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ISSUE 9 September 98

MORTAL KOMBAT 4

UK EXCLUSIVE REVIEW

FIRST UK VERSION REVIEWED

ED HUNTER



EXCLUSIVE PREVIEW

IRON MAIDEN-INSPIRED LIGHT GUN ACTION



THE FIFTH ELEMENT

UK EXCLUSIVE REVIEW

SEXY AS LEELOO?

Wild 9
Platforming perfection?

San Francisco Rush
Driving with a difference

WWF Warzone
Bone-bending mayhem

R-Types
Retro raves from the grave

ISS Pro '98
Konami's soccer sensation

Azure Dreams
RPG and town planning?

RATED
MORTAL KOMBAT 4
V-BALL
AZURE DREAMS
PET IN TV
FIFTH ELEMENT
R-TYPES
WWF WARZONE
WILD 9
ISS PRO '98
SAN FRANCISCO RUSH
PAX CORPUS
VERSAILLES

PLATINUM
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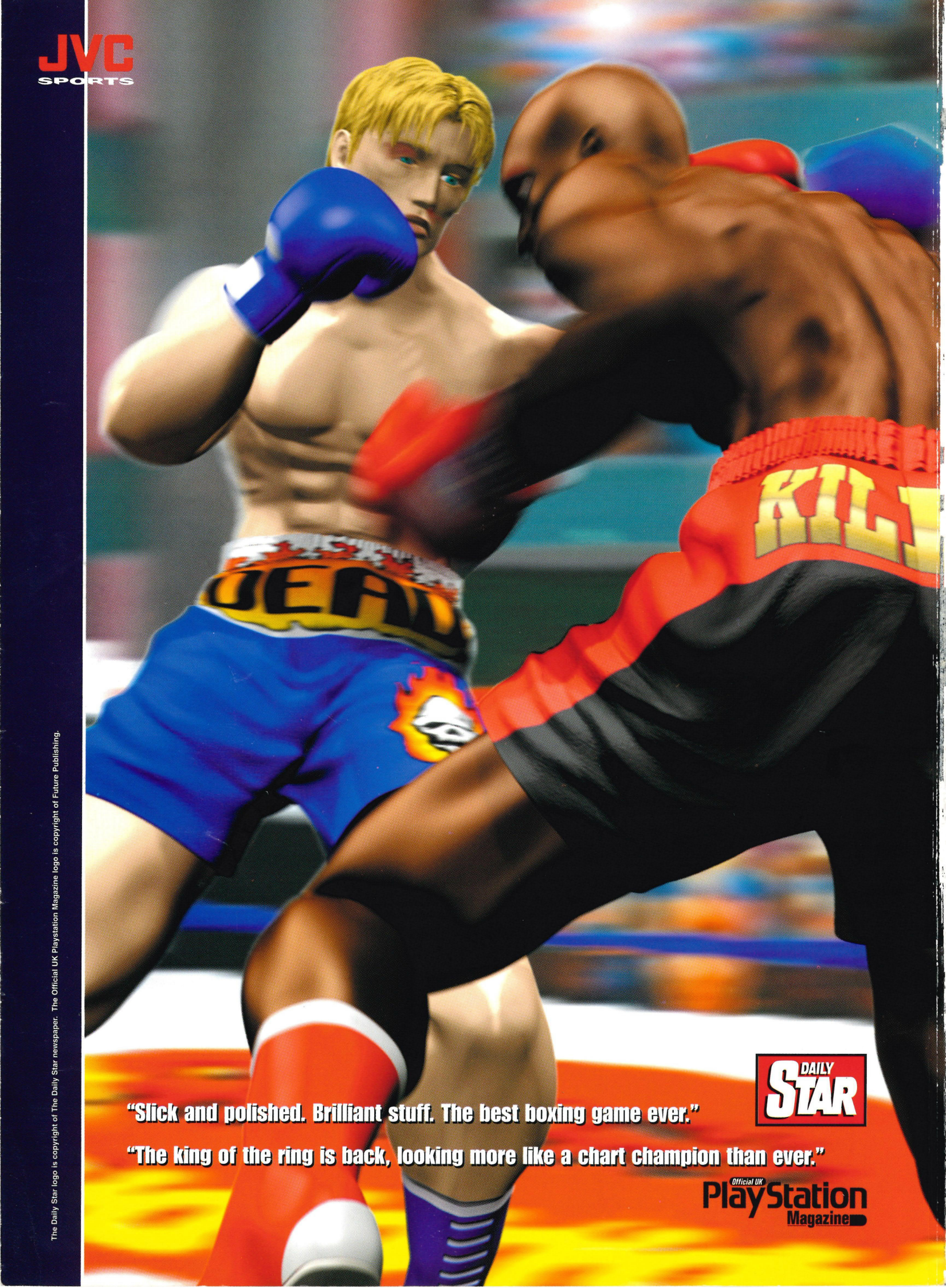
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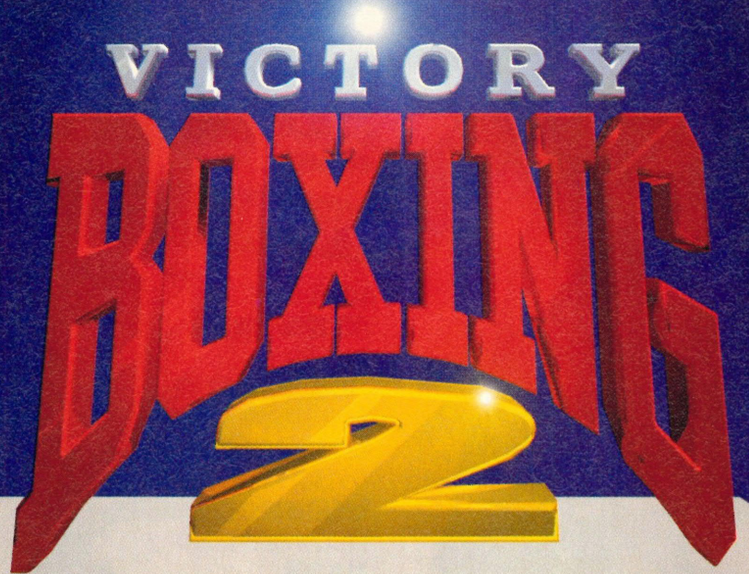
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PlayStation

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now you can feel a good bEAting



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Wild 9

Interplay's pulsating platformer, developed by games legends Shiny Entertainment, is a real corker. Packed with perplexing puzzles, malevolent monsters and dazzling devices, this secrets-heavy offering puts the emphasis on brains AND brawn.



Fifth Element

Exclusive review of Sony's top film license. Can Leeloo and Korben save the world? Can Bruce Willis make another action film before the rest of his hair falls out? Can you stop drooling over our gorgeous Leeloo pics long enough to read the review? Turn to Page 54 and find out...



11 TO[illegible] GAMES BLOWN WI[illegible]N!

extreme Solutions

VOLUME 1

200 PAGES OF COMPLETE SOLUTIONS

TOMB RAIDER II
RESIDENT EVIL 2
TEKKEN III
FINAL FANTASY VII
WARHAMMER: DARK OMEN
DEATHTRAP DUNGEON
CASTLEVANIA X
NIGHTMARE CREATURES
CRASH BANDICOOT 2
KLONOA
PANDEMONIUM 2

SOLUTIONS SPECTACULAR!

In case you hadn't noticed, there's a 200-page solutions book free with this month's mag. extreme Solutions Volume 1 features complete solutions to Tomb Raider II, Tekken 3, Final Fantasy VII, Crash Bandicoot 2 and more.

If Solutions Volume 1 is to your liking, stay tuned for the inevitable second volume in the series, coming soon.

nts

Editorial

First of all, apologies for the late arrival of last month's issue. This was caused by gremlins at the printing works. Worth the wait, though, wasn't it? The Power Tips Cards, designed to fit snugly into your game box and be on hand every time you play, went down a storm - we'll be offering more in the future. This month we've another great gift, a 200-page solutions book featuring the best PSX games. If you're stuck in any of the 11 games featured in our block-busting book, the answer to your problems are there. Look out for extreme Solutions Volume 2 sometime in the near future.

That's all for now - enjoy the issue, and come back for more next month.

Ian

How we rate the games...

90-100%
A near-perfect classic; outstanding example of its genre.

80-89%
Not quite top-of-the-league, but great fun nonetheless.

70-79%
Still not a bad game, but considerable room for improvement.

60-69%
Significant flaws creeping in - think carefully before buying.

50-59%
Decidedly average - nothing to write home about.

30-49%
Hardly any fun to be had here. Definitely not worth buying.

0-29%
Disastrous - you won't want to play it twice.

MORTAL KOMBAT 4

This near-perfect arcade conversion takes the Mortal Kombat series into the realms of 3D, with incredible success. Midway wisely returned to the game's roots, retaining fewer finishing moves and beefing up the gameplay instead. We're delighted!



Joke of the month:
A new Bill Clinton home computer has been launched. It has a six-inch hard drive but no memory.

GAME GUIDE

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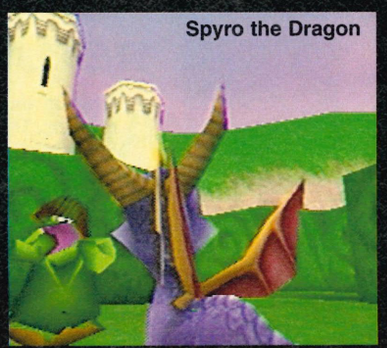
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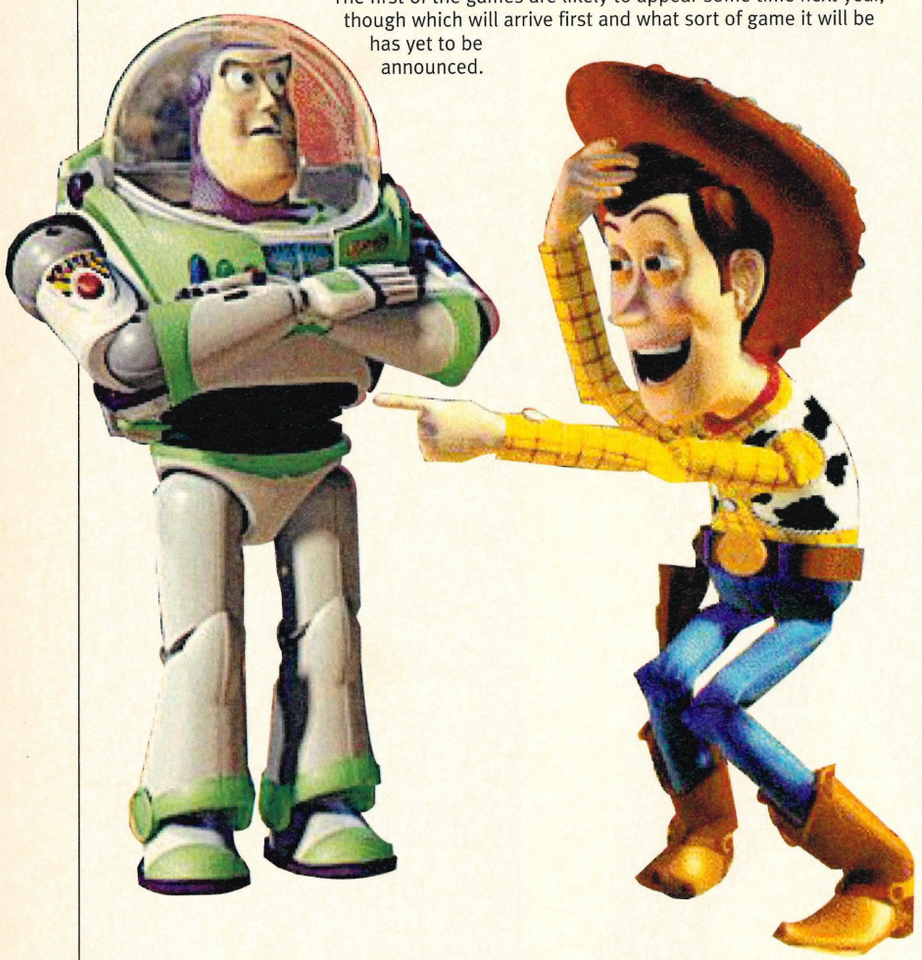


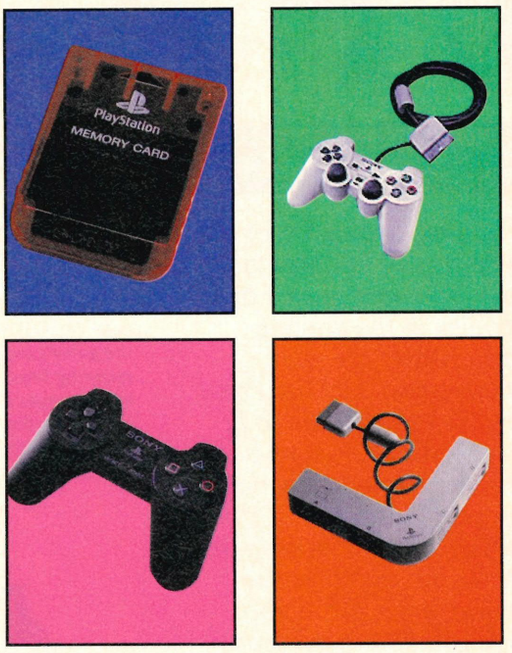
Spyro the Dragon

ACTIVISION ENTER THE MAGIC KINGDOM

Activision have bought the rights to publish video games based on six top Disney titles. Three of the games will be based on forthcoming Disney films including Toy Story 2, while three are to be licensed from classic Disney animations from the past. At the time of writing, only Toy Story 2 is confirmed.

The first of the games are likely to appear some time next year, though which will arrive first and what sort of game it will be has yet to be announced.





SONY PERIPHERAL PRICE PLUNGE

Sony have dropped the price of many leading PlayStation peripherals in the run-up to Christmas. Several acclaimed items have been discounted by up to 35%, a huge saving.

The Multi Tap, an essential piece of kit if you want to play games in four-player mode, is reduced from £32.99 to £19.99. The Dual Shock Controller, featuring twin analogue sticks and force feedback, falls from £24.99 to £19.99 and standard controllers from £17.99 to £9.99. Memory cards are now £9.99, lowered from £14.99.

Sony were once the most successful peripherals manufacturer in video games, but recently have seen their market share eroded by third party manufacturers who match them on quality but beat them on price, most notably Joytech. This price drop could see them in the lead once more.

"The PlayStation's success has been great news for everyone", said Sony's marketing director Alan Welsman. "The better we do, the more empowered we are to pass on our success to our customers".



RETURN OF THE SPACE INVADERS...



Activision are to produce a 32-bit update of the game which launched the video games craze, Space Invaders. The 1978 Taito coin-op saw the player defending the Earth from roving aliens, who moved in formation from right to left across the screen, moving down when they reached the sides. The player operated a base from which he shot at the critters and their saucers, which occasionally flew overhead. He had three controls to master - Left, Right and Fire. No news about how the game will be updated for the late 90s are available - it could even be 3D. However, Activision seem likely to offer the original game alongside the update.

"Space Invaders and Asteroids pioneered the arcade industry", said Robert Kotick, Activision's chairman. Having licensed both of these titles, Activision will bring two of the most successful arcade games ever to multiple platforms". For more information on Activision's Asteroids update, check out this issue's Activate '98 feature.

TOMMI MÄKINEN

GOES DOWN A GEAR



Ubi Soft have slashed the price of Tommi Mäkinen Rally to a mere £19.99, even though it was released only a week and a half earlier. The game, which Ubi Soft bought from Europress, performed poorly due to a combination of factors, including the current glut of driving games and the fact that it's no bloody good (EPM scored it at 41% in Issue Seven).

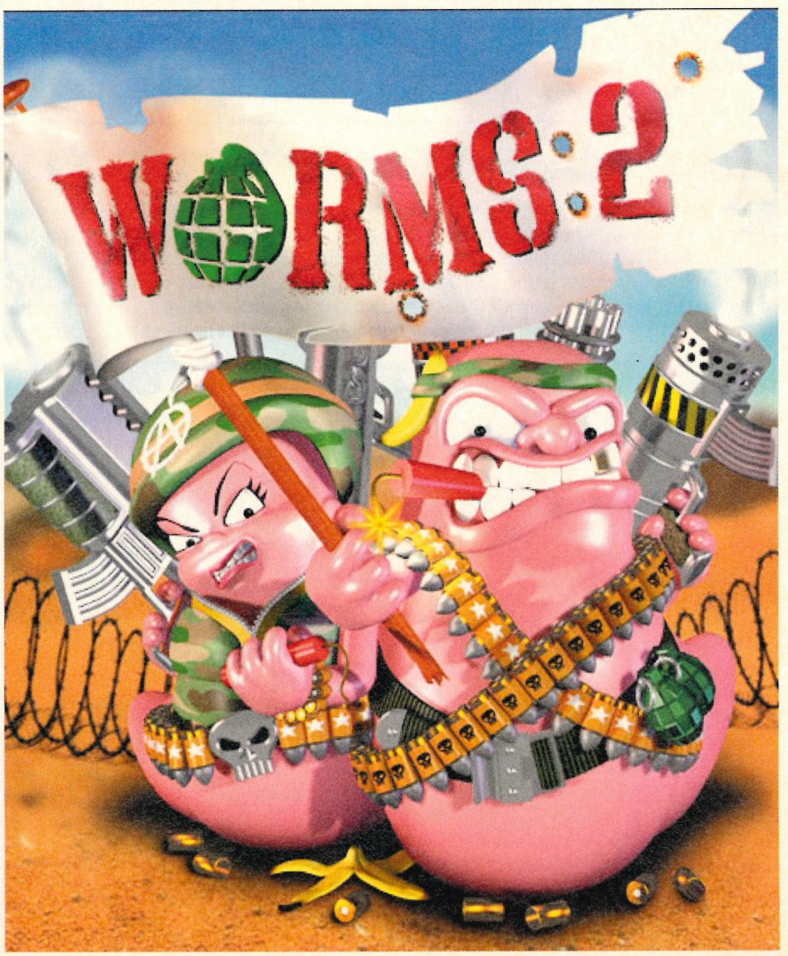
"It was due to a combination of things", says Ubi Soft's Alison Turner. "It's just gone into the Top 20 at the lower price". Steve Cooke of Computer Mania, Scarborough, is less circumspect. Quoted in the industry paper Computer Trade Weekly, he said, "Tommi Mäkinen drives like a brick. It's the worst driving game the PlayStation has ever seen".

MICROPROSE®

WORM THEIR WAY BACK ONTO PSX

MicroProse, long established as kings of the strategy and simulation game, are to return to the PlayStation with three titles pencilled in for next year, with Worms 2 leading the way. This will be followed by driving sim Stadium Grand Prix and platform adventure P.I.G.

Worms 2, the company's first PlayStation release for over a year, hits the shelves in Easter, along with P.I.G. Stadium Grand Prix won't be ready until the Summer.



GADGETS



Unless you've spent the last couple of months locked in the bog or exploring the Arctic, you know we're in the middle of a yo-yo craze. Everyone seems to have one.

Today's yo-yos, unlike those our grandparents played with, are sophisticated pieces of technology. For example, Bandai's Yomega X-Brain shown here features a clutch mechanism which allows it to spin at the bottom of the string, making it easier to perform tricks like the pros.

In Japan, where the Yomega was launched in 1997, the pastime is rapidly gaining sport-like status, with yo-yo events attended by up to 40,000 kids taking place all over the country. Some venues offer a dark tent for yo-yos with strobe effects built in. We're unlikely to go that yo-yo crazy here in the UK, but the trend is certainly catching on.

If you're after a Yomega X-Brain, a professional-quality yo-yo, they cost £7.99 and are available from most good toy shops. More Yomega devices are to follow later in the year.

ISS PRO '98 GEARS UP FOR SOLID OFFER



The initial shipment of Konami's ISS Pro '98 will also contain a two-level demo of the long-awaited Metal Gear Solid. The demo, which is fully playable, is more than enough to illustrate the game's unique mix of strategic stealth and arcade action.

ISS Pro '98 is released on 18th September, and costs £39.99. The demo will only be packaged with the first batch, but if you order early you're bound to get one.

WILD THINGS OFFER SOFT TOUCH

Wild Things, developers of computer and console accessories, are to launch several new products at this month's European Computer Trace Show. Over 20 new devices will be launched, including several for the PlayStation.

The Soft Touch pad offers 'an amazing soft finish to enhance gameplay feeling' (whatever that means). For driving fans, the PSX Steering Wheel features turbo functions and dual feedback. Two new controllers will be launched too, the analogue dual force feedback controller, KickBack, and the similar Primal Pad, which also includes Turbo and Slow functions.

Howard Jacobson, Wild Things' managing director, said, "we always aim to provide high quality, innovative and fully featured products at the most competitive prices". We'll test these claims with full reviews soon.

POST TASTE





Every issue we pick out the best and worst picture postcards sent as competition entries and give the sender a prize so bad it would embarrass Blankety Blank. This month's winners are Simon Butler of Sutton-in-Ashfield and Brian Traylor from Glasgow.

Simon's effort was streets ahead in the 'worst card' category. Nothing else even came close to its bad chocolate box-style art and mushy message ('Red and White Roses: Unity'? Bleugh!). It's so twee even your granny would hate it. On the other hand, Brian sent us a print of HR Geiger's Biomechanoid Landscape III, a dark and oppressive piece of art that makes your blood run cold. We just hope we've printed it the right way up.

Brian and Simon each win a novel sent to us as print samples. Sophisticated they ain't, but they'll do as presents for young relatives.

Think you can do better? When entering a competition in EPM, think about your card - you might just find yourself on this page.

CODEMASTERS HIT THE FLOOR WITH DANCE MIX

Following Sony's lacklustre music creator Fluid, Codemasters are hoping to do better with their forthcoming Dance Music Creator. Developed by Liverpool-based company Jester Interactive, the 'game' has been penciled in for a November launch. Catering for all abilities, beginners can lay down pre-set four-bar riffs, with the more advanced can create entire scores. It also features a powerful animation suite for visual sequences.

The creator is designed to allow you to create dance and club-type tracks ranging from funk, garage, big beat, techno and jungle. It will be aimed at 16-24-year-olds and demos will be made available in clubs and discos.

"The product will be cool but fun", says marketing director Mike Hayes. "We don't want to take ourselves too seriously, but we don't want to be too frivolous. It's a fine line, but one we can manage".

TRIUMPH AND AGONY

NBA Jam Extreme / Space Jam





Not everyone liked NBA Jam Extreme, with its arcadey, coin-op friendly approach to basketball. Its detractors questioned its long-term playability and argued it favoured quick-thrill gimmicks over solid simulation. True enough, but it basically worked - it was fun to play, easily accessible and a hoot with a few friends. Besides, it never claimed to be an accurate simulation of the sport - everyone who bought it knew what they were getting (apart from the dickheads who part with £40 for a game without bothering to read reviews), and no one was ripped off. Not so with Space Jam.

It was inevitable some company or another would snap up the licence to the Space Jam film and tweak the engine from a previous basketball game to create a PSX interpretation thereof. The disastrous quality of Space Jam, however, was far from inevitable. Playing teams made up of a mix of NBA stars and cartoon characters (makes sense if you've seen the film), what you get is a cut-down, chewed-up and spat out version of NBA Jam. The action is slow and awkward and demands virtually no skill.

If you want an accessible, arcadey basketball game, get NBA Jam Extreme. Space Jam shares all its limitations, offers none of its strengths and plays like a turd. The only major criticism of NBA Jam was that it lacked depth. Space Jam's developers saw this and... made it shallower!

CLASSIC MOMENTS IN VIDEOGAME VIOLENCE

You can't get much more classic than this. Palace Software's Barbarian, from way back in 1987, set new standards for video games gore.

Don't think Mortal Kombat was the first beat-'em-up to let you kill your foe. Here, with a well-placed sweep of your sword, you could take an opponent's head clean off, leaving our green-skinned vertically-challenged friend to drag away his bleeding body. The game also courted controversy with its advert, featuring a scantily-clad Maria Whittaker and a huge bodybuilder with a furry nappy and a sword. He later became Wolf from the Gladiators.

Given the limitations of the machines used a decade ago (the screenshot is from the C64 version), there's only so much gore the game could offer, but its groundbreaking violence earns it a place in the Classic Moments in Videogame Violence hall of fame.



TEKKEN 3

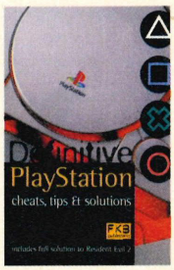
BROUGHT TO BOOK...

FKB Publishing have produced a player's guide to the newly-released Tekken 3. Called Tekken 3 Fighting Guide, it offers detailed tips and strategies for the PSX's premiere beat-'em-up. Every move for every character is covered, and many are illustrated using full-colour screenshots. All the cheats are included too.

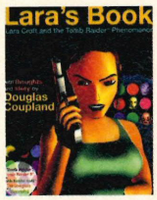
Also from FKB Publishing is Definitive PlayStation Cheats, Tips & Solutions 2. A comprehensive A to Z cheats guide, the book covers more than 150 games and includes 14 full solutions.

Tekken 3 Fighting Guide costs £8.99, Definitive PlayStation Cheats, Tips & Solutions 2 retailing at £9.99. Both are available from Game, Electronics Boutique, Virgin, HMV and other good computer games stores.





LARA BROUGHT TO BOOK TOO...



Not so welcome is Lara's Book, a glossy 190-page tome from Prima Publishing. Costing a ridiculous £15.99, it's full colour throughout and offers strategies and secrets for Tomb Raiders I & II as well as the PC game Tomb Raider Gold, but also original Lara Croft fiction, thousands of Lara pictures, interviews with the designers and developers, Lara stats and an outline of her fan clubs, internet sites and the like.

It has its moments, but a brief flick through the pages reveals it's scrappily put together and as much space has been wasted as used. Nice idea, but it doesn't quite come off.

IT'S 'GOODNIGHT' TO HAVE A NICE DAY

Sensible Software's blaster Have a Nice Day has been canned due to production problems. The game, described as a 'Quake-style 3D shooter with a difference', ran into difficulties in development and Sensible Software felt they couldn't invest the money to get it right.

Sensible Software, who had a string of hits on the 8- and 16-bit computers including Wizball, Parallax, MicroProse Soccer, Sensible Soccer and Cannon Fodder, built a reputation as producers of highly playable and original games. However, the company ran into financial difficulties when their 16-CD PC epic Sex, Drugs and Rock 'n' Roll proved too controversial to be published. With little money coming in, continuing with Have a Nice Day just wasn't viable.

Sensible Soccer is being converted to the PSX and published by GT as Sensible Soccer 98/99 in November. The next Sensible game after that, however, is less certain. A Cannon Fodder conversion has been discussed, but the people involved would want substantial changes to the 16-bit original. "Development takes such a long time, we have to restructure the company so it can handle it", said Sensible's main man, Jon Hare.

COMPETITION

FKB Publishing have very kindly given us five copies of Tekken 3 Fighting Guide to give away, with one lucky winner getting a copy of the game itself to go with it. To stand a chance of winning, just answer the following question:

• Which Tekken character is an assassin from Ireland?

Answers on a postcard to Tekken 3 Compo,, extreme PlayStation, 22 Strand Street, Poole, Dorset BH15 1SB. Entries that arrive after 25th September will be pulped.

MEET THE TEAM

Who are the people who produce EPM every month? The team were asked what real-life celebrity would they most like to see featured in our covergame, Mortal Kombat 4. Their answers were revealing to say the least...

IAN OSBORNE
Mike Tyson for me. With his boxing career in tatters he needs the work, and let's face it - you could get some great bite-the-ear/slap-the-missus special moves out of him. To celebrate a victory, he could drink lots of beer and swear.

RUSSELL BARNES
David Beckham. Every time he kicked he would be sent off and lose the fight, but if he keeps his feet to himself and gets the crap kicked out of him, it would be very satisfying to see him fall victim to a Fatality.

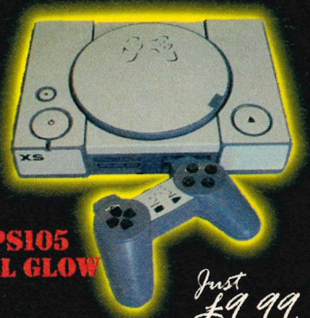
ALAN KING
How about all four members of The Spice Girls against Geri? Their fight moves would be well co-ordinated but lacking in substance, but it's a great excuse to see them all in skimpy outfits.

DOUG WILLIAMS
Bill Clinton, perhaps? He could take on the forces of evil (the press), perform the Goro's Lair Stage Fatality and deny that it was him that killed his foe - he only punched them into the air, it was the spikes that did it.

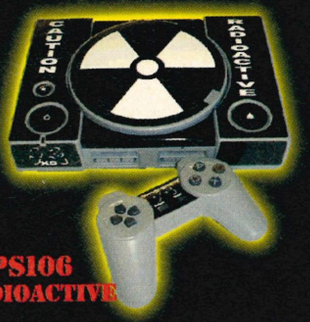
MIKE COOK
Jeremy Beadle, for reasons too obvious to explain. Perhaps OJ Simpson too - everyone has a weapon in Mortal Kombat 4, and his could be an invisible knife that doesn't really exist.

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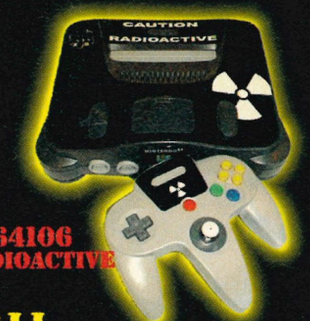
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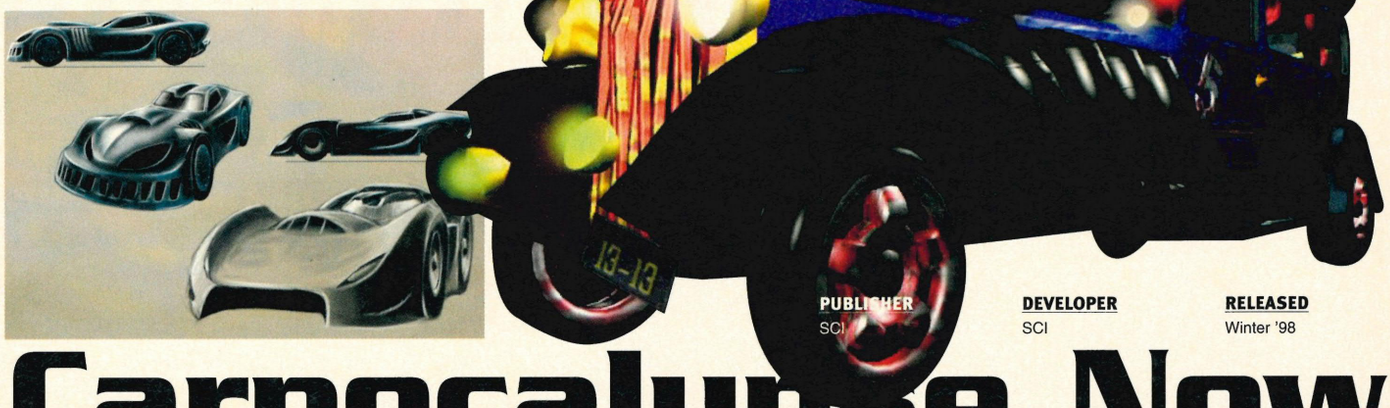
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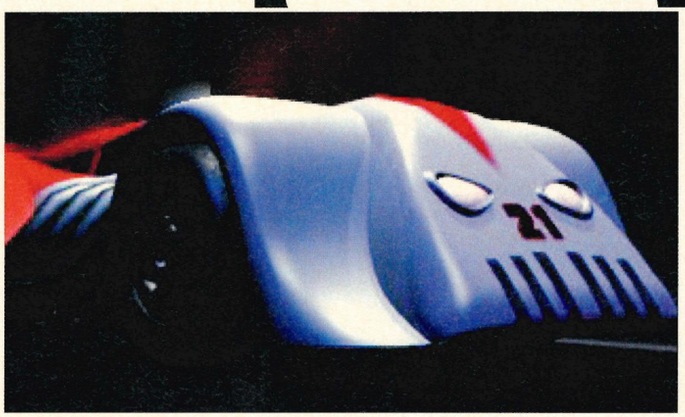
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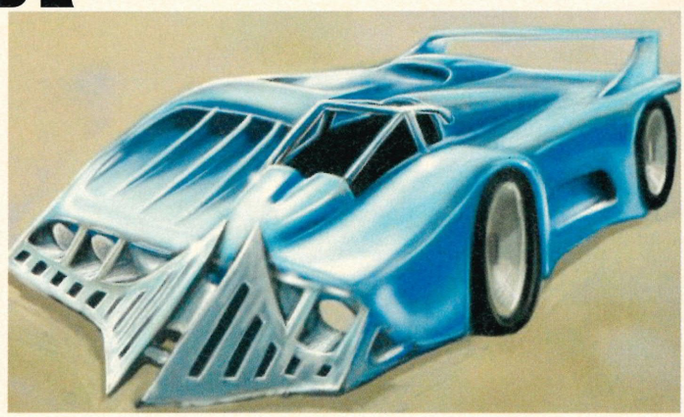
expected



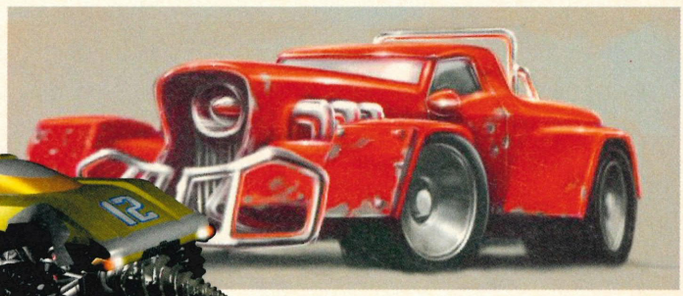
PUBLISHER SCI | **DEVELOPER** SCI | **RELEASED** Winter '98

Carpocalypse Now









This one is a conversion of the PC games Carmageddon and Carmageddon 2 on a single PSX CD. The game caused a great deal of controversy on the PC due to its level of violence against innocent people, but with a few tweaks SCI were able to release it.

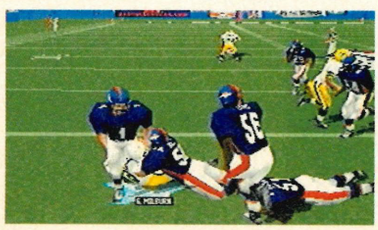
Ever seen the early Sly Stalone film Death Race 2000? If so, you know the score - a driving race where you're actively encouraged to batter opponents off the track Michael Schumacher-style, winning (in the game, at least) credits to upgrade your vehicle. Trouble is, you can also mow down pedestrians too. These were banned by the BBFC - although the decision was overturned on appeal, green-blooded aliens were included instead of people. The PlayStation version will feature zombies.

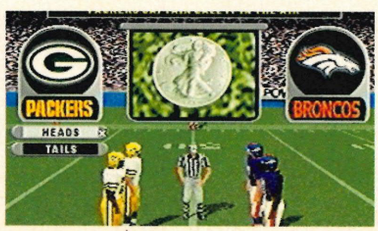
We've very little to show you at the moment, but watch out for a more in-depth preview next month.

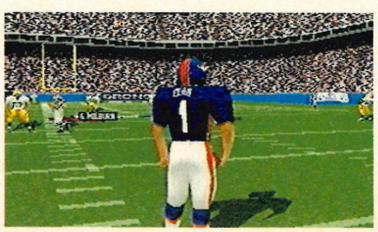
Madden NFL 99

If you're already a fan of American football, you've probably played an EA John Madden-licensed game before. If not, what can this, the latest version of a much-respected series, do for you?

According to EA, as well as offering in-depth gameplay, authentic NFL strategies and well over 100 teams past and present, it also addresses the issue of beginners who have never played a gridiron game before. Using a one-button interface, the inexperienced player can pick up a controller (the game's Dual Shock compatible) and pick up the basics almost immediately. When you've more experience, you can take over the game's higher functions. To find out how successful this is, check out next month's review.







PUBLISHER Electronic Arts

DEVELOPER Electronic Arts

RELEASED September '98

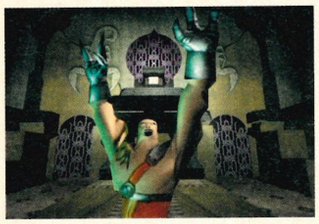
PUBLISHER Sony CEE

DEVELOPER Radical Entertainment

RELEASED TBA

Tribal






In the distant future, a tyrannical global government has outlawed all cultural expression, creating a uniform, homogenous society. A group of rebellious young punks are having none of it - they trawl the history books and recreate the fighting styles of their waning cultures - yes folks, it's a beat-'em-up.

This particular beat-'em-up features 11 characters with their own fighting styles, 33 3D arenas, over 1,000 lines of professionally-recorded voice-over taunts, 11 in-game music tracks and victory music for each character. There are also 25 'environment obstacles', including trampolines, conveyor belts, water pools and trapdoors. We've only seen a few illustrations of the game so far, but it's one we definitely look forward to playing.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts

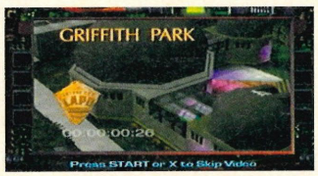
DEVELOPER Electronic Arts

RELEASED October '98

Future Cop L.A.P.D.





Los Angeles, 2100 AD. The cops now 'drive' hovercars which turn Transformers-style into walkers at the press of a button. Just the job for beating up motorists in front of video cameras...

It's basically a Strike game with the neat gizmo instead of the helicopter, even down to the player having a gun, medium rockets and heavy rockets at his disposal. It's not easy, but the all-action gameplay could prove very effective - you're certainly not short of things to do. At the time of writing, the camera's a little more mobile than it needs to be, but this will probably be corrected in the final version.

PUBLISHER Eidos

DEVELOPER Mucky Foot Productions Ltd

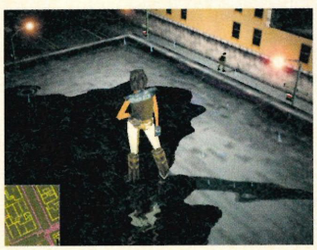
RELEASED TBA

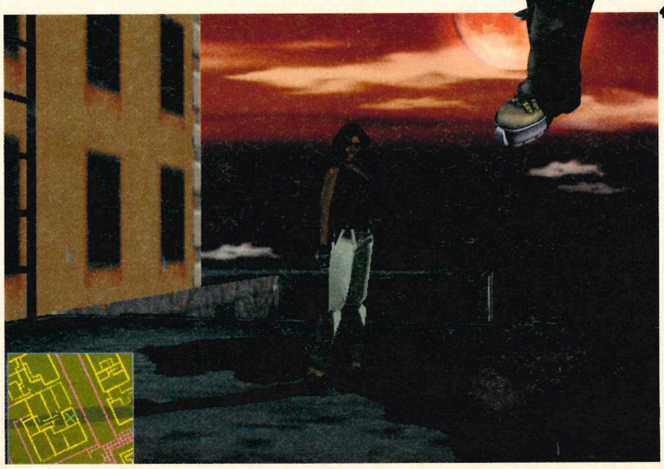
Urban Chaos



Prepare to enter a turbulent urban cityscape at the turn of the millennium. It's a lethal world of anarchy and confusion, where predictions of Armageddon may be more than pure fantasy. Sounds like the real world to us, but instead it's a 3D game from Eidos in which you can explore every corner of a 'living, breathing city'. Your task is to topple the various street gangs making life a misery for the decent citizens.

Urban Chaos features a realistic city model, a huge variety of characters and vehicles, hand-to-hand and weapons-based combat and environmental effects such as rain, snow, fog and daylight.





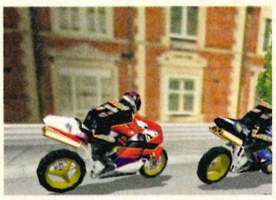
PUBLISHER Funsoft

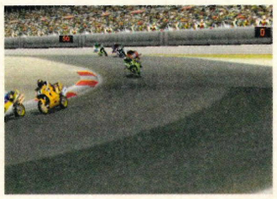
DEVELOPER Interactive Entertainment

RELEASED October '98











Castrol Honda Superbike World Championship



The title's a bit of a mouthful, but judging by the screenshots, this could well be the 'F1 of motorcycle racing' as claimed by its publishers.

Already well received on the PC, the PlayStation game will feature realistic bike handling, a split-screen mode, link cable option, and Test, Race, Grand Prix and World Championship single-player challenges. You can race up to 23 computer-controlled opponents, which is impressive given the level of detail. We've no idea how it plays yet as we've only seen these screenshots, but look forward to a full preview soon.





PUBLISHER Cryo Interactive Entertainment

DEVELOPER Interactive Entertainment

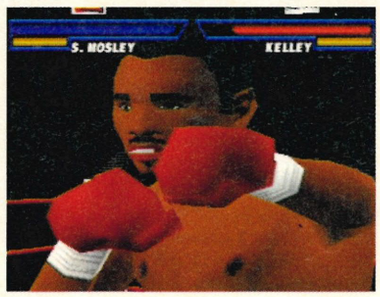
RELEASED October '98

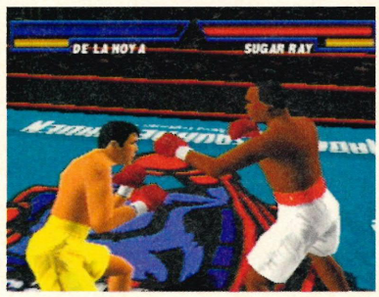
Egypt 1156BC: Tomb of the Pharaoh

We've played an early demo of this one, consisting of an Ancient Egyptian boardgame in the draughts mould. It looked quite interesting, but was difficult to understand without instructions.

The game as a whole is an adventure set (surprise, surprise) in Ancient Egypt. The graphics and speech are up to the same high standards as the beautiful Versailles and forthcoming Atlantis, and under advice from the Louvre Museum's leading Egyptologist, a high degree of historical accuracy has been maintained.

The aim of the game is to prove your father innocent of a charge of plotting to rob a royal tomb. According to Cryo, it will take 25 hours of gameplay to complete this quest, which doesn't sound a lot, but we wish we had a fiver for every title with grossly inflated playing time claims - perhaps Cryo's estimate is simply realistic.





Knockout Kings



PUBLISHER Electronic Arts

DEVELOPER Electronic Arts

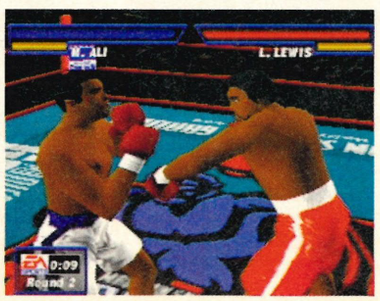
RELEASED October '98

Going head to head with JVC's Victory Boxing 2 is EA's Knockout Kings, a boxing sim featuring 38 genuine boxers covering three weight categories and several decades' boxing history. Ever wondered whether Muhammad Ali would beat Rocky Marciano, Lennox Lewis or Jack Demsey? We'll never know for sure, but with Knockout Kings you can set up your own fights between these all-time greats, or create and train a pugilist of your own.

A great deal of attention has been applied to the presentation, with commentary, entry music and crowd sounds. The fighters have their own signature moves, and as the motion capture has been filmed using Oscar De La Hoya, Shane Mosley and Sugar Ray Leonard, you can be sure the moves are accurate. Realistic boxing rules are catered for, but these can be switched off if you wish.

Also featured in the game is Butterbean, an obese heavyweight who fights four-round exhibition matches with sheer brutality rather than boxing skills. It's not the Noble Art, but he has a cult following in the States. It'll be interesting to see how he fares against Knockout Kings' more 'traditional' fighters.









PUBLISHER
Interplay

DEVELOPER
Shiny Entertainment

RELEASED
TBA

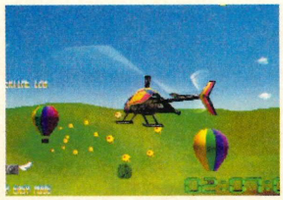
R/C Stunt Copter











This is a game like no other. Based on remote control helicopters and making full use of both sticks on the analogue pad (hurrah!), R/C Stunt Copter is a software toy you can play for hours or in a spare ten minutes, however the mood takes you.

Flying a hanger-ful of choppers based on genuine remote controlled helicopters, you take on a series of missions of increasing difficulty. Your first task is simply to hit the side of a barn, but even this isn't easy - a chopper facing in any direction other than forwards is very disorientating (just like the real thing), and balancing the collective and directional controls takes considerable practice. Good job you can select an easy mode where the chopper has four stabilisers, which look a little like tennis balls on beanpoles. Later you must fly through hoops, burst balloons and land in awkward places.

Developers Shiny Entertainment recruited World R/C Helicopter Champion Curtis Youngblood for technical advice on the choppers' handling, so you're sure for an accurate simulation. This doesn't mean it's for tech-heads only - the emphasis is definitely on fun, with colourful graphics, bouncy tunes and tongue-in-cheek presentation.

R/C Stunt Copter is unlikely to become as huge a seller as a Tekken or Tomb Raider game, but with innovation and originality in seriously short supply it's great to see someone try something new. The early version we've played is great fun, so we hope the game will reap rewards beyond kind words and a cult following.

PUBLISHER
Codemasters

DEVELOPER
Codemasters

RELEASED
Winter '98

TOCA 2

The first TOCA's now on Platinum, so TOCA 2 needs to make significant improvements on its brilliant predecessor to justify the extra dosh. This fact isn't lost on Codemasters. Their advanced graphics engine has been considerably enhanced, running at 'exhilarating speed' at high resolution. The new game uses real-time light sourcing for sharper, more detailed visuals too.

The Codies promise much-improved car damage. Now wings are ripped off and bonnets crumpled or even torn away completely. The windscreens feature special rain effects and bug splats, though you won't see too many of these if you crash and smash it. Up to 16 cars can race, including Formula Ford, Jaguar XJ220, TVR12+, Ford Fiesta, AC Cobra and the three-wheel Scorpion, though an entry from a Reliant racing team is not expected. As well as the domestic championship circuits, TOCA 2 also features international tracks in Germany, France, USA and erm; Scotland.

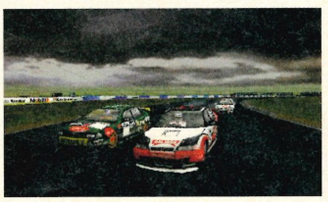
Car racers aren't exactly thin on the ground, but if TOCA 2 fulfils its immense promise, it could well take pole position and leave the rest in the pits.



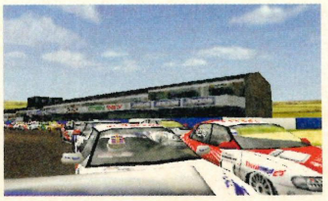














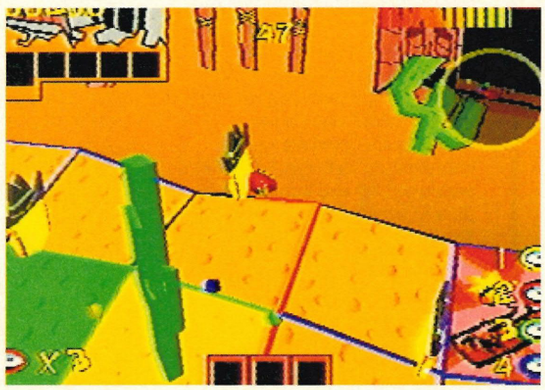
Live Wire!

PUBLISHER
SCI

DEVELOPER
Code Monkeys

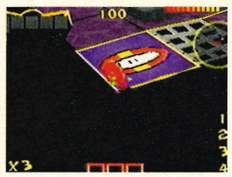
RELEASED
October '98







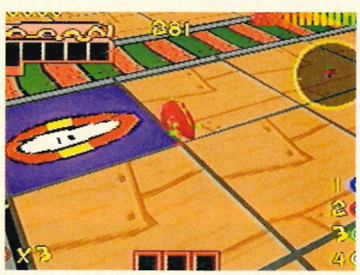


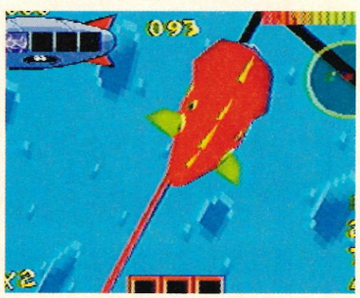


If there was a prize for being the most colourful game on the PlayStation, this little offering would win it hands down. It's basically a 32-bit answer to Painter, with your character winging his way along a squared grid chased by baddies. You leave a trail showing where you've been; cover all four edges of a panel, and it's yours, along with its contents.

The game offers camera tilt and zoom functions, though these aren't really essential to the gameplay. There are ten unique worlds with ten levels on each. These are themed - look out for the Wild West, outer space and 70s disco stages. You face over 50 opponents, so keep your eyes peeled for the 30-odd different power-ups.

At the time of writing, Live Wire! (previously called 'Wired', incidentally), needs a little work on the control method, but if this is addressed it could prove a worthy purchase in a retro-kitsch sort of way.







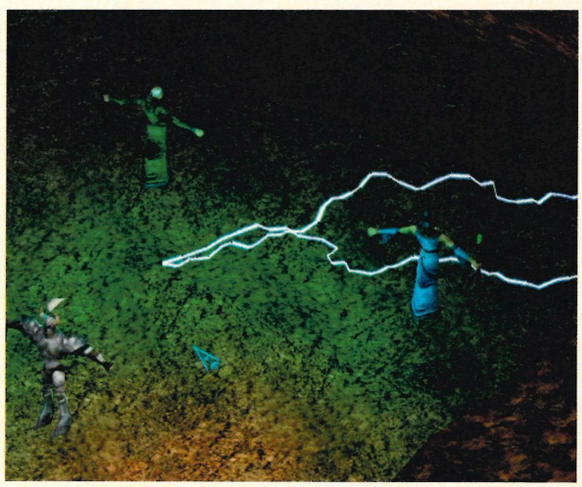
We've very little information on this one, but the art looks great.

Dungeon Keeper 2 is an RPG in the Dungeon Master/King's Quest mould. The first game won countless awards on the PC, so hopefully the series' PSX debut will prove just as successful.

The game takes place in a full 3D environment, using polygon-based characters. The dungeons will be even more elaborate than those found in the first game (not that many of us have seen it), with new rooms like the casino, where you blow your ill-gotten gains, adding variety and colour. The magic system and range of monsters are to be increased too.

The game's pencilled in for a late '98/early '99 release, though don't hold your breath - Bullfrog are infamous for compromising release dates rather than quality, and we love 'em for it.

Dungeon



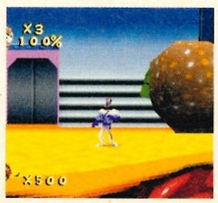
Earthworm Jim 3D

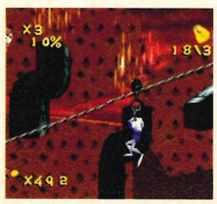
PUBLISHER
Interplay

DEVELOPER
VIS

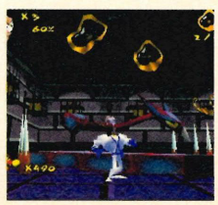
RELEASED
November '98

Nothing much to add to our Issue Seven preview on this one; suffice to say the promised new textures are coming on nicely, and here's a few up-to-date screenshots...









PUBLISHER
Electronic Arts

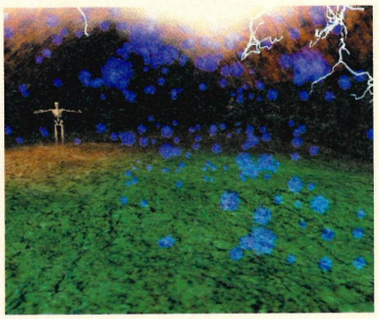
DEVELOPER
Bullfrog

RELEASED
TBA









Keeper 2



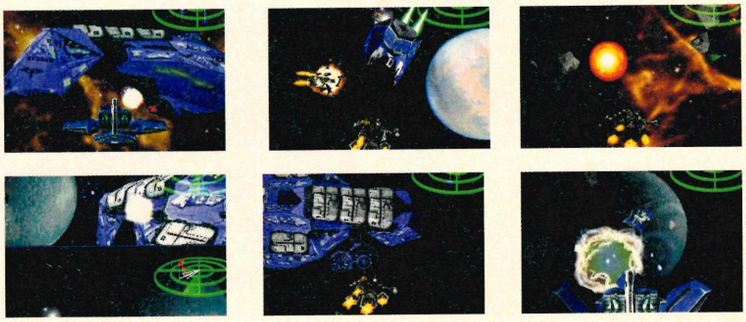
After the driving game, the beat-'em-up is probably the most common genre on the PlayStation. There's always room for another, but it has to carve itself a niche - sad clones of Tekken and Mortal Kombat just won't do. Thankfully, Shao Lin's Chinese theme looks like giving it that much-needed sense identity. Unusually, up to four human players can pitch in at once, and as many as seven characters can swap blows at the same time - it's just like a Hong Kong kung fu movie, but without the bad lip sync and cheesy plot. There are 12 characters in all, covering six fighting styles. There's also a quest mode where the player must search for Chinese martial arts spirits called Butokui. We haven't played Shao Lin yet, but if THQ have learned from the less-than-brilliant Vs, it could well be one to fight over.

PUBLISHER
Electronic Arts

DEVELOPER
Accolade

RELEASED
October '98

Star Control 4



This one was previously called StarCon, trivia fans, but is now known as Star Control 4. Needless to say, the game's another space shoot-'em-up in the Blast radius/Xenocracy mould. You choose one of three alien races and fight your way up the ranks as a pilot opposing the other two alien alliances. As you go, you can upgrade your ship and weapons. The player's actions during the missions affect the way the storyline unfolds.



As well as the one-player offering, you can play against another human via a split-screen option. At the time of writing, though, there are no plans for a link-up mode.

Shao Lin

PUBLISHER
THQ

DEVELOPER
THQ

RELEASED
1st Quarter '99









Remember, size isn't everything...

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts

DEVELOPER DreamWorks Interactive

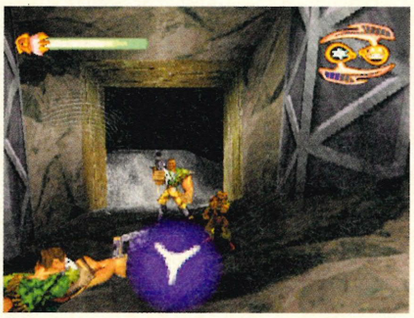
RELEASED October '98

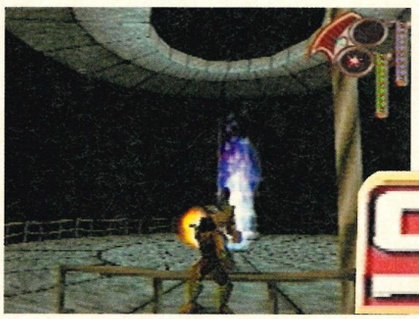
Small Soldiers

This one's come on a long way since our initial look reported in Issue Six. The characters are no longer blocky, but instead look and move smoother than Roger Moore in silk pyjamas. It's far from finished - the gameplay is still being worked on, but the technical aspects of the game are already polished to military precision.

Based on the characters from the film, you play Archer, the leader of the alien Gorgonites. Along with your fellow fighters, you must battle the war-mongering Commando Elite led by the curiously-named Chip Hazard. After defending your home world, you must take the fight to the humans and tackle them on their own ground. You can set traps, launch attacks and deploy troops. Set over a series of missions, you must complete each objective before moving on to the next.







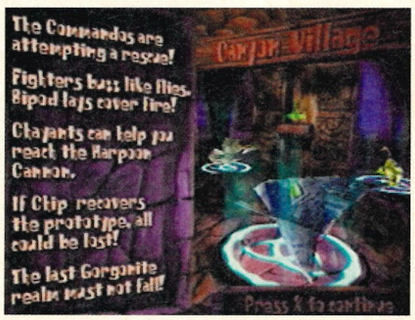
Hup, Hup, Hup...

Once again, the version of the game we've played is technically polished but lacking in many of the forthcoming gameplay elements. Having got the guts of the game just right, though, DreamWorks Interactive are keen to build on it with some exciting and dramatic features. As well as the fifteen normal single-player levels, there are five bonus stages. The split-screen two-player tournament also enjoys fifteen levels, with Archer taking on Chip Hazard in a head-to-head confrontation. There are sixteen characters in total, brought to life by DreamWorks' own Morph-X animation system. Non-player characters offer good AI, carrying out orders to stalk, track, attack and other skills essential for 'subversive tactical warfare'.

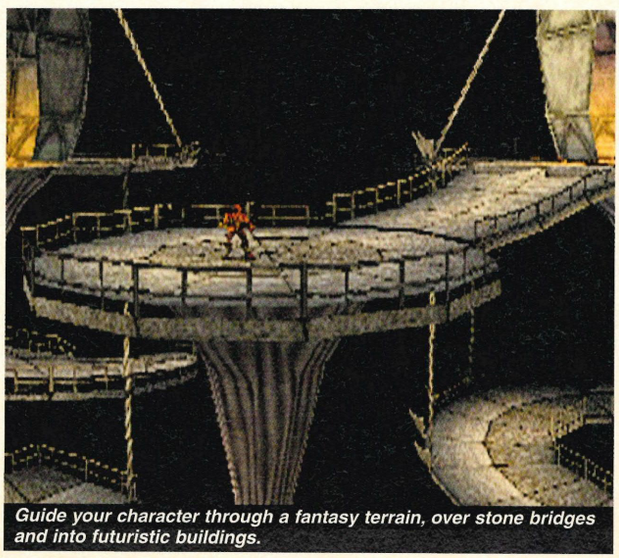
The camera angles are designed to give a cinematic feel. This, to an extent, is already achieved, though the final version needs to concentrate on stopping it floating behind solid objects, blocking your view of the characters. It always keeps up with the action, though, even when you're snaking your way down a corridor making full use of the analogue stick.

The sound has yet to be completed, but we're promised a tribal choir singing in the Gorgonite language. Tommy Lee Jones, star of Men in Black and The Fugitive, has recorded the voice-overs for Chip Hazard.

There's plenty of work to be done before the game's October release, but with so much attention paid to the already-superb game engine, DreamWorks should make this one something special.



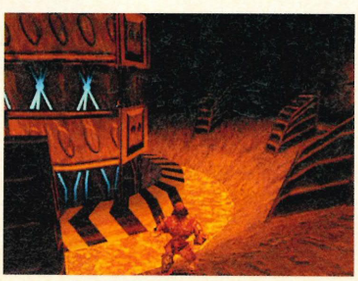


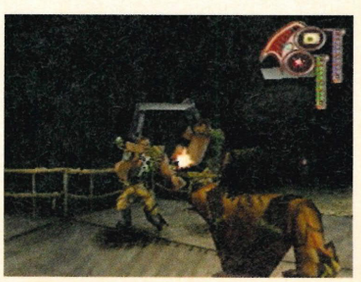


Guide your character through a fantasy terrain, over stone bridges and into futuristic buildings.







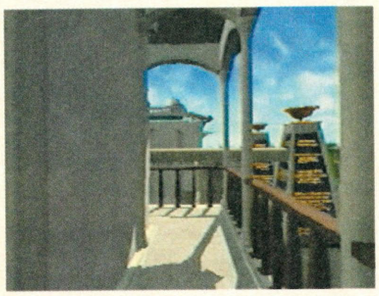


Seems Plato was right after all...

PUBLISHER
Cryo Interactive Entertainment

DEVELOPER
Cryo Interactive Entertainment

RELEASED
October '98



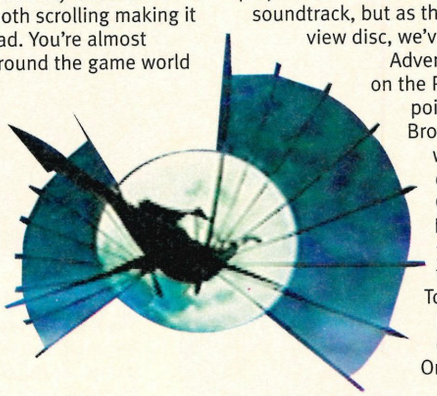


Atlantis: The Lost Tales

Now here's something you don't see every day on the PSX. Like Versailles (reviewed this very issue), Atlantis is a 3D point-and-click graphic adventure in the Myst mould, but will hopefully avoid some of the pitfalls that ruined this grossly over-rated game.

The graphics, as you can see, are seriously sumptuous. At all times you can look in any direction using the D-Pad, the silky-smooth scrolling making it seem just like moving your head. You're almost there! Unfortunately moving around the game world involves moving an icon over the place you want to be and pressing a button. After a little disc accessing, you reappear there, seemingly without crossing the space in between.

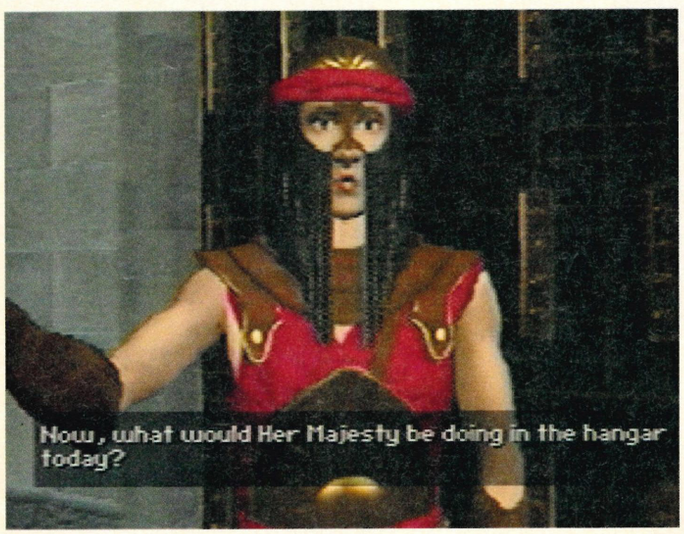
There are over 50 characters in the game, and you can interact with them in simple conversation, offered both as text and sampled speech. The icons you select in this respect are a little unclear, though hopefully this will change before the final version is released.

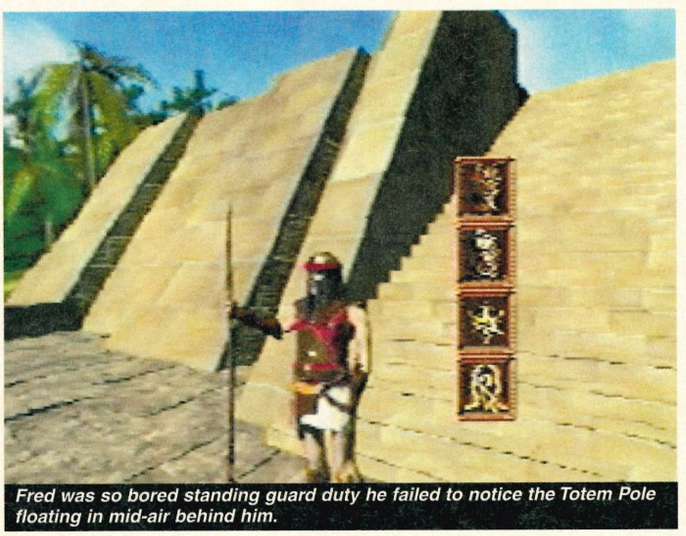


Wondrous Worlds...

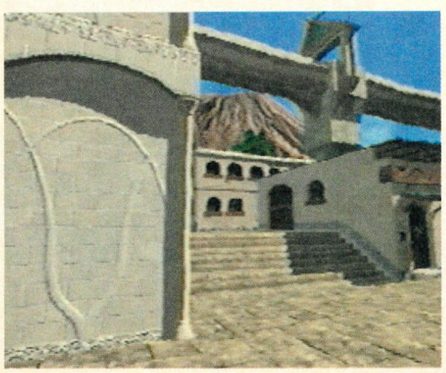
There are five separate game universes, each with their own exotic culture, and (according to Cryo) over 30 hours of puzzle-solving, mystery-revealing gameplay. The final version will also offer an original soundtrack, but as this wasn't included in our preview disc, we've no idea how good it is.

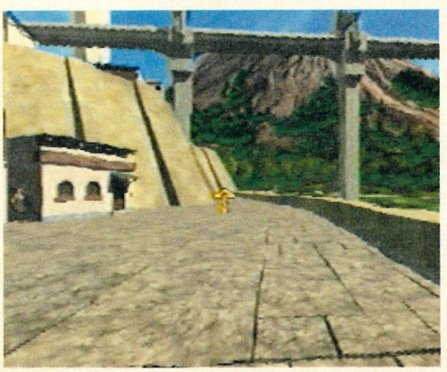
Adventures aren't exactly common on the PlayStation, and most are 2D point-and-click (Ringworld, Broken Sword) or 3D offerings with direct control over the character (City of the Lost Children, Little Big Adventure). It's vary rare a game offers a 3D environment without letting you walk in real-time Tomb Raider-style. Is the PlayStation ready for this sort of game, common on the PC? Only time will tell...

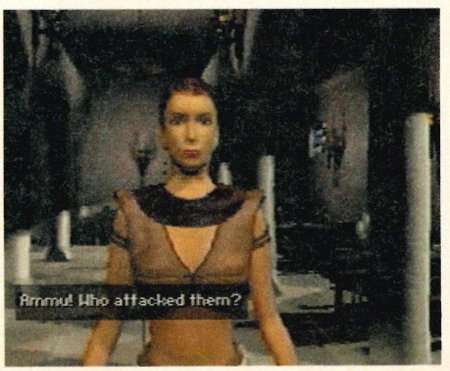


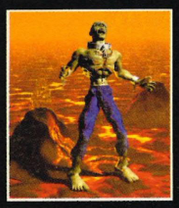


Fred was so bored standing guard duty he failed to notice the Totem Pole floating in mid-air behind him.









Ed

Eddie, go for your gun...

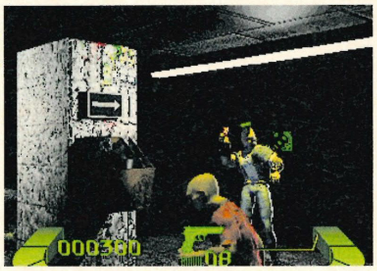
PUBLISHER
TBA

DEVELOPER
Synthetic Dimensions

RELEASED
TBA



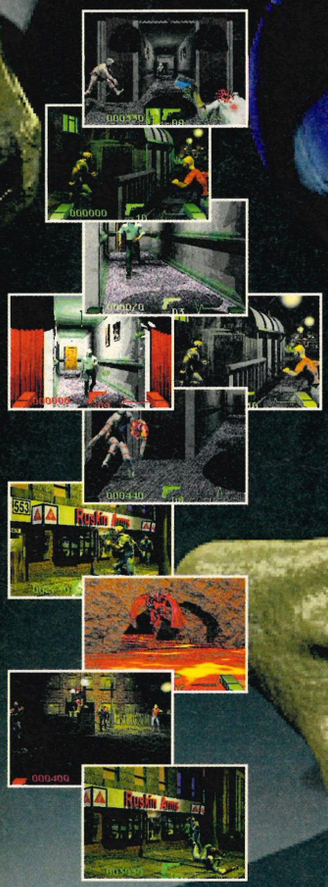












Games inspired by pop groups have never set the video games world alight, perhaps because their quality has ranged from 'average' to 'dire'. There was the Motörhead beat-'em-up a few years back (yawn), Queen: The Eye (aarrrgh), Spice World (bleugh), and Aerosmith-inspired Revolution X (snigger). Perhaps Ed Hunter, Synthetic Dimensions' light gun offering based on the music of Iron Maiden, will break the mould and truly rock the PSX.

You play private eye Ed Hunter, and must battle your way through seven levels of fast-firing mayhem as you tail the gruesome Eddie, Iron Maiden's legendary mascot. Extreme restrictions were placed on what the team could do with Eddie. They couldn't make him talk, couldn't let the player control him and couldn't explain whether he's good or evil or what he was before he became the creature he is today. The player is not allowed to hit him and Eddie can't attack anyone else either. Useless licence, then? NO - to accommodate these strict rules, Synthetic Dimensions has you follow Eddie, investigating what he's up to. This isn't easy, as while Eddie seems to walk

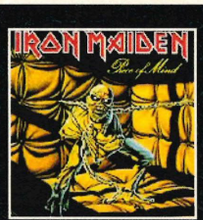
IRON MAIDEN

ROCK 'N' ROLL...

There are twelve Iron Maiden tracks featured as background music, though the exact titles are yet to be confirmed. Wisely, if a song ends before you've completed the level the game boots up another track, which might be exclusive to that particular stage or lifted from elsewhere in the game. This way, the music never loops.









Hunter





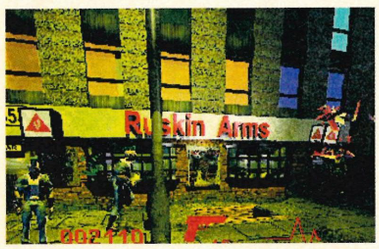


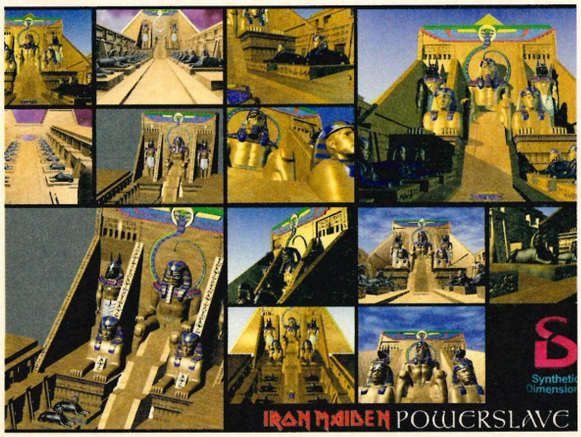












through violent and dangerous terrain with impunity, you certainly can't. Keep your pistol handy, and swap it for one of the game's six more powerful guns at every opportunity.

Best of the Beast...

Iron Maiden's influences on the game don't end with Eddie. References to song titles, lyrics and record covers can be found throughout. Starting in the city streets, you pass the Ruskin Arms, a boozer featured on the Killers album cover, though the Kinky Sex Shop next door now sells 'Kinky Sox'. Your struggles take you through the underground, where you see the poster ripped down by a Margaret Thatcher-lookalike on the Women in Uniform single sleeve, then fight your way into Acacia Avenue, with a red light casting an alluring silhouette in the bedroom window of number 22. As fans of Maiden's self-titled first album and third offering Number of the Beast know, this is the home of Charlotte the Harlot.

You eventually get to the asylum where Eddie is imprisoned (remember the Piece of Mind album cover?). He escapes but is sucked into Hell, again tying in with Number of the Beast. If you can keep up, you see Eddie rip his way back to terra firma through a graveyard (Live After Death, No Prayer for the Dying, Fear of the Dark), before taking a time machine into Ancient Egypt and the pyramid from the Powerslave cover. The inside of this is based on the tomb of Rameses II in the Valley of the Kings. Reach the top and travel into the future for a Somewhere in Time tie-in, where you see a futuristic Ruskin Arms. Win through and you find a post-apocalypse world - Virtual XI, anyone? All the way through the game every clock you see shows 11:58pm, a reference to the Two Minutes to Midnight single.

Another interesting pub (aren't they all?) is the Cart and Horses, a London hostelry where Iron Maiden played their first ever gig. Bassist Steve Harris built a copy of it in the grounds of his house, and offered advice on its appearance to the programmers.

Indeed, the band have had considerable input on the game as a whole, especially singer Blayze Bailey. A keen video gamer, he spent countless hours in Synthetic Dimensions' office, offering ideas and inspiration. For example, he suggested the band should feature in the game as severed heads - find one for a points bonus and an extra continue.

Artistic Licence...

By now non-Maiden fans think the game's got nothing to offer them. Not so - the Iron Maiden references augment rather than detract from the gameplay.





A great deal of thought has gone into the game mechanics. The team made it compatible with every sort of controller; light guns (Guncon and otherwise), analogue controllers, digital controllers, joysticks and even the PlayStation mouse. At all times the score immediately above your current rating on the High Scores Table is displayed, giving you something to aim for, and big scores offer extra continues too. You get more points for shooting targets in the head (and they usually die quicker too), and accuracy increases your heartbeat which in turn speeds your scoring. Sharp-shooting is certainly rewarded. Watch out for some neat trickshots too, eg. hitting a certain axe that's flying towards your head sends it flying through the air, killing another foe. enemies appear from many different areas, and often take you by surprise - keep your eyes peeled or you're in trouble. The movement through the game's impressive 3D environments is incredible, though unfortunately background graphics aren't interactive and can't be shot.

The band are so pleased with the game there's already talk of a Synthetic Dimensions sequel. This time the player will be allowed to control Eddie directly. The game genre has yet to be decided, but a graphic adventure has been considered.

Ed Hunter has yet to be signed by a publisher so there's no firm release date, but rest assured it will be snapped up soon - the game's looking great and if there's one thing the PSX really needs, it's some decent light gun offerings.



PUBLISHER
GT Interactive

DEVELOPER
Midway

RELEASED
25th September

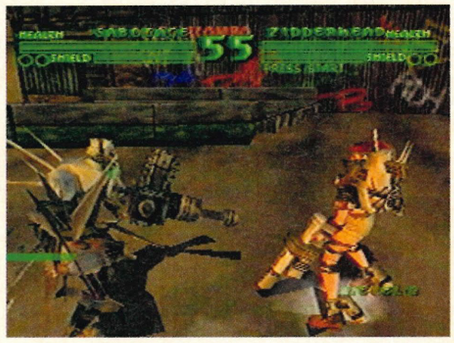


Blood and guts by the bucketful. And you thought Mortal Kombat was gory...

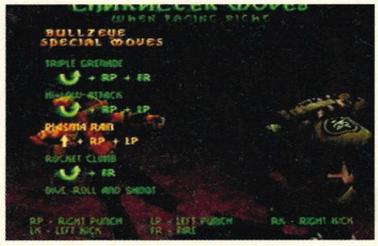
BioFreaks



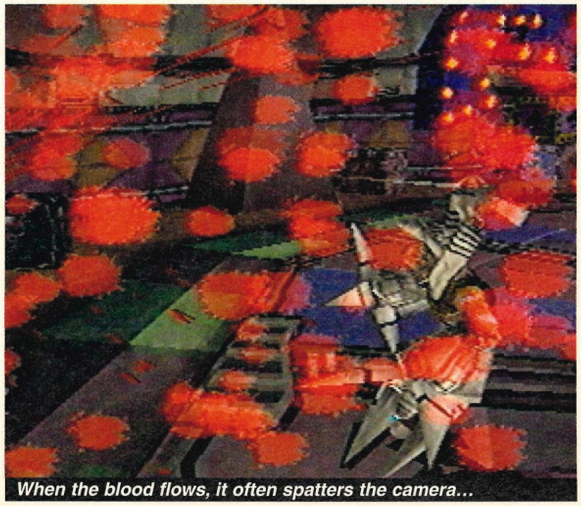











When the blood flows, it often spatters the camera...

Just another beat-'em-up? Probably not - this one's already got a cult following in the States, and looks set to make a solid conversion to the PlayStation.

As well as being 3D, BioFreaks also lets you take to the air using rocket boots. This is more than mere jumping - you can attain some serious height, whether to escape the clutches of your foe or to make ground and launch an attack yourself. Don't forget he can 'fly' too, though - be prepared for some spectacular mid-air fisticuffs.

As well as the inevitable punches and kicks, the characters possess some nifty weaponry. Look out for M-16s, chainsaws and meat cleavers.

The environments are mildly interactive too. You can hide behind solid objects, emerging with a blast from your gun (if you have one), and as the arenas are fairly large there's plenty of scope for tactical play. All the characters now hold a weapon of some sort or another, and when they strike home they produce a spray of blood unlike that of any other beat-'em-up. Instead of a single splash of red, here a wound continues to leak blood throughout the contest, spurting skywards with BBFC-unfriendly realism, redecorating the floor, and even the screen. You can even sever limbs, leaving your opponent with a gaping, blood-spewing stump and a seriously limited offence.

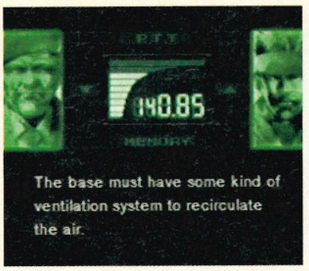
Bloody Hell...

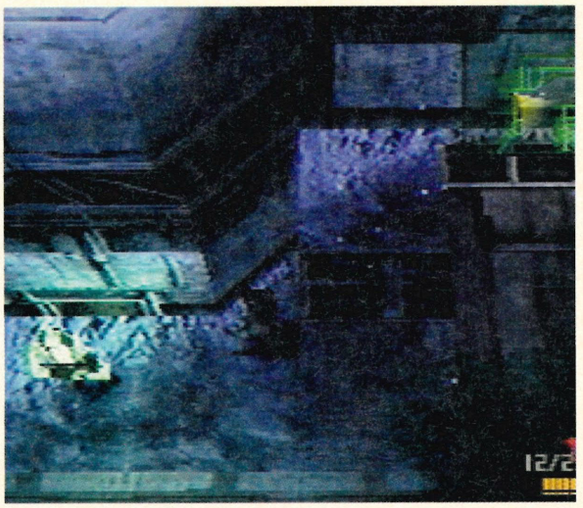
BioFreaks features 15 immediately-playable arenas which, as well as offering lifts and hidey-holes, are beautifully decorated with waterfalls, moving objects and even lava. The roving camera keeps the action in the centre of the screen, but does not confuse.

GT have paid a lot of attention to the lighting effects in BioFreaks. The mean and moody light sourcing creates shadowy areas you can use to your advantage, though firing a weapon soon lights them up. The controls take time to master, but they allow the skilful player to put together some great specials and combos. Usefully, by pausing the game you can access a comprehensive list of your fighter's attacks - great for beginners.

At the time of writing, even in Rookie mode BioFreaks isn't easy, but if you like your beat-'em-ups blood-thirsty and challenging, you'd better check out next issue's full review.





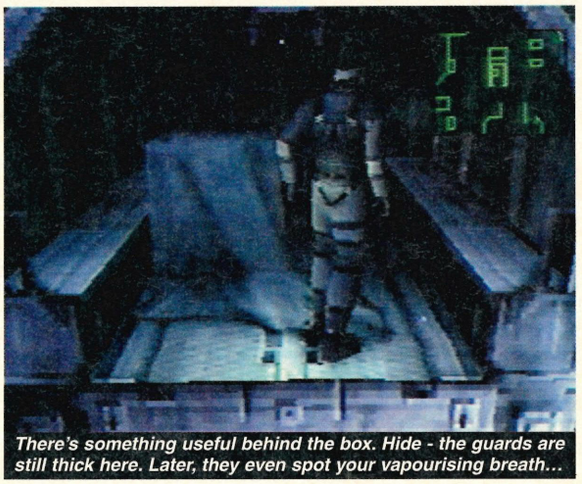


PUBLISHER
Konami

DEVELOPER
Konami CE Japan

RELEASED
Christmas '98

Metal Gear Solid


There's something useful behind the box. Hide - the guards are still thick here. Later, they even spot your vapourising breath...

Beware of the Snake in the grass...

This is the big one. It's been delayed more times than the Second Coming, but it's now pencilled in for a Christmas release, and looks set to rewrite the books for Resident Evil-style games in the same way Gran Turismo did for drivers.

The game is set in the near future in Alaska. A terrorist organisation known as Fox Hound have taken over a nuclear weapons storage facility. If this wasn't bad enough, the group is made up of former elite soldiers. Disasterville!

The group threaten to launch their new toys within 24 hours unless their demands are met (sigh - aren't terrorists predictable), and only you can stop them (whine - aren't computer games predictable?). You're ex-Fox Hound member Solid Snake, sent by the American Government to save the world from nuclear destruction. Get going - there's no time to lose...

Roll on, Christmas...

Despite the rather predictable plot, Metal Gear Solid looks set to be one of the most exciting and ORIGINAL games this year. An action and exploration game in the Tomb Raider mould (but without the platform leaping), stealth is the order of the day as you creep around the base looking for useful items and clues. There are guns to be found, but using them at the wrong moment is near-suicidal. This isn't a shoot-'em-up, and you can't fight your way into the compound like a ridiculously tough one-man army. Instead, you hide behind doors, creep around out of sight of the many guards and use your guns and fists only when you have to.

The guards have five different IQ levels, but instead of taking the easy option of using their intelligence to set skill levels, the developers used it to create a learning curve running through the game. The first soldier-guards you meet have such a low AI they would have trouble getting into the Salvation Army, but by the end your foes are working co-operatively and are so sharp they can spot your breath as it vaporises in the Alaskan cold.

You need to be careful where you tread in this game. Walk through a puddle and you leave big wet footprints, which brighter guards will follow. Watch out for the snow too - there's nothing you can do about leaving trails there, so think ahead. You might want to deliberately get a guard to chase you and lead him away from where you're going, or tap the walls and cause him to investigate.

Metal Gear Solid looks like being one tough cookie. Short of a disaster between now and its Christmas release date, it should prove to be THE game of 1998.



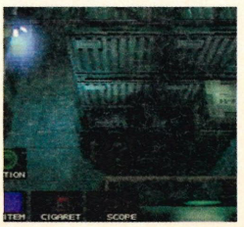


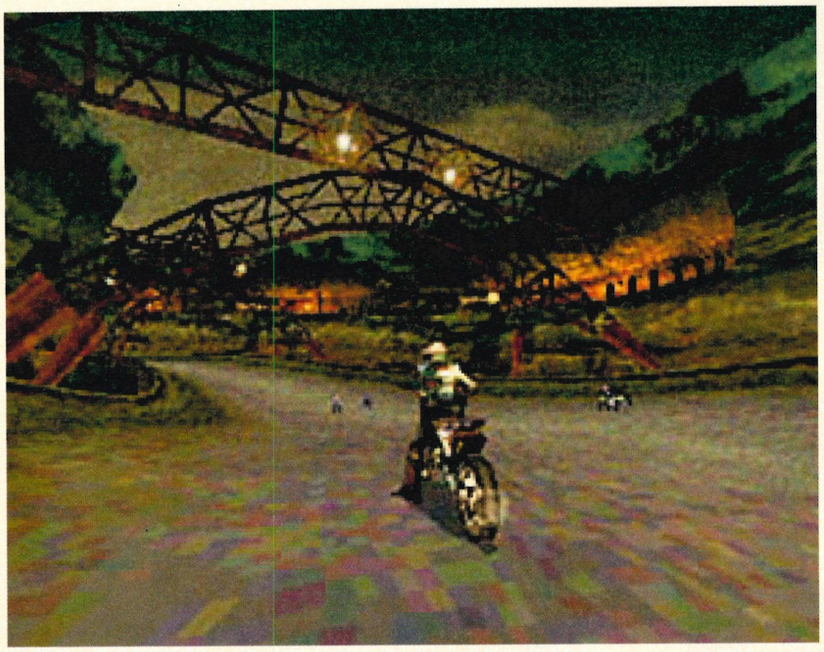










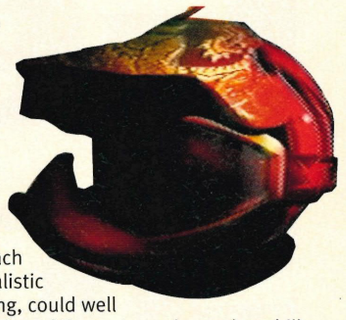




Motocross mayhem with Funcom's forthcoming scrambler...



D.I.R.T



PUBLISHER
TBA

DEVELOPER
FunCom

RELEASED
TBA





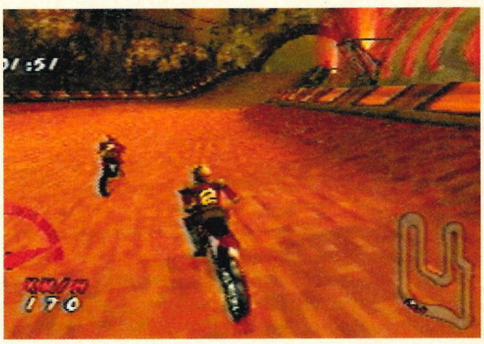
Bloody hell - this one's a tough ride. You can cane it down the straights as fast as you like, but when it comes to the corners, make sure you're on the racing line. This is no easy task as Motocross courses aren't exactly smooth tarmac. You've got to fight all the way to keep on course, or indeed your bike. Hit the kerbs and you're chewing mud. Turning isn't easy - you have to make copious use of the powerslide by hitting the shoulder buttons, but even then if you over-do it you come to a complete standstill - not good if you want to make your next checkpoint. Make sure you don't take a jump too fast either, or again you get mud on your backside. Those who complain Gran Turismo's too easy should watch out for this one.

A lot has changed since our Gamespotting piece in Issue Six. The Artificial Intelligence of the computer-controlled riders has been tweaked, offering a greater challenge, there's a greater variety of terrains in a single course, including muddy sections which are difficult to negotiate and slow the player down, and the camera angles have been adjusted making the two-player game easier to play. Another great feature in two-player mode is that you can opt to boost a slower bike, so a player that's way behind has his speed artificially improved, offering a greater challenge between badly-matched riders. You can, of course, turn this off and race for real.

Knobbly Tyres...

The graphics have also been improved, but as the early version we saw only has two tracks (the finished copy will have more), we can't say how visually varied they'll be. The exhaust smoke looks more realistic, as does the dirt thrown up by your wheels as you skid around the bends. The lighting effects now offer more atmosphere, and there are now multiple surface textures.

Driving games aren't exactly rare on the PSX, but there aren't many bike blasters. D.I.R.T, with its arcadey approach but realistic handling, could well prove king of the motorcycle mayhem hill - just don't ride over said hill too quickly and end up bouncing over the track.

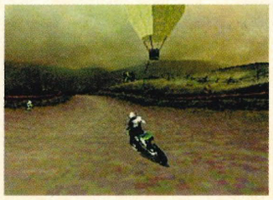


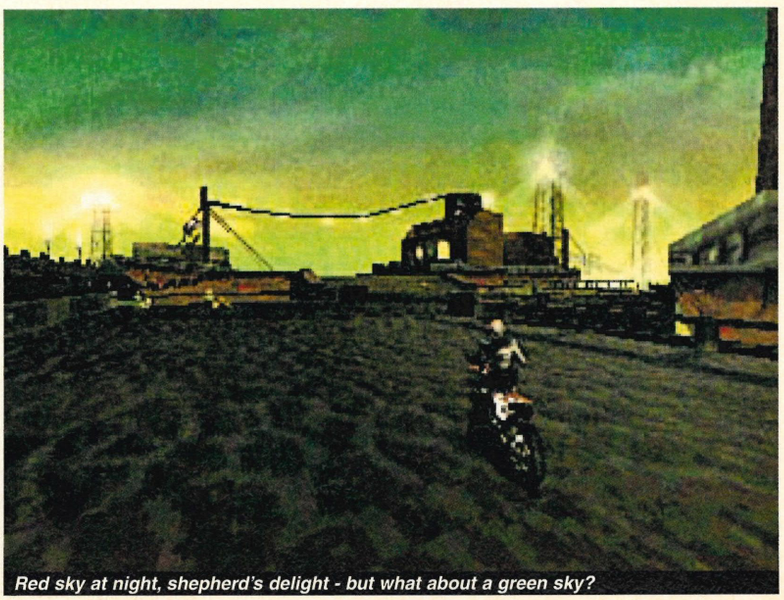
SPLIT DECISIONS...

In D.I.R.T you can choose between vertical and horizontal split-screen modes when battling with a buddy.

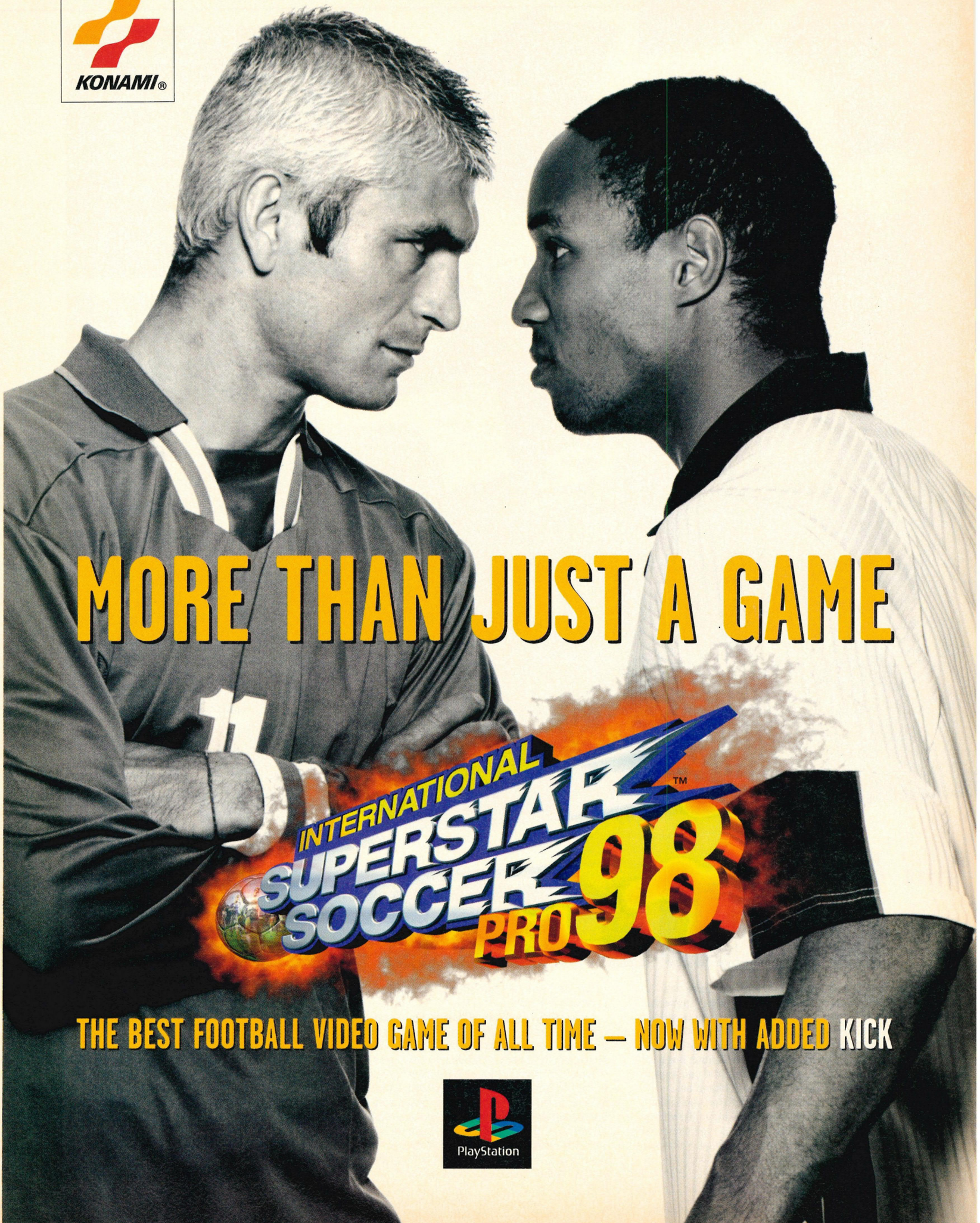








Red sky at night, shepherd's delight - but what about a green sky?


KONAMI®
MORE THAN JUST A GAME
INTERNATIONAL
SUPERSTAR
SOCCER
PRO 98
THE BEST FOOTBALL VIDEO GAME OF ALL TIME – NOW WITH ADDED KICK
PlayStation

PUBLISHER
Psygnosis

DEVELOPER
Visual Sciences

RELEASED
Winter '98



And it's another McLaren one-two...

Formula

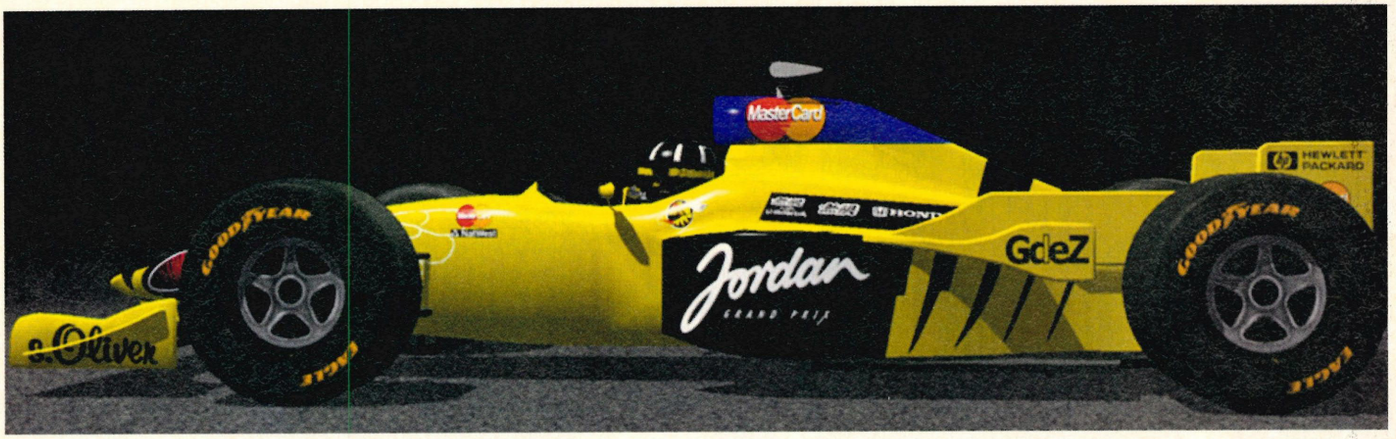
By now, everyone knows the score. It's another Formula 1 game from Psygnosis, building on a tried-and-tested (ahem) formula. Its predecessors (the now-Platinum Formula 1 and last year's Formula 1 '97) sold by the bucket-load despite some serious bugs, so why should you splash out again if you already have one of the earlier games? Read on...

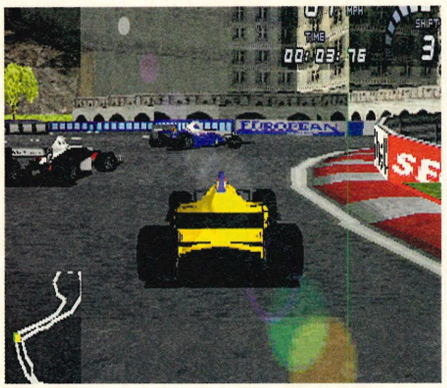
"If you're looking for an updated version of Formula 1 '97, then you're looking in the wrong place", say Psygnosis. "Formula 1 '98 comes with many changes, including a new engine that generates an improved feel to an old favourite. Whilst the gameplay is different and closer to the real thing, Formula 1 '98 retains the essential playability factor".

Interesting - instead of the expected tweak, the game's been stripped down and rebuilt from the bottom up, a bit like Olivier Panis' legs after his smash in Canada. According to Psygnosis, "The latest Formula 1 game has a new fully-functional physics engine modelled on calculations generated from the real dynamics of the cars. To enable better handling at higher speeds the full telemetry of these machines has been recreated". Anyone know what they're on about? "In other words, it's as close to the real thing as you can get without needing a crash helmet". Ah; so that's what they meant. In short, Psygnosis are using read-outs from genuine F1 cars and building their vehicle's handling around them.

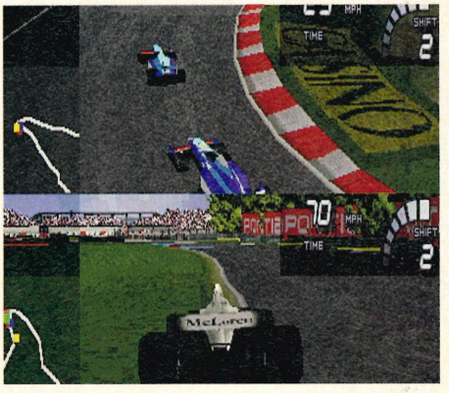
It's the Real Thing...

Oh no, more programmer twaddle. "Copying real movements as opposed to estimating them allows the car to steer from its natural point instead of always from the centre. Lateral weight transfer acts in the same way as a proper differential which in conjunction with the 4-point suspension gives more realistic control". So the steering's realistically transmitted through the front wheels instead of the car turning on a cen-









tral pivot. It appears the program faithfully reproduces the real car's suspension and inertia too, so you spin off realistically.

Indeed, developers Visual Sciences seem to have left no stone unturned in the realism department. Instead of writing an overall routine to cover the car's movement, they've put together several, all of which affect part of the car's workings. For example, the back wheels provide the power, while the front ones steer. Braking obviously affects both wheel routines, as does accelerating or slamming the tyres over the kerb to gain a few seconds. They've even covered the effects of fuel consumption, lightening your car as you go.

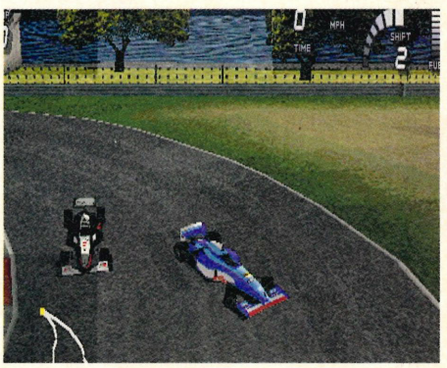
Collision physics have been improved too. Now stricken cars bounce off each other realistically instead of automatically being flipped around. The tracks, beautiful even in the previous games, have been revamped and more detail added.

One of the main criticisms of the previous games was that the computer-controlled cars were crash-crazy critters. They stuck to the racing line like Michael Schumacher stuck to his story that hitting Villeneuve in the final race of last season was an accident. They weren't above barging you out of the way Schumacher-style, either. Thankfully, this problem has been addressed and the AI of the other cars much improved. There's a four-player split-screen mode where up to ten vehicles in total can compete too, so bring all your friends.

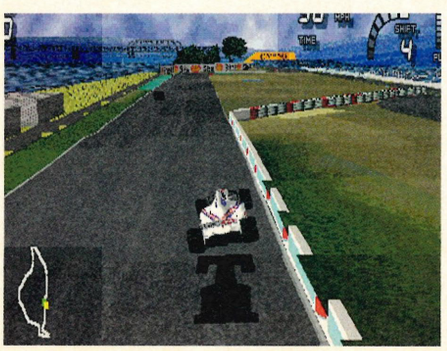
We've yet to see any playable code of Formula 1 '98 so we can't comment on how it's shaping up, but if even half of these improvements work as planned it should be a real blockbuster. But is it worth buying if you've already got the '96 or '97 versions, and is it a better deal than the Platinum offering if you haven't? Watch this space for a full review - soon!

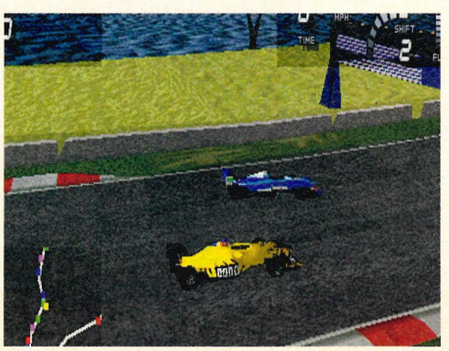


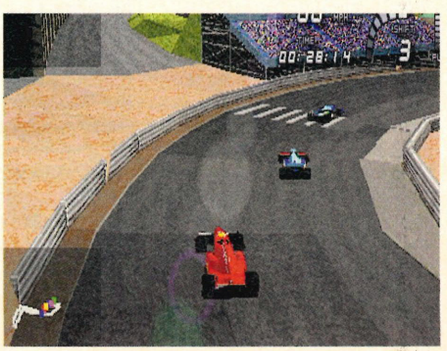


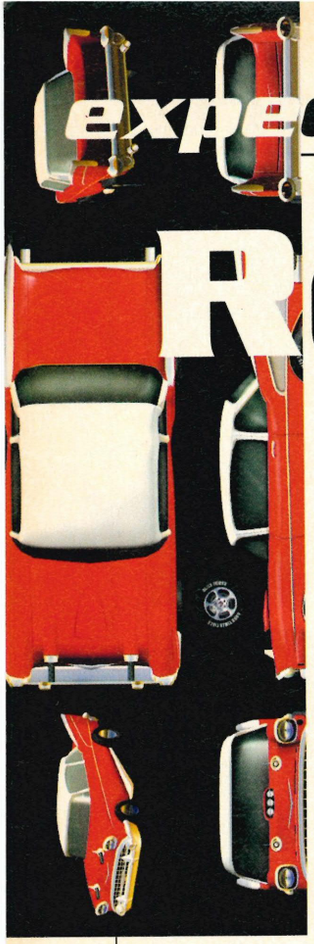


1 '98









PUBLISHER
GT Interactive

DEVELOPER
SingleTrac

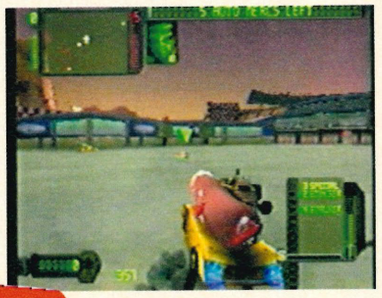
RELEASED
November '98

Rogue Trip

'Cos tourists are money...







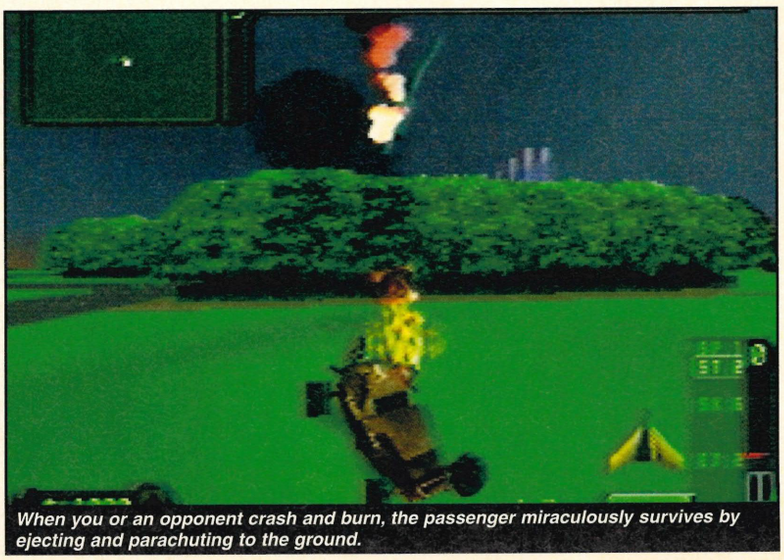








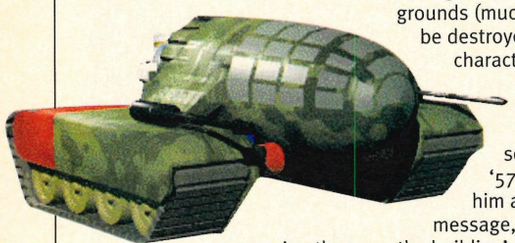




When you or an opponent crash and burn, the passenger miraculously survives by ejecting and parachuting to the ground.

Big Daddy is out there. Using Orwell's Big Brother rather than the late all-in wrestler as his inspiration, the tyrannical overlord has monopolised every holiday resort and tourist spot in the world. It's not easy to take a vacation in this dystopian future.

Some still try, though. Over-indulged tourists laden with dough make desperate attempts to reach various coveted destinations, seemingly to merely take a snapshot



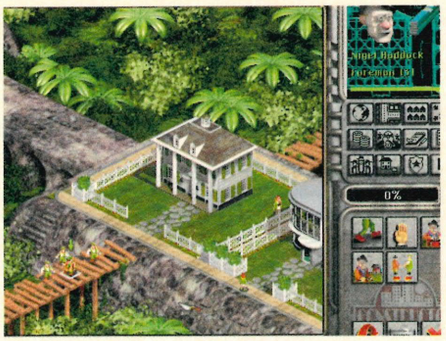
proving they were there. Your task, as a money-hungry automercenary, is to take them where they want to go. Simple, eh? Absolutely not - this is no ordinary taxi ride, and you're no ordinary cabby. Driving an armoured vehicle that's armed to the teeth with various hi-tech weaponry, you must pick up the pleasure-tripper and take him through Dig Daddy's defences to his chosen photo spot. As if this wasn't enough, you also have to contend with the other automercenaries hell-bent on grabbing your fare. Blast them out of the way, especially if they've already picked up the traveller.

Taxi Driver

Developers SingleTrac have built a reputation for weird and imaginative games, and this one's no exception. Attention to detail is evident throughout, both in the backgrounds (much of which can be destroyed), and the characters offered in the game. Watch out for an Elvis impersonator driving a '57 Chevvy. Destroy him and you get the message, 'Elvis has left the building'. Analogue/Dual Shock controllers are catered for, and up to four people can play on a split screen. The link-up cable looks likely to be utilised too.

Vehicle combat usually works well on the PlayStation, with mega-hits like Psygnosis' Destruction Derby games, SingleTrac's own top-selling Twisted Metal and Activision's Vigilante 8, which deserves far more sales than it seems to be achieving. If SingleTrac can get the overall balance of the game right, they could be on to another winner.







PUBLISHER
Acclaim

DEVELOPER
System 3

RELEASED
TBA

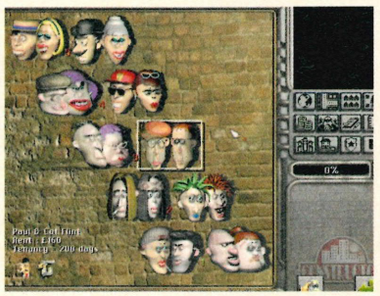
Are you a natural born builder?

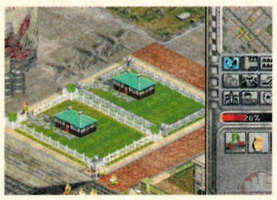
Constructor



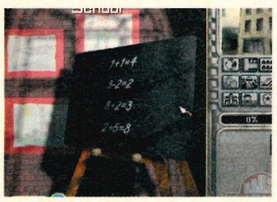








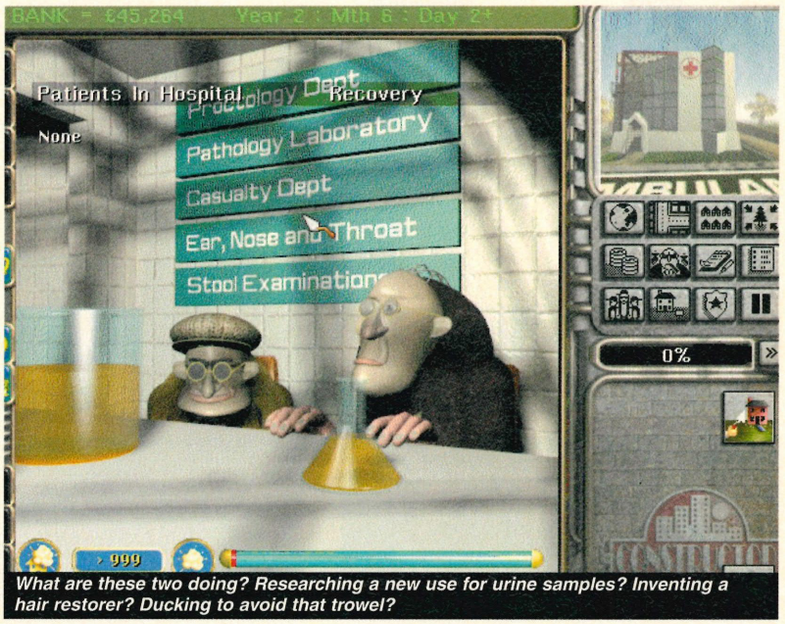












What are these two doing? Researching a new use for urine samples? Inventing a hair restorer? Ducking to avoid that trowel?

Constructor is a strategy and resource management game in the Theme Park/Sim City mould. As a property developer, you start the game with a huge plot of empty land. With a few workers, foremen, repair men and a bit of money, you build a company headquarters and use it to run your emerging empire.

There are five different victory conditions to aim for, namely:

- Financial: Get mega-loaded and become the richest man in the world.
- Ego Mania: Build every structure in the world through successive resource acquisition.
- World Domination: On a limited landscape, put a building in every territory and control the world.
- Utopian State: Create the perfect state, where everyone lives happily ever after.
- Build, Build, Build: Build until you can't build anymore.

Naturally, there are computer-controlled developers trying to achieve these goals before you do, pushing you out of business. Commerce is a cut-throat activity, folks.

People Power

The people who come to live and work in your budding empire are brought to life with some very detailed animation. They can be loosely divided in to two categories; the undesirables like Hippies, Psychos, Clowns and Zombies (!). These push down prices and encourage 'decent' people to leave, though they can be successfully deployed against the opposition.

The desirables include such characters as Kids, Slones, Police and Mr Fixits. These build up the community, creating wealth and defending the cities against migrant undesirables sent in by your opponents.

Constructor is far from original (it's basically a cross between Populous and Sim City 2000), but as the games it borrows from haven't made great in-roads into PlayStation territory (Populous' debut has been delayed more times than the Second Coming and Sim City 2000 wasn't so hot), there's still room for a really good game of this ilk. Whether its execution is enough remains to be seen, but expect a full report next month.



B-Movie



PUBLISHER
GT Interactive

DEVELOPER
King of the Jungle

RELEASED
October '98

The Martians are coming...

The race is on to save the Earth from the alien hordes, travelling from Mars in their flying saucers... Anyone who's into 1950s sci-fi films will recognise the plot. Sure the movies are cheesy, but who can deny their solid retro-kitch entertainment value? Plan 9 From Outer Space, Invasion of the Bodysnatchers, It Conquered the World - all innocent Saturday afternoon fun.

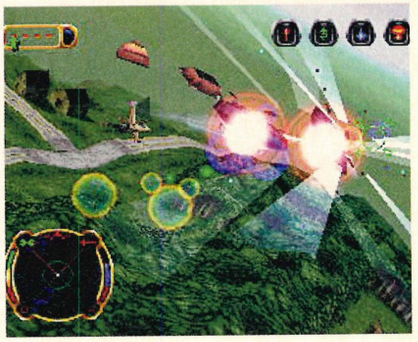
GT's forthcoming frolic is, not surprisingly given the title, a send-up of these black-and-white low-budget flicks. With a vast array of weaponry at your disposal, you must save the innocent wherever possible, or sacrifice them for the greater good if need be. Your space ships take to the skies and blast the Martian monsters while below you position military units and gun turrets to protect the towns and cities caught up in the war. A sort of Defender meets Missile Command. Maybe.

What Do You Think, Professor?

Taking down aliens opens research opportunities - build new, more powerful weapons and take the fight to the Martians. As the game moves on, strategic use of resources, both in R&D and placement of ground troops, becomes increasingly important. You need brains as well as brawn in this battle. That's not to say arcade action freaks will be disappointed - the game runs at 50-60 frames a second and tests your reflexes to the limits.

GT claim that because of the non-linear gameplay, no level plays the same twice. The secret areas and ships certainly provide an incentive to return to already-completed stages. A lot of work has been put into the alien AI as well, which increases as the game goes on. Watch out for the multiple-perspective in-game cut scenes too.

B-Movie hits the shelves at the end of October, just in time for the inevitable Autumn re-runs of Lost in Space.

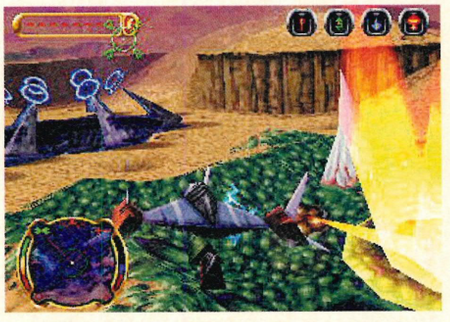








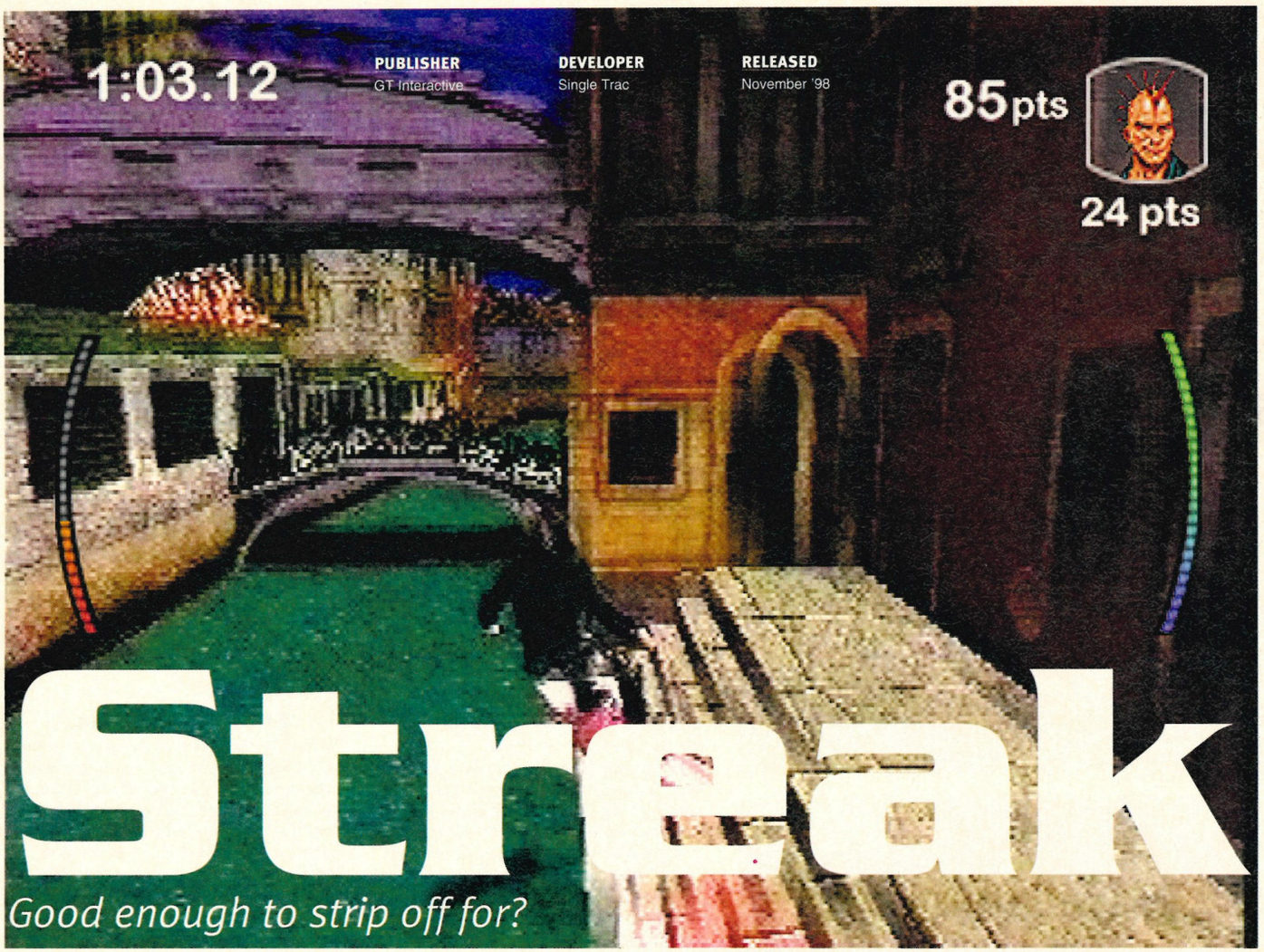








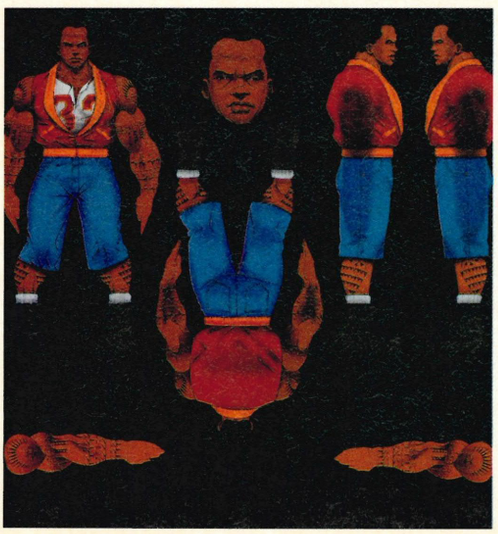












Fans of 2000AD's character Chopper Shakespeare will be instantly familiar with the concepts behind this one. You race a miraculous hoverboard called a GEMBlade, a sort of surfboard with an anti-gravity motor that lets it fly. Sound familiar? Well, Psygnosis have pursued a similar theme with their forthcoming Psybadek, so Streak looks like having a real fight on its hands.

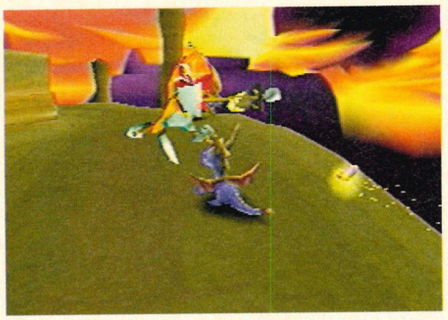
The GEMBlades can hover above any surface, be it asphalt, water, ice or concrete. You never actually touch these surfaces, but you do leave a short-lived vapour trail in your wake - could this be the eponymous Streak, or will a buxom young bird take her top off and run across the track? Bad luck - the title refers to the vapour trail.

Because the board can hover above anything, GEMBlade races take place anywhere. The sport itself is an underground and often shady one. The races take you through city streets, down sewer tunnels, into a graveyard weaving in and out of the headstones and even through a shopping mall.

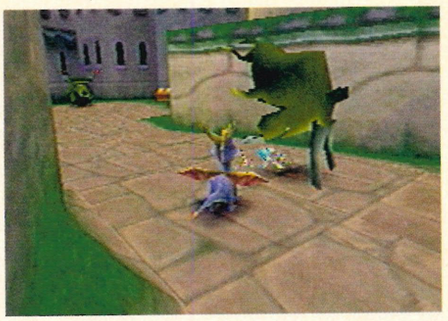
Ace Racing?

The game seems to be almost finished. A few cosmetic changes need to be made, a few incidental graphics added, but the gameplay's basically there. Despite boasting speeds of 'up to 70mph', the game feels a little slow at the moment - perhaps a greater feeling of speed will be offered by the final version. The analogue controls need tweaking too - they're too sensitive for the courses, making it difficult to stay away from the walls while using it. The tall, thin characters are ideal for a split-screen mode, though, so it will appeal to those who like a two-player game.

Minor quibbles aside, Streaks shaping up pretty well. Only time, and next month's reviews, will tell whether GT or Psygnosis win the battle of the boards, though.







PUBLISHER
Sony

DEVELOPER
Insomniac Games

RELEASED
November '98

Spyro the Dragon

Cute dragons - don't ya just love 'em?





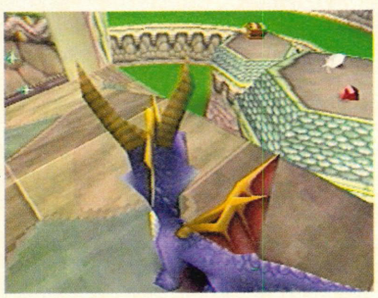
Cute platform games have a real habit of making us want to vomit all over our PlayStations, or at least they used to until we got our mitts on the demo version of Spyro.

Before we go into detail about how bloody good this game is going to be, we'd just like to stress that although the screenshots make the game out to be 'just another Croc' or 'yet another Mario clone', when you see the game moving and play it for yourself you see it's quite the opposite. The highly-detailed character graphics and animations are by far and away the best yet seen on any format, and make Mario 64 on N64 look relatively basic. To go as low as to attempting to compare this game to Croc is a sacrilege, and is presently a hanging offence in some southern states of America, so don't get any ideas. Okay, so you have to move around the levels collecting treasure and finding keys to unlock chests, but don't let the cute look fool you. This game is going to be the business, and Sony knows it - they certainly wouldn't put their name to it if it wasn't worth its weight in gold.

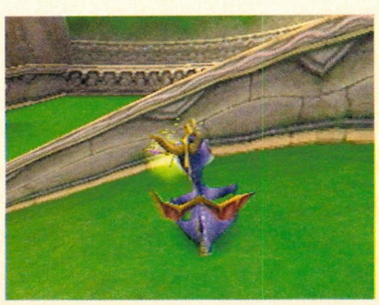
Enter the Dragon...

Watching Spyro pad around on the grass and charging head-long into his enemies who stand knock-kneed with teeth chattering is absolutely remarkable, not to mention the sound of his hooves on the grass. It really gives you a worm-glow deep down - it's clear to see that this game is so polished, you'll be able to see your face in it.

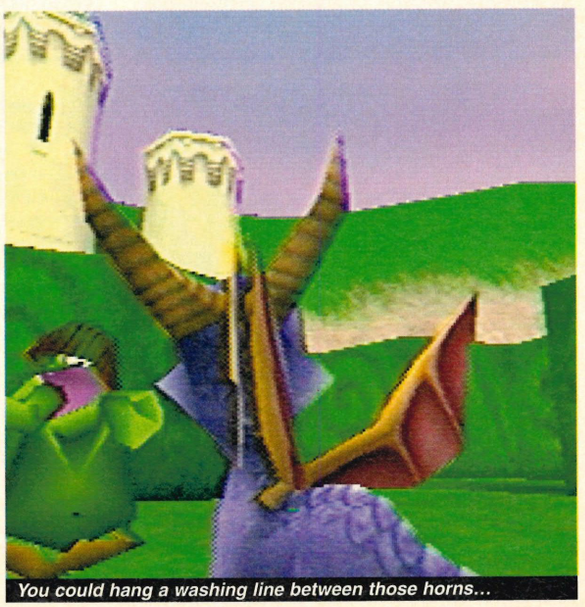
To match his boyish good looks, Spyro has a really cute voice, rather like an American adaptation of Oliver Twist (please sir, can I have some more?), which is put to great use when he talks to other characters in the game, but of course you'll have to see it for yourself to appreciate what we're saying. With any luck, the release of Spyro the Dragon will give the 3D platform genre the boot up the ass it needs, and we'll be seeing a lot more games of this standard in the future; stay tuned for more.











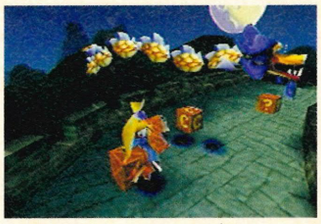
You could hang a washing line between those horns...









Crash Bandicoot 3

This is warped, baby!

PUBLISHER
Sony

DEVELOPER
Naughty Dog

RELEASED
November '98



Cortex is back once more, with his quest to take over the world. After receiving a bit of a rollocking for failing on his two previous attempts, to be able to carry out his dastardly deed he must find all the gems and crystals he's foolishly lost throughout time. Luckily, our favourite superhero ain't havin' none of it and he's on the case this time with his little sister Coco. Is it a case of 'here we go again', or might we be talking 'Wahoo baby'? Just read on and decide for yourself.

That's right, ginger-boy is making yet another appearance on our little grey box of joy, but surely it's all been done in the past two outings? Crash can't come up with the goods a third time running, can he? Well it seems he just might thanks to the boys on the Naughty Dog development team, because not only do we have the addition of another playable character, Coco his luscious sister, but Crash has had some wicked new moves added to his repertoire. The ability to double-jump, belly-flop and even use a missile launcher are only a handful of the moves you can expect in CB 3, along with flying biplanes, scuba diving and riding rawhide on backs of tigers in his quest to stop the warped and wacko Cortex.

Law and Disorder...

The game's levels no longer take place in a designated order. Instead the first five levels are all open for you to enter and exit at any time, allowing you to attempt them in any order you like and even return to them as you please find the gallons of secret stuff you previously missed.

CB 3 is also completely Dual Shock compatible, allowing the fluid 3D control and feedback that really enhances the gameplay. You also notice from the screenshots the levels are much wider than the previous games, allowing greater scope for character movement also allowing more action to be crammed into the levels.

Along with much bigger and detailed levels this time around, you can also see a lot more of the action in the distance, with absolutely no pop-up or fogging to ruin the view. This can only be down to Naughty Dog's excellent programming skills, and there can be no more excuses from other developers saying that it's just not possible when it clearly is. All in all, Crash Bandicoot 3 is shaping up to be a real winner, so keep your eyes peeled and your joypad warm.

Activate '98

Six hot new Activision games are coming our way - best check 'em out...

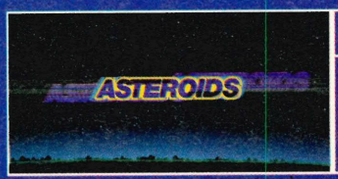
Activision are going places. Their PSX offerings have improved steadily, culminating in the 92%-rated Vigilante 8, and their schedule in the run-up to Christmas seems set to continue the trend.

"We want to become one of the largest, most profitable and most respected software companies in the world", said Activision's Senior Vice President International, Bob Dewer. "The last six months have re-established Activision in the industry, expanding from a PC publisher to a world-renowned producer on consoles too. We have a growing release schedule and have built one of the most powerful distribution arms in the world". With Activision seemingly growing in confidence by the day and producing ever-more ambitious titles, who could doubt him?

This month the Activision team staged Activate '98, a showcase for their forthcoming releases. We checked them out...

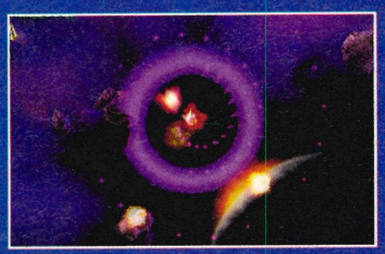
Asteroids: The Next Millennium

DEVELOPER
Quickdraw Developments



ASTEROIDS: THE NEXT MILLENNIUM IS...

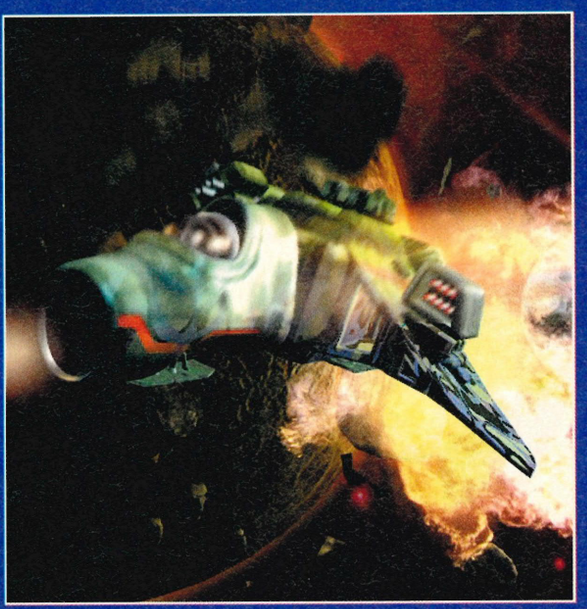
...Asteroids! This retro update takes the 1979 Atari game into the 90s with better graphics (obviously), a progressive level structure and upgradeable weapons.

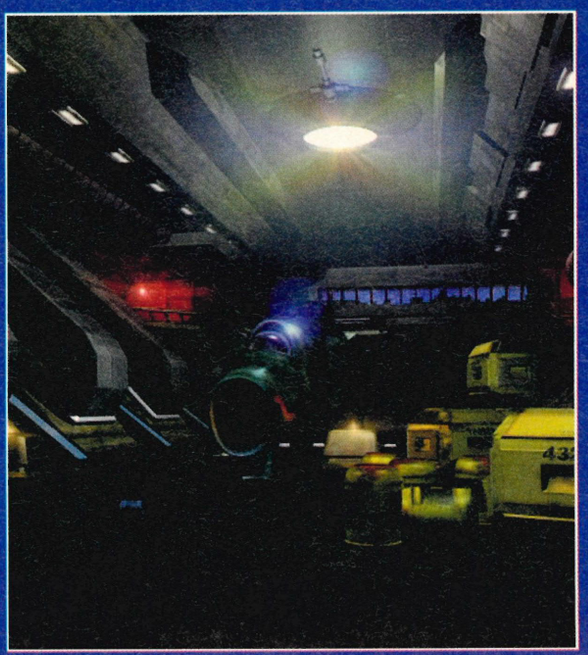












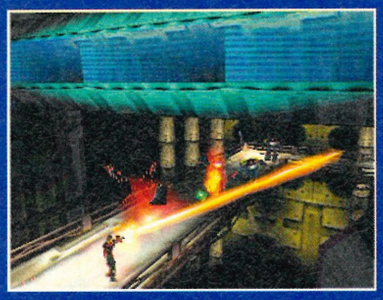
Four mega-corporations mine space, recovering valuable ore from the eponymous asteroids. As a young recruit, you can make money, upgrade your weapons and improve your ship. Unlike the vector original, some asteroids home in on you, some re-grow when hit and some are indestructible - blast them into a black hole instead of shattering them into dust.

Activision's Asteroids update was originally going to be 3D, but it was wisely decided that this just wouldn't be Asteroids. The eight-way scrolling was also abandoned in favour of the classic wrap-around screen, where shots, ships and asteroids that leave the screen reappear on the opposite side. The physics and control of the original are retained - rotate your craft by pressing Left and Right, and if you fire the engines, inertia takes affect when you release the button.

There are now 15 types of enemy ships, including Vampire craft which cling to you and drain your power. Your own ship boasts smart bombs, mines, homing mines and differing shields - you need them all to tackle the end-of-stage baddies which can dominate up to 2/3 of the screen. Other new features include black holes which draw you in and wormholes which take you from one place to another without using the unpredictable Hyperspace function.

The original game is included as a bonus, but you have to earn it by completing the game. No doubt a cheat mode will take you straight there too. Time allowing, the programming team hope to allow players competing in two-player mode to link their ships, as seen in previous Asteroids-update Blasteroids.

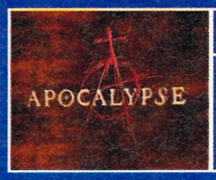
The game is Dual Shock-compatible, and will probably sell for around £25 - the exact price has yet to be decided, however.





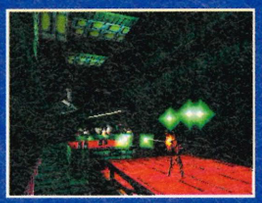

DEVELOPER Neversoft Entertainment

Apocalypse



APOCALYPSE IS...

...a film-licensed shoot-'em-up for the 90s! Using a Tomb Raider-style perspective, you must guide Kincaide (Bruce Willis' character from the film) and blast your way to the end-of-game baddies, the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse.





Musicians and bands are playing a bigger and better role in PlayStation games of late. Not only are thumpin' chart tracks often licensed for use in games, the artists themselves are increasingly featured. There was the Spice Girls' game a few months back, the forthcoming Iron Maiden-inspired Ed Hunter (which, like Apocalypse, also features the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse) and now Apocalypse, with up-and-coming grunge singer POE. Not only does her forthcoming single Control introduce the game, but she also features as one of the Four Horsemen you face at the end. Her half-hearted heavy metal and two-note vocal style might not be to everyone's taste, but her mean-and-moody image makes her an excellent game baddie.

Apocalypse has been in development for some time, but now its technical strengths are much improved from the last version paraded before the press. It runs very fast, with no slow-down when multiple baddies invade the screen (which is often), and there's no clipping or fogging. The main character, Bruce Willis, is incredibly detailed, even down to his bald spot, and for once the digitised face looks like it belongs there. Bruce himself has recorded over 800 lines offered during the game, eg. 'These guys need more lead in their diet'.

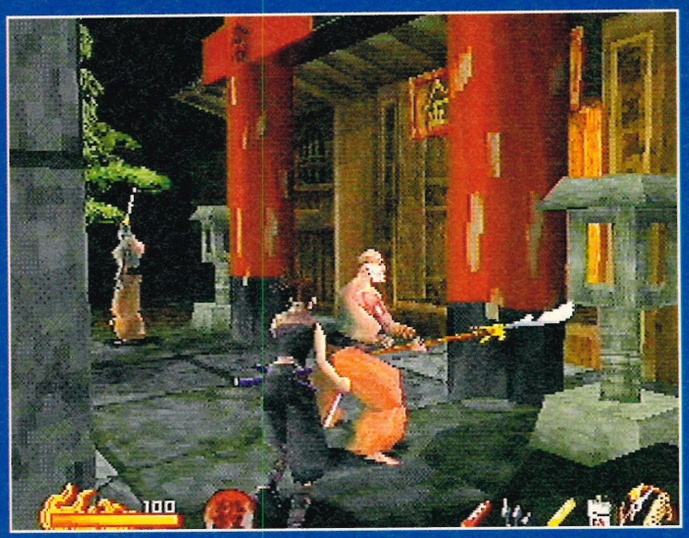
Further musical inspirations are offered by video walls passed during the game, showing FMVs of bands, to be licensed from Warner. No names are yet confirmed, though. The PSX pulls the FMV and sound off the CD alongside the game, and again there's no slow-down. This is a great touch, but we hope the programmers let you turn them off in case the bands featured are not to the player's taste.

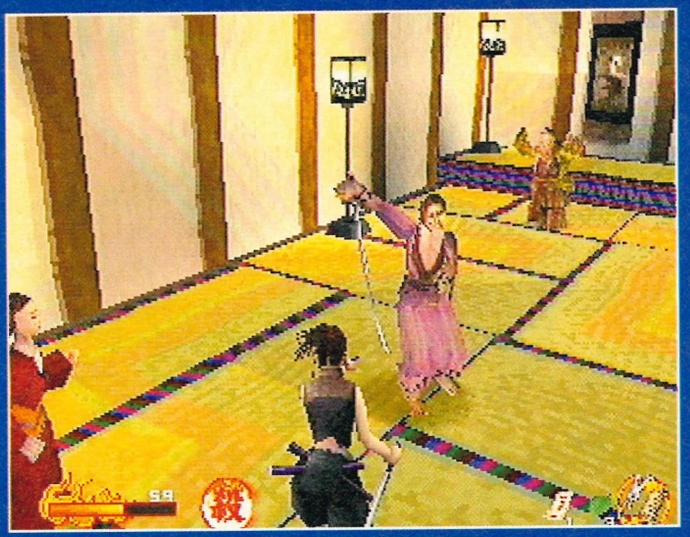
The game's a single-minded blaster - there are no puzzles here, but one or two Tomb Raider-style platform sections are included. There's a huge variety in levels. The Prison stage is dark and claustrophobic, the Night Club open and colourful, and you even get to fight in the Oval Office. There are to be eight levels in all, and four boss fights.

The linear path through the game is disguised by divergent routes which take you different ways to your goal. Look out for sneaky combat tactics such as trashing an entire army of baddies by blasting the pillars which hold the roof over their heads too. The game offers full freedom of movement within the environment, so you never feel artificially restricted.

The version of the game we saw runs very well, with no noticeable bugs, so the Christmas release date will probably be met. Activision are expecting a BBFC rating of '15'.







DEVELOPER Aquire

Tenchu: Stealth Assassins

TENCHU STEALTH ASSASSINS 天誅

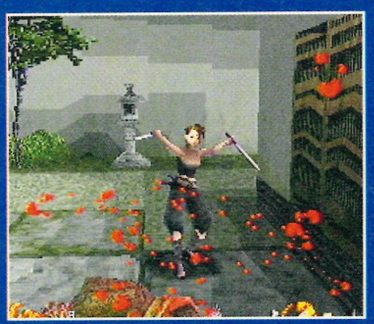
TENCHU IS...

...a third-person beat-'em-up adventure hybrid where the player must carry out a series of objective-based missions using brains as well as brawn.

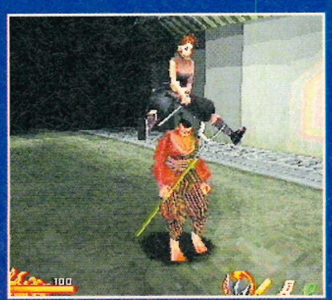


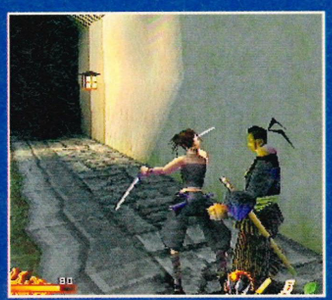


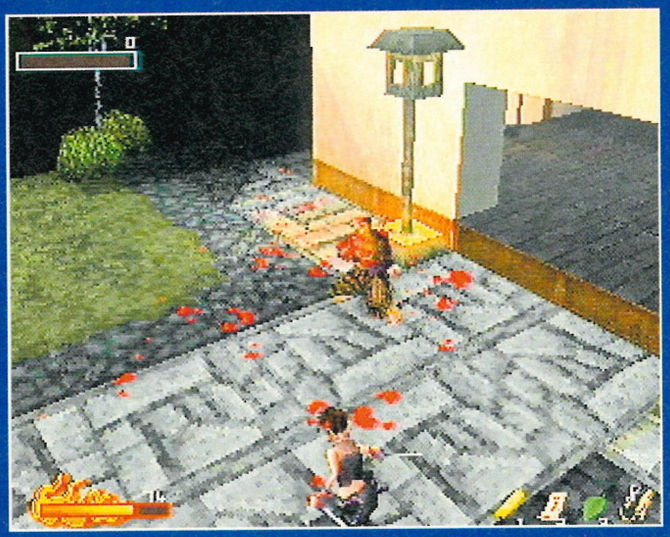














We reviewed this one as an import game back in Issue Five. Scoring 85%, our only real 'criticism' (a term I use loosely) was that the mission objectives and storyline was lost on non-Japanese speakers. Not any more - the game's coming to these shores with a vengeance, and looks even better.

As well as translated text and speech, the UK version also features two new levels, more aggressive AI, a new movie end sequence, a revamped key meter and new secret items. Unfortunately the shurikens (ninja throwing stars) have been replaced by throwing knives for legal reasons - presumably the powers-that-be consider knives less dangerous.

Each mission has a set objective which you must pursue Tomb Raider-style while battling the baddies á là Soul Blade. Points are lost for being spotted (hence 'Stealth Assassins'), and for killing innocents. By using spells you can adopt a disguise, but guard dogs still recognise you. This is very useful as you can go for instant fatalities if you surprise an opponent, cutting off his head or performing a Frankensteiner-style flip. There are also aggressive spells to be found, eg. the Dog spell which summons a mutt who attacks for you.

Tenchu is one-player only, and expected to hit the shelves with an '18' rating around October.











DEVELOPER
Syrox Developments

X-Men

X-MEN IS...

...a 3D beat-'em-up featuring Marvel's X-Men characters such as Wolverine, Brood, Iceman, Gambit, Mr Sinister and Storm.

This one's at a very early stage - it won't go on sale until Spring of next year. The basics are there; the team are now developing the characters and environments.

Each character will have around 96 moves and combos, including those unique to the X-Men character in question. By featuring time line disruptions found in the Age of Apocalypse comic series, the developers have greatly increased the characters' move range. The fighters can slip into their 'alternative' personas for around 30 seconds at a time, changing appearance and utilising moves found only in that particular comic storyline. Marvel have allowed the team to include Apocalypse moves for characters which weren't featured in the series, eg. Wolverine can use Energy Blasts.

Each fighter has personal Fatalities with which to dispatch a stricken foe, but there are also Stage Fatalities, eg. inflict the final blow over a patch of ice in Iceman's stage and a shark breaks the ice and swallows the defeated superhero. Each environment has unique conditions which impede all but the 'home' character, eg. Iceman's world is slippery and Gambit's contains fire hazards. There's also a story mode with FMV between fights.

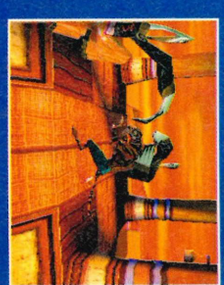


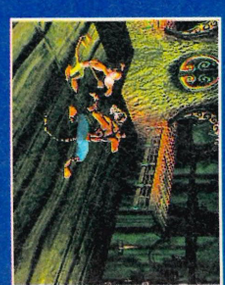
DEVELOPER Hammerhead

Quake





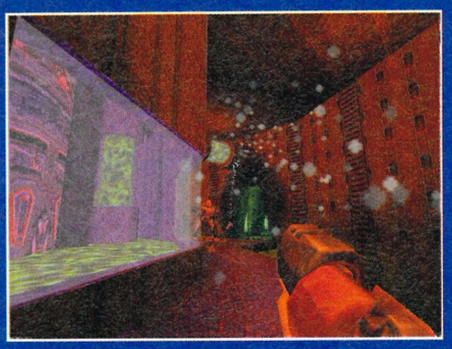


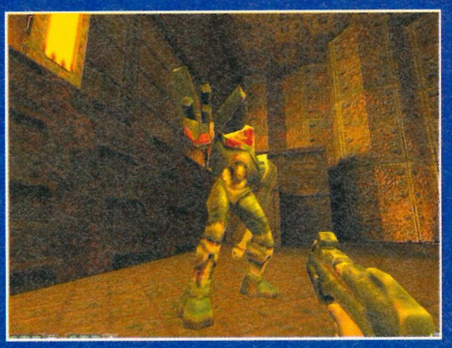


This one's being put together by ex-Crystal Dynamics programmers Lyle Hall and Noel Hughes of Gex fame, so expect a slick product. The Dragon is crushing the animal clans, and you must stop him. You (as the eponymous T'ai) explore the other clan's worlds, fighting animals, meeting challenges and learning new skills by beating the bosses. Abilities include the Monkey Bounce, Crane Hover and Leopard Rush. At first you only have a limited arsenal, but by the time you face The Dragon you've learned over 100 moves. As well as your inevitable Health bar you also have a Chi rating which offers magical strikes and powers spells when found.

T'ai Fu features 22 levels, 13 stages and nine bosses. It's a pure beat-'em-up, with no platforms or puzzle solving. Hopefully, by the time it's released (for Christmas), the main character won't look quite so much like the Frosties-crunching Tony the Tiger, but will still be grrrrrrreat!









Some believed id's PC blaster Quake II was impossible on the PlayStation. Activision thought differently, and contacted Hammerhead, developers of Psygnosis' fun-but-limited car-based 3D shooter Shadowmaster, who put together a Quake II PSX demo. id, owners of the Quake name, were blown away by it and a deal was quickly struck.

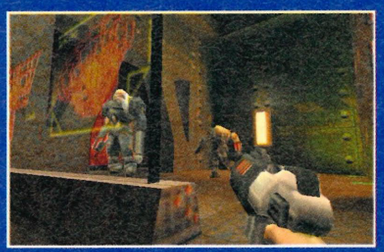
id are heavily involved in the development of the game, especially in the designs of the levels. This is excellent news for the PSX owner - who better to oversee the PlayStation opus than the company which invented the game?

There are many hundreds of polygons in each character, making the creatures look extremely realistic. There's no loss of speed, though - the game still runs at 30 frames a second. Although the PlayStation conversion is true to the original PC game, it's not an exact copy - some levels have been modified, and completely new ones added. All the PC's weapons will be there, and Hammerhead might add a new one. The N64 version of the game is limited by cart size to 24 missions, though PSX owners will enjoy far more. We might also get an on-screen map, a feature not included in the PC original.

Quake II features a two-player deathmatch mode, with four players via a Multi Tap a distinct possibility. The link-up cable is unlikely to be utilised, though. Hammerhead are hoping to allow the CPU to control deathmatch warriors, enabling you to play on your own or at least with more foes than friends.

As you can see from the screenshots, the game's looking pretty hot. You ain't seen nothing yet - wait until you see them move! The final version will boast even better graphics too, with lens flare, texture mapping reflections on the weapon and muzzle flashes. The player's shots already light up dark corridors in an impressively realistic fashion.

With eight to ten people working on it constantly, Quake to is coming together fast - very fast. With any luck, it should be ready for Christmas.

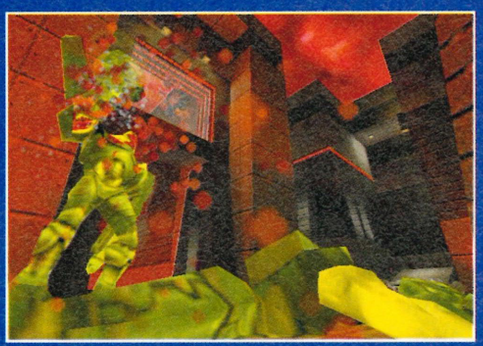




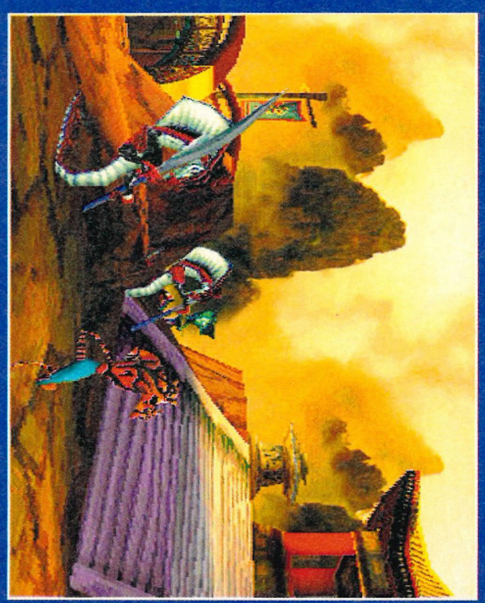
QUAKE IS...

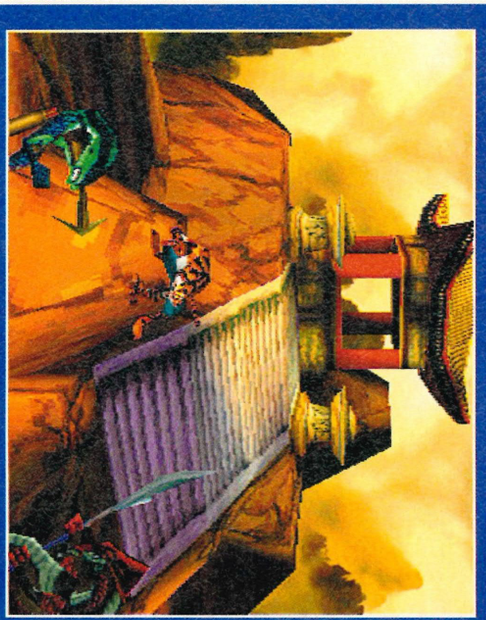
...a sci-fi shoot-'em-up in the Doom mould, where you play a hard-assed space marine sent to save mankind from the screaming alien hordes who've invaded Earth. Quake represents the next stage in Doom's development, offering greater freedom - for example, you can look up and down and jump small steps. It's by Doom creators id too, so you can bet you're in for a wild ride.

II









T'ai Fu

DEVELOPER Dreamworks Interactive

T'AI FU IS...

...a scenario-based beat-'em-up where you explore the territories of other animal kung fu clans, fighting foes and learning their moves before tackling the big bad-die, The Dragon.

So that's what Activision have in store for us. Stay tuned for updates and reviews on these fine-looking games - soon!

PUBLISHER	DEVELOPER	GENRE	RELEASED	VERSION	PRICE	PLAYERS	PERIPHERALS
Midway	Eurocom	3D Beat-'em-up	September '98	UK	£39.99	1-2	Memory Card





As Scorpion turns away, David 'Jarek' Beckham kicks him in the back of the legs. What a tosser!

Mortal Kombat 4

Finish him...













The wait is finally over. After what seemed like forever and a day, the next instalment in the gore-laden Mortal Kombat series has arrived on PlayStation, and EPM bring you the EXCLUSIVE review of the UK edition. Every 'review' you've read so far has covered an import CD, whether the magazine admitted it or not. But has it been worth the wait?

Mortal Kombat is one of the few genuine videogame legends. When the original was released it immediately caught the imagination of the gameplaying public and critics alike, not to mention all manner of censors who thought the up-front blood and gore was simply too much for impressionable youngsters. It was inevitable, with the level of success the original game enjoyed, that a sequel would soon follow, and it did - Mortal Kombat 2 improved on the graphics, sound, playability and added even more blood. In fact many gamers still rate this version as the best MK game so far. Next came the cunningly-named Mortal Kombat 3, and this is where things started to go a wrong. As the sequels began to pile up with MK3, Ultimate MK3 and Mortal Kombat Trilogy, the quality of the game itself seemed to be falling away. When the final update-version of MK3 was released (MK Trilogy), it was obvious to everyone outside of Midway that the series was flagging; it needed a boost, something to relight the fire of the gaming world and this boost was always going to come from going 3D.

Every character in the game has a weapon they can use at any time

The all-new viewpoint that MK4 adopts is the standard fare we've come to expect from 3D fighters like Tekken and the Virtua Fighter series. However, MK4 boasts a true 3D environment that allows you to actually move around as you fight. In addition to the new 3D game engine, Mortal Kombat 4 also has another major new feature; every character in the game has a weapon which they can use at any time through out the bout. Each has his or her own weapon of choice, and can use it in a number of different ways. While this may seem like a gimmick, it actually changes the way in which the game is played quite drastically, giving MK4 a new edge and something new to grab the interest.

Fight!

Now anyone who has seen and played the arcade version of MK4

FINISH HIM!

Once you've got your opponent to the brink of defeat, it's time to pull of one of those gore-filled finishing moves that make Mortal Kombat stand out from the crowds. The finishing attacks in MK4 fall into one of three categories; let's check out all three in turn...

Fatalities
Fatalities are what make Mortal Kombat the game it is. Once you're opponent's energy is completely drained, the words 'finish him' appear on the screen. This is the cue for you to input the Fatality code then sit back and watch your foe being torn to pieces - literally. Each character has two of these 'regular' Fatalities, and they can be performed on any stage you like; you must just know the button combination and the distance at which to pull off the move, though. Check out the screenshots in the sequence here as Reptile attacks a helpless victim...

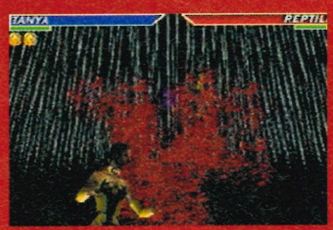
The Prison Stage Fatality
The prison stage is the one with the huge fan rotating in the background, and this should give away what is going to happen to your foe with this Fatality. The code is different for each character, and must be performed when standing close to your foe.

Goro Stage Fatality
The second Stage Fatality takes place in Goro's Layer. Again the code is different for each character and once again you must be standing close to your foe. Check out the screens in this sequence and you'll see the surprise this stage has for the losing warrior.

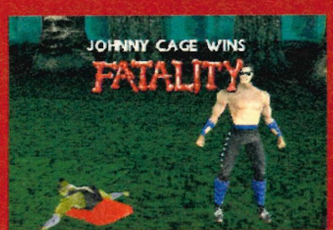


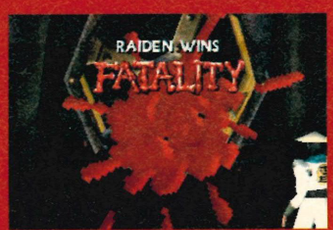














CHOOSE YOUR WARRIOR

Mortal Kombat 4 features 15 kombatants. Some, like Liu Kang, have fought in a MK tournament before



REIKO
Very little is know about Reiko or his past, other than the fact that he was once a general in Shinnok's army. Could it be that he has entered the tournament to score revenge?



SCORPION
Scorpion still has the classic 'get over here' spear attack, and this move makes up a large part of his fighting style. While not as formidable as he once was, the hell-spawned spectre is still deadly.



SHINNOK
With the defeat of Shao Kahn the way was clear for a new tyrant, and Shinnok fulfils this role perfectly. After being condemned to the Neither Realm by Rayden thousands of years ago, he has had plenty of time to plot his revenge.



LIU KANG
This is the raining Mortal Kombat champion and the man who put paid the threat of Shao Kahn on more than one occasion in the past. Liu Kang has all the old moves, so as you'd expect, he's a force to be reckoned with.









(and by this point it's safe to assume that's almost everyone), you already know what to expect from the PlayStation version - it's an almost faultless conversion, which when you consider all the fuss Midway made about the power and speed of the Zeus hardware used in arcade machine, is quite a feat. Before programming started, many critics argued the PlayStation would have problems coping with the complex 3D graphics, the large number of polygons, the high frame rate and overall smooth feel of the coin-op. Midway and the guys at EuroCom (the team responsible for programming the PSX version) have proved the doubters wrong. In addition to the almost-faultless graphics, the sound effects and music in the game are also pretty-much spot-on and easily recreate the mood of the arcade machine, although as this is a CD game this is only to be expected.

Cosmetic qualities aside, the PSX version of MK4 also has all the features of its arcade parent. For example, all the 15 characters are here to be selected right from the start, so you've got all the old faves like Scorpion and Sub-Zero to use and all-new warriors like Jarek and Fujin can be learned and mastered. For a full run-down of the characters in MK4, take a look at the 'choose your warrior' box.

Another change to MK4 is the nature of finishing moves. Gone are the Babalities, Animalites and Friendships we saw in MK3. Mortal Kombat 4 focuses on what the game is really all about - killing your opponent. To this end, each character has two regular Fatalities he or she can perform anywhere and two Stage Fatalities. For the finishing moves in MK4 the Midway team have gone back to the sort of thing we saw in the very first Mortal Kombat game; lots of very gory and, for the most part at least, believable Fatality attacks. My fave is when Reptile leaps onto his opponent and then precedes to eat their face off in a shower of blood and skin - nice...

As any Mortal Kombat fan will tell you, a game in the series simply wouldn't be complete without a few hidden characters and the PSX version of MK4 doesn't disappoint on this score either. You can find three hidden kombatants locked deep within the CD, and just like the arcade machine, working out how to unlock them takes much time and practise.

Toasty!

So at this point I can hear you all asking, 'where's the catch'? Surely all this quality must come at a price? The answer is, unfortunately, 'yes', and the price is poor loading times. This has always been a problem for PSX conversions of the Mortal Kombat series in the past and I'm afraid it has reared it ugly head once again here. You can expect to wait for anything up to 30 seconds before the fights start, and more time is spent waiting for things like the title screen, the character match-up screen, etc, and when you die you must sit through the whole process again. Although this is always going to be a problem when converting a game with the stunning visuals and sheer amount of information that MK4 uses, it doesn't change the fact that it's









FUJIN
Fujin is also known as the God of Wind, and is a fellow elder of Rayden's. Those of you who have played Mortal Kombat Mythologies: Sub Zero have meet him before as an end-of-level boss. A good all-round character who has lots of potential.

JAREK
Jarek is a friend of the late Kano. They were both members of the Black Dragon organisation, and worked together on a number of illegal raids. In terms of gameplay, Jarek is very similar to his fellow criminal Kano, so power is the order of the day here.

JAX
The muscle-bound Major Jax returns to the Mortal Kombat tournament in this fourth instalment, with all the same strength and power that have become his hallmark over previous games. If you're going to control Jax you should focus on his strength, as his speed is poor.

JOHNNY CAGE
The Hollywood superstar returns to his fourth Mortal Kombat tournament with the intention of kicking some ass and getting the plot to his next movie. The way to play Cage hasn't changed since the original game - move in on your foe, attack then retreat -speed and power.

and others, eg. Fujin, are new to this deadly game. Take a look to discover which of your old favourites live to fight another day.



QUAN CHI

Quan Chi is one of the new warriors to join the fray and he is set to make quite an impression. He has some excellent special moves that make him very tough to beat.



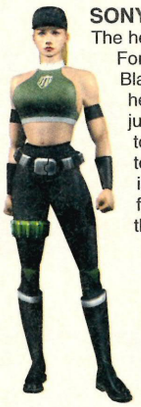
TANYA

Little is know about Tanya, but it is believed that see is connected with Shinnok in some way and that she has a struck a bargain with him, power and riches in return for the life of Liu Kang. Can she fulfil her half of the bargain and collect her reward?



SUB-ZERO

The ice-cold assassin is once again enters the realms of Mortal Kombat. Since he murdered Scorpion, his actions and direction has become confused and his ninja clan disbanded - could this be the final tournament for Sub-Zero?



SONYA

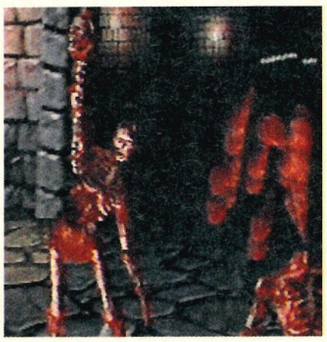
The head of the Special Forces unit, Lt Sonya Blade once again finds herself on the trail of justice that leads her to a Mortal Kombat tournament, and she is still one of the fastest characters in the game.

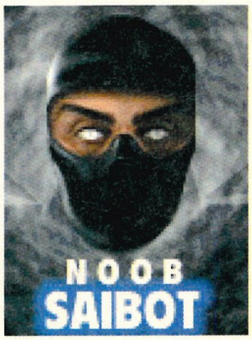
HIDDEN KONTENDERS

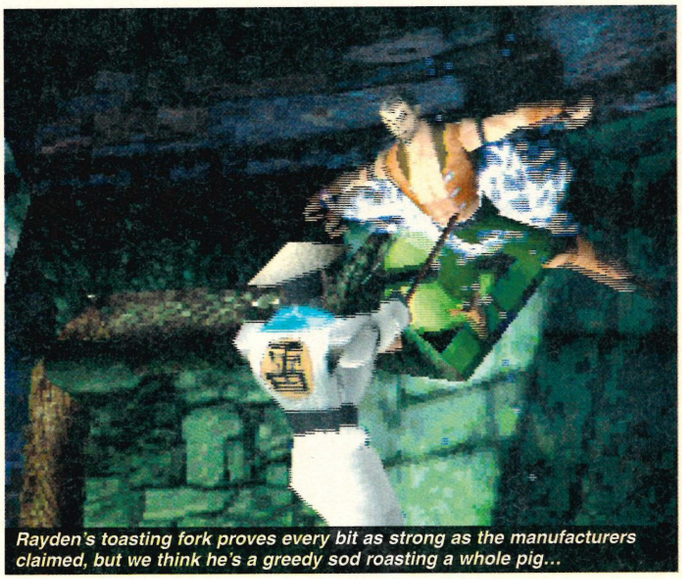
Anyone who keeps their ear to the ground and up to date with arcade news already knows the three hidden characters as in the PSX version of MK4. They're exactly the same in the arcade version, but just in case you don't know 'em, here's the list in full.

First up is the infamous Noob Saibot. After a short absence the shadowed warrior returns to the Mortal Kombat arena stronger than ever. Next is a character called Meat. This guys is new to Mortal Kombat and has to be seen to be believed - you'll understand why when you see him. The third and probably the most exciting hidden character is the one that MK fans have been calling out for; Goro makes his return to the tournament in awesome 3D.









Rayden's toasting fork proves every bit as strong as the manufacturers claimed, but we think he's a greedy sod roasting a whole pig...

bloody annoying and distracts from the fun of the game itself. This is shame.

All in all, Midway and EuroCom have made an excellent job of a seemingly impossible task. Everything that made the arcade game so good has been crammed in to the PSX version. However, it's also gotta' be said that when you consider the competition MK4 is up against, and with the official Tekken 3 release looming every closer, this latest MK game was never going to be top dog. Mortal Kombat can never touch the likes of the Tekken series for playability and depth, so for this reason alone it must take second place to Namco's amazing piece of software. MK4 has got more than enough going for it to hold its own in the PSX beat-'em-up market as it offers great visuals, good sound, lots of characters and most importantly, Fatalities. Well worth a look whether your a fan of the series or not.

Alan



KAI

Kai is one of the new characters joining this fourth instalment. He is a White Lotus monk and a friend of Liu Kang. In terms of gameplay, Kai is very similar to the raining MK champion so use his combination of power and speed to overwhelm opponents.



REPTILE

Reptile has been around since the original Mortal Kombat in one form or another, and he now returns to the tournament for a fourth time. Reptile's speed and range of special moves make him a deadly adversary.



RAYDEN

The god of Thunder and protector of the earth realm, Rayden is another character to have been around since the very first MK game. He may only have a handful of special attacks, but this doesn't stop him being one of the deadliest characters in the game.

SECOND OPINION

It's not quite true 3D, but the sidestep function works well, as do the attacks and combos. It's great to see Midway take Mortal Kombat into the realms of 3D by concentrating on gameplay rather than piling on the finishing moves. Great stuff!

Doug

THE SCORE

GRAPHICS	9
SOUND	8
GAMEPLAY	8
LIFESPAN	8

91%

PUBLISHER	DEVELOPER	GENRE	RELEASED	VERSION	PRICE	PLAYERS	PERIPHERALS
Ocean	FunSoft	Sports Sim	Out Now	UK	£39.99	1-2	Memory Card

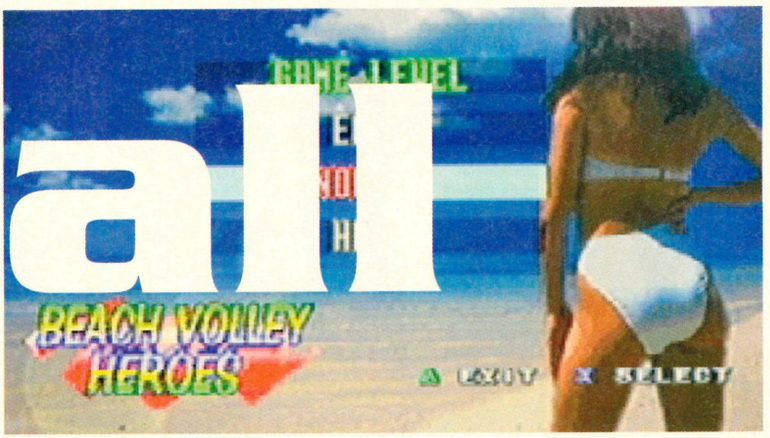
Baywatch with points?

V-Ball

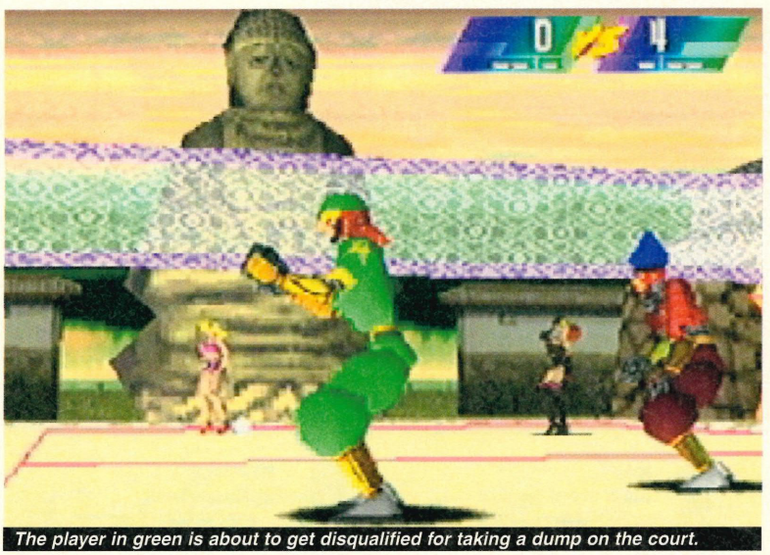












The player in green is about to get disqualified for taking a dump on the court.



Are you a fan of sports titles but fed up of the constant stream of soccer, driving and baseball that fills the PlayStation's shelves? Well it's time to get into a new sport - beach volleyball, with a twist!

Called Beach Volley Heroes in America but V-Ball over here, this game takes the sport of volleyball and shakes it around a bit. Volleyball games in the past have been 2D at best, and not given you a choice of character to play, deciding instead to concentrate of creating a perfect conversion of the sport. Well that's not what volleyball is all about, especially beach volleyball. This game is all about having fun!

Developers FunSoft have added in ten wild and wacky teams to choose from, created in an outlandish beat-'em-up style with over-

V-Ball is a game that's all about having fun!

TAG YOUR TEAM

There are plenty of weird and wacky teams to choose from in Ocean's V-Ball. All are based on the oversized characters you usually associate with beat-'em-ups. Each have their own special powers when ball-pushing, so mastering them all takes some time.



ACTORS
With their gleaming white teeth and shades, these guys are really full of themselves.



FIGHTERS
Looking like rejects from a Street Fighter game, these bandanna-wearing types have brute strength on their side.



GALS
These gun-loving girls are out for a good time. They giggle and look helpless, but they've got some secret weapons tucked away.



KUNG-FUS
Experts in the martial arts, these guys use special chopping moves to return their balls. I bet one of them is called Akira.



NINJAS
Mysterious members of a ninja clan, these are the last people you would expect to find in a volleyball tournament.



SEXIES
Pwoor! A blonde and a redhead, these girls will do anything for a fiver... No, I mean they are really top volleyball players.



SOCCERS
Football is a man's game, so it's a shame these two look so girly. Their soccer skills won't help much here - you use your hands in volleyball.



SOLDIERS
All kitted out with helmets and boots, these guys are big and butch. If you win, they'll probably shoot you!



TALLS
These guys got their name because they're tall. It's as simple as that. They also have ridiculous haircuts, but that's irrelevant.

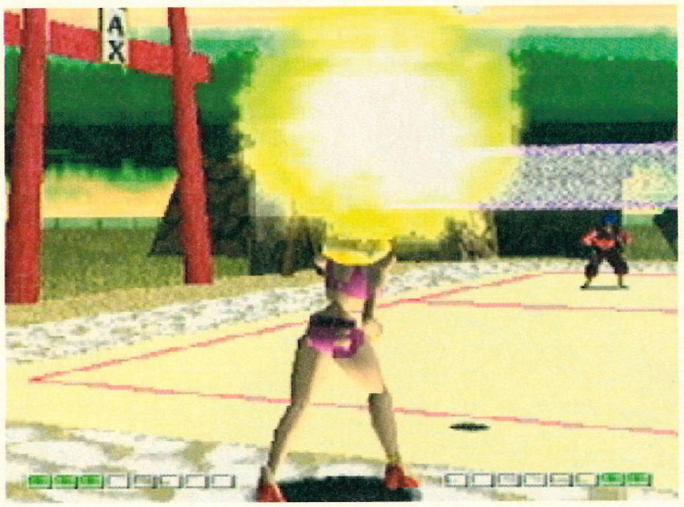


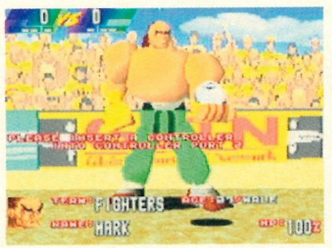
????
Ooo. A mysterious team that you don't get to play until you've conquered the rest of the game. It's nice to have something to look forward to!



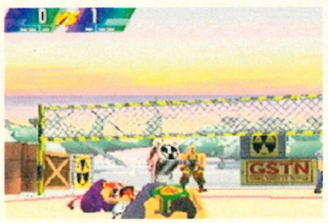






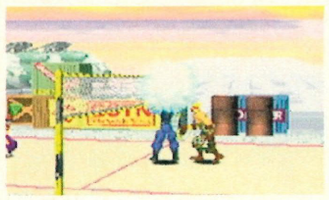












sized bodies and special moves to pull off. Each team is made up of two people, and the developers have drawn on the characters' strengths by giving the Soldiers powerful arms, the Kung-Fus chopping moves and the Sexies a large pair of breasts each, although I imagine big breasts would hinder rather than help in volleyball.

All Around the World

The games take place in locations all around the world, most of them beaches (obviously), but some (the Soldier's army base courts, for example) on tarmac or gravel. There's a training mode to start you off, teaching all the basic moves. It doesn't take too long to get used to the controls; most of the time it's a matter of simply pressing the joypad buttons at the right time. As long as the ball stays in the air, you're okay! Once you're trained up, you can progress to the Amateur League, then on to Pro League and finally Tournament Mode for the true beach volleyball experts.

This is all great fun for a while, until it dawns on you that you've hardly got any control over the action at all. Okay, so you serve the ball then continue to press the buttons at the right time to keep a volley going, but rapidly pressing the buttons with no thought at all offers the same rewards as concentrating on your game. The graphics are all polygon based, obviously, but they would look just as at home on a Mega Drive 32X than a PlayStation.

The overwhelming feeling you get after an hour's play is that this is fun for a short time, but really not worth the asking price of a PlayStation game these days. V-Ball would probably fare much better as part of the Platinum range. Fun for a while, but you can help getting the feeling that it's just not worth the asking price.

Doug

SECOND OPINION

Hmmm... Not baaaad, but is there really forty quid's worth of entertainment here? Soccer, basketball and ice hockey games offer a host of tournaments and teams. Fair enough this one's tounge in cheek instead, but compared to other sports games it's threadbare.

Mike

THE SCORE

GRAPHICS	4
SOUND	5
GAMEPLAY	6
LIFESPAN	5

58%

PUBLISHER	DEVELOPER	GENRE	RELEASED	VERSION	PRICE	PLAYERS	PERIPHERALS
Midway	Atari Games	Driving	September '98	UK	£39.99	1-2	Memory Card

It's enough to drive you barmy...

San Frans

CRUISING OVER THE GOLDEN GATE

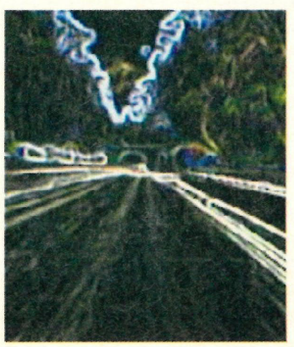
The PlayStation version of San Francisco Rush has a fantastic intro sequence that starts off with what looks like an old scratchy sepiatone film of a car driving over the Golden Gate Bridge, but then turns into a modern colour film complete with rocking soundtrack - excellent.











The Streets of San Francisco - what better place to create one of the most breathtaking, stomach-churning, eye-popping racing games the PlayStation has ever witnessed? With its steep hills, recognisable landmarks and crazy traffic you're guaranteed one hell of a bumpy ride with Midway's San Francisco Rush.

Anyone who has ever visited San Francisco will have pondered to himself or herself how cool it would be to race down the ridiculously-steep hills at 100mph in a sports car. They have managed it in the movies, but then they had to cordon off the traffic to give a clear run. No, the only way a dream like this is going to come true is on your PlayStation.

The roads, lanes, bridges and rooftops of San Francisco make up six tracks in Midway's latest blockbuster, with a rumoured seventh that takes you all the way over to Alcatraz, the notorious prison out in San Francisco Bay. There's also a good selection of cars, with eight to choose from at first, ranging in driving difficulty, and including a camper van and a VW Beetle. There are extra ones to discover if you






isco Rush

meet the grade.

This isn't a simple game of racing around and around a track though - far from it. There are multiple racing modes to choose from before you ever reach the starting grid. In a one-player game you can select from a Normal Race, Extreme Race, Circuit Mode, GP Mode, Explosive Mode and Time Pickup. Then there's also a two-player split-screen mode that can be played horizontally or vertically depending on your taste, and even a two-player link-up.

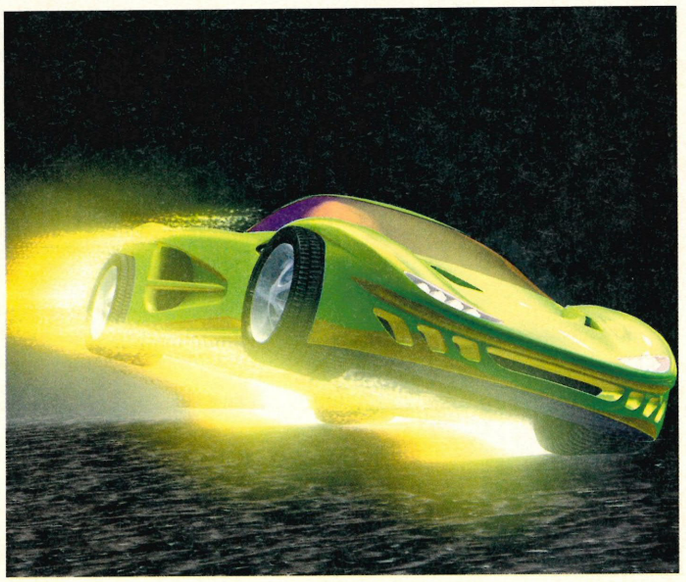
A Tour of the City

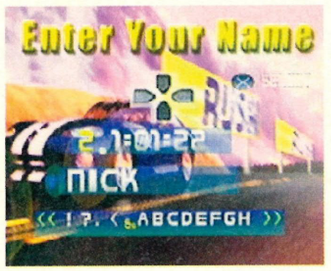
Once your type of race is chosen, it's time to select a track. Track One takes you from the Golden Gate Bridge, through the Golden Gate Park, into Haight Street and finishes up outside the Palace of Fine Arts. Track Two takes in Fisherman's Wharf and Pier 39. The third track whizzes through China Town, Sutra Tower and into Market Street while track Four goes through the Presidio, into the MacArthur Tunnel and over the Bay Bridge. These are just the first four tracks - and you can also play them in Mirror and Reverse Mode too. As you can see, you're in for a real tour of this fantastic city in this game.

What sets San Francisco Rush apart from other racing games is the fact that each track has small keys tucked away. These can be collected as you race around to unlock secrets. The problem with collecting the keys is that you must still reach each checkpoint in the set time limit, so you've got to be quick - there's no time for sight-seeing.

The actual layout of the tracks can cause you problems, as well as help you reach the checkpoints in record time. The hills of the city are so steep your car lifts off the ground at the top and soars through the air. If there's a concrete bridge just up ahead you could well find yourself smashing straight into it. Next time around you know to slow down on the brow of the hill. Because it's so easy to crash, Midway have included a special option in the game that picks up your car from any scrape and puts it back on the track a little way ahead. This is an option that is unique to San Francisco Rush, but you soon find it indispensable.

Each track also has a bunch of shortcuts hidden away. These range from bizarre rooms you can access through fences which lead back onto the track miles ahead of the opposition to half pipe-style trenches where large boulders must be negotiated to win a few seconds on your rivals. There are also excellent







A COLLECTION OF CARS

There are eight cars to choose from at the start of the game, ranging in difficulty from Beginner through Advanced, Expert and Extreme - you're warned the Extreme car gives a full simulation. In other words, you crash, you die, game over.

BEGINNER





ADVANCED





EXPERT

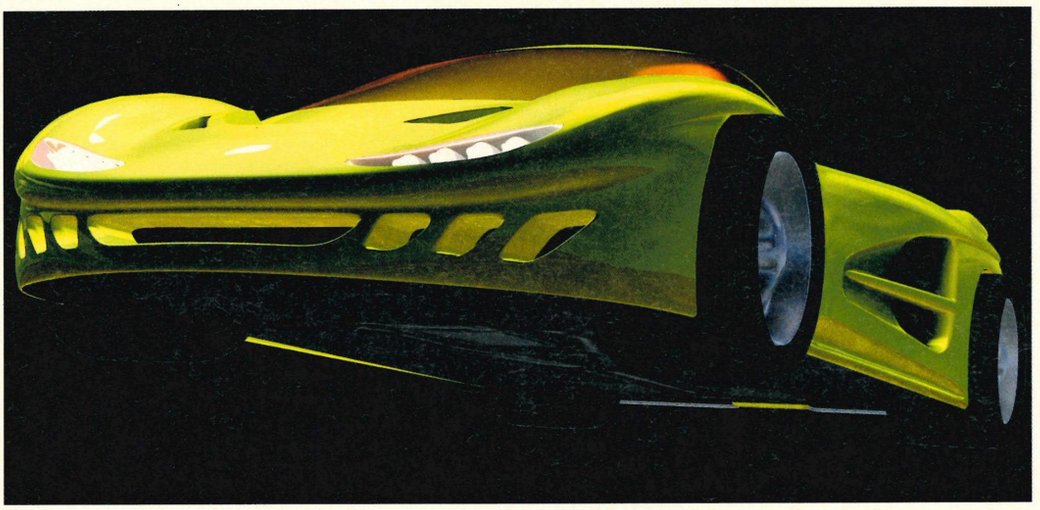


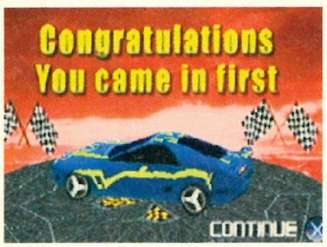


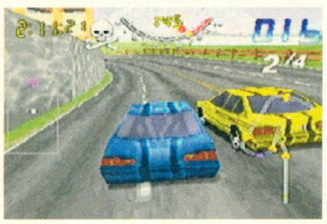
EXTREME

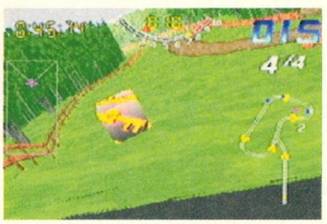




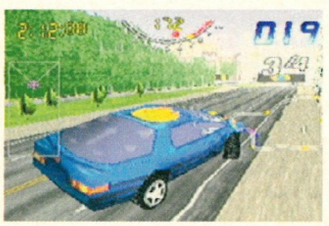














ways to cut corners by driving over the rooftops of the city. At one point you can drive underneath a parked lorry, hit a ramp and soar through the air over a bunch of buildings to land back on the track - fantastic stuff. So the game really works on two levels - you can race it normally, or spend your time searching out the hidden keys and shortcuts to enhance your racing experience.

Arcade Action

San Francisco Rush was originally an Atari arcade game, and it has already seen a sequel in the arcades - San Francisco Rush: The Rock Edition. It then became one of the best driving games for the Nintendo 64 in an almost perfect conversion, and now it's the PlayStation's turn. I don't like to say it, but the PlayStation game seems to be the ugly sister of the bunch. Being programmed by a completely different team to the arcade and N64 games, it has lost some of the polish and charm of the original with reworked tracks and a completely different approach to the key system. On the Nintendo game you could choose to cruise around the city, checking out all the nooks and crannies to find the hidden key locations then pick them up on your next race through. The PlayStation game doesn't give you any such luxury; you can only pick up keys in the middle of a race, making it almost impossible to find them all without a lot of help.

The major gripe I have with the game, though, is the return to the dreaded multi-loading days of the ZX Spectrum and Commodore 64. We all thought those days were long gone, but more and more of today's PlayStation programmers seem to be resorting to the same tactics in their games. In San Francisco Rush you must first load the title screen, a loading CD sign spinning on a black background displays for ages while it loads. Next you must load the track selection screen, and yes the CD spinning sign is back again. Track selected? Then it's time to load the car selection with more loading time. Then the gears - again, the black background CD spinning screen is back. Then finally you load the track you want to play. Now, you could live with this if you could get on with racing till the cows come home now. Sadly, you can't. If you crash and burn but want to play the track again, you've got to load it once more, even though the ruddy thing is already in the memory. This all stinks of shoddy programming of the kind which caused gamesplayers in the old 8-bit days to tear their hair out.

Today's PlayStation games shouldn't suffer from multi-load

Today's PlayStations shouldn't ever suffer from the same multi-loading problems - it's ridiculous.

The multi-load is particularly annoying as it really kills the game. One of the attractions of the arcade and Nintendo versions was the immediacy of the play - all that is stamped out with a minute wait between tracks.

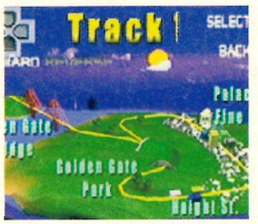
If you think you have enough patience to sit through the endless loading, then San Francisco Rush does have a lot of cool ideas and excellent tracks to offer - I just get the feeling it could have been so much better.

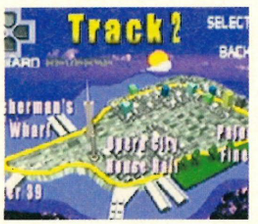
Doug

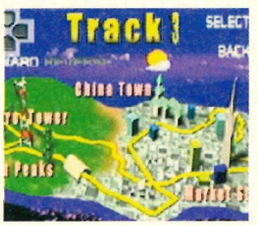


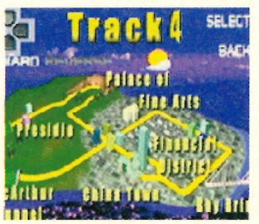
CHOOSING A TRACK

The one thing that sets San Francisco Rush apart from other racing games is the tracks. They are all set on imaginary circuits around the city, taking in some of the landmarks that have made the place to famous - including the Golden Gate Bridge.









SECOND OPINION

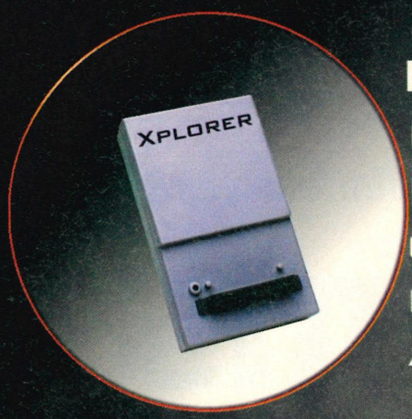
The driving model here's good, but design changes and sorry loading times bring down the score.
If you like the arcade game and are fairly tolerant of disc accessing, go for it. If not, think carefully.

Alan

THE SCORE

GRAPHICS	6
SOUND	6
GAMEPLAY	6
LIFESPAN	5

69%



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BLAZE

PUBLISHER	DEVELOPER	GENRE	RELEASED	VERSION	PRICE	PLAYERS	PERIPHERALS
Konami	Konami CE Tokyo	RPG	TBA	UK	£39.99	1	Memory Card

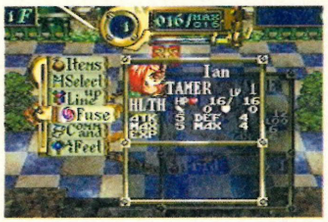
Final Fantasy meets Sim City with a Tamagotchi? It's definitely weird, but how wonderful is it?

Azure Dreams



What a nice looking bauble. We had one just like it on the top of our Christmas tree last year.







Konami have certainly delivered something different with their latest release. It's hard to say exactly which genre this game comes under, but let's just say it's a little bit RPG, a little bit simulation, a little bit action, a little bit adventure, a little bit turn-based, a little bit ohh and a little bit ahh. Or something...

Right then, where to begin? Well, here's the story so far (read carefully, this isn't easy!) ...

You live in a village called Monsbaiya, which stands in the shadow of a great tower known as the Monster Tower. Within this megalith are many magical eggs that can hatch into monsters. These eggs can be traded in the town for a fortune in gold, but due to the dangers that lie within the tower, a strict rule prohibits anyone under the age of 15 from entering. Luckily enough, though, it's your 15th birthday today and you're free to roam the Monster Tower to find your fortune or your fate.

> **It's fair to say Azure Dreams scores an A+ in the originality stakes**

Being the Son of a great Monster tamer, you wish to do your best to survive the Monster Tower and bring back many eggs, some for training to aid you in battle and others to sell to make your fortune. In a spirit no Government minister would understand, you have the opportunity to put your money to good use and inject it back into the community by upgrading buildings that already stand in the town. You can add washing machines, televisions, rugs and even gym equipment if you feel that way inclined. On top of this, you can build attractions for the town like casinos, libraries, bowling alleys and even a race track for a flutter on the horses! Depending on the types of buildings and how many you create, the way townspeople react to you changes in a style similar to that of the residents of any Sim City.

Dream On...

So I think it's fair to say that Azure Dreams scores an A+ in the originality stakes, but how it fares in the other areas is, unfortunately, a different story. It would be unfair to ridicule the game too much because it has terrible graphics (even though it does) due to the memory constraints most huge RPGs suffer from. Good graphics and this genre of game just don't mix as they're both memory-hungry critters. Any game could look and play like FF VII given enough CDs (and SquareSoft's budget) to play with, but this normally just isn't viable. Given the choice between gorgeous graphics and a good game I know which street I'd walk down. As long as the game is playable, functional graphics are all that's needed. Which rather sadly brings me to the next point, or the lack of it. Playing the game for any length of



IT GETS WEIRDER AND WEIRDER

Monster Tower has several spells cast upon it to put hunters off entering, but a man's got to do what a man's got to do, spells or no spells!

Each time you enter the Tower, the inner structure changes, giving you a different challenge every time. You always start on the lowest level in the Tower, no matter how many times you've been there before, because of a spell that makes humans weaker inside the Tower (?). Finally, if you try to enter the tower with too many monsters and items, your attempt is denied. Apparently it's got something to do with monsters having empty hearts, or something... Honest! To be frank, though, the Tower levels are far too samey and dull. The graphics don't really change; just the locations. I would have preferred to have seen 90 levels of detailed, well designed gameplay rather than basic levels that randomly generate, but hey - who the hell am I?





ONCE UPON A TIME

To continue the rather surreal feel of the game, the character name selection screen is one of the best I've ever encountered. You're prompted to give yourself a name by an angel who is floating around in the sky. He proceeds to pop it into your father's head just after you've been born. Your parents chat for a bit, then decide the name they have decided on (ie. the name you chose) must have been given to you by God himself. The words 'bunch of' and 'nutters' spring to mind, but Konami certainly like to do it differently.
Then as the intro sequence continues, your father attempts to reach the top of the Monster Tower, but never returns. The cut scene eventually reaches the morning of your 15th birthday, which is where journey begins; ahh!















time takes a lot of willpower, mostly due to the amount of to-ing and fro-ing between the Monster Tower and the town itself. Even the small sub-quests consist of going to the Monster Tower and defeating someone or other.

This probably wouldn't be too painful if it wasn't for the control interface for battles and functions within the tower. The rather dodgy turn-based 'real-time' battle scenes are really aggravating, and nowhere near as user-friendly as they should have been.



Considering you have to fight as many enemies as possible to build up your character and his monsters, it should have been the best designed feature of the game, but instead it's right where it falls flat on its face.

It's really tricky to keep your foe in front of you, making the battles frustrating rather than challenging. To the game's credit, though, you're not forced to fight like in FF VII, where fight scenes pop up at the most inconvenient times. You can avoid the brawls here, but it's not in your best interests if you want to crack the game quickly.

Eggceptional Originality

The playability of Azure Dreams may be technically flawed, but that doesn't mean to say the game has nothing to offer a persevering RPG fan. Other elements in the game are suprisingly clever and really have a lot of depth. For example, there are a total of 50 different monster eggs to be discovered within the tower, each hatching into a monster with its own separate characteristics and street values. When the eggs are hatched, it's your job to train them to be your assistants within the Monster Tower. Along with being able to give them different attack strategies and patterns which can all be altered during battle, you can also cross different types of monster to create your own personal breeds.

With a total of 90 stages to take you to the final level at the top of the tower, Konami's projection of 50 hours playing time cannot be denied. The more important point, though, is not the longevity of the game but how long you actually WANT to play. This is one thing I'm afraid Konami overlooked when in production of Azure Dreams.

Without a doubt hardened fans of the RPG genre will have something to talk to themselves about for the next few months or so, but leave it well alone if you weren't brought up on a diet of Games Workshop purchases and anoraks with your name sown into the label, if you get my drift. To be wise with your money, you'd do well to rent before it's spent.

Russell

SECOND OPINION

The most interesting thing about Azure Dreams is the way you can pursue sub-plots within your growing town, eg. by finding and chasing a love interest. The game as a whole is let down by poor combat and dodgy controls though.

Ian





THE SCORE

GRAPHICS	7
SOUND	7
GAMEPLAY	6
LIFESPAN	7

69%

PUBLISHER	DEVELOPER	GENRE	RELEASED	VERSION	PRICE	PLAYERS	PERIPHERALS
Sony CEE	Sony CE Japan	Simulator	Out Now	UK	£34.99	1	Memory Card

Pet in

Tamagotchis are bloody aggravating. The only one I had ended up committing suicide I think, but I never really had much time for it...

Tamagotchis; you can't live with 'em, and you can't stop 'em beeping unless you throw 'em under a Number 43. We've got those rather nutty Japanese peeps to thank for inflicting them on us; I suppose it's no wonder as we went to war against them, but that's a different story. Anyway I digress, because thankfully Pet in TV isn't the type of Tamagotchi you see out on the street. In fact, I'm going to be bold and say it's pretty good fun and a refreshing change from the norm - hurrah!



WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU DOING?

When the game is first started your Pet really doesn't know very much about anything and will attempt to do the strangest things with inanimate objects. Once you've corrected his mistakes and he understands what things are for and what they do, he remembers this in the future and automatically interact with it in the same fashion in the future.

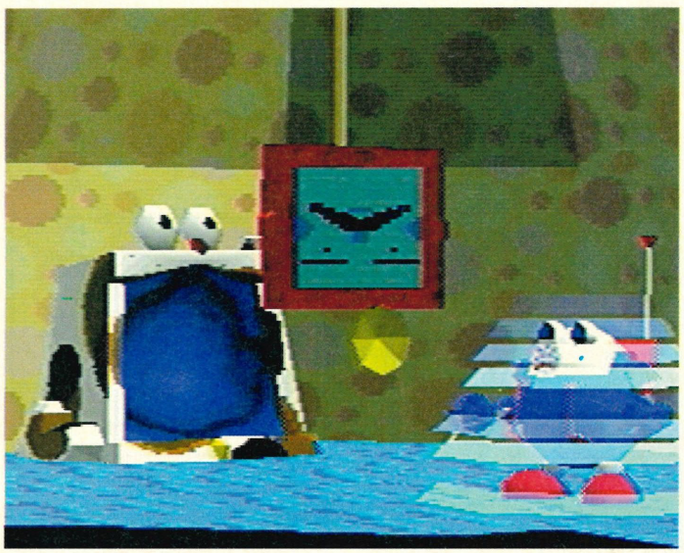
Your pet keeps trying to interact with something until it decides it doesn't like the object or just gets bored.
His total list of abilities are as follows:

- Smelling
- Touching
- Threatening
- Bashing
- Putting things on its head
- Attempting to take things back home in his backpack.
- Throwing
- Turning things upside-down

Watching your Pet trying to carry out these commands is really very funny, and it's well animated considering the basic nature of the graphics. To be honest, he's really quite sweet and does the best R2-D2 impression I've ever heard, bless him.









How do you describe a robotic egg with beach balls for feet, a watering can rose for a nose and handles on his chest?

When the game begins, your little chum wanders around the basic but functional 3D playing area, frantically grabbing stuff from his backpack and plonking it down on the floor. First he grabs a small staircase and puts it on the ground, leading up to a raised area. When he's done that, he walks up and pulls out a bloody great building and places it in front of him. This is your starting point and also your little mechanical friend's home.

When your pet has finished with his antics, it's your turn to take charge, but not control. You see, the idea of the game is to teach Pet to learn about the world around him and how to interact with it through a rather impressive method of trial and error.

Trial and Error...

The bulk of your control over your pet consists of telling him whether what he is doing is right or wrong and choosing the location or object you'd like it to interact with next. For example, if Pet is attempting to put a brick wall on his head you can tell him his actions are incorrect and to try something else. He may go on to attempt to smell it, but as you continue in this vein he eventually discovers that walls are for jumping over or smashing with his fists. This makes him very happy, and he remembers to try and interact with a wall in this fashion in the future. This can be done with every-

Virtual pets with a difference...

TV

NO, I WAS JUST BORN THAT WAY

When you first boot up the game, you are given the choice between five different types of pets, each with their own little quirky personalities.



- Type 1 is your standard model, a bit of an all-rounder and generally an agreeable little chap.
- Type 2 is a bit more upbeat and lively, as well as being particularly easy to please (I wish I could say the same about my other half!).
- Type 3 is your shy type, attempting to live an honest and quiet life as best he can.
- In stark contrast, Type 4 is a bit of an eccentric who likes to muddle through in his own little way.
- My girlfriend - no sorry, Type 5 - is a bit cagey and cautious and incredibly sensitive and tricky to please.

thing from birds tweeting around the screen to lumps of turd that make him faint when smelt.

Once he's happily interacting with most things in the world, you can actually tell it to use its own initiative and try things out for itself, leaving you to correct him when he's wrong and solve the many puzzles that are found around the vast playing area. Like a Tamagotchi, though, he gets tired, hungry and needs to have his systems checked back at home. He also refuses to do things if it doesn't want to, and needs the occasional stroke to bring a smile back to his face. Ahh; maybe this type of Tamagotchi isn't so bad after all.

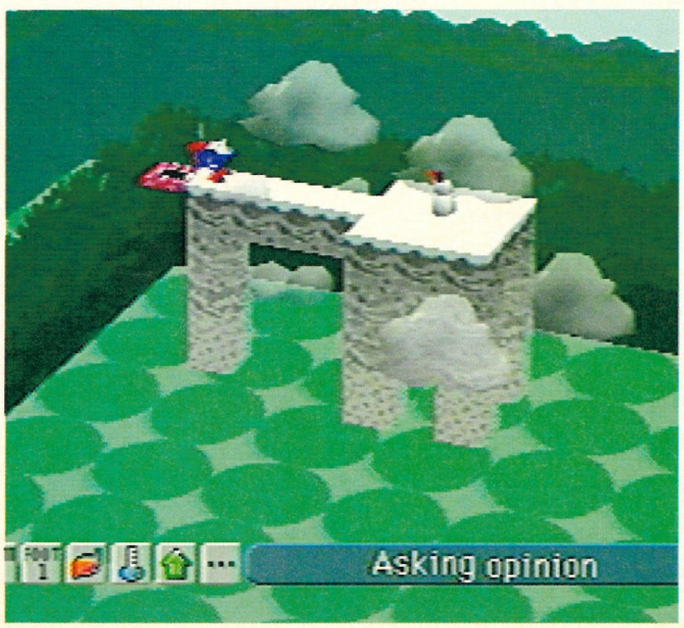
Though this title is far from perfect, it's a great attempt by Sony at producing something innovative and different. With any luck, we can expect this niche game to one day develop into a new genre that could continue to push the envelope of AI into really exciting directions. Keep an open mind with this title and give it a go; it may well surprise you.

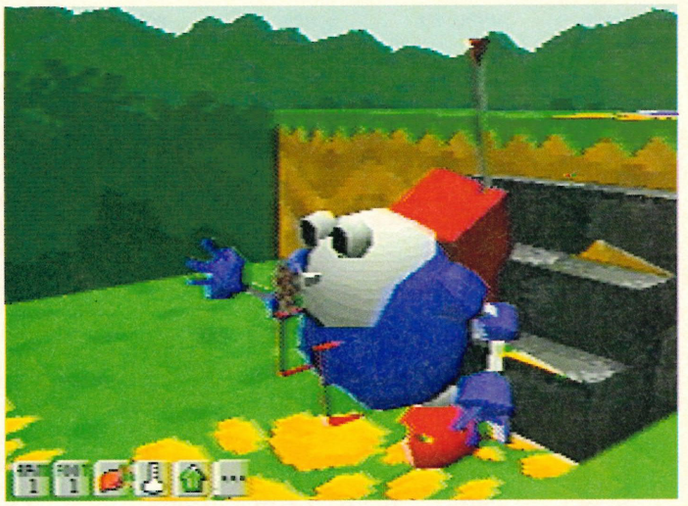
Russell

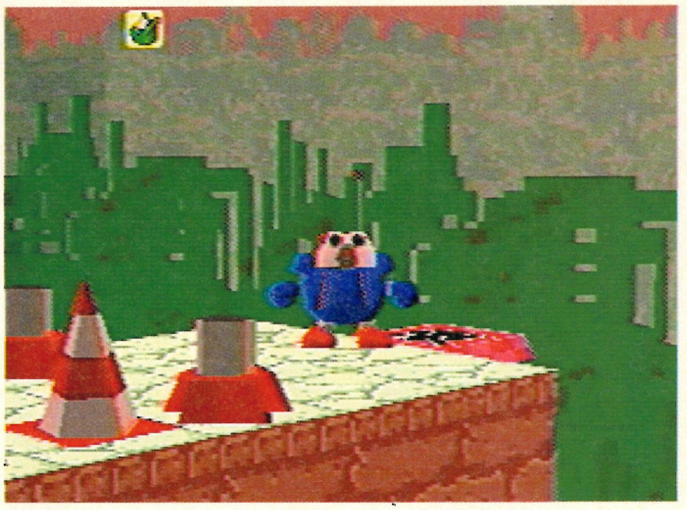
SECOND OPINION

This is more than a dodgy Tamagotchi clone. Here you build your pet's mind with Pavlovian training techniques.
It's fun watching him grow in intellect, though the game as a whole is little more than a curiosity.

Mike









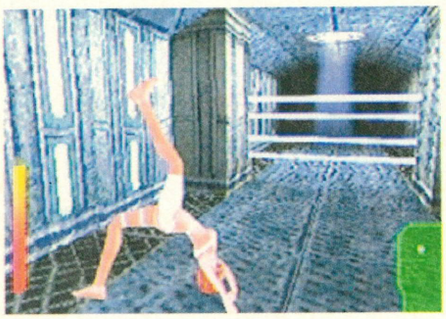


THE SCORE

GRAPHICS	6
SOUND	6
GAMEPLAY	8
LIFESPAN	7

71%

PUBLISHER	DEVELOPER	GENRE	RELEASED	VERSION	PRICE	PLAYERS	PERIPHERALS	
Sony CEE	Kalisto Entertainment	3D Action	November '98	UK	£39.99	1	Memory Card Rumble Pack	Analogue Pad





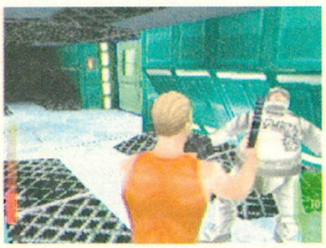


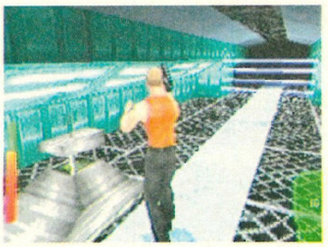
The Fifth Element

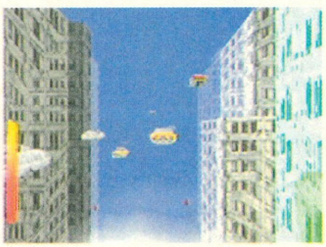


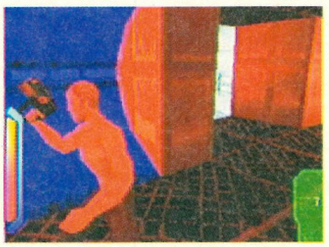


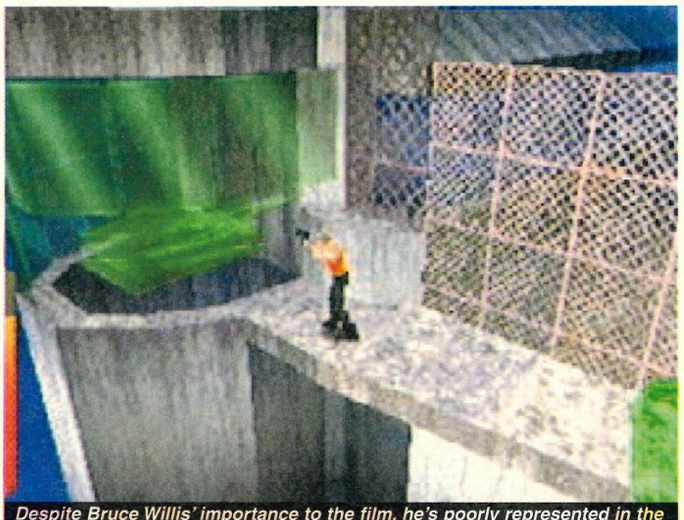
Leeloo is such a babe...











Despite Bruce Willis' importance to the film, he's poorly represented in the game. You never see a digitisation of his face, for example.

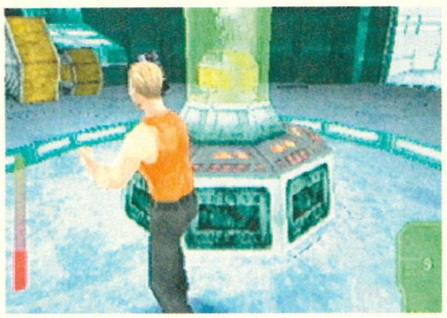
According to the legend, every five thousand years the Universe needs a hero; a Fifth Element to add to Earth, Air, Fire and Water, made of anti-energy that will save the Earth from extinction. The trouble is a good hero is hard to find these days - that was until the invention of the PlayStation. Now they're ten-a-penny.

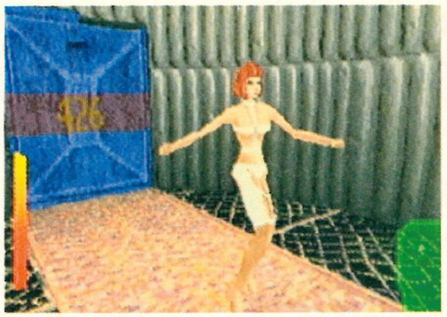
You may remember the movie The Fifth Element from a few months back. It starred that action movie regular Bruce Willis in a futuristic setting complete with insanely ugly aliens and a good helping of science fantasy. Well in true film tie-in fashion the game, created by Gaumont Multimedia and Kalisto Entertainment, is running way behind the movie.

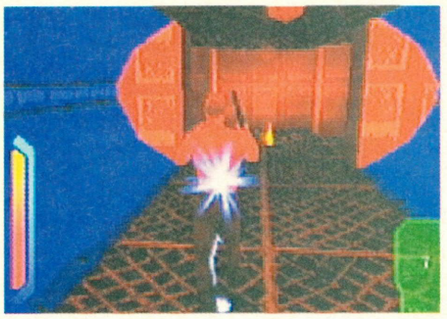
In an underground temple hidden away in the most remote desert in the world lie a bunch of carved wooden 'keys' representing the four elements of Earth, Air, Fire and Water. These elements have gone untouched for five thousand years, but must be brought into play once again as the Earth faces complete destruction. They are useless, though, without the fifth element - an extra terrestrial being in the form of a beautiful young woman. The two heroes of the game must fight their way through many levels to

A good hero is hard to find these days - except on the PlayStation...





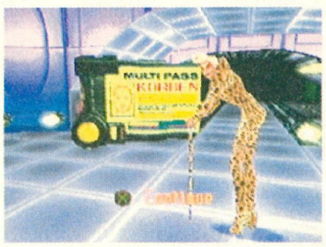




face and defeat the Absolute Evil and save the Earth for at least another five thousand years.

Polygon power

The Fifth Element uses the polygon school of world creation made famous in games like Tomb Raider; these detailed polygon worlds have almost become run-of-the-mill on the PlayStation these days. By mixing in specially-edited sequences from the movie, Kalisto have created a complete interactive version of The Fifth Element story that takes you from the starting scenes through to the end credits. Strangely you don't ever get to see Bruce Willis' mugshot or likeness - they obviously couldn't afford his huge fee.



What sets The Fifth Element apart from Tomb Raider and other clones is that you get to play as two characters from the movie - Korben and Leeloo. The first level, for example, sees the player as Korben standing high up on a futuristic sky-

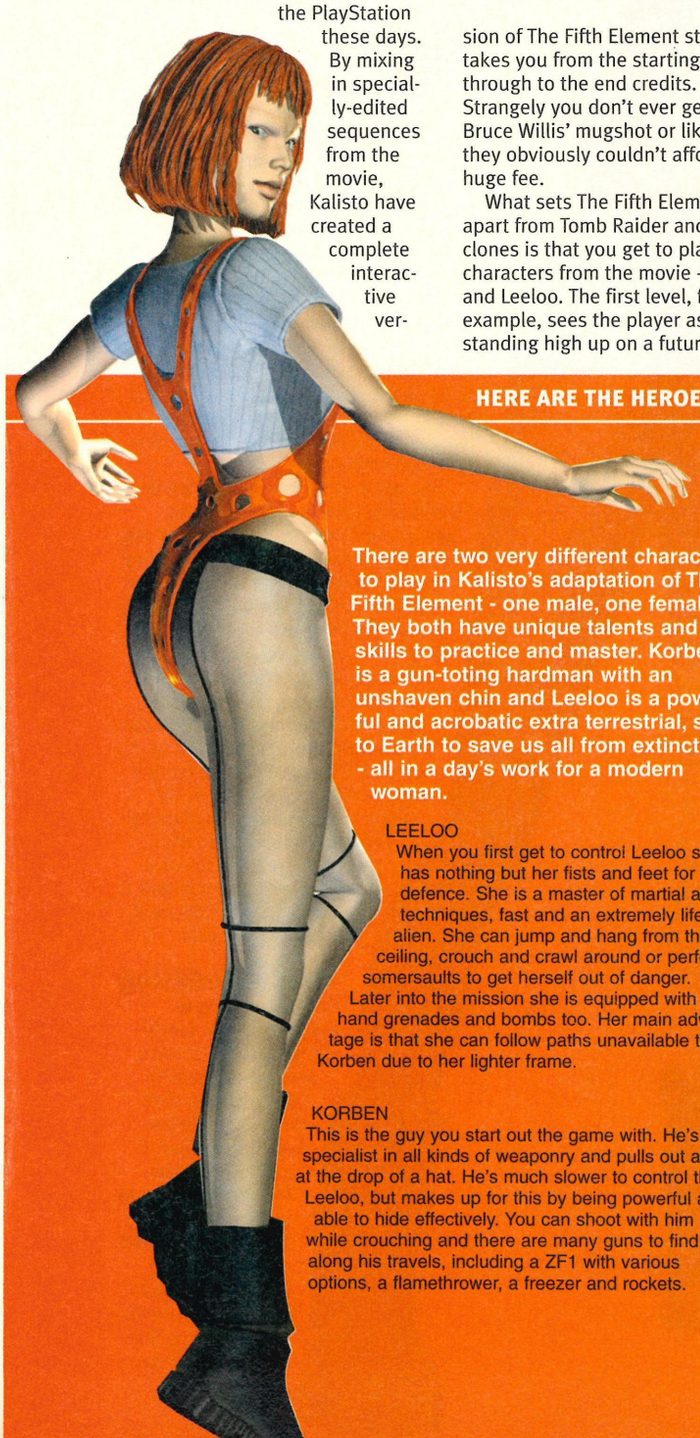






The lasers were so hot they burned the clothes off poor Leeloo's back. Lucky us...

HERE ARE THE HEROES



There are two very different characters to play in Kalisto's adaptation of The Fifth Element - one male, one female. They both have unique talents and skills to practice and master. Korben is a gun-toting hardman with an unshaven chin and Leeloo is a powerful and acrobatic extra terrestrial, sent to Earth to save us all from extinction - all in a day's work for a modern woman.

LEELOO

When you first get to control Leeloo she has nothing but her fists and feet for defence. She is a master of martial arts techniques, fast and an extremely life-like alien. She can jump and hang from the ceiling, crouch and crawl around or perform somersaults to get herself out of danger. Later into the mission she is equipped with hand grenades and bombs too. Her main advantage is that she can follow paths unavailable to Korben due to her lighter frame.

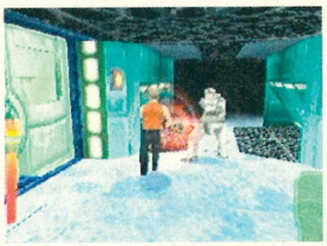
KORBEN

This is the guy you start out the game with. He's a specialist in all kinds of weaponry and pulls out a gun at the drop of a hat. He's much slower to control than Leeloo, but makes up for this by being powerful and able to hide effectively. You can shoot with him while crouching and there are many guns to find along his travels, including a ZF1 with various options, a flamethrower, a freezer and rockets.





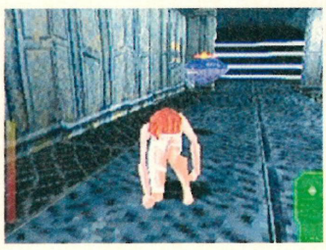


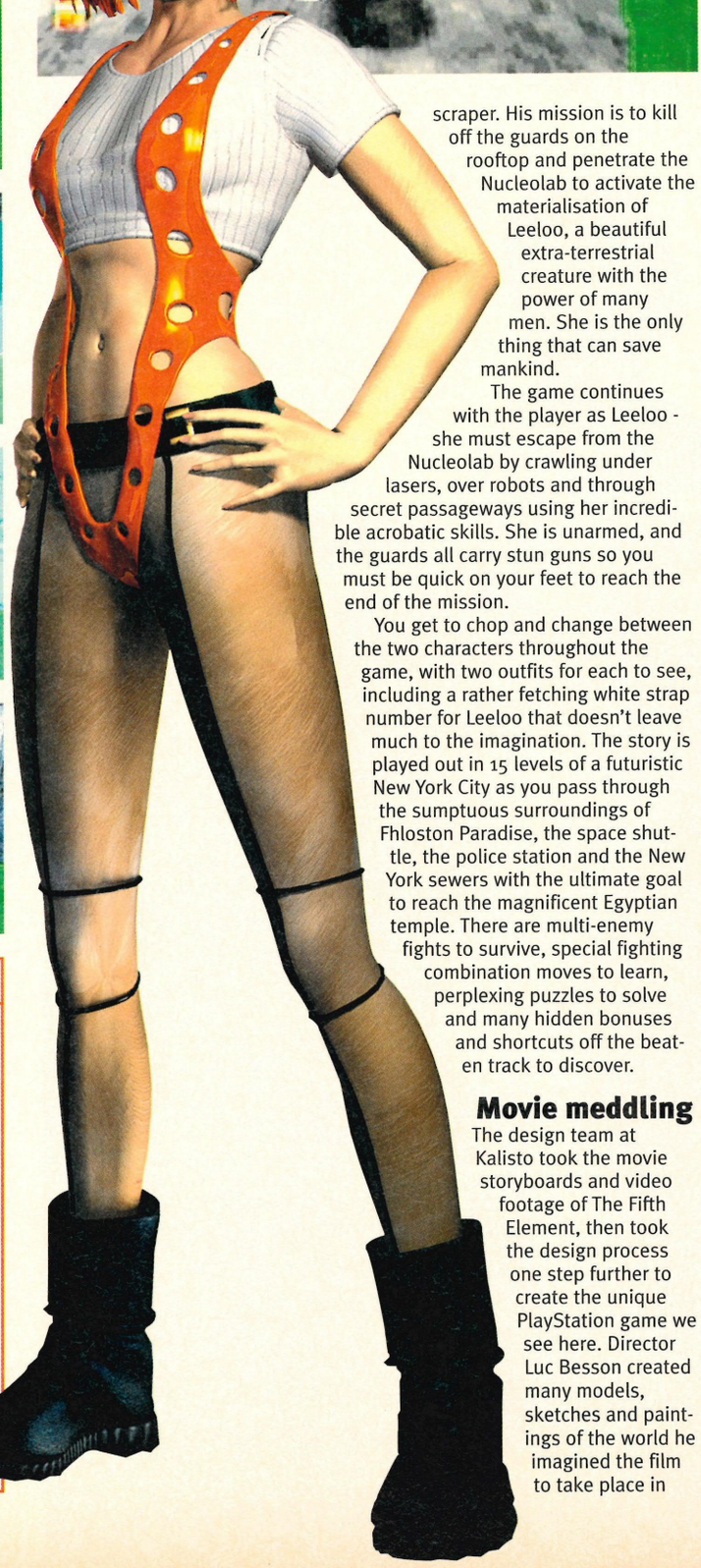












scraper. His mission is to kill off the guards on the rooftop and penetrate the Nucleolab to activate the materialisation of Leeloo, a beautiful extra-terrestrial creature with the power of many men. She is the only thing that can save mankind.

The game continues with the player as Leeloo - she must escape from the Nucleolab by crawling under lasers, over robots and through secret passageways using her incredible acrobatic skills. She is unarmed, and the guards all carry stun guns so you must be quick on your feet to reach the end of the mission.

You get to chop and change between the two characters throughout the game, with two outfits for each to see, including a rather fetching white strap number for Leeloo that doesn't leave much to the imagination. The story is played out in 15 levels of a futuristic New York City as you pass through the sumptuous surroundings of Fhloston Paradise, the space shuttle, the police station and the New York sewers with the ultimate goal to reach the magnificent Egyptian temple. There are multi-enemy fights to survive, special fighting combination moves to learn, perplexing puzzles to solve and many hidden bonuses and shortcuts off the beaten track to discover.

Movie meddling

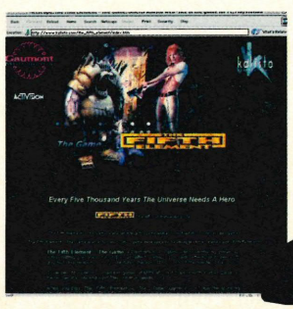
The design team at Kalisto took the movie storyboards and video footage of The Fifth Element, then took the design process one step further to create the unique PlayStation game we see here. Director Luc Besson created many models, sketches and paintings of the world he imagined the film to take place in

WEB WONDERS

If you have access to the Internet, you can check out more on The Fifth Element on the various web sites that are available. The game is detailed on Kalisto's own site that you can find at...

www.kalisto.com/the_fifth_element/

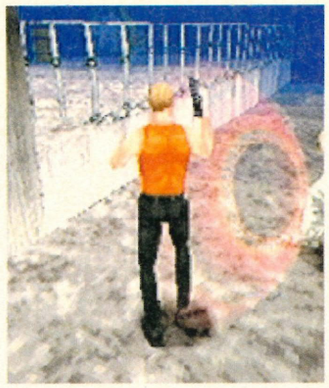




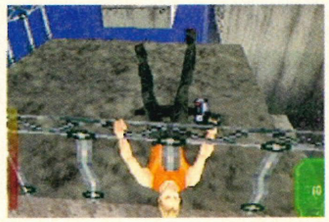




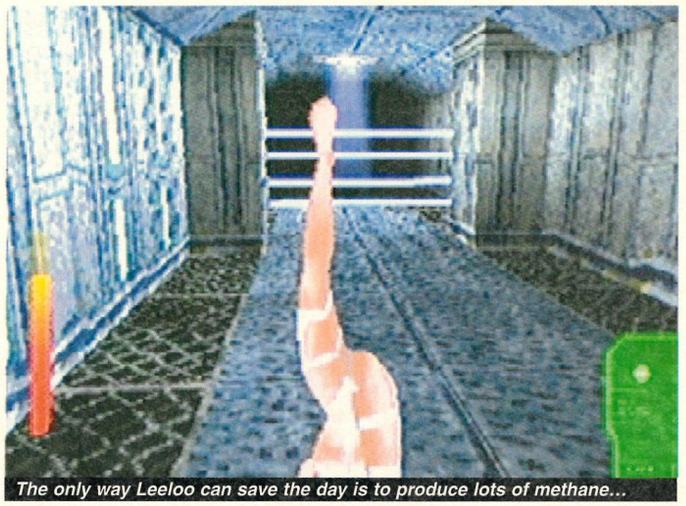












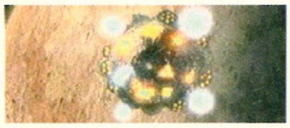
The only way Leeloo can save the day is to produce lots of methane...





MOVIE MOMENTS

No PlayStation game would be complete without extensive full motion video sequences to break up the action and The Fifth Element has the luxury of hours of videotape to choose from. The strange thing is that Bruce Willis doesn't appear in any of it.



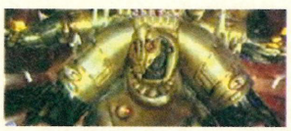














and has given all those over to the designers. Many of the locations and characters were never used in the finished film, but they come to life in the game instead to create a well-rounded environment. Add to these great graphics, 12 musical themes exclusively composed by Kalisto which change depending on the mission you are playing and the character you are playing it with and you've got the perfect science fiction atmosphere for the game.

I must admit that I was very impressed by the visuals and gameplay in The Fifth Element. The game is packed with huge weapons, nasty creatures and complex levels with a difficulty that keeps the novices at bay, but provides a cool challenge for hardened videogame players. The controls for both Korben and Leeloo are a little tough at first, with so many combinations of joypad buttons needed to survive through even the early scenes, but you soon get the hang of things. A decent trainer accessed from the start menu would have gone a long way to solving the control problems. Instead you're treated to a movie display of the motions needed - nothing interactive.

The game does boast puzzle elements, but many of them are quite simplistic compared to the brilliant Tomb Raider series. The Fifth Element relies more on brute force for its appeal rather than brainpower. This is a bit of a shame really, as a few more complex puzzles would have lifted the game.

If you enjoyed the movie, though, this game is the perfect way to continue your journey into the futuristic world of The Fifth Element. There are many scenes that weren't even included in the movie, and the story is told really well with very high quality video sequences and some great special effects.

If you're a sci-fi fan looking for a challenge, look no further. The Fifth Element will keep you busy for a long time to come.

Doug

SECOND OPINION

Not bad at all. Not exactly original (Tomb Raider got there first), but it's well executed and enjoyable. As Doug said, more complex puzzles would help it to carve a niche in the genre, but even as it stands it's a great game. It's got Leeloo in it too...

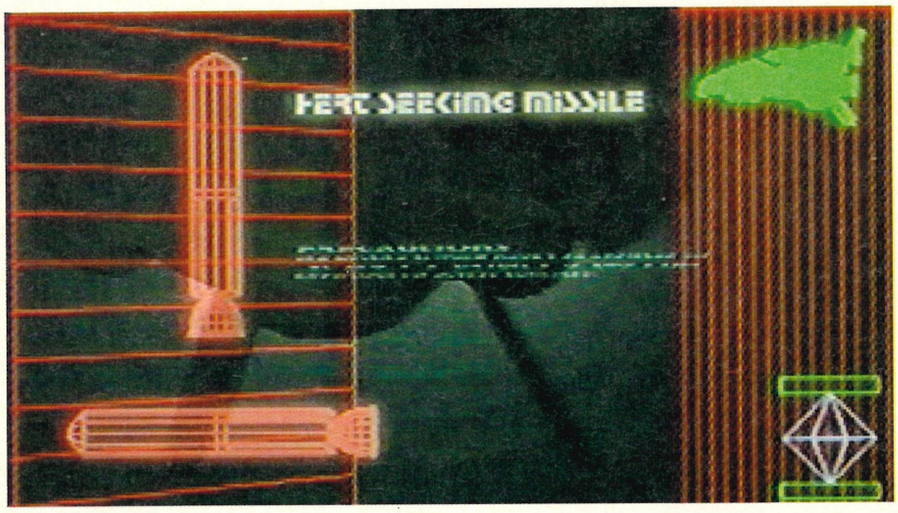
Mike

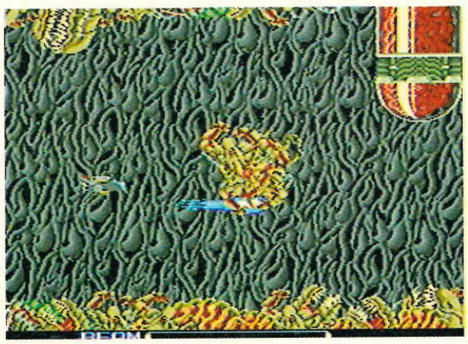
THE SCORE

GRAPHICS	8
SOUND	7
GAMEPLAY	9
LIFESPAN	8

85%

PUBLISHER	DEVELOPER	GENRE	RELEASED	VERSION	PRICE	PLAYERS	PERIPHERALS	
Virgin Interactive Entertainment	Irem	Shoot-'em-up	October '98	UK	TBA	1-2	Memory Card	Dual Shock





R-

R-Type is the mother of all side-scrolling shoot-'em-ups...

R-Type is without a doubt the mother of side-scrolling shoot-'em-ups. For those who don't know, it incorporates huge weapons, huge aliens and huge amounts of trouser tension for those who've played it. The release of R-Type and R-Type 2 on a single CD is a gift from God; it's definitely about time we got a couple of decent shooters on the PlayStation. It just worries me that we have to rely on games of yesterday to get our thrills today, but it just goes to show they don't make 'em like they used to.

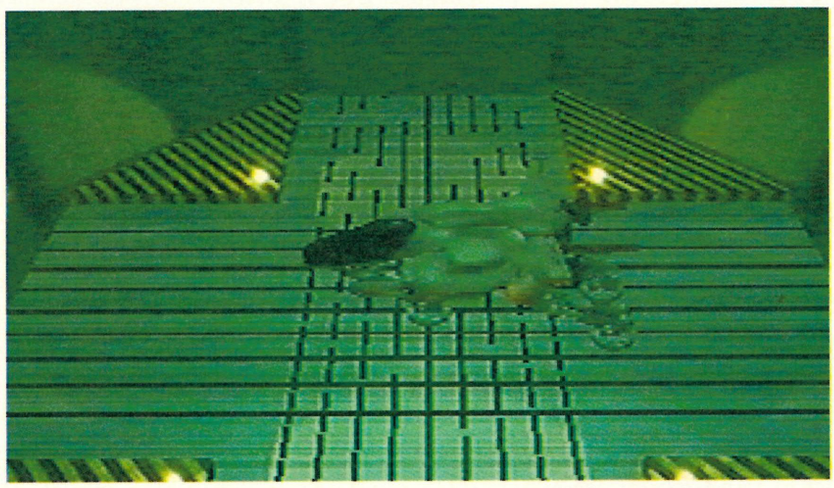
It would be foolish of me to attempt to rate the two R-Type titles separately due to the time between their releases and the release of this R-Types compilation. Instead I'll rate the disc as it stands and on its value for money and value as a retro-gaming experience. Graphically, for example, the game doesn't have a leg to stand on in this day and age, even though the translation to the PlayStation is arcade perfect. That isn't what this review is about; if anything the review of this compilation should serve as a warning to all developers out there that seem to have lost the plot as far as creating quality shoot-'em-ups go. Someone has to defend a genre that has been catered for since the dawn of gaming and one that will still be with us for many years to come. Ah, that's better! I digress...

Blast from the Past...

I really think the re-release of both R-Type games would have been a complete disaster had the designers decided to fiddle with the graphics or game mechanics in its transition to the 32-bit scene. In my mind, there's nothing worse than taking a perfectly good game and ripping it apart simply for the sake of it, so I was happy to see that the games have been left completely arcade perfect, even leaving the 'insert coin' title screen in all its glory. The only addition that's been made for its prestigious 32-bit appearance is a rather nice introduction sequence that lets you see the R-Type fighter craft in all its 3D glory. It also gives the player the opportunity to find out exactly what the plot is, even though it really doesn't have any bearing on the game whatsoever; it just looks good, but that was the way it was back in those days. Stories for games were not needed because games were purely based around playability and not weak interactive sequences relying heavily on a complex plot to hold the player's interest for long enough to fool them into thinking that they've got their money's worth. Sure enough, you could give me a copy of R-Types, a PlayStation, a desert island somewhere near the equator and Man Friday, and I'll have plenty to while away those seemingly endless summer evenings with (so what would you do with Man Friday? - Ed).

R-Type of Game...

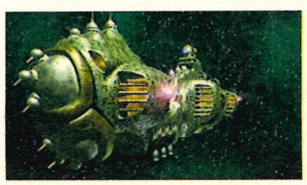
What can you say about a game

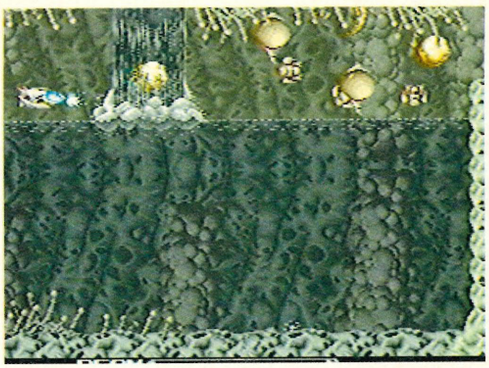


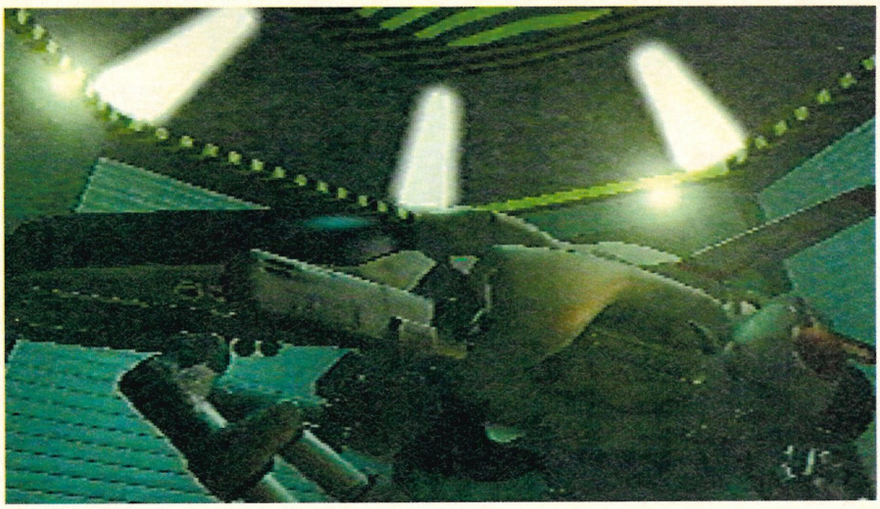
IF IT AIN'T BROKE, DON'T FIX IT

I've always wanted to know the story behind R-Type, but then I am the only person that wears an anorak to the office! At the beginning of the 22nd Century, mankind finally managed to establish world peace, only to be invaded by a technically advanced race known only as Leviathans. The people of Earth decided to strike back using the latest generation of space defence crafts know as R-Types. Civilisation depends on these ships succeeding so life as we know it may continue.







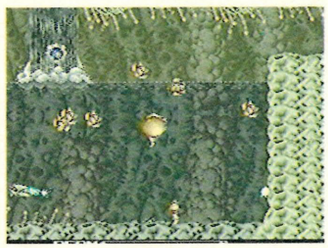
The best is back!

R-Types

that has been released on as many platforms as you could possibly want to shake a stick at and held its own for as many years as R-Type and its sequel? The playability and lastability really is phenomenal, and is largely thanks to the innovative nature of enemy attack patterns and huge boss characters that have endlessly been reproduced in second rate spin-offs even to this day. Strangely, barring the intro sequence, the only addition to the game is part compatibility with the Duel Shock control pad. The analogue stick is not used (nor needed), though the Dual Shock side of the pad is accessible through the options screen. It gives you a nice satisfying rumble when you let off a power shot and goes hell for leather when you get blown up. It's a nice touch, and surely the first game ever to only the rumble and not the analogue.

If you like a challenge and you're not biased due to it's retro roots, you certainly will not go amiss with the addition of R-Types to your collection, as well as collectible bite of gaming history. Go on, you know you want it!

Russell









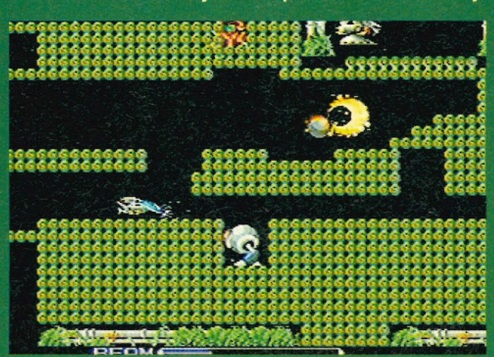
WEAPONS AND TACTICS

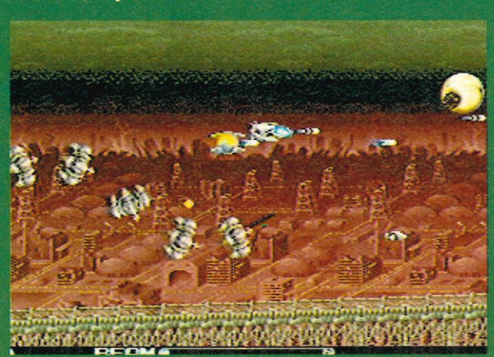
A lot of the magic of R-Type is thanks to the game's ingenious weapons system and its intelligent design. By shooting flying pods you encounter during play, you can access new weapons that come in the form of another pod-like contraption called a Force. This can attach itself onto either the front or rear of your R-Type, giving you a new weapon depending on the original pod you shot.

The Force can be made to detach from your craft and float in front of or behind you, while still in a set pattern. It can protect you from enemy fire by soaking up the bullets like a shield, and also causes damage to enemies when it comes into contact with them. You can also call it back to your ship to re-attach at any time during play, but when the Force is fixed to your craft it works in conjunction with your own weapons system to create a much more powerful weapon. If you decide to detach from it, however, the force changes its fire pattern to assist you from a distance.

You can also build up a power shot by holding one of the Fire buttons down until it charges up to the maximum, letting you fire a huge power bolt that sails right through most enemies. This also helps you trash most of the bosses in the game, depending weather it gives you enough time to charge it up.

All in all, it's very clever really, and obviously light years ahead of its time - but that's R-Type all over, if you ask me...





SECOND OPINION

Old it may be, but keen level design, interesting attack patterns and versatile weapons make this one an all-time classic. It's packed with devices, from the wheel you must enter and leave before you're trapped by the scrolling to the huge space ship you must trash later.

Ian

THE SCORE

GRAPHICS	6
SOUND	4
GAMEPLAY	9
LIFESPAN	9

90%

PUBLISHER	DEVELOPER	GENRE	RELEASED	VERSION	PRICE	PLAYERS	PERIPHERALS	
Acclaim Sports	Acclaim	Sports	Out Now	UK	£39.99	1-4	Memory Card	Multi Tap

Shoot, suplex, submission...

WWF Warzone

The grunts and groans of the World Wrestling Federation come crashing onto a PlayStation near you with the arrival of WWF Warzone from Acclaim. So is it as good as winning the WWF Heavyweight Title, or about as much fun as being drop-kicked by Bret Hart? Read on and all will be revealed...

Professional wrestling in American is a strange sport and no mistake, although I use the term 'sport' loosely. How can something so obviously scripted and fixed before the match starts draw huge crowds of anything up to 100,000 people? As someone once said, 'only in America'. However, take this mayhem and put it in a videogame and it all slots into place nicely; you've got everything you could want from a good beat-'em-up, from over the top fighters and finishing moves to arcade action and even weapons.

WWF Warzone features 16 of the best wrestlers from the World Wrestling Federation, you've got the likes of Owen Hart, Gold Dust, The Undertaker, British Bulldog, Ahmed Johnson, Ken Shamrock and lots more to pound away with (except several of them, including the great Bret Hart, have since left the WWF - Ed). Each wrestler has his own individual statistics, strengths, weaknesses, special moves and even finishing moves to help recreate their real-life alter-egos. For example, if you play as Bret Hart you can use his specialised moves like the Side Back Breaker, Inverted Atomic Drop, Piledriver and Grapevine Takedown. You can then finish off an opponent with his Sharpshooter. This level of realism really helps recreate the feel and atmosphere of the WWF, and this is what the game is all about - over-the-top, all-action wrestling.

Bending Bones

Graphically WWF Warzone uses polygons as opposed to digitised characters and this choice is a good one; the wrestler have all been motion-captured to give them an amazingly realistic look and movement. The special moves in particular are excellent and really look great, with your wrestler grabbing his opponent with incredible realism, and once again this all adds to the atmosphere of the game. The 'down' side of using polygons is that while you can achieve realistic movement, you cannot give the wrestlers much in the way of facial detail, so to get around this the programmers have used a digitised face and then pasted onto the polygon body. Unfortunately this creates what can only be described as a freak of nature, and make you wonders why they bothered, to be honest. Still, this is a harm criticism as close-ups of the wrestlers are few and far between.

Pro-wrestling is a strange sport, though we use the term loosely

Other than this small problem, the rest of the graphics in Warzone are as every bit as good as the character animation, with the ring and surrounding areas looking quite realistic. The sound is kept to a minimum, but there are plenty of nice spot effect and best of all complete commentary from Vince McMahon and Jim Ross. Anyone who watches the WWF knows exact-

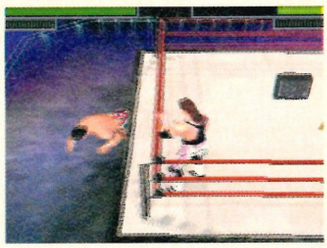


If you must draw security railings, at least make them solid - here the Bulldog's fallen straight through them.



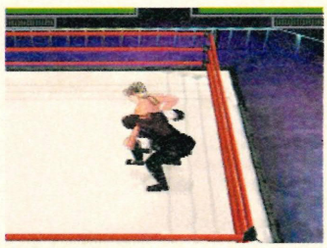


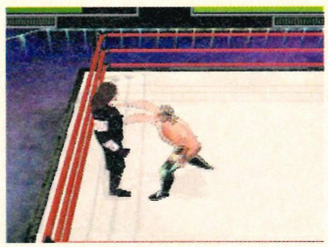




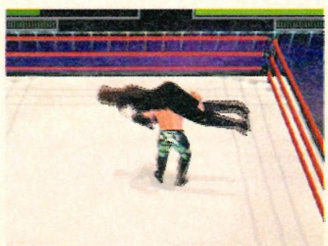


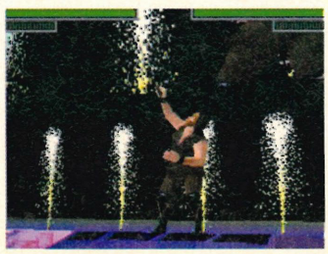














THE WRESTLERS

WWF Warzone features 16 real-life superstars, each with their own stats and finishing moves.



Gold Dust
Height: 6' 6"
Weight: 260 lbs
From: Hollywood, CA
Finishing move: Curtain Call

Gold Dust is one of the strangest individuals in the WWF. His finisher is the Curtain Call, a deadly move that is an instant stun.



Bret Hart
Height: 6' 1"
Weight: 234 lbs
From: Calgary, Alberta, Canada
Finishing move: Sharpshooter

Bret 'the Hitman' Hart is one of the WWF's all-time greats. His finishing move has an opponent screaming in seconds.



Owen Hart
Height: 5' 11"
Weight: 227 lbs
From: Calgary, Alberta, Canada
Finishing move: Sharpshooter

The younger brother of Bret, When Own won Intercontinental honours, he proved he's a force to be reckoned with in his own right.



The Rock
Height: 6' 5"
Weight: 275 lbs
From: South Pacific
Finishing move: Rock Bottom

Rocky is one of the newer superstars in the WWF. His finishing attack is the Rock Bottom which scores an instant stun.



Farrooq
Height: 6' 2"
Weight: 270 lbs
From: Perry, GA
Finishing move: Dominator

Farrooq is the leader of the Nation of Domination. His finishing move is the Dominator; this face slam style move is deadly and stuns in impact.



Ken Shamrock
Height: 6' 1"
Weight: 245 lbs
From: Sacramento, CA
Finishing move: Ankle Lock Submission

Ken Shamrock is known as the 'most dangerous man in the world', and is a dominating presence in the squared circle.



Ahmed Johnson
Height: 6' 2"
Weight: 305 lbs
From: Pearl River, MS
Finishing move: Pearl River Plunge

The powerful Ahmed Johnson combines power and speed, and his Pearl River Plunge move stuns his foes instantly.



British Bulldog
Height: 6'
Weight: 253 lbs
From: Manchester, England
Finishing move: Running Powerslam

The British Bulldog has held up the name of the united Kingdom in the WWF for some years.



Triple H
Height: 6' 4"
Weight: 246 lbs
From: Greenwich, CT
Finishing move: The Pedigree

Triple H is an upper-class member of the WWF, and his Pedigree finishing move displays all the style and class you'd expect.



The Undertaker
Height: 6' 10"
Weight: 328 lbs
From: Death Valley
Finishing move: Tombstone

The Undertaker is an ominous sight and his Tombstone Piledriver is one of the most fearsome finishing attack in the WWF.



Shawn Michaels
Height: 6' 1"
Weight: 227 lbs
From: San Antonio, TX
Finishing move: Sweet Chin Music

The Heartbreak Kid a great scientific wrestler, and his finishing move is a deadly reverse thrust kick that knocks out anything.



Mosh
Height: 6'
Weight: 243 lbs
From: His own private hell
Finishing move: Mosh Pit

Thrash metal-inspired Mosh is a man of mystery who partners Thrasher in a devastating tag team called The Headbangers.



Thrasher
Height: 6' 2"
Weight: 245 lbs
From: His own private hell
Finishing move: Stage Dive

The other half of The Headbangers tag team is slightly bigger than his partner, but they're both quite small for WWF wrestlers.



Stone Cold Steve Austin
Height: 6' 2"
Weight: 252 lbs
From: Victoria, TX
Finishing move: Stone Cold Stunner

Austin's real name is Steve Williams, but he changed it as there was already a wrestler of that name.



Mankind
Height: 6' 2"
Weight: 287 lbs
From: The boiler room
Finishing move: Mandible Claw

This guy's real name is Michael Foley, and he previously wrestled with great success as Dude Love and Cactus Jack.



Kane
Height: 6' 9"
Weight: 326 lbs
From: Unknown
Finishing move: Tombstone

Kane, real name Glen Jacobs, is meant to be the brother of The Undertaker. Jacobs previously wrestled as Isaac Yankeem and the fake Diesel.

ly who these guys are, and their interpretation of the action from ringside ranges from useful information on the moves you're pulling off to over excited ranting - all of which simply helps to enhance the WWF atmosphere.

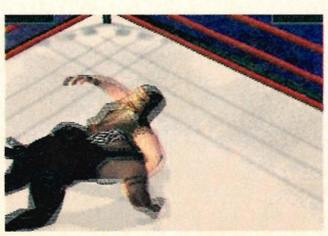
The biggest problem with WWF Warzone is its lifespan. In one-player mode you only really have the Challenge event to test your skills, and this simply involves defeating the other wrestlers in order until you win first the Intercontinental Title, then work your way up to the WWF World Title. Once you've achieved this goal there's nothing much else to do but defend your title against a stream of never-ending opponents, and this is where I found boredom began to set in. Fighting the same opponents over and over again to hold the title you've already won gets dull quickly, and this tends to lead to complacency. Nine times out of ten you turn the game off rather than start again after losing. However, in two-player mode things are much better as nothing is better than beating seven bells out of your best mate; this is where WWF Warzone comes into its own.

The bottom line is this; if you're not a fan of the whole American wrestling thing, Warzone simply flies straight over your head. If you're a fan with a few like-minded mates, you'll love Warzone as it features everything you could ever want from a wrestling game; real-life wrestlers, finishing moves, a blow-by-blow commentary and over the top American razzmatazz.

Alan







SECOND OPINION

Not bad at all. It lacks the depth of WCW Nitro, but is better executed. It's just a pity some of the WWF superstars featured don't work for the WWF anymore. Bret Hart and the British Bulldog are now WCW, and Ahmed Johnson is (as far as I know) out of the sport altogether.

Ian

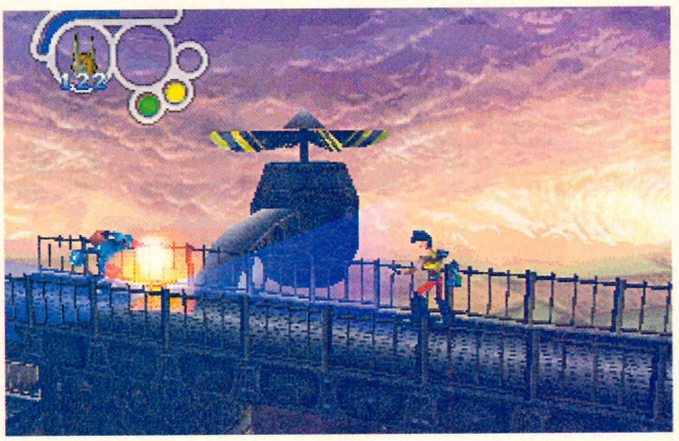
THE SCORE

GRAPHICS	8
SOUND	7
GAMEPLAY	8
LIFESPAN	6

79%

PUBLISHER	DEVELOPER	GENRE	RELEASED	VERSION	PRICE	PLAYERS	PERIPHERALS	
Interplay Production	Shiny Entertainment	Arcade Platform Adventure	October '98	UK	£39.99	1	Memory Card Analogue Pad	Dual Shock





Wild thing, you make my heart sing!

Wild

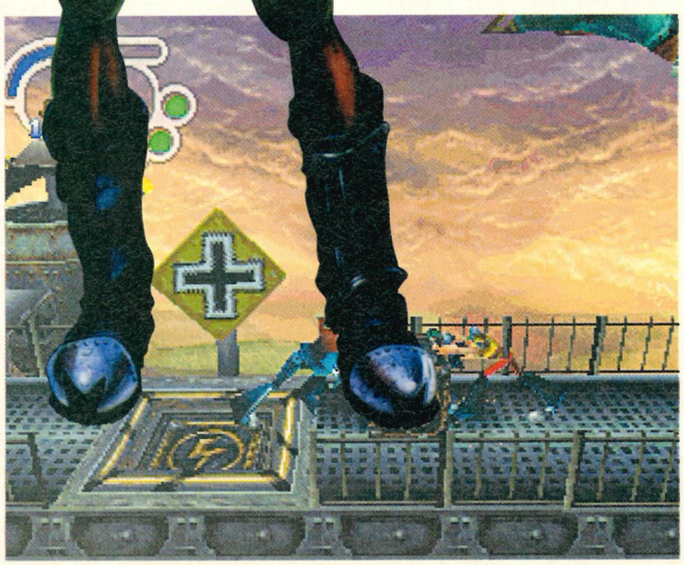




Wex meets eight aliens on his travels. Together they form the eponymous Wild 9...

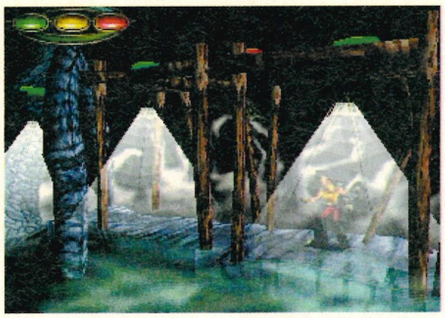
The awesome embodiment of pure evil known as Karn has finally decided to retire at the age of 346. For his retirement he plans to rip pieces out of his favourite planets to create a leisure park for personal use in his twilight years. A band of vigilantes know as the Wild 9 are on a mission to save what's left of their home planets by ending Karn's rain of terror using any means possible - It looks like the staff at Shiny have been at the medicine cabinet once too often.

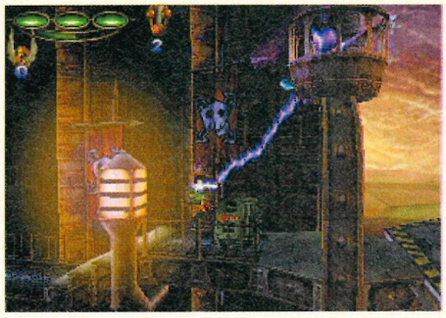
Since the 2.5D platform game genre first took off with the release of Crash Bandicoot, numerous games have attempted to push the genre onto greater heights. Pandemonium was a front runner















for a while, utilising the PlayStation's abilities and cleverly masking the genre's shortfalls. This, of course, led onto a greatly improved sequel and also a sequel for Crash Bandicoot which has established itself as the leader in this genre to this day. Wild 9 takes the Pandemonium slant on 2.5D idea, while at the same time doubling the size of the levels and using 60,000 hand-drawn animation in real-time 3D. This gives the game a fluid, flowing appearance the likes of which have never before been seen on the PlayStation or any other console, for that matter.

It isn't just the size and layout of the levels which is of interest - the complexity and puzzle-solving elements really make Wild 9 stand out from the crowd. There are numerous secret areas within the levels that can only be accessed by using certain weapons and puzzle solving techniques that can just about be compared to the likes of Doom's button-and-switch tactics.

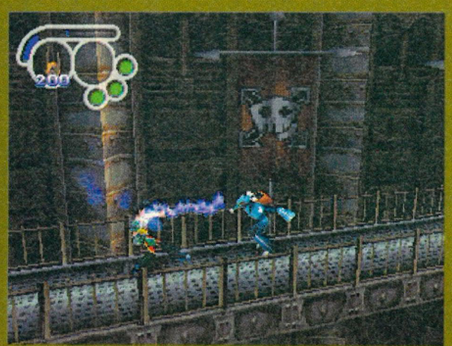
Sumptuous Secrets

Some later levels can only be accessed through secret areas, making it vital for the player to truly explore each level in great detail and not simply keep all guns blazing until the end of the stage is reached. Simply holding the fire button down isn't going to get you very far through Wild 9's vast levels anyway - a diminishing power level indicator has been incorporated for the Rig, the game's primary weapon. Slowly the power drains, shortening its firing range and losing power until it dies out. Apart from using it sparingly, the only way to counteract this is by picking up energy cells from beaten enemies that replenish the Rig's power capacity and increase its range. For ultimate control over Wex and his Rig, you can't do better than a Dual Shock control pad. You get pixel-perfect precision control as well as a feedback through the left and right portion of the controller. Most games are compatible with Dual Shock these days, but few work as well as Wild 9, and don't you forget it.

The overall graphical appearance of the game is superb, but that was to be expected. What I didn't expect was how Wex, the main character, can interact with practically everything on the screen in some way or another. Some interaction is necessary for you progress through the game (see article titled 'for my next trick'), but what's great to see is the stuff that's been put in just for the hell of it, because the use of gratuitous violence is frankly hilarious. You can, for example, pick up an enemy using the Rig and push him into a spinning ceiling fan. His head

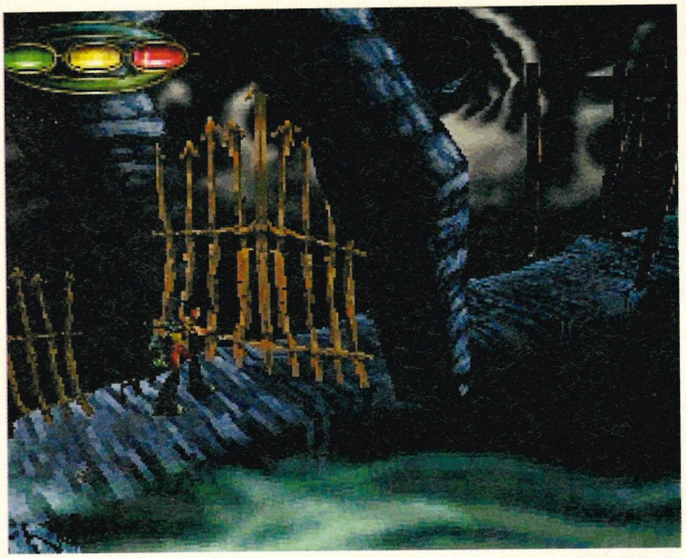
HIT ME WITH IT!

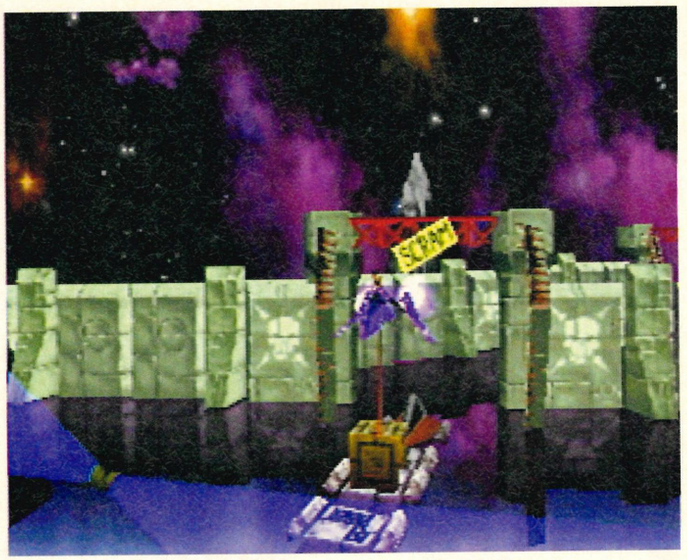
Wild 9's strongest feature is the incredibly powerful weapons systems at your disposal. In particular, Wex has a shoulder mounted weapon called The Rig which emanates a powerful electrical charge with the help of a control glove. By firing in the direction of enemies, Wex can pick them clean off the ground and swing them all around his head and even bash them on the ground in a comedy cartoon fashion! Given four ground bashes to your left and right, your enemies explode into the ground. If you decide to break off the charge, your enemy crawls around the screen dazed and confused for a few seconds before recovering. You can power up this weapon to give it a more powerful effect and a further reach by picking up energy icons that enemies drop when you have destroyed them. The highest level of The Rig is the Red Beam mode, which has the highest power and the longest reach towards bad guys. To complement The Rig, Wex can also pick up Homing missiles and even Grenades which make your enemies run around in a panic before being completely blown apart by the blast - nice!

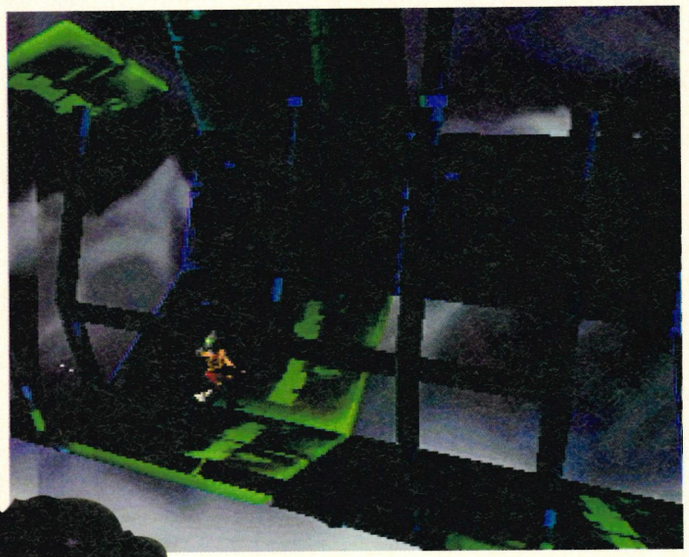






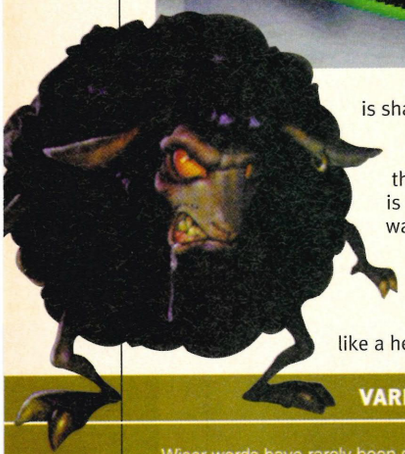








Wex can cause a power cut just by walking past your house. I wonder what happens when he scratches his arse?



is shaved clean off and the body is left wandering around the screen like a headless chicken with the added bonus of green blood spurting out of their neck. You can also do this with naked power lines that snake ominously on the screen. Your enemy is fried alive with satisfying buzzes and sparks flying everywhere. There's no need for it, but that's no excuse not to put it onto the game in my book. To top all of this, though, is the way the bad guys are incoherently begging and pleading to be released while Wex is dangling them in front of your chosen implement of death. A subtly but ingenious touch that makes me laugh every time, excellent work Shiny!

Slow Motion

Of course every game has its problems and imperfections, and this games is no exception. The two main troubles that have a bearing on its overall score are within two completely different areas of the game, though they're loosely connected. While the level design is great, the balance between their size and the number of enemies therein isn't quite there. Occasionally there's just a little too much wandering around with no

VARIETY IS THE SPICE OF LIFE

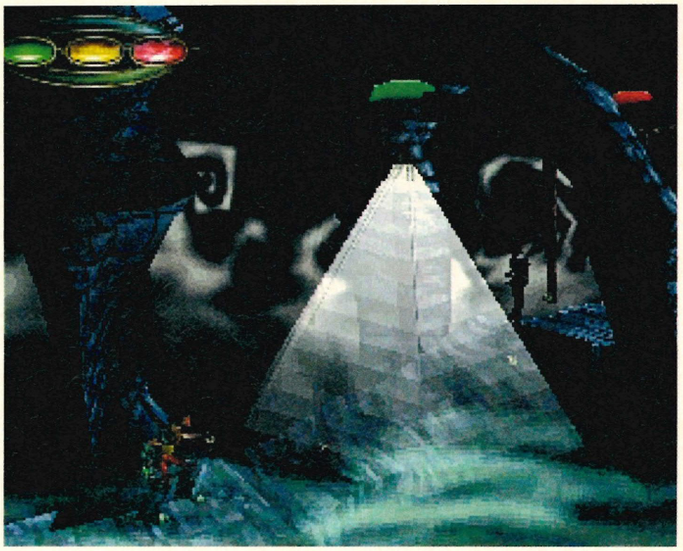
Wiser words have rarely been spoken, and the guys and gals at Shiny have acknowledged this by mixing the platform element of the game with a variety of different levels that test your reflexes and hand-eye co-ordination. Try to imagine, if you can, the scene in The Empire Strikes Back when Stormtroopers are chasing Princess Lea and Luke Skywalker on those wicked hover-bike contraptions and you'll be very close to one of the two game types. Wex zooms around space, swamp and ice areas hot in pursuit of an alien begging for a missile up the arse; just watch out for the assortment of trees, icebergs and asteroids that are in your path or it's lights out! The second of the two sub-games sees Wex jumping into a massive tube and free-falling through, avoiding obstacles on his descent, while giving the alien with you in the shaft a right good bashing. You achieve this by grabbing them by the scruff of the neck and slamming into the side of the cylinder or into objects therein. It's tricky to explain, but damn good fun to play; the screenshots here give you a better picture of what I'm saying.

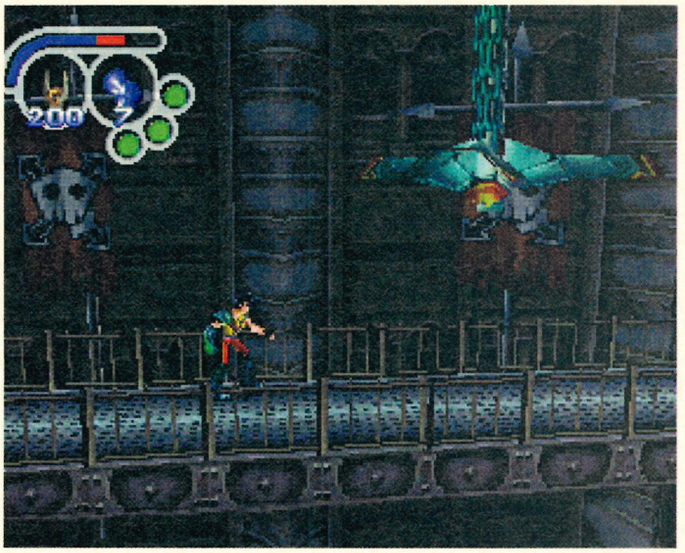


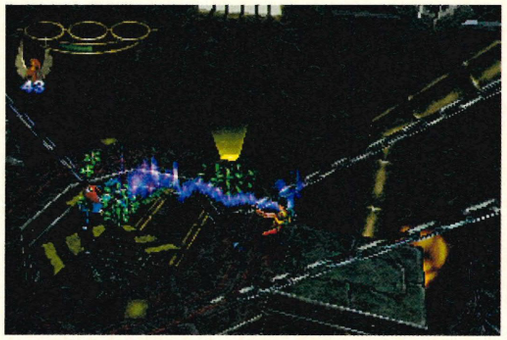


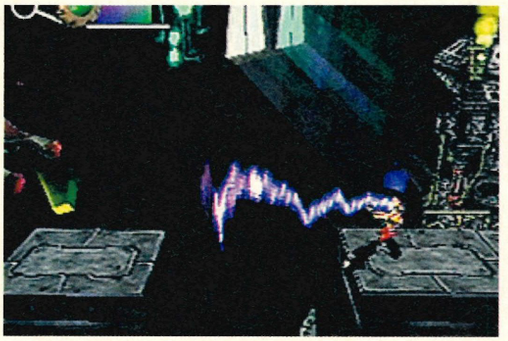


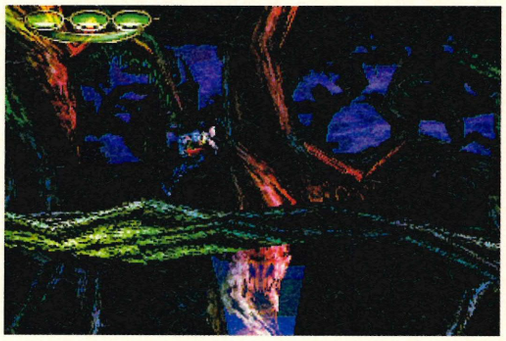














foes to fight, though this is a far from fatal flaw - most of the game is action-packed.

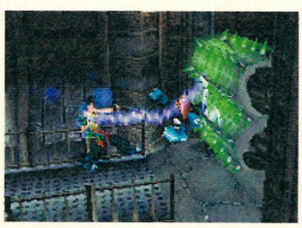
The second bugbear in Wild 9 is the rather cumbersome control you have to put up with in the 2.5D platform areas. Surely the nature of the game requires fast and accurate control, but you get the distinct feeling that this is just not what you're getting, though you do get used to it after a while. Forgivable, I think, though any worse and it would be pretty tough to play.

As it is, though, Wild 9 has more than enough to make pretty much any other game of this genre very jealous indeed. It is a well executed game showing originality and excellence in almost every score area, while maintaining a really witty sense of humour. With a long, tough challenge and varied levels that keep your interest throughout, this game comes highly recommended - it's top quality with very few downfalls. It's definitely worth a look whatever you're into, but shoot-'em-up fans are in for a real treat.

Russell

AND FOR MY NEXT TRICK...

Using his ingenious shoulder-mounted weapon, Wex can also perform an array of other tasks, making it the most versatile and powerful weapons system in the universe!



By picking up enemies with The Rig, Wex can throw them over his head and into massive grinders that are in your path. Once they have chewed up a few bodies, the grinders explode, letting Wex proceed - believe me when I say performing this manoeuvre is very satisfying! No wonder the software company described Wild 9 as 'the first game that lets you torture your enemy'.



The Rig can also allow Wex to clear long gaps of water that he would otherwise drown in. How? By picking up unsuspecting aliens and dunking them in the water until they've taken their last breath, then hopping onto their limp bodies and across onto dry land. Wex can also use this method to clear Mortal Kombat-style spikes by impaling his enemies onto them and using their blood-splattered torsos to traverse.



When Wex encounters large objects like boxes and the like, he can use his Rig to manipulate them into places he would otherwise not be able to reach. This is especially useful for moving batteries into place to power machinery needed to progress through the level. He can also smash boxes using his wonder weapon to reveal the power-ups inside. If that's not versatile, I just don't know what is!

SECOND OPINION

For sheer playability this one takes some beating. I love the way you can use your Rig as an Indiana Jones-style whip and swing to higher platforms, and the level design keeps you coming back for more. Why can't all PlayStation games be this good?

Ian

THE SCORE

GRAPHICS	9
SOUND	8
GAMEPLAY	9
LIFESPAN	8

92%

PUBLISHER	DEVELOPER	GENRE	RELEASED	VERSION	PRICE	PLAYERS	PERIPHERALS	
Konami CE Europe	Konami CE Tokyo	Sports Sim	October '98	UK	TBA	1-2	Memory Card	Analogue Pad

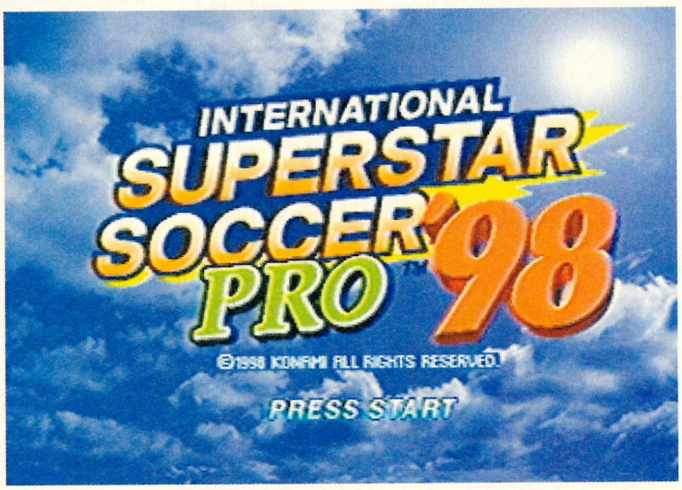




'I'll have the third from the left - you can be Sporty Spice. The others - don't call us, we'll call you'.

International Superstar Soccer Pro '98





Konami have really proven their worth in the football game market, not just now with the release of ISS Pro '98 but throughout, even back as far as ISS on the SNES which to this day reigns in the dying 16-bit market. Not even EA's licensed products change the fact that ISS, in all it's forms and especially ISS Pro '98, is the genre's leader. More importantly, however, we love it and that's the end of it. Kon' army! Kon' army!

Since the release of ISS Pro a year ago a veritable plethora of footy games have hit the shelves, fuelled by the still-talked-about World Cup. Actua Soccer 2 and FIFA '98 immediately spring to mind, closely followed by Three Lions and, of course, World Cup '98, which many argue to be the best of the lot. Having endlessly enjoyed all the incarnations of Konami's ISS games, I personally would argue ISS Pro '98 beats all its competitors hands down, but the obvious question is 'why'? There are countless reasons for ISS's popularity; it's more a case of where to begin.

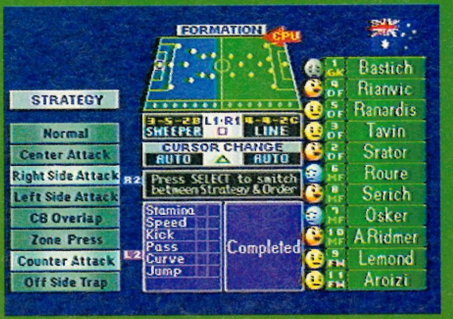
The first thing you notice when you start a match is the incredibly

AND IT'S THERE!

Although ISS Pro '98 is amazingly simple and addictive to play, there's no shortage of options and configurations to make football fans everywhere fall clean from their chairs and salivate in an animal state all over the carpet. There is a baker's dozen of formations at your disposal and nearly as many strategies like the classic offside trap and counter attack. Using the left and right back shoulder buttons, it's possible to push players into any part of the pitch you like, using your pre-determined strategies without disrupting play and being too complicated.

Using these (based on the games score and teams involved as you guidelines) you can just about tip the balance in pretty much any game situation to give you the upper hand and hopefully the match. Even though Konami haven't got any licence agreements to speak of, you can still spot a number of world class players dotted around the teams, 'safe hands' Seaman being one of the best.





GO ON... EDIT!

Konami has proved you don't need a fancy-pants licence to include real players' names in their football games, due to the newly-added Player Edit function. This gives you the opportunity to change Konami's rip-off versions of players' names like Sheallar to His Majesty's correct title, Shearer. More importantly, this function also allows you to alter Beckham's name to Tosser - thank you!













smooth graphics and animations. Since ISS Pro, the game engine has been greatly improved, not just for the sake of good looks but also for control purposes. The players now move around the pitch in a much more realistic fashion, and for once it doesn't look like the ball is glued to the players' feet - it's clearly being dribbled and manoeuvred. When you turn players right around, they don't spin like Michael Jackson, they flick the back between their legs and turn like a real player would; this makes the game feel so much better to play and it looks incredible to boot. It's obvious to see now that the players are actually looking at the ball when they are waiting for a pass or when the goal keeper gets possession, rather like the fighters in Tekken 2 constantly looking at and in the direction of their opponents.

A Game Of Two Halves

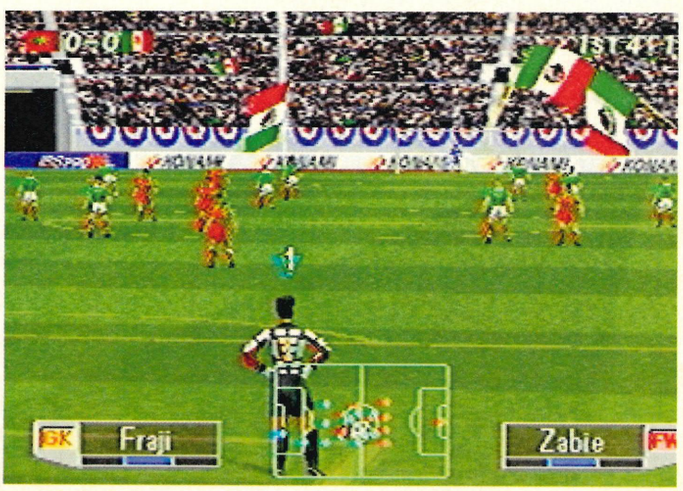
Graphics aside though, the game itself has been greatly improved in many areas. You won't find any 'soft spots' on the pitch where you can simply hoof the ball into your opponent's goal from a country mile away, though that's not to say wild goals aren't possible. You have to construct situations that make openings and use set plays to create goal opportunities, which is the way it should be. It's now also possible to play normal long balls up the field as well as playing through balls that push the ball into space for your men to chase up. This can crack any defence given the right situations and give you chances like crossing into the box and breaks up the wing. Tackling has also been greatly improved, allowing players to stop attacks almost as well as Adams himself while cutting down on fouling. Slide tackles are still dangerous near the box, though, but you get the hand of pulling them off without conceding a free kick or penalty instead of it being pot luck like in so many other football games. Goalkeepers have always been the hardest players to recreate in sports sims, either being too easy or too hard to beat. ISS Pro '98 has balanced them nicely, though set plays still give you the best chance of a goal.

All in all, ISS Pro '98 has done the impossible and topped the almighty ISS Pro of last year. Player animations and game mechanics are second to none. This is only let down ever so slightly by the not-so-great commentary from Tony Gubba and slightly duff sound effects, but every game has to have something wrong with it or the world would be a boring place, don't you know.

If you're into football, you probably would have ordered your copy by now. If you haven't or you're just not that big on footy, you'd better get on the case and sort out a copy right now. ISS Pro '98, we bow to thee!

Russell

ISS Pro '98 has done the impossible and topped ISS Pro...







SECOND OPINION

It was very brave of Konami to allow this one its time and not rush it in time for the World Cup. It probably won't do as well as the better performers in this Summer's feeding frenzy, but it's a great game - one for the football connoISSeurs.

Alan

THE SCORE

GRAPHICS	9
SOUND	7
GAMEPLAY	10
LIFESPAN	9

95%

PUBLISHER	DEVELOPER	GENRE	RELEASED	VERSION	PRICE	PLAYERS	PERIPHERALS
Cryo Interactive Entertainment	Cryo Interactive Entertainment	3D Adventure	Out Now	UK	£39.99	1	None

Loading, please wait...

Pax Corpus

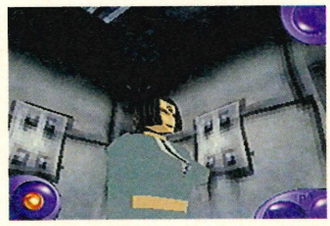
















Why, why, why? Why was this game released, and why do I have to review it? Okay, so you can't always write about great games and Sony still have this 'release anything' policy, but I really didn't deserve Pax Corpus. I'm going to be brutally honest and say this game is the worst to ever be released on the PlayStation in its entire history, and I shit you not.

I'm sorry Cryo; I respect you for releasing a couple of quite reasonable games on the PC, but this game sucks in a manner I never thought possible. If this game was a car it would never have been a sardine tin on wheels with an elastic band as an engine. I suppose I could slag this game off until the cows come home, but to be fair I'm going to be constructive about my slamming. I'll start with the good points, move onto the bad points then finish with a plea for Cryo to never create another game that feebly attempts to cash in on Tomb Raider again as long as they live; amen.

Crap Game...

Okay, first the good points. Well, the game does contain a couple a subtle touches that manage to hold it together for a little over five minutes. For example, the ability to use a first-person perspective to look around rooms, allowing you to lock onto targets, is okay. Your character can also duck away from shots and fire at the same time, which also is good, but I cant help getting the feeling that pointing out these things wouldn't be necessary if the rest of the game wasn't so poorly produced and designed. If the game had been up to the standards of previously released games of this genre, there would have been no need to compensate the poor control with a targeting system. The music during the game is also quite good and suitable for the futuristic setting of the game, and acts to create an atmosphere that certainly wouldn't have otherwise existed. That, I'm afraid, is as good as it gets.

To kick off the bad points of the game, I'm really going to have to start with the terrible loading times. The first section of Level One, for example, consists of two rooms connected by a door. It took approximately 15 seconds for this to load up, then another 15 seconds for the next section of the game to load once you've stepped onto the transporter. This incredible display of shoddy programming may be only the tip of the terrible iceberg, but it sums up the game instantly. Character animation is terrible (your character looks like John Cleese walking around in the ministry of silly walks), collision detection is non-existent, and don't start me off on the back ground graphics - just look at the screenshots for your self.

What you do with your money is none of my business, but please don't buy Pax Corpus. I wouldn't even use the disc as a coaster, but if you're looking for a laugh, just nip into your local computer game retailer and ask him to put it on for you; then you can see exactly what I mean.

Russell

SECOND OPINION

I hate giving games really low marks - around two years of people's lives went into this, but it's so technically inept a slating is the only option. This would have scored average marks at the dawn of the PSX - today it's unforgivable.

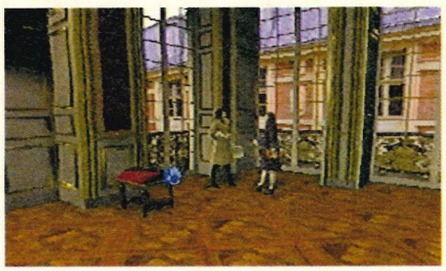
Ian

THE SCORE

GRAPHICS	3
SOUND	6
GAMEPLAY	2
LIFESPAN	3

19%

PUBLISHER	DEVELOPER	GENRE	RELEASED	VERSION	PRICE	PLAYERS	PERIPHERALS	
Cryo Interactive Entertainment	Cryo Interactive Entertainment	Adventure	Out Now	UK	£39.99	1	Memory Card	Password

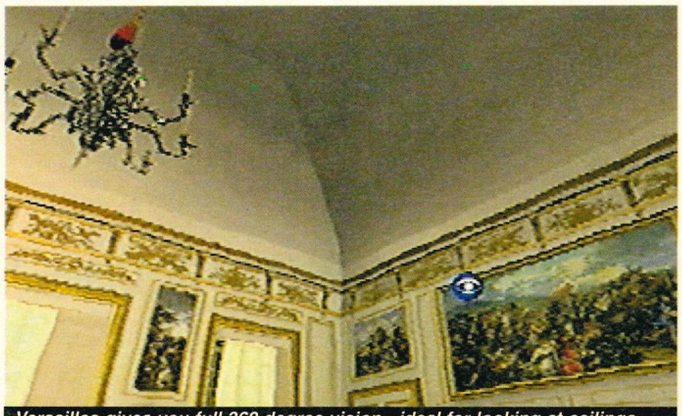




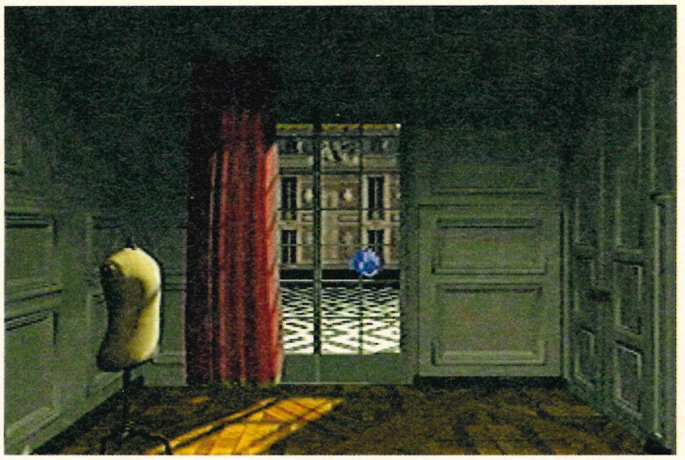


A game of intrigue; or is it?

Versailles



Versailles gives you full 360 degree vision - ideal for looking at ceilings and checking if your shoelaces are undone.



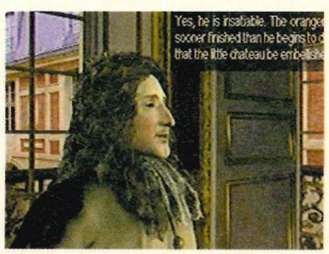
France 1685, the Chateau of Versailles. King Louis XIV's first Valet de Chambres has found a pamphlet threatening the destruction of the entire palace. The valet, Bontemps, has entrusted you with a mission to discover the pamphleteers identity, but you only have one day in which to do so.

Versailles is an edutainment game with historical information

Will you be able to save Versailles?

Yes that's right, Versailles is an edutainment game that has no shortage of historical information. You learn what an average day for the King entails and have a good idea about the people around him and his family, thanks to the detailed biographies that can be accessed during play. As well as enjoying a Myst-type tour around the palace, you can also browse through the paintings within. That, sadly, is where it ends, so 'hello' to those of you with an active interest in history, and 'goodbye' to everyone else on the planet.

Though Versailles is obviously only going to interest a very small percentage of PlayStation owners, Cryo has designed a game that many other graphic adventures would do well to learn from. For example, you have total 360-degree viewing potential for every room and location around the palace and its grounds. So instead of the limitation of only viewing what's on the screen like Myst, you can look in every possible direction, even at the floors and ceilings. You can also eavesdrop on other people's conversations, picking up general information from the gossip within the palace or even discovering hints and clues you need to solve the mystery.





Incidental Interaction

Like so many other games of a similar graphic nature, your interaction with the surroundings is limited. In Versailles you're limited almost to the point where you feel like an observer as opposed to a player. There are very few items in the environment that you can interact with, and even then there's very little you can do with them past showing them to people you meet around the palace. Indeed, it seems the balance between the historical information and the game itself is way off the mark and you're left reading chapters and chapters on the royal family and their subjects.

There are a total of seven levels or 'acts' that centre around the King's daily routine, like 'Waking the King' to 'The King at Work', but from what I saw of the game, the actual challenge presented to you is short, which is of no use for adventure fans whatsoever. Basically, what you're left with at the end of the day is a guided tour of a 17th Century palace and a detailed knowledge of it at the end of it. Great if that's your cup of tea, but a bit duff considering the PlayStation's target market of 18- to 25-year-olds. Perhaps the game would have done a greater service on the PC alone, and used to its best effect in schools and collages. Alas, Versailles just doesn't cut it as a PlayStation game partly due to Cryo's attempt to build a bridge between gaming and education that is just to wide and perilous for the average gamer to want to stand on.

Russell

SECOND OPINION

The puzzles here are illogical - the player's actions trigger totally unrelated events needed to proceed, rendering the game an excercise in trial and error instead of head-scratching problem solving. The graphics are superb, though.

Mike

THE SCORE

GRAPHICS	7
SOUND	7
GAMEPLAY	6
LIFESPAN	5

59%

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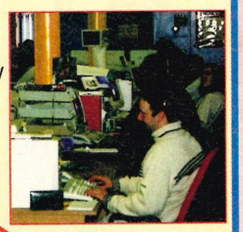
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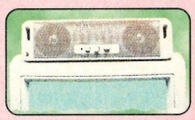
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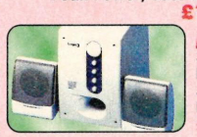
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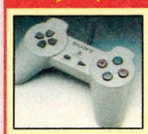


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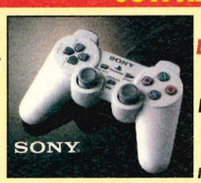
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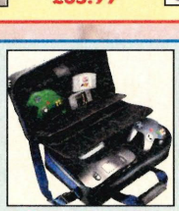
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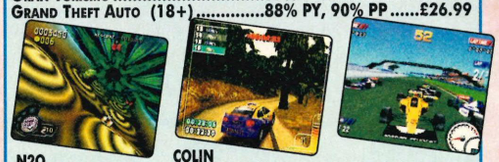
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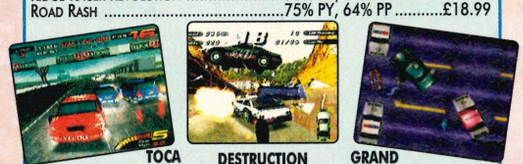
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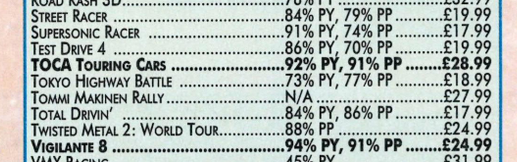
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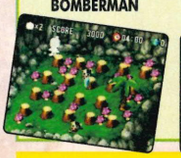




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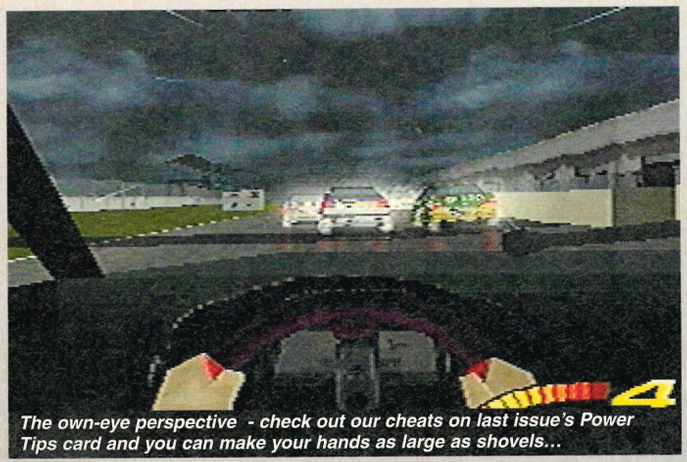
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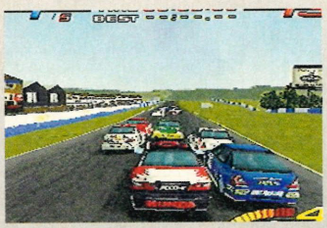
PUBLISHER	DEVELOPER	GENRE	RELEASED	VERSION	PRICE	PLAYERS	PERIPHERALS	
Codemasters	Codemasters	Driving	2nd September	UK	£19.99	1-2	Memory Card	Dual Shock Steering Wheel

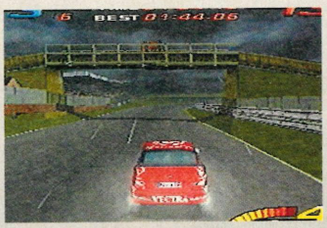
Cheap thrills! Nudge, nudge, wink, wink... know what I mean?

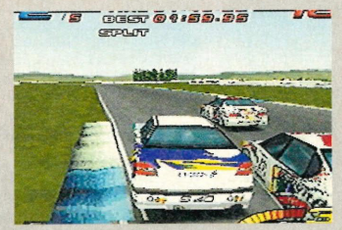
TOCA: TOURING CAR CHAMPIONSHIP



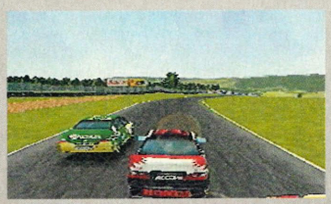
The own-eye perspective - check out our cheats on last issue's Power Tips card and you can make your hands as large as shovels...











DUAL SHOCK SHOCK!

Yes that's right folks, not only do you get an excellent driving experience for a snip at twenty quid, you also get the added bonus of playing with new Dual Shock compatibility, unavailable on the original TOCA. Analogue was the favoured control method in the original release, as it allowed you to nail precise corners without twitching or over-steering because of digital downfalls. Dual Shock, along with its refined analogue touch, gives the game a new lease of life, allowing the player accurate feedback through your hands as if they were on the steering wheel itself.

Racing games on the PlayStation are ten-a-penny, though very few warrant 90-plus review scores. When TOCA: Touring Car Championship was originally released it was a huge success, clearly out-classing the likes of Rage Racer and Test Drive 4. Now the Platinum edition is upon us, the question on everybody's lips is, 'can TOCA hold its own against the world's eighth wonder, Gran Turismo?'

Originally reviewed in Issue One of Extreme PlayStation, TOCA was said to be 'as fast as a nun's first curry', and who am I to argue with such fine words? Fast it most certainly is, especially when played in Codemasters' unique driver's-eye camera perspective. This view lets you play the game as if you were literally in the driver's seat. You can see the dashboard, your hands on the steering wheel and even the windscreen wipers when it's raining! Though this view is by far the most realistic and heart-pounding, there is a selection of other perspectives for the faint of heart. You can also have the roof view, in which you see just the bonnet of your car, or the rear view that lets you watch the action in Chase HQ fashion. Finally, there's the high rear view that lets you see the action from further away, allowing you to see a lot more of the track ahead. This is excellent for beginners still getting to grips with the game, though it does compromise the overall feeling of speed.

Riveting Realism

It goes without saying that speed alone doesn't make a good driving game (Need For Speed 3 anyone?). This genre is notoriously hard to program when you have to take into account all the complex car physics, crash damage and race track mechanics involved. TOCA is most definitely a triumph in all areas where many others have failed to deliver, incorporating extremely realistic cars and handling, as well as boasting almost exact replicas of championship courses like the legendary Silverstone and Donnington. True to form, the most important skill to learn in TOCA is cornering. Just like real touring cars, to achieve fast lap times you must slide your car into the bends and accelerate out of them. Slide too much and you spin - enter too straight and you lose speed or overshoot.

Though each race is neatly introduced by Top Gear's Tiff Needell, the only real element that's missing is in-game commentary. It's a brave writer that accuses Codemasters of lazy programming. Instead I'll just say that repetitive, badly-timed and aggravating ranting from the likes of Murray Walker is enough to drive the majority of players up the wall. The boys at Codemasters decided less is more on that front, leaving the player to enjoy the game; I'm not going to argue. Though put in the shade by Gran Turismo, TOCA can hold its head high in the knowledge that it's the next best thing. For £20, it's an essential addition to any respectable game-player's collection.

Russell

SECOND OPINION

I was amazed this one came out on Platinum so soon, especially with TOCA 2 on the way. Not that I'm wingeing - it's an excellent drive which really captures the atmosphere of a Touring Cars race.

Ian

THE SCORE

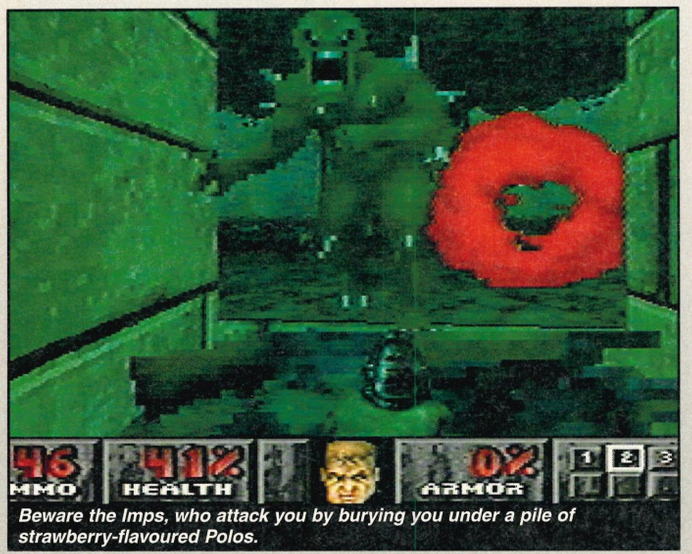
GRAPHICS	8
SOUND	8
GAMEPLAY	9
LIFESPAN	8

91%

PUBLISHER	DEVELOPER	GENRE	RELEASED	VERSION	PRICE	PLAYERS	PERIPHERALS
GT Interactive	id Software	3D Shoot-'em-up	October '98	UK	£19.99	1-2 (Link up only)	Passwords only

DOOM

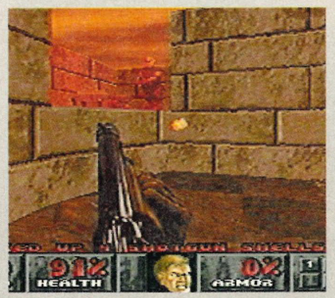
Welcome to hell on Earth...



Beware the Imps, who attack you by burying you under a pile of strawberry-flavoured Polos.









The all-time classic shoot-'em-up makes a proud return to PlayStation on Platinum. Combining the PC's Ultimate Doom and Doom 2 in one hot package, Doom lets you relieve all those homicidal tendencies that no one really likes to talk about. As if that wasn't enough, you can play link-up and kick your mate's ass in Deathmatch mode, or even save it while playing co-operatively. All this for a snip at twenty notes; what more could an honest-to-goodness human being want?

There may be other 3D shoot-'em-ups at your disposal, like Duke Nukem and Dark Forces, but they just don't have the pure magic of Doom. Some may have superior graphics, others might enjoy better sound, but for overall atmosphere and wanton destruction with the body count high and guts up to your knees, Doom is still the word.

Those that remember the original Doom games from the PC will be pleasantly surprised to see marked improvements in both Doom 2 and Ultimate Doom. Many levels are now played outside, showing hellish backdrops and broody post-apocalyptic cities on the distant skyline. The majority of the inside levels are very dimly lit, only offering you enough light to move sheepishly around, but no where near enough to feel safe in your surroundings. Though a cliché on a stick, playing with the lights off and the sound up loud is really recommended to get the adrenaline pumping and the hairs on the back of your neck standing on end. Being able to hear nearby monsters and zombies moving and breathing, for example, is a real buzz, along with the edgy music which really acts to thicken the atmosphere to knife-cutting proportions.

For overall atmosphere and wanton destruction, Doom is the word

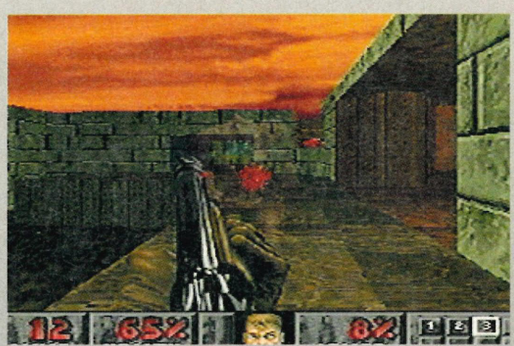


Big Flicking Gun...

Though the graphics don't quite match today's standards, they do the job adequately and portray the bloody demise of alien scum with some really satisfying animations. The array of weaponry at your disposal is well balanced, giving you all the implements of death required to nip any bad guy right in the bud. From chainsaws to the BFG9000 (I'll give you three guesses what that stands for), with seven varied weapons in between, the tools are discovered as you make your way through the game. Some are just lying around, others are found in secret areas, allowing you to pick up weapons just when you think you have no chance of survival. The shotgun, a favoured weapon by most players of the original, now has a rather nifty double-barrelled big brother which has a slower loading time but compensates by dropping four zombies in a single shot - you've just got to talk them into standing in a line.

Thankfully, even after all this time, really clever level design by id allows Doom to stand up to the rest in this genre; a worthy addition to your collection at only twenty quid.

Russell



SECOND OPINION

Technically it's been bettered, but clever design makes Doom an all-time classic. Even when baddie blasting, tactics are needed - find the best place to stand, look for sneaky shots, etc. Together with interesting weapons and foes, this makes Doom a blast.

Ian

THE SCORE

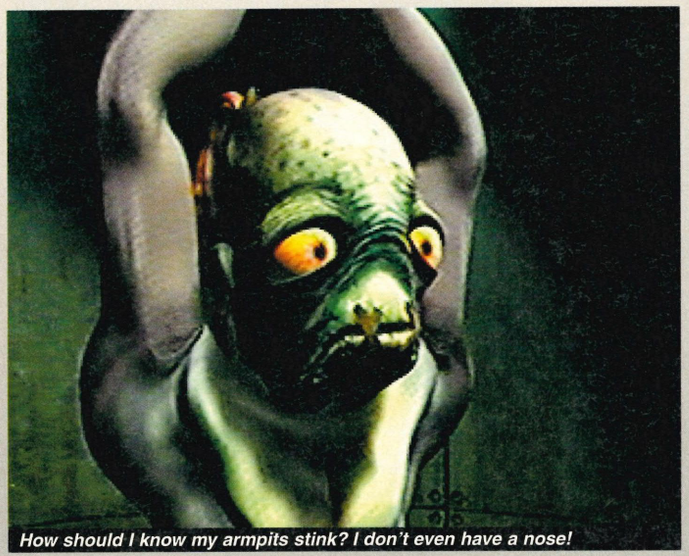
GRAPHICS	8
SOUND	8
GAMEPLAY	9
LIFESPAN	8

91%

PUBLISHER	DEVELOPER	GENRE	RELEASED	VERSION	PRICE	PLAYERS	PERIPHERALS
GT Interactive	Oddworld Inhabitants	Platform	September '98	UK	£19.99	1-2 (Alternate)	Memory Card

Hello my name's Abe; parf!

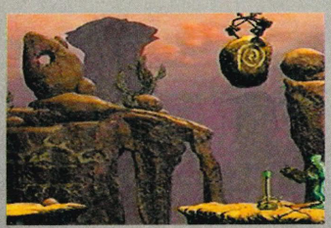
Abe's Oddysee

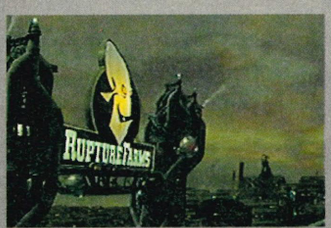


How should I know my armpits stink? I don't even have a nose!











Abe's Oddysee game begins with a beautiful story sequence introducing a Mudokon called Abe, is a slave in a meat-processing plant known as Rupture Farms. When he accidentally discovers the evil owner plans to add his race to the menu, Abe decides it's probably best to get the hell out while he still has the skin on his back. Sounds like a pretty sensible move to me...

You can call Abe's Oddysee anything you like, but 'sensible' would be pretty damn low on the list. It can fairly be described as a weird but wonderful platform adventure owing a lot to games like the classics Another World and Flashback. It has cleverly been built on a similar interface while bringing it up to date with incredible attention to detail and the addition of a new conversation feature known as Gamespeak.

> You can call Abe's Oddysee anything you like...

Gamespeak allows you to interact with the inhabitants of Oddworld in a detailed fashion, quickly and easily. You need to use it if you wish to save your Mudokon friends, and you need some quick words to talk yourself out of a few sticky situations later on in the game. Abe also has the rather nifty ability to possess other characters, so you can get them to do your dirty work - it's a tough world! From the first option screen to the final credits, the game oozes the sort of class and professionalism you would normally only expect from Sony themselves.

Sizzling Storylines

There are always going to be comparisons drawn between games of the same genre, and Abe's Oddysee is no exception. There are obvious similarities with Flashback and Heart of Darkness, but the differences you must take into account are what makes Abe's the next generation. The game holds much more than simple button combination puzzles and run-and-shoot gameplay; it really has something new to offer that's very hard to put your finger on. Maybe it's the story that's perfectly integrated with the gameplay - you really begin to feel for the poor little chap and his life of slave labourer turned hero. You also see the puzzles elements you encounter through the game slowly increase in difficulty to match the well balanced learning curve. When you play for the first time, you see various notice boards in the background, offering hints and tips on what to do and where to do it. In stark contrast, the latter half of the game Abe's abilities are tested to the maximum, mixing fast-paced action with logical problem solving.

If you didn't catch it first time round, I truly recommend you pick up Abe's Oddysee on Platinum. You really can't do much better for your twenty quid. We will be seeing a lot more of little Abe and other inhabitants in the near future - keep your eyes peeled for Abe's Exoddus, coming soon as the second game in the Oddworld Inhabitants five-game extravaganza.

Russell

SECOND OPINION

This is one of the all-time greats in the platform/puzzle genre. The animation is superb, the gameplay riveting and the gimmicks genuinely funny. The storyline works for once too.
At less than a score, it's well worth buying.

Ian

THE SCORE

GRAPHICS	8
SOUND	8
GAMEPLAY	9
LIFESPAN	9

94%

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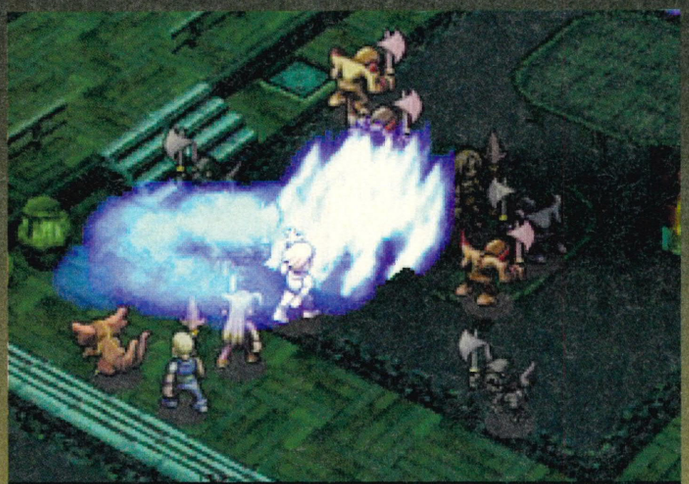
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PUBLISHER	DEVELOPER	GENRE	RELEASED	VERSION	PRICE	PLAYERS	PERIPHERALS
Atlus	Atlus	RPG	Out Now (Import)	NTSC	Varies	1-2	Memory Card

Kartia

Another quest to save the Kingdom...



The 3D battlefields are fully rotatable, and the spells are breathtaking. Typical Japanese console RPG, methinks!

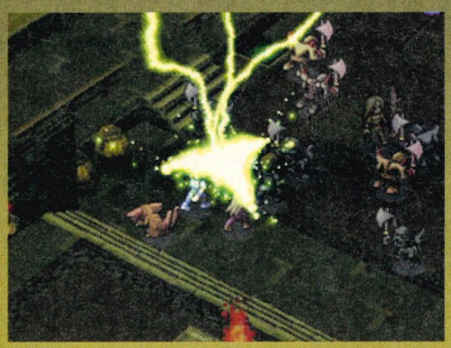
Atlus have long been creating a niche for themselves in the role-playing market, slowly taking over from SquareSoft. Now they have done the ultimate dirty deed. Kartia has been co-created with the character designer from the Final Fantasy games, Amano Yoshiitaka, so you know you're in for a true role-playing treat.

A hundred and twenty thousand Japanese role-playing experts can't be wrong. That's how many copies of Kartia were sold in its first month on sale, and it has shown no signs of slowing down either. The latest offering from Atlus is one epic adventure in which you encounter heroes, heroines, sorcerers and thieves in the terrifying world of Rebus.

This game in unlike any role-playing adventure you've encountered before. The list of unique features is long and impressive. There are two different storylines to follow using two characters, Toxa and Lacryma - a man and a woman, presumably to be politically correct. Each route through the game has its own computer-generated movie sequences, telling the story of your chosen character, all spread through over 30 hours of tactical gameplay.

Beautiful battlefields

Each battlefield is represented in 3D and all are completely rotatable. The terrain you must fight over is also fully interactive - you can freeze rivers or torch trees in the midst of battle to turn things to your advantage. You can also put together your own weapons, magic, armour and monsters using a unique interface unlike any other seen before. Then there are the 150







ITEMS GALORE

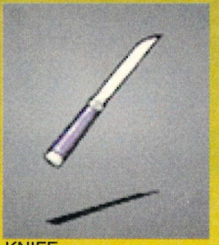
There are many different items your characters can pick up, earn or win in Kartia, with many different styles to suit your personal tastes. Even a simple thing like a sword comes in many different guises. The choice is endless.


SWORD


STAFF


MASK


MALLET


KNIFE


JAGGED SCIMITAR


JACKET


HELMET


FLINT

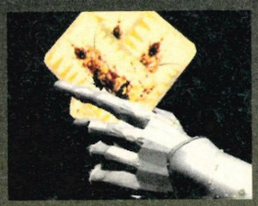

BOOTS


AXE


ARMOUR

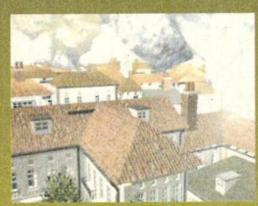
STUNNING MOVIES

There are some simply spectacular movie sequences in Kartia, telling the story of Toxa and Lacryma in the land of Rebus. Atlus have really put in a lot of effort, so the least we can do is take some time out to gaze in wonder at them.







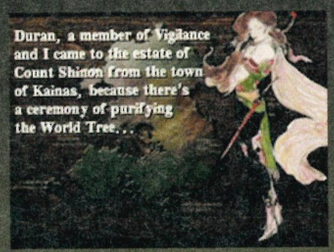












spells you can use to destroy your enemies.

One really cool feature Atlus have included is the way you can trade special items from the game with your mates using memory cards. Let them come up with the ultimate collection of items than pop their card in your PlayStation to enjoy an enhanced game. You can also fight to the death with your mates in the Versus Mode - another first for role playing games.

The Verdict

Turn-based role-playing games are an acquired taste, but the PlayStation seems to get a steady stream of them so the programmers must be doing something right. At first inspection, the graphics in Kartia don't seem anything out of the ordinary. Small characters trundle around an isometric 3D backgrounds taking it in turns to splatter the enemy. But with the inclusion of some fantastic Full Motion Video sequences between battles and great special visual effects on magic and weapons, the game really comes to life.

The basic gameplay in Kartia is quite simple, and is something that both role-playing experts and novices will enjoy, but there is a lot more depth in the game if you take the time to find it. The storylines acted out by large pictures of the characters and scrolling text really bring the game to life - you find yourself transfixed to the screen waiting with baited breath to find out what happens next.

If you got a kick out of playing games like Final Fantasy Tactics and Tactics Ogre, this outing is going to set you on fire once again.

Doug















SECOND OPINION

Because the storylines and battles are different for each of the two characters, Kartia is almost two games in one. The storyline is gripping, almost having you in tears at the end, and Prima Publishing's solution book's a work of art (I wrote it).

Russell

THE SCORE

GRAPHICS	8
SOUND	7
GAMEPLAY	8
LIFESPAN	8

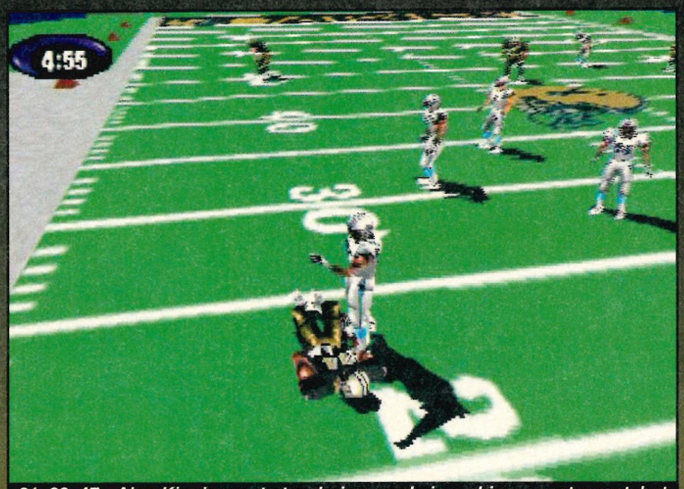
82%

PUBLISHER	DEVELOPER	GENRE	RELEASED	VERSION	PRICE	PLAYERS	PERIPHERALS
Sony	989 Sports	Sports	Out Now (Import)	NTSC	£50-60 (Varies)	1-2	Memory Card Dual Shock

Cuts faster than OJ!

NFL Xtreme

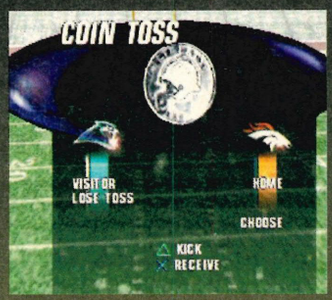




31, 29, 47 - Alan King's great at ordering meals in a chinese restaurant, but what does he know about American football?

NFL Xtreme takes the game of American football and gives it the NBA Jam treatment. This means you've got no rules, no limits and no fouls, but what you have got is loads of arcade action. Grab your pads (protective and hand controller) and take to the field.

American football is a game you either love or hate. You either revel in the action and tactics the game generates, or you dismiss it all as an over-complicated version of rugby. NFL Xtreme is the first PlayStation American football game to try and simplify American football in an attempt to make the whole thing allot more accessible and fun, while also making it much less baffling to anyone who isn't American. So has NFL Xtreme bridged the gap between simulation and action, or is it simply playing a game of hit and hope?



Hup! Hup! Hup!

Basically NFL Extreme gives you a no-holds-barred version of American football. The action is five-on-five, with no rules, no penalties, no out-of-bounds and all players are eligible to receive the ball. You can perform huge 'pancake' hits that level your opponent, you can taunt a downed foe, tackle after the ball is dead for amazing late hits and even celebrate a touchdown with one of over 50 special dances. The action is fast-paced and doesn't stop for a single second, and this adds to the atmosphere and excitement no end.

NFL Xtreme breaks the mould and goes for an arcadey feel...

First off, it's got to be said that with the number of American football games already available on the PlayStation, it's a wonder if you can decide which one to go for. However, NFL Xtreme breaks the normal mould and goes for a much more arcadey feel; for this change of approach some praise is deserved.



Graphically NFL Xtreme isn't bad, but it's never going to win prizes for pushing the boundaries of the PlayStation. The characters are large and chunky but quite well animated. They move around in a very life-like way, despite looking like tailor's dummies. Sound is average at best, with the usual grunts and groans accompanying tackles and the odd line of speech, although it does help to improve the atmosphere of the game. For a sports sim, I guess this is all you can hope for.

Unfortunately NFL Xtreme's arcade approach proves to be its undoing in the end, as its lack of depth and strategic elements means boredom can set in very quickly. I found the all-action style may be fun for the first few games, but you soon find once the 'wow look at that hit' factor has begun to die away, there isn't much of game underneath. The playbook you work from is limited to only a few basic running and passing routes and scoring seems to be a matter of luck rather than real football judgement. Frustration soon forces you to put down your joypad before you try and ram it into the TV set, and to be honest I can't see you wanting to pick it up again.

If you don't like American football, forget all about Xtreme. However, if you're a total NFL nutcase, try renting Xtreme from your local video store as you'll see just about everything it has to offer in the couple nights you get for your 3 quid.

The basic idea of NFL Xtreme is not a bad one, it's just a shame that the over-the-top action can't hide the fact that the game is far to simplistic, with little to hold the attention once the initial 'wow' factor has gone.

Alan

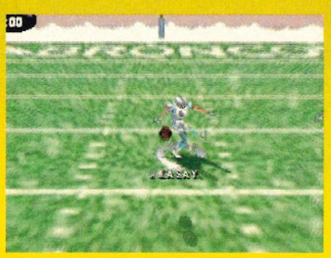




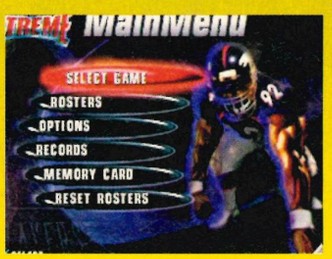
SECOND OPINION

I can't say I'm a huge fan of American football (it's just a bunch of overweight cretins running into each other), but NFL Xtreme's arcadey approach means it should appeal to those who enjoyed NBA Jam. Accessible and fun, but no depth.

Doug







THE SCORE

GRAPHICS	7
SOUND	5
GAMEPLAY	7
LIFESPAN	5

71%

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feature



high fliers

Ever wanted to fly a plane or a space ship? Who hasn't? As the PSX offers the next best thing, we take a look at flight sims and blasters where you're the pilot...



FIRST FLIGHTS

A brief history of flight sims...

There are no commercial airline sims such as Airbus or MicroSoft Flight on the PSX, so here we concentrate on the history of the sims we do get.

Multi-million pound pilot training simulators aside, the first flight sims saw you piloting a light aircraft between airports. These included Artic's ZX81 Flight Simulator. Despite their inevitable lack of sophistication, they were brilliant pieces of programming in their day. The pilot-style shoot-'em-ups like Atari's Star Raiders and Star wars worked better, their arcadey feel and disregard for flight physics giving the programmers more leeway to work with the limitations of the host machines.

The space combat game came of age in 1984 with David Braben and Ian Bell's Elite. Part blaster, part trader, this one still has a cult following today. Also released in 1984 was the young Geoff Crammond's Aviator, a flight sim based on the Spitfire. This was one of the first successful combat flyers. Although in no way a flight sim, Rescue on Fractalus from 1985 pushed back the boundaries of what could be done with the limited capabilities of the machines. The games were improving all the time.

The following year, 1986, Jez San and Argonaut Software released Starglider, pictured here. It wasn't as deep as Elite, but took the vector graphics-based blaster to new heights. By now the 16-bit games computers were making an impression too, with games like the Amiga's Interceptor, which combined speed, realism and action in a superb overall package.

Starglider 2, released in 1988, took advantage of the 16-bit machine's processing power and used filled polygons rather than wireframe graphics, and again wowed, as did Carrier Command, a strategy sim in which you could pilot a boat or a plane.

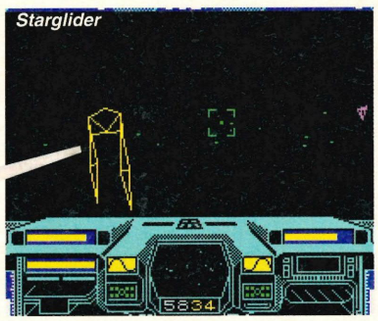
The games were getting better, but it wasn't all positive news. Ocean's F-29 Retaliator was released in rather prematurely in 1989, with some ridiculous bugs still present. Users spent an age seeking out patches and sending for updates.

MicroProse, kings of the computer flight sim, released their F-15 Strike Eagle on the 16-bit consoles to a mixed response. They also produced a coin-op which almost no one played; it was fun but too complicated for the arcades, and lost the company a lot of money. The series continued to improve on the PC, though, reaching its peak with F-15 Strike Eagle III in 1992.

1993 saw some interesting developments on both consoles and home computers. On the Sega Mega CD, Thunderhawk paved the way for future CD-based games, complete with FMV between missions. It was a very basic flight sim, but scored heavily on arcade action. Frontier: Elite 2 was just the opposite. This expanded on the Elite universe first explored back in 1984, but again the software was released prematurely. The bugs in this were so severe you could fly through a planet if you got your speed right.

Perhaps the most over-rated 'you are the pilot' game of '93 was LucasArts' Rebel Assault on the PC CD Rom. THe graphics were bed-wettingly good, but the spacecraft you piloted flew as if on invisible rails - you could only go where the program let you. Whatever the graphics did, the game's degree of interactivity was shamed by the Spectrum version of Elite, released almost ten years earlier.

And so we reach the PlayStation era, with 32-but processing power, ever-improving graphics and CD-quality sound. Space blasters have continued to improve, culminating in the Psygnosis trio of G-Police, Colony Wars and Blast Radius, though we've yet to see the PlayStation pushed to its limits with traditional flight sims. Here's to the future...





PERFECT PILOTING

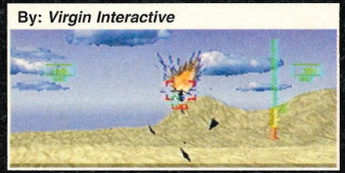
The art of writing a good flight sim...

- Programmers must make up their minds about what sort of game to write and stick to it. Titles which fall between arcade and simulation stools rarely satisfy.
- Threre should always be lots to do. Real pilots might fly for an hour before engaging the enemy, but who wants to do that in a game? Titles aiming for ultra-realism should include a 'speed time' option in this respect.
- Dogfighting is the heart of many great pilot combat sims, and is only possible if the enemies DON'T fly across your gunsights at ridiculous speeds. Again the balance between realism and gameplay must be struck.
- The balance of detail against speed must be right.
- Finally, although it takes three years to train a pilot, no game, however realistic, should be this demanding on the player. Have a heart!

AGILE WARRIOR F-IIIX

35%

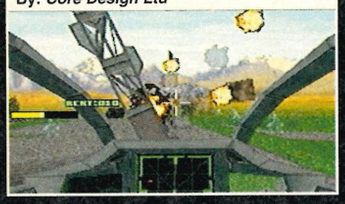
By: *Virgin Interactive*



This one's old and tired, though even in its day it wasn't particularly good.
The game's shallow and arcadey, making only token nods at flight simulation. The missions are boring and samey, and worst of all, the graphics look like they've been designed by committee. Draw-in is a problem too.
The only good thing about this game is the FMV before missions, but this is hardly reasonable compensation when the gameplay's so bad.
This is one to avoid, even at bargain basement prices.

FIRESTORM: THUNDERHAWK 2 — 79%

By: *Core Design Ltd*

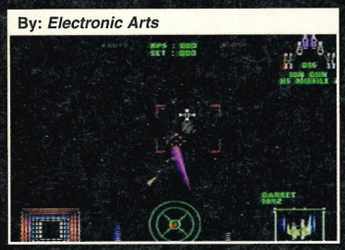


This one's older than Jimmy Tarbuck's jokes, but it's still a mean blaster. You fly a helicopter deep into enemy territory, taking out vehicles and installations as you complete your objective-based missions. Inevitably, the graphics aren't up to today's standards, though they're entirely functional. It's crying out for analogue compatibility too, but this is hardly a fair criticism when the game predates the peripheral by a couple of years. Instead, let's look at its strengths; it's fast, smooth and there's plenty to do. The maps are clear, you never lose your way, and you're never far from the action either. It's a little lacking in the variety department, though.

It's not a flight sim for the purists - you can adjust your chopper's height, but never hit the ground. Instead it's aimed at the fun fan, the shoot-'em-up maestro who wants more than a mindless blaster.

WING COMMANDER III: HEART OF THE TIGER — 65%

By: *Electronic Arts*



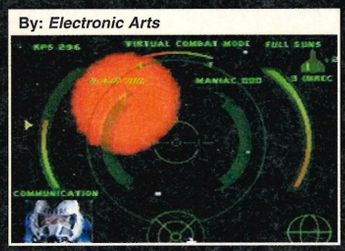
So that's what Mark 'Luke Skywalker' Hamill did after Star Wars. We often wondered...

There's fun to be had here - the storyline is genuinely immersive and the FMV well acted, but at the end of the day, it suffers from the same problem that's blighted many so-called interactive movies - too many cut sequences, not enough game. The choices you make during the FMV are limited to say the least, and hardly intrude on the gameplay at all. The shoot-'em-up elements are far from disastrous, but leave a lot to be desired by today's standards. The missions are varied enough to hold your interest for a while, but only if you can put up with the very dated graphics.

If you like interactive movie-type games with lots of atmospheric cut sequences, at today's prices (it's around £15 for a four-disk behemoth), it's worth splashing out on. If lack of interactivity gets on your nerves, though, buy for Colony Wars instead.

WING COMMANDER IV: THE PRICE OF FREEDOM — 76%

By: *Electronic Arts*



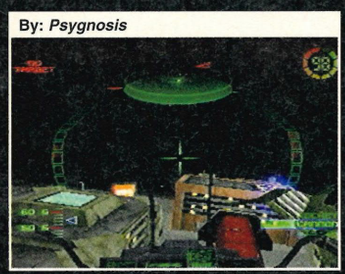
Another four-disk monster featuring Mark Hamill. It's a lot better than its predecessor. One look at the Head-Up Display shows it's come on a long way since Wing Commander III. Unfortunately it still suffers from the old 'lack of interactivity' bugbear. Still, the plot is once again immersive and the FMV well acted.

Let's face it - you either like the Wing Commander games or you don't. The space combat sim sections are piddle-poor by today's standards, but the overall space opera-style package is incredibly well presented. The lack of effect your decisions made during the FMV is annoying, but at the end of the day, it's up to you whether the moviesque cut sequences are an atmospheric gob-smacker or an unwelcome intrusion.

Better than WCIII, but won't win over those who detest the series anyway.

G-POLICE — 90%

By: *Psygnosis*

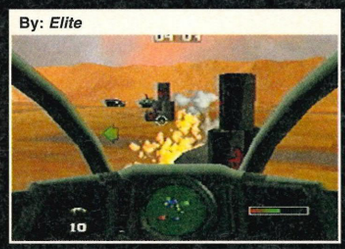


WHAT A GAME! So big it comes on two CDs, this is the ultimate mix of strategy and action. It's a bugger to control at first, but a sensible skills curve and a comprehensive training mode ensure your first few plays are as painless as possible. The graphics are outstanding, clearly showing how far programming techniques moved on since the early days, and the presentation voice-overs set the scene brilliantly.

The game sees you taking on rival corporations as you fly your futuristic rotorless helicopter contraption through a Blade Runneresque cityscape. Although the execution is undeniably slick, with lots of fine touches such as the radar and waypoint indicator which are (for once) a real asset, it's the mission structure that really sets the game alight. Varied, exciting - there's always something to do, and mastering your craft is only half the battle. Strategic use of resources is also demanded. Definitely not for the feint-hearted.

STRIKE POINT: THE HEX MISSIONS — 50%

By: *Elite*



Choose one of three choppers which trade speed against armour, fly missions, note down your password - you know the score.

For a game so old, the graphics aren't bad at all. sure they pixellate up close and lack detail, but they run smoothly with no pop-up and the area where the pixels become obvious (the foot of the screen) isn't where your concentration is focused anyway. The bases you're attacking look hellishly bland and un-busy, though.

The real problem with Strikepoint is the perspectives - viewed from inside the helicopter, the area immediately in front of you is obscured. Viewed from behind, the vehicle gets in the way of the centre area. There's fun to be had here, but your time and money would be better spent on the equally-cheap but infinitely-better Thunderhawk.

BLAST RADIUS — 91%

By: *Psygnosis*



Funnily enough, this space combat dogfighter is just as exciting as it was when we reviewed it last issue. It's basically Colony Wars with the strategy sections removed and the arcade dogfighting beefed up to the max. Because of the cool Elite-style radar system, you always know exactly where the enemy are, but doing something about it is another matter entirely - good job you've got a veritable arsenal of upgradeable weapons to hand.

The beauty of this game is the artificial intelligence of the foes. They duck and weave like cornered rattlesnakes, but it's always possible (indeed, necessary) to give chase and blast them. Obviously this gets harder and harder as the game goes on, but by encouraging this sort of dogfighting, it keeps you on the edge of your seat.

BLACK DAWN — 73%

By: *Electronic Arts*



This, the follow-up to Agile Warrior, uses a helicopter rather than a plane as its main vehicle. There's nothing subtle about the game - eschewing the sanitised war-at-a-distance approach favoured by the heavy-duty realism sims, this one's full of bangs, flashes, humongous explosions and excessive violence.
The chopper you fly is fictional, allowing a muscled-up arsenal of weapons which even include a tactical nuke. There are plenty of enemies to pot too, with the sky soon filling up wherever you fly. Mission targets include Iraqi tank formations, LA crack houses and South American drug lords.
The player has the option of playing an arcadey game or a more realistic simulation, but even with the realism switched on the game is still very pick-up-and-playable. This is flight sim lite, and it works.

GUNSHIP — 38%

By: *Microprose*



MicroProse have been releasing Gunship helicopter sims on home computer formats for years, but in 1996 it finally came to the PSX. Shame they didn't leave it where it was.
The game's biggest fault is the graphics. They would shame an Amiga with their freshly-laundered colours and blocky blandness. We should demand a lot more from a 32-bit console. Secondly, when viewed from inside the cockpit, the control panels and internal features leave virtually no room for the action. This is made even worse when your co-pilot's helpful hints are plastered in the centre of the game screen, irritating the player no end. It's more playable when viewed from outside the chopper, but that's not what flight sims are all about, is it?
MicroProse have never achieved any degree of success on the consoles, and this game does nothing to build their reputation. They're about to make a PSX return with conversions of excellent PC strategy games, though, so maybe this will change.

COLONY WARS — 89%

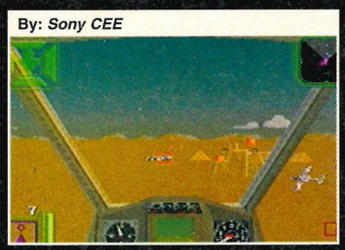
By: *Psygnosis*



Another Psygnosis game, another two-disk epic and another corker. Colony Wars is an epic space opera, with breathtaking graphics, an incredible frame rate and superb space dogfighting action.
The combat sections of the game aren't as effective as those in Blast Radius - the radar isn't as effective and the enemies (who's energy bars aren't displayed) don't encourage dogfighting to the same extent, but the slick FMV, crystal-clear presentation and solid strategy elements more than make up for this. For once, the storyline really draws you in.
If you enjoyed the Wing Commander games, or wanted to like them but became irritated by their shortcomings, Colony Wars is for you.

WARHAWK — 39%

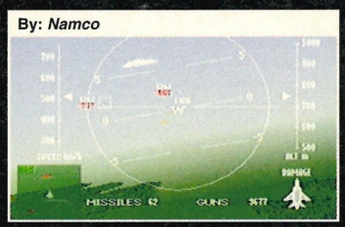
By: *Sony CEE*



This ageing chopper sim was the PlayStation's first flight sim. Compared to others of its ilk and age, it holds its own very well but it can't compete with a modern simulation blaster.
The game has some neat touches, like the way your instruments such as radar can lose functionality due to damage caused by enemy fire, but the 16-bit-quality graphics really show their age - compared to, say, Thunderhawk (itself no Spring chicken) they look distinctly jaded. Even with your throttle open to the max there's no real feeling of speed, and the enemy aircraft fly across your sights with ridiculous speed, making Blast Radius-style dogfighting impossible.
Good presentation and FMV don't compensate for gameplay this weak. Warhawk was a competent but unremarkable offering by the standards of its day, but it hasn't stood (or even knelt) the test of time.

AIR COMBAT — 43%

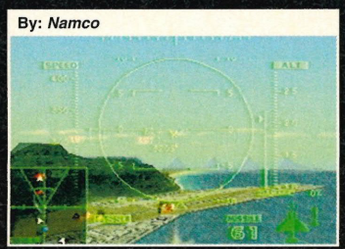
By: *Namco*



For some reason, Namco called the follow-up ACE Combat 2. Perhaps it was to distance it from this little effort which, although now on Platinum, isn't really a high flier. The presentation's intrusive, the loading's slow, the plot's insipid (secret terrorist organisation, heavily armed - yawn) and the gameplay...
The graphics are sparse yet there's still a lot of fogging. Arcade addicts will hate the amount of time spent flying around waiting for something to happen, but simulation gamers will gag at the lack of realism - you can only pitch your wings as far as the 45 degree mark, making tight turns stupidly frustrating.
Air Combat sold well in its day, but it's not worth donning the goggles for in this day and age.

ACE COMBAT 2 — 72%

By: *Namco*



The original was a pea-brained disaster, but Ace Combat 2 isn't bad at all. It goes a little too far with the atmospheric scene-setting before each mission, especially when the on-screen and audio commentary are totally out of sync, but the game itself is quite good.
Make no mistake - this isn't a game you can pick up and put down in a spare five minutes. Ace Combat 2 is a flight simmer's console flight sim, not as complex as it's PC counterparts (where you spend half your time flicking through the manual looking for the key which switches the engines on), but nonetheless realistic. It takes great practice to be able to chase and down enemy planes, and you're always at risk of stalling your own jet. Perhaps a little less detail in the graphics department and a faster frame rate would make it more fun to play, but it's still a worthy blast for the serious simulation gamers.

RAGING SKIES

70%

By: *Warner*



This one's not bad, though it's a bit samey and won't exactly set the world on fire in the adrenaline stakes.
The head-up display is one of the most realistic we've seen on a PSX flight sim, and if you feel the control panel's taking up too much of the screen, hit Select for a cut-down version. The ground and sky graphics are a little weak, with little detail and lots of fogging. The flight model's quite realistic too - you can tilt and yaw till your heart's content, or at least in your mouth as you loop the loop and perform another low-level victory roll.
Raging Skies' main fault is that it doesn't encourage dogfighting - until you're good at the game, you spend most of your time watching microscopic enemies fly on the horizon. Still, it's not bad.

TOP GUN: FIRE AT WILL

59%

By: *Microprose*

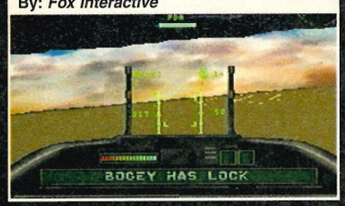


Please sir, which one's 'Will?' It must be the oldest military joke around (apart from Percy Sugden), though as this game comes from the PlayStation's early days, perhaps that's appropriate.
You can view this one from inside the plane or, if you're a wimp, from behind-and-above it, Afterburner-style. Both perspectives work quite well, as do the clear HUD and useful targeting lock-on. The graphics are crap, but what do you expect for a game so old?
The game's only real drawback is its blissful disregard of inertia and gravity. You can adjust your trajectory with ease, the plane never dipping or drifting after you release the joystick. This takes away all feeling of flying.

INDEPENDENCE DAY

29%

By: *Fox Interactive*



BLLLEEUUUGHH! BAARRF! HHUUURRGGHH! Sorry, but this game really makes you sick. It's pushing the envelope a little to call it a flight sim - it's more of a 3D Afterburner-type game, but bear with us. It's got an in-the-plane flight sim-type perspective, though it's virtually unusable due to jerky movement. Instead, you have to use the out-of-the-plane view and prepare for the worst.
Even for an arcadey game such as this, flying into buildings and just bouncing off is a little ridiculous, though not as bad as hitting the ground and bouncing like a tennis ball. Worse still, the same chase-and-shoot gameplay is used on every level, with very little variation.
There's plenty of pop-up too, despite the graphics being poor. Not recommended, even for fans of the film.

That's all for now. Stay tuned next month, when we bring another genre under the EPM microscope.

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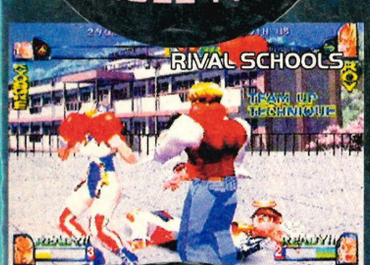
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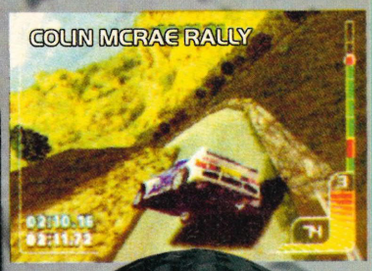
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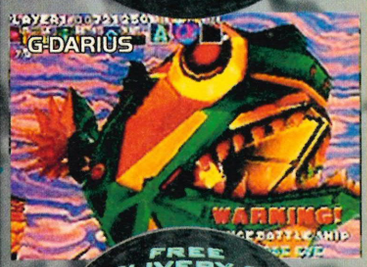
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tips & cheats

More cheeky cheats for cheerful wins. Enough talk - let's tip!

N2O: Nitrous Oxide

Passwords

3: ●, ✖, ●, ●, ■, ▲, ✖, ▲
4: ●, ●, ▲, ●, ▲, ●, ■, ■
5: ■, ▲, ■, ▲, ■, ▲, ▲, ●
6: ■, ■, ●, ■, ▲, ✖, ▲, ✖
7: ✖, ▲, ●, ■, ✖, ▲, ●, ▲
8: ■, ●, ●, ▲, ▲, ■, ▲, ■
9: ■, ●, ✖, ▲, ■, ■, ✖, ●
10: ✖, ▲, ■, ●, ▲, ✖, ✖, ✖
11: ●, ■, ▲, ■, ●, ▲, ■, ▲
12: ●, ✖, ✖, ✖, ▲, ✖, ✖, ■
13: ■, ▲, ▲, ●, ●, ✖, ●, ●
14: ■, ■, ▲, ●, ●, ▲, ●, ✖
15: ●, ▲, ✖, ■, ●, ▲, ▲, ▲
16: ●, ■, ▲, ✖, ●, ●, ●, ■
17: ✖, ●, ▲, ✖, ■, ■, ■, ●
18: ●, ▲, ●, ●, ▲, ■, ■, ✖



Crime Killer

Passwords

Mission 2: ●, ■, ✖, ▲, ■, ✖, ▲, ■, ▲, ●
Mission 3: ●, ●, ■, ✖, ▲, ●, ●, ●, ●, ●
Mission 4: ●, ●, ■, ▲, ●, ●, ■, ▲, ■, ✖
Mission 5: ▲, ●, ●, ●, ●, ●, ●, ●, ■, ▲
Mission 6: ■, ▲, ■, ▲, ●, ■, ✖, ✖, ✖, ▲
Mission 7: ●, ●, ●, ●, ■, ✖, ▲, ●, ●, ●
Mission 8: ■, ▲, ■, ✖, ▲, ■, ✖, ▲, ■, ✖
Mission 9: ✖, ✖, ▲, ●, ■, ✖, ▲, ■, ▲, ●
Mission 10: ●, ●, ●, ●, ■, ✖, ▲, ●, ●, ●
Mission 11: ■, ▲, ■, ▲, ●, ●, ■, ▲, ■, ▲
Mission 12: ■, ▲, ■, ▲, ■, ▲, ●, ■, ▲, ■
Mission 13: ✖, ✖, ✖, ▲, ●, ●, ●, ■, ✖, ✖
Mission 14: ✖, ✖, ✖, ✖, ▲, ●, ■, ✖, ✖, ✖
Mission 15: ✖, ▲, ■, ✖, ✖, ▲, ●, ■, ▲, ■
Final Movie: ✖, ▲, ●, ■, ▲, ■, ✖, ▲, ■, ▲



Agile Warrior: F-IIIX

Cheats

Invulnerability:
Pause the game and press ←, ■, ■, ■, ■, ↑, ▲, ▲, ▲, →, ●, ↓, ✖, ✖, ✖, ✖, ▲, ■

Maximum Fuel and Shields:
Pause the game and press ←, ■, ■, ■, ■, ↑, ▲, ▲, ▲, →, ●, ↓, ✖, ▲, ▲, ▲, ●

Maximum weapons:
Pause the game and press ←, ■, ■, ■, ■, ↑, ▲, ▲, ▲, →, ●, ↓, ✖, R1, R1, R1, R1, L1, L1, L1, L1, R2, R2, R2, R2, L2, L2, L2, L2

B-1 and F-15 airstrike (available only on Level One, Bastille Day):
Pause the game and press ←, ■, ■, ■, ■, ↑, ▲, ▲, ▲, →, ●, ↓, ✖, ✖, ✖, ✖, ✖, ✖

Mesh Fog Editor:
Pause the game and press ←, ■, ■, ■, ■, ↑, ▲, ▲, ▲, →, ●, ↓, ✖, ↓, ↓, ↓, ▲, ▲, ▲

Translucent Overhead Map:
Pause the game and press ←, ■, ■, ■, ■, ↑, ▲, ▲, ▲, →, ●, ↓, ✖, ●, ●, ●, ●, ●

Hover Mode:
Pause the game and press ←, ■, ■, ■, ■, ↑, ▲, ▲, ▲, →, ●, ↓, ✖, ▲, ▲, ▲, ✖

All Missions Available:
Pause the game and press ←, ■, ■, ■, ■, ↑, ▲, ▲, ▲, →, ●, ↓, ✖, ▲, ▲, ↑, ↑, ↑

Hidden Video:
Pause the game and press ←, ■, ■, ■, ■, ↑, ▲, ▲, ▲, →, ●, ↓, ✖, ↓, ✖, ↓, ✖, ↓, ✖, ↓, ✖, ↓, ✖. The video is played during the next mission briefing.

Debug Information:
Pause the game and press ←, ■, ■, ■, ■, ↑, ▲, ▲, ▲, →, ●, ↓, ✖, L2, R2

Overhead Camera:
Pause the game and press ←, ■, ■, ■, ■, ↑, ▲, ▲, ▲, →, ●, ↓, ✖, ↑, ↓, ←, →

Long Camera Views:
Pause the game and press ←, ■, ■, ■, ■, ↑, ▲, ▲, ▲, →, ●, ↓, ✖, ✖, ✖, ✖, ●, ✖, ✖, ✖

Mission Complete:
Pause the game and press ←, ■, ■, ■, ■, ↑, ▲, ▲, ▲, →, ●, ↓, ✖, ▲, ▲, ▲, ↓, ↓, ↓, ↓, ↓, ↓

Circuit Breakers

Cheats

Unlock All Single-Player Circuits:
This cheat allows you access to every single-player circuit (all 32 of them) without having to qualify. Press Start to get the pause menu. Highlight Options and press ✖ to select. Now highlight the Sound option and press ✖ to select. Highlight FX and press both left shoulder buttons simultaneously. If you've followed these instructions correctly, every single-player circuit is available when you return to the game.

Access Multi-Player Reverse Circuits:
Unlike the single-player mode, the reverse courses in multi-player are not directly accessible. This cheat allows the player to play any one of the 16 multi-player tracks in reverse mode, effectively doubling the number of courses available.
On the Circuit Selection screen, choose the circuit you wish to race and press Select. As the cars start to drive into the tunnel, quickly hold down ✖ and ■. While holding them down, press either ← or →. If successful, the cars spin around and drive into the tunnel backwards.
This cheat does not stay active like the other cheats. Each time you wish to race a multi-player circuit in reverse mode, you must re-enter this cheat.

Night-Time Circuits:
If you've tried the regular circuits and fancy making them a little more challenging try racing at night.
This cheat works on both single- and multi-player circuits. If you activate the cheat in single-player mode, only single-player circuits are affected, and if you activate the cheat in multi-player mode only multi-player circuits are affected. It remains active until the user turns it off - this can be done by following the same procedure you use to activate it.
On the Circuit Selection screen, press all four shoulder buttons simultaneously. If you get this right, a picture of a headlight is drawn at the bottom of the screen.

Turbo Circuits:
Are the normal multi-player circuits too slow for the boy-racer in you? Try this cheat to boost the speed of the cars.
This cheat is only available for the multi-player circuits. When you activate the cheat, it has a global effect on every multi-player circuit. The cheat can be undone by following the same instructions you use to activate it.
On the Circuit Selection screen, press the following buttons simultaneously; ●, ✖, ▲ and ■. If you get this right, a picture of an engine appears at the bottom of the screen.

Upside-Down Cars:
If you have a fetish for headaches this is the cheat for you, this allows you to race single- or multi-player circuits upside-down!
This cheat works on both single and multi-player circuits. If you activate the cheat in single-player mode only single-player circuits will be affected, and vice versa. The cheat remains active until the user turns it off - this can be done by following the same instructions you use to activate it.
To activate upside-down mode, press the following four buttons simultaneously; L2, R2, ↓ and ✖. If you get this right, a sweeping arrow is drawn at the bottom of the information panel.

Bean Cars:
Like the cute bean cars in the car selection arena? Well the following cheat allows you to race a multi-player game using these cars! The bean cars are very bouncy and don't handle in quite the same way as normal cars.
When you've chosen your vehicles and selected a circuit to race, you can enable this cheat. As soon as the circuit has loaded and countdown has started, simultaneously press the ● and ← buttons. If you get this right, your chosen vehicles evaporate and are replaced with the bean cars.



All Missions Complete:
Pause the game and press ←, ■, ■, ■, ■, ↑, ▲, ▲, ▲, →, ●, ↓, ✖, SELECT, ✖, ✖, ✖, SELECT, ▲, ▲, ▲, SELECT, ✖, ✖, ✖

Enable Ground Collision:
Pause the game and press ←, ■, ■, ■, ■, ↑, ▲, ▲, ▲, →, ●, ↓, ✖, ■, ✖, ✖, ■

Turn Off HUD:
Pause the game and press ←, ■, ■, ■, ■, ↑, ▲, ▲, ▲, →, ●, ↓, ✖, R1+R2

Listen to Audio CD:
Start the game and open the PlayStation. Remove the game CD and replace it with any audio CD. A prompt appears; you can pick a track from one to 99. Use the shoulder buttons to adjust the volume and track number. The game pauses after the lid is closed, and then continues with the selected audio track. A further prompt appears after every mission, and a picture of the development team is offered under Credits.

Oddworld: Abe's Oddysee

Cheats

Level Select:
At the first options screen, where Abe says 'hello', hold R1 and press ↓, →, ←, →, ■, ●, ■, ▲, ●, ■, →, ←

View FMV Sequences:
At the first options screen, where Abe says 'hello', hold R1 and press ↑, ←, →, ■, ●, ▲, ■, →, ←, ↑

Green Air Mines:
During the game, hold R1 and press ↑, ←, →, ■, ●, ✖. Abe farts green air mines.

Instant Voice Puzzle Solution:
During the game, hold R1 and press ▲, ↑, ●, ←, ✖, ↓, ■, →. Select any sound to solve the voice puzzle.

G-Police

Cheats

Invincibility:
Hold L1+R2+[SQUARE], and press [LEFT], during the mission briefing. A sound confirms correct code entry. This is useful to try out new ideas if you're stuck, but on completing the mission you can't progress to the next while the cheat is enabled.

All Weapons, Unlimited Ammunition:
Hold L2+R1+[CIRCLE], and press [LEFT], at the weapons load screen after the mission briefing. A sound confirms correct code entry. Again, the game ends after the mission in question.

Secret Missions:
Enter PANTALON as a password. The word 'Cheat' is displayed in the lower-right corner. Enter the training menu to access six secret missions.

Fast Civilian Traffic:
Enter BENIHILL as a password.

Enable Sirens:
Enter WOOWOO as a password.

Bonus Camera Angle:
Enter SUPACAM as a password. The camera angle switches to a close-up of an enemy vehicle when destroyed.

Level Passwords:
Once more, the game ends at the end of the mission when using these codes.

1:	MADGAV
2:	DOLMAN
3:	SONAGAV
4:	ACEDUF
5:	JOJOGUN
6:	WENSKI
7:	SAEGGY
8:	MAZMAN
9:	DAZMAN
10:	DELUCS
11:	ANDOOOO
12:	KIMBCHS
13:	ANDYMAC
14:	YERMAN
15:	OLLIEB
16:	THEYOLK
17:	TONYMASH
18:	ANDYCROW
19:	BIONIC
20:	TSLATER
21:	IAINTHOD
22:	JONRITZ
23:	CLAIREC
24:	STEVEBOT
25:	ANGUSF
26:	EUANLEC
27:	EDFIRE
28:	STUBOMB
29:	THONBOY
30:	JIMMAC
31:	PUGGER
32:	ROSSCO
33:	CAKEBOY
34:	NIKNAK
35:	SAGLORD

Blasto



View Babes: Complete the game after saving all the babes. A 'View Babes' option is available when you start a new game. Alternative Appearance: Quickly press ↑, ↑, ↓, ✖, ▲, ● at the main menu.

Road Rash 3D

Avoid Head-On Crashes:
Press ✖, ✖ to do a wheelie just before hitting an on-coming car. Instead of crashing, your bike uses the car as a ramp.
Hitch a Ride: Press ✖, ✖ to perform wheelie, then keep tapping ✖ until a car arrives. Ramp over the car, then hit the brake ■. If done correctly, your bike moves with the car.

No Tickets: Pause and restart the race as soon as you're pulled over to avoid getting a ticket.

Skullmonkeys

Cheats

Level Skip: Pause the game and press ▲, L1, L1, ■, →, ●, ▲, ↓

Extra halo: Pause the game and press R2, ●, ●, ↓, ←, ●, →, ↓

Ammunition: Pause the game and press ↓, ●, ↑, R2, ←, ▲, SELECT, SELECT

Maximum Lives: Pause the game and press L1, ▲, ↓, ←, ●, SELECT, ■, →

Full Super Willies: Pause the game and press R1, ←, ■, ▲, L1, ▲, R2, SELECT

Frozen Klaymen: Pause the game and press L2, ←, ●, R2, ↓, ■, ▲, ↓

Tinted Klaymen: Pause the game and press L2, ●, ●, ←, SELECT, L2, ↑, ↓

Crazy Klaymen: Pause the game and press ↓, →, ▲, L2, ↑, ←, ▲, SELECT

Fast Klaymen: Pause the game and press ←, ■, R2, ●, R1, ↓, ●, R2

Slow Klaymen: Pause the game and press L1, ▲, ←, ↓, R2, ▲, ←, SELECT

Small Klaymen: Pause the game and press R1, ←, ■, ▲, R1, ←, ■, ▲

Full Swirly Qs: Pause the game and press R1, →, ●, R2, R2, ■, →, SELECT

Full Phoenix Hands: Pause the game and press ■, ▲, R2, ←, SELECT, ●, ▲, →

Full Phart Heads: Pause the game and press R1, ←, ↑, L1, L1, ■, →, SELECT

Shoot Heads: Pause the game and press ↓, ■, ▲, ↓, ↓, ■, ■, →



DOOM

Cheats

Full Map:
Pause the game and press ▲, ▲, L2, R2, L2, R2, R1, ■

Map All Items:
Pause the game and press ▲, ▲, L2, R2, L2, R2, R1, ●

Invincibility:
Pause the game and press ↓, L2, ■, R1, →, L1, ←, ●

Weapons, Ammo, and Keys Available:
Pause the game and press ✖, ▲, L1, ↑, ↓, R2, ←, ←

Level Select:
Pause the game and press →, ←, R2, R1, ▲, L1, ●, ✖,. A menu appears in the top half of the viewing window. Press ← and → to select a level, and confirm your entry with any symbol button.

Transparent Walls:
Pause the game and press L1, R2, L2, R1, →, ▲, ✖, →

Random Levels:
Enter DOOMMNL***, replacing the asterisks with three similar characters. The game starts at a random level.

Level Codes

Ultimate Doom:
02: CR!3WDD3DB
03: 3JJCMK8W64
04: 03LTJoY!o2
05: H33!1HFTHK
06: 04MSKZX9Z1
07: YTTLCXXLXV
08: 09SMBYo4YW
09: 7KKBLD7V53
10: FM4217GSGJ
11: H!!3WDGLDB
12: 07QPDW26WY
13: WTXQ9C3W12
14: RBR4G!LDLN
15: WTXQ9C3W11
16: 548C7DFWYX
17: JOC89DZPQS
18: JGB9CToNRT
19: 9QLTKRolo2
20: 78M63QX921
21: S!61FHVQJG
22: 33QHFTT6WY
23: VBGQPJ!Y46
24: ZYKTLW7V53
25: oDJSM4HW64
26: LS5YPTCRKH
27: ZDJSMVRW64
28: 1YKTX4QV53
29: XKF6R8LZ97
30: DJXo7Q4HTR

Doom II:
31: CoW1!QNJQS
32: VM!3V1D3DB
33: W394W2DMFC
34: ZQ58ZKJRKH
35: Z758ZKJ8KH
36: 5C2V3DQBNL
37: NCKBLX7V53
38: 1Q58oFCRKH
39: HTMSKZZ9Z1
40: WS58ZKCRKH
41: CSNRG2W820
42: WT67oJBQJG
43: DQLTJ1Y!o2
44: 2N94VFFMFC
45: CQLTJoY!o2
46: WR492GDSGJ
47: PFFGXH3777
48: JWCJV2X479
49: CJJTM35964
50: M!T174XZXV
51: 577oMX2CDF
52: YJLW3PPCPM
53: DKKBLM58J3
54: 7L3!266DJK

Bonus levels:
55: BBBBBBB666
56: 3P67ZNBQJG
57: JCGDNFL555
58: BXXBXXB778
59: JCGDNFL556



tips & cheats

Full Universe Enemas: Pause the game and press ←, ▲, →, ↓, ▲, SELECT, SELECT, SELECT

Full 1970s Icons: Pause the game and press SELECT, ●, ↑, ←, ↓, ↑, ↓, ■

Full Status Items: Pause the game and press L1, ▲, ↓, R1, ●, →, ↑, SELECT. All status items except Swirly Qs and 1970s icons are now full.

Remove Pause Text: Pause the game and press L2, ←, ●, R2, ↓, ■, ▲, ↓

1970s Bonus Level: Enter ■, R1, R1, L1, L2, ▲, R1, L2, L1, R2, ■, R2 as a password.

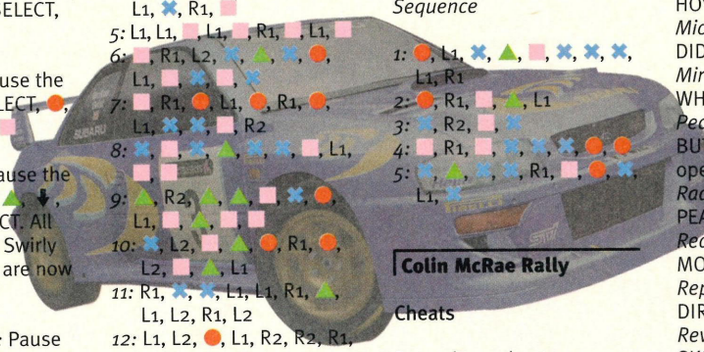
Bonus FMV Sequence: Collect all Swirly Qs and complete the game.

Passwords

Level
2: R2, R2, ●, ■
3: R2, ■, R2, R1, ■, ✖, R1, ✖, ✖, R1, ▲
4: ●, ▲, ■, ▲, ●, R1, R1, L1, ✖, R1, ■
5: L1, L1, ■, L1, ■, R1, ■, L1, ■
6: ■, R1, L2, ✖, ▲, ✖, ●, L1, ■, ✖, ■, ✖
7: ■, R1, ●, L1, ●, R1, ●, L1, ✖, ✖, ■, R2
8: ✖, ■, ✖, ▲, ✖, ✖, ■, L1, ■, ■
9: ▲, R2, ▲, ▲, ■, ✖, ●, L1, ■, ▲, ■, ■
10: ✖, L2, ■, ▲, ●, R1, ●, L2, ■, ▲, L1
11: R1, ✖, ✖, L1, L1, R1, ▲, L1, L2, R1, L2
12: L1, L2, ●, L1, R2, R2, R1, L2, L2, R1, ■, L2
13: ●, ■, ✖, R2, ●, R1, L2, L1, R2, ■, ▲
14: ■, L1, L1, R1, R2, ▲, R1, L2, L1, R2, ■, R2
15: R2, ✖, L2, ▲, ▲, L2, R1, R2, L1, R2, L2
16: L2, R2, R2, ▲, ▲, L2, R1, R2, L1, R2, L1
17: ✖, ▲, R1, L1, R2, L1, R2, L2, L1, R2, ▲, ✖
End: ✖, ▲, ✖, ✖, R1, ■, ●, ✖, L1, ✖

View FMV sequences: Enter one of the following passwords to view the corresponding FMV sequence.

Sequence
1: ●, L1, ✖, ▲, ■, ✖, ✖, ✖, L1, R1
2: ●, R1, ■, ▲, L1
3: ✖, R2, ■, ✖
4: ■, R1, ■, ✖, ✖, ✖, ●, ●
5: ✖, ▲, ✖, ✖, R1, ■, ●, ✖, L1, ✖



Colin McRae Rally

Cheats

Enter these cheats as your name. You can then enter a name of your choice before continuing.

60 Frames / Sec:
SILKYSMOOTH
All Night:
NIGHTRIDER
Chrome Car:
TINFOILED
Double Power:
MOREOOMPH
Forklift Mode:
FORKLIFT (rear wheel steering)
High-voiced co-driver:
HELIUMNICK
Hover Car:
HOVERCRAFT
MicroMachines:
DIDDYCARS
Mirror Tracks:
WHITEBUNNY
Pedal cars:
BUTTONBASH (✖ & ● to operate)
Race in fog:
PEASOUPER
Reduce Gravity:
MOONWALK
Replay in transition mode:
DIRECTORCUT
Reverse Tracks:
SKCART
Steer with all four wheels:
TROLLEY
Turbo Boost:
KITCAR (SELECT to activate)

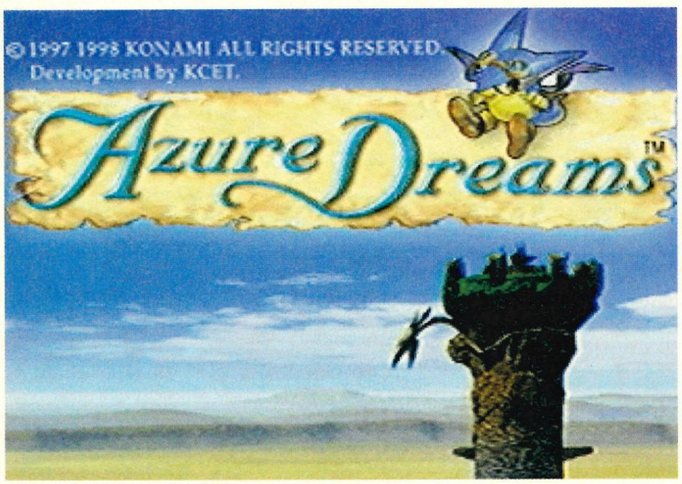
Azure Dreams

Tips

Call Your Mother:
Before leaving for the Tower, tell your mother you're going. She gives you a Pita Fruit.

Monster Hunting Tips:
Throw one of your magic items at a monster, and the effects it would've had on you hamppen to the foe. For example, if you throw an Olean (the blue fruit) at a monster it vanishes.

Cherrl:
Go to Nico's house and talk to her father. Nico enters. She talks to you about how the town isn't cultured enough and about her donations to the hospital and temple. Go to the hospital and talk to the doctor. Say the place isn't that bad. Leave. Go to the tower. Come back by using the Wind Crystal. Sell off any unwanted possesions, because you need 4000 gold. Return to the hospital and the doctor asks if you are there to donate for a new hospital. Say you are. Give him the money. Go to the tower again. Return with the Wind Crystal. Re-Visit the hospital again and talk to the doctor. He thanks you. Go to the to the





WWF Warzone

Alternate Costumes:
To use the wrestlers' alternate outfits, hold down L2 while choosing your wrestler.

Goldust's Outfits:
For Goldust's other outfits, set the difficulty to Medium or Hard and win the WWF title in Challenge mode with him.

Extra Cold Outfits:
To get the Extra Cold feature, beat the game with Stone Cold Steve Austin. This gives access to two additional outfits. To pick them, hold the appropiate shoulder button while choosing him.
L1: Regular Outfit (Black tights)
L2: Alternate Outfit (Tights and 3:16 vest)
R1: Extra Outfit 1 (Jeans and 3:16 vest)
R2: Extra Outfit 2 (Jeans and 3:16 shirt)

Beans Mode:
Win the World Title with Mosh on Medium difficulty.

Big Heads:
Beat the Challenge mode with the British Bulldog.

Bonus Wrestlers:
To play as Dude Love and Cactus Jack, win the title with Mankind. To play as Sue the ring girl, win the World Title with Bret Hart or Owen. Hart on Medium Difficulty.

Cheat Menu:
When the elevator is going up, press L1, then press R1 to descend into the basement. Cheat codes appear here once you've unlocked them.

Ego Mode:
For Ego Mode, win the World Title with Ahmed Johnson on Medium difficulty. On Ego mode, your head gets bigger and bigger as you cause more damage to your opponent.

Female Wrestlers:
To create a female wrestler, complete Challenge Mode with Triple H or Shawn Michaels.

No Meters:
To turn off all meters, beat the Challenge mode with the Undertaker.

No Wimps Mode:
To get the No Wimps Mode, which turns off all blocking, win the title with Ken Shamrock on Medium or Hard modes.

Outside Interference:
To call for a certain wrestler to run in during a match, hold all four top buttons (L1+L2+R1+R2) with a direction and a symbol a button. This can only be achieved in a one-on-one Vs match, and you always lose by disqualification. The combinations, together with all four shoulder buttons, are:
Up+Kick: Steve Austin
Up+Punch: Faarooq
Up+Tie-Up: Mankind
Up+Block: Ahmed Johnson
Down+Kick: Ken Shamrock
Down+Punch: Kane
Down+TieUp: Thrasher
Down+Block: Mosh
Left+Kick: The British Bulldog
Left+Punch: Shawn Michaels
Left+TieUp: Bret Hart
Left+Block: Owen Hart
Right+Kick: The Rock
Right+Punch: Goldust
Right+TieUp: Triple H
Right+Block: The Undertaker

9ª tower. Upon your return, in the house just north of the hospital, you see a blond girl (Cherrl) looking out the window. Talk to her. You frighten her (you brute) and she drops her doll. Pick it up and give it to her...

Mia Myria:
To seduce this girl, keep talking to the old man who collects books, in the east side of town. His collection of books soon out-grows his house. He asks you to build him a library. Do so. Visit it every now and again to see Mia Myria.

Vivian:
Talk to Madame from the bar, frequently. She goes on about her adventurer with the blue cape. Make your way up to the tower to the 25th floor. There you should be able to find a blue cape. Take this back to her. She crys and closes the bar. Talk her into reopening it - next time you go in there, Vivians dancing on the small stage.

Ayrton Senna Kart Duel 2

Hidden Karts

Enter SENNA 1 as your name. You enter an Extra Classic track. To get an extra kart, you must win here. Use this extra car to win two rounds continuously in Championship Mode to get the second kart.

One

Cheats

All Weapons:
Enter the password 'MAX-POWER'.

Debug Mode:
Enter the password 'HEY-BUDDY' for a new menu allowing you to select any stage, any area, turn invincibility on or off, and enable all weapons.

Level Select:
Enter the password 'HEVYFEET'.

Level Passwords

2:	DIYGIXRA
3:	KCSVJTJB
4:	RWLKLPBC
5:	YQFZMLTC
6:	FLZNOHLD

Need help defeating that end-of-level baddie? Looking for a cheat to get you through your fave game? Drop us a line and we'll see what we can do. Occasionally we can't help - that's where The Critical List comes in. Here we print tips requests in the hope you, the reader, can help the striken patient.

If you've a request or can help with a fellow reader's problem, drop us a line at *The Tips Clinic, extreme PlayStation Magazine, 22 Strand Street, Poole, Dorset BH15 1SB.*

DIAGNOSED AND CURED

M. Rouse Jr wants help with THEME HOSPITAL, especially a money cheat. We can't help with the dosh (can anyone else?), but here's what we have on Bullfrog's great management sim:

Clean Hospital: To get a clean hospital, save the game and reload it again when the hospital becomes full. All the garbage and patients disappear, allowing a fresh start.

Passwords

2: ✕, ●, ■, ▲, ▲, ●, ■, ✕
3: ●, ●, ▲, ■, ✕, ▲, ●, ▲
4: ■, ▲, ●, ■, ✕, ✕, ▲, ●
5: ●, ▲, ■, ●, ✕, ▲, ●, ■
6: ■, ▲, ■, ●, ✕, ■, ✕, ●
7: ■, ▲, ▲, ●, ✕, ■, ▲, ●
8: ✕, ▲, ■, ●, ▲, ●, ■, ✕
9: ▲, ■, ✕, ▲, ●, ✕, ▲, ■
10: ●, ■, ✕, ▲, ■, ✕, ●, ■
11: ▲, ●, ■, ●, ▲, ■, ●, ✕
12: ●, ■, ✕, ✕, ■, ●, ■, ▲

'How do you get the Bonus Levels in KULA WORLD?', writes Noel Ashcroft of Maidenhead.

No problem. Successfully complete all 150 regular levels, then select One Player from the main menu. Select The Final option that's now available to get the bonus levels.

Sean Ferguson from Fife asked for cheats for PGA TOUR '96 and FIFA '98.

In FIFA '98, to get unlimited money for transfers, go to the Customise Squad option then Team Edit. Highlight your chosen team's name and press L1, L2, ✕, ■, ✕. Your bank balance is now user-adjustable, as are players' stats.

Justin Blake asked for cheats for DEATHTRAP DUNGEON

No problem. For a Level Select, on the main menu, with the three skulls, press L1, R1, ▲, ▲, ■, ●, R1, L1.

John Jones of Birmingham and Adam Puddle of Cwmbran are both playing TOMB RAIDER and want 'a cheat to make Lara strip off'.

In your dreams, guys - it doesn't exist, except as a sad rumour that refuses to die.

Lee Preston of Merriott, Somerset wants cheats for RE-LOADED and GRAN TURISMO. Here Goes:

RE-LOADED
Pause the game and hold L1 and L2 until the Selection Bar stops moving (about ten seconds), then enter one of the following to introduce a new option on the Pause Menu:
Infinite Health:
↓, →, ←, ▲, →, ↓
Infinite Ammo:
▲, ←, ←, ←, ●, ▲, ↓
Full Power:
←, ↑, ✕, ●
Level Skip:
←, ▲, ✕, →, ●, ▲, ↓
Coordinates Display:
↓, ✕, ↓, ✕, ↓, ✕

GRAN TURISMO
Arcade Mode:
New Tracks (Easy Mode): Win all three classes (A, B and C) on the first four tracks and Clubman Stage Five.
Extra Cars (Easy Mode): As you complete each of the new tracks earned as above, you get an extra car dealer.
End Movie (Normal Mode): Win all eight tracks on all three classes.
Gran Turismo Mode:
Hi-Fi (Hard Mode): Win the GT World Cupto get this mode. To select tracks, click on Next within the Special Events selection screen.



THE CRITICAL LIST

Again, if you can help any of these suffering souls, write to The Tips Clinic at the address offered at the top of the page.

Justin Blake wants cheats for GEX 2 and ROAD RASH. Anyone got 'em?

Greg Harwood of Newport Pagnel asks for LITTLE BIG ADVENTURE cheats or tips. No can do, but can anyone else help?

IP Freely of Bristol wants cheats for CRYPT KILLER. Dunno why...

NV Bright is a big retro gaming fan. He's looking for cheats (not tips or Action Replay codes) for any game on a retro compilation.

Finally, can anyone help Andrew McGuiness of Cardiff, who's looking for cheats for GRID RUN. All help would be appreciated...

exchange

EPM SAYS...
Another month, another letters page. There are hundreds of games on the PlayStation; you'd be forgiven for thinking every conceivable game style and genre had been covered. But has it? Is there a type of game you'd desperately like to see on the PSX which no one has programmed yet? Perhaps a field hockey sports sim, or a business management game. It's once in a very blue moon someone writes a game which invents a new genre, unable to be placed in any previously-accepted category, but there are plenty of angles on existing game styles which haven't been addressed. What would YOU like to see?
Write and tell us what you think of our new look too, but don't list all the games in your collection and ask 'what should I buy next?' That's what the whole magazine's about - read the reviews and make an informed choice.

EXCLUSIVELY WRONG?

Is there anything some magazines won't do to get an exclusive? Some of them would crawl over broken glass with their flies undone just to get a first review, regardless of what it does to the magazine. Have you noticed how many exclusive 'reviews' are cobbled together from half-finished demo versions of the game, later coverage identifying all sorts of problems the 'exclusive' one missed, presumably because the writers thought they'd be corrected.
Also, the magazine which has the exclusive tends to mark the game higher than everyone else. Why? Is this some sort of dodgy deal between the software house and the mag, or are journalists just inclined to be more generous when they've been given an exclusive?
Brian Thimes, Dundee

EPM: Some, but not all, magazines prostitute themselves by promising high marks or by reviewing games that are nowhere near finished in order to get an exclusive. One notorious example saw a magazine bundled with a free tips magazine, a free demo CD offer and a free poster, all for the same game, which was rated at 90% in the main mag. Several months later, the other magazines reviewed it, giving universally low marks. By now, though, the damage was done - the game hit the shelves with a sticker highlighting the 90% review, and shops stocked far too many of them because of it. This sort of thing does the magazine no favours in the long run - who wants to buy a mag which so obviously sells its impartiality? You're right too when you say too many magazines review games far too early, from import discs or preview code.
Rest assured, when we get exclusives it isn't because we've sold out and compromised our integrity. This month's Fifth Element review is based on fully reviewable code, and our MK4 piece is the first-ever review of the UK version of the game. Like us, most mags have reviewed the American NTSC game, but unlike our Issue Eight Import Review, they didn't tell you they were covering an import disc.

PLAY YOUR CARDS RIGHT?

I bought Issue Eight of extreme PlayStation because it contained free tips cards and I need a tip for WipEout 2097. When I got it home it did not contain the card I needed, but had two MotorHead tips cards instead. As I had just spent my £3 pocket money on your magazine, I was very disappointed. Could you PLEASE send me the missing card?
Alex Talmage

EPM: We'd love to, but you didn't include your address. Write in again, this time enclosing the duplicate card and your full postal address.

TOP GEAR (BOLT)

Could you please give me a full review or at least some information on Elemental Gearbolt?
Steven Christie, Fife, Scotland

EPM: It scored a blistering 94% in Issue Six's light gun round-up, but demands a GunCon-compatible light gun.

MARVELLOUS MAG

I bought a PlayStation in May and tried a few mags, only to find none were to my liking. I was about to give up when I spotted EPM Issue Seven. It was different from all the others. It was interesting! Great mag, accurate reviews, decent price.

EPM: Cheers. We're written by gamers, for gamers and don't offer bland reviews or scrappy writing like lesser mags.

Could you answer a few questions:
1. What is Final Fantasy Tactics and will it be released over here?

EPM: It's an RPG/wargame hybrid with the emphasis on fighting rather than exploration. The combat is similar to that of FFVII, but you move your troops over a much larger battlefield rather than just standing toe to toe with the enemy. There are no plans to release it over here as yet, but this could change.

2. Do you reckon I should get a Datel Action Replay? Is it true that if you buy unofficial products you invalidate your PSX warranty?

EPM: Buy an Action Replay or the more versatile Blaze Xplorer if you want to cheat. Regarding unofficial products, as long as you don't open your PlayStation's case, you're OK. Sony have no way of knowing whether you used an unapproved product or not.

3. Is it true Grand Theft Auto was banned?
Stephen Morrow, Jamestown, Dunbartonshire

EPM: No, but it has an '18' certificate.

ON THE CARDS

Loved the cards you gave away last issue. It's great to be able to keep the tips in your disc box along with the game - no more hunting through endless back issues to find a cheat you saw three months ago but didn't write down. I hope you'll give away more in the future.
Darren Barnes, Barnsley

EPM: Glad you liked 'em. They're really convenient, and we certainly intend to offer more Power Tips Cards in future issues.

PLATINUM PRICES

I love Sony's Platinum range - top titles at knock-down prices. Sony are wise to only allow top-selling games to appear - the Platinum label thus offers a guarantee of quality as well as a top price, but why don't software companies launch their own budget labels and re-market games that didn't do quite as well? It happened in the days of the Spectrum and the Amiga. They'd make money, and we'd get games at a knock-down price.
The Chelsea Bargain Hunter

EPM: Neat pseudonym. Unfortunately, it's not really possible for software companies to release their own budget titles. Sony charge a set fee for each game CD they make (and only Sony can make PlayStation CDs). This fee is reduced for Platinum releases, but not for cut-price games outside the Platinum label. This didn't apply in the days of the home computers, and would make a PSX budget label like Ocean's Hit Squad and US Gold's Kixx (remember them?) unprofitable.
The best way to get older games at budget prices is to shop around. Most games depreciate in price after they've been out a few months, and games over a year old often go for not much more than Platinum prices. Also, try your local second hand games dealer for some great bargains and exchange deals.

BECKHAM BLAST

Is David Beckham in the forthcoming ISS Pro '98? If so, will it be GunCon compatible?
Gary Shaw, Birmingham

EPM: ISS Pro '98 uses slightly corrupted versions of the player's names (Konami invested their money in the game, not a licence), but it has an Edit Names option so you can restore their true monikers. Alternatively, as Russell pointed out in his review, you can call him 'Tosser'.

PLAY THE GAME

I'm sick to death of people slagging off the graphics in RPGs. Sure, heavy duty renders would be a massive aesthetic improvement, but they would also demand huge amounts of disc space. This is workable in platformers like Abe's Oddysee or sports sims with motion-captured players because platformers can use the same graphical backgrounds over and again, constructing each new level jigsaw-style from illustrations held on the disc, and sports sims (however many rings/courts/pitches they offer) never need to read backgrounds off the CD during play.
However, for RPGs this just isn't true. Use renders, motion captures and polygons and you get a very small or oft-repeated game environment, not the huge and atmospheric worlds the genre demands.
The heart of an RPG is in the gameplay, not the graphics. While there's never any excuse for shoddy visuals, I hope games like Breath of Fire 3 and Alundra will continue to opt for content over cosmetics.
Zorthan Hellspawn, The Ancient Castle, Stygia

EPM: Cool pseudonym. You are, of course, quite right - storyline and atmosphere are much more important for an RPG than instant-satisfaction visuals. Something else that cheeses us off is when a 'reviewer', clearly with no imagination and no experience of RPGs, criticises a treasure find after a wandering monster encounter. 'I fought a Giant Slug', he says, 'and after it died I got a gold statue. I wonder which pocket the Slug kept it in?' Donkeys - the Slug attacked you 'cos you chanced on its lair or feeding grounds. The last person to do that might have been a merchant on his way to the market; after killing the massive mollusc, you find the trader's bleached bones and torn backpack with the statue still inside.
If the game offered each find in these terms, you'd get sick to death of reading it after every battle, but it doesn't take much working out if you've got a brain.

GLOBAL GRIEF

I think yours is the most stupid magazine in the world. If I travelled to all four corners of the globe, I'd never find one worse.
Andrew McCann, Durham

EPM: How can a globe have four corners?

DISC-USTED OF ESSEX

I am saving up to buy Resident Evil 2. I was very pleased when I saw that there was a free demo on your PlayStation book copy 8 **(I think he means extreme PlayStation, Issue Eight - Ed)**. So I spent some of my savings on the book. When I got home I found that even though it was in a box that looked like a demo disc, it held only cards. My dad said I should have read the cover more carefully, but it is made to look like a CD so it was a con.
My dad says I should moan at you not him, so I am, and I'm not going to buy your books again.
Victor Bennett, age 9 years 10 months.



EPM: Chances are you won't be reading this, then. Your dad was right - you should've read the cover more carefully, or indeed at all. Slap-bang in the middle of the Power Tips card box (pictured here) it says, '10 CARDS'. Above that is the line, 'THE HOTTEST TIPS AND CHEATS', and text on the left side of the packet explains the cards are designed to fit inside a CD box along with your game - no wonder they're the same size as a CD, eh? The games covered are listed in very small letters - how did you notice Resident Evil 2 was there without spotting the references to cards? Nowhere, but NOWHERE, does the cover refer to a demo CD.
We can't be blamed if you miss the obvious, Victor. Besides, Resident Evil 2 is '18' rated - you're too young to buy it, even if you do save up.

BLANK PLANK

Last week I was playing on my PlayStation when I noticed something shining in the case of Tekken 2. As I looked closer I realised it was a demo CD underneath the black tray that holds the Tekken 2 CD. It was a demo of light gun shoot-'em-up Point Blank. Does every copy have the demo or is it just mine?
Finally, when will Final Fantasy VIII be released and will Final Fantasy VII go Platinum?
Tim Scott, Norwich, Norfolk

EPM: No Tim, Sony put the demo in your copy of Tekken 2 alone, just for you...
Seriously, several new games are being bundled with a demo CD - ISS Pro '98, for example, offers a two-level Metal Gear Solid opus. These are often only offered in limited quantities, however. Only the first shipment of ISS Pro '98 hold the demo.
Finally, FFVIII is due some time next year, but there are no plans to release FFVII on Platinum - yet!

MADE OF MONEY?

I own a Sega Saturn and a PlayStation, and the PSX is much better than the Sega Saturn. I own 28 games and have completed them all. I own a PSX light gun, a steering wheel with a gearstick and pedals, a Sony mouse, joystick, joypad and Dual Shock Analogue Pad but it seems every day they bring out something new, like the new PSX Glove and all the new controllers. The next time a new console takes the nation by storm we'll have all this equipment and no games to play them on.
It stinks. I have used the money I have got over the years to play for it all. I have spent over £1000 on the PlayStation and I am only 13 years old, and it will go out of fashion in a year or two.
David Radford, Exeter, Devon

EPM: It will take more than a year or two for the PlayStation to disappear. I know it can be annoying when your console is superseded by a newer one, but remember the PSX replaced the Mega Drive and the SNES (though even now games are still being produced for these machines) - if no new consoles were ever released, technology and gaming wouldn't have advanced any further than the Atari VCS 2600 console (which, incidentally, was around before you were born).
The reason people keep cranking out more and more peripherals is because people keep buying them. Why else would anyone produce something as useless and gimmicky as The Glove? It's seems worth pointing out to you that just because a product is released, it doesn't mean you have to buy it. Sony's mouse, for example, is a cool piece of kit but over-priced and only useful with certain types of games (eg. Command & Conquer and Discworld). Do you play these, or did you just buy the mouse because it was there?
You've an impressive PlayStation set-up, David, but next time you go out to buy something, ask yourself if it's really needed or are you just buying for the sake of it.

BBFC BORE

You want to know what I think about the BBFC? I think they're a load of...
Mick Milestone, Great Yarmouth, Norfolk

We'll pass on that one, thanks. The BBFC debate has run its course, and is now closed. Instead, let's talk about something else. Are PlayStation games getting too samey? Do annual upgrades of sports sims represent good value for money? Which game genres are under-represented and what sort of games would you like to see to fill the gap? What game would Bill Clinton have been playing if he wasn't busy playing with Monica Lewinsky? Let's talk about anything except the BBF-bloody-C.



stuff

Top PlayStation peripherals and a great competition. What more could you ask for?

X-LINK

BY: BLAZE PRICE: £9.99

Regular readers know how highly we regard the Xplorer cheat cartridge, which can use Game Shark/Action replay codes as well as its own and allows you to add to your code collection without typing them in using memory card devices which are currently in development. Blaze have just released the long-promised X-Link cable, allowing you to link your Xplorer to a PC and download cheats off the Internet as well as grab PSX screens, dissemble code and even use your hard drive as a massive memory card. Comes with the necessary PC software.



VERDICT: 8.5 OUT OF 10

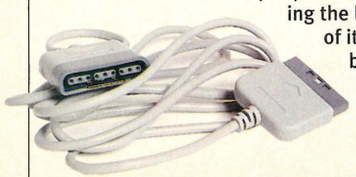
If you have a PC and an Xplorer and do a lot of cheating or techie tinkering, you'd be barmy to miss this one. It adds so much functionality it's untrue. If you've no PC, speak to the owner of your local cybercafe - he might let you bring in your PSX and download cheats.

CONTROLLER EXTENSION LEAD

BY: JOYTECH EUROPE

PRICE: £6.99

No point rating this one - you need it or you don't. With so many peripherals such as pads, steering wheels and light guns plugging into the controller port, you might find their leads aren't long enough for what you want. This is where the Controller Extension Lead comes in. It simply plugs into your PSX and peripheral, extending the length of its cable by two metres.



SCORPION LIGHT GUN



BY: BLAZE PRICE: £25.99

As reported last issue, the classiest-looking light gun on the market has had an upgrade. It still features GunCon compatibility, auto reload and recoil, of course.

VERDICT: 9.5 OUT OF 10

The best just got better. With a refined lens and a faster chip, the Scorpion is now even more accurate. Works with GunCon and non-GunCon games, a pre-requisite for any decent pistol these days.

REAL ARCADE LIGHT GUN (CAMOUFLAGE)

BY: JOYTECH EUROPE PRICE: £39.99

This one's basically the same as the Real Arcade Light Gun featured in Issue Eight, though for some reason the catalogue says it's five pounds cheaper than the silver version's £44.99. We expect this is a mistake. The gun features force feedback via a separate power supply, pedals for games like Time Crisis and GunCon compatibility.



VERDICT: 8 OUT OF 10

It's the king of light guns, but so expensive. Don't get us wrong - it's worth every penny, but you need to play a lot of light gun games to justify the asking price. Think carefully, but if you're after a real arcade experience, it's your only option.

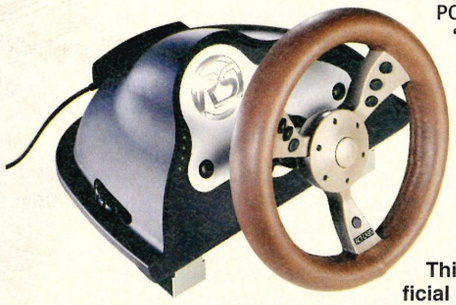
ACT.LABS RS

BY: ACT.LABS

PRICE: £TBA

This versatile steering wheel with pedals can be used on a PlayStation, N64, PC or Saturn but only by plugging in a machine-dedicated 'engine' cartridge. The wheel comes with an engine of your choice, and others can be bought separately if you've more than one system.

The buttons are programmable and the wheel offers analogue and digital modes and it has Formula 1-style behind-the-wheel gear shifters. There's a great simulated leather wheel grip too.



VERDICT: 8 OUT OF 10

This is one wheel which doesn't feel plastic and artificial - credit due. It clamps to a tabletop well, and feels comfortable to use, though the pedals are a little awkward at first. There's no force feedback on this model. We've no details on the price yet, but it's likely to be expensive.

DUO SHOCK

BY: BLAZE PRICE: £19.99



Another dual force feedback controller for the PlayStation, with twin analogue sticks. Its see-through body is quite stylish, and it feels comfortable in the hands - it's very similar to Sony's own Dual Shock controller, and now the big 'S' have put the prices down (see the news section), exactly the same price.

VERDICT: 7 OUT OF 10

It works very well and feels just right. Its only major drawback is that the shoulder buttons tend to stick if you press them too hard. Other than that, it's great.

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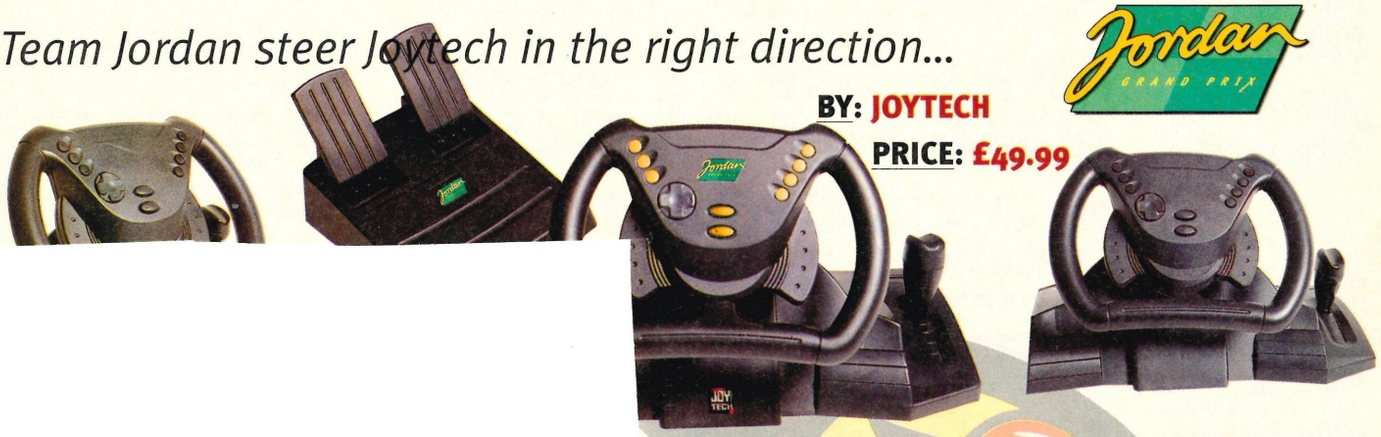
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THE OFFICIAL JORDAN GRAND PRIX RACING WHEEL

Team Jordan steer Joytech in the right direction...

BY: JOYTECH

PRICE: £49.99



...rs, ...l Damon Hill's Jordan Mugen Honda race cars. It supports Analogue and Digital modes, so works with all games (including Gran Turismo).
Two separate gear shifting systems are offered, either being available to the player. Formula 1 paddle shifters sit behind the wheel, and a rally-style gearstick is to its right. If you have a favourite gear style, stick to it - you don't have to opt for accuracy.
The only thing the wheel lacks is force feedback, but Joytech aim to launch a Dual Shock version of the wheel in September, again with the help of the Jordan team.

...el, causing you to catch ...y. The pedals are comfort- ...sive, and the suckers do a ...ing the wheel anchored to

...real drawback with the ...ula 1-style paddle shifters ...d too far from the wheel itself. You get used to this, though, so it's a minor niggle.
Overall, the Official Jordan Grand Prix Racing Wheel is a cool piece of kit at a reasonable price. If you're looking for a wheel this year, steer yourself in its direction...

VERDICT: 9 OUT OF 10

Top Gear

The Jordan racing wheel has two separate gear controllers, for added realism. For Formula 1 '97 you can use the shifters positioned just behind the wheel, just like the real thing. Play TOCA or Colin McRae Rally and go for the more traditional gearstick to the right of the wheel. Needless to say, you can opt for either at will - you don't have to go for the realistic choice.





The Real Wheel

As you can see from this photo, of Ralf Schumacher's Jordan and taken just before the Silverstone Grand Prix, the Official Jordan Grand Prix Racing Wheel has been designed around the genuine steering wheels used in Jordan Formula 1 cars. No wonder they look so cool.





Competition

Joytech have given us an Official Jordan Grand Prix Racing Wheel to give away. Want to win it? Just answer the following question: **Who owns the Jordan team?**

Answers on a postcard to: This One's For Wheel Compo, extreme PlayStation, 22 Strand St, Poole, Dorset BH12 1SB. Entries received after 25th September will fail to qualify.

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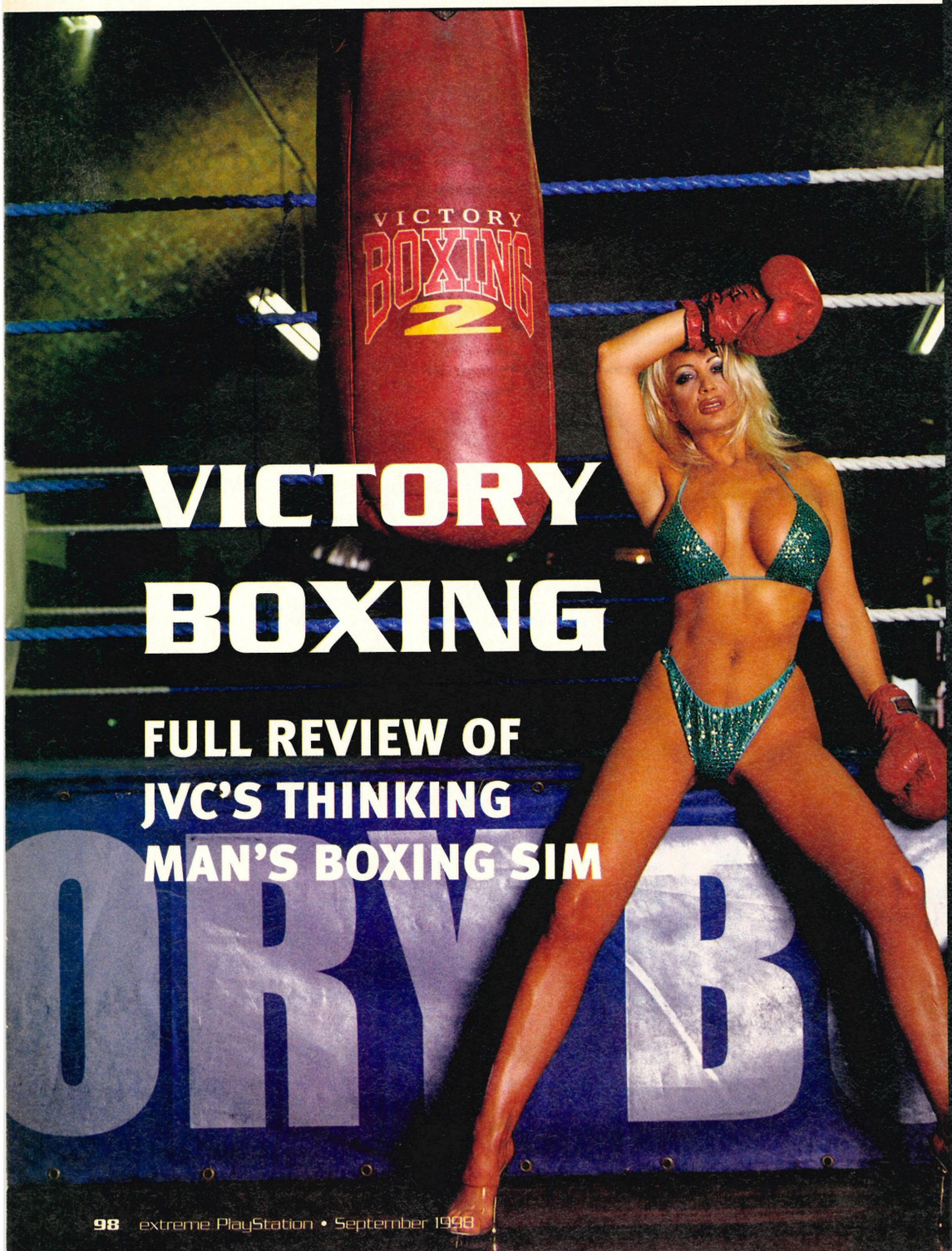
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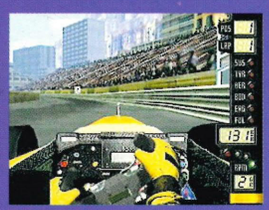


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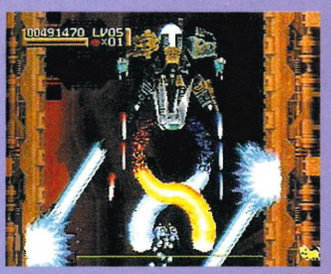
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