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extreme PlayStation • Issue 13 • January 1999

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ISSUE 13 January '99

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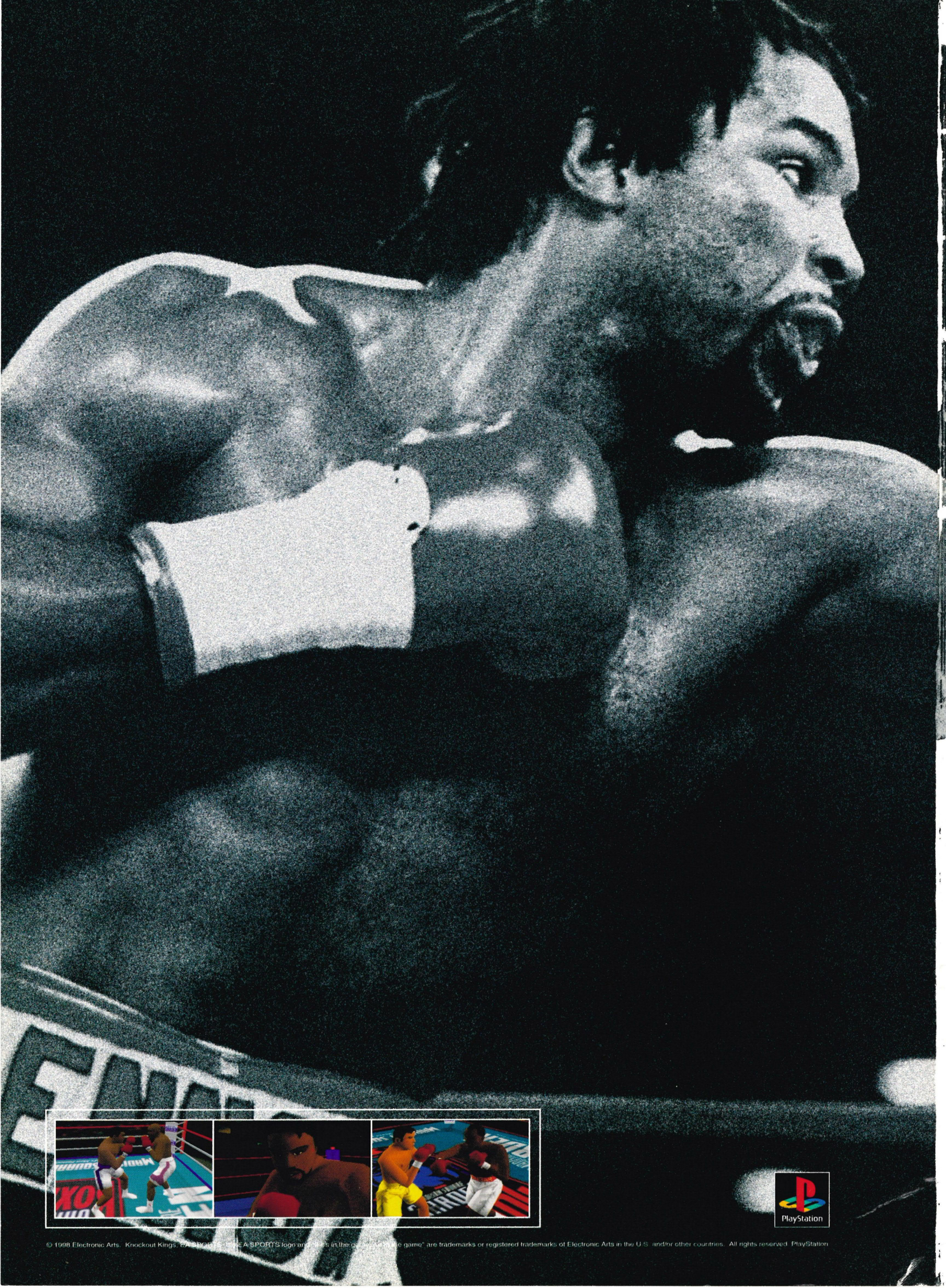

PlayStation

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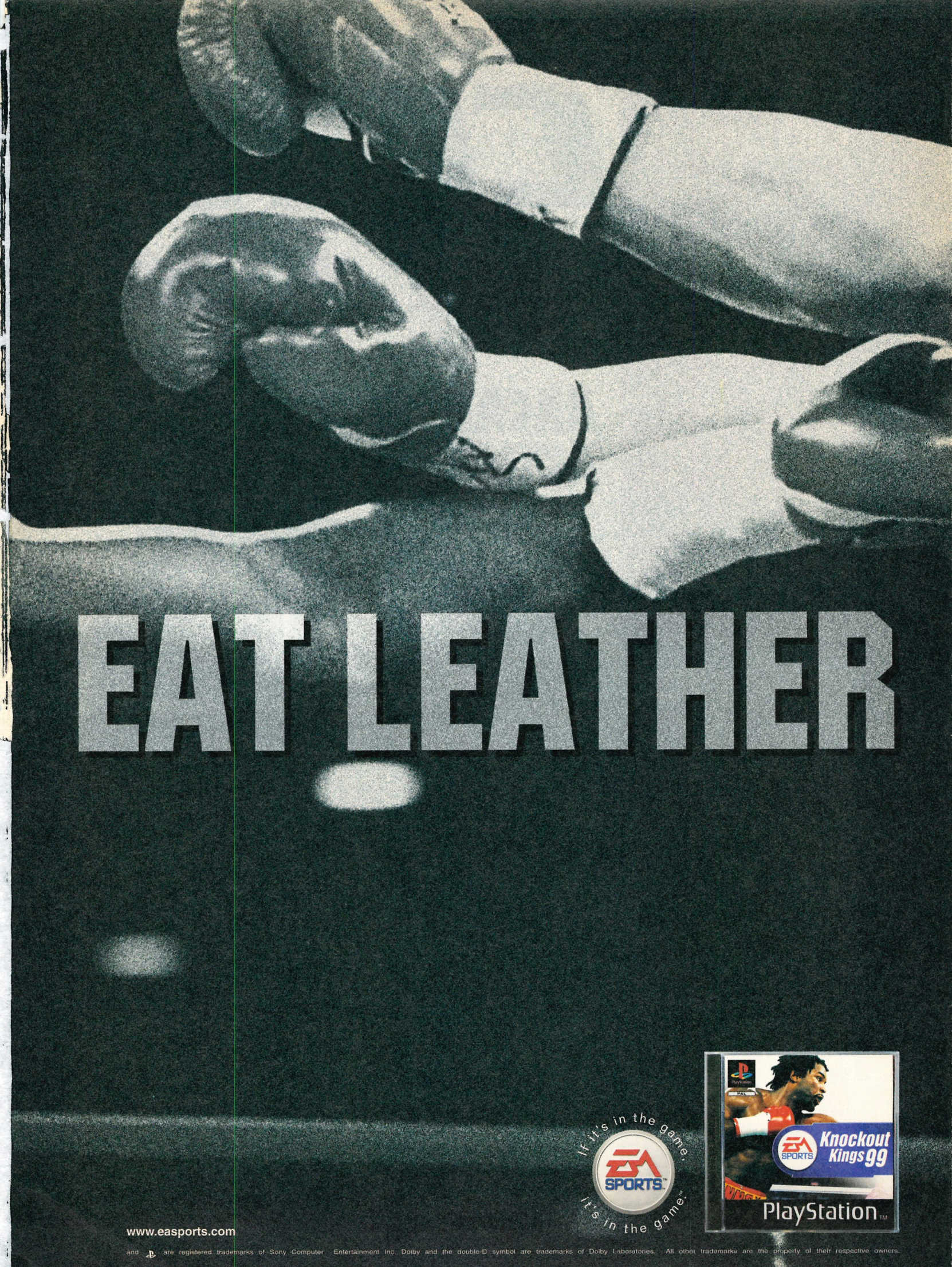

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Editorial

Who says the games dry to a slow trickle after Christmas? This month we've got Max Power Racing, a game every bit as sexy as the girls on our cover and poster, the long-awaited Cool Boarders 3 and Akuji the Heartless, a chilling Tomb Raideresque offering. The post-Christmas bonanza doesn't end here either. Between now and Easter we can also look forward to Earthworm Jim 3D, Quake II and the amazing Metal Gear Solid. 1998 was a good year for the PlayStation - 1999 could be an even better one. Well, what are you waiting for? Pin your free poster to the wall and sit back with your magazine...

Ian Osborne
EPM Editor

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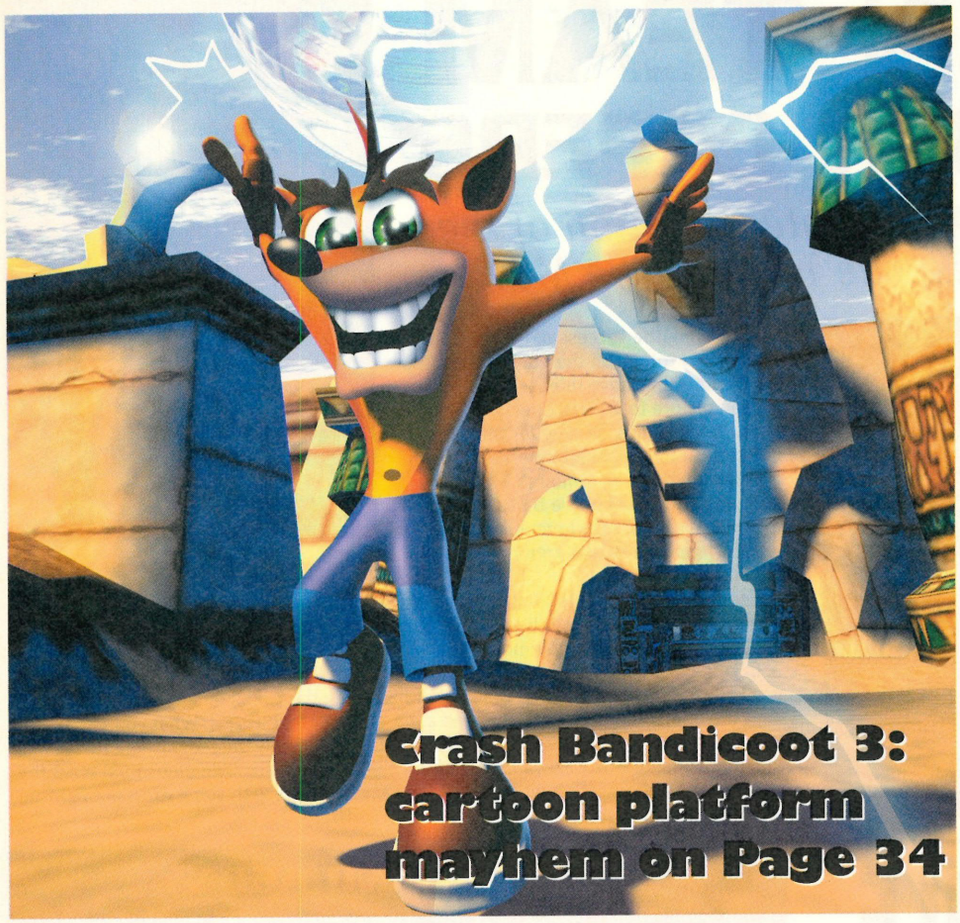

Is he on the piste? Find out on Page 32...

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.

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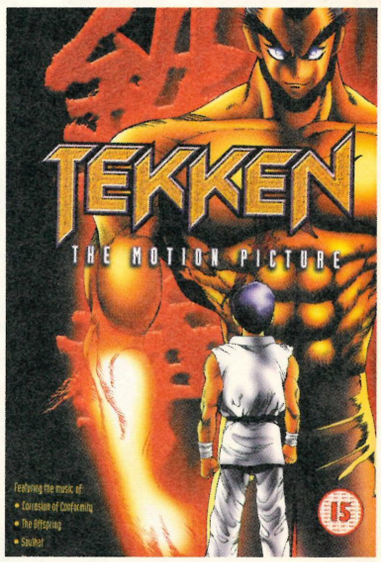
signals

Lifting the lid on the latest PSX stories...

TEKKEN TEAM IN CARTOON CAPERS

AD Vision release an Anime interpretation of the Tekken series of games; cue Tekken: The Movie...



Following the success of the incredible Tekken trilogy on the PlayStation, AD Vision Films have released an Anime motion picture to an unsuspecting audience. Released just in time for the Christmas rush (7th December), AD Vision feel Tekken has made enough of a household name for itself in the UK to warrant its release over here, where animated frolics of a Japanese nature aren't always as well received.

The film centres around Heihachi and his son Kazuya, whom he abandons when he is small for being weak. What he didn't know was that Kazuya would be back to take his revenge on his father in no time at all.

In some respects the film is reminiscent of Street Fighter: The Movie (not the Manga version, the crap one with Van Damme). It has taken the characters from the game, kept their personality but has changed almost every other aspect. What you end up with is a bunch of recognisable characters doing completely unrecognisable things in a film that ends up with Kazuya killing a bunch of Jurassic Park style dinosaurs! What the hell is that all about? It's a bit of fun all the same, though, with some excellent fight scenes and special effects.

NEW CONSOLE, NEW MEDIA?

PlayStation 2 is still under wraps, but leaked information offers insight into the new console...

Although official announcements have yet to materialise (the anticipated spoiler timed to coincide with Sega's Dreamcast launch never happened), leaks and rumours concerning Sony's oft-discussed PlayStation 2 console continue. It would appear the storage medium has yet to be decided, but the favoured options are DVD (Digital Video Disk) and Minidisc - it's unlikely to use CDs and therefore will not be compatible with the current machine.

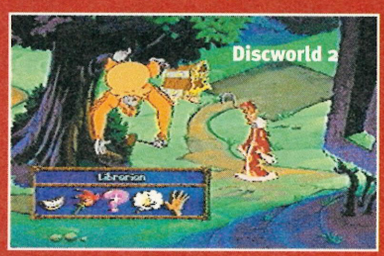
The main advantages of the Minidisc are that it holds around 1.2Gb of data and would be more pirate-resistant than its rival. The DVD has an even greater storage capacity, though most of it would remain unused for games.

Again according to the rumour mill, the hardware will support real-time tessellation, a software routine which allows games to vary the number of polygons in a character according to how close to the camera it is, allowing the games to run smoother with little loss of detail. Internet support is also being considered, though whether this would see the light of day in the UK remains to be seen.

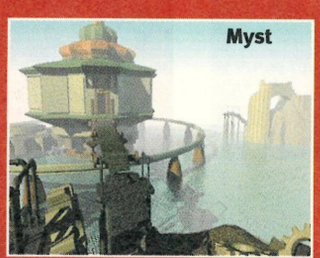
TRIUMPH AND AGONY

Discworld 2/Myst (Graphic Adventures)

It's time to compare the ace and the awful once again. This time it's the turn of the graphic adventure. Myst and Discworld 2 are certainly poles apart in terms of quality, but it may surprise you which is the better game...



Myst sold by the bucketload on the PC and was reasonably well received on the PlayStation; don't ask us why. The graphics were sumptuous, but the game broke just about every adventuring rule. The game world is inconsistent, most of the features serving no apparent purpose other than to hang a puzzle on. What happened to intelligent interaction with your environment? The problems themselves are obscure (to say the least) and many are solved by trial and error - press a button, walk back to the rotating room to see what's happened, go back and press it again, check the room once more...



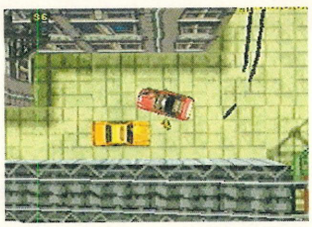
Discworld 2, on the other hand, enjoyed only average graphics. Without offering even a passing nod to the PlayStation's 3D capabilities, the game offered flat, cartoony visuals reminiscent of the 16-bit title Monkey Island. Little did it matter. Discworld 2 offered much more logical puzzles (as long as you can latch on to the warped Terry Pratchett humour), a clear sense of progress and a plot that was actually worth following.

We've yet to see THE definitive adventure on the PlayStation, and there are worse games on other formats than Myst, but at present this is the two extremes of PlayStation adventures.

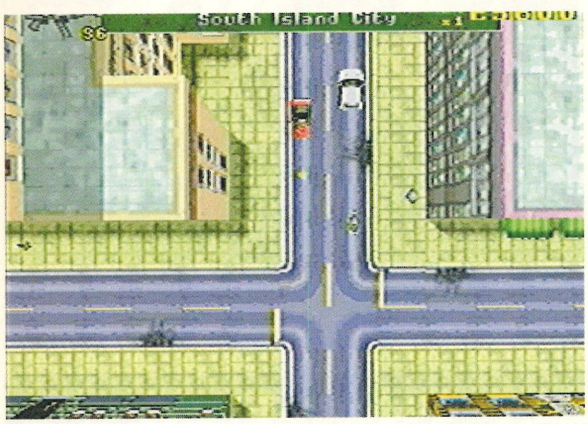
MORE TIME FOR CRIME

The sequel to Grand Theft Auto is announced...

With Grand Theft Auto (pictured) having sold over a million units on the PlayStation and PC, Take 2 Interactive (who bought out its original publishers BMG) are planning to release a sequel, GTA 2. Again developed by DMA Design, the game is to be released around October 1999.

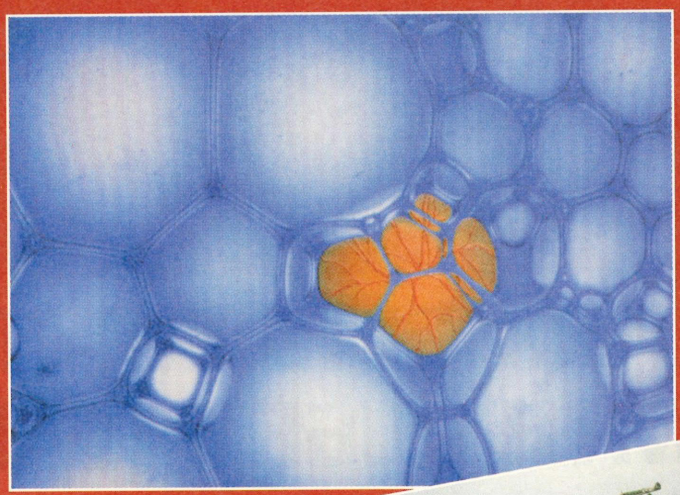


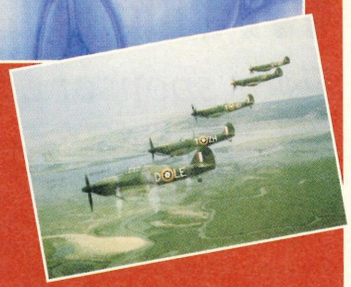
According to Sam Houser, executive producer of Grand Theft Auto 2, 'we hope the 18 months of development time invested in GTA 2 will ensure a fresh, innovative and worthy sequel is produced'.



POST TASTE

The best and worst of this month's compo entries...





The best postcard this month came from Gareth Driscoll of Preston, Lancs. Spitfires flying in battle formation always look cool, but why does the lead aircraft bear the identification code 'DOLE'? Does the pilot expect his P45? Not so good is Joe Howell's effort. Has anyone got a clue what it is? Blue frogspawn? An alien with a zit?

Gareth receives a CD of tunes created with Codemasters' Music for his efforts, but all Joe deserves is a plastic fan given away by Mindscape at a computer trade show.

When entering our competitions, choose your postcards carefully. If it's seriously cool or terminally crap, it could be immortalised in these hallowed pages.

MC ABE GETS FUNKY

...But will Abe's first single hit the charts?

Following in the military-booted footsteps of Lara Croft, Abe, of Oddysee and Exoddus fame, has recorded a CD. The single, Get Freaky, is already out in the USA and Europe, though there's no release date set for the UK.

The four-track single has been put together by GT's German office in Hamburg, and features Lorne Lanning, the voice of Abe and many other Oddworld characters, including Abe's Mudokon friends pictured here. There's also a PC multimedia track featuring an Abe video.

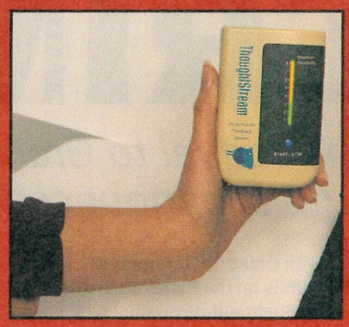
'But is it any good?', I hear you cry. It's not disastrous - it has all the elements of a decent enough club hit, but overall it's a little too cheesy and clichéd to be an essential purchase. It won't disappoint hardcore Abe fans, though.

GADGETS

From the same people who bought you the vibrating Aura Cushion, the ThoughtStream is a nifty gadget that's supposed to keep your stress levels at an all-time low.

When you're feeling chilled out, apparently he moisture content in your skin decreases and this information is translated into audio and visual signals on the ThoughtStream. All you have to do is pop your headphones on, put the sensor in the palm of your hand and take nice slow deep breaths. The little lights that are on the unit indicate how relaxed you are becoming and when you manage to extinguish all the red lights and they have turned to green, it means you're at your calmest.

Just like a PlayStation game, there are many levels to complete. The ThoughtStream can sense when you are able to go deeper into a relaxed state and it increases the level by turning the lights back to red again. You must try and do whatever you can to relax; put on some music if you have to. When you start using the ThoughtStream, you find lots of exercises in the manual to help you relax and there's also a ThoughtStream Progress Log in the back to keep track of how far you've got.



If you want an honest opinion, we reckon it's a yuppie's toy - you'd need a yuppie's income to afford it. You shouldn't really need to go to such lengths to relax - a quick pint down the pub usually does the trick. The ThoughtStream costs £129 and is available from LifeTools, Meridian House, Roe Street, Congleton, Cheshire CW12 1PG.

LARA GETS SHIRTY WITH RUGBY TEAM

Eidos sponsor grass-roots sports

Eidos Interactive have sponsored Richmond-based rugby team Kew Occasionals in a one-season deal. The team's shirts now bear a rather fetching image of Lara Croft and the address of Eidos' website.

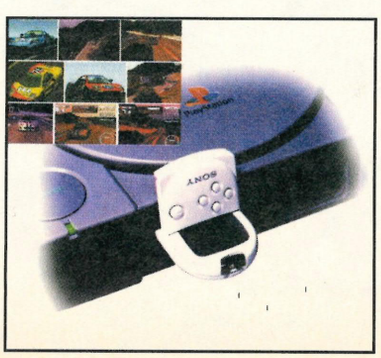
'Due to the current state of English rugby', said Nick Davies, Eidos Interactive Internet manager, 'Eidos decided to sponsor a smaller club, with the hope that other companies will follow suit, injecting much-needed cash in to the lower ranks of English rugby and creating more depth and motivation for the non-professional players'.

The Kew Occasionals RFC was founded in 1988 and is based at the Richmond Athletic Ground. Their chairman, Marcus Rule, said of the deal, 'It's great to see industry leaders such as Eidos getting involved with the smaller clubs. Besides giving them exposure it raises our profile, which allows us to attract sponsors in seasons to come'.

POCKET POWER

More hot news on the PocketStation...

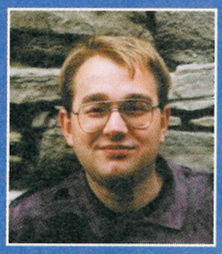
Software companies are taking an interest in Sony's forthcoming PocketStation, a PSX add-on due for release this Summer. Street Fighter Zero 3 is rumoured to include a facility where players can download fighters to their PocketStations and train them up ready for battle. Likewise, Namco's Ridge Racer Type 4 is believed to contain cars that can only be unlocked using the pocket-sized unit. Crash Bandicoot 3 and Final Fantasy VIII also use the PocketStation, though it's not known in what capacity.



Also on the cards are dedicated titles, including Muu Muu and Pocket Dungeons.

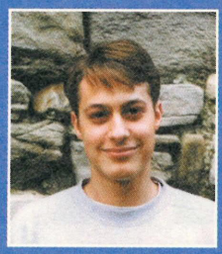
MEET THE TEAM

Christmas is over, the last of the turkey has been curried, stewed or made into sandwiches and the team's festive hangovers have at last subsided (with the possible exception of Claire's). With so many great games on offer during the holiday, it was difficult to choose what to play, so what did the team end up playing?



IAN

Tenchu. You know how it is - relatives you haven't seen in years come round for Christmas lunch, give you a pair of socks or a five year diary and park themselves in front of the Bond movie. I'd love to creep up behind them unseen and slit their throats, but I suppose doing it on the PSX is as close as I'll get.



RUSSELL

Max Power Racing has got to be my choice. The hardcore dance music is really something, and adds tremendous flavour to the game. As Shakespeare once said, 'If music be the food of love, play on'. I agree - now where did I put my free Max Power Racing poster?

CLAIRE

I'll choose the typical girlie game - Spyro. I'm just waiting for them to bring out a cuddly toy of him so I can take him to bed with my Shawn the sheep hot water bottle. Games-playing has never been such fun with a little purple dragon and a nasty Gnorg. I'm just here working while I wait for the sequel!

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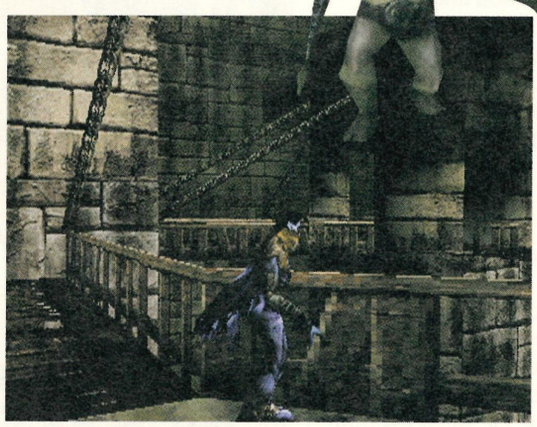
Insider info on future games...



PUBLISHER Eidos

DEVELOPER Crystal Dynamics

RELEASED March '99

Kain chose the path of evil - now you must kill him...

Legacy of Kain II: Soul Reaver

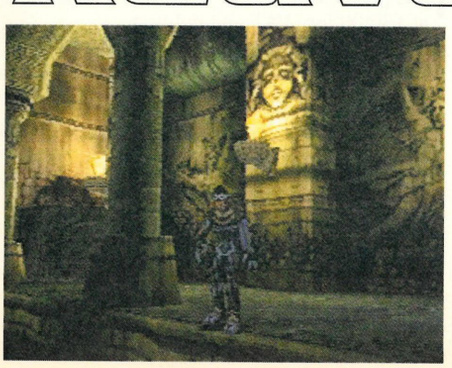
Remember Blood Omen: Legacy of Kain? Remember how Kain, the arrogant nobleman, was murdered but brought back to life by Mortanius, who used him to destroy the now-corrupt Circle of Pillars which, until then, had protected the world's peace and tranquillity? Remember how, at the end of the game, Kain (now a vampire) was forced to choose between allowing himself to die and Nosgoth to live, or to save himself and rule a decaying world in its death? Now he's back, in a very different adventure.

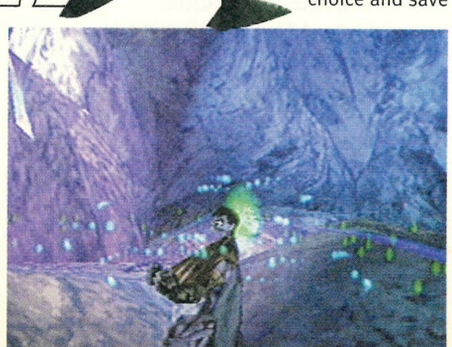
Soul Reaver, the second Kain game, takes place 1000 years after the events outlined in Blood Omen. Its plot assumes that when Kain was forced to make his terrible choice and save either himself or the world of Nosgoth, he took the typically-selfish path and chose to rule the world as it decayed and died. The course of the vampire/human war changed until by the time of Soul Reaver there are very few humans left. Most were killed or domesticated like cattle, and only a few vampire hunters keep the war alive. Instead the world is ruled by vampires, who mutate over time into ever-more powerful creatures. One such vampire is Raziel, one of Kain's first-born lieutenants. It was his job to scour the underworld looking for souls to turn into new vampires, building an undead army for Kain to command. A powerful vampire, Raziel mutated even faster than his master, growing a pair of wings and becoming capable of limited flight. Needless to say, the former nobleman wasn't pleased. He had his hapless lieutenant executed, his soul thrown into a bottomless pit. He's not imprisoned for long, though - after escaping, he thirsts for revenge, feasting on the souls of Kain's vampiric army.

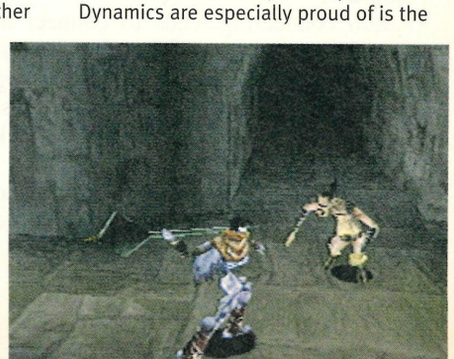
Bloodsucking Blues...

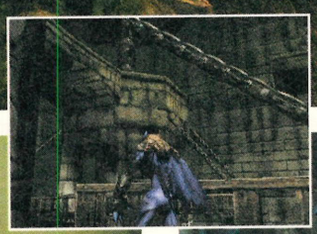
Unlike the first game, which was a top-down action RPG, Soul Reaver takes a Tomb Raider-style approach. You play Raziel, the fallen lieutenant in search of revenge. The graphics are hi-res, and the world allows full freedom in a totally 3D environment. Although you can't fly as such, you can glide from high areas.

One aspect of the game Crystal Dynamics are especially proud of is the







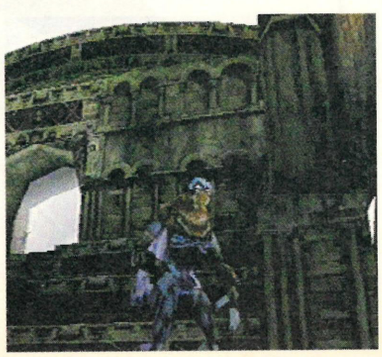


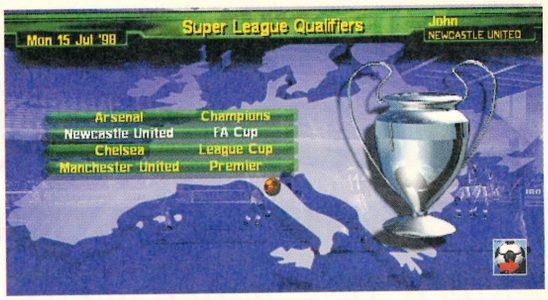
non-player characters' artificial intelligence. The system, known as Predator AI, allows enemies to learn from the player's actions and react to them. Another break from the norm is the fact that you can move from the material to the spectral realms at will. The two worlds exist in parallel, but are substantially different in their make-up. Stuck in the material realm, unable to make progress? Move to the spectral realm and see if the answer is there.

Like the first game, Soul Reaver has a strong, gothic-inspired plot which unfolds as you progress. You also get to explore your own twisted past. It wouldn't be a Kain game without devious puzzles to solve, and there are plenty on offer here. There are also 11 bosses and 20 different enemies to face, including ten classes of vampires. You certainly need all your hand-to-hand combat skills and acquired weapons and spells.

Another element retained from the first game is the brilliant cut scenes and chilling voice-overs. As these are data-streamed from the CD, there's virtually no loading delays too.

Legacy of Kain II: Soul Reaver looks set to take the Kain saga a step further. Let's hope this is the beginning of a whole series of games set in the demonic world of Nosgoth.





PUBLISHER
Gremlin Interactive

DEVELOPER
Gremlin Interactive

RELEASED
1st Quarter '99

Premier Manager '99

Can you build a team to take the championship?

If, as football sages claim', screams the press release, 'the cream always rises to the top, Premier Manager '99 ought to be packaged with choux pastry'. It gets worse too, describing Premier Manager '99 as 'pasta-fuelled' and claims it's delivered 'brimming with mozzarella'. Virtua Cookery, anyone? Mickey-taking aside, the series' first PSX incarnation Premier Manager '98 scored 91% in Issue Five, so if the new game builds on its success and takes it a stage further, it could yet prove to be the haute cuisine of management sims.

Needless to say, Premier Manager '99 boasts updated player rosters. It also offers the entire Italian League this time around, expanding the transfer market considerably. The visuals have also been improved, with team badges on show and the team kits stylised. Best of all, player AI has been polished to the point where players can be ear-marked for specific roles on the pitch, offering more effective team tactics.

The financial aspect of the game has also been beefed up. You can now make alterations to your stadium, expanding its capacity. Keep a tight rein on the purse-strings, though - spend too much and win too little and you're dismissed.

Premier Manager '99 is due for release some time before Easter. Judging by what we've seen so far, it could yet win the Premiership title.

PUBLISHER Psygnosis | **DEVELOPER** Psygnosis | **RELEASED** March '99

G-Police 2:
Weapons of Justice

Hi-tech 'tecs, varied vehicles and evil enemies; could this be the best strategy shoot-'em-up ever?

The original G-Police is a fine game. Indeed, it ranked at Number 27 in last issue's All-Time Top 50 feature. According to Psygnosis, G-Police 2: Weapons of Justice is going to be even better.

The plot remains true to the original; 'a future reality where a band of airborne officers struggle for order in the skies and down on the city streets'. In Weapons of Justice you control five air and land vehicles, each of which demands its own style of play. More on this later. You battle crime syndicates and control civil unrest as you battle your way through the game, unravelling mysteries and pursuing sub-plots. Treachery is expected, so trust no one, not even the marines - what is their colonel's hidden agenda?

You have fellow officers at your disposal, both in the air and on the ground, and you need all the help you can get - the enemies have 30 types of vehicles at their disposal, and often team together displaying impeccable artificial intelligence. Luckily you have 25 weapon types with which to take 'em out.

On a Mission...

To beat the baddies you must tackle 30 increasingly-difficult missions, but the learning curve is gentle enough to ease you into the game even if you've never played the original G-Police. The intro sequences are much-improved, and in-game voice-overs have been added. Also, the control system has been made more intuitive without losing the versatility enjoyed by the old version. According to the programmers, you can pick up the joypad and fly straight away, without even reading the manual.

The overall aim of G-Police 2 is to produce a sequel that doesn't play like a data disk. To this end, the vehicles are greatly enhanced, with the car cheat (familiar to fans of the original) beefed up to the point where it can hold its own in the game. Now vehicles use outer space as a battleground as well as flying over cityscapes. Although still based on and around Callisto, every dome and building is new and they offer a much more coherent art style, creating a highly believable gaming environment.

G-Police is still the finest game of its kind on the PlayStation, and if G-Police 2 lives up to its developer's expectations, it could prove even better. Only time will tell...

Waterworld is plagiarised again...

3Sixty

PUBLISHER Cryo Interactive Entertainment | **DEVELOPER** Smart Dog | **RELEASED** April '99

Countries from all over the world are reporting a massive rise in water levels. Rivers are spilling into the streets, oceans are breaking through coastal defences. Glaciers are melting, causing tidal waves. The cause? Inevitably, it's global warming. As the waters eventually subside, a new struggle for survival begins on the newly-reclaimed land. Despite having better things to do with their scant resources, the human race plough their efforts into a bloodthirsty sport involving racing and arena duelling. Oh well - Virtua Agriculture wouldn't make much of a PlayStation game...

The game consists of two distinct parts. On four different worlds you face three racetracks. Finishing in the top three offers you a power-up for your craft's weapon, and you need it. At the end of teach world is an arena, where you must battle it out in a fight to the death.

The game's not due out until April, so expect a further Expected exposé nearer the day. For now, here's some early shots...

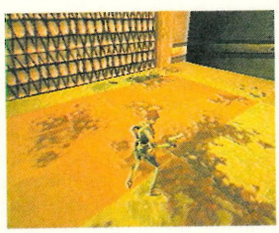
PUBLISHER
Cryo Interactive Entertainment

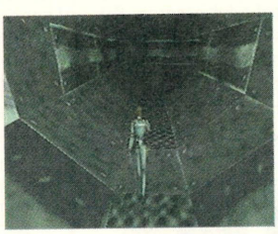
DEVELOPER
Cryo Interactive Entertainment

RELEASED
TBA

Virus

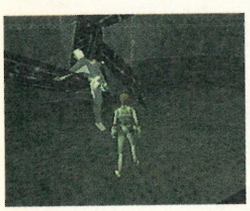
It is aware...





Recently promoted to Assistant District Attorney, Joan Averil gets aquatinted with her new office and gets to work on a strange new homicide case. As explained in our Expected piece back in Issue Ten, she's on the trail of a serial killer who dismembers her victims and leaves them with metallic art replacing their limbs. Now we've got a better idea of what she's up against...

Virus is based on the Dark Horse comic series of the same name, which is also to be made into a film starring Jamie Lee Curtis. Taking its lead from the Tomb Raider games, Averil can run, jump, climb, fire weapons, use objects and solve puzzles. She has nine types of weapons at her disposal, including a 9mm automatic, an Uzi, a 38 Special and a grenade launcher.



We've only seen a very early version of the game, with the main character and the scenery intact but none of the 40 types of creatures and five boss enemies. As soon as we've more to offer we'll give you an update, but for now, here's a few new screenshots...

PUBLISHER
THQ

DEVELOPER
THQ

RELEASED
March '99

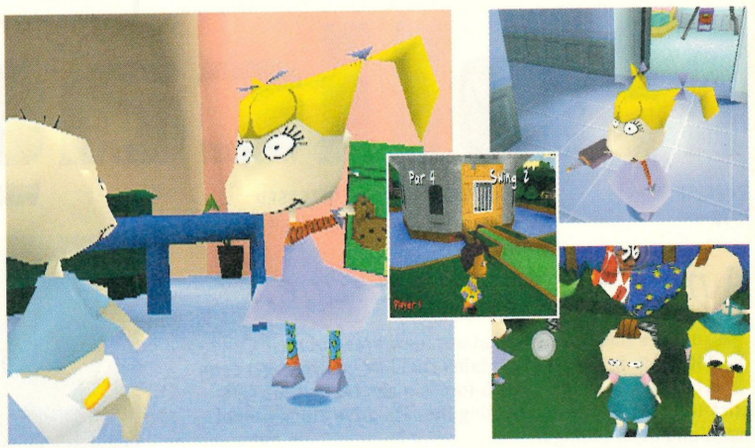
Rugrats

It's for the kids...

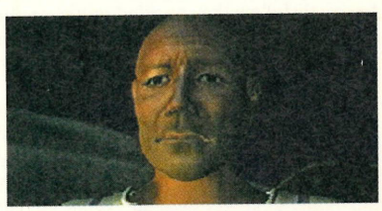
Based on the Nickelodeon television programme, Rugrats deals with life from a baby's point of view. The Rugrats behave like normal toddlers when there are adults around, but away from prying eyes, they act like five-year-olds. Watch out for the show's one-year-old hero Tommy and his chums Chuckie, Phil and Lil, his cousin Angelica and Spike the dog.

Taking a lead from Micro Machines, the small size of the main characters adds a whole new dimension to Rugrats. When you're only a foot tall, a supermarket, shopping mall or local park takes on a whole new perspective. The action varies from self-paced exploration to fast arcade-style action across 15 huge levels. To add variety, look out for miniature golf, treasure collecting and puzzle solving sub-games. To add a note of authenticity, the in-game effects and music are supplied by the TV show's producer Mark Mothersbaugh, and there are over 80 cinematic cut sequences.

Rugrats hits the shelves in March, coinciding with the cinema release of the forthcoming Rugrats movie. For once, a game aimed at kiddies seems set to deliver the goods instead of using its age range as an excuse for shallow gameplay.



Egypt 1156 BC: Tomb of the Pharaoh



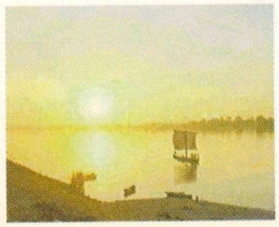
You'll want your mummy...

PUBLISHER
Cryo Interactive Entertainment

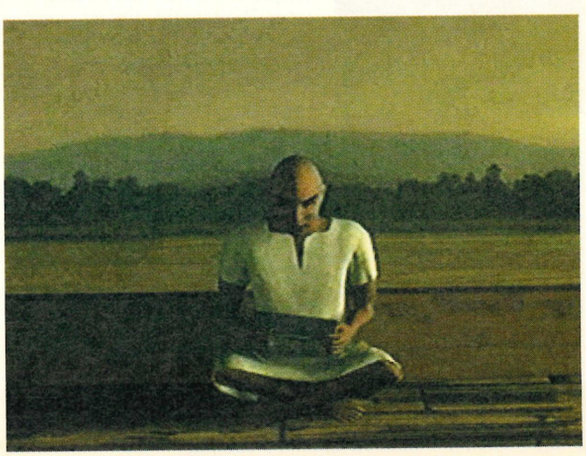
DEVELOPER
Cryo Interactive Entertainment

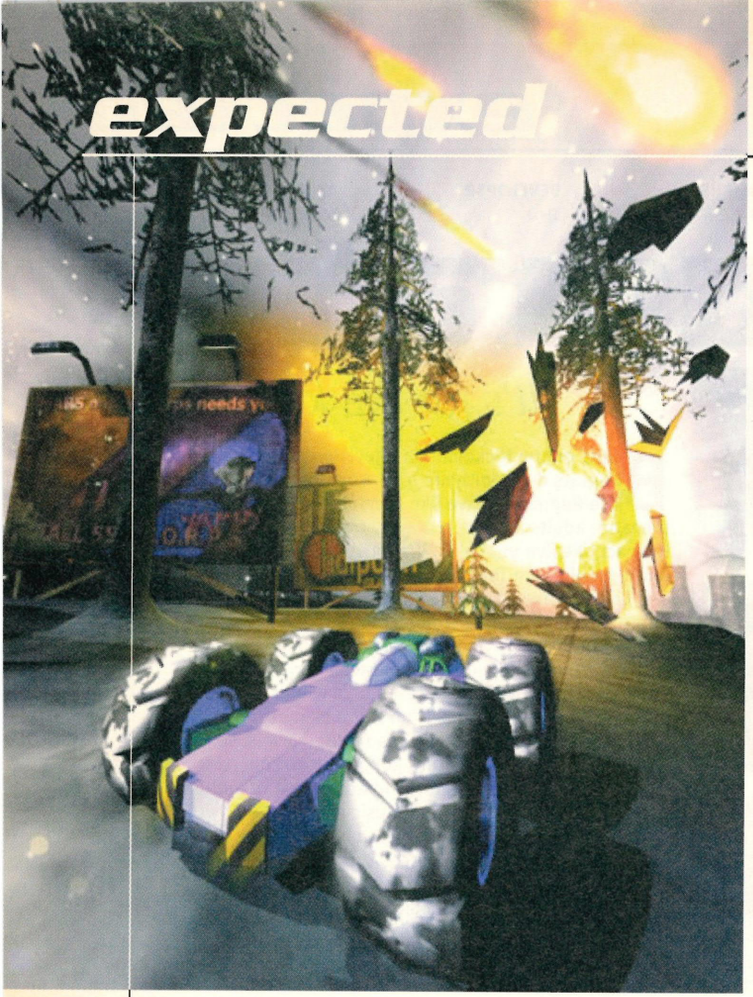
RELEASED
TBA

Take a stroll around the pyramids and mingle with the Pharaohs as Egypt's beckoning. You play a bloke called Ramose whose father has been accused of arranging the pillage of a royal tomb. Unless you can prove his innocence, your father will be killed and his name removed from the history tables.



Offering 25 hours of compelling gameplay and 30 fascinating characters, you encounter everyday life in Egypt over 3000 years ago. Complete authenticity has no doubt been achieved, as Cryo have been assured of their accuracy by the leading Egyptologist from the Louvre Museum. So get on your camel and save your family name from eternal oblivion.





Play as if your life depended on it...

Rainbow Six

PUBLISHER
Take 2 Interactive

DEVELOPER
Southpeak Interactive

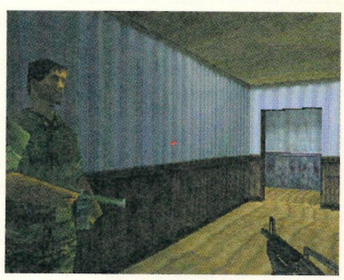
RELEASED
TBA

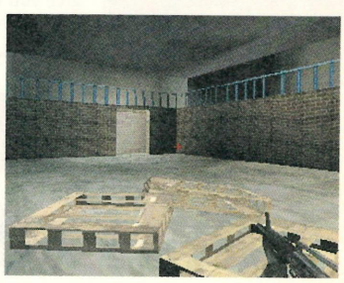
Pesky terrorists. Holding the world to ransom with their idle threats as usual. Suppose you'd better get on the blower and arrange a meeting with the big-wigs before time starts to run out. Your superiors say that everything will be OK (well that's all right then), as long as you lead your elite multinational strike force into battle and come out a winner.

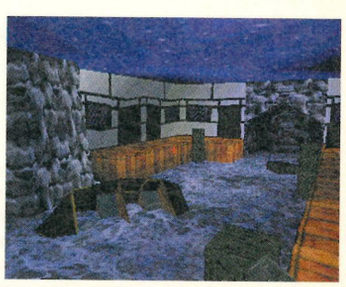
Pick your team members wisely as you only have a whole 20 special forces operatives to choose from. And don't forget to plan your attacks carefully using your 3D maps of each scenario to view your team members carrying out their duties. Expect explosive action while your specialised men infiltrate seized buildings, disarm bombs and rescue hostages in scary, rapid-fire assaults.

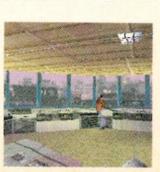
Sounds good doesn't it? Or does it? Even if it's not your favourite genre, still sit back and take a look at the true-to-life action in this Doom-style 3D blaster as, apparently, technical advisors from the real special forces have ensured the moves and language is as close to real life as you can get. You might want to pick up the Tom Clancy novel on which it's based for a bit of inspiration too.

You face the terrorists in many an exotic part of the world (cushy), including the Congo, Paris and a North Sea drilling platform (that's not very exotic!). And as you try to exterminate the enemy, wow at the 3D structures and spaces that wrap you in a world of high suspense, intense action and intrigue. We're counting on you, soldier!









Rollcage

PUBLISHER
Psygnosis

DEVELOPER
ATD

RELEASED
1st Quarter '99

A new kind of road rage...

Rollcage has been labelled as a new breed of racing game. It's fast, furious and contains cars like you've never seen before. Extremely high G-forces mean that all the cars stick to roads like glue, enabling them to drive along tunnel walls and even ceilings.

Get ready for 360 degree, no-rules racing, as there's no need to strictly follow the specified routes on the 11 single-player tracks. Rollcage includes four original racing environments where the unique effects of alien gravity and weather conditions can make a huge impact on your driving.

Not only are the cars designed for speed, they're also built for battle. Whilst driving any of the six models, you can pick up weaponry and blast several tonnes of concrete onto a rival racer. The cars themselves can also be used as a weapon by smashing it into scenery causing it to explode. Only by playing dirty can you take pole position.

This game will be a stomach-churning roller-coaster ride and probably the most accessible yet, relentlessly challenging racing experience. But remember, it's not the taking part that counts. It's winning.

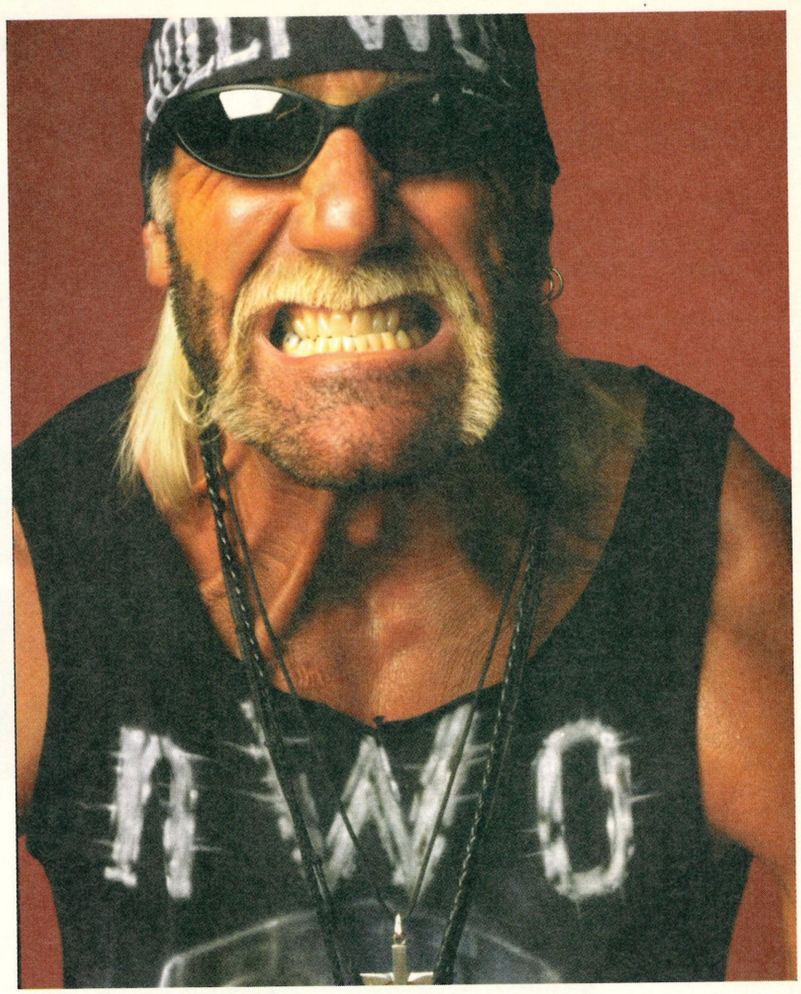
PUBLISHER
THQ

DEVELOPER
THQ

RELEASED
TBA

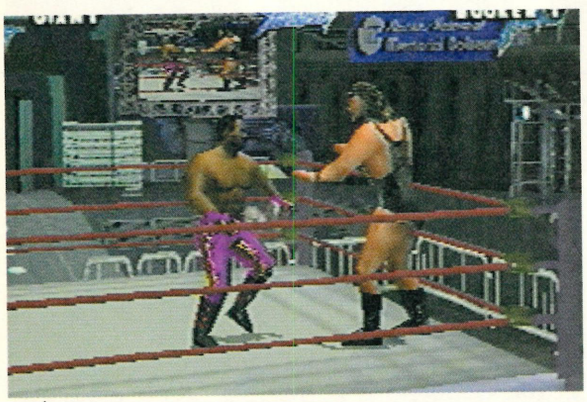
It's body slamming....

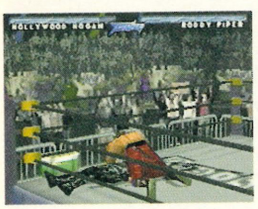
WCW/NWO Thunder

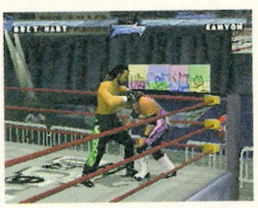


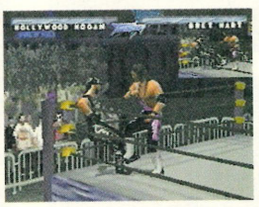
Following on from last issue's preview, it's time to feel the rumble as you tumble and move in for another clinch. As the official WCW/NWO theme music rattles your eardrums, hear the all-new feature of the real-life WCW announcers introduce the blood thirsty wrestlers.

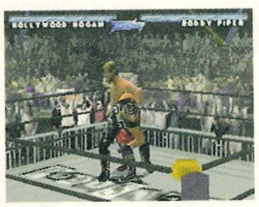
If you're after authenticity, look no further because with 32 new wrestling rants, realistic wrestler introductions and top graphics, this game is just about ready to make its own grand entrance. Check out these all-new screenshots to see what we mean...

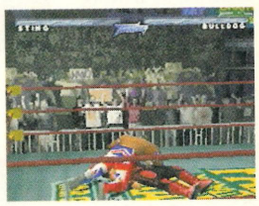












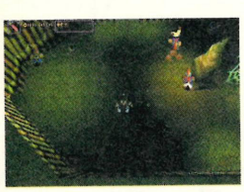
PUBLISHER
Take 2 Interactive

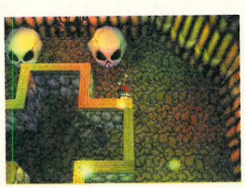
DEVELOPER
Blam!

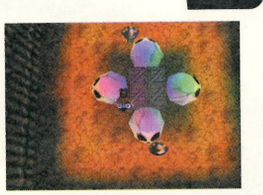
RELEASED
TBA

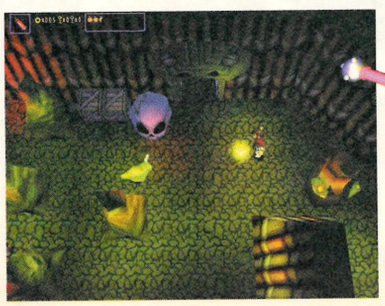
Hold on to your monkey nuts...

Monkey Hero









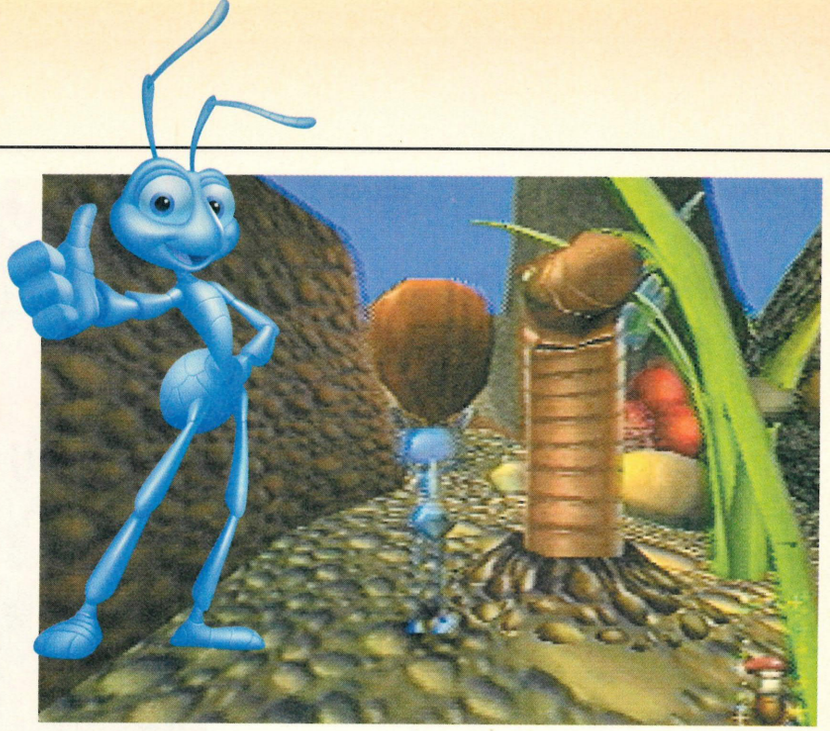
It's adventure all the way, but finger-tapping frustration at the same time, because Monkey Hero still isn't out to buy. For the purposes of this run-down, we'll call him Ninja Monkey, as he looks exactly like a wanabee kung fu artist (despite ninjas being Japanese and kung fu coming from China? - Ed). Ninja Monkey must restore the peace and tranquillity between three worlds (doesn't sound like too much of a problem -not), by finding the missing eight chapters of the Magic Story Book.

You venture through vast landscapes packed with difficult puzzles and strong enemies, including 14 unique bosses and a final battle with the muscular and magical nightmare boss (sounds like one as well).There are powerful magical artefacts and items to use in the search for hidden secrets and special endings and power-ups to turn you from a ninja into a force to be reckoned with.

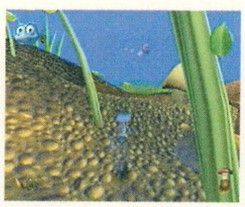
Monkey Hero looks as though it's going to be a goody, with Zelda-like gameplay and cool animation, which makes your epic adventure a splendid possible night in.

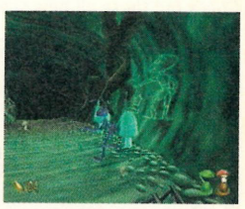
More cutsey animated mayhem from Sony and state-of-the-art animation from Disney...

A Bug's Life



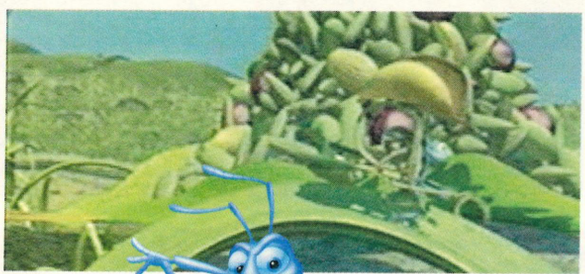
PUBLISHER	DEVELOPER	RELEASED
Sony CEE	Disney Interactive	April '99

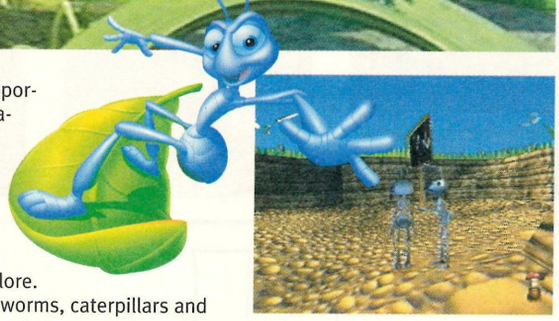


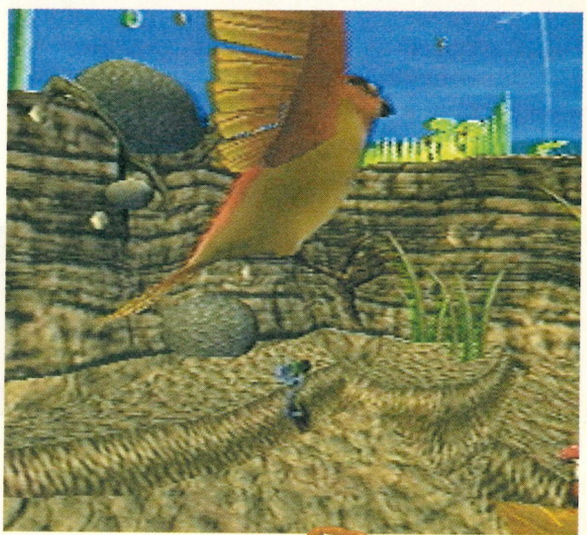


When you enter a training level and are told to use the Throw button to throw and the Jump button to jump, you know you're playing a game designed for the younger PlayStation owner. While this is certainly true of A Bug's Life, its polished execution and outstanding versatility mean it should have something to offer older gamers too.

The game's based on the film of the same name, created by Disney and Pixar Studios of Toy Story fame. Indeed, between the game's levels are cinematic quality cut scenes. Taking the role of an ant called Flik, you must explore a vast outdoor environment or, as the game's creators describe it, 'a living microcosm'. Being such a small chap, harmless objects are swelled to deadly proportions and insignificant features turn into taxing obstacles. A patch of grass becomes a dense forest, raindrops are harmful to health and a mound of garbage holds treasures and hazards galore. Beware of grasshoppers, worms, caterpillars and wasps - they're a real terror to someone your size.







Don't Bug Me...

The aim of the game is to save your ant colony. To do this, you must recruit a band of followers, defeat the evil grasshopper leader imaginatively named Hopper and protect your queen. Although ants are famed for their strength, Flik doesn't seem overly blessed in the brawn department. His main method of attack is to throw berries at his foes, shattering them into pieces in a burst of rather fine animation. By jumping on seeds he creates plants, all of which have their uses - mushrooms let him bounce higher, dandelion puffs let him fly and vines offer a mid-air platform. You can pick up and move the seeds to another location and (when you find the correct token) even change their colour and therefore the plant grown. Perhaps the tutorial mode was justified after all. As Disney Interactive producer Dan Winters says, 'We will give the player the ability to directly affect the world around them by growing a myriad of plants that are directly linked to the gameplay'.

A Bug's Life looks set to offer a real humour-filled 3D platform frolic. At present there are still a few glitches in the game, but no doubt these will be ironed out before it's released. After all, there's no reason why it shouldn't be as technically superb as the brilliant Spyro the Dragon...

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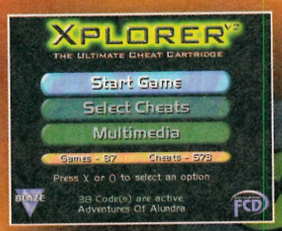

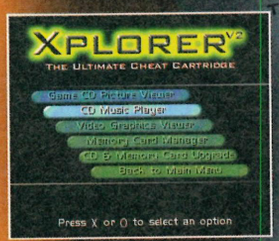

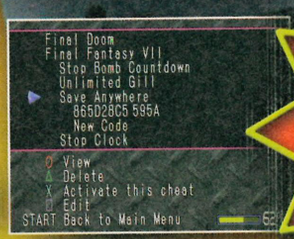

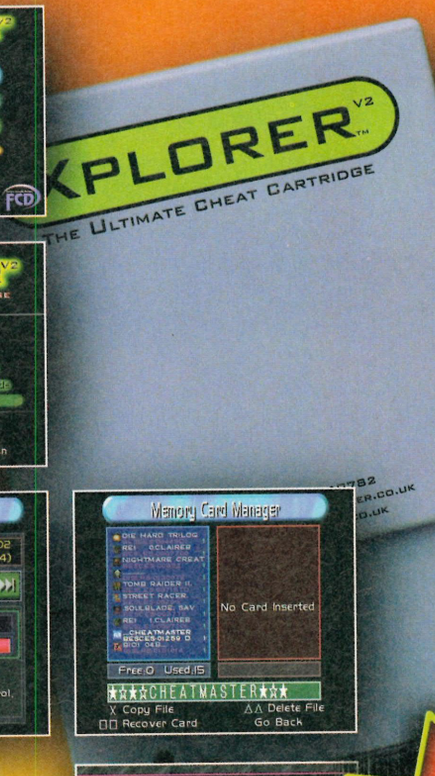

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ACTION REPLAY, EQUALIZER ARE TRADEMARKS OF DATEL ELECTRONICS. GAMESHARK IS A TRADEMARK OF INTERACT.

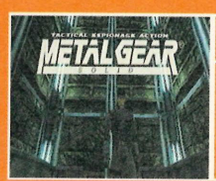
Everyone's waiting for Konami's Metal Gear Solid and Silent Hill, previewed last issue, but what else are they planning for 1999? EPM takes a look...

Konami could be said to be a bit of an OAP in the world of software publishing, and you'll be as shocked as us when we tell you in the beginning they were in the juke box business. Four years later, though, the company made a wise decision and moved into amusement machines.

They've had many a successful series of games stretched across many platforms. These include International Superstar Soccer, Contra and the infamous Metal Gear range. The question is, can Konami keep their track record going into 1999? EPM's on the case...

Metal Gear Solid

DEVELOPER Konami **RELEASED** February '99

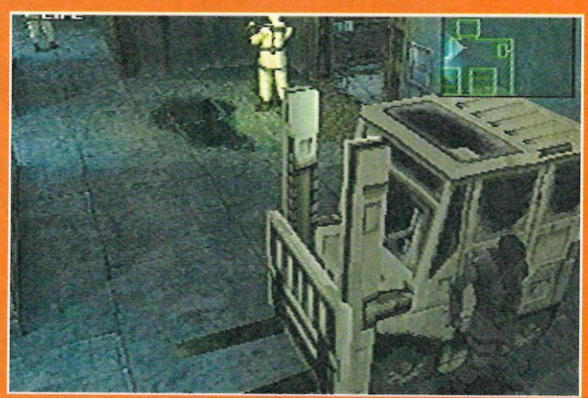


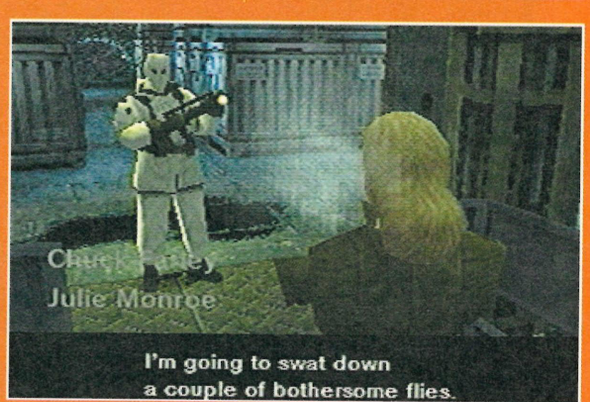
METAL GEAR SOLID IS...

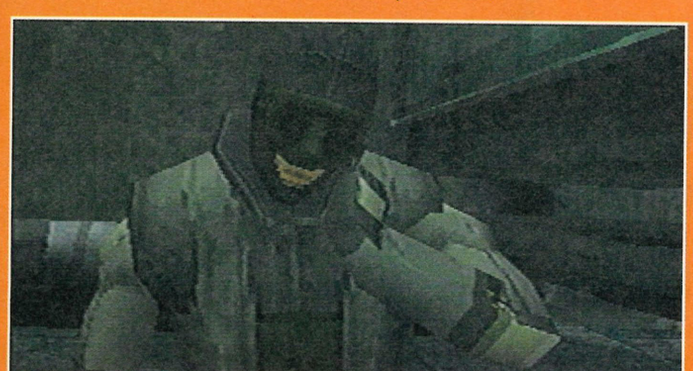
...A tactical and complex game of espionage using stealth and cunning where big guns and ammo just don't cut the mustard (though there's plenty of that too).

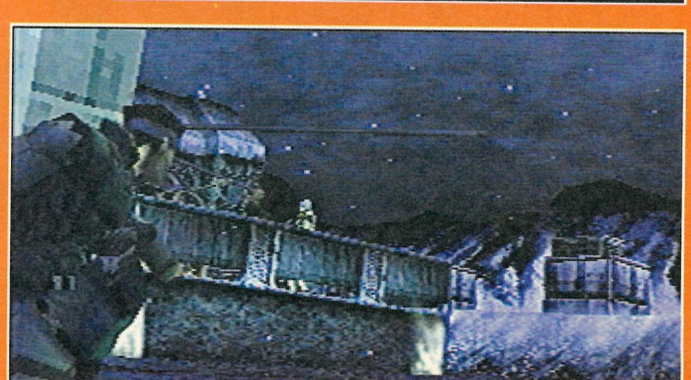
Metal Gear Solid, the biggest and most eagerly anticipated title to grace the PlayStation, is fast approaching! We've just received the UK code of the game which features a full translation of every aspect - no more unintelligible text and speech. We covered the Jap version back in Issue 10 and scored it at a smashing 92%. As we stated in the review, this was a preliminary mark that reflects the fact that the majority of the game is incomprehensible due to the lavish amount of Jap text throughout the cut sequences and during communications that take place as you play. we also mentioned that it was really hard to find out where you were meant to be going and what your objectives were. Now (thankfully) we know, and have ventured further into the game as a result.

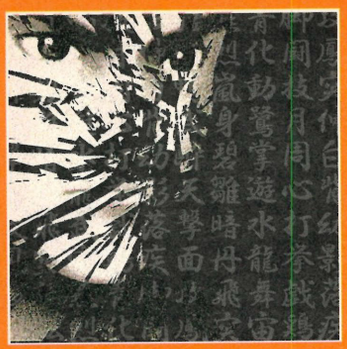
Your first objective is sneak undetected into the Nuclear Weapons Disposal Site to rescue two hostages held there. Once you've rescued (or tried, anyway) the DARPA Chief Donald Anderson and Kenneth Baker (President of ArmsTech) you must kill all the terrorists and prevent global destruction by stopping a nuclear strike from the world's most advanced mobile launcher; Metal Gear. Everything's looking smart so far; though it's not a final code, all translations have been completed and there's no visible differences in the game's graphics or running speed so far. Keep your eyes peeled for up-and-coming info and a full review in the very near future.











Kensei: Sacred Fist

DEVELOPER Konami

RELEASED January / February '99

KENSEI IS...

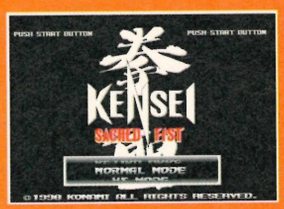
...Konami's first ever fighting game on the PlayStation.

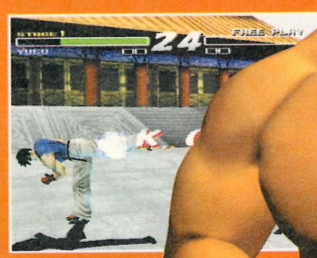
Kensei: Sacred Fist took Konami's in-house team three years to develop, and now it's nearly done and dusted. If you're a lover of Street Fighter or Tenchu (who wouldn't be?), you should be interested in this one. Over 20 different characters are included, and in addition to your usual kick and punch buttons there's also a 'redirect' option which lets you shrug off an attack and send your opponent all wobbly so you can launch a counter-attack. Just two of the characters are a wrestler and a ninja fighter, and they're both played in different ways.

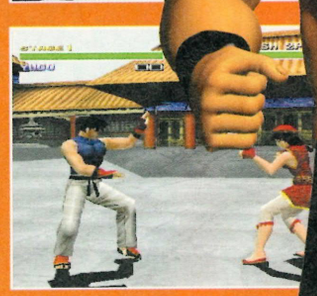
As for the graphics, so far, so good, it seems. Apparently the frame rate is 60 per second and the polygon models are very smooth and extremely detailed. We should also inform you that there are a few scantily-dressed girlie fighters thrown in for good measure (if that doesn't sell a few copies, nothing will).

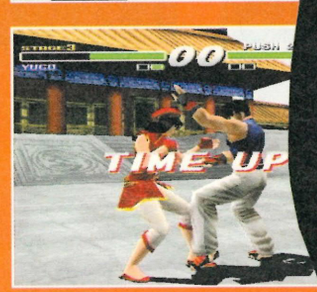
There are four different game modes to choose from, including normal, versus, time attack an survival. With eight characters selectable from the outset, the further you progress through the levels, the more you're given to try out. Thinking tactically is the secret for this beat-'em-up; or alternatively, you can go in there with guns blazing!

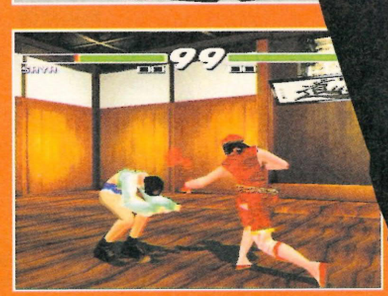
Kensei will be on its way to the shop shelves in January. With some very unique characters promised and graphics that will astound you, this one is bound to do Konami proud.

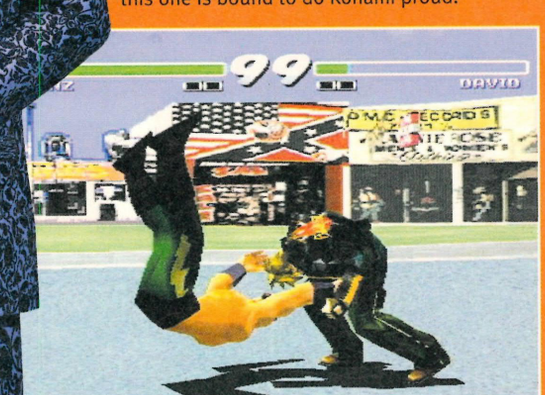


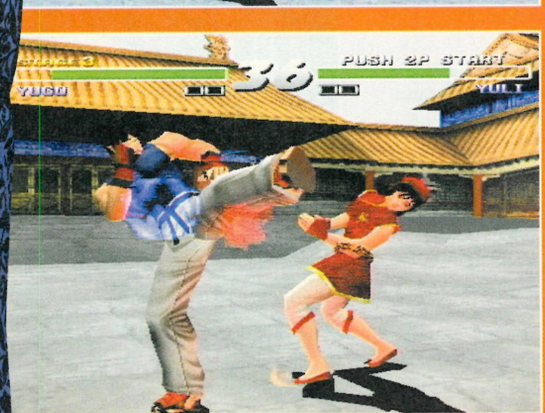












Samurai Legends

DEVELOPER Konami **RELEASED** TBA

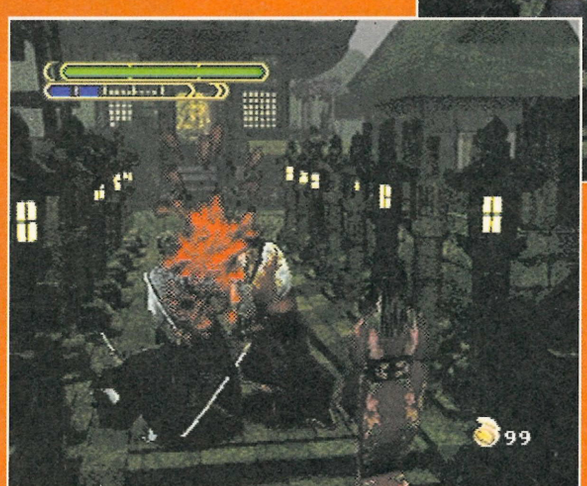
SAMURAI LEGENDS IS...

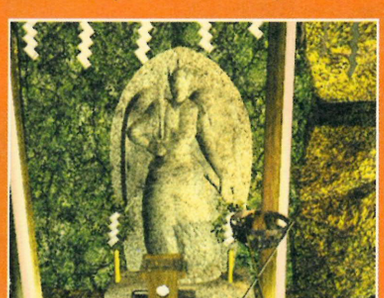
...An exploration/hack-'em-up set in 16th Century Japan - a sort of feudal Oriental Resident Evil.

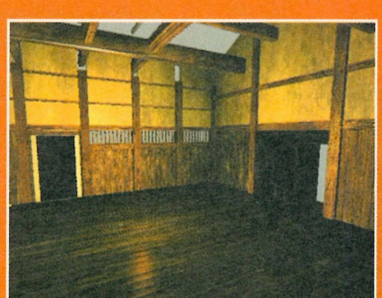
Set in 16th Century Japan, Samurai Legends sees a warlord taking over the lands. His influence is not welcome - he's so malign and wicked that under his stewardship demons appear in the streets. What do you do? Cut them to ribbons, of course!

Like Resident Evil, Samurai Legends is set against fixed CGI backgrounds, with characters made up of polygons. There are lots of RPG-style puzzles to solve, as well as some seriously gory fight scenes. Again like Resident Evil, you can play as a man or a woman, the two characters enjoying vastly differing storylines. The music has a distinctly Japanese feel, as are the weapons. You assault your foes here with katanas, short swords, shurikens, bombs and axes - classic ninja stuff.

Borrowing from Resident Evil with a huge hunk of Tenchu thrown in for good measure, this game shows real promise. It will be a while before it hits the shelves, but rest assured we'll bring you more news as it's made...







Beatmania

DEVELOPER Konami **RELEASED** TBA

beatmania

BEATMANIA IS...

...a DJ Simulation game, so move on over to your turntables and get scratchin' those records...

Move over Boy George and Sash, now you can all make beautiful music together with your PlayStation. Beatmania is a game similar to Parappa the Rappa and Bust-A-Groove, where you use your musical talents to compile some techno, hip-hop or a dose of chilled-out reggae.

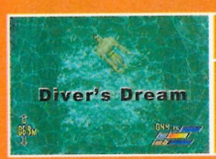
All this game involves is co-ordinating your button-pressing with the indicators on the screen. There are only five keys to use, with your left hand; with your right you control the turntable. The buttons for the turntable are specifically assigned for your standard pad, but if you're not happy with them, you can change them to whatever suits you.

If you have a go at training mode you can try out specific parts of a tune, and practice to beat the Boss DJs who challenge you to a scratching match. Watch out for the Metal Gear Solid theme tune along the way, as well as all the other 27 tracks packed onto the two CDs.

The graphics don't look up to much on this one, as there's lot of one frame animation and you have to rely more on rhythm than your reflexes. However, if you're into the club scene and fancy having a bash, you'll have to bide your time as the release date is still a mystery, though you can get it as an import as we speak.

Diver's Dream

DEVELOPER Konami **RELEASED** March '99



DIVER'S DREAM IS...

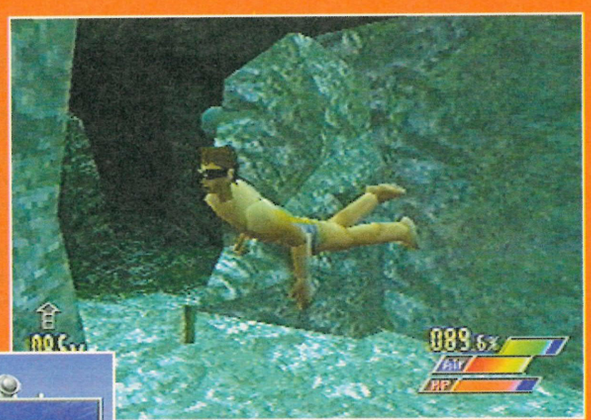
...An exploration game mixed in with a bit of adventure. Explore the ocean and uncover the treasure...

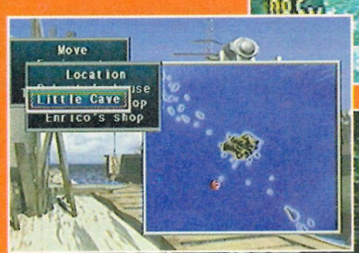
The glorious ship Gigantic Matilda is still lying at the bottom of the ocean after hundreds of years, and the secret of her treasure has yet to be discovered. Rumoured to be scattered along her 300 metre-long hull, it is your ambition to find the lost treasure and become a famous diver.

Following the story, you join an old man and his daughter in their quest to find the ship and discover its secrets. First you're shown around the harbour, meeting and greeting characters you meet along the way in your adventure. The first shopkeeper you meet makes you an offer you literally can't refuse, as if you don't take him up on it, you have no gear to swim with. That's all we're going to tell you, as we don't wish to give too much away.

The graphics look as though they're going to be pretty impressive both on and off land, with cool cut scenes to help the story along. The intro looks as though you're about to watch Titanic again; you wait in expectation for Leonardo and Miss Winslet to put in an appearance.

There's nothing like a good mystery, and there's no doubt this will be one, so get out your snorkel and flippers as it's out in March.





Rebus

DEVELOPER Atlus **RELEASED** Spring '99

REBUS IS...

...An RPG where you have to undertake another quest to save the Kingdom in the complicated world of Rebus.

The divine letters set free the power of Kartia. It lights up the dark and Kartia's winds flow through the ocean. Kartia water nurtured the plants... Thus people called this world 'Rebus', the world of Kartia civilisation. For literally thousands of years the world never knew of any war. It was a world of peace and security - until now, that is!

Gather your best men, soldier, and strap up your steel toe-capped boots; you're about to go into battle. Your army can include wizards, warriors, clerics and all other kinds of riff-raff that happen to be around. Learn to fight like a hero and cast magic like a witch to take on the chaotic legions in massive fights that leave behind a very scarred background.

There are two storylines to follow using each of the two main characters, Toxa, who is a knight, and Lacryma who fights for Vigilance. Each has a different battle to fight, effectively offering two games in one as, struggling against lots of different enemies, you must save the planet Rebus from being destroyed.

Like a game of chess, you have to strategically pick your moves and then choose your weapon to slay your enemy. Some weapons are stronger than others, and each one can be used is best in a particular situation. You can create your own swords and axes, for example, but also keep a look out for chests that contain them as well.

This game looks complicated when you first begin playing, but once you get used to the moves and what each weapon does it gets easier. It's a good idea to do some training first, where all will be revealed on what must be done to conquer your enemy. Rebus is out next Summer, so you'll have to wait to save the world until then.

Trap Runner

DEVELOPER Atlus **RELEASED** January / February '99

TRAP RUNNER IS...

...A cross between a beat-'em-up and a strategy game. Your mission is to simply seek out and destroy the enemy by any means possible.

This game most certainly brings a new meaning to 007, and should probably be shaken and not stirred. Trap Runner doesn't boast any half-clad ladies or specially-designed secret agent gadgets, so you're left with only your cunning to protect you. If you're old enough to be a fan of Spy Vs Spy, the one with the pointy-faced characters and electrified door knobs, then you should enjoy this game. It's been labelled as the version for the Nineties, so let's get our traps out and kick ourselves some enemy butt.

In the bleak and sombre future, corruption rules the roost. The secret is not to trust anybody, not even your closest friend, as you can easily be stabbed painfully in the back. Trap Runner is the story of six undercover secret agents, with assassination being their speciality. Each agent has a different enemy to kill and the way to 'get your man', as they say, is by sneakily setting traps for them to fall into. There are bombs to set down all over the battlefields and nuclear explosions to detonate when the enemy is getting a bit too close for comfort. But if the traps don't work, there's always the option to literally take matters into your own hands and battle it out with you fists like a real man (or woman).

Two players can have a go for some full-on split-screen action in an attempt to take on the bad guys over 36 solid battlefields. There are various power-ups to look out for including Invincibility, Plasma Bombs, Health, Detonators and Mines. Defeating the opposition is no mean feat, as they too can lay traps for you to fall prey to. You haven't got a lot of life and you can't run very fast, so taking the wussy way out isn't an option.

To be completely honest, getting into this game may take a while and the graphics have a lot to answer for. It would be wrong, of course, to pass any kind of judgement at this stage of the game, so we'll just have to wait until March to give a final verdict.

Suikoden 2

DEVELOPER Konami **RELEASED** TBA

SUIKODEN 2 IS...

...An RPG with a storyline based upon ancient Eastern Lore, where you battle against the bad guys and win the day.

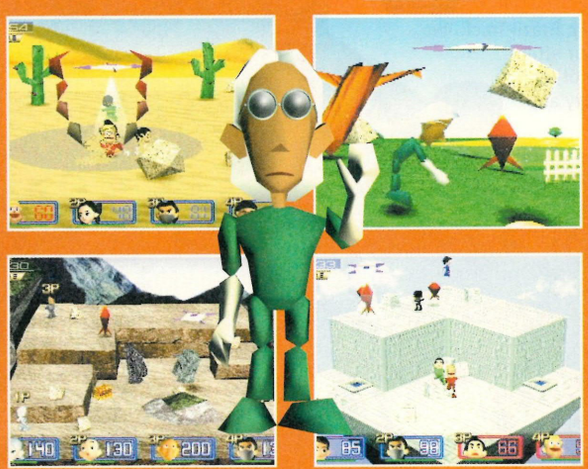
In the Scarlet Moon Empire sat the old-time hero Barbarossaon his throne. He was the Golden Emperor, and after his wife passed away his empire began to slip as he himself began to go though a change. As the deteriorating splendid kingdom fell apart and greed and corruption took over, a band of rebels formed. They called themselves the Liberation Army...

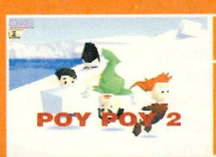
So began the first Suikoden game, which ended with the Liberation Army wrestling the reins of power from the corrupt emperor and rescuing the decaying empire. The second game sees a new threat to peace and tranquillity, an evil force that takes over the land. To combat this threat a new band of adventurers forms, with a few old favourites thrown in for good measure.

Suikoden 2 features over 102 characters to recruit along your journey. The army battles are simpler and better, and the graphics and music much improved. Apart from this, we've no real information on storylines or execution (even the programmers aren't 100% decided), but rest assured as soon as we're told, we'll share it with you.

Poy Poy 2

DEVELOPER Konami **RELEASED** Early February '99





POY POY 2 IS...

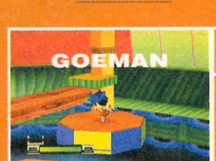
...The sequel to the great multiplayer madness that was Poy Poy, featuring a host of improvements and embellishments.

For those who've never seen the first game (89%, Issue Four), Poy Poy is an action game in which you took one of four characters and battled it out with the others. You injure your opponents by throwing boulders, tree trunks, ice blocks, bombs and just about anything else you can get your hands on at them while they, of course, do the same to you. Each player can select a special weapon such as guided missiles or bomb blasts, and stunned opponents can also be picked up and thrown. It's fun in one-player mode, but really comes into its own as a multiplayer outing.

Poy Poy 2 takes the theme a stage further, offering more characters and more human-controlled battlers - the forthcoming feud allows up to eight players to duke it out, against the original's four. The controls are much improved, and you can now block attacks. Apart from that, it's not that different, as will be made apparent in next month's review.

Goeman

DEVELOPER Konami **RELEASED** TBA



GOEMAN IS...

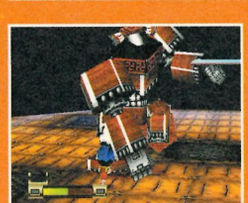
...A spectacular platform/RPG offering starring the irrepressible Ganbare Goeman, also known as the Mystical Ninja.

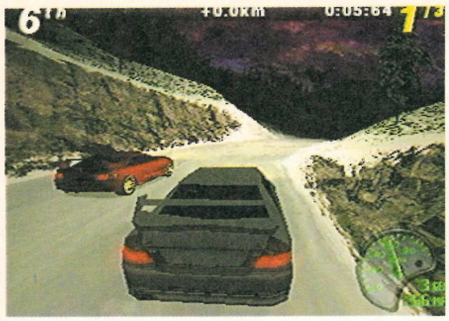
Ever heard of Ganbare Goeman? He's made quite a name for himself on the SNES, N64 and even the Game Boy, and now (at long last) he's coming to the PlayStation.

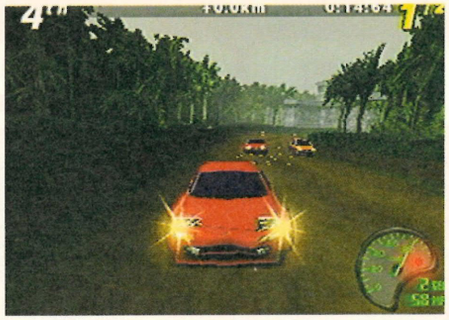
Imagine the exploration, combat and platform pounding offered by, say, Spyro the Dragon coupled with the problem-solving RPG elements of Breath of Fire III. That's Goeman. Imagine a huge world based on 16th Century Japan, filled with monsters and magic; the thing legends are made of. That's Goeman. Imagine sitting in front of your PlayStation till 4 am, determined to get past one more puzzle before you go to bed. That's Goeman. Want to learn more? Let's go, man!

Despite the series' popularity on other formats, PlayStation Goeman isn't a direct conversion of any of them. Instead it's a PlayStation-only offering, the plot and devices for which have been written from the ground-up specifically for this format. The game world and characters are the same, but the adventure itself is wholly original. You can collect money and use it to buy items, and there are sub-plots to pursue, as well as sub-games. Those who've played a Goeman game before will be pleased to know he's still got his spiky yo-yo weapon too.

Goeman is a long way off - we've seen no playable code and there's no hard news on the storyline, but rest assured we'll fill you in as soon as we're able.







PUBLISHER	DEVELOPER	GENRE	RELEASED	VERSION	PRICE	PLAYERS	PERIPHERALS	
Infogrames	Eutechnyx	Driving	22nd January '99	UK	£39.99	1-2	Memory Card Analogue	Dual Shock Steering Wheel

Can Eutechnyx' ace racer take pole position, or is it simply the pits? Ian Osborne dons a crash helmet and trashes his shiny new car...

Max Power Racing

Max Power magazine; the boy racer's essential read. You can always tell the Max Power reader on the road. His car's covered in Max Power stickers given away free with the mag, his chromed wheels are brighter than his headlights, he's got a rear spoiler that costs more than the car and his tyres are bald through wheel-spinning out of corners. Fluffy dice and Dave/Sharon sun visors are optional.

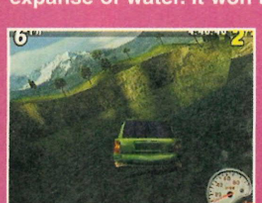
Max Power Racing, licensed from the mag (of course), is also an essential boy's toy. The PlayStation really needs a next-generation driving game. Sure, we've got Gran Turismo, TOCA 2 and Formula 1 '97, but these are simulations - it's an arcade-style racer in the Total Drivin' mould we need, and in Max Power Racing, that's exactly what we've got.

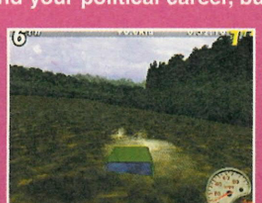
Max Power Racing is perfectly structured. Enter the Arcade Mode and you've two cars to choose from, and two territories already open. Each territory has three tracks, which must be completed in turn to open another city. Cool - if you're stuck on, say, Brazil Track Two, just turn your attentions to the other open territory and come

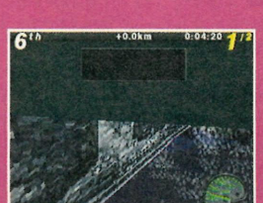
The tracks need to be treated with respect, even those at the start of the game

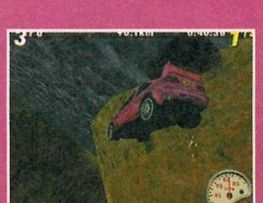
SPLASHDOWN!

There are various points in the game where you can emulate Teddy Kennedy and drive your car off the road, straight into a rather large expanse of water. It won't end your political career, but your race will be over...



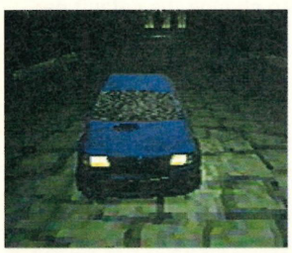


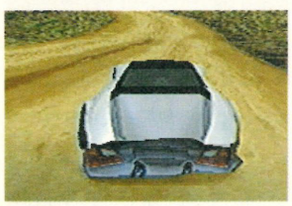


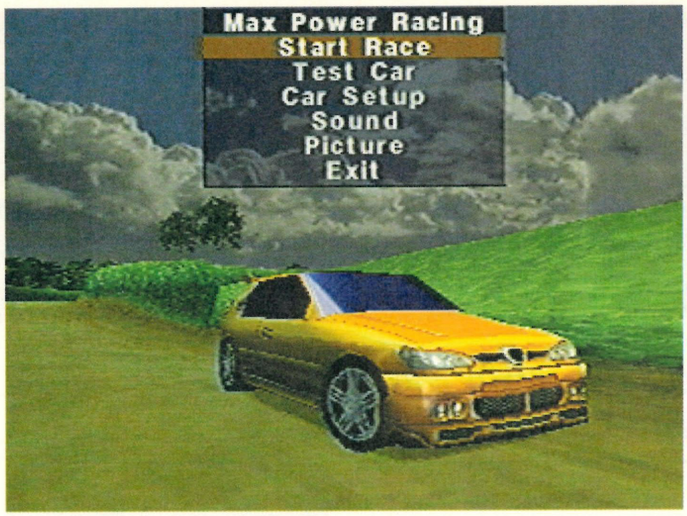


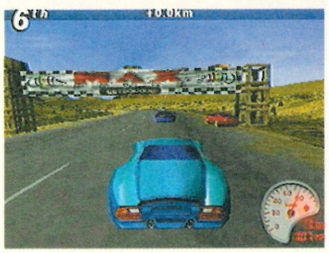
CRASH DAMAGE...

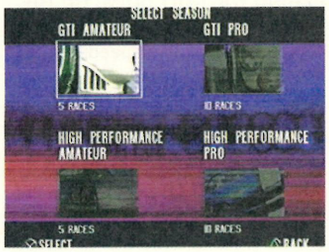
Smash into obstacles or other vehicles and your car suffers damage - windscreens are shattered, headlights damaged, frames bent and bodywork crumpled. It's pretty hard to trash your car - the programmers have been generous in that respect as the car manufacturers from which the game's vehicles are licensed wouldn't allow them to fall to bits too easily.
Although damage does eventually hamper your handling, it's just too slight to make a substantial difference. For example, even if you smash your window, your visibility isn't impaired.











Another spectacular achievement is the game's artificial intelligence

back to Brazil later, probably with a new car earned through putting in spectacular lap times. There are 25 licensed cars and 30 tracks in all, so don't expect to unlock everything on the day you buy the game, especially as the GTi vehicles eventually give way to mega-fast performance-class cars.

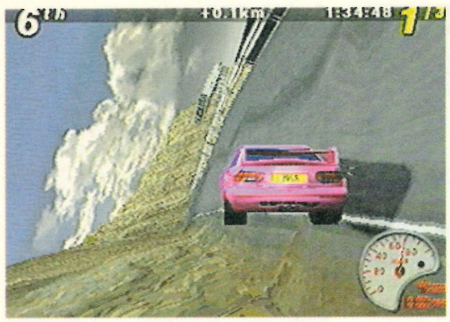
The Championship Mode is equally challenging, perhaps even more so - it's almost the game's Hard or Expert setting. Set over four leagues, again you must come first to progress onto the next. Set over five or ten races, you need to keep your wits about you here. Make a mistake in Amateur Mode and you think, 'so what? I'll just try again'. Make a calamitous cock-up in a Championship League, though, and you screw up your entire season. Not that coming second is pointless - in this mode you unlock cars depending on how many points you scored, so even if you don't make it to the next league you might still win some wheels. The tracks themselves are the same ones used in the Arcade event, so perhaps it's best to unlock all the courses for a league in Arcade Mode and practice them before taking on the Championship tournament.

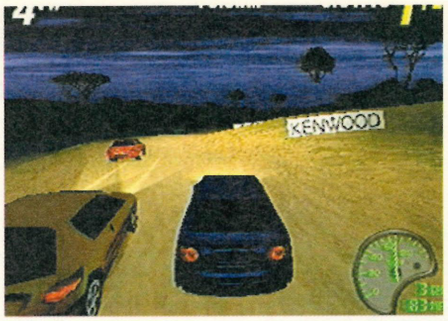
Needless to say, the game also features a Time Trial Mode, where you're up against the clock, and a two-player offering with a horizontally split screen. Let's face it - what racer doesn't?

Let's Get Physical...

The tracks need to be treated with respect, even those at the start of the game. One wrong move and you go flying off the road, maybe into the trackside lakes and rivers, as described elsewhere. Even though the game is arcadey and forgiving when your car takes to a bank and tilts at an impossible angle only to remain on its wheels, it's entirely possible to screw up. In the later levels especially, there are tunnels and pillars - take the wrong line and you clip the corner, sending your car into a spin or stopping it entirely. Trying to ride the kerbs or trackside slopes too far is also a recipe for disaster - your shiny new car doesn't look so good after it's rolled across the track and been hit by the back-markers. Crash physics are superb, with collisions based on real-time calculations. Thus when you flip your car, it behaves as it should, its rolling and somersaulting reflecting accurately the movement of the vehicle. Compare this to lesser drives where a flip instantly calls up a bog-standard crash routine, your car rolling in exactly the same way whether you lost control at 20 mph or 120 mph. Crash damage is catered for, but as the real-life manufacturers don't like to see their on-screen cars disintegrate, you'd hardly notice. Far more impressive is the way the screen swings as your car bounces over uneven ground or turns onto its side. Instead of just tilting the on-screen car, the vehicle stays where it is and the screen behind it tilts. This is very disorientating, especially when you clip a corner and two of your wheels rise, but it's wholly realistic and adds a new level of immediacy to the game.

Another spectacular achievement is the game's artificial intelligence. There are six



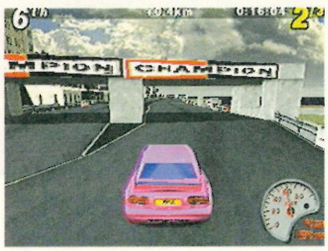


Max Power Racing is as cool an arcade driver as you can get

cars on the track during each race. In Arcade Mode you always start from the back, in the Championship event from your last finishing position. Wherever you start, though, you want to finish in front, so keep your eye on the other five drivers, all in cars of similar performance to your own. Right from the start, developers Eutechnyx refused to include checkpoints (reach them in a certain time or your engine cuts out), arguing this is a lazy excuse for not programming opponents' AI properly. Personally, I couldn't agree more - what can be more annoying than passing a checkpoint in the nick of time, just as the clock hits zero, then a few bends on spinning out and get passed by two cars? If you only made the checkpoint by the skin of your

WHAT THE HELL ARE THE CARS BEHIND YOU STILL DOING ON THE TRACK? Equally irritating is when computer-controlled speedsters follow a set route (usually the racing line) with near-religious zeal. You go faster, but they NEVER put a wheel wrong. Max Power Racing avoids both of these pitfalls and offers foes that actually behave like competitive drivers, and not just drones which are there only to test your skills. At last - you're in a race!

Your opponents can and do make mistakes, just like yourself. Maybe he takes a corner too fast and loses a few seconds as he banks wide, or perhaps he



fluffs an overtaking manoeuvre, hitting you from behind and sending himself spinning off the track. I really enjoyed watching the two cars in front of me tussle for position, especially when they both spun off. I was less impressed when a car went rolling over my bonnet and two thirds of it disappeared, but this doesn't happen often. Aside from a little glitching at the sides of the screen and a tiny amount of pop-up, the game's technically sound.

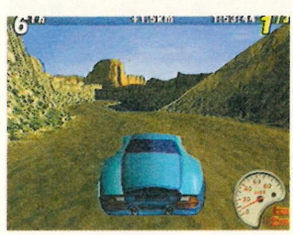
Paint Job

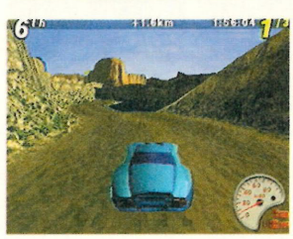
The in-game graphics are another of the game's many high points. The texture mapping isn't up to the same standards as the televisual extravaganzas enjoyed by Gran Turismo or Ridge Racer Type 4, but instead take the colourful computer game line - once again the simulation road is avoided in favour of an arcade fast lane approach. The cars, licensed from genuine road vehicles like the Nissan Micra, Peugeot 206, Toyota Supra and Marcos Mantis, are beautifully texture-mapped, looking every bit like their real-life counterparts. Likewise, the tracks are incredibly detailed. Although not based on real-life race circuits, Eutechnyx sent teams of photographers around the world to snap some genuine roads and dirt tracks in order to get that authentic, just-like-you-were-there look. Great work if you can get it, eh? They seem to have done a good job, though - the courses are wonderfully drawn, zip by at an acceptable rate and each territory has its own flavour and atmosphere, enhanced by the background music licensed from new dance label Coded.

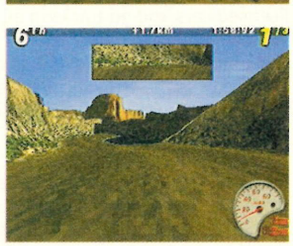
Also worth a mention are the weather effects. These are not random or variable - if a track's foggy, it's always foggy, if it rains on a certain course, it does so every time you play, and some races are always held at night. This is exactly how it should be. Variable weather condi-

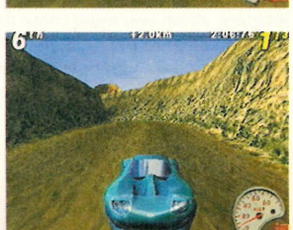
A MATTER OF PERSPECTIVE...

There are three different viewpoints available in Max Power Racing. The two behind-the-car perspectives are pretty similar, the second being just a little further away, and there's also a bonnet view. Press Down on the D-Pad and you look back on the car, gaining a good view of what's behind you.
It's great to see the programmers didn't waste their time with unusable novelty cameras, though an in-car view would be a boon, as would an option to change the default perspective instead of having to cycle through them during the countdown at the start of every race.



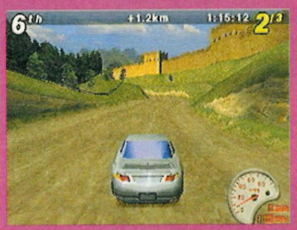


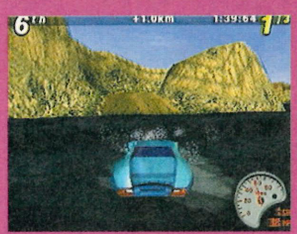


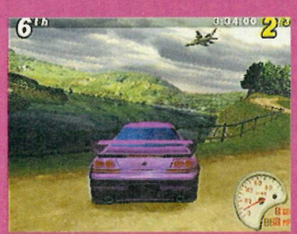


AMBIENT DETAILS...

Max Power Racing offers some great atmospheric details which, while not affecting the game directly, do much to enhance its atmosphere. Popular landmarks and other interesting buildings are offered - check out the Great Wall of China. A Tornado makes a low-level sortie over the first UK track, and Africa Track One features hot air balloons and one of the most impressive skies ever seen on the PSX. Best of all, the cars get dirty as they drive off-road, but run them through a puddle or a ford and the dirt is washed off. It's attention to detail like this that really make the game stand out.







Max Power Racing is perfectly structured

tions are very clever, but allow some seriously cheap ways of getting through them. Can't cope with the rain on a certain course? Keep coming back until it's dry. No, it's far better to let each track have its own weather conditions and force the player to adapt his style accordingly.

Talking of adapting styles, the nature of the track dictates to a large degree how you need to drive it. For dirt courses, slide around the corners. On roads, take the racing line. Finding the best approach to a bend is essential when you reach the paved streets of Rome, as the track is lined with tall buildings and cursed by some of the harshest right-angled bends ever seen. Make sure you pick the right car from your ever-growing garage - the latest won isn't necessarily the best for the job in hand. Some cars just blister on courses with long straights, but haven't the acceleration or handling for windey ones. A lighter car might eat the bends but suffer for top speed on the straights. If you can't find the exact car to match your exacting requirements, take it into the set-up screen and adjust over 20 variables, including gear ratios, downforce, ride height and more. Many (myself included) couldn't be bothered with all that mucking about - fear not, you can easily just get straight into the game. It's just when you've come second on the same race for the umpteenth time, you just can't resist giving the car a fine-tuning to see if you can coax that extra speed from it. The set-up options are never intrusive, but are there if you want them, and the temptation to use them eventually proves irresistible.

So with all these points in its favour, is there anything that could be improved about the game? Well, there are one or two glitches that could be tidied up, but they aren't really noticeable as you play. Likewise, the scenery seems to wobble water-like up close when the car's travelling slowly on uneven ground - try driving along the railway track in the USA to see what we mean, but again this doesn't affect the game as it's played. More worryingly, though, when using the bonnet view collisions seem to occur a foot in front of the car's actual position. This is annoying, though hardly terminal. Harsher crash damage (or at least the option thereof) and more polished water effects wouldn't go amiss either, but overall, Max Power Racing is as cool an arcade driver as you can get.

Ian Osborne

SECOND OPINION

This game's a real winner. It's fast, action-packed and dynamic. Clever design means you never get stuck and feel it's pointless to go on. The crash damage is pretty weak and there are one or two glitches, but it's still the best arcade racer on the PSX.

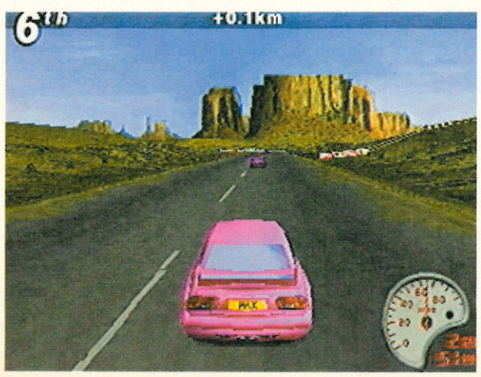
Claire Webster

THE SCORE

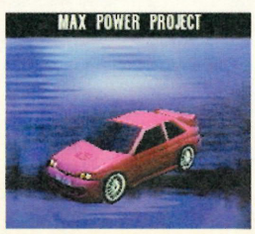
GRAPHICS	8
SOUND	8
GAMEPLAY	9
LIFESPAN	9

92%

THE WILLIE-MOBILE



One of the cars in Max Power Racing is the Max Power Project, a souped-up Ford RS 2000 built by the Max Power magazine team. It's worth over £120,000, and has a top speed of 168 mph, accelerating from 0-60 in 3.8 seconds. It's got four-wheel drive and 1000 brake horsepower. Unfortunately its pink livery makes it look like an enormous phallus, but perhaps that was the intention.



PUBLISHER	DEVELOPER	GENRE	RELEASED	VERSION	PRICE	PLAYERS
Eidos	Silicon Dreams	Sport	Out Now	UK	£44.99	1-4

PERIPHERALS
Memory Card Multi Tap
Analogue

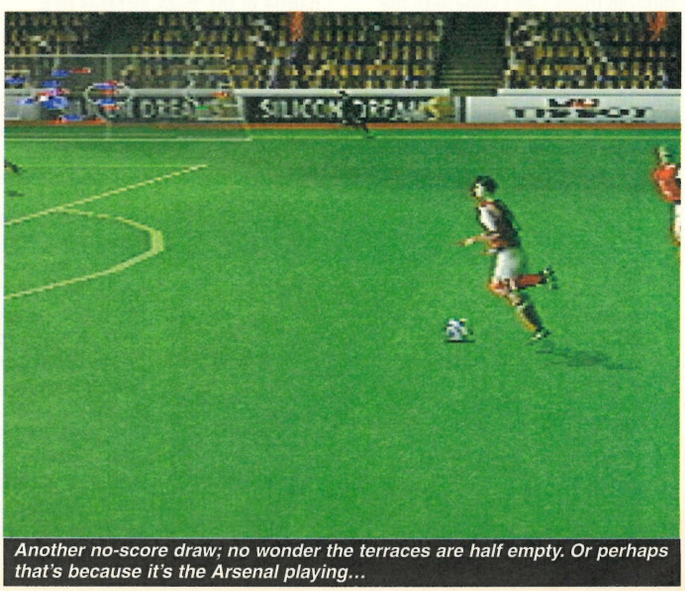
Michael Owen's World League Soccer '99

World League Soccer's back, with a revamped engine and a celebrity tie-in. Is it a game of two halves or just a load of balls? Russell Barnes puts the boot in...

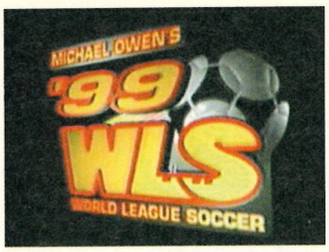
You don't have to be a football expert to know that Michael Owen is hot property at the moment. He's just a slip of a lad at 18, but has already represented his country, become a sex symbol and nicked Gary Lineker's job as the Walker's Crisps bloke pretty-much overnight. It was only a matter of time before the inevitable PSX game happened and, by Jove, here it is in all its glory. The all-important questions is whether it has the pace and looks of the real thing - better get those oranges to the ready and the magic sponge out of the bucket...

> **Less willing Sunday Cup players will be tearing their hair out within minutes**

As the introduction plays through, things are looking good. There's plenty of footy FMV and lots of lovely computer-generated stuff mixed in with a cheesy, clubby little ditty. Michael makes an appearance at the end to say 'hello', and then it's straight into the game with the first options screen. This is where things start to move in a different direction reflected in the remainder of the game. The options, controls, menu screens and formations screens are all very complicated and often quite inaccessible without a bit of trial and error or your reading the instructions manual. Selecting two teams requires you to visit a total of six screens (three screens repeated twice) before you can even think about formations on

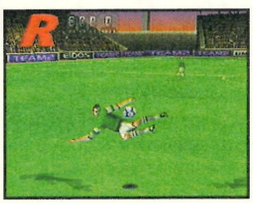


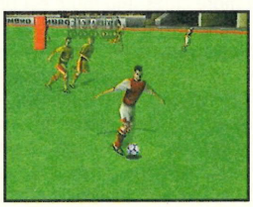
Another no-score draw; no wonder the terraces are half empty. Or perhaps that's because it's the Arsenal playing...



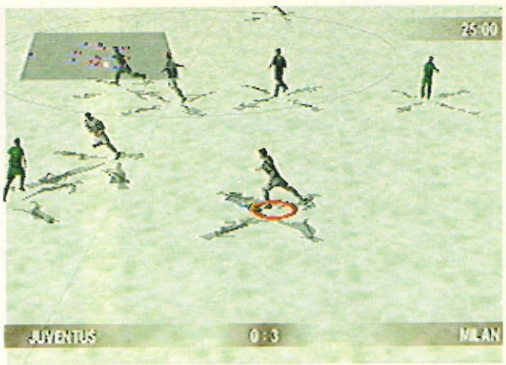
JUST PRESS AS MANY BUTTONS AS YOU CAN...

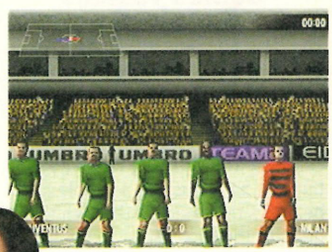
I'd be lying if I said WLS '99 was lacking moves. It has more moves and set play potential than most other titles put together (more than 23 to be close), but being able to accomplish them while in a fierce match situation takes a hell of a lot of getting used to and is something that will most likely put many players off.

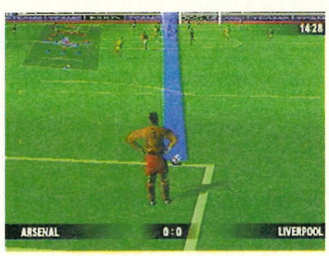


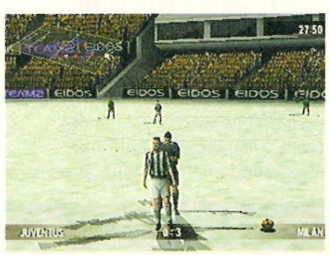


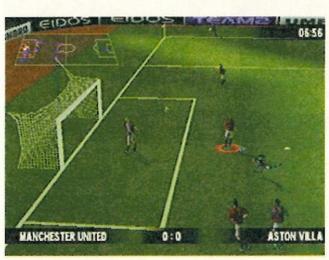
It's possible to perform a clever little one-two by double-tapping the Pass button. You can build on this to perform first-time passes and chips back and forth to lay up volleys and headers while on the attack. By holding down the Right Shoulder Button you can add a whole new range of moves to your repertoire. Long passes, crosses, high crosses, shimmies over the ball and Michael's own dragging technique that can lose your opponents in fine style. This is all fantastic, but such a range of moves means that having to perform button combinations on top of directional pad combinations leaves you feeling like you're not always totally in control. It's the ultimate trade-off really; exchanging realism for ease of use and playability. That's not to say that WLS '99 is impossible to play, as that's just not the case by any means. It's just a long learning curve and a mind for combinations and sequences that is required to become competent in all areas. No one said world class football was going to be easy, I suppose...

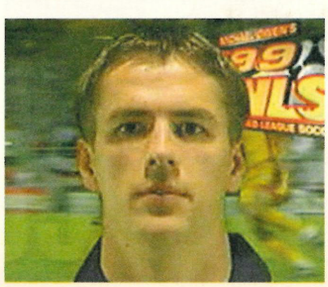








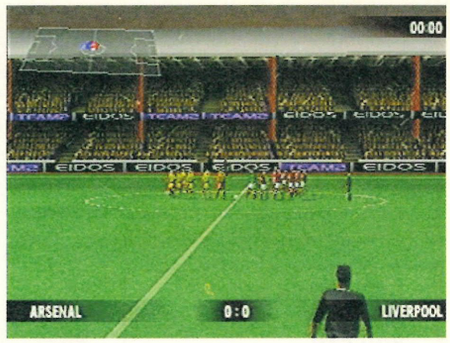


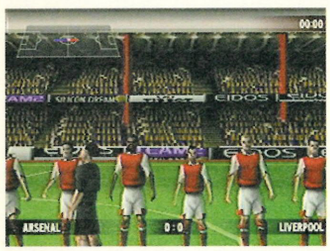


the Changing Room screen. Once this is complete you're close to starting play, but all the same, it shouldn't be that difficult to select a couple of teams to have an exhibition match. I suppose that this is partly due to the fact that WLS '99 is a very 'busy' title with lots of odds and sods to keep footy fanatics happy from dusk till dawn. There are loads of different game types, including Tournament, League and Cup play with variations of each, making up for its complexity in some ways.

There's no shortage little touches in WLS '99 that take you further and deeper than many other football games; of that there is no doubt, it's just that there are just as many things that really let it down. Take for example, the graphics. Though the animation has no visible gaps or shortfalls, the actual player graphics are pretty sparse and disappointing. In the line-up before each match it looks more like an audition for Lurch from the Addams family or Frankenstein than anything else, if you know what I mean.

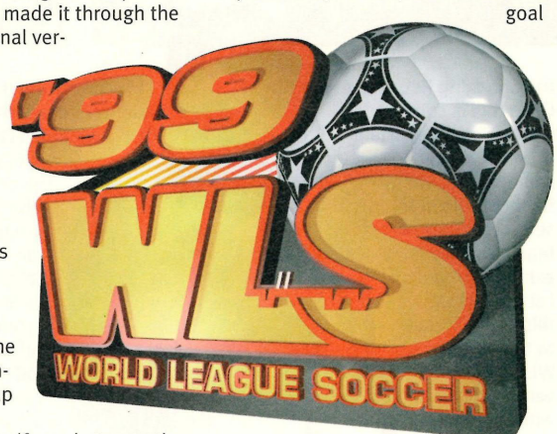
The detail on each player is something of a let-down too; blank, bland shirts and shorts that look completely out of place on the pitch. Why have football players on a football pitch if it doesn't even look like they're in the right kit? The only other slagging the graphics deserves is in the background graphics, courtesy of the crowd. According to the press release, the game boasts 'improved dynamic crowd movement', but in reality there is no improvement in graphical prowess over the likes of Pit Fighter from a few years ago. There are three, maybe four crowd animations that look like thousands of pieces of brown cardboard bouncing up and down - 'dynamic crowd movement' my arse.





Games Testers Required...

The boys and girls at Silicon Dreams have left a couple of unfortunate goofs in the final code, and these have to be seen to be believed. There's no excuse for crashing and glitching these days, but this baby has got a couple of beauties that made it through the net into the final version of the game. The more common complaint comes into action when a computer-controlled team is on the attack down on the right side of the screen. The computer-controlled cock-up takes place round about half way between the corner flag and the goalpost and is initiated when their striker gets the ball. He runs up and down with the ball for a couple of paces while standing about three feet off the ground. The rest of the players stand dead still as he magically controls the ball (while not actually touching it) and will not even give up if you run in for the tackle as he just runs (or floats) off towards the goal and then return to his patch to continue his pacing.



The boys and girls at Silicon Dreams have left a couple of unfortunate goofs in the final code

The second bug is somewhat harder to initiate but shameless all the same. The ball sits on the grass, ripe for a kicking, but it seems no one can touch it; the computer-controlled players run up and down across it as you try to run past the ball to gain control, but to no avail. The only way to stop you both from dancing around the ball (while the rest of the players stand on ceremony) is to perform a sliding tackle into the ball to dislodge it.

It Ain't All Bad...

The most fundamental factor that WLS '99 is riding on (and its greatest selling point) is its unashamed drive to give you total control over your player and his role in the team. This indeed should be applauded in all its respects as its a real breath of fresh air in this crowded genre. In most areas it has worked reasonably well. You have more available moves, more available modes of play, more teams from more clubs and more set plays than ever before. All club teams have up-to-the minute team members and statistics, which alone is enough to keep most players happy. After some intense playing (and nearly binning the game several times), the controls become easier to handle and most of the moves become second nature. Take your time and learn the game and you'll probably grow to love Michael Owen's WLS '99, but less willing Sunday Cup players will be tearing their hair out within minutes of sticking it on.

Russell Barnes

ANY WAY YOU WANT IT...

There are a total of ten methods of play in WLS '99, covering the whole spectrum of football-playing possibilities. Here we go...

Exhibition
National League
International League
Custom League
Arcade Cup
International Cup
Tournament
Season
Practice
Two- to Four-Player Games

Within the Custom League, you're free to pick any of the 200-plus available teams with a minimum of four. Teams play each other twice before it's complete. The Arcade Cup is in a strict knockout format where you must play every team, depending on whether you've picked national or club teams. These options are more than enough to keep any real football fan happy, it's just a shame the game isn't quite as immediately playable as ISS Pro '98 or FIFA '99. If it were, Eidos would have a real winner on their hands.

SECOND OPINION

Disappointing visuals and some alarming bugs bring down what could've been one of the best soccer games on the PlayStation. Like the original, Michael Owen's World League Soccer makes it difficult to score, but the flaws prevent it from being challenging.

Ian Osborne

THE SCORE

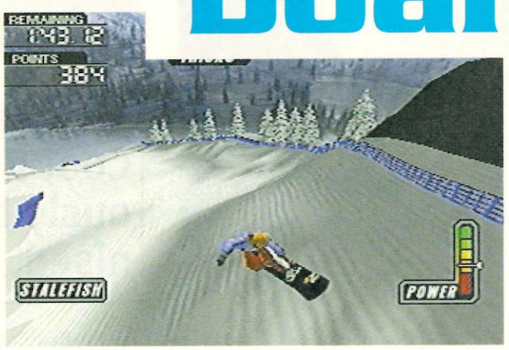
GRAPHICS	7
SOUND	7
GAMEPLAY	7
LIFESPAN	7

70%

PUBLISHER	DEVELOPER	GENRE	RELEASED	VERSION	PRICE	PLAYERS	PERIPHERALS	
Sony	Idle Minds	Sports Sim	Out Now	UK	£34.99	1-2	Memory Card Analogue	Dual Shock

Chill out for some phat air? Fakie that - Russell Barnes just wants to check out Cool Boarders 3 instead...

Cool Boarders 3



TRICKS OF THE TRADE...

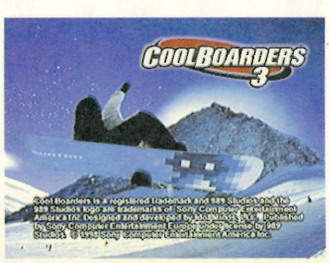
Jumps, grabs, spins and skid marks in your pants. The control method for performing stunts has changed slightly from the past to allow a wider range of tricks (and combinations of tricks) to be possible. By holding down the jump button on approach to a ramp you power up the meter in the bottom-right corner of the screen. When it is at its highest point you can perform the biggest jump (and the fastest turns), thus having the most air time to show the crowd what you can do. The shoulder buttons now take care of spinning your dude in either direction while the directional pad takes care of the type of somersault, grab or other such move that you perform when pressing the corresponding button. Once you become competent with the controls, you can do tricks and stunts like you were there in the flesh. Full marks to Idle Minds on doing a brilliant job with the control method. It's the smoothest, easiest and most versatile out there, and probably will be until Cool Boarders 4.

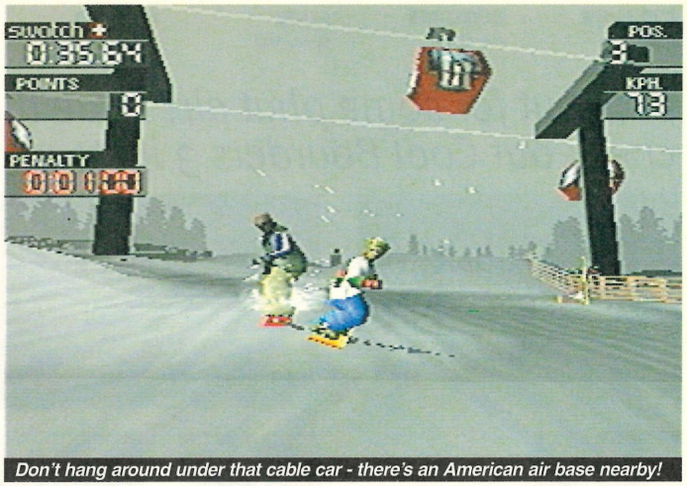
There were a bounty of snowboarding-type games in the run-up to Christmas but frankly none of them left me feeling the slightest bit festive. Phat Air (Page 46) is a prime example, as is Psybadek (46%, Issue 12). Their shite graphics and laughable gameplay are enough to give the genre a bad name. Fear not, though, brave boarder; Sony has come down from on high with an offering worthy of a King. Is this the Second Coming? Actually no, it's the third, but who's counting?

Who would ever thought in the final throws of the Twentieth Century people would be playing complex computer simulations of other people throwing themselves of the top of great big mountain with nothing more than a smooth piece of plastic and a pair of ridiculously large goggles between them and a severe case of being dead? That Nostradamus bloke didn't predict that one now, did he, but here we are and we just can't get enough of it - so where's the sanity in that, then?

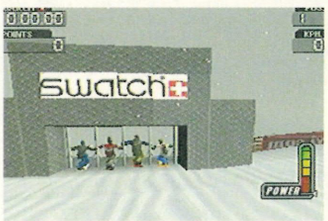
CB3 features 36 brand-new courses that have been created from scratch using an all-new graphics engine that just laughs in the faces of all its adversaries. Brilliant light sourcing and gouraud shading add depth and realism to an already-superior engine, producing a silky-smooth ride that just hasn't been seen before. You see no more break-up in the snow, or white and black lines that used to pop up occasionally in the original. Best of all, though, is the all new motion capture of some of the world's hottest snowboarders. No longer do you look at a Lego man lookalike as you

Loading times are just too long and too often





Don't hang around under that cable car - there's an American air base nearby!



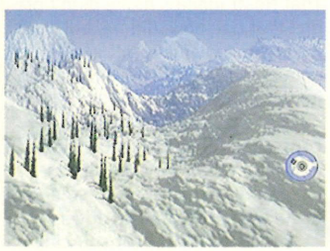
Every aspect of the previous two Cool Boarders games has obviously been reviewed, scrutinised, changed and tweaked

slide through the snow. Each character is well animated and reacts to each bump and jump in your path as you go. This is also reflected on animations now included in the snow as you pass through it. For once it really looks like you're gliding across the snow as opposed to riding an inch above it, which is another complaint levelled at other snowboarding games (including the first Cool Boarders).

Keep it Real...

Just for that extra edge, just for one more thing to break down the barrier between the game and the sport, Sony have included real sponsorship from big high street names like Swatch, Burton, and Quick Silver who, of course, sponsor real events and make the clothes they wear and the boards they ride. You see the competitors in the game all wearing authentic clothing and many of the snowboards are based on the real thing. Okay, so perhaps this doesn't mean a lot if you have no interest in extreme sports, but it shows the lengths Sony and Idle Minds have gone to produce a polished product. So what if you're not bothered about sponsorship or trendy togs? Is there anything else waiting for you after picking through your wallet for 40 smackers? Oh yes, oh yes indeed.

Every aspect of the previous two Cool Boarders games has obviously been reviewed, scrutinised, changed and tweaked to leave as little room for complaint as possible. It's clear to see they've taken advice about even the smallest



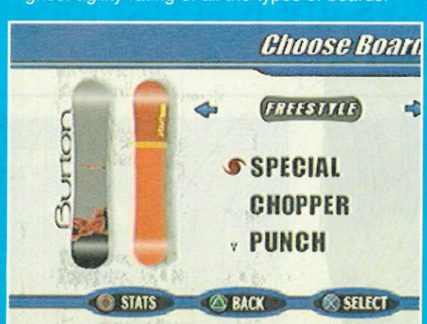
BOARDS, BOARDS AND MORE BOARDS...

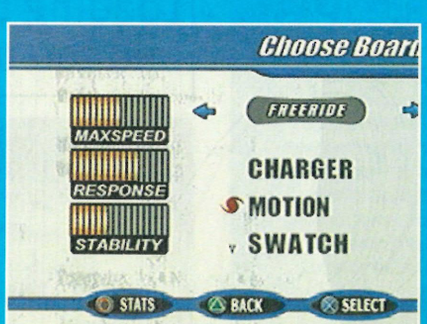
There are a multitude of boards to use in CB3, each having their different pros and cons - each is best suited to different events in the game. Your choice of board can easily mean the difference between first and second place, though the rest of it's down to whether you've got big brass balls or not. There are 11 boards available, and they span over three basic types of board; Five FreeStyle boards, five for FreeRide and only one Alpine board. I suppose that just goes to show you speed isn't everything.

FREESTYLE
With the hip FreeStyle board you are free to perform all the stunts and tricks you could ever care to imagine, and then a few more for good measure. This is mostly thanks to them having the highest agility rating of all the types of boards.

FREERIDE
This is your all rounder; if this was Street Fighter, you'd be Ryu. It scores averagely in all categories, namely Speed, Agility and Edge (turn).

ALPINE
If you're into hurtling down the side of a mountain beyond the bounds of control (and psycho-therapy), this is the type of board for you. They also have the highest rating of Edge to accommodate the high speeds that a ridged board is capable of.





EVENT CALENDAR...

Each of the 36 courses are split into six totally different events that take place on a total of six different mountains including the Alps, Devil's Butt and even the almighty Mount Everest! When you first begin playing, there are only three available mountains for you to use. To progress to the later and tougher mountains, you must compete in Tournament Mode. The six events that you perform in are as follows, and boy, are they fun...

DOWNHILL
That says it all really; a downhill race against a group of computer-controlled opponents. There's plenty of scope to perform some tricks and jumps for extra bonus points and even the opportunity to punch your adversaries square in the face (board rage anyone?)!

SLALOM
Again, it says it all; glide between around either the blue or the red markers, picking up penalty points should you miss any while competing against the same gang of computer-controlled home boys.

BOARDER X
Similar to the Slalom, this, though you have more opportunity to get some phat air and look damn cool.

HALF PIPE
The jewel in CB3's crown, the half pipe event has been tweaked and changed from CB2 into the most playable, exciting and bloody addictive events of all time - ever!

BIG AIR
Big brass ones required! Slide down a slope, perform a sodding heeoouggge jump doing as many stunts as you can for big points.

SLOPE STYLE
My second favourite event ,this one. It mixes elements from the Half Pipe, a bit of big air and throws in a wider playing area, rail slides, cars, and so in and so on. You name it you can do a wicked stunt off it.

quibble and corrected it the third time around. There was terrible glitching in the first game and it was ironed out; there were not enough courses and variation, and now there are ample. In fact, I would go as far as to say that the game allows you to go further, do more and experience (I'm going to say it again) a more realistic representation of snowboarding than ever before.

There I very few areas where CB3 falls short of expectations, and to be honest they're so small I almost left them out but...

Loading times are just too high and too often (shock horror). I hate it when you just load up a level and start off, only to crash and burn on the first jump. All you want to do is pause the game and click on restart to get straight back in the action from the start line. What you get is the PSX loading up the section that's just been loaded moments ago. It ain't the PlayStation's fault, so someone's to blame (hands up, programmers).

You too will be addicted in no time

All in all as they say Cool Borders 3 is a really accomplished piece of software, it has all the necessary requirements and has exceeded my own personal expectations. If you're into Snowboarding, you're going to fall for this big style. If you're not, you'd better get down your local boarding shop and pick up some ridiculous goggles, because you too will be addicted in no time.

Russell Barnes

SECOND OPINION

Yep, this is the best of the three snowboarding games reviewed this month. Taking Cool Boarders 2 a stage further, it offers instinctive controls, polished presentation and enough depth to keep you playing. Surely the snowboarding craze must die out soon, though...

Ian Osborne

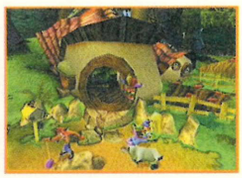
THE SCORE

GRAPHICS	8
SOUND	8
GAMEPLAY	9
LIFESPAN	8

92%

THE STORY BEGINS...

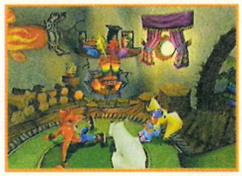
1. Crash, Coco and the tribal mask are having a normal day when suddenly the ground starts to shake as Ugah Ugah crashes to earth after escaping from his underground prison.



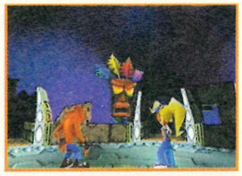
2. The friendly West Indian-sounding mask tells the story of how his evil twin brother Ugah Ugah is here to conquer the world by getting his hands on the pink crystals. It's your job to stop him!

3. Meanwhile, Ugah Ugah is giving Cortex the third degree about how he messed up the past two times they tried to take over the planet. This time he'd better not fail...

4. Crash and his cohorts start to put a plan together. They must get to the crystals before the bad guys.



5. Coco and Crash are briefed on how to use the time machine. Remember to eat as many apples as you can, watch out Ugah Ugah's adversaries and find those crystals!



PUBLISHER	DEVELOPER	GENRE	RELEASED	VERSION	PRICE	PLAYERS	PERIPHERALS	
Sony	Naughty Dog	Platformer	Out Now	UK	£34.99	1	Memory Card Analogue	Dual Shock

Our furry bandicoot friend has crashed into our time zone again, and EPM just had to be there. Claire Webster gives chase and asks whether our orange friend still has what it takes to put in a pristine platform performance...

Crash Bandicoot 3: Warped

He's cute, cool and charismatic, with new moves to marvel at and new worlds to conquer. Will Crash be able to defeat the evil Cortex for a third time? Or is the world to fall into the hands of the dastardly Ugah Ugah? I have a feeling we'll have fun finding out...

Developers Naughty Dog have had to come up with something a little different third time round. The background to the game is still basically the same; Cortex is still determined to prove us all wrong and actually succeed in getting to the crystals before Crash and his little sister Coca does. It's your job to beat him to the post so he can get another telling off from his evil master and you can point and laugh at him.

However, you can spot the differences in CB3: Warped. For starters, you begin in the Warp Room where you're directed toward the first five worlds. You don't have to complete them in any particular order, but as soon as all five crystals are found you have to face the big boss before you can move on.

Let's Do the Time Warp Again....

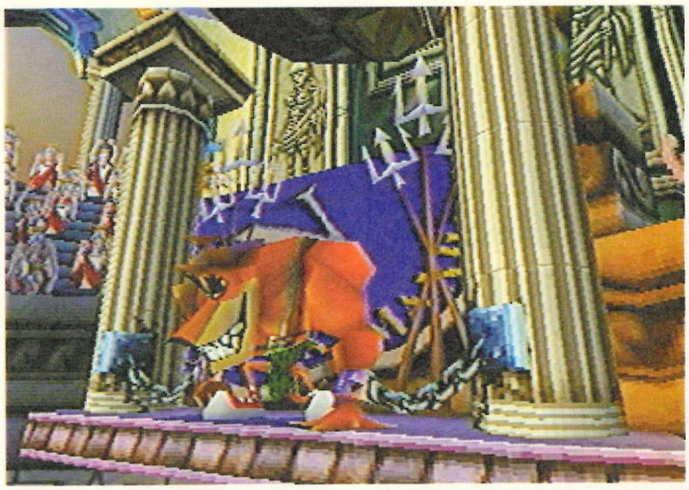
Each of the worlds are set in different time zones such as Medieval or Jurassic. You also get to ride along The Great Wall of China and swim through The Lost City of Atlantis. Each time you 'warp' into a different zone the number of skills you need begins to increase, so you have to learn fast and think fast.

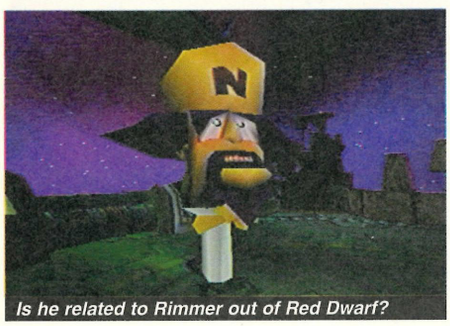
One thing to look out for is the attention to detail, and there's a lot of it here.

The graphics also have more to write home about as well. In the last two Crashes, we only had side to sideways and vertical scrolling, but now we have the pleasure of playing in 3D as well. On the Jurassic level you're literally on the edge of your seat willing Crash to keep running as a Triceratops is chasing you and you have no idea what's coming up in front of you because it's downward-scrolling.

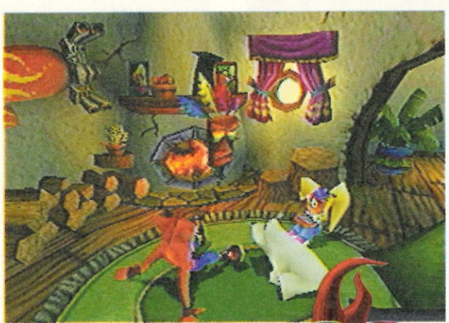
One thing to look out for in any game, whether you're reviewing it or just playing it, is the attention to detail, and there's a lot of it here. The most striking is the water. When you're under the water, carefully navigating your way past the sharks, if you look up you can see the light shining through the surface - spangly. When you're on top of the water on the Jet Ski, avoiding cannon balls and mines, there are actually waves that bob you up and down. Perhaps it's me who's just easily impressed, but it looks great.

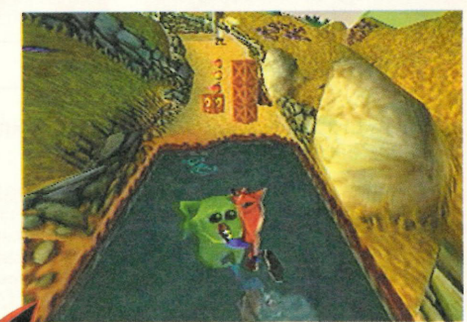
Crash has obviously been in training, as he has six new Super Moves, including extra speed, double jumps, a super belly flop and the use of a grenade launcher. And there's not only this to lend him a helping hand. He's also got various new means of getting around. The cute coca can ride on the back of a sweet tiger cub and on a Jet Ski, and Crash hatches





Is he related to Rimmer out of Red Dwarf?





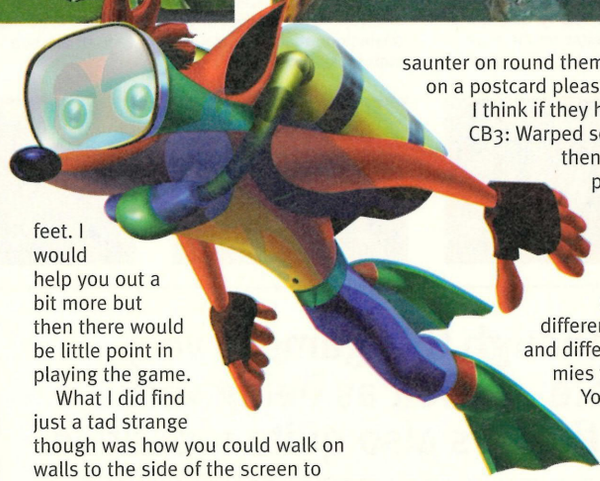
He's cute, cool and charismatic, with new moves to marvel at and new worlds to conquer.

a baby dinosaur egg which turns out to be a little T-Rex that he uses to jump over the bad guys on his way to collecting the crystal.

An Apple a Day...

Something else to look out for are the bonus levels, where you can replenish your apple stash and gain an extra life or two. The bonus levels are quite easy at first, as are the first couple of levels, but as you get further towards finishing the game you'll get increasing frustrated as it just gets more and more difficult. Only practice will make you perfect.

There are a few life-threatening obstacles to look out for though. Firstly there's the crates of Nitro that you can't really miss as they're bright green, if you walk into, spin or jump on one of these then you'll explode, which is an embarrassing way to lose a life when you think about it. You can also be kissed by a frog which then turns into a not-so-handsome Prince, be squished by a big block of concrete unless you jump over it at exactly the right time and you can also fall into a oblivion quite easily as sometimes the path falls away beneath your feet. I would help you out a bit more but then there would be little point in playing the game.



What I did find just a tad strange though was how you could walk on walls to the side of the screen to avoid the nasty horrible things that kill you. I'm sure this shouldn't actually be possible because it kind of defeats the object of the game. What's the point of putting all those obstacles there if you can just saunter on round them? (Answers on a postcard please.)

I think if they hadn't made CB3: Warped so varied then it would probably be a bit of a flop. At every level there's something different to learn and different enemies to wipe out. You gallop along on a little tiger trying to avoid Chinese festival dragons and oncoming flying barrels, the next minute you're trying desperately to finish first in a race on your motorbike. All this is there because it has

FIVE GOOD WAYS TO DIE...

However you cop it in CB3, it's always quite humorous and it's about the only time your dual shock pad vibrates, but when it does you sure know about it. Here are just some of the ways you can get killed:

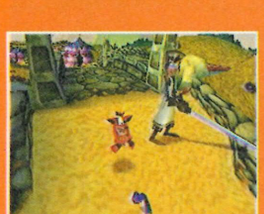
1. Get your legs lobbed off as a knight in shining armour has a good swipe of his sword.

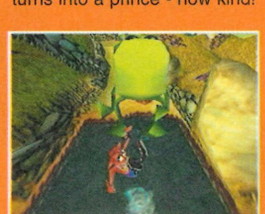
2. Have a good old snog with a frog. You can be going merrily about your jewel-gathering business when a slimy green reptile jumps up at you, salivates all over your nice clean trainers and then turns into a prince - how kind!

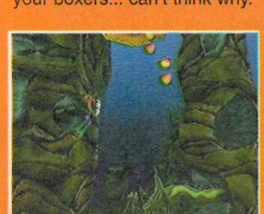
3. Just when you thought it safe to go back into the water, out pops a darn eel-type thing to rip you to shreds. And then if that's not nasty enough, it has the cheek to spit out what's left of your boxers... can't think why.

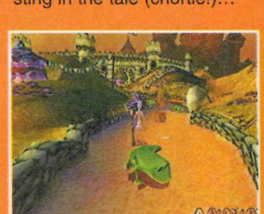
4. Crash becomes a competitor on Gladiators and has to hang off some rails while negotiating his way around boxes and genies. If you're not careful you're a scorpion's breakfast. Now that's a sting in the tale (chortle!)...

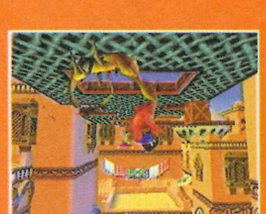
5. Getting past the wizard is quite difficult as he targets pink fireballs at you which you have to jump over. If one of them hits home, you're turned into a toad.

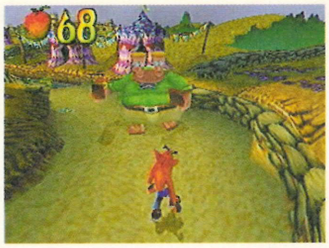


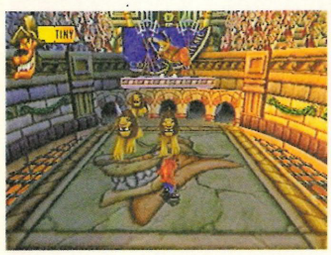


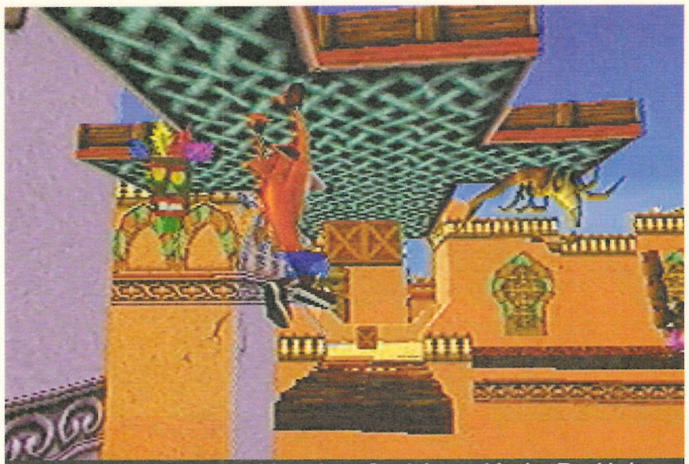












When he finished his model aeroplane, Crash jumped for joy. Trouble is, he was still holding the glue...

WAYS TO GET AROUND...

When Crash's feet get a bit tired he has alternative methods of transport. His little sister also gets to have all the fun while we do all the hard work.

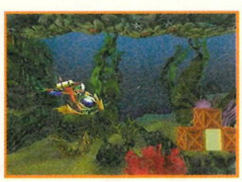
MINI SUB
When you're exploring the Lost City of Atlantis, this 'underwater propulsion unit' (as Tomb Raider 3 would say) makes swimming a little easier. You've also got a rocket blaster on the front for the odd lingering shark.

CUTE LITTLE TIGER CUB
Crash doesn't get to have a go on this pussycat as it's reserved for his sister. The baby tiger bounces along The Great Wall of China and you have to avoid any obstacle that crosses your path by leaping over it.

JET SKI
Also reserved for Coco, the Jet Ski goes pretty darn quickly over the waves but can also slow down to carefully go round all the mines the scatter the surface of the sea.

MOTORBIKE
Crash poses as a Hell's Angel for this level as he has to finish the race in first place to win the crystal. The motorbike is quite fast and you can brake if you have to. Don't forget to lean round those tight bends.

T-REX
This 'ickle baby dinosaur is almost as cute as the tiger. Clinging on for dear life on its back, you can leap high over enemies and hot lava pools.



Even though this game is very likeable, as well as being very addictive, it's also quite repetitive.

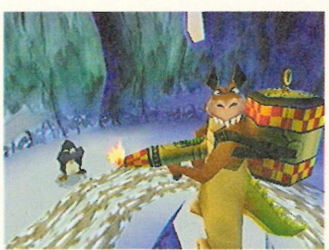
to be, as if it wasn't, you might as well just play your old Crash games.

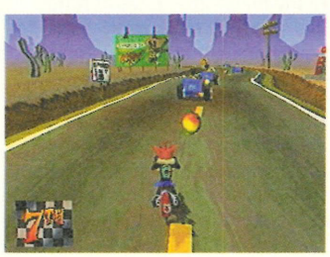
Even though this game is very likeable, as well as being very addictive, it's also quite repetitive. 'Explain yourself', I hear you ask. Well, seeing as there really aren't that many checkpoints, if you get through a pretty large chunk of the level without coming across one and then by some terrible misfortune you get killed, you have to repeat the whole level again. The same old obstacles, the same old things to kill and the same old scenery to pass. This can be extremely time-consuming as well as very irritating; I would even go so far to say that you have to put your game pad down and have a break for a bit and then go back to it - or perhaps that's a little harsh.

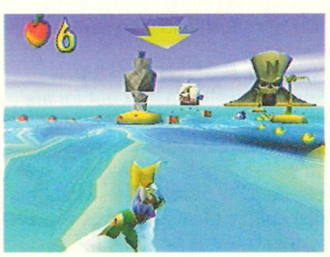
Why, then, have I given it such a good rating? Even though it can get a bit annoying, it depends on how patient you are where waiting to progress onto the next time zone is concerned. The graphics are cool, the characters are cooler and it definitely tests your skills to the max.

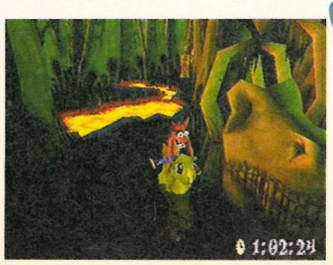
I think maybe Naughty Dog would be stretching it a little too far if they were to bring out another Crash game, but if they did it would have to be called: 'Crash Bandicoot 4: Going Overboard'!

Claire Webster









SECOND OPINION

Crash Bandicoot may be ugly, but he's got a huge following on the PSX. The latest game has all the elements that made the series popular, but polished to the 'nth degree. No real innovations, but you do get a Spyro demo thrown in for good measure...

Ian Osborne

THE SCORE

GRAPHICS	8
SOUND	8
GAMEPLAY	8
LIFESPAN	8

89%

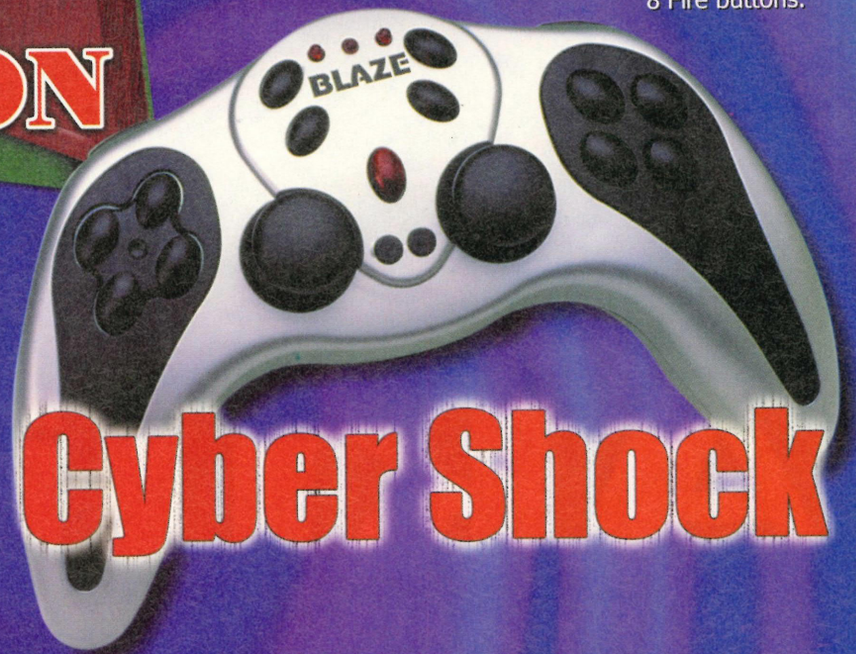
Total Control!

Scorpion light gun for PlayStation™.
Lightweight design.
High accuracy.
G-Con™ compatible.
Auto Fire function.
Auto Reload function.

SCORPION

The UK No.1 Best Seller*

Digital, dual analog and dual shock compatible.
8 Fire buttons.



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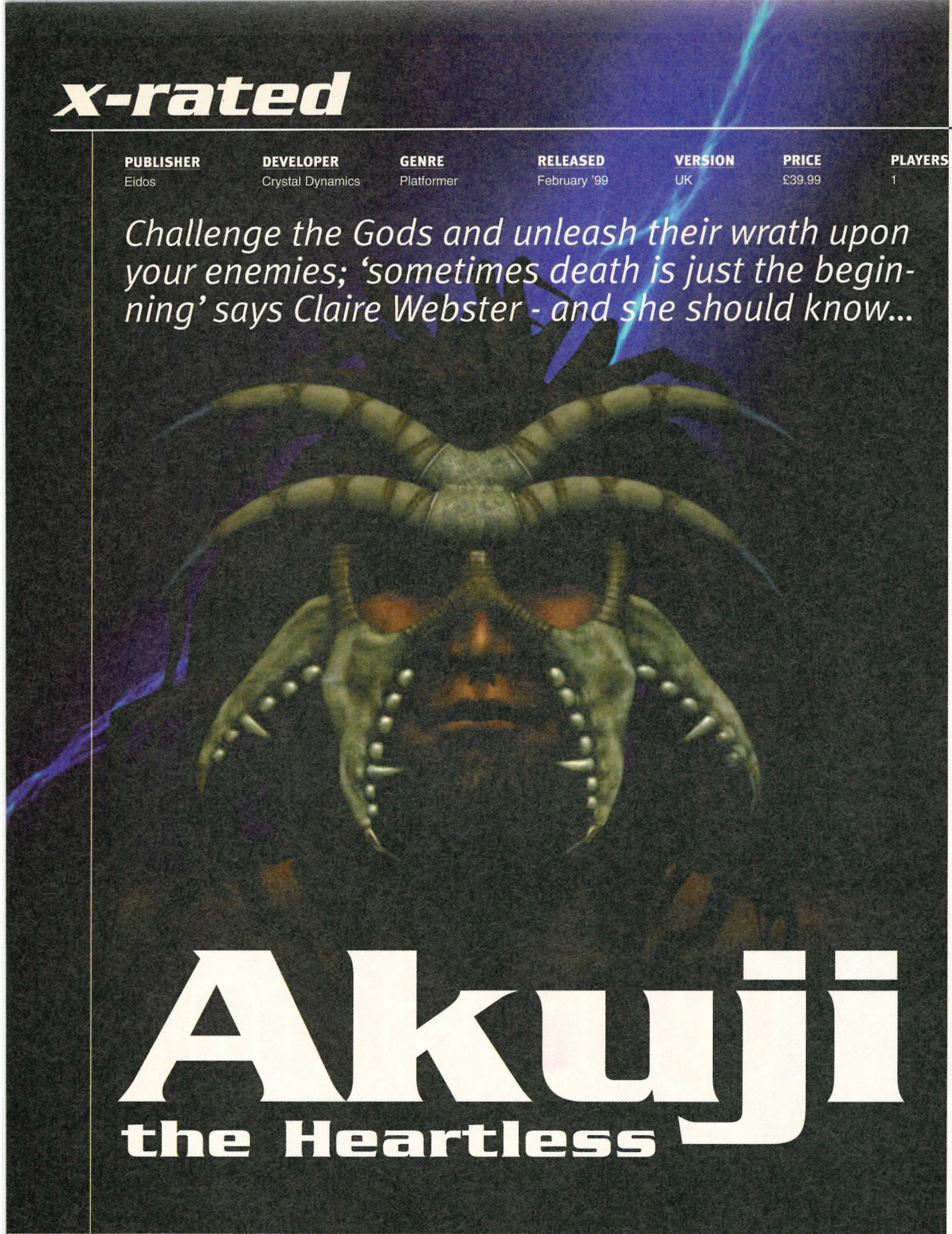
*Charttrak - September 1998

PUBLISHER	DEVELOPER	GENRE	RELEASED	VERSION	PRICE	PLAYERS
Eidos	Crystal Dynamics	Platformer	February '99	UK	£39.99	1

PERIPHERALS
Memory Card Dual Shock
Analogue

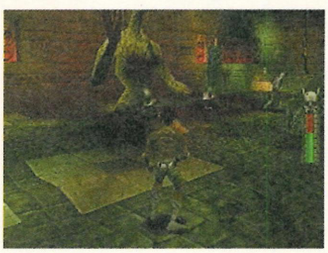
Challenge the Gods and unleash their wrath upon your enemies; 'sometimes death is just the beginning' says Claire Webster - and she should know...

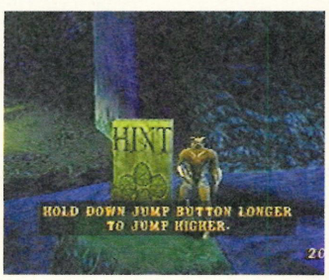


Akuji
the Heartless

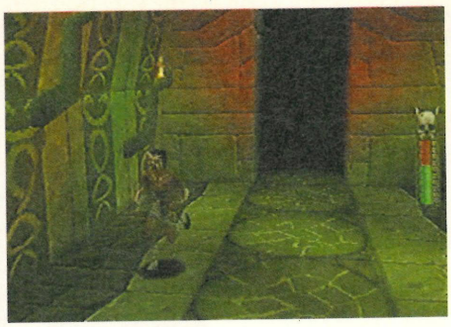
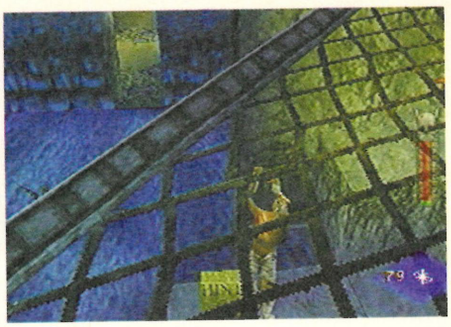
In the world where voodoo reigns and the passions of the people challenge the law of their gods, fear runs deep. In Mamora, powerful families fight for control and wars are fought to make sacrifices to the gods. Murat of Selvia, a voodoo priest, has created an empire and cemented his control through arranging strategic marriages.

Peace was at last to arrive as soon as Murat's second son, Akuji, married Kesho, the eldest daughter of the Grimaldi tribe. On his wedding day, Akuji was brutally murdered by his evil brother, Orad, in an attempt to disrupt the road to peace. Orad's followers killed Akuji and ripped out his still-beating heart, thus sending him to the Underworld. If he wishes





Akuji has one of the most epic storylines we have come across here at EPM

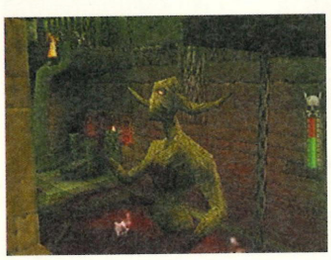



to escape, Akuji must scour the Underworld to find the spirits of his ancestors and use their power to destroy the barriers between the Underworld and home.

Akuji the Heartless is certainly one of the scariest games ever to grace the PlayStation. The game begins with a very spine-chilling intro sequence which makes even the most hardened horror movie fan shudder. We're told the gruesome tale of Akuji's death by a dark, mysterious voice-over, with scenes of death and bloodshed that make your eyes water. If ever a game deserves to be given an '18' rating, this is it!

Your adventure begins in Cocytust, The River of Souls, and you must travel along the river to reach the spirit gate. Cocytust is the first out of four vestibules you have to complete. There are hints along the way, which give you useful snippets of information like how to make a very high jump so you can reach onto platforms. As you explore, you can pick up voodoo dolls that eventually give you an extra life (only once you've collected a hundred). As well as dolls, there's also hearts which replenish your health and red, evil-looking heads that give you magic spells so you can shoot fireballs at nasty creatures.

Akuji the Heartless is certainly one of the scariest games ever to grace the PlayStation



Baddie Bashing

Just some of the bad guys you come across are hooded ghosts with gleaming sharp scythes to slash open Akuji's stomach. And if they're not horrific enough, wait until you see the legless bald-headed zombie that whips you with what looks like his spinal chord. The only way to kill the zombies is to crouch down and either swipe them with your nifty sword or fire some magic at them. Your enemies only begin to launch their attack when they spot you, so you can avoid them altogether if you so desire. Also, watch out for the dragonflies that buzz around your head. Slash them with your sword or burn them with fireballs. They can't reach you while you're in the water, because as we all know, dragonflies won't go near any rivers or pools of water (!).

Once you have explored the surroundings thoroughly and collected the stone tablet, you come face to face with the evil Baron. You can see the bright red veins on his bald head, and he wears a top hat that makes him look as though he's come from some kind of freakshow. The cheeky blighter slanders Akuji's family, then sends him on his way in a marvellous cut scene.

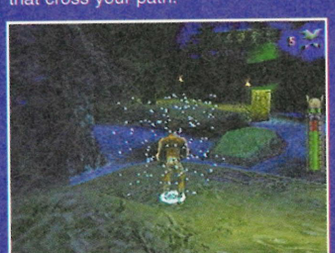
Passing through the flashing door, you reach the next world - Pluton, The Temple of Tears. Here, Lightning Spires (whoever they are) await to send you to your peril. You must destroy the source of your attackers to escape. It's raining in Pluton and all you can see when you look around is rings in puddles and a green glowing room lit up by vertex lighting. The principal is the same for this level; find the stone tablets to open all the appropriate doors and rise to the challenges you are set. One of these is to flick a few

THE UNDERWORLDS...

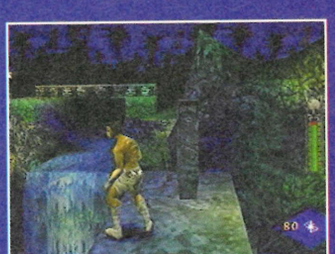
Enter the four vestibules from Navo, where The Baron lurks. Here's a few things to look out for in the first two levels.

1: The first vestibule you find yourself in is Cocytust...

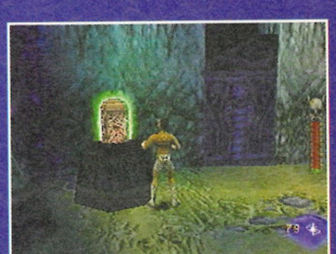
2: Everything is dark here, all you can see are waterfalls and black skies. This place has nooks and crannies everywhere, and horrible creatures that cross your path.



3: Jump up onto high ground to take a good look around. Precious life and ancestor spirits can sometimes be found on the highest peaks.

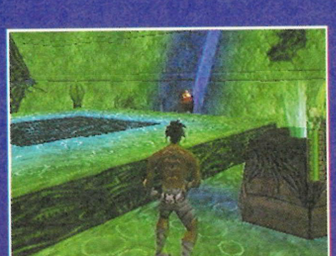


4: Like in all the vestibules, the only way in and out is to collect the stone tablets and place them on the altars which are scattered around.

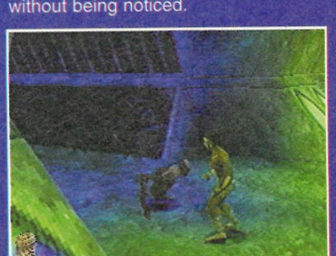


5: Once you have completed Cocytust, The Baron opens the next porthole to Pluton...

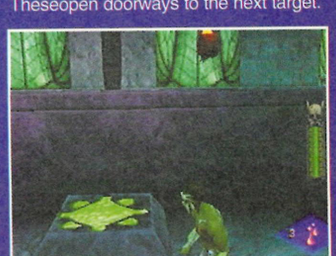
6: It's raining here in Pluton, and green vertex lights guide you along your path. Hidden between pillars are magic spells and voodoo dolls.

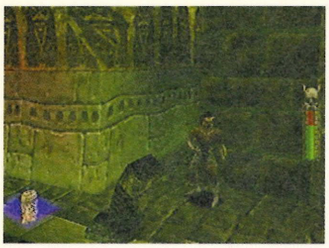


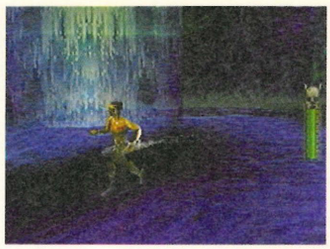
7: Legless zombies greet you in darkened tunnels, with spinal chords to thrash you. If you're sneaky enough, you might be able to get past them without being noticed.



8: Further into Pluton you enter a multi-layered room, in which there are many green targets you must either stand on or shoot at with your magic spells. Theseopen doorways to the next target.







switches, but it's not as easy as that. The switches are a luminous green colour and they're all around you. You must use your close-up sniper-type camera with the cross-bones as your guide, to fire magic into the centre of the switch. Each time you manage to push the switch, another section of the room opens, and from there you must find the next switch to carry on.

Don't forget to pick up your ancestor's spirits as you go, as if you don't, you may only have to come back for them later. There are more dragonflies and zombies to kill and a new spell to collect - The Shield of Blood, which gives you some protection against any injuries. You only have a limited number of times you can cast this spell, so make the best use of it. The difficulty level in this vestibule compared to when you were exploring Cocytust, has increased ten-fold, and as you pass on the next vestibule, you notice it again.

Fearful Frolics

Khalas is known as The Sanctum of Hate, and to get out of there alive, you must kill Vastu. But beware, he has many protectors. Just some of these 'protectors' include Egyptian mummies and skulls with wings (nice, hey?). You have to sprint around the room looking for yet more switches that make the floors move up and down, so you can jump up onto platform after platform, acquiring goodies as you go. At one stage, there's a sequence of invisible jumps that you have to make and the only way you can see them is by looking at your reflection next to you, and negotiating your way across.

In every vestibule there's a new skill to learn to be able to survive. The backgrounds get eerier and your killers get scarier - so much so you find yourself screaming out loud.

One downside, though, is the really awkward camera angles you end up with. You repeatedly have to alter it yourself, which gets infuriating after a while. The controls are also a bit sensitive; it's difficult to face the way you want to go, and for many moves you have to be in exactly the right place to make a jump.

Akuji has one of the most epic storylines we have come across here at EPM, made even better by the cut scenes that appear once you have reached the end of each vestibule. The music has a tribal feel to it to add to the voodoo magic element of the story. Perhaps Eidos were trying to make a male equivalent to Lara, but although Akuji the Heartless is a close competitor of Tomb Raider III, there's just a little something missing (probably Lara herself).

Claire Webster

C'mon baby, light my fire; and if you dress like that in the middle of the jungle, you bloody have to...

Akuji the Heartless is a close competitor of Tomb Raider III

SECOND OPINION

This 3D adventure is one of the scariest games ever to hit the PlayStation. The vomit-inducing plot, spine-chilling enemies and gory graphics combine to make it a real thrilling chiller. Recommended, but not just after you've eaten...

Ian Osborne

THE SCORE

GRAPHICS	8
SOUND	9
GAMEPLAY	8
LIFESPAN	8

90%

COLLECTOR'S ITEMS...

No matter which vestibule you are exploring, there are always objects to look out for along the way. Some are imperative to your survival, others hold the key to getting back to Mamora. Here are just some of them...

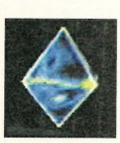
VOODOO DOLL
One of the only ways to restore your health fully is by collecting a hundred of these evil-looking dollies. You also find them if you slash totem poles or wicker baskets.

STONE TABLET
These are 'the' most important of the objects to find, as without them you can't delve deeper into the vestibule. Place them on the appropriate altar to find out where you must go next.

HINTS
If you strike these with your sword, some text arrives on the screen that shows you how to do particular moves. If you don't read them, you might miss some valuable information.

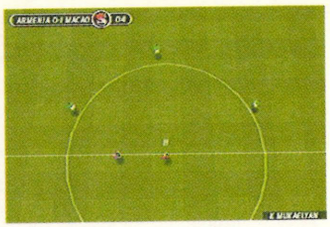
VOODOO MAGIC
This comes in the form of different-coloured skulls which have fire blazing out of the top. Some are red, others are pink and purple and each one signifies a certain magic spell. There's the Shield of Blood, Firestorm and Shadow's Wrath to help you kill your enemies.

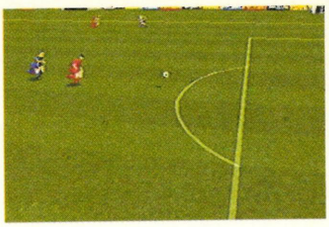
BLUE SYMBOLS
Whenever you kill an attacker, they turn into a blue shiny ball. If you collect one hundred of them, you gain an extra life.

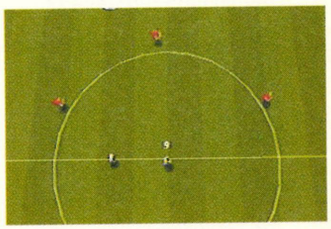


DIAMONDS
You don't find these very regularly, but when you do, swipe them and you've earned yourself a checkpoint; hoorah!

SPIRIT OF AN ANCESTOR
White, glowing heads are what you must seek during your travels. Out of the four vestibules you have to collect seven ancestors altogether to carry on with your quest.







PUBLISHER	DEVELOPER	GENRE	RELEASED	VERSION	PRICE	PLAYERS	PERIPHERALS	
GT Interactive	Krisalis	Sports Sim	8th January '99	UK	£39.99	1-2	Memory Card	Analogue

Sensible Soccer
European Club Edition

Is Sensi back to reclaim its crown, or has the champion of the 16-bit soccer sims had its day? Russell Barnes puts the boot in and cries 'foul'...

Sensible Soccer, in its glory days, was the only football game to play. It was the most playable, addictive and outstandingly sensational game to grace our screens. So good, in fact, that GT Interactive Software believe that it would prove just as popular now on the PlayStation as it did then. We cram ourselves into the dug-out and take it through it's paces...

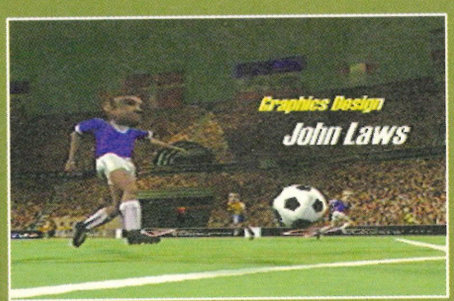
Let's start with the basics. If you're going to re-release a from the Amiga days you're must make sure that it retains all of its original magic. You want it to keep the same appeal to the adoring public and find ways to heighten this appeal so it's still on the cutting edge of today's programming technology. Well... apparently not. You don't need to change any aspect of the game to warrant a new release on the PSX and you don't need to try and improve on the original.

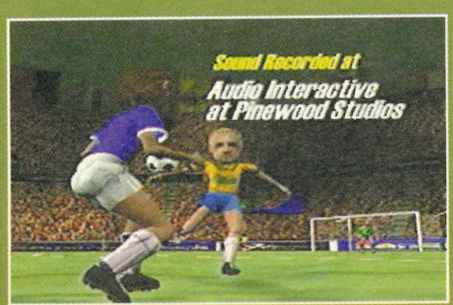
GT Interactive promise us that this is a retro release more than a new version of an all-time, early-'90s classic. It has gone through merely aesthetic changes in its transition and very little besides (minus camera angles and commentary). Is it wise to rely on this alone? GT Interactive obviously think so, but unfortunately we on extreme PlayStation, where our

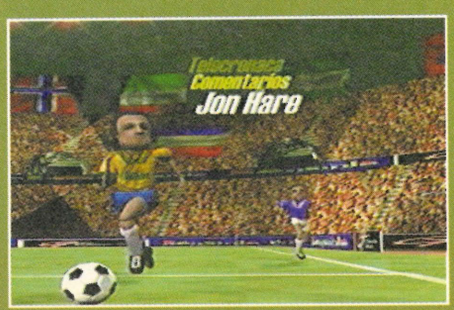
> **Carry on with the footy games you're playing at the moment**

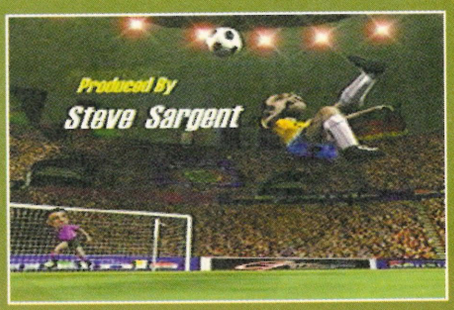
IDIOTIC INTRO...

Here are a selection of shots from the introduction sequence. This is one of the few new additions to the original that doesn't completely ruin the game. It's still really naff though and the song is so painfully bad I'll save you the details.



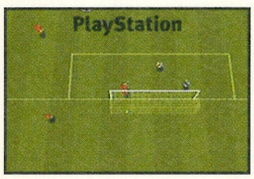


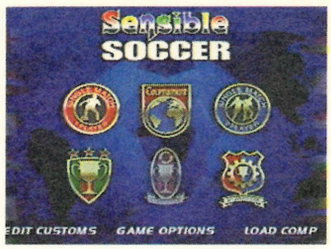




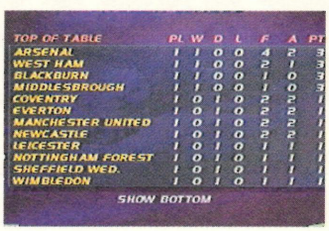
GOING DOWNHILL FAST...

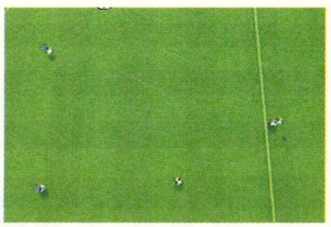
Compare our version of Sensible Soccer with the old 16-bit Amiga game. Can we honestly say our version has better graphics, or have the visuals regressed?





The scrolling is among some of the most jerky we've ever seen





Desert Island Discs include copies of ISS Pro '98 and FIFA '99, feel slightly differently...

Let's kick off with the good points, of which there few - it would just seem so unfair and unjust if I just got straight in there with a slagging. Okay, so the commentary is alright. It's snappy and generally keeps up with the game, even if that is due to the fact he never says more than a few words in a sentence anyway. You hear stuff like, 'It's a good pass' or 'It's two-nil!', which is okay but brain-bustingly aggravating by the second or third match. This leads on to the other matters surrounding the overall sound quality of the game. It has a few good crowd chants, the obvious hoofing of the ball and the odd whistle from the ref. This, incredibly, is where the sound story ends - that's your lot, but it's okay because this is Sensi...

Relegation Zone

Actually no, it's not. I can see more similarities to a pregnant goat than the original Sensible Soccer. Just about every element that Sensible Soccer is loved and remembered for has been either removed or, worse still, ruined. You can still play an entire match of football using only one button, and the aftertouch is still there, but it's the worst game of football you'll probably ever play.

Without an instruction manual it's an incredible chore to find out how to choose your own team, for example, even then you need to do it all again to find out how to actually take part in the match you just set up. Shouldn't using the menus be easier than getting George Best pissed? The game is made more ludicrous still when you consider that the graphics were smoother, more fluid and frankly better on the Amiga version.

The controls don't allow for smooth play anyway in this version; they're so twitchy and harsh that being able to run in a single direction is made practically impossible. The sliding tackle sends your players into warp across the pitch, but then it's hard enough to figure out which player you're actually controlling sometimes. Through no fault of your own, the player that is running for a loose ball suddenly changes to someone else miles away, dashing all your hopes of gaining pos-

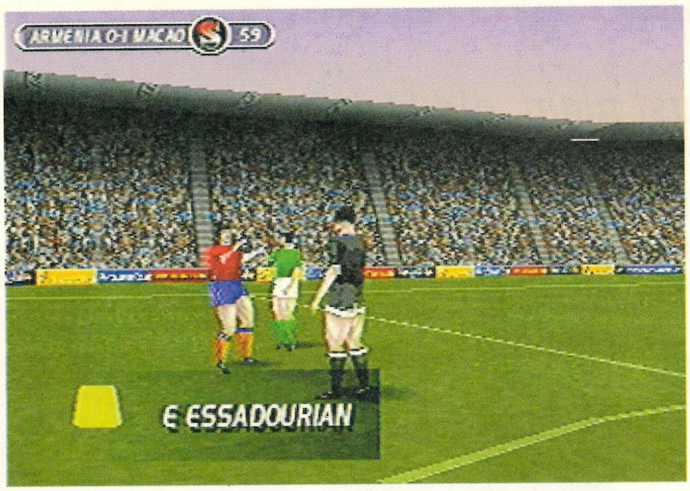
POINTS OF VIEW...

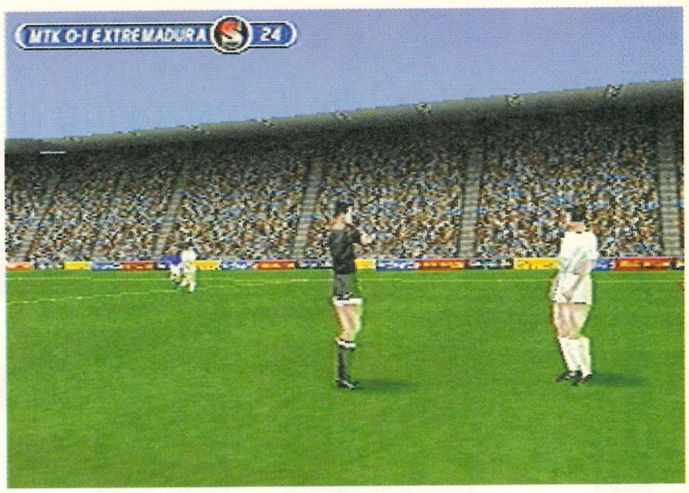
You can choose from three different perspectives in Sensible Soccer. Here they are...

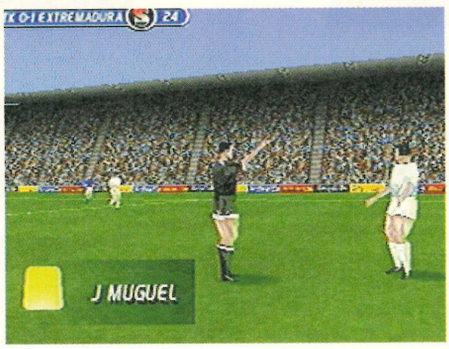
CLASSIC CAM
This is the original, and some say the best way to view the game. Look at those little men move; ahh.

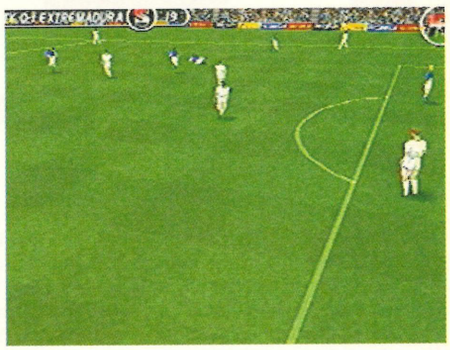
SENSI CAM
The first of the two updated camera views especially for the PlayStation is much closer to the action. You can see the players close up now. Oh, better put it back on Classic Cam.

TV CAM
This camera takes a few set angles and plays around with them in a very inplayable way.



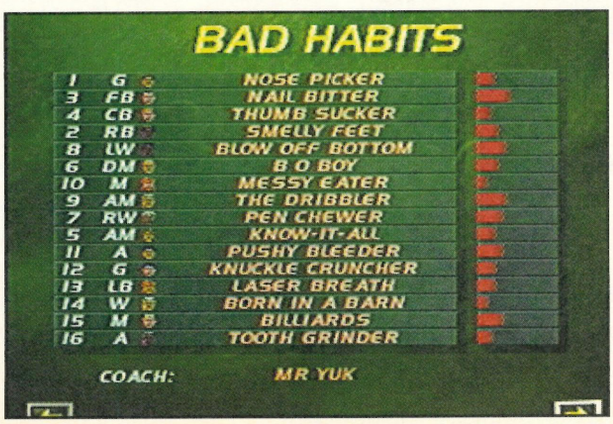






MAIMED NAMES...

Common to most games which aren't licensed, the players' names in Sensible Soccer are slightly 'tweaked' versions of the real things. Hilarious, aren't they? If you must have your fave team with real names, though, you can always edit one of the custom teams offered specifically for this purpose - you can even play your school or pub side in this way.



The controls don't allow for smooth play anyway

session without having to perform a tackle at Warp Nine right across the screen. Occasionally a player, regardless of whether it's human-controlled or not, goes into a sliding tackle and leaves the screen. A split second later he reappears in front of the ball as if nothing actually happened; what a crock of shite.

This leads me on nicely to the graphics, which can be compared to the game's gameplay in a consistent way. There are very few animations for the players or for different moves like tackles or overhead kicks. There are very few moves in the entire game anyway, so why do the ones they have got have to be so poor? It's not like there are memory constraints or the PSX can't handle it; we know damn well it can be done better than this, so why is it so bad? Answers on a postcard to the usual address.

It doesn't stop there either. The scrolling is among some of the most jerky we've ever seen - the Amiga version was silky-smooth. Why to players with the ball run just as fast as those without it? That's not Sensible Soccer. The tactics enjoyed by the Amiga version are gone, too. The fact that the computer doesn't automatically target the player closest to the direction you're facing when you pass the ball makes a fluid, passing game impossible; it was the heart of the original. Not that you need to pass around in the box to pull the goalkeeper out of position any more - just hoof it goalwards and you usually hit the target.

Sensible Soccer still has loads of teams and player edit functions, but that isn't the point. No one's going to want to play a game this poor anyway. Forget this game is going to ever be released and carry on with the footy games you're playing at the moment - even Adidas Power Soccer is better than this pile of...

Russell Barnes

SECOND OPINION

I loved Sensible Soccer on the Amiga, and would welcome a similar approach on the PSX, but this effort has stripped away everything that made Sensi a great game. It's been converted by people who never really understood it.

Ian Osborne

THE SCORE

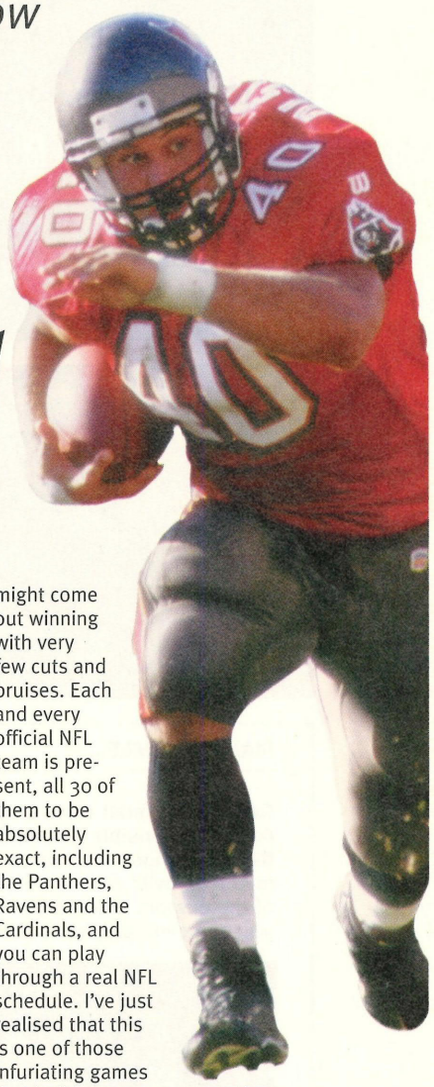
GRAPHICS	2
SOUND	3
GAMEPLAY	1
LIFESPAN	2

20%

PUBLISHER	DEVELOPER	GENRE	RELEASED	VERSION	PRICE	PLAYERS	PERIPHERALS	
Sony	989 Studios	Sports Sim	Out Now	UK	£39.99	1-2	Memory Card Analogue	Dual Shock

Bone-crushing, soul-destroying or just plain, old kick-in-the-head boring? NFL Xtreme has been washed and softened, now Claire Webster's going to hang it out to dry...

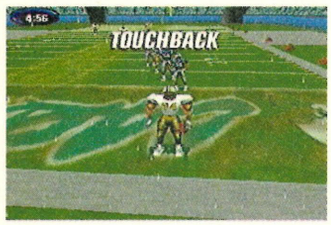
NFL Xtreme

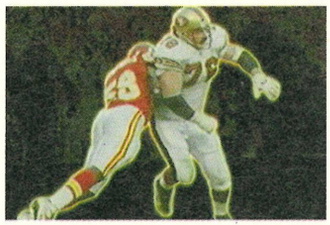


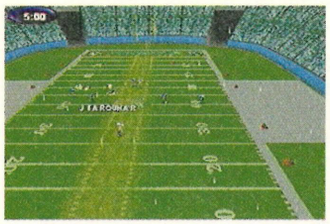
Trying to take American football to the 'extreme', Sony and 989 Studios have created a five-on-five game which contains no rules and no penalties. Impressed yet? Me neither. They say the game flows at over 30 frames a second and that it has high resolution presentation. Am I sparking your interest now? Probably not. You have to give them credit where it's due, though; motion capture was done during the Super Bowl itself, by Jason Sehorn, Mike Alstott, Hardy Nickerson and Ryan Leaf (I hope that means more to you than it does to me).

There are four game modes on the set-up menu; Exhibition, Season, Playoffs and Sudden Death. All of these, you'll notice, look exactly the same and are all the same to play. Simply choose a team and away you go, tackling, scrumming and making touchdowns right, left and centre, hoping that somewhere, somehow, you might come out winning with very few cuts and bruises. Each and every official NFL team is present, all 30 of them to be absolutely exact, including the Panthers, Ravens and the Cardinals, and you can play through a real NFL schedule. I've just realised that this is one of those infuriating games that builds up your expectations, and then makes you end up with

Every player seems to have the same voice - strange that!

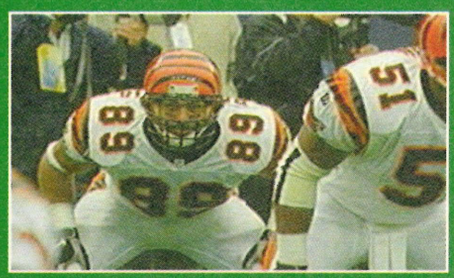


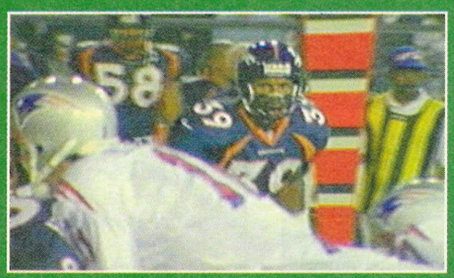


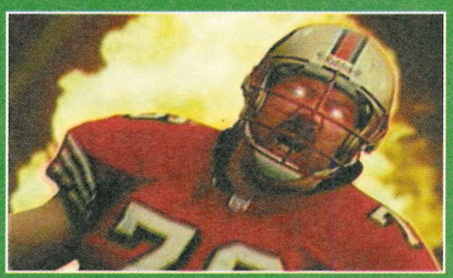


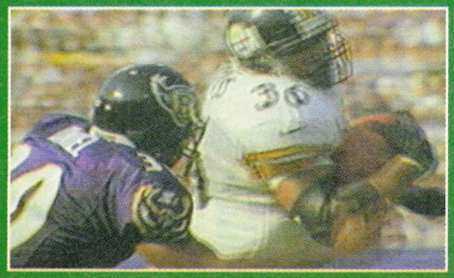
XTREME FOOTAGE...

The only thing that's cool about this game is the intro, so here, especially for you, are a few screenshots...









If you're a fan of American football then you'll find this game an insult to the sport

nothing but disappointment.

On the positive side (and believe me, there aren't many of them), you are able to customise your own players like in the newly-popular game of Knockout Kings (I'm being sarcastic, by the way). Unfortunately you aren't shown a preview of what your player will finally look like, so you have to hope he's something special. There aren't that many features to customise, the most exciting ones being his height, weight and skin colour and you can pick which position he plays. Quarterback is about the only American football position I know, so I ran with that one.

Gimmie Five...

The idea of creating a game which only has five players on each team would probably be to make the playing field wide open, so the gameplay is fast and there's more opportunity to be creative. However, there's no such thing here, as all you can muster are your bog-standard sweeps, posts and outs, which is nothing we haven't seen before. What's even more annoying are the controls, which are extremely slow. Catching and throwing becomes an art form, and players either drop their passes or their throws merely bounce of the receiver's helmet - now surely that's not supposed to happen?

And then we come to the graphics, always an important part of the game. The players themselves are very detailed. Sometimes you notice the occasional one has got a ripped jersey, and you can see their shadows as well, which look particularly funny when a player performs an end-zone dance. A nice touch are the optional different weather conditions that you can play in, such as snow, rain, sunshine, wind and just plain old freezing cold blizzards. When the players are running around you can see the rain and snow splashing beneath their feet. The tackling part of the game isn't quite right, though, as sometimes your players just run into each other accidentally, which destroys whatever realism there actually is in the game.

Candid Cameras...

One of the major flaws in this game are the diabolical camera angles. The players are far too big when they're up close and look like pinheads (no offence) when they're positioned more than 20 yards away. When your player is at the other end of the pitch you end up having absolutely no idea which team he's on as they all blur together in a murky heap. The perspective leaves out too much of the left and right sides of the playing field, which makes it very hard to make an accurate pass. This decreases the power of your offence, which consequently reduces any pleasure involved in the game.

Another quirk that's remotely funny for a while is the trash talking, where players verbally abuse each other after a tackle, though like I said, the novelty only lasts a short while as they repeat the same jibes over and over again and every player seems to have the same voice - strange that!

There's nothing left to say really, other than please don't buy this unless your really desperate to spend your money - if you're a fan of American football then you'll find this game an insult to the sport. I really would like to tell you that I'm being too harsh and that NFL Xtreme is a game that brings real-life footy right into your living room. But it should stay where it belongs - in the waste bin which it 'accidentally' fell into while you were tidying up around the house.

Claire Webster

SECOND OPINION

Another attempt at an arcadey NFL football game gets blown out of the water - will anyone ever get it right? Also, why do Americans call this sport FOOTball when you can get through an entire career without ever kicking the ball? Just a thought...

Ian Osborne

THE SCORE

GRAPHICS	5
SOUND	5
GAMEPLAY	4
LIFESPAN	6

49%

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

Damn, he's phat.. Oh, and he smells a bit too. Russell Barnes is very particular about personal hygiene, and intolerant of bad snowboarding games too...

Phat Air

Extreme Snowboarding

According to the game's creators the term 'Phat Air' is used by snowboarders everywhere to describe a really 'styled-out' trick or a very long jump. Similarly, according to the blurb on the back of the box, if you wish to 'Pheel phree and pheel good' about Phat Air you should immediately go to your local games retailer and purchase a copy of Phat Air. Now I don't know much about subliminal messages, but if Phat Air means a particularly long jump then surely 'pheeling phree' and 'pheeling good' similarly equates to approaching a fat man and doing your best Mr Humphries impersonation from Are You Being Served.

Do we really need another snowboarding game? we've got more than enough already (three this issue alone), and frankly I'm getting a bit fed up of the same thing over and over again. I mean, Cool Boarders 3 has just scored a brilliant mark on Page 34, X Games Pro Boarder performs well above our expectations over on Page 68; is there any room for another one? Oh well, I suppose there's only one way to find out...

> This lacklustre production technique is reflected in most elements of the game

Can I Tweak Your Tail Grab?

Tweaking tail grabs? Another subliminal sexual harassment message or merely two of the tricks you can perform in the game? Well okay, they're two of the tricks, but you never know these days. There is a grand total of 12 stunts and tricks available for you to perform in Phat Air, which is 12 more than I could

MAIN COURSE...

The ten snow-sliding courses in Phat Air are split into four different challenge categories which consist of Downhill races, Slalom races, Half Pipe and a big air Ski Jump. Here's a quick run-down of some quotes of the manual (not me, the manual!) has to say about each of the courses. Are you sitting comfortably (near a sick bag)? Then I'll begin...

DOWNHILL 1
You should practice on this one to get the hang of curving and doing tricks.

DOWNHILL 2
It has some big jumps that just asks the player for big aerials.

DOWNHILL 3
If you look carefully you might be able to find a little shortcut or two.

DOWNHILL 4
You have to be careful here as it requires your total attention as not to crash into the walls.

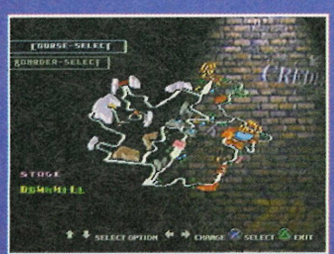
DUAL SLALOM
If a gate is missed the player is subject to a three-second time penalty.

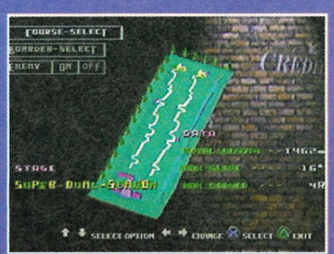
SUPER DUEL SLALOM
Be sure you practice this a lot to master those fast curves.

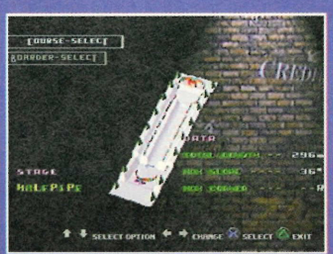
HALF PIPE
Good for practising but excellent for experts.

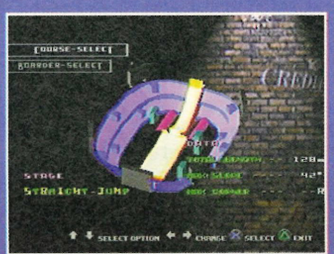
STRAIGHT JUMP
You have three tries on this course.

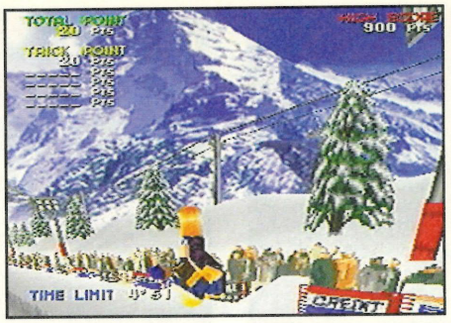
As you can see, the manual and the game were written by a production company full of hardcore gamers who also happen to be snowboarding experts in their spare time (and I go on drinking binges with the Pope).

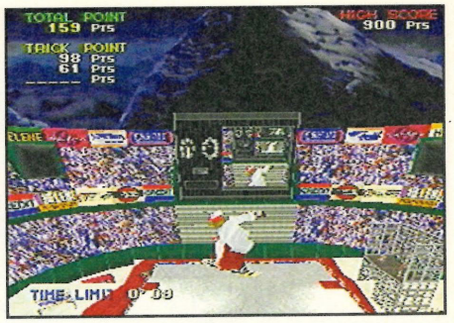




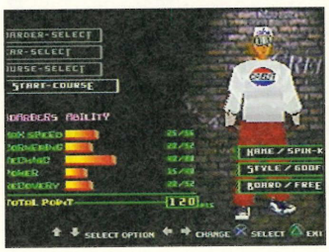


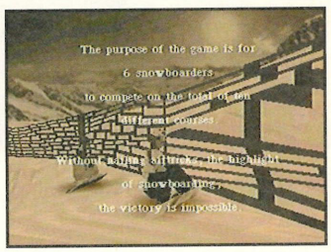


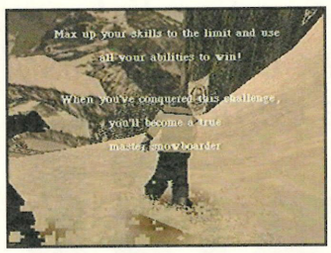


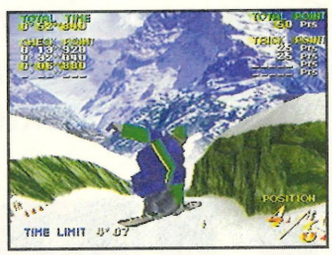


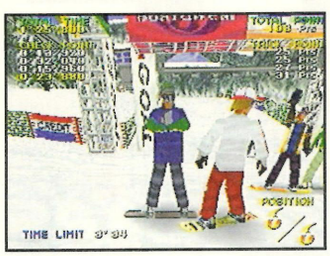
Did the last competitor go over the fence and flatten the crowd?

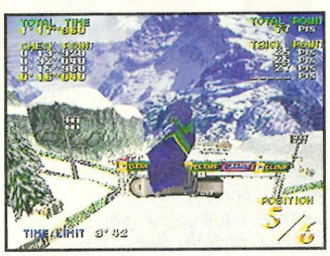












The biggest reward you're offered from winning races in the game is a new snowboarding jacket

probably pull off, but still 22 stunts short of titles on a par with Cool Boarders. Admittedly there are a couple of occasions where moves can be stringed together or more spins can be achieved with higher jumps, but it's still a pretty sparse turn-out for a game specifically designed with tricks in mind.

The basic grab tricks are pretty easy to complete and are animated reasonably well, but when you want to do something a little more flash things start getting a little out of hand. Apparently (according to the makers) the 'ultimate' trick is called a Back Side 3D air. To give you an idea of what the fuss is about, here's how it's accessed: Down, then the L1+R1 shoulder buttons followed immediately by Right and L1+R1, followed now by the X button. Considering there are only a miserly 12 stunts in the entire game, surely they could have come up with a slightly better, more accessible control method than that?

This pointless complexity and nonsense is continued through the rest of the game. The courses, for example, have four variants which is okay considering Cool Boarders 3 has six, but Phat Air only has ten courses in all; where's the variation in that? This is more of a demo or a sub-game than a complete product you'd spend forty pounds on new, but there you go, really. Funsoft haven't looked at what's available or what's good, they've just made a snowboarding game just like all the other developers, thinking it will sell just on that point alone - shame really.

This lacklustre production technique is reflected in most elements of the game. Phat Air's graphics are the best thing about it, but even they're not particularly good and who buys games on the basis of visual quality alone anymore? It's not like the graphics are of a particularly high quality; take a look at some of the screenshots and you'll see that none of the snowboarders actually have knees. It sounds funny, but the characters haven't got enough polygons on them to cover even the most elementary requirements of the human body. I mean, it's pretty bloody unlikely you'd see a kneeless snowboarder on the piste, so why should we put up with it in a computer games? Ludicrous.

Boardering on Ridiculous

Like all snowboarding games, the idea is to win races to go onto the next. With Phat Air, the idea is to win races to improve the abilities of your character. They're each scored on different values including cornering, technique and recovery so each time you win and progress, their rating improves so they can, say, recover quicker from a fall. This would be fine if you could actually reap any kind of reward for having a better character, but it just doesn't seem to make any difference whatsoever. Unfortunately, even when it looks like there's something different about your competitor, you're on the last race of the championship and you've already decided you've no intention of ever playing the game again. The biggest reward you're offered from winning races in the game is a new snowboarding jacket, which, considering the graphics are shit anyway, makes me want to jump on the CD instead of jump for joy.

The words 'pile of' and 'unadulterated cack' spring to mind whenever I hear the phase Phat Air. Perhaps they should have put that on the back of the box instead.

Russell Barnes

SECOND OPINION

Dodgy controls, poor execution and limited lastability make this game one to avoid. It's not even as good as the Cool Boarders, and this series has moved on - check out our Cool Boarders 3 review to see what a decent snowboarding game should look like.

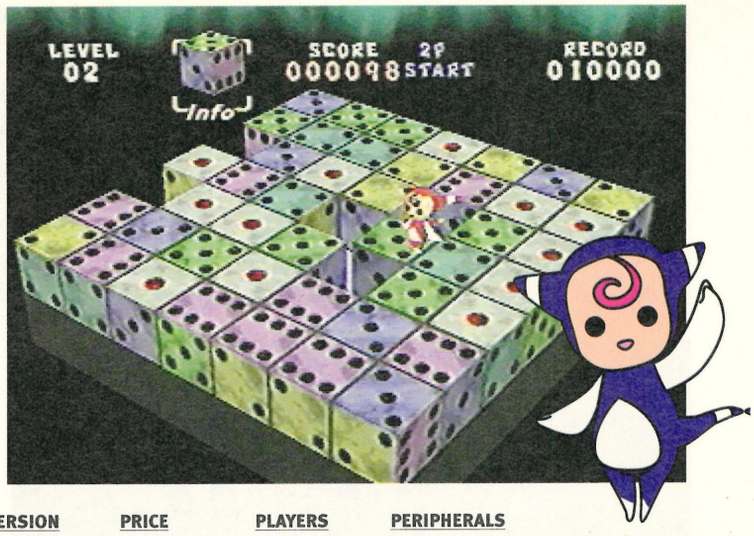
Ian Osborne

THE SCORE

GRAPHICS	5
SOUND	4
GAMEPLAY	4
LIFESPAN	3

31%

Po can't find Dipsy, La La and Tinky Winky. Maybe they're making toast...



PUBLISHER	DEVELOPER	GENRE	RELEASED	VERSION	PRICE	PLAYERS	PERIPHERALS	
Sony CEE	Swift	Puzzle Game	February '99	UK	£39.99	1-5	Memory Card	Multi Tap

Can a game involving fiendish puzzles, dozens of dice and Satan himself prove heavenly, or is it hellishly boring? Claire Webster rolls the bones and cackles demonically...

Devil Dice

Some puzzle games need brains, some need a whole lot of patience and some, like Devil Dice, need a smidgen of both. This one's up there amongst the elite with Bust-a-Move and Super Puzzle Fighter II Turbo; you really truly have to give it a go. You're a little devil which looks uncannily like Po from the Teletubbies, and the object of the game is to make all the dice on the board disappear, preferably before lightning strikes and more dice appear from underneath you.

There are four different game modes to puzzle over. Some are a lot harder than others, and it's a very good idea if you read the manual before starting - try and figure the rules out for yourself you'll be there for a while.

On Trial

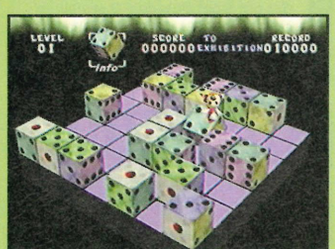
The first and perhaps best mode is Trial. Here you can play against the clock or just battle it out until the bitter end, trying to sink the dice. Your devil has to roll the dice with his (or her) feet to try and match up the numbers. Confused yet? Let me give you an example; if you roll the dice over to show a two, you need to roll another two next to it so they join together and disappear. The same applies for all the other numbers; line up four fours, five fives and so on. You can line up more dice than the number shown, so you can put three twos together or six fives, for instance. Even more confused? Don't blame you, but it makes perfect sense when you're playing.

Like Tetris, the further you go, the more difficult it gets. By the

You'll be there in front of the TV for hours battling it out

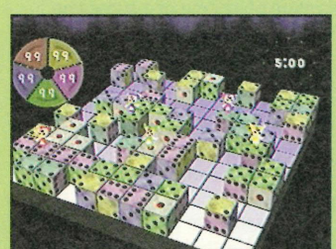
BE A DEVIL...

Trying to match up the dice is hard enough, but in the different game modes you have to try something a bit different. Below are a few hints on what you have to do on each.



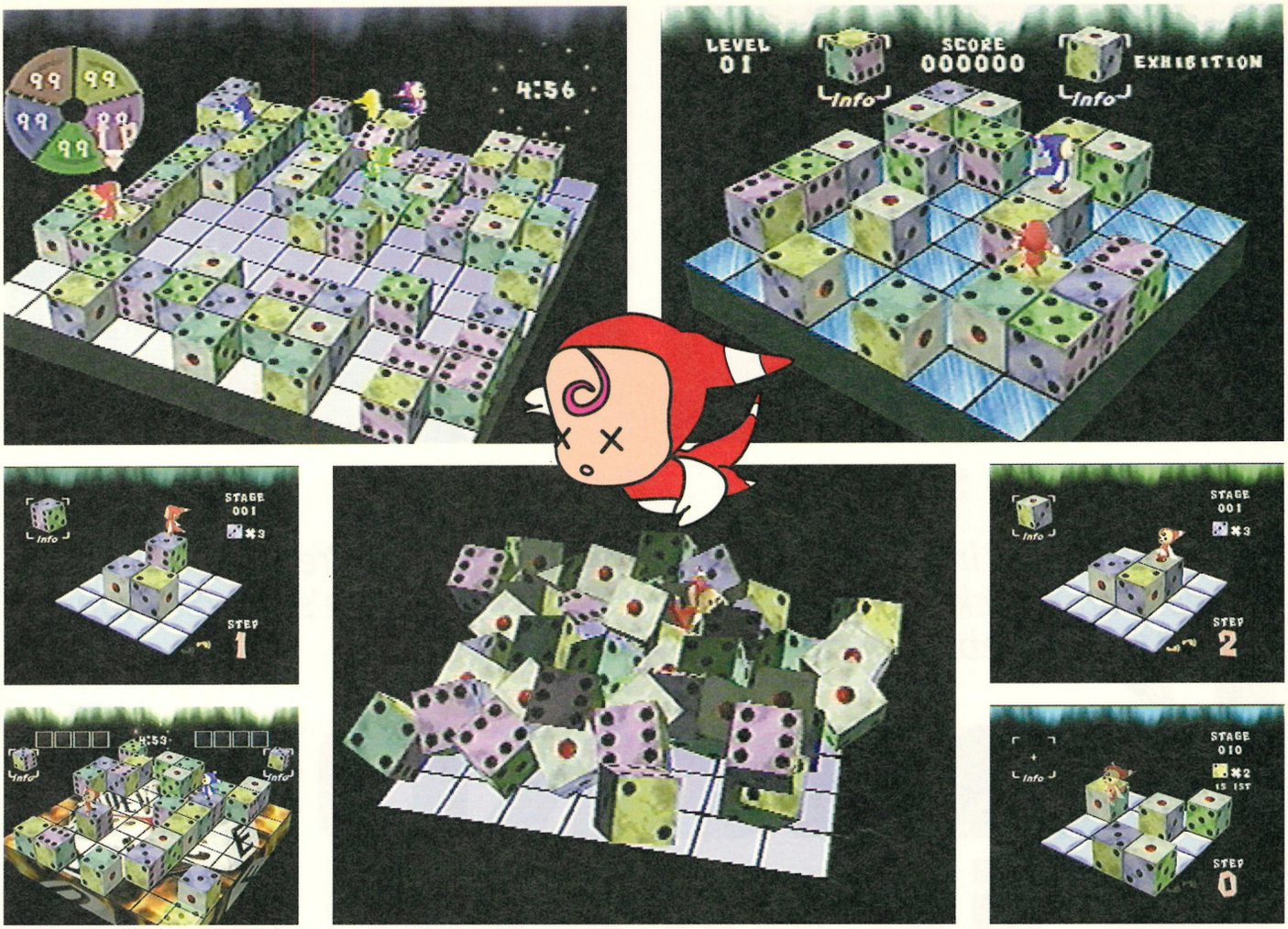
TRIAL MODE
This is the most basic mode. What you have to do here is to try and get rid of all the dice as quickly and efficiently as possible. HINT! If you get a friend to help you in a two-player game you can work together to get further through the levels.

BATTLE MODE
Play in one-player mode or against a friend to try and get successive numbers of dots against the clock. Opponents can steal premiums from one another by collecting the same numbered dice. As with all the modes, you can alter the size of the board and the type of dice you use.



WARS MODE
Up to five people can play at once and cause an unholy war trying to suck away their rivals' strength by making as many links and chains as possible. Causing the ones to disappear gives you your strength back and the player with the most energy at the end is victorious.

PUZZLE MODE
Starting at Level One and going up to infinity, Puzzle Mode involves joining up the specified amount of dice in only a few steps. The more stages you complete, the harder it gets and each time you complete ten stages you become a piece of artwork hanging in the gallery of great players.



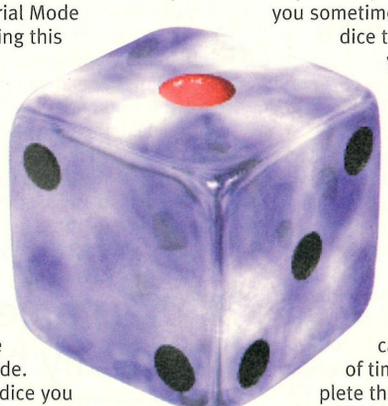
Graphics don't really matter in this kind of game

time you reach Level Ten, dice almost appear quicker than you can make them disappear. By the way, if you fall off a die the only way you can get back on is by waiting for the lightning to strike and rise up on top of a die. Or while you're down there you can just push the dice around to match them.

It's only fair to tell you now that to get rid of all the ones on the board you have to do something a little different. When you manage to connect certain numbers together, if you add a one to the end, or within the chain, all of the ones on the board disappear. Also, if you keep adding the same number dice onto the chain they sink as well. So the more dice you can connect, the more room you have to play with on the board (just tell me to pause if I'm losing you!).

Mortal Combat...

In Battle Mode you can either play against either the computer or a friend to try and sink a succession of dice first; for example, numbers one, two, three and four. The secret is to be quick - if your opponent starts to collect the same numbers as you, you can consider yourself burgled and you have to steal them back. If you're playing against your PlayStation, you'll more than likely notice it hardly makes any mistakes and seems to be able to move a lot faster. Take it from me - start practising in Trial Mode before trying this one.



Talk about the survival of the fittest. Up to five players can play at the same time in War Mode. The more dice you match up, the more your attacking power increases and your opponents' decreases. If you can match up a one, this restores your health completely and the player with the most strength left at the end of the allotted time wins! This mode too is difficult to get used to unless have you've had some practice, and if you have a go at it in one-player mode it's practically impossible.

If my explanation isn't confusing enough so far, see if you can decipher Puzzle Mode. Oh yeah, it's pretty easy at first, but just you wait until you reach level 25, then you'll be sorry! The principal sounds simple enough - all you must do is line up as many dots as you're told, in a set number of steps... easy. You find, though, that you sometimes have to push the dice together, or roll it with your hands. Some dice can't move either, making it yet more difficult! It's a good idea to use this mode for practice, as the quicker you remember where each number is on the dice, the better you become.

On each mode you can change the amount of time you have to complete the level and you can also alter the size of the board. There are also different types of dice to use including wood, ice, stone and iron, with each die doing different things; some can't be pushed and iron ones can't be stood on, which can prove devilishly unhelpful (sorry).

Graphics don't really matter in this kind of game, and they're not really too bad in Devil Dice; 'simple' is the word I'd use to describe them. But what I'd also say is that if you're a sucker for a puzzle game, you really should add this to your collection. Some puzzles get a tad repetitive after a while, with not enough problems to get your head round, but with this one there are so many tricks to learn and levels to complete you'll be there in front of the TV for hours battling it out.

Claire Webster

SECOND OPINION

No other puzzle game will ever compete with this. Challenge after challenge makes you use your brains as well as some nifty fingerwork on the old joypad. If this one somehow isn't your cup of tea, try Bust-a-Move 4, also reviewed this issue.

Russell Barnes

THE SCORE

GRAPHICS	7
SOUND	7
GAMEPLAY	9
LIFESPAN	9

90%

The referee brings the two fighters together and - disappears. Honest - he just disappears!

PUBLISHER	DEVELOPER	GENRE	RELEASED	VERSION	PRICE	PLAYERS	PERIPHERALS	
Electronic Arts	Electronic Arts	Sports Sim	Out Now	UK	£39.99	1-2	Memory Card	Dual Shock

We were briefed in our dressing rooms, and now we're gonna touch gloves! Can Knockout Kings 99 take Victory Boxing 2's PlayStation crown? Claire Webster wants a good clean fight...

Knockout Kings 99

It's supposed be 'the' boxing sim to knock Victory Boxing 2's socks off, with a glittering array of 38 boxers, including the exclusive rights for Muhammad Ali. We were promised graphics that would put us out for the count and playability to send us flying. All I can say is EA Sports have delivered nothing but a VERY low blow.

As well as the exclusive fighters such as Evander Holyfield, Sugar Ray Leonard and Oscar De La Hoya, other headliners include Floyd Patterson, Sonny Liston, Ken Norton and Lennox Lewis. It would obviously take too long to name all of them, but Butterbean must get a mention as the heaviest and scariest of the fighters who tends to just ram at you during a round rather than use any real skill. He does have a cult following in America though - I can't imagine why.

EA Sports decided to consult some of the boxers themselves on how to make the game as realistic as possible. Sugar Ray Leonard, Shane Mosley and Oscar De La Hoya were motion-captured as they carried out hundreds of different moves they would use in a proper fight. The moves were then digitised into the game to bring the cyber-boxers to life.

We've Seen it All Before...

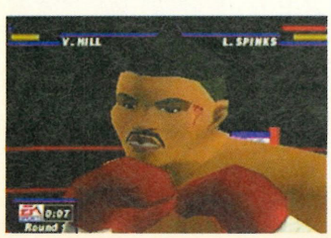
All this sounds very impressive, but is it just me who finds it difficult to get over-excited about a boxing sim? Developers keep on churning them out; only three issues ago we reviewed Victory Boxing 2, which has been the best effort so far.

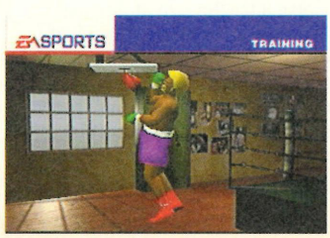
At first glance it does seem like Knockout Kings 99 has something different to offer. To begin with you can choose what kind of match you want, including Exhibition mode, where you can battle it out against either the computer or a friend. Or you can choose Slugfest which is a fight without any rules, so you can beat your opponent with as many low blows and kidney punches as you want. But don't think you can get away with that sort of caper during an Exhibition match, because if you do it more than twice you lose by disqualification. It's nice to have the option of whether you want to play by the rules or not, depending on whether you're the kind of person who wants to take the game seriously or someone who just likes to lash out and cause as much physical and mental anguish as possible.

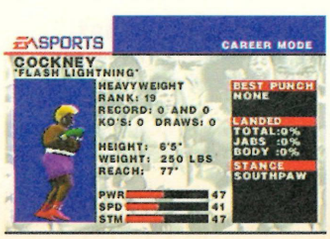
One thing I was pretty impressed with is Career Mode. Here you can create your own boxer or slugger and have a bit of giggle at the same time. First of all you can choose whether your man's a light, middle or heavyweight, then pick how tall, thin or fat he is, before adding your own personal hair style and colour and optional facial hair. You can change the colour of his trunks, gloves and shoes before giving him his nickname; 'Sweet Sugar' is my own personal favourite (how sad).

Before you start slugging away, you can choose which of the four arenas you want to fight in. To be honest there isn't a lot of difference between them, though if you look at the audiences at the Great Western Forum and the Ring Magazine Arena you notice some-

If this game stepped into the ring, I'd lay my bet on it losing the bout





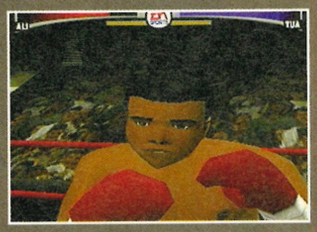


WHO'S PULLING THE PUNCHES?

Hand-picked and ready for the ring - here's some vital statistics to help you choose the ultimate fighting machine.

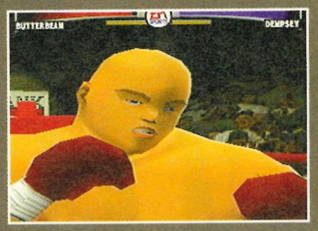
MUHAMMAD ALI
Height: 6'3"
Weight: 210 lbs
Reach: 82"

Obviously the first choice, Muhammad has one of the fastest and best jabs in the sport. He's known for his patience and his quick feet to help him get out of trouble.



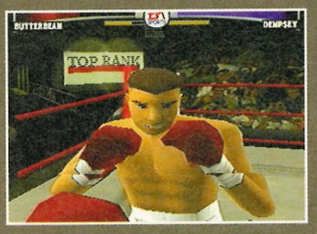
BUTTERBEAN
Height: 6'10"
Weight: 323 lbs
Reach: 78"

Always be on the lookout for this guy's haymaker. He constantly throws punches at you and because of his size he can withstand a good beating.



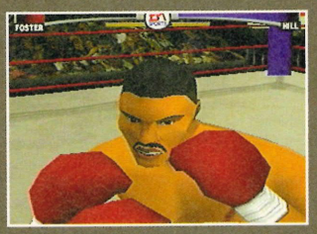
JACK DEMPSEY
Height: 6'0"
Weight: 180 lbs
Reach: 77"

Jack Dempsey is renowned for his fast movement around the ring so he can close in on his opponent quickly. Watch out for his big right hand.



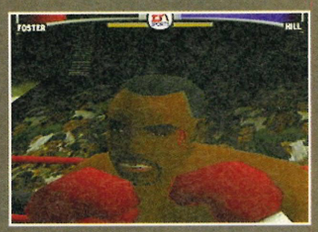
BOB FOSTER
Height: 6'3"
Weight: 175 lbs
Reach: 79"

It's difficult keeping track of this boxer as he's forever moving around the ring. In the early rounds he has tremendous knockout power and dishes out huge punches.



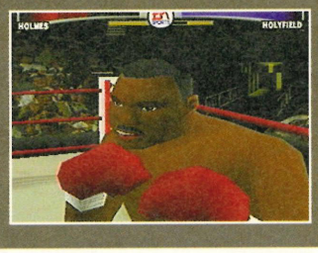
VIRGIL HILL
Height: 6'0"
Weight: 174 lbs
Reach: 75"

This guy uses brains rather than brawn with great jabs and consistent, accurate punches. You notice that he doesn't tend to use his right hand very often.



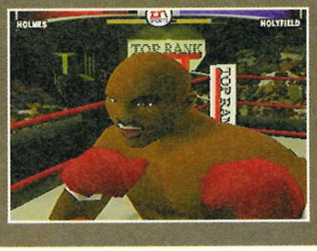
LARRY HOLMES
Height: 6'3"
Weight: 209 lbs
Reach: 79"

Never say size doesn't matter... Larry here creates massive power punches using size and strength. He also has a very accurate jab and is methodical about his fighting.



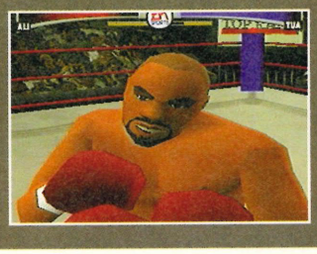
EVANDER HOLYFIELD
Height: 6' 2"
Weight: 214 lbs
Reach: 77"

Evander's a bit of a sneaky one as he waits for openings and then attacks. You can tell he spends a lot of time in training, he's always confident and stays close to his opponent.



LENNOX LEWIS
Height: 6'5 "
Weight: 244 lbs
Reach: 84"

Mr Lewis has a real advantage with his reach and height. He's also pretty smart as he can seek out his opponents' weaknesses and exploit them with his huge right hand.



one has either pasted the onlookers onto their seats or they've been flattened by a steamroller at some stage - maybe Butterbean was let loose into the crowd. If you're put off by people by people watching, then go to the Grand Casinos where you can hear but not see them.

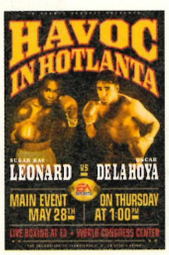
Up Close and Personal

Like in Victory Boxing 2, there's also a range of camera angles to choose from including first person, overhead, sidecam, close-up, best view and with the camera in the red or blue corner. I'd say the best angle is from first person so you can see your opponent's eyes and, even better, see how much damage you're inflicting. As for any of the others, if you want to see from a bird's eye view, then choose overhead, though you can't actually see a lot and it's difficult to tell what you're doing.

There is the facility to be able to play as a lightweight and fight against a middle or heavyweight if you prefer, and it's not as difficult as you might think. Seeing as Mosley is able to beat Mr Ali, I'd say you should never under estimate the underdog, although it does take a few low bodyshots and kidney punches.

So what are its very good points? There really aren't very many to tell you about. One good thing is the fact that if you're highly skilled and you manage to win consecutive fights, you get to continue against fighters that progressively get more and more difficult to beat. This is possible in whichever mode you've chosen to play in so you don't have to keep returning to the main menu to start a new game.

However, and it's a BIG 'however', there is a very annoying point in the matches where you have to wait for the game to load - every single time a round finishes, to be exact! This obviously doesn't make the game flow very well. You tend to spend more time impatiently waiting instead of boxing.



Unfortunately the graphics aren't anything to write home about either. Although they did say motion capture was used, I really can't understand why it looks as though the fighters have triangular-shaped elbows and knees pointed enough to impale their opponent.

Before each round you see the compulsory ring card girl, or may be you'd rather not see her as she's got a very bizarre waddle, almost as if someone has put a magnet in her 'undergarments' and they're pulling her in (you must take a look at her yourselves to understand). In Exhibition Mode you also get a low-down on each boxer that's playing, so you check out their strengths and weaknesses.

Be the Best

After the round and again after the match, there's a stats table showing how many total punches, jabs and body shots were thrown compared to how many actually landed, which can either be very embarrassing or satisfying depending on how much practice you've done. Which smoothly brings me to my next point. The controls are quite easy to get the hang of with each individual boxer having their own individual moves such as Leonard's famous extended chin taunt and De La Hoya's deadly left hook. It therefore doesn't take long to master how you're going to win a match, but on the down side this does mean that the game does get a little tedious after a while.

Overall I can't really be very generous with the closing compliments, I'm afraid. Knockout Kings 99 sneakily gives the first impression that it's going to be a champion with its famous boxers and proper rules, one that any boxing enthusiast would like to get his or her hands on. Unfortunately, EA Sports spent more time sorting out how good it's going to sound rather than working on the graphics and the stiff-looking movement. If this game stepped into the ring, I'd lay my bet on it losing the bout.

Claire Webster

SECOND OPINION

This one's even more farcical than Naseem Hamed's ring entrances. The graphics are a joke - you won't believe they're motion captured. The fights are dull and uninteresting too. If anyone tells you Knockout Kings is a good game, bite off his ear.

Ian Osborne

THE SCORE

GRAPHICS	5
SOUND	5
GAMEPLAY	6
LIFESPAN	6

42%

PUBLISHER	DEVELOPER	GENRE	RELEASED	VERSION	PRICE	PLAYERS	PERIPHERALS
EA Sports	EA Sports	Sports Sim	Out Now	UK	£39.99	1-4	Memory Card

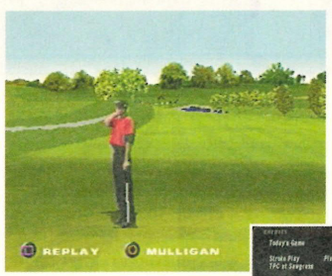
Fore! Does Tiger Woods 99 sink a hole in one, or does it leave you bunkered? Russell Barnes takes to the fairway before retiring to the 19th hole...

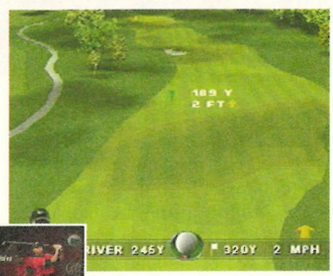
Tiger Woods 99

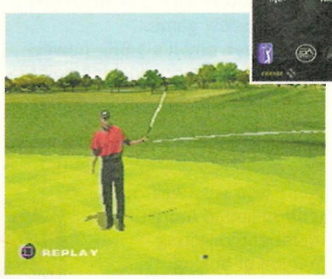
According to EA Sports, 'If it's in the game, it's in the game'. I'm no sceptic, but they said that about Knockout Kings (reviewed Page 50) and that was a pile of shite. Let's hope going a few rounds with Tiger isn't quite as agonising, or I'll have a great case of product misrepresentation sitting on EA's post pile in the morning.

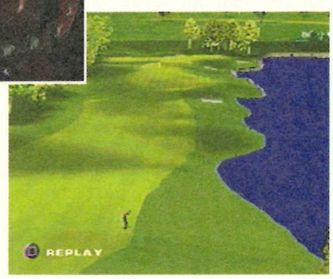
Tiger Woods 99 is a real step forward from EA's previous attempts with the PGA Tour titles, and is obviously a head and shoulders above Actua Golf 3 (which isn't hard). Although PGA's graphics were always of a high quality and all the basic requirements were there, you never really felt like you were in control of the proceedings and were instead just hitting the buttons without much thought or feeling involved. The first thing that really struck me about this game (and something other golf games haven't bothered doing before on the PSX) is the five PGA courses that are included. That's a total of 90 totally authentic, realistic and official holes for you and up to three friends to enjoy in the comfort of your own home! For those of you who can't get enough of the realistic flavours of modern golf, you won't do wrong with TW 99. It boasts a fully digitised version of Tiger which is capable of performing all the moves that have brought him to fame. 350-yard

If you're into golf, get into TW 99



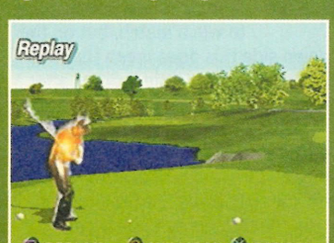


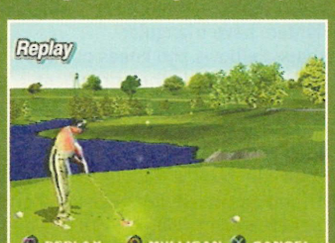


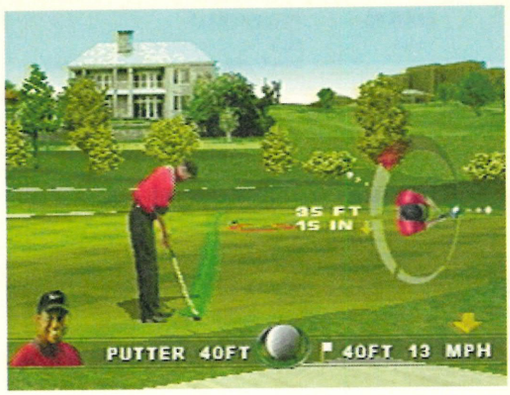


HE'S ON FIRE!

Perhaps borrowing a little from Acclaim's NBA Jam games, EA have put in amusing animation to accompany Tiger's long drives down the fairway. As he winds up the swing, a bolt of lighting or a streak of flame goes through his body then spreads throughout as he swings down and through. An atomic like explosion occurs on impact with the ball, which leaves a vapour trail as it whizzes through the air. It's not easy to perfect because the more power you allow before the shot is hit, the faster your marker comes back towards the shot zone, which means trouble hitting it dead on the sweet spot.







It boasts a fully digitised version of Tiger which is capable of performing all the moves that have brought him to fame

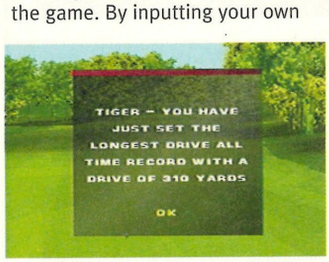
drives, 40-foot putts, chipping onto the green with a three-wood and all his trademark fist pumps, jumps and characteristics.

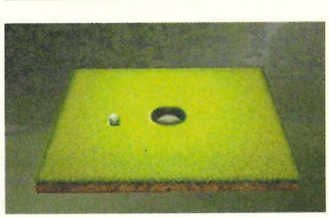
In Control...

The control of TW 99 has been modified from the PGA titles of the past to give a smooth, fluid playing action that allows you to perform realistically and competitively against computer-controlled opponents. The CPU-driven players aren't perfect, though; they make the odd mistake like dropping into a bunker of two and slicing the odd one out to the right, which is a vast improvement in terms of fairness and realism to titles of the past. If this isn't all enough to get you excited, you can blur the line between golf and golf sim even more by another clever addition to the game. By inputting your own statistics and tendencies into the Player Edit option, you can actually see how you would fare going 18 holes with the big man himself on world-class courses. If you don't fare too well (believe me, I didn't), you can take your new player to the practice holes and facilities where you can drive, chip and putt until you're blue in the face.

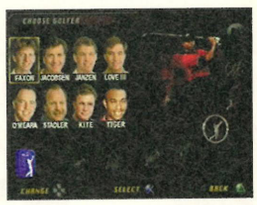
There isn't much that lets this game down, other than a couple of graphical glitches here and there on Tiger's animations and sudden pop up in the backgrounds. The options screen is a bit of a bugger to use as well, but who's complaining when golf has never been better on the PSX? If you're into golf, get into TW 99. If you're not, give it a try and you might just be surprised. It has more on offer than meets the eye, and it's as addictive as sin; beauty!

Russell Barnes





MASTERS AT WORK...



If top competition is what you want, you've got it right here where you can mix and match another seven of the world's greatest golfers. I highly recommend a skins match between Tiger Woods and Mark O'Meara; it's as close as the '98 Masters Championship (with two similarly-skilled players or against the CPU) and just as exciting! You can team up for a foursome or play a little one-on-one for some serious skins. Indeed, you can compete with and/or against any of the following top dogs in all of the game modes available...

Davis Love III
Mark O'Meara
Brad Faxton
Tom Kite

Sadly EA didn't feel it necessary to include the golfer's first names in the game (I wonder why?) so I had to make the last three up because I don't know and I haven't enough will power to watch as much golf as my dad...

'Jacky' Jacobsen
'Jonny' Janzen
'Sammy' Stadler

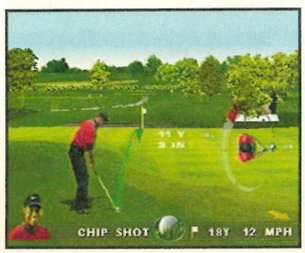
SECOND OPINION

This is the best golf game on the PlayStation. Although more laid back than most PlayStation games, you get a real adrenaline rush when you sink a two-shot from ten yards. Tiger's well represented too - no dodgy Knockout Kings-style motion capture here.

Ian Osborne

IT'S YOUR CALL...

Another fine feature of Tiger Woods 99 is the wickedly easy shot selection which can be more than enough to sway the state of play in any match situation. Unless you're driving off the tee or you're on the green, you can choose between taking a full swing, pitch, or chip. The main difference between the three is the trajectory of the ball, which dictates how far it runs on, how it's affected by weather conditions and how it lies on the grass (depending whether it's fairway, rough or green).



THE SCORE

GRAPHICS	8
SOUND	7
GAMEPLAY	9
LIFESPAN	8

89%

PUBLISHER	DEVELOPER	GENRE	RELEASED	VERSION	PRICE	PLAYERS	PERIPHERALS
Various	Various	Compilation	Out Now	UK	£39.99	Varies	Multi Tap (Overboard only) Link Cable (Independence Day only)

Four old games bundled together for a children's charity fund-raiser? Is this a recipe for a blistering bargain or a well intentioned but ultimately crap compilation? We send Ian Osborne out with his collection box...

4 PlayStation

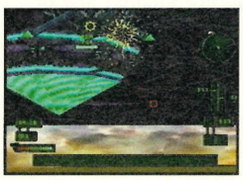
If you read last month's extreme PlayStation (and if not, why not?), you know five major publishers have got together and released a charity compilation. Psygnosis, Eidos (who now own Core Design), Gremlin Interactive and Fox Interactive supplied the games, while Acclaim handled the distribution. Last year's three-game boxed set raised over £1 million, and the organisers are confident they'll beat that this year.

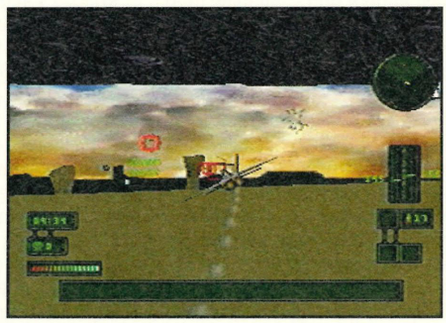
There's no doubting the worthiness of the aim of this joint venture, to raise money and divide it between children's charities, and at a tenner each the games aren't exactly expensive, but they're pretty ancient too - have they aged well enough to be worth buying, even at this price? Let's look at them one by one.

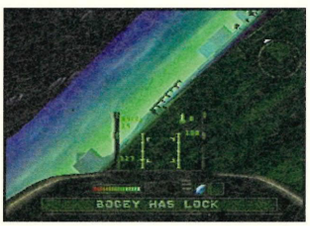
INDEPENDENCE DAY

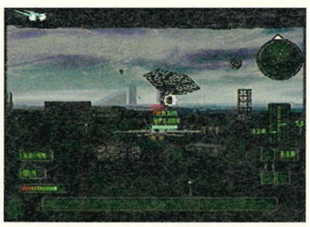
Original Publisher: Fox Interactive **Developer: Radical Entertainment** **Score**

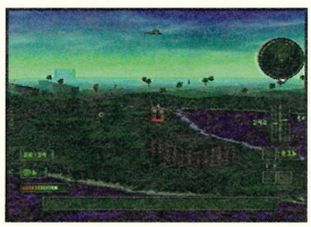
Disappointing when first released in early 1997, Independence Day is an insult to its overrated movie inspiration. The game's a complete joke. I mean, look at that sprite in the middle of the screen (no polygons here) - it looks like a plane, so why the hell doesn't it behave like one? Why can you fly straight into the ground or the overhead spaceship and just bounce off as if you were made of rubber? Why can you fly through buildings as if they weren't there? Why is the flight model so artificial, refusing to let you loop effectively? Why is every level the same bog-standard chase-and-shoot offering? Why do enemy vehicles fly in straight lines, destroying any sense of dogfighting? Why is there so much pop-up in a game which would hardly tax a SNES? Why do they offer you an in-plane perspective that's virtually unusable due to jerky movement? Why do static targets only appear when you're almost on top of them? But most of all, why did they bother?









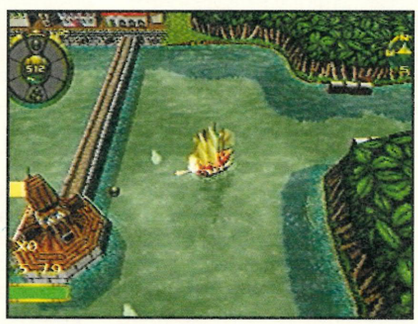


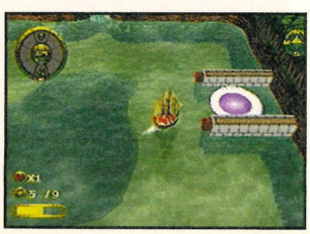
OVERBOARD!

Original Publisher: Psygnosis **Developer: Psygnosis** **Score 58%**

The most recent of the games on offer is 1997's Overboard!. The graphics are great, full of excellent cosmetic touches like the way the boat bobs in the water and the pirates throwing themselves off the bridge when the ship catches fire, but the game as a whole is too fiddly to be fun. Take the controls. They use far too many buttons, and it's impossible to lay them out so they become instinctive. It's bad enough switching from front-firing cannons to broadside ones and then working out which button fires left and which fires right (and, if your ship's pointing towards the screen at the time, which side IS left and right), but when you gain missiles that fire upwards, mines, depth charges and other such crap, the situation becomes unmanageable. The multiplayer matches are cool, but the awkward controls still take their toll - there are better deathmatch-style offerings on the market.

With better controls, Overboard! could've been a real breath of sea air. It's plank-walkingly original and full of fresh ideas, but the gameplay means its treasure must remain buried, and alas, 'X' doesn't mark this particular spot. Overboard! doesn't deserve the black spot, but nor should it win your pieces of eight.





FIRESTORM: THUNDERHAWK 2

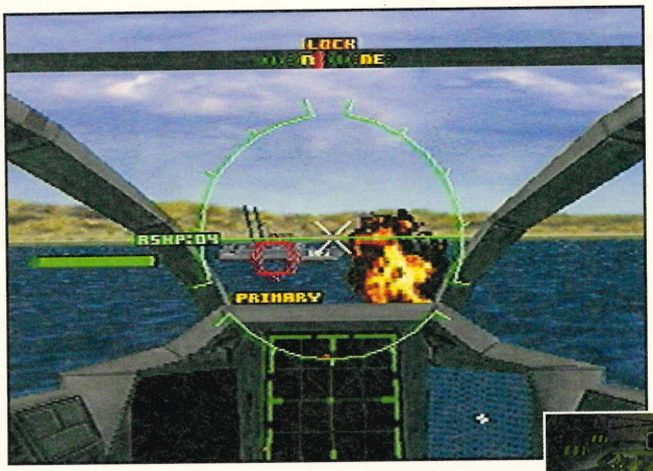
Original Publisher: Core Design **Developer: Core Design** **Score 79%**

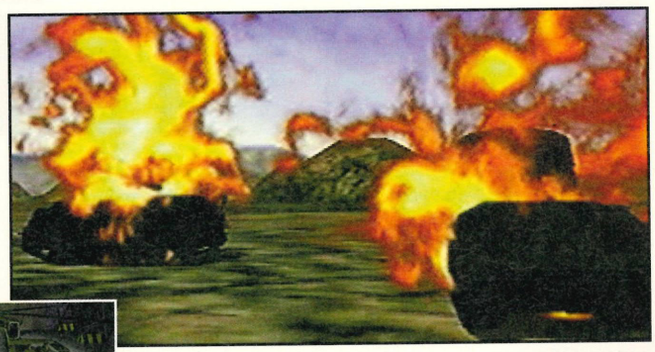
The slick FMV at the start of the game and cool voice-overs as you get your mission briefings re-wrote the rules for PlayStation presentation, though they've been further revised several times since. Don't expect the near-movie quality of Red Alert's cut scenes or the chilling tones of Blood Omen: Legacy of Kain, but it isn't difficult to see why this one wowed in its day.

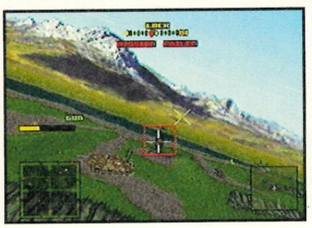
Firestorm, first released in 1995, is no slouch in the gameplay department either. You pilot a helicopter through 26 missions, each with specific targets and objectives. The game runs at an 'incredible' 25 frames a second, which isn't so impressive four years on.

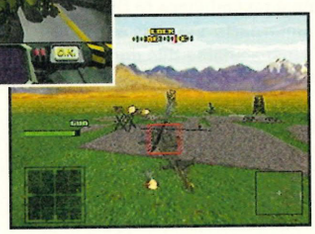
In terms of variety, again the game's been surpassed since, but don't expect a straightforward mindless see-it-shoot-it boreathon which far too many early PlayStation blasters degenerated into. Here you're trashing stockades, guarding convoys, reopening canals and other such tasks, often having to prioritise targets strategically. Although not a flight sim in the truest sense (you can't crash your chopper and the collective and torque models are simplified), the main craft feels like a helicopter - it's a bit like a simplified Soviet Strike, but with the added option of own-eye perspective.

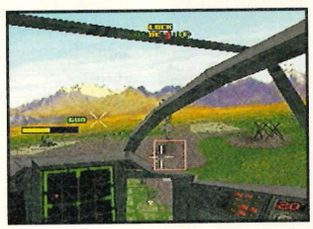
Overall, Firestorm: Thunderhawk 2 is a fun game, but definitely showing its age next to, say, G-Police.











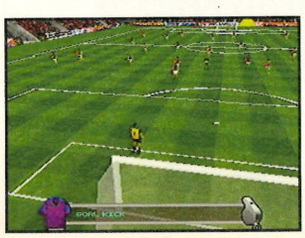
ACTUA SOCCER: CLUB EDITION

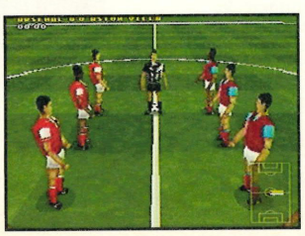
Original Publisher: Gremlin Interactive **Developer: Gremlin Interactive** **Score 59%**

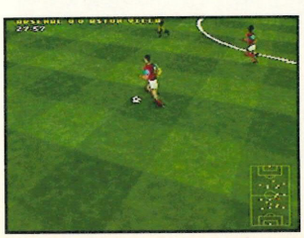
Actua Soccer 3 performed scorchingly well last issue, but this, a cynical Premier League cash-in on the original Actua Soccer, no longer puts in a first team performance.

The game is sluggish in the extreme, with none of the fluidity enjoyed by the later games. Tackling is so rudimentary that it's often wisest just to run up the pitch and shoot, as if you were playing a basketball game. Passing isn't made any easier by the duff camera angles, which leave you unable to find your players or with a ridiculously (though perhaps realistically) small ball.

Actua Soccer: Club Edition really only offered one advantage over its now-platinum predecessor; it offered the real-life Premier League clubs, so you could play a season as your favourite team. However, as most of the kits are out of date and virtually all modern soccer sims offer a customise option to keep up with the transfers, this facility seems redundant.







I can't really recommend this one. Yes, it's for charity, and yes, you get four games for £40, but they're all bargain bin fodder anyway. If you're feeling generous, instead of buying this compilation, root around for a couple of decent old titles for £15 each (entirely possible), and give your £10 change to a children's charity.

Ian Osborne

SECOND OPINION

well, it's for charity, I suppose. Alas, the games on this four-title compilation are just too old or too crap or both. It's not that they're disastrous (Independence Day aside), but they're mediocre poor value for money. Nice idea, but it just doesn't work.

Claire Webster

THE SCORE

GRAPHICS	N/A
SOUND	N/A
GAMEPLAY	N/A
LIFESPAN	N/A

52%

PUBLISHER	DEVELOPER	GENRE	RELEASED	VERSION	PRICE	PLAYERS	PERIPHERALS
UbiSoft	Smart Dog	Sports Sim	Out Now	UK	£39.99	1-4	Multi Tap

Another tennis game has been served up for the PlayStation. But is it as sweet as strawberries and cream, or have Ubi Soft made a double fault? Claire Webster takes Centre Court...

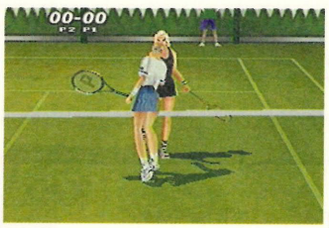
All Star Tennis '99

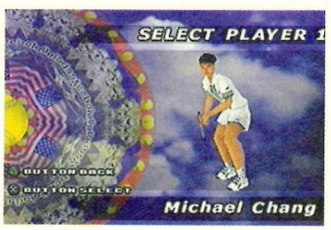
Now here's an opportunity to make a few sly puns and clichés - how about 'anyone for tennis', or perhaps I 'can't be serious'. There aren't any John McEnroes in this game, but then there's no new balls either, if you catch my drift. I just thought I'd get all those out of the way before I start telling you how 'ace' All Star Tennis '99 is (sorry!).

There's been a few tennis games on the PlayStation up to now, some good, some not. We've been quite eager to find out how this one has turned out. Just to try and impress you to begin with, I can tell you Ubi Soft have licensed many an All Star player for this game, including the feisty Michael Chang, Jana Novotna and Conchita Martinez. They do bear a vague resemblance to their real-life counterparts, which is quite rare; it's just a shame this doesn't make hitting the ball any easier.

The first thing you notice about this one is the graphics, which are quite impressive as far as the court and the two (or four) players are concerned. You might notice, though, that the ball boys and girls don't do their jobs very well, but then they're just cardboard cut-outs by the looks of it. They also forgot to tell the linesmen that a match was going on, as they're not around either. I don't know; they get all the top players to take part but then forget the officials. Are we just playing for fun?

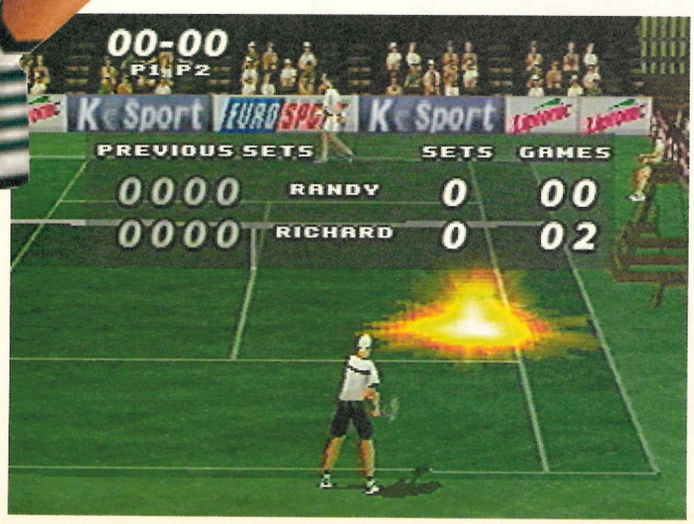
Even using her mother's soup ladle, Zoe Taylor couldn't handle the egg and spoon race...





Bombed Out

Seriously now, this game does have a lot of good points as well as some rather strange features. Take a look at Bomb Tennis for instance; whoever dreamed this up was quite imaginative to say the least. What on earth would have made them put bombs in the way during a tennis match? However, when you get past the amazement of it, it does make the game a bit more interesting.



You don't have to be a Greg Rusedski or a Jeremy Bates...

The bombs arrive on the court each time the ball bounces in the other player's half. They're set on a time delay, but if you accidentally run into one they blow you over - does that sound like fun or what? What's not so much fun is when a bomb explodes and you have absolutely no idea where the ball is. The best idea is to just swing your racket and hope for the best, but then maybe that's just part of the challenge.

There are eight different courts to choose from including America, Australia and Italy although you only get to pick if you're in either Bomb or Smash Tennis mode. As for the tennis players, there are five women and seven men (some more famous than others) and it's possible to have a mixed match, either in doubles or singles.

The controls are pretty easy to get used to as well, although you have to manage your timing literally to the second as if you swing that

SERVING UP THE STARS...

Ever wanted to be a famous tennis star? Well now's your chance, below are just some of the best players you can choose from...Wimbledon here we come!

JANA NOVOTNA
Height: 5'9"
Weight: 139 lbs
Plays: Right-handed
Highest singles ranking: 2 (1997)

Born in Brno, Czech Republic, in 1968, she turned pro in 1987. She was a finalist at Wimbledon in 1997 and won the Chase Championships in 1997, the biggest title of her career to date.

JONAS BJORKMAN
Height: 6'0"
Weight: 166 lbs
Plays: Right-handed
Highest singles ranking: 4 (1997)

Turning pro in 1991, Jonas has been a semi-finalist at the US Open and a finalist at the 1994 French Open. He comes from Vaxjo in Sweden and captained the Sweden team in the 1997 Davis Cup Finals.

AMANDA COETZER
Height: 5'2"
Weight: 120 lbs
Plays: Right-handed
Highest singles ranking: 3 (1997)

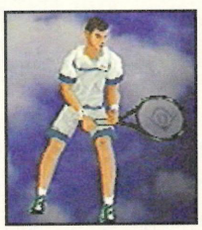
A 27 year-old South African, Coetzer turned pro when she was only 17. She reached the Australian Open Semi-finals in 1997 after which she was given the nickname 'the little assassin'.

RICHARD KRAJICEK
Height: 6'5"
Weight: 190 lbs
Plays: Right-handed
Fastest Serve: 139 mph

Richard was born in The Netherlands in 1971 and has been Number Five in the World. He was the first man from Holland to win at the prestigious Wimbledon two years ago after beating Sampras and only losing one set during the entire two weeks.

MICHAEL CHANG
Height: 5'9"
Weight: 150 lbs
Plays: Right-handed
Fastest Serve: 130 mph

Michael Chang has taken a bit of a fall in the world ranks, this year he's down at 30th, whereas in 1996 he was as high as 2nd in the world. Surely there's life left in him yet!

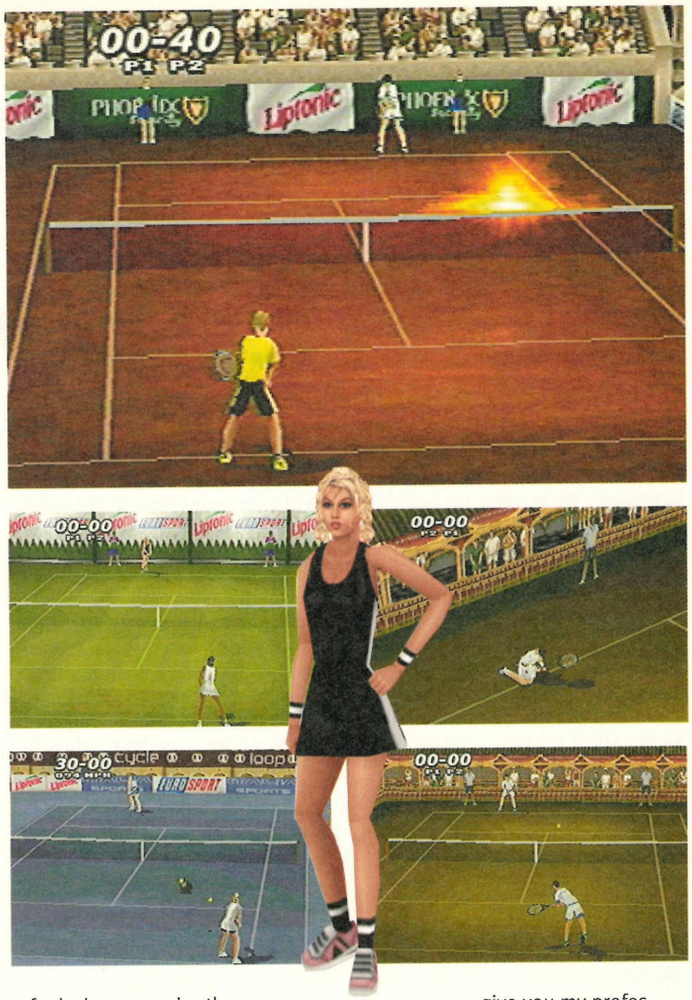


MARK PHILIPPOUSSIS
Height: 6'4"
Weight: 202 lbs
Plays: Right-handed
Fastest Serve: 142 mph

With his height and strength, Philippoussis reached the doubles semi-finals at Wimbledon in 1996. In the 1997 Davis Cup he helped Australia with two victories.

CONCHITA MARTINEZ
Height: 5'7"
Weight: 132 lbs
Plays: Right-handed
Highest singles ranking: 2 (1996)

Conchita was the first Spanish woman to win at Wimbledon, in 1994. She was born in Monzon in 1972 and started to play professional tennis when she was 16 years old.



a fool when you miss the ball completely. Also make sure that you're well positioned to take the shot or at least within arm's reach of the ball. Once you've mastered the timing you can start to experiment with different shots and tactics. You can lob, but then there's always the risk of your opponent smashing a return, then you've got your bog-standard ground stroke, dive shots and smashes. Of course it's not just as simple as just hitting the ball to each other, you have to watch the other player carefully, see where he is on the court and strategically aim your returns so he or she has to run wildly from one side of the court to the other.

Combo Shots

Also, you can choose to use special shots made available by filling your specials bar by scoring. Fill it half way for your first shot, or completely for the character-specific second special. These are activated in much the same way as you would in a beat-'em-up, by pressing a different combination of buttons. When you or your opponent plays a special move it's almost impossible to make a return; it's based more on luck than skill. There's a dramatic action replay sequence after the shot as well that's worth a watch.

I have to admit that this is the first tennis game I've played on the PlayStation, but that doesn't necessarily mean that I'm not qualified to give you my professional opinion (as I'm going to anyway). You people out there may be 'umming and 'arring over whether tennis is your kind of game. Let me assure you that you don't have to be a Greg Rusedski or a Jeremy Bates to be able to play the game, and it's fun if you're challenging a friend. I wouldn't say it would walk away with a trophy in Grand Slam against Smash Court Tennis, for instance, but it's seeded amongst the best.

Claire Webster

SECOND OPINION

Not a bad game at all, and certainly better than Actua Tennis. It's a little awkward at times, but if you persevere, it certainly offers rewards.
Although faithful to tennis, the arcade extras are a welcome addition to the package as a whole.

Ian Osborne

THE SCORE

GRAPHICS	7
SOUND	6
GAMEPLAY	8
LIFESPAN	8

80%

PUBLISHER	DEVELOPER	GENRE	RELEASED	VERSION	PRICE	PLAYERS	PERIPHERALS
Acclaim	Taito	Puzzle	Early '99	UK	£39.99	1-2	Memory Card

We're forever blowing bubbles, pretty bubbles in the air... It's the stuff fairy tales are made of, but does it make a cool PSX game? Claire Webster takes a look...

Bust-a-Move 4

First it's Devil Dice, now Bust-a Move 4. Will the long string of cool puzzle games landing through our letterbox ever end? It seems not. We've seen our bubble-disintegrating friends a few times before, and we're still not bored. Bring them on and let me play them all - that's what I say.

You might think that this time around it will be the same old characters with the same old game modes, but no! Bust-a-Move 4 has a lot more to offer the keen puzzle gamer. There are ten characters you can play, such as Bub, a cute little dinosaur dude, Marino, a young mermaid and Tantam who looks like an Indian tribal totem pole. All of them have their own personal sounds and face-pulls which are well worth watching out for.

The objective of the game is the same as in its predecessors. At the beginning of each round a clump of bubbles appear at the top of your screen. All you have to do is wipe them out, and to achieve this you must link up the same coloured bubbles using your gun - at least three spheres at a time.

Bubble Trouble

Like in Bust-a-Move 3DX, there are four different game modes to choose from. At the top of the list is Puzzle Mode. Here you have a further two options; Arcade or Story. I'll come to story later as I don't want to complicate matters. In Arcade Mode, you firstly have to decide whether you consider yourself a bit of an expert (which you should be by now if you've played the others), a novice (like me!) or a regular Joe who prefers things normal. So what's 'puzzling' about Puzzle Mode? Not a lot really. You simply have to progress through the levels with your chosen character, mastering the art as you go. The further you get through the levels, the more difficult the game gets.

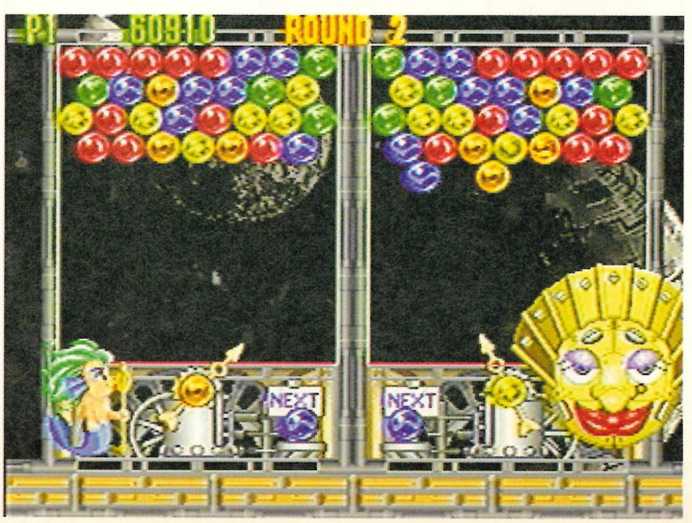
It's here that you first have a run-in with one of Bust-a-Move 4's new features; the pulley. Basically, the principle's the same as you have to disintegrate the bubbles. Only this time you have to perform a delicate balancing act, as the more bubbles you fire onto each pulley the more weight you're adding to one side. This makes the other side rise up and if you don't get rid of all the bubbles in time, it's curtains for you! This is also explained in the game if you go to the specified option, and if you're still not sure then you can always have a practice.

The game is also all about speed, as the quicker you complete a round the more bonus points you get, which also helps you climb up the ranks. The clock also starts ticking if you take too long pondering over where you're going to fire your next bubble. In fact, if you haven't decided in five seconds, then it's also Game Over. Even though Puzzle Mode can only be played in one-player mode, you can always get a friend to make some useful suggestions along the way (or not).

If you manage to get through Arcade, then Story is the next mode to complete. First of all you see a clip of what looks like your character having a horrible dream. The next thing you know, you're on a grassy plain with different levels to enter; Chariot, Magician, Lovers and Fool. Perhaps the biggest puzzle here is finding the alleged storyline. In each level you must complete each of the rounds, and at the end you collect what looks like a tarot card. It's not just me that's making absolutely no sense whatsoever - take a look for yourself!

You can also challenge the computer to a match of bubble bursting. It's a race against the clock trying to disintegrate the bubbles before your opponent does. It's worth just gathering up the bubbles together before you add the final one, as this adds more obstacles to the other player's side which makes the game a lot more difficult. But don't forget that they can also do the same to

This game is extremely addictive; once you start, it's impossible to stop

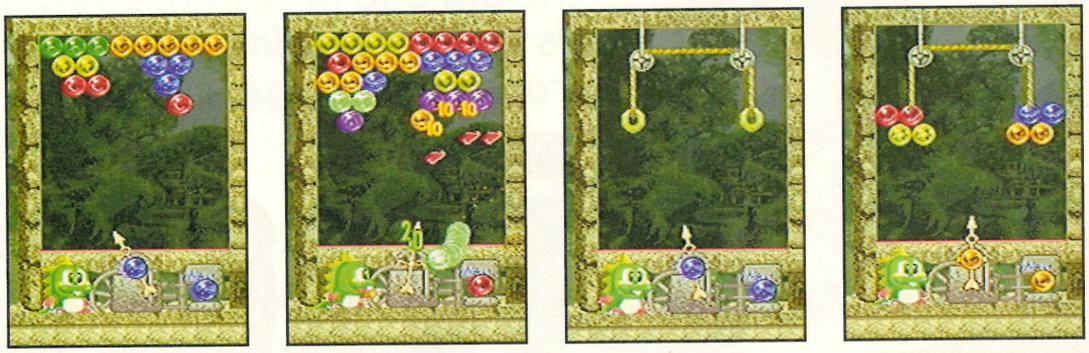


PULLEYING IT TO PIECES...

Mastering the art of balance and making a chain reaction is an acquired skill in Bust-a-Move 4, so here's a quick guide on what to do:

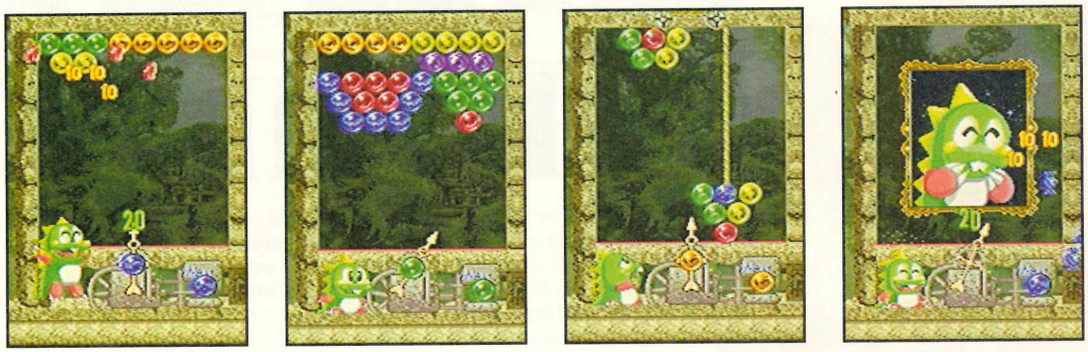
Explanation of the chain reaction...

1. You can only use the chain reaction in Vs mode.
2. A chain reaction is when the colours are recycled due to two of the same colour bubbles being next to each other.
3. The Chain reaction continues under the same condition
4. However when the colours are surrounded by other colours, a chain reaction won't happen.



How to work the pulley...

1. These are pulleys, the anchors are on the end of the rope. Bubbles are clustered around the anchor.
2. When a bubble sticks to a cluster, the pulleys start to move and the heavier cluster goes down, but when each cluster has the same amount of bubbles, the pulleys balance.
3. Sometimes clusters aren't balanced, depending on the length of the rope.
4. The anchors remain until all of the bubbles are burst.



you, and as soon as they start bursting multiple bubbles the less time you have to rescue your situation. The more times you beat the other character, the more wins you gain and again, this makes you climb your way to the top of the leaderboard.

Yet again, there's another story for you to follow, but this time it's a lot easier to understand. You find yourself in Rainbow World where many stars come together. The evil Moon Queen, who rules the night, has instructed the Night Fairy to steal the rainbow. So your task is to get the rainbow bubbles back off the characters that are keeping them for the Moon Queen.

The Bubble Bursts...

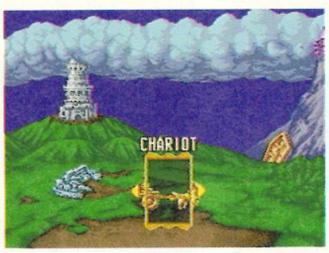
Finally, there's Challenge Mode. Here you again have to progress through the different levels, which also become harder the further you get. Look out for the glistening balls again, because if you fire any coloured bubble at them they all disappear.

There's also an edit option (like in Bust-a-Move 3DX) where you can alter the size of the playing area and choose whether or not you want random coloured bubbles during the game. Basically, you can design your own puzzle to solve, or you can create one for somebody else to solve - it's up to you.

Like in Devil Dice, the graphics aren't really important when you're playing the game. I can tell you this game is extremely addictive; once you start, it's impossible to stop and in two-player mode it's even more fun as the competition gets rather heated. All the voice effects seem to be in Japanese, which you'd think would be quite annoying, but somehow it suits the game - English wouldn't sound quite right once you get used to it.

This game suits any age PlayStation owner as even though it's easy at first, when you begin to get the hang of it, the more difficult it becomes. But isn't that what puzzlers are all about?

Claire Webster



SECOND OPINION

Bust-a-Move 4 is simple to play, but its subtleties take time to master, which is exactly how a puzzler should be. Perhaps it's a little too close to the original for comfort, but its cartoony cheerfulness and top gameplay make it a real hoot, especially in two-player mode.

Ian Osborne

THE SCORE

GRAPHICS	7
SOUND	8
GAMEPLAY	9
LIFESPAN	9

90%

PUBLISHER	DEVELOPER	GENRE	RELEASED	VERSION	PRICE	PLAYERS	PERIPHERALS	
SCEE	Namco	Sports Sim	Out Now	UK	£34.99	1-8	Memory Card Analogue	Dual Shock

Out with the old and in with the new. Namco deliver the goods with an original game of footy, but have they scored an own goal? Claire Webster takes it through its paces.

Libero Grande

It's never been done before, and Namco may just be starting a new trend in football simulation games. You are literally the main man of the match - no longer is there any need for the usual chore of changing between players, as you're permanently in control of a single player of your choice, never switching to another during the game. It's just you and a whole load of goal-scoring action!

If I was you, the first thing I'd do is have a bit of a kick-around in Challenge Mode, which is basically an opportunity to practice with your skill and player control. To start off, there are only six challenges available to complete, but once you've mastered all of them, a further three open (one by one). You can work on your speed with a bit of dribbling (not that kind!), and polish your reactions with a bit of tar-

ON ME 'ED SON...

Before moving on to becoming a pro, have a go at Challenge Mode where you can practice all the skills you need to become an invaluable member of the team. Here's an explanation of what you have to do...

DRIBBLING
You must compete for the quickest time by dribbling the ball through the red cones. Control your man by using the directional buttons. If you skip a cone, I'm afraid you've failed the challenge. The faster you complete the course, the more points you receive.

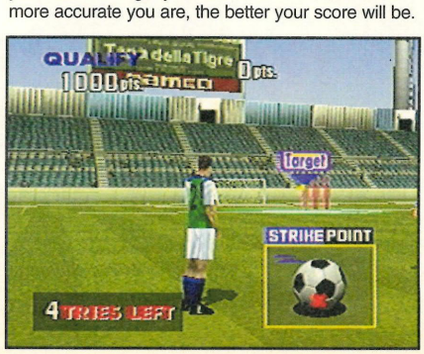
PENALTY KICK A
Try to score as many points as you can by shooting at the targets in the goal. Press the Circle button to take your shot and alter the angle of your shot by using the directional buttons. If you completely miss the goal, you're not up for the challenge.

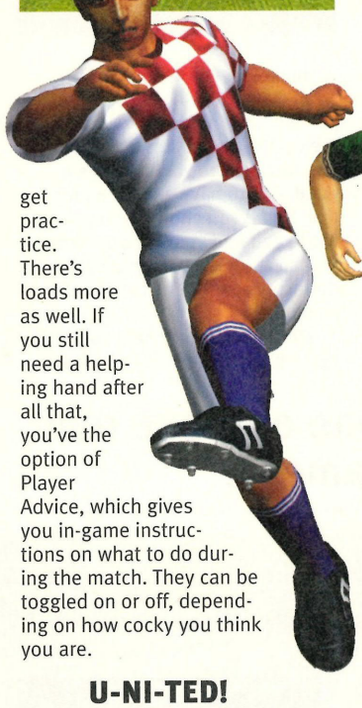
PENALTY KICK B
React quickly and shoot at the targets that appear in the goal. You have to select a difficulty level for this challenge and the higher the difficulty level, the more points you can gain.

FREE KICK A
Try for the highest score by shooting at the free-standing target. The closer to the target you manage to get, the more points you clock up on the scoreboard.

FREE KICK B
For yet more points, aim at the free-standing target by adjusting where you're going to strike the ball.

PASSING
Pass the ball to the randomly appearing targets. Direct your shot so that you're in line with them, if you miss the target you lose time. The faster and more accurate you are, the better your score will be.





Its arcade style has tremendous amounts of appeal...

get practice. There's loads more as well. If you still need a helping hand after all that, you've the option of Player Advice, which gives you in-game instructions on what to do during the match. They can be toggled on or off, depending on how cocky you think you are.

U-NI-TED!

As well as Challenge Mode, there are also five other modes to have a bash at. First of all there's Arcade. Here you can play in one- or two-player mode in matches where you can either play together in a partnership, or competitively against each other. Together you can try and get through the LiberoGrande™ Cup and score against the computer-controlled teams to win. But don't panic if you don't manage to beat the opposition first time around as you can continue as many times as you want. You can also adjust the settings before beginning the competition.

The International Cup is a little more in-depth as it features 32 teams. To start with, you have to qualify in the Preliminary League. The 32 teams are split into eight groups (four teams in each). Whoever gets the least points at the end of the league doesn't make it to the next stage, the Knockout competition, where the overall winner is decided. Again, you can adjust the settings for this mode before you start the competition, and you can save your games as you go (bonus).

If you fancy something a bit friendlier, give the Exhibition Modè a go. Here, any of the 32 teams can play together in an International Friendly. Yet again, if two of you want to play you can play as part of the same team or against each other and you can adjust the settings (yet again), before you start. Once you've finished a match, you're given various options; Rematch, where you can play again with exactly the same settings and Reselect, where you can set up a new game (quite a handy shortcut!)

If you want to take part in a multiplayer match, choose World League from the game menu as here you can play in a tournament for up to eight players. As you play, you can check your progress on the League Table and you can also check up on your player's performance on the top player record list. The winner of the league is the team with the highest number of points.

Control Freak...

One thing that would have let this game down if Namco hadn't have included it, is being able to control the other players. Because you're only in control of one man, there are other means of getting your own way by bossing around your team. At the touch of a button you can order a team-mate to pass you the ball, order him to take a shot or to clear a shot, to name just a few. If this feature wasn't included the game would certainly have some explaining to do, and it would definitely not be able to compete against such top games as FIFA '99.

LibertoGrande does, without doubt, offer something very different. Its arcade style has tremendous amounts of appeal to those who like to spend time down at the amusement arcades. The graphics are pretty good, along with the background crowd cheers and chanting. The only thing I would say that lets this game down is the pace. Your player is quite difficult to control (as you notice in Practice) and he's not too light on his feet. The camera angles aren't too helpful either. Most of the time the cameraman has to catch up to the ball before you can, so you spend up until half time searching the pitch for it. But let's not hang up our boots just yet. Namco have delivered a clearance shot that might have just scored a final goal for the football sims this year.

Claire Webster

LiberoGrande™

SECOND OPINION

Try as you might, you'll never find a football sim as unique as this. The graphics are nothing special and the controls are a tad difficult, but overall it makes a change from the usual traits found in these kind of games.

Russell Barnes

THE SCORE

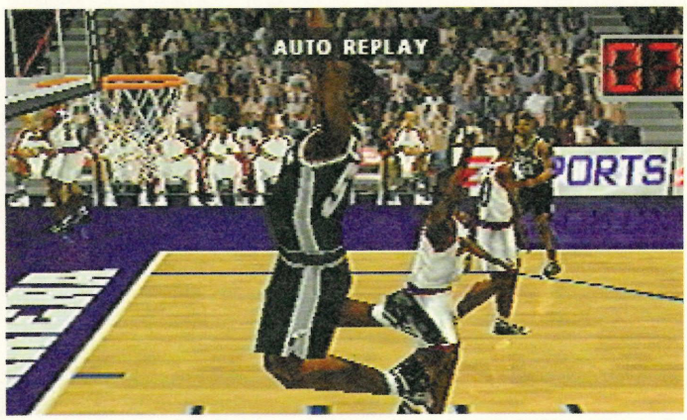
GRAPHICS	7
SOUND	7
GAMEPLAY	7
LIFESPAN	8

80%

PUBLISHER	DEVELOPER	GENRE	RELEASED	VERSION	PRICE	PLAYERS	PERIPHERALS	
Electronic Arts	EA Sports	Sports Sim	Out Now	UK	£39.99	1-8	Memory Card Analogue	Multi Tap

Dribbling their way onto court, EA Sports have delivered another sly pass. This time they turn their attention to basketball. Claire Webster shoots some hoops...

NBA Live 99

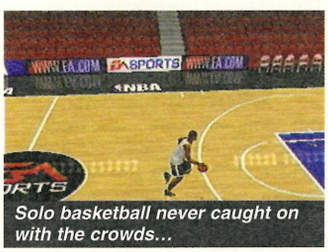


It's not one of the most well known game here in the UK, but basketball thrives in the United States and maybe this game will be better received over there. Don't get me wrong, the game itself is a lot of fun - as long as you're playing it for real, that is. On the PlayStation, though, I'm not so sure.

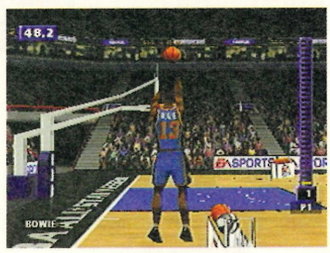
It seems this is the month for sports sims from EA Sports. In this issue alone we've reviewed Tiger Woods 99 and Knockout Kings 99 (which, like I said, was a bit of an all-time flop).

Just like Knockout Kings, when you first look at it, it seems quite impressive. Yet again EA Sports have included all the top players like Boston Celtic's Antoine Walker, who even does his little 'shimmy-shake' celebration dance. But when you look again, you see that it's all just decoration rather than playability.

There are plenty of different modes to choose from, such as Exhibition, Season, Playoffs, Three-Point Shoot-Out and even Practice so you can hone your ducking and weaving skills and all that business. However, when you actually play these, they're really all the same. In Exhibition, your chosen team only takes part in one match, but in Season you have to challenge everybody and just try and stay in the game.



Solo basketball never caught on with the crowds...



Dirty Foul

If you set the style setting to Arcade then play without any of the game rules. For instance, you can run out of court and do plenty of bad tackles with the opposition, though you still have the Shot Clock where you have only 20 seconds to either sink a few points or just hit the backboard. If your time runs out, play passes to the other team.

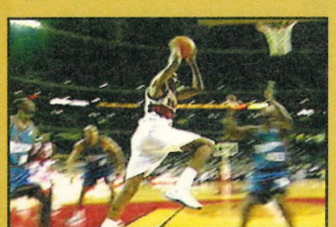
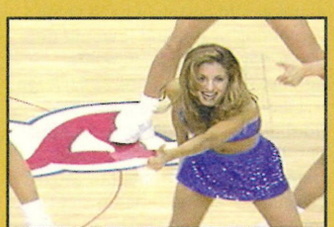
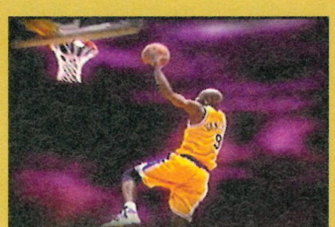
It's also possible to alter the quarter-length of your game, up to 12 minutes if you want to be on court for a while, or of you fancy just a quick dribble then you have the option to play for just three minutes. Before you start, it's a good idea to have a bit of a practice. And if you choose Practice Mode you find yourself on the basketball court alone with only the darn cool sound effects to keep you company.

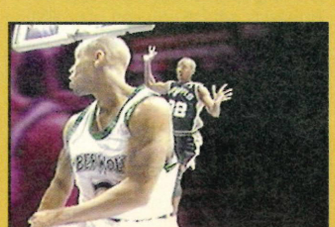
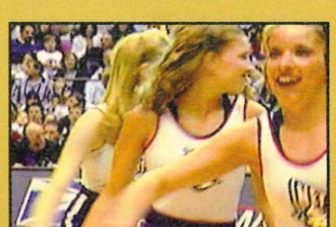
Whichever other mode you're playing in you hear the very realis-

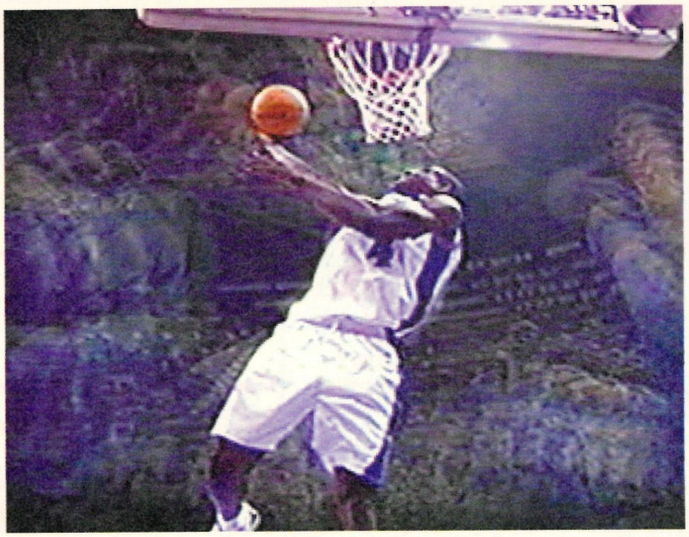
NBA Live 99 is one of those real disheartening games...

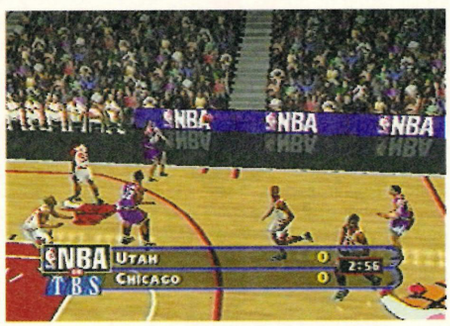
BRING ON THE DANCING GIRLS...

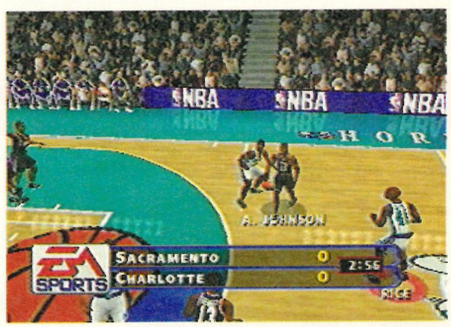
After a short advert for EA Sports' titles, showing off their motion capture, the intro to NBA Live 99 offers FMV clips of genuine basketball stars in action and NBA cheerleaders strutting their stuff. Impressive...

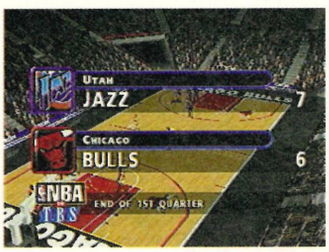




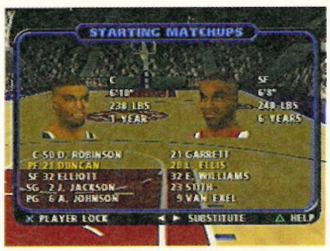



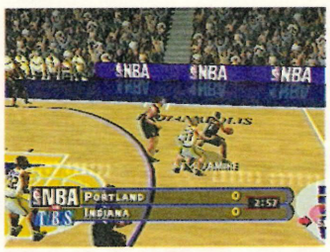


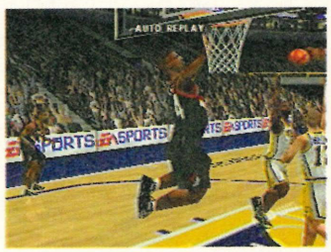






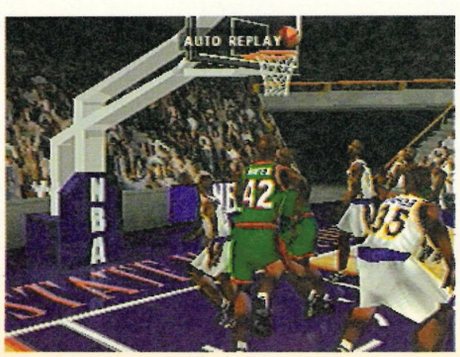






tic sound of the players' trainers squeaking on the polished court and the crowd roaring from the stands. The in-game commentary is pretty impressive as well. Don Poyer gives realistic run-downs on what the up-to-date score is, who's got control of the ball and also phrases such as 'he buries the shot' and 'count it baby!' (very American). I also can't go without telling you about the soundtrack. Personally, if I was going to have a game of basketball I'd definitely want a bit of hip-hop, funk and blues to help me long. If anything, the game's worth buying for the music alone.

The General Manager features allow you to customise everything, even the players. Again, like in Knockout Kings, each individual feature can be altered to just the way you want it from changing the colour of their hair, to making them have a particular attitude - they can be laid back, balanced (whatever that means), or hyped (it has to be seen to be believed!). If you fancy something more devious, you can plan a team strategy and even customise the game rules to suit yourself. EA also boast about the 'all new' feature of giving the NBA players facial expressions; watch out for them as you're given a run-down on each of your team's players. I think 'unimpressive' is the word I'd use to describe them, and that's only because I'm polite!



State of Play...

The question is, 'is the game playable'? After all, that's what you all want to know. To begin with, the controls take a bit of getting used to. The players are always packed in tight together, so sometimes it's difficult to see the person you're playing. Like in other sports sims, your rivals match how well you're playing, so winning becomes almost impossible. When they have the ball, you have no option but to use R1, which makes you run faster or else you're permanently playing catch-up. Obviously, the more time you spend playing the game, the better you become. You begin to get a feel for what each of your players is best at doing, whether it's scoring three-pointers or doing occasional slam dunk. It's also a lot more fun if you're competing against a friend; at least then it's an even game.

The graphics, unfortunately, are nothing to write home about either. Like in All Star Tennis and Knockout Kings, the officials look like cardboard cut-outs and the audience looks like it has had an unfortunate run-in with a steamroller. Even though the moves are motion-captured, the not-so-good animation lets the game's appearance down, but otherwise there's very little else to complain about.

Put NBA Live 99 next to Total NBA 97, and I'd say there was no competition on which to shell out your hard-earned cash on. NBA Live 99 is one of those real disheartening games where you can see that there's a lot of promise there (I sound like a school teacher now), but it's just not doing anything for you. For a game that's referred to as 'the Soul of Hoops', I'm afraid to say it doesn't quite live up to its name.

Claire Webster

SECOND OPINION

Another day, another fistful of dosh, and another basketball game from Electronic Arts. Yes, it has all the latest rosters (but who this side of the pond would notice if it hadn't?), but overall this game falls a little short of brilliance. For die-hards only.

Ian Osborne

THE SCORE

GRAPHICS	6
SOUND	8
GAMEPLAY	7
LIFESPAN	6

73%

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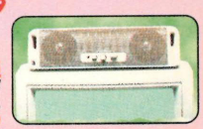

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Tekken 2	95% PY, 95% PP	£18.99
Tekken 3	94% PY, 96% PP	£35.99
Tobal No.1	94% PY, 91% PP	£14.99
Toshinden	76% PY	£18.99
Toshinden 2	74% PY	£16.99
Toshinden 3	78% PY, 76% PP	£29.99
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X Men V Streetfighter	82% PY	£32.99
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DRIVING / RACING

TOCA 2

The follow-up to the biggest driving game of last year, TOCA 2 boasts 1998 drivers, new stats, improved damage levels, weather effects, an all new pit lane and 10 secret vehicles, all displayed in hi-resolution. **RRP £44.99 Our price £35.99**

FELONY 11-79 VIGILANTE 8 MICRO MACHINES 3

Auto Destruct	84% PY, 77% PP	£19.99
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Moto Racer 2	87% PY, 91% PP	£32.99
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TOCA Touring Cars 2	92% PY	£35.99
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V Rally *Dual Shock*	87% PY, 94% PP	£18.99
Wipeout	94% PY, 78% PP	£18.99
Wipeout 2097	93% PY, 94% PP	£18.99
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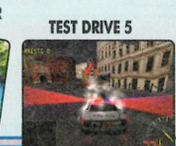
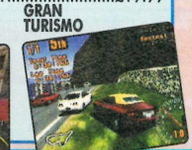

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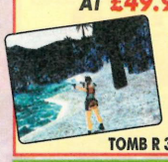

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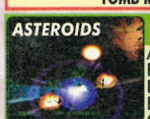
ARCADE SHOOTERS



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Asteroids	Due 4th December	£22.99
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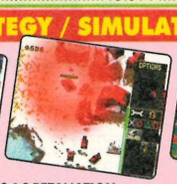
STRATEGY / SIMULATION



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V2000	82% PY	£30.99
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Actua Soccer 3	**92% PY**	**£29.99**
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Cool Boarders 2	81% PY, 92% PP	£29.99
Cool Boarders 3	84% PY	£29.99
Dead Ball Zone	84% PY, 88% PP	£19.99
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Int'l Superstar Soccer Pro	84% PY, 92% PP	£17.99
Int'l Superstar Soccer Pro '98	**92% PY, 94% PP**	**£31.99**
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Jonah Lomu Rugby	86% PY, 84% PP	£20.99
Knockout Kings	Due 4th December	£32.99
Libero Grande	67% PY	£29.99
Michael Owen's W L S '99	**N/A**	**£32.99**
Nagano Winter Olympics '98	83% PY	£20.99
NBA Live '98	87% PP	£24.99
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NFL Madden '99	N/A	£32.99
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Victory Boxing 2	90% PY	£32.99
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WWF In Your House	N/A	£19.99
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VICTORY BOXING 2 WWF WARZONE

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DIE HARD TRILOGY & ERAZOR GUN **£28.99**

Die Hard Trilogy	92% PY, 92% PP	£18.99
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Judge Dredd	62% PY	£24.99
Lethal Enforcers 1 & 2	30% PP	£24.99
Point Blank	**90% PY, 92% PP**	**£29.99**
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3D SHOOTERS

Alien Trilogy	**91% PY, 85% PP**	**£17.99**
Armoured Core	69% PY, 86% PP	£29.99
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Colony Wars	92% PY, 93% PP	£19.99
Colony Wars Vengeance	**93% PY**	**£34.99**
Dark Forces	75% PY, 84% PP	£24.99
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Duke Nukem 3D	**90% PY, 91% PP**	**£19.99**
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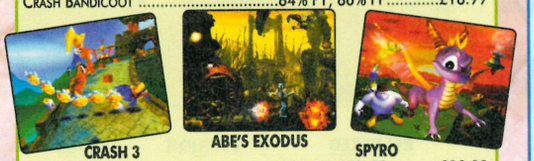
Ghost in the Shell	73% PY, 90% PP	£29.99
G Police	84% PY, 93% PP	£23.99
Life Force Tenka	86% PY, 82% PP	£19.99
Mech Warrior 2	91% PY, 83% PP	£19.99
SCARS	82% PY, 83% PP	£32.99

PLATFORM

Agent Armstrong	75% PP	£24.99
Baby Universe	22% PY	£25.99
Blasto	N/A	£29.99
Bomberman World	85% PY, 83% PP	£29.99
Castlevania	92% PY	£24.99
Crash Bandicoot	84% PY, 86% PP	£18.99



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Crash Bandicoot 2	86% PY, 87% PP	£29.99
Crash Bandicoot 3	**Due 11th December**	**£34.99**
Croc	78% PY, 84% PP	£18.99
Earthworm Jim 3D	Due January	£34.99
Frogger	69% PY, 88% PP	£24.99
Gex 3D	92% PY	£24.99
Heart of Darkness	**88% PP**	**£27.99**
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Megaman 8	82% PY	£26.99
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Mr Domino	72% PY, 70% PP	£32.99
Oddworld Abe's Exodus	**Out Now**	**£31.99**
Oddworld Abe's Oddysey	90% PY, 91% PP	£18.99
Pandemonium	90%	£18.99
Pandemonium 2	72% PY, 91% PP	**£22.99**
Pitfall 3D	70% PY	£19.99
Psybadek	N/A	£34.99
Rayman	87% PY	£17.99
Rascal	77% PY	£34.99
Skull Monkeys	83% PY	£24.99
Spyro The Dragon	**88% PY, 88% PP**	**£34.99**
T'ai Fu	Due 8th January '99	£30.99
Tombi	79% PP	£29.99
Trash It	55% PY, 57% PP	£29.99
Wild 9	72% PY, 90% PP	£31.99

FLYING

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Ace Combat 2	84% PY, 85% PP	£29.99
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RETRO / COMPILATION / MISCELLANEOUS

R-TYPES BUST A GROOVE FLUID

Bust-A-Groove	89% PY, 88% PP	£29.99
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Fluid	78% PY, 84% PP	£26.99
Midway Greatest Hits 2	N/A	
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Namco Museum Volume 2	70% PY, 63% PP	£22.99
Namco Museum Volume 4	79% PY, 67% PP	£24.99
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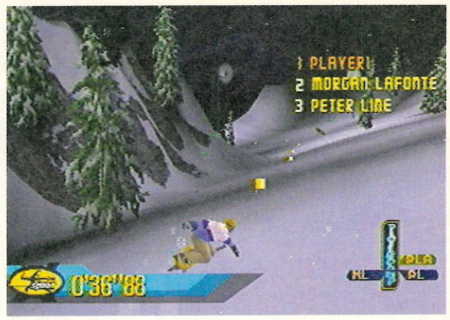


PUBLISHER	DEVELOPER	GENRE	RELEASED	VERSION	PRICE	PLAYERS	PERIPHERALS	
Sony CEE	Sony CEE	Sports Sim	February '99	UK	£39.99	1-2	Memory Card Analogue	Dual Shock

Is this game a real XXX experience, or is it frozen out by the other snowboarding sims reviewed this month? Russell Barnes goes on the piste...

X Games Pro Boarder

We haven't seen an awful lot of Sony's second Winter sports game until now, so we reckon now's a good time to slip into our fancy boarding togs for more extreme sports action courtesy of X Games Pro Boarder. Someone press 'Play' 'cos I've got some Green Day in the CD player and a six pack of Pepsi Max in the fridge; yyyeeeeaaaahhhh!

Every now and then a game pops up a little unexpectedly and takes us all by surprise. This is such a game, and frankly I'm quite excited. Even from the first look at the game you can tell it's going to be a Sony-powered scud missile of a game. It's got a flashy introduction sequence, snappy music and a well produced and polished exterior. As you move closer and check out the options menu for the first time, things don't change a bit. There's top-notch graphics and menu art, and you've got everything right there and accounted for. All the game modes, riders, boards and stats are there, as well as a small video library's worth of snowboarding FMV. We've got a full check list so far; it looks good, sounds good and is about as cutting edge as Keith from the Prodigy wielding his garden shears. But does it play as well as this years best snowboarding game so far, Cool Boarders 3? I had bloody good fun finding out and that's for sure...

Get down to Blockbusters and rent it out for a week

Graphically the game is excellent. The boarders are well animated and the backgrounds fly by quickly and smoothly. The tricks are beautifully animated and, when executed correctly, look the bee's knees, meeting the high standards set by Cool Boarders 3 with ease. The courses are always very busy-looking, with

COURSE OF EVENTS...

There are five events in XGPB, each requiring the player to adopt different skills and, more often than not, different boards in their quest to perform the greatest stunts and highest scoring runs. Here they are in all their glory:

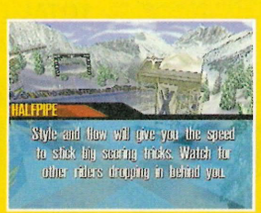
HALF PIPE
Slipping down the half pipe has rarely been this good. You're pitted against two computer-controlled opponents in a bid to string together as many high-scoring tricks as is humanly possible within the two-and-a-half-minute time limit and the finishing line.
Pose to the max by jumping clean over an opponent as they're in mid flight and still have time for a spectacular tail grab.

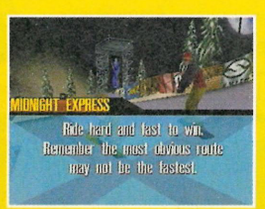
MIDNIGHT EXPRESS
Speed and agility are of the essence here as you speed down a mountain course in the middle of the night, avoiding trees and obstacles as you search for wicked short-cuts and trick opportunities. You need all your wits about you to get through this one.
The first across the line has first tabs on the groupies in the crowd. Snowboarders always get the chicks - I think I'll rush out and buy myself a board!

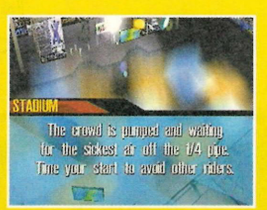
STADIUM
The crowd are well pumped up and want you to risk life and limb to get the biggest air off the quarter pipe in the evening's biggest crowd pulling event. You're steaming down a ski jump slope gathering as much speed as possible before you hit the ramp at the end. The winner of this event is the boarder to perform the best trick in two and a half minutes. Watch out for bodies in your path, though; this one's a free-for-all, and very exciting.

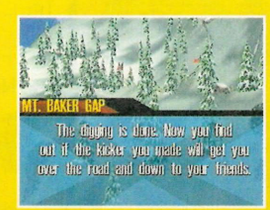
MT. BAKER GAP
Similar to the Stadium event this one, but about ten times more dangerous! The idea here is to jump clear over a massive crevasse, accumulating the biggest air time and stunt points. It's not easy to make it right over the other side, but once you have you've got extra point opportunities waiting for you before the line. Once your two and a half minutes are out the competitor who performed the single highest-scoring run is the winner.

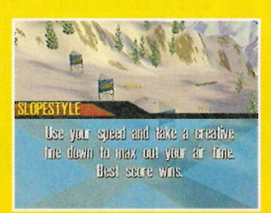
SLOPESTYLE
The idea here is to travel down a huge mountain full of rail slides, cars, helicopters (?) jumps, cliffs and more, accumulating the most stunt points before you cross the line or the time runs out. This mode allows you to combine jumps, rail slides and tricks all together to produce an almost unlimited number of point-scoring possibilities. It's by far the most versatile mode of play, and beats Cool Boarders 3's version of the same event hands down; beauty!

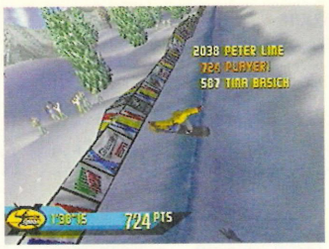


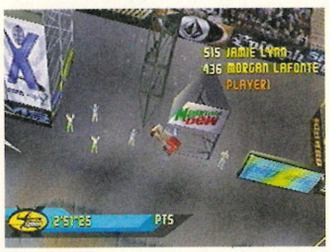












Bill the carpenter hated working on scaffolding, especially when he sawed through a plank he was standing on by mistake...

Once you've beaten all of the individual events in XGPB, there isn't an awful lot left for you to do

lots of nice light sourcing on the night stages, great crowd effects and very little break-up in the scenery around you. Gameplay-wise the game is bordering on faultless. The controls are effortless, the stages are wonderfully designed with tricks and stunts in mind and the challenge of beating your opponents is very taxing.

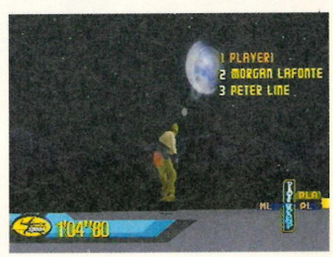
Control Freak

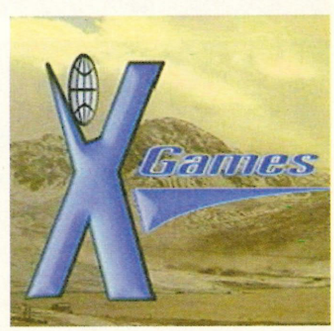
Considering there are three snowboarding games reviewed in this issue alone (two of them by the same company), it's amazing that each of them have all had completely different control methods. XGPB has a very intuitive system that can create fantastic tricks and stunts using minimal button combinations and little direction pad-bashing. This is a stark contrast to Phat Air, with its ropy combinations and procedures that puts the dampeners on an already-dreary game. XGPB lets you can create a large range of tricks using a single button with a bit of air time, thanks to three allotted trick buttons and a trick preparation button. If you don't want to set up a complex trick (by holding the Jump button), you can just press the quick Ollie button to jump up to rail slides and the like. As you would expect, the shoulder buttons help you to manoeuvre to the left and right more effectively, but combine these with different tricks half way through a different trick and the results are totally different. You don't have to be a mathematician or a snowboarding expert to work out there's a lot of tricks to be found here.

But...

Once you've beaten all of the individual events in XGPB, there really isn't an awful lot left for you to do. It has a playable two-player split-screen option which deserves credit. It also allows you to take part in a circuit event that where you play all the events one after the other against the computer characters in a knockout format. It only lets you continue three times, which is a great challenge on the Professional setting, but that just isn't anywhere near enough. Don't get me wrong; what's there's excellent, but it's just not enough to warrant a full retail price sticker. If you're a games collector with plenty of spare cash who also happens to love snowboarding, X Games Pro Boarder is the one for you. If not, get down to Blockbusters and rent it out for a week.

Russell Barnes





SECOND OPINION

What's here's great, but there just isn't enough in the game to justify a £40 asking price. If it were not for the Cool Boarders series, which improves with every game, this might be a worthy purchase, but as it stands, it's as redundant as the Pope's wedding tackle.

Ian Osborne

THE SCORE

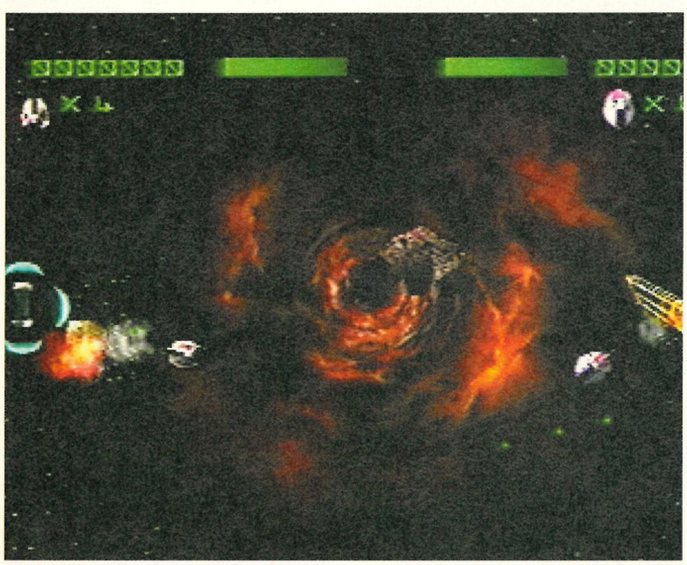
GRAPHICS	8
SOUND	8
GAMEPLAY	8
LIFESPAN	5

75%

PUBLISHER	DEVELOPER	GENRE	RELEASED	VERSION	PRICE	PLAYERS	PERIPHERALS
Activision	Boat Drinks	Shoot-'em-up	Out Now	UK	£29.99	1-2	Memory Card Analogue Dual Shock

Floating boulders, nippy ships and an update of a game from the dawn of time. Can Asteroids still excite? Ian Osborne gets his rocks off...

Asteroids



As a wise man once said, 'what goes around, comes around'. Or was that Chumbawamba? Anyway, whoever it was could've had video games in mind when he said it. Hardly a month goes by without a new retro compilation hitting the shelves, taking a cluster of coin-ops from yesteryear and putting them together in a single package. They're great for nostalgia value, but do they justify the asking price at £40 for four or five geriatric titles demanding almost no work in converting to the PSX? Opinions are divided, but Activision have bravely blazed their own trail with this one, a cut-price single-game pack featuring a great 90s update of Atari's Asteroids and the original 1979 version thrown in as a bonus game.

The update is more than just a cosmetic excercise in spit and polish (anyone remember the updated version of Rainbow Islands on the Bubble Bobble Pack? No? Never mind, it wasn't worth remembering). Instead it's a complete overhaul, bringing the game into the modern era (though hardly taxing the PlayStation), while remaining faithful to the original. Although a scrolling screen was toyed with, it was decided this wasn't really Asteroids - instead the game retains the original's static screen, with both horizontal and vertical wrap-around. Thus, for example, if you fly off the top of the screen, you immediately re-appear at the bottom, travelling and firing exactly as you were before. Rocks and bullets also wrap around, so watch your back when near the edge of the screen.

Breakin' Rocks...

Like the original, your craft is controlled using a rotate-and-thrust method. By pressing Left or Right you turn on the spot, with the inevitable buttons for thrusting (beware the effects of inertia when you release it) and firing. You can also hyperspace, vanishing and re-appearing somewhere else entirely. Great for getting you out of trouble, but also prone to getting you killed if you re-appear on top of a rock. New for the 90s version are a whole host of extra weapons gained by picking up power-ups flown to you from Mission Control (there's a quaint plot about clearing space lanes of debris, illustrated by some cool cut-scenes). These include Armageddon, which spins your ship while firing rapidly, Homing Missiles which target your foe, Gun Satellites

> **Asteroids' main strength is in its simplicity**

SHIP-SHAPE AND BRISTOL FASHION...

There are three different ships to choose from in Asteroids. And here they are...

DAGGER

RAPIER

LONGSWORD

A great blaster at a cool price

which revolve around your ship and fire with you, and Mines, which are as obvious as they are useless. You can also flip your ship through 180 degrees instead of rotating it.

The asteroids themselves differ from the original game too. Sure, there's still the big boulders which split into medium-sized rocks when hit, which in turn split into two pebbles, but there are also some new hazards. Space debris doesn't split at all and is hard to deflect, and takes several shots to shatter. Watch out too for indestructible asteroids and crystal rocks that regenerate after being hit.

The space ships are still there too; not just the big ship/small saucer foes offered by the original, but legions of craft that move and attack using differing patterns. This brings us to the game's biggest problem. The ships are cool, and a welcome change from the rocks and space trash, but they're just too tough. Some of the smaller craft move at an incredible rate and fire directly on your ship. Their weapons, glowing red missiles, are easy to spot but difficult to avoid as they move so blimmin' fast. You've hardly time to activate your shields before they're on you, and even if you succeed, they fire so rapidly they probably get you anyway. I'm not suggesting they make the learning curve too steep - they're a legitimate hazard, but their toughness makes them far more dangerous than anything else on the level, destroying the game's balance.

Level Clear...

The game is broken down into a series of sectors, each containing a large number of individual levels - the first, for example, has 15. This works well, and keeps you on the edge of your seat throughout. The levels are a little short, though - perhaps instead of summoning the wormhole taking you to the next level after a single wave of asteroids are dispatched, you should get several waves per level and fewer levels. This is hardly a major malfunction - the game only loads between sectors, not levels, so there are few pauses anyway. As the game progresses, sectors introduce their own problems such as the black hole in Sector Two which pulls you into the centre of the screen and destroys your ship if you stay there too long.

Perhaps Asteroids' main strength is in its simplicity. You can see the entire playing area, so there's no excuse for not spotting an on-coming hazard. The controls are complex at first, but you soon get used to them - once you're au fait with your craft, there's no excuse for not taking out the space debris. Indeed, the only thing that can stop you is your own mistakes - don't blame it on an awkward section of the game, or an unadvertised obstacle.

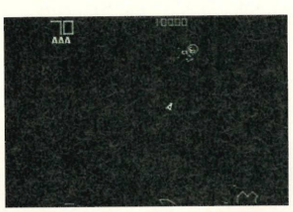
If you die in Asteroids, the only person you can blame is yourself. This is what thrilled the punters almost 20 years ago, and this is what makes Activision's upgrade so cool. So what if there's no 3D and the graphics, while great to look at, don't even approach the PlayStation's limits? It's a great blaster at a cool price.

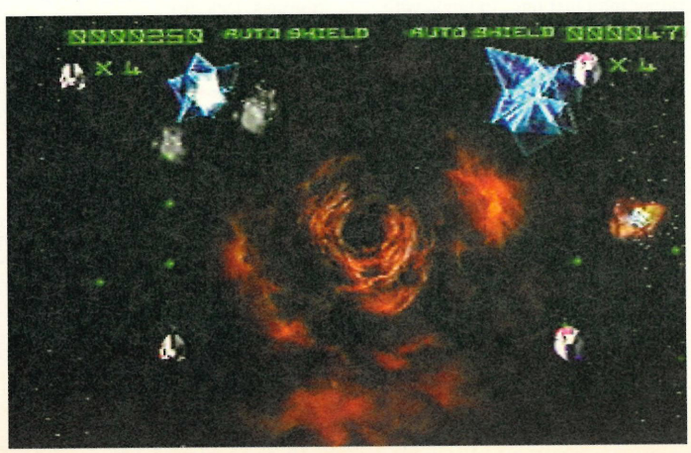
Ian Osborne

HOOKED ON CLASSICS...

It's inevitable that the original Asteroids vector graphics-based arcade outing would find its way into the updated version. Blast the old-style rock found in the first sector and the original game is yours. An easily-won bonus if ever we saw one.

It's great fun, even after all these years - believe it or not, the original coin-op was released in 1979.





SECOND OPINION

I agree with Ian's overall comments on the game, especially on the levels being too short - fewer stages with more waves of asteroids would make more sense. It's good that Activision have the sense to release it at a knockdown price too.

Russell Barnes

THE SCORE

GRAPHICS	6
SOUND	7
GAMEPLAY	9
LIFESPAN	8

80%

PUBLISHER	DEVELOPER	GENRE	RELEASED	VERSION	PRICE	PLAYERS
Sony CEE	Sony CEE	RPG	Out Now	UK	£44.99	1

PERIPHERALS
Memory Card

An RPG which brings 3D action and top-down perspective together, Wild ARMS is here to do battle with Final Fantasy VII and Alundra, but will it be the victor? Ask Claire Webster...

Wild ARMS

Filgaia used to be a prosperous planet where humans and elws worked together under the protection of the Guardians. Peace was soon disrupted by the demons, who ravaged the once-harmonious world in an effort to take supreme control. A savage war was fought and the humans were eventually victorious. However, left behind was barren wasteland and very little hope of being able to recreate

> **Wild ARMS is a wonderful RPG to play**

the destroyed city. And as if that wasn't enough, the demons left the Guardians very little power to protect the remaining population. Without this power, the whole planet began to suffer and the humans had to learn to fend for themselves.

Now, a thousand years later, Filgaia is returning to its former glory thanks to the two kingdoms of Adelhyde and Arctica. But war threatens again, as the Demons are preparing another attack and this time they'll not lose the fight.

Going into Battle

Guess what? It's us who are going to have to save the world again (surely there's only so many times we can do this?), only this time we're playing three characters rather than just one. To begin with we have to choose which human we want to play with first, as each one has to complete an introductory level. The only female character is Cecilia, a confused 17-year-old Princess who keeps imagining voices in her pretty little head. She has lots of magical powers and was trained within the confines of the Abbey walls. Or you can choose Rudy and complete his adventure first. He's an outcast who was thrown out of his hometown for causing too much trouble. Unfortunately he doesn't know any magic, but when it comes to man-on-man combat he's the toughest fighter of the three. Finally we come to Jack, who's the eldest and most experienced of the characters. He is a treasure hunter who must escape from an underground abyss by mastering the old, ancient art of the Fast Draw.

Each of the characters has his or her own special skills which they acquire on their journeys. Jack, for example has a pet rodent who is able to reach objects and chests that he can't get to himself. Cecilia can create her own spells by combining spells on a magical 'Crest Graph'; the more graphs she collects, the more spells she can conjure up.

Pick a Puzzle

Cecilia's quest begins in the Abbey, but before she starts her journey she has a dream. A voice speaks to her and tells her 'the power is in the book'. This is your first clue, and as you

MEET THE HEROES...

Trying to save the world from demons is a difficult task. It sounds like a job for three worthy fighters who make the Guardians proud and restore Filgaia to it's former glory...

CECILIA LYNNE ADELHYDE

Cecilia is the daughter of the noble King Adelhyde. At only 17 years of age, she is known as The Innocent One. The young Princess is able to communicate with the spirits of the Guardians. She was trained the difficult art of magic at Curan Abbey and now knows many of the most complicated spells. Being the only female character, she is the weakest (typical) and most vulnerable in the trio.

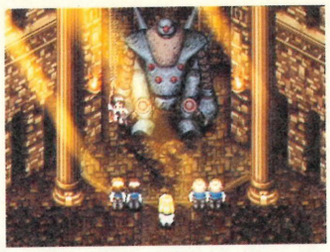
RUDY ROUGHKNIGHT

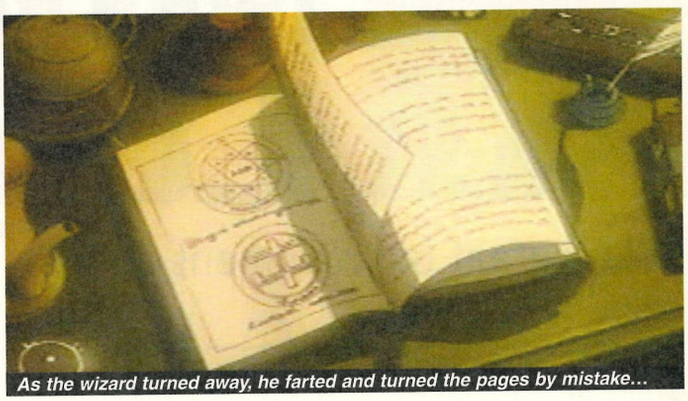
This guy looks like he's had a rough night, but as he's only a young and impressionable 15-year-old, we'll let him off.

Rudy has wandered around the world of Filgaia for many months, so has gained some valuable experience. He can use many ancient weapons which he finds left over from when the demons came, which makes him a bit of a tough guy.

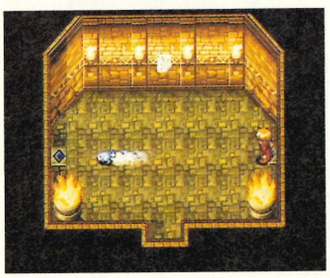
JACK VAN BURACE

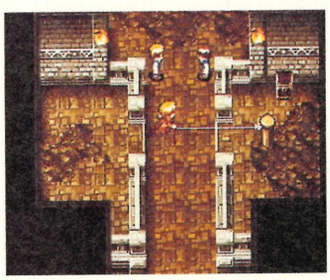
Jack is a treasure hunter who has spent many years gathering valuables. He is the oldest of the characters and owns a Wind Mouse to keep him company. He hopes to master the art of the Fast Draw, which is a series of sword attacks that he can use in combat.





As the wizard turned away, he farted and turned the pages by mistake...





Guess what? It's us who are going to have to save the world again

waddle around the ancient abbey there are plenty more. In nearly every room, you come across some friends to have a chat with and they point you in the right direction. When you enter the library, the librarian asks you to help him clear up the mess he's made (cheeky blighter), by finding a magic pocket watch that reverses time. That way the books are tidied off the floor. So off you go in search of the watch, only to pick up even more goodies on the way, such as a Crest Graph which you can take to the Magic Guild and make spells. I'm not going to give away any more as it's no fun finding out what you have to do for yourselves. Bear this in mind, though; people are worth talking to more than once.

The men's adventures are a bit different to Cecilia's. Jack and his furry blue Rodent, Hanpan start by arguing about whether Jack should try and access the Temple of Memory. When Jack attempts to open the temple, he's sent down a trap door which opens up underneath him. He crash lands in an abyss and decides to do his treasure hunter thing and scour around for valuables. You must send Hanpan to open some of the chests because Jack can't reach (sometimes it's useful having a rodent that can fly!).

Every now and again you also transport to another room where you come face to face with some enemies to kill. If you manage to slay them successfully, you gain extra energy and money that's called 'Gella'. Jack is searching for the 'Ultimate Power' in his adventure, though what shape or form it comes in is still a mystery.

It's All Talk...

Rudy is a wandering youth, or a Dream Chaser as the inhabitants of Surf Village call him. Again, Rudy can explore the village and gain clues to help him and collect bombs, energy and also throw some chickens and crates around just for fun. One of the exits out of the village takes him onto a huge map where he has to destroy lots of enemies to earn money. Use your gun to blast Pillbugs and skeleton fighters to smithereens (it's very satisfying).

Once each character has completed their introductory quest they all travel to the kingdom of Adelhyde where they all meet up. Even when they have all got together, they still have to spit up for various reasons. However, to reassure you as to where your companions currently are, you can view their position in a little window at the top of the screen whenever you stand still. When the three are together, the one which is 'active' is the most useful. The information that people tell you in the game sometimes depends on which character you're currently using, so switching from one to another lets you pick up more useful info.

Wild ARMS is a wonderful RPG to play. It's not quite as involved or as famous as Final Fantasy VII, but it's a lot simpler to understand. This game has a lot of similarities with Alundra, even if it is a little more complicated. But saying that, it does have a lot of unique features and qualities that no other role-playing game has attempted before. Some people just want games where they can just beat their opponents to a pulp, but others merely want something which will give them hours of puzzling pleasure. If your cup of tea is the latter, then this one will be right up your street.

Claire Webster

SECOND OPINION

Wild ARMS is a little slow and a little samey, but overall it's a cool Japanese-style RPG. When you charge a character ready for a run they look like they're farting, but what the hey? The game's good enough to keep you busy while you wait for Suikoden 2 and FFVIII.

Ian Osborne

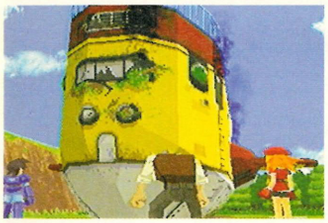
THE SCORE

GRAPHICS	7
SOUND	7
GAMEPLAY	8
LIFESPAN	8

80%

PUBLISHER	DEVELOPER	GENRE	RELEASED	VERSION	PRICE	PLAYERS	PERIPHERALS
Virgin Interactive Entertainment	Capcom	RPG / 3D Adventure	Out Now	UK	£39.99	1	Memory Card

The all-new Megaman Legends has had a change of image. Now in 3D, this old timer has decided a change is as good as a rest, But does Claire Webster agree?



Megaman Legends

It is a great improvement on its predecessors...

Imagine if your world was completely covered by endless water and you were forced to camp out on tiny patches of land scattered over the ocean surface. People who inhabit this world have no choice but to depend on old technology driven by quantum refractors, a very powerful source of energy. Luckily this is all just a fairy tale for you and me, but to Megaman and his friends it's a harsh reality.

The refractors the people need are all buried in ancient ruins under the ground and in the sea; only the explorers called Diggers can retrieve them. At one time the Diggers' only purpose was to find these refractors, but now it has come to light that there is the possibility of finding the hidden treasure known as Mother Lode. The size of the treasure is said to be so huge that if found, it would provide energy forever.

One day, a famous digger named Barrel Casket found a baby at an archaeological site. The child was named Megaman Voulnut and together with his granddaughter, Barrel raised Megaman as his own.

Mega Sales

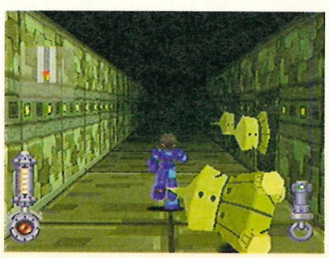
The Megaman series has always gone down a storm in Japan. In fact it now has its own cult status over there, and this one will probably only add to the excitement, as never before has one of the games been in 3D.

In Legends, your mission is to seek out the Mother Lode with the help of your cronies; Professor Barrel, Roll and Data. You begin in a dark and dingy passageway, and Roll informs you where to go over an intercom-type thing. All you have to do here is destroy the ReaperBots, which are rather ugly-looking robots that seem to grow in size through the levels and there's a big boss at the end that you have to shoot at with your strap-on Busta Gun before you can go on to the next stage of the adventure.

Once you've passed through the magic doors in faded to back, you find you've crash-landed on Kattleox Island (without even knowing it). When you've dragged yourself out of the carnage, you must make yourself acquainted with the locals. if you talk to them nicely, they point you in the right direction and give you missions to accomplish. Along the way, there's extra life to pick up and also more attachments for your metal suit (more stuff to weigh you down!). Most add-ons appear once you have slaughtered an enemy Reaperbot and you have to hurry to collect them all as they seem to transport off somewhere.

The graphics for this game are pretty disappointing. It's bright and colourful, I'll give it that. However the backgrounds are very simple and blocky, and not much to look at really. And as for the controls, it takes a while to get used to them, especially when you try to turn Megaman around. All that aside, it's a very playable game to have a tinkle on and it is a great improvement on its predecessors.

Claire Webster

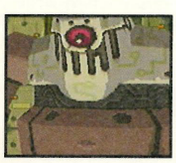


INTRODUCING THE MAIN CHARACTERS...

Megaman and his friends join forces to search for the hidden 'Mother Lode'...

MEGAMAN VOLNUTT
This is the main man, found by Barrel when he was only a baby. Volnutt is really a Megaman-series robot (and not a lot of people know that!). He was created to enforce human population control by a computer called Edin. You can find out about his past when you see him taking on huge mechs and robots.

DATA
Data is Megaman's little monkey friend who was discovered with Megaman by Barrel. He can replenish Volnutt's health, and as his name suggests, you can also save data when he's around.



REAVERBOT
This is just one of the nasty robots you find as you work yourself around the game. Some are a lot smaller than this one, but they all do the same amount of damage if you get injured by one. Most of the army can be found deep within the ruins. All of them are devoted to Edin.

BARREL CASKET
Barrel was the kind old fella who first found Megaman. He's Roll's grandfather and is a very good friend of the Mayor of the island. Unfortunately, though, he doesn't enter into the game very often.

ROLL CASKET
This is Megaman's sweet little sister and she's a dab hand when it comes to machines. She watches out for her little brother and talks to him over an intercom while he's off digging around.

SECOND OPINION

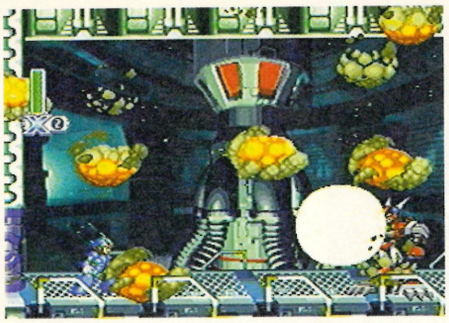
Hmmm, a bit generous, I think - I know Megaman has his fans, but this is a very tired rehash of old ideas put into a shoddy 3D environment. It's fun for a while, but like the Betamax video recorder, flared trousers and U2, Megaman has had his day.

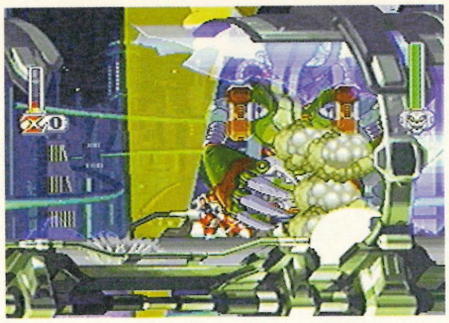
Ian Osborne

THE SCORE

GRAPHICS	6
SOUND	7
GAMEPLAY	8
LIFESPAN	9

82%

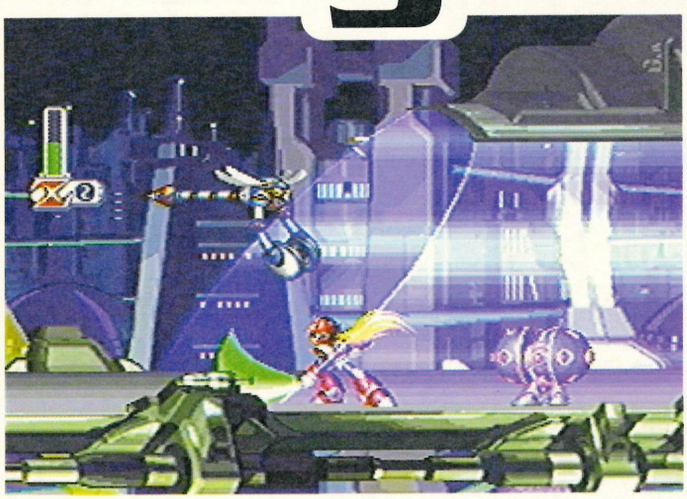


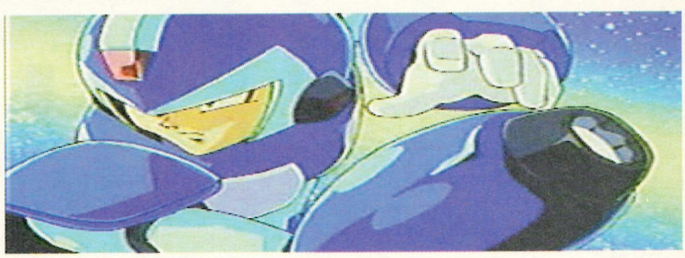


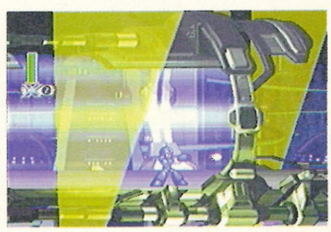
PUBLISHER	DEVELOPER	GENRE	RELEASED	VERSION	PRICE	PLAYERS	PERIPHERALS
Virgin Interactive Entertainment	Capcom	RPG / Adventure	Out Now	UK	£39.99	1	Memory Card

It's THE month for Megaman, but is this one better than Legends? Claire Webster starts getting serious...

Megaman x4







There's a war on. It's between you and the Repliforce and at the moment, it's definitely not you that's winning. You've been given the mission directive, 'take out the bad guys using any means possible' and you aim to succeed.

Namco have taken a step backwards this time and shifted to some side-scrolling action (just like the old days), though they have made some improvements to the graphics, with interesting backgrounds and very detailed characters. Megaman Legends pales in comparison as far as the plot is concerned. All you're given in this one is a long-winded description of what's going on in the battle against the Evil Colonel; decipher it if you dare.

Something else that's different in x4 is Megaman himself. This time he's really taking his role seriously. If you think the armour he wears in Legends is pretty hefty, you ain't seen nothin' yet! He's got head gear and extra padding all over and, believe it or not, you can even collect extra add-ons as you progress.

Even though Megaman is rather weighed down by his attire, he's still nimble on his feet. The moves he performs are a lot more sophisticated in x4. He does very impressive super-slides that give him bursts of speed at just the right moment, and he's also got the ability to jump onto tall obstacles, which I recommend you have a go at because you can actually completely ignore your enemies and oncoming fireballs and just keep on running.

If you're a sucker for the classic style, stick with x4

Mega Moves

Unlike Megaman Legends you have the choice of two characters to play, obviously Megaman himself, and then there's Zero. At first you can't quite decide whether the character is a boy or a girl, but apparently the Japanese like to give their male characters a pony tail - and why not? Zero is only a little different to Megaman. Instead of a gun for a weapon, he's got a flashy whip to slash his enemies. He also does the usual super-slide move, and can jump just as high as Megaman.

All you seem to come across along your way, whether you're playing Megaman or Zero, is boss after boss and they're all hard to destroy. First you come to your 'average' boss, like Frost Walrus for instance. To kill him, you must make sure you've already collected some Rising Fire from the Magma Dragon, and when he turns his back, hit him where it hurts! And if that's not complicated enough to achieve, at the same time you have to avoid the icicles that he keeps firing at you.

Next you have to exterminate the End Bosses, which (unbelievably) is even harder than beating the average ones! There are lots of skills to learn and you have to get to know all their different moves, which is not an easy task.

If I was to advise which Megaman's the better one, I'd probably say they both have their good and bad points and are both worth a look. If you're a sucker for the classic style, stick with x4, as you won't be disappointed. Both of them are out now, so if you're lucky, you might be able to scrounge a post-Christmas present.

Claire Webster

SECOND OPINION

With its cutsey graphics and Japanese cartoon animations, Megaman x4 should keep the traditionalists happy. Technologically the game would be more at home on the SNES, but the gameplay's there. This series will go on forever, like Bruce Forsyth...

Ian Osborne

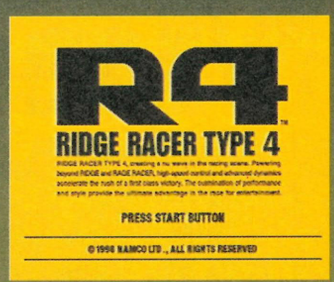
THE SCORE

GRAPHICS	7
SOUND	7
GAMEPLAY	7
LIFESPAN	8

79%

PUBLISHER	DEVELOPER	GENRE	RELEASED	VERSION	PRICE	PLAYERS	PERIPHERALS
Namco	Namco	Driving	Out Now	Japanese	£60-70 (varies)	1-2	Memory Card Analogue Dual Shock Steering Wheel NegCon Jogcon

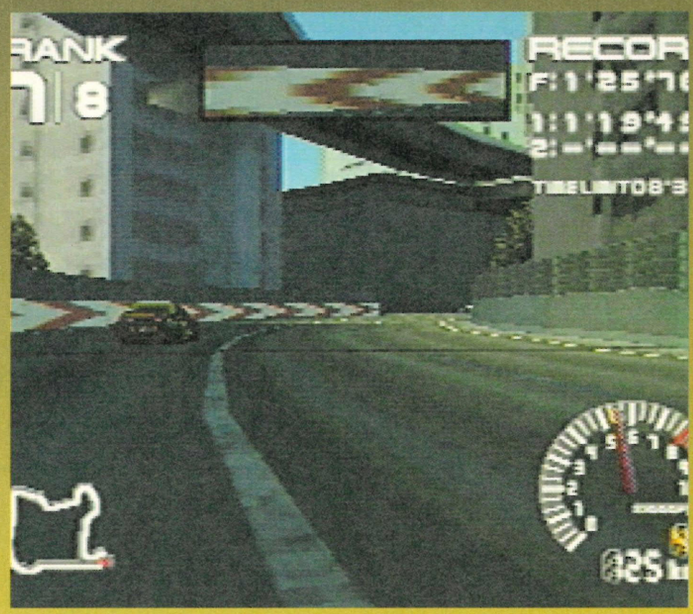
From the land of the rising yen comes this high-speed cash cow. Will Ridge Racer Type 4 establish the original PSX racer as the benchmark by which others will be judged, or will it crash and burn? Russell Barnes takes his position on the starting grid...



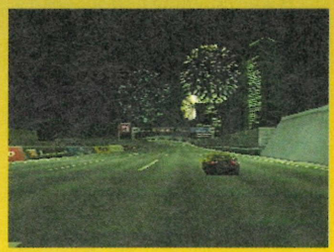
Ridge Racer Type 4

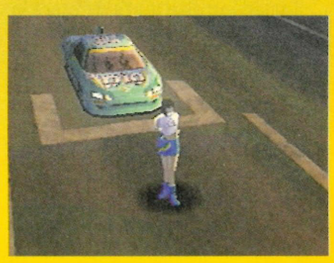
Ahh Ridge Racer, eh? You just can't beat any of 'em. There are three previous Ridge Racer games floating around at the moment, and we've got the lot - we just can't get enough of it. Ridge Racer was the first PSX title to offer true arcade thrills. Not far behind came RR Revolution, boasting more cars, more track variants and slightly flashier graphics with the two-player link-up. Rage Racer was next in line, using a GT-style 'buy and upgrade' philosophy to mesmerise its users. Now it's the turn of Ridge Racer Type 4, and frankly I'm bloody excited; are we talking GT beater or what? Don your crash helmet and matching fireproof gloves, and come along with me...

Let's talk about graphics - we've got to do it sometime, so we may as well get it out of the way now. 'Spankingly gorgeous' is a phrase that suits RR T4 down to the ground. It's still blatantly Ridge Racer graphics, which is no bad thing as I'm sure you'll agree, but it's had a 1998 face lift that puts the likes of Max Power Racing and F1 '97 to shame. The graphics are silky-smooth with no glitching, no pop-up and definitely none of the break-up that dogged the original. New additions include fantastic light sourcing, more detailed cars and backgrounds, and courses to die for. Next, of course, comes sound. Fans of all the other RR games know it's been of the highest quality in the past, and RR T4 is no exception. It has a very upbeat jungle and sometimes ambient soundtrack, which really sets the scene and gets the adrenaline pumping. Engine sounds haven't changed much, but just enough to keep with the times, and the commentator is different (thankfully). He actually talks you through how



> 'Spankingly gorgeous' is a phrase that suits RR T4 down to the ground





DO YOU WANT TO BE ON MY TEAM?

As part of RR T4's new format, when you choose to take part in the Grand Prix you're prompted to choose a team you'd like to race for. Choosing your team determines the difficulty rating of the competition. The four teams are as follows...

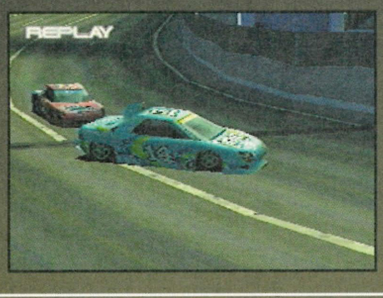
R.C. Micro Mouse Mappy (Easy)
Pac Racing Club (Normal)
R.T. Solvalou (Hard)
Dig Racing Club (Expert)

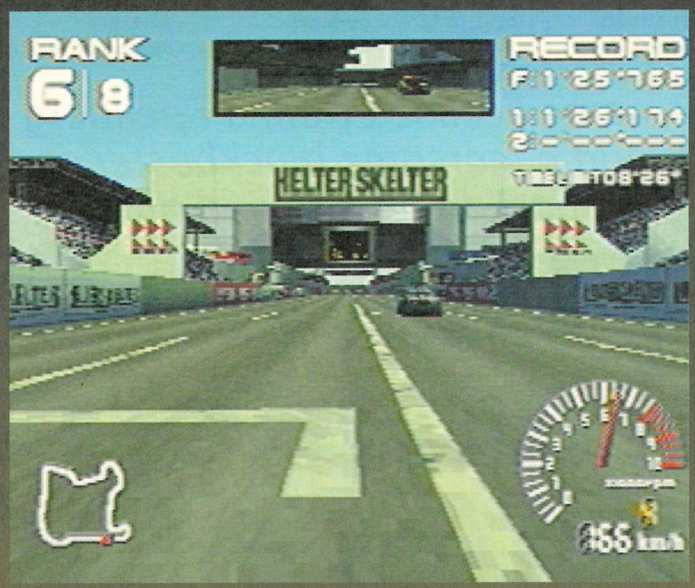
When this is complete, you have a little pep talk with your new manager (unfortunately in the form of Jap text), and then you're prompted to choose your make of car from a possible four. The four makes are basically the same when you start your Grand Prix, minus one difference that splits the cars into two groups. Two of the cars are suited to a 'Grip Racing Technique', and the other two are more suited to the 'Drift Racing Technique'. The Drift Technique is most familiar from the other RR games, but see the Grip and Drift Techniques boxout to find out more. The four makes of car are as follows, but don't panic; there are shit-loads more cars to come within these four makes!

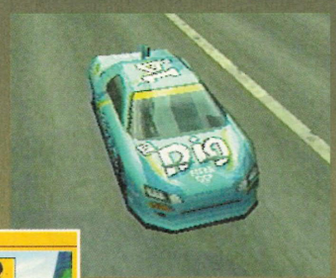
Assoluto	Drift Technique
Lizard	Drift Technique
Age Solo	Grip Technique
Terrazi	Grip Technique

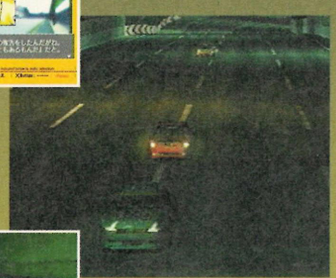
GRIP AND DRIFT TECHNIQUES...

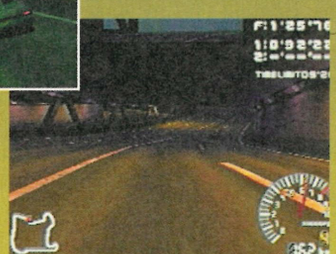
The difference between the two techniques is really quite straightforward. The Grip technique allows the cars to hold the road better. They corner sharper, but don't skid very reliably. The Drift Technique, in contrast, allows the back end of the car to pop out after only minimal coaxing. It's great fun taking those corners side-on! The main point is the fact that it allows Namco to produce twice as many cars that handle and drive differently. We're not entirely sure how many cars there are in the entire game, but we're pretty sure they're gained not only by going through the Grand Prix but by improving your lap times on the Time Attack mode. There is also a Challenge type mode where you can race on one of the courses against a new, fast car. This could also be the key to collecting all of the cars. We've been reliably informed there are between 200 and 300 in all; it's hard to believe, but until we get our hands on a UK translation of the game, we'll just have to keep on playing...











MORE FOR YOUR MONEY...

Included in the box-set edition of RR T4 is a lovely T-shirt and a copy of the original Ridge Racer, but also a free pad called the Jogcon. This wonderfully weird pad allows you to drive with the aid of a little steering wheel in the place of the analogue sticks. The wheel is analogue and, believe it or not, it's also force feedback, which means you feel every corner and bump just like the real thing. It doesn't have shock compatibility, but it's great all the same. The bonus copy of Ridge Racer is also compatible with the Jogcon, but not quite to the same extent.

SECOND OPINION

This is a really great drive, but there just isn't enough game there. You complete it far too quickly. Hopefully this will be beefed up in the UK version - Ridge Racer Type 4 could become the next Gran Turismo.

Ian Osborne

Are we talking GT beater or what?

to use some of the options screens, which is great because at times they're pretty inaccessible despite most of it being Jap and he speaks English.

horsepower for Courses...

There are eight courses in all now, each totally different in every respect and not just variations of an old one you're raced on several times before. When you first start the game you have access to four of the eight courses on Time Attack mode. To open the remaining courses you must play the game in full Grand Prix mode, which takes place over three heats. As you progress through the heats you gain new cars (depending on your performance and position) until you complete the competition. Once this is done it would be easy to say that you've completed the game, and in many ways I suppose you have (it took me one afternoon to complete the Grand Prix on Easy, then Hard).

All in all RR T4 is a great game let down only by its rather short challenge. Real fans of RR will be tickled pink, though, by the games innovations and improvements. It's just whether on not you're happy to keep playing the same courses over and over again in the quest to gain all of the cars. Watch out for a more in-depth review of the English version, if and when it becomes available; there's just too much Jap text to make a full report at present, so get down your local import emporium to see it for yourself.

Russell Barnes

THE SCORE

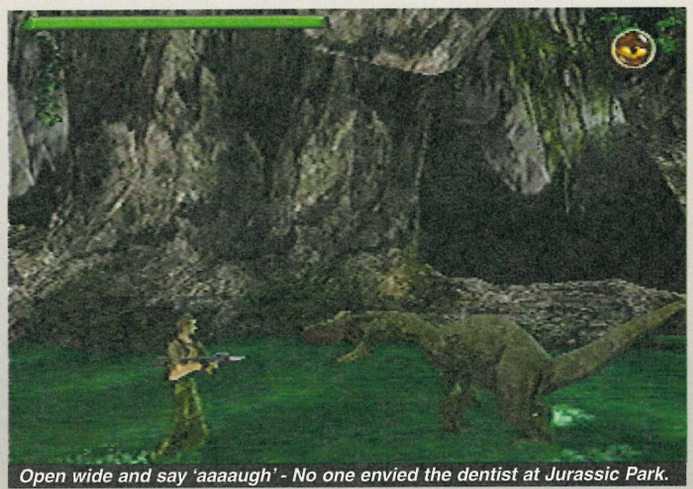
GRAPHICS	9
SOUND	9
GAMEPLAY	8
LIFESPAN	4

85%

PUBLISHER	DEVELOPER	GENRE	RELEASED	VERSION	PRICE	PLAYERS	PERIPHERALS
Sony CEE	Dreamworks Interactive	Platformer	22nd January '99	UK	£19.99	1	Memory Card

A game licensed from a Speilberg film is bound to sell, but is The Lost World a fearsome blockbuster or an ageing dinosaur? Ian Osborne goes back in time to find out...

The Lost World: Jurassic Park



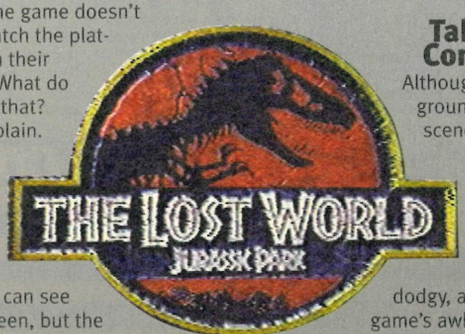
Open wide and say 'aaaaugh' - No one envied the dentist at Jurassic Park.

Why did they call the film JURASSIC Park? It featured hardly any dinosaurs from the Jurassic Era. Perhaps Cretaceous Park wouldn't sound so good, but why they chose to be so badly wrong is beyond me.

This game also gets off to a bad start. Despite the spacious, sprawling stepped mountainside, your character (at this point, a raptor) can only move right or left - it's a fearsomely 2D platformer with visuals that imply more freedom than you've actually got. At least Pandemonium offered a crystal-clear path to avoid confusion. Oh well - move left, grab the easily-won One-Up and then proceed right, hoping things improve.

Unfortunately, they don't. In fact, they get worse. That old platform game bugbear the 'hop and hope' syndrome rears its ugly head, forcing the player to take a leap of faith and jump to a platform that's off the screen and therefore unseen. This was unacceptable five years ago, and is inexcusable now. Also, despite the lush backdrops and scenery, the game doesn't always match the platforms with their graphics. What do I mean by that? Let me explain. The game's graphics offer platforms which the player can see on the screen, but the software needs to acknowledge there's a surface for the game character to walk on , or he'd just fall through - the game needs to create areas where the player can and can't stand or walk. Unfortunately, the platforms recognised by the machine aren't married too well with their on-screen graphics, so you can stand in mid-air off one side of the platform but fall straight through it as you reach the edge at the other side. Can you imagine how difficult this makes timing your jumps? That's not the only time you fall through platforms either - there are a few bugs which 'allow' you to do this when you're nowhere near the edge.

> The Lost World should have stayed lost.



Taking Control...

Although the background and scenery graphics are great, the animations on the main characters are decidedly dodgy, as are the game's awkward controls. You play a series of dinosaurs and humans, and every one of them boasts awkward handling. Take the Evade button, for example. It hardly ever works as intended, and often turns your back on a foe. The first lizard you control can bite and claw an enemy, but timing your main (and only really useful) attack is hideous, and costs you serious health as you get it wrong. Far better to just jump over him and run - is this the way the game's supposed to be played? Watch out for enemies hiding out of sight behind trees too. Also, fallen foes can be eaten to offer more health. After a couple of bites the meal in finished, but the carcass looks exactly like it did before you started. While eating, your creature blinks behind and in front of your meal too - what happened to attention to detail here?

The Tyrannosaurus Rex is no better. The big bite attacks are fearsome, but while you're chewing chunks out of your prey, you're attacked by at least three other foes and unable to defend yourself. The humans have to be seen to be believed for sheer sluggishness, bad animation and irritating handling.

The Lost World should have stayed lost. It features excellently-drawn (though poorly animated) graphics, but it's a disaster in the gameplay department. There are better ways of spending twenty quid.

Ian Osborne

SECOND OPINION

What a disaster. Leaps of faith, invisible rails, dodgy overlapping, awkward controls, hideous bugs - the list goes on. This is a game that only sold on its licence, and certainly doesn't deserve a new lease of life as a Platinum game.

Russell Barnes

THE SCORE

GRAPHICS	7
SOUND	6
GAMEPLAY	2
LIFESPAN	3

29%

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Riven: The Sequel to Myst
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San Francisco Rush
Shadowmaster
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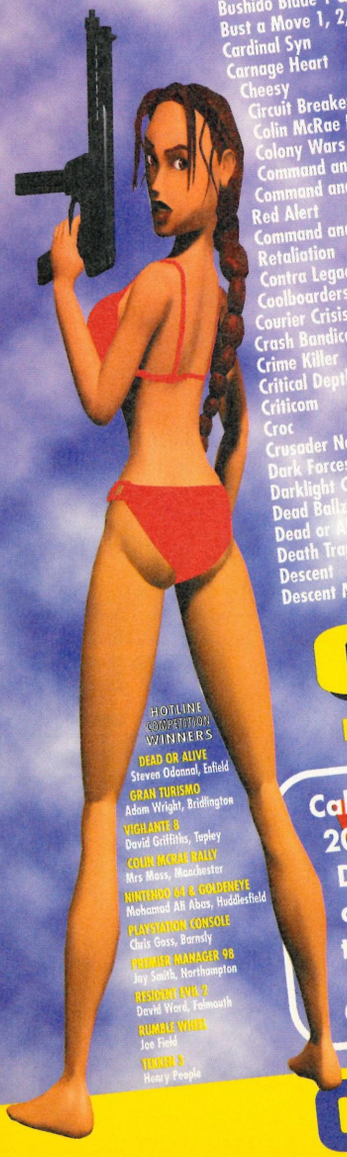
Street Racer
Suikoden
Super Puzzle Fighter 2 Turbo
Swagman
Tekken 1, 2, 3
Tempest X3
Tenchu
Tennis Arena
Test Drive 4, 5 & Off Road
Tetris Plus
The Incredible Hulk
The Lost World
Theme Hospital
Theme Park
Three Lions
Tiger Shark
Time Comando
Time Crisis
Tobal No. 1 or 2
TOCA
Tokyo Highway Battle
Tomb Raider 1, 2, 3
Tommi Makinen Rally
Toshinden 1, 2, 3
Total Drivin
Total Eclipse Turbo
Total NBA 97
Treasures of the Deep
Triple Play 97, 98, 99
Tunnel B1
Twisted Metal 1, 2, 3
Victory Boxing
Vigilante 8
VR Baseball 97
VR Powerboat Racing
V Rally
Vs
V Tennis
War Games
War Gods
War Craft 2: Dark Saga
War Hammer: Dark Omen
Warhawk
WCW Nitro
WCW Vs the World
Wing Over
Wipeout
Wipeout 2097
World Cup 98
World League Soccer 98
Worms
WWF in the House
WWF War Zone
WWF Wrestlemania
X-Com Terror from Deep
Xevious 3D G+
X-Men Children of Atom
Zero Divide 1 & 2



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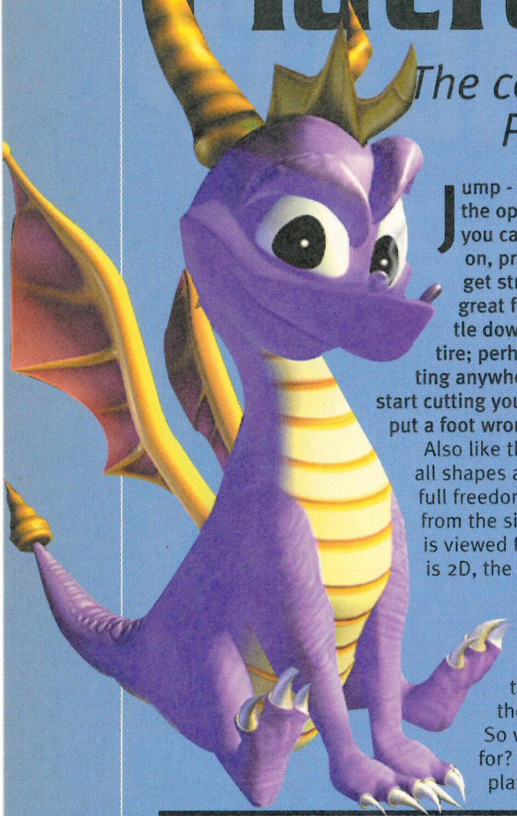
Platform Perfection

The complete guide to PSX platformers...



Jump - Duck... Shit!' Platform games are like the opposite sex - you can't live with them, you can't live without them. They lead you on, promising this and that, and when you get straight down to the action, things go great for a while and you really start to settle down. After a while you might begin to tire; perhaps they start to stop you from getting anywhere and become really awkward. They start cutting you dead, and heaven forbid when you put a foot wrong...

Also like the opposite sex, platformers come in all shapes and sizes. There are 3D affairs, with full freedom of movement, 2D offerings viewed from the side and 2.5D games where the world is viewed from a 3D perspective but movement is 2D, the player walking along invisible rails. Some games are serious in their approach, with tough-guy main characters and terrifying baddies, others more cartoony, viewing everything through a sly grin. Needless to say, there are good ones and bad ones too. So which platformer should you plumb for? Check out our guide to PlayStation platformers and decide for yourself...

LAUDABLE LEAPING...

So what makes a good platform game?

• Like all genres, a platform game's controls should be instinctive. Using Up to jump is awkward as running jumps demand an Up/Right or Up/Left button press. The player often hits one direction before the other and leaps vertically or doesn't jump at all. Despite the number of buttons on the PSX controller, some games still fall for this fatal flaw.

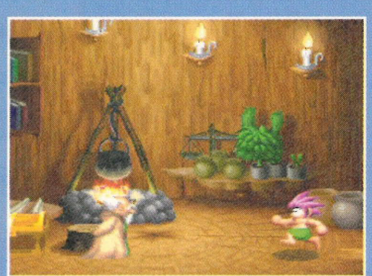
• The game should be huge, and offer lots to do. There should be plenty of secrets to find, offering replay value if the player completes the game without finding everything.

• The platforms should be crystal-clear. This isn't as simple as it sounds. With the PlayStation's incredible graphics capacity, platformers often feature excellent background graphics. There's nothing worse than trying to jump onto something that looks like a platform but is, in fact, part of the scenery.

• When the player's found the fastest route through a level, all the devices should be ready for him. Swinging ropes should be positioned for him to grab straight away, moving platforms placed so he can run straight onto them and swinging hazards should be out of the way. Thus unnecessary delays are avoided.

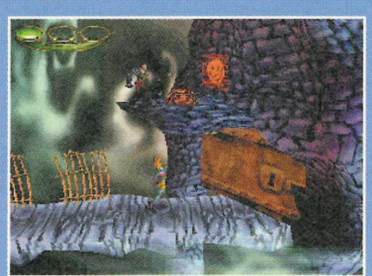
• There should be no hidden traps. If a platform collapses under the player, it should look weak or at least wobble before it crumbles, giving him time to get off. Monsters shouldn't be hidden, leaving you to run into them before you know they're there or creep forward one step at a time. Likewise, the scrolling shouldn't wait until you're at the edge of the screen before moving.

Tombi — 55 PERCENT



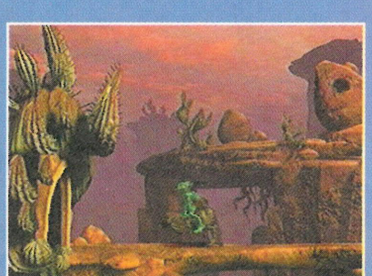
This one owes its roots to the old 8-bit classics Dizzy and Seymour - an arcade adventure/platform hybrid. The theme has been updated (obviously), but Tombi would still look more at home on the SNES. The simplistic gameplay and outrageously-regular save options suggest this game is designed for children, though really even the younger end of the market deserves more. Not recommended, though far from a disaster.

Wild 9 — 92 PERCENT



There are some terrific features in this game that really push the envelope of the 2.5D platform genre, and possibly one of the strongest is Wild 9's weapons system. The primary weapon, known as the Rig, can pick up enemies and objects and move them around Wex (that's you) totally at your discretion. You can bang them on the ground, torture them over water and spikes or chew them up into little bits in huge grinders. Pure Shiny magic and mischief makes Wild 9 a platformers dream.

Abe's Oddysee — 94 PERCENT

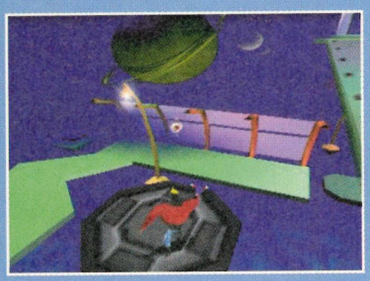


The ultimate Platinum platform pleaser. Another all-time great here, but it leans largely towards the puzzle genre at the same time. There are superb cut sequences telling the excellent story behind the game (in fact, the whole Oddworld story will span over a quintology of games), there are excellent character animations and a brilliant conversation interface that allows Abe to speak to the game characters to get him out of tricky situations. Definitely one for your collection, especially at the bargain price of £19.99.

Abe's Exoddus — 75 PERCENT

The second release in the Oddworld Quintology continues in the same vein as the original, with few additions to the graphics or the gameplay. There is a fantastic storyline and more excellent puzzles and stuff, but it is too much like the original to warrant a higher score. The biggest gripe about Abe's Exoddus is the absolutely appalling loading times. When Abe dies (as you do quite often), the whole section must be reloaded even though it's just been loaded up moments before. If you loved the first, though, it's well worth a look.

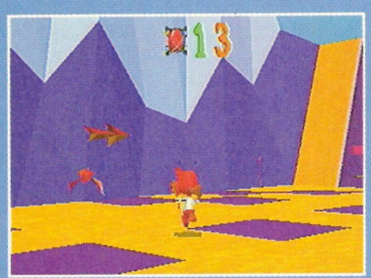
Blasto — 60 PERCENT



Not one for Sony to shout about here simply because it's a bit crap. The graphics are functional but basic at best, and the levels are pretty samey using different colours for the floor and walls to denote the change in level; even the characters you meet become too similar after a while.

Its strongest point is its innuendo-filled introduction sequence which did force the odd chuckle out of me. Not really worth bothering with.

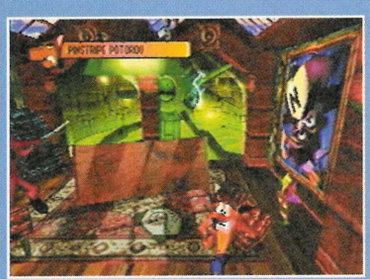
Bubsy 3D — 25 PERCENT



Hmmm... Seen better. The graphics are awful in their cartooniness, with no interesting textures.

Also, we realise it's difficult to make a character in a 3D platformer interesting when the player spends most of the game looking at the back of his head, but Bubsy redefines the term 'bland'. Aside from the visuals, the game's just plain boring. The fact that its one interesting feature is spelling 'PAUSE' as PAWS' should give you an indication of just how dull it is. ZZZZzzzzzz...

Crash Bandicoot — 82 PERCENT



With Crash destined for Sonic the Hedgehog / Mario-style status, this game was once the most spectacular platformer on the PSX, but has now been surpassed, most notably by its sequels. Even so, as a £20 Platinum release, it's still a bargain. The graphics are still as pleasingly cartoony, the action still a fun-fuelled laugh-a-thon and the battle with the evil Cortex still excites. Alas, the game's a little too easy, though.

Bubble Bobble Pack — 79 PERCENT

Two classic arcade games in one! In Bubble Bobble you blow bubbles to trap enemy creatures, bursting them again to kill and complete each of the game's 100 single-screen levels. Rainbow Islands is a more traditional platformer, revelling in its 2D simplicity - you move upwards at all times, drowning in the rising water if you take too long.

Although these games are pretty ancient, they were rather good in their day and still play well now. So what if the visuals are dated (even in the rather pointless updated version of Rainbow Islands)? It works!

Cheesy — 14 PERCENT

Great CGI intros do not make up for this game's complete lack of gameplay. The game gets off to a bad start with a Tomb Raider-style rotate-and-move control system which is unbelievably badly implemented, and gameplay that lets you leap two steps (floating through space like a feather) before offering the dreaded 'Loading - Please Wait' message. At this point, you've spent longer loading than actually playing. The rest of the game's pretty crap too, with some of the most dated animations seen on the PSX. Mere words cannot explain Cheesy's awfulness.

Crash Bandicoot 2 — 90 PERCENT

Cortex Strikes Back was released to its well primed audience around about Christmas last year. It has lusher graphics, with next to no clipping or glitching, and fun, frantic gameplay that's definitely not just for kids. It has an excellent 3D effect to the graphics even though you are on a set course that act like rails you can't deviate from. In its day it was hailed as the best platform game of the year, which was certainly true then but it just can't match the might of Spyro in the freedom stakes.

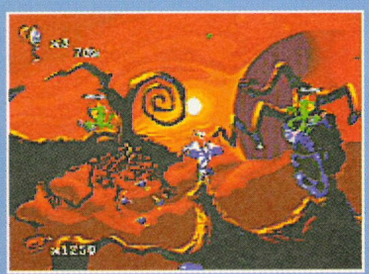
Croc — 67 PERCENT

This has got to be 3D platform gaming at its most mediocre. He's cute, he's cuddly, he's a stereotypical computer games character and yes, he's a crocodile.

Another one for the kiddies here, but only because anyone over the age of ten will find the game laughable to the point of exhaustion. To its credit, it was one of the first 3D platformers to reach the PlayStation, but it really has little on offer for the big boys and girls. Even as a Platinum release, Croc isn't really worth your money. It's not that it's a disaster - it's just that there are plenty of better platformers around.

Earthworm Jim 2

60 PERCENT



What's here's good, but it's exactly the same as the Mega Drive version. Okay, so the old 16-bit game was a scorcher, with the unlikely hero using an even unlikelier range of abilities to conquer his suitably-evil adversary, but isn't it a bit lazy to just port a game, making no significant improvements? It should've been sold as a retro release, back to back with another game, but for sheer gameplay it scores respectably...

Floating Runner

21 PERCENT

It takes about three seconds' play to spot the game's major flaw - the perspective is too high and too far forward. You can hardly see what's in front of you, causing you to run into unseen hazards for your first few plays and creep forward one step at a time thereafter. The graphics are terrible too - gravelly floors and scenery that looks like it was cut from the back of a cereal packet hardly excite, and the creatures are made from similarly flat polygons. Avoid.

Gex

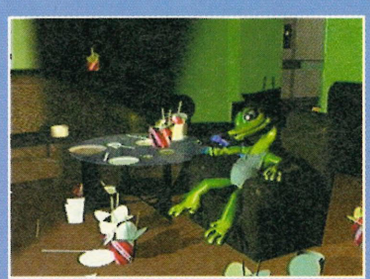
70 PERCENT

This one has all the right ingredients for a spectacular platformer. Huge, varied levels, cool animations, good graphics, a cute, sympathetic main character - on paper, it seems to have it all.

Unfortunately, Gex isn't the game it should've been. Somehow, it's been put together with a distinct lack of enthusiasm - the whole is less than the sum of its parts, leaving the player somewhat unsatisfied.

Gex 3D: Enter the Gecko

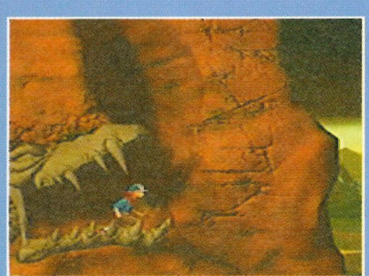
93 PERCENT



Some of you may not entirely agree, but Gex 3D: Enter the Gecko is second in the platform stakes only to Spyro T Dragon himself. Though the graphics aren't quite as technically triumphant, there is one hell of a polished game waiting for you to break wide open. The levels are excruciatingly huge in size and almost fool you into thinking you're playing an adventure game of gargantuan proportions. It has excellent humour thanks to Leslie Phillips supplying the witty one-liners and bringing Gex to life in a way few other characters have achieved.

Heart of Darkness

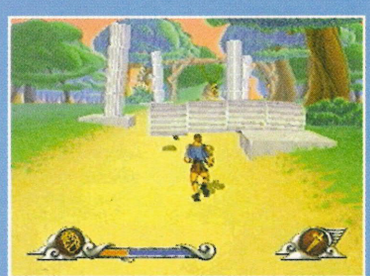
80 PERCENT



Another platform puzzler in the Abe's Oddysee mould, this one features some of the best cut sequences ever. The storyline's phenomenal, the puzzles excellent and the level of variety tremendous. Alas, it's a little too short and insubstantial, so the 90% it received in Issue Seven is a little high when measured against games that have come out since. It's still a mean game, though, and certainly worth a look.

Hercules

70 PERCENT



A great one for the kids here. Graphically the game is well polished, Herc himself is well animated and the use of spot effects and voices from the Disney film is very clever. Though there aren't all that many levels, each one is well varied and big enough to keep fans of the film amused for hours. You see an occasional clip of the film to tie in the story to the game, and lots of humour for good measure. Hercules is now available on Platinum, so it's well worth a look if you're that way inclined.

Iznogoud

10 PERCENT

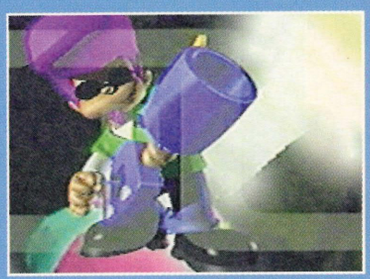
The Abe games proved there's life in the 2D platformer yet, but Iznogoud is best forgotten.

Based on an obscure French cartoon character in the Asterix mould, the game features useless graphics, ropey animation and some of the worst-designed levels ever seen. They couldn't even get his catchphrase right - 'Defeat the Sultan and become the Sultan', screams the back of the box. Iznogoud (yes, it is pronounced Iz-no-good) would've said, 'I want to be Caliph instead of the Caliph', and that's probably a joke that doesn't translate very well.

Jersey Devil — 89 PERCENT

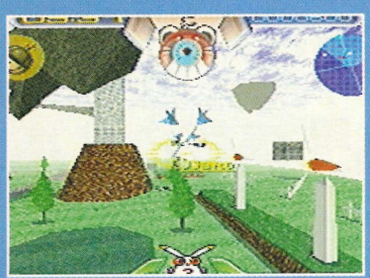
Very much one of the PlayStations most under rated platform games, Jersey Devil has everything required to become a classic except the backing and marketing of other titles like Crash and Spyro. It was one of the first good PlayStation free-roaming 3D titles, boasting excellent graphics and a huge playing area, and I mean BIG! If you love 3D Platform games like Gex and Spyro, this one's especially for you; let's just hope that Ocean sort us out with a sequel soon.

Johnny Bazookatone — 64 PERCENT



Nothing remarkably special on offer here, just good, old-fashioned platform frolics minus the 'good'. Well it's not that bad, but it wouldn't technically push the likes of the SNES or Mega Drive if it wasn't for all the end of level cut scenes and CD-quality music. This is definitely a case of 'try before you buy', but it has more than enough to offer a younger player who is being introduced to the PlayStation.

Jumping Flash! — 79 PERCENT



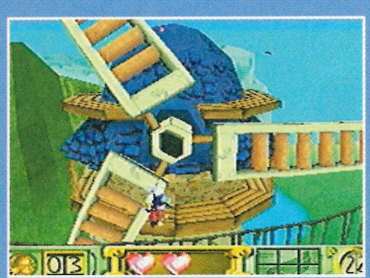
This one's a real mixture of disparate genres. Using an own-eye perspective (honest), you control a huge robotic rabbit (shades of Mech Warrior, perchance?), wander around a 3D world, jump around a lot and blast enemies. Yes, it's a mech platform shoot-'em-up.

Needless to say, JumpingFlash! takes a lot of getting used to. After a few plays, though, its weird mix of styles begins to work, and it's great fun. Not bad at all, for a game of its age.

Jumping Flash! 2 — 86 PERCENT

Another brilliantly quirky offering from Sony. It's basically more of the same (including the ridiculously-punctuated title), but this time the levels are much better designed, with less wide-open space and more to see and do. It looks better too; the graphics are much-improved. The only real downer on this one is that, like the first game, it's a little easy to complete once you've got the hang of it. Even so, at the sort of prices it sells for these days, it's still value for money.

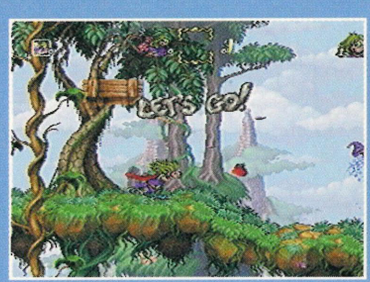
Klonoa — 74 PERCENT



Klonoa is a great kids' platform game that's definitely worth a look, it has superb 3D backdrops that really impress and cute characters that each have nice animations. Its only real let-down is that it's rather easy, with a short challenge in all.

It's fun to play, but a few kids might breeze through it without a second look. Ask to try it out before you buy, just to make sure it's for you.

Lomax — 45 PERCENT

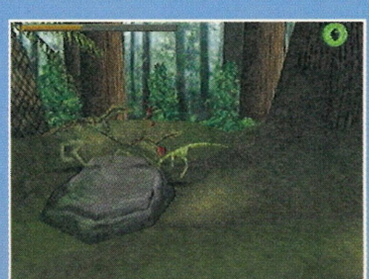


This one, believe it or not, is set in the land of the lemmings. Lomax the lemming must do battle with Evil Ed and save the land of the lemmings from a fate worse than this game's plot. The graphics are fine, if a little basic - they really do offer that Lemmings feel, with the cry of 'Let's go!' as Lomax falls from a trapdoor at the start of each level.

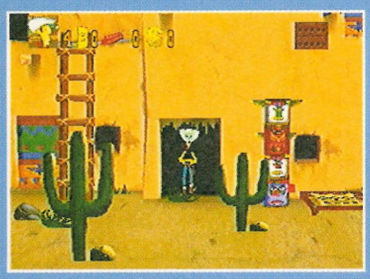
Unfortunately, the levels are poorly designed, making progress an irritating chore. Neat ideas, but they're wasted.

Lost World — 29 PERCENT

If you've seen the Platinum review in this very issue, you already know the game's terrible. Avoid it at all costs - it's crap!



Lucky Luke — 80 PERCENT



Kiddies' games always seem to get a bad write-up in the press - this one was slated by just about everyone but us. We still think it's pretty cool, though.

The straightforward, cartoony graphics appeal to the younger gamer, and the animations are genuinely amusing. There are also some cool sub-games to add variety. It hasn't the depth of a Jersey Devil or Crash Bandicoot game, but it's ideal for the kids.

Mega Man 8 — 31 PERCENT

Another Mega Man game, this time released to celebrate Mega Man's 10th anniversary. Not much of a celebration, though.

The graphics are straightforward SNES copies, offering virtually no PlayStation advances, and it both looks and plays like a 16-bitter. Although the sequel to Mega Man X3, it makes no real advances on this already-dated game. For fanatical Mega Man fans only.

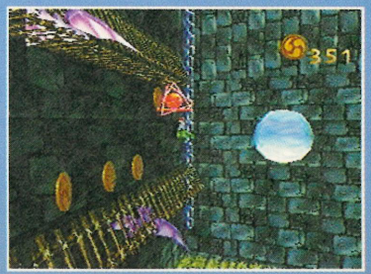
Mortal Kombat Mythologies — 20 PERCENT

This is the first (why not the last?) in a series in which characters of Mortal Kombat fame have a game based solely around them. Instead of it being a one-on-one fighting game as you would expect, it is, in fact, a side-scrolling platform game which sees Sub Zero flailing across badly-drawn backgrounds that wouldn't be out of the question on the SNES. The levels are crummy and frankly offensive to anyone who has the slightest inkling of what the PlayStation is capable of.

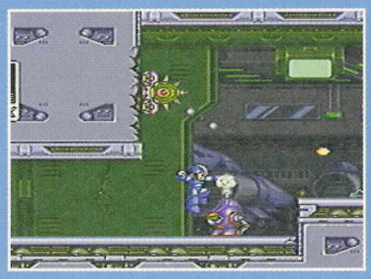
Pandemonium 2 — 52 PERCENT

Bit of a shock this, but Pandemonium 2 is one of a rare bread of sequels that has all the best points of the first game surgically removed so that all the flawed aspects and niggles are all that are left.

Graphically it has its plus points; there's no fogging or slowdown and it runs at a smooth pace, but unfortunately that's not the issue here. It's almost like they worked really hard to create a mad, psychedelic environment then added the game in as an afterthought. This is a real shame, especially when the first game was so much better.

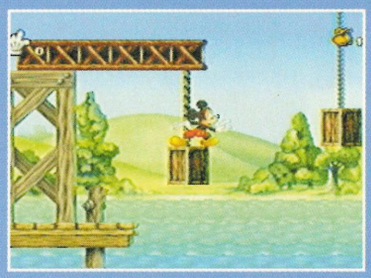


Mega Man X3 — 29 PERCENT



Oh dear. This dodgy SNES conversion does Ocean no favours at all. It takes ages to get into the game (the start is full of presentation screens, pointless animations and other such crap), and when you do, you wonder why you bothered. The graphics are fuzzy and flat, the level designs awkward and uninteresting and the menus and inventories would hardly tax a NES, let alone a SNES. This just isn't what you buy a PlayStation game for. There are, apparently, more Mega Man games to come. We can't wait...

Mickey's Wild Adventure — 69 PERCENT



An early Disney game this, and it shows. It's pretty-much directly ported over from the 16-bit platforms, with little more added than higher quality voice FX. It's got reasonable playability, but it's another one for the kiddies really, as the levels tend to be pretty short with quite simple puzzles and traps to overcome. If you've got a young one in the house with a birthday coming up, it might be worth a look.

Pandemonium — 88 PERCENT

This fearsomely-straightforward 2.5D psychedelic offering wins through with its crystal-clear presentation, slick execution and superb level design. Each stage is different to the last, with new monsters, traps and devices all creating an atmosphere of their own. The player is on rails (movement is only 2D, despite the 3D camera movement), but you never assume you can wander where you cannot, and when you die, it's always because you made a mistake and not because you were short-changed by the program. Much better than the over-rated sequel.

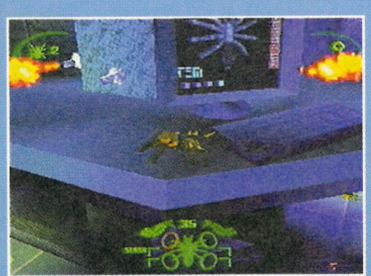
Pitfall 3D — 72 PERCENT

The graphics on this one are pretty hideous, but the game's true 3D nature shines through in the end. It's no classic - the monsters are pretty bland and combat tedious. Perhaps it's just as well that the heart of the game is in the platform-pounding, not the baddie-bashing. There's no excuse for the sparse sound and atmosphere-retardant graphics, though. Pitfall 3D's level design makes it a pleasing challenge, but nine months on, the 81% it got in Issue Four looks a little high.

Rayman — 91 PERCENT

Here we have an all-time classic platform game of the 2D side scrolling persuasion. It's quite an old title by today's standards, and it delivers all the goods required then a bit more for good measure. It's colourful and bright with a butter-wouldn't-melt character, but never judge a book by its cover. There are tonnes of levels with an excellently-balanced learning curve that just keeps getting higher. The last few levels are some of the toughest and cleverest I've seen; you scream but then you try again!

Spider — 75 PERCENT



For an old game, this one's not bad. Sure, the graphics lack detail and the spider animations make him look like he's not standing on the ground. Sure the game's repetitive, asking you to do the same things over and again (though with different abilities to be found). Sure, you often walk into baddies before you spotted them because they hide too well. At the end of the day, though, it's full of fresh ideas like the eponymous spider hanging below platforms as well as standing on them. A break from the norm.

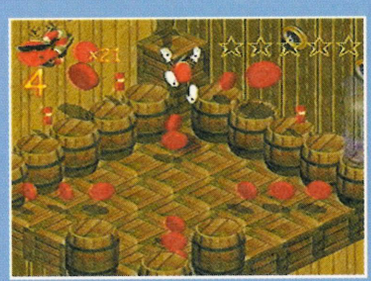
Rascal — 50 PERCENT

Get this, right; Psygnosis commissioned Jim Henson's Creature Shop to create a ground-breaking new character for their latest game. Something fresh, innovative, the next Mario, the next Sonic... What did they come up with? Rascal, an adolescent in a baseball cap that runs, jumps, shoots and um... well that's it, actually. What a pile of shite; we gave it 80% in Issue Five, but I'd just like to rectify that mark now, because it just wasn't deserved. It has nothing to offer fans of the genre, and is about as original as the lead character himself. Duff.

Skull Monkeys — 65 PERCENT

Skull Monkeys has everything you can expect from a Hollywood blockbuster along the lines of Jurassic Park; impeccable visuals, crystal clarity and the like, but when it comes to content and what's underneath the exterior, basically what you've got is a bit duff. Some original aspects, but otherwise just a very poor game in a Versace suit. It's worth hiring from Blockbusters just to check out some excellent claymation visuals and wicked cut sequences, though.

Spot Goes To Hollywood — 24 PERCENT



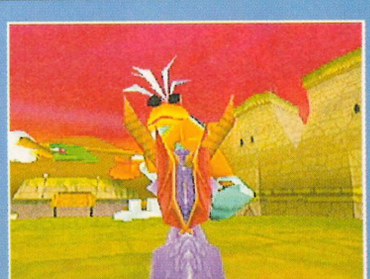
The intro to this little number is one of the worst uses of the new technology we've ever seen, and the game doesn't improve over 20 levels of bog-standard platforming. The controls are awkward and jerky, the animation abysmal and Spot's ridiculous shooty weapon hopelessly out of place in a platformer. Basically, it's just crap.

Spyro the Dragon — 94 PERCENT

From the makers of Crash Bandicoot comes the latest and greatest in platform adventures. Spyro the Dragon spans over 36 huge levels, featuring ground-breaking graphics, sound, gameplay and basically everything a gamesplayer ever wanted.

The game emanates professionalism and the type of presentation only Sony can produce; there really isn't much wrong with this game, unless, of course, you don't like platform games at all.

Spyro rhw Dragon is a real hit, and on reflection, worthy of a few extra marks from what it gained back in Issue 11.



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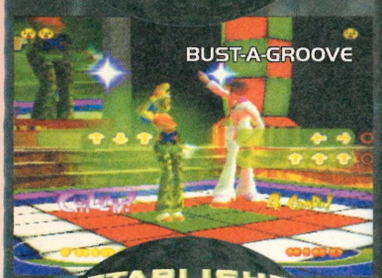

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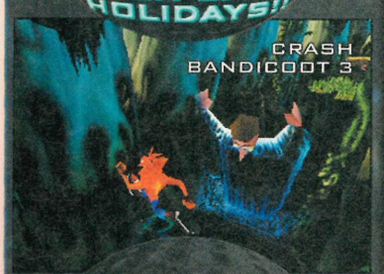

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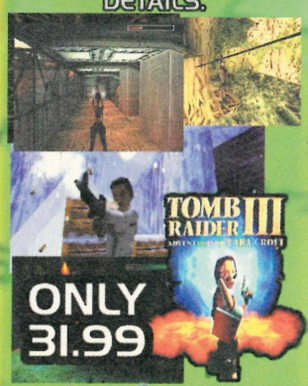

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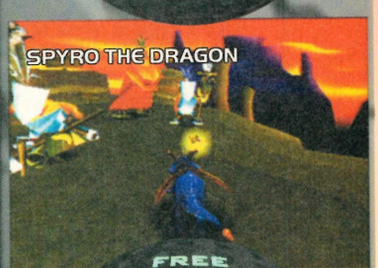

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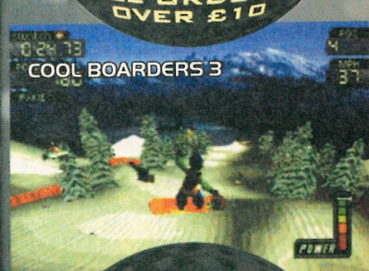

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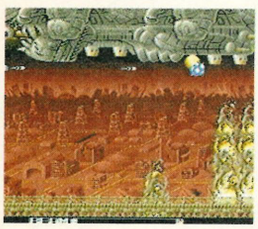
tips & cheats

We're back, with another selection of the latest and greatest tips and cheats on the PlayStation...

R-TYPES



Level select:
Highlight the 'R-Type' or 'R-Type II' options at the title screen. Quickly press L2 ten times, then R2 ten times. Start the game and press the Start button. You can now select any level, including the end sequence.

Turbo mode:
In either R-Type or R-Type II, pause the game. Hold L2 and press →, ↑, →, ↑, ↓, ←, ↓, ←, ●

Slow motion:
Pause either game. Hold L2 and press →, ↑, →, ↑, ↓, ←, ↓, ←, ✖

All weapons:
Pause either game. Hold L2 and press →, ↑, ←, →, ↓, ←, ↑, → followed by ▲, ■, ✖, ●, or R1 for the various weapons.

ROGUE TRIP

Unlimited life:
Hold L1+R1 and press ↑, ↓, ←, →

Hornet nest stingers:
Select Stingers, then hold L1+L2+R1+▲+←

Alien saucer:
Enter R1, ■, ✖, ■, L2, ● as a password.

Play as Goliath:
Enter ▲, L1, R1, ✖, L2, L2 as a password.

Play as Nightshade:
Enter R1, R2, L1, L1, ✖, ● as a password.

Play as Helicopter:
Enter L1, ▲, R2, ▲, ▲, R1 as a password.

Double pick-ups:
Enter L1, L2, ●, L1, R1, ■ as a password.

Increased armour:
Enter R1, ▲, R1, ▲, L1, ■ as a password.

Unlimited turbos:
Enter ■, ✖, ●, ▲, R1, R2 as a password. The special bar decreases anyway, but turbos are always available, even if the bar is exhausted.

Unlimited jumps:
Enter ●, ■, R2, ✖, ▲, R2 as a password.

Funtopia level:
Enter ✖, ●, L2, ✖, ■, L1 as a password to enable the Funtopia level in Challenge Mode.

Gulch level:
Enter ✖, ■, ●, L1, L2, Square as a password to access the Gulch level in Challenge Mode.

Boss Battle 1:
Enter ●, R2, R1, ■, L1, R2 as a password.

Boss Battle 2:
Enter ●, ●, L2, L1, ▲, ▲ as a password.

Boss Battle with Big Daddy:
Enter ■, ▲, ●, ●, R2, R2 as a password.

Duke Nukem: Time To Kill FMV sequence:
Enter ■, ■, ●, ●, ▲, ▲ as a password.

SAN FRANCISCO RUSH

All cars:
Press ▲, ■, ■, ✖, R1 at the options screen. A sound confirms the code.

Truck:
Select any car, then hold L1

until the race begins.

Buggy:
Select any car, then hold R1 until the race begins.

Hidden car:
Select any car, then hold R1+R2 until the race begins.

Various cars:
Select any car, then press ↓ at the Transmission Selection Screen to cycle between a low rider, bus, rocket engine car, taxi, and police car, depending on how many keys have been found. To drive the police car, Circuit mode Must be completed.
Press ● at the car selection screen for four more vehicles: a Viper, hippie van, VW Beetle, and McClaren.

UFO:
Hold R1+R2+L1+L2 at the Car Selection Screen and choose a car. Still holding the shoulder buttons, press

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DIAGNOSED AND CURED

The following problems have been solved by The Tips Clinic:

John Peers listed his entire games collection and asked for cheats on every single title - all 11 of them. We haven't got room to cover them all, but here's five:

ROAD RASH 3D

Hitch a ride:
Press ✖, ✖ to pop a wheelie, then keep tapping ✖ until you're near a car. Ramp over the car, then press Brake, ■. If done correctly, your bike is stuck on and moves with the car.

Avoid head-on crashes:
Press ✖, ✖ to pop a wheelie just before hitting a car head-on to leap over it instead of crashing.

Special punch:
Hold ↑, then press ●. Your biker can hold this punching position simply keeping ● held. This may also be done with all the other punches.

No ticket fines:
Immediately pause and restart the race after being pulled over.

Best bike:
Press Up(2), Down(2), X(2), R1, L1 at the bike selection screen.
Although posted as a valid code on other web sites, it does not function in the retail version of the game.

TEKKEN 3

Fight as Kuma:
Complete arcade mode once.

Fight as Juila:
Complete arcade mode with two characters.

Fight as Gun Jack:
Complete arcade mode with three characters.

Fight as Mokujin:
Complete arcade mode with four characters.

Fight as Anna:
Complete arcade mode with five characters.

Fight as Bryan:
Complete arcade mode with six characters.

Fight as Heihachi:
Complete arcade mode with seven characters.

Fight as Ogre:
Complete arcade mode with eight characters.

Fight as True Ogre:
Complete arcade mode with nine characters.

Fight as Panda:
Highlight Kuma at the character selection screen and press ●.

Fight as Tiger:
Highlight Eddy at the character selection screen and press ▲.

Fight as Doctor Boskonovitch:
Complete Tekken Force Mode four times (collect the bronze, silver, gold keys, then complete it one more time). Defeat Dr Boskonovitch to have him available on the Character Selection Screen under Arcade Mode.

Beach ball mini-game:
View all endings of the ten base characters to access the Ball Mode.

Theatre mode:
Unlock each character, including Panda, Tiger, Dr Boskonovitch and Gon, and view their endings. The Disc and Sound options under Theatre Mode are available.

Fight as Gon:
There are several ways of doing this. Complete Arcade Mode using Dr Boskonovitch, defeat Gon

✖ at the Transmission Selection Screen. Hold ▲ until the race begins.

Alternate car colours:
Press ■ at the car selection screen.

Reversed tracks:
Complete Circuit Mode to unlock an option for forward and reversed tracks.

Stunt mode:
Complete Tournament Mode to access a stunt mode option on the Golden Gate track.

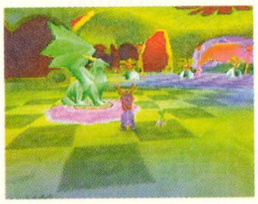
S.C.A.R.S.

Enter these codes as passwords:

All cars and tracks: ALLVID
Cobra car: RATTLE
Crystal Cup: GLASSX
Diamond Cups: ROCKYY
Guepard car: RUNNER
Master Modus: XPERTS (all bonus cups and mirror mode)
Panther car: MYSTER
Scorpion car: DESERT
Zenith Cup: ZDPEAK

SPYRO THE DRAGON

Crash Bandicoot: Warped demo:
Press L1+▲ when 'Press Start' is shown at the opening screen.



Faster running:
Hold Run+Jump to run faster.

Secret level:
Collect all the gems to obtain a 100% ending. Go to Gnasty's World and approach the green dragon head. It opens to allow access to the Gnasty's Loot bonus level.

Save yourself:
Pause and exit the current level if faced with imminent death by falling, but not in the home levels.

SYNDICATE WARS

All weapons:
Press ↑, ↑, ↓, ↓, ←, →, ✖, ● during the introduction. The sound of a gunshot confirms the code.

ZERO DIVIDE 2

Fight as Neco and Modoki:
Complete the game using Nox and Eve.

View Neco's demo:
Successfully complete the game with any character, then hold Select+Start to restart.

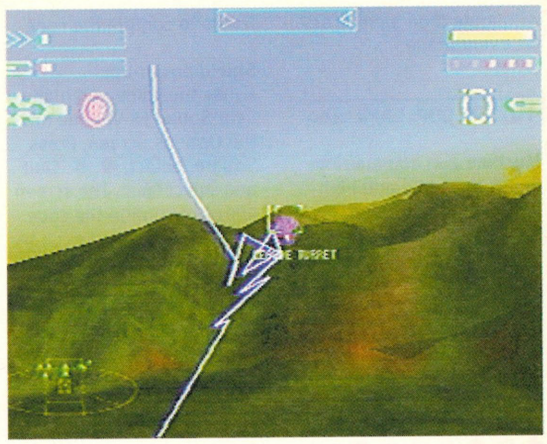
Alternate character colour:
Hold Select on Controller Two and press ✖, ●, ■, ▲, L1, L2, R1, or R2 at the character selection screen.

Additional levels:
Two additional levels are available after the game is completed under each of the three difficulty settings, for a total of six new levels.

COLONY WARS: VENGEANCE

The following codes are entered as passwords, and are case sensitive, so get your capital letters right:

Invincibility:
Vampire



All weapons:
Tornado
Primary weapons always available:
Dark Angel
Unlimited secondary weapons:
Chimera
Unlimited afterburners:
Avalanche
Unlimited money:
Hydra
All ships:
Thunderchild
Mission and FMV select:
Demon

Multiple cheats: Blizzard
Unlocks all missions, all ships, unlimited secondary weapons and more.

Disable cheat mode:
Stormlord (to disable all active cheats).

COOLBOARDERS 3

All tracks:
Select tournament mode and enter WONITALL as a name.

All boarders:
Select tournament mode and enter OPEN EM as a name.

Big head mode:
Select tournament mode and enter BIGHEADS as a name.

View game programming date:
Press L1+L2+R1+R2 at the number of players options menu.

Play as Burg:
Unlock all players, boards, and tracks, then finish first

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in Ball Mode or play Survival or Force Mode until prompted for initials, then enter GON.

Record or replay combo:
Enter Practice Mode and choose the Freestyle selection. Press L1+L2+R1+R2+● at the Freestyle Options Screen. Press ↓+Select to record or replay a combo.

Alternative introduction sequence:
Complete the game with the ten basic characters to view an alternative introduction. Here the characters wear their second costumes. Complete the game with every character, including the secret ones, for a second alternative introduction.

Alternate costumes:
Select Arcade Mode, highlight a fighter on the character selection screen and hold all four shoulder buttons until the timer reaches zero. Release the buttons when both fighters are displayed.
Some characters revert to their second costumes automatically after a set number of plays, namely: Xiaoyu's (50), Jin (50), Anna (25), Gun Jack (10).

FADE TO BLACK

Check out the full solution in last issue's extreme Solutions Platinum special, which we gave away free.

VMX RACING

Display co-ordinates:
Press ↓, ↑, ←, ↑, ↓, →, →, ↓, Select during the game.

Disco colours:
Press ✖, ●, ■, ✖, ✖, ▲, ▲, Select during the game.

Gouraud shaded cycle:
Press ■, ■, ✖, ▲, ●, ■, ✖, ■, Select during the game.

Paint trails:
Press ▲, ✖, ▲, ■, ■, ▲, ●, ✖, Select during the game.

View FMV sequences:
Press ●, ✖, ■, ●, ■, ▲, ▲, ●, Select during the game.

Wave landscape:
Press ↑, ←, →, →, ↓, ↑, ↓, ↑, Select during the game.

Techno-Funk song:
Press ←, ↑, →, →, ←, ↓, ↓, Right, Select during the game.

Tricks:
Input these codes before a jump:
Nac Nac: R2
Table-Top: R1
Special Move #1:
R1, R2, R1, R2
Special Move #2:
R1, R1, R1, R1
Special Move #3:
R2, R2, R2, R2

Bonus tracks:
Perform sufficient tracks during the season to open the Moon, Desert, Moon, Figure-8 and Supercross bonus tracks.

RAMPAGE WORLD TOUR

Alternate colours:
Highlight George, Ralph, or Lizzy at the Character Selection Screen and press ↑

GRAN TURISMO

Memory card battle with only one card:
Enter Memory Card Battle Mode with a memory card in the first slot. A message appears stating that Player One is loading and no memory card was found for Player Two. Wait until the information has loaded for Player One, then remove the memory card and insert it into the second slot. The game loads data from that card, allowing both players to participate.

High resolution mode:
Earn an International A Licence, enter the GT League and win all four cups, including the GT World Cup. Alternatively, successfully complete all Arcade Mode tracks under the hard difficulty level.

Bonus FMV sequence:
Select Arcade Mode, win the bonus tracks and finish in first place every time with any car. This must be done in A, B, and C-Class Mode under the normal or higher difficulty setting. A Staff Video option appears in the Bonus Items menus.

Chrysler Copperhead concept car:
Get all gold medals in the B-Class licence test or fin-

tips & cheats

with more than 3400 in single event mode.

FUTURE COP: LAPD 2100

Machine gun ammunition:
Pause the game and highlight Sound FX Volume on the Options Screen. Press ■, ●, Select, ✖, Select, ✖, ●, ■. Quit and select 'Yes'. The screen jumps to confirm the code.

Machine gun power-up:
Pause the game and highlight Sound FX Volume on the Options Screen. Press ●, ●, ●, ✖, ✖, ✖, ●. Quit and select 'Yes'. The screen jumps to confirm the code.

Shield power-up:
Pause the game and highlight Sound FX Volume on the Options Screen. Press Square, Select, ●, ✖. Quit and select 'Yes'. The screen jumps to confirm the code.

Heavy weapons power-up:
Pause the game and highlight Sound FX Volume on the Options Screen. Press ■, ■, ■, ●, ✖, ●, ✖. Quit and select 'Yes'. The screen jumps to confirm the code.

Special weapons power-up:
Pause the game and highlight Sound FX Volume on the Options Screen. Press ■, ●, ■, Select, ●, ✖, ■, ●. Quit and select 'Yes'. The screen jumps to confirm the code.

Jump power-up:
Pause the game and highlight Sound FX Volume on the options screen. Press ●, ●, ●, ●, ■, ✖, Select, ■, ✖, Select, ●. Quit and select 'Yes'. The screen jumps to confirm the code.

200 bonus points:
Pause the game and highlight Sound FX Volume on the options screen. Press ●, ■, ●, ✖, Select, ■, ✖. Quit and select 'Yes'. The screen jumps to confirm the code.

No missions completed, all bonus weapons:
Enter SYMRGOBRRL as a password.

All missions completed, all bonus weapons:
Enter DYPYFASRHR as a password.

All missions completed and locked, all bonus weapons:
Enter DYSIFASRHY as a password.

Passwords:

Level	Password
1:	TAFRGYBLRR
2:	CRGRGYBLRY
3:	FUMRGYBLRL
4:	SICUGYBLLI
5:	TAFUGYBLLR
6:	CRGUGYBLLY
7:	FUMUGYBLLR
8:	SIFYGYBISR

NFL BLITZ

Hidden players:
Select the 'Enter Name For Record Keeping' option and enter one of the following player names and PIN numbers. The phrase 'Lights out, baby' confirms the code.

Name	PIN number
ALLEN	7911
AUBREY	6666
AZPOD	4777
BERT	8735
BRIAN	2221
BYRON	1969
DAVID	3456
FRANC	1221
FRANZ	8421
GATSON	1111
JOVE	6644
SHINOK	8337
SKULL	1111
BRAIN	1111
RAIDEN	3691
JENIFR	3333
JUAN	6521

Cheat mode:
Press Turbo, Jump and Pass to change the icons below the helmets on the Versus screen. The numbers in the following list indicate the number of times each button is pressed. After the icons have been changed, press the D-Pad or analogue stick in the indicated direction to enable the code. For example, to enter 1-2-3 Left, press Turbo, Jump twice, Pass three times, Left.
The name of the code and a sound confirms correct code entry.

Effect / Code
Super field goals:
1-2-3 Left
Allow stepping OB:
2-1-1 Left
Power-up blockers:
3-1-2 Left
Fast passes:
2-5-0 Left
Turn off stadium:
5-0-0 Left

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ish in first in the UK Vs. US championship.

Toyota TRD3000GT:
Get all gold medals in the A-Class licence test.

Nissan Nismo 400[R]:
Get all gold medals in the International A licence test.

Christopher Chaudery is having a spot of bother with BEAST WARS: TRANSFORMERS
"I'm an enormous Transformers fan", he says, "and the only reason I bought the PlayStation is to play Beast Wars". Although disappointed with the game, Chris wants some cheats. Can do...

Weapon power-up:
Pause and hold L2, then quickly press ↑, ↓, ←, →, ▲, ✖, ■. Release L2, then press Start to resume play.

Level skip:
Pause and hold L2, then quickly press ↑, ↓, ←, →, ▲, ✖, ✖, ▲, →, ←, ↓, ↑. Release L2, then press Start to resume play.

Hidden characters:
Hold R1+R2+L1+L2 and press ●, ✖, ▲, ●, ●, ✖, ■ at the options screen.

Nick Bishender wants help with Premier Manager 98 and World League Soccer 98. Premier Manager 98 was covered last issue, but here's some help for WORLD LEAGUE SOCCER 98:

Proper Names:
Go to the options and select Player Editor. Pick the English League, select any team and. Edit any player's name and change the team's name to TEAMTWO. Click on it to make a Default 2 option appear. Use it to reveal the correct names for the team's players. To do so for the other teams in the English league (it works for no other), choose Back to Teams then click on Default 2.

Finally, we're not sure who asked for these as we lost their letter, but here's some TEST DRIVE 5 and UNHOLY WAR cheats anyway...

TEST DRIVE 5

Easy high scores:
Start a drag race with a much weaker car.

Super arcade mode:
Enter SPURT as a name on the high score screen.

Unlock all game modes:
Enter VRSIX as a name on the high score screen, and save the game settings. Cop Chase and other game modes are selectable.

All tracks and cars:
Enter RONE, NTHREE, and MTHREE as names on the high score screen.

Bonus cars:
Enter NOLIFE as a name on the high score screen. The Pitbull Special, Chris' Beast and The All Mighty Maui are selectable.

Bonus FMV music sequence:
Enter AUXYRAY as a name on the high score screen. Then, select the Fear Factory video option at the main menu.

THE UNHOLY WAR

Bonus maps:
Successfully complete the game on Normal level as the Arcanes to unlock The Maze. Successfully complete the game on Normal level as the Teknos to unlock the Menhir Circle.

Beta Razor-fane:
Successfully complete the game on Hard level with the Teknos. Beta Razor-fane can be selected under Mayhem Mode.

Super-Prana Devil:
Successfully complete the game on Hard level with the Arcanes. The Super-Prana Devil can be selected under Mayhem Mode.

THE CRITICAL LIST

The following readers need your help. Aid them well and you could win some Blaze goodies:

Ian Jones of Durham wants help with Herc's Adventures. He's killed the boar and got the key to the castle, but is now stuck. Can anyone help?

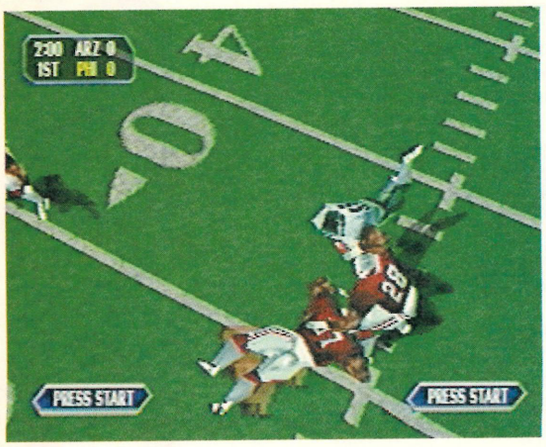
Andy Kelly, whereabouts unknown, wants help with Mortal Kombat 4. Can anyone offer him tips on beating Goro?

If you're stuck in a PSX game, write to:

• The Tips Clinic, extreme PlayStation, 22 Strand St, Poole, Dorset BH15 1SB

Don't forget to tell us EXACTLY what your problem is, and which game it is you're playing (don't laugh - we throw away several letters every month because this wasn't stated. Finally, DON'T SEND AN SAE! We can't offer personal replies - you're just wasting a stamp.

Tips & Cheats is sponsored by Blaze. Send in your hottest cheats and win some Blaze goodies.



Late hits:
0-1-0 Up
Huge head:
0-4-0 Up
No first downs:
2-1-0 Up
No interceptions:
3-4-4 Up
No punting:
1-5-1 Up
Infinite turbo:
5-1-4 Up
Super blitzing:
0-4-5 Up
Power-up team-mates:
2-3-3 Up
Power-up defence:
4-2-1 Up
Fog on:
0-3-0 Down
Thick fog on:
0-4-1 Down
Show field goal %:
0-0-1 Down
No random fumbles:
4-2-3 Down
Hide receiver name:
1-0-2 Right
Big football:
0-5-0 Right
Team tiny players:
3-1-0 Right
Team big players:
1-4-1 Right
Team big heads:
2-0-3 Right
Big head:
2-0-0 Right

No play selection (1):
1-1-5 Left
Show more field (1):
0-2-1 Right
No CPU assistance (1):
0-1-2 Down
Power-up speed (1):
4-0-4 Left
Tournament mode (2):
1-1-1 Down
Smart CPU opponent (3):
3-1-4 Down
No head:
3-2-1 Left
Weather: clear:
2-1-2 Left
Weather: snow:
5-2-5 Down
Weather: rain:
5-5-5 Right
Power-up offence:
3-1-2 Up
Invisible receiver highlight:
3-3-3 Left
Headless team:
1-2-3 Right
Night game:
2-2-2 Right
Fast turbo running:
0-3-2 Left
Invisible:
4-3-3 Up
Hyper blitz (1):
5-5-5 Up

Notes:
(1) Two-player agreement required.
(2) Only in two-player game.
(3) Only in one-player game.

On-side kick:
Hold Turbo+Jump+Pass+↑ after scoring.

Extra blocker:
Hold Turbo+Jump+Pass while hiking the ball.

Hide plays:
Press ↑, ↑ at the play selection screen to remove the pointer.

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FORSAKEN

Infinite Shield:
865EB94C695A
Infinite Hull:
865EB94A695A
Infinite Bikes:
36622108594F
Infinite Crystals:
36622107594F
Infinite PowerPods:
865EBA78594F

Primary weapons
Trojax:
365EBA965959
865EB954D95A
Pyrolite:
365EBA955959
865EB952D95A
BeamLaser:
365EBA9C5959
865EBA56D95A
Orbit Pulsar:
865EBA825959
TransPulse:
365EBA975959
Suss Gun:
365EBA9B5959
865EBA58D95A
Pulsar:
865EB954D95A

Secondary weapons
Infinite MUG:
865EBA9A5657
Infinite Solaris:
865EBAA0595F
Infinite Gravgon:
865EBAA4595F
Infinite Scatter:
365EBA9E595F
Infinite Purge:
865EBAA2595F
Infinite Pine:
365EBAA8595F
Infinite MFRL:
365EBAA3595F
Quantum:
365EBAA7595F
Infinite Titan:
365EBA9D595F

GHOST IN THE SHELL

You must have completed at least 1 level for the following cheat to work.

Access All Levels:
36657A0A5963

Enable All Movies:
B6655756595A
16657A885959

Level 1
Infinite Shields:
36685C585924
Infinite Grenades:
36685C5C595B

Level 2
Infinite Shields:
366549945924
Infinite Grenades:
36654998595B

Level 3
Infinite Shields:
366861345924
Infinite Grenades:
36686138595B
Stop Countdown:
36686128594F

Level 4
Infinite Shields:
36687DA85924
Infinite Grenades:
36687DAC595B
Stop Countdown:
36687D9C594F

INTERNATIONAL SUPERSTAR SOCCER PRO

P1's team is very good:
B666575C595A
3662FF7E595A
P1's team sucks:
B666575C595A
3662FF7E5956
P2's team is very good:
B666575C595A
3662FFBE595A
P2's team sucks:
B666575C595A
3662FFBE5956

MEDIEVIL

Auto Activation:
F663D800525E
Infinite Health:
3663D804597E
3663D8035959
3663D8085960
3663D807596A
3663D80C5960
3663D80B596A
Money:
3663D51C594F
3663D51B59CF
Crossbow:
8663D5A459B6
Club:
8663D59059B6
Daggers:
8663D59859B6
Magic Sword:
8663D58C59B6
Axe:
8663D59C59B6
Drumstick:
8663D5A059B6
Hammer:
8663D59459B6
Longbow:
8663D5A859B6
Flame Longbow:
8663D5AC59B6
Magic Longbow:
8663D5B059B6
Spears:
8663D5B459B6
Lightning:
8663D5B859B6
Good Lightning:
8663D5BC59B6
Chaos Rune:
8663D5C059B6
Earth Rune:
8663D5C459B6
Moon Rune:
8663D5C859B6
Time Rune:
8663D5D059B6
Skull key:
8663D5D859B6
Dragon gem:
8663D52059B6
Star rune:
8663D5CC5A5A
Shadow Artifact:
8663D5EC5A5A
Witch Hex:
8663D5F45A5A
Copper Shield:
8663D50C5A5A
Silver Shield:
8663D5105A5A
Gold Shield:
8663D5245A5A
Dragon Armour:
8663D5285A5A

exchange

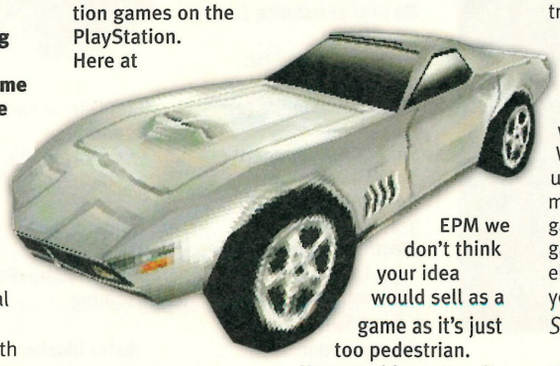
EPM SAYS...

We're back with another selection of your luscious letters. Got something to say? Send it this way! If you win the coveted Star Letter award, you win a game of your choice from Gameplay, so make sure you state your selection on your letter.

SUNDAY DRIVING

Many driving games (such as the Test Drive series) call themselves 'driving simulators' when they're not. Personally I would like a real driving simulator, a game where you drove through streets or cities on two-lane roads with the odd traffic jam, and cars coming in the other direction. You could also have motorways and speed cameras. This could really be brilliant, with good graphics, speed, realistic handling and real cars.
James Ling, Orpington, Kent

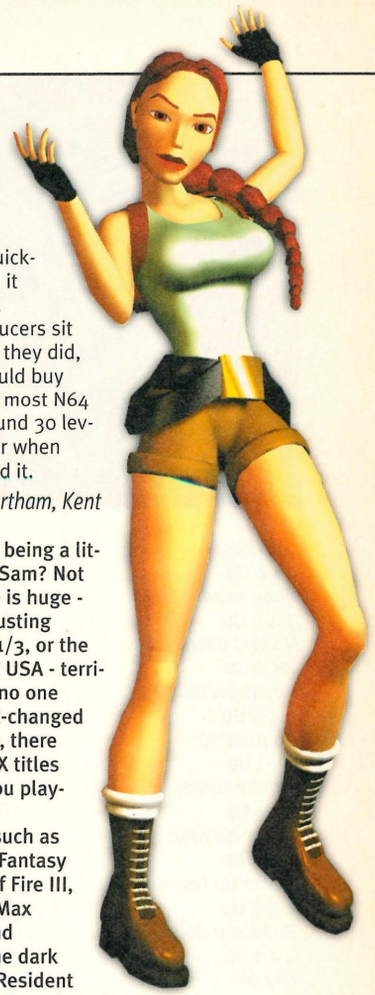
EPM: A driving game which calls itself a simulator (Formula 1, Gran Turismo) offers realistic handling and physics, as opposed to arcade racers (Max Power Racing, Total Drivin') which take liberties with the real world in order to maximise gameplay. As you say, the Test Drive series don't reproduce real road conditions, but instead focus on an imaginary race (as opposed to genuine sporting event). Not reproducing everyday road conditions doesn't stop them being simulations. There's room for both arcadey and simulation games on the PlayStation.
Here at



EPM we don't think your idea would sell as a game as it's just too pedestrian.
How would you turn it into a game? Mission One: Take the kids to school, Mission Two: Drive to the shops and get groceries. See what we mean? It would be really cool as a teaching tool for learner drivers, though.

SAD SHORTCOMINGS

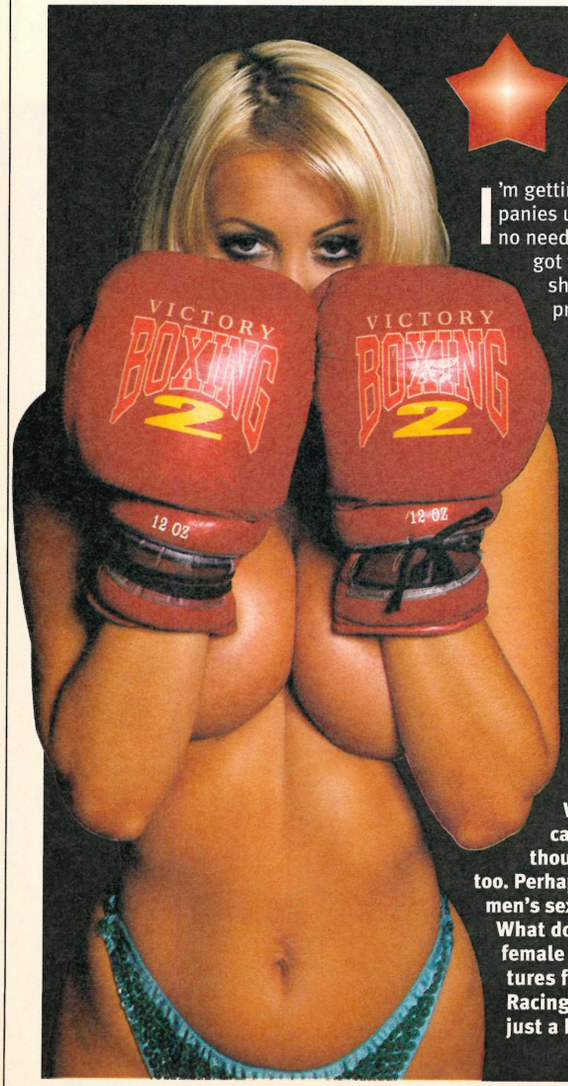
I have owned my PSX for nearly three years now and I have owned many good games such as Resident Evil 2 and Tomb Raider, but even the best games could be improved on in some way. For example, let's take Cool Boarders. It has great graphics and gameplay, but only four tracks and ten boards. This made me get bored very quickly. I completed it with in an hour.
Why don't producers sit up and listen? If they did, more people would buy games. After all, most N64 games have around 30 levels and extras for when you've completed it.
Sam Walker, Chortham, Kent



EPM: Aren't you being a little harsh there, Sam? Not every N64 game is huge - look at the disgusting Clayfighters 33 1/3, or the pathetic Cruisin' USA - terrible. Also, while no one likes to be short-changed by a short game, there are plenty of PSX titles that will keep you playing for months.
Splendid RPGs such as Suikoden, Final Fantasy VII and Breath of Fire III, top drivers like Max Power Racing and Formula 1 '97, the dark and foreboding Resident Evil and Tenchu, the colossal Tomb Raider III - need we go on? Look out for Cool Boarders 3 too; unlike the too-short original, it has 36 courses and 20 boards.
The best way to make sure you don't buy a stinker of a game is to read EPM every month - should a game offer too little for your dosh, we'll tell you about it. Check out our Phat Air review on Page 46 and you'll see what we mean.

STAR LETTER...

NO SEX PLEASE, WE'RE GAMERS...



I'm getting sick and tired of video games companies using sex to sell their products. There's no need for it. Let's face it - what had Vicky Lee got to do with Victory Boxing 2? Okay, so she was wearing boxing gloves, but her presence was still wholly gratuitous. It's just using an irrelevant image of a woman's sexuality to make an unrelated product appear more attractive. Likewise, using Jo Guest to promote Tetris was pretty ridiculous.
It's fair enough to use sexy models when they're playing characters from video games, like Nell McAndrew as Lara Croft or Kelley Brooke as Deathtrap Dungeon's Red Lotus (though certain games use sexy female characters gratuitously too), but when they're totally irrelevant to the product it's just exploitative. Don't the games companies want to sell to women?
Susan Morris, Oswestry, Shropshire

EPM: I wonder what you made of our cover and poster this issue, then? We're standing by it as the 'girls and cars' look is definitely Max Power, though perhaps it's gratuitous for them, too. Perhaps it's time advertisers used images of men's sexuality to sell products to women too? What does everyone else think? Do our female readers consider the Vicky Lee pictures from Issue Eight and the Max Power Racing material in this issue offensive, or just a bit of fun?

UP THE BAGGIES...

I think it would be a good idea if Electronic Arts were to bring out a FIFA game called FIFA Divisions, with all four divisions in it. As a West Brom fan I would like the chance to play with them.
JS Nicklin, West Bromwich

EPM: What an excellent idea. Surely the lower divisions hold more interest over here than European leagues? I suppose the only difficulty here would be cost in researching and licensing the game, which could (obviously) only be sold in the UK, as opposed to all over the world like FIFA 99, which offers leagues from just about everywhere. Nice idea, though.

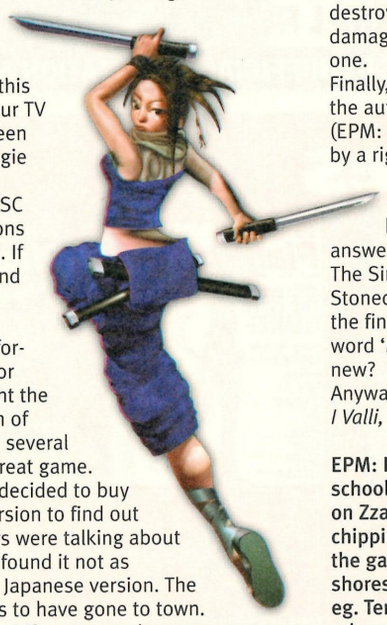
CRASH CODSWALLOP?

My friend and I are really good at Crash Bandicoot. We tried to complete the game in as quick a time as possible, taking it in turns to play for an hour each. It took us seven hours, 13 minutes. We moved as fast as we could, but this was the best we could do.
We've been playing Crash Bandicoot for years, but we couldn't complete it in 4 1/2 hours (EPM: See Exchange, Issue 11 where Jonathan Abbott complained he finished the game in this time). As a Crash fan, I think this is impossible.
Gary Casey, Wembley

EPM: We hope you're talking about Crash Bandicoot 2, not the original - that's what the debate was about. Can anyone beat 7 hours 13 minutes?

WHO SCARTED?

Regarding your answer to Carl Fletcher's letter in EPM 12, most modern TVs and VCRs will play NTSC games in colour on a chipped PlayStation, using a SCART lead. However, some older ones will only play in black and white. To get over this, you can buy an NTSC/PAL converter for around £15 to £20. This plugs into the back of the PSX just like a SCART or AFC connection and can be plugged into either the aerial co-ax socket or the red, white and yellow phono sockets (if your set has them), using different leads. This gives you glorious colour and stereo sound. If this doesn't work, your TV set must have been made by John Logie Baird himself.



As for buying NTSC games, my reasons differ from Carl's. If I fancy a game and I think it very unlikely to be released in PAL format, I'll buy it. For instance, I bought the Japanese version of Bushido Blade 2 several months ago. A great game. However, I later decided to buy the American version to find out what the buggers were talking about in Story Mode. I found it not as authentic as the Japanese version. The US censor seems to have gone to town. People don't grunt if someone shoves a sword through their torso. Also the Yanks, bless 'em, made Ayame in Tenchu sound like a female version of John Wayne - no detriment to a great game, but I'm glad I waited for the UK version.

EPM: So you should be - Activision made substantial improvements for Tenchu's UK release, including two new levels, better AI and more secret items. Likewise, the PAL version of Metal Gear Solid will offer more skill levels. Not every publisher cranks out dodgy conversions for the UK market. Thanks for your advice on NTSC games, though.

OLD TIMER

Congratulations on creating such an awesome mag. Most other PlayStation magazines just clone each other or sell on who can print the most Lara Croft pics or pictures of women with as few clothes as possible (EPM: Hope you're enjoying this month's poster, then). Yours is definitely the best of the lot - the others lack that cutting edge originality.
I'm a hardcore gamer and have been following games since the days of Zzap! 64 (the good ole days, eh?).
Regarding chipping, I think this is down to the individual. I got mine chipped when Tekken 3 was released in Japan, simply for Tekken 3. I don't regret it. The cost of import games is a bit high, but well worth it if you want to play the full-screen, full-speed uncensored versions of the games. My only worry is piracy. This disease has destroyed many consoles and computers before, like the C64 and the Amiga. This is the killer that could eventually destroy the PlayStation, so DON'T DO IT! The damage is far too harsh - just trust me on this one.
Finally, I'll finish with some interesting facts for the author of the letter about Christian Jihad (EPM: a nauseating idea for a new game offered by a right wing loony in Issue 12). You blame the Muslims and Hindus for your sad life. Well, do some research into a group known as the Freemasons for all your answers. To start you off, watch the episode of The Simpsons where Homer joins The Stonecutters (a spoof on The Freemasons?) and the final song at the end credits. Replace the word 'Martians' with 'Muslims' - learn something new?
Anyway, must dash.
I Valli, Leicester

EPM: It's great to hear from one of the old school - our editor's thrilled you remember him on Zzap! 64. You've probably got a point about chipping, but the irony of the situation is that the games which take the longest to reach these shores are the ones that are converted properly, eg. Tenchu and Metal Gear Solid. It's the speedy releases which offer ugly black boarders and a slower running speed, though even then there are exceptions. You're right about piracy threatening the existence of our favourite machine, though it wasn't the only factor in the death of the Amiga and the Commodore 64. The C64 had basically had its day - it had an incredibly long innings, but technology moved on. Although piracy certainly hastened the death of the Amiga, another contributory factor was sheer incompetence on Commodore's part. Because it was more than just a games machine, Commodore refused to market it at gamers, the very people who were keeping it alive.

Finally, we haven't got a clue what you're talking about regarding our fascist friend and his Christian Jihad, perhaps because we're not familiar with the Stonecutter's song. Perhaps someone could explain this to us?

TOP GEAR

I'm thinking about buying Metal Gear Solid. I've never played the game so I don't have my own opinion on it, though my friends have mixed views.
Does Metal Gear Solid live up to your expectations as THE game of '98? Also, could you send me a Metal Gear Solid poster?
Ryan Devanney, Lanark

EPM: Metal Gear Solid is an excellent game, scoring 92% as a Japanese import in Issue 10. It doesn't hit the shelves in the UK until February, but a sound conversion is promised - no slowdown or black borders. If you must buy an import version, make sure it's American (unless, f course, you can speak Japanese), but it will be far cheaper when it comes out in the UK, and let's face it - there are plenty of games to keep you busy until then.
Finally, what makes you think we're awash with Metal Gear Solid posters here at EPM? You're out of luck, I'm afraid - we haven't got any.

TACTICAL ESPIONAGE ACTION
METAL GEAR SOLID

PEARLS OF WISDOM...

Short and to the point...

• What's it like testing PlayStation games before they come out? To me it sounds like a really cool job.
Robin Taylor, Lichfield

EPM: It's cool enough...

• What do you think of Zero Divide II, Test Drive 5 and Brian Lara's Cricket?
Christopher Pretty, Lichfield

EPM: Crap, cool and excellent respectively.

• If I had a job like yours I would want to review and play Tomb Raider 3 and Crash Bandicoot 3.
Robin Taylor, Lichfield

EPM: Why not review them for your school magazine or a PlayStation fanzine?

That's all for now - see you next month. Remember, when writing to Exchange make sure you state your choice of game, just in case you win our coveted Star Letter award.

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This month's stunning line-up of periphs are nothing short of blockbusters. There's a touch of sci-fi with Blaze's Cyber Shock, a bit of action thanks to the Wild Things Turbo Feedback Steering Wheel and gritty drama courtesy of Blaze's Xplorer 2 and its shocking truths for cheats and fraudsters all over the country...

CYBER SHOCK

BY: BLAZE **PRICE: £19.99**

Isn't she a beauty, eh? Quite a looker indeed. If it were a car it would be a Mitsubishi GTO, with lavish curves and an aerodynamic look that's equally as ergonomic to feel. Apart from it's sports car/Star Trek look, the Cyber shock has another great selling point; interchangeable thumb controllers that you can swap until your heart's content.

VERDICT: 6 OUT OF 10

The interchangeable sticks are spot on! Each one could be used for a different game depending on how you like to play or what type of game it is you're using. The pad itself has a very sturdy, solid feel with good quality buttons you can tell are going to last you a fair while. All the buttons are within easy reach thanks to the pad's mould, but they all seem to be remarkably small. If you've small hands this is fine, but if your hands are on the big side you soon find yourself hitting two buttons at the same time by mistake or simply the wrong one altogether. A similar complaint haunts the directional buttons, though there is another slightly-deeper rooted problem there. Pressing Up doesn't mean up! No, neither does Left, Right and Down. It's all a bit lop-sided, you see. It is possible to get used to the 'novel' slanting directional pad, but it's a bit like learning to write with your other hand. Great if you can do it, but why bother?

TURBO FEEDBACK STEERING WHEEL

BY: WILD THINGS **PRICE: £64.99**

Well, it's the first time that any peripherals manufacturer has released a steering wheel for the PlayStation that comes with separate pedals, a separate gearstick AND a hand brake in one box set. It's Duel Shock compatible with intuitive feedback and an adjustable driving position. If this wasn't enough, each of the package's components come with G-locks that fix them firmly into position any way you want them. That's great, but is it any good considering the slightly high price point?

VERDICT: 8 OUT OF 10

Yes... and no. Yes, because it drives like a dream and still manages to put all of the normal PSX function buttons within easy reach, even though it ain't a pad. Yes, because the handbrake works incredibly well and doesn't even need setting up before starting to play (on most of the games I tried). No however, because it's all a bit plastic at times and the gearbox has more give that a worn out Peugeot (some say it's like trying to stir a bowl of custard). The only other problem is where are you going to set it up. If you've got a desk, that's great; simply lock and load. But if you haven't even got a chair, things start getting a little complicated as I'm sure you can imagine. Circumstances allowing, though, it's a cracker of a wheel.

JORDON GRAND PRIX STEERING WHEEL

BY: JOYTECH

PRICE: £59.99

If you've read Issue #9 of EPM you might remember we've already reviewed this little beauty. Well, not quite this little beauty because this is the 'all new' rumble version that has full Duel Shock compatibility.

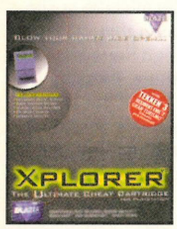
VERDICT: 7 OUT OF 10

At the end of the day it is basically exactly the same wheel, just with a little more bump and grind. I pity the people who bought the original at £49.99 because three months have passed an it's obviously time to upgrade you equipment. Not! Why release a pricey wheel only to update it three months later with only minor modifications? Don't ask me, ask Joytech. This is the main reason why the mark has dropped from 9/10 to 7/10, that and the slightly different driving feel. It's not as much to my liking anymore, so there!

XPLORER 2 CHEAT CARTRIDGE

BY: BLAZE **PRICE: £29.99**

The Xplorer cartridge has been a smashing success for Blaze and they now bring you Version Two of their little grey box of tricks. The latest version boasts an easier-to-use interface (if that was possible), a handy memory card manager, an even handier CD player and, last but not least, it holds more cheats than Version One.



VERDICT: 10 OUT OF 10

So what if you've got the original and don't feel that you should be spending out for yet another version? Easy; there are three ways you can get the latest version of Xplorer if you've already got the earlier one and they go a little bit like this:
You can send your cartridge to Blaze and they will (for a small postage and packaging fee) send it back to you fully upgraded and full of the latest cheats for games such as Tomb Raider 3! Or, if you've got the technical wizardry, download a complete upgrade from the Internet or, better still, get them to send you a disk for free! Finally, if you think those other two methods of upgrading are not suitable for you, you can get a special FCD memory card that fits snugly onto the 2Mb memory card (I prefer the first two personally). This incredible display of goodwill is enough to bring a tear to my eye, but it also happens to be the best cheat cartridge on the market by a country mile.

LABTECH C-110 HEADPHONES

BY: LABTECH **PRICE: £12.99**

Headphones for the PlayStation? No, not strictly, but I'm certainly not going to stop you trying 'em. You can plug them in through your TV or your hi-fi if you're wired for sound. If you've got an old-style PSX (with he separate audio outs) you can plug them straight in with a phono to 3.5mm jack widget thing. Well that's about it really... um... It's got an adjustable head and a volume control on the cable. Yup, they're headphones all right.

VERDICT:

7 OUT OF 10

They ain't bad head phones either, just not brilliant. They don't seem to fit on the head too well if yours is on the petite size, to be honest, that and the volume control hissed like an angry cat when you used it. Not bad for the price, though, if you think about it.

COMPETITION

Sponsored by GT Interactive

All you fellow Mudokons out there must surely still be playing with your newly-acquired copy of Oddworld: Abe's Exoddus. And we're very sure you must be thinking, 'wow, if only I could get my hands on a really cool T-shirt which had lots of little Abes on it'. Well surprise, surprise, we've got five spankingly-gorgeous T-shirts to give away in this month's dead easy brain teaser. They're an army-green colour and have little zombie-type heads placed lovingly across the front. Lads, sorry but these much sought-after fashion items are made only for the girlie fans of Abe, but they'd make a very nice gift for a loved one!

And if that isn't amazing enough, you should have a go at winning one of the bags we have stashed away here at the EPM office. It's an over-the-shoulder jobbie, with many hidden compartments. It looks like something from out of space really; quite apt if you think about it. Put it this way; you really will be the talk of the town if you wander down to the shops in this clobber. We've got five T-shirts and five bags to give away, and all you have to do is answer one really easy-peasy question:

- Name just four of the words that Abe can say to his Mudokon friends during the game.

Send your competition entries to the usual address, making sure that you mark them 'Abe compo' and get your entry in by the 28th of January. The first five correct entries drawn out of the metaphoric hat win a bag, the next five win a T-shirt. Good Luck!

Here's our address which can be used for all of your competition entries, and anything else for that matter:
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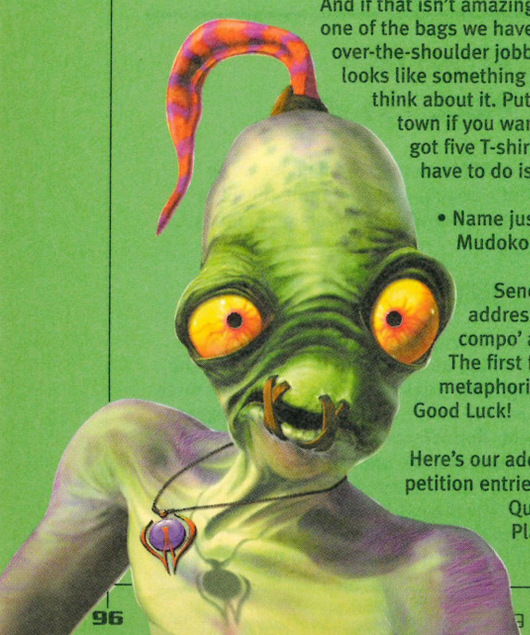

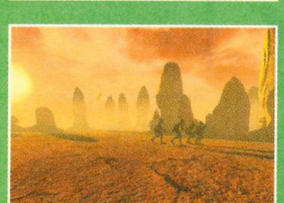

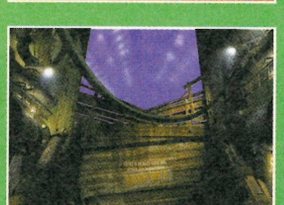
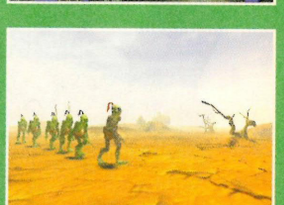

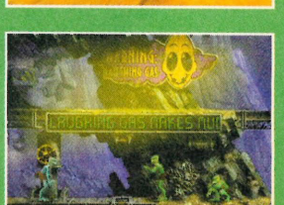

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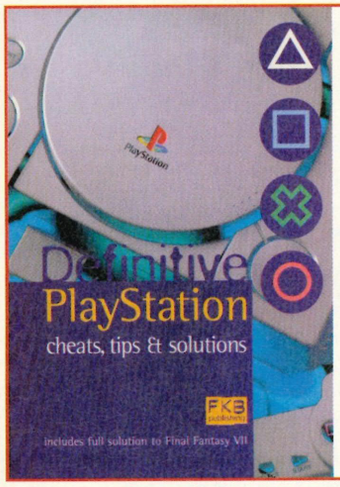

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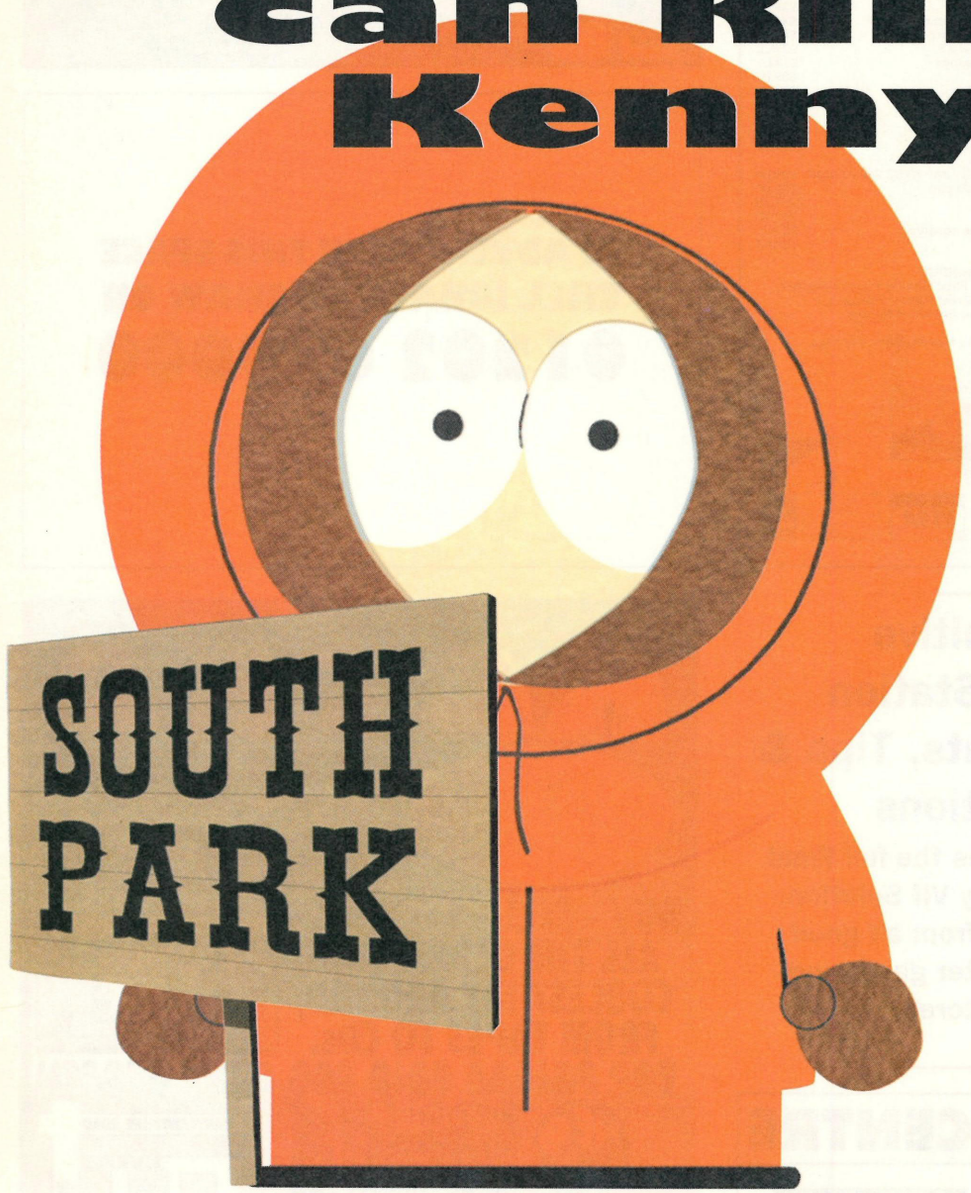

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Published by
Quay Magazine Publishing Ltd
22 Strand Street
Poole
Dorset
BH15 1SB

Tel: (01202) 679000
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Subscriptions & back issues
The subscription rate for 13 issues is £26 (UK), £35 (EU) & £65 (World)
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Cover & poster artwork supplied by Eutechnyx, posed by Caroline Sophia Prest & Karen Seafield

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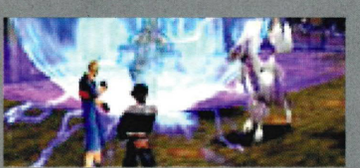
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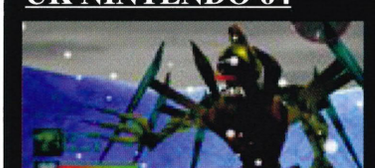
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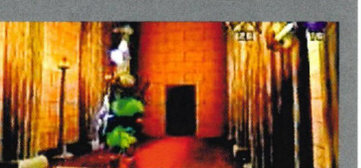
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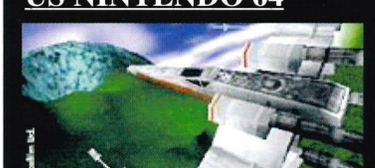
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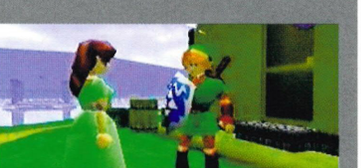
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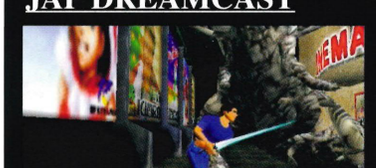
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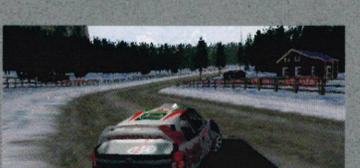
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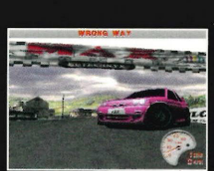

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