

Nintendo 64: 10 reasons why it will succeed • 20 reasons why it will fail

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# NEXT

## GENERATION

Leading edge console video games

August 1996

**Soviet Strike**  
Exclusive: EA's PlayStation classic

### The greatest videogame of all time

Nintendo's *Super Mario 64* is like

nothing you've ever played before.

Our 10 page preview shows you why

### Nintendo vs. Sega vs. Sony

Three presidents tell it like they think it is...

volume two

# 20

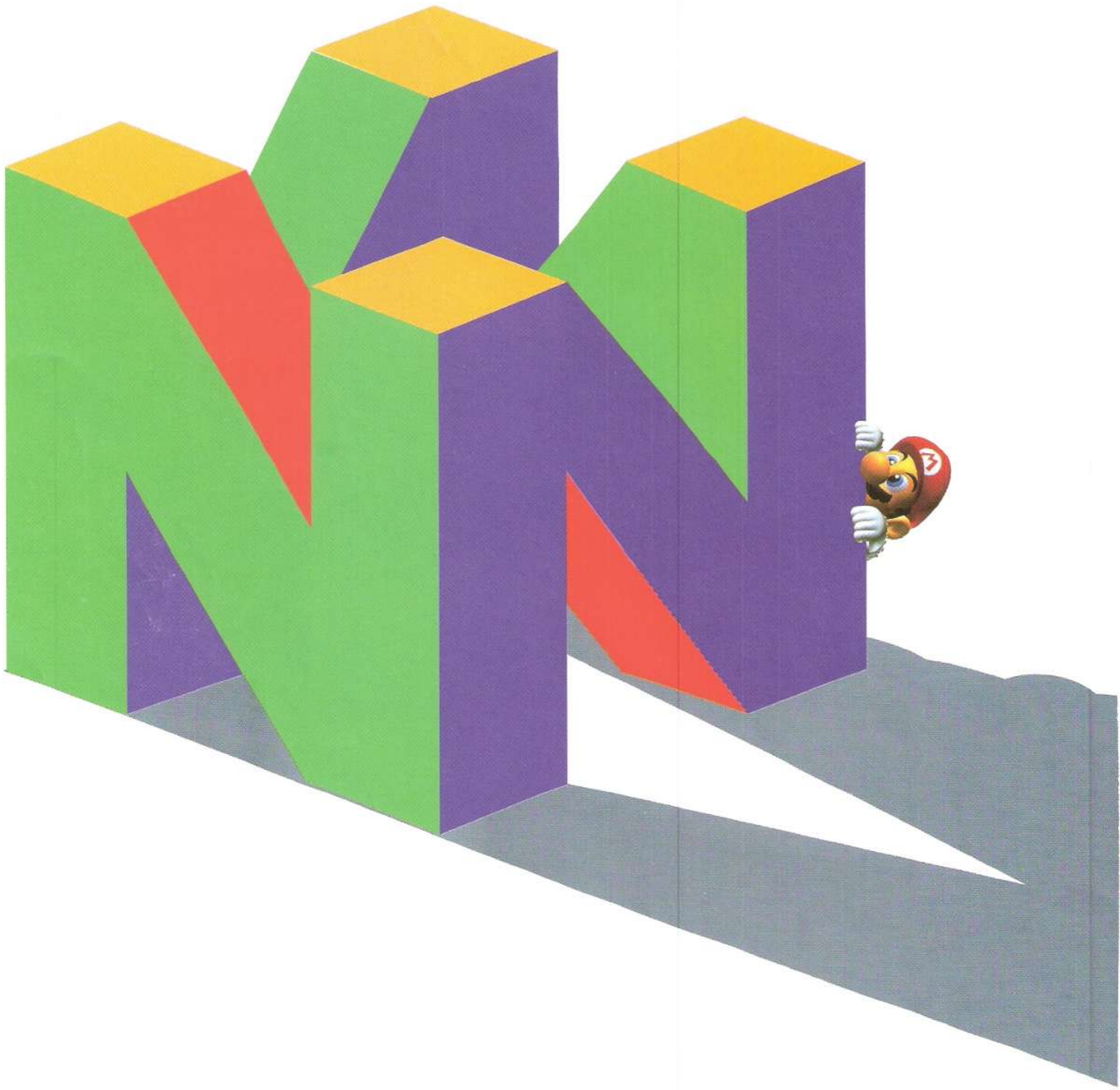
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Shigeru Miyamoto's *Super Mario 64* is the most impressive videogame of all time. But what of the rest of Nintendo 64's line-up? Can a game console survive with just one killer title? Next Generation's investigation begins on page 36

SEGA SATURN'S NETLINK: Can Sega's \$199

WWW-browser save Saturn? Page 16



# He's Back

Without *Super Mario 64*, Nintendo 64 would be **nothing.**

With *Super Mario 64*, Nintendo 64 is **everything.**

It really is as **simple** as that. The range of Nintendo 64 games revealed so far are shocking in their **mediocrity.**

Sure, *PilotWings 64* is exciting, *WaveRace* has potential, and there's no arguing with the pedigree roots of *Doom*, *Cruis'n USA*, and *Super Mario Kart*. But it's *Super Mario 64* that is causing all the **excitement.**

The game's **scope, depth, and sheer brilliance** is simply **breathhtaking.**

Graphically, *Super Mario 64* **exceeds** anything seen **outside an arcade.** But it is the **gameplay** that will have die-hard gamers **salivating.** Indeed, those who have not experienced the **supreme playability** and depth of

**Nintendo's in-house 8-bit and 16-bit games** may appear **slightly ambivalent** toward Mario's 64-bit debut. But don't be **fooled.** This is as much a gamer's game as it is a sure **mass-market blockbuster.**

But what of **Nintendo 64's future?** Can gamers look forward to a new **golden age** of genre-busting, revolutionary, 64-bit titles? Or is Nintendo 64 **doomed** to be remembered as a **one-trick pony?** After all, how will other games even begin to match the **quality** of a project that took **two years, 40 full-time staff members, an unlimited budget,** and the **golden touch** of **Shigeru Miyamoto?**

A **wary eye** is cast over Nintendo 64's **chances of dominating** Sega and Sony.

Page 36 is where it  
all begins.

# NEXT GENERATION

August 1996

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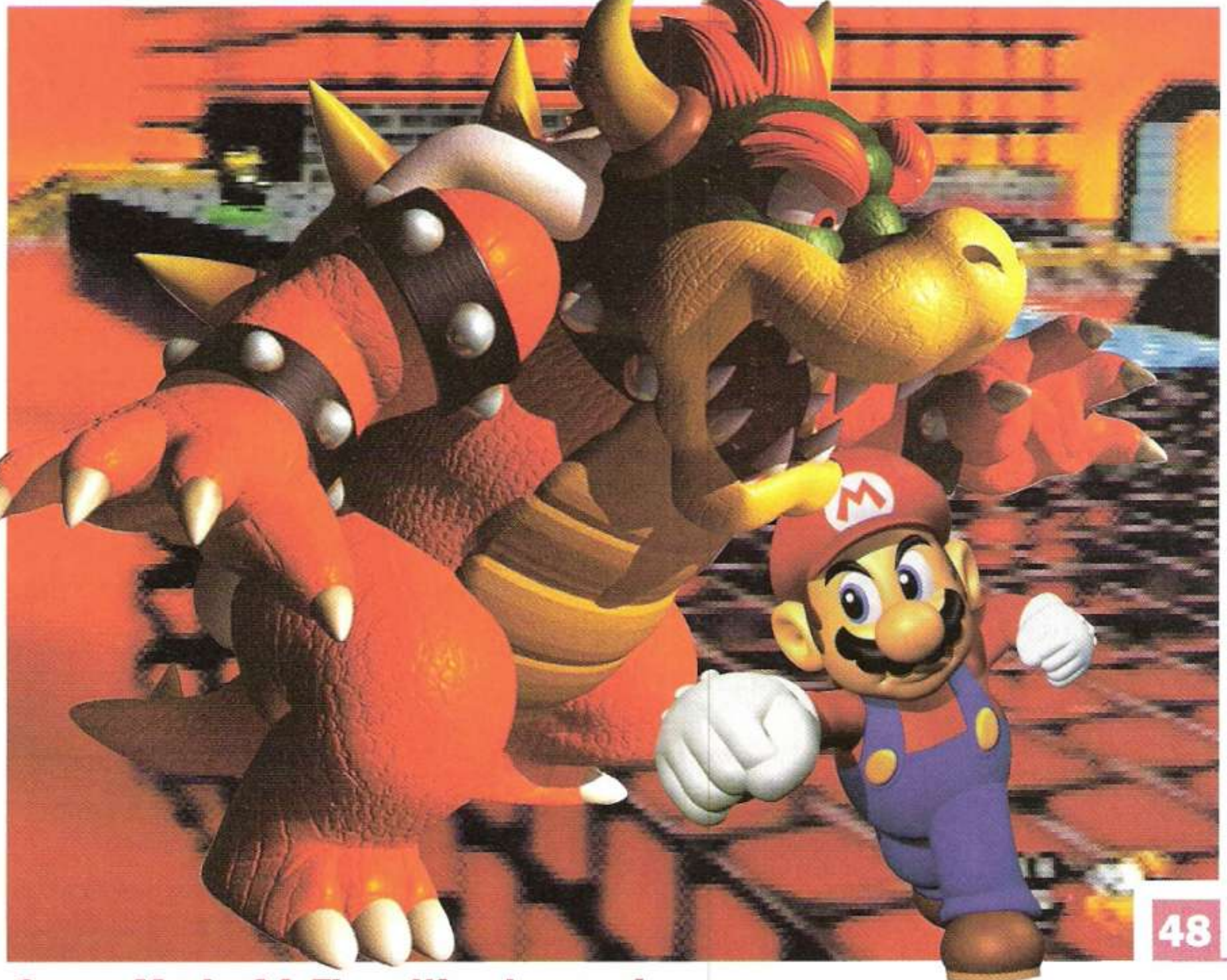
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## Nintendo, Sega, and Sony under one roof

In a **Next Generation** exclusive, interviews with the U.S. heads of all three console powerhouses are merged to provide a rare look how three different people can only agree to disagree. It will probably get us in trouble, but hey — they can't sue. Can they?



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## Super Mario 64: The ultimate preview

If there was any doubt of Shigeru Miyamoto's genius, *Super Mario 64* dispels it. **Next Generation** received exclusive access to Nintendo 64's killer app, and here for you are the results. Killer shots and information that only **Next Generation** could deliver



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## 10 reasons why Nintendo 64 will succeed (& 20 why it could fail)

It's unlikely, but Nintendo 64 has some serious flaws that may doom it to failure. In this controversial report, **Next Generation** explains why having the best games and the best technology doesn't guarantee success for the world's largest videogame company



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Let's just say it's probably good, they weren't all in the same room when we did the interviews

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## 90 rating

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10 pages of killers reviews, including: *Tekken II*, *Killing Zone*, *Jumping Flash!2*, *Top Gun* (PS-X); *Alone in the Dark*, *NHL Powerplay '96*, *Shellshock*, *Golden Axe: The Duel* (Saturn); *Dinotopia*, *EarthSiege 2*, *Duke Nukem 3D*, *Fantasy General*, *Strife* (PC); *X-Wing* (Macintosh); *Olympic Summer Games* (Super NES); *Time Killers* (Genesis); *War Gods*, *Run and Gun II* (Arcade)

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NEXT Generation #21 arrives on newsstands on August 20th with the 100 best games of all time. Will your personal favorites make the cut?



## Alphas: 11 game previews

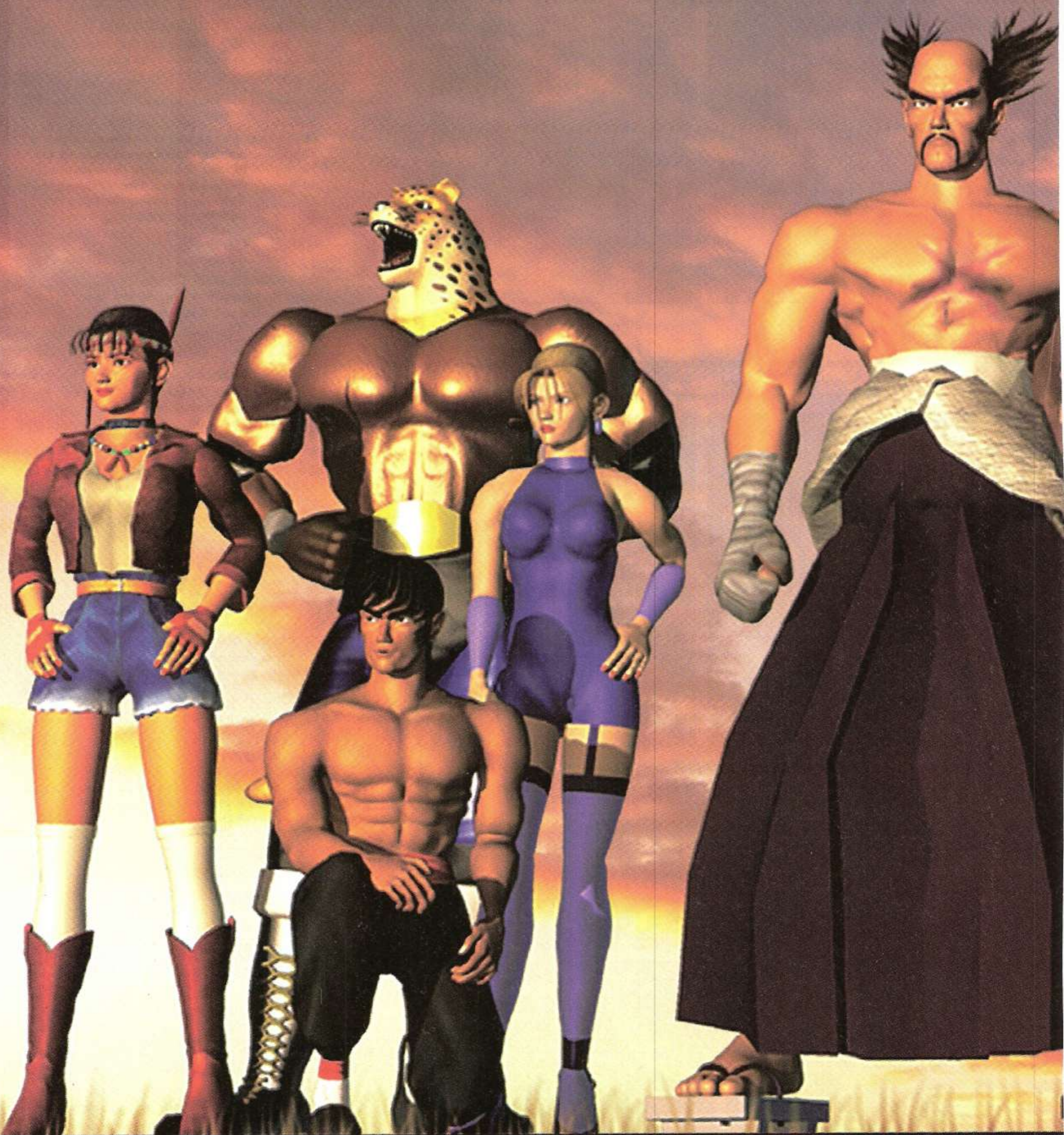
30 pages on 11 games guarantees in-depth coverage found nowhere else. Games previewed include: *Pilotwings 64* (N64); *Soviet Strike* (multi); *Thunder Truck Rally* (PS-X), and plenty more



## Finals: 24 game reviews

The good, the derivative, and the uninspired. We play 'em all, so you don't have to. Including: *Tekken II*, *Jumping Flash!2* (PS-X); *NHL Powerplay '96* (Saturn); *Duke Nukem 3D* (PC)

EVERYTHING YOU'VE HEARD IS TRUE.



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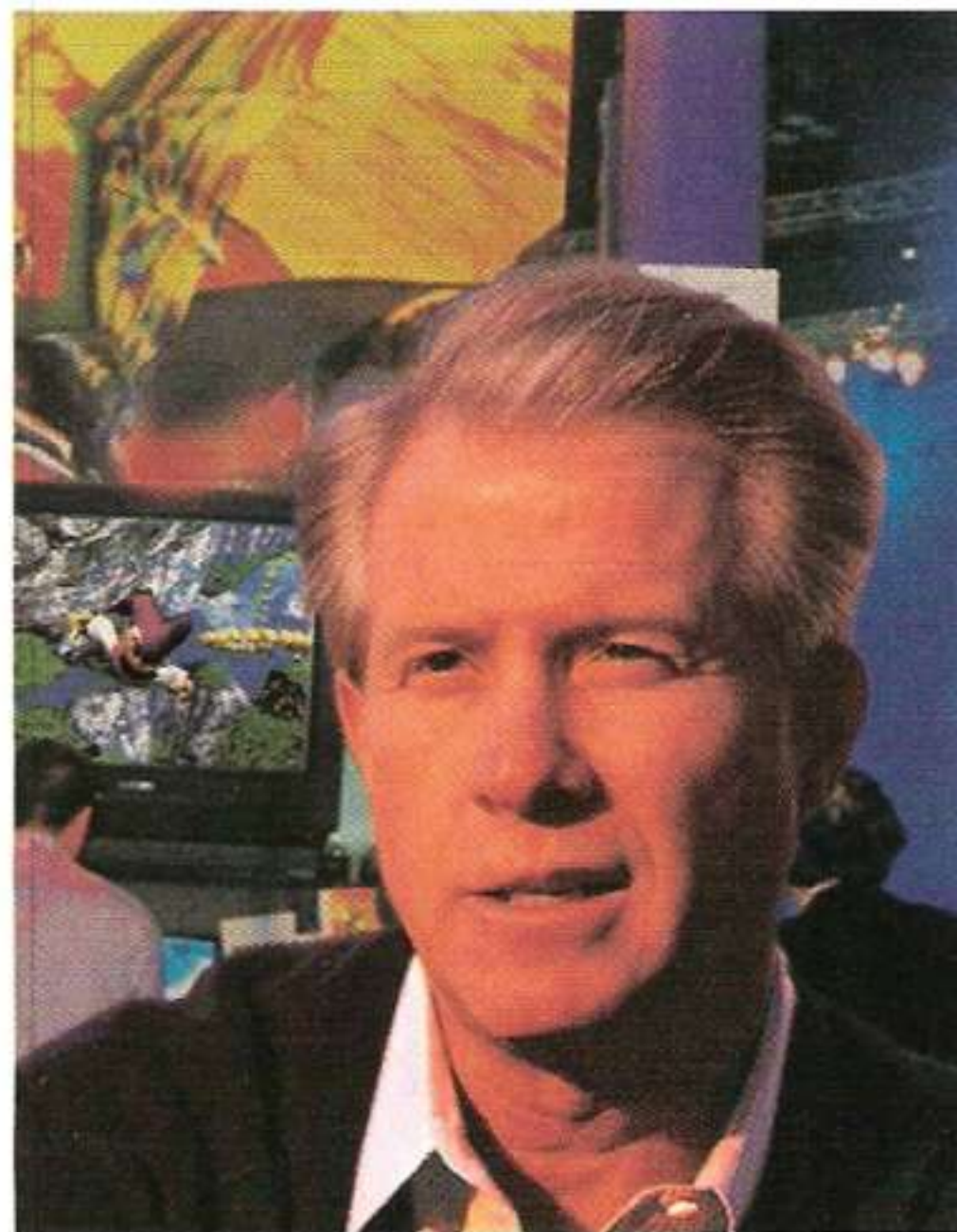
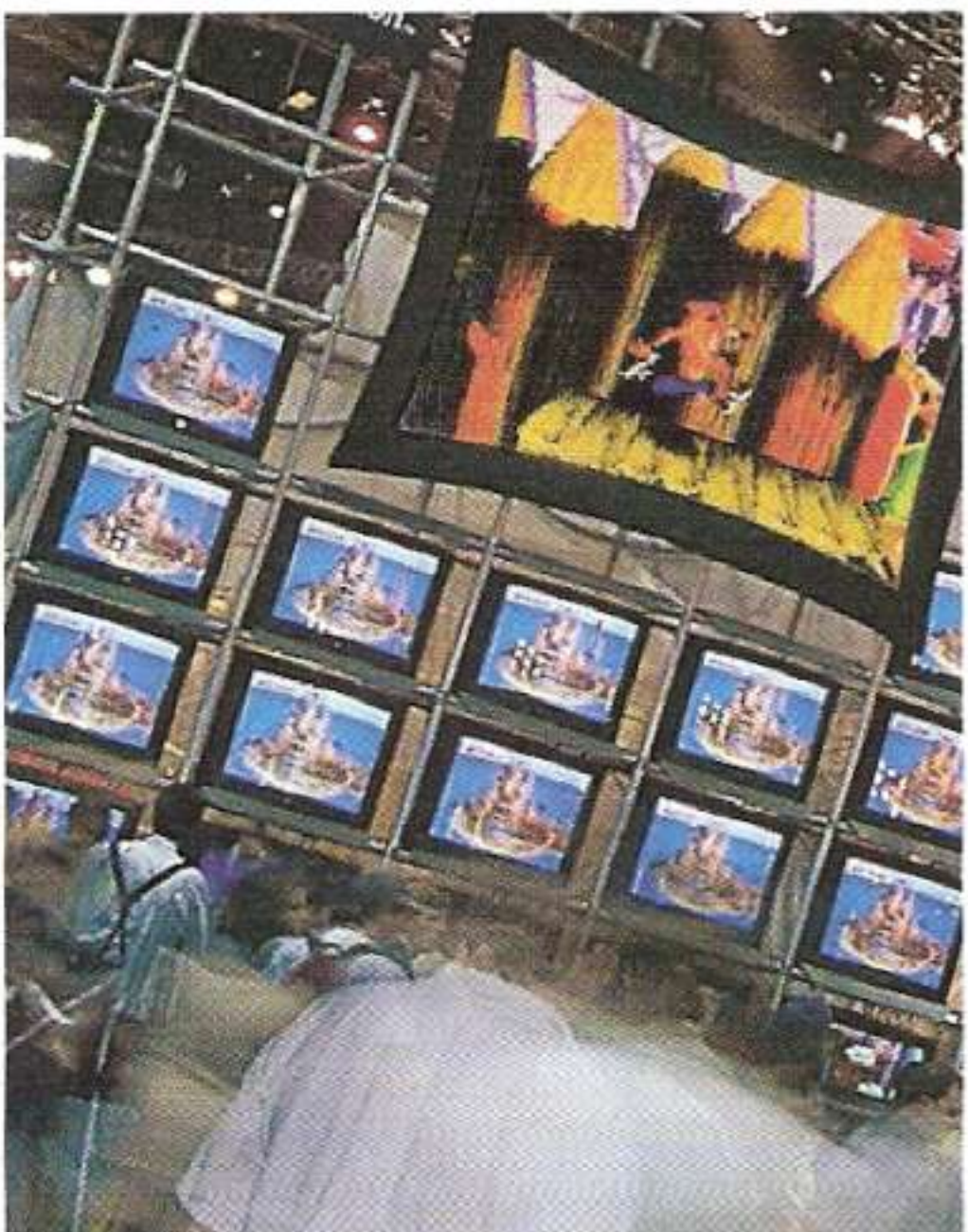
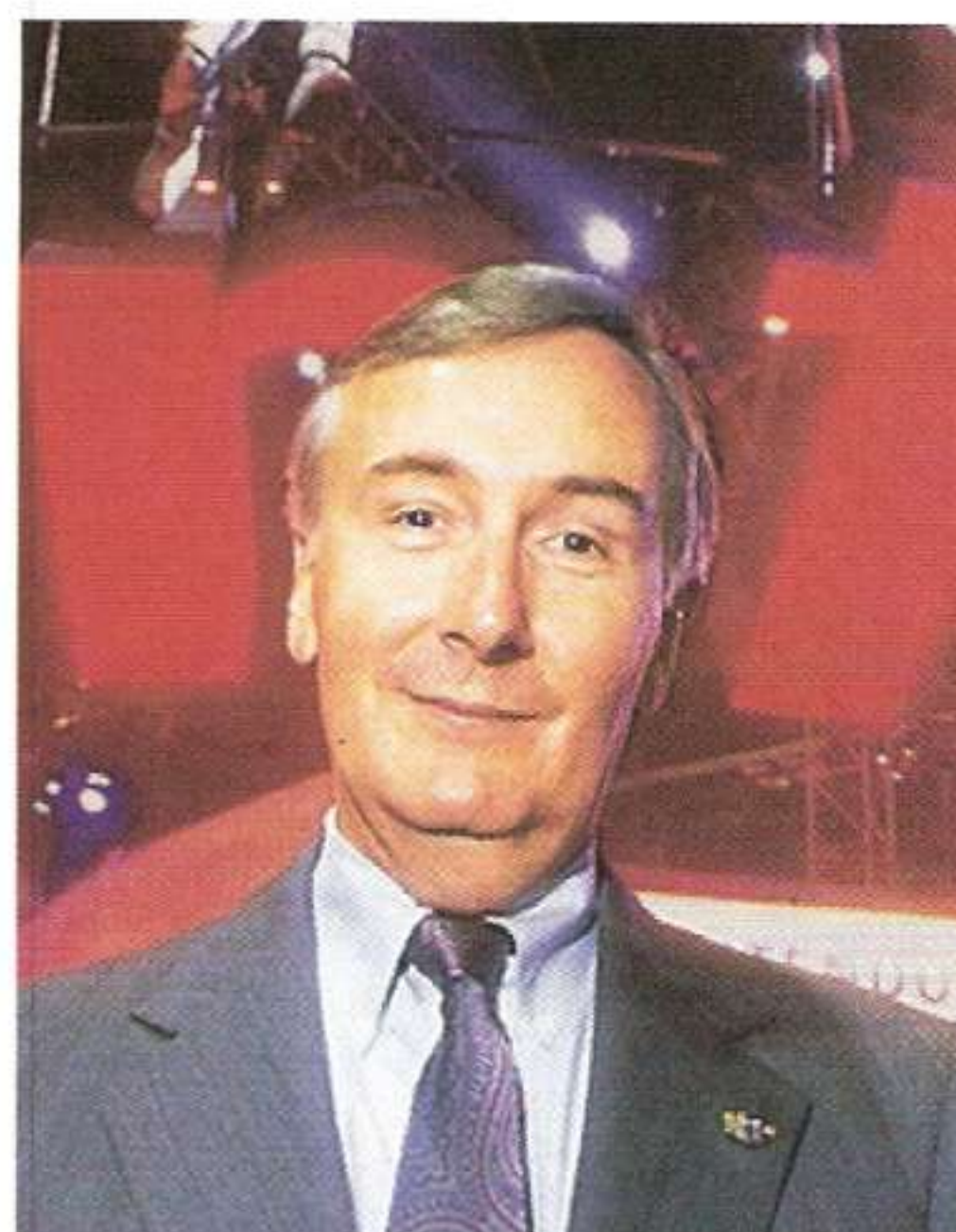


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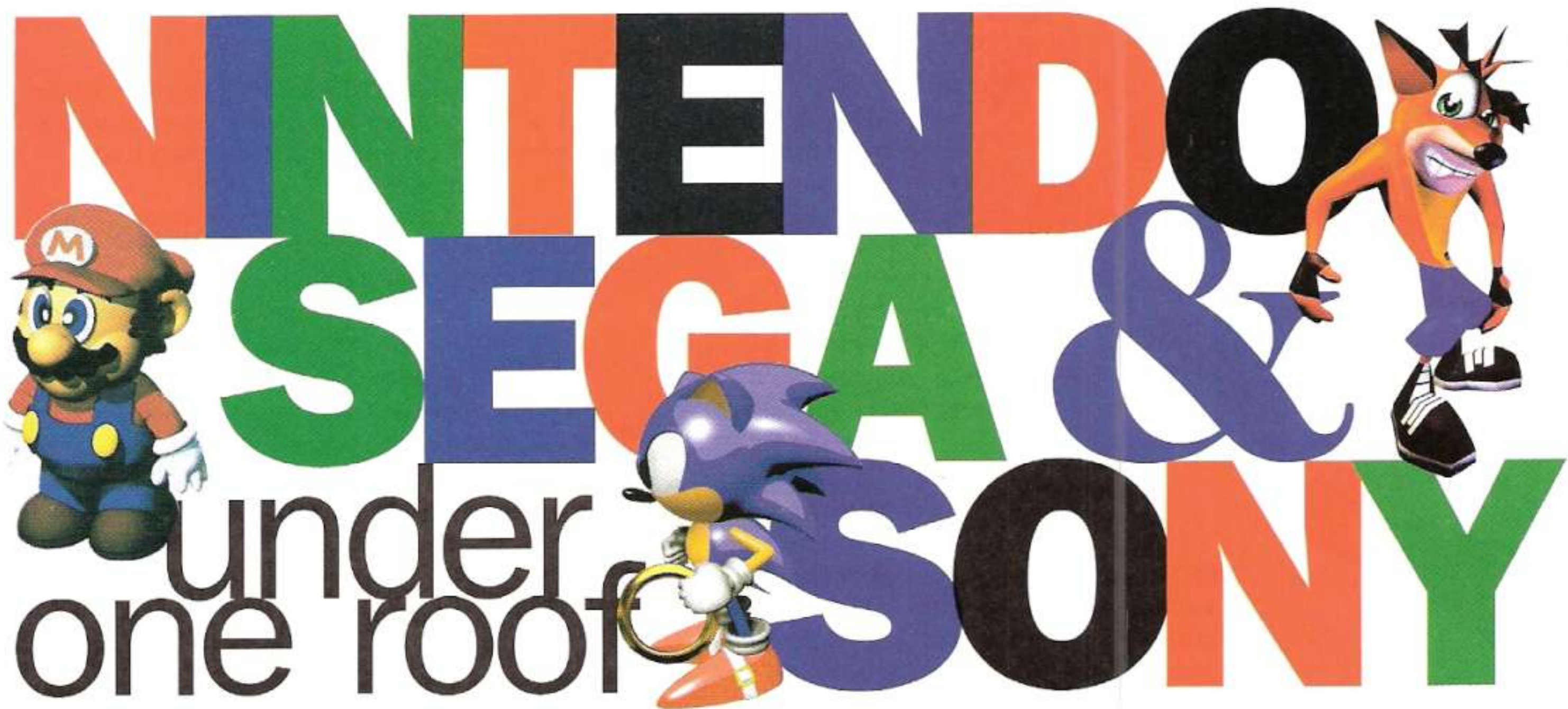
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**Take three** rival game companies. Talk to their presidents separately. Mix the three interviews together to create a hearty stew of intellectual debate (or a heaping plate of hot air, depending on your point of view)...





# NINTENDO SEGA & under one roof SONY



**A**t May's E<sup>3</sup> (Electronic Entertainment Expo) in Los Angeles, **Next Generation** interviewed at length the heads of Sega, Sony, and Nintendo, separately. The following piece is a fusion of these three independent interviews. Don't mistake this for a round-table discussion (at no point did Sony's Jim Whims and Andrew House, Sega's Tom Kalinske, or Nintendo's Howard Lincoln actually meet — at least not on **Next Generation** business). Instead, regard this as a collection of different perspectives on common themes, namely the issues surrounding Nintendo 64: cartridges versus CDs; quality versus quantity of software, 32 bit versus 64 bit, and Trip Hawkins' views versus those of almost everybody else.

The end result is a textbook example of how, in a world of "media-trained" executives and hidden agendas, Socrates was perhaps correct in his urging that "The partisan, when he is engaged in a dispute, cares nothing about the rights of the question, but is anxious only to convince his hearers of his own assertions," and perhaps also Al Juddikis' observation that "If Jack's in love, he's no judge of Jill's beauty."

## Topic 1: PlayStation's price drop to \$199

**Jim:** We announced on the day before E<sup>3</sup> that we'd shipped 5 million PlayStations on a world-wide basis. That's 2.7 million in Japan, 1.3 million in the U.S., and the rest in Europe.

This success has led to economies of scale which allows us to make a move that has actually been a part of our overall strategic plan for quite some time. Plus, we have a much more favorable dollar/yen relationship than we did a year ago.

**Howard:** It seems to me that the timing of Sony's announcement suggests panic and desperation. Sony didn't have to make that price adjustment because of anything Sega was doing, so

the only logical explanation — unless Sony have simply lost their minds — is that it is fearful of Nintendo 64.

**Tom:** Obviously, Sony is reacting to the fact that when Saturn went to ¥19,900 [\$200] in Japan; we started outselling PlayStation even more dramatically than we were at Christmas time. I was in Japan in April, and you couldn't find a Saturn on the shelf.

In Japan we're about to announce the 3 millionth Saturn sold-through to the consumers. Sony's probably done just above 2 million. There's almost a million-unit difference, so that's a big deal. You can bet that Sony views this pretty damn seriously at their headquarters in Japan, and I think that this probably has more to do with their decision to drop the price of PlayStation than anything else.

**NG:** Is Tom Kalinske right, Sony? That the real reason you lowered the price of PlayStation is because of Sega turning up the heat in Japan?

**Jim:** [laughs] Turning up the heat in Japan?

**Andrew:** [laughs] I'm trying to work out the logic of that statement.

**Jim:** Yeah, I'm trying to understand this.

Well, let me talk about North America for a moment. I mean, it's no secret to anybody that we've been the dominant player in the marketplace, and as leaders, it's our job to really drive the next-generation videogame business.

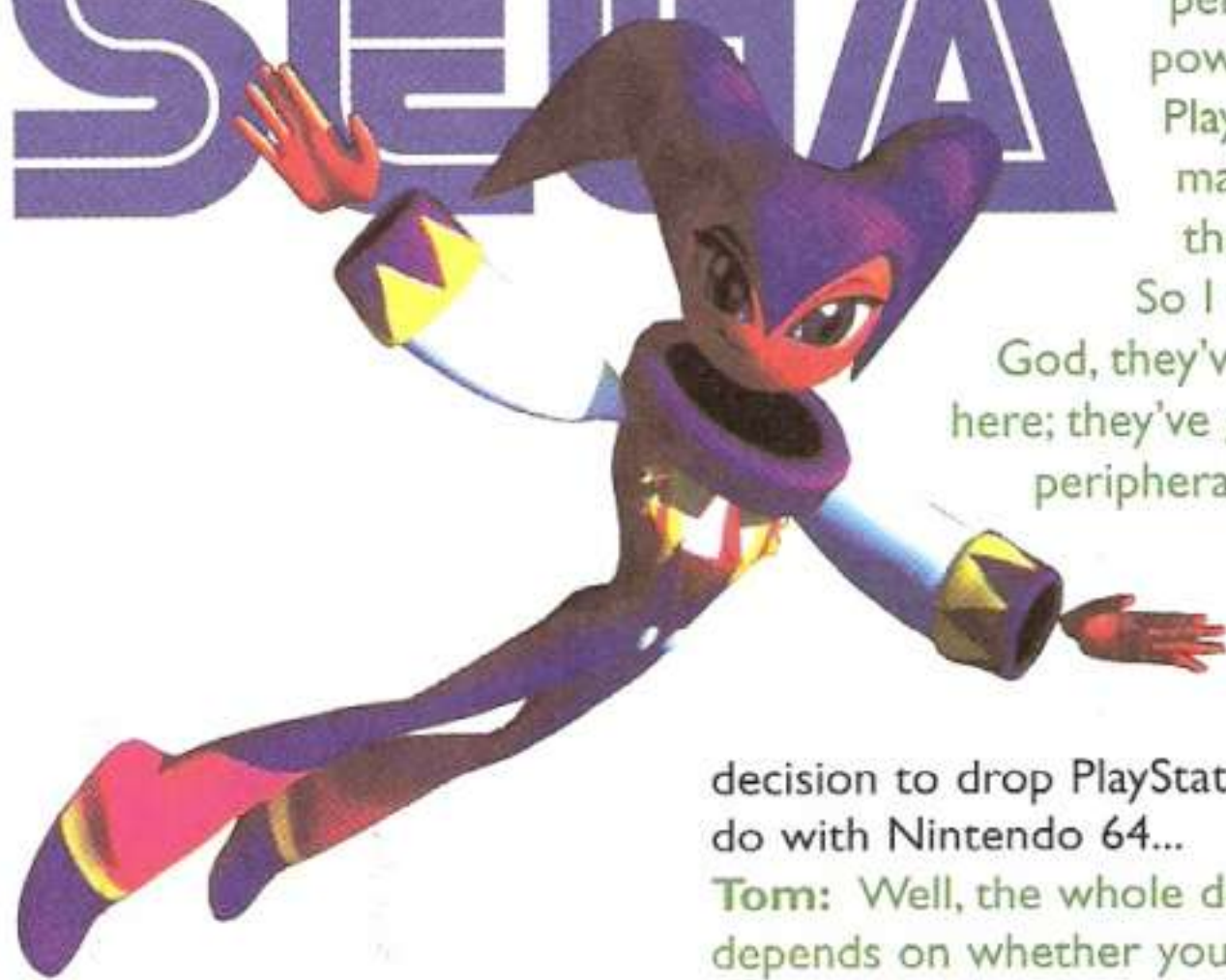
**NG:** Tom, why is it that you think Sony's scared of Sega Saturn?

**Tom:** We've got great software. We do, after all, have three 32-bit processors in Saturn, which initially people had problems with, but today I believe developers are saying, "You know what? We can do more and more with this. We're



LA's Electronic Entertainment Exposition (aka E<sup>3</sup>) saw Sony, Sega, and Nintendo fight it out in public

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Yuji Naka's *Nights* paired up with Yu Suzuki's *Virtua Fighter 3* as Sega's main weapons against Nintendo

realizing that we've only been using some small percentage of Saturn's power, whereas in PlayStation, we're pretty maxxed out at 80% or so of the capacity."

So I think Sony said, "Oh my God, they've got a network link-up here; they've got an Internet peripheral; they've got better software; they're killing us in Japan, we better do something."

**NG:** Surely Sony's decision to drop PlayStation's price has a little to do with Nintendo 64...

**Tom:** Well, the whole deal with Nintendo 64 depends on whether you really believe in what Nintendo is doing, I suppose.

If you're Sony and you believe in it a lot, maybe you'd be more inclined to react to it. From our point of view, we still want to see if it's real. We've had three or four announcements from Nintendo that haven't been lived up to. And so I don't know what to think on this.

**"We still want to see if Nintendo 64's real. We've had a lot of announcements from Nintendo that haven't been lived up to"**

Tom Kalinske, president Sega of America

**NG:** Sony, do you think that there's still a chance Nintendo won't deliver?

**Andrew:** For us, it's really not an issue. If Nintendo 64 comes, it comes.

**NG:** Let's ask Nintendo. Howard: Mr. Yamauchi, Nintendo Corporate Ltd.'s chairman, indicated in the Japanese press that Nintendo 64 will launch in the U.S. in either "September or October."

Doesn't this contradict Nintendo of America's announcement of a definite September 30 launch date?

**Howard:** As far as we're concerned, the September 30 launch is set in stone. But I can't get into a public quarrel with the guy who pays my paycheck! So the only thing I can say is that I was aware of the interview and we double checked with Mr. Yamauchi's office and confirmed that September 30 is the launch date.

But you know, it's a free country, everybody's entitled to their opinion.

**Topic 2: Is online gaming the new battlefield?**

**Tom:** Our new NetLink for Saturn is phenomenal. This thing is researched off the

map. I mean, I've seen a lot of research in my life, but, boy — people really want to connect to the Internet, and a whole lot of them don't have \$2,000 to buy a PC.

**Jim:** One of the interesting things that came back from our first pass of PlayStation registration cards is that more than half of the current PlayStation customers already own a PC, so they can already browse the Internet if they want to.

**Tom:** The interesting thing is, the people who do have the money and who have already spent it on the PC also want to connect via their family room. Because everybody sees the added benefit of being able to share what's on the Internet with a larger group of people in the family room in front of the TV — and then of course, they are also able to play games online with groups and families in other parts of the country. It's a very important, highly researched product.

**Jim:** At Sony, we're a company of vast R&D resources; so we're always evaluating new technologies — and we've checked this out.

We always try and put ourselves in the shoes of the gamer or the customer, and if we saw a true value added, then it would make sense for Sony to get involved with a similar device. Until then, it just doesn't make any sense.

**NG:** Howard, your response to questions concerning Nintendo's online gaming strategy has always been a strict "no comment." But how's this for a theory:

First, cartridges are very expensive. It's safe to say that if Nintendo could find some other way of distributing software — without losing what you like about cartridges — then you would. Second, Nintendo has been continually experimenting with online gaming, via such projects as its GateWay system (as found in hotel rooms and on airlines) and with networks in



Hands-on demonstrations of all the latest games were available to all delegates. Sega found itself sandwiched between Sony and Nintendo, but still managed to stand tall

Japan. Third, if games are to be downloaded via telephone lines, then gamers will need a writable data storage device to accompany their game machine — and that's exactly what Nintendo intends to provide with the DD64.

It does look as if all the groundwork is in place for Nintendo to launch its own online gaming network...

**Howard:** [smiles] One could say that. That's a very astute observation. And everything you've said I completely agree with. But, without trying to be overly coy about this, we just are not in a position where we can make an announcement.

You know, I don't think anybody should worry too much about Nintendo and the Internet. I think the most important thing for Nintendo to focus on now is to drive the installed base for Nintendo 64 hardware. And then that really does open up a lot of collateral opportunities.

**NG:** Tom, Sega's peripherals have traditionally been disasters; look at Menacer, Activator, Sega CD, or 32X. What makes you think that the \$199 NetLink will be any different?

**Tom:** I think this is different because everybody knows that a fast modem — a 28.8 bps modem — alone is around \$200. So here we're talking about a 28.8 bps modem, plus a special chip that allows it to do what it does with Saturn, and browser software, all for just \$199. Everybody will recognize that this is a very good value.

### Topic 3: Nintendo 64

**Tom:** Nintendo 64's biggest problem is that it's a cartridge system. We all know the problems with cartridges from an inventory cost standpoint [cartridges typically cost around \$35 to manufacture, compared to \$5 for CDs]; from a retailer standpoint [cartridges offer smaller profit margins]; from the third-party licensee standpoint [who don't want to risk being stuck with unsold games at \$35 a go]; and from the consumer's standpoint.

**NG:** What's the problem with cartridges from the consumer's standpoint?

**Tom:** Our research says that the consumers who are already moving toward 32-bit or are moving to PC look at cartridges and they say, "Whoops! That's old-fashioned technology. That's not what I want to do anymore."

**Jim:** Nintendo, historically, has always set the standard — it's a great company, but if you talk to the president of any third-party company, like Larry Probst [EA], or Greg Fishback [Acclaim] and you ask them if they have found a way to make money yet with Nintendo 64, I guarantee you that the answer's going to be "No, it can't be done." I don't know how Nintendo thinks it can survive in this business standing alone. You just can't.

**Howard:** Since the very beginning, any third party that has ever associated itself with Nintendo and made a good game has made a great deal of



In a move labeled as "cheating" by both Nintendo and Sega, Sony's Jim Whims made the surprise announcement of PlayStation's drop to \$199 at a roundtable discussion at which it had been agreed that there would be, erm, no surprise announcements

money. I'm confident that this will continue in the future. There's always going to be grousing by third-party publishers about the publishing programs of Sega, Sony, and Nintendo — I think that's to be expected. But I'm confident that third-party publishers will be very anxious to publish on Nintendo 64.

**NG:** Tom, cartridges can't really be as bad as you're making them out to be. You yourself managed a cartridge market very, very well in the 16-bit era and made a whole lot of money in the process. You could probably do it again if you had to. So why can't Nintendo?

**"Since the start, any third party that's ever associated with Nintendo and made a good game has made a great deal of money"**

Howard Lincoln, president Nintendo of America

**Tom:** The big difference is that the 16-bit carts you're talking about cost a lot less than carts for Nintendo 64. I understand that the hard cost was going to be something like \$50. Well, that's nuts! Who wants to take that inventory risk?

Imagine you're launching a hit game, then you have to say "O.K., I'm gonna make 1 million of game X — costing \$50 each — before I sell any." That's \$50 million dollars tied up in inventory! You've got to be crazy to make that kind of a decision! It's crazy for the retailers to go along with you on it because then, if the product doesn't

sell, they suffer with the overstock, they've got to come back to you for the mark-down money, and it messes up the marketplace.

But if it's a CD-based product, and you made that same error, your mistake and true cost is a heck of a lot less. Therefore, from a financial point, this thing doesn't make sense.

**Howard:** We are prepared today to concede that [partly because of sticking with cartridges] Sony and Sega will have more games than us.

There's going to be a more-than-adequate range of Nintendo 64 software. But you're not going to have hundreds and hundreds of games.

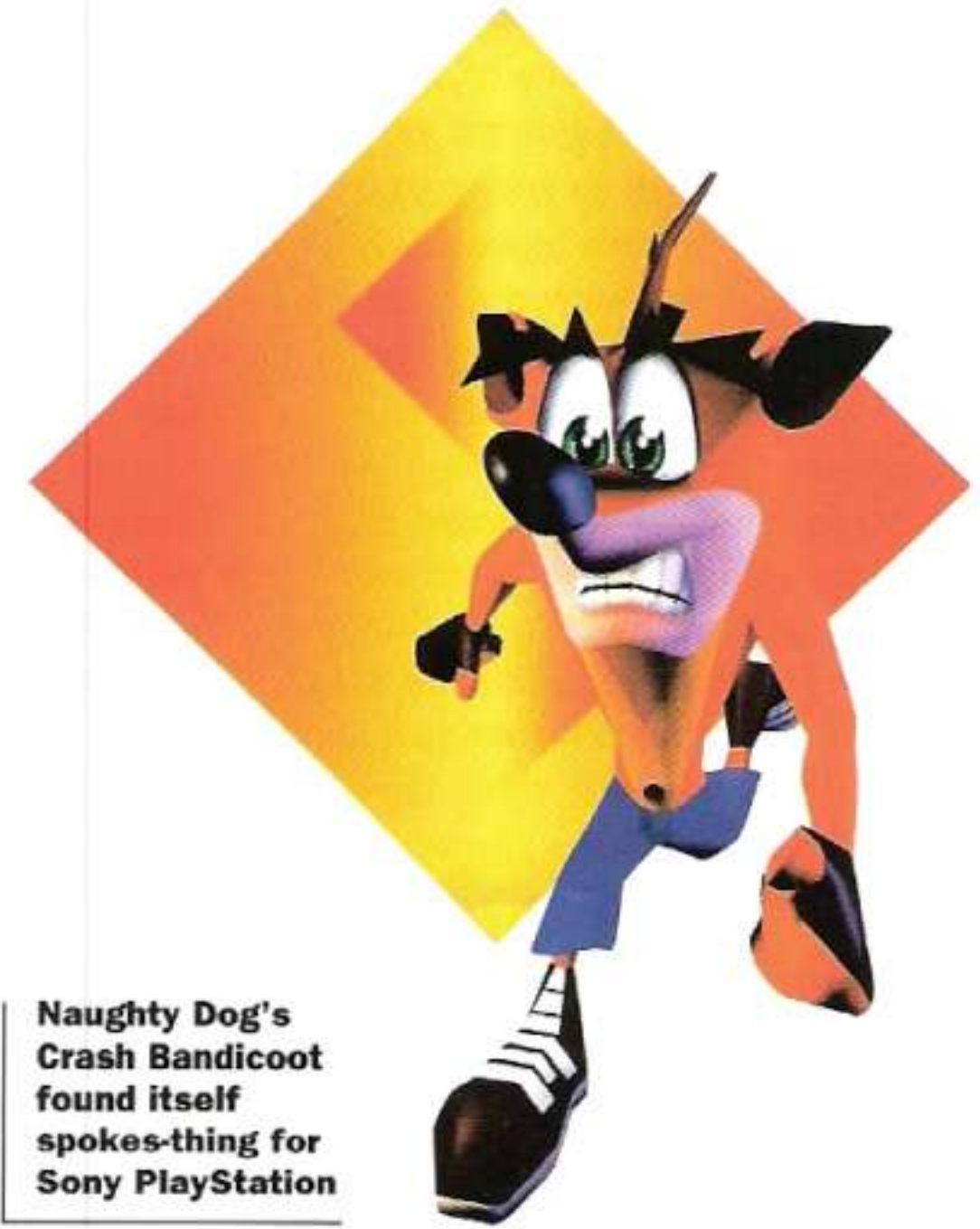
## “The 32-bit generation hasn't happened because the quality of the games isn't any different to Nintendo's 16-bit output”

Howard Lincoln, president of Nintendo of America

**Tom:** You've got to have a third-party line-up, but you also have to be able to do it yourself. So, you know, I look at my two competitors and I see Nintendo doesn't have the third-party support; Sony has third-party support, but doesn't have the internal development capability. Sega has both, so that's why I have great hope for the future.

**Jim:** What we found in our research is that there's a lot more that goes into buying a game platform than just hardware. What people look for is a platform that gets support across a wide variety of different game genres.

PlayStation today has 75 titles, we have another 125 additional new titles out this year. We will round out our entire game-line in all genres. We have more than 200 licensees and



Naughty Dog's Crash Bandicoot found itself spokes-thing for Sony PlayStation

developers in North America alone, and well over 400 on a worldwide basis.

**Tom:** The biggest problem for Nintendo with [a small group of third-party developers] is that never, in the history of videogames, has a hardware manufacturer been successful without widespread third-party support.

It didn't happen with Atari, and it didn't happen with Intellivision — which was why these systems failed. Third-party support was certainly necessary for 8 bit, and it was necessary for 16 bit as well. So, while it may be easy for Nintendo to deny it, I think they need third-party support. You need to have a broad selection of product out there in order to have the consumer pay this kind of money for a system.

### Topic 4: Games, games, and more games...

**NG:** Howard, the lesson learned at E<sup>3</sup> for many people is that to make a game as good as *Super Mario 64* you need two and a half years, the world's best design team, 40 full-time staff, complete access to hardware designers, and unlimited financial resources.

Third-party developers can't match this, so won't they be put off trying to compete?

**Howard:** Could be. But having seen *Super Mario 64*, I fully expect that on Monday [after the E<sup>3</sup> show] we're going to have a lot of phone calls from companies who really want to develop on Nintendo 64. Something tells me that we're not going to be boycotted.

We don't believe that everybody in this business is capable of making 64-bit games for Nintendo 64. We feel very strongly about this, and we haven't made any bones about it. The worst mistake we could make would be to rush a lot of games to market just so that we could say,



Neither E<sup>3</sup> nor LA is famous for its subtlety — and yet Sony's “booth” managed to draw attention from all over. (The makeshift sports bar serving free “refreshments” helped)

"Well, we've got as many games as Sony and Sega." I don't care if we have as many games as Sony and Sega. What I care about is whether the games are any good or not.

And it is now much easier for game developers to develop games, having seen *Super Mario 64*, and having seen what Mr. Miyamoto did with the technology. After we showed the prototype of *Super Mario 64*, we didn't have any more people say, "I can't figure out how to make a game in a 3D environment with these tools," because somebody had just showed them how.

**NG:** Sega, Sony, how can your 32-bit games compete with *Super Mario 64* and Nintendo's other 64-bit games?

**Jim:** Consider *NFL Gameday*, for example, which was last year's number one title. If you take a walk onto the E<sup>3</sup> showfloor now, and look at *NCAA Gamebreaker*, the frame-rate is 50% faster on *NCAA Gamebreaker* than on *NFL Gameday*. It's just amazing. Clearly our focus is going to be on new and improved games, second-generation software, and really telling that story.

**Tom:** I haven't had the time to really study *Super Mario 64*. But I don't think it looks any better than *Nights*. I think *Nights* looks — to me — to be a superior game.

**NG:** Do you believe that *Nights* can do for Saturn what *Sonic the Hedgehog* did for Genesis?

**Tom:** I believe it can. It's as different.

**Andrew:** In reference to *Super Mario 64*, I was talking to an 11-year-old last night who told me that he wouldn't buy a system based on one title.

**Jim:** Another thing you have to consider is that next-generation gamers are older. Based on our first batch of returned registration cards, we found that the average PS-X owner is 23.4-years-old.

This is no longer the "play" business. Once you put the Sony name on a product, it very quickly turns from being a toy into technology. So, you know, *Mario* has been a great product for Nintendo forever. But *Mario* skews very young, and because this now has evolved into a technology business, I'm not so sure that *Mario* appeals to today's gamers.



In a business that has to bet on the future every day, success is based on *perceived strength* — hence all the showing off and gratuitous extravagance

**NG:** Howard, let's talk about profits for a moment. You can't be making much money on the hardware. And you can't be making much money on the software, because N64 carts cost more to make, yet you're charging standard prices. Something's got to give.

Is the strategy to simply sell lots of N64s now, with a view to phasing out cartridges and making money from games on the DD64 at a later date?

**Howard:** No, I don't think that is true. I don't regard DD64 as an alternative software medium to cartridges. I regard the two as compatible so that we give a range of software media for game developers to program on.

**Tom:** Nintendo's whole DD64 strategy seems remarkably similar to 32X. And I wouldn't recommend going down that road at all...

**Howard:** We see the kind of games that you can play on that magnetic disks — since it's writable — to be a different genre of games. And we're not exactly sure what that is yet.

But there is nothing going on here that somehow equates to Nintendo getting out of the cartridge business. Obviously, if it was possible to do *Super Mario 64* on some other software medium, we would choose that. But it is not.

## “Because this now has evolved into a technology business, I'm not sure that *Mario* appeals to today's gamers”

Jim Whims, vice president of sales, Sony

**NG:** So, given that you have announced a \$50-million marketing campaign to sell just 500,000 systems in 1996 (that's \$100 spent in marketing per Nintendo 64 unit sold), is this still a profitable business for Nintendo?

**Howard:** The only thing that we've revealed is the suggested retail price and the volume price for retailers. I don't believe that we revealed yesterday what our costs were. Given Nintendo being traditionally a rather profitable company, I think you should assume that we're not trying to shoot ourselves in the foot with Nintendo 64.

## Topic 5: Is 32-bit really happening?

**Howard:** Sony's and Sega's sales figures combined — in any month since their launch — do not equal sales of Super NES's hardware.

The 32-bit generation hasn't happened because the quality of the games is not any



Nintendo's Howard Lincoln largely let the games (and some Nintendo game testers) do the talking

different than the 16-bit games that we are putting out. As a result, the 32-bit systems are stalled. And Sony and Sega realize that there is not that great of a market for 32-bit once Nintendo 64 and other 64-bit platforms come in. So, in desperation, they've done the only thing they could do [lower the price]. That's my view. I'm sure they disagree.

**NG:** Trip Hawkins also says that 32-bit "hasn't really happened." Sony?

**"The notion that 32 bit hasn't happened is not true... The adoption rate is far faster on 32 bit than it was on 16 bit"**

Tom Kalinske, president Sega of America

**Jim:** You know, up until a week and a half ago, we were still selling every piece of hardware we got into the country, every single piece of hardware — everything. So when Trip and Nintendo say the 32-bit business hasn't happened, I can tell you from our standpoint, it would be impossible to be any more successful than we have been.

You know for Trip, sure the 32-bit business is dead for him; 3DO was a disaster. In fact, when we did original focus group research, the biggest problem we had to overcome was that people who had previously ventured into the "next generation" were disappointed that 3DO failed to deliver. It delivered absolutely nothing. We had to prove to gamers that PlayStation wasn't another Jaguar, Neo-Geo, or 3DO, that it really and truly was the ultimate game machine.

**Tom:** The notion that 32-bit hasn't happened is simply not true. If you look back at late 1989 and 1990 when we were just starting 16 bit with the Genesis, we sold less than 400,000 through the first year in 1989, and then we sold about 450,000 through in 1990. After 18 months we'd sold 1 million units. Now, take a look at what's happening today. Either Sega or Sony will sell-through far more than that. By the end of 1996, you put our's and Sony's numbers together and you'll see an adoption rate that's way, way ahead of the 16-bit rate.

**Topic 6: Any other business?**

**NG:** Tom, SegaSoft makes sense in a lot of ways: Sega makes great games, and it's good that gamers can play them on many platforms. But if SegaSoft publishes a game on PlayStation, it has to hurt Saturn, right?

**Tom:** Well, first of all, SegaSoft has not published a game on PlayStation yet. It's publishing on Saturn and PC through this year.

Now, we're trying to set that company up as a totally independent software publisher — like, say, Electronic Arts. Therefore, it really should publish on any viable platform. I can say that out of one side of my head, and on the other side of my head I say, "But damnit, I hope that it's not Saturn's competition that's the viable platform!"

If you want to set this up in a way where it makes sense to the employees in the company, you have to live with that kind of conflict.

**Howard:** I really don't know what Sega is doing.

**Andrew:** I think it's an interesting move. I think it's interesting... an interesting strategy to take.

**NG:** Seeing as Sega has declared that it intends to publish games on "all viable platforms," will you give SegaSoft a license to publish on PlayStation?

**Andrew:** We'll look at it very closely [laughs].

**NG:** What's the deal between Sony and Psygnosis right now?

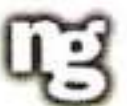
**Andrew:** You've seen the announcement that was made recently. I can't say much beyond that.

In terms of the relationship that we have with Psygnosis, I don't think anything has changed. It is clearly devoting a large proportion of its resources to PlayStation. Psygnosis filled a very important role in Europe during the launch and ramp-up phase. However, Psygnosis was, when it was acquired and has always been, a multiformat publisher. That's what it does best. So it's great that Psygnosis hit big while in the Sony camp, and it did deliver a lot of great products for PlayStation. Psygnosis fulfilled its role very well.

**NG:** And you'll probably get more for them than you paid for them.

**Jim:** That would be nice.

**Andrew:** We'll keep our fingers crossed.



Ultimately, despite Sega's and Sony's valiant efforts, the star of the show was Mario. No contest. Next Generation, however, failed to get an interview...

# Long before

there was ultra-super-duper-64-bit-polygon-video-

capture, hardware hype, **WEIRD TYPE**, point-

less game ratings, E3, ~~screaming guys~~ in ads,

ViRtUaL ReALiTY,

CLICHÉS

like "in your face"

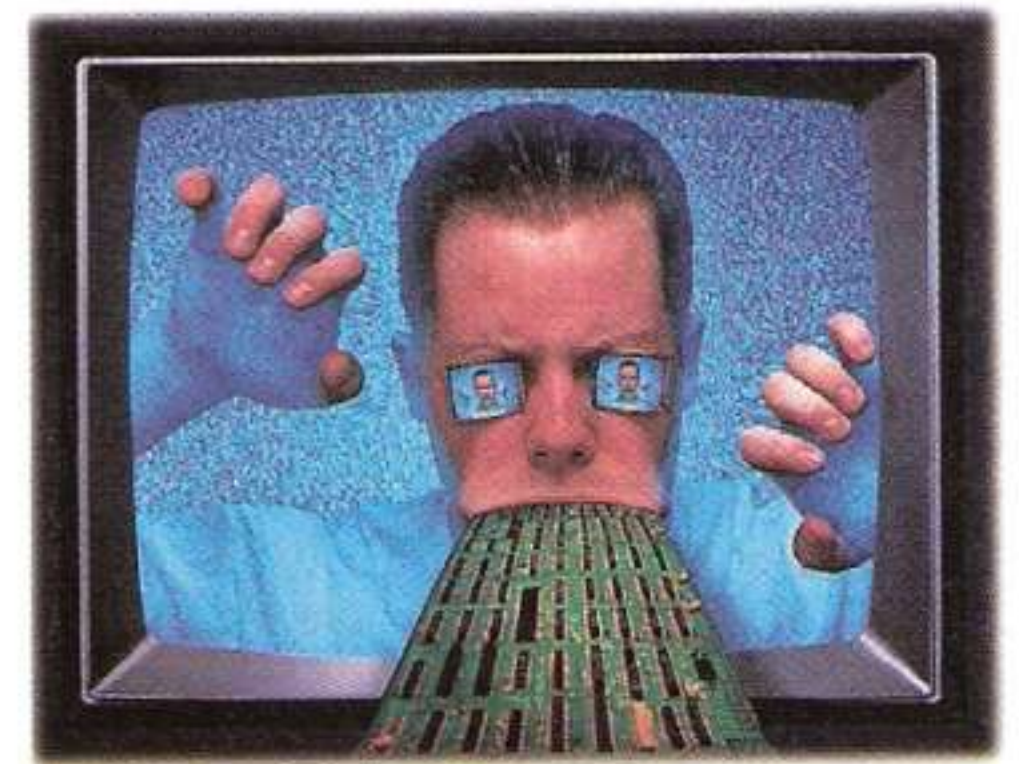
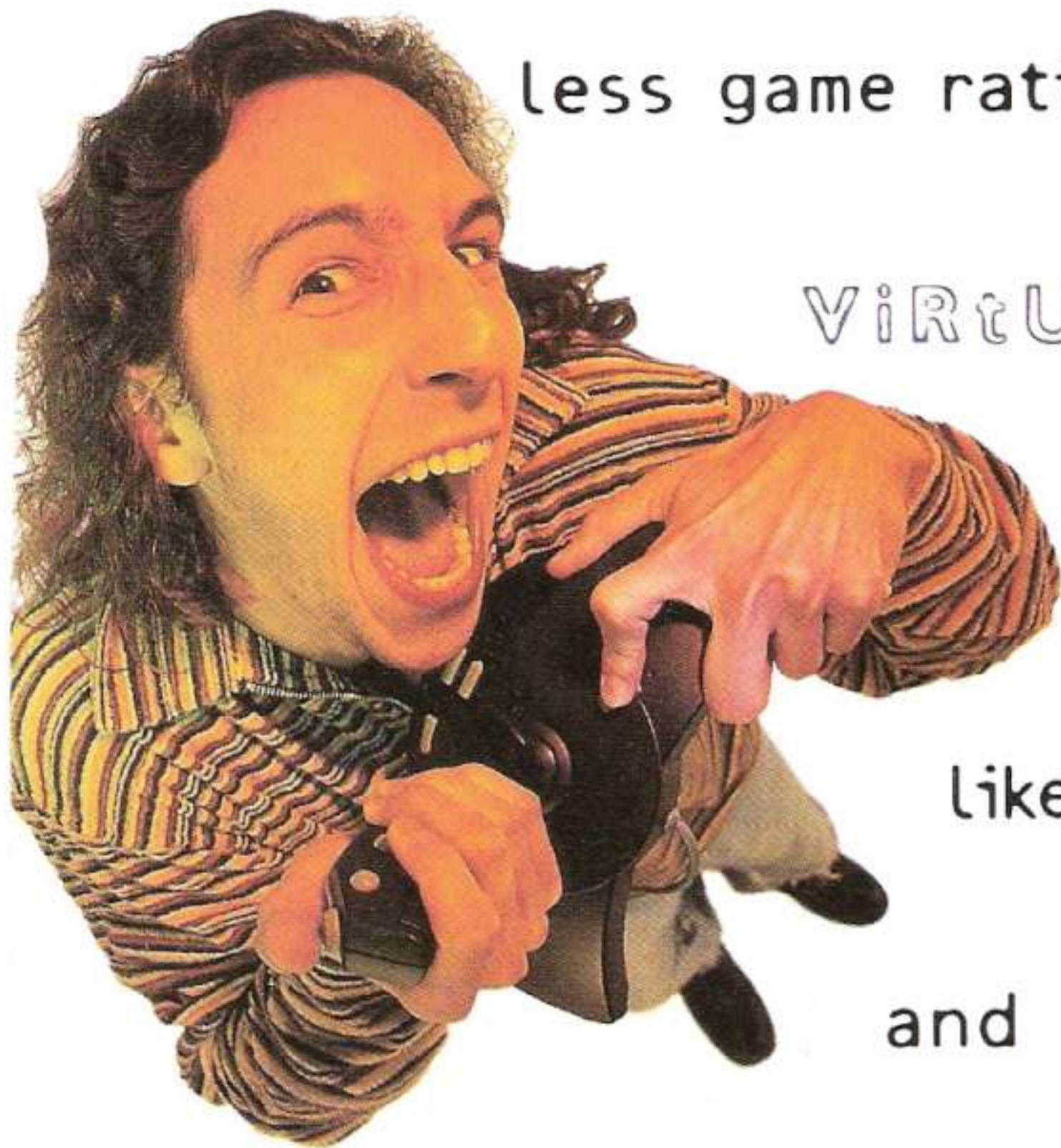
and "it's the ultimate", 360° roto-

scope-rhetoric from *self-righteous*

reviewers, CD-this, **3D** -that, **MULTI-MILLION-DOLLAR**

TV commercials tainted with

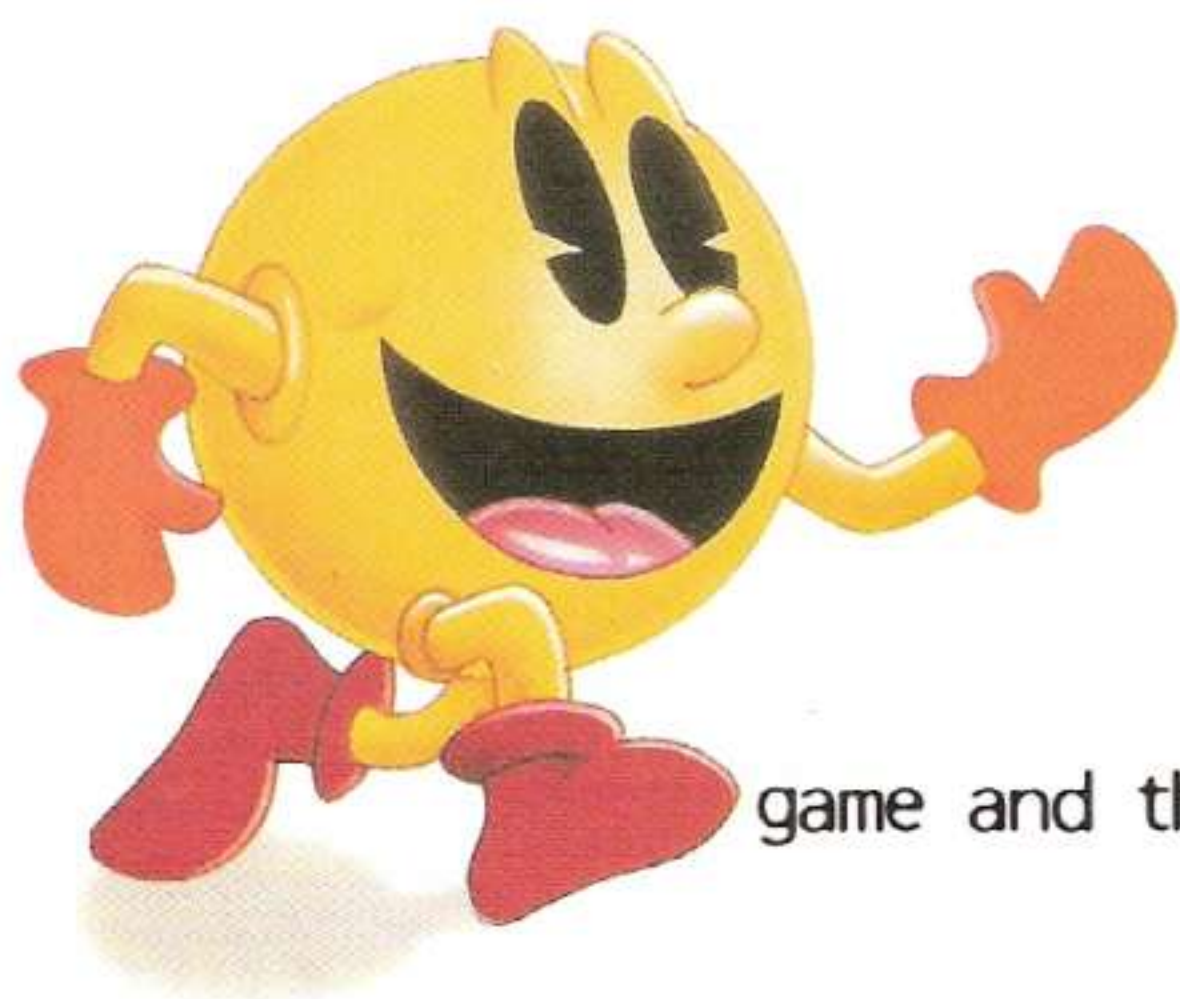
**TOILET** humor...



# there v

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game and the only tough choices



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were one-or-two player mode?

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The arcade shooter that set the standard. Squadrons of robotic bugs set out to swarm your starship. Includes never seen before bonus rounds - plus a way to sacrifice ships to increase your own firepower.

Namco Museum™ Volume 1 for the PlayStation™ - the first

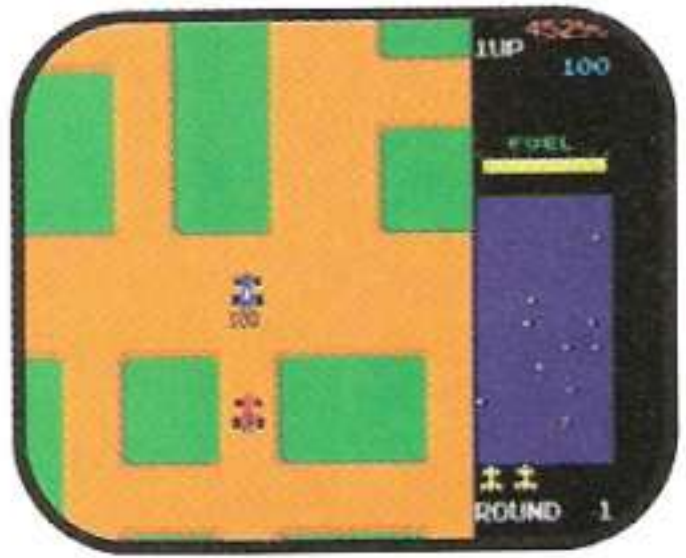


# was fun.

## Museum™ Volume 1

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in a series of five video game

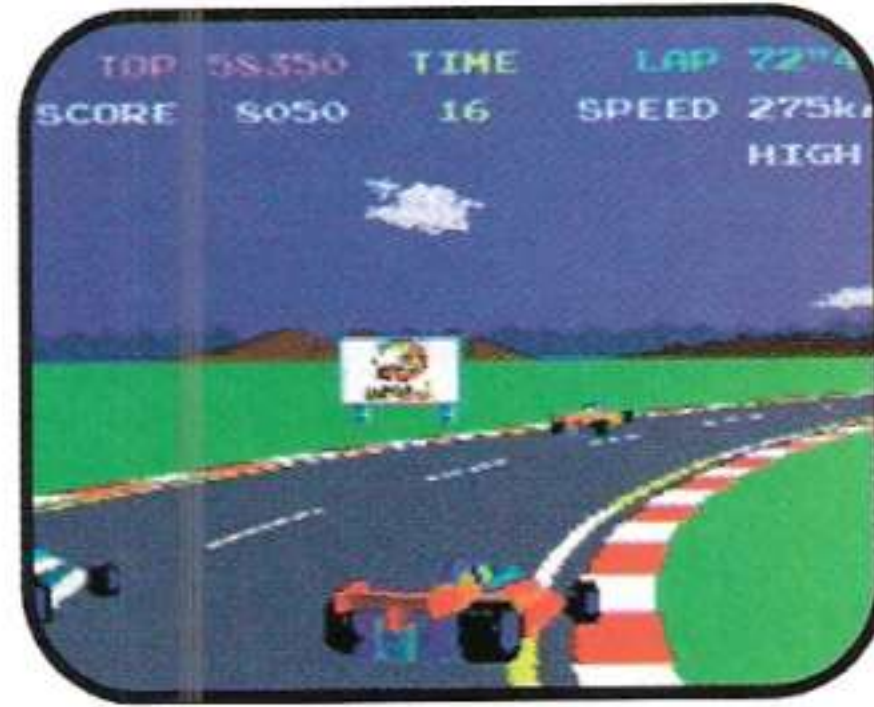


Let the bad guys suck exhaust and dine on dust. You're going pedal to the metal through a maze, taking chances and checkered flags.

compendiums comprised of the

world's most famous arcade

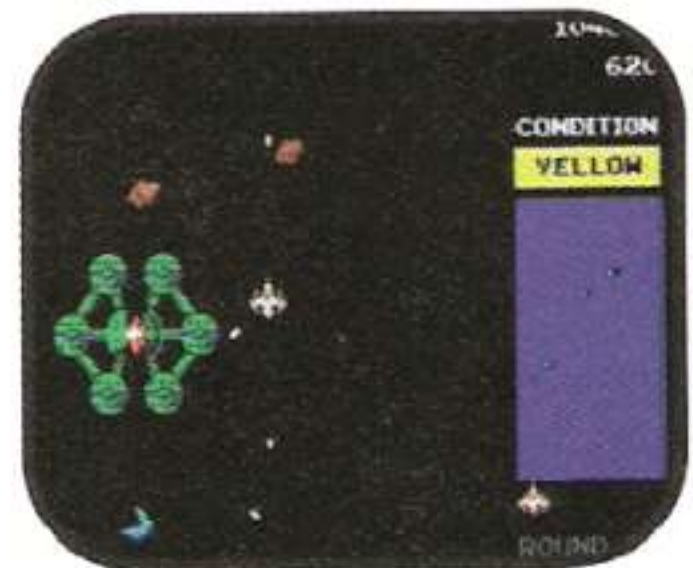
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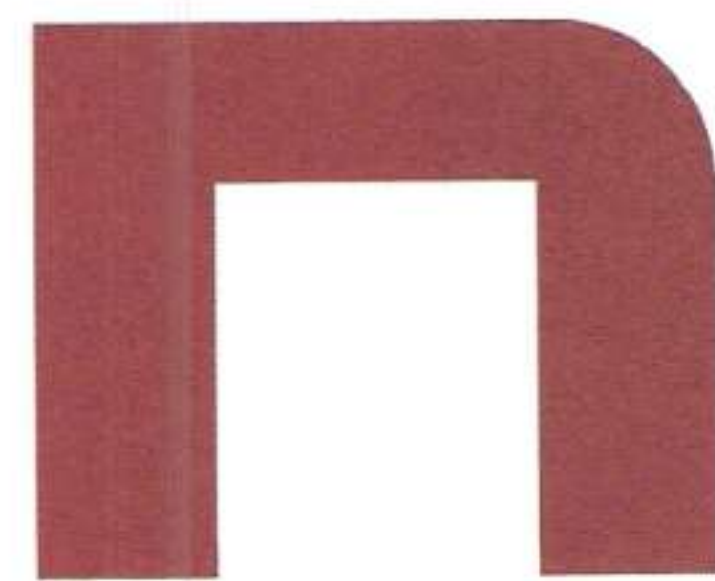
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**Nintendo 64:** Sega and Sony prepare for battle with the newest 64-bit machine/p.16 • **M2:** Matsushita breaks its silence/p. 20 • **Intel:** Announces the release of its new enhanced PC chip/p.23 • **The Next Generation E<sup>3</sup> report:** analyses from the show of the year/p.25 • **Nintendo's main man talks:** Chairman Yamauchi tells it like it is/p. 30



Videogame news from around the world

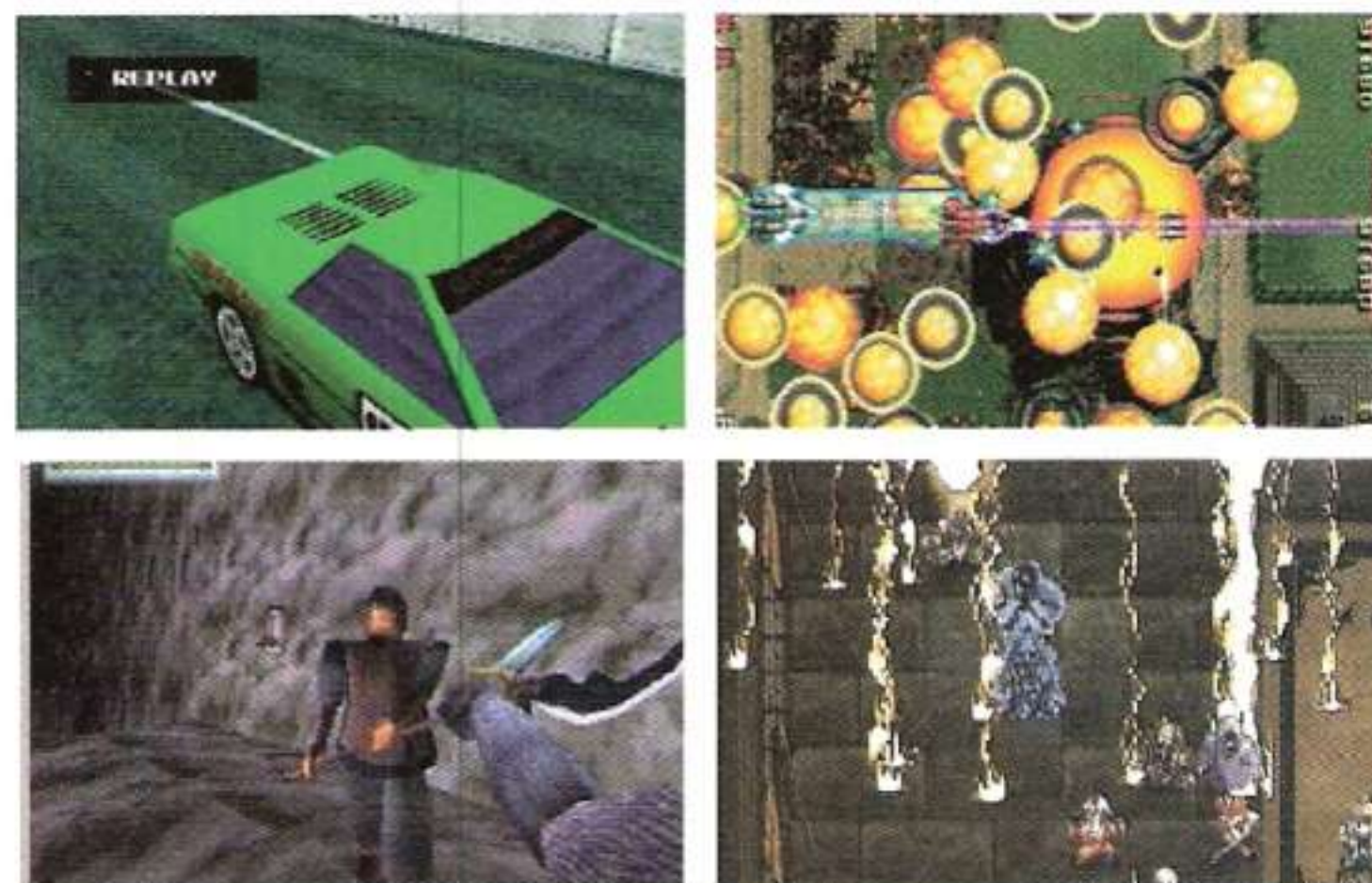
# Sega and Sony prepare for Nintendo 64

How can 32-bit compete with 64-bit? Drastic price cuts, Internet add-ons, and aggressive marketing are Sega's and Sony's answers

**O**f course, there are many good reasons why Nintendo 64 may not crush PlayStation and Saturn underfoot (see page 36), but the smart money has to be on Nintendo 64 stealing the initiative from its 32-bit rivals this fall, and slowly accelerating ahead. Sega and Sony dispute this reasoning, and are confident that they will be able to batton down the hatches and weather the storm of Nintendo 64's launch.

As predicted by **Next Generation** in **NG 18**, their first and most obvious strategy has been to cut the price of the hardware. At May's E<sup>3</sup> (Electronic Entertainment Exposition) in Los Angeles, Sony announced that it was dropping the price of PlayStation by \$100 to a mass-market-friendly \$199.

Sega of America spent an embarrassing 24 hours on the phone to Japan, working out



Sony Japan's ¥2,800 (\$28) budget line-up: *Ridge Racer*, *Raiden Project*, *King's Field*, and *Arc the Lad*. *Ace Combat*, and *Toshinden 2* out soon...

what its reaction would be (come on guys — Sony's action wasn't that surprising, why didn't you have contingency plans already worked out?), and matched the move.

Sega has happily acknowledged that its sales are up. A spokesperson commented that "Many retail chains are talking about increases of between two and three times previous levels." Sony is equally bullish, claiming that leading retailers such as Toys R Us and Electronics Boutique are reporting sales surges of "two and a half to three times their previous levels."

**Naughty Dog's** *Crash Bandicoot*, as well as some fine second-generation offerings from Psygnosis, lead Sony's software assault. Sega is relying on *Nights*, *Sonic Extreme*, and the promise of an eventual *Virtua Fighter 3* conversion. Both companies are unsurprisingly promoting the view that it is breadth of software library that counts, and that one or two (albeit awesome) games

## Nintendo's 64DD revealed

Nintendo's 64DD Magnetic Media Drive for Nintendo 64 is designed to fit snugly under the base of the Nintendo 64, perhaps inspired by the proposed floppy drive peripheral for Pippin. 64DD will provide 64 MB of storage, with some portion (rumored to be approximately 20 MB) writable. The unit is slated to be shipping fall of 1997 at a price of approximately \$150.



Sega and Sony believe that Nintendo 64 can be fought with cheaper hardware, cheaper software, and sheer momentum. Will gamers agree?

**Sony Japan has already released four "classic" titles at budget prices. Ridge Racer, Arc the Lad, King's Field, and Raiden Project all retail for just ¥2,800 (\$28)**

aren't enough to make a system. Sony is also likely to battle Nintendo on software prices. Sony Japan has already released four "classic" titles at budget prices. *Ridge Racer*, *Raiden Project*, *King's Field*, and *Arc the Lad* all retail for just ¥2,800 (\$28), compared to a the standard price of ¥5,800 (\$58). More are on their way, and it is anticipated that Sony America will unveil a similar release strategy soon. Good news for gamers, but bad news for Nintendo — cartridge games can't be sold so cheaply.

**Where Sony's** and Sega's tactics differ is concerning their belief in the importance of online applications. Whereas Sony can only offer an enigmatic response ("We haven't made any announcements, although we're working on lots of things,") Sega is pushing full steam ahead with its NetLink peripheral.

NetLink is priced at \$199 (enabling Sega to promote a Saturn/NetLink set-up as the world's first "Internet solution below \$500") and essentially turns the Saturn into a primitive WWW-browser, e-mail center, and online gaming platform.

Sega has five multiplayer games in development (including the hopelessly addictive *Baku Baku*) as well as projects from Accolade, Interplay, GT Interactive, Virgin, and Westwood Studios. "At least 10" games are promised by the end of 1996. Sega's history with peripherals (Sega CD, 32X, Activator, Menacer, etc), however, doesn't offer much hope of NetLink solving Saturn's problems.

Still, gamers can only benefit as the battle continues to heat up. **ng**



Can a \$199 console with no keyboard and no data storage device really become a "network computer" for just \$199? Sega seems to think so

# In the studio

Of course, what really matters are the games themselves. So who's working on what? New game announcements, delays, and other game-related goodness: A Next Generation look behind the scenes...

A multiplayer version of Maxis' strategy game *SimCity 2000* is to be launched later this summer. The game will enable players to compete in building up their own areas of a city, although some cooperation with competitors will be necessary, say Maxis representatives. *SimCity Network Edition* will feature added elements to the original, including the need to buy land before development and the ability to block competitor development. Other new features to enhance multiplayer play include trade agreements, collective voting on city ordinances, and real time city council meetings.

Top Neo-Geo game *Samurai Spirits RPG* is set to appear on PlayStation and Saturn. The SNK title was a hit on Neo-Geo last year, taking characters from the *Samurai Shodown* combat world and placing them in an RPG. No release date has been announced although it is thought likely that the game will appear early next year. Meanwhile, *Samurai Shodown III* will be making an appearance on Gameboy before the end of 1996.



LucasArts' *Shadows of the Empire* for Nintendo 64 has been delayed until December. While originally slated to be a launch title for Nintendo 64, *Shadows of the Empire*, met with mixed initial reaction at E3. Many observers expressed disappointment at both the game's concept (it's a very basic shooter) and execution (it doesn't look very good at all). In an effort to ship a more polished game, LucasArts will be giving the production team a few more months to complete it.



Williams' *Doom 64* has joined *Shadows of the Empire* as another high-profile "Dream Team" Nintendo 64 project that is horribly delayed. *Doom 64* was supposed to ship at the end of September to coincide with the launch of the Nintendo 64. Evidently, Id Software was not completely satisfied with much of the level design, and as such many of the levels are being redesigned, resulting in a six month postponement until April of 1997.

Sega has rebutted suggestions in the arcade press that *Virtua Fighter 3* will not be the first Model 3-based game. Reports had been circulating that Sega's Research and Development team was planning to spring a surprise launch in the late summer of a driving game — possibly a new *Daytona* game. This would indeed have been a major shock, given the (deserved) hype surrounding *VF3*. A spokesperson for Sega commented that *Virtua Fighter 3* would definitely be the first Model 3 title to appear.



The Tetris Company has announced that it is renegotiating all licensing rights to *Tetris*. Among the areas it plans to expand to is the Web. Prior to the formation of the Tetris Company in early 1996, the licensees of the Tetris name included: Atari, Bullet-Proof Software, Hewlett Packard, Microsoft, Nintendo, Philips, Sega, Sharp, and Spectrum Holobyte. In addition to major licensing agreements, the Tetris Company plans to bring the game to the WWW for two and multiplayer competitions. There will be worldwide rankings with divisions based upon gender and age. Reserve the top five rankings for Next Generation...

All the latest arcade and coin-op news

# ARCADIA

by Marcus Webb

Marcus Webb is the editor-in-chief of *RePlay* magazine, the US' leading trade amusement magazine



## Capcom's Plans

The long-awaited *Street Fighter III* is officially under development at Capcom Co. Ltd. (Japan) and will feature advanced computer graphics (CG) images. However, executives gave no clues as to when this game might be released (though it's believed the game will reach completion at the year's end). The announcement came during a March 27 meeting in Tokyo, where Capcom founder Kenzo Tsujimoto and his development chief Yoshiki Okimoto said that other titles in the works include *Street Fighter Alpha 3* and *Night Warriors 2* for 1997.

## Inside Scoop On Williams' "Wavenet"

Ten units of Williams/Bally-Midway's *Ultimate Mortal Kombat 3* have been undergoing field testing in the Chicago area since mid-April, linked by modem via "WaveNet." The word stands for "Williams Action Video Entertainment Network," a networking system enabling realtime, remote interactive gameplay.

The test represents WaveNet's first public unveiling after several years of in-house R&D. WaveNet requires a rather pricey hardware set-up (including, we're told, ISDN phone lines). This could mean a start-up cost of several thousand dollars per arcade installation, plus hundreds of dollars extra per individual game for a typical arcade video upright.

But these costs could prove negligible, especially since Williams isn't looking for a short-term jump in earnings on one or two games. It envisions WaveNet as a possible means to revolutionize the entire arcade business. One business model under consideration: WaveNet might enable Williams to send new software titles and/or game updates to 10,000 or more arcades and other game locations for free, instead of making arcades pay for the games up front. However, Williams, in turn, would get a direct cut of each game's revenues (under this proposed model, anyway). Williams hopes this revenue-sharing approach would give it a huge boost in profits.


One operator involved in the current WaveNet test told us: "Williams has described this to us as a technical shakedown phase. WaveNet technology has proved reliable, but there has been no marketing or promotion so far; no tournaments or prizes have been offered. Subsequently — as you might expect — this purely technical test has not made much difference in game earnings." But, expect this to change in the near future.

## Acclaim Signs Up

3Dfx Interactive, makers of hi-tech graphics engine components, says Acclaim Coin-Op is the latest factory to enter a strategic relationship to use 3Dfx's "Voodoo Graphics" chipset to create photorealistic, 3D images in video games. Former Acclaim prexy Tom Petit said the technology would help his firm create exciting coin-ops and "extend the life of a game and easily deploy it across the console, coin-op and PC markets, increasing the revenue stream for each title." Industry pundits predict that by the end of '96, up to 10 companies will compete with 3Dfx for market share in the high-end video components business. Acclaim is at <http://www.acclaimnation.com>.

## Computer Giant Eyes Arcade Biz

Bill Gates didn't talk about the arcade sector in his exclusive interview, published in the June issue of *Next Generation*. But certain well-placed people in the coin-op arena claim that Microsoft remains very, very interested in establishing a foothold in coin-ops.

One of its points of contact could be providing something like a universal game platform, much as 3Dfx is beginning to do, but also perhaps with some of the same types of business model considerations described in the WaveNet strategy. At any rate, Microsoft was very public last year about its excitement over the NANI modem system and we hear hints that this interest has not necessarily evaporated despite delays in NANI's implementation. Other potential connections between Microsoft and the arcade industry are also simmering away, but at this point all we can say is, "Look for more news on Microsoft and arcade video by this summer." 

## Up and Coming Coin-ops

### Die-Hard — Sega

This new Titan coin-op uses specialized fighting moves, and is the first *Final Fight*-style action game to sport texture-mapped, polygonal graphics.

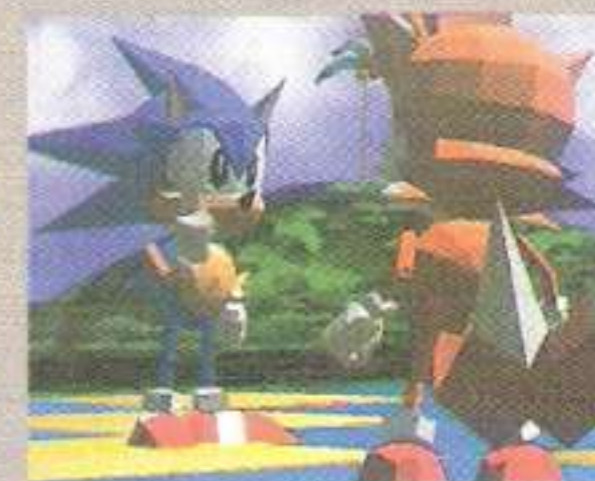


### Puzzle Fighter — Capcom

In a remake of the old, but once-popular Japanese arcade game *Tetris Gaiden*, Capcom's two-player *Puzzle Fighter* enables gamers to manipulate various patterns to activate two fighters who battle it out on screen. In other words, gamers play *Tetris*, but watch their chosen characters fight it out (starring characters from *Street Fighter* and *Darkstalkers*).

### Sonic The Fighters — Sega AM2

Still on test, and still without a new name, this fighter stars all the characters from the *Sonic* series, and showcases hilarious, slapstick fighting moves.



### Soul Edge Version II — Namco

With the additional of two new characters, Cervantes and Hwang, and an improved Guard impact, one of the finer new 3D fighting games has been refreshed.



### Winding Heat — Konami

The unofficial sequel to *Midnight Run*, *Winding Heat* is a daytime-oriented driving game with sharp-looking graphics, more selectable car options, and more variation in courses than *MR*.

# On August 30<sup>th</sup>...



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—Strategy Plus



Actual IBM screens shown



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THE ELDER SCROLLS™  
Chapter Two

crib  
sheet

The stuff every gamer should know. This month, we give you the videogame industry's founding father:

No. 2  
Nolan  
Bushnell

**Who is he?** The man who founded Atari and launched the videogame revolution in 1972 with *Pong*.  
**So he made the first games?** Not quite. Videogames were around on college computers since the '60s. He just brought them into the arcade and popularized them.  
**When was this?** Atari was founded in 1972 for \$250. In 1976, he sold out to Time Warner for \$28 million, just before the 2600 started to take off.  
**Damn, he sounds like a fantastic businessman.** Sort of. Although he made out great on the Atari deal, by 1983, Warner lost \$283 million in a single fiscal quarter, thanks to Atari. By that time, Bushnell, unable to deal with corporate culture and — he says — mismanagement, was long gone, making (and losing) another fortune on an idea Warner wasn't interested in — Chuck E. Cheese's Pizza Time Theaters.

**I thought the name to associate with Atari was "Tramiel."** No, no. The Tramiel family bought the home side of the Atari business from Warner in 1983, but Bushnell started it all.  
**What's he doing now?** Rumor has it he put in a bid on Atari Games, the arcade division that Time Warner sold off about six months ago (WMS bought Atari games). Currently he's developing a "Chuck E. Cheese for adults," called E2000.

M2: Matsushita breaks  
its silence

Too good to be true?  
"unconfirmed reports" from  
Japan fan the fires of hype

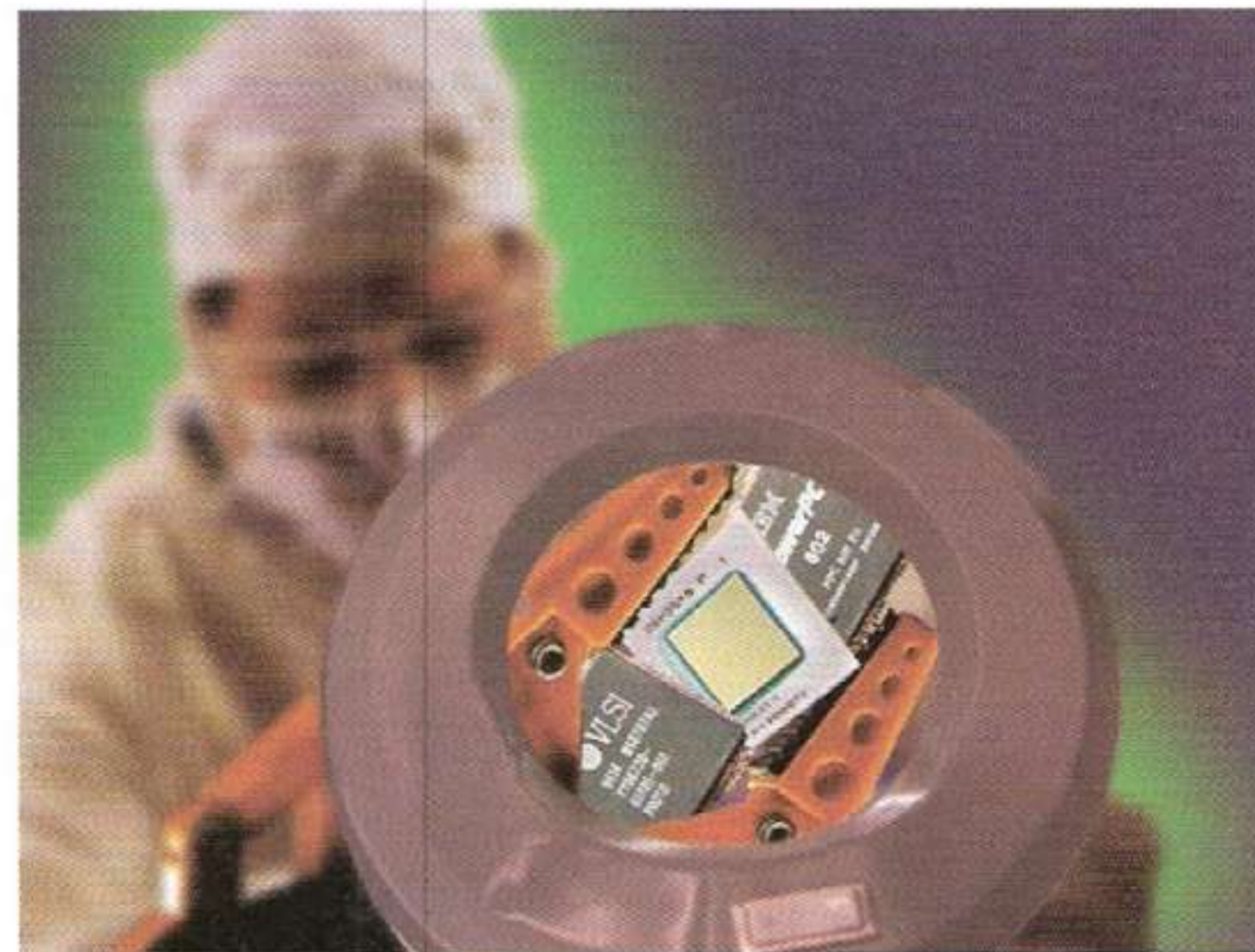
**T**he M2 project has become the game industry's Big Foot: no one's actually proved that it really exists; very few people believe in it; but if it's true — boy, what a powerful beast. In the latest twist to the myth, new rumors from Japan indicate that Matsushita is planning to incorporate not one, but two of The 3DO Company's PowerPC602-based chips within the M2 hardware. This would easily push the system's performance well above 1 million polygons per second, the spec currently touted for M2 (compared to PlayStation's 500,000).

The manufacturing cost of these chips alone is estimated to be \$150, which led many industry observers to speculate that Matsushita was planning to launch M2 at a price in excess of \$500. Compounding this prediction of a high price-point is the popular notion that Matsushita also plans to incorporate a DVD player into the hardware. As the world's biggest consumer electronics manufacturer, Matsushita is betting heavily on DVD's adoption into mainstream households; M2 could be key in delivering a payoff.

However, to counter this potentially damaging hypothesizing (Matsushita is all too well aware of what happened to the last game machine priced at above \$500), sources within the company soon leaked news that M2's intended price-point would be no more than \$300. Quite how this will be manageable (if the proposed technical specifications remain intact) has not been revealed — and it certainly seems ridiculously ambitious to **Next Generation**. But Matsushita doesn't seem to be in any rush to bring M2 to market (perhaps it is waiting for some manufacturing breakthrough to reduce costs) and it has to be assumed that the electronics giant still has some powerful cards to play.

## Meanwhile, many

software developers seem to have given up waiting. Interplay has put its M2 development of *Clayfighter 3* on ice, in preference for Nintendo 64 development. A source inside Interplay commented: "Some of the M2 work



Gamers waiting for M2 will be heartened by Matsushita's news. But **Next Generation** doesn't predict M2's arrival anytime soon. Try late 1997

will be used for the Nintendo 64 project. At the moment no one is sure what Matsushita's plans are, so we have decided to put the project on hold for a while."

We await more M2 news with bated breath.



## i wish...



Neil West, NG

- I didn't get any more phone calls from PR agents telling me about games being developed from a "Hollywood angle"
- Everyone in the game industry would sit down and play *Super Bomberman 2* and *Civilization*
- More people would listen to what Chris Crawford has to say
- I had a Nintendo 64 RIGHT NOW!
- Matsushita would figure out what the hell it's going to do with M2
- Yu Suzuki would teach me everything he knows about making videogames
- I could find somewhere to get a decent cup of tea...
- EA would rediscover the magic
- Force-feedback joysticks become the mass-market hit they deserve to be (far more revolutionary than any simple increase in graphic sophistication)
- The one time we put my picture in the magazine, the art staff didn't take the opportunity to make me look silly
- Nolan Bushnell makes it three
- The unsung heroes of **Next Generation** get the riches and glory they deserve
- England had won Euro '96 (now there's pessimism for you)
- All these big-budget newcomers to game design would realize that it's not about telling a story, but creating a world in which players can create their own

Neil West is the editor-in-chief of **Next Generation** magazine

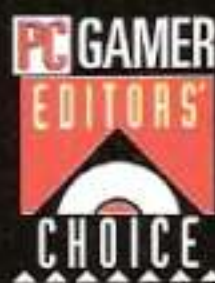
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The business news that affects the games you play

**MOVERS & SHAKERS**

**SQUARE SOFTENS NINTENDO LINE**

**NEWSLINE :** Square's frosty relationship with erstwhile bosom buddy Nintendo appears to be thawing. The company is now going out of its way to stress its status as a multiplatform developer. Indeed, Nintendo executives are understood to have been visiting Square's U.S. HQ in Los Angeles. Square representatives say there is no Nintendo 64 development right now, but they are no longer ruling out future possibilities.

**BOTTOMLINE :** Square's disappointment with the choice of mass-storage formats for Nintendo 64 and the lack of quality development tools for the machine caused it to cease development on Nintendo's *Final Fantasy VII*. The announcement of a shift to PlayStation marked the first time a Square game would exist for a non-Nintendo platform. However, Nintendo's strong showing at E<sup>3</sup>, and overtures of friendship from an old ally keen to woo Square back from Sony, have caused the company to reconsider. Expect announcements of a return to the fold in the near future.

**CRYSTAL DYNAMICS FACES FINANCIAL REALITY**

**NEWSLINE :** Crystal Dynamics' new CEO, Ted Ardel, has stated that the company will soon cease to be a publisher, and will concentrate on development. It's also reported that one third of its workforce will be cut within a three month period.

**BOTTOMLINE :** Some predictions for the next-generation market were rosier than the reality, and Crystal's massive expansion in terms of both SKUs and the workforce to create them cost the company dearly. In this respect, the firm gambled, and lost. Crystal's decision to dip out of publishing may well be repeated by other small outfits unable to compete with the likes of Electronic Arts and Acclaim.

**32-BIT SALES BOOM AFTER CONSOLE PRICES DROP**

**NEWSLINE :** Both Sony and Sega are claiming sales increases of two to three-fold since they dipped below the \$200 price threshold.

**BOTTOMLINE :** Retailers are evidently happy with the new price-point and have backed both companies' claims. Confusion in the market had caused potential buyers to wait and see, and their patience was rewarded. Also, the \$200 threshold introduced a new strata of consumers who were not

prepared to pay more than a couple hundred bucks for a game machine. And then there is the growing phenomena of the dual owner. Additionally, Nintendo's ludicrous claims that the 32-bit era is a nonevent have been shown to be not only predictable, but ineffectual spoiling tactics as well.

**32-BIT ATLANTIS NOW ON HOLD**

**NEWSLINE :** Nintendo representatives have admitted that a color, handheld game system is in development, but have stated publicly that the machine won't arrive until 1997, if at all.

**BOTTOMLINE :** Here is a company with an amazing ability to make its gaming products and properties last a very long time. Remember, the company's star intellectual property, Mario, is 10 years old (a long time in videogame years). The Gameboy was seen to have legs and was repackaged as Pocket Gameboy. It is a delightful design and will be a success. So, Nintendo has decided to sit on the color project until sales die down, which may take as many as two years.

**A NEW TOKYO SHOW?**

**NEWSLINE :** Japanese companies are teaming up to launch an E<sup>3</sup>-type exhibition in Tokyo next summer. But the project isn't without problems.

**BOTTOMLINE :** The Tokyo Game Exhibition is a defensive move by the Japanese game industry. TGE had suspected that IDSA — the American trade body and organizer of E<sup>3</sup> — was planning to launch E<sup>3</sup> Japan. However, any Japanese show has inherent problems, chiefly Nintendo. It is not worth having an exhibition without this market-leading name, but Nintendo already runs its own fall show, Shoshinkai. There may be reluctance to spend yet more money exhibiting at another show.

**SEGA SEES NAKED TRUTH**

**NEWSLINE :** Sega of Japan has recently announced that none of its future Sega Saturn games will feature nudity.

**BOTTOMLINE :** Many Japanese videogames feature nudity (female nudity, of course), whether as part of the plot (in RPGs, for example) or simply as decorations in puzzle games. But Japanese lobby groups have targeted the industry, which, after all, aims most of its products at boys, and Sega has been quick to fall into line, thus avoiding any public relations unpleasantness.



by **Christian Svensson**  
 Christian Svensson is the assistant editor and webmaster at Next Generation Online which can be found at <http://www.next-generation.com/>





# GADGETS

Peripherals, accessories, gizmos, add-ons, thingies, and stuff

## Mach V 166

Price: \$4,000

Manufacturer: Falcon Northwest Computer Systems  
System: PC

Falcon Northwest isn't the only high-end computing vendor on the planet, but it's one of the few that specifically targets gamers. The company custom builds every PC to suit each customer, and every machine is based around its own "Falcon 75" motherboard, equipped with a screaming 200 MHz bus and a 256 K sync burst cache. We evaluated an Intel Pentium 166 MHz CPU, 16 MB EDO memory, 2.1 GB Western Digital EIDE hard drive, Diamond Stealth 3D graphics adaptor with 2 MB EDO DRAM (uses S3's VirGe 3D chipset), Soundblaster 16 with a Roland SCD-10 Sound Canvas MIDI daughterboard, an 8X CD-ROM drive, a CH Products high-speed game card, a Princeton



Ultra 17" monitor, and a set of Advent speakers with separate powered sub-woofer. The system's performance was nothing short of excellent, chewing through every benchmarking program thrown at it, scoring an overall average of 20% better performance than a similarly equipped Gateway 2000 166. The system is pricier than some, but we've come across few systems that offer as much performance for the cost.

## PlayStation Analog Stick

Price: TBA

Manufacturer: Sony Computer Entertainment  
System: PlayStation

Hey, Nintendo and Sega have analog sticks, why not Sony? The PlayStation Analog Stick uses one port, with all eight buttons scattered over the sticks, and an additional four-way digital "hat" switch on the right stick. The stick is extremely functional, and mimics the joystick-plus-throttle config common among PC flight fans. Only one game is currently compatible, the flight game *Sidewinder* from SCE and Asmik.



# Intel prepares to enhance Pentium

Intel has announced details of its new MMX enhancement which will be added to Pentium and Pentium Pro chips before the end of the year. The new chip design, the most important update since Intel's 80386, will allow programmers to write more efficient gaming code, meaning MMX-compatible titles will be faster, smoother, and more colorful. For example, fading one 640x480 screen, which contains a 24-bit color image, into another, would take a current Pentium processor 1.4 billion instructions. MMX could do it in 525 million, enabling games currently written in 256 colors to be converted to 24-bit true color with no speed loss.

MMX is not a new chip in itself, but a set of improvements to existing Pentium processors, intended to accentuate the PC's gaming potential. MMX adds 57 new instructions, mostly of the low-level variety, and mostly dealing with moving groups of data from one memory cell to another. MMX can deal with bigger groups (64 bits at a time) than the current Pentium chips because it implements the latter's large operating registers — originally intended to manage floating-point operations (rarely used in games and multimedia products).

By employing the MMX/floating-point register, instead of just the old Pentium register, certain operations, like changing the color of sets of pixels, can be carried out

**The MMX allows certain operations to be carried out simultaneously, making games several times faster**

simultaneously rather than one pixel after the other. Key operations in a game compatible with MMX would consequently be several times faster. Adapting a game to the MMX chip only requires the rewriting of a small amount of core code, mostly the sections written in assembler.

Though Pentium MMXs and Pentium Pro MMXs will not start to appear until year's end, Intel is already encouraging developers to write for the new technology. Microsoft, Ocean, Qsound, and Epic have all expressed support for MMX, and others are expected to follow.



**The world's biggest chip manufacturer is ready to make PC games faster**



While commentators speculate over the Pentium chip's speed limits, Intel has made it faster for games



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The issues affecting the way games are made

# Generator

## Battle of the bits — Is 64 always better than 32?

**T**he **Next Generation** Lexicon has the following to say about bits:

*Bit 1) Contraction of Binary digIT. The smallest discrete unit of information available to a computing device. Since all nonesoteric modern computing devices are binary, a bit is usually represented as a 1 or a 0, meaning on or off. 2) The bit is the basic measuring device for information in computers and videogames. It used to measure computing power of systems, referring to how many bits the microprocessor or CPU of the system could process at once. An 8-bit system, like the original NES, works with 8-bit "words" and is less powerful than a 16-bit system, like the Genesis or Super NES, which can process 16-bit "words." This is confusing because often a system will have different processors using differently sized bit "words." The NEC TurboGraphics had an 8-bit CPU but a 16-bit graphics chip. The Atari Jaguar uses 16-, 32-bit, and 64-bit chips but has a 64-bit wide bus. 3) The color generation capability of a system is also measured in bits. Color on a computer screen is made up by combining different intensities of red, green, and blue in a pixel. 4) The number of colors a system can generate. Thus, 8-bit color is 256 colors, 4-bit color is 16 colors, and so on. Sometimes with 16- and 32-bit color, some bits are used as check-bits or for generating alpha channels, and are unavailable for actual color generation.*

**In case you** hadn't noticed, there is a marketing war going in the videogame business. Most claim it is a "war of game titles" (*Virtua Fighter* versus *Tekken*, for example). Increasingly, however (and especially since the arrival of Nintendo 64), many people claim that this has become a "war of bits."

Nintendo's got 64 of them. Poor old Sony and Sega only have 32.

The "war of bits" is really a war of technology, with "bits" as an easily digestible word for gamers on the street to use as a gauge of system performance. Since most gamers (**Next Generation** readers are, remember, the exception) do not understand the underlying technology and complex benchmark tests, nor want to spend the time to be educated, game marketers use "bits" as a way to differentiate their products over the competition.

This is really no different than other industries. Take the exciting world of performance sports cars. When Chrysler announced the Dodge Viper, the rallying cry was "10 cylinders of performance! It's a V-10!" In reality, the fact that the Viper has a V-10 engine has relatively little to do with its performance. The fact that the engine has 8.0 liters of displacement and 400 horsepower does. However, "V-10" is a far easier way to inform and brag to the average consumer.

The connections between the phrases "64-bit

processor" and "V-10 engine" go deeper than this, however. Both are used to position the products that they power as the leading system. Both are "engines of work" (to label them correctly). Yet neither describes how frequently they do their work. Hence, neither describes their real world performance — they both only paint a part of the overall picture.

So, what is the hapless consumer meant to do in the face of such abstract information? In both the case of the computer and the car, one way to understand performance is to take the engine and see how well it works with the system it sits in. Thus, the benchmarks of "pixels/second" or "polygons/second" for gaming consoles and "zero to sixty miles" for performance cars. Both these benchmarks imply a certain intensity of user experience. But, as any gamer knows, they do not necessarily imply the *quality* of the user experience.

**As a general rule**, though, if we can manipulate much bigger words (bits) in smaller amounts of time (clock frequency), we should be able to do more work. In the case of gaming, more work

means more processing power for computing more complex character and object behaviors. More work also means much quicker arithmetic, so we can calculate where a polygon should be on screen more quickly, and put more of them on the screen in a given time period.

This means better graphics.

However, for this to translate into higher performance, the whole system has to be tuned to work as a whole. A 32-bit CPU with 8-bit data paths to a 16-bit graphics engine would be a clunky architecture — like connecting a V-8 engine to a go-kart transmission in a station wagon's chassis.

More bits are better as long as the whole system is tuned and designed in a smart architecture to

use them most effectively. Even more importantly, how well the game software takes advantage of them decides the success of that system.

"Bits" are also often used to describe a system's ability to show colors — the more bits, the more colors, the better the visual experience.

However, this perceived benefit decays when we realize that human visual perception is saturated at 36 bits. After this point, the human eye can't see any difference. The situation we now have is that current systems can produce more colors than we could ever see or display on a television (we wouldn't be able to detect the subtleties in color changes even if there were enough pixels on a TV screen).

So don't always put trust in bits. Sure — as a general rule, the more the better. But it's how the whole system hangs together that matters. And then — perhaps even more importantly — what a talented programmer decides to do with it.

**The fact that the Dodge Viper has a V-10 engine has relatively little to do with its performance. The point is that the engine has 8.0 liters of displacement and 400 horsepower**

by **George Zachary**

George Zachary, who, when working with Silicon Graphics, was interviewed in NG 14, is now a partner at Mohr Davidow Ventures, a technology venture capital firm. To contact George try sending e-mail to him at [gzachary@mdv.com](mailto:gzachary@mdv.com)



**STOP**  
press

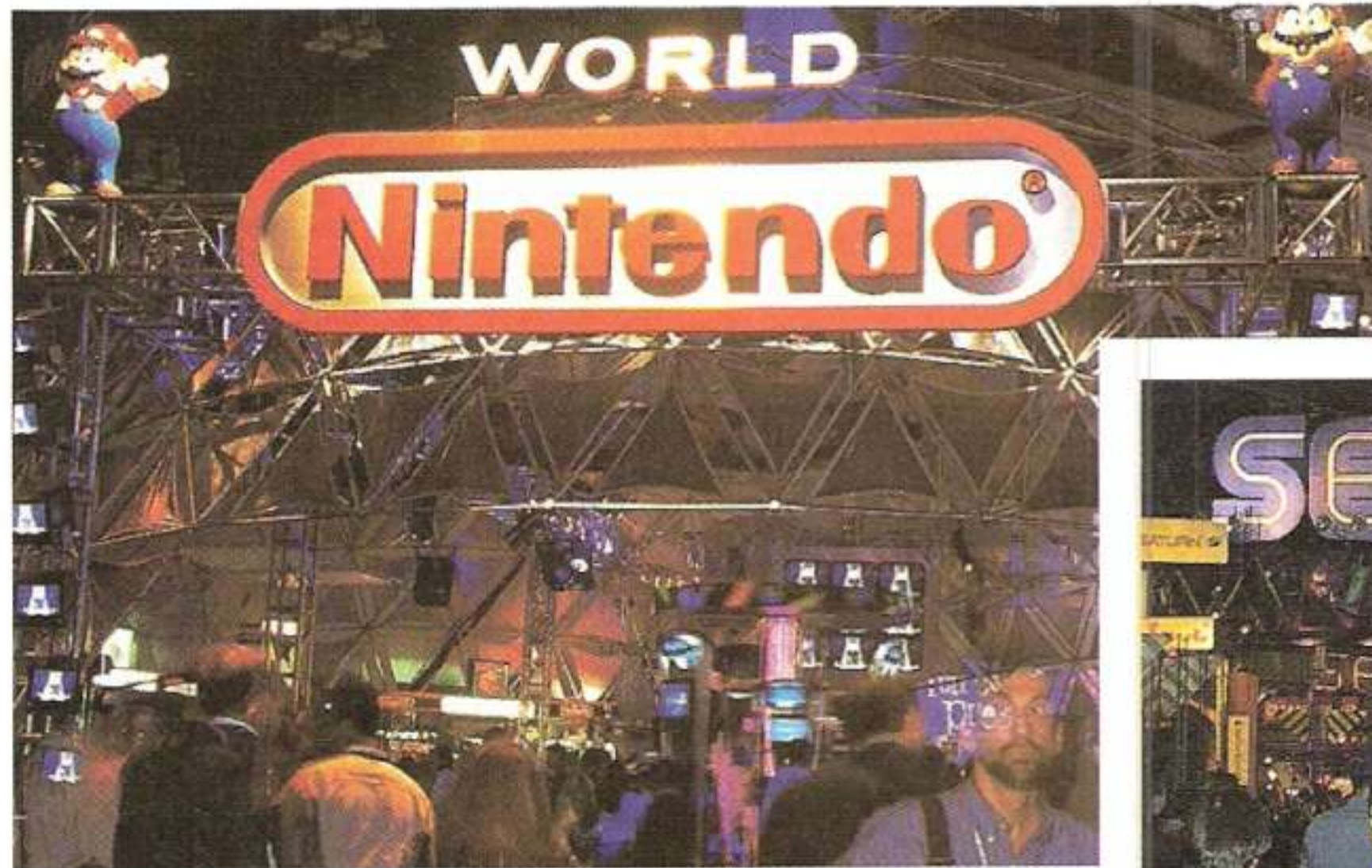
**Datel Launches PlayStation Disk Drive**  
Peripherals innovator Datel has launched a disk drive for PlayStation which enables saved game positions to be stored on 3.5 inch disks. The PlayStation Memory Drive is available via distributor Interact Accessories and costs \$99.95. Each disk will save 15 games, and the drive — styled to suit PlayStation — plugs directly into the save game port.

**Sid Meier Leaves Microprose**  
Following a brilliant career at Microprose, game design legend Sid Meier has left to form a new company, Firaxis. Meier, whose best known games include *Civilization*, *Pirates*, *Railroad Tycoon*, and *F-15 Strike Eagle*, is still under contract with Microprose to finish his latest title, *Magic: The Gathering*, a PC based version of the popular card game. The title will be finished by Meier later this summer.

**VR Pac-Man To Hit Arcades**  
Namco has struck a deal with VR coin-op company Virtuality to bring *Pac-Man* "into the 21st Century." A 3D VR machine based on Namco's classic arcade puzzle game will be appearing on September 1. The deal is expected to be announced in a matter of days. Virtuality has been working on the software for some months. The title will be a first-person perspective romp which will give players the sensation of being in a maze which reaches to about waist height.

# E<sup>3</sup>: Nintendo rekindles Mario's magic

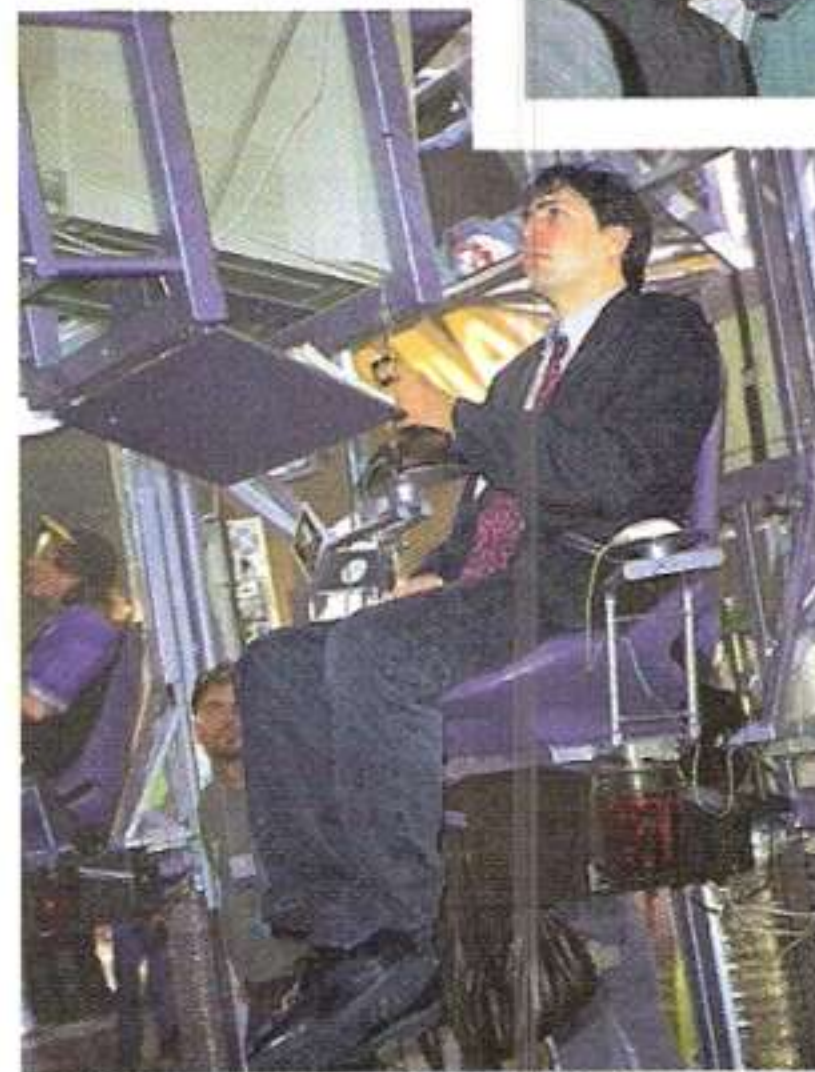
LA's Electronic Entertainment Expo proves to be the focal point of the game world



**W**ithout question, it was Nintendo that dominated this year's E<sup>3</sup> show in Los Angeles. A day prior to the show, the company chose to unveil its console to the press at a heart-warming reception that served as a reminder of why Nintendo still has a better understanding of what makes a great videogame than anyone else.

The following day *Super Mario 64* and *PilotWings 64* were the talk of the show. NCL's own *WaveRace 64* came a close third to its launch duo. Having now received a complete graphic overhaul since its announcement at Shoshinkai (as Miyamoto hinted during *Next Generation's* interview in **NG 14**), the game now features jet skis instead of power boats, and while graphically rather rough, played well. The rest of Nintendo 64's line-up proved to be a mixture of the promising (*WaveRace 64*, *Blast Corps*), the predictable (*Shadows of the Empire*, *Killer Instinct II*), and the relatively average (*Kirby's Air Ride*, *Cruis'n USA*). The rest seemed remarkably poor.

**Meanwhile**, on the first morning of the show, during a conference on videogames which included NOA's Howard Lincoln and SOA's Tom Kalinske, Sony's Executive Vice President Jim Whims dropped the bomb of PlayStation's price cut to an astonishing \$199. The following day, Sega followed suit and matched Sony's price with its Saturn.



57,795 delegates crammed into LA's Convention Center to witness the official unveiling of Nintendo 64

But while Nintendo's rivals Sony and Sega may have distracted some attention from the N64 stand with their ultra-competitive pricing announcements, the software on display was considerably less cut-throat, with Naughty Dog's *Crash Bandicoot* inevitably paling next to *Mario 64* in virtually every respect.

Other notable PlayStation newcomers include a reworking of Konami's famed *Contra* series (also for Saturn) by Hungarians Apaloosa (previously known as Novatrade, and the designers of Sega's *Ecco The Dolphin*), and Square's *Tobal No.1*, which — despite matching the 60 fps speed of *Tekken II* — seemed a tad

**Sony and Sega may have distracted some attention from Nintendo with their ultra competitive price cuts**

# breaking



## Game Boy relaunched

Launched as Game Boy Pocket, the new machine is 30% smaller and roughly half the weight of the original, requiring only two AA batteries. Finished in sleek matte silver, it features a new black-and-white screen design which reduces the infamous Game Boy blur and costs only \$59.95. Available in November.

dull, despite Akira Toriyama's strong character designs.

Perhaps predictably, the strongest PlayStation software at the show was from Psygnosis in the form of *Wipeout XL*, *F1*, and, from affiliate developer, Reflections, *Destruction Derby 2* and *Thunder Truck Rally*. But there was a feeling that something was missing for PlayStation, perhaps highlighted by the display of weak Japanese games such as *Aquanaut's Holiday* (aimed at "enthusiasts who appreciate new-age music"). However, it was also announced that several Japanese RPGs such as the well-received *Beyond The Beyond* and *Arc The Lad* will get the translation treatment for U.S. release.

**On the whole**, Saturn fared better. As well as a surprise showing of Westwood's revered *Command & Conquer* and Amazing Studio's *Heart Of Darkness* (which now looks a tad dated due to its interminable development period), *Nights* from *Sonic the Hedgehog* creator Yuji Naka, was unveiled (complete with Sega's new analogue Saturn joypad).

Alongside this was *Sonic Extreme*, a fairly impressive 3D



Want one of these? 64-bit gaming is almost here, but now that PlayStation and Saturn are \$199, can you afford it?

interpretation of *Sonic*, and an unexpected showing of *VF Kids* (ported swiftly from its ST-V coin-op board).

It was Sega's technology plans that attracted the most interest, though. Following on from its unveiling of its Model 3 board at the Tokyo AOU show, it presented the same realtime *VF3* demo at E<sup>3</sup> which guaranteed a huge crowd. Rather amusingly, company President Tom Kalinske even had the gall (during his speech at Sega's House of Blues party) to brag that (as *VF3* was on its way to the Saturn) "you can't do that on Sony or Nintendo!" For licensing reasons, that's true, but you certainly can't do 1 million trilinearly-interpolated, Gouraud-shaded, 24-bit color polygons per second on Saturn either, Tom.

Of more immediate relevance was Sega's NetLink peripheral (page 28).

**The PC made** its strongest ever showing. Once again, Scavenger blew away most of the competition in terms of technology, although it was interesting to note that it presented a wealth of new 3D projects such as *Terminus*, *Tarantula*, and the rather lovely *Aqua*, despite long-awaited titles such as *Scorcher*, *Amok*, and *Into The Shadows* still a way off release. A case of spreading resources too thinly?

3D accelerator technology was one of the key attractions on the PC side at E<sup>3</sup>, with 3Dfx demos of titles such as Core Design's *Tomb Raiders* and Ocean's *HMA Carnage* proving that this card is a serious contender. LucasArts chose to show off its *Dark Forces II* using the Rendition board to stunning effect, while VideoLogic's PowerVR technology played host to a neat collection of demos.

**Overall, E<sup>3</sup>** was a spectacular show for all concerned. But more than anything, it was a reminder that Nintendo is still king of the jungle in terms of defining what videogaming is all about.



Graphically, much of Nintendo 64's launch line-up isn't light years ahead of such second-generation PlayStation titles as *Wipeout XL* and *F1*. *Super Mario 64*, however (and sorry if we're going on about it), is something else

# Data stream

Most rented videotape of all time: *ET The Extra Terrestrial*, rented **228,168,939 times** (last time Next Generation counted)  
 Virtuality gross profits in year up to the end of 1995: **\$9.4 million**  
 VictorMaxx net losses for 1995: **\$11.7 million**  
 Biggest grossing computer-related film in the U.S. and Canada: **War Games**  
 According to a Durex survey: Amount of times Americans have sex per year: **135**  
 Amount of times Thai citizens have sex per year: **64**  
 Global average: **109**  
 Forecast number of copies of Windows 95 that will ship in 1996, according to DataQuest: **62.7 million**  
 Number of lives claimed by the Black Death in the thirteenth century: **40 million**  
 Music CDs most often played in the NG offices during the production of NG 20: **Leftfield, Leftism; Peter Gabriel, Secret World**  
 Number of attendees at E<sup>3</sup>, held at the Los Angeles Convention Center May 16-18: **57,795**  
 Increase from 1995: **nearly 50%**  
 Number of media representatives attending: **2,500**  
 Proportion of attendees from outside the U.S.: **13%**  
 Number of companies exhibiting: **467**  
 Number of new software titles demonstrated: **1,700**  
 Size of show floor: **490,000 square feet**  
 Location of 1997 E<sup>3</sup>: **Atlanta, GA**  
 Dates: **June 19 through 21, 1997**

## Dreams, stories, and games

In the ongoing argument over the conflict between interactivity and plot, it seems to me that people don't give dreaming its due.

All too often dreams are described in overly simple terms, as if they were stories. People talk about dreams in much the same terms they use to describe movies. They talk about the visual experience, in some cases using technical terms from moviemaking: pans, zooms, cuts, and so forth. I can't accept this; dreams aren't videos. I hope it's not too obvious to point out that, when you're asleep and dreaming, your eyes are closed; visual experiences don't exist during dreams. Whatever you may imagine you experience during a dream, it is most certainly not a genuine visual experience, so why should it be constrained by the logical realities of the visual experience?

Another aspect of dreaming that strikes me as important is its nonlinear nature. Stories must, of course, follow a linear sequence of some sort (the plotline), but dreams don't have to follow that rule. My own dreams don't follow a coherent plotline; why should they? Indeed, when we report a dream, we often provide logical connections that may not have existed in the actual dream. "And then I took the bowl off my head," may be something that our conscious minds insert because we remember having the bowl on our head at one point, and shortly thereafter it was no longer on our head. We therefore insert the logically obvious connection — but where is it written in stone that dreams must be logical?

This brings me to assert my own personal opinion about dreams. I believe that dreams are a consciously appreciated subset of more complex mental activity. This is predicated on the assumption that our consciousness represents only a subset of our overall mental existence — there's a lot more going on inside our brains than we are fully aware of. When we dream, our brain cuts loose and lets the mental activity fly. Our consciousness is like a three-year-old observing a raucous party with loud music, flirtation,

political debate, and one-ups-manship all taking place simultaneously. Unable to appreciate the complexity of the experience, our consciousness strings together whatever matter it can find meaningful, and we call the experience a dream.

**Now, what does** any of this have to do with games? (Notice that I ask that question frequently in my articles.) The answer is, the relationship between the experience of playing a game and the intellectual structure of the game itself is rather like the conscious experience of a dream and the dream itself. The actual dream is a vastly complex process that cannot be fully appreciated by the consciousness of the dreamer. In the same way, a game is a vastly complex structure that simply cannot be understood from a single playing.

## What happens when game designers are only young programmers with no wisdom to impart?

This implies something about the talent required of the game designer: the designer must be wiser than the player. The designer must see the world in larger terms, terms that the player can appreciate only in direct instantiation. Thus, I, as designer, create the following relationship for my interactive story:

"A character's inclination to kiss another character when the opportunity arises will be equal to that character's affection for the second character, plus the second character's sexiness multiplied by the first character's lust, minus the first character's faithfulness to any significant other with whom that first character may have a relationship or similar intimacy."

This is esoteric stuff (and is simpler than what I have actually used in my work). I certainly can't

expect a player to understand, appreciate, or even enjoy this concept. But if the player experiences this instead:

"Jessica gazed into Brad's eyes; she had never seen him in this way before. Before he had been nothing more than the delivery man, but now she could see his wonderfully chiseled features, his tanned face, his gentle eyes, his tight buttocks, and she knew in her loins that she wanted him. In a single whirling flash, Frederick was forgotten and she was wrapped around Brad, kissing him frantically."

Now, that's something most people can appreciate. Yet the language is really nothing more than a flowery instantiation of the earlier statement.

It's the job of the talented designer to create esoteric generalizations that can produce such entertaining instantiations. Thus, the internal structure of interactive entertainment almost always lies beyond the grasp of the typical player.

This implies that the game designer must be wiser and smarter than his players. This in itself is nothing new; after all, storytelling has for millennia been a means for wise and experienced members of society to impart their wisdom to the younger ones. It also suggests that a game is really a form of indirect communication. I may want to tell you about some truth of the human condition, but if I say it in conscious or explicit terms, it will sound too academic, too intellectual, and you won't hear me. But if I wrap my message up inside a game, and let you experience its manifestations rather than its intrinsic nature, those manifestations can penetrate your consciousness and work their way down deeper, where the true message can be induced from the instantiations and understood.

But what happens when technological constraints ensure that the only game designers are young programmers with no wisdom to impart? Must we wait for a generation of game designers to mature before the medium can blossom? I don't know.

But I do know this is why interactivity is so important.

Hi-octane game theory by Chris Crawford

# The way games ought to be ...

by Chris Crawford

Chris Crawford has designed numerous computer and video games and pioneered the Computer Game Developers' Conference. This article is taken from his monthly newsletter, *Interactive Entertainment Design*.



Gaming on the Internet



by **Bernard Yee**  
Bernard Yee has contributed to USA Today and writes regularly for PC Gamer, PC Magazine, and has authored several books on gaming.



## Will Sega Saturn's NetLink succeed, or "do a 32X"?

**W**hat did I tell you? It's gonna be a big year for online gaming, and the E<sup>3</sup> (Electronic Entertainment Expo) in Los Angeles this May proved me right on a number of fronts. Mpath, Engage, TEN (Total Entertainment Network), and DWANGO (serving tasty Texas barbeque) were all there, blowing their respective horns. Dean Dibiase of INN sat on a panel on online gaming with Bob Huntley (DWANGO), Gilman Louie (Microprose), and Richard Garriott (Origin/Electronic Arts). One look at the meeting room, which was standing room only, confirmed what readers of Joyriding already know: online gaming's the thing. And the message was clear; the Internet — now considered a platform — is being developed for, just like consoles or computers. Yet, despite this knowledge, there's no clear strategy on how to pursue this thing in any clear way, shape or financial form.

**Despite the fact** that Sony rocked the console world with a price drop to \$199, which was quickly matched by Sega for Saturn, the biggest news at E<sup>3</sup> for this column was at the Sega booth. Conventional wisdom had Sega on the ropes a few months ago, but there are two reasons why this could change: First, upcoming titles like *Nights* and *Virtua Fighter 3* look great. Second, Sega is the first console company to unveil a fully-fledged Internet strategy. Couple these together, and the Sega franchise at E<sup>3</sup> looked like it was ready for round two.

I predicted several columns ago, that a Network Computer, at a \$500 price-point, designed for the television, would soon be here. But what I hadn't guessed is that it would be at the amazing price of \$400, and that neither Oracle nor Microsoft would have anything to do with it.

Yup, you guessed it — the company to rise to the challenge is Sega with its \$199 NetLink, a 28.8 Kbps modem for Saturn. With browser software that enables magnification of computer fonts (remember, web pages were designed to be read on a 640x480 display) on your TV, Sega has taken the bold step of bringing the hype of the Internet home to anyone who has about \$400, a TV, and a phone jack. Sega has also taken the initiative to sponsor

Website design to create content designed for TV viewing. E-mail? Sure, no problem; Sega also intends to sell a low-priced keyboard adapter that will enable you to use a standard PC keyboard with Saturn.

Very few console peripherals (other than a second controller) have sold well, and Sega's modem package costs as much as Saturn itself, but consider this: \$199 is a reasonable price for a 28.8 K modem even by PC standards (though PC versions include fax capability), and the modem may be an easier sell to parents than, say, yet another fighting game precisely because of the Internet's hype and the ubiquity of the World Wide Web. What will parents buy: *Mortal Kombat 32* or a modem to get on the Net? That'll be an easy choice for most parents, at least for those who do not have a PC, or who have an underpowered PC at home. Expect this product to hit fall. But don't expect full Network Computer power; as Saturn has no mass storage.

Meanwhile, Mpath showed off a four-person game of *Command & Conquer* playing on its service, and Origin demoed its alpha version of *Ultima Online*, also known as *Multima* or *Shattered Worlds*. This game looks a lot like *Ultima VII*, and, according to Richard Garriott, a society has started to develop even without any quests or real gameplay.

**So how will** the Internet affect gaming today? While some people talk about the Internet as a means of distributing games, someone's gone and done it. Legend Entertainment, which has inherited the mantle of intelligent adventure gaming from Infocom, has placed one of its classic games, *Gateway* (based on Frederick Pohl's classic sci-fi novel), on its website for a free download. This isn't a shareware version, but the entire game is available for the taking. And as an extra, you'll be able to download the entire hintbook for *Gateway* for free, too.

Surf to <http://www.legendent.com> and check out *Gateway* along with game info on Legend's latest games, *Mission Critical* and *Shannara*, and get a taste of tomorrow's technology today. This is the way games will be sold and distributed in the future, so we might as well get used to it.

## NG Online's game demos

**NG Online** (<http://www.next-generation.com/>) offers gamers the chance to download game demos, including:

**PC**  
*3D Lemmings*  
*Allied General*  
*Apache*  
*Ascendancy*  
*Battle Arena Toshinden*  
*Big Red Racing*  
*Caesar 2*  
*Cannon Fodder 2*  
*Command and Conquer*  
*Conquest of the New World*  
*Cybermage*  
*Descent 2*  
*Destruction Derby*  
*Duke Nukem 3D*  
*Fantasy General*  
*Gearheads*  
*Hardball 5*  
*Hi-Octane*  
*IndyCar Racing 2*  
*Mechwarrior 2*  
*Mortal Kombat 3*  
*NASCAR Racing*  
*Need For Speed*  
*NHL '96*  
*Perfect General 2*  
*Power Slave*  
*Quake*  
*Rayman*  
*Tempest 2000*  
*Terminator: Future Shock*  
*Terra Nova*  
*Virtual Snooker*  
*Warcraft 2*  
*Wing Commander 4*  
*Wipeout*  
*Witchaven*  
*Worms*  
*Zone Raiders*

**Mac**  
*A-10 Attack: Outpost Cuba*  
*Apeiron*  
*Chiral*  
*Dark Castle*  
*Dark Forces*  
*Descent*  
*Doom*  
*Escape Velocity*  
*Hexen*  
*Icebreaker*  
*Lemmings*  
*Maelstrom*  
*Marathon 1 & 2*  
*Odyssey*  
*Peg-Leg*  
*Realmz*  
*Shanghai 2*  
*Shockwave*  
*Spaceward Ho!*  
*Tetris Max*  
*Warcraft 2*  
*Warlords 2*  
*Wing Commander 4*



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# breaking

## Nintendo's Yamauchi speaks out

The most powerful man in the world of videogames speaks out in Japan



Nintendo's Chairman Mr. Hiroshi Yamauchi is not one to mix his words

**I**n a frank interview with Japan's *The Nikkei Weekly*, Nintendo's global President Hiroshi Yamauchi candidly revealed some of Nintendo's core beliefs — as well as contradicting some of Nintendo of America's previous statements.

**NG:** With growing competition from both Sega and Sony, it would appear that Nintendo is no longer the champion of the videogame market. Will you be able to revive your market dominance when Nintendo 64 arrives?

**Mr. Yamauchi:** Most of the users who have bought 32-bit machines for ¥30,000-¥40,000 (\$280 to \$370), I believe, were older game players with their own money to spend. But we won't be making any money by going after those users. Nintendo will target younger users, elementary school or junior high school students, who can't buy the games with their own money.

**NG:** Nintendo has been lambasted for N64 delays. Why was the launch postponed in March?

**Mr. Yamauchi:** Nintendo's software development team needed a few extra months to finish *Super Mario 64*. Game creators can finish games quickly if they compromise. But users have sharp eyes. They soon know if the games are compromised.

[Shigeru Miyamoto] asked for two more months and I gave them to him unconditionally.

**NG:** When will the machine be launched in the U.S.?

**Mr. Yamauchi:** It could be either September or October. But November would be too late because business in the U.S. runs on a quarterly basis.

**NG:** Why did Nintendo decide to stick to the more expensive ROM cartridges for its games?

**Mr. Yamauchi:** The ROM cartridge has its advantages and disadvantages and so does CD-ROM, but some people overestimate the merits of the latter. The odds are about even for either.

**NG:** What are the current sales projections for Nintendo 64?

**Mr. Yamauchi:** Nintendo now has a monthly production capacity of 500,000 units. We'll start with this capacity. But if we get users' support we may start boosting production in November.



# Datebook

## July

**Web Interactive '96** will be held Wednesday through Friday, July 31 through August 2, at the Sheraton New York Hotel and Towers, in New York, NY. This event will be informative for website developers, multimedia producers and developers, publishers and broadcasters, with the content focusing on the top Internet software and hardware from the most significant vendors in the business (not open to the public). Complete up-to-date listings are at <http://events.iworld.com/summer96/webint>, or call 1 (800) meckler, FAX (203) 226-6976, or e-mail at [info@mecklermedia.com](mailto:info@mecklermedia.com).

## August

**Siggraph** blends interactive media with digital entertainment, and has a hand in all of the newest emerging technologies of 1996. Open to the public, this event will be held from Tuesday through Thursday, August 6-8, in New Orleans, LA. Siggraph 96 has arranged special rates for conference participants at hotels with easy access to the Ernest N. Morial Convention Center Startup Park. Digital Bayou will be the interactive games center and will include spotlight games such as *Virtual Playspace*, *Hoverball*, *Haptic Challenge*, *Digital Dixieland*, *Cypress Adventure*, and *Bayou Sauvage*. To purchase exhibition space for SIGGRAPH 96, call or write: Siggraph 96 Exhibition Management Hall-Erickson, Inc. 150 Burlington Avenue Clarendon Hills, Illinois 60514 USA, 1.708.850.7779, 1.708.850.7843 fax, [halleric@siggraph.org](mailto:halleric@siggraph.org).

The biggy in Mac expos is coming your way. **Macworld Expo** will be held in Boston Wednesday through Saturday, August 7-10, at the World Trade Center Boston and Bayside Expo Center. This expo highlights the latest software and hardware developments for the Macintosh, new development kits, Internet related info, conferences, computer graphics, animation, and games. Not open to the public. Preregistration deadline is July 8, at 5:30 p.m. After July 8, register on-site at either the World Trade Center or the Bayside Expo Center. Fax complete registration information to (617) 440-0363. Mail your registration to: Macworld Expo, 1400 Providence Hwy, PO Box 9103, Norwood, MA 02062.

## September

**AMOA**, the **Amusement and Music Operators Association**, will hold its annual event this year from Thursday to Saturday, September 26 to 28 in the Dallas Convention Center, Dallas, Texas. This event is not open to the public, but will show the newest arcade games, redemption games, virtual reality games, pinball machines, jukeboxes, etc. to the industry. For more information please contact Fred Newton at AMOA, (312) 245-1021; or e-mail [amoa@sba.com](mailto:amoa@sba.com).

## November

**IAPPA**, the **International Association of Amusements and Attractions**, is like a big arcade show except for the simulators, rides, and amusement attractions, for which it's famous. Closed to the public, it's held from November 20 to the 23 in New Orleans, LA, at the New Orleans Convention Center. Call 1 (703) 836-4800 for more info.

**SHOW ORGANIZERS:** If your show isn't listed here, well, that's because you haven't told us about it. Call (415) 468-4684, FAX information to (415) 468-4686, or send details to DATEBOOK, Next Generation, 150 North Hill Drive, Brisbane, CA 94005.



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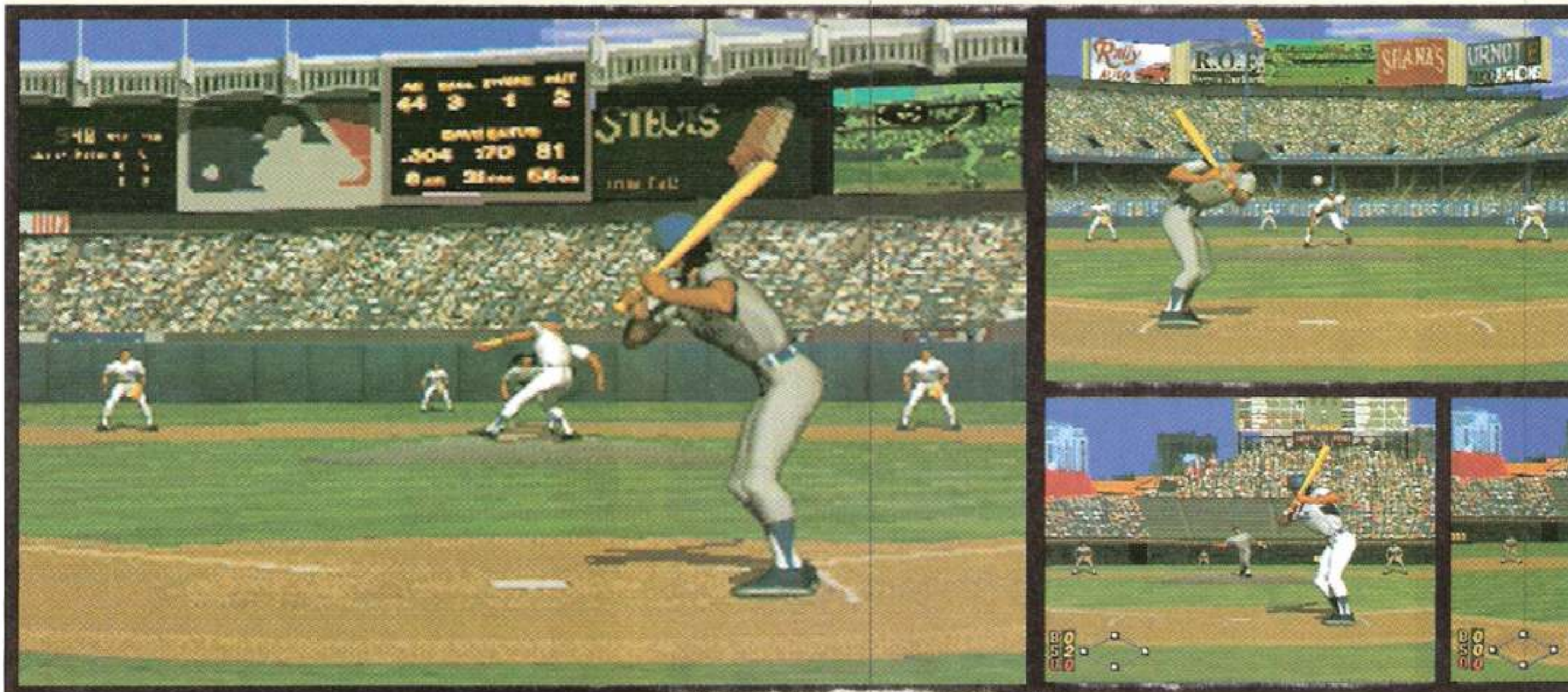
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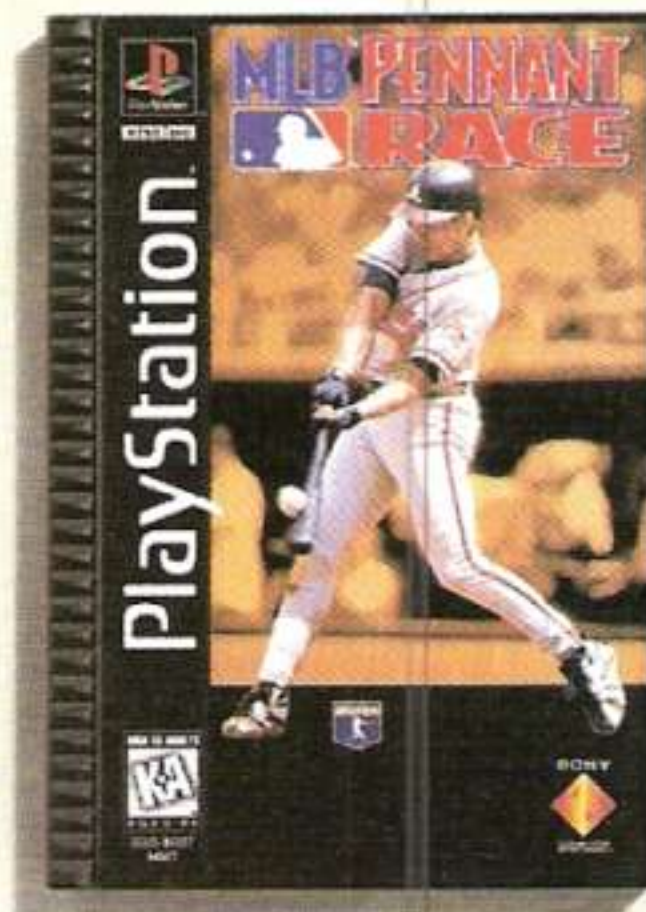
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10 reasons why

Nintendo

will



kick

Sony's and Sega's

ass

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reasons why it

On September 30, Nintendo 64 becomes the most powerful home videogame system in the U.S. Does this guarantee success? Not necessarily — in their time, so were Jaguar, 3DO, and Neo-Geo. And look what happened to them. So what is Nintendo 64's Achilles' Heel? And what could possibly lead to the game industry's 900 lb. gorilla dropping the ball?

**S**higeru Miyamoto's *Super Mario 64*, which made its debut in almost complete form at last May's E<sup>3</sup> (Electronic Entertainment Expo) in Los Angeles, is almost certainly the single greatest videogame ever created. The Nintendo 64 is also, indisputably, the most powerful videogame hardware ever released for the home. Those two facts alone, combined with Nintendo's \$54-million marketing push for the winter holiday season, will undoubtedly result in a total sell-out of the 500,000 Nintendo 64 units allocated to the U.S. market in 1996. (Bear in mind, however, that this marks more than \$100 in marketing dollars for each unit sold.)

Don't be surprised if most of those units are presold long before the release date, either. The next 500,000 units, which will be shipped between January 1 and March 31 also will sell out, if for no other reason than that the shortage of units during the holiday season will create a huge demand.

But what then? Wowed by *Super Mario 64* and with the Nintendo hype machine ramping up to full swing, it's easy to be overwhelmed into believing that Nintendo will dominate the game industry, pushing PlayStation and Saturn aside, while simultaneously countering the continued encroachment of the PC into console territory. When viewed with a more dispassionate gaze, however, it's clear that Nintendo 64 as a hardware platform (and, in fact, Nintendo as a company), carry along a great deal of excess baggage that could well sink the ship.

Don't mistake **Next Generation's**

motives — it is our belief that Nintendo 64 will indeed achieve spectacular success around the world. **Next Generation** has consistently praised Nintendo, and "promoted" Nintendo 64. But — in the absence of any objective criticism from other game publications — we also believe that it is our duty to reveal the other side of the coin, and examine the possibility of Nintendo 64's failure.

In this groundbreaking **Next Generation** report, we'll start by reiterating what everyone already "knows," the 10 reasons why Nintendo 64 will be an overwhelming success. And then we'll outline what no one outside of Sony and Sega wants to admit: The 20 reasons why Nintendo 64 could fail. And don't be surprised to find that some items — like the "dream team" of third-party game developers — end up on both lists.

## 10 reasons why Nintendo 64 will succeed...

### 1) Shigeru Miyamoto and Nintendo's first-party development teams

For Nintendo, it's always been about Shigeru Miyamoto. Hired by Nintendo Co. Ltd. Chairman Hiroshi Yamauchi in 1977 as the then-playing-card-and-toy-company's first staff artist, he created Mario for the original *Donkey Kong* coin-op and never looked back. He is arguably the greatest



Shigeru Miyamoto's Mario and Donkey Kong characters helped sell millions of Super NES systems. Can they do the same for Nintendo 64?

videogame designer in the world (some might say Sega's Yu Suzuki and Yuji Naka are of equal brilliance), and his games have sold more than 100 million units worldwide. With Mr. Miyamoto and the rest of Nintendo's awesome in-house teams developing exclusively for Nintendo 64, the only way to get the absolute cream of the AAA titles is to buy a Nintendo 64. And who doesn't want the best titles?

### 2) Serious business muscle: Mr. Yamauchi, \$4 billion cash in the bank, and lots of experience

According to conservative estimates, Nintendo has around \$4 billion in the bank. That translates into a lot of marketing muscle. It'll be spending \$100 marketing dollars for every Nintendo 64 system

# won't)





Mr. Yamauchi, chairman of Nintendo, has a reputation as being one of the toughest businessmen in Japan. He also has a keen sense for what will sell

shipped in the U.S. in 1996. It probably will not be difficult, by the winter holiday, to go into a Toys R Us and not find any other products for sale, frankly. Between television, print, and comarketing campaigns with Nickelodeon, Kellogg's, and Blockbuster Video, expect Nintendo 64 to have the highest mind-share possible among the people Nintendo thinks will be the main buyers of the unit — parents.

### 3) That "Nintendo" badge...

In the mid-1980s, when Nintendo had a near-monopoly on the 8-bit console market, the term "Nintendo" became almost a generic one. Among most parents, it wasn't "little Johnny's playing a videogame." It was almost always, "little Johnny's playing Nintendo."

Even now, among nongameplaying adults, the terms videogame and Nintendo may as well be synonymous. Since Nintendo is aiming its high-tech system at younger children, parents will be doing most of the buying, and if the only videogame company they know is Nintendo, a purchase decision between the



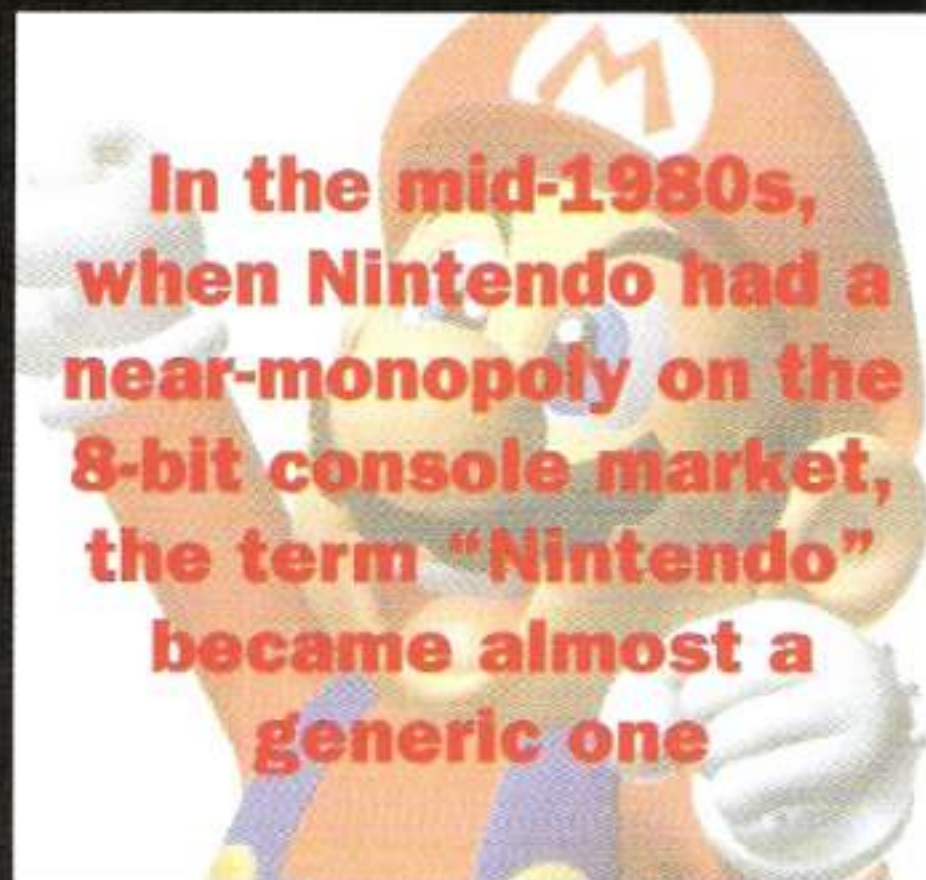
big three will be essentially a no-brainer, especially considering the marketing blitz outlined above.

Beyond parents, though, there is a whole generation of Americans who grew up with Nintendo's 8- and 16-bit products as their game platform of choice.

Estimates of the number of consumers who have been waiting for Nintendo 64 to ship before making the jump to next-generation hardware run into the millions. Twenty million people bought 16-bit Super NESs and then proceeded to spend the next four or five years arguing with Genesis owners about which console was better. If Nintendo can use its valuable name to convince even 10% of those 16-bit owners to go with Nintendo 64, it will have beaten Sony's and Sega's combined efforts.

### 4) 64-bit versus 32-bit

Nintendo 64 is clearly the superior hardware when compared directly to Sega's Saturn or Sony's PlayStation. The true 64-bit RISC CPU runs at 93.75 MHz (compare this to the twin 32-bit Hitachi RISC CPUs in Saturn, which run at only 28 MHz or the PlayStation's 33 MHz R3000A RISC CPU), and the console sports hardware-based Z-buffering, tri-linear mip-map interpolation, perspective-correct texture-mapping and anti-aliasing. (Note: for complete definitions of these and other technical terms, please see the NG Lexicon, **NG 15**. The Lexicon also may be



found at NG OnLine at <http://www.next-generation.com/>.)

The console sports the power of 10 Intel Pentium chips (according to a Nintendo spokesperson) and the proof is clearly in the games. But let's just forget gameplay for a minute. From a purely technological point of view, *Super Mario 64* looks far superior to anything on the 32-bit consoles or even Pentium-based PCs with 3D graphics accelerators. The video technology of the system is also nothing short of amazing, as it handles incredibly sharp graphics and features little of the polygon seam show-through or clipping and culling glitches that are commonplace

### Nintendo 64 Marketing Specs

**Ship Date:** September 30, 1996  
**MSRP:** \$249.95, includes power cable, 1 controller, Nintendo 64 base unit, AV cable (no pack in game)  
**add-ons:** extra controllers (\$29.95), RF cable (\$19.95), memory cards (\$19.95) (64 MB writeable "Bulky" Drive Unit will be available in late 1997 for around \$100)  
**Target audience:** Children, ages 8-13  
**Competition:** Sega Saturn (\$199), Sony PlayStation (\$199)



*Turok the Dinosaur Hunter* is one of the most impressive third-party titles for the N64

on both Saturn and PlayStation.

The bottom line is that consumers who wish to own the best hardware, simply must own Nintendo 64. And even though gameplay will shine though in the end, graphics have an important role to play. If they didn't, we would still all be playing 16 bit.

### 5) "Dream Team" policy ensures that all N64 games are great

By confining the number of third-party licensees to limited, "Dream Team" members, and keeping the majority of development in-house, or in second-party arrangements with quality development studios, Nintendo hopes to assure that every game release on the system will be an A, AA, or, in the case of Miyamoto's personal output, AAA title. Nintendo's high standards of quality control are legendary, and the company is definitely going for quality rather than quantity with the software for Nintendo 64. A glut of mediocre titles sunk the Atari 2600 (and — cynics will say — may be sinking PlayStation now), and Nintendo has no intention of letting the same fate befall its 64-bit baby.

### 6) A revolutionary controller

The analog joystick is a quantum leap beyond the eight-way, digital D-pad of old, and is able to deliver play experiences that were never previously available on a home console system. And although Sega and Sony also have analog offerings in the works, only Nintendo's is native — planned for and expected by every design team.

Expect the odd game on Saturn or PlayStation to support analog control, but Nintendo 64 is where the analog stick will truly come into its element. (For a more detailed discussion of Nintendo 64's joystick and the merits of analog control, check out NG's joystick feature in **NG 17**.)





The innovative analog controller enables gameplay experiences far beyond competitors'

### 7) Cartridges have many advantages over CDs

The time between when a machine turns on to the start of the game on CD-based consoles can take a minute or more (and triple or quadruple that for PCs and Macs). With a cart-based system, gamers can be playing immediately (in theory at least), and there're no annoying load times between levels either. While this isn't a huge factor, and hasn't hampered the success of PlayStation or Saturn, it should lend to a subtle feeling that Nintendo 64 is the faster system. Cartridges are also less likely to break.

Most significantly, however, is the hardware savings that supporting cartridges give Nintendo. Without the need for either a CD-ROM player or extra RAM for data to be loaded into, Nintendo is saving itself at least \$50 on a manufacturing level, translating to at least \$100 off the street price. Thus, it's not unreasonable to regard Nintendo as a \$250 game machine without a CD-ROM drive, and the PlayStation as a \$100 game machine with a CD-ROM drive.

### 8) DD64 offers unique gameplay, and a gateway to online gaming

The writable DD (disk drive) 64 (also known as the "bulky drive," and presumably destined for another name change before launched in the U.S.) is one of the most exciting reasons to support Nintendo 64. By enabling gamers to store huge amounts of save-game data, custom characters and custom worlds become a reality, and even more exciting is the prospect of update disks for games, rather than having to buy a whole new cart. A writable disk also will be key for any Internet strategy that Nintendo decides to pursue, enabling software to be downloaded.

### 9) Four controller ports

Everyone who has played one agrees — four-player games, like *Super Bomberman* for

instance, are far more entertaining than one- or two-player games (see **NG 19's** feature article *Getting Connected*). By designing four ports into the machine, Nintendo has clearly acknowledged this. With extra controllers being sold at an inexpensive price (\$30), expect to see many games take advantage of this, like *Super Mario Kart R*, *Wayne Gretzky Hockey*, and *NBA Hang Time*. Developers seeking to create similar games for PlayStation or Saturn will be hindered by the need to



With four-player capabilities built in, Nintendo 64 should be a multiplayer fan's dream console

provide an expensive adaptor, so this should add yet another edge for enhanced gameplay on Nintendo 64.

### 10) Internet Strategy

Despite an official "no comment" from company representatives, it's no secret that Nintendo, which pioneered an 8-bit console-based online service in Japan, sees the Internet and online gaming as the future of gameplay. The company is known to be in ongoing discussions with Netscape Communications, as well as continuing to experiment with its Gateway system of gaming in hotel rooms and on airplanes.

Plus, the DD64 coupled to a fast modem would enable exploitation of online and multiplayer networked gaming options to a degree greater than Sega's NetLink Internet connection kit for Saturn.

One to watch for.

### Nintendo 64 Technical Specs:

**CPU:** MIPS 400 64-bit RISC CPU running at 93.75 MHz

**Memory:** RAM BUS DRAM 36 Megabit; max transmission speed 4,500 Megabit /second

**Coprocessor:** sound and graphics, DSP, running at 62.5 MHz

**Sound:** 64-bit DSP running at 44 KHz

**Resolutions:** varying from 256 x 224 to 640 x 480

**Color:** 32-bit RGBA, pixel color frame buffer support; 21 bit color video output

**Special Functions:** On-board, realtime anti-aliasing, load management, tri-linear mip-mapping, perspective correct texture-mapping, Z-buffering

## ...And 20 reasons why Nintendo 64 could fail

Now it's time to play devil's advocate. While Nintendo 64 will certainly be a runaway success among hard-core gamers, like the readers of this magazine, hard-core gamers, ultimately, will not determine the fate of a system (despite what we'd like to believe). Rather, it's the millions of casual gamers who will, in the end, decide who wins the next-generation console wars.

Chief among these casual purchasers are the gift buyers — moms and dads, aunts and uncles — who buy systems for those who can't afford the games themselves (i.e. kids). There are many reasons they may eschew Nintendo 64 for a Saturn or PlayStation. Chief among them are the high costs of the system and its games, and the fact that there will be little third-party software on the shelves — traditionally an easy benchmark for judging the success of a platform. We're not saying Nintendo 64 will fail, but if it doesn't live up to Nintendo's own expectations, it will likely be for the reasons outlined below.

### 1) It's just too late

Let's not forget that Nintendo 64 has suffered horrific delays. Twice. Originally scheduled for a 1995 release, the launch was postponed until April of this year. Then, it was delayed again.

These delays have benefited Nintendo's competition in two ways. First, it has enabled them to sell more hardware units at a higher price (if only to those gamers sick of waiting for Nintendo 64). Second, the extra year's head start now enables Sega and Sony to compete with second- and even third-generation software, as opposed to merely their opening salvos. Many observers would argue that this has fudged the distinction between 32 bit and 64 bit, robbing Nintendo of its advantage.

There is a historical precedent for those who would prophesize this scenario: In the 16-bit era, Nintendo's delay in bringing Super NES to U.S. shores enabled Sega to gain a foothold that ended up costing Nintendo just over half of the market share — despite Super NES's obvious technical superiority over Genesis.

This time around, however, Nintendo faces two extremely tough competitors, each of which will have had more than a year's head start by September 30. Sega expects to sell 1 million units by the end of the year. Sony says it'll do better than that.

At best, Nintendo will sell 500,000. Any dreams of the videogaming equivalent of an easy, "three-day war" are based on naivete.

By January 1, Sony and Sega will have reached the critical mass of hardware sales needed for long-term success, and Nintendo will only be halfway there. And three-way races in the videogame business seem always to boil down to two strong competitors and one pathetic also-ran. Remember the TurboGrafx-16?

Nintendo's stringent quality-control mechanisms should also ensure that most software ships late, too. Mr. Yamauchi has shown no hesitation in postponing the release of games at the whims of his developers. This can only lead to even further delays.

**2) It's too expensive**

When Saturn was at \$399 and PlayStation at \$299, \$249 looked like a great price-point. But with Saturn and PlayStation now less than \$200, Nintendo suddenly finds itself in the uncomfortable position of being the most expensive console on the block. And while Sega and Sony can include a pack-in at a real cost to themselves of about \$3, for Nintendo to do the same would cost about 10 times that, in terms of cost of goods. Nintendo 64 plus *Super Mario 64* will weigh in at



They're \$50 cheaper and CD-based. Will having better technology be enough for Nintendo 64?



about \$320 — a hefty price-point when considering Nintendo expects parents to buy this system for their children as a toy.

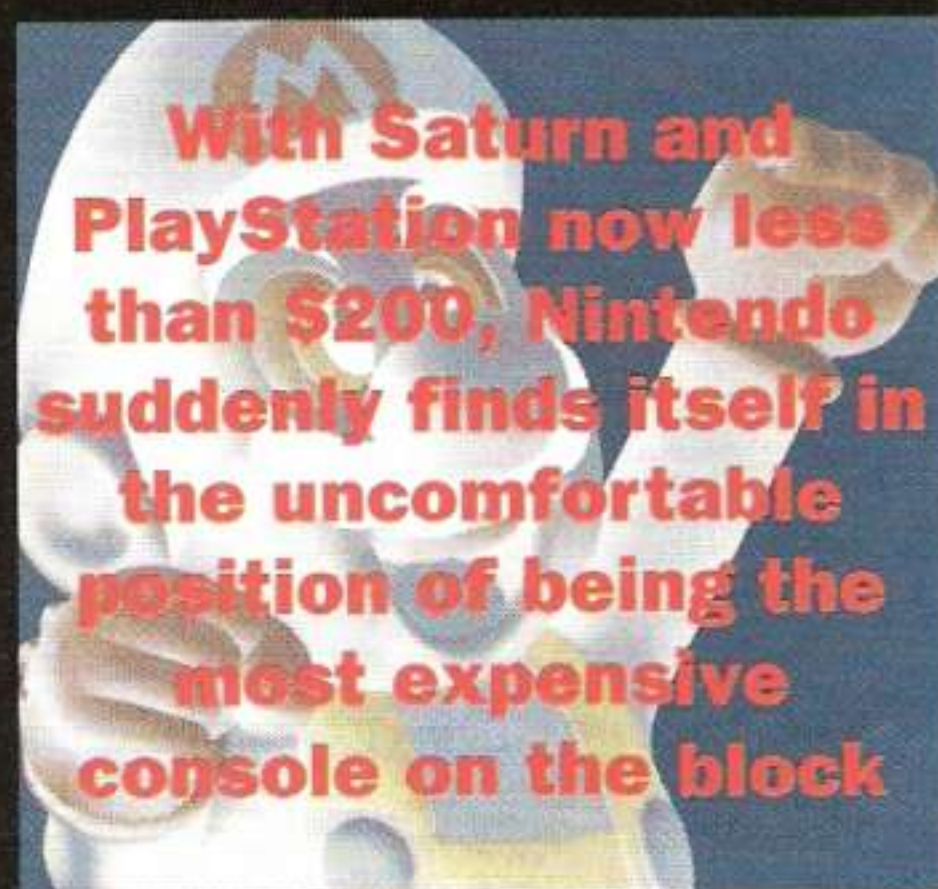
Also, consider that while Nintendo 64 is the most expensive system, it is being targeted to the lowest age demographic. Mom and dad are probably just as likely to buy a cheaper system with cheaper games, notwithstanding the psychological implication that by being more expensive, the Nintendo 64 is the "premium" system. After all, it's a kid's toy, who cares, right?

**3) Kids don't care about 64-bit**

Focus groups have revealed that most children under about 12 years of age

simply can't tell the difference between 16-bit and next-generation titles. They are just as satisfied playing a side-scroller on a Super NES as they would be playing *WaveRace 64*.

Couple this with Nintendo's stated intention to continue heavily promoting the Super NES and it's not difficult to see that many parents who go into the store with the idea of buying a Nintendo 64 in fact walk out with a Super NES — glad of the extra \$150 still in their pocketbooks.



**With Saturn and PlayStation now less than \$200, Nintendo suddenly finds itself in the uncomfortable position of being the most expensive console on the block**

**4) "Toys" ain't cool**

Older gamers — who will definitely care about the difference between 32-bit and 64-bit — may be far less likely to buy Nintendo 64 once it is marketed as a "kiddie system." Sega and Sony will surely exploit this in their own marketing. And, in a "which-is-cooler?" war that will be fought largely on the playgrounds of U.S. schools, game quality may take second place to perceived hipness. Sure, the hard-core gamers will still buy Nintendo 64, but — as was

stated at the start of this piece — the hard-core gamer makes up only a small fraction of the market. Indeed, most people play games like *StarFox* or *Mario Kart* despite the cute characters, not because of them.

**5) Quantity over quality?**

As a by-product of Nintendo's quality-over-quantity software strategy, there will be far

fewer games available for Nintendo 64 than there will be for Saturn or PlayStation. The PlayStation had more games on shelves last winter holiday season than Nintendo will have in development for Nintendo 64 through the end of 1997. And because there will be fewer games available, the system will look far less appealing to mom and dad when they walk into the store, since one of the main ways a system is judged by casual purchasers, like parents, is by the number of titles available, not the quality of those titles. (Many people put off buying a CD player until CDs took up as much space in record stores as vinyl LPs.)

Plus, despite what Nintendo may have people believe, game creation is not a science and there is no way to guarantee success. Very often, the best games come out of small, obscure developers with little or no track record (Id's *Doom*, Takara's *Battle Arena Toshinden*, Blizzard's *War Craft*, or Naughty Dog's *Crash Bandicoot*, are good examples). Often the best policy is simply to throw enough mud, and hope that some sticks. Indeed, much of Nintendo 64's initial line-up is far from impressive.

**6) Third-party developers hate cartridges**

Let's quickly compare cartridges to CDs: Carts cost between \$20 and \$30 to manufacture, CDs cost less than \$3. Carts take three months to manufacture in volume, a batch of CDs can be turned around in days.

The consequence? Publishing games on cartridges can be a huge risk, requiring both an enormous up-front investment of cash, and the gamble of having to predict



The physical size of carts will actually be smaller than those of the 16-bit Super NES

what the market will be demanding several months ahead of time. Underestimating means lost sales; overestimating means a vast amount of money tied up in almost worthless inventory.

Becoming familiarized with the advantages of publishing on CD for both the PC and PlayStation and Saturn, it's easy

**Nintendo "Dream Team" Partners**

**Hardware:** Silicon Graphics, Inc — Developed 64-bit system with Nintendo  
**Rambus, Inc** — Developed memory technology for hardware

to see why publishers will not be itching to return to cartridges. Nintendo claims that it can survive without substantial third-party support. But that's exactly what Atari said about Jaguar.

**7) Third parties are scared of Nintendo "cheating"**

Some recent history: In late 1994, Shiny Entertainment's *Earthworm Jim* launched for the Super NES on a 16-Mbit cartridge. Two weeks later, Nintendo's own *Donkey Kong Country* was released on a 32-Mbit cart, and sold for \$10 less. "How the hell are you meant to compete with that?" bemoaned Shiny's Dave Perry. He has a point.

Nintendo controls every aspect of the cart manufacturing process (even to the point of owning the cart ROM manufacturing plant), and it expects to make a profit over and above its licensing fee, at every step of the way. Of course, this vertical integration also gives Nintendo the ability to make its own cartridges as cheaply as possible.

No wonder third parties are scared.

**8) Carts are ill-suited to next-generation games**

Cartridges simply can't hold as much data as CDs. Although most games today do not even come close to fully using the full CD in any meaningful way, developers are now familiar with the freedom that CDs offer, and many gamers have come to expect FMV cut-scenes as well as Red Book audio soundtracks — both of which require a CD format.

Games such as *Resident Evil*, with many prerendered backgrounds, simply would not fit on a sub-\$100 cartridge. Even a simple side-scroller like *Guardian Heroes* has an executable file that's larger than 272 Mbits. That would be around seven times the size of the first third-party Nintendo 64 titles.

Also, for good or ill, many developers have invested millions in developing multimedia studios, and (for good or ill) they want to use them, if for no other reason than to justify the expense to their shareholders. Many developers seem convinced that their titles will not sell without multimedia flash which just can't be provided on the cartridge format.

**9) One trick pony?**

There is no doubt that *Super Mario 64* is probably the single greatest videogame ever created. But it is the fruit of more than two and a half years of development,



*Super Mario 64*, Shigeru Miyamoto's 64-bit masterwork, ensures a sell-out at launch time

unlimited development resources, the winning touch of Shigeru Miyamoto, and is built on the most successful videogame character of all time.

There are absolutely no reasonable grounds to assume that any other

**Development Tools:**

**Alias/Wavefront** — Developed and markets customized 3D graphics development tools to Nintendo 64 developers and publishers

**MultiGen, Inc.** — Developed and markets realtime 3D simulation tools to Nintendo 64 developers and publishers

**Software Creations** — Developed sound tools for Nintendo 64

**Nichimen Graphics, Inc.** — Developed and markets content development systems and CG tools for Nintendo 64

**Paradigm Simulations, Inc.** — Created turnkey development bundle, *Fusion 64*, for Nintendo 64 publishers and developers; also offers training programs and developer support services

Nintendo 64 game will match *Super Mario 64*'s level of achievement for a very long time. Indeed, many third-party publishers with Nintendo 64 games in development were scrapping half-completed projects and heading "back to the drawing board" in the wake of *Mario*'s 64-bit debut at E3.

Aside from *Pilot Wings 64* (which also benefits greatly from the nostalgia factor) and — arguably — *WaveRace 64* and *Shadows of the Empire* (which doesn't play as good as it looks), much of Nintendo 64's other software, like *Ultimate Doom* and *Killer Instinct II*, just doesn't offer significant enough improvement over the 32-bit games of Sega and Sony.

**10) "Dream Team," or nightmare?**

Imagine you were to put together your dream team of game developers to create the ultimate software line-up. Most gamers would definitely include outfits such as SquareSoft, Namco, Konami, WestWood Studios, Psygnosis, and Bullfrog.

Certainly, the likes of GameTek, Acclaim, Spectrum Holobyte — and then such obscure, unproven entities like Software Creations and Angel Studios — would be near the bottom of **Next Generation's** list. Cynics can easily argue that — with a couple of notable exceptions, like Williams and LucasArts — many members of the "Dream Team" are merely companies without the development clout or muscle to survive in the cutthroat world of multiformat publishing. Instead of being the cream of the world gaming industry, they are, in fact, those who see an alliance with Nintendo as a way of either temporarily escaping from market realities, securing an easy ride into mainstream game publishing, or who see Nintendo 64 publishing as a way of getting rich quick.

Either way, the Dream Team doesn't necessarily mean great news for gamers.

**11) Brand Loyalty? What's that?**

Conventional wisdom states that one of Nintendo's chief advantages is the Nintendo brand. The name Nintendo was synonymous with videogaming itself in the 1980s, and is hence a terrific weapon in the videogame wars of the 1990s.

There are, however, two problems with this belief. First, Nintendo is going firmly after the 8 through 13-year-old market, at least for starters. But there is evidence to show that while gaming remains popular among the players who were 8 to 13 in 1991 when the Super NES was introduced (and who are now 13 to 18

themselves), it's entirely possible that this same age group today just isn't as interested in videogames as their big brothers were five years ago. Trends come and go, fashions change overnight. Try selling *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* or *Cabbage Patch Dolls* on the street today, and witness the lukewarm response.

More pragmatically, Nintendo is counting on brand loyalty and the Mario name to sell systems. But what does an 8-year-old remember about Nintendo? Virtual Boy, anyone?

No, the loyalty to the Nintendo brand is among users 15 years of age and up — the people being targeted extensively (and successfully) by the PlayStation and Saturn, and largely ignored by Nintendo.

**12) But these guys are Nintendo — that's enough, right? Wrong**

Nintendo loyalists often fall back on the base argument "but it's Nintendo, it's never failed, it's marketing and mindshare are just too damn strong." To which we reply, "Virtual Boy."

The 32-bit "virtual reality" system's abysmal performance (around the office, we call it "Nintendo's Vietnam") shows that sometimes Nintendo's ham-fisted marketing efforts do fail, especially when the product simply isn't up to snuff. And while the Nintendo 64 is certainly powerful hardware, the volume of software



The dismal Virtual Boy showed perhaps the first chink in Nintendo's near-perfect armor

needed for success, particularly third-party software, may never arrive.

Less symbolic, but of perhaps more tangible concern is the damage that Virtual Boy may have done to Nintendo's relationships with retailers, game developers, and, yes, gamers. Once bitten twice shy isn't a saying that has traditionally carried much weight in the fickle world of videogames, but Virtual Boy hasn't helped Nintendo's cause, no matter how you look at it.

**13) The high cost of games**

Most Nintendo 64 carts will retail for between \$69.95 and \$79.95. Sega's value line comes down to the low thirties. Thanks to high cost of goods, Nintendo simply cannot compete on price for games, especially in the (albeit unlikely) event that

**Nintendo is counting on brand loyalty and the Mario name to sell systems. But what does an 8-year-old remember about Nintendo? Virtual Boy, anyone?**

a price war breaks out. The high cart price will not sit well with the value conscious.

**14) "Heere Sony, heere Sega — have some free customers"**

With a maximum of 500,000 units arriving in the U.S. before the end of 1997, plus a marketing budget in excess of \$100 per hardware unit, demand for Nintendo 64 is certain to outstrip supply. Nintendo will fuel a fire that it simply doesn't have the resources with which to deal. This will likely drive buyers, particularly parents desperate for winter holiday presents, into the waiting arms of Sony and Sega (who will have no product shortages). And once one next-generation system is purchased,

**Developers:**

- Angel Studios
- DMA Design
- H2O Entertainment
- LucasArts Entertainment
- Paradigm Simulations
- Rare, Ltd.
- Software Creations

the likelihood of a second one being purchased drops dramatically, especially if, as in Nintendo's business plan, mom and dad are doing the shopping.

**15) DD64: Nintendo's 32X?**

In the entire history of console gaming there has never been a peripheral that has sold in significant numbers, and the DD64, which will add at least another \$100 to the



The DD 64 will enable mass storage and awesome new gameplay. But will gamers pony up \$150 for the privilege? They didn't with 32X

cost of Nintendo 64, is not likely to be an exception, despite the range of features it will offer users. "It's not a route I would advise taking," ruefully warns Sega's Tom Kalinske, conscious of 32X's high profile nose dive onto oblivion.

Indeed, it's possible to argue that no matter how DD64 fares, it's bad news for Nintendo. If it fails to sell in any significant numbers at all, then Nintendo is stuck with cartridges (bad news) and can wave goodbye to any possibility of introducing a competitive online gaming network for Nintendo 64 (bad news). If it sells a reasonable amount of units, it then splits the Nintendo 64 game market down the middle — half the people will want cartridge games, half will want DD64 games. This will lead to confusion, and dilute development resources (bad news). If DD64 sells like hot cakes and becomes an essential add-on for Nintendo 64 gaming, then the entry level price of Nintendo 64 gaming increases by \$100 to \$350 (bad news).

Additionally, Nintendo's history of not supporting peripherals (got many games for your SuperScope or NES Robot add-on?) means that even hard-core gamers will want to think twice before they buy.

**16) Sony**

When mom and dad enter Toys R Us to buy Johnny his console, the Nintendo



ONLY ON SEGA SATURN



Nintendo faces its biggest challenge at point of purchase, where Sega and Sony will have more software at a cheaper price. To combat this, Nintendo will be placing thousands of interactive demo units at retail. By New Year's, they'll probably be the only ones to play, if you miss out on the initial 500,000 units

name will certainly be familiar to them. But more familiar than that will be the name of the world's No. 1 consumer electronics manufacturer, Sony. And while in most marketing, the focus is always on the PlayStation brand, in store point-of-purchase displays (more likely to be seen by gift buyers), the Sony name is always prominently displayed, for just that reason.

When gift buyers walk into a store intending to buy a game system, seeing the trusted Sony name at a lower price-point, combined with a volume of available (and cheaper) games, is bound to impress — perhaps even more than Nintendo's name. This is a form of competition with which Nintendo has never had to deal before, even when squaring off against Sega in the 16-bit days. The game industry's 900 lb. gorilla may well have just run up against a bigger, scarier monster than even itself.

**17) Sega**

Despite its initial lackluster performance in the 32-bit race, Sega isn't going anywhere. It plans to spend almost as much as Nintendo through 1996 on marketing, and it has something that Nintendo has never had — AM2's library of killer coin-ops. *Virtua Fighter 3*, anyone?

Sega can also be relied upon to produce a more innovative marketing campaign that reaches beyond the lowest common denominator of puke jokes and me-too pseudo-rebellion. Combine this with a new *Sonic* on Saturn and Genesis, and *Nights* on Saturn, and it's clear that Sega isn't planning on taking Nintendo's threat lightly.

And, of course, at present Sega has the only Internet strategy among the console manufacturers, which could score

major points if the market for the "\$500 network PC" market really exists.

**18) Nintendo is too tightly tied to Japan**

In the words of one Nintendo subcontractor, the folks at Nintendo of America are "so \*#@ing asinine that they have to get permission from Japan before any one of them can take a shit." Indeed.

We assume that this is a slight exaggeration, but the point is clearly made.

While all three console manufacturers are closely tied to their Japanese parent companies, none are tied more tightly than Nintendo. While Sega may not always know when it is getting information from Japan, it's generally free to do what it wants with the information once it's in its hands. Sony has even greater freedom, especially since so many SCE Japan executives are now occupying offices at SCE America's Foster City headquarters. The end-result is that Nintendo of America simply can't maneuver in the marketplace as fast as Sony or Sega can.

**Publishers:**

- Acclaim - *Turok: Dinosaur Hunter*
- BMG - *Silicon Valley*
- Electronic Arts - *FIFA Soccer*
- GT Interactive - *Ultra Combat*
- Gametek - *Robotech Crystal Dreams*
- Mindscape - *Monster Dunk*
- Ocean America - *Mission: Impossible*
- InterPlay - *Ultra Descent*
- Virgin - *Freakboy*
- TWI/Williams - *Wayne Gretzky Hockey*
- Williams Entertainment - *Doom, NBA Hangtime, Mortal Kombat Trilogy, War Gods, Robotron X*

**19) Developers just aren't ready for 64-bit**

Very few game developers around the world have come close to exploring all of 32-bit's possibilities, let alone prepare themselves to start pushing the envelope of 64-bit game development.

The skill required to make a great 3D game goes far beyond the skill set needed for a 2D game, in terms of character design, world creation, and gameplay elements. Just creating a tenable camera angle can cause a multitude of headaches.

To be fair, this problem faces all game companies as the switch to 3D is finished, but for Nintendo 64 to be a breakaway hit, it needs differentiation now, especially since only a few titles will be introduced a year.

**20) Games aren't portable**

Because games need to be written exclusively for Nintendo 64, developers will be unable to amortize development costs across several platforms, a key strategy today, when the number of units sold will pale in comparison to the amount of 16-bit software that could be moved just three years ago. It's just one more reason why you shouldn't expect too much third-party software, now or ever.

**In conclusion**

**Next Generation** believes that Nintendo 64 will be a huge success, but that success is by no means guaranteed. Without *Super Mario 64*, Nintendo would be in serious trouble. But with *Super Mario 64*, it's hard to see how it can fail. We'd all buy a system to play just the one game.

Wouldn't you?





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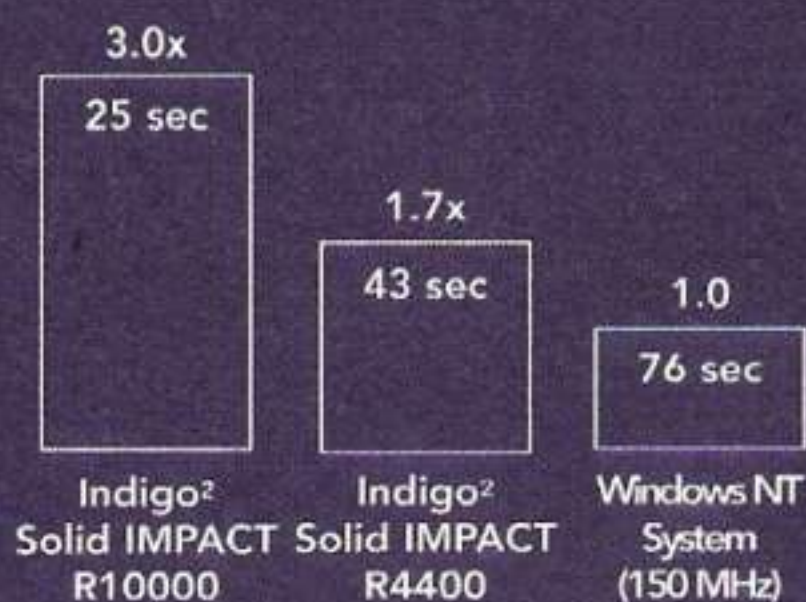
It's a fact when you compare equivalent products, our prices come in surprisingly low. Indigo<sup>2</sup> IMPACT starts at just \$22,000. The TDZ™-300 GLZ5 (a 200MHz Pentium® Pro Windows NT system) costs approximately \$28,195\*, more than every model in Silicon Graphics' entry level IndyStudio™ product line.

It's a fact that if you want real workstation performance, you have to get a real workstation.



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## Silicon Graphics vs. Windows NT Systems



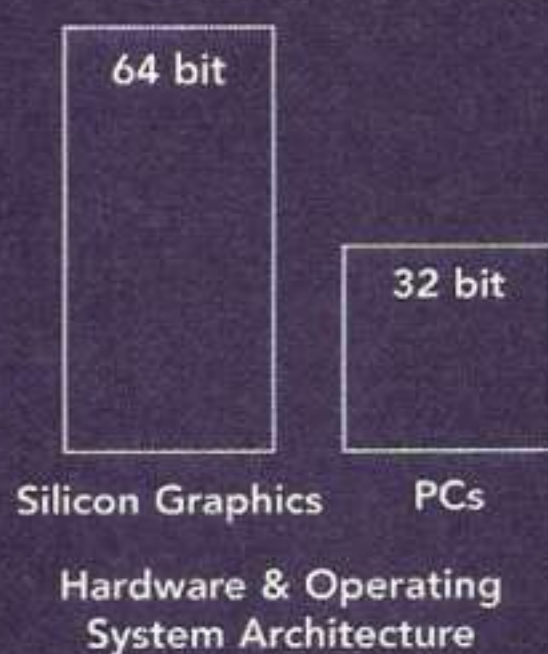
Application Performance\*, NewTek Lightwave 3D, 5.0, Rendering Preview

It's a fact that in real cross platform application performance, Indigo<sup>2</sup> Solid IMPACT™ outperforms the leading Windows NT workstations in Rendering Preview, Rendering Playback, and Graphics performance.



Graphic Performance, SPEC/OPC Viewperf benchmark\*, ADVS Viewset

It's a fact that in the area of 3D animation, Silicon Graphics Indigo<sup>2</sup> Maximum IMPACT™ delivers nearly 4 times the graphics performance of the top Windows NT system on record. Allowing you to create even the most detailed models and scenes in a truly interactive environment, with real-time response.



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First looks at the hottest games of tomorrow

**T**his month, Next Generation brings you the largest preview we've ever run for Shigeru Miyamoto's *Super Mario 64*, plus an exhaustive report on its sister showcase title, Paradigm Simulation's *Pilotwings 64*. Also, Sony's new wave of games will provide PlayStation owners with more than a few killer sequels, starting with *Wipeout XL*, *Destruction Derby 2*, *Soviet Strike*, and (at last) *Madden '97*.

**48 Super Mario 64** **N64**

Shigeru Miyamoto's first Nintendo 64 title is simply the greatest videogame of all time

**62 Novalogic** **PC CD-ROM**

Novalogic re-tools Voxel Space for several of its newest games and it looks amazing

**66 Madden '97** **SATURN, PS-X, PC**

The most recognizable name in console sports is ready to charge down the field

**69 Pilotwings 64** **NINTENDO 64**

The original boasted the features of Super NES. Now, the follow up showcases N64

**76 Destruction Derby 2** **PS-X**

A powerhouse sequel puts a whole new spin on its one-note predecessor

**77 Wipeout XL** **PLAYSTATION**

Psygnosis' sequel to one of the finest PS-X games ever is an incredible follow up

**78 Shining Sword** **PLAYSTATION**

American Laser Games looks to re-vamp its image with this impressive PS-X title

**80 Soviet Strike** **PLAYSTATION**

After a long wait, E.A.'s groundbreaking series finally steps into the next generation

**82 Ballblazer Champs** **PS-X**

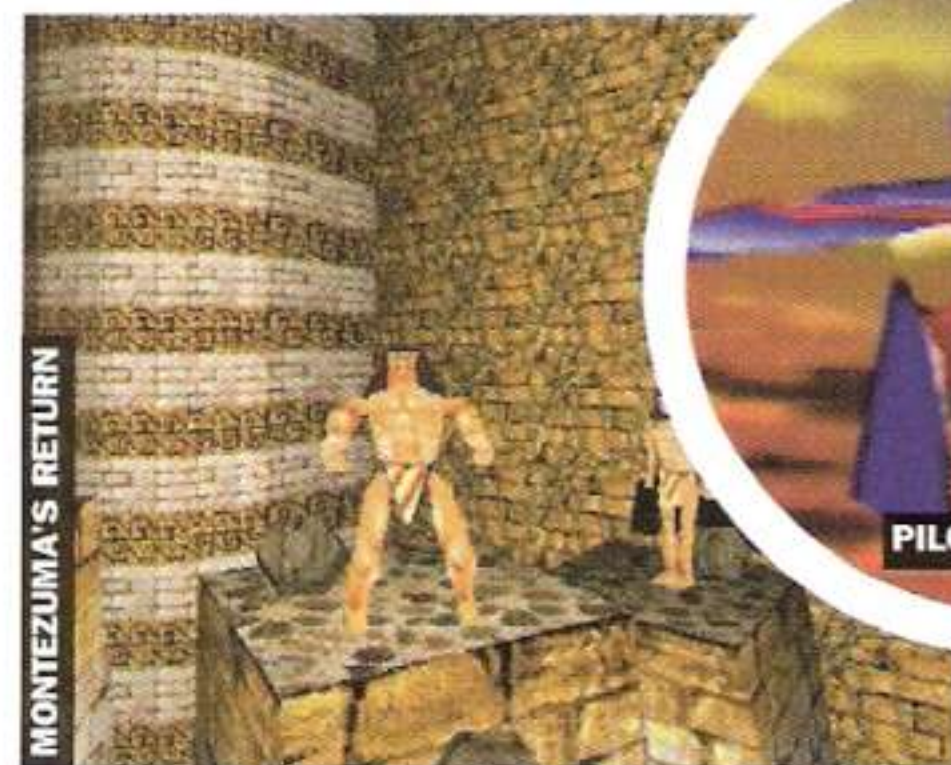
LucasArts updates a classic head-to-head battle with state-of-the-art 3D gameplay

**83 Montezuma's Return** **PC**

Utopia Tech uses one of the most powerful 3D engines yet for its graphic adventure

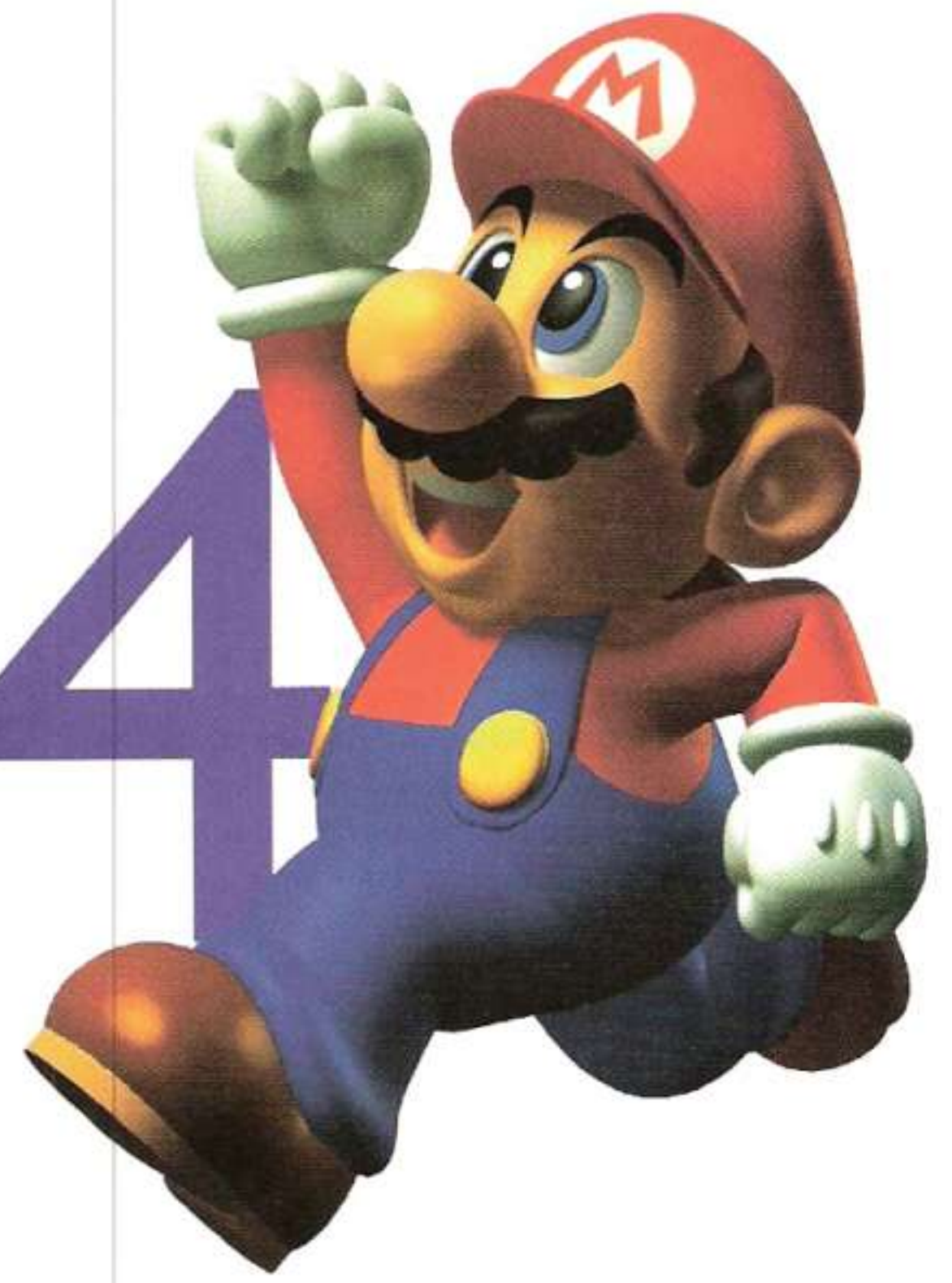
**85 Thunder Truck Rally** **PS-X**

From the makers of *Destruction Derby* comes a hot new monster truck racer



ng alphas

# Super Mario 64



It's destined to be the greatest videogame ever. Next Generation presents the most in-depth look yet at Shigeru Miyamoto's 64-bit masterpiece





Mr. Miyamoto's puzzle design genius is revealed (above). Mario is standing in front of a mirror, but something is different in the reflection than in the room — an important clue to locating a secret course. The ship (right), shows N64's perspective-correct texture-mapping and depth-cuing abilities



Whether fighting an enemy (top), or wandering around, the feel of the world is instantly familiar

Format: **Nintendo 64**  
 Publisher: **Nintendo**  
 Developer: **Nintendo**  
 Release Date: **September 30**  
 Origin: **Japan**

**F**orget everything you've ever known about videogames. *Super Mario 64* sets new standards in gameplay, graphics, and level design. While an M2 or PlayStation-style "dinosaur demo" might serve to show off the sheer technical prowess of Nintendo 64, *Super Mario 64* is the real deal. This is an actual gameplay experience, and the perfect package with which to demonstrate to gamers that Nintendo 64 is a machine which, when properly programmed, has the power to fundamentally change our perceptions about what makes a great videogame.

Of course, this is largely due to the work of the game's producer and chief designer, Shigeru Miyamoto. His handiwork is very much apparent in this project; 64-bit or not, this is clearly, unmistakably, a Mario game — right down to the corny plot.

Supposedly, Mario has left the castle he shares with Princess Toadstool to fight through *Super Mario World*. When he returns, he discovers, to his horror, that Bowser has invaded, filled the castle with kupas, goombas, and other assorted nasties, and has imprisoned Princess Toadstool in a stained glass window. So (just as it's been since 1985, with the release of the first *Super Mario Bros.*) it's up to Mario to defeat Bowser and his minions and free the princess. Of course, this may not explain why his castle is jammed to the gills with dangerous levels, lost lakes, and pools of lava, but hey, if we wanted a good storyline, we'd watch *The 11th Hour*. Like so many truly great videogames, *Mario* has always been all about exploration and the simple joy of playing, not story.

**The basic format** of the game will be familiar to most players. One hundred and twenty stars are hidden in the game, 105 of them in 15 different "courses," (7 in each course) and 10 hidden among other levels (like those leading to Bowser) with 5 hidden in the grounds of the castle

**Like so many truly great videogames, Mario has always been about exploration and the simple joy of playing**



Rotating blocks: trademark Miyamoto concept and flawless N64 execution

# ng alphas

itself. The courses are themselves hidden in the castle, and are usually accessed by jumping through pictures on the wall (showing off Nintendo 64's impressive realtime morphing capabilities). At first, only a very limited region of the castle is accessible to Mario, but as he collects stars and fights bosses, he gains keys which enable him to access additional areas. When he has collected enough, he can fight Bowser for the final time (they meet three times in the game) and free the princess. The number of stars required to fight the final Bowser and complete the game is actually far less than 120, but no serious gamer should consider the game complete until all 120 have been collected.



Zooming in close to Mario while in the safety of the castle reveals cartoon quality animation and rendering

**Sound simple?** Guess again. Based on our extensive playtesting of a prerelease version (at the exclusive invite of Nintendo) we estimate that the average gamer can expect more than 85 hours of gameplay to get all 120 stars. Experts (the kind who solved *Super Mario World* in four days, and — of course — Next Generation staff members) may complete the game in 55 or 60 hours.

And Nintendo isn't squeezing out the hours by forcing gamers to go through the same level again and again to try to perform some difficult task, or by limiting the number of locations from which you can continue (you can save the game each time you exit a course). There are simply so many different things to do in this game and different skills to master that it will simply take a long time to solve.

Like in *Super Mario World*, obtaining free guys in *Super Mario 64* is totally straightforward, so the challenge is performing tasks in the courses, not searching for free guys or power-ups.



Although in screen-shots the game sometimes looks blurry, when in motion, it looks incredibly smooth, thanks to Nintendo 64's hardware anti-aliasing

## Liquid Metal

The technological prowess of N64 serves merely to emphasize the gameplay elements. "Liquid Metal" Mario, a special power-up acquired by going through a level that lies past an undulating black pool, demonstrates the N64's ability to reflect environmental changes in texture maps. And what special features does Liquid Mario have? For one, he sinks (quickly) in water, useful for puzzles in which you drown if you try to swim down (slowly) to a special door or area...





The familiar enemies, turtles, koopas, goombas and more are all back

There is enough deep gameplay that among the quests for coins, pink bombers, and (perhaps) Mario's hat, one can quickly lose sight of acquiring stars as the ultimate goal of the game. The castle alone seems as large as some of the shorter 32-bit offerings (say, the otherwise commendable *Jumping Flash!*) that have been released in the past year.

**So just how** do you get stars? In each course, there are seven stars. One star is awarded for collecting all eight red coins, one for collecting 100 regular gold coins, one by shooting

yourself from a cannon to an otherwise unreachable ledge, and the other four are hidden. With the possible exception of the first course, do not expect to get all seven stars the first time you enter a course. Not only are most of them huge (300-400 yards on a side, if you assume Mario is about 5 feet tall), but many, especially early in the game, require you to leave and come back before you have the power to find all of the stars.

Like *Super Mario World*, the game is largely nonlinear and once you have access to a specific part of the castle, you can enter the courses in any order you desire. Although the courses are all extremely different, there are some

**We estimate that the average gameplayer can expect more than 85 hours of gameplay to get all 120 stars**

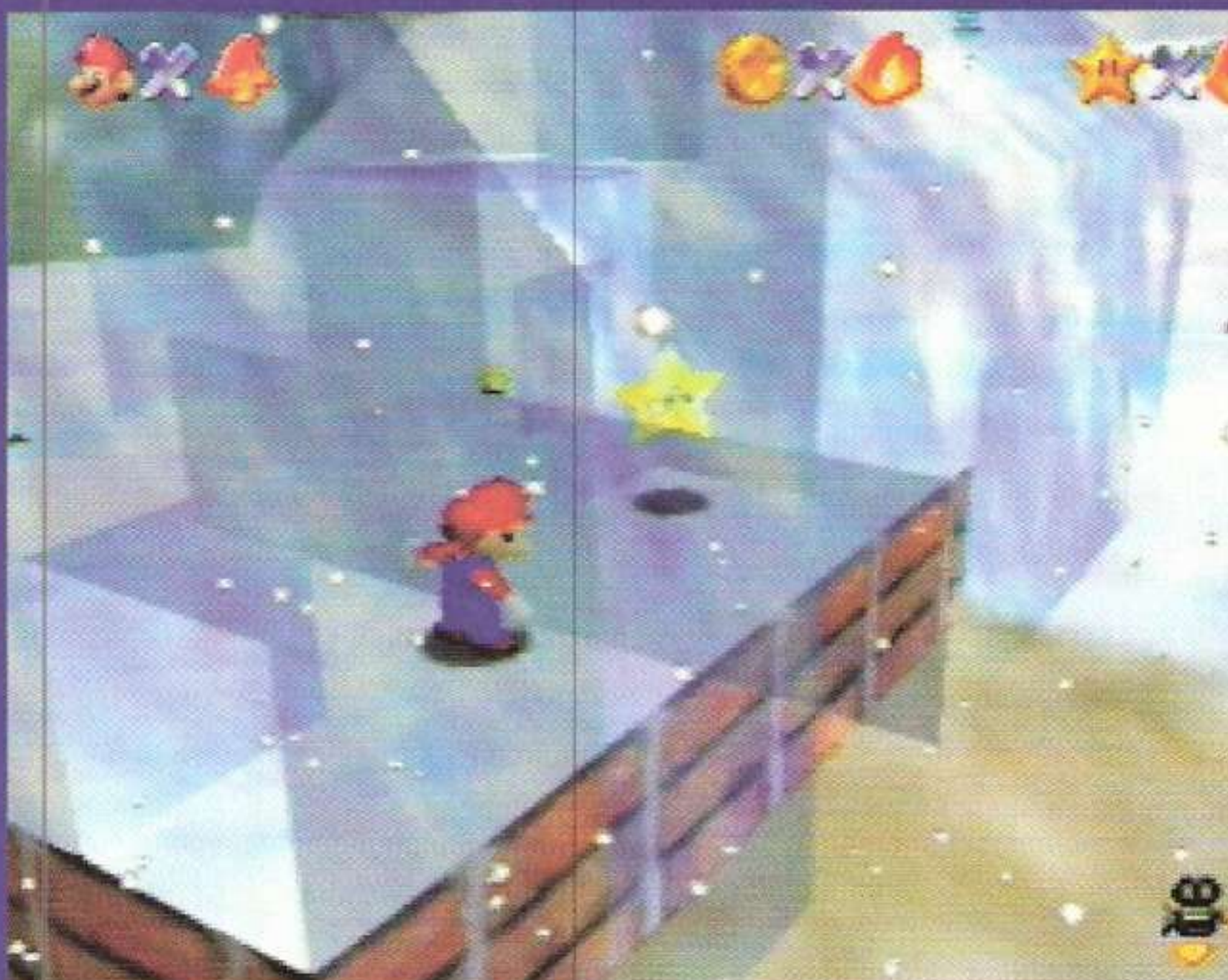
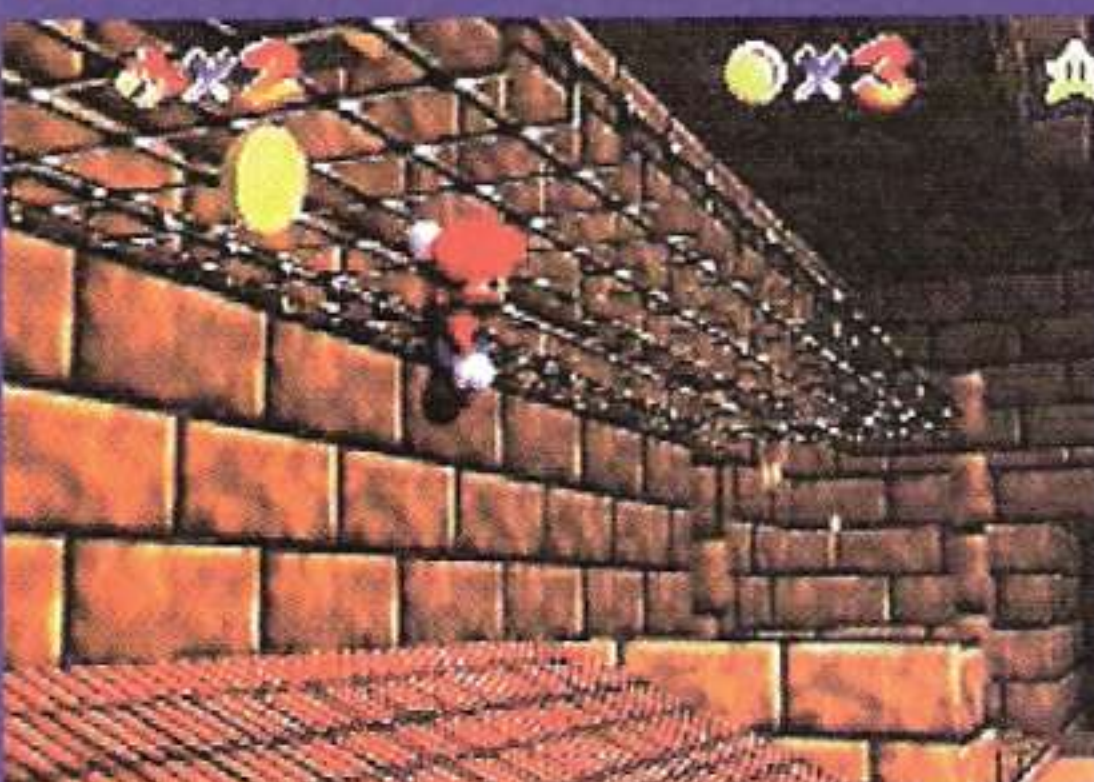
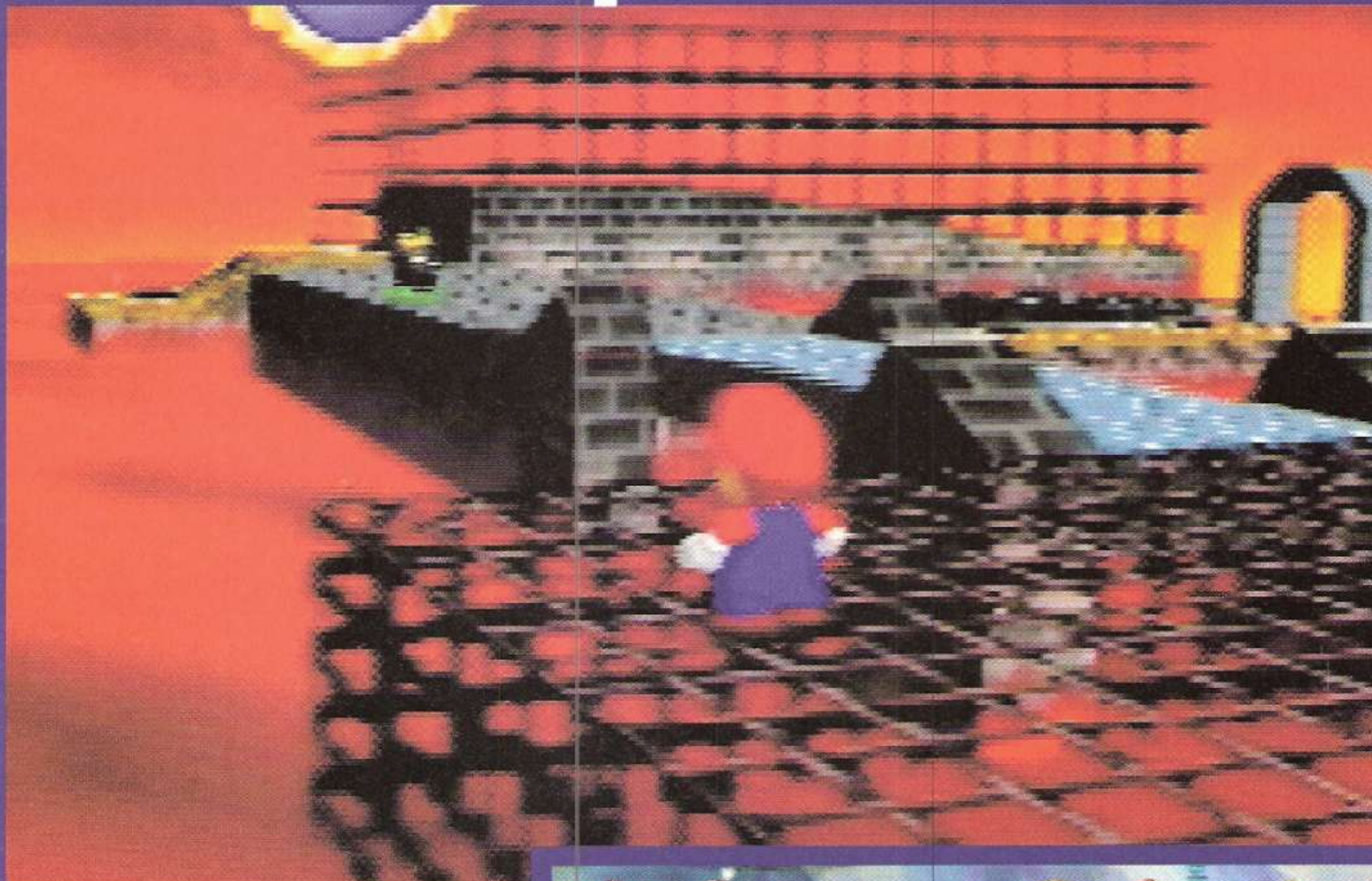
# Special Moves

In addition to his many normal moves, there are a number of special ways that Mario travels through the many courses and levels of the game. Clockwise from top left, Mario rides on the back of a friendly Loch Ness-style monster; swims with the fishes in a water-filled tower; catches a ride from an owl (on his way to a hidden star outside the castle); and (center) tries out the winged hat power up, flying through the sky in an experience vaguely reminiscent of the flight aspects of *Nights*. What's truly amazing about this title is that despite its cart nature, these five screen-shots represent more diversity of experience than that offered by many CD-ROM games. Indeed, *Mario 64's* 8 MB easily outpaces games created on a storage medium 81 times its size, once again showing what the luxury of a two and a half year development cycle, combined with unprecedented creative freedom and expert programmers, can do



ng alphas

# Effects paradise



The special effects vindicate Nintendo's statement that the N64 has the graphics power of a SGI Reality Engine, with the caveat that it operates only at TV resolution. Clockwise from top: Note the system's ability to render latticeworks without moiré patterns; the multilayered translucency enables this ice maze's complexity; perspective-correct texture-mapping and anti-aliasing combine to create unparalleled graphics; the mirror image of this room provides an impressive technical demo, as well as facilitating a clever puzzle



Mario's gaits include running (top) and walking (above). In all, 80 different states of acceleration are possible with the analog stick

common elements in each, like a cannon which Mario must shoot himself out of, once he finds and talks to a special "pink bomber." You must also watch out for common hazards, like losing your hat (which causes Mario's course-ending "victory dance" to turn to a humorous display of frustration).

**The game does** not consist simply of 15 courses and the castle, however. There are also levels you need to go through before reaching the bosses or gaining certain power-ups (like pixelated Mario or your flying hat). Once you get a star or a key (assuming you save), it's yours to keep. Things like coins, though, reset each time you enter a course. Players familiar with Nintendo's gameplay will not be surprised that despite the cartoonish nature of many of the graphics, this is not a kiddie game. Although it was carefully designed so that a six-year-old would be able to get a good deal of enjoyment from the game, solving it will require expert gameplaying skills.



A view of Mario's castle, complete with the princess who's trapped in stained glass (top). The owl delivers you to a star (right)



The variety in the levels is nothing short of stunning, in both graphics and design. There are the expected, brightly colored green hills in the beginning of the game, but there are also surprisingly sophisticated levels with absolutely breathtaking graphic complexity. The full power of Nintendo 64's graphic architecture is exploited in the game, and the trilinear mip-mapping, perspective-correct texture-mapping and hardware anti-aliasing are used to the fullest extent possible, resulting in a graphic experience that is simply unchallenged. Especially when compared to the best that 32-bit consoles or PCs using high-end 3D accelerators can offer.

Laticeworks, which generally disintegrate in ugly moire patterns on conventional systems (and can hence be judged as the Achilles heel of current 3D texture-map engines) are rendered absolutely flawlessly on Nintendo 64. The depth seen in many levels, in which you can look hundreds of feet up or down, would be impossible without perspective-correct texture-mapping and mip-mapping.

**Overall, the** graphics are so smooth and fluid that this 64-bit title truly looks more like a quality Saturday morning cartoon than any videogame ever did, something that screen-shots or even QuickTime preview movies just



Mario often finds himself in rooms with many exits. SM64 is not your old left to right side-scrolling platform game

**Although it was designed so that a six-year-old would be able to get a good deal of enjoyment, solving Super Mario 64 will require expert gameplaying skills**

# ng alphas

## Scaling Power

In *Mario 64*, every aspect of available technology has been exploited to enhance the gameplay, instead of gameplay simply being a slave to technology. An example is this goomba encounter. In this course, Mario first finds himself shrunk to an extremely small size (left) — the goomba, which should come up to about his knee, towers above him. After going through a pipe, though, Mario towers above the goomba (right). In the course, Mario himself never actually changes size (except as you zoom in or out), instead, the entire world scales. Because the hardware renders a large world as well as a small one, with no noticeable pixelization, the end result is far more immersive than it could be on a lesser system

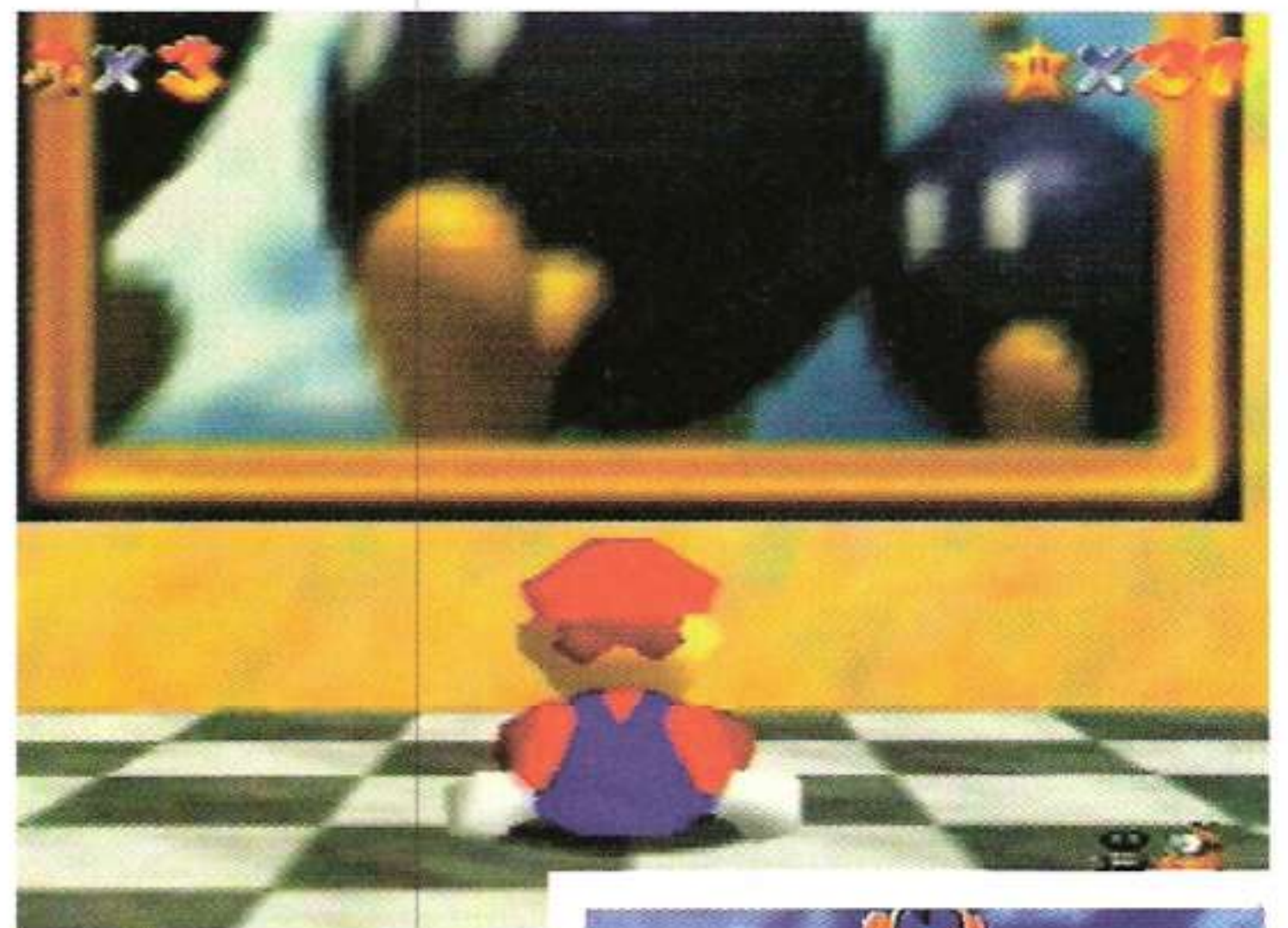
can't show. And despite initial reports to the contrary, it is not an overstatement to say that the graphic potential of Nintendo 64, as demonstrated by *Super Mario 64*, is as far beyond the 32-bit generation as 16-bit was beyond 8-bit generation.

Beyond simple technological flourishes, each course has a distinct look and feel (and many custom textures), which should put to rest complaints that an 8 MB cartridge simply isn't large enough to hold games with the graphic complexity that today's gamers expect. In fact, this thoroughness should make the producers of some graphically unvaried CD-based games blush with embarrassment.

The absence of load time also contributes to the subtle feeling of speed in the game. The Nintendo staff members supervising prerelease play



This bobsled race with a momma penguin for a star was demoed at E<sup>3</sup>, and convinced even the most skeptical in the audience that N64 was as powerful as Nintendo claimed. If you cheat in the race, you don't get the star



testing have laughed at more than one game journalist who sat patiently waiting for a level to "load," forgetting that since the game isn't on a CD, it requires just a button press to start play, not a 30 to 45 second wait as data is pulled from a CD-ROM.

The game, of course, provides true 3D freedom, more extensively perhaps than any other game we've seen. You can walk in any direction, up or down or onto anything you can climb, and look up and down as well. When swimming, you control Mario's motion with six degrees of freedom. The basic camera view is over the shoulder (in a very nice touch, you can see your



If you let the game sit without pausing, Mario sits, and eventually lays down (top). Mario faces off against a typical enemy: cute, simple and deadly (above)



# Far Out



One of the most stunning aspects of the *Super Mario 64* (especially to players acclimatized to the fog shaded landscapes of the 3DO, Saturn, and PlayStation) is the incredible depth of field present in the game. (Finally, we have a game that doesn't appear to be set in London or San Francisco.) Not only are the levels and courses massive, but you can see for hundreds of yards. There's something about being able to see the entire level at once that adds an extremely foreboding element to the start of each course; it's an almost humbling experience that makes completing the level that much more satisfying

cameraman, Latiku, floating on a cloud behind you when you look in a mirror), although it changes on-the-fly to give you the best possible view from wherever you are standing. According to a Nintendo spokesperson, setting the appropriate camera angles and changes for every piece of ground in the game took months. You can also change the camera angle yourself, and in some situations, you'll want to (certain levels are easier to get through when looking from the side or front). You can also



change the height of the camera view, and the zoom level, and lock the camera in a specific location.

**The 3D control** would be impossible without the analog controller, which has two major advantages over traditional eight-direction D-pads. First, it has a full 360° of freedom, not restricting you to moving only at 45° angles. Second, by controlling how far you push the stick in a specific direction, you control Mario's velocity. Push it slightly, and Mario creeps along. Push it further and he begins to walk faster; push all the way and he runs. There are six animated gaits, from creeping to running, but how fast Mario moves in each gait is also controllable.

Adjusting to the new



The first 16-bit mascot to make the leap to 3D (he should beat Sonic and Bubsy to market by a month or so), Mario has made the transition well

# ng alphas

**You discover, as you're falling to your death, a hidden trail that you would not have seen otherwise**

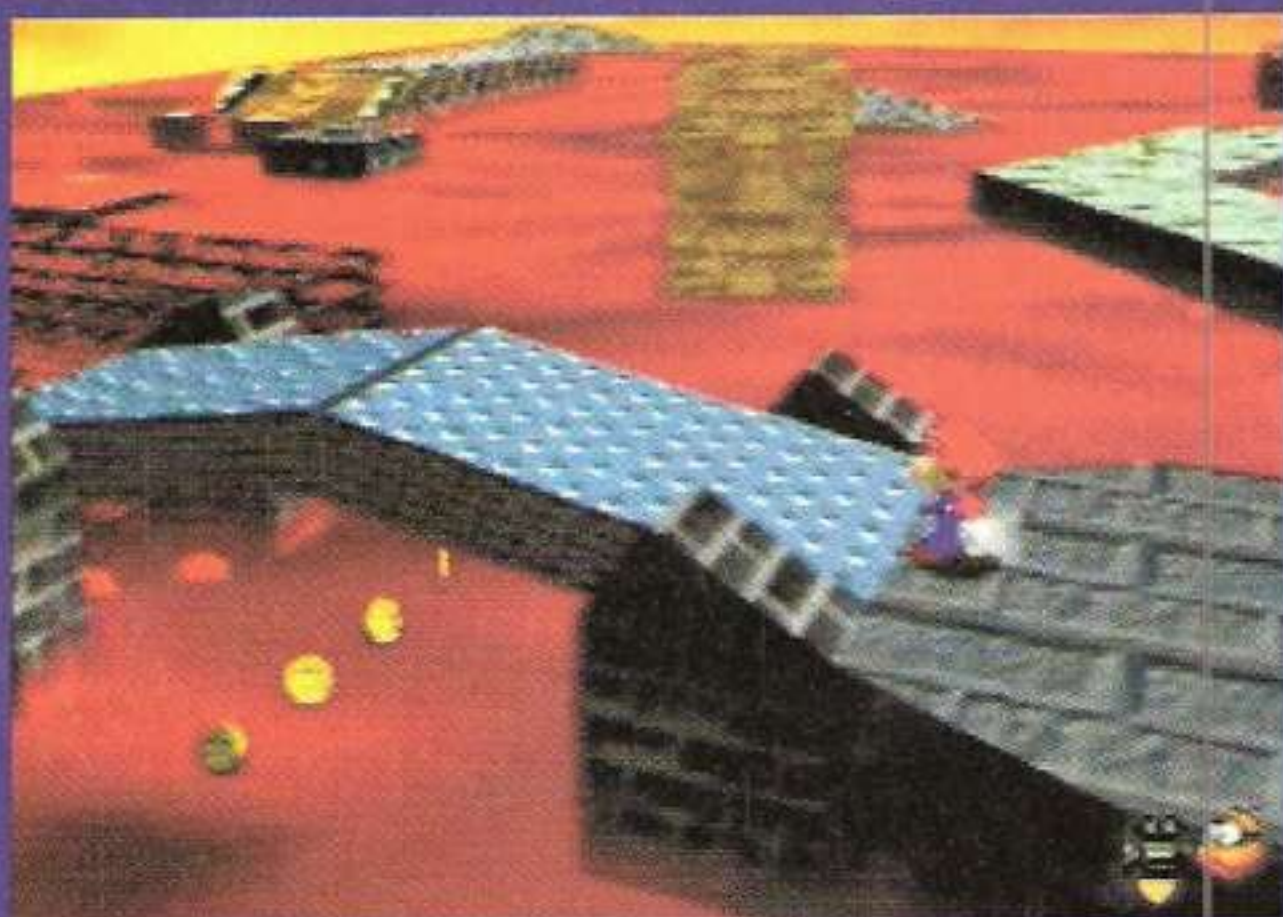


control can be difficult for gamers who were reared on digital controls — the temptation is to either have Mario running or stopped. After running into a few traps, however, and most players will learn to slow down unless they know where they are going.



Mario faces his Bowser-invaded castle and his trapped Princess (left) and runs from a stinky ol' barrel (right)

## Puzzling



One of the more interesting things about the game is that despite the 3D, the puzzles will be innately familiar to most gamers. That isn't to say that they are derivative or unoriginal — the 3D enables truly novel modes of gameplay, but they definitely retain elements that are instantly familiar, whether its creeping across moving platforms, running over bridges, or simply avoiding goombas

Mr. Miyamoto's attention to detail is outstanding, as are his concepts of game design. As noted previously, to get one star in each course, you need to shoot Mario out of a cannon, which you cannot do until you find the "pink bomber." No problem in the first few courses, but in later courses, he is well hidden. On one specific course, a monkey steals your hat and runs down a mountain. As you chase him, you enter unfamiliar territory, and, unless you've already gone through the level, you're almost guaranteed to plunge off a certain cliff to your death.

So you need knowledge from a "previous life" to get through the level, which would normally be a hallmark of crappy design. But Mr. Miyamoto is so good, he can break the rules, because as you plunge, unavoidably, off the ledge for the first time, you discover, as you're falling to your death, a hidden trail that you would not have seen otherwise, at the end of which is the pink bomber for that course. There are thousands more examples of this skill and expert planning throughout the game.

This is an action title, and there is plenty of enemy killing, platform jumping, puzzle solving, and danger avoiding to be found. But more than that, it's a Mario game, and that means exploration. The distinguishing feature of all Miyamoto's titles, from Mario to Zelda to Metroid, has been the gradual discovery of vast new areas to explore.

Those who are familiar with the Mario series (and that has to cover just about everyone reading this magazine) will quickly recognize the red, green, and blue blocks dotting each level, waiting only for the player to find the appropriate P-block to turn them on and gain access to additional areas.

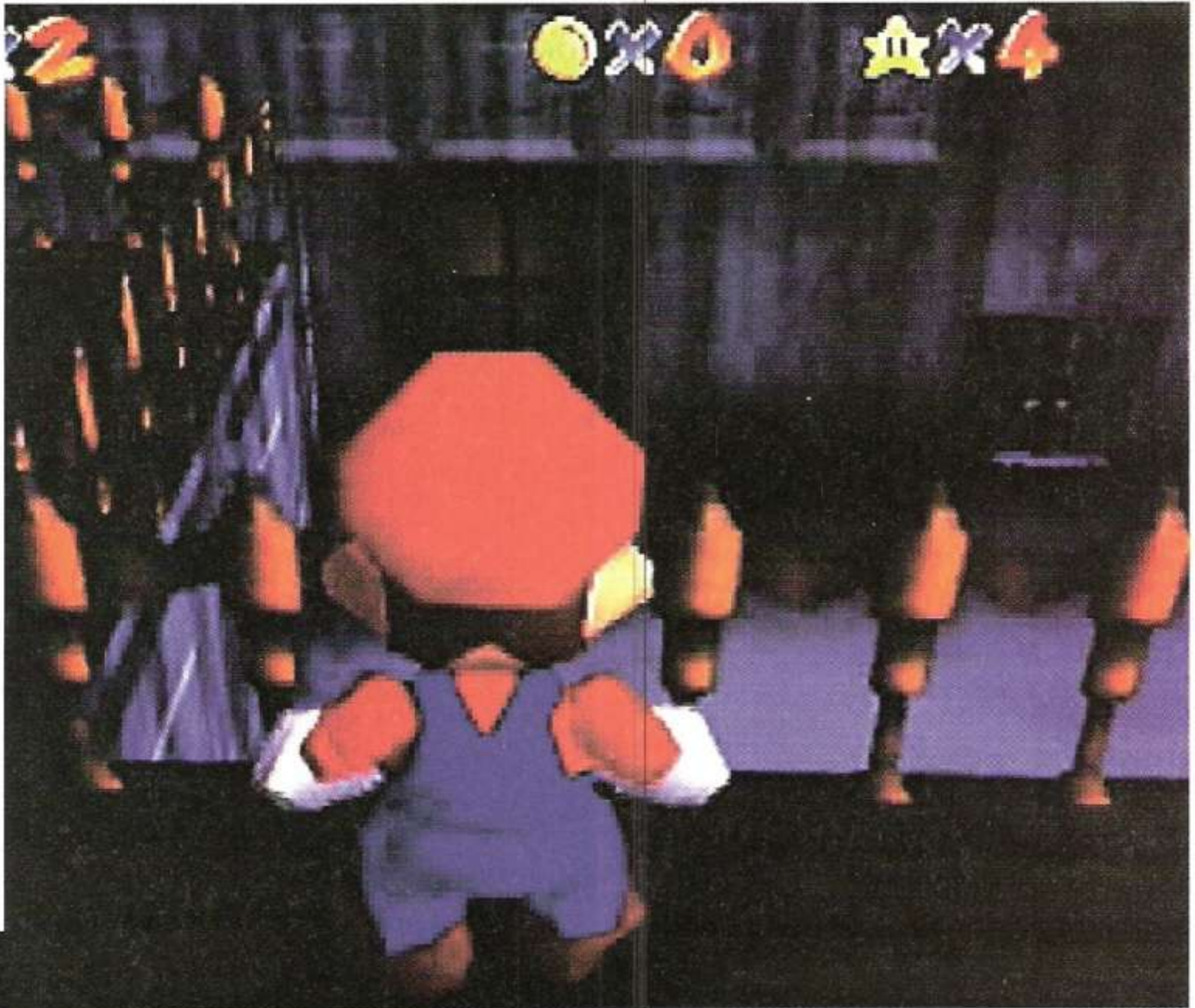
Beyond 3D, the game has expanded in many other ways, perhaps none more



The depth from which you can see is absolutely amazing; it seems to be enough to give weak-stomached folk vertigo



**Ghost House hi-jinks.** Fans of Mario's 16-bit game will be pleased to note that the Ghost House returns, in full 3D



**Beyond 3D, Mario has expanded in many other ways, perhaps none more stunning than in the number of new moves at his disposal**

stunning than in the number of new moves available to Mario. In addition to the standard jump, there is a high jump, a long jump, a "butt-stomp," and a double-high backward somersault. He can also do an "ollie" off a wall to gain additional height in a jump.

The power-ups in the game include a winged hat for flying, the ability to become "liquid metal" Mario (a T2 like black metal version of the plumber), and Pixelated Mario, which makes Mario look a lot like he's suffering from sprite flicker and tear, but enables him to pass ghost-like through certain obstacles.

**So what does it all mean?** Despite all the knocks Nintendo takes, (and many are well deserved) no one has ever been able to accuse Nintendo of creating games that are anything less than stellar. From the top of the company down, everyone knows that Nintendo's success is less due to business models or marketing acumen, and more to do with great games.

*Super Mario 64* will be the game that ups the ante for all interactive entertainment. After its release, standards of gameplay simply will not remain the same. But will just having the greatest game of all time enable Nintendo to succeed in the next-

generation marketplace? It's not clear. But Nintendo is betting on it.

While *SM64* shows what Nintendo 64 is capable of, it is an open question as to whether other developers (some of whom have scrapped works in progress after seeing *Super Mario 64*) can get the machine to perform to the same level any time soon. In the meantime, come September 30, we can confidently say that you will have the opportunity to play what we think will be the best game of all time.

ng



**Take a simple shape, give it teeth and big eyes and you've got an enemy typical of Mr. Miyamoto. Remember this guy from Mario's last adventure?**

## An interview with

## Shigeru Miyamoto

**F**ollowing its main E<sup>3</sup> press conference, Nintendo invited a select band of journalists to a private demonstration of *Super Mario 64*, and an audience with Shigeru Miyamoto. Next Generation was, of course, in attendance.

**NG:** Although you've worked on *Super Mario 64* for a long time, you've also had to work on many other titles to ensure the system has a good launch line-up. How have you been able to manage the task of working on so many games at once?

**Mr. Miyamoto:** I had a lot of trouble concentrating my efforts on *Mario 64* working as the game's director. Ever since I completed the *Zelda* game, my role at Nintendo has been more of a producer, supervising the different works in development. But when it comes to *Mario 64* I was actually the main director of the game, so if I stopped at some point all other work stopped simultaneously. This was not easy.

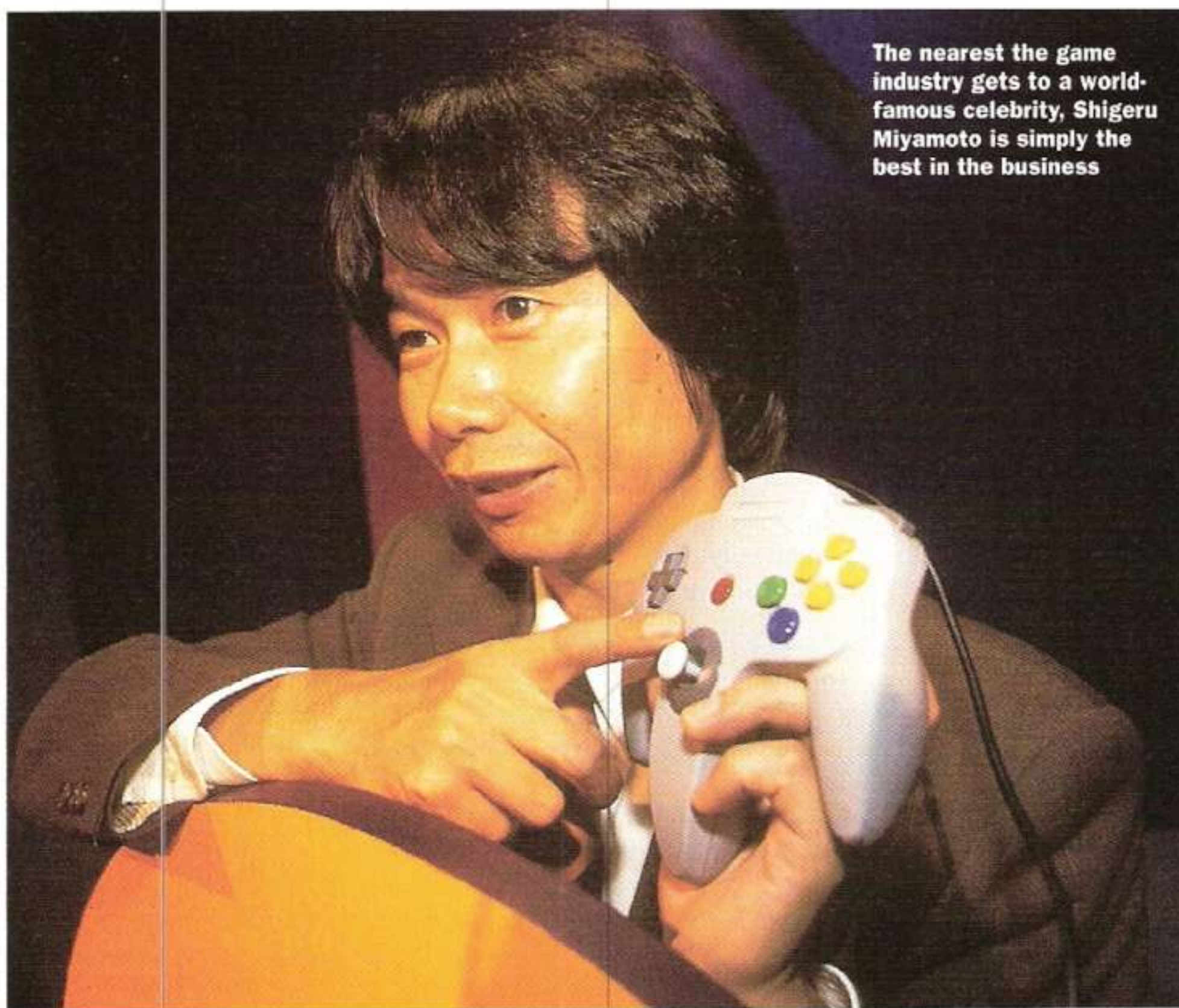
**NG:** What were the biggest design problems converting *Mario* from 2D to 3D?

**Mr. Miyamoto:** I don't want to criticize other developers, but I believe that, other than in fighting and racing games, nobody is meeting a 3D criteria. Many games are presented in 3D, but are, in fact, simply 2D experiences incorporating lots of tricks to fool people into believing they're playing a 3D game.

One of the biggest difficulties in creating 3D is the viewpoint. Looking at the way the camera follows you in *Super Mario 64*, you would think it would be easier, but in fact, when you start a 3D game from the very beginning, it's easy to get confused. For example, if Mario is in a maze, you can change the viewpoint to play the game from Mario's point of view, but if the camera is behind Mario and you are walking through a narrow passageway in a maze and you want to look in other directions, you have to realize the camera would hit the wall. It's frustrating for the player to realize they cannot change the viewpoint freely, even though 3D games must incorporate realistic camera movement — this kind of camera work is problematic when you start creating 3D games.

**NG:** With *Mario* nearly complete, on what new game or games will you be next concentrating your efforts?

**Mr. Miyamoto:** I couldn't put everything into *Super Mario 64* that I really wanted, so we've decided to continue working toward a



The nearest the game industry gets to a world-famous celebrity, Shigeru Miyamoto is simply the best in the business

sequel which will take about a year-and-a-half at least — so please don't write many things about that [laughter]. Of course, *Zelda* is one of the things I would like to concentrate on, too, but before that we have *StarFox*, *Mario Kart*, and more immediately I would like to concentrate upon *WaveRace*.

**NG:** How does *Super Mario 64* compare to previous *Mario* games? Is this the best yet?

**Mr. Miyamoto:** Personally, I'm satisfied simply because we have created something very new and unique, nonexistent in the past. Concerning the game itself, I'll have to wait for the actual remarks to be made by the consumers. Talking about *Super Mario 64*, I believe we have just utilized only 60% of the whole capacity of the N64 technology.

**NG:** Now that everything is moving in 3D on the Nintendo 64, will there be 2D games on the Nintendo 64 later on?

**Mr. Miyamoto:** Yes, in fact, even though this is a 3D system, if you are careful enough you can make a 2D game — I'm actually working on a *Yoshi* title.

**NG:** Since *Super Mario 64* is a cartridge game, was the lack of space a limitation?

**Mr. Miyamoto:** Honestly, after working on *Super Mario 64* on cartridge, I realized the game would never have been possible on a CD-ROM system. I'm not speaking ill of CD-ROM at all, but this is my genuine sentiment.

**NG:** Will the sequel use the upcoming optical-based 64DD? And when you're talking about the speed advantages of cartridges, how will you cope with the slower handling of data by which the 64DD will be restricted?

**Mr. Miyamoto:** We have not yet decided what format we will use for *Super Mario 64's* sequel, but if we are going to use the 64DD system for this, yes, we will have to work on the transfer speed. However, the speed is decided not by the actual disk but by the RAM that is incorporated onto the hardware, and if we look at the N64 hardware system itself, it has an expansion memory slot.

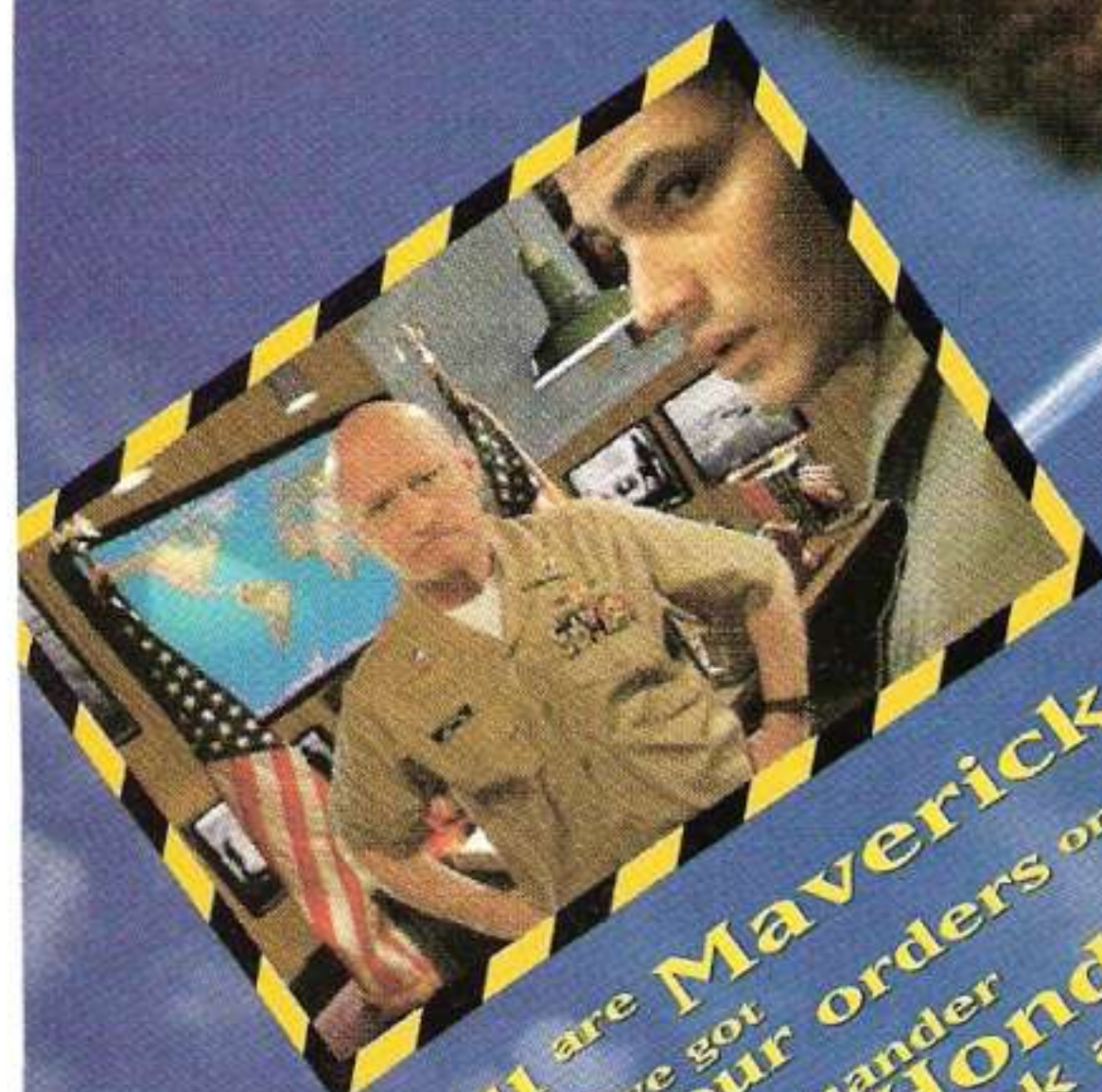
**NG:** *Time* magazine recently called you the Spielberg of videogames. What would you have done if you hadn't worked for Nintendo?

**Mr. Miyamoto:** I chose to work for Nintendo simply because I thought Nintendo would be the kind of company to give me the opportunity to surprise people.

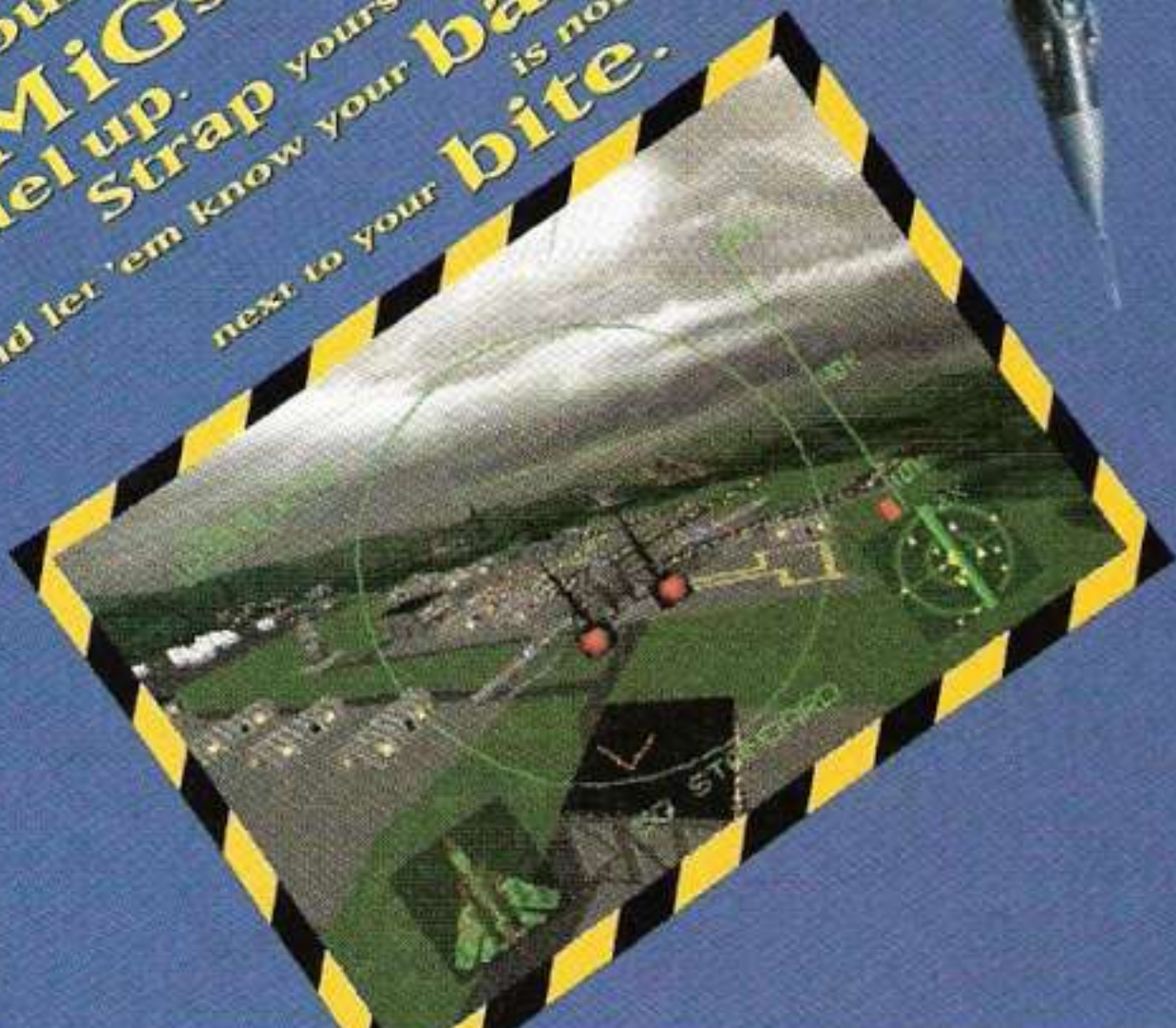
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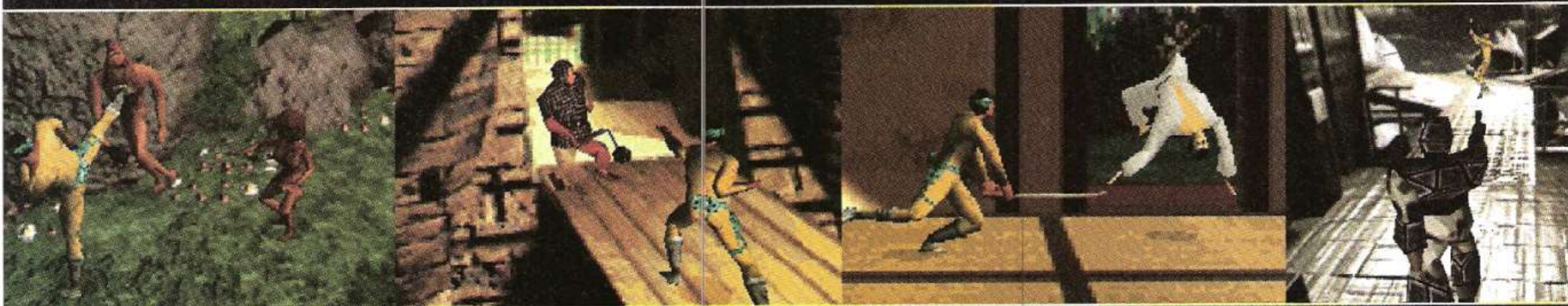


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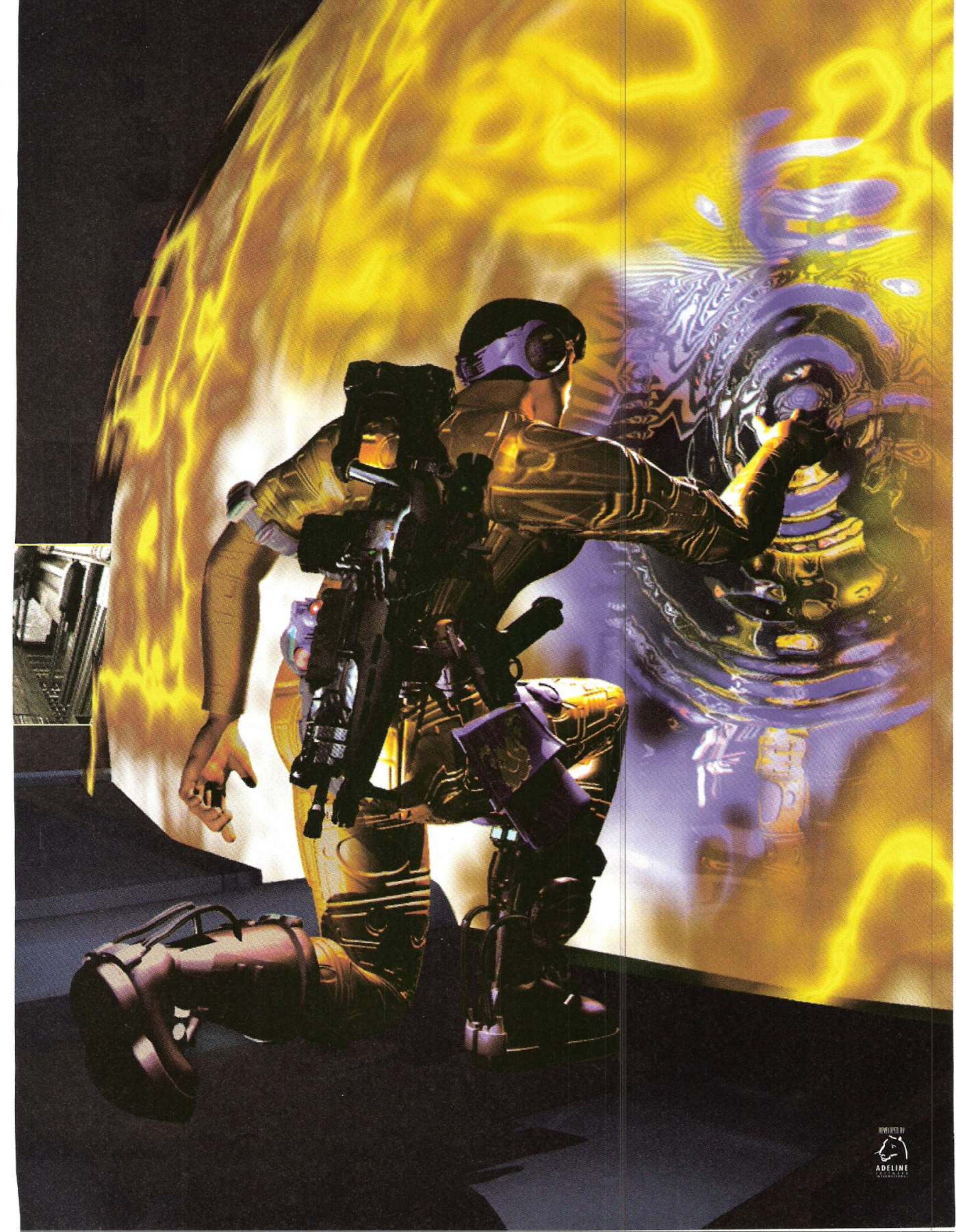


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ng alphas

# NovaLogic

Format:	<b>PC</b>
Publisher:	<b>NovaLogic</b>
Developer:	<b>NovaLogic</b>
Release Date:	<b>TBA</b>
Origin:	<b>U.S.</b>

Beyond the world of polygons, there's the world of voxels. One company has been using them for years, and its latest 3D world is on the top of the heap



**“A voxel, or ‘volume pixel,’ is a picture element in 3D space”**

John Garcia, president and founder, NovaLogic

**N**ovaLogic's very first product was *The Rocketeer* for Disney Software. Shortly after came *WolfPack*, a WWII submarine simulator. But it wasn't until 1992's *Comanche* that the designers pushed the technical envelope by using a new 3D engine called Voxel Space, and began to attract some attention.

“A pixel is a picture element in 2D space,” explains President John Garcia, who founded NovaLogic in 1985. “A voxel, or ‘volume pixel,’ is a picture element in 3D space.” Voxel modeling is somewhat akin to building a world out of small Lego blocks, rather than the flat triangles of polygon worlds.

“The main advantage voxels have over polygons is that they're very good at modeling ground-surface details,” Garcia says. “A ground surface modeled using texture-mapped polygons looks good from a scale distance of about 5,000 feet or so, but when you land, the

detail goes away and it looks like what it is — a series of flat surfaces with wallpaper over them. What voxels allow you to do is get very close to the land, and still get very realistic ground contours, because every point along that surface can have its own altitude.”

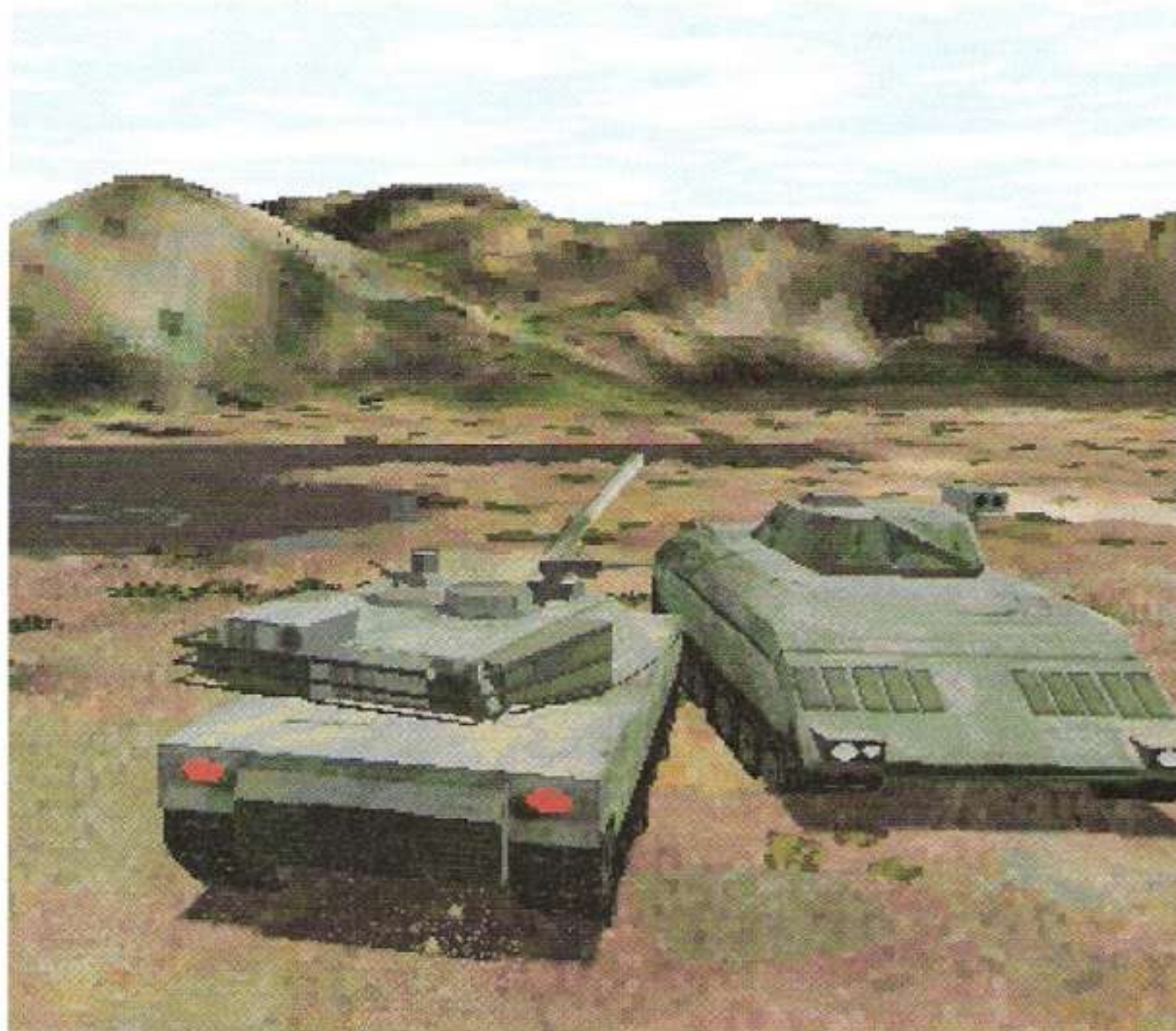
**The latest version** of Voxel Space (known appropriately enough as Voxel Space 2), is the basis for two new games coming this fall, *Comanche 3* and *Armored Fist 2*. Voxel Space 2 enables greater degrees of freedom — “You can fly right off the planet if you want to,” Garcia jokes — supports higher screen resolutions, and is composed of finer voxel elements for



**Armored Fist 2 and Comanche 3 are coming this fall from NovaLogic**



ng alphas



For now, realistic landscapes are the main advantage voxels have over polygons. With faster hardware, soon even more complex objects can be constructed

the real-world flight tests of the Commanche attack chopper itself. NovaLogic is currently working with Sikorsky (the company actually making the

chopper) to incorporate as much authentic detail as possible into the game's flight model, control layout, and craft design.

Still pictures can't do justice to the smoothness and beauty produced by Voxel Space 2. Players will have to see the game for themselves to appreciate just how groundbreaking NovaLogic's 3D engine really is.

**AF2 is based as accurately as possible on General Dynamics' latest tank design and military tactics**

roughly twice the detail seen in the original *Commanche* and *Armored Fist*. "We're actually using recursive functions to generate more voxels as you approach ground level, so the closer you get, the more detail you see." Voxel

Space 2 also supports the ability to place traditional texture-mapped polygons into the voxel world so designers can use those techniques for what polygons do well: modeling tanks and choppers.

**Armored Fist 2** — *M1A2 Abrams* is perhaps the best showcase for the new voxel engine, as it's set entirely

at ground level. It's based as accurately as possible on General Dynamics' latest tank design and re-creates genuine military tactics. And, as with NovaLogic's greatest success to date, *Werewolf vs. Commanche*, *AF2* will be networkable for up to eight players.

As for *Commanche 3*, it'll be playable in two modes. The first follows the original game's "jump-in-and-fly" philosophy, using simplified controls and slightly forgiving flight dynamics. The second play mode is an accurate simulation, which is based largely on



NovaLogic's modestly expanding HQ, located in sunny Calabasas, CA.



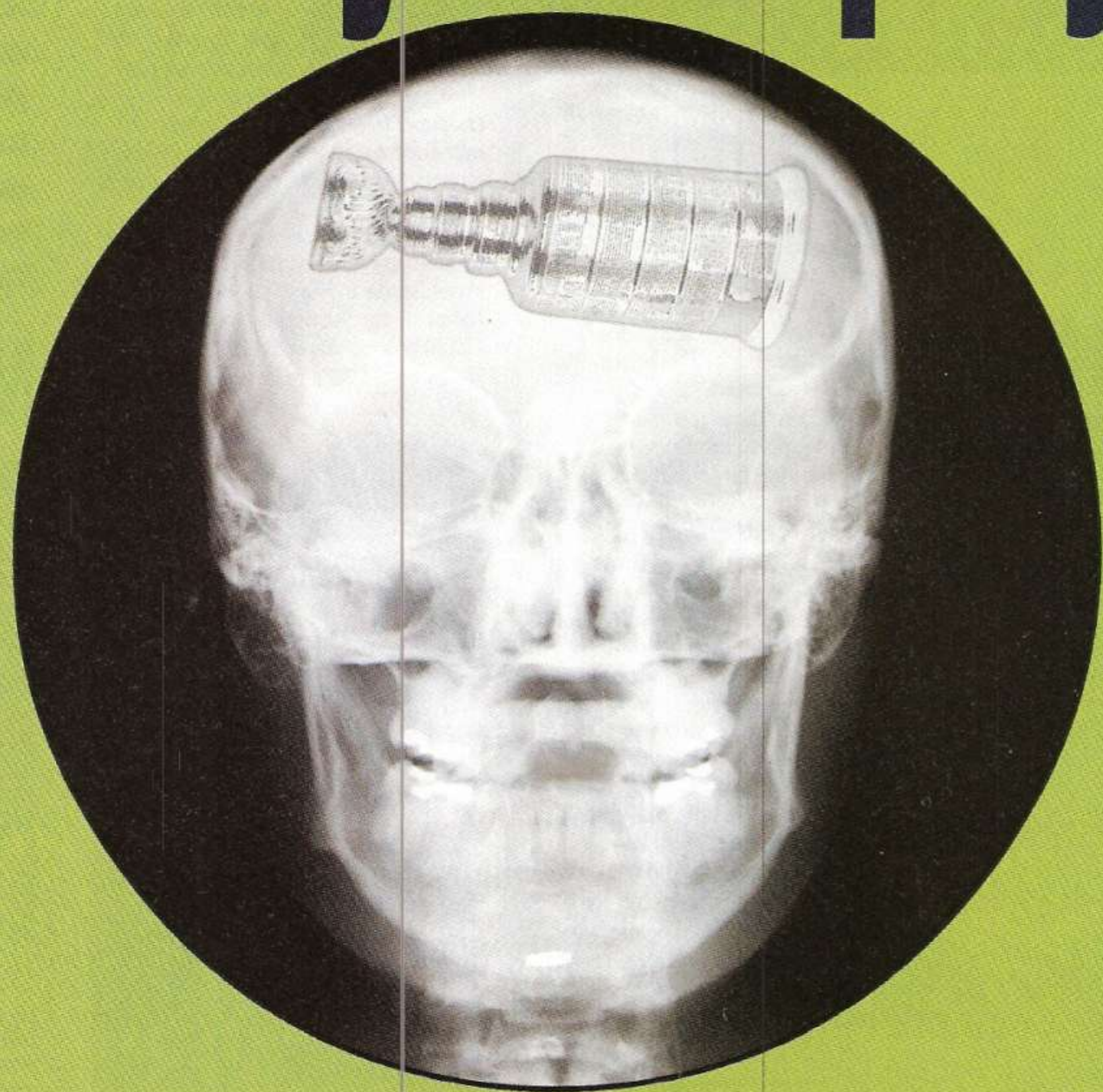
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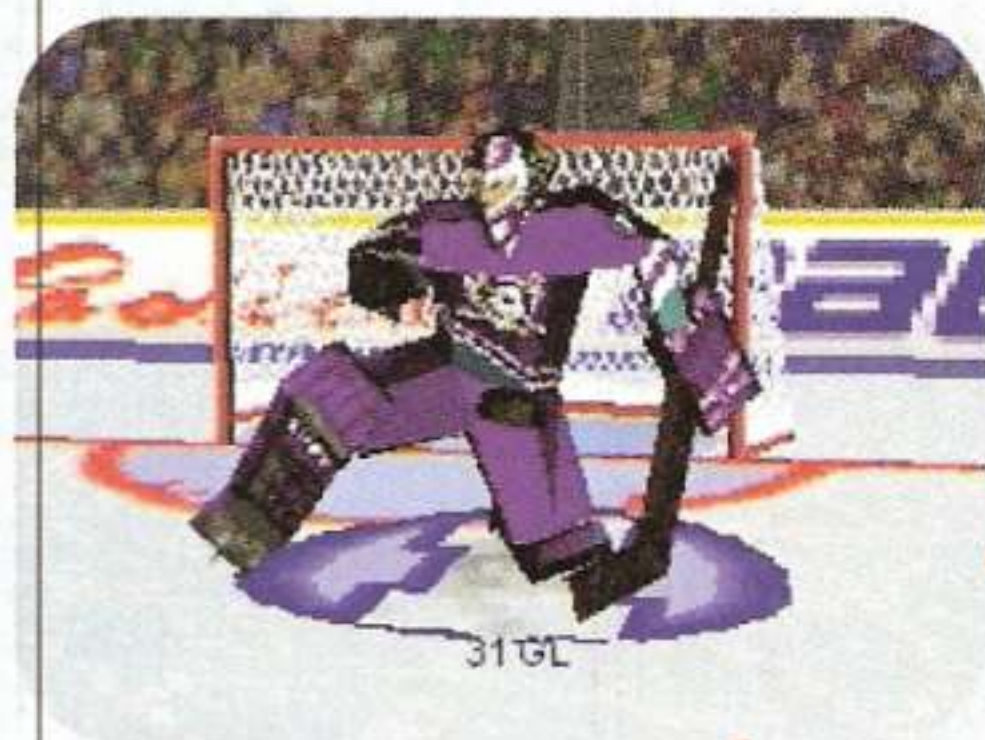
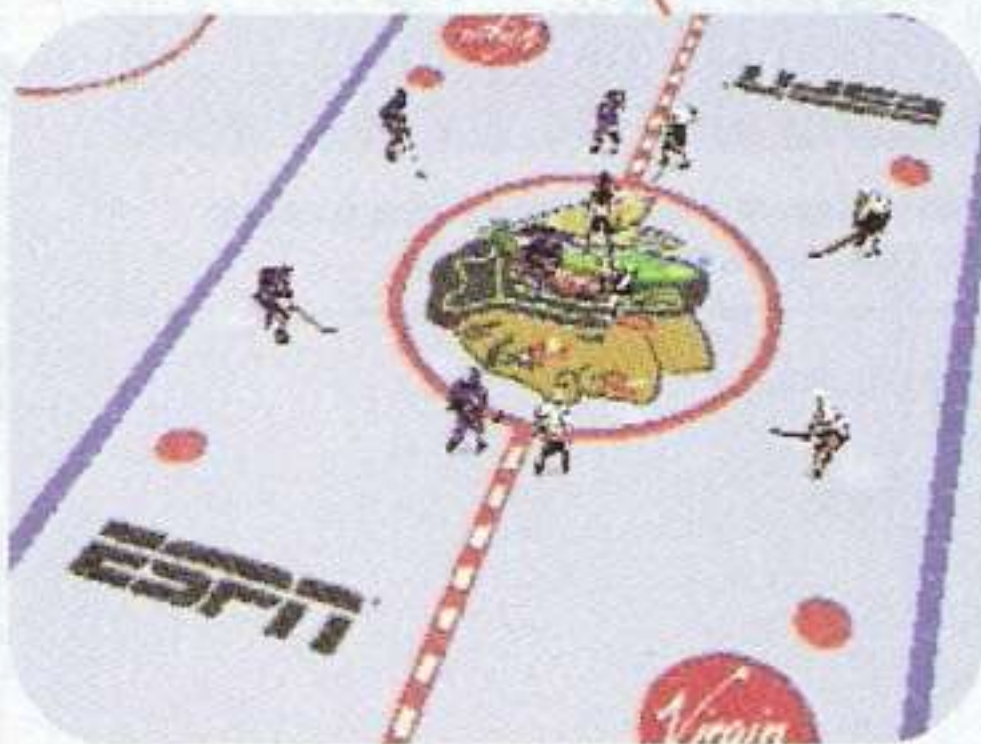
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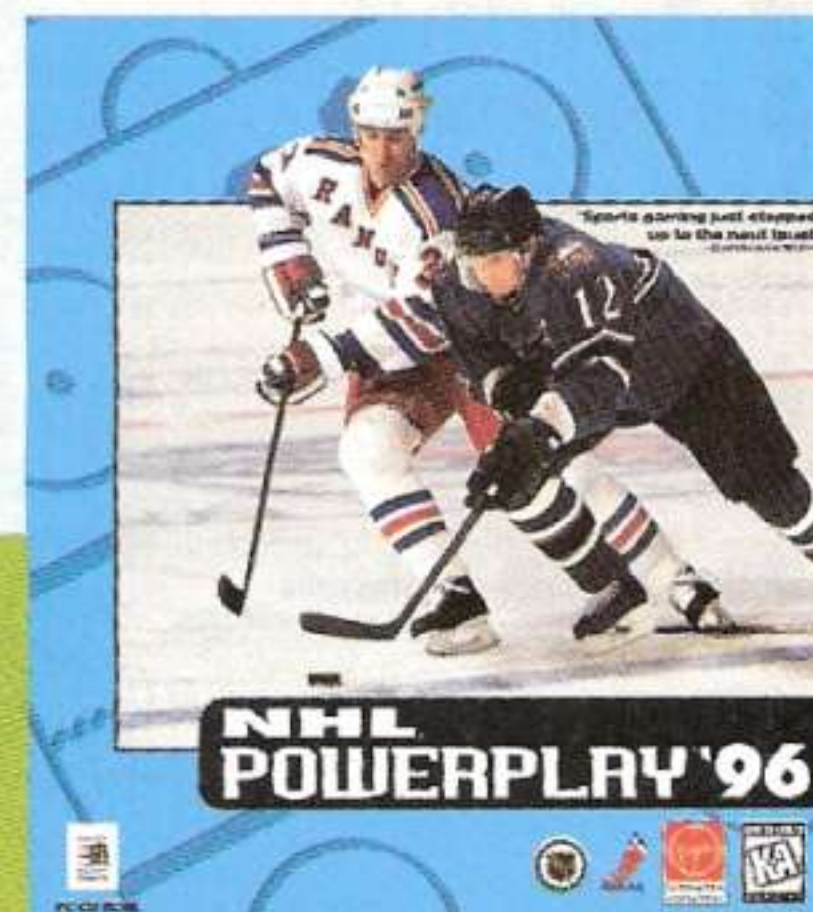
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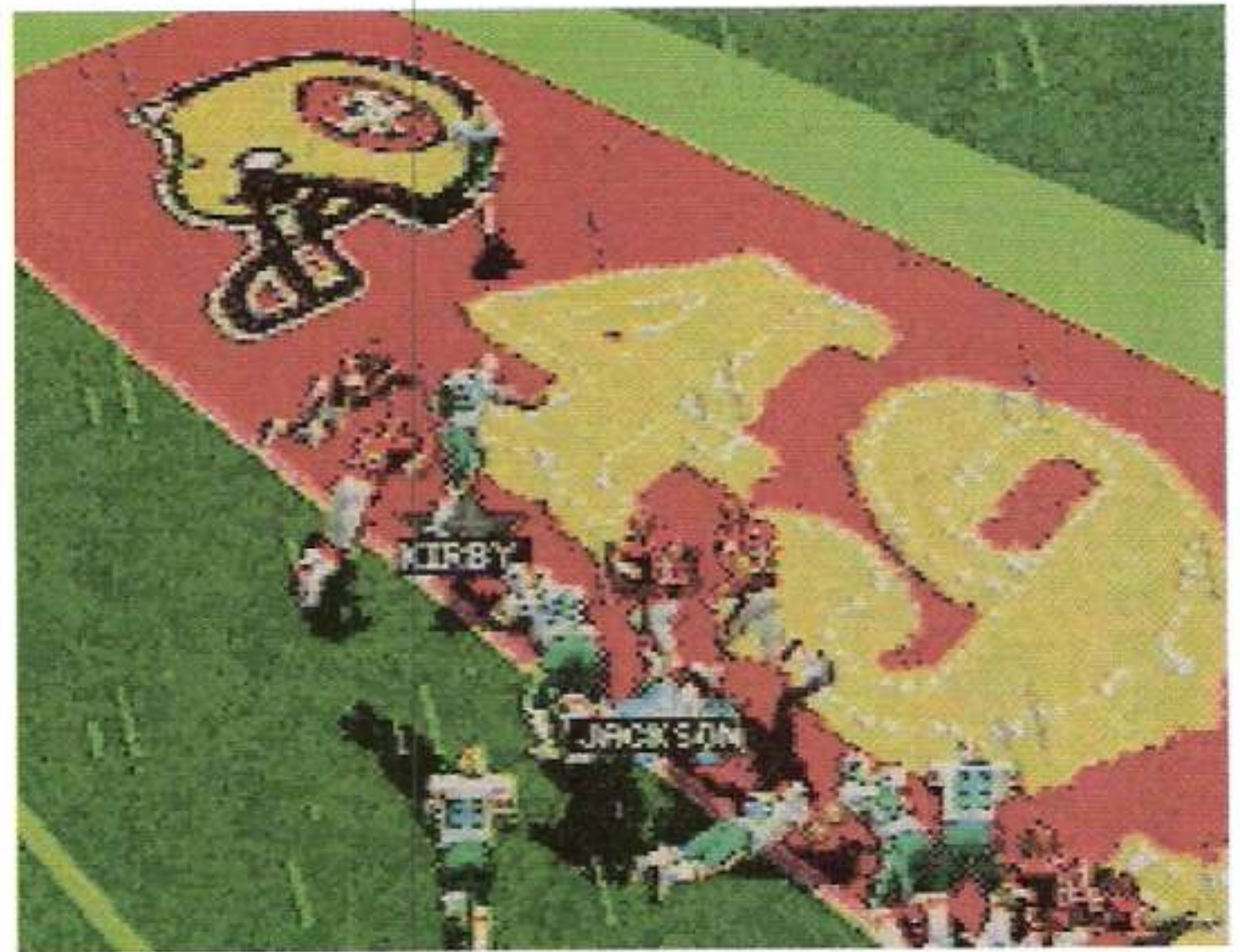
ng alphas

# John Madden Football '97



The players are slightly smaller than in the scrapped *Madden '96*, but they actually look better, and the animation is convincing and smooth

After a year of delays and serious retooling, EA Sports' signature series is finally ready for its 32-bit run



As with every previous *Madden* title, players can expect varying weather conditions throughout the season: rain, snow, and night games

Format: **PlayStation, Saturn, PC**

Publisher: **Electronic Arts**

Developer: **E.A. Sports/Tiburon**

Release Date: **October**

Origin: **U.S.**

**With one more year of development and a rethinking of its approach, EA Sports is now confident that the Madden series is back on track**

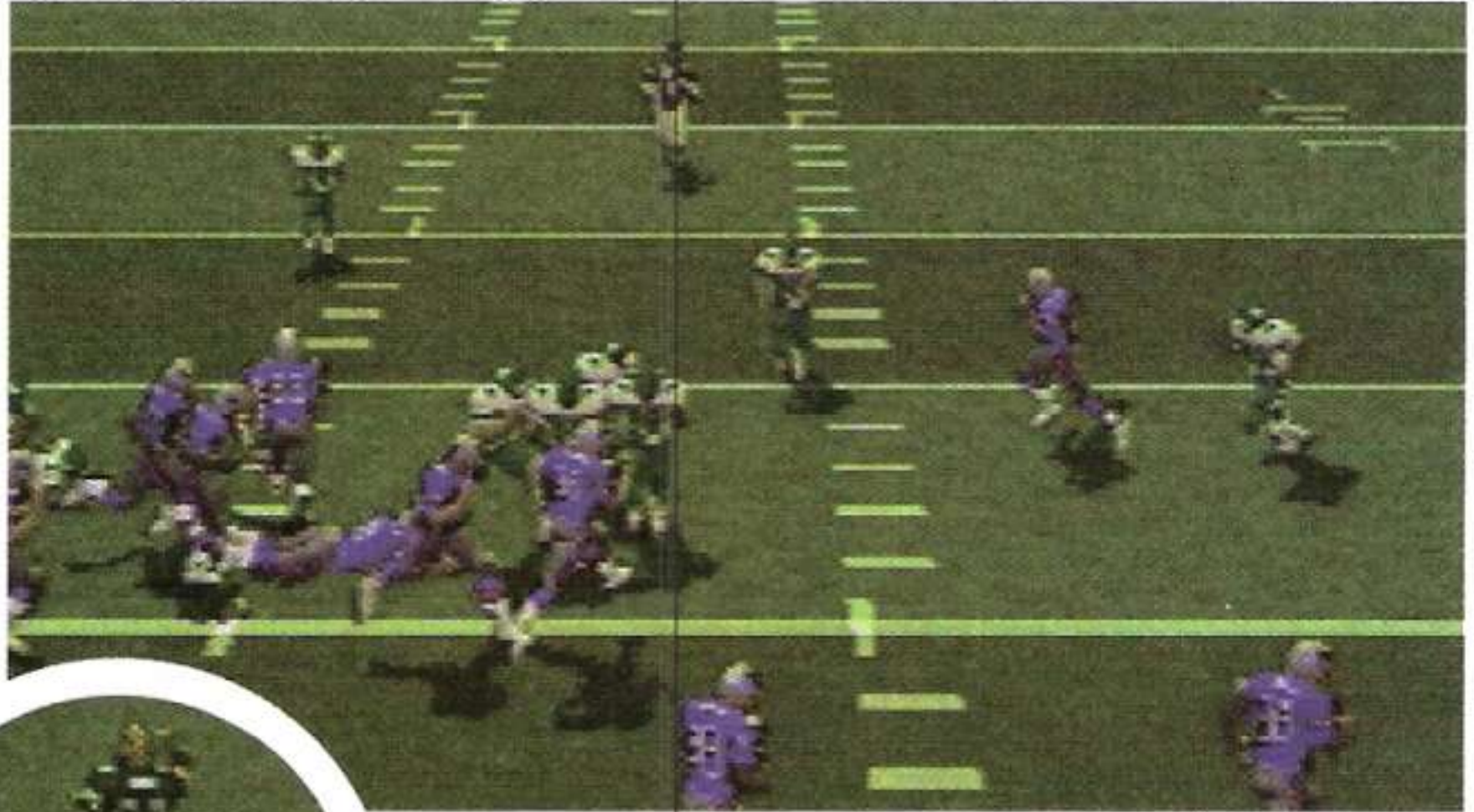
**I**n 1991, *John Madden Football* put E.A. Sports on the map, and was also a major weapon in the Genesis camp during the 16-bit wars of the early 1990s. However, it could be argued that success bred inertia — succeeding versions of *Madden* games further refined the engine but rarely offered any substantial improvements in gameplay. By 1996, with the first battles of the 32-bit wars well underway, *Madden '96* was such an extreme let down, especially up against Sony Sports' rival *Gameday*, that E.A. pulled the project and never released it.

That was then, this is now. With an additional year of development and a rethinking of its approach, E.A. Sports is now confident that the *Madden* series is back on track, and fully intends to have the 1997 edition on the shelves by the start of football season.

So how is *Madden '97* different and better than the failed '96? The designers have pulled back from their original concept of aping the way viewers watch the sport on television — a hubris that quickly consumed the game to the detriment of playability. Players were too large and blocky, and the amount of FMV and running commentary distracted from the



*Madden '97* still features play-by-play from Madden and Pat Summerall



The action can be viewed from multiple camera angles: behind the quarterback, just to the left or right of the QB, or from either sideline

RECEIVING LEADERS

RANK	PLAYER	TEAM	YARDS	AVG
1	RICE	49ERS	1678	14.9
2	CARTER		1080	14.5
3	SANDERS		1059	17.7
4	IRVIN		994	12.9
5	TIMPSON		920	13.9
6	COATES		913	10.4

INJURY REPORT

PLAYER	TEAM	INJURY	OUT FOR
82 WESTBROOK	REDSKINS	DISLOCATED FOOT	4 WEEKS
82 WESTBROOK		DISLOCATED FOOT	4 WEEKS

TRADE PLAYER

PLAYER	TEAM	WGT	AGE
12 HARRISON	COLTS	204	33
28 FAULK		200	36
42 POTTS		245	34
82 ZOOK		270	34
9 PEETE		207	39
22 WATTERS		215	30
34 TURNER		250	33
84 BARNETT		199	34

TEAM SELECT

TEAM	OVERALL	DEFENSE	SPECIAL
COWBOYS	86	73	77
AT	77	73	77

Featuring a roster of more than 100 teams, Madden '97 also includes a plethora of options for trading and player creation, as well as a full roster of player stats that can be compiled and tracked throughout an entire "virtual" season

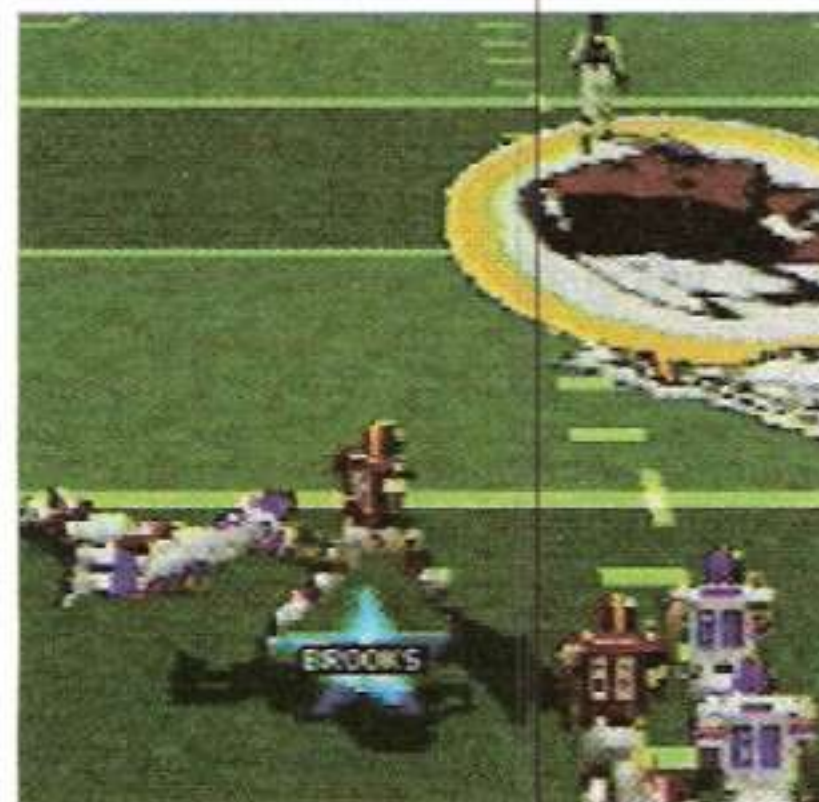
experience, rather than enhancing it. Current design strategy has brought the focus back to the elements that have always made Madden great: real players, ease of control, strict attention to real-world mechanics, and a playbook that reflects the one the NFL uses. In fact, John Madden himself has returned as a direct consultant to help refine the play selection and mechanics. Also, while the game retains the play-by-play from Madden and Pat Summerall, the numerous cutaways to field reporter Leslie Vassar and commentator James Brown have been scaled back to pregame and halftime viewings.

What has been retained is the rotoscoped-from-motion-capture animation of real players (players were motion captured, then 3D models were used to produce 2D sprites from multiple angles). All 30 U.S. stadiums have been meticulously modeled in 3D, including Hawaii for the Pro Bowl. In addition, classic teams from the '60s, '70s, and '80s have been included for a total of more than 100 teams and 600 real players. If that's not enough, options for trading, recruiting, and creating new players have been included. The PC version also includes a second disk, Madden's Football College, in which Madden himself gives lectures and demonstrations covering offense, defense, special teams, and the history of the sport itself.



Passing mechanics are now handled through a down-the-field view. Open receivers are highlighted, with the button for each shown on the ground beneath, making passing as simple as 1-2-3 — except for the blockers

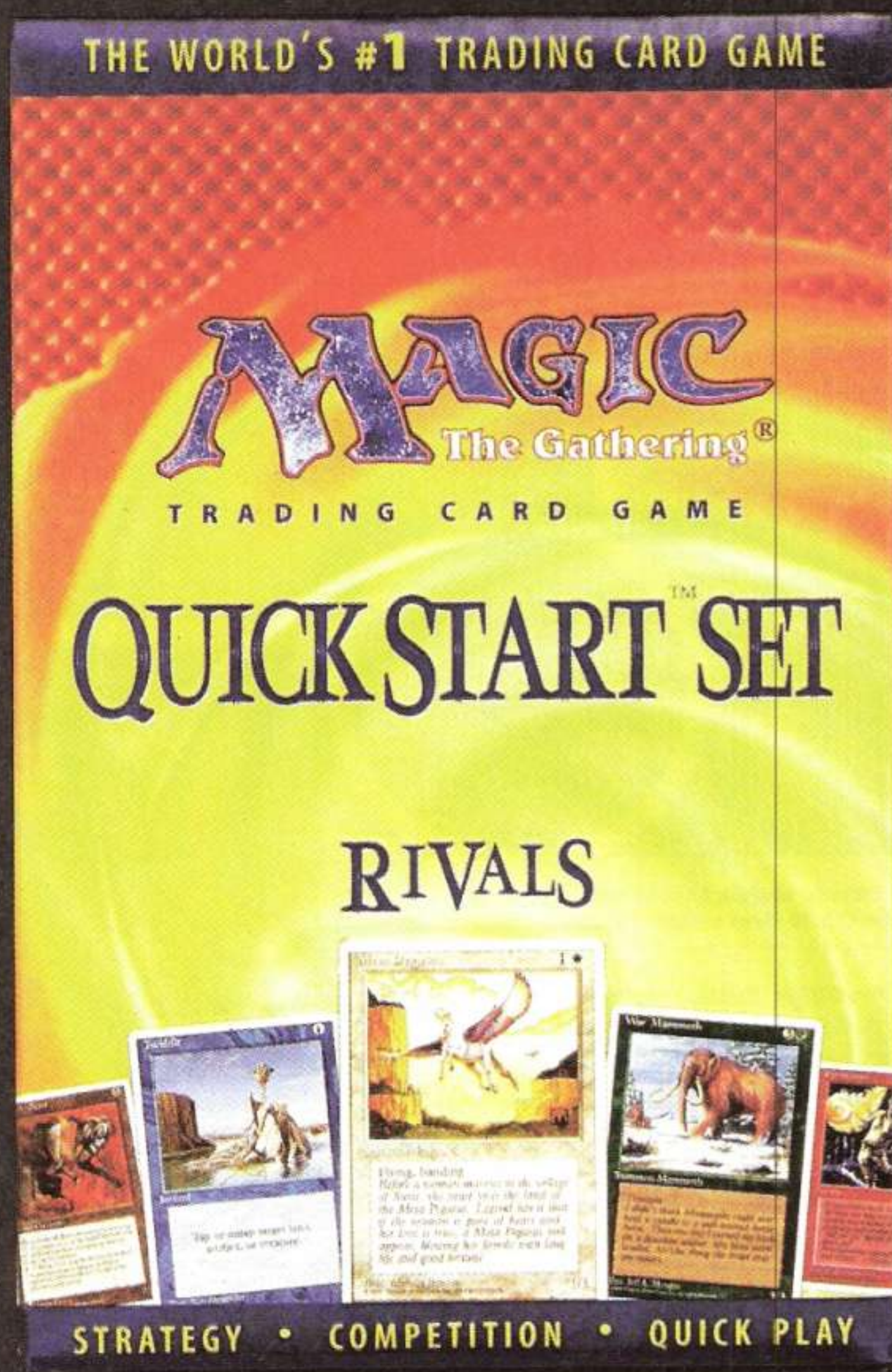
Madden '96 could be seen as the darkest moment in the history of E.A. Sports. However, it also seems to have served as a wake-up call, and if Madden '97 is any indication, the lesson has been well learned.



More than 600 players and 100 classic teams from the '60s-'80s are in JMF '97

John Madden himself has returned as a direct consultant to help refine the play selection and mechanics

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ng alphas

# PilotWings 64



Since you can hover, the rocket pack is the best vehicle for scouting through the game and looking over each area

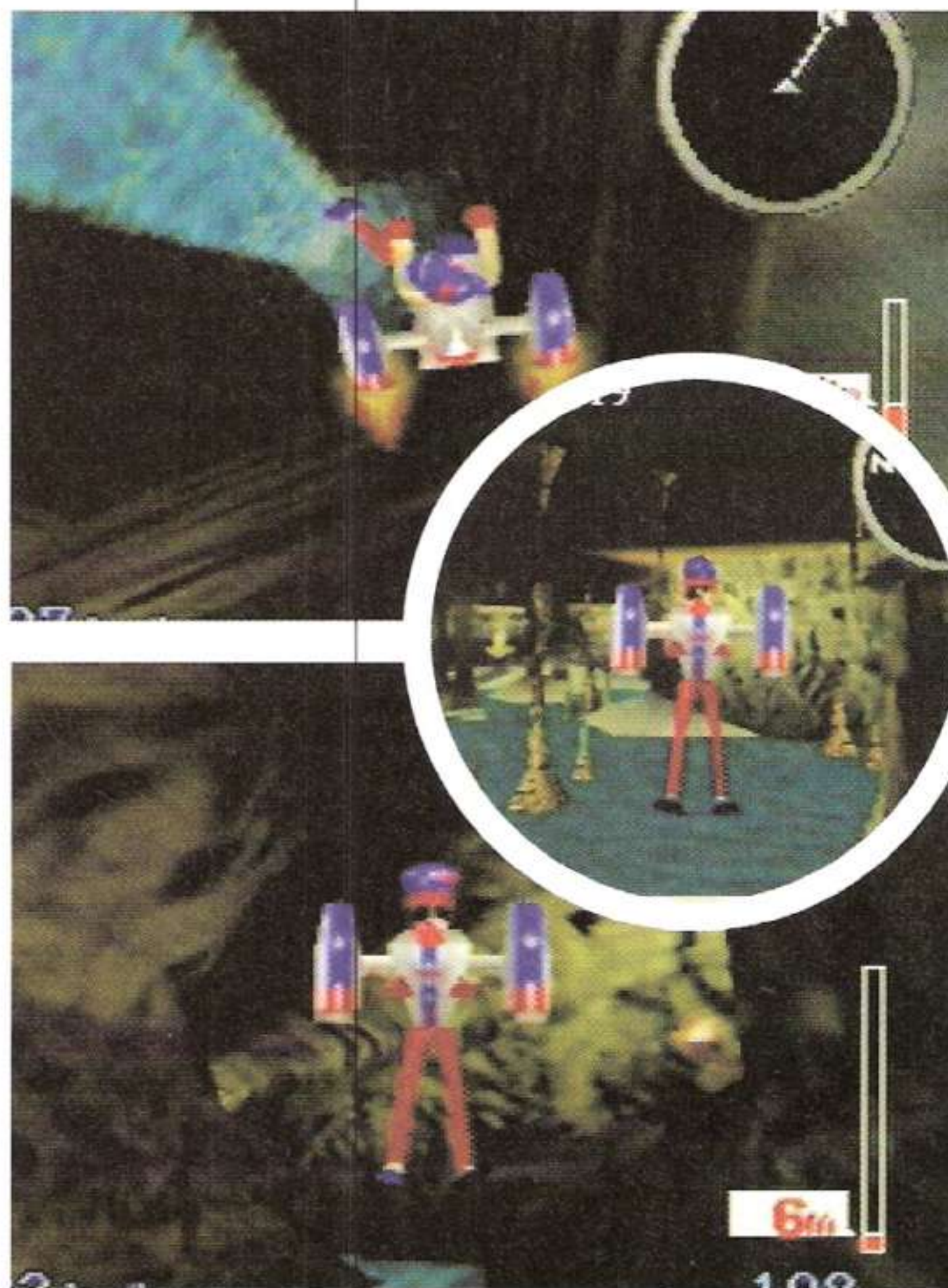
Format: **Nintendo 64**  
 Publisher: **Nintendo**  
 Developer: **Paradigm**  
 Release Date: **September**  
 Origin: **U.S.**

**The flight engine is extremely smooth, but it's the game's graphic quality that truly catches the eye**

**T**he original *Pilotwings* was a sleeper hit in the early days of the Super NES. Not quite a flight sim, not quite an action game, it nevertheless had a spellbinding effect on those who played it. Offering the chance to hang glide, skydive, and pilot biplanes, attack choppers, and even rocketbelts (not to mention the hidden penguin skydiver), the game offered hours of gameplay, as it was open-ended enough to allow for creative exploration. The title was also, (not coincidentally), the perfect showcase for the hardware features of the new Super NES.

**Plunging toward** the earth while skydiving provided a dramatic example of the console's built-in sprite scaling, while the flight sections were the perfect way to show off the abilities of Mode 7's background rotation and scrolling. The lounge tune soundtrack also went a long way toward giving an idea of what the machine's

Four years after the original game showcased the features of the Super NES, *Pilotwings* makes a triumphant return as one of the major first-wave releases for Nintendo 64



*Pilotwings 64* has a few more creative challenges than the endless "fly-through-the-rings" stages of the original. This cave is miles long, with numerous twists and tight squeezes — not an easy thing to fly through

custom 8-bit sound chip could produce.

With its latest hardware platform (finally) ready to launch, Nintendo looked to the Texas-based company Paradigm Simulations to come up with a similar showcase game, and the designers there looked to Nintendo's

# ng alphas



The level of detail is astounding: the "American Island" includes cities like Chicago and New York, and flying through them reveals cityscapes with everything but roaches

classic for inspiration. Rest assured, this latest incantation of *Pilotwings* takes as much advantage of the Nintendo 64's hardware as its ancestor did of the Super NES.

The game is based around three basic types of craft: the hang glider, gyrocopter, and rocket pack. There's also a choice of six pilots, each with his or her own combination of skills and attributes, and you're free to choose any pilot for any stage. This enables the player to select a smaller, lighter pilot for the gyrocopter, while still using a heavier one for the hang glider, for example, where the extra weight makes it easier to fight against wind.

The flight engine is extremely smooth, but it's the game's graphic quality that truly catches the eye. Each level of competition is held on a



You can expect not only familiar urban landmarks, but dotted all over the map are other, equally familiar sights (above). The Human Cannonball is an exercise in ballistics, as the hapless aerobat is shot at targets miles away (inset)



different island, and each island is its own complete world, fully realized in three dimensions. Going the original *Pilotwings* one better, Paradigm's new title provides pure enjoyment in the exploration of the individual islands, each nearly a game in itself. To scale, even the smallest island is some three by five square miles — and the largest, "The American Island," is 10 times that at 30 by 50 miles across. Flying over each island creates the impression that every building, mountain, and tree exists as it would in the real world. Objects simply start very small on the horizon, and get bigger with more discernible detail as they approach.

Nintendo 64 can perform this feat through two of its more important

**Flying over each island creates the impression that every building, mountain, and tree exists as it would in the real world**



The game includes a number of hidden surprises — and every stage has secret Birdman Suits, not to mention a certain number of Nintendo 64 flags. If you can find all of the flags, you'll receive an ultra-secret bonus





Again, the level of detail is amazing — look close and you can make out the bricks on the chimney, and each of these chalets also has a balcony going around it which you can land on

hardware features: mip-mapping and load management. Load management is a process by which objects are reduced to simpler geometry as they recede in the distance. Mip-mapping performs a similar task with texture maps, substituting less detailed textures as objects get farther away. The combination of the two dramatically reduces the polygon count and rendering time for a given frame, putting less strain on the console's geometry engine.

**Contrary to** Nintendo's PR rhetoric, this doesn't completely eliminate object pop-in. However, the threshold distance at which this occurs is so far away that unless you take your time and deliberately look for it, you'd never notice — and so for all intents and purposes, in the middle of a game pop-in simply doesn't exist.

*Pilotwings 64* also shows off another of the Nintendo 64's hardware features: Z-buffering. Z-buffering keeps track of how far "into" the screen each object is, and easily enables the graphics processors to know which parts of each object to render, and which parts are hidden. The result is that every polygon is rock-solid, with none of the strange, overlapping sections commonly seen at characters' joints in *Battle Arena Toshinden*, for example. Couple this with anti-aliasing and bilinear filtering, which smooth out textures and avoid the blockiness seen in every other system currently available, and you have a level of graphic detail that's simply amazing.

**As a game,** *Pilotwings 64* fares better than its Super NES ancestor. While the previous title had a certain appeal, the gameplay just wasn't that deep. The 64-bit update offers a much wider variety of challenges. Through four increasingly challenging levels, the

Mip-mapping and load management: objects begin small in the distance and simply grow in size and detail



Bilinear filtering and anti-aliasing: textures are smooth and show little or no pixelation, while edges of objects show none of those nasty "jaggies"

# ng alphas



The Birdman Suit is one of the more relaxing stages of the game. There's no goal here, just pleasant music and the ability to fly anywhere you wish, completely at your own pace — kinda peaceful, isn't it?



Oddly, the least goal-oriented of these bonus rounds, the birdman suit, is one of the best. Accompanied by a rhythmic soundtrack, the birdman levels enable players to simply fly around at leisure, with no time constraints or specific tasks to perform. With such gorgeous scenery, the effect is hypnotic.

**The joystick provides players with extremely precise control, and gives the impression that real-world physics are at work**

Like the original, *Pilotwings 64* will most likely wind up as a footnote in the history of the hardware it was designed to showcase, leaving the player with fond memories of his or her early experiences with the system. While it provides some interesting challenges, it's less a game than a drop-dead gorgeous example of the kind of rock-solid, smoothly flowing worlds the Nintendo 64 can produce. Being among the first wave of available titles, however, *Pilotwings 64* has few equals in its graphic beauty and in the sheer joy of flight it provides. **ng**

player competes with all three available vehicles, accomplishing various tests of skill. These range from something as simple as flying through a series of airborne rings, to carefully piloting through an underground tunnel, to bouncing a huge ball off the landscape and through a hoop, and even includes a few combat missions in the gyrocopter. Depending on how well these tasks are performed, the player may then earn a shot at a bonus round, including a birdman suit, skydiving, and the ever-popular human cannonball. The analog joystick provides players with extremely precise control, and gives the definite impression that real-world physics are at work. Yet, at the same time, the game is extremely easy to get into.



Other stages include skydiving, which unlike the original, also includes formation diving (left), hang gliding (right), and the truly strange Mercury Shoes (inset), which enable the player to make super-sized jumps across the landscape. Whether flying, diving, jumping, gliding, flapping your wings, or getting shot out of a cannon, *Pilotwings 64* delivers jaw-dropping graphics



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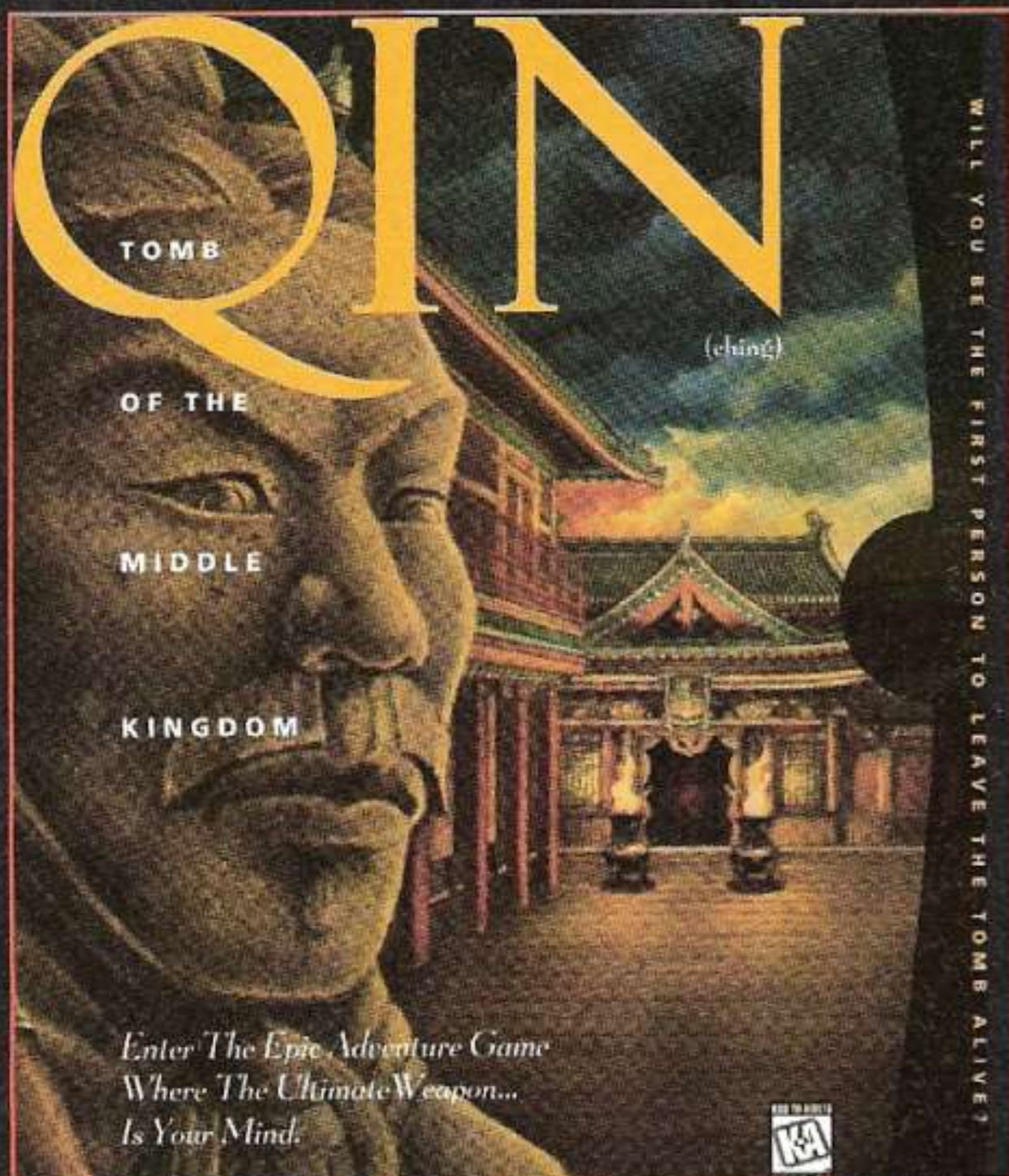
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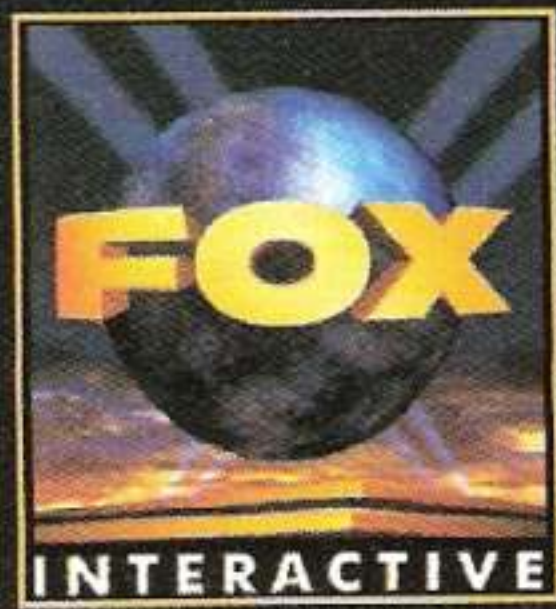
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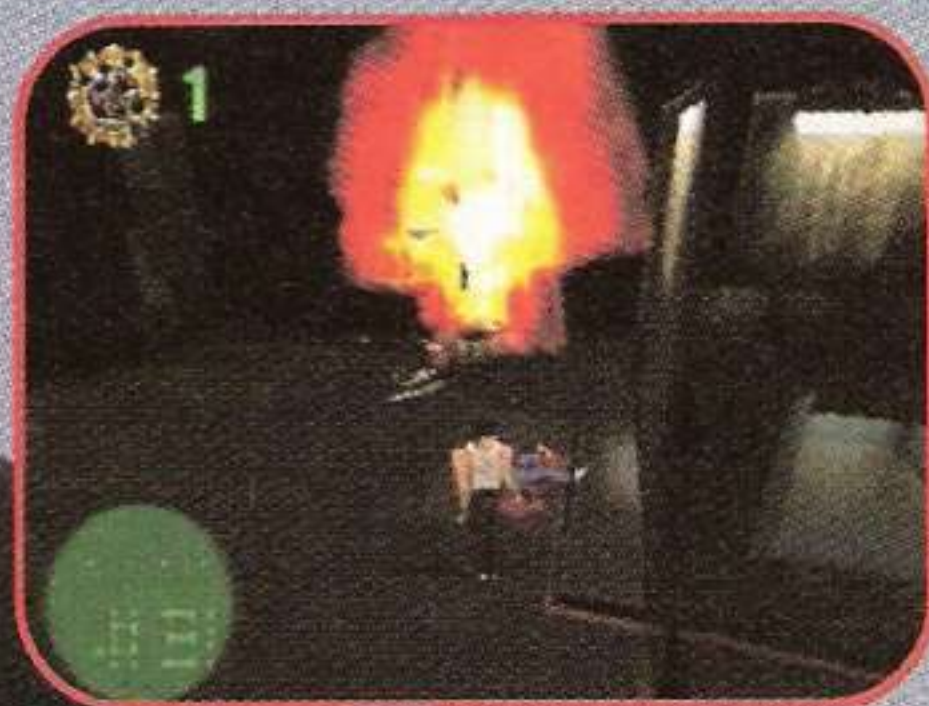
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# Destruction Derby 2

Psygnosis adds significant improvements in gameplay to the original *Destruction Derby* pretty graphics, for a sequel that's better, faster, stronger than it was



The sequel also frees the player from flat tracks and boring layouts. Banked curves and plenty of dips and hills offer lots of opportunity to grab some air

While the sequel still offers the chance to ram opposing cars at will, a greater emphasis has been placed on speed and racing

Format: **PlayStation**  
 Publisher: **Psygnosis**  
 Developer: **Psygnosis**  
 Release Date: **October**  
 Origin: **U.K.**

**Like in the original, the designers have put a lot of emphasis on spectacular crashes**

**A**long with *Warhawk*, *Twisted Metal*, and especially its sister Psygnosis product, *Wipeout*, *Destruction Derby* set the tone for graphic excellence in the early days of PlayStation. Unfortunately, the original game also followed the tradition of first-generation PlayStation titles in that it was mostly a one-song product — fine concepts backed up by few levels or options, providing the game with very little replay value.

The lesson has not been lost on *Destruction Derby 2*. The designers at Psygnosis have listened to criticism and critique, and in addition to upgrading the look to take advantage of every latest special effect the PlayStation graphics library can offer, this sequel also offers more depth of gameplay, and a wider variety of race types.

Players can still choose from four race circuits: Wrecking Racing, Stock Car Racing, Destruction Derby, and time trials, but unlike *Destruction Derby 1*,

the tracks have banks and hills, rather than all being laid out flat. Like the original, *Destruction Derby 2* also supports multiplayer options using the PlayStation link cable. Two players can choose from Duel or Team racing, and of course the ever popular Tag Racing (hit the other player and all computer-controlled cars chase after him).

Gameplay is also deeper all around. Each track (except for the all-out destruction modes, of course) come equipped with a pit area for repairs. And gamers are going to need them, too — the designers have put a lot of emphasis on spectacular crashes. Cars won't just bump into each other and show damage. At high speeds, they flip, roll, and even cartwheel end over end.

The first title was fun for the short time it lasted. The sequel promises to be even more intense, and should hold gamers' interest for a long time to come.



Have no fear, however, there's still plenty of room left for the spectacular crashes that made the original such a blast



# Wipeout XL



Familiar yet very different, *Wipeout XL* takes the best elements of the original and blends them with updated graphics and faster gameplay

Psygnosis continues its tradition of producing solid, powerhouse videogames with a sequel to one of the finest PlayStation games ever made



The sequel emphasizes combat skills as much as raw speed. Note the energy bar at the lower right — this time, you can literally be blown off

Format: **PlayStation**  
 Publisher: **Psygnosis**  
 Developer: **Psygnosis**  
 Release Date: **November**  
 Origin: **U.S.**

**It's in the new and improved weapon selection that the game really begins to show off**

**T**he original *Wipeout* was arguably the PlayStation's finest hour during its first wave. Faster than fast, with twisting, deviously designed tracks, the game made you believe "32-bit" really meant something. A sequel was inevitable, and as PlayStation moves into its second and third generation of software, the obvious question becomes whether a new *Wipeout* can still impress.

The answer is a resounding yes. Although still in its early beta stage, *Wipeout XL* (see early alpha, NG 15) shows every sign of being another PlayStation breakthrough title. The action is approximately 20% faster than the original, and in response to criticisms that the game was too tough on beginners, the tracks also have been made wider and more

forgiving. It's in the new and improved weapon selection, however, that the game really begins to show off.

In the original *Wipeout*, weapons were fun to play with, but rarely useful, and would only result in a car being momentarily stunned. For the sequel, not only have Psygnosis' designers come up with an entirely new arsenal, but each car also sports a damage meter, and it is possible to completely destroy a car and knock a driver out of the race.

**New weapons** include a multimissile, improved and various mines, and the "Earthquaker," a truly bizarre device that causes a huge disruptive wave in the track ahead of the player. In fact, it seems as if an entirely new ensemble of PlayStation graphics effects has been invented, as nothing in the game looks even remotely like that of previous PlayStation titles.

Topping an instant classic like the original *Wipeout* is a formidable task. Next Generation is pleased to report that the designers at Psygnosis have managed to do just that.



Although the tracks are wider, don't expect an easy time. Enemy AI has also been improved



New weapons include the oddly psychedelic "Earthquaker" (top)



ng alphas

# Shining Sword

American Laser Games is looking to remake its tarnished image with one of the most ambitious PlayStation projects of 1996. Can *Shining Sword* do it?



The motion capture has not been incorporated into these renders yet

Format: **PlayStation**  
 Publisher: **TBA**  
 Developer: **American Laser Games**  
 Release Date: **fourth quarter**  
 Origin: **U.S.**

**After undergoing a radical restructuring, ALG is attempting an exceptionally ambitious project**

**A**merican Laser Games hasn't had the best reputation in the console market for quite some time. Although *Mad Dog McCree* was a fairly novel shooter on 3DO — especially when played with the Light Gun — *Mad Dog II*, *Space Pirates*, *Drug Wars*, and *Crime Patrol* were all extremely derivative efforts. *Mazer*, the company's only nonlight-gun game, was an almost unplayable shooter. But after undergoing some rather radical restructuring, including the shut-down of its arcade division, ALG has switched target platforms (to PlayStation), and is attempting an exceptionally ambitious project. If successful, this gamble could leave the company's previous efforts in the dust, and establish it as a premiere developer in PlayStation's second wave of titles. *Shining Sword* combines the over-



This dragon will use ALG's particle generator to spew massive fireballs

the-shoulder view and the questing theme of *Resident Evil* with a fully fledged 3D combat system like *Battle Arena Toshinden*. The plot of the game is fairly simple. It's set in the city of Haradum, which was once a great capitol city, until it came under the thumb of Nazduk, your typical super-evil dictator. He was deposed, but not before casting a spell on the city — turning its citizens into animals and dooming it. Against this backdrop, you play one of four characters, a rat, a minotaur, a female acolyte, or an undead Lich (actually Nazduk himself), all of whom are questing for the "shining sword," which will return the citizens to their human state, and give the possessor of the sword super powers.

You progress through the city solving puzzles in a similar vein to *Resident Evil*, with several key differences. First, the entire 3D city is rendered on the fly, unlike the



A modified MIME skeleton (top) and a finished render (above)



# ng alphas



The Lich floats above ground. An innovative shading routine has been developed to animate his cloak. Notice how the buildings in the background exist without space between them and appear as digital facades



Three views of gameplay give an impression of the scale of the world

prerendered scenes of Capcom's *Resident Evil*. The game also has a dynamic, asynchronous loading scheme, which also means no stupid "door-opening" animation, or similar conceits to hide load time. Instead, areas around the player are constantly loaded, as areas he or she cannot reach are purged from memory. This should enable a much more immersive play experience.

**More importantly** is the fighting, which is done as are your standard 3D fighters, complete with motion captured moves, etc. Most of the fighting is done with medieval-style weapons, and ALG is using members of the Society for Creative Anachronism for the motion capture. Because the fighting happens in a real city, and not an arena, you (or your opponents) can run away and continue the fight later in another area, or fight your way from one part of the map to another. The fights are also not restricted to one-on-one bouts either. Many times you'll square off against multiple opponents. The trade off to these vastly expanded fighting options, of course, is that you can only choose from between four playable characters.

The technology ALG is using to implement its very ambitious design spec is one of the more impressive elements of the project as a whole. ALG is using a modified version of Sony's MIME development tool for creating characters (heretofore it has been used only in the dinosaur developer demo and *Kingsfield*). This waveform-based

animation system enables designers to specify key frames, and the MIME tool handles all the tweening on the fly. Unfortunately, standard MIME is extremely memory intensive, and doesn't support skeletal animation. By creating support for skeletons in a proprietary version of MIME, ALG has reduced MIME memory requirements to one tenth of their previous size. This has enabled ALG to make its characters more than 600 polygons (compared to only 300 in *Toshinden* and 200 in *Tekken*). To keep speed up, and to distinguish the characters from the heavily textured backgrounds, these grotesques will be mostly Gouraud shaded, with spot texturing on the face and other areas.

**ALG is** on a much tighter budget than some of the larger development houses, which has made for interesting innovation. The company made its own proprietary optical motion-capture system for \$10,000. The results, in gameplay, are barely distinguishable from infrared systems.

This is an ambitious project. Not only does ALG have to make it all work, but it has to make sure it's fun, too. We won't know whether it's succeeded until we play the finished product. But we do know this, ALG deserves applause for attempting to take PlayStation technology far beyond the state-of-the-art, and gameplay to levels which we have simply not seen before.



Note the absence of textures on the characters. Not only does this speed rendering, it enables developers to use more polygons per character. An additional advantage is that characters stand out against textured objects

# ng alphas



The *Strike* series is known for its near-perfect mix of strategy and action, high level of challenge, and huge levels. At Next Generation, however, we're pleased to report that everything still blows up real well



# Soviet Strike

Format: **PlayStation, Saturn**

Publisher: **Electronic Arts**

Developer: **EA Studios**

Release Date: **October**

Origin: **U.S.**

Electronic Arts brings its classic action series up to date with a new look, hard-hitting game play, and the coolest explosions 32-bit consoles can produce

**“One of the things we could never do with the 16-bit games was have a true, living battlefield”**

Albert Penello, product manager

**E**lectronic Art's signature *Strike* series is (finally) making the leap to a next-generation console, and it's about time. If ever

a series screamed to be set free of its 2D isometric roots and allowed a full 3D environment, this is it. We're pleased to report that *Soviet Strike* (despite the odd misnomer of a title), promises to be as stunning for 32-bit platforms as its predecessors were for 16-bit consoles.

“The *Strike* games have always had something to do with the headlines of the times,” says *Soviet Strike*'s Product Manager Albert Penello. “So this one takes place in the former Soviet Union, where different warring factions are trying to take over the country by defeating the all-but-mothballed Russian army.” The game's five mission

areas are therefore spread all over the old Eastern Empire, from the Khyber to the Black Sea, as the player climbs into his trusty attack chopper to push back the enemies of Democracy.

**This isn't, however**, your father's old *Strike* game at its heart. While the overall structure should be familiar to veterans of *Desert Strike* or *Jungle Strike*, the idea behind the game has been given a new spin. Penello explains: “We went back to the basics and thought through what had worked and what hadn't worked with the 16-bit entries in the series. This latest game follows some of the traditions, so the missions are still pretty much objective-based, but one of the things we could never do with the



For its first 32-bit outing, *Soviet Strike* places all the emphasis on the vehicle the series' fans know best: the assault chopper



For its full 3D landscapes, *Soviet Strike* used real topographical survey maps and satellite photos — so all the geography is as real as it can possibly be

16-bit games was have a true, living battlefield." In other words, don't expect enemy tanks and Croatle mobile SAMs to just sit there, patiently waiting for you to come along and blow them up. "The idea is to have situations that you have to deal with within a battlefield that constantly changes depending on decisions you make. For instance, if you don't blow up all of the tanks in an early part of a mission, some of those tanks you didn't get to are going to be waiting for you later."

**Soviet Strike** uses a new 3D engine developed by the same team that created *Road Rash* for 3DO. In fact, *Soviet Strike* originally began life as a 3DO project more than two and a half years ago (NG 11). When that platform was abandoned, the engine was refined for the much more powerful PlayStation and Saturn. With nearly two years of development for those systems, the game engine boasts features no other 32-bit title can match, including mission areas based on topographic maps of geographic areas.

The final game will include digitized voices coming over the radio during missions, and FMV cut-scenes in the form of news reports on your actions.

Also, while the designers don't foresee any additional craft to pilot besides the familiar *Strike* attack chopper (and players can definitely not expect a repeat of *Urban Strike's* near disastrous foot missions), the list of chopper upgrades has been expanded. Players can expect a number of mission-specific power-ups.

They can also expect a game punched up with a humor. "We're shooting for something with a bit more of a



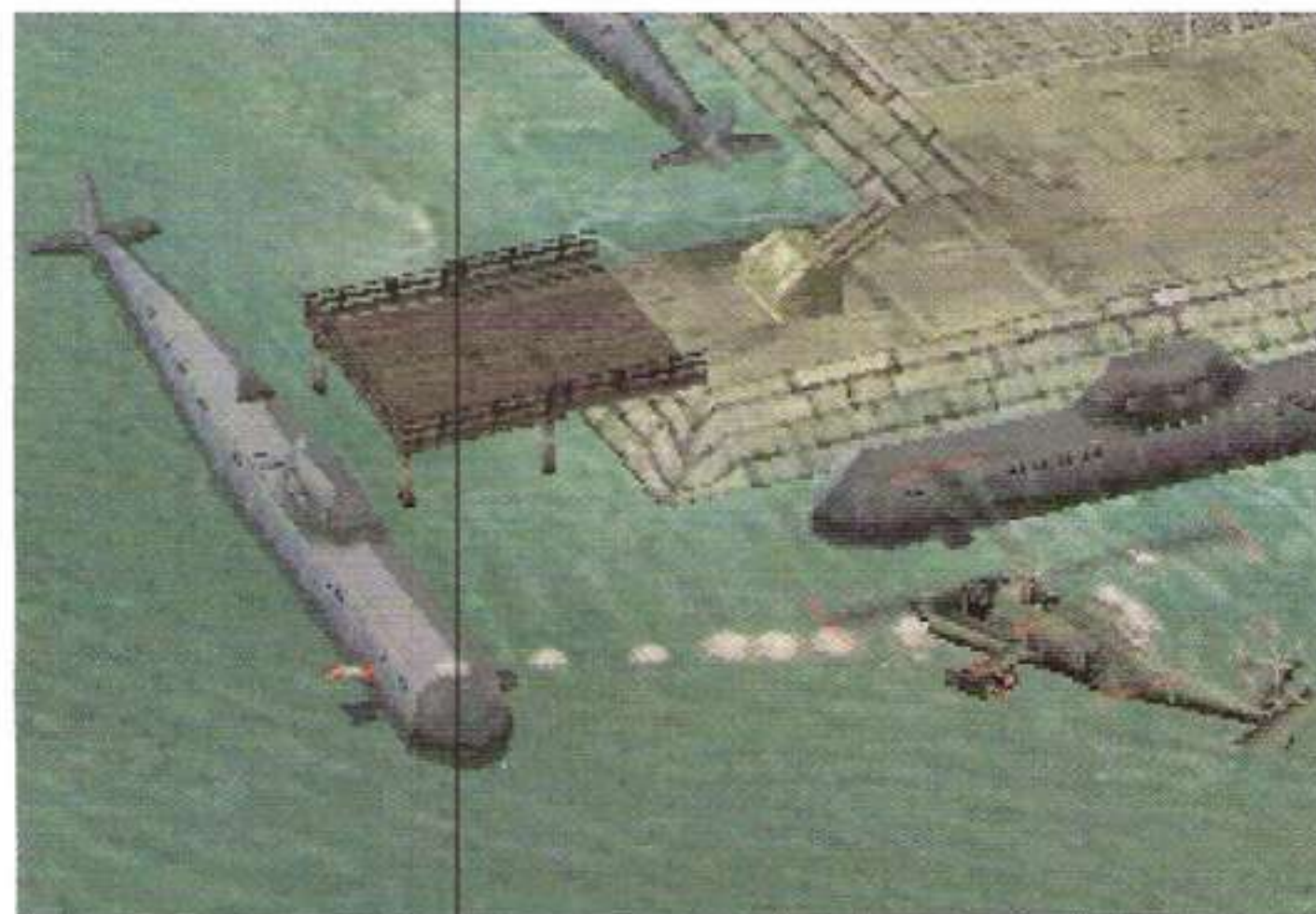
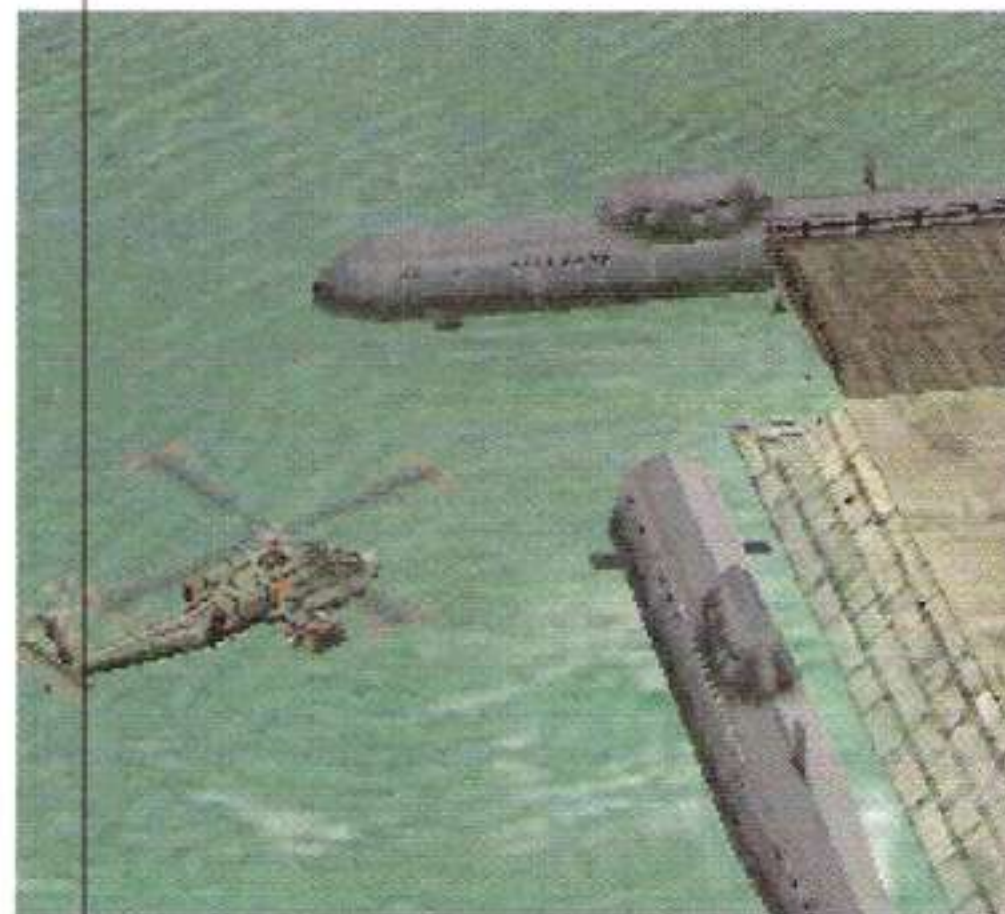
The look may be brand new, but gameplay is faithful to the series, and anyone who's played before will feel right at home

**The game engine boasts features that no other 32-bit title can match, including mission areas based on actual topographic maps**

'Mission: Impossible'-style tongue-in-cheek humor," says Penello. "Lots of the kind of strange details that don't really influence the game but add some depth. And," he chuckles, "the production team have a real affection for Elvis — The King *will* be back."



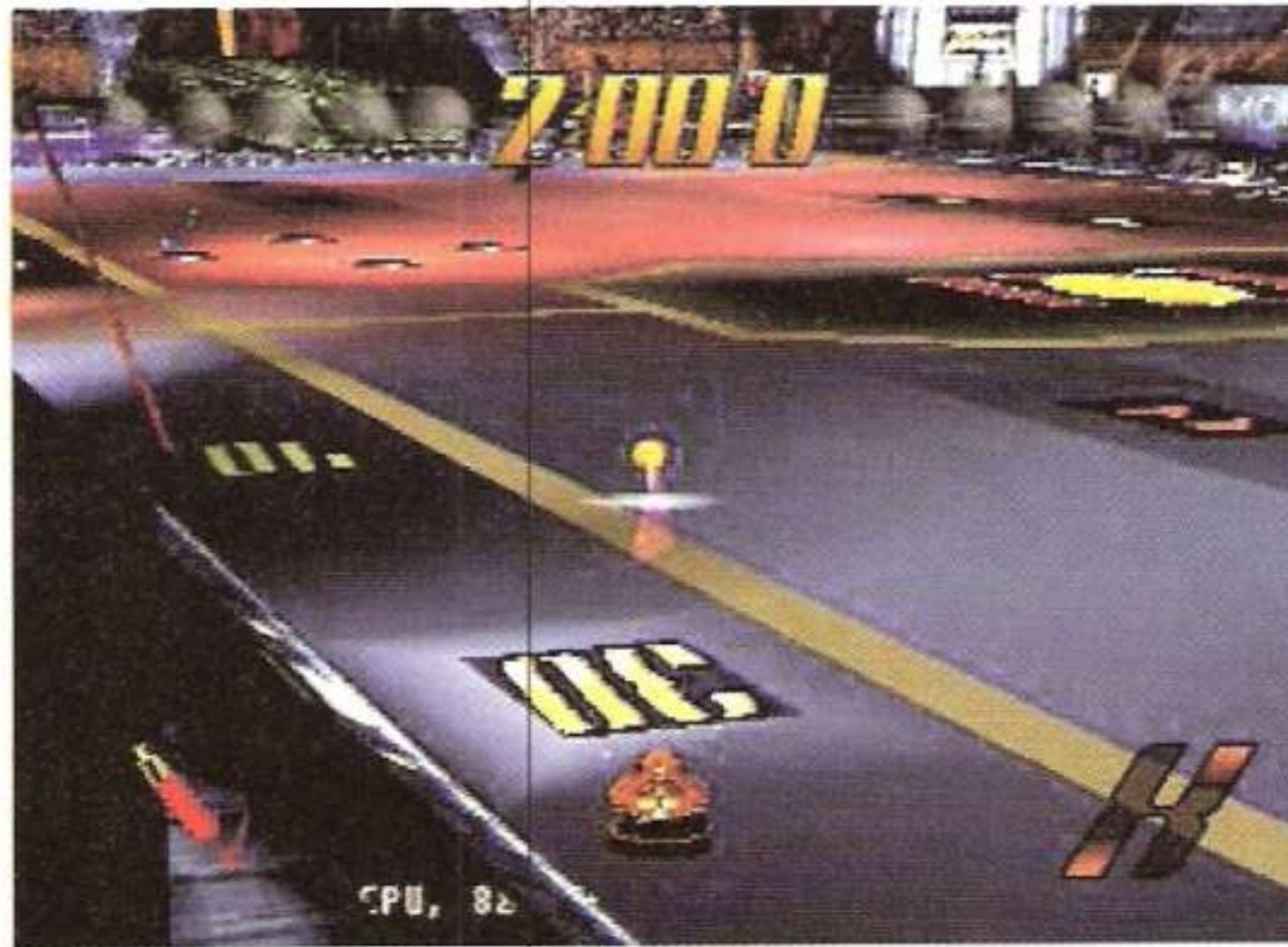
The idea behind this latest game was to both increase players' options and make it necessary to use them. Enemy AI has been significantly upgraded, and the battlefield constantly changes. "The first mission or two will follow a pattern that's familiar to those who have played *Strike* games before," says Product Manager Albert Penello, "but as you continue through the game, you'll find things are very different, with enemy forces constantly moving and responding to your tactics, always driving toward the center and finding your weaknesses." In other words, don't expect many chances to rest



ng alphas

# Ballblazer Champions

LucasArts discovers the missing link between retrogaming and state-of-the-art with an update of an '80s classic, *Ballblazer*



The original *Ballblazer* concept remains intact in *Champions*: two players go head-to-head, attempting to "catch" a ball (left), which is then shot into the opponent's goal. Factor 5's update promises to be one of the most attractive 32-bit games to date, thanks to its use of high-resolution visuals

Format: **PlayStation**  
 Publisher: **LucasArts**  
 Developer: **Factor 5**  
 Release Date: **TBA**  
 Origin: **Germany**

**I**n 1983, when the 8-bit microcomputer revolution was beginning to take a firm hold, LucasArts released a game, based around an imaginary futuristic sport, to universal acclaim. Thirteen years later, *Ballblazer*, originally a hit on the Commodore 64 and Atari 800, is being exhumed under the guise of *Ballblazer Champions* by veteran codeshop Factor 5, whose CV includes *Turrican* and a number of 16-bit console projects for LucasArts such as *Indiana Jones' Greatest Adventures*.

"It's still based on the '83 classic, it's still head-to-head, but apart from that, everything has changed," says Julian Eggebrecht, Factor 5's director. These changes come in the form of nine selectable player classes (one human, eight alien), variably powered

rotofoil crafts, upgradeable weapon systems and, perhaps most importantly, playing areas totally unlike those of the original.

"The playing surface isn't always flat, and the 3D in the complex stadiums gets as complicated as anything you'll see in *Super Mario 64*," claims Eggebrecht. "The game takes place in consistently bigger and more complex arenas. One league in the championship consists of only natural stadiums which feature craters and canyons, with one entirely composed of ice."

In terms of special effects, the team uses a complex lighting system with a fancy particle system for dozens of huge explosion effects, says Eggebrecht, who adds that every type of PlayStation SFX is used.

"We're drawing the stadium all of the time — all 6,000 polygons of it — running at 30 fps in hi-res modes."

If Factor 5 can meld the legendary playability of the original with its own expert technical content, *Ballblazer Champions* has the potential to be one of the biggest PlayStation games of 1996.



One of the game's 13 stadiums (top, middle) and a rotofoil (above) which you control

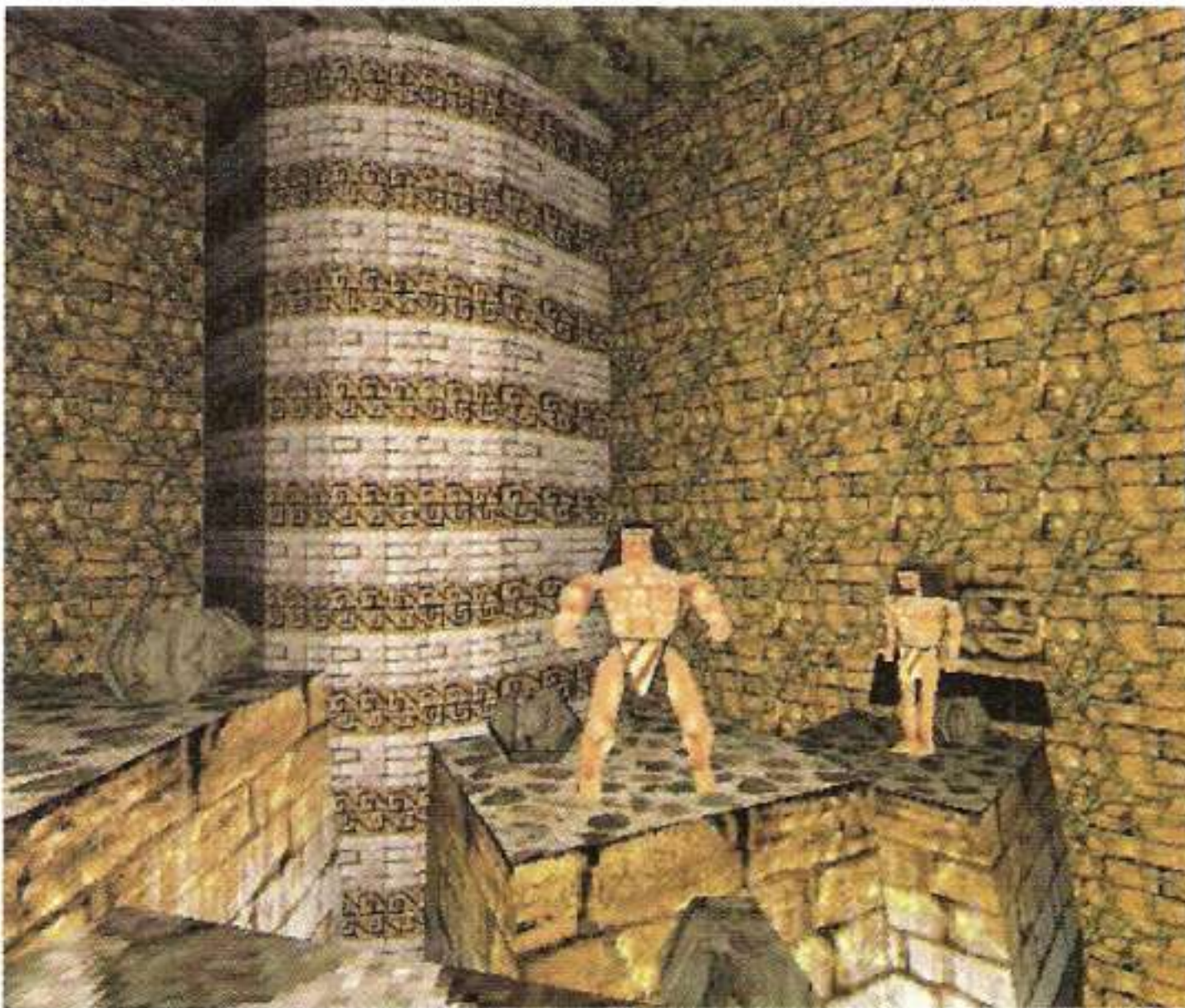


A full-screen mode is used for the one-player (versus CPU) and two-player link-up options

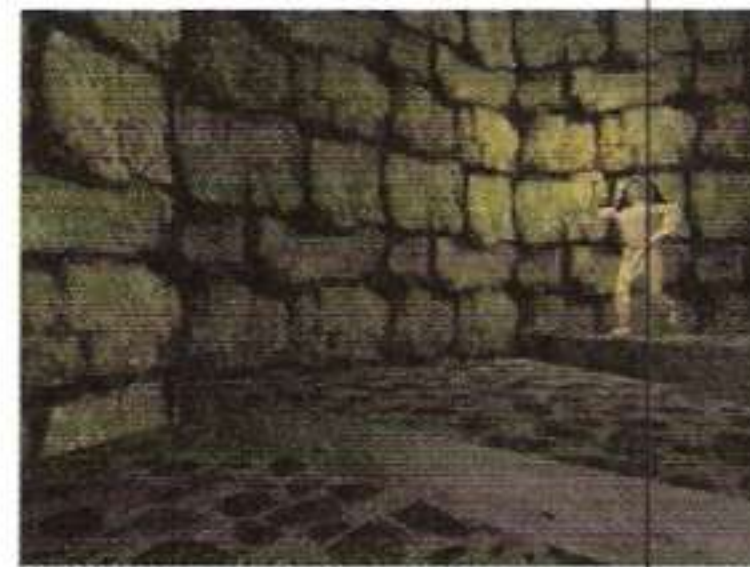
ng

# Montezuma's Return

Utopia Technologies releases a game to showcase UVision, its new 3D engine that may change graphic adventures forever



Hulking Aztec guards are just a few of the many hurdles you'll encounter



Point-light sourcing is a major feature of Utopia's UVision — note how the torch light easily moves with the character

Format: **PC CD-ROM**

Publisher: **TBA**

Developer: **Utopia Technologies**

Release Date: **fall**

Origin: **U.S.**

**This game is the first to use UVision, Utopia Tech's 3D graphic engine that's been in development for more than two years**

**G**raphic adventures come and go, but the best of them always have one thing in common: They push the innovative envelope to bring the player the most up-to-date graphic technologies available. *Montezuma's Return* from Utopia Technologies is no exception.

The game is the first to use UVision, Utopia Tech's 3D graphic engine that's been in development for more than two years. UVision is able to generate multiple moving light sources, including point sources and spotlight (directional) sources, as well as realtime phong shading. Most impressive, UVision can generate a three-dimensional world at any resolution and up to 16-bit color, limited only by the horsepower of the player's system. Like *Id* before it, Utopia is currently in negotiations with other developers to license the UVision engine for other games.

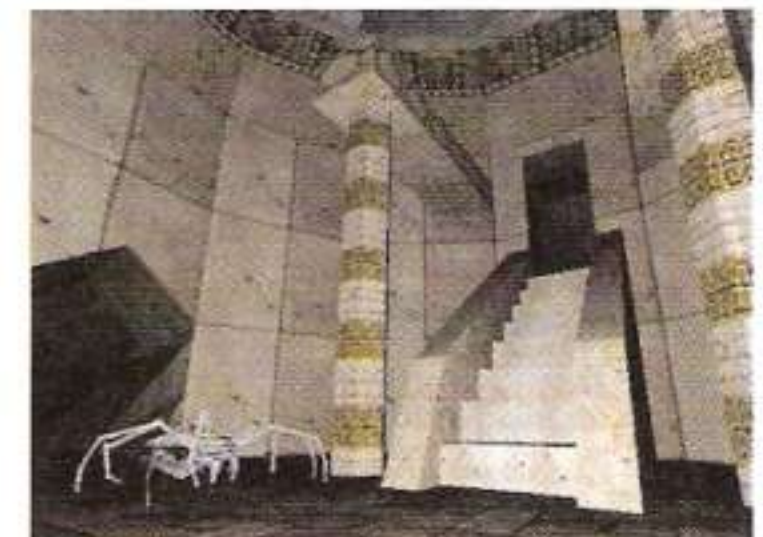
## *Montezuma's Return*

follows the adventures of Max Montezuma, a hapless pilot who's small plane crashes in the Pacific during a raging storm. Desperate to survive, he

washes up on the shore of an uncharted island off the coast of Mexico, an especially deadly place inhabited by the descendants of a tribe of exiled Aztec warriors. Worse, something other than the Aztecs is there and has taken an interest in the island, and Max — something not of this Earth.

The game unfolds in a first-person perspective, through a complete 3D world, totally rendered in realtime. Players can expect a mix of both puzzle solving and action as they battle through jungles, volcanic caves, and underwater passages. Obstacles include the Aztecs, but also giant insects, nasty bats, and who knows what other bizarre beings. The player can, however, also expect help from allies he or she meets along the way, not the least of which is (and we're not making this up) a giant frog.

If you like your graphic adventures big, a little strange, and on the cutting edge of technology, *Montezuma's Return* could fill the bill.



UVision is a true next-generation 3D engine: inside or outside, on land, sea, or air, the system is up to the task, as *Montezuma's Return* shows

ng

ng alphas

# Thunder Truck Rally

The developers responsible for *Destruction Derby* take to the mud for some monster truck mayhem



Whether rolling across the countryside or through the arena events, *Thunder Truck Rally* boasts some of the most highly detailed texture maps the PS-X can muster



Format: **PlayStation**  
 Publisher: **Psygnosis**  
 Developer: **Reflections**  
 Release Date: **fall**  
 Origin: **U.K.**

**The Stunt, Challenge, and Monster Truck Rally modes offer the true essence of the monster truck experience**

**R**acing fans will be spoiled for choice by Psygnosis' fall PlayStation line-up. Bizarre Creations' *F1*, the in-house *Wipeout XL* (page 77) and Reflections' *Destruction Derby 2* (page 76) will all appear on the Psygnosis label. But lurking in the shadows of these sure-fire blockbusters is a second title from Reflections that could end up offering the most racing thrills of the bunch: *Thunder Truck Rally* uses essentially the same game engine as *DD 2*, but puts a slightly different spin (and considerably bigger wheels) on it.

The game begins with a choice of 12 training modes, giving players a chance to practice on short circuits and in

stadiums. Here, you can learn to handle the big rigs while driving up slopes, through mud, and across some of the bumpiest dirt tracks you're likely to see.

**The main event** in the game, however, is the Endurance Race — a four-day, five-stage event across 500 miles of varied terrain and constantly changing weather conditions. Players can choose between two vehicles, a lean-and-mean desert buggy or the prototypical giant truck. The reason for this choice becomes evident when you consider that Reflections has devised a driving model that attempts to accurately model the forces of suspension, wheel size, and center of gravity for each vehicle.

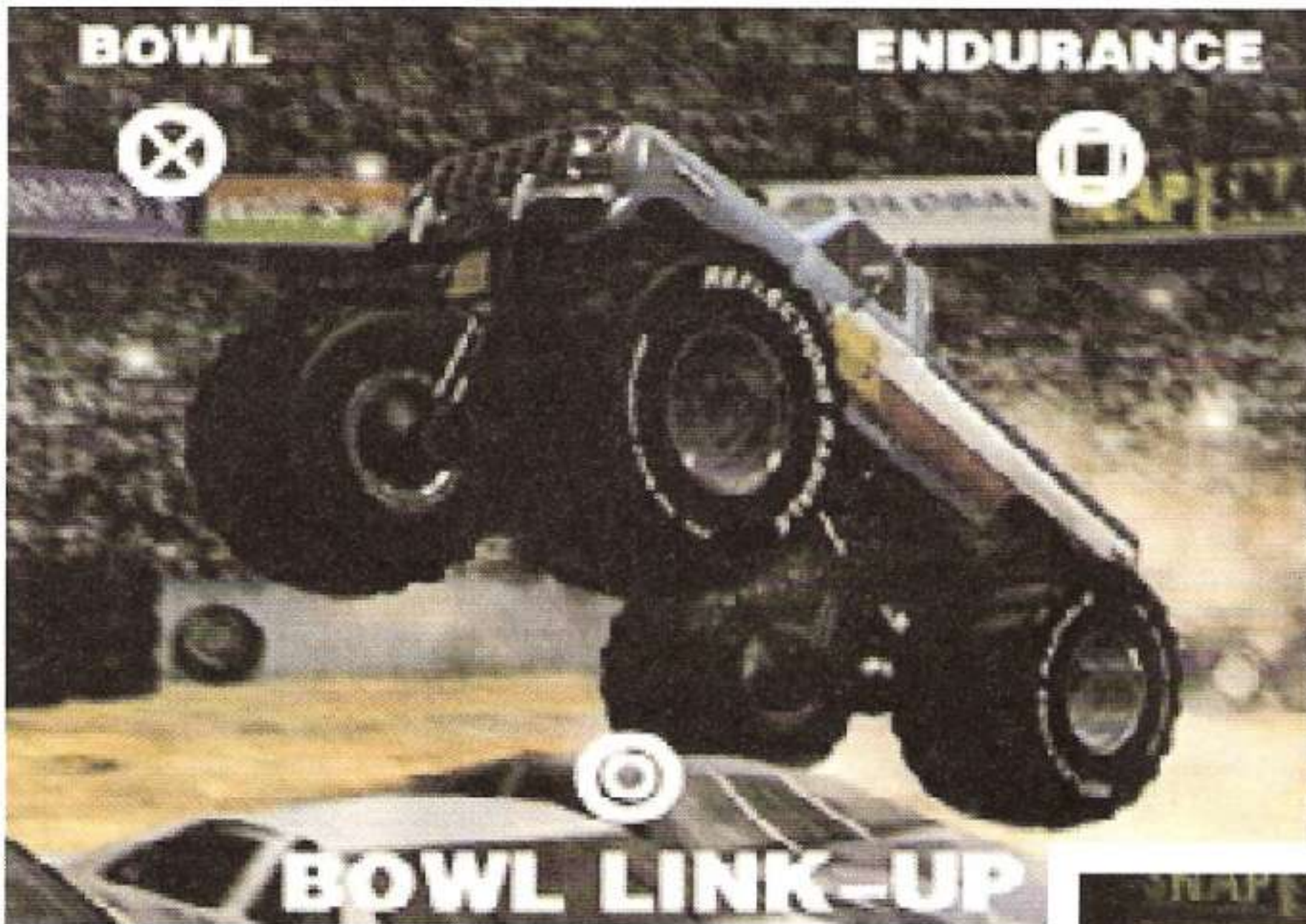
The truck, while often able to power its way up steep slopes and through even the most treacherous bogs, bounces around far too much to be able to drive at high speed over straight, bumpy mountain roads — in fact, there's a very real danger that the truck may flip over.

The buggy, on the other hand, with



**The Endurance Race** takes place across vastly different terrains

# ng alphas



Like nearly every other Psygnosis title, *Thunder Truck Rally* fully supports the PlayStation link cable. Two-player, head-to-head monster truck action — the mind boggles. Muddy terrains are especially cool

its low center of gravity and smaller tires, excels on those kinds of surfaces, but easily gets mired down on more challenging terrain. The competition then becomes a classic test of strategy, a choice between using raw power and heading cross country, or sticking to the flatlands and relying on maneuverability and speed to reach the goal first.

**The Stunt**, Challenge, and Monster Truck Rally modes offer the pure essence of the monster truck experience. Here are the events that made monster trucks what they are today: drive blithely over the roofs of



cars, winning points based solely on the amount of damage a player can cause.

The Rally mode offers players the unique option of placing cameras wherever they desire around the arena. Each camera can then be programmed to focus on a specific vehicle throughout a race or rally, and this "footage" can then be edited afterward. The player can then add zooms and cuts for dramatic individual replays.

**Reflections** has taken all the lessons learned developing the two *Destruction Derby* games and applied them here. The game includes a number of impressive special effects, including clouds of dust, mist, snow, and even lens flare. Few companies have released as many quality titles for the PlayStation as Psygnosis, and *Thunder Truck Rally* shows no sign of departing from that tradition.



Feel free to run over hills, houses, and um, other landmarks



Monster trucks may be powerful, but they have one small problem: they're just a wee-bit top heavy. Players will have to be careful on steep grades and bumpy roads to keep the truck from completely tipping over

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**E**ach month, NEXT Generation's team of die-hard gamers reviews and rates the month's new game releases. Our opinion as to each game's merits is expounded in the text, but as a rough guide to a game's worth (or lack of it) then refer to the following ratings.

- ★★★★★ **Revolutionary**  
Brilliantly conceived and flawlessly executed; a new high-water mark.
- ★★★★ **Excellent**  
A high-quality and inventive new game. Either a step forward for an existing genre, or a successful attempt at creating a new one.
- ★★★ **Good**  
A solid and competitive example of an established game style.
- ★★ **Average**  
Perhaps competent; certainly uninspired.
- ★ **Bad**  
Crucially flawed in design or application.

## PlayStation

### Killing Zone

**Publisher:** Naxat Soft  
**Developer:** Naxat Soft

If *Tekken 2* is the finest 3D brawler PlayStation has ever seen, *Killing Zone* is trying its darndest to be the one at the bottom of the barrel. The animation is among the worst we've ever seen, play control can charitably be called "peculiar," and the camera angles jump around in a way that's supposed



*Killing Zone's* monsters aren't as frightening as its gameplay

to be dynamic but only serves to be totally confusing. In a one-player game, rather than go to the

trouble of coming up with decent enemy AI, the designers have simply made every enemy you face faster, more powerful, and quicker to recover than you are. To call this game frustrating is to give the most unbearably frustrating games a bad name.

The heartbreak of it all is that, on paper, *Killing Zone* could have been a standout: its characters are all classic monsters, either from movies or mythology, and the original plan was to make the game dark and gory as hell. There are still a few interesting tidbits, like a

## PlayStation

# TEKKEN TO THE LIMIT



The game's features include a "big head" code, and a big-headed bear is worth the price by itself (top). Yoshimitsu kicks ass (above)?

### Tekken 2

**Publisher:** Namco  
**Developer:** Namco

The original *Tekken* was a definite high-water mark in PlayStation's early days. It was a top-notch 3D brawler in its own right, and the PlayStation version was more than just another straight arcade conversion — the designers at Namco added a slew of extra features, including additional playable characters, new play modes, and animated endings.

*Tekken 2* goes even farther. The graphics have undergone improvements. Backgrounds are more interesting this time around, including impressive lighting effects in Yoshimitsu's stage. The characters still look a little like broken puppets, but they move smoother than the original, and the animation is nothing short of excellent. Play control lags slightly, but just slightly, and only by comparing it to the dead-on mechanics of, say, *Virtua Fighter 2* would you even notice.

And boy, does it come with extras. In addition to a ridiculous number of playable characters (19, including all bosses and sub-bosses which, as in the original, become playable after you beat them), the game adds Tournament modes, Survival modes, and possibly best of all, a Practice mode. You can practice defending against combos: just select whatever character you're having trouble with, have him or her start the combo, and the screen tells you what level block you need to use to fend off each hit. The utility of the practice feature can't be overstated — even relative novices can quickly learn the basics, and experts can hone 10-hit combos at leisure. If this feature doesn't wind up becoming a standard on every brawler released from now on, we'd be very surprised.

*Tekken 2* isn't perfect, but it's damn close, and chock full of interesting characters, humor, and way-cool moves. It's the best 3D fighting game yet available for PlayStation.

**Rating:** ★★★★★

PlayStation

# JUMP FOR JOY



The fantastical first-person look and feel of the original is perfectly captured in *Jumping Flash! 2* (top). But the degree of difficulty of the bosses and the standard levels are still meager. However, the emphasis on hidden bonuses and larger worlds adds superb value



## Jumping Flash! 2

**Publisher:** Sony Computer Entertainment  
**Developer:** Exact

Close to a year ago, a game featuring a mech-rabbit showed up with precious little hype, and turned out to be one of the most innovative titles ever, for any system. That game was, of course, *Jumping Flash!*, and as if we actually deserved a gift from the heavens, this month marks the arrival of *Jumping Flash! 2*. While it's nearly impossible for any sequel to have the same impact as an original, *JF2* does an excellent job of recreating the magic of the first game, yet still adds creative details and fresh ideas throughout. Taking the first-person shooter to a whole new level, *Jumping Flash! 2* combines all the fun of a top-notch platform game with some of the most dramatic visual effects yet seen on PlayStation.

Another carry-over from the original game, however, is that it's simply too easy to beat. The worlds are considerably larger, the challenges are new and exciting, and overall the focus of the game has shifted slightly to accommodate more exploration, but the difficulty level is set way too low. This is especially true of the bosses: The awe you feel when first setting eyes on the giant Shark or Plant bosses, both of which are intricately designed and strikingly impressive in size, is quickly lost after you defeat them in a matter of seconds.

Outside of the general lack of serious challenge, *JF2* does represent what is still some of the most inventive and enjoyable gameplay available anywhere. With the new larger 3D worlds and emphasis on hidden bonuses (a feature conspicuously missing from the original), *JF2* takes a big hop in the direction of a new style of play while still enabling the seasoned *JF* player to feel like they're right at home.

If you're one of the many gamers who dismissed the original because of its cutesy graphics, here's your chance to make up for your mistake.

**Rating:** ★★★★★

werewolf character who can transform during a match, and some unusually off-the-wall moves. However, the final version is almost totally bloodless, and most of the characters just wind up looking dull or stupid, not scary at all. Overall, a better title would have been *Fright for Life*.

**Rating:** ★

## Top Gun

**Publisher:** Spectrum Holobyte  
**Developer:** Spectrum Holobyte  
*Top Gun* for PC was a decent (if uninspired) flight sim with a lot of FMV cut-scenes. *Top Gun* for PlayStation isn't even that good.

To start with, the flight dynamics of the craft are... unusual. Your F-14 Tomcat has no momentum at all — you turn, bank, climb, etc., for exactly as long as you hold down on the direction pad, and stop dead when you let go. So it's not a sim, and that's fine, but this kind of control scheme doesn't even work from an arcade standpoint. The plane just sort of flops around, while the player sort of gets it pointing in the direction he wants it to go. It's functional, but

in the game, when you get some ridiculous weapon power-ups), but the cannon shoots down anything just fine, and the in-cockpit view blocks off so much of the screen you've got no reason to use it. The game is actually a little more enjoyable than all this makes it sound — if you stick with it, it kinda grows on you — but not much.

**Rating:** ★★

# Saturn

## Alone in the Dark

**Publisher:** T•HQ  
**Developer:** I•Motion

First, a word of explanation. This is actually I•Motion's *Alone in the Dark II*, released for the PC about two years ago, and for 3DO last year. Since the original *Alone in the Dark* was never released for Saturn, T•HQ decided it would avoid confusing Saturn owners and drop the *II* from the name — which, of course, just confuses anyone who's familiar with the series.

*Alone in the Dark* was the pioneer in using 3D characters on



This plane may look suspiciously like a Tomcat, but it hardly flies like one. *Top Gun* is a sub-par "action" game masquerading as a sub-par flight sim

it leaves you feeling disconnected from what's going on.

The game's other big fault is in the level of difficulty. There are four theaters of operation, with roughly a half dozen missions in each, and you can count on each one following the same pattern: five or six missions that are ridiculously easy, followed by a "boss" mission that's next to impossible. This makes no sense — in early missions you can shake off enemy missiles and shoot down anything in the sky with impunity, but get to the boss area and suddenly air-to-air missiles slam into you at will.

Your own air-to-air missiles are practically useless (until later

a 2D background, and for the Saturn version, the designers have made some attempts at updating the looks by texture mapping the flat-shaded polygons models of the original. However, the net effect of this is to just call attention to how far recent efforts like *Resident Evil* have passed the series by.

*Alone in the Dark (I or II)*, whatever you want to call it), however, still manages to hold up fairly well on its own. The game is huge, and the graphics, while relying on hand-drawn backgrounds instead of the latest, trendy, prerendered variety, still look good. Once again, we wish that some of the camera angles had been better

# rating saturn



**Alone in the Dark** is starting to show its age, but it's still good for a decent challenge

chosen, as the perspective often makes it more difficult to line up a shot than it should be, but as a graphic adventure with action, *Alone in the Dark* has its challenges and rewards.

**Rating: ★★★**

## Golden Axe: The Duel

**Publisher: Sega**  
**Developer: Sega**

Whenever a new game checks its innovation at the door, there's always a sense of foreboding. Unexpectedly, *Golden Axe: The Duel* makes the best of a stacked deck and delivers a solid, if uninspired, videogame.

Sprite-based, 2D fighting games were the mainstay of 16-bit systems, where the great examples usually resided on the Super NES and were released by Capcom. There were some worthy contenders for Genesis, but it may well have taken until the 32-bit era for Sega to offer a spiritual competitor to the *Street Fighter* series. Which is not to say that *Golden Axe: The Duel* should be granted the same reverence as *Street Fighter*, but *The Duel* does come close to matching Capcom's classics in terms of animation and graphics quality, balanced control interface, entertaining special moves, and all-around gameplay.



Large characters and punishing special moves help players to forgive the competent but uninspired gameplay in *Golden Axe: The Duel*

## Saturn

# PUCKING COOL

## NHL Powerplay '96

**Publisher: Virgin Interactive**  
**Developer: Radical Entertainment**

The lure of a million-dollar-making killer app has propelled sports titles to the top of sales charts. As much as half of all games now sold are sports games, and titles like *NFL Gameday* and *NHL Face Off* also helped entrench Sony Computer Entertainment and Sony PlayStation as the leaders in sports software, unseating the once untouchable, Genesis-based EA Sports. *NHL Powerplay '96* may be the title that changes the pecking order once again.

Begging a direct comparison to *NHL Face Off*, *Powerplay* ups the ante by boasting superior graphics, and most importantly, smoother gameplay. Although the PlayStation version of *Powerplay* is noticeably faster, the Saturn version's slightly slower game speed (whether through accident or design), surprisingly "feels" better because the pace more closely mimics true hockey physics and enables players to execute plays on a more consistent basis. Nice touches like scratches on the surface of the ice and other graphic details also make the Saturn version of *Powerplay* look better than its PlayStation counterpart.

But perhaps the single element that propels this one past *Face Off* is its exceptional AI. *NHL Face Off* drew some well-earned criticism for being too easy in Easy Mode, and too hard in Hard Mode. *NHL Powerplay '96* always seems to provide a realistic challenge at any difficulty setting.

Attempts at finding fault in *Powerplay's* design just provokes nit-picking more than substantive criticism. The small puck is sometimes hard to pick out on the ice, but then you could say that about real-life hockey. Also, the number of stats the game tracks may be less than what a die-hard hockey fan would demand. But all in all, once the puck hits the ice these minor complaints are quickly forgotten. Sony be warned: *NHL Face Off* was a great game, but *NHL Powerplay '96* is better.

**Rating: ★★★★★**



The question is whether *NHL Powerplay '96* is the first sports game that successfully utilizes polygon graphics. The proof is in the details

Unfortunately, being the late-comer to the party takes away any pretense of a fresh, new gaming experience. The interesting cast of characters is

adequate but lacks the personality (or maybe the familiarity?) of the *Street Fighter* ensemble. Still, the traditional gameplay is entertaining enough that fans of the 2D fighting genre should give *Golden Axe: The Duel* its due.

**Rating: ★★★**

## Shellshock

**Publisher: U.S. Gold**  
**Developer: Core Designs, Ltd.**

There's always a danger in designing a game that's meant to please everyone. Simulations have a smaller, dedicated following, while more universally accessible arcade-style games hold a broader appeal. *Shellshock* is tank sim-shooter that achieves a superior level of play by treading the thin line between both genres.

For those gamers searching for a true tank sim, *Shellshock* will disappoint. It doesn't even come close to recreating a true tank model, nor does it require any battlefield resource management. The tank can incur

far too much damage, and there's no need to fret over ammunition or fuel supplies. Also, while the game is played with full 360° of movement, the terrain is all flat, with no opportunity to "hunker down," or incorporate other battle tactics that take advantage of varying elevation.

In terms of special effects, Saturn's version lacks the fogging effects seen in the PlayStation version (NG 19). Just in terms of lost subtlety, the tense moments caused by watching enemies



*Shellshock* treads the line between arcade game and sim very well

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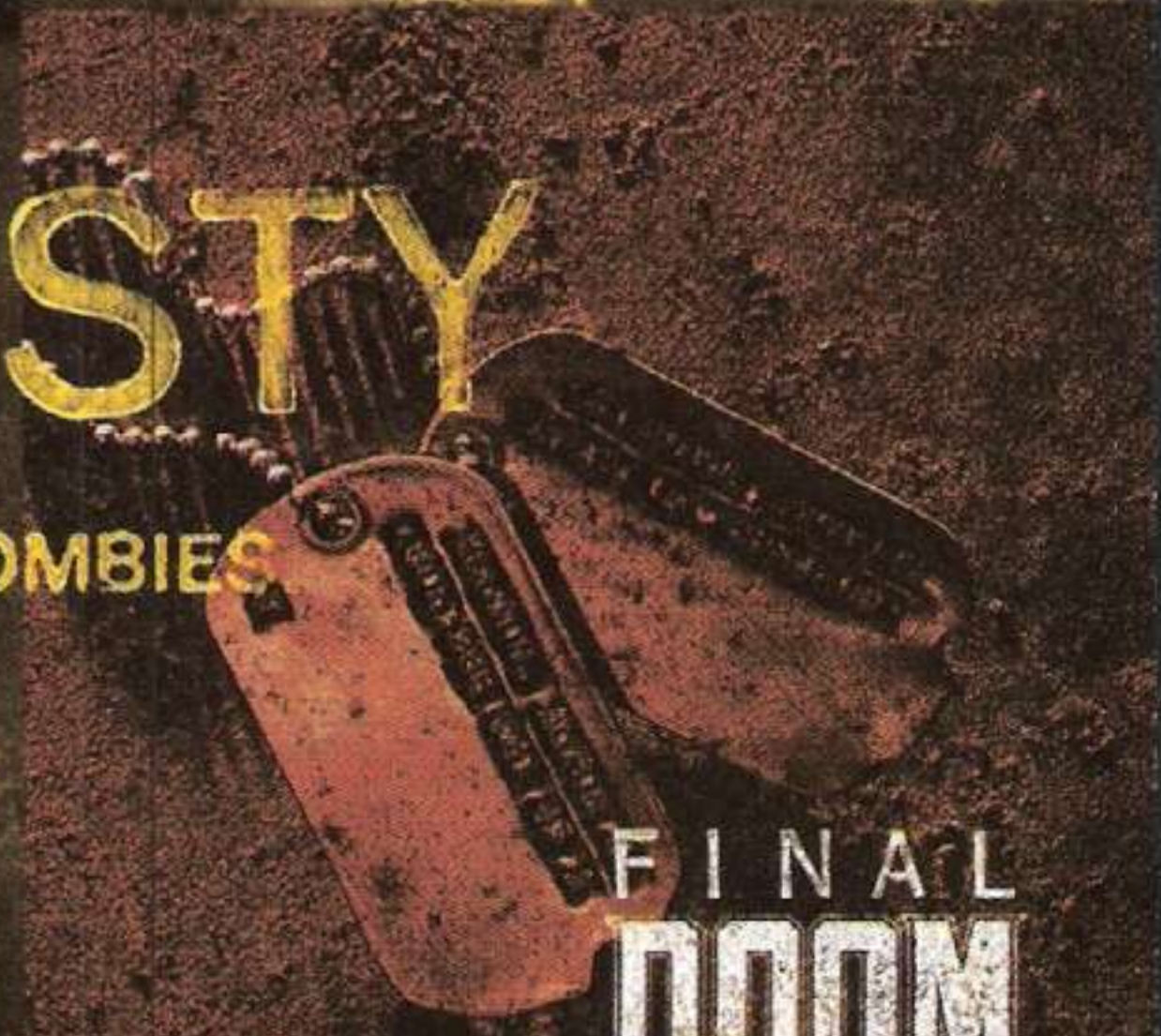
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emerging from the mist in the distance has been replaced by the far-less satisfying effect of tanks simply popping into view.

Despite the lack of many true sim features, *Shellshock* proves to be an entertaining shooter because of the many sim elements the game manages to retain. The tank's rotating turret, the recoil of the gun, the sensation of piloting a vehicle of considerable weight and momentum, all combine to create a shooter that at least has some resemblance to a tank sim.

Combine the simplistic but entertaining gameplay with 25 extremely challenging levels and there is plenty here for the gamer who doesn't mind foregoing a little realism for fun.

Rating: ★★★

## PC

### Conquest of the New World

**Publisher:** Interplay  
**Developer:** Quicksilver

*Conquest of the New World* is just what it sounds like: a strategy sim centered around building colonies and taking over the Americas. As such, it does a good job — there aren't too many confusing units with which to deal, expanding each colony takes a lot of forethought if it's to succeed, and combat is simplistic yet challenging.

Though the game is not as enthralling or as addictive as some of its competitors, like *Civilization 2* or *Colonization*, hard-core strategy sim fans will appreciate the straightforward rules and the subtle nuances of creating successful colonies.



The level of detail in *Conquest of the New World* is nice; it's even possible to see the little lives of the settlers as they accomplish their daily tasks

There are plenty of details to monitor and change, but if a military campaign is all that's desired, it's also possible to put the colonies on automatic (it's also possible to put the military on automatic). Combat is resolved through a system of grid-based battle screens (which can also be played on its own as a mini-game), where elements similar to chess come into play.

*Conquest* admittedly lacks any sense of visual flair or style, and is probably too dry an experience for the casual player. However, there's more than enough depth, involvement, and features to please the really dedicated strategy fans.

Rating: ★★★

### Dinotopia

**Publisher:** Turner Interactive  
**Developer:** The Dreamer's Guild

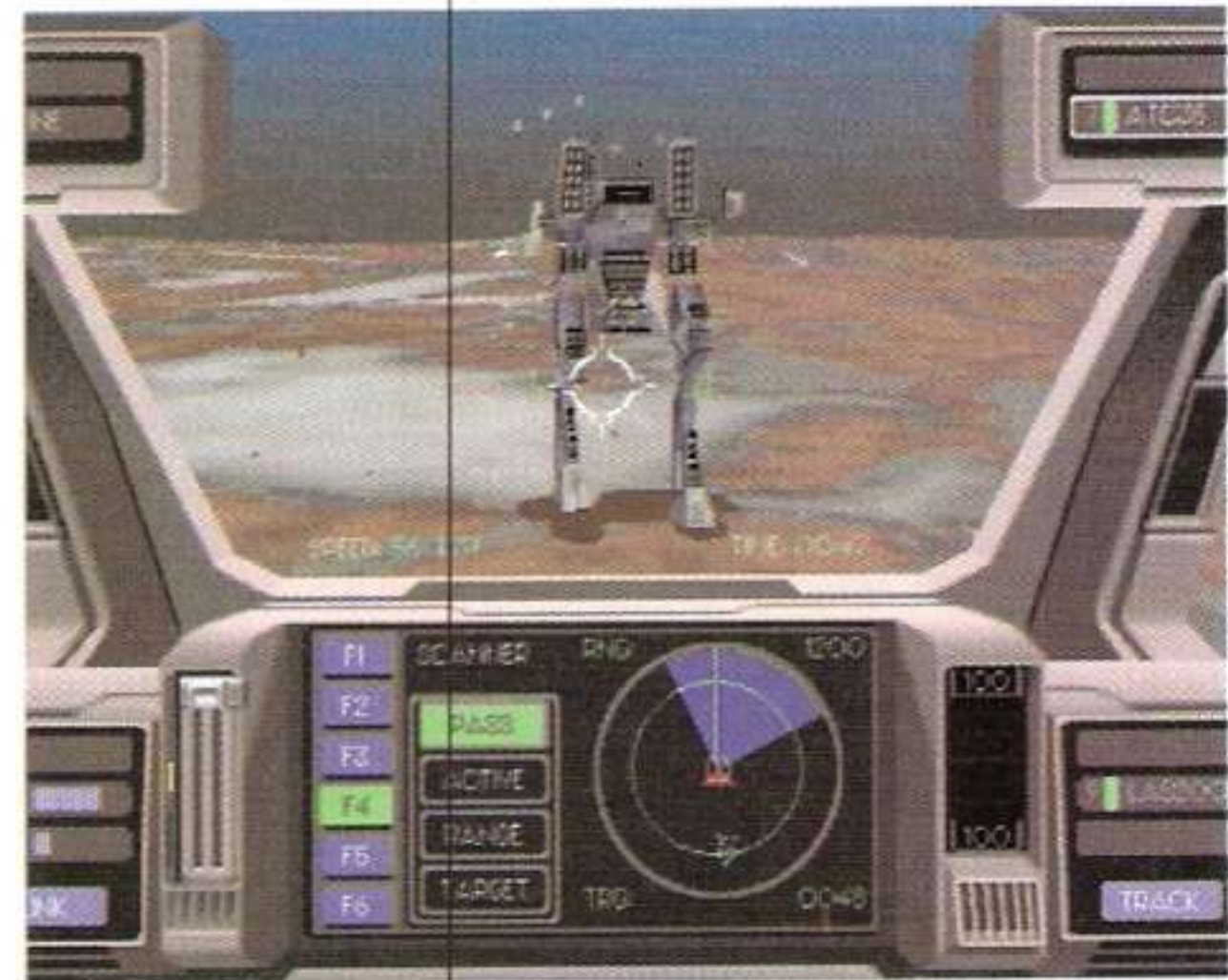
Originally a book by James Gurney, *Dinotopia* the videogame tells the story of a young man named Nathan whose search for his lost sister leads him to a land where humans and dinosaurs live together in harmony. The game is played in a skewed, top-down perspective, and takes place in the intriguing realm originally conceived by Gurney.



In *Dinotopia* there are all sorts of quirky characters and places. This place looks like New Orleans

PC

## SIEGE THE DAY



The intense combat leaves little time to think, but you had better if you're to stand up to menaces like this one. Highly detailed terrain and HERC graphics are best accessed with souped up PCs

### EarthSiege 2

**Publisher:** Sierra On-Line  
**Developer:** Sierra On-Line

The second installment of its battling-bot series, Sierra On-Line's *EarthSiege 2* is more proof that gamers just can't get enough of giant mechanical guns on legs shooting each other. The intelligent machines that started killing off the human race (cybrids) may mostly have been defeated in the first game, *Metaltech: Earthsiege*, but the computer mastermind behind the attack on humans (Prometheus) has been building forces on the moon. It's a typical sci-fi story, but it makes a suitable excuse for this kill-fest of a sequel.

There are a lot of improvements over the first *EarthSiege*. The SVGA graphics are stunning, with texture-maps on everything from terrain to the HERCs themselves (although you'll need at least a Pentium 90 to appreciate them). The enemy AI is no longer nearly impossible to take on, and a strategic element has been lifted from the game's closest competitor, *MechWarrior 2* — to gain maintain military might, resources are salvaged from damaged cybrids. This means it takes concentration and brains to keep from frying each enemy into thousands of glittering shards; the enemy needs to be disabled so you can loot them for spare parts.

There are, however, a few disappointing things about this otherwise well-designed action title. For instance, there aren't many new HERCs, though there is one new flying unit, the Razor. Also, the missions are so similar they blend together after a while. More variety would've helped.

But if you want fast action, good pacing, and incredible gameplay and graphics, *EarthSiege 2* shines in all the right places.

Rating: ★★★



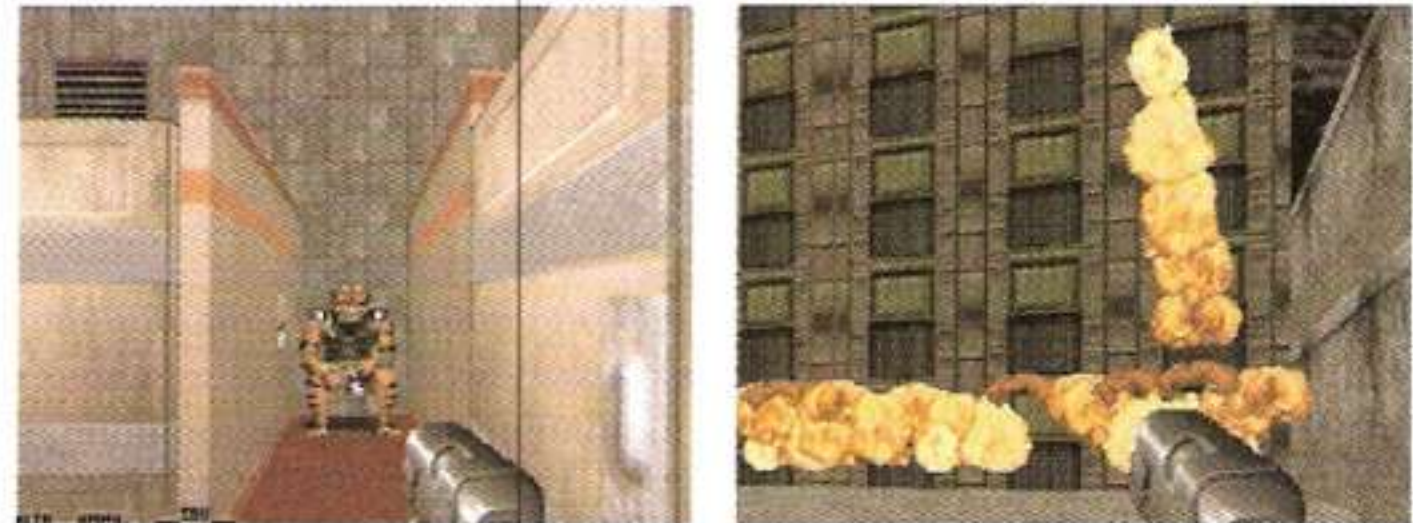
The Razor will help you rain death from the skies, but because it's a heavy flight machine, you must carry fewer weapons

# rating pc

PC



Besides cool interactive levels, *Duke's* weapons are great fun. Pipe-bombs, when used correctly, display exquisitely exploding pig-parts



Some would say this fellow was caught with his pants down (left). There are all sorts of exciting things to do in *Duke*, like blowing up this building

## DOOM TO DUST?

### Duke Nukem 3D

**Publisher:** 3D Realms

**Developer:** 3D Realms

*Duke Nukem 3D* has everything *Doom* doesn't, but it also doesn't leave out the stuff that made *Doom* a classic. The shareware version has been available on the Net for some time, but now the release version is here, and it's worth every penny. It's got high-res modes, the ability to fly, swim, jump, duck, and some of the best weapons yet devised for a game. While the expected arsenal is there — the pistol,

shotgun, machine gun, and the ever-popular rocket launcher (rocket propelled grenade, in this case) — the game also gives you some new toys to play with: laser mines, shrink rays (squash 'em like a bug!), freeze guns (shatter 'em like party ice!), and, the ideal weapon for ambushes — trigger activated pipe-bombs.

The one-player game is huge and complex, but it's in the multiplayer mode that this game shines. Up to eight people can hunt each other at once, twice the number allowed in the shareware version. The game even comes with its own level-editor built in, so you can be assured that we'll be seeing plenty of custom levels. There are bizarre monsters, tricky traps, and some of the most clever puzzles we've ever seen in a first-person shooter. There's even a parental lock, for people who don't want to expose their children to some of the blood, gore, and scantily clad women (many levels take place in a seedy area of post-holocaust Los Angeles).

*Duke Nukem 3D* is, by far, the best of the new-wave shooters. The suspense-building storyline, along with crackling good level design will appeal to a wide variety of gamers, even if they're *Doomed-out*. We'll have to see what *Prey*, *Quake*, or *Shadow Warrior* is like before we can say this will be remembered as a classic, but if you've been hooked on the shareware demo, we highly recommend sending in your registration money for the full version — it kicks.

**Rating:** ★★★★★

While the interface is simple — the standard graphic adventure icons (walk, take) along with other situational icons — the controls can be tricky. Getting Nathan to do exactly what you want him to often requires extremely precise mouse control.

The game contains FMV of a few characters for some key conversations, most of which suffer from the same bad acting that seems to infest every video sequence in computer games. The dinosaurs, however, are apparently a mix of CG imaging and animatronics, and are fantastic looking, adding a lot of value to the game.

All told, this is only a slightly-above-average adventure title. The story is nothing special, and the puzzles won't be a serious challenge to hard-core players. It would make a great light hearted adventure to play with kids.

**Rating:** ★★★

### Fantasy General

**Publisher:** SSI

**Developer:** SSI

Continuing the expansion of the Five Star Series, *Fantasy General* is just what it sounds like — the

*Panzer General* engine which uses fantasy-style units, like trolls, goblins, and elves. Now while this might sound frivolous to some die-hard war gamers, it's really quite entertaining.

Because the units don't conform to any set historical accuracy, the variety is astounding. The opportunity arises

for the player to research different aspects of his or her army, such as mechanical, aerial, or magical units. Just like other SSI strategy games, the initial core group of units gain experience progressing from battle to battle, and they can be improved as the player gains spells and equipment.

And although it is not the

most challenging strategy game, however, it never builds any sort of intensity. In fact, its lighthearted, fun atmosphere may put off the hard-core war game crowd altogether. But there's a lot of entertainment value here for those willing to give it a try.

**Rating:** ★★★

### Icebreaker

**Publisher:** Twentieth

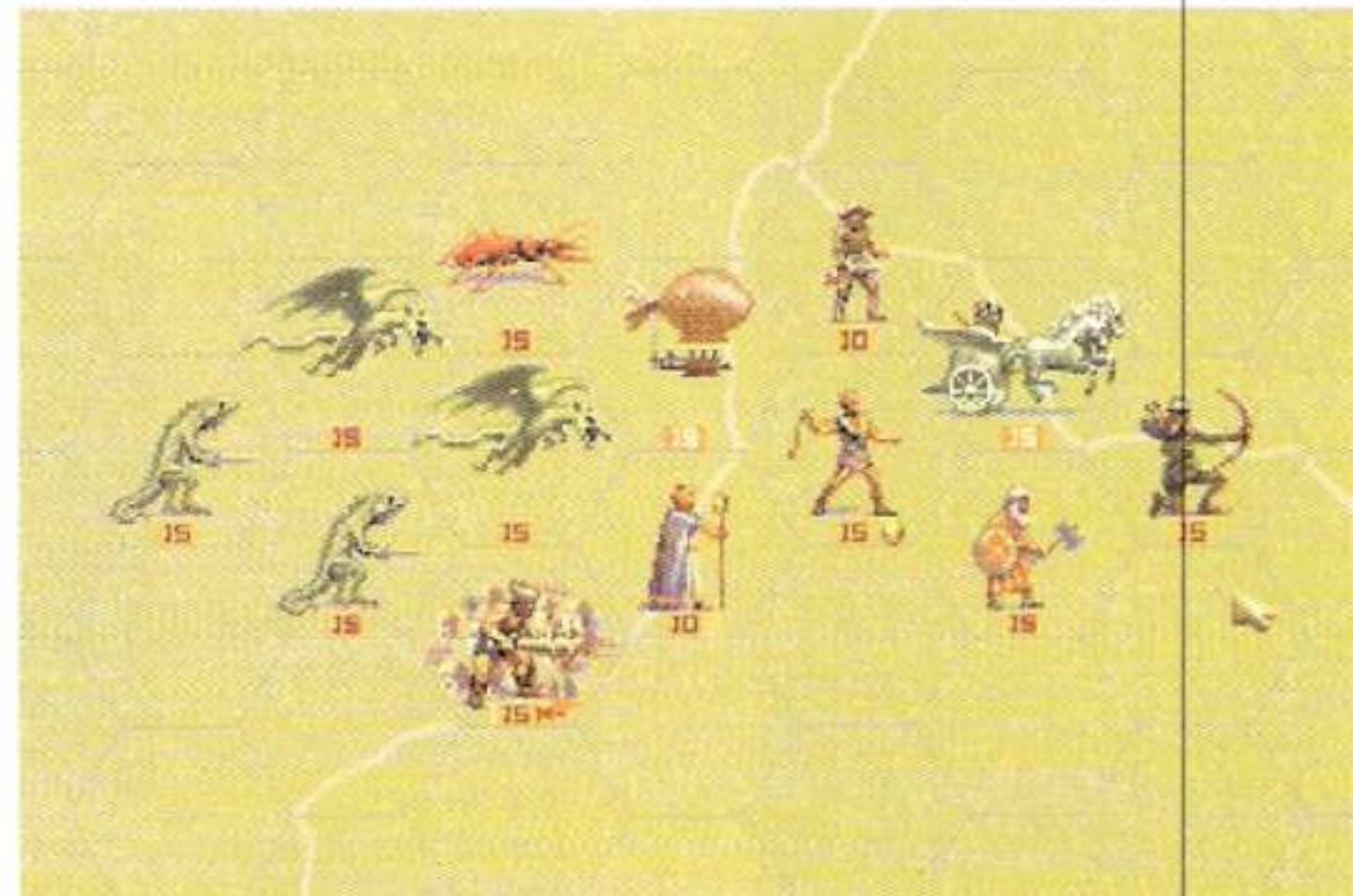
**Century Fox**

**Developer:** Magnet Interactive

*Icebreaker*, you may recall, originated as a title for 3DO, and what we said then is still true: for a simple little puzzle game, *Icebreaker* has a lot to offer.

The object is to destroy all the pyramids on each play field, and the myriad of ways to achieve this feat are often astounding. Some you have to shoot, others you must ram, and yet others can only be destroyed by running into the pyramids you're chasing.

Each color of pyramid has its own characteristics — some move, others don't; some are fast and smart, while others are slow and dumb; some, when destroyed, turn into pits, while others can turn into even more pyramids.



Fans of SSI's previous titles will quickly recognize the engine in *Fantasy General*, but the units and variation still make it entertaining to play

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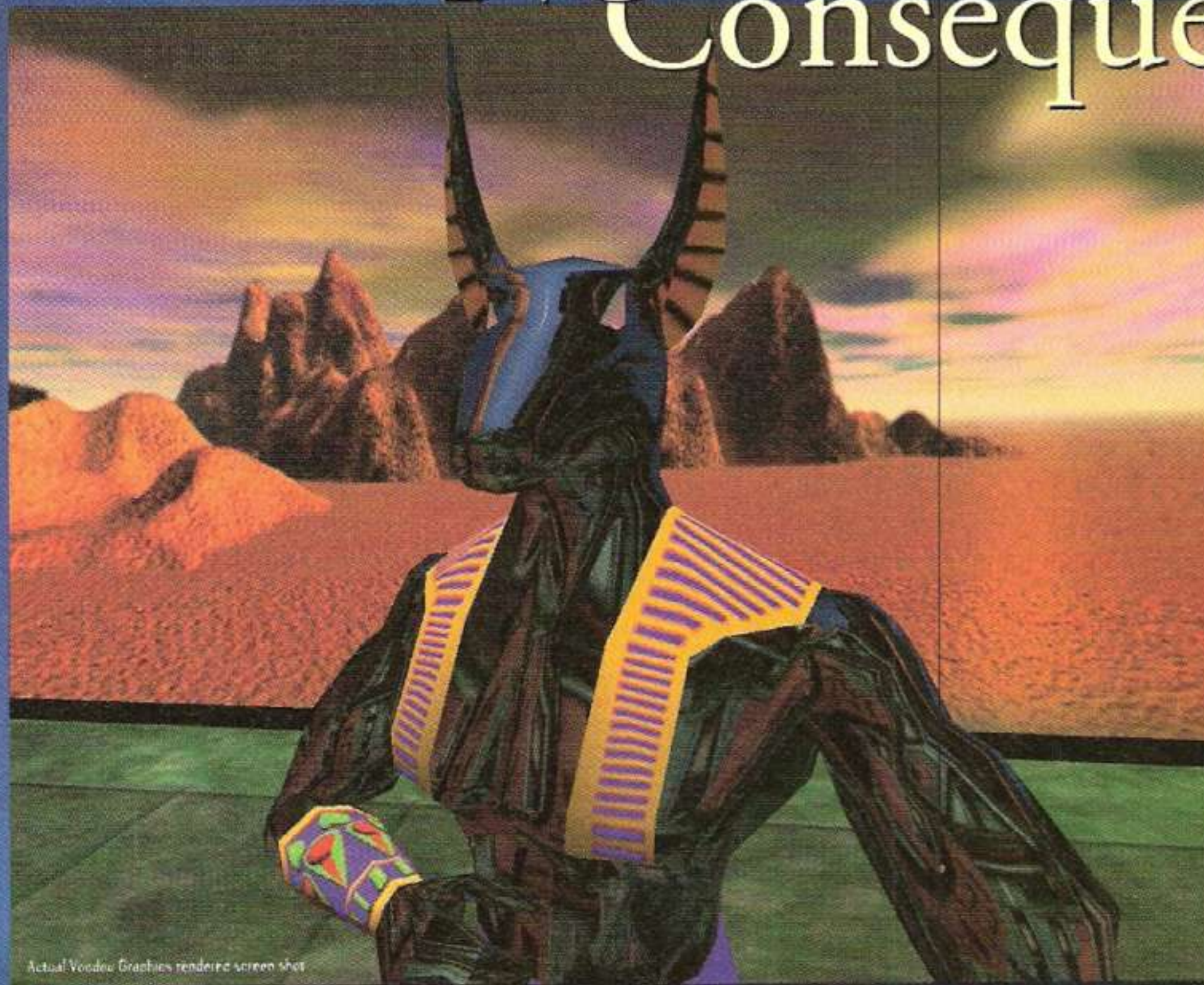


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Avoid the hazards and destroy the pyramids in *Icebreaker*, a game where anything with five sides is considered evil (except yourself, of course)

Combine the variety of terrain — grass, swamp, slime, ice, and lava — put them into 150 pre-made levels (and if you run through those, the game also features a level builder), and this is one detailed little puzzle game.

It's simple to control (cursor keys and one button to fire) and the concept is easy to grasp, yet there's a lot of challenge and fast-paced strategy, and it's insidiously addictive. If you crave a good puzzle game, *Icebreaker* delivers.

Rating: ★★★

### Silent Thunder: A-10 Tank Killer II

Publisher: Sierra On-Line  
Developer: Dynamix

This game needs a brief preface. The A-10 Thunderbolt II is a big, bulky airplane that not only carries 17,000 lbs. of ordnance, it sports a monster 30 mm GAU-8A "Avenger" cannon that fires 3,000 rounds of bullets the size of coke bottles a minute. Nicknamed "Silent Thunder" by the Iraqi army during Desert Storm (due to its incredibly quiet engines), it's one of the most feared ground-attack planes in the world.

Unfortunately, the latest sim to put you in the cockpit of this flying death machine never manages to catch the raw power of the A-10 experience. It delivers great graphics, wonderful views, and neat explosions, but the flight model is one of the worst of its kind, and the least accurate. Considering the plane in question, it's rather ridiculous to gain altitude while flying upside down. Barrel loops are a breeze, and if you hit the rudders the craft responds nimbly and quickly — far more nimbly and quickly than an actual A-10 could ever do.



The graphics are amazing, but *Silent Thunder's* flight engine just doesn't help gameplay in any way

Simply put, *Silent Thunder* isn't much of a flight sim. It comes closer to *Descent 2* or *Terminal Velocity* than *Jane's Advanced Tactical Fighters*, and as an action title, you could argue that it's not half bad. However, it's being touted as a sim, and as a sim, it's more than half bad.

Rating: ★★

### Star Trek: Klingon

Publisher: Simon and Schuster Interactive  
Developer: Simon and Schuster Interactive

Whether this is a game or a movie, *Star Trek: Klingon* isn't much fun. *Klingon* is actually little more than a video disc that makes you click the mouse every now and then to see more movie. Of course, if you click the wrong thing, you have to see parts of the movie you've already seen again.

To be sure, the footage is well produced, the actors are competent (including a few from the TV



The FMV in *Klingon* is decent, but the game still makes about as much sense as this scene

series), and it's got a fine story. But *Klingon* is less exciting than even an average *Star Trek* episode (take your pick of series), and of course, paying for this at your local software store makes it a much more expensive proposition than just watching TV.

When you get to the end, you realize that not only have you just wasted the past two hours — because that's about as long as it takes to get through the game —

but that for roughly one tenth of the cost, you could have had more fun renting *Generations* again.

Unless you're caught up in the idea that Klingons are better than humans, or you have a strong desire to know every tidbit of information about a fictional race (the game actually features a half-ass "How to Speak Klingon" tutorial, for whatever that's worth), you'll be sorely disappointed with this one.

Rating: ★

### Strife

Publisher: Velocity  
Developer: Velocity

*Strife* is one of the first games to incorporate a role-playing element in a *Doom* clone. This means that rather than just hunting down enemies and shooting them, you can think a little before firing.

The strange thing about *Strife*, however, is that although it's supposed to be a role-playing game with many paths and choices, it makes no attempt to be anything but linear. If you make the wrong choice you're dead, period. No ifs, ands, or buts. This makes it more of an action-puzzle game with a storyline than an actual role-playing adventure. But as long as you understand this small eccentricity going into it (and you're not bored with the *Doom* thing), *Strife* is a fine *Doom* clone. Coincidentally, the 3D engine is licensed from Id Software, so it



Most of the choices in *Strife* are made during conversations with NPCs, like this Front rebel, Macil

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## rating mac super nes

plays exactly the same as *Doom*.

Among *Strife*'s weaknesses are its single meager save-game slot, which is nearly unforgivable. And if you make a poor decision before your last save, the only way back is to restart the game — a huge mistake on Velocity's part. Still, *Strife* is somehow a refreshing change from the glut of first-person shooters, even with the older *Doom* engine.

Rating: ★★★

### VR Soccer

**Publisher:** VR Sports  
**Developer:** VR Sports

There's no denying that VR Sports, Interplay's new development team, knows how to make a good-looking sports sim. Interplay's new Interactive Motion Technology, a new routine to translate motion-captured movement into the game, is featured in *VR Soccer* and it makes the players look incredibly realistic. This, along with the high-res SVGA mode, make the graphics as clean and sharp as anything we've seen.

But then there's gameplay. The rate of gameplay is sluggish, the computer opponent seems to take far too many liberties, and at high-res, the preferred mode, the game simply doesn't run well. Although control is simple, especially if you have a joystick, it's usually a shot in the dark whether you'll hold onto the ball for very long. And for some



**VR Soccer** features many camera angles and decent gameplay

strange reason, the computer can steal the ball ridiculously easy.

Still, there are lots of perks. The camera pans from different views during play, and at any point, you can replay the action from nearly anywhere in the stadium. There's also multiplayer support and other options. It's a good sim, just not the best.

Rating: ★★★

## Macintosh

### X-Wing

**Publisher:** LucasArts  
**Developer:** LucasArts

The original PC version of *X-Wing* was a deserved, runaway hit, thanks to little things like excellent control, breath-taking graphics (for the time), and the way the game perfectly captured the atmosphere and flavor of the *Star Wars* universe. Macintosh users have been screaming for years for this space combat title to appear on their platform, and even though it took some time, LucasArts has finally delivered. *X-Wing* doesn't disappoint.

The Mac version of *X-Wing* sports updated graphics with texture mapping and light sourcing, in addition to running at a higher resolution than the original PC version. The missions themselves are identical to the original, although perhaps as an apology for Mac users having to wait so long, the CD includes the Imperial Pursuit and B-Wing expansion sets (which were sold separately for the PC). In each of the missions, various objectives range from destroying specific targets, to protecting allied craft.

There is one minor complaint that's often leveled at this game, and which hasn't been changed for the Mac release. In general, the game is challenging not because your ship is threatened (although the enemy AI can be quite devious), but because the objectives are often very difficult



In what seems to be an apology to Macintosh gamers, the Mac version of *X-Wing* includes two missions that were sold separately for the PC

to carry out. Expect to fly some missions (saving a rebel hospital ship from Imperial assault comes to mind) over and over again before discovering the right combinations of strategy, skill, and luck to complete them.

On the positive side, however, the ease and response of the game's controls are still among the best ever designed. The mission briefings graphically explain your objectives and go a long way toward making the player feel like a part of the story and a member of the Alliance, while still steering clear of the "slow-everything-down" FMV used by others in the genre. Because of the inclusion of the extra scenarios, there are a total of four ships to pilot: the traditional X-Wing, the speedy A-Wing, the sluggish but powerful Y-Wing, and the hearty B-Wing.

Overall, *X-Wing* for the Mac is a welcome addition to a rapidly growing Macintosh gaming market. The only question left is how long will Mac users have to wait for *Tie Fighter*?

Rating: ★★★★★

## Super NES

### Olympic Summer Games

**Publisher:** T•HQ  
**Developer:** Tier Tex

If there was ever a videogame that recalled the button-crunching fury and spirit of Konami's arcade classic *Track and Field*, T•HQ's *Olympic Summer Games* for the Super NES is the one.

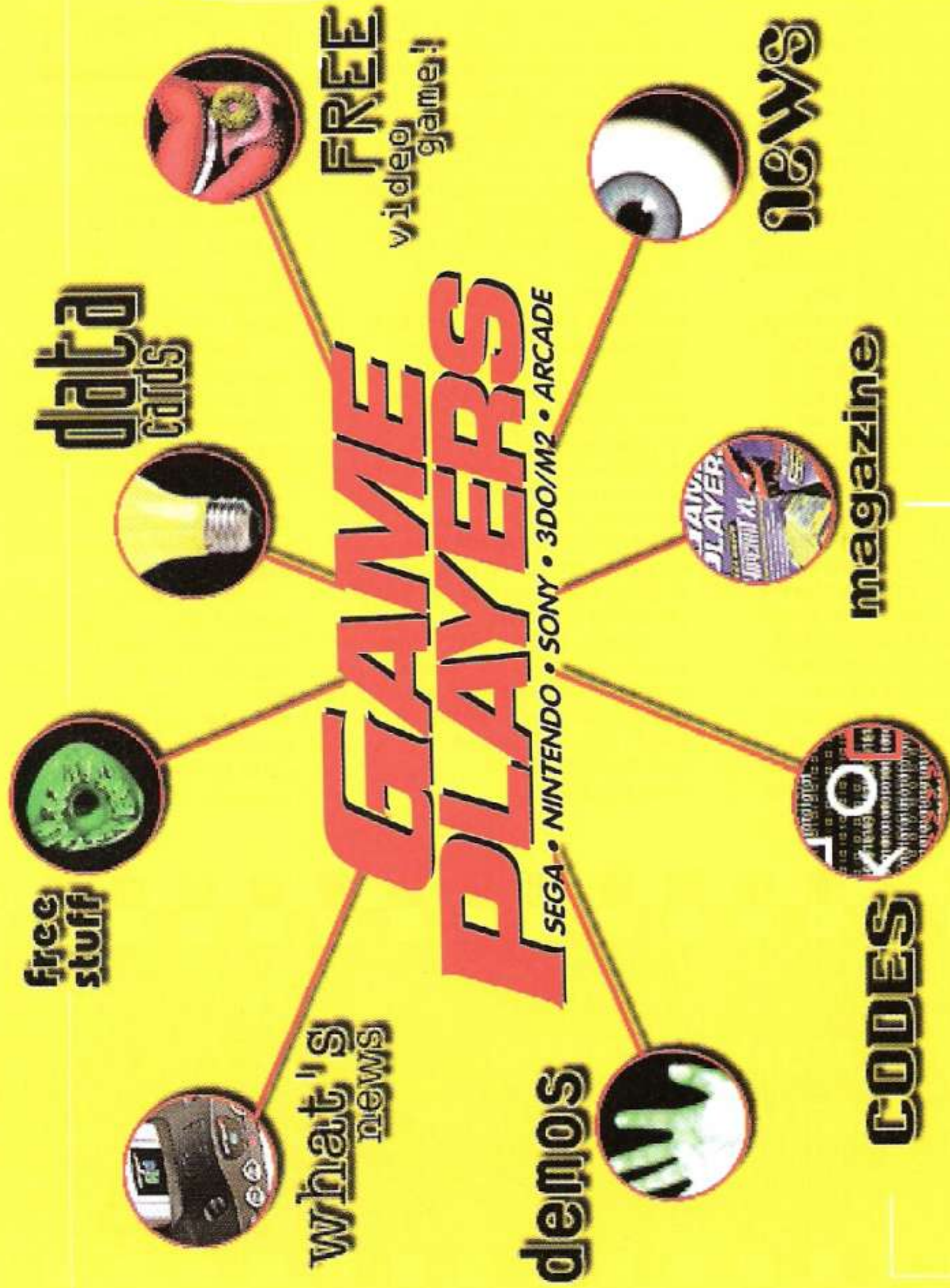
Although buried behind sub-standard graphics (even for 16-bit standards), *Olympic Summer Games* features the multiple player gameplay that made *Track and Field* so popular. Gameplay consists of making your Olympic athlete run, jump, shoot, and throw through an array of 10 different events.

There is a challenging balance of button-pounding ferocity and precise timing required in order to successfully compete in the various events. And most players will find that there is definitely a steep learning curve before a player will be able to master the contests. This is

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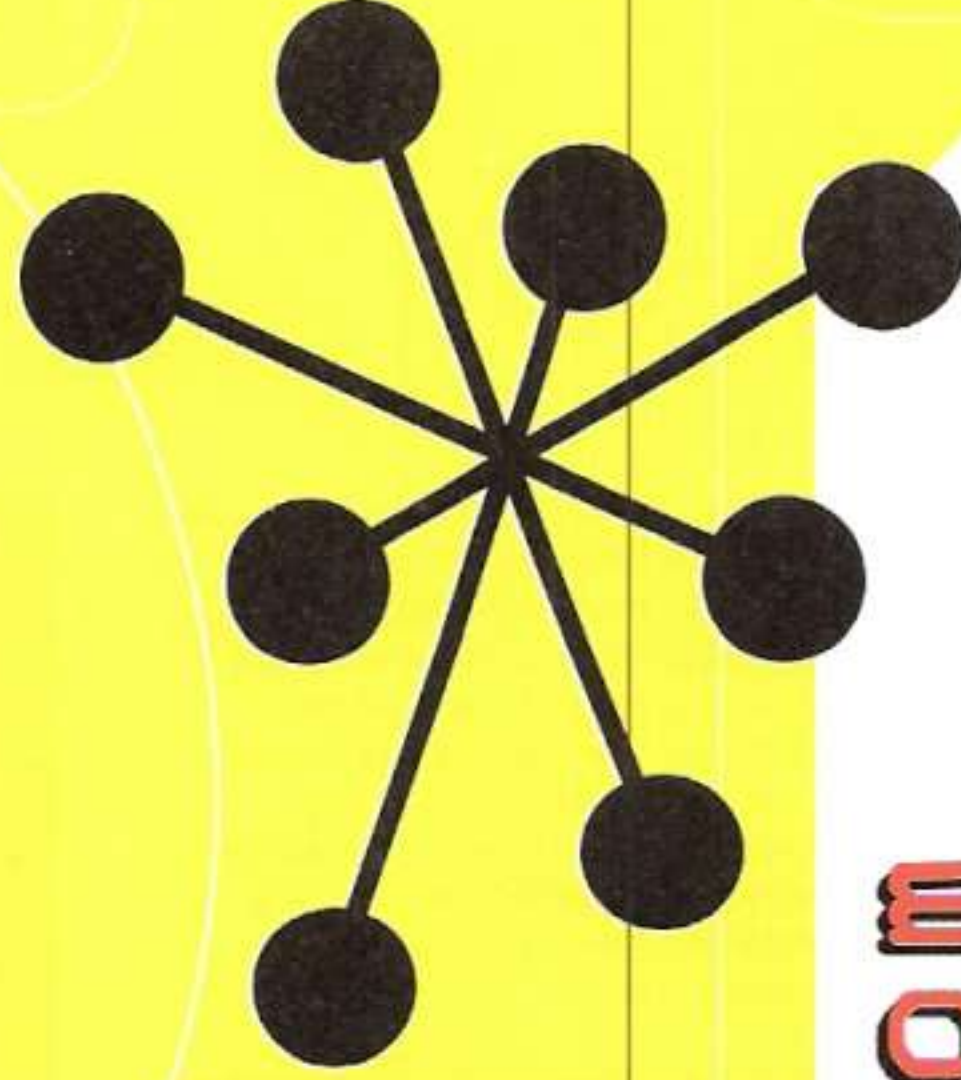
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**Olympic Summer Games may not feature superb graphics, but it does feature classic gameplay**

especially evident in the jumping events which require a precise balance between the manic button pounding and perfectly timed jump command inputs. But regardless of the initial frustration that discovering the timing patterns of the game inspires, sticking to the game will reveal the considerable entertainment value behind the traditional looks and gameplay.

Judged against today's 32-bit graphics standards, *Olympic Summer Games* would probably be deemed visually lacking and wanting in innovation and style.

But considering the dearth of quality 16-bit titles available now, this game will have you believing the adage that a game doesn't need to look good as long as it plays well.

**Rating: ★★★**

## Genesis

### Time Killers

**Publisher: TH•HQ**

**Developer: Incredible**

**Technologies**

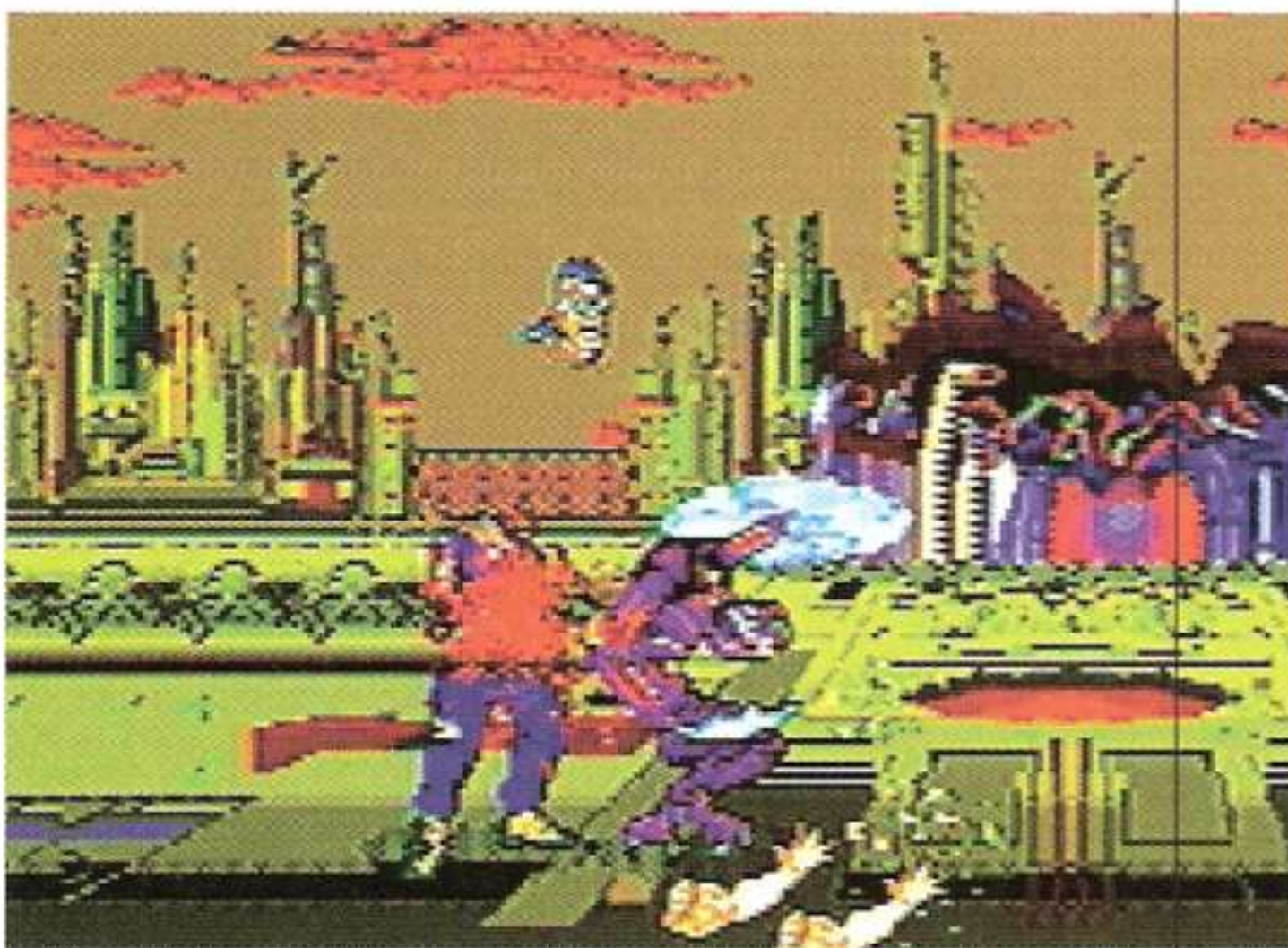
It's rare that a game is released which lacks any redeeming qualities whatsoever. But with *Time Killers*, a disease has been released in the world that should serve as a warning to future generations to come. Developed more than three years ago, *Time Killers* was a coin-op game that should never have been released

in the arcades, let alone scheduled for porting over to Genesis. But as the number of titles for the 16-bit systems dwindles, there seems to be an urge by a number of companies to release whatever drivel resides in their outdated closets.

Harsh words? It takes 10 seconds of play to convince even the most casual gamer that *Time Killers* is easily the worst example of a 2D fighting game in history. The graphics and animation are only good for nostalgic value, in that you'd swear you're playing a first-generation 8-bit game. But the absolute worst quality of *Time Killers* is a horrid control scheme that reduces pulling off even basic moves, let alone what passes for a special move, to sheer chance.

Is there anything that elevates *Time Killers*? There are moves for bloody decapitations, but rest assured, any amusement derived from the macabre humor will soon be drowned in the nightmarish hell of the gameplay. After 10 seconds, you might well wish someone would rip your own head off, just to kill the pain.

**Rating: ★**



**What seems to be the most fascinating aspect of *Time Killers* is how much money TH•Q lost making it. As can be seen, it looks like an 8-bit game**

## Arcade

### Midnight Run

**Publisher: Konami**

**Developer: Konami**

Within the last few years, Konami has poured loads of cash into its R&D department in the hope that this tack would produce a slew of killer apps. *Midnight Run* is one of those games that comes extremely close to hitting the mark, but misses by a few hairs.

*Midnight Run* packs solid, competitive racing (four can compete at once), adequately challenging AI, three tracks, and manual or auto transmission, coolly developed so gamers can switch any time during play. And the game performs an odd but compelling act of blending *Ridge Racer*'s tight control and *Daytona U.S.A.*'s awesome powerslides into one game.

Souped-up street car selection is varied (choose any four) and custom selections are possible, while both in-car and behind-the-car viewpoints are



**Want to humiliate your opponent? Just find the short cut in *Midnight Run*'s medium track and you will**

selectable. The driving itself is fast-paced and most of the cars tightly hug the road during the sharpest of turns, though it seems that the amount of pedestrian cycles, trucks, and other autos make the game more of a challenge than the courses themselves. Track Two has an expert's short cut which will cut gamers' racing time down and presents a formidable challenge of twists and sharp turns.

Still, despite Konami's efforts in the R&D labs, *Midnight Run* is only slightly better than the average racing game, and ultimately it just doesn't come close to *Daytona U.S.A.*

**Rating: ★★★**

### Run and Gun II

**Publisher: Konami**

**Developer: Konami**

The big-time, in-your-face offensive arcade basketball game that was the mother of all five-player hoop games now has a sequel, adequately named *Run and Gun II*.

What sets the sequel apart from its predecessor doesn't amount to anything terribly profound. Aside from subtle changes like the addition of alley oops, better ball handling in the form of spins and more controlled dribbling, and defensive moves like block outs, the game isn't wildly different.

On the other hand, *Run and Gun II* features competent gameplay that's as solid as any

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**Arcade**

# GOD AWFUL

**War Gods**

**Publisher: Williams-Bally/Midway**

**Developer: Williams-Bally/Midway**

As game companies dive into the 3D fray, each is coming up with its own uniquely fashioned results. *War Gods*, Williams' ambitious new 3D laboratory test rat, both succeeds and fails in varying degrees.

The development team designed an innovative "digital skin" by capturing a costumed model's form, combining this digitized data with motion-capture technology (using actual martial artists), and resulting in an unprecedented 3D look. In that it's new, this technique succeeds. Unfortunately, the final playable result is stiff, even mechanical character movement, not at all like the smooth movement found in *Tekken 2* or *Virtua Fighter 2*. In addition to the mildly embarrassing Ringling Brothers' character design, (combining Greek, Roman, and sci-fi themes), characters often appear jagged-edged, blocky, and look like cut-outs in front of particular backgrounds.

The gameplay sadly depends on knowing *Mortal Kombat*-native moves (though the game isn't related to the series). After playing for just a few minutes, gamers will recognize that Annubis' and Pagan's containment spells are comparative to Sub-Zero's freeze; Maximus' net is just like Cryrax's net; and Scorpion's grappling hook has the same effect as Voodoo's reptilian hand, which extends across half the arena. Sweeps, upper-cuts, teleportation moves fill out the comparison chart. A large neon green button was created to enact 3D escapes, projectiles, and as many as 10-move combos. Again, the path into 3D is a disappointing gimmick that ends up being awkward, despite the expansion of the move list into 3D.

The final blend of all these elements creates an arcade game that just doesn't add up to the overall ambition of the project, although not for Midway's lack of trying.

**Rating: ★★**



*War Gods'* suspicious similarity to *Mortal Kombat* will bring *MK* fans into the 3D realm, but is *WG* a big enough step?



Pagan sets up Maximus for perverse fun

other title out there: Players can select any of the five team players during the game, while keeping time with a pounding soundtrack, all playable NBA teams, and four-person competitive play. The game didn't need a huge workover, and Konami recognized that.

It's not your father's new Oldsmobile, but it's multiplayer, and dependable good fun.

**Rating: ★★★**



*Run and Gun II* is one of the few hoops games that makes good use of the behind-the-basket view

## SORRY!

No new games were made available for review this month on the following systems

3DO

Jaguar

Virtual Boy

Neo-Geo

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- 5. At bedtime, you read *Inside Macintosh* to your three-year old Mac whiz instead of Dr. Seuss
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# 32-bit gamers' guide

Every 32-bit "next-generation" game, rated by Next Generation

Every month the gaming powers that be craft, and in cases, churn out videogames by the dozen. And every month **Next Generation's** reviewers exhaustively play and rate every new game in our own finals section. These scores are then incorporated into this, the 32-bit gamers' guide, which is meant to be used as a quick reference — a videogame bible, if you will.

There isn't room, however, to include PC or Mac games in this guide. Also note that many games here have been superceded by sequels or updates (Sega's *Virtua Fighter* series, for example). In these instances, be sure to select the later version. Also note that where a game is accompanied by the suffix (Japan), it means that the game is — at the time of going to press — only available as a Japanese import.

TITLE	PUBLISHER	NG RATING
<b>PlayStation</b>		
<i>Agile Warrior</i>	Virgin	★★
<i>Alien Trilogy</i>	Acclaim	★★★★
<i>A-Train</i>	SCE	★★
<i>Aquanaut's Holiday (Japan)</i>	ArtDink	★★★★
<i>Arc The Lad (Japan)</i>	SCE	★★★★
<i>Battle Arena Toshinden</i>	SCE	★★★★
<i>Battle Arena Toshinden 2</i>	SCE	★★★★
<i>Bottom of the Ninth</i>	Konami	★★★★
<i>Boxer's Road (Japan)</i>	New Corp	★★
<i>Cosmic Race (Japan)</i>	Neorex	★
<i>Crime Crackers (Japan)</i>	Sony Entertainment	★★
<i>Criticom</i>	Vic Tokai	★★
<i>Cyberia</i>	Interplay	★★
<i>Cyberspeed</i>	Mindscape	★★
<i>Cyber Sled</i>	Namco	★★
<i>Cyber War (Japan)</i>	Coco Nuts	★★
<i>Defcam 5</i>	Data East	★★★★
<i>Dark Stalkers</i>	Capcom	★★
<i>Descent</i>	Interplay	★★★★
<i>Destruction Derby</i>	Psygnosis	★★★★
<i>Doom</i>	Williams	★★★★
<i>Dragon Ball Z (Japan)</i>	Bandai	★★
<i>Gex</i>	Crystal Dynamics	★★
<i>Goal Storm</i>	Konami	★★★★
<i>Gunner's Heaven (Japan)</i>	Media Vision	★★★★
<i>Hardball 5</i>	Accolade	★★
<i>In the Hunt</i>	Xing	★
<i>In the Zone</i>	Konami	★★
<i>Jumping Flash!</i>	SCE	★★★★
<i>Jumping Flash! 2</i>	Sony	★★★★
<i>Jupiter Strike</i>	Acclaim	★
<i>Kileak The DNA Imperative</i>	SME	★★
<i>Kileak The Blood 2</i>	SME	★★
<i>Killing Time</i>	Naxat Soft	★
<i>King's Field</i>	Asciware	★★★★
<i>Krazy Ivan</i>	Psygnosis	★★
<i>Loaded</i>	Interplay	★★★★
<i>Metal Jacket (Japan)</i>	Solan	★
<i>Mobile Suit Gundam (Japan)</i>	Bandai	★★
<i>Mortal Kombat 3</i>	Publisher	★★
<i>Motor Toon GP (Japan)</i>	SCE	★★
<i>NBA Jam Tournament Edition</i>	Acclaim	★★★★
<i>NBA Live '96</i>	Electronic Arts	★★★★
<i>NBA Shoot Out</i>	Sony Interactive	★★
<i>NFL Gameday</i>	Sony Interactive	★★★★
<i>NHL Face Off</i>	Sony Interactive	★★★★
<i>Olympic Soccer</i>	U.S. Gold	★★
<i>PGA Tour Invitational '96</i>	Electronic Arts	★★
<i>Philosoma</i>	SCE	★★
<i>Po'ed</i>	Accolade	★★★★
<i>Power Serve 3-D Tennis</i>	Ocean	★★
<i>Power Baseball (Japan)</i>	Konami	★
<i>Raiden</i>	Seibu	★★
<i>Rayman</i>	UbiSoft	★★★★
<i>Return Fire</i>	Time Warner Int.	★★★★
<i>Resident Evil</i>	Capcom	★★★★
<i>Ridge Racer</i>	Namco	★★★★
<i>Ridge Racer Revolution (Japan)</i>	Namco	★★
<i>Road Rash</i>	Electronic Arts	★★
<i>Romance of the Three Kingdoms IV</i>	Kael	★★
<i>Shellshock</i>	U.S. Gold	★★★★
<i>Shockwave Assault</i>	Electronic Arts	★★
<i>Sidewinder</i>	Asmic	★★
<i>Silverode</i>	Vic Tokai	★★★★
<i>Slam 'n' Jam</i>	Crystal Dynamics	★★
<i>Space Griffin</i>	Atus	★★
<i>Tekken</i>	Namco	★★★★
<i>Tekken 2</i>	Namco	★★★★
<i>Top Gun</i>	Spectrum Holobyte	★★
<i>Total Eclipse Turbo</i>	Crystal Dynamics	★★
<i>Toukan Retsuden (Japan)</i>	Tomy	★★★★
<i>Twisted Metal</i>	SIE	★★★★
<i>Viewpoint</i>	Electronic Arts	★

TITLE	PUBLISHER	NG RATING
<i>Warhawk</i>	Sony Interactive	★★★★
<i>Wipeout</i>	Psygnosis	★★★★
<i>Worms</i>	Ocean of America	★★★★
<i>WWF Wrestlemania</i>	Acclaim	★★★★
<i>X-Corn: UFO Defense</i>	Microprose	★★★★
<i>Zero Divide</i>	Zoom	★★
<b>Saturn</b>		
<i>Alone in the Dark</i>	T-HQ	★★
<i>Astal</i>	Sega	★★
<i>Battle Arena Toshinden Remix</i>	Sega	★★
<i>Battle Monster (Japan)</i>	Naxat Soft	★★
<i>Blackfire</i>	Sega	★★
<i>Bug!</i>	Sega	★★
<i>Clockwork Knight</i>	Sega	★★
<i>Clockwork Knight 2 (Japan)</i>	Sega	★★
<i>Congo the Movie</i>	Sega	★★
<i>Cyberspeed</i>	Mindscape	★★
<i>D</i>	Acclaim	★★
<i>Dark Legends (Japan)</i>	Data East	★★
<i>Daytona USA</i>	Sega	★★★★
<i>Deadalus (Japan)</i>	Sega	★★
<i>Double Switch</i>	Digital Pictures	★★
<i>Earthworm Jim 2</i>	Playmates	★★
<i>FIFA Soccer</i>	Electronic Arts	★★★★
<i>F-1 Live Information</i>	Sega	★★★★
<i>Galactic Attack</i>	Acclaim	★★
<i>Ghen War</i>	Sega	★★
<i>Golden Axe: The Duel</i>	Sega	★★
<i>Gotha (Japan)</i>	Sega	★★
<i>Guardian Heroes (Japan)</i>	Sega	★★
<i>Hang-On GP '95</i>	Sega	★★
<i>Hi-Octane</i>	EA	★★
<i>High Velocity</i>	Atlus	★★
<i>Iron Storm</i>	Working Designs	★★★★
<i>Johnny Bazoakotone</i>	US Gold	★★
<i>Last Gladiators (Japan)</i>	Kaze Co	★★★★
<i>Mansion of Hidden Souls</i>	Sega	★★
<i>Mortal Kombat II</i>	Acclaim	★★
<i>Myst</i>	SunSoft	★★
<i>NHL All-Star Hockey '96</i>	Sega	★★
<i>NHL Powerplay '96</i>	Virgin Interactive	★★★★
<i>Night Warriors: Dark Stalkers' Revenge</i>	Capcom	★★
<i>Off-World Interceptor</i>	Crystal Dynamics	★★
<i>Panzer Dragoon</i>	Sega	★★★★
<i>Panzer Dragoon II Zwei</i>	Sega	★★★★
<i>Pebble Beach Golf Links</i>	Sega	★★
<i>Riglord Saga (Japan)</i>	Sega	★★
<i>Quarterback Attack</i>	Digital Pictures	★★
<i>Sega Rally Championship</i>	Sega	★★★★
<i>Shellshock</i>	U.S. Gold	★★
<i>Shinobi Legions</i>	Sega	★★
<i>Shining Force</i>	Working Designs	★★
<i>Shining Wisdom</i>	Working Designs	★★
<i>SimCity</i>	Maxis	★★
<i>Skeleton Warriors</i>	Playmates	★★
<i>SteamGear Mash</i>	Takara (Japan)	★★
<i>Street Fighter: The Movie</i>	Acclaim	★★
<i>Tama (Japan)</i>	Tengen	★★
<i>Theme Park</i>	Electronic Arts	★★
<i>ThunderStrike 2</i>	US Gold	★★★★
<i>Ultimate Mortal Kombat 3</i>	Williams	★★
<i>Virtua Cop</i>	Sega	★★★★
<i>Virtua Fighter</i>	Sega	★★★★
<i>Virtua Fighter Remix</i>	Sega	★★★★
<i>Virtua Fighter 2</i>	Sega	★★★★
<i>Virtua Racing</i>	Time Warner	★★
<i>Virtual Hydlide</i>	Atlus	★★
<i>Virtual Volleyball (Japan)</i>	Imagineer	★
<i>Wicked 18</i>	Vic Tokai	★★
<i>Wing Arms</i>	Sega	★★
<i>Wipeout</i>	Sega	★★★★
<i>World Cup Golf: Pro Edition</i>	US Gold	★★
<i>World Series Baseball</i>	Sega	★★★★
<i>Worldwide Soccer</i>	Sega	★★
<i>Worms</i>	Ocean of America	★★★★
<i>X-Men: Children of the Atom</i>	Capcom	★★
<b>3DO</b>		
<i>Alone In The Dark 2</i>	Interplay	★★★★
<i>Battlesport</i>	Studio 3DO	★★★★
<i>Bladeforce</i>	Studio 3DO	★★★★
<i>BC Racers</i>	Goldstar	★
<i>Burning Soldier</i>	Panasonic	★★
<i>Bust a Move</i>	Panasonic	★★★★
<i>Cannon Fodder</i>	Virgin	★★★★
<i>Captain Quazar</i>	Studio 3DO	★★
<i>Crime Patrol</i>	American Laser Games	★★
<i>Cyberdillo</i>	Panasonic	★★
<i>Cyberia</i>	Interplay	★★
<i>D</i>	Panasonic	★★
<i>Deathkeep</i>	SSI	★★
<i>Demolition Man</i>	Virgin	★★
<i>Drug Wars</i>	American Laser Games	★★
<i>Family Feud</i>	GameTek	★★
<i>Flying Nightmares</i>	Domark	★★
<i>FIFA International Soccer</i>	EA	★★★★
<i>Flashback</i>	U.S. Gold	★★
<i>Gex</i>	Crystal Dynamics	★★★★
<i>Ghost Hunter</i>	Matsushita	★★
<i>Guardian War</i>	Panasonic	★★
<i>Hell: a Cyberpunk Thriller</i>	GameTek	★★
<i>Icebreaker</i>	Magnet Interactive	★★

TITLE	PUBLISHER	NG RATING
<i>Immercenary</i>	EA	★★
<i>Iron Angel of the Apocalypse</i>	Panasonic	★★
<i>Iron Angel: The Return</i>	Panasonic	★★
<i>Jammit</i>	Street Sports	★★
<i>John Madden Football</i>	EA	★★★★
<i>Killing Time</i>	Studio 3DO	★★★★
<i>Kingdom: The Far Reaches</i>	Interplay	★★
<i>Lemmings</i>	Psygnosis	★★★★
<i>Lost Eden</i>	Virgin Interactive	★★★★
<i>Lucien's Quest</i>	Panasonic	★★
<i>Mazer</i>	American Laser Games	★
<i>Mega Race</i>	Mindscape	★★
<i>Microcosm</i>	T&E Soft	★★
<i>Myst</i>	Panasonic	★★
<i>Off-World Interceptor</i>	Crystal Dynamics	★★
<i>Need for Speed</i>	EA	★★
<i>Panzer General</i>	SSI	★★★★
<i>PGA Tour Golf '96</i>	EA Sports	★★
<i>PD'ed</i>	Any Channel	★★★★
<i>Primal Rage</i>	Time Warner	★★
<i>Quarantine</i>	GameTek	★★
<i>Road Rash</i>	EA	★★★★
<i>Rebel Assault</i>	Lucas Arts	★★
<i>Samurai Shodown</i>	Crystal Dynamics	★★
<i>Scramble Cobra</i>	Panasonic	★★
<i>Seal of the Pharaoh</i>	Panasonic	★★
<i>Shanghai: The Great Wall</i>	Activision	★★
<i>Shock Wave</i>	EA	★★
<i>Starfighter</i>	Studio 3DO	★★★★
<i>Operation Jump Gate</i>	EA	★★★★
<i>Slam 'N' Jam '95</i>	Crystal Dynamics	★★★★
<i>Soccer Kid</i>	3DO	★★
<i>Space Hulk</i>	EA	★★★★
<i>Space Pirates</i>	American Laser Games	★★
<i>Star Control II</i>	Crystal Dynamics	★★
<i>Starblade</i>	Panasonic	★★
<i>Station Invasion</i>	Club 3DO	★★
<i>Super Street Fighter II Turbo</i>	Panasonic	★★★★
<i>Super Wing Commander</i>	Origin	★★★★
<i>Supreme Warrior</i>	Digital Pictures	★★
<i>Syndicate</i>	EA	★★★★
<i>The Daedalus Encounter</i>	Panasonic	★★
<i>The Last Bounty Hunter</i>	American Laser Games	★★
<i>Theme Park</i>	EA	★★
<i>Trip'D</i>	Wrap	★★
<i>VR Stalker</i>	American Laser Games	★★
<i>Way of the Warrior</i>	Universal Interactive	★★
<i>Wing Commander III</i>	EA	★★★★
<i>Wolfenstein 3-D</i>	Id/Logicware	★★
<i>World Cup Golf</i>	US Gold	★★
<i>Zhadnost: The People's Party</i>	Studio 3DO	★★
<b>Jaguar</b>		
<i>Alien vs. Predator</i>	Atari	★★★★
<i>Atari Karts</i>	Atari	★★
<i>Bldies CD</i>	Atari	★★
<i>Battlemorph</i>	CD	★★★★
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<i>Checkered Flag</i>	Atari	★★
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<i>FlipOut!</i>	Atari	★★
<i>Highlander</i>	Atari	★★
<i>Hover Strike</i>	Atari	★★
<i>Iron Soldier</i>	Atari	★★
<i>I-War</i>	Atari	★★
<i>Missile Command 3D</i>	Atari	★★
<i>Pitfall: The Mayan Adventures</i>	Atari	★★★★
<i>Power Drive Rally</i>	Time Warner	★★
<i>Ryman</i>	Atari	★★★★
<i>Ruiner Pinball</i>	Atari	★★
<i>Supercross 3D</i>	Atari	★
<i>Syndicate</i>	Ocean	★★★★
<i>Tempest 2000</i>	Atari	★★★★
<i>Theme Park</i>	Ocean	★★
<i>Tony Aikman Football</i>	Williams	★★
<i>Val d'Isere Skiing</i>	Atari	★★
<i>White Men Can't Jump</i>	Trimark	★★
<i>Wolfenstein 3-D</i>	Atari	★★
<i>Zool 2</i>	Atari	★★
<i>Zoop</i>	Viacom	★★

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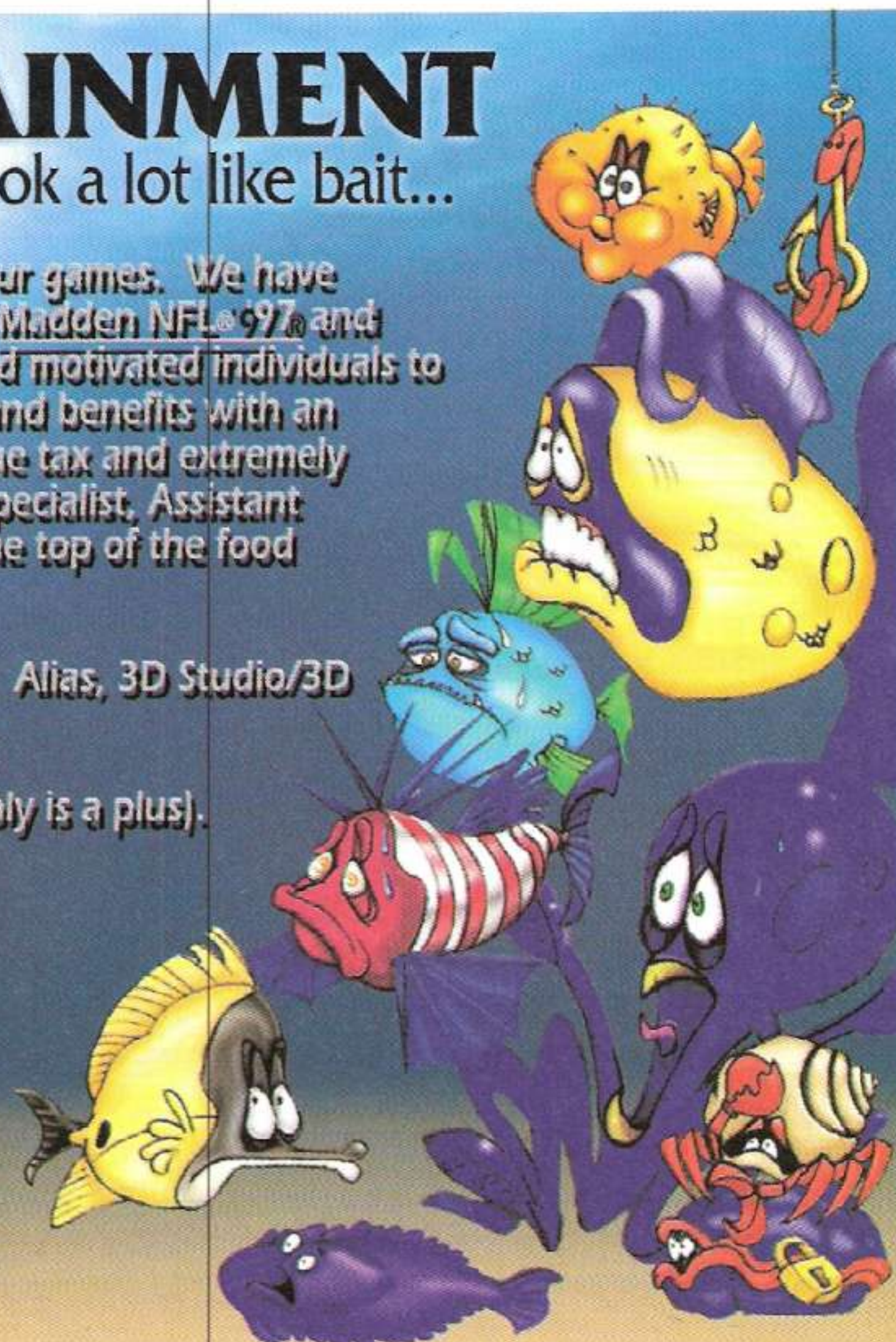
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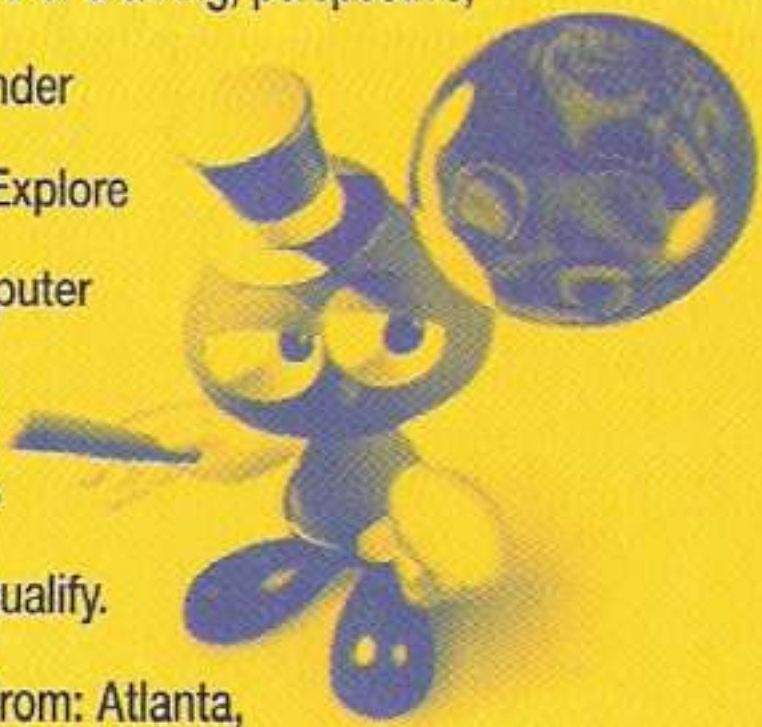
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## The write stuff

I found the interview with Bill Gates in **NG 18** embarrassing. I realize Willie has a few more dollars in the bank than I do, so he must be doing something right, but I feel compelled to point out some of the smoke Gates was blowing about how the PCs are going to catch and beat the consoles.

At one point, Bill states that PCs will have surpassed the consoles by '97, when certain PCs come equipped with a standard 3D accelerator card. Who is he kidding? It's now a full three years since the P5 (Pentium 60 and up) was introduced into the "affordable" home market, and yet the 486 DX66 is still the median machine for game developers (meaning more families own that machine than any other). One could have purchased every one of the next-generation consoles, along with five games each, and still have spent less money than on any of the P5s coming out in '97 with an integral 3D accelerator card.

Second, to say that the only advantage PS-X has over the PC is texture mapping is a gross understatement. The fact that it has realtime texture mapping with shadows and transparencies, for millions of polygons, for a list price of now \$200, would be more accurate. One would have to spend \$7,000 (PI33, good accelerator card, 40 MB plus EDO RAM) on a PC to get the same effect, and there wouldn't even be a game to showcase your now very expensive hardware.

I offer Willie a free piece of advice. Don't try to beat the consoles. Instead, concentrate on what PCs are good for: sims, strategy, and multiplayer

networking. This is akin to a microwave trying to beat out the conventional oven. I reheat pizza in a microwave, and bake turkeys in the oven. Neither is practical for the other's job, and the same applies for PCs and consoles.

**Steve Bowler**  
[monolithgrp@earthlink.net](mailto:monolithgrp@earthlink.net)

The Bill Gates interview, and his assertion that PCs will overtake consoles in terms of graphic power, has generated more than a small amount of response. Two things: One, an increasing number of PC titles are taking advantage of 3D accelerator cards and — assuming that Microsoft's Direct3D API ever gets past the beta stage and eliminates the need to program directly for each specific card — that number will only increase.



**Bill Gates' exclusive interview with NG sparked controversy**

Also, while PCs aren't likely to drop significantly in price by '97, the trend is for PCs to become cheaper while each generation of consoles gets more expensive (your \$7,000 price point also seems excessive).

However, your argument is correct. By their very nature,

PCs have to be powerful, general purpose machines, and therefore expensive. Consoles only have to play games well, and will always offer the consumer a better price-performance ratio for that reason. No matter how impressive PC games are or may become, the cash value and ease of use consoles offer ensure they will never disappear from the game market completely.

I'm writing to you about what could happen if game companies take the plunge and start to design games for Windows 95 with these "standard" APIs and SDKs. Setting a standard with an operating system is a bad idea.

Right now designers take their time making games, and when they're done we get a game like *Quake*. Make a standard and the market is going to be flooded with games that run great in Windows 95 but the quality of the games will suck.

[rendrgod@accessone.com](mailto:rendrgod@accessone.com)

Wrong. While in some cases setting standards does result in less creativity going into game design and titles starting to look the same (which happened to a certain extent with PlayStation games toward the end of the first wave of releases), that ain't the case with APIs.

In general, all an API does is make it easier for designers to communicate with various kinds of hardware. In the case of Direct3D, for instance, it alleviates the hassle of having to program for every individual 3D accelerator. If anything, a well-written API will accelerate creativity, since less time needs

to be spent dealing with hardware issues, and game companies can rest assured that everyone with a PC can run their game, rather than just the limited segment of the market that owns the particular card with which they can write.

Also, keep in mind that just because a standard exists, that doesn't mean a designer has to use it — and frequently, the most creative designers don't.

I am aware of the demographics of gaming, and I don't mind seeing a little T&A in ads when appropriate — nor rippling hunks of manflesh, for that matter. But on behalf of (uptight?) women gamers like myself, I would like to thank you for not running the multiple-page ad layouts of "Flesh and Fantasy" XXX CD-ROMS that I see in so many other gaming magazines. As a woman in an industry dominated by men, such ads (aimed at heterosexual men, and containing only erotic depictions of women) often make me feel isolated and unwelcome.

As the gaming industry grows, more and more women are coming onto the scene as programmers, game designers, and artistic directors. Your decision not to run ads for erotic-pornographic "games" is due, I believe, to good taste. But more importantly to me, it makes me feel that I am also a part of the gaming revolution.

Thank you.

**Melanie Walker**  
Portland, Oregon

Not printing pornographic ads is a conscious choice. We feel that

# corresponding

they have no place in our magazine: Altruistically, we don't want to offend our valued female readers; Pragmatically, the bulk of such product can't even be labeled as real games.

On the other hand, we have accepted and continue to print "sexy" ads for otherwise mainstream games — which leads us to this next letter.

**I** enjoy your magazine, I really do, and I thought that you had possibly changed, but I got issue 18 in the mail today and was shocked to find the Sega "naked lady" ad. I have sent a letter to Sega telling them that I am very insulted and almost ashamed to own a Saturn now. But, when I brought your attention to this kind of thing months ago, you said you'd try to do something about it, and I was happy. But I see that ad dollars are much more important to you than your female readership. You've shown your spots and they haven't changed. I'm canceling my subscription.

Thanks for making me feel so welcome...

**Crystal Walters  
Tyndall AFB, FL**

Ms. Walters wrote us once before (**NG 14**) to complain about "sexist" and otherwise "offensive" ads. However, we never said, nor meant to imply that we would "do something about it." True, we did delete some blood from a *Wipeout* ad shortly after, but for somewhat different reasons, which in itself only underscores the pitfalls of dealing with ads and the issues of taste and censorship.

Then as now, we concede the point: much of game advertising is extremely adolescent in tone. However, as a practical issue, game companies prefer to aim their campaigns at the audience they know, in ways they're sure will work, rather than risk millions on an audience that no one's sure exists. And, once again, the direct approach, the one you've already taken, is best: write the companies directly and tell them you won't be buying their products. For

good or ill, consumer dollars always talk loudest.

**W**hy aren't Saturn games being Gouraud shaded? I heard Saturn doesn't have this built in, but it's simple enough to have it done in software. The box for Saturn even says it can Gouraud shade. Also, what do people mean by saying Saturn can't do transparency? I saw that *Kupido's stage in Battle Arena Toshinden Remix* was transparent, or is that something different?

**Jason Ubalde  
San Diego, CA**

Actually, Saturn games are being Gouraud shaded (a method of smoothing the vertices of objects modeled from polygons), and some, like *Toshinden Remix*, also include transparency. Trouble is, you heard correctly: Saturn has to do this through software, since unlike Nintendo 64 or PlayStation, Saturn has little in the way of hardwired, built-in 3D modeling features.

**W**hat's up with you guys? You claim to be a videogame magazine but as far as I'm concerned, you're full of it. I read a review of a game called *Pulstar* for the Neo-Geo which you tore to pieces. You compared it to *Defender*! How could you? Your reviewers must be blind. The game is amazing and more like *R-Type*. You also forgot to mention it has SGI-rendered graphics. I've had many game systems and I find the Neo-Geo is a great system. This is my favorite system because there's no pretentious 3D garbage. Try playing *Nam-75* or *Magician Lord* for a change, instead of all that 3D crap. Hand-drawn art is where it's at, ladies and gentlemen. You also compared the magnificent *Guardian Heroes* to *Final Fight*. That just goes to show that you are on the 3D bandwagon, like so many other misguided souls. I will give you credit for your review of *Real Bout: Fatal Fury* and *Samurai Shodown III*. They run circles around games like that pile of garbage [*Battle Arena*]

*Toshinden* and *Virtua Fighter* — 2D fighters will always rule.

**B. Allen  
Laural, MD**

Yeah, whatever.

**I**'m totally confused about videogame graphics and how to improve them. I have a 27" JVC TV with a variety of inputs, including an S-Video jack. People have told me that if I get an S-Video cable for my Saturn, the graphics will improve a lot over the standard RCA cable packed with the system. Is this true or are the salesmen just trying to sell me a \$30 cable that just improves the graphics a little? Thanks for any help.

**Mike Schowalter  
Chicago City, MN**



**Are 3D games necessarily better than 2D games?**

There are two schools of thought on this. One, the difference to the average Joe between S-Video and standard composite video (which uses an RCA cable) is minimal. But, if your monitor is high-end enough to handle the S-Video input the way it's supposed to, then, in general, you will notice an improvement in both a sharper image and cleaner colors.

Whether the difference is worth \$30 or not is up to you. Personally, that's not a whole lot of cash to gamble, and heck, you can always return the thing if you're not convinced.

**I**t would be nice if your magazine devoted some more coverage to Macintosh games. Many PC games have been ported over to the Mac, and there are some excellent Mac-only games

available. It would also be good to point out in your reviews which games are cross-platform, and what systems they play better on. I know that many games such as the *Doom* series, *X-Wing*, and others are enhanced to take advantage of the Macintosh, and run faster and with better graphics than a Windows or DOS PC.

**Marcel Brown  
mbrown@edwpub.com**

Can and will. The problem in the past has been that while everyone at **Next Generation** uses Macs every day to put the magazine together, until recently, most games available for the Mac were more or less identical ports of PC titles, which we saw little reason to cover again. As the market has expanded, however, we're taking steps to beef up our Mac coverage.

Expect more in the future.

**I** think I cracked the puzzle behind Sony's mysterious "Enos Lives" ads. If you look in the Holy Bible, Genesis 5:6 reads, "And Seth lived a hundred and five years, and begat Enos. And Seth lived after he begat Enos eight hundred and seven years."

Now if you add those years together,  $105 + 807 = 912$ ; "912" can be seen to represent nine for the month of September, day 12, and September 12 being the day PlayStation was released in the U.S. Coincidence? I think not!

**Thearrel W. McKinney Jr.  
Cleveland, OH**

Fascinating. Except, of course, that PlayStation was released on September 9.

**Y**our review of *CyberSpeed* said that the game looked as good as Roseanne in a bikini.

Would that be a regular bikini or a string bikini?

**Jim Ward  
jfw@saltmine.radix.net**

Jim, you really shouldn't waste too many brain cells on this. Trust us.





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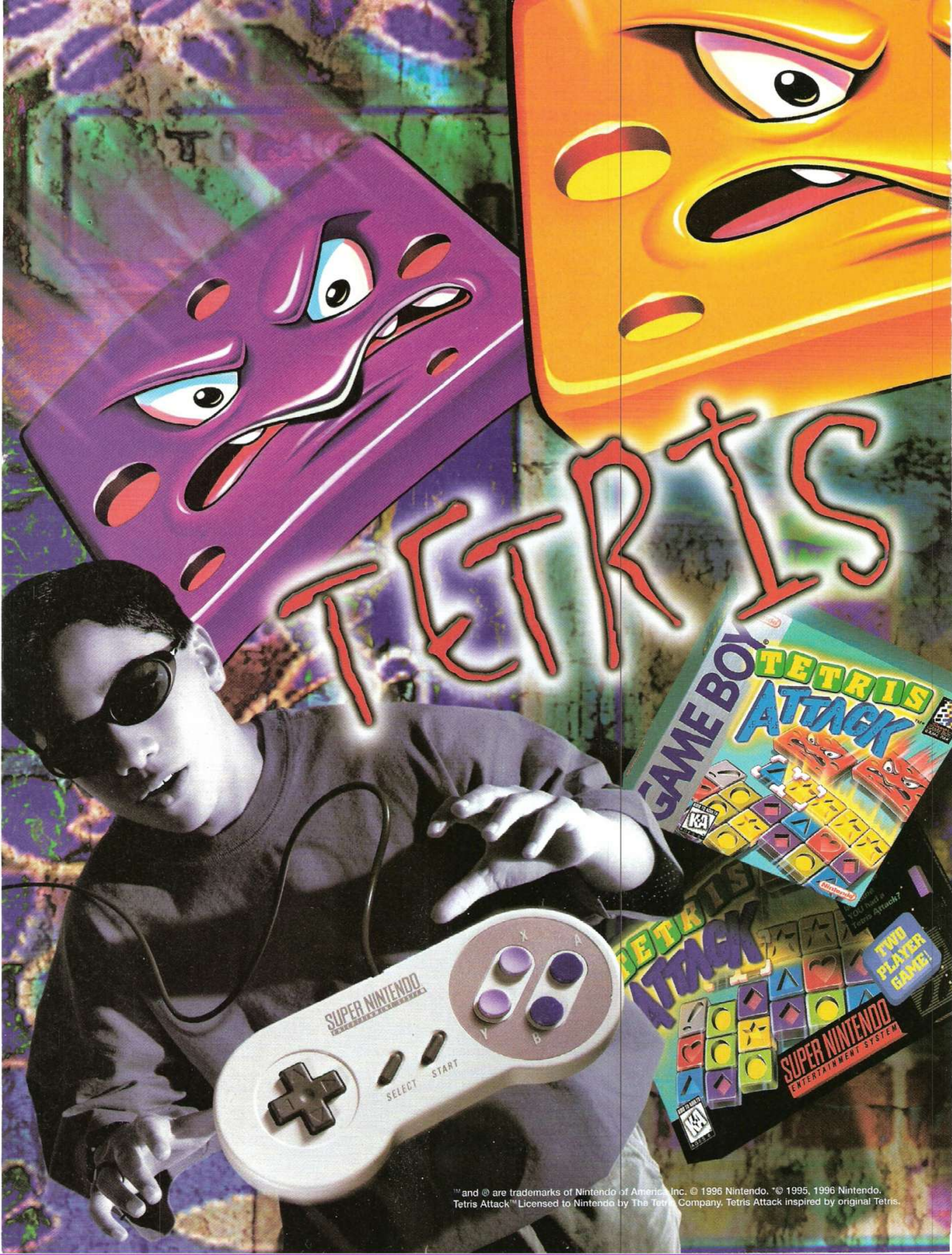
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