

YOUR ESSENTIAL PS2 LAUNCH GUIDE: **180+ PLAYST**

Lifecycle 2 Vol2 #11 11/00



Next Generation

Next Generation Magazine

HERE IT COMES!

NINTENDO'S GAMECUBE

Can **Zelda**, **Metroid**, and **Star Wars** put the company back on top?

Our exclusive report begins on page 53

THE FINAL WORD IN FOOTBALL

Dreamcast's **NFL 2K1**
VS.
PlayStation 2's **Madden**

PLUS:

- PlayStation Star Online
- SegaNet goes live
- Xbox announces developers
- Hands-on with Game Boy Advance
- A look back at Lieberman's first hearings

Shigeru Miyamoto:

The master of design reveals his Gamecube plans



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11 >



Dreamcast ■ Nintendo 64 ■ PlayStation 2 ■ PC ■ Xbox ■ Gamecube

COME ONE, COME ALL.

IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME SINCE YOU WERE INVOLVED IN A FREE-FOR-ALL OF THIS MAGNITUDE. QUARK III ARENA ON SEER DRANGORF IS A PRIMAL STRUGGLE FOR SURVIVAL WHERE THE FIT BECOME CHAMPIONS AND THE UNFIT BECOME STAIN. PRACTICING ALONE CAN ONLY TAKE YOU SO FAR. IF YOU'RE READY TO TRY YOUR CHARM ON OTHERS, TRY A CASUAL ONE-NIGHTER IN THE ARENA. YOU NEVER KNEW IT COULD BE LIKE THIS.

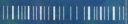
2024 PRODUCTION

220X

BECOME ONE OF OVER 30 SAVAGE GLADIATORS FROM ALL OVER THE UNIVERSE TO MEET IN THE ARENA.



030-0C 0010
X030
030-0C 0010



ENABLED 10/0000
FOR MULTIPURPOSE IDENTIFICATION
DESCRIPTION OPTIMAL, READ
LEFT TO RIGHT
DIMENSIONAL 10/0000





RESOLUTION
203X

A FULL ARSENAL OF WEAPONRY
HAS BEEN ASSEMBLED FOR
EVERY ANGLE OF WARFARE.

ROCKET LAUNCHER: DIRECT HIT: DEVASTATING
(ALSO SEE SPLASH DAMAGE)



RESOLUTION
250X

THE NEXT STATE OF MULTI-
PLAYER GAMING EXPERIENCE
IS BORN. ENTER THE ARENA
ONLINE AND COMPETE WITH
PC AND OTHER DREAMCAST
OPONENTS.



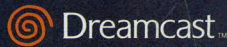
MULTIPLAYER



RESOLUTION
303X

GET TO KNOW YOUR
SURROUNDINGS. OVER 30
FULLY REALIZED 3-D
ENVIRONMENTS AS STUNNING
AS THEY ARE DEADLY.

QUAKE III ARENA



RASTER
PRODUCTIONS



MATURE
M
Animated Blood and Gore
Animated Violence

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NextGen

Next Generation Magazine



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EDITORIAL What's new?



What an exciting month. Unless you've been living under a rock, you're probably well aware that Nintendo has announced its next system. With the unveiling of the Gamecube hardware, we finally have a solid idea of what Nintendo plans to do when it launches its new console in 2001. We even got Nintendo's master designer, Shigeru Miyamoto, to spill a few beans. The next chapter on Nintendo begins on page 53.

But Gamecube is next year, and this issue hits newsstands two weeks before PlayStation 2 arrives in the U.S. Despite the fact that Sony still has no first-party software to show us, we predict a successful launch. And despite the fact that developers continue to wrestle with the hardware, there are more than 180 games in development. For the answers to all things PS2, including info on each of those 180+ games, go to page 67.

Still, we wonder if Sony will continue to maintain such a strong grip on the development community. Both Nintendo and Microsoft are touting powerful systems that are easy to develop for, and Xbox has just announced a number of U.S. first-party developers (page 12). But the most exciting breakthrough of late goes to Sega. Anyone who's played NFL 2K1 online knows what we're talking about. On page 8, we begin to chart Dreamcast's bold growth into console online gaming.

As it stands, all things next-generation are shaping up nicely. And don't worry about government involvement, it's all been sorted out before — just see page 92.

Tom
— Tom Russo

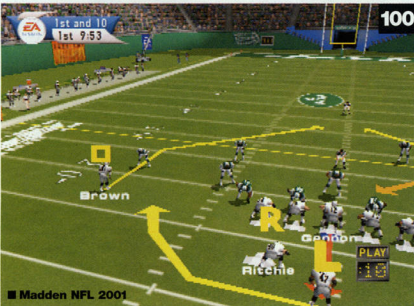
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Animated Violence
Mild Language



Dreamcast™

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Stopping is a bad idea.

In a world of angry cops, rival taggers and lots of paint, it's important to keep moving. It's a race against time to leave your mark on the sprawling urban environment. Armed with skates, a radio and varying quiver of spray paints, it's you against the world. But you'd better be quick because the price of self expression just got higher.



Featuring music by Rob Zombie, Jurassic 5 and Mix Master Mike. »

→ News

Game industry news and analysis



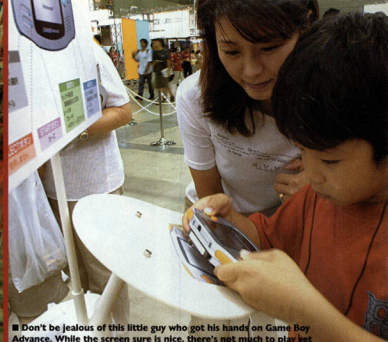
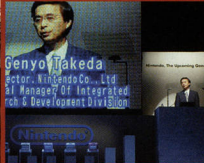
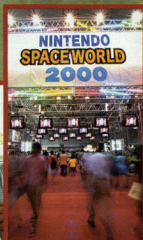
■ THERE'S NO SPACE LIKE...

Spaceworld 2000

There was almost nothing worth playing at Nintendo's show, so why are we still so pleased?



If you endured Tokyo's sweltering late August heat and long lines (event attendance in one day broke 54,000) simply to get your hands on upcoming N64, Color Game Boy, and Game Boy Advance titles, you went a long way for nothing. So why, then, on the day before the show opened, were more than a thousand members of the videogame industry press from around the world so eager to be



■ Don't be jealous of this little guy who got his hands on Game Boy Advance. While the screen sure is nice, there's not much to play yet.

Game Boy Advance-at-a-glance

Scheduled Launch:	March 21 (Japan) July (United States) 9,800 Yen (\$90)
Price:	
LCD:	Reflective TFT Color LCD
Screen Size:	40.8mm x 61.2mm
Resolution:	240 x 160
Display capability:	32,000 colors
CPU:	32-bit RISC-CPU + 8-bit CISC-CPU
Memory:	32Kb WRAM + 96Kb VRAM (in CPU) 256Kb
Sound:	Speaker, Headphone Terminal

Multiplayer capability:	Link cable for up to 4 GBA systems
Power Supply:	2 AA Batteries or special Battery PAK
Battery Life:	2AA Alkaline Batteries - Approx. 15 hours Battery Pak - Approx. 10 hours
Power Consumption:	Approx. 0.6W
Dimensions:	82mm x 144.5mm x 24.5mm (LWD)
Main Unit weight:	Approx. 140 grams
Cartridge capacity:	Max. of 256Mbits (GB Advance Only)
Backwards Compatibility:	Game Boy/Game Boy Color



there? Simple. Nintendo finally unveiled Gamecube.

No longer referred to as "Project Dolphin," Nintendo's new Gamecube console is scheduled to launch next June in Japan (October in the U.S.) at a price that has yet to be determined. We caught a glimpse of what games are in store, and that was more than enough to spark our imagination. (For more on Gamecube, see our cover story on page 53.)

After the pre-show press event, every trace of Gamecube vanished from the Spaceworld floor, but Game Boy Advance was tangible and playable for the masses. The software selection was slim, due in part to the fact that the system won't be available in Japan until March 2001 (July 2001 in the U.S.). The announced price is 9800 yen, and according to the Nintendo we can expect a \$90 price point in the U.S. as well.

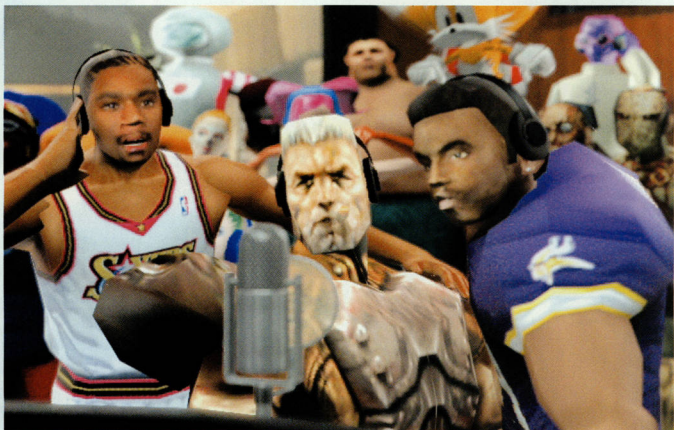
Of the limited selection of Game Boy Advance titles available to play, Mario Kart Advance was unquestionably the most entertaining, especially when played against four other opponents via its 4-way link cable. Other less-than-exciting-demos included Silent Hill, which featured no gameplay but showed off the machine's ability to display nicely rendered FMV clips. Pinobee, a playable side-scrolling game from Hudson, featured a spunky

bumblebee mascot with limited flying capabilities. This game in particular looked as if it had been resurrected from a mass grave of 16-bit Mario wannabes. And at this point, we had little hope that GBA is going to do anything to revolutionize the portable industry - not that this probably concerns you. As one editor recently said, "Nintendo can talk about how great the portable market is, but everyone knows it has always been considered a

compromised way of playing games in places you normally couldn't." While most Next Generation readers would have been bored there, Spaceworld clearly held its spell over Japanese children. We literally followed a river of families through several of Tokyo's train stations to get to the event. And while the promise of Gamecube is well, promising - what remained of Spaceworld left little to distract us. — Tom Russo

SEGANET'S UPCOMING LINEUP AT-A-GLANCE

- **18 Wheeler** (Sega)
- **4x4 Evolution** (Gathering Of Developers)
- **Alien Front Online** (Sega)
- **Black and White** (Sega)
- **Gorka Morla** (Ripcord)
- **Kiss Psycho Circus** (Gathering of Developers)
- **Legend of the Blademasters** (Ripcord)
- **Music: The Gathering** (Sega)
- **NBA 2K1** (Sega)
- **Outrigger** (Sega)
- **PGA Tour Bowling 2001** (Bethesda)
- **Peacemakers** (Ubi Soft)
- **Pod II** (Ubi Soft)
- **Phantasy Star Online** (Sega)
- **Strapnet** (Ripcord)
- **Sierra Sports Game Room** (Sierra)
- **Soldier Of Fortune** (Crave)
- **Sonic Shuffle** (Sega)
- **Speed Devils Online** (Ubi Soft)
- **Starlancer** (Crave)
- **System Shock 2** (Vatical)
- **The Next Tetris** (Crave)
- **Unreal Tournament** (Eidosgames)
- **Worms World Party** (Titus)



■ Sega's newest ad campaign (above) stars characters from some of the first SegaNet titles. As of press time only **NFL 2K1** (below) was out

■ WAR IS HELLL...

Dreamcast Online Gaming Goes Live!

With **NFL 2K1**'s revolutionary online play and a new ad campaign, Sega ramps up for the biggest fight of its life

→ There is little doubt in anybody's mind that the upcoming holiday season is perhaps the most crucial in Sega's history. With the launch of PlayStation 2 looming ominously close and third parties sitting on the fence (or abandoning the platform altogether) this could be Sega's darkest hour — or its greatest victory.

Enter Sega's newest and greatest super weapon: online play. On SegaNet's official launch day, Sept. 7, gamers excitedly inserted their copies of **NFL 2K1** into their Dreamcasts, plugged in the phone line and prepared for — Sept. 8, the day SegaNet actually started working reliably, ushering in what was to be the next gaming revolution. From our experience at **Next Gen**, they probably weren't disappointed. Despite some early hiccups with the service,

Sega's promise of online gaming was indeed everything the company had led us to expect — fun, fresh, and, most importantly, lag-free gaming on the Dreamcast's built-in 56K modem (check out

our review of **NFL 2K1** on page 104 for the full story).

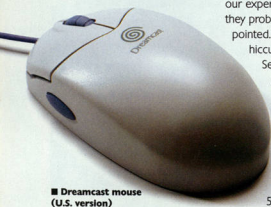
Still, one game is hardly a revolution, and it is here that Sega knows it must take its greatest strides if it wants to derail the competition. Starting in October, the list of titles in Sega's online library starts to grow with games like **Quake III** (released in early October along with the U.S. version of the Dreamcast mouse) and **NBA 2K1**. Other titles to follow include some other high-profile first-party releases like **Outrigger**, **Black and White**, and, of course, **Phantasy Star Online** (see our preview on page 22). Third parties are also getting in on the action with titles like **4x4 Evo**, **Unreal Tournament**, **Starlancer**, and **The Next Tetris**. On the hardware side, this winter marks the debut of the long-promised Ethernet adapter for



those fortunate enough to have a broadband connection.

The launch of Sega's new online service also signifies the beginning of the new rebate program — subscribe to SegaNet and get your Dreamcast for free (see cover story **NG 05/00**) and a price drop to \$149. Sega also kicked off its new ad campaign featuring, once again, the Sega Scream. The new ads aren't all great — “Packers Pack,” with its adolescent-minded football fans in the living room, may not appeal to everybody — but there is definitely more than a shred of the old Sega advertising brilliance in the “Play Online” commercial, which features not only an electro-turked bird but a man in a cowboy hat doing the centipede.

But is this all enough? On the SegaNet side, it just might be; Sega Director of Marketing Charles Bellefield has told us that they only need 250,000 subscribers (that's 10% of total Dreamcast owners) to be profitable. The question is whether or not the games will be there to keep players flocking to the service. **NFL 2K1** is a great start, and the rest of the first-party lineup looks great too, but the list of third-party games is rather short at present. We hope Sega's innovative approach to system sales, great holiday lineup, and online service can turn that around. Otherwise we won't be playing online games until broadband becomes a viable option — and nobody wants that. — Blake Fischer



■ Dreamcast mouse (U.S. version)

News Bytes

→ **The gentle ebb and flow of the videogame industry continues** — companies form, make a game, then go out of business or get sold, only to give rise to new companies. Get a load of this, just one of the many fascinating tales this month:

Years ago, a company called **Parallax** was born and made a game called *Descent*. In 1996, the owners split Parallax into two separate entities, *Outrage* and *Vollion*. *Outrage* went on to make *Descent 3*, which ranks at number three on the "Top 10 Great Games That Sold Terribly" list. *Vollion* went on to release *FreeSpace* and *FreeSpace 2* (numbers five and six on that list, respectively). Now *Vollion* is developing two games for THQ's P52 lineup, *Red Faction* and *Summerhorn*, that are apparently so good in development that THQ just decided to buy the company. As for *Outrage*, it's developing two next-generation console titles dubbed "Adventure Game" and "Action Game." And what does this story teach us about the games industry? We're not sure yet, but maybe this next story will help us form a moral.

Dig, if you will, this picture: In the mid-1990s, two major start-ups in the Silicon Valley were going to "own" the online multiplayer market. *MPlayer* and *Total Entertainment Network* (TEN) each had a membership-fee strategy that would, they figured, reap millions in profit as billions of people came to the magical Internet to play *Quake*. But

they built it, and the gamers did not come. Soon *MPlayer* became a free network, TEN tried to make pro gaming work with the Professional Gamers League (PGL), and Microsoft stole the entire market under them with its *Gaming Zone*. Finally, *MPlayer* became a company more about audio over the Internet than *Quake* games, and TEN changed its name to *pogo.com* and became the Internet's leading distributor of Java-based checkers games. Now *Excite@Home* has announced it's buying *pogo.com* for its excellent games that grandma loves. Perhaps now, the lesson is clear! Perhaps not. Okay, check this out:

Once upon a time, there was a company called Microprose that published the best strategy game ever — *Civilization*. No stranger to sequels (and no dummy either), *Microprose* followed it up with a game called *Sid Meier's Civilization II*. It was developed by... No, not Sid Meier, but his numero uno compadre, Brian Reynolds. But *Microprose* got too clingy, so Reynolds and Meier packed their things, got their records back, and founded a company where they could pursue their dreams free of the strictures of big, corporate America. They called that company *Firaxis* and released a couple of games before Reynolds decided it was time to get his records from Meier, pack his things, and go start his own company, *Big Huge Games*, where he could pursue his own dreams away from the strictures of big, corporate Sid Meier. Now Reynolds has signed an exclusive publishing deal with big, corporate *Microprose* for all future Big Huge

products. How about them apples? Okay, the moral is pretty obvious now, but here's one last byte to shed some light on the insanity of the games industry.

Good ol' boy/novelist/multi-gazillionaire Tom Clancy decided in 1996 that he would get into this whole game craziness by cofounding a company called *Red Storm Entertainment*. The company produced some great games, especially the *Rainbow Six* line that tied in with Clancy's novels. Its corporate mission was to bring Clancy's uber-realism into videogames, previously the home of big heads, adorable mascots with no torsos, and French people. Now *Red Storm* has announced that it is selling out, lock, stock, and two smoking barrels to Ubi Soft, a company filled with the French people who invented big heads and adorable mascots with no torsos. As for Mr. Clancy, he's entered into a "new exclusive, long-term license and endorsement agreement with *Red Storm* and Ubi Soft." And perhaps his next novel will tell one of the many sordid tales of the games industry, wherein this moral will be clear: The videogames business is like a box of chocolates. It's very expensive, and you think it will impress girls — but it doesn't. And yet, sooner or later somebody will come along and pay a lot of money for it, even if it's the bad kind of chocolates with that weird maple sugar crap in the center.

— Compiled by Aaron John Loeb
Executive Producer, *DailyFard.com*

■ THE DEVIL MADE THEM DO IT

Adam Sandler goes Game Boy Color

Play *Little Nicky* — the comedian's next movie

→ Developer *Digital Eclipse* and Ubi Soft have teamed up with Adam Sandler and *New Line Cinema* to bring the former *Saturday Night Live* funnyman's next big-screen project to one of gaming's smallest screens. In the film, which opens Nov. 3, Sandler plays *Little Nicky*, the feeble son of the Devil who must leave his home in Hades to stop his two brothers who are trying to create a new Hell — on Earth, in New York City. In the *Game Boy* game, players take on the role of Nicky and must use his demonic powers, such as burping fire, emitting a special evil ray, and possessing bystanders to defeat his brothers in a 14-level quest. The game is scheduled to be available in late October.



■ Sandler's guide in the movie is this talking dog (right) and *Little Nicky* with the dog (left) as seen on *Game Boy Color*

PlayStation 2

ONi

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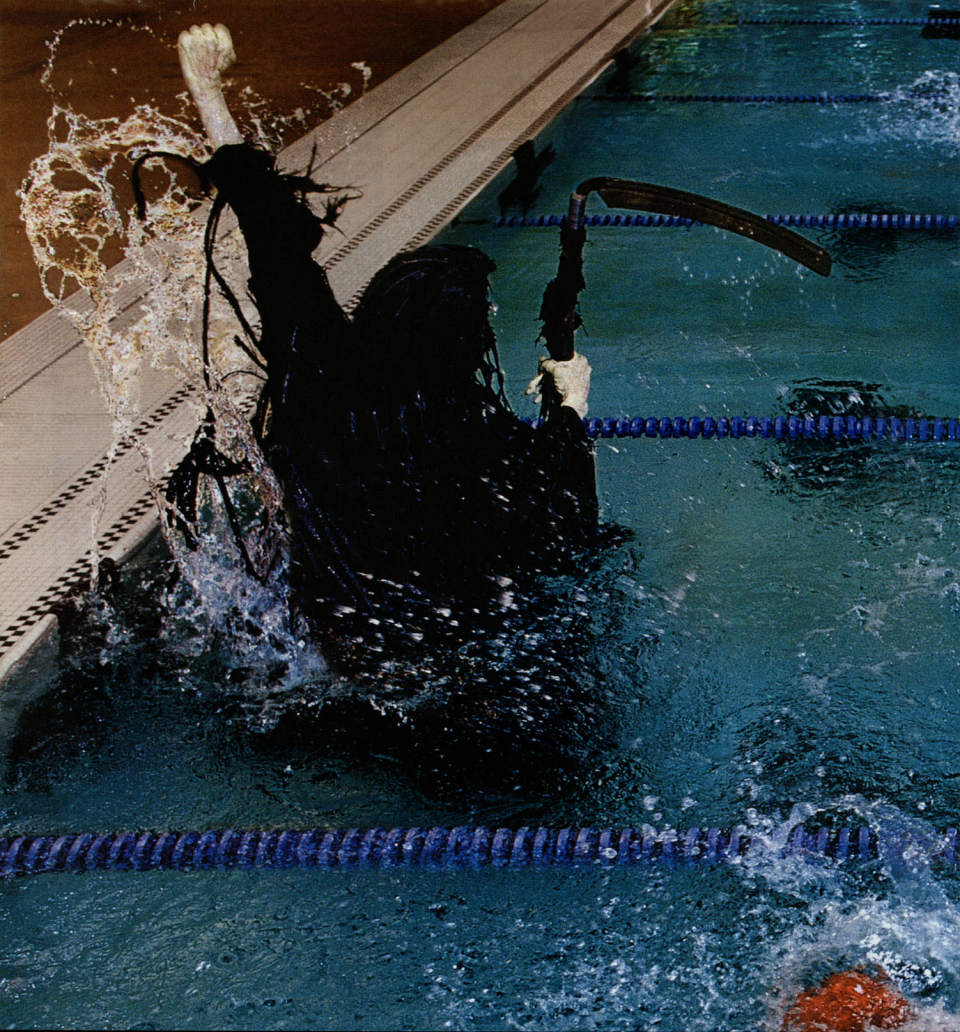






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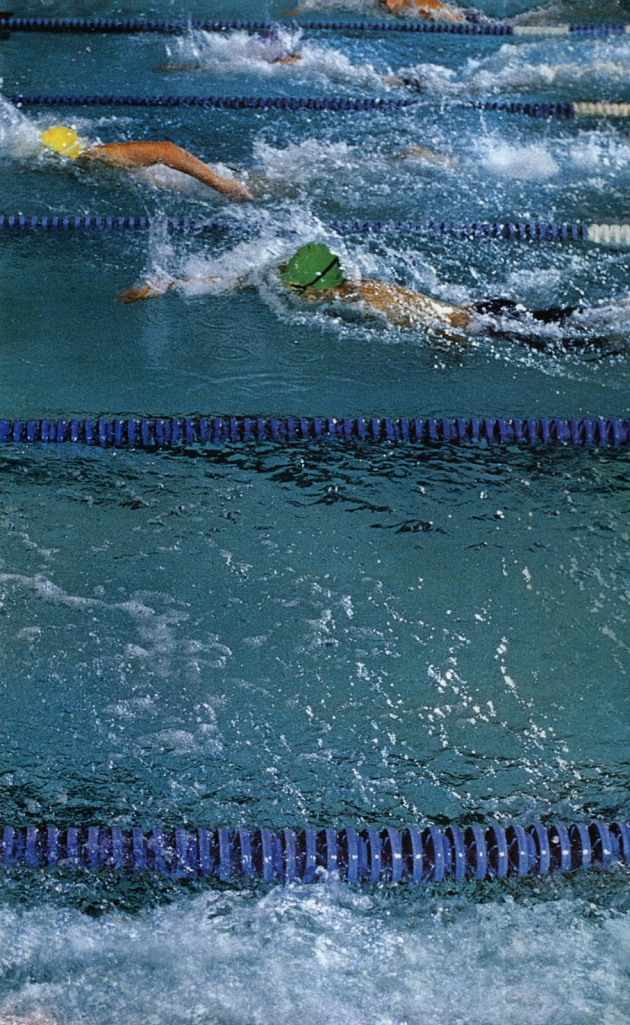
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EIDOS
ENTERTAINMENT

FREE
RADICAL

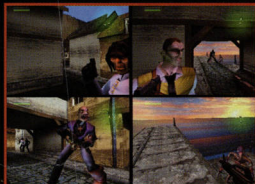




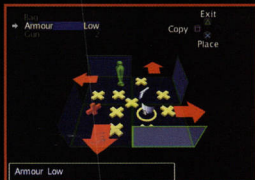
PlayStation 2



Spend quality time getting to know the brutal quirks of all 30 playable characters.



Enjoy the blistering speed of 60 frames per second with as many as four players.



A simple level editor lets you make your own maps for endless new environments.

TIME SPLITTERS™

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Xbox First Party: More Than a Dirty Dozen

➔ Microsoft has invented a remarkable and refreshing blend of openness and secrecy: open with people, open with developers, and remarkably open with its intimidating tech specs. Now the company has opened up its list of first-party talent, a unique group of outside developers all apparently beavering away on Xbox projects to be published by Microsoft. The secrecy continues with Microsoft's current reluctance to name any game titles or show the system design, and yet by the time you read this, there's a very good chance that both game names and, perhaps more importantly, Japanese developers will have been unveiled.

(Although, for an insider's report on Japan, see page 13.)

The crop of developers is a mixture of glamorous and obscure, unbeatable and unknown. It looks a little something like this:

Lionhead Satellites
 Universal Interactive Studios
 Stormfront Studios
 Kodiak Interactive Software Studios, Inc.
 Totally Games
 Rainbow Studios
 Artificial Mind and Movement
 Boss Game Studios
 Climax Development, Ltd.
 Digital Illusions
 High Voltage Software
 KnowWonder Digital Media Works
 Meyer/Glass Interactive
 Pipeworks Software, Inc.
 Pseudo Interactive, Inc.
 Tremor Entertainment
 VR-I Entertainment
 (Circadence Corp.)

What's Lionhead Satellites? It's two (and eventually another, handling *Black and White 2*) spin-off companies, Intrepid Computer Entertainment and Big Blue Box Studios, started by Lionhead and *Black and White* creator, Peter Molyneux. "We've thought long and hard about where to focus the satellites. One of the games we're working on has been

floating around in my head for about 10 years, waiting for a piece of hardware powerful enough to do it justice," he explains ardently. "At last we've got something that can do that." Both spin-offs will concentrate solely on exclusive Xbox content, while the main hub, Lionhead, will continue to do multi-format development of *Black and White* and others.

Now that's pretty glamorous. Microsoft has picked up the two most politically potent PC-originated titles in the shape of Bungeie's *Halo* and Lionhead's *Black and White*. But this is a console after all, so where are the console developers? Again, Microsoft seems to have things covered.

At console launch time, the most oft-discussed category is sports. EA has already pledged support and Microsoft has secured the services of Kodiak Interactive and Boss Game Studios, known respectively for console ports of *Madden* and high-speed racing games. It's not known specifically what those companies will be producing, but it would make sense for them to stick to their specialties. [Ed. Note: In our in the Studio column in the July issue, sources close to Boss intimated that indeed it would be a racing game.]

Stormfront Intellivision and CEO (and one-time President guy) Don Daglow claims that dealing with Microsoft is a pleasure. "It's a really good relationship," he says. "The team we're working with is very much a team of gamers. The human beings we deal with are long-steeped in the gaming tradition. Thus far, it feels like Microsoft is very serious about games." Daglow also has the distinction of having created the very first computer baseball game, on a PDP-10 mainframe.

But perhaps the most interesting couple of fellows on this

list are Universal Interactive and Totally Games, respectively. Universal owns the rights to both *Crash Bandicoot* and *Spyro the Dragon*, the latter of which is headed for Xbox via a Ubi Soft publishing deal — and the former hasn't been ruled out. Universal is also designing an action game exclusively for Xbox — a mascot title, perhaps?

Totally Games, headed by Lawrence Holland, progenitor of *Star Wars: X-Wing Alliance*, *TE Fighter*, and *Secret Weapons of the Luftwaffe*, is working on a game for Xbox too, described by Microsoft's Ed Fries as "being in a genre you can probably guess."

Those are the American and European guys signed up — big names and innovators, with more to come. And that list didn't even include Bungeie or Microsoft's own internal teams. And if you're



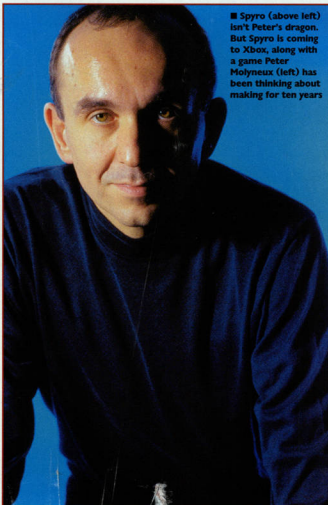
"One of the games we're working on has been floating around in my head for about 10 years, waiting for a piece of hardware powerful enough to do it justice. At last we've got something that can do that."

— Peter Molyneux



■ When he isn't sifting through Xbox developers' trash, Frank O'Connor acts as the Editor-in-Chief of Daily Radar Consoles

wondering about the girl from the much-misplaced Xbox demo, Pipeworks Software, the demo's producer, is hard at work on an original Xbox product, so we could be seeing more of her (and her robot) in the future. Perhaps her hair will have grown out by then. — Frank O'Connor



■ Spyro (above left) isn't Peter's dragon. But Spyro is coming to Xbox, along with a game Peter Molyneux (left) has been thinking about making for ten years

In the Studio

Development news as it develops

11.00

GAMECUBE GETS RESIDENT EVIL

Capcom has canned the N64 version of its *Resident Evil* prequel entitled *Resident Evil 0*, and the company is now preparing the title for Gamecube instead. The game has been in production for some time, and with another year to prepare it for Gamecube, Capcom should have the title on shelves before the end of 2001. In *Resident Evil 0*, the player becomes Rebecca Chambers, one of the original S.T.A.R.S. team members who had a minor role in the first *Resident Evil*.

MODEL VOLLEYBALL

Every month, it seems, a new celebrity gets involved in videogames. Last month it was Ozzy Osbourne, and this month, Infogrames signed top women's pro beach volleyball athlete Gabrielle Reece to endorse and appear in *Power Spike Pro Beach Volleyball* for the PlayStation and Game Boy Color. All we can say is this: Finally a woman in videogames who doesn't wear two pistols to work. Although much like Lara Croft, Gabby does look pretty damn good in those shorts.

SAVING THE MAN OF STEEL

After the job Titus did on *Superman* with their excuse-for-an-N64-game, the Man of Steel was in need of some rescuing. Infogrames has stepped in and has acquired the rights to create games featuring Clark Kent's alter ego for "all leading interactive gaming platforms including Sony, Sega, Nintendo, and others." We're wondering who Infogrames means by "others." The NeoPocket perhaps? Or is there still too much Kryptonite in Bill Gates' pocket to say Microsoft? Either way, Superman still remains hostage of the French, as does Batman, whose bat cave can now be found under Ubi Soft Manor. At this point, it can't get any worse than the movies. Or can it?



JAPAN GOES XBOX

By the time you read this, Microsoft will have made announcements at Tokyo Game Show regarding Xbox titles from Japan's third-party publishers. As of press time (a week before the show), we were aware that Namco had two Xbox titles in development, including one *Rave Racer*-inspired racing game. Tecmo has one title in development, possibly another version of its seminal fighting game *Dead or Alive*. Capcom has a minimum of two titles, and Konami is in the lead with three titles, one of which is, as we've reported before, a version of *Metal Gear Solid 2*.

XBOX GOES KART RACING

No new console (Xbox being no exception) could launch without some kind of kart racing game in its lineup. Sources deep, deep, deep inside Crystal Dynamics have told us that the company is working on a character-based kart racing game. No word as to who will make up the cast, but if it isn't Disney characters, get ready for *Gex Kart*.

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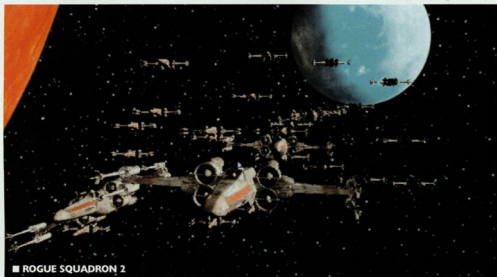


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Gamecube Watch

11/00

"Technical Demos" or Games in the Making?



ROGUE SQUADRON 2

→ So we finally have a name for Nintendo's next-generation console, and better yet, the company has given us a taste of what Gamecube can pull off visually (For more on Gamecube itself see our feature on page 53.) At its August Spaceworld event, Nintendo previewed snippets of gameplay examples starring huge franchise characters, all drowned in effects and animated to perfect realism. However, despite the fact that the showing was impressive, Nintendo repeatedly referred to the software on hand as working "technical demos" and casually noted that these demos weren't necessarily games in the making. But we have learned otherwise. Read on for our analysis of each video clip below:

Link and Gannondorf: Pre-rendered or Realtime? In Development? Unconfirmed

This 15-second scene featured Link and archenemy Gannondorf dueling inside a giant castle room. Running in realtime 3D, the demo

featured an impressive selection of effects ranging from bump-mapped textures on Gannon's shoulders to a beautifully light-sourced backdrop that stretched far into the distance. Also, a stairway in the rear of the structure ended in a doorway, presumably a way out, into the castle fight arena. The amount of detail surrounding the battle scene, and on the animated characters themselves, indicates much more at work than just a "technical demo." Zelda is a huge franchise for Nintendo, and the scene shown again was not rendered — it was running on the hardware. The company practically announced the game's existence without actually saying a word.

Luigi's Mansion: Pre-rendered or Realtime? In Development? Unconfirmed

For those who knew what to look for, this demo was the technical masterpiece of the show. It highlighted Mario's green-suited brother as he explored an exquisitely detailed 3D haunted house. Luigi met up with everything from stunning alpha-layered ghosts to falling chandeliers, all with realtime

lighting and texture skinning. Perhaps most impressive was the cartoon-like consistency with which the characters stretched and bounced around. Luigi's Mansion was not easily whipped up; there was simply too much development work behind it for it to be anything but a secret project by Nintendo.

Rogue Squadron 2: Pre-rendered or Realtime? In Development? Yes

LucasArts previewed more than two minutes of in-game footage for a Factor 5-developed Gamecube Star Wars title tentatively referred to as *Rogue Squadron 2*. While Nintendo was quick to call it a technical example, LucasArts President Simon Jeffery confirmed it to be prototype Gamecube software. The *Rogue 2* display boasted a rock-solid 60fps framerate, extraordinarily high-resolution textures, and a huge depth of view. According to sources, the X-Wing model used in the game was taken exactly from the feature film, and one of the levels in this "demo" was actually playable.

Metrod: Pre-rendered or Realtime? In Development? Yes

A brief snippet of a rendered Samus running down a hallway was on display at Spaceworld and it drew big cheers from crowds. What Nintendo didn't reveal, however, is that the title is actually under development by second-party Retro Studios. Retro allegedly whipped up the rendered demo for Spaceworld and is still very early on with the software. Incidentally Retro is also in the works with four other Gamecube titles ranging from a football game to a first-person shooter.

Wave Race: Pre-rendered or Realtime? In Development? Yes

Called a "conservative FMV render" by inside sources, this short *Wave Race* demo was also flashed onscreen at Nintendo's event. NOA first-party Nintendo Software Technology Corporation (NST), which made *Ridge Racer 64*, is well into development with the title. The breathtaking water reflections



Matt Casamassa, the biggest Gamecube sleuth in the videogame industry, is the editor-in-chief of IGN64.com

and realistic jet ski physics in the FMV shouldn't be a problem to realize in realtime, according to those involved with the project.

Too Human: Pre-rendered or Realtime? In Development? Yes

Shown only as a running FMV, this action adventure based on a dark, futuristic world was once scheduled as a four-disc PlayStation game but was moved over to Gamecube when developer Silicon Knights became a Nintendo second party.

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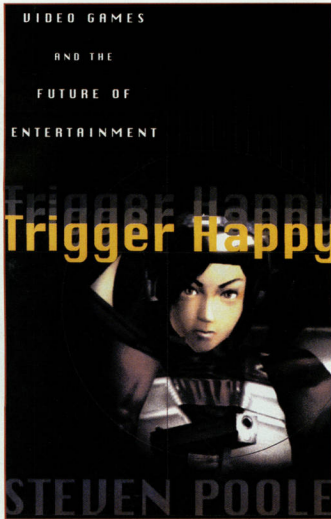
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Sega Dreamcast





■ DON'T TOUCH THAT TRIGGER

Trigger Happy: Video Games and the Future of Entertainment

→ "We speak a different language, and here our tongue is incomprehensible." — Carlo Levi

Steven Poole, the punch-drunk author of *Trigger Happy: Video Games and the Future of Entertainment* has gone shooting — and clearly missed the mark. His history-cum-technological survey of videogames and the industry they created rings with the passion that has carried the dice since the first would-be gamer gawked at Pong but that passion fails to resonate. In an attempt to capture the sublime mix of man and machine, Poole turns the epic into the facile.

Clearly Poole knows his stuff. His text takes his readers from Willy Higinbotham's creation of the first "video" game in 1958 up to *Shenmue* and stabs at an analysis of the medium's

conventions and its grand appeal. Unfortunately, he does this by deifying technology at the expense of the humans who both create and play the games. At one point, Poole so immerses himself in the worship of the machine that he argues animated polygons constitute "a machine soul." "This," as he states so eloquently, "constitutes a lethal failure of imagination."

In the course of 230 pages, the author manages alternately to dazzle and confound. Poole is simply brilliant in concocting arguments. Chief among them is the idea that technological advance has created a sort of alienation that enabled long-distance and impersonal slaughter of both friendlies and hostiles by U.S. forces in Iraq and Serbia. But his analyses are summed up in the most simple-

minded manner possible. After a thorough discussion of videogame cybernetics, Poole can think of nothing better to end with than "you don't want it to be real" and "the purpose of a videogame, then, is to never simulate real life, but to offer the gift of play." And few will be able to forgive his tendency to perpetually reference *Tomb Raider* and its various incarnations — or his penchant for getting the simple stuff wrong. Poole may make himself out to be a new sort of prophet, but when he can't quite grasp that *Crazy Taxi's* "imaginary American town center" is, in fact, San Francisco, the gospel bears witness to mishap. Game over, baby.

— Greg Orlando
Arcade Press, New York, NY
230 pages (Hardcover)
\$25.95

■ LESSONS FOR THE LATENT GAME GURU

Game Programming Gems

→ Wow. Four years of college and all you've really learned are some lame C pointer commands. You're reasonably sure you can make a database that will set the world on fire, but how the hell are you going to make games?

Textbook publisher Charles River Media can help. Its latest book, *Game Programming Gems*, features scores of programming routines and explanations to take you from making text-only databases to creating graphic implementations of water or glass, designing 3D pathfinding routines for game characters, doing lighting calculations, Internet gaming,

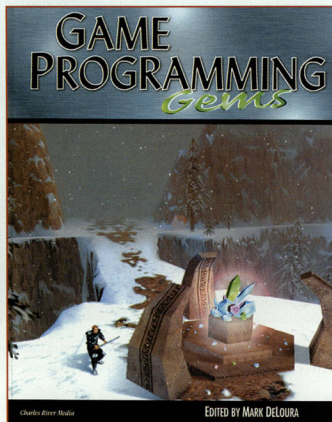
curved surfaces, and more. In short, it can take you from knowing C or C++ to knowing how to make games — or at least start you down the right path. The explanations are well done, with the CD accompanying the book offering all the source code. And while these may not be the most perfectly optimized routines in history, they'll certainly get you started.

With topics headings like "Using Implicit Euler Integration for Numerical Stability," this isn't for math or programming beginners, but it is a great way to get moving along the road from basic programming knowledge to game guru. — Chris Charla

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■ It's probably too advanced for math and programming beginners, but if you know a little C or C++, this book will move you closer to making your own games



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■ DREAMCAST

PHANTASY STAR ONLINE

■ Publisher: Sega ■ Developer: Sonic Team ■ Release Date: January 2001 ■ Origin: Japan

Can Yuji Naka and Sonic Team reinvent the console RPG for the online generation?



To stay on the forefront of gaming, you have to think ahead of the curve. For Yuji Naka, CEO of newly independent Sonic Team, the need to push the limits of console development has always been present, whether he was creating beautiful parallax scrolling worlds with *Sonic* in 16-bit, redefining the 3D experience with *Nights* on Saturn, or creating the mad design document that eventually became *Samba De Amigo* on Dreamcast. Naka and team dabbled ever so slightly in downloadable options in *Sonic Adventure*, and now they are finally ready to cross the Rubicon of Internet gaming with the first online console-based RPG, *Phantasy Star Online*.

"I made the first two episodes of the series, which were traditional RPGs," explains Naka. "I wanted the new *Phantasy Star* to embrace a whole new experience." The result is an RPG that is unique in the console field — one that offers gamers from around the world the ability to play together. Naka stresses that this online cooperation is really what he's trying to foster in the game. "Teamwork is going to be my main concern for this title," he says. "It will be possible to clear the main quest of the game alone, but that would only account for a small percentage of my whole vision."

This type of experience may be old hat to PC veterans, who are possibly still leveling up their *Diablo II* or *EverQuest* characters. But the fact that it's a first for consoles makes it something of a social experiment. Up to four players — many of whom have quite possibly



■ When you communicate with other members of your party the text will be translated into your choice of English, Japanese, French, Spanish, or German

→ Alphas



■ *PSO* supports four characters online at once, but as you can see, the screen also quickly fills up with enemies

never played a game online at all — can join together in a single game via SegaNet.

Naka theorizes that this experience will lead to some surprising situations and fresh gaming experiences. “Imagine that four players are in a dungeon and after a battle you are rewarded with a chest,” he hypothesizes. “Inside the chest is a cool item. It will be interesting to see how the four players decide who has earned it most. They may fix rules, give priority to the females, or just argue.” Players are nudged subtly towards amicability by the fact that they can’t actually hurt one another, but as any *Everquest* veteran will tell you, you never know what will happen when you’re playing with the masses.

It will also be interesting to see how a typically egocentric group of gamers who might

prefer to play *PSO* single-player will deal with the reality that they must work together to complete puzzles in the game. “A simple example of this,” Naka elaborates, “would be a mechanism with four switches that need to be operated at the same time. One or even three players alone would not be able to access this part of the game.” Combat is also almost a puzzle in itself, as players will need to learn to cooperate to survive. “Each player will have strong and weak areas, and it will be essential for the group to know each other inside out,” explains Naka. “Otherwise the party will be quickly wiped out.” Since the fighting is now completely in realtime — a first for the series — it’s not hard to imagine players banding together. Hordes of nasties or even a large enemy (like the Dragon shown in early

screenshots) would be far too difficult for any single player to defeat.

Despite the new **gameplay paradigms**, the team is still eager to keep the game quasi-familiar to fans of the series. Players once again are playing in a world of both science fiction and magic, and they can choose to follow the paths pertaining to each discipline. The storyline itself involves players trying to figure out what caused a great disaster on the planet Raguroi. Although



THE SERIES SO FAR

Phantasy Star (1986, Sega Master System)

The introduction to the *Phantasy Star* universe featured both top-view and first-person RPG gameplay elements. Players were introduced to the lands of Palma in the Algo star system as they struggled to find out the secret of a new dark religion that has corrupted their King and threatened the planet.

Phantasy Star II (1989, Sega Genesis)

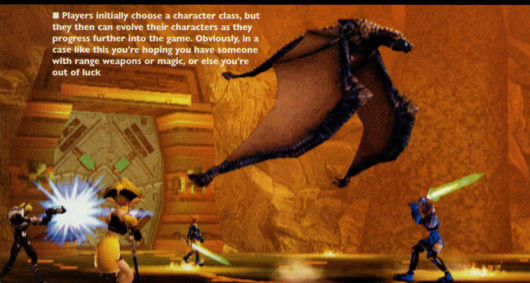
The series successfully jumped to 16-bit with improved graphics and sound. This time, players quest on the planet Mota and endeavor to find out what is causing the world to go crazy. Strangely, the first-person dungeon crawling scenes from the original game were removed in favor of top-down dungeons.

Phantasy Star III: Generations of Doom (1991, Sega Genesis)

The third installment tries to raise the content bar by including seven different planets and three generations of characters. The biggest twist is that gamers can actually choose whom they would marry and then continue the quest as their own children.

Phantasy Star IV (1994, Sega Genesis)

Phantasy Star IV's storyline ties directly into the shocking ending of *PSII*. It is generally regarded as the worst in the series and carried a hefty price tag of \$90.



■ Players initially choose a character class, but they then can evolve their characters as they progress further into the game. Obviously, in a case like this you're hoping you have someone with range weapons or magic, or else you're out of luck.



■ Unlike past *Phantasy Star* games, the combat in *PSO* is all realtime, so you'll need good reflexes as well as an eye for tactical planning



■ Despite the fact that the game world has been kept small, there is still a tremendous amount of variety to be found. If you play single-player, however, you will experience much less than if you are in a group

finer story details are being kept quiet, Naka says he doesn't want to fall into the trappings of other RPGs. The game world you play in, for example, has been deliberately kept small to minimize random wandering. "I don't really like titles like *Final Fantasy* or *Dragon Quest*," confesses Naka. "You have a very long story, and it is necessary to travel miles and miles and sometimes get lost on the map. I prefer the player to be focused on the gameplay as well as the setting."

Perhaps the most revolutionary part of *PSO* is the interface that ties together players from around the world. The game will ship with support for five languages — English, Japanese, Spanish, French, German — and will allow players from around the world to play in each others' games (although we have to question the lag) and to

communicate in their native languages. Each player in the game will receive messages translated into his or her chosen language. While details are scarce on how this has been accomplished, Naka has referred to keyword- and icon-based systems that could be used.

Whether or not online gaming takes off on consoles remains to be seen, but Naka, like much of the gaming community, feels that it is just a matter of time and infrastructure. His hope is that *PSO* will serve as a catalyst upon which solitary console gamers will move into the growing world of online action, which, coincidentally, is only offered on Dreamcast at this point. It's a gamble, but Sonic Team has always thrived on placing educated bets. Only time will tell if this one pays out.

— Blake Fischer



■ Beating tougher enemies like this dragon will require teamwork and an overall strategy between players. Otherwise, as Yuji Naka says, "the party will be quickly wiped out"



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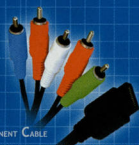


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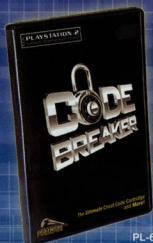
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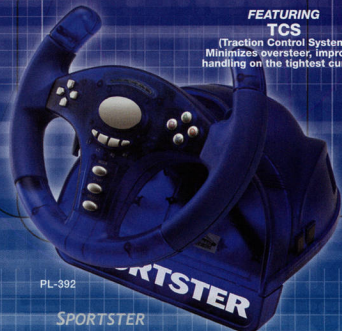
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ARCADE

PLANET HARRIER

Publisher: **Sega** ■ Developer: **Amusement Vision** ■ Release Date: **November** ■ Origin: **Japan**

A high-powered sequel that's been a long time coming

➔ After the announcement of a new *Metroid* from Nintendo, here's the second most notable entry into the "About Damn Time" sequel category. If the title and the screenshots scattered around these pages don't clue you in, *Planet Harrier* is the successor to Yu Suzuki's classic 1985 arcade

shooter, *Space Harrier*. Under development at Sega's own Amusement Vision (formerly known under the rather saucy name of Soft R&D #4), *Planet Harrier* brings the venerable forward-scrolling shooter into the 21st century.

Although the gameplay remains similar to the original in that it's essentially a shooter on

rails, the most immediately noticeable upgrade is that, naturally enough, the game is in full 3D. And as you can tell from the screens, the graphics are a knockout. Running on Sega's latest Hikaru arcade board, it boasts some spectacularly colorful textures and incredibly crisp models and backgrounds.

You'll find in the enemies a mix of old and new. Some opponents, most of which are featured in the game's early stages, are 3D

BACK TO HIS ROOTS

The original *Space Harrier* was designed by none other than Sega visionary Yu Suzuki and it was a milestone in arcade game design. Not only did it push the known limits of graphic technology (using the Sega System 16 board), but it featured an intense 3D shooting experience unlike anything else. You can try it yourself in Suzuki's latest epic, *Shenmue*. All you have to do is go to an arcade in the game and pop in a coin.



■ The game's ten stages offer tremendous visual variety as well



■ One of the things that impresses us most is the incredible depth of the playing field — the horizon seems miles away



Rock star X fights using an electric guitar, while Cory (who, somewhat inexplicably, is a nurse) uses — yes — a giant hypodermic needle

updates of the dragons, crocodiles, and others from the original. Later stages, however, will be full of new enemy designs. In all, you can expect a total of ten stages.

Unlike the original, *Planet Harrier* offers you a choice of four characters: Nick, Cory, Glenn, and the mysteriously named X. Though the weapons

include the expected Big Guns from Nick and Glenn, rock star X fights using an electric guitar, while Cory (who, somewhat inexplicably, is a nurse) uses — yes — a giant hypodermic needle.

Anyone familiar with *Space Harrier's* combination of quick shooting and target lock-on, however, will feel right at home, since the play mechanics are roughly the same. But even

here, there are a number of interesting additions and updates to gameplay. You and a friend can enter a two-player cooperative mode — in which it's possible for both characters to be strung together using a kind of target beam — and pull off combination moves and special attacks unique to each pairing of characters.

Unleashing such combinations also results in your destroyed enemies giving up more gold. (Yes, gold.) Defeating various critters releases a shower of coins, which you can pick up and use in between stages at the "Star Shop" to purchase weapon upgrades and other upgrades.

Although the straightforward, shooter-style gameplay is, of course, nothing new, *Planet Harrier* still looks like it could be a complete blast for arcade gamers. And while there's been no official word from Sega, it wouldn't surprise us at all if a Dreamcast version popped up sometime next year. We're certainly hoping one does. — Jeff Lundrigan/Christophe Kagotani



■ Unlike the single anonymous protagonist of the original, *Planet Harrier* offers four characters to choose from



■ The action certainly looks fast, furious, and very much in keeping with the spirit of the original



■ Destroying enemies will earn you coins, which can be used to purchase upgrades in the Star Shop. Who says being a hero is a thankless job?





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HART ATTACK

While Ricky Carmichael is undeniably a racing phenom, freestylers fear the name of another THQ-sponsored rider, Cary Hart, whose signature move, the "Hart Attack," consists of Hart's basically doing a handstand on the seat of his bike while in mid-air. When the CMX 2002 physics model enabled players to complete a mid-air back flip, THQ's Rod Baumsteiger insisted the feature be removed because it had never actually been done. Then, at July's Gravity Games in Providence, RI, Hart performed the first complete back flip ever in motocross competition—a feat comparable to Tony Hawk's record-breaking 900 at the 1999 Summer X Games. As you might imagine, this effectively ended the debate. And of course, the crowd went ballistic.

■ There's no special code that enables the bike to do a wheelie or a stoppie. It simply occurs as part of the physics simulation, because real bikes can do them

■ PLAYSTATION 2, PLAYSTATION, GAMECUBE, XBOX

CMX 2002

FEATURING RICKY CARMICHAEL

■ Publisher: THQ ■ Developer: Pacific Coast Power and Light ■ Release Date: Fall (PSX), Summer 2001 (PS2), TBA (Xbox, Gamecube) ■ Price: US

Will the madness of motocross take over next-generation consoles?

➔ Anyone who thinks extreme sports appeal only to a small, core audience clearly isn't paying attention to the videogame market. The past year's steady stream of successful extreme titles (among them EA's *Sled Storm*, Nintendo's reborn *Excitebike 64*, and a certain skateboarding series from Activision) is set to become a raging torrent over the next year. Not to be lost in the flood is this sequel to last year's cumbersome titled *Championship Motocross 2000*

featuring *Ricky Carmichael*. The first (but surely not the last) motocross game officially announced for the PlayStation 2, it could easily establish itself as the benchmark by which all future motocross games will be judged.

Although pre-alpha, *CMX 2002* already sports impressive visuals. Each rider model uses 3000 polygons, and each bike uses 3000 more (individually modeled bumps on the bike's rear tire are clearly visible), and the

■ Many games are limited by their inability to create rugged terrain on a small scale (actual surfaces are big and smooth, or each bump is the same size and slope), but *CMX 2002*'s suspension model enables designers to create naturalistic tracks with bumps of every shape

■ While these early PS2 screens are all from the single-player mode, there will be several multiplayer game modes as well, ranging from two-player splitscreen racing to stunt competitions



→ Alphas

game blasts along at 60fps. Granted, there's still a long way to go — most of the riders' animations weren't in yet, the particle system wasn't turned on, and the tracks lacked final textures, and the framerate will have to contend with ten riders, not two or three — but what we saw inspired confidence.

Five minutes with the controller, however, will demonstrate what truly sets this game apart — realism. Banked turns are a staple of actual motocross tracks, but they're rarely seen in games due to the complex math they create. In this game, they're everywhere. Likewise for whoops sections, the motocross equivalent to skiing's moguls. If they exist at all in current titles, it's usually just as a slow patch of the track where the animation switches to simulate bouncing. Here, depending on the rider's technique, they can slow you to a crawl or sling you ahead of the pack. According to Lead Programmer Ming Lee, this realistic feel is all because of the team's unique, physics-based driving model.

Glen Helen



You begin Career mode as an amateur, but as you win races, sponsorship opportunities arise, allowing you to upgrade and tweak your bike for maximum performance.

You can literally watch the wheels independently hitting bumps, compressing and re-extending to match the terrain



Owners of the original PSX will be able to pick up a version of the game this fall under its super-clunky former title, *Championship Motocross 200!* featuring Ricky Carmichael.

"When you begin with an arcade-type model," Lee says, "a programmer has to add every particular piece of fun to the game. When you have a physics model, a lot of things come together naturally, because it's a dynamic system."

What does this mean to the gamer? It means there's a friction model that analyzes the traction between each tire and the driving surface — so your front tire can actually dig into a loose surface, enabling you to realistically slide around a turn. There's also a true-to-life suspension model — so you can literally watch the wheels independently hitting bumps, compressing and re-extending to match the terrain.

Yet the most visible demonstration of the physics model's versatility came to the team the day Lee discovered that it enabled the bikes to perform not just wheelies but stoppies (front-wheel wheelies), a feature unheard of in past motocross games. While this may not be useful during races, it bodes well for freestyle stunt competitions, and he can attest it's a hell of a lot of fun. According to Lead Designer John Grigsby, this has been the all-important crucial step in making CMX 2002 a next-generation game.

"The fundamental experience of driving your vehicle around has to be fun. Even if it's only one bike, that has to feel really cool. We've really been concentrating on making the bike fun to drive." If everything else is realized as perfectly as this initial goal, this will be one fantastic game indeed. — Eric Bratcher



The team has added many features for novice players because, as Lee puts it, "You get a lot of intuitive feedback from a bike itself when you're riding it. When you're holding the controller, you don't know that the guy on the bike's screaming 'Nooo! You can't turn that hard! I'm gonna die!'"



Players will ultimately choose from over thirty actual motocross riders and cycles from five licensed manufacturers. You'll also be able to create your own rider.

Forget narrow, confining motocross tracks — these are huge and wide open. Most of the 25 courses in the game will be actual licensed courses, with some homemade entries to teach beginners the ropes or let riders tear into locations unavailable in real life (such as construction zones)

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PLAYSTATION 2, XBOX

LOTUS CHALLENGE

■ Publisher: TBA ■ Developer: Kuju ■ Release Date: 2001 ■ Origin: UK

An atypical approach to your typical racer

→ Of the many games expected to reach the PlayStation 2 market within the console's first 12 months on sale, something like 40 of them will be racing titles. Few of them, however, can boast the kind of partnership that Kuju has with Lotus.



■ Kuju claims that the game will accurately represent over 40 different cars



For example, how many licensed games offer a Stunt mode in addition to normal circuit racing? At the time of *Next Generation's* visit only a handful of stunt tests (180°, 360°, acceleration, and broadside parking into a space — the most spectacular, if obviously difficult, maneuver) were in place. But Project Director Ad Stevenson promises that the team is "planning to have a lot more stuff, like jumping off ramps, through windows..." And Lotus approves of this? "Yeah, absolutely," says Stevenson. "The fantastic thing about working with them is that they accept that we know how to make computer games. And we accept that they know how to make cars."

Of course, the license isn't just a name, either, and Lotus has been more than helpful in getting the Kuju team what it needs to make the game great. "The main thing that they're giving us are the variables for each car," reveals Stevenson. "We've got 41 cars in total, and obviously they all behave differently, given things like center of gravity, exact dimensions, plus all the other elements Lotus have given us. We've tried putting a Lotus Carlton in, which is just a very powerful saloon car, and it does handle very differently to everything else, which proves that our driving model works as it should."

■ Will the G7 2000 sun effect replace the lens flare as the most overused special effect in racing games? It sure looks like things are heading in that direction, but we don't mind — yet



■ Kuju will actually have a full damage model working in the final game, so you'll have to be careful not to hit a wall at 100 mph — you won't escape unscathed like in *Gran Turismo*.



While the game is still very early in development, the symbiotic partnership between Lotus and Kuju looks to be a sign of good things to come. We'll be watching as this one gets closer to release. — Nigel Edge

THE POWER OF X

Kuju, as you may remember from our recent Xbox feature (NG 08/00), is the team behind the gorgeous *Faith* technical demo. So while *Lotus Challenge* is currently only scheduled as a PlayStation 2 game, it's no surprise that an Xbox demo already exists. The following is a screenshot from the Xbox.



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HEAVY-DUTY DNA

Another strange feature of *Type X* is your ability to collect DNA samples from dead creatures. The DNA can then apparently be used in conjunction with various other items to create new items and weapon effects. However, it's also possible to combine DNA from different creatures to create new DNA strands for even more outlandish possibilities. It almost sounds like a mini-game in itself.



■ Here's a tip: If you ever get to a space station and find it overrun by alien creatures, just turn around and go home, 'cause man, the overtime isn't worth getting your head chewed off

■ DREAMCAST

TYPE X: SPIRAL NIGHTMARE

■ Publisher: Sega ■ Developer: Sega ■ Release Date: November (Japan) ■ Origin: Japan

In space, no one can hear the Sega Scream

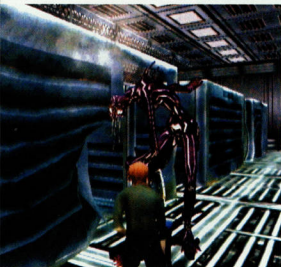
➔ Set in the year 2078 in a space station orbiting Mars, *Type X: Spiral Nightmare* covers the familiar gameplay territory of *Resident Evil*, but this one looks like it will manage to put several interesting new wrinkles into an established formula.

An engineer named Yohan travels to the station with some coworkers to fix a broken turbine, only to find the place has been overrun with strange and (naturally) hostile creatures. The initial goal is simply to escape to the planet's surface, but apparently once Mars is reached, things just get more complicated.

While the mechanics will be familiar to anyone who's played *Resident Evil*, the graphics are completely 3D, à la *Code Veronica*, and the screens shown reveal a fairly nasty-looking bunch of critters and some atmospheric locations. Also, most of the backgrounds can take damage and/or be destroyed.

The unique thing about *Type X* however, is its "Emotional Communication System." The game will feature some 20 characters that Yohan can interact with, and their reactions to how he treats them are said to be very realistic. The game's story, too, will vary, with different areas opening up depending on how you choose to handle each encounter. Although the exact details of how this will be carried out are still unknown at press time, this is where the bulk of the developer's efforts have been spent. It certainly sounds like an experience

different from the "lone agent" gameplay typical of the genre, and the multiple endings add replay value. This is very much in keeping with Sega's current charter to push gameplay in new directions, and we'll be keeping an eye out for this one. — Jeff Lundrigan/Christophe Kagotani



■ And what gloomy sci-fi game would be complete without a big-toothed, slime dripping alien?



■ Of course, you can always steal their DNA and toss it right back at 'em

メガフォース

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■ Ultimately all the training and hard work you put into your dance squad will pay off when you get to perform on-air

→ While we've been mostly shielded in the U.S., Japan is awash with more music and dancing games than you might imagine. *Unison* is Tecmo's take on the scene, and while it appears to have been partially inspired by Enix's *Bust a Groove* series, it plans to provide enough twists of its own to set itself apart.

As the dance group *Unison*, you must, predictably enough, perform your dance moves on a popular TV show. Unfortunately for you, the road to success isn't that easy and you must actually take lessons from a teacher to learn each dance routine before you go on stage. Insiders at Tecmo have told

■ PLAYSTATION 2

UNISON

■ Publisher: Tecmo ■ Developer: Tecmo ■ Release Date: Q4 (Japan) ■ Origin: Japan

Train to dance. Dance to win.

us that the game is actually based on the *Monster Rancher 3* engine, so it's not really surprising to see training modes playing a substantial role in the experience. You will

even need to budget the group's time between learning their steps and promoting their public image. Put too much into one or the other, and you could be in bad shape when it comes time for each performance.

Of course, the dancing action itself still plays a huge part in the experience. Moves will be performed using the Dual Shock 2's analog sticks instead of the traditional button patterns, and players must, as usual, duplicate patterns shown on the screen, during which they are rated according to their timing and accuracy.

Will *Unison* revolutionize the way we play games? Probably not, but it still stands out as a clever twist on what is surely becoming an otherwise stagnant genre. We're hoping this game will have the "legs" it needs to give gamers a whole new lease on the dancing game experience.

— Blake Fischer



■ Like most dancing games, your grade ranking depends on both your timing and accuracy in matching the correct move



■ Graphically, *Unison* really shines. While the characters are stylistic, the backgrounds are exquisitely detailed and feature tons of special effects

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中山武藏

日向庄左衛門



■ While this Dojo level is the only one that is currently working in the game, fighting will take place in more than 20 different locations

➔ Originally planned as a PSX game, Kengo is Lightweight's spiritual successor to the popular *Bushido Blade* series. While *Next Generation* looked at the game in its earlier form back in our June issue, we're even more excited by the prospect of the game on PS2. It will give the team a chance not only to enhance the graphics but to add some new gameplay twists as well.

The *Bushido Blade* series always distinguished itself from other fighting games with its unmatched adherence to realism, and Kengo follows in that tradition. Each controllable fighter is actually based on a real person in history and uses a unique, authentic swordfighting style. Fighters can't pull off fireball attacks, and a character doesn't jump right back up after a solid sword slash to the head — instead, he dies instantly. An advanced damage system tracks where each hit connects, so many

■ PLAYSTATION 2

KENGO: MASTER OF BUSHIDO

■ Publisher: **Crave** ■ Developer: **Lightweight** ■ Release Date: **Q4** ■ Origin: **Japan**

The creators of *Bushido Blade* unsheathe the power of PlayStation 2 to create the most treacherously realistic swordfighting game ever

matches actually end up with one or both combatants crippled by debilitating blows but still continuing to fight (albeit much more slowly) until one is dead.

The actual swordplay mechanics haven't changed much in the jump between systems, but the way the player interacts with each level definitely has. "The biggest difference from the old version," says Senior Producer Daryl Pitts, "will be the effects of objects in the environment. Pushing someone against a shelf or a pile of boxes meant nothing in terms of gameplay on the previous version, but for the PS2 we take advantage of the extra processing power to have



■ Characters are based on historical figures and each has his own authentic swordfighting style

REVERSAL OF FORTUNE

One of the best things about a Kengo match is the way the balance can quickly shift between players. One player might be clearly winning against an injured opponent, but all it takes is a single strike to cause an upset. In this vein, characters who have been hurt badly and are quickly bleeding to death often opt for a sudden suicide charge that can easily turn a cry of victory into a whimper of defeat.

→ Alphas



■ There aren't any real effects in yet, but we expect them to be as authentic as the fighting (lots of splattering blood when you get sliced)

the collisions actually harm the characters." Add to this a destructible environment — though the exact degree of destructibility is not yet known — and you will have to pay attention both to your opponent and what elements of the environment he's likely to use against you.

Like most fighting games, the main draw to Kengo will no doubt be the Versus mode, but there is also a very notable single-player Story mode. As one of three characters, each with his own distinct fighting style, you must work your way through opponents and at the same time solve a "personal" issue. In RPG fashion, victories against a *dojo* will give you new items and techniques, each of which helps you get closer to your ultimate goal: becoming a master Kendo swordsman.

Players will even have to customize their characters to some extent. "One of your



You will have to pay attention both to your opponent and what elements of the environment he's likely to use against you

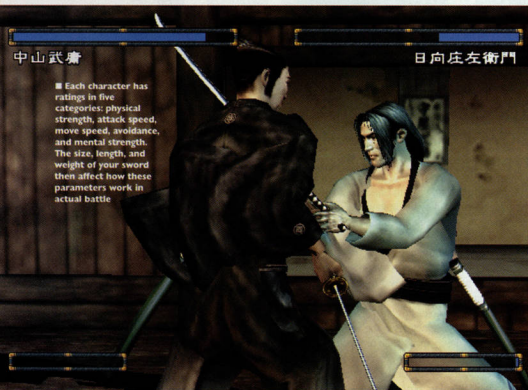
primary strategies will be learning to equip your warrior with certain sword attack techniques," explains Pitts. "If you are going up against the master of the 'School of Dragons,' you would know in advance that their attacks consist of the wild spinning of their weapon, and they often cut low like a dragon's sharp tail. Thus you would want to train your character to excel at low-level blocking and

reversals." Players can prepare for these situations with "Tanren" practice modes that play almost like mini-games. Each Tanren — whether it be meditation, cutting trees with your sword, or ghost fighting — will, if done successfully, increase your character's skills and aid you in your quests.

Crave and Lightweight are hoping to get Kengo out in the United States before the end of the year, but it's only been a few months since the game switched platforms from PSX to PlayStation 2. We're hoping it won't get rushed out the door — given enough time, Lightweight could make the game into another legendary experience. — Blake Fischer



■ Unlike Bushido Blade, Kengo actually has life bars — although that doesn't mean you can't get killed with one hit



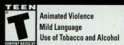
■ Each character has ratings in five categories: physical strength, attack speed, move speed, avoidance, and mental strength. The size, length, and weight of your sword then affect how these parameters work in actual battle



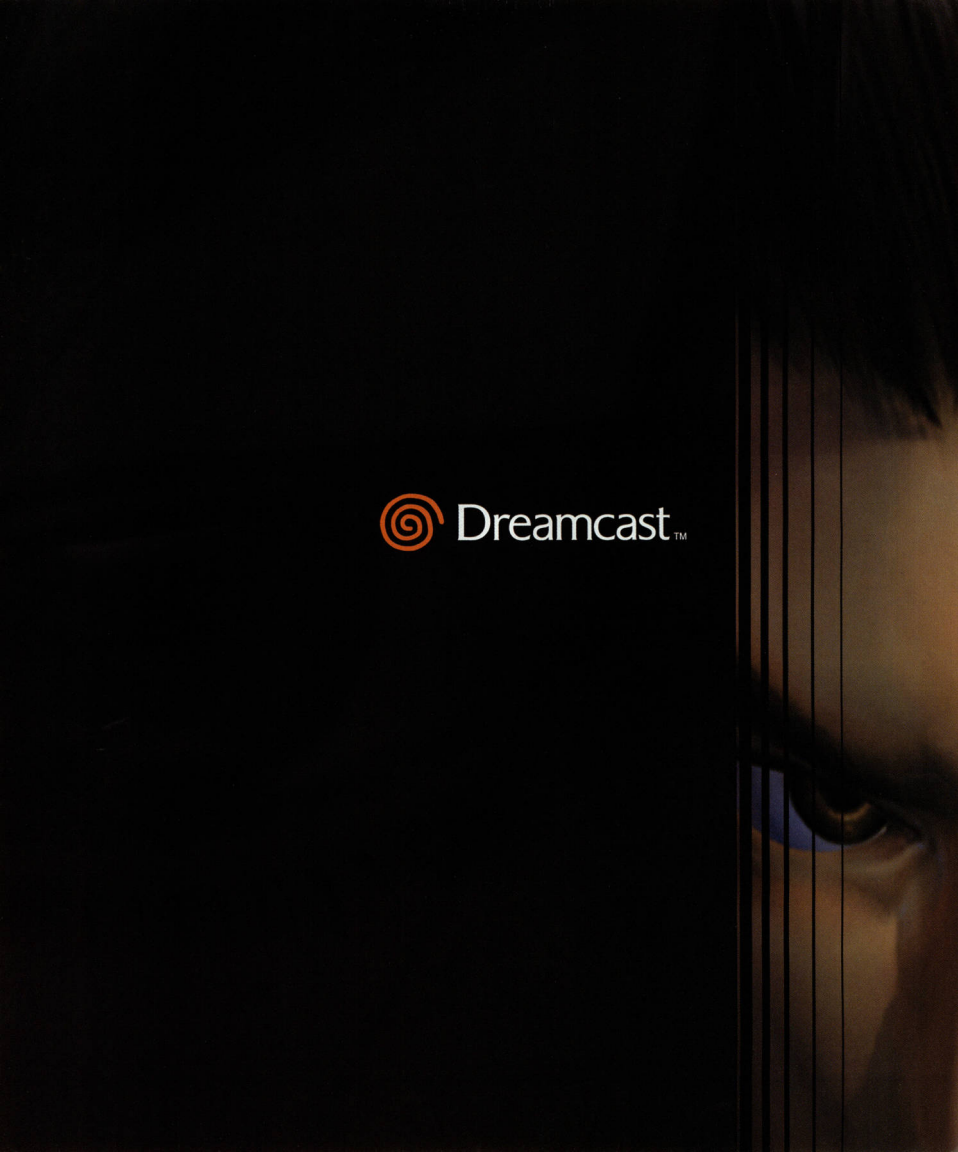
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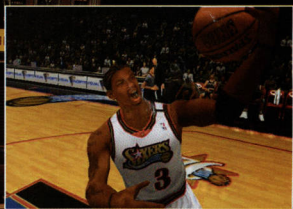
NBA 2K1



Time to reach out and posterize someone. Our new online gameplay lets you and up to three of your boys use one console to take on wannabes nationwide — from gloating Laker groupies in L.A. to nostalgic Knicks-worshippers in Queens. There's e-mail so you can, uh, "chat." Plus franchise mode, swat blocks, and ill crossovers and spin moves. All with graphics tighter than a point guard's shorts circa 1974. Now we'll see who's got internet game.



nba.com



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NFL 2K1

Online gameplay is here. Now you and up to three buds can get on one console and school opponents nationwide -- from pathetic Cowboys sympathizers in Tulsa to masochistic Bills fans in Schenectady. You can even exchange "pleasantries" in real time. Throw in a radically improved running game, franchise mode, and complete team-specific playbooks, and you've got yourself a full-contact chat room. Does technology rule or what?



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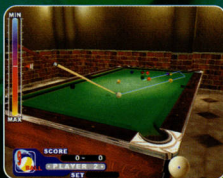
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Once again, Nintendo paves its way with its own ideas of what a next-generation console should do. But does the company still have the design savvy to survive the onslaught of Sony and Microsoft? Next Generation has to ask...

Will Gamecube Hold Up?

Don't equate Nintendo with the dinosaurs yet. The world's oldest surviving console manufacturer may yet again show us it is still on the cutting edge of innovation

➔ On Aug. 24 the game industry was changed once again when Nintendo revealed Gamecube to the world at their annual Spaceworld show. Nintendo's next game console appeared in a puff of smoke, when a few vinyl-bedecked models trotted out several Gamecube units from a six-foot-high magician's closet and proudly displayed them for the crowd. But the smoke, mirrors, and models are gone now, and we're forced to look at what was really revealed.

The Hardware

At no time in the history of the console market has the race for the next generation been more competitive, and the Spaceworld announcement was proof positive that we're seeing a tighter, more focused Nintendo. While Nintendo announced little on the software side, it did reveal a fair amount of its hardware plan, and the company even conceded, on some level, to match its competition technically by finally dumping storage-limiting cartridges and moving to a proprietary mini-DVD-based storage device. The maximum capacity for a disc is 1.5GB (190 times greater storage than the 8MB Super Mario 64), with each disc measuring only eight centimeters in diameter. Because of the smaller size and Nintendo's unwillingness to pay for the DVD movie format license rights, Gamecube will not play DVDs, but the disc system was designed by Matsushita, who may at some point incorporate Gamecube technology into its future DVD devices. Nintendo also revealed that a broadband gaming network lies in the company's future.





Gamecube at a glance

Nintendo used Spaceworld to reveal finer Gamecube details

Japan release date: July 2001
U.S. release date: October 2001
Price: TBA
Number of launch titles: 5

MPU: IBM PowerPC (Gekko)
Clock frequency: 405MHz
GPU capacity: 902Dmips (Dhrynes 2.1)
Internal data precision: 32-bit integer and 64-bit floating-point
External bus bandwidth: 1.6Gb/second (peak)
External bus bandwidth: 1.6Gb/second (peak) (32-bit address, 64-bit data bus)
202.5MHz
Internal cache: L1: Instruction 32Kb, data 32Kb (left-way); L2: 256Kb (two-way)

System I/O: Flipper
Clock frequency: 202.5MHz
Embedded frame buffer: Approx. 2Mb
Sustainable latency: 5ns (1T-SRAM)
Embedded texture cache: Approx. 1MB
Sustainable latency: 5ns (1T-SRAM)
Texture read bandwidth: 12.8Gb/sec (peak)
Main memory bandwidth: 3.2Gb/sec (peak)
System floating-point arithmetic capability: 13.0GFLOPS (peak) (MPU, geometry engine, HW lighting total)
Actual display capability: 0 million to 12 million polygons/second (display capability assuming actual game with complexity model, texture, etc.)

System main memory: 24Mb sustainable
Latency: 10ns or lower (1T-SRAM)
A-memory: 16Mb (100MHz DRAM)
Image-processing functions: fog, subpixel anti-aliasing, HW light x8, alpha blending, virtual texture design, multi-texture mapping/bump/environment mapping, mipMap, bilinear filtering, realtime texture decomposition (BTO), 24-bit color, etc.
Other: Realtime decompression of display list, HW motion compensation capability

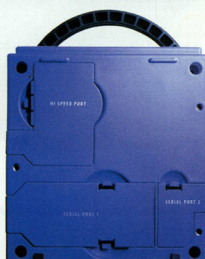
Sound processor: custom 16-bit DSP
Instruction memory: 8Kb RAM + 8Kb ROM
Instruction memory: 8Kb RAM + 8Kb ROM
Data memory: 8Kb RAM + 4Kb ROM
Clock frequency: 101.25 MHz
Maximum number of simultaneously produced sounds: ADPCM: 64ch
Sampling frequency: 48KHz

Disc drive: CAV (Constant Angular Velocity)
System average access time: data
Transfer speed: 16Mbps to 25Mbps 12rps
Media: 8cm Nintendo Gamecube disc, based on Matsushita's optical disc technology media, approx. 1.5Gb capacity

Input/output:
 Controller port x4
 Digidart slot x2
 Analog AV output x1
 Digital AV output x1
 High-speed parallel port x1

Main unit dimensions:
 150mm(W)x110mm(H)x161mm(D)

As we predicted, Nintendo showed no playable games, opting instead for a video clip of concept movies



According to Nintendo, the company has not shot for "highest possible performance" but instead has attempted to create a "developer-friendly, next-generation TV game machine that maintained above-standard capabilities." To accomplish this, they've developed a console that the company feels has "painstakingly removed the bottlenecks to an efficient system." With 24Mb of 1T-SRAM technology available to the "Flipper" graphics chip and a secondary cache memory implemented in the Gekko CPU, Nintendo believes it has struck a combination that gives developers the functionality necessary to realize a consistent, high level of performance without creating technological hurdles that decrease productivity.

Gamecube features four control ports and two slots for PlayStation-like memory cards. Nintendo also introduced the controller (see sidebar) and several add-on components, the most surprising of which was the Game Boy Advance. The successor to Game Boy Color will plug into the Gamecube control port and work like a controller; supplying players with their own personal color screens — think Dreamcast with a color VMU.

A wireless version of the stock controller, dubbed the "Wavebird," was shown, and Nintendo also revealed two future Internet accessories. A company called Conexant has designed a 56K modem and broadband adapter for the system, and while Nintendo made no direct mention of a hard drive add-on, it is planning a broadband network. According to Gekko Takeda, Nintendo's corporate director and general manager of integrated research and development, "Gamecube will combine Nintendo's

world-class design and beloved franchise characters with the expansion of the world of gaming by an online network."

Like competitors Sony and Microsoft, at this time Nintendo had little else to say about its broadband plans, and it is entirely possible that Gamecube's broadband network could (not unlike the 64DD for N64) be delayed and ultimately canceled due to market and technological limitations.

The Software

As we predicted, Nintendo showed no playable games, opting instead for a video clip of concept movies starring popular Nintendo characters. In the short montage, Nintendo paraded a series of clips, one right after another, each featuring a character more popular than the last. In one brief clip, we saw a very smooth Link crossing swords with an equally smooth Ganondorf. In another, the camera panned across a rogue squadron of X-Wings poised to attack the Death Star. Then several jet skis went flying by in what will ultimately become the *Wave Race* sequel, complete with some beautifully transparent water effects.



■ During the Spaceworld presentation Shigeru Miyamoto gave a hands-on demonstration of the Gamecube controller, discussing its merits and functionality



■ The Gamecube first appeared with models in tow, in a puff of smoke from a magician's closet. Apparently, the cabinet was also used to store extra costumes from *The Matrix*

Gamecube at a glance

Gamecube

Realtime demo

But the showstopper (at least for the excitable U.S. press) came when, unbelievably, a fully articulated Samus Aran appeared in 3D, buffed out in her *Metroid* armor, and came running toward the camera in a lavish 3D environment. Retro Studios is apparently working on the game, but little more is known.

After Samus, we saw a clip featuring Luigi, the other Mario brother, sliding down a banister away from some ghosts (again showing nice transparencies) in a haunted house. Following Luigi, the clips became a little anti-climactic: a couple quick shots of a rendered Joanna Dark and *Meowth's* Party — as near as we could tell, *Meowth* will be Nintendo's attempt to attach *Pokemon* to a *Parappa*-style music action game.

Without question, in a movie that lasted barely two minutes, Nintendo spectacularly leveraged the power of its franchises and delivered a whammy of a punch that ruffled with the force of 20 years of rich character history. The blow is still ringing in the ears of game industry execs weeks after the announcement.

"I think that the characters looked amazing," admits Xbox founding team member Seamus Blackley. "They really kick ass at that."

Of course, a raging debate ensued over the actual authenticity of the demos — were they all a pre-rendered sham? The demos certainly didn't represent gameplay, but did they actually represent the Gamecube's performance?

"What you saw was a combination of realtime and select few that weren't realtime," says Nintendo Director of Corporate Affairs Perrin Kaplan. "But they all represent the great capabilities of Nintendo's Gamecube and what developers can do with it."

Given the company's "waste not, want not" approach, it seemed unlikely Nintendo would have dedicated significant resources to creating detailed demonstrations of titles it hasn't committed to producing, and in fact, several of these games have been confirmed after the fact. This month, we've given the job of internal video clip analysis to our Gamecube columnist Matt Casamassina (see Gamecube Watch, page 16).

But why did Nintendo refuse to display active gameplay? It comes back to the N64 demo of *Mario 64*, the company



■ In this realtime demo, a very smooth, highly defined Link crosses swords with Gannondorf. The scene is well lit, and the characters are beautifully animated. It may convince most of us that we need Gamecubes, but still, we'll want more games than what is available on N64.



explained. After they showed pre-launch peeks at *Mario 64*, lesser-quality knock-offs hastily appeared on other systems. (Croc anyone?) Perhaps they've learned that it only takes 10 seconds of actual gameplay footage to reveal months of design work and tweaking, so this time Nintendo is holding its cards closely. The most depressing part of the announcement is that the company said it will reveal nothing more until E3 2001 — still a good six months away.

Innovation — Nintendo's Saving Strength

While many industry watchers are quick

to recognize Nintendo's hard-nosed approach to business, the company's greatest strength, which has not gone unnoticed by game players, is its ability to innovate with every new system. In fact, it can be said the same intense focus seen in Nintendo's shrewd business dealings belies the effort that goes into developing their games.

While no journalist has ever been behind closed doors at Nintendo's headquarters in Kyoto, word from the inside is (unlike the offices of some western developers) Nintendo's development areas aren't

The Gamecube Controller



■ The final colors haven't been set, but you can bet Gamecube will come in a variety



■ Get a good look at this cord, because if Gamecube's wireless controllers are up to par, this may be the last Nintendo system that ships with a wire to your fire-button

The Gamecube controller features an analog stick, a directional pad, five buttons on its face, (A, B, X, Y, Start) and a secondary C analog stick, which like the yellow C buttons on the N64 controller will primarily be used to control in-game cameras. Like Sony's Dual Shock controller, it comes with built-in rumble support, and like the Dreamcast controller, it features two analog triggers on its underside.

Unlike any other hardware developer we know, Nintendo designs its controllers as it simultaneously develops launch software for its new systems. Nintendo's unique designs come courtesy of teams who report to Shigeru Miyamoto, who oversees both the controller and game designs. This comprehensive approach to developing new kinds of gameplay experiences is one of Nintendo's strengths. Undoubtedly many industry watchers would rightly argue Miyamoto builds a controller for himself, and this kind of thinking limits what third parties can do with the controller. This argument comes back to the foundation of Nintendo's philosophy: Nintendo argues that it builds controllers that "Nintendo also has to live with." Nintendo believes it will prove the controller's merits in first-party games, setting examples for third parties to follow.

Other console makers — including Sony, Sega, and Microsoft — have built variations of past controller designs, slightly expanding on what's worked before and what works for a variety of games. Nintendo gives you what the company feels will give the user the best experience with its software. And looking back, ask yourself this: have you ever bought a Nintendo system for a third-party game or one of Nintendo's own games? And did you really need an arcade fighting stick for N64?

→ Cover Story Gamecube



■ This gray, modular broadband adapter snaps easily into one of the three expansion ports located on Gamecube's underside



■ While it's not likely to ship with the unit, this black, low-bandwidth 56Kbps modem uses the same port as the broadband adapter



■ Gamecube will feature a 4MB memory card, but a Digicard adapter (shown above) increases storage to 64MB



■ No more cords as Nintendo's "Wavebird" wireless controller enables Gamecube users freedom of transmission up to 10 meters

"[Nintendo is] focused on the fun, and they will find it and maintain it at all cost."

— Fred Markus, game design director, Angel Studios

littered with pizza boxes and Nerf guns. On the contrary, the rather antiseptic environment suggests that the developers direct every last bit of their energy straight into the games.

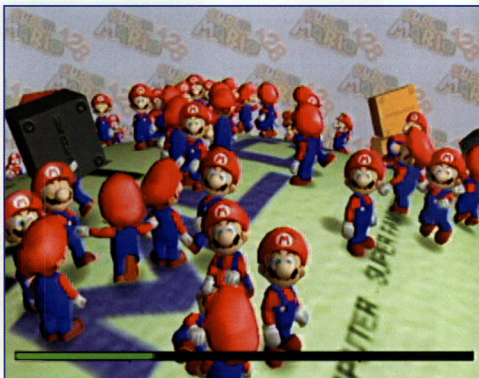
What the rest of the world also fails to realize is that Nintendo develops games very differently than most others. Projects are not designed on paper, but instead onscreen with joystick in hand. Angel Studios Game Design Director Fred Markus has worked directly with Nintendo's development organization in the past. According to Markus, Nintendo's approach to game design is like sifting for gold.

"New gameplay ideas are like sand," says Markus, "shaking them, that's tuning. You find the gold, an idea that worked. If it's fun, you keep it. And when you have enough gold, you make a jewel out of it. The jewel can then take the shape of a *Zelda*, a *Mario* or whatever. The core of the gameplay needs to be there, though. Nintendo has a lot of experience in detecting the gold. They know when they have enough of it and they know how to craft the jewel too. That's years and years of experience."

Of course, this organic kind of prototyping can make the development process a lengthy one — one that few companies can afford. "They prototype an idea, tune it, modify it," says Markus, "try something else if it doesn't work,



■ Move over Parappa, Nintendo's billion-dollar franchise (*do we need to say Pokemon!*) is getting its own music game



■ Instead of showing off a new playable Mario game, Miyamoto illustrated the graphic power of Gamecube with a demo that featured 128 Marios in a variety of situations



and tune, tune again. They are focused on the fun and will find it and maintain it at all cost."

Markus should know. He worked with Nintendo on an N64 project co-created by Nintendo's creative driving force, Shigeru Miyamoto, and Angel Studios. The project, *Buggie Boogie*, was inevitably killed when Nintendo opted to proceed with a prototype of *Diddy Kong Racing* instead. Was *Buggie Boogie* just not coming along? On the contrary, Angel Studios was left with a well-polished tech demo that helped the company win several development contracts from other publishers.

But does Gamecube have the technical power to stand up to the competition: PlayStation 2 and Xbox? According to Markus, too much has been made of the raw power argument. "What is important," he counters, "is what the game makers will do with that amount of power. What new and fun games will they create? Nintendo made the Gamecube easy to work on and that's what Microsoft wants to do too: Make it easy to prototype new ideas and grow cool games."

At the end of the day, can you compare Nintendo's philosophy to the "Think Different" campaign by Apple? Markus says yes. "Think about your game. Is it fun? Why is it fun?" he asks. "Miyamoto's point is that Nintendo is very good at making games, and they will continue to be. This will remain their main focus, and that's the console's main focus too."

Nintendo vs. the World

As a hardware provider; Nintendo continues to live in its own little bubble. This was never clearer than when Atsushi Asada, Nintendo vice president, made his opening remarks to the Spaceworld audience.

"Nintendo has continued to grow by traveling on their own path," Asada said, "which has naturally met with critical eyes

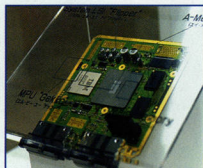
Gamecube

from the public. For the last 10 years or so, I don't think there has been a year in which the 'net hasn't been closing around Nintendo' or the 'crisis of Nintendo' has not been featured in the news. Yet even in these economic hard times, with our recession in Japan, this mysterious company has managed to steadily continue to increase sales and profits."

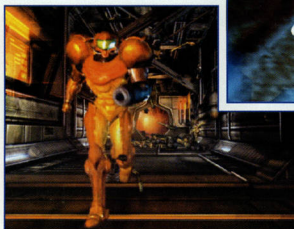
And Asada is right — Nintendo's bubble-world has been a profitable one. But one can't help but notice a certain ridiculous smugness that permeates the company. It even found its way into Asada's obviously pre-scripted speech. "I'm sorry," he said, "the place is so crowded today that many of you cannot take seats." For the record, though, we turned to see a number of seats available.

While there may have been extra chairs at Nintendo's press event, Gamecube will have to find a seat next year on shelves already occupied by PlayStation 2, Dreamcast, and Xbox. As the market gets more crowded, the quest becomes more intense for the coveted virgin landscape that is next-generation market share. But don't expect Nintendo to end looking for third-party support to help it gain market share.

"Nintendo will always take profitability over market share," a Nintendo employee once told *Next Generation*. The distinction between controlling market share and making money is an important one. It is in all likelihood possible for Nintendo to make a profit on Gamecube without controlling the majority of market share. When PlayStation was the dominant 32-bit machine, Nintendo still managed to make money with Nintendo 64. However, considering the huge



■ Nintendo bared it all at Spaceworld, at least on the hardware side. The software may have been hidden away, but the Gamecube motherboard was displayed in its naked glory



■ The Spaceworld press went wild when Metroid hero Samus Aran (top left) burst onto the big screen in stunning 3D. (There hasn't been a console Metroid game since Super NES.) Luigi (top right) also made a ghost-busting appearance in what's being called Luigi's Mansion



investments being made now by Microsoft and Sony, the risk for these companies is greater; and it may not be possible for Microsoft and Sony to make a profit if either company owns the bulk of the console market.

Unlike Sony and Microsoft, Nintendo can recoup much of its spending on developing Gamecube through the steady sales of first-party hits such as Mario and Zelda. Also, it's rumored that Gamecube has been developed with extremely cost-effective parts, so Nintendo could introduce the hardware at a price that would enable it not to lose money.

Unlike Nintendo, Sony and Microsoft are both counting on the royalty revenues generated by third-party software sales to make profits. They're also counting on the support of top third-party publishers and developers to create games that will sell their systems. Both are entering the market with fairly expensive machines, and despite the high prices of their machines, they will still lose money on the sales of each unit. Should PlayStation 2 or Xbox falter, their respective parent companies could lose millions, if not billions, of dollars.

But instead of fighting for first place with Microsoft and Sony, Nintendo could very well just stay in its bubble and accumulate a healthy secondary

place in the market. Gamecube will undoubtedly be a lower-priced machine with some very attractive games, featuring a cast of well-known characters.

Will Nintendo go it alone?

Imagine for a minute Al Pacino's ruthless drug dealer from the film *Scarface*, Tony



■ In what is undoubtedly a genius move to get us all to buy Game Boy Advances, the GBA (left) will link to the Gamecube system as a specialized controller and will utilize its color screen. In Japan, expect GBA to soon have a wireless network like Game Boy's (above)

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Nintendo's not-so-secret-weapon: Shigeru Miyamoto

The man, the myth, the *Legend of Zelda* creator has kept Nintendo in the race with games that continue to redefine the word "experience." What does the Zen master of gameplay have in store for us next? Read our exclusive Spaceworld interview.

NG: How different is your job now that you are a board member at Nintendo?
SM: The only change is that there are more meetings I have to attend, and there are more documents I have to execute. I think that would be all. Nothing very significant has changed before and after I became a board member. For example, yesterday I actually helped set up the Spaceworld show floor.

NG: So you've been focused mainly on Gamecube?
SM: So far, I have been able to concentrate on Gamecube. But now it's going to be connected with Game Boy Advance, and in the future, it is further to be connected to a mobile system. So in my position I have to overview everything, and I might not be able to concentrate on the software side. But at least right now, even though I am busier, I can take care

of the software division. The only other advantage [laughing] is if I'm late for work I don't have to report to a supervisor.

NG: Do you like to sleep in?
SM: [Still laughing] Yeah, I'm the kind who likes to work until midnight and sleep in the morning.

NG: With all these new responsibilities, and management, do you miss game design?
SM: Well, I don't think I've been so far away from game design. For example, *Legend of Zelda: Majora's Mask*. I was not actually working on it, but we were able

to train people that have full responsibility in each different segment of the creative process, and I can overview everything. So in that sense I am part of the general aspect of the creative work — but from time to time I am able to design something specific for myself.

NG: Speaking of which, we've seen Link, Luigi, *Metroid*, *Wave Race* — all very familiar to Nintendo fans. Are we going to see something new for Gamecube from your group?

SM: Unfortunately I can't tell you anything specific until May of next year. But what I can tell you right now is that we should not have the demographic version of Link or Luigi. That's not what we should most be aiming to do. When we were making *Mario 64*, though the characters were familiar, we had come up with a new gameplay system. Now we may be introducing some new characters, but we are coming up with a new, different game system first, and then for that game system, we'll come up with a new character that is best suited to that new game idea and game system.

NG: What are you most excited to bring to Gamecube users? Is there one title — or one specific theme?

SM: [Pauses] Well, I now have so many creative members working for us, many of them are working on the game series for the Gamecube. I would like to concentrate on making something brand-new myself. Once again, I cannot go into the details about the software right now. But what I want to deliver to the users of Gamecube is a kind of "touch." It's

a touch you can feel by your hand and it's a new feeling you can feel in your brain. I feel it in my brain, so it's a kind of image. I'm working on it right here right now. I don't have any specific thing I can show you or let you play. But what I'm trying to realize is something that gives you some very unexpected feeling that you have never experienced before. Like *Mario frid rice*. *Ed. note: During his Gamecube presentation, Miyamoto displayed Gamecube ability to model physics by flipping a plate of little Marios up in the air, like a pan of "Mario frid rice" as he mentions here. Given Miyamoto's use of the word "touch" we expect he's currently experimenting with physics models. Wow!*

NG: We understand that [Nintendo President] Hiroshi Yamauchi is not a big fan of the Gamecube project. Is this possibly because the home TV/console market is getting more competitive and harder to turn a profit?
SM: Please don't misunderstand, Mr. Yamauchi is not abandoning the home console business altogether. What he is saying is,



"We have designed a system wherein the development time needed shall become significantly shorter."



Montana, in the console business. Were Mr. Montana looking at the game industry from the first-party perspective, he might have quipped, "First you get the developers, then you get the publishers, then you get the consumers."

To an extent, this is the business model followed by Sega, Sony, and Xbox — but not Nintendo. Building and controlling a lion's share of third-party

support was the key to PlayStation's success. Where else could you play *Tekken*, *Tomb Raider*, and *Resident Evil*? Interestingly enough, both Microsoft and Sony are following the business model that was started by Nintendo, and in the 16-bit era, mastered by Sega, and in the 32-bit era, Sony. Yet this industry around, the quest to get the industry behind PS2 has led Sony to promise the world in the form of technical

benchmarks. (Employees at all of Sony's competitors at one time or another have told *Next Generation* editors they believe Sony's performance benchmarks are unrealistic or inflated.)

It's like Tony Montana says. The best technical specs are needed to secure developer interest. Developer interest is needed to secure third-party publisher interest. And third-party publisher interest is needed to secure a

successful launch, which leads to market share. But during this mad rush for support, prices are driven up for the consumer, and the cost of entry for third-party publishers getting into the next-generation market also rises. The Capcoms and Activisions of the world are required to buy expensive development kits and sell their games to fewer installed users, while the newer, more sophisticated hardware



don't believe that the console business can play the core role in home entertainment in the future. However, he has not rejected the idea of making the new hardware; Gamecube is still going on after all. He's not discarding the home console business altogether. He understands American branding, being in the console business. Also that it can be expandable... it can be part of home entertainment. It can be connected to wireless technology and portable technology. There are very significant merits that can be realized... like a hard disk can be attached and so on. What Mr. Yamauchi is saying is, don't rely on the past legacies, but rather make use of something that is only available for the home technologies - that's the way of Nintendo.

MG: You mentioned a hard drive. Are there plans for a Gamecube external hard drive?

SM: What I can tell you is that if next May at the E3 show we are

■ Unquestionably the most popular guy at Spaceworld, the highly animated Shigeru Miyamoto charmed pre-show guests and journalists from all over the world

requires more resource and R&D costs — so all in all, it's risky business.

But Nintendo is saying no to Tony Montana by developing a machine that it can be successful with regardless of third-party support. The company has developed a lower-priced machine that's easy to develop for and delivers consistent performance. Are third parties interested? You bet. Having finally abandoned the cartridge format,

Nintendo has attracted the interest of several third-party publishers — Capcom, THQ, and Electronic Arts among them — who, no longer concerned with heavy inventory risks, have already intimated to **Next Generation** that they intend to work on Gamecube.

No Console is an Island

While it's likely Gamecube will see a reasonable amount of third-party

interest, Nintendo isn't known for embracing the third-party community. The world's most secretive console developer kits out to third parties yet. According to Nintendo, they will go out in September or early October.

With less than a year for third-party developers to work on Gamecube, can we expect any third-party games at launch? Not likely. As Nintendo Director

of Public Relations Hiroshi Imanishi told us during Spaceworld, it is very likely the company will have only five titles at launch from first- and second-party developers. In our meeting with Miyamoto, we asked him why the kits aren't out to third parties yet.

"We have set up the system and business model," Miyamoto responds, "which other software makers can rely upon, and once again, we are declaring

Gamecube

→ Cover Story

Gamecube



going to show some software which requires that hardware, then I could say "It's a hard drive will be very important for Nintendo." By that I mean we are not hardware-oriented. We do not think because there is hardware like a hard drive, we have to make software for that. We understand that technology, and there may be some opportunities. And for the better games for the Gamecube, if we come up with an idea that requires a hard drive, then it is going to become important from a software creator's point of view.

But until we can actually show some specific software that would require the hard drive, I probably should refrain from making any specific comment about that.

NG: That's interesting because the hard drive issue, as it stands alone, is almost reflective of the different philosophy Nintendo has taken. Sony and Microsoft have introduced a hard drive with the intention of letting third parties find more creative uses for it. Nintendo, on the other hand, builds only what is necessary for

Nintendo, as opposed to providing something that other developers will find useful.

SM: Well actually, Nintendo isn't thinking in terms of Nintendo alone, even if it looks so. What we are doing is — this is very important — Nintendo is declaring to the world and to third-party developers that Nintendo is going to do this. Nintendo is going to show what this new technology can do and can't do. Other companies are saying "Look we have the hardware, but we are not going to take any responsibility for whatever the outcome shall be." Nintendo is different. We are going to become responsible for this hardware quality, because we are going to develop software for this hardware. That means that we have already designed a system that is going to make you money, because we are going to make money just the same.

It's very important. I mean, think about so called multimedia, [Ed. note: multimedia perhaps being synonymous in this case with 'computer entertainment'] How can a hardware designer say multimedia is the future? They never showed a business model at all, and they never guaranteed the profits. And now in the Internet world, so-called "network" businesses, the same is true. Everybody is saying, "We have this infrastructure. There is a gold mine for the software creator." But they have never guaranteed, for example, how the money can be generated, how the fees are collected, and so forth. And then only the companies that are building the infrastructure are the winners and all the others are losers.

NG: Some people would say Nintendo 64's best first-party

software was available at launch.

With the exception of Zelda, the games never really got any better than Mario and Wave Race. Will we see more evolution of software from first-party with Gamecube?

SM: We started the development of Gamecube by reflecting upon N64 development, and what you said is one of the reflections we have made about N64. So we have designed a system wherein the development time needed shall become significantly shorter. So in other words, with much shorter intervals, new software can constantly go to the market. Nintendo is also going to show that Gamecube has many more opportunities and capabilities. For example, linking the Gamecube technology with mobile systems... Nintendo will become the first to use this technology and Nintendo will become the first to advocate the game software, which is not just taking advantage of graphics and sound, but more importantly putting more effort into the more unique and innovative game design.

NG: The N64's cartridge format was criticized for its inability to enable developers to use richer textures. Yet even with Gamecube's DVD storage, most of what we've seen in the demos was very singular-colored and looked flat-shaded. We understand that the characters like Mario were designed with very basic coloring, but still, the demo's left us wondering about the texturing capabilities.

SM: The level of complexity is up to the game designers. If we are just talking about the texturing capability of the Gamecube, I can say it's the world's best. And if the game designers want to use Gamecube's potential for polygon making, that's good, or if they want to use it for texture

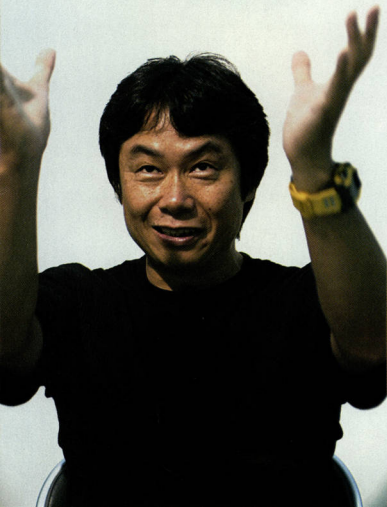
mapping, that's good too — it depends on the game designer. As far as videotaped demos are concerned, the Legend of Zelda featured multi-texture mapping and also bump mapping.

NG: You've been at Nintendo 20 years. How has life at the company changed for you?

SM: When I graduated from the university, everybody thought that I couldn't work for any company — that I'd be the first to leave Nintendo. But somehow I found myself working here, and somehow [laughing] I'm in a position where I cannot volunteer to quit. Even at the time I joined Nintendo they provided me with the opportunity to work in various ways. Now I think I can say that I've had the opportunity to think much more freely compared with when I first joined. Nintendo was not earning so much money when I first joined them, but even in those days Mr. Yamauchi told us we still had to do what others weren't doing. That's the philosophy that he is constantly repeating. We never imitate what others are doing. So in that sense, as creators, we are given much more freedom to realize our dreams.

NG: Donkey Kong was released in 1981, so next year marks the 20th anniversary of Mario. Shouldn't we expect to see Mario on his 20th birthday?

SM: I completely forgot about that. Nintendo doesn't make so much of the anniversary thing. It didn't even celebrate its 100-year anniversary. The Gamecube is a system that makes the programming and game creation a lot easier, a lot quicker. In terms of what we are working on right now, it may be possible to come up with a 20th anniversary version of Mario.



by becoming the first to use this technology that we are going to keep this business profitable for third parties to gain from."

While it's likely the Gamecube will suffer from a lack of launch titles, the drought shouldn't be as bad for Gamecube as it was for Nintendo 64. Nintendo has adeptly added several second parties, including Retro Studios, an Austin, Texas-based developer

founded in December 1998 specifically to develop Gamecube games, and from what's to be believed, several sports titles, which, as we've seen, no system can successfully last without.

No Puzzle Cube

While Nintendo spokesmen will say the company has every intent on recapturing market share with Gamecube, that just may not happen. It

certainly isn't taking the business risks Microsoft and Sony are. But Nintendo may ultimately prove once more that profitability isn't completely linked to controlling the third-party software business, nor does Nintendo need the majority of the market to turn a profit.

Profitability for Nintendo has always come back to having the best games. By developing an affordable machine (we expect Gamecube to be introduced at

\$149) and offering a smattering of several high-quality highly anticipated titles, Nintendo will once again best serve its most loyal market: families, teens, and other children-at-heart looking for Mario, Zelda, Star Wars, and Metroid.

Will Nintendo ever see majority market share in the console space again? Perhaps not. Will the company ever lose money on its console systems? Even more unlikely. — Tom Russo

FINAL FANTASY IX



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READY

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- Blast enemies with four different weapons simultaneously with Max, the six-legged, jet-pack carrying, robotic dog.

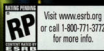
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■ THE WAIT IS OVER

PLAYSTATION 2 ARRIVES

Sony has officially dared lightning to strike twice. Can the company redefine the gaming experience — again?



In 1995, the old guard was sure Sony's PlayStation wouldn't survive against gaming giants Sega and Nintendo. Smash cut to

October 2000 — the PlayStation has moved some 73 million units worldwide, and gamers across the U.S. are frothing at the mouth in anticipation of PlayStation 2.

With radical hardware architecture, unprecedented early software support, and DVD playback, is PS2 an all-in-wonder machine? Maybe, maybe not. Over the next fifteen pages we give you our expert hardware analysis, reveal more than 180 games, and show you the important peripherals. Why? Because there's a new machine in town. The needle on the hype-o-meter is buried, and you need to be able to decide for yourself whether Sony has managed to create another amazing console that will change the way we play, or whether they've simply unleashed upon us the most over-designed DVD player in history.



■ Tekken Tag Tournament's Jin Kazama is one of the more recognizable 32-bit heroes to receive a 128-bit facelift for the PS2 launch

→ Rating the system

PS2 Launch

And now the \$299 question...

HARDWARE POWER

This holiday season, PlayStation 2 is the undisputed king of hardware power. It has its quirks — the architecture is unlike any other system's, and the tiny AMB of VRAM is and will continue to be a bottleneck until the streaming of textures is nixed down — but rated purely by its specs, this is a frighteningly powerful machine. (Whether developers stick around long enough to master it is a different story.)

Also, it's nice that Sony didn't mess around with the basic design of the Dual Shock controller. The original was a masterpiece of functionality, and although the utility of analog buttons has yet to be seen, it does nothing to detract from such a winning configuration.

Lastly, sticking to only two controller ports is a bit disappointing, but the inclusion of a number of other standard ports — notably USB and Firewire — opens up a whole new range of possibilities for unique peripherals and interface devices.

ENextGen ★★★★★

CURRENT SOFTWARE

This is PlayStation 2's Achilles' heel — in fact, it's more like an Achilles' left leg. The radically different architecture, lack of development kits early on, and Sony's reportedly erratic developer tech support have all combined to Sony's distinct disadvantage. This wave of first-generation titles sport some nice graphics, but unless you really look hard, it's tough to make out any immediate visual superiority over current, second-generation Dreamcast games — and in some cases, they don't even look as good.

Gameplay is stuck in familiar ruts as well. Although the lineup through the winter includes a handful of quality titles, very few offer anything other than more of the same. It's actually ironic that PlayStation 2 can run original PlayStation games, because it makes you realize very quickly that the major difference between the majority of PS2 and PSX software is that things look better on PS2. They certainly don't play much better.

ENextGen ★★☆☆☆

FUTURE SOFTWARE PROGNOSIS

Here's where things get better. The anti-aliasing problem that plagued the initial Japanese lineup has been cracked, so PlayStation 2 software is going to look better and better. Also, many developers — in fact, entire publishers — are betting their futures on PlayStation 2's success, so a lot of resources are being thrown into making all the next-generation titles into standouts.

This doesn't mean there aren't a few caveats here as well. The optional hard drive and Sony's broadband strategy could fracture the PlayStation 2 market into the haves and have-nots — putting publishers in a difficult situation. Despite this, it's guaranteed that, as developers continue to familiarize themselves with exactly what the hardware is capable of, many exciting games will emerge. How long that will take is uncertain, but it's likely that by mid-2001, we should start seeing the real proof of PlayStation 2's power, networking or no.

ENextGen ★★★★★☆

MARKETING MUSCLE

What marketing? As we write this in early September, we've seen no TV commercials, no print ads, no billboards — nothing. Sony's PR reps say they're concentrating mostly on Web-based promotion, so they might not even have a PS2-specific marketing campaign.

Of course, with 27 million original PlayStation2s installed in the U.S., the name Sony is well-known to gamers. The one million PS2s estimated to be in stores by the holidays will surely sell out, so Sony might not even need an ad campaign. If Sony didn't have such a strong brand, it would be in a great deal of trouble right now. As it is, they do have a strong brand. The PS2 will likely sell just fine, and Sony can save its money to combat Xbox and Gamecube when they arrive.

ENextGen ★★★★★☆

BOTTOM LINE

It's the current game library that mars Sony's newest powerhouse. We've said it before and we'll say it again: a system is only as good as the games it plays, and that's where the PS2 is lacking. Still, there are a few shining stars at launch (SSX and Madden) and developers around the world are currently striving to create true next-generation experiences. Looking at many of 2001's upcoming titles, it is our belief that the PS2 will quickly grow into another must-have system. For now, play SSX or Madden, or rent a DVD flick — it'll just have to do.

ENextGen ★★★★★☆

UNDER THE HOOD:

CPU: 295MHz Emotion Engine (128-bit; 6.2GFLOPS)
Graphics: 40MHz Graphics Synthesizer (25 million texture-mapped polygons per second; Gouraud shading; mip-mapping)
Sound: SPU2 (48 channel; Dolby; AC3; DTS)
DVD-ROM: (4X, 6.2GB; 24X CD-ROM)
Video RAM: 4MB System RAM: 32MB Audio RAM: 2MB
Controller Ports: 2 Expansion Ports: 2x USB, 1x IEEE 1394 (Firewire), 1x Type III PCMCIA, 1x A/V multi out, 1x optical digital out



TO JAPAN AND BACK

We originally rated the various merits of the PlayStation 2 after its Japanese launch. But much has changed since then (including the system itself), so we thought it was worth a second look. For those who didn't see our *Play* issue, here's how we graded Japan's PS2.

Demonstrable Hardware Power: ★★ ★★

An unruly beast is still a beast. This rating is higher now, mostly because of a little "demonstration" called the MGS 2 trailer.

Current Software Library: ★★

There wasn't much there, and it was sloppy. In fact, software sales in Japan are way down, and exceptional software is just now starting to appear.

Future Software Prognosis: ★★ ★★

This hasn't changed. Everyone and their dog are developing for this system, so sheer probability alone dictates there'll be some great software.

Overall Future Prognosis: ★★ ★★

We're less optimistic now because development problems persist, we know more about both Gamecube and Xbox, and the unusually silent Sony seems, quite frankly, to have stuck its head in the sand.

Final Score: ★★ ★★

When all is said and done, this was the most anticipated console ever. It will probably succeed in spite of Sony, if not because of them. However, it may not remain the king of the mountain as long as PSX has.

WORST-CASE SCENARIO

Could PS2 really fail? Considering the momentum PS2 has built — we've revealed more than 200 games in development in this story — chances are that PlayStation 2 won't fail. But will it be the success that PlayStation was? Here's the worst-case scenario: Sony, unable to match the demand for PS2 due to manufacturing shortages, only reaches an installed base of 25 million U.S. PS2 owners by fall of next year. Consumers who can't get a PS2 this Christmas buy a Dreamcast instead, or decide to wait. Suppose those lucky 2.5 million PS2 owners decide to buy more DVD movies than PS2 software, and third parties become wary of slow sales (this is actually happening in Japan right now). Developers' focus could shift to Xbox and Gamecube, leaving Sony's tiny first-party development groups to take up the slack. If Xbox and Gamecube yield great-playing, more visually appealing launch titles in 2001, consumers who were waiting before buying may choose the comparatively priced Xbox or the (expectedly) cheaper Gamecube. The end result? A new market leader. It's happened before.

→ Getting Connected

→ Fact: There are more companies providing more ways to hook up your PlayStation 2 than any other game system ever released (even granting the odd lack of a VGA adapter). What's the best way for you to connect? It all depends on the equipment you've got at home...

RF Adapter

The lowest of the low end, the only reason you'd need one of these is if you've got a really old TV set.

1. Stereo RFU adapter by Performance

Composite (RCA) Cables

These are the cables that will (only) come with your PS2. There are leads for video and right and left stereo channels. These can connect directly into your TV, or to your A/V stereo receiver.

2. Composite cable by Monster Cable

3. Close-up of Monster Cable

S-Video Cables

S-Video splits the signal into black and white and color information for a cleaner signal, and provides a maximum of 400 lines of vertical resolution — appreciably sharper than the 320 lines for standard composite. You will, of course, need an S-Video-compatible TV and A/V receiver.

4. S-Video cables by Nyko

Component Cables

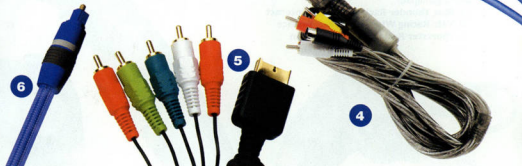
The best picture solution available, component video is an option on most high-end TVs these days. You have not seen the true glory of a DVD picture until you've seen it delivered this way. Note, however, that some component cables are for video only — you'll need some other means of connecting the sound up to your stereo (like Optical Digital Cables).

5. Component cables by Pelican

Optical Digital Cable

This is a necessary for high-end sound systems — standard analog stereo cables are incapable of carrying Dolby Digital 5.1 or DTS signals. If you own an A/V receiver that's DD5.1- or DTS-compatible, you'll want one of these, no matter what you use for a video cable.

6. Optical digital cable by Pelican



Lara Croft,
eat your heart out...

-The Game Guy

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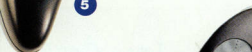
PS2 Launch → Peripherals

Third-party software developers may be excited about the PS2, but third-party peripheral manufacturers aren't exactly feeling left out. PS2 supports USB devices (like a mouse and keyboard for you FPS fans) and most existing PSX devices, so it seems clear that gamers wanting a little more from their hardware are going to get it.

STEERING WHEEL CONTROLLERS

Given the number of cutting-edge racing games being developed for PlayStation 2, do you really want to be caught playing them with a gamepad?

1. Blue Thunder Racing Wheel by Interact
2. V3ix Racing Wheel 2 by Performance
3. Sportster Racing Wheel by Pelican



CONTROLLERS

While Sony's own Dual Shock 2 is nearly perfect, there will always be those who attempt to improve upon it. Be wary though — not all of these substitutes feature analog buttons, and some niche products (namely, the fishing pole and light gun) currently lack the software to support them.

4. Viper 2 gamepad by Nyko
 5. Dual Impact 2 gamepad by Performance
 6. StormChaser gamepad by Interact
 7. Freedom Shock 2 wireless gamepad by Pelican
 8. ReelPro Fishing Controller by Interact
 9. ThunderStrike LightBlaster gun controller by Interact
 10. ShadowBlade arcade stick by Interact
- (not shown) Retro Shock 2 gamepad by Pelican





11

5.1 SURROUND SOUND SPEAKERS

More and more games are utilizing surround sound, and with the PS2's DVD capabilities, you really have no excuse not to shell out for a set of these.

- 11. 5.1 Surround speakers from Cambridge SoundWorks
- 12. Interact SoundStage: Home Speaker System by Interact
- 13. AudioStorm PST speakers from Gallant
- 14. S4 8200 Surround speakers from Midland



18

WIRELESS DVD REMOTE

It's a mystery as to why Sony chose not to offer a wireless DVD remote themselves, but nearly every third-party manufacturer is jumping at the chance to step up and fill in the gap. Most models even feature a pass-through so you can leave the remote plugged in without sacrificing a precious controller port.

- 18. Master DVD/TV remote by Interact
- 16. DVD remote by Nyko
- 17. DVD remote by Saltek
- 18. DVD remote by Pelican (not shown)
- Basic DVD remote by Interact



12



16



15



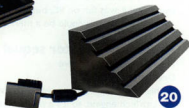
13



14



17



20



19

MULTITAP

If you feel the urge to pound on more than one friend or loved one at a time, you're going to need one of these, at least until USB pads enter the market.

- 19. Multiplayer adapter by Performance
- 20. MultiTap by Pelican

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Tomb Raider. F.A.K.K.2... will
knock your socks off.

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ON BROADBAND...

Optimistically, I don't expect broadband to be a significant force for three to five years. The infrastructure is moving slower than expected and, frankly, the content has got a long way to go.

— Don Mattrick, President, EA Worldwide Studios

1/4

Publisher: TBA

Release: TBA

Developer: From Software

■ An action RPG in which your party of four fights up to 100 foes at once. Not announced for U.S. release.

Our take: Early screens have shown very little, but the *Gunfight*-esque concept could be cool.

7

Publisher: Namco

Release: TBA

Developer: Namco

■ Not much is known about this title, save that it's a party-oriented, fantasy combat game.

Our take: If it's even remotely like *Soul Caliber*, we're in.

Age Of Empires 2

Publisher: Konami

Release: Q4 2000

Developer: Konami

■ A very popular PC RTS. Think *Civilization* meets *Warcraft*. **Our take:** It was fun on PC, but without online and a solid control scheme this could be a mere shadow of the original.

Aliens vs. Predator sequel

Publisher: Fox Interactive

Release: Q4 2001

Developer: Monolith

■ This as-yet-unannounced sequel to the popular PC FPS uses the *Unreal* engine, so it's a pretty sure bet for PS2 release. **Our take:** No details on gameplay yet, but the previous installments have been pretty great — and that's good.

Allens: Colonial Marines

Publisher: Fox Interactive

Release: Q4 2001

Developer: Check-Six

LAUNCH GAME

Armored Core 2

Publisher: Agetec

Developer: From Software

Release: Launch



■ A third-person mech combat title featuring incredibly customizable mechs.

Our take: We voted this one of the 10 best games at this year's E3. How did our prediction hold up? Check out the review on page 113.

■ Squad-based combat set in the *Aliens* universe. Think *Rainbow 6* with facehuggers.

Our take: *Rainbow 6* with facehuggers? Sounds good to us.

All-Star Baseball 2002

Publisher: Acclaim

Release: Q2 2001

Developer: Acclaim/High Voltage Software

■ A PS2 update to Acclaim's long-running baseball franchise.

Our take: This has been a good series, but with *High Heat* and *Triple Play* also on deck, somebody's gonna strike out.

All-Star Pro Wrestling

Publisher: Square

Release: TBA

Developer: Square

■ A Japanese pro wrestling title.

Our take: Much like *Wipe-Out*, this is a failed experiment from Square. If they bring this to the U.S. they'll have to spend some time fixing up the lackluster Japanese version.

Armada 2

Publisher: Metro3D

Release: Late 2000

Developer: Metro3D

■ This sequel to the "Gunfight in space" original promises online play between PS2 and Dreamcast owners.

Our take: Online play should help this series realize its full potential. But when the hell is PS2 going to get online?

Army Men: Air Attack 2

Publisher: 3DO

Release: Q4 2000

Developer: 3DO

■ Fly a toy attack chopper through a variety of real-world and Army Men environments.

Our take: While *Army Men* has been a disappointing franchise, *Air Attack* came closest to realizing the potential of the concept. Maybe PS2 will offer the push it needs.

Army Men: Sarge's Heroes 2

Publisher: 3DO

Release: Q4 2000

Developer: 3DO

■ Think *Syphon Filter*, but green.

Our take: The first one suffered from bad camera and stilted control. Maybe the second will be better.

Army Men: Tour of Duty (tentative title)

Publisher: 3DO

Release: Q2 2001

Developer: 3DO

■ This game has been described to us as "old-school, *Ikaru* Warrior-style action in the *Army Men* universe."

Our take: *Ikaru Warriors*? Rock on!

Barbarian

Publisher: Titus

Release: Q4 2001

Developer: Saffire

■ Not yet announced. We only know this is a fighting game.

Our take: Ummm, well, the name sure sounds fun.

Big Wave Surfing

Publisher: Acclaim

Release: Q2 2001

Developer: Osiris

■ Acclaim enters the soon-to-be overcrowded surfing game market. So far, nothing has been seen.

Our take: Surfing is good, but we'll ride before we buy.

Black & White

Publisher: Electronic Arts

Release: TBA

Developer: Lionhead

■ This realistic, virtual-pet god sim (RTVPGS?) looks fantastic and has had fans drooling in anticipation for almost three years. No PS2 version had been announced at press time, but we're confident that will change soon. **Our take:** We've been drooling too (over of the game).

The Bouncer

Publisher: Square

Release: Q1 2001

Developer: Square

■ The last word in 3D beat-'em-ups. Cinematic action and absolutely stunning graphics make this a must-see.

Our take: Didn't you get our cover feature last month? We can't wait to get our hands on a finished copy.

Burn Out

Publisher: Titus

Release: Q4 2000

Developer: Yukes

■ Not yet announced, this is the latest in Titus' treadworn Roadsters sports car racing series.

Our take: This series has never risen above mediocre, though the graphics will likely improve. Slightly.

CART Fury

Publisher: Midway

Release: Q1 2001

Developer: Midway

■ A conversion of Midway's arcade racer, in which licensed CART vehicles race through over-the-top fantasy tracks.

Our take: It sounds like yet another slight variation on *Hydro Thunder*, but we're still interested. *HT* is the game to imitate.

Carrier

Publisher: Jaleco

Release: Winter 2000

Developer: Jaleco

■ Version 1.5 of the Dreamcast survival horror title. Think *Resident Evil* aboard a ship.

Our take: The Dreamcast version was good but short. We expect the PS2 version to be enhanced, but still short.

Cash On Delivery

Publisher: Hasbro

Release: Q4 2001

Developer: Argonaut

■ A Crazy Taxi variant in which your cargo can be damaged.

Our take: Despite the rumors, CT is unlikely to appear on PS2. This could substitute if anyone still cares in a year.

CMX 2002 Featuring Ricky Carmichael

Publisher: THQ

Release: Q2 2001

Developer: Pacific Coast Power & Light

■ A physics-heavy motocross simulation.

Our take: The feel of the bike is already solid. If the visuals come together, this could be the best motocross game ever.

Circus Maximus

Publisher: Hasbro

Release: Q4 2001

Developer: Kodiak Interactive

■ A chariot racing title based on *Avolon Hill*'s board game.

Our take: Something different, and on that merit alone, this is definitely worth watching.

Clive Barker's Undying

Publisher: Electronic Arts

Release: TBA

Developer: Dreamworks Interactive

■ A freaky-looking title that combines first-person action with a survival horror atmosphere in 1920s Ireland.

Our take: Looks creepy. We like it.

Cool Pool: Billiards Master

Publisher: Take 2 Interactive

Release: November 2000

Developer: ASK

■ It's a billiards sim. What do you expect?

Our take: It's a billiards sim. What do you expect?

**Move over Lara Croft,
there's a new lady in town!**

-GamePro

F.A.K.K.2 blends all the best aspects of... 'Legend of Zelda', 'Jedi Knight' and 'Tomb Raider', and avoids almost all the missteps of those games. I found myself asking, "Lara who?"
-Gamecenter.com

In comparison to Tomb Raider...the lead Fakk2 character is far more versatile, ...good looking and interactive. It's got everything that Tomb Raider never had!
-Speedy 3D

This game is seriously bad news for other 3D action/adventures. I've been gentle on Tomb Raider because really, despite the lack of innovation in that series, it was still the best of its breed. Not any more.
-Gamesmania

...she'd tear Ms. Lara Croft a new one
-Gamers Depot



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ON DEVELOPMENT DIFFICULTIES...

Every format has a downside. You just choose to work around each system's weaknesses and if you are diligent you overcome them. That's what development is all about. That and Mountain Dew...

— Travis Williams, Senior Producer, *Run Like Hell*

Dance Summit 2001 Bust A Groove

Publisher: Enix **Release:** TBA
Developer: Enix
 ■ Enix's rhythm action series get prettier on the PS2.
Our take: This niche should certainly be represented on PS2, but don't look for this title to expand the genre.

Dark Cloud

Publisher: Sony **Release:** TBA
Developer: Sony
 ■ A Zelda 64-style action RPG with world-building added.
Our take: It's really pretty, and sounds like unique gameplay.

Disney's Dinosaur

Publisher: Ubi Soft **Release:** Q4 2000
Developer: Disney Interactive
 ■ Believe it or not, the developers have described this as "Dialo with dinosaurs."
Our take: If you say so. We'll take your word for it.

Disney's Donald Duck: Goin' Quackers

Publisher: Ubi Soft **Release:** Q4 2000
Developer: Ubi Soft

■ Donald Duck finally gets his own 3D platformer.
Our take: Graphics look nice; we'll see about the gameplay.

Disney's Jungle Book

Publisher: Ubi Soft **Release:** Q4 2000
Developer: Disney Interactive
 ■ Characters from the Jungle Book in a dance and rhythm game that's even compatible with the Dance Dance Revolution dancing mat controller.
Our take: Huh?

Drakan PS2

Publisher: SCEA **Release:** Q1 2001
Developer: Surreal Software
 ■ Tomb Raider meets Pioner Dragon. Dragon dogfighting in a beautiful 3D world plus land-based hack 'n' slay action.
Our take: Looks great, and the PC installment played great too. No word yet on a nude code...

Driving Emotion Type-S

Publisher: Square **Release:** Q1 2001
Developer: Escape
 ■ Square's realistic GT racing simulation has been out in

Japan for a while. Like *Gron Turismo*, it features dozens of real cars and real tracks.

Our take: It looks great but controls like a brick. Unless this is fixed for the U.S. release, the "S" in the title will stand for "sucks."

Dropship

Publisher: Sony **Release:** TBA
Developer: Sony Camdem
 ■ A 3D sci-fi action game that combines air-to-air and air-to-ground combat with realtime strategy.
Our take: Early screens looked like a Jaguar game, but new images gave us hope. Still no word on gameplay.

Duke Nukem

Publisher: Rockstar **Release:** TBA 2001
Developer: N-Space
 ■ No PlayStation 2, Duke title has been officially announced yet, but Rockstar promises they have one in development.
Our take: A polished, high-end Duke game is just what we need to wipe his PlayStation entries from our memory.

Ephemeral Fantasia

Publisher: Konami **Release:** Q1 2001
Developer: Konami
 ■ Formerly titled *Reiseleid*, this RPG pairs a musical main character with a talking gular.
Our take: It sounds unique, but musical games are a risk. Then again, Konami does them better than anyone.

ESPN National Hockey Night

Publisher: Konami/ESPN The Games **Release:** Q4 2000
Developer: Konami
 ■ By the time you read this, Konami should have announced this, the latest addition to the ESPN games lineup.

Our take: Some of the ESPN games look good, although we can't guess about this one until we see and play it. Which should be soon, if this ship date is solid.

ESPN NBA 2Night

Publisher: Konami/ESPN The Games **Release:** Nov. 2000
Developer: Konami
 ■ Basketball with a realistic focus, complete with play-by-play from Brett Musberger.
Our take: Konami flubbed its original basketball franchise, in the Zone. It's uncertain whether this will be any better.

ESPN NFL Primetime

Publisher: Konami/ESPN The Games **Release:** Nov. 2000
Developer: Konami
 ■ Yup, it's football with commentary by ESPN's Chris Berman.
Our take: We haven't seen this one in action, but we'd hate to be the ones going up against *Madden 2001* with a first-generation product.

Etalon Blade

Publisher: Mattel Interactive **Release:** Q2 2001
Developer: Stormfront Studios
 ■ A third-person, party-based action RPG — in other words, it's a lot like *Gauntlet Legends*.
Our take: Early version look promising, and developer Stormfront is also handling *Pool of Radiance*, which looks great. Definitely worth watching.

Evil Twin: Cyprien's Revenge

Publisher: Ubi Soft **Release:** TBA
Developer: In Utero
 ■ Ubi Soft hasn't announced a PS2 version of this spooky-looking 3D platformer at press time, but they will soon.
Our take: Every version of this game is still early, but Ubi Soft also publishes *Rayman*, so they know what makes a platformer good.

LAUNCH GAMES

DOA 2: Hardcore

Publisher: Tecmo
Developer: Tecmo
Release: Launch



■ This version of Tecmo's fighter is graphically enhanced over the Japanese release and also features the now obligatory new levels and costumes.

Our take: We're big fans of the series, but we already played it to death on the Dreamcast and we don't know whether the latest enhancements will really be enough to draw us in again. If you haven't tried it, though, it's well worth your time, so take a look.



Dynasty Warriors 2

Publisher: Koel
Developer: Koel
Release: Launch



■ Take on the role of a single legendary warrior in huge pitched battles between opposing armies in third-century China.
Our take: It's really amazing the first time you drop into a battle featuring hundreds of individual soldiers (many of whom are onscreen with you), but it remains to be seen whether there is enough gameplay to keep us going after the initial thrill has passed. See the review on page 117.



PlayStation 2

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there are no rules.

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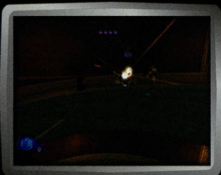


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ON THE PS2'S MIDDLEWARE...

Development on PS2 is much more difficult than it should be. You're spending a lot of time and writing a lot of code to solve problems that you never would have imagined would have been left for developers to solve. — Lorne Lanning, President, Oddworld Inhabitants

Evo Rally

Publisher: SCEA **Release:** TBA
Developer: Evolution Studios
 ■ A rally racing game set across 48 tracks all over the world.
Our take: Another rally racing game? Europeans seem to love these things, but we can take 'em or leave 'em.

Extermination

Publisher: SCEA **Release:** TBA
Developer: Deep Space Inc.
 ■ A third-person action adventure set in a mutant-infested arctic base. Resident Evil meets John Carpenter's *The Thing*.
Our take: Some bits have looked amazing, others looked pretty raw. It's early, but it has our attention.

F1 Championship Season 2000

Publisher: EA Sports **Release:** Q4 2000
Developer: EA Sports
 ■ The title pretty much says everything you need to know.
Our take: Formula 1 is an incredibly crowded market, but EA will surely field an above-average entrant.

F1 Racing Championship

Publisher: Ubi Soft **Release:** Q4 2000
Developer: Ubi Soft
 ■ The latest entry in Ubi Soft's long-running F1 racing series.
Our take: Unfortunately, "long-running" hasn't exactly been synonymous with "outstanding."

FIFA 2001 Major League Soccer

Publisher: EA Sports **Release:** Q4 2000
Developer: EA Canada
 ■ The latest in the FIFA series features updated rosters and improved graphics.
Our take: It looks a lot better; but the gameplay doesn't seem much different from last year. That's still pretty good.

Final Fantasy X

Publisher: Square **Release:** Q4 2001
Developer: Square
 ■ Square's seminal RPG series looks better than ever.
Our take: Worse case scenario: the game turns out to be just "really good."

Final Fantasy XI

Publisher: Square **Release:** TBA
Developer: Square
 ■ Square's entry into the massively multiplayer online RPG.
Our take: We can't wait to see this, but dont hold your breath waiting for Sony's broadband network to materialize.

Formula 1 2000

Publisher: SCEA **Release:** TBA
Developer: Studio Liverpool (Psygnosis)
 ■ One more Formula 1 racer, although this one is arguably the most authentic of the bunch.
Our take: We'd get excited, but there are almost as many of these as kart racers, and we just don't need that many.

Formula X

Publisher: Titus **Release:** TBA
Developer: Smart Dog
 ■ Titus hasn't actually announced this title yet, but we're assured it's a racing game.
Our take: Without playable code or even screens, we're

forced to fall back on Titus' rather questionable reputation.

Freedom Ridge

Publisher: Bethesda Softworks **Release:** TBA 2001
Developer: Mythos
 ■ Squad-level, turn-based combat with incredible physics, in a future when humans rebel against conquering aliens.
Our take: This X-COM of the same people working on it as the original X-COM. Are we excited? Oh yeah...

Galerians 2

Publisher: Crane **Release:** TBA 2001
Developer: Polygon Magic
 ■ The as-yet-unannounced sequel to *Galerians* (duh), a survival horror adventure that uses full 3D environments instead of pre-rendered backgrounds.
Our take: The first one was good, and we're looking forward to seeing a graphically improved follow-up.

Galleon

Publisher: Interplay **Release:** TBA 2001
Developer: Contouring Factor
 ■ A character-driven, third-person pirate adventure from many of the developers of the original *Tomb Raider*.
Our take: Unconfirmed for PS2 at press time, but we're

sure looking forward to it — we have been for two years.

Gauntlet: Dark Legacy

Publisher: Midway **Release:** Q1 2001
Developer: Midway
 ■ It's a lot like *Gauntlet Legends*, only larger — in fact, it's exactly like *Gauntlet Legends*, only larger.
Our take: We like *Gauntlet Legends*. It's fun. But we really want to see some new wrinkles or at least online play. Soan.

Gekkuken Pro Baseball

Publisher: Square **Release:** TBA
Developer: Square
 ■ One of the best-looking baseball games ever.
Our take: It's actually very unlikely that this title will come to the U.S. — it uses Japanese teams, you see — but we'd love to see more PS2 sports titles of this quality.

Getaway

Publisher: SCEA **Release:** TBA 2001
Developer: SCEA
 ■ Play a getaway driver in an ultra-detailed 3D London.
Our take: We're skeptical, but if the game plays as well as it looks, it will kick some serious ass.

Ghost Master

Publisher: Empire Interactive **Release:** Q4 2001
Developer: TBA
 ■ Empire is keeping tight-lipped about this one, which seems to resemble *Dungeon Keeper* in a haunted house.
Our take: We're intrigued, but the game is so early the haunted house still has fresh paint.

LAUNCH GAMES

ESPN International Track and Field

Publisher: Konami
Developer: Konami
Release: Launch

■ More button mashing madness from the developer that invented track and field videogames, featuring a total of 12 events.
Our take: The graphics are certainly pretty, and this includes some unique events, like Rhythmic Gymnastics. More interesting than usual for a track and field title.

ESPN Winter X Games—Snowboarding

Publisher: Konami
Developer: Konami
Release: Launch

■ This officially licensed snowboarding game is attempting to be more of a sim than its arcade-style competition.
Our take: It looks cool, and the fact that the player is actually riding down mountains instead of just tracks is overdue. It'll be a tough competition between this and *SSX* — which also looks great and plays divinely.

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goes unquenched no longer.



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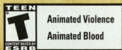


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ON MASTERING THE PS2'S HARDWARE...

The key to getting good PlayStation 2 performance is to wrap your mind around the PlayStation 2's architecture, rather than trying to apply old PC programming techniques to its vastly different architecture. To quote *The Matrix*: It is not the spoon that bends, only yourself.

— Tim Sweeney, Epic Games

Gradius III & IV

Publisher: Konami
Developer: Konami

Release: Q4 2000

■ A pair of classic 2D shooters packaged together.

Our take: Good as they may be, we can't imagine paying full price for a pair of old shooters.

Gran Turismo 2000

Publisher: SCEA
Developer: Polyphony Digital

Release: TBA

■ Some 150 cars and a wealth of tuning options make this one of the most realistic racing games ever for a console.

Our take: This eagerly-awaited racer has fallen off the map. Some insist it will be ready for launch, but we doubt it.

Ground Control

Publisher: Sierra
Developer: Sierra

Release: TBA 2001

■ A flashy 3D sci-fi RTS with more action than strategy.

Our take: It was fun but not incredible on PC, and consoles are not historically RTS friendly. We'll see how it ports.

Gunslinger

Publisher: Activision
Developer: Surreal Software

Release: TBA 2001

■ A third-person spaghetti Western action adventure, with the requisite good guys, bad guys, sheriffs, and gunfights.
Our take: Forget the crappy early footage shown at E3. This one is a high concept from a proven development team, and we want it.

Herdy Herdy

Publisher: Eidos
Developer: Core Design

Release: Q4 2001

■ A cartoonish 3D platformer with unique play mechanics based upon — we're not making this up — animal herding.
Our take: The graphics look amazing, and the idea is one of the few creative game concepts on PS2. We're interested.

IQ Remix +

Publisher: SCEA
Developer: SCEI

Release: TBA 2001

■ A 3D puzzle game in which you play a man who must eliminate rolling blocks before they crush him.

Our take: Who knows whether or not this is coming over from Japan, but since the "remix" completely ruined a highly playable puzzler (*Intelligent Qube*), we hope it isn't.

ICO

Publisher: SCEA
Developer: SCEA

Release: TBA 2001

■ A puzzle-heavy adventure game, starring a peculiarly garbed little guy who's out to rescue a beautiful girl.

Our take: Setting aside its possibly cross-dressing hero, ICO is actually pretty stunning to look at. Gameplay? Too soon.

Kengo: Master of Bushido

Publisher: Crane
Developer: Lightweight/Genki

Release: Q1 2001

■ A hyper-realistic swordfighting sim, using actual rules and techniques of the discipline.

Our take: As huge Bushido Blade fans, we were excited when this was a PlayStation game. Now we're ecstatic.

Kessen

Publisher: Electronic Arts
Developer: Koel

Release: November 2000

■ A beautifully modelled RTS based in samurai-era Japan.

Our take: If you ever wanted an RTS based in samurai-era Japan, this'll satisfy you. But how many console gamers care?

Knockout Kings 2001

Publisher: EA Sports
Developer: Black Ops

Release: Q1 2001

■ A boxing sim featuring extremely realistic graphics and numerous real-life boxers from the past and the present.

Our take: This series has been disappointing, but early glimpses look promising, so we have our fingers crossed.

Legacy of Kain: Soul Reaver 2

Publisher: Eidos
Developer: Crystal Dynamics

Release: Q1 2001

■ A third-person actioner starring our favorite soul sucker.

Our take: The original was just good enough, but with identical versions coming for both PlayStation and Dreamcast, this one could simply be more of the same.

Legion: Legend of Excalibur

Publisher: Midway
Developer: 7 Studios

Release: Q3 2001

■ A medieval RTS featuring King Arthur, his knights, and their legendary round table.

Our take: The subject matter rocks, and most of the dev team worked on the original C&C. Watch this one closely.

The Lost

Publisher: Crane

Release: Q3 2001

Developer: Irrational Games

■ The team behind *System Shock 2* brings us a third-person horror RPG set in Hell.

Our take: The team has proven they can make intense titles, and setting one in Hell sounds pretty damn intense.

Lotus Challenge

Publisher: TBA

Release: Q1 2001

Developer: Kuju Entertainment

■ This Lotus-endorsed racer featuring an added Stunt mode and a realtime damage model.

Our take: The Stunt mode sounds fun, but does the Lotus license have enough U.S. appeal to support a full game?

Maximo

Publisher: Capcom
Developer: Capcom

Release: TBA

■ A 3D take on the classic Ghosts 'N Goblins series.

Our take: We loved Ghosts 'N Goblins; let's hope the magic is still there and this one isn't as bloody impossible to finish. Hint: only make us beat the game once.

Max Payne

Publisher: Rockstar
Developer: Remedy Entertainment

Release: TBA

■ Third-person action adventure, best described as "John Woo — the game."

Our take: We can't get here to admit it's coming to PS2, but the PC version can't get anyone shot enough.

Medal of Honor

Publisher: Electronic Arts
Developer: Dreamworks

Release: Q3 2001

■ A new WWII first-person shooter starring Jimmy

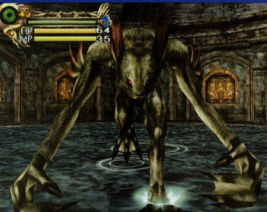
Patterson, the hero of the original PSX game.

Our take: We love shooting Nazis. Period.

LAUNCH GAMES

Eternal Ring

Publisher: Agetec
Developer: From Software
Release: Launch



■ A first-person fantasy RPG in the same vein as *King's Field* on the PSX. While it was a first-generation title in Japan, the game has been much improved for the U.S. release.

Our take: It's better than the Japanese release but still feels a little primitive. See our review on page 117 for the full scoop.

Evergrace

Publisher: Agetec
Developer: From Software
Release: Launch



■ A fairly *Zelda*-like fantasy action adventure featuring two main characters (a male and a female) whose wardrobe is crucial to the progress of the game.

Our take: It's kind of wacky (clothes matter!), but we've been itching for a good action RPG. See our review next issue.

Metal Gear Solid 2

Publisher: Konami
Developer: Konami

Release Date: TBA

■ Hideo Kojima's sequel to what was arguably the PlayStation's greatest game is easily the most anticipated PS2 title yet. *MGS 2* looks to have it all: amazing graphics, compelling storyline, and incredible third-person action. **Our take:** The most anticipated PS2 game so far, or the most anticipated game of all time? Both, we'd say.

Mobile Suit Gundam Wing (tentative title)

Publisher: Bandai
Developer: Bandai

Release: Q1 2001

■ Little information has come out about Bandai's latest, but we'd guess it's a first-person mech combat game. **Our take:** A good Gundam game? Great, but odds are even.

Monster Rancher 3

Publisher: Tecmo
Developer: Tecmo

Release: TBA 2001

■ A monster breeding sim in which players control their creature's diet, training, and battle actions. **Our take:** It'll surely look great, but some new gameplay elements would really get our attention.

Moto GP

Publisher: Namco
Developer: Namco

Release: Q4 2000

■ A realistic, G-style, motorcycle racing sim, based on the arcade game *500 GP*. **Our take:** Early versions were unimpressive, but Namco usually polishes games until they shine.

Motor Mayhem

Publisher: Infogrames
Developer: Beyond Games

Release: Q1 2001

■ A futuristic vehicular combat game based around larger-than-life characters and destructible environments. **Our take:** The genre is tired, but this title's focus on WWV-

style characters looks to liven things up.

Munukuru

Publisher: Interplay
Developer: Outrage

Release: Q4 2001

■ Little is known about this tactical action title, in which players lead a tribe of something (we're not sure what) through a mystical land. It sounds vaguely like a more pugilistic blend of Lemmings and Munch's Oddyssey. **Our take:** We're interested but perplexed. Tell us more.

NASCAR 2001

Publisher: EA Sports
Developer: Electronic Arts

Release: Q4 2000

■ EA's annual update to the NASCAR franchise arrives on PS2. EA promises more detail than ever before. **Our take:** Early looks had us interested, but we're unsure that the title can deliver a *Days of Thunder* experience.

NASCAR Heat

Publisher: Hasbro
Developer: Monster Games

Release: Q1 2001

■ A port of Hasbro's PC NASCAR franchise. **Our take:** The "Race against the Pros" feature is nice, but it'll take a superb engine to keep us racing around in ovals.

Navy SEALs

Publisher: Jaleco

Release: Q1 2001

ONE STEP FORWARD, TWO STEPS BACK - PLAYSTATION 2 VS. BLEEMCAST

PS2's ability to support virtually every PSX game in existence is obviously a huge asset, but Sony's backward-compatibility card may soon be trumped by a tenacious third party: bleem! has created a PSX emulator for Sega's Dreamcast, and the company plans to roll out the product late this year.

Each emulator has its pros and cons. PlayStation 2 is compatible with nearly every single PSX title but provides only minor improvements — mildly enhanced textures and an occasional slight decrease in load times. bleem! for Dreamcast will take the opposite approach — each "bleempack" will support only 100 specific games but will add massive enhancements like 640 x 480 resolution and software-based anti-aliasing. bleem! will also market an adapter that enables the use of PSX-compatible memory cards and controllers.



■ Final Fantasy IX on PlayStation...

■ On PS2 with smoothed textures...

■ And on bleem! for Dreamcast

LAUNCH GAMES

Fantavision

Publisher: SCEA
Developer: SCEI
Release: Launch



■ This action puzzler involves the player chaining together fireworks and setting them off. **Our take:** It's really colorful and really pretty, but ultimately a little short-lived. Still, that didn't stop at least one editor from getting addicted to it.

Gungriffon Blaze

Publisher: Working Designs
Developer: GameArts
Release: Launch



■ A 3D mech combat game. **Our take:** Of the two mech combat games at launch, this one feels more like an FPS (with jumping Flash-style leaps) than a standard mech game. The little time we've spent with it has been fun, but it may end up being too shallow.

Jet Ion GP

Publisher: Crave
Developer: Gust
Release: Launch



■ This futuristic racing game tries to outdo *Wipeout* with futuristic tracks and hovering vehicles. **Our take:** The Japanese version (*Hresvelger*) had huge framerate problems. Unless they're fixed, this one won't be worth your time.



Developer: Jaleco

■ A S.W.A.T.-style, third-person, realtime action adventure in which you control a team of SEALs with various specialties. **Our take:** Everybody seems to be doing this type of game, but this is one of the first on PlayStation 2. We're optimistic.

NBA Live 2001

Publisher: EA Sports
Developer: EA Canada

Release: Q4 2000

■ The premiere PSX basketball title brings its game to PS2. **Our take:** The PC version is awesome, and *Madden 2001* and *SSX* prove that EA can handle the PS2. Could be great.

NBA Hoopz

Publisher: Midway
Developer: Midway

Release: Q1 2001

■ Called *Showtime* last year, Midway hopes to revitalize this arcade franchise that started with greatness as *NBA Jm*. **Our take:** It will take more than a name change to revitalize the franchise that started as *NBA Jm*.

NBA Shootout 2001

Publisher: SCEA
Developer: 989 Sports

Release: TBA

■ 989's decent basketball series makes the leap to PS2. **Our take:** No details have been given out at press time, so it's anybody's guess.

NCAA Final Four

Publisher: SCEA
Developer: 989 Sports

Release: TBA

■ The college version of *NBA Shootout 2001*. **Our take:** The college version of "No details have been given out at press time, so it's anybody's guess."

NCAA Gamebreaker

Publisher: SCEA
Developer: 989 Sports

Release: TBA

■ The college version of *NFL GameDay 2001*. **Our take:** You're surely tired of hearing this, but "No details have been given out at press time, so it's anybody's guess."

NFL GameDay 2001

Publisher: SCEA

Release: TBA

Developer: 989 Sports

■ 989 refuses to comment upon this (or, for that matter, any other PS2 game), but it does indeed exist. Sapposely. **Our take:** Maybe it'll be good! Maybe it'll be bad! The truth is that we just don't know.

NHL 2001

Publisher: EA Sports

Release: November 2000

Developer: EA Canada

■ EA brings their hockey franchise to the PS2 with improved graphics, animation, and a promised 60fps framerate. **Our take:** Early versions looked and played up to the series' established standards (including really shiny helmets), but there were few notable leaps in gameplay.

LAUNCH GAMES

Madden NFL 2001

Publisher: EA Sports
Developer: Tiburon Studios

Release: Launch



■ EA's newest football game features a complete graphical overhaul while still offering the same tried-and-true gameplay.

Our take: This is probably the biggest system seller the PS2 has. Check out our review on page 100 for the complete story.

Midnight Club GT

Publisher: Rockstar Games
Developer: Angel Studios

Release: Launch



■ Race through meticulous reproductions of London and New York — with traffic. Earn new cars and your opponents' respect by taking out each city's finest street racers.

Our take: We haven't seen it at the promised 60fps yet, but this could be the most technically advanced, best-playing racer on the system.

PlayStation 2

SMUGGLERS RUN

RELEASE DATE: PlayStation 2 Launch

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NHL Faceoff 2001

Publisher: SCEA

Release: TBA

Developer: 989 Sports

■ While we know 989 is doing a PS2 version of this popular hockey franchise, it seems Sony has stuck their tongues to the frozen flagpole — because they aren't talking.

Our take: The longer it's stuck, the more it will hurt later

Ninja Gaiden

Publisher: Tecmo

Release: TBA 2001

Developer: Tecmo

■ The popular arcade/NES series gets a 128-bit update — finally! Details are scarce, but we're pretty sure you'll still play a ninja.

Our take: Since DOA 2, Tecmo's credit has gone through the roof with us, so we can't wait. Plus, it has ninja.

No One Lives Forever

Publisher: Fox Interactive

Release: Q4 2001

Developer: Monolith

■ A first-person action adventure spoof of '60s era spy movies starring sultry female agent Cate Archer.

Our take: The LithTech engine on PS2 and a "shagadelic" premise makes this one to watch closely.

Oddworld: Munch's Oddysee

Publisher: Infogrames

Release: Q2 2001

Developer: Oddworld Inhabitants

■ The latest in Oddworld's series of surreal, personable action platformers.

Our take: Oddworld has been quite outspoken about early struggles with the PS2 hardware, but everything appears to be back on track now. Forget "pushing" the envelope — this game will tear it up and eat the pieces.

Offroad Thunder

Publisher: Midway

Release: Q4 2001

Developer: Midway

■ An offroad racing game in the style of *Hydro Thunder*.

Our take: The Dreamcast version was pretty disappointing. No clue whether the PS2 version will be any better.

Oni

Publisher: Rockstar

Release: Q1 2001

Developer: Rockstar Canada

■ A futuristic, anime-influenced third-person action adventure featuring gunplay and kung fu.

Our take: In development for at least two years (beginning on PC), it's always looked cool, but we're starting to doubt it will be "futuristic" by the time it's eventually released.

Onimusha: Warlords

Publisher: Capcom

Release: Q1 2001

Developer: Capcom

■ Think *Resident Evil* with samurai and swordplay. Although the game uses pre-rendered backgrounds, the 3D characters boast up to 10,000 polygons each.

Our take: The newest build is gorgeous, and the sword fighting is great. One of the few PS2 titles we absolutely can't wait for.

Orphen

Publisher: Activision

Release: November 2000

Developer: Shade/Kadokawa Shoten/ESP

■ A third-person, 3D action RPG based on an anime series about a young, lazy sorcerer.

Our take: The graphics look impressive, and Activision's record with Japanese titles — like the *Tenchu* series — has been good so far. Probably worth checking out.

Picasso

Publisher: TBA

Release: Q4 2001

Developer: Promethan

■ A non-violent, third-person adventure in which you play an art thief. No publisher at press time, but it'll find one.

Our take: It's unique premise and gamestyle could make this game stand out. We're withholding judgement until it gets closer to release.

Pirates of Skull Cove

Publisher: Westwood

Release: Q3 2001

Developer: Westwood

■ This swashbuckling, third-person adventure is similar in concept to Interplay's *PC-DC Gallions*, with a focus on collecting gold and buying bigger, better ships.

Our take: This title hasn't even been announced yet, so it's a little early to call. But hey, we've said it before: who doesn't want to be a pirate?

Project Eden

Publisher: Eidos

Release: Q2 2001

Developer: Core Design

■ A third-person action game in which you simultaneously control four mercenaries investigating crimes that (as always) will lead to vast, sinister conspiracies.

Our take: An early version of this game looked great, and the four-player demo provided some interesting gameplay opportunities.

Quake III

Publisher: TBA

Release: TBA

Developer: TBA (id)

■ While likely publisher EA has yet to announce a PS2 port of this PC/Dreamcast FPS, id's Todd Hollishead is making one nonetheless.

LAUNCH GAMES

Ready 2 Rumble: Round 2

Publisher: Midway

Developer: Midway

Release: Midway



■ Midway's comical pugilists get a nice graphical update and plenty of new boxers to spar with.

Our take: While this game seemed fresh on Dreamcast last year, it's definitely starting to feel slightly dated now — even with its updated characters and graphics. Still, we're up for one more go.

Ridge Racer V

Publisher: Namco

Developer: Namco

Release: Launch



■ Namco's fifth *Ridge Racer* title features everything you'd expect: fast cars, plenty of powerlides, and techno music.

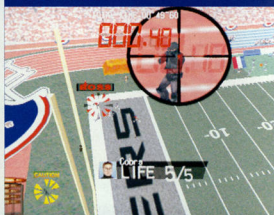
Our take: This title doesn't look like it has been improved at all since its Japanese release and, while it was impressive then, it was also juggy and very similar to a slightly prettier R4. Still, worth a quick run if you're itching for a fast racer. For the full story see our review on page 113.

Silent Scope

Publisher: Konami

Developer: Konami

Release: Launch



■ Snipe at terrorists by guiding your targeting reticle around the screen. A port of the arcade game of the same name, but with the Dual Shock instead of the custom sniper rifle.

Our take: Whose idea was this? A gun game with no gun is really pretty lame. It may be fun for a little while, but then you'll realize that you've got a PS2 and you could be playing something better suited to the system.

Our take: Great first-person shooters are possible on a console, and this is one of the greatest, but we'll wait until we see the engine up and running.

Rayman 2: Revolution

Publisher: Ubi Soft
Developer: Ubi Soft

Release: Q4 2001

■ The most beautiful platformer in years arrives on PS2 with new areas and other promised enhancements.

Our take: Previous versions were some of the best platformers in recent memory. More can't only be better.

RC Revenge Pro

Publisher: Acclaim
Developer: Acclaim

Release: November 2000

■ An enhanced version of Acclaim's recent PSX RC racer. **Our take:** It sounds good, but the PSX version isn't.

Real Pool

Publisher: Infogrames
Developer: TBA

Release: Q1 2001

■ Infogrames recently announced plans to unleash this intense pool-playing action upon the PS2 early next year. **Our take:** Niche market, corner pocket.

Red Faction

Publisher: THQ
Developer: Voltion

Release: TBA 2001

■ An ambitious FPS featuring the most advanced damage model to date — you can destroy the walls, the floor...

Our take: Any game where you can blow through a wall to paste the guy on the other side ... rocks.

Resident Evil PS2

Publisher: Capcom
Developer: Capcom

Release: TBA

■ Capcom has hinted that there is a RE game in development for PS2. Why wouldn't there be?

Our take: Capcom improves this series substantially with every new game. Bring it on.

Ring of Red

Publisher: Konami
Developer: Konami

Release: TBA

■ A turn-based strategy game featuring WWII-era mechs — that's right, WWII-era mechs.

Our take: WWII-era mechs? Intriguing, but dual-stick welding robot jockeys may want to remember this one is still turn-based.

Robocop

Publisher: Titus
Developer: Titus

Release: TBA 2001

■ Not yet officially announced, this game should nonetheless materialize as a first-person shooter showcasing the Robocop license.

Our take: Does anyone still care about Robocop? We just hope Titus learned its lesson with Superman.

LAUNCH GAMES

Silphheed: The Lost Planet

Publisher: Working Designs
Developer: Treasure

Release: Launch



■ A follow-up to the classic Sega CD shooter on rails. Blast everything in sight into shrapnel in this graphically superlative vertically scrolling space shooter.

Our take: A shooter by Treasure? This sounds like a must-have — unless, of course, you don't like shooters. Poor soul.

Smuggler's Run

Publisher: Rockstar
Developer: Angel Studios

Release: Launch



■ A mission-based, offroad racer in which you have to get the goods from point A to point B by any route necessary.

Our take: Technically, this game looks quite brilliant. We're still waiting to see if there's enough variety to the gameplay to keep us coming back.

湾岸 MIDNIGHT CLUB STREET RACING

PlayStation 2

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RELEASE DATE: PlayStation 2 Launch

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HAS ANYTHING ABOUT THE PS2 SURPRISED YOU IN A POSITIVE WAY?

The PlayStation 2's openness as a platform. It has industry-standard inputs for USB, i-Link (Firewire), and PCMCIA peripherals. We've already taken advantage of this in *Unreal Tournament* in addition to the built-in joystick, you can play the game with a USB keyboard or a USB mouse. The possibilities here are unlimited.

— Tim Sweeney, Epic Games

Romance of the Three Kingdoms VII

Publisher: Koei Release: TBA

Developer: Koei

■ The seventh (count 'em, seventh!) in Koei's series of hyper-detailed, turn-based historical simulations of warfare in third-century China.

Our take: This niche series probably won't benefit significantly from PS2's increased graphical abilities, but the added processing power could really deepen the simulation.

Run Like Hell

Publisher: Interplay Release: Q2 2001

Developer: Digital Mayhem

■ Survival horror in a space station, with dark corridors, overwhelmingly powerful aliens, and very little ammunition.

Our take: We might run like hell to buy this one. It's creepy, it's action-packed, and so far, it looks cool.

Sammy Sosa's High Heat Baseball 2002

Publisher: 3DO Release: Q1 2001

Developer: 3DO

■ The next generation of 3DO's respected baseball series.

Our take: The PC version is generally regarded as the best-playing baseball game around. With the graphics of PlayStation 2 behind it, it's almost a sure hit.

Seven Blades

Publisher: Konami Release: Q1 2001

Developer: Konami

■ Third-person action in which you play either a swordsman or a female ninja fighting against space ninjas. Honest.

Our take: So far Konami's lineup includes WWIII mechs and space ninjas. You can't accuse them of rehashing old ideas.

Shadowman: Second Coming

Publisher: Acclaim Release: Q2 2001

Developer: Acclaim

■ A sequel to the voodoo-infested 3D action adventure featuring a protagonist who moves between the land of the living and the land of the dead.

Our take: The original never quite lived up to its creepy premise — we'll take a "wait and see" attitude with this one.

Shadow of Destiny

Publisher: Konami Release: Q4 2000

Developer: Konami

■ A third-person adventure game in which you must constantly time-travel to prevent your own murder(s).

Our take: Imagine the atmosphere of *Silent Hill* crossed with inscrutable time travel paradoxes. Another compelling, unique gameplay concept from Konami.

Sled Storm 2

Publisher: Electronic Arts Release: Q1 2001

Developer: Electronic Arts

■ Snowmobile racing with the typical EA flair.

Our take: The original was a truly great game on PlayStation. We expect even bigger things on PS2.

Spawn: In the Demon's Hand

Publisher: Capcom Release: TBA 2001

Developer: Capcom

■ Capcom hasn't said anything about this one, but Todd

McFarlane himself hinted that this third-person arcade shooter would be ported over from Naomi/Dreamcast.

Our take: Unless they fix the camera, we don't care. If they do, we'll take a look.

Spin Sprint Car Racing

Publisher: SCEA Release: TBA 2001

Developer: Ratbag

■ You know those really tiny cars with the big spoilers on top? They can go up to 170 mph on a dirt track.

Our take: Wheeee!

Spy Hunter

Publisher: Midway Release: Q2 2001

Developer: Paradigm

■ The classic spy-driving, racing supergame returns, in 3D.

Our take: Once "Peter Gunn" kicks in, it's all good.

SRC

Publisher: TBA Release: TBA

Developer: Criterion

■ A graphically impressive racing title from the developers of *Trickstyle*.

Our take: Too early to tell, but we're on it.

LAUNCH GAMES

SSX

Publisher: Big EA

Developer: EA Canada

Release: Launch



■ This boardercross game pits several international competitors against each other on some of the most offset slopes ever devised.

Our take: This game is pure fun, and the best reason to buy a PS2 yet. It's easily been the most played PS2 game in the office. Check out our review on page 108 if you want to know more.

Street Fighter EX3

Publisher: Capcom

Developer: Capcom

Release: Launch



■ The latest in Capcom's 3D Street Fighter series. The Japanese version's slowdown has supposedly been taken care of.

Our take: We were disappointed by the unfinished Japanese release, but we're looking forward to giving the U.S. version a second chance.



ON THE DANGERS OF ABANDONING THE PS2...

Every "difficulty" on EVERY system, is just a hurdle that will be overcome if there is a demand for software on that system. Any developer that runs from the PlayStation 2 because they don't like the texture ram, or the anti-aliasing, or whatnot, might find themselves far behind the technology curve when they are forced to return to the PlayStation 2 because it has a dominant market share.

— Jason Rubin, Naughty Dog

Stunt GP

Publisher: Titus

Release: Q4 2000

Developer: Team 17

■ The PS2 version of this comical, stunt-car racing game (coming on Dreamcast from Infogrames) has disappeared from Titus' release schedule, so its future is uncertain.
Our take: If it resurfaces, we'll give it a spin.

Stunt Squad

Publisher: TBA

Release: TBA 2001

Developer: Criterion Studios

■ A 3D hoverboard stunt game from Trickstyle's developers. **Our take:** The only thing wrong with Trickstyle was that the tracks were impossible to race on. A pure stunt game based on the same idea could be awesome.

Super Bust-A-Move

Publisher: Acclaim

Release: November 2000

Developer: Acclaim

■ The definitive bubble-popping puzzle series marches on. **Our take:** This game is unstoppable. Sadly, it never changes.

Surfing H3O

Publisher: Take 2

Release: TBA

Developer: ASK

■ Take 2 has just announced this heavily modified version of Surfroid, Japan's bizarre, galactic surfing game.

Our take: We'll hold our cards until we learn the extent of the retooling, from which this game can only benefit.

Swing Away Golf

Publisher: Electronic Arts

Release: November 2000

Developer: T&E Soft

■ A cartoonish golf game full of stereotypically "goofy" golfers and caddies.

Our take: Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2001 is coming out within weeks of this title. Why bother?

The World Is Not Enough

Publisher: Electronic Arts

Release: Q1 2001

Developer: Electronic Arts

■ A first person, Quake III-engine game based on the movie of the same name.

Our take: This could be the next GoldenEye. Then again, it could be the next Tomorrow Never Dies. We'll wait until it gets closer to release.

Theme Park Roller Coaster

Publisher: Electronic Arts

Release: November 2000

Developer: Electronic Arts

■ Bullfrog's theme park management sim moves from PC to PS2, with graphical improvements and new attractions.
Our take: The PS2 has the horsepower to handle the numbers that crunched the PSX version. This should be a great diversion.

Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2001

Publisher: EA Sports

Release: November 2000

Developer: Electronic Arts

■ Everyone's favorite golfer starts in EA's flagship golf series.
Our take: It looks good, but this series has been hit-and-miss on previous consoles. We'll wait for playable code.

Titanium Angels

Publisher: TBA

Release: Q4 2000

Developer: Moebius Entertainment

■ A third-person, sci-fi action adventure that follows the exploits of bounty hunter Carmen Blake and her bizarre, terminator-like mechanical "horses."
Our take: There are some cool ideas and a certain sense of style here, but we want to see some gameplay that doesn't remind us of Tomb Raider.

Tomb Raider PS2

Publisher: Eidos

Release: Q4 2001

Developer: Core

■ Console gaming's original busty heroine returns in what Core promises will be a departure from past installments.
Our take: It had better be different. Core is promising just the kick in the khakis this franchise needs. Here's hoping.

Top Gear Dare Devil

Publisher: Kemco

Release: November 2000

Developer: Papaya Studios

■ A mission-based, free-roaming racing title set throughout realistically modeled cities like San Francisco and Tokyo.

Our take: Unless this title improves drastically, we'll leave it in the garage.

Top Gun

Publisher: Titus

Release: TBA

Developer: Digital Integration

■ An arcade flight sim based on a fourteen-year-old license. Titus hasn't yet announced this one officially.

Our take: We want to get excited, but has there ever been a good Top Gun game?

Unison

Publisher: Tecmo

Release: TBA

Developer: Tecmo

■ A dance music breeding game based upon the Monster Rancher 3 engine.

Our take: This is just crazy enough to pique our curiosity.

Unreal II

Publisher: TBA

Release: TBA

Developer: Epic Games

■ This sci-fi FPS hasn't been announced yet for PS2, but the engine's up and running, so it seems like a no-brainer.

Our take: The PS2 should support a USB mouse and keyboard, and a single-player FPS won't suffer from lack of online support. We're in.

Unreal Tournament

Publisher: Infogrames

Release: November 2000

Developer: Epic Games

■ The reigning king of FPS multiplayer arrives on a home console — without online support.

Our take: No online support? Give us a break here! Still, we're happy to see the engine ported to PS2.

LAUNCH GAMES

Summoner

Publisher: THQ

Developer: Volition

Release: Launch



■ A 3D action RPG featuring a small party of adventurers and summonable pet monsters.

Our take: It looks great, but Volition is adamant that the title's standout feature is its involving storyline — which we know almost nothing about. If the story isn't compelling, this may get boring.

Tekken Tag Tournament

Publisher: Namco

Developer: Namco

Release: Launch



■ Essentially, this is Tekken 3 with the ability to switch characters. The Japanese version's jaggies are rumored to have been fixed.

Our take: The Tekken series has a wonderful fighting engine, but this really plays just like Tekken 3 with better graphics, and its longevity may suffer as a result.



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ON SEPARATING THE MEN FROM THE BOYS...

The PS2 is hard to develop for because developers have access to the hardware at such a fundamental level. In the long run, that should prove to be an advantage. I expect that we'll see a big difference between what the best developers are capable of doing with the machine compared to the more pedestrian crowd.
 — Steve Crane, Senior VP, Activision

Untitled fantasy title

Publisher: Jaleco
 Developer: Jaleco

Release: TBA

■ Barely out of the concept stage, this will be a Gountief Legends-style multiplayer game based upon myths from around the world.

Our take: The content sounds cool, but there're quite a few games "like Gountief" coming down the tube.

V.I.P.

Publisher: Ubi Soft
 Developer: Ubi Soft

Release: TBA

■ This third-person action title based upon Pamela Anderson-Lee-Anderson-Whatever's syndicated jiggle-fest is on indefinite hold.

Our take: And we think that's probably a good thing.

Velvet File

Publisher: TBA
 Developer: Daz

Release: TBA

■ A futuristic, turn-based, mech strategy title that takes place in a painstakingly re-created Tokyo.

Our take: This looks a lot like *Front Mission* with better images and highly configurable mechs. Count us in.

Vicky's Adventure

Publisher: 3DO
 Developer: 3DO

Release: TBA

■ A third-person action adventure featuring a decidedly non-green, minor character from the *Army Men* universe. Described as "different" by 3DO reps.

Our take: Different sounds good, but there are several thousand third-person action adventures in development, and we haven't loved the *Army Men* universe lately.

Virtual Ocean

Publisher: Crave
 Developer: AndNow

Release: TBA 2001

■ Even publisher Crave has little information regarding this title, which they have yet to formally announce. We're guessing it's like Sega's Ecco, but with a killer whale.

Our take: This one smells fishy, but it's way too early to call.

Warriors of Might and Magic

Publisher: 3DO
 Developer: 3DO

Release: Q4 2000

■ 3D melee combat in the *Might & Magic* RPG universe.

Our take: The series' quality is erratic, but this looks good.

Wetrix (Aquaqua In Japan)

Publisher: TBA
 Developer: Zed Two

Release: TBA

■ Think of it as a horizontal, dam-building Tetris.

Our take: Another long-running puzzle game series.

Potentially fun, but hardly cutting-edge.

Wild Wild Racing

Publisher: TBA
 Developer: Rage

Release: TBA

■ Details are sketchy on this action racer, but Rage's games tend to be both pretty and pretty mediocre.

Our take: Will the PS2 really need another average racing game?

Winback: Covert Operations

Publisher: Koei
 Developer: Koei

Release: Q1 2001

■ A third-person shooter with occasional puzzle elements, originally seen on N64.

Our take: This title was enjoyable on N64, but it's a year old. Still, if the PS2 version contains plenty of MGS 2-level enhancements, we'll be there.

Wipeout Fusion

Publisher: SCEA
 Developer: Pygnosis

Release: TBA

■ One of the PlayStation's defining franchises brings high-speed, futuristic racing onto PS2.

Our take: Developer Pygnosis has promised a return to the original *Wipeout*'s standards. If they were serious, we'll race you to it.

World Destruction League: Thunder Tanks

Publisher: 3DO
 Developer: 3DO

Release: Q1 2001

■ Though 3DO has renamed and completely reworked their tank combat franchise, the core values — destructive environments and multiplayer options — remain.

Our take: There's at least one other vehicular combat title out there (not counting 989's currently AWOL *Twisted Metal* series), but we can't yet guess which will come out on top.

World Destruction League: War Jetz

Publisher: 3DO
 Developer: 3DO

Release: TBA

■ Details are sketchy on this title so far, but it would appear to be a sort of *Twisted Metal* with wings.

Our take: Jets are good, so Jetz probably are, too, but it's too early to see if it'll fly.

World Sports Cars

Publisher: Empire Interactive
 Developer: West Racing

Release: Q2 2001

■ An ultra-meticulous racing sim in which every mechanical aspect of your car can be adjusted.

Our take: This one will be for the herd of the hardcore only, but serious, patient gearheads should be thrilled.

Zone of the Enders

Publisher: Konami
 Developer: Konami

Release: TBA

■ An anime-style mech combat game that looks to take *Virtual On*-style combat to the next level while offering an involving story.

Our take: We'd be excited about this even if Hideo Kojima's name wasn't attached. But it is, and this game looks incredible.

END GAME

Lists like this one are nearly impossible to complete, because new titles are constantly surfacing. By the time you read this, Konami will have shown *Silent Hill 2*, Eidos will have announced a *Commandos 2* port, and Activision may be discussing *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3*, *Kelly Slater's Pro Surfer*, *Shawn Palmer's Boarder Cross*, and *Matt Hoffman's Pro BMX 2*. It's even possible that the veil of secrecy will have been lifted from new projects by *Naughty Dog*, *Insonmnia*, and *Sucker Punch*. But don't worry. As soon as we know, so will you. We promise.

LAUNCH GAMES

Timesplitters

Publisher: Eidos
 Developer: Free Radical Design
 Release: Launch



■ An FPS from some of the designers of *GoldenEye* and *Perfect Dark*. This one focuses on multiplayer mayhem not single-player stories.
Our take: Of course, *Quake III* and *Unreal Tournament* also focus on multiplayer action, but this is first, and these guys are good. We'll play.

X Squad

Publisher: Electronic Arts
 Developer: Electronic Arts
 Release: Launch



■ A futuristic, third-person action adventure with multiple controllable characters.
Our take: This doesn't look to be a stand-out, but it could still be a good, solid, game.



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PlayStation 2

Senator Joseph Lieberman — isn't he the guy running for Vice President? Yes, and as many of you loyal readers know, Lieberman has been a videogame industry watchdog since 1993 when he was responsible for organizing the Senate hearings that ultimately led to the formation of the ESRB ratings. And it took the threat of the federal government to get fierce game industry competitors to ultimately cooperate. Steven Kent recounts this messy incident in his book, *The First Quarter*. What follows are several excerpts from a chapter entitled "Judgment Day."

Lieberman vs. the Videogame Industry

A LOOK BACK AT THE 1993 SENATE HEARINGS

→ I remember saying to [Acclaim CEO Greg] Fischbach and to Rob Holmes [also of Acclaim], "I can guarantee you with *Night Trap* and now *Mortal Kombat*, we're all going to end up in front of Congress."
— Howard Lincoln, executive vice president, Nintendo of America

I think that all of this stuff that happened with the Senate was really orchestrated by Nintendo.
— Tom Zito, former president, Digital Pictures

There is a great deal of debate surrounding the events that led up to the 1993 joint hearings that investigated the marketing of videogame violence to minors. People at Sega and now-defunct Digital Pictures claim Nintendo wanted the hearings to stop Sega's runaway sales. Some people claim that Nintendo Director of Communications Perrin Kaplan initiated the debates over videogame violence when she delivered a speech to National Organization of Women in the fall of 1993. Other claims that Nintendo representatives went to Washington, D.C. and showed several congress members tapes of violent games in the hope of stirring up trouble for Sega.

I think Nintendo had taken such a strong liking that they decided to sort of go for broke and attack Sega. And they made these tapes up that showed *Night Trap* and showed *Mortal Kombat* on Genesis versus Nintendo. They hired a lobbying firm, and the lobbying firm basically started going around banging on doors to see if they could find a congressman who would be interested in taking this up as a cause. And I think that Nintendo was hoping that the public would be so outraged at what Sega was doing versus what Nintendo was doing

that there would be pickets in front of every Toys "R" Us store saying, "Don't buy Sega products."
— Tom Zito

The official account of the events that led up to the hearings is that Senator Joseph Lieberman (Democrat from Connecticut) became concerned about videogame violence when Bill Andresen, his chief of staff, told him about a hot new game named *Mortal Kombat*. Andresen's nine-year-old son wanted a copy of the game, but having heard that it was "incredibly violent," Andresen did not want to purchase it for him. Out of curiosity, Lieberman suggested that they get a copy and see what it was about.

It was started. It was very violent, and as you know, rewarded violence. And at the end, if you really did well, you'd get to decide whether to decapitate ... how to kill the other guy, how to pull his head off. And there was all sorts of blood flying around. Then we started to look into it ... I forget how I heard about *Night Trap*. And I looked at that game, too, and there was a classic. It ends with this attack scene on this woman in lingerie, in her bathroom. I know that the creator of the game said it was all meant to be a satire of *Dracula*; but nonetheless, I thought it sent out the wrong message.

— Senator Joseph Lieberman

Once he saw *Mortal Kombat* and *Night Trap*, Lieberman became concerned about the peddling of what he considered the equivalent of R-rated materials to children. He did some reading and found surveys that showed pre-Genesis demographics with the average player being a 7- to 12-year-old male. It should be noted that the 16-bit generation was only a few years old, and Sega was only beginning to gather the data that showed the

shift Genesis had brought to the market. It should also be noted that while only 10 percent of the games on the home market were violent, *Street Fighter II* and *Mortal Kombat* were huge sellers, and fighting games seemed to dominate the market.

Having come to the conclusion that videogame publishers were marketing violence to children, Lieberman decided to see what his constituents thought. He asked parents in his home state of Connecticut what they thought of the games. Their answers gave him cause for further concern.

I started to talk to people in Connecticut about it. Part of what I was hearing back from parents was that they didn't know what was in the game. Either there was a generational gap, which meant that they really didn't know how to use the machines, or they just didn't take the



■ STEVEN KENT



A Few Words With the Author

Steven Kent, author of *The First Quarter*, has been a longtime contributor to *Next Generation*. Passages of this book that appeared periodically in our *Retrosview* section (from NG 10/97 to NG 08/99) make up less than one-tenth of the book, according to Kent. *The First Quarter* will be available only through Amazon.com ("People looking for my book can simply go to Amazon.com," Kent explains, "and type in 'video game' or 'quarter' or 'steven kent'") for \$21.95. We got a hold of the author to give us some background on his book.

time. In a lot of these games, as you probably know, you have to spend a little time playing until you get to the so-called good parts.

— Joseph Lieberman

As to questions about whether Howard Lincoln, executive vice president of Nintendo of America, approached him, Lieberman always insisted that Nintendo did not contact him to initiate the inquiry into the videogaming world. But he also remembers meeting with Lincoln once the plans for the hearing were in place.

He certainly didn't initiate the process; in other words, we went to him. We went to the industry. I had not heard about Howard Lincoln before we planned the whole thing. In fact, to be very honest about it, and there's nothing wrong with it — once the hearings were announced, I saw [Senator] Slade Gorton (Republican from Washington) on the floor of the Senate one day on a vote and he said, "I just got a call from the folks from Nintendo, which is real important in Seattle." I later learned that they had played this enormous and incredibly sort of civic role in helping Seattle to keep the baseball team there. So anyway, Slade was all tied in with them and he said, "There's a guy named Howard Lincoln whom you've called to testify. Do you mind speaking to him or having your staff speak to him?"

— Joseph Lieberman

As Lieberman proceeded to arrange a hearing on the marketing of videogames, Nintendo, Sega, and other companies found themselves in an untenable situation. They



■ JOSEPH LIEBERMAN
It was very violent, and as you know, rewarded violence. And at the end, if you really did well, you'd get to decide ... how to kill the other guy, how to pull his head off.

did not have their own lobbying organization. Many belonged to the Software Publishers Association, the same trade organization that represented Microsoft and WordPerfect. Their relationship with SPA, however, was shaky. Interactive entertainment companies, especially videogame manufacturers such as Sega, Nintendo, and Electronic Arts, had long felt like the black sheep of the SPA community. The bulk of SPA's membership was made up of "serious" software companies that did not consider videogames legitimate members of the computer industry, and the top executives at the game companies did not expect to receive sufficient support during the hearings.

Senator Herb Kohl (Democrat from Wisconsin), chairman of the Subcommittee on Juvenile Justice, and Lieberman, chairman of the Subcommittee on Regulation and Government Information, presided over the hearings, which officially began on Dec. 9, 1993.

Most of the hearing was taken up by the testimonies of expert witnesses from two panels, one consisting of experts on education and child psychology and the other made up of industry executives. The expert panel consisted of Parker Page, president of the Children's Television Resource; Dr. Eugene Provenzo, Jr. of the University of Miami; Robert Chase, vice president of the National Education Association; and Marilyn Droz, vice president of the National Coalition on Television Violence.

Page led the panel testimonies citing the limited research that existed in the early '90s into the effects of violent games on the children who played them. He finished with

three recommendations for the industry: 1) the Federal government fund independent research projects into the effects of violent games, and the results of the research along with a game rating strategy be made available to parents; 2) future advertising should reinforce, not undermine game ratings; and 3) a voluntary industry-wide cap be placed on how much violence is allowed in games.

An issue that came to the forefront of the hearings from the start was concern about realistic-looking characters in games. *Street Fighter II*, and even *Eternal Champions*, an especially violent fighting game for Genesis, were seldom if ever mentioned in the hearings. Neither were *Doom* or *Wolfenstein 3D*. The emphasis throughout the hearings was placed on games with digitized human images, i.e., *Mortal Kombat*, *Night Trap*, and toward the end of the hearings, *Lethal Enforcer*. Even the launch of an arcade game from Strata titled *Time Killers*, in which players hacked off each other's limbs with swords, saws, and axes, went unnoticed.

After reviewing the panel of experts, the senators turned their attention to a panel of industry representatives that included Lincoln; Bill White, Jr. vice president of Sega of America; Ilene Rosenthal of the Software Publishers Association; Dawn Wiener, president of the Video Software Dealers Association; and Craig Johnson of the Amusement and Music Operators Association. The battle that was about to transpire was, if nothing else, bizarre. Lincoln led off by stating that Nintendo was "just as concerned about the

Next Generation: We know your book is about the videogame industry, but what specifically do you try to accomplish?

Steve Kent: Above all else, I wanted to show the creation and evolution of the industry through the eyes of the people who made it happen — hey, I wasn't there, and I hope no one really cares what I think. It's Nolan Bushnell, Ralph Baer, Eugene Jarvis, Dave Theurer, Ed Logg and all of those quirky, brilliant people who actually did things that make this story interesting. One thing stands out; especially in the early going, the videogame business was populated by wacky people who did cool things. I spent seven years conducting over 500 interviews so that this book could accurately depict the history as these people saw it.

NG: When did you start the book, and why has it taken so long to finish?

SK: I started working on a book called *Electronic Nation* in 1994. At the time, I thought it would be about the history of computer and videogames. Then I realized that the combined history would amount to well over a thousand pages. I made the change to videogames only in 1996, and I changed the name of the book to *The First Quarter*.

NG: What was the most difficult part of completing the project?

SK: I would like to say that the learning curve was the hardest part of writing this book, but that would not be true. Frustration over publishing the damned

thing was the hardest part. There were times when I was almost sure that several publishers were going to publish the book and each one ended up not happening. Truth is, I could have finished the book three years ago but nearly gave up.

One thing I will say is that *Next Gen* readers played a large role in convincing me to finish this book. I have received an endless stream of emails from people who enjoyed the Retroview columns, and that boosted me when I got frustrated.

To all our loyal readers who wrote to Steve, thanks for pulling him through. You've done the game industry and its historians and fans a true service. From everyone on the *Next Gen* staff, Steve, best of luck with the book — we'll be reviewing it next month.



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death by rail gun



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issue of violence, whether in the movies, television, or videogames, as anyone in the room." Having made the decision to edit the violence out of the Super NES version of *Mortal Kombat*, Lincoln entered the proceedings with an air of innocence. Lieberman even offered Lincoln an air of courtesy that was not extended to the people from Sega.

Lincoln went on to extol his company's struggles for virtue. He said that thanks to the security chip, companies were required to get Nintendo's permission to create games for the NES and Super NES. "Nintendo has videogame guidelines which control game content, and we have applied these to every one of the more than 1,200 games released into the market by Nintendo and its licensees."

In the past year, some very violent and offensive games have reached the market and, of course, I am speaking about *Mortal Kombat* and *Night Trap*. Let me say for the record, I want to state that *Night Trap* will never appear on a Nintendo system. Obviously it would not pass our guidelines. This game, which as you have indicated, promotes violence against women, has no place in our society.

— Howard Lincoln

When Lincoln mentioned that Nintendo had been criticized by children and parents alike for "sanitizing" *Mortal Kombat*, Lieberman interrupted him to ask about it. "We have received letters. We have received literally thousands of phone calls," Lincoln responded. If Lincoln was the welcomed guest, Bill White of Sega was the man on the hot seat. Both of the games that had prompted the hearings were made for Genesis, and without ever mentioning Sega, Lincoln had pointed a scathing finger at the company during his testimony. White tried to improve his company's image by restating the vital information that Lincoln and the senators seemed to have ignored. He started by stating three points: Sega's customer base was older and broader than the previous experts had suggested; Sega already had a rating system; and Sega was trying to encourage the rest of the industry to adopt a rating system.

In recent days, the glare of the media spotlight on this issue has resulted in the circulation of a number of distorted and inaccurate claims. The most damaging of these distortions, in my view, is the notion that Sega and the rest of the digital interactive industry are only in the business of selling games to children. This is not the case.



■ HOWARD LINCOLN

I want to state that *Night Trap* will never appear on a Nintendo system. Obviously it would not pass our guidelines.

Yes, many of Sega's interactive video titles are intended for and purchased by young children. Many other Sega titles, however, are intended for and purchased by adults for their personal entertainment and education. The average Sega CD user is almost 22 years old, and only five percent are under age 13. The average Sega Genesis user is almost 19 years old, and fewer than 30 percent are under age 13.

— Bill White, former vice president of marketing/communications, Sega of America

White went on to explain Sega's "three-pronged approach" to informing parents. According to White, Sega not only would place ratings on all Genesis games but would also include a toll-free hotline for consumers to get ratings and informational brochures about the ratings would be made available.

Listening to White, Lincoln was apparently seething. Years later, Lincoln would say, "I heard him saying these things that I knew he didn't believe, and I'm not sure what came over me." He sat quietly through several other testimonies, preparing a response to White. Lincoln's anger may have been aroused by the way White tried to speak for the entire videogame industry, and it may have been in response to the way he characterized Sega as being on the forefront of protecting children from adult material. It may also have sprung from their past relationship. White had been Nintendo of America's director of advertising and PR and had joined Sega a few months after an ugly split from Nintendo.

Whatever his reasons, Lincoln waited until the question-and-answer period after Johnson's testimony to speak. Lieberman directed his first comment to White, stating that the clip he had seen of a woman being attacked in *Night Trap* was "gratuitous and offensive and ought not to be available to people in our society." White responded by sticking to his message about the market maturing and the importance of ratings. Lieberman continued to pick at White, pinning him down on whether or not *Night Trap* was a product for adults, then pointing out that if it was indeed being marketed only to adults, Sega should be obliged to enforce the ratings. He then proceeded to show the commercial for *Mortal Kombat* and commented that the boy in the commercial appeared to be under 13 years of age — too young to buy the game, according to Sega's ratings.

Lieberman then turned to Lincoln and threw him a softball question. After faintly praising Nintendo for its limited self-regulation, he asked if Nintendo would be willing to display ratings on advertisements and in brochures as

well as on games. Lincoln said he would, then changed the subject.

Let me make just a couple of other points. I can't sit here and allow you to be told that somehow the videogame business has been transformed today from children to adults. It hasn't been, and Mr. White, who is a former Nintendo employee, knows the demographics as well as I do.

Furthermore, I can't let you sit here and buy this nonsense that this Sega's *Night Trap* game was somehow only meant for adults. The fact of the matter is this is a copy of the packaging. There was no rating on this game at all when the game was introduced. Small children bought this at Toys "R" Us, and he knows that as well as I do. When they started getting heat about this game, then they adopted the rating system and put ratings on it.

— Howard Lincoln

What could Lieberman say? He thanked Lincoln for his "forthrightness" and praised Nintendo for "having been a darn sight better than the competition."

Well the truth is that those statistics were very true and I think Howard knew those statistics were true. He would have to if they kept the same records that we kept. And having worked there [Nintendo], I imagine they did. Those were the primary player demographics that we measured based on warranty card returns from our games, both software and hardware. And they represent the actual reported age of the people that play the games.

— Bill White

White shot back with a videotape showing violent games on Super NES. Nintendo's self-regulation, apparently, did not go far enough, he argued. At least Sega games had ratings. The tug of war continued with Lincoln pointing out that without enforcement, ratings would not keep violent games out of the hands of children and White stressing the importance of ratings.

One of the true highlights of the testimony, for me, was when after days of Nintendo claiming how pure they were in Lincoln's sanctimonious testimony, White pulls out the huge bazooka-like gun that Nintendo sold for use with the Super NES and asked Howard if this was what he meant by saying that Nintendo controlled the product it made and protected families and kids. Howard was shaken, ashen and furious.

— Richard Brudvik-Lindner, former director of communications, Sega of America

I really had not planned on taking Sega on, but it became such a delightful opportunity. It was broadcast twice on C-SPAN, and the part when I really took White on was broadcast on CNN. It was everywhere. I don't remember what it was that he said, but it was so dumb. It just brought out the lawyer in me. I mean, it was a golden opportunity I couldn't pass up.

— Howard Lincoln

I was surprised when Howard Lincoln and Bill White went after each other like that. I thought that it looked awful. And I was surprised at the intensity of it. I guess it gave me this message that this was obviously big business.

— Joseph Lieberman

The meeting continued, with Senators Lieberman, Kohl, and Byron Dorgan (Democrat from North Dakota) hammering White until the session finally adjourned at 1:52 p.m. Before closing the meeting, Lieberman called for a second meeting to be held in February to evaluate the industry's progress toward adopting a rating system.

In a lot of ways, the hearings really changed the industry. It was a coming of age for the industry. It really marked the arrival of Sega as the industry leader. It created alliances and engendered animosities that exist to this day. It also created the opportunity for the PC entertainment industry and the videogame industry to check each other out and see if they could be married. It forced these companies to develop a political savvy that they never really had.

— Richard Brudvik-Lindner

Many changes occurred during the three months between the first Senate hearing in December and the much more serene second hearing on March 4, 1994. Lincoln was promoted to chairman of Nintendo of America, making him co-equal with Nintendo of America president Minoru Arakawa. Work had begun on a rating system. Despite Sega's suggestion that the industry adopt its own system, an entirely new one was being created. Also, largely as a result of the publicity generated by the hearings, *Night Trap* had sold out all across the country. Sega CD was never more than a niche product with approximately 250,000 units sold in the United States. Had it not been for the hearings, *Night Trap* would have vanished as just another forgotten Sega CD game. Given new publicity from the hearings, it was later re-released for both PCs and 32X.

Sega wound up selling way more copies of



■ TOM ZITO

Sega wound up selling way more copies of MK1 because of the hearings. Night Trap came back to life.

MK1, probably as a result of the hearings. *Night Trap* came back to life. You know, I sold 50,000 units of *Night Trap* a week after those hearings.

— Tom Zito

Two things became obvious to people pretty quickly. One was that the industry ought to attempt to come up with a self-regulatory response to congressional concerns about content; and the second was that it ought to consider creating a trade association to represent its interests, not just in Washington and at the state level, but in a variety of forms.

— Douglas Lowenstein, president, Interactive Digital Software Association

Two organizations were formed as a result of the hearings. In 1994, videogame company executives decided that they had better create their own trade organization rather than depend on the Software Publishers Association. The result was the Interactive Digital Software Association (IDSA) — the interactive entertainment industry's own dedicated trade and lobbying organization.

Seven industry leaders met to discuss the formation of the IDSA — Nintendo, Sega, Acclaim, Electronic Arts, Phillips, Atari, and 3DO. The meetings, intense and private, took place over a six-week period that was punctuated with hostile power struggles between Nintendo and Sega. The fighting eventually led to compromise and the creation of the IDSA. The trade organization would be headed by seasoned Washington, D.C. veteran Douglas Lowenstein, and in later years, the IDSA would prove to be very effective when the industry was under siege.

The creation of the rating system did not go off without battles. In the beginning, Sega executives wanted the entire industry to adopt the rating system Sega had created. When it became obvious that Nintendo and several other companies would not agree to use the Sega rating system, Sega took a leading role in trying to establish a new system that would be mutually acceptable. Even this did not end the fighting. Several computer game publishers created their own rating system, which they used for more than a year before eventually accepting the videogame ratings.

Well I think the real reason they didn't go with Sega's rating system was just that. It was Sega's rating system and, at the time the notion of Nintendo and Sony as fierce competitors with Sega adopting a system identified with Sega's product was, that

was very unpalatable.
— Douglas Lowenstein

It's somewhat ironic that Sega was criticized for the way it was for having actually taken a lead in producing a rating system that would provide the very information that the senators wanted to see on every package across the industry. I think Sega should have been congratulated publicly for showing taken a lead in establishing ratings for games, albeit amongst games that were proprietary or running on Sega platforms. And, of course, Sega was instrumental in the formation of IDSA and was very proactive in helping bring the industry into compliance with Lieberman's requests.

— Bill White

Videogame makers also created an independent organization to rate games called the Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB) in conjunction with the rating system. Led by a highly respected educator named Dr. Arthur Pober, the IDSA now gave reviews and it presented its rating system to Lieberman and Kohl. Though they resisted at first, computer game makers eventually adopted the IDSA's rating system, reinforcing the industry's new unity.

At Williams Manufacturing, Ed Boon and John Tobias made a modification to their basic game formula as they created *Mortal Kombat 2*. They kept the blood, brutality, and fatalities, but they also added a new kind of finishing move called "friendship." Friendships worked very much like fatalities — if a player defeated an opponent for two rounds, the opponent would stand dazed for a few seconds, during which time players had to tap in the right combination with their joystick and buttons. If the code was done correctly, instead of destroying the opponent in some gory way the victor would give him a cake, a doll, or some other gift as the word "friendship" appeared across the top of the screen in rainbow colors.

The 'friendships' were a result of the hearings. They were put in specifically because we were getting so much publicity because of the violence in the game and stuff. We just thought we'd offset the fatalities with friendships.

— John Tobias

With the ratings in place, Howard Lincoln and Minoru Arakawa decided that Nintendo no longer needed to sanitize games the way they had in the past. The Super NES version of *Mortal Kombat 2* contained as many fatalities and friendships as Sega's. This time it sold better than the Genesis version.

— By Steven Kent
From his book, *The First Quarter*

RULING THE UNIVERSE TAKES EXPLORATION, COLONIZATION AND A FLEET OF WARSHIPS HELLBENT ON DESTRUCTION.

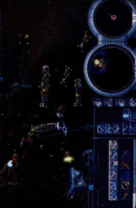
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8:57 am - GEAR BOX PROBLEM.
DROP TO 22nd POSITION.

11:40 pm - WHEELS CHANGED.
17th POSITION.

2:18 am - SPUN INTO
GUARD RAIL.
15th POSITION.

4:00 am - TWELVE HOURS DOWN
AND TWELVE TO GO.
200 MILES PER HOUR
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→ Finals

This month: your first U.S. PlayStation 2 reviews and a slew of Dreamcast titles. Welcome back to the next generation



PlayStation 2

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Ridge Racer V	113
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Eternal Ring	117
Swing Away Golf	117



■ Spectacular graphics abound, both between plays and in the thick of the action



■ PLAYSTATION 2

Madden NFL 2001

■ Publisher: EA Sports ■ Developer: EA Sports

Simply the best

Ef you were a videogame console retailer, and you wanted to sell a ton of PlayStation 2s this holiday season, you'd be wise to set up a few demo screens running *Madden NFL 2001*. But if you really wanted to be a savvy businessperson, you would set up a kiosk or two and let people try the game out for themselves. Follow this advice and we're betting you

would run out of units long before you'd run out of credit-card-waving customers eager to get their hands on what is the greatest video football game in existence.

Yes, you heard that right — *Madden NFL 2001* has raised the bar for video football. The latest version of Sega's NFL series puts up a valiant effort (see our review on page 104), but feature for feature, *Madden* stiff-arms its way into the lead and, in one fell swoop, puts the PS2 into the

must-buy category of any self-respecting sports fan.

Glance quickly at a lot of today's sports games, and you won't be fooled for long into thinking it's a television broadcast. Usually it takes only a mere second or so of concentration on the screen to spot the telltale signs of a videogame. *Madden NFL 2001* manages to maintain the illusion longer than any game we've seen, even upon close scrutiny; it is an absolutely gorgeous combination of



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The Finals Rating System

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

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

● Denotes a review of a Japanese product

MADDEN MINUTIAE

For all of you youngsters out there, here's some info you may not have known about everyone's favorite overweight, product-hawking, bus-riding broadcaster:

Madden was a great head coach. He led the Raiders to a 103-32-7 mark from 1969 through 1979, and in 1976, the team won Super Bowl XI.

Madden is now in his 20th season as a broadcaster and has won 11 Emmy awards for his work.

He gained notoriety by appearing in those "tastes great, less filling" beer ads long before we all got sick of them.

modeling, texturing, and animation. Every nook of every stadium and every nuance of the players' motions are as convincing to the eye as can be — heck, you can even take out the down-marker guys on the sidelines, watching them fly through the air in direct proportion to the blow you delivered. It's a level of detail that's absolutely mind-boggling.

Great looks, of course, are by no means an indicator that the gameplay will match, and we've all been seduced by pretty pictures that served to cover up deficient or even non-existent action. This is certainly not

the case in *Madden NFL 2001*. The controls are perfectly in tune with the action on the field, and the players' performances and motions accurately reflect their height, weight, and talent. Perhaps the best part of the gameplay is how adjustable it is. There are four difficulty levels, but within each level you can fine-tune how the players perform on both sides of the ball. Everything from defensive back awareness to the offensive line's blocking ability can be turned up or down, giving all gamers the chance to play at their own level. This also means that you may never grow out of this game — just adjust the difficulty as your abilities increase. This feature has been a welcome part of the *Madden* series for the last few years, but finally, in the PS2 version, there are two sets of adjustments — one for your team and another for the CPU — which makes tweaking things a lot easier.

The sheer numbers of gameplay and adjustable options are another area where *Madden* shines. The Franchise mode lets you build a team through multiple seasons, having to deal with



Stat-hounds will be in their glory, especially when getting knee-deep into the awesome Franchise mode



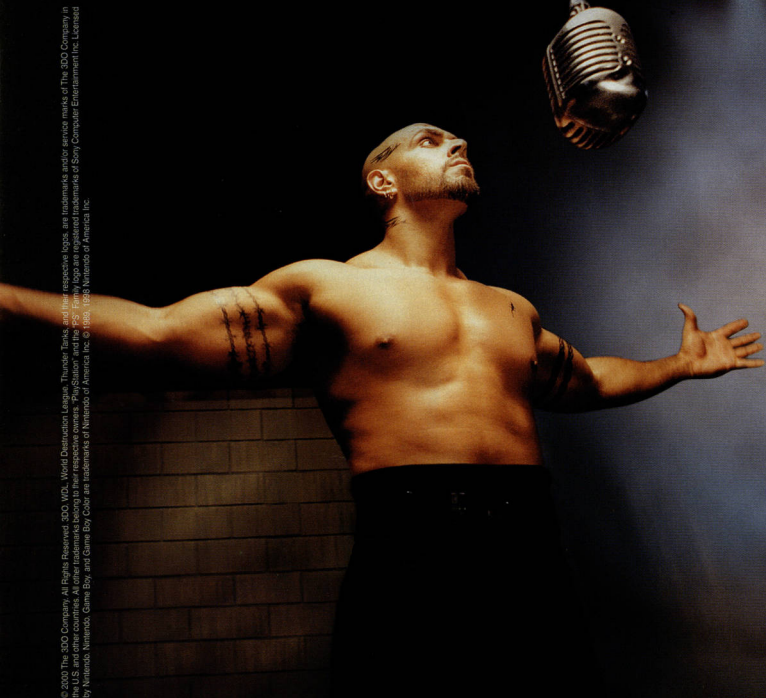
trades, rookie drafts, salary caps, etc. The Madden Challenge — perform certain tasks during a game, such as completing a 40-yard pass, and you'll gain points to unlock hidden features — is a cool, unobtrusive side-game. And of course you can always try the Practice mode for the chance to dabble in a bit of play creation or just to take a couple of teams from different eras out on the field for a fantasy match-up.

If you're of the belief that all reviews must point out something negative about a game, you're going to be disappointed here. Even John Madden and his longtime broadcasting partner Pat Summerall seem to be more pumped up than usual this year. They must have had a chance to play *Madden NFL 2001* themselves, and we're betting you'll get pumped up, too, after giving this game a try. It's really that good. — Rob Smolka

NextGen ★★★★★

Bottom Lines: If you were looking for a reason to buy a PlayStation 2, this is it — superb gameplay, even better graphics, and enough substance to make you forget about all those other, weak launch titles.

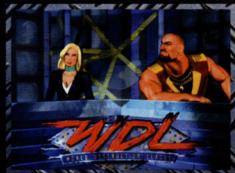
A FRIENDLY GAME...



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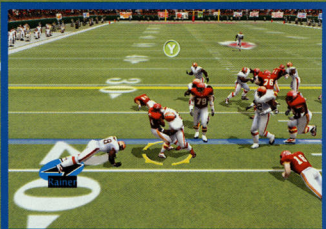
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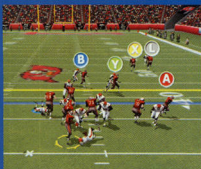
■ NFL 2K1's running game has been tuned to perfection

■ DREAMCAST

NFL 2K1

■ Publisher: Sega Sports ■ Developer: Visual Concepts

If you thought last year's game was impressive...



➔ When NFL 2K was released as part of the initial Dreamcast lineup, nearly every print and online publication anointed it as the greatest sports game ever made. We here at **Next Gen**, though, are a bit harder to please. While we appreciated the sheer beauty of the game and saw glimpses of greatness, the fact that the running game was poorly implemented prevented us from giving the game our highest reward.

■ Throw quickly...or pay the piper

What a difference a year can make. We are happy to report that **NFL 2K1** is now worthy of our full praise. The running and blocking code has been completely overhauled, resulting in one of the most intense, action-packed games of football we've ever seen. If you've got a big bruising back like Jerome Bettis, you'll revel in plowing into and through the opponent's defensive line, inflicting as much damage as you receive. Smaller, quicker backs can use their speed to get to the outside now — all without fear that the omnipotent and omnipresent linebackers of last year will be there to stall every play. Yes, you'll still be stopped behind the line of scrimmage on occasion, but only because your blocker wasn't good enough to prevent the defense's penetration. It truly is a revolutionary step up from last year, and, truthfully,

makes **NFL 2K** obsolete. You'll never, ever want to go back.

Fortunately, all of the strengths that made **NFL 2K** an excellent game have returned, and most have had some nice upgrades. The strong passing game is back, letting you feel like a real-life QB in the pocket, reading the defense and firing the ball to the open receiver. The animations are beyond reproach as well.

Another major addition to this year's game is the Franchise mode. If you're the type that enjoys the front-office goings-on in sports, you'll probably get your money's worth from this part of the game alone. Salary cap worries, rookie drafts, and free agent signings all have to be dealt with, as well as how to keep your team in one piece from week to week as the injuries begin to mount. You can even start a franchise with teams that have been redrafted from

NFL 2K1 VS. MADDEN PS2

NFL 2K1 may be good, but it does have some major competition this year, as EA Sports' Madden series makes its stunning debut on the PlayStation 2 (see page 100 for the full review). Madden does just about everything that NFL 2K1 does and manages to look even better while doing it. Madden even has some options, like the adjustable AI sliders and the tracking of individual player stats throughout their careers, that make it the game of choice, at least when it comes to the single-player game. Where Dreamcast holds a trump card is in its online play—a feature that Madden won't have until Sony gets its broadband network up and running, whenever that may be.

the available talent pool in the NFL. The only negative is that you can't save career stats for individual players.

NFL 2K1's much talked-about online play looks like its going to live up to the hype, too, at least from our early impressions. We logged on to SegaNet and, after a few hiccups trying to open an account, found a couple hundred eager competitors. We wanted to give the service a real test, so we played a few games against East Coast opponents. To our amazement, each game we tried was as smooth as a hot knife through butter, almost making us forget we were playing someone 3000 miles away. We'll continue to test the service out over the next month (purely for "research" purposes...not because it's so much fun) to see if problems start arising as more and more people join up. If things remain as they stand, NFL 2K1 is beyond recommended for anyone

ENextGen ★★★★★

Bottom Line: A great-playing game, both online and offline, and a significant advance over last year's version.



■ The many new animations make the action look even more realistic



interested in a little human interaction over the phone lines (note that you can play with as many as eight people too—four at each Dreamcast).

All we can say is that we are truly impressed. Visual Concepts has done a great job correcting the

problems of the initial release, and Sega looks like it's scored a touchdown with its online service. NFL 2K1 will be gracing our monitors for a good long time, and anyone with the slightest interest in video football is urged to go get a copy immediately. — Rob Smolko



■ Just like number 87 shown above, visual concepts scored a touchdown with this year's excellent update to the series



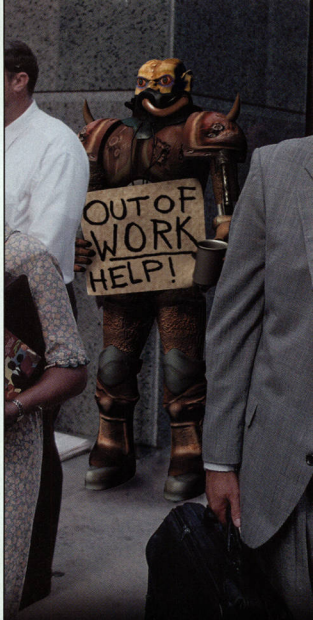
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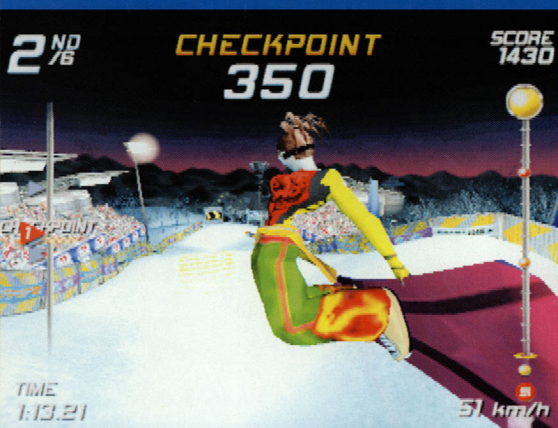
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PlayStation 2

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CONTENT RATED BY
ESRB

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While checkpoints are the main goal of each race, the best way to place first is by collecting the rare power-up (top right) and keeping your turbo meter full by performing mad tricks

PLAYSTATION 2

SSX

Publisher: EA Sports ■ Developer: EA Sports

Who'da thunk it?

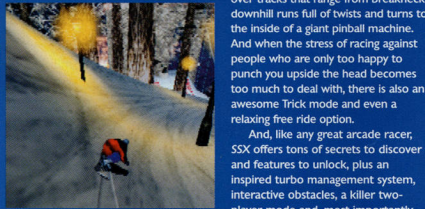
→ Throughout this year there's been plenty of talk about the best games lined up for the U.S. launch of

PS2. GT2000 was lauded and praised, as were Dark Cloud and Madden 2001. What nobody expected was that SSX, the under-hyped snowboarding game from EA that had gone through so many complete revisions, would break out and become the hands-down best game of the launch. It is.

Bringing the feel of Tony Hawk's Pro Skater together with the best parts of Road Rash and setting them all against the most magnificent levels ever to grace a snowboarding game,

SSX is the ultimate example of a console game done right. The characters are funny, individual, and well rendered. The long, beautifully animated tracks are filled with so many shortcuts diligent explorers may not find them all. Even the color scheme in SSX screams fun, with an overly lush, vibrant palette that makes everything in the game leap off the screen.

It's not just the colors that are over the top, either. The action in SSX is firmly in the "don't try this at home"



Beautifully designed locales range from a fantastical Hawaiian glacier (left) to the gentle paths of a city park (above).

NextGen ★★★★★

Bottom Line: The best game on PS2 to date. End of story.

A FACE FULL OF GLASS

Although plenty of unmarked routes can shave a little time off your score, the designers of the game marked all the shortcuts with big, glass SSX signs. These lead through office buildings, onto blimps, out of abandoned mines, and right over the competitor's heads. So whenever you see a pretty glass decoration with the name of your new favorite game on it, go ahead and barrel on through face first.

category — the average jump would instantly kill any real person. You race over tracks that range from breakneck downhill runs full of twists and turns to the inside of a giant pinball machine. And when the stress of racing against people who are only too happy to punch you upside the head becomes too much to deal with, there is also an awesome Trick mode and even a relaxing free ride option.

And, like any great arcade racer, SSX offers tons of secrets to discover and features to unlock, plus an inspired turbo management system, interactive obstacles, a killer two-player mode and, most importantly, the most fun to be had anywhere on a console.

— Daniel Erickson

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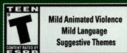
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PLAYSTATION 2

Armored Core 2

Publisher: Agetec ■ Developer: From Software

What's a launch without at least one mech?

➔ Armored Core 2 plays just like the previous original — that is, very well indeed — but with the added attraction of crisper graphics and a wider variety of missions. Each of the more than 25 missions are unique, from escorting a submarine and

destroying secret documents to defusing bombs and more. And because the missions take place in very different environments, AC2 maintains a fresh look and feel from beginning to end, with especially impressive sand storm, blizzard, and water levels.

As a supplement to the missions, From Software has included an Arena mode, in which you can battle it out much like in *Virtual On*. There are over 50 computer opponents, and with each victory you earn money and, sometimes, new parts to upgrade your mech.

If you're unfamiliar with the series and its complex mech-building process, you'll either love or hate AC2. Constructing a mech is mostly a balancing act — light and fast versus heavy and powerful, for example. And to throw another wrench in this complicated process, you never seem to have quite enough money for the upgrades you want.

As good as the game is, however, there's still room for improvement. First, it lacks analog support. By now, we feel most companies understand that analog control is a standard feature, especially in intense action games where the D-pad is tading on the thumb. Second, your mech turns



■ Smash this guy into pieces with your shoulder cannon

like the hour hand on a clock — in the three or four seconds it takes to swivel around, you'll invariably get pummeled. Third, the mission-based approach is ultimately

shallow — it follows no real storyline and simply lacks personality. But these are minor problems; ultimately, AC2 is still a blast to play. — *Chet Borber*

NextGen★★★★☆

Bottom Line: Definitely one of the best titles currently available for PS2. Certainly worth owning, unless you're turned off by the complex mech-building system or you hate mechs entirely.

PLAYSTATION 2

Ridge Racer V

Publisher: Namco ■ Developer: Namco

It's back, and this time, it's... well...

➔ We reviewed this as part of our Japanese PlayStation 2 launch coverage back in May, and since the U.S. launch version is virtually identical, there isn't a

whole lot new to add. It's a faster, more tightly tuned, arguably more impressive version of RR for PlayStation, but it won't set the racing game world on its ear.

On the plus side, the graphics stream along at a rock-solid 60fps, imparting a blistering sense of speed. The analog control may seem a little twitchy and overly sensitive at first, but with a very small amount of practice it quickly becomes second-nature and nails the feel of driving a high-performance vehicle — and Ridge Racer's traditional power slides have never been slicker. Also, the higher difficulty levels are sure to test the mettle of even the most dedicated of the series' fans.

Interestingly, this is among the first PS2 titles to take advantage of the analog buttons on the new Dual Shock controller — they're used to handle gas and brake. As such, it highlights both the promise and inherent pitfalls of such a configuration. The buttons have a limited range of movement, so basically you're left with two states



■ It's fun, but if you're looking for something new, it's a disappointment

— stomping on the accelerator for all its worth or lifting off entirely.

Still, once the initial shock of the new wears off a little, you're left realizing that although it's a prettier Ridge Racer, it's still just Ridge Racer. This one features a

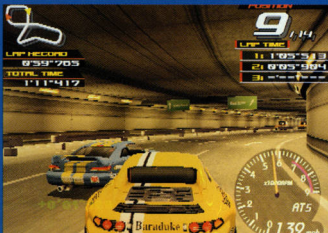
small number of tracks that simply open up different paths — one of which, Sunny Beach, is fully lifted from the first in the series — and a nice assortment of cars. But there's not much else here you haven't seen before. — *Jeff Lundrigan*

NextGen★★★★☆

Bottom Line: It bears repeating: "Like its predecessors, Ridge Racer V will initially amaze you with flashy graphics and a great sense of speed. Unfortunately, there's not a lot of meat under the basic shell of the game."



■ This is the Arena mode. The second-ranked mech is tough; it moves very fast and carries lots of powerful weapons



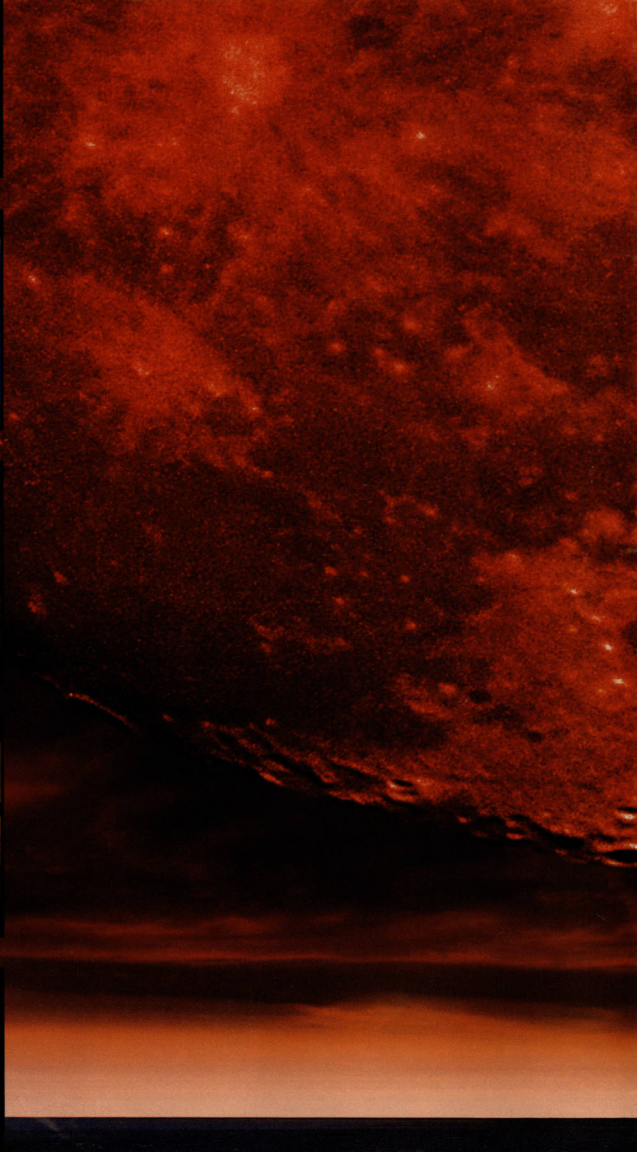
■ Did we mention that the anti-aliasing hasn't even been fixed for the U.S. release? Ridge Racer V is exactly the same as a year ago



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Eternal Ring

Platform: **PlayStation 2** Publisher: **Apotec** Developer: **From Software**

Those who remember the early days of the original PlayStation will likely also remember a first-person RPG called *King's Field*. For the Japanese PlayStation 2 launch, From Software returned with *Eternal Ring*, which mined much of the same gameplay territory. Unfortunately, it suffered from miserable framerate and was barely playable. However, with another year of work, the U.S. version has been significantly improved — at least with regard to the framerate.

But it is fundamentally still the same old thing. Despite having its code cleaned up, the game's pace continues to be pretty slow. The 3D graphics are serviceable without really making any strong impression, and while the animation is now smoother, it still isn't terribly natural. The character models appear to be roughly the same as before, and that means they're all well, kind of rough. Likewise, the voice acting ranges from passable to pathetically bad.

Given the story-driven nature of RPGs, however, this could possibly all have been forgiven if the plot had been compelling. Unfortunately, the



■ Although it's not as slow as it was, *Eternal Ring* is still pretty slow

game falls flat there as well. It's mostly a generic and slightly convoluted tale involving an island inhabited by eight dragons and a hero, Cain, out to save the kingdom and uncover his true identity. And now, the cut scenes and character interaction only pop up sporadically after long stretches of what you could call "action."

The magic system, which involves finding stones of various properties and assembling them into spellcasting rings, does hold a certain appeal to the obsessive collector and it's interesting to experiment with various combinations and try out the results. However, that's not a big enough draw to make up for this game's shortcomings. — Jeff Lundrigan

NextGen ★★☆☆☆

Bottom Line: It's the first RPG available for the system, and you could do worse. You could do a lot better though.

Swing Away Golf

Platform: **PlayStation 2** Publisher: **Electronic Arts** Developer: **T&E Soft**

Swing Away Golf is the last kind of product you want to see at a system launch: It doesn't take advantage of the hardware, and it's been done better before on other systems that are far less expensive. For what it is — a cutesy golf game with pretty PS2 graphics — it's not bad at all, but it can hardly be called an inspired entry into the launch lineup.

This wouldn't be a problem if the game played as well as, say, *Hot Shots Golf*, but it doesn't. The biggest killer is the stilted pace of the gameplay, due to the load times that crop up whenever any single action is taken. While each title delay may not be an issue unto itself, overall it really gets annoying after a while. Golf is, we suppose, meant to be a leisurely game, but *Swing Away* takes forever to play a complete round.

The actual golfing is what you'd expect, with roughly the same "swing



■ With the PS2's backwards compatibility you could actually play the superior PSX *Hot Shots Golf* instead of this, but the graphics won't be nearly as pretty

meter" game mechanics you've played a million times before, only slightly less forgiving. The best part is the Story mode, which enables you to create a character and then build up their skills and equipment with money earned from the tournament circuit, but that isn't enough to raise this game above mediocrity. — Blake Fischer

NextGen ★★☆☆☆

Bottom Line: If you want a middle-of-the-road game for your PS2 and you dig golf this might be worth a try, but you're probably better off waiting for *Tiger Woods 2001*.

PLAYSTATION 2

Dynasty Warriors 2

Publisher: **Koei** Developer: **Koei**

Romance of the Three Double Dragons



■ The feeling you get when you first drop into one of the game's huge battlefields as a single soldier is indescribable — this is the kind of unique experience that we should expect from PS2 developers

→ Unlike any game before it,

Dynasty Warriors 2 gives players the chance to experience a battle firsthand as one of nine heroes among literally hundreds of common soldiers. The graphics engine supports this realtime battlefield, displaying dozens of characters onscreen at once against a backdrop of huge temples and castles — all with no slowdown at all.

To combat the hordes, each of the nine heroes (a dozen more can be unlocked) comes complete with a signature weapon and has a number of attacks at his disposal.

There are also power-ups — both temporary and permanent — such as arrows for sniping. The game's setting is one usually reserved for Koei's epic strategy games, the massive battles of third-century China. There are three distinct factions vying for power, with three heroes per faction. In the course of a game,

each hero must win five battles (one enemy soldier at a time) to capture control of the country. This leads to an amazing body count racked up over the course of a level. However, gameplay



■ The gameplay is a lot like *Final Fight*, but on a much grander scale

quickly becomes repetitive and even tedious. There is a bit of strategy involved in deciding where to concentrate your efforts in each battle, but beyond that, it's just hack, slash, repeat. And with levels that can take well over an hour to complete, being killed

and forced to repeat a battle is maddening — not to mention level bosses that can often kill an unprepared hero in seconds. An occasional save point or even just a couple of continues could have really cut down on the frustration factor here. — Daniel Erickson

NextGen ★★☆☆☆

Bottom Line: While it is the first third-person, 3D action game to feature a realtime battlefield, the gameplay is strictly old-school. Fun but not terribly deep.

■ DREAMCAST

San Francisco Rush 2049

■ Publisher: Midway ■ Developer: Midway

Does it get any better than this?



■ Rush 2049 is the racing game for those of us who are tired of unlocking 100+ cars and just want to get out on the road and drive as fast as possible — or fly, as the case may be

→ Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome the latest entry into the "Series That Just Keep Getting Better" Hall of Fame: San Francisco Rush. The new Rush 2049 takes everything that was great about previous Rush games and ups the ante across the board. There are more tracks and more wild (and hard-to-find) shortcuts. The cars can jump even farther, and the Stunt mode is, as always, a complete blast. Simply put, it's great stuff.

Whether or not the real city of San Francisco will actually look the way it's depicted here in 49 years is debatable, but the city could certainly do worse. Massive skyscrapers and walkways crowd the urban landscape, and there's nary a polygon out of place. The glossy graphics are as rock-solid as the framerate, putting Dreamcast's power to excellent use, and the game is about as beautiful and colorful as you could ask for. The car explosions are still less-than-impressive, but other than that, it's superb.

The main addition to gameplay comes in the form of a pair of extendable wings for

each car, which significantly increases the amount of air time they retract on their own after a set period, so finding the exact moment to pop them out for just enough lift to reach that seemingly unreachable ledge presents you with an interesting new challenge.

It's a new addition to the game itself, however, that really pushes

this one over the top. Rush has always been a great multiplayer experience, but 2049 throws in a new Combat mode that is at once simple, balanced, and utterly addictive, putting more elaborate car combat games like Twisted Metal or Vigilante 8 to shame. This alone is worth the price of admission and will perk up just about any party. — Jeff Lundgren



■ Hey, it looks just like San Francisco to us ... some of the time anyway...

NextGen ★★★★★

Bottom Line: One of the truly great games just got even better.

Hidden and Dangerous

■ Platform: Dreamcast ■ Publisher: TalonSoft ■ Developer: Illusion Softworks

At first glance, Hidden and Dangerous, a new military strategy FPS from TalonSoft, has some major problems. The graphics aren't as crisp as you'd expect on Dreamcast, and several bugs can slow down the gameplay significantly.

But the ominous WWII atmosphere, thoughtfully designed levels, and seemingly limitless number of options make Hidden and Dangerous a smashing addition to the Dreamcast family. There are six major campaigns, a total of 26 missions in all, and for each one you choose a team of four from among a huge selection of operatives with a wide variety of skills. This in itself makes up a core strategic challenge, since there's never any set way to accomplish a mission's goals, and you can tailor the team to your own style — stealth versus a straightforward assault, for example.

The controls are fairly intuitive, and you have the option of using a series of in-game commands so that you



■ Don't let the lackluster graphics fool you. Under the hood, Hidden and Dangerous has got the goods

aren't always forced to take yourself out of the action to issue orders. A variety of accurately depicted weapons from the era have been included, and for something even cooler you can commandeer and drive several different vehicles, from tanks to jeeps to gunboats.

Fans of Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six will do themselves a favor by picking up a copy of Hidden and Dangerous. It's packed full of the same strategic action and adds a number of new innovations. — Garrett Kenyon

NextGen ★★★★★☆

Bottom Line: While the minor bugs and graphic shortcomings keep this game from being a classic, TalonSoft has done an excellent job presenting a solid game with enough missions, options, and surprises to keep you coming back for more.

D2

■ Platform: Dreamcast ■ Publisher: Sega ■ Developer: Warp

The second adventure (or the third, if you count Enemy Zero for Saturn) of Warp's heroine Laura Partron finally arrives in the U.S., minus one arguable sense of tentacle sex but otherwise intact. And like the original D, the sequel gets a lot of mileage out of its detailed graphics, highly expressive character animation, and creepy, atmosphere-overpowering atmosphere.

On the other hand, it's also kinda slow and boring. D2 spans 40 G-DROMs, and most of that seems to be taken up by animation files. It's structured like an adventure game, so you spend time hunting for objects like keys and so forth. Unfortunately every time Laura opens a door, or a drawer, or a cabinet, you're treated to a sequence that shows her doing it and reacting to what she finds — every single time, no matter how mundane the discovery. It's cool for a bit, then it just gets tedious.

Likewise, the sprawling, snowy outdoor environments are visually stunning, but you have to walk everywhere, and the distances are



■ Think this looks cool? Trouble is, the slow pace of D2 doesn't come across in a screenshot

pretty realistic. This means you can spend upwards of twenty minutes just trudging from location to location.

It's a shame really. Aside from the crippling pace, this is a fascinating game with a compelling, adult story that includes a number of genuine shocks and a wealth of quirky details (like the odd fact that Laura remains off the whole game, only speaking when off-camera). It's a testament to Warp's storytelling skills that you do feel compelled to keep playing just to see what happens next. But that makes it feel more like a rewarding chore than a game. — Jeff Lundgren

NextGen ★★★★★☆

Bottom Line: If you've got a lot of patience, it's well worth your time, but D2 desperately needs a better sense of pace.

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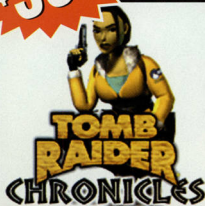
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\$39.99



Machine: PS2 Genre: Action Publisher: Eidos
of Players: 1 Available: November, 2000



Lara bucks at some fool wearing a Hawaiian shirt.



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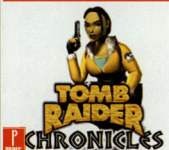
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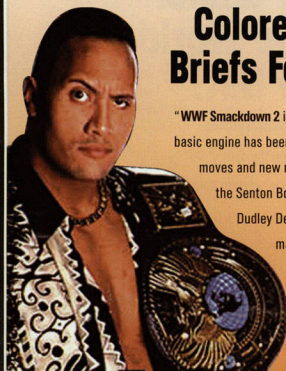
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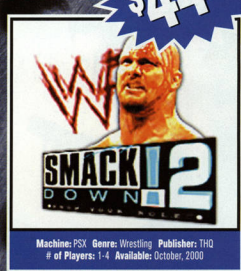
"**WWF SmackDown 2** is everything we were hoping it would be. The same basic engine has been retained but there are new locations, double team moves and new modes. There's a ladder match with Jeff Hardy hitting the Senton Bomb off of the top of an eleven-foot ladder. There's the Dudley Death Drop and Triple H being ambushed while watching a match in the VIP lounge. With plenty of brutal beatings, wild brawls in the WWF Restaurant and tons of new characters, **WWF SmackDown 2** deserves a spot on every wrestling fan's game shelf."

— DailyRadar.com



SmackDown! 2 KNOW YOUR ROLE

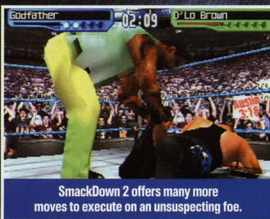
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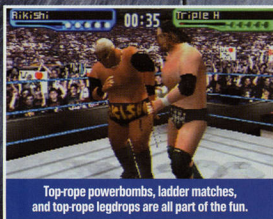
Machine: PSX Genre: Wrestling Publisher: THQ
of Players: 1-4 Available: October, 2000



SmackDown 2 will feature over 50 WWF superstars.

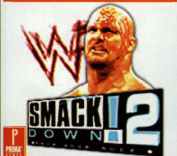


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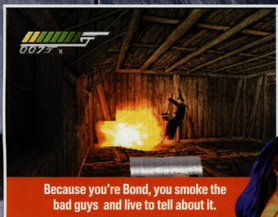
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Machine: PSX Genre: Action Publisher: Electronic Arts
of Players: 1 Available: November, 2000



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Test Drive V-Rally

■ Platform: Dreamcast ■ Publisher: Infogrames ■ Developer: Infogrames UK

Rally games are sometimes too serious for their own good. Realism is often the guiding ideal, with fun jammed somewhere in the backseat.

But with Test Drive V-Rally, Infogrames deserves credit for bringing a rally game to the Dreamcast that not only holds its own as a serious simulation but also is a lot of fun for casual players just looking for a good time.

This is primarily thanks to a cool Arcade mode. Rally races normally pit players against the clock and the elements, with competitors rarely, if ever, seen. The Arcade mode keeps the same driving style, but it introduces up to three opponents for some tighter corners and fun, high-speed wipeouts.

Fans of traditional rally racing aren't ignored either; as the standard Quick Race and Career modes let you run 16 cars through 84 different tracks in 12 countries. The driving physics are a little loose, so lighter cars tend to go flying. But, the abundance of options enables you



■ Rally masters unite! Test Drive V-Rally will give you what you need

to adjust everything from the analog stick's sensitivity to the tire tread. Everything looks nice thanks to sharp graphics and a solid framerate, with attention to details such as damage modeling and even spectators running away from oncoming cars. There's also a track editor to create your own courses, but its menus are so packed that they're hard to read. Small television screens. Nonetheless, Test Drive V-Rally offers plenty of cars, tracks, and enjoyment for the Dreamcast driver. —Jim Prestono

NextGen ★★★★★

Bottom Line: A colorful, fun, and realistic driving sim.



■ Make no mistake, Blitz isn't even in the same category as Madden or NFL 2K1. This is very much its own kind of beast.

■ DREAMCAST

NFL Blitz 2001

■ Publisher: Midway ■ Developer: Avalanche Studios

Fourth and violent

→ As Vince Lombardi once said, "dancing is a contact sport. Football is a hitting sport." Blitz 2001 isn't so much a football game as a video mugging. Gridiron warriors attack ball-carrying prey with the ferocity of lions on antelope. Helmets rocket off players' bodies, wrestling-style suplexes are issued by burly defenders, and back-bodyflips will send a poor sap soaring through the air with the greatest of ease. Expect some hurt feelings.

Midway has updated its no-holds-barred football franchise, and Blitz 2001 both looks and plays better than its predecessor. The game's essential goofy, arcade-style play remains intact, as does its whole ass announcer, but now there's a smidgen of new additions, including a sharp instant replay feature, five mini-games, and various create-a-team, playbooks, and character options. On the playing field, there are now adjustable camera angles, and though some of them are unwieldy (such as the sky-high "blimp" view), it's nice to see that Midway

endeavored to fix a glaring hole in last year's model.

The football action, played seven on a field, is largely frenetic — and perfectly delightful with four humans slamming the turf out of each other. Players will quickly fall into a smooth rhythm of scattaccato, two-step bullet passes and long bombs to defeat an aggressive defense. Running, as per the drill with all the Blitz titles, remains somewhat shaky, but it's still entirely possible to command



■ Streetcchhh for it!

a quarterback or a hand-appointed runner to sneak around a defense's weak side then trigger the game's turbo boost option for whopping gains. A human-controlled defense will be able to go man-to-man and hit the zones effectively, but an insanely over-enthusiastic "catch-up" feature makes computer-controlled offenses nigh invincible in your effort to keep up. Here, even the most conscientious defenses will be confounded by runners who spin madly, issue punishing stiff-arm, and dash like a pre-trial O.J. Simpson. —Greg Orlando

■ No sim here — knock your opponents into next week

NextGen ★★★★★

Bottom Line: In Blitz's world all roughness is necessary — and quite fun, to boot.

Virtua Athlete 2K

■ Platform: Dreamcast ■ Publisher: Agetec ■ Developer: Hill Maker

Since it comes from the same developer as the beautifully balanced Virtua Tennis, we had high hopes for this game. Unfortunately our hopes were dashed on the shores of frustration and boredom.

With its shockingly modest selection of only seven events, VA 2K simply does not offer enough variety. After the laborious process of setting up a contest, you enter the arena with dreams of gold, and although it follows the traditional control scheme — press alternating buttons quickly — rarely has a game required such a blistering pace to get up to speed. Add in silly limitations such as a stamina bar in the 100-meter dash, and it makes playing anywhere in the top four an unrewarding chore. The 1500-meter is even worse, since you actually have to steer along the track while button mashing — and yes, it's every bit as awkward as it sounds.

Although graphically superior to the competition, VA 2K simply fails to show its art in the category. The user interface isn't very clear and



■ One hapless Next Generation editor actually got a blistered fingertip trying to play Virtua Athlete — really

creating an athlete includes such minutia as entering hobbies, choosing a shoe color, and selecting what type of glasses your player wears. Presumably this is all in place because you can post your event records to a Web site and make these hobbies and such will build an online community of like-minded players. Unfortunately, the game's community will probably consist of a few hundred people whose grandparents accidentally purchased them this game instead of the one they really wanted. —Kevin Rice

NextGen ★★★★★

Bottom Line: Already limited by only having seven events, this game falls flat on the Olympic track with frustrating controls and disappointing gameplay.

Dreamcast Finals

SYDNEY 2000

■ PUBLISHER: EIDOS ■ DEVELOPER: ATTENTION TO DETAIL

Mashing for the gold



■ Sydney 2000 is decent enough for a button mashing fest, but after an hour, who cares?

→ It's Olympics season again, and with that comes a whole new battery of Olympics-based videogames. Among the first out of the gate is Eidos' Sydney 2000, and those who remember Konami's 1983 arcade classic *Troch & Field* will instantly feel at home. However, those without a joystick will feel instantly screwed. Trying to mash the buttons on a standard Dreamcast controller just doesn't make the championship cut.

The game features twelve events, including the 100-meter dash, the triple jump, skeet shooting, and kayaking, which recreate the Olympics atmosphere well enough for the average couch potato. You can easily jump into any event in Arcade mode, but the more serious athletes will want to compete through them all in the Olympics mode itself.

Sadly, this is where things start to fall apart. Each event must be trained for, with various coordination skills being put to the test through jumping rope, bench

presses, or even a simple treadmill. Unfortunately, each event has at least 12 levels of training before you actually get to compete, and many of the exercises overlap — for example, the treadmill is used to train for multiple events, but it's exactly the same each time.

The events themselves are pulled off fairly well. The triple jump goes into slow motion as the jump begins — a masterful touch — while diving involves matching button presses to icons on the screen in time to their positioning, which also works well. There's only one glaring clunker: Kayaking should have absolutely been axed — control is miserable and gameplay is non-existent.

The commentary is good, if a little dry, and the graphics are decent. But ultimately, the repetitive gameplay and monotonous training will drive off everyone but the most dedicated alternate-button-pressing master. — Kevin Rice

NextGen ★★☆☆☆

Bottom Line: A weekend rental at best. It's somewhat amusing to relive childhood memories of the local arcade, but the game's lack of depth and repetitive game mechanics grow old quickly.

Cannon Spike

■ Platform: Dreamcast ■ Publisher: Capcom ■ Developer: Palkyo

No one would expect Capcom's 3D shooter-cum-beat-'em-up Cannon Spike to be anywhere near as complex as, say, brain surgery for the record though, Cannon Spike is actually less involved than, say, mopping the floors after brain surgery. Enemies of all kinds, at once animalistic, robotic, and humanoid, are in need of shooting. You choose one of seven different Capcom heroes (among them *Street Fighter*'s Cammy and the armored man-child Mega Man) and proceed to pummel hordes of oncoming foes and bosses. Your character whizzes around on high-powered motor boots, employing both hand-to-hand and projectile attacks to eliminate the opposition with prejudice most extreme.

Cannon Spike offers 10 levels, a third-person perspective, and a top-

down viewpoint. Its play sady, is just an extended pounding on the same violent key, but a breathless sense of pace as well as a few curious touches help redeem the mix. Spike alternately rips and steals from sources as varied as John Williams' music and the zombie epic *Resident Evil*, superfoes such as the decaying Kong, "Bo Gorilla Bloody", and the killer automaton "Crazy Machine Jet Tiger" serve to fix video tongue firmly in cheek.

Detailed character models and a solid framerate anchor Spike's play. A two-player mode enables catholic, shared aggression, and there's no slowdown to speak of even when the



■ It ain't especially original, but the frenetic Cannon Spike is great, mindless fun

screen is overwhelmed with enemies and all sorts of pyrotechnics. If hardly golden, this excels at competent mayhem, and ultimately, the cannon's fire hits its mark. — Greg Orlando

NextGen ★★☆☆☆

Bottom Line: Cannon Spike is not quite as artilleristic, but it is a mindlessly fun way to murder some time.

Giga Wing

■ Platform: Dreamcast ■ Publisher: Capcom ■ Developer: Capcom

What do you say about a game that keeps score in the hundreds of billions? Giga Wing is the sort of title that now appears as a dusty relic from videogame's yesteryear. Reminiscent of classic vertical shooters like *1942*, Capcom's latest contribution to the genre is a game so hyper in every way that we're surprised the disc didn't disintegrate inside the Dreamcast.

You get to choose from four no-nonsense fighters and take to the busy skies of an Earth threatened with a mysterious evil. Gameplay consists solely of frantically pressing the fire button while desperately trying to avoid the dozens and sometimes hundreds of projectiles that fill the screen. Although the addition of a

reflective shield generated via the fire button is a nice touch, distinguishing those tiny little bullets from the background and your own ammo is basically impossible — a bit like going to *Metal Gear* and being told to avoid the guy with the funny hat.

This sort of manic style would be fun if there was anything new. But the graphics are generic and outdated, with little effort to take advantage of Dreamcast's abilities. Sound and control are mediocre, and the addition of a second player onscreen



■ Looks really busy doesn't it? Trying playing through this...

only doubles the headache factor. Sadly, this game's freshness date expired five years ago. — Jim Preston

NextGen ★★☆☆☆

Bottom Line: This should be packaged with bottles of both Visine and Excedrin.

Demolition Racer: No Exit

■ Platform: Dreamcast ■ Publisher: Infogrames ■ Developer: Pitbull Syndicate

A year ago, the PlayStation version of this was, frankly, awful. However, we're pleasantly surprised to report that the Dreamcast version is vastly improved. It still ain't great, but it's definitely up to the level of "pretty good." The idea is to score points by ramming other cars, and the combination of damage inflicted and how well you place determines the overall winner — just crossing the finish line first won't guarantee first place.

It certainly looks good, with glossy cars, a nice variety of tracks, and a few gratuitous special effects for good measure. But the special PlayStation version's sole virtue was that it looked good (for a PlayStation game), this is probably the least surprising plus.

More importantly, Pitbull has

reworked the physics model so the cars actually handle responsibly. They're still incredibly bouncy, but at least the steering feels more natural.

The camera follows the action well, and the scoring system is consistent. They've also added the No Exit mode — a classic arena-based demolition derby — plus some odd, unlockable extras like "Big Car Hunter" in which you can use the D-pad or a light gun to shoot incoming cars.

There's still room for improvement — the difficulty level is way low for a long stretch then abruptly jumps off



■ The Dreamcast version is a distinct improvement over the PlayStation one — thank goodness

the scale, and the opponent AI is a bit peculiar. But overall it's more than worth a look. — Jeff Lundrign

NextGen ★★☆☆☆

Bottom Line: This still isn't living up to its potential, but it's a fun title nonetheless.



just get up **dust yourself off**
and know that
you have the tools
to wrestle it to the ground.

sometimes,
when you least expect it,
an idea can hit you
like a **suckerpunch**.
you never even see it coming.
you've been hit with ideas before,
but never one **so powerful**.
it may have even knocked you **on your ass**.
no worries though.
and know that
you have the tools
to wrestle it to the ground.



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■ With typical Capcom style, the pre-rendered backgrounds are a marvel of crowded detail and realism



■ PLAYSTATION

Dino Crisis 2

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

Making giant strides backward

→ Time-lost heroine Regina and her burly partner Dylan star in Capcom's 3D panic survival game *Dino Crisis 2*, but they don't shine in it. In fact, the only real point of

interest here is the cast of prehistoric behemoths: the lumbering Tyrannosaur, the vicious Velociraptor, the fast, if tiny, Compsognathus, and the majestically destructive Pteranodon. Gorgeously animated and imbued with a killer instinct to rival Jack the Ripper, these dinosaurs are far more compelling than the two stock characters who hunt them or the game they find themselves in.

A straightforward, third-person 3D adventure, *Dino Crisis 2* contentedly nestles itself in the groove created by classics like *Resident Evil* and the original *Dino Crisis*. Familiar Evil-style movement controls have been



■ The cut scenes are cool, as if that matters

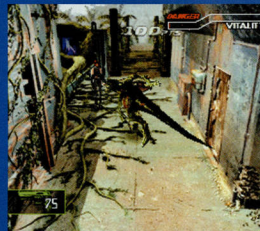
tightened to enable the game's two playable heroes to explore their surroundings with nary a misstep and to execute a run-and-gun offense. Solid graphics improve on the original, and Capcom has thrown in a delicately beautiful underwater scene to bulge the eyeballs in awe.

Though there are some decent puzzles to solve, *Crisis 2* loads its plate with lots of blood and fuels its prehistoric fire with scenes designed specifically to elicit a surge of adrenaline. Tooth-and-claw battles take up a lot of gameplay, and the endlessly respawning creatures provide great thrills at first. And then, when the rush wears off, ennui.

In fact, the incessant demand that Regina and Dylan schlep back and forth between game levels, retrieving previously hidden goodies, is a punishable gameplay offense. Were it not for the solid backstory of the

dinosaurs' existence coupled with the curious appearance of black-clad, jack-booted soldiers, these two generic souls would be nothing more than video mules, toting that barge and lifting that bale.

There is, however one other huge flaw here that can't be ignored: The game can be beaten in just a few hours — as little as four if you're very skill and half a brain. As good as certain parts of this are, there simply isn't enough of it. — Greg Orlando

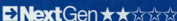


■ If you like blasting critters, then you'll love the fact they keep spawning over and over

DINO CRISIS: THE EXTINCTION AGENDA

Dinosaurs (Latin for "monstrous lizard") walked the Earth for 140 million years but couldn't escape the end of the Mesozoic era. Sixty-five million years ago, something (and scientists are baffled as to what that something was) decimated the dinosaurs, smoked the various winged and marine reptiles, and put paid to such long-lived species as the ammonite.

But dinosaur extinction is no issue in *Dino Crisis 2*. The rascally reptiles respawn each and every time Regina or Dylan travels to a new location — and, in certain areas, they're video herpes, reappearing ad nauseam despite anyone's best efforts.



Bottom Line: Beautiful graphics, solid control, and furious action still can't overcome the dull protagonists and severely foreshortened running time.

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Dreamcast™

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ESRB



A large-scale medieval-style battle scene. In the foreground, a man in a green hat and dark tunic runs towards the viewer, holding a sword. Behind him, a large group of soldiers in similar attire marches through a grassy field. The sky is overcast with dark clouds. The overall scene is one of intense action and military movement.

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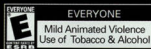
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Spider-Man

■ Publisher: Activision ■ Developer: NeverSoft

“Does whatever a spider can...”



■ What Spider-Man game would be complete without a little web shooting?

→ Excelsior! As a noun, the word refers to wood shavings. In popular usage, it has become the catch phrase of Stan “The Man” Lee, co-creator of what is now accepted as the Mighty Marvel Universe. Translated from the Latin it means “still higher” and is perhaps the perfect word to describe Activision’s ambitious 3D action adventure Spider-Man. Many, many games have attempted to capture the gleefully manic and exhilarating antics of the comic book icon Spider-Man. Only this eponymous title even comes close. A Tomb Raider on radioactively-enhanced

testosterone, Spider-Man enables you to scale walls, stealthily creep across ceilings, leap into the New York City sky and plummet it before firing off a web line to swing on. With all of Spider-Man’s powers intact, the game eliminates the need for straightforward smashmouth tactics. The traditionally cerebral Spider-Man can employ strategy as a weapon, surprising foes by dropping down on them from the ceiling and using his failed web-shooters to paralyze one enemy so as to better concentrate on another.

Moments of sheer web-slinging ecstasy have our hero hurtling across the skyline while being chased by an attack helicopter — it’s a pure keep-’em-moving videogame convention, but nonetheless it does capture the comic book magic. You will believe that a man can fly, or at least soar, across the Big Apple on a few strands of faux spiderweb.

■ NextGen ★★★★★

Bottom Line: Excelsior! Great web-slinging fun.

■ This hero stuff is never easy, is it?

Frogger 2

■ Platform: PlayStation ■ Publisher: Hasbro ■ Developer: Blitz Games

The original Frogger for PlayStation was a visual and gameplay disaster. Ugly and sluggish, it suffered from a less-than-helpful camera and no sense of depth — the kiss of death for a game that depends on knowing where you can jump next.

With Frogger 2, however, Hasbro seems to have taken those criticisms to heart. The sequel is actually quite pleasant to look at, with a good amount of variety from level to level. For the most part the camera manages to be in the right place and rarely gets in the way which is about the state of the art — no harm, no foul. And with the exception of a mildly haphazard double jump, the control is pretty snappy.

The best thing, however, is that the gameplay achieves what the original failed: it really plays like an updated 3D version of the 1981 classic Frogger. It’s all about timing and knowing when to jump — fairly old-school, arcade-style action, with new challenges overcome through a combination of

■ NextGen ★★★★★

Bottom Line: It won’t win any awards for originality, but Frogger 2 accomplishes what it sets out to do and proves enjoyable enough.



■ Frogger 2 goes a long way towards blotting out the horror of the first PlayStation Frogger

trial and error and quick reflexes. But you effectively have an unlimited number of lives, as using up your allotted number on a level just means you have to go back to the beginning of that level with a new set of lives. So anyone with either patience or skill can keep moving along.

Sure, it’s not the sort of game that makes us break out phrases like “paradigm shift,” but it’s an easily engaging, decently changing, and consistently entertaining title that’s good for five minutes or a couple of hours at a time. — Jeff Lundrigan

Vampire Hunter D

■ Platform: PlayStation ■ Publisher: Jaleco ■ Developer: Victor Interactive

Based on a classic horror anime, Vampire Hunter D is truly horrifying — just not in a good way. From the first-generation PlayStation graphics to the equally primitive gameplay and control, this gives every impression of having been resurrected, rotted and shambling, from some chamber house of dead games.

In fact, the control is so stiff and imprecise that simply running around — let alone fighting enemies — gets annoying. In battle, the inability to move action, anything resembling accuracy coupled with painfully slow attacks virtually always results in your having to take cheap hits.

The fidgety camera system further makes playing this game a chore. As in Resident Evil, the camera is fixed, so it changes view as you move. However, the split in perspective happens so often — and many of the angles are so poorly planned — that you might find yourself out of control or running in circles. What’s more, the jittery camera doesn’t even switch at appropriate times, which often produces blind spots.



■ D unleashes a magic attack. This is the only highlight of the game

If these problems don’t turn you off, then the simplistic gameplay probably will. It mostly involves killing a few enemies while running to various rooms, solving trite puzzles, and searching for keys. The only positive aspects of the game are the beautiful anime cut scenes and D’s talking hand. Besides, initially being funny (we just had to wonder what the loney D might do with a mouth on his hand), the hand’s devouring attack adds a unique element to the gameplay. Unfortunately, unlike its brooding protagonist, this tiny speck of good in Vampire Hunter D doesn’t overcome the bad. — Chet Barber

■ NextGen ★★★★★

Bottom Line: Being fans of the anime, we really wanted to like the game. But even fans should avoid this at all costs.

An invitation to Mars isn't an honor...

The newest addition to the Armored Core series allows you to go head-to-head in relentless battles using an endless combination of parts. Never before have you been given so many options for configuring your AC unit for non-stop action – especially with graphics that dazzle the imagination. Choose between solo missions or vs. friends in 2-player split screen or linked combat sorties.



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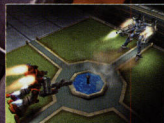
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Screenshots shown are from Sergio D'Amico's art.




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PlayStation 2

 Dreamcast

HATING PENDING
RP
ESRB RATED
MATURE
17+

■ PLAYSTATION

Hogs of War

■ Publisher: Infogrames ■ Developer: Sheffield House

Rooting to victory



■ "Cry havoc, and let slip the...uh...sorry. Wrong barnyard beast..."

→ Babe meets the battlefield in Infogrames' 3D porcine epic Hogs of War. Combat has never been so bacony and the brutal turn-based strategy that ensues when the hot hams start sniping at one another results in a salty yet oddly delicious, meal.

Pig warriors of different factions (each representing a different combatant in World War II) are called into the fight across 25 separate battlefields on six swill-soaked islands. Once the troops have rolled into the killing fields, each side takes a turn guiding a soldier into the fray. During a given 50-second turn, it's possible for a swine to move, seek cover, hop

into a killing machine or medical tent, collect valuable weapons or health bonuses, deploy a weapon, or call in an airlift and fry up some sausage.

A veritable metropolis' worth of avenues for exploration are held within War's CD-ROM.

Wholesale hog slaughter ensues that a victorious general can promote and guide its warriors into new combat specialties, and there are approximately 40 different weapons with which to make a piggy squeal. Down in the trenches, though, the best weapon is the brain, and smart generals can use their armaments in all sorts of devious ways: a well-tossed explosive can send a foe hurtling into water (Porky don't swim — usually) or a mine-laden hell.

Solid graphics, a decidedly wicked multiplayer mode, and some airy Brit humor make up for a rather limp AI in the single-player mode. There are some decidedly uncomfortable parts here, too, such as when a pig staves down an enemy through a gun scope and the target, clearly, is shielding its snout in abject terror. But all's fair, and indeed quite cool, when this little piggy goes to war. — Jeff Lundrigan



■ This is the war game in which every hill is Pork Chop Hill

NextGen ★★★★★

Bottom Line: War may be hell, but we want to load our plates with it.

Flintstones' Bedrock Bowling

■ Platform: PlayStation ■ Publisher: SouthPeak Interactive ■ Developer: Adrenalin Interactive

There are the games you can play for hours, and then there are the ones that you can only play for a few minutes at a time before running off to slam your head against a wall for a while to try and blot out the pain.

To say Bedrock Bowling is a misfire would be pure charity. Rather than actually make a bowling game with Flintstones characters — which would be simple and have some appeal — this has instead been designed as a kind of low-end bobsled simulation. No, we're not making this up.

Gameplay consists of choosing one of six Flintstones characters, hopping into a large rock bowl that acts as a ball, then sliding down a long course with the goal of knocking over ten pins scattered haphazardly along it.

Naturally, there are also obstacles to avoid and bonus items to collect, and had this been carried off with any competence, it might have proven mostly harmless. However, while the control consists mainly of moving left and right, even that's sluggish. The environments are all either bland or distractingly busy (enjoying in ruts of color that are almost painful to look at, peppered with ill-looking 3D objects almost at random).

Stages, of which there are a grand total of 12, are named things like "Lava" and "Flouded," which gives a



■ Despite the cartoon trappings, Bedrock Bowling is evil on a disc

good indication of the level of creativity here. The whole thing is so ill-conceived and executed, it's a wonder of its type. — Jeff Lundrigan

NextGen ★☆☆☆☆

Bottom Line: So bad, we're tempted to buy up copies just to protect some unsuspecting child from picking it up.

Grind Session

■ Platform: PlayStation ■ Publisher: SCEA ■ Developer: Shaba Games

Sony seems to be on a mission to steal its third parties' franchises. As Legend of Dragoon was to Square's Final Fantasy series, so Grind Session is to Activision's Tony Hawk's Pro Skater.

Not that publishers have always cannibalized each other's ideas, but Sony's new skateboarding title isn't inspired by or advancing the game that Activision made; it's just trying to cash in. The controls are exactly the same, as are many of the moves and the basic approach. The soundtrack is arguably better, but it's obviously trying to create the same atmosphere.

Sadly enough, even copying Tony Hawk wasn't enough to make Grind Session anything more than an average game. The framerate is unpredictable, the camera poorly designed, and the levels vary from the cute but stupid to

the just plain bad. There's some fun to be had going from city to city breaking things and earning "respect" by racking up points or completing objectives, but in the end it just feels like a bastardized version of a masterpiece. Which it is.

The multiplayer options, the one area in which Tony Hawk could arguably have been improved upon, falls even flatter in Grind Session. There's the same game of HORSE, but this time requiring exact moves instead of points, which quickly becomes frustrating as well as boring.



■ Grind Session is like a third-generation Xerox copy of Tony Hawk — the same, just not as good

Worse, all of the so-called multiplayer games involve taking turns, rather than playing side by side. — Daniel Erickson

NextGen ★☆☆☆☆

Bottom Line: If you've already played out Tony Hawk's Pro Skater, go pick up Street Skater 2. At least that plays differently.

Monster Rancher Battle Card

■ Platform: PlayStation ■ Publisher: Tecmo ■ Developer: Tecmo

It's not every game that requires its participants to submit to a personality survey before playing. The poorly dull Monster Rancher Battle Card, which delicately blends the tedium of arranging one's sock drawer with the verbosity of an Academy Awards acceptance speech, offers up just such a test, and you can expect to be asked such pointed questions as this one: "Between school and sports, I am better at schools [sic]."

Although a variant on the two previous Monster Rancher titles, Monster Rancher Battle Card holds none of their whimsical fun. The meat of the card-battling action takes place on a screen that captures the exciting look and feel of a picnic table. After building up "Guts" points by

eliminating items from your hand, you can then execute attacks, summon up defenses, and heal your beasts. While there's some solid strategy involved, you'll need to repeatedly jump on the X button to scroll through the endless text and suffer through uninspirable battle animations that play out whenever an attack is performed.

There's more to be said, such as the game's ceaseless procession of talking heads who spew out long-winded dialogue seemingly translated from Japanese by lower primates, (possibly gibbons or macaques). But



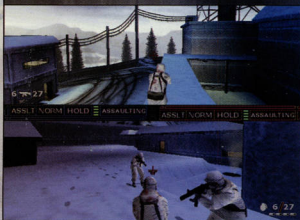
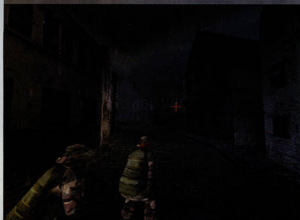
■ Why simulate a card game on PlayStation? Well, that's a really good question...

to do so would fly in the face of Kenny Rogers' great card wisdom: know when to fold 'em. — Greg Orlando

NextGen ★☆☆☆☆

Bottom Line: Know when to walk away, and know when to run...

ONE SHOT



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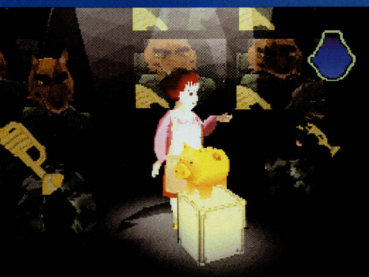


PLAYSTATION

Incredible Crisis

Publisher: Titus Developer: Polygon Magic

No ordinary day in the life



Your tasks range from unlocking a piggy bank that's also a secret weapon and dodging rolling globes to sneaking out of school and shopping. Yes, shopping.



A brilliant collection of single-player mini-games tied together with a hysterically outlandish storyline, Incredible Crisis chronicles a day in the lives of one deceptively typical-looking Japanese family.

The genius is in the segues from one ridiculous mini-game to the next. Father Taneo's strategic sprint from a giant runaway globe leads to a button-pounding plunge in a broken elevator, a quiz game in the ambulance that rescues him, and a driving game when his stretcher is thrown out the back.

The story, too, is all over the place. When daughter Ririko's pink teddy bear becomes a Godzilla-

sized monster, mother Etsuko combats it in a jet she hijacked after snowboarding away from secret agents. In the meantime, dad is protecting an embattled UFO mothership from artillery fire, and young Tsuyoshi, having been hit by a shrink ray, is simply trying to outrun a praying mantis. Believe it or not, this all fits together (loosely — remember, it's a Japanese game), accompanied the whole time by strangely appropriate ska music.

The 30+ events run the gamut from puzzle and dancing games to the obligatory button mashers and everything in between. They're creative and well executed, though the few driving game variations control somewhat sloppily.

There's just one caveat, but its importance can't be understated: Interesting as they are, these are still single-player mini-games, and no amount of creativity can compensate for the fact that you can blow through the entire thing in a few hours. —Eric Brotcher

NextGen ★★★★★

Bottom Line: It doesn't last long, but everyone on the planet should play Incredible Crisis at least once.

Dragon Valor

Platform: PlayStation Publisher: Namco Developer: Namco

Although it may initially feel dated, overall Dragon Valor is an enjoyable blend of platform game, brawler, and RPG, with a unique story that will keep you playing right to the end.

The action itself isn't terribly deep. Yes, your characters learn weapon and magic attacks, and they can perform various combos, including an air juggle, but the platform elements are only moderately difficult and generally consist of the usual jumping and dodging traps. The puzzles are also simple: find keys, trigger a few switches, and move around boxes.

It's the epic, RPG-worthy story underneath it all that will draw you in. It focuses on members of a family line whose ancestors were gods and who are sworn to protect humans

from dragons and demons. Because you play through successive family generations, the main character constantly changes, which helps keep the plot fairly fresh.

Things do drag after awhile — your character kills some enemies, starts a family, and has a child who then becomes your next character. The story eventually perks up on the second disc, but by then you've had to slog through half the game.

The fixed camera is another weak point — though generally adequate, every so often you'll find yourself



Dragon Valor can drag, but it has its rewards if you stick with it. Frustrated that you can't shift it around a bit more. But overall it's an engaging title. Try to miss it in the face of the PS2 release. —Chet Borber

NextGen ★★★★★

Bottom Line: It may not blow your socks off, but Dragon Valor is a solid title worthy of any gamer's attention.

Destruction Derby Raw

Platform: PlayStation Publisher: Midway Developer: Studio 33

The third Destruction Derby game for the PlayStation, this one has adequate graphics compared to previous installments, but, unfortunately, it's also the worst-playing game of the series.

The basic idea is to ram other cars and earn money doing so, but a number of severe glitches gum up the works. Occasionally you'll ram an opponent and even flip his car, but the game won't notice or credit your score. Then again, sometimes other cars ram you, or you'll simply slam into a wall all by yourself, and you'll mysteriously earn money for it — huh?

The many kluster moments are another major deficiency. There are various types of games to choose from, like Skyscraper and Pass Da Bomb, but not one of them is much fun. For example, in Skyscraper mode,

which resembles "King of the Hill" on a Skyscraper when you try to knock someone off, there's always another car right behind you ready to push you off. All you can do is try and avoid getting hit, which is no fun; the name of the game, after all, is Destruction Derby, which is indicative of automotive carnage, not defensive driving. The only modes worth your time are the classic Destruction Derby and Wreckin' Racing modes — simply crash into cars and earn money.

The lack of any fresh elements combined with the actual decrease in quality make Destruction Derby Raw



inferior to the first two in the series. Die-hard fans may like it, but newcomers should give Destruction Derby 2 a try. —Chet Borber

NextGen ★★★★★

Bottom Line: This game is exactly the same as the first two in the series, but with some new problems included.

Alien Resurrection

Platform: PlayStation Publisher: Fox Interactive Developer: Argonaut

Just in time for — well, nothing actually — comes this movie tie-in, surprisingly faithful to its source but with little else to recommend it.

You play not only as the cloned Ripley but also as Call and several other characters from the film, switching off from stage to stage of FV's action. The framerate is a bit chuggy, but the graphics are generally quite good, which, if nothing else, manages to nail an appropriately creepy atmosphere with suitably dark corridors and odd background noises. Played on a system with surround sound, it can indeed inspire moments of genuine, pulse-pounding fear.

On the other hand, it gets just about everything else wrong. If you use a Dual Shock controller, the game

offers literally a dozen different control schemes, but none work very well given the lightning-fast reaction times an alien popping up behind you requires — you're almost guaranteed to get killed with each new encounter.

Gameplay quickly devolves into rote memorization. Begin a stage, turn a corner, run into an alien, die. Start the stage over. Now you know the alien is there, kill it, move on. Flip the next switch, see an alien pop up behind you, die. Start the stage over. Now that you know the alien will appear behind you, turn quickly, kill it,



Here's a good joke: ammo-biting fagsuckers can actually get in closer than you can bend over to shoot them. Silly, huh?

round the next corner, die... Get the idea? Gameplay continues thus through ten long stages. —Jeff Lundrigan

NextGen ★★★★★

Bottom Line: Nice atmosphere, but what starts out frustrating quickly becomes kinda slow and dull.



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TABLETOP TO COMPUTER SCREEN

Crimson Skies was originally conceived as a computer game, but the folks at FASA found it easier to create a board game first. Falling back onto its maker's roots as a pen-and-paper gaming company, *Crimson Skies* became a tabletop game along the lines of *BattleTech*, which later became the classic *MechWarrior* PC series. Like *BattleTech*, *Crimson Skies* has players creating pilots and planes as they fight for control of the skies with character sheets, hexagonal maps, and ten-sided dice.

■ In one level, you'll leap from your plane to the enemy's, wing-walk across, jump into the cockpit, and hijack his plane

■ PC

Crimson Skies

■ Publisher: Microsoft ■ Developer: Microsoft

Pulp takes to the skies

→ *Crimson Skies* is the flight sim for people who hate flight sims. Instead of endless micromanagement and the constant battle against controls that are the hallmarks of most flight games, *Crimson Skies* is more along the lines of an action

game that has accidentally found itself in the air.

The flight model is almost apologetic about gravity: "Oops, did you hit the ground at 200 miles an hour? Sorry about that — let me bounce you back into the air with

minimal damage." As strange as this sounds, it works beautifully. You really don't ever have to worry about controls outside of joystick and throttle, since these planes are basically bicycles with wings. The game engine is occasionally pushed too hard, resulting in some slight stuttering during crucial moments, but the atmosphere is pure, unadulterated fun.

You are Nathan Zachary, the dashing gentleman aerial pirate who operates from his flying zeppelin base in an alternate 1930s America. You perform rescue missions, down enemy planes by the zeppelin-load, fly crazy stunt courses through Hollywood movie sets, and scream through the darkened metropolitan canyons of New York City. The pace of the game is



■ Perform daredevil stunts through a Hollywood movie set

fast and frantic, which, combined with the excellent score, turns this into a truly cinematic experience — one that's part Errol Flynn, part Indiana Jones, part Rocketeer.

When Microsoft purchased FASA Interactive last year, their eyes were on the *MechWarrior* prize, but *Crimson Skies* has shown that giant robots are not the only intellectual property that came with the studio. Swashes are buckled, merchant vessels are plundered, and battles are waged. This may be the greatest pirate-themed game since *Sid Meier's Pirates*, and yet there's not a creaky old sailing ship in sight. More games ought to be like this. — Chris Kramer

■ Autogyros — early helicopters — pop up in the game as well



NextGen ★★★★★

Bottom Line: This game is a breath of fresh air: fun, fantastic, and different.



With a little practice, the gore-making sword-and-gun combos are easy to master.

PC

Heavy Metal F.A.K.K.2

Publisher: Gathering of Developers Developer: Ritual

Fun while it lasts...

→ *Heavy Metal F.A.K.K. 2* is the sort of game in which a nearly naked woman puts on a single metal shoulderpad and calls it armor. The game is much more interested in a certain style and attitude than in actually making any sense. But to its credit, it's a lot of fun — if only for a little while.

For a game that's primarily worried about surface appearance, the developers have done a fine job of getting those surfaces right. Ritual licensed the Quake III engine — though the game is played from a third-person perspective — and used its curved architecture, 32-bit textures, and lighting to spectacular effect. Some of the later levels are truly bizarre and would be entirely at home in the pages of *Heavy Metal* magazine itself.

Similarly, the story is an extension of the recent *Heavy Metal 2000* movie, which has our heroine, Julie, once again battling the forces of a space tyrant. Moving through Julie's colorful world is easy thanks to a smart camera system and smooth interface. Switching among the game's 20

weapons is a snap with the mouse, and all the important information you need is clearly laid out on the screen.

Unfortunately, the gameplay is simply too facile to make this a great title. The few puzzles are all so easy that adventure fans will likely be bored, and while the action is fast and bloody, it won't

take FPS veterans too long to finish off the boss monsters of the game itself. At roughly 10 to 12 hours of gameplay with no multiplayer or custom levels to sustain it, *F.A.K.K. 2* is a disappointingly short affair. And because the game is very linear, not much is gained by replaying it. But perhaps it's only appropriate that a *Heavy Metal* game would be so stylish, sexy, and, ultimately, shallow. — Jim Preston



Julie don't need no stinkin' armor.

NextGen ★★★★★

Bottom Line: While beautiful to look at and fun to play with, *Heav* isn't ready for a serious commitment.

Sanitarium: Aiken's Artifact

Platform: PC Publisher: Fox Interactive Developer: Monolith

Growing up, we often had to wade through handfuls of useless oatmeal pieces just to get the marshmallows in our kiddie cereals. *Sanitarium* takes that same sort of sweet-tooth approach and applies it to the Diablo II experience. It removes the tedious clicking and dull, hack-and-slash oatmeal, getting right to the colorful marshmallows of spells and glyphs.

Sanitarium uses a third-person, top-down perspective, but it is in fact a 3D game that uses the familiar LitchTech engine that's powered many first-person shooters. And while the camera is easily pivoted, the limited range of visibility ultimately becomes frustrating. Often we wished we could just tilt it back a bit farther and see more than 20 feet in front of the character — this became especially true in hectic multiplayer battles.

The single-player game involves a cop with psionic abilities named Cain, voiced by a bored-sounding Ice-T, tracking down his evil foster brother named Abel. The story won't win any awards, but it is nicely paced, and



Gaining new psionic abilities will result in colorful light shows.

while some puzzles are just busywork, a few are truly ingenious. The interface is simple enough, using only the mouse and a few hotkeys.

But the real attraction comes from the more than 80 "talents" in *Sanitarium*. Cain picks up these colorful psionic abilities, which enable him to do everything from healing and cloning himself. The graphics are pretty but not memorable, and neither the single- nor multiplayer modes really distinguish themselves with anything new. It's engaging but lacks the depth to be truly great. — Jim Preston

NextGen ★★★★★

Bottom Line: A colorful game that starts out fun then slowly grows routine.

Soulbringer

Platform: PC Publisher: Interplay Developer: Gremlin

Let's get one thing out of the way: This 3D, isometric RPG is ugly. Textures are pixelated, models are low-poly, and there's a far-too-close, pitch-black fog layer that makes every location look like a coal mine at midnight.

Unfortunately, the rest isn't much better: The game just isn't player-friendly; for example, navigation is a game in itself. You get no indication where an archway leads before you walk through it. You're forced to start out with a broken compass, and there is no auto-map feature whatsoever. You also spend a lot of time wondering what you should be doing, thanks to needlessly vague quest assignments and obscure puzzles.

Even simple movement is a chore. Thanks to a lousy camera, you'll constantly head straight where you didn't mean to, and evade running is virtually impossible, as you can't make even the slightest change of direction without coming to a complete stop and pivoting before continuing. Collecting loot is similarly painstaking



Don't let that looming black haze fool you. It's actually daytime.


→ your character has to slowly bend down and pick up items individually.

Combat is the game's saving grace.

While targeting is cumbersome and projectile weapons useless against a moving target, the mo-capped animation is smooth and varied, and you can both choose specific attacks on the fly and use pre-programmed combos, even setting them to repeat indefinitely or mix spells with melee attacks. This flexibility, combined with a worthwhile (if convoluted and contrived) story and interesting voice acting are the game's few redeeming qualities. — Eric Bratcher

NextGen ★★★★★

Bottom Line: If you've already beaten *Diablo II* and *LowWind Dale*, and you simply cannot wait for *Baldur's Gate II* and *Arcanum*, this game will keep you from RPG starvation. But it won't taste like steak.



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→ Letters

Write where you belong

→ I just wanted to know, what the hell happened to *Castlevania: Resurrection*? The screenshots you had in Milestones looked pretty cool, and I was looking forward to it. What happened? And can you please tell me where I can pre-order a PlayStation 2 before October 26th for a price LESS than \$299? Everywhere I've looked so far is accepting pre-orders for

the abominable launch price! What happened to the good old days when we could pre-order the \$200 Dreamcast for \$130 (yup, it happened) four months before the launch date? Is there any place that I've overlooked?

OFM710@cs.com

Castlevania: Resurrection was axed. Period. As with almost all such decisions, Konami hasn't offered any

concrete reasons for doing so, but like it or not, such things happen all the time in this industry.

As for where you might pre-order a PlayStation 2 for less than the going \$299, there isn't anywhere. Nowhere. Not at all. The simple fact is PlayStation 2 is a pretty pricey machine for everyone involved in the distribution pipeline, so you're not likely to get a

break anytime soon. Our advice? Try hauling a batch of old games to an Electronics Boutique or some other retailer that will give you credit in exchange for bargain and "pre-owned" bin fodder. It works for us.

→ With all the forthcoming systems, I can't help but wonder which one will win. I think the

companies jumping on the bandwagon (i.e. Microsoft, Nintendo) will probably wind up producing the greatest console. Meanwhile, the true groundbreakers (i.e. Sony, Sega) will be left behind. It's like learning every move in *Soul Calibur*, perfecting them and never losing to the computer, then having a seven-year-old button masher beat you like nothing. It's ridiculous. I truly feel for poor old Sony and Sega. I already own a Dreamcast and greedily await PlayStation 2's stateside release. I would like to hear what your opinion is on this.

Ian "Skeanbear" Skeans

Considering Nintendo has been making consoles longer than all of them, we think don't think its fair to call them bandwagon jumpers. Competition is a good thing, and the more contenders there are, the better. This holiday season, we predict Sega's sales will be decent, and Sony will likely sell out every PS2 it puts on the shelves. Next year? Expect a war. And the ultimate winner will be gamers, because all four companies are going to do everything they can to grab your attention, which will hopefully result in a lot of great games at great prices.

→ Finally, I am now in the 12th grade and ready to get out of school, and since I'm about to graduate, I want to know every step you guys went through to get where you are. Can you tell me if you went to college and took some kind of class? After college, whom did you contact, and what requirements did it take? Can you tell me what you guys went through and what's the best way to get where you are?

Raymond Ellis

Honestly, no two people ever arrive at this job by the same

THE LOOMING TERROR...

I hate to bring politics into the land of gaming, but it was going to happen regardless. Vice President Al Gore chose Senator Joseph Lieberman to be his running mate for presidency of the United States, and with the way Lieberman has reacted to "graphic" videogames and music in the past, how do you think this will affect current censorship laws throughout the country? Should I expect to mail order all new music and games now?

Ryan Beasley

I'm concerned with the appointment of the Antichrist of Videogaming and Popular Culture, Joseph Lieberman, as the running mate on Al Gore's team for the White House. I wanted to know what this means for the life and freedom of our videogaming choices, or for that matter, the freedom to do and look at what we please! If they're elected, I'm afraid that the dawn of videogaming history will come to a slow halt because of Lieberman's censorship views and that the young videogaming culture will not be able to experience the upcoming wave of new technologies and new ideas about videogaming.

You're the most intelligent and well-written videogaming magazine out there, and I'd like to see what you have to say about this.

Scott Denton

OK folks, calm down. In the wake of Vice President Al Gore's selection of Senator Joseph Lieberman as his running mate this election year, we've received a metric ton of mail — some fearful, some downright angry. This puts us in a difficult position, as we're not in the business of endorsing, or trashing, political candidates (the entire Next Gen staff consists of Blue Anarchists,

which don't fit easily into the known political spectrum anyway). However, the current Democratic ticket is a strange beast from a gaming and techno-geek perspective. On one hand, Al Gore has long been a proponent of information technology and recognizes the power of new media — he really was instrumental in

turning the Internet from a military and academic communication tool into the crazy Web we have today. On the other hand, Joe Lieberman is a staunch social conservative from way back, taking a stand against what he sees as objectionable content not only in games and music but also film and television. Worse, the religious right-influenced Bush-Cheney Republican ticket doesn't exactly offer a more palatable alternative.

As far as videogames go, however, when Lieberman (along with others) called in industry executives back in '94, he was calling them on the carpet for failing to inform consumers about violent or otherwise objectionable content — which, in point of fact, the industry was falling to do. The ESRB rating system was put in place because of that, and the industry went on. (See Steve Kent's retrospective, page 92)

At the end of the day though, while freedom of expression and culture are important issues, there are an awful lot of others — education, Social Security, gun control, environmental policies, etc. — that are equally, if not more, important. Consider all the issues before deciding.

And look at it this way. As a Senator, Lieberman could convene congressional hearings, and he's also been bandied about as a Supreme Court justice. If he does become vice president, at least that takes him out of the loop for much else besides attending state funerals.

■ INDUSTRY IN A HEADLOCK?



■ The looming Lieberman — we wouldn't worry one way or the other

route. What we do have in common is that every editor at **Next Gen** has gone to college and did, in some form or other, study for a career in writing — and we played a hell of a lot of games. We'd recommend journalism as a good place to start for any career in magazines, but an English degree or any sort of liberal arts program with a lot of writing courses wouldn't be bad. At the end of the day, it's being a good writer that will eventually get you noticed (at least at **Next Gen** — we can't speak for others). Beyond that, you just have to do it. Start a Web site, or find one to submit some work to, send a lot of resumes, and be prepared to do a lot of grunt work to begin with. Everyone has to start somewhere.

→ I'm here to tell you that not only does **Next Generation** provide a totally enjoyable read, it also was behind my best stock market coup. I remember reading an issue of **Next Generation** in which you postulated that nVidia might be the chip that would be used in Microsoft's Xbox. Knowing the quality of your reports and information, I quickly opened an online brokerage account and invested \$500 of hard-earned cash. I waited and watched the stock rise and fall with industry speculation. Then I hit the big time — Microsoft announced nVidia's involvement and my initial \$64 per share soared to \$130. I quickly sold and plunked my newfound riches down on Java certification classes. So thanks **Next Generation**. Keep hitting me off with those picks!

C Wright

And people say **Next Gen** is just about games...

(Please note: Results not typical. **Next Gen** makes no claims of fiscal expertise and accepts no responsibility for any losses incurred, whether financial, social, spiritual, or

WE'RE BIASED (AGAIN. GROAN...)

1) Ok, admit it, sometimes you guys are biased. I'm sure *Deus Ex* is good, and I'm fine with the five-star review except for one small issue. Because of your bias (which could stem from your close relationship with the developer or your glowing previews of the game, but it doesn't really matter why), you didn't dock the game for running choppily on non-3dfx cards (which constitutes the majority of the market nowadays, according to nVidia). You wouldn't let some other games (*Ultima 9*, for instance) get away with this, so your bias is quite clear. I don't mean you're biased because you liked the game, I'm just taking a moment to point out that (in this instance) review criteria were not applied consistently.

2) Regarding Frank O'Connor's X-philes editorial, he is correct in everything except for the implication that the Xbox moniker has no downside. If Microsoft fails against Sony or Nintendo, I'm willing to wager it won't be long before we see "Ex-box" headlines...

Anthony Farmer

1) Oy, one more time, please — we're professionals and have never, ever let a relationship with a developer, or any previous coverage we've given a game, affect its final review, and our record here stands for itself (*Blasto*, anyone!). In this instance, there are review criteria, and there are review criteria. For example, yes, *Deus Ex* did run a bit choppy, but given the overwhelmingly open-ended, fresh approach the game took, in the end it didn't detract significantly enough to keep us from enjoying it. *Ultima Ascension*, on the other hand, not only didn't run smoothly but had other bugs and glitches as well (a number of which were mentioned in the body of the review). And, perhaps more subtly, although it was a huge, impressive RPG, *Ultima* was still just an RPG, which in itself isn't a big enough reason to shave off a star, perhaps, but when taken together with the technical problems, is.

2) "Ex-box!" Aw, damn. Now we're going to have to think of something else to use when the Wheel of Bias lands on Microsoft some month ... D'oh!



■ No, really, *Deus Ex* is that good...

imaginary, using the information found herein. No user serviceable parts inside. Avoid bending, exposure to magnetic fields, and immersion in benzene. Not to be taken internally.

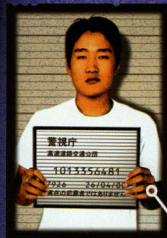
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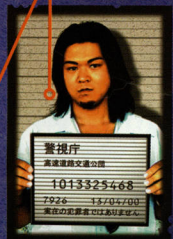
Tokyo Xtreme Racer 2



悪魔達はover 100 miles of highway上で
他者の安全も省みずにレースをする。



Hundreds of opponents から逃れる事は
不可能だ。何故なら彼らもまた strong
competition を持っているからだ。



危険死

この脅迫者達は自分達を
ultra-super cool だと信じて
疑わない。彼らはその持てる
力の限りを尽くし闘う。
Emperor of the Streets の名を
手に入れる為に。

速度

路上にたむろする
流浪の一团は名誉ある
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忠誠心はこのシンボル
しか share しない。



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Tokyo Xtreme is meant as a simulation only. The racers shown are not actual criminal suspects.

Sega Dreamcast



CRAVE ENTERTAINMENT

www.cravegames.com

→ Retroview

November 1979

Games go mainstream, and the seeds of war are sown

→ Christmas of 1978 had been so good for Atari that the company began marketing its 2600 console year round, not just during the holidays. It worked. 2600s practically leaped off the shelves, much to the chagrin of Magnavox's Odyssey.

Atari was also hard at work developing Cosmos, a cartridge-based, holographic, portable game console. The system would never ship, but an arcade variation of one of its games would, with incredible results. A vector game that featured a single tiny spaceship blasting its way through endless waves of space rocks, Asteroids exploded into arcades, selling a staggering 70,000 units. Despite this success, the business was still difficult. Atari's pinball division folded, thanks in no small part to competition from videogames, and Bally withdrew software support for its home console, the Bally Professional

Arcade, so it could focus on its arcade and casino games divisions. Interestingly, this led to the formation of one of the first user groups, as high-and-dry BPA owners found themselves creating their own games using the console's BASIC program. Mattel's Intellivision, however, blazed through its initial test-marketing phase with a lineup of solid sports titles and smooth, high-resolution (192 x 160) graphics. It would enter full production in 1980, becoming the final entrant in the original console war.



■ Conceived by Iyle Rains and programmed by Ed Logg, Asteroids was the first game to enable high scorers to enter their initials

Arcades' Next Wave: Star Castle, Gorf, Defender

→ NextGen

Next Generation Magazine

Here it Comes!
INTELLIGENT TELEVISION
Mattel's sophisticated new console will change gaming forever

30+ Games Reviewed!
TRS-80
• Temple of Aphrodite
• Astroblast
• Asteroids
• Odyssey II
• Glowdown in 2100
• Apple II
• Canyon II
• Atari II (2500)
• Star Raiders (800)



CONSOLE PROGRAMMING SPECIAL!

BASIC Programming: Atari 2600
Bally BASIC: Bally Arcade
Computer Intro: Odyssey
Which BASIC program is best for you?

Previewed:
Alien Invaders Plus - Odyssey
Zork - Apple II
Superman - Atari 2600
Air/Sea Battle - Atari 2600
Space Invaders - Atari 2600

■ ATARI ■ BALLY ■ ODYSSEY ■ INTELLIVISION ■ APPLE II ■ TRS-80 ■ ARCADE

What we were playing

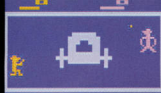
They didn't look real, but they sure were fun

■ SEA WOLF II



■ System: Arcade
■ Publisher: Midway

■ OUTLAW



■ System: Atari 2600
■ Publisher: Atari

■ HOCKEY



■ System: Odyssey
■ Publisher: Magnavox

■ MAJOR LEAGUE BASEBALL



■ System: Intellivision
■ Publisher: Mattel

■ ALPINE SKIING



■ System: Odyssey
■ Publisher: Magnavox

Top Pop Albums of 1979 ...and in the real world

- Bad GirlsDonna Summer
- Blondes Have More FunRod Stewart
- Breakfast in AmericaSupertramp
- Briefcase Full of BluesBlues Brothers
- The CarsThe Cars
- Dire StraitsDire Straits
- Get the KnackThe Knack
- In Through the Out DoorLed Zeppelin
- In the Long RunThe Eagles
- Minute by MinuteThe Doobie Brothers



■ Mother Teresa accepts the Nobel Peace Prize. Pope John Paul II becomes the first Pope to visit the United States. And Ry Cooder's *Top Bill You Drop* is the first digitally recorded record album ever released.

■ The impossibly mis-designed Susan B. Anthony dollar coin is introduced nationwide, despite the fact that every vending machine, tollbooth, and parking meter in America thinks it's a quarter. For that matter, so do most Americans.

■ The planet's billions of inhabitants avoid an unpleasant death by flaming shrapnel from above when space station Skylab disintegrates but plunges harmlessly into the Indian Ocean.

■ A U.S. postage stamp costs 15 cents, a gallon of milk runs \$1.44, and a gallon of gas costs only 77 cents — that's one Susan B. Anthony quarter, not four.

■ Texan Ross Perot considers buying a small software company called Microsoft from its founder, a young entrepreneur named Bill Gates. Gates says he asked for \$6 to \$15 million, but Perot recalls Gates' asking figure to be in the \$40- to \$60-million range.

■ The Three Mile Island nuclear power plant makes headlines when a reactor's cooling system malfunctions, eventually resulting in the release of thousands of curies of radioactive gas and water into the surrounding area and nearly causing a total nuclear meltdown.

■ Fittingly, one of the top ten movies of the year is the *China Syndrome*, the fictitious story of a nuclear disaster and the government's attempts to conceal it. The movie leads to one of *Saturday Night Live*'s most memorable skits, the *Pepsi Syndrome*, in which cola spill on a control panel leads to an irradiated, thirty-stories-tall Bill Murray.



EXIT

You'll need skill, endurance
and a reliable *blowhole*.

ecco
THE DOLPHIN™
DEFENDER OF THE FUTURE



Sega Dreamcast
IT'S THINKING



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Slay away from jellyfish. Remember to come up for air. Don't eat bad fish. Or you could die. Of course, a shark could kill you too. On top of all that, the ocean's in a downward spiral and it's up to you to save it. Tough job, but you'll figure it out. You're the chosen one. The big fish (although you're not a fish). Too bad you can't even count on Greenpeace. The weight of the ocean rests on your dorsal fin.



ANIMAPLEX

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ANIMAPLEX

ANIMAPLEX

Animated Blood



EVERYONE

ESRB

THEY'RE
BIGGER,
FASTER,
SMARTER.
AND RIGHT
BEHIND YOU.

DINO CRISIS 2

Yes, Regina is back in the action-packed sequel to the blockbuster survival-horror hit. Sent in for search and rescue, she is now armed with even more dino-fighting heavy artillery. Only Regina is prepared for the adrenaline-pumping battles the recon team will soon encounter. More action! More intensity!

More prehistoric predators! One question remains... are you the hunter - or the hunted?



Animated Blood and Gore
Animated Violence



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