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ISSUE 128 JUNE 2004

HYPER

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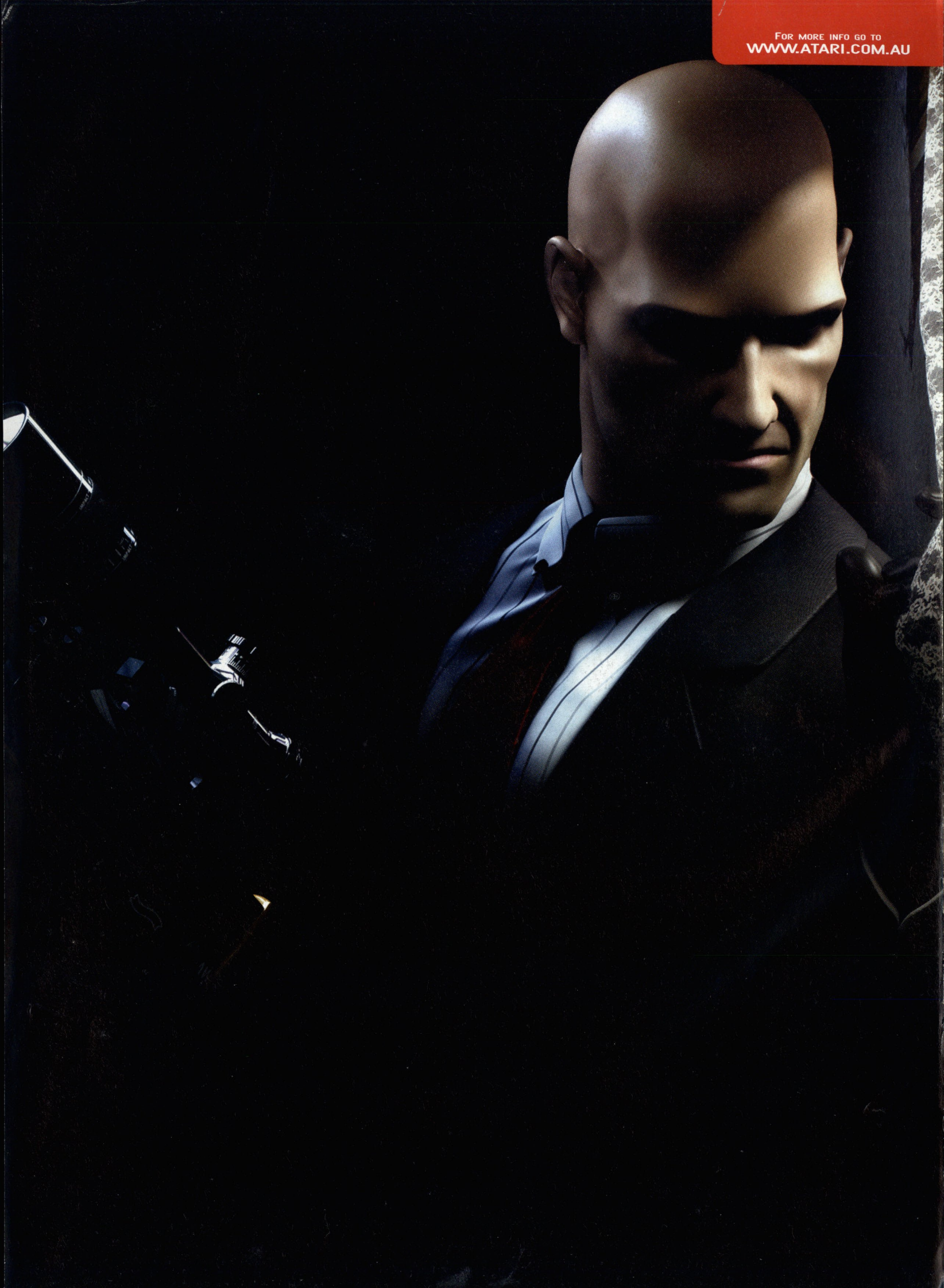
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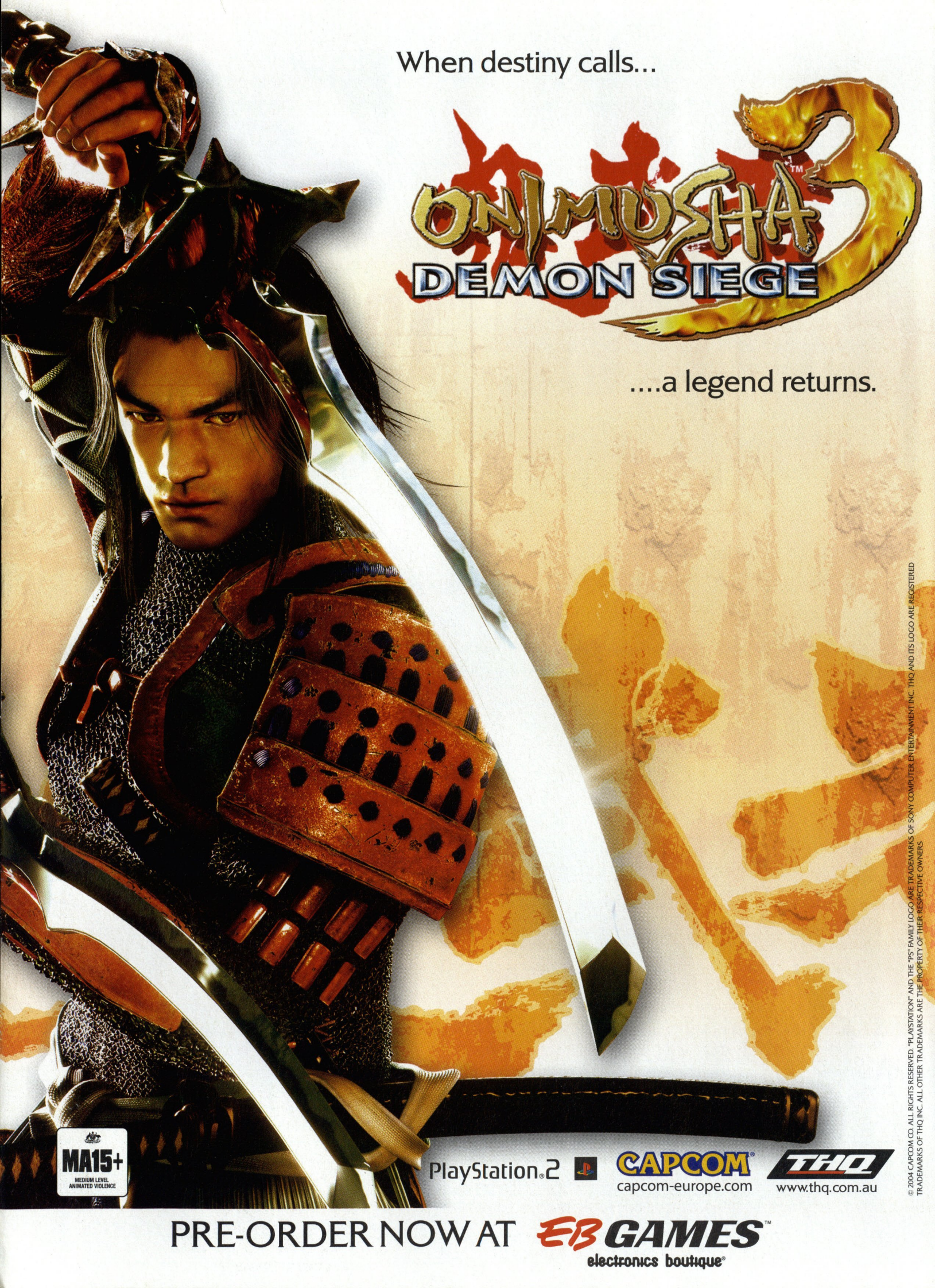

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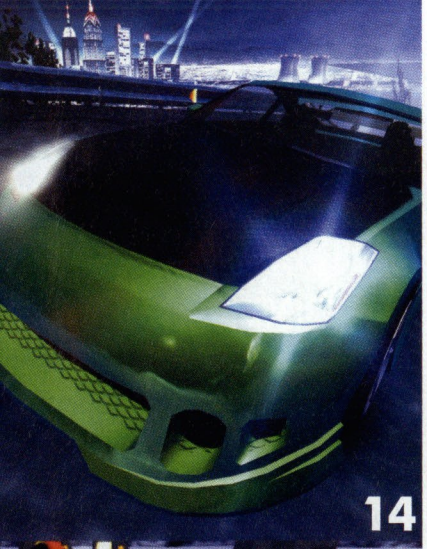
62 UNREAL TOURNAMENT 2004
The ultimate multiplayer first person shooter?



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EDITORIAL

>> With the advent of peripherals like the EyeToy and karaoke microphones, game consoles are taking another big step towards being all round entertainment machines that are just as geared towards the mainstream as they are to the "hardcore". There's really nothing wrong with this (in fact, it's probably a good thing), but it's still a little hard to know how to take it all.

EyeToy, for instance, was fun for about five minutes... then we went back to our arcade sticks and Guilty Gear X2. And as for all the karaoke games that have come out of the woodwork (next up – Drunken Master Karaoke for GBA), it's taken us until now to bother reviewing one of them, and as you can see above, we didn't exactly take it too seriously.

But you know what? Why shouldn't more mainstream gamers have their peripherals? We get crazy shit like the Steel Battalion controller, so really, it's just balancing things out. And sometimes it's products like EyeToy that act as a portal into gaming for casual players, not to mention functioning as breeding grounds for the future of control/navigation solutions - if the PS3 rumours are to be believed.

Gaming will continue to grow, and the more choice you have, the greater the likelihood it will be a lifelong passion. So kick back and enjoy.

Cam Shea >> Editor

HYPER CREW MONTHLY TOP 5 GAMES

Cam Shea - Editor
1. Majora's Mask - GCN
   "That rotten skull kid won't get away with this! R, A, D, R, A, D"
2. Ninja Gaiden - Xbox
3. UT 2004 - PC
4. Rallisport Challenge 2 - Xbox
5. Fight Night 2004 - Xbox

Daniel Wilks - Deputy Editor
1. UT 2004 – PC
   "More UT is always a good thing. PANCAKE!"
2. Sacred - PC
3. Final Fantasy X-2 – PS2
4. Soul Calibur 2 - Xbox
5. Phone tag with banks

Malcolm Campbell - Art Guy
1. R-Type Final – PS2
   "Sunday Strike, Delicatessen, Hot Conductor, gotta catch 'em all!"
2. Final Fantasy X-2 – PS2
3. R-Type – PSone
4. R-Type II – PSone
5. R-Type Delta – PSone

Kosta Andreadis - Some Guy
1. FarCry – PC
   "Currently playing it in slow motion with a GeForce 3"
2. Fire Emblem - GBA
3. Metal Gear Solid: The Twin Snakes - GCN
4. Battlefield Vietnam - PC
5. Uno! - Card Game

HYPER>>

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WRITE TO HYPER!

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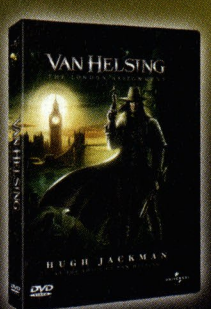

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IN STORES MAY 6

News

IN THE NEWS: Tamagotchis are back! ■ Mind controlled gaming ■ Paper Mario 2 confirmed! ■ Stuff gets smaller

[above] But where's the Master Chef?

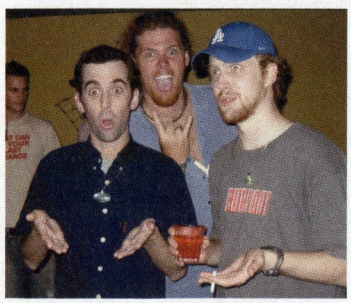
PRICE DROP

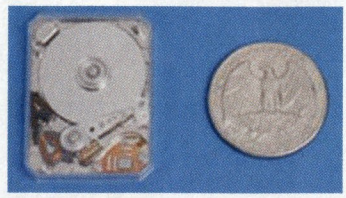
XBOX NOW $249

Microsoft get the jump on the competition...

Microsoft recently announced a price drop for the Xbox down to $249 (from $299), which makes it ridiculously good value for money. Don't believe us? Then check out the latest shots of Halo 2 – and bear in mind these screenshots were taken WITHOUT all the effects turned on! Imagine what the final product is going to look like! We simply can't wait for this game. In other price drops, the Halo Elite Force pack is now $299 and you can pick up PGR2 for $69.95, and Amped 2 and Counter-Strike for $49.95. Will Sony and Nintendo follow suit? Here's hoping.

In other Xbox news, Hyper staffers were on hand to help celebrate the Xbox's second birthday in Australia. Unlike last year's party, which was in a huge warehouse with a full beach volleyball court and skate ramp out the back, the second birthday was a smaller affair. Just a few hundred people in a strip club in Kings Cross. And you guys think the life of a gaming journalist is glamorous... think again!





SHRINKAGE

TINY TOSHIBA

HDD in your pocket

Japanese electronics manufacturer Toshiba has cemented their place in the Guinness Book of Records by creating the world's smallest HDD. The new storage devices are roughly the size of a postage stamp and can hold up to an incredible 4Gb of data. Toshiba are planning on placing the drives in devices such as mobile phones and digital video cameras, giving the portable devices more storage space than desktop computers had a few short years ago. Toshiba is no stranger to tiny HDDs – their last small drive is utilised in Apple Computer's hugely successful iPod digital music player. The company plans on putting the drives into mass production by the end of this year so with any luck we should start seeing the first devices to utilise the tiny drives in early 2005.

SURGICAL

STEADY HANDS

Job prospects for gamers

Next time your parents tell you that you'll never amount to anything if you just keep playing videogames all day, look them straight in the eye and tell them that you are training for your future career as a surgeon. A recent study conducted at the Beth Israel Hospital and the Institute of Media on the Family at Iowa State University showed that doctors who played videogames using gamepad style controllers were 37% less likely to make a mistake and 27% faster than doctors who didn't play games during the practice of laparoscopic surgery. Laparoscopic surgery involves the making of a tiny keyhole incision into which is placed a small camera and tools that are remotely controlled with thumbsticks.

DEAD TIRED

SAGA OF STUPIDITY

Internet cafe death trap

Barely a month goes by without someone in one of the Asian nations keeling over dead after playing a marathon session of some game at an Internet café. Before anyone starts looking towards Korea (again), this month's victim of stupidity comes from China. The unnamed 31-year old man was found dead in his favourite Internet café in Chengdu after a marathon 20-hour session playing a popular MMORPG called Saga. Apparently the man had begun playing for ten plus hours a day more than three months ago but employees at the café found nothing wrong with this behaviour. There are no indications on file as to why the man passed away aside from his marathon gaming session which leads Hyper to believe that Saga itself was the cause – we've played games bad enough to cause serious physical pain before but never one bad enough to kill us, but with the number of games we play it's only a matter of time...

Why doesn't our stuff look so cute?

STORAGE

SWISS ARMY GEEK

MP3s and knives. Yay!

A generation ago it was a sign of supreme coolness for any kid to have a real Swiss Army Knife, the original multi-tool folding knife with accessories ranging from nail files to wood saws and wire cutters. Swiss Army Knives are still in hot demand due to their small size and incredible usefulness but soon it looks as though the venerable blade may become the height of geek chic. In addition to a knife blade, screwdriver and the like, this year's model of the knife will come with a variable size USB thumb drive. A spokesman from Victorinox, the company responsible for making the knives stated that they were having a hard time looking for new attachments for the knives but are happy with the trend of miniaturisation in technology – god only knows what next year's model will surprise us with.

A NOVEL GAME

WHO-DUNNIT?

Christ(ie) on a bike

When it comes to best selling authors and books, two stand out above all, the Bible and the works of William Shakespeare, a man who wrote some pretty nifty plays but could never be sure how to spell his own surname. That may not come as much of a surprise but how many people know who the third most popular is? Agatha Christie, the now dead author of the Hercule Poirot mysteries (amongst others) wrote 79 books during her long career that have collectively sold over 2 billion copies. 2 billion copies – by anyone's estimation that is an absolute shit-load. Now the grand dame of mysteries books (or some of them at least) are to be transformed into games. There are no details as yet as to which of the novels or short stories will be used and what form the games will take but mystery fans and fans of adventure gaming should rejoice.

[left] Hercule Poirot – fantastic mustache

POCKET

TAMAGOTCHI: THE REVENGE

Get on the Bandai-wagon

Just when you thought it was safe to go back into a public place and not be assaulted by the myriad annoying beeps of small virtual pets, Bandai, the makers of the phenomenally successful Tamagotchi virtual pets are on the verge of releasing a second generation time waster. The Tamagotchi II is for all intents and purposes just like the original with one important difference – an IR port that will allow the little bastards to communicate with each other. The new virtual pets will be able to make friends, play, give each other gifts and, heaven forbid, even breed with each other giving birth to genetically mixed offspring. Bandai expects to sell around 2 million units in the first year. Whilst this may sound like a huge number it's nothing compared to the 40+ million original Tamagotchi (not including cheap imitators) sold.

CAPTION THIS!

Come on, make us laugh. Do your best. You can do it! Just send your funny screen captions to us at captionthis@next.com.au with Caption This Part 55 in the subject line.

PART 55

hardy ha ha

THINKING

MIND GAMES

Cranial balancing act

A group of researchers have come up with a nifty little game called Mind Balance which revolves around players directly controlling a tight-rope-walking creature with their mind. When the player first starts the game (and are fitted with the specially designed headset) they are asked to concentrate on different images in screen to calibrate the machine before launching into the game proper. The actual gameplay revolves around keeping the on screen character balanced by concentrating on coloured boxes on the left or right of the screen – if the frog-like alien, dubbed Mawg starts leaning right then the player has to concentrate on the left hand box and vice-versa. If this doesn't sound like your cup of tea then don't worry because you won't be seeing it on shelves any time soon. The technology has been developed for research into spinal/brain injuries that hinder movement and will hopefully be a first step to helping those people move again.

WINNERS

Hyper 126

ARMED & DANGEROUS

First prize winners:
Don Hua, NSW
Michael McAtee, QLD
Kevin Willett, NSW
Carla Lewenhoff, WA
Stew Colman, ACT

Runners-up:
Chris Skevofilax, VIC
Carmen Gerada, NSW
Alex Campbell, WA
Tim Paladin, QLD
Lauren Wood, TAS

TENCHU

Gene Megaritz, VIC
Chris Nicoll, NSW
Jason New, NSW

28 DAYS LATER

Joseph Bell, NSW
Tanya Cupper, NSW
Merrin Westlake, NSW
George Watson, VIC
Alexandra Kilby, NSW

CHAT

LIFELINE

Talk your way out of trouble

Some people say that talk is cheap but in the PS2 game Lifeline it is anything but. Players take the role of a security guard trapped inside their control room guiding a young woman named Rio through a space station after a disaster. Whilst the plot may not sound too novel, the actual gameplay mechanics definitely are. The player watches Rio through the security monitors of the station and tells her what to do through a USB headset – that's right, players literally have to tell Rio what to do. The game is built around a voice recognition middleware program developer by ScanSoft that can recognise around 5000 individual words and up to 100,000 phrases. In practice this basically means that Rio has a good chance of understanding anything that the player says to her as long as it is within context. There are no indications of the game being released in Australia as yet but even so, Lifeline is a tantalising glimpse into the possible future of interactive games.

POSTAL

NEW BILL

Putting a sting on socially unacceptable games

Amazing as it may seem, the highly popular GTA: Vice City and the craptastic Postal 2: We Still Think Gary Coleman is a Selling Point, have come under fire for being harmful to children. Assemblyman Leland Yee of San Francisco has singled out these two games as prime examples of harmful games in an effort to push a bill through legislature with the purpose of prohibiting the sale of such games to minors. Yee has no problems with adults playing the games themselves but he does not want children to have access to such antisocial or violent titles. His bill, AB1792 will level hefty fines at anyone caught distributing the games deemed harmful to underage audiences. Bravo Leland Yee – it's about time someone approached the subject with an open mind and a good idea instead of simply trying to ban games outright.

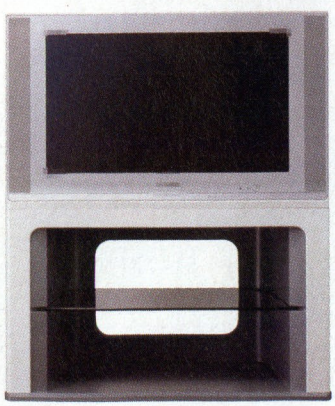
Bad Cop No Doughnut

DANIEL WILKS - THE WORLD'S MOST DANGEROUS DEPUTY EDITOR

Like many other people I took advantage of the after Christmas sales and bought myself something I really couldn't afford. It probably comes as no surprise that I am something of a film collector with a current stash of around 1000 videos, 300 or so DVDs in my living room and a heap of old film reels gathering dust and possibly sentient Hollywood flavoured mildew in storage. I bought myself what I thought was a great, beautiful looking high definition widescreen TV. I saw the beauty on sale for 2g's off due to the fact that the company no longer manufactures models in that colour (nice shiny white). It's a mistake I don't know if I'll live to regret.

Ever since getting the box home I have been plagued with problems – only small ones mind you but things that irk me nonetheless. The image shows a pixel sheen for the most part that causes fine textures to tear and for some reason the refresh rate seems to drop dramatically when playing games, making everything look, for want of a better word, shit. I did some Internet research and discovered that many other owners of this TV suffered from similar problems but had found ways of fixing it by contacting their local service department. I called the manufacturer and their helpful advice was that I had a faulty model and that I should call a technician. I called said technician who said there was no problem with the TV itself and that I would have to call the manufacturer to get debug codes to fix the problems internally. On my second call the manufacturer flatly denied that there was any such thing as debug codes and told me to call a technician.

The saga continues...



JUST ANNOUNCED! Far Cry Instincts

Xbox, PS2 Developer: Ubisoft Montreal

JUST ANNOUNCED! Death by Degrees

PS2 Developer: Namco

OVERFLOW

In great news for Cube owners, both Paper Mario 2 and a Fire Emblem title have been confirmed for the system. Woo Hoo! Both games are in development at Intelligent Systems (y'know, the guys that did Advance Wars and Fire Emblem), so you can rest assured they'll be grade A gold Jerry. Both titles look to pick up where previous games in the series left off, and Paper Mario 2 in particular looks to have some inventive and playful elements, such as Mario folding himself up into a paper plane to get around. Here's hoping we get a hands on with both games at E3.

John Woo has optioned the rights to the Metroid franchise. Yes, you read right. One of the only people in Hollywood that could do Metroid justice may not only co-produce, but possibly direct a film adaptation of the origins of Samus. Apparently the plan is to have the film ready before 2006.

Legendary Japanese developer Tetsuya Mizuguchi has hinted that his next game may be a spiritual sequel to the funky Rez, and he's considering doing it on the Nintendo DS or Sony PSP. If you didn't already know, Mizuguchi left Sega around six months ago to start his own development house – Q Entertainment. Apparently he wants more freedom to be creative. Sounds good to us.

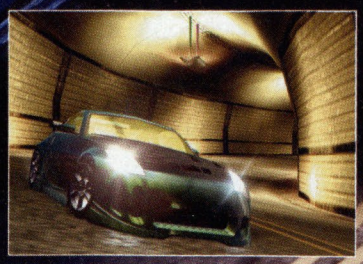
Although we weren't exactly clamouring for a sequel, here it is - Unreal Championship 2: The Liandri Conflict is in development on Xbox at Epic and will be out later this year. What's interesting about it? You can switch to third person and indulge in some serious melee moves... including defensive parries. Take that rocket and shove it!

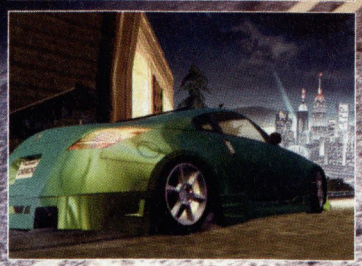
Those of you with Amped 2 and Xbox Live will be pleased to hear that Microsoft have recently delivered three new courses for the game - Pioneer, Sky, and Slopestyle 2003. Gotta love the powder.

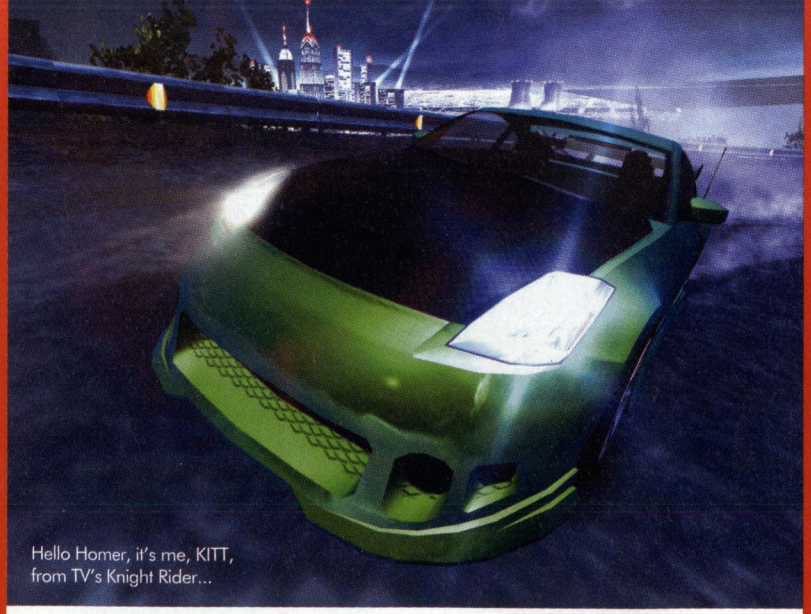
Holy voice overs Batman! Ubisoft have incorporated voice-overs for NPCs in Everquest II. It's the first ever MMOG to do so, with a staggering 130 hours of dialogue... let's hope they get it right.

Our State of the Consoles feature will be in next month's Hyper...

NEED FOR SPEED UNDERG







Hello Homer, it's me, KITT, from TV's Knight Rider...

AVAILABLE ON:
PS2 / XBOX / GCN / PC

DETAILS
CATEGORY: Street Racing / **PLAYERS:** 1-Multi / **DEVELOPER:** Black Box / **AVAILABLE:** TBA /

WOW-O-METER

WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE:
Service stations we can hang outside of and rev our engines. Cos everyone knows that's cool!

ROUND 2

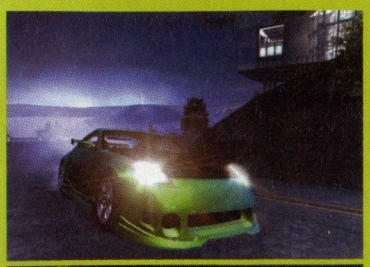
Need For Speed Underground really tuned in to the current interest in street racing, capturing the speed and the culture of the scene. It represented a rebirth for the series as a whole too, and we've been frothing at the mouth thinking about what the next step might be. To find out, we spoke to Chuck Osieja, the Executive Producer for the Need for Speed Franchise.

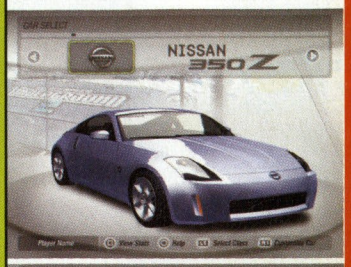
HYPER: What's your main goal for this sequel? What elements from the original did the team think could be improved, and what opportunities are you looking forward to pursuing this time around?

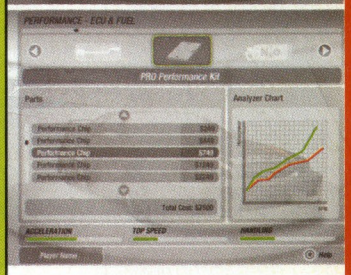
Chuck: The vision has been from the start to take Underground 2 to a whole new level in terms of the experience and how the player interacts in the world. The first Underground allowed us to introduce the player to the tuner culture and allow them to discover what tuning is all about. We really wanted to nail the idea of giving the player enough customization options to build the car that they really wanted.

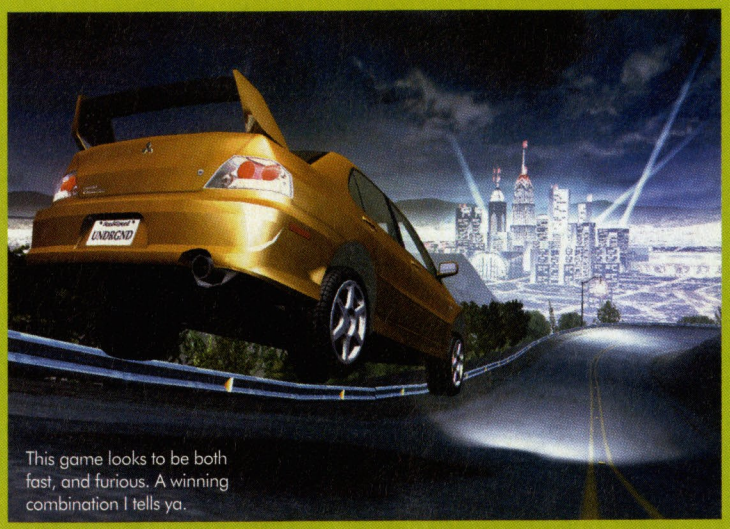
This time out we're expanding that idea to the world and focusing on the idea of discovery of the tuner scene. The player isn't handed every race. They have to go out and find them. This year the world is huge and it's all interconnected. You can literally drive from one end to the other and to anywhere that you can see on the map. The first Underground was really a collection of tracks that were in the same world but you could only drive on one at a time. This year you can drive from a circuit event to a drift event to a drag event without ever leaving the world. You can be racing in a point to point race and drive right past an area where a drift event is taking place. The world is alive and things are happening as you drive through it.

You also drive to all of the tuner shops in the world. In order to get the parts in the game you'll have to find out where they are by talking to other drivers and then finding them in the city. Inventories change and new parts and options arrive all the time so knowing where the best shops are is really an advantage. We're really building on the idea of that once the player is in the Underground 2 world they never have to leave. It's a much more organic approach to the game this year.









This game looks to be both fast, and furious. A winning combination I tells ya.

HYPER: How much more detailed will the tuning options be? We'd love to see a more intricate engine, suspension and aerodynamic tuning. How about damage to parts and cars, such as wear and tear on the engine?
Chuck: Oh yeah. One of the focuses of the game this year is to have a deep performance customization aspect to the cars. We're not changing the kits and packages that we had last year but instead we're adding the ability for the player to buy and tune individual performance parts. Gear, shocks, torque curves, and much more will all be there for the player with enough car "know how" to squeeze that little extra out of the parts that they put on their car. Not only will you be able to tune individual parts on your car but the player will also be able to save multiple set-ups and then load them before each race.

At the same time we don't put the player who doesn't have a lot of tuning knowledge at a disadvantage because they can still buy and apply the kits and packages and get great performance upgrades to their cars.

HYPER: How hard is it balancing visceral arcade thrills with the attention to detail that gearheads want? What are the tradeoffs involved with ensuring that almost anyone can pick the game up and play it?
Chuck: It is exactly this balance that the Need For Speed franchise has targeted. Our physics engine delivers this by being forgiving to the casual gamer while at the same time rewarding the more seasoned drivers. We've also found that incorporating things such as Nitrous Oxide provides a thrilling element to a gamer at any level, but also resonates with the hard core enthusiast who is looking for authenticity.

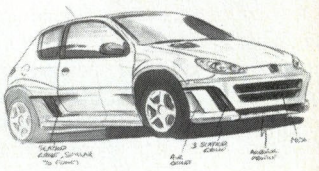
HYPER: How much more dynamic will the new game structure be? Will there be any new events in addition to street racing, drift and drag?
Chuck: This is one of the focuses for Underground 2 – let the player determine their experience. We're designing an event system that allows the player to play only the events that they want to play and still make it through the game. If you love drifting and circuits you can become great at those. If you prefer drag or one of the new modes that will be in the game play those. There will be over seven different race modes in Underground 2 so I think that everyone will find enough events that they want to play, and they won't be forced to play the ones that they don't like. You don't have to finish all of the events in a region to move on either. Earn enough cash and reputation and new areas of the world will open up to you. We've also designed the events so that you can go back and play any event over again. The goal is to give the player as much freedom to customize their game experience as possible.

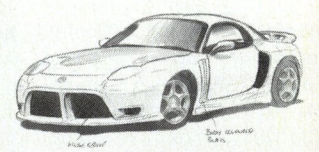
HYPER: Tell us about the environments that we'll be racing through in NFSU2. And what challenges are involved in designing city-based courses without covering the same territory as the last game?
Chuck: Underground 2 will take place in a metropolitan area with a city-core and a variety of distinct neighborhoods. We are building a larger interconnected world that will be fully drivable.

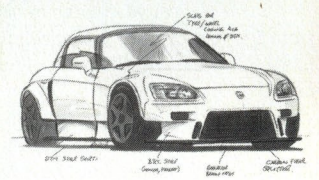
The whole thing will be tied together with a pretty intense system of freeways. The player will be able to drive from one end of the city to the other once they've unlocked all of the areas.

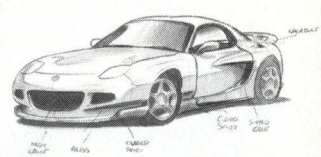
HYPER: Will police play a role in the sequel? Or sunlight?
Chuck: There will be no police in Underground, it is not an option given the scope of the project. Because this is a game about underground racing, we are staying with a night-themed environment. We will however have a range of evening light from sunset to sunrise. Also new to Underground 2 will be dynamic weather effects that will dramatically change while you are driving, adding to the visual variety.

HYPER: Will we be able to drive V8s and other popular street cars in NFSU2? How many licensed cars are we likely to see?
Chuck: We've already settled on our car list and I think players will be happy with the choices that we've made. We're still in negotiations with some of the manufacturers so I can't mention the cars right now, but it will definitely be a broader selection of vehicles than what we had last year. If you've watched the tuning scene over the last year, and lord



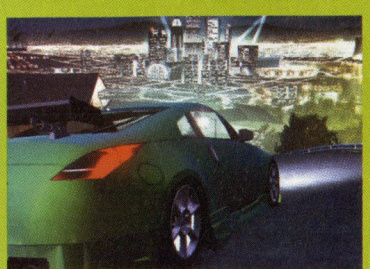


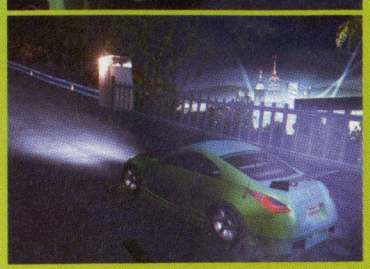


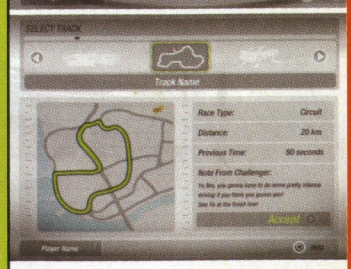


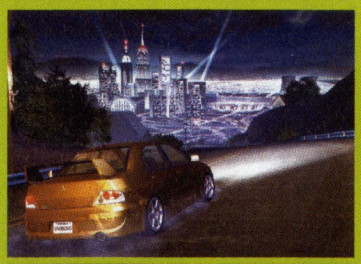
[above] Just a few of the fully sick rides you'll be able to race with in Underground 2.

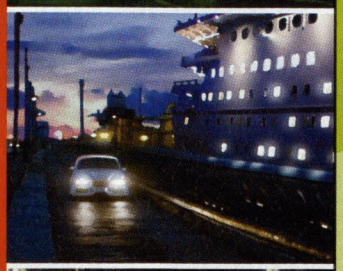
ONCE THE PLAYER IS IN THE UNDERGROUND 2 WORLD THEY NEVER HAVE TO LEAVE

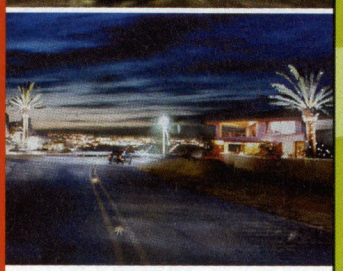




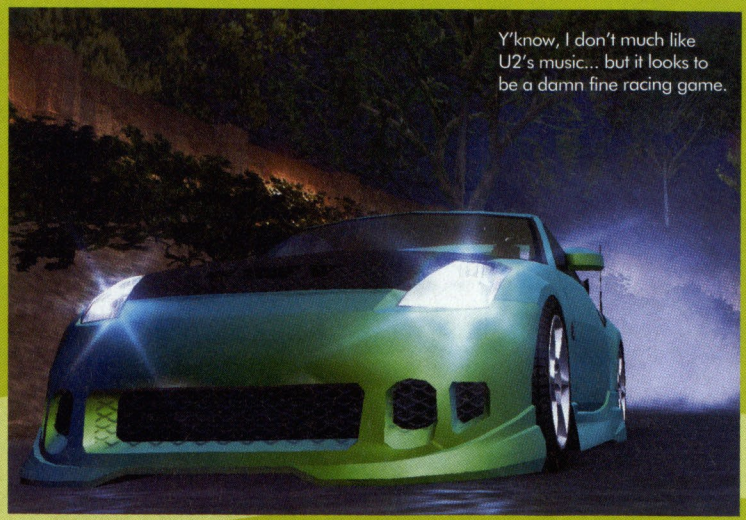








[above] Concept sketches hint at a Los Angeles type of setting, with overpass freeways, docklands, industrial area and snobby Mulholland Drive downhill section, the latter featured in a lot of the screenshots



Y'know, I don't much like U2's music... but it looks to be a damn fine racing game.

knows I've been to enough car shows, the types of vehicles being tuned is really starting to run the gamut. Things you wouldn't think of as being tuned last year are showing up all tricked out this year.

The majority of the list will still be hard-core tuner cars. We had a long list last year and we had to make some pretty painful cuts to the get the cars done. We'll be going back in time for a couple of older models and we'll also be looking into the future at a few cars we think will be big on the scene in the next year or so.

HYPER: What changes will be made to the technology behind the game?

Chuck: I'm not giving away any secrets this year! We've got a few more visual techniques that we're planning to add into the mix to crank up the sensation of speed a few more notches, but after seeing some of the driving games that are going to ship later this year it's obvious that they've learned a few things from Underground that they're applying. They say that imitation is the sincerest form of flattery so I shouldn't be surprised that camera shake and wet streets are already showing up.

HYPER: The possibilities for developing an online street racing community based around events and challenges is very enticing. What will NFSU2 offer for online gamers?

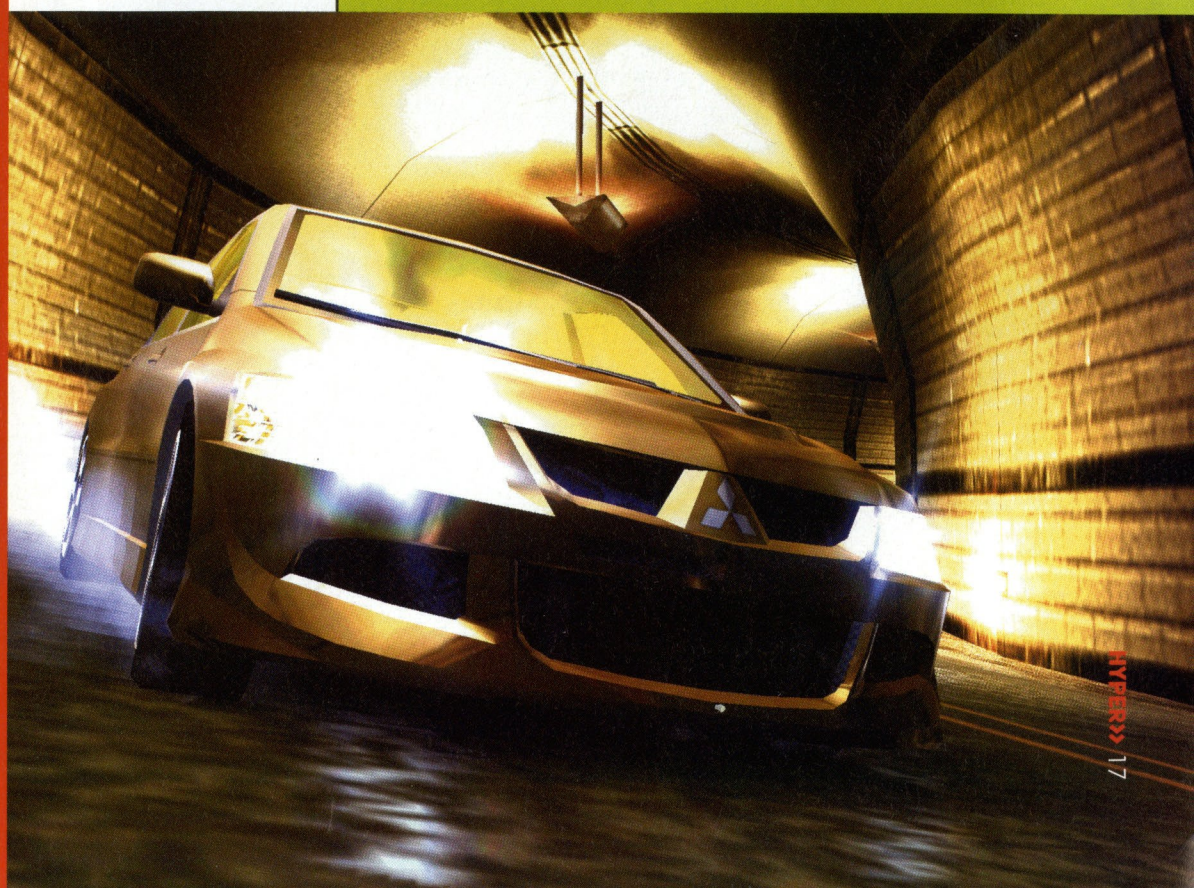
Chuck: I'm really stunned at how many people are playing online. I've played some other racing games online and after a week you'll be lucky to find anyone to race against. Underground has really struck a chord with online gamers. We can't give away our plans but you know we'll step it up this year.

HYPER: Looking beyond NFSU2, where do you see this sub-genre of racing going in the next few years? What opportunities will the next generation of hardware bring?

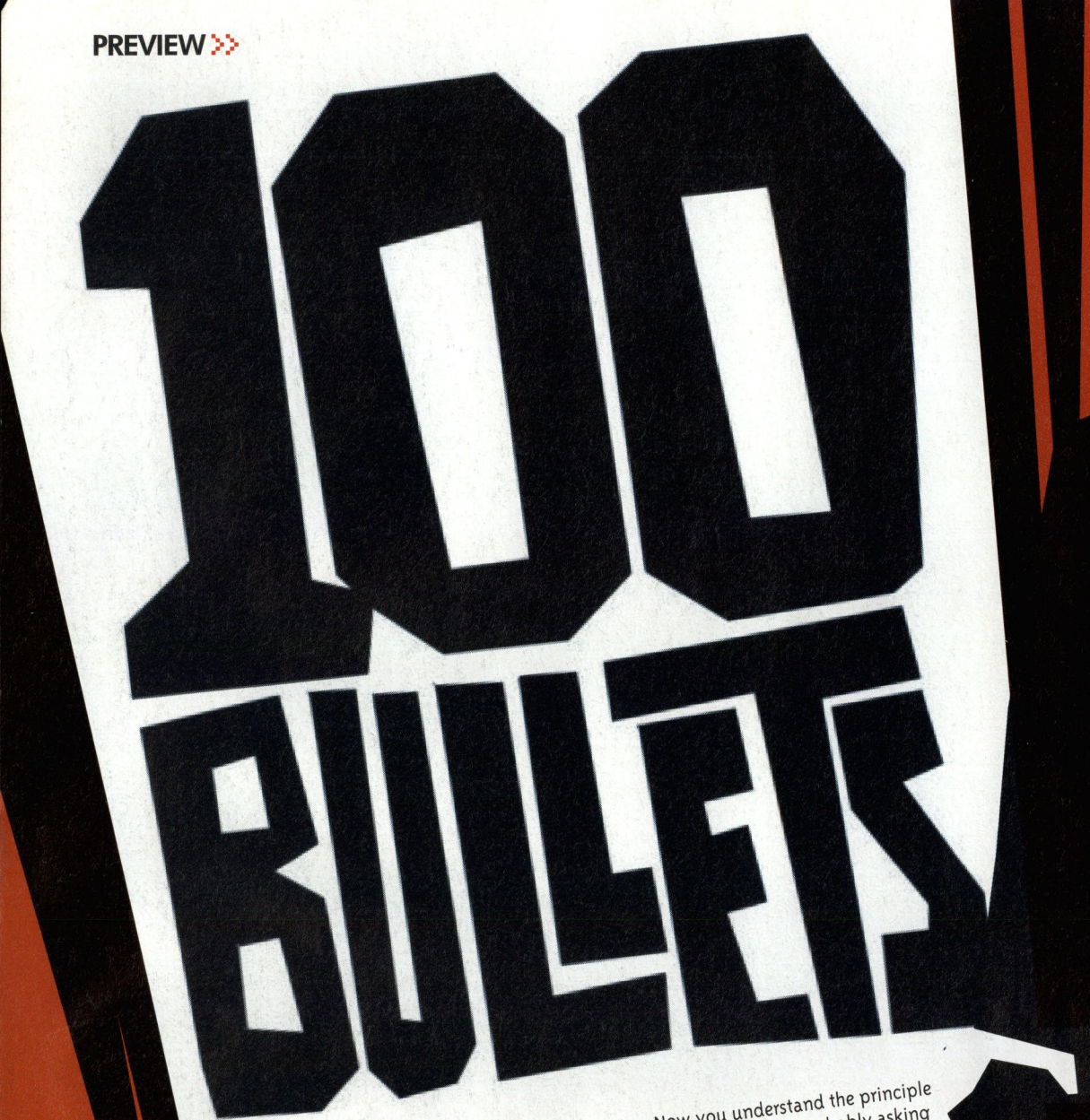
Chuck: I think that games like Underground and the GT series have proven that players really want the ability to customize their racing experience. Whether it is with a wide selection of visuals and performance, like in Underground, or with a wide variety of cars, like in GT, I think that's the "cost of entry" now. As a player you need to be able to express yourself and your personality through the car you're driving or through what you've done to it. Unless it's a "pure" arcade experience I think that any time you're asking a player to invest significant time you need to give them enough choices to really personalize their game.

The biggest problem that I see is a lack of creativity. It's rare that I pick up a mag and see a racing game and say "I can't wait to get my hands on that". There is way too much "me too" in the industry and consumers are too smart to fall for it. Look at all of the GT clones that shipped in the last few years. They didn't even try and do anything different. We're seeing the same thing now with Underground. We knew it was going to happen but here come the "street racing games with rain slicked roads". Whoo-hoo, can't wait for that (sarcasm). As a gamer I play as much as I can and I think that my tastes are as discriminating as anyone's. I've only got so much time to dedicate to my gaming so I want my experience to either be "tried and true" with a brand that I know consistently delivers, or, I want it to be something new and "fresh" that challenges my skills. I want to get my $50 worth every time.

Beyond that we've been working really hard on two or three additional products that we think will help further define where racing goes in the next few years. I think we've got some really cool technologies that we've developed available to us that will allow us to realize some of the ideas that we've had for a few years but just couldn't get to work until now. <<



100 BULLETS



Acclaim continues their tradition of comic-based games (they even bought a comic book company once called Valiant, just to have access to their library), and in doing so Acclaim Studios Austin has been collaborating with new comic sensation Brian Azarello to bring his hit series, 100 Bullets, to an interactive screen near you. The results are a mixed affair of sexy gun-play, intangible story breaks (they lead to something bigger, we're told), stylised visuals and questionable level design. But we're getting ahead of ourselves. It is, after all, early days – and to say the game doesn't look at least appetising would be lying, so put your bib on and we'll read you the menu. You can decide if you like the meal after the chef cooks it.

WHY NOT 99 BULLETS?

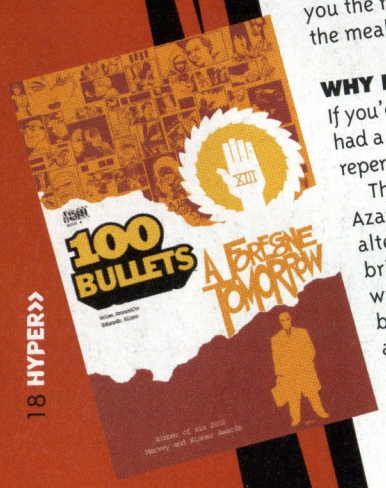
If you'd been wronged in your life and had a chance for revenge –with no repercussions – would you take it?

This question is the basis for Azarello's story. People with life-altering pasts are confronted with a briefcase containing evidence of who wronged them, a firearm and 100 bullets. They're also promised absolute immunity, leaving them with a decision; whether or not to commit murder.

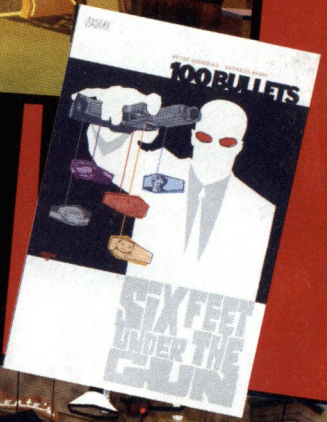
Now you understand the principle of the story, you're probably asking why? Why are they offered a chance for revenge? The answer to that question is the meat behind this simple and intriguing plot. An agency, simply known as XIII (established before the videogame of the same name, we're told) has something to do with it, but what, you don't know – yet.

A mysterious person known simply as Agent Graves is your briefcase delivery man, and, seemingly a man with a purpose; the intentions behind his actions, however, are what drive you on throughout the story of 100 Bullets, and it's with this tangled web Acclaim Studios Austin have found a basis for a kick-arse action game.

What we're told by the development team, however, is that behind kicking arse is a deep



[left] When kossack dancing classes go wrong
[below] He holds his gats like he keeps his mistresses - on the side



FANS OF THE COMIC WILL BE HAPPY TO HEAR THE STORY HAS BEEN PENNED BY AZARELLO...

story full of twists and turns, favours and double crosses, life and death. Unfortunately they weren't able to divulge more, but knowing too much can get into a lot of trouble in this industry, and Azarello's knowledge of the underworld is too extensive for Hyper to really play with. The last thing we want is someone from Acclaim being handed a briefcase because we spilled the beans on the crux of the game.

Thankfully, fans of the comic will be happy to hear the story itself has been penned by Azarello, while award winning artist and 100 Bullets penciller, Eduardo Risso, has stepped in for art direction. All of this spells great things for the game on paper, and what we saw of the game's story progression in play looked great, but the art-direction still seemed a little off. It's visually appealing, but given the gritty nature of the story and the comics, everything looked a little too... colourful. This is represented most in the game's environment.

Everything, however, is interactive; all doors open, every fence can be scaled, all crates can be shot up and most other things can be used as tools to complete objectives or kill bad guys. What this means, though, is the textures and detail have had to be dropped for the game to run smoothly and consistently with the game's engine (the same engine used for Turok and Vexx). At this stage, it could be us being picky and they might find some extra grunt to iron out the colourful kinks, but it would be nice if they heard our cries: "please make the game grittier!"

AVAILABLE ON:
PS2 / XBOX / GCN / PC

DETAILS
CATEGORY: Third-person shooter /
PLAYERS: 1 /
DEVELOPER: Acclaim Studios Austin /
AVAILABLE: September /

WOW-O-METER

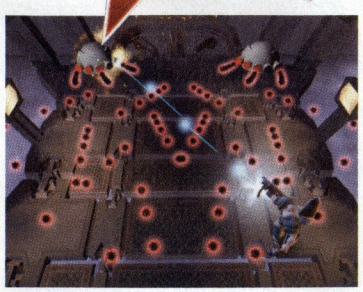
WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE:
A slightly grittier take on the source material...

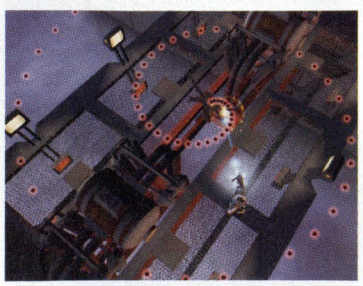
100 BULLETS FOR ONE PERSON?

Visuals aside, the action in the game is coming along nicely. The two characters you play as, Cole Burns and Snow Falls, both have great animations and abilities. You can take hostages (with moral repercussions depending on how you 'dispose' of them), fight melee and generally handle most situations. There are also the obligatory stealth elements that work well within the game's framework, and as mentioned earlier, the interactive environments play a big part during the in-game action.

Currently Acclaim is in talks with undisclosed parties about music, and it appears as if the game will be scored by someone or a group of famous musicians, possibly on the successful heels of True Crime's well-received soundtrack. All is set to be revealed at this year's E3, including an announcement of a "breakthrough gameplay feature" so expect Hyper to be on hand when all is revealed.

Third-person shooters are a dime a dozen (or should that be ten cents?) these days, but so far 100 Bullets has the goods to really stand out. Acclaim may have failed in the past, but we're all about forgiveness here at Hyper. Besides, we know some guy who sells strange briefcases to people looking to exact revenge. So be forewarned Acclaim: deliver the goods, or else. <<





THE RED STAR

Imagine a world where Mother Russia never fell into the tumultuous times that followed the Cold War, a world where, as a Super Power, Russia would thrive as a nation but divide as a people. The Red Star investigates the possibilities of "What If" and in the process utilises some wonderful imagination to create a world of magic and power, of love and hate, of oppression and triumph.

Christian Gossett's "The Red Star" has become one of the most significant works of modern graphic fiction, and continues to entertain as his magical world expands upon its humble roots, each time with a subtle and fluid adaptation of what he has locked inside his passionate and hyperactive imagination. If you've missed the graphic novel boat, or if you're a slave to only being able to read text on a TV, Gossett and Acclaim have collaborated to bring an interactive representation of The Red Star to a PS2 and Xbox near you. But how has such a deep and involving story been translated to videogame form? It's quite simple really...

THE RED TURTLES

Rather than lose the impact of the books in an "all-out action/RPG/RTS/fully interactive/GTA-styled" game, The Red Star goes back to arcade roots – where quick thinking and linear level design keep you on your toes and less concerned about what's happening to who and for what reason. While this approach may seem to impinge upon the aforementioned intellectual importance, it does the very opposite.

AVAILABLE ON:
PS2 / XBOX / GCN / PC

DETAILS
CATEGORY: Beat 'em up /
PLAYERS: 1-2 /
DEVELOPER: Acclaim Studios Austin /
AVAILABLE: September /

WOW-O-METER

WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE:
Unlockable novels within the game for people who've never read the series and have just forked out one hundred bucks!

You see, hidden deep within The Red Star's multi-layered plot is an action-packed sub-story about kicking ass - plain and simple, right?

This is the crux of what Acclaim Studios Austin and Gossett have collaborated upon. The Red Star videogame is akin to original arcade classics like Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, The Simpsons or Final Fight; side-scrolling, pseudo 3D worlds with lots of bad guys to beat up. But in this simplicity, the team have managed to inject some depth and gameplay variation. While walking about, players can also use their magic as super attacks, these attacks, however, pay a price in time-frame (kind of like Ha Ha Stepping, right Bryce?) In boss battles, these uber attacks are very important, but some need to be performed in close proximity making you a target for deadly counter attacks. Equally, the same can be said of projectile magic attacks, aiming incorrectly or simply wasting time with the charge - you can pay dearly.

There is also a very deep element relayed in team work. With your psychic abilities it is possible to pick up an enemy and bash them against the ground, wall or crate. But you may need to use the enemy to help out a surrounded friend who simply cannot escape or fight their way out of what's facing them. To this end, keeping an eye on each other is very important, and each character will have an ability that can help the other out in a real jam, like using an enemy as a battering ram against other enemies.

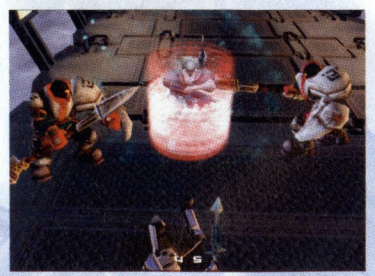
While the arcade action is fun, it could definitely become a tedious point of play, which is why the inclusion of mid-level bosses is very important. At these interjections, the style of game changes from beat 'em up to top-down shooter, not too unlike Ikaruga, or to a lesser extent, 1942. Bullet Play now becomes a strategic aspect of staying alive, and pummelling the boss with everything you've got an important point of moving on. Like top-down shooter classics, the mid-level and end of level bosses attack in predictable but difficult to outmanoeuvre patterns, which brings the game back to simply being on your toes at all times.

A RED'S TALE

With the confines of design, the developers have been able to create a visually stunning world that very closely resembles future industrial U.R.R.S. from The Red Star graphic novels. With this in mind, fans of the books will be in visual heaven, as many familiar locales and enemies will appear in the game, while new comers to the universe can simply lap up the grandeur of what's at hand. Christian Gossett has worked very closely with each department of Acclaim Studios Austin to ensure his vision is never compromised, and this shines through.

Moreover, for fans of the series, the game will actually stand as a separate entity in the story department. There are moments within the game that will reflect aspects of the books, but for the most part the game stands as a side-story of sorts; something you can enjoy, but you won't necessarily miss out anything on if you don't play.

So far so good for the title: the amalgam of shooter and beat 'em up seems to work very well for the universe, and the team and Gossett are very pleased with what they've produced. In fact, consider this - Gossett even turned down James Cameron to direct a movie based on his graphic novels because he wasn't ready to collaborate! This tells us he won't let anything bad happen to his baby. <<



[top] Hectic combat, big guns, chunky tech - all part of the U.R.R.S. [above]Special abilities will prove very important during the course of the game.

THE DEVELOPERS HAVE BEEN ABLE TO CREATE A VISUALLY STUNNING WORLD

TRIBES: VENGEANCE

AVAILABLE ON:
PS2 / XBOX / GCN / **PC**

DETAILS
CATEGORY: Jere sim / **PLAYERS:** 1-Multi / **DEVELOPER:** Irrational Games / **AVAILABLE:** Q4 2004 /

WOW-O-METER

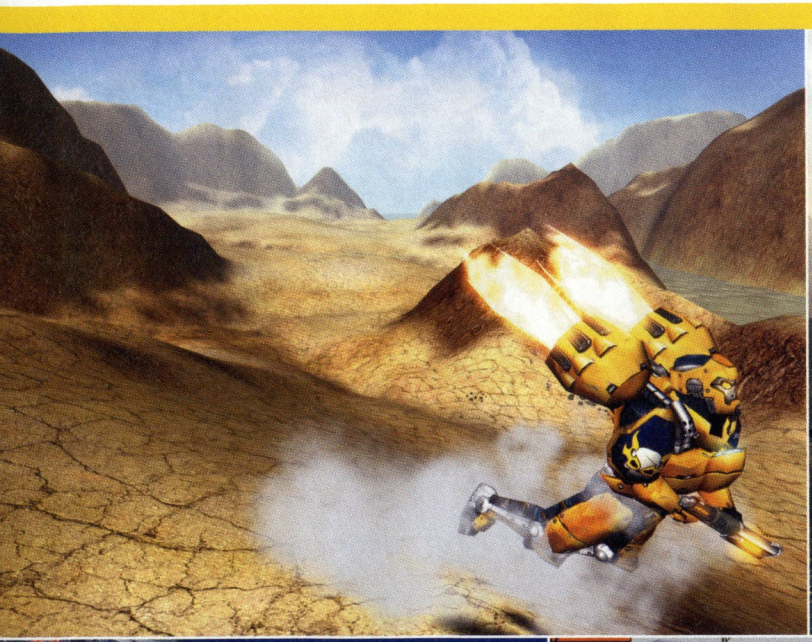
WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE:
An easy to use editor shipping with the game to allow for quick and painless mods and player created maps.

It's ironic that the thing that really captured the imagination of the gaming public with the first game was nothing more than a bug or exploit – skiing (the ability to slide down incline surfaces to gain incredible momentum and speed) was never meant to be a feature of the first game. The ability to ski proved so popular that it reappeared in the sequel and will once again appear in the third game in the series, Tribes: Vengeance. Whilst the act of skiing is without a doubt one of the most exhilarating modes of movement in any FPS, every silver lining has its dark cloud – in the previous games in the series the act of skiing is very hard to learn, making the game very hard to pick up for new players, alienating a lot of the marketplace. Tribes: Vengeance may very well see an end to this alienation as Irrational Games have implemented some nifty new features. We first had a chance to see Tribes: Vengeance nearly six months ago and at that time the design team was acutely aware of the problem with skiing – as Michael Johnston, Lead Designer and the man in charge of multiplayer development in Vengeance put it, "I hear that a lot. It's easy to say that you haven't put in enough time to ski properly but you shouldn't have to dedicate lots of time to enjoy a game. That's something we've tried to address."

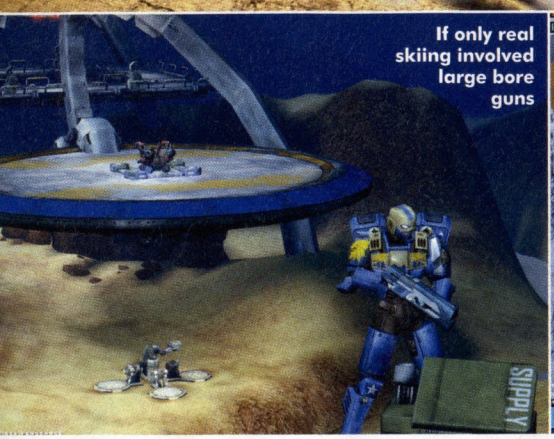
SAN FRAG-CISCO?

Recently Vivendi and Sierra hosted an event in San Francisco to show off the multiplayer element of Tribes: Vengeance and allow us to have a play on one of the maps that the game has to offer. Although the finished code will reportedly be shipping with 20+ maps we were only able to play on one. This map, known simply as "Fort" is a good example of what players will be able to expect – rolling terrain with bases at each end and multiple routes to reach each of them. Unlike the other Tribes games, Vengeance will feature more than large hilly maps, although they will make a return appearance. Players will also have the chance to duke it out in underground caverns complete with stalagmites and stalactites, industrial facilities, sports style arenas and even some smaller, far more intimate maps for as few as two players. All of the maps will also be playable with all of the game modes through a method Irrational Games calls the "universal game mode". Choosing a specific game mode will spawn mode specific objects, items or terrain into the map – choosing Capture the Flag will spawn flag points in each base whereas the as yet unnamed sports game (similar to Blitz Ball from UT2003) spawns a platform in the middle of the map for the ball and a goal above each of the bases. During play one thing became very obvious – Irrational have lived up to their promise of making the game much more new player friendly. Within the first 15-20 minutes of play new players (such as myself) were beginning to get the hang of skiing, albeit in a very cursory way and could hold our own in some of the more heated duels. Before any Tribes fan starts to think that the game has been dumbed down for a newbie crowd then never fear – the Tribes veterans were still kicking our collective butts as was the case with the earlier games in the series, the only difference here being that the new players could have fun whilst it was happening.

IRRATIONAL HAVE LIVED UP TO THEIR PROMISE OF MAKING THE GAME MUCH MORE NEW PLAYER FRIENDLY



God bless the UT engine and 80s style giant shoulder pads



If only real skiing involved large bore guns

Indoor maps really switch things up

Far and away the most unique part of Tribes: Vengeance is the fact that Irrational Games has chosen to develop a fully featured single player campaign rather than a simple set of tutorial missions as seen in the previous iterations of the series. This choice is not surprising considering that Vengeance is not only the first dedicated shooter the team has developed, but Irrational is much better known for their deep storylines and great characters from such games as System Shock 2 and Freedom Force. The single player campaign features an original plot by Ken Levine (the man responsible for System Shock 2) and is set some 400 years before the first Tribes game, giving the developers the chance to flesh out the history of the game world as well as play with some of the elements with impunity. Players will be cast as a number of different characters over a number of different years.

TRIBAL GAMING

Whilst all of the missions follow the same storyline they won't necessarily follow the same timeline so players may find themselves playing an Imperial Princess in the modern day in one mission only to find themselves transported 20 years back in time to take part in the events that lead to the previous mission in the next. Although we were unable to play any of the single player campaign during the press LAN we did get to see some in action and at this stage of development it looks very impressive. One level saw the player having to storm an enemy base as an AI controlled heavy-armoured companion bombarded the defensive gun emplacements with its mortar, while another saw the player making their way through the depths of an enemy base to destroy a reactor. The layout of the interior maps was especially interesting as they combined more traditional FPS level design with unique Tribes elements such as enormous pipes and conduits that could be used almost like skateboard half-pipes, allowing the player to make massive ski-jumps up to levels above and use their momentum to carry out bombing/strafing runs. <<

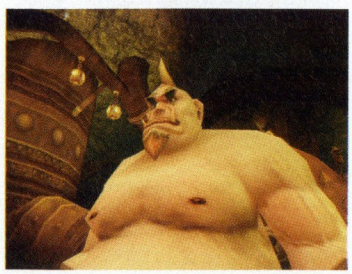
WORLD OF WARCRAFT

Recently a number of international journalists were flown to the Blizzard offices in a nondescript section of Northern California where a number of PCs had been set up to allow us to join in on the closed beta of World of Warcraft. We were amongst the lucky few.

Right from character creation the game looks great. As is standard, players choose their race and class, modifying their height, weight, facial features and the like as they see fit to perfectly create their ideal avatar. Each of the available models has a good number of variables at the current stage of development and we can expect to see more when it is finally released towards the end of the year. Choosing a Tauren fighter, I set about creating my ideal half cow warrior woman and launched into the game proper. The most impressive aspect of the graphics engine is not the complexity of the beast but the artistry with which the models, buildings and terrain have been made. The world of Azeroth is vibrant and beautiful, full of varying races, terrain and styles of architecture to match. The Tauren encampment has a wonderfully nomadic look to it with some teepee style tents as well as more permanent hut style buildings. The decoration features primitive totem poles and feathers. Whilst the spawning area of the Taurens is a large expanse of rolling plain land with the occasional copse of trees, the other races, including undead, elves, dwarves and gnomes all spawn in vastly different environments from dank, fungus infested wasteland for the undead, beautiful sunny deciduous forests for the elves and pine forested, snow bound mountains for the dwarves. Although there are only a few animations for each of the models and monsters they are all top notch and we should be seeing a few more come along by the time the game has been released. Unfortunately the wonderful graphics of World of Warcraft lead to one of the few misgivings we have about the title – will the engine be able to deliver solid framerates with minimal lag without requiring the player to have an absolutely blisteringly fast internet connection?

LET'S TAKE IT BACK TO THE OLD SCHOOL

The next thing you notice after you manage to tear yourself away from looking at the world in wonder is that World of Warcraft is incredibly accessible. Whilst most MMOs these days seem to be heading in the "virtual sandbox" style direction, giving the players a world and a bunch of tools and leaving them to create their own fun, Blizzard have gone very old school with their game



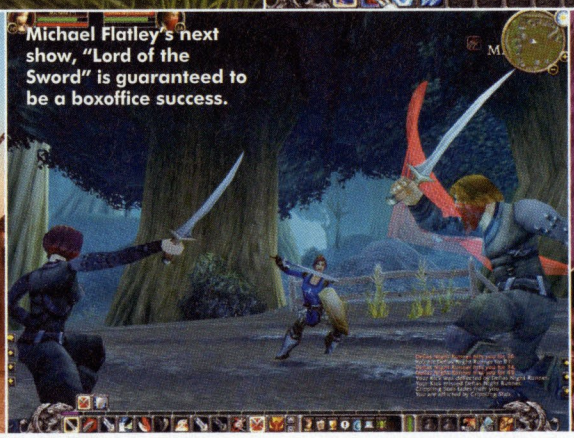
AVAILABLE ON:
PS2 / XBOX / GCN / **PC**

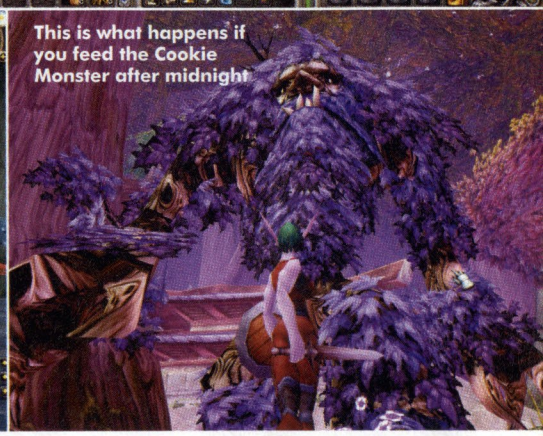
DETAILS
CATEGORY: Strategy / **PLAYERS:** 1-multi / **DEVELOPER:** Blizzard / **AVAILABLE:** Late 2004 /

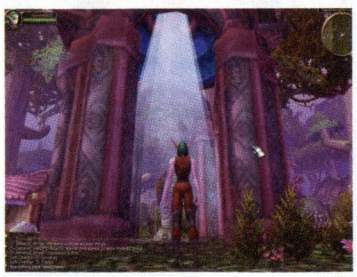
WOW-O-METER

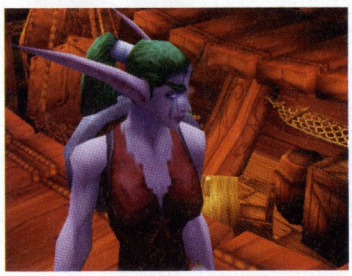
WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE:
An easily affordable subscriptions scheme and a bunch of local servers to keep things running smooth.

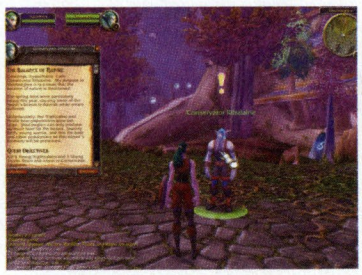
BLIZZARD HAVE GONE VERY OLD SCHOOL AND MADE IT AN ENTIRELY QUEST BASED GAME.











[above] With a mating display like this Grizbonk the scaly is sure to score **[below]** Typical denizens of Redfern after dark

and made it nearly entirely quest based. Initially the developers aimed to have around 600 different quests at time of launch – not an insignificant number by any stretch of the imagination, but continued development has pushed the current number of available quests to an incredible 1400 and we suspect that there may still be more to come. As soon as a new player spawns they are given the option to do their first quest – every NPC character with a question mark above their heads has one on offer. Although these initial missions do fall under the general category of XP tread-milling (forcing the player to level up so they can access the higher level, more interesting content), these missions actually give the player something that has been lacking in MMOs in recent years, a sense of satisfaction. In the case of the Taurens, the early missions are a series of quests to prove yourself as a valuable member of the tribe by hunting, fetching water, driving back the enemies of your people and proving yourself to a holy-man. As can be expected, each of the races has their own unique starting quests.

MMO ON SPEED, OR MOOS FOR SHORT!

The final thing you will notice with World of Warcraft is that it's fast, more akin in speed to action RPGs such as Blizzard's own Diablo series than a traditional MMO. Combat is fast paced and very accessible, requiring only a few mouse clicks and little in the way of hotkeys. At higher levels players can learn special moves and abilities that can either be hot keyed or simply placed as an icon down the bottom of the HUD, available at a click's notice. Traveling is also fast – no more running for 30 minutes just to get to the next area. Players can cross their starting zone in ten minutes flat and there's still heaps to do and explore. This is not to say the world is small. It's far from it – much of the development time has been spent creating the incredibly vast world of Azeroth. It's just not going to take you days in travel between the fun bits. Another thing that has been sped up is the healing. No sitting in the grass for minutes at a time waiting for the slow regeneration of health. Characters can eat a bit of healing food and recover their health in as little as half a minute. It may not seem like much of a difference but when you consider that in many MMOs you can go and make yourself a cup of coffee and read the paper whilst waiting for your avatar to heal itself comes as a great relief. Unfortunately the speed of play has not moved across to the real world – World of Warcraft is closer to being released than it was six months ago but we're still going to have to wait until at least late this year to actually be able to play it. <<

THE BARD'S TALE

The name Brian Fargo may not be as recognisable as that of Gabe Newell, John Carmack or (shiver) John Romero but his contributions to the world of computer gaming are by no means any less spectacular, although he never promised to make us his bitch or told us to suck it down – I'm looking at you Romero. Widely regarded as one of the founding fathers of PC role-playing, Fargo is best remembered for his Bard's Tale series, though his invaluable contributions to other genre classics such as Neuromancer, Wasteland and Fallout should not go overlooked either. After years of overseeing Interplay, Fargo has thrown his hat back into the ring with a spiritual successor to the Bard's Tale series.

SO THIS GAME'S ABOUT CACOFONIX RIGHT?

Taking a different route to the 3D turn-based/real-time approach of the original games, the new Bard's Tale will utilise the Dark Alliance engine, already seen this year in Dark Alliance II, Champions of Norrath and Fallout: Brotherhood of Steel. Although the framework will be that of an action RPG, Fargo promises that The Bard's Tale will bring a little something new to the table. As the title of the game suggests, players will take the role of a not so humble wandering musician, first seen earning his living by summoning a rat (his first bard power), sending it into homes, inns and pubs and then showing up to heroically "dispatch" the furry little beast. This irreverent sense of humour will be evident throughout the game, often seen poking fun at the cliches that have plagued the genre since its inception. Case in point: the first mission will see the Bard being entreated by a comely (not to mention buxom) serving wench to venture down into the cellar to deal with the rat problem. Driven more by the promise of some warm boobies to nestle up to than true heroics the Bard goes down into the cellar and in a very anticlimactic moment slays the single scrawny rodent present with a hilariously over the top voice over narrating the whole time. Whilst basking in his success the real rat arrives – a half ton, fire breathing monstrosity that proceeds to turn the hero into minstrel flambé, sending him screaming back up to the bar where he is subsequently laughed at by all the patrons for falling for their old trick. This play with genre conventions is just one of the things that will set The Bard's Tale apart from the other action RPGs on the market.

Unlike games such as Dark Alliance or Champions of Norrath in

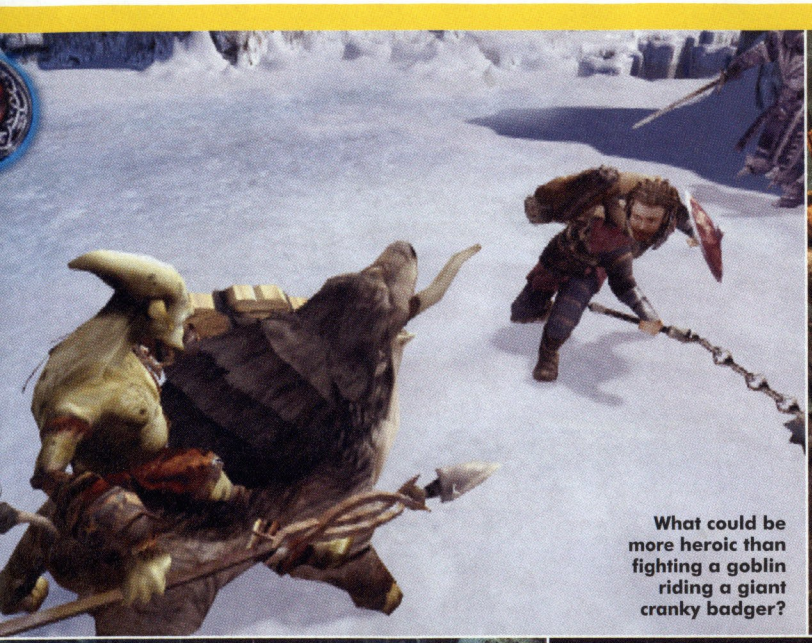
AVAILABLE ON:
PS2 / XBOX / GCN / PC

DETAILS
CATEGORY: Action RPG /
PLAYERS: 1 / **DEVELOPER:** InXile /
AVAILABLE: Late 2004 /

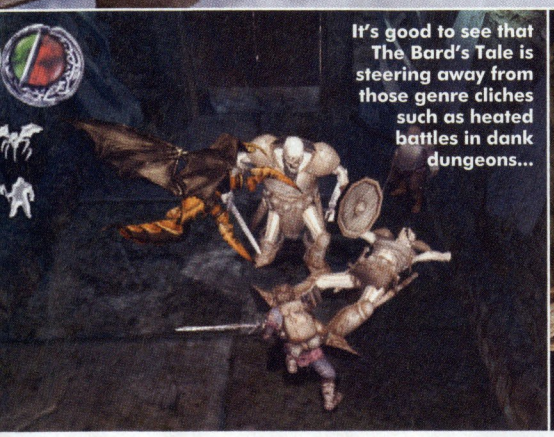
WOW-O-METER

WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE:
The Bard getting into frequent and amusing arguments with the narrator.

>> SIMPLY PUT, THE PLAYER WILL HAVE THE OPTION TO ACT FRIENDLY OR BE A JERK IN ANY SITUATION.



What could be more heroic than fighting a goblin riding a giant cranky badger?



It's good to see that The Bard's Tale is steering away from those genre cliches such as heated battles in dank dungeons...

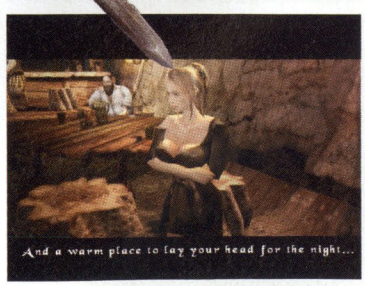
Beer, Beer, Beer, Tiddly Beer, Beer, Beer

It's log, log, it's big, it's heavy it's wood.

which conversation trees are simply ways to ensure that the player is steered in a certain direction to get to the next event, those seen in The Bard's Tale will have an actual branching structure that will have a lasting effect on the game world. Simply put, players will have the option to act friendly or be a jerk in every situation – it may not sound like much but this simple divergence can trigger different events in the game. An example we were given of this is an encounter early in the game in which the Bard comes across a small puppy. If the Bard is nice to the dog it will start following him, eventually growing into a loyal and formidable companion, capable and willing to throw itself in harm's way to save its master. On the other hand if the player decides to treat the puppy poorly it will leave, tail between its legs never to be seen again. This lasting impression the player leaves on the game world will also play a more subtle role – in one example we were given, the Bard screws up on a mission and accidentally unleashes a demon into the local countryside. Later in the game the Bard enters a tavern and joins the group of troubadours on stage singing a song (during a cutscene) only to realise that the fool they are deriding is in fact himself.

END UP IN GAOL AND IT'S A "BARRED TALE"...

Due to the strong character focus of the game (players only have the option to play the Bard – no one else), players are able to summon magical companions in lieu of having a friend join in to help you out. As the Bard gains in power he will also gain new bardic summoning songs including the ability to conjure up creatures able to find traps, fight by your side or use spell like effects. The trap finding summon is worth special mention – it will take the form of an old blind man who hesitantly taps his way around with his cane, setting off any traps in the immediate vicinity which, when sprung, will kill him in a number of humourously grisly ways. The next time you summon him the first thing he will do is bitch about the player's sadism and inhumanity towards his fellow man. <<



And a warm place to lay your head for the night...

Do you dare discover what lies inside Santa's sack of horrors?

Insert chilli joke here.

THE NIGHTMARE BEFORE CHRISTMAS

AVAILABLE ON:
PS2 / XBOX / GCN / PC

DETAILS
CATEGORY: Action / **PLAYERS:** 1 /
DEVELOPER: Capcom /
AVAILABLE: Halloween /

WOW-O-METER

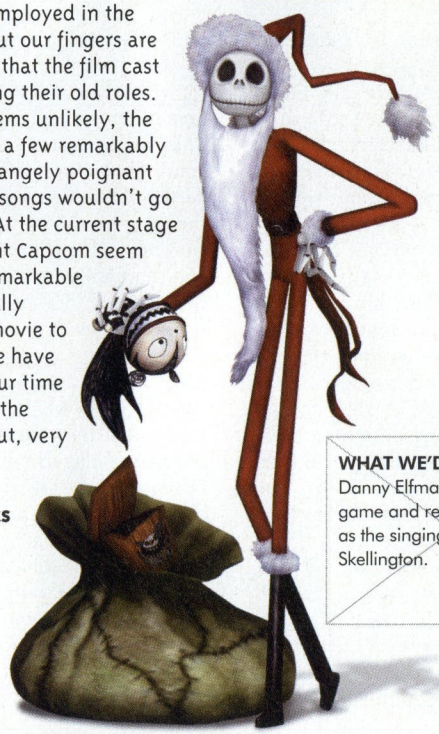
It's been over ten years since the unique and sometimes visionary filmmaker, Tim Burton brought his skewed take on both Halloween and Christmas to cinemas in the form of the animated musical, The Nightmare Before Christmas. Ten years in which the license has slept soundly, only occasionally rearing its head in the form of T-shirts and novelty Christmas cards, and only now making an appearance in game form exclusively on the PS2. Much like Tron 2.0, The Nightmare Before Christmas is not a direct game retelling of the film upon which it is based; instead the game will be, for all intents and purposes a sequel to the film. Set roughly a year after the events of the movie, The Nightmare Before Christmas will see the film's villain, the evil Oogie Boogie making a comeback along with his wicked henchmen, Lock, Shock and Barrel. Naturally it's up to the misguided but generally well meaning king of Halloween Town, Jack Skellington, to come out of his self-imposed exile and save the day.

IT'S HUGE IN JAPAN!

The Nightmare Before Christmas will feature Jack fighting his way through levels made famous in the film, in a style akin to Capcom's own Devil May Cry series. Instead of being armed with an array of guns and an improbably big sword, Jack will take on the 30 or so enemies in the game with an elastic, luminous green (vaguely snot-like) whip weapon, amusingly called the Rubber Soul. With this weapon Jack can perform all manner of combos and grabs so fighting junkies should be able to have their fill. If that's not enough then a tap of the shoulder buttons can transform the skeletal leading man into one of two alter egos, the Christmas themed Santy Claws (as seen in the film) as well as the gourd headed Pumpkin King. When playing as Santy Claws, Jack will have power over the ice and snow as well as a bag of malevolent toys with which to attack enemies and the Pumpkin King will have similar dominion over the element of fire.

Little is known about the voice acting to be employed in the game as yet but our fingers are firmly crossed that the film cast will be reprising their old roles. Although it seems unlikely, the appearance of a few remarkably catchy and strangely poignant Danny Elfman songs wouldn't go astray either. At the current stage of development Capcom seem to be doing remarkable work in faithfully bringing the movie to life. Now all we have to do is bide our time and wait until the game comes out, very fittingly, this Halloween.

Daniel Wilks



WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE:
Danny Elfman scoring the game and reprising his role as the singing voice of Jack Skellington.

FIFTH DAWN™

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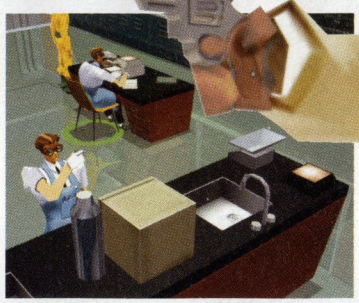
EVIL GENIUS

AVAILABLE ON:
PS2 / XBOX / GCN / **PC**

DETAILS
CATEGORY: Strategy / **PLAYERS:** 1 /
DEVELOPER: Elixir Studios /
AVAILABLE: 2004 /

WOW-O-METER

WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE:
A competition for most elaborate and convoluted trap!



As much as we like playing the hero here at Hyper, there's definitely something to be said for games that let you take on the role of the villain. In the tradition of Dungeon Keeper before it, Evil Genius does just that. Better still, it does so with a great sense of humour and some very involving gameplay. To find out more about what makes Elixir Studios' game tick, we spoke to Mike Rosser, the assistant designer on Evil Genius.

HYPER: There haven't been too many videogames that explicitly deal with being the bad guy, yet "rooting for the bad guy" is an innately human reaction, and there are countless films and books from the bad guy's perspective. Do you think this is a reflection of the relatively young age of the videogame medium, and what inspired you to tackle this theme?
Mike: That's a good question, and a hard one to answer. We've seen a couple of great games recently that let you play as the bad guy (Grand Theft Auto), and others that are morally ambiguous (Deus Ex: Invisible War and Knights of the Old Republic), and it'd be nice to think that the approach these games take indicates that the industry is maturing. On the other hand, we've also seen some execrable titles that rely on shock value rather than intelligent gameplay, so perhaps not.

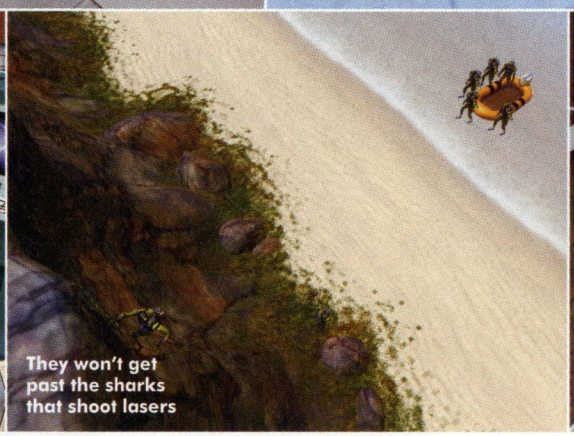
Evil Genius was born out of a desire to turn the spy movie formula on its head, and let the villain finally triumph for once. We wanted to let players do all the fun stuff you associate with the genre – gloating, interrogating agents on overcomplicated apparatus, and launching rockets – whilst enabling the player to ensure a happy outcome. Well, happy for the Evil Genius at least. Not so happy for the world that's been brought to its knees.

HYPER: Tell us about the world that this game is set in. It looks very much like a kitsch 60s setting – arguably the heyday of the evil genius. Would this be an accurate assessment, and what advantages does this setting have for game design?
Mike: The game is roughly set in the 60s – but not the 60s as they were, more the imagined 60s of earlier generations, when they fancifully anticipated that we would all have robot butlers and be eating nutrition pills instead of meals. This setting allows us a lot of leeway in portraying our game world – we can draw on real issues like the Cold War, whilst also indulging in sci-fi fare like jetpacks and shrink rays.

HYPER: How important will humour be to Evil Genius?
Mike: Humour is fundamental to Evil Genius - everything is tongue-in-cheek. A lot of the humour in Evil Genius is contextual rather than explicit, emerging from things like the characters and their actions

EVIL GENIUS WAS BORN OUT OF A DESIRE TO TURN THE SPY MOVIE FORMULA ON ITS HEAD, AND LET THE VILLAIN TRIUMPH...

We want a Fat Bastard henchman!



They won't get past the sharks that shoot lasers

rather than anything specifically scripted to be funny. Playtesting indicates that some of the funniest parts of the game come from witnessing events like a captured agent being interrogated in an industrial food mixer, the over-wrought death throes of the evil genius avatars, or the wild limb-flailing of panicking tourists. Much of our humour comes from an over the top representation of the spy world rather than a direct attempt to make fun of it, and although our treatment of spy movie clichés inevitably plays a part in the overall humorous ambience, weird and funny ideas pop up from everywhere.

HYPER: It sounds like Evil Genius will have many layers of gameplay – from base building and management through to training minions and missions. Tell us a little about the way the gameplay is structured, and how the various elements are balanced.

Mike: There are five elements of gameplay: base building, minion management, world domination, research and base defence. Base expansion is essential, as only by unlocking and building new rooms can you access certain functions and features that are vital to progression. For example, basic construction workers cannot be trained up into advanced minions until the training room has been built. Minion training is critical – without the right balance of military, social and science minions, success will be hard to come by. Advanced minions are more effective when deployed as part of the world domination process – without a good mission team in place, it'll be more difficult to get cash, loot and information without incurring heavy casualties. Science minions are less effective as far as world domination is concerned, but they are invaluable to the research program. They can use the numerous research machines available to create new base objects, and, eventually, research the doomsday device that will be used to conquer the world. By the time this device is ready for deployment, however, it's certain that the global forces of justice will be launching all-out attempts to stop the launch. This is when the base defences will be tested to its limits – a well constructed base defence will identify intruders early through the surveillance network, and whittle the lesser agents down through the judicious use of sentry guns and inventive traps.

As you can see, the core gameplay elements are all inherently interlinked, and final success depends on each individual element being carefully managed.

HYPER: How many Evil Genius avatars will there be to choose from, and how will they differ?

Mike: There are three different Evil Genius avatars to choose from: Maximilian, who you'll recognize from screenshots; Alexis, a sultry femme fatale; and a third character who we'll be unveiling in the near future. In terms of game mechanics the choice of avatar won't greatly affect the way the game unfolds, but as you'll be seeing a lot of the avatar, and controlling them to perform various evil deeds, it's important to choose a character you can, for lack of a better word, empathise with. However, if you truly empathise with any of these sadistic power mongers, you should probably seek psychiatric help!

HYPER: How much freedom will the player have to create truly evil traps for the hero protagonists? We're really excited by the idea that players will have the basic building blocks and the freedom to put them together as their own unique evil vision dictates!

Mike: Our trap system is basically

Doing the YMCA turned out to be a poor decision

broken down into two elements – traps and triggers. We have a simple drag and drop mechanism that allows the player to connect up a trigger (such as a pressure pad), to a trap (circular saw blades perhaps?). However, if they so wish, the player can connect up a trigger to any number of traps, or a trap to many triggers. In fact, the player can connect up traps to traps and triggers to triggers, allowing them to create potentially lethal combinations that all fire up once the first trigger has been tripped. On top of this, many traps physically move targets that they attack, potentially into other traps. It leaves a lot of scope for players to put their scheming hats on and design some truly devious methods of dispatching their foes.

HYPER: Traps are all well and good but every evil genius needs a master plan – what kinds of super weapons will players be able to develop?
Mike: The game is essentially the story of the Evil Genius's rise to prominence, culminating in a bid to take over the world by developing a doomsday device of awesome power. As the doomsday device is such an integral part of the narrative, we don't want to spoil the player's experience by revealing the potential choices they can make.

HYPER: Tell us about the research/technology trees in the game. What tools will you start out with and what kinds of things will you eventually be able to research?
Mike: Research is handled in a way that's pretty far removed from the manner in which most games of a similar genre tackle it. The standard way is to use a rather dry, spreadsheet-like technology tree that you move through in a mechanical way when you have the required resources. We've tried to make this process more hands-on and involving by integrating the research system into the game world itself, whereas the norm is to have a rather separated and artificial system of technological upgrading.

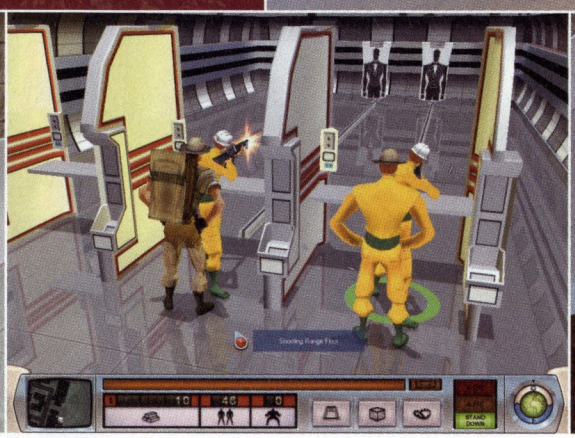
In Evil Genius, you need a science team and an equipped laboratory to perform research. Your science minions will wander around your base and examine the objects you've built so far, and if an object is suitable for research, you can then order an experiment. Let's say your science minions have suggested the security camera as an appropriate item – you can then order it to be researched with a piece of research equipment – the laser, for example. Once this order has been placed, a science minion will take a sample from the security camera and subject it to laser bombardment, and then place the sample into the research machine for analysis. After a few minutes of cogitation, the result of the experiment will be announced – in this case, combining the security camera with the laser equipment results in the laser trip-beam sensor.

Research unlocks all manner of goodies, ensuring that you'll always be discovering new and exciting objects throughout the duration of the game, from new traps like the piranha tank to outrageous creations like the Freak, an insane mutated product of the biotanks.

HYPER: Tell us about the notoriety system, and what you'll have to do to reach the top of "most wanted" lists around the world.
Mike: Notoriety is accrued through performing various evil deeds, and is critical to success, as certain megalomaniacal goals can only be accomplished once you have established your devious credentials. The more villainous henchmen, for example, will only become available once certain levels of notoriety have been reached. In practical terms, notoriety is primarily gained by performing acts of infamy in far-flung locations via the world domination screen, but there are also other methods.

Is that Heff in the smoking jacket?

He looks so much like Papa Lazarou it's scary



Cooler than most rollerblades...

HYPER: All good villains gloat and those in your game follow suit – what effect does gloating have in the game and what different gloating options will players have?
Mike: When an agent has been captured, you can guide your Evil Genius avatar to the cell and start gloating over the prisoner for a notoriety bonus. The longer the Evil Genius gloats, the more notoriety you will gain, but the more likely it becomes that the agent will take advantage of this evil vanity and escape.

HYPER: We understand that all rooms in the game will have multiple uses as both evil facilities and interrogation devices – can you give us a few examples of some of the different applications of the basic rooms?
Mike: Technically, the rooms themselves don't have dual purposes, but many of the objects in the game do. The mess hall counter, for instance, is primarily used to prepare food for the minions in order to replenish their endurance, but it can also be used as an interrogation device by bundling a captured agent into the industrial mixer. A lot of seemingly innocuous objects in the game have this sinister dual function, which is not only practical (objects that obviously have an evil purpose act as evidence) but also a lot of fun.

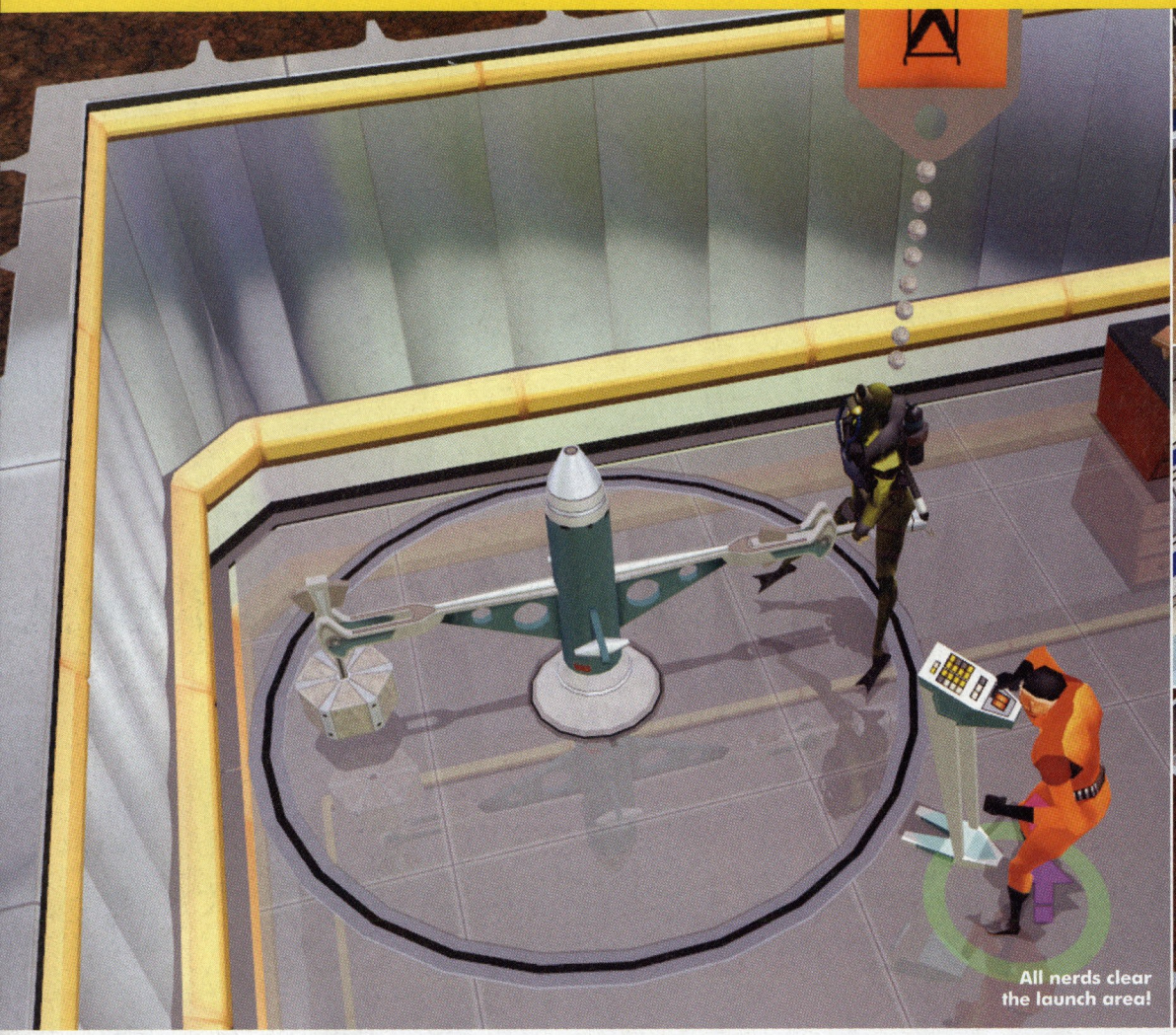
HYPER: John Steele is your take on the Bond character. What will make him a worthy foe?
Mike: Each territory has their own super-agent that they will dispatch to the island if heat levels get too high – and when a super-agent arrives, you're going to know about it! Quite apart from their general robustness and ability to avoid traps and evade capture, they also have a unique ability that allows them to wreak havoc in their own special way. The Chinese super-agent, for example, can lay waste to hordes of minions with his phenomenal martial arts skills. John Steele is the most deadly of them all, and he'll be a constant thorn in your side once you've become enough of a global threat. Suffice to say that you'll savour the moment if and when you finally get the chance to put a stop to his meddling...

HYPER: Tell us about the other do-gooders that will attempt to infiltrate your base. Can we expect full-scale assaults on the base as your notoriety grows?
Mike: There are four different types of agents, not including the super-agents. At first, you can expect investigators to come to the island, scouting about and trying to uncover evidence of your evil deeds. If they discover anything incriminating – like a cell or a body bag – they'll take photographs and then try to leave the island and report back to their agencies. If they escape with evidence, your heat levels will rise, and the agencies will start sending more specialized units, such as saboteurs (who will lay explosives and destroy important equipment) and thieves (who will try to retrieve your looted treasures). Eventually, once the global defence agencies are in no doubt about your intentions and capabilities, you can expect to contend with assault soldiers who shoot first and don't bother to ask questions.

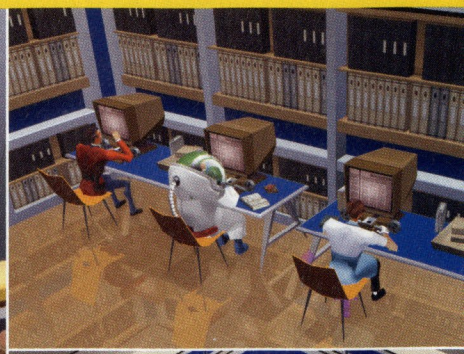
HYPER: Minions are essentially disposable idiots when it comes to super villains in films. What roles will they play in Evil Genius and how will the player be able to upgrade them?
Mike: At first you'll only be able to hire construction workers. They're essential for expanding your base, as only they can build new rooms. They're also expendable, and although they'll willingly throw themselves into combat, they are ultimately cannon fodder. As the game progresses, you'll be able to train up advanced minions in one of three different career paths: military, science and social. Military minions are combat specialists; science minions are essential for research and maintenance; and social minions help keep the base running smoothly, as well as being able to bewilder enemies with their non-lethal psychological attacks. There are 13 different minions in total – 4 for each career path, plus the basic construction worker.

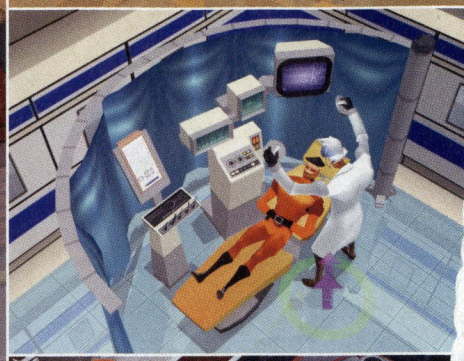
HYPER: Henchmen fall into a separate category to minions. How many henchmen will be available and what kinds of identities/skill sets can we look forward to?
Mike: Henchmen are incredibly important to the player, as well as all being completely unique characters in their own right. Each henchman has a number of special abilities only available to him or her. For example, Red Ivan is a gung-ho, reckless type –

» NOTORIETY IS PRIMARILY GAINED BY PERFORMING ACTS OF INFAMY IN FAR-FLUNG LOCATIONS...



All nerds clear the launch area!





he has a rocket launcher that he's all too willing to use, even though its large blast radius means that it's often a liability. Red Ivan is devastating as long as you don't mind collateral damage, and this penchant for high explosives is reflected in his special abilities: the Cossack grenade jig, and the minefield. Contrasting sharply to Ivan is Jubei, the rogue samurai, who has a far more subtle approach. Although he's physically weaker than Ivan, his wind walk teleportation and critical strike abilities mean that he can be an equally deadly opponent, specializing in surgical strikes against solitary enemies as opposed to Ivan's technique of blowing up everyone in the vicinity, agents and minions alike.

HYPER: Tell us about some of the missions in the game. Will we be able to steal national landmarks? And how will these missions be presented to the player?

Mike: The world domination screen is the Evil Genius's point of contact with the outside world. Plotting away from the comfort of the inner sanctum, the Evil Genius can send minions and henchmen out to various regions of the world, where they can either steal money to fund further base expansion, or plot to uncover acts of infamy that can be committed to unlock various rewards, from new henchmen to exotic loot items. There are innumerable unique loot objects to be stolen, from famous paintings, vases and statues to a mummy's sarcophagus or Excalibur, to name but a few. As far as landmarks go, one particular act of infamy does allow you to shrink the Eiffel Tower and bring back the miniaturized version as a trophy.

HYPER: Your evil lair is located on a tropical island and you'll have to build casinos and hotels to try and keep holidaying civilians from straying into it. How important is this aspect to the game? What measures can you take if civilians wander into the wrong area?

Mike: Tourists are a constant hazard for the budding Evil Genius. No matter how remote an island you choose for your secret lair, there are always going to be adventurous sightseers to inadvertently blunder into your lair and raise the alarm. Tourists panic if they see anything disturbing – an armed guard, for instance – and if they escape off the island with their evidence, they'll raise the alarm back home and prompt more agent incursions. It's therefore in your best interests to keep the tourists happy and calm, and make sure they don't stumble upon your evil operations. The hotel is the main way of dealing with tourists – although expensive to set up, a fully equipped hotel with lobby, lounge and casino will keep tourists tied up all through the day. The downside, apart from the expense, is that social minions are needed to staff the hotel. If a tourist does happen to make their way into the lair, how you deal with them is up to you. If you're feeling evil, you can simply kill them – but they will leave a body bag that must be dealt with. If you're saving your malignity for agents, you can use the spin-doctor minion or the brainwasher machine to sap their intelligence, causing them to forget what they've seen.

HYPER: Evil Genius is based on the same engine as Republic. That engine is famous for its scalability. Will this come into play for Evil Genius? What modifications have you made to the engine?

Mike: The engine that we are using for Evil Genius does share some elements that were written for Republic, however given that the player is able to dynamically change the environment when constructing their evil lair, the team have had to upgrade it significantly to allow this.

The engine is designed to handle having tons of characters, special effects and animation on-screen. It scales neatly between more accurate (and higher polygon) effects when the camera is zoomed in, and faster implementations when zoomed out. There are all the features you'd expect from a modern game, such as a fluid animation system, particle effects, reflections, and real-time shadows. We're particularly proud that even on our minimum spec graphics cards, we can still throw around a lot of polygons without it slowing down. Lots of characters on-screen and large-scale battles are definitely part of our master plan. <<

>> THE EVIL GENIUS CAN SEND MINIONS AND HENCHMAN OUT TO VARIOUS REGIONS OF THE WORLD...

AIR FLO™

tools that cool

fig.1 - AIR FLO PC

13 Fully Assignable Buttons

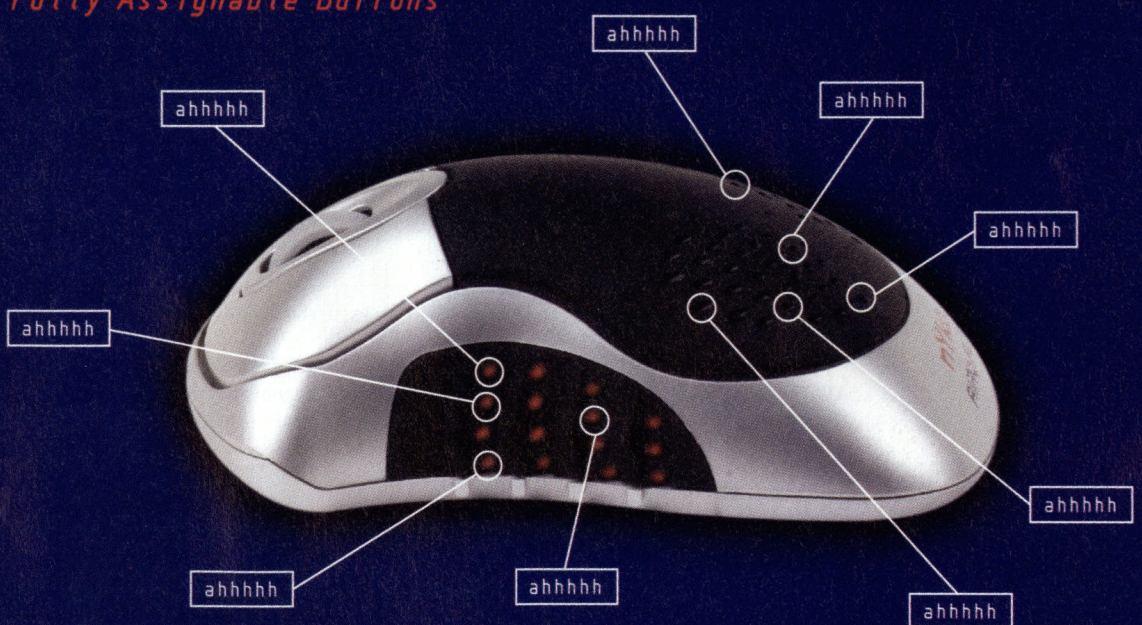


fig.2 - AIR FLO MOUSE

850 dpi Optical Sensor

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THE BIG CONTROLLER ROUNDUP

Consoles are great but without controllers they're nothing more than expensive paperweights - we tested 25 so you don't have to. In the upcoming months we will be looking at some light guns, wheels and some intriguing controllers from Conexus.

PLAYSTATION 2

DUAL SHOCK 2

The standard PS2 controller - very well designed and comfortable but a hell of a price tag for a standard corded controller.

PRICE: $59.95

AESTHETICS: ★★★★½

BUTTONS: ★★★★

TRIGGERS: ★★★★½

ANALOGUE STICKS: ★★★★

D-PAD: ★★★★

OVERALL: ★★★★½

4GAMERS SOFT TOUCH WIRELESS

PRICE: $89.95

AESTHETICS: ★★★½
Attractive but somewhat clunky and a bit uncomfortable due to the need for batteries.

BUTTONS: ★★★★
Well spaced and responsive.

TRIGGERS: ★★★½
Placed a little too tightly for our liking. R1 and L1 are a bit uncomfortable to use.

ANALOGUE STICKS: ★★★★
Comparable to standard Dual Shock analogue sticks for accuracy and comfort.

D-PAD: ★★
Chunky, imprecise and uncomfortable – just plain nasty.

OVERALL: ★★★½
A responsive and reasonably priced wireless controller marred by a terrible D-Pad.

THRUSTMASTER DVD WIRELESS

PRICE: $79.95

AESTHETICS: ★★★★
Annotated with the standard PS2 DVD controls. Surprisingly light for a battery powered wireless controller.

BUTTONS: ★★★★
Well-placed standard buttons plus extra DVD related buttons.

TRIGGERS: ★★★★
Feel just like the standard Dual Shock shoulder buttons.

ANALOGUE STICKS: ★★★★
Very accurate and responsive with some nice resistance.

D-PAD: ★★
Appears to be the same as the 4Gamers D-Pad in all respects.

OVERALL: ★★★★
Looks good, plays well and the DVD labels make for a great remote control alternative.

THRUSTMASTER 360 MODENA ANALOG GAMEPRO

PRICE: $29.95

AESTHETICS: ★★★
Pleasantly red but the garish speedometer and tachometer don't flatter anybody.

BUTTONS: ★★★½
Fairly standard, and somewhat flimsy feeling.

TRIGGERS: ★★★★
Well placed and comfortable as well as responsive.

ANALOGUE STICKS: ★★★
Quite squishy – not enough resistance to make them feel particularly good.

D-PAD: ★★½
Responsive but uncomfortable and inaccurate.

OVERALL: ★★★
Not a bad pad but not recommended unless you like Ferrari branding.

4GAMERS SOFT TOUCH DUAL ANALOGUE CONTROLLER

PRICE: $29.95

AESTHETICS: ★★★★
Fits very well in the hand and looks pretty neat to boot.

BUTTONS: ★★★½
Well placed face buttons but the Select/Start are a little fiddly.

TRIGGERS: ★★★★
Good placement and response.

ANALOGUE STICKS: ★★★★
Excellent placement, response, accuracy and resistance.

D-PAD: ★★★
Not precise enough. Requires a lot of movement.

OVERALL: ★★★★
An excellent alternative to the standard Dual Shock controller.

LOGITECH CORDLESS ACTION CONTROLLER

PRICE: $79.95

AESTHETICS: ★★★★
Remarkably small and sexy for a Logitech product.

BUTTONS: ★★★½
Well–placed but the buttons feel a little sticky.

TRIGGERS: ★★★★
Very good placement and comfortable as well.

ANALOGUE STICKS: ★★★½
Well placed but a little too floaty for our liking.

D-PAD: ★★★½
Similar to the Xbox Controller S D-Pad. We like.

OVERALL: ★★★★
A new look for Logitech and an excellent wireless alternative.

LOGITECH ACTION CONTROLLER

PRICE: $39.95

AESTHETICS: ★★★★
Smaller than the last Logitech offering with comfortable rubberised grips.

BUTTONS: ★★★½
Well placed but not enough resistance.

TRIGGERS: ★★★★
Well placed and very comfortable to use. Very responsive.

ANALOGUE STICKS: ★★★
Too close in for the width of the controller and also a little mushy.

D-PAD: ★★★
Remarkably accurate for such a flat D-Pad.

OVERALL: ★★★½
The pad itself is very comfortable but the analogue sticks can be a little frustrating.

JOYTECH WIRELESS ANALOG CONTROLLER

PRICE: $59.95

AESTHETICS: ★★
Boxy and uncomfortable – battery pack rubs on fingers.

BUTTONS: ★★★★
Well spaced and positioned.

TRIGGERS: ★★★½
Well positioned and comfortable but a little unresponsive.

ANALOGUE STICKS: ★★★
Too mushy to be truly great but still comfortable.

D-PAD: ★★★
Nice old school cross style D-Pad with precise response.

OVERALL: ★★★
Works well but just doesn't sit comfortably in the hand.

CONTROLLER S

A vast departure from the old Xbox potato, the Controller S is a genius work of design and ergonomics.

PRICE: $49.95

AESTHETICS: ★★★★½

BUTTONS: ★★★★

TRIGGERS: ★★★★

ANALOGUE STICKS: ★★★★½

D-PAD: ★★★½

OVERALL: ★★★★

LOGITECH PRECISION CONTROLLER

PRICE: $49.95

AESTHETICS: ★★★
Large and boomerang shaped but still quite comfortable.

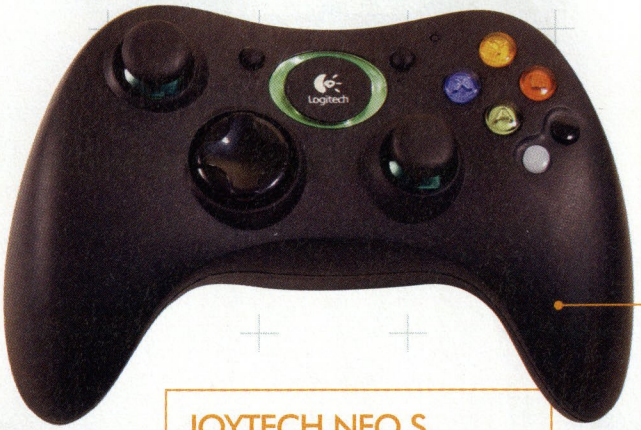
BUTTONS: ★★★★
Well placed face buttons nearly identical to the Controller S.

TRIGGERS: ★★★★
Comfortable and have a good bit of resistance.

ANALOGUE STICKS: ★★★
Feel a little too flimsy and floaty for our liking.

D-PAD: ★★
Too flat to be accurate. Not enough range of movement.

OVERALL: ★★★½
Comfortable in the hand but not enough "Precision".



JOYTECH NEO S

PRICE: $34.95

AESTHETICS: ★★★★
Initially looks a little cheap but boy is it comfortable.

BUTTONS: ★★★★
The buttons are small but the placement is excellent.

TRIGGERS: ★★★★
A bit stiffer than the Controller S triggers but very well placed.

ANALOGUE STICKS: ★★★★
Very comfortable and intuitively placed.

D-PAD: ★★★★
Old school, cross style, perfectly functional D-Pad.

OVERALL: ★★★★
The Neo S may look cheap but performance and comfort wise it's a winner.

LOGITECH THUNDERPAD

PRICE: $39.95

AESTHETICS: ★★★★
Compact, comfortable and with a nice long cord.

BUTTONS: ★★
Way too close together for a heated gaming session – unless you're a midget.

TRIGGERS: ★★★½
Well placed but the action is a bit soft.

ANALOGUE STICKS: ★★★★
Very comfortable and well positioned.

D-PAD: ★★★½
Very nice flat design and a good range of accurate movement.

OVERALL: ★★★½
Aside from the woeful button layout a very fine pad.

JOYTECH WIRELESS NEO S

PRICE: $69.95

AESTHETICS: ★★★★½
Small, attractive, damn comfortable and no pesky cord.

BUTTONS: ★★★★
Just like it's wired brother – very nice.

TRIGGERS: ★★★★
Once again, just like the wired Neo S.

ANALOGUE STICKS: ★★★★
Well placed and very comfortable.

D-PAD: ★★★★
Cross style with both form and excellent functionality.

OVERALL: ★★★★½
Without a doubt one of the best third party controllers we have ever seen.

4GAMERS XBOX JOYPAD

PRICE: $49.95

AESTHETICS: ★★★★½
Looks very swanky and melts into your hand.

BUTTONS: ★★★★½
Sublime placement and excellent response.

TRIGGERS: ★★★★
Well placed but feel a bit gummy.

ANALOGUE STICKS: ★★★★½
Excellent placement and movement.

D-PAD: ★★★½
Definitely usable but not too good for quarter circles.

OVERALL: ★★★★
Very attractive and very comfortable – just like a good pad should be.

4GAMERS WIRELESS XBOX CONTROLLER

PRICE: $89.95

AESTHETICS: ★★★★½
Looks great, no cord but the battery pack can dig into your fingers.

BUTTONS: ★★★★
Like the wired pad but the Start button is a little hard to get to.

TRIGGERS: ★★★★
Very well placed but still a little gummy.

ANALOGUE STICKS: ★★★★½
Some of the best analogue sticks we've come across.

D-PAD: ★★★½
Why are D-Pads so problematic?

OVERALL: ★★★★½
Another superb wireless controller that's very attractive to boot.

GAMECUBE

GAMECUBE CONTROLLER

So cute it looks like a child's toy but it's hard to find a more comfortable controller anywhere.

PRICE: $49.95

AESTHETICS: ★★★★½

BUTTONS: ★★★★

TRIGGERS: ★★★½

ANALOGUE STICKS: ★★★★

D-PAD: ★★★

OVERALL: ★★★★

WAVEBIRD

Best. Controller. Ever.
Amazingly comfortable, great looking and no pesky cord.

PRICE: $69.95

AESTHETICS: ★★★★★

BUTTONS: ★★★★

TRIGGERS: ★★★★

ANALOGUE STICKS: ★★★★

D-PAD: ★★★

OVERALL: ★★★★½

4GAMERS GAMECUBE CONTROLLER

PRICE: $29.95

AESTHETICS: ★★★★
Looks like a Fischer Price toy but feels great in the hand.

BUTTONS: ★★★½
Not quite as accessible as the normal kidney buttons but not too bad at all.

TRIGGERS: ★★★½
The normal triggers are great but the Z-trigger doesn't feel quite right.

ANALOGUE STICKS: ★★★★
Well placed, springy and accessible.

D-PAD: ★★★
Small but still remarkably good.

OVERALL: ★★★★
Not a bad replacement for the standard controller but it ain't no Wavebird, that's for sure.

PC GAMEPADS

LOGITECH WINGMAN RUMBLEPAD

PRICE: $69.95

AESTHETICS: ★★★
Big but fairly comfortable. Looks nice and imposing. Good rumble.

BUTTONS: ★★
Poorly spaced, little in the way of action.

TRIGGERS: ★★★
Well placed but very little movement.

ANALOGUE STICKS: ★★★
Accurate but awkwardly placed in the middle of the pad.

D-PAD: ★★
Feels awful. Very hard to get accurate movement.

OVERALL: ★★
Too unwieldy to be of much use to anyone.

THRUSTMASTER FIRESTORM DUAL POWER 3 GAMEPAD

PRICE: $79.95

AESTHETICS: ★★★★
Very comfortable and feels nice and solid. Meaty rumble function.

BUTTONS: ★★★★½
Six buttons in accessible and intuitive locations as well as clicking thumb sticks.

TRIGGERS: ★★★★
4 triggers placed much like those on a PS2 Dual Shock controller.

ANALOGUE STICKS: ★★★★
Well spaced and feature a nice level of resistance.

D-PAD: ★★★
Too chunky and clicky for our liking.

OVERALL: ★★★★
A very decent pad that should see to all of your needs. Expensive just for rumble.

E-BEST JOY CONTROLLER

PRICE: $35

AESTHETICS: ★★★
Sits well in the hand but looks a little cheap.

BUTTONS: ★★★
4 decent face buttons but a gaggle of ill defined and tiny rubber buttons above the analogue sticks.

TRIGGERS: ★★★★
Dual Shock style triggers.

ANALOGUE STICKS: ★★★
Decently placed but feel very flimsy.

D-PAD: ★★
Movement doesn't feel at all well defined.

OVERALL: ★★★
An OK pad that comes with an anachronistic install disc.

LOGITECH WINGMAN PRECISION

PRICE: $24.95

AESTHETICS: ★★
Looks OK but hard edges dig into your hands.

BUTTONS: ★★
4 awful feeling but well placed buttons.

TRIGGERS: ★★★
Well placed button style triggers.

ANALOGUE STICKS: N/A

D-PAD: ★★
Similar to the other Logitech pad but with more range of movement.

OVERALL: ★★
Decent for MAME, not too good for anything else.

E-BEST E-CONTROLLER

PRICE: $20

AESTHETICS: ★
Looks cheap, feels cheap and nasty.

BUTTONS: ★★★
6 decent face buttons and the requisite but somewhat confusing "turbo" button in the centre.

TRIGGERS: ★★
4 uncomfortable clicky hard plastic triggers.

ANALOGUE STICKS: N/A

D-PAD: ★★
Looks good but feels inaccurate.

OVERALL: ★★
Spend a bit more money and get something different.

THRUSTMASTER FIRESTORM WIRELESS

PRICE: $79.95

AESTHETICS: ★★★★
Solid and sexy Thrustmaster construction with no pesky wires – the battery pack can get in the way though.

BUTTONS: ★★★★
Well placed face buttons and some hidden extra trigger style buttons as well as clicking thumb sticks.

TRIGGERS: ★★★★
4 triggers to suit every purpose.

ANALOGUE STICKS: ★★★★
Well placed and nice and springy.

D-PAD: ★★★
Still too clicky and chunky for our liking.

OVERALL: ★★★★
Another great Thrustmaster pad.

THRUSTMASTER FIRESTORM DUAL ANALOGUE 3

PRICE: $39.95

AESTHETICS: ★★★★
Just like the other Thrustmaster pads but with smooth plastic instead of rubberised.

BUTTONS: ★★★★
Those great Thrustmaster buttons we've come to know and love.

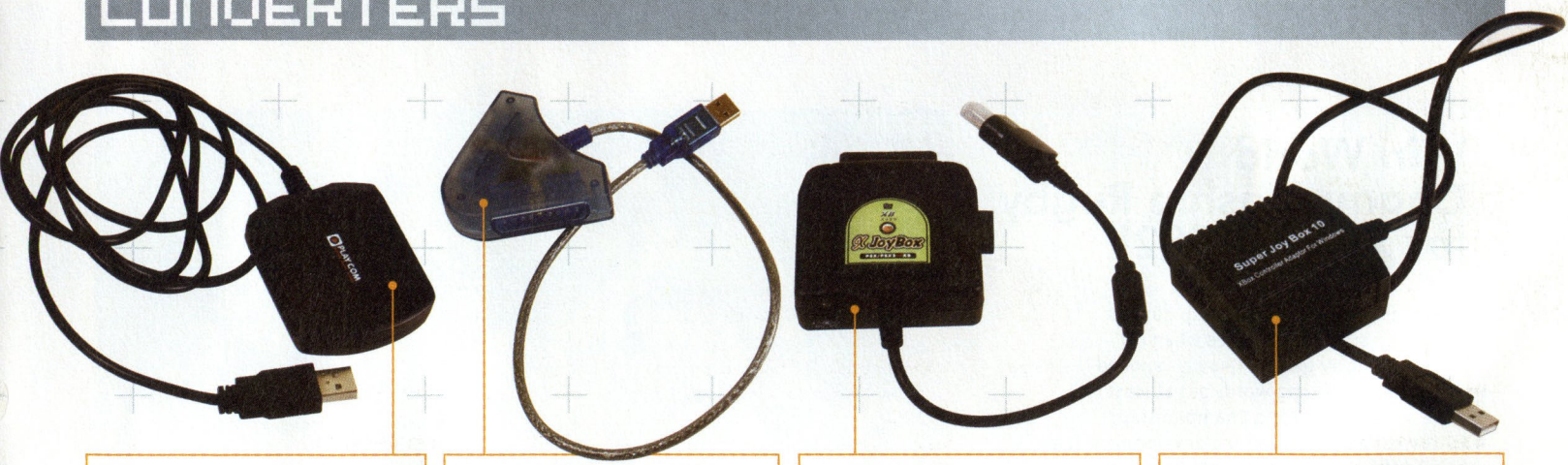
TRIGGERS: ★★★★
4 triggers right at your fingertips.

ANALOGUE STICKS: ★★★★
Well placed and springy.

D-PAD: ★★★
Still too chunky and clicky.

OVERALL: ★★★★
A great budget pad.

CONVERTERS



JOYTECH PS2 TO USB CONTROLLER CONVERTER

In case you can't find a PC gamepad you like there's always the option to connect your PS2 controller to your PC through a USB adapter. The adapter works quite well after installing the drivers and fully supports the rumble of the Dual Shock 2 pad. The adapter allows for two Dual Shocks to be connected through one USB port.

PRICE: TBA

OVERALL: ★★★★
A good cheap alternative to a pad.

SUPER DUAL BOX

If you're looking to play a dancing game on the PC but can't find a mat then this is the adapter for you – the major selling point on the front of the pack is that it supports dance mats. That aside the Super Dual Box allows players to use two PSX controllers on their PC. Installation is simple and the adapter looks quite good as well. It's just stupidly expensive.

PRICE: $45

OVERALL: ★★★★
Not too bad but the Joytech product is a better bet.

X JOY BOX

Aside from having a name like a porn site, the X Joy Box allows you to use your PS2 controller on your Xbox. Although the concept sounds appealing the controller did have the nasty habit of occasionally dropping out and not registering button presses or movements. Once again the price is way too steep for a simple converter.

PRICE: $45

OVERALL: ★★★
Nice idea but too temperamental to warrant a purchase.

SUPER JOY BOX 10

Silly name, nifty adapter. The Super Joy Box 10 allows players to connect two Xbox controllers to their PC. The drivers are a bit of a hassle as they only come on floppy so you may have to hunt around on the net to find a downloadable version before going crazy Controller S style. The adapter also supports the rumble feature of the pads – so long as you can find a game with force feedback. $50 for a converter? *DM*

PRICE: $49

OVERALL: ★★★★
A bit of a hassle to install but a good adapter none the less.

WinWinWin

Entries close June 9th

Win Fight Night 2004 for Xbox or PS2!

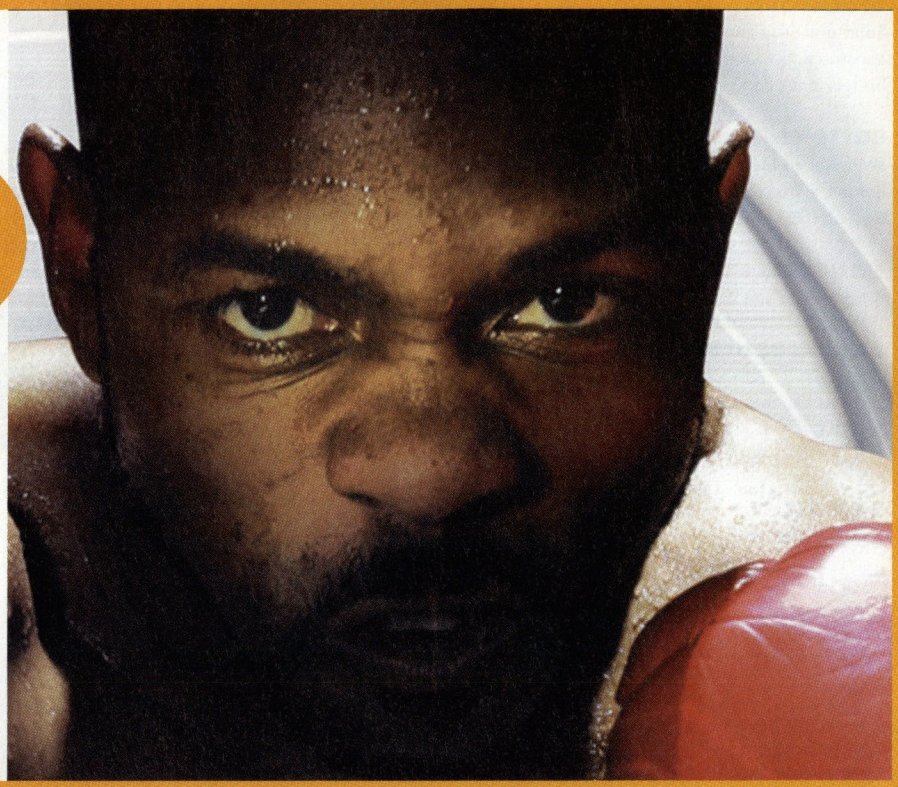
6 COPIES UP FOR GRABS!

>>Fight Night 2004 is probably the best boxing game yet, and is another one of those games that all but halted productivity here at Hyper HQ, with people from all over the office stopping by to watch our boy Amos get his box on. To help celebrate Fight Night's bloody and brutal rise to the top of the boxing heap, EA have been kind enough to give us six copies to give away.

To be in with a chance to win one of these six copies, just tell us which system you'd like the game on (Xbox or PS2) and answer the following question:

What is the name of the MC in Fight Night 2004?

Put your answer on the back of an envelope along with your name and address, and post it to: **King Amos, Hyper, 78 Renwick Street, Redfern, NSW 2016.**



Win World Championship Rugby for Xbox or PS2!

6 COPIES UP FOR GRABS!

>>In the wake of the World Cup gamers have been spoiled for choice when it comes to Rugby games. Okay... "spoiled" is perhaps the wrong word, but at least there's "choice". World Championship Rugby comes to us from the development team behind the classic Jonah Lomu Rugby, and unsurprisingly it's the most playable rugby game around. Thanks to our homies at Acclaim we have six copies to give away, on the system of your choice.

To be in with a chance to win one of the six, just tell us which system you'd like the game on (Xbox or PS2) and answer the following question:

Name the development studio behind World Championship Rugby.

Put your answer on the back of an envelope along with your name and address, and post it to: **Rug Up It's Cold Outside, Hyper, 78 Renwick Street, Redfern, NSW 2016.**

Terms & Conditions 1) Entry is open to residents of Australia and New Zealand except employees and immediate families of Next Publishing Pty Ltd and its agencies associated with the promotion. 2) Only entries completed with these terms and conditions will be eligible. 3) Competition begins 9am April 27 and entries close at 6pm June 9. 4) In determining eligibility the judge's decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into. 5) The winner will be drawn at 9am June 10 at Next Publishing Pty Ltd, 78 Renwick St, Redfern NSW 2016. 6) Prizes must be taken as offered and are not redeemable for cash. 7) The promoter is not responsible for misdirected or lost mail. 8) The winners will be notified by mail and results published in the August issue of Hyper on sale July 7. 9) 6 winners will each receive Fight Night 2004 on either Xbox or PS2 (RRP $89.95). 6 winners will each receive World Championship Rugby on either Xbox or PS2 (RRP $79.95). Total value of competitions is $1019.40. 10) The promoter is Next Publishing Pty Ltd ABN 88 002 647 645 of 78 Renwick St, Redfern NSW 2016.

RED·DEAD REVOLVER

COMING
AUTUMN 2004

WWW.ROCKSTARGAMES.COM/REDDEADREVOLVER

OFFICE OF FILM AND LITERATURE CLASSIFICATION
MA15+
[RESTRICTED 15 YEARS AND OVER]
MEDIUM LEVEL ANIMATED VIOLENCE

PlayStation 2

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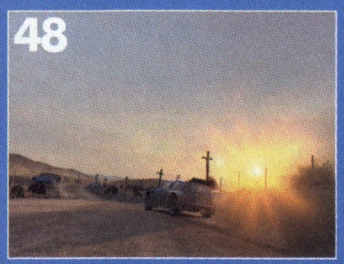
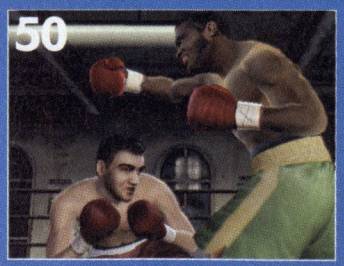
Ninjas – is there anything they can't do?





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Reviews

Game Theory

DANIEL STAINES

>>In last month's column, I commented that it is reasonable to expect the quality of games to improve as the technology that supports them becomes exponentially more powerful. I didn't bother defending that statement then and I don't really intend to now either – frankly, I think the empirical evidence and arguments supporting it render it beyond reasonable reproach. The simple fact of the matter is that increasingly powerful technology gives clever game designers more freedom to realise their visions. This isn't to say that better technology necessarily means better games, but rather that better technology provides developers with a better chance of making better games.

The lure of exploiting CPU and graphics processing power to the fullest extent possible is understandably strong. Publishers love nothing more than to plaster game boxes with hyperbole-laden feature lists and big screenshots with lots of high-end special effects. Similarly, games that push the technical envelope are more likely to be funded by the major cash-factory publishers and consequently enjoy significantly more pre-release coverage from the specialist press. Think Far Cry. Think Doom 3. Think STALKER. None of these titles would've enjoyed the amount of positive coverage they have if journalists had not been privy to the snazzy preview videos made possible by their respective engines. I'm not accusing the specialist press – of which I am a part – of selling out. This isn't a veiled attempt at revealing the hidden machinations of conniving corporate entities on unsuspecting gamers. This is simply a matter of supply and demand. People demand technology-focused previews with lots of lovely screenshots and we do our bit by supplying it to them.

However, there is a danger in all this. While the games industry itself continues to focus on technology driven product – and perhaps should continue to do so – we in the press are becoming increasingly blinded to the fact that technology is supposed to be a means to making games that are fun to play rather than something that is somehow game independent. Just go and have a look at the majority of Far Cry reviews currently doing the rounds to see what I'm talking about. As games critics, it is entirely remiss of members of the specialist press to spew out pages of frothing at the mouth praise for Far Cry's fabulous engine without once mentioning how this technology is utilised to facilitate a more enjoyable game experience overall. It is simply nonsensical to cite and praise a particular technical feature of a given game without talking about how it fits in with the game entire.

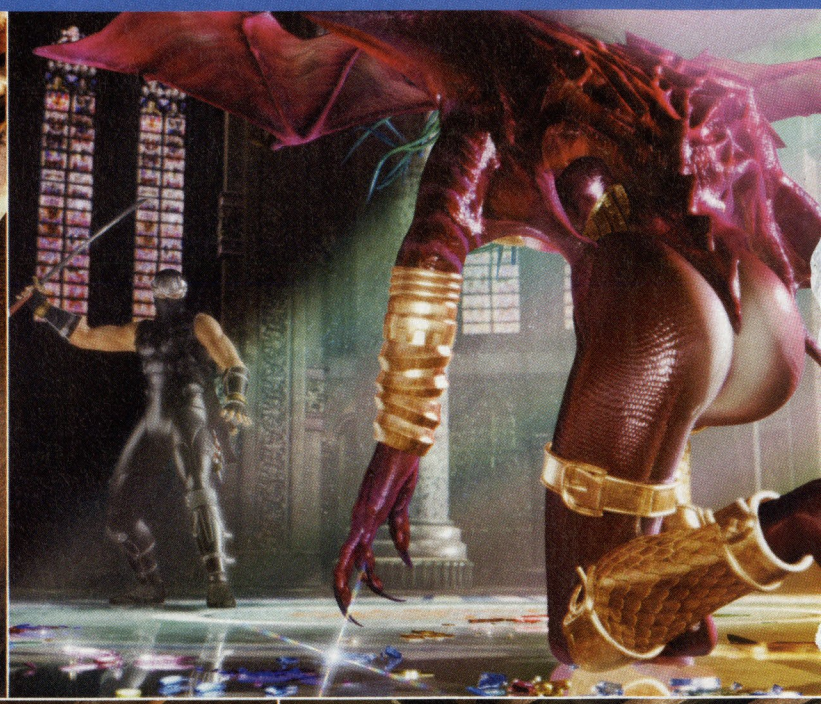
Regrettably, almost every game critic I know – including myself – has been guilty of this infantile brand of criticism at one time or another. In fact, some magazines and websites produce nothing but this kind of garbage. And that's a shame because reviews and previews written in this style miss the point of games criticism entirely. They are the result of an industry's excessive focus on technology driven game development and result in the mistaken belief that the individual components of a given game can be appraised in a vacuum – completely independent and unconnected to any other facet of the title under scrutiny.

Well, I'm sorry IGN, but that's a load of bullshit. A game is more than a mere compendium of its technical features. A game is what arises when a player interacts with those features and is the context in which said features should be appraised. If there is a particular facet of a game that seems incongruous or is used inappropriately, then that particular facet is open to criticism within the context of said game regardless of its technical proficiency otherwise. Otherwise simply doesn't matter. We're talking about games criticism here, so how about we stick to actually criticising games and not just what they're composed of?

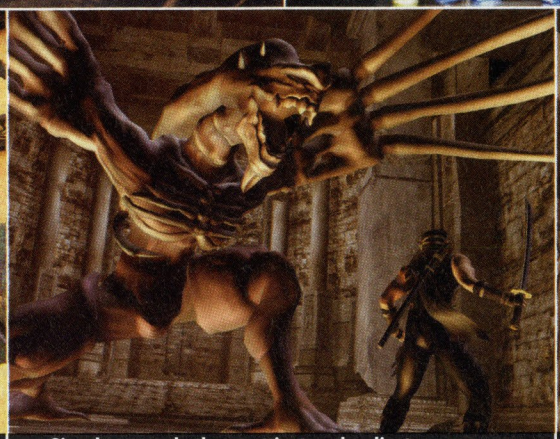
Until next month,
daniels@next.com.au

THE HYPER SCORING SYSTEM The Overall Score – what's it all about?

0-49	50-59	60-69	70-79	80-89	90+
You're better off watching reality TV than playing these games...	The gaming equivalent of an uncomfortable silence.	Take it or leave it. What do we care? Utterly average.	I say old bean, now this is a little bit more like it. Spit spot!	Good, verging on great. Worth getting excited about!	This is the straight-up dope shit, and we're the pushers...



This is how they choose the next Iron Chef contestant



Simultaneously the prettiest and ugliest game ever

Running on the walls was invented at Atari y'know

NINJA GAIDEN

MAURICE BRANSCOMBE was born to guide ninjas...

It's been almost fifteen years since Ryu Hayabusa first sought revenge for the massacred Dragon Ninja clan in the original Ninja Gaiden, and all these years later it seems as though the clan's bad luck still knows no bounds. Returning home from training, Ryu finds his village ablaze and once again, every last Dragon Ninja slaughtered. A lesser man may have considered leaving the Dragon Ninjas and joining a clan that could actually defend themselves, however Ryu has his honour, and once again sets out to avenge his hapless clan.

METAL PASTIES AND A G-STRING

Ryu's main preoccupation in Ninja Gaiden is simply to cut a bloody great swathe through the ranks of the assassins of his clan, consisting variously of rival ninjas, mutant freaks and other crimes against nature. Ryu has a variety of weapons to help him do the job, including his trusty dragon sword and a bottomless supply of shurikens among numerous others. More importantly though, mastering all of the combos, counters and desperation attacks that Ryu has at his disposal is absolutely essential if you want to get anywhere in this game, as Gaiden features some of the most diabolically merciless enemies in recent memory.

Throughout the game there are never any enemies who'll simply offer up little resistance to being carved into steaks, instead every single enemy is highly capable of killing you with surprisingly little effort if given half a chance. For this reason some may be quick to dismiss the game as too tough, and even the hardest of gamers may take a little time to get used to playing a game where you will actually die with some degree of regularity. Becoming successful at Ninja Gaiden takes quite a lot more than merely mashing your fist into your controller; it takes strategy, style, and practice.

A few sections in particular that you'll almost certainly be continuing over and over again to complete are the boss battles. Paying homage to its old-school roots Ninja Gaiden ends almost all of its chapters with an end of level guardian of some description. Some of the more impressive bosses include a morbidly obese henchman with a lightning gun, a giant reanimated dinosaur fossil and a particularly nasty pink reptilian woman clothed in naught but a pair of metal pasties and a G-string (this is from the publisher that brought you DOAX Beach Volleyball remember), as well as many other assorted multi-eyed, multi-tentacled freaks.

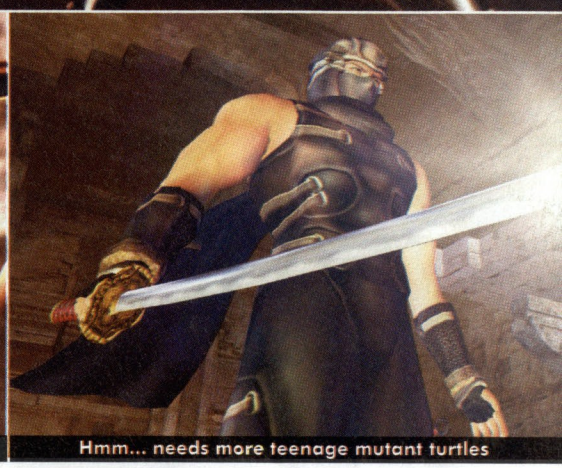
The bosses make the rest of the game's enemies look like pussycats, and some of them can even kill you with their first attack, but just like all classic bosses, their patterns can eventually be learnt and an effective counter attack planned, but it all takes plenty of practice.

GET YOUR NINJA ON

Anyone who's played the superb Prince of Persia: Sands of Time will immediately feel at home controlling Ryu Hayabusa. Ryu and the Prince share many attributes, including the ability to run up and across walls, swing around poles gymnast-style and jump from wall to wall to access higher platforms. Ninja Gaiden isn't all disembowelling and decapitations either, puzzling and exploration also makes up a sizable portion of

It's a bit buggy... sigh

The fanciest fondu set we've seen since the 70s



Hmm... needs more teenage mutant turtles

NINJA GAIDEN ISN'T ALL **DISEMBOWELLING AND DECAPITATIONS** EITHER, PUZZLING AND EXPLORATION MAKE UP A SIZEABLE PORTION...

the game. Again like Prince of Persia, most of Gaiden's puzzles involve the mastering of Ryu's acrobatic moves, and executing them at the appropriate time and place. A memorable example of this is when Ryu must reach a high ledge at the end of an alleyway. At first it seems impossible, but after making a few well placed jumps while wall-running Ryu can actually start running on one wall, jump to another and continue running to reach previously inaccessible areas. The game is literally filled with moments like this, where experimentation and practice is more important than what's in your inventory.

Team Ninja's extensive experience with the Xbox hardware is made most obvious in Ninja Gaiden's gorgeous visuals. The entire game looks exactly as you'd expect Tecmo's own Dead or Alive series to appear if it were turned into an action-adventure game. The characters are designed and rendered in an almost identical style to the DOA series (minus the undulating bosoms), and are animated superbly, especially Ryu, who moves as only a ninja can.

Weapons leave mesmerizing Soul Calibur-style trails behind them as they cut through the air, and the environments too manage to look as stunning as those found in Tecmo's other popular franchise. That's a pretty mean feat considering the amount of action occurring on screen at any one time, and that the levels are upwards of ten times the size of the arenas in DOA. Still, even in the middle of a six-on-one brawl Ninja Gaiden's framerate never seems to miss a beat.

Perhaps the most salient complaint that can be levelled at Ninja Gaiden is that some players may find that the automatic camera angles can occasionally become intrusive in the heat of battle. That said, it rarely poses a significant enough problem to weigh the rest of the game down.

!!! Ninja Gaiden is everything that Sega's Shinobi sequels should have been. Shame on you Sega.

With Ninja Gaiden, Team Ninja have successfully resurrected an industry legend with a game that both stays true to its old-school origins and at the same time brings those concepts fifteen years into the future and builds upon them. It's easy on the eyes, highly challenging and is almost certainly one of the best action-adventure releases on the Xbox, or any other platform for that matter, making Ninja Gaiden the best reason to get your ninja on in years. <<

HYPER BIG RUBBER STAMP OF APPROVAL

AVAILABLE ON:
PS2 / **XBOX** / GCN / PC

DETAILS

CATEGORY: Action Adventure / **PLAYERS:** 1 / **DEVELOPER:** Team Ninja / **PUBLISHER:** Tecmo/Microsoft / **PRICE:** $99.95 / **RATING:** M15+ / **AVAILABLE:** Now /

HYPER VERDICT

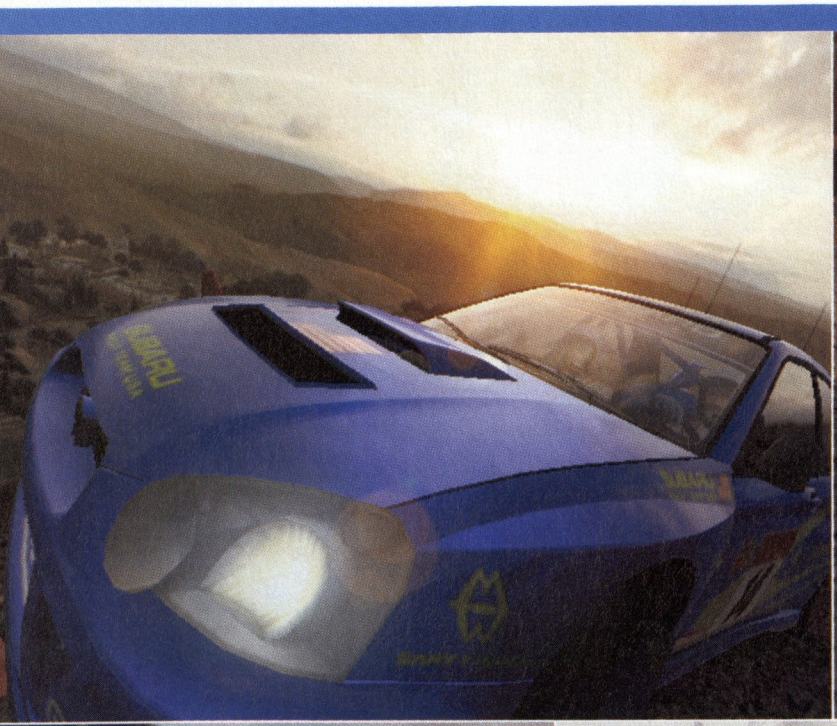
PLUS: Excellent graphics and challenging gameplay. Ninjas.

MINUS: Will make you feel less hard than you think you are.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
93	85	90

OVERALL
91

Finally a retro ninja game update that doesn't suck!



Captioning car games holds no joy for us...

I mean, look at this clown. Does he think he's cool?

Oh la di da. It's an empty friggin' track...

RALLISPORT CHALLENGE 2

CAM SHEA rallies to the cause...

There's nothing like a good arcade rally game to get the heart racing. Something about the fact that you're very rarely in complete control of your car, essentially skating slightly askew across rugged terrain at high speeds, is very appealing. The original Rallisport Challenge fit the bill quite nicely. And now, in a shocking turn of events that will surprise absolutely no one, so too does Rallisport Challenge 2.

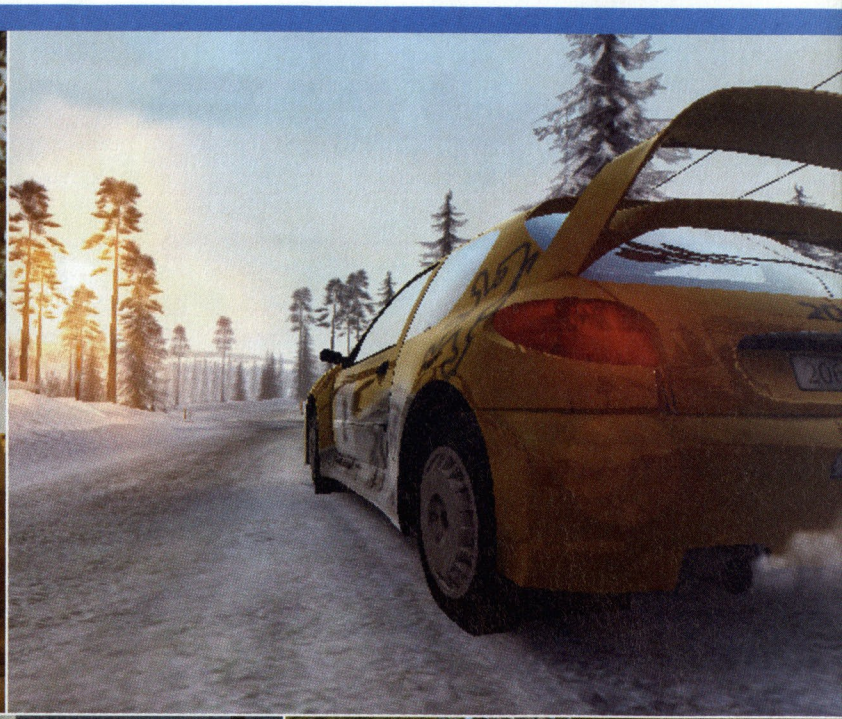
IT'S RALLY FUN MAN

At first glance nothing much has changed. There's still a whole host of racing styles to compete in, with Rally Cross, Rally, Hill Climb and Ice Racing returning, and with Crossover making its debut. The game still flies along at 60fps with no slowdown to be seen (in single player that is), while utterly convincing environments pass you by. But fortunately, some things have changed. There's now a Career mode bringing the disparate race styles together, and giving you some sense of purpose. Better still, the Career mode also gives the player a modicum of freedom in how they approach the various events. Basically, the further into the Career mode you get, the more choice is available. If you want to specialise in Rally Cross later on you can – although you may need to compete in some of the other events to get enough points to unlock the final competitions. It's a reasonable enough way to tie it all together and make sure you never get stuck, although as is normal for racing games there's not a great deal of personality to speak of.

The Career mode comes alongside the usual Time Attack, Single Race, Multiplayer and Xbox Live modes. There's also a Leaderboard option which can bring up not only your best times, but the best times via Xbox Live too. Not a bad way to compare skills with opponents all around the world. We should also mention that Rallisport 2 is the first racing game from the XSN Sports stable, so you'll be able to set up your own competitions and get racey with sweaty teens the world over.

If you're not able to play online, however, there's plenty of playtime to be found on your own. Just like the original, Rallisport Challenge 2's greatest strength is the variety in actual racing on offer. We're particularly fond of the Rally Cross and Crossover modes. Both styles of course are circuits based in largish arenas, with generally wide sections of track with both tight corners and sweeping runs, requiring precision driving. Think the Drift courses from NFS Underground but larger and with many more undulations and you'd have a good idea what we're talking about. What's most fun about Rally Cross and Crossover is that you're constantly powersliding and adjusting for the next corner. Although this analogy may seem like a stretch, it actually reminds us of our time trialing days in Mario Kart - mastering every approach and every corner, trying to shave precious seconds of your mate's last time. It's good fun in other words. The only major difference between Rally Cross and Crossover is that in Rally Cross you're competing alongside up to three other drivers, whereas in Crossover the course is designed to have two parallel tracks that you race along against one other driver.

Into more traditional rally territory, the Rally courses are spread between Australia, Great Britain, Monte Carlo and Sweden. While there are plenty (12 per location), there are many overlapping sections in each



At least this one has a bloody car in it. Huzzah

You deserve to run into a pole. Loser

Finally, some action from Drifty McDrift

ABSOLUTELY **SCREAMING** ALONG GENTLE CURVES WHILE **THE CAR THREATENS TO LOSE CONTROL**

country, making the actual number slightly less impressive. There are also 21 Hill Climb courses, based in the USA, Argentina and Canada. Topping it all off are 8 Ice Racing tracks based in Canada and Sweden, which are closed circuit races around snow covered icy environments.

In terms of handling, Rallisport 2 is an unabashed arcade rally game. Don't expect it to feel real – it doesn't, but that hardly matters because once you're synched in to the driving model you'll be having too much fun fanging around hairpins and absolutely screaming along gentle curves while the car threatens to lose control. Perhaps the only disappointing element of this approach is a lack of ramifications for your car's performance. You can use the old trick of using trees or roadside barriers to ease your path around a corner with no impact on the handling. Sure, your windows will smash, your hood will go flying and your navigator will end up with a chunk of wood through his chest (maybe), but your car still hums along, which is a bit of a shame. Even more so when you consider that Rallisport 2 has some decent car customisation options spanning everything from tyre types through to power ratio and suspension options.

!!! In two player splitscreen the arrows pretty much obscure the path ahead, so just get on Live instead!

BUT WHAT ABOUT THE VISUALS?

Backing up all this racing goodness is one of Rallisport's greatest strengths - its visuals. Race through a British forest for instance, and you can only just make out the rich green foliage to either side, what with the sheets of rain sweeping across your car and droplets that dribble down the windshield. The Australian courses, on the other hand, are very much at the opposite end of the spectrum, with deep red clay roads, gums dotting the roadside and a uniquely Australian topography. It's a rich tapestry, that's for sure, and although the courses represented are pretty standard for rally games, they're very rarely as well fleshed out... or experienced at quite such a pace.

If we have to find fault with the game, however, we'd say that Rallisport Challenge 2 is just too easy. You can forget about starting out at Pro difficulty – go straight to Champion if you've ever played a rally game before. Even so, whipping through the game isn't such a problem because there's an awful lot to unlock – around twice as many courses as the original and somewhere in the vicinity of 40 cars too. Great, lightweight fun. <<

AVAILABLE ON:
PS2 / **XBOX** / GCN / PC

DETAILS
CATEGORY: Racing / **PLAYERS:** 1-4 /
DEVELOPER: Digital Illusions CE /
PUBLISHER: Microsoft /
PRICE: $99.95 / **RATING:** G8+ /
AVAILABLE: Late May /

HYPER VERDICT

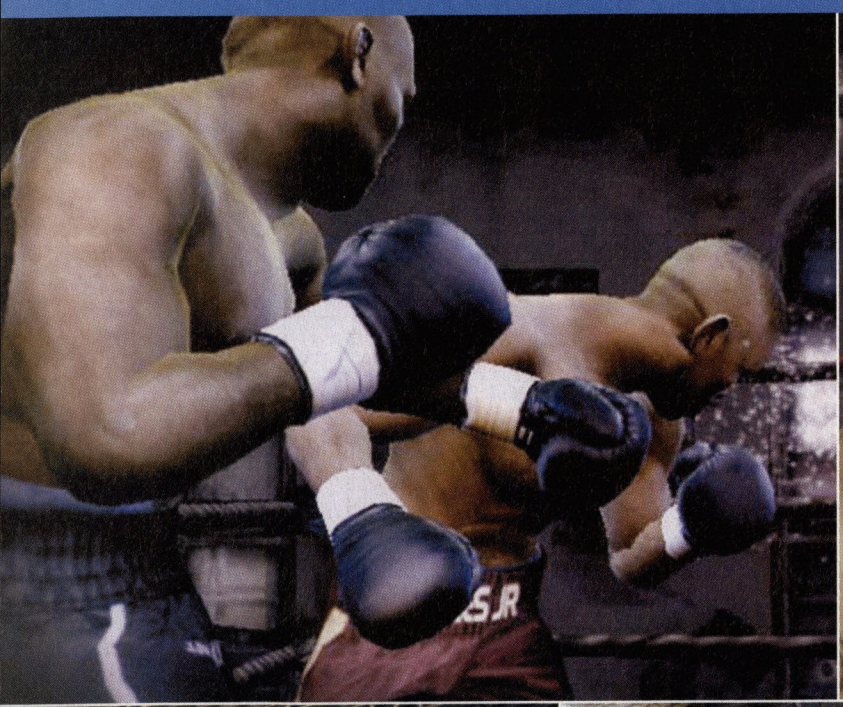
PLUS: Speed, lots of content

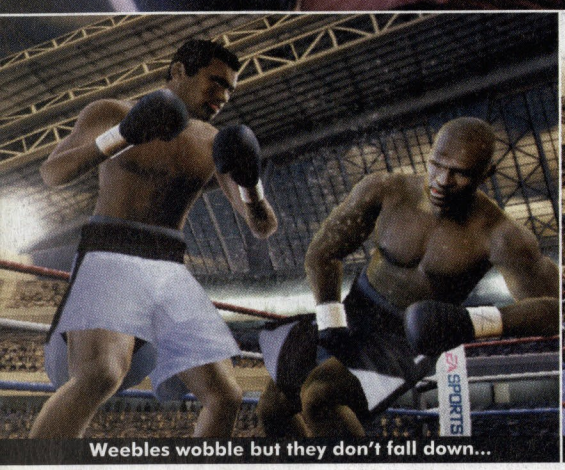
MINUS: No rear view mirror, too easy

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
89	80	83

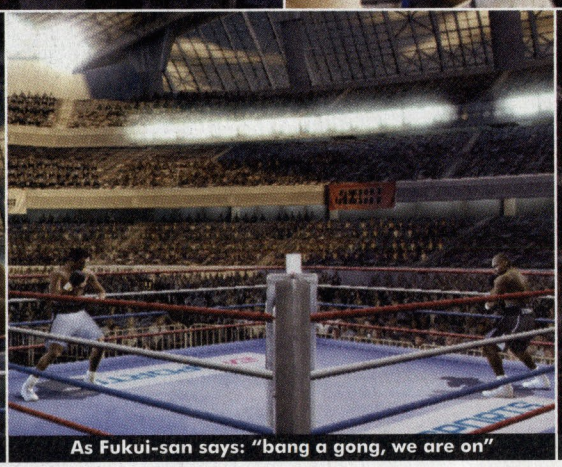
OVERALL
83

Everything you loved about the original plus more...

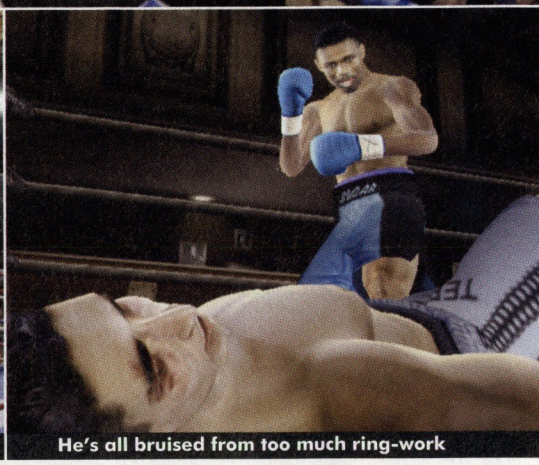




Weebles wobble but they don't fall down...



As Fukui-san says: "bang a gong, we are on"



He's all bruised from too much ring-work

FIGHT NIGHT 2004

DANIEL WILKS takes Amos to the top

It's no secret that we here at Hyper love Amos, the humble CD guy slaving away night and day making cover discs for various magazines published by the same publishing house that produces the hot game injection you now hold in your (hopefully not) sweaty hands. Amos is every man's hero – he is in fact every man made flesh, the underdog of underdogs – our hero. What better way can we show our undying love for Amos than to create his visage in EA's latest boxing game, Fight Night 2004 and pummel the shit out of various real world boxers on his way to being number one, the Light Heavyweight Champion of the World?

IF ONLY HYPER HAD A DVD FOR AMOS TO WORK ON...

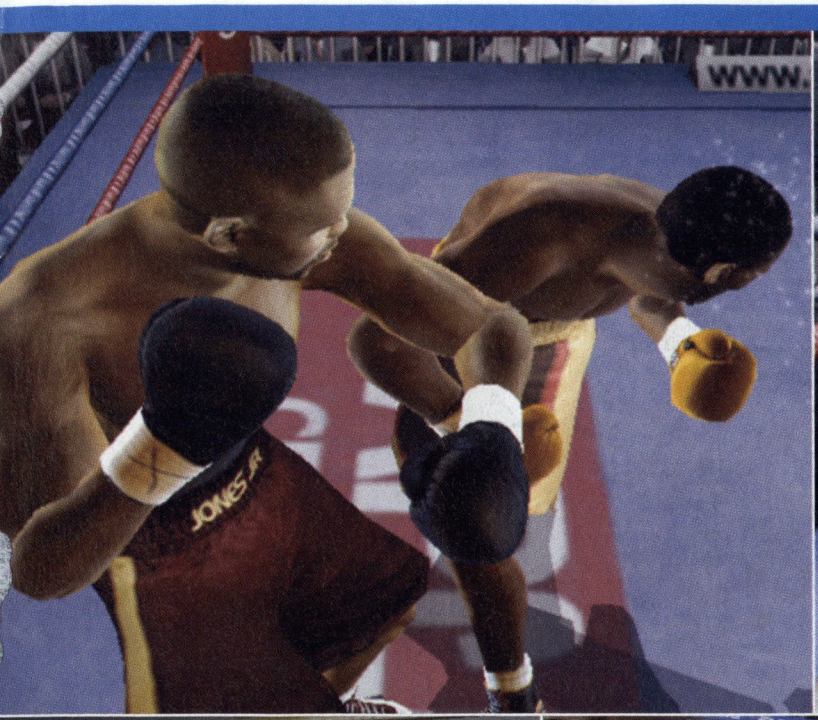
If the words "boxing game" have already made you lose interest then you're in for a surprise – Fight Night 2004 is something of a revolution in the genre taking the style of game from being a rather niche marketed sports package to being something rather special indeed. Why is Fight Night so special? Aside from us being able to create a virtual Amos, the game gives the player unprecedented control over their fighter by assigning all of the attacks (aside from a few special punches) to the right analogue stick. Whilst this may not sound too revolutionary the control approach evens out the flow of the game, steering it away from the simple button mashing that plague many of the other entrants into the field.

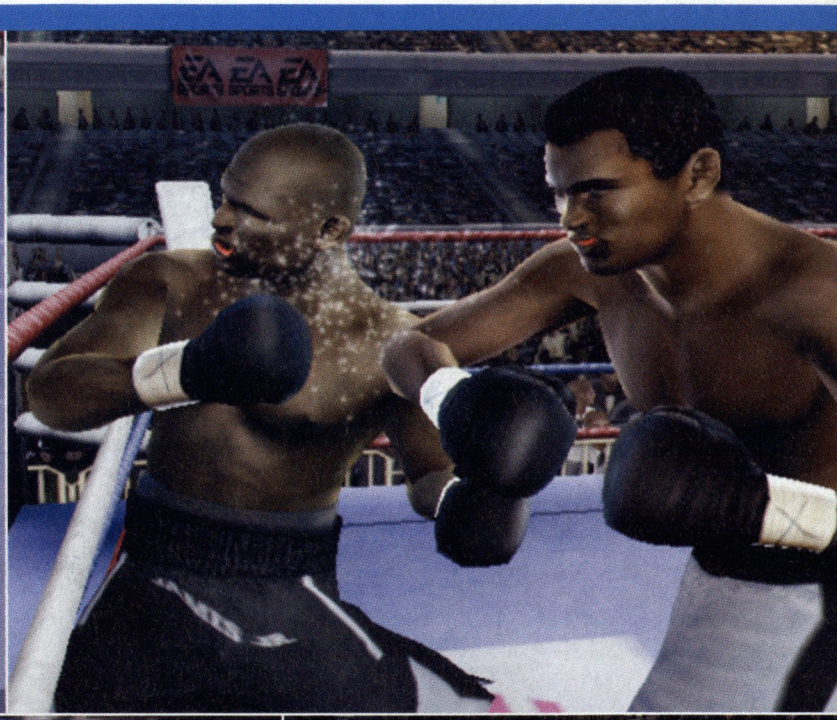
Initially players are given a choice between the different weight divisions and given the option to play one of 32 real world boxers or to create their own. At first the boxers have what can only be referred to as absolutely rotten statistics – jabs are launched from some time last week, and crosses, uppercuts and roundhouses take even longer. Win or lose, the player is given the option to play one of four training games in between bouts – punching the heavy bag, sparring, working out with target mits or getting sweaty (in a totally non homoerotic way) with the combo dummy. Depending on how many points the player scores they will be awarded a number of stat points that can be allocated to the stats linked to the game. Unfortunately there is no training mission or option to play these mini games by themselves to refine your technique so you'll probably find yourself quitting out and restarting them numerous times to get the best point score possible and build up your boxer.

THE HYPER VS PCPP SPAT CONTINUES...

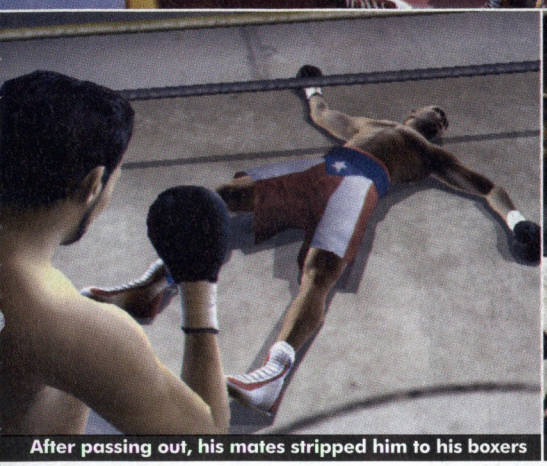
Aside from normal punches, each boxer, both real and created have access to two special signature punches. Whilst these punches are capable of inflicting quite a good deal of damage and look damn cool whilst doing it they also significantly reduce the boxer's punch strength for the rest of the match. The boxers also have access to a range of taunts – while these have no real impact on the game they are most definitely fun to bust out when you're wailing on a friend's, or even Bennett Ring's virtual head. When you are knocked down Fight Night utilises a rather novel technique to get back up again – the player must align three EA symbols on the referee's shirt within the ten count otherwise it's match over for you.

When a player wins a bout two things can occur – players will win a cash reward and may go up the ranks if the fighter they beat was ranked higher than them. Going up the ranks



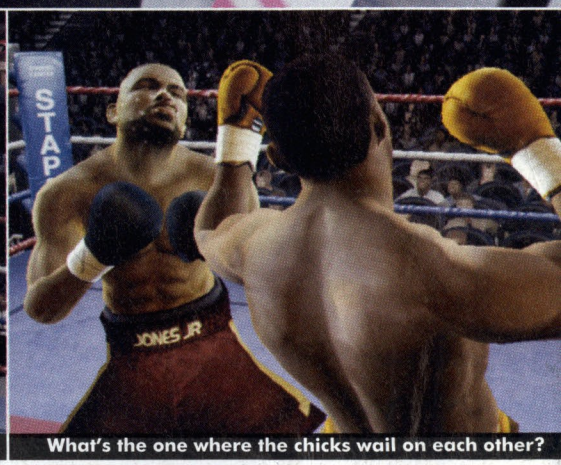


After passing out, his mates stripped him to his boxers



The best game since "Super Slugfest"

What's the one where the chicks wail on each other?



UNLOCKABLE ITEMS INCLUDE **RING HOOCHIES** IN VARIOUS OUTFITS, ENTRANCE EFFECTS SUCH AS FIREWORKS OR **FLOCKS OF DOVES**

STAINES BITCH TECHNIQUE

If there is one thing that holds Fight Night 2004 back from being an absolute work of genius it is a little something we like to call the "Staines Bitch Technique", named after its creator, Daniel Staines. Many of the fighters in Fight Night will follow set patterns to certain moves, such as dropping their guard if you back off far enough allowing you to repeatedly hit them in the head with your special punches or repeatedly guarding their body if you throw even the most cursory of punches at their stomach allowing you to wail on their head unchallenged. As a result it's too easy to exploit the flaws in the AI and with the game. Of course this doesn't apply to multiplayer or online play.

not only allows the player to fight progressively harder opponents but also unlocks what can only be described as "bling" for the player to purchase for their fighter. These unlockable items include ring hoochies in various outfits, entrance effects such as fireworks or flocks of doves being released, entrance music and different gloves, trunks, and tattoos. Honestly, who wouldn't want to spend $125,000 of their hard earned virtual cash buying a pair of shorts with the word "terrible" written across the groin, or $200,000 for a new pair of hot pants for your ho? Other unlockable features include new signature punches and taunt moves.

To put it plainly, Fight Night 2004 looks astounding - the detail in the characters is nothing short of superb. Aside from having boxers that look like their real world counterparts, Fight Night also accurately and sometimes grotesquely models bruising, cuts, swelling and sweat on the characters making the between round cutscenes something of a horror show. Not only do the cuts look great (in a painful and horrible kind of way) they have a direct effect on the flow of the game – when your eyes become bruised, swollen or cut your punch accuracy is significantly reduced. Things get even better when you score a coveted knock-down or knockout as some beautiful ragdoll effects take over as the fighter collapses limp to the ground. Complimenting the great graphics and animations are some truly meaty (pun intended) sound effects. Every punch sounds like it's hitting like the proverbial ton of bricks, and the soundtrack and commentary are OK if you like run of the mill hip hop. <<

!!! Want to win a copy of this fine game? Just turn to page 42. Who loves ya baby?

AVAILABLE ON:
PS2 / XBOX / GCN / PC

DETAILS

CATEGORY: Boxing / **PLAYERS:** 1-2 / **DEVELOPER:** EA / **PUBLISHER:** EA / **PRICE:** $89.95 / **RATING:** M15+ / **AVAILABLE:** Now /

HYPER VERDICT

PLUS: Excellent controls, tactically deep, looks fantastic.

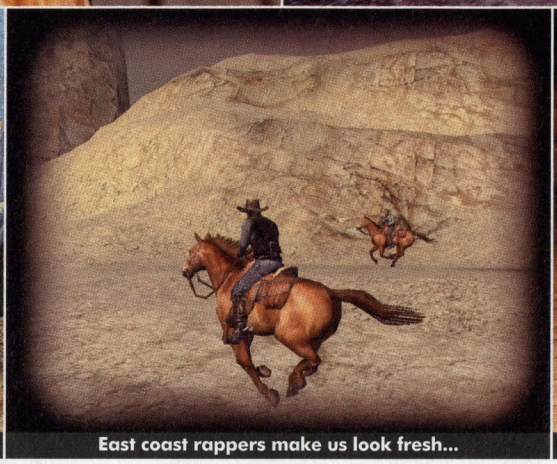
MINUS: Bitch techniques, generic Hip Hop.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
90	85	88

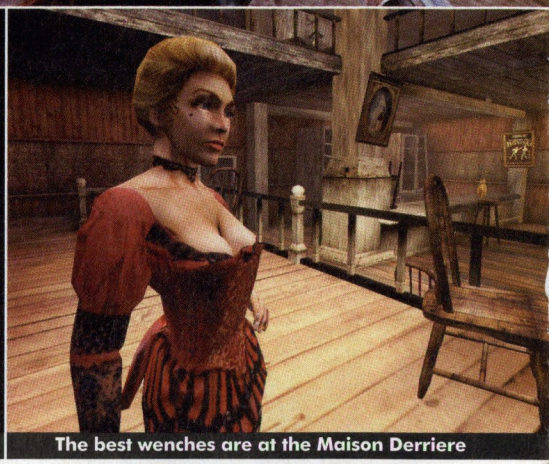
OVERALL
85

The best boxing game around but left a little too open for exploits.

He's been working on this fort since he was a kid



East coast rappers make us look fresh...



The best wenches are at the Maison Derriere

DEAD MAN'S HAND

BRETT ROBINSON loves the wicky wicky wild wild west...

If there's one life lesson that videogames consistently reinforce, it's that crime doesn't pay. For Dead Man's Hand's leading man, Tejon, this is a lesson learned the hard way. Enticed by promises of riches and adventure, Tejon joins a gang of bandits known as 'The Nine'. A twisted bunch, The Nine like nothing better than to slaughter innocent women and children, but when Tejon refuses to do likewise, the gang's leader revokes his membership, Colt .45-style. Adding insult to injury, the local sheriff takes the unconscious Tejon into custody and leaves him in a prison cell to die. But Tejon's incarceration is short-lived: a riot gives him the opportunity he needs to escape, whereupon he embarks on a mission to track down The Nine and wreak bloody vengeance.

COMICALLY BIZARRE

In many respects Dead Man's Hand (DMH) is a typical first person shooter, but it does have a few interesting tricks up its sleeve. Between levels you can play poker to increase the amount of ammo you start with, and in-game there's a gratifying degree of environmental interactivity: a well-aimed shot can drop a piano or a boulder on a group of bad guys, and there are plenty of powder kegs scattered about. Interestingly, there are a number of optional side missions to tackle as well as some comically bizarre on-horseback segments.

!!! If you want to get in the spirit, check out http://ladybelleoutlaw.homestead.com/OldWestSlang.html

In keeping with the Western theme, there are ramshackle towns to explore and scorching desert-scapes to traverse, and swarthy sombrero-wearing types oppose you every step of the way. An appropriately twangy guitar-driven soundtrack compliments the on-screen action, while scratchy black and white cut scenes appear at critical junctions in the plot. Really, the only thing missing is the tumbleweed, though we'll happily forgive the developer for that omission because DMH is one of the most humourous shooters we've played in quite some time. Some of the enemy dialogue is hilarious, albeit in an offbeat kind of way. It's not every day that you hear men shout out things like "Come look at mah belt buckle, boy" or "Ahm gonna stir you up in mah butter churn, boy"! Guess there weren't all that many womenfolk in the Wild West...

Sadly, DMH's graphics really aren't up to scratch, nor does its fickle framerate and at times suspect aiming system do it any favours. But for gamers willing to endure these technical deficiencies, Dead Man's Hand offers some fresh concepts and a reasonably solid play experience.

AVAILABLE ON:
PS2 / XBOX / GCN / PC

DETAILS
CATEGORY: FPS / **PLAYERS:** 1-8 / **DEVELOPER:** Human Head / **PUBLISHER:** Atari / **PRICE:** $89.95 / **RATING:** M15+ / **AVAILABLE:** May /

HYPER VERDICT

PLUS: Shooting gallery atmosphere, classic Western feel.

MINUS: Muddy visuals and poor framerate.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
71	78	74

OVERALL
73

Flawed, but still good, light-hearted fun.

Yu Yu Hakusho - Dragonball Z meets Ghostbusters!

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A Demonic Enterprise...

SAKURA WARS

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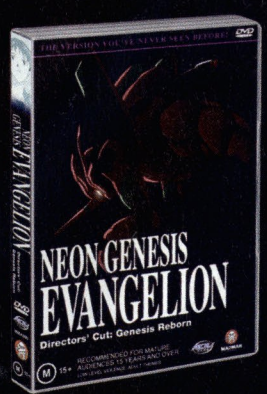
NEON GENESIS EVANGELION

Directors' Cut: Genesis Reborn



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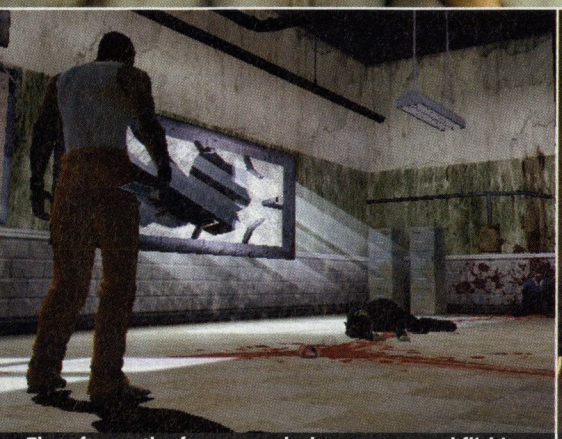


The aftermath of a savage locker-room towel flicking

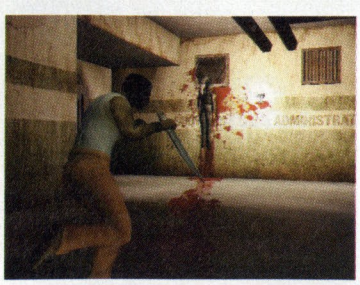
Torque doesn't like comparisons to the movie

Would you trust this man?

THE SUFFERING

DANIEL WILKS likes them Abbott Prison Blues

A few months ago I wrote a review of another Midway game for another magazine in which I joked that you knew what you could expect from gameplay simply by reading the name of the publisher – blood, gore and a herd of fatalities. After playing The Suffering this joke has become all the more true. Whilst most survival horror games are more concerned with ramping the tense atmosphere up to 11 and then hitting you with the occasional monster to make you soil your trousers and jump out of your seat (not necessarily in that order), The Suffering is far more of a visceral delight, throwing hordes of death dealing monstrosities at the player whilst all the while keeping the tension as high as they can. It also breaks from tradition by casting the main character, the default (anti)hero as a hardened criminal, Torque, sentenced to death for the brutal murder of his entire family. Before anyone starts to think that the man named after the worst film made in recent history may be another case of a man convicted of a crime he didn't do, Torque is also guilty of killing numerous inmates in the prisons in which he has been incarcerated, including shanking half of the Aryan Brotherhood, before winding up in Abbott Prison on the ominously named Carnate Island, the setting for the game.



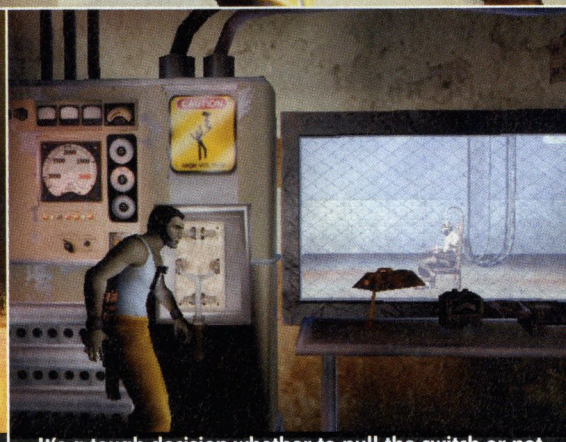
LIGHTS OUT

As soon as Torque is placed in his not so comfy 8'x10' the ground rumbles, the light goes off and like the game box says, all hell breaks loose. Literally. Scuttling horrors from the bowels of the earth twisted to mock styles of execution ranging from beheading and firing squad to lethal injection and electrocution bubble up to wreak havoc on the not so innocent inmates. It's up to the improbably named protagonist to escape, find out what is going on and discover for himself if he really is guilty of all of the crimes he is accused of. Throughout the ten levels of the game, Torque must fight his way through the hordes of ghastly enemies either helping or killing any NPC he comes across whilst simultaneously trying to find a way off the cursed island and pitting wits against the evil mastermind of it all, the aptly named Dr. Killjoy.

Another pleasant break from survival horror conventions taken by The Suffering is the fact that it has a decent control scheme and camera. The control scheme has more in common with third or first person shooters than it does with its own genre with Torque being controlled with the left thumb-stick and the right being used to control the camera. Both the face and trigger buttons are used for actions such as shooting, jumping, interacting with the environment, taking pain killers (thanks Max Payne) and transforming into a giant hulkified demonic killing machine for short periods of time. This latter ability is never fully explained aside from the fact that our protagonist has been suffering from blackouts his entire life and that may be the reason why. Whatever the case the demon form is a good "get out of gaol free" card as it were, allowing the player to easily

I don't remember prison being like this

Nice pants pretty boy

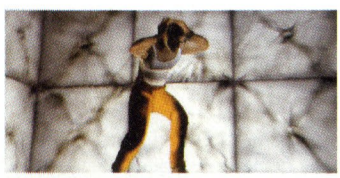


It's a tough decision whether to pull the switch or not

THE **MONSTER DESIGNS** (BY STAN WINSTON OF ALIENS FAME) AND LIGHTING ARE **ABSOLUTELY BRILLIANT**

ACTIONS MAKETH THE MAN

Throughout the course of the game Torque will have the option to help or kill a number of prison guards and fellow prisoners. The actions you take ultimately decide if Torque is guilty or innocent of the crime of killing his family. Every time you encounter one of these situations Torque will literally hear voices in his head – one prompting him to get revenge and the other asking him to show mercy. Depending on what you choose you will see a number of different endings as well as unlock special archive footage and information about Torque's real or otherwise crimes.



carve their way through hordes of enemies rather easily if things get too hot for you in human form.

PRISON BITCH

In a nice touch players are able to freely switch between first and third person modes allowing them to play in whichever way they feel more comfortable. Puzzles range from the typical switch flicking to open doors to some far more interesting proposals, a personal favourite being having to drag a drink machine over a drain then turn on the sprinkler system to flood a room to put out a fire. Unfortunately there are still some problems with control and general gameplay. Torque is only able to climb over objects when he wants to so you may find yourself becoming a little frustrated trying to work out if you have to break something or climb over to get to your next objective. Speaking of objectives it's not always easy to know where you're meant to head next, especially if you're coming back to a saved game.

!!! For a good prison horror film, seek out Renny Harlin's "The Prison" starring a young Viggo Mortensen

Although the monster designs (by Stan Winston of Alien fame) and lighting are absolutely brilliant, with the cone of light effect from the torch and pools of flickering luminescence from flares being the standouts, the graphics engine for The Suffering just isn't up to snuff. Many of the textures (aside from some cool stone effects) are dull and the character models seem to have a fairly low poly count. Don't be put off by the wooden, poorly acted and remarkably foul mouthed intro movie – the sound in the rest of the game is superb and just about guaranteed to have you constantly looking over your shoulder. <<

AVAILABLE ON:
PS2 / XBOX / GCN / PC

DETAILS
CATEGORY: Survival Horror /
PLAYERS: 1 / **DEVELOPER:** Surreal /
PUBLISHER: Midway /
PRICE: $89.95 / **RATING:** MA15+ /
AVAILABLE: Now /

HYPER VERDICT

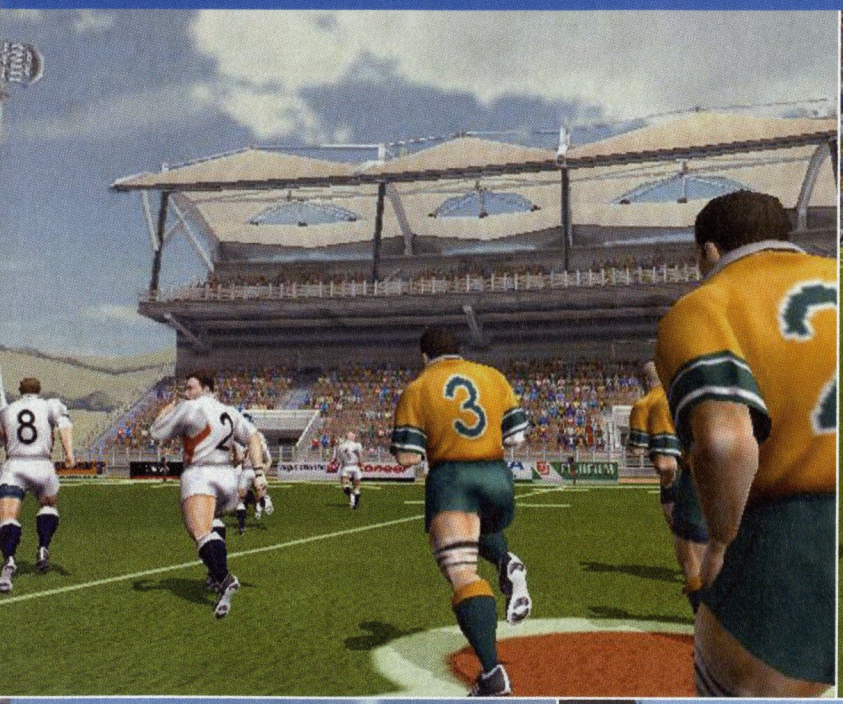
PLUS: Superb sound, creepy atmosphere, nice monster design

MINUS: Short (10 hours), frustrating, not enough variety

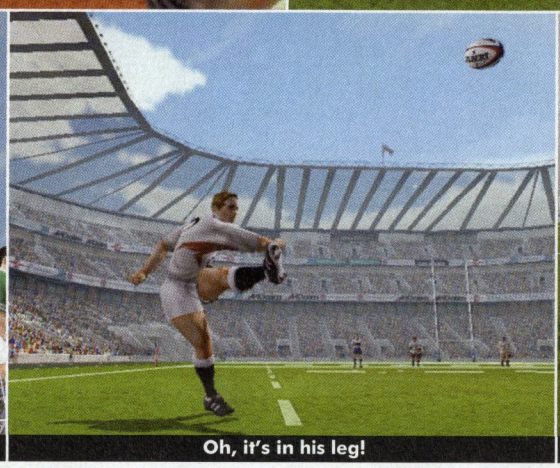
VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
81	92	80

OVERALL
81

Bloody, profane, misanthropic, fun – what else would you expect from Midway?



I can't see the surgically inserted grenade launchers



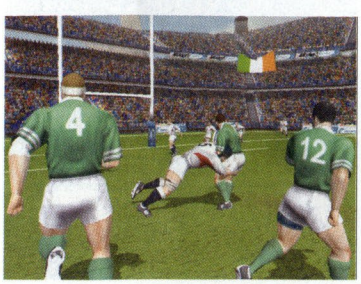
Oh, it's in his leg!

Quick - spam the field!

WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP RUGBY

JOHN DEWHURST changed his name to Jonny after the World Cup...

League has taken a pounding in recent months thanks to the various indiscretions (criminal and otherwise) of certain players, so this is the perfect chance for the rugby code from the bigger end of town, to stick it to the "People's Game"™. Do John Eales and George Gregan look like they're going to poison your children's minds? Certainly not. For concerned mothers (who aren't already concerned about spinal damage), rugby union is surely the safer choice for impressionable young boys. And World Championship Rugby is the perfect way to educate your son in the code.



A MEASURE OF PRESTIGE

Or is it? This is the official game of the English Lions, the world champions of 2003, so it certainly has a measure of prestige. In terms of portraying the modern game, it does a good job of representing the individual characteristics of well-known international players, such as Gregan's determined play and Wilkinson's sonuvapreacherman pose. More than most team sport games, there's a fair amount of variety among the players abilities too. It captures well the pace of rugby and some of its raw power. But whether it's actually an adequate rendition of the sport or even an exciting game in its own right is another question entirely.

The control system is well conceived and makes logical use of the DualShock2 controller. Passing, either left or right, uses L1 and R1. Sprint is mapped to 3 buttons (L3, R2 and Triangle), but pressing all of them at once won't make you run faster. Kicking and pack movement in the scrum, ruck and maul, both make use of the X button. Furious tapping of X in a rolling maul will have your team push forwards, while holding the X will see them dig in. The simplicity of the controls creates an easy entrance into play.

So it's a pity that the game itself features nothing like realistic physics. The most obvious flaw being the long passes that seem to travel on wires between players. Not only is the arc of the ball movement alien to Earth's gravity, but the speed of the passes makes you think your team is using a variety of surgically inserted grenade launcher to move the ball around.

As for collision detection, it's inconsistent at best. A player may be still on his feet and able to offload (or run or ANYTHING) but the game engine has detected an opponent close enough to make a tackle and takes some time to bring the two together for a tackle. It makes sense in game mechanic terms but those few seconds are fairly absurd and in play terms vary from ridiculous to frustrating. Some of these problems are inherent in making a game of a full contact sport. It's never going to seem realistic in the way that a tennis game can. However, it's reasonable to expect a coherent rugby-esque game.

RUGBY-LITE?

The physics of the game engine are not realistic enough for a simulation of the game of rugby and not

He doesn't like being taken from behind

At least it's better than EA's offering

Is that a grenade in your pocket?

THIS IS THE **OFFICIAL GAME** OF THE ENGLISH LIONS, THE **WORLD CHAMPIONS OF 2003**

coherent enough, or outlandish enough, to be enjoyed as something else. It seems to betray a lack of focus in development. I'm guessing that someone in management decided late in the game's development cycle that the World Championship Rugby was "too slow". An easy way to fix this is just to speed up passing in the game. Sure, you get a quicker game but also one that comes to resemble the game of rugby less and less.

While scrums in rugby league are kind of stupid, rugby union is fought as much in the scrums and mauls as in the passing and kicking. In World Championship Rugby, there's a fair amount of control in mauls. By tapping the X button you can add players and push, or dig in. In practice, there's a complex relationship between what you do with the DualShock2 and what happens on screen. You need to suss out when you need to hold pressure and when you need to drive forward in a scrum/maul. Without any tutorial in the final version, you'll have to rely on practise to make perfect. We'd like to have seen a little more control in mauls since they are so central to the game of rugby. The controls for much of the game are innovative and direct, why not take it further to the scrums, rucks and mauls?

There is little variety in game modes: Friendly, Competition and Challenge. But within the last two modes, there's a far amount of gameplay. Competition comprises World Championship, Euro Nations, League, a Tour and other modes, while the Challenge offers unlockable Classic Matches, Beat All-Stars and Survival modes. There are twenty teams and a good range of abilities to play with.

!!! This game desperately needs commentary by Roy and HG.

Ultimately, World Championship Rugby is a stylish, well-packaged product with the right endorsements and trappings. As a game, it presents some of the excitement of rugby, with some great design choices. But on the PS2, where the standard of team sport games is very high (you guessed it, Pro Evo), it's clear that this is not a must-own. It's a shame to see a game fall over in the final stages of development. If there had been a little more time and money spent on the balancing and testing of World Championship Rugby, it may well have been a standout. It is not. The average rugby fan won't know the difference and will pick it up anyway and love it. It's diverting but will have replay value only for the die-hard. <<

AVAILABLE ON:
PS2 / XBOX / GCN / PC

DETAILS
CATEGORY: Sports / **PLAYERS:** 1-2 / **DEVELOPER:** Acclaim / **PUBLISHER:** Acclaim / **PRICE:** $79.95 / **RATING:** G / **AVAILABLE:** Now /

HYPER VERDICT

PLUS: Ooooh... official!

MINUS: Just not that fun. Big balancing issues.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
83	75	60

OVERALL
66

Rent before you buy.

Caress those curves like a lover... an ugly lover

This game will be "piling up" in stores Australia wide

Your character has her own "high beams"

R: RACING

CAM SHEA can sum this game up with one word – meh

Namco, Namco, wherefore art thou Namco? These are (oddly enough) the words that sprang to mind while playing R:Racing, for this is a game that, although allegedly developed by the Ridge Racer team at Namco, is thoroughly lacking in Namco's racing game smarts.

BRING BACK THE "IDGE"!

While their shift in emphasis away from drifting towards a more "realistic" driving game where one must come to grips with "braking" is all well and good on paper, there are several other games out there that already do this very well indeed. So what have Namco brought to the table? Very little.

The driving model in particular is very poor. Compared to other recent racing titles (such as V8 2 or PGR 2), R:Racing really can't claim any real level of "simulation"... unless the purported simulation is based on some alternate Earth with completely different physics. The simplistic nature of the handling is especially evident in some of the real life tracks that Namco have thrown in, like Suzuka and Monaco. Simply put – we know these courses well from other more realistic games, leaving R:Racing's control deficiencies exposed for all to see.

Adding insult to injury, R:Racing's AI seems to hark back to the days of early Ridge Racer titles, whereby your competitors (all five of them) seem to sit in mostly fixed order throughout races. This is especially noticeable when your (large breasted) female rival is introduced in the Racing Life mode. Since she's your (large breasted) rival, she always has the lead. There's nothing more soul destroying than for the artiface of a game to be so clearly on display. The trick of a good game is to make things seem realistic; to make it seem like the other cars are jostling for positions, to make the other drivers seem competent but ultimately fallible. R:Racing simply doesn't succeed at this, and it's mildly insulting for Namco to think that a product of this quality will suffice.

!!! The GameCube version comes bundled with multiplayer Pac-Man Vs. You tell us which is the superior game...

Then again, some gamers will be happy just to get to the next cut scene in Racing Life mode, to see the next close up shot of your (large breasted) rival having a go at your (moderate bosomed) character. Yes, there's a story. Yes, it's irrelevant. Even worse, the 14 chapters of this mode are structured so that you essentially have no decisions to make. Hell, there isn't even any tension or consequence for performing poorly (hello retry!).

To be fair, R:Racing has a few different styles of driving available, and a reasonable Event Challenge mode where you can unlock a wide range of cars, but again, there's nothing here that hasn't been done better elsewhere. <<

AVAILABLE ON:
PS2 / XBOX / GCN / PC

DETAILS

CATEGORY: Racing / **PLAYERS:** 1-2 / **DEVELOPER:** Namco / **PUBLISHER:** EA / **PRICE:** $89.95 / **RATING:** G / **AVAILABLE:** Now /

HYPER VERDICT

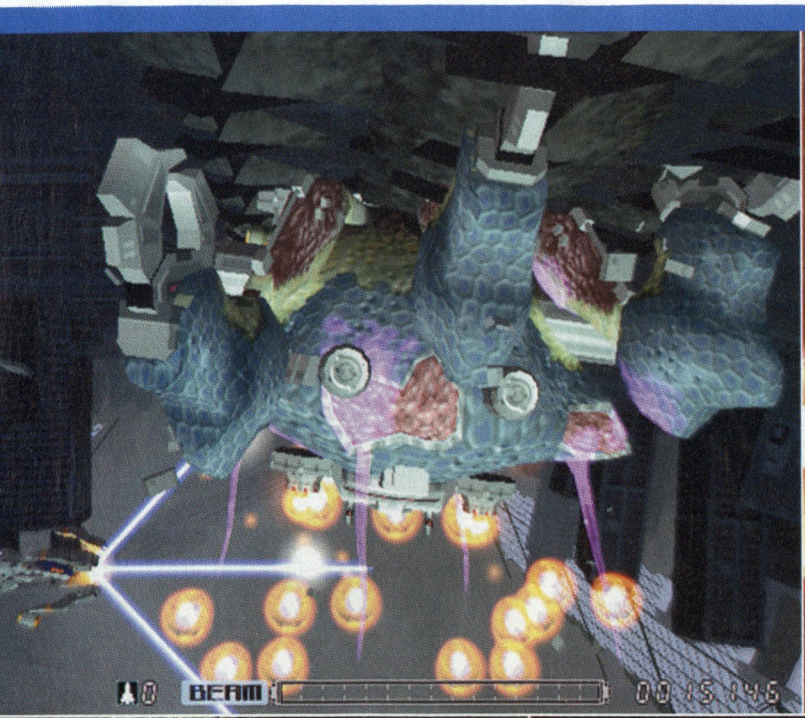
PLUS: Licensed vehicles, music.

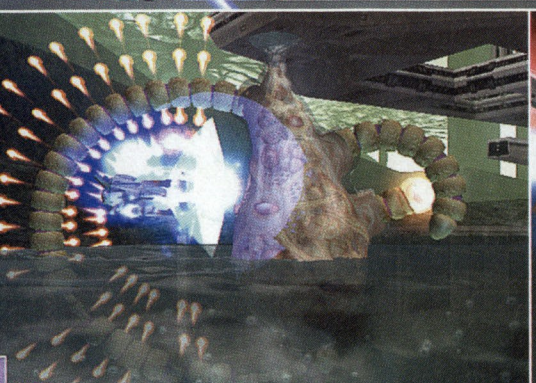
MINUS: Slow, bad driving model, grainy visuals.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
75	80	55

OVERALL
63

Worth a look for racing and Pac-Man fans who own GameCubes and GBAs...





Spread 'em. Fnaar fnaar

Eat your heart out Macross

Blau it Malks!

R-TYPE FINAL

MALCOLM CAMPBELL has a pocket full of 20-cent pieces.

You know R-Type. Even if you're not Ye Olde Schoolle gamer you've probably got it tucked away in an old MAME directory somewhere. It's the horizontal shooter with the indestructible balls you can detach and fire into the soft fleshy weak spot of the bosses. Read Ed's retrospective on page 82 if you're still none the wiser. The point being, if you've played any of the R-Type games spanning back to 1987 then basically you've played R-Type Final, albeit with a few billion less polygons. Even this transition to psuedo-3D graphics is old news – R-Type Delta on PSone did a more than admirable job of that. A-ha! But what the others didn't have were the ONE HUNDRED unlockable ships that R-Type Final has. Impressive, eh?

GEE, THAT MANY? WOW

Okay, enough with the sarcasm. In truth, the abundance of selectable ships in R-Type Final does add considerable depth to the gameplay. Being an R-Type game, Final is difficult, so replaying stages over and over is inevitable. The ability to test different ships' offensive and defensive weapons with each 'continue' lessens the frustration and gives vital tactical choices to the player. The option to switch ships after each stage is also a welcome addition, as is the ability to customise missile payloads and most importantly, cockpit window tinting. The nifty Hangar option lets you peruse the ships you've unlocked, showing the tech-trees and evolution of the distinct R classes.

!!! Being an R-Type game, Final has plenty of thinly disguised sexual references in the enemy design. Oo-er!

If there's one thing that lets Final down it's the level design. R-Type has some strict traditions in this area – the second stage is underwater, the third is a massive juggernaut, there's a space debris section and the last stage is just plain trippy. While previous games have added new twists on these traditions, Final is content to simply re-hash them. Should it be appreciated as a homage that stage three of Final is a straight re-make of the first R-Type, or is it just lazy level design? Elsewhere there is a distinct lack of the surprising set pieces found in earlier games, making for some pretty dull areas.

The AI mode isn't really what we were hoping for either. Pit two of your ships against each other, set instructions and see who wins. Fun for a little while, but you'll soon go back to the main game.

When Capcom revealed they were re-releasing Street Fighter II for its 15th anniversary, I was among many who were hoping for a game with updated graphics, a full roster of characters and the same core gameplay. The final product was a disappointment. In re-making R-Type (for the final time?), Irem has delivered on my wish list. See how it's done, Capcom?

AVAILABLE ON:

PS2 / XBOX / GCN / PC

DETAILS

CATEGORY: Shoot-em-up / **PLAYERS:** 1-2 / **DEVELOPER:** Irem Corp / **PUBLISHER:** THQ / **PRICE:** $69.95 / **RATING:** G8+ / **AVAILABLE:** Now /

HYPER VERDICT

PLUS: Lots of ships to unlock, classic R-Type gameplay and flava.

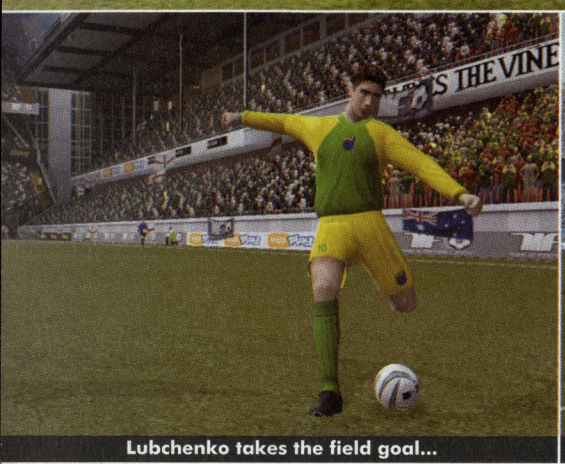
MINUS: Level design doesn't live up to its predecessors. Slowdown.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
81	80	83

OVERALL

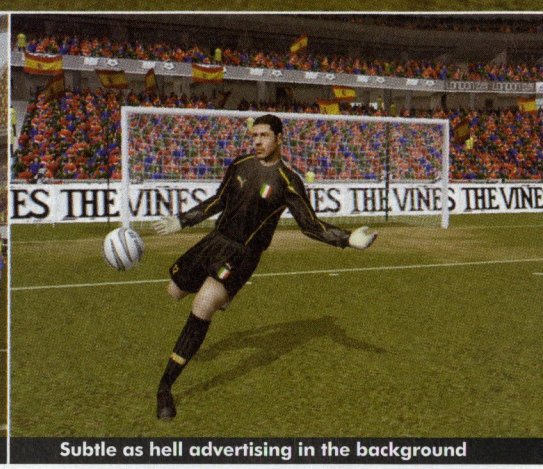
80

What's that old cliché about 'fans of the series loving it'?



Lubchenko takes the field goal...

Fast kicking, low scoring and ties? You bet!



Subtle as hell advertising in the background

THIS IS SOCCER 2004

ELIOT FISH returns to kick a few balls...

Someone once said that if you locked away a million monkeys with a bunch of typewriters, they would eventually write the works of Shakespeare. I have another theory. About three years ago, Sony locked away about 15 monkeys and tasked them with writing a soccer game for the PS2. The poor chimps were even stuck with having to model the Artificial Intelligence in the game on their own limited knowledge of how to play football. These primates are still pretty wily though, because they also snuck in a nice looong loading time before every match to make sure there would be enough time to peel a bunch of bananas... and eat them.

SIMIAN SLAVERY

A deadly through-ball splits the defence and you run your striker onto it. He's now clean through on goal with only the keeper to beat. You're inside the box, you jink slightly to the left and momentarily hold the shoot button. You've already started punching the air in celebration, until you realise that your world-class striker has just pounded the ball straight into the waiting arms of the keeper who has been rooted to his spot in goal the entire time. Huh? And it happens again, and again... To be honest, scoring goals in This Is Soccer 2004 feels suspiciously arbitrary.

!!! There is an online option, but servers were not running at the time of review.

Player control feels 'wonky' for want of a better word, and every player controls the same way, regardless of whether they have world class stats or not. Basically, This Is Soccer 2004 has the consistency of an Aero bar. It's full of holes.

A full season can be played if you have a hankering for working the transfer market, but it absolutely pales in comparison to both Pro Evo and FIFA. Everything just feels so lightweight. If I could quickly run through a few other things: there is no controller configuration option (always a sin), there is no training mode, player likenesses are non-existent (except for the odd superstar such as Beckham), there is a lag between button presses and the execution of certain moves, set pieces are impossible to orchestrate with any kind of tactical plan, there is a deliberate dive button (yes, pretty sad, huh?), when players run onto the ball they sometimes just run over and away from it as if it's not there, opposing players sometimes just stand off and watch like zombies, and I'm sure I mentioned the interminable loading times.

Playing This Is Soccer 2004 (sadly, the logo in the game still says "TIF" for This Is Football) would be bearable if no other football games existed, but thankfully they do. Do yourself a favour and give this one a miss. <<

AVAILABLE ON:
PS2 / XBOX / GCN / PC

DETAILS
CATEGORY: Sports / **PLAYERS:** 1-Multi / **DEVELOPER:** SCEE / **PUBLISHER:** SCEE / **PRICE:** $99.95 / **RATING:** G / **AVAILABLE:** Now /

HYPER VERDICT

PLUS: You can edit the appearance of your manager. Tee-hee!

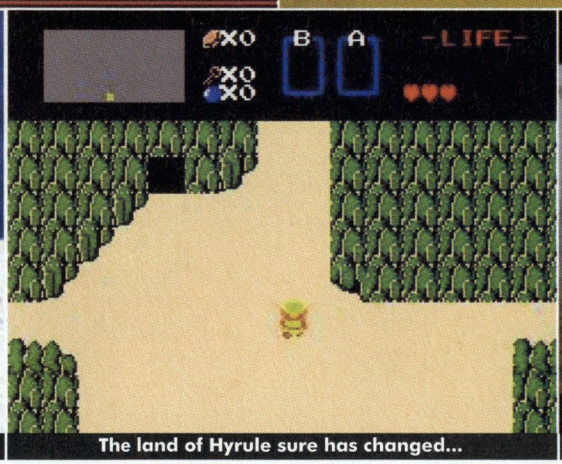
MINUS: There's absolutely no flow to the football.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
70	65	67

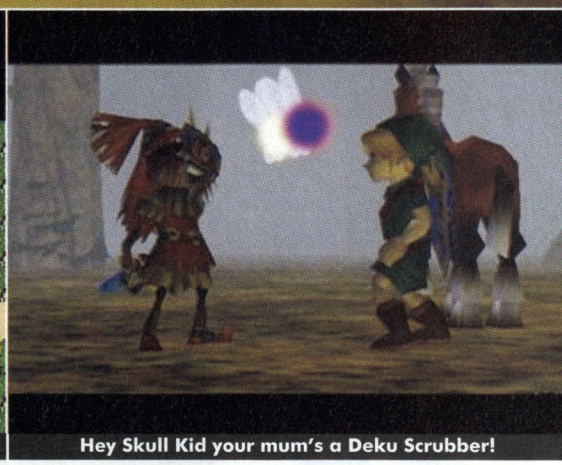
OVERALL
68

TIS 2004 doesn't even make the bench.

Punch, curl, it's all in the mind



The land of Hyrule sure has changed...



Hey Skull Kid your mum's a Deku Scrubber!

LEGEND OF ZELDA: COLLECTOR'S EDITION

JOEY TEKKEN catches up with some old friends

Now that the gorgeous Wind Waker is long finished and fading from memory, we were stoked to get this latest promotional disc from Nintendo in the mail. For contained within its humble mini-DVD format lies some classic gaming – the NES games The Legend of Zelda and Zelda II: The Adventure of Link, and both Link's N64 outings Ocarina of Time and Majora's Mask.

SUBSTANCE OVER STYLE?

Zelda I was where the whole series started, and features top down gameplay where you take Link from screen to screen, defeating the first iterations of some classic enemies, all set to one of the most familiar theme tunes of any game series. There's little in the way of storyline and it's hard as buggery, but hey it's the original Zelda and it's cool to have.

Zelda II was a very different game. Not only was the story a little darker (some wizards want to resurrect Ganon but to do that they need Link's blood. Oh and Zelda isn't kidnapped but is in an eternal sleep, with only the power of the Triforce being able to bring her back!), but the gameplay took a bit of a sidestep too. The top down view returned, but as much more of an overworld map, which meant that it was zoomed right out. When you ran into an enemy or went into a town or dungeon, however, the game switched to a side on perspective, giving you a good view of the more grown up looking Link. From this perspective you could talk to people in towns or do battle, bringing in a little more of both the platform and RPG genres. There were other RPG elements too, such as an experience points system that allowed you to raise Link's life points, attack points or magic when he leveled up.

Zelda I and Zelda II are certainly a lot less forgiving than the later Zelda games, and are inevitably lacking in storyline too... hence we found there wasn't much appeal anymore. As for Ocarina and Majora, however, that's a different story. It's still an epic sight seeing Link riding Epona across the fields of Hyrule, and the design of Majora's Mask, where you replay a three day period over and over trying to avert disaster is just as compelling. These games are every bit as good as we remember them, and just as much as an achievement in game design - murky visuals and all.

Perhaps the one thing we should mention is that the emulation of these games isn't perfect. A couple of times during Zelda II the game slowed down and glitched a little during the side on battles. And when you load into Majora's Mask a screen warns that you may experience some sound problems, although these didn't really bother us.

!!! Anyone who buys a new GameCube or two of six new titles will receive this promo disc for free. Just check http://nintendo.com.au/zelda/zelda.php for details.

AVAILABLE ON:
PS2 / XBOX / **GCN** / PC

DETAILS
CATEGORY: RPG / **PLAYERS:** 1 /
DEVELOPER: Nintendo /
PUBLISHER: Nintendo /
PRICE: $N/A / **RATING:** G /
AVAILABLE: Now /

HYPER VERDICT

PLUS: It's Zelda and it's (kinda) free!

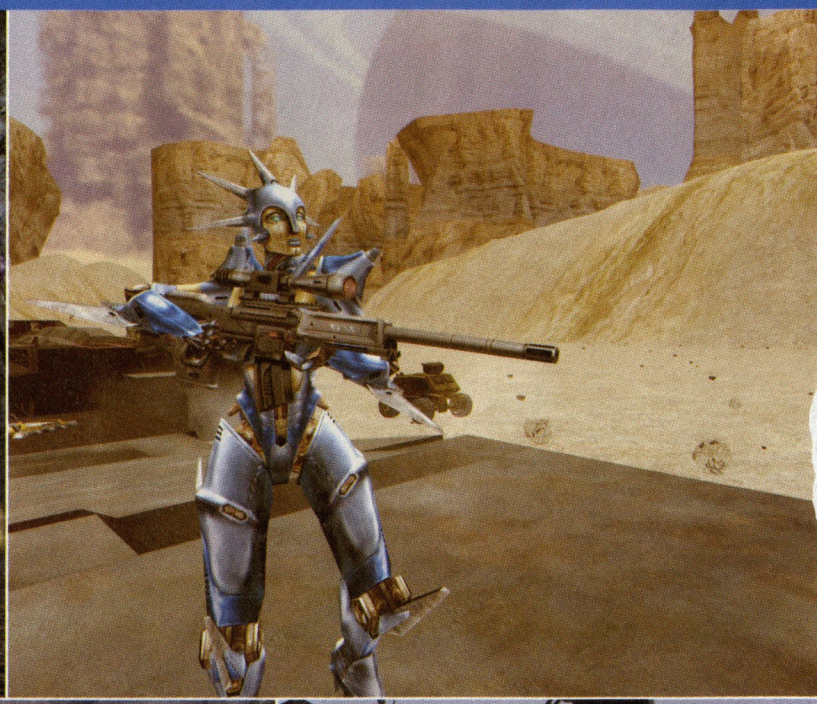
MINUS: The NES games are less appealing now.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
80	86	86

OVERALL **90**

HYPER BIG RUBBER STAMP OF APPROVAL

Take a bite of some classic gaming goodness.



And then a monkey starts throwing barrels at you

I sense a PANCAKE! coming on

Not a PANCAKE! to be seen... how very dull

UNREAL TOURNAMENT 2004

DANIEL WILKS captains the Townsville Steves to the top of the UT ladder

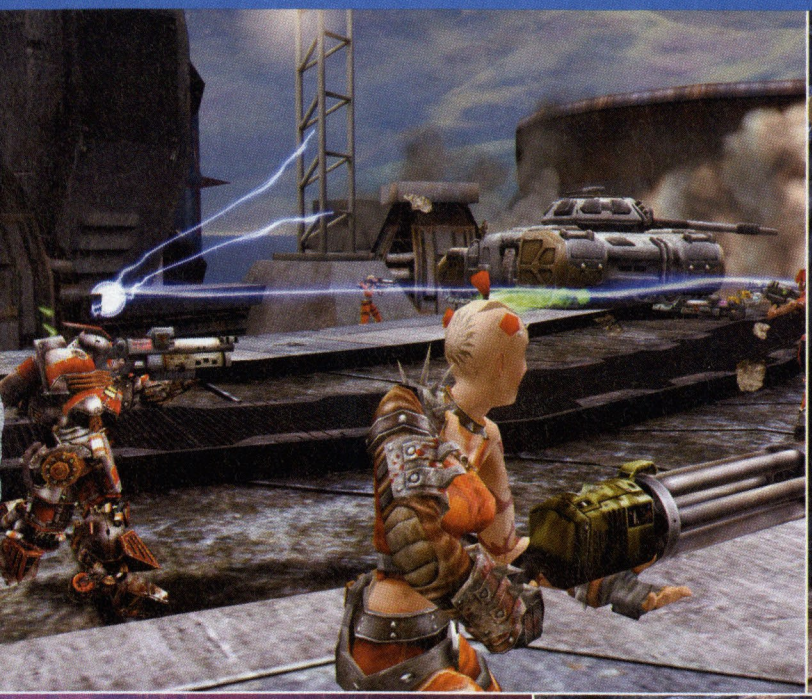
Some sequels are hard to get enthused about – when a new Tomb Raider comes out it's hard to hear yourself think over the sighs of discontent emanating from every games journo in the immediate vicinity. Sometimes, though, a sequel comes out that has everyone drooling in anticipation, case in point being Unreal Tournament 2004, the latest installment of the critically acclaimed, not to mention popular Unreal Tournament franchise. One of the major fears about sequels is that the game will do little more than simply present players with more of the same with the major tweaks coming in the graphics department. Whilst this is partially true for UT 2004, it also brings a hell of a lot more to the table and firmly cement's the series' place near the top of the multiplayer shooter heap.

NEW AND IMPROVED

As a change of pace from the opening of UT 2003 (I seem to be the only person in the world who actually liked the "sports entertainment" angle), 2004 shows a number of simple battle scenes and the competition this time around is themed along the lines of reenacting some of the great military battles in the Unreal universe's past. The bulk of UT 2004 is much like what we've seen before from the franchise with hectic deathmatch, capture the flag or bombing run sessions over a huge variety of maps against either bots or human opponents. The true genius of the game comes with the two new game modes introduced, Onslaught and Assault. The new game modes are supposedly based around some of these historical engagements. Also in keeping with the reenactment line, UT 2004 introduces a team from the Skaarj Empire, adding to the already significant number of skins the player can choose from.

Onslaught can best be described as the bastard offspring of games like Tribes 2 and Battlefield 1942. Each team in the match has a Power Core – essentially a giant base/reactor – and the players must capture and hold Power Nodes to link their Power Core to that of the opposing team. Once this has been achieved the team that has successfully linked all of the nodes can attack the opposing team's core. The round is won when one team destroys the other's Power Core. The true genius of the game is that players are forced to work as a team to capture and hold these nodes, and players can only capture nodes that are already linked to nodes they already own ensuring that the field of play is limited to a few key areas so the action is always hot. An extra level of tactical complexity is added when you take into account that each node captured spawns a unique set of weapons and vehicles that can be accessed as long as that team has the node. Onslaught maps range from absolutely huge with 10+ nodes to fight over to tiny with only one or two. Whichever maps you choose you're sure to have stupid amount of fun against the bots or friends online.

Assault takes a much more straightforward approach to the art of



C'mon! I'd even settle for a little maple syrup

Giant crates - the next evolution of videogames

When giant crates explode

THE **TRUE GENIUS OF THE GAME** COMES WITH THE TWO NEW GAME MODES INTRODUCED, **ONSLAUGHT AND ASSAULT**

THE TOWNSVILLE STEVES

If you can't jump online to battle it out with some friends (or if you're like me and don't actually have any), never fear – the bot support in UT 2004 is nothing short of excellent. Each bot has a preferred weapon and has a good knowledge of the maps. Even better, the bots have a sound understanding of the new game modes so it's possible to play a heated game of Onslaught or Assault on your lonesome. In the ladder mode the AI team you captain (the Townsville Steves in our case) follow the simple commands well and ably hold corridors, hunt specific targets, cover your back or simply go crazy New York style.

killing. Each map contains a number of objectives that are unlocked after another objective is completed – a player may have to lower a bridge to get to a door which then has to be bombed to get inside and pull a lever to open another door, etc. All of these objectives must be achieved in a time limit to win the round. The opposing team is charged with stopping them at every turn. Although not nearly as clever as Onslaught, Assault still offers a great alternative to objective based shooters such as Counter-Strike or the like.

!!! There's also a special edition DVD version of UT 2004. Phew!

THE ART OF KILLING

Aside from the new game modes, the other obvious addition to the UT franchise in UT 2004 is the vehicles. Although they are mostly used for Onslaught the vehicles can be added to nearly any map through mutators. The best thing about the vehicles is that they are very balanced in a rock, paper, scissors kind of way with ground vehicles being great against infantry but weak against air vehicles, flying vehicles being great against ground vehicles but weak against infantry and hover vehicles falling somewhere in between. The vehicles run the gamut between huge tanks requiring a crew of six to operate with full firepower to small, single seated hover vehicles called the Manta. These fast moving and highly maneuverable craft are perhaps the most enjoyable in the game if for no other reason than the fact that if you manage to jump the craft onto an enemy player and mince them with the rotor blades the now familiar voice over will pronounce in stentorian tones, "PANCAKE!" <<

AVAILABLE ON:

PS2 / XBOX / GCN / **PC**

DETAILS

CATEGORY: FPS / **PLAYERS:** 1-64 / **DEVELOPER:** Epic / **PUBLISHER:** Atari / **PRICE:** $89.95 / **RATING:** M15+ / **AVAILABLE:** Now /

HYPER VERDICT

PLUS: Onslaught rocks, dozens of maps, PANCAKE!

MINUS: 5Gb install! 6CDs! Needs a grunty PC

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
93	87	91

OVERALL

92

HYPER BIG RUBBER STAMP OF APPROVAL

The UT franchise just keeps getting better and better. PANCAKE!

A Sacred tribute to Johnny Cash

It's late, I've had some beer and I can't think of anything

Something to do with a pub maybe?

SACRED

DANIEL WILKS delves into the world of Diablo clones

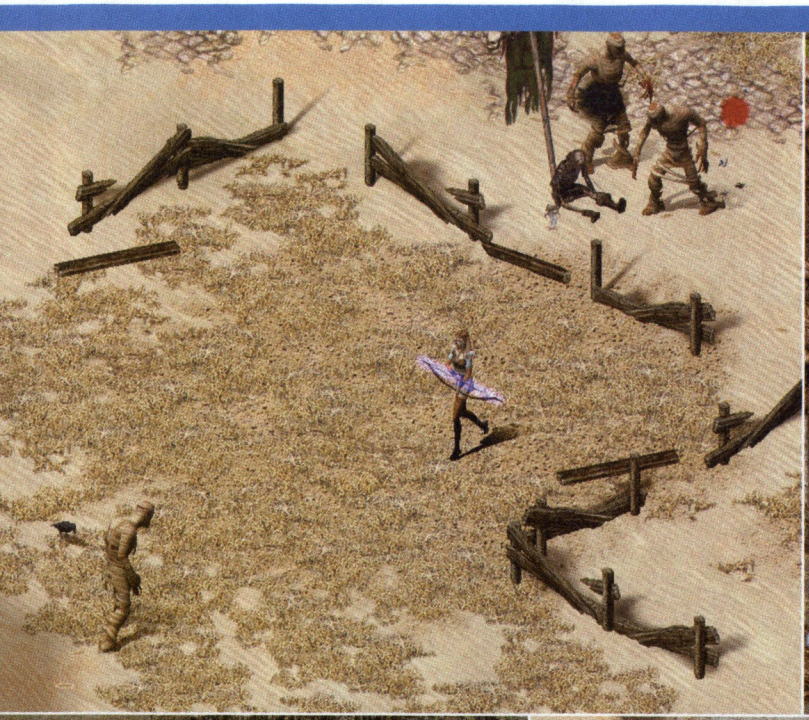
Ever since the release of Diablo back in the dark ages (1996), action roleplaying has never been the same, or more precisely, the genre has remained the same, with little in the way of innovation other than small tweaks in gameplay and flavour to differentiate one game (or franchise) from another. Don't get me wrong – I thoroughly enjoyed a number of these games including Diablo and Diablo II, Divine Divinity, Dungeon Siege and even Throne of Darkness (I seemed to be just about the only one) but have remained disappointed that no developer has sought to develop the genre, rather playing it safe and sticking to the tried and true formula. Now comes Sacred, the latest game from European developer Ascaron. Whilst it would be nice to say that Sacred is the first game to truly break the mould that would be an incorrect statement considering the facts. That said Sacred does have enough individual flavour and gameplay tweaks to make it stand out from the rest of the pack. It's lucky that the gameplay is compelling because the story is anything but – the plot starts off weak and obtuse and ends in a remarkably similar way.

SHADES OF DISCWORLD?

The kingdom of Ancaria is a dangerous place – a generic stupid wizard has screwed up a summoning spell and unleashed a demon on the lands, hordes of goblins and orcs roam the wilds attacking any passers by and army deserters team up with bandits to waylay travelers, so naturally it's up to an intrepid hero (or up to four in cooperative multiplayer) to ride in and save the day. To combat this evil the player can choose from one of six characters, the Gladiator, Seraphim, Battle Mage, Wood Elf, Dark Elf or Vampiress. Although the Gladiator, Battle Mage, Wood Elf and Dark Elf are fairly familiar as far as character skills and abilities are concerned and you're sure to have played their ilk before if you've ever dabbled in the genre, the Seraphim and Vampiress have enough quirks and interesting design points to merit a look in. The Seraphim is a holy (angelic) warrior that combines fearsome combat skills with bolstering magics. Although from this description the character may sound like a rather generic cleric or paladin from other games the actual result is something quite different. The Vampiress acts like a knight during the day but being a member of the undead becomes far more powerful during the night hours in which she transforms into a bloodthirsty beast. No matter which class is chosen the player will have access to a number of unique skills and combat abilities that can be modified as the character gains in levels. Combat is played out in a way fairly common to the genre – left clicking on a target uses the player's standard attack and right clicking uses the currently assigned skill or spell. Unlike Diablo, clicking on an enemy and keeping the mouse button down is the key, rather than repetitive clicking.

THREE HIT COMBO

When a character gains a level they have the chance to increase their attributes and skills – other abilities are bolstered by picking up magical training runes. The skills may be interesting but the game really shines when it comes to the extra abilities, not because they are all that unique – you're bound to have seem most of them before at one stage or another – but because of what you can do with them. Most



Still drawing a blank

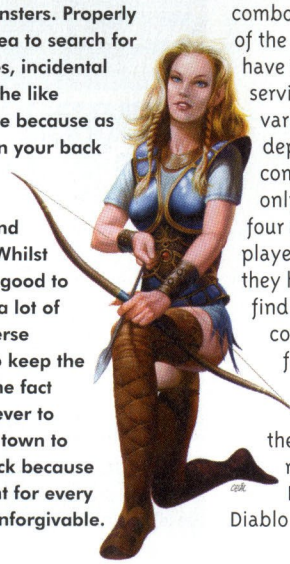
You can lead a horse to beer...

Is this what it feels like to be Steve?

PLAYERS CAN ALSO BUY AND **RIDE HORSES** TO **TRAVEL FASTER** AND GIVE THEM **CAVALRY-LIKE ATTACKS**

BUT I KILLED YOU!

Although there are a number of small annoyances that plague Sacred, there is one that stands out above all – constantly respawning monsters. Properly exploring an area to search for hidden treasures, incidental dungeons and the like becomes a chore because as soon as you turn your back the monsters you just killed pop up again and give you grief. Whilst it's all well and good to give the player a lot of combat to immerse themselves in to keep the game moving the fact that it takes forever to travel from one town to another and back because you have to fight for every bloody inch is unforgivable.



towns have what are called Combo-Masters, wise old men capable of teaching characters more and more complex combination moves. Instead of simply purchasing set combos, players can chain up to four of the abilities they possess, if they have the money to pay for the service that is. Each combo takes a variable time to recharge depending on how powerful said combo is. Although the character only has slots for four combos the player can reuse slots they have tired of by finding another combo master and forming another combo. In keeping with this spirit of the player being able to tailor their character, players can also modify equipment at Blacksmith shops. Much like in Diablo II, some items have slots for modification which can be filled with runes, rings, necklaces or skills specific to the Blacksmith being used. Players can also buy and ride horses to travel faster and give them cavalry-like attacks.

!!! Keep an eye out for some good geek humour on monoliths and tombstones.

BIGGER AIN'T BETTER

Although Sacred looks a little old with its pre-rendered backgrounds and 3D characters, the level of detail in the environment is quite nice. Unfortunately the nice detail can't make up for the fact that the vast majority of the map, which is bloody huge to say the least, is empty of anything of real interest aside from XP farms in the shape of monsters. Character animations could use a little work as well. Thankfully the soundtrack and voice acting is good and there is a pleasing streak of humour throughout. <<

AVAILABLE ON:

PS2 / XBOX / GCN / **PC**

DETAILS

CATEGORY: Action RPG / **PLAYERS:** 1-16 / **DEVELOPER:** Ascaron / **PUBLISHER:** Ascaron / **PRICE:** $89.95 / **RATING:** M15+ / **AVAILABLE:** Now /

HYPER VERDICT

PLUS: Combos, huge map, humour

MINUS: Crap story, empty, constantly respawning monsters

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
80	84	79

OVERALL

77

Huge and enjoyable for the most part but equally frustrating.

!!! Everything you need to know about Counter-Strike can be found at www.counter-strike.net. Download it today!

Your mission: protect the crates at all costs

Pointing at poontang. Classy

They've breached the outer crate perimeter!

COUNTER-STRIKE: CONDITION ZERO

D. MANNERISM hates terrorists just as much as the next guy

It's been three years in the making - and passed through the hands of four developers along the way - but finally Condition Zero has shipped. Valve originally announced the game as a standalone single-player Counter-Strike inspired game, and excited gamers everywhere started imagining just how well that concept could turn out. Well, we all imagined something a lot better than this.

DELETED GAMEPLAY

The single player game that Ritual Entertainment were working on towards the end of development was originally going to be Condition Zero, however it's now turned up on the Condition Zero disc as Condition Zero: Deleted Scenes. The game that installs as Condition Zero turns out to be nothing more than Counter-Strike (again) with bots, which is what Turtle Box Studios were charged with creating late in the development cycle. It's seems pretty clear that Valve's efforts to get a decent single player Counter-Strike game made just never really got off the ground. That game exists here in this package, but it's been relegated to second billing. Once you start playing Deleted Scenes you realise why Valve must have panicked.

Deleted Scenes uses the Half-Life engine and is obviously inspired by the mechanics of Counter-Strike - rescuing hostages, killing terrorists and uses lots of cool Counter-Terrorism gadgets - but the meat of its gameplay is boring and predictable corridor cleaning of enemies. Stuff we've been doing in first-person shooters for years already. There's just nothing memorable or exciting about it at all. If this is what you've been holding out for, then you're going to be pretty disappointed.

The good news, is that the single player version of Counter-Strike itself is very well put together. For starters, the artificial intelligence of the bots is probably the best we've seen in a team-based shooter yet. The terrorists, and your counter-terrorist teammates, all exhibit the same playing techniques as experienced human Counter-Strike players. You're only playing with bots, but it feels like you're playing against intelligent opponents. Turtle Box have also integrated a cool tiered stage system, that requires you to win three maps - completing different objectives in each - in order to unlock the next three maps. It's addictive. As far as new maps go, there are a few, but Xbox Counter-Strike players will recognise them. Very little has been done to jazz up the Half-Life engine either, and despite some nice textures, this still looks like the Counter-Strike that's been online for a few years now.

Our advice is to leave this one to those few gamers out there who want to play Counter-Strike for the very first time without having to go online. Can't imagine there would be that many.

AVAILABLE ON:
PS2 / XBOX / GCN / **PC**

DETAILS
CATEGORY: FPS / **PLAYERS:** 1-Multi / **DEVELOPER:** Turtle Box/Ritual / **PUBLISHER:** Valve / **PRICE:** $69.95 / **RATING:** MA15+ / **AVAILABLE:** Now /

HYPER VERDICT

PLUS: The official Counter-Strike bot is awesome.

MINUS: Half the game sucks and the other half we've played before.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
70	80	73

OVERALL
69

Counter-Strike is getting old.

FULL SPECTRUM WARRIOR

MA15+
MEDIUM LEVEL ANIMATED VIOLENCE

"A new, exciting direction for military games... a true-to-life soldier experience"
- Official Australian XBox Magazine

"The most realistic, tactical combat strategy game ever."
- www.gamebiz.com.au

THQ
www.thq.com.au

XBOX LIVE

PANDEMIC

Assume your command at www.fullspectrumwarrior.com

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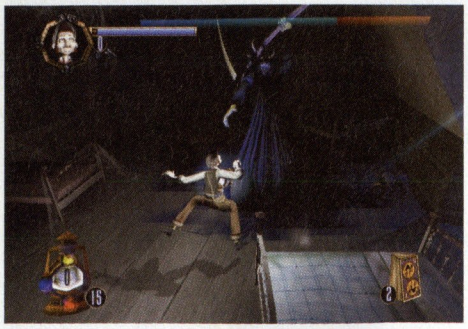


HAUNTED MANSION

The film version of The Haunted Mansion which stars Eddie Murphy has been getting somewhat of a critical arse whipping of late, so not surprisingly expectations for the game version weren't running high.

Eddie is nowhere to be seen of course, in probably one of his better career moves of late. Instead, a young unfortunate named Zeke finds himself trapped in the mansion in question, and soon discovers that the only way he'll be able to escape is if he releases the tortured souls held within. Progression through the game generally requires you to explore each of the mansion's many rooms turning on their lights by solving a typically arbitrary puzzle, and then shaking objects around the room to see if ghosts are hiding in them, and then sucking them into your lantern. In the end however, what we have on our hands is a very average Luigi's Mansion clone, which lacks both the charm and playability of Nintendo's ghost-buster.

Controlling Zeke always manages to feel imprecise, and he is animated in such a way as to make it look as though he's walking on a cushion of air. The graphics too are on equally shaky ground. While they do have a little of the usual Disney style, they are simplistic at best, and completely un-optimised for the Xbox.

Overall The Haunted Mansion is a run of the mill action game that at its best could provide a youngster with a few hours of enjoyment. Sophisticated gamers however would do well to steer clear.

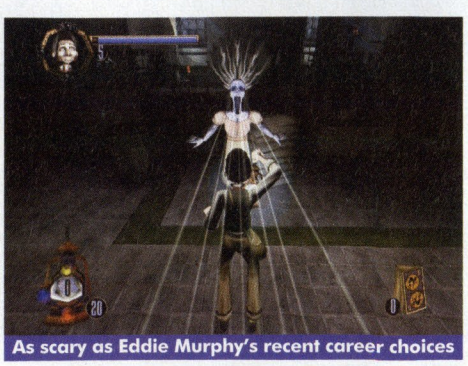
Maurice Branscombe

AVAILABLE ON:
PS2 / XBOX / GCN / PC

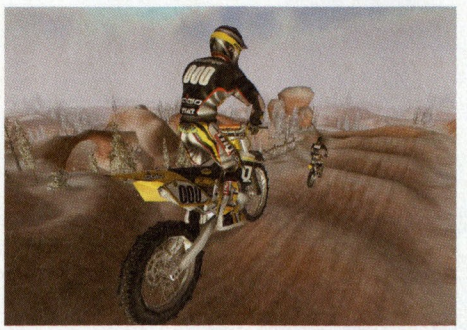
DETAILS

CATEGORY: Action adventure / **PLAYERS:** 1 /
DEVELOPER: High Voltage Software /
PUBLISHER: TDK / **PRICE:** $69.95 /
RATING: G / **AVAILABLE:** May /

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	OVERALL
67	73	65	66



As scary as Eddie Murphy's recent career choices



MX UNLEASHED

Every year a handful of motocross games get released, and every year, none of these titles really grab the genre by the balls and prove to be the definitive game. This year's entrants are no different. MTX Mototrax (reviewed last issue) was a pretty solid game which did a number of things well, and MX Unleashed could be described in exactly the same way.

What we're saying is that the genre feels a little stagnant. Take MX Unleashed. It's been developed by Rainbow Studios – the guys that made Motocross Madness way back in 1998, but in many ways not only is the gameplay the same but Madness actually had more variety (Unleashed would really benefit from the inclusion of Baja racing). All that has really changed is the introduction of challenges a la Tony Hawk.

Courses are either indoor Supercross or outdoor Nationals, and there are almost 50 of them all up, which is very reasonable. There are also freestyle courses, which are open areas with crazy natural bowls and lips for you to trick off. These are generally grouped into your standard goals – get such and such a trick score, land all these jumps in the target area etc. You can also accept some more interesting challenges such as taking on a helicopter or a truck in a race... but ultimately MX Unleashed doesn't deviate much from the extreme sports template.

Cam Shea

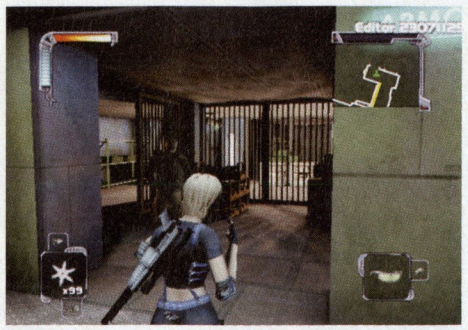
AVAILABLE ON:
PS2 / XBOX / GCN / PC

DETAILS

CATEGORY: Racing / **PLAYERS:** 1-2 /
DEVELOPER: Rainbow Studios /
PUBLISHER: THQ / **PRICE:** $79.95 /
RATING: G / **AVAILABLE:** Now /

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	OVERALL
75	74	76	78

Do not try this at home



ROGUE OPS

Let me set the scene for this review. It's a sunny(ish) Tuesday afternoon and I have finished my day's work. Cam comes to me and says, "hey dude, can you do a byte size review of this for me?" "Sure", says I, the honest but naïve fool that I am, "what is it?" "Rogue Ops", says Cam, quickly followed by a mannerism and somewhat evil laughter – thus did my descent into the underworld begin. They say that the road to hell is paved with good intentions – this is a lie – it is paved with copies of Rogue Ops, fixed to the ground with the blood that will surely shoot from your eyes after playing it and the sticky lumps of brain matter that drop from your ears after trying (and failing) to make sense of the stupid control scheme and nonsensical on screen instructions. Stealth has become the new lens-flare and like the visual effect few people can do it right. Imagine a Splinter Cell rip off with a homely blonde chick and a guy who looked like he accidentally flensed himself shaving and you have some idea of the hell I went through. The controls demand that you have to laboriously look at everything before you can act, so instead of simply jumping up to a ledge you have to look for the jump point and hit the action button. Likewise some objects can be jumped over if you look at them right but others require pulling and pushing - which is which seems entirely arbitrary. I'm going home to cry now.

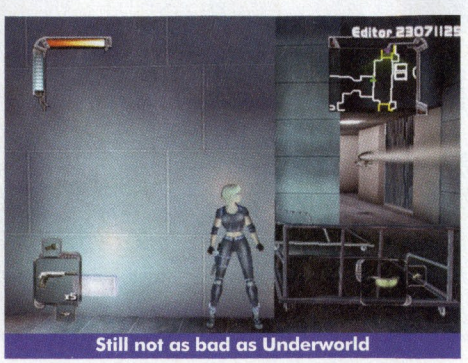
Daniel Wilks

AVAILABLE ON:
PS2 / XBOX / GCN / PC

DETAILS

CATEGORY: Crap / **PLAYERS:** 1 /
DEVELOPER: Kemco / **PUBLISHER:** Kemco /
PRICE: Too much / **RATING:** M15+ /
AVAILABLE: Unfortunately /

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	OVERALL
60	55	15	24



Still not as bad as Underworld

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PlayStation.2 XBOX PC CD-ROM SWORDFISH STUDIOS GILBERT WORLD CHAMPIONS

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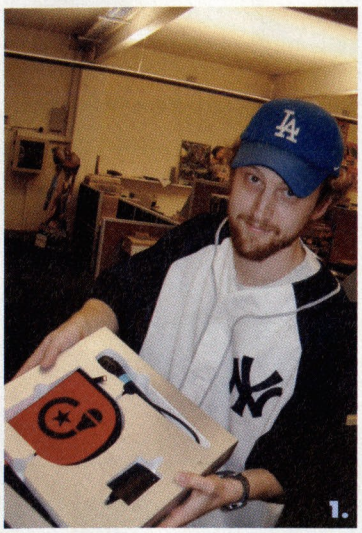
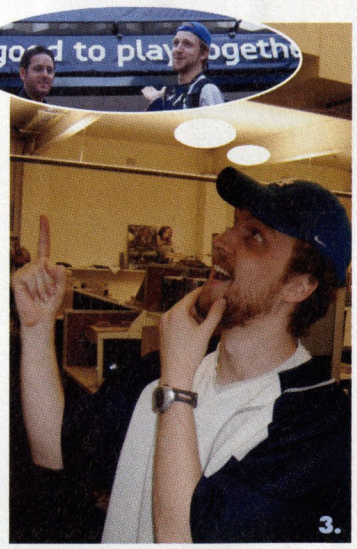
SingStar – a review in the medium of digital photography



Cam: "Hey Daniel, we got a sweet new game in today, and I really think you should review it!"

Daniel: "Karaoke? You gotta be kidding me? And don't pull that "I'm the editor" bullshit, I've already written half the mag this month – this review is yours!"



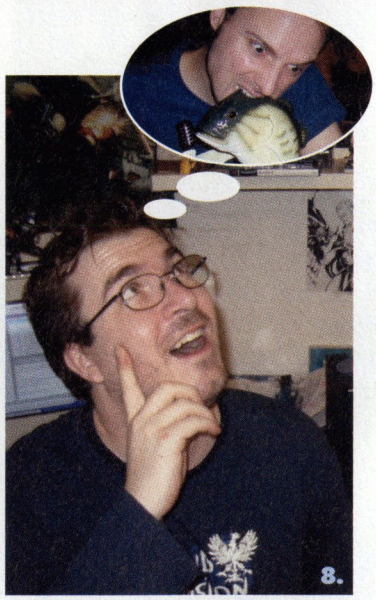
Cam: "Damn, I knew doing no work would come back to haunt me. Why don't we take a leaf out of Microsoft's it's good to play together book and both test it?"

Daniel: "Okay, you kick things off then"

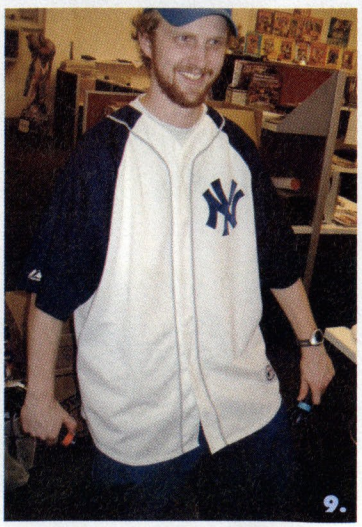
Cam: "I don't think so. I can do the rock pig pose (thanks Eliot!) but I'm not actually going to sing"

Daniel: "Neither am I. I mean, I can do a mean Lemmy but I'd need a bottle of scotch to properly scorch my vocal cords"

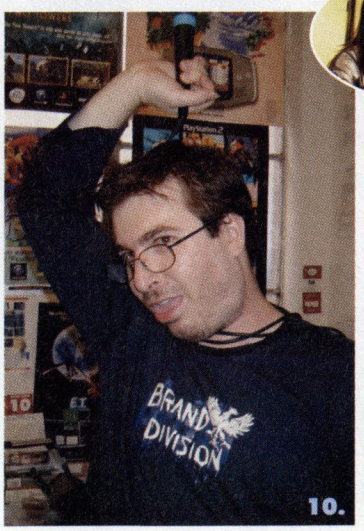
Cam: "And I don't have a chicken. How am I meant to get in the Ozzy zone with only a cow's head to bite off?



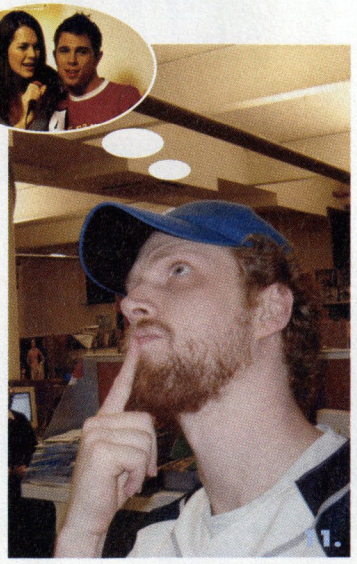
Daniel: "Hey, remember when Eliot bit the head off a fish at the last BHS concert? Now he's a showman. Not like you."



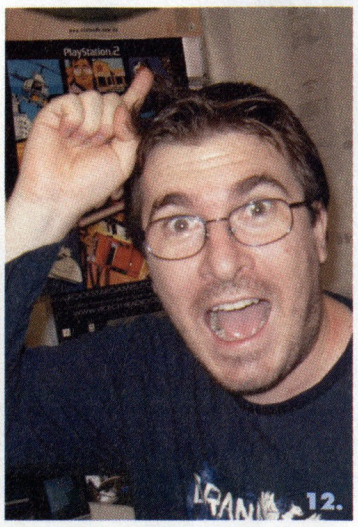
Cam: "My pants do the singing for me! Pants tres bien! Now get on the mic before I bust you down to Junior Vice Deputy Associate Editor"



Daniel: "You'll never catch me alive! So long stink town - I'm shipping off this mortal coil"

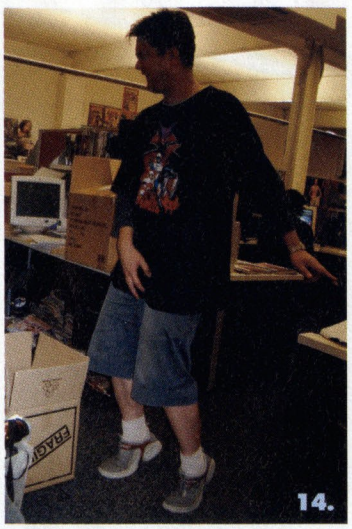


Cam: "What we really need is someone so mainstream that this game will seem cool"



Daniel: "Amos! Hell, this game was made for him – he's Korean therefore he can sing, and he actually bought Guy Sebastian's album!"

Cam: "Get to it Amos, and don't hold back – you'll be judged on your levels of Amosticity."

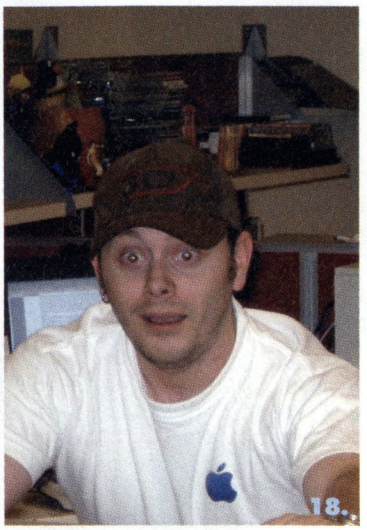


Amos: "I'm known as the Korean Michael Jackson, but not because I lure children to my ranch"

Daniel: "Hmm, not bad, but not enough crates"
Cam: "I'd like to see a little more Blau for my buck."

Amos: "You guys wouldn't know talent if it bit you in the ass. You know I was Avril's muse for Sk8terboi"

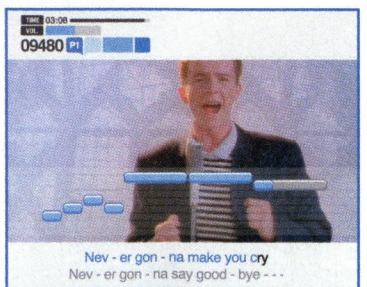
Cam: "Hey check it. I found a photo of the SingStar dev team. Do these guys know how to have a good time or what?"



Bennett (from PCPP): "Can I join in guys? This looks like fun!"

Cam: "Wow, what a soulful ballad. You guys were made for each other. Gaming... it brings people together."

The crew: "Hey Bennett, it's getting late man, we're going to the pub, you coming?"



AVAILABLE ON:

PS2 / XBOX / GCN / PC

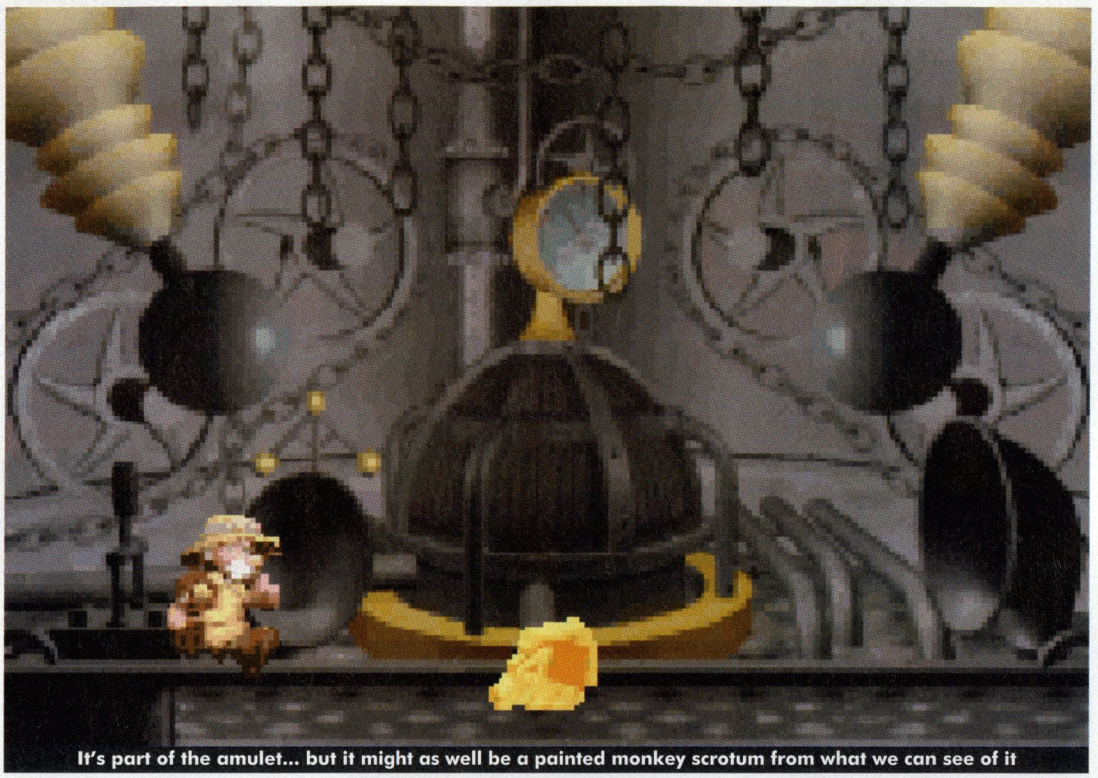
DETAILS

CATEGORY: Karaoke / **PLAYERS:** 1-2 /
DEVELOPER: Sony London /
PUBLISHER: Sony / **PRICE:** $99.95 /
RATING: G / **AVAILABLE:** May /

SingStar... perfect for your little sister. Or Bennett.

SABRE WULF

20 years ago, Ultimate Play The Game (now known as Rare) were one of the hottest game developers on the planet. Among the litter of classic titles they released for systems such as the Sinclair and C64 was Sabre Wulf. Rather than drudging through their back catalogue for an easy port, however, Rare have taken the far more honourable path of making a whole new game around the Sabre Wulf property. And it's a pretty good one at that.



It's part of the amulet... but it might as well be a painted monkey scrotum from what we can see of it

PLATFORM LAW

As is required by law for platform games, the story revolves around tracking down eight parts of an amulet across a large number of levels, all while avoiding the large jaws of the Sabre Wulf and the traps of the evil Dr Doolittle Goode (ho ho). The amulet is the key to bringing order back to the world and locking up the Sabre Wulf once again. As the aptly named Sabre Man, it's up to you to save the day... hell, who else would the village turn to other than the kindly stranger with the imperialist moustache and Pith helmet?

The gameplay is broken up into three distinct sections. There's the isometric perspective of the overworld, where Sabre Man wanders around talking to people, going into houses, finding treasure and accessing Sabre Wulf's lairs. Once he steps into a level, the game switches to a traditional side on platform perspective and he must run and jump his way to the end, where he'll find the Sabre Wulf and whatever treasure it has stolen. At this point the game switches to the third play mode – the mad dash back through the level with the Sabre Wulf hot on your heels. Get back to the start before it has caught you and you're safe.

WULF IT DOWN!

If this all sounds rather generic, you'd be right, but we haven't told you the best bit yet. As Sabre Man continues on his adventure, he collects (or buys) Good Creatures to aid him. You see, Sabre Man on his own is rather useless. He's from that breed of most primitive platform heroes – only able to run and jump. Hell he can't even jump on the heads of his enemies. It's only with the help of the Good Creatures that he's able to navigate the puzzlish platform levels. Each creature has an attribute that can be used to your advantage – whether to provide a bouncy platform, to blow enemies out of the way or whatever. It's in juggling your limited numbers of Creatures that Sabre Wulf's gameplay becomes compelling, although it's a bit of a shame that the difficulty ramps up so slowly. Worth a look.

Cam Shea

Dr Livingstone I presume?

His mo is frozen solid

He thinks he's "da bomb"

It's not your foot I'm worried about

A shady character

THE ORIGINAL

Set across a massive 256 screen rectangular play area, Ultimate's 1984 classic saw Sabreman retrieving the four pieces of the Wulf amulet and bringing them back to the correct place in the jungle. The gameworld spanned jungle, cave and mountain environments, and although Sabreman was equipped with a sword you were generally better off trying to avoid the many nasties in the game. There were also a variety of coloured orchids to run over. Some would help you – such as speeding Sabreman's movement up, while others would hurt you, such as reversing your controls. With only five lives, Sabre Wulf was very hard... but very good. Rightfully remembered as a classic.

DETAILS

CATEGORY: Platform / **PLAYERS:** 1 / **DEVELOPER:** Rare / **PUBLISHER:** THQ / **PRICE:** $69.95 / **RATING:** G8+ / **AVAILABLE:** Now /

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	OVERALL
79	75	80	80

SPLINTER CELL: PANDORA TOMORROW

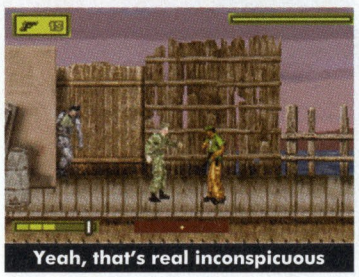
Sam Fisher's back on GBA, but this time Ubisoft Montreal have integrated more stealth components into the gameplay. It certainly helps make this 2D game more like its big brother, but doesn't necessarily make it more fun. Indeed, one has to question the wisdom of trying to make stealth entertaining in 2D (although Abe's Odyssey did it well in some ways), as Pandora Tomorrow has all of the frustrating trial and error gameplay, with very little of the experimentation or immersive graphics that give Xbox owners that "one more go" mentality.

Instead, you'll be playing and replaying each of the nine levels over and over again until you meet the game's criteria for success. Some elements of the game are certainly impressive, such as Sam's list of abilities. He can climb pipes, move hand over hand along wires, crouch and commando roll, shoot while hanging, take guards hostage and force them to open doors that require retinal scans, dispose of bodies, use night vision and thermal vision viewing modes and even slip into the backgrounds. And unlike the first GBA Splinter Cell, Sam doesn't just hide in the shadows – he can often actually move along the second plane, allowing him to sneak behind shrubs, curtains or crates. This adds another level to avoiding the guards, but doesn't make the game any less linear.

You're also able to suss out what's ahead by using the left shoulder button to move your view ahead or behind you. This means you can watch a guard's patrol route from a safe distance without being spotted. Even so, some kind of Metal Gear Solid style "cone of vision" might have worked well, as it's hard to know just how far the guards can see, and getting it wrong can mean yet another restart. Pandora Tomorrow is certainly not a bad game... but we're not convinced the formula works in two dimensions.

Joey Tekken

From here he looks like Solid Snake... or should that be Sneak?


Yeah, that's real inconspicuous

My thighs are chafing!

DETAILS

CATEGORY: Platformer / **PLAYERS:** 1 / **DEVELOPER:** Ubisoft Montreal / **PUBLISHER:** Ubisoft / **PRICE:** $69.95/ **RATING:** M15+ / **AVAILABLE:** Now /

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	OVERALL
78	77	75	76

BOKTAI: THE SUN IS IN YOUR HAND

At first glance, Boktai may seem like just another action adventure game. You play a hero (Solar Boy!) roped in to ridding the world of the undead, who must travel through dungeons and castles taking on mummies, ghouls and vampires before finally eradicating the boss of each area. Fortunately however, Boktai puts its own spin on things by introducing the power of the sun as an important element in the gameplay. The team at Konami have even gone so far as to include a sunlight sensor on the cartridge, so that the game can judge in real-time how much sun is in the environment.

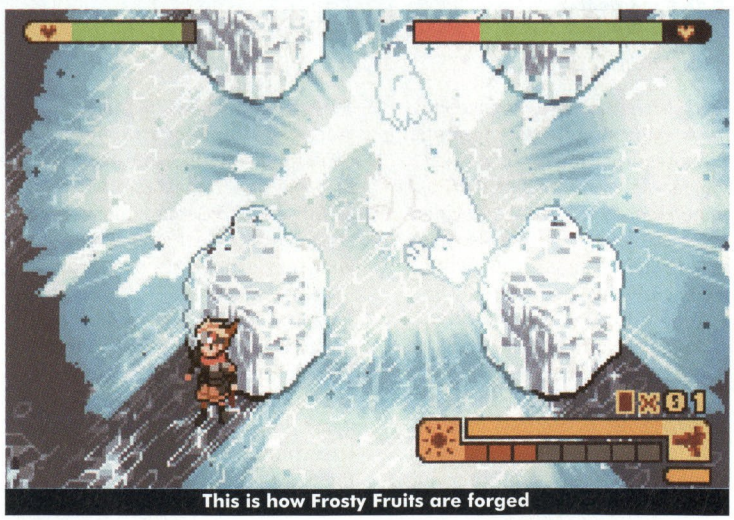
The effect this has on gameplay is multifaceted. You carry a gun that harnesses stored sunlight as its power source. To recharge it, you must stand outside or under a sunlight inside. If the sensor isn't detecting any sunlight, you won't be able to recharge. If the sun isn't strong, it will take longer to recharge than if it is. On the flipside, your Solar Gun can overheat if you play in direct sunlight too long.

The amount of sunlight also comes into play with the enemies and environments. Some creatures, for instance, can only be seen in low lighting conditions.

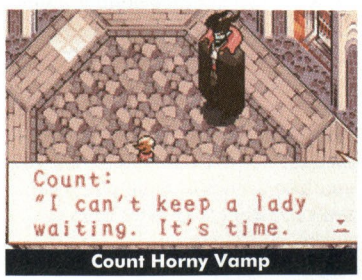
Much of the gameplay we've seen before, such as crate puzzles and tapping on walls to lure vampires out of your way or onto switches. There's an interesting mix of stealth and action too, with Django able to press up against and move along walls to keep quiet. Unfortunately it feels a little clunky, but at least the boss battles (and dragging its coffin back through the level) help spice it up.

Although the sunlight element is interesting, it ends up being a bit of a gimmick and means that you're restricted to certain times of day to play effectively. We hate to think what Londoners would have to do to play this game... move to somewhere with a better climate perhaps?

Chokey McChoke


This is how Frosty Fruits are forged

Six Feet Under: The Game



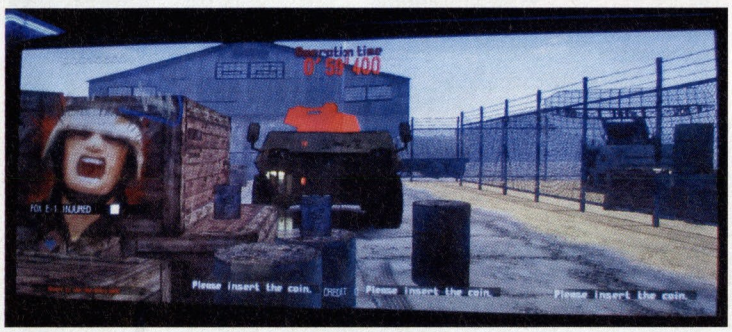
Count Horny Vamp

DETAILS

CATEGORY: Adventure / **PLAYERS:** 1-2 / **DEVELOPER:** Konami / **PUBLISHER:** Atari / **PRICE:** $79.95 / **RATING:** TBA / **AVAILABLE:** June /

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	OVERALL
79	78	78	78

[below] Wartran, huh, good god y'all, what is it good fortran?



[above] Tim impressing the ladies with his "kill skill"

Wartran KONAMI

>>Tim Levy

Violence ain't violence. It is interesting to note that what often seems to be 'on screen violence' can actually be, NOT on screen violence. The TV and video game industry have often been able to side step the issue of showing violence by making a few subtle changes to their content so that, technically, in the midst of the hailstorms of bullets and gigantic explosions, there is actually no 'violence'. By doing this, they lower the classification (i.e. G, PG, M, R) and open up the content to younger (and bigger) audiences.

Here are a few prime examples: Astro Boy – a kids TV show that gives robots human emotions and then has them killed (Hey, they're just robots!) The A-Team, although there are massive gunfights in every episode, no one ever gets hospitalized. Even Wartran's predecessor, World Combat had you shooting armies of skeletons. You can't kill what is already dead right?

SO LAME THAT IT'S COOL?

Wartran has out done all these contenders and has won the coveted prize for the "Lamest Effort To Disguise Video Game Violence" award. At the start of each game, your sexy drill officer tells you that "You are a soldier of the National Defense Force at 'WAR TRAiNing' camp. Live ammunition is being fired so wear your bullet proof vest at all times". But what about those missiles and grenades? What about those hundreds of 'allies' playing the role of 'the enemy' you just shot in the legs and head? What about the guys that keep wanting to stab you? In any case, war sucks ass in real life, but contained in computer world, it can be a blast. Or should we say... the bomb.

Starting off at a training camp, you are put through 8 different scenarios including assaulting a desert town, a night attack using a night scope and even a stealth mission to sneak into a military base. In all stages, you have to not only fight against troops with all types of conventional weapons, but also battle 'mechs' that bar your way. Fortunately, your assault rifle can be upgraded to a machine gun and rocket launcher to save your trigger finger from overworking.

The most important thing to master (apart from accuracy) in the game is the way you use the shield, which is activated by pointing your weapon off screen. This not only renders you invulnerable to attack, but it also reloads your weapon. If the screen is choked with enemies, hide behind the shield and jump from cover to pick them off one by one. Patience in this game is the key to survival, but is offset by wanting to get a higher score than your opponent in the awesome multiplayer mode.

ALWAYS HOLD YOUR GAT TO THE SIDE

Although the game was intended to be played by up to four people, this is not necessarily the coolest way to play it. The most challenging way to play the game is for you to use two or even all four guns at once. This makes the game harder by a factor of about six. But just think how cool you'll look down at the arcade, blasting away all the 'bad guys' with your shirt off. You can take out the enemy with one gun as the other gun is reloading or just use all guns at once to create a wall of bullets. Better still, it is a great way to impress the ladies. The trick is to rack up heaps of credits before starting, so you can continue to attract attention for at least half an hour. The other good thing about using all four guns is that no one else can play the game and steal your glory. Basically, more guns = more ladies (and likewise for females).

Lame violence excuses aside, Wartran is a good combat shooter in that it not only provides the player with an extensive range of combat situations, but it also takes a lot of kill skill (or money) to take the game through to the end.

SCORE: **8/10**

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How to create your own website

Kosta Andreadis, Alex Andreadis and Cam Shea

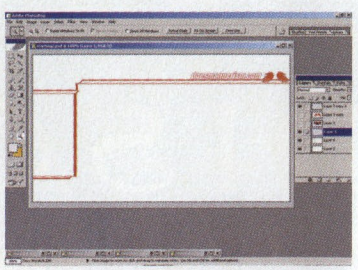
It doesn't take very much effort at all to get your own little corner on the web, virtually anyone with access to the Internet can have their very own website. Although this may solidify the crazy theory that the Internet's soul purpose is to connect the world via a platform of free speech, information and ideas – the truth is most home-made websites look like they were made in a crapfactory, and when they're hosted for free on places like Geocities, Angelfire, and other free hosting services they become havens for spy-ware and popup ads. It might be because we're old fashioned or old enough to remember a world where you could actually download from websites instead of using p2p apps – if there's anything worth doing it's worth doing right. So we've decided to give you, the humble Hyper reader, a step by step window into the creation of our very own site www.doesmannerism.com. If you want to make your very own website look as polished, professional and downright hilarious as ours does, this guide may be of some help. It may not be as comprehensive, technical, renowned, acclaimed, or respected as the "Dummy's Guide To" series, but it's pretty close and features more subliminal communist propaganda than the usual Hyper feature.

THE IDEA, OR AS WE'D LIKE TO CALL IT "WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT?"

It all starts with the idea, and if you want to make your mark on the web your site better be mind-blowing, original and born of true grit - or at the very least interesting enough to make an impression. For example, simply trying to make a gaming news/reviews website just won't fly as there are more than enough sites out there on videogames, films, comics and general smutty entertainment - except maybe for the smut. You've got to come up with an original idea for a site the likes of which the Internet has never seen. Some of you will take the easy way out and create a Richard Grieco fan site that would make the only other Richard Grieco website out there, RichardGrieco.com, pale in comparison – but you'd fail. The only person out there who would even want another Richard Grieco website is Richard Grieco, so you're going to have to look deep and hard (Ed: Hey I've got it! A website called "Deep and Hard") and try to find something you can bring to the world, which is exactly what we've done.

ENTER THE MANNERISM

The truth of the matter is all you need to do is base your site on your own personality/ies and view of the world, a place you can be yourself – and grow from there, the rest will fall into place. So if it grows into a gaming site, it will be more personalised and at the end of the day far more interesting than something generic ('rip-roaring hilarity' to 'uplifting counsel' in the space of a paragraph – dig it). As regular readers of the mag you've most likely seen many a picture of the Hyper crew in a *does mannerism* pose - a hand/face/body/spiritual gesture the likes of which the world hasn't seen since someone first decided all those years ago to raise their middle finger. It's served us well since its



[right] Giving birth to a website isn't as painful as you might think...

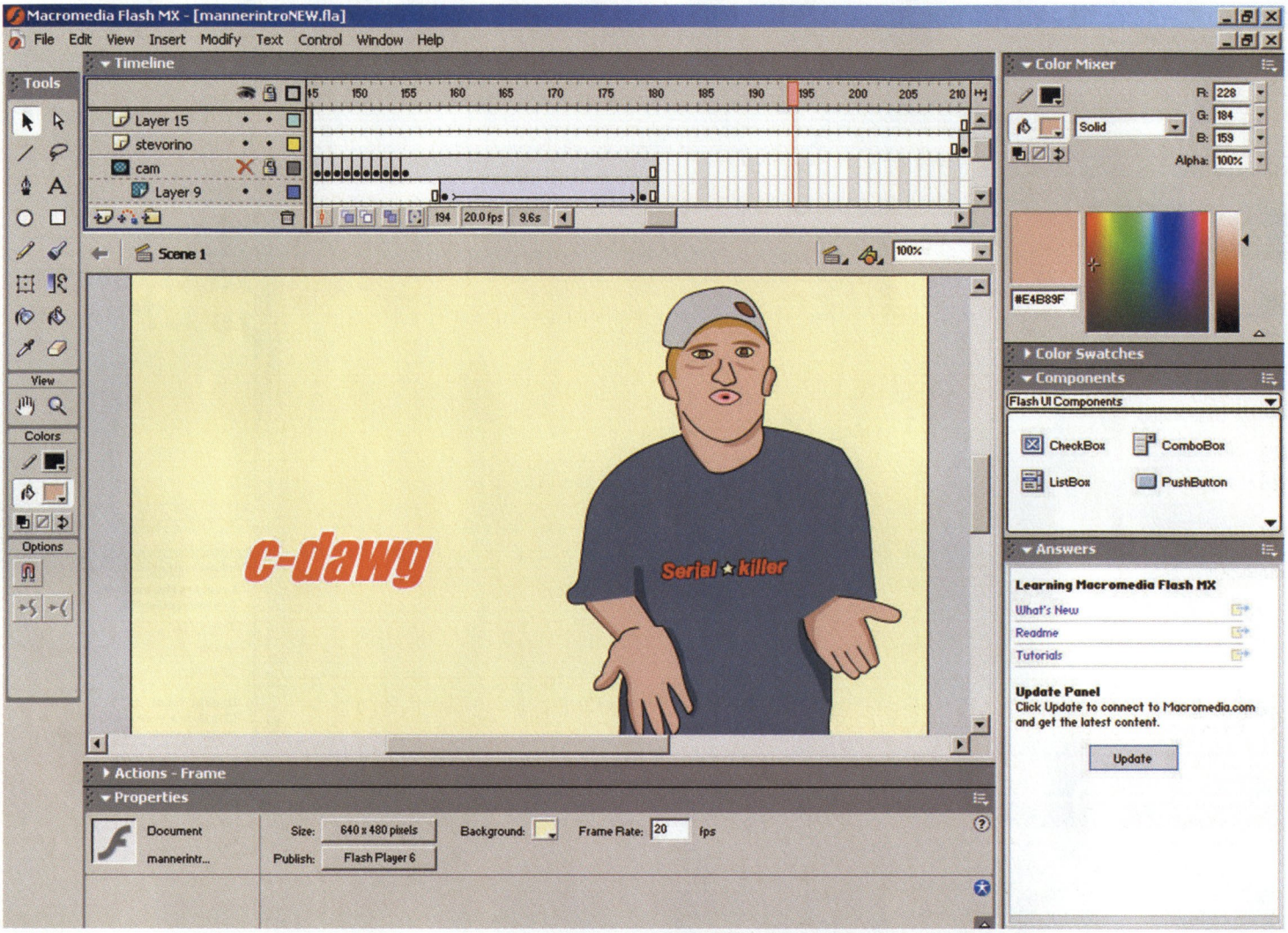
SCRIPTING

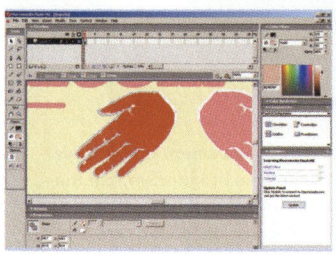
http://php.resourceindex.com/

After lengthy and quite nerdy discussions we decided to use PHP as the scripting language of choice for doesmannerism.com. And with thousands of ready-made and free scripts available to download here we were able to turn doesmannerism.com into a site that dispenses mannerisms not one that receives them.

DOESMANNERISM.COM

Co-existence ain't a pipe dream dreamt up by a group of people whilst smoking a pipe, it happens everywhere. One of these occurrences of co-existence exists between a little magazine called Hyper (you may have heard of it) and a website called doesmannerism.com. Although the site may be relatively new the mannerism has been around for many years now, and is in a constant state of evolution – one that someday may even supersede its creators, C Dizzle and Hoster. It's our home away from home, and sometimes our home when we're already at home – so drop on by and join the revolution.





[above] An oh so flattering cel shaded rendition of yours truly

ICING ON THE CAKE, THE FLASH INTRO

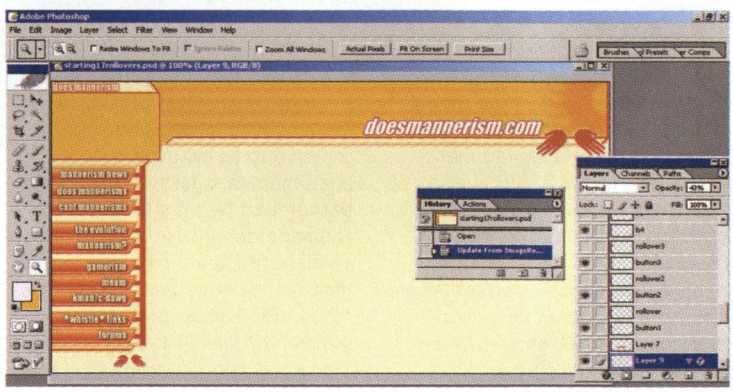
http://www.flashkit.com/index.shtml
http://www.echoecho.com/

Creating an animated introduction to a website is a great way to add style and life to any website (and extra load times for 56K users, but to hell with them). To do so you'll need Macromedia Flash MX, a vector graphics based program that allows users to create impressive animations with ease. First introduced in 1996, Flash has quickly become the web standard for high impact animation and uses a compact flash file format (*.swf). doesmannerism.com features its very own flash intro that you can check out, and if you're game you can find easy to follow tutorials on the above sites to create your very own.

invention at E3 a few years ago, and being the crazy wacky bunch that we are, we've decided to devote an entire website to the mannerism! If nothing else, it will provide a window into one of Hyper's most enduring in-jokes. And if you don't get it, try busting your own mannerism at the site itself and you'll understand its power.

THE DESIGN

At its core a standard webpage will have three things, a logo, menu and content. Placement of these three components is important but thankfully quite easy - the content pretty much always goes in the main portion of the site with the logo and menu to be placed on the top and/or left side of the page. Of course each of these components can and often do feature many sub-components and types, all of which will depend on what the site is all about. Once you know exactly what needs to go where you'll need to draft a list of all the different pages you'll need (news, links, galleries etc) before you start creating the look. Before you jump the gun and start designing the logo you'll need to decide on the colour scheme, as the two will ultimately have to complement each other once the site is online. Choosing colours for a site can be very easy if you keep it simple, this means using no more than two colours (in addition to white and black) at all stages of the design. Image editors like Photoshop are ideal when creating logos as they as provide text tools and filters as well as easy to use web integration for creating images specifically for the web. As

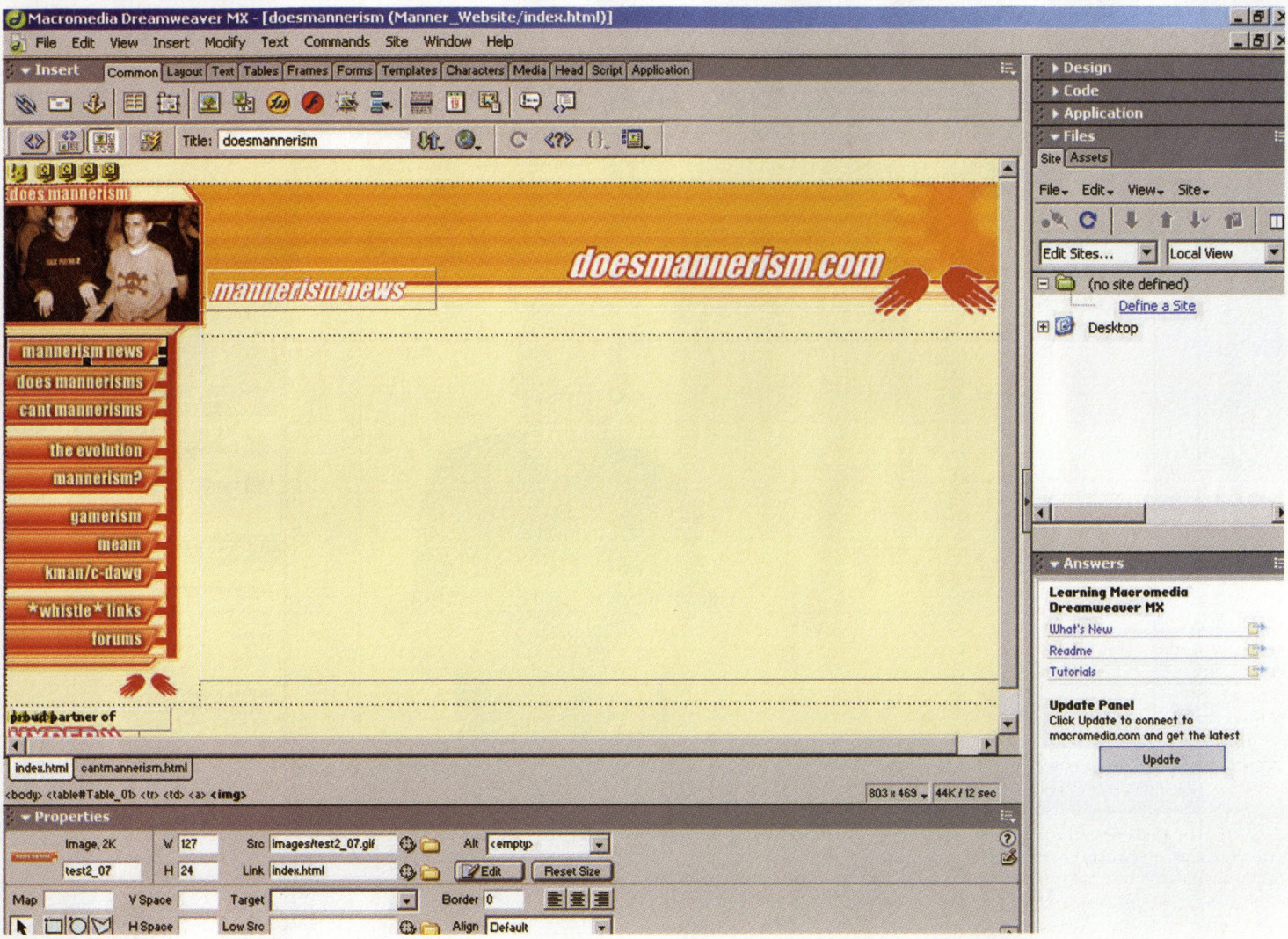


[above] Photoshop. Best. Program. Ever.

A MANNER OF MONEY

Adobe Photoshop CS - $953.64
Macromedia Dreamweaver MX – $604.55
Macromedia Flash MX - $726.36
Domain Registration and Hosting - $150.00
doesmannerism.com – priceless

Some things money can't buy, for everything else there's Kaazar*
*** The additional 'r' = all potential legal issues solved in one fell swoop!**



[above] Dreamweaver MX Unleashed?

standard practise the logo should contain only one of your chosen two colours in addition to the whites and blacks.

LAYING IT OUT

Creating a professional looking website unfortunately requires some rudimentary skills in the use of programs like Macromedia Flash, Adobe Illustrator and Photoshop. First up you'll need to create the title and menu bars as well as the menu buttons using the vector based software (Flash, Illustrator) then arrange them together into one cohesive static image using Photoshop. In regards to the general background for the site do not use an image, simply use white, black or a web-safe colour in the spectrum of the colour scheme chosen. Once you have a static image of what your website will look like you'll need to export this into Adobe Image ready which will let you slice it up and automatically generate the necessary HTML and images!

HOW TO GENERATE HTML WITH PHOTOSHOP® AND IMAGE READY® IN 10 MINUTES OR YOUR MONEY BACK.

Step 1: Once you have your design looking all spankeriffic in Photoshop® select the 'Edit in Image Ready' button from the File Menu.

Step 2: Image Ready will have a similar interface to Photoshop so from here select the slicing tool from the toolbar.

Step 3: This will allow you to literally slice the picture into smaller ones so use this to separate all your buttons and titles.

Step 4: You'll want the buttons to be functional, and in the web content window (if it's not shown click Window > Web Content) you'll notice each slice is a separate layer. Select your first button and Right Click > Add Rollover State. This will turn that slice into a button. Although optional, for each button you can add a rollover picture, which means the picture will change as the mouse goes over the button.

Step 7: Once you've sliced and diced all the buttons, go to the optimise window (Window > Optimise). Here you can select each slice you've done to optimise each slice manually in order to conserve bandwidth whilst maintaining quality.

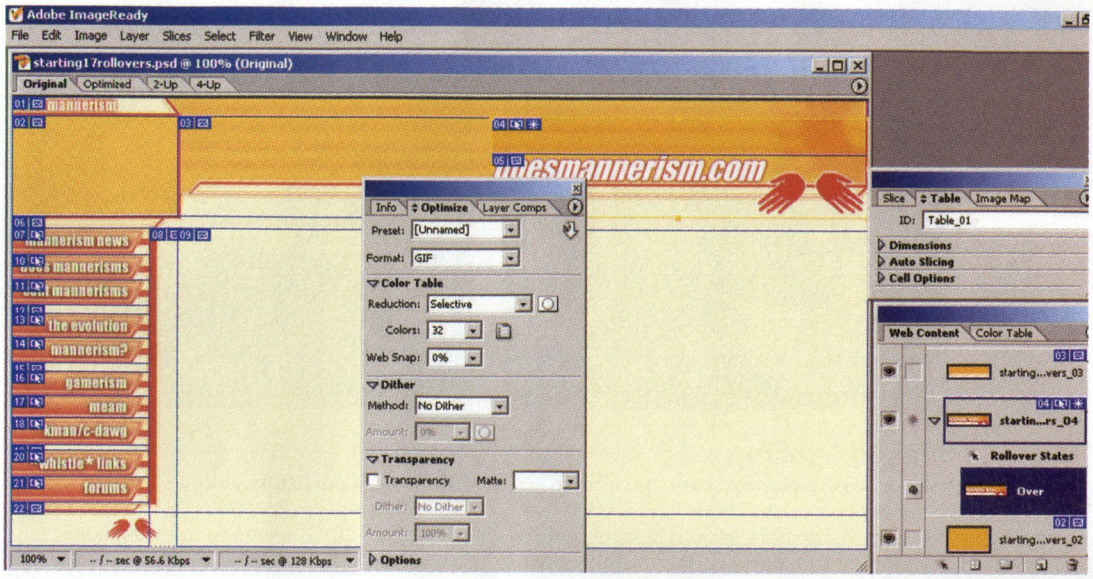
Step 8 (Compression Session): There are many different types of compression to choose from so here's a handy guide that'll help you select the right one first time, every time. For photos or images containing millions of colours use JPEG compression (for good quality and low file size stick to 40 – 60% compression). For buttons, vector based images or pictures with

TUTORIALS!

If you're looking for some great online tutorials that can teach all there is to know for the programs mentioned in this feature then check out the following sites.
For Dreamweaver:
http://www.101-dreamweaver-tutorials.com/
For Photoshop:
http://www.planetphotoshop.com/
and
http://www.phong.com/tutorials/

WHY IS IT CALLED *DOESMANNERISM*?

The actual movement is obviously known as the mannerism, but the internet shorthand is *doesmannerism* to indicate that you're doing it at the time of typing. It's similar to writing NAC (naked at computer) or HH (holding hands) but nowhere near as lame. When would you use it? Let's say you're chatting on ICQ to a friend, who says that he just played Cricket 2004 and "it's gotta be the most awesome game ever". In reply, you don't need to say anything. Just hit him with a *doesmannerism* and he's instantly knocked down a few pegs. Powerful stuff.



[left] You've got to "hand" it to us, we know what we're doing

FORUMS, THEY'RE LIKE A SECRET SOCIETY THE WHOLE WORLD CAN BE A PART OF

http://www.phbb.com

If you were savvy in the world of the web (a condition known as 'web-savvy') you'd know what forums are. And thanks to free software like PHPBB you can easily add a fully functioning and quite impressive forum to your website allowing you to create and control your very own online community. So hop online and register at the doesmannerism.com forums because we can't wait to sell your email addresses to penile enlargement pill manufacturers.

transparency select GIF (to save space, fiddle around with the amount of colours used)

Step 9: When you're all done select File > Save Optimized. This will save your static image as an HTML page and place all your slices (images) into an image folder. Hooray!

DREAMWEAVER AND SCRIPTING

Macromedia's Dreamweaver is a very powerful and easy to use HTML editor that serves as the perfect application to use when adding content to each page of your site. With the HTML outputted with Image Ready you can open this in Dreamweaver, save it as a template and use this to set up each page for your site. Dreamweaver allows you to add and edit tables, layers, headers, and images with ease. But one thing you don't want is a page you'll need to edit and upload every time you add some content – this is where scripting comes into play. Scripts allow users and webmasters to add content via the inclusion of code in the HTML – usually written in PHP, Perl/CGI or Javascript. Thankfully you don't need to be a programmer to add scripts to your site as there are many free scripts available to download. Some examples of scripting functionality include web-based forms to add news or upload images into an automatically generated gallery. This would allow you to update your site within your Browser, free of FTP clients and HTML code.

WEB HOSTING, BANDWIDTH AND SERVERS

Once you've designed your website you'll need to fork over your money to one of the thousands of companies that offer domain name registration and web hosting. You'll find that hosting your site on an overseas server will ultimately be the cheapest option available but you'll need to make sure it has all the features one would need when creating a dynamic website. Important features to look out for would be MySQL database capabilities, scripting language support (PHP, CGI), ample bandwidth, storage and email support. Hosting on a Microsoft Server will cost a lot more than hosting on a Linux server, with the benefits being only minimal. Once the domain has been registered and server space is configured and secured the final step is to upload the entire site and type the domain into your web browser. There may be a lot to it but if the Einstein like intellect of the Hyper crew can do it, any super intelligent ape can. <<

JAVASCRIPT

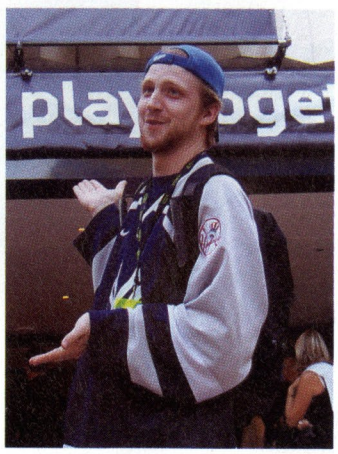
http://www.javascriptcity.com/scripts/index.html

JavaScript is a popular scripting language that can be use to create a whole manner of cool effects on a website. For example if you load up doesmannerism.com and see the mannerism on the top left corner change every 10 seconds, that's all thanks to some very simple JavaScript code you can download from a site like this.

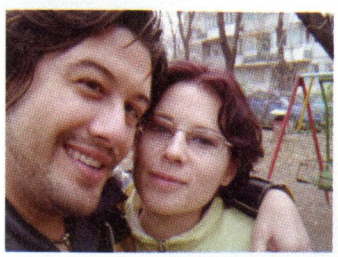
IF YOU HAVE NO IDEA WHY THIS IS MEANT TO BE FUNNY

If you've read the feature and gone to the site, and you're still scratching your head over exactly why we think the mannerism is so funny, and why you just don't get it, there is an alternative to losing respect for us. You've just got to think like a games journalist to understand. Here are a couple of examples that any gamer will get:

Scenario #1: You've been flown all the way to France for an Xbox event. You're on a beach, you've just had a few beers, and the press conference begins. Instead of announcing some amazing new game, Microsoft instead tell the assembled throng that they've come up with a new slogan: "it's good to play together". Being a jaded cynic you find this incredibly funny. After the laughter subsides (even though you seem to be the only one laughing) there's only one thing that sums up how silly this is. The mannnerism.



Scenario #2: Not only is John Romero a middle-aged hair model responsible for Daikatana, but he's also recently married an 18 year old Romanian girl that he met on the Internet. You bump into him at E3... don't shake his hand! Bust out a mannerism!



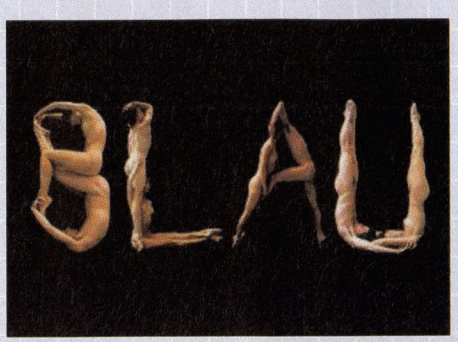
Links

>> Kosta Andreadis

Real Gamer

www.realgamer.com.au/
http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0113957/

>> People say that internet shopping is safe, but I'm guessing those people haven't seen The Net – a superb action thriller starring Sandy Bullock as a computer programmer caught up in a high stakes game of corruption and internet security. A real think piece, the type of movie that makes you stop and say "what if this happened to me?" So as much as I'd like to endorse realgamer.com.au, with its cool products, low low prices that can't be beat, excellent service, friendly staff, and great range of local and imported games – something tells me the minute I enter my credit card details, that'll be it.



Naked Spelling

http://www.petardas.com/pornonombre/

>> Some websites out there have a lot of content, this doesn't. What it lacks in content it makes up with purpose, that being to spell anything you want with naked people. Type your name and lo and behold there's a bunch of naked people posing as letters. Type anything you want and there it'll be, all naked and clearly legible. 60 seconds pass, you quickly become bored with the site and never visit it again.

Tatts

http://www.techtatts.com/

>> Many people have tattoos, but many people that do have tattoos don't call them tattoos, but 'tatts'. Tattoos are generally found on bikers, punk rockers and other groups of cooler people than you. Nerds don't have tattoos because their mums would kick them out of the basement if they found out they've got a cool permanent dragon on their back. So the next option would be to get a 'tatt' for all your nerdy tech equipment! If you can't be cool then your PC might as well be.

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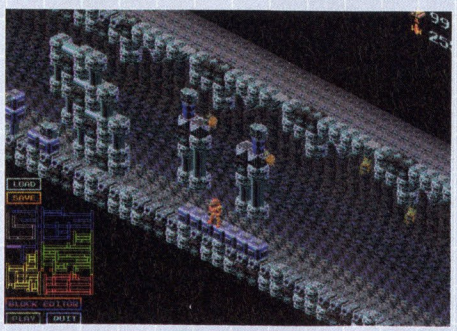
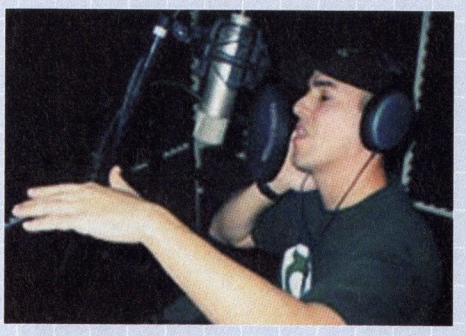
OPTUSnet
BROADBAND



Metroid Cubed

http://pages.infinit.net/voxel/home.htm

>> Using a custom developed isometric 3D engine, 'Metroid Cubed' lets you play the original 1986 Nintendo classic like never before. Although trying to play a 2D side-scroller from an isometric perspective isn't exactly easy, you'll definitely want to check this out – if only for the interesting blend of 8-bit textures with 3D environments.



Movie Rap

http://www.movierap.com/

>> Movie review websites are a dime a dozen. If that was a little too Americanised for you then try this for a home-grown analogy – movie review websites are a tenner a slab. But here's one with a difference, movie reviews in the form of rap videos. For example when reviewing John Woo's Paycheck, Cap-One rhymes "No respect for the next movie on the set, Paycheck is a movie you'll soon forget. Ben Affleck is a terrible actor, Keanu Reeves the only one out there who's much wacker." Gold.

Goonies

http://goonies.freewebspace.com/

>> The self proclaimed "best Goonies sound site on the web". Sure, it hasn't been updated in several years, and sure there's more pop-ups than a Geocities site, but if you're hankering to hear Chunk say "Geez mister, you're even hungrier than I am" or lusting after Data's classic call "Okay Data, don't mess this one up", then there's really only one place you can go.

apply and the offer expires 30th June 2004 unless withdrawn earlier. SingTel Optus Pty Limited trading as Optus Communications 101 Miller Street North Sydney 2060. Optus, the Optus logo, 'yes' and Optus FreeTime are trademarks of SingTel Optus Pty Limited. Optus Communications services are provided by Optus Networks Pty Ltd ABN 92 008 570 330. OPT2810/3

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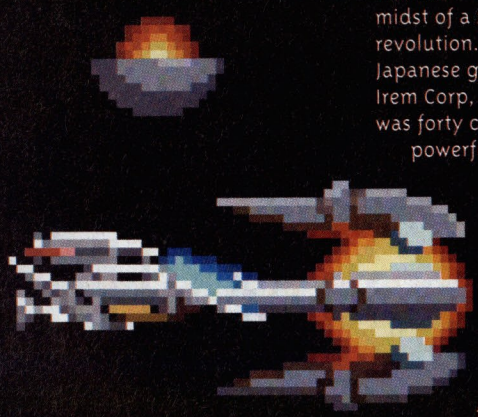
R·TYPE

ED DAWSON BASKS IN SIXTEEN YEARS OF SHOOTERY JAPANESE ANIME GOODNESS

In the golden era following the original Transformers cartoon series, in the late 80s, a new game hit the arcades. Programmed on the generation of arcade machines that brought us 1942, Raiden and Space Harrier, R-Type was launched in the midst of a 2D animated-sprite revolution. From a little known Japanese game developer called Irem Corp, in the days when a credit was forty cents a pop, R-Type was powerfully impressive.



We found ourselves gazing upon an intricately detailed, inspired vision of mechatronic robots, blistering bolts of plasma and elegant industrial design, clashing together in a thundering space opera the likes of which would have been unimaginable in the preceding years. It was unbelievable to look at.

Drawing inspiration from the ancient Defender, R-Type was a side-scrolling shooter, rolling smoothly to the right through an inspired landscape of polished metallic caverns, bio-fertile breeding grounds and spacecraft graveyards, filled with the spindly, rusted wreckage of high-tech gone to seed.

You flew the plucky R-9 Arrowhead, a sharp-looking experimental space fighter pitted against the malevolent hordes of the Bydo Empire, a nightmarish interstellar force resembling the bad acid trip of a Robotech illustrator. You and the R-9 were Earth's last remaining hope, with the peeps back home having already suffered titanic losses against these bad-assed intergalactic exterminators, who are the result of a failed experiment into bio-weapons.

Being one of the finest old-school shoot-em-ups, R-Type is punishingly difficult. The R-9 can only suffer one hit before disintegrating in a small but tragic fusion shockwave. And the Bydo empire are fearsome. The variety of their offensive craft is only matched by the legion number of weapons they can wield. In R-Type, you were assaulted by near-continuous waves of varying and multifarious threats like swift laser bolts, seeking rockets, floating mines, gouts of flame from huge jet engines, airborne mortar rounds and falling wreckage — requiring the player to develop a tight collection of strategies to stay alive.

But the R-9 has its own spicy flavour of ass-whupping to serve up. In addition to a standard pulsing laser, you can hold down the fire button to launch powerful fireballs of varying sizes, which can plough through numerous enemies. R-Type was also one of the first games to feature an escalating arsenal of weapons and powerups, of an innovative and creative design. In R-Type the key weapon was a hovering, indestructible satellite drone which you could deploy and retrieve. While attached, it unleashed either devastating bolts of reflecting beam lasers, punishing rings of arcing red energy or "tracking" yellow energy that would track along the ground and ceiling planes, destroying all in its path.

Possibly the best part of R-Type was the giant end-of-level bosses that were overflowing with classy animation and effects. They all had a glossy coloured gem as a weak spot (a recurring theme of R-Type), which usually required you to cleverly deploy your drone past blocking shields, waving limbs and a barrage of ammunition, to destroy it. One boss was so large and bristling with guns that it couldn't even fit on the screen. It comprised a whole level-length battle and had to be destroyed gradually, piece by piece.

IN THE BEGINNING...

R-TYPE 1 (1987 - Arcade, GameBoy, Sega Master System, PC, MSX, Commodore 64, Amiga, and Turbo Grafx 16)

■ The first R-Type game was unleashed on the arcades in 1987 – spawning the legacy and setting a new benchmark for shooters.

R-TYPE 2 (1989 – Arcade, PSone, GameBoy Colour, Turbo Grafx 16)

■ The sequel to R-Type was another graphical step forward, also the weapons can be powered up to a much greater degree, but it attracted some criticism from the original's hardcore fans for not innovating enough.

SNES-A-LICIOUS

SUPER R-TYPE (1991 – SNES)

■ Irem made a decisive move onto home systems with Super R-Type, which is one of the harshest titles in the series, as you're banished to the beginning of the level each time you die. Also, as the framerate on this version occasionally drops under load... it isn't the best the series has to offer.

R-TYPE 3 (1993 – SNES)

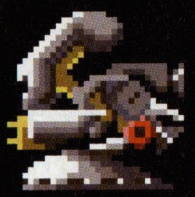
■ A return to form, R-Type 3 overcame the technical troubles of Super R-Type and brought many innovations such as levels where you were forced to fly backwards, morphing enemies and even some cool pseudo-3D effects. R-Type 3 restored the good old checkpoint restoration system and allowed unlimited continues, acknowledging the trend away from "punishing" players in games of this difficulty level.

2D RENDERING ROCKS

R-TYPE DELTA (1998 – PSone)

■ Following Irem Corp's acquisition by another group, this is the first title under the new business hierarchy. Following the long gap between titles, the new Irem Software Engineering, operating from a place called the "Fukudome" in Ishikawa, launched R-Type Delta at a time when 3D rendering was becoming the new standard for games, with the 2D-focused consoles such as the Sega Saturn falling out of favour. R-Type Delta still plays in two dimensions, but rendered the environment using 3D technology that the PlayStation allowed. Also, for the first time you were able to select from three different ships, a feature that clearly influenced R-Type Final.

R-Type Delta looked fantastic, was great fun and is still considered one of the best titles in the series' history.



!!! Download G-Type from this page: http://www.the-underdogs.org/game.php?id=3841

RETURN OF THE KING

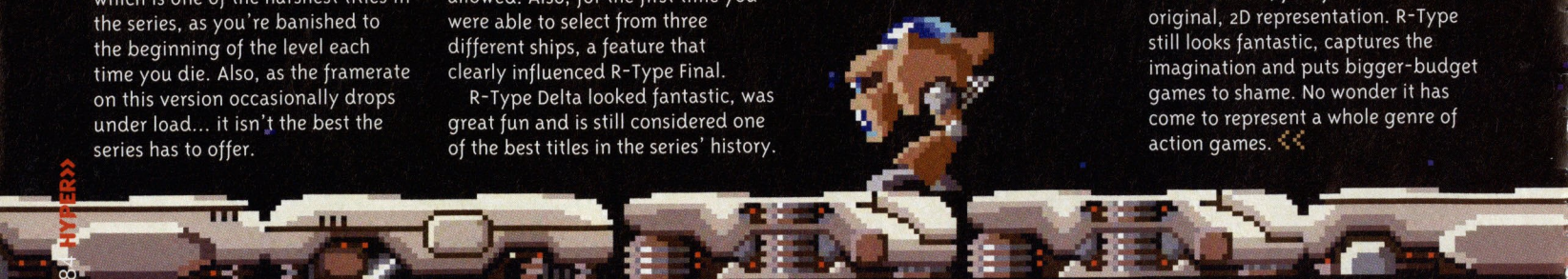
R-TYPE FINAL (2003 in Japan, 2004 in Australia – PlayStation 2)

■ With the various ups and downs this series has weathered over the years, it was with some trepidation that fans of the series awaited the arrival of R-Type Final, a whole five years after the stellar Delta. Explosively, R-Type Final has proved itself as a truly worthy swan song for the legacy, adding huge new features and bringing it powerfully into the current generation of console rendering. With 100 ships to choose from and 160 different weapons, R-Type Final is a shooter fan's drug of choice, offering a truly massive replay value. It's also brought up to modern standards, letting you choose from finely graded difficulty levels. Also, a new AI mode lets you customise the R-Type ships and send them into battle against the computer, or your friend's craft stored on memory card. Stoners need no longer even hang on to the controller – they can just bliss out and watch the wild action roll by.

SEND IN THE CLONES

So many R-Type clones have been launched that it almost seems redundant to describe anything as an "R-Type clone", as almost every shooter that side-scrolls in 2D is compared to it. Often imitated, but rarely matched, R-Type is just far too original and unique, with such outstanding art that the clone factories can't afford to compete with it directly. One of the most notable clones is G-Type, which can be downloaded for free.

R-Type was such a high water mark for quality graphics and design that few titles ever rose to challenge it, despite its early appearance in the Arcade revolution. It was ported to virtually every game system imaginable and spawned a whopping five sequels, spanning an extraordinary sixteen years of high-quality laser-fire. And despite technological revolutions coming and going, R-Type has remained in an old-school, faithful-to-the-original, 2D representation. R-Type still looks fantastic, captures the imagination and puts bigger-budget games to shame. No wonder it has come to represent a whole genre of action games. <<



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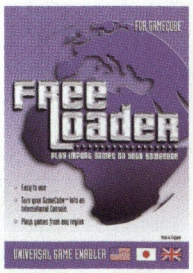

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Play imported games on your Australian Gamecube.

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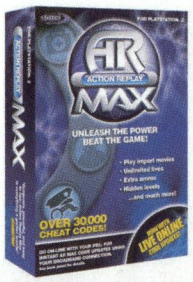
CHEATS



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Revolutionary code system. Play multi region DVDs, maximise memory card and access thousands of codes.

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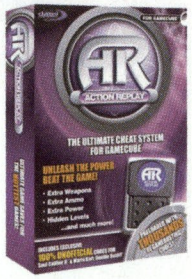

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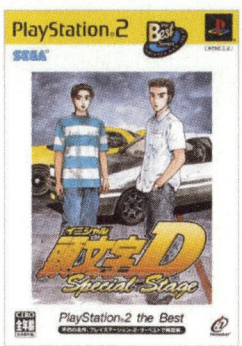

Initial D: Special Stage

Brilliant racing game based on the hit Japanese anime.

$49.95

Win Stuff ! Exclusive Comp for HYPER readers: Visit http://realgamer.com.au/hyper for details

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Apparently in the 70s all teenagers looked like Calvin Klein models

Texas Chainsaw Massacre

ROADSHOW, MA 15+

Although billed as a "re-imagining" of the Tobe Hooper classic, The Texas Chainsaw Massacre, the new version of the film bearing the same name has little to do with the original, save of course a certain fatty with a penchant for wearing parts of other people as a jaunty hat. Being a huge fan of the original film it pains me to say this but for posterity it must be done – director Marcus Mispel's take on the material is in some ways superior to that of the original. In case you're unfamiliar with the story of the original film it goes a little something like this; a group of teenagers traveling through America have the misfortune to stop near an old farm. Bad things happen and only one escapes, insane but alive. Although the tension in the original was so thick you could cut it with a knife, there was also little justification for any of the goings on. Why did the kids stop? Why is Leatherface the way he is? The new version of the film answers all of these questions in an elegant and credible way. Once again the tension is layered on thick and the scares, when they come, are just about guaranteed to have you jumping out of your seat. Unfortunately unlike the American edition of the DVD that features commentaries, deleted scenes, behind the scenes documentaries and a 75 minute retrospective on the TCM series, all we get is the bloody trailer.

Daniel Wilks

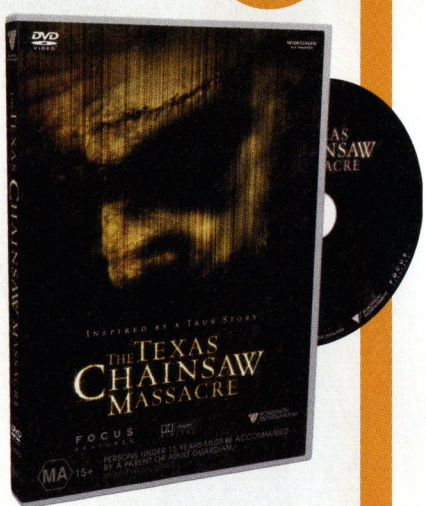
MOVIE: 8 / EXTRAS: 1

The early practise stages of Jim Rose's "Chainsaw Football" stunt.

Win Taxas Chainsaw Massacre on DVD!

10 UP FOR GRABS

It's rare that remakes of important films live up to expectations, but the new all-singing, all-dancing version of Texas Chainsaw Massacre does just that. Don't believe us? Then read the review! Better still, why not win a copy so you can decide for yourself! Thanks to Roadshow Entertainment, we have TEN copies of Texas Chainsaw Massacre to give away. To be in the running just answer this question:



Name two other films (aside from Texas Chainsaw Massacre) that Tobe Hooper directed.

Put your answer on the back of an envelope and send it to: **Texas Carmack Massacre, Hyper, 78 Renwick St, Redfern, 2016.**

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Matrix Revolutions

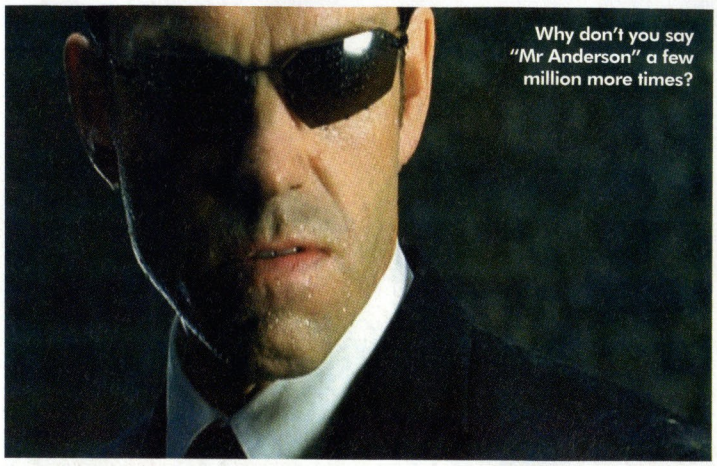
2 DISC SET

ROADSHOW, M 15+

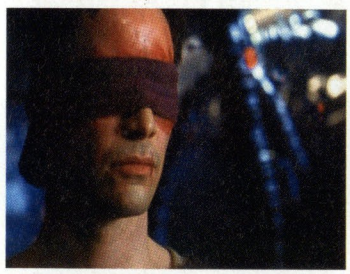
Many people are going to hate this, but Matrix Revolutions is an unjustly maligned movie. People have accused it of being redundant, confusing, stupid or not philosophical enough. These people seem to believe that The Matrix was a deep and clever film. What is clever about The Matrix is that it's simply a great action film that had enough pretension to make people believe it was something more. Although the second two films in the trilogy may not live up to the expectations set upon them by the masses yearning for another film to enliven a rather stale genre, they are by no means bad. Case in point – Matrix Revolutions neatly caps off the series featuring the final showdown between Neo and Agent Smith, sees the war in Zion and the ultimate resolution to the problems between the humans and the machines, complete with incredible special effects, some great movie references and the style over substance approach of the first film. Although many may be disappointed that the majority of the action in the final installment of the trilogy takes place outside the Matrix, thus negating any bullet-time wire-fu, what we are left with is no less spectacular. Just leave your brain at the door and you should be happy. In keeping with the other Matrix DVDs, Revolutions comes with a second disc packed full of extras including making of featurettes and the requisite game footage.

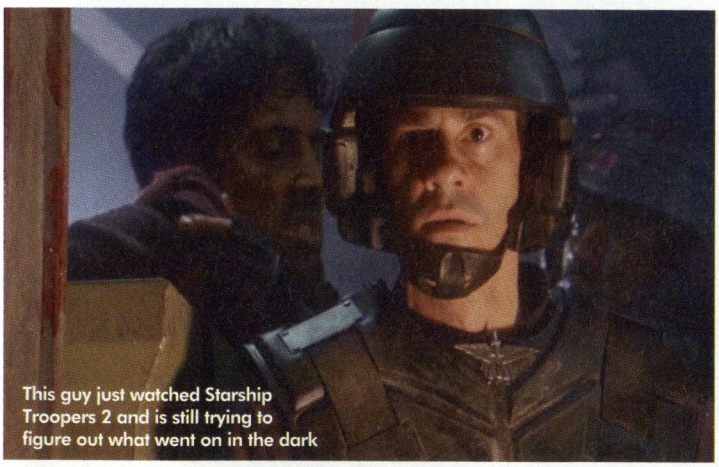
Daniel Wilks

MOVIE: 7 / EXTRAS: 7



Why don't you say "Mr Anderson" a few million more times?





This guy just watched Starship Troopers 2 and is still trying to figure out what went on in the dark

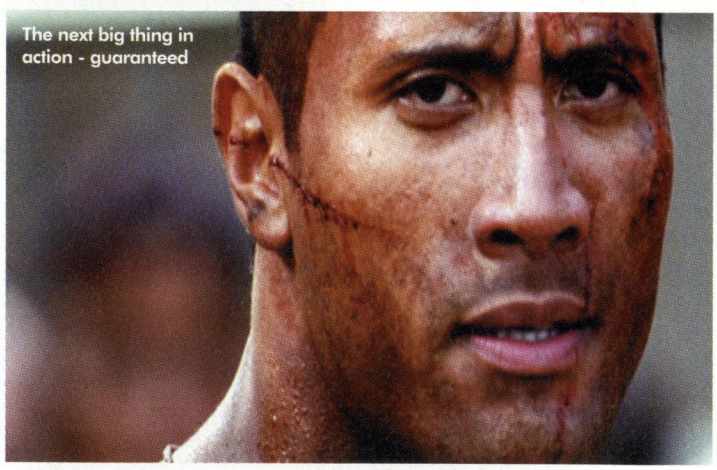
Starship Troopers 2

COLUMBIA TRISTAR, MA 15+

Sometimes filming a movie very dark adds to the setting – just look at the steamy constant night of Blade Runner or the claustrophobic emptiness of Pitch Black and you know this to be the case. On the other hand, sometimes all filming a movie dark does is make it hard to differentiate between characters, discover the protagonists of any given action or just work out what the hell is actually going on. Take a guess which camp Starship Troopers 2: Hero of the Federation falls into. Set shortly after the events of the first film, ST2 sees the heroic (if somewhat stupid) mobile infantry pushing further into bug controlled territory to finally wipe out the arachnid threat once and for all. Of course things end up going bad and the cadre of victims wind up holed up in an abandoned outpost as a new and malevolent type of bug tries to infiltrate and take them out. Although there is a hint of the anarchic satire that made the first film so great there is never a real spark and the film as a whole is devoid of the type of action that made the first film so good, namely much over the top gore and the lovely Dina Meyer getting her kit off.

Daniel Wilks

MOVIE: 5 / EXTRAS: 7



The next big thing in action - guaranteed

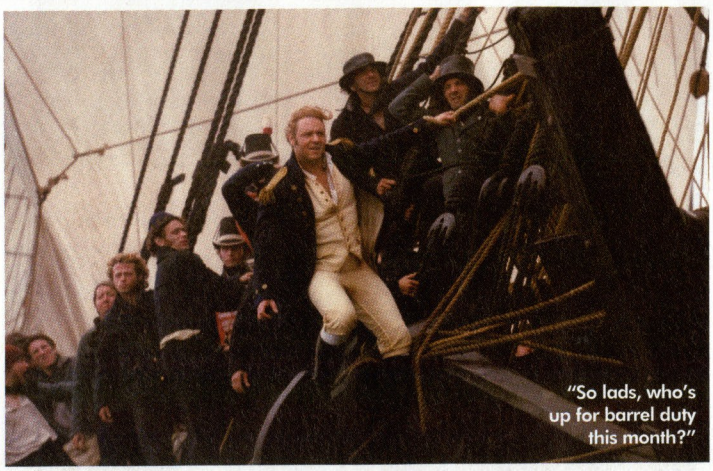
Welcome to the Jungle

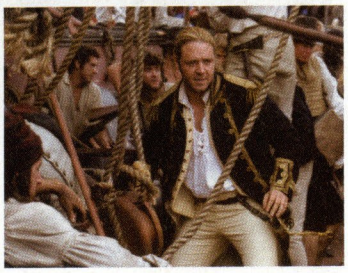
COLUMBIA TRISTAR, M 15+

After seeing Dwayne Johnson (The Rock) in little but a loin cloth spouting out some melodramatic lines and swinging a sword like he had no idea which end went in the bad guy in The Scorpion King, few people had any real belief that he had what it takes to be a leading man. Those people were wrong and Welcome to the Jungle amply proves this and also goes a long way to cementing Rocky as the next big thing in action. Not only does the Governator appear in a brief cameo, handing the action reigns to The Rock with a quick "have fun", the wrestler turned actor shows he has just what it takes to fill the rather big shoes. Not only is The Rock an imposing physical specimen, he also exhibits an almost inhuman level of charisma and the ability to poke fun at himself to such a degree that it is charming rather than obvious self parody. The Rock plays Beck, a mercenary who wants to own a restaurant who is sent to South America to track down the son of a crime boss (Sean William Scott) only to become embroiled in a plot involving a gold idol, revolutionaries led by the Rosario Dawson and the always watchable Christopher Walken as an evil industrialist with a penchant for insane rants. The disc also contains a number of funny making of featurettes that are almost as fun as the movie itself.

Daniel Wilks

MOVIE: 8 / EXTRAS: 8


"So lads, who's up for barrel duty this month?"



Master and Commander

FOX HOME ENTERTAINMENT, M15+

2 DISC SET

Based on the novels of Patrick O'Brien and adapted to the big screen by Peter Weir and John Collee, Master and Commander's narrative takes place in 1805 and follows the monotonous tag team movements of two boats. Captain Jack Aubery (Russell Crowe) of the British Navy is chasing the French ship Acheron, and the vast majority of the film is set within the claustrophobic and gritty surrounds of his ship. The setting may be fascinating, but the same can't be said for the rest of the film. Indeed, coming out the other side of this 138 minute film, there's very little to say. Stuff happens, but at no point do you really care for or admire the characters, and that's a major flaw for a film like this, as the cannon battles, sword fights and arm amputation are obviously meant to be driven by the characters and the situation.

The bland nature of the film, however, can be partly forgiven due to the inclusion of a solid second disc of special features. The chronicle of the 100 days of building the ships for the film is particularly intriguing, and unfortunately reminds you that so much of the detail is lost in the final production.

Rebecca Izard

MOVIE: 6 / EXTRAS: 8

A typical staff meeting at the Hyper offices

The Last Samurai

2 DISC SET

WARNER BROS, MA15+

There's just nothing like feudal Japan as the setting for an epic film, although we have to admit we're biased. You see, we love everything to do with Japanese culture, whether it be modern (tentacle rape aside) or ancient (tentacle rape aside). In this case, the beauty of the architecture and the countryside (even if it is New Zealand), the culture, the fashion, the fighting, the philosophy... it all adds up to a thumbs up in our books. Fortunately, in addition to its wonderful cinematography, The Last Samurai is a very entertaining film in its own right.

Japan was changing at a rapid rate, thanks to the end of their period of self imposed isolation. Nathan Algren (Tom Cruise) is recruited to help modernise their imperial army, but ends up among the samurai, and comes to appreciate their way of life... as it slips away. Although this may seem like familiar territory, the execution is wonderful, with a great cast of Japanese actors (Ken Watanabe in particular) and real respect for the setting and subject.

In addition to commentary by director Edward Zwick, The Last Samurai comes with a second disc packed full of extras. There's a video journal from the director, interviews about the process of bringing this period of Japanese history to the big screen, a featurette about production design, costume design, deleted scenes and more.

Cam Shea

MOVIE: 9 / EXTRAS: 8

THE *Greatest* MOVIES YOU'VE NEVER SEEN

Not exactly the people you would want to rely upon to save the galaxy

PART 2:

Lexx

ACORN MEDIA (IMPORT), M 15+

What started as four demented tele-movies co-produced by Canada and Germany quickly turned into a very successful, cult favourite and critically acclaimed science fiction series. Describing the plot would take far too long but the general gist of the series revolves around the Lexx, a giant living space ship that looks like an insect and his crew, the ineffectual Captain Stanley Tweedle - hated across half the galaxy for being responsible for 685 billion deaths, Xev (or Zev depending on the actress and season) - a fat woman transformed into an appealing "Love Slave" after failing to please her husband but who retains her personality despite her increased libido and Cluster Lizard genetic traits, 790 - a robot head madly in love with Xev after receiving her love slave conditioning and finally Kai – a dead romantic warrior and assassin who can only be thawed out for a limited time before his "proto-blood" runs out. Taking a liberal dose of Douglas Adams and Red Dwarf, mixing it with some Goethe style morose philosophy and topping it off with Benny Hill sexuality and you have Lexx in a nutshell.

Daniel Wilks

MOVIE: 8 / EXTRAS: 4

The Twelve Kingdoms

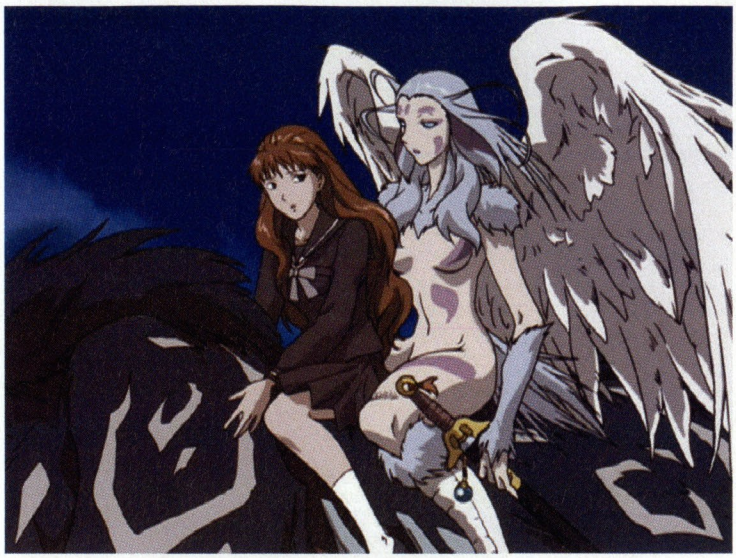
PRODUCTION COMPANY: PIERROT
GENRE: ACTION/FANTASY

If you're a good Hyper reader who watched the Escaflowne series back when we endorsed it six years ago, then you're probably cringing at the adulation being heaped upon it by noobs who've only just discovered it. Mercifully, The Twelve Kingdoms is a brand new fantasy epic you can sink your teeth into that's similar to Escaflowne in some ways, yet in other ways makes for far superior viewing.

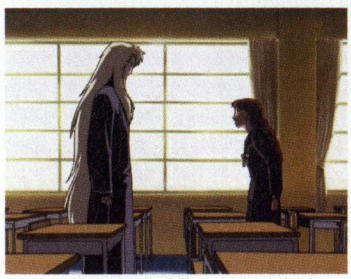
Youko Nakajima is an introverted, emotionally repressed schoolgirl whose life is turned upside down when a mysterious stranger takes her through a portal in the ocean into a parallel world made up of twelve kingdoms. In this enchanted alternate world of demons and magic, Nakajima learns that she is fated to do many great things in the land – but not without being constantly hunted by local authorities who believe she'll bring about a disaster. With the help of schoolfriends Asano and Sugimoto, as well as the magical spirits and animals that are loyal to her, Nakajima embarks upon a perilous journey towards the Kingdom of Kei to bring a resolution to her presence in the land.

Based on the novels of Fuyumi Ono, The Twelve Kingdoms is a breathtaking epic – its fictional history and culture lovingly depicted in every frame, every background, and every spoken word. The characters are oddly human in nature – flawed, annoying, unpredictable, yet fascinatingly conceived. That said, The Twelve Kingdoms is essentially Escaflowne without the mecha, with more believable characters, and with the grandeur of the Loddoss Wars series.

ANIMATION: 9 / PLOT: 8
OVERALL: 8



[above] Now this looks like a recipe for a yiffing good time



Macross Ultimate Collection

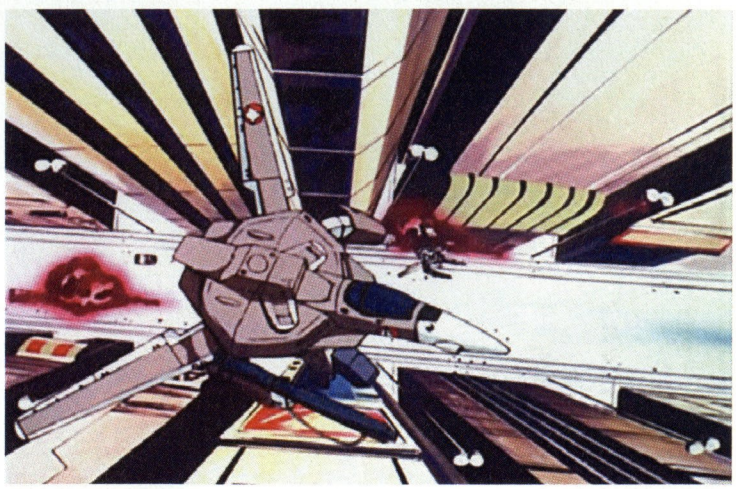
PRODUCTION COMPANY: TATSUNOKO
GENRE: SCI-FI/MECHA

There's a lot more that anime and pornography have in common than just outrageous sex. Back in the old days, if there was ever any footage deemed too explicit or violent for cartoon audiences, the offending portions would be cut from the final release, the deficit filled by existing footage that's simply looped and flipped vertically. Sometimes, there'd be so much footage cut from the original that the local production company would have to create its own scenes and characters, as was the case with Gatchaman (like 7-Zark-7 in Battle of the Planets). This chopped up world of Frankenstein animation is what Tony Abbott would have us watch if he had his way with Australia. As it is, he doesn't, so we can happily go about enjoying all the schoolgirl tentacle action we want.

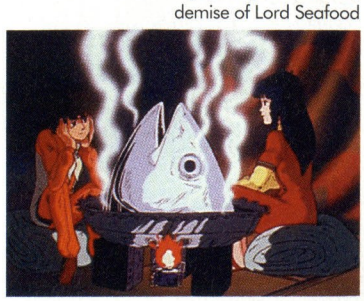
The old titles, in the mean time, are being re-released in their unedited form. The latest is Macross, the first and most popular component of Harmony Gold's Robotech Saga. This six-disc box set comes with all 36 episodes of the now legendary tale of an alien space station that crashes to Earth and catapults humanity into a race for survival against the gigantic Zentraedi aliens. Shoji Kawamori's transformable Valkyrie fighters piloted by Ichijo Hikaru (that's Rick Hunter to the uninformed) continues to inspire a generation of mecha fanatics, who'll no doubt love to see every sortie rendered in its original, uncensored glory.

The Macross Ultimate Collection box set is a must for anyone who considers him or herself a connoisseur of Japanese animation. The sound and video are beautifully remastered, but softcore pussies who only watch dubs will want to take note that the entire audio package is in Japanese with English subtitles. Which is just fine by us.

ANIMATION: 7 / PLOT: 9
OVERALL: 8



[below] The untimely demise of Lord Seafood



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Just Subscribe for your chance to win!

Screen technology is moving at a frightening rate – not too long ago in the grand scheme of things colour was seen as the great revolution, then flat screens, then Widescreens, Plasma and High Definition. To celebrate the dawn of a new revolution Philips have been kind enough to give us one of their brand spanking new **170T4 Widescreen High-Definition LCD Monitor/TV combo** units to give to one lucky subscriber. No longer will you have to watch TV in crappy resolution or play your DVDs through your monitor – now thanks to **Philips** you will be able to see them in the highest resolution possible in the correct aspect ratio! To make it even better the tiny footprint of the unit hardly takes up any space at all. How's that for cool?

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Q. Nintendo DS or Sony PSP?

Nintendo has had an iron grip on the handheld gaming scene for well over a decade now, but with more and more computing power and the process of convergence, will they be able to keep up with what the consumer wants? Whether or not you believe that Nintendo and Sony aren't going to be competing with one another, most gamers will only be able to get one of the new systems... so what's it going to be?

HYPER FORUM

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

? "Who is the world's worst videogame sidekick and why?"

Responses will be printed in Hyper #130

MAIL THE HYPER FORUM:

78 Renwick St. Redfern,
NSW 2016
Australia
E-mail: freakscene@next.com.au
with Hyper Forum in the subject line, and the topic of discussion at the top of your response. Please note that very long contributions may be edited.

NINTENDO SOLIDARITY

As a long time devoted Nintendo fan, it has to be DS for me. I'm a hardcore gamer, I care about GAMES, not multi media. Seriously, would you buy a portable DVD player if it had a screen the size of a handheld gaming system? Would you really want to hold the unit for two hours at a time if you're not interacting with it?

Predictable Sony are taking the multi media path, which will probably prove profitable for them. The masses will flock to the PSP, and for good reason, it will probably be an awesome system, but in my opinion even though we know almost nothing about the DS at this stage its safe to say it will be a far superior system.

I like to believe that I know how Nintendo think, and I know that they are going to deliver not only what their GBA and GCN fans want, but much more because this time they have stiff competition. Honestly, its taken a looooong time for Nintendo handhelds to "advance" and its because they didn't have to, but now they do, and they will.

This is what "I'd like to see": The DS to have a high resolution, the power of the GameCube, and be compatible with its games. (I believe Nintendo used those 8cm discs for more than piracy control and aesthetics)

Mawson Ridge

PSPASSION

SONY PSP!

Now I am a big, loyal fan of Nintendo but think that Sony are definitely on to something with their new handheld concoction. It seems to have everything a gamer-on-the-run could ask for! A large screen, slick system specs, 3D capability and awesome portability. The developers and publishers who have signed on to make and publish games for the device are certainly big names too. EA definitely seem to think the platform has potential and lets face it, EA have never published a game that hasn't sold well (except for maybe TRON 2.0, WHERE WAS THE MARKETING!?)? Nintendo... well they seem to be moving along okay, but two screens? Creativity... I'm thinking more along the lines of in-accessibility? How are games going to run on two separate screens? Separate, cinematic camera angles focused on two or the same part of the gameplay action might be nice. But I find it hard enough concentrating on one screen on a bumpy ride home let alone two! The information on the system specs for the DS has been rather scarce though so lets hope Nintendo have something up their sleeves in that department.

Well that's my two cents,

Alex Fynes-Clinton

FAITH

OK, the Sony PSP or the Nintendo DS. Not a great challenge to decide on this one. The Sony PSP may have the fan following and the backing of giant Sony, but the DS is going to be my choice. I trust Nintendo to make a good handheld, and after the GBA, can they do anything wrong? And besides, it would be like watching 24 all the time!

It is I, Ninja Catfish

REMEMBER THE VIEWMASTER

Dear Hyper,

I must admit to being a complete Nintendo fanboy, so my choice here is obvious. What I did want to talk about though was the fact that the DS is a very misunderstood concept and could have a lot more going for it than anyone has seemed to realise...

Pretty much all the criticism on the DS I have read online (of which there is a dearth) is leveled at the main feature - the dual screens. Surely, the argument goes, you could achieve the same result with one screen split in two, and then you could actually have different sized windows instead of two identically sized screens. My assertion is this: the second screen is actually new and exciting because it heralds the start of a whole new thing: True 3D games!

What am I yabbering about?

Well, let's start with that classic toy of the 1980s, the Viewmaster. Apart from being the name of a cool song by Eric's Trip, the Viewmaster was a portable Stereoscope that allowed the user to see pictures with depth - not unlike, though superior to, the Magic Eye crap that replaced it a decade later. You see, with the Viewmaster you could see in full colour (and without the headaches and frustration) and each "reel" was like a story. I remember having heaps of them as a kid - Spiderman the movie (the 1st one, from the 80s) amongst others.

Anyway, the whole point here is that if the DS were designed in such a way that each eye was seeing an independent screen, depth could be

perceived. This also makes some sense of the dual processors, as they would each need to draw the environment from a slightly different angle.

I don't know what Nintendo have up their sleeve, but if we're lucky and they haven't completely lost their minds, we could all be playing true 3D games on a portable console.

I can dream....

Colby Hanks

NINTENDON'T

Can I just go for both? Both handhelds seem promising and come from respected manufacturers so it's hard to choose. But if I have to, for now I'd have to say PSP. First because I'm a PlayStation fan, but secondly because Nintendo are too secretive with their specs for the DS! It was called Nitro, and then there was news that it had "touchscreen" features, we're guessing too much. And this double-screen thing Nintendo's going on about seems like they're trying to revive the double screen Game & Watch from the 80's (it probably is since Nintendo say it's not a Game Boy).

Sony on the other hand is flooding us with info. I'm really excited with UMD being used, and the specs are just amazing (33 million polys/sec)! The developer/publisher support is growing larger too, especially with EA on board. It's like an éclair, sweet and creamy. And Kutaragi-san's words just added the icing, "It's the walkman of the 21st century" – now that's gotta be good!

In my opinion, the PSP is not competing at all with the DS, it's actually challenging the next GB. A handheld console war? Sounds exciting!

Anthony Palmer

SHIGGY LOVE

I'm not gonna lie to you guys, I'm a Nintendo freak, so naturally I want a DS. Why? Why not?! With Shigeru, Konami, Sega and whatnot. And Nintendo are the best at being innovative, I'm pretty sure they'll find a better use for the double screen then a soccer game.

PS. you guys rock!

Mark Heilbron

BRANDING

A Sony handheld has been a long time coming, and the PSP is probably going to make them a killing, seeing as brand name recognition matters more than anything nowadays, and most of the little brats who don't own a GameCube or haven't been gaming more than five years think Nintendo quite simply suck. It's probably in Sony's best interests to make it especially easy to port PSone games to the PSP, seeing as Nintendo have managed to recycle a hell of a lot of NES and SNES titles to the GB and the GBA respectively. In fact, most decent console games will probably be ported over to a handheld with similar capabilities to it's origins about 10 or so years down the track (GTA: VC or GT4 on the PSP2 one day?). I didn't happen to catch how powerful the DS will be. Another GBA revamping like the GBA: SP or as powerful as the 64? Having it somewhere in the middle would be an awkward position to be in.

Mark Howell

[above] Between the PSP and the DS we'll take the "How To Breakdance" Viewmaster card every day.

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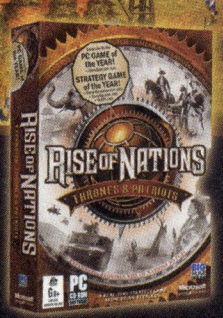

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MAKE HISTORY

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[above] Ari Gibson returns in style with some nice Crystal Chronicles art

CAPTION THIS!

PART 53 WINNER

Our old pal **David Hyde** sent this one in. Not bad, not bad at all.

Yuna's Hidden Dress Sphere: The Floral Faux Pas.

RIPPED OFF

Yo Hyper,

First of all I would like to say that your magazine kicks arse! This is the magazine I always consult before buying a game and your opinions are always accurate. I have recently been wanting to buy a lot of games and it just hit me that the price is almost extortion, for one thing I only get $10 bucks a week from my folks and that has to last all week so it takes around ten weeks to save up for a single game and therefore by the time I have the money it is hard to find the game so I have to then do some real digging to find it, the simple solution would be to get a job but I am too young to get one. Another point has already been raised by another reader and that is the American dollar conversion should have us paying $76 per dollar.

So why are we being ripped off so badly? Is it the shops or the publishers being greedy?

Thank you 4 listening to my thoughts and putting up with my possible ignorance. Please enlighten me as 2 why we are being ripped off so bad.

Thanks for reading,

blythoman_13

Dear blythoman_13, (I want to meet the other 12 blythomen), although the Australian dollar is at a high point at the moment when compared to the greenback the Australian market can't base retail sales around that alone – if we did the price of games would fluctuate on a daily, if not hourly basis. The main reasons for games costing what they do here is the shipping rates on the games, and taxes put on them by the government.

URU DEAD

Hey Hyperdudes,

I was devastated when I got the news of the death of Uru Live. I know they weren't getting enough consumer support but why didn't they get that support? All the time we see great products and ideas that could literally make games last forever get canned or ignored. Like the Sims Online (I haven't actually played it). It was supposed to offer everything the Sims had but in an environment where you could interact with real people. Uru Live tried to offer the same thing, the Uru experience with added interactivity. Are gamers so scared of each other that we avoid games where we have to interact and stick to the mindless games where we blow each other up. Even MMORPG's aren't interactive. Its not you who's in the game, it's a character you've created and that's not a real person you're fighting beside, its a character someone else has created. Why can't gamers be themselves online and why do games that allow this opportunity fail? Oh, and don't say cost cause Uru was offering free passes to people.

Thanks for reading this rant and probably wasting your time, I just thought it was a good issue.

Stuart Watt (Thats me not an alias)

Dear Stuart Watt, if that is your real name (shit, the joke doesn't work when you point out it is your real name), we can't say for sure why Uru Live failed but we believe it may have had something to do with the demographic of the majority of people who play games such as Uru and Myst. These people, as a whole aren't gamers but rather computer owners with only a little interest in gaming. It may simply have been that the market that bought the game had no interest in anything other than a relaxing single player experience like the games they had played in the past.

STRAIGHT TO IT

Great. So Sony will make its PS3 even more multi media than the PS2? Is that really a good idea on Sony's behalf as a manufacturer of videogame consoles? I mean I was on the PS2 bandwagon very early on, I shelled out $699 for my series 30002 PS2 thinking that I'd also benefit from the kick ass DVD function (as I'm sure a lot of people did as well). Since then I have had to purchase a real DVD player that actually PLAYS DVD'S (I made sure it wasn't a Sony) to save myself the head ache, heart ache and gymnastics I have to go through to get that incompetent black box to come up with that "disc read error" line that I love so much. What really sent me over the edge isn't Sony's cruel little marketing ploy, but rather that my recently serviced PS2 has stopped playing my favourite game, GT3 when there's no scratches or markings on the DVD and it works on a friend's PS2. It plays everything else (but movie DVD's) so I think I have a right to be upset. Oh and my GameCube, Dreamcast, GBA, N64, SNES AND NES all work fine to further rub salt. Maybe instead of convergence technologies Sony should channel a little more money into reliable technologies... Nah I don't think the idea will ever catch on, it's not cost effective. Oh and what's the deal with CELL technology for the PS3, will I have to own a house full of Sony appliances if I want to get the best

continued page 96

LETTER OF THE MONTH

PORTS TO THE LEFT, REMAKES TO THE RIGHT

Hey Hyper,

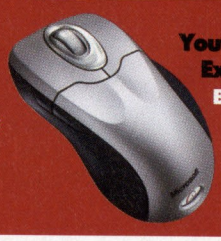
Is the recent proliferation of ports on the GameCube market a sign of the future, or just a temporary occurrence? There are 4 Zelda and 3 Resident Evil ports, plus the remade Ocarina of Time, Resident Evil and Metal Gear Solid. These games are a great opportunity for gamers to experience some classics again or for the first time. The remakes are/will be fantastic, with the developers taking significant care to rework the graphics and gameplay. But then you get the rubbish. A PC port of a MGS game had press start on the title screen amongst its numerous shortcomings. Resident Evil 2, 3 and Code Veronica X looked hopelessly outdated without the graphical enhancements that made RE1 brilliant. I'm concerned that in the future there will be more games ported and developers won't make such an effort, if at all, to do justice to these games. The success of these remakes may determine the likelihood of future ports (or remakes) being released. Luckily RE1 has outsold RE2 and RE3.

I appreciate the GameCube has little market share, resulting in it missing out on a lot of games exclusive to PS2 and/or Xbox. New games are less profitable on the cube, and ports are a cheaper alternative, with the game already developed and a reputation established. I just hope that the ported games continue to be good enough to have succeeded without the original.

By the way, I heard that Beyond Good and Evil will be released soon on Gamecube. In the future, could you mention in the preview or review for similar games that they will eventually be released on Gamecube?

Al Christie

Dear Al, if that is (and it seems likely) your real name, it seems to us that no matter which system you own you're going to be adrift in a sea of ports, but yes, the GameCube does either miss out or get the "remake" treatment more than most. Our advice? Hope that Shiggy can be cloned sooner rather than later...



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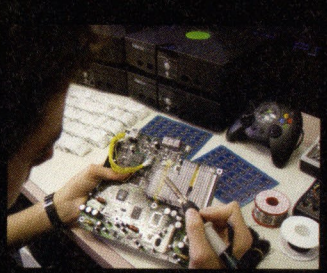

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out of my PS3? (what do you mean it won't play GT5 if we don't have a Sony TV, Stereo, Microwave, blender and Toaster) That sounds like another one of Sony's cruel marketing ploys to get me to buy more of their crap. To end on a lighter note, Fire Emblem has put a big fat smile on my face, it has really satisfied me with pretty much every thing it does, except how it autosaves after every turn, a bit unforgiving but you get used to it. Finally to Lord Seafood, you've made Hyper a very readable magazine in your tenure as editor, a little bit bias at times but it does add personality.

Well that was my spleen vented.

Adios Loady Macgee.

Dear Loady Macgee, (do you know Chokey McChoke?), come on now dude – we're big fans of the rant here but you can't paint all of Sony's products with one brush because you've had some problems with a first generation PS2. The idea of having a device that can play games as well as DVD is very tempting for a consumer and it would be foolish of Sony not to take advantage of this. Instead of blaming Sony you might want to have a talk to the people that serviced your machine as from what you've said it stopped playing GT3 afterwards.

BUNNING STEVE

Hey Hyper people,

1) Is Viewtiful Joe worth getting? Or is there something else that is better?

2) I was at Bunnings Warehouse the other day and I swear I saw Steve Farrelly working there. Does he work there?

3) Why did Nintendo Gamer shut down? It was so cool and funny not to mention infomational.

4) I'm sure you don't know this one but why is it that every time I go to Zoonami.com it hasn't been updated since 11.11.03? That's really pissing me off!

P-Trac...

Dear P-Trac, (what's with the elipsis?), in answer to your questions:

1) *Viewtiful Joe is great if you want a new spin on a classic side scrolling beat em' up.*

2) *That indeed was Steve – though you were lucky to catch him. Even though he officially "works" there he hardly ever goes in.*

3) *Unfortunately Nintendo Gamer wasn't making a profit so it had to be closed down.*

4) *I'd say the reason it hasn't been updated since 11.11.03 is because nobody has updated the site since 11.11.03.*

STEVE LOVE

Greetings, 'Tis the season to be Jolly! It's 2004 and many things of immense proportions are to baffle us gaming fans this year! Yay! :D

I'd like to send my salutations and regards to Hyper and its flawless team of hardworking "go getters" as well as a very special homie of mine...um...drum roll please...Mr Stephen Farrelly! * crowd roaring noise * I've never seen someone who could scull beers like Steve @.@ !!!! Therefore I've done a portrait of this wonderful guy.

Hey! Flattery gets people to higher places =P So here we go.....! =)

Aregato! Xoxoxo

[above] There is no emoticon for how frightened this piece of Steve Love makes us

Natalia Silva

Dear Natalia Silva, we only have one question for you? Are you the person who has been hiding in Steve's bushes at night? Oh, and you might want to go to "emoticonaholics anonymous".

The Official Australian Games Chart

Compiled by GfK in association with the IEAA

TOP 10 PlayStation 2 Games Over $50

W/E 4 April 2004 RETAIL SALES

1	▲	SOCOM 2 US Navy Seals	Action
2	▼	Need For Speed: Undergrnd	Racing
3	▼	TC Ghost Recn Jungle Storm	Strategy
4	▲	GTA: Vice City Ptm	Adventure
5	✪	Rtn Castle Wolfnsten Op Res	Action
6	▲	Simpson's Hit & Run	Adventure
7	✪	Crash Nitro Kart	Racing
8	▼	Final Fantasy X-2	RPG
9	✪	Dr Seuss Cat In The Hat	Adventure
10	✪	True Crime Streets Of LA	Adventure

TOP 10 PlayStation Games Over $30

W/E 4 April 2004 RETAIL SALES

1	◆	Yu-Gi-Oh Forbidden Mem	Strategy
2	◆	Simpson's Wrestling	Sports
3	◆	GTA Collectors Ed	Adventure
4	✪	Digimon World 3	Adventure
5	▲	Beyblade Let It Rip	Adventure
6	▲	Disney Triple Pack	Adventure
7	✪	NBA Live 2003	Sports
8	▼	Medal Of Honor 2 Pack	Action
9	▼	FIFA 2004	Sports
10	◆	Tomb Raider 3 & 4 Pk	Adventure

TOP 10 Game Cube Games Over $50

W/E 4 April 2004 RETAIL SALES

1	◆	Final Fantsy Crystl Chron	RPG
2	✪	Harvst Moon:Wonderful Life	Simulator
3	✪	Metal Gear Solid 2 Twin	Adventure
4	✪	Mario Golf	Sports
5	✪	Mario Golf Toadstool Tour	Sports
6	▼	Mario Kart Double Dash	Racing
7	◆	Simpson's Hit & Run	Adventure
8	✪	Worms 3D	Strategy
9	▼	Mario Party 5	Family
10	▼	Bond: Everything Nothing	Action

TOP 10 Xbox Games Over $50

W/E 4 April 2004 RETAIL SALES

1	◆	TC Splinter Cell Pandora	Adventure
2	✪	Midnight Club 2	Racing
3	▼	GTA Twin Pack	Adventure
4	✪	Star Wars Jedi Knight Ac	Adventure
5	▲	Simpson's Hit & Run	Adventure
6	▼	Need For Speed: Undrgrnd	Racing
7	✪	Mission Impossible 2 Surma	Action
8	✪	Rtn Castle Wlfnstn Tide War	Action
9	▲	Dr Seuss Cat In The Hat	Adventure
10	✪	Robotech: Battlecry	Action

TOP 10 PC Games Over $20

W/E 4 April 2004 RETAIL SALES

1	▲	Counter Strike Cond Zero	Action
2	▼	Far Cry	Action
3	▲	The Sims Deluxe	Strategy
4	◆	Battlefield Vietnam	Action
5	▼	Unreal Tournament 2004	Action
6	✪	Empires: Dawn Modern World	Strategy
7	✪	Civilization 3	Strategy
8	▼	The Sims Superstar	Strategy
9	✪	Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell	Adventure
10	▼	The Sims Unleashed	Strategy

TOP 10 Game Boy Advance Games Over $30

W/E 4 April 2004 RETAIL SALES

11	▲	Dr Seuss Cat In The Hat	Adventure
2	▲	Yu-Gi-Oh Wrld Champ 04	Strategy
3	◆	Pokmon Sapphire	RPG
4	▼	Pokmon Ruby	RPG
5	▲	Finding Nemo	Adventure
6	✪	Dragonball Z: Legcy Goku 2	Action
7	✪	Yu-Gi-Oh World Wide	Strategy
8	▼	Simpson's Road Rage	Racing
9	✪	Super Mario Adv 4: SMB3	Adventure
10	▼	Yu-Gi-Oh: The Sacred Cards	RPG

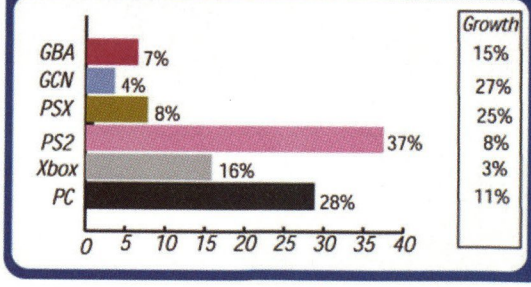
TOP 10 All Full Priced Games

W/E 4 April 2004 RETAIL SALES

1	◆	TC Splinter Cell Pandora	Tom Xbox
2	▲	SOCOM 2 US Navy Seals	PlayStation 2
3	◆	Counter Strike Cond Zero	PC/MAC
4	▼	Far Cry	PC/MAC
5	▲	Need For Speed: Undrgrnd	PlayStation 2
6	✪	Midnight Club 2	Xbox
7	✪	The Sims Deluxe	PC/MAC
8	▼	Battlefield Vietnam	PC/MAC
9	▼	TC Ghost Recon Jngle Strm	PlayStation 2
10	✪	GTA: Vice City Ptm	PlayStation 2

MARKET WATCH All Games by Platform

Mar 04 Vs Feb RETAIL SALES



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

GfK

Charts can be viewed at **www.informbd.com.au** *as part of Inform's comprehensive database of online market intelligence, updated weekly*

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Next Issue:

REVIEWED

TRANSFORMERS

One of the best games to come out of Australia?

PLUS: We ask the console manufacturers some probing questions, go inside an Australian development house and still find time for the usual dose of preview and review goodness. Damn this mag rocks!

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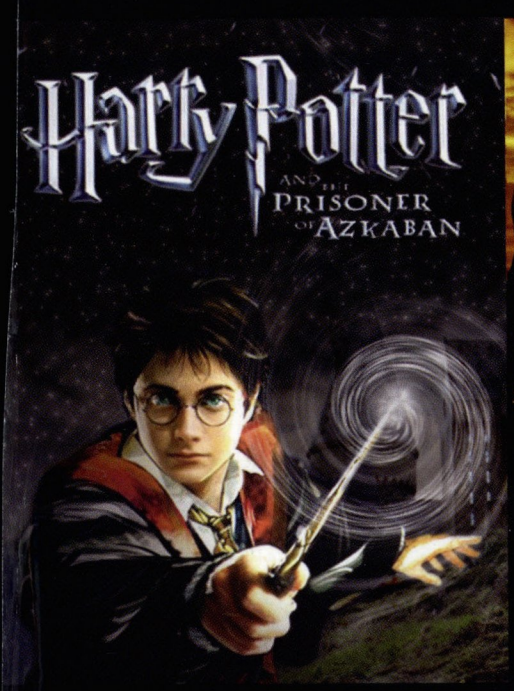

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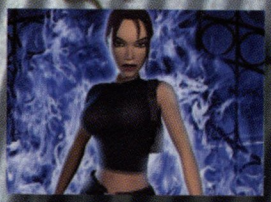

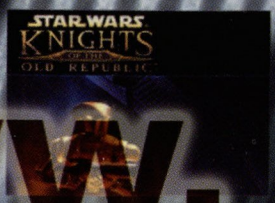

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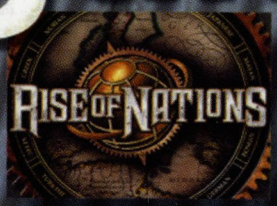

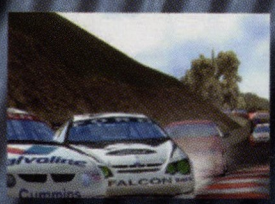

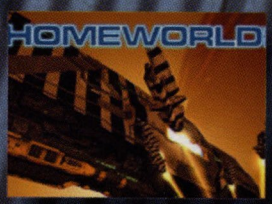

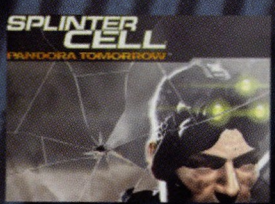

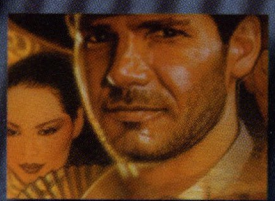

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