumping boosts), and perform tricks to heighten their score while avoiding annoying obstacles such as people, animals and vehicles.

The graphics in 2 Xtreme are good, but not great. Although the game speed is much faster than the original, making the races much more intense, some

of the player animations and detail seem to suffer.

In the end, 2 Xtreme improves upon the gameplay of the first by breaking further away from reality and taking itself less seriously, resulting in an entertaining racer with an edge all its own.

ig

GRAPHICS:

- Backgrounds are a little boring, and objects get real pixelated up close.

SOUNDS:

+/- Sound effects are a little weak, but the hard driving rock soundtrack is very appropriate.

GAMEPLAY:

+ Game speed is great and player control is very responsive.

LASTING POWER:

+ Two-player split-screen mode is a great feature.

OVERALL

RECOMMENDED

C+
B
A
B
B+

Two-player mode can be played with human or CPU-controlled opponents.



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MLB Pennant Race

Sony's baseball rookie plays like a veteran

Publisher: Sony CEA

Platform: Sony PlayStation

Format: Single CD-ROM

Developer: Sony CEA

Release: Now Available

▶ The 3-D stadiums are very realistic. Notice all the empty seats in the Astrodome.

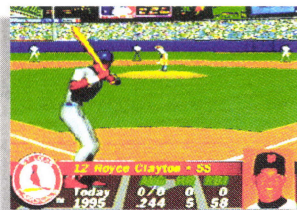


Sony's past success at bringing out successful first-generation sports games is well documented with successful NBA and NFL entries into the world of sports video gaming. Although MLB Pennant Race isn't quite as impressive as their previous efforts, Sony's first baseball game is still a noteworthy one.

Pennant Race attempts to cater to two types of baseball gaming fans—those that like the strategy that personifies baseball, and those who prefer pure action and don't want to be bothered with the finer points of the game.

For the most part, Sony has succeeded with this concept. The simulation mode employs an elaborate pitching and batting interface that brings the game's

pace to the slow crawl that purists will appreciate. Conversely, switching the arcade mode on speeds the game up dramatically by using a World Series



▶ A variety of statistics and other important information are shown as each batter steps to the plate. Also available are several types of batting views.

Baseball-like pitching interface. After the ball has been thrown by the pitcher, the player steers it with the controller. Further allowing the tweaking of realism are several levels of difficulty and fielding aids. Obviously, this game has no shortage of gameplay options, and that isn't even mentioning the extensive amounts of season and statistical features.

Unfortunately, other aspects of the game aren't as successful. The graphics in Pennant Race are very good, especially the 3-D stadiums, but the animation of the players suffers. As a by-product of this, the control in Pennant Race feels overly stiff,

and the controls take some getting used to.

Because of these problems, Pennant Race is an above-average game, but not the home run caliber of sports game that Sony is known for. Overall, a good first effort.

ig

GRAPHICS:

- + Great 3-D stadiums.
- Players should animate much better.

SOUNDS:

- + Announcer sounds very professional.

GAMEPLAY:

- + Two different styles of play is a big bonus.
- Controls are stiff and the fielding a bit awkward.

LASTING POWER:

- + There are enough play modes and styles to satisfy die-hard and casual sports fans alike.

OVERALL

RECOMMENDED

B

B+

B-

B+

B

TNN Motor Sports Hardcore 4x4

ASC fills ignored redneck market

Publisher: ASC Games

Platform: PlayStation/Saturn

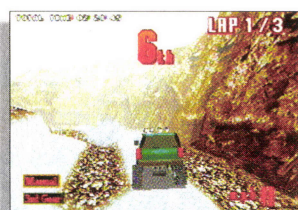
Format: Single CD-ROM

Developer: Gremlin

Release: December



▶ Pile-ups are a frequent experience, especially when six trucks try to fit through a one-lane mountain pass.



▶ When traversing snow, the trucks seem to have a mind of their own. Variable weather conditions make the driving even more treacherous for those who enjoy a good slide.

convincing on-screen and have a positive effect on gameplay. Changing the view from the traditional chase cam to the cockpit perspective makes the game feel more realistic, but actually hinders gameplay to a degree. This is mostly because the constant jostling and bumping makes this mode too sickening to use.

The problem with 4x4 is not lack of realism or things to do—it just isn't entertaining enough. Although the hill climbing, tire-spinning stuff is moderately fun, it doesn't really facilitate the feeling of speed, thus hurting the feeling of actually racing. To make matters worse, there is no multiplayer capability, which is a cardinal sin when it comes to racing games.

Audibly, 4X4 is about average. The sound effects are decent, consisting predominantly of a low engine rumble interrupted by the squeak of shock absorber springs and the crunch

of trucks hitting one another. The music is, what has become commonplace for racing games—rock and roll.

4X4 is an average game that stressed too much realism, and forgot the fundamentals of a fun racing game. Perhaps less bumps and more speed would make this game more exciting.

ig

GRAPHICS:

- + Solid-looking terrain and nice vehicles.
- A slight clipping problem appears on some of the mountainous courses.

SOUNDS:

- +/- A little anemic on the engine noise, it could have been more substantial.

GAMEPLAY:

- +/- Mostly solid, but it never picks up to the point of total intensity.

LASTING POWER:

- +/- Only so much you can do with a monster truck... legally, that is.

OVERALL

AVERAGE

B

C+

C+

C

C

C+

Dare Devil Derby

As cute as a cartoon, but not nearly as fun

Publisher: Mindscape

Platform: Sony PlayStation

Format: Single CD-ROM

Developer: Supersonic

Release: November

The cast of racers is as silly as anyone could want. Where's Waldo?



Strap in for another micro-machine style racing experience complete with eight eccentric (they prefer "eccentric" over "crazy") characters and the spiffy cars they drive.

Over 30 courses make up the Dare Devil Derby, which include areas that include a Haunted House, Outer Space, a Deep Sea, the Jungle and many more. Most of the short, "cutesy," 3-D tracks have traps, ledges, jumps and other obstacles to maneuver around. In the Arctic course, for example, a ski lift must be used. In Deep Sea, players race through a whale and get tossed out its blow-hole over to the next section of the courses. After completing each one, you're rewarded with various different upgrades for your racer.

To further effect the cartoony appeal, a unique, classical sound track adds a certain somber, morose mood to the game.

It appears that care



Watching for the arrows pointing out which way to turn—it's the only way to make a turn successfully. Otherwise, the race becomes just too frustrating.

was taken to create a lot of unique, obstacle-laden tracks, characters and even the music, but all this is outweighed by the awkward game play mechanics. The overhead view only allows players to see just a short section of the oncoming roadway during a race. Anticipating a turn is hit or miss, unless, the track is memorized from repeated play. Car control is acceptable, but sliding off the course and getting destroyed, is a frequent and frustrating occurrence. In addition, the cars seem to move at about the same speed, so passing is done almost solely by cutting the corners to slip by the other racers or

by slamming into them.

Dare Devil Derby has an ambiguous appeal. The developers seem to have played too much of their time into making a cute, cartoony game, and too little on making it an enjoyable racing title.

ig

GRAPHICS:

+/- Nothing outstanding, 3-D tracks and backgrounds are functional, but not flashy in the least.

SOUNDS:

+ Music is interesting and a nice departure from the usual '80s metal crap.

GAMEPLAY:

- Not enough track on the screen at one time to really control well.

LASTING POWER:

+/- A multitude of courses and multiplayer ability will keep things interesting.

OVERALL

AVERAGE

C+

B

C

C

C+

Street Racer

Here he comes, here comes (Street?) Racer...

Publisher: Ubi Soft

Platform: Sony PlayStation

Format: Single CD-ROM

Developer: Vivid Image

Release: October



Get close enough to the other racers and players can snap them with their beach towels.

Kids love a cartoon racing experience featuring an eclectic cast of weirdos peppered with combat and Saturday-morning humor. Street Racer fits that bill, but may leave racing fans out in the cold.

Eight goofy characters ranging from a Hillbilly to The Red Baron are available for cartoon-like racing action. While winning the race is the main goal, combat is an integral element. Each character's car sports a special weapon, including electrification and spiked tires. The most used weapon is the punch or slap from the side of your car that knocks opponents sideways for a moment. Players might not want to bother with the fighting aspects of the game due to the fact that all of their concentration might be better used on just driving, which is consuming enough already.

The 24 3-D rendered tracks keep the racing fresh and somewhat challenging even though contrary to the game's title most of the tracks are on dirt or other non-street surfaces.

Micro mode is a better view of the track, helping players anticipate the corners and traffic jams. The only problem, you need to get really close to your TV to see it.

This game's Achilles' heel is certainly in the way that the game is viewed. In Normal mode, the player's car remains stationary in the lower middle of the screen while the screen scrolls in what amounts to a poor attempt to create the feeling of motion. On the other hand, using the "Micro mode" enables players to see up to half of the racing track from above as they power-slide around the course.

Up to eight players can play this game at once but the problem is eight little windows on the TV screen make keeping track of ones character quite hard, plus who has eight friends?

Coincidence or not, Street Racer shares many of the same major problems as it's competitor on the top half of the page. Street Racer is cute, but it doesn't play very well as a result of a flawed presentation.

ig



GRAPHICS:

+/- Graphics are very solid if not a little too detailed for the small size of the characters.

SOUNDS:

+/- Cartoon-style music is boring, while effects—like rubber ducky squeaks, etc. are too kiddy.

GAMEPLAY:

+ Micro Mode is decent.
- Normal Mode doesn't play that well due to the player's position.

LASTING POWER:

+ Multiplayer ability, and tons of tracks.

OVERALL

AVERAGE

B-

C

C

C+

C+

A summary of the ratings given to games reviewed in past issues of IG.

ALSO NEW THIS MONTH

NHL Face Off '97 (PS)



Graphics
Sounds
Gameplay
Lasting Power
Overall

A- A A A A

NHL Face Off '97 is a major improvement over the original game that was released last year. Gameplay is quicker, AI is better, and most importantly, this game is fun. Full-season play and a host of options are present as well. Highly Recommended!

Beyond the Beyond (PS)



C+ B- C+ B+ B-

Being one of the only PS RPGs available, BtB is certainly worth a look. However, the game moves along at a snail's pace, and the aesthetics are certainly nothing to swoon over. For now it'll do, but once Konami's Suikoden hits, BtB will RIP.

MYST (PS)



C- D+ D+ B- D+

MYST was a great game in its time, but now, the game has aged horribly and just doesn't possess the same magic that it used to. Only consider this game if you are satisfied with a great port of an outdated adventure game.

Namco Museum Vol. 2 (PS)



C- D A- A- B+

Retro fans will totally love Namco 2. The museum aspect is a great feature, and each of the games really bring back the memories of yesteryear. U.S. gamers get a treat too, as Super Pac-Man is exclusive to the U.S. version of the game.

Casper (PS)



C+ B B B B

This might be a good candidate to be named "My First Adventure" as it is primarily geared toward a younger audience. As you might expect, older gamers should stay away.

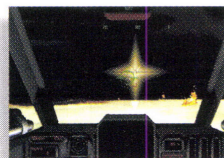
Soviet Strike (SAT)



B B- B+ B+ B+

Soviet Strike on the Saturn is a worthy follow-up to the popular 16-Bit series. The Saturn version of the game doesn't miss a step when compared to its PlayStation counterpart, aside from the lesser-quality full-motion video.

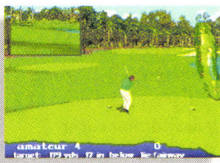
Shattered Steel (PC)



B+ B D C C

Decent graphics and sound are not enough to cover up the gameplay in this title. After the slick interface graphics, you are treated to a shallow MechWarrior II wanna-be. Poor controls and tough enemies make this game a no-win situation.

PGA Tour '97 (PS)



Graphics
Sounds
Gameplay
Lasting Power
Overall

B+ B- B B+ B

PGA Tour has a slightly new attitude, with its menus looking like ESPN 2 offshoots. The game still suffers from not enough courses, but has above-average gameplay.

Dean Hager (BS)



C B+ ? ? B

Dean Hager (no relation to the pants), our fearless Managing Editor looks like an average guy. Only his girlfriend can comment on his gameplay and lasting power rating. Here our hero is kicking back during deadline.

IG REVIEWS

Nintendo 64

PilotWings 64
Mortal Kombat Trilogy
Saikyo Habu Shogi
Super Mario 64
Wave Race 64

A+ B+ A- A- A-
B+ B- B- B B
D C A B B
A+ A A+ A+ A+
A+ B+ A+ A+ A+

PlayStation

Andreotti Racing
Black Dawn
Blood Omen: Legacy of Kain
Bogey: Dead 6
Bust-A-Move 2: Arcade Ed.
ChoroQ
Crash Bandicoot
Darkstalkers
Die Hard Trilogy
Double Dragon
The Final Round
Floating Runner
Formula 1
Galaxian 3
Goal Storm
Horned Owl
International Track & Field
Irem Arcade Classics
Johnny Bazookatone
Jumping Flash! 2
Killing Zone
King's Field
Krazy Ivan
Madden NFL '97
Motor Toon Grand Prix 2
Namco Museum Vol. 3
NASCAR Racing
NBA Shootout
NCAA GameBreaker
Olympic Soccer
Olympic Summer Games
Perfect Weapon
Project Overkill
The Raven Project

A- A- A A- A-
B+ A B B+ B+
B B B- C- C
B+ C- B C B
B B+ A- A B+
B- B B+ A- B+
A B- C- B B-
A B+ B+ A- A-
A- B A- A- A-
B- C+ C- D C
A B A+ B A-
B- B+ D C C-
B+ B+ A- A B+
B+ B- B- D C+
B B+ A- A- B+
B B B+ B B
A B C B- B
D C B- C C+
B+ A- A- B B+
A A- B+ B- B+
C+ B- C- C- C
B- C- D- C- C
A- B- B+ C B
B+ B A A A-
B+ B+ A A A-
C- D A A- B+
C B+ C+ C+ C+
A A- A A A
B B B+ B+ B+
C+ B+ A B B
C C+ A- B C
A- A- B- B+ B
B- B- C- B C+
B+ B C- D+ C-

Graphics
Sounds
Gameplay
Lasting Power
Overall

Resident Evil	B	B	B-	B+	B
Return Fire	A-	A+	B-	B+	A-
Ridge Racer Revolution	A-	A	A-	A-	A-
RoboPit	B	C	C+	B	C+
Soviet Strike	B	B-	B+	B+	B+
Spot Goes to Hollywood	B-	C+	D+	C+	C-
Star Gladiator	A-	B	B+	B+	B+
Starwinder	D+	C	D+	D+	D+
Street Fighter Alpha 2	B	B+	A-	A-	A-
Street Fighter Alpha	C+	B-	A-	A-	B
Tekken 2	A	A+	A+	A+	A+
Tetris X	D	C-	D	D	D
Time Commando	B+	B+	B-	C	B-
Tobal No. 1	B	B	B+	B+	B+
Tokyo Highway Battle	B-	B-	B-	C	C+
Toshinden 2	A-	A-	A-	A-	A-
Triple Play 97	B+	A-	A-	A-	A-
VR Golf	B+	B	A	B+	B+
VR Soccer '96	B+	B-	C-	B-	C
WipeOut XL	A	A-	A	A	A
Worms	C+	C+	A+	A+	B+

Saturn

Baku-Baku	B-	C+	B+	B+	B-
Darius 2	B-	A	B	B+	B
Decathlete	A	B+	C+	C+	B
Earthworm Jim 2	B+	A-	B+	A-	B+
F1 Challenge	C+	B	B+	B+	B+
Fighting Vipers	A-	B+	A-	B+	A-
Golden Axe	B+	C+	B-	B+	B-
Guardian Heroes	B+	A-	B+	A	A-
Hyper 3D Pinball	C-	C	C-	A-	C+
Iron Storm	B	C+	A-	A-	B+
Johnny Bazookatone	B+	A-	A-	B	B+
King of Fighters '95	A-	B	A-	A	A
The Legend of Oasis	A	A	A+	A-	A
Madden NFL '97	B	B	A	A	B+
MegaMan X3	B-	B+	B+	C+	B
Metal Black	B	A-	B+	B-	B+
Mortal Kombat II	B-	C+	C	B-	B-
NiGHTS	A	A+	B+	B-	A-
NightWarriors	A	A-	A+	A	A
Saturn Bomberman	B+	B+	A	A	A-
Shining Wisdom	C+	B-	B+	B	B-
Skeleton Warriors	A	A-	C-	C+	B
Street Fighter Alpha 2	A-	B	A	A	A
3D Baseball	B	B-	C	C	C+
Three Dity Dwarves	A-	B+	B+	B-	B+
Victory Goal '96	A	B	A	A	A
Virtua Fighter Kids	A	A	B+	B-	B+
WipeOut	B-	A-	A	B-	B
World Series II	B+	B+	A-	A	A-
Worms	C+	C+	A+	A+	B+
X-Men: COTA	A	B+	B+	A-	B+

IG RATINGS:

A+:	Revolutionary
A / A-:	Highly Recommended
B+ / B-:	Recommended
B- / C+ / C:	Average
C- / D+ / D:	Below Average
D- / F:	Poor

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SUPER GRAFX

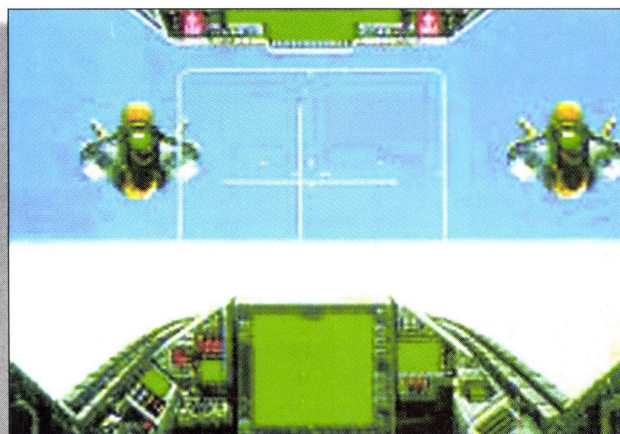
NEC's PC Engine

Although the Japanese counterpart of the Turbografx 16, the PC Engine, took many forms that never made it Stateside (the Core Grafx, Shuttle Grafx and Duo RX just to name a few), no version of the 8-Bit machine was as unique or short-lived as the SuperGrafx. Basically a PC Engine with enhanced sprite-handling capabilities, a larger color pallet, and hardware scaling and rotation, the SuperGrafx was compatible with all previous PC Engine HuCard games and accessories when it was first released in 1990. Unfortunately, due to the SuperGrafx's relatively short lifespan of only about a year and a half, less than 10 titles were ever released for the system that took advantage of its enhanced features.

The lukewarm reception the SuperGrafx received was well merited—the hardware could only be described as a modest improvement over the then almost 4-year-old PC Engine, and paled in comparison to the Sega Mega Drive and upcoming Nintendo Super Famicom. Many estimate that only about 50,000 of the machines were ever manufactured and sold. Still, games like *Aldynes* and *1941* prove that the SuperGrafx had some value—perhaps not as a mainstream gaming system, but at least enough to be worthy of a footnote in video gaming history.



No version of the 8-Bit PC Engine was as unique or short-lived as the SuperGrafx system.

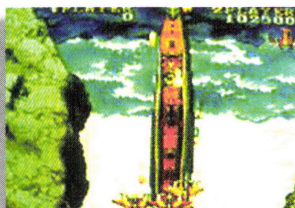


BATTLE ACE

Released simultaneously with the system, *Battle Ace* (above) is a first-person shooter, similar to *After Burner*, but in a futuristic sci-fi setting. Utilizing the SuperGrafx's scaling features and some nice background interaction, *Battle Ace* was an interesting but not fabulous first effort.

ALDYNES

A fantastic side-scrolling shooter in the tradition of *R-Type*, *Aldynes* remains one of the best, and most difficult, titles ever to exist in the genre. Featuring a wide variety of weapons, a truly unique power-up system and impressive boss encounters, *Aldynes* is reason enough for any hardcore shooter fan to hunt down a SuperGrafx system.



1941

The last title released for the SuperGrafx and perhaps the most sought after, *1941* (above) is vertically scrolling shooting at its best. Really putting the SuperGrafx to work, *1941* fills the screen with little signs of slowdown or flicker, and allows for two-player simultaneous play. Truly impressive for its time.

GRAND ZOT

The pseudo-sequel to Keith Courage in *Alpha Zones* for the PC Engine, *Grand Zot* is an enjoyable, if not totally captivating, action/adventure. Players can change between any of three robot mechs, each with their own weapons and special abilities, to fight their way through multi-directional scrolling action.



GHOULS AND GHOSTS

The best translation for any home system, *Ghouls and Ghosts* (above) is the Capcom side-scrolling action game we all know and love. The graphics on the SuperGrafx version are closer to the arcade, including some scrolling layers and background graphics missing from the Sega Genesis version.

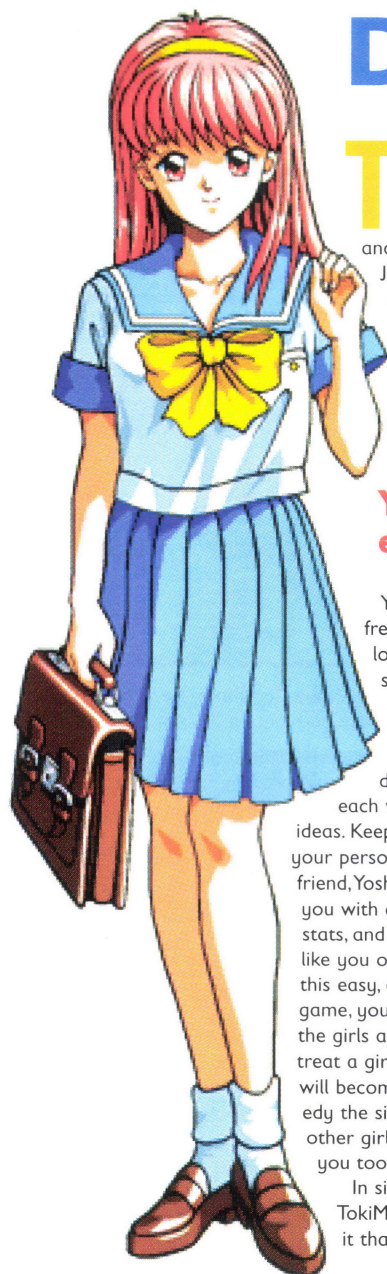
STRIDER

The arcade sleeper hit, *Strider*, was in development for the SuperGrafx, but unfortunately the system was officially canned before the game could be released. Rumor has it that beta EPROMs still exist somewhere in the murky depths of NEC Japan...



Tokimeki Memorial and Taisen Pazurudama give gamers a chance to stay in...to go out

Will Someone Date Me, Please?



This month's End Notes focuses its sights squarely on Japan's number-one rated game of the year, and also the most popular Japanese PlayStation game ever—Konami's Tokimeki Memorial ("TokiMemo" for short). TokiMemo is a high school dating simulation that is slowly making its way into the hearts of U.S. gamers.

You can meet and date up to a dozen girls, each with their own style and ideas.

You play a high school freshman who is looking for love—balancing exams, studying, sporting events, stress and (most importantly) sleep in the process. You can meet and date up to a dozen girls, each with their own style and ideas. Keeping track of the mess is your personal bookkeeper and close friend, Yoshio Saotome. He'll provide you with a new girl's phone number, stats, and tells you whether the girls like you or not (if only real life were this easy, eh?) In this wholesome game, you schedule dates and show the girls a good time. If you don't treat a girl nicely or neglect her, she will become angry. If you don't remedy the situation, she gossips to the other girls and they begin to dislike you too.

In signature Konami style, TokiMemo has mini-games inside it that you'll have to complete in order to win over a girl's heart. The goal is to have three girls so head-over-heels in love with you that by the end they carve your name in the sacred tree that

Even though the game is in Japanese (and text-heavy), numerous FAQs are available on the Internet so that anyone, fluent in Japanese or not, can enjoy the game. Team TokiMemo, a small group of Stateside fans have been attempting to get Konami to translate the game into English so that more gamers this side of the Pacific could enjoy it. The game is so popular in Japan that when the Saturn version was released it came with

its own memory card, and there's lots of TokiMemo merchandise featuring the girls from the game.

In addition to the regular game, Konami recently released a puzzle game starring TM's characters, called Tokimeki Memorial Taisen Pazurudama. This addictive, Puyo Puyo-esque game has a story mode and excellent two-player tournaments. TokiMemo Puzzle relies on strategy and massive combos that unleash devastating special moves.



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A Shiori Fujisaki (above) is just one of the girls in TokiMemo. She is one of the harder girls to get to carve your name into the sacred tree by the end of the game, but she's always friendly.

rests outside the school, to be forever immortalized in history. Sounds easy, but juggling girlfriends gets to be extremely hectic near the end of the third year. No nudity or adult themes—just good, clean fun.



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Nintendo

1942	5	Marble Madness	4
Advent Island	5	Mario Brothers	4
Adv Of Lolo	15	Mega Man 1	22
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Capt Skyhawk	2	Raid Racer	15
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Castlevania 2	4	Rampage	8
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Donkey Kong Cts	22	Sesame St 123	8
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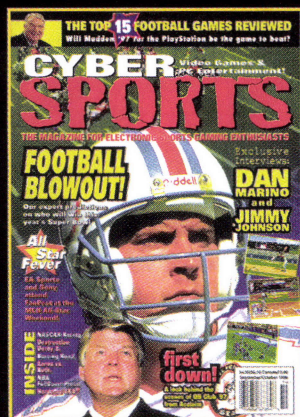
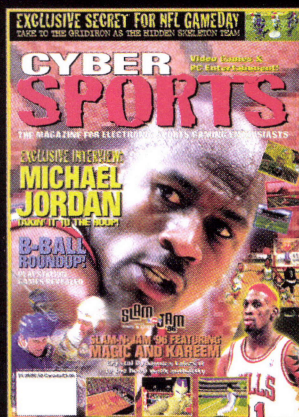
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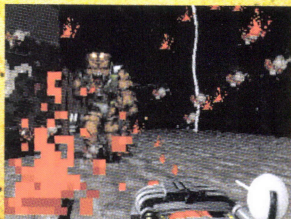
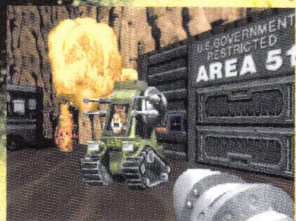
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