RALLY RAGE: TOMMI MAKINEN VS COLIN MCRAE

132 PAGES OF INTENSE PSX GAMING

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extreme PlayStation MAGAZINE

Issue 6 June 98



WORLD CUP FEVER

FULL-ON FOOTBALL FRENZY

VIGILANTE 8

SMASH MY PICK-UP!

FLUID AT CREAMFIELDS

SONY'S PSX MUSIC SEQUENCER UNVEILED

REVIEWED

GRAN TURISMO
VIGILANTE 8
THREE LIONS
DEAD BALL ZONE
CIRCUIT BREAKERS
WORLD LEAGUE SOCCER 98
TREASURES OF THE DEEP
PARASITE EVE
BUST-A-MOVE (RHYTHM & DANCE)
KULA WORLD
POINT BLANK
ARMOURED CORE
TOTAL NBA 98
VS
KLONOA
EVERYBODY'S GOLF
BOMBERMAN WORLD
WCW/NWO NITRO

PLATINUM

SOUL BLADE
COMMAND & CONQUER

FREE!

LIMITED EDITION ENGLAND MEMORY CARDS

SEE PAGE 50

HEART OF DARKNESS • VIPER • VICTORY BOXING 2 • MR DO... ...STO • SAN FRANCISCO RUSH

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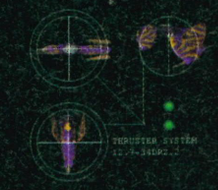
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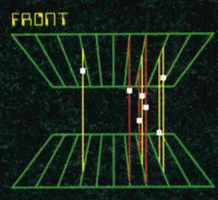
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CRACY



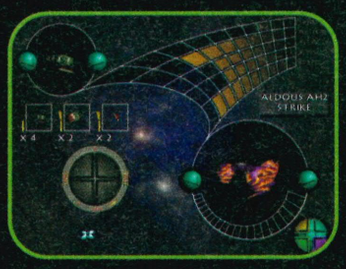






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QSOUND

SIMIS

Editorial

The nomadic boyz from extreme have been on the road again to bring you the very best in PSX gaming. The newshound ninja, Ozzy, raided Langely in the dead of night, successfully returning with his prawn balls intact and all the info on EA's top-secret games Road Rash 3D, Small Soldiers and WarGames. Saul, Graham and myself - the techno travellers - hit Creamfields to try out Sony's new music sequencer for the PlayStation, Fluid. We rubbed candy noses and created some sweet toons with the likes of Roni Size, Mr C and Finley Quaye. Christian 'well 'ard' Slater wheel-span his way up the M3 to Oxford to bash the hell out of a Toyota Corolla in Codemasters' promotion of Colin McRae Rally - he returned bruised but buoyant. The whole team's off to France next month to help Glen and the boys bring back the cup, but before we go we thought we'd bestow upon you the most in-depth ball-roasting World Cup feature around! The extreme team put forward opinions on every new footie sim available on the PSX, incorporating all the high points from the tournament since 1930. Footie fever has hit us baaad! To back up the feature, we're giving away the 500 limited edition England memory cards worth £14.99 each; simply fill out the coupon on Page 50 to win one. Au revoir mes amies

Darren

Highlights



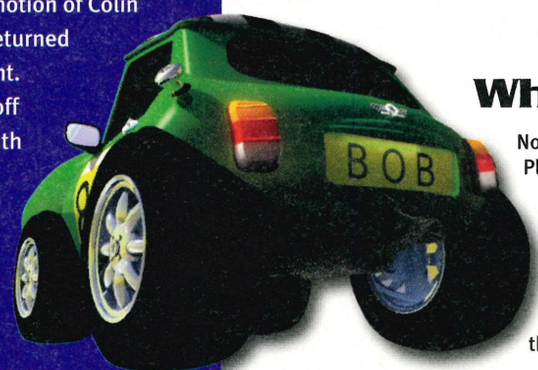
We're On Top of the World

Yes, its World Cup time again (as you may have noticed), and here at EPM we're not being left out. Our 16-page footy focus gives you all the form on the latest releases, while our resident soccer pundits predict the future stars and potential donkeys. To top it all, there's a fabulous cut-out-and-keep wall planner to help you keep track of your favourite team's majestic progress to the finals (or probable dejected humiliation). Dribble the ball over to Page 35, and try not to kick your opponent in the head on the way.

Cetacean Sequencing



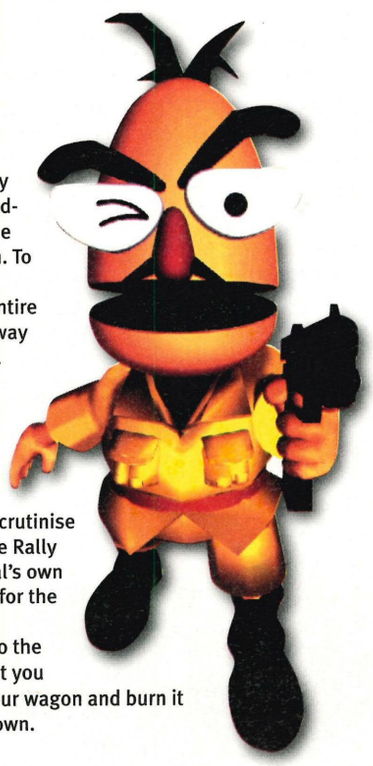
Based around idyllic swimming and sampling gathering, Fluid is perhaps Sony's most defiantly left-field and daring title yet, being part watery exploration game and part sound mixer, allowing you to create and customise your own tunes. As it was exclusively unveiled at the recent mega-rave Creamfields, out of duty our illustrious editorial department forced themselves to attend. You can read their somewhat fragmentary and impressionistic report of events and see the 'game' on Page 16.



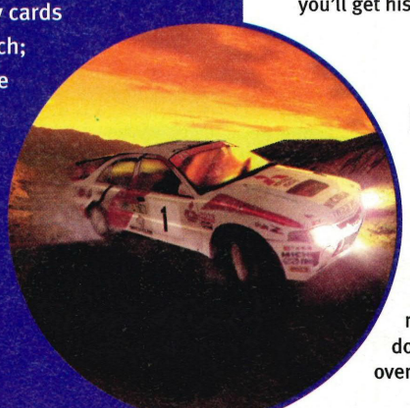
Where's the Party, Mate?

Now's a fine time to get your chums round for an evening of fun-swilling PlayStation action as there's a clutch of top party-style games reviewed this month. Namco's hilarious and variety-packed light gun game Point Blank lets you squeeze off a few rounds and grin widely, while Circuit Breakers is a multi-tappable top-down racer that brings out the true git in anyone. The Nintendo explosives 'n' maze-chasing classic Bomberman World makes it to the PSX in fine form, while Bust-a-Move: Rhythm and Dance comes boogying in from Oriental shores, and it's not taking its dancing shoes off at the door for anyone.

Come and Meet My Leetle Freind



It's a tough old world out there, and as any American will probably tell you, it's best to be armed to the teeth with a solid piece of lead-spitting hardware . However, as guns are illegal in this country, the best rod you can hope for is one that shoots light at the TV screen. To help pick the best bit of digital death-dealing kit, our own Ian 'Scarface' Osborne tests and assesses them all, and grades the entire range of titles in this trigger-happiest of genres (p104). The only way you'll get his gun is to prise it from his cold, dead fingers, y'know.



Max Power

Yet again there's a grid-full of top racing games to scrutinise this issue, with the astounding-looking Colin McRae Rally battling for off-road laurels against his real-life rival's own game, Tommi Makinen WRC. At last it's finally time for the Gran Turismo review (p52), so now you can see for yourselves if the turbocharged hype really lives up to the reality. The superfly Vigilante 8 is also a car game, but you don't race your opponents, you waste them! Jump in your wagon and burn it over to Page 76 for an unrepentantly gas-guzzling low-down.

Contents

GAMESPOTTING

VICTORY BOXING 2 12
DIRT 12
WING OVER 2 13
SDR 13
MR DOMINO 14
B-MOVIE 14
HEART OF DARKNESS 15

EXPOSED

VIPER 20
Top chopper shoot-'em-up action. Blue Thunder, eat your heart out!

COLIN MCRAE RALLY 22
Could this be a V-Rally beater? Scotland's top rally driver comes to the PSX.

BLASTO 26
This superhero sensation could become the PSX's new icon, but not if Ms Croft can help it...

TOMMI MAKINEN WRC 28
He just beat Colin McRae to last year's rally championship, but will his game do as well?

ELECTRONIC ARTS 30
We visit EA and take a peek at WarGames, Road Rash 3D and Small Soldiers.

SAN FRANCISCO RUSH 33
Fresh from the N64 comes this top road racer. That's right - it's ANOTHER driving game.

REGULARS

SIGNALS 06
Fact us 'til we fart.

COVER FEATURE: FLUID 16
Dolphins, samples, swirly shapes and techno. Sounds like a top night out.

FEATURE: COMICS 96
Resident Evil and Lara Croft in comic book form? Yes mate!

FEATURE: LIGHT GUN GAMES 104
The sleekest, most accurate video gaming guns and their accompanying games.

STUFF 100
Peripheral visions, accessories to murder for.

SUBS AND BACK ISSUES 101
Always the most intelligent and currency-friendly option, we feel.

EX-COMMUNICATION 110
Thoughtful and considered feedback, or prejudiced and blinkered drivel? You decide.

SWINDLERS INC. 112
You filthy, cheating bunch of swines.

PLAYER'S GUIDE: LUCKY LUKE 114
The Gaelic cowboy pulled to bits and laid bare. Sounds delightful.

PLAYER'S GUIDE: DIABLO 118
EA's Gauntlet clone fully dissected and explained away.

PLAYER'S GUIDE: FFVII 122
The further secret adventures of Cloud and co.

EX-TRAS 128
All the stuff we think is cool, or that Ian has blagged.

NEXT ISSUE 130
A towering colossus that stands proudly astride the PlayStation universe. Probably.

X-RATED

GRAN TURISMO 52
What can we say about this that we haven't said already?

WCW NITRO 58
Makes Big Daddy look like a fat, talentless, dead old Yorkshireman...

BOMBERMAN WORLD 60
Bomberman secures an early release from the 16-bit formats and takes his place on the PSX.



DEAD BALL ZONE 62
Violent future sports sim - it's a bit like playing football against Vinny Jones, Graeme Souness and Norman Hunter.

TREASURES OF THE DEEP 66
Deep-sea diving strategic blaster - the thinking person's shoot-'em-up.

CIRCUIT BREAKERS 68
Top Micro Machines-inspired racing, and one of the best multi-player games yet to hit the PSX.

KUALA WORLD 72
Curiouser and curiouser... check out the review, there's no room to make sense of it here.

ARMOURED CORE 74
Big, ugly mech takes on big, ugly enemies in this big, ugly game.

VIGILANTE 8 76
...Birmingham City 0. Sorry about that - it's a top car combat creation from Activision.

POINT BLANK 82
You won't be firing blanks with this top Namco title. Fairground frolics for all.

VS 84
The less said about this offering, the better.

EVERYBODY'S GOLF 85
Golf? For everybody? A laudable aim, but did Sony hit an Eagle or a Bogie?

KLONOA 86
Fun-filled platform fare in the Pandemonium mould. A pleasant change from all those driving sims...

TOTAL NBA '98 88
Shoot those hoops; it's basketball time again, and again, and again...

▸ IMPORTS

BUST-A-MOVE 90
Boogie on down with this footloose Japanese fodder. Last one on the dance floor's a disco fan...

PARASITE EVE 92
This could be a Resident Evil-beater - if it's translated into English.

▸ PLATINUM

SOUL BLADE 94
Weapons-based fighting fun for under a score. Slices through the opposition.

COMMAND & CONQUER 95
The PSX's top strategy sim at a bargain price. Yes sir - acknowledged.



signals

WHAT'S NEW, BLUE AND TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE IN THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF THE PLAYSTATION

SKATE PARK

Sony and PlayStation are sponsoring a series of inline and skateboarding events, climaxing at the PlayStation ramp park in Ladbroke Grove on 6th September. It's the first UK amateur competition for the past decade, and is open to all levels of skaters, with numerous prizes including a sponsorship deal lasting a year with the PlayStation, two air fares to America plus a grand hard cash to blow, consoles, boards, T-shirts and so on.
There are five heats dotted around the country, with the grand finale taking place in September (dates listed below). Music at the last two events is provided by Manc Skunk rockers The Dust Junkys, The Young Offenders, Maximum Roach, A, Geek and DJ Harry.

20th June (Inline)
2pm - 6pm
21st June (Skateboard)
2pm - 6pm Storm Skatepark
Derby
Tel 01332 201 768

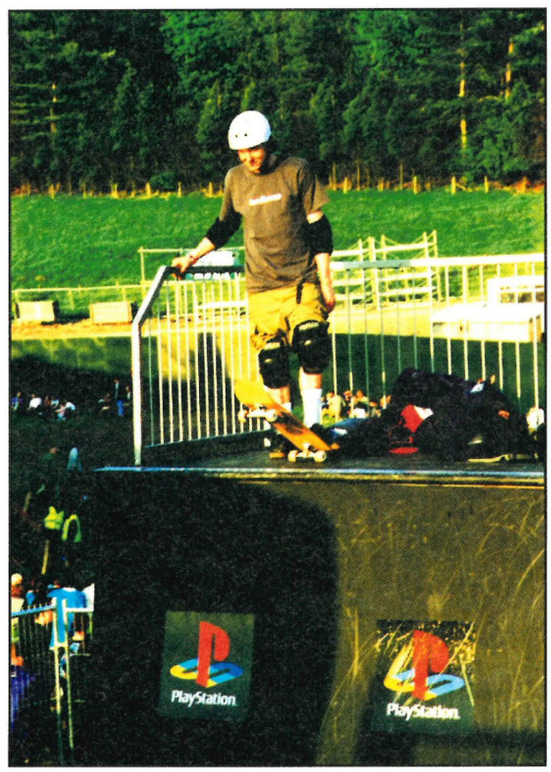
4th July (Inline)
2pm - 6pm
5th July (Skateboard)
2pm - 6pm Bones Skatepark
Stockport
Tel; 0161 480 7755

18th July (Inline)
2pm - 6pm
19th July (Skateboard)
2pm - 6pm PlayStation Skatepark London
Tel; 0181 969 4669

1st August (Inline)
2nd August (Skateboard)
2pm-6pm
Rampworks
Liverpool
Tel; 0151 530 1500

8th August (Inline)
9th August (Skateboard)
2pm - 6pm
Mount Hawke
Truro
Tel; 01209 890 705

5th September (Inline)
FINALS 12pm - 8pm
6th September (Skateboard)
FINALS 12pm - 8pm
PlayStation Skatepark London
Tel; 0181 969 4669



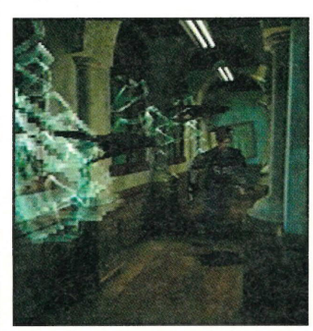


PATRIOTIC PRODUCT POPS UP

Out just in time for the soccer tournament in France is the Official World Cup Joypad by Gamester. Revelling in the potential flood of convenient patriotism, it 's pluckily emblazoned with the Three Lions logo, and proud in its supportive livery of the team's colours, replete with a sturdy white casing and bulldog blue action buttons.
Available either on its own or with the equally-marvellous limited edition blue Memory Card (also with team shield), it hits the shelves at the end of May and costs £11.99 for the pad or £19.99 for the pair. Let's just hope our lads don't get trounced by Tunisia, or they'll look just a bit silly, won't they?

WISE UP, SUCKERS

Overheard in a local branch of GAME the other day: A youngster, having just spent £49.99 on Resident Evil 2, asking the assistant if they had a solution book available for it yet, to which the employee stoutly replied, "Why don't you try and beat the game first before resorting to cheating? You'll enjoy it more that way." EPM says: 'Right on, brother'.



PSX DOMINATES EVERYTHING

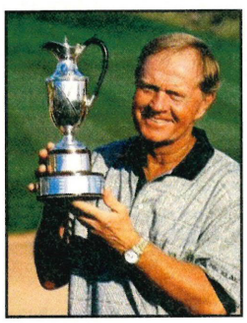
Sony are admiring the size of their wad after a bumper Easter for PlayStation sales, shifting a whopping 30,000 over the holiday period. This brings the total nation-wide ownership figures to an unprecedented 2.25 million, which means your mum probably has one.
This comes at a time when an independent research group has revealed that over 50% of PSXs are connected to the TV in the living room, due to the generally higher qualities of picture, sound and screen size. Is the PlayStation's relentless march into the mainstream good or bad? For Sony, the answer is definitely an affirmative, as the PSX is officially their Best-selling product ever.



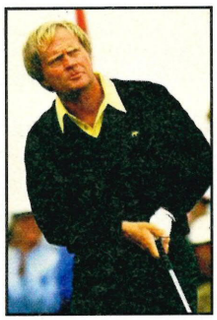
BRUCE WILLIS STARS IN APOCALYPSE - NOW

Activision have commissioned Neversoft, creators of MDK, to write Apocalypse, a filmic action-shoot-'em-up that stars Bruce Willis as the gritty Trey Kincade.
The game is set in the ubiquitous violent and dark future where religion and science are at loggerheads to dominate society, each offering their own version of salvation to the masses. A corrupt prophet known as The Reverend has stolen nanotechnology and corrupted it in order to bring into being the famed Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse from the Book of Revelation, namely Death, Plague, War and The Beast (not Biblically accurate, but don't blame us).
The Horsemen roam the earth incognito, amassing evil power and awaiting the signal to rise up and give humanity a really good fright before destroying them. Of course, the player(s) must strive to save mankind from a nasty fate, whether they deserve saving or not.
At the moment little information describing the game exists, but it's apparently going to be stuffed with explosive action and seamless 3D character movement within a cinematic environment (hopefully not one that smells of stale popcorn and spilled Coke, then). Expect more detailed info soon, and don't confuse the game with the forthcoming asteroid-impact film Armageddon, also starring baldy Bruce.

ACTIVISION FOLLOW THE BEAR



Activision have bought the rights to Accolade's critically-acclaimed Jack Nicklaus Golf series. Previously PC only, the sixth and latest game will also be released on the PlayStation. No release date has been set, but it's likely to hit the shelves in 1999.
"Jack Nicklaus is the greatest golfer of all time", said Activision chairman Robert Kotick. "We are thrilled to partner with Jack Nicklaus to deliver a new round of games where the player can tee off on some of the world's most exclusive courses".
Whether Jack 'The Golden Bear' Nicklaus is 'the greatest golfer of all time' is open to debate, but with the current batch of PSX golf games offering more bunkers than hole-in-ones, his appearance on our fave console can only be good news.



TROLL BRIDGE? HUGO FIRST...

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QUAKE'S ON THE WAY

Activision's long-awaited Quake has finally been approved by id software. The CDs are being duplicated as we write, so we should have a full review for you next month.

CRASH BANDICOOT 3

Developers Naughty Dog are to launch the third game in the Crash Bandicoot series at the forthcoming E3 trade show in June. The game is set in several time zones, and offers improved animation and environments, as well as more characters. These include a Sonic and Knuckles-style playable partner, his little sister Coco first seen in Crash Bandicoot 2. Look out for a full preview soon ...

RETRO ADVERT FLIES OVER HEAD OF POPULACE

By now you've probably seen the advert for Pitfall 3D doing the rounds on TV at the moment. It stars an octogenarian Pac-Man, Centipede, Battlezone tank and most smirkingly of all a pair of bats from Pong grumbling at Pitfall Harry's new exploits from the confines of a rest home. Its humour and retro references may be lost on most people, but at least it shows someone in Advertising Land has;
a) a sense of humour
b) old-skool tuned sensibilities.
EPM says: 'Respect due'.

THOUGHT OF THE MONTH...

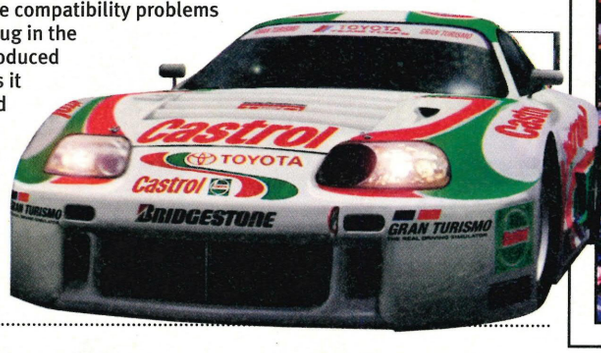
...if you didn't know, would you 'snog' Dana International?

GRAN TURISMO: A WHEELY BAD COCK-UP

Bad news - despite being the hottest racing game ever to hit the PSX, Gran Turismo has very poor steering wheel compatibility and won't even work with the Sony-endorsed Mad Katz wheel.

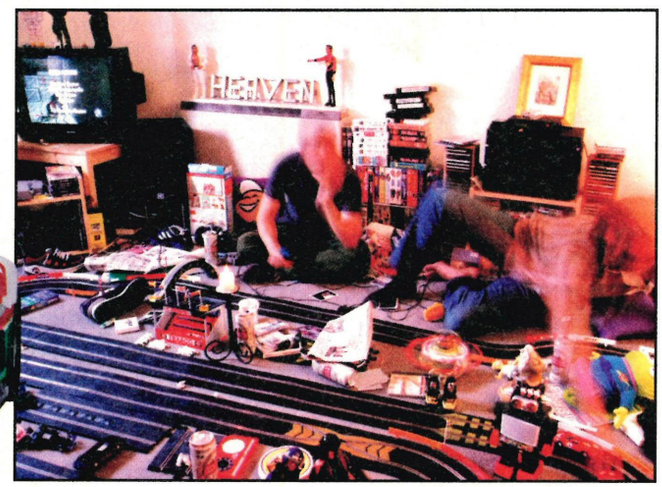
According to the Sony Helpline, a handful of third party wheels work with the game, but some are only partly compatible and none of the ones Sony recommend work. For example, the LMP steering wheel operates the car during the races, but cannot function on the options screens - you have to keep swapping between an hand controller and the wheel. Even Negcon compatibility is no guarantee a steering wheel works, despite the game being Negcon compatible.

Sony claim the compatibility problems are due to a bug in the program, introduced unwittingly as it was converted from NTSC to PAL formats. They're 'looking into the matter'.

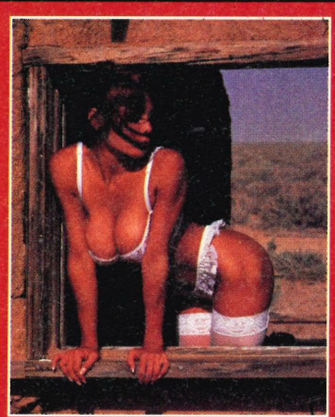


POP STAR PSX

Spotted on the cover of lo-fi trip-hoppers Skinny's debut album The Weekend is a craftily-lurking PlayStation running a game we can't quite make out among all their other wicked toys. Yet again the PSX is used as a symbol of underground cool and hipster cred. Bet you'll never see an N64 in a similar context, eh?



POST TASTE...

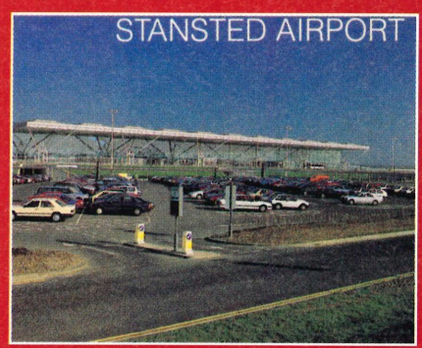


With so many hot competitions, we get piles of weird and wonderful postcards here at EPM. Some are picture creations, others plain white functional efforts. Some are fascinating works of art, others are boring, badly-printed tosh. Most are put into a hat ready for the draw, a few are written on pieces of card so ridiculously large they won't even fit into the hat - good try, but no cigar.

Losing competition entries were, inevitably, thrown away - until now. From this month, we're printing the best and worst losing competition postcards we receive, and handing out small and usually crap prizes to the senders. This ish we've a neat babe pic from Shane Mullins; great picture, mate. That's more than can be said for Andrew Cosgrove's effort - the car park at Stanstead Airport? Yawn!

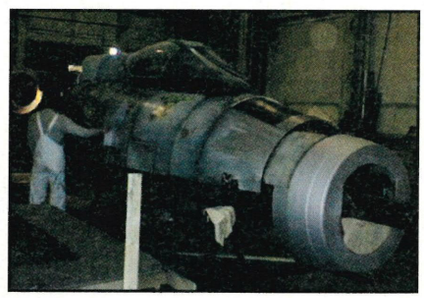
Congratulations, guys, you each get Tekken 3 character cards and memory card stickers.

When sending in your compo entries, have a think about what you use. If it's outstanding or insufferable, you might win even if you lose, so to speak.

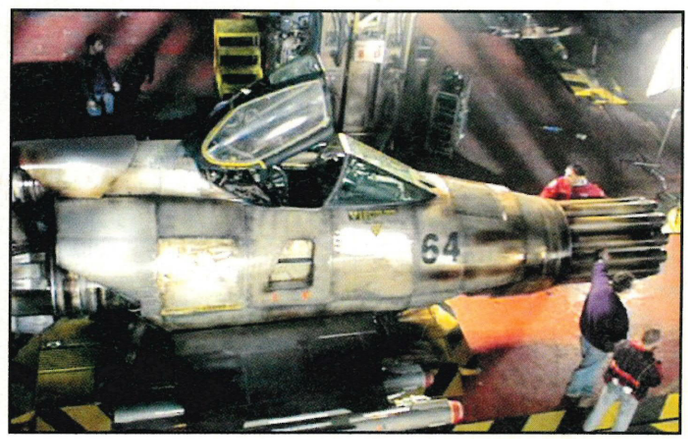


WING COMMANDER NEWS- THE LATEST

We've little to add to what's already been said about the forthcoming Wing Commander film, but here are a few shots taken in the studio. The crew build a futuristic space fighter on the cockpit section of a Lightning jet. Looks great - can't wait to see it fly.







WIN DEAD BALL ZONE FLEECES AND GAMES!

▸ WINNERS ..... 2x DBZ FLEECES AND GAME
▸ RUNNERS-UP ..... 3xDBZ GAME

To celebrate the launch of Rage Software's violent future sport sim Dead Ball Zone, Publishers GT Interactive have donated five copies of the game plus two limited edition Dead Ball Zone fleeces. Just the thing for those hot Summer months? Maybe not, but you can always store them and look extremely dapper in the winter.

To stand a chance of winning a fleece and/or game, simply answer this 'get football in the mag at all costs' competition:

RAGE SOFTWARE ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR WHICH CLASSIC SOCCER GAME?

A. STRIKER
B. SENSIBLE SOCCER
C. KICK OFF
D. ALAN SHEARER'S KUNG FU FOOTBALL

Send answers on a postcard to:

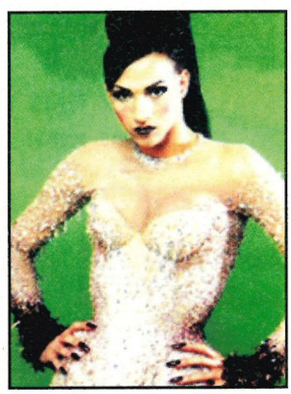
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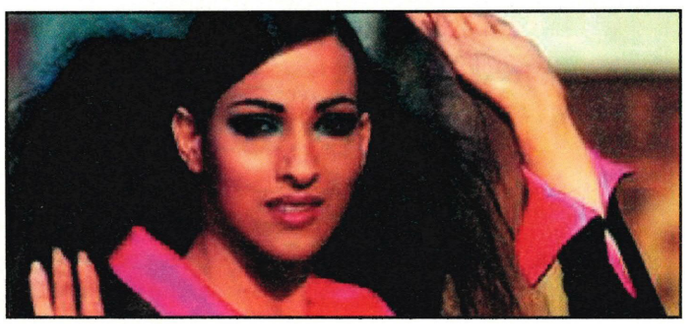
Closing date is 19th June.

LARA LOOKALIKES

Another month, another babe we'd like to see playing Lara Croft. This month it's Eurovision Song Contest winner Dana International. Lara's a lady with real balls, and Dana used to have a pair - a match made in heaven. Besides, they both owe their curvaceous charms to silicon...









EARTHWORM JIM 3D™

worming this way

Autumn '98

www.interplay.com/ej3d

NINTENDO64 PC CD ROM PlayStation Interplay™

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CLASSIC MOMENTS IN VIDEOGAME VIOLENCE



▸ DEAD BALL ZONE'S KICK IN THE KNACKERS

We had to start this new series with one of the best bits of videogame violence ever, and the game hasn't even been released yet. Okay, so it may be a little slapstick, but this is top cringeworthy violence at its best. Find yourself a point down at the end of the game? Opposition just about to score? Don't sweat, because with a simple button combo you can gain possession of the ball in grand style. Position yourself near the unlucky player, then hit Triangle and Square in quick succession and watch the gut-wrenching results. Your player runs up to the target and launches a high-speed boot swipe to the knackers of the poor bloke with the ball. With the sheer pain far too much to handle, he drops the ball, allowing you to grab it and peg it off down the other end. It's worth hanging around for a little while, though, because if you're lucky you get to witness the sucker puking his guts up all over the floor. Nice!

SORRY...

Some of you have apparently bought copies of Dark Omen on the strength of our review's stating that it was link-up compatible (Issue Four). Unfortunately, it seems this feature was removed from the final version at a late stage in development, after we had reviewed what we thought was the final version of the game. We can only apologise to anyone who shelled out to buy two copies only to be disappointed, and crassly attempt to point the finger of blame at Electronic Arts for giving us misleading info. Again, we're really SORRY.

THIS MONTH WE 'AVE MOSTLY BEEN PLAYIN'

▸ DAZZA

WORLD LEAGUE SOCCER 98
Easily the best footie game I've played. Very tricky to pick up, but once the moves start to flow it's an excellent title. The goals are few and far between, but who cares when 0-0 draws are as exciting as this.

BUST-A-MOVE DANCE & RHYTHM ACTION
I've been playing this for nearly two months and I still want more. Surely a Publisher will pick up on this title and bring it to the UK. Beats Parappa The Rappa hands down. One for high-flyers after a club.

TEKKEN 3
This is still appearing on my screen even though I've been caning it since its day of release. Super-charged with huge amounts of moves and characters make this the best beat-'em-up of all time.

▸ SAUL

COLIN MCRAE RALLY (PREVIEW)
Beats V-Rally hands down, and that's even before I've seen the finished version.

WORLD LEAGUE SOCCER
I'm not a huge football fan, but giving Dazza a kicking on this can't be beaten.

DARTS
Who needs videogames when you can sink a few pints and take part in a real game of skill in your local?

▸ IAN

BOMBERMAN WORLD
This seminal classic has cropped up on virtually every post 8-bit machine. Technically it's showing its age, but it once again delivers in the gameplay department. And that's why I gave it a high mark. So there.

CIRCUIT BREAKERS
If the vehicles offered more choice and variety, this one would be damn-near perfect, but even as it stands it's a fine game. Hopefully Supersonic will turn their hands to Circuit Breakers 2, offering the same GREAT gameplay and cars with a little more soul.

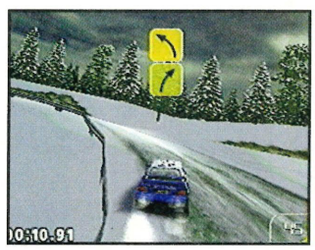
VS
I played it for an afternoon and won all the boss characters, and completed the game with one of the main fighters. As the 'end sequence' was white scrolling text on a black background, I had no incentive to try again with another character either. Pure toss.

▸ CHRISTIAN

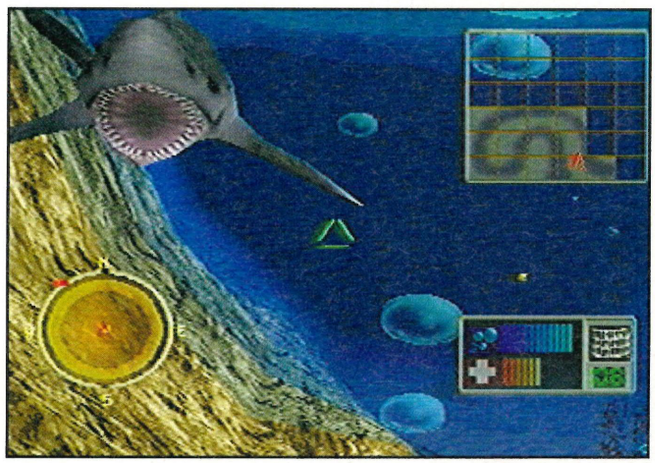
MOTORHEAD
After extended playing I'm more inclined to think I under-marked it at 90% last month, as it actually does have quite a lot of long-term potential . 93% would have been fairer, maybe (sorry Gremlin).

COLIN MCRAE RALLY (PREVIEW)
Can't wait for the finished version, as the one we've got still only has about a quarter of the tracks. Most of my mates who've played this reckon it's as good as (if not better than) GT.

TREASURES OF THE DEEP
Arriving with no hype at all, this undersea corker is the most pleasant (and scary) surprise I've had for a good while. Top graphics, oppressive atmosphere, fascinating aquatic creatures and loads of lasting potential.







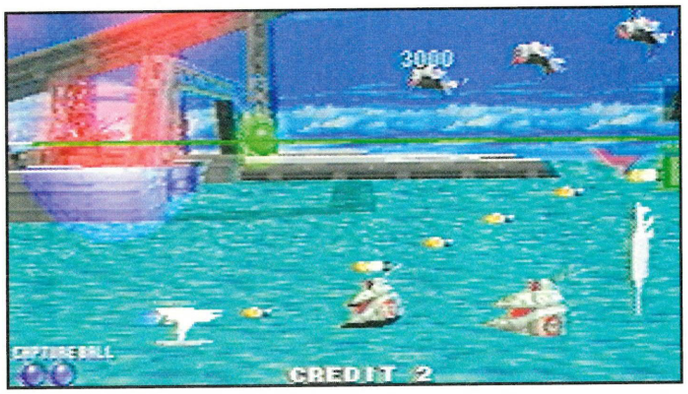
OVERSEAS

Welcome to the news from the Land of the Rising Sun. Last month's mainstream import reviews went down so well our illustrious editor decided to make the section a regular - look out for Bust a Move and Parasite Eve. So not to be out-done, we've had a look at some of the older games about as well as some of the more obscure releases.

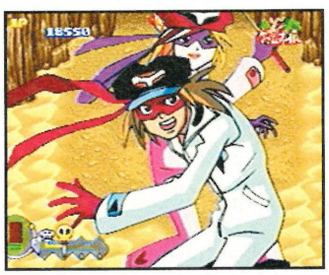




The first new release is Darius, a pure shoot-em-up. This has arrived in the shadow of R-Type, which came out a few months ago. It's still proved a big hit, though, and has caused quite a stir in Japan. The graphics are clean, fresh and crisp, which makes it pleasant to play. The speed of the side scrolling and the amount of on-screen ships add to the realism of the game. This is, without doubt, the best release of the month in terms of short-term playability.

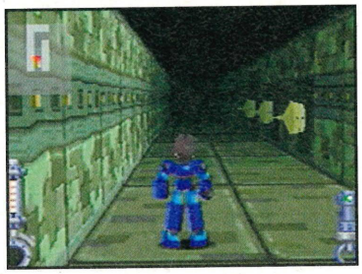


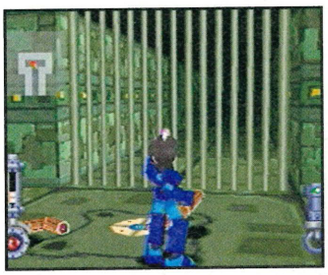
The final game for the month is a dreadful blaster, and without question one of the bizarrest games we've played. We're not sure what it's called as the title's in Japanese, so we just call it 'Crap'. The graphics look like they came from Speed Racer. They're bright and sharp, but when the game gets going you're comforted with just another clone of Parodius. With games like Einhander and Darius now available, you have to ask why people play games like this, but hey, who are we to argue when they have the skills of people like Squaresoft?





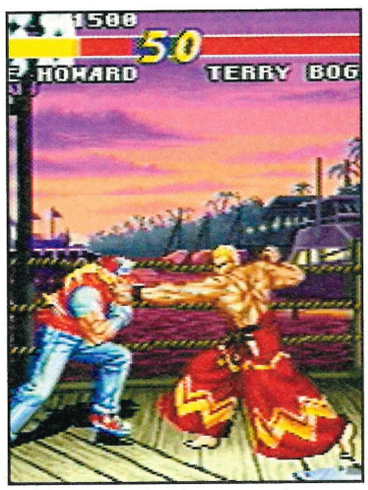
This month's second release is the new Megaman game. This time, instead of the standard side-scrolling offering, you're placed in a 3D environment. The game starts with you exploring dark and suspecting corridors, with the alien enemies detaching themselves from the walls once you've passed them. As the game goes on, it turns into a full 3D world, with you being able to walk up to people in the towns and talk to them. Again, this has proved to be a popular game, but we can't see why. There is some serious clipping that lets it down immensely - add that to the awful sound and you can't help but wonder what people see in it.



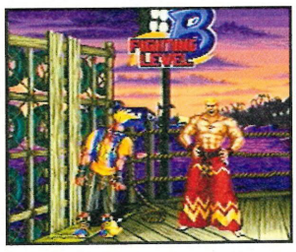




The next one is an old title that really did cause a storm on its release - Real Bout. The graphics look like something out of a Street Fighter game, and even for its age it still looks reasonably good. The thing we liked best was even though it's not a 3D arena, you can move into the foreground and the background to avoid attacks that might pummel you into the ground. If you can play import games, I recommend you getting this if you can find it going for around a tenner.







That about raps it up for the month, but before we go, here's some details on some up and coming games. The first is a Manga licence and centres around the Neon Genesis Evangelion series. The game's already out on the PC and has proved to be a hit. You play the hero Shinji Ikari, and the story pivots round a female junior high school girl called Mana Kirishima. We will bring you more news on this as it's made.
The second is from the chaps at Squaresoft and is called Soukaigi. If you read the review of Saga Frontier last issue, you have an idea of what the game's like. You have a huge amount of freedom to talk with the people in the area. This is definitely going to be a massive hit for the Squaresoft team, and when we get the chance to play it, we'll let you know what it's like.
The other thing that's caused a commotion is the release of a video CD add-on, enabling you to play movies on your PlayStation. We don't know if there are any plans to release it over here, but again we'll let you know as soon as we find out.

Gamespotting

This section is dedicated to titles still in development. All the information here has been kindly sent to us by the various publishers and developers involved in releasing the games. Included are JVC's forthcoming titles and Norwegian developers Funcom's Dirt and SDR.

Victory Boxing 2

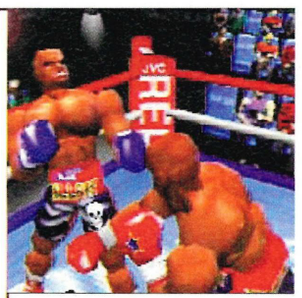
Publisher - JVC
Developer - In-House
Released - September

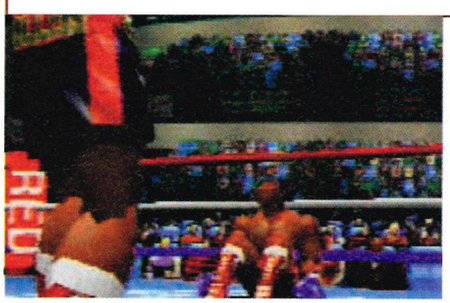
Here at EPM, we have a difference of opinion on the original Victory Boxing. Dazza thought it was okay but in need of fine-tuning, but Ian thinks it was terrible. Hopefully JVC will clear all the cobwebs from the sequel before it hits the shelves.

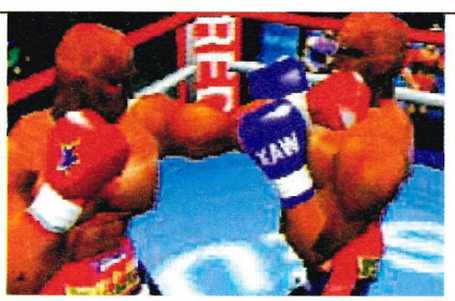
It's early days yet, but the game certainly needs more work on it. All the characters and combinations are there, including your trainer, Snake, retained from the first game. The actual boxing needs speeding up, though - JVC are working on it as we speak. You can side-step within the ring, but (hurrah!) you can't dance circles around your foe, flicking jabs until he falls.

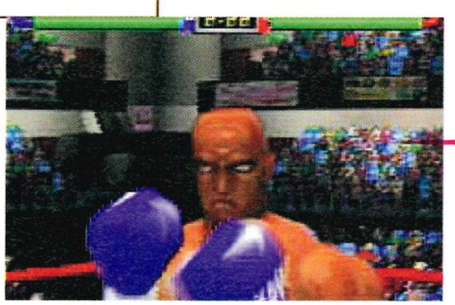
The Japanese developers included a cool cartoon intro sequence in the game. For the PAL version, JVC are to replace it with a rendered or FMV sequence. They're probably wise, but we hope there's room to offer the cartoon too, as a cheat or a reward for finishing the game.

Finally, look out for a boxer called Kelly Hasslephone - he's named after an Advertisement Sales Executive who phones JVC with ridiculous regularity.









Dirt

Publisher - TBA
Developer - Funcom
Released - TBA





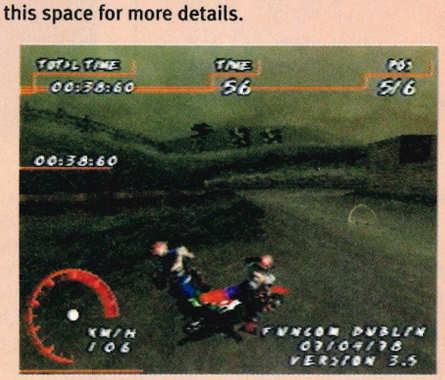
This one took us by surprise. Developed by Norwegian game freaks Funcom, no publisher has yet signed it up, even though it's almost finished and looking pretty good.

The race physics feel quite realistic as you bounce and batter your way across various Motocross tracks. They're undeniably arcadey in that you won't find it too hard to stay on the bikes, though. Key skills include taking the corners at just the right speed, sliding through the racing line without overbraking or drifting too wide, and keeping the bike flat when in the air. Land on one wheel and you lose speed.

Unfortunately, we can't say when Dirt is to be released, or even who's to release it - was we said earlier, it hasn't been signed up by a publisher. All we can say (as usual) is watch this space for more details.





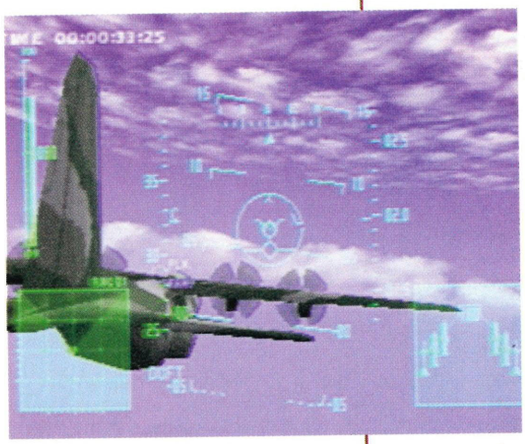


Wing Over 2: Aggressor

Publisher - JVC
Developer - In-House
Released - Aug/Sep '98

There aren't many decent flight sims on the PlayStation - Gunship 2000's the only one that springs to mind. All this could change in late Summer with the release of Wing Over 2, though.

JVC themselves admit the original Wing Over left a lot to be desired, but the sequel addresses the problems of the earlier incarnation and offers a much better blast. There are more planes, more enemies, more fighting arenas, more weapons, and for the first time, missions - both ground- and air-based!









According to JVC, "Wing Over 2 is going to be all the things Ace Combat 2 tried to be. Using the exclusive Wing Over flight engine that enables the pilot to execute realistic, full 360 degree stunts and aerobatics, WO2 will propel gamers into a world that's the closest thing to a realistic flight sim on the PlayStation".

The game's far from complete as we write, but it certainly looks interesting. Look out for an exclusive review in extreme PlayStation - soon!

SDR

Publisher - TBA
Developer - Funcom
Released - TBA







Believe it or not, SDR stands for Super Deformed Racer - it's one of those quirky titles the Japanese like. If it's ever released over here the title's bound to change, so for now we'll stick the abbreviation 'SDR'.

Woah there - did you say, 'IF it's published over here'? Alas, we did - the game has yet to be signed by a European publisher, despite being in a reasonably advanced stage of development. Someone's bound to notice it soon though - it looks well worth a blast.

One look at the screenshots is enough to reveal its, erm; 'inspiration'. This game aims to be the PlayStation's answer to Mario Kart.



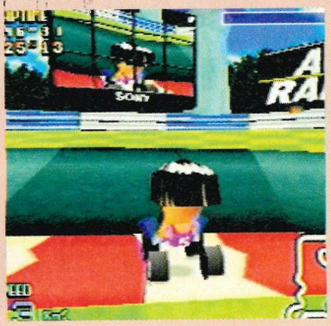
The graphics are cartoony, the courses short and packed and the racers have a hoard of power-ups at their disposal. Blast your enemies, extra speed - the usual stuff.

Even with the aesthetics just right, the game could still fall flat if the racing's not up to scratch. The game must demand the gamer sticks to the racing line like glue, the computer-controlled cars must offer a real challenge, keeping you in the thick of it all, and there must be enough cars on the track for you to always be struggling for position (at the moment, only the player's car is there).

Aside from the ridiculous characters and offensive title, we've little to moan about at this stage. Hopefully someone will sign the game and Funcom will turn it into the cartoon classic it deserves to be.







Mr Domino

Publisher - JVC
Developer - ArtDink
Released - July

• domino / doh.min~o / n. (pl. -noes) any of 28 oblong pieces marked with pips; in pl. game played with these.

Cheers, JVC. We had no idea what dominoes were until you told us! Nor did we realise your game's 'the trippiest adventure on the PlayStation' featuring a 'drug-induced oblong with attitude'. Having seen it, though, we see your point.

Mr Domino knocks the spots off other titles in the originality department. Remember Domino Rally? Mr Domino is a little like that. The aim of the game is to set up a domino 'tipple', standing the dominoes on end next to each other - push one over and it knocks down the next, which in turn knocks down the one next in line, and so on. People spend hours arranging hugely complicated tipples - there's even an entry in the Guinness Book of Records for the largest. This is the first time it's been featured in a computer game, though.

To complete a level you must arrange the tipple through various terrains. As well as knocking the dominoes over, your rally must activate various traps and devices as it goes - if you've ever seen a real; tipple, you know what we mean. Territories covered include a Japanese home, a supermarket and a casino. Look out for the game's multiple routes and hidden switches.

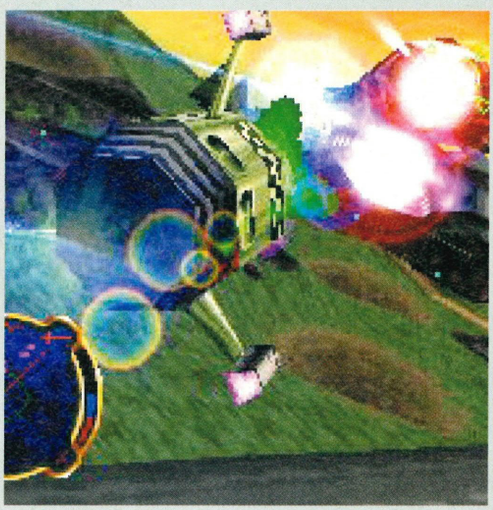
According to ArtDink, the game's Japanese creators, "A player will never have the feeling on other games when the big event occurs by a small heap". Says it all really, dun't?











*UPDATE

B- Movie

Publisher - GT Interactive
Developer - In-House
Released - September

We've more alien-attacking PlayStation information on GT's cheesy cultural look-back at those Fifties sci-fi flicks now shown in the middle of the afternoon during school holidays. B-Movie's more ridiculous than Attack of the 50-foot Woman, cornier than Plan 9 From Outer Space, has a worse title than Them! and takes a hold of you like Invasion of the Bodysnatchers.

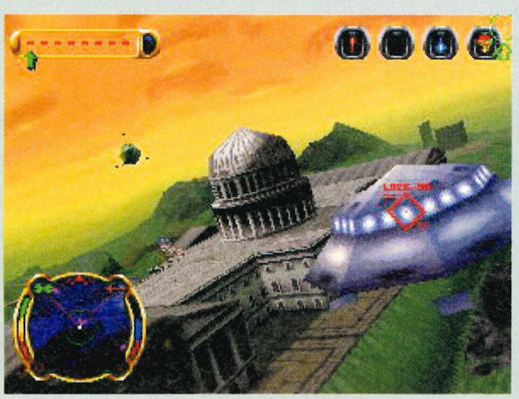
'Cattle beware', scream GT. 'Those most infamous and persistent of human enemies the Martians are back in all their shiny, flying saucered glory'. No hint of clichés borrowed from science fiction's so-called Golden Era, then. The aliens are attacking in true Fifties style, even down to the Cold War Communist-infiltration overtones. Only you can stop the invasion and save the citizens, no doubt winning the busty blonde along the way.

From what we've seen so far (which isn't much), the games looks set to offer a lot of shoot-'em-up and a bit of strategy. Pick your craft and fight it out, moving citizens to safety down on Earth. The game will run at 50-60 frames a second, so it won't lack speed.

We've yet to see a playable copy of the game so we can't comment on how it plays, but relish the screenshots and watch this space for more news...







*UPDATE

Heart of Darkness

Publisher - Infogrames
Developer - Amazing Studio
Released - Summer



Here's some more images from the forthcoming mega-epic title Heart of Darkness by Infogrames. Information is still somewhat sketchy about this highly budgeted and hyped product, but tantalisingly it looks like the game might be similar to the Amiga platform and puzzle classic Flashback, produced by US Gold.





With over half an hour of rendered movie footage, it's meant to ape the feel of a fantastical Spielberg-style film, replete with sappy 'boy in cap who's lost his dog' scenario, unfortunately. Expect a Summer release date, with a large-scale simultaneous cinema-based launch.







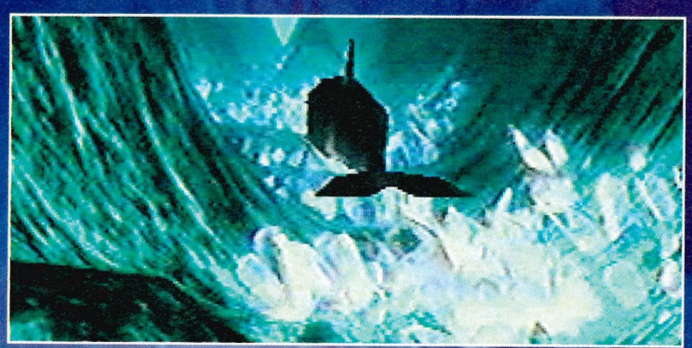






Rave Alert

On the 1st May, 1998, three intrepid individuals (Dazza, Saul and Graham) made their way to Winchester. Why? Because Creamfields, the first dance festival this year, saw the first unveiling of Sony's Fluid game. What were they to do though? Spend the night playing games or tear it up like a used lottery ticket to the sound of Judge Jules and Brandon Block? Play games it is, then...











Q. WHAT DO YOU GET WHEN YOU CROSS ECCO THE DOLPHIN WITH A MUSIC SEQUENCER?

A. FLUID

Fluid is the first game in the brand-new Yasashi series that Sony is about to release on an unsuspecting public. The new series will bring in radical new titles that provide the gamer with 'games' - or interactive software tools - that enhance creative expression. No platformers or beat-'em-ups here, then. Fluid offers a totally unique gaming experience, at least on the PlayStation, in that it combines gaming with music software. Sounds like a bad idea, doesn't it? You'd better read on, though...

FLIPPER

Fluid differs from normal PlayStation games in that there's no final boss to beat, no lap times to better and no alien scum to vaporise with a big flipping weapon. It offers such a different gaming experience that calling it a game just isn't enough.

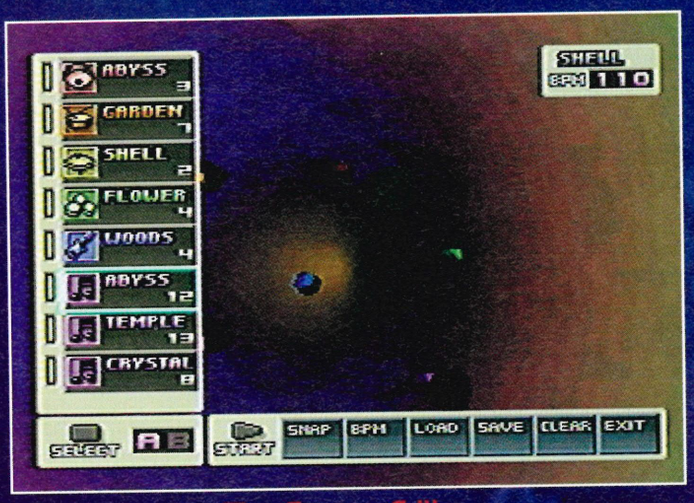
The basic premise is you take control of a dolphin and swim around a number of different underwater environments collecting sound banks. Each sound bank contains a batch of music samples which could be anything from a drum loop to a synth sound to a piano line. Once you have enough samples, you need to find the groove editor, which is where the fun really begins.

Sony and Fluid's presence at Creamfields was pretty low key, with just a cosy tent tucked away in the corner of the guest area, which was, incidentally, a haven for star-spotters. All the boys were there; Roni Size, Monkey Mafia, Cornershop, Mr C, Finlay Quaye, Pete Tong... Large! The Fluid reception was even more low key, but we got a chance to see the game in action and drink a shed-load of beer and champers. It's a hard job, but somebody's got to do it. The tent itself was decked out in Fluid-themed stuff such as goldfish tank tables the RSPCA would love to have seen. The fish were probably dead by four in the morning due to the vibrations from the excellent sound system Sony installed for the tent. I say 'probably dead' because after 10pm we weren't in much of a state to notice anyway.

With eight different musical arenas to check out for babes and vibes, we obviously weren't stuck in the Sony tent for too long, although the beverages and party atmosphere were most definitely flowing. Outside of the Sony tent, the highlight of the night had to be the Run DMC set, with the tent absolutely rammed. We also saw loads of other great acts such as Finlay Quaye, Roni Size & Reprazent and Cornershop to mention but a few, and enjoyed the banging React style techno of the Trade tent in particular . The only problem was, with so many acts to see and so much beer to drink, we inevitably missed loads of great stuff. Still, we got to see Fluid.

The PlayStation made an appearance in the drum & bass tent, but only with a few machines tucked away at the back. There was a PlayStation-sponsored skateboard ramp with some cool skateboard-type stuff going on for most of the afternoon and evening. Still, the main attraction was the music and general festival vibe, and on that front the night cannot be faulted. As for Fluid; let's just say it was lucky that we had a copy waiting at the office when we got back, otherwise the preview above would have been a little hazy...





▲The Groove Editor.

GROOVE EDITOR

Once in the groove editor you're able to position the samples where you like and activate them whenever you want them to play in your tune. This takes some time to get used to, but anyone with the slightest inclination for making music will have a masterpiece going within half an hour of starting the game. As far as we can tell, though, Fluid isn't an advanced music sequencer; it simply loops the chosen samples in time, allowing you to activate them whenever you wish. In effect, it allows you to build layers up and take them away at will. Although a sequencer would have given the user more creative input, it would also make Fluid far more technical and, in turn, not as appealing to the average PlayStation gamer. As it stands, Fluid is incredibly easy to get going on, but it should hold your interest for hours at a time.

CREAM or GORGONZOLA

Of course, the most important thing is what the samples and sounds are like. We've had the unfortunate opportunity to play around with a few budget PC mixing/sample/sequence packages and were horrified to hear the cheap, cheesy and downright crap sounds included. To be honest, we weren't expecting a lot from the sounds on Fluid. How wrong we were. Every single one of the countless samples has been produced to the highest standards. From the basic drum loops and atmospherics to complex break-beats, rhythms and riffs, every noise is instantly listenable and of the highest quality. There are very, very few duff sounds or riffs to be found in Fluid, although some of you may not be into the style of music offered - it basically covers the whole dance spectrum so rock and rap headz won't be able to become the next Radiohead or Busta Rhymes.

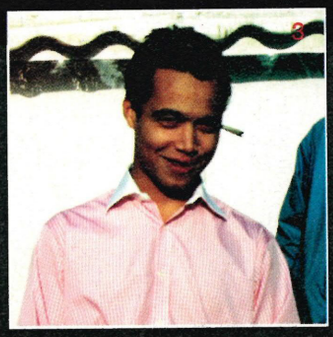


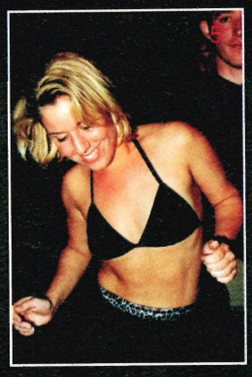




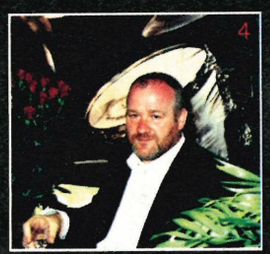




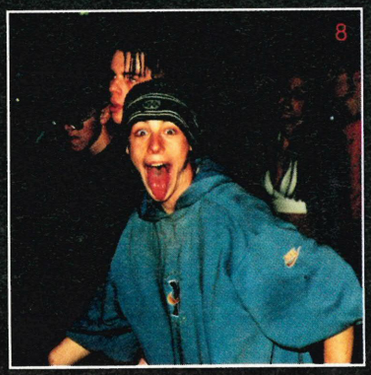




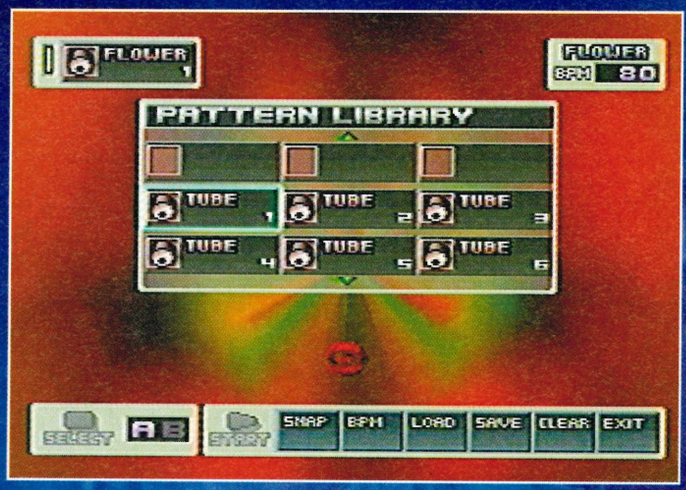








1. Dazza gets to grips with Fluid. 2. Top junglist Roni Size. 3. Finlay Quaye: let us borrow your pen mate! 4. Vince Power: Head of the Mean Fiddler Organisation and co-promoter of Creamfields. 5. A babe yesterday. 6. Mr C gets interviewed by MTV: don't know who the twat in the background is, though. 7. Sony PR Pete Devery and Roni Size. 8. Oi nutter, no!!



▲ Choose your sample

EFFECTS

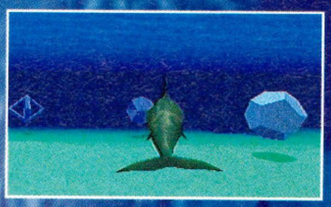
Fluid gives you the opportunity to change the way each sample sounds so that you can get a more personal feel to your compositions. The effects section isn't exactly exhaustive, but all of the major options are here. You can change the volume of the sample, make it pan around the speakers and add modulation, delay and reverb. Although there aren't many effects, playing around with the different settings can change your sound quite drastically and there's plenty of room for experimentation.

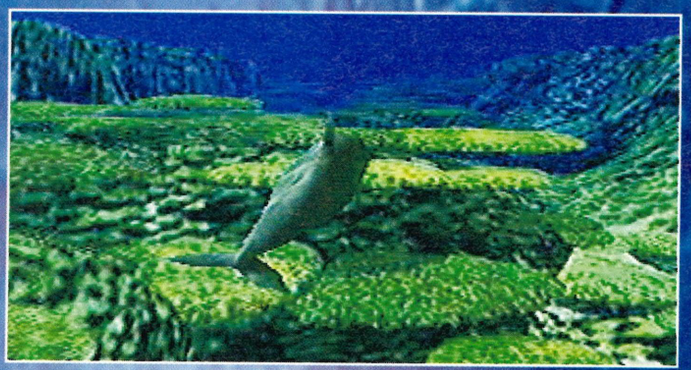
TRIPTASTIC

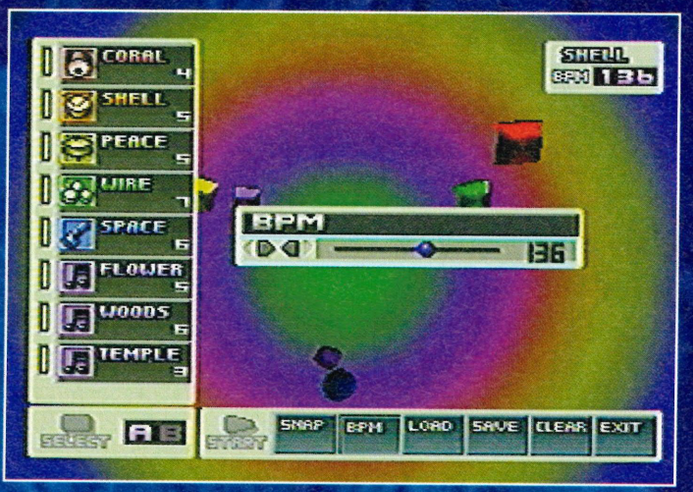
Going on in the background throughout your time on the groove editor is a sequence of psychedelic and seriously trippy moving images. You can hide the groove editor icons and play around with the images on screen. Adding a strobe effect and making the images move and distort is intriguing, although really only a slight diversion from the main music-making business. However, this feature will be great to amuse your friends with in those post-club smoking sessions.

Fluid isn't quite finished; there's still more to be added before we can bring you the full review. What will be new on the final version we don't yet know, but it could do with a few extra effects. Besides that, though, Fluid promises to be a unique, intriguing and creative gaming experience - something the PlayStation has never seen before.





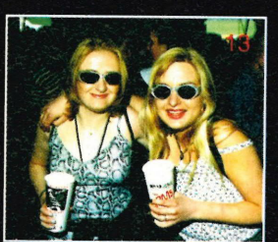




▲ The speed of your composition may be altered















9. The Sony tent in full effect 10. The only driving we were capable of! 11. AAAARRGGHHH! 12. 'avin it laarge. 13. It's dark , and we're wearing sunglasses. 14. Feelin' horny 15. Those Ladyshaves really work well.

exposed

The games found herein are unfinished versions of up-and-coming titles that can be bug-ridden, cobbled-together hash versions or as good as complete titles that are just waiting for the nod.

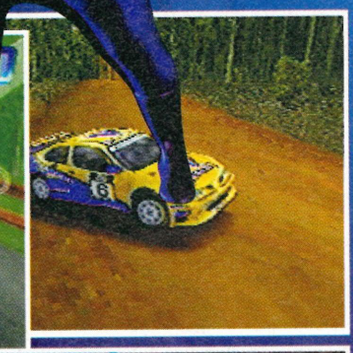
This month we've got two rallying sims that are bound to lock horns in the near future, a helicopter-based shoot-'em-up and a comic-bookish platform/exploration game to wet your appetites, plus a detailed rundown of Electronic Arts' upcoming hot releases.

- Blasto
- Colin McRae Rally
- Road Rash 3D
- San Francisco Rush
- Small Soldiers
- Tommi Makinen WRC
- Viper
- WarGames









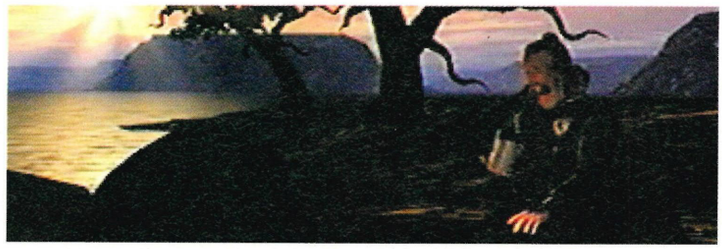




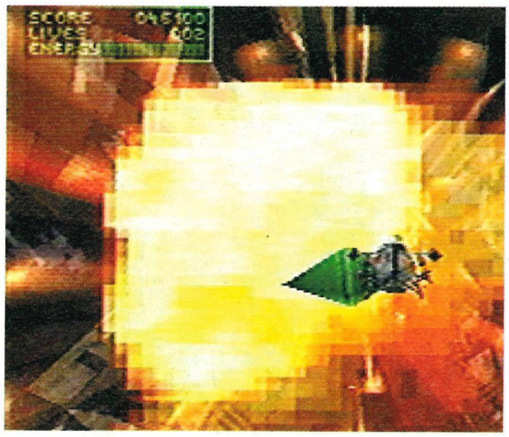


•Publisher- Ocean •Developer- X-Ample Architectures •Release Date- July •Genre- Shoot 'em' up

Viper



Grab a large German chopper with Ocean's assistance

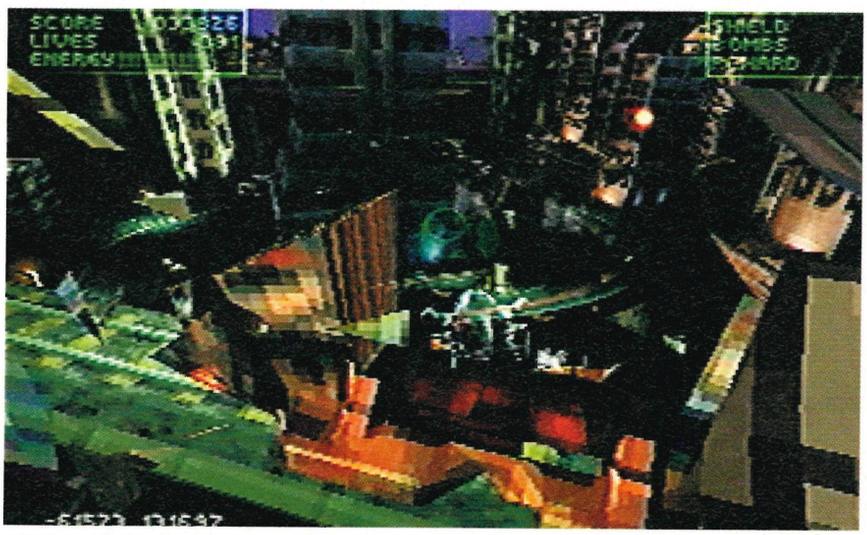


The not-so-young out there may remember the seminal Eighties action adventure series Airwolf and Blue Thunder. Prime friday night fodder for a destruction-obsessed eleven-year-old, though the real stars of the shows weren't the painfully-wooden actors but the brilliant hi-tech helicopters bristling with guns, rockets and other baddie-wasting toys used each week with explosive abandon. Alas, these programmes are now long-discontinued relics of a simpler, more violent time, but one that can be re-lived soon thanks to German programmers X-Ample Architectures and their impending rotor-based shoot-'em-up, Viper.

Taking the reins of a nasty-looking whirlybird, you must run the gauntlet of countless enemy flak batteries and aircraft through a number of varying landscapes, avoiding a fiery and agonising missile-caused demise. Using the experience gained through programming the patchy Tunnel B1, the teutonic code-twiddlers have created an all-new graphics engine (catchily called The PHIGS) that slaps out the polygons like there's no tomorrow, leaving plenty of processing power for sinister programming procedures such as 'backface culling'. Sounds a bit nasty to me.

Anyhow, the visual side of things is nicely executed, rendering the various landscapes with fine detail and honey-smooth movement. This is just as well, as the action is equally fast and frantic, with dozens of near-future gun emplacements and Independence Day-style aircraft relentlessly homing in on your gnat-like chopper.

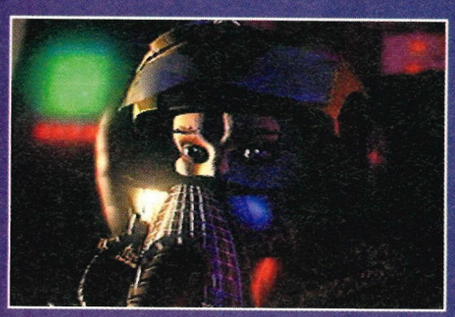
Viper's game format is almost a Nineties version of

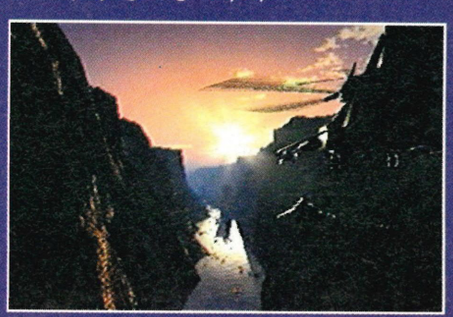


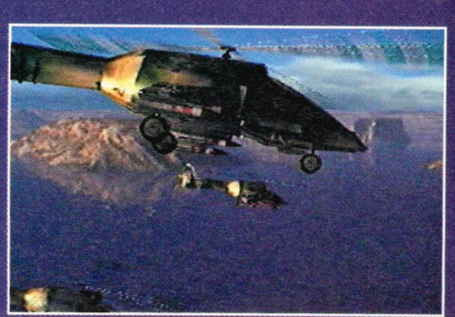


CHOP GUN

The opening movie is a sun-dappled introduction to your mean looking squadron of weapon heavy copters, their rambunctious swoopings looking superb as they hurtle through idyllic landscapes hosing bullets at a bafflingly absent enemy. Accompanied by a suitably gung-ho military drumming/techno soundtrack, it really gets your vital juices pumping in lieu of playing the game proper.











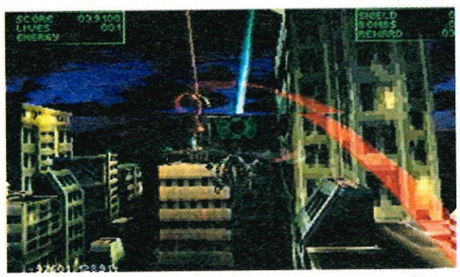


the old arcade sit-on-it-and-swivel favourite Thunderblade, as you dart down canyons of rock and skyscraper, moving along a pretty much predetermined path, with a few choices per level thrown in along the way. As a result, this means a stage must be played through more than once to find the best path to take to gather power-ups, bonuses and hidden areas (in the manner of Panzer Dragoon 2), which should hopefully extend longevity beyond the normal shoot-'em-up scope. The levels themselves run from an urban maze of hi-rise buildings and bridges, and stalked by 80-foot tall walker war machines, through to a rocky canyon strewn with fallen trees and a river at the bottom hiding an enormous techno-serpent which rears up and spits boulders. Huge columns of stone can be blown over to clear a path, but beware the end-of-level boss, a well-armoured UFO sort of thing. Later on, the Entrance stage puts a huge train straddling two tracks in your way, flinging out nasty little homing shots with grinding regularity. After dipping underground, it emerges over a dam that conceals a flotilla of murderous foes (and a jolly lovely sunset background as well).

You Cannae Change...

Intriguingly, when flying through an environment, a seemingly-fatal head-on collision with a solid object doesn't cause an automatic mess of twisted wreckage, just a bump and a loss of energy. This demonstrates a novel twist on the laws of physics that decreases potential frustration but, to tell the truth, looks a bit silly in action. Also, flying into an area of space away from the prescribed route has the effect of throwing up an invisible force field, prodding you into going the right way, you naughty boy.

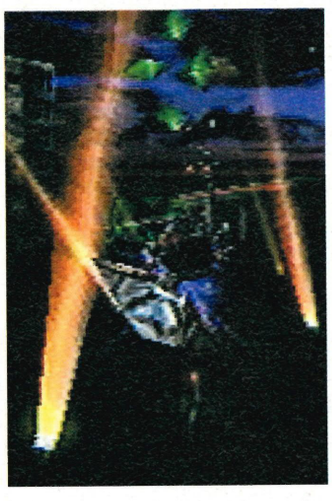
To assist with picking off the multitudes of assailants, there's a green crosshairs floating in front of the helicopter at the point where your shots fall, but this can become obscured when flying directly at a target as the body of your chopper sometimes gets in the way. The special weapons haven't been programmed in yet, but by the look of their icons they'll be boomtastic dealers of seriously large bangs, triggering the smart fragmentation effect evident when enemy ships explode under your withering fire.



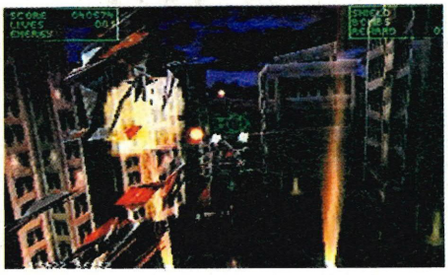
The all-important audio FX sound excellent at this point, a fact lost on many shoot-'em-up developers lately. Various sci-fi burbles and whirrs mesh nicely with the booming bassy detonations of weaponry, and the whup-whup-whup of rotor blades is muted just enough to avoid annoyance. The music, alas, sounds like a German wrote it. Need I say more?

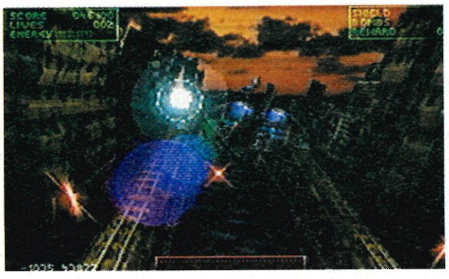
With only the first level completely finished at the time of writing, there's still a way to go until Viper's polished, finished and ready to kick derriere, but rest assured it'll be a good-looking and trigger finger-scratching title when it hits the shelves.











•Publisher - Codemasters •Developer - In House •Release Date - July •Genre - Driving game

Colin McRae Rally

Let's Off Road...





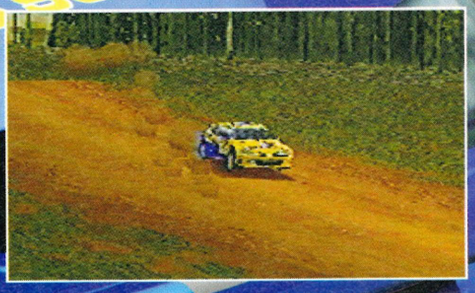






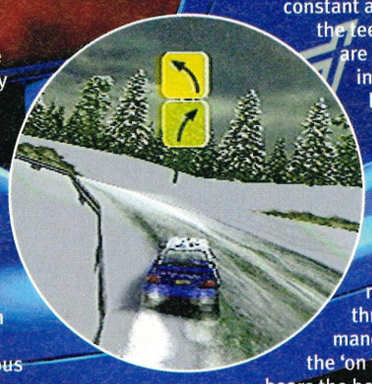






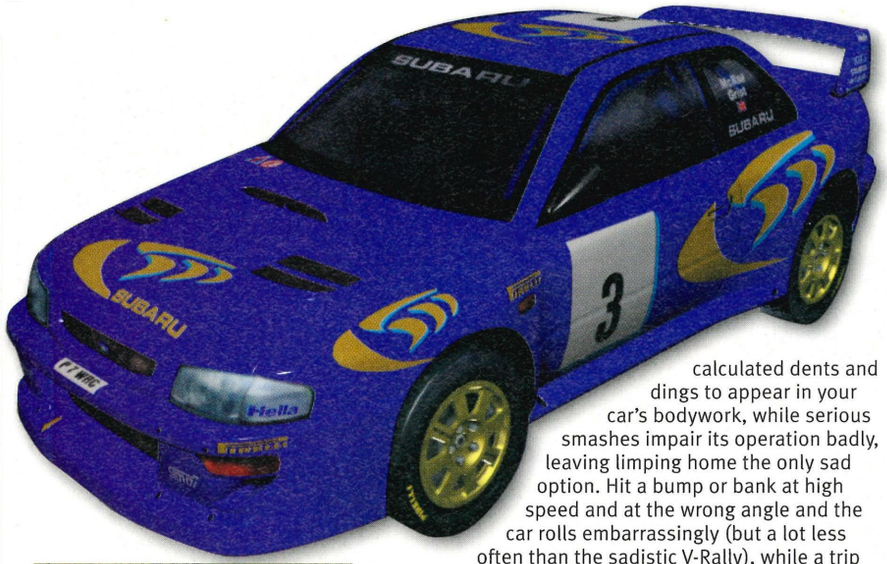
While Gran Turismo has dibs on the foremost circuit racing title, the loose-surfaced joys of rallying simulations have been somewhat overlooked on the PlayStation. Current king of the hill is the rapidly-ageing V-Rally, that's unsurprisingly getting a final non-budget push before the release of two new games based on the endorsements of World Rally front-runners Tommi Makinen (previewed elsewhere) and this one, backed by Scotland's own Colin McRae.

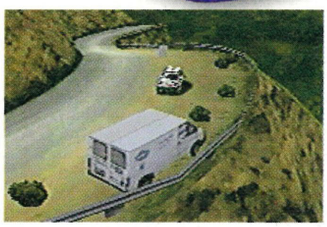
Developed at great length by Codemasters, it employs the same graphical techniques as the hugely popular TOCA Touring Car while evolving its appearance and style to rival the high standards of realism being currently set. There are twelve class-leading cars available (including McRae's Prodrive Subaru Impreza), with a spread of four- and two-wheel drive vehicles. The cars' polygon bodies have all been meticulously laser-scanned to accurately reproduce the curvaceous lines of their real-life counterparts. Manufacturer's telemetry data has also been extensively used to model the vehicles' handling and engine characteristics to a hitherto unheard-of level of authenticity, while Colin himself has been consulted to get the feel of the driving model just right.



The smooth clinicism required in a tarmac track-based game such as GT won't do the business here, as almost constant sideways sliding and opposite steering lock are necessary to get the engine's power down efficiently on the slippery gravel and mud surfaces that profuse throughout the eight different countries that host races. There are six tracks for each, with most taking over four minutes to complete a 'lap', so repetition is not a worry. Wildly differing weather and track conditions make constant adaptations a must. Some levels, such as the teetering mountainside roads in Corsica, are high-grip tarmac that need to be driven in a completely different style to the rain-lashed mud-tracks of, say, New Zealand, while the grassy plains of Australia provide little traction if you stray off course, sending your car spinning hopelessly for hundreds of feet. To assist with learning the tricky style of car control demanded here, there's a handy Rally School presided over by the man himself. He tutors and assesses you through three series of specific manoeuvres and handling routines that hone the 'on the edge' cornering technique which bears the best results. Also helping you stay on track is the digitised voice of McRae's actual co-driver Nicky Grist, whose dulcet Caledonian tones give out warnings to beware of ditches, banks and narrow gaps as well as the more usual pace notes, which really does help avoiding nasty hazards and a sticky end.

The inevitable crashes cause mathematically-

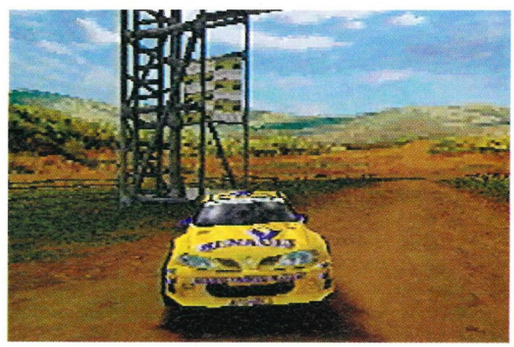




calculated dents and dings to appear in your car's bodywork, while serious smashes impair its operation badly, leaving limping home the only sad option. Hit a bump or bank at high speed and at the wrong angle and the car rolls embarrassingly (but a lot less often than the sadistic V-Rally), while a trip off road leaves you in among the trees, or heading out to sea in the case of the beachfront Indonesian event. Sparks strike off the bodywork if you scrape a cliff or wall, while mud splashes linger on the car, messing up the initially-pristine look of your machine. A full replay option is available to study all these in detail, which ably shows off the superb miles-deep background scenery and the mossy, naturalistic look of the tracks at their best

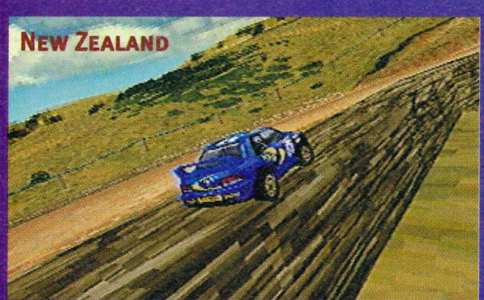
Swivels and Dips

There are five driver views available, including twin helicopter cameras, bumper and bonnet angles and a novel helmet-cam that swivels and dips with the driver's head in response to severe bumps and the curvature of the track, providing a hopefully-realistic impression of the stresses and strains a modern rally car puts its pilot under. The technical set-up of your car can be adjusted depending on the particular course faced, such as changing the gear ratios, suspension stiffness and tyre tread, and damage must be repaired at the end of a stage within a strict time limit. Late evening and night driving stages compound the difficulties further, limiting your visibility drastically despite the enormous extra halogens stuck onto the front of the car, making concentrated attention to the co-driver's advice doubly vital for success.

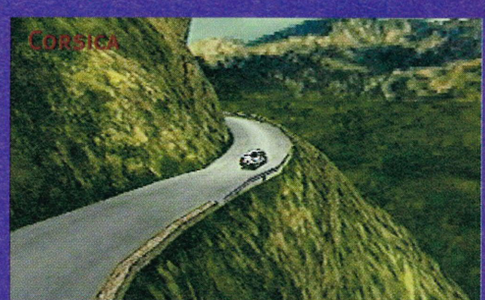


IT'S GRIT!

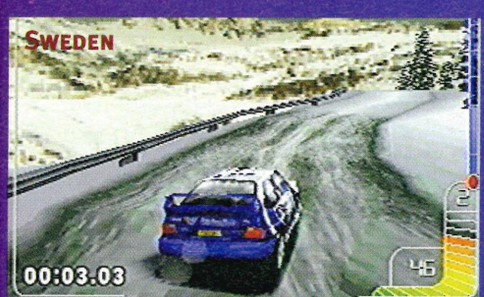
The various countries where races occur all throw up a huge variety of different terrains, scenery and challenges. Here's but a few...



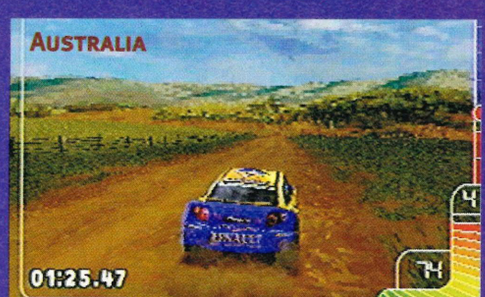
Prone to rain and treacherously muddy at points, this series of courses provide a fine all-round challenge, containing fast, hilly terrain and a tortuous series of devious tightening bends. Couldn't see many sheep, mind.



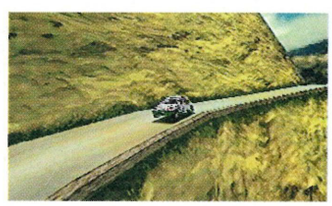
A narrow tarmac road clings to the edge of a mountain with a steep drop-off over the low crash barrier. The course slopes downhill, meaning speeds are high and crashes likely, particularly as the intermittent lay-bys have vehicles parked in them.



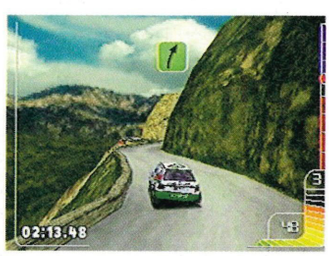
Spiked tyres are a must as the snowfall has been extremely heavy and the track is treacherous and mainly obscured. Crashes tend to be long, languid plunges into the banking rather than high-speed shunts, but this is of little consolation. A delicate touch and plenty of broadside-on manoeuvring is the best gambit, with minimal use of the brakes.



Twisting technical turns through dense trees suddenly open out onto wide open plains and fast, undulating straights with tricky bumps. The bone-dry track is surprisingly slidy, especially at high speeds, as the dusty red surface can be unpredictable. "Beware of the Kangaroo" signs and wind farms are picturesquely dotted about the bush.



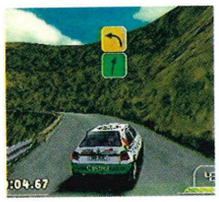






Also worthy of praise at this point are the sound FX, in particular the engine note, which combines a throaty roar with the powerful whine of the transmission as it moves up through the gears, sounding incredibly realistic, replete with the gargle of unburnt fuel in the exhaust when you lift off the gas. In addition, it's even possible to tell what kind of surface the car is on (be it wet or dry mud, gravel and so on) by the sound effects alone, which provides a surprising amount of help in staying on the road.

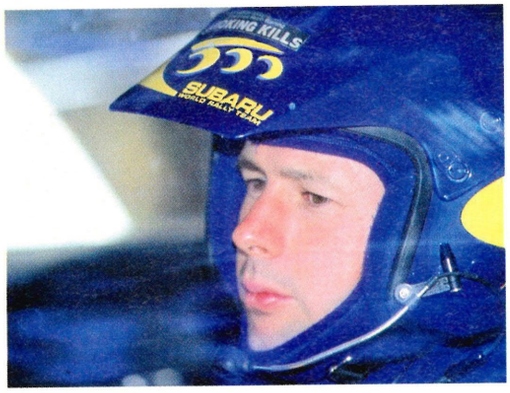
Control is via digital, NegCon or Dual-Shock compatible analog, the last of which is unsurprisingly extremely pleasurable to employ, and the finished version will contain a head-to-head two-player mode that should make up for the lack of CPU opponents. When it arrives in July it could conceivably rock the boat and rival GT for best racing game of the year. No joking, mate.







GREAT SCOT...

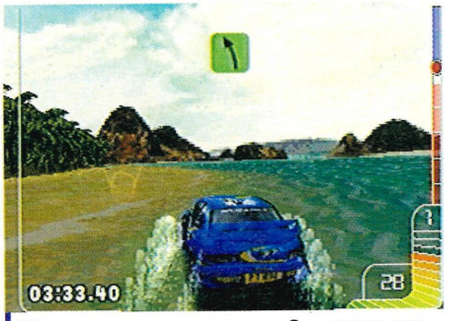




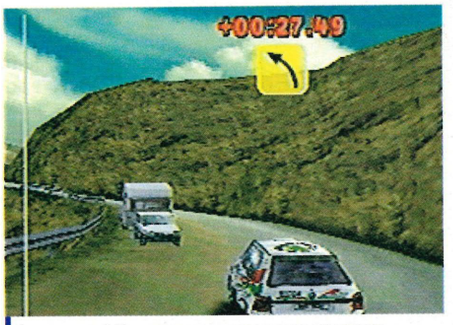
Only just pipped at the post by his rival Tommi Makinen in last year's World Championship, Colin McRae is arguably the best all-round rally driver currently racing. Bearing a cool demeanour that's more reminiscent of a F1 driver than the usual bluff and cheery Scandinavians, his professionalism and searing speed have put him at the top of the pile, as seen recently when he won the Rally of Portugal by a scant 2.1 seconds.



THIS IS THE SEA-SICKNESS INDUCING HEAD-CAM VIEW. CHALLENGING, AND NAUSEATING.



WATER, WATER, EVERYWHERE... SPLASHING OUT IN INDONESIA.



LOOK OUT! BLOODY DAY-TRIPPERS IN THEIR CARAVANS GET EVERYWHERE...

REALITY CHECK

Those kind fellows at Codemasters were so confident that their game would be the most accurate and realism-drenched rallying simulation yet that they invited a whole swathe of game journos like myself to go and drive an actual rally car in anger so as to compare the souped up real deal with their binary baby. After trailing up to an off-road driving centre in Oxford I'm pleased to say that the game is damn close to actuality, minus the teeth-gritting element of terror (especially when it's a pro at the wheel). The real thing is a touch less forgiving perhaps, while the thumps, bumps and sheer physical effort involved in driving at high speed on a loose surface also play a large part in making the job a lot harder, and the unsoundproofed engine makes your ears ring mightily before too long. However the skills I'd tried to hone on the PSX did port over to actuality quite nicely, thank you, and certainly made the principles of the tricky "pendulum technique" pioneered by the Finnish champions of old a lot clearer to grasp.

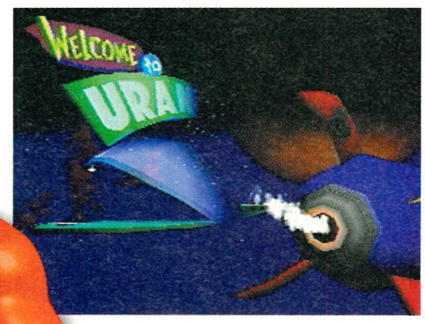


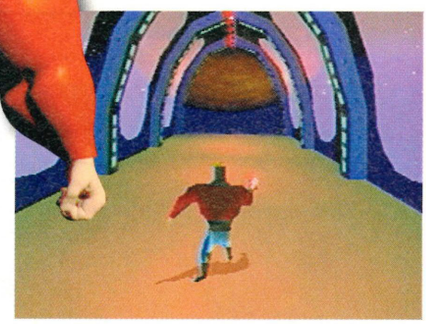
Publisher - SCEA Developer - Sony Interactive Studios America Release Date - June Genre - 3D Platformer

Blasto

In search of a new PlayStation figurehead?







POWER PILLS

On top of Blasto's weapon pick-ups, there are also plenty of other items that can be found around the game.

PILLS
Red pills refill Blasto's life bar completely, whereas the rest just top it up.

INVINCIBILITY PILL
This one makes you invincible for a short time. Funny that.

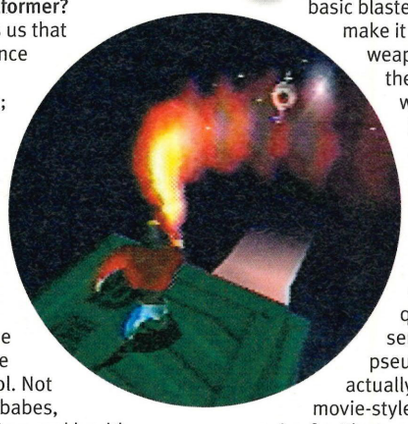
INVISIBILITY CRYSTALS
Find these to make yourself invisible in dodgy situations. Don't start shooting when you're invisible, though, because the enemy work out where you're shooting from.

JET PACK
Find the jet pack and take to the skies. There are loads of secrets that can be found using the jet pack, so make sure you search it out.

FUEL CANS AND CRYSTALS
The cans top up the jet pack fuel, whereas the crystals fill it completely.

They tried and failed with Crash Bandicoot, so now it's time for Blasto. Will the PlayStation finally get its own platform game icon, or will Blasto just be another run-of-the-mill 3D platformer?

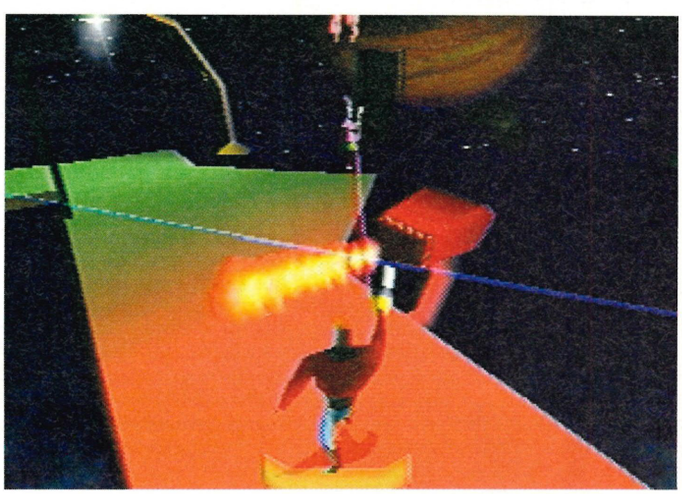
Looking at the game so far tells us that Blasto's definitely in with a chance of becoming that PlayStation icon. It's got all the right moves; fast, colourful 3D graphics, big guns, aliens, a lead character straight out of the comic books, plenty of jokes and most importantly, loads and loads of babes. In fact, one of your jobs as Blasto is to rescue scantily-clad ladies from their cages dotted around the levels. Every time you rescue one, you get a little kiss or some other flirtatious happening. Cool. Not only do you get to flirt with the babes, though, you actually get extra lives and health for rescuing them. If you rescue every babe in the game, you get a very special treat at the end. Whoever said football was better than women?

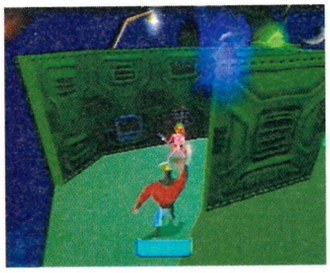
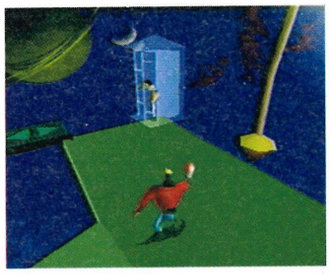
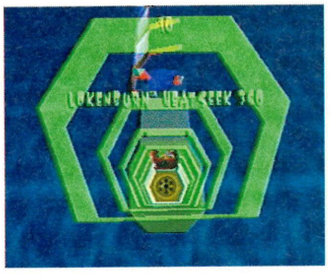
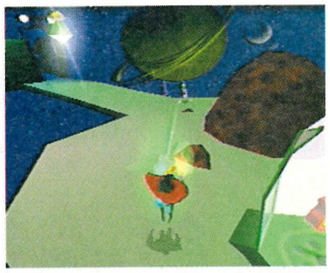


Blasto has two types of weapon at his disposal as he battles his way through the 12 space levels. The basic blaster can be charged and powered up to make it an extremely powerful and destructive weapon. It's the special weapons that offer the best firepower, though. Special weapons are limited but you come across hardware like flame throwers and homing missiles. Very handy indeed.

Blasto has all the usual 3D platform moves. He can jump, backflip, strafe, hang onto ledges and walk slowly. Nothing new here, then. So what does Blasto have over other platform characters? A huge whacking great quiff, that's what. Oh, and a sarcastic sense of humour that comes over in a pseudo-Flash Gordon type of voice, which is actually quite cool and very fitting to the B-movie-style atmosphere of the game. In fact, the voice for Blasto was supplied by Phil Hartman who

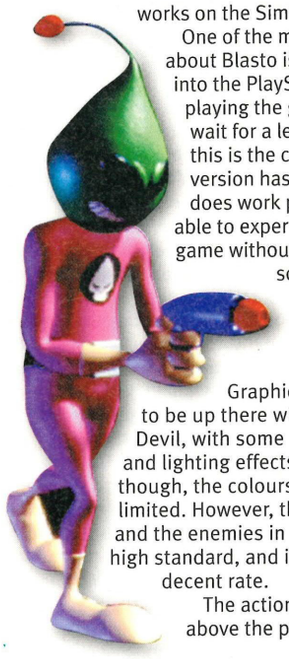




works on the Simpsons.

One of the most remarkable things about Blasto is the way the data loads into the PlayStation while you are playing the game so you never have wait for a level to load. Whether this is the case in the finished version has yet to be seen, but if it does work properly, you should be able to experience the whole of the game without any disc accessing, something that's never been achieved before.



Watching Uranus...

Graphically Blasto looks likely to be up there with the likes of Jersey Devil, with some excellent transparency and lighting effects. At the moment, though, the colours are bright but a little limited. However, the animation on Blasto and the enemies in the game are up to a high standard, and it also moves at a decent rate.

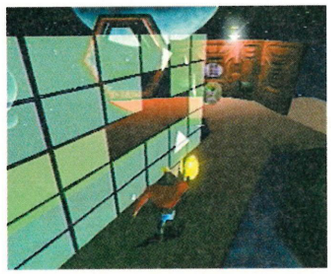
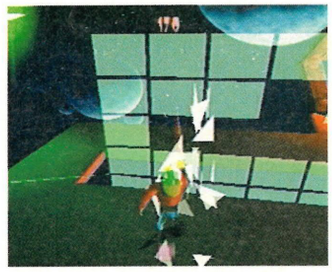
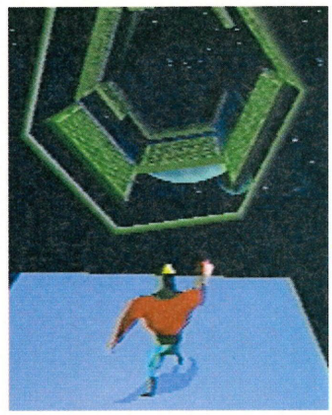
The action takes place on and above the planet Uranus. We reckon this was simply so they could start the game with the quote, 'Good luck, Uranus depends on you'. Anyway, you start at the Uranus spaceport which is suspended above the planet. It's here that you realise just how tough Blasto is going to be. The first level has you traversing narrow platforms with nothing but death either side. You have to complete some dare-devil jumping, with one area that has you jumping gaps through a moving tube, which is ridiculously tough and damn frustrating. On top of the platform action, you also have plenty of aliens to take out and some fiendish puzzles to solve. The aliens are everywhere, and to make it even tougher, they actually teleport to your area so you may be working out a particular problem when you get attacked from behind by some alien scum.



The actual gameplay of Blasto is free-roaming, so you can go almost anywhere you like, providing you have the means of getting there. Also, to add to the freedom, the level order is not completely linear. At times you have to return to previous levels and perform different tasks from the first time you where there.

Blasto has tried to capture the atmosphere of the old B-movie films and 1940s and 50s comic books, and on the whole it looks as though it will work. The gameplay promises to be fast and frantic, with puzzle elements to boot and the graphics are in place to back it up. If the finished version fulfils the promise of our preview version, it's gonna be toasted Crash for starters, burnt Gecko for main course and sorbet Devil for dessert, with Blasto as the chef.



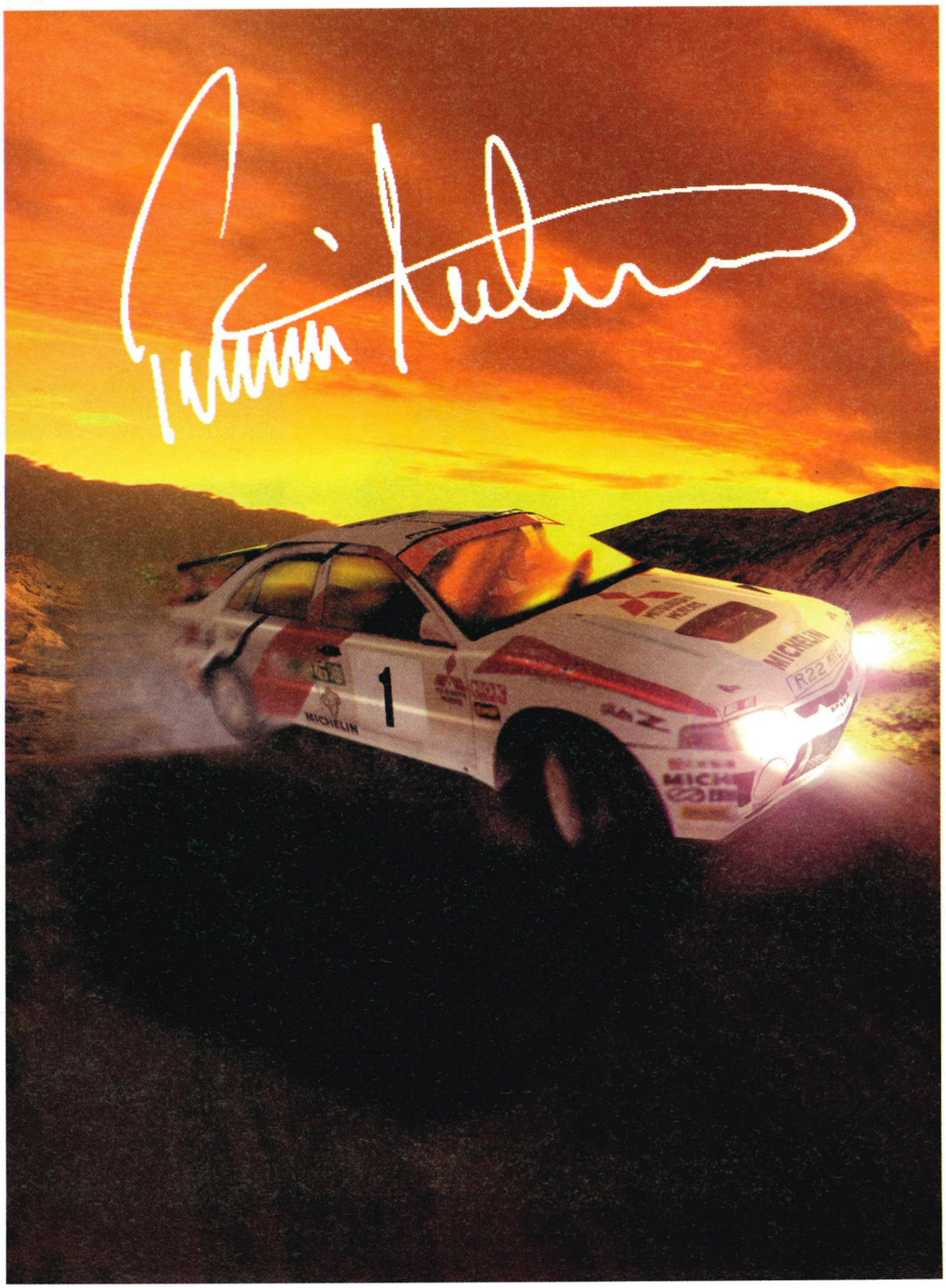







Publisher - GT Interactive Developer - Single Track Release Date - June Genre - 3D Shoot 'em' up

Tommi Makinen Rally

Potential V-Rally beater, or clapped-out Skoda?



Tommi Makkinen Rally has a hard job ahead of it. With V-Rally already established as the PlayStation's top rally game and Codemasters' Colin McRae Rally poised for release, things are certainly hotting up in the PlayStation off-road, high-speed thrills stakes. Hopefully Tommi Makinen Rally can offer the high-speed thrills required to give a rally game that certain edge. V-Rally has it, Rallycross hasn't. Which is going to be the winner out of Colin McRae and Tommi Makinen, though?

The preview version we've been playing is, to put it bluntly, bugged to buggery, so we couldn't really get a feel for what the finished version will be like. However, there are a few things that make Tommi Makinen Rally stand out from the rest. Firstly, there's going to be over 65 tracks on the finished version, as well as - get this - a 3D track editor. We couldn't get the track editor working, but we've seen it so we can testify that it's there, and will be fully functional by the time the game hits the shops. The track editor has to be a first on a modern driving game, and if it's implemented properly, the possibilities for the lifespan of Tommi Makinen are endless.

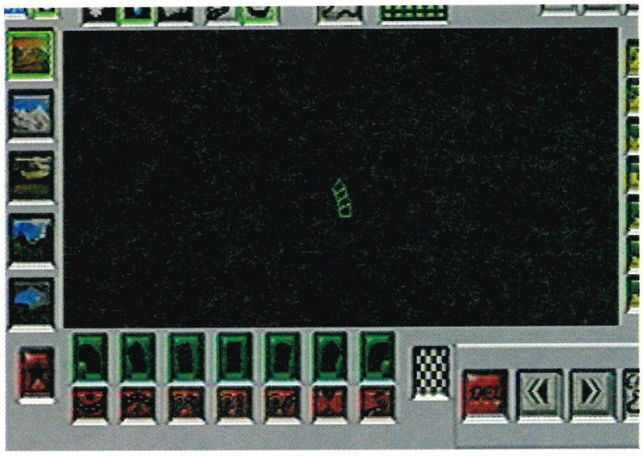
Of course, the game itself will





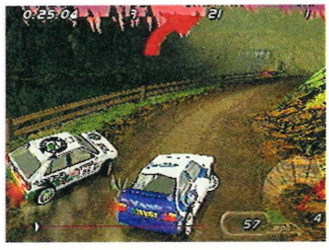
ENDLESS TRACKS

The 3D track editor available on Tommi Makinen Rally is set to give it the longest lifespan of any driving game. You can keep building tracks till your heart's content. Let's just hope Europress manage to make the track editor user-friendly, because past efforts on this front have often been time consuming, boring and extremely fiddly.



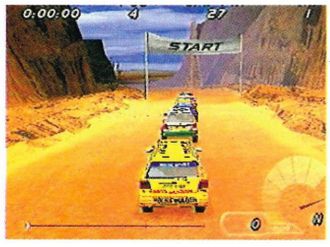








have to play realistically to make any amount of tracks worthwhile. The game engine is so far looking pretty good, and with the promised tweaks to car handling, collision detection and speed we could have a contender for the PlayStation rally game crown. At the moment all nine cars handle exactly the same, which is going to be rectified for the final version. The cars are all based on existing rally cars such as the Subaru Impreza, Ford Escort and VW golf. All of the official colours and decals are in place, and the cars themselves are looking pretty cool.

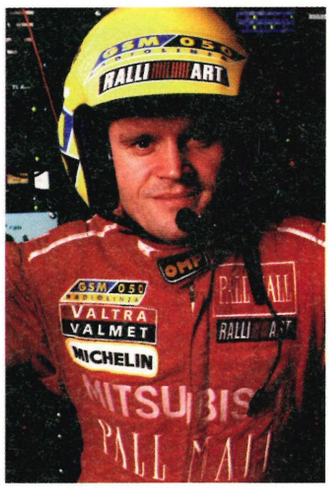


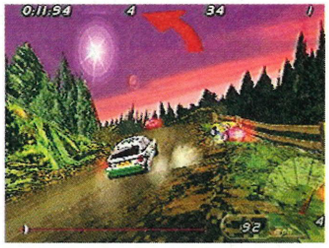
Ace Racin'

Tommi Makinen Rally takes a different approach to Colin McRae in that the races take place on circuits rather than rally stages. This means you can set the number of laps per race, in a rallycross and not general rally style. The tracks are based all over the world so you get to race on loads of different surfaces, from gravel and mud to snow and slush. The first few tracks are a little easy, but the rest are filled with perilous hairpin turns, tight chicanes and all manner of devious track design.

Rather than merely using Tommi Makinen's name to sell the game, Europress have included a special Challenge Tommi mode where it's just you against Tommi on a set number of tracks. Alongside this you have the usual Arcade, Championship, Time Trial and Two-Player modes. Alas, we can't comment on the two-player game because it wasn't in place on the preview disc. However, we can tell you the Time Trial mode will have a ghost car to race against.

Tommi Makinen Rally has a lot of work to go before it's ready for the shelves, but we can testify it has the potential to become the top racer. However, with competition as tough as V-Rally and Colin McRae, it's going to have its work cut out.













Electronic Arts Exposé!

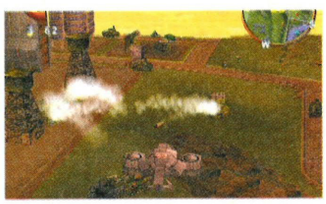


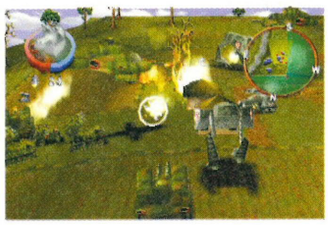
What have Langley's finest got in store for the PlayStation this Summer? Three potential blockbusters, that's what!

'It's a nice place', says Electronic Arts' Nick Grange, 'but there's not much to do here'. Don't head to Langley, Berkshire if your planning a night out, then, but if it's Electronic Arts you're after, book that ticket.

This month the EPM team did exactly that, as EA unveiled their trio of top titles due for release this Summer. Interactive Studios' founder and Managing Director Philip Oliver showed off WarGames, licensed from the 15-year-old movie, and EA's in-house teams offered bike combat game Road Rash 3D and the film tie-in Small Soldiers, licensed from this year's school holidays' movie of the same name. But are they any good? Read on...









WarGames

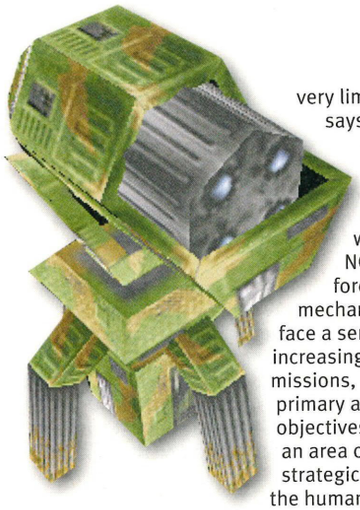
This one had us scratching our heads at the office. The film's 15 years old and has dated considerably since its release. People are more used to computers than they were back in 1983, and no one today believes a teenager with a home micro could hack a US Government top-secret system so easily. Philip Oliver is unconcerned. "It won't matter if you don't know the film", he says. "The licence offers a striking title, and many have fond memories of the movie". True enough - it has a sizeable cult following, and still sells well on video.

The game plot, written by the movie's director John Badham, doesn't follow the movie storyline. Instead it's set 15 years after the events. David Lightman, the schoolboy who almost started World War III by hacking a US military computer and playing what he thought was a video game, now works for Military Intelligence. His job involves programming the machine he once hacked, War Operations Planned Response (WOPR), extending it as a training tool and developing its artificial intelligence. His efforts soon make it very intelligent indeed. Lightman then connects the machine to the internet - big mistake. Armed with its new advanced AI, WOPR makes its own decisions and gambles on the stock market, building up considerable funds with which it produces its own army. This it uses to strike at key human-controlled areas using strategic skills developed as a training machine, determined to supplant his masters and ensure he's never taken off-line again.

Leaving aside the obvious Terminator 2 influences, the storyline owes more to WarGames than might first be apparent. The premise is the same, blurring the distinction between computer war sims and the real thing, and it panders to the same paranoid mistrust of new technology. In 1983, the hacker was the mysterious nemesis threatening to end life as we know it - today it's the internet.



So much for the plot; what about the game? It's a cross between Soviet Strike and Mass Destruction, though Philip Oliver prefers comparisons with the former. "Mass Destruction was a



very limited game", he says. You control a host of vehicles as you stomp your way through a fully-interactive 3D world. Playing the NORAD (human) forces or WOPR's mechanised creations, you face a series of 15 increasingly-difficult missions, each with its own primary and secondary objectives. Each represents an area of important strategic value to WOPR or the humans - the rogue military computer takes over one sector at a time, and you must help or stop him, depending on your choice of sides.

You're assigned eight units out of the 32 available. These include tanks, jeeps, helicopters, jets, juggernaughts, ships and infantry units. The NORAD units are instantly recognisable military forces, whereas WOPR's cybernetic creations owe more to sci-fi flicks than genuine combat hardware, especially the walkers, eerily reminiscent of Robocop's ED-209. Improved vehicles are researched as the game goes on.

Each unit has a primary weapon with infinite ammo, and a secondary one which is equipped during the game. You can switch between the vehicles at will,



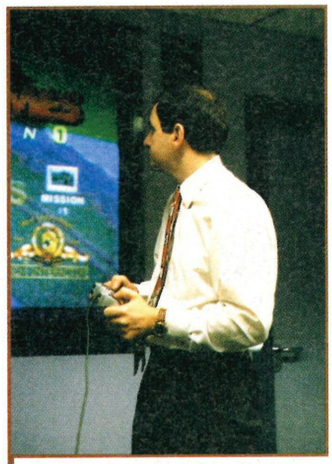
leave an order that's carried out automatically while you control another, eg. 'attack an enemy position', and link separate units so they follow the one under your control, attacking alongside it. Like the Strike games, the mission objectives are restricted to a set order, either because further objectives are wired to you on completion of the last or it makes simple tactical sense to do so.

Although by no means a war game in the traditional sense, WarGames offers a great deal of opportunity for strategic play. Your units can split and take on enemy forces from two sides, or a diversionary strike might let a secondary force achieve its aims. You must also use the right unit for the job in hand, eg. never attack a base guarded by active SAM sites with a helicopter. It pays not to be over-cautious, though. The game's DEFCON (DEFense CONdition) starts at '5', moving to '1' with time. The lower the rating the more aggressive your foes, but each successful kill raises it a little, encouraging you to work quickly.

Gameplay like this raises an obvious alarm bell - does the player feel in control of the game, or does it seem to play itself with the player just helping out a little? Oliver is confident it won't be found lacking. "The computer-controlled units carry out orders, but don't fight as well as a player-controlled one", he insists. "Even if a unit isn't subject to the player's direct control, it's still under his orders".

As well as the 30 single-player missions, there's also a nifty two-player game. Here you can play the usual missions co-operatively, or indulge in a deathmatch with objectives such as total destruction of the opposition or capture your foe's flag. The screen is split diagonally, allowing considerable room and visibility, but there's no link-up mode. "You would lose too much speed", says Oliver, "and very few people would have access to two PSXs, two TVs and two copies of the game".

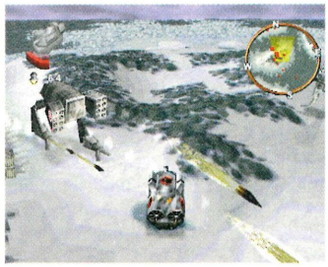
So far, the game's looking pretty good. The graphics are functional rather than exceptional, freeing up processing power for fluid 3D cameras and movement. The laws of physics take second place to gameplay too - the battleships turn on a sixpence. Still, WarGames was never intended to be a simulation - rather a thinking person's arcade game with the emphasis on fun. Check out our forthcoming review to see how well it achieves the laudable aim.

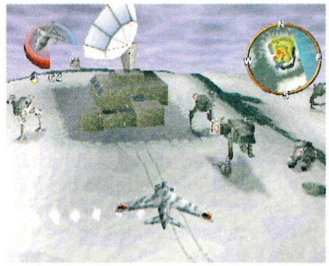


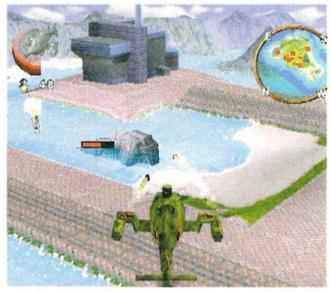
INTERACTIVE STUDIOS' PHILIP OLIVER











Interactive Studios, twinned with Gameplay

Interactive Studios was founded by the famous Oliver twins, creators of the 8-bit's own gaming icon, Dizzy. They're responsible for over 50 games, including over ten UK Number One best sellers.
Unfortunately Dizzy was scrambled by a dispute between the twins and original publishing company Codemasters, but together with over 30 dedicated staff, they and Interactive Studios will continue to be at the forefront of video games development for years to come.





AUDREY MEEHAN INDULGES IN A LITTLE ROAD RAGE

Road Rash 3D

What a difference a week makes. The version of Road Rash 3D we saw at EA left a lot to be desired, featuring ropey animation, freshly-laundered low-res graphics with blocky scenery and off-the-peg bikers, and sonics which made the engines sound like sewing machines. When we got back to the office and looked at the screenshots, taken by EA from a version of the game which enjoyed a week's further development, the graphics had improved immeasurably. No longer did the Lego-like scenery look like an idealised Toytown, with primary colours and not a thing out of place. Nor did the bikers wear freshly-ironed leathers and ride bikes fresh from the showroom. Obviously, having only seen screens of the later version we can only comment on graphical improvements, but perhaps we should cut the game some slack and hope its other aspects have been improved to the same degree.

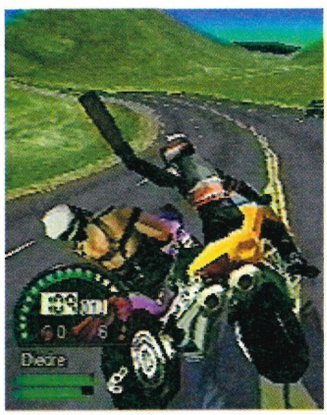
Road Rash enjoys a console pedigree dating back to the Mega Drive. It's a driving game with a difference, featuring bad-assed bikers who let nothing get between them and victory - you can even punch opponents off the track, kick their bikes or swing a range of vicious weapons at their heads. The 3D outing features four biker gangs, 12 different machines and 150km of tarmac based on genuine US roads. Professional actors are used for the FMV, which really looks the nuts.

The first Road Rash game performed poorly on the PSX, being little more than a 16-bit port with flashy movie sequences. Project Manager Audrey Meehan reckons this one will do better. "The new Road Rash is completely different from the first PSX game", she says. "The gangs are much more aggressive; you can no longer easily avoid combat, and the environment is fully 3D, allowing much more freedom of movement. The first game was ported from the 3DO - this one was written specifically for the PlayStation".

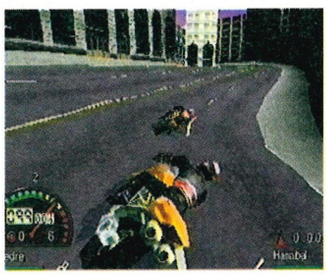
Successful riders earn money to spend on upgrading their bike or buying a new one. Kicks and punches are available from the start, but weapons must be captured from other bikers. Watch out for cattle prods, 2x4s, mace sprays, nunchuku, crowbars and even stun guns.

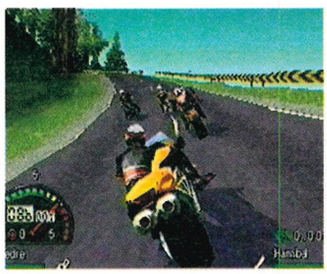
Road Rash 3D should be finished any day now - look out for a review next ish. And EA; pleeeeeeze stop the signs indicating a corner appearing right on the horizon!

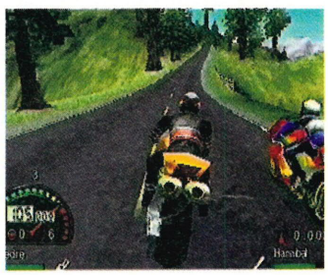


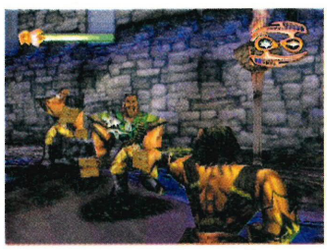


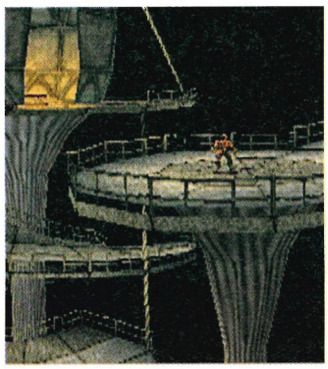












Small Soldiers

The Batman movies are often criticised for being little more than celluloid adverts for the toys, but Small Soldiers takes the money-making piss-take to new heights. The film, due out in late Summer, seems to have been written around its marketing opportunities. The ridiculous plot certainly bears this out.

Finding themselves with little to do after the end of the Cold War, weapons manufacturers turn their hands to making toys with limited artificial intelligence - 'when kids play with toys, what if the toys play back?'. The inevitable happens; the Action Man-style toys' sci-fi war scenario, Humans Vs Gorgonites, spills over into the real world as the human soldiers think the film's main characters (inevitably insufferable American kids) are siding with the extra-terrestrials. All sorts of unlikely Home Alone-style chaos ensues.

As you can imagine, the shops will be swamped with Small Soldiers spin-off figures. This is marketing and film making in perfect harmony. Art? Quality? Get outta here, you subversive, leftie pinko hippy! This is the capitalist 90s, where money talks.

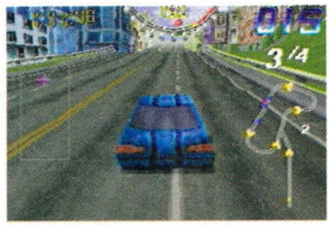
The game itself features 3D Tomb Raider-style action. The characters look a bit blocky at the moment, but there's plenty of time to improve them - the game's not out until September. What it will play like is anyone's guess, but at least it came up with one of the best tag lines this year; 'remember, size isn't everything'.



Publisher - GT Interactive Developer - Climax Entertainment Release Date - Autumn Genre - Driving

San Francisco Rush





This one's almost finished, so we've a pretty good idea of what it's going to be like. It needs tightening in several departments, but overall the news is good.

San Francisco Rush is a driving game based on the coin-op of the same name. The races take place on street circuits through a certain American city (we're sure you can guess which one), and features all the expected landmarks such as the Golden Gate Bridge, TransAmerica Building, Fisherman's Wharf, Alcatraz and more. The streets are accurately based on San Francisco's too.

To give the game depth, the arcade original has been expanded. The new Extreme Car has been added, making a total of eight vehicles, and the short-cuts (a major part of SF Rush) added to. As well as the standard ones, by collecting 'cunningly-stashed' keys the player can access otherwise-locked areas including the aforementioned short-cuts and various secret areas.

San Francisco Fog...

Being set in San Francisco is a reasonable excuse for fogging - it's always foggy over there. However, when compared to the all-conquering Gran Turismo (which has no fogging) this excuse cuts little ice. Some of the lighting effects need tweaking too - hopefully both these things will be tightned up before the game hits the shelves. One thing SF Rush beats GT on hands down, though, is the way the cars get damaged. Every bump produces a realistic dent, and handling is gradually reduced too. A really bad roll or crash can trash your car completely.

San Francisco Rush is hardly short of options. Lots of different race styles are catered for, including an explosive mode which blows up your car if you spend too much time off the track. Also included is 'Rumble Pack compatibility' (we think they mean 'Duel Shock'), a two-player link-up mode (hurrah!) and also a two-player split screen outing. Alas, the split screen offering needs a little tweaking. Given the reduced screen size the camera is a little too close to your car, and the speedo is right in the middle of the horizon, which is exactly where you don't want it.

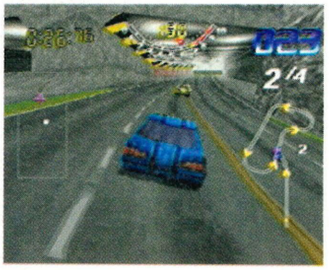


The heart of San Francisco Rush is its secret areas, stunt sections and other such hidden extras. Thus it's a very different game to current top titles such as Gran Turismo, Formula 1 '97 and Motorhead. From what we've seen so far, it could well find its niche in a very crowded market.



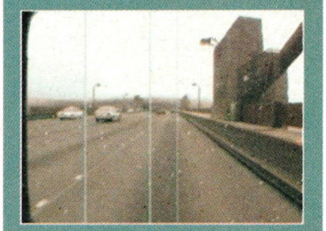
TAKE THE HILL TOO FAST AND YOU HIT THE FLYOVER.

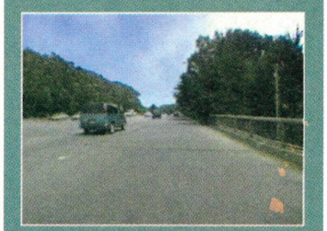




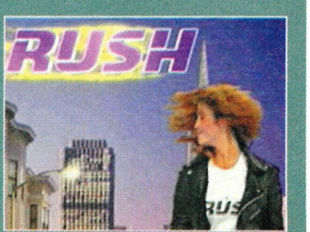
Intersting Intros

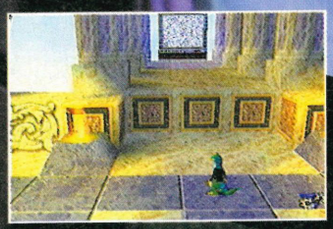
Curious one, this. The FMV at the beginning of the game starts with a crackly old sepia film shot from a car driving through San Francisco, which then becomes full colour and modern, this in turn giving way to some futuristic effects. To cap it all, a babe shakes her hair. Makes no sense to us; even in the old film section, the cars are strangely modern.

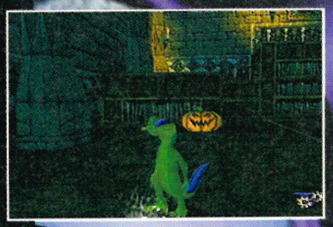













gex competition

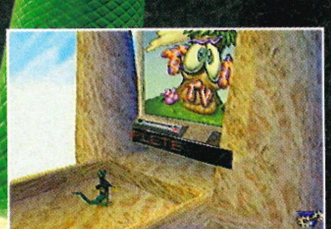
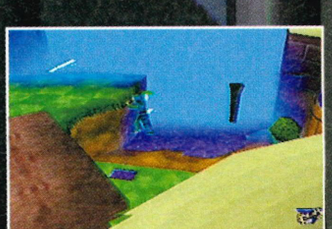
To celebrate the release of Gex 3D: Enter the Gecko, we've got a cheery competition with various magical gecko-related products to give away to some of you lucky beggars.
There's an enormous cut-out cardboard Gex that looks great in any lounge or dining room, five copies of the marvellous 93%-rated game, five lizard-emblazoned T-shirts, and ten big-arse posters proudly featuring our favourite reptilian rake. Just answer this simple question on either a very interesting or very dull postcard:

▸ Who would Gex's favourite pop star or band be, and why? (In less than twenty words).

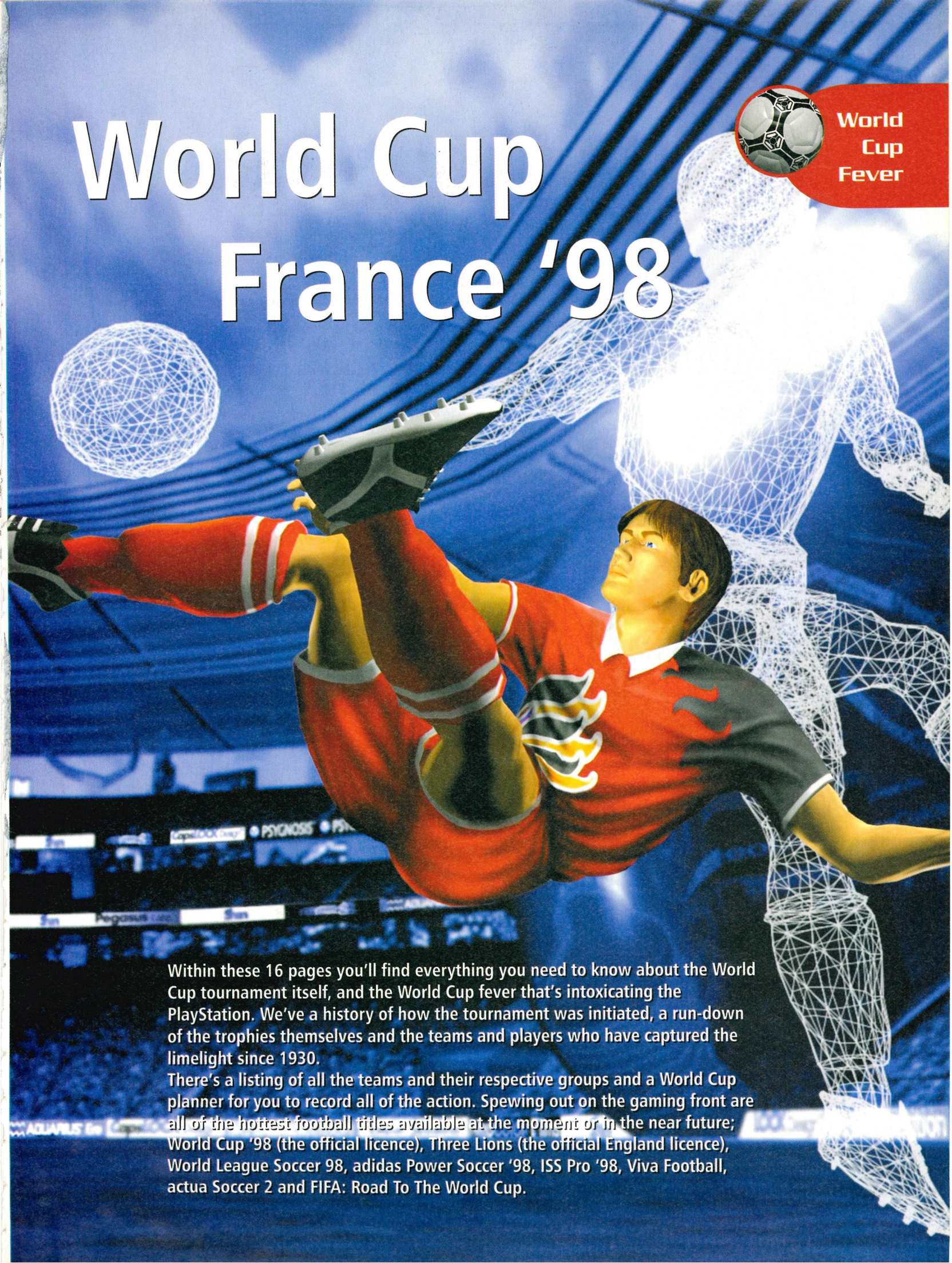
Send your replies to our sparkling new offices at:

The Joy of Gex
Quay Magazine Publishing
Jade Manor Court
West Quay Road
Poole
BH15 1JF

Closing date 19th June, and remember the editor's decision is probably wrong.


World Cup France '98

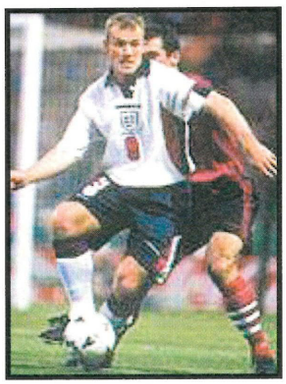


Within these 16 pages you'll find everything you need to know about the World Cup tournament itself, and the World Cup fever that's intoxicating the PlayStation. We've a history of how the tournament was initiated, a run-down of the trophies themselves and the teams and players who have captured the limelight since 1930.

There's a listing of all the teams and their respective groups and a World Cup planner for you to record all of the action. Spewing out on the gaming front are all of the hottest football titles available at the moment or in the near future; World Cup '98 (the official licence), Three Lions (the official England licence), World League Soccer 98, adidas Power Soccer '98, ISS Pro '98, Viva Football, actua Soccer 2 and FIFA: Road To The World Cup.

World Cup Fever

Mankind's Beloved Contest



Seventy years ago this very month, a congress of the Federation International de Football Association was held in Amsterdam. It voted on the proposal to establish a competition open to all affiliated national associations. With 23 votes for and only five against, the project was taken to a Barcelona Congress in the following year for final approval. Finally, the dreams of founders Jules Rimet and Henri Delaunay had become reality - the World Cup was born. 1930 saw the first World Cup tournament, held in Montevideo in July and was won by the hosts Uruguay.

No one at the time would have dreamt this new competition would become the premium sporting celebration. Sixty-four years later, television is accessible to people world-wide; 1.5 billion people watched the '94 final between Brazil and Italy.

This year sees the finals in France. A record 172 countries registered to compete in the eliminating matches, with only 30 qualifying places available (Brazil, the title holders, and France as hosts qualify automatically). The eliminating rounds saw 50 teams from Europe, 36 from Africa, 36 from Asia, 28 from North and Central America, ten from South America and ten from Oceania.



The Samba Kings

Brazil is the only team to have competed in all of the final phases since 1930, fifteen in all. They have won the cup a record four times, in 1952, 1962, 1970 and 1994. The most famous of all the South American players is the Brazilian Edson Arantes do Nascimento, known you and us as the great Pele. He is the only player to have won three World Cups.











Jules Rimet Cup

FIFA commissioned the sculptor Abel Lafleur to create the first cup. It was 35cm high and weighted 3.8kg. Made of sterling silver and golden plated, it had a blue base made of Lapis Lazuli - a semi-precious stone. It depicted the goddess of Victory holding aloft an eight-sided chalice. The four sides of the base had the winners between 1930 and 1970 engraved upon it.

The Cup was first stolen in London in 1966 before the finals. It was found buried under a tree by a dog called Pickles. In 1983 there was no dog to save the day! Brazil had earned the right to retain the cup after winning it three times, but it was stolen in Rio de Janerio, and was apparently melted down by thieves. The Brazilian Association ordered a replica to be made.



FIFA World Cup Trophy



World Cup Fever

This, the present trophy, was the work of Italian sculptor Silvio Gazzaniga. It's 36cm high and is made of solid 18-carat gold, weighing in at a massive 4,970 grammes. Again the base is made of a semi-precious stone, malachite. Now the trophy cannot be won outright; it's permanently in FIFA's possession. The base has enough room for 17 small plaques, space for the World Champions up to 2038. Instead of receiving the original trophy, winners of the tournament are awarded a gold plated version.

It was first presented in Germany in 1974, it has since travelled back and forth between Europe and South America every four years.

Preview



World Cup 98

Publisher - EA
Developer - EA Sports
Released - 22 May

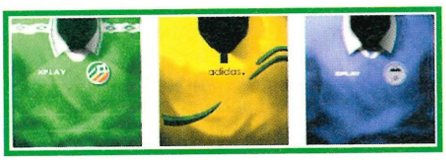
We'll be reviewing this next issue, but we had to include it in our World Cup feature as it's the official title and looking likely to top the flood of footie titles this year.

FIFA: Road To The World Cup sold bucket-loads, out-selling Tomb Raider II at Christmas and still riding high at Number Five in the charts as we go to print! World Cup '98 takes the FIFA series to the greatest tournament in the world, and that little closer to being the ultimate football simulation. It contains all the teams, groups, kits and the trophy itself. It also lets you enter classic moments in World Cup history in Classic Team Mode. Here you can recreate some of the greatest finals ever, such as England 1966, Brazil 1970 and Germany 1990.





Star Player Moves is a feature where the biggest footballing stars have their own trademark moves for you to access.



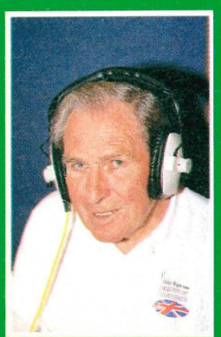


'WINNING ISN'T THE END OF THE WORLD...'!?!?!

FIFA: RTWC boasted excellent commentary, but World Cup '98 is even better! On the mic are footballing greats Gary Lineker and Chris Waddle, and commentary legends Wolstenholme, Motson and Lynam. It's performed in authentic TV-style presentation.

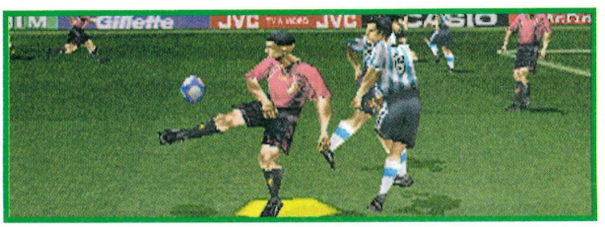








Realistic Team Strategies allows a player to choose from various accepted football styles of play to fashion their own team tactics.



World Cup Fever

Review

World League Soccer 98

Global corporate bladder kicking



WLS 98 is the finest footie title I've played on the PSX! Okay, that might change when Konami's ISS Pro '98 finally appears, or when a finished version of EA's World Cup '98 turns up next issue, but as my ma says, "If 'ifs' and 'ands' where pots and pans we'd have no need for tinkers". Or something like that. What I'm trying to say is WLS 98 is here, and so far it's the best; the rest are maybes!

What makes WLS 98 so good? For starters, to play WLS 98 well takes an age. It taken me three days to beat the CPU in a single exhibition game, and I'm no slouch at footie sims either. It's like learning to drive a car, or ride a bike, or getting a woman to climax - you can't do it first time, but with effort and practice it suddenly clicks into place and you can't understand why you couldn't do it in the first place.



Spending three days losing to the CPU might not sound like fun, but this is WLS 98's secret - it is! The gameplay is excellent, with a learning curve that needs you to master the game before you start scoring and winning. With many footie games you score the first time you play, and then after time as you get better and better, and the score-lines get higher and higher with actual build-up play and defending taking a back seat. Scorelines in WLS 98 very rarely see a team score more than four goals. You're pleased and have played well if you score two in a game, offering a creditable representation of football itself, methinks. And another thing - many of the matches I've played against the CPU and a human opponent have ended 0-0, but these too have been exhilarating, another aspect you find in the real game.

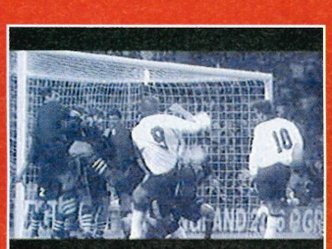
Ya Can't Touch This!

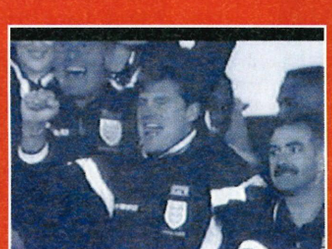
WLS 98 brags an enormous 190 teams representing ten leagues from across the world, hence the title. Two sets of international teams are present, including almost every international team in the world, so you could easily mock up your own version of the World Cup tournament. It's not an official title so there's no named players in the game, but if that's something you want in a footie game and would sway your decision on which to buy, don't worry. WLS 98 has a Player Editor which allows you to change every player's name to whatever you want. There's also 14 different stadiums, all modelled on Premiership grounds.

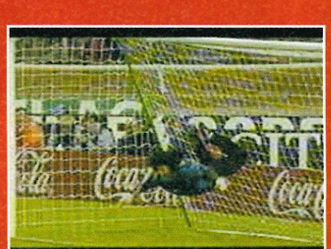
All the usual features found in modern footie sims are included; different camera views, special moves like one-twos and drone players, real-time shadow calculation, four-player simultaneous play, analog compatibility, animated crowds; it's all there.

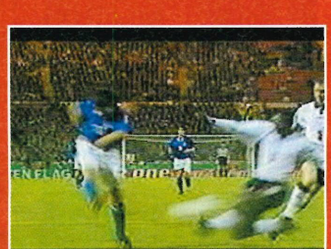
If you've been sucked in by World Cup fever and intend buying a footie sim in the near future, we at EPM strongly recommend this. It's not instantly accessible, so if you want something to just boot up and play without using any brain-power, purchase a game with a number and an animal in the title. If you're looking for the ultimate footie simulation that taxes your reflexes, stamina and grey matter, WLS 98 is da maan!

WLS 98'S BOASTS A SHORT BUT INSPIRING INTRO. SGI'S MIXED WITH FMV RAMS THE ACTION DOWN YOUR THROAT IN A VINNY JONES STYLE

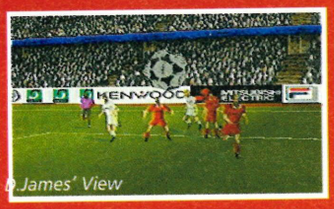


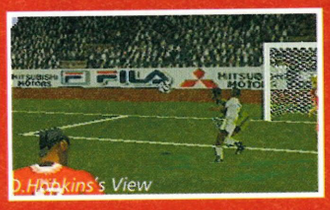






ANDY GRAY WOULD CREAM HIS PANTS!

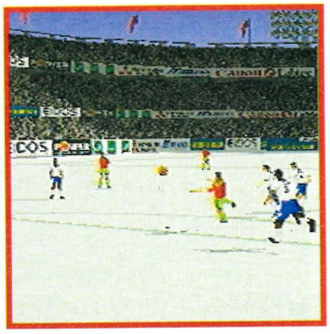








If you're into anatomising your tactics or just simply enjoy watching the action over and over again, WLS 98 has an monumental replay system. It allows you to view the proceedings from almost anywhere on the pitch, permitting you to rotate the camera up and down and with a zoom in and out option. Let's take a look at why Leeds' Hasslebank couldn't get the ball past Liverpool's James. Obvious really; Leeds are crap! Here's how four people on the pitch saw the action:



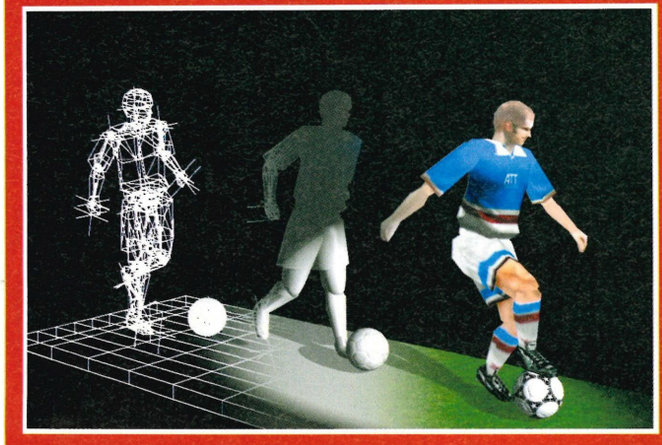


WLS 98 flaunts a thrilling selection on weather conditions, including rain, wind, fog, snow, and thunder and lightning. To add realism, rain starts and stops when it's overcast, as does snow while playing in the winter.

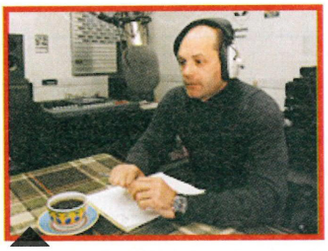


In relation to the weather conditions, there are various pitch conditions. Ranging from a hard frost to lush grass, these in turn affect the way the ball bounces and the stamina of the players.

BONE STRUCTURE PARADISE



Silicon Dreams a have used a new skeletal system which can utilise large amounts of fluid motion-captured animation. UV texture mapping enhances the player's visual characteristics, enabling muscle tone and facial features.



Unfortunately WLS 98 does has one major downfall, and that's the commentary . It's very uninspiring, which is a surprise as Peter Brackley and Ray Wilkins are very good on Channel 4's Italia Football. Ray, don't give up your day job! Whoops, sorry mate, I forgot you haven't got one anymore.



The Score

Publisher	EIDOS
Developer	SILICON DREAMS
Released	28TH MAY
Version	UK
Price	£39.99
Genre	SPORTS SIM
Players	1-4
Memory Card	✔
Multi Tap	✔
Analog	✔

GAMEPLAY
10

ORIGINALITY
8

LIFESPAN
10

SOUND
5

GRAPHICS
8

OVERALL
94%

in summary

Touched by the hand of God!

World Cup Fever

Preview

adidas Power Soccer '98

Publisher - Psygnosis
Developer - Shen
Released - June

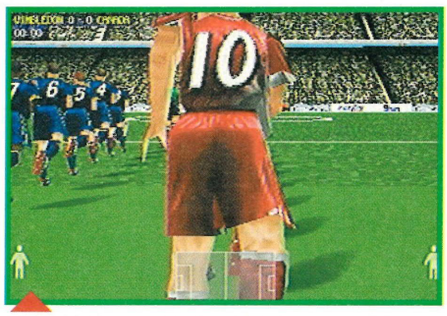


aPS '98 runs in PlayStation Hi-Res mode (512x256), which apparently is the only football game to do so - but don't quote EPM on this, again it's a claim by Shen.

Unfortunately we can't bring you the promised review of adidas Power Soccer '98 as it didn't arrive in time, so here's a little update of what's happening to Psygnosis' World Cup challenge. Since our preview last issue, we've had a few bashes on an updated version. Things have been tweaked, but we still feel it needs a few more touches to get it on a par with the rest. On saying that, aPS '98 looks set to be the best incarnation of the adidas series so far, easily wiping the floor with aPS 2, and looking on a level with Three Lions.

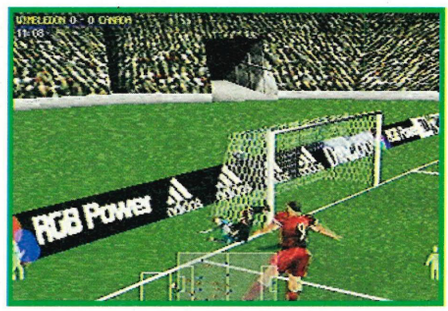
This is the fourth in the adidas series, but only the second developed by Shen. They're claiming the finished version will boast better gameplay than ISS Pro and have better motion capture than FIFA, and a better overall frame rate than actua 2 (30fps). The Shen trumpet is also playing to the tune of real-time weather effects that affect the playing environment, and a massive database that's more on a par with a football management game, really.





aPS '98 has a 10,000 player database, over 33 different stadiums and a variety of game and tournament modes.





Top Scorers

Here's a quick look at who's banged in the most each year since 1930...

YEAR	PLAYER(S)	COUNTRY	GOALS
1930	GUILLERMO STABILE	ARGENTINA	8
1934	ANGELO SCHIAVIO	ITALY	4
	OLDRICH NEJEDLY	CZECHOSLOVAKIA	4
	EDMUND CONEN	GERMANY	4
1938	DA SILVA LEONIDAS	BRAZIL	8
1950	MARQUES ADEMIR	BRAZIL	7
1954	SANDOR KOCSIS	HUNGARY	11
1958	JUST FONTAINE	FRANCE	13
1962	DRAZEN JERKOVIC	YUGOSLAVIA	5
1966	FERREIRA EUSEBIO	PORTUGAL	9
1970	GERD MULLER	WEST GERMANY	10
1974	GRZEGORZ LATO	POLAND	7
1978	MARIO KEMPES	ARGENTINA	6
1982	PAOLO ROSSI	ITALY	6
1986	GARY LINEKER	ENGLAND	6
1990	SALVATORE SCHILLACI	ITALY	6
1994	SALENKO	RUSSIA	6
	HRISTO STOICHKOV	BULGARIA	6



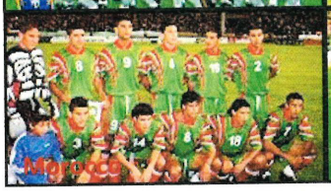
Eusebio - 1966

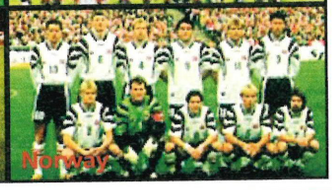
The Groups

GROUP A



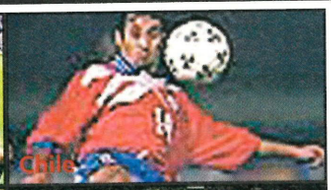






GROUP B





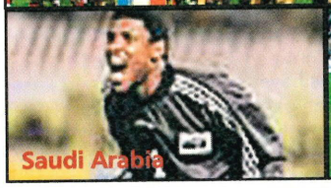




GROUP C

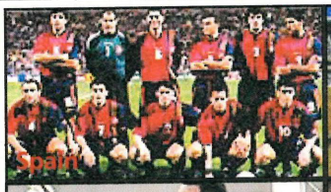




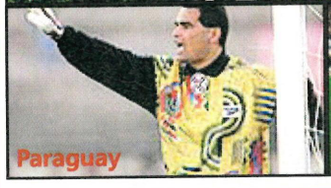




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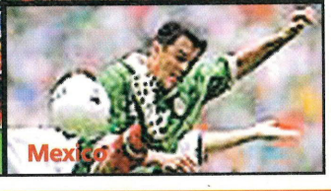


GROUP E







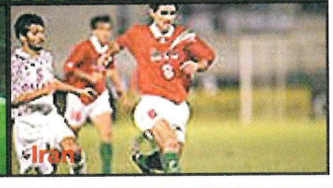


GROUP F









GROUP G









GROUP H







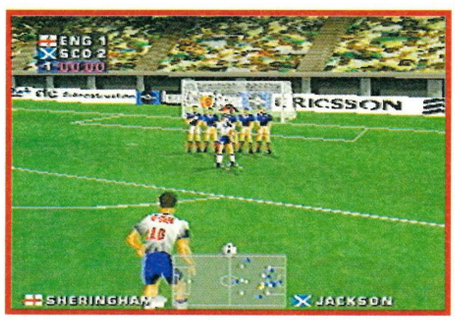


World Cup Fever

Review

Three Lions

It's in the shops, It's in the shops, Three Lions is in the shops



Dodgy, you may think. Three Lions appears in the shops before anyone gets a chance to review it. This usually means the software company want to quietly release a poor game without the poor scores it's bound to receive. This isn't the case with Three Lions, though, because it's a definite contender for the PlayStation World Cup.

Three Lions is the official England World Cup game, but not the official World Cup licence itself. This honour goes FIFA '98, which is reviewed next month. Enough official-this, and official-that, though; it really doesn't matter what organisation a soccer game has behind it as long as it provides a decent kick-about, something which Three Lions does extremely well.

The first thing you notice when you start playing Three Lions is just how dodgy the players look, especially close up. Graphically, Three Lions is dithering somewhere at the bottom of the First Division whereas World League Soccer and FIFA '98 are battling it out for the Premiership title. The players look deformed and the close-up goal-scoring celebrations are hilarious, with Alan Shearer looking like a Neanderthal with more ape genes than human. It was a valiant attempt to try an make the faces look realistic, but it's failed miserably. When the camera pulls out, though, you can't see the faces or the players' deformities and the game doesn't look half bad. The animation on the players is up there with the best of them, with a range of smooth and fast moves at your disposal.

The gameplay itself isn't as simple as the looks on the players faces, though. The game starts hard but the learning curve has been implemented perfectly to get you used to the controls as you play. The gameplay is fast and smooth, and probably the most frantic we've seen in a while. The midfield game is extremely tight, with the ball changing possession constantly.

Developers Z-Axis have tried to add a few innovations to the gameplay, and despite a few guffaws coming from my colleagues, they've actually succeeded in trying to make Three Lions that little bit different. This basically comes down to a completely new system of taking a shot. Instead of running towards the goal, hitting 'shoot' and trying to direct the ball blindly, you have a target you can move around the goal. Okay, so it looks like you should be firing a bow and arrow at it, but it's excellent for placing your shots to the nearest inch. The only problem this causes is while you're concentrating on positioning your shot, you may be dispossessed by an opposing defender and not realise for a split second. Using the shot target becomes much easier with practice, though, and after a while you should be able to integrate it into your game.



You shoot, I'll do the two-step.



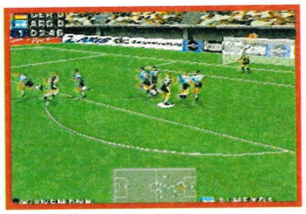




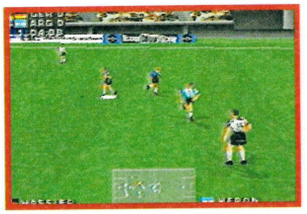
Shearer celebrates a successful arm enlargement operation.

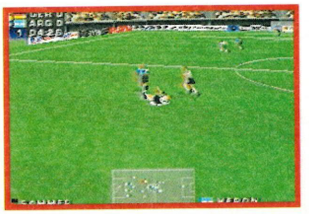


Shearer manages to miss the other players' heads.









Colourful Commentary

Commentators rarely work properly on football games (with the exception of Actua Soccer 2), due to the time it takes to load in each snippet of speech. This usually means the commentators sound inebriated, because they keep getting it wrong. Z-Axis have looked at this and decided to forget about an in-game commentator completely. Instead we get something called Player Chat. Now we're privileged to hear the players shouting things like 'Clear It' and 'Man On'. To be honest it sounds absolutely ridiculous and doesn't work at all. Nice try, though.

The crowd noise is a different matter. In fact, Three Lions has got one of the most hyped-up and atmospheric crowds I've heard on a sports game. With massive cheers for a goal and sighs for a miss, the crowd really does add to that world cup feeling.

Z-Axis have also been a bit un-sporting with the inclusion of the intentional foul. This is basically a rabbit punch that floors your opponent in one fell swoop. Not in the spirit of the World Cup I know, but it's great fun to deck Romario just before he's about to score and get away with it. Of course, you shouldn't be able to get away with it, but the ref in three Lions is a bit inconsistent, making challenging other players a bit of a lottery. This doesn't spoil the game because Three Lions is one of the few football games that doesn't rely on sliding tackles to procure the ball. Sliding tackles are useful, but only as a last resort. When you do make a sliding tackle you find your player doesn't get up immediately, which is much more realistic than in FIFA: Road To The World Cup where your players jump up straight away. To get the ball from your opponents without sliding you have to use the basic standing tackle or shoulder barge, which is far more realistic than ten players all skidding along the grass anyway.

The advantage of being an official licence is only in that the World Cup tournament is set-up exactly the same as France '98, so as England you get to go up against Romania, Columbia and Tunisia in your first three games. The only problem is this tourney will be out of date by the end of the World Cup. Oh well. The exhibition match gives you the chance to play against any team at any time, and this won't be out of date once the World Cup ends (or indeed ever), so it's not all bad.

It's a Funny Old Game...

Real football fans demand an in-depth squad selection and set-up section on a football game, but Three Lions doesn't really deliver in this area. Setting up your team's formation is fiddly and illogical. For instance, if you want to have four at the back you always end up having a gap somewhere. This is because there are five positions for players on the back row, so to get an even spread you either have to have a three- or five - strong defence. The formation and set-up does allow for some experimental play, but I can't see many wanting to try out unorthodox formations. One handy feature, though, is being able to set a tactic for the match which you can activate with a tap of R2. For instance, you can order your team to push up when the ball breaks or pull back when you are being attacked. Your team tactics and formations can be changed at any time during a match, but if you substitute a player it won't happen until a suitable break in the play.

Real footy fans will be pleased to know Three Lions offers up all the usual after-game stats for your perusal, and it also gives you the Man of the Match. However, the CPU's choice is debatable at times, especially when you're playing against a mate, but on the whole it's a good idea.

Three Lions has some tough competition in the coming months, with the likes of FIFA '98 and World League Soccer all gunning for the same crown. In fact, I've been caning World League Soccer too and I think for the average player, it just beats Three Lions, but only on penalties. Three Lions, however, has a star sub - the fact that all of the players names are real and you can play a simulation of this year's World Cup. After all, this is the only reason we're seeing a sudden influx of footy games. Three Lions doesn't boast great graphics and it has a few niggling flaws (like the omission of any type of analog control), but there's enough innovation and gameplay here to give the other World Cup bandwagon games a run for their money.

The Score

Publisher	TAKE 2
Developer	Z-AXIS
Released	OUT NOW
Version	UK
Price	£39.99
Genre	SPORTS SIM
Players	1-2
Memory Card	✔

GAMEPLAY
8.5

ORIGINALITY
9

LIFESPAN
7

SOUND
8

GRAPHICS
7

OVERALL
85%

in summary

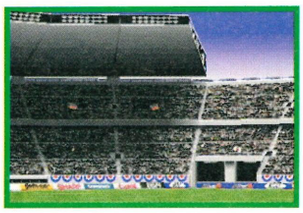
A bit like the England team itself - a contender, but not a sure-fire winner.

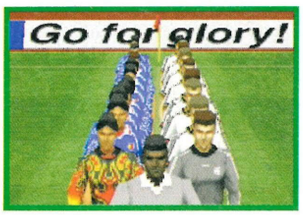
World Cup Fever Preview

ISS Pro '98

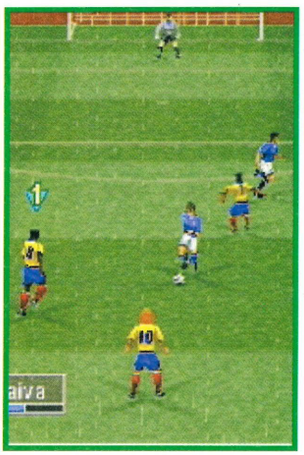
Publisher - Konami
Developer - In-house
Released - September

ISS Pro on the PSX and N64 went down a storm. The Nintendo version was a better product, but both were top quality football simulations. With such a well regarded footie title under their belt, it's a shame to hear Konami put back ISS Pro '98 to September. Its original May release has been canned, which means they'll miss the World Cup fever, but for punters it means a quality purchase and not a 'rushed out' joke. Information on this title is very sparse; we know it's going to run smoother, with player animation being sharper. Match of the Day's Tony Gubba has performed the commentary, which shows Konami have noted one of the major let-downs of the first ISS game. We've also heard the pitch can be flipped through 90 degrees, allowing you to play from any angle. As with the first, there's no licence, so made up names are in abundance, although as we all know a licence doesn't make a classic footie title - that's down to gameplay. We're really looking forward to ISS Pro '98 as we expect it to be challenging for the crown of the best footie release this year.











1966 - Our Greatest Day!

England Team

• GOALKEEPER
GORDON BANKS

• DEFENCE
GEORGE COHEN
JACKIE CHARLTON
BOBBY MOORE (CAPTAIN)
RAY WILSON

• MIDFIELD
NOBBY STILES
BOBBY CHARLTON
ALAN BALL
HUNT

• STRIKERS
GEOFF HURST
MARTIN PETERS







England finished one point ahead of Uruguay in Group One to come up against Argentina in the Quarter-Finals. Beating them 1-0, England entered a tough semi-final against Portugal and their awesome striker Ferreira Eusebio, who went on to be top scorer of the tournament with nine goals. Beating Portugal by a spectacular 2-1 scoreline, England proceeded to the Finals to face West Germany. In a exhilarating final, England won 4-2. A hat-trick from Hurst produced the famous 'did it cross the line' inquiry, and the saying "Some people are on the pitch, they think it's all over... [Hurst scores] It is now!"

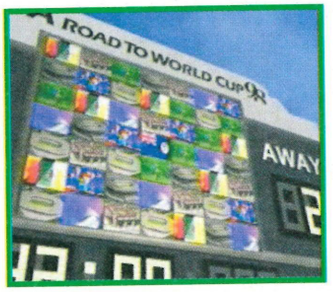
Mini Review

Publisher - EA
Developer - EA Sports

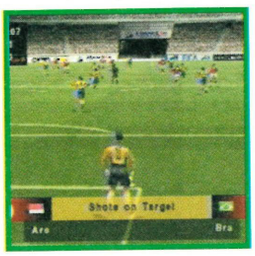
FIFA: RTTWC







Many of the previous EA FIFA gameplay quests resulted in a pile of dog scat, but this is solid as a rock. While running with the ball, by simply holding L2 or R2 you can enter a skill mode that allows you to perform several different moves to avoid being tackled, including side-step and a 360-degree spin.
Although this is an awesome footie title, there are a few flaws, namely a slightly awkward control system and that the old 'easy goal' rears its ugly head. However, the intro sequences are exceptional, and accompanied by Blur's Song 2.
Commentary is supplied by Des Lynam, John Motson and Andy Gray; it's excellent, but not on a par with actua Soccer 2. With World and League teams and named players, for sports anoraks this can only be topped by World Cup '98.
On the gameplay side, we feel World League Soccer 98 is better. If you're looking for a footie title but a bit short on the readies, then trundle down to your nearest second-hand dealer and purchase this on the cheap - it's better then most of the newer titles coming out!





In summary - Picked for the England Squad

RATING 91%

Who has Lifted the Cup so far

YEAR	CHAMPION	RUNNER-UP	SCORE	ATTENDANCE	CITY
1930	Uruguay	Argentina	4-2	90,000	Montevideo
1934	Italy	Czechoslovakia	2-1	55,000	Rome
1938	Italy	Hungary	4-2 (aet)	65,000	Paris
1942-46	Not Held				
1950	Uruguay	Brazil (not a Final)	2-1 (the deciding	group game)	
1954	W.Germany	Hungary	3-2	55,000	Berne
1958	Brazil	Sweden	5-2	49,737	Stockholm
1962	Brazil	Czechoslovakia	3-1	69,068	Santiago
1966	England	W. Germany	4-2 (aet)	93,000	London
1970	Brazil	Italy	4-1	110,000	Mexico City
1974	W.Germany	Netherlands	2-1	80,000	Munich
1978	Argentina	Netherlands	3-1 (aet)	77,000	Buenos Aires
1982	Italy	W.Germany	3-1	90,000	Madrid
1986	Argentina	W.Germany	3-2	114,800	Mexico City
1990	W.Germany	Argentina	1-0	73,600	Rome
1994	Brazil	Italy	3-2 (ap)	94,800	Los Angeles

*aet - after extra time
*ap - after penalties

World Cup Fever

Who will shine in France '98?

A guide to the top world's players and their achievements for club and country...



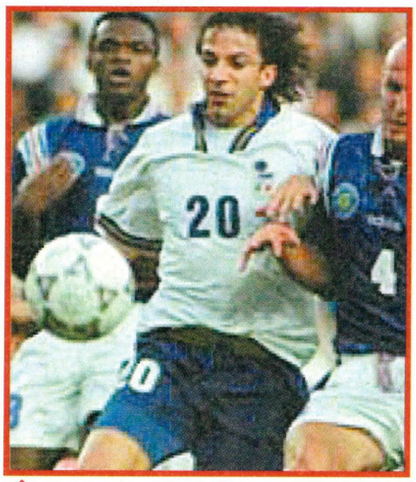


• GABRIEL OMAR BATISTUA

NATIONAL TEAM - ARGENTINA

CLUB TEAM - FIORENTINA

He's one of the best forwards in the world today. He has not only been Fiorentina's top scorer for the past few years, but Seria A's top scorer as well. He didn't have a great time in the previous World Cup in the USA, however you can guarantee that if Batistua plays well in this cup, Argentina will be challenging for the title.



• ALEXANDRO DEL PIERO

NATIONAL TEAM - ITALY

CLUB TEAM - JUVENTUS

Some say that Del Piero is the best player in the world, better that Ronaldo. With Juventus he's won the Italian championship in 1995 and 1996, the Italian Cup in 1995, and the Champions League and the Intercontinental Cup in 1996. Although 1997 saw Juventus lose the in Champions League final, they bounced back to win the European Super Cup.

• DENNIS BERGKAMP

NATIONAL TEAM - HOLLAND

CLUB TEAM - ARSENAL

Bergkamp has had great success with many different clubs. With Ajax he has won a Championship medal, the Dutch Cup, the European Cup and the UEFA Cup. At Inter Milan he won the UFEA Cup when Milan beat Casino Salzburg on a 2-0 aggregate, and with Arsenal he has won this year's Premiership. He's famous for spectacular goals and the fact he is scared of flying - he's missed many important matches due to his phobia.



• CARLOS 'EL PIBE' VALDERAMA

NATIONAL TEAM - COLOMBIA

CLUB TEAM - TAMPA BAY MUTINY

Voted South American player of year three times. He's played for his country on 94 occasions, and in the last five Copa America. In 1987 and 1993 he was named outstanding player of the Copa America tournament. He's only scored seven goals for his country, but his presence within the national team evokes passion throughout the other players.



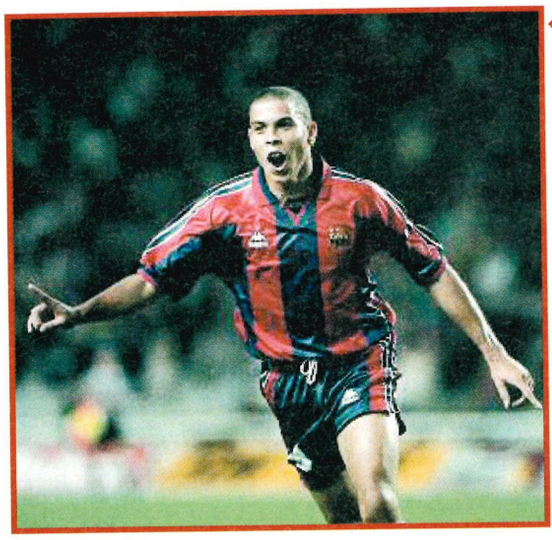


• RAUL GONZALES

NATIONAL TEAM - SPAIN

CLUB TEAM - REAL MADRID

At the age of 17, Raul had already played first team football for Real Madrid and appeared in the Champions League. He is now a regular in the Spanish squad, but was left out of the Euro '96 squad as coach Javier Clemente though he was too young. He has now won two national championships with Real Madrid.



• RONALDO

NATIONAL TEAM - BRAZIL

CLUB TEAM - INTER MILAN

At this point in time he's classed as the greatest player in the world. He's won World Player of the Year twice, and European Player of the Year once. When he joins a team, they win honours. Inter Milan are now reaping the rewards of Ronaldo's outstanding skill; they beat Lazio 2-0 to win this year's UFEA cup, and as we go to print Inter Milan are challenging Juventus for the Italian title.



• ALAN SHEARER

NATIONAL TEAM - ENGLAND

CLUB TEAM - NEWCASTLE

England's best striker! Started his professional career at Southampton, moving to Blackburn Rovers after five seasons. At Blackburn he scored 112 goals in four seasons and won the Championship. In the summer of 1996 Shearer transferred to Newcastle for a record-breaking fee. He spent most of 1998 injured, but now he's back on form and leading Newcastle into the FA Cup final.



• ZINEDAN ZIDANE

NATIONAL TEAM - FRANCE

CLUB TEAM - JUVENTUS

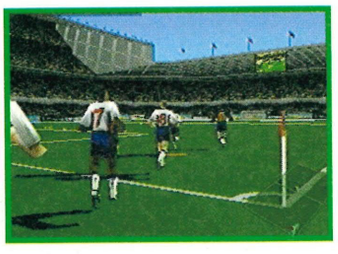
Zidane in one of Europe's finest midfielders. He scores magnificent goals as well as assisting in many others. He is at the heart of Juventus' Championship side, who are challenging this season for the '98 Italian championship and the Champions League title. Zidane featured in Bordeaux's UEFA Cup final and helped the French team get to the semi-final of Euro '96.

Publisher - Gremlin
Developer - In-house

actua Soccer 2

Mini Review



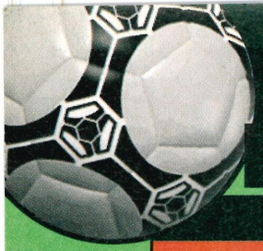




RATING 88%

In summary - Not one for the subs' bench. Keep it on the field!

Top game! Gremlin were on a winner with this before Christmas, and they still are now. Alan Shearer was the overseer with Michael Owen employed to do the motion capture. The commentary is executed perfectly by Barry Davies and Trevor Brooking, and is without a doubt the best to date of any footie sim. All the international teams are included, with a editor to allow 24 custom teams - enough for the whole of the Premiership. The strip editor is another high point, having the ability to recreate any league strip, colour and pattern. Twenty great-looking stadiums are recreated. All the usual weather conditions are included, with added touches including footprints in the snow. Overall, actua Soccer 2 was, and still is, an excellent footie sim. It received a respectable 88% in Issue One of extreme PlayStation, and even after seeing the 'new wave' titles this wouldn't be a stupid buy.



WORLD CUP

Round 1

GROUP A

Match	Date	Time	Stadium	Match Report
Brazil Vs Scotland	10/06/98	17:30	Saint-Denis	
Morocco Vs Norway	10/06/98	21:00	Montpellier	
Scotland Vs Norway	16/06/98	17:30	Bordeaux	
Brazil Vs Morocco	16/06/98	21:00	Nantes	
Scotland Vs Morocco	23/03/98	21:00	Saint-Etienne	
Brazil Vs Norway	23/06/98	21:00	Marseille	

GROUP B

Match	Date	Time	Stadium	Match Report
Cameroon Vs Austria	11/06/98	21:00	Toulouse	
Italy Vs Chile	11/06/98	17:30	Bordeaux	
Chile Vs Austria	17/06/98	17:30	St. Etienne	
Italy Vs Cameroon	17/06/98	21:00	Montpellier	
Italy Vs Austria	23/06/98	16:00	Saint-Denis	
Chile Vs Cameroon	23/06/98	16:00	Nantes	

GROUP C

Match	Date	Time	Stadium	Match Report
Saudi Arabia Vs Denmark	12/06/98	17:30	Lens	
France Vs South Africa	12/06/98	21:00	Marseille	
France Vs Saudi Arabia	18/06/98	21:00	Saint-Denis	
South Africa Vs Denmark	18/06/98	17.30	Toulouse	
France Vs Denmark	24/06/98	16:00	Lyon	
South Africa Vs Saudi Arabia	24/06/98	16:00	Bordeaux	

GROUP D

Match	Date	Time	Stadium	Match Report
Paraguay Vs Bulgaria	12/06/98	14:30	Montpellier	
Spain Vs Nigeria	13/06/98	14:30	Nantes	
Nigeria Vs Bulgaria	19/06/98	17:30	Paris	
Spain Vs Paraguay	19/06/98	21:00	Saint-Etienne	
Spain Vs Bulgaria	24/06/98	21:00	Lens	
Nigeria Vs Paraguay	24/06/98	21:00	Toulouse	

GROUP E

Match	Date	Time	Stadium	Match Report
South Korea Vs Mexico	13/06/98	17:30	Lyon	
Holland Vs Belgium	13/06/98	21:00	Saint-Denis	
Holland Vs South Korea	20/06/98	21:00	Marseille	
Belgium Vs Mexico	20/06/98	17:30	Bordeaux	
Belgium Vs South Korea	25/06/98	16:00	Paris	
Holland Vs Mexico	25/06/98	16:00	Saint-Etienne	

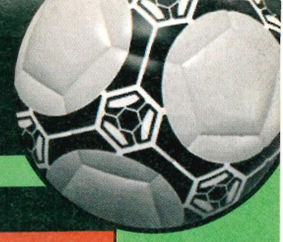
GROUP F

Match	Date	Time	Stadium	Match Report
Yugoslavia Vs Iran	14/06/98	17:30	Saint-Etienne	
Germany Vs USA	15/06/98	21:00	Paris	
Germany Vs Yugoslavia	21/06/98	14:30	Lens	
USA Vs Iran	21/06/98	21:00	Lyon	
Germany Vs Iran	25/06/98	21:00	Montpellier	
USA Vs Yugoslavia	25/06/98	21:00	Nantes	

PLANNER

Winner.....





GROUP G

Match					Date	Time	Stadium	Match Report
Romania		Vs		Columbia	15/06/98	17:30	Lyon	
England		Vs		Tunisia	15/06/98	14:30	Marseille	
Columbia		Vs		Tunisia	22/06/98	17.30	Montpellier	
Romania		Vs		England	22/06/98	21:00	Toulouse	
Romania		Vs		Tunisia	26/06/98	21:00	Saint-Denis	
Columbia		Vs		England	26/06/98	21:00	Lens	

GROUP H

Match					Date	Time	Stadium	Match Report
Jamaica		Vs		Croatia	14/06/98	21:00	Lens	
Argentina		Vs		Japan	14/06/98	14:30	Toulouse	
Japan		Vs		Croatia	20/06/98	14:30	Nantes	
Argentina		Vs		Jamaica	21/06/98	17:30	Paris	
Japan		Vs		Jamaica	26/06/98	16:00	Lyon	
Argentina		Vs		Croatia	26/06/98	16:00	Bordeaux	

1/16 Finals

	Match				Date	Time	Stadium	Match Report
1	A1		Vs	B2	27/06/98	21:00	Paris	
2	B1		Vs	A2	27/06/98	16:30	Marseille	
3	C1		Vs	D2	28/06/98	16:30	Lens	
4	D1		Vs	C2	28/06/98	21:00	Paris	
5	E1		Vs	F2	29/06/98	21:00	Toulouse	
6	F1		Vs	E2	29/06/98	16:30	Montpellier	
7	G1		Vs	H2	30/06/98	21:00	Bordeaux	
8	H1		Vs	G2	30/06/98	21:00	Saint-Etienne	

1/4 Finals

	Match				Date	Time	Stadium	Match Report
A	1		Vs	4	03/07/98	21:00	Nantes	
B	2		Vs	3	03/07/98	16:30	Paris	
C	5		Vs	8	04/07/98	21:00	Marseille	
D	6		Vs	7	04/07/98	21:00	Lyon	

Semi Finals

	Match				Date	Time	Stadium	Match Report
1	A		Vs	C	07/07/98	21:00	Marseille	
2	B		Vs	D	08/07/98	21:00	Paris	

3rd/4th place play-off

Match			Date	Time	Stadium	Match Report
	Vs		11/07/98	21:00	Paris	

Final

Match			Date	Time	Stadium	Match Report
	Vs		12/07/98	21:00	Paris	

World Cup Fever

Preview

Viva Football

Publisher - Virgin Int.
Developer - Crimson
Released - September

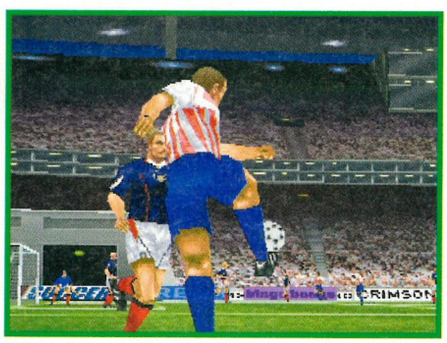
The version we've played is only half complete, but it still has enough gameplay to tell us this is a game to look out for. As with the official England title, Three Lions, Viva Football uses player's speech instead of the usual commentary. We're not wholly convinced by this yet. Both Viva Football and Three Lions claim this enhances gameplay as the CPU-controlled players tell you where they are and what they're doing. For example, a CPU player points in the direction he intends to run while shouting 'through ball'. It sounds good, but the concept needs a lot more work to get it correct. The 'cut-and-paste' commentary of many footie titles aren't up to much, but Trevor Brooking's and Barry Davies' commentary on actua Soccer 2 was excellent and definitely heading in the right direction.

Anyway, impressive new aspects of Viva Football include the unique long-term challenge of competing as any international team from 1962 to 1998. Here you can replay and rewrite famous matches in football history, with all the Sixties matches being depicted in black and white and time running down on an authentic analogue clock. There's also tons of teams to play, 987 in all, and with 1,974 authentic kits, 16,224 players and 259,584 player attributes. Crimson and Virgin Interactive have made sure realism is the name of the game - no slouching here. And if that wasn't enough, they've recreated 300 stadiums from around the world, ranging from Wembley Stadium to The Sir Anerood Ruganth Stadium in Pamplemousses, Mauritius.

More high points include motion capture of over 5,400 keyframes, with players used from attack, midfield and defence to make sure, as Virgin claim, Viva is more realistic than any other football game. That's all we have so far on Viva Football; we'll have playable code to preview soon, but to keep your spirits high, here's the newest shots available of the game...



Viva Football boasts polished hi-res graphics, with a unique control system that gives players complete control.







Moves include one-twos, feints, dummies and through-balls. Experienced players will be able to perform pin-point pass and shots.

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.....

Postcode ..... **Daytime tel:** .....

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REVIEWS

x-rated



Plenty of high-speed action this month again, with (finally) the review of Gran Turismo plus the groovy new 70s-style car destruction game Vigilante 8, plus Supersonic's long-awaited top-down racer Circuit Breakers.

There's plenty of gratuitous violence in varying degrees as well, thanks to Dead Ball Zone, Vs And WCW Nitro, while it's party game central thanks to Namco's coin-op Point Blank and the SNES favourite Bomberman making it into fun-packed PSX form. Last but definitely not least is the hilarious frugging simulation, Bust-a-Move. Get Down!

· PAL
Armoured Core
Bomberman World
Circuit Breakers
Deadball Zone
Everybody's Golf
Gran Turismo
Klonoa
Kula World
Point Blank
Total NBA '98
Treasures of the Deep
Vigilante 8
Vs
WCW Nitro

· Import
Bust-a-Move: Rhythm and Dance
Parasite Eve

· Platinum
Command and Conquer
Soul Blade





REVIEW GUIDE

Score: 96-100%
A virtually perfect game that will quite probably change your life, bring about world peace and stamp out the Millennium bug . The digital equivalent of hearing a Jimi Hendrix solo for the first time. Owning it is, of course, mandatory.

Score: 90-95%
Quite probably a classic title, this baby pushes your buttons well and truly for months. A definite uber-game, it's strong in all aspects and supremely playable. Creates a feeling much like being chatted up by an All Saint.

Score: 80-89%
More than likely a front-runner in its genre; any game that gets a score in this tier should be tested out first. Rest assured, though, it's a fine title and well worth having a look at. Somewhat similar to an episode of Robot Wars, perhaps.

Score: 50-79%
Getting a bit wobbly here, and probably things are going a bit pear-shaped here, the game in question has probably got a few ropy qualities. A bit like the new Tortoise album, when all's said and done.

Score: 25-49%
A symphony of slurry, an opera of awfulness, games that attain this grade are frightfully shoddy and not much cop at all. Steer well clear of this, by heck, or you'll regret it, sonny. Most akin to that Celine Dion record that made it to Number One.

Score 00-24%
Only a game that's actively malicious and a deliberately misleading con could get a score this low. Possessing a black, cynical soul that scorns all that's good and beautiful on the earth, it has to be a blatant cash-in/rip-off/pack of lies to warrant such a drubbing. The final nadir of human decency.



The Aston Martin DB7 looks good in Canary Yellow, n'est pas?



tricky in comparison to the next, but the net result is you have to learn to take the curves cleanly, eking out every ounce of power and momentum from the sewing machine-engined Damio and its like. In addition, a spread of front-, rear- and four-wheel drive cars are used, meaning the fundamental differences in handling and power application must be absorbed to be successful. You must also make a decision as to which suits your developing driving style.

"...The long-term challenge doesn't come through unlocking tracks or cars, but through honing and evolving your driving style to the max..."

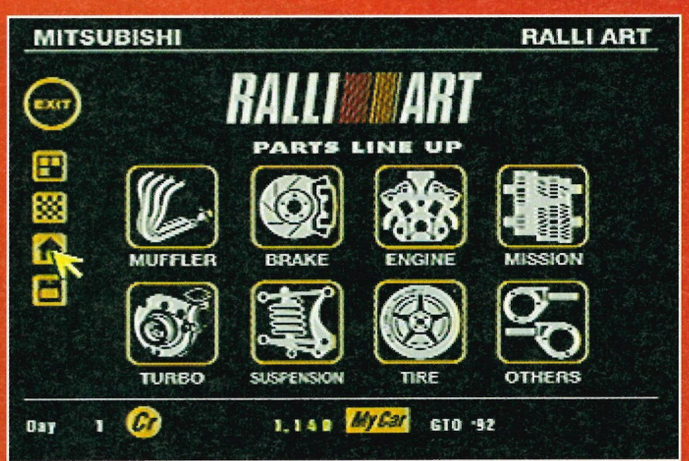
DEMON TWEAKS

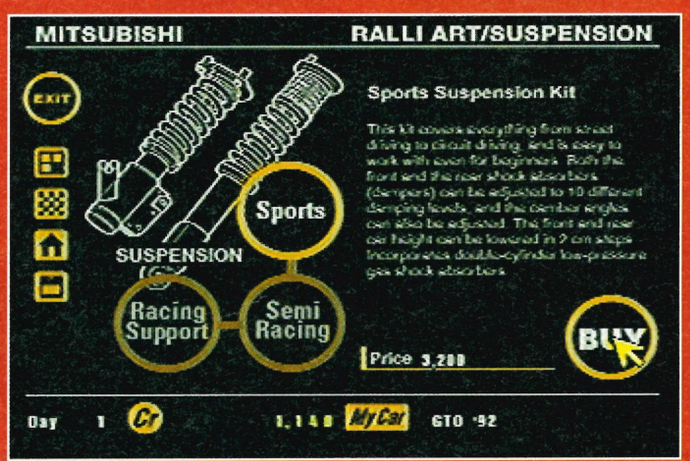
The number of adjustments or upgrades available to improve your car verges on the intimidating. The Haynes manual-lookalike Parts and Settings screens allow almost every aspect of a vehicle's specification can be fiddled with, made bigger or tuned to feck, turning your standard 'L' model into a fire-breathing Gti tarmac-eater.

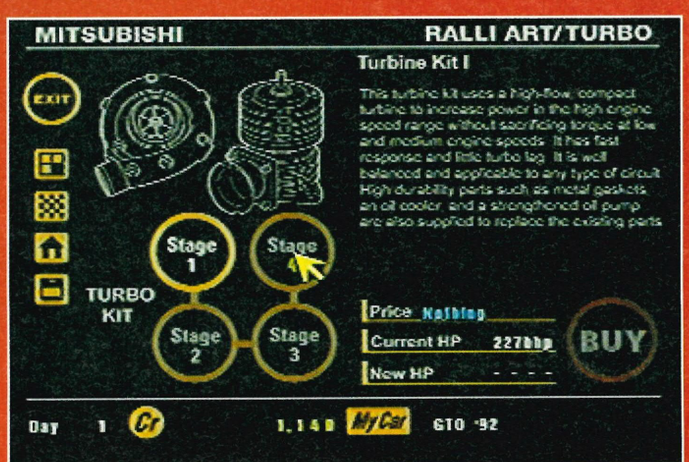
To start with, your engine can be 'chipped'; not so it can run import games, but so it sparks at a much higher rate than normal, increasing brake horsepower at the cost of a long life, while Port Grinding takes your power plant to bits and smoothes all the components out, reducing friction and again making you faster. Handling can be made sharper by adding racing suspension and stiff stabilisers that quell body roll, or soft 'n' sticky tyres that yield phenomenal levels of grip.

To get rid of all this extra velocity it's probably wise to invest in some huge carbon sports brakes that stop harder and fade less than your standard anchors, while a nimbler car is available by using the Weight Reduction option, which improves the vehicles handling, accelerating and stopping distance wholesale. As they say in the business, 'to increase speed, add lightness'.

After you've bought all this Max Power-type stuff, it's also possible to fine-tune the settings of individual parts to preference. For example, suspension can be made softer or harder depending on whether a track is twisty or fast, while gear ratios can be shifted comparatively to make a car with 'long legs' for lengthy straights or a low top speed, high acceleration burner for tight circuits. All the different permutations create virtually infinite possible options for a machine's set-up, ultimately dictated by your own taste and changing driving style, and by the particular quirks of a car's specification.



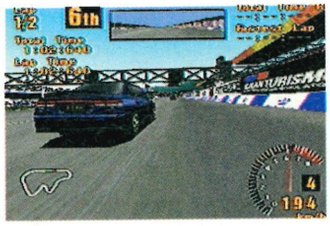






At its heart, Dodge Viper is a thoroughly American sports car driven by an awesome V10 engine. Its adrenaline-pumping performance and wholly unique look represent the ultimate prize for those with a true passion for automobiles. It is the conclusive expression of the Dodge "attitude". The Viper GTS Coupe and RT/10 Roadster are powered by the same awesome 488 cu in V10 engine; that power is channelled by a high-performance six-speed gearbox. Viper rides on a classic race-bred sports car chassis and suspension, massive high-performance tires, and heavy-duty brakes.

Viper is about driving, about the pure enjoyment of getting from point A to point B. There exists only the driver, the car and the road. Everything else is irrelevant. Viper is designed primarily to become a part of its environment - in the open air, with the air in your face, or on a busy street, filled with people, cars, sights and sounds.



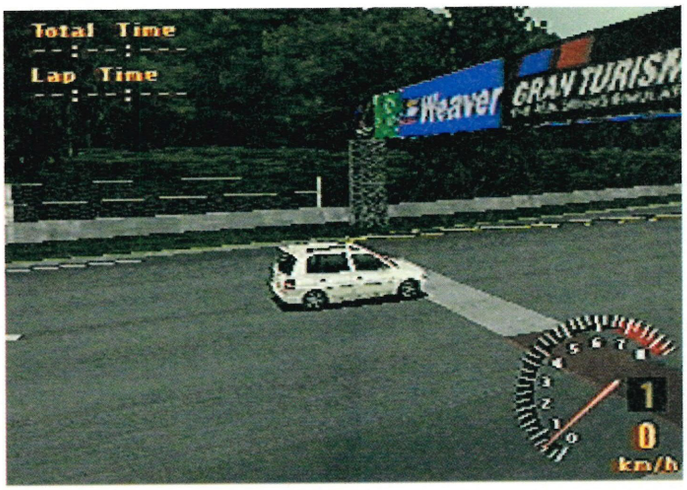


Since the day that a no-doubt bearded Californian boffin steered an X between a row of Os on a vastly-expensive college mainframe, the car-racing simulator has been a constant obsession for software designers. Our favourite form of personal transport has been repeatedly represented on screen in some form or other, the levels of realism in both appearance and real-world handling increasing in tandem with each new generation of machine. Early first- or third-person games tended to be more like 'move the road around the vehicle' efforts, the feeling of car on tarmac being rudimentary at best.

As sprite-shifting and ultimately polygon-based technology took hold, though, the sensations of speed and being in control of a ton of speeding metal grew, throwing up such seminal titles as Revs, Outrun and Stunt Car Racer, each of which introduced a new element of realism, either in the visual dimension or in the behaviour of the car, such as skidding, spins or rolling it over wholesale. Now, with the coming of the PlayStation era, the trend seems to have accelerated, as its memory capacity and 32-bit swiftness of processing has finally allowed the on-screen cars to look (as near as dammit) like their real-life counterparts. However, while most titles can boast this visual accuracy, the handling of the digital machines more often than not leaves a lot to be desired. They're often arcade-bred exaggerations, allowing outrageous slides and manoeuvres that would inevitably put you into the barrier in a genuine car, or unpredictable simulations that seem either too forgiving or overly jumpy, eg Newman-Haas and to a much lesser extent F1 '97.

"...After over three years of intense development, Gran Turismo is here, and computer games will never be the same again..."

Now, though, the stakes have been considerably raised. After over three years of intense development, Gran Turismo is here, and computer games will never be the same again. Mark my words.

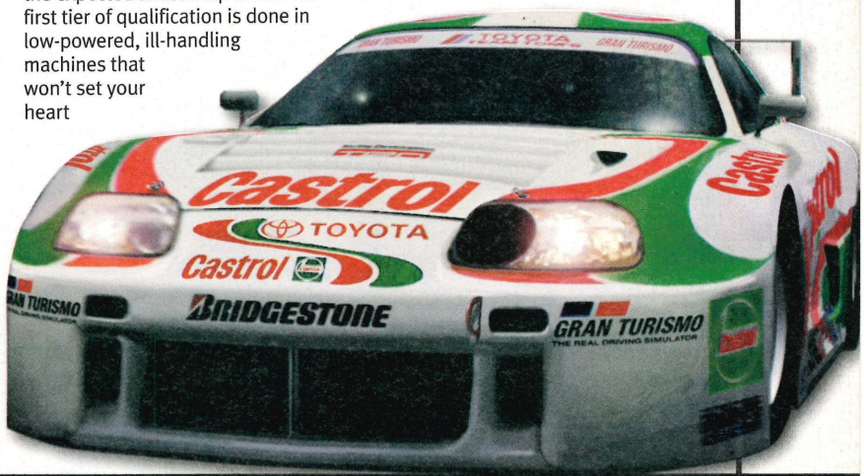


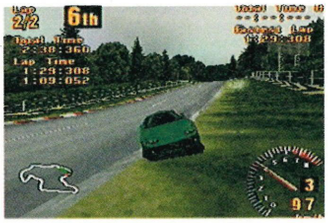
▲ This pasty bean-can peoplemover is the first licence test vehicle.

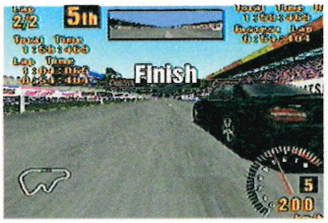
Cheap, Quick Thrills

The basic scenario (as such) for Gran Turismo is rigidly 'no frills' in its make-up. For cheap and convenient thrills there's a quick arcade play option that lets you race a grid of opponents in a fairly fast car without qualifying, but the real business lies in the full simulation mode. Before any serious racing for cash can be undertaken, you must first pass a ten-part licence test demanding a demonstration of basic skills such as starting and stopping, cornering at speed and tight manoeuvring, plus the expected limited lap times. This first tier of qualification is done in low-powered, ill-handling machines that won't set your heart racing, but are just as challenging to drive as the muscle cars available with time. The tasks set vary in difficulty, with some being especially



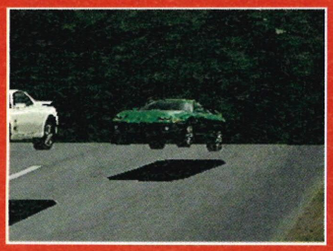




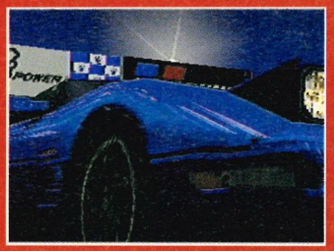


LOOK AT ME, MUMMY

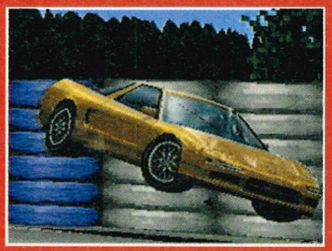
Here are some of the posiest stills I managed to grab from replays. Yeehaa!



Bo and Luke Duke have nothing on this pair of flash jumping jacks.



Extreme Close Up! Wooaaahh!



This champagne-golden NSX looks set for a nasty landing.



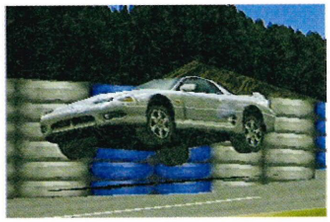
Light's a-blazin', the GTO streaks through the floodlit tunnel like a fast object.

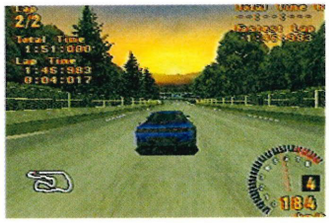


When I tap the dashboard, please accelerate to 160mph

We've previewed it to death, seen it in half a dozen Japanese/English incarnations and told all our mates how great it is. Now it's finally here, the finished UK version of the Most Eagerly Awaited Game This Year™. Was the hype and wait worth it? Are the graphics gob-smackingly amazing, as even the mainstream press have reported? And does the gameplay match the visuals? Only those grimly determined to keep the throttle mashed to the floorpan no matter what should read on...







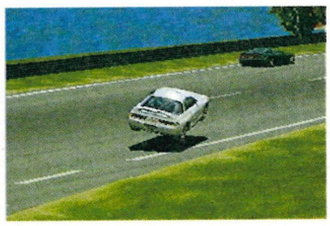
Completing the 'B' Class licence grants you £10,000 and access to the Sunday Cup League, pitting you against similarly-powered cars and drivers. At first you can only afford lower-grade cars, but win a few races and soon improvements can be made to the basic chassis. These adjustments include upgraded parts or fine tuning to the car's general set up (see boxout), and form a vital part of your car's competitive potential.

Consistent point-scoring accumulates credits (money) while winning a league gets you a car (which is usually be sold for ready cash). Only after gaining an International 'A' Class licence and amassing enough wedge in the higher formulae are the snazzy Special Racing editions of the bog-standard models with meteoric top speed and pinpoint handling be within your grasp.

Sinuous Skin

It seems almost boring saying it now, but the graphics in GT are stunning. The in-car view gives so much fine detail at long distances that the chase cameras become seriously redundant, while the usual bugbears of pop-up, clipping and tearing are only rarely hinted at, the vectors being all-but invisible in most cases. The texture-mapped 'skin' of the cars follow the sinuous lines of their real-life counterparts perfectly, the curvy coachwork sweeping aerodynamically and without the annoying crenellations plaguing less meticulously-programmed titles. In addition to the general high-quality sheen of the 3D models, they also move about at a wonderfully brisk pace, shifting from long distance to close up sweetly and without fuss. Far-off objects such as hoardings or trees are visible even when they're barely dots and 'grow' towards the camera until they fill the screen, only pixellating when you finally ram into them.

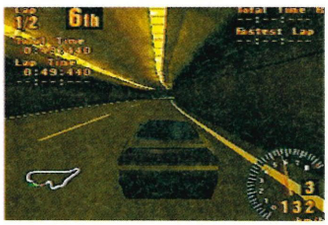


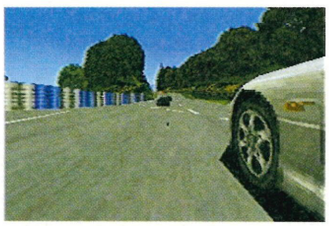


The car graphics themselves behave similarly, but with them it's possible to get even closer as the level of detail increases the nearer one gets, far beyond the mundane limits that have sufficed before. You can even tell what kind of car's in front of you by driving up to its boot lid and reading the badge stuck on it! On the daytime tracks there are real-time light reflection effects that spill fluidly over the mirror-shine bodies of the vehicles utterly realistically - so much so it's hard not to look into the reflection to see what's being reflected. This never-seen-before effect is compounded by the general high quality of the lighting used to illuminate the game. Ambient daylight looks freakishly 'right', the computer sun's rays creating a warm tone that subtly but accurately apes reality, replete with dappled shadows cast over the more tree-lined tracks.

> **"...The in-car view gives so much fine detail at long distances that the chase cameras become seriously redundant..."**

Full appreciation of this feature only comes when watching a race again through the genuinely jaw-dropping replay mode, at which point the full glory of GT's Performance Analyser-enhanced graphics (see last issue) are allowed to stretch their legs. Multiple camera views including panning, tracking and static shots are combined with lateral and vertical movement, making the cars rushing past look all the more rapid, while there are also wheel-well and three-quarter views of the car (straight out of Top Gear) that flatter your driving magnificently. Attention can be moved to whichever vehicle you







> "...The effort gone into accurately modelling the physics of driving has as much dedication put into it as the visual side of the game..."

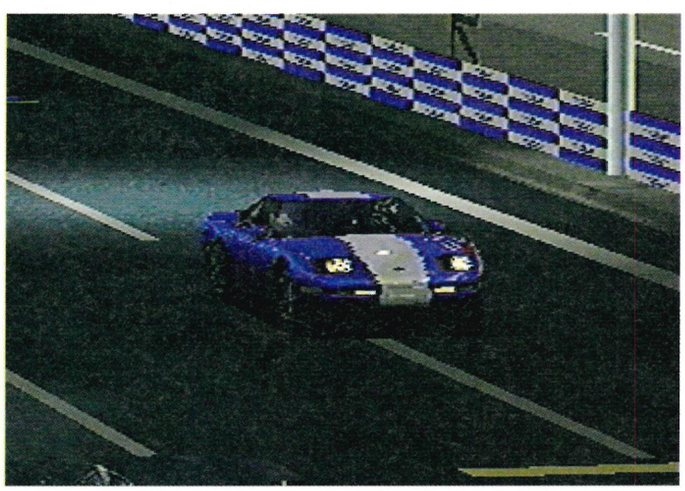
wish, and the action observed in-car or with rear view if necessary.

Independent suspension on each wheel allows each car to heel over or bounce on its shock absorbers, while tyres spin and brake lights illuminate along with the engine and steering. It's just like watching a little film starring yourself flying about at breakneck speed.

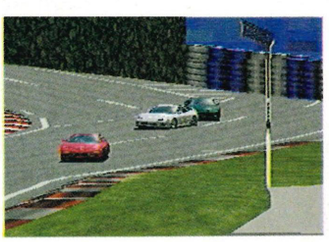
The sound is also a fundamental piece of the pleasure here, as individual engine notes can be picked out at a distance. In a splendid extra feature, the most spectacular replays can be saved off and recalled at will through the Replay Theatre option, which could (for your mates) end up like watching the lengthy holiday slide-shows your aunty use to make you sit through.

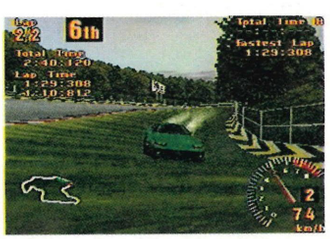
Hard to Handle

While the screenshots on these pages merely hint at the sublime graphical virtuosity Gran Turismo delivers, it's ultimately not this that truly makes the game great. The effort gone into accurately modelling the physics of driving has as much dedication put into it as the visual side of the game, as it's the first driving sim to comprehensively codify the highly complex shifts and shudders of real-world driving. As most adults have passed their driving test, the programmer's task is hard as everyone has an inkling of what a car should feel like to drive, and thus the standard of a game's real world dynamics need to be accordingly higher than if the subject vehicle's some far-out futuristic design. Of course, most games centre around hi-powered high-speed racing which hardly anyone has experienced, but nonetheless, silly handling is obvious to even the poorest drivers. Gran Turismo's subtitle is 'The Real Driving Simulator', an ambitious standard to aim for to say the least, but it's safe to say it really does digitise driving into a joypad-friendly form. All the arcane nuances of car-handling technique and hazards have been painstakingly reproduced to a near-obsessive level of accuracy. Uniquely present is lift-off oversteer, in which the back of the car swings around suddenly mid-corner if the power is dropped off

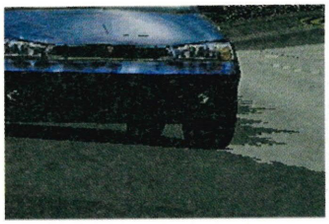






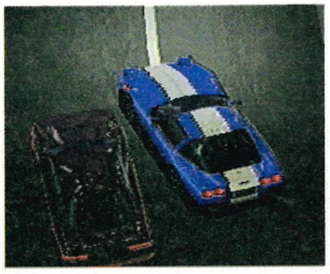












(especially in mid- or rear-engined cars), while 'wiggling' when braking and power under or oversteer are possible, making driving an awful lot more of a handful than you may be used to. Slamming on the brakes and jerking the car into a corner just won't do now, as a spin is inevitably your payment. Corners must be eased into, the brakes caressed lovingly but firmly, the accelerator applied only at the right time, without the jerking thrusts which might send the car over the edge of adhesion. Analog control is a definite advantage (in particular if it's via the new rumbly Dual Shock Pad), as the turn into bends must be an incremental lean rather than a simple digital on/off lacking precision. The upside of all the anal-retention and discipline required is the sense of achievement and thrill when a corner is taken properly and fast, which always raises a grin, and you know if you crash it's always for a good reason (though it's only a small consolation as you pirouette into the gravel for the nth time).

> "...Analog control is a definite advantage (in particular if it's via the new rumbly Dual Shock Pad)..."

Grit in the Lubricant

Not everything about Gran Turismo is perfect. The collisions between cars are a touch lumpen, so the old 'use the car in front as a brake' manoeuvre is still possible if the corner's coming up a bit fast. It's possible to punt off opponents, but only with a full-on T-bone ram, and this doesn't seem to screw up your own handling too much. Crashes never cause any damage, visible or mechanical, so a 140mph argument with a barrier leaves your motor unscathed. An option for realistically-delicate vehicles should be in there somewhere, an especially-puzzling omission as games like the upcoming Colin MacRae have ingenious virtual damage systems that calculate dents individually.

It's also impossible to flip the car over in Gran Turismo. You can tip it up onto two wheels so it teeters, but it never ends up on its roof, which is a great pity as a cataclysmic wipe-out can be just as satisfying as a clean and super-fast lap. The promised bonnet view is absent, as is the removal of the extreme slowdown uniquely present in the import Japanese version whenever the tyre smoke effect is on-screen. This is annoying during replays, but can make recovering from spins much harder than it should be as the rate of turning oscillates when clouds of burnt rubber come into view, usually provoking fatal steering overcompensation and more spinning.

Unforgivably (as far as we're concerned), yet again the two-player option is split screen, which although faster and smoother than most of its rivals, is still an extremely poor cousin to a serial link mode. It almost goes without saying that if this had been present it would have been mind-blowing.

The much-vaunted music is also a disappointment. The Manics/Chemical Brothers track is great but FMV-only, while in the game only the Ash track evokes the fast and furious atmosphere required, and even that's not too hot. Worse, though, is the menu screen music which is not only very tepid, but changes for each screen. Quickly flicking through menus triggers a different tune with each button press. Most annoying to say the least, especially as only the in-game background music can be turned off, so you're stuck with endless weedy twittering guitar licks for what seems like ages. However, in spite of all this, do bear in mind that the ultra-high quality of the rest of the game make these quibbles sound more troublesome than they really are. It's all a case of proportion, really.

Speed King

While it's fastidious nature may not appeal to those who prefer their thrills quick and convenient, it's fair to say Gran Turismo hoses quite conclusively over the opposition in the same field. The long-term challenge doesn't come through unlocking tracks or cars, but through honing and evolving your driving style to the max, shaving off ever-decreasing margins of perfection from your lap times. The sublime environment and revolutionary visuals harmonise with the gameplay like a Bach symphony. Pretentious? For sure, but such wanky language is needed to convey the maestro nature of Gran Turismo. Get a copy, book some holiday and put your right foot down.

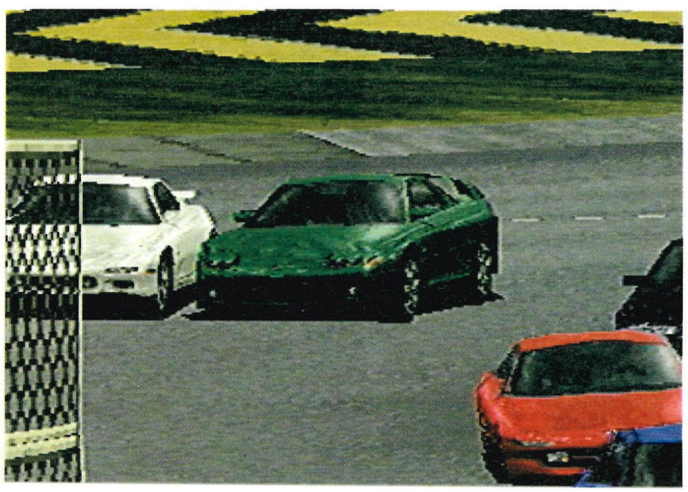
EPM

CHRISTIAN

Second Opinion

This is by far the most addictive racer on the PSX. Awesome graphics, realistic handling and a massive selection of cars make this a 'must have'. If this is speeding towards your collection, fork out for the dual shock as well. Perfect harmony!

Darren



The Score

Publisher	SCEE
Developer	SONY JAPAN
Released	OUT NOW
Version	UK
Price	£44.99
Genre	DRIVING SIM
Players	1-2
Memory Card	✓
Analog	✓
Dual Shock	✓
Steering Wheel	✓

GAMEPLAY
9

ORIGINALITY
8

LIFESPAN
10

SOUND
8

GRAPHICS
10

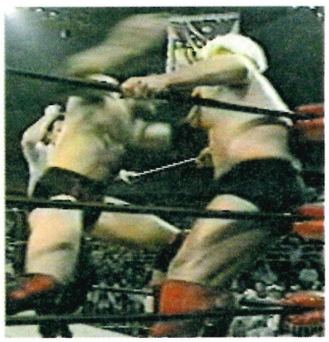
OVERALL
96%

in summary

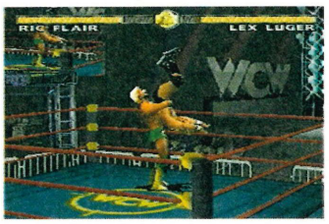
The first third-generation PlayStation game for sure.

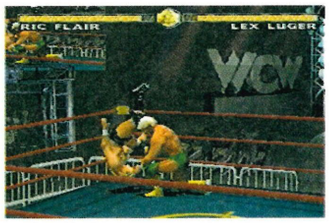
WCW Nitro

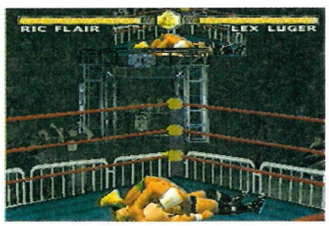
Make sure the bout really, genuinely, honestly isn't a fix with THQ

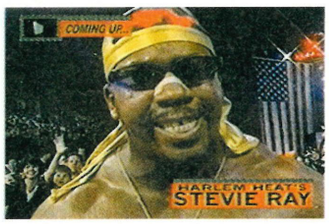


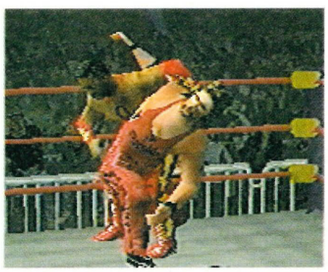










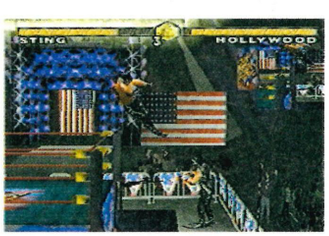


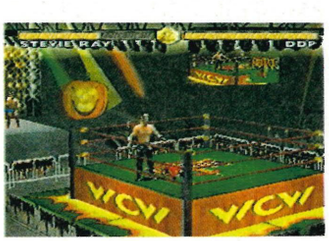
While UK wrestling brings back memories of Big Daddy and Giant Haystacks having it out in front of braying grannies at Croydon, the hyper-razzmatazz American equivalent focuses on steroid-augmented and terribly damp men with awful curly mullets and macho made-up names flinging each other about with impressive choreography and overstatement. The numerous splinter organisations in US pro-wrestling each have their own stable of star grunters to battle one another, the outcomes being only thinly-veiled fixes that ensure entertainment and acrobatics for the Bud-swilling crowds.

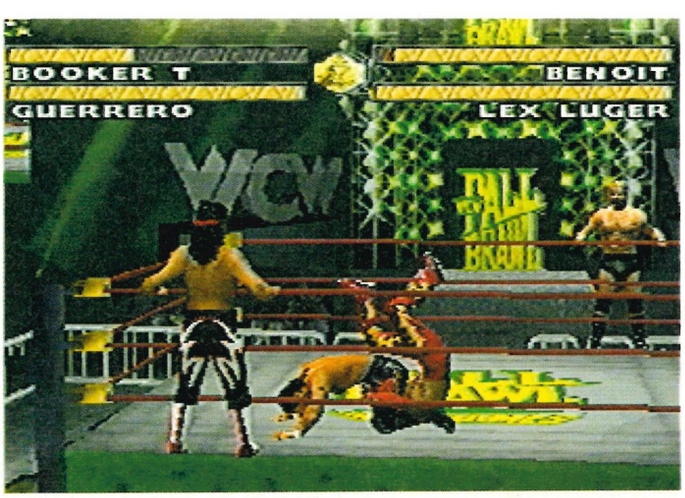
So how does a sport that's basically a choreographed spectacle translate into a PlayStation game, bearing in mind its essentially non-competitive nature? Well, actually without too much difficulty, as the co-operation required in real-life bouts between wrestlers to enable the ridiculous moves they attempt isn't necessary, as the digital grapplers can be programmed to pull off these outrageous attacks perfectly and without assistance. This particular game is based on the WCW organisation and doesn't shy short of piling on the cheeseball gloss, mainly in the shape of badly-digitised photographs and blazered announcers full of mock gravitas. There are up to 64 wrestlers available, from the ubiquitous Hulk Hogan (who now has a 'Hollywood' prefix to his name for some reason), to the more obscure participants such as Sonny Onoo and Pee Wee. Each bone-bender has been converted to actually-quite-good polygon form, all to accurate scale and with authentic over-snug trunk designs. The character sprites are huge and extremely nicely detailed, particularly in the shading that makes their skin look especially realistic (albeit without the authentic sheen of grimy perspiration and banana oil), each being instantly recognisable by their facial hair alone.

> "...The character sprites are huge and extremely nicely detailed, particularly in the shading that makes their skin look especially realistic..."

The whole range of standard wrestling moves are present, including splashes, elbow drops, pile drivers, backbusters and clotheslines, while the more exotic and outrageous manoeuvres such as the 'jump out of the ring' gambit and the always-charming 'climb up onto the post and hurl yourself off' attack are winners. Each character has his own individual special moves used for a stylish coup-de-grace, such as Lex Luger's Torture Rack and Macho Man Randy Savage's surely-illegal Atomic Head Butt.



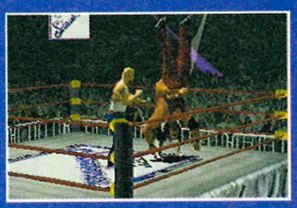




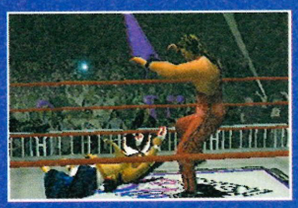
▲ Hot, tight-leather-trousered face-sitting action a go-go.

HELP! I NEED SOMEBODY...

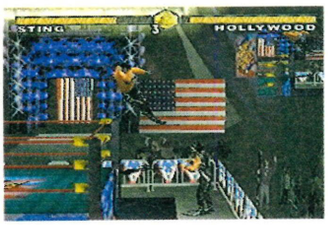


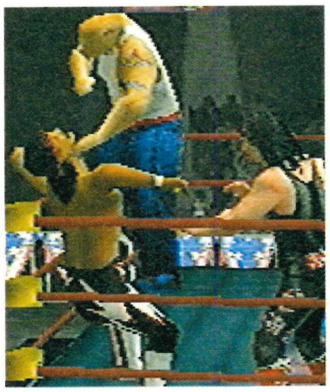






If the going gets a bit tough, a tap of the Select button summons this bald bloke (just like in the Godzilla cartoon of old) who sprints from the entrance of the building to the ring side, vaults the ropes and weighs in against your opponent! Hammering the 'Taunt' button while he's doing this helps regain energy, leaving you free to finish the other wrestler off, as seen here. Not bad, eh? Go, on get 'im! Heh, heh, heh...







A straightforward energy bar at the top of the screen is gradually worn away through repeated punching, kicking and chops. As it dwindles, it leaves the wrestler more susceptible to certain special moves or to being pinned for the vital count of three. Up 'til this point it's possible to throw an opponent off with a spasm of the chest, buying a few moments of time to recover and counterstrike before it's too late. Rolling under the ropes is a fine method of escape and recovery, but there's only a limited amount of (user-defined) time one can remain outside, so this respite must be employed wisely. If in extreme dire straits, help can be obtained by hitting Select (see boxout).

One-uh, Two-uh, Three-uh....

The trouble with WCW Nitro is while the fairly relaxed pace of things may accurately reflect the real sport, it doesn't help in making an exciting video game, particularly as the unresponsive controls take the edge off the playability somewhat anyway. While all the bona fide spectacular moves are present and correct, they don't seem particularly challenging to employ, particularly as there's no block move (or at least its wrestling equivalent), or side-step, or indeed much actual grappling. Once a move is underway there's very little that can be done to counter it, leaving the action only a partially satisfying experience at best. CPU and

> **"...Once a move is underway there's very little that can be done to counter it..."**

computer opponents are of course available, as well as a tag-team option that lets you switch between wrestlers when they've taken a pounding. Unfortunately, as your partner stands at the ropes he stays dumbly still, not even turning his head to look at his comrade wrestler as he tumbles past to hit the deck. It's little points like this which point to WCW being a fairly low-tech piece of programming that just about gets away with it due to the matching simplistic nature of pro wrestling, but leaves you feeling somewhat short-changed as a player .

Slack Ring

Apart from the wrestlers themselves, the graphics are as a whole uninspiring and slack. The ringside area (which in reality is alive with shouting and gesticulating Yanks going ape at their heroes) is depicted as a faceless homogenic grey mass that stays eerily static and unseen regardless of the action on stage (as such), while the arenas themselves are virtually identical, apart from a few very minor cosmetic colour differences. All the gaudy flashing lights and hoo-haa of a real WCW meet have been omitted, which is strange seeing as all of that kind of thing is at least 50% of the attraction for aficionados. There's also no in-game commentary, which is almost unheard of nowadays. The over-the-top exhortations of even a fairly reserved pundit are fairly entertaining, and would have spiced proceedings up a tad.

Apart from the adequate thuds and grunts of the melee, there's only the toe-curling fluff metal soundtrack to hear, which again is wholly authentic but an awful lot like volunteering for root canal treatment. As well as this, the generally shoddy look of the game makes it only attractive to those already into the scene as such, offering little else for the more casual player. This workmanlike ethic prevents the game from potentially garnering any particular affection in spite its lumpy gameplay, which is a pity. Although it probably wouldn't seriously rival a game such as Tekken 3 or Cardinal Syn for longevity, it could have been ideal for short, sharp mindless two-player slugfests.

EPM
CHRISTIAN

Second Opinion

The way you chain moves together is cool, and as Christian rightly says, the exaggerated stuff works well as a game. I'd have given it at least 70%, even though two of the featured grapplers have already left WCW.

Ian

The Score

Publisher	THQ INC.
Developer	INLAND
Released	19TH JUNE
Version	UK
Price	£44.99
Genre	BEAT-'EM-UP
Players	1-2
Memory Card	✓

GAMEPLAY
5
ORIGINALITY
7
LIFESPAN
6
SOUND
4
GRAPHICS
7
OVERALL
55%

in summary

Sweaty leotards yes, sweaty hands, no.

Bomberman World

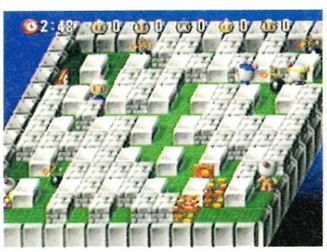
Make your PSX go with a bang...

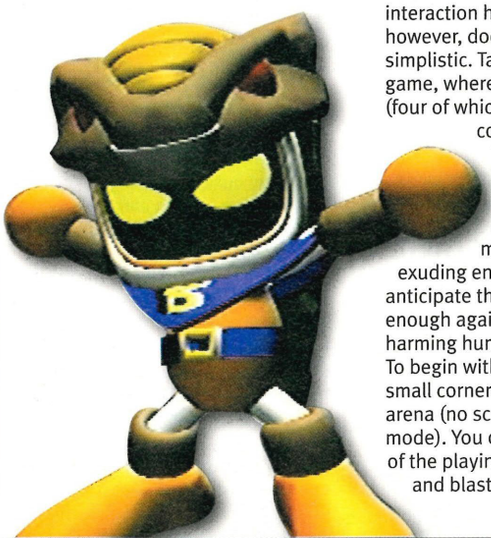
With Poy Poy taking Japan by storm, it was inevitable Bomberman, the granddaddy of all multiplayer bash-yer-buddies games, would make a PSX appearance. After the poorly-updated N64 version, though, what would it look like? Thankfully, we needn't have worried. Bomberman World is, despite a few niggles, a cool title and far superior to the hit-and-miss Bomberman 64.

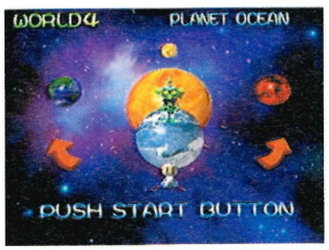
Just like Poy Poy (reviewed last ish), the Bomberman titles are best experienced as multiplayer outings. Like sex, playing by yourself only hints at the fun you can have. Bomberman World also boasts a credible if flawed one-player offering too. The game mechanics for both are essentially the same. You control a character that looks like a Lego deserter. Your only real abilities are to waddle along at a snail-like pace and use bombs; You can't jump, for example, or shoot, though with the right power-ups you can pick up and throw bombs, drop more than one at a time or kick the explosives into place. Use what you have to take out human and CPU enemies and (in single-player mode) open the inevitable level exit by collecting gems.

The action takes place in a two-dimensional arena, which (unlike the 16-bit original) is viewed from a 3D perspective. The playing areas are built as if on square grids, and peppered with both indestructible and breakable obstacles. The brittle barriers can be blasted with your bombs, allowing access to new areas.

As well as the aforementioned abilities, grabbing power-ups can improve factors such as your bomb's blasting power and your running speed. An unenhanced Bomberman can't move or pick up a bomb when it's laid, and nor can he walk past it. Take care where you place them too - a misplaced bomb can blow up yourself instead of your intended target.









> **"...Being simple, however, doesn't make the game simplistic..."**

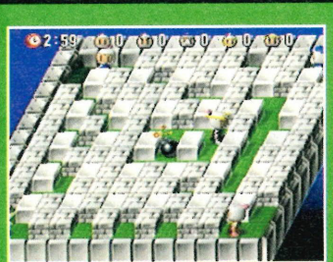
Bomb the World...

If this sounds incredibly simple, it's because it is - no umpteen-button combinations and complex interaction here. Being simple, however, doesn't make the game simplistic. Take the multiplayer game, where up to five characters (four of which can be human-controlled) can compete. There's a whole host of intricate strategies you can use to trap and trash your foes. To master your explosive-exuding enemies you must anticipate their moves. This is fun enough against the CPU drones, but harming human foes is a real hoot. To begin with, you're cramped in a small corner of the single-screen arena (no scrolling in multiplayer mode). You open up more and more of the playing area by laying bombs and blasting apart the fragile obstacles blocking your path. With any luck, you find some power-ups en route. When the way ahead is reasonably clear and you face your frightening foes, the real fun starts.

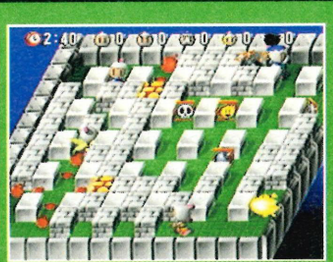


By dropping a couple of bombs in succession or kicking one into place (both possible if you have the correct power-up) you can create large no-go areas for your foes, forcing them to take cover ready for the impending explosion. Make sure you have enough hideaways for yourself, too. Because you can't walk over a bomb, a player hiding in a dead end can be trapped by placing a Christmas pudding-like device in his way. He's forced to sit and wait for the inevitably-fatal explosion. Tricks and tactics like this that really make the game, but they were all-but absent in the N64

FOUR-PLAYER FRENZY



At the start of a multiplayer match, the characters are boxed in, with little room to manoeuvre.



By placing bombs near the fragile obstacles blocking their way, they gradually blast their way through the arena, gathering power-ups and moving towards each other.

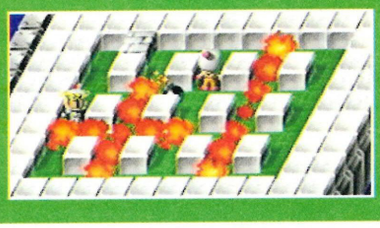


Eventually they've cleared enough space to trap and trash each other. Do you go for your foes or try to gather more power-ups? What a dilemma...



There can be only one winner.

BLASTING POWER



Bombs explode in a cross-shaped blast, fiery tentacles extending vertically and horizontally away from the centre. The length of these blasts can be increased by picking up power-ups.



offering because of the wide-open arenas and dome-shaped explosions, completely destroying the blast-and-hide, seat-of-your-trolleys excitement. The PlayStation wins again!

Because you can assign any of the characters to the CPU, you can play with a full compliment of troops even if you haven't enough buddies to bomb. You can even play the 'multi'player game on your own this way. If you prefer not to use CPU drones you can fight with fewer foes. We're talking versatile city here.

Needless to say, you've plenty of arenas in which to indulge yourself, and they're all just the right size - you've enough time to carve your way through the territory picking up power-ups, but you're not so far apart you get bored while trying to reach each other. Some include gimmicks such as floating platforms, but these never detract from the simple playability of the game. There's a wealth of options on offer too, customising parameters and features. For example, defeated bombers can fly around the edge of the arena, throwing bombs and generally mucking up everyone else's game. Saves getting bored when you're dead...

The Lone Bomber...

And the one-player game? It works reasonably well. Battle your way to the heart of the enemy stronghold by taking over four planets, trashing the end-of-level baddies to win the world. Push-scrolling game zones replace the single-screen arenas, and the enemies are creatures of varying abilities and intelligence. By laying a bomb and moving your character you can usually guide your foes to disaster, as long as you understand their movement patterns. The end-of-level foes are wonderfully atmospheric, blending in perfectly with the Bomberman character and looking just like evil versions of our hero. Standard baddies are a little weak, though.

Bomberman must collect the jewels to open the exit, but don't expect it to be easy. As well as monsters, there are minor puzzles along the way too. Blow a tree to create a bridge, kill the monster that's carrying a gem, follow the moving platform; they're hardly rocket science, but add a little variety to the proceedings. You'd better hurry, too - there's a time limit.

Unfortunately, the one-player game's niggles identified in last month's preview have not been corrected. When you die, you restart a level from scratch instead of being reborn where you fell. This is annoying, even though the levels are short. Even more annoying is the time it takes to get back into the game. The 'Area 2-3: Start' message takes long enough, but when you fall to a boss, you're treated to a 20-second animation of him arriving and taunting you - every time you restart. While you're getting used to a new boss you can spend more time watching the animation than fighting your foe. How much playtesting would be required to see this? How much trouble would it be to offer the sequence FIRST time you arrive meet him, and then get straight into the fight when you're reborn with a new life? Finally,



although it makes sense for power-ups to last for only one 'life' in the multiplayer game, why is this so for the one-player offering? Losing all your carefully-gathered goodies the first time you make a fatal foul-up is irritating to say the least.

These niggles certainly reduce (but by no means ruin) the one-player opus, but Bomerman always worked better with a few friends. On this level, it can't be faulted.

EPM

IAN



> "...The end-of-level foes are wonderfully atmospheric, blending in perfectly with the Bomberman character..."

Second Opinion

The excellent multi-player game makes this the perfect after-pub button-basher. The one-player game is flawed, but who cares? Multi-play kicks ass!

Darren



▲ The first boss is a tree, and his bark's worse than his bite.



The Score

Publisher	SCEE
Developer	HUDSON SOFT
Released	JUNE
Version	UK
Price	£39.99
Genre	ACTION
Players	1-4
Memory Card	✓
Multi Tap	✓

GAMEPLAY **9**

ORIGINALITY **8**

LIFESPAN **8**

SOUND **7**

GRAPHICS **7**

OVERALL **83%**

in summary

It's a blast!

Dead Ball Zone

It's just not cricket...

Violence sells. Be it in films, books, sport or videogames, violence is one of the biggest commodities the entertainment industry has, and with the release of Dead Ball Zone it's not gonna let up; not on the videogame front, anyway.

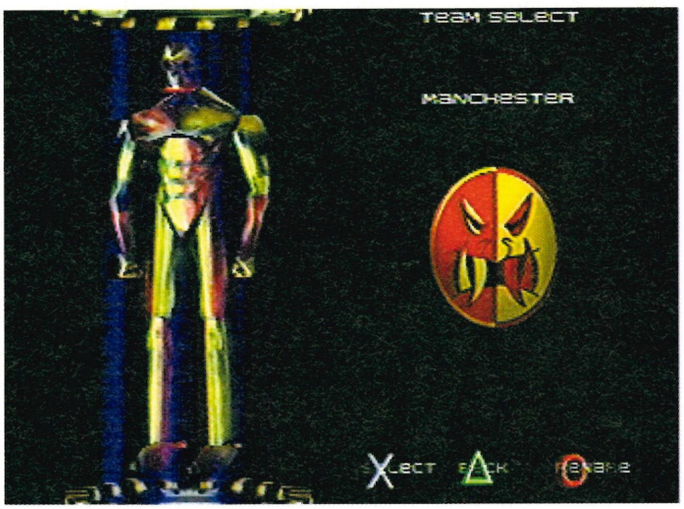


Older gamers will remember a certain Bitmap Brothers game on the Amiga. It wasn't the first game of its kind, but Speedball 2 delivered the fastest, most polished and most playable future sports game the world had ever seen. Years later this situation hasn't changed. It's not that people look back at Speedball 2 with the fondest of memories; it's that they're still playing it over six years after its original release. Things are about to change, though, because Dead Ball Zone takes the future sports game even further into the future.

The world has suffered a mass economic and social crisis, poverty is at an all-time high and society has split. Massive self-contained complexes called Geospheres have sprung up, dedicated to researching the world's problems. Only the privileged live inside the complexes; the rest have to fight for life in the no-go areas of the world. However, there is one chance of gaining entry into the luxury life of the Geospheres - Dead Ball Zone.

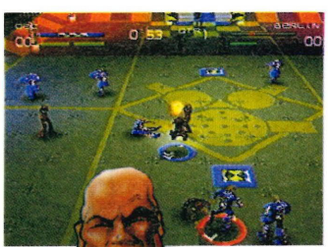
This, the most violent of violent sports, started life in the underground but quickly became popular in the Geospheres; so much so they now run massive tournaments to find the best DBZ teams. Winning a tournament ensures entry into the Geospheres, which is where you come in.

You start with a choice of six teams from the lower echelons of the DBZ leagues. You have one goal; to make it to the DBZ tournament in your local Geosphere and become the champion. In return, untold status and plenty of wealth and luxury will be yours. The starting teams aren't the fastest or strongest around, but with names like Dominators, Killa Klowns and Voodoo, they're no weaklings either. Once you choose a team, you're given the choice of going to either the team management section or straight into a match.

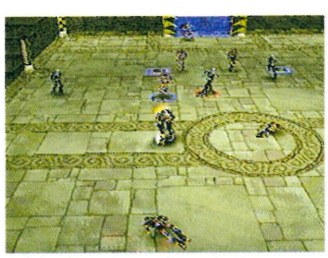


Surprise, surprise, Manchester is England's team .



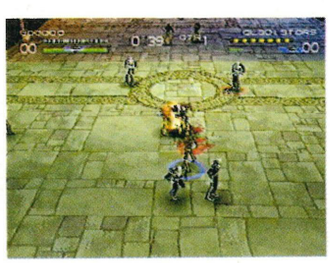


"...Dead Ball Zone takes the future sports game even further into the future..."



Malicious Management

The management screen allows you to set up a number of different parameters on your team, from training and team roster to team formation and injury nursing. At the start your entire squad are in perfect health, which is denoted by a small bar with OK on it. After a few games, though, your team starts to look a bit ragged - the bars shorten and a percentage appears on them. To rectify this you need to enter the training section. Here you have five bars that can be placed on any one of five different areas. These are passing/shooting, toughness/strength, speed/agility, mentality and injury. Placing your five bars onto the different areas results in more training effort going into that section. An injured player requires a couple of bars on the injury side of things. Once fixed up, you can start repositioning the bars. If, for example, your player's low on passing and shooting tactics, you may want to concentrate all of your training on this section.





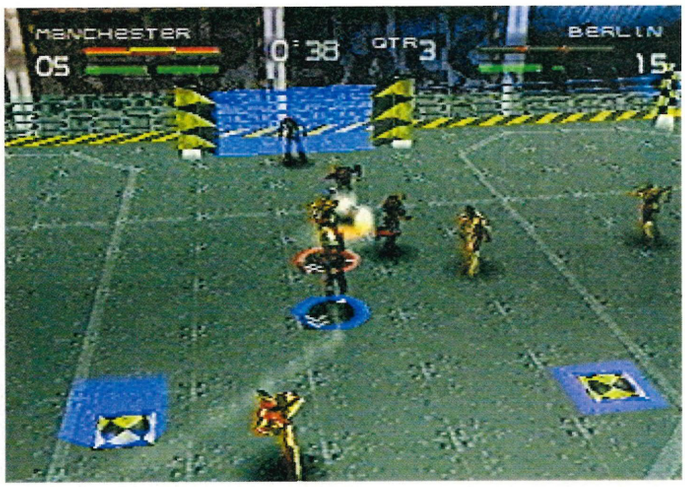




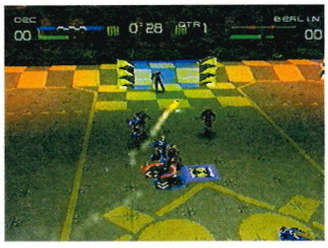
PLAYERS' NAMES

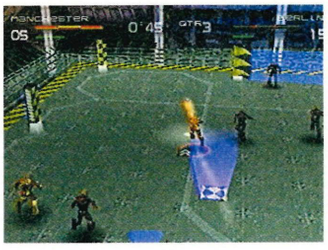
SQUAD	HEALTH	SUBS	HEALTH
GRIZOR EYEBALL	85%	DEKE TAPEWORM	85%
ROB RAMOX	87%	KORZAG ANTLER	85%
DEAN STEELE	85%	JUAN INJECTION	87%
TED TWIN TRIFLE	86%	GRANT WIZBOUSKI	85%
JONNY FURY	85%	OREGAN CHINSKI	87%
FRED INSANE	85%	REAPER DEEVER	85%
PAUL CLEAVER	87%	SOLLY COBRA	85%
TETSUO PINCER	87%	NAPALM DIAMOND	85%

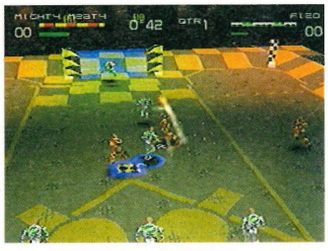
To add a little light-hearted fun to the deathly violence that oozes out of Dead Ball Zone, Rage Software has added a name generator for the players. The generator builds new names for the players every time you start a new name. Rage have opted out of the 'Smith and Jones' trap, though. Instead we get names like Tetsuo Pincer, Fred Insane and Ted Twin Trifle.











> **"...The game itself is very simple. There's only one rule, and that says, 'there are no rules'..."**

You find yourself constantly changing things around in the training part of the game, and although DBZ is made better by its inclusion, it could have been made a little more intuitive. At times the system can become too fiddly, and you find the process becomes too drawn out, especially when you have the whole of your squad to sort out before a match. However, the actual presentation of the management and option screens in general is second to none. Each time you enter a new screen the menus are drawn in a suitably futuristic fashion. It takes a little time for the menus to appear, but the effect is superb.

After deciding on a starting line-up and suitable team formation it's straight into the match, which is were things really start to hot up. The game itself is very simple. There's only one rule, and that says, 'there are no rules'. The idea is to get the ball into the goals at either end of the pitch. Each team has eight players who's jobs vary, but it all comes down to throwing the ball around in a bid to get those all-important points. The points vary for each goal depending on how close you were for the shot, but ultimately it doesn't matter how you get them. You can opt to play a skilful passing game or go straight for the jugular with a violent team of thugs and yobbos. The latter of the two approaches is helped by the inclusion of some mega-violent special moves that can be pulled off with different button combinations. These range from the excellent kick in the gonads to a straightforward but effective head butt, to even more complex wrestling-style moves. At first you may find it hard to execute them, but after a few plays your feet constantly find themselves in the opponent's crotch and your forehead often plasters onto their noses. Each punch, kick or butt is met with a resounding thud or smack, and a healthy dose of blood to add to the plainly gratuitous violence DBZ offers.

With Fist and Foot...

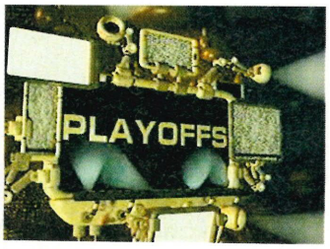
Adding to the good old hand-to-hand combat is a varied selection of weapons you can certainly make good use of. Among these are chainsaws, guns and, the most devastating of all, the bomb. Before each game you get to decide which selection of weapons to choose. If the weapons were unlimited, DBZ would be a shoot-'em-up and not a future sports game, which is why you only get a few weapons for every match. If you feel the weapons make things too easy, though, you can always turn them off and stick to Queensbury rules.

Playing DBZ can be a bit daunting at first. This is mainly because the











Contestants - choose your weapons.

DBZ TIMELINE

1998
London is expanding, investment is on the up, employment and wealth are burgeoning.

2002
London attracts more international visitors than ever before, and is fast becoming the cultural and financial world capital.

2030
The growth in London has caused increased traffic, industry, pollution and poverty. Social groups are forming according to wealth, status and intellect.

2035
The police-like state formed in London to combat increased crime has backfired. Powers of arrest are ridiculous and official trials are rare. This sparked of the Blackfriars riot which in turn gave police new powers to shoot rioters on sight.

SUMMER 2050
London is full to the brim. The unbearable heat of the summer causes more civil unrest. The police cannot handle it and London is on the brink of collapse.

28th NOVEMBER 2050
Asian investors are forced to withdraw money from London due to civil war in Asia. The repercussions result in the world's worst ever financial disaster. A world summit is held which brings about the 2050 Declaration of World Disaster. This declaration means each country is committed to helping others solve social and economic problems.

JANUARY 2055
The peasants revolt! Looting is widespread and nothing gets repaired. The British situation is exactly the same as the rest of the world. World governments are facing the largest social crisis ever. Underworld and Mafia bosses exploit the situation and drug abuse becomes an epidemic.

2061
People are starving, and all-but-major cities become no-go areas. People are turning to cannibalism just to survive.

2081
NKD, one of the few surviving organisations with money behind it, reveals plans for a new type of research complex - the Geosphere. Suggestions that every country build these massive structures in their major cities are made. Each totally self-contained complex should concentrate on solving one social, economic or scientific problem in a bid to get the world back on track. A new co-operative spirit is blossoming.

2090
There are now ten Geospheres around the world. The aim is for them to become totally self-sufficient and contact with the outside world is limited. Trips out of the Geospheres are usually supported by heavy police and military presence.

2101
News of a new form of entertainment arrives at the Geospheres. Dead Ball Zone is played in reclaimed sewers and other such underground locations, in the no-go areas of the country. Leaders feel it could become new entertainment to keep staff happy, so secret envoys are sent out to film the games.

2102
Scientific research into violence shows Dead Ball Zone should only ever be played by the lower classes of citizens. The mungos, if you like. However, the research also shows violence acts as a release valve for the more intellectual types, so DBZ is sanctioned by the authorities.

2150
The Geospheres expand to almost city-like proportions. However, outside recruitment is very limited; only born-and-bred Geosphere residents are welcome. Research continues into the world's social and economic problems.

2160
The Geospheres want to hold a tournament. The winner of each national tournament wins the right to represent their Geosphere in a world-wide tournament. Winners gain entry to the Geosphere and are offered wealth, luxury and status they could only ever dream of outside of the spheres.

2161
You've got it all to play for; work your way through the ranks and win your place in the Geosphere. Let the games begin!

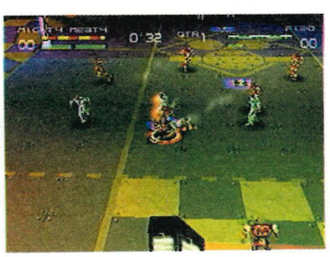
action is so fast-paced. Because of the extremely fiddly controls, you may want to give up on DBZ after your first few plays. With a little perseverance and effort, though, the controls become almost second nature. Once you're adept at controlling your team, the game brings on a whole new light. You find yourself putting together some silky-smooth passes, defence-breaking runs and crunching power tackles. This, however, doesn't alter the fact that at times it feels the odds are stacked against you. The AI of the opposing teams, although fine most of the time, can become a little aggressive if the CPU decides you shouldn't win the match. At times the opposing teams just wipe the floor with you, no matter what you do to stop it. This is only occasional, but when it happens it can be damn frustrating and, in my eyes, totally uncalled for. You won't get into this situation when playing the superb two-player game, which offers as much fun as any of the best footy titles available at the moment.

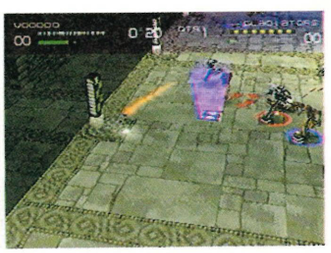
Players on the receiving end of a good kicking lose energy as the game progresses, so at the end of every quarter it pays to substitute injured players. If you leave an injured player on and he receives even more of a pasting, he could end up karking it in the middle of the game. Besides leaving you a player short, this also provides an amusing image of some poor bloke on the floor in a pool of blood while the game carries on around him. In fact, even without dead players on the pitch the floor is always covered in something, be it blood or green pools of sick which injured players tend to yak up.

There are over 15 arenas available to play in, although not all can be accessed at the start of the



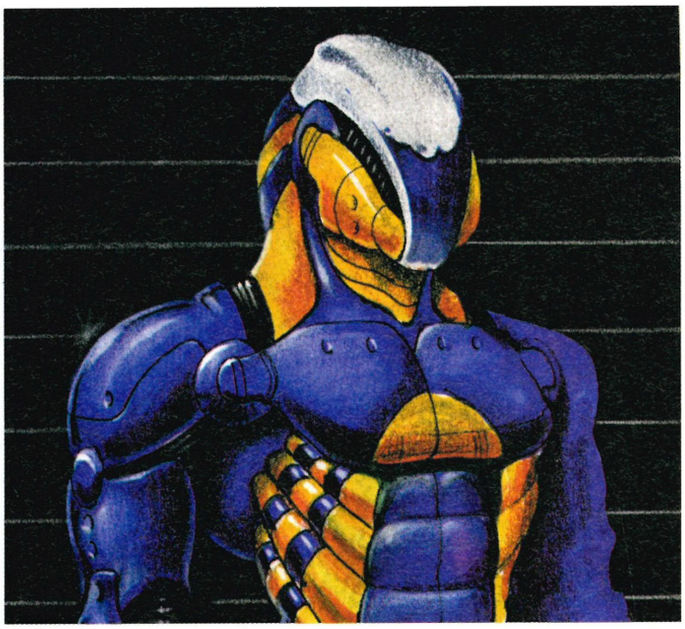
Can't win by fair means? Kick 'em in the nads!







These beams alter the ball's trajectory.

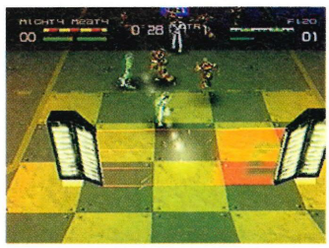


> "...Each move looks smooth and precise, which is quite a feat. considering DBZ runs at such a high speed..."

game. As you progress you come across some excellent-looking arenas that range from dark, dank sewer systems to hi-tech Geocities. Each has its own theme and atmosphere, so you do notice when you come across another one, unlike many sports games where one stadium looks like any other.

Surrounding the pitch is a transparent energy field that can be used to bounce the ball off like in five-a-side. Every time you hit the energy field it glows and moves with the ball for an excellent visual effect. The players themselves have all been hand-animated to the highest of standards. Each head butt, punch, diving tackle or special move looks smooth and precise, which is quite a feat. considering DBZ runs at such a high speed. The players themselves all look the part, with some of the best looking kit design we've seen - there's no plain grey and black kits as seen on Speedball 2 here. This, however, brings some problems. You find some of the teams inevitably clash and because there are no away kits, there's no way of rectifying the problem.

DBZ's few flaws don't detract from the fact that it's an incredibly competitive and enjoyable game to play, against the computer or a mate.





The management section and overall polished presentation add to action that's as fast or even faster than most other team-against-team sports games on the market. With excellent graphics and animation to back this up, DBZ is certain to become a hit. It's also certain to raise a few eyebrows with its over-the-top violence, but that's no bad thing in my eyes. Dead Ball Zone - hard-hitting futuristic sports action that should not be missed.

EPM

SAUL





An example of how littered with bodies the floor can get.

Second Opinion

This futuristic sports sim really kicks you in the knackers. Awesome graphics, sound and gameplay gel perfectly.

Darren

The Score

Publisher	GT
Developer	RAGE
Released	29TH MAY
Version	UK
Price	£39.99
Genre	FUTURE SPORTS
Players	1-2
Memory Card	✓
Analog	✓

GAMEPLAY
9

ORIGINALITY
8

LIFESPAN
9

SOUND
8

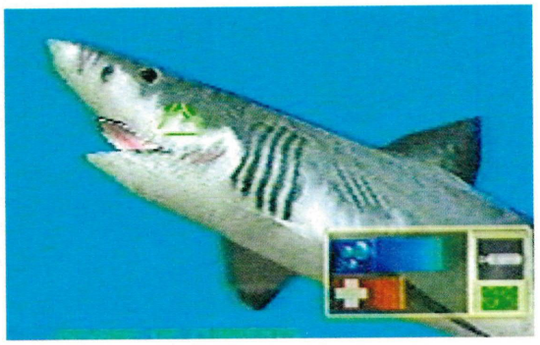
GRAPHICS
9

OVERALL
91%

in summary

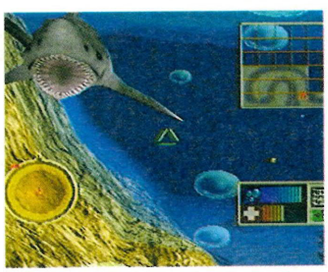
Speedball 2's spiritual descendant, and it should not be missed!

Treasures of the Deep



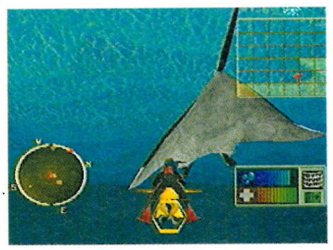
Relive Das Boot from the comfort of your sofa.

While outer space has long been an obvious and easy setting for computer games, the more organic, crinkly-edged world of the undersea has rarely been seen on our screens. Only the supremely eerie underwater scenes in Tomb Raider 2 have really mined this seldom-touched area, particularly the Forty Fathoms Down section (which is honestly the spookiest computer game experience I've yet encountered). Black Ops Entertainment have taken note of this otherwise-open gap, though, and donned their flippers and snorkel to bring us Treasures of the Deep, a game that's capable of giving you the dreaded bends through fear alone.



You take the role of a frogman working for a shadowy agency, and are assigned increasingly hazardous missions of below-the-waves exploration, combat, recovery and rescue. At first, only a sit-on, kind-of water bike is available to pull you through the water at moderate speeds. This is fine in the relatively straightforward, shallow water missions, but later deep-dive levels demand sterner bits of kit if you're to stay alive.

These first few assignments ease you into the game fairly smoothly, being set in near-the-surface trenches which are easily navigated with the help of your compass/radar and a self-drawing map, but even here the idyllic looking sea is full of hazards. Animal denizens of the deep lurk everywhere, from the more obvious (various shark species) the benign (dolphins, turtles and whales) and the just plain fascinating (schools of multi-coloured fish, scurrying crustaceans, lazily flapping manta rays). During my first few plays I felt more like to Jacques Cousteau than a Navy Seal, stopping every few feet to marvel at a new piece of aquatic fauna emerging from the gloom. The killer factor that makes these so fascinating is the level of detail, meaning even the tiniest creatures can be swum up to and inspected minutely, their movements smooth and realistic even under intense scrutiny. The same can be said for the surrounding landscape, which is almost fractilinear in its rough-hewn and grainy look, never pixellating and losing its intensely natural qualities at close quarters, while the surface of the water overhead (which cannot be breached, unfortunately) pleasantly undulates with the unseen waves.



> **"...even the tiniest creatures can be swum up to and inspected minutely, their movements smooth and realistic even under intense scrutiny..."**

Subaquatic Hybrid Blues

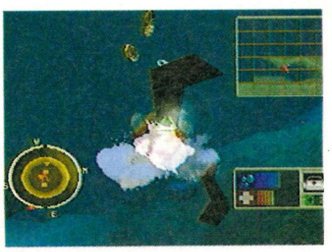
Gameplay-wise, Treasures of the Deep is a hybrid of a number of disparate styles. Exploration plays a large part, as you swoosh about searching out the set objectives and collecting the numerous gold coins, bars and so on that profuse the environment (and which seem rather buoyant for metallic objects, floating statically in space, as such). Control is via standard digital or a very useable twin analog stick option, allowing free movement in all planes. Dealing with the more aggressive sea creatures requires the use of the incapacitating net shooter, which ensnares the aggressor and inflates a balloon that drags them struggling surfaceward, while there are usually enemy divers and subs patrolling who require either the use of the standard-but-weedy harpoon gun or the more exotic homing and sonar torpedoes available when enough currency is amassed. This element gives the game a shoot-'em-up aspect, although it's less a case of button-hammering blasting than tactical running, hiding and ambush attacks - much like real-life submarine warfare, in fact.

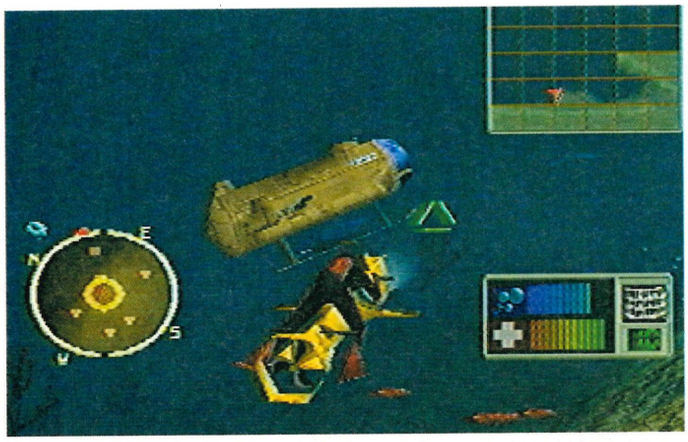
Being hit by harpoons or chewed by sharks leaves a nasty-looking cloud of blood in the water, while explosives can blow the hapless diver to bits, his limbs forlornly dropping to the sea bed. Strategy and planning also enter into the equation, as the correct range of specialist equipment, transport and



▲ This refugee from the X-Files needs to be netted sharpish.

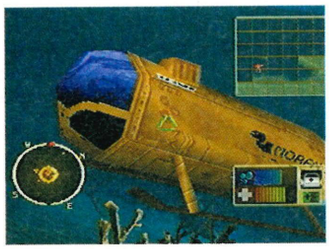






An enemy submersible tries to send you to a watery grave.

armaments must be chosen at the outset of each mission to suit its individual requirements. For example, there are remote-control vehicles, welding torches, cold-weather and shark-proof wetsuits, low-light goggles and numerous sonar and weapon upgrades that can be purchased, along with the more mundane medkits, air tanks and torpedo reloads. Each sub has a specific weight limit, so careful consideration must be given to get the right spread of kit. For example, the lost Aztec treasure mission isn't particularly hostile-heavy, but air is at a definite premium in the claustrophobic caverns you must navigate, so an Air Pony is a must (and no, it's not some amphibious equine, it's an extra oxygen canister). Other problems in this section alone include whirling vortices that suck the diver in and spin him out and sudden surges of underwater currents that push you off course. I haven't managed to progress father than this point yet, but from the looks of the demo there's a huge range of things to deal with, including a rapidly-sinking aircraft carrier, derelict World War II planes, prowling orcas and crippled submarines, so a wide variety of long-term play shouldn't be a problem.



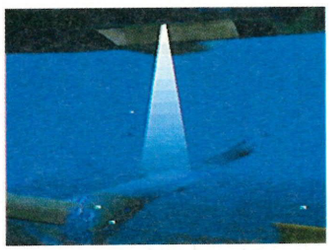
Bubbles and Roar

The sublime graphical presentation is complimented beautifully by the sonic elements. Effects range from the sound of bubbles and the roar of the rushing currents to the strange whistles of passing dolphins and the groans of whales. Each has been imbued with a real blood-pounding-in-the-ears quality that piles on the aquatic atmosphere, and the generally reverb-soaked soundfield compounds the already-mysterious and other-worldly atmosphere the visuals create. There's also an Abyss-esque musical score that could be straight from a genuine film soundtrack and a hilarious mission briefing voiceover whose stentorian tones are an extremely close facsimile of Buzz Lightyear.

> "...explosives can blow the hapless diver to bits, his limbs forlornly dropping to the sea bed..."

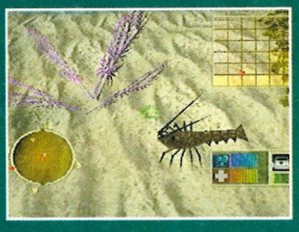
Throughout the game there are many unnecessary but stylish touches, such as the custom paint jobs available for each sub and the options menu set in a sea-bed station (replete with shoals of fish swimming past the portholes). Coupled with the usually ghostly and often terrifying atmosphere, it creates a strongly immersive feeling (no pun intended) that grants Treasures of the Deep an aura of intensity that can be simultaneously both pleasurably idyllic and heart-stoppingly frightening. Rewarding in the short term for its visual immediacy but with serious depth as well, it's an unusual and welcome addition to the lexicon of game styles, which as ever could do with as much variety as possible to allay the recurrent tendency towards homogenism. Rest assured, this game is worth getting wet over.

EPM
CHRISTIAN



WET WILDLIFE

Treasures of the Deep is suffused with incredibly realistic-looking creatures that can be either engaging or downright nasty, in a toothy kind of way.



Hopefully not destined to become a thermidor, this tendriled crustacean scurries about not bothering anyone .



This hammerhead, on the other hand, is an aggressive beast which, unlike most sharks, likes to hunt in a pack.



With a brain far larger than our own, who knows what the Killer Whale thinks about? Huge and graceful, they are like the lions of the sea (and this one's not called Willy).



Der-der... Der-der... The Great White is the most feared (and misunderstood) predator in the oceans. Basically a hunting and eating machine, it must be avoided (duh)

Second Opinion

Lush graphics and realistic settings make for an atmospheric and often terrifyingly perilous voyage into the deep. The next best thing to a bit part in The Abyss!

Graham

The Score

Publisher	SCEE
Developer	BLACK OPS
Released	15TH MAY
Version	UK
Price	£44.99
Genre	UNDERWATER ODYSSEY
Players	1
Memory Card	✓
Analog	✓

GAMEPLAY
8

ORIGINALITY
8

LIFESPAN
8

SOUND
10

GRAPHICS
9

OVERALL
90%

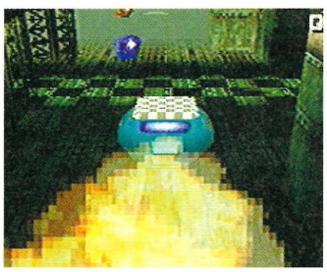
in summary

Definitely not sub-standard.



Circuit Breakers

A game to challenge the mighty Micro Machines? Maybe...



Everyone remembers Micro Machines in one form or another. Be it the first Mega Drive incarnation or the latest V3 on the PlayStation, Micro Machines is hailed as one of, if not the best multi-player games ever. You can't deny Micro Machines V3 took the whole thing one stage further by combining the classic gameplay of the 16-bit games with the superior graphics and speed of the PlayStation, and it's now only twenty quid on the Platinum label! Mindscape, though, are confident they've got the game to beat Micro Machines, and after caning Circuit Breakers we reckon they're in with a chance.

Let's get one thing straight from the off. The principle of Circuit Breakers is in no way original. This doesn't make for a bad game, though. It's a top-down racer in the vein of Micro Machines and Supersonic Racers, without even a hint of a twist on this idea. The thing is, it's about the most fun we've had in the office for ages and one of the very few games that gets fought over to see who's taking it home that night.

Circuit Breakers offers 32 basic tracks, 16 of which can be played in One- Player, Championship and Time Trial modes with the remaining 16 dedicated to the excellent multi-player mode. Each track is littered with death-defying leaps, tricks, traps and hazards, but the most amazing thing is the actual track designs themselves. The Space Mountain and Oblivion rides have got nothing on the Circuit Breakers tracks when it comes to pure adrenaline and upy-downy-type design. The tracks twist all over the shop, giving you a real roller coaster-ride feeling. This feeling is helped, especially in the one-player game, by the way the camera moves. To be honest, Circuit Breakers isn't wholly a top down racer. The dynamic camera follows

> "...The dynamic camera follows the car and attempts to give you the best view of the action at all times..."



▲ The 'Mini' submarine. Geddit?

▼ CIRCUIT BREAKERS AT SILVERSTONE





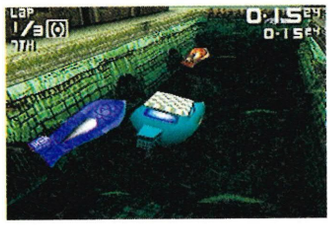
A real-life racing car was sponsored by Circuit Breakers at a recent Formula Vauxhall test day. The event saw the unveiling of the 1998 Touring Car Season and was attended by all the top bods in the motoring industry. Anyway, here's some piccies of that life-sized Circuit Breakers car.

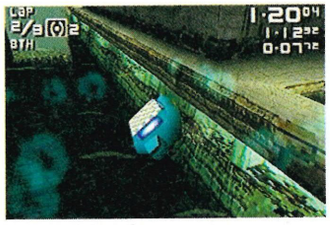
the car and attempts to give you the best view of the action at all times. So if you're on a long straight the camera comes down to an almost 'behind the car' view. Go up a hill, though, and the camera pulls out to give you the feeling of height, and to make it easier to see what's coming. The camera works well most of the time, although it does tend to pull out too far on occasion. The camera on the Multi-Player Mode isn't quite as dynamic, giving you more of a traditional top-down-at-an-angle-view which works well in the circumstances.

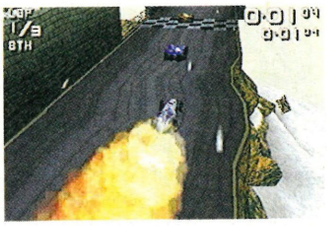
Top Gear

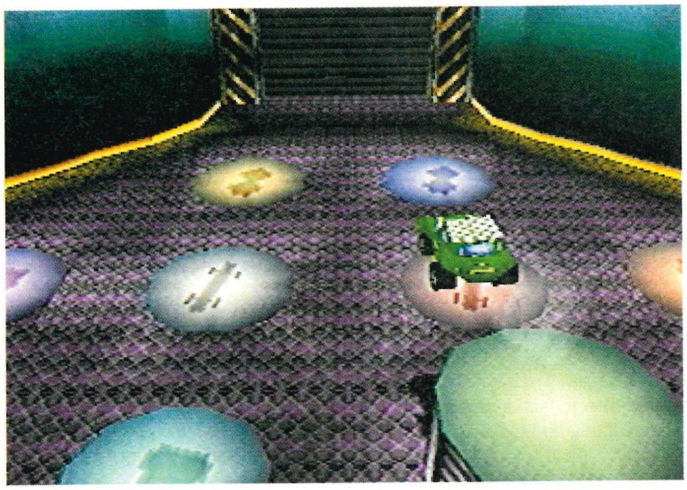
Something that's a little disappointing with Circuit Breakers is there's a very limited choice of cars. Worse still, though, they all have the same performance as each other! This is good thinking when it comes to the multi-player game but I would rather see cars with different stats when it comes to the one-player game. The only difference the cars seem to have is in weight. For instance, if the Corvette attempts to bash the F1 car off the side of the track, it wins easily. This would have been fair enough if the F1 car had a certain advantage as well, but it doesn't. The five cars are all drawn very nicely and the actual handling is

"...Circuit Breakers becomes extremely competitive when you start playing other people, but most of all it's immense fun..."









To choose a car, simply drive onto the desired circle.

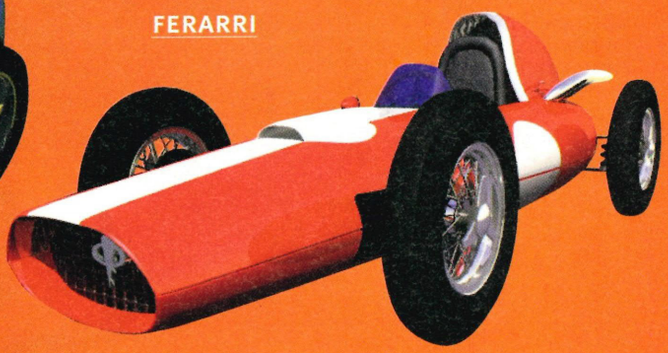
THE CARS

The cars all handle the same and go at the same speed. Still, here's some pictures anyway.

CORVETTE



FERARRI

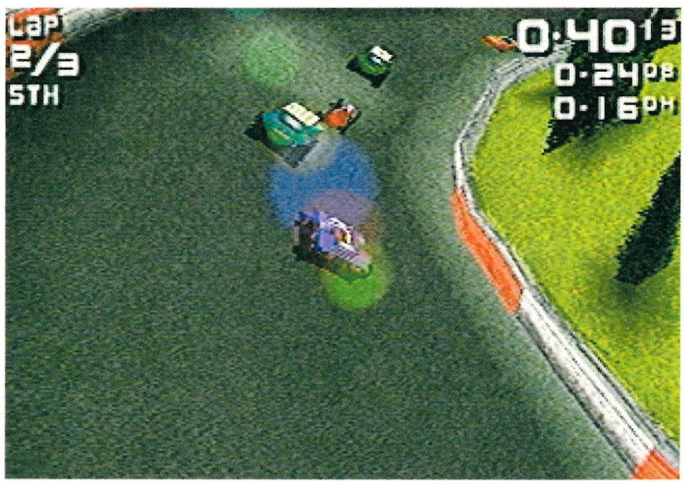


LAMBORGHINI

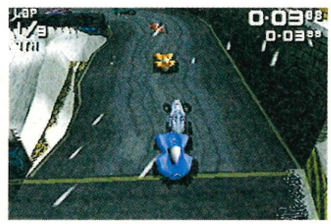


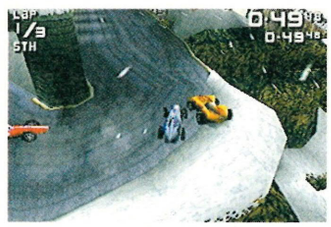
MINI





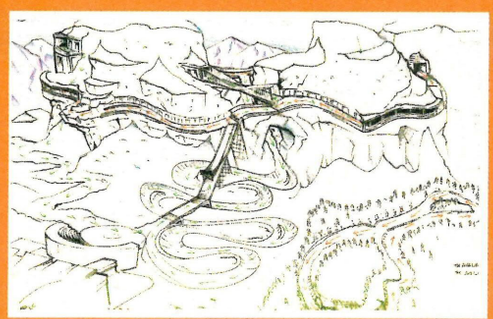
▲ Obligatory lens flare on the circle circuit.

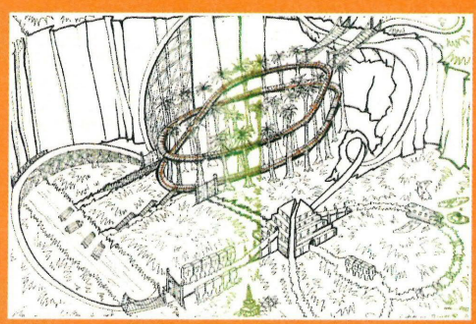




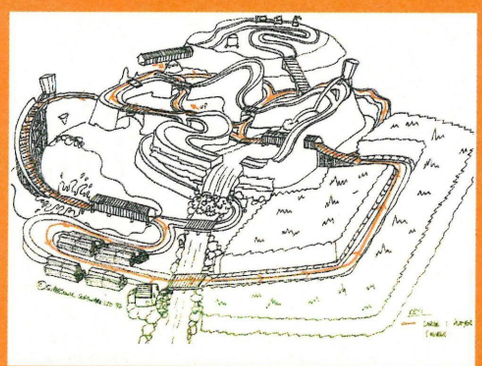
excellent, in an arcadey sort of way. The cars slide and skid all over the place but they're not actually tough to handle. In fact, anybody can come along and pick Circuit Breakers up straight away. This is great for party play as it means that everyone has a fair chance and not just the owner of the game (and me, of course). The cars do have certain variations when you hit the water-based courses, though. In the swamp they're transformed into sleek-looking power boats, but they still keep the same overall look so you still know that you're in the Corvette or Mini, etc. The underwater courses turn your car into a little mini submarine, which is nice touch.

▼ LET THE ROLLERCOASTER RIDE BEGIN





There are eight different environments to race on and each offers up it's own unique hazards. The tracks range from basic loops to exquisite, and highly perilous multi levelled raised raceways. The feeling of depth on these multiplayer tracks is second to no, especially when one of your so-called buddies knocks you into a crevice or waterfall. These early track drawings show you the complexity of the track design but they don't tell you that each track has been built and drawn to the highest standards. It's surprising that the track graphics are actually as good as they are because Circuit Breakers runs fast and is about as smooth as a racing game gets. Anyway, here's a little breakdown on the different track styles.



HIGHWAY
Fast and furious tarmac based racing. Ranges from track to road based circuits.

VENICE
Take place on the twisty-turny canals of Venice.

JUNGLE
Race over rickety wooden bridges, through aztec buildings and over rushing waterfalls.

EGYPT
Sand based racing that makes your car very hard to control.

CANYON
Race around the ridges of a massive canyon - one wrong move and it's Thelma & Louise time.

UNDERWATER
Race in mini subs that handle in a completely different way than the cars.

ARTIC
Snow based racing in some of the best tracks in the game. Watch out for the snow drift jumps though.

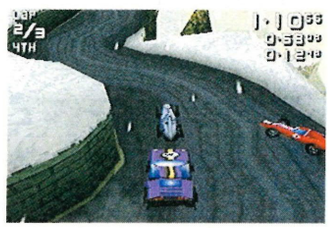
SWAMP
Probably the hardest tracks in the game give you the chance to race around in powerboats.

"...Not surprisingly, it's the multi-player mode where Circuit Breakers shines the most..."

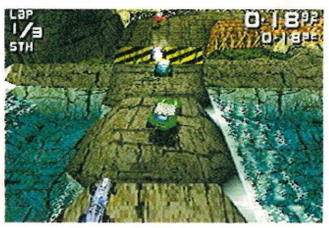
Although the game is almost instantly playable, it doesn't mean that you can simply pick it up game and become champion on your first go. The one-player game places you on a lift with four tracks on each floor. Beat the first four tracks and take the lift up to the next level. The first level won't cause you too much hassle, but get onto the second floor and you start to realise Circuit Breakers is no pushover. The devious track design and super-fast computer-controlled cars make the one-player game as tough as you can get, and even when you do complete it there are a host of extra modes to play in. These include reverse courses, night time driving and even driving upside down! In fact, the blurb says the combination of all the different modes can give you up to 3000 course variations. We've tried this driving upside down malarkey and believe us when we say it's mad and a whole lotta fun to boot.

Motor Show

Not surprisingly, it's the multi-player mode where Circuit Breakers shines the most. Get four mates together and you find yourself spending a whole evening staring at the screen







POWER-UPS

To add more of a competitive element to Circuit Breakers there are plenty of power-ups and weapon icons to collect around each course. Here's what you get:

Rocket Booster
A massive boost to get you past the cars in front.

Sub Woofer
The bass from your stereo pushes the other cars away from you.

Shrinker
Shrinks your car for easier overtaking and better top speed.

Oil Slick
Work it out.

Jumbo
Enlarges your car, allowing you to squash other vehicles.

Stilts
Gives you a speed boost and allows you to travel over other cars.

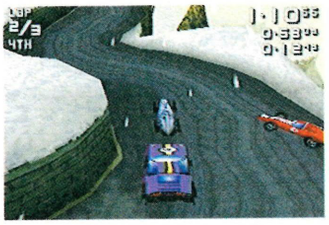
Jump
Makes your car bounce with an added speed boost.

Glue
leaves a patch of glue behind to slow the other cars.

Suicide Bomb
Hit other cars and they explode. Make sure you're fast, though, or you explode.

Fire Bomb
Allows you to shoot balls of fire at opponents

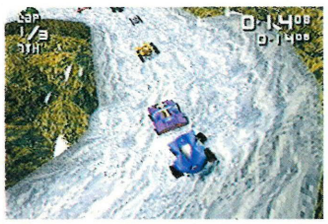






"...The extra modes available after you complete the game offer a wealth of different gameplay options ..."





in an attempt to get one over on your peers. To win, it's simply a case of reaching the set amount of points first. The winning points can be changed to make the race longer. Getting the points is no easy task. It works much like Micro Machines in this department. Any players going too slow are wiped out, leaving the faster ones to battle it out for top points. Second and third place earn points as well, but there's no satisfaction in coming runner up, is there? Circuit Breakers becomes extremely competitive once you start playing other people, but most of all it's immense fun. We've wasted hours of work time battling it out on Circuit Breakers over the last few weeks. Our local boozer's even starting to miss us because we've been playing it at lunch-time.

Many people will see Circuit Breakers as a blatant cash-in on Micro Machines. The fact is that Circuit Breakers may be like Micro Machines, but it also offers much more besides. The extra modes available after you complete the game offer a wealth of different gameplay options that extend the lifespan ten-fold. The single-player game is varied, challenging and fun. It also has one of the best camera systems we've seen on this type of game. As for the multi-player game; it's definitely as much fun, if not more fun than Micro Machines. If you've got a Multi Tap, three mates and four joypads, get down to your local game emporium and grab a copy of Circuit Breakers while you can. If you haven't got a Multi Tap, three friends and four joypads, you're pretty sad. I'd still offer the same advice, though.

EPM
SAUL

Second Opinion

Circuit Breakers lacks the atmosphere of Micro Machines and the vehicles are unexciting, but it has ace gameplay, especially in multi-player mode.

Ian

The Score

Publisher	MINDSCAPE
Developer	SUPERSONIC
Released	JUNE '98
Version	UK
Price	????
Genre	RACING
Players	1-4
Memory Card	✓
Analog	✓
Multi-tap	✓

GAMEPLAY **9**

ORIGINALITY **5**

LIFESPAN **9**

SOUND **8**

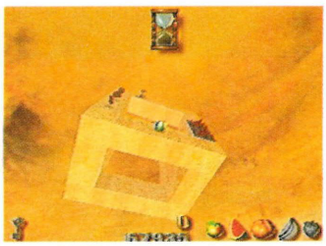
GRAPHICS **8**

OVERALL **89%**

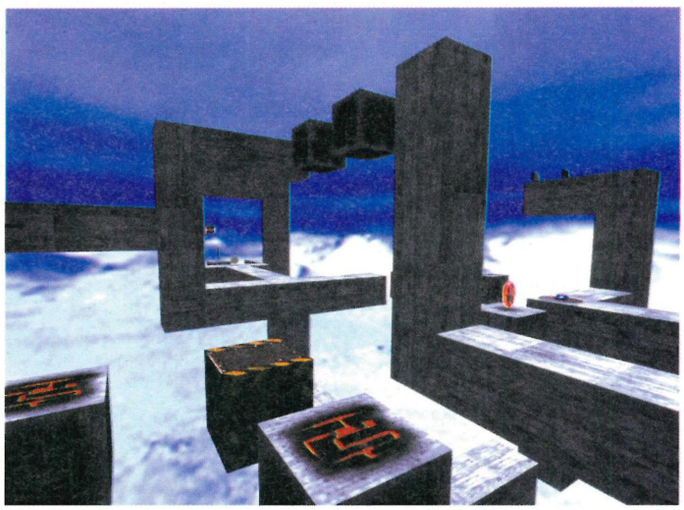
in summary

If you buy one non-football game this Summer, make sure it's Circuit Breakers.

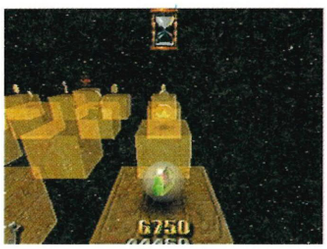
Kula World



Last month Motorhead, this month Kula World; Sweden's going up in the videogame world...

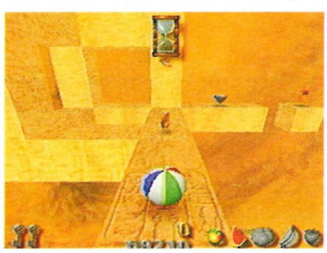


The concept's so simple I'm surprised we haven't seen a game like Kula World before; control a beach ball around a mass of 3D floating maze-like platforms. Simple? Well no, actually.



If you thought thinking in 3D in games like Doom and Quake is confusing, you'd better take a deep breath before playing Kula World. Each level's made up of a number of platforms or blocks which must be negotiated to collect goodies and reach the exit. However, every plane and axis has been utilised, so to reach the end of a level you need to use every single side of the platforms. This is where things start to get wickedly confusing. Once you've left the starting face of a platform, the whole screen rotates, giving you a new set of jumps and moves to complete. On top of this, it's extremely easy to lose your bearings and get lost at almost any point on a level. You have the ability to look up and down, and most of the time you can see where you need to go; it's just getting there that causes problems.

Of course, anyone with an ounce of brain power could work out the 3D problems, if they had plenty of time. Alas, that's something that you don't have. The first few levels have a massive time limit, which gives you an opportunity to get into the 3D way of thinking, but as you get further into the game the time limits get tighter and the game gets much, much more frantic.



Govinda

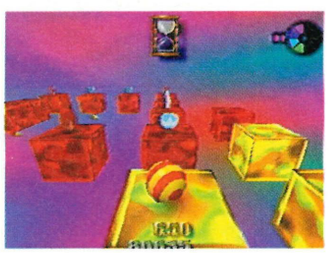
So far, you'd be forgiven for thinking Kula World is best left to MENSA members and nuclear physicists. However, this isn't the case. It may be frustrating, ridiculously tough and infuriating, but it's also extremely playable, addictive and fun. After a few hours you're completely at ease controlling your multi-coloured beach ball, and the style of 3D rotation starts to sink into your brain. Once you've grasped the way the levels rotate as you move to different sides of a platform, your half way there. The other half, though, may take a little longer to get to grips with; the centre of gravity changes depending on what side of a platform you're on. Thus jumping becomes an extremely perilous task. Getting a jump wrong results in you plummeting to your doom or landing on a spike.

> **"...It may be frustrating, ridiculously tough and infuriating, but it's also extremely playable..."**

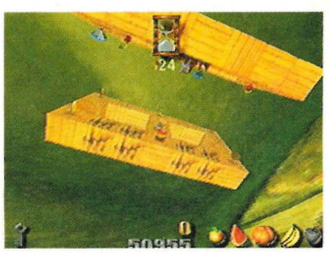
This fully-rotational style of gameplay wouldn't work at all if the 3D engine wasn't completely up to scratch. Thankfully, then, Kula World offers one of the smoothest and fastest 3D operations and rotation we've had the pleasure of witnessing. The graphics themselves are rather minimal, which is why the game engine runs so well. When the screen rotates you can see almost every block and platform rotating in perfect time, without any clipping or graphical glitching. This effect really has to be seen to be believed and no amount of screenshots can do it justice.

The actual levels themselves offer a number of different environments, ranging from Aztec to trippy spaced-











out acid style settings. As all the levels are set floating in the air there's no room for scenery, but the style of the blocks, platforms and backgrounds give off the idea of each different level.

> "... you find there's far more action and excitement than almost any other puzzler available..."

Jeya Jeya

On top of searching for the key and exit on a level, there are also plenty of pick-ups and obstacles for you to collect or avoid. Each level contains a piece of fruit to collect; once you've collected five pieces from five levels, you can go to a bonus level and earn yourself some extra points. There's also plenty of points to be found around the normal levels in the form of precious gems.

On top of this, you have to contend with anything from spiked platforms to collapsing platforms and even hallucinogenic drugs! 'What?', I hear you say. Many of the levels have suspicious-looking red and yellow capsules lying around them. Roll over one of these Rhubarb and Custards (ahem), and the screen starts to glow and mutate, similar to that two o-clock Sunday morning buzz. This makes things much harder as your controls become sluggish and unpredictable. Very, very similar to the aforementioned buzz, then!

Although at the heart of it, Kula World is a puzzle game, you find there's far more action and excitement than almost any other puzzler available. The field of movement is much larger than any other puzzle game, giving Kula World far greater depth than the other brain teasers available for the PlayStation.

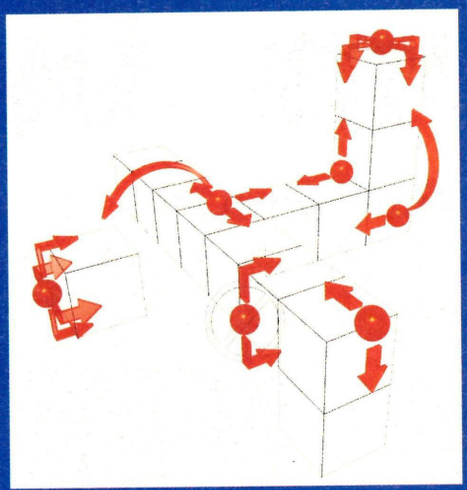
There are very few puzzle games we actually enjoy here at EPM, but we're happy to say Kula World fits in nicely with Bust-A-Move 3, Kurushi and (of course) Tetris. At first you're totally foxed by Kula World, but after a few hours of mega frustration you find yourself being sucked into the totally original gameplay it offers. If puzzle games are your thang, Kula World's a must. If you're addicted to beat-'em-ups, shoot-'em-ups or sports sims, Kula World should be a worthy diversion from the norm; just make sure you replace your preconceptions with your thinking cap.

EPM
SAUL



One of the spaced-out bonus levels.

BALL PHYSICS

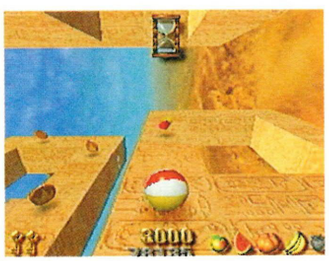


The whole rotational style of play is pretty hard to explain, especially when it comes to talking about the ball movement. To make it easier for us and you, here's a diagram of how the ball moves...

Second Opinion

An intellect-warping, spatial awareness-scrambling, eyeball-activating gem of a game. Not to everyone's taste, though, as it takes a lot of patience and logical thought.

Christian





The Score

Publisher	SCEE
Developer	GAME DESIGN SWEDEN
Released	JUNE
Version	UK
Price	£39.99
Genre	PUZZLE/ACTION
Players	1-2
Memory Card	✔

GAMEPLAY
8

ORIGINALITY
9

LIFESPAN
9

SOUND
7

GRAPHICS
8

OVERALL
88%

in summary

Kewl as you like.

Armoured Core

Gundamn it!

Mech games aren't exactly in short supply on any home format, so breaking into the market is a tough job for most. It helps, though, if the game has something different, something new, and something exciting about it. Alas, Armoured Core has nothing different, exciting or new to help its already lost cause. The preview version of Armoured Core looked pretty promising, but after hacking away at the finished copy for a good while now, we've found once you've broken the surface there's nothing left to keep you interested.



You take the role of a new recruit to the Raven anti-terrorist organisation. Your mech machines are called Armoured Cores and each can be equipped with a vast array of different parts, including heads, arms and legs. Each part gives your basic machine a boost; it could be a new weapon, speed-up or shield upgrade. To build up your Armoured Core, though, you have to complete missions for cash and then go to the garage and shop to tinker with your mech.

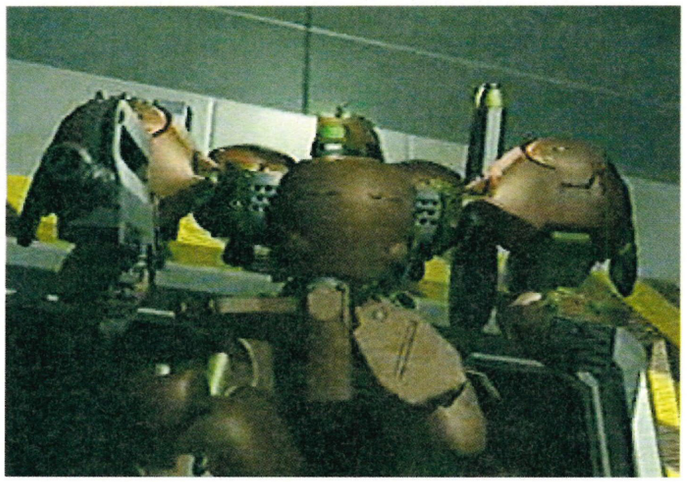
The mech upgrade section of the game is very thorough and also easy to use, unlike some games of this type we've had the pleasure of playing. In fact, you can go as far as changing the colour and paint style of your mech. You have options of different types of camouflage which are suitable for different environments, although this rarely makes a difference once past the aesthetics side of things.

Paint

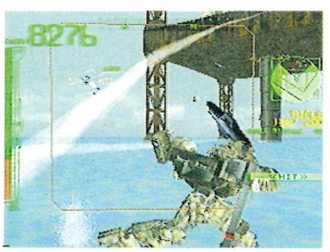
Once you pass the initial test to enter the Raven organisation, you receive e-mails offering advice and missions to take on. The first few missions are easy enough, but it only takes half an hour to figure out Armoured Core has one fundamental flaw - it's boring. The fact that you get a choice of missions to take in any order doesn't alter this either. The gameplay itself consists of one basic element, which is to simply blow up a set number of enemy units or specified targets. Okay, some missions may have other secondary objectives like blowing up all of the enemies without taking out specified targets or objects, but this isn't enough to take Armoured Core out of the quagmire of dullness we find it trapped in.

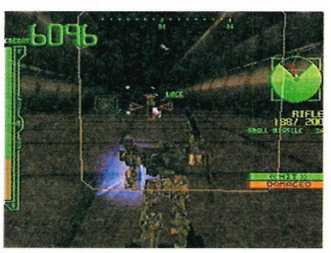
It's a shame there isn't more to the actual gameplay of Armoured Core, because the control and physics of your mech are very good. Your Armoured Core is very manoeuvrable but getting used to using the jet pack in conjunction with all of the other controls causes problems. The control set-up isn't exactly intuitive, so you end up fiddling around for ages. Once you're up to scratch with controlling your Armoured Core you get a little more out of the game. Here comes the paradox though; it takes some

"...Even the frankly superb sound effects and sampled speech don't save Armoured Core from the doldrums..."

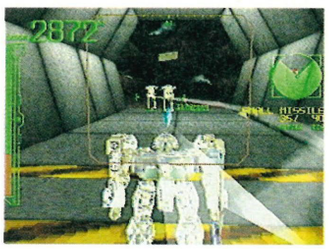


▲ A still from the cool rendered intro.

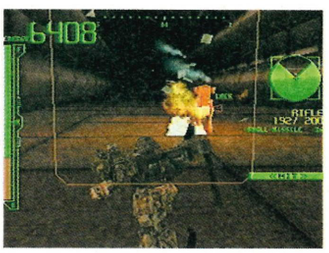












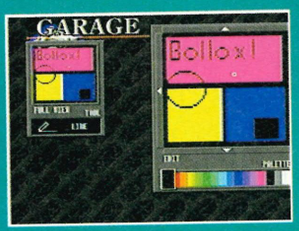
▼ MULTI-PLAYER MECH





Thankfully the two-player game is quite playable. This is because you don't have to follow the boring missions that dog the one-player game. The only problem with the two-player mode is the play only takes part in a small section of the screen, and a lot of visual detail is missing. However, the gameplay becomes fast and frantic and is far more fun than the single-player game ever could be. Not that that's saying a lot...

ARTS AND CRAFTS



Novelty alert! Armoured Core gives you the opportunity to design your own emblem, although you can't see it while playing the game. The tools in this section are pretty basic and it takes an absolute age to get anything that even resembles a decent emblem. It's a slight diversion from the rest of the game, but it's really about as useful as a family planning clinic in a nunnery.

time to get used to the control, but most of you will find yourself bored shitless before you can actually reach this point.

Graphically, Armoured Core is extremely similar to the excellent Ghost in the Shell (reviewed last month). The grainy style of graphics isn't eye-poppingly fantastic, but it allows the game to run at a fair pace and manages to keep the clipping and glitching down to a minimum. The game also has a good variety in scenery, although it isn't quite as varied as the aforementioned Ghost in the Shell.

Like Ghost in the Shell, Armoured Core has a problem bringing enemies onto the screen. Whereas in Ghost in the Shell the enemy vehicles tended to pop up into the screen, on Armoured Core they are just really hard to see or make out until you're right up close to them. This becomes annoying after a while, especially in the darker levels such as the sewers or tunnels. Another problem with the visuals comes with the animation, if you can call it that. It's very minimal, which is fair enough because the enemy vehicles don't require much in the way of mechanical movement. Unlike the enemy vehicles, though, your Armoured Core looks the nuts and the animation is smooth, precise and, more importantly, fast.

Drying

From looking at the screenshots you'd be forgiven for thinking what I've written so far about the boring aspects of Armoured Core is just a figment of my imagination. The game is jam-packed with great looking explosions, multiple enemies, scorching laser fire and missiles flying about all over the place. All the ingredients for a full-on, action-packed blast fest then? Well, yes and no. The ingredients are here, but somebody forgot to turn the oven on at the baking stage, making Armoured Core a flat and dull concoction that doesn't live up to what it could have given us.

Even the frankly superb sound effects and sampled speech don't save Armoured Core from the doldrums. The mass of explosions, shots and computer effects add quite a hectic feel to the proceedings and the speech coming from your counterparts and the enemy gives off a great atmosphere. The gameplay's still boring though.

On first looks, Armoured Core has the makings of what could be a decent mech game but after a few plays you find there just isn't enough in the gameplay to keep all but the hardened mech fan happy. It's much more arcade in feel to previous mech games, especially the Mechwarrior series. It's admirable that even though Armoured Core has an arcade feel, there's still an excellent weapons and parts upgrade section. If as much effort went into making the gameplay a little different and more exciting Armoured Core could have been worthy of your cash. If it's a 3D blaster you're after, though, I'd give this a miss and opt for Sony's other, much more competent effort, Ghost in the Shell.

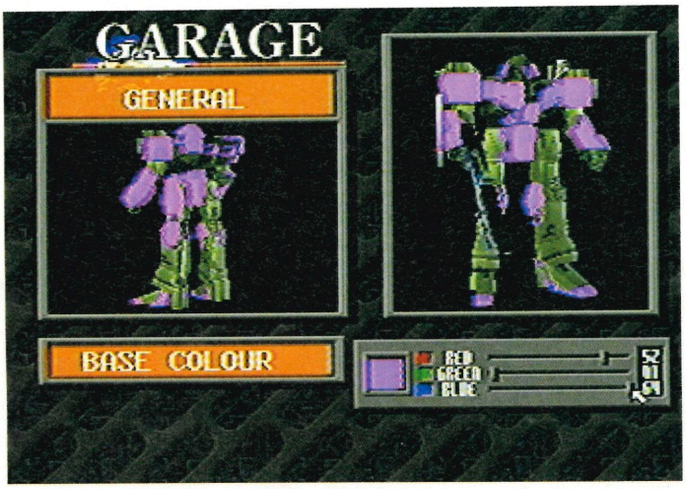
EPM

SAUL

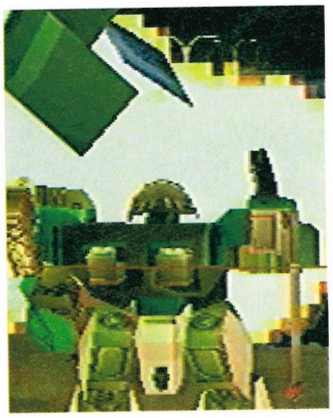
SWORDPLAY



On top of the usual missile and laser weapons, your Armoured Core has another attacking option. Hitting the triangle button causes your mech to lunge forward and swipe with an energy beam sword. The sword is quite powerful, but you have to get very close to your enemy before you can use it, which makes it about useful as morals in a vicarage.



A paint job the Freak Brothers would be proud of.



"...If as much effort went into making the gameplay a little different ...Armoured Core could have been worthy of your cash..."



Second Opinion

Mech warriors battling to the death isn't exactly original or inspiring. Doesn't even compare to the to father of all mech games, Sega's Virtual-On.

Darren

The Score

Publisher	SCEE
Developer	FROM SOFTWARE
Released	JUNE
Version	UK
Price	£39.99
Genre	3D BLASTER
Players	1-2
Memory Card	✓

GAMEPLAY **6**

ORIGINALITY **6**

LIFESPAN **5**

SOUND **8**

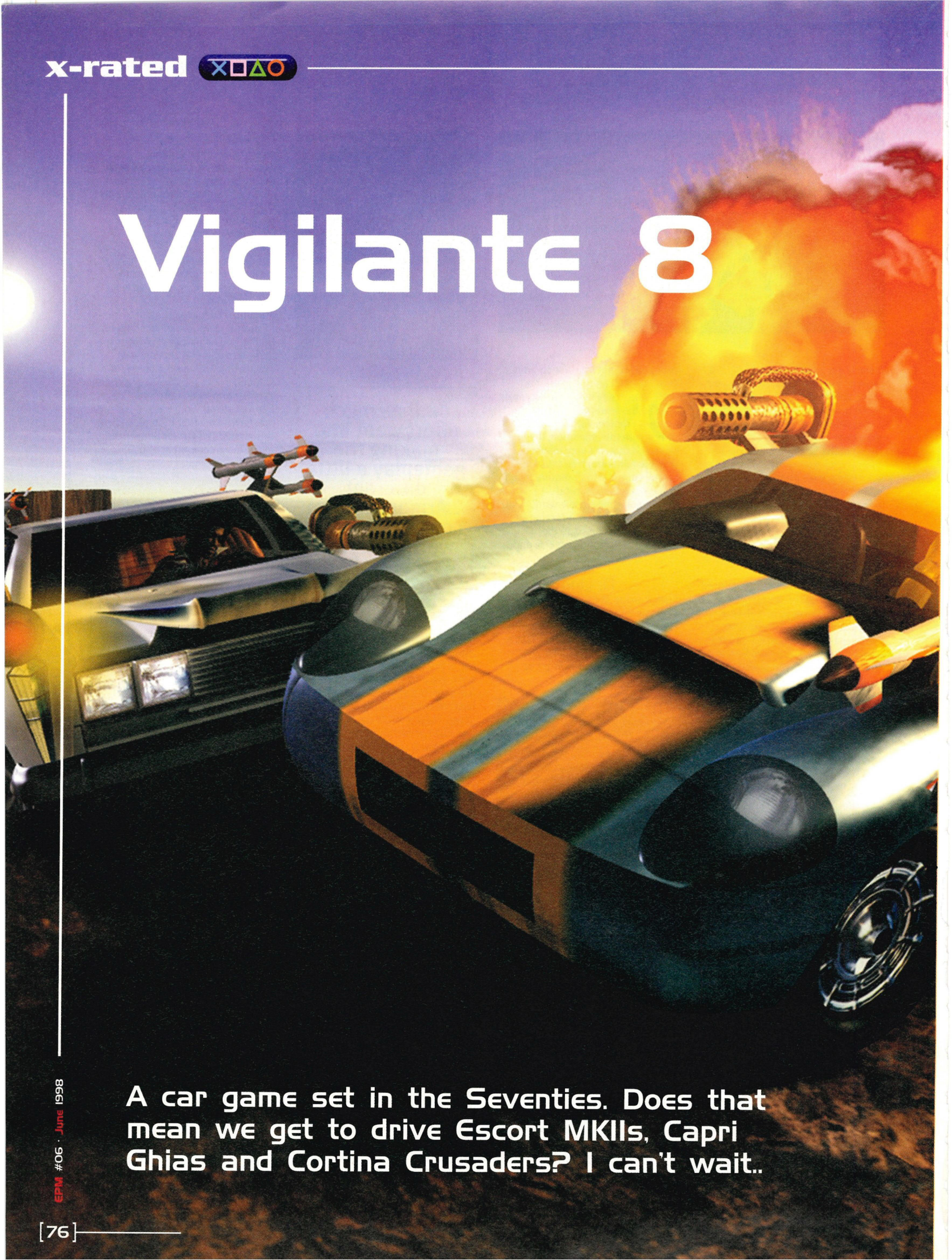
GRAPHICS **8**

OVERALL **65%**

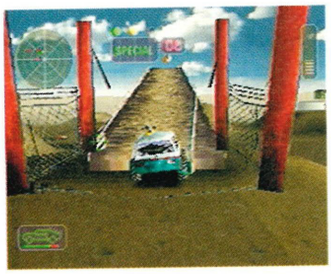
in summary

Helped by the two-player battle, but tedium seeps in too soon on the one-player game.

Vigilante 8

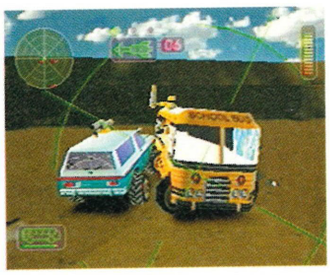


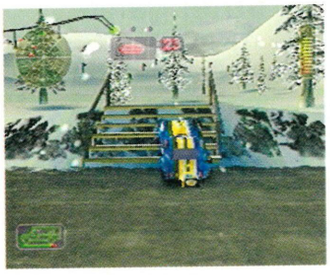
A car game set in the Seventies. Does that mean we get to drive Escort MKIIs, Capri Ghias and Cortina Crusaders? I can't wait..













Luckily, Vigilante 8 doesn't make you drive clapped-out, cheesy Seventies Fords. Instead it offers car combat with a host of old American steeds and colourful, if a little stereotyped characters to sit behind the wheel.

Vigilante 8 first appeared on the PC as Interstate '76. However, Activision reckon the full-on motor mash mayhem is perfectly suited to the PlayStation, and we're inclined to agree with them. Why set the game in the Seventies, though? Well for a start, you can't have characters and cars that look as though they've come straight out Shaft or Deliverance if the game's set in the present day or the future.

"...driving is only half the package because each level has a hoard of enemies who go all out to send you to the scrapyard..."

It's also an opportunity to drop some cool slap bass funk and rock tunes to complement the Dukes of Hazard shenanigans going on in the game. Finally, though, it's original. I mean, how many games are set in the past?

The game revolves around the struggle between two separate bands of motorised gangs, The Coyotes and the Vigilantes. The Coyotes are a band of merciless terrorists who, under their leader Sid Burn, operate a campaign of death and destruction throughout South-Western states of America. Lurking behind Coyote is a sinister multi-national company called the Oil Monopoly Alliance Regime (OMAR), who's aim is to destroy the US economy. To achieve their goal, they offered Sid Burn $100 million to cause chaos in the country's oil refineries and other important industrial units. So with his loyal band of troops, Sid sets out to terrorise the South-West until one day some good folk decide they've finally had enough. Enter the Vigilantes. Led by a trucker called Convoy, this whacked-out group of misfits and weirdoes are about to put paid to Sid's plans. Elsewhere, at a secret base called Site-4, the government are researching new weaponry reportedly based on alien technology. Sid hears of this and attacks the base. He didn't count on the Vigilantes turning up, though, and now both sides have the use of some of the most advanced weaponry in the game. Well, if they hadn't added the sci-fi bits the game's only weapons would be shotguns and platform shoes.

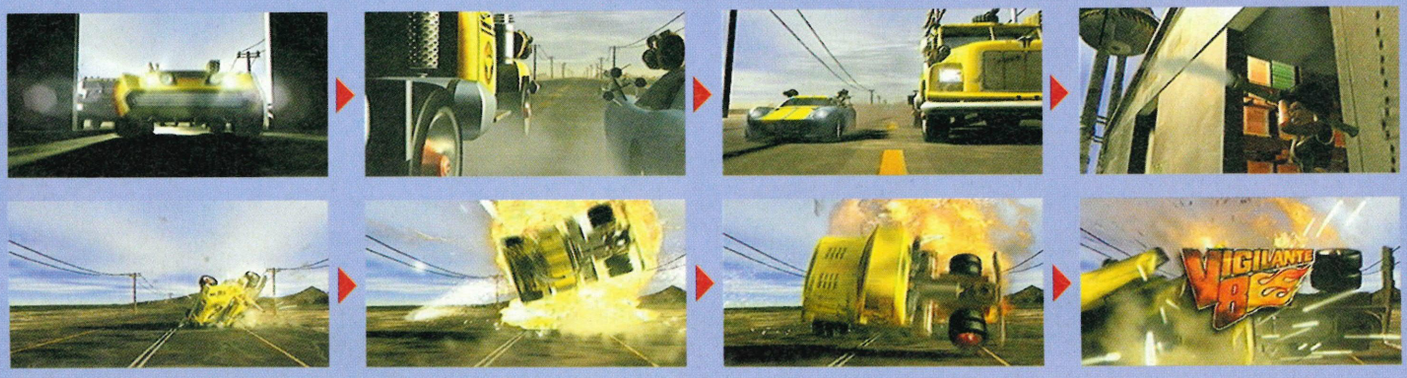
Earth...

Vigilante 8 can be played in a number of different modes, from one-player Quest and Arcade to



▲ Keep your eyes peeled for special routes to power-ups.

▼ WE GOT A GREAT BIG CONVOY...



split-screen battle and co-operative. The one-player Arcade mode allows you to choose any character (of which there are 12 in total) and battle it out on any of the ten scenarios. Your goal here is simply to be the last car still running. The Quest mode is a little different. Each character has a certain route to follow throughout the game, each with a different set of goals for each level. For instance, if you play as a Vigilante, you may have to protect a certain structure under attack from Coyote. If you're playing as a Coyote member, you may have to destroy that structure. Each character's route and storyline is different, so there's plenty of replay factor when you've completed the game once (which is no mean feat!).

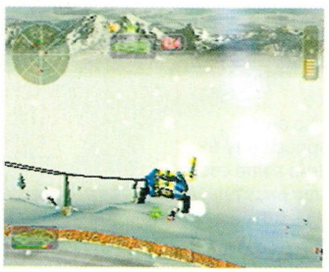
The game itself drops you straight into a battlefield with the main objectives simply to stay alive and take out the opposition. The cars all come equipped with a basic machine gun, but are also capable of carrying some astounding weaponry which can be picked up within the level. Luxaflux, the developers behind Vigilante 8, have managed to merge a perfect blend of driving and combat action in a Twisted-Metal-with-knobs-on style.

"...It may take its influence from games like Twisted Metal, but Vigilante 8 takes the car combat genre further than any other game before..."

The cars are all extremely quick (some more than others), so before







THE HIPSTERS, THE WHEELS & THE HARDWARE

COYOTES

• SID BURN

Sid, the leader of the Coyotes, is a born arsonist who likes nothing more than to experiment with deodorant and matches. He has been offered $100 million by OMAR to cause chaos to the US economy by terrorising the South-West. His '69 Manta is fast, strong and very good looking.

Special Weapon
Breath of Fire
A rapid-fire bomb thrower that sets enemy cars on fire after a direct hit.





• LOKI

Loki is an ex-test pilot who is addicted to fling. He also has a penchant for destructive weaponry. Sid told Loki about the experimental weapons at the secret base, which was just too much for him to resist. His '73 Glenn 4x4 is an average vehicle, but it does have a decent armour strength which is always an advantage out on the battlefield.

Special Weapon
Scatter Missiles
Fires three missiles at a time for more blast coverage. Very handy indeed.





• BOOGIE

This man likes to strut his stuff. So much so he's won many a dancing competition, but when he's not grooving to the sounds of Earth, Wind & Fire, Boogie likes nothing more than to carry out terrorist missions for the evil Sid. His car, The '76 Leprechaun, looks like something out of Wayne's World - hence it's not exactly fast. It's main advantage is it makes a good job of avoiding tracking, allowing you to sneak in and make a quick strike.

Special Weapon
Disco Inferno
An inflatable disco mirror balls that fires out deadly explosives.





• HOUSTON 3

Houston is a human/machine abomination created by the OMAR corporation. Somebody up there has taste, though, 'cause she's got a corking set of waps. Anyway, she was sent to help out Sid in his bid to wipe out the American economy by causing countrywide destruction. Her '75 Palamino is very fast, but hard to control. Beware though; it's a very easy car to track.

Special Weapon Super Fantastic Death Ray 3-Ax
This highly destructive beam cuts through anything, and even knocks power-ups off enemy cars.



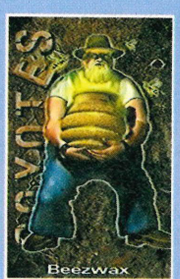


• BEEZWAX

This guy's prized bee collection was mutated by radiation from the government's nuclear tests. He was so cheesed he joined Sid and the Coyotes to get his revenge. His '70 Stag Pick-up truck doesn't look high on performance, and to be honest it's not. It does have a very good armour rating, though.

Special Weapon
Gamma Swarm
A swarm of killer bees that have a real sting in their tale.



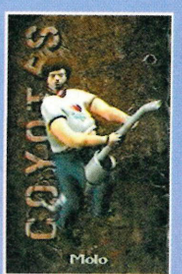


• MOLO

Perhaps Molo didn't get enough love, but this little tyke from the streets of New York was kicked out of school for bad behaviour. What does he do, then? Steals a school bus, heads west and joins Coyote. His bus is one of the strongest vehicles in the game, but it's dead slow. It's great for ramming your opponents off the road, though.

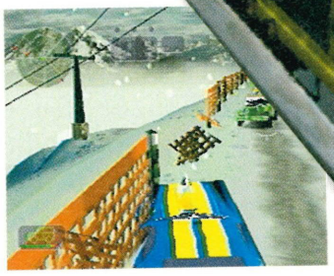
Special Weapon Bad Day In LA
Molo's exhaust weapon gives off such dense gasses it clogs up the best of engines.





you can get full y into the combat you have to get to grips with the driving side of things. It isn't a case of simply driving around on roads and lanes, though. Each level's multi-levelled with a ridiculous amount of jumps, bumps, trenches and hills to negotiate. This makes for some extremely hair-raising driving as you find yourself jumping broken bridges, winging your way down ski slopes and driving alongside precarious ledges that drop into





There are six Coyote members and six Vigilantes to play in Vigilante 8. Each character has their own car an special weapon, with different advantages and disadvantages, but most of have one thing in common - a cool, funky Seventies look.

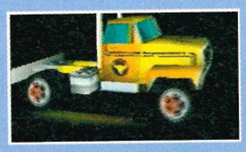
VIGILANTES

• CONVOY

The leader of the Vigilantes was a normal trucker until he got ambushed by the Coyotes just one time too many. He now leads the fight against Sid and Coyote in his '72 Moth Truck. The truck is deceptively fast and very well armoured, but it has absolutely no tracking avoidance, which can cause you real hassles.



Special Weapon Steel Belter
Forget your top-flight experimental weapons. Convoy prefers the old 'truck tire full of dynamite' approach.

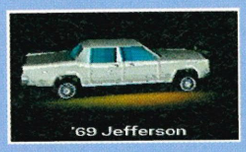


• JOHN TORQUE

Torque is now Convoy's right hand man, although he used to be a drinking, gambling Vegas hustler. Now he fights with the Vigilantes for the good of his country. His '69 Jefferson finishes off his pimp-style look and is also pretty tough in all departments, making Superfly Guy a good choice.



Special Weapon Bass Quake
Torque's sound system is the best money can buy. His bass box can cause a wealth of damage to other cars.

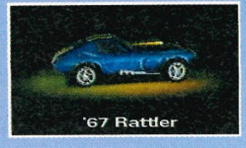


• CHASSEY BLUE

As well as being a beauty queen, Chassey is also a secret government agent with one goal - to get rid of the Coyotes. Joining the Vigilantes was the best way to achieve this. The '67 Strider she drives is one of the fastest cars in the game, and it take some getting used to due to the poor handling at high speed.



Special Weapon
Gridlock
The gridlock fires a grid of flares that are capable of taking out almost any engine in the landing area.



• SHEILA

Sheila is Convoy's niece and loves a bit of action; and she's only sixteen! Convoy doesn't like the idea of Sheila running around the battlefield, but she refuses to go home, so what can he do? Her '74 Strider beach buggy isn't very tough, but it's fast and able to avoid most tracking devices.

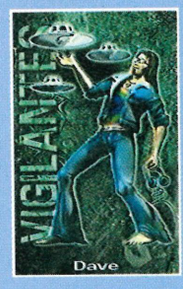


Special Weapon
Tantrum Gun
24mm gattling gun that auto locks onto targets; very handy indeed.

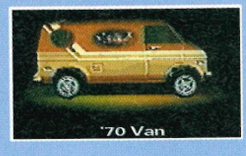


• DAVE

Dave only joined the Vigilantes to find a way onto Site-4, where he hopes he might meet the aliens he believes are his friends. By the looks of him, though, it seems he may have done just a few too many pharmaceuticals, or spent too much time with Timothy Leary. His Seventies van looks cool and is pretty average on the performance front. It's probably good for a smoke, though.



Special Weapon
Invasion
A special satellite dish Dave found at Site-4 supposedly calls aliens down to help him. Sounds dodgy to me, though.



• SLICK CLYDE

Clyde was on the way to an auto show in Albuquerque when Convoy took his truck and forced him to help the Vigilantes. Now, though, Clyde is gunning for leadership of the Coyotes. His '70 Clydesdale vehicle is pretty unremarkable, and average in almost all departments.



Special Weapon
White Lightning
Not the editor's favourite drink, but an electrical charge that can short circuit almost any weapon system.







deep chasms and lakes. The level design is perfect for the seat-of-your-pants action offered up, and we've never seen a driving game that offers up as much spectacular air-time as Vigilante 8.

...Wind...

Of course, the driving is only half the package because each level has a hoard of enemies who go all out to send you to the scrapyard. The computer-controlled vehicles are all highly intelligent, although it seems a bit unfair when every other car in the area is after you. This ups the ante, though, and only makes you try even harder to complete each ridiculously tough level.

Each vehicle comes equipped with a machine gun, but picking up weapons as you cane it around the levels is not a bonus, but a necessity. Your basic weapon doesn't cause much damage, so without the extra hardware you're really up against it. Three weapons can be carried at a time. You can cycle through them using the Square button, and they're discharged by hitting L2.

Due to the constant hammering you receive from the enemy and the ridiculous speed the vehicles travel at, you'd think concentrating on attacking would be a hard job. At first it is, but the controls have been laid out so you can concentrate on filling the enemy with hot lead using the shoulder buttons, whilst you take care of the driving with your spare fingers. This works perfectly and is very intuitive. After a while the controls become second nature, leaving you with the important job of hunting down your superfly enemies and sending them up to the Great Leopard-Skin Rug in the sky.

It may take its influence from games like Twisted Metal, but Vigilante 8 takes the car combat genre further than any other game before it. The driving action is fast and frenetic, with the combat action easily matching this. It's the level design that really makes the gameplay so much fun. The jumps and bumps and the general unconventional environments give Vigilante 8 a significant boost in the gameplay stakes.

...& Fire

With the game running at a such a speed, being fully rotational 3D (no rails here), and with such complex level design, there's bound to be a few graphical glitches throughout the game. This, however, has been kept to quite a minimum and is pretty impressive. Each level has a totally unique look, from the Hoover Dam with its estuaries and piers to the dark and dingy ghost town with a menacing-looking train circling

70s FIREPOWER

If you didn't have access to weapons, Vigilante 8 would be nothing more than an elaborate game of bumper cars. Lucky you have, then...

- **Mosquito Machine Gun**
The Mosquito is popular with both sides because of its high firing rate and ammunition capacity.

- **Interceptor Missiles**
This homing missile was developed at Site-4. Its ability to track a vehicle depends on the target's size.

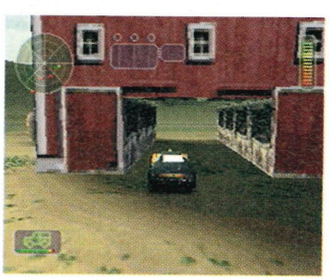
- **Bull's Eye Rockets**
A simple home-made rocket that cannot track but is very powerful.

- **Sky Hammer Mortar**
This mortar fires a charge of alien matter up to 400 feet into the air. When it drops, it follows the sleeted targeted until it makes contact and explodes.

- **Bruiser Cannon**
This, the world's smallest cannon, is very powerful but due to its slow rotation speed it cannot track very well while on the move.

- **Roadkill Mines**
The roadkill mine is specially designed so it can be dropped at high speed. Just make sure you don't run over any of your own mines.







▲ The combat isn't just confined to road warfare.



around every minute or so. There's deserted graveyards, secret bases, sand factories, farming towns and even a casino city to battle it out in, and each of them offers up a new aspect to the gameplay or visual aspects of the game. The ski resort has to be my favourite level, though. It's set on a snow-covered hillside with cable cars, wooden huts, alpine trees and even a slalom course, which is great fun to hot-dog around. The most fun here is to start right at the top of the hill and just cane it down as fast as humanely possible. Blast your way through that fence on the ledge and jump down to the next level where you hit a slalom course. Negotiate this, then hit the moguls and down into the cable car motor rooms. Great fun, especially when you've got a fleet of cars behind you, all after your blood and trying to do exactly the same thing. It's this sort of action, speed and graphical finesse that makes Vigilante 8 so playable.

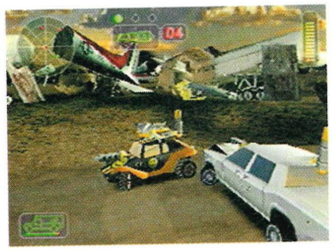
"...it has enough originality, gameplay and cool Seventies quirkiness to make it the best game of its type..."

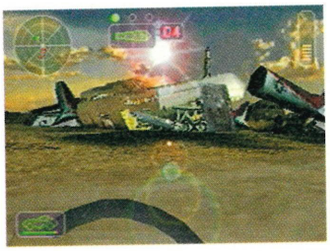
Although secondary to the excellent Seventies-style car combat, the Seventies-style soundtrack is also pretty funky. You hear anything from wigged-out disco to funk and rock that just wills you to go out and buy a pair of flares and goldfish-filled platform shoes. Just don't start calling your girlfriend the 'bitch', asking your mum for 'yo' shit', or taking any 'hos' back to 'yo' crib'. The sound effects offer a host of pyrotechnical bangs and wallops that complement the amount of spent cartridges and alien energy beams flying around all over the shop. On the whole, a decent soundtrack then.

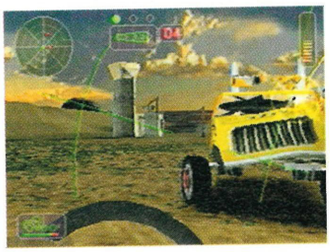
Vigilante could have been simply an average motor mash-style game, but thankfully it has enough originality, gameplay and cool Seventies quirkiness to make it the best game of its type. The characters all ooze Seventies cool and the cars are far better than the English cars of the Seventies. You get to drive and smash up anything from an old school bus to a dune buggy, and you get to play as big city hustlers, FBI agents and even a bee keeper! The gameplay earns the triple 'FFF' award with ease, so if you want a Fast, Frenetic and ultimately Fun game, look no further than Vigilante 8. It really is da shit, man.

EPM
SHAFT











DISCO POWER-UPS

On top of the normal and special weapons there are also a number of power-ups to help you out.

- GREEN ..... Shield
  Protects vehicle from damage for a short time.
- YELLOW ..... Radar Jammer
  Stops enemy radar tracking you for a limited period.
- BLUE ..... Weapons Upgrade
  Double the strength of your weapons.
- SPANNER ..... Repair Damage
  Repairs part of your damage.

Second Opinion

This has been a surprise hit in the office. It's very fast, very smooth and has a cast of superfly characters who aren't exactly PC. Tons of levels, and with two-player battle and co-op modes, you won't be getting Shafted for a long time.

Huggy Bear

The Score

Publisher	ACTIVISION
Developer	LUXAFLUX
Released	JUNE
Version	UK
Price	£39.99
Genre	DRIVING/COMBAT
Players	1-2
Memory Card	✓
Analog	✓

GAMEPLAY
9

ORIGINALITY
9

LIFESPAN
8

SOUND
9

GRAPHICS
8.5

OVERALL
92%

in summary

Shaft mixed with the Dukes of Hazard, and a Twisted Metal garnish. Tasty.

Point Blank

Namco's unlikely Time Crisis-beater opens fire willy-nilly



Up 'til the arrival of this title, most light gun games were based around blowing away ever-increasing waves of homicidal armed blokes until you ran out of ammo, time or health. Point Blank disregards all the usual conventions of the genre, though, basing things around varied fairground-type tests of skill and quick thinking in a bizarre cartoonish setting.

Based loosely around the antics of Dr Don and Dr Dan (a kind of high-calibre Little and Large), the emphasis is on varied demands being placed on the player rather than relentless itchy trigger-fingering. Being a Namco coin-op conversion means, of course, it's compatible with the marvellous Guncon, which is just as well as pin-point accuracy is an absolute must. The action is based primarily around single-screen levels, each demanding a basic task be carried out, which goes from fairly mundane gallery or skeet shooting tasks to more puzzle-like and ingenious problems that test your intellect and coolness as well as raw reactions. For example, one level flashes up a particular type of cuddly toy from among a whole range appearing underneath it, meaning you have to take in which toy to shoot, pick it out from among the crowd and then snipe at it. On another screen, you must shoot out scrambled number tiles from one to 16 in order, which is a lot harder than it sounds.

The sheer variety of things, objects and creatures you get to pop away at beggars belief. There are jumping octopi, swimming piranha, asteroids, paper ninja cut-outs, puffy-bodied cuckoos, bouncing balls that split in two when shot and a UFO that disgorges a big-eyed alien when you take it out.

Bonus-type screens that take a different slant to the rest of the game also pop up frequently. For example, there's the one where Mr Dan holds a bottle in one hand and drops it almost immediately and you have to intercept sharpishly. Even better (and easier) is the level in which a smart sports car sits in front of you in pristine condition. Your task? To blow it completely to bits as fast as possible. Gratuitous, and intensely gratifying.

> **"...The sheer variety of things, objects and creatures you get to pop away at beggars belief..."**

Not all the games are based on aggro, though, as some involve benevolently protecting one or the other of the hapless doctors from being either crushed by advancing tanks or immolated by spinning firebrands through the help of your trusty and versatile firearm. Throughout the game and its wide plethora of styles, the amount of shots you get varies from infinite to just the one, with accordingly differing time constraints that need taking into account with regard to your rates of fire and attempted accuracy. All this makes it impossible to drop into a robotic rhythm, so thinking on your feet and adapting to the new demands quickly become just as important as sharpshooting.

Sarcastic Shooting

Extensive options and variables are available, such as a full Training Mode that lets you select certain





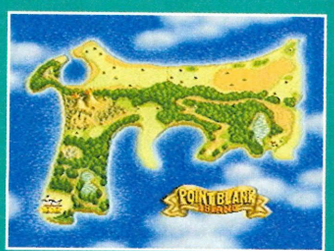






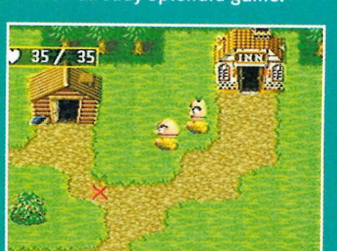
DROLL-PLAYING GAME

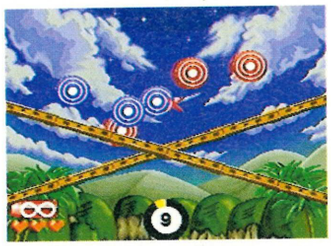
There's an unexpected but welcome extra feature nestled away in Point Blank, namely a rudimentary RPG that lets you control Dr Dan and Dr Don as they explore the ingeniously-named Point Blank Island, searching for the fabled Gun Bullet. This mystical weapon can apparently slay dragons, so the climax of this section does seem a little obvious. Steering the pair about is implemented by shooting at the areas you want them to head towards, while they can interact with the island's inhabitants or indulge in 'fights' with some denizens (that are screens from the main game). Experience points and Resilience are gained through victory, and your position can be saved via a Memory Card. An entertaining and dumbly enjoyable addition to an already splendid game.

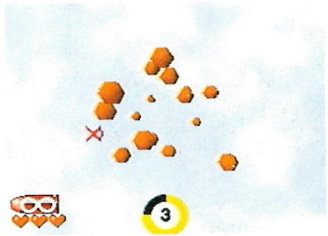














screens to practice on, and then assesses your performance with both a comprehensive data breakdown (with mathematical graph) and a sarcastic set of comments. Beginner, Expert and the vicious Very Hard modes are selectable at the start of play, creating quite a lot of scope for long-term potential, while surprisingly there's even a Zelda style RPG tacked on (see boxout).

"... ideal for rollicking party play, particularly if two Guncons are extravagantly daisy-chained together..."

Finishing a set of games allows you to play the final decorative bonus screen, where the number of targets hit corresponds to the amount of fireworks launched in your honour as uniformed pigs fanfare your score. The hugely enjoyable multi-player mode allows for up to eight participants, and can be based around a straightforward highest score battle, a knockout tournament or a grudge match team battle, and each one is more fun than a tickly pillow fight with a load of giggling schoolgirls.

As each game is different, the tendency is that things stay nicely competitive as it's hard for an individual to be good at every screen. It's ideal for rollicking party play, particularly if two Guncons are extravagantly daisy-chained together, allowing for chaotic twin-player action.

Valiant Visuals

Although the graphics are, as you can see, strictly 16-bit in their look and execution, being flat sprites (remember them?) really doesn't make the blindest bit of difference to the gameplay. Anything you see is likely to be shot before you actually look at it for very long. Instead of giving the impression of having little effort put into them, the visuals instead seem refreshingly unpretentious in a software universe that has a Freudian obsession with huge frame rates and ostentatious graphical tricks . The solid bedrock of arcade-bred playability and fine design makes the simplistic look of the game an effective irrelevance, and emphasises yet again that being pretty to look at isn't what computer games are all about. The same could be said of the sound FX, which are strictly functional but chunky and apt, while the melodic din that is the background music (which laughingly cannot be turned off) adds that 'we're in an arcade' atmosphere, as does the programmers' wryly leaving the 'FREE PLAY' tag at the bottom of the title screen.

As an almost-straight coin-op port, it was bound to retain the instant gratification that is vital for people to keep pumping their 20 pees in, so the taut gameplay underbelly that nestles under the simple 'n' saccharine visuals without contradiction comes as no surprise. Procure a Guncon, amass some pals and palesses, and enjoy this game and all the innocent fun it can provide. EPM

CHRISTIAN

FOOTNOTE: **Point Blank only works with Guncon-compatible light guns. For a full guide to light gun compatibility, check out our feature on page 104.**

Second Opinion

Easily the best light gun game on the PSX. With over 70 different shooting games included, you'll never get bored.

Darren

The Score

Publisher	NAMCO
Developer	NAMCO
Released	JUNE
Version	UK
Price	£34.99 (ALONE)
	£59.99 (WITH GUNCON)
Genre	LIGHT GUN GAME
Players	1-8
Memory Card	✓
Guncon 45	✓

GAMEPLAY
9

ORIGINALITY
8

LIFESPAN
7

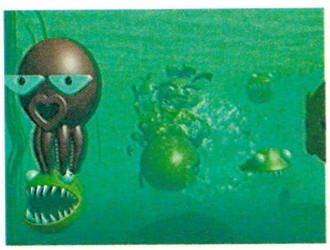
SOUND
5

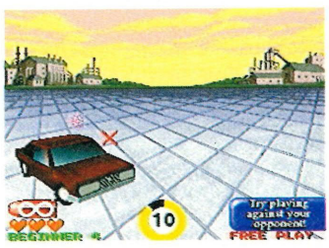
GRAPHICS
6

OVERALL
89%

in summary

Top-notch rapid-fire hi-jinks.

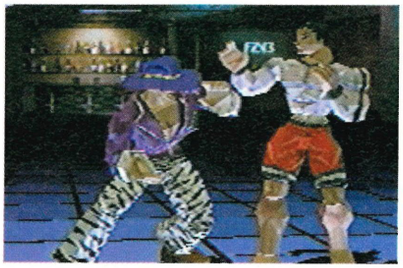






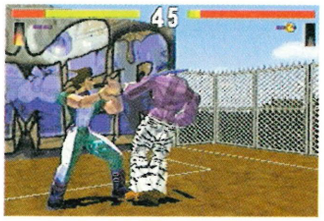


Enter the Dragon! You have to shoot this beast 16 times.



Vs





Who are the Warriors?

Set on the mean and nasty streets of LA, Vs avoids the usual fantasy/kung-fu settings used for fighting games and instead pits rival gang members against one another in a battle for reputation, turf and kudos. However, the gangs aren't the real-life Crips and Bloods (we'll have to wait for the arrival of Virtua Compton for that), but stylised fantasy cliques based loosely around the Hood, Street, Beach and, erm, Campus areas of the city. Each set has four fighters (plus a hidden boss), covering several different fighting styles from free karate to pro-wrestling.

As seen last month, the characters are an unusual bunch of drop-outs and low-lifes, from the homeless tae-kwon-do master Jalil through to Rave DJ Mia, the pleated skirt-wearing schoolgirl Kathleen and last but definitely not least, the flyest pimp on the block, Slim Daddy. Available venues for the inevitable rumbling include a tarmac basketball court, glitterball disco dance floor, various seaside settings and the university roof for the bookish battlers, all of which provide a colourful but fairly non-interactive background for the pummelling.

Straightforward Slugging

Fighting controls are fairly simple - there's only straightforward Punch, Kick and Evade buttons to hit, eschewing the complexity of the Tekken series and fixing its sights more firmly on the coin-op-flavoured kind of conflict. Combos can be strung together without too much hassle, which can be frustrating when on the receiving end, but attacks can be firmly blocked and cut off. As an immediate and fairly no-frills fighter, it's more than adequate. However, as you can probably tell from the screenshots, the detail on the characters' bodies is somewhat lacking, presumably to keep the frame rate at a swift 50 fps. This makes for their blocky look when viewed close-up or at rest.

> **"...Although it's loveable and playable, it just doesn't have the punch to be the hardest player on the street..."**

The action's certainly fast, particularly against the CPU who is mercilessly quick even on Normal level, but the artificial intelligence leaves quite a bit to be desired. It's vulnerable at times to certain repeated attacks. Nowadays this really isn't up to the mark in programming terms, but then again in my opinion most beat-'em-ups are really designed around human Vs human encounters, so again the game should be cut some slack in that respect.

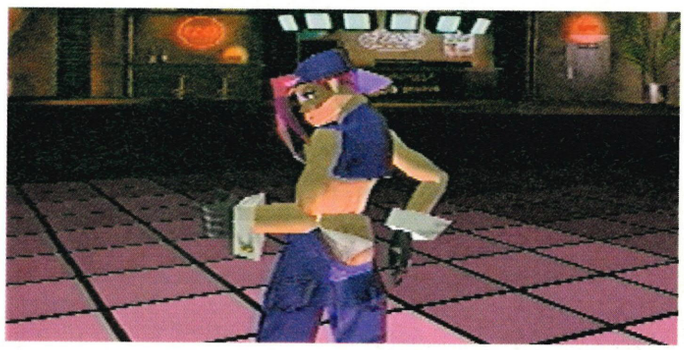
All the normal modes of play are here - CPU, Vs another player, Team, Survival, and an inter-gang Challenge confrontation, success at which yields the four secret Boss characters who are added to the roster. It's all pretty much as expected, really, with only the cool characters adding a frisson of unfamiliarity to proceedings. It must be noted, though, out of the 16 available there are only eight generic fighting styles, which does smack a little of short-changing in the design department (less motion-capturing to do, saving precious time and hard cash).

Intermittent Audio

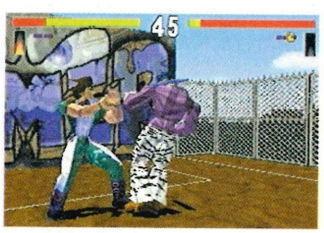
The audio aspect is also a little patchy, with some of the fighters' yelps and shouts sounding a touch incongruous and hurriedly-sampled, while the smart-ass witticisms they spout upon victory are also sometimes strangely absent . Musical accompaniment comes from a brace of fresh new Los Angeles alternative rock bands that all need a funk suppository followed by a melody implant and then a rhythm bypass, quite frankly.

It's unfortunate for Vs that its inconsistency lets it down altogether, as it removes the impression of a finely-polished game enjoyed by titles such as Cardinal Syn and Bloody Roar. Lacking the bells and whistles of these two, it has to stand on its combat and characters alone, which although cool are not cutting edge, a quality that any game in this most worn of genres needs to survive. Although it's loveable and playable, it just doesn't have the punch to be the hardest player on the street for longer than an afternoon.

CHRISTIAN



▲ Tits are passé, so Mia flashes her knickers when she wins.





Second Opinion

How can a game which won't last 'longer than an afternoon' get 61%? Bad AI means you can win many fights with your eyes shut. I'd mark it at least 30% lower.

Ian

The Score

Publisher	THQ INC.
Developer	POLYGON MAGIC INC.
Released	12TH JUNE
Version	UK
Price	£44.99
Genre	BEAT-'EM-UP
Players	1-2
Memory Card	✔

GAMEPLAY **6**

ORIGINALITY **5**

LIFESPAN **5**

SOUND **6**

GRAPHICS **6**

OVERALL **61**

in summary

Not a heavyweight outfit.

Everybody's Golf

But not Everybody's cup of tee...



Golf games. Boring, linear pap, or exciting seat-of-your pants action? I'll go for the former on that one. It's a split decision, but every golf game is basically the same - choose your stick (although the computer always gives you best one anyway), line up with the flag (although the computer always does that for you anyway) and press 'fire' a few times (the computer doesn't do that). Good fun, innit?

Sony, however, have tried to do it a little different with Everybody's Golf. Don't expect naked beat-'em-up future golf, though. It's simply the presentation and style of graphics that offer something new in Everybody's Golf. The visuals themselves are much more cute and cartoony than previously seen in a golf game, and they work very well. Because of this, the game aims to appeal to people other than just golf game fans. Hence the title.

> "...it may look lovely, but the gameplay is just too damn simple to make it interesting for long periods of time..."

The gameplay has also been altered slightly, but only in that it's far easier to play than other golf games. The power bar's more forgiving than the more serious golf games in that the hook and slice factor isn't very strong. This makes taking a shot just that bit too easy, which in turn makes Everybody's Golf a tad boring and repetitive.

This is something many of you would find in most golf games, but in Everybody's Golf it seems to be more prominent.

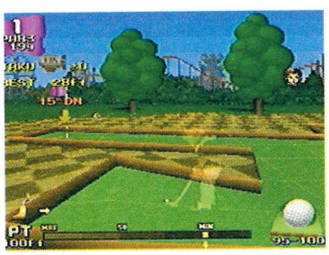
There are several different modes of play in Everybody's Golf, from basic stroke and match play to a trip to the driving range and a mini golf-style putting course. The mini golf is one of the best parts of the game in that it actually takes some real skill as you get further into the course. Lucky, then, you can play a four-player game of mini golf - we tried it on the normal course and didn't get far. Get four players on the putting pitch, though, and it's a different matter. You've got to get your angles and power just right to putt the ball, which makes it a satisfying achievement when you win.

Everybody's Bored

It's a shame the main game doesn't offer enough excitement, especially when it looks as good as it does. The courses are drawn beautifully, with all the usual features of a golf course such as trees, water hazards and sand bunkers. The camera fly-by at the beginning of a hole is also very nice, but it doesn't make up for the fact that Everybody's Golf isn't really a lot of fun.

That's not to say that it's the worst golf game we've ever played, though. It's just that with graphics as good as these, it would have been nice to see a more in-depth golf game behind them. Everything's in place. There are plenty of clubs to choose from, a





view function where you can look around the course until your heart's content, plenty of putting options such as ball lie and gradient and there's even ten different characters for you to play with, all with different strengths and weaknesses. The problem is everything has just been simplified to the extreme. Perhaps if they hadn't tried to make a golf game for everybody, it would have turned out different.

We admire Sony for trying to bring the golf game to the normal person, and if they had offered more challenging gameplay I'd be able to score it much higher. However, it may look lovely, but the gameplay is just too damn simple to make it interesting for long periods of time. The fatal flaw is that they've assumed a game for 'everybody' has to be easy, which is a bit of an insult if you ask me.

EPM

SAUL

Second Opinion

Everybody's Golf is very simple but this makes it very accessible . I'd score it well into the seventies for being a little different.

Darren

The Score

Publisher	SCEE
Developer	CAMELOT
Released	OUT NOW
Version	UK
Price	£39.99
Genre	SPORTS SIM
Players	1-4
Memory Card	✓

GAMEPLAY **6**

ORIGINALITY **6**

LIFESPAN **5**

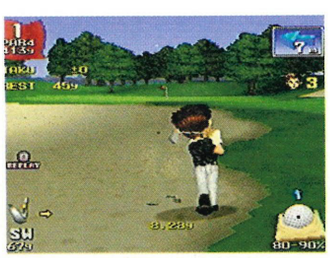
SOUND **7**

GRAPHICS **9**

OVERALL **65%**

in summary

Beautiful to look at, but just too simple to play.





Klonoa

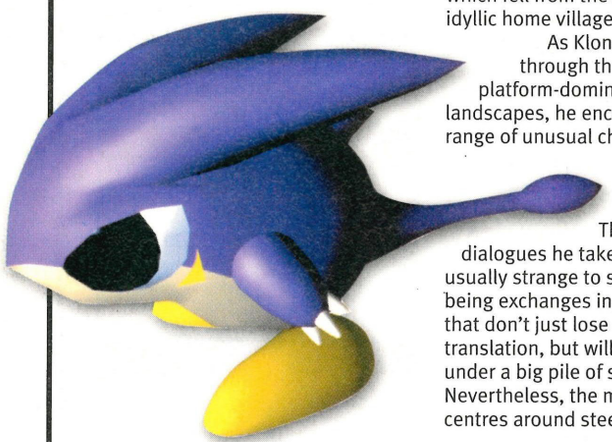
Super furry animals a go-go from Namco



As you may have already gleaned from the wealth of primary-coloured screenshots you see before you, Klonoa is a game aimed squarely at the younger PSX players, a fairly small (and hence risky) subset of the PlayStation-owning pie. Nintendo (rightly) have the reputation for pandering to this under-monied sector of the market, so for maverick quality alone the game is unusual.

Being a Japanese-programmed title, the plot's a mite impenetrable to simplified western tastes, being full-on Saturday-morning cartoon fodder with that added extra oriental twist which always brings a feeling of intense bafflement. Eponymously centred around the questing of a cuddlesome canine and his floating purple bubble sidekick (tongue-tieingly called Huepow), the player must guide the pair on a hunt to find clues that make clear the conundrum presented by the mysterious object which fell from the sky onto their idyllic home village, Breezegale.

> **"...The cartoonish three-dimensional landscape looks surprisingly good for a game meant for unappreciative kiddies..."**

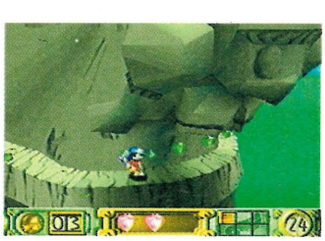


As Klonoa progresses through the various platform-dominated landscapes, he encounters a wide range of unusual characters who either provide clues or try to kill him dead. The intermittent dialogues he takes part in are usually strange to say the least, being exchanges in finest 'Japlish' that don't just lose something in the translation, but willingly hide it under a big pile of something odd. Nevertheless, the main action centres around steering the hairy hero about and jumping him onto stuff, all the while avoiding the wide variety of cute but nasty creatures that suffuse the pastelised environment. To deal with them, Klonoa has a kind of energy blast that only fires a few feet in front of him, but knocks the creatures it hits up into the air and onto his head, whereupon he uses them to either shoot at other creatures (who then explode in a shower of geometrical shapes) or to give him an extra jumping boost to help reach particularly high platforms or the bonus blue and green jewels that suffuse his path. Blocking his way are bloated red rabbity things, Sonic lookalikes that sprint towards him aggressively, be-shielded lupins, a wicked bunny that gobs spiked balls at him and numerous other homicidal roly-polies.

To keep things nice and fluffy for the youngsters, life loss is offset by having three strikes per energy heart and three hearts per life, and there's plenty of extras dotted about to keep things healthy. This means that the game is ever so slightly easy for the more mature and professionally-skilled player (like our good selves), and the actual demands placed on one to get past certain obstacles are set at a breezily enjoyable level rather than a toughly frustrating one. However, when a life is lost Klonoa disappears (becoming









CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE ABSURD KIND

Our Klonoa runs into some freaky situations and individuals on his adventures.



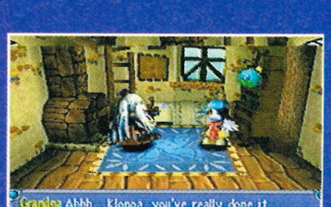
Inside a mountain he finds a mine cart which speeds off down a corkscrew track that's littered with jewels to pick up. There's no risk, so it's a kind of bonus level.



This unusual fellow is your arch-nemesis Ghadius, whose wicked machinations have set Klonoa's adventures in progress. He's got the universe under his cloak, you know.



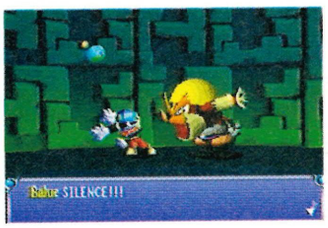
The first boss is this strange scorpion-type creature that ripples the earth by stamping its foot. To win, run underneath when it jumps and shoot its backside.

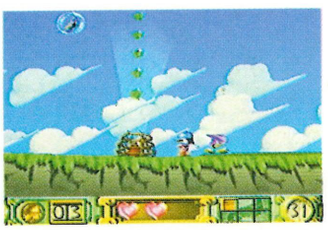


This over-critical gaffer is Klonoa's grandad, who gives him next-to-useless advice. Miserable old codger. Note Huepow floating by loyally.











briefly invulnerable), but then it's impossible to tell which way he is pointing, which often lands you back in just as much trouble again. At the end of each level there are boss creatures to deal with, but these look a lot more vicious than they are, needing just a touch of patient pattern-watching to find their weak spots (which are usually hinted at anyway). They're nicely designed though, the first one in particular being akin to a Final Fantasy VII nasty.

Cartoon Capers

The cartoonish three-dimensional landscape looks surprisingly good for a game meant for unappreciative kiddies, the moving camera angles emphasising the 2.5D nature of the game and nicely providing the most aesthetically pleasing view of the buildings and platforms. In fact, it's strongly reminiscent of the old 8-bit favourite Parallax, particularly in the indoor sections, with its cylindrical-scrolling style and baddy-leaping manoeuvres. The relative simplicity of the objects and sprites means everything stays nice and smooth, the various graphical effects that pop up (such as the sleeting rain and leaves buoyed up on whooshing updrafts) are well executed and pleasant to behold. The sound fits in nicely with the overall mood of the game, punctuating the hopping and flinging with agreeable fizzy twangs and gobbling blurps, while the conversations Klonoa has are accompanied by the entertaining baby-talk mewlings of the characters; if you squint with your ears you almost make sense of them. An aura of unrelenting jolliness is fostered by the soundtrack music though, which surely must have come out of an instrument created by Fisher Price and manned by Barney the Dinosaur. The presentation all-round is generally good, from the animated between-level pop-up book to the front-end movie, which basically is a soft-focus cartoon that introduces the Odyssean figure of Klonoa and chronicles his first meeting with Huepow, and the subsequent arrival of the meteoric thing that struck the village.

"...Definitely worth a twiddle at, and an ideal purchase for a diminutive relative..."

Critique Ludo

Judging the gameplay of Klonoa by adult standards would obviously be unrepresentative as it would be a bit like criticising Ludo for being one-dimensional and simplistic. The difficulty seems to be set just right for short attention-span sproglets, and losing doesn't carry a nasty bitter taste that would put them off coming back for more. Technically the game's also admirable, albeit understandably unambitious, but definitely its status as a youngster's title doesn't mean the impression of polish and quality hasn't been shirked. While not pushing back any boundaries at all (except perhaps that of sheer tweeness and sugary sentiments) it's a decent computer game, being both fun and to an extent atmospheric (although, let's face it, it's no Resident Evil in this respect). Definitely worth a twiddle at, and an ideal purchase for a diminutive relative, but still a little bit of a wrench at £34.99.

EPM

CHRISTIAN





▲ Klonoa cops some attitude from this bellowing bloke.





Second Opinion

Cutesy platform games are usually the realm of 16-bit machines or the N64. Sony's attempt, though, is a decent effort but it doesn't match the more adult-orientated platform action of Jersey Devil and Pandemonium 2. One for the kids.

Saul

The Score

Publisher	SCEE
Developer	NAMCO
Released	MAY
Version	UK
Price	£34.99
Genre	PLATFORMER
Players	1
Passwords	✓

GAMEPLAY
8

ORIGINALITY
6

LIFESPAN
4

SOUND
5

GRAPHICS
7

OVERALL
74%

in summary

Cute as a button, easy as pie.

Total NBA '98

A gap in the market is filled by Sony's much-needed release...



It seems basketball games fill the same niche in the US as soccer games do over here; they're produced at a rate that must surely outstrip demand. As you can tell from our football feature, there are many virtually identical examples to choose from, all with extremely similar features. Only a virtuoso game with no flaws AND some kind of gimmick or schtick making it different can keep its head above water. The same situation exists with basketball sims, as was made clear when this game landed on the office doormat. Even after loading it up we weren't 100% sure whether we'd already reviewed it, and even had to consult last month's mag for confirmation!

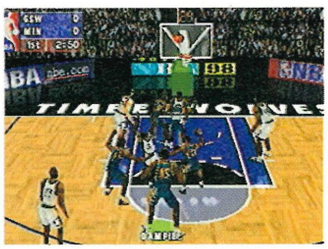
> "...there are reams of completely comprehensive and historically accurate roster statistics ..."

As you might have guessed, on the surface there's not a lot revolutionary about this game compared to all the other NBA-this-or-thats, but then again if there was it just wouldn't be basketball, would it?

Comprehensive Reams

As is the absolute norm nowadays, there are reams of completely comprehensive and historically accurate roster statistics complimented by digitised pics of the stars themselves, plus an entertaining Create Player option allowing you to invent your own custom team members (and give them entertaining facial furniture and hair-dos). Full league, play-off and draft structures are available for campaign play, plus a one-off exhibition match for quick thrills.

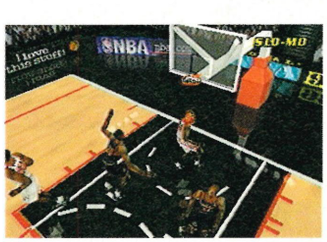
Either full simulation or simplified arcade play is possible (but they seem pretty similar to me), and handily, all those tedious rules such as back-court violations and the shot clock timings can be switched off for a less accurate but faster-moving game, which is ideal for those unfamiliar with basketball (or who just can't be arsed). If twin Multi Taps are used, up to eight players can take part simultaneously, either co-operatively or on competing teams, so full-on party entertainment is a possibility with the right kit and enough compadres. Most other variables can be changed to taste (quarter length, skill settings, FX balance) and some other less obvious values, such as fatigue on players and the close score option. All these menus are slickly presented to a much higher standard than the usual workmanlike sports sim style, particularly the rotating cube/TV picture effect behind the main screens, the pleasant bouncing ball sound that punctuates each movement of the cursor and the agreeable slice of hip-hop that acts as a backing track . All very nice so far, then.



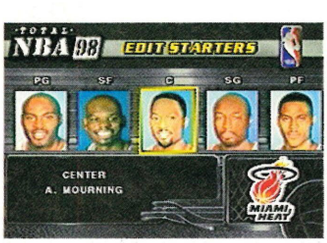
Polished Plank

The action section of the game follows the same high standard set by games such as NBA Fastbreak '98 (reviewed last issue) in depicting sweetly-drawn and motion- captured players to scale with one another, all with realistic facial features and mannerisms. The court is highly-polished planking that reflects the players and floodlights just right, while the crowd looks OK but again are motionless, which is becoming the norm for sports sims. This is understandable; there's only a finite amount of processing power at hand, and animating the audience is a low priority. Six camera angles are available, which is extremely conservative by current genre standards, but they cover all the views that are actually practical during a game, with the addition of a free-roaming action cam. There is also (unsurprisingly) a full replay video mode that allows the numerous spectacular shots to be seen repeatedly and from almost any angle (even between the player's legs; oo-er), and when rewound has fuzzy horizontal lines and a reversing-tape sound, an unnecessary but definitely cool touch.

The playing itself seems to err towards the long-term full-on simulation aspect, which is one of the demands b-ball fans make (and rightly so), but it still seems a touch easy to score from the middle-range area. There are many shimmy-type









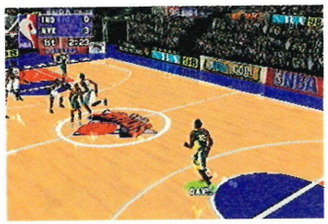


▲ Design your own character with the Create Player option.



moves and devious passes which takes a little time to get to grips with and execute properly, but they can be used to string together some nice passing sequences and attacks on the basket fairly easily. To help with this, various formations can be accessed on the fly by holding down L1 and R1 simultaneously and hitting a pre-assigned button for either box, triangle or hi-lo plays (whatever these are), ostensibly sending your gangly blokes scurrying about into space. Pressing the lower shoulder buttons when in possession flashes a symbol above the other members of a team, a touch of which puts them on the receiving end of a pass. Your players can also be set to mark particular opponents dependant on their respective abilities, 'shutting them down'. After every match there's a full breakdown analysing possession times, attempts on basket and so on, so your skill progression (or lack of it) can be dissected completely. The atmosphere of a match is aided no end by the genuinely excellent sound effects and voiceover that raises the somewhat shoddy standard which such games normally aspire to. Grunts of players and the squeaks of their trainers mingle nicely with the booming voice of the commentator as his extremely American tones lend an authentic sheen of overstatement and deep ironical avoidance to things.

"...Grunts of players and the squeaks of their trainers mingle nicely with the booming voice of the commentator..."



Who'll be the Judge?

Not being completely au fait with the intricacies and less basic tactics of the game, it's very hard to judge this game truly accurately as a simulation. From what I can tell, though, NBA Total '98 has no obvious shortfallings in any department, and boasts many stylish features and smart touches that make it less of a straight and possibly bland translation of the real-life sport than most of the games in this field. The differences between this title and the rest of the pack are small and in all likelihood relatively minor, but this does not detract from the game itself, only indicating that the standard across the board is generally high. In and of itself it's a fine piece of software, but taken as part of the wider picture things become less clear, and really boil down to personal taste (reliant, of course, on one's own predilection for basketball).

EPM

CHRISTIAN



Second Opinion

Basketball games don't really set my hoop on fire, but as far as they go Total NBA '98 is a decent effort. If you like running back and forth and taking it in turns to score, that is.

Saul

The Score

Publisher	SCEE
Developer	SONY AMERICA
Released	JUNE
Version	UK
Price	£39.99
Genre	SPORTS SIM
Players	1-8
Memory Card	✔
Analog	✔

GAMEPLAY **8**

ORIGINALITY **5**

LIFESPAN **7**

SOUND **9**

GRAPHICS **8**

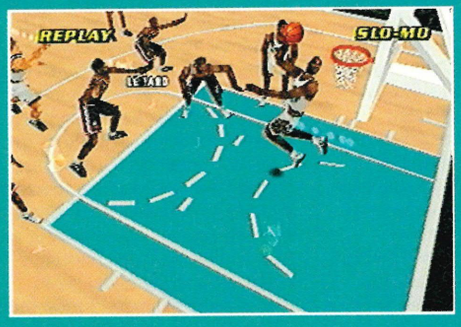
OVERALL **85%**

in summary

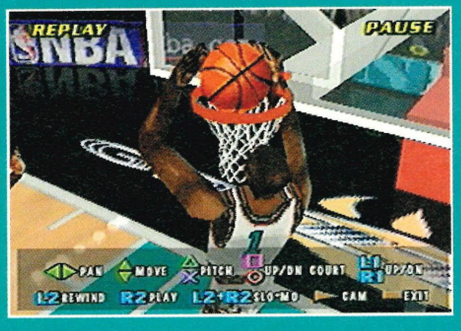
No more! Please, no more!

WHAT'S THE ANGLE, MAN?

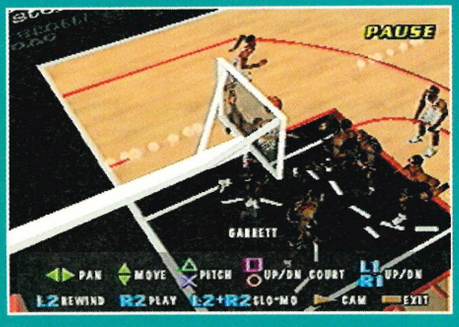
There are numerous camera angles and viewpoints available to help wallowing in the glory of splendid shots and delightful dunks.



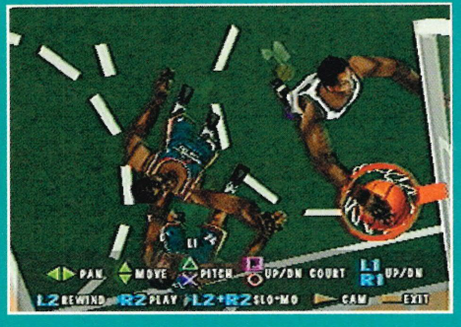
The normal in-game replay gives you a slo-mo view of the best shots from a normal angle.



The player-definable replay view means you can 'fly' the camera right up to the action and pause it, just like here. Isn't that lovely?



...or from a skewed angle, such as here, allowing you to study your form during an attack from a crow's eye viewpoint.



This neck-snapping angle lets you see the look of victory on the player's face as he scores a slam. Or not. Note the reflection of his trainers on the court floor.

BUST A MOVE DANCE & RHYTHM ACTION

First rapping, now dancing. What next? Karaoke? God help us...



Let's get one thing straight from the 'off': Bust A Move Dance & Rhythm Action is absolutely no relation to the excellent Bust-A-Move puzzle games. In fact, it has almost no relation to any videogame previous to it. Why? Because it's a game about dancing, that's why.

We couldn't believe it ourselves when BAM first arrived in the office. I mean, how can a game possibly be based on dancing? Once you start playing, though, you realise the Japanese sense of all things odd has actually worked and BAM is a supremely playable game.

The basic premise is to tap buttons in time with the music. Don't worry, you don't need to be John Travolta, but a good sense of rhythm does give you a head start. During the game, each button press and combination appears on the screen for you to follow in time with the music. It starts off with a simple single-button press, but as the song progresses you have to follow multiple D-Pad and button presses in succession. This would be easy if it wasn't for the fact that each press of the joypad and buttons has to be in time with the music. As the combinations build up, you need to pull off complex D-Pad and button presses to keep yourself in the running. Once you've reached a certain limit, you perform a freeze, which is a special dance move. All the time, though, you're battling it out with the dancer next to you who can either be played by a mate or the CPU.



The dance battle idea is taken one step further by the inclusion of special attacking moves that can be pulled off by hitting Triangle instead of the button depicted on-screen. These moves are all character specific. For instance, if you're playing as Heat, his special move is a ball of flames . Activate Shorty the Kid's special move and some giant sweets drop from the top of the screen onto the other character. The special moves can be avoided by hitting Square at the right time, although this seems to be down to luck more than judgement.

GREASED LIGHTNING

There's a choice of ten different characters to play as at the beginning, and each has their own arena, dancing style and music. All of the characters have a certain quirkiness about them, making each one as interesting and fun to play as the others. There's a John Travolta-style playboy, a raver called Gas-o who wears an Altern 8-style gas mask, a few sexy ladies in various states of dress and undress, a bloater called Hamm and a cocky little kid, complete with sideways baseball cap. They've all been drawn with an incredible attention to detail and the animation has to be seen to be believed. The dancing is so incredibly smooth, especially on some of the more complex moves like backflips and windmills. Performing well in a bout usually results in you getting a Fever Time session. Here you watch your character to perform some of their best and most spectacular moves just in the name of posing. These sessions look superb and are great for annoying your mates with.

"...There's anything from funky Seventies disco strut to Nineties hardcore raving and hip hop-style breaking..."

The range of dancing styles is also pretty astounding. There's anything from funky Seventies disco strut to Nineties hardcore raving and hip hop-style breaking. It's a shame, then, that unless you're a spectator you don't get to watch the dancing. You find yourself concentrating so much on the beat and button combinations you rarely get to witness your character's movements. There's no other way it could have been done, though, and BAM is still

ELECTRIC BOOGALOO

Heat shows of some of the more technical breakdance style moves.







a hoot to play. At least it's good for those party situations, because the spectators or players rarely get bored of the funky shenanigans going down on the screen.

The one essential ingredient for dancing is obviously music. At first I was convinced the music on BAM was complete and utter pap, but after giving it a chance there's no denying it offers some of the best in-game music we've heard. Okay, so it's not full of cool, deep underground cuts, but hey, music doesn't always have to be cool, does it? It's basically a quirky, funky blend of Japanese pop and dance music with an extremely light edge. Most of the tunes have some kind of lyric that are all in English, even though it's a Japanese copy of the game we're playing. Some of the lyrics are excellent, and the singing is up to a high standard - as far as Japanese pop goes, anyway. Our favourite 'choon' has to be the John Travolta-style character Hiro's, with the irresistibly cheesy lyric, "I'm an international playboy". Cool. There's such a diverse range of music here that everyone will find at least one favourite, and even if you're so underground you never see daylight, you'll still find it hard not to raise a smile when you here the BAM music.

SATURDAY NIGHT FEVER

Playing BAM in one-player mode isn't exactly challenging, but to give the game a longer lifespan, there are a number of new characters and modes you can obtain by beating the game in certain ways. Completing the game on 'easy' gives you the Dance Preview option, where you can choreograph your own dances from scratch. Completing the game on 'normal' difficulty allows you to play as two aliens who dance in a Capoeira martial arts style. There are three other characters to obtain, but we'll leave it up to you to find out how to get them.

The real lifespan comes from the two-player battles. A two-player session really brings out the rivalry between friends, but unlike a beat-'em-up or football game this competitiveness never comes down to the usual slagging match, due simply to the overall niceness of the game.

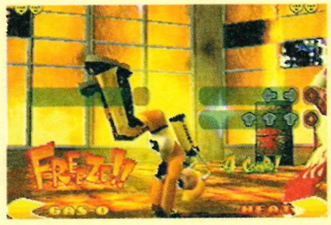
The usual problem with reviewing import games is working out exactly what everything does. Check out the Parasite Eve review for proof of that. However, there isn't one piece of Japanese text in the whole of BAM, so it might just well be an English game. There's absolutely no problem with figuring out what does what, but there's a huge problem playing on a chipped machine. If you have a Japanese or American PSX you're laughing, but playing it on a chipped PlayStation is like trying to dance after ten pints of Stella. Because of the different speed the PAL system runs at, the music is out of time with the stuff-strutting on screen, making it impossible to play. Dazza tried it and put it down to the fact that he had no rhythm, but after closer inspection we realised that it wasn't him (for once) but the combination of chipped machine and Jap game.

> **"...BAM really is the proverbial breath of fresh air in a world filled with beat-'em-ups, sports sims and racing games..."**

BAM really is the proverbial breath of fresh air in a world filled with beat-'em-ups, sports sims and racing games. If you're looking for originality in a game, look no further than here. The music, the superb visuals and eclectic bunch of groovers to choose from offers months and months of disco-grooving fun, but only if you've got mates to play it with. If you haven't, the one-player game doesn't really warrant the sixty or seventy quid you're going to have to fork out for the import version. BAM is the perfect party game all but the most cynical will enjoy. Grab your dancing gear, ride the rhythm and strut your funky stuff.

EPM

SAUL





Second Opinion

Corrects many of the faults of the first, although in the process loses many of features that made the original great.
original great.

Saul

The Score

Publisher	ENIX
Developer	METRO
Released	OUT NOW (IMPORT)
Version	JAPANESE
Price	£60-£70 (MAY VARY)
Genre	DANCING
Players	1-2
Memory Card	✔

GAMEPLAY
8

ORIGINALITY
10

LIFESPAN
8

SOUND
9

GRAPHICS
9

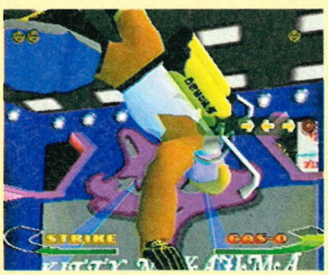
OVERALL
86%

in summary

Single-player game won't last long, but the two-player mode excels.

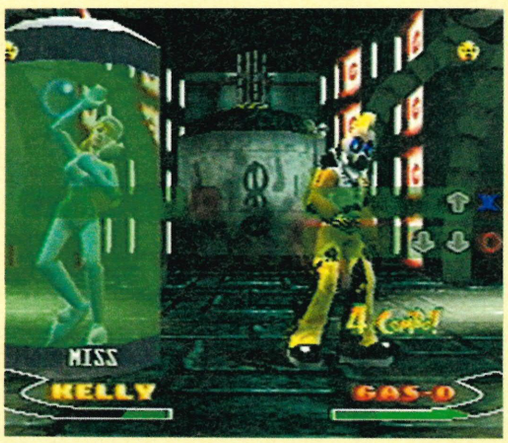








I'm soooo funkeee!



Gas-o traps Kelly in a tank full of flobber.

PARASITE EVE

Resident Evil meets FFVII, or not?

The story begins in New York, Christmas Eve 1997. Aya, a rather attractive rookie detective, is spending an evening at the opera with the love of her life. All is going well (if you're into opera, that is) until half way through the performance when the cast start to combust and fall to the floor in burning heaps. As terror fills the audience, they too start to perish in flames. People try to escape the carnage, but on the stage one lone figure stands and continues to sing. As the flames quell themselves, Aya approaches the solitary figure. Who is she? What is she? Can she tell me next week's lottery numbers?

Parasite Eve hails from SquareSoft, the home of Final Fantasy, so from the word 'go' you know you're in for a highly polished visual experience. But what about the gameplay? Well, it's a cross between an RPG and a Resident Evil-style game. This means you get to explore in glorious set camera 3D but with the added extra of RPG-style equipment, health and magic statistics. This adds a welcome new depth to the Resident Evil style of game, but if you're about to buy the Japanese copy, beware - it takes some time before you work out exactly what everything does.

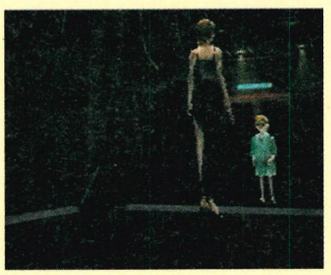


Another problem with the Japanese version is all the plot text is, surprise, surprise, Japanese. Thus the in-game storyline goes totally over my head, and over anybody else's who can't speak Japanese. However, the game's still a shining example of original gameplay ideas and fantastic-looking rendered 3D visuals which even a non-Japanese-speaking gamer can sink themselves into.

The game takes place over six days in the life of Aya, where each day has a certain theme. Each day has a title that depicts what is happening. For instance, the first day is called Resonance and day six is called Evolution. The gameplay stays basically the same, although things get progressively harder as you make it to the later days.

> **"...from the word 'go' you know you're in for a highly polished visual experience..."**

The emphasis is on exploring, which is evident from very early on in the game. After the first battle with Eve on the theatre stage, you have to explore the theatre to get clues and pick-ups to help you in the rest of the game. It's in the backstage area of the theatre you first get a clue to what's going on. A rat crosses your path and the game smoothly cuts to a sumptuous CG scene where it transforms into a gruesome beast you have to fight. Is it some kind of virus? Of course not; that would be too Resident Evil. The cause of this is the Mitochondria Cells which Eve carries in her body.



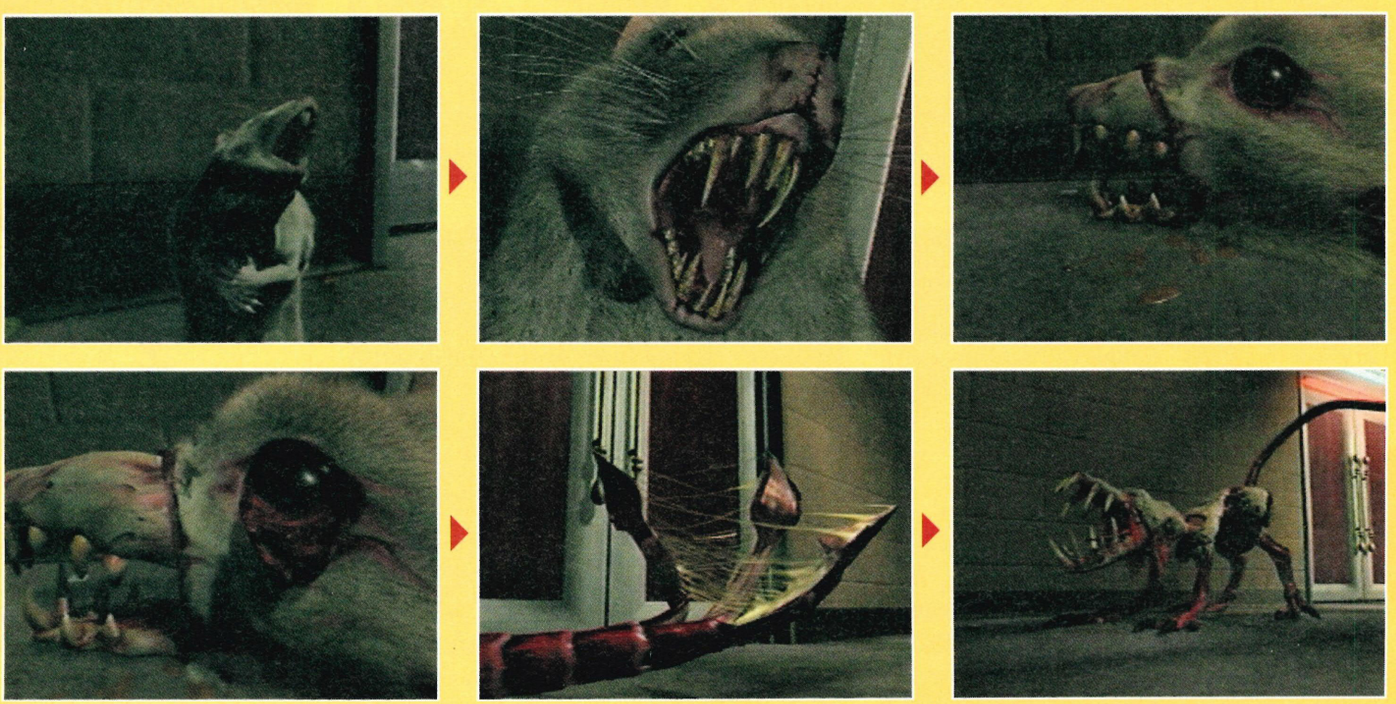
These cells have one of two goals; to either destroy all life, or multiply themselves within other life forms. Hence the rat.

Resident Fantasy

How do you take on the rat then? Basically it's a cross between Resident evil fighting and full-blown RPG tactics. The time bar from FFVII is used, but instead of standing in one place waiting to be attacked, you can run around to dodge your assailant. When it's your turn to attack, hitting the button causes a green grid to appear around you. You can then choose your weapon and if you're in range, go for a shot or strike. There are plenty of weapons to find in the game, but you start out with

YOU DOITY RAT

Just one of the many stomach-churning moments in Parasite Eve; watch in disgust as a rat sheds its skin and becomes something altogether nastier.



THE CHARACTERS

• AYA BREA
The star of the game. Aya is a 25 year old New York detective who does all of the fighting and exploring throughout the game.

• DANIEL DILLON
Daniel, A veteran detective, is Aya's partner. He offers advice throughout the game though he doesn't play much of a part in the action.

• KUNIHIKO MAEDA
A researcher from a Japanese university. That's about all we know.





a simple police baton and a small handgun with very limited ammunition. Later on you come across all types of weapon, including the classic rocket launcher.

As well as weapons you also have use of Parasite Energy, which is a form of magic (all rookie detectives are issued this, or something). Providing you have enough energy on your Parasite Energy bar, spells can be cast to help in battle, either in defence or attack. The spells are very reminiscent of the magic in FFVII, although you find some new ideas. The battle and magic side of Parasite Eve has been implemented perfectly and in my opinion (although I must admit I couldn't fully understand everything) it's far better than FFVII's statistical style of combat.

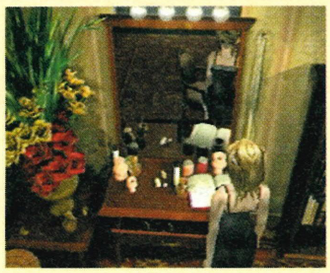
Graphically Parasite Eve doesn't surpass its two major influences, but it does take the best ideas from both and use them to great effect. The CG intro is on par with the fantastic intro from RE2 and the scenery itself looks the nuts. Most of the FFVII influence shows on the combat sections in the style of the enemy drawing and animation.

One flaw with FFVII is the combat always takes place in a set area which the game changes to whenever it feels like giving you a battle. On Parasite Eve, though, you can see the enemies as you walk onto the screen and the battle takes place in that area. This gives the game more realism as the combat happens within the scenery and not in some specified arena.





"...Graphically Parasite Eve doesn't surpass its two major influences, but it does take the best ideas from both and use them to great effect..."





The most impressive thing I've seen on Parasite Eve, though, is the fantastic CG cut-scenes. Square have managed to blend in these scenes perfectly into the action with a minimum of loading time or disc stalling. The scenes themselves have all been drawn to an incredible standard, with some fantastic ideas to back it up. Take the opera scene when the fires kick off. Instead of just having a load of people running around screaming, you've got people falling off balconies, into the camera, blazing curtains falling down and fried bodies falling to the floor. In fact, this scene looks so perfect you couldn't imagine Hollywood doing it any better!

Final Evil

Apart from the fact the game is completely in Japanese, it's still one of the most time-consuming and biggest games we've played. It comes on two discs, which is a bit of a give-away to the game's size, but you can't fully comprehend the magnitude until you actually start playing the game. We're nowhere near to completing it yet (you can't blame us), there's a ridiculous amount left for us to do (believe us - we've seen the walkthrough).

SquareSoft are famous for their fantastic graphical work, but something that's often overlooked is the sound and music they produce. FFVII was a shining example of top game music and atmospherics, which Parasite Eve has taken to another level. The music is completely fitting and varied, ranging from operatic pieces to break-beat and piano. The music, along with the sound effects, keeps Square right at the top in this department.

Playing the Japanese version of Parasite Eve has been a hard job. The game itself is absolutely superb and is a definite contender for game of the year. However, I can't seriously recommend you bother buying Parasite Eve in this form. Okay, it's a cool game, but unless you can speak Japanese or are prepared to forget about most of the plot, it's best to either wait for the American version. Better still, wait until it's released over here. After all, it won't cost you an arm and a leg if you get the PAL version, and it will be far more enjoyable when you actually know what's going on.

EPM
SAUL

Second Opinion

This could take on RE2 once it's translated to English, but forget it in this form unless you can speak Japanese or are a glutton for punishment.

Saul

The Score

Publisher	SONY JAPAN
Developer	SQUARESOFT
Released	OUT NOW (IMPORT)
Version	JAPANESE
Price	£69.99 (MAY VARY)
Genre	3D ACTION/RPG
Players	1
Memory Card	✔
Analog	✔

GAMEPLAY 9

ORIGINALITY 9

LIFESPAN 9

SOUND 9

GRAPHICS 9

OVERALL 94%

in summary

Massive potential; wait for the PAL version, though.

Soul Blade

Take a slash with Namco's assistance

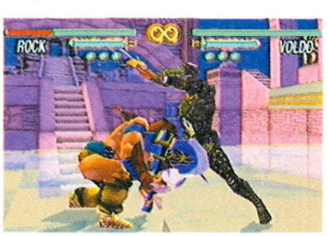




While Tekken 3 looks set to take the popular crown for the numero uno beat-'em-up, it would be foolish (and potentially fatal) to disregard the steely delights of Soul Blade. Coming from the same Namco stable, its action is centred around beweaponed combat rather than hand-to-hand slugfests, and concentrates more on tactical manoeuvring and lightning-fast attack interceptions instead of toe-to-toe combo duels.

Choosing which of the nine available characters to pick depends on what you prefer. There's the big-hitting murderous oafs such as arrogant red knight, Siegfried, or club-carrying barbarian, Rock, while the lithe and deadly demon assassin Taki and tae kwon do-trained Samurai Hwang cater for the other end of the spectrum. Each have their own individual weapons, their strengths and vulnerabilities becoming obvious over time. Some are more difficult to get to grips with than others, in particular the unpredictable and trickily non-standard technique of the creepy sadist Voldo.





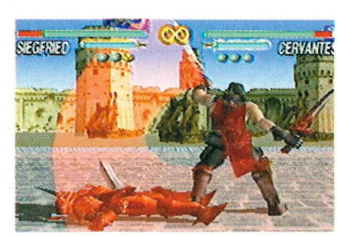
Deadly Ballet

Originally released after Tekken 2, Soul Blade shows a number of evolutionary features that at the time took the fighting game into fresh new territories. The ability to side-step means a scrap can become almost balletic as the characters jockey for an advantageous position, dodging and weaving to open a chink in an opponent's defence. The ultra-swift reaction of the fighters to your button taps (arguably much less sluggish than Tekkens 1+2), makes the combat seem more dangerous than its unarmed cousin as sharp-edged strikes lash out in an almost-blur of speed and deadly intent.

> **"...It's fair to say Soul Blade is a quality product in every aspect..."**

Although there are many complex multi-press moves that can really mess up a foe, the focus isn't on stringing together hits in never-ending combos. It's more on picking the right attack for the right situation, dependant on relative position; low or high stance, reach, and so on. For example, some attacks are long lunges that cover a lot of ground quickly but leave you vulnerable from above if they fail to connect first time. Special attacks include an unblockable strike that takes a moment to charge up before unleashing a vicious strike that can't be parried (and creates a cool 'lightning from above ' effect as well), and a Critical Edge manoeuvre that unleashes a flurry of blows but damages your weapon, making it more susceptible to breakages when blocking. A snapped blade leaves your character as a hapless pugilist, highly vulnerable to merciless slashing from a gleeful opponent.

The more advanced attacks leave a superb coloured trail behind the character's sword (or whatever weapon), giving the game a psychedelic feel which has been endlessly imitated since by newer beat-'em-ups.



Pixel Punchbag

As well as the standard Vs, Time Attack and CPU Opponent modes, there's a Book Option which is basically a structured quest pitting you against all the characters consecutively, but with various nasty restrictions on play to test your combat adaptability to the max. To assist with getting to this level of proficiency, there's a hugely useful and infinitely adaptable practice mode providing a handy punch bag opponent who can be set to repeatedly carry out whichever move you desire, while your button presses are conveniently flashed up on screen, making those tricky roll-round-the-D-Pad moves a lot clearer to execute.

It's fair to say Soul Blade is a quality product in every aspect, from its huge and rapid sprites through to the epic and marvellous introductory FMV. The music is, of course, terrifying Japanese interpretations of the Conan the Barbarian themes that sound hilariously naff and over the top, while conversely the in-game sound FX are perfect, the clash of weapons and the battle cries of the characters being spot on (so much so that the game has been sampled by the mighty Wu-Tang Clan). At a ridiculously low twenty pounds a throw, Soul Blade is an absolute must as it arguably still hasn't been bettered in its field for pure playing power, and the long term potential and learning curve is more refined than Tekken 3's (at least to my taste). And, of course, Seung Mi Na's knicker-flashing whirlwind kicks are a definite 'plus' point.

EPM

CHRISTIAN



The Score

Publisher	NAMCO
Developer	IN HOUSE
Released	OUT NOW
Version	UK
Price	£19.99
Genre	BEAT-EM-UP
Players	1-2
Memory Card	✓

GAMEPLAY
10

ORIGINALITY
8

LIFESPAN
9

SOUND
8

GRAPHICS
9

OVERALL
94%

in summary

The sharpest and still the best

Command & Conquer



Westwood's storming strategy fest makes a return

Since its initial PlayStation release, Command & Conquer has been surpassed by Westwood's own Command & Conquer: Red Alert, but if you don't own a copy of the sequel, the original's well worth your twenty quid now it's out on Platinum.

C&C comes on two stand-alone discs. One contains the GDI (Global Defence Initiative) missions whilst the other disc is for the Brotherhood of NOD campaign. The GDI are the good guys here, and if you choose their disc you have to battle it out with the NOD, and vice versa.

The first moan I have here is C&C has no link-up mode, which is gaping flaw, seeing as game comes on two discs anyway. Red Alert managed to rectify this and has proved our favourite office link-up game since Christmas. Even without a link-up mode, though, C&C is still one hell of a game.

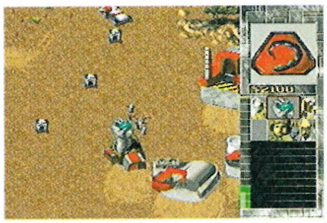
Each mission is spilt up with some of the best FMV and computer graphic scenes we've seen on any game. The acting in the FMV is pretty good, and it's through these cut sequences that more of the storyline is divulged. The CG scenes show off the more action-based stuff, with covert operations and bombing runs being recreated in beautiful rendered graphics.

However, if you're looking for beautiful in-game graphics you won't find them here. The game's viewed from above and the graphics are no more than functional. Some of you will dismiss C&C straight away after you've seen the visuals. It's not that the game looks poor, it's just that all of the men, machines and scenery are minuscule. Still, this doesn't alter the fact that the gameplay is ridiculously addictive and habit-forming.

Give the Order

The basic premise is to order your troops and vehicles around the battlefield and beat the opposition. The first few missions on each disc drop you into the action with a few troops and vehicles to take on a very small enemy presence. As the game progresses, though, you have to start building up your base by making money from mining an ore called Tiberium. After placing your construction yard, you're given building options such as barracks to train troops, or vehicle manufacturing centres to build tanks and jeeps. Some structures make more buildings available, such as radar, missile sites and gun emplacements.

Although the basic premise of C&C is quite simple, once you start getting a squadron of tanks and a regiment of troops things start to get quite complicated. Luckily the control system has been made as intuitive and easy to use as possible. C&C was originally a mouse-based game on the PC, but Westwood have done a fine job in converting the controls to the PlayStation joypad.



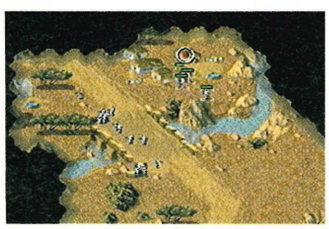


Graphically C&C is nothing to write home about, but the music and sound effects help make up for this. The music is a superb blend of hard-hitting rock and dance tunes that complement the action perfectly, and the sound effects make you feel as if you're in the battle, even though your troops look like stick men and your vehicles look like Micro Machines.

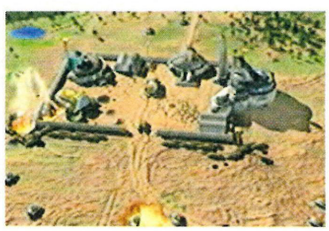
If Red Alert wasn't around, C&C would still be the best strategy game on the PlayStation. However, the improvements Red Alert makes over its predecessor are far-reaching, which makes C&C almost redundant - if it wasn't for the new price. At twenty pounds, C&C is a fantastic game, if only to prepare you for Red Alert. If you don't own any strategy games, now's the time to give it a try - at this price C&C is a great investment that will last you an absolute age. EPM

SAUL











"...at twenty quid, C&C is a fantastic game, if only to prepare you for Red Alert..."

The Score

Publisher	VIRGIN
Developer	WESTWOOD
Released	SEPTEMBER
Version	UK
Price	£19.99
Genre	STRATEGY
Players	1
Memory Card	✔
Passwords	✔

GAMEPLAY
9

ORIGINALITY
8

LIFESPAN
9

SOUND
9

GRAPHICS
6

OVERALL

91%

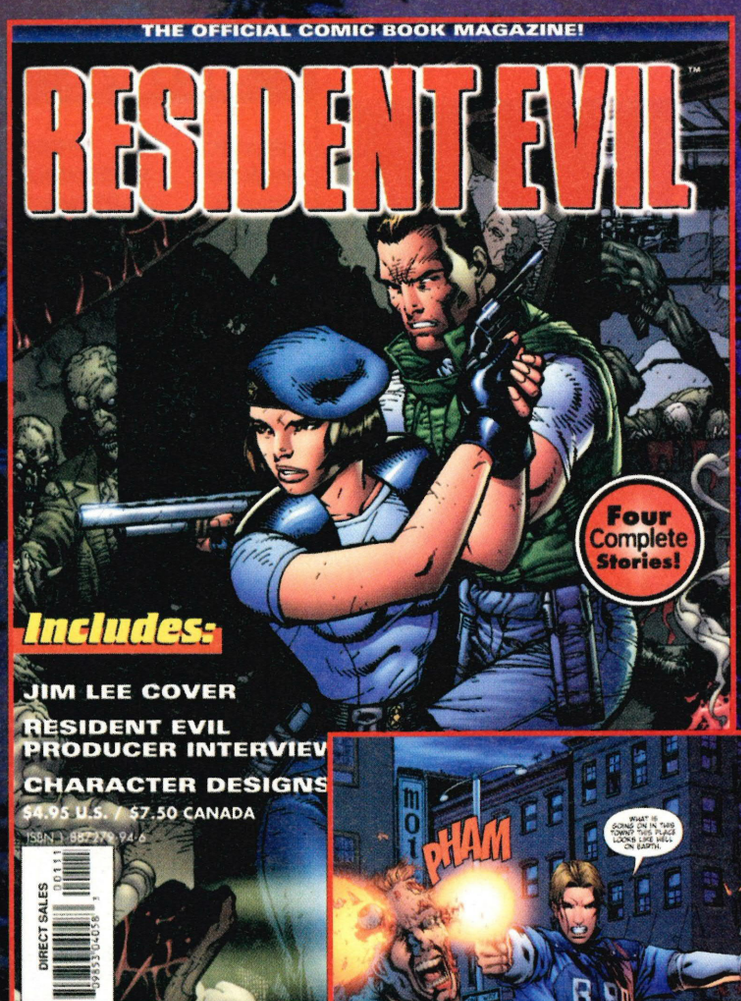
in summary

THE classic strategy game for under a score - you can't miss it.

BIFF! SPLAT! POW!

Is it a bird? Is it a comic? Is it a video game? Well it's the last two, anyway...

A new and interesting spin-off from the games world is the trend to convert well-known titles into an easily-consumed comic book form, transposing the most popular and lucrative characters into an easily consumed paper-and-staples form. In other words, they're making comics based on video games. The extreme PlayStation crew sped to Paradox, their local comics store, and checked out a fistful of these games-based graphic novels...

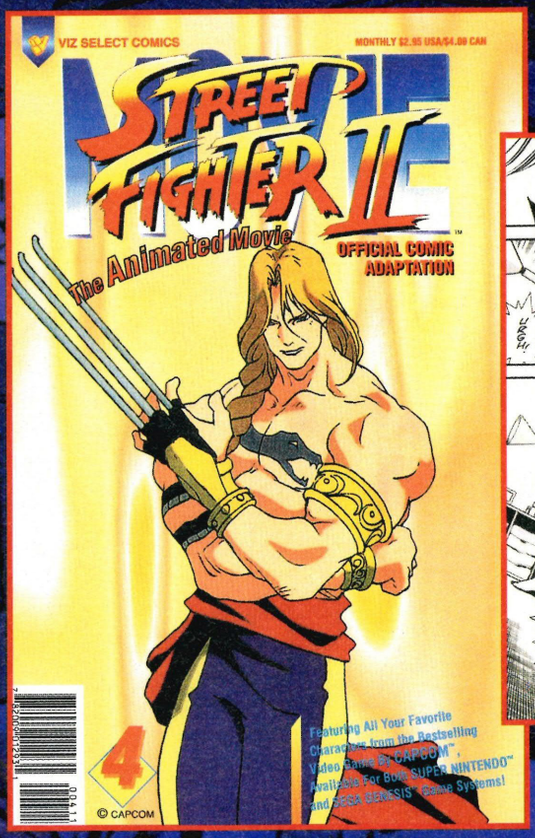




RESIDENT EVIL

Initially focusing on events before the first instalment of the guts-fixated classic game, this smoothly-drawn comic sheds light on the motivations of the traitorous mole Wesker and the macabre experiments by his employers, the Umbrella Organisation, as they strive to perfect the T-Virus by testing it first on animals, and then on their own researchers. The action then shifts to a recap of the mansion mission, recounted by Chris and Jill (including a wry jibe at the dual-plotted nature of the game) and the bloody final confrontation with Tyrant on the rooftop, which dovetails nicely into the revelation that Umbrella are now developing the new and deadlier G-Virus, which has already leaked out and contaminated the residents of the hapless Racoon City. Many of the causes of the effects seen in the opening movie and game in Resident Evil 2 are explained in graphic blood-splattering detail. Altogether it's a cool augmentation to the 'universe' created through the two games, and entertainingly replicates the stilted dialogue so beloved in both. A nasty dose of survival horror that's ideal sat-on-the-toilet reading.

STREET FIGHTER II





This disappointingly black-and-white, simplistically-drawn series adapts the excellent Anime interpretation of the venerable beat-'em-up, but loses a lot of its sparkle and visual impact. The line drawings seem dashed off, and the vital fight sequences are dotted with pointless 'SPINNING BIRD KICK!' and 'SUPER HUNDRED HAND SLAP!' exclamations that sound good in the game, but look a bit daft on the printed page. Hire the film and avoid this stinker.

TOMB RAIDER

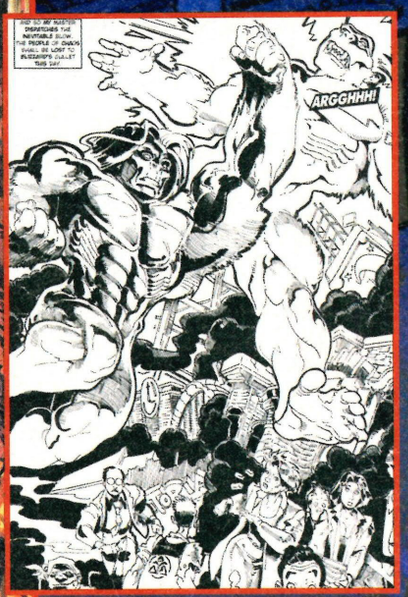




The delectable uber-babe Lara teams up (somewhat unnecessarily) with a minor heroine called Witchblade in this Further Adventures Of-style effort that pits her against a marauding demon she's has unwittingly set free. The pen-and-ink depictions of our favourite leaping lady are absolutely stunning (as you've probably noticed), but just as importantly, her uniquely British character has been fully realised in the form of her dry quips and laconic asides. The wet suit is also present in all its black rubbery glory, you'll no doubt be thrilled to hear.



PRIMAL RAGE



The eldritch background scenario of the brawling monster game is strongly reminiscent of 2000 AD's classic Slainé series. The cataclysmic and ultimately fatal battle between the serpentine Talon and demonic Vertigo and their respective sets of tribes is depicted in epic style (albeit black and white again), as the forces of Chaos strive to plunge the Urth into, erm, chaos. A speedy but angular unfolding of narrative is the key motif here, as modern-day scientists pop up unexpectedly to weigh in to the scrap and bearded wizard types say things to one another in a grave and sagely manner. The much-vaunted Final Battle ('next issue!') should be good, though, as the mighty destructive powers of the gargantuan contenders are set to collide head-on. Perhaps best read by young obsessive fans of the game, to be honest.

These next titles are not strictly comic-to-videogame conversions, but have (or will be) been converted to video game form. The link is tenuous, but good enough to print , dammit.

SPAWN





The cripplingly dull game and inconsistent Hollywood film were both based on this popular comic series, which a strong cult following attracted by its devilish imagery and the anti-heroic nature of Spawn. The truly monstrous nature of the demon star is only really explored through the comic, particularly through the accompanying boxed narrative from an unknown observer who sheds dark light onto the events that transpire. The artwork is first class, finely detailed but not clinical, and simultaneously rich in colour but subdued and threatening. The semi-insane character presents a new and contradictory twist to the traditional image of the comic-book star. Definitely worth a dabble with on a gloomy night.

GHOST IN THE SHELL

The marvellous animated incarnation of the cyborg chick favourite unfortunately bore only a cursory resemblance to the otherwise cool PSX game by SCEE. The game is, ironically, based more on this, the original weighty graphic novel. Partially in colour but mainly black and white, it explores the smart themes of human personality and its boundaries as expended on by technology . Pricey, but a seriously good slice of the generally poor Manga pie.



THE UNCANNY X-MEN

This long-running series has spun off several game incarnations, the most intriguing of which is the recent X-Men vs Street Fighter game, which is possibly the first cross-pollination of two different continuities based in entirely different media, comic fact fans. The comics themselves are renowned for their far-reaching plot implications and soap opera-like undertones, and of course the ever-evolving collective nature of the X-men, constantly shedding and gaining new members. Wolverine is, or course, one of the coolest, most violent heroes you could ever wish for.



THE X-FILES

The depressingly mainstream nature of the once cultish X-Files has unsurprisingly spawned dozens of tie-in products, not least of which is the impending PSX game. This particular episode of the comic series, Cam Ranh Bay, is based around the training of dolphins for military purposes and pulls much of the same moves as the TV series pretty much, all depicted in a determinedly naturalistic style. Not bad, but not really top comic-book fodder.



All these comics are available from Paradox by mail order. Check out their advert for further details.

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GAMESTER CSX CLEAR JOYPAD

RRP - £11.99

This transparent third-party pad allows you to see all its internal organs, which provides a post-modern novelty aspect to the normally mundane world of game control. Presumably the see-through casing allows one to spot exactly what's broken inside when it goes wrong (which shouldn't be often, apparently, as it's been 'extensively tested to take years of battering'.

VERDICT - Aesthetically wholesome and ergonomically quite okay, with a positive but over-formal button action and a D-Pad that has slightly square edges which make 'roll round the pad' beat-'em-up moves a bit unpleasant to execute. Sensibly priced, though.

7/10

GAMESTER OFFICIAL ENGLAND JOYPAD

RRP - £11.99

Riding a wave of potential patriotic fervour and lucrative opportunism comes the officially-sanctioned England Joypad. Coated in a pure white kit and adorned with true blue buttons, the Three Lions logo tops it all off in a fine manner.



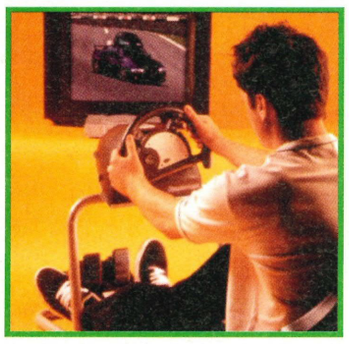
VERDICT - A high potential exists for this pad looking a bit silly in a few months, so think carefully before purchase. Could well be a lot cheaper after the World Cup as well. The pad is the standard Gamester version, so it's of sturdy quality.

7/10 for practical value

3/10 for style

GAMESTER PSX RUMBLE FORCE STEERING WHEEL

RRP - £TBA



Incorporating similar force feedback features to that seen in the Dual Shock Pad, this steering wheel promises to add a new dimension of sensory inputs to your racing game experiences. Crashes, spins and bumping the kerbs cause ripples throughout the body of the wheel, in all likelihood heightening the realism to almost hallucinatory levels. Available in June, there's no price available yet, but rest assured we'll bring you a full verdict as soon as we get our sweaty mitts on it.

7/10

GAMESTER PSX ANALOG JOYPAD

RRP - £19.99



As the first non-Sony analog pad, this baby has a lot to live up to, especially with the similarly-priced Dual Shock looming on the horizon.

VERDICT - The pad sits nicely in the hand but the shoulder buttons are sharp-edged and stiffly clicky, the D-Pad has the same uncomfortable raised edges as other Gamester pads and the Select, Start and symbol buttons are unnecessarily small. Does have auto-fire and turbo modes, though, and the twin sticks are well weighted.

6/10

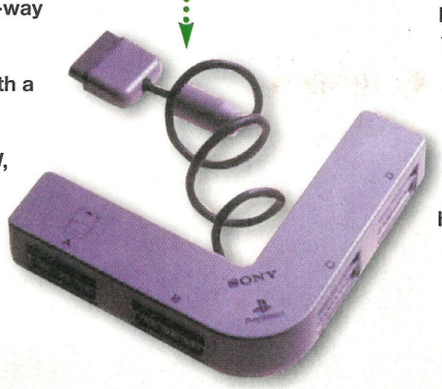
SONY MULTI TAP

RRP - £32.99

The L-shaped key to up to 8-way multi-player lunacy. Ideal for Circuit Breakers and all-in matches of digital soccer with a gaggle of boorish pals.

VERDICT - Built like a BMW, and a prime bit of hardware for any truly dedicated gamer's armoury. High time for a drop in price, though.

8/10



GAMESTER PSX LINK UP LEAD

RRP - £9.99

Manufacturers use the chicken-and-egg excuse for not putting a link-cable option into their games, ie. 'no one's got the cables, so why bother programming one?'. They don't purchase them because there's precious few serial mode-compatible games, twats. It's still a top accessory, though.

VERDICT - Organising a pair of TVs and PlayStations into one room and having two copies of the games is tricky, yes, but head-to-head WipEout 2097 is a sublime computer game experience. Again, a cheaper version would be nice, as it's not the most complicated widget in the world.

7.5/10



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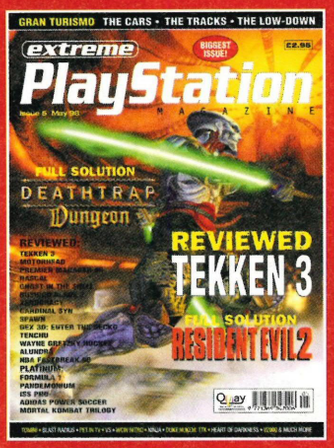












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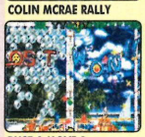
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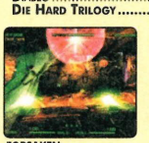
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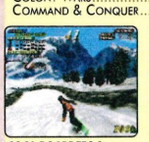


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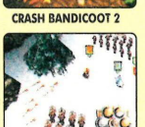
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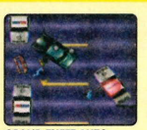
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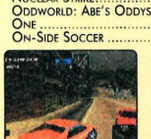
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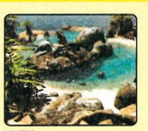
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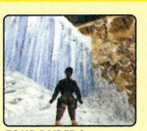
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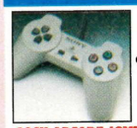
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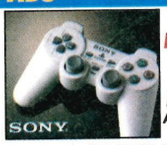
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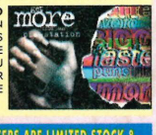
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Is that a Gun in your Pocket?

The PSX is blessed bu some excellent offerings, but cursed by quizical compatability issues. Trust EPM to sort the wheat from the chaff.

Pistol-packin light gun games have been around since the early 70s Binatone Pong machines.

These games dont portray the player on the screen; instead the enemies are killed by aiming a light gun or moving a crosshair over them and firing, while they aim their attacks at the foot of the screen.

* Bygone Bullets

Light gun and other own-eye perspective blasts from the past.

The origins of the light gun game lie in the pistol- and rifle-shooting fairground stalls which have been around far longer than video arcade technology. Shoot three targets and you win a prize which probably cost less than the entry fee, but it's for fun after all. The first electronic version came in 1973. Nintendo's Laser Clay was a clay pidgeon-shooting simulator designed by Gunpei Yokoi, who went on to design the Game Boy. Gamers fired shotgun-style light guns at a huge screen displaying a rural landscape, onto which clay pidgeons were projected. Needless to say there was no home version.



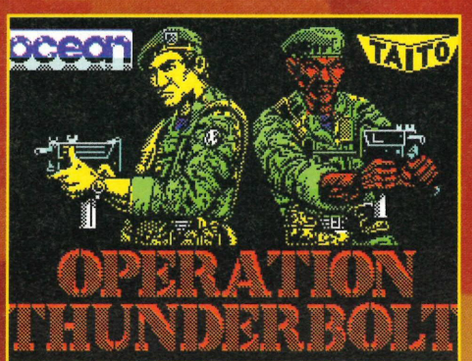
Some of the more advanced Binatone Pong-type consoles included a light gun offering where the targets were simply white squares on a black background. They worked reasonably well, but weren't as much fun as Night Gunner which, Pong machines aside, was arguably the first own-eye shooter available for home machines. In this early-Eighties home computer offering the player was a tail-gunner in a WWII bomber, popping away at advancing fighter planes.

The game which started the light gun craze was, of course, Taito's 1987 classic Operation Wolf. The arcade cabinet had a huge vibrating gun bolted to it, which was used to mow down the enemy soldiers and take out their grenades and knives before you were hit. The screen scrolled horizontally, out of the player's control. The game's sequel, Operation Thunderbolt, was basically the same but included a two-player option. Both titles were converted to most home machines with varying degrees of success.



Dynamite Duke broke with tradition for own-eye blasters in that you saw the player's character on the screen, offered in outline only so you could see through as well as around him. Now you could dodge bullets in a more meaningful way, instead of just blasting baddies before they fired. Strictly speaking, of course, the game was no longer 'own eye'. but the principle was the same.

The last generation of light gun games ended with Space Gun. The game was very similar to Operation Wolf, but now enemies walked into and out of the screen as well as horizontally. The game was still very 2D, though - not until the new generation of arcade coin-ops and 32-bit home machines did the action take place in 3D environments. Check out our round-up to see how successful they are...



* Quick on the Draw

Has your game got what it takes?

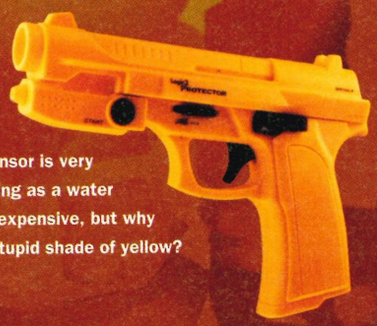
- At the risk of stating the obvious, a good light gun game must calibrate the gun effectively. There's nothing worse than a light gun blaster which doesn't hit what you aim at.
- It should be possible to play a light gun game with the standard hand controller as well as the gun. This aspect of the game shouldn't be neglected - the player might want a two-player blast and only have one light gun.
- Give the player a chance. Baddies that fire as soon as they appear are unfair, as the player can't help but be injured. This problem doesn't arise if the player can take cover, Time Crisis-style.
- Variety is the spice of life. Offer the player something different, not just endless troops. How about heavy hardware such as tanks or choppers, or new territories with differing challenges?

* Go For Your Gun

We've covered most light guns on the market in previous issue's Stuff pages, but here they are again. It's ironic that there are almost as many light guns as there are light gun games, and if we include grey import peripherals, there are indeed more guns than games. Many of the obscure imported weapons are just slight variations on home-grown guns, though. As imported weapons do the same job for twice the price, we've only featured UK-available light guns here. If you're wondering why many light guns look like cheap toys, it's because by law certain American states won't allow them to look like real ones, and the manufacturers didn't redesign them for the UK market.

Protector

Spectra Video, £14.99

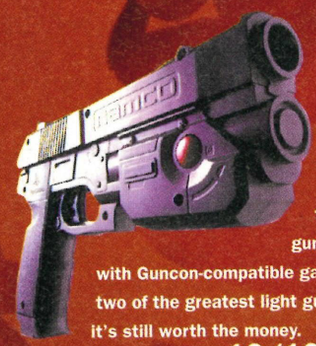


Features ammunition reload, three speeds of reload timing and a special weapons button. It's light sensor is very precise, but it's about as mean looking as a water pistol. It does the job and isn't very expensive, but why did they have to mould it in such a stupid shade of yellow?

8/10

Guncon

Namco, £59.99 (with Time Crisis)

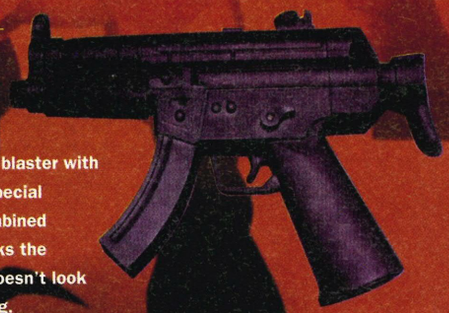


This is the fastest, most precise light gun around - this one's accurate to around three pixels. Namco designed it to their own specifications, ignoring light gun conventions, so you can only use it with Guncon-compatible games. Time Crisis and Point Blank are two of the greatest light gun games yet, though, so you may think it's still worth the money.

10/10

Erazer MP5

Blaze, £29.99



It's not cheap, but it's compatible with the Guncon games as well as standard light gun offerings - you can use this blaster with any light gun game. Features special weapons button, recoil and combined auto reload and auto fire. It looks the part too; at last, a gun which doesn't look like a cheap toy from Hong Kong.

9/10

PSX Light Gun

Gamester, £19.99

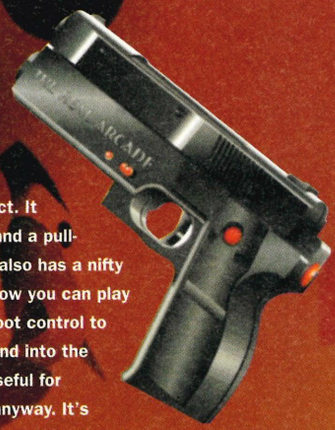


Imaginative title, eh? This is one of the the weakest of the guns we tested, with less features than the others but no significant price advantage. It looks pants too, with its pukey orange bodywork and ridiculously large barrel.

6/10

Real Arcade Gun/Jolt Gun

Innovation Extreme, £34.99/£39.99

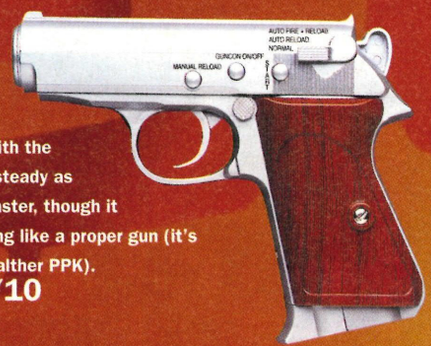


It works - its a very good Guncon compatible, in fact. It features programmable auto reload and auto fire, and a pull-back mechanism on the top for manual reloads. It also has a nifty little foot pedal for performing special functions. Now you can play Time Crisis as it's played in the arcades; using a foot control to make your character move from behind his cover and into the line of fire. Trouble is, this function is only really useful for Time Crisis, and the game comes with a Guncom anyway. It's an expensive gimmick, innit? The Jolt Gun is as above, but also plugs into the mains for force feedback.

7.5/10

PPK Scorpion

Blaze, £25.99



Cool - has comprehensive autofire/reload facilities and an optional recoil which causes the hilt to vibrate when you shoot. It's Guncon compatible too, so you can play any light gun game with the Scorpion. It's not as steady as Namco's all-killing blaster, though it gains marks for looking like a proper gun (it's modelled on 007's Walther PPK).

9/10

Light Blaster

InterAct, £24.99



Four modes selection, hyper button for special weapon, five LED indicators blinking in sequence like the Knight 2000's radiator grill... Despite the gimmicks, this isn't one of the stronger guns on the market, but it gets by. It looks ugly, but feels comfortable in the hand.

6/10

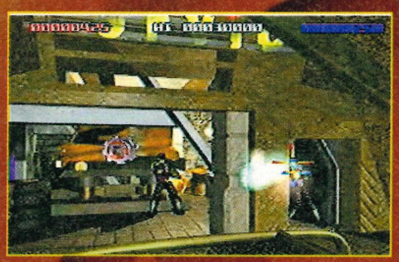
TIME CRISIS
NAMCO



Woooo! Imports aside, this is the king of the light gun blasters. The Guncon (sold with the game) is the most accurate light gun yet, and the game gives a real feeling of being there. Most games force you to walk zombie-like into enemy fire, your only hope being to shoot them before they shoot you. Not Time Crisis. Here you take cover, putting yourself into the line of fire and letting off a few blasts before taking cover and reloading once more. Be quick though - there's a time limit. Blast all nearby enemies and your character advances into the enemy stronghold, finding cover once more as more foes arrive. This simple feature gives Time Crisis a uniquely satisfying feel. After this, other light gun games seem like a fairground duck shoot. Only works with Namco Compatible guns, though.

88%

JUDGE DREDD
GREMLIN INTERACTIVE



Four issues on, the 70% we gave this in Issue One looks decidedly generous. The game does nothing with its licence - you could as easily be in Milton Keynes as Mega City One, and the enemies you blast are mostly random thugs and n'er-do-wells rather than the villans faced by 2000AD's top cop. You can't even switch between the six types of bullets fired by a judge's Lawgiver. In fact, the only element retained from the comic is Dredd, and you never see him on the screen.

The action's poor too. Response times are shocking, and calibrating your light gun's a nightmare. Not recommended, even (especially?) to fans of the comic. Guncon-compatible, but dodgy with any weapon.

33%

CRYPT KILLER
KONAMI



This disasterous coin-op conversion should be taken out and shot. The graphics are embarrassingly bad, characters and scenery pixellating horrendously when up close, and the action's nauseatingly dull. It's almost impossible to play with the joypad due to sluggish controls, but if you have no light gun, there's a sneaky way to win. Pause the game - you can still move the crosshairs. Move them over a baddie, unpause and fire, pausing again immediately after you shoot. Now move the crosshairs over the next baddie and repeat until you've completed the game, or (far more likely) got bored with it. The best way to wring some handgun action out of this is to throw the CD into the air and take pot-shots at it with an air pistol.

11%

DIE HARD TRILOGY: DIE HARDER
FOX INTERACTIVE (PLATINUM)



The second of the three self-contained games on this Platinum barg is a light gun offering. The innocents you must avoid shooting (a common feature in light gun-style games) often wander around, seemingly oblivious to the shoot-out going on around them. When they notice, they still think nothing of walking straight in front of your sights. Some players might not consider this a problem, but for others it saps the game's atmosphere.

This one minor flaw aside, Die Harder is a cool game. The action's frantic and fast, the power-ups interesting and the terrorists are clearly defined and never confused with hostages. Best of all, the scenery is fully interactive. You can blow away almost everything on the screen - trash a car and the driver's set on fire. It's not very playable with the joypad, though, unless you use the invincibility cheat (Pause, hold R2 and press Down, Triangle, Right, Square). The mark is based on the gun game, not the trilogy as a whole.

83%

POINT BLANK
NAMCO



From the people who brought you Time Crisis comes Point Blank, a fantastic fast-firing fairground frolic giving fistfulls of fab fun. There's not much to add to Christian's review over on Page 80; suffice to say this is one of the all-time light gun greats.

You can only get the game on Japanese import at the moment, but it should be out in the UK in June. Watch out for it - it's the one of the best light gun games to date. Only works with Namco compatible guns, though.

89%

REVOLUTION X
ACCLAIM



A crap blaster featuring the American rock band Aerosmith. The usual guff about evil overlords ('You're the only one who can stop the destruction') is made even more implausable when you find the aim of the game is to rescue the guys from Aerosmith, who've been abducted. Who in their right mind would want to?

The enemy forces (curiously titled 'New Order') pop up like targets at a fairground shooting gallery and seldoom do anything interesting, and as your main gun never runs out of ammo, you spend most of the game swinging it from side to side with the fire button held down. You could do it with your eyes shut. The graphics are at best adequate, at worst (on large enemy vehicles) laughably infantile. The horrendous pauses for disc accessing don't help either.

This is really only recommended to die-hard Aerosmith fans, and then only because they deserve whatever what they get.

31%

ELEMENTAL GEARBOLT

SONY CE (JAPANESE IMPORT)



Sony, why haven't you released this epic title over here? Elemental Gearbolt is the best light gun game we've seen. The atmosphere is beyond reproach, blasting exciting aliens drawn in a sci-fi/fantasy crossover style as you wander through dark and gloomy landscapes, and the scrolling is smoother than a cockney spiv on market day. It's like stepping into a Roger Dean painting.

You've three weapons on offer, and can change between them at will. These weapons are noticably different, and matching them to the monster in hand and your own style of play is vital to success. They're noticably different too - the scattergun's ideal for fast-moving monsters and for picking up coins (you must shoot them), the rapid fire blaster works well when there are several slower, larger enemies on the screen and for the end-of-level baddies, you can't beat the big bugger, which boasts powerful shots but is slow. It requires a Namco-compatible gun, so you're guaranteed accurate aiming.

94%

LETHAL ENFORCERS 1&2

KONAMI



What a difference a generation makes. Cops 'n' robbers coin-op outing Lethal Enforcers and its sequel, the Wild West-inspired Lethal Enforcers II were first converted to the Mega CD to unenthusiastic reviews, but now, on the PSX, it looks complete pants.

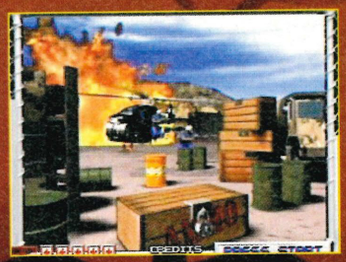
The graphics are digitised, but the games date from the days when 'digitised' meant fluid animation but flat, dull sprites that never really looked part of the backgrounds - the enemies look more like cardboard cut-outs in a shooting gallery than criminals fighting their way through the forces of law and order.

Betraying their coin-op roots, neither game lets you get very far before you're killed, though the 'bullet hole in window' effect when you're hit is good. Over all, though, this package isn't recommended. Putting two games on one CD is no excuse for dated crap like this.

23%

AREA 51

ATARI



As coin-op conversions go, this one's almost arcade perfect. Unsurprisingly, given the title, the game involves aliens and a hidden military base, though the atmosphere is more convincing than the plot.

You can blast any part of the scenery, a device which offers tactics as well as aesthetics. Shooting explosives, for example, kills anything near it. Shooting certain features such as paintings or windows allows you to access secret areas, usually full of power-ups.

It's almost impossible to play Area 51 with a control pad, but with the light gun or mouse it's an action-packed gore-fest, despite a few flaws. The single end-of-level boss is seriously unimpressive and it's too short, but these days you should find Area 51 second hand for around £15. At this price, it's a blast.

79%

SONY CE (JAPANESE IMPORT)



Hmmm... There's nothing disasterous about this quinessentially Japanese experience, but it's nothing to write home about either. It's playable enough and very well executed, but it's terrifyingly unspectacular.

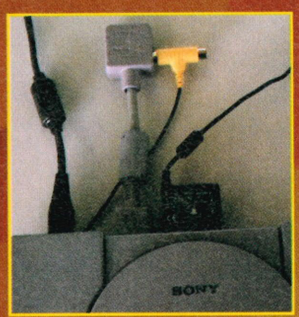
Check out that screenshot - alas, the baddies are all as unexciting as those robots. You can shoot the scenery (or at least some of it), but it looks so unimpressive you wonder why you bothered. We can forgive the graphics for pixellating at extremely close distances, but not their inability to interest any but the most easily pleased. It's like those cracked old oil paintings of bowls of fruit - nothing wrong with how they're drawn, but why does the subject matter have to be so boring?

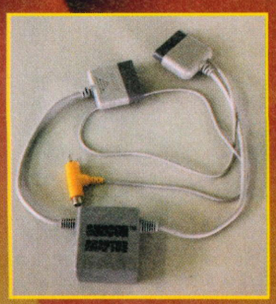
The cut scenes are reasonably interesting Anime-style cartoons, but that's not enough to save it. If Time Crisis were a Ferrari, Project: Horned Owl would be a Volvo. Functional and workmanlike, but with no sparkle whatsoever.

43%

The Compatibility Question

Which guns work with what games? Once upon a time, buying a light gun was easy. Just splash out on a gun that's compatible with your machine, and it works with any game. Originally, that was true for the PlayStation too, but then came Namco. Unhappy with the way standard PSX blasters performed, designed their own. The result was the Guncon, which connects to the video output of the PlayStation and stores the screen image inside the gun to 'provide the highest accuracy possible'. Because of the way it works, the Guncon only works with Guncon-compatible games. Nor can you use ordinary light guns on Guncon-only games, ie. Time Crisis, Point Blank and Elemental Gearbolt. This led to a third generation of light guns, compatible with both Guncon and standard light gun games. These are known as Guncon compatibles, and work with ANY light gun game, whether they demand a Guncon or not. Check out the guns round-up for details of which guns are Guncon compatible.





If you have a Guncon game but want to play with a standard gun, or you have a Guncon-compatible gun and use a PlayStation RF lead to connect your PSX to the telly, you need an adaptor...

AV MULTI OUT ADAPTOR

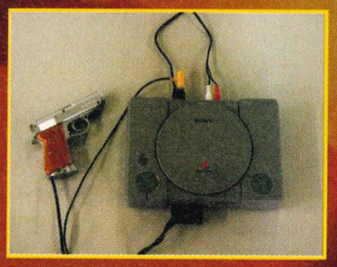
Because the Guncon has a plug which connects to the PlayStation's Video Out port, it's impossible to use with a standard RF lead - the gun's plug stops the RF cable fitting into the playStation. If you have a Guncon-compatible weapon and use a standard RF connection, you can only use your gun as a normal light gun without the adaptor, and the Guncon itself won't work at all. That's where the Guncon RF Adaptor comes in.

By connecting the adaptor to your machine's AV Multi Out socket, you can insert the gun's video plug into the adaptor and still fit the RF cable. You get a free adaptor with the Time Crisis Guncon pack. At the time of writing they're not available seperately, but watch the Stuff page - sooner or later, someone's bound to make one.

Guncon Adaptor

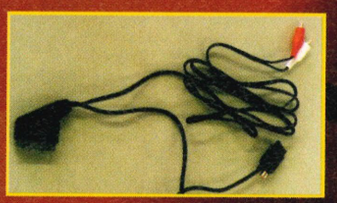
If you already have a light gun and want to play a Namco Guncom-only game, you need one of these Blaze-made peripherals. The Guncon Adaptor, available from both Excitement Direct and the Video Games Centre (see adverts elsewhere this issue), emulates the additional features enjoyed by the Guncom and enables you to play titles such as Time Crisis and Point Blank with any PSX-compatible blaster.

The Guncon Adaptor is compatible with the AV Multi Out Adaptor, so you can plug the video plug of the Guncon Adaptor into the AV Multi Out and still use an RF lead. As the only way you can get an AV Multi Out Adaptor at present is with the Time Crisis/Guncon pack, there seems little point in doing so unless you want a two-player game with someone who owns a non-Guncon blaster. Hopefully some enterprising third party manufacturer will make their own version of the AV Multi Out, giving PSX owners the freedom to pick and choose what they buy.



Blaze PlayStation Scart Cable

If you link your PSX to a tellie with a Scart (as opposed to RF) cable, you need a Scart lead. This is the one to buy - it functions perfectly well as a normal PSX Scart lead, but also has a connection for the Guncon or Guncon Compatible's video plug. That's all there is to say about it, really...



Brain-Busting Ballistics

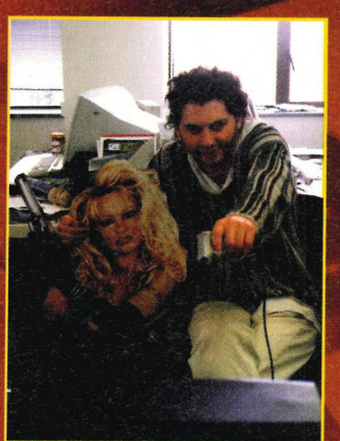
What makes a light gun work?

What makes a light gun work?

Ever wondered what makes a light gun work, and how a game registers where you're aiming it when you pull the trigger? We asked Fire International's resident tech-head Wayne Beckett.

Many assume (wrongly) that the light gun fires a beam of light at the screen. "The light gun doesn't actually fire anything", he says. "The gun collects information from the area of the screen you're pointing at and sends this down to the PlayStation". Thus it works like a camera - pulling the trigger opens a shutter inside the gun, and a sensor inside 'photographs' the portion of the screen you're firing at. The game then recognises this, identifies what you hit by matching the information with the screen as a whole and acts accordingly.

The Guncon and compatibles work slightly differently. These guns connect to the video output of the PlayStation and stores the screen image in the gun. "The additional video connector is used as a direct input to the gun", says Wayne, "and collates both sets of information for increased accuracy". Thus the gun itself can identify where the 'bullet' landed and sends that information to the PSX, a much faster and therefore more accurate means of data transmission.



Pistol-Packin Compo

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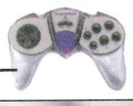
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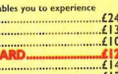
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Ex-Communication

EASY EVIL

Dear EPM,
I want to know why sequels can't be more original in their various incarnations, even though I know it's a tad self-contradictory. Take Resident Evil - hardly original plot-wise, but still a good - oh alright then, excellent - game like no other before it. So we wait. Obediently foaming at the mouth over leaked screenshots and tasters for RE2, hooked on the promise of a 'city alive with the dead'.
So what do we get? Five lousy game minutes of linear movement and creature blasting (albeit stunning in its execution), followed by the rest of the game set within a sprawling mansion - sorry, police station, sewer and a laboratory; sound familiar? I completed the game within two days of buying it. OK, only with the female character on Easy setting, and I'll probably try to beat the 2.5-hour time limit, but even RE1 took me longer than that. The puzzles are almost EXACTLY the same, the plot is lifted straight from the first one, even down to the ending which is basically exactly the same. Don't get me wrong; RE2 is a stunning game if you haven't played RE1, worth getting even if you have got the first one, but it's too easy. The puzzles are about as difficult as getting Jo Guest to drop her kit and the whole thing smacks of lack of thought. Capcom, if you read this, go to your room and don't come out until you've thought about the £49.99 I spent on this.
Paul Golledge, e-mail

EPM: This is an opinion we've been hearing more and more after the game's release, and we must agree that in spite of the absolutely incredible visuals and atmosphere, it does seem a little too straightforward at times. Changing the difficulty levels does make things harder, but only the combat, not the puzzles. Finishing the game within the set time limits and with other characters provide more long-term challenges, but it's not really a new game is it? Hmmm... maybe our '9' for Lifespan was a little optimistic, or there must be some truly obsessive gamers out there. Even though this letter disagrees with us on some points, its intelligence and sheer good point-iness earns it the status of Star Letter for this month. Drop us another line, Paul, and give us your choice of game and your address.

OOPS A DAISY

Dear EPM,
Firstly congratulations - after only a few issues I have been very impressed by the style and content of your mag! However (isn't there always a however?) I was really disappointed by your review of Blizzard's Diablo in Issue Four. I don't know if your reviewer deliberately omitted the two most important and relevant innovations in the game or whether they were just too lazy too find them.

1. The game can be played co-operatively by two players , which adds a completely new dimension to what is admittedly an average game (after all, how many two-player games of this type are available? Answers on a small postage stamp).

2. The labyrinths are randomly generated so they're different each time the game is played, which, combined with three separate characters, increases the games longevity.

As I work in an independent games shop, I know there are many 'couples' who would jump at the chance of playing a game like this. I'm not saying the game itself is exceptional, but I think it deserves better treatment for the effort it has made to be innovative, and also I think readers should be given the relevant information to make an informed decision as to whether or not to purchase the games.
I realise this letter is probably too long and critical to get published, but hey! Just send me the goodies and I'll say no more about it.
Trevor Prowse, Hitchin

EPM: Au contraire, Trevor, this is just the kind of missive we want for Ex-Communication; incisive and fair-minded. As it was me (Christian) who wrote the offending review I have to hold my hands up and admit to overlooking the two-player option for some reason (I like to think it was due to extreme cognitive numbness after sitting through the reams of turgid background story the game spewed up at me, but there really is no excuse).
After looking at Diablo again I must agree the random level generator is a cute feature, but the double-player mode seems just a bit 'tacked on', and smacks of a game that was meant to be an authentic RPG devolving into an over-complicated arcade game. Yes, it does introduce a new dimension of play, but the same can be said for any middling game with a two-player mode. The added unpredictable human element and/or teamwork aspect provides a dash of spice, but the game is still at heart a dingy and pretentious version of Gauntlet. Nonetheless, good work son! Let's see more letters that keep us on our toes.

INTERROGATION ALLEY

Dear EPM,
I am 13, but please don't discard this letter as if it were a piece of trash written by a hooligan. I think your magazine's great. No; I KNOW your magazine is the best around. I have been collecting it since Issue One. I Anyway, here's some questions and compliments...

1. Thanks for pointing me in the right direction for which virtual pet to get (Tamagotchi, Cyber Pet, whatever). I am going to buy the DigiMon (my brother has one).

EPM: Ian is assuredly ecstatic to hear he has another Tamagotchi convert.

2. When will Lunitik be released and could you do a review on it please?

EPM: Oh dear, it's been ditched by Eidos. Gutted.

3. Do you know anything about a game called Macross Digital Mission VFX?

EPM: Nope, never heard of it.

4. I'm not stuck on FFVII, so I don't need any help there.

EPM: Thank God, nice one mate.

Martin Balbier, Leicester.

GORE FOR ALL

Dear EPM,
Congratulations on the best mag on the market. I say it's the best because you don't fill a page with screenshots and put about a paragraph of text next to them. Anyway enough bum licking! Your review of Resident Evil 2 was spot on; I shat myself a few times whilst playing it (and it is best in the dark with the volume up full). But one thing I'm wondering is will the BBFC censor the PAL version, because they must think we're all mad if everything we see we go and imitate. What would happen when the Teletubbies came on the box? Would we all grow fat arses and run about like pissed-up prats (EPM: Yes if you're our illustrious Editor). I think the BBFC are a load of conservative tossers who don't know what they're doing . They should let the EPM crew censor the games, which would mean a few more litres of blood in RE2, eh lads? (EPM: And probably breasts if Darren had any say).
Lee Adams, Sheffield

PS: Please print this letter as I bet the lads a fiver you would.

EPM: To be fair to the censorious BBFC, as game graphics have edged nearer towards visual realism, making the amazing scenes viewed in Resident Evil 2 possible, digital violence and gore now looks virtually as real as a film. Obviously the very young need protection from horrifying images as they are not emotionally developed enough to distinguish between fantasy and reality. However, fully-matured adults are capable of making an informed choice as to what to see, so the ratings system acts as a guide towards this end. However, when an organisation such as the BBFC makes the decision as to what we should be allowed to watch (By demanding cuts be made from an '18' certificate game pre-release) things become a bit shakier, as they are deciding what's good for us, which is logically an infringement of individual liberty. Protection of the young and innocent must be balanced with freedom of

Ex-Communication is sponsored by those awfully nice Gameplay guys and gals, who award the winner of our star letter a game of his or her choice. This month's worthy winner is Paul Golledge, who's e-mail impressed us greatly. Alas, he didn't offer his snail mail address or state which game he wants! When writing to Ex-Communication, MAKE SURE YOU STATE YOUR FULL NAME, ADDRESS AND GAME OF YOUR CHOICE! Future forgetful folk may find their merry missives disqualified from the coveted Star Letter spot.

Ex-Communication

information and the ability to corrupt one's own mind if that's what you want to do.

KÄSI COCK-UP

Dear EPM,
Being an avid Star Wars fan I was interested in your review of the new LucasArts fighting simulation Masters of the Tëras Käsi (Issue Four) and how it faired against other games in the genre, such as the Tekken series and Soul Blade. After reading your review I noticed to my horror that you mocked the Star Wars Trilogy, an act inexcusable on its own (EPM: I think you got the wrong end of the stick, mate; we all love the adventures of Yoda and Co. more than our mothers). Your first quote for Return of the Jedi was "Hey, Luke, thanks... thanks for coming after me... now I owe YOU one!" - Han to Luke after they escape from Hoth. This is impossible as they never went to Hoth in Return of the Jedi; it was in fact Tatooine, the home planet of Luke Skywalker. The researcher who made this grave error should be sacked and replaced by myself, or alternately employ a decent proof-reader (EPM: Hear, hear).
Also, does Darren drive a Ford Escort XR3i, and is he an Essex boy or Girl?
RT, Tunbridge Wells

PS. If this letter is not published I will be forced to use the dark side of the Force to destroy you and your pitiful band of rebels. You will be taken to the dune sea and cast into the pit of Carcoome, the resting place of the all-powerful Zarlac , where in his belly you will find a new definition of pain and suffering as you are slowly digested over a thousand years (EPM: actually it's 'Sarlacc' RT, get your shit correct).

EPM: Congratulations , RT, you win our Pedant of the Month award, which is ironically the previous sole dominion of our resident proof-reader Ian Osborne.

HISTORY REPEATING

Dear EPM,
I have recently become the proud owner of a PSX and would like to say how brilliant your magazine is, and the only one really worth reading.
I started going through some old magazines (circa 1992/1993) for the Atari STFM that I have stashed away in a corner gathering dust (it was purchased in my youth and never disposed of). What I really want to know is whether there are any plans to do 32-bit conversions of games like Carrier Command or Monkey Island 2, along with some of the flight and driving sims? Some of these 16-bit games were actually quite good for their day. I'm aware of the Atari & Namco retro collections that are available, but they're mostly mediocre games, with a couple of exceptions - namely Pacman and Space Invaders.
Mark Collins, Watford

EPM: Good to see the old skool of thought staying firm, Mark, as all too often the murky past of video gaming has been sniggered at by those pampered by not having to load games from tape and having more than eight colours to play with (see next letter). You'll be pleased to hear the next project for John Cook (the man behind the amazing-looking 90s revamp of The Sentinel) is actually Carrier Command! Nice. As for other retro thrills, check out Atari's Greatest Hits 2 (previewed last issue) which is worth getting just for the original-code versions of Gauntlet and Marble Madness. For my money, the latter is especially ripe for a 32-bit reincarnation, as well as that Geoff Crammond classic of yore, Stunt Car Racer. Do any of you out there have any suggestions for PSX versions of old 8- or 16-bit games you reckon would benefit from being resurrected? There's no prize, only nuff respect from your peers.

RETRO NO-NO

Dear EPM,
I am a PlayStation owner and have been for nearly a year. Although I enjoy using my console a lot, I want to complain about the behaviour of some software developers, who feel it necessary to squeeze every last penny out of the public by releasing games (at £40) based on activities such as fishing, horse racing and chess. A couple of my PlayStation-owning mates are fishermen and they assure me that they would never pay out good money for a fishing sim. Although these games are not yet available in Britain (except on import), it won't be long before they hit our shores.
Another example of this effort to rip off the public is the recent burst of retro games available. There's a reason those games were left in the Eighties - they're poor to look at, poor to play and laughable by today's expectations. Although they do not claim to be as good as today's games, we're still expected to shell out £40 for them. The developers should stop thinking only of their pockets and start making games that people want.
Daniel Bowcock, Staffs

EPM: Dear me Daniel, you are a bit of a games facsist, aren't you? In answer to your first point, specialised games like these may have a comparatively limited appeal, but I'd rather see daring and unusual subject matter for titles than another generic racing game/beat-'em-up/basketball sim. It's better that specialist titles such as those you list exist so at least you have the choice of not shelling out your precious forty quid.
On the subject of retro games, it's obvious you weren't around to play them at the time and thus need some perspective. Of course most titles produced then weren't great, but believe you me, the proportion of good games to bad nowadays is worse if anything, and to say they were 'poor to play' is just plain wrong. Because there wasn't any flash texture mapping and mega-powerful polygon shifting processors in those days, a game had to have superb playability to cut the mustard, and couldn't hide behind a camouflage of pretty visuals. Just look at Marble Madness and Gauntlet on Atari's greatest hits two for games that show the way to most modern titles for sheer playing punch.

Got a whine? Drop us a line! Send your merry missives on all things PlayStation to:

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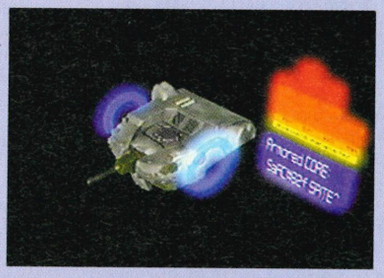
These cheats are dedicated to Pam, bang the bastard up, he deserves everything he gets, and more. Don't worry, I'll always be here for you.

Armored Core

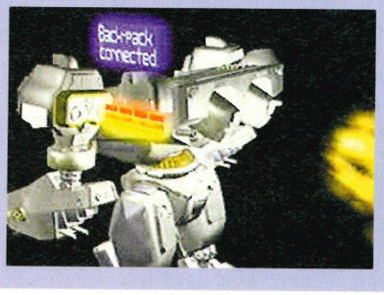
First person view:
Press ■ + ▲ + Start. The game is paused. Press Start to resume play with the new camera angle.

Fixed camera view:
Press ● + ✕ + Start. The game pauses. Press Start to resume play with the camera fixed at the present location.
Alternate emblem backgrounds:
Highlight an emblem and enter the edit screen. Then, hold L1 + L2 + R1 + R2 and press Select.
Return to default view:
To return to the default view, press Start to pause game play, then press Start to resume.
No limit bonus:
Complete over 100 sorties with a greater than 90% win record and an over all rating of 98% or more. Unlimited leg weight points, core weight points, and generator output points will be allowed. Note: Ignore the overweight warning.

Death bonuses:
Intentionally die with less than 50,000 credits. The game restarts from the first level with all items gained in the previous game. The first time this is done, the radar becomes a grid system and detects incoming missiles. The fourth time this is done, the rear weapon may be fired while in motion. The sixth time this is done, available energy is doubled. Additionally, a ball may be fired from the laserblade by firing the blade, then pressing Jump.







Ghost in the Shell

All mission and training FMV sequences:
Quickly press R2, R1, ■, ■, ↑, ↓, ■, ■, R2, R2 at the main menu. A sound will confirm correct code entry.
Hidden Motoko Kusanagi picture:
Finish all missions without continuing to view a bonus picture after the ending credits.

FIFA: Road to the World Cup '98

Unlimited player attributes:
Press L1, L2, ✕, ■, ✕ at the player edit screen.
Editable bankroll:
Select Customise Squad, then Team Edit.. Press ■, ✕, ■, L2, L1 at the club transfers screen. Pressing ← rolls the tally round to £999,999,999, but beware, changing kit cancels this.
Adjust lighting:
Pause game play and press ■, ▲, ✕, ■, ▲, ▲, ✕, ✕, ■, ■, ■, ■, ■, ▲, ▲, ▲, ▲, ▲ at the options screen.

Deathtrap Dungeon

Level select:
Press L1, R1, ▲, ▲, ■, ●, R1, L1 at the main menu. All levels may now be selected on the "Load Game" screen.



Top Tip

Three Lions

Secret Teams
Enter these codes on the team menu select screen. Go to where it says CPU or Player 1, enter code and push ↓, which should trigger a 'dong' sound. Use in friendly match or tournament modes. Thanks to J.Brooks from flight-path friendly Hounslow who sent us this cheat before we actually had the game, so he wins a mystery widget from Blaze.

England 1966 L1, L1, L1, →
Brazil 1970 R1, R1, R1, →
Germany 1990 R2, R2, R2, →
All-Time Team L2, L2, L2, →
Europe All-Stars L2, ↓, ↓, →
Z-Axis Super Team R1, ↓, ↓, →
South American All-Stars R2, ↓, ↓, →
North American All-Stars L1, ↓, ↓, →
African All-Stars R2, ↑, ↑, →
Aus/Asia All-Stars R1, ↑, ↑, →
Azzuri Team L2, ↑, ↑, →
Oranji Team L1, ↑, ↑, →

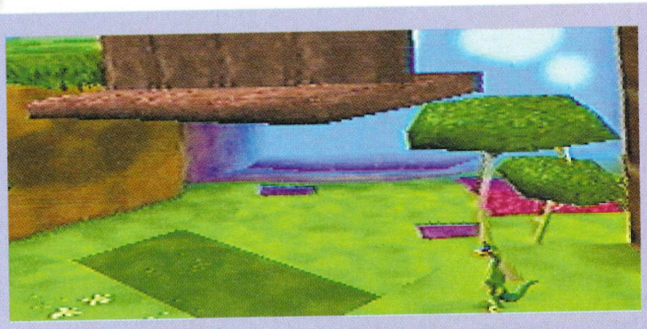


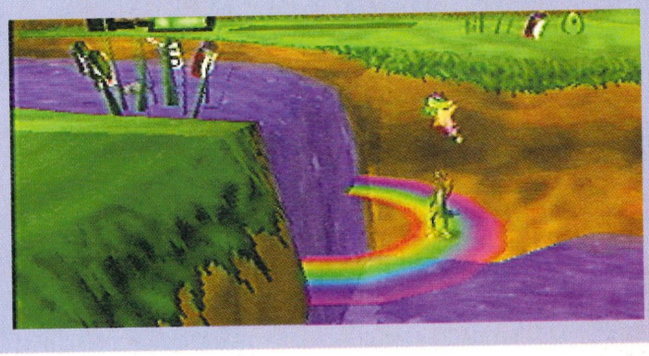


NASCAR Racing '98

Shoot paintballs:
Pause game play and display the race statistics screen. Hold L1+ R1 + L2 + R2. The sound of an engine will confirm correct code entry. Resume game play and press ▲ to fire paintballs at the other cars.
Pinnacle Trading Cards car:
Select exhibition mode. Highlight Bobby Labonte's car on the car selection screen, then hold ✕ and press ↑, ↓.
EA Sports car:
Select exhibition mode. Highlight Kenny Wallace's car on the car selection screen, then hold ✕ and press ↑, ↓.
Turbo mode option:
Hold ● and press ↑, ←, ↓, Right at the options screen. A new option that increases the game's frame rate will appear at the bottom of the screen.

Gex 3D: Enter the Gecko





Unlimited lives:
Press Start to pause game play and highlight the "Exit" option. Hold L2 and press ↑, ↑, ↓, →, ▲, ↓.

Invincibility:
Press Start to pause game play and highlight the "Exit" option. Hold L2 and press ←, →, ▲, ↓, →, ←.

Level select:
Press Start to pause game play and highlight the "Exit" option. Hold L2 and press →, →, ←, →, ▲, ↓, →. Resume game play and press Select to choose a new level.

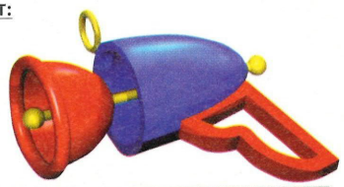
Gex quotes:
Press Start to pause game play and highlight the "Exit" option. Hold L2 and press ▲, ←, ●, ↑, ↓. Resume game play and press Select to force Gex to make a comment.

Rambling Gex:
Press Start to pause game play and highlight the "Exit" option. Hold L2 and press ↓, →, ↑, ↓, →, ←, →, ↓, ↓.

Level times:
Press Start to pause game play and highlight the "Exit" option. Hold L2 and press →, ▲, →, ←, ▲, ✕. Resume game play and return to the Media Dimension. Press Select to view the level statistics or ■ for the fastest times.

Rascal

Level and room select:
Enter HOUSE as a password and begin game play. Press R1 during game play to select a new level or R2 to choose a room.





Motorhead

Additional cars and tracks:
Enter as code

COWRULES	level 1
FRAGTIME	level 2
TURBOMOS	level 3
LASTCODE	level 4
Increased Traction	INSANITY
Faster View	SOFTHEAD
Overhead View	SUPERCAR



Jet Rider 2

All tracks:
Use the following steps to enable all tracks, including the tracks from the first Jet Rider game. Note: The effects of this code may be saved with the game.
Set master difficulty and five laps per race at the options screen
Press ✕ on Li'l Dave at the 1 player select screen, then go back to title screen.
Press ↑, ↓, ←, →, R2, R1, L2, L1 within four seconds at the title screen.
Set three laps per race at the options screen.
Press X on Wild Ride at the 1 player select screen, then go back to title screen.
Press ↑, ←, ↓, →, ■, R2, ●, L2 within four seconds at the title screen.
Set amateur difficulty and turbos off at the options screen.
Press ✕ on Bomber at the 1 player select screen, then go back to title screen.
Press ↑, ↓, ←, →, ↑, ↓, ←, → within four seconds at the title screen.
Set professional difficulty and turbos on at the options screen.
Press R2, R1, L1, L2, R2, R1, L1, L2 within four seconds at the title screen.

Race as Enigma:
Set master difficulty and 6 laps per race at the options screen. Press ←, ■, ↓, ▲, →, ●, L1, R1 within four seconds at the title screen. Note: The effects of this code may be saved with the game.

Insane difficulty level:
Complete all ten tracks at the Master difficulty level. This also allows Enigma to be playable.

Hint: Stay at turbo speeds:
Keep ▲ held after running out of turbos to keep the speed over 100 mph.

All trophies:
Hold L1 + L2 + R1 + R2 and press ↓, →, ↑, ←, ↑, →, ↓ at the trophy case. The following game features will now be available.

Indy 500

Extra menu item:
Press [●, ✕, ▲, ■] three times at the title screen.

Drag race:
For one player mode, highlight the "Qualify" option on the Indy 500 mode screen and hold L1 + L2 + R1 + R2 + Start. For two player mode, hold L1 + L2 + R1 + R2 + Start at the handicap screen.
Alternate replay views:
Hold Select and press L1, L2, R1, R2, ▲, ■, or ✕ during the replay.

Poy Poy

Suicide bomb:
--Rapidly tap ✕, ● to fill the glove power bar until it explodes.

Theme Hospital

Hint: E-Z Clean hospital:
Save the game and reload when the hospital becomes full. All of the garbage and patients disappear, allowing a fresh start.

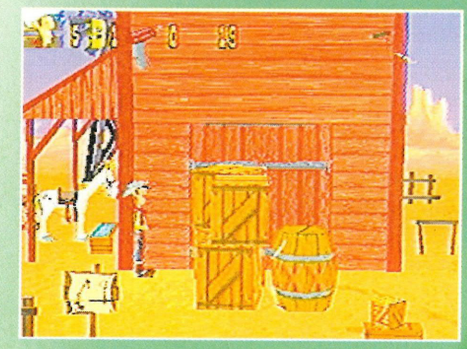


Player's Guide

Lucky Luke

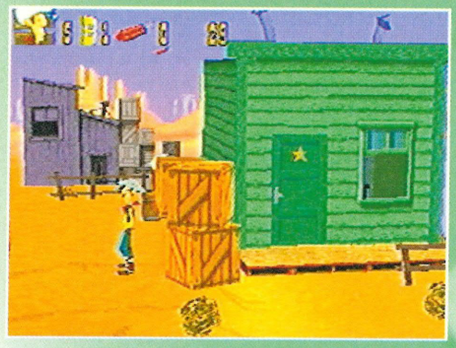
Level one: abilene

From the start, turn left and collect the bonus from the crate then turn back and proceed forward until you come to the pile of big boxes. Shoot the silver sign on the building. This deflects the bullet into the barrel of explosives, blowing

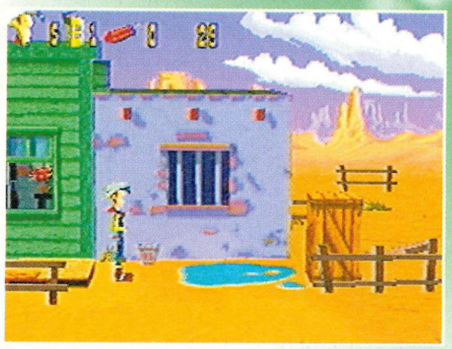


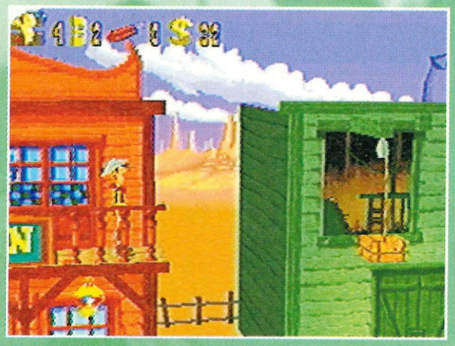
up the boxes and allowing you to continue.

When you get to the next set of crates, shoot the pan to your right and the bullet hits the guy hiding in the barrel. The next thing you encounter is a barrel hanging precariously above more crates. Shoot the rope and the barrel drops and smashes the boxes blocking your passage. To collect the coins and avoid the barrels thrown at you, push the big box along until it's below the dollar signs then jump up onto it to reach them. The barrels smash harmlessly on the large box you're standing on.



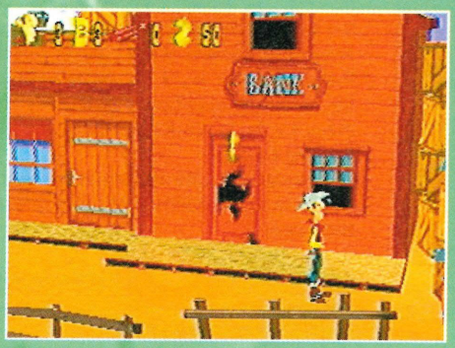
When all the dollar signs have been collected, continue to push the large box along until you reach the next set of crates. Do a running jump to get on top of them, then drop down the other



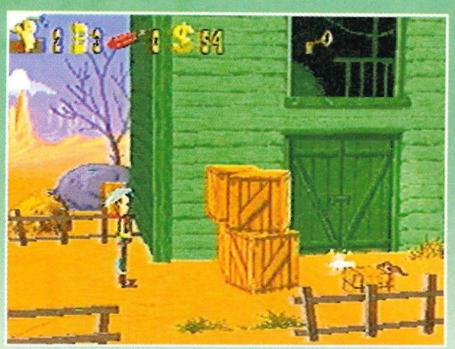


side. At the next obstruction, avoid the sticks of dynamite and stand close to the crates barricading your passage. If you time it right, you should get the dynamite to clear your route forwards. As you pass the Sheriff's Office, you see a stick of dynamite through the building - you need the key in the barn at the end of the level to get to it.

As you progress, look for the guy hidden in the crate shooting at you. The next thing to avoid is the chap lobbing barrels from the roof of the building. Push the large box along and duck behind it to avoid the barrels, then leap up onto the box and then the roof.

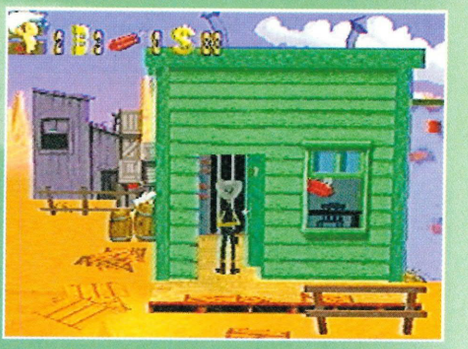


When you come to the saloon bar, enter and collect the bonus in the doorway. Go to the first floor using the stairs to the left of the entrance. Once out on the balcony, shoot the rope on your left to make a crate to drop and hit the horse. The horse kicks a barrel that demolishes the next set of barrels blocking your way. When you get to the hotel, a guy appears in the window. To kill him, duck down and shoot the anvil; the bullet



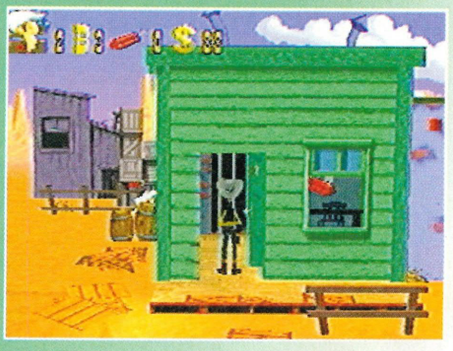
bounces off and hits him.

Run past the next cowboy that's shooting at you and reach the drainpipe. Shoot the pipe; the bullet deflects and kills the guy in the window. You can now collect the bonus and dollar signs. Shoot a second bullet through the pipe and into the window, a hatful of dollar bills fly out. Climb the ladder you just passed and turn to your right at the top. Shoot the guy sticking his head out the box and jump over it. Drop down from the top of the building. Jump over the crate and, while avoiding the sticks of dynamite, shoot the rope to cause the box to drop and knock out the guy as well as smashing the boxes. Now climb the next ladder and walk over to the dog to activate the checkpoint. Go to your left into the barn to collect the key. Head back to the Sheriff's Office and pick up the dynamite. Head back to the green barn and collect the bonus; you now have four. Use your dynamite to blast the crates at the end of the level.



Level two: boss abilene

Wait until the boss throws a log at you. Using your frying pan, hit it back at him and try to hit him. It seems easier to hit him by returning them on your backhand. Try to judge your return, otherwise he ducks and avoids the return shot. Once you've hit him three times, you knock him out and complete this section of the game.



bonus level: the bar

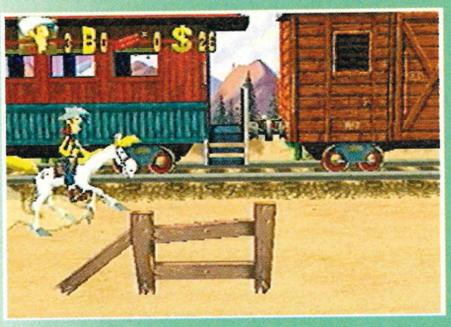
This is straightforward; all you need to do is to hit as many bottles as possible to win a certain amount of dollars, depending on the type of bottle you shoot. Don't worry too much about what you shoot, though, as time is tight. At the end you're given a breakdown of what you shot and how much it's worth, then you are given the



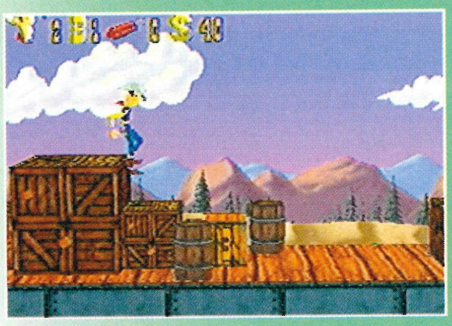
chance to buy an extra life or a password. The choice is yours.

Level three: train chase

Before you reach the train, you need to first jump a series of fences with dollar signs above them. You then catch up with the train. Here you need avoid the gunfire and explosions and return fire as you continue along the carriages on the train. At the same time, you also need to collect the dollar signs as well as shooting the crates with the 'B' sign on them to reveal bonuses. When you reach the engine you've completed another level. If you got all four bonus signs, you get another go at shooting the bottles in the bar.

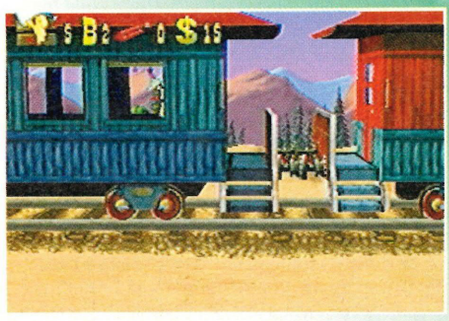


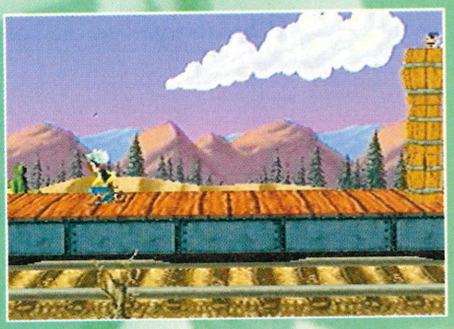
Level four: on the train



Now you're on the train and need to find the sticks of dynamite hidden in certain crates. You can access them by jumping onto some of the boxes. Use them to blast the roof off the wagons and free the hostages inside.

Once in the carriage, you need to shoot a cowboy guarding them. Explore the area for extras. When you've freed several passengers, you encounter a guy throwing bombs at you from three barrels stacked at one end of the train trailer. To kill him, shoot the bombs that land near your feet. This sends them back to the barrel and causes one of them to destruct. Be careful of the guy hiding in the second barrel. He fires at you while you have two barrels left to blow up. Leap out of the line of fire while still trying to get bombs away from you. When you successfully complete this section, a hatful of dollar signs fly out of the barrel. Wait for a moment, then collect them as they rain down upon you.





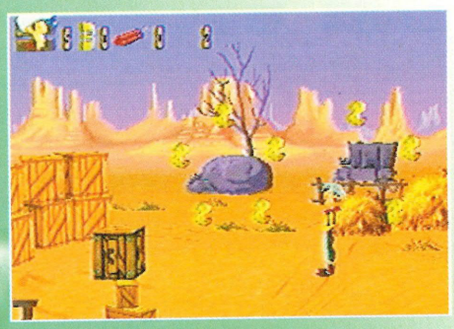
With all the dollars collected, it's time to continue along the train freeing hostages as you go, but this time you need to be quick on the draw, because when you drop into some of the carriages, not only have you got to worry about the guy holding the hostage, you also have baddies springing up behind you. When you come to the second guy throwing barrels, wait until the bombs are flashing (meaning that it's about to explode), then shoot it back. Watch out for the guy throwing bottles at you from the second barrel. When you returned enough bombs, the guy starts rolling along in his barrel, in an attempt to avoid the explosions and knock you over. Time your jump to avoid him. Once you've blown him from his barrel, you can progress to the next level, via the bonus level if you collected the four bonus icons.



Level five: mexican village (pueblos)

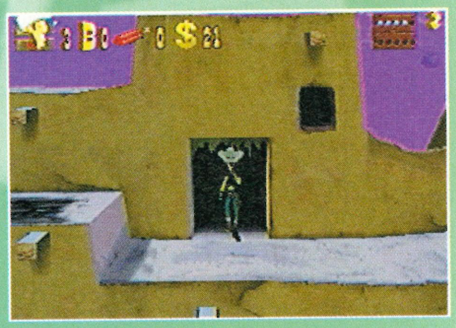
The aim here is to collect ten pearls and return them to the medicine man located at the end of the level. Be careful not to go back to him until you have at least collected nine of the pearls.





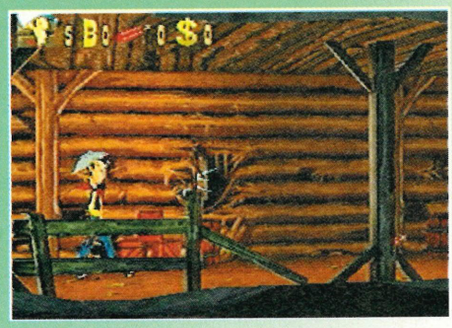
To guide you through the level, Rantaplan the dog offers his assistance and shows you the route. Avoid the Indian ghosts roaming the area; you can't shoot them. To use the swinging ladders you need to run before you reach it to make it carry you across to the other side. Use the vertical trampoline to boost Luke's speed when you need to jump the large hole.

When try to collect the sixth pearl, you won't be able to reach it. Instead, go to the left and take the first door you come across and walk through to the dark side of the level. Now go to the left, until you reach another door with an Indian ghost leaving. Go through and run to the right in order to bump into the vertical trampoline and jump over the gap. You should now be able to reach the pearl.

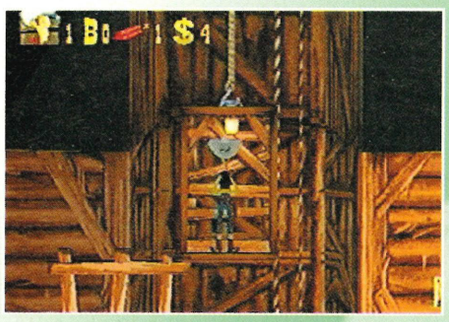


The final pearl proves awkward. Go and see the medicine man - he sends you to the right location. Collect the pearl and go back to the medicine man, but to find him you need to go to the left and jump over the holes and take the ladder down, then head to the right and take the first ladder down that you encounter. Now head to the right and jump some more holes, using the wooden planks and then go down the next ladder. Go right and leap yet another hole and continue until you reach another ladder. Go up this to find the medicine man.

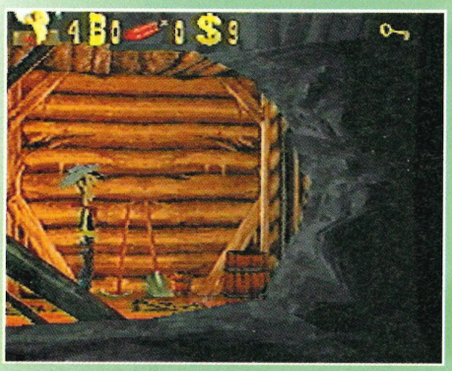
Level six: old mine

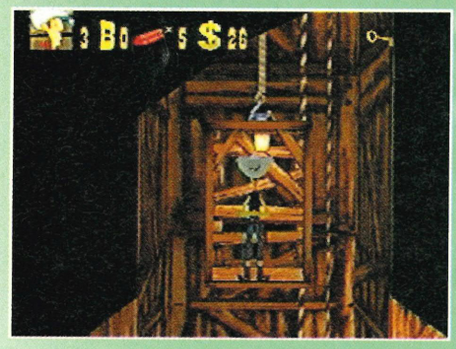


This level sees you in an old mine. Head right and collect the stick of dynamite. When you come to the pile of boxes blocking your path, use one of the sticks to blow a way through. Proceed forward and judge your jumps carefully over the pit and head to the end of the shaft. Here you see



a toothed wheel, so drop another stick of dynamite near it. This frees the wheel and activates an elevator in the main shaft. Turn around and leap back over the pit and proceed until you come to the lift. Take it to the next area.





Head to the left and pull the lever, then come back on yourself and off to the right, over the pit and onto the moving planks. Head down to the right and into the tunnel to find a Gold Key. Head up to the top left and into the next shaft. Leap over the pit and lay a stick of dynamite at the foot of the next giant cog. When this blows up, it again frees the elevator and raises it to the level your on. Go back past the pit and onto the lift to take you to the fourth section. Go left and avoid the swinging pillars - because you have the key, the double doors open. Go through to the third area. From here, go left again and through the next doorway. You're now in the second area, so go to the left and through the next door. This brings you to a new area.

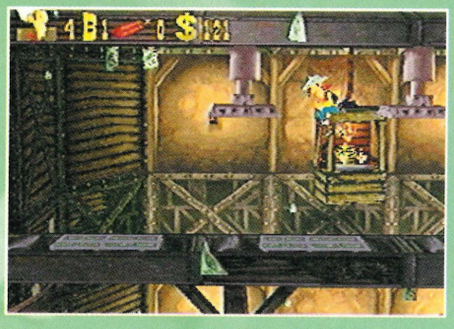


Walk along and flick the switch on the wall, then place a stick of dynamite close to the box of crates to open up the next part of the level. From here, go left to enter another area - you reach a series of moving platforms. Head up to the top left-hand side and into a section with a key. Pull the lever to make the hidden warp zone appear. Now go to the top-right of the pit and down the passage over the hole until you come to another door. This opens automatically because you have the key. Go through and pull the lever to activate a wooden door to take you up. Now head right and you come to another pit with moving platforms. Go across the pit and into the tunnel and proceed along until you come to another lift. Get the elevator, then go to the right and leap onto some more moving platforms and head to the top-right to the exit.



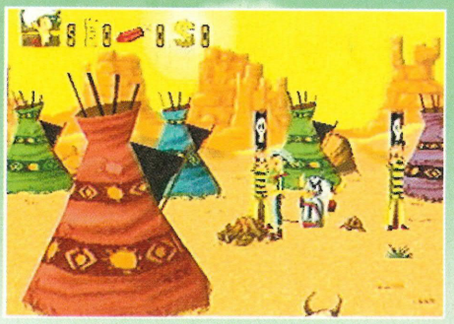
Level seven: buttercut hidden place

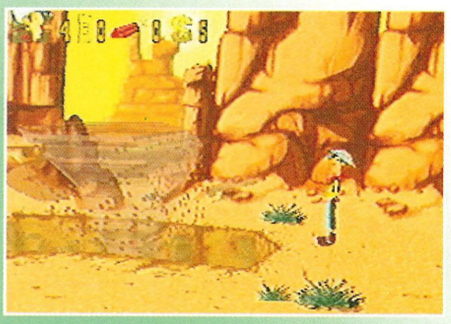
The aim here is to shoot Buttercut using the ink sacks on the printing presses. Whilst this is going on, you also need to avoid the stampers that crash down onto the counterfeit money. On the top press mill, you see a lever above you. Jumping up and flicking the lever stops the stampers. This gives you a limited time to line yourself up with Buttercut and hit with the ink. Keep moving between the two press runs. This gives you the opportunity to get the best position for the lever, before attempting to strike him again. Once you've hit him four times, you've won.



Level eight: desert

The aim of the level is to find the four pieces of the Totem and bring them back to the medicine man at the beginning. You know when you get to



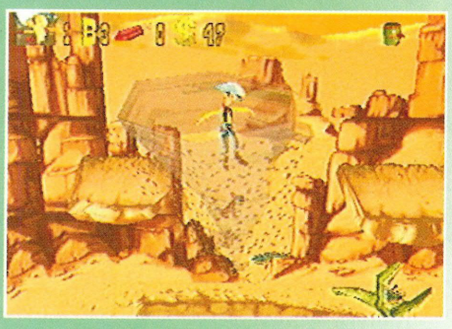


a piece; dog following you starts to bark. From your starting position, go to the left and over the holes by using the skeletons or snakes as trampolines. Once over the pits, use the tornado to carry you up to the top-left platform. Head to the left until you come to a medicine man, then use the clouds of smoke he's creating to carry you to the first bit of the Totem.

There are two types of cloud. One carries you up at a 45 degree angle to a warp zone, the other



cloud takes you straight up and into two tornadoes and the Totem. Now go back to the right and past the medicine man and shoot the cactus. Jump on the snake to reach the platform. Now go to the right using the tornadoes and collect the dollar signs. When you reach the next snake, use it to reach the platforms, then use the skeletons to bounce to the next platform and



finally use Mortican's vulture as a trampoline to reach the second part of the Totem.

From here, continue to the right via the platforms until you come to a high cliff. Drop down and when you get to the bottom, head to the left and you find the third piece. Now go right again, until you reach a medicine man. Use the clouds he's creating, but only the one on that takes you to the right. As the cloud disappears, go to the right until you come the fourth piece of the Totem. With all four parts collected, go back to the camp and the medicine man to finish the level.

Level nine: saloon

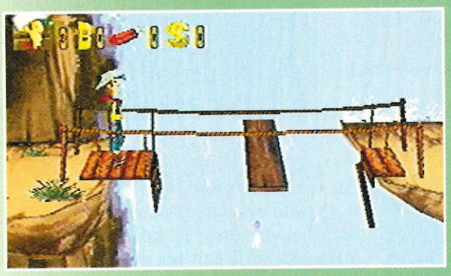
This is a straightforward fist fight and all you need to do is out-punch your opponent. Land a blow and he springs back when you least expect it. There are



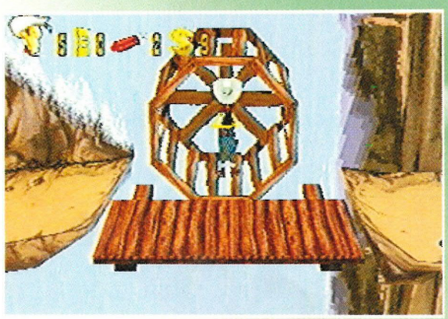
three opponents to beat. The first guy is skinny but fast. The second is a big fat guy. You can normally hit him a couple of times before having to block his punches. The final guy is bit more difficult. He comes in and tries to hit you three or four times before jumping back out of reach.

Level ten: waterfall

The aim here is to collect the four gold nuggets and return them to the old digger who's at the beginning of the level. Go to the right and over the old bridges, avoiding the parts that collapse. When you come to a part that looks like a hole in the waterfall, go through. On the other side you come out on a platform where you find a stick of dynamite. Grab it and go back through the hole. Now go to the right and avoid another falling woodbridge until you're next to a pile of rocks. Drop the dynamite to blow a gap in the rocks to continue your trek.

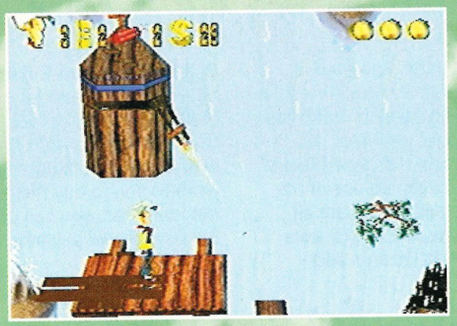


Keep going until you come to a large wooden wheel sat in the waterfall. Walk into it then run to your right, activating the wheel. This turns for a while then stops. Come out from the wheel and continue to the right until you come to a door in the rock face. When you come out further up the waterfall, avoid the guy that leaps out of the box then jump onto the next ledge. When you can't go any further, shoot the rope on the top of the large box and push it to the edge of the ridge. Do a big leap onto the bouncy planks of wood. Head over to the ledge and through the entrance in the wall. When you reappear, head to the left and across the waterfall again, avoiding the guy with the

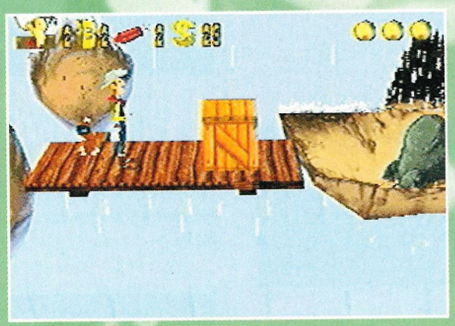


spinning pickaxe, until you come to another collapsing bridge. Go down collecting the dollar signs and you land on a ledge with a dog. Next to the dog is a box containing the first gold nugget.

Climb back up the waterfall, back to the bridge. This time jump across the bridge and continue left. When you reach the next doorway, head through and collect the bonus icon. Head right and through the door in the waterfall, then go right, but don't drop down to collect the sheriff's badge or you're back at the beginning of the level.



Instead, go right and avoid the guy in the wooden cage throwing frying pans at you. Continue and go over the moving platform, until you reach a place where there's a big gun firing at you. Drop down by the dollar signs and you find the second gold nugget.

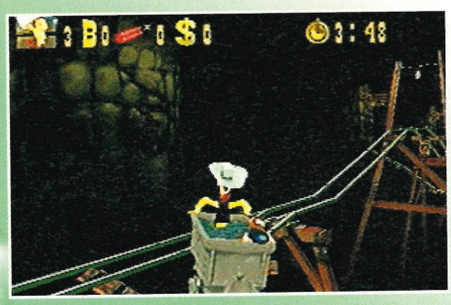


Follow the path of dollar signs and head right and up, using the bouncy planks. When you come to the next door in the waterfall, go through and when you reappear head left to find another box which contains the third nugget. Now go to the right and jump on the bouncy branch to reach a wooden platform. Leap over to the stone ledge and through the doorway. When you emerge again, go to the left and onto a wooden platform containing the dog checkpoint. Now head right via another plank of wood. As you land on solid ground again, you see a bonus icon bouncing away from you; don't follow it. Instead go to the right and down until you come to a moving platform. Jump across two moving platforms and onto a wooden gantry. Climb up the gantry, avoiding the large boulders crashing down.

Keep going until you reach another wheel you stand in and turn. This moves a little cage situated just past the dog. Get the cage across to the left until you come to the next door. As you reappear a bear arrives, so run to the left until it stops chasing you. When the bear's been knocked out, use him as a spring to jump up to the final gold nugget tucked in a box on the left. With all four nuggets, head back to the beginning to hand them over. When you do this, you're given a key as reward. This opens the doors just past the first wooden bridge to the next level.

Level eleven: wild ride in a wagon

You must now guide the wagon you're in through the crazy rails of the mine. Every so often you need to time a jump to get across a gap in the rail - look for the skull and crossbones signs. To reach the end of the level you need to pull all the levers that you pass, while dealing with the



obstacles at the same time.

Level twelve: the Lumberman sports event

In this section you are pitted in a series of events against an opponent. The first is timber felling. You need to punch away on the Square and Circle buttons until your energy bar's flashing, then hit Triangle for him to take a swipe and cut out part of the trunk. When you win, you take on the next event. This is very similar, but you hit a spring that shoots a ball up the pole and hits the bell as well as lifting it higher. The aim here is to reach the top first. The last of the events places you in the a boxing match against the same guy. If you've already done the saloon fighting, you find this match easy.

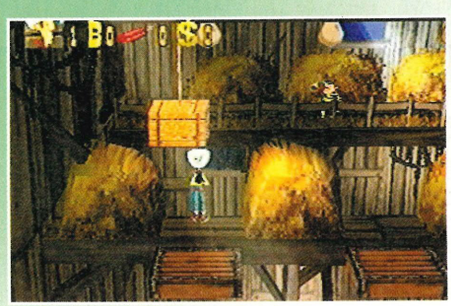


Level thirteen: Dalton City

This is quite a difficult level if you're slow with your holster. As the camera pans around the town, you need to shoot the guys that pop up out of the windows, barrels and crates. Some of the baddies throw bombs or knives at you. Shoot these as well as the chap that threw it. Be on your guard as they appear randomly.

Level fourteen: the barn

To defeat the final boss, shoot at the straw bails as they come across the screen. This causes them to swing and knock the straw bag at the far end of the barn. You need to time it to hit the boss man. At the same time you need to keep your eyes on the bombs he's throwing at you. Also, watch out for the planks at the back of the platform you're on. You can walk onto these, but they drop away after a few seconds. You need to hit the guy several times to be able to beat him and finally bring him to justice.



Player's Guide
DIABLO

There are a total of 16 levels to the game. All the quests are generated in groups and sub-groups, and you don't have to complete every quest to finish the game. For Group One, you get the chance to do one of two. In Group Two, you must do two of the three quests available. Again in Group Three you must complete two of the three quests. Group Four has you taking on two of the available three and in the last group, Group Five, you can do one of the two quests. The Chamber of Bone, Archbishop Lazarus and Diablo are all default quests in single-player mode. In two-player mode, the only quests available are The Butcher, King Leoric's Curse, Archbishop Lazarus and Diablo. King Leoric Curse and Archbishop Lazarus appear on levels three and 15 respectively, instead of sub-levels.

It's worth saving your game just before you go into battle, thus giving you the chance to attempt the quest as many times as you want without losing everything. Also be prepared to sell items and build up your cash; this enables you to buy the rarer, more expensive items. If you have an item that's not identified, you can pay Cain the Elder to identify it for you. Griswold the Blacksmith will pay more for it if you know what it is.

townfolk characters

These are the people situated around the town and on its outskirts. All the people can help in some form or another, so talk to everyone.



• Griswold the Blacksmith

This chap is in the centre of the town. Here you can buy or sell your weapons for your next quest, and Griswold will also repair damaged items. Occasionally you can buy some magical items from him.



• Ogden the tavern owner

This chap is located just north of Griswold and will, during the game, send you on two quests. He offers some information, but very little else.

• Adria the witch

You need to leave the town and head south across the river and east to meet Adria. She can, for a small fee, recharge your staves as well as sell you powerful magical artefacts. You can also purchase mana potions from her, which you need as you get deeper into the dungeons.



• Pepin the healer

To find this guy, you need to head to the west of the town. When you talk to him, you can buy health and rejuvenation potions to aid you in your treks.



• Gillian the barmaid

You can find this person north of the fountain in the centre of the town. She's one of the few people who can't really offer you anything. She tells some stories that might link to certain quests, but apart from that, she's no use.





• Wirt the peg-legged boy

Leave the town and head up to the north and over the river to be able to find this boy. Don't be deceived by this guy's looks; he can sell you some of the strongest magical weapons in the game, but be prepared to pay high prices for them.



• Cain the elder

This guy is found standing close to the fountain in the middle of the town. He advises you in some of your quests and is a wealth of information. For a small fee, he will identify any object you've collected on your quests.

• Farnham the drunk

This chap is tucked away at the back of one of the westerly buildings. When you approach, he moans about being left to drink in peace. This is about the best thing to do as well. He offers very little advice and does not sell or buy things.



the game characters

You've a choice of three different characters to play. Below is an indication of the maximums the player can achieve and extras you might be able to collect:

Class	Max Str	Max Mag	Max Dex	Max Vit	Effect
Warrior	250	50	60	100	+2 life, +1 mana
Rogue	55	70	250	80	+2 life, +2 mana
Sorcerer	45	250	85	80	+1 life, +2 mana

Bear the following points in mind too:

- A warrior gains a further two Life points for every one increase in his Vitality.
- A Rogue or a Sorcerer gains only one Life for every one increase in Vitality.
- A Sorcerer gains two Mana points for one increase to their Magic.
- A Rogue or Warrior gains only one Mana for every one increased in there Magic.
- All the characters each have there own special ability as well. For the Rogue, it's the ability to detect traps, while the Sorcerer's ability is to recharge staves and finally the Warrior's ability is to be able to repair things.

the quests

• king Leoric's curse (skeleton king's lair)

Group: 1
Dungeon level: 3

Reward: Undead Crown
Attributes: Armour Class 8, Life Stealing Ability

Begin by talking to Ogden the tavern owner. He tells you the history of King Leoric and the curse - he's damned to walk the dungeon floors as an undead warrior forever. His tomb is situated in the third level and is infested with swarms of skeleton warriors and zombies. As you progress down each floor of the dungeon, be sure to collect all the treasure and collect the weapons. If you become so stocked up you can't pick up any more items, head back to the town and speak to the Locksmith or the Witch and trade your items with them for better ones or more money. When you finally reach the third level, use the Holy Bolt Spell to aid you in your effort to kill the undead King and take him out first. If you don't, he resurrects any dead skeletons you waste. When you've finished him off, collect the Undead Crown and kill the remaining minnows.

• poison water

Group: 1
Level: 2

Reward: Ring of Truth
Attributes: Hit Points +10, -1 Damage from enemies, resistance to all magic +10%

Go and talk to Pepin the Healer to learn of the town's poisoned water supply. You notice the water at the well is a yellowish colour, to indicate the poison. Head to level two of the dungeon for this quest and look for the enclosed room with some torches, surrounding a crack in the wall. Head through this into some caves and you find a spring that is the root of the poison infestation. You encounter small demons and goat men are guarding the area, so make sure you're equipped with health orbs and mana orbs. Your aim, once in the caves, is to kill every single monster roaming the area. Progress slowly and take your time in your quest. Trying to run in and hit everything in one go results in you being overwhelmed and finally killed. When you've defeated everything, a horn sounds letting you know you've been successful. Now head back and see Pepin; he rewards you with the Ring of Truth.

• the butcher

Group: 2
Level: 2

Reward: The Butcher's Cleaver
Attributes: Strength +10, Unusual Item Damage

Head to the entrance of the cathedral and talk to the wounded warrior. He tells of a demon that has slain the townspeople and kills with a devastating weapon. Head down to the second floor of the dungeon and look for a small square room. You know when you reach it; inside is the spiked bodies of the dead he's taken back to his lair. Make sure before taking him on you have defeated all the remaining beasts from the area. The one good advantage you have over him is that he can't open doors, and you can use this against him. There are two ways in which you can now tackle him. The first is to get a Fire Wall spell ready, then open the door and cast it, before shutting the door on him. The second tactic is to lure him to a room that has railing in the walls. Enter into the room and shut the door before he tries to enter, then through the railings, shoot him using either spells or arrows to kill him, while holding him at a safe distance. When he has been killed, collect the Cleaver and add it to your inventory.

• ogden's sign

Group: 2
Level: 4

Reward: Harlequin Crest
Attributes: All Attributes +2, Armour Class -3, Damage from Enemies -1, Hit Points +7, Mana +7

Second Item: The Ice Shank
Attributes: Resistance to Fire +40%, +9 to Strength

Talk to Ogden and he tells you of some creatures that have stolen his sign. You now need to head to level four in the dungeons to seek out the ringleader called Snotspill. He tells you where the sign is and warns you it's being guarded by several meaty creatures. Find the sign and kill the beasts protecting it before using a Town Portal to get quick access from the area. Return the sign to Ogden and he rewards you with the Harlequin Crest. Using the teleport, go back to level four and find the infamous Snotspill. Kill him and his minnows, then search the carcasses to find the Ice Shank. This completes the mission and you can now return back to the town.

• gharbad the weak

Group: 2
Level: 4

Reward: Two different magical items

Proceed down to level four of the dungeon and you encounter Gharbad, who is a goatboy. When you've spoken to him, leave the room and wait a moment before returning. The second time, he gives you a magical item. Now leave and return for a third time. When you do this he stalls, telling you he's almost finished making something great for you. Leave and then return for the final time. On this occasion, he explains the item made is too great for you or human kind. Kill him - it doesn't require a great deal of effort. He now drops the second item. Remember, every time you've finished talking to him, you must leave the area to trigger the next visit.

• the magic rock

Group: 3
Level: 5

Reward: The Empyrean Band
Attributes: All Attributes +2, Light Radius +20%, Fast Hit Recovery, Absorbs Half Trap Damage

Griswold the Blacksmith tells you of a magic rock and the history surrounding it. You need to descend to level five and the catacombs to find the rock. When scouring the area you need to look carefully to find it, but it should be somewhere on or near a small table. Collect the rock and head back to the town and Griswold. He then makes you a magic ring.

• armour of valor

Group: 3
Level: 5

Reward: Arkaine's Valor
Attributes: Armour Class 25, Vitality +10, Damage from Enemies -3, Fastest Hit Recovery

You need to go to level five and look for the large sealed room in the centre of the level. Enter through the two doors and kill the creatures roaming the area. You can now read the Book of Blood. Go to the next room and enter where the Pedestal of Blood is. On the floor nearby you find the Blood Stone. Pick this up and place it on the pedestal. This now opens a secret room. The pedestal can hold up to three of the Blood Stones you need to find. Enter the now-revealed secret room to find another stone. When you've placed this on the pedestal, it open another secret room, and this contains the third Blood Stone. When the final stone has been placed, the wall behind the pedestal opens and reveals a hoard of demon monsters. You now need to be ready with your weapon to kill them all, then you find Arkaine's magical armour in the chamber.

• halls of the blind

Group: 3
Level: 7

Reward: The Optic Amulet
Attributes: Light Radius +20%, Resistance to lightning +20% Damage from enemies -1 Magic +5

To read the Book of the Blind, you need to drop down to level seven of the dungeons. Once you have read it, two doorways open into what looks like empty rooms, but they're not. Inside you encounter some invisible creatures called Illusion Warriors. To defeat them, it's best to stand by the door and kill them one at a time as they try to leave the room. Another thing to do is throw a spell or two into the room. The best one to use is the Fire Wall as you can roast a few beasts in one go. Once they've all been wiped out, search the area to find the Optic Amulet.

• zhar the mad

Group: 4
Level: 8

Reward: Spell Book
Random Magical Item

In level eight of the catacombs is a library and inside you find Zhar studying. When you approach him, he doesn't want to be bothered by you, so he hands you a spell book and tell you to leave him alone. Leave and then return. This time he gets enraged and attacks you if you either try to talk to him or search his personal bookshelf. You need to be quick to react to him as his Teleport and Fireball spells prove a deadly duo. Try to attack from a distance to stand any chance. If you get too close and involved in tight combat, it proves to be your death. If you want to use spells against him, lightning is about the best one to use. Don't use your Fire spells as he's immune from them. Once you've won you're awarded a random magical item.

• the black mushroom

Group: 4
Level: 9

Reward: Spectral Elixir
Attributes: All Attributes +3 permanently

Descend to level nine of the dungeon and look for a book called the Fungul Tome. When you found it, bring it back to Adria the Witch. She then tells you to go back down to the ninth level and find a black mushroom from the mushroom patch. When this has been collected, head back to Adria and hand her the mushroom. She now advises you to talk to Pepin, who in turn asks you to find a demon's brain. Progress to the caves and kill one of the demons and collect his brain for Pepin. Take the brain back to Pepin and he places it in the elixir - take this to Adria the witch. When you go to give it to her, she no longer require it. Drink the elixir to add points to your attributes. Slightly long winded, but easy enough to complete.

• the anvil of fury

Group: 4
Level: 10

Reward: Griswold's Edge
Attributes: Fire Damage 1-10 Chance to Hit +25% Fast Attack Knocks Target Back Mana +20 Hit points -20

Head over to Griswold and he tells you of a mystical Anvil of Fury. The item in question can be found in the deep caves on a small island on level ten. Proceed out there and look for the Anvil. It's will be guarded by a small hoard of beasts. To kill these guys, use the Lightning spells or if you're the Rogue, use your longbow to do the damage. With everything defeated, collect the Anvil and head back to Griswold - he rewards you with Griswold's Edge.

• warlord of blood

Group: 5
Level: 13

Reward: Various Weapons and Armour

This is one of the most difficult quests in the game, so get loaded up with plenty of health potions and mana potions. Go to level 13 of the dungeons and look for the book called the Steel Tome. When you've found it, don't read it straight away or you release the Warlord and his army of minnows. Instead, go back to the village and talk to Cain. Now proceed back to level 13 and take your time defeating all the monsters in the area before reading the book. Once the section's free, read the book to unlock the Armoury. Upon entering you need to deal with the Blood Knights first this - gives you the ability to deal with the Warlord. To make matters worse, the Warlord is immune to Fire, Lightning and Magic, which makes things a lot harder if you're a Mage. The best spell to use is the Stone Curse. If, however, you're a Rogue or Warrior, use your more damaging weapons to defeat him. It's worth saving the game every so often to help if you die.

• Lachdanan

Group: 5
Level: 14

Reward: Veil of Steel
Attributes: Armour Class 18 Resistance to all +50% Light Radius -20% Armour +60% Mana -30 Strength and Vitality +15

To help in this quest, read about the tragic tale of Lachdanan in the History section at the front end of the game. Go to level 14 and seek him out. When you meet him, he tells you he's cursed and he wants you to help in freeing him. To do this, you need to head to level 15 and locate the Golden Elixir, but at the same time, you need to deal with the creatures roaming the chambers. Once the Elixir has been located, return back to the knight Lachdanan and use it to free him from his curse. In return he rewards you with the Veil of Steel.

• the chamber of bone

Group: X
Level: 6

Reward: Guardian Spell and Various Magical Items

When you get to level six of the catacombs, you need to read a mysterious tome. When you've done this, a previously sealed stairway opens. At the top of the stairs you enter into the Chamber of Bone. Just before you enter, be sure that you're equipped with plenty of mana and health potions. Once inside you come face to face with an army of undead warriors, so use spells that have the most effect on creatures like these, including the Fire Wall. When all have been defeated, you should be able to collect the book with the Guardian Spell in it. Now search the area to find extra items that help in future quests.



• archbishop Lasarus

Group: X
Level: 15

Reward: Various Magical Items

This guy is only second to Diablo, it's a serious quest. Head down to level 15 and you find a Vile Stand - the Staff of Lazarus lies on it. Collect the staff and proceed back to Cain the Elder. He tells you of the history behind it and advises you to go back. When you reach the level for a second time, a red new portal appears near a large pentagram on the floor. By walking into this you go to Lazarus's domain. You need to take on a horde of witches and demons protecting the area. If you stand on the circles on the floor, you're transported to other parts of the level. The final teleport circle takes you to Lazarus, near a sacrificial altar. He's flanked by his witch guardians. When he starts talking, head out of the room. When he stops talking a secret room adjacent to you appears, crammed full of witches. Stand near to the door and try to take each one out as they try to get through. It's also best to set up a Town Portal so you can get out quick if things become too much. Pick up all the magical items from the corpses and set about the Archbishop. Use Fire Wall and Stone Curse spells.

• diablo

Group: X
Level: 16

Reward: End of Game.

After restocking and repairing back in town, it's time to head back to level 15. Find the room with the pentagram in it, but this time it's glowing a strange colour. Before standing on the pentagram and being teleported to meet Diablo, make sure that your equipment has resistance to fire up to 75% max. When you teleport, you see the dungeon's split into four quadrants. The best tactic to use is to clear each area before progressing onto the next section. Don't flick any of the levers until you're ready, as doing this results in hordes more blood knights and hell horrors coming at you. Keep using the same tactics to clear all the areas and when you flick the final switch, this frees Diablo himself. If you approach him at a slow pace, he comes out to meet you in the final battle. This is the best way to tackle him, as charging in results in you coming under attack from his minnows and normally proves futile. The best thing to use against him is the Holy Bolt spell as this does the most damage. Be stocked up with plenty of mana and health potions, because it takes more than one series of attacks to kill him. Eventually you kill him and the game finishes with a great gush of blood shooting from the dead body.

weapons List

• SWORDS

	Damage or Armour	Durability	Requirements
Dagger	1-4	16	None
Sabre	1-8	45	17 strength
Short Sword	2-6	24	18 strength
Scimitar	3-7	28	23 strength, 23 dexterity
Blade	3-8	30	25 strength, 30 dexterity
Falchion	4-8	20	30 strength
Long Sword	2-10	40	30 strength, 30 dexterity
Claymore	1-12	36	35 strength
Broad Sword	4-12	50	40 strength
Bastard Sword	6-15	60	50 strength
Two Handed Sword	8-16	75	65 strength
Great Sword	10-20	100	75 strength

• BOWS

	Damage or Armour	Durability	Requirements
Short Bow	1-4	30	none
Long Bow	1-6	35	25 strength, 30 dexterity
Hunter's Bow	2-5	40	20 strength, 35 dexterity
Composite Bow	3-6	45	25 strength, 40 dexterity
Short Battle Bow	3-7	45	30 strength, 50 dexterity

Long Battle Bow	1-10	50	30 strength, 60 dexterity
Short War Bow	4-8	58	35 strength, 70 dexterity
Long War Bow	1-14	60	45 strength, 80 dexterity

• clubs, blunt weapons

	Damage or Armour	Durability	Requirements
Club	1-6	20	none
Spiked Club	3-6	20	18 strength
Mace	1-8	32	16 strength
Morning Star	1-10	40	26 strength
Flail	2-12	36	30 strength
War Hammer	5-9	50	40 strength
Maul	6-20	50	55 strength

• axes

	Damage or Armour	Durability	Requirements
Small Axe	2-10	24	none
Axe	4-12	32	22 strength
Large Axe	6-16	40	30 strength
Broad Axe	8-20	50	50 strength
Battle Axe	10-25	60	65 strength
Great Axe	12-30	75	80 strength

• staves

	Damage or Armour	Durability	Requirements
Short Staff	2-4	25	none
Long Staff	4-8	35	none
Composite Staff	5-10	45	none
War Staff	8-16	75	30 strength

• shields

	Damage or Armour	Durability	Requirements
Buckler	1-5	16	none
Small Shield	3-8	24	25 strength
Large Shield	5-10	32	40 strength
Kite Shield	8-15	40	50 strength
Gothic Shield	14-17	60	80 strength
Tower Shield	18-20	50	60 strength

• helms

	Damage or Armour	Durability	Requirements
Cap	1-3	15	none
Skull Cap	2-4	20	none
Helm	4-6	30	25 strength
Full Helm	6-8	35	35 strength
Crown	8-11	40	none
Great Helm	10-15	60	50 strength

• armour

	Damage or Armour	Durability	Requirements
Rags	2-6	6	none
Cape	1-5	12	none
Cloak	3-7	18	none
Robe	4-7	24	none
Quilted Armour	7-10	30	none
Leather Armour	10-13	45	none
Hard Leather Armour	11-14	40	none
Studded Leather	15-17	45	20 strength
Ring Mail	17-20	50	25 strength
Chain Mail	19-22	55	30 strength
Breast Plate	20-24	80	40 strength
Scale Mail	23-28	60	35 strength
Splint Mail	31-34	65	40 strength
Field Plate	40-45	80	65 strength
Plate Mail	46-50	75	60 strength
Gothic Plate	51-60	100	80 strength
Full Plate	63-75	90	90 strength

SHRINES

During your many quests, you get the opportunity to head to certain shrines and activate them. This places an enchantment on you that gives a special ability. Below is a list of the shrines and what each one has to offer. A quote is also spoken when you collect the enchantment, and these have been included in the list below.

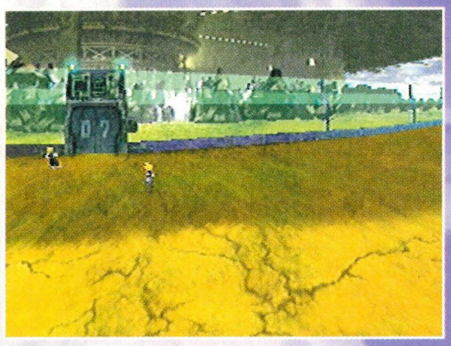
Name	Ability	Quote
Abandoned Shrine	+2 dexterity	The hands of men may be guided by faith
Blood Fountain	+1 life	No quote (each drink restores one life)
Cauldron	Random Effect	Random quote
Creepy Shrine	+2 strength	Strength is bolstered by heavenly faith
Cryptic Shrine	Casts Nova Spell	Arcane power brings destruction and restores mana
Divine Shrine	Restores health or mana and one full potion of rejuvenation or life	Drink and be Refreshed
Eerie Shrine	+2 magic	Knowledge and wisdom at the cost of self
Eldritch	All poisons become potions	Crimson and azure become like the sun rejuvenation
Enchanted Shrine	Lose one spell level for one spell, all spells gain one level	Magic is not always what it seems other
Fascinating Shrine	Lose mana, gain firebolt spell	Intensity comes at the cost of wisdom
Fountain of Tears	-1 to one attribute, +1 to another	No quote
Glimmering Shrine	Identifies all items in inventory	Mysteries are revealed in the light of reasons
Goat Shrine	Random effect	Related quote
Gloomy Shrine	-1 max damage to all weapons, +2 to armour items	Those who defend, seldom attack
Hidden Shrine	One item in inventory-10 durability, all others +10 durability	New strength is forged through destruction
Holy Shrine	Teleports you to a new section of the level	Where ever you go, there you are
Imposing Shrine	+2 dexterity	A surge of blood interrupts your thoughts
Magical Shrine	Casts mana shield	While the spirit is vigilant the body shines
Murkey Pool	Casts Infravision	No quote is given
Mystic Shrine	Lose all gold in inventory except one, gain experience points	Your skills increase, but at a price
Mysterious Shrine	+5 to one Attribute, -1 to others	Some are weakened while others grow
Ornate Shrine	Lose mana, gain Holy Bolt levels if not already maxed out at level 15	Salvation comes at a cost
Purifying Spring	Restores one mana point per drink	No quote given
Quiet Shrine	+2 to vitality	The essence of life flows from within
Religious Shrine	Restores all items to full durability	Time cannot diminish the power of steel
Sacred Shrine	Lose mana, gain levels of charged bolt	Energy comes at a cost of wisdom
Secluded Shrine	Gives map of current level	The way is made clear when viewed from above
Spiritual Shrine	Gives a small amount of gold for each open slot in your inventory	Riches abound when least expected
Spooky Shrine	All other players get hit points restored	Blessed by a benevolent companion
Stone Shrines	Restores charges in staves	The power of mana refocused renews
Tainted	User gets +1 stat, other players get -1 in all attributes	Those who are last, may be first
Thaumatology Shrine	Refills the chests on current level	What was once opened is now closed
Weird Shrine	+1 damage to all weapons in inventory	The sword of justice is quick and sharp

Player's Guide

final fantasy VII side areas

Apart from the epic journey Final Fantasy VII offers, there are also various side areas for you to explore and extra tasks to complete. Although it's not essential to tackle these extra tasks, they greatly improve your character's statistics and aid you in the Final confrontation against Sephiroth.

• the key to the city



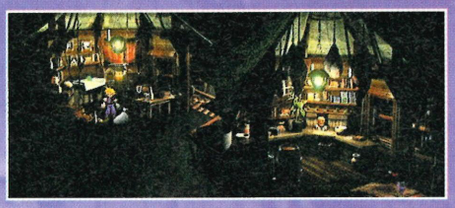


When on Disc Three, it's possible to get back into Midgar without using the parachute. If you visit the Number Seven gate late in the game, you find a guard stood outside who tells you he can't find his key. He then mentions he might have dropped it at an excavation site. Once he has told you this, head to the excavation site at Bone Village and tell the foreman that you're looking for 'normal treasure' then place your hired hands around the top area of the site and set the blast. In the morning, you find the key to Sector Five in the chest.

• the back room



When your team arrive at Cosmo Canyon for the first time, there's a section in the general store that has been roped off. If you return to Cosmo Canyon later on in the game and enter the general store, the rope has been removed, allowing you to walk around into the back room and collect the Elixir, Magic Source and the Full Cure Materia.



• sleeping old man

There is a cave directly east of Junon Harbour that can only be reached by using Highwind or with the aid of a Blue or Gold Chocobo. Inside the cave, there is a sleeping old man who tells you how many times your party has fought when you approach him. If you talk to the sleeping old man when the last two digits of your battle statistics match, he gives you a free gift.

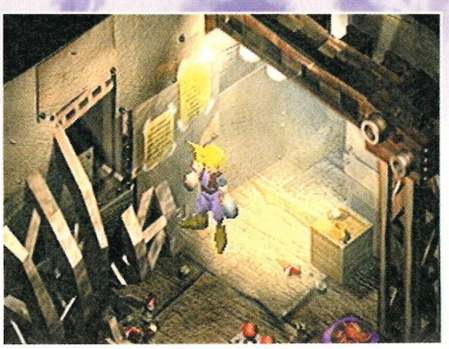


• turtle's paradise flyers

The Turtle's Paradise restaurant in Wutai is having a special contest. They have placed six flyers around the world, each of them advertising the Turtle's Paradise. The owner of the restaurant is offering a prize for anyone who can locate all six flyers, and here's where you can find them.

flyer #1

This can be found in the Slums of Sector Five. It's stuck to the wall upstairs in the boy's bedroom.



flyer #2

This second flyer is located in Shrina's HQ and can only be found during one of your two trips there. It's stuck to the notice board at the back of the first level lobby.

flyer #3

When you take a trip to the Gold Saucer, visit the Ghost Hotel and look inside the lobby; the third flyer is next to the Item Shop's entrance.

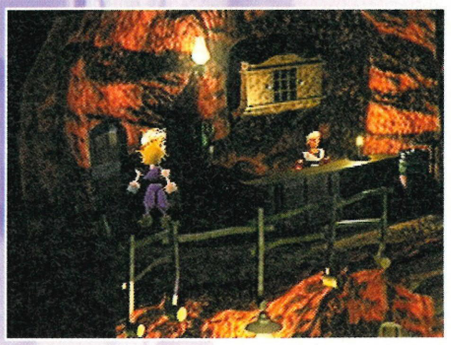
flyer #4

This fourth flyer is attached to the Tiger Lilly Arms shop in Cosmo Canyon. Follow the path that leads to Bugenhagen's house to get there.



flyer #5

Whilst in Cosmo Canyon, enter the Inn and walk up the stairs - the fifth flyer is pinned on the back wall.



flyer #6

The sixth flyer is located next to Turtle's Paradise in Yuffie's basement, it is on the wall outside the trap room.

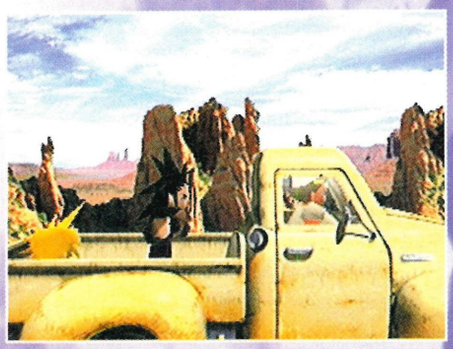
When you have all the six flyers, return to the Turtle's Paradise and talk to the man behind the bar. He gives you a Power Source, Guard Source, Magic Source, Mind Source, Speed Source, Luck Source and a Megalixir for your troubles.

• aLL Lucky 7s

If any of your party members hit points are reduced to 7777 during a battle, they receive the All Lucky 7s effect. Once a character has the All Lucky 7s effect, they go into a mad rage and attack all enemies non-stop, landing hits worth 7777 points each time. To achieve the All Lucky 7s effect, you must have a high level character with more than 7777 hit points and then during a battle, their hit points must be reduced to exactly 7777. If your characters do not have enough hit points, you can equip them with HP Plus Materia to help boost their points.

• cinema showing

When on the third disc, return to Shrina Mansion in Nibelheim and head for the library in the basement. When you enter, you see a special cinema showing which explains how Cloud decided to become a mercenary.



• the materia caves

There are four secret Materia Caves scattered around the world, each containing special Materia that you won't find anywhere else. The list below shows you the location of each cave, the Materia you find there and what means of transport you need to use in order to reach the cave.

materia cave #1 - knights of the round

This cave is located on the small island in the far north-east corner of the map and can only be reached with a Gold Chocobo.



materia cave #2 - quadra magic

This cave is on the northern tip of the set of islands located in the south-east corner of the map, and can only be reached with the aid of Highwind or a Blue or Gold Chocobo.

materia cave #3 - hp< >mp

This cave is located in the mountain range north of Mt Corel and can only be reached with a Green, Blue or Gold Chocobo.

materia cave #4 - mimic

This cave is located on the eastern desert peninsular on the island to the west and can only be reach with a Green or Gold Chocobo.



• ultimate weapons

Each character has a certain weapon that is considered to be their ultimate weapon. Although these ultimate weapons can deliver extremely heavy hits to enemies, any Materia used with the ultimate weapons will not be able to increase in level, so it is best to only use them with Materia that has already been mastered.

cloud: ultimate weapon

Cloud can only obtain his ultimate weapon by destroying the enemy Ultimate Weapon. When on Disc Three, you find the Ultimate Weapon hovering above a lake in the eastern continent.



barret: missing score

Barret's ultimate weapon can be found on the steps that lead up to the Sister Ray just before your party encounters Hojo.

tifa: premium heart

After collecting the key to Sector Five from the excavation site at Bone Village, return to Wall Market and check the broken vending machine again. This time it dispenses Tifa's ultimate weapon, the Premium Heart.



aeris: princess guard

While exploring the clock room in the Temple of the Ancients, search the IV hallway to uncover Aeris' ultimate weapon, the Princess Guard.

red xiii: limited moon

After taking Bugenhagen to the Ancient City, return to Cosmo Canyon with Red XIII in your party. When Red XIII finds Bugenhagen he walks away with his ultimate weapon, Limited Moon.



cait sith: hp shout

Cait Sith's ultimate weapon can be found during your second raid on Shrina's Headquarters. Once on the 64th floor, enter the health spa and look inside the locker on the left side of the third row.

yuffie: conformer

When you have the submarine and have located the crashed Gelnika just off the coast by the Gold Saucer, enter the generator room to find Yuffie's ultimate weapon, the Conformer.



cid: venus gospel

After the rocket has been launched from Rocket Town, repeatedly talk to the man in the Item Shop and he eventually gives the Venus Gospel.

vincent: death penalty

While playing Disc Two, acquire the submarine or a Gold Chocobo, then put Vincent in your party and enter Lucrecia's Cave, located behind the waterfall in the Nibel area. Revisit Lucrecia's Cave when playing Disc Three with Vincent in your party and he receives his ultimate weapon, the Death Penalty.



• Level four Limit breaks

cloud: omnislash

Fight in the Battle Arena at the Gold Saucer until you have gained 32,000 battle points. These points can then be exchanged at the Battle Arena for Omnislash Limit Break.

barret: catastrophe

Once Meteor has been summoned, revisit North Corel and talk to the lady in the middle house on the west side of town. She gives you Catastrophe for Barret's Limit Break.

tifa: final heaven

On reaching Nibelheim, take Tifa to her house and to the piano upstairs. Using the piano, you must play the song from Cloud's flashback at the Kalm Inn. Press the following button sequence to play the song:

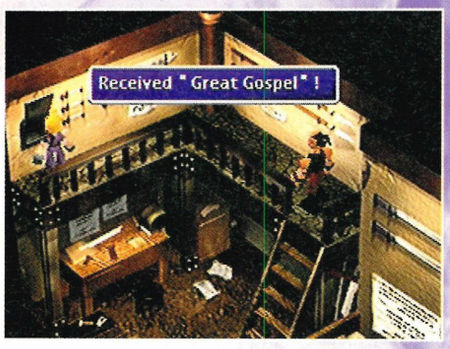
• X, Square, Triangle, R1/L1+Triangle, R1/L1+Square, Circle, Square, Triangle, R1/L1+X, Circle, X, Square, X.

Once you've finished the song, press Start; Tifa now finds the Final Heaven Limit Break inside the sheet music.

aeris: great gospel

Speak to the sleeping old man in the cave east of Junon Harbour when the last two digits of your battle statistics match (see Sleeping Old Man) and he gives you some Mythril. Take the Mythril and give it to the weapon seller (east of Gongaga Village) and he lets you look in one of his two boxes. Look in the small box on the first floor to receive Aeris' Great Gospel Limit Break.





red xiii: cosmo memory

To receive Red XIII's Cosmo Memory Limit Break, you must open the safe on the second floor of Shrina Mansion and defeat the Lost Number boss who appears.

yuffie: all creation

With Yuffie in your party, enter Wutai and visit the Pagoda. Yuffie must battle her way to the top of the Pagoda and defeat her father to receive her All Creation Limit Break.

cid: highwind

Once you have the submarine, visit the crashed Gelnika just off the shore by the Gold Saucer. Inside the cargo bay you find Cid's Highwind Limit Break.

vincent: chaos

After acquiring the submarine on Disc Two, put Vincent in your party and visit Lucrecia's Cave behind the waterfall in the Nibel area. Revisit the cave during Disc Three with Vincent in your party and he receives his Chaos Limit Break.

• ancient forest

The Ancient Forest is located to the east of Cosmo Canyon, but can only be accessed once you have defeated Ultimate Weapon or have bred a Gold Chocobo. The forest is a huge puzzle where you need to use creatures and insects to create a path through the forest in order to successfully collect the items from within.



insects

When an insect is placed in a Pitcher Flower, the flower temporarily shuts, creating a bridge or a step. Insects can also be used to lure frogs out from hollow trees, but once an insect has been used, it won't reappear until you leave the screen and then re-enter.

frogs

Frogs can be placed in Pitcher Flowers just like insects, although the frogs are not digested like insects. Instead, the frog jumps out after a few seconds, forcing the flower to open. If Cloud is stood on the flower when the frog bursts out, he is catapulted to areas he may not normally be able to reach.

beehives

Beehives are the only things that can be used to get Mutant Flytraps to close their jaws. Once a beehive has been thrown into a flytrap, the flytrap remains closed until you leave the area.

pitcher flowers

Pitcher Flowers can capture insects and frogs in their petals. While holding a victim, their lids can be used as a step or bridge to reach far-off areas.

mutant flytrap

Most of these flytraps can be avoided by walking around or jumping over them but there are a few that you need to close with the aid of a beehive in order to avoid injury.

stamen

These springy plants can be used to fling Cloud to different areas or higher ledges, and often provide the best way to get around an obstacle.

hollow trees

Each hollow tree contains a single frog that can only be lured out by using an insect.

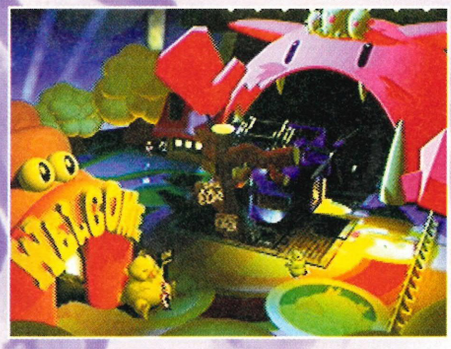
• fort condor battles



When fighting Fort Condor battles, it is essential to overpower the enemy as soon as possible rather than letting them come to you. Always move your troops out onto the battlefield once the battle has commenced. If you're quick enough, you can bring the enemy advance to a halt before their Commander gets the chance to begin his attack.

• the gold saucer

gil exchange



As you continually visit the Gold Saucer, you notice a man who occasionally appears by the side of the house at the Gold Saucer's Ropeway station. If you approach and talk to him, he offers to exchange Gil for GP at an extortionate rate of 100 to 1.

gp exchange



The GP you acquire at the Gold Saucer and in Wonder Square can be exchanged with the girl near the entrance to Wonder Square for various prizes. The prizes are as follows:

GP	Prize
1	Potion
20	Ether
80	X-Potion
100	Turbo Ether
300	Gold Ticket
500	Carob Nut
1000	Gil Plus Materia
2000	EXP Plus Materia

● Battle Arena

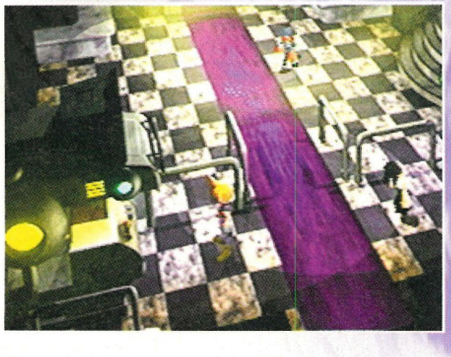


At the Battle Arena, one of your party members can participate in a series of battles against various creatures in order to win Battle Points, which can then be exchanged for valuable prizes. The cost to enter the arena is only 10 GP and there is very little risk involved as you don't lose a life if defeated.

Once you've chosen a fighter, they enter the arena and fight a total of eight random battles, providing they are not defeated. After each battle, a single reel slot machine spins, which you must then stop to determine the handicap or bonus your fighter gets. Each time your fighter receives a handicap, it is carried over to the next battle.

The amount of GP won for each battle increases with battles, so the more battles you can win, the more GP you receive. It's not always advisable to try and win all eight battles, especially if your fighter is beginning to struggle. Simply exit the arena after a battle then restore your fighter before re-entering the arena.

● Battle Points Exchange



Once you have gained a decent amount of Battle Points from the Battle Arena, you can exchange them for an item from one of the two machines near the entrance to the Arena. The more Battle Points you have, the better the item you can collect.

Battle Points	Item
100	Remedy
250	Enemy Lure
500	Right Arm
1000	Pre-Emptive
2000	Regan Greens
4000	Speed Plus
8000	Stardust
16000	Championship Belt
32000	Omnislash
64000	W-Summon

● Chocobos

Chocobos are friendly creatures that can be kept as pets or used for transport across the various terrain of the world map. After acquiring Highwind, you can breed your own Chocobos, and with the right mating techniques you can breed special Chocobos that allow you to travel to the various areas of the map, including the four Materia Caves, that are not accessible by any other means of transport.

● Catching a Chocobo



Before you catch a Chocobo, there are two items that you need from Choco Billy's Ranch. The first is the Chocobo Lure Materia, which you should have collected from one of the Chocobos stood in the pen outside the ranch the first time you visited. The second item you need are Greens. These can be brought from Choco Billy himself. Once you have both of these and have equipped one of your party members with the Chocobo Lure Materia, it's time to find some Chocobo tracks.



As you should already know by now, Chocobos only appear once one of your party members has been equipped with the Chocobo Lure Materia and while battle takes place near some Chocobo tracks. Even then it's not guaranteed that a Chocobo appears.

There are seven different areas where Chocobo tracks can be found. The list below shows where the tracks are located and the type of Chocobo appearing in that area. Each area generally has two different types of Chocobo appearing at random.

Area	Type
Chocobo Ranch	Poor, Weak
Junon Area	Fair, Poor
Gold Saucer Area	Good, Average
Rocket Town Area	Mediocre
Wutai Area	Average, Fair
Icicle Inn Area	Wonderful, Weak
Mideel Area	Great, Fair

Once you've located some Chocobo tracks and a battle with a Chocobo has begun, the first thing you must do is to throw some Greens at the Chocobo. While he eats, you must destroy all the enemies without injuring the Chocobo. If you hit a Chocobo during a battle, it attacks each character on the screen, including the enemy, before running off.

After winning a battle and catching a Chocobo, it's time to send it to Choco Billy's Ranch. Each time you dismount a Chocobo, you're asked if you want to sent it back to the ranch or if you wish to let it go. If you order a Chocobo to return to the ranch, it heads straight there and waits in the pen for your arrival. The size of the pen allows you to catch a maximum of four Chocobos before you need to return to the ranch for Billy's assessment.

Chocobos can only be moved from the pen and into the barn once you've talked to Choco Bill, who's located in the house at the ranch, and arranged to rent a stall from him. You need at least three stalls if you're going to breed Chocobos, possibly more if you can afford it.

● types of Chocobos

When moving Chocobos from the pen and into the barn, Billy will give you his assessment of each Chocobo. You must use his assessment to decide which Chocobos you're going to use to mate and which ones you are going to release.

Each Chocobo's abilities and class can be increased, but because their type never changes, they can only advance so far. This is why it is important to make sure you've got the right Chocobo before you start breeding, or you just waste time and money.

Chocobo Types	Choco Billy's Assessment
Wonderful	"This... is a wonderful Chocobo!"
Great	"This is a great Chocobo"
Good	"Mmm, this seems like a good Chocobo"
Fair	"Mmm, this ones not bad"
Average	"This is a pretty average Chocobo"
Mediocre	"This Chocobo's so-so"
Poor	"This one doesn't seem to be very good"
Weak	"I really can't recommend this one"

● feeding a Chocobo

Feeding is another important part of breeding and raising your Chocobo successfully. All Chocobos are fed Greens which improves their racing abilities and their chances of winning.

The Greens you need to feed your Chocobos can be purchased from Choco Billy or the Chocobo Sage (see Chocobo Sage), and all vary in price according to quality. The list below show which Greens have what effect, where to find them and how much they cost.

Green	+Speed	+Intelligence	+Stamina	Location	Price (Gil)
Gysahl	No	No	Yes	Bill's	100
Krakka	No	Yes	No	Bill's	250
Tantal	Yes	Yes	Yes	Bill's	400
Pahsana		No	No	Bill's	800
Curiel	Yes	No	Yes	Bill's	1000
Mimett	Yes	No	Yes	Bill's	1500
Reagen	Yes	No	Yes	Sage's	3000
Sylkis	Yes	Yes	Yes	Sage's	5000

You must continually feed your Chocobo until you're told 'there's no improvement'; this means you've increased that Chocobo's abilities to the maximum and that they are now ready to race.

Here's how your Chocobo's abilities effect it's performance on the race track:

Ability	Effect
Speed	Makes the Chocobo run faster
Intelligence	Makes the Chocobo pace itself better
Stamina	Allows you to push the Chocobo harder
Attitude	Makes the Chocobo behave better

● Racing a Chocobo

Chocobos are raced to improve their classes, which is not an essential requirement for breeding Chocobos but will greatly increase your chances of breeding a special Chocobo.

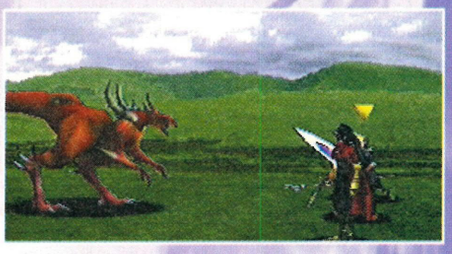
Your Chocobo must win at least three races, either long or short, before they're moved up to the next class. When your Chocobo manages to move up to a new class, it races against stronger and faster Chocobos than before. This is why it's important to maximise your Chocobo's abilities before they leave the ranch, otherwise they struggle to win races each time they are moved up a class.

While racing in Manual mode, press and hold L1, L2, R1 and R2. This slowly increases your Chocobo's energy bar and allows you extra bursts of speed.

● Chocobo Classes

There are four classes of Chocobo which range from 'C', 'B', 'A' and 'S'. All Chocobos begin at 'C' class and can be gradually increased if they've been fed the correct Greens and win enough races.

● Mating Chocobos



When mating Chocobos, you need to use certain types of nuts in order to breed the Chocobo you desire. Choco Billy and the Chocobo Sage both sell nuts, but not the kind you need to breed a special Chocobo. These nuts are the Carob Nut and the Zeio Nut. The Carob Nut can be purchased for 500 GP from the GP Exchange at the Gold Saucer, but this can be a costly and lengthy process.



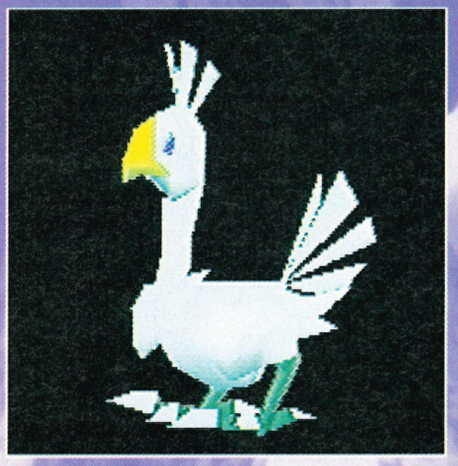
The Carob Nut and Zeio Nut are both carried by enemy creatures, and are best acquired by stealing them from these creatures during a battle. Carob Nuts can be stolen from Vlakorados, which are found in the Bone Village area, while Zeio Nuts can be stolen from the Goblins that roam the forest on the small island located to the south-east of the Chocobo Sage's house.

● Special Chocobos

Green
These Chocobos are known as Mountain Chocobos as they can be used to travel across mountains. They are bred by mating Good or Great Chocobos, with the aid of a Carob nut.



Blue
These Chocobos are known as River Chocobos as they can travel across rivers and other sections of shallow water. They are bred by mating Good or Great Chocobos, using a Carob nut.



Black
These Chocobos are a cross between a Mountain and a River Chocobo and they can travel across mountains and rivers. They are bred by mating a Green and Blue Chocobo, using a Carob nut.

Gold
These are the ultimate in Chocobos as they can travel across mountains, rivers and the ocean, allowing them to travel anywhere in the world. They are bred by mating a Black Chocobo with a Wonderful Chocobo, using a Zeio nut.

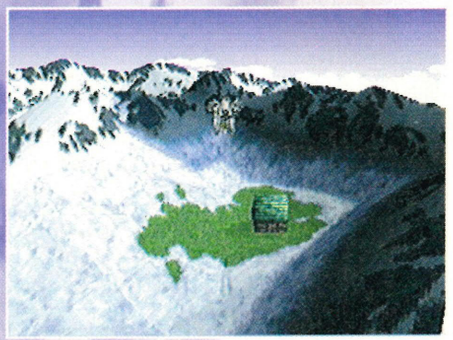
● Chocobo Sage

The Chocobo Sage lives a house located in the centre of the northern island, which can only be reached with the aid of Highwind or a Special Chocobo. He sells good quality Greens and nuts that aren't available from Choco Billy, although they're a bit more expensive. The Chocobo Sage also gradually gives you information about raising Special Chocobos, depending on how well you're raising your own Chocobos.





If you visit Chole, Choco Billy's assistant, after the Chocobo Sage has given you some information on breeding Chocobos, she makes notes that allow you to recall everything the Sage has told you.





the triumphant ones

ISSUE 3

PSYGNOSIS PLATIUM COMPETITION

WINNER
Mark Slade, Hampshire

RUNERS-UP
James Mason, Hove
Andrew Lacey, Guernsey
Mrs J. Dodd, NR Wrexham
Harry Herd, East Yorkshire

SECOND PRIZE
James Pullman, London

THIRD
Mike Allison, Aberdeen

RUNNERS-UP
Paul Shotton, Stoke-On-Trent
Jon White, Cornwall
Ms. Irene Taylor, North Lincs
Jonathan Jonas, Leicester
Phil Daniels, South Darenth
Lee Adams, Sheffield
Blake Dixon, Sheffield
Lewis MacDonald, Melrose
Kevin Newton, Norfolk
Mark Bailey, Leeds
Karl Taylor, Exeter
Robert Donaldson, Stirlingshire
Mark Perry, Brixham
Ken Deane, Herts
Kevin Forster, Leicester
Mr K. Banks, Puckeridge
Sharon Burchell, Erith
D Healey, Bury
Mr T. Williams, Mid Glam
Warren Quinn, Galway
George Reeves, Sutton In Ash
Mr. M. Turner, West Midlands
Derek Swan, Northhumberland
Mr S. Trickett, Deeside
Jamie Woodbridge, Ayrshire

ISSUE 4

GOOD OLD MURRAY COMPETITION

WINNERS
Joe Hemmings, Glasgow
Sarah Kirby, Telford

SNOW RACER 98 COMPETITION

WINNER
Kimberley McCubbin, Dalbeattie

FOOTBALL GOING'S FRENCH

Kevin Newton, Norfolk



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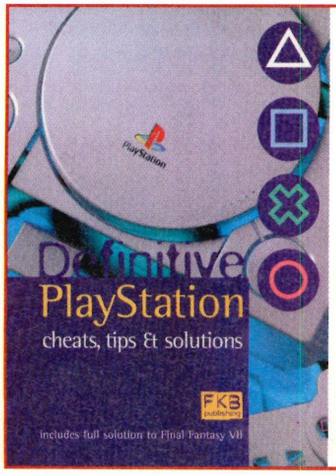
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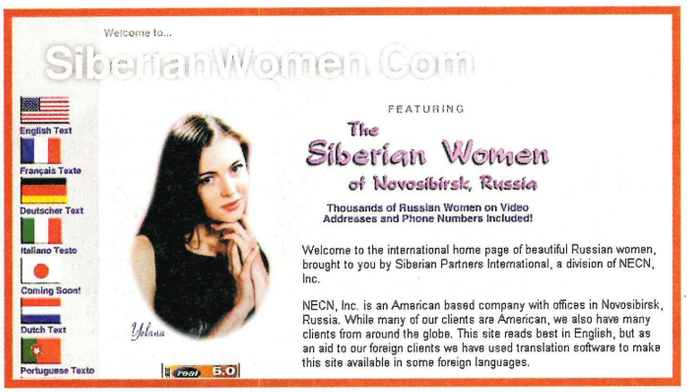
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EXTRAS

HERE WE GO AGAIN, WITH ANOTHER ROUND-UP OF ODDS AND ENDS WHICH HAVE PRECIOUS LITTLE TO DO WITH THE PLAYSTATION, BUT ARE INTERESTING ANYWAY - WITH THE POSSIBLE EXCEPTION OF THAT GOD-AWFUL BISCUIT...

GET MARRIED ON LINE



A bit lacking in the trouser department? Heart races when you're around women? Feeling left on the shelf? Well, if your favourite pastime is ice block pushing, sweat no more because Siberian Partners International are here to fix you up with a top Russian bird.

Their web-site (www.siberianwomen.com) is jam-packed with girls who are all after a bit of western man (and passport, no doubt), and it's as simple as picking one you like the look of. Well, almost. The website is just a small selection of the women on offer, and to actually meet one you have to order the videos and select the woman of your dreams. Once you've decided, Siberian Partners set you up with an e-mail correspondence or even a real physical visit, although leaving the comfort of your bedroom may be a little tough for the type of person who actually uses this site.

Anyway, Sounds too good to be true doesn't it? You'd be right, because all this doesn't come cheap, and do you really think Natacha the Ballet Dancer is going to stay by your side once she's got that green card? Well probably, but you won't want her after she's invited her 50-strong extended family to leave Russia and join you in your two-up, two-down.



'My trip to Novobirsk was wonderful. Lilia and the office staff took care of everything. They picked me up at the airport, had a great flat waiting for me to stay in, and of course helped me to meet Svetlana. She was more beautiful in person than on the videos. When I go back to Novosibirsk next time, it will be to marry Svetlana'.

'I have travelled the world and I can honestly say I have never seen a collection of beautiful girls that are more stunning, freindly and approachable as the ones on your videos. Thanks for this opportunity'.

Must be true then.

MUSIC

Cream Resident, Perfecto boss and all round DJ supremo **PAUL OAKENFOLD** is set to have his latest live mix released on the top **GLOBAL UNDERGROUND** series this June. Paul Oakenfold in NEW YORK offers two CDs'-worth of fine dancefloor fodder and head-gear ranging from a dose of cool house to a bit of drum 'n' bass, mixed in with his trademark trance/euro sound. Paul's mix provides the perfect summer vibe making this essential for fans of his style... A little less summer but every bit as essential is **COLIN DALE presents MUTANT: DISCO**, on HARMLESS records. The CD includes some of the best deep & funky house & techno this side of Roland inventing the 909, with tracks from **Luke Slater, Jeff Mills, Paperclip People, I:Cube and Fix** (with the superb Flash). Connoisseurs of this sound are in for a treat; it's out already... On a completely different tip, but also on Harmless records is **NORMAN JAY presents PHILADELPHIA**. Norman often hailed as 'the peoples DJ' lays down a selection of his smoothest Philadelphia Soul. Everything on the CD was recorded between 1973 and 1981 by the likes of **M.F.S.B, THE O'JAYS and THE JACKSONS**. Okay, so these groups may not mean a lot to you, but no matter what you're into, these classic tunes are going to leave a huge smile on your face... If you go about as far away as you can get from classic Philly soul, then times it by ten you'd be somewhere in the area of **BONKERS 4**, the latest edition in **REACT**'s popular hardcore series. DJ's **DOUGAL** and **HIXXY** provide the mix honours on this 2CD package with the likes of **Brisk, DJ Fury** and **Marc Smith** making an appearance on the track listing which is full to the brim with absolutely Bonkers happy hardcore, mate... Finally, another Harmless compilation entitled **LOFTGROOVER presents SPEEDCORE**. 'Play hard or die' is DJ Loftgroover's motto and one listen to this double CD will back him up completely. Forget punk, heavy metal and thrash because this is the fastest, nastiest and most extreme form of music (!?) we've ever heard. The average 250bpm tracks include titles like 'I Am Living Death' by **Jack Lucifer** and 'God Won't Save You' by, get this, **Shit Spitter**. Hmm. Don't have nightmares; bye.



• Here's the five lucky winners of Issue Four's High Octane Competition:
Warren Quinn, Galway Ireland
David Haines, Cheltenham
Mark Perry, Devon
George Reeves, Notts
Sally Greenway, Portsmouth

BANDAI STAR TREK FIGURES



Bandai, the people who brought you Power Rangers, Beetle Borgs and Tamagotchi, are to release a series of sets of figures based on Star Trek figures.

The fully-articulated figures stand 15cm tall. The first set, shown here, features a fencing Jean-Luc Picard, Riker with a phaser rifle action, Worf with his Klingon sword, a cybernetic Borg and Q, who also fences (not shown). These should be in the shops now. The second set of figures, available July, covers Deep Space 9 characters, with December's third wave featuring the original series' Kirk, Spock, Uhura, Chekov and Sulu.

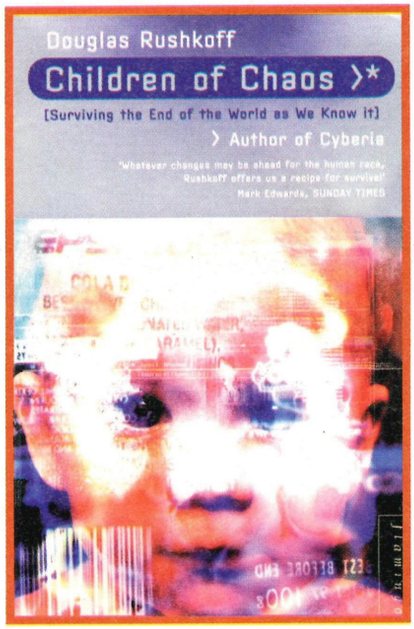
Each Star Trek Action Figure costs £10.99. As Spock might say, 'Fascinating'.

BISCUIT



Sainsbury's are going World Cup cash-in crazy - even their microwave meals are now labelled 'Ideal extra time snack'. One of their tackier tie-ins are these honey biscuits overlaid with the England logo printed on edible paper. They're 49p each, which is about the same as an entire packet of proper biscuits, and taste like old cardboard.

BOOK



As global culture becomes more and more information-saturated and impossibly complex, the traditional structures that society has been built on are becoming far less clear-cut than they were for our baby-boomer parents. The sheer volume of disparate ideas, concepts and ideologies available to an individual through multiple TV channels, the internet, computer games and the whole wide range of brand-new data-carrying media have made the straightforward moral templates and belief systems which older generations found adequate to be fundamentally incapable of coping.

The need to process information from multiple sources simultaneously is the skill that Stephen Rushkoff reckons sets the young (or 'screenagers') apart from their parents, who cannot deal with the seemingly random turbulence of discontinuous thought and cultural stimuli that their children merely 'surf' over, skimming the information in an active process rather than merely absorbing spoon-fed entertainment or processed data. Frightening signs of societal breakdown and cultural homogenisation they see as symptomatic of a lack of 'morals' are really the birth-throes of a new culture that embraces the chaos of modern living rather than trying to tame it.

The wide girth of Rushkoff's analyticalscope is remarkable, drawing links between fractilinear phenomena and the Rodney King tape, explaining the semiotics of kids' favourite non-toy, Slime, unearthing the pseudo-Freudian undertones of snow and skateboarding and making clear the boundless techno-optimism and positive futurist values of the Power Rangers. Recurring motifs include the breakdown of linear modes of thought and perception, and the inevitable crumbling of hierarchical systems of power and social organisation in the face of an exponential explosion in the amount of new thought that an individual has to take in, assess, and make some sense of. Relentlessly illuminating , this book makes clear how even the most frivolous and self-satisfying things we do for fun or fashion are really unconscious reactions to the wider angst of society, and throws the seemingly lame-brained popular culture that we're all a part of into a new floodlight.

FLIX

The latest release from Manga Video is called Psychic Wars. The film starts with the brilliant surgeon Ukyo Retsu performing an operation to remove a cancerous growth on an old woman. The operation at first seems to be a success, but it's later discovered the cancer turns out to be a 5,000-year-old demon, a dark messenger from Japan's ancient past, when demons ruled the world and killed men who opposed.

Ukyo travels to the hidden remains of the ancient city. From here he travels back in time to find the demons and stop them opening the gateway into modern society in their attempt to rule the world again.

The film has a rather interesting twist near the end. It's an '18' certificate due to the violent and sexual scenes, though these are not strong compared to other Manga films.

Also this month we got the chance to see brilliant Ghost in the Shell. Without a doubt, this is one of the best films ever done in the Manga style and is crammed full of excellent music and action. Even though the film's been out for a little while, it's still the one to have in your Manga collection.

Coalition, distributors for the Manga Video in the UK, have given us five copies of Psychic Wars and Ghost in the Shell to give away. To get your hands on one of these five sets of top Manga action, answer this simple question:

Name the psychic that used to appear on the National Lottery.

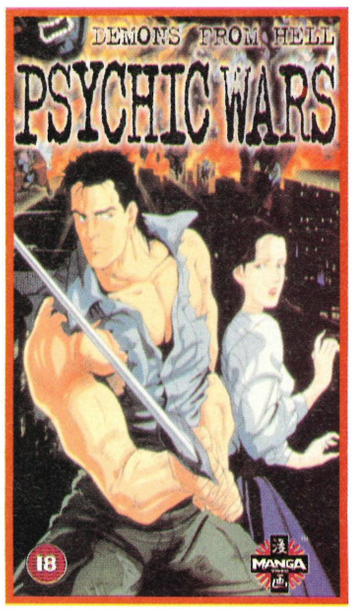
A. Mystic Peg
B. Sadistic Meg
C. Mystic Meg
D. Syphilitic Smeg

Answers on a postcard to Burn The Witch Compo at the competition address. You must state you're over 18. Entries received after the 19th June will be torn up like a losing Lottery ticket.

• Remember you must be over 18 to enter the compo. IT IS ILLEGAL TO FALSIFY YOUR AGE.

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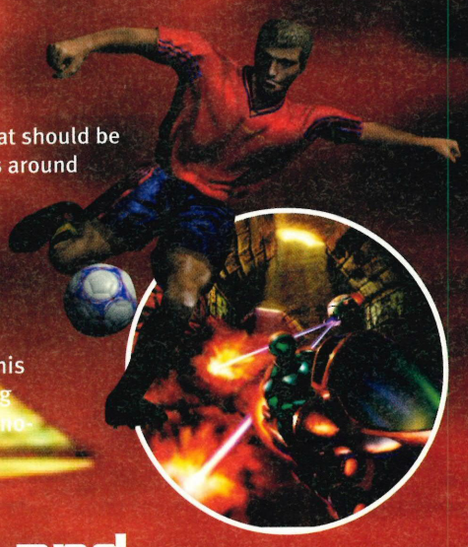
ISSUE SEVEN

E3

We're not going to Atlanta to attend the big boy of games conventions, E3. Nonetheless, we'll bitterly give you a full and comprehensive rundown of what was there (hopefully including details on the return of a certain well-endowed adventuress).

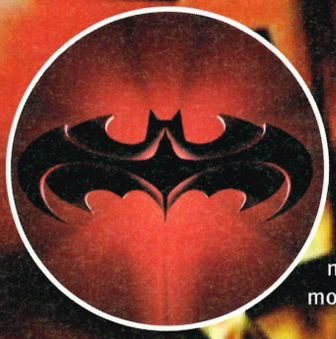
World Cup '98

There's even more soccer action with EA's new footy sim that should be out just in time for the World Cup, and might even run rings around all the titles in this month's supplement. A potential Man of the Match, Brian?



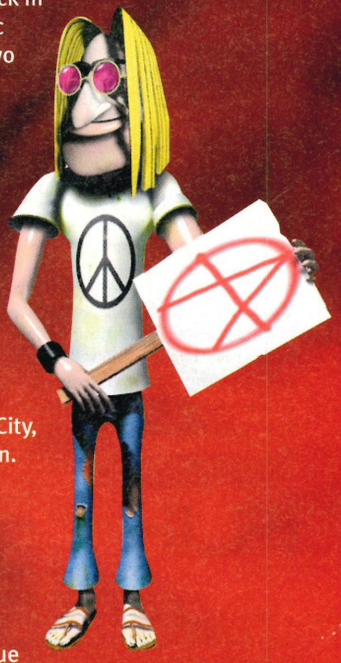
Forsaken

A futuristic 3D shoot-em-up from the house of Acclaim, this game threatens to have jaw-dropping visuals and lighting effects to accompany the mayhem. Expect a full-on take-no-prisoners preview.



Batman and Robin

Dinna dinna dinna dinna... The Dark Knight comes to the PlayStation, albeit with his annoying homoerotic sidekick in tow. Will it be as good as the moody graphic novel, or an awful cheese-fest like the last two movies? Wait and see...



Super Cross

The glamorous world of off-road scrambler bikes makes a noisy and rib-cracking showing in July's issue, so get ready to hose the mud off your helmet .



Constructor

From Acclaim comes this close cousin of Sim City, which lets you find the cowboy builder within. Expect a full review and plenty of whistled sexist comments.

Spice World

Last and very probably least, next issue heralds the arrival of the suspiciously long-delayed game based on the antics of the Spice Girls. Will it revolve around guessing Geri's age, or better still, be Guncon compatible?

Also Reviewed

Blast Radius, Sentinel Returns, adidas Power Soccer 98, Atari Greatest Hits 2, Tommi Makinen WRC, Blasto and many more.

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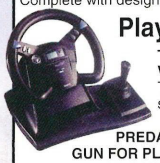


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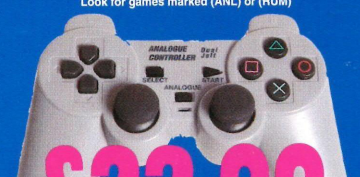


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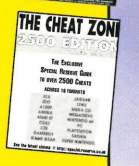
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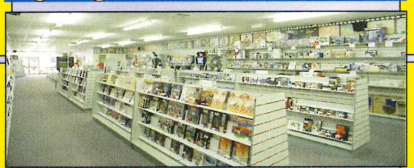
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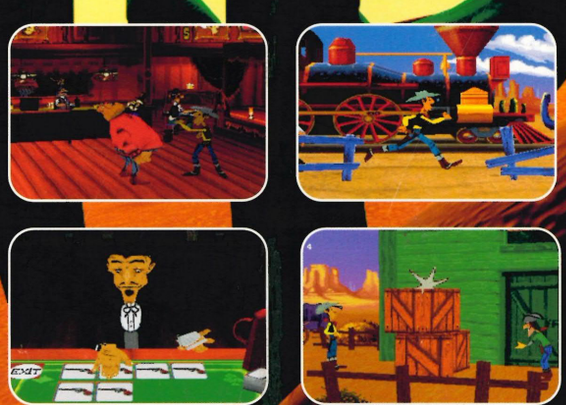
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