

• PlayStation

• Xbox

• Dreamcast

• GameCube

• Game Boy

S M

SILICON MAG

Episode 30 • 02.01

MDK2:

Armageddon

A world **EXCLUSIVE**
first review

Xbox Announced!

SM's got the full story

Dragon Ball Z: Legends

Is it the best DBZ game
ever?

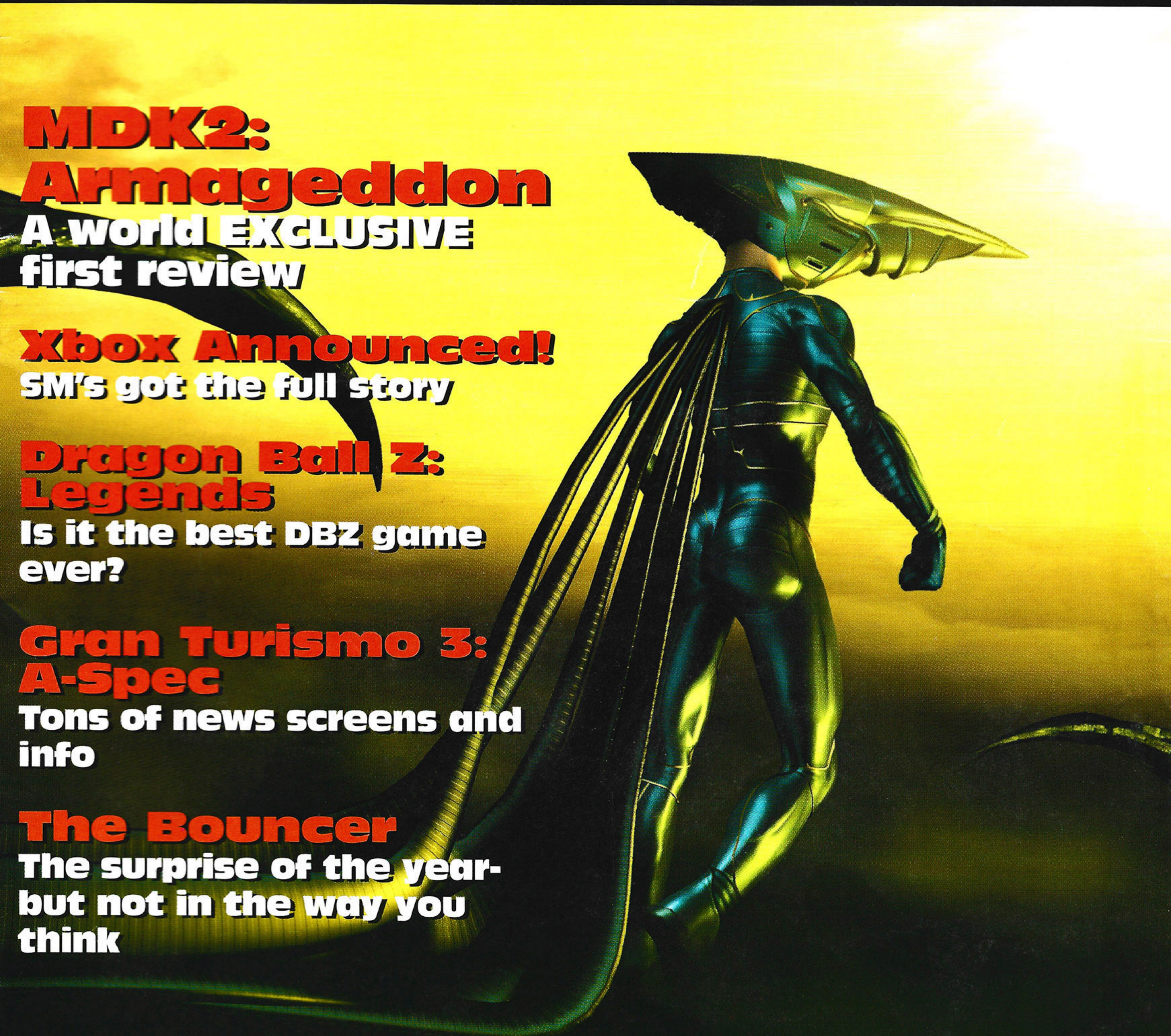
Gran Turismo 3: A-Spec

Tons of news screens and
info

The Bouncer

The surprise of the year-
but not in the way you
think

• Final Fantasy X Revealed! The story starts on page 18



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Animated Violence



- PlayStation
- Xbox
- Dreamcast
- GameCube
- Game Boy

S M

SILICON MAG

Episode 30 • 02.01

Ring of Red

Who will rule Japan?

Kartia

Deluxe strategy at a budget price

Klonoa 2: Lunatea's Veil

His name may not be Fritz, but he's still one cool cat

Dance Dance Revolution

It's been a long time coming, but it's here!



• Oni Reviewed! Konoko came, saw and kicked some...



TEEN
T
CONTENT RATED BY
ESRB

Animated Violence

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Boxes



Japan



United States

This was a no-contest situation. The U.S. box effortlessly swept the Japanese box in our second 5-0 vote in so many issues.

Editor Brian Wakefield made the mistake of thinking that the Japanese box was actually the U.S. box (he assumed that good boxes don't happen in the U.S. and we all know what Stuart Smalley says about making assumptions) thus the original vote tally was 4-1. Once corrected as to what box was what, he changed his vote.

We think Capcom should revise the Japanese SFEX3 art to look more like ours- what a first.

Accessing: the news spin

While Las Vegas is known for its gambling, Microsoft certainly wasn't taking any chances in the city of neon. It was here that Microsoft chose to take advantage of the "slow season", grab the CES spotlight and shine it squarely on Xbox.

During the International Consumer Electronic Show, Microsoft Corporation chairman and chief Software Architect Bill Gates formally unveiled the Xbox video game console and its controllers. They also took the time to demonstrate two exclusive Xbox games.

Mr. Gates proclaimed "The Xbox is the future of video gaming." He continued "With its breakthrough technology and incredible graphics capabilities, Xbox will set the standard in gaming for years to come. It enables game designers to create a whole new world of game-playing experiences that will captivate the imagination and competitive spirit of gamers like no other console."

While we have certainly heard similar proclamations with the release of every new console, Xbox has learned a few things from its competitors. It includes four game controller ports, an ethernet port that is broadband ready for top-speed online play. The controller has shoulder buttons, analog sticks, and built in dual memory card slots while taking advantage of these proven

game player favorites, Microsoft also showed they were not afraid of taking chances by including an 8GB hard drive, a first in console gaming.

The two games that were demoed at CES were Oddworld: Munch's Oddysee by Infogrames (previewed on page 25) and Argonaut Games' Malice: A Dark And Cosmic Fairy Tale.

Activision announced that an enhanced version of Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2, entitled Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2X, would also be among the launch titles. They stated that the inclusion of online multiplayer game modes and the ability to host tournaments would be among some of the Xbox-only features.

Speaking of surreal, it was certainly a Kafka-esque Kodak moment when both Bill Gates and The Rock combined on stage to announce that the latest WWF licensed videogame, WWF Raw Is War, would be among the first titles to launch on Microsoft's new system when it appears in the fall of 2001.

With the unveiling of the actual console design and the first demo of software on the system, the Xbox is one step closer to becoming a reality. With some of the largest game publishers like Infogrames, Electronic Arts and Activision already promising their star titles, Xbox's future is looking bright.



•From top going counter clockwise, the Xbox with controllers, the Xbox from behind, the logo, and the Xbox going solo

Noticed: catching the details

If you're reading this then the chances are you've probably already noticed the new dual cover format and are wondering what's going on.

Each issue of •SM is
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actually planned with two covers and then one is selected over the other to run on the front page. The mitigating factor is usually available assets like art for use on both the cover and

in the cover story. Since games are usually covered two or three months before their release, the cover that didn't make it rarely gets used.

So instead of letting

great art go to waste, we decided to run two covers and two cover stories. Do you like the two cover/cover story idea? Please let us know at: vote@siliconmagazine.com

•SM
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30 of 100,000 • 02.01

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PlayStation 2

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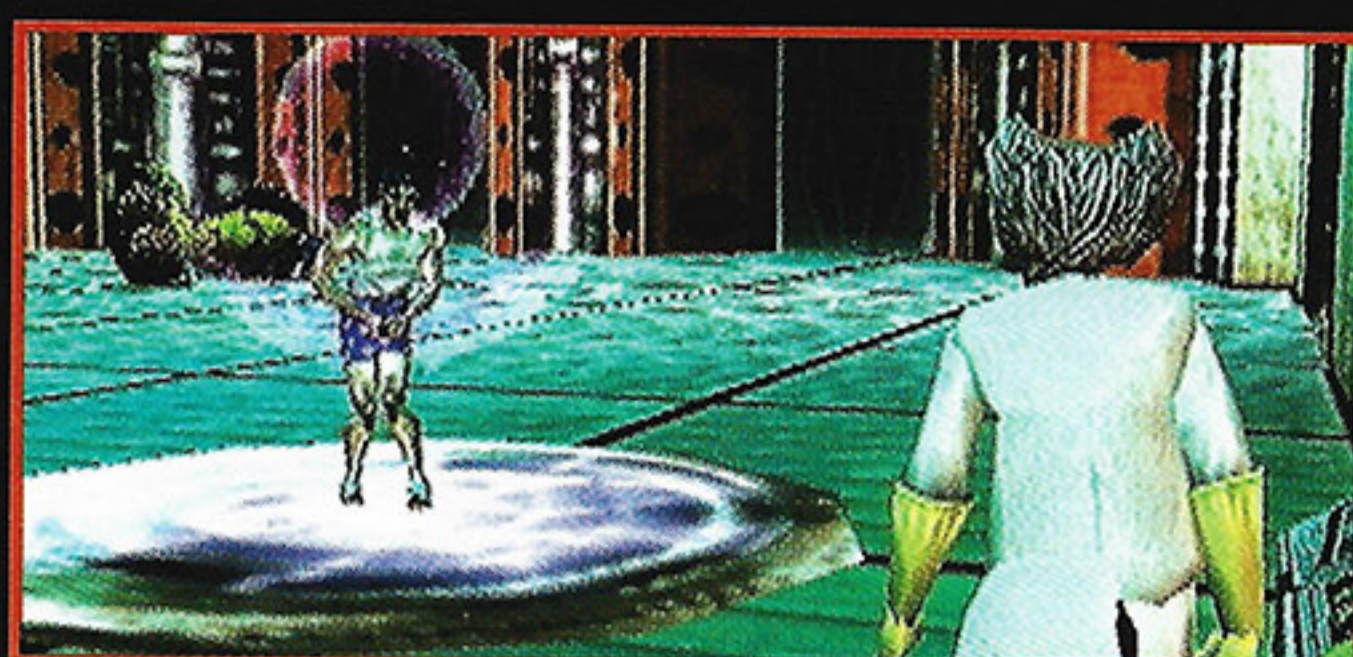
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•Meet the unlikely heroes of the MDK universe (from left to right) Max, Kurt and Doc



MDK2: Armageddon

Platform: PS2 • Publisher: Interplay • Release Date: March • SM Rating: 90



When Shiny first introduced Earthworm Jim, gamers were wowed by revolutionary graphics, animation, and intense sound and music. It was truly a leap forward in 16-bit gaming. On top of these technical achievements, Shiny carved its name onto the industry map with a franchise whose personality was so off the wall, so unforgettable, that it still stands today as one of the most highly sought after old-school series.

Then they topped it.

MDK, which had some confusion and controversy surrounding its name in the early days (was it Murder Death Kill?), presented a completely over-the-top storyline and some of the wackiest yet lovable game characters ever. For those still wondering, MDK stands for Max, Doc and Kurt. Doc is the semi-mad scientist who brings the other two heroes to life by

altering his dog Max's genetic makeup, and turning his janitor Kurt into a high powered, alien-blasting, human apocalypse. After all is said and done, Max has become a six-legged, cigar-toting ball of attitude capable of wielding four assault weapons at once. And Kurt, well, you have to see Kurt to believe him.

Bioware, famous for the PC hit Baldur's Gate, has taken over the MDK series for this sequel to

the underrated Playstation romp. Though the game generally plays the same, and level design is also quite similar, there are a number of key elements that have been upgraded to take advantage of PS2 technology. The visual presentation is a testament to the fact that we have indeed reached a new generation in console entertainment. You can't deny that when you look at something in the background that appears

to be a mile away- and see something animating. And at close range, there is just an unbelievable amount of fine detail built into the environments. Their design is also extremely creative, providing a very enjoyable world to roam around in. But don't get caught up too long staring at the graphics. There's a very difficult game in front of you, and if you let up for even a second you'll get wasted.

Enemy AI ranges from "Which way did he go, George?" to wickedly intelligent. While many enemies are classic drones that keep coming at you until you destroy their generator, others are large, maniacally crazy predators with accurate firepower. However, making it through a level isn't just about blasting aliens left and right. The game's overall design makes things even more difficult, with levels that go on seemingly forever and occasional mind-racking puzzles. What's really interesting is the way that MDK2's creators managed to cover the difficulty up, masking it with a hilarious story and fun minigames.

You get the opportunity to control each of the three heroes at different times throughout the story, and the levels are designed around the style of play a particular character requires. Kurt will spend a lot of time sniping door locks, targets and bad guys from great distances. Max will be well protected from the onslaught he encounters because he has the ability to carry four guns at a time. And Doc, being

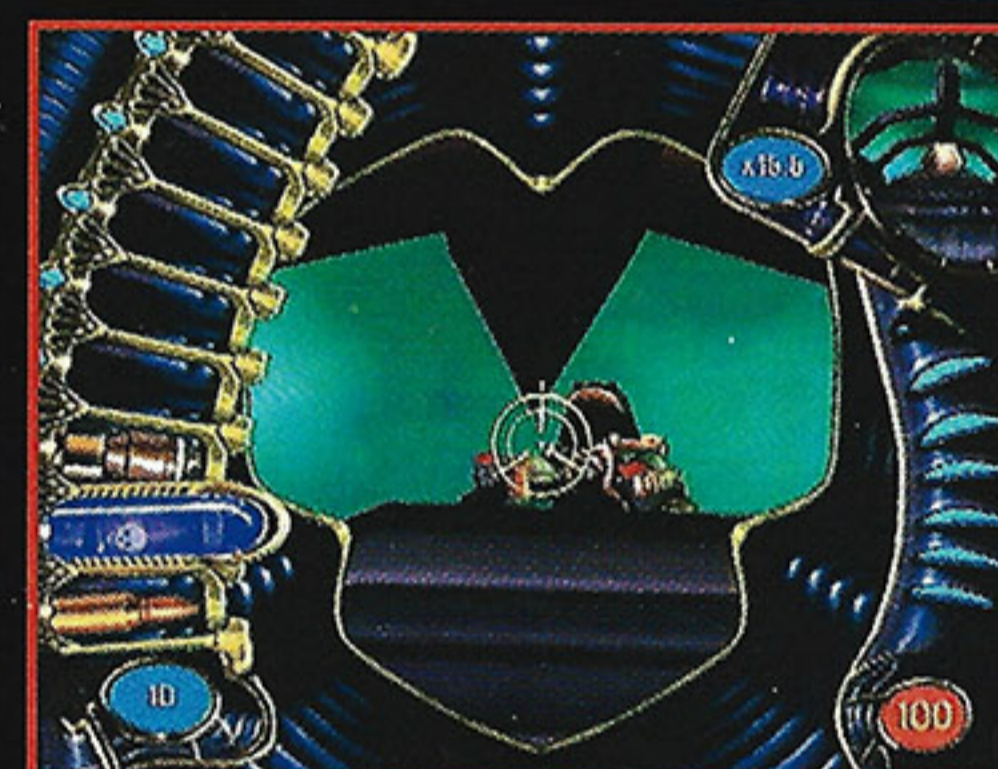
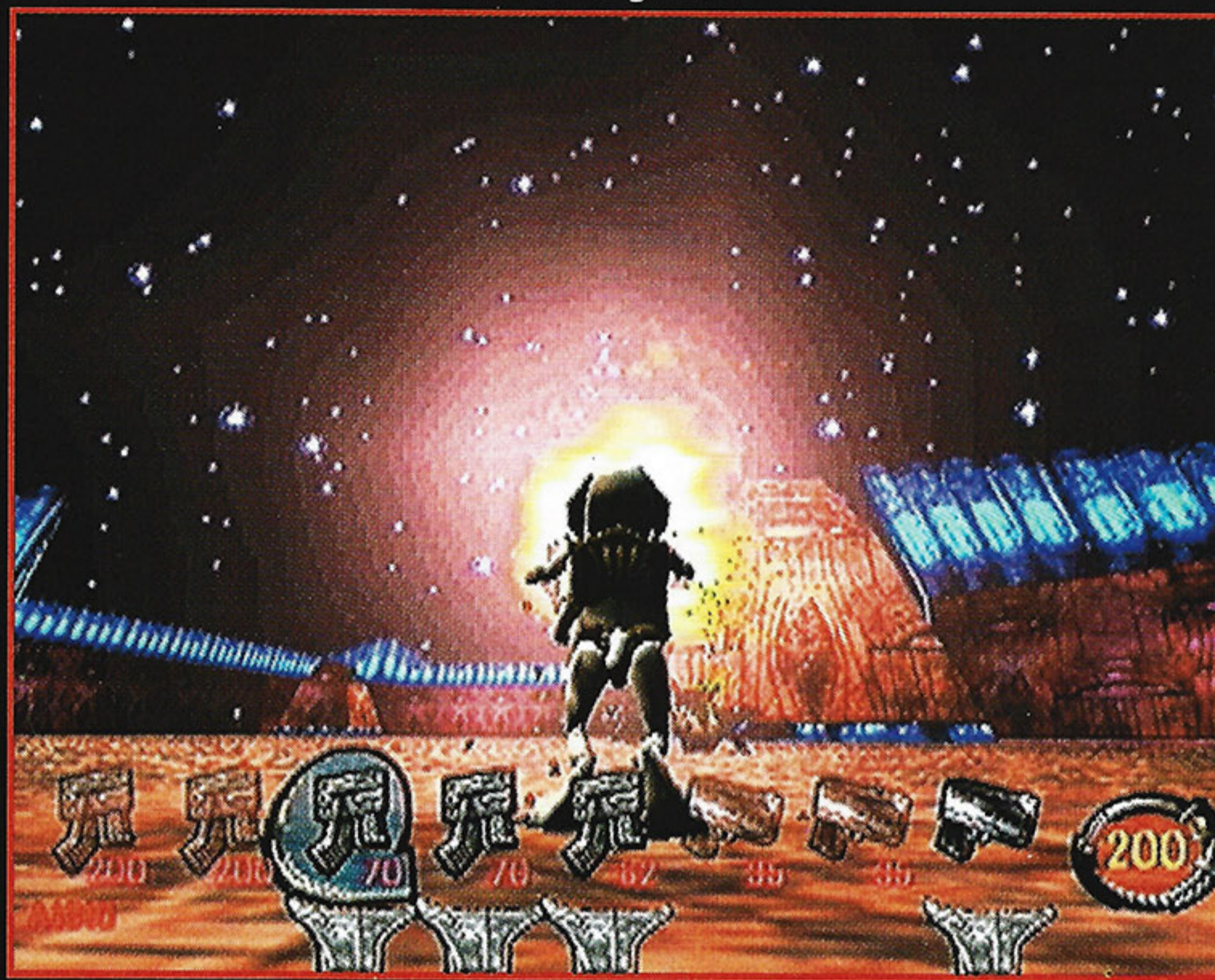
the brains of the operation, will concentrate on solving puzzles and putting together unique gadgets with which to fight the aliens. Doc's levels, although very difficult, are the most fun. Since he doesn't have any real weapons at his disposal, he has to run around combining household items to create some. For example, he can collect and combine pipes, duct tape and a bathroom hand dryer (wait until you see how he acquires THAT- we were literally rolling on the floor) to make a leaf blower. This device is then used to blow the aliens into the clutches of Doc's meat-eating, Little Shop of Horrors pet plant.

Dozens of little touches really drove us to give MDK2 a high rating. We can't think of another game that saves data to the memory card while you're running around in a level. No loading, no hiccups; it just does it automatically without disrupting gameplay. The loading between missions is a lengthy process. Luckily, the levels are so gigantic that the loading sequences are few and far between.

The game is further brought to life by some of the best voice acting ever, and we're sure you'll be laughing non-stop during the cinemas. The cinemas are also noteworthy because they are handled by the game engine, yet they possess a near CG quality cleanliness.

We also like the way that the game never leaves you hanging with its complex controls, because at the start of each character's involvement, you get a crash course training exercise.

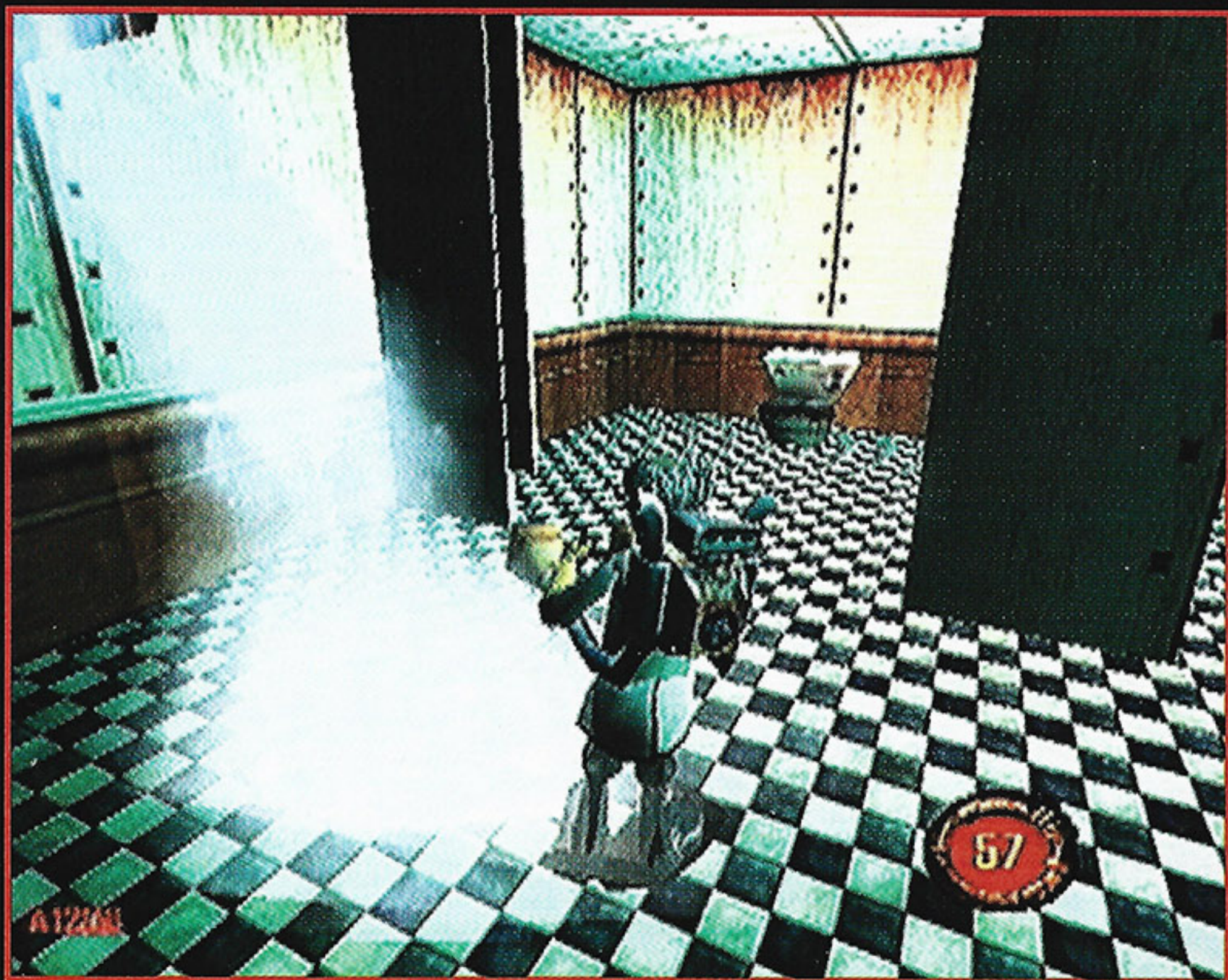
• Would you believe that you can disintegrate aliens, snipe a frog, and make delicious toast all in the same game?



Bioware's attention to the control is highly appreciated as well. This game requires extensive practice to get a handle on. Of all the button layouts, we liked the one that had the face buttons (triangle, square, etc.) used for directional movement and the shoulder buttons for firing and jumping.

The only real issue we have with MDK2 is the extreme

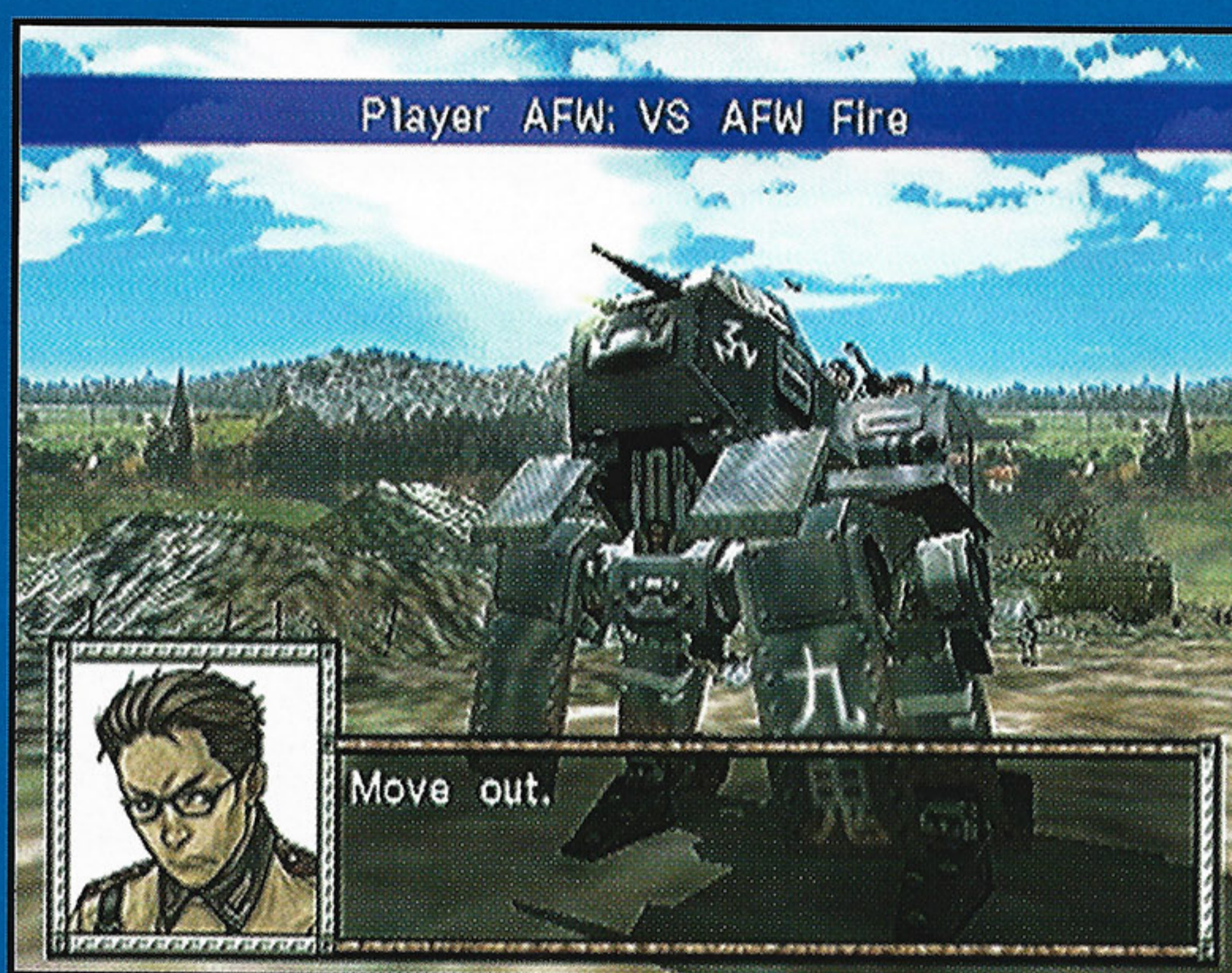
difficulty. Even on the easiest setting, there really seems to be no mercy, especially when it comes to the bosses. This is the type of game that often has you thinking you've just defeated a particularly pesky foe, only to have him get up and transform into an even more menacing antagonist. However, if you're up to the challenge, there's a highly enjoyable experience here.



• Intricate puzzles, cigar smoking, wise cracking, and toilet humor should help keep things rolling

Ring of Red

Platform: PS2 • Publisher: Konami • Release Date: March • SM Rating: 91



One of the most powerful phrases in the English language is "What if?" What if the Japanese had not surrendered after the American's dropped the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki? What if this extended the war and eventually led to Ally occupational forces dividing up Japan in the same way that was done to Germany? What if, by the 1960's, the cold war wasn't so cold anymore and skirmishes were constantly breaking out along the Northern and Southern Japanese De-Militarized Zone? What if one of the primary assets of every army was towering thirty-foot high mechanized Armored Fighting Walkers (or AFWs)? And, the most importantly, what if Konami created an incredibly

detailed, graphically dazzling, strategy title for Playstation 2 based upon this alternate reality.

Ring Of Red is that title. Konami has taken a unique approach to ROR. Instead of placing it in an alternate future, they chose to put it into an alternate past. They then seamlessly wove the appearance and deployment of AFW's into this past. By using both stock war footage and newly created video, they show how AFW's were used during the war. Everything has not been replaced with mechas, but instead they are simply one piece to the wartime puzzle.

A variety of different AFW's exist. The light versions come equipped with dual machine guns that excel in short range

combat. The traditional two-legged humanoid shaped AFW's are armed with cannons that are best at medium range melees. The large four-legged "Spider" versions are armed with artillery that make it best for long-distance engagements.

Ring Of Red varies from most other strategy titles in a number of different ways. Most strategy titles are not known for their graphical prowess, but the action sequences found in Ring Of Red are visually astounding. Each battle sequence features not only an AFW, but also the support troops needed to take advantage of its strengths and weaknesses.

The player has direct control over these units, which are divided into three platoons. One squad is used for the crew of the mecha and can use special attacks or skills to reinforce its abilities. Skills range from the capacity to use heat shells (as napalm styled attack) or a fast repair ability to patch up the AFW between rounds. The second and third legions have skills centered on combat or recon. The player can command them to lay down cover fire, use a grenade attack, or

snipe the opponent's forces.

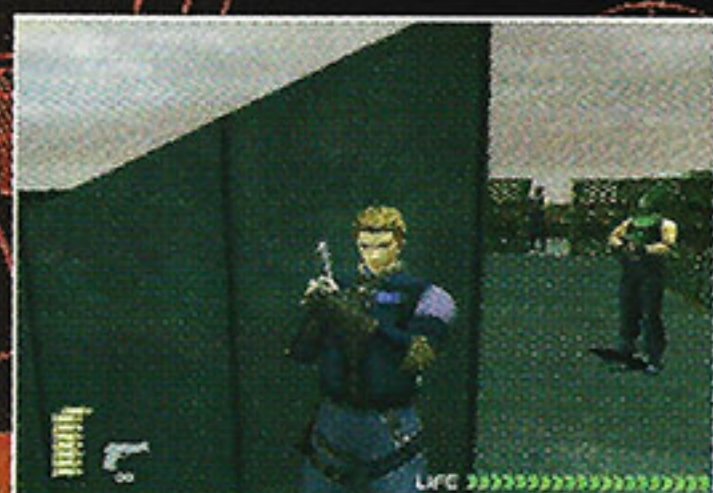
ROR also varies from the typical strategy in that, during the combat rounds, the player does not simply choose an attack and have the AI execute it for them. When the main weapon is ready to fire, a targeting system is brought up and a percentage chance of hitting (based upon numerous conditions) is displayed. The crosshairs then sway around, slowly steadying as your percentage increases. You must execute the fire command as the sights center on the enemy. This adds a whole new level of tension to the gameplay. Since each AFW has a limited engagement time before it is required to withdraw (due to overheating), a sense of urgency also flows into the combat. Some may find the combat to be slow paced, with entire levels requiring 45 minutes to an hour to complete, but speaking as fans of the strategy genus, ROR's depth and intricacies are appreciated.

Because of its powerful storyline and unique execution, Ring Of Red easily qualifies as a must buy.





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BUZZ: insider info

From The Sega Buzz 3: The Dreamcast Warriors Department:

SoftMax is preparing to release a Dreamcast Strategy RPG entitled The Rhapsody of Zephyr in Japan this January. The game is a port of a Korean PC title. Looks like the Dreamcast is branching out and giving us foreign PC ports! The Dreamcast version will include new computer-generated movies, improved controls and a newly revised game system. The story revolves around the traditional battle between the empire and the revolution army.

Shoemisha has released some new info on Macross M3. It is a mission based 3D shooter that puts you in control of an Airframe that will transform between a robot and a jet. A "Plus-In System" is featured in the game that will allow you to purchase special function chips and install them into your Airframe. It will feature three controllable characters: Max, Miria and Moaramia.

Bandai Of Japan has announced a new Dreamcast title called Gundam Net Battle. It will be an online simulation game, supporting up to 4 players simultaneously. Each player will control 3 battleships and 9 mobile suits. Battles will be conducted fully in 3D.

Ubi Soft has recently registered the domain name grandia3.com. :)

From The Christmas Is Over, Can We Please Have A PlayStation 2 Department:

Various sources have reported that Seagate has signed a contract with Sony to provide hard drives for the PlayStation 2. Both an internal and external drive will be available. Capcom has confirmed that the Japanese release of the PS2 version of Resident Evil: Code Veronica Complete will include a special DVD called "Wesker's Report." This DVD will contain inside stories of events related to S.T.A.R.S. and Umbrella over the past 5 years (or four games, it depends on how you look at it.). It will also feature interviews with game developers and exclusive still images. Rumor has it that a demo of the upcoming Devil May Cry may be included as well.

Enix has announced a new
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PlayStation 2 title called Super Galdelic Hour. Billed as an action/combat game, it will take place on a psychedelic TV show. You will play as one of five show girls: Toko, Neko, Kuma, Coco, or Sista and challenge other girls to such well known sports as hips sumo wrestling, jump roping, boxing, kurukuru bout, and tree chopping. •SM is now taking odds of this title ever hitting the states.

Gust is working on the sequel to Atelier Marie and it will be a PlayStation 2 RPG called Atelier Lillie. The story takes place 10 years after the original Atelier Marie, and will feature anime cut scenes and full voice for the entire dialogue. The main character is Lillie (of course), who is a student in the academy of alchemy learning the power to turn elements into gold.

Bandai of Japan shipped 350,000 copies of their PlayStation 2 Mobile Suit Gundam title and it sold out in four days! They are working hard to get more copies to stores in Japan. They also released some new details on their latest PlayStation 2 Gundam game Mobile Suit Gundam: Zeonic Front. This title is a strategic simulation game that takes place in the Zion army force. Gamers will play as a soldier of the Zion army and enter the battlefield with their own unit. Zeonic Front is scheduled for release in Japan in the summer of 2001.

Sony has unleashed some new information on Tsugunai, a new PS2 RPG in the works that is set for a February release. It will feature over thirty scenarios, all of which you will be able to view from different perspectives by "possessing" various characters involved in the story. A narration system will be included to help keep track of all the clues and views you have encountered. Battles will be conducted using a combination of magic and summoning spells that can be used to attack enemies. A special guard system will also be included so that you can reduce battle damage by pressing a button when the enemy hits you. It's kind of like a reverse combo or chain system.

Resident Evil 4 is indeed in the works. Capcom hopes to have it

ready in 2002.

From The Koei, Is It Too Early To Start Begging For A U.S. Release Yet Department:

Koei is preparing to release the latest Japanese Playstation version of the Romance of the Three Kingdoms saga, Romance of the Three Kingdoms VII. This version will feature an exclusive mode called History Event Collection and will include a new scenario not found in the Playstation 2 version. Koei is also planning to re-release Romance of the Three Kingdoms III for Playstation. This remake will support up to 8 players simultaneously in a multi-scenario system. It will feature over 60 new generals and a new monarch to choose from.

From The Uno Playstationano Department:

More popular RPGs are coming back from the past. In Japan, at least. Shin Megami Tensei (roughly translated that would be Digital Devil Story) is being re-released on the PlayStation. It is the remake of the RPG that appeared on the Famicom (called the NES in the states) over 10 years ago. This title sold over 3.5 million copies in Japan.

Namco will be bringing Point Blank 3 (see Prospects for a preview) to PlayStation next year. For those keeping score at home, this is the U.S. version of the Japanese release entitled Gun Balina.

It looks like Konami has finally made up with Jaleco over the whole dancing game issue. Konami announced that they have dropped all the lawsuits against the line of rhythm and music games developed by Jaleco (VJ, Stepping Stage).

Emblem Saga is coming to PSX! While the name may not mean much to most gamers, those familiar with the Fire Emblem series will rejoice that the team responsible for creating that great Nintendo strategy RPG series is bringing something similar to Playstation. The game will feature a complex storyline and an excellent promotion system. It will also have an irreversible combat death system, so when a character is killed, they are gone forever. Two

types of maps are available in the game. One is the Unit Map, which will allow you to see the whole continent, and the other is the Plan Map, which will allow you to plan your movements, manage units and plan specific strategies. During battles, you will also be able to speak with allies and enemies to acquire new characters or special items. Emblem Saga is scheduled for a Japan release in March of 2001.

Konami will release Genso Suikogaiden Vol. 2 for PlayStation in March of 2001. This is the sequel to the recently released Suikoden side story adventure game. There will be 4 episodes in this sequel and the main character will be Nash from Genso Suikogaiden Vol. 1. Keeping with the Suikoden tradition, you will be able to load saved data of Suikoden 1 & 2 in this game and it will affect what characters you meet.

Enix has shipped a total of 4 million copies of Dragon Quest VII in Japan. That makes it the best selling PSX game in Japan and the best selling title in the Dragon Warrior series.

Konami is remaking Castlevania Chronicles: Castlevania Dracula and will release it on the Playstation. Set for release in Japan this March, CC originally appeared on the X68000. This new version will include the requisite graphics and sound effects, and original opening and ending movies.

From The Best Nintendo Buzz Ever? Department:

In a New York Times news story, the Times claimed to have information from "executives close to the negotiations," stating that Sega and Nintendo are, "...holding discussions that could lead to Nintendo acquiring Sega for about \$2 billion." The story went on to say that the transactions are not final at this point and that "...the deal could still collapse." Of course, both Nintendo and Sega have denied the rumors. The president of Sega of Japan even went so far as to write the N.Y. Times and inform them that their information was false. This story had a major effect on both Nintendo and Sega stock, with Sega stock rising dramatically and Nintendo dropping slightly. Still we're keeping our eyes open.

captain's log.

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crash landing
01. 2001



www.stupid-invaders.com



Wanted: From Japan

Dragon Ball Z: Legends

Platform: PSX • **Publisher:** Bandai • **Release Date:** Now • **SM Rating:** N/A

Mission:

To fill you in on a great import game that will never make it to U.S. shores.

Best Features:

It follows the storyline of the series and has an incredible amount of characters, including variations of key Dragonball Z heroes.

Coollest Moment:

The Meteo Attacks.

Similar U.S. Games:

Guardian Heroes

One of the most asked questions we get is, "What is the best DragonBall Z game on the market?" With the exception of the ultra rare Dragonball Z RPG that appeared on the Super Nintendo in Japan (complete with tons of Kanji, making it almost impossible for non-Japanese speaking gamers to play), Dragon Ball Z Legends gets our vote. It is currently available as part of the Japanese Playstation "The Best" series, which puts it in a lower price category, making the import almost equal in

price to the typical Playstation U.S. release.

Unlike many of the other Dragon Ball Z titles released in Japan, Legends is not a simple one on one fighter. The battle takes place with the player controlling up to three players battling another group of three players. Damage is calculated using a tug-of-war system. Each attack that successfully lands moves the bar in your favor. Once you have dominated an opponent and have the bar totally in your control, your character will execute a Meteo attack. After a set number of Meteo attacks have damaged your opponent (this number varies according to the power of the enemy) your character will win the battle.

The story (or Z) mode begins with Vegeta's arrival and progresses through the battle on Namek, the introduction of Cell, all the way to the final battle with Super Buu. The characters you are

able to control depend on the story line for that "episode". No fighter would be complete without a versus mode. Dragon Ball Z Legends includes both a one player and a two player versus mode. The characters that you can choose are limited to the ones you have defeated in Story mode, so finishing the Z mode should be your first objective.

After beating Story mode, you will unlock SP battle, which are a number of pre-determined fights pulled directly from the series. A total of thirty fights are included. Some of the highlights are Super Saiyan Trucks Vs. Freeza, Piccolo Vs. Gohan, and Goku Vs. Vegeta. The controls are simple to master. They consist of attack, fireball, power-up, and block.

The attack button is used in a Street Fighter type fashion. Pressing up and attack will launch your opponent into the air while more complex moves like a half circle and attack will execute a

combo of hits. The fireball button unleashes energy attacks, whose power differs depending on how long you hold the button. The power-up button is used to regain strength lost unleashing your energy attacks. The block button...well...blocks.

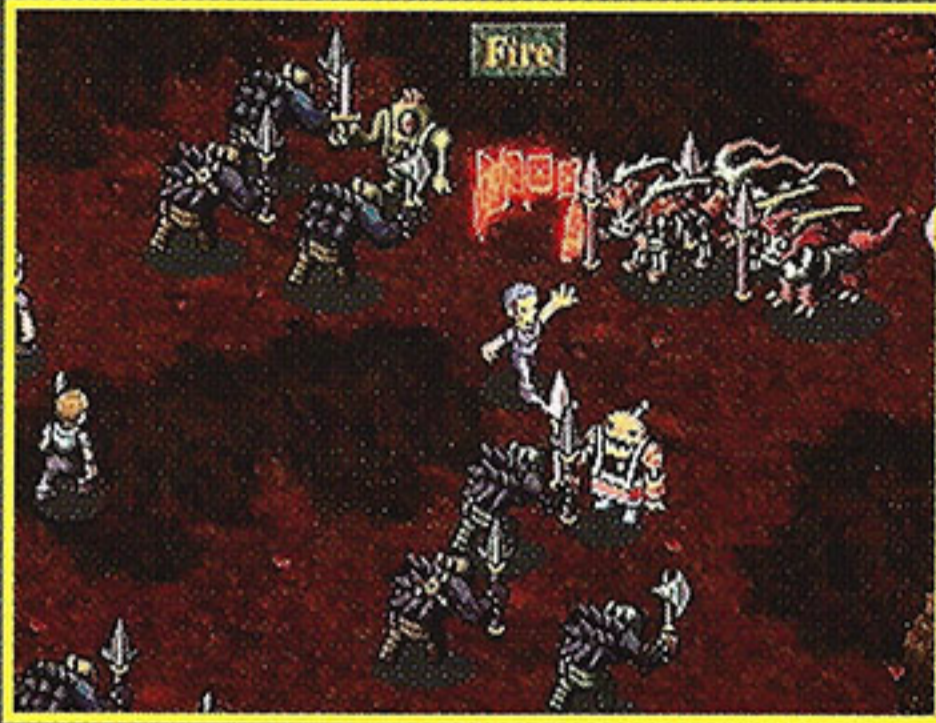
Dragon Ball Z Legends was released on both the Sega Saturn and the Playstation. The differences between the two are minimal. We are featuring the Playstation version simply because it is still readily available for purchase from various import stores. Just last month, Infogrames announced they had secured the licensing agreement in order to produce a new round of games based on the Dragonball Z anime. Let's hope that they take a close look at Dragonball Z Legends and the SNES Dragonball Z RPGs, they show how a Dragonball Z can be done exceptionally well.



Available: Here & Now

Kartia: The Word of Fate

Platform: PSX • Publisher: Atlus • Release Date: Now • SM Rating: N/A



The sprite-based graphics are surprisingly well animated

Mission:

To fill you in on a game that is available in the U.S. that you probably do not own.

Best Features:

Character design by Final Fantasy alum Yoshitaka Amano.

Cooliest Moment:

Creating your first Phantom.

Similar Games:

Final Fantasy Tactics, Tactics Ogre

Atlus recently made many RPG fans a little bit happier. They have recently re-issued the original Persona, Brigandine, and Kartia, all for the Playstation, at the bargain price of \$19.99. And just as Persona is an alternative take on the traditional RPG, it is a variance on the strategy RPG category.

Kartia contains two separate quests in the true sense of the word. You can choose to play as the daughter of a high priest or as an unaligned knight. While both stories are separate, with characters unique to each

adventure, the paths of the two adventurers are destined to cross. So, while it isn't necessary to complete both quests to get the full story, it does offer twice as much gameplay if you enjoyed your first play through.

Kartia suffers from a steep learning curve, just like the ones found in other strat RPGs like Dragon Force and Ogre Battle. The Kartia system (which is named after a magical deck of cards that the players use in during the game) is what ends up putting some players off. In order to appease the hardcore strategy fans, the system is very deep and almost infinitely customizable. So, a quick glance at the instruction manual makes this title seem dauntingly complex. However, after about an hour of gameplay, the basic mechanics can be grasped, and Kartia slowly builds additional layers of information over what you already know. After

about 3 or 4 hours, the information that seemed like complete nonsense in the instruction manual will now make perfect sense. In other words, give it some time to begin and working its magic.

One of the most addicting aspects of Kartia is creating Phantoms and weapons. Phantoms come in three general types: Common, Doll, and Shadow. Each one is weaker than one of its cousins and stronger than the other, in sort of a rock, paper, scissors type of way. You are able to create Phantoms at any time, but as your levels grow, so does your ability to create more powerful Phantoms. Just as in most RPGs, your Phantoms can grow in strength and raise levels. But Kartia has included a special surprise for players who manage to get their Phantoms to reach level 20 (the highest possible). Players can then "delete" their

Phantoms, trading in the powerful life essence they have worked to create for ultra rare items.

A few details keep Kartia from reaching its true potential. Each character's quest is only 18 chapters long, which quickly breeze by when you finally master the play mechanics. Also, the somewhat faulty AI will allow you to corner some of the boss characters. By doing this, you can force them to create Phantoms that you can easily dispatch, allowing you to level up your Phantoms and characters almost indefinitely.

We'd love a sequel, but aren't holding our breath for one. With that said, Kartia is well worth the \$19.99 admission price. It's unique mixture of strategy and creation is a blend that is sure to please fans of the strategy role playing game category, and it might even make some new fanatics, too.

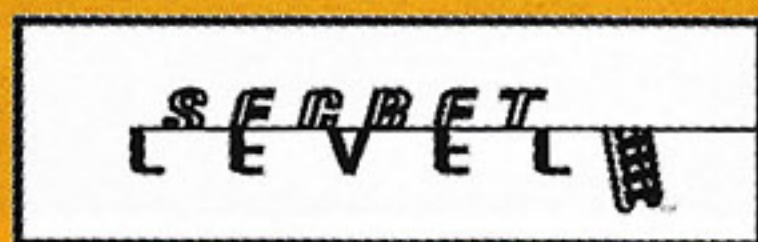
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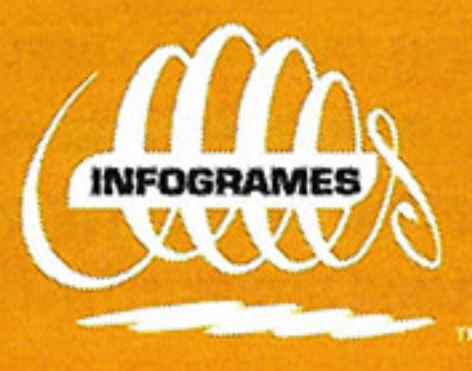
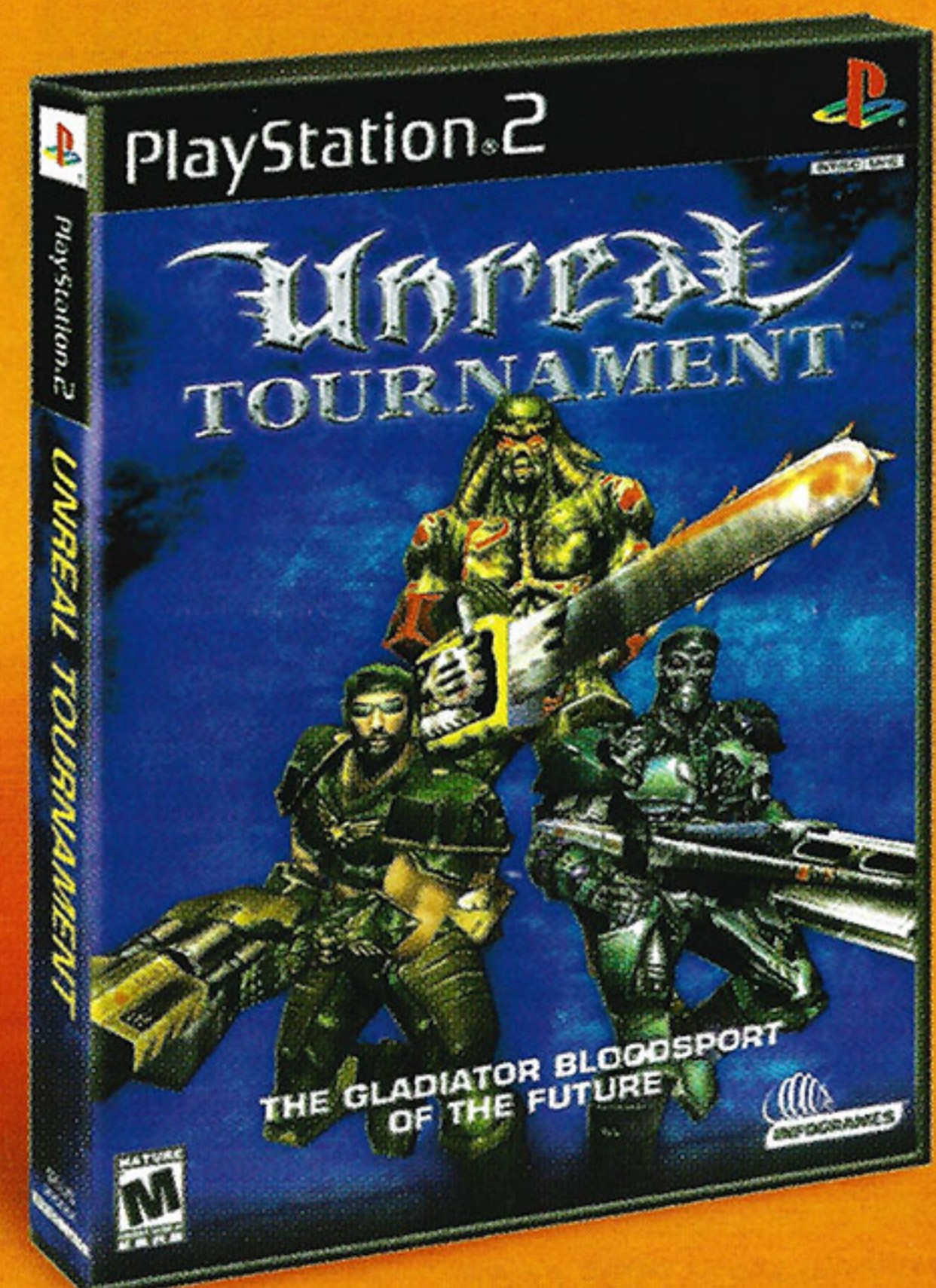
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Final Fantasy X

Platform: PS2 • Publisher: Square • Release Date: Mid 2001 • Stage: 70%

The first look at the next evolution of the Final Fantasy dynasty

YUNA



•The influence of FFVIII is evident in the screens



Square has been on the forefront of developing Playstation 2 titles in Japan. They have done everything from baseball to pro wrestling to auto racing. But a silent murmur has been raised by the impatient masses "Where are the games that made Square famous? Where are the RPGs? Where is Final Fantasy X?"

Finally, Square has opened the floodgates regarding their flagship series on the Playstation 2. Or, to put it more aptly, a small crack has opened and a little information has seeped out and we are savoring every single drop.

The first drop of information is in the development staff in charge of producing Final Fantasy X. Tetsuya Nomura is once again in charge of the character design. He is an alum of Final Fantasy VIII team and the look of the characters really reflects this. Other members of the Final Fantasy VIII team that are returning include Yoshinori Kitase, who is once again taking over the director duties, Scenario writer Kazushige Nojima and Art Director Yusuke Naora. One surprise in the announced staff is Battle Director, Toshiro Tsuchida. Mr.

Tsuchida is best known as the director of the Mecha Strategy / Simulation series Front Mission. His contributions are expected to heavily influence the combat system, with the possible loss of the active time system that has been featured in the last few Final Fantasy releases.

Square announced earlier this year that Okinawan folk singer Rikki would sing the theme song for Final Fantasy X and series composer Nobuo Uematsu has been quoted as saying the entire game would feature an "Okinawan Feel" (Okinawa is a group of tropical islands located off the southwest coast of Japan.) This is seen in the clothes featured throughout the screens and movies that Square has released to the press.

One of the other bits of information that Square has released about Final Fantasy X is the hero and heroine of this epic. The hero is Tidus, (•SM earlier reported his name as Tide thinking it fit with past heroes Cloud and Squall). Tidus is, a professional competitor in an underwater sport called "Blitzball." Unlike the brooding heroes of the past Final Fantasy offerings, Tidus is said to be an "optimistic,

Star Wars Episode 1: The Battle For Naboo (N64):

Infinite Lives:

Enter "PATHETIC" as a password.

All upgrades:

Enter "OVERLOAD" as a password.

One-hit kills:

Enter "EWERDEAD" as a password.

Expert mode:

Enter "NASTYMDE" as a password.

Pink ship:

Enter "RUAGIRL?" as a password.

Unlock art gallery:

Enter "KOOLSTUF" as a password.

View development team:

Enter "LOVEHUTT" as a password.

Advanced shields:

Enter "DROIDEKA" as a password

Episode 1 strategy:

Advanced bombs:

Advanced bombs can be found in the "Glacial Grave" level, on the opposite branch of the river that leads to the gunboat hanger.

Advanced missiles:

Advanced missiles can be found in the beginning of "The Smugglers Alliance" level. Help the farmers and a land speeder will come out of a homestead. Protect it and it will lead you to a farm with the upgrade.

Advanced blasters:

Advanced blasters can be found in the "Liberation Of Camp Four" level. At the last shield generator, face downhill and there will be another up slope leading towards the upgrade.

Homing torpedoes:

Homing torpedoes can be found in the "Borvo The Hutt" level. Go northwest of the first battle to find a village hidden amongst the trees and the upgrade.

Rapid-fire lasers:

Rapid-fire lasers can be found

near the end of the "Sanctuary" level. There is a small valley to the right of the main valley. Inside it is a volcano. The upgrade located here.

Cluster seeker missiles:

Cluster seeker missiles can be found in the second secret level, "Corauscant Encounter". Turn right immediately after starting the level to find a brown striped building. Enter the hole in front of it and turn left before the path turns to the right. The upgrade is located here.

Sith infiltrator:

You will be able to play as the Sith Infiltrator once you access the third secret level, "Dark Side". You can use the Sith Infiltrator on any level where you could use the Naboo Starfighter.

Trade Federation secrets bonus level:

Successfully complete the game with all bronze medals to unlock the Trade Federation Secrets bonus level.

Corauscant Encounter bonus level:

Successfully complete the game with all silver medals to unlock the Couruscant Encounter bonus level.

Dark Side bonus level:

Successfully complete the game with all gold medals to unlock the Dark Side bonus level.

Silent Scope (PS2 & DC):

Use the mouse!

Konami has announced that gamers can use the DC Mouse or PS2 USB Mouse to play Silent Scope. For 2-button mice, the left button functions as the Scope, right button will be the shot button, clicking both buttons the same time will start or pause the game. For a three button or wheel mouse, the center button functions as start or pause. While this isn't as cool as a light gun, it certainly makes the game much

more enjoyable.

Blade (PSX):

Ultimate cheat mode:

At the main menu, hold L1 and press X(5), ●, R1, R2(2), R1. Now, anytime during the game you can press start and activate any option on the cheat menu.

Infinite lives:

At the main menu, press Left(3), Right, L2, L1, R2, R1. Then, press start during the game and activate that option on the cheat menu.

Infinite ammunition:

At the main menu, press Down, Right, Up, Left, L2, L1, R2, R1. Then, press start during the game and activate that option on the cheat menu.

All items:

At the main menu, press Right, Left, Up, Down, L2(2), R2(2). Then, press Start during the game and activate that option on the cheat menu.

NBA2K1 (DC):

Hidden teams:

Enter the "Options" screen and choose the "Codes" selection. Then, enter "vc" as a cheat code to unlock the Mo Cap, Sega Sports, and Sega Net teams.

Random team selection:

Select exhibition mode, highlight a team name, then press L + R + A.

Additional statistics:

Pause the game and select the "Substitution" option. Press X at the substitution screen to view a player's 3 point shooting rating, and rebound rating.

Medal Of Honor: Underground (PSX)

Ultimate cheat mode:

Enter "ENTREZVOUS" as a code. Return to the code entry screen and enter "PORTECLEFS" as a code. All missions, multi-player characters, and secrets in the game will be unlocked

Invincibility:

Enter "PUISSANCE" as a code.

Quadruple firing rate:

Enter "BALLESVITE" as a code.

Bouncing bullets:

Enter "RICOCHET" as a code.

One shot kill mode:

Enter "LATIREUSE" as a code. Note: This also gives your enemies the ability to kill you with one shot. Note: With many of these codes, the screen will flash green to let you know you entered them correctly. Most codes only work on levels previously completed.

Frogger 2: Swampy's Revenge: level select:

Pause the game and press Right, ■, ▲, ■, ▲, R1, L1, R1, L1, ▲, Down.

Unlimited lives:

Pause the game and press Right, ■, ▲, ■, ▲, X.

Neat little trick at the opening screen:

At the main menu screen, press ● to say "Ribbit" or ■ to eat the fish and bugs.

Secret Level:

Collect all the gold coins on a level to unlock a secret for that level.

Dead Or Alive 2: Hardcore (PS2):

Extra options:

Pause the game, then press ▲ + X.

Play as Bayman:

Successfully complete story mode with all the characters on the easy difficulty setting to unlock Bayman in all modes except story mode. Or successfully complete story mode 30 times with any combination of characters.

Play as Tengu:

Collect 10 stars in survival mode to unlock Tengu in all modes except story mode. Or successfully complete story mode 200 times with any combination of characters.

Extended Credits:

Successfully complete story mode with all the characters on the very hard difficulty setting.

CG Art Gallery:

Successfully complete team mode with five characters to unlock the CG Art Gallery.

Tenchu 2 (PSX):

Level select:

At the level selection screen, hold Select + ■ + ● and press Right(3), Up, Left, Down, R2.

Restore health:

Pause the game, then hold Square and press Left, Right, Up, Down.

Note: A perfect score cannot be achieved with the use of this code.

All ninja items:

At the item selection screen, press ■(3), ●, ■, ●(2), Left, Up, Down, Right, R2(2).

Increase items by one:

At the item selection screen, hold R1 + ■ and press Right, Down, Left, Up.

Full map:

While playing a game, hold Select to display the map, then press ●(5).

Play as Tatsumaru:

At the level selection screen, hold ● + ■ and press R1, R2, L2, L1, Up, Down, Left, Right, Select to unlock Tatsumaru in the mission editor. Or successfully complete the game with both Rikimaru and Ayame.

Sky Odyssey (PS2):

Auto gyro:

Successfully complete all levels in sky canvas mode with more than 90 points.

Corsair:

Accumulate enough acrobatic points in adventure mode to have ten of your mission grades marked with circles to unlock the Corsair.

Gold UFO:

Successfully complete all levels in target mode with a gold rank to

unlock the Gold UFO.

Me-262:

Successfully complete adventure mode to unlock the Me-262.

Silver UFO:

Successfully complete all levels in the adventure mode with an A rank to unlock the Silver UFO.

Stealth fighter:

Successfully complete all levels in target mode with a total time of 10 minutes or less to unlock the Stealth Fighter.

Swing Away Golf (PS2):

All Golfers:

At the main menu, press L2, R2, L2, R2, Up, Right, Down, Left, L1, R1 to unlock all characters in stroke play mode

Left-handed Golfers:

At the character selection screen, highlight a golfer, then hold L2 + Select and press X to have them play left-handed.

San Francisco Rush 2049 (DC):

Enable Cheat menu For Code Input:

At the main menu, hold L + R + X and press Y to display a "Cheats" selection at the bottom of the screen. Enter the cheat menu and enter one of the following codes to enable the cheat.

All tracks:

Highlight the "All Tracks" option on the cheat menu, then hold A + X and press R. Release the buttons, then hold X + Y and press L. Release the buttons, then press A(2), Y(2). Hold L + R and press X.

All cars:

Highlight the "All Cars" option on the cheat menu, then press A(2), Y(2), L(2). Hold R + X. Release the buttons, then hold L + A.

All parts:

Highlight the "All Parts" option on the cheat menu, then press X, Y, A, L, R. Hold Y + A. Release the buttons, then press X(2).

Invincibility:

Highlight the "Invincible" option on the cheat menu, then hold L + X and press Y, A. Release the buttons, then hold R and press A + X + Y.

Invisible car:

Highlight the "Invisible Car" option on the cheat menu, then hold L + X. Release the buttons, then hold R + Y. Release the buttons, then press A and hold L + R and press X. Release the buttons, then press Y(3).

Invisible track:

Highlight the "Invisible Track" option on the cheat menu, then press R, L, Y, X, A(2), X, Y and hold L + R and press A.

Track orientation:

Highlight the "Track Orientation" option on the cheat menu, then hold L + R and press X. Release the buttons, then press A, X, Y. Hold L + R and press X.

Super speed:

Highlight the "Super Speed" option on the cheat menu, then hold Y + R and press L. Release the buttons, then hold A + X. Release the buttons, then press A(3).

Super tires:

Highlight the "Super Tires" option on the cheat menu, then hold R and press X(3). Release the button, then hold L and press A(2), Y.

Brakes:

Highlight the "Brakes" option on the cheat menu, then press Y(3) and hold L + R + A + X.

Heavy car:

Highlight the "Mass" option on the cheat menu, then hold A and press X(2), Y. Release the button, then press L, R.

Resurrect in place:

Highlight the "Resurrect In Place" option on the cheat menu, then press R(2), L(2), A, X, Y.

Auto abort:

Highlight the "Auto Abort" option on the cheat menu, then press A, L, X, R, Y. Hold L + R and press A, X.

Car mines:

Highlight the "Car Mines" option on the cheat menu, then hold L + R + X and press A, Y. Release the buttons, then press A, Y.

Suicide mode:

Highlight the "Suicide Mode" option on the cheat menu, then press Y, R, L, R, L. Release the buttons, then press X, R, L, R, L.

Battle paint shop:

Highlight the "Battle Paint Shop" option on the cheat menu, then hold Y and press R, L, R, L. Release the button, then press X(3).

Change fog color:

Highlight the "Fog Color" option on the cheat menu, then hold L + X. Release the buttons, then hold A + X. Release the buttons, then hold Y + X. Release the buttons, then hold R + X.

Random battle mode weapons:

Highlight the "Random Weapons" option on the cheat menu, then hold L + A and press X, Y. Release the buttons, then hold R + A and quickly press X, Y.

Tony Hawk Pro Skater 2 (PSX):

Unlock all cheats:

Pause the game, then hold L1 and press X(3), ■, ▲, Up, Down, Left, Up, ■, ▲, X, ▲, ●, X, ▲, ●. If you entered the code correctly, the pause screen will shake. Then, select the "End Run" option from the pause menu.

Final Fantasy IX (PSX):

Please note that these are GameShark cheats.

Infinite Gil:

8008B7B0 FFFF

Max Gil:

8008B7B0 967F

8008B7B2 0098

Have One of All Cards:

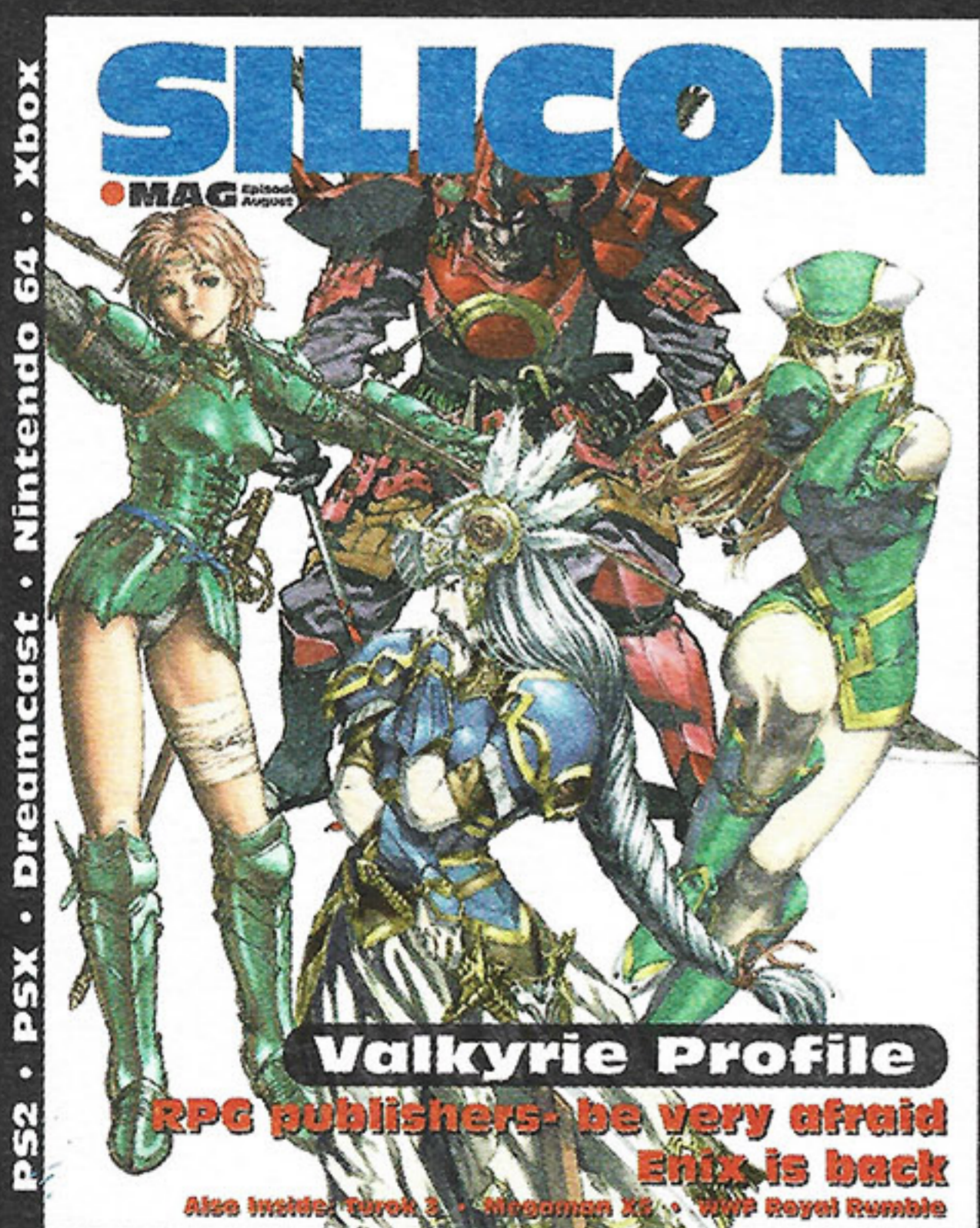
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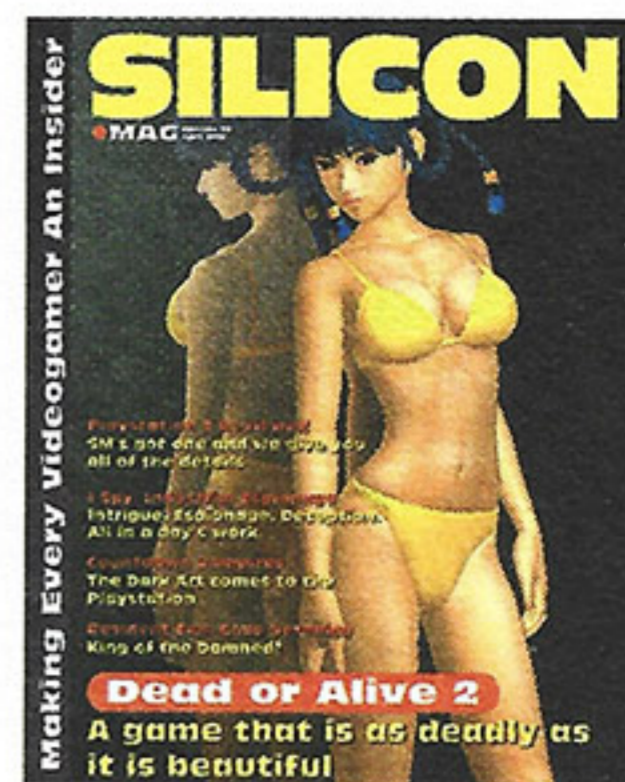
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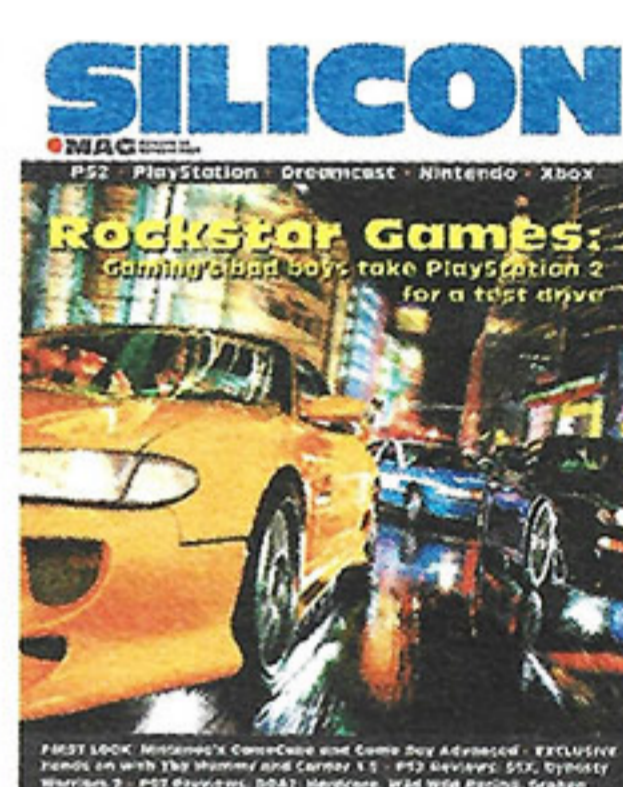
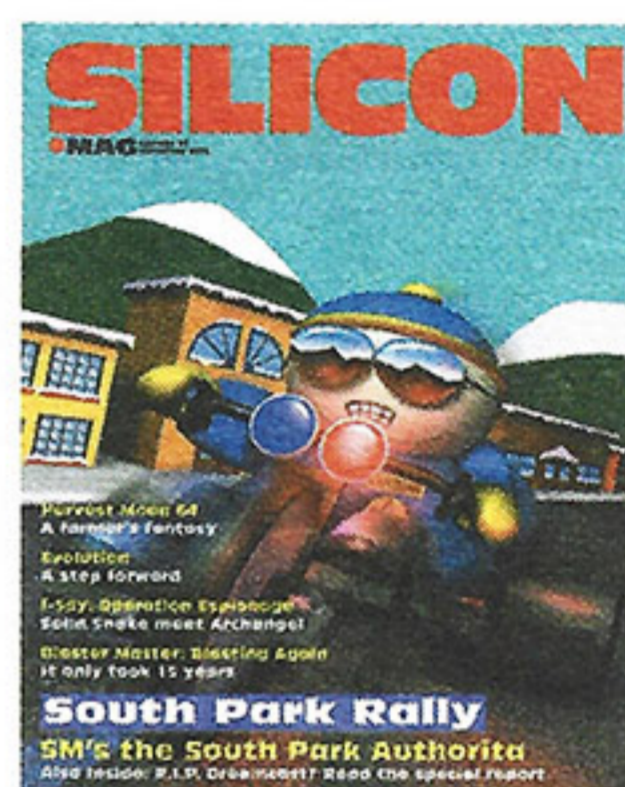
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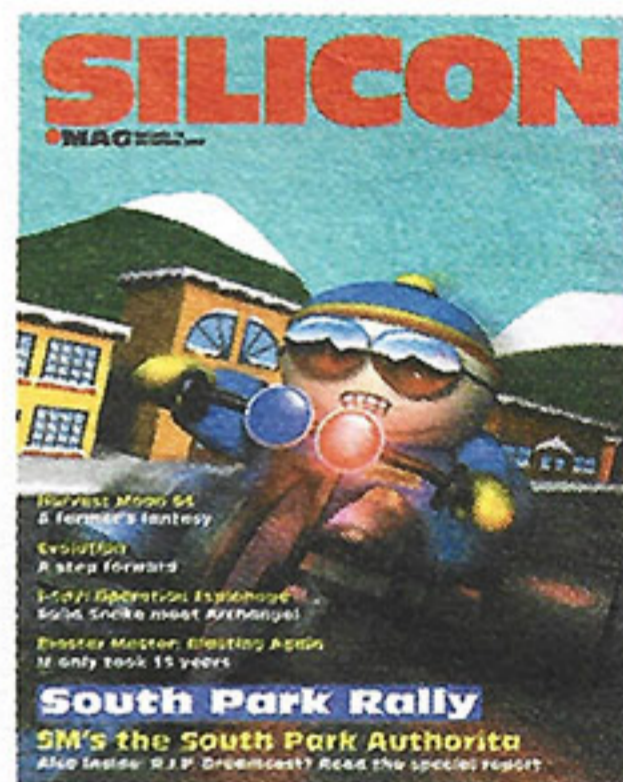
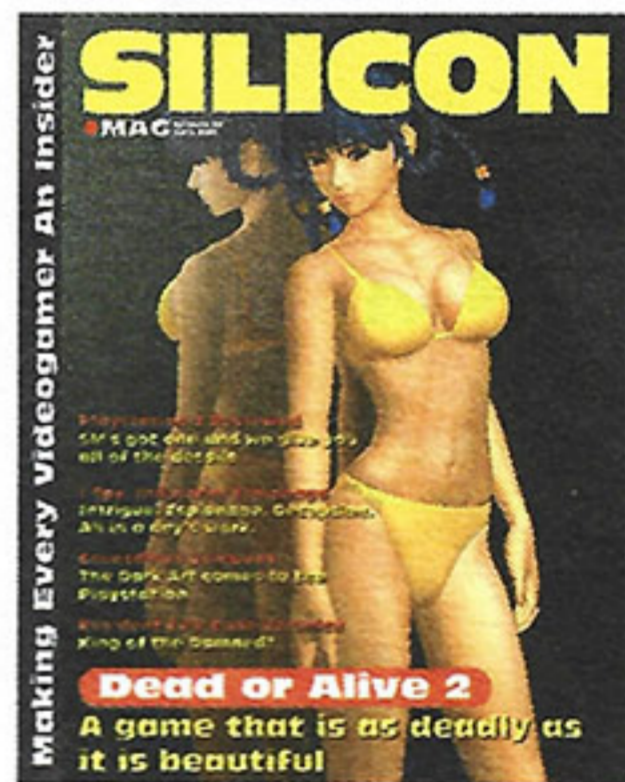
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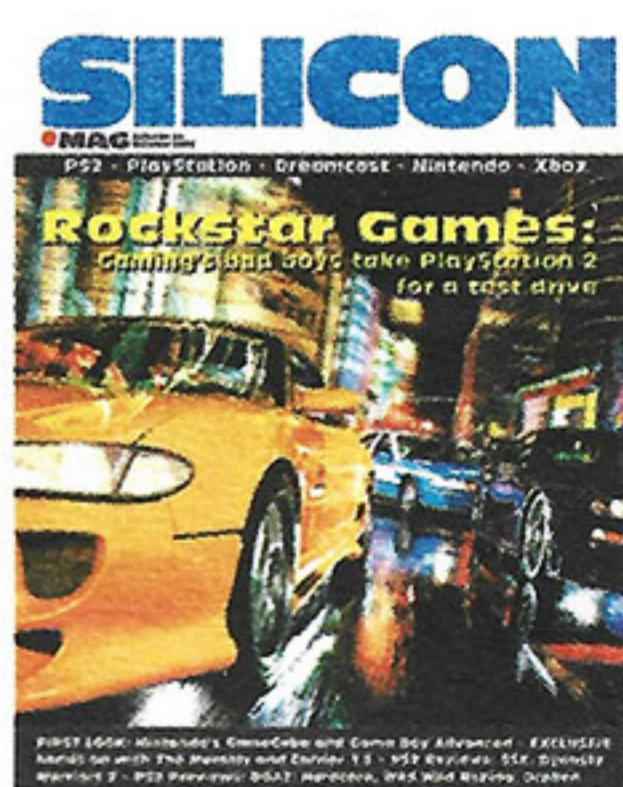
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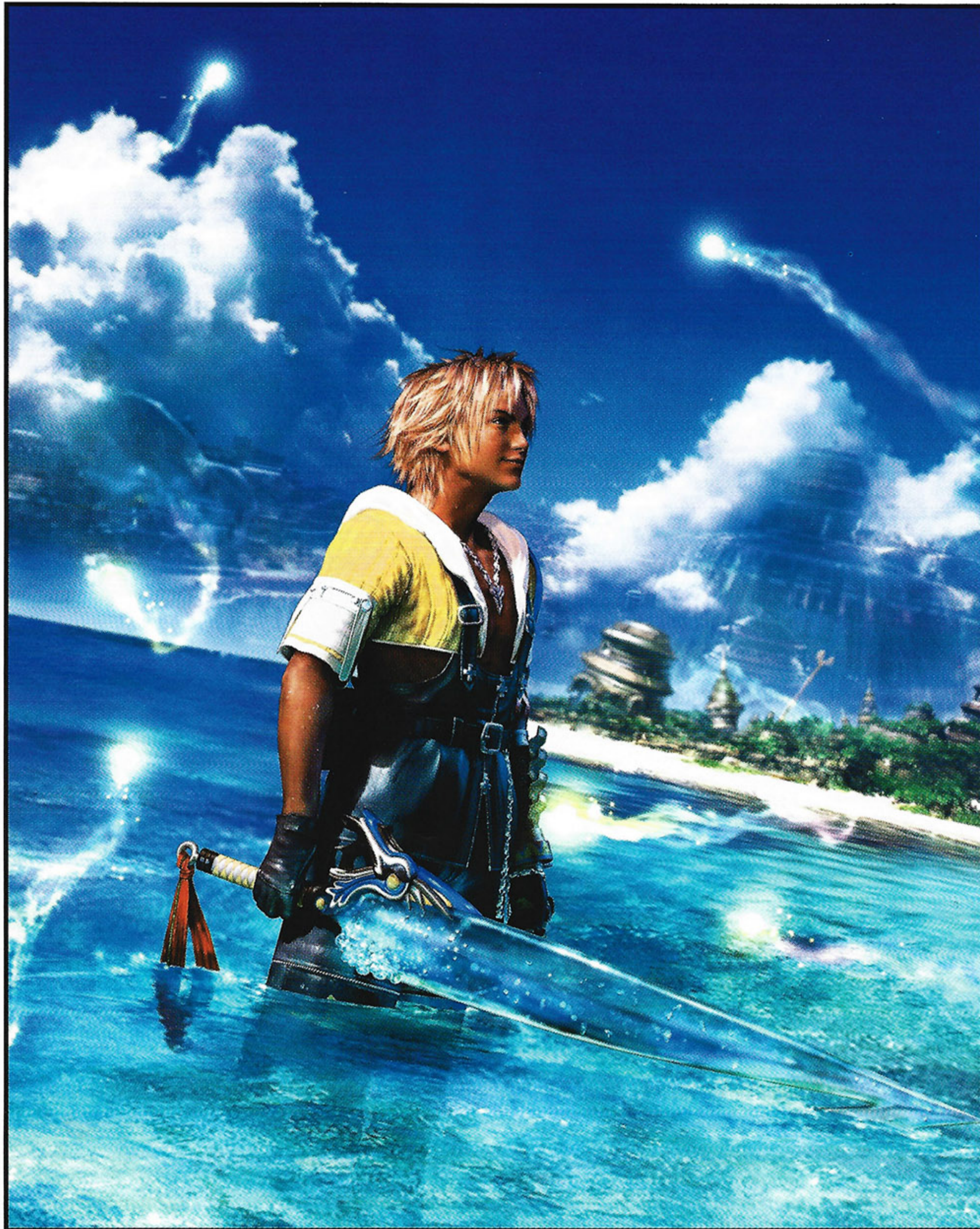
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•We're not sure if this is cinema or just a really cool render, but it certainly makes one want to play FFX that much more



© 2001 Square Character Design: Tetsuya Nomura Image Illustration: © 2001 Yoshinaka Amano

TIDUS



unflinching sportsman with a will to win".

The female lead is a beast summoner named Yuna, who is also seventeen years old. She is the daughter of the High Summoner Braska. The video we saw showed Yuna battling with a fire based enemy who bears a resemblance to the summon beast Ifrit.

The final tidbits of information are firsts for the Final Fantasy series and are very dramatic departures. Final Fantasy X will be the first in the series to feature voice-overs. The Japanese version will feature two actors who were used for motion capture in Final Fantasy VIII. Square has gone on record saying they wanted virtual unknowns, so that the voice will not be associated with other roles. No word as to whether Square EA will follow this lead in the U.S. A proprietary facial motion system used to create minute expressions should further complement the voice acting.

Look for more soon.



•We normally don't print game logos, but this is Final Fantasy X- and any bit of info we can pass on is important

Kessen 2

Platform: PS2 • **Publisher:** Koei • **Release Date:** 2001 • **Stage:** 80%

The PS2 has earned its first sequel and strategy buffs could not be happier

The Three Kingdoms era is the inspirational well that Koei is always returning to. Much in the same way as Western cultures have romanticized the King Arthur or Robin Hood stories, Koei has done the same with the Three Kingdoms tales. As the stories have been passed down from generation to generation, myth has mixed with reality and the tales have grown taller and taller.

Koei has grasped this idea and

will meld the fantasy and reality of Cao Cao and Liu Bei into their latest strategy RPG simulation. While the Romance of the Three Kingdoms series and the first Kessen mingled truth and fiction, they have always stuck with the calvary and blade realism of combat. With Kessen II, Koei has chosen to mix sorcery with the swordplay. If you thought the scenes of a hundred warriors charging down upon your enemies in



•The inclusion of magic not only looks fantastic, but should add a new level to Kessen's strategy



the first Kessen was awe inspiring, wait until you see a wizard summon a lightning storm that rips through 500 mounted calvary troops.

Koei's familiarity with the Playstation 2 has allowed them to make great strides with the original Kessen engine. While one hundred enemies could be displayed at once in the first release, Kessen II will be able to render five times as many for up to 500 soldiers at once.

One common complaint with the first Kessen was the lack of squad based control. With the sequel, players will have much more control over the action. You will be able to view the melee on screen and react by ordering anything from a special

maneuver to a magic attack.

For everyone who felt that the first Kessen did not eat up enough of their free time, Kessen II will feature over thirty stages or three times the number found in the original. The levels will also be more diverse, including sea battles and castle sieges. New troops and weapons will also be introduced, including the feared elephant troops of East India.

With more voice-overs, additional dramatic CG intermissions, and the previously mentioned advancements, Kessen's return engagement on the Playstation 2 makes it one of •SM's most anticipated sequels.



Winback

Platform: PS2 • **Publisher:** Koei • **Release Date:** March • **Stage:** 85%

PS2 owners will soon have the opportunity to play one of the few outstanding N64 games

Winback is one of the N64's premier titles, unless you're under 12 years old and your most anticipated game of 1999 was Banjo-Tooie. However, many adult gamers have missed out on this espionage thriller, simply because of the platform. This March, Koei's in-house developer Omega Force will re-release the game for PS2, hopefully hitting the target audience like a buck shot.

Though it's basically the same game, everything from graphics to control mechanics will be improved immensely. Plus, you lucky U.S. gamers will be treated to a special "BOT" mode, in which one or two players can go head to head with up to seven computer-controlled characters in a deathmatch. Players can choose cooperative or competitive style, and customize the way computer teams are broken down into friends or foes.

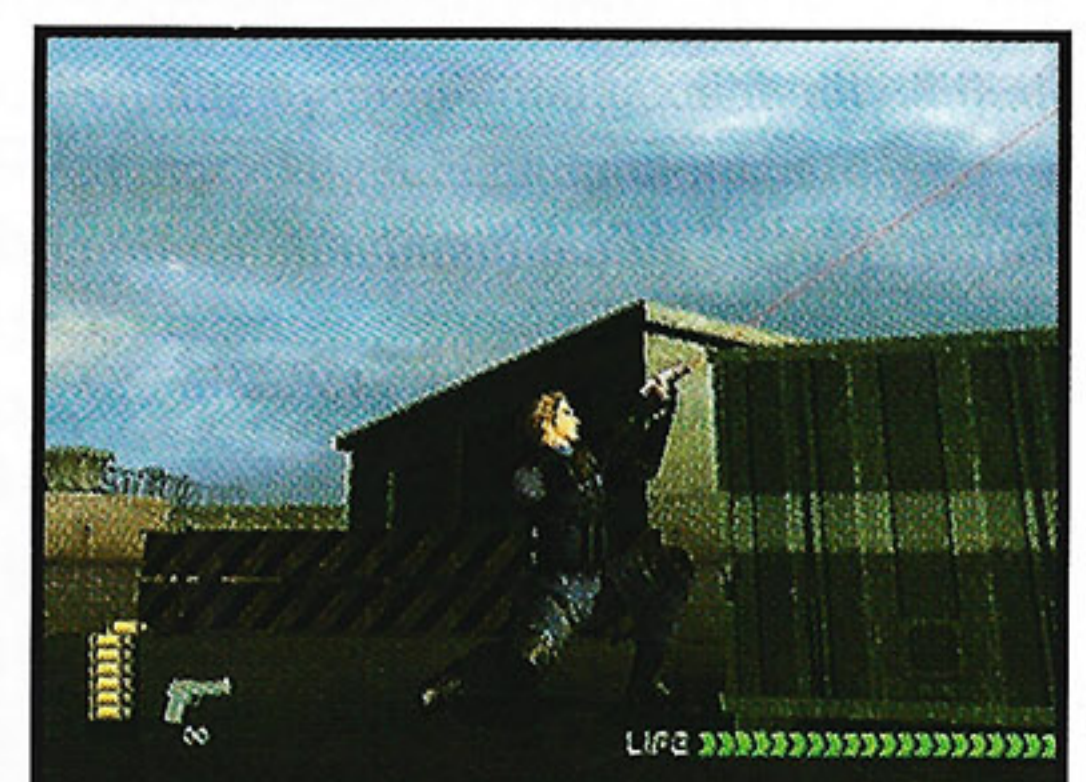
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The bulk of the game, of course, is the Story Mode. If you haven't experienced the N64 version, listen up. You control Jean-Luc Cougar, Strategic Covert Actions Team member and resident bad boy. A powerful terrorist organization has seized the control center for the world's most destructive weapon. Housed in an orbiting satellite, it is capable of leveling an entire city with a concentrated laser blast. The group's leader, Kenneth Coleman, has begun launching attacks, and it's up to you to infiltrate the compound and regain control. Lucky for you, Jean-Luc has 350 motion captured moves, a ton of weapons and a great attitude.

Three different endings should provide replay incentive. The finale is determined by the player's ability to minimize satellite attacks. As time wears on, city after city will be

destroyed, decreasing your chances of finishing on a happy note. Furthermore, points are awarded throughout the game for reaching certain goals, which are used to unlock up to 28 characters for use in multiplayer modes. Finally, game completion allows access to additional gameplay modes, like Max Power (an unabated romp through the levels with unlimited ammo).

We've spent some quality time with Winback's work-in-progress. Small details, like increasing tension in the music as your life drains away, help keep you focused and involved. We also were impressed by the realistic audio, from gunfire to footsteps. Although Omega Force is still tweaking the animation and a few gameplay aspects, we're betting this will be an instant classic.



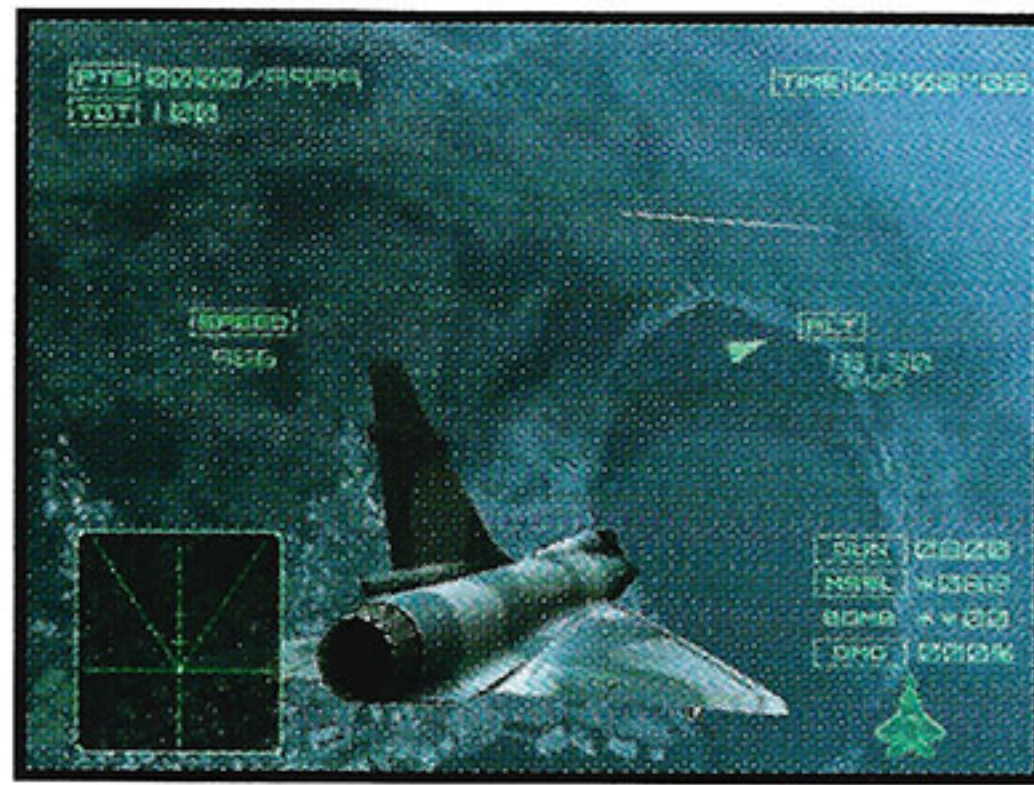
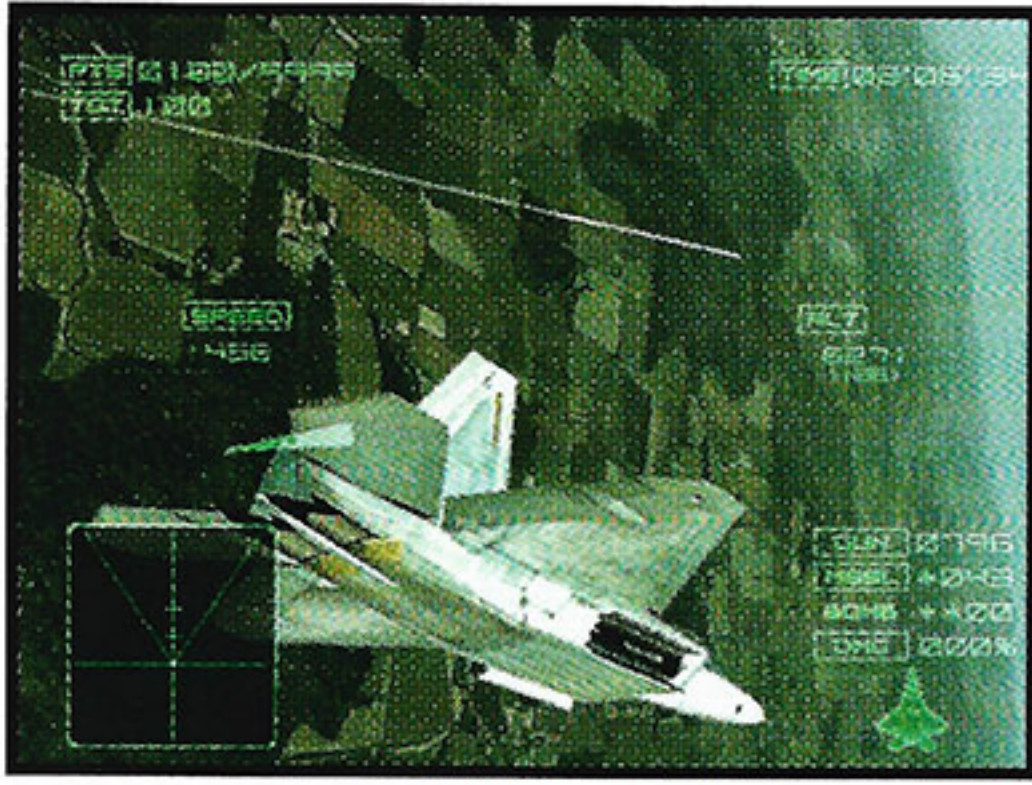
Ace Combat IV

Platform: PS2 • **Publisher:** Namco • **Release Date:** 2001 • **Stage:** 55%

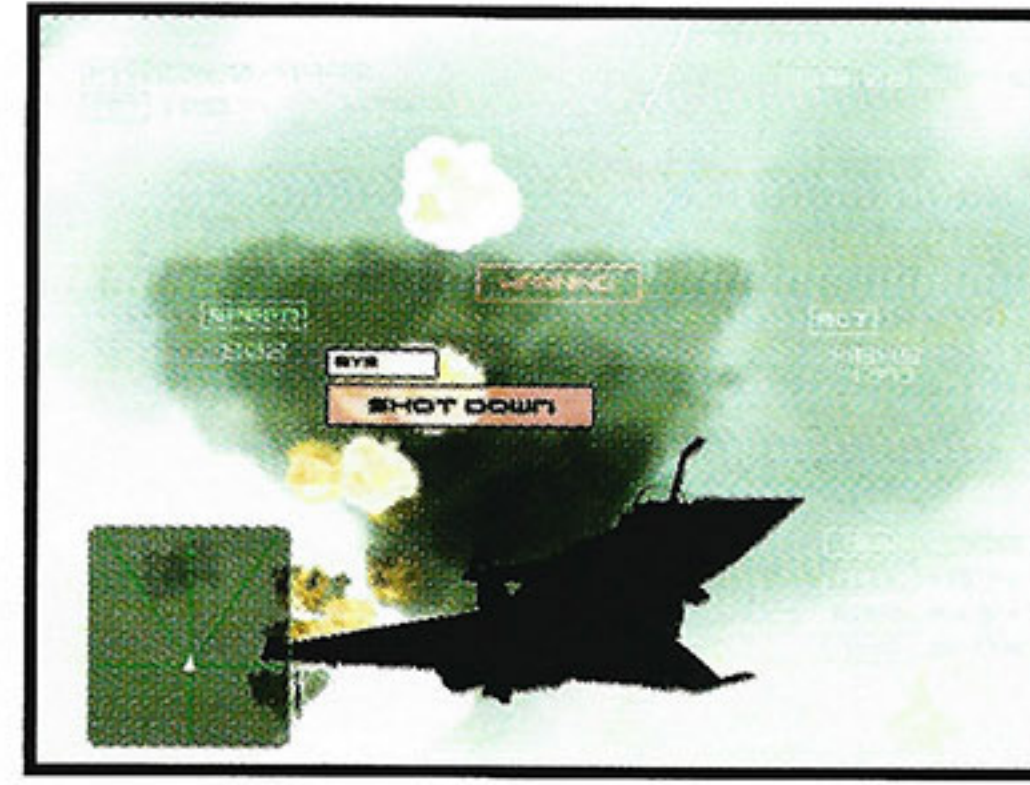
Ace Combat IV will be to PS2 in 2001 what Air Combat was to PSX in 1995

Technology can never advance quickly enough when it comes to air combat simulations. Ace Combat III pushed the original Playstation to its limits, and Ace Combat IV looks to benefit from the newfound power of the PS2. As the screen shots show, the Playstation 2 has allowed Namco to flesh out the backgrounds and other

secondary graphics to a much larger extent than was previously allowed. The colors are much more vibrant and do not suffer from any "muting" or blurring that was seen in many Playstation games. Of course, the cornerstone enhancements can be seen in the aircraft. The realism conveyed by the attention that



•All of the screens you see in this article are all of in game graphics- not cinema or mock-ups



Namco has paid to everything from the smallest insignia to each moveable part of the fighters will certainly help to draw gamers to this title.

Ace Combat IV's story takes place just after a meteor, on a collision course with Earth, has been destroyed in the atmosphere. The explosion peppers the earth with debris and sends the world's nations into chaos. As everyone struggles to rebuild and regroup, various outlaw nations seize the chance to expand their borders and settle old scores by launching air strikes against their neighboring countries.

Players will take control of a young pilot whose family was killed during the anarchy that followed the

start of the war. Both hot-headed and seeking vengeance, this young aviator will take to the skies in hopes of finding the person or persons responsible for murdering his family.

Over twenty-four missions will be included in this title. The aircraft models will be based on actual aircraft such as the F-22 Raptor and, as with earlier Ace Combat releases, plenty of hidden fighters will be unlockable throughout the many stages.

Namco is promising a 2001 release of this title and has stated that it will take advantage of the storage space of the DVD format. The extra space allows for the photo realistic backgrounds and detailed aircraft you see in the screens.

Klonoa 2: Lunateda's Veil

Platform: PS2 • **Publisher:** Namco • **Release Date:** March • **Stage:** 90%

Klonoa 2 would have silenced many of PS2's critics had it been available at launch

Last month, the Available section featured Klonoa: Door to Phantomile. That underrated title deserved way more recognition than it got, especially from a retail perspective. Hopefully, we've created more awareness about this great franchise, and you're now awaiting the sequel as anxiously as we are.

The best news is that the general gameplay mechanics from the original are completely intact. The simple two-button layout (one for attack, one for jump) allows the developers to create a more challenging game, because control is a non-issue. Still, it's amazing how many different things you can do with just two buttons. Klonoa's Wind Bullet snares enemies, who can then be thrown in one of five 3D directions. Or he can use the enemy

to slingshot himself upward to reach higher platforms or items. His floppy ears act as wings when in the air, and can be used to extend the duration of a jump. On top of these abilities, Klonoa has learned a new skill- surfboarding. Again, the control is easy to grasp, but the speed of the game requires quick reflexes to stay alive.

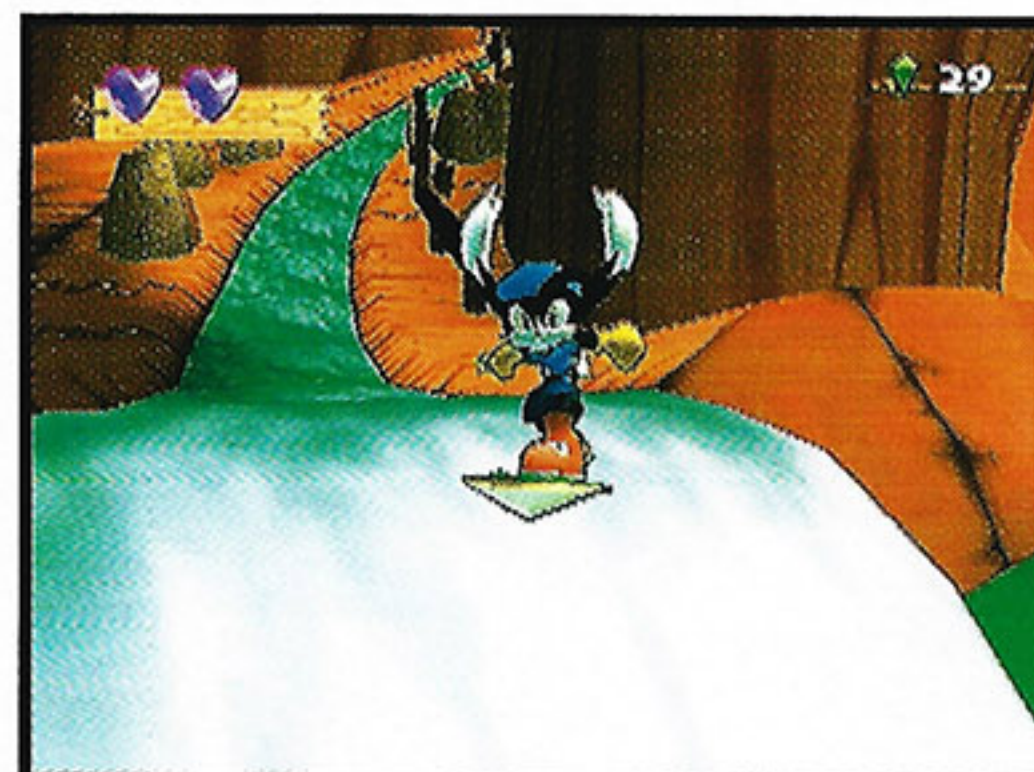
The levels in the first Klonoa were comprised of colorful polygonal structures, creating a beautiful world that was teeming with life. Though you were stuck in a 2D plane of motion, the paths branched out everywhere. This design allows for a different experience each time you play, and provides a great way for the creators to hide game secrets. For Klonoa 2, the formula remains the same.

Namco is taking complete advantage of the PS2's rendering capabilities. If you've seen Jet Grind Radio, then you should have some idea of what to expect. No more blocky backdrops; this game looks like a blockbuster Disney film. Wait until you see the incredible water effect- we got seasick just looking at it. To enhance the experience, the camera swoops all over the place, providing dynamic views without

ever losing sight of the action.

It's important to note that this sequel will have approximately four times the length as the original. Even with two endings and a ton of secrets, Klonoa could be completed in less than a week.

Just look at these incredible screens. Namco deserves some serious props for sticking with this franchise. We love it.



•He's buff, he's tough, and just so damned cute

Gran Turismo 3: A-Spec

Platform: PS2 • Publisher: Sony • Release Date: Summer • Stage: 65%

Hail to the king, baby- oops wrong game. You'll need to go to Retrospect for that

Remember the first time you laid eyes on Gran Turismo? We do. About six months before it was released stateside, we were hanging out at a local import store when a shipment arrived from Japan for one of the employees. He pulled a Dual Shock out of the box, a \$65 chunk of heaven that at the time was nothing more than a dream for most American gamers. Then he began fumbling excitedly through the foam peanut packing, mumbling something about his new baby. Out shot a ray of light, and we heard angels singing as he carefully lifted the software from the package. Ok, there was no light, and no angels, but the second the game booted up we knew it was not only going to revolutionize racing games, but the industry as whole.

When GT2 hit the streets, everyone pretty much knew what to expect. And in most regards, Sony delivered. But now, at the dawn of a new console generation, everyone's

expectations are even higher. Can Polyphony recreate that near-angelic, enlightening experience we all got from the first go-around? Our short, but sweet playable sure points that way.

Gran Turismo has always had the best visuals of any racing game, hands down. A-Spec will continue to carry that torch in grand fashion, with even more realistic graphics than the first two games. First, we noticed the photo-quality look of the demo's only playable track, Trial Mountain. Subtle details, like the way the sunlight casts misty rays through the trees, make for an engulfing experience. Previously impossible special effects further enhance the presentation. For example, reflections bouncing off the vehicle surfaces are actually mapped from the environment onto the cars. The PSX versions cheated this effect by scrolling pixilated images over the vehicles that were really just optical

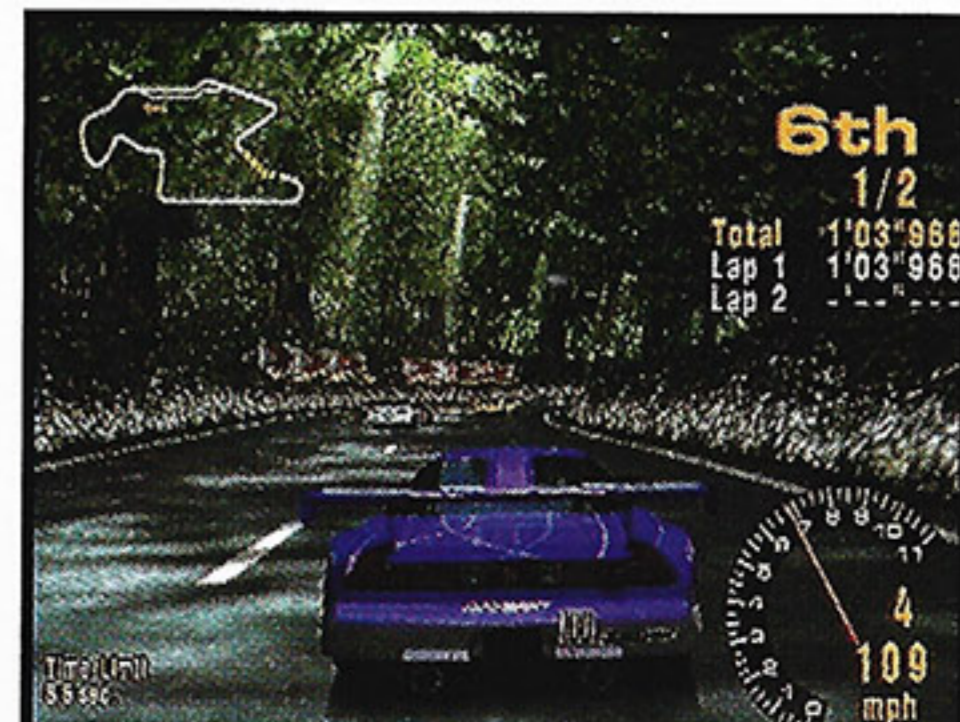
illusions.

Our disc had three playable vehicles: The NSX Sport version, a Mustang Cobra, and the S2000. They offer a wide range of control mechanics and give us the sense that, like in the previous versions, each car is going to require separate techniques to optimize performance. The game feels just like the PSX versions, meaning veterans will be right at home. We really like the first-person perspective, which displays the tachometer and speedometer in convenient locations at the bottom of the screen. However, there are only two available views right now, and we're hoping the developers add at least one more.

The replays had us really tripping. Heat mirages and realistic smoke are the most noticeable of several new effects that caught our eyes. If you thought the replays were incredible before, get a load of these screens.

After spending countless hours with the Japanese version of GT1, one sore spot (in our humble opinion) was the music in the American renditions. Though the U.S. soundtracks weren't bad by any stretch, they just didn't feel like driving music when compared to the cool J-Pop stuff overseas. Well, throw that statement out the window, because Motley Crue's in the house with "Kickstart My Heart." Now that's driving music. Hey, Sony, how about "Black Sunshine" by White Zombie? ("...the wheels of his Mustang exploding on the highway like a slug from a .45...") You can find it on their first major album. Hint, hint, nudge, nudge...

Gran Turismo 3: A-Spec should be the premier racing title for PS2. That's not to say racing fans won't have plenty of other games to take for a spin. But for now, there's only one king.



Fear Effect 2: Retro Helix

Platform: PSX • **Publisher:** Eidos • **Release Date:** March • **Stage:** 75%
Sex and violence, violence and sex- did we miss anything?

Just wait. Some maniacal parent is going to get a hold of Retro Helix and start a campaign and convince Wal-Mart to pull it from the shelves. This will trigger a chain reaction and eventually cause game companies to create nothing, but 2D platformers starring the Rug Rats.

What else can you expect? You've got half naked women running around blowing away guards (most of whom probably have families) with high powered weapons, all the while spewing out comments like, "Well, if I was totally naked I'd only be able to hide one gun!" Four letter curse words are commonplace, and graphic depictions of female sexual arousal are always right around the corner. All this comes in a package that is

frighteningly realistic, despite being hand animated.

Like the first Fear Effect, the gameplay graphics push the PSX way beyond what anyone thought was possible. Actually, our near-complete version is tossing around visuals that blow the first game away. Everything from facial expressions to the sexy hip-swaying gaits of the heroines has been painstakingly animated. Lip-synched voice-overs give life to the characters and the story. Additionally, the acting is above average.

The sequel's control interface is identical to the original. That's good if you're a vet, but if you've never played Fear Effect, it may take some getting used to. It's the type of layout that is somewhat strange at first, but grows on you. It works well for the 3D

•As the pictures show, Hannah and Rein have, shall we say, a unique and interesting relationship



environments, and we're glad Kronos is keeping it.

Much of your time will be spent solving puzzles. From what we've seen so far, Retro Helix will stimulate your mind (and your hormones) without getting frustrating. The answers to the puzzles we came across were always under our noses, and we just had to put our little heads together to figure them out.

We almost could have reviewed Retro Helix with the version we have. There are barely any glitches, and everything clips along without any hang-ups. We're betting the finished product will be everything we previously expected and more. Of course, we're only interested in playing this game because it's our job. It has nothing to do with sex and violence.

Triple Play Baseball

Platform: PSX • **Publisher:** EA Sports • **Release Date:** April • **Stage:** 70%
TPB will only be appearing on 128 bit platforms in the future- this is the PSX swan song

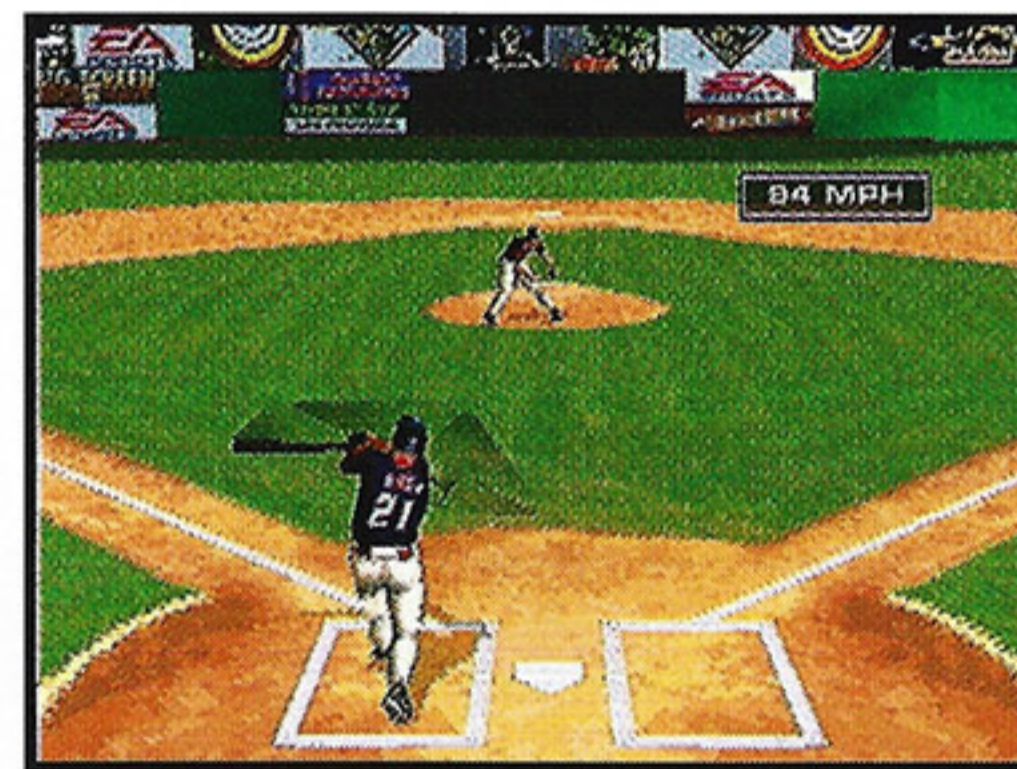
To create a sense of timelessness for its last ever PSX baseball title, EA will release Triple Play Baseball without the usual "year" stigma. After all, in the year 2004 millions of people will still have Playstations, and it wouldn't seem like an epitome of achievement if it were called Triple Play 2002.

As amazing as this may seem, TPB's development team has been able to squeeze even more graphical enhancements out of the soon-to-be-obsolete hardware. Not only are the mapped player faces more real looking, but now they animate as well, showing situational emotions. Additional animations have been added for umpire arguments, game end celebrations, and more.

Polygonal player models have been slightly improved too, and the whole thing looks well polished.

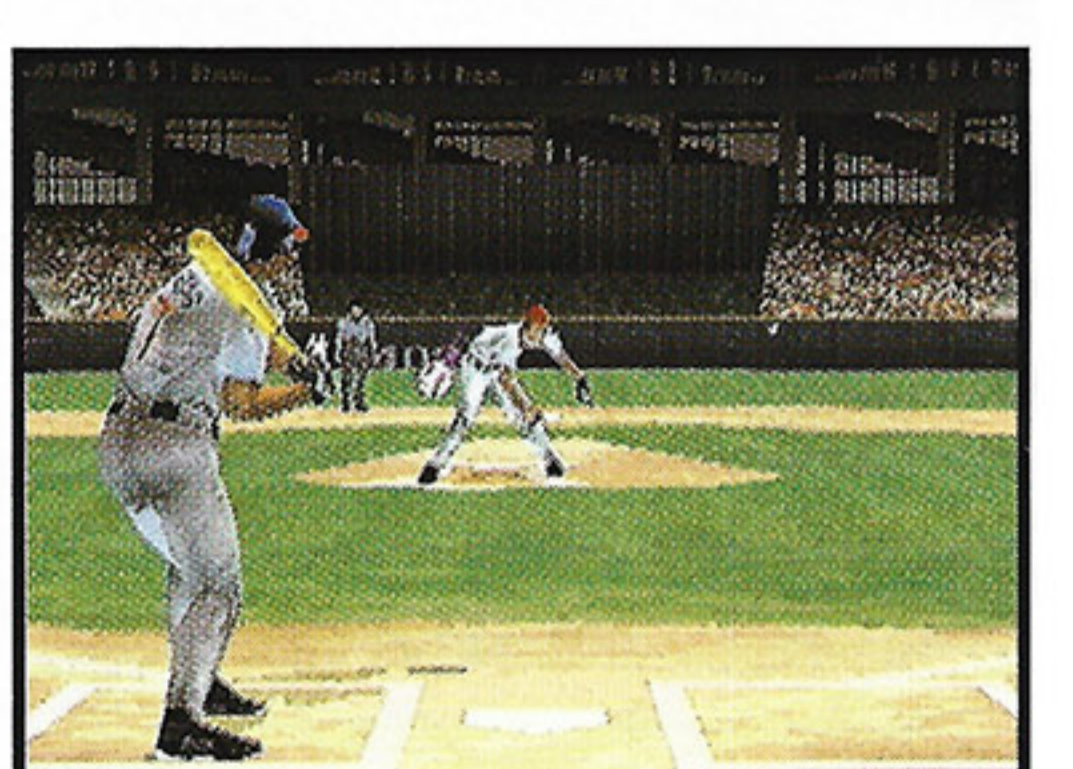
The audio presentation has even been upgraded, with better stadium ambience and a highly interactive crowd. You'll hear the PA announcer page fans, and the now-famous hotdog man still does his thing. What we're wondering is, will they ever give the suspiciously missing beer man a job? We need something to wash down our hotdogs with! Returning to the booth is EA Sports staple Jim Hughson, along with Buck Martinez. Congratulation on the new job, coach!

Miller Park and PNC Park will appear in the game, alongside enhanced renders of all the pre-existing MLB stadiums. To promote more strategical play, mystery stadiums (as well as bonus teams, hidden players, and more) can be



unlocked via a new reward system based on achieving in-game feats. In Season Mode, your team accumulates points that are used to purchase special items or features for enhancing your team. Like the Madden games, this idea really entices gamers to play their hardest.

TPB is keeping with the dynamic arcade look established in TP'00. Home runs will be accompanied by swift replays of the swing and stomach dropping camera swoops of the in-your-face ball cam. But don't think that this means the realism is being compromised. EA knows that in order to keep fans happy, they need to please both the arcade and sim camps. Their baseball formula has always been successful, and we feel this will be the ultimate send-off for the series.



TJ Lavin's BMX

Platform: PSX • **Publisher:** THQ • **Release Date:** Spring • **Stage:** 80%
Acclaim's got Dave Mirra, Activision's got Matt Hoffman, THQ fires back

Bunny-hopping onto the extreme sports scene, TJ Lavin's Ultimate BMX is gunning for the top with a smattering of professional BMX superstars like (of course) Lavin, Fuzzy Hall, Colin Winkelmann, Matt Beringer, and Dave Freimuth, among others.

These limb-risking daredevils will be airing it out in three distinct environments. Dirt, street, and vert tracks should provide armchair bikers with enough terrain variety to see what they're made of. All of the bikes in the game are authentic, each with varying degrees of speed and maneuverability. Interestingly, the game's 60+ tricks and combos are executed with a simple control interface that is designed to allow anyone to just sit down and start

busting out 720s, tabletops, truck drivers, no-handers, and slick grinds in no time flat.

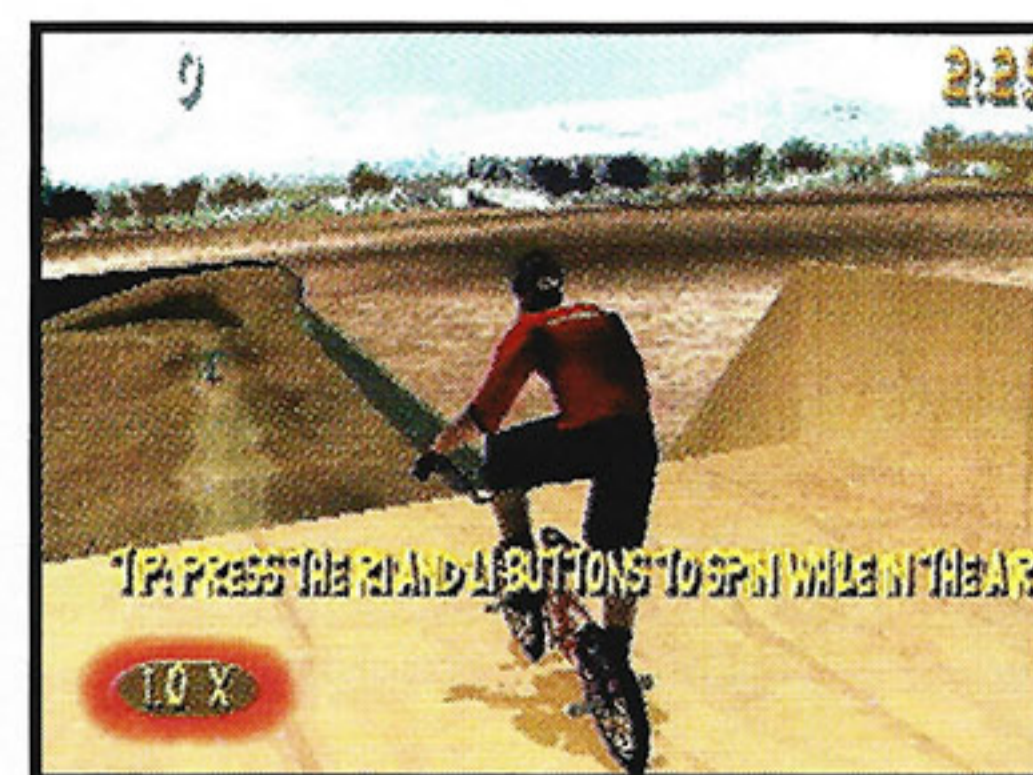
Our preview disc displays a distinct look and feel. Rider models are smooth and colorful, complete with a large set of animations from tricks to wipeouts. We loved the wince-inducing crashes, which had riders spitting up blood and crawling around on all fours holding various sore spots. The environments are logically laid out, with plenty of shredable surfaces and ramps. The music, though not as mainstream as that found in the competition, is every bit as hip. The Kottonmouth Kings, POD, Millencollin, and other alternative rock bands set the aggressive tone.

This revision is obviously very



early, but Blue Shift's development team appears to have a great start. These screens should give you some idea of what to expect. Unfortunately, the feel of this type of game really can't be relayed through still images. You need to see the tricks in motion to really appreciate what the developers are doing. This is especially significant when you consider how easy it is to pull off the majority of the tricks.

Ultimate BMX should be hitting shelves right around the same time the Midwest winter blast begins to subside. If you know where to look, you just might catch a glimpse of an **SM** editor or two grinding it out in downtown St. Louis. Well not really—that's what video games are for.



Point Blank 3

Platform: PSX • **Publisher:** Namco • **Release Date:** March • **Stage:** 70%
Finally, a reason to dust off the Guncon that even Mom approves of

While everyone has been complaining about the shortage of PS2s, they seem to have forgotten about the shortage of Guncon shooting games for PSX. Heck, the last Guncon game that found its way into our eager little hands was...well...Point Blank 2.

Point Blank 3 (known as Gun

Balina Japan) features a number of different game modes. The most recognizable is the Arcade Mode, which is a direct port of the arcade game, with one and two player cooperative and competitive modes. Training is another mode allowing you to practice various levels over and over. The third mode is new to



•Dan and Don. Bert and Ernie. Separated at birth? We'll let you know when the paternity test come back.



the home release and is entitled "Endurance." This one-player only mode will challenge the player to transverse as far as possible through the levels without losing a life.

The final modes are the one portion of the Point Blank that keeps us up at night, in a good way. The tournament and team battle tournament modes. The modes are the ones that allow two to four players to compete in cutthroat tournaments against each other in team or free for all mode.

And with all the concern over "violent gun games", even the uptight folks here in St. Louis would have a hard time dubbing any part of Point Blank 3 as violent. The entire game revolves around what are



essentially carnival shooting gallery challenges. Over eighty different levels are featured, with challenges ranging from the typical (shoot all the baddies before they reach Dan and Don) to the odd (like reading the time off of a digital clock and shooting the analog clock displaying the same time) to the hardcore Namco (playing Galaxian with a light-gun? Why not?).

Get ready to dust off your light gun and maybe pick up a second gun for those late night pizza parties. With a couple of polygonal professors named Dan and Don, who look like Bert and Ernie's long lost second cousins relying on you, how could you possibly say no?

Munch's Oddysee

Platform: Xbox • **Publisher:** Infogrames • **Release Date:** Fall • **Stage:** 25%
Microsoft scored a big victory with the Xbox exclusive release of Munch's Oddysee

When you look over the specs of the Xbox, and you have an understanding of the marketing power of Microsoft, you can see why major game publishers are signing on to do exclusive development for the system. Xbox boasts three times the visual processing power and five times the audio channels of any other

next generation game platform, and Bill Gates' super empire has companies like Infogrames seeing green.

Originally planned for the PS2, Infogrames' Munch's Oddysee is now being developed exclusively for Xbox. Not only that, but three other Oddworld titles are in their planning



stages. If you haven't played Abe's Oddysee or Abe's Exodus on PSX, you are missing two of the most revolutionary gaming experiences ever. Using a unique language system called "Gamespeak," you were required to talk to captive Mudokans and elicit certain emotions. In turn, they would perform specific tasks that you needed to manipulate the slaves into saving themselves. Abe also had the ability to chant, and possess an enemy while in his spiritual form. This gave you control over the enemy, and you could run around blasting his friends and eventually force him to commit suicide.

Besides this completely off the



wall style of play, Oddworld games are huge on personality. For this latest installment, the story will focus on Munch, a strange little creature who can acquire a wheelchair to rocket around in. Abe plays a role as well, but we're not sure how extensive his involvement will be. Many of the enemies will return, too, like the Sligs seen in these images.

As expected, the graphics have made a huge jump since we play-tested an early PS2 demo at E3. There's an overall "clean" look to everything, with polygonal characters sporting smooth edges and incredibly lifelike animation. Lorne Lanning, president and co-founder of Oddworld Inhabitants (the series' development crew), said that only Xbox contained the graphical muscle to create the immersive world they had envisioned for the game, and that it's the only platform capable of producing the intense sound to go along with it.

Munch's Oddysee is due to release alongside Xbox this Fall. As huge fans of the first two games, we're already fighting over which editor will get to review it.

•After only a short time in development for the Xbox, Munch's Oddysee is looking better than it did after eight months of development on PS2

NBA Hoopz

Platform: DC • **Publisher:** Midway • **Release Date:** April • **Stage:** 90%
We'll never get tired of those three little words: "He's on fire!"

Get the score cards out, this could get complicated. NBA Jam debuted and dished the rock off to NBA Hangtime, which stutter-stepped and alley-ooped to NBA Showtime: NBA on NBC, who aired the ball to NBA Hoopz for the easy tip-in. This is just our colorful (and cliché filled) way of showing the progression, and many name changes that went into bringing out Midway's latest arcade NBA basketball action.

So, what's new besides the name? Well, two-on-two just doesn't cut it anymore. NBA Hoopz is bringing a third man into the foray. Every team now has a guard, forward, and center. But this is arcade action, so feel free to put any player in any position.

NBA Hoopz actually condones this action by letting gamers create their own gang of three, build up their stats, and dominate the NBA.

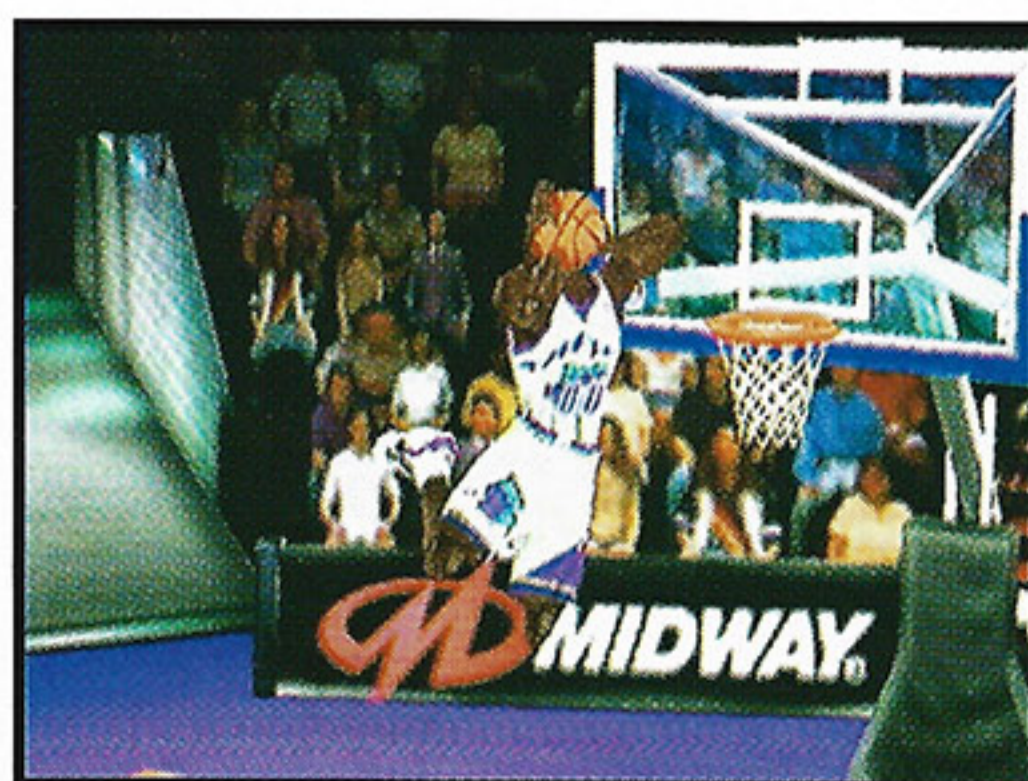
How about saying, "screw the salary cap" and putting Shaq, Malone, and Iverson on the same team?

With the new third person, NBA Hoopz has also added a new button, the aptly named "Hoopz" button. Now setting up alley-oops and executing give-and-goes is much more intuitive.

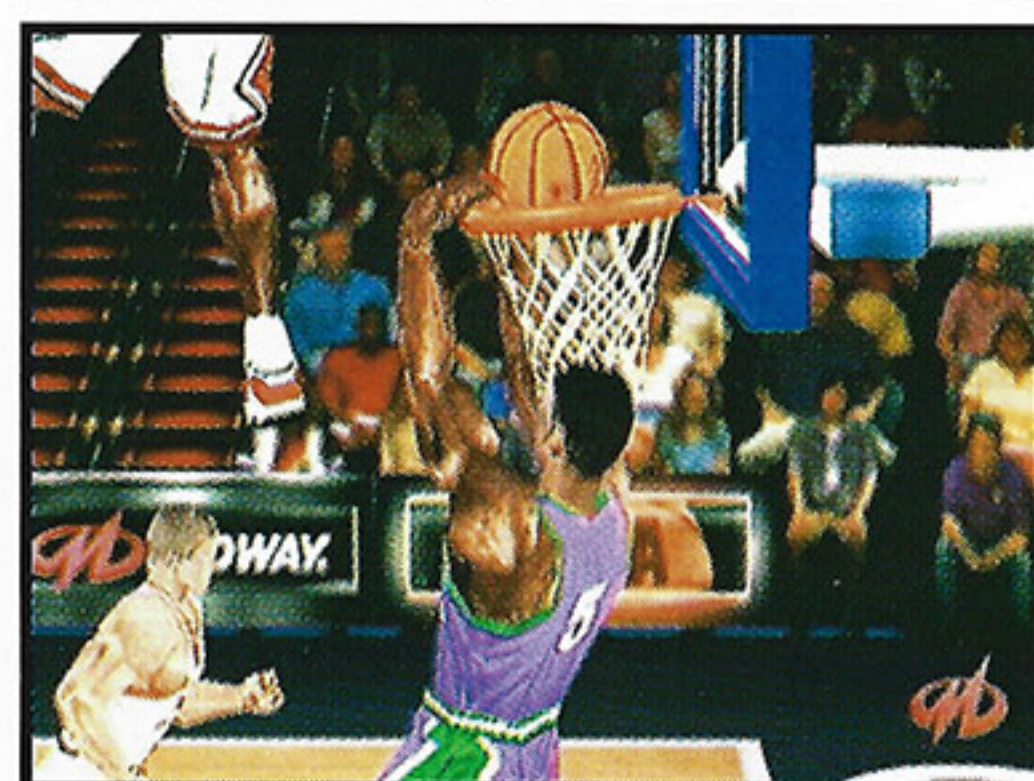
Midway has also added to the depth of the arcade action by including six new mini-games. Classic playground favorites like around the world and twenty-one are just a few of those that are included.

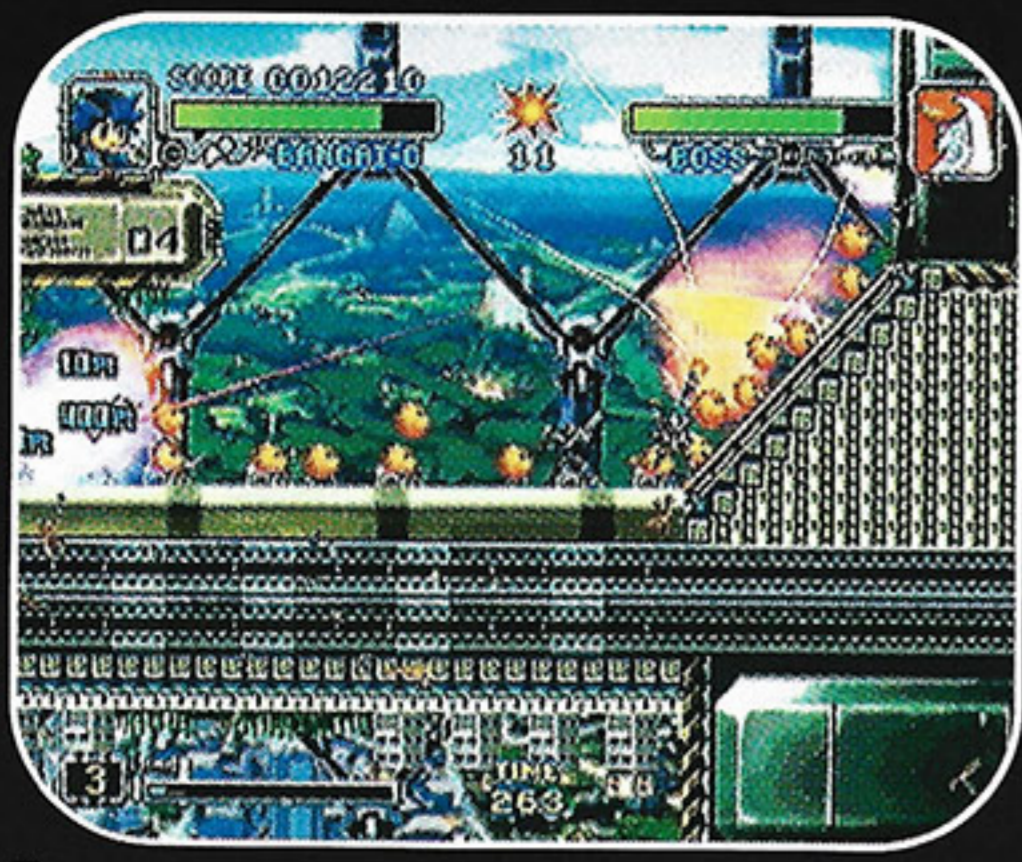
Midway is going for a complete full court press by providing NBA Hoopz titles for Game Boy Color, Playstation, Dreamcast and Playstation 2. All versions (except for the Game Boy Color) will support up to four players at once. The Dreamcast version we previewed has plenty of new player animation,;

including new motion capture madness by the master of Shaq-fu himself, Shaquille O'Neal. We particularly liked the new slow motion flaming dunks, perfect for use when taunting, humiliating and impressing your opponents. As a matter of fact, we actually used the new memory card feature to save a few spectacular displays of hoops mastery to humble up a certain overly-competitive editor when the trash talking got too extreme. And it often does.



•NBA Hoopz is all about three on three action- no sick jokes, please





Dreamcast
Bangai-o
Conspiracy Entertainment
•SM Rating: 75

The promise of a 2D shooter from the blaster-minds at Treasure always whets our appetites. So, when Conspiracy Entertainment announced Bangai-o, we couldn't have been more ravenous.

Bangai-o originally appeared on the N64 in Japan. Many points in the game still reflect its cartridge-based roots. For instance, new levels are presented with still frame pictures with limited speech. As the story quickly flashes by, you only get a somewhat sparse idea of what is going on due to the speed at which it is presented and the not so stellar translation. However, being that it is a shooter, we were quite a bit more interested in the action.

Jumping into the actual game, we immediately noticed two things (three if you count the fact that there aren't any real power ups). The first was the enormous number of enemies on screen (no slowdown either) and just how small the sprites are. We quickly found that these two points are very interconnected. Bangai-o needed all the screen space afforded by these smaller enemies to fill those areas with, well, more enemies.

Unlike other shooters where you blast everything as soon as you see their beady little eyes, Bangai-o rewards you for getting yourself in the worse possible position, surrounded by attackers, and unleashing a massive multi-pronged attack. As the game tracks the number of explosions occurring on the screen, rewards are given for just how long you can keep up the insanity. It becomes very obvious that Treasure wanted you sitting on the edge of your seat with Death taking its place as your co-pilot. And, of course, we were more than happy to oblige.

Bangai-o delivers on something Treasure always promises: action, action, and more action.

•SM's Rating System:
 We rate games from 1 to 99 using units of 1. 50 is average, so expect a lot of games to score in this range.



Dreamcast
Evil Dead: Hail To The King
THQ
•SM Rating: 55

Cutting off his own hand to rid himself of an evil spirit was only the beginning. Bidding the callings of devilish nightmares, Ash returns to the cabin along with his girlfriend. The damsel is kidnapped and Ash has to be the hero all over again.

The dark, foreboding atmosphere bests that of the Resident Evil series. Wind, rain, thunder, and demonic voices surround you in the forest. Deep, moody music induces uncontrollable goosebumps. Graphics are absolutely superb, with all kinds of creepy details like moon-cast shadows of

twisted trees, and little enhancements such as blowing leaves or blood trails left by your weapon.

It's too bad the whole experience is undermined by terrible control. It was just okay on the PSX version, but for Dreamcast it's nearly unplayable at times. It's excruciatingly painful when Ash gets cornered, and his response to your frantic inputs is to stand there like a statue. Other times you'll be running from an enemy, and just as you turn the last corner before escaping Ash will inadvertently swing all of the way around and dash directly into its waiting arms. Compounding the control problems, ammo is too scarce.

It's too bad, because Evil Dead would be an incredible game if not for these issues. Challenging puzzles, daunting bosses, and a great storyline gave us plenty of reason to press onward. But ultimately, our enjoyment was killed by the overwhelming problems.



Dreamcast
The Next Tetris: On-Line Edition
Crave Entertainment
•SM Rating: 68

There are a few things in life that are guaranteed. Death, taxes and the fact that if you buy a new system, a new and slightly improved version of Tetris is eventually going to appear on it. Now it's the Dreamcast's turn to take the puzzle classic and put a new spin on it.

As can be derived from the title, the main feature of Tetris is the all-new online option. Yes, this means that you can finally play a round or two of Tetris over the Internet. Global scoreboards and a tournament options add to an already rock solid game.

The Next Tetris doesn't add too much to the classic formula, but a few things are missing. The game no longer scores in points, and lines, but points only. This still means that pulling off that tetrad that you've been working on nets you more points than four individual lines. If you're a Tetris pro this is good news, as some of the excitement is lost. While playable this TNT may not have the shelf life of past renditions.

We also noticed that instead of just showing you the next piece to come up, The Next Tetris shows you the next four. It's really not a huge change, but notable none the less. We are also given blocks that have more than one color and can be split apart to fill otherwise unreachable gaps. This opens up a new combo system. Depending on how you like your Tetris can be either a good thing or a bad thing. Of course, classic Tetris is also included for those who like the old school gameplay.



PSX
King Of Fighters 1999
Agetec
•SM Rating: 75

Here we have the latest PS incarnation of the legendary KOF series. Fortunately, Agetec has graced the aging Playstation with a faithful port of the arcade game.

Any SNK fan will tell you that the King of Fighters series has always had great art, an in depth combo system, and excellent playability. KOF '99 is no different. Tons of characters are offered, 32 to be exact. Unfortunately, with so many characters it's hard to maintain originality throughout. Some of the characters are direct rip-offs from other games, such as the stumbling drunk who seemed just a bit too similar to Shun from Virtua Fighter 2 to us.

The combo system is rock solid as is to be expected from SNK. Combos are easy to pull off, yet not so devastating as to be unfair. Special moves are the standard fare, with uppercuts, fireballs and the like, but they get the job done. We are also given a wealth of options. The controller can not only be configured to your liking, but the option for special moves being assigned to each shoulder button is included. It's an excellent idea, and one that we wish was used in more games. An art gallery, illustration gallery and voice gallery are also included.

All is not perfect however. The graphics bring us back to the glory days of the SNES, the animation rarely includes more than three frames for each move, and the sounds appear to be really low samples. Other things include; the horrible rain effects, AI that seems to cut out abruptly, and a cheap boss who rarely pulls off more than two different moves in any given match.

King of Fighters balances out tough enemies by giving you options on different ways to handicap them or power yourself up after you lose a match. Once again, great idea.



PS2
Driving Emotion Type S
Square EA

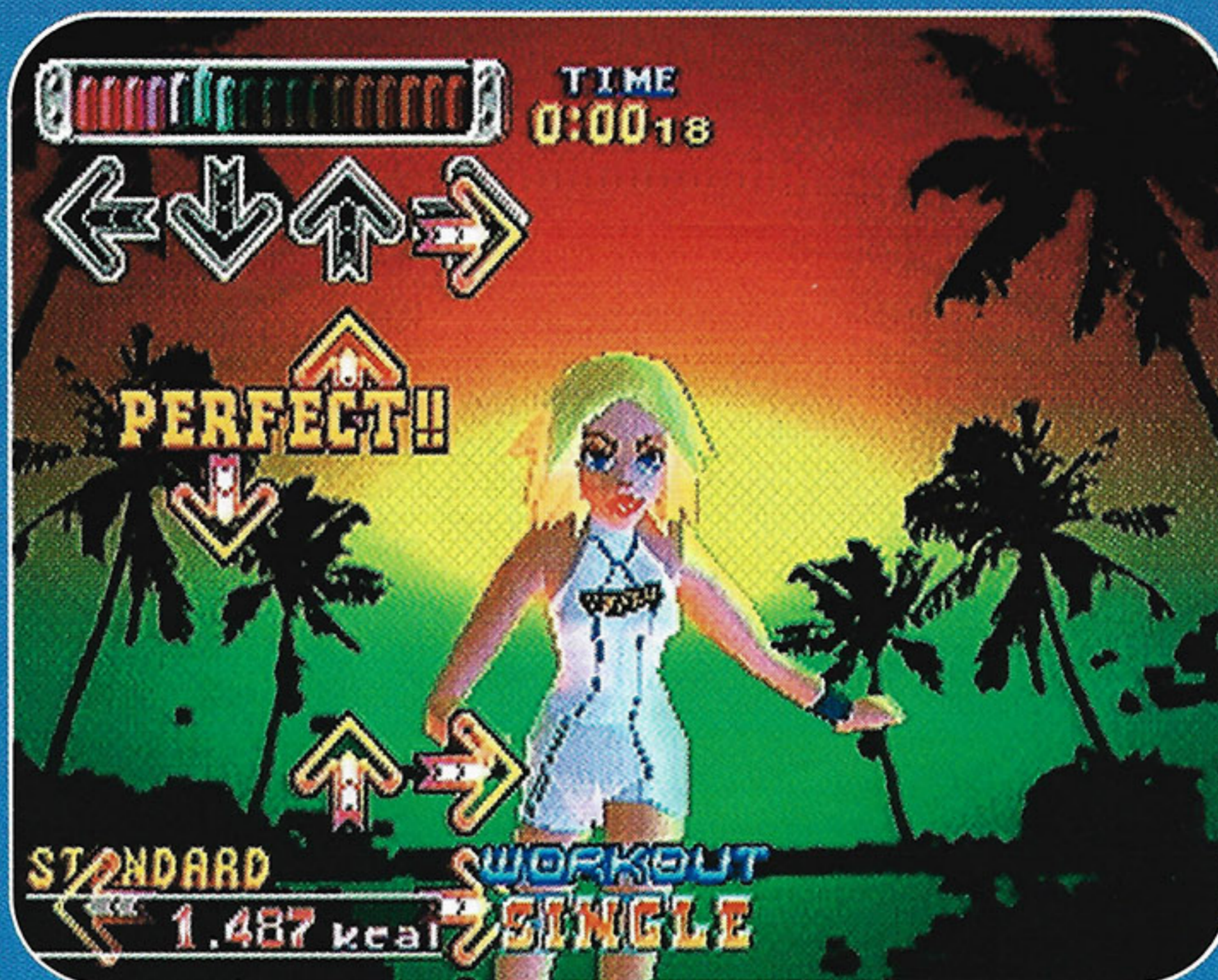
•SM Rating: 45

If you spend \$50 on this game, chances are the only emotion you'll experience is anger. The main problem with Driving Emotion Type-S (but not the only problem) is a lack of significant game modes. You have Arcade Type-S, a series of non-related single races where your aim is to beat all the classes. If that's too difficult at first, you can try Line Training. Here, a red line guides you through each course, showing you how to attack the corners. Also, this mode allows you to burn through "Autocross" courses, which are non-circuit tracks. Strangely, they're not available in any other mode. Even though they're short, it would be cool to race them. Time Attack Mode is just what you'd expect. And that's it. No "career" mode, no Gran Prix or even a tournament. Oh, there's a versus mode for two players. Yay.

The draw of the game is it's 43 licensed vehicles, 39 of which are locked at the beginning. We're betting that most gamers won't care enough to open any of them. First, there isn't enough track variety. Second, and more significantly, the game has miserable control. You can adjust analog sensitivity and stick dead zone, but even with the response set at zero we had difficulty driving in a straight line. The cars seem to float most of the time, and you really don't get a good feel for the track- even after the Line Training.

At times, it seems DETS is mocking Gran Turismo. Car models are decent, until you notice the jaggies and generic reflections. Come on, Square, this is PS2. How about some environment mapping? The replays look great in pictures, with the backgrounds going out of focus the way a human eye perceives depth. But in motion, the fuzzy parts flicker so badly we all got headaches.

•SM recommends a U-turn.



PSX
Dance Dance Revolution
Konami

•SM Rating: 96

Dance Dance Revolution has been a staple in both •SM's pages and in our office Playstations. We thought we pretty much knew what to expect from the U.S. release. Amazingly, Konami still managed to surprise us with the sheer scope of the American DDR.

For the uninitiated, the basics premise of DDR is that you need to execute the correct button press on beat with the music. While this may sound simple, it's a lot of fun.

First off, if you are going to play DDR, you need the dance pad to play it right. Not only is it the most exciting way to play, it also allows you to take advantage of the workout mode and step by step tutorial for first time players. That's right; DDR includes a workout mode that will keep track of how many calories you are burning as you play the game. If that isn't enough incentive for parents worrying about their kids (or themselves) getting enough exercise to purchase this game, it certainly should be.

The step by step tutorial is just like it sounds. It literally

shows you the best foot placement to help you really master this release. While most DDR veterans have their own style, this mode really helps to assure that you don't end up looking like something left over from a game of twister gone bad by the end of each song.

DDR can be played with the standard control pad on the Playstation. While not near as exciting, it is just as challenging. We personally like using it in two-player mode to allow the second player to learn the flow of the song or to catch their breath during our marathon dance sessions.

The main thing that helps this version stand out, even among its Japanese counterparts, is the tremendous number of modes and extras collected into this release. Some of the highlights include being able to play a non-stop mode with pre-selected mixes of various themed songs without having to return to the song selection screen between each tune. Even little things like being able to adjust the background intensity or turning off the indication arrows altogether (for those who have memorized every step) have been included. We wouldn't be surprised to see Japanese

•DDR is as fast moving as it is bright and colorful- and that's no understatement

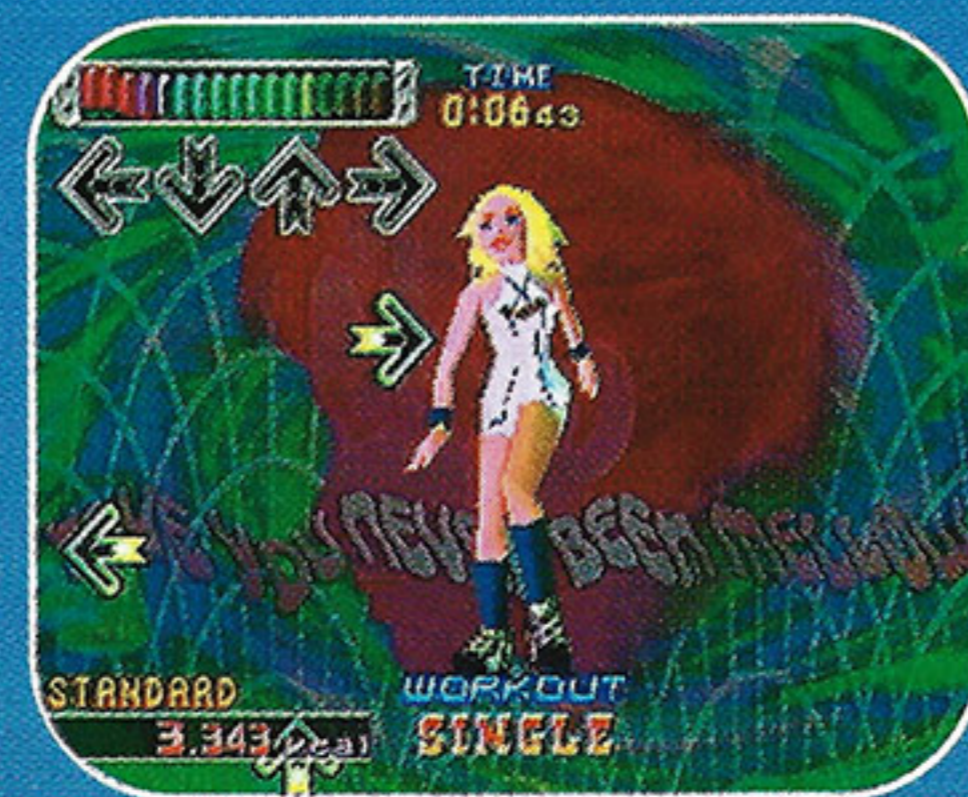


gamers importing this version of DDR for themselves (a first for sure).

Some of the options that worked well in the arcade, but are not necessary in the home release can now be turned off. You can toggle off the option to end in mid-song if your score drops too low and you can pick the same song over and over in an effort to truly master it (Hello Paranoia!).

With all music-based games, the songs included are paramount to its success. DDR features a wide selection of tunes with one common factor; they are all extremely catchy and immediately danceable. DDR standards such as Have You Never Been Mellow, Trip Machine, and My Fire are included along with a few new surprises. If you have played some of the Japanese DDRs, you will notice the absence of a few of the "classic" tunes. But we guess the loss of Butterfly and a few others is to be expected due to the constant addition of new songs to the series.

Dance Dance Revolution is an exceptional game that has the almost unique quality of appealing to everyone. Hardcore, casual, and non-gamers alike will thoroughly enjoy it.





PS2
WDL: Thunder Tanks
3DO

•SM Rating: 80

It looks like its time to break out some major artillery on the multi-player action front. Come on; admit it. You never watched "Patton" and thought, "Man, I wish I was one of the infantry men!" No way, you wanted to be in control of a couple of tons of mechanized destruction known as a tank.

WDL: Thunder Tanks is essentially a multi-player game and suffers when confined to single player. The variety offered to keep multiple players happy in death matches actually works against the one player game. One such mode requires you to secure various drone machines inside of an arena. Once you secure them, they will produce drones of your color while you race to the next enemy controlled machine and attempt to take control of it. This provides hours of "punch your buddy in the arm, hey that was mine!" type of fun with a group of friends. However, when you encounter this challenge every fourth or fifth round in the single player game, the amount of time it takes to complete this challenge slows the game to a crawl.

The over the top power-ups really help WDL: TT. 3DO not only managed to include cool methods of destruction such as satellite strikes and tactical nukes, but they did so in a way that still keeps the gameplay balanced. Tank variety isn't limited to simple shape and speed, different weapons and powers (such as strafing) also make your choices a little bit harder.

However, no matter what tank you prefer, the gameplay is always fast. A good mantra to mumble while playing Thunder Tanks is "Strike Hard, Strike Fast, No Mercy." If you have to stop to think, you'll usually end up dead.

If you are looking for a multi-player party, WDL: TT brings the chips and tanks, you just have to provide the bodies.



Dreamcast
Typing Of The Dead
Sega

•SM Rating: 87

Quirky is a label that has been used to describe many different games, from Chu Chu Rocket to Space Channel 5. After watching the intermission scenes from Typing Of The Dead that include agents with keyboards strapped to their chest battling the undead, quirky has a new meaning for us.

The best way to describe Typing Of The Dead is to imagine House Of The Dead 2, but instead of using a lightgun to shoot the enemies, you use a keyboard to type in letters or words to eliminate them. And as odd as the concept sounds, the fun

factor is though the roof. It features all of the depth of House of the Dead, with branching levels, hidden bonuses, and training challenges. It also reproduces the pressure of HOD, as the undead enemies charge and you race to finish the word or sentence that will stop them in their tracks.

TOD is also one of those rare games that *GASP* actually teaches you something as you play. It doesn't matter if you are a beginning typist or a professional with years of experience. TOD makes you want to become a faster, better, and more accurate typist.

One of the minor annoyances is the lack of a "play again" function in the drill mode, making us endure the exit, selection, and loading screens every replay.

Typing Of The Dead is utterly unique and completely addictive. It is both a great party game and an awesome one-player challenge.



PS2
Top Gear Daredevil
Kemco

•SM Rating: 63

TGDD doesn't fit into the racing category. It's not a driving simulator, or a getaway game, or a stunt title. Truth be told, we don't know what to call it, except a little wacky and a lot of fun.

The goal is to collect the tokens before time expires. Nitros and time bonuses aid your cause, and you can uncover wrenches and keys to unlock secrets. You'll need to deal with moronic Sunday drivers and all types of man-made obstacles.

The instructions suggest you weave around traffic rather than plow through, as this saves time. However, you're awarded points for

crashes. Besides, there are so many vehicles on the road that this notion is ridiculous. We noticed some odd quirks, too. It's really something when you can smash through a corner store, plow into a bus, and blow up a gas station- while a cop at the nearby intersection drives calmly away.

Graphics are above passable but significantly less stunning than say, Gran Turismo. We appreciate the way pop-up is minimized, with buildings gaining detail only as you approach. Car models mimic real ones, like the super Black Widow (it's a Prowler), and they look great.

Our concern is that the one player mode can be beaten within a few days, and after that the only replay incentive is the two-player mode. This consists of three gameplay types, and nothing is lost in terms of graphics or speed. Unfortunately, they're only slightly entertaining. It's too bad the fun ends so quickly.



PS2
ATV Offroad Fury
Sony

•SM Rating: 78

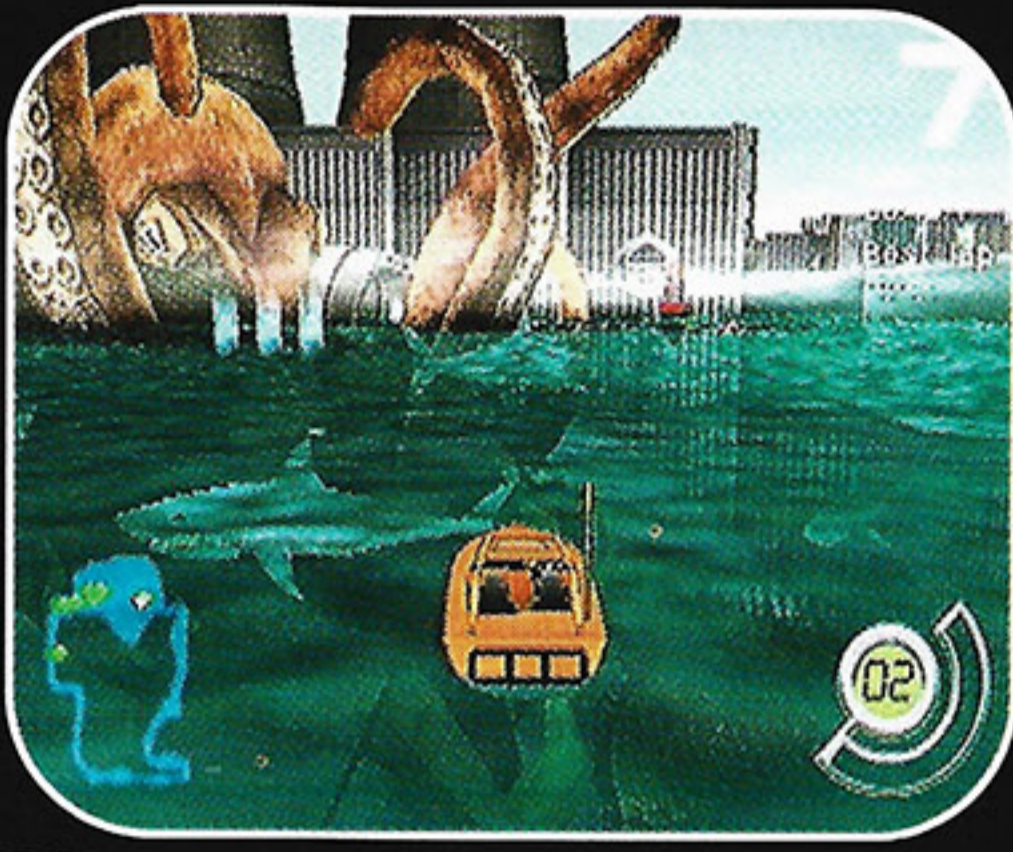
When we previewed ATV two issues ago, we knew it had great potential. Highlights included magnificent visuals, perfect control, and realistic physics. Thankfully, Sony's development team didn't adjust these variables.

Being a first-party developer has its advantages, one being that programmers have easy access to the tools they need to optimize the hardware. That explains ATV's superior graphics. There is an immense amount of depth to the environments, with little pop-in. Then there are the finer details, like the way dust and mud fly from under the vehicles or the gut-wrenching wrecks. These elements work together to create a high degree of realism.

There are several gameplay modes, with Pro Career being the main draw. Unfortunately, its length is mostly determined by its non-adjustable difficulty. Advancing requires you to place second, which really means you have to win. ATV suffers from Gran Turismo Syndrome, a condition identified by AI opponents clinging via an unseen magnetic force. This design, coupled with the fact that when you wreck you always reappear without having lost any ground, means the outcome of the race is rarely determined until the last lap. Of the other modes, we liked Cross Country Enduro the best. It's a lengthy open race where an overhead arrow guides you through checkpoints. The five-racer field spreads out better here than in the smaller lap races, creating more challenge.

One disappointment is the lack of a replay mode. After a race, you get to view the final lap's action, but it's mostly hidden by a results overlay.

ATV Offroad Fury deserves your attention. We'd urge you to at least give it a rent and see if you agree.



PS2
RC Revenge Pro
Acclaim

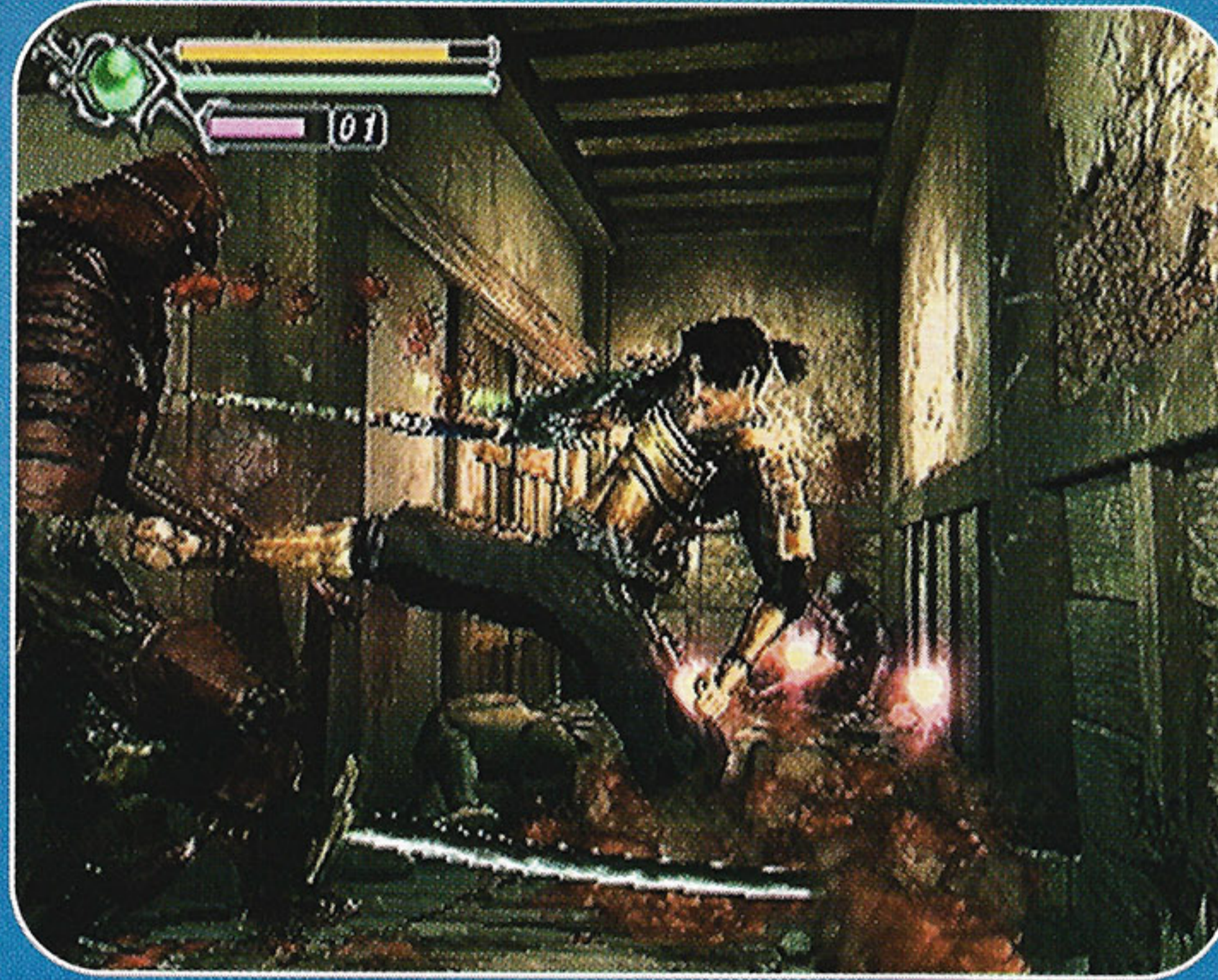
•SM Rating: 51

Time sure flies on PS2 as a platform. It seems like it took forever for the original Playstation to receive its first generic cart racing game, but the Playstation 2 has been "blessed" with one right off the bat.

While the title doesn't say "Kart" in the title, everything about the gameplay does. Drift steering, stock powerups, and themed levels are the order of the day. Granted, you do switch between remote controlled cars and remote controlled boats but with the exception of some minor control differences, the experience is the same. The power-ups found throughout the courses are the standard fare. Some are utterly useless, prompting the player to discharge them immediately to rid themselves of them while others are helpful, but not so much so that you would hold onto them for key situations. The AI tends to drive in large packs, making passing almost impossible. The odds are at least one of the cars in the pack will be firing off a power-up at any given time. If you do happen to encounter a powerless pack, the computer-controlled cars will spin you around with some well-timed bumps as they continue merrily on their way.

The themed racing environments do not suffer from any real layout flaws, but do emphasize the physics problems in the game engine. Computer approved ramps will launch you through the air perfectly, powering you into the lead, but a bump in the road that looks good for getting some air will roll your vehicle like a scene from the world's scariest police chases: DWI edition.

The level editor is a nice inclusion, but nothing makes RC Revenge Pro stand out. Even the graphics, where one would think a Playstation 2 game would excel, fail to impress.



PS2
Onimusha: Warlords
Capcom

•SM Rating: 97

"The video game industry is about to witness gaming like never before," said Keiji Inafune, Onimusha's creator. We will be the first to back that statement Onimusha has forever changed our perception of both PS2's graphical capabilities and the survival/horror genre as a whole.

In the year 1560, Japan is crumbling under the advances of Nobunaga Oda and his army of demons. Having devised a devilish plan, he sets his sights on Yoshitatsu Saito's castle in the Mino Prefecture. During the ensuing battle, the beautiful Princess Yuki is captured and taken to an underground prison. Samanosuke, the main character, sets out to save her from a terrible fate- Nobunaga plans to drink her blood as part of a sacrificial ceremony that will give him ultimate power. But before the evil ritual can commence, he needs one more ingredient. This buys Samanosuke the time he needs to attempt a rescue.

Onimusha's design most resembles Resident Evil, with polygonal characters and prerendered backdrops. General

movement is also comparable, wherein directional control is relative to the character's perspective. But the similarities stop there as this game has a much faster flow both in battle and story progression. Most fighting takes place in close quarters, requiring extremely quick reflexes.

Though the idea of soul-sucking has been done before, the execution here is totally unique. Early on, Samanosuke acquires a gauntlet that steals soul energy from defeated enemies. Yellow energy restores vitality, blue restores magic, and pink energy can be exchanged to level up your gauntlet's powers. These powers are then used to increase elemental attacking power and, get this, open up doors. Collecting souls is imperative, and it adds a separate dimension to fighting. As you are swarmed by adversaries, you have to fight them off while attempting to collect the energy without getting mauled.

Aiding your mission is Samanosuke's female ninja companion, Kaede. You gain control over her at times when two pairs of hands are required to solve a puzzle or when Samanosuke gets into trouble. You have to be much more

Without a single doubt in our minds, Onimusha is the best looking PS2 game out there



careful with her, though, because she is not capable of sucking souls and therefore can expire quicker. Kaede's involvement provides gameplay variety and adds depth to the story.

Though there are a few instances when the camera angle isn't the best, it's never obtrusive. Save points are everywhere, and as a result you don't get that sick feeling that accompanies death forty minutes after your last save. Even with an inability to skip cinemas, the most you ever need to backtrack is only a few minutes.

Currently, Onimusha has the best graphics to be found anywhere. Put aside the most realistic-looking, wonderfully animated characters ever, you've still got environments so real you could sell them at a photography expo. Perfect sound effects and musical score boost the experience.

Onimusha earns the highest score for a game ever in these pages. Though you should be able to finish the story in a few days, completion awards you with some great minigames and extra modes. Capcom won't let us disclose what they are. We are sure you won't be disappointed.



• Don't let the pretty pictures fool you, in person the visuals are blurry and the action is lame



PS2
Knockout Kings
Konami

• **SM Rating:** 74

Rating KK01 for PS2 wasn't easy. It's supposed to be like the PSX version with better visuals, thus making a better game, right? Problem is, it's lacking in some of the areas that were strong points for the PSX version.

Most notably, the boxer creator has been hacked to pieces. There are only nine selectable likenesses, and a very limited list of color options for the clothing. EA must have been running short on time, but Career Mode is supposed to be the main draw of the game. We were also put off by the long loading time. Sometimes the game has to load twice just when going from one round to the next. We also thought that the backgrounds could have been better. Some of the venues have no lights on anywhere except directly above the ring.

Once you get into a match, however, you'll quickly forget about all that stuff. Except for the rather slow grabbing animations, everything moves along at a good pace. We say "good" and not "fast," because it's important to understand that fast does not mean realistic. Real life boxers don't run into the ring and throw blurring punches all over the place. If they did, they'd drop from exhaustion. Strategy is paramount in the real ring, and the same goes for KK01. Many of your bouts will go the distance, so you'd better be able to keep up.

It is true that this is an incredible leap in terms of graphics. The high-poly fighters sport muscle definition and their faces are perfect renditions of their real-life counterparts. They swell, bruise, and bleed realistically, and it's not uncommon to see a mouth guard fly across the ring.

Overall, KK01 is highly enjoyable. Hopefully next year EA will have the time to make it perfect.

PS2
The Bouncer
Square

• **SM Rating:** 40

Ready for a Phantom Menace-sized letdown? The Bouncer was one of the first PS2 games to be announced, yet until now Square has only allowed trickles of information and screenshots to leak from its walls. This strategy generates a lot of hype, especially when you're dealing with a reputable publisher. It's like reverse psychology; the less information you reveal, the more people clamor for it. But in this case, Square wasn't trying to build hype, they just didn't have much to talk about.

Many promises about The Bouncer did not materialize in the final product. Early reports claimed the game engine would handle cinematics, which was pretty amazing since the screenshots looked like high-end CG. However, you can really see the difference when the game switches from story to action. The screen gets fuzzy, and the characters lose fine detail. Besides, the switch is easily given away when a loading screen appears. And that's another broken promise. This game loads so much it's a chore to continue after you've been knocked out. Additionally,

you may remember Square's testimony about the different types of gameplay The Bouncer was going to have in Story Mode. We've uncovered nothing more than a Fighting Force rip-off, and a bad one at that.

Not surprisingly, the RPG giant attempted to incorporate some role-playing elements. You have a three-character party, each member with varying degrees of stamina, power and defense. Before confrontations, you're asked to choose which character to control. Scoring a kill awards that character with points to be exchanged for higher attribute rankings or special moves later. Regrettably, the design of the fighting sequences is based more on luck than strategy. Sometimes, just as you go to finish off an adversary, one of your comrades will swoop in and kill him, leaving Battle Points for no one. Other times, your buddies will instantly get killed, leaving you to face multiple enemies alone.

We could forgive the NPC AI problems if it weren't for the general lack of control over your selected character. There's no "lock" button, meaning you'll often find yourself swinging at the air while getting repeatedly kicked in the buttocks. Pressing L1 keeps your character facing

one direction, but if Dream Factory had thought about it, they would've seen that this only makes the problem worse. Furthermore, a terrible, non-controllable camera often hides your fighters from view.

To break up the monotonous fighting, the designers inserted a sequence that has you traipsing around undercover dressed as a guard. When approached by a real guard, you're supposed to mimic his bodily gyrations via button presses. Of course, this is the way Special Forces guards greet each other all over the world (sarcasm, anyone?).

There's actually a decent story going on underneath all of this. Unfortunately, you won't care much about it because the voice talent obviously didn't care about it, either. You can almost hear the pages turning. The coolest part of the game is the death of Mugetsu, and the scene gets that distinction only because by that point, you just want him to shut up.

Truth is, nothing could save this project. Not even the multiplayer modes, which are actually better than the Story Mode. Lucky for us, we finished the game in only a couple of hours, releasing us from our suffering.





PS2
Shadow Of Destiny
Konami

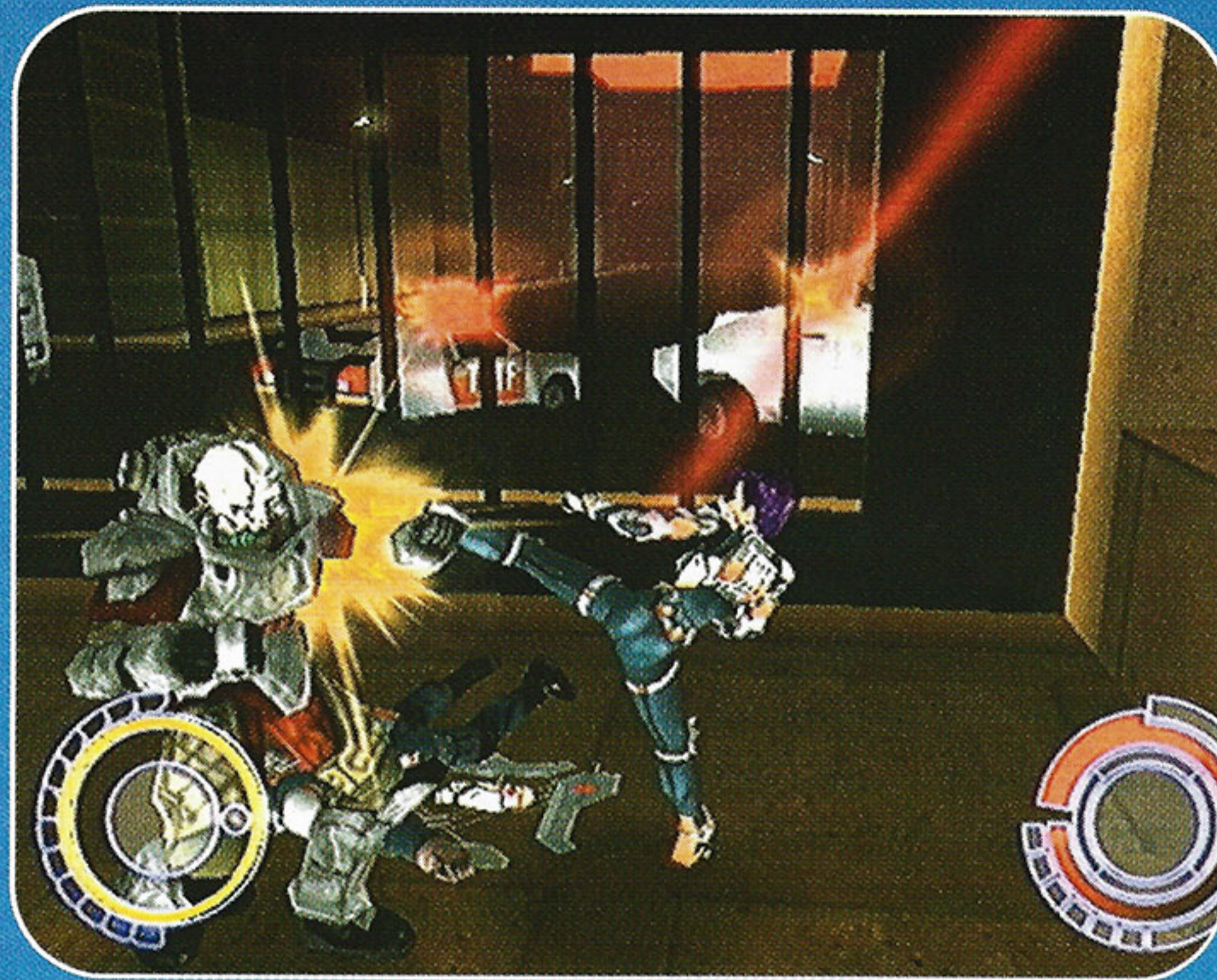
•SM Rating: 38

We love graphic adventures, and that's why we were excited about Shadow of Destiny. In a nutshell, your destiny is to get killed. Eike, the hero must then find a way to prevent himself from being killed in each chapter. This is usually done by manipulating time and doing odd tasks to prevent his own murder. Definitely innovative.

Here's where it all goes wrong. Aside from the sub par graphics and sounds, the quests are loose and disjointed. For instance, one chapter starts with you being stabbed with a knife. It is suggested that you find a heavy piece of iron so that when the attacker comes, the iron will stop his knife. Normal people would simply go home and get a cookie sheet, but Eike decides that the best way to do this is to travel back in time to find a frying pan. When he can't find a frying pan in the past, he dresses up in a white sheet and mask, writes something to the effect of "get a frying pan" on a piece of paper, travels back to the future, performs as a street artist, attracts a crowd, throws the piece of paper to the Eike of the present who then reads the note, gets a frying pan and survives an attempted murder. Why Eike had to go back in time in the first place makes little sense.

SOD is meant to be a serious game, but it turned out to be funnier than even Incredible Crisis. For instance, there is one scene when Eike eats a poisonous female sea rabbit. That in and of itself is a bit goofy, but it becomes really funny when he discovers that the only antidote is to eat a male sea rabbit. Of course, the male sea rabbit is long extinct, so you have to travel into the past to find one.

SOD has a great premise, but we feel that the game's shortcomings keep it from being an enjoyable experience. A rental is the best option here.



PS2
Oni
Rockstar Games

•SM Rating: 86

Unless you've been living in Somalia for the past two years, you've no doubt heard of Oni. It was one of the first PS2 games to be announced, and we're pleased to say that it deserves all of the hype that it's been given.

Oni focuses on Konoko, a member of the Technology Crimes Task Force or TCTF. A corporation known only as The Syndicate, led by Boss Muro is providing people with weapons and drugs, and thus must be stopped. Luckily for us the TCTF aren't morons and usually send in some other troops to help you out on your mission. These troops come armed with guns and are a great asset as long as you keep them alive, which can be difficult at times.

Bungie promised us a good hand to hand fighting system, and they delivered. Konoko has a wealth of attacks ranging from a backward elbow strike, to a jump flip. The sheer volume of moves never gets in the way, as Bungie wisely decided to stick to a minimal number of buttons to control them. One button punches and one button kicks, while pressing

a direction with either of those buttons will produce a different move for each direction. It's really an excellent system that allows you to attack enemies all around you without having to continuously turn around and face them. A combo system, while simple, is also present. Additional moves and combos are gained periodically throughout the game. Of course, weapons are also available to take out those enemies from long range.

While on the subject of weapons, we found that if an enemy is holding one, Konoko could knock him down and actually take that weapon and use it against him. The enemies can also do the same, but it ensures that battles are never completely one sided.

Many details are included through out, such as the bullet holes that stay in walls even after you leave a room and come back. Graphics are excellent, and the music, when present, is as good as any other action game. Special effects such as the force field look incredible, and the game maintains an authentic anime look throughout.

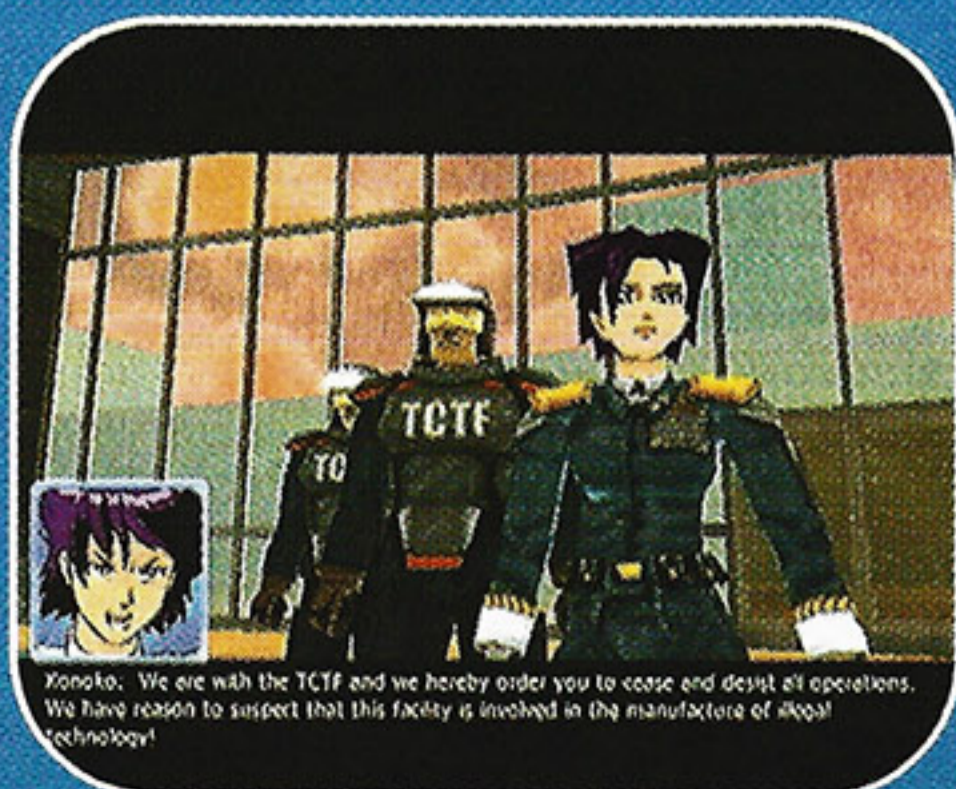
There are a few things that irked us though. First off is the absolutely insane difficulty.

•Oni: Gorgeous and hard... oh goodness... did we just say that?

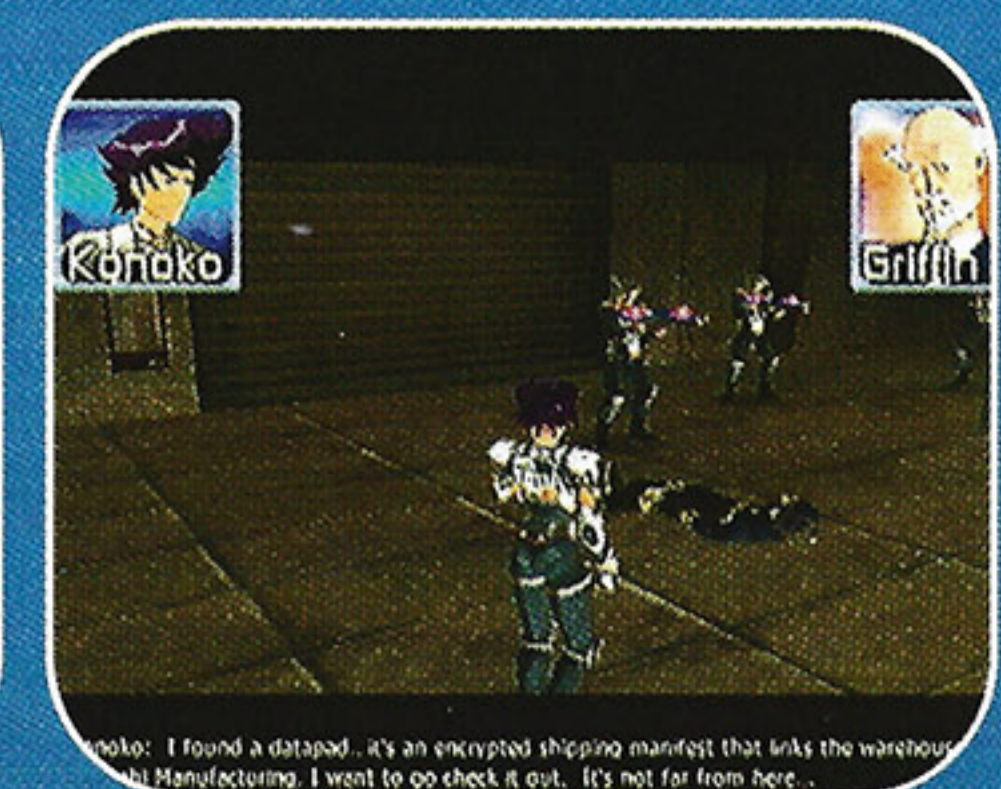


Konoko may be an excellent hand to hand fighter, but when there are four enemies around her with guns blazing; there's no hope. Unfortunately, situations such as that are commonplace in Oni. Blocking happens automatically, but Konoko must be directly facing the enemy for a block to be effective. The game also features an automatic save system, which happens to save at some very inopportune times. Voice acting ranges from excellent, such as the second boss, to lame (Shinatama). Overall, it's a step above average and lively. Though, goofy lines such as "The computer is trying to manifest digital images of itself" left us wondering. After all, what harm could a digital image of a computer do?

Amidst all of the hyped up games that unfortunately turned out to be disappointing, it's nice to see a game that delivers all that it promised, and maybe even a little bit more. Oni has great graphics, sound, and most importantly, gameplay. It's definitely a title that won't be finished anytime soon, and we highly recommend picking it up if you're one of the lucky few who owns a PS2. Hey, you'll then be one of the even luckier few who own both.



Konoko: We are with the TCTF and we hereby order you to cease and desist all operations. We have reason to suspect that this facility is involved in the manufacture of illegal technology!



Konoko: I found a datapad... it's an encrypted shipping manifest that links the warehouse to illegal Manufacturing. I went to go check it out... It's not far from here...



PS2
NBA Live 2001
EA Sports
•SM Rating: 90

It doesn't matter if you are an asphalt playground hoops master or one of the four people in the U.S. who actually understand the Illegal Defense rules in the NBA, NBA Live 2001 has got game and its even got the Jordans (Montell and Michael).

EA Sports is showing off their PS2 prowess by giving us another slick, well presented game with a heart where it really counts, in the gameplay. From the casual basketball fan to those with a Celtic Pride-type obsession, anyone can step into a pair of Nikes and compete. The four levels of difficulty really help, but the inclusion of both an arcade and simulation setting makes it much easier for those who prefer to jam instead of plan when it comes to offense. Raising the difficulty in NBA Live 2001 just doesn't change the percentages of steals and shots; it instead changes team strategies.

While gameplay is the key, the graphics still deliver. The lifelike animations are not just limited to the players; details like the ball ripping through the net on a three-point swish and the rumble of the backboard when someone throws up a brick are expertly recreated. Also, the interaction between players that EA first introduced in the PS2 version of NHL 2001 has been used to a further extent, so encouragement from team mates and high fives are often seen without an over abundance of trash talking filtering into the game. (Thank you EA!)

The only things missing are a few of the extras that EA has spoiled us with lately. There are no NBA challenges, no franchise mode, and no nifty NBA cards to earn and collect. However, without sounding like we are making excuses, the core gameplay is what counts and NBA Live 2001 brings that home.

Another outstanding EA sports title for the PS2. We're getting spoiled.



PS2
Kengo: Master Of Bushido
Crave Entertainment
•SM Rating: 55

Kengo: Master of Bushido is not Bushido Blade. Maybe it is supposed to be the spiritual successor to that series, but it is a pale imitation that succeeds in relaying its style but fails in duplicating its execution.

The atmosphere is nearly flawless. Not since Akira Kurasawa's epic movies has a product encapsulated the Samurai spirit so well. Everything from the training dojo to the minimalistic eastern music set the mood perfectly. The training sequences that are used to raise your Samurai's various statistics are graphically amazing and a joy to master.

Unfortunately, neither the atmosphere nor the excitement of training to become a Bushido master can overcome the key flaw in Kengo: the actual combat. The first mistake was including health bars. While these may be fine for the typical arcade fighting game, it simply does not work when it comes to Bushido. When you cleave an opponents arm, follow up with a strike to his shoulder, drop to one knee and pierce him through the heart and watch your sword exit through his back, he should NOT simply step back and assume the guard position. Trust us, he's dead.

However, the true deathblow is the combat itself. Many of the innovations of Bushido Blade simply are not present. The control is difficult and much of the technique is missing. Combos will miss their target completely and you will find yourself simply slashing to the right of an enemy as he does the same to your left. It's not Crave's best showing.



PS2
Aqua Aqua
3DO
•SM Rating: 52

To make a great puzzle game, its creators must build upon two important principles. First, it must be unique. Second, and more significantly, the design must allow for ease of use.

Aqua Aqua is definitely unique. Using shaped blocks called Uppers, your goal is to build terrain in such a way that it traps water. Water that runs off the edge of your land empties into a drain, and when it's full the game ends. Occasionally fireballs appear that evaporate water, reducing runoff and lowering your drain level.

Of course there's more to it than that. Terrain gets

destroyed constantly by Downers (opposite of Uppers-go figure), bombs, earthquakes, and various monsters that can rain apocalyptic destruction upon you. Monsters can be repelled by attaining certain point totals before they appear. But as for the other evils, all you can do is choose where to drop them. Often these plagues occur in rapid succession, making you feel totally helpless.

Control is so loose that it's difficult to place blocks exactly where you want. Often you end up overlapping your Uppers to make sure you don't leave any gaps. Additionally, the camera angle sometimes won't allow you to see block placement before it hits the ground, and you can't rotate the landscape.

In its defense, Aqua Aqua has a fun two-player battle and a helpful Training Mode. Puzzle fanatics will love the high level of challenge, but others may want to rent first or skip completely.



PS2
Silpheed: The Lost Planet
Working Designs
•SM Rating: 86

Silpheed is the convertible of shooters. That is to say, it is top-down, wind in your hair, and damn fine looking. Visually, it sets a new standard for shooters. The transition between the CG cut scenes and actual game graphics is almost seamless. And while Silpheed is expanding what we can graphically expect from shooters, it also works in a surprising number of subtle nuances that instantly identify it as an offspring of the blaster minds at Treasure.

If the constant screen shattering explosions don't tip you off that this is a Treasure game, the scoring system will. The player can simply fly through the levels and annihilate ships and rack up a decent score. However, if you really want to optimize your score, you have to achieve multipliers. This is done by being as close as possible to an enemy when you destroy it. This will multiply their point value by up to 12 times. Its like a twisted version of The Price is Right's showcase showdown, where you are rewarded for coming as close to death as possible without going over.

Attempting to secure astronomical scores is not just for bragging rights. You begin each game with the same basic set of weaponry and additional firepower is rewarded based on the score at the end of each level. So, while a decent score may garner you one new firearm, tipping the scales with a nice run of 12x multipliers will reward you with numerous new weapons.

The only real negatives in Silpheed are an occasional hiccup of slowdown and short shooter syndrome- if you're good this one will only take you a day or two to beat, however there is some replay value. Still, Silpheed is the future of shooters. It is a future so bright, we gotta wear double polarized, heat shielded, mirrored shades.

Gear: essential hardware



PSX2/PSX Mini Stick Naki

•**SM Rating: 85**
With all eight buttons lined up in a two by four pattern, this controller is simply perfect for both 2D/3D fighting games and shooters. It's small, but laid out in such a way that even people with big hands won't have much, if any trouble hitting the buttons. Plus it comes in assorted iMac-like colors. On the whole, the Mini Stick is a very high quality bit of hardware.



PS2 Magicgate 8MB Memory Card Mad Catz

•**SM Rating: 87**
Rating a memory card is not the easiest thing to do. We can give one a great score, only to have it go belly up just after the review runs. The Magicgate 8MB Memory Card has one thing that really put our minds at ease: The Sony seal of approval. If both Sony and Mad Catz are willing to put their names on the line, this alternative to the first party card earns our approval too.



PS2/PSX V3FX Racing Wheel Performance

•**SM Rating: 66**
Three preset sensitivity settings help make this wheel usable for most PS2 games. The analog function doesn't work at all with at least one PS2 racer (Driving Emotion Type S), but it could have been due to the fact that the game was a beta. It offers a strong vibration and the completely adjustable height and tilt should give you more than enough reason to check out the V3FX.



PS2/PSX Omega 2 Nyko

•**SM Rating: 90**
If you need a new controller for your PS2, look no further. Offering every feature of the Dual Shock 2 and even a few extras the Sony controller doesn't, the Omega 2 is a class act. While it's not Sony branded, we've been using it for two months with no issues at all and find that the weighty feel in the hands inspires confidence. Additionally, it has a great digital pad for 2D fighters.

Dialogue: e-mail us at dialogue@siliconmagazine.com

I like the Japanese Tekken box better than the U.S. Tekken box. I'll give you a couple of reasons.

First off, I can see more facial expression, suggesting a more advanced, in-depth game. Secondly, the Japanese box doesn't have that damned annoying ESRB rating symbol on it. But alas, I've heard rumors that it will happen in Japan soon.

J. C. Grandstaff

•**SM**-We've not heard rumors of the ESRB rating system being enforced in Japan, but that's interesting none-the-less. We'll have to do some digging, thanks for the tip!

We like the Japanese and European boxes better. Ours suck!
kaseyalicia@yahoo.com

•**SM**-For the most part that's 100% true. However, check out this and last issue's Boxes and you'll see that American box art can compete.

A couple of issues ago, you guys posted a site that told which DVDs worked on the Japanese PS2. Would you email me the site so I can look at it?

Andre tipton
pressstart1@hotmail.com

•**SM**-We're here to help! The url you're looking for is as follows:
<http://users.erols.com/invasion/lists.html>

The list is pretty complete and also seems to be updated on a regular basis.

I read in one of your past magazines that you were looking for a cover artist, I was just wondering if you could drop me a line telling me what's the subject for your next cover. I'll draw something for you guys, and you can tell me what you think.

Ben
ish_55@hotmail.com

•**SM**-We can do that, in fact we'd be happy to do so! This applies not only to Ben, but to any other interested readers.

I have a question. I noticed that there's a heading on your web site for a free issue, when will you get that online subscription thing going? I would really like to get my hands on at least one copy of your magazine!!
Jamie Alston
sponky_d_99@hotmail.com

Your magazine just keeps getting better! I recently got Drummania for Christmas, and inside the carton was the October 2000 issue.

Anyway, do you guys have ANY idea when you'll be offering a subscription? I've missed your last two issues and I don't want to continue this unfortunate trend.

Oh, and I have a small

question/suggestion. What limits you to the relatively small content you put out on a monthly basis? Is it a lack of advertising revenue which leads to the need to cut content? Or is it simply that you don't have enough writers to supply the content? The reason I'm asking is because I for one would be more than happy to contribute material such as reviews or opinions on the videogame industry in an effort to increase your magazine's size. I also think other readers would be interested in supplying you with similar articles. Just an idea.

Dan Sohayda
dsohayda@bellsouthips.com

•**SM**- Thank you all for your patience in regards to subscriptions, they've been in the works for quite a while, but they're now available.

Since you're this far into the magazine, you've probably noticed the subscription cards a few pages back. Send them in and we'll be sure you get •**SM** delivered to your door each and every month up to ten days earlier than the newsstands. Plus you're completely assured of getting a copy.

•**SILICON MAG**-are PS2 ass kissers!
They might not agree on everything. But the taste of Honey Nut Chex is so delicious, everyone in the family will love it. (Yes, even your family.)

Dear Editor-IN-CHIEF,
Thanks for all of the uncensored and ve criticism about Sega! PS2 has hell of alot to worry about this holiday season! The DVD player ain't gonna do it! Mediocre Launch titles originality not there DOAZ + Ready 2 Rumble: 2nd Round! Didn't we see the same games for Dreamcast! HMMM!)
10 Built-IN-MODEM, NO Harddrive, NO-ONLINE GAME! Where is the revolution IN PS2? Your magazine mentioned PS2 over 30 times (The word abbrev) in our July 2000 issue! Pnn! Using the Volunteered...
times, it will stick in our heads!

ATTN: EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
SILICON MAGAZINE
P.O. BOX 9421
ST. LOUIS, MO 63117

This X-MAS - PS2 will fall!
Free Eyecards are available nationwide.
To advertise call BrandArt Communications at 212-717-...
Not. It will stick in Silicon's ass!

•Here's an interesting bit of mail we received a while back. The author had some definite opinions, and we respect him for that. We just wish he'd left his name since this letter is the best kind- honest. He spent a good bit of time on this and deserves credit.



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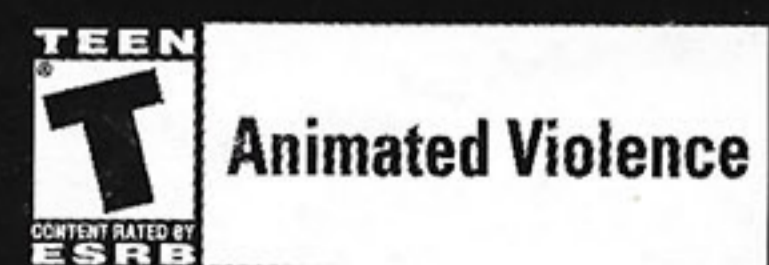
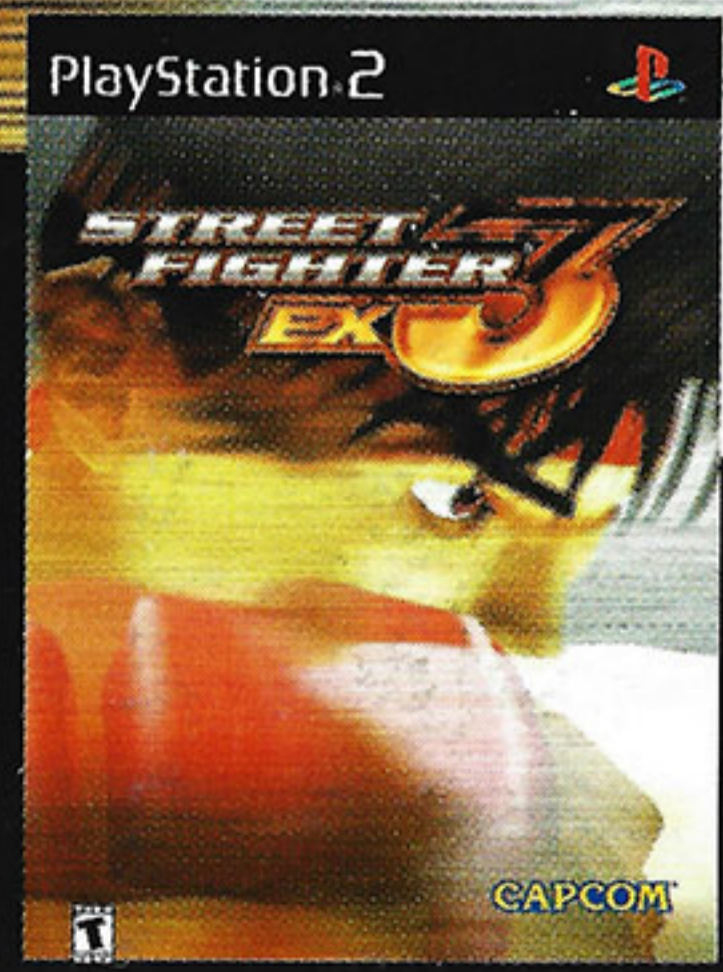


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PlayStation 2



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