EXCLUSIVE! AIRONAUTS FIRST LOOK AT THIS FUTURE BLOCKBUSTER

£2.95

extreme PlayStation MAGAZINE

Issue 2 Feb 98



Aironauts
Top Dogfight action!

Chill out with
Coolboarders 2

Bushido Blade
Swordplay, Squaresoft style

WIN!

An exclusive Sony snowboard • Sony Discman
Diesel jacket • Rodney Matthews artwork
PSX clothing • Bucket loads of games

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TEKKEN 3 • NHL OPEN ICE • ACTUA ICE HOCKEY • CHILL • SNOW RACER • RIVEN • DEATHTRAP DUNGEON & MORE

extreme PlayStation • Issue 2 • February 1998

PlayStation

NEW
AV

"JERSEY DEVIL WILL BE DANCING ON THE GRAVE OF THE COMPETITION THIS CHRISTMAS."

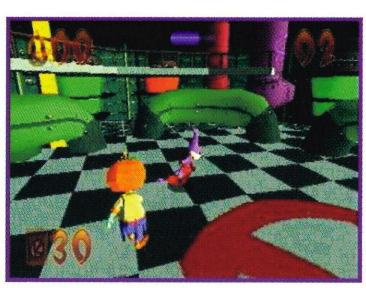
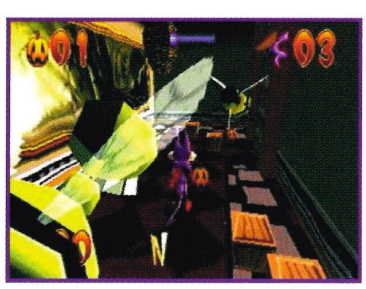
93% extreme PlayStation

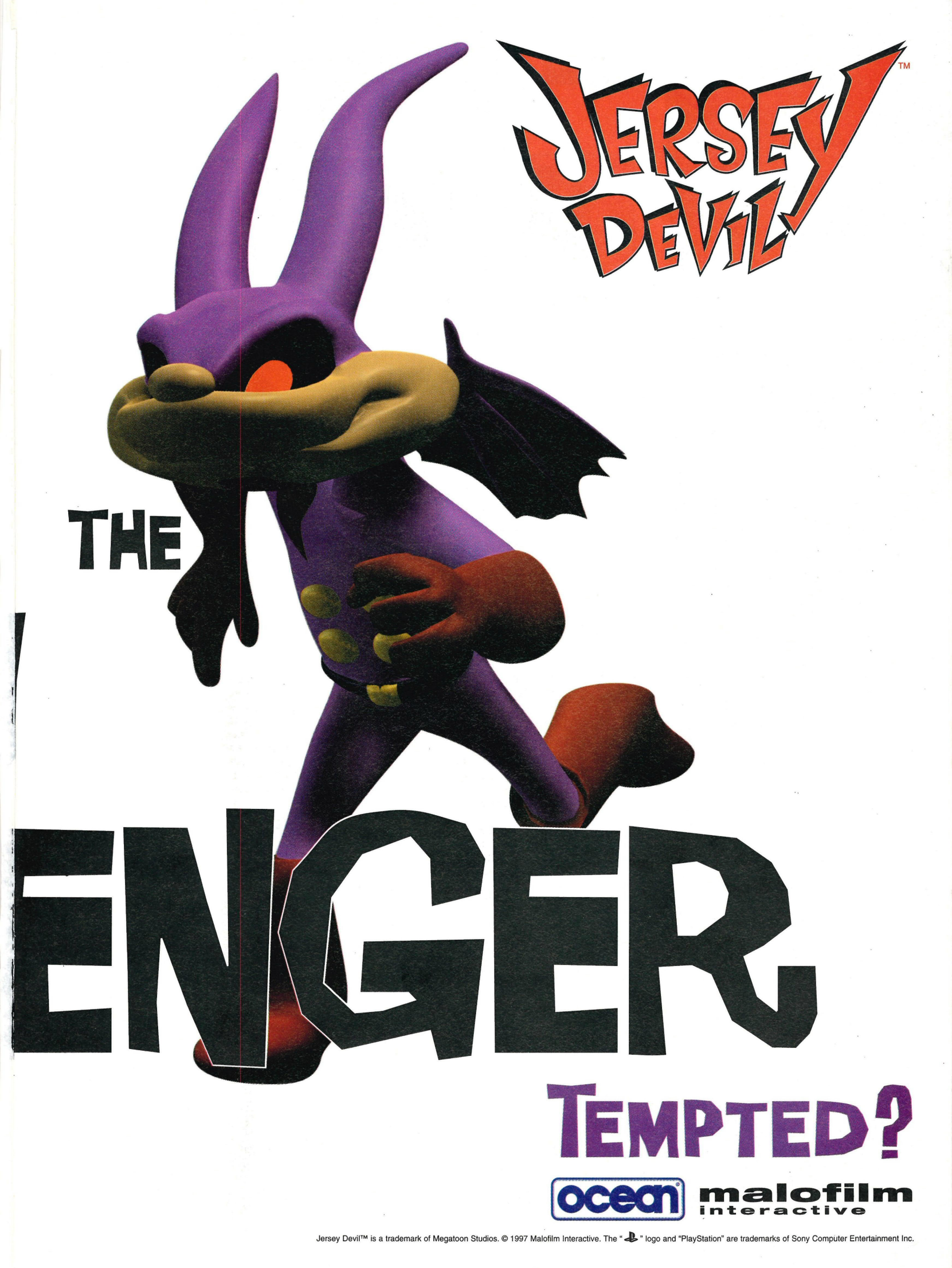
"SO, THE BEST OF THE 3D BUNCH? CERTAINLY!"

PlayStation Magazine STARPLAYER — The Official PlayStation Magazine

"JERSEY DEVIL IS A CLASSY PLATFORMER"

90% PlayStation plus

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Editorial

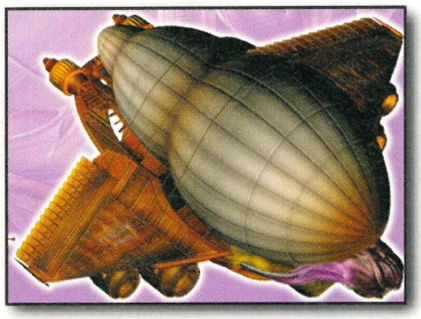
Back for a second helping?! Well, let's kick-off by giving you the 'pukka' news that we are now a monthly magazine. Due to the H-U-G-E sales of the first issue, the original plan to be bi-monthly has now been canned (applause, screams of excitement, sighs of sexual contentment). So from now on you won't have to wait a whole two months to get your greasy mits on an issue.

If you thought the first issue was good, well, you ain't seen nothin' yet. This mag features over forty of the hottest titles around, with an exclusive preview of red lemon's 'Aironauts'. Issue two also sees the introduction of two new sections - Extra's and Ex-communication (come on, we gotta milk it!). Ex-tra's is our lifestyle pages, covering everything from the 'high' Freak Brothers to tunes kickin' off the dancefloors around the globe. Ex-Communication is where you can air your feelings on whatever you bloody well like!

Later,

Darren

Highlights

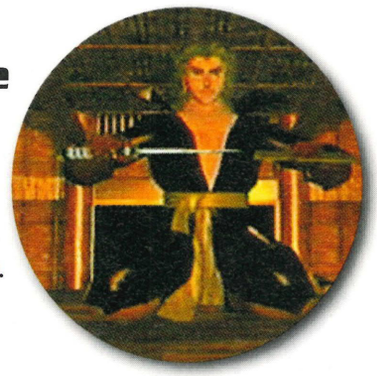


Flying High

red lemon studios may be the 'new kids on the block', but they have a wealth of videgame knowledge spanning many years. Their 'Aironauts' is shaping up to be one of '98's big successes. We trundled off to Glasgow to meet the talented team behind the project, to grab an exclusive preview of the game. Check out those cool characters on page 20.

Bushido Blade

Squaresoft have taken the fighting genre - chewed it up, swallowed it, regurgitated it, and spat it out - to produce an inspiring title. No energy bar, no rounds, one hit kills, a code of honour; features that have never graced a beat-'em-up before. To find out more, turn to page 68.





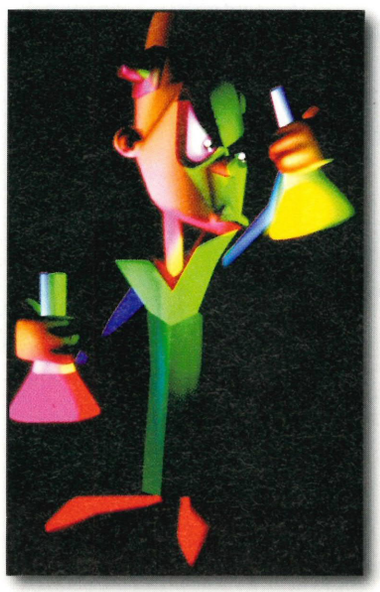
Cold As Ice

The cold weather always brings bags of Winter sports games to the videogames market, but with the Nagano Olympics only around the corner, there's even more. Check out -

Chill on page 12
Snow Racer on page 30
Actua Ice Hockey on page 36
NHL Open Ice on page 44
Coolboarders 2 on page 52

Platform Mayhem

Where did it start? And where is it going? From Donkey Kong to Rascal, our 'Take A Running Jump' feature anatomises every Platformer that has appeared on every console. So if you 'jump for joy', this is for you! Leap to page 46.





Coolboarders 2

Awesome Dude. If snowboarding's ya thang, then slide on down to page 52 to find our eight page in-depth review. All the problems of the first have been ironed out, and with more boards and more courses this is our game of the month.

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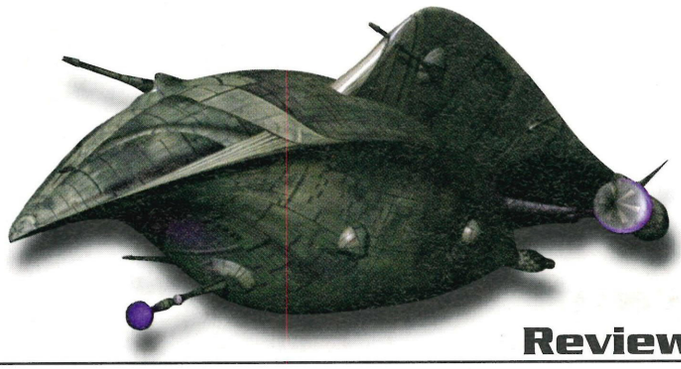
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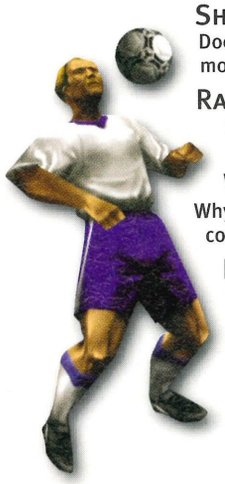
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Next Issue 98
Read this issue first, though!



Review Guide

Overall Score - 91-100%
Dog's bollox, cat's knackers, etc. Buy, beg, borrow or steal this game. Worth pawning your granny's heirlooms for.

Overall Score - 81-90%
The dog's bollox, but not quite the cat's knackers. Still worth spending your hard-earned dosh on, and definitely worth stealing.

Overall Score - 71-80%
Make sure you play this little critter before you buy or steal it. Many will think it's great, some will think it's crap.

Overall - 51-70%
We're getting on the verge of this-ain't-even-worth-stealing territory. It might interest punters who are big fans of the genre.

Overall - 25-50%
Okay if you've received it as a present, but parting with cash for this title might be regarded as madness.

Overall - 0-25%
If you see this game lying on the pavement, cross over to the other side. If you see it on fire, don't piss on it - let it burn.

signals

If it's happening, it's here! extreme PlayStation brings you the latest news.

PLAYSTATION LEADS THE WAY



CHRISTMAS FIGURES JUST IN

The PlayStation sold over thirty thousand more units than its nearest rival, the N64, this Christmas. Figures for PlayStation hardware topped over 140,000 over the holiday season whereas Nintendo could only manage 110,000; confirming the PlayStation as the country's leading platform for yet another year.

There are now over 1.9 million PlayStations in British homes and the current European figure is around 7.2 million machines. In fact, Christmas saw a shortage of PlayStations throughout the country as Sony found it hard to meet the massive demand for the little grey box.

Software sales also went through the roof with sales for all formats up 70% on last year's Christmas period. The top Christmas title this year was FIFA: Road to the World Cup '98; which is no surprise as FIFA always does well at Christmas, despite the quality of its former incarnations. Tomb Raider 2 took a close second with TOCA: Touring Car Championship, Crash 2 and Grand Theft Auto all faring well.

GRAN TURISMO LATEST

GT to get Euro overhaul

GRAN TURISMO
THE REAL DRIVING SIMULATOR

Sony's Gran Turismo is to receive something of a going-over before it hits UK shelves. Not only will it be 15-30% faster than the Japanese original, but it will also have a brand new soundtrack, provided by the best of British bands. The bands involved in the project are: Manic Street Preachers (Chemical Brothers remix!), Ash, Garbage, Dubstar, Feeder and Cubanate. Gran Turismo will be the first PlayStation game to feature a soundtrack completely made up of famous bands, rather than two or three famous tracks plus a slew of in-house recordings.

Also for the European version, some of the cars have been moved around so that European cars can be used in the arcade mode. The slowdown caused by smoke effects will be rectified. A new Pan European Competition is to be included, which can be activated with a special code. Finally, there are more camera views planned, including an over-the-bonnet view which has yet to be finalised.

With its 250-plus cars and super-fast game engine, Gran Turismo is shaping up to become the pinnacle of driving games. Let's just hope the June release date stays.



MK teevee

RETURN OF THE WATER MARGIN



It seems somebody, somewhere thinks this video game malarkey can make them some cash on the big screen, and now even the small screen.

Mortal Kombat, the live-action (that means not cartoon) series is due to debut in America this Autumn. The companies behind the project, Warner Brothers Domestic Television and New Line Television, must have a lot of faith in the franchise seeing as the movies and the cartoon have been so cack. We think it may be something to do with the fact that the Mortal Kombat name has made over $4 billion dollars worldwide since its first outing in the arcades. Then again that's a little cynical, isn't it?

Anyway, the series is set to follow Kung Lao and pals in their struggle to rid the planet of villains and, no, David Carradine won't be taking the lead role. We're promised a weekly dose of high-kicking martial arts action and some incredibly cheesy acting (we added that part ourselves). We don't know when, or if, Mortal Kombat will grace our small screens but you can bet Channel 5 are getting all excited about it.

DOOM THE MOVIE

ID'S CLASSIC HITS THE BIG SCREEN

Fans of the classic game Doom will be pleased (or pissed off) to hear that a movie of the game is in the making. The film is being produced by TriStar pictures who have obviously seen the potential of the Doom franchise.

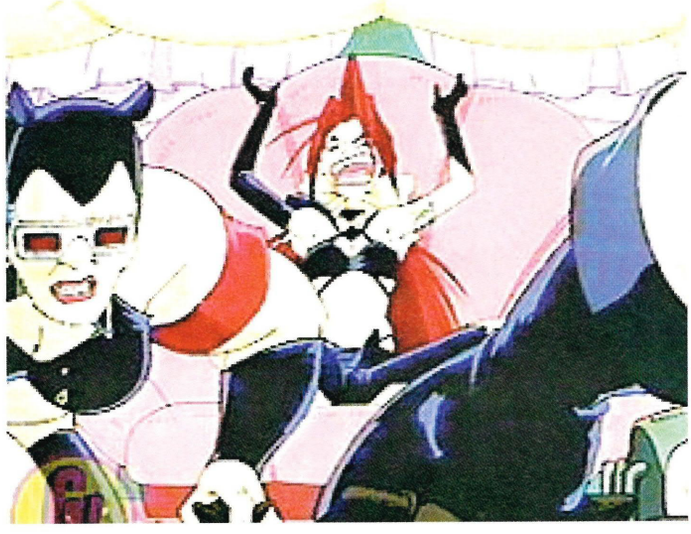
Who will star or what the plot will be has yet to be confirmed, but you can bet it's going to be a good, old-fashioned shoot-'em-up full of one-liners and big f**k-off guns.

If history is anything to go by, Doom - The Movie will probably be pretty mediocre. Film companies have yet to realise that a big videogame licence doesn't always translate to a great film (and vice versa), although they usually do all right at the box-office. Check out Super Mario Brothers and Mortal Kombat: The Movie, both steaming piles of turd, both videogame movies, both did well in terms of cash. Still, we'll all be at the front of the queue for tickets when Doom - The Movie opens...



FINAL FANTASY ANIME

More crossover antics



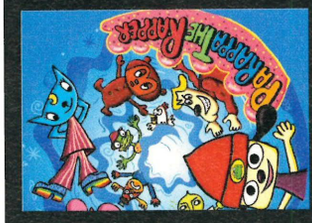
Not wanting to be outdone by Mortal Kombat on the telly and Doom on the big screen, Urban Vision and American Anime are set to release one of the most anticipated anime videos for a long time. Final Fantasy: Legend of the Crystals continues where the SNES release Final Fantasy V left off, and although it's not a sequel, the plot does tie in.

We're promised sixty minutes of the usual Final Fantasy antics, so expect to be dazzled by fantastic locations, awesome fight scenes, massive spells and the all-important classy dialogue that comes with most Final Fantasy games. This is just the first video - more episodes are expected later in the year. No UK release has been confirmed for Final Fantasy: Legend of the Crystals, although you should be able to pick it up on American import with ease - make sure your VCR can play NTSC tapes.

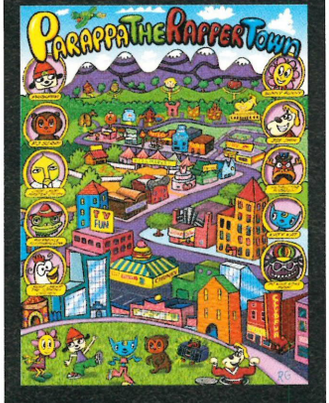
By the way, it's also rumoured that a Final Fantasy movie will hit the screen by the year 2000. More news as it's made.



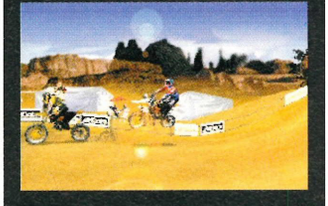
PARAPPA TO RAPPA AGAIN



Fans of Parappa The Rapper, one of the PlayStation's most original titles of 1997, will be pleased to hear Parappa The Rapper 2 is already in production. The announcement was made at the Parappa The Rapper New Year Live Party in Tokyo. Sales of the original game topped one million, and it was universally hailed as a fantastic, if somewhat weird game. There's no real information on storylines or difference from the original yet, but you can be sure that as soon as we know, you will too.



ACCLAIM JUMPS JEREMY MCGRATH



Top SuperCross champion Jeremy McGrath is to endorse Acclaim's forthcoming title, Motocross. And by the looks of the screens we've seen, it's shaping up to be somethin' else. Jeremy started his career riding Suzuki bikes, but now competes in championships upon a Yamaha. Interesting!

Sony files lawsuits

COUNTERFEIT VILLAINS SHIT THEIR PANTS

Sony Computer Entertainment America have filed lawsuits against six supposed software counterfeiters. The counterfeiters are said to have been selling dodgy copies of PlayStation games over the internet, under the pretence that they are back-up copies of the games that the customer already owns. Hmmm.

Sony says it's still illegal for anybody to copy a disc, even if they own the game, and it's also unlawful to sell copies of games under the idea that they are, in fact, back-up copies. This led to false advertising charges, but Sony are also going for infringement of copyright and trademark. Counterfeit software affects third party publishers, which in turn affects the punter, so Sony are determined to make the world gold disc-free. If Sony win the case, it should be the starting point in closing all counterfeiters down, which in the end will benefit everybody; even you, believe it or not.

SATURN SUCCESSOR ANNOUNCED

Sega unveil the Katana

Okay, so this is a PlayStation magazine, but we still thought you'd be interested to know that Sega has announced its new console (working title, Katana - previously known as Black Belt and Dural), won't be released in Europe until next year. Although the news is pretty negative, it does highlight the fact that there will definitely be a new Sega machine.

It's reported that the machine will be shown for the first time in Japan later this year. A Japanese release date hasn't been set yet, but it's rumoured that the Katana may have a Japanese launch of late '98.

In light of this new announcement, it's also been revealed that Sega America have made thirty percent of it's staff redundant, and ceased production of the Saturn. It's curtains for the Saturn then (at least in the States), but if Sega's history is anything to go by, they'll be back.

COCK-UP CORNER

It was our fault...
If you read our TOCA: Touring Car Championship review last month, you may have noticed our blunder in The Score (page 75). TOCA is published and developed by CodeMasters, and not ASCII Entertainment and Climax as stated. The in summary comment came from our Felony review; how, we don't know. It should have read something like, 'TOCA is the best racing game on the PlayStation, buy it'. It's a shame nobody wrote in and informed us as it was a secret competition with a prize of £10,000. Too bad.

FINAL FANTASY VIII?

Squaresoft plan next game in Final Fantasy saga



With Final Fantasy VII riding high in the charts, Squaresoft are said to be already planning Final Fantasy VIII. Details are sketchy, but the game, pencilled in for a fourth-quarter 1998 release, is likely to be similar in style to FFVII.

Just like Final Fantasy VII, Squaresoft are to include mini-games within Final Fantasy VIII. Two are so far confirmed, a skydiving section and a chocobo shooting event. While FFVII had you breeding chocobos (large domesticated birds which can be ridden and raced), FFVIII has you breeding monsters. How this is done or for what purpose has yet to be revealed.

Fans of Final Fantasy VII will remember Cloud Strife falling into the lifestream. On being rescued, while in a wheelchair in Mideel he said, "taken... angel's... singing voices... zeno... gias...". Squaresoft of Japan refused to shed any more light on Zenogias. "You'll find out", was their only response. Could he be in Final Fantasy VIII? Again Squaresoft aren't saying, but he's also rumoured to be a boss character from a new game called Zenogears.

Finally, according to unsubstantiated rumours, Square Honolulu (the latest branch of Squaresoft) are to produce Final Fantasy IX, budgeted at $70-80 million, probably for the forthcoming PlayStation 2. These rumours are denied. According to an unofficial source, there will be a FFIX, but "Square Honolulu is working on the Final Fantasy Movie. Square will no doubt finish Final Fantasy VIII before starting work the ninth".

HOUNDED BY THE FASHION POLICE?

...then how about winning an exclusive Diesel jacket?

Psygnosis have teamed up with Diesel - one of the world's leading global denim and fashion labels - to produce exclusive limited edition Diesel-designed-and-manufactured G Police clothing. And to support the promotion, G Police PlayStations have been installed in Diesel Superstores in major cities around the world.

G Police's Blade Runneresque cityscape environments also incorporate 3D neon-style Diesel logos, and a 3D rendering of Diesel's famous New York City superstore.

Bob Shelvin, Diesel's Director of New Media said, "This project was really a natural progression for us. We were familiar with Psygnosis, and had a great deal of respect for their work. When they proposed a game to us with a storyline taking place far-off in the dark film-noir future, we thought it would be great to imagine the Diesel brand still existing at this point in time; perhaps existing in some strange new omnipotent form".

If you like the sound of owning limited edition Diesel clothing, then you're in luck. The guys at Psygnosis have kindly given us a G Police/Diesel jacket, and when they say 'limited edition' they mean 'limited edition'. There are only 50 of them in the UK, so you won't have the worry of seeing some other tosser wearing the same jacket as yerself. To win it, answer this simple question:

WHO STARRED IN *BLADE RUNNER*?



A. ANNA FORD
B. ROGER MOORE
C. HARRISON FORD
D. HARRY CORBETT

Answers on a postcard to:

G Police/Diesel Compo
extreme PlayStation
Quay Magazine Publishing
Quay House
The Quay
Poole
Dorset
BH15 1HA

*Entries must be in by 26th February 1998

TARTS ON CARDS

Like it!



To coincide with the release of Deathtrap Dungeon, Eidos will be releasing Deathtrap Dungeon - The Card Game. Ian Livingstone has designed the game using an idea from an ancient Chinese card game called 'Zheng Shang Yu'. The aim of the game is to rid the dungeon of monsters; players kill monsters by discarding cards and are then awarded with points depending on who gets rid of all their cards first. The player who has accumulated the most points at the end of 4 rounds is the winner. Simple. The card game also features the Exploding Pig, one of the highlights of the videogame counter-part.

We like these because a few of the characters on the cards are horny bitches, though not as frisky as Red Lotus (the star of Deathtrap Dungeon), good enough to shag on a dark night.

Muscle Cars in Vigilante 8



Just before going to press, we recieved the first shots of Vigilante 8 - Activision's new combat driving game. It boasts innovative graphics, a new 3-D landscape engine and a modern soundtrack. There are 12 super-charged vehicles armed with an arsenal of high-tech weapons and strategic attack moves. Special effects include lens flares, real-time reflection mapping, and car and terrain deformation. This title also includes split screen two player action, and multiple view options. We'll bring you more next issue!

BEAST WARS

Transformers Robots In Disguise!



Another late game to hit us on deadline day is Hasbro's Beast Wars Transformers. It's based on the action figures and cartoon series of the same name, and is an arcade style shoot-'em-up. All are to be launched in the Spring of this year.

Transformers made their first public appearance in the States in July 1984, in an animated TV commercial for the Marvel comic book. And believe it or not, between the years of 1985 and 1994, Transformers toys have generated a staggering $45 million in income in Europe alone.

THIS MONTH WE 'AVE MOSTLY BEEN PLAYING

Darren
Red Alert (link-up),
FIFA Road to the World Cup '98,
Theme Hospital,

Saul
Red Alert (link-up),
Coolboarders 2,
Grand Theft Auto

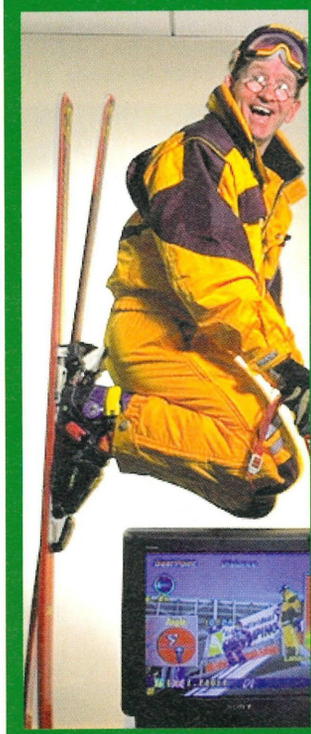
Ian
Red Alert,
Castlevania: Symphony of the Night,
F1 '97

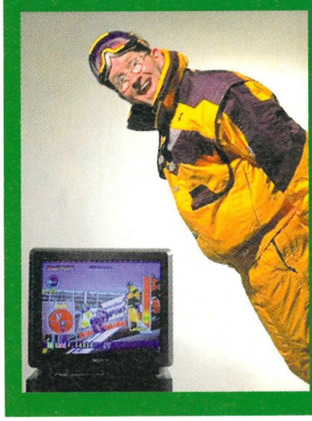
Graham
Total Drivin',
V Rally,
Crash Bandicoot 2

THE EAGLE HAS LANDED

Eddie Edwards 'jumps' again

To promote Nagano Winter Olympics '98, Konami invited everyone's favourite loser, Eddie 'The Eagle' Edwards, to their offices for him to brush-up on his ski-jumping skills. And after playing the game for a couple of hours, Eddie had apparently achieved his longest jump ever. Which shows that he must be half decent at playing videogames, but really shite at ski-jumping. Or, on the other hand, it might mean Konami's ski-jumping simulation isn't that accurate!





Gamespotting

All of these games are in development; there's no playable code available yet, but with games such as Tekken 3, Newman Haas Racing and Chill, we know you want to know what's going down. Some titles have been updated from last issue with new shots and new info. Enlightenment starts here!

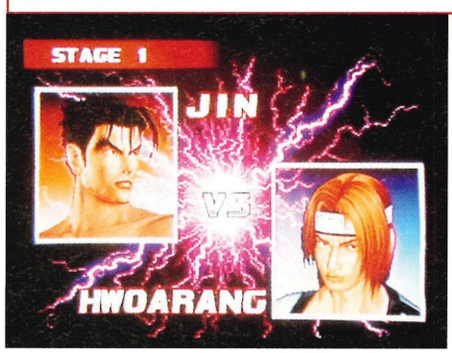
Tekken 3

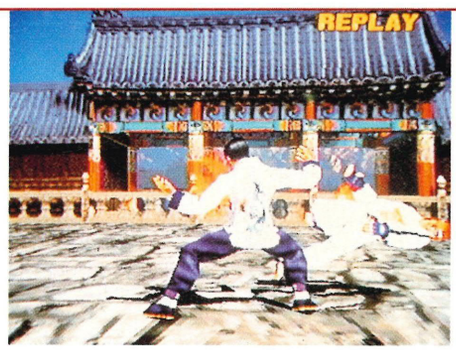
Publisher - SCEE
Developer - Namco
Released - Mid '98

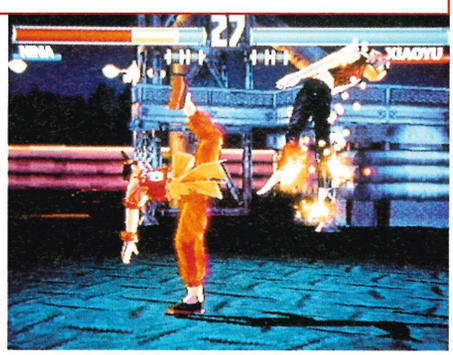
Here are the first shots of the PSX version of Tekken 3; everything is looking rosy in Namco's garden. Rumours have been flying around that they would have to produce an add-on for the PlayStation to handle the System 12 technology the arcade version uses, but these proved unfounded. Mike Fischer, Namco's director of marketing said, "The PlayStation version of Tekken 3 will not be released with any type of add-on. The development team is really pushing the limits of the PlayStation. Tekken 3 will showcase what the system is really capable of doing". Previous arcade Tekkens have implemented System 11 hardware, which is virtually akin to the PlayStation hardware.

The story line takes place twenty years on from Tekken 2, with the 'God of Fight' slaying and capturing the world's most potent martial artists. The character line-up keeps some of the old faves, but also introduces a few new boys. Eddy Gordo, he's an ex-con with a dance-like fighting style; Hwoarang, master of two different fighting stances, taught by Tekken 2's Baek; King - not the old King as he's now dead, but the new boy uses the same mask and moves; Heihachi, older and greyer; Lei Wulong, the bad cop who's still on the case, and is entering the tournament to solve the mystery of the abducted fighters; Paul Phoenix, has now grown a beard (Nice!); Orge, he's the final boss; Nina Williams, she's been asleep for the past 19 years for experiment purposes (shame she didn't volunteer!); Yoshimitsu, his weapon has changed from a metallic sword to a green lightsaber; and Jin Kazama, out to avenge the death of his mother.

As you can see from the screens, the graphics are awesome, with the fighters losing those hard body edges for a smoother more rounded look. There are also rumours from the States, where very earlier play-tests have occurred, that it could be as much as 50 per cent faster that its predecessors!





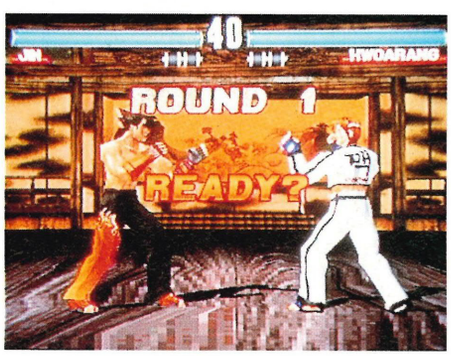


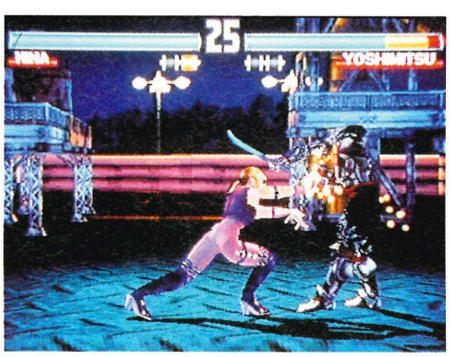












NBA Fastbreak '98

Publisher - GT Interactive
Developer - Midway
Released - 1st Quarter '98

There's plenty of basketball games on the PlayStation, so what's going to make NBA Fastbreak '98 any different? Well, Midway tell us the main new feature is a switch button that allows the player to change the ball from one hand to another. This means the player can turn his back on the opposing defender and then turn quickly in either direction, past the opponent and on to the basket - a kind of 'magic move'.



It also features hundreds of real players from the NBA, but all with realistic playing skills. For example, Shaquile O'Neal will be better at attacking the hoop than taking long three-point shots, but Kukoc from the Chicago Bulls will be adept at outside shots, but not a physical inside game. The game will be a higher resolution than most PlayStation games, with the view being seen from overhead, allowing the player to see the whole of the court and all ten players. The decisions by the coach, such as time-outs, plays and substitutions, can be automatic or manual.





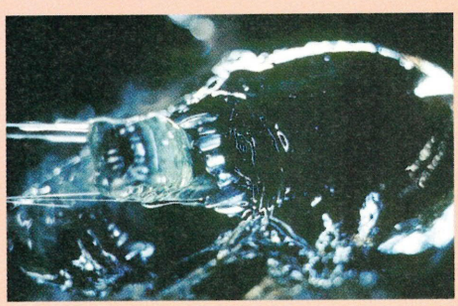


Alien Resurrection- The Game

Publisher - Fox Interactive
Developer - Argonaut
Released - Spring '98

You've probably guessed already, but this game's based on the spine-chilling motion picture Alien Resurrection, the current instalment in Fox's Alien series. Fox claim this title will have 'diabolical amounts of firepower', 'horribly frightening Aliens', 'apocalyptic mayhem', and 'acid dripping realism never before achieved'.





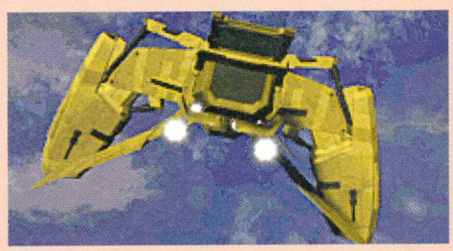
It all starts on a research vessel called Auriga, but you soon find your journey won't be the smoothest space cruise you've encountered. Chaos has enshrouded the ship, and a certain deranged Dr Wren is on the verge of escaping to Earth to carry through his evil cloning experiments. And it doesn't finish there; as well as Dr Wren's imminent escape, hordes of Aliens are closing in on the last survivors on the craft.

The player can choose from five different selectable characters. Once chosen, you have to guide your character through thirteen chilling levels. This third-person perspective bloodbath also boasts 'smart camera' viewpoint options to add to the realism. A diverse array of weapons are available for you to collect and use on your quest to stop Dr Wren and to protect yourself from the attacking Aliens.

All of the environments are destructible. With the help of Father, the spacecraft's computer, you must undertake assigned missions to complete each level to dispose of Wren's embryo experiments before you reach Earth.







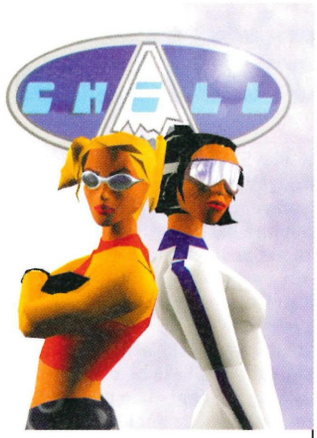


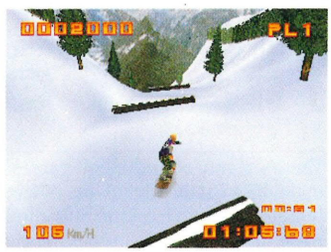




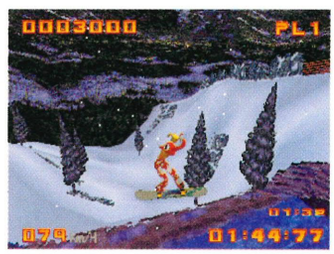
Chill

Publisher - Eidos
Developer - Silicon Dreams
Released - 3rd Quarter '98







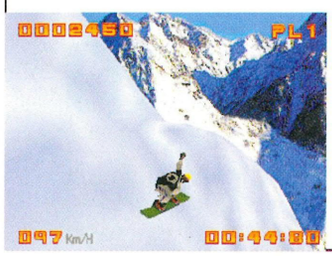


Snowboarding is becoming more popular as the years go by and as it's an official sport in this years' Winter Olympics, you can guarantee its profile will continue to soar. Not everybody can afford to go snowboarding, though, so the next best thing is to play a snowboarding game. These are few and far between, but check out our Cool Boarders 2 review this issue to see how much fun virtual snowboarding can be.

Coming soon, though, is Chill from Eidos and it looks like a contender for the PlayStation's 'gnarliest' game crown. You get the choice of five boarders and up to 21 different boards to try out over five different mountains. Players can go for a sedate, scenic run down gentle slopes or opt for the rush of extreme off-piste boarding on some of the most dangerous (virtual) slopes in the world.

The main aim of the game is to become the most 'chilled' boarder around, which is achieved by completing five of the most daring runs in the game. You don't have to take every run, so if you feel you're not ready to hurtle down a 90 degree incline you can always choose to go to a different area and practice on an easier slope.

A snowboarding game wouldn't be a snowboarding game if it didn't have a mass of jumps and stunts to perform, and Chill is no exception. It will have to be something special to out-do Coolboarders 2 in this department, though.





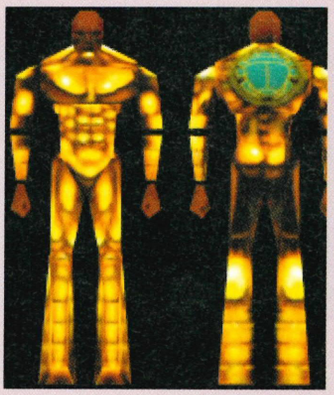
Chill will run at a minimum of thirty frames per second, and the skeleton-based animation system should ensure your boarder looks the part when you're caning it down the slopes. There's also a two-player mode, so you can pit your skills against a buddy and battle it out to become the most 'chilled' boarder.

Dead Ball Zone

*UPDATE

Publisher - GT Interactive
Developer - Rage Software
Released - 1st Quarter '98



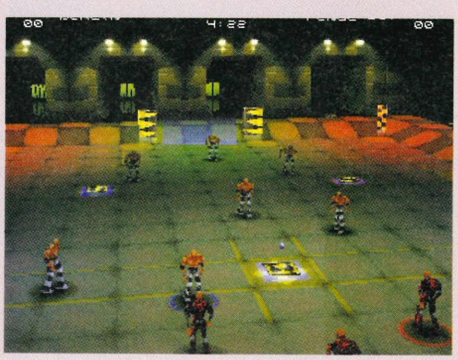


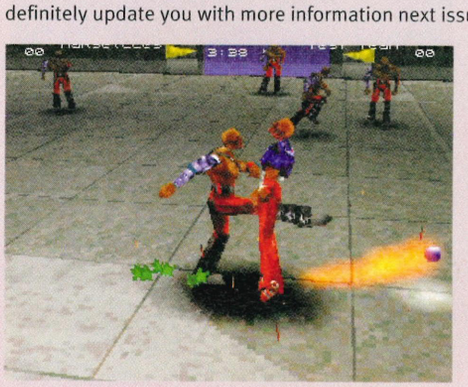


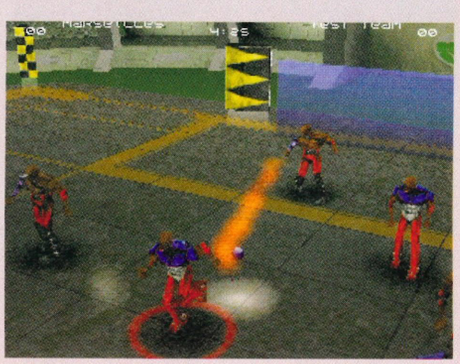
Remember the game Speedball? It appeared on many formats, and was a futuristic sport where two teams battled it out on a court with a metallic ball. The idea was to throw the ball into your opponent's net, but as well as the usual end-to-end tussles you could off-load the ball into chutes along the side of the court for extra points. Dead Ball Zone takes its main ideas from Speedball, but adds that 32-bit polish machines like the Mega Drive and Amiga could only dream of.

All of the player's movements are motion captured, so as you tackle an opponent by punching them out, the radical violence looks very real. You play on a 3D pitch with a fixed camera viewing the proceedings, but like any good sports game this camera can be adjusted using the options. The Dead Ball Zone has three divisions, each consisting of ten teams. These teams represent cities from across the world, from Mexico City to Tokyo. In manager mode you take on board one of the smaller cities, and once successful you can transfer to more prosperous surroundings.

We're off to meet the developers next month, so we'll definitely update you with more information next issue.







F1

Publisher - Eidos
Developer - Lankhor
Released - July '98



French developers Lankhor have had a great deal of help from Mclaren's race engineers to give F1 an edge over the competition, but beating F1'97 from Psygnosis will take some doing.

All 13 F1 teams and 17 real-life tracks are fully recreated in F1, and the gameplay should be the fastest and most exciting yet seen. Although the actual driving is intended to be more arcade than sim, there are plenty of simulation aspects to deal with as well.

All the cars have a true force model and all settings can be changed in the pits to get the handling just right. The weather aspects play more of a role than usual. For instance, racing at Silverstone might provide a little drizzle but you could well encounter a tropical downpour in Brazil. There's also a gauge to give you the depth of the water on the track to make controlling aquaplaning possible.

As in Codemasters' excellent TOCA, all the drivers in F1 are extremely intelligent and have the same style as their real life counterparts making the racing as realistic as possible. You'd be wise to give a wide berth to the brothers Schumacher, then.

Lankhor have introduced some new camera angles so the excellent visuals can be shown off as much as possible. All of the angles link together to give you a smooth view of the action rather than jerky movements between views, something that marrs many driving games.

Eidos' F1 is going to have its work cut out in the extremely competitive PlayStation racing games market, especially on the Formula One front. It's looking good, though, so the competition had better watch out.







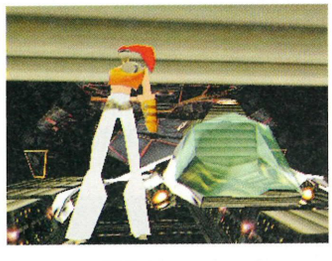




Lunatik

Publisher - Eidos
Developer - Pure
Released - April '98



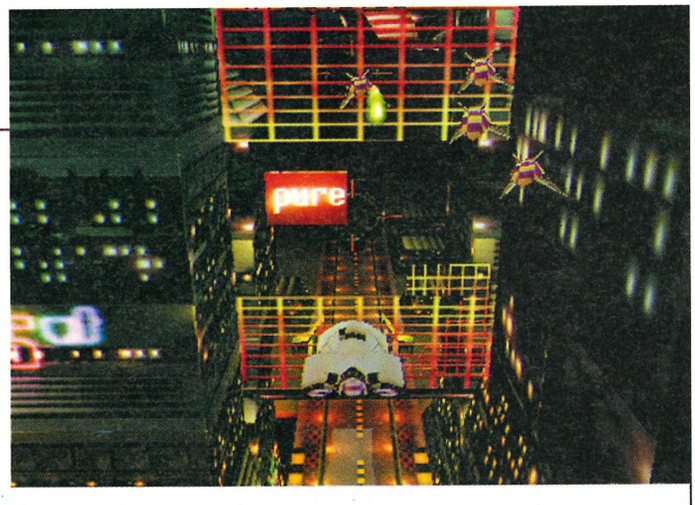




Lunatik is a 3D shoot-'em-up inspired by classic games such as Defender and Zaxxon. The classic gameplay of these eighties shoot-'em-ups have been improved to give PlayStation owners a truly awesome shooter.

Lunatik has eight massive, 3D rotating levels for players to overcome. Each one is a moon orbiting the now-decaying planet Earth. You play a citizen of new Earth as you battle across the other moons that are all controlled by... yep, you guessed it, mega corporations. Your corporate enemies throw everything their armies (and probably lawyers) have got at you with your goal a simple one - to survive and overcome the might of the corporations.

The 3D worlds and enemies all hold a feast of new features and effects that have never been seen before. A 'bump map' has been designed to make it easier to control your ship. This is basically a map of the world terrain which allows your ship to change height automatically as the hills and valleys come towards you, leaving the player to get on with the important job of causing mass destruction.



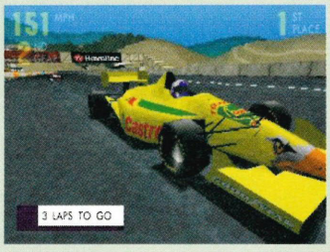
Lunatik looks set to give existing shooters a run for their money, and with a 'thumping boomfest' soundtrack to accompany the action it should be something special.

*UPDATE

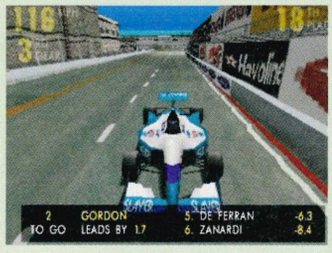
Newman Haas Racing

Publisher - Psygnosis
Developer - Studio 33
Released - March '98





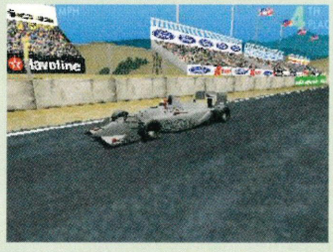




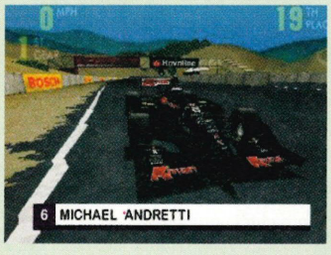
This latest addition to Psygnosis' motor racing stable is an Indy Car game based on their original Formula 1 game engine. While Psygnosis themselves beavered away on Formula 1 '97, the team worked on this Indy Car update side by side. Game parameters were changed to suit the different handling of the Indy Car, the circuits were redrawn and this year's Indy teams replaced our F1 faves.

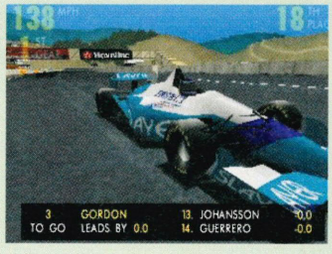
The game will feature 16 top Indy car drivers and 11 licensed tracks, two ovals, five permanent road circuits and four temporary street courses. There are also four fantasy tracks, to be revealed as the game is played. The PlayStation version features a great two-player split-screen offering, though on the preview copy we saw, not all perspectives were available in this mode. The game enjoys the realism offered by Psygnosis' earlier Formula 1 games, offering the same playability and feeling of speed.

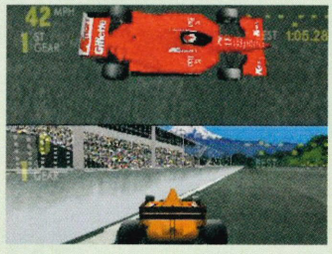
Newman Haas Racing hits the shelves in March, so expect a full review next issue. The way things are shaping up, it could prove a real corker.



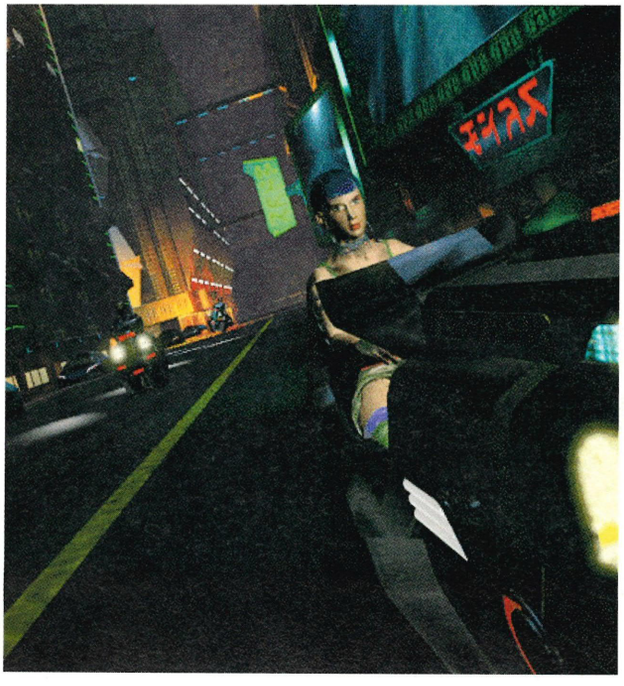






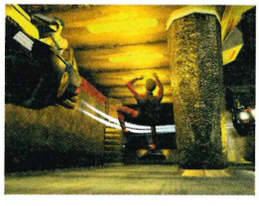






Publisher - Eidos
Developer - Quantic Dreams
Released - September '98

Omikron







Here's another real-time game from Eidos. This time it's an arcade adventure set in the city of Omikron, somewhere in another dimension. The game is a full 3D go-anywhere adventure, which means the whole city of Omikron is open to the player so there's plenty of exploring to be done.

The mix between arcade and adventure means that as well as taking part in 3D battles you also have to interact with other characters and solve some pretty devious puzzles in the adventure sections of the game. Although part adventure, producers Quantic Dream are striving to make Omikron an 'instant fun' type of game. Graphically things are looking great. Facial motion capture will be utilised to capture the movements of the characters' faces and the real-time 3D engine is reputed to be one of the most advanced ever used on a PlayStation game.

The arcade action in Omikron should appeal to most people, but the added adventure elements should interest hard-core gamers out there looking for something other than pure action.

*UPDATE

Rascal

Publisher - Psygnosis
Developer - Travellers Tale
Released - March '98

Following last month's Gamespotting report on Psygnosis' Rascal, we've been talking to the development team Travellers' Tales...



1. **When was Travellers Tales formed?**
The company was formed in 1990.

2. **How many titles have been developed since then?**
Eight altogether: Leander, Puggsy, Dracula, Mickey Mania, Toy Story, Sonic 3D, Sonic R and Rascal.

3. **How many people have been working on Rascal and how long has it taken to complete?**
Fifteen people have worked on Rascal and it took approximately a year to complete.

4. **What influences have other platform games had on the Rascal?**
Rascal was influenced by best elements of both the traditional and next generation 3D platform games.

5. **How did you manage to achieve such amazingly low loading times?**
We have stored the data in the most compact way possible which allows loading and decompressing whilst the game fades between the different locations.

6. **Rascal is TT's first 3D platformer. Was it difficult working in 3D?**
Luckily we were able to draw on the experience gained from the 3D sections in our previous games, such as Mickey's Wild Adventure and Toy Story. The toughest aspects were the terrain and the correct sorting of objects.

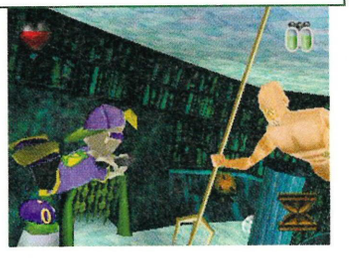
7. **What is Rascal's greatest technical innovation?**
Everything from the load time and sorting to the palette tricks has been designed to be as technically innovative as possible.

8. **The main character was designed by Jim Henson's Creature Workshop. What special touches does he have?**
As well as all of the basic and normal moves, Rascal also has a range of animations and the ability to track other creatures.

...so now you know.









Publisher - GT Interactive
Developer - Midway
Released - 1st Quarter '98

San Francisco Rush



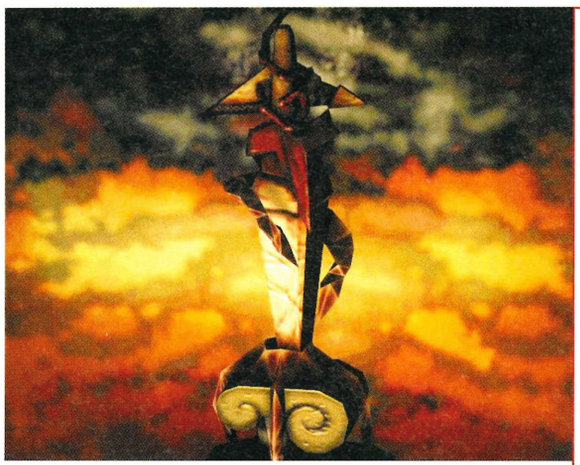


Based on the arcade game, San Francisco Rush features eight cars and six tracks. Included within the courses are the Golden Gate Bridge, the Trans America Building, Fisherman's Wharf, Alcatraz and many of San Francisco's famous hills and dales; not forgetting those distinguished trams. As with the Nintendo 64 version, there will be hidden levels, shortcuts and stunt sections.

Like most street racers these days, most of the scenery is interactive. You can crash into trams, fly off the huge San Francisco hills, smash through the famous landmarks and even drive along the pavement if you think it's a faster route. And for all you trainspotters out there, the 3D San Francisco model is based on the original physics model of the seminal classic Hard Drivin'.

Publisher - Psygnosis
Developer - Hookstone
Released - May/June '98

Sentinel Returns

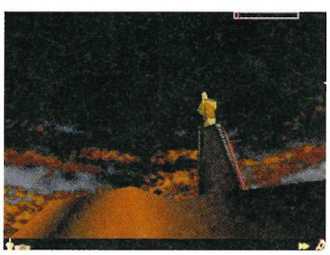
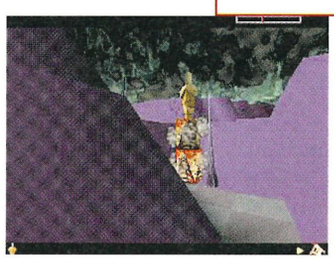


Those old enough to remember Jet Set Willy and Jet-Pac might well recall a certain Geoff Crammond game that set the gaming world alight. The game was Sentinel and was originally released on the archaic BBC Micro. It went on to appear on the C64, Spectrum, Atari ST, Amiga and PC. Now, Over ten years from the original release, Sentinel is about to make a welcome return to the limelight with Sentinel Returns (original or what?) on the PlayStation.

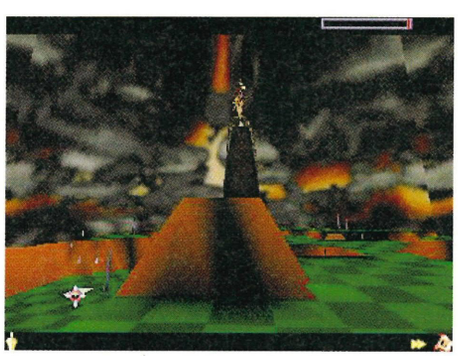
The idea behind Sentinel is certainly very original. The player guides a robot around a playing area in an attempt to consume objects that all have a different energy value. The Sentinel sits at the highest point in the landscape and the goal is to make your way through and take the Sentinel's position.

The original game had an abstract and very atmospheric style, and with over ten years of technological improvements over the original, Sentinel Returns has taken this to the extreme. Although the original chessboard-style has gone, Sentinel Returns is still square based; you can see them glowing when you stand on them.

A concious decision has been made to keep close ties to the original's gameplay (although Geoff Crammond is not involved with the project), so you can expect a certain amount of panic, paranoia and claustrophobia to hit you when you're playing. Of course, the visuals have changed completely but if the gameplay stays close enough to the original, Sentinel Returns will be a refreshing and original PlayStation game.





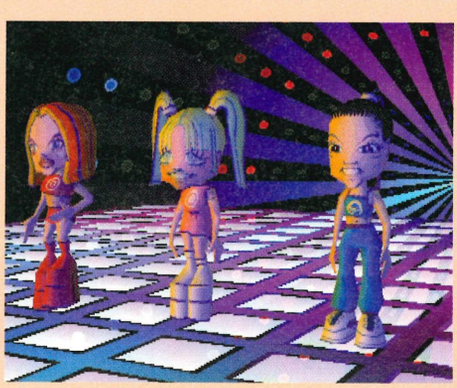

Spice World

*UPDATE

Publisher - SCEE
Developer - SCEE
Released - 2nd Quarter '98

As you can see, we've received a few more shots. These are from the last section of the game, where all your hard work remixing and choreographing comes together in a Spicy performance. Hopefully preview copies will be available for the next issue.



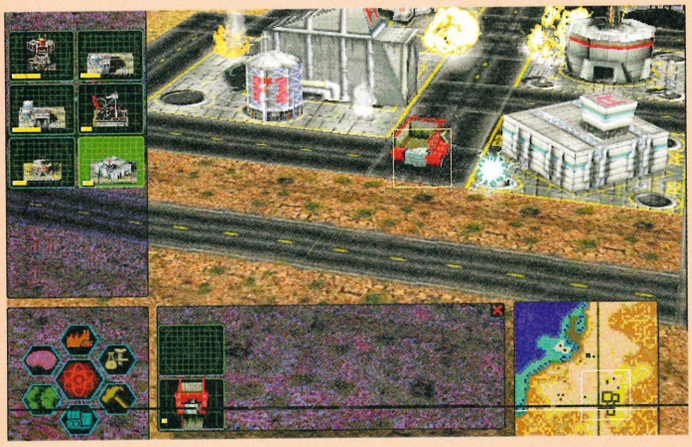



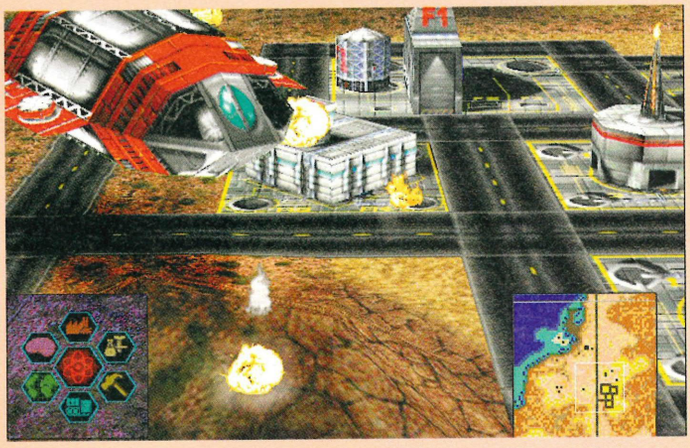
Warzone 2100

Publisher - Eidos
Developer - Pumpkin studios
Released - September '98

In Warzone 2100 the player's objective is to regain control of the devastated land of North America and return it to its previous glory. The game focuses on development of the player's Command Droids that have a varying degree of intelligence which actually progresses as the game goes on. The droids learn skills and tactics through their experiences on the battle field.
The game is a real-time mix of action and strategy although the strategy side does seem to play a more important role, especially in the development of your forces. As time goes on new technologies become available to the player, which allow the game to unfold in different ways every time you play.

Warzone 2100 promises a deluge of technical wizardry which includes sophisticated AI, a rotatable 3D landscape and a full range of transparency effects. There's also some excellent mission briefing and cut scenes for the player to witness.
Getting to grips with a strategy-based game can sometimes be a real test of patience, but the learning curve in Warzone 2100 should ease the player into a world of real-time battles and exploration, and extremely involved technology research and production. PlayStation owners won't get a chance to play Warzone 2100 until late Summer, but it should be worth the wait.



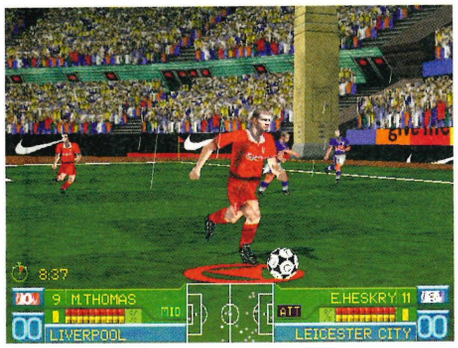


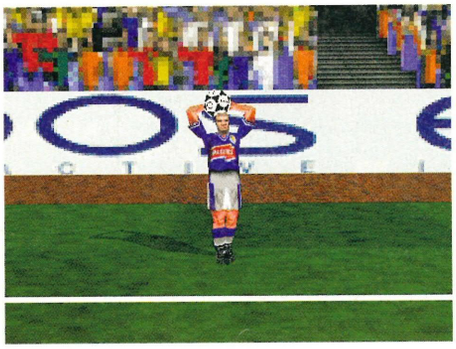
World League Soccer

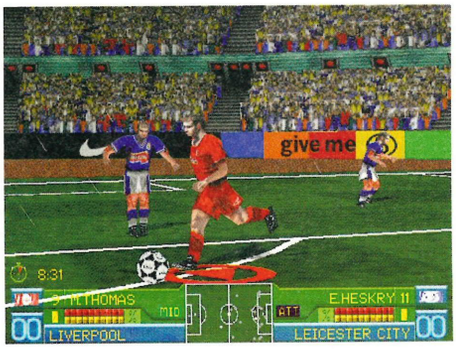
Publisher - Eidos
Developer - Silicon Dreams
Released - September '98



Yes, it's another football game. This time Eidos have one simple goal - to give PlayStation owners the ultimate soccer game.
World League Soccer promises an equal mix of arcade football and deep gameplay plus an innovative new graphical system that should make the game stand out from the crowd. The new skeletal visual system allows a higher resolution on the players and speedier animation. Added UV textures make the players look even better, with distinctive facial and body features and intricate kits design.
A football game relies on its control method and although we haven't tested World League Soccer yet, Eidos promise a simple but intuitive control to suit all style of players. A number of new moves will be included to give the game an edge over the opposition and with the added bonus of Sky TV's Martin Tyler and Ray Wilkins commentating, World League Soccer could well be a contender for the PlayStation World Cup.

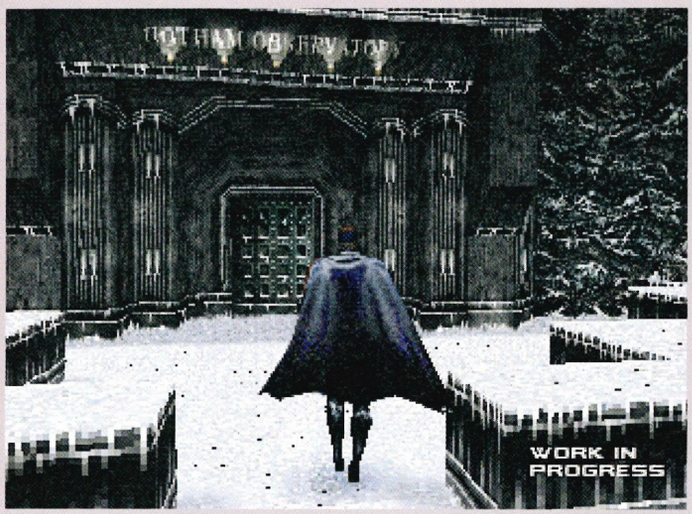






Publisher - Acclaim
Developer - In-House
Released - 1st Quarter '98

Batman & Robin



Despite being a crap film, Batman & Robin is coming to the PlayStation, courtesy of Acclaim Entertainment. It's going to be the first video game ever to place Batman in a real 3D environment.

To combat the loading time problems that often come with 3D games of this type, Acclaim are implementing a new loading system where the data is streamed off the CD whilst you are playing the game. This should make for a smooth-flowing experience rather than a stop-start one, as seen in so many other games.

You get to play Batman, Robin or Batgirl in an all-action, puzzle-solving, high-kicking, gadget-filled adventure, around a suitably dark-and-dingy Gotham city in a fight against the evil Mr Freeze.

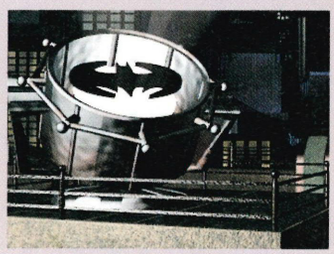
All of the gameplay elements have been split equally so you won't find yourself getting bored of any one particular aspect of the gameplay. One of the most interesting parts of Batman & Robin is the detective work you have to do to progress through the game. You find clues throughout Gotham City, and you must figure out what they mean or use the Bat Computer to do the hard work for you. This adds another dimension to the game, making it more than just another 3D romp.

Despite the film being pants, Batman & Robin on the PlayStation is shaping up to be a potential 'triple A' title. Let's just hope it doesn't go the same way as other film licences.









Forsaken

Publisher - Acclaim
Developer - Probe
Released - 1st Quarter '98

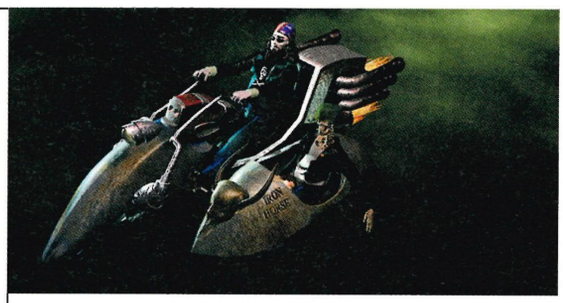
The year is 2113 and the Earth has been ravished by a massive experiment gone wrong. Within a few short days of this disaster, all life on Earth has been extinguished and the planet has been condemned by the Imperial Theocracy, the rulers of the multiverse.

This opens the way for a mass of interplanetary salvage crews, bounty hunters and fortune seekers to ravage the planet of whatever it has to offer. You play one of these hunters as you ride aloft your anti-grav Pioncycle in an attempt to salvage as much as you can from the now-dead Earth. This isn't made easy for you as the Theocracy has left a horde of mechanical sentries around the planet to stop people like you.

There are fifteen characters and bikes for you to choose from before you embark on what looks to be an excellent full 3D action/adventure game. As one of these characters, you have to fight your way through fifteen huge levels that include underground mines and artic labyrinths in an attempt to become the richest and most famous bounty hunter.

You start the game with just a basic set of weapons, but there are actually thirty weapon enhancements and pick-ups for you to find; you need them as you're going to come up against a mass of enemy guards.

Forsaken will support the Sony Analogue pad so the control should prove to be a gem to use. There's a two-player split-screen option for you to get to grips with, though whether this comes complete with slow-down and pixellated graphics has yet to be seen. We're also promised a 'completely original Drum 'n' Bass pumpin soundtrack' to complement the fast-paced 3D action, so on the whole, Forsaken is looking good.













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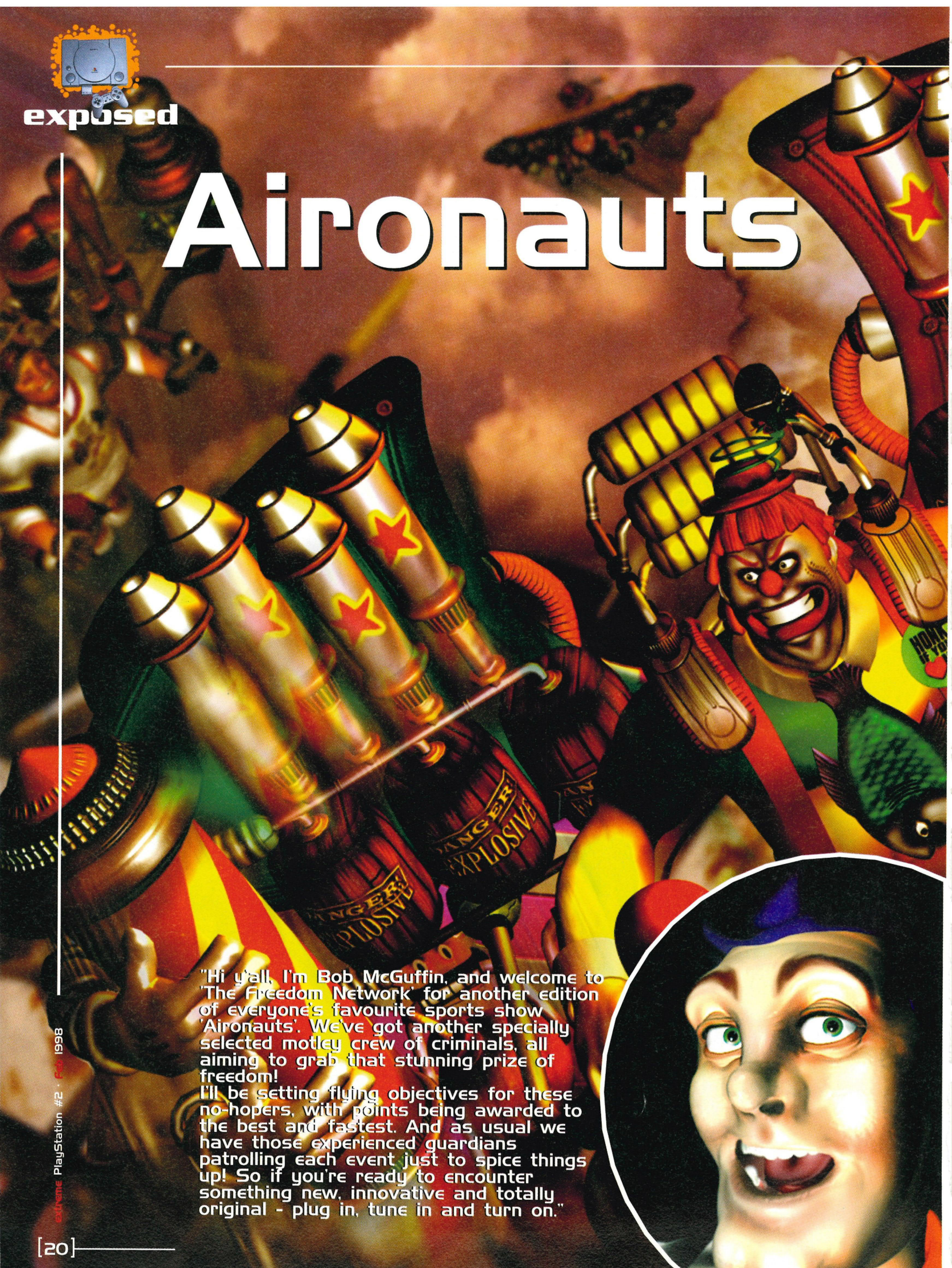


ocean

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Aironauts



"Hi y'all, I'm Bob McGuffin, and welcome to 'The Freedom Network' for another edition of everyone's favourite sports show 'Aironauts'. We've got another specially selected motley crew of criminals, all aiming to grab that stunning prize of freedom!
I'll be setting flying objectives for these no-hopers, with points being awarded to the best and fastest. And as usual we have those experienced guardians patrolling each event just to spice things up! So if you're ready to encounter something new, innovative and totally original - plug in, tune in and turn on."

Publisher - Ocean | Developer - red lemon studios | Release Date - 1st Quarter '98 | Genre - Arcade Action

What's It All About?

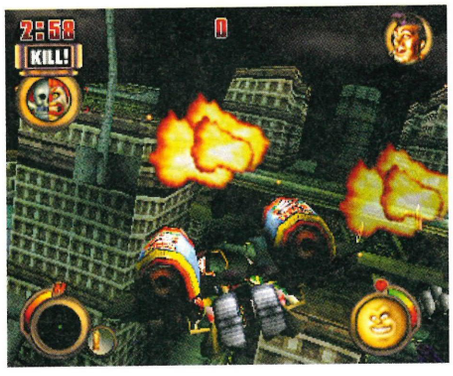
The world is on a slippery slope, crime is at an all time high! Prison has become outdated. To house the massive criminal element, contained areas - city sized - have been constructed. Within these cities are 'volunteers'. These are law-breakers with a sentence greater than their life expectancy; big businesses pay huge fees for these 'volunteers' to take part in research experiments. One such business is S.K.P.T.V - 'The Freedom Network'. Its producer and broadcaster Bob McGuffin you've already met. The show that attracts audiences of billions worldwide is 'Aironauts', staged in the world's most infamous containment facilities.

This gladiatorial combat is the contestants' only means of escaping. Skill, bravery and ruthlessness spell freedom; failure spells death. Bob, our ever loveable host, sets rounds that are created to stretch the contestant's adeptness and endurance to breaking point. If a player earns enough points in one contest, he or she will qualify for the next; while others that don't, fall away, back to a life of imprisonment. Guardians that sentinel the bouts become more merciless as the tasks become harder.

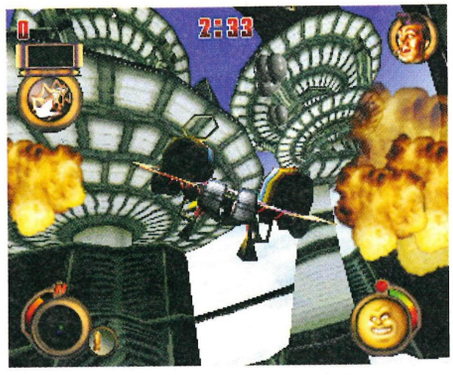
Tasks include performing death defying stunts, combat with mechanised drones, racing special guest stars through specially designed courses (these weave between the most hazardous areas of the arenas), bombing particular buildings while dodging sentry fire, racing through hoops that the guardians are igniting, dogfights with guardians, finding and collecting certain objects in a certain time period, avoiding mines and traps set by the guardians - the list is endless!



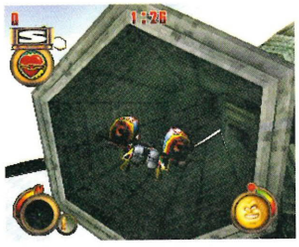












Inspiration?

red lemon's Andy Campbell told us, "Aironauts was inspired by our experience of playing many flight sims in the past which claimed to have 'intense dog-fighting action' only to find that the aerial battles would eventually degenerate into mid-air ramming sessions on a backdrop of flat green grass and empty blue sky. This started us thinking about how great it would be to soar among buildings and other structures, chasing and being chased, trying to out-manoeuvre opponents while the bullets flew and explosions boomed, and so Aironauts was conceived with those aims in mind". He also went on to say, "What we have tried to achieve with Aironauts is a more loose, analogue style of game. The player is given objectives which allow him or her to amass points in many varied ways. Stunts, kills, skilful flying, combos and mini missions are all rewarded and it is up to the player to decide what tactics to use". And the arenas themselves? "The aim was to make the arenas tight and packed with features for the players to exploit in their quest for points. Because of the environment's size you can be sure an opponent is never far away so the action comes thick and fast and good flying combat skills are essential."







The Fun Loving Criminals

Here's an exclusive look at four of the eight selectable characters.

Douglas Whooshter



Credentials - Son of poor coal mining parents, Douglas was the middle child of nine children. War hero movies scheduled every afternoon on television fuelled the delusion that he was a fighter pilot, giving him his upper class English manner.

Violations - While at university in California, an advertising company hired him for a multi-million dollar English Mustard ad campaign, due to his English accent and dress sense. Part of the campaign was a live half-time SuperBowl plane performance. While performing the stunts, crazy Douglas buzzed the stadium - shooting down blimps, jettisoning the co-pilot, and killing forty players while trying to land. Charged with homicide, he was committed as a madman.

In A Nutshell - Terry Thomas meets Jim Carrey at Mr Sheen's.

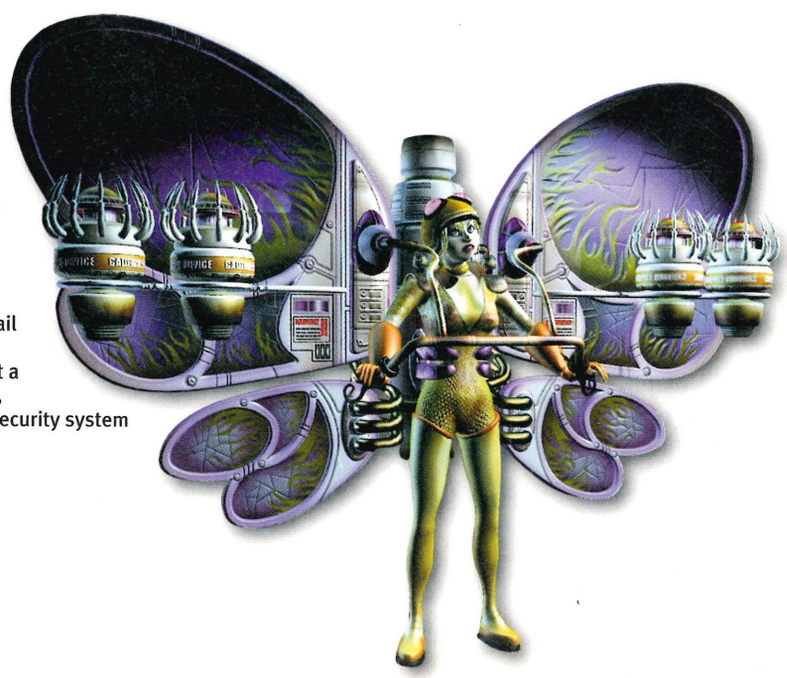


Hiroshi Badda

Credentials - New York cab driver of Hawaiian extraction. While shuttling brokers across New York, he taped phone calls and conversations made in the back of his cab. With this information he started insider share dealing and made a killing on stocks and shares.

Violations - After making millions, he quit cabbing and bought the Honolulu Batz baseball team, his favourite sport. Cornered by the 'feds', due to his illegal insider trading, Badda took the Governor of Hawaii hostage and on live TV, tried to use the Governor's head as a ball in batting practice.

In A Nutshell - Danny DeVito meets Jackie Chan on Wall Street.



Lady Alex

Credentials - She's a dazzling Manhattan socialite and the most striking and intrepid cat burglar America has ever seen. Her title came from marrying into the English aristocracy, which also gave her a penthouse in New York, a Hampton mansion and a multi-million dollar fortune.

Violations - Started with petty theft of expensive ornaments at cocktail parties, that turned into more adventurous raids on safes and strong rooms. Became too cocksure, wearing items in the victim's presence at a later date. Finally caught after attempting to steal from her own home, oblivious to the fact that her husband had fitted the most up-to-date security system on her behalf.

In A Nutshell - Grace Kelly meets Penelope Pitstop at Versace.



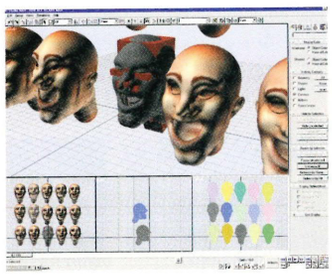
The Taxman

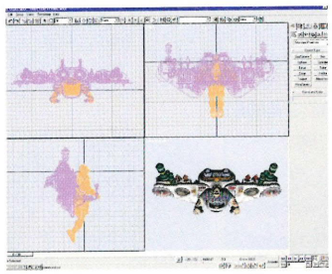
CREDENTIALS - Christened Reginald Penny, The Taxman is a very clever criminal. His school days showed that he was a genius at mathematics and science, but his short, dumpy, physical appearance meant savage bullying and beatings from his classmates.

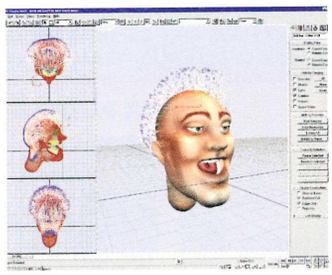
VIOLATIONS - Employed by the Inland Revenue, but merely as a public front for top research genetics cross-breeding. With doctorates in biology and chemistry, Reginald was the ideal scientist for the government's seedy goings-on. But unknown to his employers, The Taxman was working on experiments of his own and introducing the materials into the home environments of his former schoolmates. These experiments slowly killed his former bullies. Convicted on the conclusion that only Reginald 'The Taxman' Penny was capable of such scientific acts.

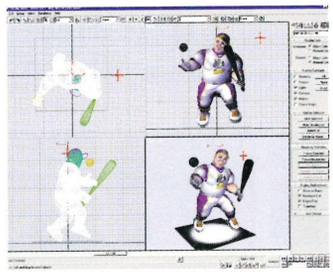
IN A NUTSHELL - Robert De Niro meets Doctor Mengele at the corner shop.

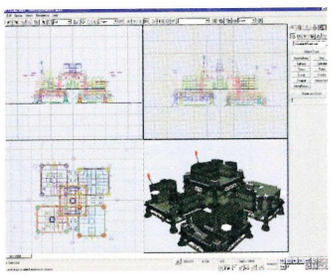
Aironauts - Technical Breakdown and New Techniques

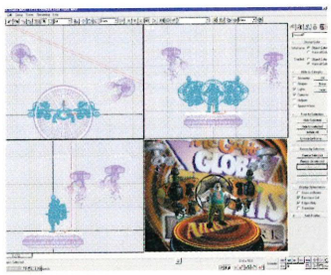












- Fully Gouraud-shaded environments (colours are first calculated at each of the vertices in a polygon, then the surface of the polygon is shaded to give a smooth transition between the different colours at each vertex).
- More than 15,000 polygons on screen, without the use of fogging to reduce them.
- Eight characters with more than 500 polygons in each.
- In excess of 1000 transparency effects at any one time.
- Real time dynamic lighting with over 200 light sources.
- Virtually no texture distortion on the PlayStation version.
- Various heuristic pre-processing algorithms are used to accelerate performance.
- Occlusion engine calculates elements of the scene which are hidden from the player's view over the entire environment.
- Progressive mesh refinement adds detail to sections of the environment as they near the player.
- Character's AI - characters have two levels of intelligence, one allows them to negotiate the complex environments. The second level, 'meta-intelligence', decides on strategies which can be deployed against the player. Both are very complex but have been optimised for performance

red lemon

red lemon studios | It's a game thing!

red lemon studios is based in Glasgow, Scotland, and is one of the UK's newest and freshest computer games developers. The talented team won two contracts worth a massive £850,000 after only trading for ten weeks. Speaking on the signing, Dave Ward, Chairman of Ocean Software said, "In an industry where home-grown talent dominates the world, red lemon are one of the most exciting new teams. Many developers claim to be creating genre-breaking products but red lemon's passion for games, combined with a comprehensive understanding of the market, shows in the originality of the products they are working on". Eidos chairman Ian Livingstone said of the relationship between the companies, "Eidos is very excited to form a partnership with red lemon, a new name in development but led by games experts with a considerable industry experience and enthusiasm to create original and compelling gameplay".

You may never have heard of red lemon studios before, but you've probably played one of the games but under a different guise. The management team formerly worked for Gremlin Interactive in Sheffield, and was the key talent behind Euro '96 and Actua Soccer which, at the time, set the record for the fastest selling game on the Sony PlayStation.

*Epilogue - I'd just like to thank red lemon studios and Ocean Software for their hospitality - it was a great day out, and the hotel wasn't bad either. The PlayStation version I played of Aironauts wasn't completely finished, it still needed fine tuning. But as you can see from the screens and the artwork, the guys at red lemon are going to make sure that this title is going to be a big hit on the PlayStation and PC. Can't wait for the finished version!

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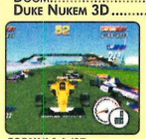

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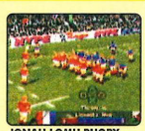

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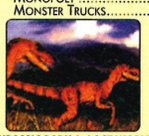
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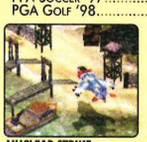

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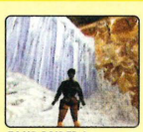

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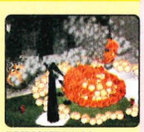
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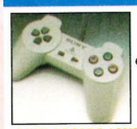
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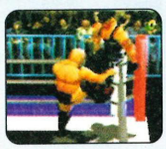
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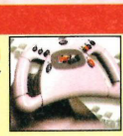
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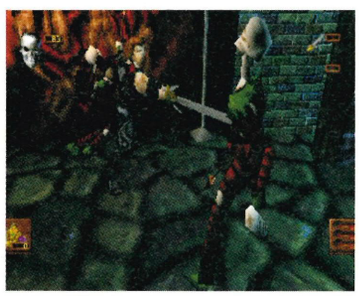
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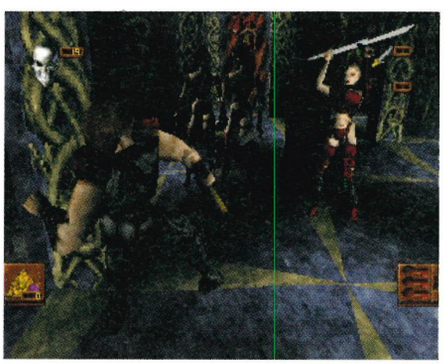
Publisher- Eidos Developer- Eidos Release Date- Summer 1998 Genre- 3D Action Adventure

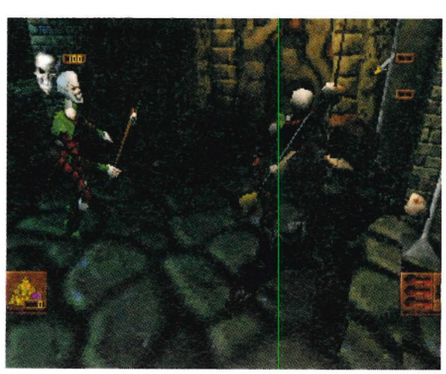
Deathtrap Dungeon











Eidos' latest 3D action adventure is based around Ian Livingstone's multi-million selling Fighting Fantasy books. We've played an early preview version, and it's shaping up nicely - but as Ian Livingstone is chairman of Eidos, we thought we'd let him give you an insight into the title and how it all began...

Could you please give us a brief history on how you got started in gaming?

My history in gaming goes back a long way. In the early 1970's I shared an apartment with an old school friend Steve Jackson, and used to play a lot of board games and war games. We were both fed up with our jobs and decided to start our own games company. Games Workshop was thus born in a third floor apartment in West London at the beginning of 1975. We started by publishing a small magazine and mailed it out to everybody we knew in games. Fortunately for us, one of the people who got hold of a copy was Gary Gygax, who very kindly sent us a copy of his new game. It was in a brown box and had three strange rule books inside. The game was called Dungeons & Dragons. We played it and were instantly hooked. We ordered six copies and were rewarded with a three-year exclusive distribution agreement for Europe! Little did we know what that would mean. Games Workshop soon left its birthplace and grew at an unbelievable rate. Its own retail stores, its own magazine, White Dwarf and its own range of miniature figures under the Citadel brand. Then we launched our own games: Warhammer, Space Hulk and Talisman, to name but a few. The Games Workshop empire had arrived.

When was the Fighting Fantasy concept conceived?

Being big readers of Science Fiction novels and players of fantasy role-playing games, Steve and I came up with the Fighting Fantasy concept in 1981 during one of our long brainstorming sessions about what to do next. We decided to license the book to a book publisher rather than publish it through Games Workshop. The first book, 'The Warlock of Firetop Mountain', was the first interactive gamebook to be published and went straight to No.1 in the UK charts. Deathtrap Dungeon was the fourth book in the series. And now, 13 years later, technology has arrived to transform it into a video game. The book took me three months to write whereas the video game has taken nearly 40 man-years! Twenty talented people working all hours for over two years. But it has been worth the wait and the hard work. The Fighting Fantasy series has sold over 14 million copies in 23 languages worldwide. I owe it to the fans of the books to give them a good game and this, I believe, we have done.

How many Fighting Fantasy books have been published?

The Fighting Fantasy series numbers 60 titles in total. Most were written by Steve and myself, and some by authors who fleshed out the stories using our basic ideas.

For readers who haven't played any of your gamebooks, how does a Fighting Fantasy book actually work?

A Fighting Fantasy gamebook is exactly that - part game, part story. The reader is the hero or the heroine who adventures through the book making choices in a monster-filled fantasy world. The reader rolls dice before starting the adventure to determine three characteristics: SKILL, STAMINA and LUCK. The characteristics change during the adventure when combat occurs, items are found or events occur. The adventure itself is presented as 400 numbered paragraphs which give choices to the reader. A simple choice would be, for

example, 'If you want to turn left at the junction in the corridor, turn to 78 or if you want to go right, turn to 232'. Other choices are much more complex. Dice are used to resolve combat just as in traditional role-playing games. There are hundreds of ways of journeying through a book, but only one correct way. The fun is finding the right way and readers usually make maps of the routes they choose as there is no chance that they will succeed first time, especially not in Deathtrap Dungeon.

GIVE US AN INSIGHT INTO THE INSPIRATION BEHIND DEATHTRAP DUNGEON?

Deathtrap Dungeon was inspired by a visit I made to Thailand in 1981. I went trekking in the northern hills and actually passed through the village called Fang (where the story begins). In the book, the reader befriends a barbarian called Throm whose help you need to get through the dungeon. But the sick part of me made me make the reader obliged to fight Throm to the death late on in the adventure! Only one person is allowed to get out of the dungeon alive. I also included some enemies, incidents and events which were inspired by all the comics and fantasy books and films I'd read and seen over the years.

IS DEATHTRAP DUNGEON YOUR FAVOURITE FIGHTING FANTASY BOOK?

Yes. It was my ambition to create the ultimate dungeon adventure when I wrote the book and a lot of effort went into writing it. It was the book that received the most complimentary fan mail, most acclaim and had the best artwork. It also sold about one million copies on its own.

WHAT DESIGN CHALLENGES OCCURRED DURING THE CREATION OF DEATHTRAP DUNGEON THE COMPUTER GAME?

At first I imagined the game to be first person perspective in a 3D world. But I wanted to have hand-to-hand combat as well as ranged combat. To do this realistically necessitated third person characters with full 360 degrees of movement to adventure through the 3D world. So this was the starting point. As the game developed, the number of levels increased to accommodate all the puzzles and creatures we had fiendishly devised. The original gameplay specification moved away from role-playing and more towards combat/adventure to reflect the concept of the books. But overall, the game captures and even goes beyond the goals I set out to achieve.

WHO ARE THE GAME'S PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS?

The hero is called Chaindog. He's quite a brutal character having been brought up as a slave in the savage war pits of the barbarian north. Nothing pleases him more than carving those who get in his way, especially Rat Man and Pit Fiends. Not really a person who you could call a 'good guy'. The heroine is called Red Lotus. She's a girl with serious attitude and faultless beauty. Captured by pirates whilst a young teenager, she learnt every trick in the book. She does not suffer fools gladly and men even less; many have died trying to charm her against her wishes.

DO YOU PROGRAM YOURSELF?

I can design and create gameplay but I can't code to save my life! Our brilliant software engineers take the credit for that monumental work.

WAS IT EASY TO WATCH YOUR BOOK BEING TURNED INTO A VIDEOGAME? DID YOU HAVE TO EXERCISE CREATIVE CONTROL AT SOME POINTS?

Deathtrap Dungeon was first published in 1984, but until the Pentium PC & PlayStation arrived the technology wasn't around to create the 3D world realistically enough. Some of the fantasy games that came out on 8 bit and 16 bit machines looked terrible. Now I'm happy. I've had a lot of creative control. I'm sure the programmers and artists are sick of me making small changes all the time. But if you are passionate about something, you have to do it right.

WAS THERE A CONSCIOUS EFFORT TO MAKE THE GAME AS CLOSE TO THE BOOK AS POSSIBLE?

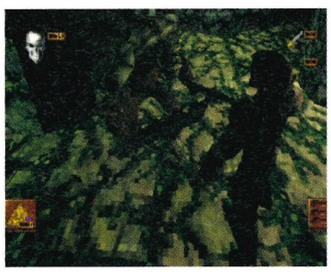
I've tried to get as many of the book's characters and incidents into the videogame as possible. The Bloodbeast and friends are all in here. But the game is much, much bigger than the book. The dungeon itself is huge. The weapons go beyond swords and axes with the addition of ranged weapons. Creative license has added magical flame guns, rocket launchers and my own favourite, the exploding pig. Pick him up, pop him in your backpack and when a nasty creature gets in your way toss the piggy at him. Like a homing pigeon, he runs towards the creature squealing like crazy and explodes in his face. No more creature and alas, no more piggy. The Blue Imps are good too, stabbing you in the foot with their knives and forks. Then there's the flying turtles to ride on... I could go on forever.

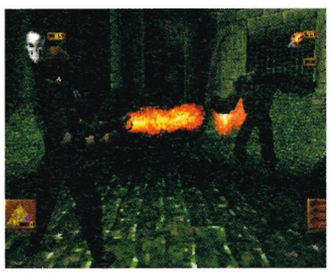


IS DEATHTRAP DUNGEON THE FIRST OF A NEW LINE OF GAMES BASED ON YOUR FIGHTING FANTASY BOOKS?

There is no doubt that Deathtrap Dungeon will become a franchise brand. Deathtrap Dungeon 2 will be based on another of my gamebooks entitled City of Thieves and subtitled as such. More on that in due course. In the meantime, gamers will have enough on their plate dealing with Exploding Pigs, nasty Blue Imps, horrendous tricks and traps and assorted methods of dying in the most evil dungeon in town. Good luck - you'll need it!















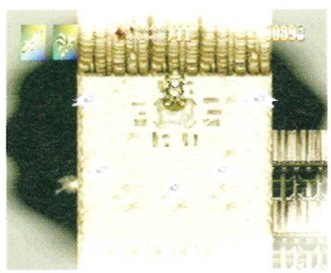
Publisher - Psygnosis | Developer - SCE Japan | Release Date - March '98 | Genre - RPG



Alundra

Seen it all before, but not here.









Shoot-'em-ups, we got 'em. Beat-'em-ups, the PSX has armfuls. Driving games, we can paper our wall with 'em. But Japanese-style RPGs? There's Suikoden, erm... Vandal Hearts, er...

Japanese-style RPGs prospered on the SNES, with titles such as The Secret of Mana, Breath of Fire and (of course) Zelda selling by the bucket-load. Despite their successes on Nintendo's cart-based creation, though, there are surprisingly few of them on the PlayStation. This is even more surprising when you consider what FMV sequences could do for the genre - remember the brilliant Blood Omen - Legacy Of Kain? Perhaps Alundra could break the mould and usher in a new generation of console RPGs with that uniquely Japanese feel.

Alundra, the game's main character, discovers a unique and valuable talent. He can enter the head of a sleeping person and get inside their dreams. By confronting the evil that causes terrible nightmares, he can cure the otherwise-doomed sufferer. A wizened old man appears in Alundra's own dream, telling him to go to the village of Inoa where people's nightmares are becoming so intense their lives are in danger. The villagers beg Alundra to explore the origin of these evils and free them from their fears. The rest, as always, is up to you...

At the time of writing, Alundra is almost finished. The graphics are comfortable and attractive but hardly push the PlayStation to its limits. Psygnosis argue this is to allow more room for the storyline, and most RPG freaks will argue they have their priorities right. The developers estimate the total playing time to solve the game at around 50 hours, so it certainly promises a meaty experience.

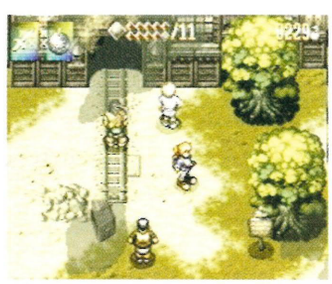
Like most traditional Japanese RPGs, Alundra features a whole host of weapons and widgets to find along the way. Needless to say, you need 'em to topple the wide range of enemies the game throws at you; but then you guessed that anyway, didn't you? Combat is of the arcade slash-and-bash variety favoured by Zelda as opposed to the options-and-stats battles found in Final Fantasy VII, so some manual dexterity is required.

As Alundra (the character, not the game) battles his way through Alundra (the game, not the character), the plot twists and turns like an epileptic sidewinder. He needs every one of the new talents he discovers along the way.

At the moment Alundra looks very promising - we certainly enjoyed playing the preview version shown to us by Psygnosis. If the storyline is as engaging for the entire game as it is for the first hour and the skill curve continues at a sensible pace, it should prove a real winner. Our main negative concern is the game's lack of originality. From what we saw, it's a little close to Secret Of Mana and Zelda - a link to the past for its own good. 'If you need to borrow', cries the reviewer, 'borrow from the best'. 'True enough', says the reader, 'but not to the point of plagiarism'. It's too early to say whether Alundra has enough new ideas to strike its own path or proves to be another dodgy clone, but stay tuned for the forthcoming review where all will be revealed.





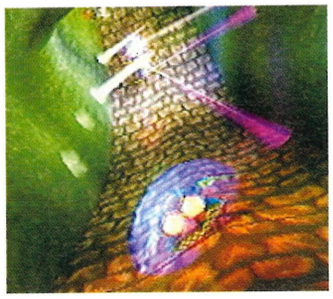


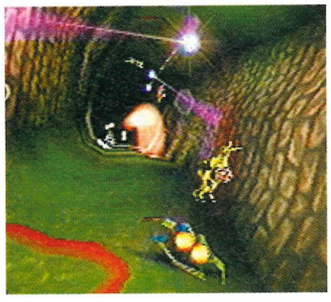


Publisher- Gremlin Developer- Gremlin Release Date- 1st quarter '98 Genre- 3D Shooter

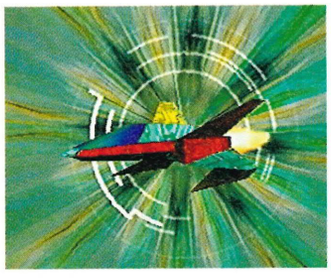
N2O

Don't think, just shoot!

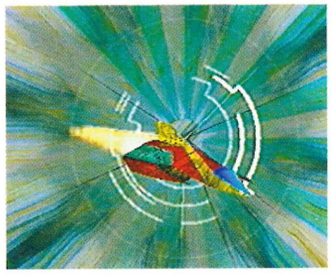














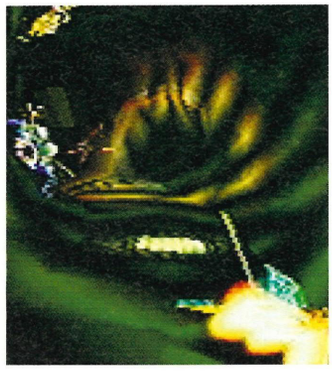












N2O from Gremlin doesn't claim to be original or ground-breaking. What it does claim to be is one of the fastest, most intense and hectic shoot-'em-ups you're likely to play in a long, long time.

The idea of the game is to fly your ship through a series of tunnels and destroy everything you come across. Your vessel sticks to the side of each tunnel Stun Runner/Tempest style. The speed at which you're propelled forward makes dealing with the numerous bad guys extremely perilous. Our preview copy offers a choice of four different ships, though the difference is only cosmetic. Perhaps this will change in the final, finished version.

Power-ups are periodically rocketed in front of you. Shooting the icon changes it to a different type of power-up. After a while you have a natty collection of weapons to swap and choose at your will. A great deal of thought has gone into the power-ups, making them varied and different from those in other shoot-'em-ups.

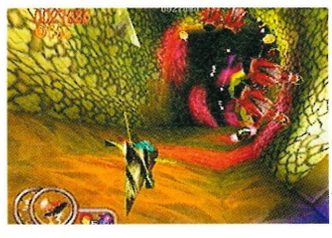
The graphics are already looking cool in an old Amiga kind of style. That's not a bad thing, by the way! The speed and tunnel rotation mixed with the surreal colour scheme gives the game a very trippy feel. In fact, after a session on N2O you find yourself at a service station buying twenty fags and a pack of Rizlas whilst laughing hysterically at the perfectly normal sales assistant. Probably.

Backing this chemically-induced feel is the extremely promising soundtrack. Any game with Lochi's 'London Acid City' as one of its tunes gets my stamp of approval. There are only another two tracks on the preview CD, one an acid-techno type thing and the other a hardcore breakbeat jump-upathon. Both are superb and if Gremlin can fill the rest of the game with music of this quality, you can expect an N2O audio CD to follow the game. The music suits the style of gameplay perfectly; in fact I found myself turning the sound effects and ambience off completely so I could sit and play with just the tunes banging out. Cool!

You won't have to play this shoot-'em-up frenzy on your own either. There's a two-player mode played on a split or full-screen, running at exactly the same pace as a one player game.

N2O isn't a state-of-the-art 3D offering and the tunnel-style graphics look a little out of place on the PlayStation, but the heady mix of tripped-out visuals, gameplay and a thumping acid soundtrack should make for some pretty surreal post-club PlayStation sessions. Even if you're not into the music and you only drink shandy, the fast-paced classic shoot-'em-up gameplay should be enough to keep you interested. Find out for sure next issue.





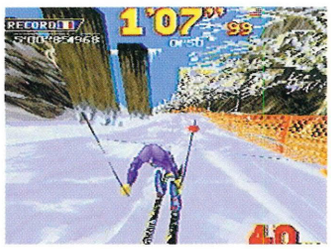


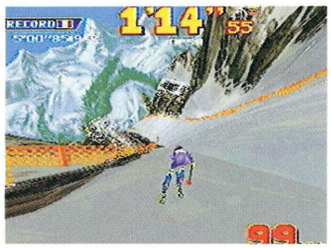
Publisher - Ocean | Developer - Power and Magic | Release Date - Early '98 | Genre - Winter Sports



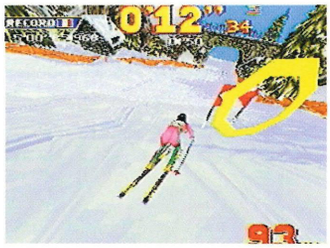
Snow Racer

Do we really need to be reminded it's winter again?

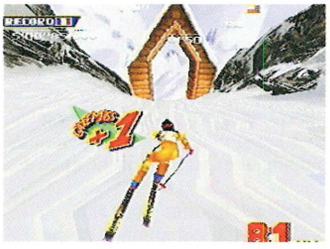












The only way any game can knock Coolboarders 2 off the winter games hot spot is if it can cram more onto one disc than the aforementioned game already has. Snow Racer from Ocean Software attempts to do this by giving you the choice of skiing or snowboarding in one game. At the moment the two disciplines are very similar, but by the time Snow Racer hits the shelves, they should be very different from each other. The version we played was an early preview; it has a long way to go, but even at this stage you can see Snow Racer has a mass of potential just waiting to be realised.

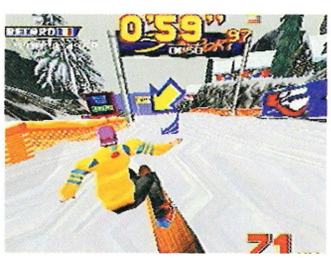
One of the first things you notice about Snow Racer is the amount of characters you can choose to race. Paris-based developers Power and Magic haven't taken the characters in Snow Racer too seriously, so what you end up with is a mixed bag of tight skinsuit-wearing studs and big-boobed snowboarding babes. The characters are definitely one of the best parts of the game at this point, but only because the rest of the game needs so much work doing to it. At the moment the different contenders don't seem to have any different attributes, but the finished version will see every character being suitably set up.

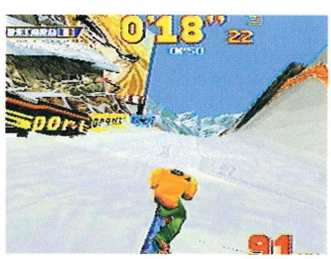
The version we tested only had a time trial option, but the complete game will also feature a championship mode and a two-player split screen option, something we're really looking forward to.

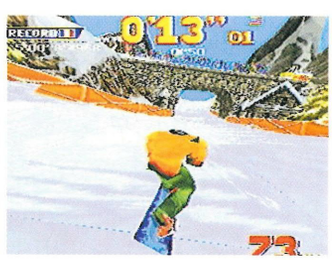
Racing down the slopes on skis or a snowboard is not a pretty sight at the moment, mostly due to some serious clipping. Once this is sorted out, though, Snow Racer should prove to be a truly exhilarating experience. The animation on each racer is at quite an advanced stage, although the jumping still leaves a lot to be desired. The movement of each racer is very exaggerated, which gives the game its own special appeal. When your skis slip away from you, your racer lurches backwards into the screen with arms flailing as he tries to balance himself. If Power and Magic can maintain this standard of animation for the rest of the game, Snow Racer will certainly be unique.

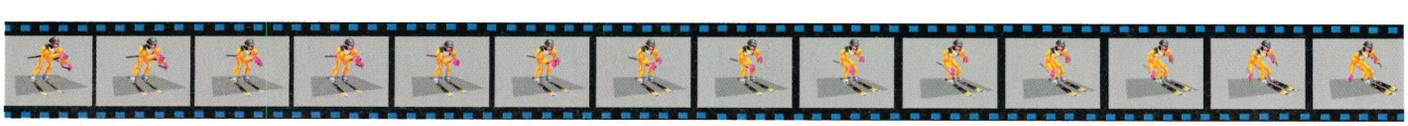
We can't really comment on the control at this time because there isn't really anything there, except for left and right on the joypad. We're sure the analogue control will be implemented and by the time Snow Racer is finished there will be plenty of control options for you to get to grips with. The jump button is working on the

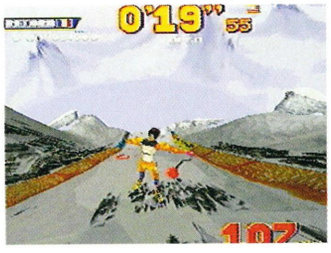




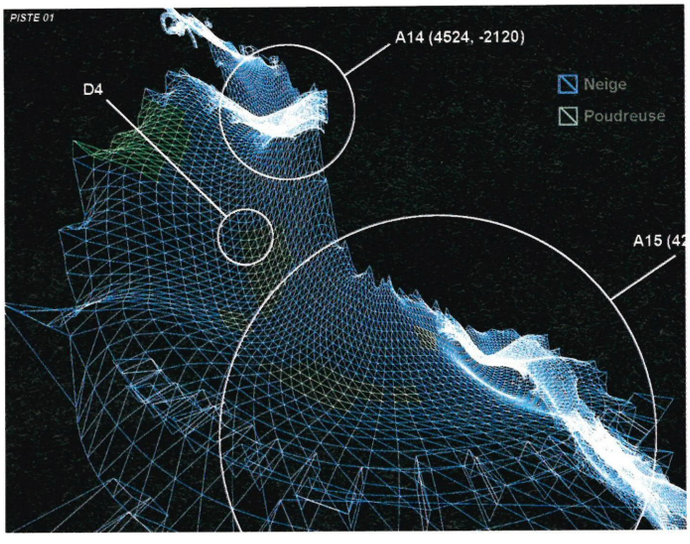


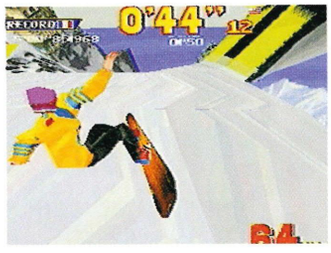
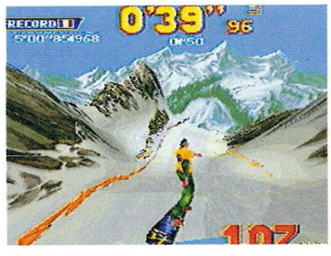










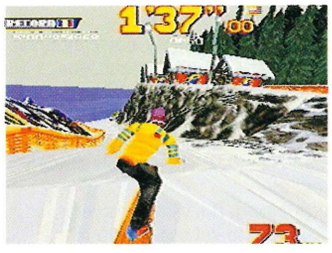
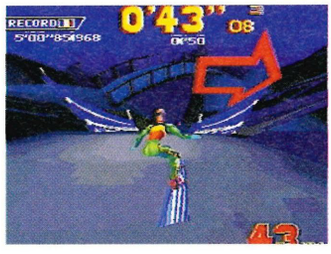
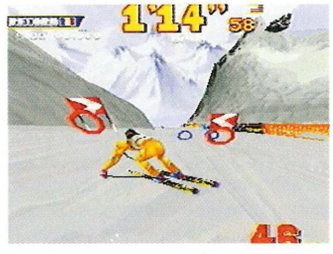
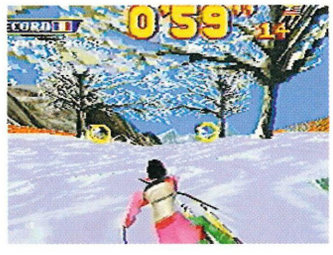
snowboard section of the game, and we've managed to pull off a few stunts, but again it's too early to comment because there's a lot of work left to do.

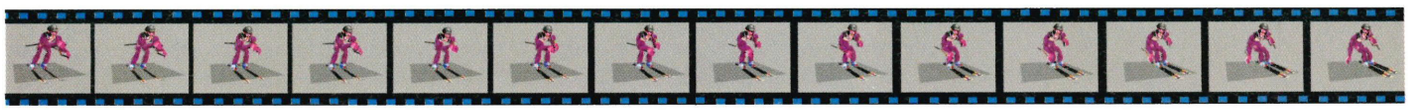
Something that's nearly finished is the track layout and design. As I've mentioned, there's some terrible clipping at the moment but this doesn't alter the fact that there are some excellent track designs on Snow Racer. We've played on six tracks so far, though there should be more in place on the finished product. Each track has a choice between a straightforward downhill run or a slalom event. Getting through both runs on each track should take ages, especially if you attempt all of the tracks on skis and the snowboard.

The downhill run is pretty simple. Just get to the bottom of the track as fast as possible. At least it would be simple if it wasn't for the incredibly devious track design. The tracks snake and twist their way down the mountainside in varying degrees of difficulty - even the first run is pretty hairy, though. The slalom event adds a new dimension as you have to ski from gate to gate as well as keeping an eye on where the track goes next. Luckily you're helped out by coloured rings that fly towards your next gate. This may sound weird, but when you're playing you'll see it does actually work and it doesn't even look out of place.

The tracks all vary in style as well as difficulty. The Blue Run Countryside track is the easiest, taking you through some scenic countryside (surprise, surprise) as well as some nasty banking slopes. The Ski Resort Run does exactly what it says on the label. The Alpine Glacier Run takes you on an extremely hazardous ride through the dangers of an alpine glacier. The Cliff Red Run takes you on a multi-route ride through a perilous mountainside setting, and the Forest Run... hmm what can we say? The Black Night Run is one of the hardest, and it looks as though it's only available to snowboarders, although this may change for the final version. Most of the courses have multiple routes for you to try out, so it will take you some time before you see everything.

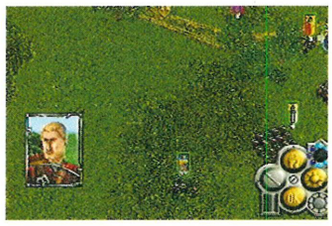
Snow Racer should be out before spring, but there isn't any definite release date yet. From what we've seen so far, though, it looks as though it could give Coolboarders 2 a run for its money.

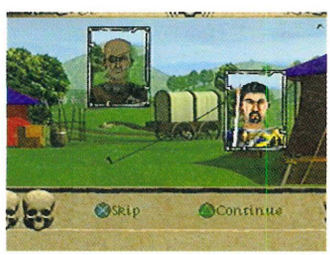


Dark Omen

Kill those dirty, scum-bucket lizards!







You take on the role of Morgan Bernhadt, Commander of the Grudgebringer mercenary army. It's your job to protect the Empire and stop armies of undead soldiers heading north to join the Dread King; as they sweep north into his presence, they cause death and destruction.

Dark Omen is based on the Games Workshop fantasy battle system, Warhammer, and is a real-time arcade/strategy battle game. The battles themselves are depicted in 3D, with the player having the ability to rotate the viewpoint while holding the X button and pressing the shoulder buttons. Holding L2 and R2 allows the player to zoom in and out of the battlefield.

As Bernhadt, you command five types of regiments. Infantry are best at hand-to-hand combat and march on foot; Cavalry are the fastest of all the regiments as these ride on horseback; Crossbow units are accomplished with hand-held weapons such as crossbows and longbows; Artillery squads are assigned to war machines, eg. cannons, and once deployed cannot move; finally, Wizard regiments are masters of magic. On your journey you also defend and help other armies, which in time also come under your command.

After every victory you receive cash from either towns or noble people you have protected. Gold can also be stolen from your enemies. After each battle you can enter Troop Roster. In this you can read about your regiments and buy reinforcements if need be. You can also swap or buy magic items, and increase a regiment's armour.

Once in battle, you see The HUD; this is the 'head up display' feature which allows you to view the banners of your forces and your opponents, in relation to the area shown before you. To skip to the regiment you want to view, you simply scroll through them using the shoulder buttons and then select the one you want with the X button. The colour of the arrow beneath the banner shows each regiment's status - White, awaiting orders; Red, fighting; Yellow, routing; Green, under cover.

The three armies in Dark Omen (Allied, Greenskin and Undead) all have psychological and physical attributes which influence their behaviour on the battlefield. Fear and hatred sway a race while battling against another. If a regiment comes up against a foe they're scared of, retreat is automatic. Likewise, if a regiment clashes with a rival that they hate, they need no encouragement to strike with a vengeance. But if a race is exempt from fear and hatred, the battle is fierce and to the death. Fear and hatred are also affected by the strength of your regiment. An already-battered army of zombies probably won't scare away a fully fit Cavalry regiment.

As well as the fear and hate attributes, each regiment has its own 'special attributes' - good and bad. For example, the Treeman regiment of the Allied race receive twice as much damage when attacked with fire; the Night Goblin Fanatics of the Greenskin race can't be engaged in hand-to-hand combat - they simply plough through a regiment regardless.

As you've probably guessed, Dark Omen is very strategic and it will take time to get used to your regiments and what they can and can't do, but to me this leads to longevity and a world that sucks you in and doesn't spit you out. Even though this preview copy didn't have all the features, it was still enjoyable. Roll on the full version!

Publisher- Electronic Arts Developer- Mindscape Release Date- 1st Quarter '98 Genre- Strategy

Comparison with Shadow of the Horned Rat

(compiled by Electronic Arts)

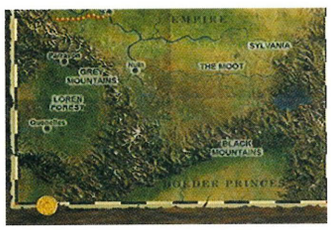
How does Dark Omen compare to Electronic Arts' previous Warhammer game, Shadow of the Horned Rat? EA claim the following improvements:

Shadow of the Horned Rat

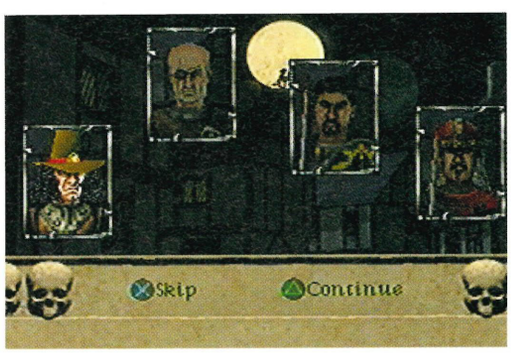
No shadow effects
No lighting effects
No particle graphics system
Terrain has no effect on troops
2D line-of-system
2D targeting/projectile system
Battles run at 15 fps max.
2D animated character portraits
320 x 136 animation at 8 fps, in 256 colours
Speech in English language only

Dark Omen

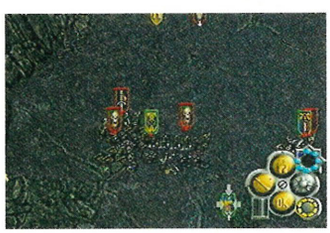
Realistic shadow effects
Real-time 3D effects
Particle graphics system for effects
Terrain has many effects on troops
True 3D line-of-sight system
True 3D targeting/projectile system
Battles run at 30 fps
Real-time generated 3D character portraits
320 x 180 animation at 30 fps, in 16million colours
Speech localised to French and German







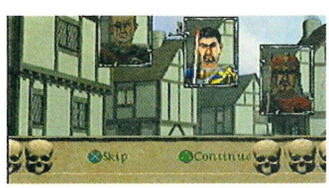












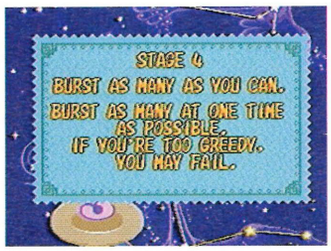


Publisher - Acclaim Developer - Taito Release Date - 1st Quarter '98 Genre - Puzzle

Bust-A-Move 3

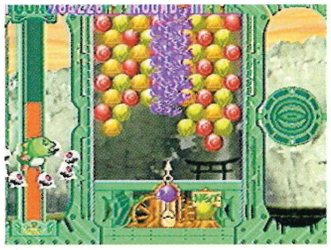
Puzzle games, you either love 'em or you hate 'em.

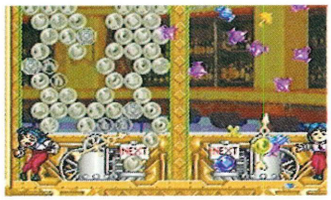


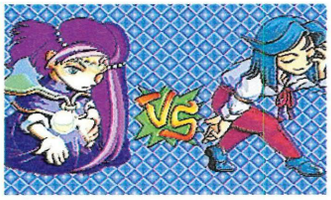














Personally I love Tetris, but the glut of Tetris clones that have appeared since the Godfather of puzzle games has been way too much. Which brings me on nicely to Bust-A-Move 3.

In fact the Bust-A-Move games have always been good fun, and at least they've tried to be a little different from Tetris. Instead of fitting shapes that drop into the screen, in Bust-A-Move 3 you have to fire coloured bubbles up into the screen. Once you have three or more bubbles together they pop, taking out any other bubbles that may be clinging on to them. When this happens you send extra bubbles or immovable blocks over to your opponent's screen, making their job much harder. This time around, though, there are special blocks and special moves for you to utilise.

This doesn't sound taxing, but when you do it against the clock, a mate or a computer opponent, it starts to get pretty frantic. It's not simply a case of matching three bubbles either. You can set your bubbles up for big runs where you can clear half your screen in one go, and in the process fill up your opponent's screen. This is great fun in a two-player game, especially when you get the upper hand.

Bust-A-Move 3 gives you the choice of eight characters, some famous, others not so famous. Each character has its own background screen which is reached via a neat little intro where you go into an arcade cabinet. For instance, if you choose to play as the dragon from Bubble Bobble, you find yourself in a Bubble Bobble level.

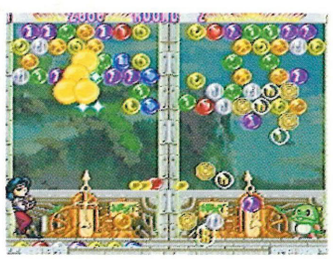
There are absolutely loads of different ways to play Bust-A-Move 3. The Arcade Mode can be played in puzzle or versus, where you can play a mate or the computer. The idea of this mode is to make your way across a map by completing a set number of rounds. Challenge Mode is pretty straightforward. Make your way through a batch of 25 different challenges where you are scored on speed, strategy and skill. You receive a grade for how well you completed each batch of challenges. The Win Contest pits you against all of the computer opponents. The Collection Modes pit you against a batch of specially-designed and edited challenges which have been created and saved to disk using the Puzzle Editor.

The Puzzle Editor is an excellent addition to Bust-A-Move 3. Here you can build yourself the most ridiculous challenge possible, and it's actually pretty easy to use too. Simply choose the size of the playing field then fill it with bubbles. These can be saved to the memory card, and then used to really wind up your mates.

Altogether, Bust-A-Move 3 is looking like a worthwhile addition to the already overcrowded puzzle game market. The gameplay itself is nothing new, but the new features, especially the Puzzle Editor, should be enough to find it a home in plenty of collections.









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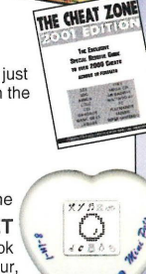
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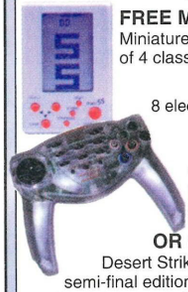
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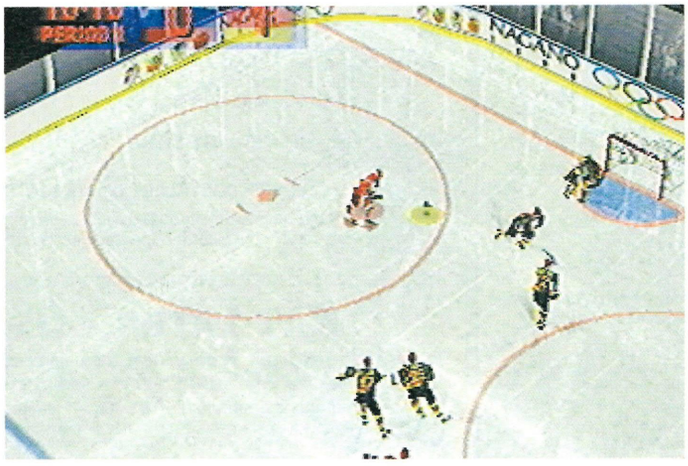
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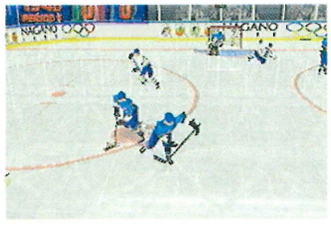
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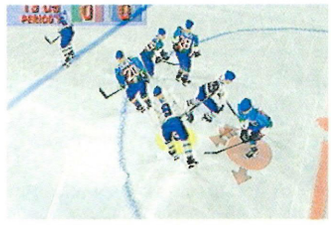
Publisher - Gremlin Developer - Gremlin Release Date - February '98 Genre - Sports sim.

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If there's one name that's synonymous with quality in the sporting game world, it's Actua...

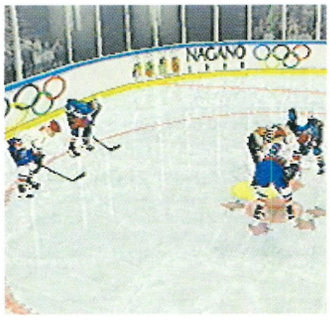








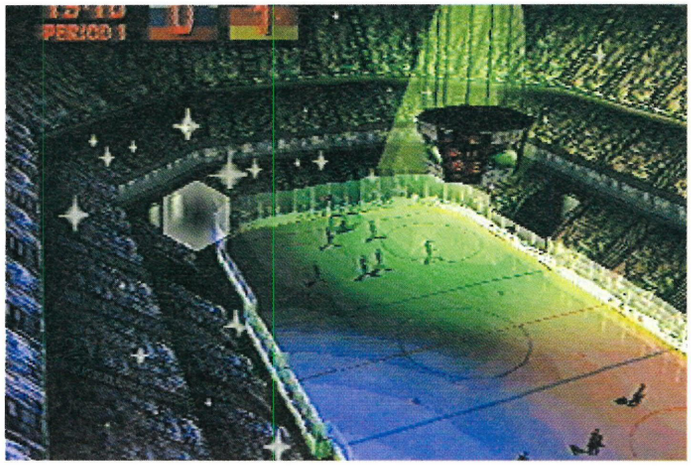




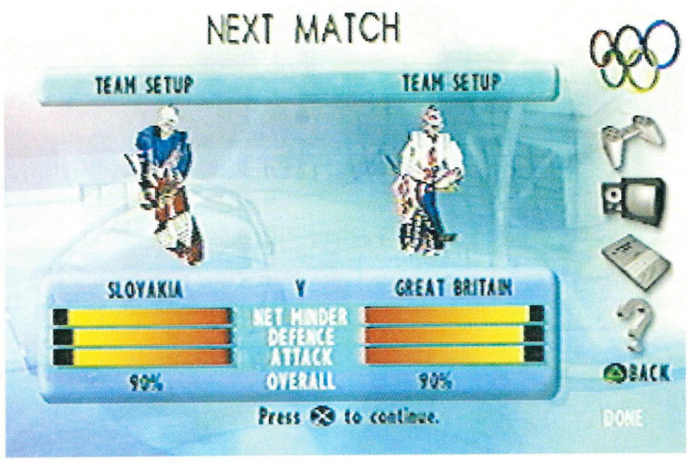
Actua Soccer kicked off the next-generation soccer games revolution, and since then the Actua name has gone from strength to strength. The latest Actua release is Actua Ice Hockey, and it looks set to keep up the Actua tradition of great gameplay and superb visuals.

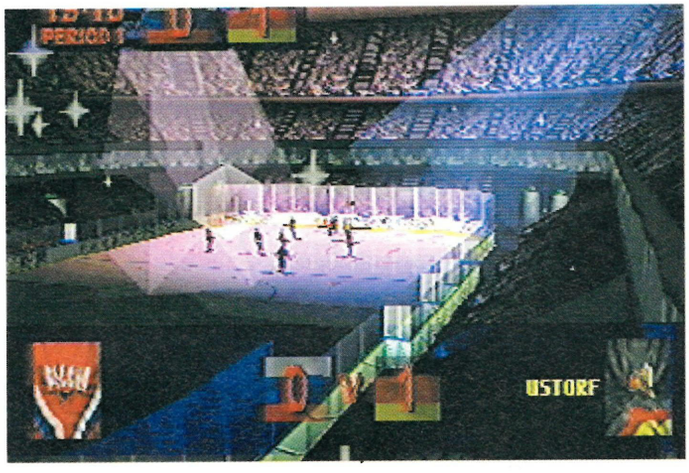
Sheffield Steelers, the winners of the British Championship play-offs, provide the technical advice and information on the game. The Steelers also provided the motion capture and Chis Kelland, former England captain, has been instrumental in this due to his adept ability to play in almost any position on the ice. Piero Greco (who's he?) provides the goal-minding captures and a number of real-life officials offer their services too. The extremely life-like motion capture was made possible by the latest ten-camera technology allowing a much wider area of the body to be captured. There are only two such systems in the world, and it would be impossible to motion capture the moves of the ice hockey players without one.

So far the animation looks pretty rosey, and is running at a super-fast pace, which makes for an extremely hectic game. At the moment, Actua Ice Hockey has definitely got the crown for being the fastest ice hockey game we've played. Luckily, though, it's analog compatible, which makes controlling your team much









easier than with a digital pad.

The control method is very simple with just 'pass', 'shoot', 'speed up' and 'change player' being utilised. Expect plenty of extras by the time the game hits the shelves, though. Even with this simplified control, Actua Ice Hockey still plays a cool game.

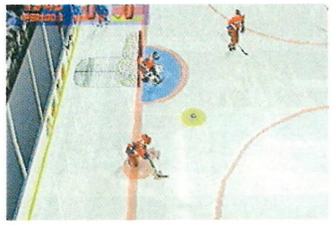
No sports game is complete without a massive amount of camera angles, and Actua Ice Hockey has its fair share. The camera views in Actua are all useable, unlike plenty of other games where you're inundated with camera angles but only one or two of them are actually any good!

What with the Nagano Winter Olympics on the way, Ice Hockey is going to be in the limelight a little more than usual in 1998 and Actua Ice Hockey will be there with it - Gremlin have captured the official Olympic Ice hockey licence. This means Actua will be the only Ice hockey game that represents the actual Olympic contest and the teams involved in it. Gremlin have been a little lenient on this, though; they've included Great Britain as one of the teams in the tournament, something that isn't true for the actual Olympics (for some reason). The game isn't only based on the Olympics, though, so you can play any number of international tournaments as well.

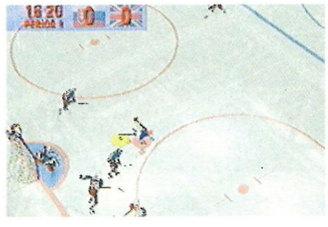
The commentary on Actua games is usually of the highest standard (check out last issue's review of Actua Soccer 2 for proof), and although the version we previewed has no commentary, Gremlin promise a top-secret, classified celebrity commentator is all set to take up the challenge. Ambient realism is the term that Gremlin like to use for the sound on Actua games, and so far the crowd sounds excellent. It's far from finished, though, so we can't offer definitive judgements yet.

Actua Ice Hockey is definitely going to be one of the better winter sports games this year. The official licence and its February release should ensure it sells well, but as with any Actua game, the graphics and gameplay should take Actua Ice Hockey to the top.









ACTUA - A BRIEF HISTORY

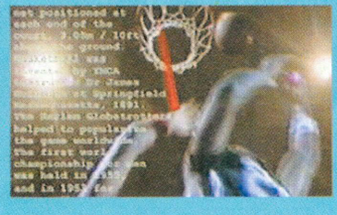
Gremlin's Actua Sports series is one of the most highly regarded series of games on the PlayStation. You can always be sure of quality gameplay and solid graphics on an Actua game, and this looks set to continue with Actua's latest spree of releases. Some of you may have missed the first few Actua games, so here's a past, present and future gameography...

Actua Soccer	March '96
Actua Golf	October '96
Actua Soccer Champ. Ed.	April '97
Actua Golf 2	September '97
Actua Soccer 2	November '97
Actua Ice Hockey	February '98
Actua Tennis	Spring '98







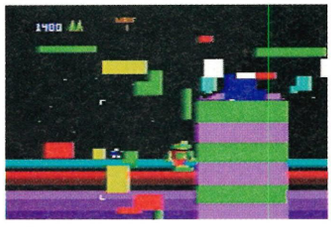
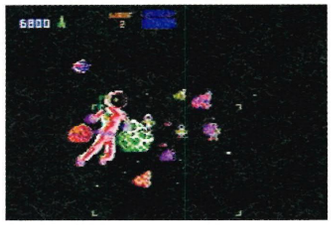
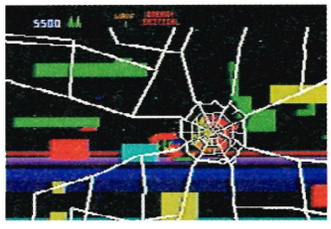
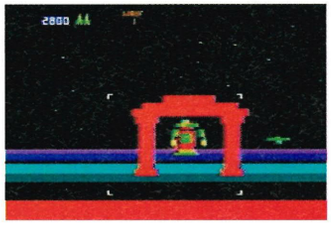


Publisher - GT Interactive Developer - Various Release Date - Early '98 Genre - Compilation

Arcade Clas

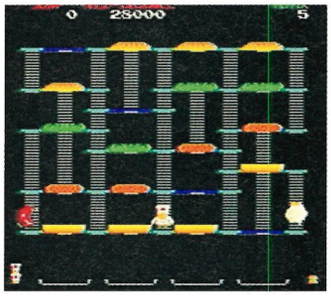
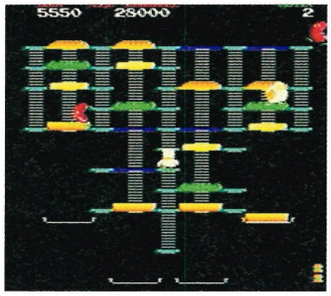
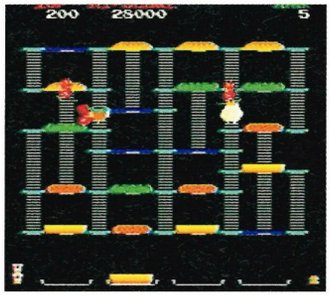
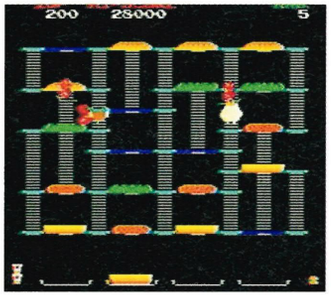
Don't look back in anger...

Wow - a compilation of seven hot titles on one disc? With retro gaming taking the world by storm, the second slice of Atari arcade history is a welcome release indeed, especially as they've included an in-game menu so you can switch from one to another without resetting the machine. But what about the games?

Blastar

This colourful creation looks like an old Atari VCS 2000 console game. It was the first ever first-person 3D shoot-em-up, which just goes to show how much the genre has developed. Look at the screenshots - it's hardly Doom, is it? This one looks like it could become the weakest game on the finished release, though of important historical interest. Controls on our preview version seemed sluggish, but hopefully this will be corrected on the finished version.

Burger Time

A platform game with a difference. Burger Time has you racing around the screen building burgers. Walking over a platform holding one of the burger pieces causes said foodstuff to fall onto the platform below. If there's a burger bit underneath it, this falls a single platform too, domino-style. Build all of the burgers to complete the level.

Naturally, it's not that simple in practice. You're chased by roving grub including sausages and eggs. If one of these gets you, you're dead. All you have to protect yourself is a pepper pot with limited ammo. Pepper a baddie to freeze him for a short while. Trap an enemy under a falling burger bit for a bonus. If one's on the burger as it falls, the burger falls further.

Burger Time is more addictive than it sounds, though on the pre-release version you have to be anal-retentively precise when changing direction - you can't step off a ladder unless your feet are on the exact pixel that forms the platform. Hopefully this will be less of a problem in the finished version.



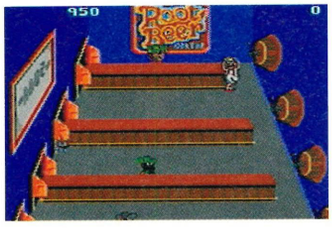
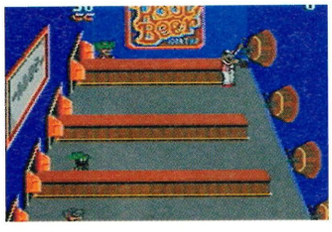
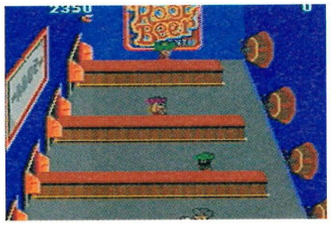
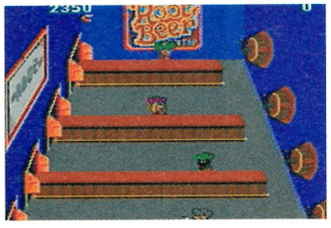



Splat

Unfortunately this isn't the amazing maze game seen on many home computers in the early eighties, but a dodgy food fight. A constant supply of grub scrolls down the screen. Catch two items, then throw them at your foe using the appropriate button - Triangle to fire up, Square to fire left, etc. Needless to say, your opponent throws food at you too. If you're hit, your head falls off and bounces around the room - honest! You have to get it back before you can throw again.

Although original, the game doesn't really excite. Using all four symbol buttons to allow directional firing is a great idea, but the rest of the game seems rather thin.

sics- Midway Collection 2

Root Beer Tapper

ROOT BEER Tapper? Last time I saw this little number it was a Sega arcade console called simply Tapper. Why the change? What's wrong with a game associated with alcohol (root beer's non-alcoholic)? It's not as if you have to neck fifteen pints, vomit over your trousers and wake up in a police cell without remembering how you got there, is it? You're not drinking at all - you play the barman. The aim of the game is to serve the customers who appear on each of the four bars, gradually walking towards you. Fill a glass from the barrels on the right (I didn't realise root beer came in barrels), and slide it to the thirsty drinker. If a customer reaches the end of the bar, he grabs you and slides you along it - you lose a life. If a returned glass falls off the bar before you collect it, you lose a life. Waste a pint by sliding it along a bar with no customers, you lose a life. On the positive side, if you pick up a tip the dancing girls appear. Despite the dodgy name change, Root Beer Tapper looks like it could be one of the stars of the collection.

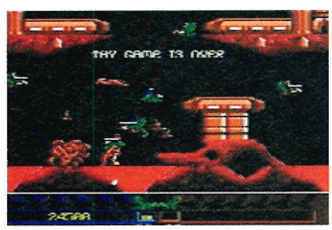







Moon Patrol

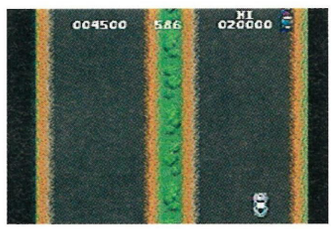
Is this the first ever example of parallax scrolling? We can't remember anything older, but if we're wrong some enterprising reader will no doubt tell us. Moon Patrol is a simple affair (like all retro games). You drive a moon buggy with three functions. It can speed up or slow down when needed, it can jump over holes and boulders and it can fire, forwards and upwards. Thankfully, a single button press fires both up and forward. The aim of the game is to get from A to B , then to C, D, E, F... That's right folks, the checkpoints are merely letters. Jump the holes, blast the overhead aliens and jump or shoot the boulders to reach the next stage.
The game's lack of sophistication doesn't stop it from being a real hoot. You have to have another go to see if you can get a little bit further. The early version we played runs smoothly too.

Joust 2

This is one of the all-time retro arcade greats. The basic gameplay is the same as the first Joust game - fly your ostrich, toppling other knights by colliding with them while your lance is higher than theirs. The sequel boasts improved gameplay, more baddies and more arenas, though.
If you didn't like Joust anyway, this game won't change your mind - it's just more of the same. If you're already a fan, through playing the arcade game or the first Arcade Greats collection on the PSX, you'll find this release immediately to your liking.





Spy Hunter

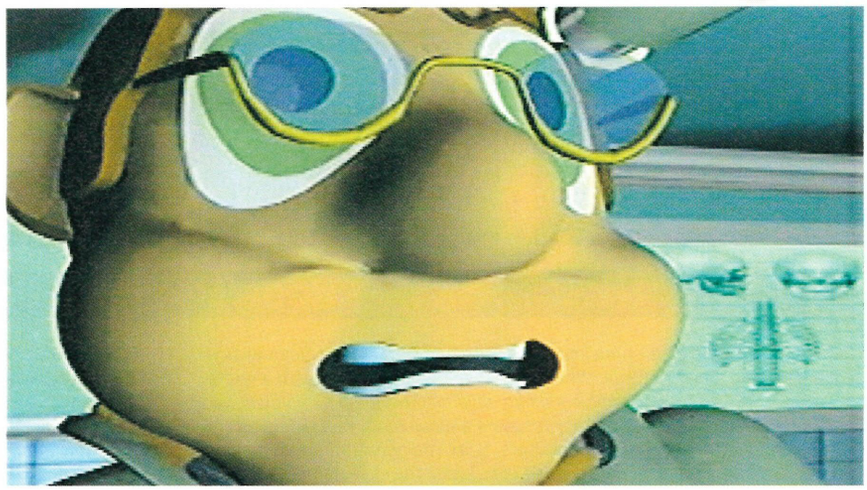
This one's a true classic, and one of the earliest driving games to boot. The track scrolls downwards as you avoid the innocent motorists and chase the escaping black car, the track forking right or left rather than turning. Watch out for those narrow sections too.
The animation on the main sprite is, erm... absent. Even when you turn the car still points forwards. This doesn't stop it being a thrilling game, though. It's fun to play, and when you crash, you've only yourself to blame - no unfair hazards here.
Let's face it, Spy Hunter won't give Formula 1 '97 any headaches, but it's well worth a look, especially if you remember the arcade original.

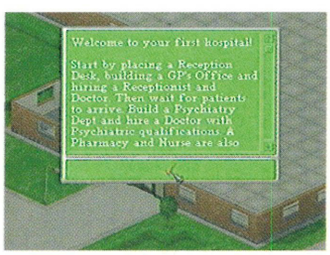
Publisher - Electronic Arts **Developer** - Bullfrog Production Ltd **Release Date** - March '98 **Genre** - Strategy Sim.

Theme Hosp

Nurse! Nurse! I've just shat the bed...



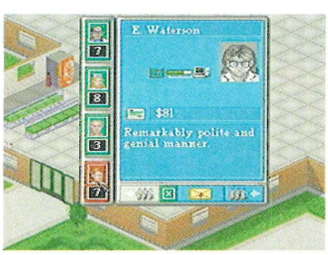














Theme Hospital is already a huge success on the PC, being in the top five for over five months. Of course, this achievement wasn't a surprise; its predecessor from Bullfrog was Theme Park, which has sold nearly two million copies worldwide and has been riding high in the top ten for almost two years.

Theme Hospital casts you as an administrator for a health care unit which you must build into a useful and efficient working business. Your aim is to have a top class medical facility, employ the best doctors and nurses, research everything from common illnesses to life-threatening diseases, cure patients and basically make your hospital the best in the city.

You start your quest to becoming the 'Quincy Queen of Medicine' at a small location. You're given the task of building up the centre to the requested requirements. At the same time four other establishments open up in competition, so quick thinking and fast acting are essential in bringing those sick old gits into the building.

Every aspect of hospital management has been explored by Bullfrog to make this as realistic as possible. Keeping staff and 'punters' happy at the same time is the key to a profitable unit. Work first starts at the reception. You must first plan where the reception will be positioned, who will man the desk, what amenities will be available to the patients, safety precautions and heating. These small but important aspects act as a building ground for your whole empire. Placing enough seating might seem trivial, but patients leave and seek another hospital if their requirements are not met. Placing a drinks machine in the reception will keep the people happy and raise the bank balance. Once the reception is finished it's on to the GP's office, the wards, the whole bloody lot!

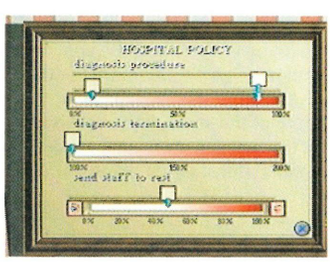
You must man your health centre with the best staff available. When employing staff you are given several options, from lazy tossers to dedicated workaholics. Wages have to be paid so if you're desperate for a janitor, but you can only afford a wage of $98 a week, then you're more likely to get Hong Kong Phooey than 'Caretaker of the Year'.

Keeping the staff happy is just as important as keeping the patients happy. Tired and miserable employees make mistakes and that loses money, so as

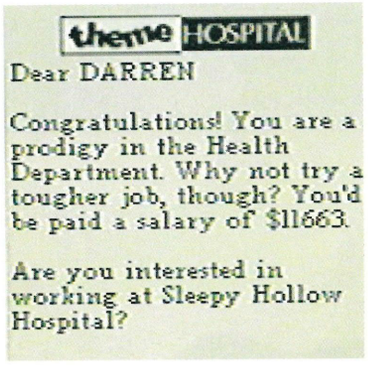


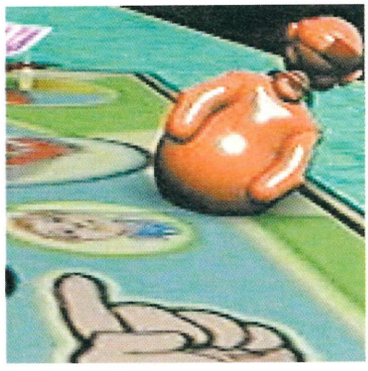






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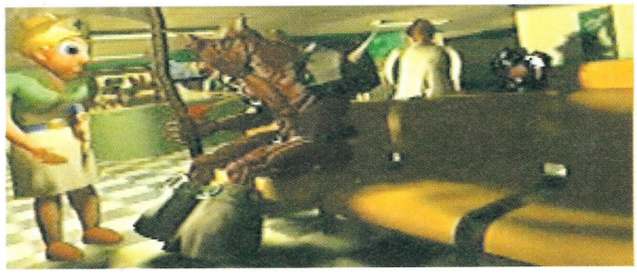
Bullfrog Background

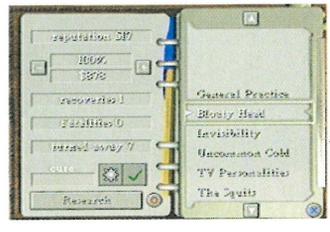
Based in Surrey, Bullfrog have been developing for nine years and have developed many fine games. Formed in 1987, they released Populous, the first god sim, two years later - selling over three million copies. 1991 saw the release of Powermonger, with Populous 2 arriving a year later. The radical and vicious Syndicate was the next, '93 saw its release. A year later Theme Park, the management simulator, hit the shelves - and has now been converted to 15 different platforms. In the same year Magic Carpet flew into the charts. This year also saw Electronic Arts buy a portion of the company, making the Managing Director of Bullfrog, Peter Molyneux, an EA vice-president.





1995 brought us Hi Octane, the spaced-out racer, followed by Magic Carpet 2. Two games appeared in '96, Gene Wars and Syndicate Wars, with Theme Hospital and Creation finding their way into the charts in '97. Not bad, hey!



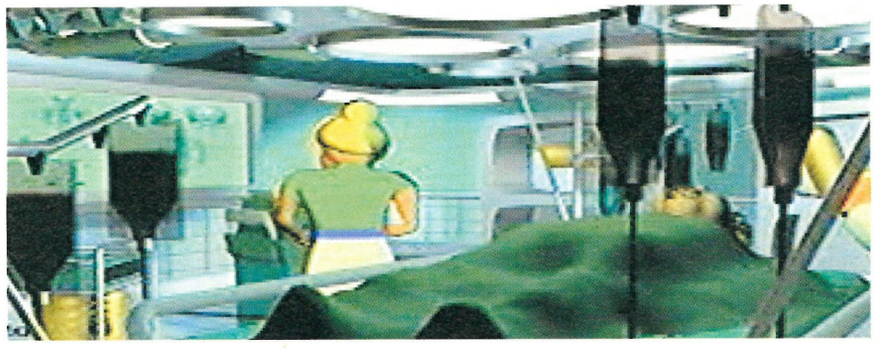


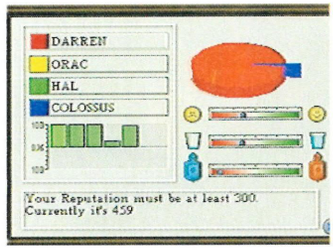


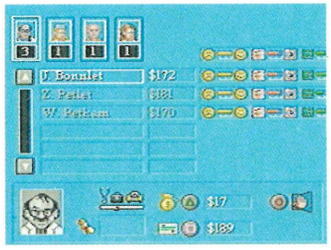
administrator it's up to you to build a staff room with good amenities such as sofas, tellies and even a pool table.

At the end of the day it's all about curing sick people, so research and facilities to do this must be installed and implemented. If you've played Theme Park, you know Bullfrog always adds a little humour to their titles. In this, patients turn up with 'Hairyitis', the uncontrollable growth of body hair caused by overexposure to the moon; Bloaty Head, an inflated noggin caused by sniffing cheese and drinking unpurified rain water; and even King's Complex, the controllable desire to wear suede and eat cheeseburgers caused by the King entering the patients' mind.

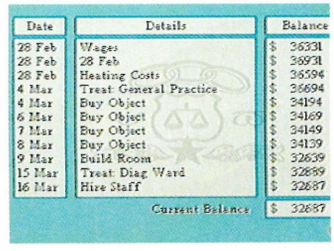
So far everything is looking rosy in the TH garden. Even though we've only played a preview, things are looking great and it plays wonderfully - very 'joypad friendly'. If you liked Theme Park, then this will 'rock yer socks off'. There's so much depth to Theme Hospital. The work that goes into building a health centre is enormous - too much for me to explain in this two pager, so hopefully the previous paragraphs have given you a taster. I'd need ten pages to decode the nitty gritty of the 1,000 different characters that fully interact with each other and every object they encounter. From a simple janitor watering the flowers to keeping the hospital looking nice, to the pie charts depicting your medical structures, bank balances and forecasts. Can't wait for the finished version!







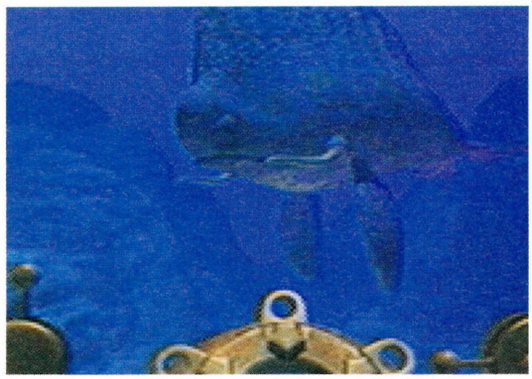




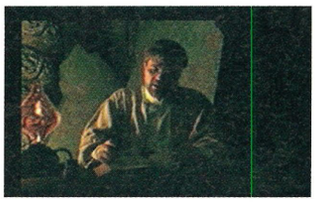
Publisher - Acclaim | Developer - Sunsoft | Release Date - 1st Quarter '98 | Genre - Adventure

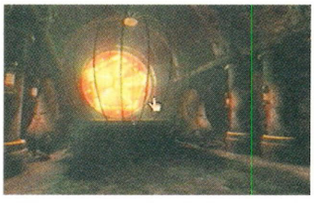
Riven

The most anticipated sequel?!









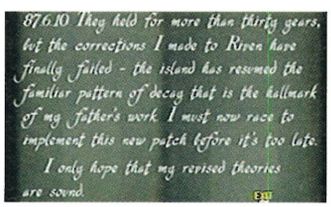
And you thought Final Fantasy VII with its three disks was big. Riven, the sequel to Myst (which is said to be the biggest-selling PC game of all time) comes on an incredible five CDs, most of which are taken up with the game's lush, hi-res graphics. Size isn't everything, though - ask Ian's girlfriend. Is Riven a top title or too little game spread over too many disks? Only time will tell!

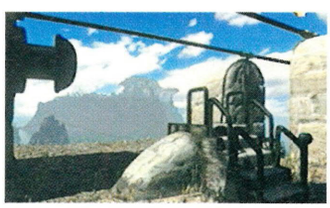
Riven boasts a stronger storyline than Myst, with a plot that opens as you play. Explore your environment and you find journals, stained-glass windows and other clues as to what went on before you arrived. You know very little at the start. Atrus, father of the battling sons you met in Myst, has another task for you. His father Gehn has imprisoned Atrus' wife in one of the mystical books also found in Myst. What a nice family he has. Your task is to rescue her by entering Riven. As the word 'Riven' comes from the old English 'rive', meaning to rip apart, this won't be an easy task.

Gehn created this magical world by dreaming about it. It worked well at first, but as time went on it started to glitch and fail. Atrus must use patches to hold it together - a bit like Windows '95.

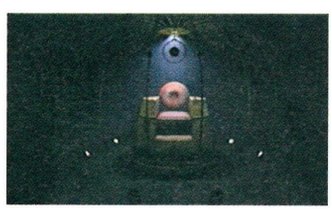
Riven (the land) is a series of islands connected by catwalks, trams that run on suspended cables and even a small submarine. These islands are inhabited too, unlike the totally-deserted Myst. Not that you get to see too many people - you must look hard before you find anyone.

Like Myst, Riven's graphics are fantastic - look at the





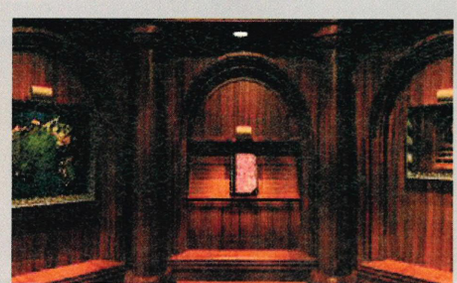


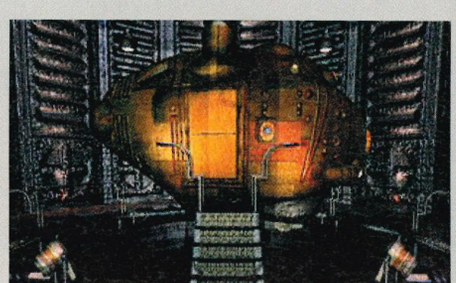


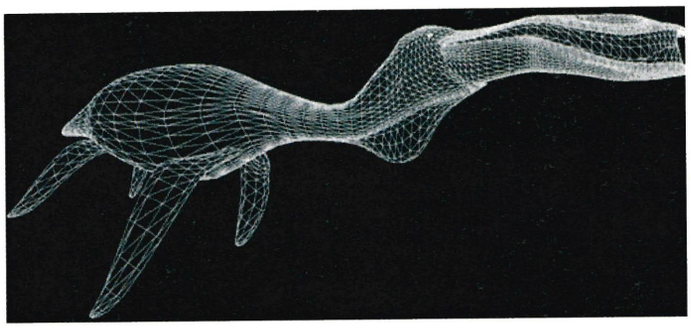
Scotch Myst...

Myst proved extremely popular due to its eye-popping graphics and laid-back gameplay, quickly gaining a cult following among people who weren't regular gamesplayers. It soon became a fixture in offices throughout the land, played during lunch breaks and after work.



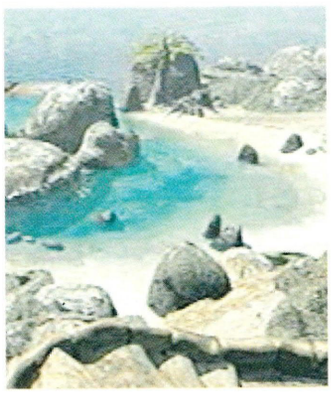


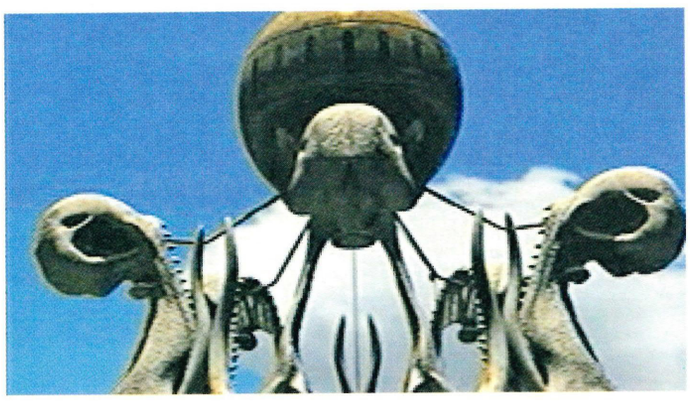


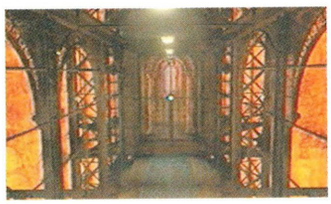


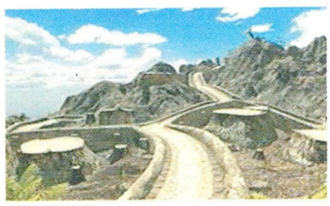


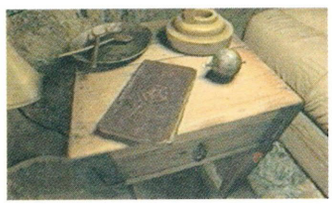






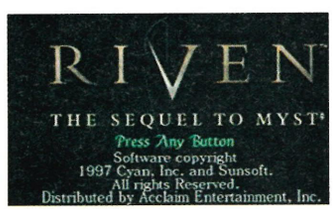




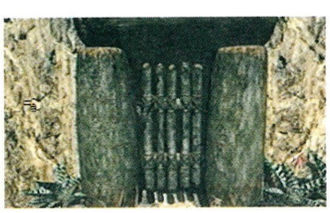


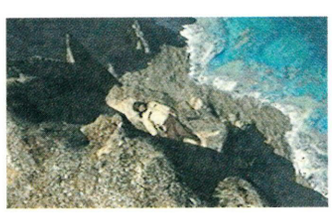
screenshots! The FMV sequences are as wonderful as the static graphics, too. Also like Myst, the game engine is fearsomely unsophisticated. The game world is presented to you as a series of picture postcards with virtually no animation, though what little there are blend in well with the backgrounds, far better than Myst's. Each step you take offers another picture, which can be disorientating at times. Another problem (at least with our preview version) is that the pointer you use to pick your way through the game world hardly ever changes. When you wish to turn to the left or right or move forward or back away from a fixture it points in these directions, but when pointing at an object you can examine, it remains a finger pointing upwards. Hopefully this will change in the finished version.

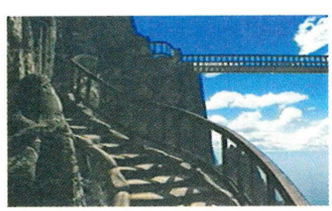
The game shipped in the US on December 22nd, and is (according to Acclaim) already exceeding sales expectations. "Playing Riven on a 27-inch stereo TV, with its lush graphics and mosaic soundtrack, is one of the most powerful and immersive gaming experiences imaginable", said Frank Sagnier, Head of Marketing (Europe) for Acclaim. "Millions of domestic PlayStation owners across Europe can now experience the number one selling multimedia game in an incredible new light, complete with the convenience of console plug-and-play." Hmm... we think he means the game has 'its lush graphics and a mosaic soundtrack', not the television, but if Riven's any good we can forgive him this little faux pas.











Was it really such a great game, though? Scratch beneath the surface and flaws become apparent, though hopefully these will be corrected in the sequel.One thing that can't be faulted, though, was Myst's spectacular graphics. If anything, Riven seems to have improved on its predecessor - have a look at these Myst screenshots and see what you think. The sound seems a lot deeper too.



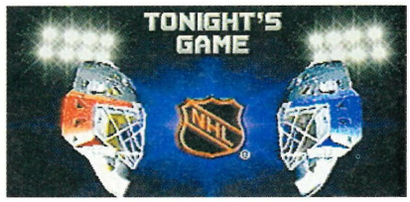




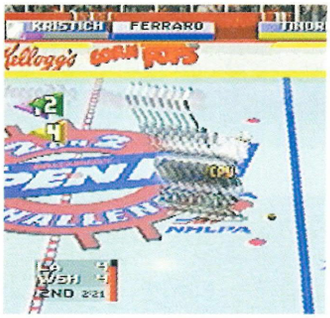
Publisher - GT Interactive | Developer - Midway | Release Date - 1st Quarter 98 | Genre - Ice Hockey Sim.



NHL Open Ice

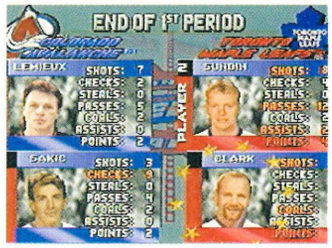


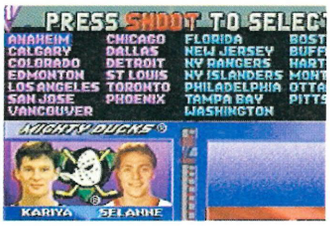
Barman! I'll have an NBA Jam on ice, please...













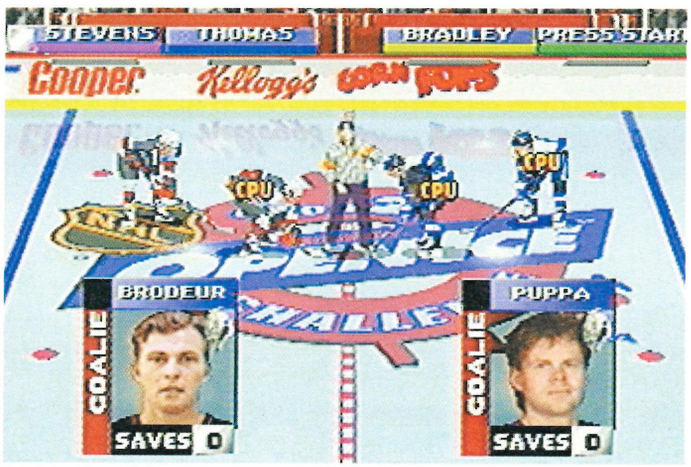
Midway's NHL Open Ice is an ice hockey game with a difference - it doesn't take itself too seriously. Unlike Actua Ice Hockey, NHL Open Ice is not a simulation, it's simply a fast-paced, arcade action game of ice hockey.

The first thing you notice about NHL Open Ice is its striking similarities to NBA Jam, the classic arcade basketball game, also from Midway. Okay, so Midway may have just ported the NBA Jam format from basketball to ice hockey, but the second you start playing, the last thing on your mind is originality.

Like NBA Jam, NHL Open Ice is a two-on-two game (plus goalkeepers) where you can choose to control one or both players on the team, making the game instantly accessible for all but the most useless of gamers. Being able to pick it up and play immediately doesn't mean NHL Open Ice is easy, though. The controls are simple enough; shoot, pass and turbo is all you have to worry about when you've got the puck. Off the puck it's simply a case of check, slide and steal.

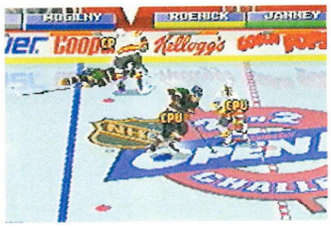
Using the turbo button depletes your turbo bar at the top of the screen, but it soon replenishes itself. If you take a shot while using turbo, you pull off one of the many special moves. This could be anything from a super speed shot to a somersault-spin shot. Taking a shot without the turbo button produces a normal shot which is still pretty useful if you aim it well. Players of NBA Jam should remember this. Likewise, players of NBA Jam will remember the 'he's on fire' feature. This is where your player gets on such a roll that nobody can stop him. He becomes faster, fitter, stronger and better at shooting. To set a player on fire you need to fill your 'hot' bar up at the top of the screen, which is achieved by scoring goals, stealing the puck and pulling off some devastating body checks. Once you've got a player on fire, every time he gets the puck it starts to flame, and when you score the whole goal catches fire. If you manage to score four goals while on fire, you destroy the goal completely. The only way to stop a player who's on fire is for the opposition to score a goal, as this resets the player's hot meter.

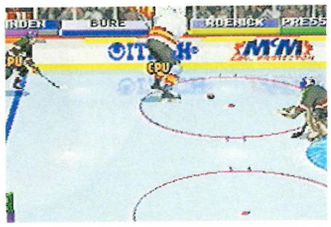
The preview copy we tested only had a single match option but the finished version will include a tournament mode to get your skates into. The two-player game can either be cooperative or versus, and no doubt there will be a multi-tap option for some serious four-player action.

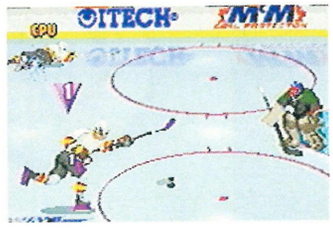
















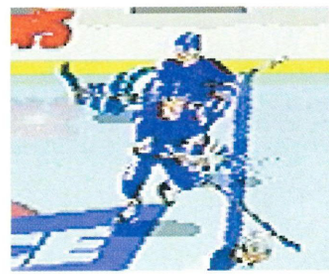
All of the American NHL teams have been included, so ice hockey fans will be contented, even though Open Ice isn't a simulation. Once you've decided on a team, which can be anyone from The Mighty Ducks to Ottawa, you have to select your starting lineup. There's a choice of three players on each team, so you always have one on the sidelines waiting for a go on the ice. At the moment, you can only swap your team around at the end of a period as there are no options for substitutions.

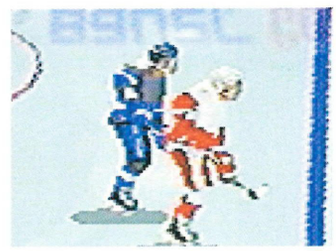
Each player has a set of stats to help you decide which team and which team-set-up to choose. The stats cover skate, shoot, pass and body check, but unlike most other sports games, you won't find a team that out-does everybody else in every department. The stats are very important in selecting your two starting players and you soon notice the difference on the ice. You get more stats at the end of the period when you can check on both teams' performance throughout the game. Also, a man of the period is named according to these stats.

One useful feature, which also appeared in another form on NBA Jam, is the coach's clinic. This is the help screen that appears when the game's loading. As well as being treated to some digitised footage of a cheezy cheerleader, you also get a different gameplay tip every time the screen appears.

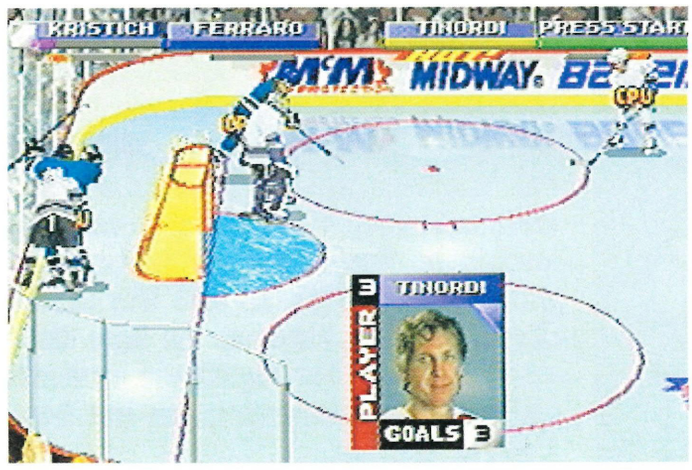
The commentary is supplied by some guy called Pat Foley, and he really does get the game going. Rather than just naming the players and commentating on the action, he really gives an atmosphere to the game. The speech is very Americanised, but it definitely goes with the game of ice hockey. All of the sound on Open Ice makes you feel the game you're playing is entertainment and not just a sporting event. You get organs playing in the background and you often hear the players on the rink shouting at each other. In fact, on the preview copy there are actually some phrases that sound like four-letter words. Whether these will stay, though, is another matter.

I'm a great fan of NBA Jam and after playing this preview of Open Ice I'm really looking forward to getting my hands on a full version. Hopefully that won't be long and we should have a full review on what looks to be one of the most fun releases for '98.

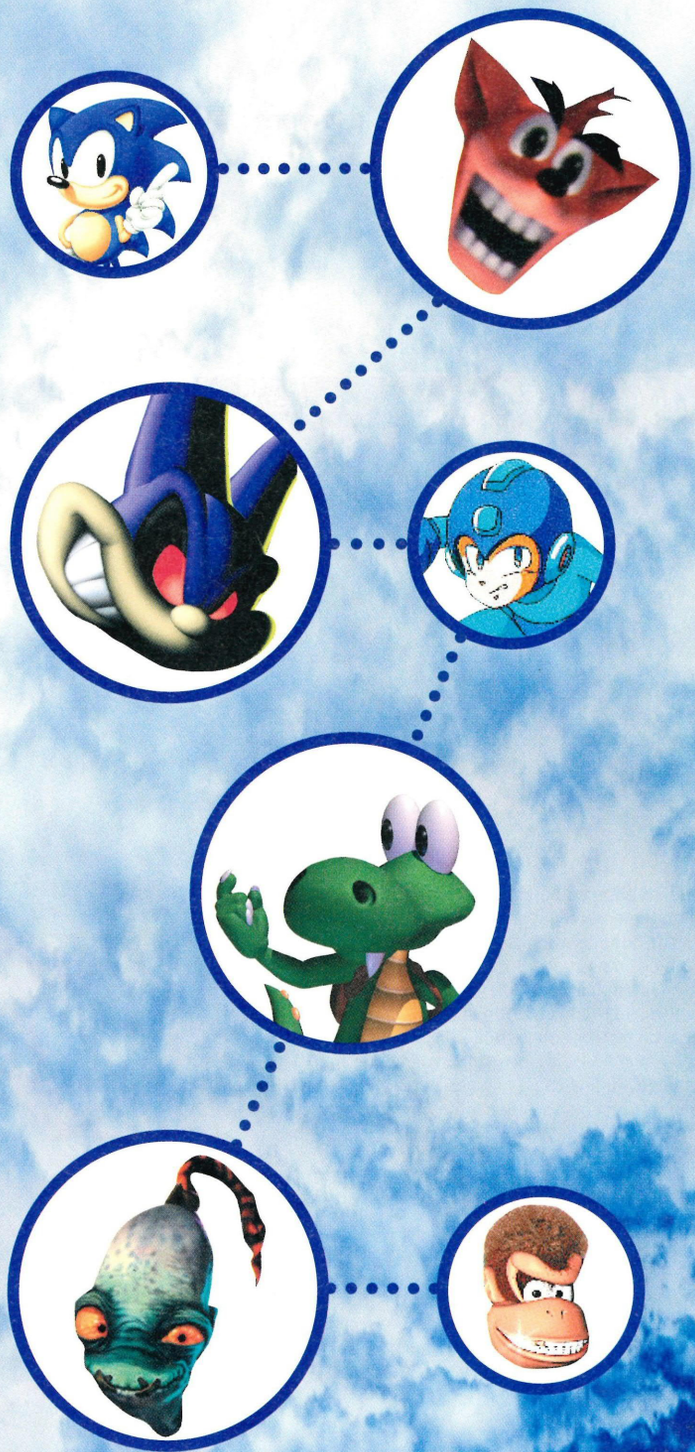








Take a Running Jump!



Platform games... you can't beat 'em. The genre's almost as old as the home console, with primitive examples appearing on pioneering 8-bits such as the Spectrum and Commodore 64, as well as early coin-ops. The passing years have done nothing to dampen our enthusiasm for platform games either, with hot hits like Crash Bandicoot 2, Croc and Abe's Oddysee. So how did we get from there to here? For significant moments in the history of the platform game and lots more besides, read on...

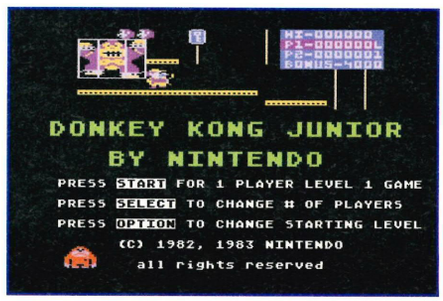


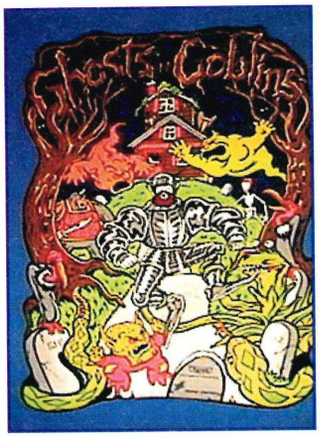
Arguably the first platform game ever was Donkey Kong. Nintendo's ageing opus introduced their main man who later made the platform genre his own - Mario had arrived! As can be expected for a coin-op released in 1982, gameplay was very basic. Our friend the plumber had to climb a single-screen platform tower, jumping over barrels, fireballs and later, pies en route to his goal, the damsel in distress next to Kong. The killer ape then grabbed her and took her to the next level. On the final stage (level four) you removed rivets from the tower, sending Kong to his doom.

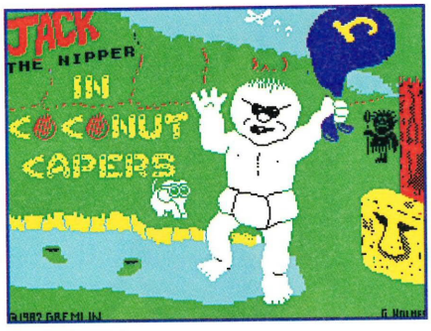
Rumour has it the game was meant to be called Monkey Kong, but was changed due to a bad phone line or a mistyped memo, depending on who's talking. Its creator, Shigeru Miyamoto claims he saw the monster as stubborn rather than evil and the Donkey moniker was the result of an unfortunate piece of translation. However it got its daft name, it was great fun and arguably the most advanced game of its day.

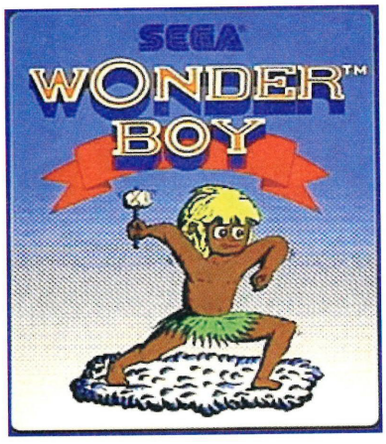
After freeing his girlfriend, Mario imprisoned Donkey Kong in a tower similar to the one he climbed in the game. Enter Donkey Kong Jr, who's task was to rescue his father in the coin-op of the same name. It didn't catch on as well as its illustrious predecessor, and is really only notable as the only game which cast Mario as a villain.

Also appearing in 1982 was Burger Time, an all-time classic. Pieces of burgers were laid one above the other on platforms. Your task, as the chef, was to build the burgers by walking over the pieces, dislodging them. If it landed on another burger bit, this in turn fell. To finish a level, you had to complete all the burgers. Watch out for roving sausages, eggs and other foodstuffs. Best crush 'em by trapping them









under a falling burger. Surreal? Sure, but it was bloody good.

Better was to come the following year, with AF Software's Chuckie Egg and the coin-op Hunchback conversions for the 8-bit home computers. Perhaps the most influential game of 1983 was Matthew Smith's Manic Miner, a stunning offering starring Miner Willy. Each of the game's 20 levels was played on a single screen (the norm for the early eighties). Your goal was to collect every flashing object on the level before bouncing your way to the exit before your air supply ran out. Manic Miner shone in every department. The graphics were rich and colourful, the sound a nifty rendition of The Snow Queen and the creatures endearingly amusing - imagine being chased by lavatories as you leap over what looked like a tennis ball in sunglasses. What really made the game, though, was its excellent design. There was always a time to jump, a time to wait and a time to run. The heart of the game was finding out when. Although obviously surpassed by later Spectrum games, Manic Miner was unequalled in its day, and for some time afterwards. It was a head and shoulders above everything that came before it, and perhaps the home computer's first ever mega-hit.

1984 saw the follow-up to Manic Miner, Jet Set Willy. Miner Willy, filthy-rich following his exploits in the previous game, threw a huge party. Now his housekeeper won't let him go to bed until he's cleared up every glass in his 60 room mansion. Can't get the staff, can you? The game was similar to its predecessor, but was non-linear (you didn't have to tackle the rooms in a set order), three times the size and, unfortunately, badly flawed. Early versions had a bug which stopped you getting some of the glasses, leaving you unable to complete the game. Also, when you died, you restarted in the place where you entered that particular screen - even if you fell down from above and died because you landed on spikes. You could only sit and watch as you fell uselessly once more, your lives being extinguished one by one with bugger all you could do to save yourself.

Despite its bugs, Jet Set Willy was an instant hit. It's a tribute to the Miner Willy games that over a decade after their release they're still talked about, with hackers programming level editors and unofficial sequels and putting them on the internet. After this, programmer Matthew Smith faded into obscurity. The promised Miner Willy Meets the Tax Man never emerged, though an official Jet Set Willy sequel (called JSWII, of course) was released in 1985. It was simply a bigger version of the first game programmed by someone else.

Mario makes good...

1985 also saw the birth of Mikro-Gen's Wally Week, who starred in a series of Speccy platformers such as Automania, Pyjamarama, Everyone's a Wally and Herbert's Dummy Run. The most significant release, though, was Nintendo's Super Mario Bros for the 8-bit NES system. Mario himself was fatter and more cartoony than in the Donkey Kong offerings, and the game was far more involved than the earlier Mario Bros coin-op, a very basic game involving knocking turtles off pipes on a single screen. Super Mario Bros was push-scrolling too. This was the game which first defined Mario's world, with collectable coins and stars, pipes leading to underground chambers and baddies including walking bombs and deadly tortoises. The now-familiar power-ups were introduced here too, eg. the mushroom that made Mario grow.

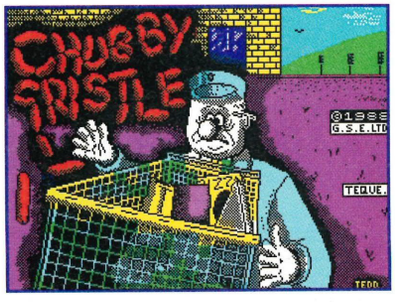
1986 saw the release of Wonder Boy, Sega's top coin-op which spawned several sequels, including Wonder Boy III: Dragon's Trap. Although now forgotten, Wonder Boy was a minor celebrity in his day. His caveman clothes and fantasy-style world seemed at odds with the skateboards he found in giant bird's eggs (honest), though the game's variety of devices won through. It was fun in its day and certainly took the platformer a stage further, but is really only of nostalgic value now.

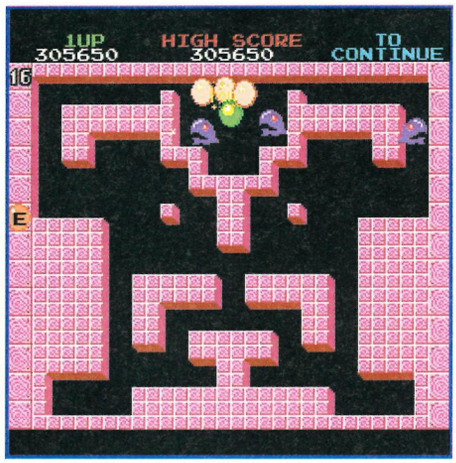
Another Sega coin-op, Ghosts and Goblins, came to the home video machines in 1986. There was nothing confused about the atmosphere in this medieval shoot-'em-up platformer. An interesting feature was that if you (the brave knight in shining armour) were hit by an enemy, you lost your armour and continued in your underwear. Get hit again and you fall as a pile of bones. An excellent game, though the difficulty level was a little high.

Wizball, produced in 1987, proved a landmark for platform games and developers Sensible Software alike. You controlled a bouncing ball, which you had to guide through several levels of platform- and puzzle-filled action. The game's quirky humour and polished design, features which became Sensible trademarks, made Wizball an all-time classic.

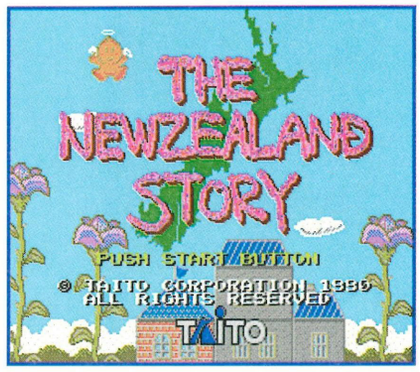












Baby Boomer

As one classic was born, another returned. Gremlin's Jack the Nipper II saw the return of the big baddie-bashing baby, and he hadn't grown up at all.

In 1988, Rainbow Arts looked set to take the computer world by storm with The Great Giana Sisters. This wasn't so much inspired by Super Mario Bros as a direct rip-off. Nintendo weren't amused, and the game was withdrawn under threat of legal action.

Far more amusing (and financially successful) was Chubby Gristle, released on 8- and 16-bit machines. There aren't many games featuring a greedy, fat slob as the main character, and even fewer that are as good as Chubby Gristle.

The inevitable Super Mario Bros 2 exploded on the scene in 1989. Boasting improved graphics, more secrets and better gameplay, this game took the legendary Mario series a stage further. By now even the British, who originally found him childish and cartoony, were getting to like Mario.

Cartoony creatures were very much the order of the day. Graftgold converted the 1987 Rainbow Islands coin-op to the 16-bit home computers, and enjoyed terrific success. The aim of the game is simple. Make your way from the foot of the level to the top, leaping from platform to platform while outrunning the rising water. To deal with the baddies you had a superb rainbow weapon, which could be upgraded by finding power-ups. It's the single-mindedness of the gameplay that makes Rainbow Islands such an ace rave. With such a simple goal, there were no distractions - just pure, straightforward platform action. No wonder it's been updated and released on the PlayStation, along with stablemate Bubble Bobble.

Sales of the ailing NES were boosted in 1990 by packaging the machine with a game based on that year's big craze, Teenage Mutant Hero Turtles. The game was seriously sad, but at the time you could wrap a bandanna round a turd and sell it as Turtles merchandise. US Gold's licensed offering was better. The 8-bit versions of Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade had our whip-wielding warrior exploring underground caverns, running over trains and generally being an okay guy. It was fun, and certainly better than its predecessor Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom, though ultimately unremarkable. Capcom's Strider offered similar gameplay to Indy, but set against a sci-fi rather than ancient ruins background.

Another 1990 release was the unbelievably cute New Zealand Story. Here you had to help a humble kiwi rescue his friends and family. Pixel-perfect timing was once again the order of the day, as the baddies were often more mobile than the main character, enjoying flying abilities instead of just a powerful jump. Best of all, though, was the kiwi itself, which managed to look powerful and vulnerable at the same time, making it easy to identify with.

Perhaps the cutest and indeed finest release of 1990 was the Mega Drive outing, Mickey Mouse in the Castle of Illusion. This, the first of several Disney licenses, boasted the best graphics yet seen on a home console platformer.

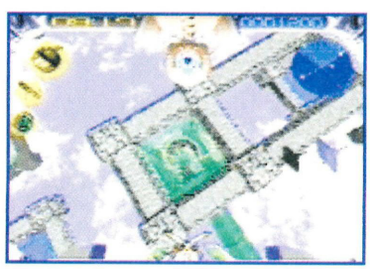
Miyamoto's miracle

Another Mario game hit the shelves in 1991, Super Mario Bros 3, but it was the import Super Mario World on the 16-bit SNES which turned the most heads. Although not a huge departure from earlier Mario games, Shigeru Miyamoto's 30-strong team devoted 15 months to its development, getting the most out of the then-new hardware. As well as huge graphical improvements, Mario was given new abilities to be found within the game. Super Mario World was bigger than its predecessors too. Once again a landmark in platform gaming had been achieved, and yet again Mario was the man with the gonads.

Sega, who's Mega Drive had stolen the home console market from the previously-invincible Nintendo, looked for a console character to match Mario. By September 1991, it had one. This was, of course, Sonic the Hedgehog. Taking a different approach to the exploratory, secret area-filled Mario games, Sonic went all out for greasy-fast speed. Sonic's stock has fallen considerably in recent years, but back in '91 he was the bee's knees.

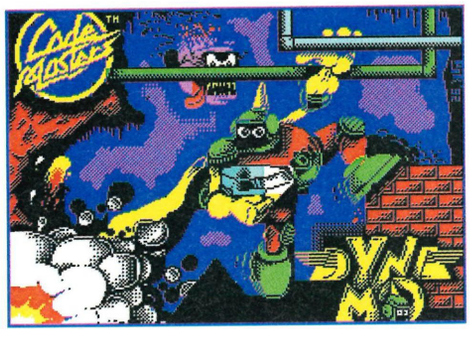
1992's Sonic 2 did for Sonic what latter-day Mario games had done for our plumber friend; it was bigger, slicker and generally better without departing from the tried-and-tested formula.

On the home computer front, the 8-bits were all-

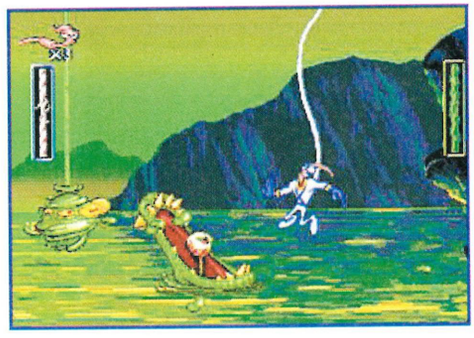












but dead and even the 16-bit models were in trouble, though a few good games emerged, most notably Zool, a colourful platformer in the Sonic mould.

CodeMasters' Captain Dynamo hobbled onto the home computer scene, but not without the aid of a Zimmer frame. You see, Dynamo was a retired superhero who donned the red tights once more to foil a diamond robbery, even though he was in his 60's. The 16-bit versions were great fun in a simplistic, budgety sort of way, but the Commodore 64 game was a badly programmed, poorly-designed disaster.

The most significant platform release of 1993 was Delphine's Flashback, a platform/adventure hybrid which took computing one step closer to that holy grail of video gaming, the interactive movie. Full Motion Video was still some years off, but Flashback's animated in-game sequences and between-level animations were superb, adding atmosphere to an already high-quality game without being intrusive.

Super Mario All-Stars appeared on the SNES, but this was just a collection of older Mario games on a single cart.

Enter the PSX...

1994 saw what is arguably the most significant event yet in the history of the platform game, and indeed of gaming in general - the release of the PlayStation, which hit the shelves in Japan in November. Both the PlayStation and the Sega Saturn, released in Japan at the same time, reached the UK shores on import by Christmas. There were no next-gen platform games yet, though.

Nintendo's next generation console was still a long way off, but they did release Donkey Kong Country, a wonderful platformer featuring incredible rendered graphics. At 32 megabits, this was the largest cart release yet. Earthworm Jim also made his first appearance in '94, Shiny Entertainment achieving the seemingly impossible in turning a worm into a platform hero. More of him later.

The Saturn and the PSX were released officially in the UK in July and September 1995 respectively. Both machines took off, despite spoiler tactics from Nintendo who's forthcoming Ultra 64 (later renamed the Nintendo 64) was pencilled in for the second half of 1996.

The first platformer released for the Saturn was Clockwork Knight, a disappointing 3D game set in a child's bedroom. Despite great graphics and impressive animation, the game was too short and too damned easy. Rumour has it that as there were no platformers on the Saturn, the game was rushed out before it was ready, forcing the programmers to cut it in half and release only the parts they had already finished. This would certainly explain the game's brevity. Interestingly, the sequel (Clockwork Knight 2) was equally brief and started with a boss fight - could this be the other half of the original project?

Another disappointment was Bug!, despite its interesting graphics and a cute main character. The game succeeded in showing off novel programming techniques made possible by 32-bit technology, but was repetitive and restrictive as a game. Underneath the impressive 3D model was a jaded old-style platformer - a sheep in wolf's clothes.

The PlayStation's Jumping Flash was much better. Although small, it was perfectly formed and offered a 3D interactive experience impossible on earlier consoles. Unfortunately the sequel, released the following year, was basically a rehash of the first game, offering nothing more in terms of size or quality.

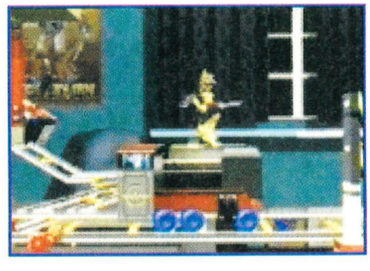
Rayman, released for both the Saturn and the PSX, was something of an enigma. Boasting insufferably cute characters, Rayman himself had no arms or legs - just hands, feet and a torso. Likewise, the monsters were made up of segments that weren't connected, but behaved as if they were. Sounds weird, but worked really well.

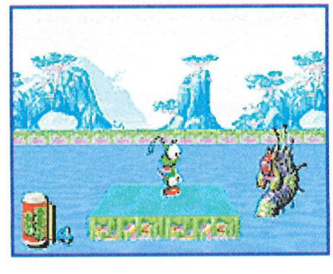
Offerings for 16-bit platforms were looking decidedly jaded by now. The Mega Drive's Toy Story featured great rendered graphics and a licence which virtually guaranteed sales, but offered nothing new on the gameplay front. Likewise, the SNES offered Donkey Kong Country 2: Diddy Kong's Quest and Super Mario World 2: Yoshi's Island, both great games in their own right but little more than variations on already well-worn themes.

SHiTES?

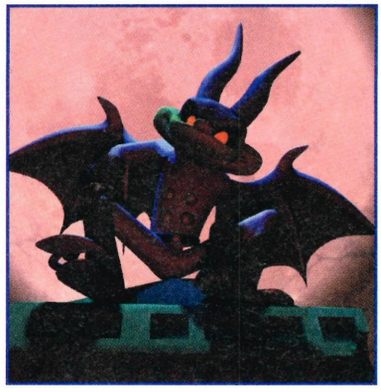
Sega's 1996 Saturn release NiGHTS has been described as a platformer, but really its generic

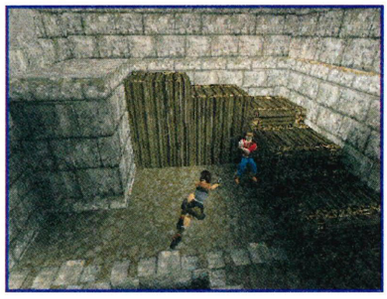












categorisation is as confusing as its use of capital letters. It obeys the usual rules of a platformer, but with the platforms removed. Instead, you fly around the game world collecting objects, though the game allows less freedom than it promises. Your character flies along as if on rails, unable to leave these program-specified paths. The graphics were outstanding, though; just what you'd expect in a game programmed by the Sonic team.

The PlayStation's answer to NiGHTS was Pandemonium, which many consider far superior. The 3D graphics are just as gorgeous, and although you're still restricted as to where you can go, here it's implemented logically. You don't expect to be able to step off Pandemonium's clearly-defined paths, so unlike NiGHTS, it doesn't feel ludicrously restrictive. Last year's sequel expanded on the original, and turned the female character Nikki into a real babe.

When the Nintendo 64 was released in June (in Japan, at least), the excellent 3D platformer Super Mario 64 was unleashed on an unsuspecting world. A superb technical achievement, the game's 3D graphics and movable camera perspectives took a new look at Mario's world, but in a way established fans would find familiar. Despite a few glitches which hid the main character just as you were attempting a jump, this was a truly ground-breaking game.

It wasn't long before the PSX had its own 3D platformers, though. Crash Bandicoot opted for a more cartoony approach than Super Mario 64, and proved a huge hit despite its weak main character. The game's strong points were its cleverly-designed levels and huge amount of things to do. Even after you've completed the game you can come back over and again to squeeze out the last few drops of gameplay. The Eidos classic Tomb Raider was a different kettle of kippers all together. Boasting smooth polygon graphics, real world-orientated gameplay and a main character who's since become one of the most recognisable icons of the nineties, this is the game that really set the PSX alight. Both Crash Bandicoot and Tomb Raider spawned sequels in 1997, and both did exactly what a good sequel should, taking the games a stage further and improving on the originals.

In the Autumn of last year came Croc, a platformer designed with the young gamer in mind. Although shamelessly derivative, it at least borrowed from the better platformers gracing the shelves at the time. Besides, its brilliant polygon graphics offered a 3D experience previously unknown on the PSX.

Abe's Oddysee breaks with the current trend for 3D platformers, offering instead a 2D environment fleshed out with some of the best graphics yet. Making full use of the D-Pad, the game introduces Abe's many talents at just the right speed, so you're fully trained by the time you need a particular ability in a life-threatening situation. It takes brains as well as bounce to complete this puzzle-filled platformer, so don't expect an easy ride.

Another platform/puzzle mix is Lost Vikings 2, the sequel to a fun but obscure 16-bit game. The 2D graphics show its roots, but the ace arcade action and lemmings-style puzzles solved using the three vikings' individual skills win through.

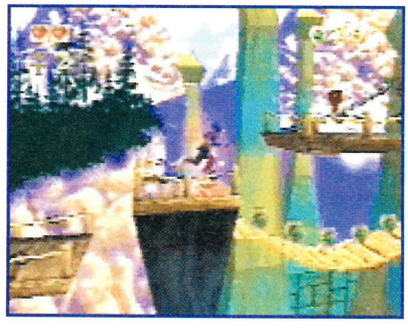
This is more than you can say for the colourful-but-stale Rapid Reload, a 2D platform blaster with a distinctly Japanese feel. The PSX can do better, as was proved by Spider. Although repetitive, the missile-firing arachnid main character put a whole new dimension on the genre by hanging by its web and walking on the underside of platforms.

Devil of a game...

Arguably the best pure platformer on the PSX, and certainly a fave in the extreme PlayStation office, is Ocean's Jersey Devil. With exciting visuals, great animation and a learning curve which eases you in at just the right speed, this is a true platformer for the nineties. Scoring an amazing 93% last issue, this is one game no self-respecting platform freak should be without.

So much for the past - what about the future? 3D platform fans should keep their eyes peeled for Psygnosis' Rascal, which could well be the best platformer of all time. Check out our Gamespotting section for more details. Earthworm Jim 3D sees Shiny's wriggly rascal in his first next-gen, 3D adventure and Mega Man Neo, Mega Man's first 3D outing, offers improved weapons, a more in-depth storyline and solid RPG elements. Gex, the lizard who first appeared on the 3DO, returns in Gex: Enter the Gecko. Publisher Crystal Dynamics promise a souped-up main character and a great 3D model. Blasto features a 40's-style comic book hero shooting his way through a 3D world, and Pitfall 3D is just plain weird. Look out for more information on all these games in future issues of extreme PlayStation. Whatever happens in the world of PSX platformers, we'll be there to tell you about it.







Cross Purposes

No, not the porno film, but multi-genre games where platform offerings meet another game style. Here's just a few...

Arcade Adventure

Remember the Dizzy games? An egg with red boots and boxing gloves (!) bounced his way through a platform-filled land, gathering objects and using them to solve puzzles; put the sticks by the locked door, light them with the match, put the fire out with the jug of water and hey presto, you've burned your way through the door and opened up another area of the game.

The first Dizzy adventure was well received, but looking back it was pretty cack. You often had to go to one side of the playing area to find an object and all the way to the other end to use it. Later games such as Magicland Dizzy and Crystal Kingdom Dizzy avoided this trap, and became all-time classics. Dizzy was an 8-bit superstar and made in-roads into the 16-bit scene, but a dispute between the publisher (CodeMasters) and creators (the Oliver twins) prevented him going further. It's a pity - Dizzy would be cool in a 3D PlayStation game, as would that other 8-bit wonder, Impossible Mission. A serious secret agent outing, the epic from Epyx was later updated on 16-bit machines as Impossible Mission 2025, but has yet to see life on the 32-bit consoles.

Another game which wowed in its day is Flashback. Boasting (for its time) outstanding animation and some seriously perplexing puzzles, this was Delphine's finest hour. Imagine how good a Flashback-style game on the PlayStation would look...

Beat-'em-up

Perhaps the purest platform/beat-'em-up crossover is Mortal Kombat Mythologies: Sub Zero. Here our chilly friend is taken out of his usual one-on-one fighters and made to explore a hostile environment in search of the Map of Elements. As well as the expected fighting, featuring most of Sub-Zero's Mortal Kombat moves, you must climb ropes, jump static and mobile platforms and find objects - in other words, classic platform fare.

At the time of writing, the PSX version of MKM: Sub Zero is due any day, but as it proved disappointing on other formats, no one is too excited.

Football

Unbelievably, there's a football/platform hybrid too - sort of. Soccer Kid features a football-mad geezer as the main character. As well as the usual jumping over platforms, you get to blast the baddies by booting a ball at them. Different tricks on the ball can be performed, all of them useful for tasks like toppling enemies or breaking barriers. Soccer Kid is more platform than soccer, but this interesting hybrid works well enough.

Shoot-'em-ups

One of the all-time classic games on 8- and 16-bit systems was Turrican, a platform shoot-'em-up which spawned several sequels. The game boasted an incredible (and, as the game went on, ever-increasing) range of weapons and huge quantities of hostile enemies to face. Turrican demanded brains as well as brawn, as you geared your weapons to the situation in hand and found safe havens from where to blast the baddies with impunity. Perhaps this is why it became so popular. Here's hoping for Turrican 3D...

Driving Games

Believe it or not, there are a few driving/platform crossover games. Automania on the Spectrum was a little like Donkey Kong, only in a car. For the bikers among you, there was Kik Start, an ageing classic based on the TV show. The aim of the game was simply to get from A to B; there were no baddies, just obstacles to avoid and platforms to jump. More recently, the Amiga and the PC enjoyed Car-Vup, an addictive little game in which you again drove a car.

3D...

Alien 3 had virtually nothing to do with the film from which it was licensed. The game boasted hoards of aliens where the film had but one, the player had an incredible arsenal of weapons though the film saw Ripley unarmed and in the film she was accompanied by a group of convicts, whereas in the game she was alone. Still, it was a great platform blaster so who really cares?

RPGs

The Castlevania series of games seem to have been going forever, on loads of computer and console formats. The latest offering is Castlevania: Symphony of the Night, aka Castlevania X. The game involves much exploration, with a fair few platforms to peruse en route, but also a character who improves with experience. He gets more hit points and magic points through finding power-ups, and new weapons and armour offer increased attack and defence ratings. Likewise, acquired equipment offers new abilities. Most Castlevania games have storylines which are revealed as the game progresses, too.

As an RPG, Castlevania X wouldn't worry Final Fantasy VII, and as a platformer it's hardly Jersey Devil, but the interaction of two game styles and plenty of ideas of its own make it a great game in its own right.

competition

First out of the virgin's muff will receive -

A *Sony DiscMan*, a copy of the game *Jersey Devil*, a *Jersey Devil T-shirt*, *poster* and... a *face mask*?

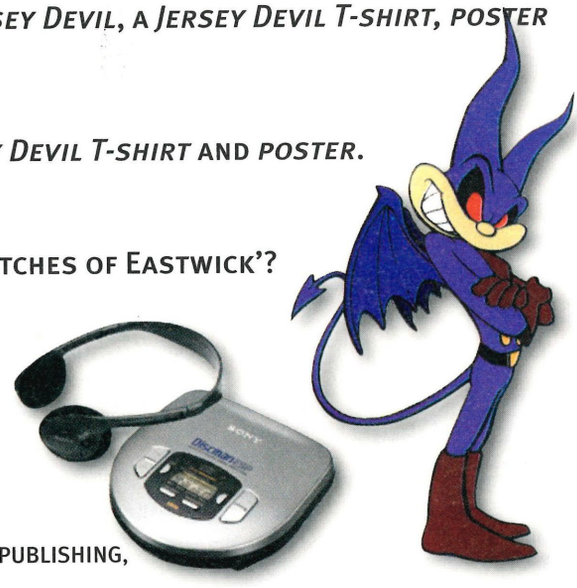
With four runner-up prizes of -

A copy of the game *Jersey Devil*, a *Jersey Devil T-shirt* and *poster*.

Answer this simple question -

Who played the devil in the film, 'The Witches of Eastwick'?

A. Jack Nicholson
B. Julian Clary
C. Gary Barlow
D. Damen Hill



Entries on a postcard, written with the blood of next door's cat to -

TAKE A RUNNING JUMP, EXTREME PLAYSTATION MAGAZINE, QUAY MAGAZINE PUBLISHING, QUAY HOUSE, THE QUAY, POOLE DORSET BH15 1HA

COOLBOARDERS 2

Wax up, slip on your Bermuda shorts and ride those tubes... Shit, wrong sport. Right, slip on your woollies, strap in your feet and cane it down the slopes on a small piece of fibreglass - it's time for more Coolboarding...

Although Coolboarders wasn't the most technically awe-inspiring game around, when first released it still managed to catch the adventure and spirit of one of the coolest (no pun intended) sports around.

The main problem was there simply wasn't enough to it. This is something that Sony attempted to correct with Coolboarders 2, and to an extent this goal has been achieved.

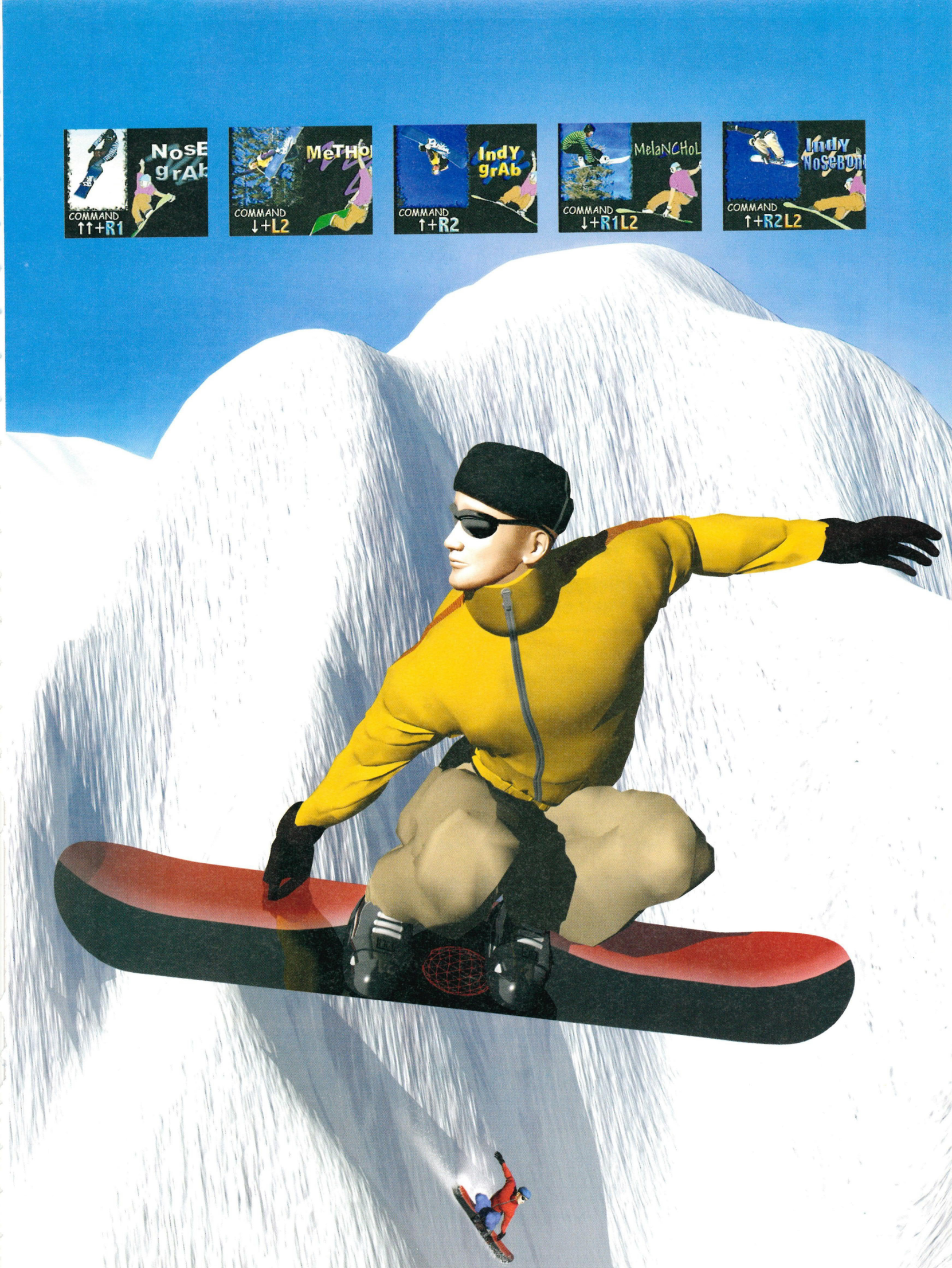











COMMAND ↑↑+R1
COMMAND ↓+L2
COMMAND ↑+R2
COMMAND ↓+R1L2
COMMAND ↑+R2L2






Believe it or not, there's a snow flurry outside as I write. So much for sunny Poole. Anyway, I won't let the wintry atmosphere and 'oh, it's snowing' attitude sway me in this, the most wintry of reviews...

There's something about snow, isn't there? The second it starts to settle, even the most well-adjusted adults turn into little kids. Be it a snowball fight in the garden or a few hand-brake skids in the car park (who, us?-Darren), everybody gets into snow; at least until your feet start to freeze and your fingers fall off.

Some people have more stamina (and money) than us part-time snow lovers, and they relish week after week in the snow, getting cold, braking limbs but most importantly having a most excellent time in the process. These people are snowboarders (and skiers, but they're not really relevant so I'll leave them out). Snowboarding has been growing in popularity for years, becoming an official sport at the '98 Nagano Winter Olympics. Unlike skiing, though, most snowboarders aren't middle class toffs who visit their parents' winter lodge in Val D'isere every winter. They're ordinary people who have simply caught the bug of one of the coolest sports since skateboarding and surfing.



> "...All of the new elements wouldn't help Coolboarders 2 one bit though if it wasn't for the heroin-like addictiveness of the gameplay..."

Anyway, it's already stopped snowing outside so I suppose it's time to start the review proper; it doesn't look like I'll pull off any 180's in the car park this year.

Following Coolboarders was never going to be a hard job. The first game had excellent gameplay, but not enough depth. It would be simple, then, for Sony to add a few more modes, leave it at that and ride off the original. They have indeed added new modes of play, but that's not all. There are ten new tracks on offer, as well as a freestyle area, a half-pipe and three ski jumps to compete on. Complete all the tracks in the competition and you're awarded another that's even more devious than the previous ones. Oh, and there's a special masters' mode where you can take to a slope that just keeps repeating with jumps, over and over again, for anything up to fifteen minutes.

So as you can see, Coolboarders 2 is not just an update, it's a true sequel. All of the new elements wouldn't help Coolboarders 2 one bit though if it wasn't for the heroin-like addictiveness of the gameplay. I haven't put it down for three solid days, and I'm not about to quit until I've won the championship in normal and mirror modes (sorry, I forgot to tell you about the extra mirror mode as well). Even when this is done, I'm sure it's worth coming back to for the freestyle, ski jump and half-pipe sections which you can find out about elsewhere in this review.

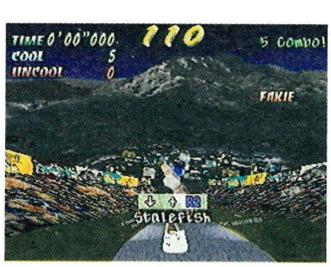
BAG MAN

The closest I've ever been to snowboarding is sliding down a snow-covered verge in a bin liner when I was a boy, so I can't talk about how realistic Coolboarders 2 is. In fact, I haven't got a clue (you're just too honest-Darren). What I can tell you is, realistic or not, Coolboarders 2 is great fun to play.

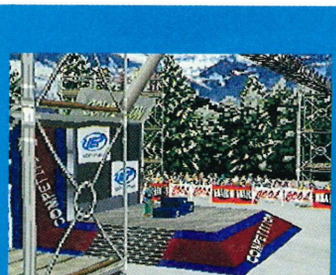
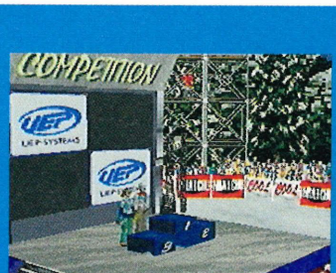
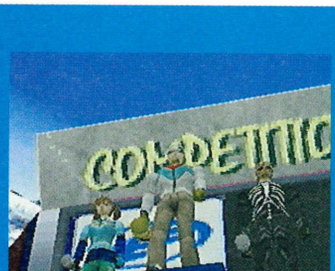
It's basically an arcade game, albeit with tons more features than anything you'd throw a quid at. Sony haven't gone for the simulation approach to snow-boarding, and Coolboarders 2 is all the better for it. This is reflected in the quantity and difficulty of the tricks that you can pull off. There's well over a hundred combinations of tricks, and most of them look pretty damn impossible to do in real life. Some of the basic tricks are obviously taken from the real thing, but just sticking to realistic tricks would make the game a tad boring. I mean, pulling of a 1400 degree spin while performing a melancholy grab is great fun to do, but I'm sure even the gnarliest snowboarders in the world would fall short of this excessive dare-devilness.

With such a huge amount of tricks and stunts to perform, it seems a shame they haven't been more strongly implemented in the actual racing part of the game. It would have been better if the final results of a race were decided not only on the finishing position, but also the amount and quality of






▲ This scene only comes to the gnarliest players.





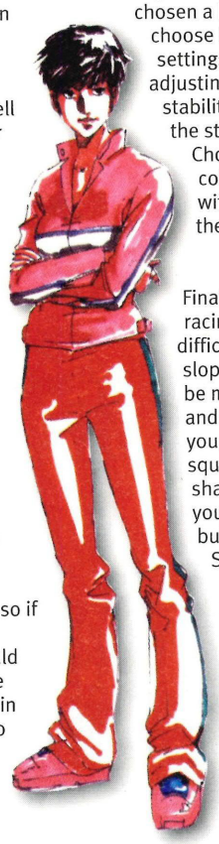


One wrong move and you reach the bottom faster than you'd like!

stunts performed. Don't worry, though, you can perform tricks 'till your heart's content in the freestyle, big air and board park sections of the game.

Stunts and jumps haven't been totally ignored in the competition mode though. Before every race you must attempt one of the three ski jumps in a bid to score the most points by pulling off the best moves. Your start position in the next race depends on how many points you scored in the jump qualifying section; score well and you start at the front or just a few seconds behind the leader. Wipe out or score badly and you find yourself bringing up the rear in eighth position. This is definitely a good way to set the start positions as a straightforward eight-man start would make it too easy to get to the front.

The actual racing is very simple to control, but before you start you need to choose a boarder and a board. There are four boarders for you to choose from, two dudes and two dudettes. They all have a number of different outfits so if you're the type who likes dressing Barbies, you should enjoy this part. Actually the clothes all look pretty cool in an 'if you've got the balls to wear it' kinda' way. Once you've chosen your rider, it's time to choose a type of board, of which there are three - freestyle, all-round and alpine. Alpine is the fastest type of board, but is also the least stable. All-round is pretty cool in all departments (funny that, I know) and freestyle is best for tricks and jumps. The freestyle board is also pretty stable, but it's soooo slow you shouldn't even think about using it in a race. Once you've chosen a board type you can choose between three different settings for your board, adjusting things like speed and stability. After this you go on to the style of board selection. Choose your favourite colour or one that goes with your natty clothes, then it's off to the slopes.



SNOW GO

Finally, then, we get to the racing. At first it's bloody difficult, even on the easier slopes. The control couldn't be more simple, though. Left and right on the D-Pad takes you, um, left or right, the square makes you turn sharply, acting as a brake if you turn with it, and the X button makes you jump. Simple. Well, yes and no. This all sounds easy, but once you start down those icy, snaking slopes you find yourself eating plenty of rock face as well as creating an intimate relationship with the snow. The use of the Square button is fundamental to making it down the mountain in one piece. The problem is that turning sharply also slows you down, which gives the other racers a few seconds to catch up. There's no getting around this, though, so your racing technique must be based on precise and speedy turning.

> **"...you can perform tricks 'till your heart's content in the freestyle, big air and board park sections of the game..."**

When you get onto some of the later tracks, it's amazing how twisty they become. At first you're cursing the track designers, but after a few tries on each track you get into the swing of things. When you finally conquer that snaking passage without making one mistake, you're thoroughly chuffed with yourself.

On the whole the tracks have been extremely well designed, so I'll take back any curses I put upon the designers when I first started playing. Each run has plenty of hazards, the most dangerous being a sheer drop to your doom on one side when you're caning along a piece of snow. Usually this is on the outside of the corner, meaning you constantly drift out to the edge unless some serious control is achieved. This sort of thing really annoyed me at first, but as you get better at the game you find you need and relish the challenge. Other hazards found on tracks include anything from fallen logs and

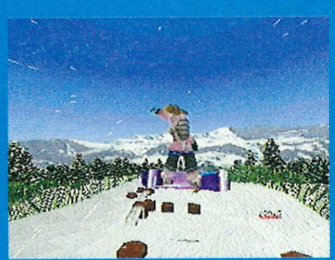


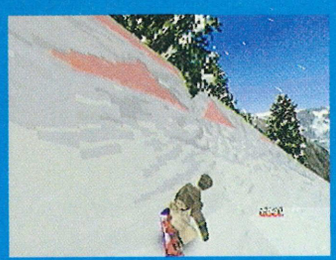
ON THE BOARDPARK

The boardpark is basically a practice run, but you can still tear the place up and use the moguls, hills and obstacles for some great stunts once you've finished practising. There's a variety of different jumps on which you can take to the skies and halfway down the run you come across an area packed with obstacles such as cars, lorries and oil drums which can all be used to impress your mates.
Pull off a decent move here and you're awarded a 'cool' sign in the bottom corner of the screen.















massive pipelines to jutting-out rocks and trees.

In fact the trees cause a huge amount of frustration at times, but they also offer some of the most exciting racing. Track three, Bear In The Forest, consists almost entirely of a slope covered in trees which you must descend while watching out for your opponents. Flying through the trees at breakneck speeds is as close to extreme snowboarding as you can get on the PlayStation, and although you're pulling your hair out when you connect with a tree trunk, you're whooping with delight once you've made it through. This track, although simple in design, is definitely one of my favourites but I also hate it for its sheer difficulty. If you can understand that.

The other tracks vary from difficult to extremely bloody difficult, and with ten of them to deal with, plus mirror mode, you won't find yourself getting bored quickly. The tracks and the control method make for some excellent races, and one of the most competitive one-player games you're likely to play. Once you're going you find the control is very instinctive and smooth, and the speed of the game adds to the addictiveness and challenge of the gameplay.



That's like some wicked air maaan.

"...one of the most competitive one-player games you're likely to play..."

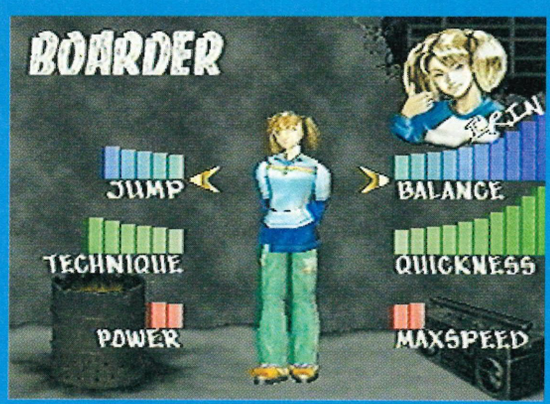
FLAW TIME

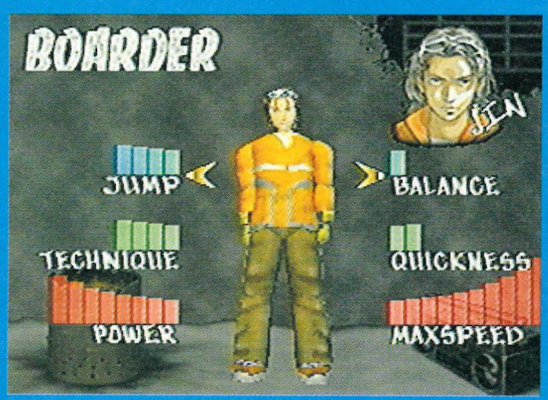
After having blown Coolboarders 2's trumpet this far into the review, it's about time to go into its downers, and I'm afraid to say there are one or two very annoying flaws in the game.

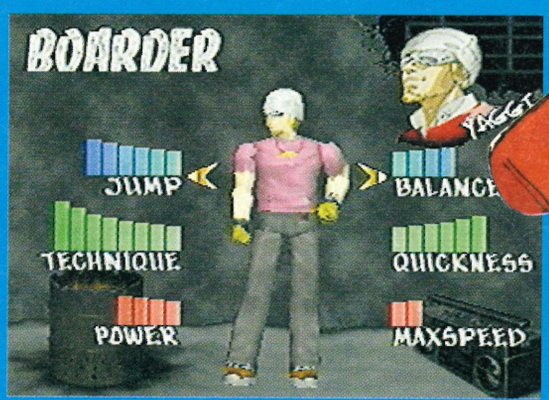
The problems really come with the graphics. For a start, the boarders themselves are very basic.

THE COOLBOARDERS











The four boarders all have different advantages and disadvantages, but in the end they work out about even. For instance, Yaggie has a great technique and is very quick, but he loses out on power and maximum speed. Jin is extremely powerful and fast but his technique, quickness, jump and balance suffer. I found Yaggie the most useful character, but everyone should find a boarder that suits their style.





There's not much movement of the body as you turn corners, though this is made up for when you pull off a stunt. I can live with this, but something that really bugs me is draw-in. It's not that bad in one-player mode, but it's pretty terrible in the split screen two-player game. Shrouding the horizon in mist would have dealt with this, and fog wouldn't look out of place on a mountain, would it?

Another graphical problem is the way that at times you can see flickering lines where the different parts of the scenery join up. On the whole the scenery's pretty solid, but these lines let the game down badly. The final problem with the graphics is the glitching; you know, when polygons disappear. I can't moan about it too much as nearly every 3D game suffers from this type of problem.

On the sound front things are looking fine and dandy. The music is a cool blend of drum 'n' bass, thrashy metal and hip hop-style pop, and the snowboarders make comments when you pull off a flashy manoeuvre. The commentator is a different matter, he really gets on your tits. He's got one of those 'wicked man' type of voices

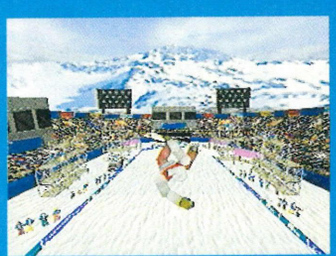


The trees look blocky close up, but you're going too fast to notice anyway.

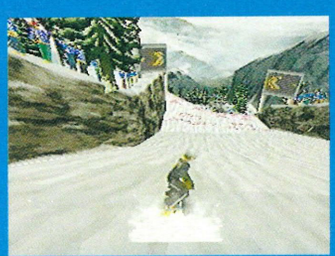


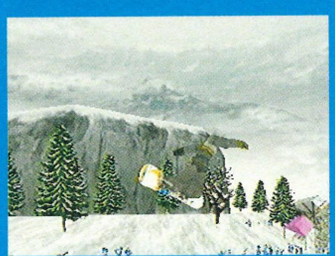


CATCH SOME AIR





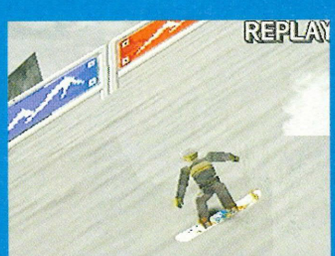


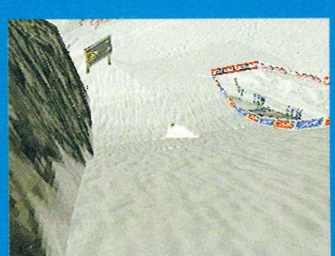


On top of the Competition and Freestyle sections, on Coolboarders 2 there's the Big Air Tournament. You can take part in a competition or the masters' event. The competition gives you three ramps to choose from - Stadium Kicker, Ice Fang and Titan's Toe. The idea is simple enough: Attempt each ramp and try to pull off the biggest and best jump possible. Doing it isn't simple, though. You need to be pretty adept at pulling off moves to get your name on the high score tables for all three jumps, and one small mistake can end with you eating snow and being jeered by the crowd. Each ramp differs radically, and you must tailor your technique to get the best results. The Stadium Kicker is a basic ramp - this is the best place to start and learn some moves. The Ice Fang ramp takes things one step further by making the lip of the ramp at different heights. Going over the higher side of the ramp makes your jump harder to pull off, but if you can do it the results are spectacular. Titan's Toe is a different beast altogether. This one gives you a massive, drag style, steep run down onto the half pipe section where you can pull off some of the most hair-raising, sallopette-soiling moves you've ever seen.

The masters' competition puts you on a long, straight, slope with jumps at regular intervals. The idea here is to perform the move which flashes up on the screen before the jump. If you wipe-out or make a wrong move, the instructions appear and show you exactly how to do it on the next ramp. Each time you get a stunt right, you're awarded extra time and immediately move on to the next stunt for the next ramp. Scoring is based on how long you lasted (the maximum is fifteen minutes), how many stunts you completed, how many stunts you completed in a row (combo) and how many stunts you poo poo'ed. The masters' competition is an excellent way to learn the stunts and it's also extremely challenging once you get going.











Race a ghost in the freestyle section.









that's quite laughable. After a while you're wishing that there was an option to turn him off, but alas, there isn't.

None of the graphical flaws ruined my enjoyment of Coolboarders 2. I'm sure if I found them on a game which wasn't much fun to play I'd be really ranting about them, but they don't seem to matter in one of the most enjoyable games I've played in ages.

Second Opinion

A sequel is supposed to iron out the flaws of the original, whilst adding new features to justify the purchase. Coolboarders 2 does exactly that. Challenging courses and a wide selection of boards and moves keeps you on the piste.

Darren



Some people claim Coolboarders 2 is the game Coolboarders should have been. I have to disagree. Coolboarders 2 gives far more than the original could ever have offered - the improvements are phenomenal. The ten tracks plus mirror mode, four riders, a plethora of different boards, big air competitions, half-pipe competitions and a freestyle section are all hinged together with some of the best arcade action gameplay seen on this type of game. Coolboarders 2 will be liked by almost everybody and it makes an excellent party game. Okay, it hasn't got the depth of Tomb Raider 2 or Final Fantasy VII, but the sheer challenge and enjoyment gained from a few gnarly sessions on Coolboarders 2 is well worth the entry fee, and more.



SAUL

The Score

Publisher	SCEE
Developer	UEP-SYSTEMS
Released	OUT NOW
Version	UK
Price	£39.99
Genre	WINTER SPORTS
Players	2
Memory Card	✔

GAMEPLAY
9

ORIGINALITY
8

LIFESPAN
9

SOUND
7

GRAPHICS
7

OVERALL
90%

in summary

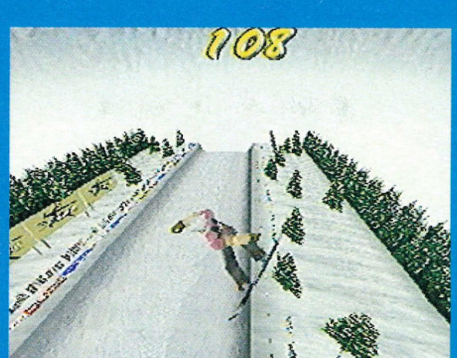
Forget everything else; it's the adrenaline-pumping gameplay that conquers here.

GI'S A TOKE

The half-pipe section is another great addition to the competition modes. The idea here is to send your boarder through a half-pipe while pulling off as many tricks as you can. This is excellent for party play as each run doesn't last long and everyone gets a score based on a number of different elements at the end of each run.

Tackling the half-pipe looks easy but completing a perfect run is far from simple, so you're well chuffed when you get your first 20+ score without a wipe-out.







competition

WIN! A LIMITED EDITION *PLAYSTATION SNOWBOARD* & A COPY OF *COOLBOARDERS 2*

also FIVE RUNNERS UP GET A COPY OF *COOLBOARDERS 2*



We've got one gnarly, rippin' and grindin' PlayStation Snowboard and a copy of the superb *COOLBOARDERS 2* to give away to the winner of this (as ever) easy to enter compo. Don't fear though, even if you don't win the snowboard you'll still be in with a chance to win a copy of the game.

To enter just answer this teaser:

WHAT ESSENTIAL INGREDIENT DO YOU NEED FOR A SUCCESSFUL DAY OF SNOWBOARDING?

A. SEA
B. SAND
C. SNOW
D. LARD

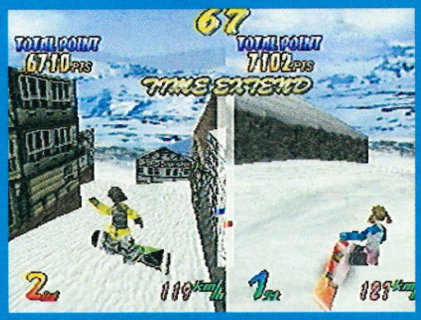
Entries on a postcard (or a piece of cereal pack that resembles a postcard) to:

I'M A COOLBOARDER ME
EXTREME PLAYSTATION MAGAZINE
QUAY MAGAZINE PUBLISHING
QUAY HOUSE
THE QUAY
POOLE
DORSET
BH15 1HA

*Competition closes 26th feb

SPLIT SCREEN SNOWBOARDING





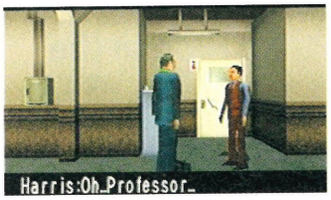


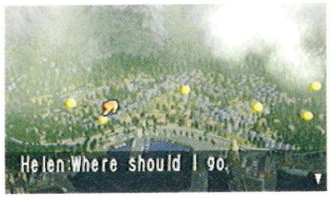
The original Coolboarders didn't have a two-player split screen mode, though it was definitely needed. Sony have rectified this with Coolboarders 2, and they've done a pretty good job with it too. The two-player mode loses a little speed and the draw-in evident in one player mode is worse, but not enough to detract from your enjoyment of the game. In fact, as long as both boarders have a good grasp of the controls, the two player mode is immense fun that's made even better when you play a winner-stays-on match or tournament with a group of mates.

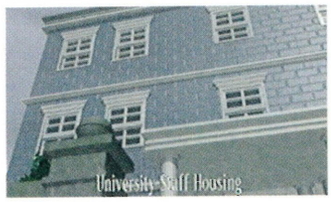


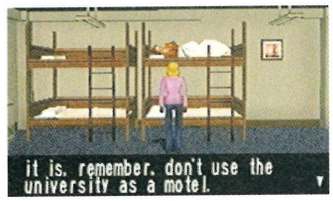
Clock Tower

It's 'B' movie madness with Ascii's horror outing...









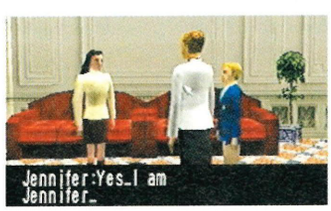
Jennifer was scared. As she scrambled up the steep cliffside, she could almost hear the evil murderer on her tail. She had heard legends of twins Dan and Bobby, the Scissormen, but never thought them true. But true they were. The hideous monster from Barrows Mansion could almost taste the blood of his next victim as he pursued his teenage prey.

Desperately, she reaches for the top handhold and pulls herself up. Her fingers bite into the loose earth as it crumbles in her hand, dislodging a small wooden crate on top of the ledge. Ducking to avoid its fall, she looks over her shoulder in time to see it hit a lower ledge, exploding in a ball of flames - it contained explosives! She winces as she hears the blood-curling screams of her attacker as he falls to the fire. The Scissorman was dead.

All was quiet for the next year, but then a series of brutal, savage killings swept the area - the Scissorman had returned. Since her lucky escape, Jennifer had stayed with Helen Maxwell, an Assistant Professor of Criminal Psychology. Although Helen had taken a great interest in the Scissorman case and had heard every detail of Jennifer's brutal encounter, the girl was more than just a case study for her. In fact, they were by now almost like sisters. Helen just had to solve the case of Scissorman and discover the secret of his apparent immortality, but would she live long enough to do it?

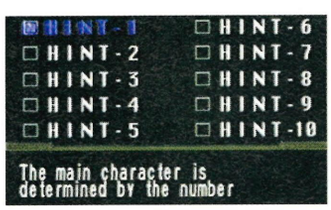
> **"...She winces as she hears the blood-curling screams of her attacker as he falls to the fire..."**

So begins Clock Tower, a point-and-click adventure with a difference. Unlike most such games, where you battle your way through the game solving problems until you get to the end sequence, Clock Tower has opted for a less linear approach. There are ten different endings, five using Jennifer as the main character, and five playing Helen. Your performance in the game decides which you get. The character you play is decided by your actions during the prequel, in which you play Professor Barton. The deciding action, though, is so embarrassingly trivial the programmers offer it as a hint found on a piece of paper during the game. There are ten such hints, which can be read only when you've quit out. They're useful in that they signpost the paths to endings other than the one you're already heading for, but this should be made clear by playing the game, not finding phoney, contrived clues.



Dialogue Dilemmas

As you can see from the screenshots, aside from the FMV intro sequence the graphics are merely functional. The 3D human models don't animate realistically, and have no real character of their own. They all look like kids' TV hero Mr Ben as they wobble across the screen. The sound's nothing to shout about either. Much has been made of its haunting minimalism, and it's certainly minimalistic, but haunting? Naaah, it's just lazy. Whole chunks of the game are









Here are a few minor players

Beth, Age 23
Despite her years, Beth is often immature and child-like. She carries a pillow everywhere she goes, as she can't sleep without one. Not very logical, but that's Beth...

Danny, Age 25
Computer whizz Danny was a student of Professor Barton's last semester. He's a very adventurous type, never one to let the grass grow under his feet.

Rose, Age 30
Rose, a friend of Helen, is a lab assistant. She often meets her boyfriend Baker at midnight on the campus. Better watch out for the Scissorman...

Baker, Age 32
Rose's boyfriend is also a lab assistant. He's come to enjoy their risky midnight rendezvous.

Tim, Age 27
Tim's a photographer for the Oslo Weekly News. He's most unlike his partner the loud, brash Nolon. Rather, he's a quiet, thoughtful worker.

Sullivan, Age 72
Sullivan is the Head Librarian. He's an adventurous and moral person, and good friends with the man who taught Professor Barton.

Rick, Age 65
Rick is a retired butler who used to work for Barrow's family. He's diligent and careful, but lacks humour and rarely smiles.

Kay, Age 26
In 1995, Kay started working at the Granite Orphanage where she took in Edward. She's currently staying at the Norway International Hotel.

Motley Maps

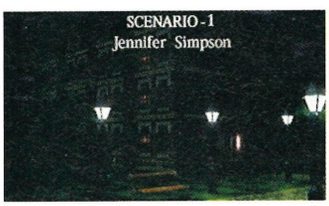
When presented with a map such as this, visit all locations and talk to people until you're plunged into a scenario. Trial and error again. If you're getting nowhere, visit every location once. You should now have an idea where to go next (it will be one of the locations already visited). If not, try them all once more. You get there in the end...



Dull Dialogue



Conversation within the game has been very lazily implemented. Only two lines of dialogue are visible at any time, and it scrolls pathetically slowly only one line at a time. This is ridiculous considering how much screen space is wasted. You rarely hear the speech too - it's as if the characters are communicating telepathically.



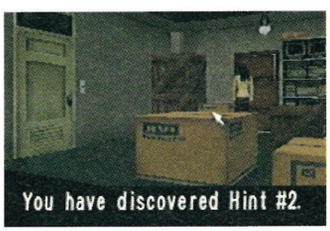
played in complete silence, and there's almost no speech at all. Watching two people having a text-only conversation, their mouths opening and closing like hungry goldfish, is disconcerting to say the least. To make matters worse, the speed of the text update is abysmal. It takes ages to finish a conversation, with the grand total of two (TWO) lines appearing at a time, with a press of the X button scrolling up a line. After reading what's there, there's a pause of a second or two before you can scroll anyway. Can you imagine how annoying this is when you've just one more word to read, and you've guessed what it is anyway? Broken Sword 2 gave us full digitised dialogue, with the option to see it written on the screen as well. Why can't Clock Tower do the same?

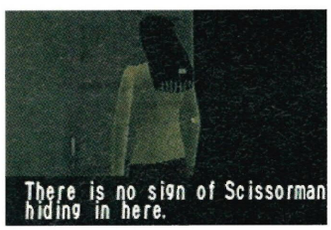
As stated earlier, Clock Tower's not as linear as most adventures, which is both a blessing and a curse. The game improves dramatically as you leave the speech-heavy scene-setting sections and into the cat-and-mouse battles with the Scissorman. Your main character, be it Helen or Jennifer, is chased by the malevolent monster and must get the better of him with improvised traps Home Alone-style or whacking him with an improvised weapon over a series of scenarios. This offers handy, bite-sized chunks of gameplay but can seem artificial at times.

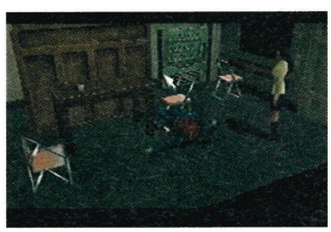
"...Hide in the same box twice and he's likely to plunge his shears into it..."

Stalked by Scissorman

Another break from the norm is in the way you're stalked by the Scissorman. You're never sure where he is, and can walk into him









COLOURFUL CHARACTERS

Here are the main

Professor Samuel Barton, Age 52

You play as this guy, the Professor of Criminal Psychology, during the prologue. He provides psychological profiling research on baffling criminal investigations, including the notorious Clock Tower case.



Edward, Age 10

Edward survived the Clock Tower massacre last year, along with Jennifer. He lost his memory when rescued - his true name and identity are unknown. He was given the name Edward by the Granite Orphanage.



Harris Chapman, Age 35

Harris is a Research Assistant studying criminal psychology. He's a sneaky little toad with an unhealthy interest in Jennifer.



Stan Gotts, Age 42

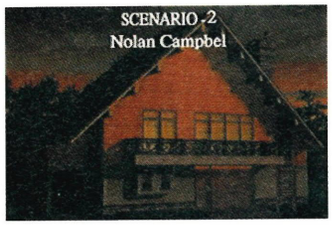
This officer is determined to crack the Clock Tower case, perhaps to the point of obsession. He has no faith in the supernatural, instead relying on his years of experience to crack the case. He strongly believes he's the man for the job.



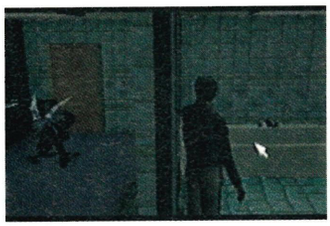
Helen Maxwell, Age 30

Helen is one of the two people you might control during the game. She's the Assistant Professor of Criminal Psychology with a special interest in Scissorman, the murderer in the Clock Tower case. She'd love to write a paper on this cold-blooded killer, but will she live long enough to see it published?









(with suitably disastrous results) at any time. There are always opportunities to confound him by, for example, hiding in a box or throwing acid in his face. This is the best and in some cases only way to buy yourself time. If you're really stuck, it's possible (but difficult) to knock him flat with a well-placed punch. Be warned, though - many tricks work only once. Hide in the same box twice and he's likely to plunge his shears into it. This degree of trial and error makes a definitive step-by-step solution impossible - what works first time around might not succeed again. The basic puzzles are there, though. Save often and persevere.

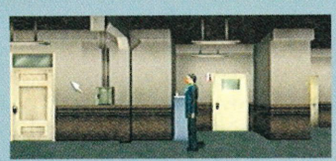
It's when you get into the individual Scissorman scenarios that the game really comes into its own. The sound improves - it's still deliberately minimalistic, but when the foul fiend gets close, the 'schink, schink' of his shears turns your blood to anti-freeze. There's a real feeling of tension. There's little speech here so the clumsy dialogue interface is a virtual irrelevance, leaving you free to explore your environment without getting bogged down with slow-scrolling text. The graphics seem to improve too; not the people, but the scenery, which comes across as being more detailed and interactive. It's obvious where the effort has gone, and rightly so - the scenarios are the heart of the game. It's a pity the between-scenario scenes are so half-hearted, giving weak first impressions of what is essentially an exciting and absorbing game.

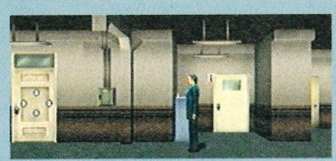


IAN

Swirly Thing Alert...

The pointer is usually an arrow - click on part of the screen to walk to it. If you highlight something worth investigating, though, it spins, splits and becomes four dots. These indicate something you can look at, pick up or (as in this case) go through.





Second Opinion

Hard to get into at first due to a slow introduction of characters/plot. But after a few hours of play things start to hot up. Multi outcomes from the same actions adds to replay value.

Darren

people you meet as you pursue your investigations...

Jennifer Simpson, Age 15

Depending on your actions during the prologue, you could get to control Jennifer instead of Helen. Jenny was raised in an orphanage after her parents were killed. After being attacked by the Scissorman last year, she went to live with the investigator Helen, who was interested in one of the few people to survive such an attack. The two are now like sisters.



Nolan Campbell, Age 26

This roving hack's a reporter for down-market tabloid the Oslo Weekly News, the sort of paper that doesn't let the facts get in the way of a good story. While researching a piece, he became a little too interested in the Clock Tower case and was targeted by the Scissorman. Although unscrupulous, he's extremely professional when it comes to getting his story.



Scissorman, Age ?

The Scissorman is a man of mystery. Almost nothing is known about him. Originally dismissed as folk lore, recent sightings and attacks have forced people to take him seriously. It seems his body is undead and cannot be killed by physical attacks. Could this Scissorman be Bobby?



The Score

Publisher	ASCII ENT.
Developer	HUMAN CORP.
Released	OUT NOW
Version	UK
Price	£39.99
Genre	ADVENTURE
Players	1
Memory Card	✔

GAMEPLAY
8

ORIGINALITY
9

LIFESPAN
7

SOUND
4

GRAPHICS
6

OVERALL
77%

in summary

Works well, but the execution is far from perfect.

Auto Destruct



More burnin' rubber, pedal-to-metal clichés.

Sigh, the driving shoot-'em-up is hardly the most original of genre crossovers. From the basic-but-fun APB to the fast-firing Road Blasters, from the bump-'n'-crunch Chase HQ to this month's Steel Reign, the rootin', shootin', air pollutin' driving blast has been covered before with various degrees of success. So where does Auto Destruct fit in?

If I had to sum up the game in one tired cliché, I'd say 'APB meets Road Blasters'. A quick glance at the screenshots tells you the game is set in a town built in the American way, with the roads forming a grid and the buildings arranged in blocks. This means all corners are 90 degrees, but at least it's easy to find your way around. This is almost exactly like Taito coin-op APB, though unlike its ageing inspiration, it's viewed from slightly behind your own car (or in it, if you prefer) as opposed to from above. This is a similar approach to that of Atari's Road Blasters, as is the forward-firing, power up-chasing weapons system.

Motoring Madness

Although based on two classic games, Auto Destruct fails to make the grade as a PlayStation game for the 90's. Its inspirations are really showing their age next to today's offerings, and EA's offering repeats their main mistake, that of repetitiveness. It's as flat as a witch's tit. Each stage has you solving multiple missions, including chasing and destroying enemy vehicles, picking up a passenger and taking him to another part of the city, attacking an enemy compound or grabbing a hot new weapon. Sounds good, but in practice they play in just two ways - drive to your objective and run into it, or drive to your objective and shoot it. Occasionally there's a time limit to keep you on your toes. This is great fun for a while; there is fun to be had here, but it gets too repetitive too quickly. Also, when you've mastered skidding round the corners at speed, avoiding innocent road users, there's very little skill involved. Unlike, say, Shadow Master you can't sidestep with your road car. This is probably a good thing - Auto Destruct was never intended to be a Doom clone - and it would look bloody ridiculous if you could. However, on such narrow roads this makes it difficult to fight a tactical battle. Aside from choosing the most appropriate weapons for the various baddies, you just stand in front of them and fire most of the time. The trees and lamp posts are annoying too - drive into one and you go straight through. If you collided with them the game would be virtually unplayable, but why draw them in if they're not treated as solid objects? It's just another example of the game's half-hearted approach.

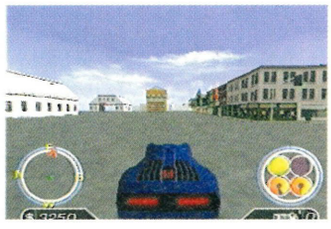
> "...great fun for a while; there is fun to be had here, but it gets too repetitive too quickly..."

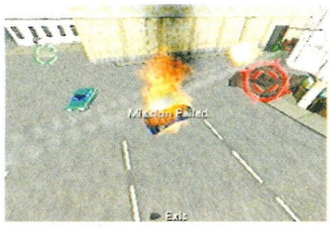
Auto Destruct is fun for a while, but runs out of fuel long before you've got your money's worth. On a £15-a-throw budget label it would be ideal.



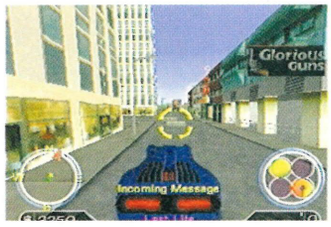
IAN







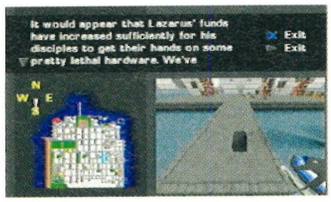


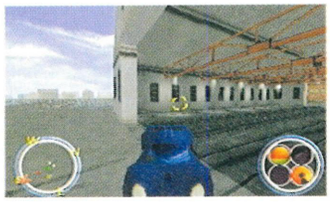


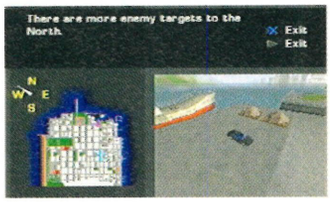
Second Opinion

Lack of cars and varying tasks make this too repetitive. Fun, but only for a short period of time. I think Ian's 'lost the plot' comparing it to Doom and ShadowMaster, poor little boy!

Darren







The Score

Publisher	ELEC. ARTS
Developer	IN HOUSE
Released	OUT NOW
Version	UK
Price	£39.99
Genre	ACTION/SHOOTER
Players	1

GAMEPLAY **6**

ORIGINALITY **6**

LIFESPAN **5**

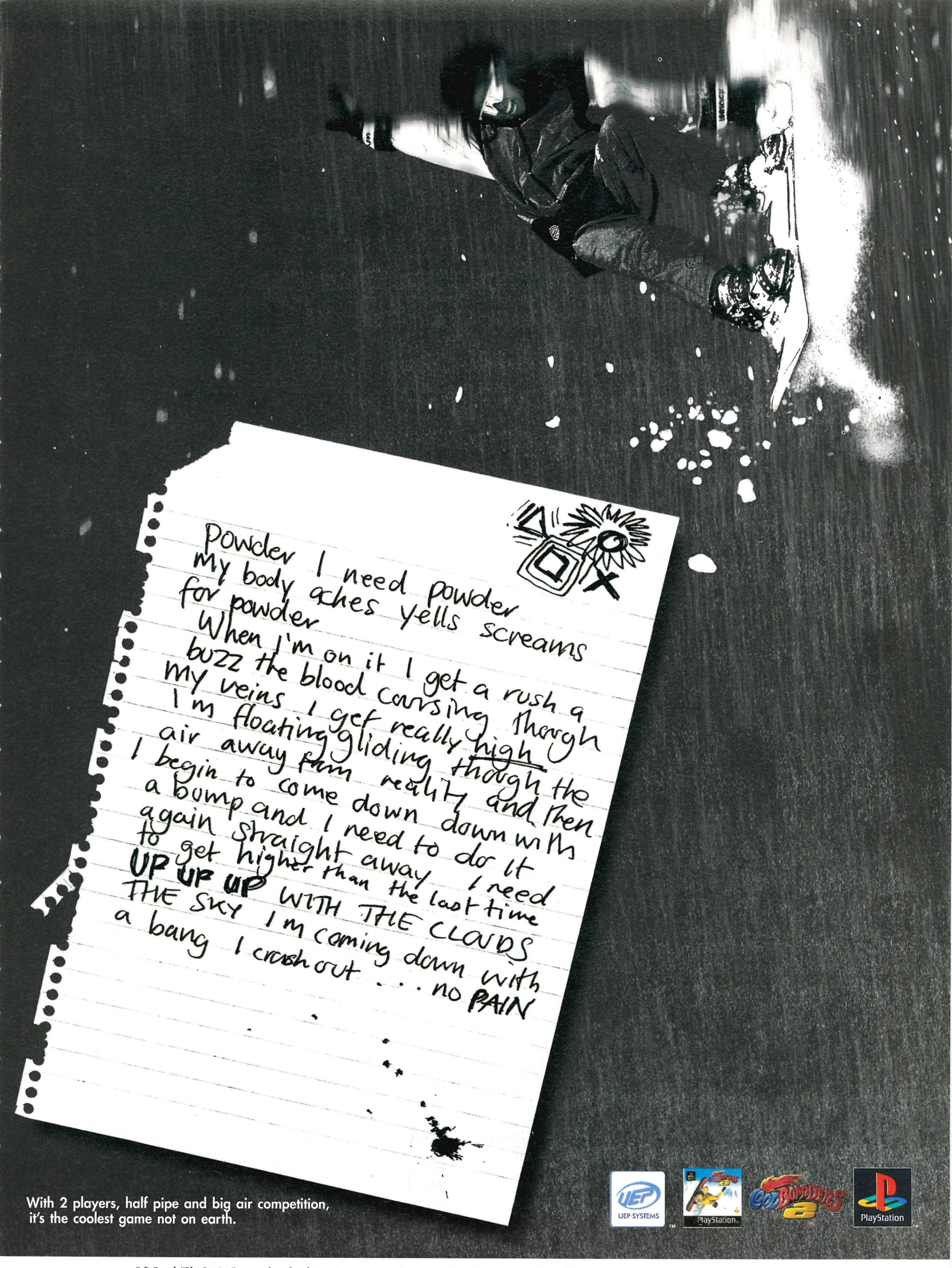
SOUND **7**

GRAPHICS **6**

OVERALL **67%**

in summary

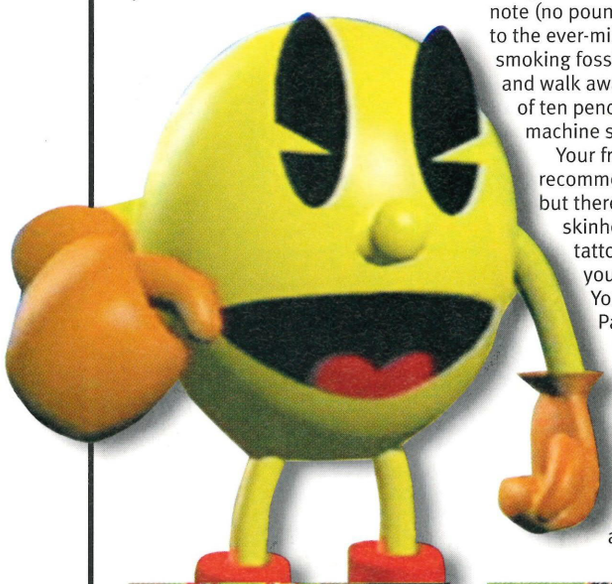
Too shallow to be recommended.


Powder I need powder
My body aches yells screams
for powder
When I'm on it I get a rush a
buzz the blood coursing through the
My veins I get really high and then
I'm floating gliding through
air away from reality down with
I begin to come down down with
a bump and I need to do it
again straight away I need
to get higher than the last time
UP UP UP WITH THE CLOUDS
THE SKY I'm coming down with
a bang I crash out . . . no PAIN
With 2 players, half pipe and big air competition,
it's the coolest game not on earth.
UEP SYSTEMS
PlayStation
PlayStation

Namco Mu Vol.5

I can remember when all this was green fields...

It was a long, hot Summer. The sea rippled softly as it lapped onto the sun-kissed sands, and overhead seagulls sang contentedly, waiting for another holidaymaker to throw them a few crumbs from their sandwich. Seaside holidays - don't you love them?



On the sea front was a building which had obviously seen better days. Through the cracked windows you see crowds of people pressing buttons, waggling joysticks and kicking the machines when they 'die'. It's the amusement arcade! You go in and hand a one pound note (no pound coins in those days) to the ever-miserable, chain-smoking fossil in the change booth and walk away clutching a fistful of ten pence pieces. Which machine should you play first?

Your friend back home recommended Dragon Spirit, but there's a pot-bellied skinhead with BO and bad tattoos playing it. Instead, you turn to Pac-Mania. You loved the original Pac-Man, but how does the update stand up?

The 2D maze enjoyed by the original is now offered in a 3D perspective, but movement is still 2D. There are several arenas, each offered in a differing graphic style, but basic gameplay remains the same - race around the maze eating dots, moving on to a new one when you've cleared it. Cosmetics aside, the only real difference between Pac-Mania and Pac-Man is that you can now jump over the ghosts as well as destroying them by chewing one of the four power pills, which make the monsters vulnerable for a brief period.

Pac-Mania took the Pac-Man series in directions it really didn't need to go. The graphics are better, with the scrolling screen allowing bigger sprites, but the endearing cutsey feel of the original is lost. It's fun for a while, but nothing to send a postcard home about.

Nasty Niffs

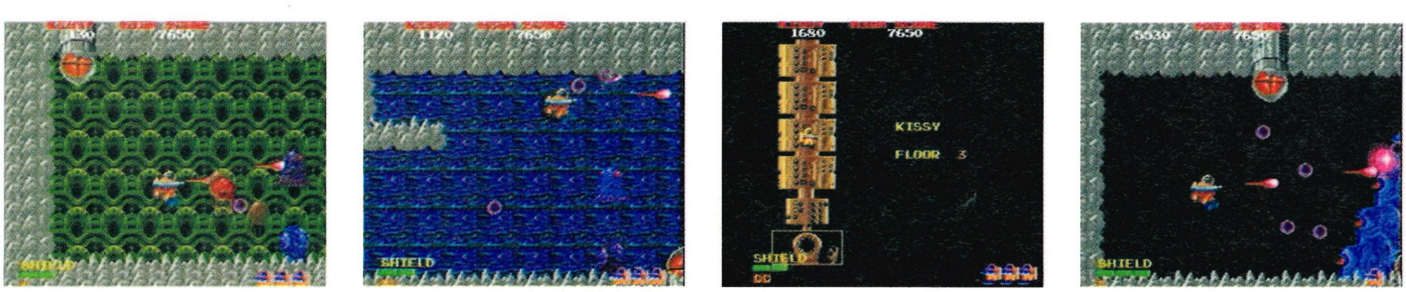
The smelly skinhead is still playing Dragon Spirit, so you play the machine next to it so you can play when he's finished. This is Legend of Valkyrie, an eight-way scrolling cartoon blast in the Commando vein. You (the eponymous valkyrie) can move in eight directions and fire the way you face. You can also jump, an essential skill when leaping across lily leaves Frogger style or across floating stepping stones - one slip and you're in Valhalla. Coins won in battle can be used to upgrade your weapons.

Because the game demands you face the way you're firing, if the baddies get too close there's no room to step towards them and shoot. Thus the game demands intense dodge-and-fire tactics. Legend of Valkyrie is a fun game which, despite its age, is more absorbing than a box of tampons. Its sheer simplicity coupled with clever, interesting design make it a welcome change from the more involved and complex modern games. It won't last you for ever, but it's well worth a look.

Alas, the skinhead is still blasting away on Dragon Spirit, so you turn your attentions to Baraduke. This is about as absorbing as the shiny bog roll you get in a British Rail khazi. You control a little spaceman who can only fire horizontally, but can turn and fire at something behind him if he wishes. Use your jet pack to take to the air, gravity taking



▲ Legend of Valkyrie - A great Commando-style shooter from yesteryear. Eat your heart out, Lara Croft...



▲ Baraduke - About as much fun as smelling our shaven-headed friend's armpits.

SEUM

effect when you release the boosters. Each level consists of a series of short floors, the object of each being to blast the monster generators, thus opening the gate which takes you to the next floor. At the bottom is an end-of-level baddie to blast.

Mildly Amusing...

There's nothing really terrible about Baraduke - it's mildly amusing for a short while, but when your last life is lost, you don't feel inclined to play again.

The skinhead is cursing loudly and kicking holes in Dragon Spirit - you decide to keep well out of his way and play Metro Cross instead. The aim of the game here is to run to your goal before the timer runs down. In your way are rolling Coke cans, hurdles, patches of sticky floor and other hazards. Use the skateboards for speed. You can move into and out of the screen to avoid hazards, but you can't retrace your steps and run back to an item you missed - not that you'd have time anyway. You quickly tire of this extremely dull game and look for something else to play.

As you crane your neck and look for another machine, there's a commotion at the other end of the arcade. The smelly skinhead (6'4") is held in an arm lock by the fossil from the change booth (5'8"), and is being frog-marched out of the arcade. Wonders will never cease! At last, you can play Dragon Spirit.

What a game. This epic vertically-scrolling shooter is rock hard but electrifyingly exciting. You fly a dragon over a prehistoric terrain. Blast oncoming aerial enemies with your fiery breath, bombing the ones on the ground. This two-button approach takes some getting used to - a joypad with autofire is a real boon. Battle your way to the power-ups to gain enhanced firepower, extra lives and even one that lets you grow another head.

> "... Through the cracked windows you see crowds of people pressing buttons, waggling joysticks and kicking the machines when they 'die'. It's the amusement arcade!..."

Dragon Spirit is a real rip-snorter, a great example of an almost-forgotten genre. Its only real fault (other than its excessive difficulty) is that the screen, longer than it is wide, is very small.

Alas, all good things come to an end. You've run out of money and have to go back to your tent. Oh, how you wish you could add credits with a Select button, just like the PlayStation version...

IAN



Dragon Spirit - A great game, but only slightly easier than nailing jelly to the ceiling.



PacMania - A totally unnecessary update of a classic game.



Metro Cross - Fun for five minutes, but soon runs out of steam.

Second Opinion

Play FFVII, TR2 or TOCA then load up this and tell me if you get any enjoyment out of it. Odds are that you won't. I reckon it's best to leave these so called 'classics' in the past, where they belong, and get on with the cutting edge gaming that the PlayStation is capable of.

Saul

The Score

Publisher	SCEE
Developer	NAMCO
Released	OUT NOW
Version	UK
Price	£34.99
Genre	RETRO COMPILATION
Players	1-2

GAMEPLAY
8

ORIGINALITY
0

LIFESPAN
6

SOUND
4

GRAPHICS
3

OVERALL
72%

in summary

There are some great games here, but the fillers bring down the overall score.

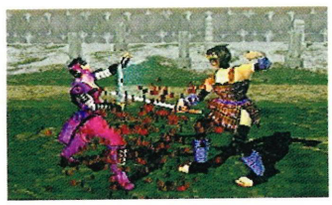
Bushido

extreme PlayStation follows the code of Bushido in one of Sony's bravest games to date...

Let's face it, fighting games are bread and butter titles for the PlayStation. Walk into any good video game stockist and you're bound to have at least ten beat-'em-ups staring you in the face. Trouble is most beat-'em-ups available for the PlayStation are very similar - Tekken 2, Toshinden, Soul Blade and Zero Divide to name but a few. Once you have one of these there doesn't seem much point in buying another fighter, until now, that is...



Blade







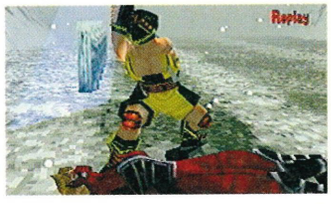


Rather than churning out another Tekken or Soul Blade, Sony have opted to totally transform the existing beat-'em-up format, so instead of getting a full-on button-thrashing one-on-one brawl, we get Bushido Blade, the thinking man's beat-'em-up.

Most fighting games require a mercenary attitude to actually win a battle. For instance if your opponent's on the deck in Tekken 2 you can go for a stomp move to finish him off, which is extremely satisfying, especially when you're playing against a mate. Bushido Blade shuns this type of action. Instead you must fight with honour, as a Samurai should. This aspect is most prominent in Bushido Blade's story mode, although it does play a part in the rest of the game.









Like Soul Blade, Bushido Blade, is a weapons-based beat-'em-up, though here the weapons actually make a difference to your fighting style and the outcome of the battle. You have the choice of six Bushido warriors and eight weapons of varying styles. Each character can use any weapon, though some characters fight better with particular tools. For instance, a heavy weapon such as the broadsword can be used by the female characters but the rapier, which is much lighter, proves more useful in the hands of the fairer sex.

There are six modes of play, with the one-player story mode forming the heart of the game. You can also choose a two-player battle, slash mode where you take on 100 computer opponents in a row, training mode where you fight with wooden weapons and an innovative first person perspective where you can play against the computer or in link-up with a friend (or enemy) - a definite first for beat-'em-ups!

The first person view is actually very good, although it's extremely hard to get used to. A small picture of your character appears in the top-right of the screen, so you can check your positioning. This makes things a little easier, though it's still seriously tough going. Playing against a mate with a link-up is more fun than playing the computer using this view, as you're as hopeless as each other - at least when you first start playing. Although not many people have the equipment to get a link-up going, it's still a very worthy addition to Bushido Blade.

Like most other beat-'em-ups, the rest of the game is played in third-person 3D, although in Bushido Blade you can literally go anywhere. For instance, if you're the cowardly type you can turn and run away from your opponent. If they decide to follow, you can peg it through all of the arenas in the game until they catch up with you. There's no hiding though - In the end you have to face your foe. This gives the game a real feeling of vastness because you're not just restricted to one fighting arena at a time.

> **"...if you're the cowardly type you can turn and run away from your opponent. If they decide to follow, you can peg it through all of the arenas in the game until they catch up with you..."**

The arenas themselves have been designed to the highest standard, and the thought that has gone into this really shows. You find yourself battling it out in huge tree-lined gardens, industrial yards, on wooden bridges, in the mountains and lots more. In some areas the scenery is interactive so you can chop down small trees or throw muddy water at your opponent. Also, if there's a ledge you can climb up onto it to get yourself into a better position. This also sets you up to stab your opponent in the eye when they're climbing up to get you. It's not an honourable action, but it's very satisfying.

TELL US A STORY MODE

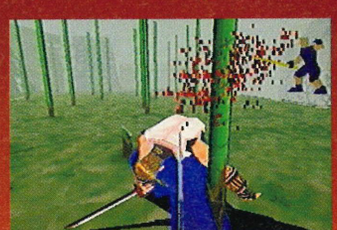
The story mode is the main one-player segment of Bushido Blade. You're cast as one of six Bushido warriors, and you must escape your colleagues who are out to kill you. The game is simply a succession of fights, but it isn't just the winning that counts. This is where the honour comes into play. A Samurai Warrior lives for his honour, so if you want to see the good ending, you have to fight by the Samurai code.

This means you can't attack or even taunt an opponent while they are talking at the beginning of a fight. Also, hitting opponents while they're down is a no-no. Nasty manoeuvres such as a full-on sword in the eye are also frowned upon, especially if you go for a move like this at the beginning of a bout. Finally, the Samurai code is disgusted by cowardice, so running away in story mode is not a good idea if you want to keep your

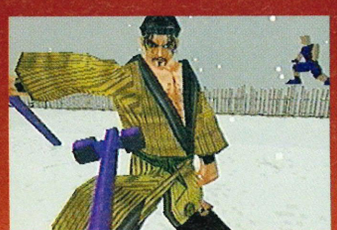
POINTS OF VIEW

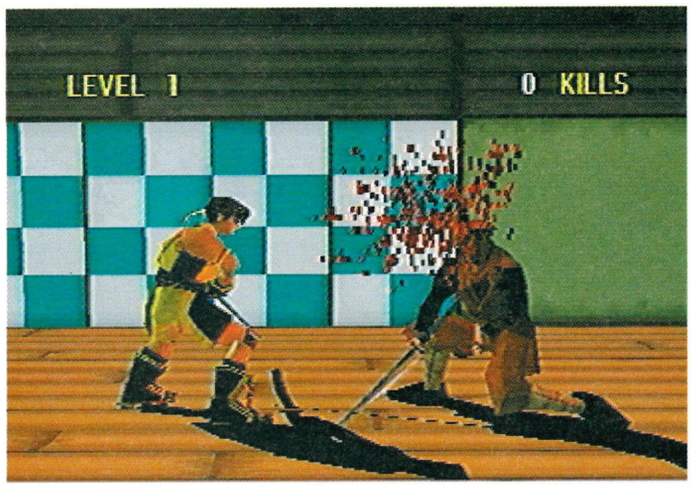
The first person 'POV' mode is reminiscent of the old Tekken wireframe mode, although rather than being just an added extra, it's an extremely worthwhile part of Bushido Blade. Being able to link up with a friend is a good laugh, though you need to spend a lot of time learning how to fight in this view.











No need to lose your head over it.

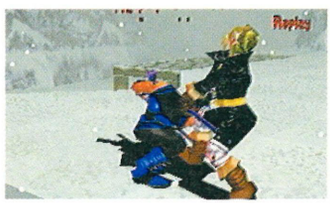
honour. Rules were made to be broken, though, and in the first few games you probably make a shish kebab of someone while they're talking, run away countless times and fillet an opponent's stomach while he's on the floor. As you can see, keeping your honour intact is extremely hard, but this makes the game last much longer.

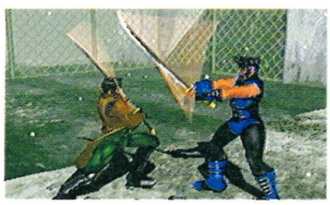
The fighting itself is extremely different to anything you've seen before. At first you'll probably think that it's pants - I certainly did. It's not a case of full-speed attack and 20-hit combos here, so champions on Tekken or Street Fighter have to start from scratch. There's more strategy and thought involved in winning a fight in Bushido Blade. The most radical difference between Bushido Blade and other beat-'em-ups, though, is that Sony have done away with the age-old health bar and replaced it with a much more realistic system of taking damage.

A good strike in Bushido Blade can take out your opponent in one go. This is usually a head shot or a stab to the stomach. Every base has been covered when it comes to damage, though. If you slice your enemy's leg he hits the deck. When he recovers he attacks on one knee. This allows you to go for the kill, but be careful; a skilful opponent is still dangerous with just one leg. If you manage to hit a second leg your foe keels over, but can still defend himself by waving his sword in the air. Hit an opponent's arm and he can't hold his weapon with the damaged limb, making blocking and attacking much harder. After a hard fight both players usually end up like Sir Knight from Monty Python's Holy Grail, with only a big mouth and a pair of gnashers left to kill with.

Of course, you don't see limbs fall off when you get in a good hit - the Mary Whitehouse posse would never allow this. Damage is shown with different coloured hits on the body. For instance, hitting a leg badly enough to incapacitate it flashes up as an orange hit. A lighter, non-damaging hit or a block shows as green. If you receive an orange hit elsewhere on your body, your reactions become dull or inconsistent. The best hit, though, is the fatal blow where you see a huge splurt of bright red blood leave your opponent's body and spill onto the floor. Cool.







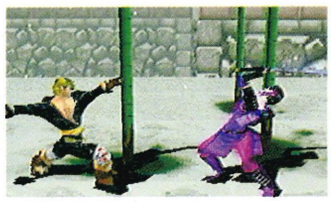




"...The best hit is the fatal blow where you see a huge splurt of bright red blood leave your opponent's body and spill onto the floor. Cool..."

R U KEN...NOT!

Each player has a range of special moves, but don't expect any fireballs or sonic booms here. Some of the moves are very spectacular, but they're also very realistic. Another feature not seen before in a fighting game is the stance system used in Bushido Blade. One touch of R1 or R2 changes your player's stance to high, mid or low, and each different stance offers a new set of moves to try. The actions to perform each move in a particular stance may also work in different stances, but the move performed is always different. Learning what stance and moves to use at the right time takes ages. In fact, you only ever get the most out of Bushido Blade when you know everything there is to know about the fighting system, so that you can fight with complete confidence.







Bushido Blade is far more brutal than any other beat-'em-up I've played, something which has to be down to the realism. Take, for instance, the use of a sledgehammer, one of the deadliest weapons in the game. You won't have any graceful moves or stabbing opportunities when you're fighting with this, so to get anywhere you must become a head-pummelling psycho. Not that this is a bad thing. Dropping a sledgehammer at full speed onto an enemy's forehead is extremely gratifying, but doing it repeatedly as your opponent falls to the ground is just sick. You don't have to go for the immediate fatal blow though - why not kneecap your opponent first, then finish him off with a chest shot. The opportunities for gratuitous violence are in abundance here, but heed my words: Bushido Blade is not for the faint-hearted.

OOOOH... CHASE ME!









WEAPONS

There are eight weapons to chose from in Bushido Blade, but it's not simply a case of picking the one that looks best. Each character has a preferred weapon, so you need to find the perfect combination of weapon and fighter. Of course some arms are much more accessible than others. Most players can pick up a sledgehammer and win a few fights, but I defy any novice to win with the naginata.

1. KATANA

weight 1.5kg
length 92cm

The katana is one of the best weapons to start with as it can be used to good effect by most of the characters. It's not as deadly as some of the other weapons, but you should be able to move pretty fast with it and it offers loads of special manoeuvres to learn.

2. RAPIER

weight 0.9kg
length 75cm

This short sword is perfect for the ladies as it's very light and easy to handle. Although it doesn't look formidable, it's actually an excellent weapon because it can be used very quickly and most of its moves are stabbing motions. This helps because a stab has more chance of a quick kill than a slice. Its only downfall is that it's very light on special moves.

3. NAGINATA

weight 2.2kg
length 181cm

Definitely the expert's weapon of choice. The naginata should be easy to use due to its length but there's just something about it that makes it the hardest weapon to learn. If you're a novice you'd better steer clear.



4. SLEDGEHAMMER

weight 4.5kg
length 83.5cm

The sledgehammer is to Bushido Blade what the BFG is to Doom. This weapon is all-conquering once you've got to grips with it, and the psycho factor also makes it the most fun to use. It's crap in the hands of a bird, but give it to one of the blokes and you become an instant killing machine.

5. NODACHI

weight 1.9kg
length 119cm

The nodachi is the second-longest weapon in Bushido Blade, and it's extremely useful. You can chop, slash or slice to great effect with almost any character. Its length allows you to stay away and plan your moves. It's extremely easy to incapacitate your opponents rather than going in for the quick kill with the nodachi.

6. LONG SWORD

weight 1.4kg
length 79cm

The long sword is a hard weapon to get used to, and its lack of special moves makes it one of the worst weapons in the game. Experts may relish the challenge, but for the rest of you, avoid the long sword like the plague.

7. SABER

weight 1.2kg
length 72cm

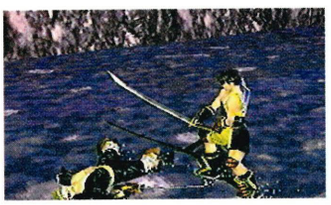
The saber is along the same lines as the rapier, although it's even shorter which makes it harder to defend yourself. Again the stabbing movements are handy, but if you want a short weapon you should go for the rapier.

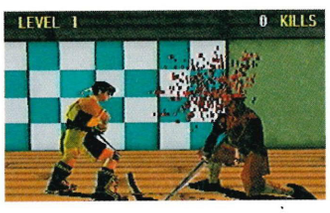
8. BROAD SWORD

weight 4.1kg
length 85cm

The broad sword is a good weapon, even though it's very heavy. It causes a lot more damage than some of the lighter weapons, which makes up for its lack of speed. It also has plenty of special moves which makes it a safe bet.

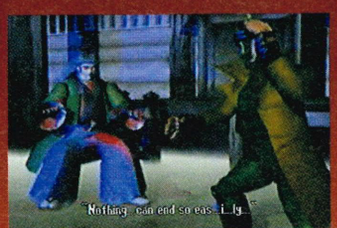


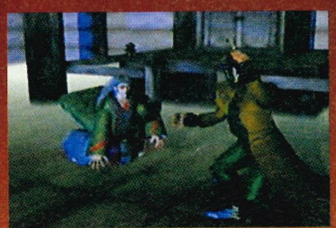


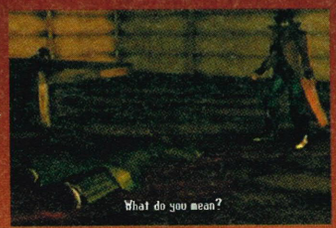


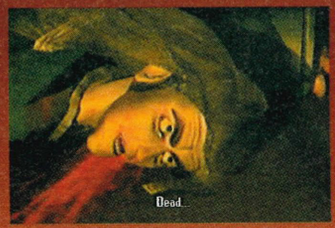


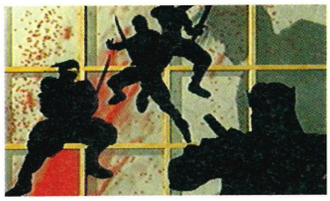
GRIPPING STUFF

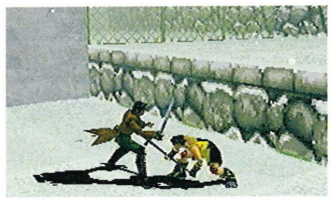


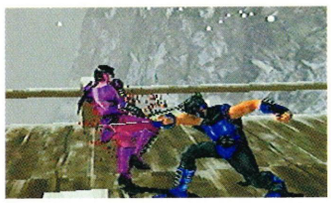














"...if you can complete the story mode without taking a single hit you get the chance to fight each character's secret boss..."

The fighting system in Bushido Blade will not be everyone's cup of char, and even if I stress the point that you need to stick with it, I'm sure many will still think it's crap. Fair enough, I say, but those who do stick with it will be extremely glad they did. Once you're competent with the moves and controls you can start getting into some serious action. There's loads of secrets to find, but you won't get any of these until you've become a true swordsman. For instance, if you can complete the story mode without taking a single hit you get the chance to fight each character's secret boss, which opens up a whole new batch of enemies for you to defeat. Also, to fight as a secret character you have to kill all one hundred opponents in slash mode, which is no mean feat.

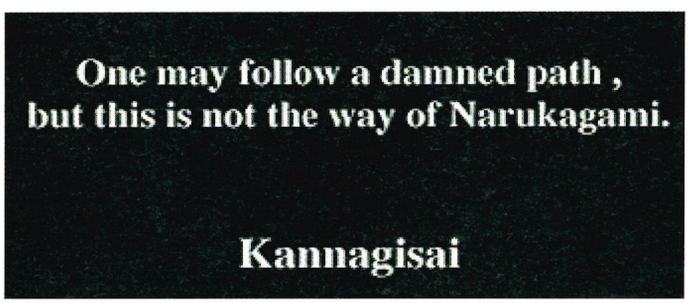
As you get further into the game, you uncover more of your character's story. In fact, the story behind each character changes depending on how you go about the game. After a while things become quite complicated. One excellent touch is the way all the voices are still in Japanese and you have to read the subtitles to understand what's going on. You may think this is just laziness on the programmers' part, but I think it gives the game a much more authentic feel - like one of those old Japanese Samurai movies. Besides, I'd rather hear this than some over-the-top third rate American voice-over.

As for the rest of the sound, it's pretty sparse but it definitely does its job. The sword clashes are excellent and there's a range of screams, grunts and groans to spill from your speakers. The atmospherics are also pretty cool, although the music is almost non-existent.

On the face of it, you won't be impressed by the depth of Bushido Blade but the more persistent of you will uncover a gem of a game. I'm not going to say that Bushido Blade is better than Tekken 2 or Soul Blade, simply because it's not. As a game in its own right, though, Bushido Blade is one of the best I've played for a while. You won't get an instant hit and you won't faint due to the excitement of it all. What you do get is a thoroughly enjoyable, extremely intelligent and very, very original beat-'em-up. I've said it before and I'll say it again - Bushido Blade is THE thinking man's beat-'em-up.



SAUL



▲ Glasshopper say...

YOU DIRTY RAT







When it comes to honour, you soon find most of your opponents couldn't give a toss. You're hit when you're down, and few foes are averse to pegging it if things get too tough for them. It gets even worse towards the end of the game as you come up against a gun-wielding assassin. The best way to avoid getting a bullet in the head here is to keep running around the assassin until you see the opportunity for a fatal blow.



▲ ...knew that vindaloo was a bad idea.

YOUR HONOUR OR YOUR LIFE

Honour plays such a big part in the story mode on Bushido Blade that you may even find your characters topping themselves! This only happens in very rare and extreme cases, but it can happen. In lesser cases of dishonourable conduct the game usually ends, but not before you're shown an ancient proverb to remind you of what you have done.









Choose your Assassin



You'll have the choice of six different assassins and each of them have different story-lines for you to discover. Most of the characters are very similar though, apart from the obvious aesthetic differences.

BLACK LOTUS

Black Lotus doesn't start off as the most honourable character in Bushido Blade but if you steer him in the right path you can make a good man out of him. He's extremely tough though and he's a dab hand with the sledgehammer so what more could you want?



KANNUKI

Kannuki is your typical mouthy bloke. He seems to have no honour at all, although you'll still need to keep close to the Bushido code. Kannuki is very useful with the long or broad sword which makes him a worthy character to choose.



TATSUMI

Tatsumi is leaving the group because he has found out about the Kage Assassins. He doesn't like to kill but once things get too much for him he starts to lose it and turns into a bit of a nutter, actually.



MIKADO

For a start Mikado does have a nice set of baps. She's my personal favourite character due to her abilities to fight with a number of different weapons. Oh, and those baps.



RED SHADOW

Red Shadow is one of the fastest characters in the game, especially if you equip her with a light weapon. Her story-line follows the path of good but I won't divulge the details now.



UTSUSEMI

It seems that Utsusemi and Red Shadow have a bit of a thing together, which is revealed as both of the characters' stories unfold. Utsusemi is probably the most honourable character you'll come across which is why it's so hard to finish the game with him.



Second Opinion

Bushido Blade takes a 'well whipped' genre that little further. Standard features have been ignored - scaring die hard beat-'em-uppers - but to me it's a breath of fresh air. First person mode is flawed, but at least SquareSoft had the 'bollox' to try it.

Darren

The Score

Publisher	SCEE
Developer	SQUARESOFT
Released	MARCH '98
Version	UK
Price	£39.99
Genre	BEAT-'EM-UP
Players	1-2
Memory Card	✓

GAMEPLAY
9

ORIGINALITY
9

LIFESPAN
8

SOUND
7

GRAPHICS
8.5

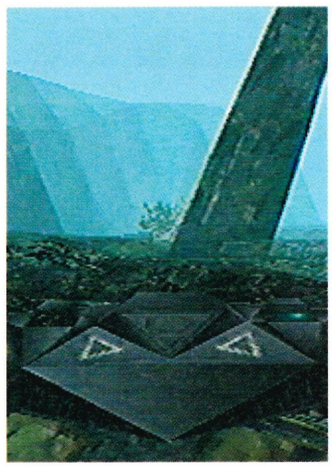
OVERALL
90%

in summary

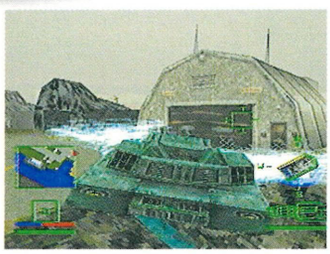
Bushido Blade is the most original and one of the most playable beat-'em-ups in years.

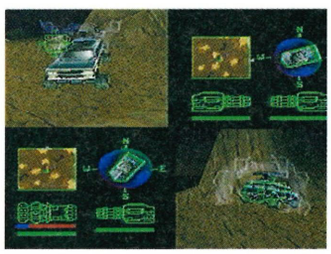


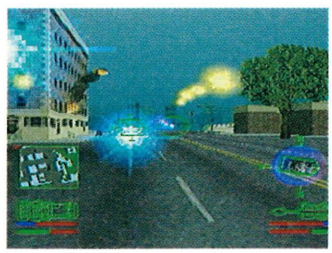
Steel Reign



Stormin' Norman meets Tommy Tank in Sony's Steel Reign.









When you first play Steel Reign you have a choice of three very different tanks, but as you progress through the mission-based levels you come across icons that, once collected, give you access to another eight. The first mission kicks off in the desert as a friendly building is being bombarded by attack choppers. Spin around and your turret automatically targets a gunship and a few short taps of the fire button gives you your first kill. Finish off the rest of the attackers, then it's simply a case of following the red arrow on your radar map to the next mission goal.

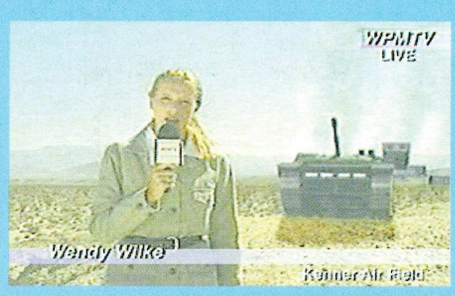
It's now time to devastate a terrorist encampment, which simply means shelling a few buildings and mercilessly running over the terrorists that dare to attack you. After this you have to take out a heavily protected satellite dish, which is where things start to get very tough.

You need to become accustomed to the controls very early on in Steel Reign. Luckily there are plenty of different control set-ups to choose, and the analogue pad has been implemented perfectly. Choose the double analogue set-up for one of the most realistic and intuitive control systems seen on a shoot-'em-up. Each stick controls one of the tank tracks, so as in real life can move each track independently. In this mode the D-Pad moves the turret, so you can fire in any direction while driving in another, making your job a whole lot easier. Once you've got to grips with it, you find that you need this much control even to get through the first few levels. For instance, on the second level, in the city, you have to drive over a bridge to get to the next area. As you cross you're attacked from behind, but instead of turning around to fight you can simply keep moving and turn your turret to deal with the enemy.

> **"...Choose the double analogue set-up for one of the most realistic and intuitive control systems seen on a shoot-'em-up..."**

Every tank you control has a directional shield, so when you're attacked only part of your shield takes damage. To avoid getting blown away you can turn the body of the tank to put a stronger area in the line of fire, still keeping the turret trained on your target. This makes the game very frantic when your shields are low, as you find your tank in some very odd positions. For example, if you've taken a lot of damage on the front of your tank you can turn the turret around completely and drive in reverse. This makes the control very difficult, but it's worth it to keep you alive until you find that all-







What the...! You get an FMV sequence between most levels.

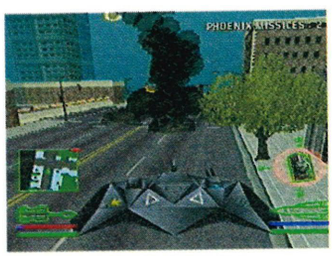












important shield restore icon.

All of the tanks have the same weapons, though some can carry more than others. Each tank has its own special weapon that can be anything from a turbo boost to armour-piercing shells. The selection of weapons is varied, and you start each level with a full cargo load of basic hardware. Your starting weapons are an ion cannon, plasma cannon, chain gun, missiles and cannon shells. To add to this you find icons for lasers, guided missiles and mines, all of which are essential to get anywhere in the game. The extra weapons don't last long, but they're easy to find as they appear as blue dots on the radar. If you can't find any, though, you have to rely on the old-fashioned chain gun or some serious Death Race 2000-style driving.

Even with all this firepower at your hands, Steel Reign is still an extremely tough game. The amount of enemy vehicles for you to deal with is massive, though they're not as varied as they could be. You find tanks, choppers, gun emplacements of various sizes and a number of different jeeps. The enemy tanks usually give the most trouble, but don't underestimate any foe. The level design's also pretty fiendish, especially on the second level where you must negotiate the city's many road blocks and dead-end cul-de-sacs. The arrow on your radar only gives you the general direction of the next goal so you also have to find your way around by using the full map provided on the options.

There are also plenty of hidden areas in the game, so once you've completed a level you may want to go back to try and find the secrets.

Although the control method is excellent, Steel Reign isn't exactly a top gaming experience. There aren't really any new ideas on the gameplay front, and although you're spurred on to try and find the new tanks, you may find yourself putting it down prematurely because you're bored or frustrated.

It's hard to review a game like this because there's nothing terrible about it - it's just so average that it should be in black and white and be renamed 'Norm's Adventures in Tank-Land'. A great game needs to offer something special, and besides the control, Steel Reign has nothing but average ideas and gameplay.

The disappointing one-player game is almost saved by a great two-player game, though. Here you get to choose any one of the eleven tanks on offer and go up against a mate in one of eight well-designed arenas. The screen is split into four boxes, with each playing screen taking up a single box. The other two have your shield and weapons information, which to me is a slight waste of space. Having such a small playing screen makes the game look much better, though, and it runs at an excellent pace which makes for some tense and frantic one-on-one matches.

Graphically, the one-player game is competent but it doesn't really dazzle your eyes with a display of

"...The disappointing one-player game is almost saved by a great two-player game..."

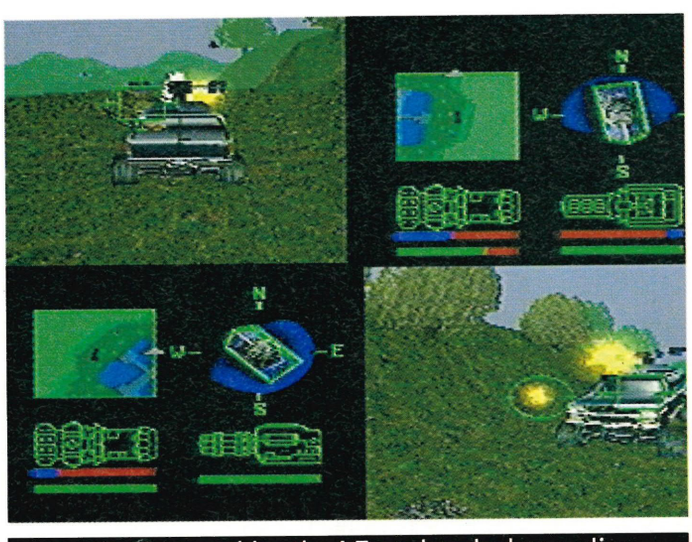
PlayStation power. The main scenery is very solid and some of the buildings and vehicles are pretty well drawn. What lets the visual side down are the actual tanks under your control. They're all very blocky and the attempts at a futuristic style of tanks are very poor indeed. Luckily you can play in a first-person mode without having to look at the tanks. This mode's much better to play in, but it would have been nice to play with the camera behind a tank that looks half decent.

There's also a certain amount of polygon glitching and pop-up, which in no way helps the game's cause. Finally, driving through walls isn't very realistic, especially when elsewhere you can't even total a poxy road-block.

Steel Reign doesn't disappoint big-time, but after a while you start to lose interest. If you're lucky enough to have a mate, you get a lot more mileage out of Steel Reign than if you were a loner, but in the end it's still no more than average. Have I said that before?



SAUL



Here's something the A Team knocked up earlier.

Second Opinion

Steel Reign is a decent attempt at an arcade tank game but even so, there's just not enough here to make it a must-have game.

Ian

The Score

Publisher	SCEE
Developer	CHANTEMAR CREATIONS INC.
Released	OUT NOW
Version	UK
Price	£39.99
Genre	SHOOTER
Players	1-2
Memory Card	✓
Analogue	✓

GAMEPLAY
7

ORIGINALITY
6

LIFESPAN
6

SOUND
7

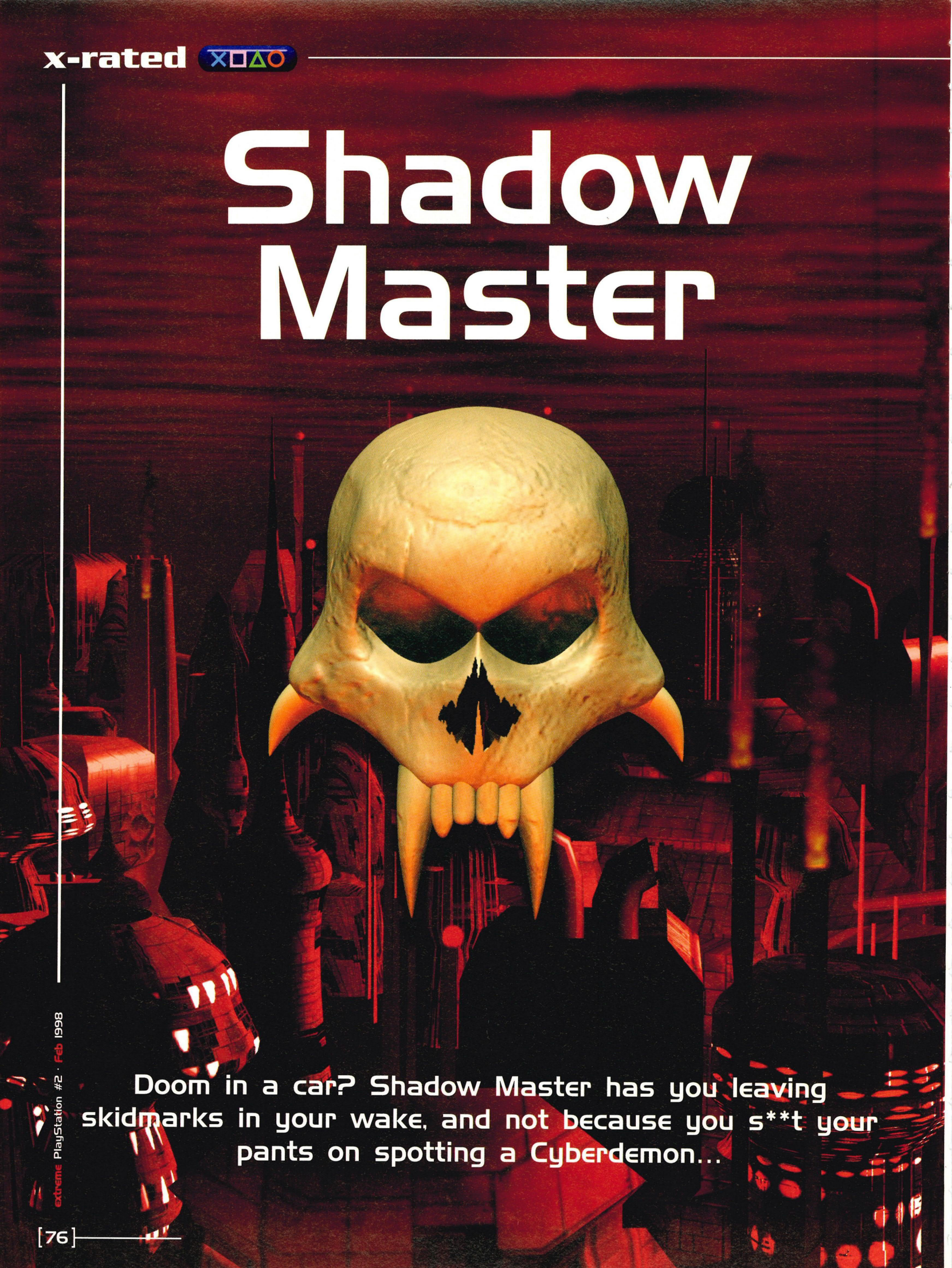
GRAPHICS
6

OVERALL
68%

in summary

A-V-E-R-A-G-E, with a decent two player mode.

Shadow Master

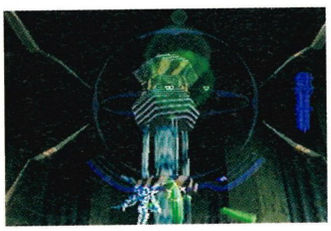


Doom in a car? Shadow Master has you leaving skidmarks in your wake, and not because you s**t your pants on spotting a Cyberdemon...

Psygnosis have really excelled themselves with the plot for this one - it reads like a cross between Dan Dare and Dianetics. The eponymous Shadow Master is an alien dictator who has been waging war for thousands of years (now that's what I call bearing a grudge). He's completely exhausted his own resources, so he's out to capture your system and strip it clean. How he's supposed to do this without using more resources than he gains isn't explained. What's the world's response? Do the leaders of every nation put aside their petty differences and get together? Do the massed armies of several planets join forces and take out this evil tyrant? No, they send you and your bloody car.

The game features 16 missions set across seven different worlds. Beat a planet and a spacecraft automatically takes you on to the next. At the end of the game, of course, is the Shadow Master himself - beat him and you've won.





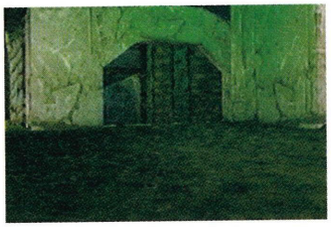
Each mission has its own objectives, which invariably revolve around blowing things up, be they shield generators, mega computers or other such devices which are never far away in this sort of game. You can save your game between planets too, which is a boon.

Unusually for a 3D first-person game, Shadow Master gives you a groovy car instead of forcing you to fight the foes on foot. Rather neat it is too. It moves along at a fair old pace, doesn't get damaged if you scrape the walls and it can even strafe sideways using the shoulder buttons. Don't ask me how this is possible in a car - I'd love to see this happen on an outside view.

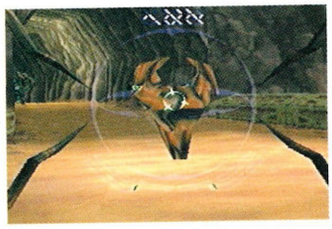
BUGGY MODE

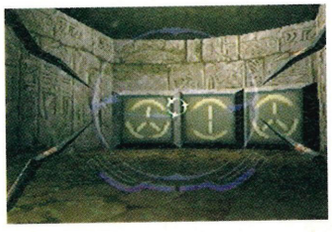
Overall, the buggy works well, it's certainly more convincing than the nose-to-the-ground perspective which cursed Tunnel B1. For a while, if you're used to playing Doom-type games it feels somehow wrong. Unlike virtually every other 3D shooter, releasing the D-Pad doesn't bring you to an immediate halt. Instead, inertia carries you on before you grind to a stop. You soon get used to it, though, and learn to compensate for the effects of inertia by tapping in the opposite direction to that which you're travelling.

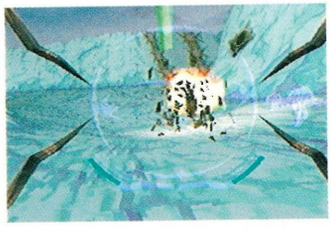
The flight sim-style head-up display which shows your status, targeting and enemy location is a major distraction at first, but again you get used to it. After a few plays, you wonder how you could ever do without it. The weapons targeting is certainly more realistic than Doom's, with the game helping you aim at anything inside the large circle and showing a 'lock' using the smaller one. id's illustrious offering sets the elevation for you as long as the foe is directly in front of you, which doesn't make much sense.











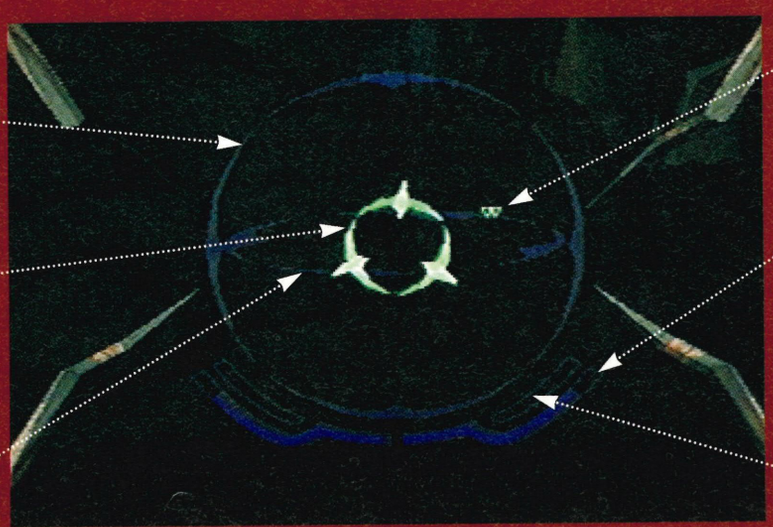
> **"...Unusually for a 3D first-person game, Shadow Master gives you a groovy car instead of forcing you to fight the foes on foot..."**

Don't expect an easy blast, though - the lock-on is helpful, but by no means infallible. You still have to make minor adjustments if you're to take out the foe with speed, especially if he's firing at you too, which is most of the time. It doesn't keep up well when you move around either, causing you more headaches - do you stay still and deliver your payload, at the risk of getting hit yourself, or stay mobile and do your best to keep the foe in target? As enemies are almost always grouped, targeting the one most able to hit you is also important. Strafing and firing, advancing and retreating; the Doom tactics are there, but the emphasis is different. A word of warning though - the wireframe representation of a targeted enemy, which appears on the right of the head-up display, is very clever but seriously distracting. I've lost count of the number of times I've tried to shoot it, mistaking it for an actual foe.

Although the vehicle puts a new perspective on the game's already well-served genre, it also causes one of its biggest faults. You can drive faster than you can walk

THROUGH THE WINDSCREEN

This is what you see as you look through the windscreen of your buggy:



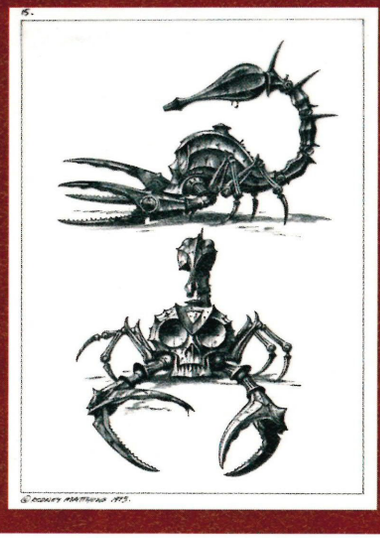
1. This, the large circle, is your targeting area. Get the enemy inside this and...
2. ...the small circle homes in on it, targeting your weapon.
3. The oblique circle is a radar, scanning the area around your craft.
4. The white triangles on the radar indicate enemies.
5. These bars show the current state of your craft.
6. The smaller bars show the state of your guns. Don't let them overheat.

RODNEY MATTHEWS

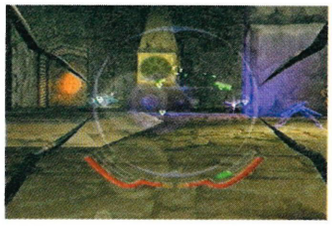


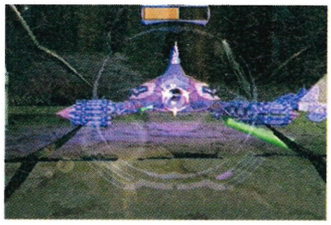
Rodney Matthews is one of the foremost science fiction and fantasy artists around. His work has adorned countless sci-fi novels as well as record covers including Thin Lizzy. Here are some examples of his work on Shadow Master.





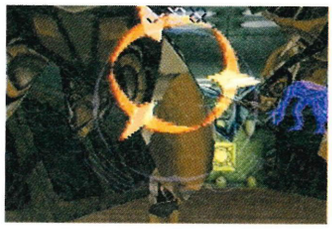


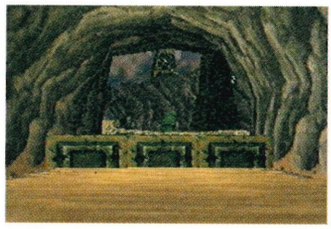


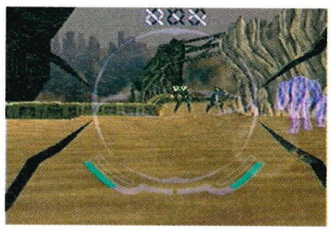


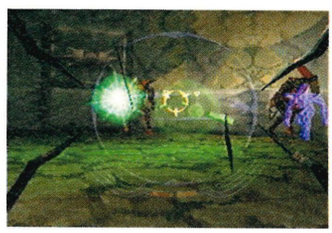












(obviously) and an armoured buggy can carry some seriously heavy weapons (equally obvious), but it's just not as easy to manipulate your environment convincingly. This makes it difficult for the developers to utilise puzzles. You can (and indeed must) flick switches by shooting them, eg. on the first level you blast three symbols until they match those outside the room, opening a door, and on the second planet you have to activate three timed switches together, hitting the third before the first switches off. This is about as far as the exploration element goes. There are no ladders to climb, few lifts and no jumps to otherwise-unreachable platforms. Doom and its recently-released inspiration Duke Nukem offer involved, complex stages where you must think on your toes as you find ever-more challenging problems. How can I reach that platform? Where's the secret area? What's the switch combination that opens this door? Shadow Master takes an entirely different approach, and is more of a pure action game. This will, of course, endear it to many button-bashers, but it also forces a lack of variety.

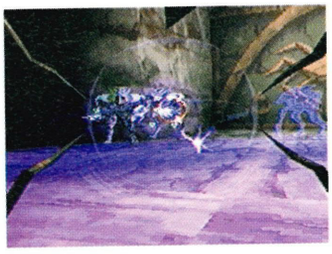
BADDIES

There's no shortage of variety when it comes to the aliens. There are hoards of these robotic monsters, each with their own characteristics. No mere cosmetic changes here! Unlike many games, sprites aren't used. Instead each enemy is a true 3D model with (say the programmers) around 170 polygons each, with many of the larger foes consisting of over 400. This means you can approach each one without it pixelating, blurring or distorting. Attack waves of six to eight baddies are common, with the action not slowing at all. They look good too, offering a real sci-fi feeling. This is probably because they were co-designed by top fantasy artist Rodney Matthews, who also designed your buggy. They explode when shot, as opposed to lying where they fell as in Doom. Dead aliens usually leave behind crystals which restore a small quantity of health. Be quick - they soon vanish, unlike the health power-ups which restore a bigger portion of energy, or in some cases all of it. There are new weapons to be won too.

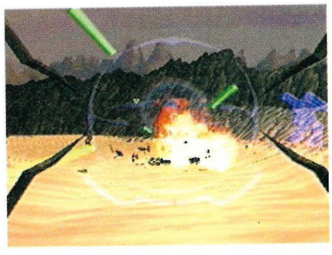
Unfortunately, there's little variety when it comes to the deployment of the enemies. They almost always explode onto the battlefield right in front of you, forcing you to reverse as quickly as possible. I know this is intended as a head-on, guns-blazing firefight, but meeting the monsters in the same way over and again gets a little boring. What's wrong with stalking a foe for a change?

"...The developers wisely set out their aims and intentions before starting the project, and made sure the game satisfied them. Their forward planning paid off..."

The background graphics are pretty cool, too. Draw up to a wall to see it in all its detail and again it doesn't pixelate beyond recognition or blur horrendously. Avoiding the purely corridors-and-tunnels approach, much of the game takes place in wide-open areas with nowhere to run and no place to hide. Even so, are the backdrops really appropriate for a sci-fi blaster such as this? They're attractive enough, but do they really scream 'alien landscapes', or 'future war zone'? This is by no means a damning indictment (the arenas are attractive and entirely functional), but the







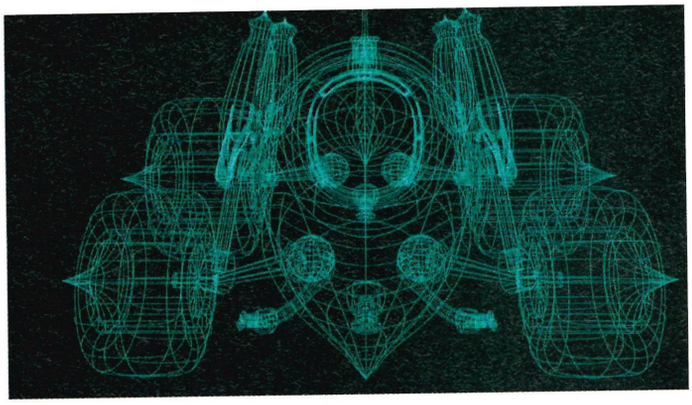


game would have more atmosphere if each planet had been given more of a 'feel', a little more individuality, with aliens tailored to suit.

Perhaps the game's biggest flaw is the lack of a Doom-style on-screen map. If you can think in 3D you should have no problems finding your way around - as stated earlier, exploration is not the heart of the game and the level layouts reflect this. However, people like myself (I could get lost in my own back yard) lose their way here extremely easily, and it's a bloody pain. Would it be so difficult to offer a map of areas already explored?

Criticisms aside, Shadow Master is a fine game, not just another Doom clone. The developers wisely set out their aims and intentions before starting the project, and made sure the game satisfied them. Their forward planning paid off - the game's a solid blaster that really goes for the throat. It's not immediately accessible, but if you stick with it long enough to get to the second planet, you're hooked. You might get bored of its single-minded but one-dimensional approach before bettering the big baddie, but there's fun to be had along the way.

IAN





Second Opinion

Shadow Master has a lot of potential which hasn't quite been realised. Even though it's a tough game it's all a bit too straight forward and apart from the fact that you are in a car/tank, there really isn't anything new here.

Saul

The Score

Publisher	PSYGNOSIS
Developer	HAMMERHEAD
Released	OUT NOW
Version	UK
Price	£39.99
Genre	3D SHOOT-'EM-UP
Players	1
Memory Card	✔
Analog Pad	✔

GAMEPLAY **8**

ORIGINALITY **6**

LIFESPAN **7**

SOUND **8**

GRAPHICS **9**

OVERALL **83%**

in summary

A well-planned, cleverly-designed game which puts the blast in 3D blaster.

competition

If you're into Rodney Matthews and like the look of ShadowMaster, then this compo's right up your street. Take a peek at these goodies.

1ST - A SIGNED RODNEY MATTHEWS PRINT AND BOOK, PLUS A COPY OF *SHADOWMASTER* AND AN ANALOGUE PAD.

2ND - A SIGNED BOOK, PLUS A COPY OF *SHADOWMASTER* AND AN ANALOGUE PAD.

3RD - A COPY OF *SHADOWMASTER* AND AN ANALOGUE PAD.

To win, answer this simple question -

WHICH BAND DID GOOD OLD ROD DESIGN AN ALBUM COVER FOR?

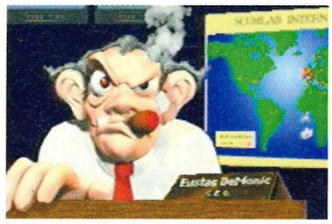
A. SPICE GIRLS
B. THIN LIZZY
C. ABBA
D. CHAS 'N DAVE

send entries written in blood on a parchment manuscript to:

RODDERS COMPO
EXTREME PLAYSTATION MAGAZINE
QUAY MAGAZINE PUBLISHING
QUAY HOUSE
THE QUAY
POOLE
DORSET
BH15 1HA

*Competition closes 26th feb

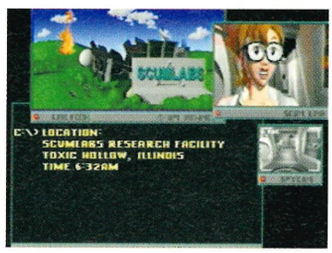




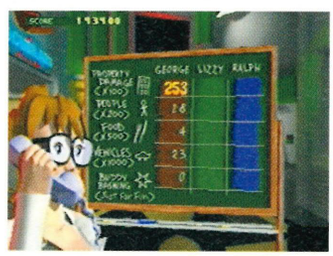
Rampage

Another ageing arcade outing gets the PSX treatment...











Rampage, the ageing coin-op from yesteryear, was one of those games that defied categorisation. The World Tour update is no less perplexing. We've called it a smash-'em-up for want of a better term, but this B-movie demolition fest fits no existing genre.

Let's start at the beginning. You, and your friends, if you have any, choose one of three monsters. There's Lizzie the Godzilla-lookalike, George, who bears more than a passing resemblance to King Kong and Ralph, a werewolf. These creatures are every bit as big as you'd expect. In fact, they're HUGE!

Dwarfing the policemen, tanks and even helicopters that harass them every step of the way, they must destroy the buildings in successive towns, toppling as many as possible before moving on to the next. This is achieved by punching, kicking and jumping on them until they're so badly damaged they collapse into a heap of rubble. Occasionally a foolish citizen pokes his head out of the window, only to be scooped out and eaten by your good self. You can do this to people running out of the buildings too, or if you're not hungry, kick them into the air or squash them. Food and other useful items are found inside the buildings as you smash them in.

Naturally, you don't get it all your own way. Some of the citizens inside the building are armed, and take pot-shots at you out of the windows. Police officers and soldiers arrive in the street and are also armed. Later you tackle tanks, helicopters, cargo planes, flame thrower-wielding warriors with jet packs and finally (on the moon) space ships. These all take their toll on your health by blasting away at you, though you can strike back by scooping up footsoldiers, punching or kicking tanks and swatting the choppers out of the air, just like King Kong. If your health is low gorge on food to regain it, but be careful. Eat the wrong snack and you vomit, a painful and debilitating experience.

Despite the huge numbers of enemies harassing you at every turn, gameplay is strictly one-dimensional. There are few tactics. 'Do you go for the enemies or the buildings?' is an obvious question, but it's usually a case of tackling whatever's nearest. Trash the enemies if they're likely to threaten, then go for the constructs. Whether to take the buildings from the sides, collecting grub and power-ups, or smash them from above and miss the goodies but topple towers quicker is another consideration, but this hardly offers phenomenal depth. Indeed, this game has all the depth of a poodle's piss puddle on a hot Summer's day. In this respect it's just like the original; only the graphics and gimmicks have been updated.

> **"...The game has some wonderful idiosyncrasies. One of the citizens you can grab is sitting on the bog..."**

Glib Gimmicks

The game has some wonderful idiosyncrasies. One of the citizens you can grab is sitting on the bog. By all means grab him and eat him (even if he hasn't yet wiped), but snatch the toilet itself and a spurt of water knocks you off the building. Likewise, grab furniture for bonuses but take anything electrical and you're zapped. The radioactive waste that turns you into a fire-breathing mutant monster has to be seen to be believed - as if you weren't ugly enough before!

Fun as these foibles are, they too add nothing to the game's depth.

With Fist and Foot

There's more than one way to topple a tower. Here are your basic battering moves...



PUNCH FROM THE SIDE
This is ideal for finding power-ups and scooping out civilians, but slow to devastate the tower.



KICK FROM THE SIDE
Climb the side of the building and kick instead of punching. Does more damage, but you can't scoop people and power-ups at the same time as kicking.



PUNCH FROM ON TOP
This is quicker at demolishing buildings, as it breaks both sides of the tower at once. If you want to collect power-ups, though, you have to move onto its side.



DYNAMIC JUMP
This is the fastest method of all. Jump and hold Down to take out a whole floor. You miss the power-ups, though.

World Tour







They're genuinely amusing even after you've played the game a few times, but do they really significantly increase its overall playability? Although the game's basic premise is sound and mindless destruction is always fun, there's precious little variety here; certainly not enough to keep you playing for long. You see virtually everything the game has to offer before you're half way through.

> "...The game's main saving grace is its three-player mode. Team up with a couple of buddies and you can trash the buildings co-operatively ..."

The game's main saving grace is its three-player mode. Team up with a couple of buddies and you can trash the buildings co-operatively or competitively, reducing the towns to rubble in mega-quick time and taking care not to smack each other in the back of the head - or not, as the case may be. This is far more fun as the increased human element makes the game less predictable. Even then there are better games to play in multiplayer mode.

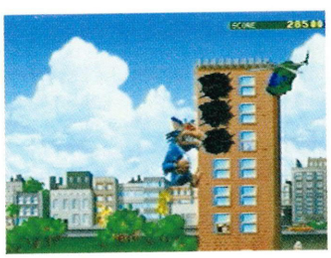


Rampage World Tour would be ideally suited to a retro compilation, featuring original and updated versions of classic arcade games, but on its own it hasn't enough to offer. This is another game which would be better suited to a £15-a-throw budget label.

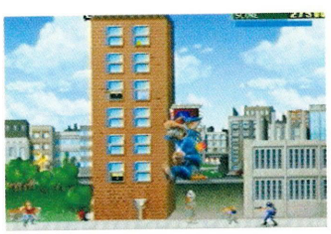


IAN













Hmm, Torquay. Despite the World Tour theme, every city in the game looks the same, with almost no regional variation.

Second Opinion

Great game, totally original, 'top' characters. It's fun in one player mode, but awesome in multi-player mode. Destruction of whole cities is 'cool'. I'd give it at least 80%, maybe even more!

Darren

The Score

Publisher	GT INTERACTIVE
Developer	MIDWAY
Released	OUT NOW
Version	UK
Price	£39.99
Genre	SMASH-'EM-UP
Players	1-3
Memory Card	NO
Multi-Tap	✓

GAMEPLAY
8

ORIGINALITY
4

LIFESPAN
4

SOUND
6

GRAPHICS
8

OVERALL
72%

in summary

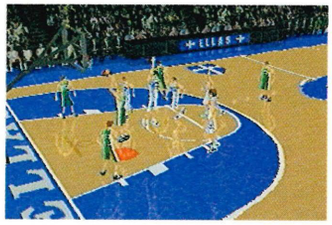
Would suit a retro compilation, but too thin to stand alone.

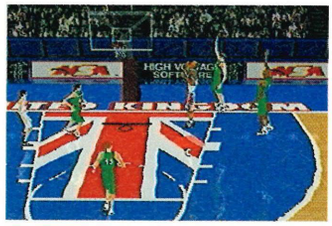
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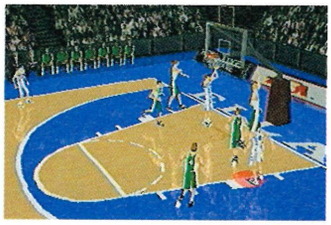
Up-basket, down-basket, up-basket, down-basket and so on and so on and so on...



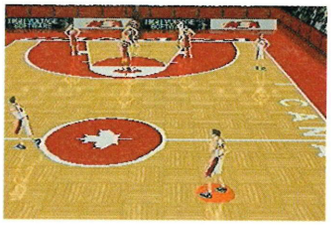


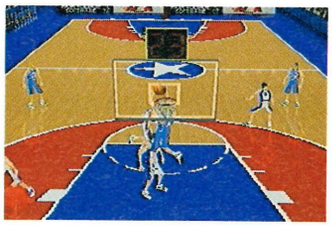












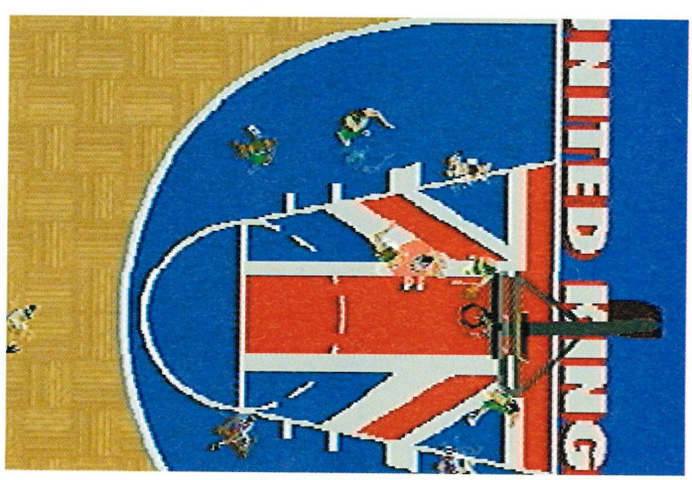


What's the point in basketball games? You get the ball, you pass it down the other end and you score. Then the other team does the same and it's your turn again. It gets so repetitive it's really quite laughable. Okay, there are some playable basketball games around such as the NBA Jam series, but these attempt to give the player some added fun by not keeping the proceedings completely serious. World League Basketball attempts to give the player a perfect basketball simulation, and completely fails to do so.

When I first loaded up World League Basketball, things were looking good - it looked like it was going to be really special. It's amazing how fast my hopes were dashed when I started playing though. Graphically, World League Basketball is pretty impressive - the colours are strong, the reflections on the highly-polished court are excellent, the crowd is the best seen on any sports game and the players look the part too. But, like so many visually-superb Hollywood movies, World League Basketball fails totally due to lack of content and wooden acting.

The movement of your players just isn't fluid enough. At times you find yourself horribly confused by what's going on. The teams bunch together, especially by the basket, and you can't see who's got the ball or which player's under your control. When it's your turn to run up and score it still isn't much better. The only time you feel totally in control of the proceedings is in the centre of the court.

> **"...The CPU decides if your next shot's a slam dunk; you get no say in the matter. This frustrates..."**



▲ EN - GER - LAAAAND!

He's On Fire!

The problems aren't limited to the bunching of your players, though. The control system also fails to come up to today's expected standards. It's not that the controls don't work, it's just that they're extremely boring. Pass, Shoot, Tackle and Jump are the only notable moves. Repeatedly pressing these buttons for a whole hour gets very played-out, and the slam dunks aren't enough to add anything. You don't really control the dunks, so there's no skill involved in this part of the game. The CPU decides if your next shot's a slam dunk; you get no say in the matter. This frustrates most when you think that you're pulling off a dunk and the computer decides to make it a shot, which means you usually get caught for travelling.

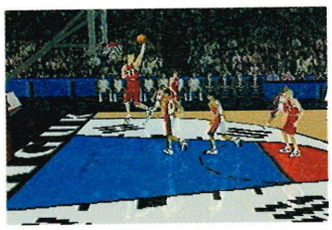
There are over fifty different dunk animations, though if you ask me, most of them look alike and the fact that you have no real control over which move you pull off is thoroughly disappointing.

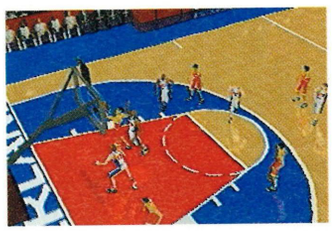
In fact, getting caught for travelling is just the tip of the iceberg. World League Basketball seems to stop the play at intervals of about twenty seconds. The rules have been taken way too far, and getting a foul for jumping, barging or interference becomes overly annoying when it happens so regularly. World League Basketball would definitely be more playable if these fouls weren't called so often, making the action much more fluid.

As fans of basketball know, you get a free throw whenever you're fouled. No matter how good a player is, though, they won't always get a basket. Not so in World League Basketball - simply hold the shoot button for a count of two and you're guaranteed a basket every time.

€ Basketball













Jammin'

World League Basketball does have some plus points though. There are 64 international teams to choose from, each with their own stadium. The stadiums only differ in their colour scheme, but it's nice to see maps and flags of the different countries plastered over the court - at least until you find a team that clashes with the colour scheme. The teams are split into eight divisions, and as well as the obligatory exhibition mode you can also take part in a complete season and a tournament with skill levels ranging from amateur to superstar.

It is possible to have eight human players going for it at the same time on World League Basketball. Whether you'll find another seven people interested in joining you is a different matter entirely. Actually, the multi-player games do save World League Basketball from being utter tosh and they can be a laugh for a while.

The camera angles can be adjusted to four different settings with three different heights so it is possible to find a view that suits you. This however doesn't make up for the boring controls and gameplay. Any amount of camera angles can only help the game aesthetically - it's just a shame it doesn't need help in this department.

It certainly needs help in the sound department, though. The commentary is some of the worst I've heard in a long time. It's not that what the commentator has to say isn't up to standard, it's that he doesn't know when to say it. If you get a free throw, the commentator announces it just after you've scored the basket. This delayed reaction commentary sounds almost as bad as Murray Walker's gibberish mode in Psygnosis' F1 and very nearly as bad as the commentary in Power Soccer 2, but not quite.

> **"...It is possible to have eight human players going for it at the same time on World League Basketball. Whether you'll find another seven people interested in joining you is a different matter entirely..."**

World League Basketball is a simulation, so I shouldn't compare it to the NBA Jam games. It's just when there's such good basketball competition out there, I find it hard to get excited about the tedious gameplay of World League Basketball. Okay, it's possible to have an eight-way multiplayer game, but you need two multi-taps and seven mates, so that counts most out, I expect. If I was to go into cliché mode, I'd recommend it only to 'die-hard fans of the genre'- but I hate clichés so I'm afraid I can't even do that.



SAUL



▲ Don't lose your head!

Second Opinion

I'm in total agreement with Saul here. World League Basketball looks excellent but all of this gloss can't hide the fact that it plays like a team of dwarfs in a giant's game. I'm gonna stick to my NBA Jam Tournament Edition.

Darren

The Score

Publisher	MINDSCAPE
Developer	MSA
Released	FEBRUARY
Version	UK
Price	£39.99
Genre	BASKETBALL SIM
Players	8
Memory Card	✔

GAMEPLAY
6

ORIGINALITY
5

LIFESPAN
5

SOUND
4

GRAPHICS
8

OVERALL
60%

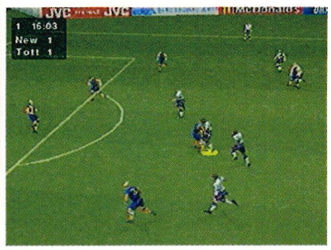
in summary

Doesn't play as good as it looks.

FIFA

Road to the World Cup

You can imagine my surprise when I found out that the latest FIFA title is actually very good...



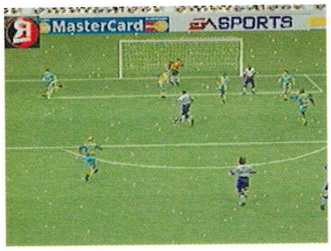


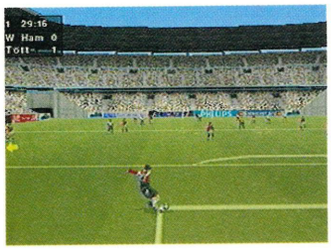
Let's cut straight to the chase here. The first FIFA game on the Mega Drive was excellent, but subsequent updates and sequels were nothing special on any format. EA have relied on the branding to sell FIFA, so I approached FIFA: Road To World Cup with an extremely cynical eye.

On loading up FIFA: RTWC you're immediately hit with one of the best intro sequences seen in a long time. It's accompanied by Blur's Song 2, which really gets you set for a good game of soccer. At this point, though, I was still convinced RTWC would be no more than average. After fighting your way through the many options (is it just me or does FIFA always make it hard to choose teams?), you're treated to another excellent scene where the stadium you chose to play in is introduced by way of a quick FMV and CG tour around the country of your choice. Go for Wembley Stadium and the intro gives you cuts of Tower Bridge, red buses and all things British before taking you on a CG sweep of the outside of the stadium and right through to the pitch. Nice touch. There's one of these scenes for









each of the sixteen worldwide stadiums, meaning that you get a mini tour of countries from Brazil to Italy and Australia to South Africa.

This is all well and good, but great presentation does not make a great football game. A great football game relies on one thing and one thing only - gameplay. Good gameplay is something that the previous FIFA games severely lacked, and I wasn't expecting anything else from RTWC. How wrong I was.

Realising EA have addressed the fundamental flaws of their previous FIFA games was something of a surprise. In fact, if you didn't already know you'd never guess it was a FIFA game because it plays so damned well. The control has been perfectly implemented, making the game at least as intuitive and as fun to play as Actua Soccer 2. It won't take you long to get used to it and after just a few matches the World Cup Finals never seem far away. An extra skill mode has been added to the control system, which is great for when you're running with the ball. Simply hold L2 or R2 to enter the skill mode, then hit any of the four main buttons to produce a skilful move such as a full 360-degree spin or a nifty side-step. This adds even more realism to the control method. Once you've got to grips with it, you can perform some outstanding moves.

SWEETNESS & LIGHT

It's not all sweetness and light though. The control method brings with it an age-old problem that's dogged soccer games from day one. The 'guaranteed goal' rears its ugly head in RTWC, and it's not just one sweet spot either. There are several ways of scoring which work at least 80% of the time. I won't detail them now (you can find them yourself), but if I tell you that an average score-line against the computer on my first day of play was about 5-1 in my favour, you should get the idea. This, however, is only a major problem when you're playing on the Amateur skill level, which is pathetically easy anyway. Crank the skill level up to Professional or World Class and you soon see the difference. Although it's still possible to get these goals, it's much harder to put yourself into the correct position when the other team's all over you.

Something else that really bugs me is the way players can recover immediately after a sliding tackle.



RTWC caters for five-a-side games.

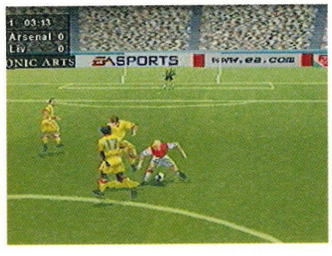
As soon as you've got the ball, the player you just tackled is straight back on you. Once you get away, though, the control comes into its own and you can start on the flowing passes and shots again.

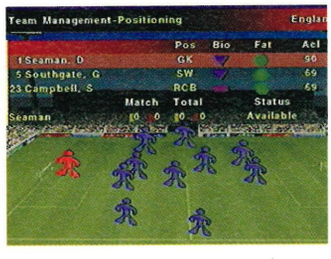
> **"...if you didn't already know you'd never guess it was a FIFA game because it plays so damned well..."**

Despite a few flaws, RTWC still plays an extremely decent game of soccer. Okay, playing against the computer does get a little frustrating, but once you sit down with a mate and get down to some serious two-player action, RTWC really does shine. The control method is perfect for playing against another human, producing a tension-filled and exciting pseudo-ninety minutes, as long as the two players are closely matched. The game is definitely biased towards the more arcade style of football, with the ease of tackling and high score-lines, something which FIFA is definitely not famous for.

Although the action is arcade based you still find a mass of team management options to play around with. Your team's formation and positioning can be totally customised, and you can even set how aggressive your players are. This is done by moving a bar between Calm and Nutter. Needless to say, Paul Ince is set all the way to the Nutter end of the scale. The strip and name of your chosen team can also be changed, along with the option to change your players' names.

If you play the league option you have the choice of hundreds of club teams from around the world. This







Introducing... Wembley Stadium



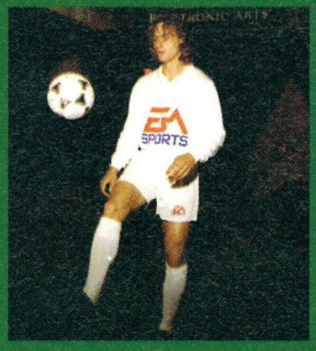


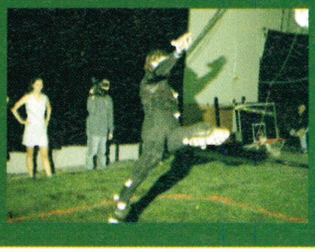




French Connection

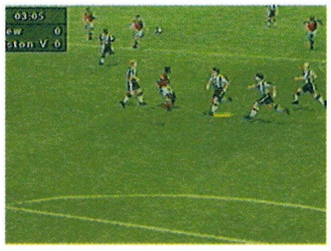




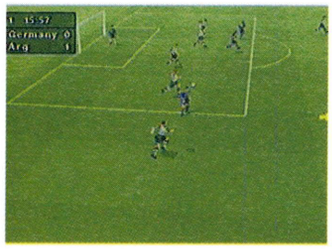


FIFA RTWC boasts another famous face in the form of David Ginola, who supplied his skills for the motion capture during development.

"...FIFA games have always been highly regarded on the visuals front, and RTWC is no exception..."



is nothing to do with the Road to the World Cup, I know, but it's still a very worthy addition. Playing a league gives you even more control as a manager by allowing you to buy and sell players in the transfer market, adding another dimension to the game.



FIFA games have always been highly regarded on the visuals front, and RTWC is no exception. There are a plethora of camera angles to try, and some of the close-up shots look superb, though they make it harder to play a good match. The stadiums are the most realistic you're likely to see (and hear) on any PlayStation soccer game, and the players are very well drawn and animated- at a healthy pace. On the sound front you won't be disappointed either. EA have employed credible acts to supply the tunes for the front end of the game - you never get bored of the Blur intro sequence. The commentary, supplied by Des Lynam, John Motson and Andy Gray, is also of a very high standard though not quite up to the dialogue on Actua Soccer 2.

The amount of teams and stadiums in RTWC is simply astounding and any football anorak will be satisfied by this. For non-anoraks, though, FIFA: RTWC is still one of the best football games you'll find on the PlayStation. The action is fast, smooth and most importantly, fun.

Second Opinion

Surprise, surprise, FIFA RTWC '98 is a bloody good game. It's about time too, 'cause most of the other FIFA's are shite. In fact it's better than Actua Soccer 2.

Darren

It really shines in a two-player match due to the superb control method and intense gameplay. EA have done a fine job in finally giving PlayStation owners a decent FIFA game. It's just a shame that it's taken them so long. Never mind - it's here now.



SAUL

The Score

Publisher	ELEC. ARTS
Developer	EA SPORTS
Released	OUT NOW
Version	UK
Price	£39.99
Genre	FOOTBALL SIM
Players	1-4
Multi-Tap	✔
Analog	✔

GAMEPLAY **9**

ORIGINALITY **7**

LIFESPAN **8**

SOUND **9**

GRAPHICS **9**

OVERALL **91%**

in summary

FIFA is finally up there with the big boys.

competition

WIN!* AN EA SPORTS JACKET & A COPY OF *FIFA ROAD TO WORLD CUP '98

PLUS FIVE RUNNERS UP WILL BECOME THE PROUD OWNERS OF A FREE COPY OF *FIFA '98*

Aren't you always chuffed when you get a great game? Just think how chuffed you'd be if you could get a great game for free. Well now you can and you might even win yourself a snazzy EA SPORTS jacket as well. How do you do this? Why, answer a pointless question of course.

PAUL GASCOIGNE'S NICKNAME IS..?

A. KNOBBA
B. TOSSA
C. INCONSISTENT
D. GAZZA

Send entries on something suitable for pulling out of a hat, to:

I'M FOOTBALL MAD ME
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THE QUAY
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*Competition closes 26th feb



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Ex-Communication

CHRISTMAS STRIFE

Dear EPM,
Here is my account of trying to find a PlayStation for Christmas.

Day 1
Today was the big day. Today we phoned Gameplay. As I pranced around the room like a rabbit on drugs, I decided now was the time. I picked up my copy of extreme PlayStation and tapped in Gameplay's number. It was engaged, so I held on for about a minute and then I got through.
"Have you got any PlayStations for sale?", I asked.
"We have been sold out for ages", said the bloke on the other end.
Next I tried Entertainment Direct. They were engaged too. I thought I would be through in five minutes. I was wrong. Half an hour later it was my turn to speak.
"Have you any PlayStations left?", I asked with my fingers crossed. "We had 200 in today", I felt a burst of relief inside me which soon went when I heard they had all gone. I would try again tomorrow.

Day 2
This time I went shopping. As I entered GAME I was nearly knocked over by people running away with their Christmas gifts. I went in and asked the shop assistant if they had any left.
"Sorry mate, we just sold out", said the assistant. "How about an N64 instead? We have got tons of them".
"No way!", I said as I walked out of the shop. It was the same at all of the other places I went to. They had all sold out.

Day 3
This was my last tactic. Phone my aunt in London to see if she could get one. I tapped in her number and waited for a response. I asked her and my Aunt said she would go up Oxford Street to try and find a PlayStation and a copy of Tomb Raider 2. All I could do was hope for the best.

Day 4
I sat down, reading my copy of extreme PlayStation when the phone rang. It was good news. I was now an owner of the best games console in the world!

This is all true. Thanks for the best PlayStation mag. Keep up the good work.
Alistair Wells, Stoke-on-Trent

EPM says...
Plenty of other people had the same problem, Alistair, but yours was the best letter so you'll soon be the proud owner of a Blaze steering wheel and light gun. We just hope you've got some racing and light gun games.

IT'S NOT BIG AND IT'S NOT CLEVER

Dear EPM,
Wow! I opened the fresh pages of the wonderful fresh new covers and was dazzled by the witty humour, bad f**king language and great reviews of the hottest new games. Also, thanks for the Sh*t f*cking hot Abe's Odyssey cheats. Another down-trodden, trolloping-not-fit-to-wipe-your-arse magazine printed the same, but their FMV cheats didn't f**king work...
Steven, king of... shite and pong, Christie, Methil Fife

EPM says...
We had to cut it there because most of the letter is incomprehensible. Steven had to write in crayon 'cos they don't allow pens or pencils where he lives, you see.

WE HATE THE BBFC

Dear EPM,
It's really annoyed me (and most probably others) to find the BBFC have taken their scissors to Resident Evil: Director's Cut. Now the demo of RE2 I have to say is unbelievable. I have been a fan of films and computer games for around eighteen years, and thought I'd seen everything. How wrong I was, I have never seen a game that combines the atmosphere and tension of the best horrors with the playability of the best arcade adventures... This leads me to worry. I can envisage the gore being substituted for, say green, to give it a fifteen certificate.
Rob Robinson, Thurnscoe

EPM says...
As it happens there are plenty of people who feel the same as you, Rob. Do we really need to have a board of suits telling us what we can/can't, play/watch? As for RE2, we reckon the blood will stay red; I mean, there was plenty of blood in the original game wasn't there?

YOU SO HOORNY, ME SU..... (cut due to taste)

Dear EPM,
I have recently converted to a PlayStation from my Saturn, mainly due to the exclusive and top-quality software coming out for the PlayStation (eg. Tomb Raider 2 and Final Fantasy VII to name but two) and the comparatively poor software on the Saturn. I've heard the PlayStation 2 is to be released in 1999 and that the Saturn 2 is to be released next year; which has the most potential and power? I have only one problem with your magazine. In the Tomb Raider 2 review, on a couple of occasions you commented on how horny Lara was. I have no question that she's fit, but calling her horny on more than one occasion sounds a bit like you fancy a computer games character, which is a bit sad.
Adam Wheeler, Taunton

EPM says...
It's inevitable that a PlayStation 2 will arrive but despite what you've read elsewhere, there has been NO OFFICIAL WORD OF THIS YET! When it does arrive you can bet it will wipe the floor with the existing consoles. In the meantime, there's still a lot left for the PlayStation so I wouldn't worry about the long wait for PSX2. As for Sega's next console, it's supposedly due out in Japan late this year and if Sega live up to their promise, it should be something special (yes, we're big enough to admit this so don't write in complaining). When it comes to comparisons, though, we really couldn't tell you because nobody has any firm details on either console. By the way, we do apologise for Darren's over eager description of Lara. He's been seeing a counsellor ever since first playing TR2 and it looks as though he's on the mend. You yourself admit she's 'fit' though; do you want us to send you the number of Darren's counsellor?

IT'S NOT BIG AND IT'S NOT CLEVER 2

Dear EPM,
Wow, a new mag, I had to buy it and I thought 'great', but then I thought it was too extreme. Imagine a six-year-old PlayStation fan bought your mag. The first thing he sees is Silicon Valley with large breasts, you're going mad about stealing games in the contents page and you're talking about tits in the Tomb Raider review. I mean, what's he gonna think? I have a few questions anyway:
1. What do you think of Croc?
2. Why are you so generous on your reviews?
3. Why's three quarters of your magazine reviews?
Jonathan Hunter, Stockton on Tees.

EPM says...
To tell the truth, we really don't feel we're as rude as you think. I mean, we wouldn't want to upset our mummies, would we? Seriously though, we don't swear for the sake of it but if a naughty word comes up then we're not going to shy away from using it. Besides, it gives our sub editor something to moan about (you mean apart from your spelling? Sub Ed). As for Silicon Valley, a six year old could see exactly the same and more in the Spring/Summer copy of Freeman's catalogue. Everybody has their opinions, though, so we won't hold it against you and we'll take it into account. Anyway, here are the answers to your questions...

1. It's alright.
2. We were snowed under with great games for Issue One, it's as simple as that. I'll take the opportunity to tell you now that everybody's opinion is different and you shouldn't take review scores, from any magazine, as gospel, just as a guide.
3. As well as being issue one, it was also the Christmas issue so there's bound to be a huge number of reviews due to the enormous amount of games hitting the shelves.

BLAZE

Every month the best letter will receive a selection of goodies donated by Blaze International. Depending on how we're feeling at the time, this could be a box full of stuff or it could simply be some pencil sharpenings from the design room, who knows? So, if you fancy a steering wheel and a light gun, or alternatively some wood shavings, you'd better get writing...

We've got more of a balance this issue though, don't you think?

CRASH DREDD

Dear EPM,
First of all, I have bought many PSX mags but after your first-ever issue I think it's up there with the best. I have a few questions to ask.
1. I already have Crash Bandicoot. Is it worth buying Crash Bandicoot 2?
2. Will Judge Dredd support Namco's new G-Con 45?
Micheal Hardman, Ilford

EPM says...
Think you're hard, man? (Jeez, we crack ourselves up).
1. Definitely, but you'd be better off doing a trade.
2. Yes, but why would you want it to? It's not exactly Time Crisis, is it?

OH YES IT IS!

Dear EPM,
For Christmas I got a PlayStation with five games. One of them was Tomb Raider 2. It is the best game that I have ever played and it deserves everything you gave it. One of my friends told me that Mario 64 got ten out of ten in another review. I played it and thought that it was crap...
Mark Mitchell, somewhere

EPM says...
We cut the letter prematurely because it went into Nintendo-bashing mode. We have to agree with you on the Tomb Raider 2 front, but you're mad if you think Mario 64's crap.

OH NO IT ISN'T!

Dear EPM,
I feel a lot of people are being misled about a so-called fantastic game called Tomb Raider 2. I bought the game a couple of weeks ago, on a Saturday morning to be precise, and it was taken back a couple of hours later... basically the game is utter crap and don't just take my word for it; my girlfriend also agrees with me. Lara is so unresponsive. Lara is also a shit shooter - I just could not get her to target the damn tigers before they mauled me to shreds.
I have not finished yet! The intro sequence is bloody rubbish, what the hell is it supposed to mean? It's not a patch compared to the likes of G-Police and Final Fantasy! I consider myself to be a fairly good games player, but I am sorry, Tomb Raider 2 (or the first one come to think of it), is utter PAP! Why do games have to make use of all the buttons on the control pad? I am not a bloody octopus.
Sean Hughes, Pontefract

EPM says...
Jesus! What a miserable git. Apart from the beginning of the letter where he praises the mag (cheers Sean), the whole thing is just one big moan. We can't understand how you can hate Tomb Raider 2 with such a passion, but it's your choice. As for having a go at the controls, try plugging in your joypad next time. If you're a fairly good games player as you say (and we believe you), and if you had given Tomb Raider 2 a little more time, you would have discovered the control is actually very responsive and easy to use. Anyway, we're glad you like the mag and cheers for the letter.

FOILED

Dear EPM,
Congratulations on the launch of your first issue. To be honest, I bought your first mag because I wanted a bloody good laugh at how totally and utterly bollok it was. But little did I know that inside the crusty exterior of this supposedly inferior magazine lay a load of brilliant, finely polished, detailed reviews. So it has good reviews, what else can I look for which has something hideously wrong with it? Ahhh, the cheats section - these are usually poor and don't bloody well work.
Nothing wrong here...
At this point in reading the mag, I was spinning around in my bedroom, repeatedly bashing my head against my solid concrete wall trying to find a fault in your bloody magazine. Oh yeah, talking of bloody, please can I have your opinion on Nightmare creatures?
James Hogbin, Penzance

EPM says...
We're glad to have proved you wrong James. Nightmare Creatures you say, well in a way it is a cross between Res Evil and Tomb Raider, minus the playability of both, so I wouldn't bother with it.

DEPTH CHARGE

Dear EPM,
Regarding your article on Depth Charge (issue 1, page 9), I was very interested and I would like to know where I could obtain a copy...
Ken Scallon, Dublin

EPM says...
The game was going to be called Depth but we thought Depth Charge was a snappy headline. Anyway, that's all irrelevant now because Sony are going to change the name for its UK release. There's no confirmation on what it will be called yet but it should be out at the end of March. We'll let you know the new name just as soon as it's confirmed.

Letters on any subject are gratefully received, as long as you send them to the following address:

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THE QUAY
POOLE
DORSET
BH15 1HA

e-mail...
epm@quaynet.co.uk



Swindlers Inc.

You cheating b*****ds; you love it, don't you? Inputting those sneaky little button sequences to access hidden goodies. We like to wear rubber knickers while doing it. We also enjoy rubbing Marmite into our gonads. Sexy!

COURIER CRISIS



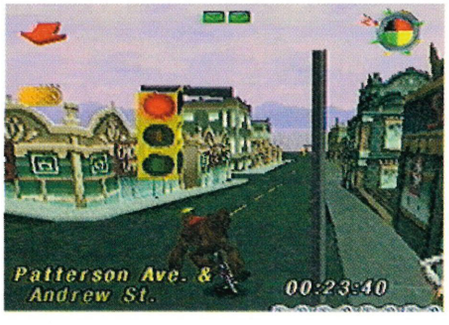
Bonus Level

At the Neighbourhood Selection screen, press L1 and R2 simultaneously to access a bonus tricks level.



Alien Rider

On the Password screen, enter your password as 'XFIFTYONEX'. This changes your rider into a slimy green mutant.



Gorilla Rider

On the Password screen, enter your password as 'SAVAGEAPES'. This changes your rider into a hairy brown monkey.

Passwords

Level 1	EFLCIFCGKJ
Level 2	IFLCIFCCKI
Level 3	MFLCIFCOKJ
Level 4	AFLCIFCKKJ
Level 5	FHCLFIGCJL
Level 6	FLCLFICCIL
Level 7	FPCLFIOCJL
Level 8	FDCLFIKCJL
Level 9	KFLCIFCGII
Level 10	OFLCIFCCII
Level 11	CFLCIFCOIJ
Level 12	GFLCIFCKIJ
Level 13	FFCLFIGCJJ
Level 14	FJCLFICCIJ
Level 15	FNCLFIOCJJ

CROC: LEGEND OF THE GOBBOS

Level Select

Enter 'ULDLRLDULRRDRRU' as your password to access a level select.

Super Password

Enter 'LLLLDRRLLDRDLUR' as your password to begin at the final level of Hidden Island with all secrets.

FORMULA 1 '97



Extra Tracks

Enter the Edit Driver screen, and rename the driver 'BILLY BONUS'. This allows you to access all the extra tracks including the black and white 1960's mode.

MDK

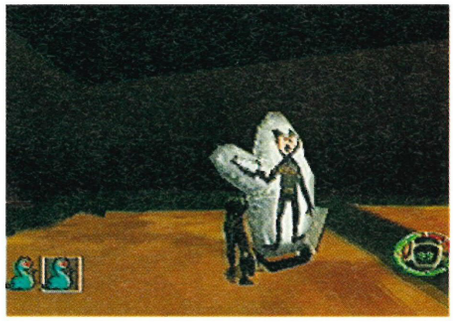
Pause the game during play and enter the following button sequences. Unpause to receive your reward!

Bones Air Strike - ↓, ↑, ○, ↓, ↑, ↓, L1



Seal - ○, △, △, L1, →

Cow Strike - ↑, ↓, ↓, L1, →



Super Chain Gun - ←, L1, ↓, □, △, ↑

Super Gun - →, ↑, ↓, L1, ↓, ○, ←, ←

Decoy Dummy - ×, L1, →, ○, ×, ↑, □

Homing Bullets - □, L1, L1, →

Grenade - △, ○, □, □, L1, →

Sniper Grenade - ↑, □, L1, ←, ○, △



Homing Sniper Grenade - ←, ↑, ×, △, L1, L1, →

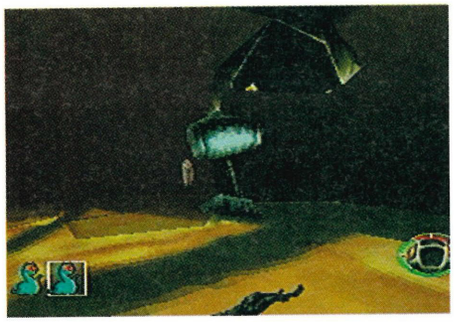
Mortar - ←, L1, △, □, →, ○, ←, ←

Twister - ↓, L1, □, △, →, ↑, ×

World's Smallest Nuke - ↓, ↑, □, △, ↓, ○, ○, →

Full Hit Points - →, L1, □, △, L1, ↓

World's Most Interesting Bomb - ↓, →, ○, ○, ←, ←, ↑, □, △



Faster Speed - →, ○, △, ○, ×
Nodie - ○, △, △, ○, →, ↑, ←, L1, □
Earthworm Jim - ↑, ↓, ↓, L1, →
Thumper - ↓, ↑, ←, ←, △, ↑, →, ↓

MORTAL KOMBAT MYTHOLOGIES: SUB-ZERO

Enter these codes at the Password screen in Options:

Unlimited Urns - Enter 'NXCVSR'
Thousand Lives - Enter 'GTTBHR'
View Credits - Enter 'GRVDTS'
Fortress Stage (with 20,000 experience points) - Enter 'ZCHRRY'
Exploding Earth Boss - Enter 'RCKMND'

Passwords

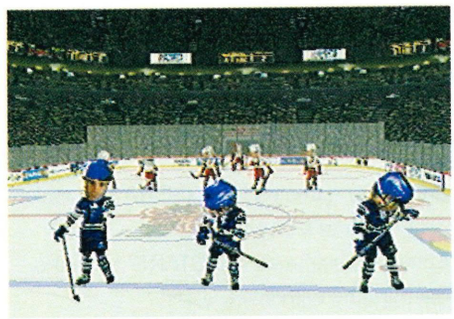
Wind	THWMSB
Earth	CNSZDG
Water	ZVRKDM
Fire	JYPPHD
Prison	RGTKCS
Bridge	QFTLWN
Fortress	XJKNZT

NHL '98

Enter the following passwords at the Password screen in Options:



View Stanley Cup FMV sequence - Enter 'STANLEY'
Small Players - Enter 'NHLKIDS'
Large Players - Enter 'BIGBIG'
Mixed; big and small - Enter 'PLAYTIME'
Powerplay awarded to team that allowed last goal - Enter 'GIPTEA'



Large Heads - Enter 'BRAINY'
EA Blades (bonus team) - Enter 'EAEAO'
EAC Players (allowed to be traded) - Enter 'FREEEA'
Use Alternate Jerseys (if available) - Enter '3RD'

NIGHTMARE CREATURES

Cheat Mode

Enter the Password screen, and enter the password, ←, ↑, △, ↓, ○, △, □, ↓.
'Unlimited Continues', a 'Level Select',



and **'Play As Monster'** options are now accessible.

Passwords - IGNATIUS

Level 2 - △, ○, △, ←, △, □, ×, □
Level 3 - △, ×, ○, △, △, ↓, □, ↑
Level 4 - △, □, △, ←, △, ↓, ↑, □
Level 5 - △, ↑, △, ↑, △, ↓, ↓, ×
Level 6 - △, ↓, △, ×, △, ↓, ←, ○
Level 7 - △, ←, △, ×, △, ←, △, ○
Level 8 - △, →, △, ×, △, △, ○, ○
Level 9 - ○, △, △, ×, ○, ○, □, ×
Level 10 - ○, ○, △, →, △, ↑, ↓, ↓
Level 11 - ○, ×, △, →, △, ↓, ←, ↓
Level 12 - ○, □, △, □, △, ↑, △, □
Level 13 - ○, ↑, △, □, △, ↓, ○, □
Level 14 - ○, ↓, △, →, △, ○, ×, ↓
Level 15 - ○, ←, △, □, △, △, □, □
Level 16 - ○, →, △, □, △, ○, ↑, □
Level 17 - ×, △, ×, □, △, □, ↓, ↑
Level 18 - ×, ○, ×, □, △, ↑, ←, ↑
Level 19 - ×, ×, ×, □, ○, ↓, ○, ↓
Level 20 - ×, □, ×, □, ○, ←, ×, ↓



Passwords - NADIA

Level 2 - ↑, ○, △, ←, △, □, ×, □
Level 3 - ↑, ×, △, ↑, △, □, □, ×
Level 4 - ↑, □, △, ↑, △, ↑, ↑, ×
Level 5 - ↑, ↑, △, ↑, △, ↓, ↓, ×
Level 6 - ↑, ↓, △, ↑, △, ←, ←, ×
Level 7 - ↑, ←, △, ↑, △, △, △, ×
Level 8 - ↑, →, △, ×, △, △, ○, ○
Level 9 - ↓, △, ×, ×, ○, ×, □, □
Level 10 - ↓, ○, ×, □, △, □, ↓, ↑
Level 11 - ↓, ×, ×, □, △, ↑, ←, ↑
Level 12 - ↓, □, ×, □, △, ←, ○, ↑
Level 13 - ↓, ↑, ×, □, △, ←, ○, ↑
Level 14 - ↓, ↓, ×, □, △, △, ×, ↑
Level 15 - ↓, ←, ×, □, △, ○, □, ↑
Level 16 - ↓, →, ×, □, △, ×, ↑, ↑
Level 17 - ←, △, ×, □, △, □, ↓, ↑
Level 18 - ←, ○, ×, □, △, ↑, →, ↑
Level 19 - ←, ×, ×, □, ○, ↓, ○, ↓
Level 20 - ←, □, ×, □, ○, ←, ×, ↓

PANDEMONIUM 2

Enter these passwords at the Password screen in Options:

31 Lives - Enter 'IMMORTAL'
Invincibility - Enter 'NEVERDIE'
Level Select - Enter 'OCMCKKEJ'

TEST DRIVE 4

Bonus Tracks

Set a time quick enough to place you on



the course record screen, and enter your name as 'KNACKED'. This allows you to access mirrored/night time courses.

Bonus Cars
Set a time quick enough to place you on the course record screen, and enter your name as 'SAUSAGE'. You will now be able to access hidden cars, including The Viper GTSR, TVR 12/7, '69 Dodge Daytona, and the Pitbull Special.

Nitro Boost
Set a time quick enough to place you upon the record screen, and enter your name as 'WHOOOOSH'. Now while playing, you can use the horn for a nirto boost. The 'Traffic' and 'Timer' options must be enabled to use this code.

Small RC Cars
Set a time quick enough to place you on the record screen, enter your name as 'MJCIM.RC'. Now race remote control cars.

TOCA TOURING CAR CHAMPIONSHIP

Enter these codes at the player's name, Tiff Needell will say 'Cheat Mode Enabled' to verify that the cheat has worked. Once any cheat has been activated, the 'Select' button can be pressed once racing to access the camera. This can be rotated by



pressing the △, ○, □, and × buttons.
Enter your name as 'CMTOON' to change the background to cartoon scenery.
Enter your name as 'CMNOHITS' to disable the collision detection.
Enter your name as 'CMCOPTER' to view



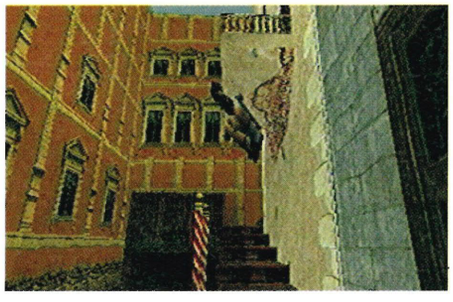
the race from a helicopter view.
Enter your name as 'CMDISCO' to race while the background flashes through various neon lights.
Enter your name as 'FLEXMOBILE' to give your car better traction and rear wheel drive.
Enter your name as 'CMLOGRAV' to make your car float along the tracks.
Enter your name as 'CMSTARS' to fill the background with lovely stars.
Enter your name as 'CMGARAGE' to access to extra cars.
Enter your name as 'CMRAINUP' to make the rain rise to the skies.



Enter your name as 'CMCHUN' to enter a go-kart view in the cock-pit view.
Enter your name as 'XBOOSTME' to increase the speed of all the races.
Enter your name as 'CMFOLLOW' to change the camera angle to that of the demonstration mode.
Enter your name as 'CMMICRO' to access a Micro Machines view.

TOMB RAIDER 2: THE DAGGER OF XIAN

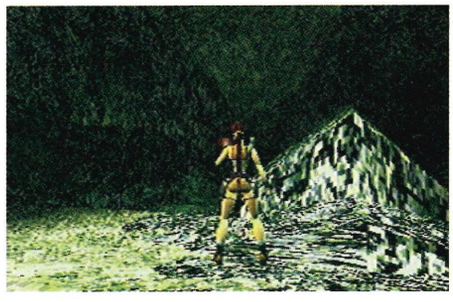
Level Skip
During gameplay, make Lara perform the



following actions in sequence. Hold Walk and sidestep Left, Right and then Left again. Then release Walk and turn three complete circles (either direction will do, as long as all the turns are in the same direction), now jump forward and perform a Roll in mid-air by pressing the Circle button. This code can be pretty hard to undertake, but it does work! When successful the screen freezes while Lara is executing the roll in mid-air, and after a few seconds you're transported to the end of the level.

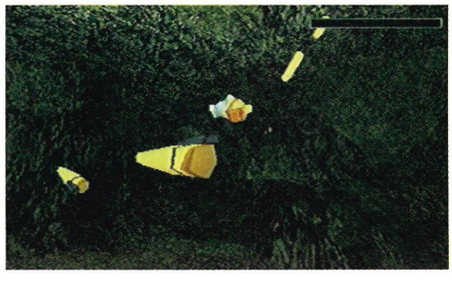


All Weapons
This code is exactly the same as the Level Skip, except to jump backward instead of forward. Hold Walk and sidestep Left, Right and then Left again. Then release Walk and turn three complete circles (either direction will do, as long as all the turns are in the same direction), now jump backward and perform a Roll in mid-air by pressing the ○ button. Press the Select buttons to access the Inventory to find all weapons with full ammunition. Nice!



Unlimited Flares
To get unlimited flares, press Triangle and as Lara is drawing her guns, press L2. She will now return her guns to the holster, and then strike a flare. This works even if the Inventory shows that she has no flares in her possession.

Exploding Lara
Weird, but it's true! Hold Walk and step forward, then backward. Now turn three complete circles and jump backward; while in the air, Lara will explode - it's just a shame her clothes don't drop off first!



Platinum Range

ACTUA SOCCER

Hidden Team

To find the hidden team, on the title screen press L2 + R2 + Select + ← + ↑ at the same time.

ALIEN TRILOGY

Level Select

Instead of your password, enter G0LVL followed by the level number you want. To get the end sequence, enter G0LVL34.

Cheat Menu

Go to the passwords screen and enter '1GOTP1NK8C1DBOOTSON'. You'll now be able to access the cheat menu.

DESTRUCTION DERBY

Secret Track

Select Wreckin' Championship and enter your name as 'RELECT!' then return to the



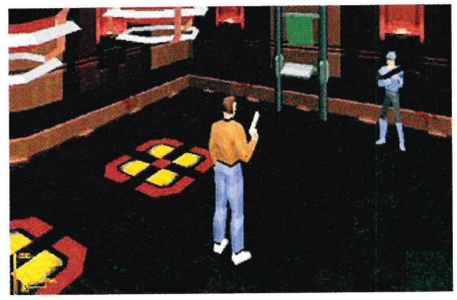
main menu and go for the Practice Mode. On the track selection screen you'll now find the hidden course, Ruined Monastry.

No Damage

Entering your name as '!DAMAGE!' will stop you from suffering any car damage.

FADE TO BLACK

Level	Code
Level 1	SCTXCS
Level 2	TCXCSX
Level 3	XCXCTX
Level 4	XSTCCT
Level 5	SSTXXT
Level 6	TXXXXC
Level 7	CCTXXT
Level 8	SSXTXX
Level 9	TXXTCT



Level 10	XTSCTX
Level 11	CSXXSX
Level 12	STXSCX
Level 13	XXSCTCT

RAYMAN

Ten Continues

When you have two continues or fewer, press ↑, ↓, →, ← at the continue screen. This cheat can be performed again and again.

Picture in a Picture

Pause the game then hold R2 and press ○, ○, ○, ←, ○. You'll now get a screen within the screen. Repeat the above to cancel this cheat.

Hidden Animation

At the UbiSoft logo, press and hold L1 + L2 + R1 + R2. When the brick wall appears, press Start whilst still holding the shoulder buttons.

Password Cheats

99 Lives

Enter XNB9FM!Z2? as your password.

Final Level

Enter SD3BKFooMN as your password.

ROAD RASH

Get Off Your Bike!

To get off your bike, brake until you stop completely then press ↑ + L1 + R1.

TEKKEN

Sub Bosses

The quickest way to beat the game and gain a sub-boss is to set difficulty to 'easy', rounds to 'one' and the timer to 20 seconds. Get in a few blows then block whilst waiting for the timer to run out.

Heihachi

Beat the game without using a single continue to control Heihachi. He's the only one who can reach Devil Kazua.

Devil Kazua

To gain control of Devil Kazua in arcade mode, beat the Galaga game at the start by scoring a perfect on each stage without using more than one continue.

WIPEOUT

Rapier Class

On the start-up screen, highlight Player One then hold L2 + R2 + ← + Start + Select, and while holding them, press ✕ to take you to the Class Screen.

Hidden Track

On the start-up screen, highlight Player One and hold L1 + R1 + → + Start + ✕ + □. While holding them, press ✕ to get Firestar, the hidden track.

Turbo Start

Hold the rev bar on the second line when the word 'go' appears.

Repeat Lap

Hit one of the air brakes and turn in the same direction to do a 180 degree turn as you cross the line. The machine will ignore this lap and allows you to do another one.

WORMS

Secret Weapons

On the Weapons Screen, press □ and ✕ together eight times. Some of the standard weapons will be replaced with Sheep Bombs, Banana Bomb, and a minigun.

Every Weapon

Pause a game then press ✕, □, □, ✕, □, □, ✕, □, □.

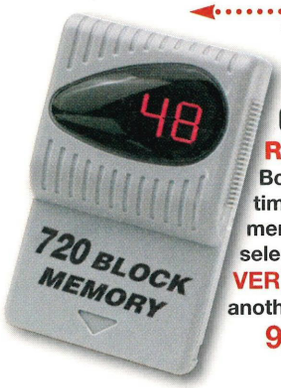


STUFF

IT'S A BLOODY JUNGLE OUT THERE!

WE RECEIVED BUCKET-LOADS OF PRAISE FOR OUR STUFF FEATURE LAST ISSUE, SO WE THOUGHT WE'D MAKE IT A REGULAR. THIS MONTH WE HAVE THE DATEL PLAYSTATION RANGE PLUS THE NEW GAMESTER STEERING WHEEL FROM LMP.

DATEL GAME PRODUCTS



720 SLOT MEMORY CARD

RRP - £39.99

Boasts up to 720 game saves, 48 times the storage space of standard memory cards. Has a joypad page selection system.

VERDICT - You'll never need to buy another memory card again!

9/10

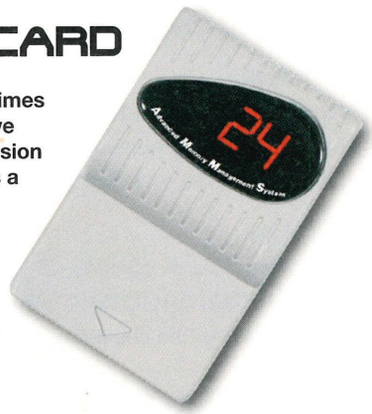
360 SLOT MEMORY CARD

RRP - £29.99

Offers storage up to 24 times bigger than a regular save cartridge. Uses compression techniques, and features a two-digit LED display; making it easier to see your current page.

VERDICT - Half the size of the 720, but ten quid cheaper - still great value.

8/10





120 SLOT MEMORY CARD

RRP - £19.99

Has eight Megabits of game save memory; eight times bigger than a regular save cartridge. 100% compatible with regular cartridges.

VERDICT - Again, smaller than the other two, but a tenner cheaper than the 360 and twenty quid cheaper than the 720. Good value!

8/10

PLAYSTATION RACING CHAMPION

RRP - £19.99

Plug in this memory card-like device and play your favourite racer. Access hidden vehicles and tracks within most racing games with its ace cheat codes. Gain best times, maximum scores.

VERDICT - If you're crap at racing and you need some help, this will probably be right up your street.

7/10



PLAYSTATION COMBAT CHAMPION

RRP - £19.99

Gain extra lives and energy for those beat-'em-ups you just can't beat. Dedicated to nearly all of the fighters around.

VERDICT - If you keep getting your ass kicked and cheating is the only way forward, then get ya fists on this.

7/10





PLAYSTATION MEMORY DRIVE

RRP - £79.99 **(only available from Datel by mail order)**

Plug into the standard memory card slot and store games to the floppy disk drive. Low-cost standard floppies are used, with 15 game-save slots available on each.

VERDICT - A box of ten floppies costs under a tenner, so if you're playing a huge amount of games, this is your answer. The price of the drive will probably put people off.

7/10

GAMESTER LMP

PSX STEERING WHEEL MK11

RRP - £59.99

Features foot pedals, racing-style gear change, eight action buttons and direction pad.

VERDICT - The best has just got better. The only main problem with the first was the pedals were too big and angled wrongly. These have been corrected, and with a lower price tag, this is the steering wheel to have.

9/10



THE TRIUMPHANT ONES

Thanks to everyone who entered the compos, the response has been brilliant. We did consider many of the bribes, including free beer, sex and drugs (we'll be in touch!). This issue also has plenty of goodies up for grabs, so get writing. And don't forget, you get a selection of Blaze goodies for the best letter in EX-COMMUNICATION. Nice!

Speed Freaks Competition

The answer to the Speed Freaks competition was 'A', Jacques Villenuve

Winners of the F1'97 Limited Edition and the Blaze VR F1 X-Cellerator are:

Stuart Burridge
8 Founders Way
Bridgemary
Gosport
Hants

Jamie Skelton
14 Western Avenue
Brigg
N. Lincolnshire
DN20 8PY
(Top notch postcard mate; do you know their addresses?)



A. Dibden
'N' Portland Road
Dorking
Surrey
RH4 1EW

Shaun P. O'Connor
16 Manor Park
Pontesbury
Shrewsbury
Shropshire
SY5 0RH

Mr P.S. Tan
210A, Northend Road
West Kensington
London
W14 9NX

Runners-up receive a copy of Rapid Racer and a Sony Analogue Pad:

Sarah Preston
29 Beeleigh Link
Chelmsford
Essex
CM2 6PH
(Phone us on 01202 679000. And if what you say is true, you'll be in the next issue!)

Martin Oliver
9 Ripley Grove
Wiggington
York
YO3 3DF
(Did you shag the girl lying by the swimming pool?)

T. McKinney
17 Loraine Way
Bramford
Ipswich
IP8 4JS

Miss J. Divine
16 Swanage Close
Saint Mellons
Cardiff
CF3 0LS
(With such a lovely name, how can you support such a shite team!)

Mr T. Whittaker
10 Fine Lane
Shorwell
Isle of Wright
PO30 3LE

Stuff Competition

The answer to the STUFF competition was - 'A', a way of representing information that uses a continuous range of values.

First prize of Blaze's VRF1 Arcade Steering Wheel, Erazer Light Gun, Pro Arcade Joystick 2, Hyper Drive Pad, Hyper Chromed Pad, Hyper Combat Pad, Memory Card, Scart Cable, and System Link Cable, goes to:

G Peacock
101 Lisle Rd
Colchester
Essex
CO2 75A

Second prize of Spectra Video's Explorer 32 pad, Dominator Joystick and Protector Light Gun, goes to:

R. Burton
Flat 6
172 Cathams Terrace
Cardiff
CF2 4HZ

Third prize of a Gamester's PSX Light Gun, PSX I Joypad and PSX II Joypad, goes to:

Peter Robertson
5 Mossuale Square
Craigend
Glasgow
G33 5PQ

Final Fantasy VII Competition

The answer to the Final Fantasy competition was 'B', Cloud Strife.

The prize of a copy of Final Fantasy VII, ASCII's Grip Joypad, and a Blaze 1meg memory card, goes to:

James Naylor
49 Ashbourne Rd
Cheadle
Staffs
ST10 1RS

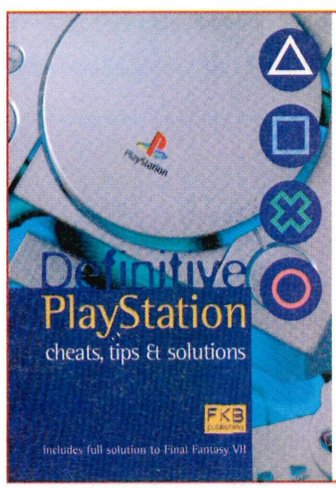


video game centre

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Duke Nukem	£39.99	Gran Tourismo	£69.99	G Police	£34.99
Total Drivin'	£34.99	Final Fantasy Tactics	£59.99	Exhumed	£24.99
WCW V The World	£39.99	Nagano Olympics	£69.99	Zero Divide	£9.99
Courier Crisis	£29.99	Puyo Puyo Sun	£69.99	Warhawk	£9.99
Castlevania	£39.99	Chocobo Dungeon	£69.99	4-4-2 Soccer	£19.99
Touring Cars	£39.99	Tales of Destiny	£69.99	Mech Warrier 2	£19.99
Resident Evil Directors Cut	£32.99	Colona The Wind	£69.99	Darklight Conflict	£14.99
Rage Racer	£29.99	Midnight Run	£69.99	Street Racer	£14.99
Judge Dredd	£29.99	Mega Man 3D	£69.99	Tempest x3	£14.99
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Jersey Devil	£34.99	Einhänder	£59.99	Disruptor	£19.99
Nuclear Strike	£34.99	Fighting Force	£49.99	Deflon 5	£9.99
Peak Performance	£29.99	Treasures of the Deep	£39.99	Assault Rigs	£14.99
M.D.K.	£29.99	F1 '97 (USA)	£39.99	ShellShock	£14.99
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EXTRAS

ALTHOUGH SOME MAY NOT BELIEVE IT, THERE IS A LIFE OUTS DE OF VIDEOGAMES. THIS IS WHERE EXTRAS FITS IN. EVERY MONTH WE BRING YOU THE BEST OF THE BEST ON ANYTHING THAT ISN'T A PLAY STATION GAME. IT COULD BE MUSIC OR MOVIES, CLOTHES OR CARS, BOOKS OR BOOZE; IN FACT YOU NAME IT AND YOU'LL SEE IT HERE AT SO RE POINT. THIS MONTH WE'VE BEEN CHECKING OUT THE LATEST IN COOL STREET-WEAR, THE SONY SYMBOLS COLLECTION, AND OUR RE SIDENT VIDEO BUFF HAS BEEN, UH, WATCHING VIDEOS. SO, TURN OFF YOUR PLAYSTATION AND DO SOMETHING THAT YOU'VE PROBABLY ONLY EVER DREAMT ABOUT; ENTER THE REAL WORLD...

SYMBOLS

Not content with assaulting the console market, the PlayStation is about to make its way onto the street proper, this time as a range of clothing. The Symbols collection is unlike any videogame togs you've seen before. There's no tacky cartoon pictures or self-indulgent software company plugs here. No, the symbols range can be worn with pride and not a cringe.

The range is styled in fetching shades of grey, black and white (grey goes with anything, you know), and the only thing that gives the PlayStation connection away are the four PlayStation controller symbols that adorn the garment. The cross, circle, triangle and square are all tastefully done and they don't stand out like a sore thumb; in fact they look pretty cool.

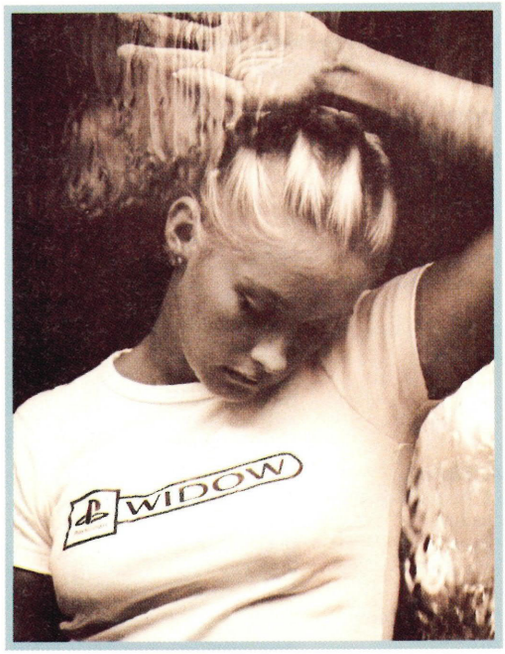
The symbols range includes: T-shirts, fleeces, jackets, vests, bags and hats. There's a Symbols range for men and women, but we're not too sure of how the girlfriend will take getting a 'PlayStation Widow' T-shirt for her birthday.



Anyway, we've got a sack full of 'Symbols' clothing to (somewhat reluctantly) give away. What do you have to do to win some of this top clobber then? Simple think up a caption for the photograph of the dodgy-looking geezer looking in the mirror and send it to the following address...

MMM JAZZ, COMPO
EXTREME PLAYSTATION MAGAZINE
QUAY HOUSE
THE QUAY
POOLE
DORSET
BH15 1HA

Closing date: 26th February '98. Our extreme style guru (Ian) will pick out a selection of the Symbols range for the five best captions pulled out of the hat.





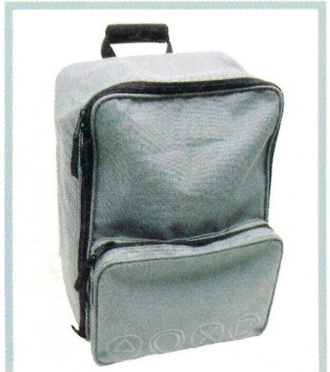








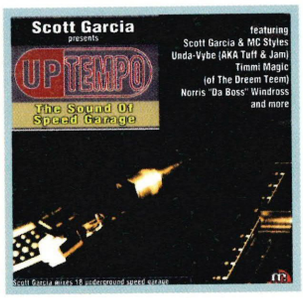




MUSIC

The must buy this month comes from the REACTIVATE stable, with its quality REACTIVATE CLASSICS compilation. With classic tracks from D-Shake, GTO, Fierce Ruling Diva, Hardfloor, Age of Love, CJ Bolland and Joey Beltram all mixed by Daz Saund and Trevor Rockcliffe you know you're in for a serious ride down memory lane, and beyond... If you fancy something a little less bangin' you could try JUMPIN' 2 from HARMLESS, a compilation of disco classics that have spawned much of today's dance music... Next up comes MIAMI DEEP from American house-masters MURK. Miami Deep is a selection of Murk's best productions and remixes, that takes in the likes of Donna Summer, Olive, Adeva and D.O.P, along with some Funky Green Dog classics that you'll definitely recognise. It's a must for anybody into quality house music... DOPE ON PLASTIC 5 from REACT music gets all laid-back and break-beaty. Including tunes from the BASSBIN TWINS, WAY OUT WEST and the FREESTYLERS to name but a few, it should suit beat-headz everywhere... Jump to the sound of the London Underground (and Radio One) with UP TEMPO, The Sound Of Speed Garage. Mixed by Scott Garcia, Up Tempo gives us an insight into the sound that's touted to be the next big thing. We'll see... THE DISTINCTIVE SOUND OF HOUSE - Vol 2 on DISTINCTIVE records steers well clear of the underground and gives us a huge dose of dance classics, old and new. The diverse track listing includes Huff & Puff's Help Me Make It (Rollo & Sister Bliss mix) and Sueno Latino's Sueno Latino (Salt Tank mix). There's no real cutting edge stuff here, just good old banging tunes that should get any party going... Talking of Banging Tunes, The new GRAVITY WHEEL album sampler is a serious contender for speaker destroyer of the month. It's a mix of quality breakbeat, trance and techno that steers well clear of cheez. The album should be out in March on DISTANCE records. Well worth the wait if you ask me... Finally, we've got a new single from the Icelandic collective, GUS GUS, called POLYESTERDAY - The Remix Project. With remixes from SASHA & CARL CRAIG donning the disc this has to be the second must buy this month.







WIN THE NEW BBE ALBUM

BBE, creators of the superb SEVEN DAYS & ONE WEEK single are self confessed games freaks, which is why their new album is titled GAMES. Games delivers a many-layered, melodic journey into the heart of the dance floor and if the tunes are even half as good as the singles it will definitely be a hit. It's coming out on Positiva records on the second of February and (funnily enough) we've got five copies to give away.

To win a copy, send in a postcard with your name and address on; the first five we pull out of the hat will win. Simple really.

Here's the address:

EXTRAS BBE GIVE-AWAY
EXTREME PSX MAGAZINE
QUAY HOUSE
THE QUAY
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Any entries received after 26th February will be burned.



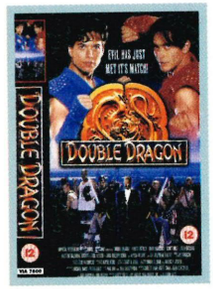
FLIK

One of the lesser-known movies inspired by video games has just hit the shelves as a video to buy. Double Dragon is here, and it boasts 'incredible special effects, stunning action sequences and a knockout sense of humour' - or so publishers M.I.A. claim.

Set in the year 2007, California has been ravaged by earthquakes, tidal waves and general gang lawlessness. Los Angeles is decimated, New Angeles being all that remains. Koga Shuko is the villain, obsessed with uniting two halves of a talisman known as the Double Dragon which will bestow mystical powers on him (yawn).

Starring Robert Patrick, Scott Wolf, Mark Dacascos, Alyssa Milano and several others you won't have heard of, the movie is fun in a seen-it-all-before sort of way, but its shameless theft from other films gets on your nerves after a while. Still, this movie never aimed to be high art; instead, it's a throwaway action movie that refuses to take itself too seriously.

Unfortunately it doesn't take its video game roots too seriously either. The main characters are there (Billy and Jimmy Lee), but they don't don the uniforms worn in the games until the film's almost over. It's mildly amusing, but more suited to rental than sell-through; it's not a film you can watch over and again.

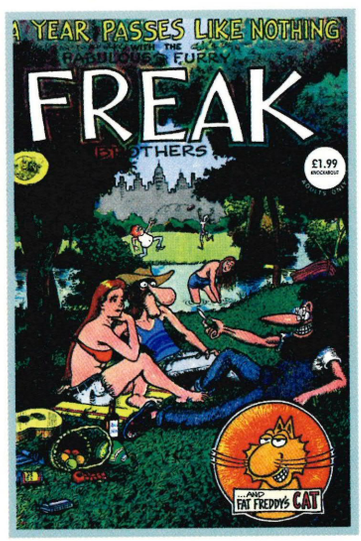


BLAST FROM THE PAST

THE FABULOUS FURRY FREAK BROTHERS

Imagine Men Behaving Badly with Tony and Gary replaced by three seventies hippies and you're somewhere near the Fabulous Furry Freak Brothers comics.

Freewheelin' Franklin, Phineas, Fat Freddy and his cat are probably the most whacked-out comic book characters ever to appear, and ever since the first Freak Brothers comic in 1968, they've been an underground institution. Their penchant for illicit substances and high adventure produces some classic comedy moments that you really have to read to believe.



If you've seen Cheech and Chong on video then you know what to expect from the Freak Brothers. If you've never heard of Cheech and Chong though, I wouldn't even bother picking up a Freak Brothers comic.

These classic comic books are written by Gilbert Shelton and Dave Sheridan and are published by an American company called Rip Off Press. If you fancy a peek at this hilarious dose of alternative seventies lifestyle though, contact Knockabout Comics who can be found at 10 Acklam Road, London, W10 5QZ.

VIRTUAL LOVER

The Virtual Lover has to be one of the saddest toys we have ever seen. It's in the same style as Tamagotchi, but rather than training a little LCD pet, you actually have to win the heart of a virtual bird or bloke.

To win the heart of your virtual bit of stuff you must court them with gifts and love letters. At first you may get a virtual kiss, but if you're a real Romeo you may end up getting virtually married.

Virtual Lover is produced by Solar Tune Electronics in Hong Kong and costs under ten quid. If you don't pull though, you could always stick to your virtual rubber doll.

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Issue 3

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plus many, many more (we just don't know what they are yet)



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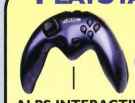
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