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# games TM

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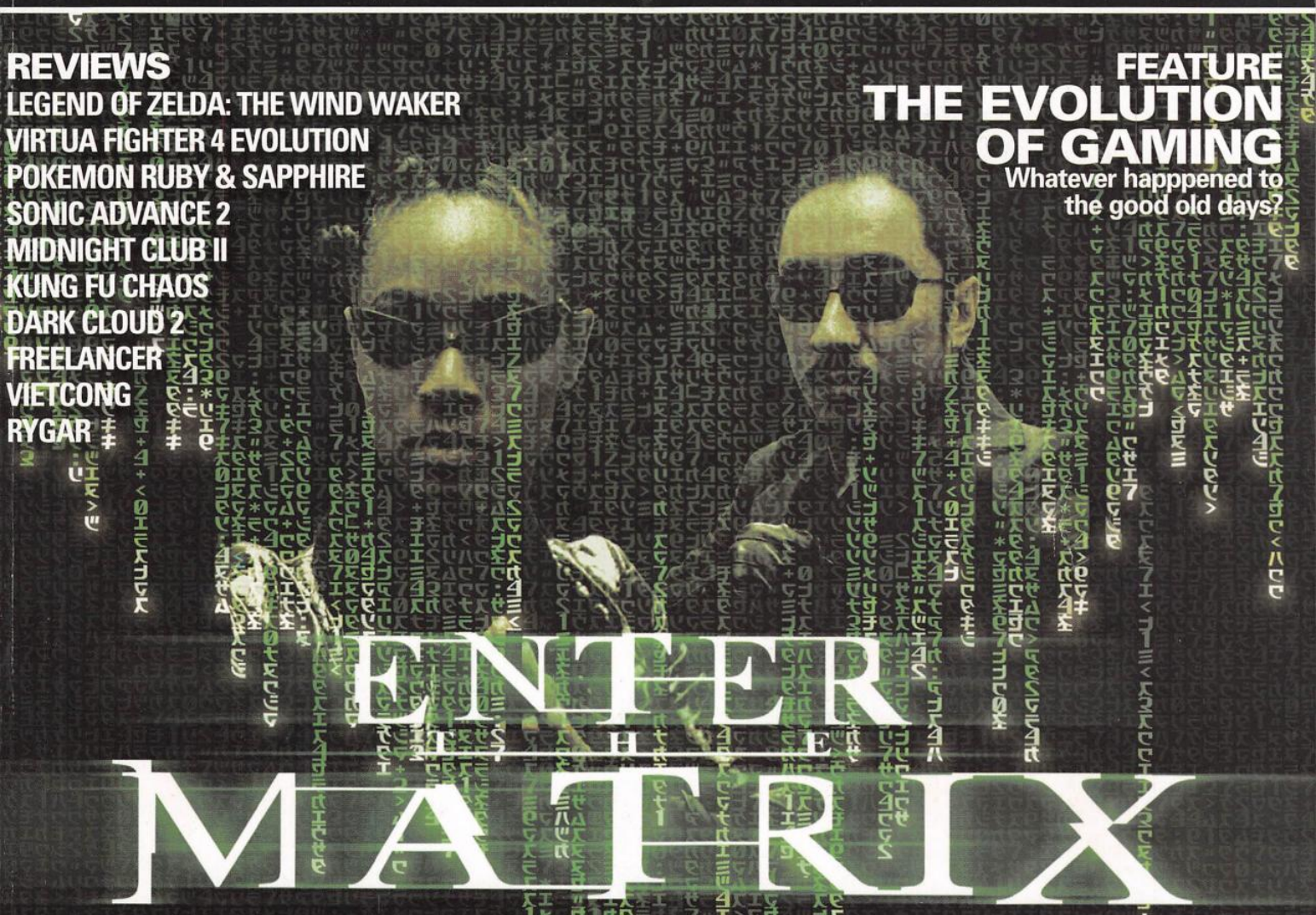
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VIRTUA FIGHTER 4 EVOLUTION
POKEMON RUBY & SAPPHIRE
SONIC ADVANCE 2
MIDNIGHT CLUB II
KUNG FU CHAOS
DARK CLOUD 2
FREELANCER
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RYGAR

## FEATURE

## THE EVOLUTION OF GAMING

Whatever happpened to the good old days?



# ENTER THE MATRIX

Are you ready to see just how deep the rabbit hole goes?

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## THE WORLD OF PRO GAMERS

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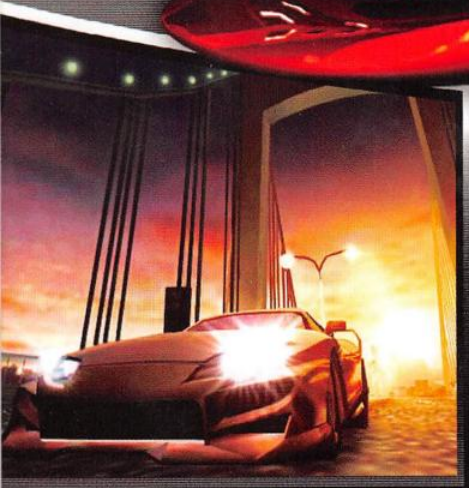
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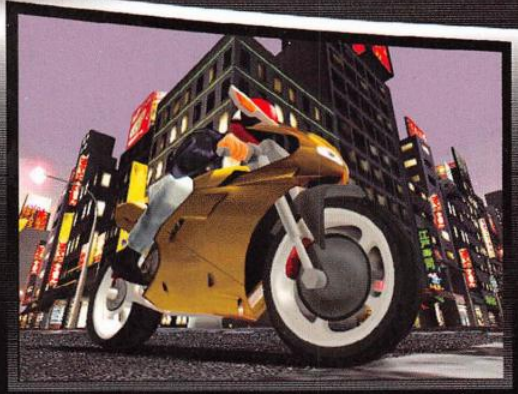
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Medium Level Course
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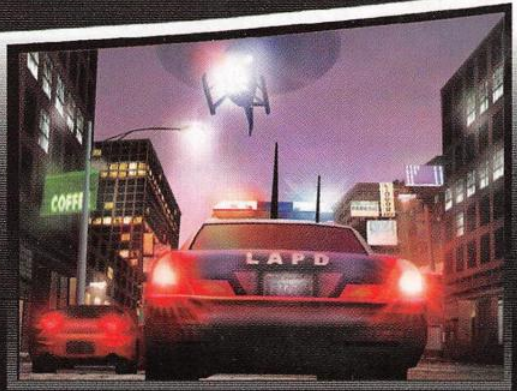
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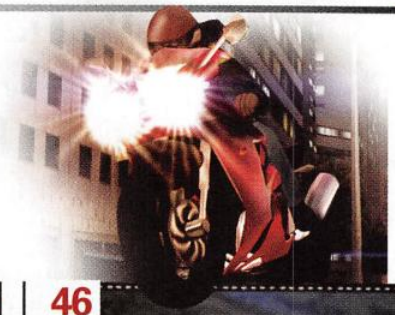
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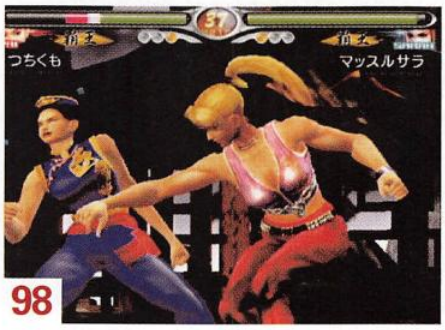
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The games industry today is more competitive than ever before - but whatever happened to the days of good old rivalry?

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# 38 SILENT HILL 3

**Sofa cushions at the ready – Konami's latest effort looks like it's going to be the scariest game of them all...**

Most magazine launches are timed to catch the slipstream of a console launch – **games™**, as the more observant of you will have already noticed, is different. Unlike every other multiformat magazine, **games™** is a celebration of videogames past, present and future. It revels in a pastime that we are all passionate about and have been part of since we first connected a games system to a TV and abandoned the real world for the pixelated pleasures on offer. Though much has changed over the years, our ardour has yet to wane and is hopefully reflected within these pages.

Simon Phillips, Group Editor.

# NEWS

NEWS | **GAMES MARKETING** | GIRLS IN GAMES

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FIND OUT WHERE TO GET THE ESSENTIAL STORIES WITH OUR QUICK GUIDE TO THE NEWS


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Just how much of an effect does product placement in games have on the games-playing consumer?

**10 NINTENDO IN TROUBLE?**
With the GameCube flagging and third-party developers jumping ship, is Nintendo in more trouble than it might be letting on?

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With the PS2, Xbox and GameCube battling it out like heavyweight boxers, which console is best for you?

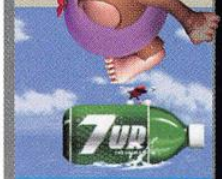
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All the latest from Japan and the US with our regular correspondents.

**24 COMMUNITY: PIVOTAL**
Born out of crisis, Pivotal is now making it big across all formats with *Conflict: Desert Storm*. We went to meet them to find out the secret of their success.




The use of actual cars in racing games creates brand awareness.







Chester Cheetah and Cool Spot were invented in order to shift drinks and crisps.





Dante can get kitted out in head-to-toe Diesel in *Devil May Cry 2*. Flash bastard.




BUY! BUY! BUY! EFFECTIVENESS OF IN-GAME ADVERTISING TO BE STUDIED BY ACADEMICS AND AD MEN

# DRINK BEER, SMOKE FAGS

**A company specialising in product placement in videogames has announced its intentions to begin testing the effectiveness of subtle (and not so subtle) in-game advertising.** JAM International Partners, Inc will work with Assistant Professor Michelle R Nelson, a leading researcher of film and videogame product placement who's currently based at the University of Wisconsin.

Promising to be the first of its kind, the research is to be commissioned by a trio of companies working in partnership on a product placement deal. In the past, we've seen Diesel clothing in *Devil May Cry 2*, Dole bananas in *Super Monkey Ball* and the likes of Pizza Hut and Tower Records in *Crazy Taxi*, so this initiative is nothing new. Of course, with product placement in videogames first appearing in the late Eighties, it's surprising that companies have waited so long to find out its actual effectiveness. Professor Nelson has already researched quite extensively in the field, first publishing her findings in an article entitled 'Recall of Brand Placements in Computer and Videogames'.

Professor Nelson's first experiment was exploring the effectiveness of a brand in racing games. It was discovered that products or companies were more memorable whenever they became a major part of the title's gameplay or were particularly relevant to the actual consumer. The gamers who were tested felt that they did not feel that the product placement was deceptive and that in certain circumstances could actually help to enhance realism. The overall results for the research were generally positive and are best summed up by Professor Nelson herself: "We've only just begun to understand the effectiveness of brand placement in videogames," she says, "and are pleased to have the opportunity to






Clothing, sports equipment and even bananas are now being promoted in games.



*Kelly Slater's Pro Surfer* and Microsoft's *Amped* are just a few videogames that feature branded clothing.

**"THE EXPLOSIVE GROWTH OF SOFTWARE SALES IS MAKING IN-GAME PRODUCT PLACEMENT THE MOST DESIRABLE FORM OF BRAND COMMUNICATION"**

*JOSHUA GRAFF, MANAGING DIRECTOR, JAM*

further our learning through actual games being developed for consumers on a large scale, versus ones created largely for testing in a laboratory setting."

JAM International Partners has now entered into new discussions with an as yet unnamed major videogame publisher and a leading consumer brand company with the aim of creating a whole series of videogame product placements which will then undergo strict testing to prove their actual effectiveness. At the moment, none of the companies are willing to divulge any further information about the new partnership, although they are hoping to reveal details of the research study at this year's E3.

Joshua Graff, managing director of JAM, has high hopes for the unique experiment: "The response by our partners to this idea of research has been fantastic. The goal is to develop a body of learning that will help us understand what type of brand placements are most effective, looking at a whole array of variables, from the genre of the game to the role and prominence of the brand within the game.

"The explosive growth of console and software sales, coupled with the never-ending quest by companies to make their brands more visible to young consumers, is making in-game product placement the most sought after and desirable new form of brand communication."

With product placement becoming even more popular within the industry, we're interested to see how JAM and Professor Nelson's research eventually turns out. However, with companies becoming increasingly sensitive as to how their products are displayed (after all, we're not likely to see well-known family brands in the likes of Max Payne or Vice City) a conclusion to this research could be a long time coming...

## COMING SOON

**The female game character has taken a very long time to evolve into anything remotely akin to the current characters female gamers now crave.**

**Vixen**
In the late Eighties, women were not even considered to be regular gamers. The result was embarrassingly sexist advertising as found in *Vixen* and *Barbarian*.

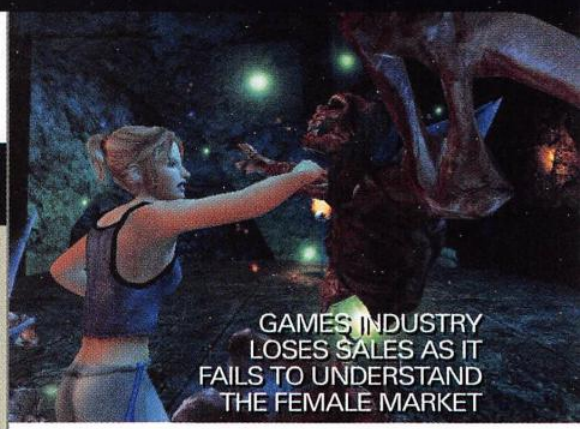



**Tomb Raider**
Lara Croft seemed the perfect choice for all gamers when she first appeared on the PlayStation. Unfortunately, later games focused more on the character's clothing and breasts – so female appeal quickly waned.



**Shadow Over Mystara**
This is more like it. Capcom's Elf wore suitable clothing (especially when compared to the steel bikinis of *Golden Axe*) and could more than hold her own against the other characters in this great scrolling fighter.

**Buffy the Vampire Slayer**
Buffy has the best of both worlds. She's sexy enough for the male gamers and sassy enough for the women – and currently one of the best videogame heroines around. You go, girl.



GAMES INDUSTRY LOSES SALES AS IT FAILS TO UNDERSTAND THE FEMALE MARKET

# THE FEMININE TOUCH

**One of the more interesting meetings at the recent Game Developers Conference in San Jose, California focused on the failure of the games industry to appeal to the female market.** Whilst female gaming isn't exactly a new topic, the current argument suggests that the games industry is missing out on huge sales figures because it simply doesn't understand this potential new market.

Clarrinda Merripen, human resource manager of CyberLore Studios, believes that the lack of female interest in gaming is something that needs to be addressed: "I don't think they [women] have necessarily been ignored but I think the gaming industry has grown up male and now they're looking around and trying to make that leap because they have to."

According to EA's community manager, Lizzie Deighton, there's an obvious place for the industry to start. "Stop creating female leads for eye candy," she says, "and start creating them as good characters to play – one that is attractive, strong minded, fun and wickedly sly. Take Buffy, for instance. She can plan her prom outfit, rugby tackle frothing-at-the-mouth werewolves into the ground and still find time to hang out with her friends."

Of course, developers can't expect women to start playing overnight, but the industry needs to start evolving sooner rather than later.



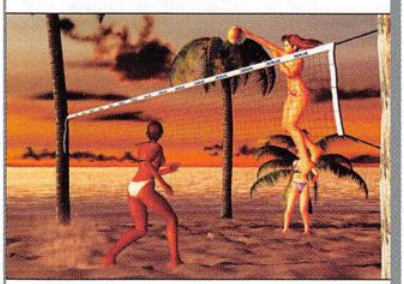
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BITE-SIZED STORIES FROM AROUND THE WORLD OF GAMING



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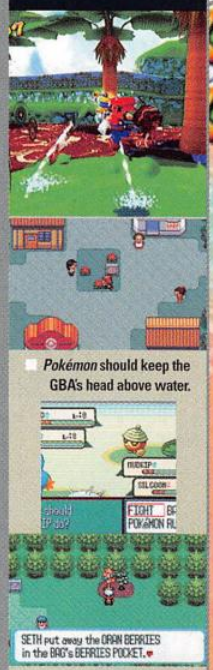
Thanks to various 'socially inept' Xbox owners with too much time on their hands, it's now possible to play *DOA Xtreme Beach Volleyball* the way Tecmo never intended – with naked ladies. Not surprisingly, Tecmo is suitably peeved about this: "Please do not post anything about nude patches and other hacked information, or you will be punished to the fullest extent of the law," said a moderator post on its official forum page. "The recent links we have seen clearly show images of our game that have been modified or altered. We cannot permit this behaviour." So there.



### AND THE WINNER IS...

Honouring a career spanning some of SEGA's most innovative games, AM2 frontman Yu Suzuki has been given the prestigious Academy of Interactive Arts and Science Hall of Fame Award. The gaming world's lifetime achievement award has previously been won by the likes of Miyamoto-san and Will Wright, creator of *The Sims*. Suzuki-san is a lead developer at SEGA and has worked on the popular franchises *Out Run*, *Virtua Fighter* and *Shenmue*.






*Pokémon* should keep the GBA's head above water.

The GBA SP may attract a new audience for the handheld.

Link may well turn out to be Nintendo's hero if he can save the GameCube.



DOES NINTENDO HAVE MORE TROUBLE BREWING THAN IT'S LETTING ON?

# GAME OVER FOR GAMECUBE?

**Even if you're a relative newcomer to videogames, you'll most likely be familiar with the whole SEGA fiasco that we had to endure in 2001.** At the time, all the claims made about SEGA dropping the Dreamcast and becoming a third-party developer were fervently denied by the company – until they turned out to be true just a few months later, proving that hindsight really is worth its weight in gold. So with that in mind, we have to turn our gaze in the direction of Kyoto, Japan and ask the question: could Nintendo be setting itself up for a similar fall? There's no question that with companies like SEGA and Atari, Nintendo practically laid the foundations of the games industry. Of course, it's always had a reputation that it's found difficult to shake, despite recent attempts to make changes to keep up with Sony and now Microsoft.

Thanks mainly to the belief that Nintendo still makes games aimed at kids rather than gamers of all ages, the GameCube has had a tough time finding a firm footing within the games market – even in its home territory of Japan where, at the time of going to press, the Xbox is actually outselling the GameCube.

Unfortunately, with the increasing number of people who wouldn't normally be into games picking up consoles based purely on the number of games available and the machine's popularity, analysts believe that this image isn't just going to disappear overnight.

"Nintendo is missing out on the current generation of games players," says David Mercer, VP of the Strategy Analytics Global Broadband Practice. "Culturally, it will be difficult for the company to change course but it must do so in order to secure its long-term position as a leading games publisher." So, the message to Nintendo from financial analysts about making hardware is 'get out while the going isn't that good' – not exactly something the company will want to

**"THEY MAY BE GOOD FOR GAME USERS BUT WHEN IT COMES TO UNIQUE INTERACTION WITH THE HARDWARE, I DON'T THINK CROSS PLATFORM GAMES CONTRIBUTE A LOT"**
SHIGERU MIYAMOTO, NINTENDO





The mighty *Metroid Prime* will undoubtedly help to shift a few GameCubes on its UK release.

hear when its plans for a follow-up to the GameCube are already in motion.

On top of all this, there's the issue of third-party support – disappointing sales in recent months (which are being attributed to the GameCube's lack of popularity, rather than the quality of the games) have led to companies like Activision, THQ and even EA pulling their upcoming cross-platform titles from the GameCube release schedule, creating a lack of confidence in the console across the publishing board.

There's also the firm's hesitant stance on online gaming. While Nintendo's reluctance to take the GameCube online this early might make business sense, the sudden rush for everyone to get their consoles online means it might get left behind if the GameCube doesn't follow suit – even though the argument that online gaming is the future of videogames looks slightly flimsy.

However, if all this has got you reaching for the razorblades then stay your hand; it might look bleak, but all is not lost. In fact, according to a report recently released by DFC Intelligence covering market leaders in the videogame industry, Nintendo has more than enough stockpiled cash to keep its head above water for many years to come.

While there's certainly evidence that it hasn't managed to grow significantly as a company over the last decade, Nintendo has always been profitable thanks to the Game Boy's constant popularity, the continuing success of its first-party titles and (most obviously) those damned Pokémon creatures. Combine this with the early sidelining of failed hardware like the Virtual Boy and the Pokémon Mini – both dropped to save money, as well as face to some extent – and it looks as though Nintendo does have some business sense after all.

Despite all the rumours floating around at the moment about the company's strife, one thing is for sure – Nintendo does know what it's doing. Certainly, it's not likely to be making a play for Sony's crown any time soon, but with such a strong first-party line-up set for the next year, it's difficult to see Nintendo struggling in the near future. To be honest, it's just up to anti-GameCube zealots to open their eyes and see what they're missing out on. But then we doubt that'll happen before the next-next-gen.

## COMING SOON

**If you think that there's a drought of games on the GameCube, you really haven't been paying all that much attention...**

**Zelda: The Wind Waker**
Nintendo's big game of the autumn sees Link return in an absolutely gorgeous yet opinion-dividing form – expect this game to sell GameCubes like the warmest of cake-like products. (see a full review on p.74)



**F-Zero GC**
Mmm, blindingly fast racing. We're already on tenterhooks at the prospect of playing this for more than five minutes (damn you, World Hobby Fair) when Nintendo releases it in May over in Japan.



**Pikmin 2**
Captain Olimar's back, and this time he's got a mate. Otherwise, it looks like business as usual for the slave-like Pikmin as they lift, carry and generally grow like the happy little flower people that they are.



**Mario 128**
Also promised before the end of the year (in Japan, at least), it's slightly odd that Nintendo have yet to release a single piece of information about Mario's next game. E3 can't come soon enough...



**Mario Kart Online**
Recent comments from Miyamoto-san have revealed that he's no longer troubled at the prospect of taking the *Mario Kart* series online. Plus it'll be revealed at E3. Ooh, how exciting.

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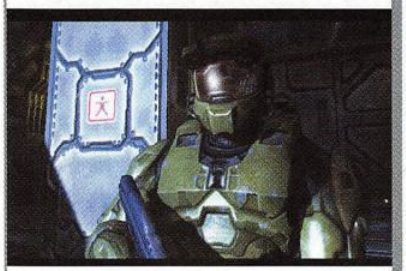
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### YOU CAN HAVE IT WHEN IT'S READY

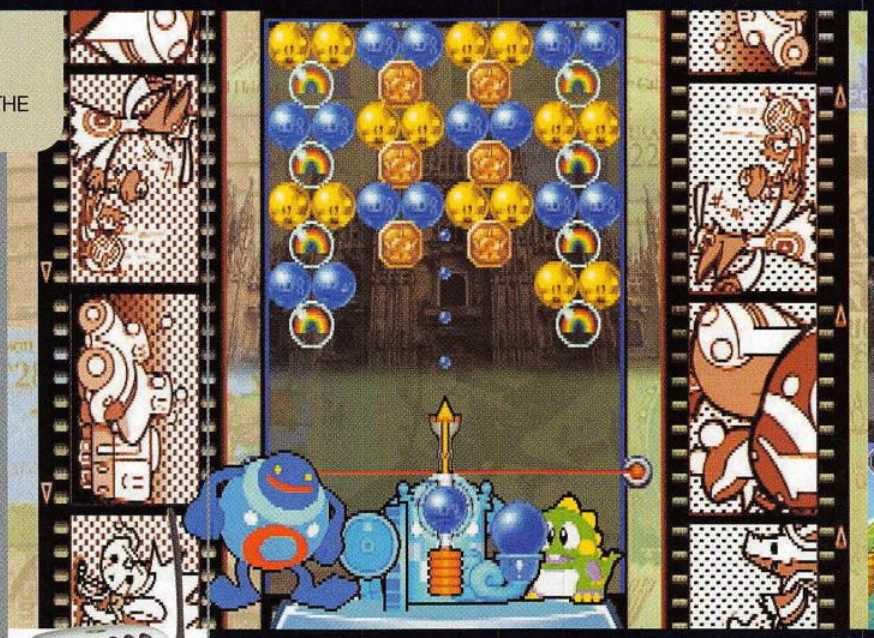
Well, there's a surprise – Microsoft's biggest title of the year, *Halo 2*, has now definitely slipped and will not be released until at least 2004. While no doubt a bit of a blow to Xbox owners everywhere, we can't help feeling that this will give Bungie plenty of time to correct the (very) small niggles we had with the original game. Our only concern is that Microsoft may decide to change its mind and stick to its original date as they did with the original – *Halo* was rushed to meet Xbox's launch and suffered because of it.





### OUR SURVEY SAYS...

Sony's PlayStation2 has been voted games developers' console of choice in a survey carried out by tools developer SN Systems. The online survey was sent to 75 developers and industry workers to find out which console they had most enjoyed playing in their lifetime. The PS2 garnered more than a fifth of the votes (23 per cent), with Nintendo's SNES only slightly behind with 19 per cent. Xbox and GameCube came third and fourth respectively.



If Peer-to-Peer Systems wins its lawsuit, could it mean the end of the likes of *Sonic* and *Bust-A-Move* on the N-Gage?







Peer-to-Peer Systems claim that Cybiko's handheld device (above) is breaching the patent for wireless gaming.



# BUT MISS, HE COPIED ME

## POSSIBLE PROBLEMS FOR N-GAGE OVER MOBILE GAMING PATENT LAWSUIT

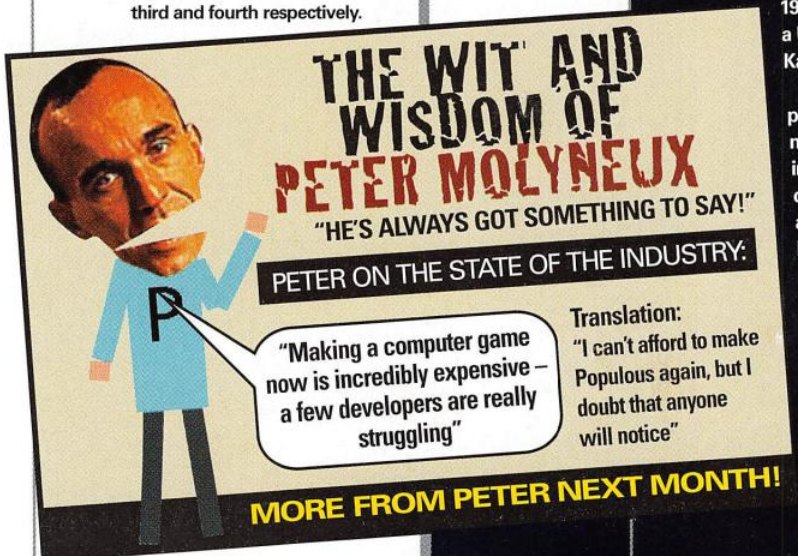



Well, you learn something new every day. According to a patent that dates back to 1995, the complete rights to any form of wireless multiplayer gaming belong to a little-known company called Peer-to-Peer Systems. Currently engaged in fierce litigation with developers Palm (over its PDAs being able to play games over wireless networks) and Cybiko (who manufacture a handheld gaming device with wireless multiplayer options), Peer-to-Peer's patent was originally filed in 1995 and eventually granted by a US patent office to Michael Kagan and Ian Solomon in 1997.

Essentially, it consists of the patenting of 'an interactive multiple-player game system including at least two playing devices communicating over an ad-hoc, wireless, all to-all broadcast network'. Palm and Peer-to-Peer Systems had initially been in negotiations over a licensing fee, although these have since broken down and a lawsuit is now in progress.

As you might expect, this situation could have serious consequences for handheld gaming. For instance, there's currently been no action recorded against Nokia or its upcoming N-Gage system although considering the machine's potential, we're sure that the company will be watching the proceeding court cases with great interest – it's quite possible that Nokia could be next on Peer-to-Peer's agenda depending on how successful it is with its current two lawsuits.

If successful, the ramifications for Nokia could be difficult to say the least, as Bluetooth link technology is being used to enable all its wireless gaming. Of course, it seems very unlikely that the patent will actually stop the evolution of wireless multiplayer gaming either now or any time in the future. However, if Peer-to-Peer Systems wins its cases, it could set a precedent that could lead to huge payoffs for the firm.





Microsoft's *Kakuto Chojin* failed to make an impact in Japan and was quickly dropped on religious grounds (or so they said...).



This round of staff cuts can only be bad news for Microsoft, who has struggled to sell the Xbox in Japan.

MICROSOFT GETS SET TO DROP STAFF IN JAPAN

# CUTTING IN A BOX




**The Japanese arm of Microsoft's Xbox department is set to lose several members of staff as the machine continues to struggle in Japan.** Thirty four employees will go from the marketing and production departments. "Xbox is refining its strategy in Japan to deliver gaming experiences and other services more directly targeted to the Japanese consumer," said Microsoft's Nick Grange. "As a result of this effort, 34 positions will be made redundant to streamline operations and position the business for long-term success."

Although the machine has been out for a year in Japan, it has only managed to sell 370,000 units (Nintendo's GameCube has shifted over a million in a similar period). Of course, the staff cutbacks are just one of several hitches that the company has faced since it launched the Xbox in 2002. With Japanese gamers complaining of scratched discs, Konami refusing to release games in Japan, and head of Xbox Japan, Hirohisa Ohura, being repositioned within the company, Microsoft has had plenty of troubles.

Only Tecmo has achieved financial success on the Xbox in Japan, partly thanks to *DOA Xtreme Beach Volleyball* selling 73,000 copies on its first day of release.



*DOAXBV* has managed to keep Xbox alive in Japan.

# YUNA HITS THE BIG TIME

FINAL FANTASY X-2 PROVES TO BE ANOTHER HUGE SUCCESS FOR SQUARE

**Square's *Final Fantasy X-2* is currently dominating the Japanese software chart with first week sales of 1.5 million.** Not surprisingly, the many game districts of Japan were filled with gamers patiently awaiting the chance to enjoy Yuna's continuing adventures. *Final Fantasy X-2* was a bit of a departure for Square, as it was the first time it has ever created a direct sequel to one of its *Final Fantasy* games.

Whilst the sequel hasn't sold as well as *Final Fantasy X* (which sold 1.7 million units in its first week) the figures are still very impressive and are sure to please Square's bosses, particularly because *Final Fantasy X-2* represents 70 per cent of the sales in the Japanese software market.

When you take into account that *The Legend Of Zelda: A Link To The Past* achieved just under 100,000 units in the same period it's clear that Sony's stranglehold on Japan is going to be very hard to loosen. With no official release date in Australia yet, we'll be looking towards the more text-friendly US version (due in October) for our *Final Fantasy X-2* fix instead.



# GAMES ROOM 101

## THINGS WE HATE ABOUT VIDEOGAMES

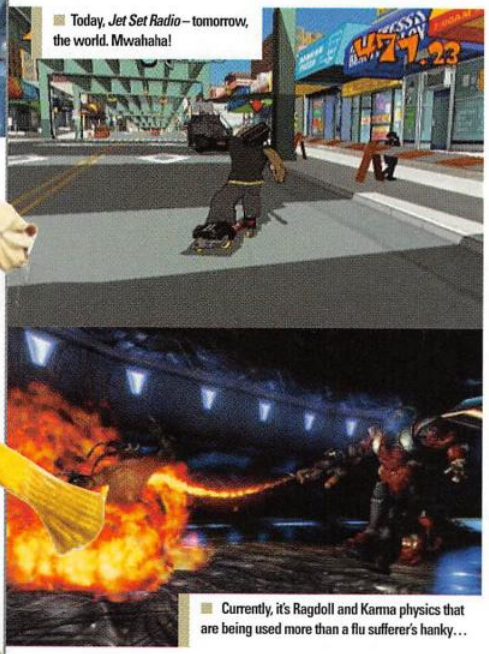



**NO.1: HERE COMES THE BANDWAGON**

While some of us might not agree that the concept of originality in gaming is dead, there's certainly a fair point to be made for certain developers waiting for the 'next big thing' to come along and then leaping on it with a passion. Yes, bandwagon jumping (where a new and interesting concept appears in one title, shortly before everyone else steals it for their own) is getting more common these days, with everything from subtle concepts to entire genre ideas being copied in an effort to grab sales.

Notice the sudden increase in overly violent games? That'll be *Grand Theft Auto*'s fault then. Cel-shading being used in virtually every game featuring anything remotely connected to cartoons or comics? Take a bow, *Jet Set Radio* (yes, the original Dreamcast one – it's still being bled dry today). Even games in genres that don't really have much room for manoeuvre – such as football or realistic driving – have changed to reflect the current market leaders, namely *Pro Evolution* and *Gran Turismo A-Spec*.

Is it a case of imitation being the greatest form of flattery? Hardly. After all, this is a business and, for some people, making money is more important than coming up with something even vaguely original...



Today, *Jet Set Radio* – tomorrow, the world. Mwahaha!



Currently, it's Ragdoll and Karma physics that are being used more than a flu sufferer's hanky...




**THIS MAN CREATED THREE OF THE MOST INFLUENTIAL CHARACTERS IN THE GAMES INDUSTRY BEFORE HE WAS 35, WORKED ON SOME OF THE GREATEST GAMES EVER MADE AND HELPED BUILD NINTENDO INTO ONE OF THE MOST RESPECTED COMPANIES IN THE INDUSTRY TODAY. YOU'RE NOT EVEN FIT TO SHINE HIS BANJO. BUT THEN, NEITHER ARE WE.**

"MANY DEVELOPERS FOCUS ON CREATING BETTER GRAPHICS – I REALLY WANTED TO MAKE USE OF THE TECHNOLOGY TO ADVANCE THE AREAS NO-ONE ELSE THINKS ABOUT"

*SHIGERU MIYAMOTO*

## SHIGERU MIYAMOTO

# NINTENDO JAPAN

**When it comes to the man who's done more for the games industry than most of its employees combined, the last thing you'd expect him to be is modest.** Confident, yes – maybe even a little excitable when asked to go into detail about the subjects he feels most passionately about, but not modest. That's why talking to Miyamoto-san is so refreshing. To him, he's just a normal man doing a normal job – albeit one that makes millions of people happy every time he does it.

"I never intended to cause any shockwaves," insists Miyamoto-san when confronted with the fact that his upcoming game, *Zelda: The Wind Waker*, had gamers up in arms over the cel-shaded look, "but I'm always trying to make something new. Of course, it's best to be consistent but with *Wind Waker*, when I was creating the new Link, I was confronted with problems about taking him forward that I was a little uncomfortable with.

"Obviously, if Link was realistic then when he was walking, for example, he would be expected to travel so far with each step – however, the game would feel unnatural as Link's movement wouldn't relate to the gameplay very well. This is basically the argument I had while trying to form Link into his current shape. Like I said, I don't plan to create shockwaves – I'm just always thinking about making perfect gameplay."

Is Miyamoto-san being entirely truthful about not wanting to create shockwaves? Depends if you believe the adage that there's no such thing as bad press ("If there's a negative opinion, at least people are talking about the game, which is better than no-one talking about it," says Miyamoto-san, somewhat grudgingly). Still, the idea of 'evolution, not revolution' seems to be quite high on Nintendo's list of priorities at the moment. With *Super Mario Sunshine* being strikingly similar to *Super Mario 64* and *Zelda: The Wind Waker* certainly taking more than a few ideas from *Ocarina Of Time*, more cynical gamers out there may feel that Miyamoto-san is running out of ideas. Not surprisingly, the man himself isn't quite ready to put himself (or his beloved characters) out to pasture just yet.

"A lack of ideas isn't a concern," Miyamoto-san says. "However, Nintendo has a lot of important franchises and at the moment most of our team is occupied with creating sequels to those franchises, which is kind of troublesome. The good news is that new people are growing fast, which means I can trust them to work on the latest games.

"Unfortunately, with a company like Nintendo there's always pressure to develop sequels to your most successful games. Recently though, we've had Retro Studios developing *Metroid Prime*, SEGA is working on *F-Zero* and Namco are developing the new *StarFox* game, so in that respect we've started looking to more and more third-party companies to be involved with creating games using Nintendo's characters."

Miyamoto-san's acknowledgment of GameCube's third-party support is pretty indicative of the change in Nintendo's attitude over the last few years. Once a developer who preferred to keep itself to itself, Nintendo now holds regular public displays of its games, dishes out demo discs (in Japan, at least) and even lets the press get within sniffing distance of its rather attractive titles more than it used to. That said though, Miyamoto-san's assurance of third-party support doesn't exactly explain why some big-name firms appear to be pulling in the reins when it comes to developing for the GameCube. The console might hold all the cards when it comes to first-party titles but in terms of backing from firms like Activision or EA... well, it's just not there.

"If you are just simply comparing the hardware then in terms of functionality of course you can make similar games," says Miyamoto-san, "which is why many developers are trying to make multi-platform games. It may be good for gaming audiences, but when it comes to the unique attraction of each format, I really don't think multi-platform games are contributing a lot to getting the best out of each console. That's why it's important for Nintendo to come up with the best first-party titles and unique entertainment experiences that only we can provide."

Ah, now there's the Nintendo we used to know and love – bullish, unyielding and suitably resolute that it doesn't need anyone but itself. Former Nintendo president Yamauchi-san may have retired, but it looks as though his spirit lives on more than the current management may believe...

The Legend Of Zelda: The Wind Waker *is released in Australia on 9 May – see page 74 for a full review.*




# CONSOLE WARS

## EPISODE I

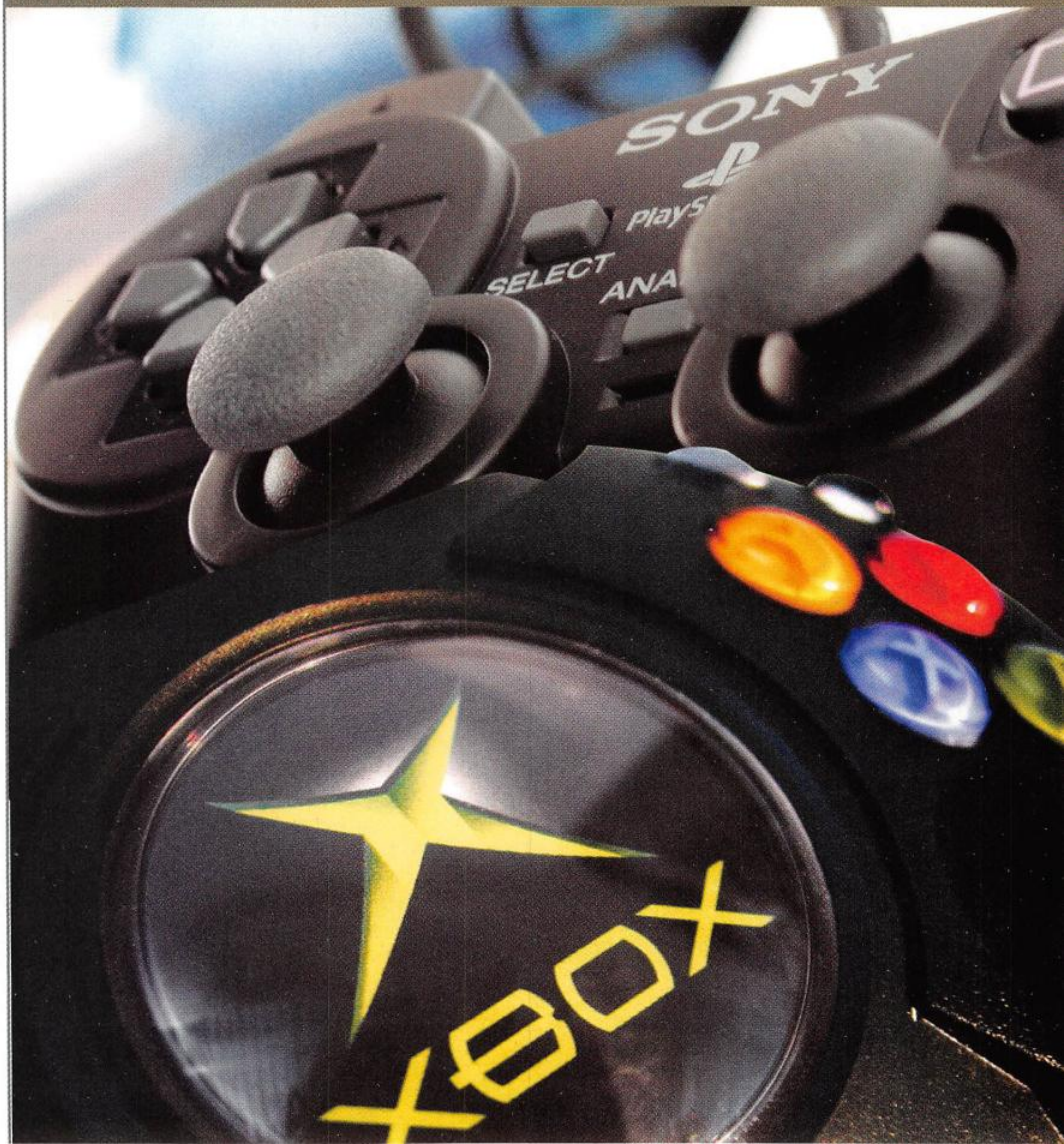
## THE GROUP TEST

THE CURRENT HARDWARE BATTLE IS PROBABLY THE MOST INTENSE THE VIDEOGAMES INDUSTRY HAS EVER SEEN, AND EACH OF THE THREE COMPETITORS HAS A STRONG PRODUCT WITH MANY GREAT QUALITIES. BUT WHICH CONSOLE IS BEST FOR YOU?

**Picking a clear winner out of the three frontrunners of the current console generation is an almost impossible task.** It may be true that PlayStation2 is way ahead where sales are concerned, but does that make it a better console? Take the Ford Falcon, for example. It may be more popular than the Jaguar XJS, but that doesn't necessarily mean that it's any better. Of course, comparing consoles to cars isn't entirely fair – Jaguars and Falcons are aimed at two totally different markets and are priced accordingly. Then again, Xbox initially cost $100 more than PS2, suggesting that Microsoft viewed its hardware as the XJS of the console market. So does that mean that with the new pricing structure Xbox owners are buying a Jaguar for the price of a Falcon?

Perhaps it does, but then does the average family want all that extra power when all it needs is a little runaround to drop the kids at school and get to the supermarket? Surely it would make more sense to choose the mass-market option, which is cheap to run and easy to get spares for. But where does GameCube sit in this battle? Nintendo's cute little purple box may be the cheapest console on the market, but it packs a fair old punch where horsepower is concerned – and it's already got more third-party support than N64 ever had.

*games™* believes that each of the consoles available today offers enough to warrant a purchase and suggests that, if you have the budget, you should in invest in all three. Of course, that's not really practical for most people, so read on and find out exactly how we view the strengths and weaknesses of each format...



# GRAPHICS

**Every hard-core gamer knows that good graphics don't always equate to a good game.** However, advancements in technology can sometimes allow programmers and designers to introduce new gameplay elements that simply wouldn't have been possible previously. Take driving games, for example – before the introduction of 3D visuals there was none of the realism, clarity or subtlety on offer today.

Of course, the graphical differences between the three consoles available today are hardly the same as the jump from 2D to 3D. Each is capable of generating enough polygons to display a fairly believable 3D environment, after all. Even so, differences in the internal workings can create some very interesting results...

## AN EYE FOR DETAIL

Being the oldest of the three, PS2 was always going to come out worse in this area. Despite Bump Mapping and other such special features being listed in the hardware specifications, severe memory limitations have made these luxuries nigh-on impossible to implement in the average game. These technical restrictions, combined with a lack of any sort of texture compression, make the majority of PS2 games look horribly bland compared to those on rival consoles. This has, however, been partially rectified since the introduction of Criterion's *Renderware* program a little over a year ago.

When it comes to GameCube and Xbox though, there isn't nearly such a big difference. Xbox graphics tend to be slightly sharper and the additional memory allows for a wider variation of textures and special effects to be displayed simultaneously. But the nVidia graphics chip has a tendency to make things appear a little grey and washed-out if developers aren't careful. There's also an occasional problem with sections of the screen refreshing at different rates, causing ugly lines to streak horizontally across the picture.

GameCube, on the other hand, suffers from no such problems – everything is solid, vibrant and colourful. It's also an incredibly easy machine to program for, which is good for developers but does mean that we may have already seen much of what the technology has to offer.

**" A LOT OF PS2 GAMES LOOK VERY BLAND COMPARED TO THOSE ON RIVAL CONSOLES"**

**"XBOX LETS GAMERS SAVE ENTIRE MUSIC TRACKS ONTO THE INTERNAL HARD DRIVE"**

# SOUND

**Sound usually comes second to graphics, but here at *games™* we appreciate just how much difference a good soundtrack can make.** In the past, composers have had numerous boundaries restricting their creativity. Be it too few channels or not enough memory, sound producers have nearly always had to find ways of cutting down their programs to make them fit.

These days, of course, such difficulties aren't such an issue, so it seems a bit of a shame that videogame compositions generally aren't what they used to be. To compensate for this though, new technology has allowed for a few innovations; licensed soundtracks and surround sound being two areas that seem to be making progress at present. But which console has the edge?

## AN EAR FOR MUSIC

In this category it's immediately clear that Xbox offers a far more comprehensive range of functions than either of its rivals. PS2's lack of memory lets it down once more – although the console supports Dolby Digital 5.1 surround sound, not a single game offers the feature during play. Nintendo hasn't even included the feature in its hardware at all, instead going for the lower-end option of Pro-Logic II.

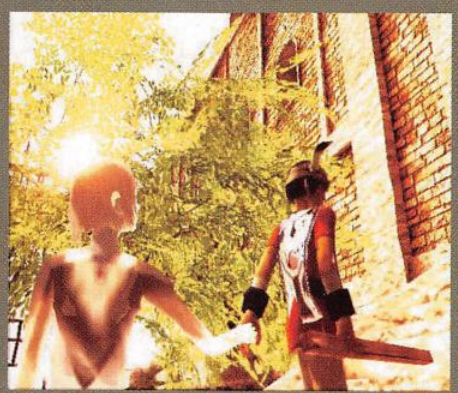
Many would argue that Dolby Digital 5.1 doesn't make a huge difference, but once you've sampled the delights of *Halo* through a decent home cinema system, your perception will be changed forever. In fact pretty much every Xbox game supports the feature – even those titles ported across from PS2 tend to be upgraded. And the extra functions don't stop there. While both PS2 and Xbox offer users the option of playing music CDs on their consoles, Xbox goes a step further by allowing them to save entire music tracks onto the internal hard drive. These can then be selected and played back in-game on many Xbox titles, giving you the chance to tailor soundtracks to your own taste. Creating your own soundtrack can make a good game great.

Aside from one or two other slight differences, all three consoles are of a fairly similar standard though. Sampling rates aren't an issue any more and, although both Xbox and GameCube offer a larger number of sound channels than PS2, the difference isn't noticeable in-game.

## BEST AESTHETICS: IT'S LIKE A PIXELATED BEAUTY PAGEANT...




While innovation and overall finish may be an issue with Rare's *StarFox Adventures*, the quality of the visuals and sound simply can't be disputed. Dynamic lighting, fur-shading, shadow-casting... it's all here and it looks lovely.



A triumph of art and imagination – that's the only way to describe Sony's *Ico*. Rays of golden sunlight burn away detail and cast shadows over sprawling cliffs and castle walls, while the sound of seagulls echoes in the skies above. Stunning.



It's almost unbelievable to think that *Halo* was a launch game on Xbox. Just about every visual effect imaginable is used in abundance and almost 11,000 voice samples and sound effects are featured in Dolby Digital 5.1 surround sound.

# GAMES

**Everyone knows that good games make a console popular – or at least that was the theory until SEGA's Dreamcast came along.** Despite many innovative titles, Dreamcast failed to get noticed by the mass-market, although that probably had more to do with the company's status than anything else. Of course, that status is on the mend now that SEGA has given up the hardware war and started focusing solely on software. The big question now is whether the market is large enough to cater for three different hardware platforms currently available.

Nintendo has years of experience in creating top-quality games, but then so did SEGA. Sony has spent the past few years building up its reputation as a console manufacturer, but has never had to deal with a competitor as large as Microsoft. With such stiff competition it's going to be the quality of the software that separates the big three.

## PRESS MY BUTTONS

The PlayStation2 has by far the biggest quantity of games, but they say that biggest isn't always best and that's certainly true here. The problem is that, while there are some real gems such as *Ico* and *Grand Theft Auto*, the PS2 line-up is littered with sub-standard products. On the plus side, the large number of titles means that there's something for everyone as well as a range of platinum games priced at $49.95.

Nintendo's line-up is perhaps the most perplexing at the moment, as the company's in-house produce seems to be all over the place. There was a time when almost everything that came out of Nintendo's Japanese headquarters was Triple-A quality. Now, however, titles such as *Luigi's Mansion* and the uninspired follow-ups to *Wave Race* and *Smash Brothers* suggest that the company has lost a little of its magic. It's not all bad though – S*uper Mario Sunshine* approaches the excellence of Nintendo's last generation titles and *Super Monkey Ball* from SEGA is pure genius.

Perhaps the hardest line-up to judge is that of Xbox. After a fantastic launch, things seemed to have dried up. There have been far too many multi-format titles released on the machine – although, admittedly, many have Xbox-exclusive content too. But there's plenty on the way, and it does seem to be the format receiving the most original concepts – even if many of them are fundamentally flawed.

**"NINTENDO'S GAMES LINE-UP IS PERPLEXING – IN-HOUSE PRODUCE SEEMS TO BE ALL OVER THE PLACE AT THE MOMENT"**

**"PS2 IS A TRICKY MACHINE TO PROGRAM FOR, WITH MANY FLAWED AND OUT-OF-DATE COMPONENTS"**

# THE FUTURE

**At the moment you could buy any of the three consoles currently available and have a lot of fun with it.** The big question is whether you'll still be having fun on it in a year's time. Could one of the big three become the next Dreamcast? *games™* doesn't think so, but exactly how successful each will be is another question.

Certainly so far there's been no touching PS2. Despite aggressive pricing of Xbox and GameCube, and with both consoles offering better visuals and sound, PS2 is still the mass-market's favourite. But is this simply because it's a more established brand? Will GameCube and Xbox sales catch up?

## QUE SERA SERA

Okay, let's be honest – PS2 isn't going anywhere in a hurry. Sony's hold on the market is as strong as ever and, for the time being at least, it's still furthering its lead. However, we can't help feeling that we've seen the best of what PS2 has to offer. Being a tricky machine to program for, with many flawed and dated components, it's really showing its age from a technical standpoint. There will, of course, be the introduction of online gaming over the next year, though it's likely to hit the pocket quite hard to get the necessary upgrades. Besides, reports from America would suggest that the service has been less than stunning so far.

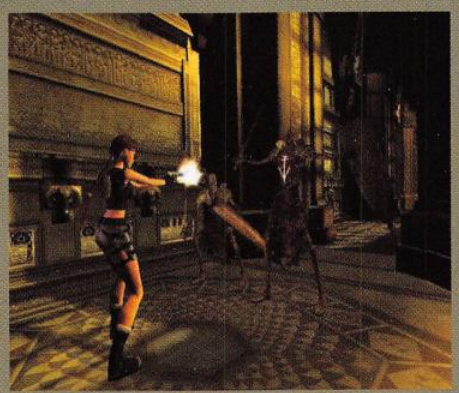
If it's online gaming you're after, then the Xbox Live facility is certainly looking like the best option. Microsoft has built a closed broadband infrastructure specifically for use with Xbox and, indeed, its future consoles. For $99.95 you'll get a year's subscription, a Communicator headset (everything is done with your voice, rather than typing), and two free games. Many companies have agreed to include Live support in their games – be it for downloading extra content and/or full online multiplayer goodness, though the fact that broadband hasn't taken off in Australia like it has elsewhere in the world, could mean that consumer support is slow to start.

In contrast to Microsoft's bold online plans, Nintendo has decided to take a different approach to the subject. While online gaming is certainly part of the company's later in the year it's relying much more on quality titles to get noticed. And with games such as *Zelda* and *F-Zero* on the way, it's a strategy that might just pay off.

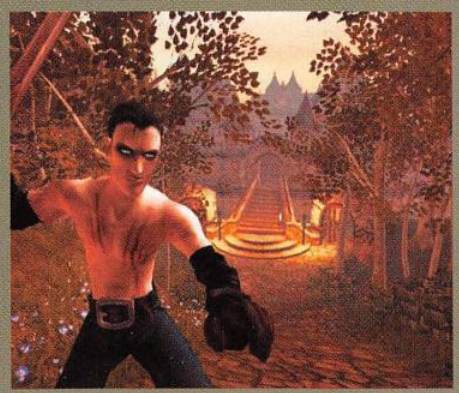
## SOON PLAYING: COMING TO A CONSOLE NEAR YOU...




Whether you like the new-look visuals or not, it's hard to imagine that this will be anything other than stunning. Judging by the popularity of the past titles in the series, *Zelda: Wind Waker* will undoubtedly be one of the few GameCube highlights of the year.



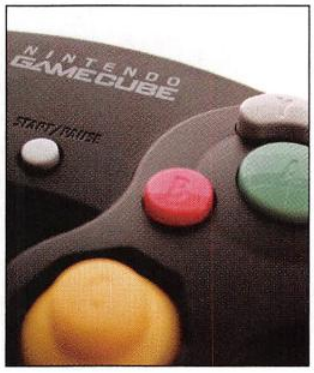
No matter what happens elsewhere in the industry, you know that Sony's always going to deliver the casual gamer's basic needs. *FIFA*, *Gran Turismo*, *Tekken* and, of course, *Tomb Raider*. It's hardly an innovative approach, but it does the trick.



With a heavy focus on broadband and online gaming, the future of Xbox should be very interesting indeed. Plus, there are a few innovative titles coming, such as *Fable*, which develops the main character and adventure around the decisions you make.

# NINTENDO GAMECUBE

PRICE: $289




**Central Processing Unit**
- IBM Gekko (Custom PowerPC)
- 485 MHz

**Graphics Processing Unit**
- ATI Flipper
- 162 MHz
- 33 million polygons per second (peak)

**Special Effects**
- Point, Bilinear, Trilinear, Anisotropic Mip-Map Filtering
- Perspective-Correct Texture Mapping
- Bump Mapping
- Environment Mapping
- 24-Bit Z-Buffer
- S3TC Texture Compression
- Sub-Pixel Anti-Aliasing

**Sound Processing Unit**
- Custom Macronix 16-Bit DSP
- 81 MHz
- 64 Sound Channels
- Dolby Pro-Logic II Support

**Main Memory**
- 24 Megabytes plus 16 Megabytes Auxiliary Memory

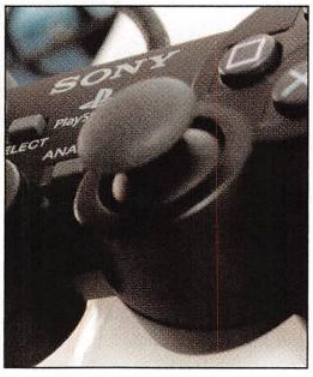
**Games Storage**
- 3-Inch Optical Disc (1.5 Gigabytes)

**Other features**
- High-Speed Port
- 2 Serial Ports
- HDTV Support

**games™ AWARDS**
- ☐ Cutest design
- ☐ Most underrated hardware
- ☐ Most cutesy games
- ☐ Most upgradeable
- ☐ Biggest fanboy following
- ☐ Most overrated control pad
- ☐ Most compact
- ☐ Most vibrant graphics
- ☐ Best boot-up sequence
- ☐ Cheapest hardware

# SONY PLAYSTATION2

PRICE: $399




**Central Processing Unit**
- Emotion Engine (Sony)
- 294.912 MHz

**Graphics Processing Unit**
- Graphics Synthesizer (Sony)
- 147.456 MHz
- 75 million polygons per second (peak)

**Special Effects**
- Point, Bilinear, Trilinear, Anisotropic Mip-Map Filtering
- Perspective-Correct Texture Mapping
- Bump Mapping
- Environment Mapping
- 32-Bit Z-Buffer

**Sound Processing Unit**
- 48 Sound Channels
- Dolby Digital 5.1 Surround Sound Support

**Main Memory**
- 32 Megabytes RAMBUS DRAM

**Games Storage**
- DVD-5 (4.7 Gigabytes)

**Other features**
- DVD Playback
- I/O 33.8688 MHz Processor (PSone CPU for backwards compatibility)
- 2 Universal Serial Bus Ports
- I-Link Port
- Optical Out
- HDTV Support

**games™ AWARDS**
- ☐ Most established
- ☐ Most games
- ☐ Most poor quality games
- ☐ Most likely to still be selling in five years
- ☐ Most overrated hardware
- ☐ Most publicized
- ☐ Noisiest fan
- ☐ Where are the textures?
- ☐ Longest loading times
- ☐ Cheapest games

# MICROSOFT XBOX

PRICE: $399




**Central Processing Unit**
- Modified Intel Pentium III
- 733 MHz

**Graphics Processing Unit**
- nVidia XGPU
- 250 MHz
- 125 million polygons per second (peak)

**Special Effects**
- Point, Bilinear, Trilinear, Anisotropic Mip-Map Filtering
- Perspective-Correct Texture Mapping
- DotProduct3 Bump Mapping
- Environment Mapping
- Cubic Environment Mapping
- Volumetric Textures
- S3TC Texture Compression
- Full Scene Anti-Aliasing
- Programmable Pixel and Vertex Shading Processors

**Sound Processing Unit**
- nVidia MCPX
- 200 MHz
- 256 Sound Channels
- Dolby Digital 5.1

**Main Memory**
- 64 Megabytes DDR SDRAM

**Games Storage**
- DVD-9 (8.54 Gigabytes)

**Other features**
- Internal 8-Gigabyte Hard Drive
- DVD Playback
- Ethernet Port
- 4 USB Ports
- HDTV Support

**games™ AWARDS**
- ☐ Most potential
- ☐ Best online support
- ☐ Most innovative exclusives
- ☐ Most unattractive hardware
- ☐ Best value for money
- ☐ Too many PS2 ports
- ☐ Best sound
- ☐ Sharpest graphics
- ☐ Worst boot-up sequence
- ☐ Too much green
- ☐ Most expensive games

games™ USA REPORT



# LETTER FROM AMERICA

WITH YOUR FRIENDLY EX-PATRIOT, THE SHAPE




## "THOUSANDS OF LOVELESS HOPEFULS HAVE REALISED THAT THE SIMS ONLINE IS SIMPLY THE WORLD'S MOST EXPENSIVE CHATROOM"

**For the second year running, citizens of this nation I have made my home spent more on videogames than on movie tickets.** Think about that. If you'd said such a future was possible back in, say, the Amiga's heyday, they'd have suspected you were using your massive Wall Street cellphone a little too often. But it's happened – we've beaten Tinseltown. Of course, your ordinary casual gamer wouldn't know about it, as softcos and retailers keep peddling their wares in ever more urgent ways, like they were having trouble breaking even. Two stages of their plan are apparent: 1) they intend to sell more games with better-than-ever pre-order incentives, and 2) they'd like it if you kept paying for your software indefinitely, thank you very much, via online fees.

In the case of pre-order freebies, nobody loses. The most valuable of these in recent memory was, of course, the bundling of N64 conversions *Ocarina Of Time* and its *Master Quest* incarnation with GameCube headliner *Zelda: The Wind Waker* (and one naughty chain even offered the bonus disc right away upon receipt of your pre-order deposit, weeks before the main game shipped). Electronics Boutique has taken the reins itself, promising limited edition Lara DVDs with all pre-orders of the next *Tomb Raider* title, although it's usually publishers who decide to tart up their own products. *Vexx* and *Batman: Dark Tomorrow* each came with pre-order-only comic books starring the respective lead characters (though it'll take more than a little comic to make either of these howlers worth US$50). Xbox heavyweight *Brute Force* is currently boosting its pre-sales appeal with a '*Halo* Companion' DVD full of digital bonuses like wallpaper and concept art plus screens and footage of *Halo 2*. Smart marketing that one, considering the almost total crossover audience between both of the big-name shooters on Xbox. I can't say any of these represents as good value as when I bought a box of Cinnamon Toast Crunch cereal today and got a free DVD of *The Muppets Take Manhattan* inside (I didn't even have to pre-order), but you can't argue with something for nothing.

The intensifying push toward online fees is a little tougher to deal with. Big business is determined: free play is on the way out! Question: How do you make more money people to play them. An important milestone was recently passed when *Phantasy Star Online* was released here for Xbox. Among the great new 'features' was the need to have a working, paid-for Xbox Live account to play the game in any form – even offline. Hence, if you don't live in a broadband zone then you can't play *PSO*, whether by yourself or over the Net. If you do have broadband in the house, then it's US$8.95 on top of your Xbox Live fee each month to play the game, in addition to the US$50 you paid for the Live kit itself.

Sony started soft – no charge to play PS2's killer online app *SOCOM* – but has now shown its true colours with substantial




fees for *EverQuest Online Adventures* and they're selling it hard. Kids unable to sign up using a credit card can buy pay-as-you-go-type top-up cards for US$9.99 a shot (feeding their *EQA Online* habit with thirty-day doses) while CG-enhanced TV ads make it look like playing this game with your friends is 'The Cool Thing To Do'. Don't be surprised if you come home one day to find that little Jimmy's sold mum's jewellery – and he's wheeling the TV to the door as you walk in. Sony should be off to a tearing start: the Network Adapter, which has only just reappeared in stores having been permanently sold out with the huge popularity of *SOCOM*, is being sold this very moment with a free (yes, free) copy of *EverQuest*. Give 'em their first hit for free...

The pay-to-play hook doesn't always take hold of course, but by the time thousands of loveless hopefuls realised *The Sims Online* was simply the world's most expensive chatroom, how many US$10 direct deposits do you suppose had made their way to EA's Zurich account? Enough to keep producer Gordon Walton in Cinnamon Toast Crunch for a long, long time, no doubt.

**Cheers**

THE SHAPE

**MISS ABOUT AUSTRALA...**



**LOVE ABOUT AMERICA...**

**Public Access TV**








Want to play Xbox Live in the States? Better start saving. And get some broadband access.

# AMERIKAAN

PRODUCTS, PLACES, SERVICES AND EVENTS FROM THE LAND OF THE FREE

## ENCORE PRESENTATION

**There are no repeats on network TV anymore, but you'll have many opportunities to view 'encore presentations' of the shows you missed. Handy that.**



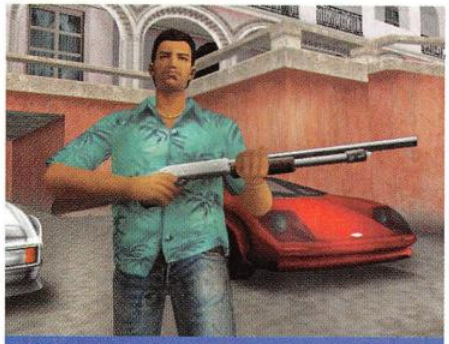




## US MULTIFORMAT TOP TEN

| | Title | Publisher | Format |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Grand Theft Auto: Vice City | Rockstar | PS2 |
| 2 | DragonBall Z: Budokai | Infogrames | PS2 |
| 3 | Madden NFL 2003 | EA | Multi |
| 4 | Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell | Ubi Soft | Xbox |
| 5 | The Lord Of The Rings: The Two Towers | EA | Multi |
| 6 | Legend Of Zelda: A Link To The Past | Nintendo | GBA |
| 7 | Yu-Gi-Oh! Eternal Duelist Soul | Konami | GBA |
| 8 | James Bond 007: Nightfire | EA | Multi |
| 9 | Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 4 | Activision | Multi |
| 10 | Mortal Kombat: Deadly Alliance | Midway | Multi |

(Updated 14/03/03)





games JAPAN REPORT



# KONGETSU*

WITH JAPANESE CORRESPONDENT OLLIE BARDER

## "THE JAPANESE UNDERSTAND MECHA – AFTER ALL, IT'S BEEN PART OF THEIR POP CULTURE FOR NEARLY 50 YEARS"

**Big stompy robots are very popular in Japan.** Since the Sixties, they've graced the Japanese airwaves and encouraged successive generations to snap up highly lucrative toys. It's verging on a pop cultural heirloom, unique to Japan. From an animé and manga perspective, mechanical creations work in and of themselves – despite their cipher-based nature, 'mecha' are self-serving, they merely have to exist. In games, however, it's a different matter entirely. The mecha genre of gaming is an offshoot from their popularity within animé and manga – so technically, it isn't a gaming 'genre', more of a definition that the game contains mecha. As you might guess, this leads to all sorts of problems.

The Japanese understand mecha – after all, they've had it integrally linked to their pop culture for nigh on half a century – whereas we (as Western types) don't. Both *Virtual On* and *Armored Core* are third-person mecha combat games; they're both games that contain mecha, but to classify both games as having the same game mechanics simply because they're in the same genre is just plain wrong. Sadly though, this is exactly what happens. Usually, the name of the genre (sport, platform, puzzle and so on) indicates what game mechanic is at work. With the term 'mecha', however, the game mechanic isn't described accurately, just the fact that it contains mecha. In Japan, they know the difference. Abroad, however, superb games get lumped with rubbish ones just because they all contain robots.

*Virtual On Force* is popular because, to a certain extent, it's a good game. Admittedly, it does borrow from the huge mecha pop culture catalogue, but the game is ultimately what draws punters back. Cynics argue that it wouldn't be popular if it didn't contain mecha; this is clearly wrong simply due to the wealth of godawful mecha-based games out there that don't do so well.

However, the more astute will realise that animé tie-ins are often the bane of the discerning gamer. Almost any of the *Macross* games currently available are catastrophically bad, yet they sell solidly (initially, anyway). It is important to understand that they sell simply because of the animé they represent rather then because of the actual game itself. Much like the numerous terrible *Bond* tie-ins (bar *GoldenEye*, obviously), they may sell well but their quality is universally accepted as being sub par. The same can be said for some mecha games in Japan. The Japanese won't put up with rubbish – I just wish we gaijin didn't either (because as far as I'm concerned, anyone who says *MechAssault* is 'good' requires a frontal lobotomy).

Anyway, the fact that people actually play *Virtual On* in this wondrous land shows that all is not lost. I just wish they wouldn't kick my arse on it so frequently. Best TwinStick forward, eh?

**Kind regards** ラリハニイ チスシイス




# TEACH YOURSELF JAPANESE

## LESSON ONE: RIDING THE TRAIN

| | |
|---|---|
| … made onegaishimasu | I'd like to buy a ticket to… |
| Kyori wa mijikainoni yakeni takai desune. | That's awfully expensive for such a short journey. |
| Korewa … iki no desya desuka? | Is this the train to…? |
| Mateyo – machigatta densya ni noccyattakana? | Hold on – am I on the wrong train? |
| Oh… kuso | Oh… shit |

## JAPANESE MULTIFORMAT TOP TEN

| | Title | Publisher | Format |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Final Fantasy X-2 | Square | PS2 |
| 2 | Zelda: A Link To The Past | Nintendo | GBA |
| 3 | Dynasty Warriors 4 | Koei | PS2 |
| 4 | Virtua Fighter 4 Evolution | SEGA | PS2 |
| 5 | Taiko No Tatsujin | Namco | PS2 |
| 6 | Star Ocean 3: Till The End Of Time | Enix | PS2 |
| 7 | Pokémon Sapphire | Nintendo | GBA |
| 8 | Pokémon Ruby | Nintendo | GBA |
| 9 | Kaidou Battle | Genki | PS2 |
| 10 | DragonBall Z | Bandai | PS2 |

(Dengeki Console Game Ranking Top 50, week ending 16/03/03)


Final Fantasy X-2


Zelda: ALTTP/Four Swords


Dynasty Warriors 4

## KNOW THY MECHA DESIGNER

**The people who invent these mechanical beasts are an eclectic bunch and are generally highly creative and a wee bit loopy. If you're planning on showing off your mecha knowledge next time you're in the pub, these are the names you really should know. Then all your mates will think you've 'got' mecha and will no doubt think you're terribly sophisticated.**

### • KUNIO OKUNWARA

Original mechanical designer for *Kagaku Ninjatai Gatchaman* (or *Battle Of The Planets* to the rest of us) and *Kidou Senshi Gundam*. Often regarded as the father of 'real robot' (read: vulnerable robot) design, he is highly respected and earns vast sums of moola accordingly (mainly because he still supervises the design for *Gundam*, a particularly lucrative franchise). Recently he has worked on the original design work for Takara's *J-Phoenix* series of games as well as *G-Breaker*, a turn-based mecha tactics game by Bandai.


Kunio Okunwara: The creator of vulnerable mechs. Careful now.

### • SHOJI KAWAMORI

Originally educated at Keio University, Kawamori is a frighteningly clever individual. Almost as influential as Okunwara, he is most famous for his work on *Chojikyu Yosai Macross* and its subsequent spin-offs (apart from *Macross II: Lovers Again*). Games wise, he's been responsible for the design work for FROM Software's *Armored Core* series of games and Polyphony Digital's *Omega Boost*. He also recently designed one of the new Aibo's for Sony.


Shoji Kawamori: Brain the size of a planet, apparently.

### • HAJIME KATOKI

An incredibly talented artist and a bit of a cheeky chap too. Broke into the industry in 1988 with the jaw-dropping *Gundam Sentinel*, since then he has been incredibly successful and understandably popular. In 1995, he was approached by Juro Watari for *Cyber Troopers Virtual On* and has worked studiously on the series ever since.


Hajime Katoki: The future's so bright he's got to wear shades…

**"I WANT TO GIVE THE PLAYER A CHANCE TO CREATE ANOTHER VERSION OF HIM OR HERSELF, WITH THEIR OWN WORLD AND HISTORY INSIDE THE GAME"**

*SATOSHI KANEMATSU, PRODUCER, TECMO*

## SATOSHI KANEMATSU
# TECMO

**The hardened gamers among us might consider it the gaming equivalent of grave robbing (in both a moral and actual sense), but there's little doubt that dragging successful games from the 'golden era' kicking and screaming into the present day is the big thing at the moment.** Obviously, some important industry bigwigs have decided that if it did well back then, it'll do well now; all it takes is a bit of next-generation spit and polish and a whole lot of 'do you remember?' marketing, and then the money practically prints itself.

Of course, the games that usually get selected are age-old classics that everyone remembers – we can cite *Shinobi*, *Metroid*, *Wolfenstein 3D* and *Phantasy Star* as recent examples without having to think too hard. So if we mentioned *Rygar* (or *Argus No Senshi*, if you happen to be Japanese), would you know what we were on about? Maybe not. But we wouldn't blame you – Tecmo's 1986 side-scrolling slash-'em-up isn't exactly the first game that springs to mind when you ask people to reel off their ten favourite arcade games of all time. With that being the case then, you have to wonder why Tecmo waited so long before resurrecting a game that not many people may remember anyway.

"It's not so much that we waited," says Satoshi Kanematsu, producer of *Rygar: The Legendary Adventure*, "but rather, there was no-one who truly longed to remake the game for the last 17 years. I truly believe that there's no point in making a game unless the person behind it passionately wants to do so. With *Rygar*, there wasn't anyone like that... until I came along, of course."

However, with passion comes responsibility – after all, the last thing you want to do is make fans of the original angry by turning the game into something completely different. Thankfully, this new version of *Rygar* has more than enough of the first game in it to keep everyone happy.

"Unfortunately, none of the people who worked on the original arcade game are on our team," admits Kanematsu-san, "although we did receive advice from the original development staff during production. However, we don't think of *Rygar* as just a remake – it's a brand new title that was created with new inspirations. It's just that essential elements from the first game such as the Diskarmor and the background, as well as the deep-rooted soul of the game, happen to have been carried over in the process."

Indeed, the whole setting of *Rygar* – one that mixes ancient Greek and Roman influences with a demonic edge – is something that comes across very strongly in the follow-up. Not surprisingly, this is something that was done on purpose – a fact that makes Kanematsu-san quite proud. "We used actual architecture as motifs for many of the game areas," he says. "For example, Arcadia, one of the most impressive stages in *Rygar* for me, was based on an actual monument. Also, certain monsters that appeared in Greek mythology have inspired the characters in the game, although we've added some unique touches of our own."

Just as Kanematsu-san and his team put a lot of effort into making the game look right in relation to the ancient theme, particular attention has also been paid to the musical score – especially as Kanematsu-san himself wants people to be able to "feel the game with their ears" as they play. "Rygar is an epic fantasy opera," he says, "and we didn't believe that popular modern music would suit it, so we chose a much fuller and dignified sound. We also structured the game around the classical music style with different themes, so that we could tell a complete story within the deeper layer of the music. We used a full orchestra because we couldn't get the emotion that we wanted using synthesizers, and we wanted to put feeling into the sound. We even used traditional Greek folk instruments in the recording process."

Of course, all the effort in the development process would be for nothing if the game isn't pitched right. As *Rygar* is a pseudo-sequel to a game that's over 15 years old, getting the balance right is essential; trying too hard to attract people who might remember the original may put off those who don't, but deviating too far from the original would have fans up in arms. "*Rygar: The Legendary Adventure* is a completely new game that gets its inspiration from the original," says Kanematsu-san, "but other games like *Devil May Cry* have also influenced us; in particular, in the area of the game engine. Essentially, we have tried to target modern game players – especially those who like action games – regardless of whether they are familiar with the original game or not." Hopefully, the gaming public will agree with him when the game hits the shelves.

*Rygar: The Legendary Adventure* is out on 16 May for PS2 and is reviewed on page 78.



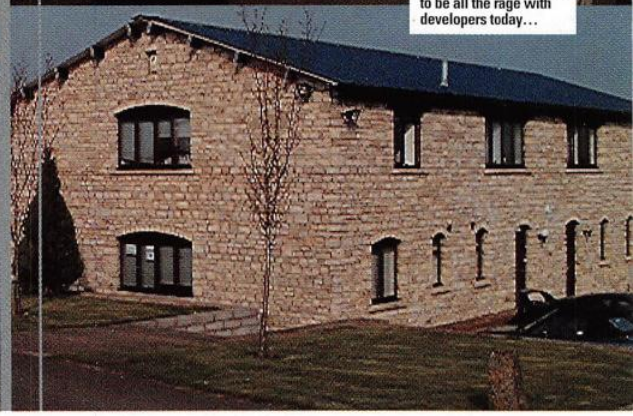
**REMAKING GAMES THAT DID WELL OVER A DECADE AGO IS NOTHING NEW, BUT TRYING TO RESURRECT AN ARCADE TITLE THAT A LOT OF PEOPLE DON'T EVEN REMEMBER? NOW THERE'S A COMPLETELY NEW CHALLENGE...**

# COMMUNITY

EVERY ISSUE, **games™** GOES BEHIND THE SCENES WITH A DEVELOPER. THIS MONTH WE PUT ON OUR FATIGUES TO VISIT PIVOTAL – THE CREATORS OF CONFLICT: DESERT STORM.



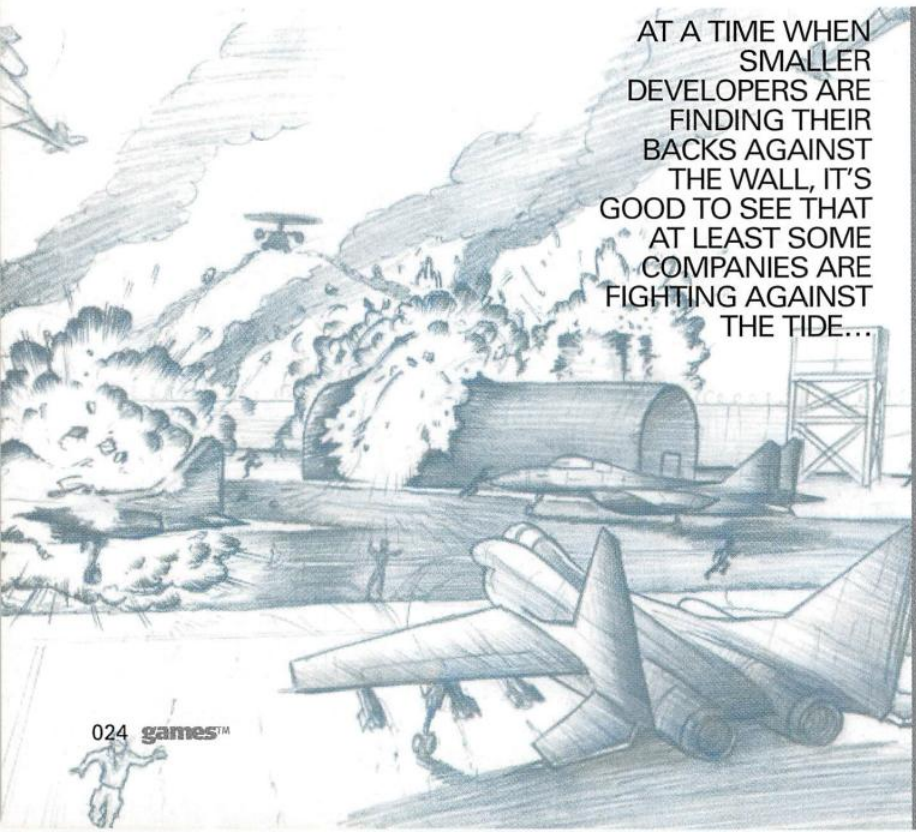




Rustic buildings seem to be all the rage with developers today…

# PIVOTAL GAMES

AT A TIME WHEN SMALLER DEVELOPERS ARE FINDING THEIR BACKS AGAINST THE WALL, IT'S GOOD TO SEE THAT AT LEAST SOME COMPANIES ARE FIGHTING AGAINST THE TIDE…



**Starting your own games development company from scratch is a daunting prospect for anyone, but having to pick up the pieces from one that's gone under must be a right bitch.** Most people might not even want to bother, perhaps moving into other areas of the industry, but for the small number who are so passionate about what they do that they have to get back up and try again, the uphill struggle must be terrible. Nevertheless, that's exactly the challenge that faced the ex-employees of Eidos-owned Pumpkin Studios when the publisher pulled the plug. Having already moved out from under the flailing wing of now defunct MicroProse to start anew, the team faced another difficult task in getting the ball rolling once more as Pivotal Games.

"Effectively, we had to start all over again," says Jim Bambra, managing director of Pivotal. "With a hard-core team of 15 personnel we set up Pivotal Games and worked on *Conflict: Desert Storm* with just our redundancy payments to fund us through the concept stage. Thankfully, the product was signed after three months and the rest, as they say, is history."

Indeed it is – with the firm's first game now having surpassed a million sales across PS2, Xbox and PC (and the GameCube version now available), it's clear that it has fallen squarely on its feet. That said, it's only fair to expect the constant changes in ownership and management to take their

Pivotal Games has grown considerably since being set up, going from a core staff of 15 to nearly 50 employees. Despite being a small developer, it already has three other titles on the go.













■ Pivotal's next *Conflict* outing will see the boys push further into the Gulf, as well as deep into the jungles of Vietnam.

toll on the team; in particular, the thought that they are now pretty much working for themselves (through the financial support of the Kaboom Studios group). As far as Pivotal is concerned though, it's not as big a deal as you might think. "I don't think that the change has been hard in terms of the day-to-day running of the studio," insists Nick Cook, art director at Pivotal. "Although the name has changed, and we have moved from what was Eidos' studio in the South West to become Pivotal Games and part of the Kaboom Group, the guys that have made this transition from what was originally an internal team at MicroProse to today's current set-up are all passionate about the roles they perform."

Having a core team of people who worked together for nearly a decade has obviously worked in Pivotal's favour as it's allowed the team to bond despite the hardship. With many small companies feeling the pinch as costs rocket and publishers become more cagey about who they offer projects to, it's this experience that has no doubt helped Pivotal get into the position its currently enjoying.

"Things are definitely getting tougher," says Alex McLean, Pivotal's director of technology. "The cost to develop for new platforms has spiralled dramatically, and I envisage that the step up to the next-gen



platforms will increase the cost of development even more. The knock-on effect of this is that if development teams don't have a proven track record on delivering code on time, publishers are reluctant to sign up projects they are not completely comfortable with. Inevitably, it's the bigger studios that tend to get their projects signed – but it still takes time even then."

Even with this being the case, Pivotal has managed to get off to a good start; with three games already in development following *Conflict: Desert Storm*, and the staff count having risen to a more healthy 48, the company's status has been upgraded in the eyes of the industry from 'nearly dead' to 'frisky'. Starting out was obviously the big hurdle though, if only because the company's first title was being touted across three platforms. Although some of the team already had

**"WHEN WE TAKE PEOPLE ON, WE LOOK FOR THE SAME QUALITIES IN THE NEW RECRUITS THAT ARE THERE IN OUR EXISTING MEMBERS OF STAFF"**

**NICK COOK, PIVOTAL GAMES**



# ANCIENT HISTORY

Although Pivotal Games is a relatively new company, many of the people working for the firm have been in the games industry a long time – they've developed over 60 games between them.

## FORMULA ONE GP AMIGA (1991)

Having formerly worked as Head of Design at MicroProse, Jim Bambra was one of the people responsible for Geoff Crammond's original masterpiece, *Formula One Grand Prix* – the game that revolutionised the racing genre at the time.




## X-COM PSONE, PC (1995-1998)

Nick Cook also started his career at MicroProse, working as Art Manager on several games from the *X-COM* series. Despite constant evolution over the years, the real-time tactical squad-based combat and realistic combat manoeuvres that attracted many PC owners were never really lost.



## WARZONE 2100 PC (1998)

The one and only game to come out of Pumpkin Studios (shortly before it broke away and became Pivotal Games) was *Warzone 2100* – a real-time 3D strategy game that was easily compared to Westwood's *Command & Conquer* series.



Big blokes, even bigger weapons – just because they're supposed to be a stealth unit, doesn't mean they can't blow stuff up.





Although Pivotal has had a good start with *Conflict: Desert Storm*, there's more to come...



"WE PRETTY MUCH KNOW WHAT IS AND IS NOT ACHIEVABLE WITHIN THE TIME LIMITS WE'VE BEEN SET BY THE PUBLISHER"

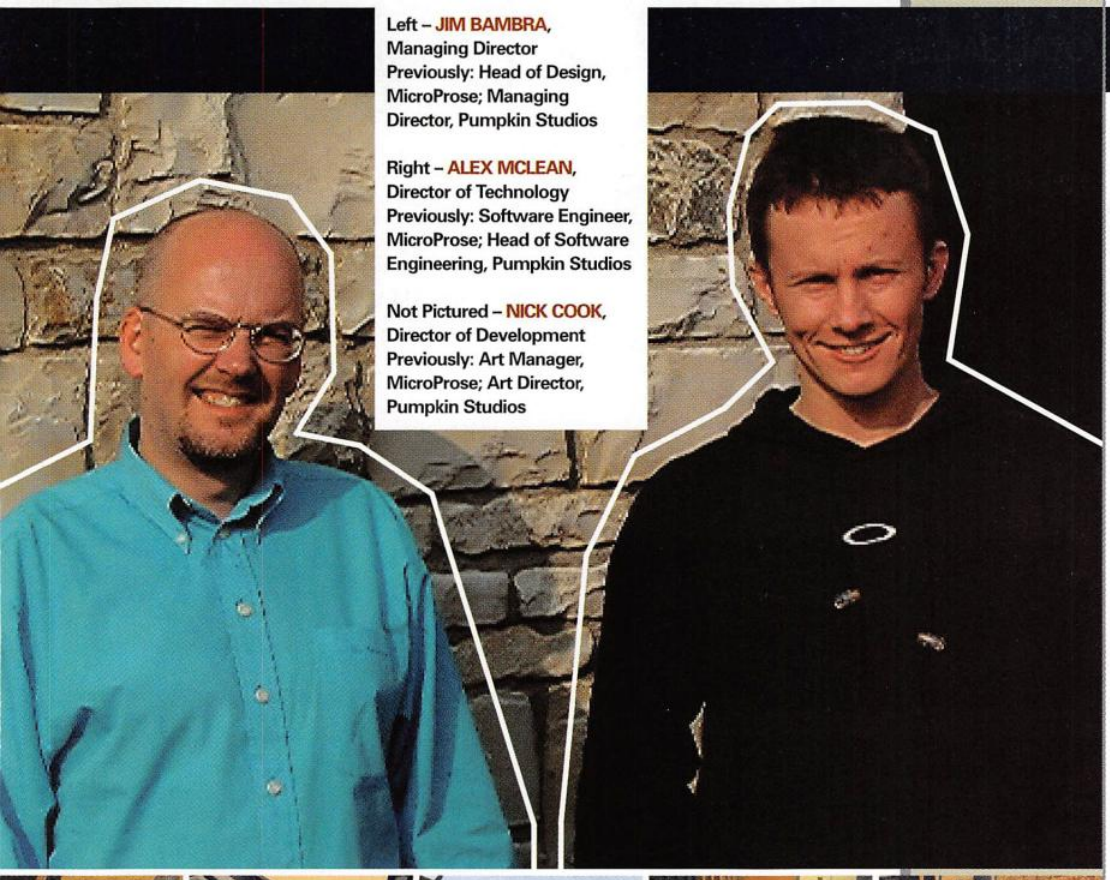
ALEX MCLEAN, PIVOTAL GAMES



experience of developing for the PSone, the generational gap from one console to another will always present developers with new problems. "We do not see the transition from one console to a next-gen platform as a difficult one," says Alex. "The major difference between developing for PC and consoles is the fact that the console manufacturers have a pretty stringent set of guidelines in place that we have to follow. This means that there are extra demands on our coders to ensure that logos, splash screens and the appropriate commands appear on screen at the correct time. The PC is a different beast to deal with, and there are so many variables that appear from manufacturer to manufacturer. The changes that have occurred here have been ones of technological advancements in speed, sound effects and the like, and the pressure is on the team to ensure that the finished product exploits these to the full, where possible."

While developing for a home console with its own restrictions might present problems of one kind, translating a game which represents a genre that is predominately PC-based onto a console is a different matter altogether. Not only do you have to consider the contrasts in audience demographic (presenting a more mass-market game while appealing to squad-based action fans), but there's the small matter of control methods and time management to take into account. Despite issues such as tight deadlines on game development these days, and publishers wanting a swift turnaround for as little outlay as possible, Jim admits he wasn't that worried when it came to *Conflict: Desert Storm*. "Ultimately, games development is all about having a great design and turning that into a highly detailed and achievable schedule backed up by highly talented and motivated programmers and artists who then turn the design into a fantastic game," he says. "I won't pretend that it was easy, but we're very confident in our abilities. With *Conflict: Desert Storm* we wanted to create a game that was fun but also very involving to play. With four characters to control, the interface has to be elegant and very easy to pick up and play. It had to work on a joypad and allow you to control multiple characters at the same time. But at the same time the game has to let you recover from your mistakes; that meant no one-shot kills, so you could always back out from difficult situations. We also introduced a state between alive and dead, where unconscious characters bleed to death over a three-minute period and players could heal them to get them back in the game. This idea was generally loved but, for some reason, one PC magazine thought it was the worst idea ever."

Obviously, the success of *Conflict: Desert Storm* has surpassed anything Pivotal could have hoped for when it began work on the game – in fact, the game has already



Left – **JIM BAMBRA**, Managing Director
Previously: Head of Design, MicroProse; Managing Director, Pumpkin Studios

Right – **ALEX MCLEAN**, Director of Technology
Previously: Software Engineer, MicroProse; Head of Software Engineering, Pumpkin Studios

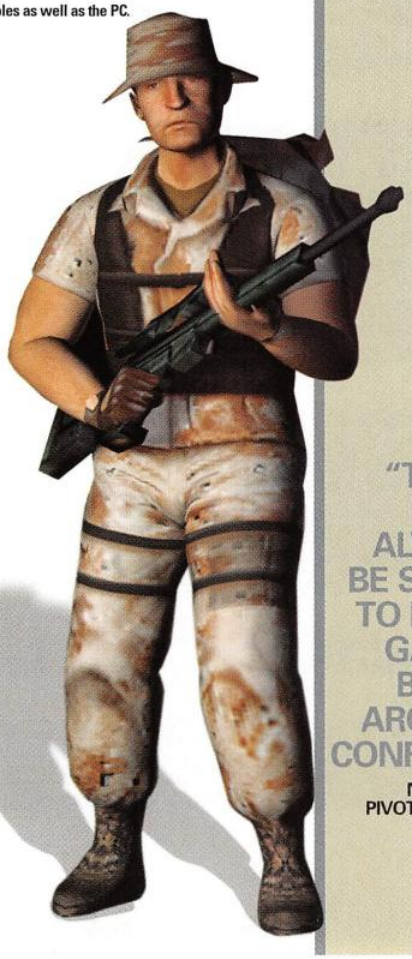
Not Pictured – **NICK COOK**, Director of Development
Previously: Art Manager, MicroProse; Art Director, Pumpkin Studios



■ The arcade nature of *Conflict: Desert Storm* helped make it a success on various consoles as well as the PC.

managed to spawn two sequels that are currently in the works for publisher SCi. Of course, you could argue that just because a game does well, that doesn't mean it can sustain an entire series; in the rush to get out more titles along the same theme, there could be a risk of the whole thing running out of steam. Thankfully though, Pivotal doesn't believe that will be the case for a while. "We think that there will always be scope to develop an entertaining gaming experience based around conflict itself," says Nick. "You only have to look back over the last 15 years of computer gaming to see how many products have been launched that are based around combat and conflict. We see the *Conflict* series as an ever-expanding game experience that will continue to entertain players for years to come. We have lots of great ideas at the moment and in many ways, *Desert Storm* was really only the first step."

So it looks as though the future for Pivotal is a bright one, even if their past has been turbulent. "I am very proud of many things," admits Jim, "and the way in which the studio works on a daily basis never ceases to amaze me – right from the start of development on *Warzone 2100* through to the closure of Pumpkin, then the willingness of the 15 staff who were prepared to work on a new game with no guarantees when Pivotal was set up. There are even those 70-80 hour weeks that everyone puts in as we come to the last three months of a project… these things make me proud. To have a million plus seller, with the first title though, from what effectively is a new studio – that speaks volumes about the people that work at Pivotal Games."

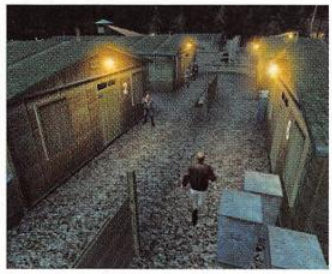


"THERE WILL ALWAYS BE SCOPE TO MAKE GAMES BASED AROUND CONFLICT"
NICK COOK, PIVOTAL GAMES

# DISTANT FUTURE

## THE GREAT ESCAPE
**(PS2, XBOX, GC, PC)**

Based on the classic 'always on at Christmas' movie of the same name, *The Great Escape* sees you assume control of Steve McQueen himself and three other prisoners in an third-person action-based attempt to break out of the dreaded Stalag Luft III POW camp.



## CONFLICT: DESERT STORM 2 (PS2, XBOX, GC, PC)

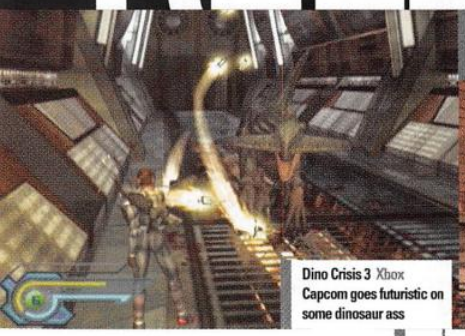
Originally named *Conflict: Desert Sabre, C:DS2* is planned to be an out-and-out sequel to the first game and continues the theme of US Delta Force and SAS troops being sent into Iraq during the Desert Shield mission. Expect to see this one invading consoles towards the end of the year.



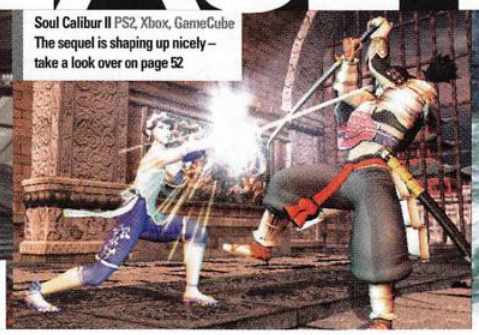
## CONFLICT: MISSING PRESUMED DEAD
**(PS2, XBOX, PC)**

Yes, it's another instalment of the *Conflict* series – although this time it's based on the Vietnam War and follows the story of four US soldiers who become cut off behind enemy lines during the 1968 Tet Offensive. Think *Conflict: Desert Storm* mixed with *Apocalypse Now* and you'll get an idea of what to expect in August 2004.

# RELEASE LISTS



**Dino Crisis 3** Xbox
Capcom goes futuristic on some dinosaur ass



**Soul Calibur II** PS2, Xbox, GameCube
The sequel is shaping up nicely – take a look over on page 52



**Lost Kingdoms II** GameCube
Better than the original? Check out the review on page 86



## games™ MOST PLAYED

### THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: THE WIND WAKER

**Format:** GameCube
**Developer:** Nintendo

Oh, come on – did you really think we'd have been playing anything else for most of this month? Miyamoto-san's latest foray into Link's world might not be as revolutionary as *Ocarina Of Time*, but it's no less enjoyable – and you have to admit it looks damn great too.



### GAME BOY ADVANCE SP

**Format:** Game Boy Advance SP
**Developer:** Nintendo

We love looking at our new SPs almost as much as we love playing them. Although several fights have broken out in the office over who has the best colour, the fact that we can finally see what's going on in *Castlevania: Circle Of The Moon* helps warm the cockles of our hearts.



### FREELANCER

**Format:** PC
**Developer:** Digital Anvil

It's not often that you get a space flight-sim as good as the latest offering from Digital Anvil. Giving new meaning to the term "lost in space", there's no wonder we've all spent more than just a few office hours getting well and truly lost in the world of *Freelancer*.





## PLAYSTATION2

| Title | Publisher | |
|---|---|---|
| **MAY** | | |
| Malice: Kat's Tale | Vivendi | |
| Return To Castle Wolfenstein | Activision | Wanted! |
| Rygar | Wanadoo | |
| Pro Beach Soccer | Wanadoo | |
| Dancing Stage Mega Mix | Konami | |
| Dead To Rights | Electronic Arts | |
| Enter The Matrix | Infogrames | Wanted! |
| Midnight Club 2 | Take 2 Interactive | Wanted! |
| Speed Kings | Acclaim | |
| War Of Monsters | SCEE | |
| Moto GP 3 | SCEE | |
| NBA Streets 2 | Electronic Arts | |
| F1 Career Challenge | Electronic Arts | |
| Blood Rayne | Vivendi | |
| Ghost Vibration | Infogrames | |
| Shinobi | Sony | |
| World Championship Snooker | Infogrames | |
| **JUNE** | | |
| Wakeboarding Unleashed featuring Shaun Murray | Activision | |
| Indycar Series | Codemasters | |
| The Great Escape | SCi | |
| Dark Chronicle | SCEE | |
| Dungeons And Dragons Heroes | Infogrames | |
| Evil Dead: A Fistful Of Broomstick | THQ | |
| True Crime: Streets Of LA | Activision | |
| Futurama | SCi | |
| Yu-Gi-Oh! | Konami | |
| Charlie's Angels: Full Throttle | Ubi Soft | |
| Clock Tower 3 | THQ | |
| **JULY** | | |
| Lara Croft Tomb Raider: The Angel of Darkness | Eidos | |
| Soul Calibur II | EA | Wanted! |
| Mace Griffin Bounty Hunter | Vivendi | |
| SOCOM: US Navy Seals | SCEE | |
| Alter Echo | THQ | |
| Dragon's Lair 3D | THQ | |
| Everybody's Golf 3 | SCEE | |
| Pacman Fever | SCEE | |
| **AUGUST** | | |
| Falcone: Into the Maelstrom | Virgin | |
| Medal Of Honour: Fighter Command | Electronic Arts | Wanted! |
| **SEPTEMBER** | | |
| ATV Off Road Fury 2 | SCEE | Wanted! |
| Conflict: Desert Storm II | SCi | |
| Driver 3 | Infogrames | Wanted! |
| XIII | Ubi Soft | |



## GAMECUBE

| Title | Publisher | |
|---|---|---|
| **MAY** | | |
| Conflict: Desert Storm | SCi | |
| Lost Kingdoms II | Activision | |
| Legend Of Zelda: The Wind Waker | Nintendo | Wanted! |
| NBA Street 2 | Electronic Arts | |
| Resident Evil 2 | Capcom | |
| Resident Evil 3 | Capcom | |
| Enter The Matrix | Infogrames | |
| Blood Rayne | Vivendi | |
| Def Jam Vendetta | Electronic Arts | |
| Finding Nemo | THQ | |
| Lost Kingdoms 2 | Activision | |
| Shrek Super Party | TDK | |
| Skies Of Arcadia Legends | Infogrames | Wanted! |
| Mercedes Benz World Racing | TDK | |
| Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell | Ubi Soft | |
| **JUNE** | | |
| V-Rally 3 | Infogrames | |
| GALIDOR: Defenders Of The Outer Dimension | Electronic Arts | |
| Burnout 2 Point of Impact | Acclaim | Wanted! |
| Futurama | SCi | |
| Red Faction 2 | THQ | |
| Wario World | Nintendo | |
| Charlie's Angels: Full Throttle | Ubi Soft | |
| Dragon's Lair 3D: Return To The Lair | THQ | |
| Dinotopia | TDK | |
| Mace Griffin: Bounty Hunter | Vivendi | |
| The Hulk | Universal Interactive | |
| Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell | Ubi Soft | Wanted! |
| **SEPTEMBER** | | |
| Powerpuff Girls 2 | BAM! | |
| Soul Calibur 2 | Nintendo | |
| Starsky & Hutch | Empire | |
| Bulletproof Monk | Empire | |
| Hitman 2: Silent Assassin | Eidos | Wanted! |



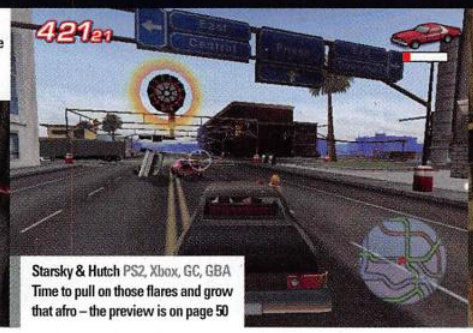
## XBOX

| Title | Publisher |
|---|---|
| **MAY** | |
| Project Zero | Microsoft |
| Group S Challenge | THQ |
| Return to Castle Wolfenstein: Tides of War | Activision |

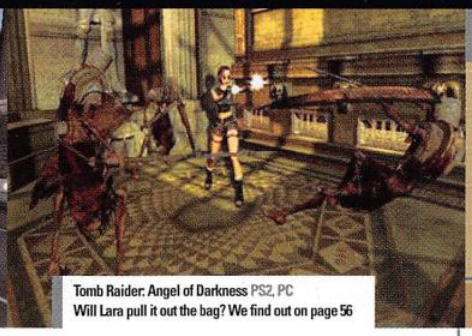
# CALM YOUR FEVERISH ANTICIPATION WITH OUR COMPREHENSIVE LIST OF FORTHCOMING RELEASES



**Silent Hill 3** PS2
Konami's pant-wetting adventure is just around the corner. Dare you turn to page 38?



**Starsky & Hutch** PS2, Xbox, GC, GBA
Time to pull on those flares and grow that afro – the preview is on page 50



**Tomb Raider: Angel of Darkness** PS2, PC
Will Lara pull it out the bag? We find out on page 56



**Pokémon Ruby/Sapphire** GBA
Catch 'em all in the review on page 92

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Burnout 2 Point of Impact | Acclaim | |
| Enter the Matrix | Infogrames | |
| Paris Dakar Rally 2 | Acclaim | |
| F1 Career Challenge | Electronic Arts | |
| Blood Rayne | Vivendi | Wanted! |
| Speed Kings | Acclaim | |
| V-Rally 3 | Infogrames | |
| Moto G 2 | THQ | |
| Midnight Club II | Take-Two Interactive | |
| World Championship Snooker | Infogrames | |

**JUNE**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Starsky And Hutch | Vivendi | |
| Kung Fu Chaos | Microsoft | |
| Outlaw Volleyball | Red Ant | |
| Brute Force | Microsoft | |
| Wakeboarding Unleashed featuring Shaun Murray | Activision | |
| Backyard Wrestling | Infogrames | |
| Godzilla: Destroy All Monsters Melee | Infogrames | |
| Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic | Lucas Arts | Wanted! |
| Freestyle MX | Acclaim | |
| SX Superstar | Acclaim | |
| Dungeons and Dragons Heroes | Infogrames | |
| Mace Griffin Bounty Hunter | Vivendi | |
| The Hulk | Vivendi | |
| Red Faction 2 | THQ | Wanted! |
| WWE Raw 2 | THQ | |

**JULY**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Midtown Madness 3 | Microsoft | |
| Evil Dead: A Fistful of Broomstick | THQ | |
| Soldier of Fortune II: Double Helix | Activision | |

**AUGUST**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| The Great Escape | SCi | |



## PC

| Title | Publisher |
|---|---|
| **MAY** | |
| Blitzkrieg | CDV |
| Ghost Master | Empire |
| World Championship Snooker 2003 | Infogrames |
| Colin McRae Rally 3 | Infogrames |
| Heaven And Hell | CDV |
| The Great Escape | SCi |
| Enter The Matrix | Infogrames |
| Blood Rayne | Vivendi |
| Breed | Vivendi |
| Imperium Galactica III | CDV |
| Rise Of Nations | Microsoft |

**JUNE**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| The Great Escape | SCi | |
| Indycar Series | Codemasters | |
| Red Faction 2 | THQ | |
| Starsky And Hutch | Empire | |
| The Hulk | Vivendi | |

**JULY**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon | Ubi Soft | |
| Lara Croft Tomb Raider: The Angel of Darkness | Eidos | Wanted! |
| Breed | CDV | |



## GAMEBOY ADVANCE

| Title | Publisher | |
|---|---|---|
| **MAY** | | |
| Altered Beasts: Guardian Of The Realms | THQ | |
| Crazy Taxi: Catch A Ride | SEGA | Wanted! |
| Kirby: Nightmare In Dreamland | Nintendo | |
| The Revenge Of Shinobi | THQ | |
| Road Rash: Jailbreak | Zoo | |
| Shaun Murray's Pro Wakeboarder | Activision | |
| Space Channel 5: Ulala's Cosmic Attack | THQ | Wanted! |
| Yu-Gi-Oh! The Eternal Dualist Soul | Konami | |
| GT Advance 3: Pro Concept Racing | THQ | |
| Need For Speed: Porshe Unleashed | Zoo | |
| Disney Princess | THQ | |
| Battlebots | THQ | |
| Golden Sun: The Lost Age | Nintendo | |
| Hamtaro: Ham Ham Heartbreak | Nintendo | |

**MAY**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Rock N'Roll Racing | Vivendi | |
| The Hulk | Universal Interactive | |
| Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell | Ubi Soft | |
| Wakeboarding Unleashed featuring Shaun Murray | Activision | |
| Donkey Kong Country | Nintendo | Wanted! |
| Jet Set Radio | THQ | |

**JULY**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Advance Wars 2 | Nintendo | |
| Sim City 2000 | Electronic Arts | |

**AUGUST**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Wallace & Gromit | BAM! Entertainment | |
| Harvest Moon | Natsume | |
| Wizardry: The Summoning | Media Rings | |
| Starsky & Hutch | Empire | |

**PLEASE NOTE:** While every effort has been made to ensure these dates are correct at the time of going to press, they are liable to change at short notice. It's not our fault, really it isn't. We've got notes from our mums to excuse us anyway.

## games™ ON THE HORIZON

### BROKEN SWORD 3: THE SLEEPING DRAGON

**Format:** PC, PS2, Xbox
**Publisher:** THQ
The *Broken Sword* franchise has always offered a mixture of humour and mystery – not to mention some rock hard puzzles – to loyal gamers over the years. Now it's jumping to the next-gen consoles and promises to be every bit as good as its predecessors. Let's just hope we don't have to meet that goat again though...



### FALLOUT: BROTHERHOOD OF STEEL

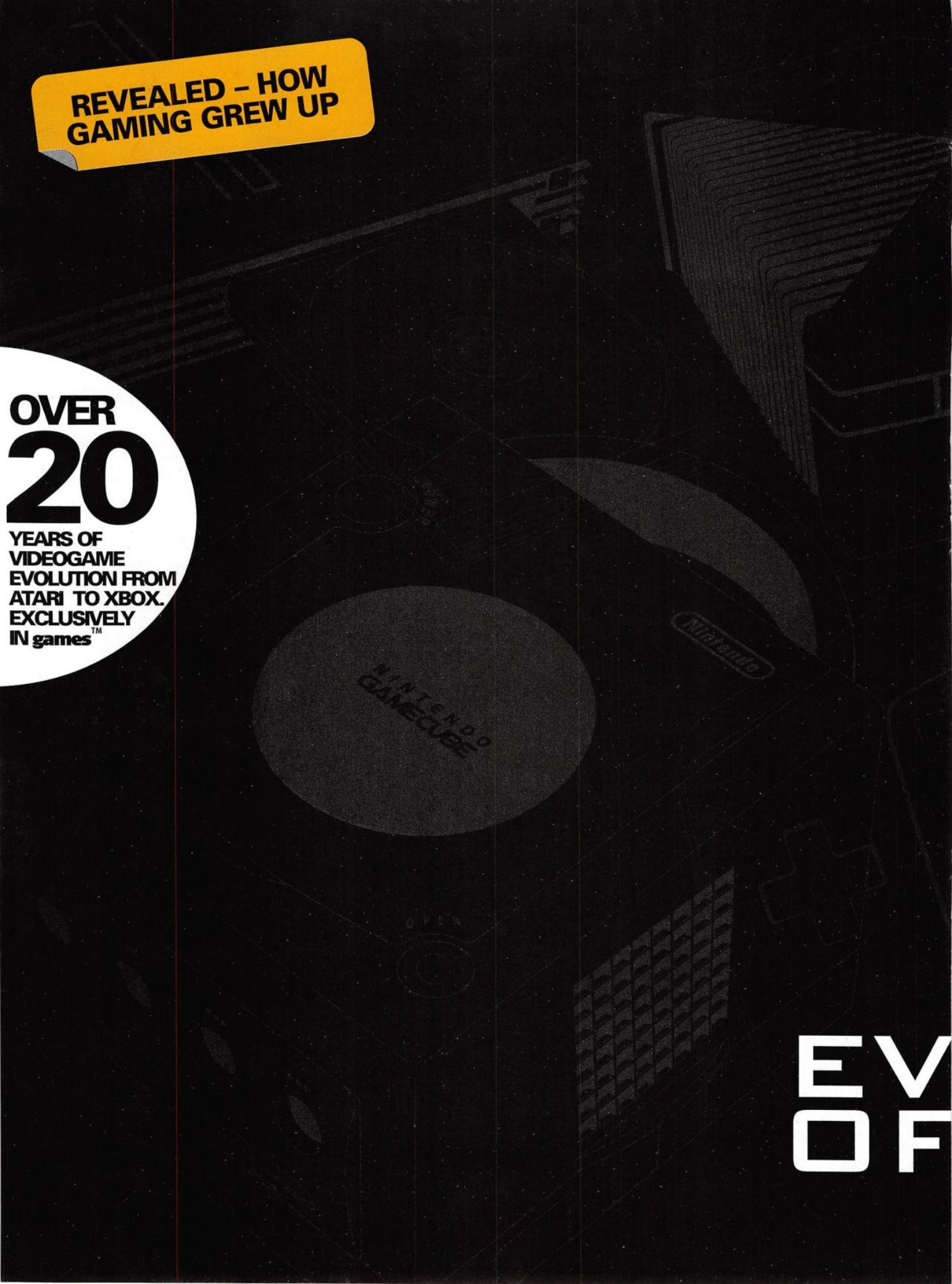
**Format:** PS2, Xbox
**Publisher:** Interplay
Extremely popular on the PC, it's now the turn of the PS2 and Xbox to get a taste of Interplay's promising RPG franchise. In preventing the human race from turning into a mob of hideous mutants, lucky console owners are also offered a lot more action over their PC counterparts.



### PIKMIN 2

**Format:** GameCube
**Publisher:** Nintendo
Miyamoto-san is back again with everyone's favourite spaceman-cum-gardener, no doubt stranded on yet another hostile planet – surely his ship hasn't crashed again? While not much is known about Nintendo's latest title, we know that it will involve an intriguing two-player mode. Two hundred Pikmin on the screen at once? The mind boggles...




REVEALED – HOW GAMING GREW UP
OVER 20 YEARS OF VIDEOGAME EVOLUTION FROM ATARI TO XBOX. EXCLUSIVELY IN games™
NINTENDO GAMECUBE
EV
OF

# THE OLUTION GAMING

## PART ONE

HOW DID THE HUMBLE 8-BIT SYSTEMS OF THE EIGHTIES BECOME TODAY'S POLYGON-SHIFTING POWERHOUSES? AND WHATEVER HAPPENED TO GOOD NATURED RIVALRY...?

**SOCIETY LOVES A WINNER. Even in a market where there is easily room for a number of similar products to thrive due to their varied outputs, modern logic still dictates that one must be better than the other.** Strangely, such thinking hasn't always existed. Going back in time to the home computer era, coexistence was rife. Amstrad, Spectrum and Commodore were all in competition in a business sense, but there was very little in the way of advertising and one-upmanship such as that thrown around by today's developers. Even the Master System/NES generation was very amicable – although

# THE EVOLUTION OF GAMING: PART ONE

"SO WHERE DID IT ALL GO WRONG? WHEN DID THE 'LIVE AND LET LIVE' ATTITUDE GIVE WAY TO TODAY'S CUT-THROAT APPROACH?"

Nintendo and SEGA both had consoles jostling for the lion's share of the market, there was still room for the variety and choice offered by multiple machines. Without one or the other proclaiming its prowess to the world, the two would exist side by side for their entire lifespans.

Even after that, the next generation of consoles was still fairly low-key, although there were signs of conflict brewing – large-scale advertising had begun and although it was only appearing in the specialist press, it was a good indication of things to come.

Also, allegiances had started to form both between hardware and software companies and between the buying public and the consoles themselves – a fledgling market that had been through a few terrible times was really starting to come into its own. As weeks rolled into years, more consoles came and went but the two big companies remained strong and grew more competitive as time went by, even if they never actually came to blows.

So where did it all go wrong? When did the 'live and let live' attitude give way to the cut-throat approach seen so often today? Between companies switching sides, switching off, buying out and selling out, there's a hell of a lot more to the modern games industry than just games.

The market today is a very tactical one, where good business sense is as important as a good product and this can be pinned almost single-handedly on one company: Sony. You see, the declaration of war, as it were, can be traced back to the time surrounding a single event... the birth of the PlayStation.

## THE SONY INVASION

Originally designed as a Super Nintendo expansion unit to show Sega that a CD add-on could be successful, the PlayStation X (as it was then known) was such a burden in development that Sony soon worked out that it would be far more sensible to turn it into a stand-alone console.

Realising something was awry, Nintendo investigated and found that the cause of the delay was that Sony was working on its own piece of hardware. The SNES-CD deal was immediately given to rivals Phillips, even though there had been no breach of contract by Sony.

Following the nasty split from Nintendo, Sony decided to play the firm at its own game by developing the 16-bit CD add-on into a freestanding entity; thus, the PlayStation was born. Whereas other consoles previously had slipped onto shelves overnight though, Sony took a vastly underused approach to launching a new machine – marketing.

The flurry of publicity that surrounded the release of Sony's first effort took the world by storm – never before had a console had such extensive advertising and, despite the fact that the adverts themselves started pretty poorly (such as the awful S.A.P.S. TV campaign, for instance), they did the trick. Sony also roped in some high profile developers to make sure the games themselves were up to scratch.

Arcade legends Namco brought coin-op favourites such as *Ridge Racer* and *Tekken* to the little grey box, while long-time developer Psygnosis delivered sleeper hits *Wipeout* and *Destruction Derby* that made the PlayStation an essential purchase.

Within a few months, Sony had turned the market on its head. Gaming stopped being a pastime relegated to bedrooms across the world and became an accepted and fashionable activity that appealed to a wider audience than ever before. The war had begun.

## THE BATTLE FOR SQUARE

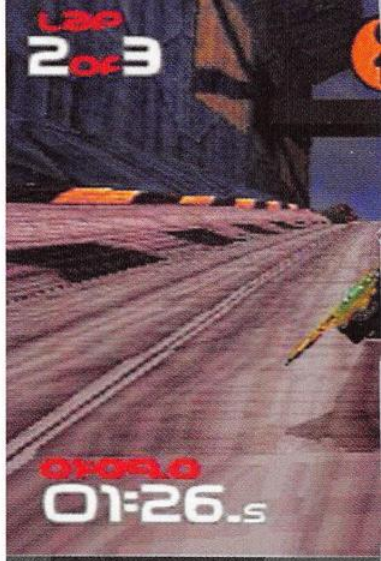
With the gloves well and truly off, other companies had to fight back in order to compete with the buzz that Sony had created. Admittedly, Nintendo did a little advertising for its N64 console and the key titles; but no one could match the initial hype from Sony, who continued to pull aces from up its sleeves.

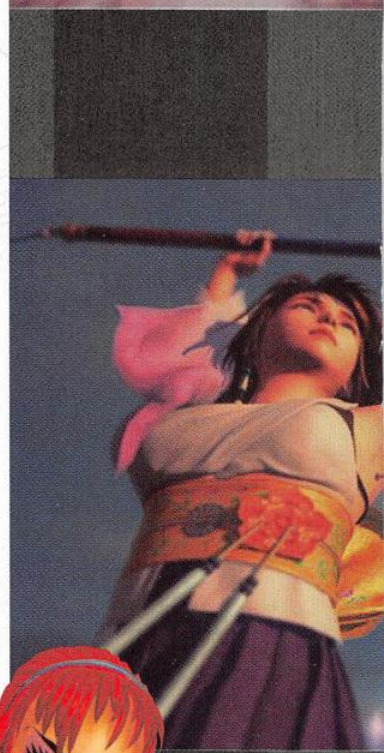
The next of these was their allegiance with Japanese RPG giants Squaresoft. Disappointed with Nintendo's choice of cartridges rather than CDs for its 64-bit machine (as well as snubbing of its new title, *Final Fantasy VII*), Square took its long-running *Final Fantasy* series on its first PlayStation outing at the end of 1997.

Claims that the cartridge format was incapable of handling the various elements of *Final Fantasy VII* were perfectly founded; the high-quality rendered backdrops and hours of FMV cut-scenes spanned a whopping three CDs. The N64 only once came close to this quality towards the end of its life with *Resident Evil 2*, but even that was nowhere near the scale of the Squaresoft epic.

Much to the annoyance of Nintendo fans the world over, *Final Fantasy VII* went on to be considered one of the finest RPGs ever crafted. Once again, a Nintendo decision had backfired, allowing Sony to pick up the pieces – this time, the result was a split from a high-profile developer after ten years of loyal service.

As the years went by, Sony bought into Squaresoft more and more to keep them developing exclusively for the PlayStation.



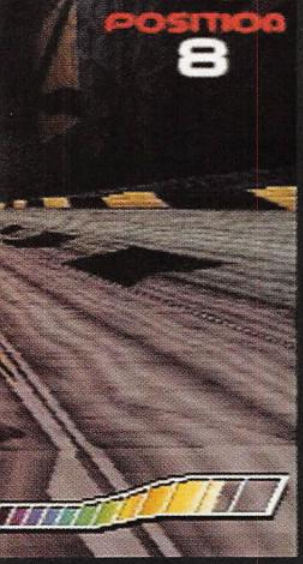









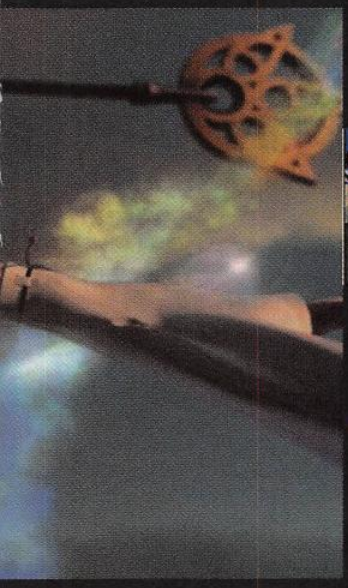








Psygnosis's *Wipeout* helped the PlayStation so much that Sony almost needed the developer on board. So Psygnosis was bought out by Sony.








"ALTHOUGH NINTENDO AND SEGA WERE COMPETING, THERE WAS STILL ROOM FOR VARIETY"

It's questionable whether the PlayStation would have been a success without Namco – its coin-op ports brought arcade-quality titles into gamers' homes.

After sticking with Nintendo for ten years, Square's move to a new console, and a different company, was a big surprise for many gamers.




*Super Mario RPG* was a joint effort between Nintendo and Square. Released on the SNES towards the end of the machine's life, the game never made it to shelves over here.

Square's breakaway title, *Final Fantasy VII*, needed to be something special to maintain the company's reputation. Luckily, it was a true gaming masterpiece and a commercial success.



As a result of the Square/Nintendo split, the sequel to *Super Mario RPG*, *Paper Mario*, was developed solely by Nintendo. It was a great game, but lacked Square's magic.



# EXTINCT




## SEGA

A casualty of the hardware wars after four generations of consoles, SEGA bowed out of the hardware market with the Dreamcast. After years of producing more than capable rivals to Nintendo's NES and SNES in the Master System and MegaDrive, SEGA's first major downfall came with the Saturn.

An unfortunate piece of hardware, it specialized in 2D visuals just as the world was embracing the extra dimension. Although it impressed when first released, the machine soon suffered a double blow at the hands of Sony's superior 3D hardware and the marketing steamroller that heralded the PlayStation's arrival. The Dreamcast took bad luck to the next degree – failing despite being a technically superb console that could produce visuals to rival even its assassin, the PlayStation 2.

The Dreamcast was swept aside by the marketing tidal wave that accompanied the release of Sony's second console even though there was no shortage of excellent games on the SEGA console. It also excelled in terms of being the first online console.

But at the end of the day, the lack of publicity (and the PS2 hype machine) stopped the Dreamcast market dead in its tracks. Thankfully, SEGA continues to develop quality titles across all major formats... so perhaps their abdication from the console market is more a blessing than a curse.

# THE EVOLUTION OF GAMING: PART ONE

"BY BECOMING A MULTI-FORMAT DEVELOPER, SEGA WAS DOING WHAT WAS NECESSARY TO KEEP THE COMPANY ALIVE."

Today, after dozens of quality Square titles, Sony is a main shareholder in the legendary RPG developer. Although this doesn't give them absolute power (as recent announcements of GameCube and Game Boy Advance titles prove), it does give Sony a good amount of control over what Square can and can't do. As the war rages on, Square will be a valuable weapon for those lucky enough to wield it; this, at the moment, is everyone bar Microsoft.

## SEGA SWITCHES SIDES

With all the recent talk of Nintendo calling it a day in terms of hardware after the GameCube runs its course, we're reminded of the last company to make this decision – SEGA. After a decent enough start in the market with the Master System and MegaDrive, SEGA hit a shaky patch around the Mega-CD, 32X and, to a slightly lesser extent, the Saturn.

And while the Dreamcast was expected to do great things, it performed reasonably but failed to reach expectations. It came as a surprise to gamers and the industry when SEGA announced that it was to end production of the Dreamcast and release no further consoles; many speculated that this decision would be the death of SEGA.

Within a matter of months, the unthinkable was already happening; the firm's long-standing mascot, Sonic The Hedgehog, was to appear in a brand new title for Nintendo's Game Boy Advance. Immediately, accusations started flying that SEGA had 'sold out'. In fact, Nintendo's former arch-rival had merely become a multi-format developer and was doing exactly what needed to be done to keep the company alive in the new console climate.

The lack of a piece of hardware to concentrate on also allowed SEGA more creative freedom than ever before. More projects have been announced for Xbox, GameCube, GBA, PlayStation 2, arcade and even mobile phones than would have been impossible to conceive had SEGA had its own console to worry about as well.

Thankfully, the games it churns out continue to be of the same high standard as ever before – the likes of *Super Monkey Ball* and *Jet Set Radio Future* are unquestionably SEGA and undeniably brilliant.

It does beg the question though; would another developer like Nintendo be able to replicate its success if they were to follow the same path? Such actions could surely only lead to a single conclusion: the single format.

## SURVIVAL OF THE RICHEST?

Leaving just Sony and Microsoft to go at it surely wouldn't be the best of moves for the industry – two companies with so much money to throw around would surely leave each other no option than to either work together on an über-console or to outbid each other to the top, snapping up any developer they can.

Many consider this to be the way Microsoft already operates, but this isn't exactly true; in fact, their recent buy-out of Rare was their sixth largest acquisition to date at $375 million. Although it ranked as one of the worst kept industry secrets in recent times, it wasn't until X02 earlier this year that Microsoft officially confirmed the deal.

The age-old developer (formerly Ultimate Play The Game in the home computer era) was 49% owned by Nintendo before the takeover. Despite releasing a few classic titles on the N64 though, Rare often came under fire for poor productivity, with some later games being in production for far longer than planned.

Their final title for a Nintendo home console, *StarFox Adventures*, is a fitting testament to the fine work they did – after all, it manages to squeeze all things Rare onto one tiny disc. Whether they can work the same magic for Microsoft remains to be seen but with the American giant's support, the answer is almost surely going to be yes. Whatever they produce, the purchase was not in vain – an important developer has been snatched away from a rival, so Microsoft win either way.

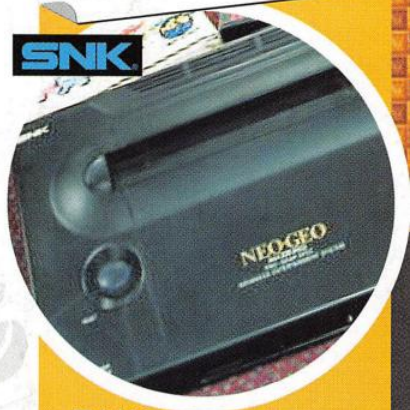
Judging from past experience, it's impossible to predict where the market is headed. The only thing that could possibly quell the wrath of the raging marketing and purchasing war would be a single format. As it stands, Sony's PlayStation started an avalanche that continues to snowball out of control to this day.

It's hard to imagine these companies working together on a single format, but by the same token consider this: would you have predicted ten (or even five) years ago that SEGA would ditch consoles to become a multi-format developer? Would you have considered Sony a threat within the console market? And Microsoft's recent foray into the gaming world would have surprised many people.

When the big guns stop firing and the smoke clears, we see that the games industry is among the most unpredictable markets out there. Technological advances, an unstable world economy, changing (and more demanding) consumer tastes... the list of variables is endless. In fact, fair to say that the only certain thing about gaming is uncertainty itself...




## EXTINCT




### SNK

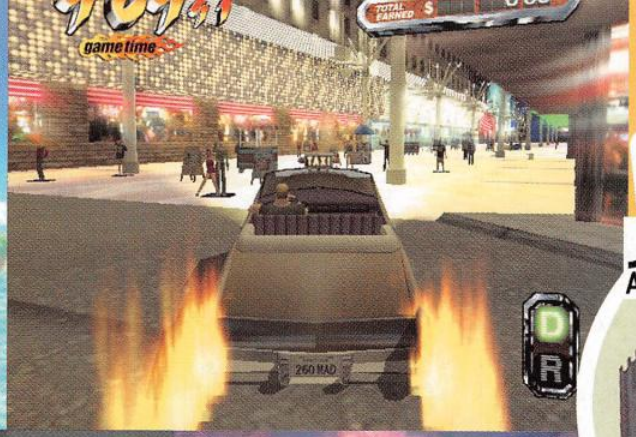
**One of the key figures in 2D gaming, SNK's Neo-Geo home consoles never really hit the big time. A hefty price tag for games and machines meant that not only was it out of many peoples' price ranges, but it was also a considerable risk for potential stockists; the danger of having a such expensive games sitting on a shelf indefinitely is unquestionable.**

**Despite having some astounding franchises to its name (*Metal Slug*, *Samurai Showdown* and *King Of Fighters* all being among the finest), third-party support was minimal for the home machines. It was hoped that the Neo-Geo Pocket (and later the Color version) could aid the cause, but this wasn't to be. The Game Boy (and all its variations) had full control of the handheld market and SNK's accomplished effort was a commercial failure. Following this final flop, SNK closed its European and American offices in June 2000, with the Japanese base going the same way just over a year later.**

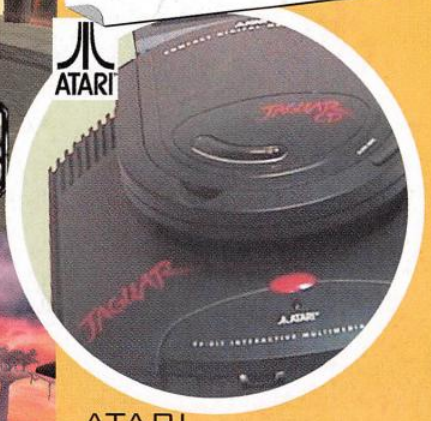
**But if you think that you'll never seen the SNK name again, you're wrong. Having recently been bought up by Playmore, many titles that would never have seen light of day are now planned for release.**

**Furthermore, there could even be life in the old dog yet – Playmore recently made the brave move of re-opening the SNK US offices. No-one knows what will come of this, but if nothing else, it's heartening to see the legend receive a new lease of life.**





## EXTINCT



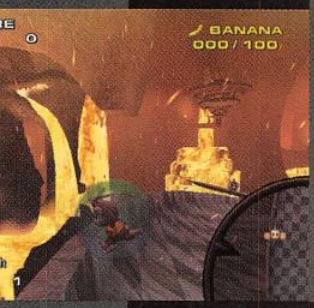

### ATARI

Despite being one of the founding fathers of home gaming, time has not treated Atari well. While the VCS was revolutionary (in that it made gaming accessible to everyone from their own armchair), Atari's focus soon turned to home computers rather than consoles.

It's for this reason that it came of something as a surprise when the Jaguar console was unveiled in 1993. Bereft of notable software support, it wasn't long before the world's first 64-bit console disappeared as quickly as it turned up in the first place.

This came as no great shock, however – Atari's previous jaunt into the console market was the equally ill-fated Lynx handheld, which just helped to prove that the Game Boy had the handheld market well and truly sewn up. Atari more or less accepted its fate after its failed console efforts and despite a few games slipping out, it was mostly quiet on the Atari front until Hasbro snapped up the rights to remake popular titles like *Pong* and *Missile Command* in 1998. Nowadays, the Atari brand remains only in name – while games like *V-Rally 3*, *Splashdown* and *Stuntman* still appear wearing the Atari logo with pride, they have nothing to do with the Atari of yesteryear (the logo also crops up on the sort of T-shirts worn by people who want to look retro but probably aren't old enough to remember the VCS).

Sadly, Atari as a company is dead – buried now alongside several million copies of that rather dreadful *ET* game…



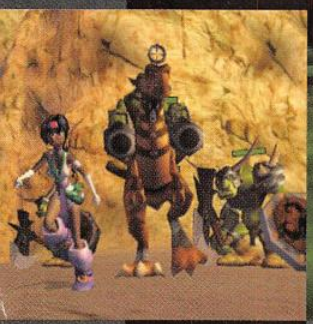

SEGA's mascot on a Nintendo console? A few years ago, you'd have been laughed out of town for even suggesting such a thing could happen. But it did.



SEGA continues to bring its franchise up to date on next-gen consoles. *Toejam And Earl* and *Shinobi* are getting 21st Century facelifts.

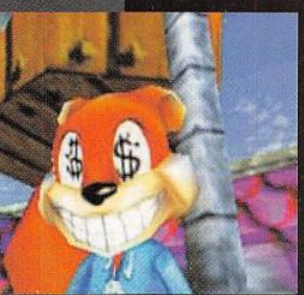
SEGA is showing its commitment to developing innovative titles like *Super Monkey Ball* for the 'big three'.





*Banjo Kazooie* was arguably Rare's finest hour during the Nintendo years. *GoldenEye* and *Perfect Dark* weren't bad either…

"THE ONLY THING THAT COULD CALM THE RAGING MARKET WOULD BE A SINGLE FORMAT"



The Rare/Nintendo split was a surprise. Nintendo was apparently unhappy with Rare's work rate – maybe Microsoft's offer couldn't have come at a better time.






Oh, I do like to be beside the seaside... **Soleil Mega Drive [SEGA] 1994**



# SILENT HILL 3

## KONAMI'S MASTERPIECE HORROR SERIES JUST GOT SICKER AND SLICKER THAN EVER

**Back in the days when *Resident Evil 2* on the PSone was considered to be undisputed king of the videogame horror genre, the original *Silent Hill* was released in its shadow.** Those of us who decided to give Konami's challenger a chance and allowed ourselves to be drawn into its terrifying clutches soon discovered that it offered a truly interactive horror experience, and quickly put Capcom's light-hearted zombie-zapping antics into perspective. With *Silent Hill 2*, the power of the PlayStation2 was fully harnessed to bring the same ingeniously chilling concepts into the next generation graphical arena. The results were breathtaking and brought the nightmare to life with shocking new clarity. So, will the third instalment in the series be capable of making similar progress in quality without the leap to a new platform enjoyed by its predecessor?

Well, the signs so far are very positive. Once again, most of the enhancements are in the aesthetic department, such as graphical sharpness, lighting and painstaking attention to detail, yet these are undoubtedly the integral ingredients in generating the atmosphere that really sets the series apart. The ability of the game's various visual elements and heart-stopping sound effects to completely immerse you in the town's hellish events is possibly *Silent Hill*'s greatest strength, and certainly key to its appeal for those uninspired by the *Resident Evil* brand of 'horror'.

The trademark lighting engine spearheads the graphical revamp in terms of enriched realism, with shadows particularly impressive on the eye at first, but also contributing to an intensity that will scare the crap out of you as play progresses. As fans of the series will know, there is much more than an atmospheric eeriness to worry about whilst exploring the sleepy borough of Silent Hill. The other side to the games' unique draw has to be the genuinely disturbing breed of demonic creatures that lurk within the impressively cast shadows. No surprise then that *SH3* offers a new batch of these grossly mutated abattoir accidents that will both shock and unsettle.

This time around, however, players won't be stepping into the shoes of a guy who at least looks like he can work out one end of a revolver from the other. Instead, in an attempt to perhaps make us feel even more vulnerable to the terrors that await, our heroine is a young teenage girl named Heather. As usual, the developer has replaced anything resembling a plot with an incomprehensible twisty-turny thing. Suffice to say that Heather awakes in her local shopping centre from a haunting nightmare only to find that everyone in town has disappeared. Clearly, reality is about to take a sour turn for the worst, and before long the poor girl is plunged into a living nightmare of inconceivably horrific proportions. Okay, this sounds a little familiar but it's guaranteed to drag us into its usual web of mystery and confusion, making sure our panic instincts are kept close to the surface.

Newcomers who are tempted to sample *Silent Hill*'s unique kind of terror should be warned that no game is more worthy of an R certificate for graphic horror than this one. Those still brave enough to enter this twisted world will be pleased to know they can be enjoying an enhanced slice of gruesome terror by the end of May – several weeks before its release in Japan and the US.

**DETAILS**
**FORMAT:** PS2
**ORIGIN:** Japan
**PUBLISHER:** Konami
**DEVELOPER:** In-House
**RELEASE:** 23 May
**GENRE:** Horror Adventure
**PLAYERS:** 1

■ A few aesthetic tweaks go a long way to create the most atmospheric visit yet to gaming's grisliest town.

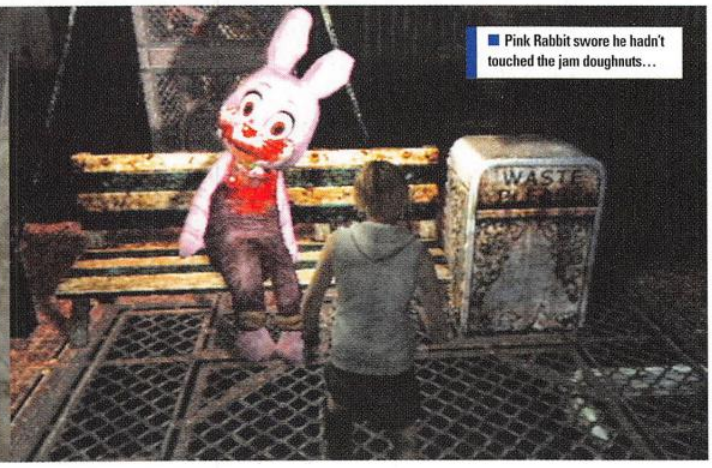
### PERFECT BALANCE

***Silent Hill 3* sees a welcome return of the option to select separate difficulty settings for action and riddles. As before, you'll be able to find the right balance of combat and puzzles depending on what you want out of the game. While few changes have been made to the gameplay, combat feels more integral here than in earlier instalments where the mere presence of monsters seemed more important than the fighting. The problematic camera angles can be tamed fairly quickly and should prevent any blind confrontations where your target is out of shot. We particularly like the inclusion of beef jerky in the game, which can be used to distract your bloodthirsty foes.**

**"UTTERLY IMMERSING YOU IN THESE HELLISH EVENTS IS SILENT HILL'S GREATEST STRENGTH"**



■ Please don't let me run out of ammo now...




■ Pink Rabbit swore he hadn't touched the jam doughnuts...

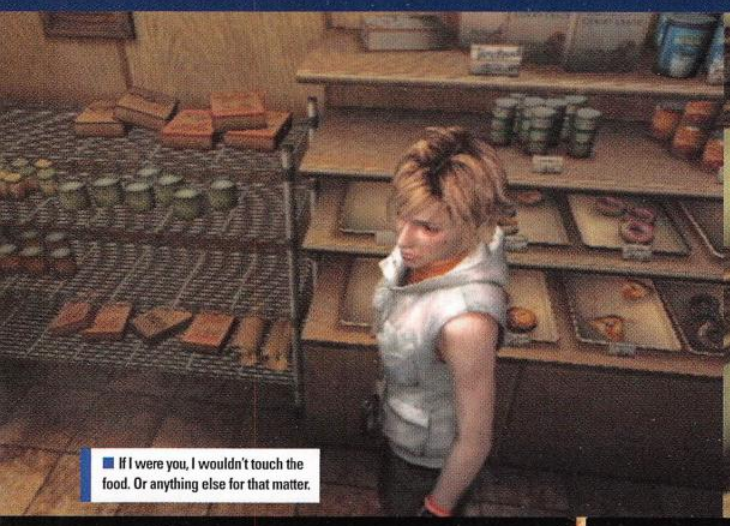


## DEVELOPER PROFILE

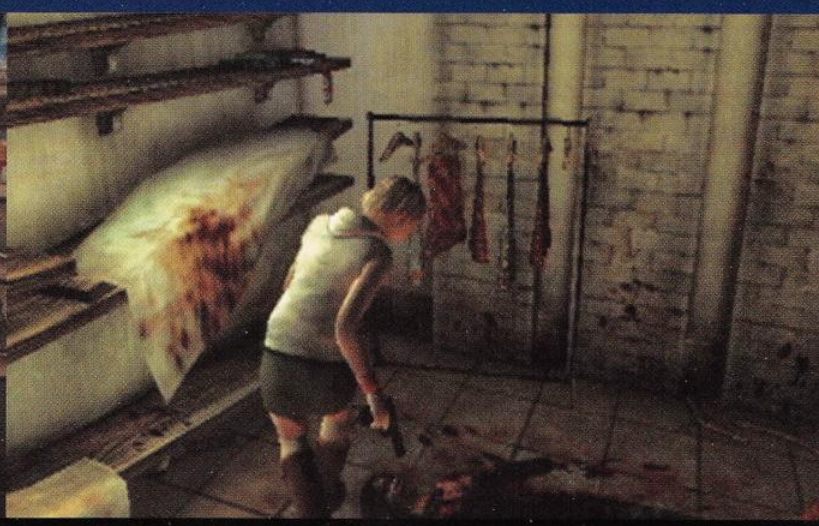
■ Akira Yamaoka was born in 1968 in Tokyo, Japan. His first in-game compositions were for *Castlevania: Symphony Of The Night* in 1997. He shot to fame with his haunting compositions for the *Silent Hill* series and is now renowned as one of the leading composers in the gaming world, boasting a sizeable fanbase.

## HISTORY

- **SILENT HILL 3** 2003 [PlayStation2]
- **SILENT HILL 2** 2001 [PlayStation2]
- **SILENT HILL** 1999 [PSone]



■ If I were you, I wouldn't touch the food. Or anything else for that matter.



### VIDEOGAMES MATHS

**NOT ONE FOR THE KIDDIES**

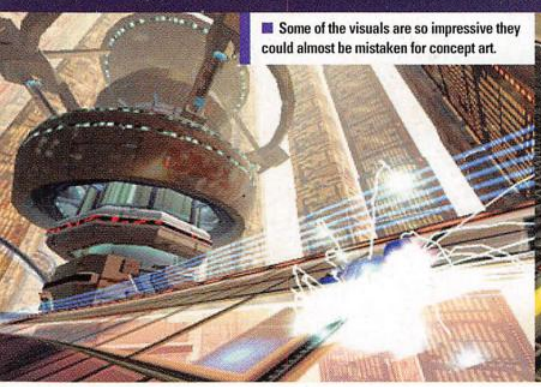



**"SILENT HILL 3 WILL BE THE SCARIEST OF THE SERIES – WE'VE LEARNT SOME LESSONS FROM PAST EXPERIENCE, AND WE HOPE TO MAKE THIS GAME VERY SCARY INDEED"**

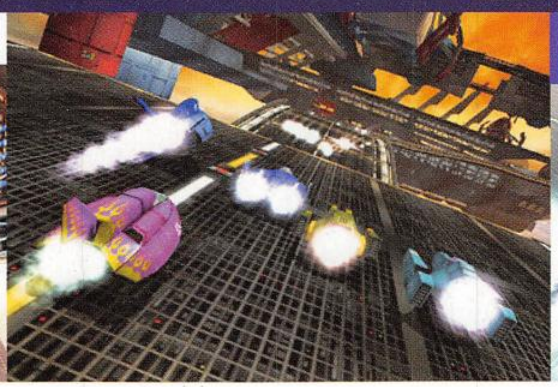
*KAZUHIDE NAKAZAWA, SILENT HILL 3 DIRECTOR, KONAMI*

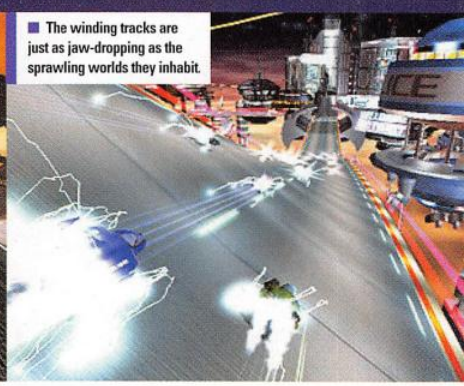


# F-ZERO GC



■ Some of the visuals are so impressive they could almost be mistaken for concept art.





■ The winding tracks are just as jaw-dropping as the sprawling worlds they inhabit.

## SEGA PUTS THE HEDGEHOG ASIDE AND TURNS TO CARS FOR ITS HIGH-SPEED THRILLS...

**What's all this then? Nintendo giving out another one of its precious franchises to an external company?** It certainly didn't do the superb *Metroid Prime* any harm and early looks at various Japanese shows suggest that Amusement Vision is also on the right track with its GameCube update of the *F-Zero* series.

Taking a break from sphere-encased simians, AV's latest GameCube offering is shaping up to be a truly exhilarating experience. Like its predecessors, *F-Zero GC* is all about taking racing to the very extreme – the kind of racing that offers such intense, gut-churning speeds that you'll have to play the game with a chuck bucket handy (much like in the N64 version only, well, faster).

Looking extremely slick with gorgeous texturing, blindingly fast tracks and plenty of graphical trickery – all running at a solid 60 frames per second – there's plenty to get those retinas burning. Even better, tracks are now set in the midst of bustling cities rather than barren landscapes and are jam-packed with spacecraft, hi-tech billboards and even the odd character from Nintendo's back catalogue. Think *Bladerunner* meets *Roadrunner* and you'll get a rough idea of the futuristic speed-fest this is shaping up to be (although with less coyotes and more hovercar thingies).

Gameplay-wise, the actual races are as frantic as ever, with you and 29 other racers hurtling along the impressive tracks at breakneck speeds. While the graphics may have been suitably upgraded for Nintendo's new console, what we've played so far suggests that little of the gameplay has been changed since its N64 outing (although obviously, this is no bad thing).

Additional game modes over its arcade peer have yet to be confirmed, although it is hoped that AV will add suitable extras to increase longevity – after all, this is the company that took a bunch of monkeys and created the best multiplayer game for the GameCube. Confirmed details for the home version of *F-Zero* include the addition of a first-person view (for those of you who like to turn the scenery into a sickening blur of nausea-inducing colour), five unique worlds to race through and even a currently unspecified two-player co-operative mode, although details as to how this will work are being kept under wraps.

Of course, with both Nintendo and SEGA at the wheel (albeit a futuristic one), you can be sure that the results should be pretty impressive.

**"WHILE IT IS REMAINING TRUE TO THE FORMAT, AMUSEMENT VISION IS GIVING THE GAME A TYPICAL SEGA SHEEN"**

**DETAILS**

**FORMAT:** GameCube
**ORIGIN:** Japan
**PUBLISHER:** Nintendo
**DEVELOPER:** Amusement Vision
**RELEASE:** TBA (Japan: May '03, US: 25 June)
**GENRE:** Racing
**PLAYERS:** 1

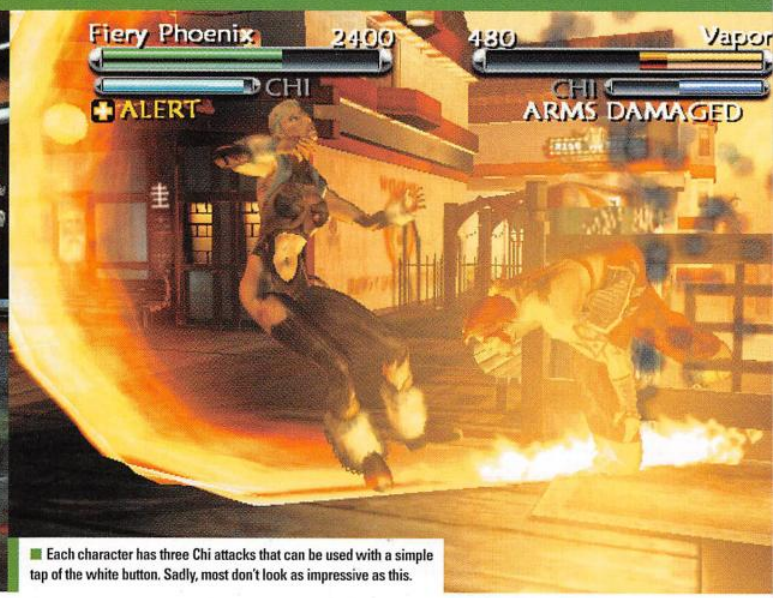
■ Nintendo's seminal futuristic racer gets the makeover treatment by SEGA favourite, Amusement Vision (monkeys and balls not included).



■ The aptly named Lightning track features a world ravaged by storms.

# TAO FENG: FIST OF THE LOTUS




Each character has three Chi attacks that can be used with a simple tap of the white button. Sadly, most don't look as impressive as this.

**DETAILS**
**FORMAT:** Xbox
**ORIGIN:** US
**PUBLISHER:** Microsoft
**DEVELOPER:** Studio Gigante
**RELEASE:** May '03 (US: Out Now)
**GENRE:** Beat-'em-up
**PLAYERS:** 1-2

John Tobias (one of the duo behind *Mortal Kombat*) sinks his teeth back into the beat-'em-up world, as Microsoft tries to forget that *Kakuto Chojin* ever happened.

## CAN THE MAN RESPONSIBLE FOR MORTAL KOMBAT OUTDO HIS OWN CREATION?

**Don't you hate it when a game gets wildly hyped up, only to find out that it's not actually any good?** Well, so do we. That's why when we finally managed to get our hands on preview code for *Tao Feng: Fist Of The Lotus* – a game that Microsoft and many specialist games mags have been pushing as being something pretty special – we were a trifle disappointed. This is probably because, on paper, *Tao Feng* has more than enough going for it, not least its lovely looks, but it still somehow disappoints.

By combining a *Dead Or Alive*-esque visual style of rock-hard blokes and well-endowed ladies shown in immense detail (plus some rather good voice talent to match), *Tao Feng* provides just about the right atmosphere that you'd expect from a fighting game based around the theme of ancient Chinese parables and warring sects. There are also plenty of unique touches that make it sound more interesting than standard beat-'em-up fare. With interactive fighting arenas that allow you to bounce off walls and swing round poles before attacking, specific limb damage that'll reduce your attack power if you take too much punishment to a particular part of the body, and a massive Quest mode that'll take ages to complete, it's almost enough to make you pre-order it now... almost.

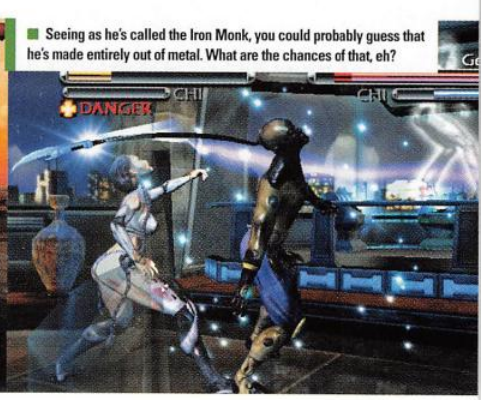
Of course, everybody knows that gorgeous graphics, voice acting and snazzy effects can't make up for bad gameplay. Unfortunately, having sat down with *Tao Feng* for a fair amount of time (in single and two-player modes), this is the one area of the game that we're concerned about. With not long to go until *Tao Feng* comes out in Australia, it's unclear how near to completion our preview build was. Considering that a few eyebrows were raised over certain collision detection issues, some of the more interesting ideas not being implemented to full effect and the slightly dubious over-reliance on combos, we're hoping these concerns might be sorted out before the final release. There are already a couple of decent beat-'em-ups on the Xbox, so *Tao Feng* needs to really impress. The last thing we want is another pile of *Kakuto Chojin* on our hands...

**"DESPITE CONTAINING MORE THAN ENOUGH GOOD IDEAS, THE WAY THEY'RE EXECUTED LEAVES A BIT TO BE DESIRED"**










Seeing as he's called the Iron Monk, you could probably guess that he's made entirely out of metal. What are the chances of that, eh?

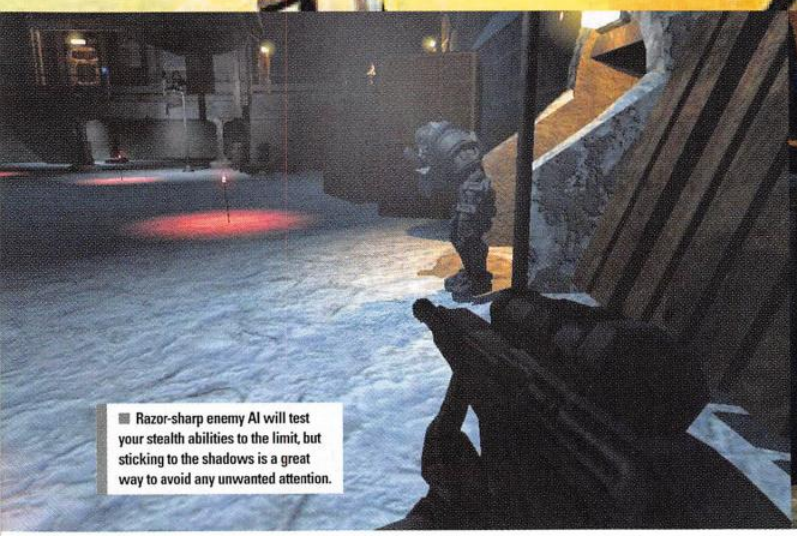
# DEUS EX: INVISIBLE WAR



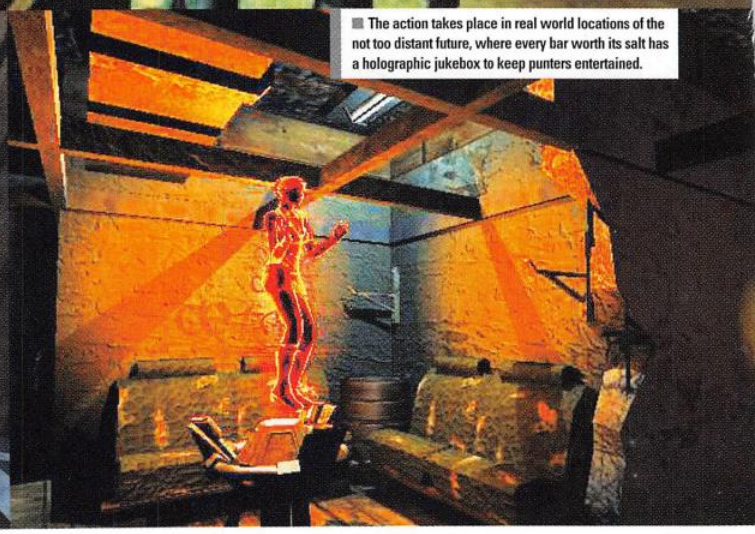

Interactions with intelligent NPCs will affect your relationships with them for the rest of the game, so it's best not to piss too many people off early on.

**"EVERYTHING WE HAVE IN THE GAME, WE TRY AND USE FOR SOME KIND OF GAMEPLAY"**

*BILL MONEY, PRODUCER, ION STORM*



Razor-sharp enemy AI will test your stealth abilities to the limit, but sticking to the shadows is a great way to avoid any unwanted attention.



The action takes place in real world locations of the not too distant future, where every bar worth its salt has a holographic jukebox to keep punters entertained.

## COMPANY PROFILE

■ Originally founded in 1998, Ion Storm now operates from a single studio in Austin, Texas. With the renowned talent of Warren Spector as studio director and widely anticipated titles *Deus Ex: Invisible War* and *Thief III* currently in the pipeline, these are exciting times for the once troubled development house.

## HISTORY

- **THIEF III** TBA 2003 [PC]
- **ANACHRONOX** 2001 [PC]
- **DEUS EX** 2000 [PC, PS2]

# ION STORM'S FREEFORM SCI-FI MASTERPIECE NOW LOOKS AS GOOD AS IT FEELS

**When it was first released on the PC in 2000, Eidos' genre-bending classic *Deus Ex* took the gaming world by storm, picking up more than 35 Game of the Year awards and receiving critical acclaim across the board.** With groundbreaking non-linearity and incredible depth of gameplay, the game was only hampered by some uninspiring visuals. In response to the pleas of gamers everywhere though, Ion Storm has made sure that the forthcoming sequel has been given plenty of beauty as well as brains.

*Deus Ex: Invisible War* sees the return of all the concepts that made the original such a masterpiece, only this time a complete graphical overhaul gives the game an appearance that does justice to the top notch gameplay. In fact, *Doom III* is the only other title out this year that showcases the revolutionary lighting technology at the heart of *DE:IW*s stunning good looks. Whilst character models initially consist of an impressive 3,000 polygons, shadows cast by the dynamic lighting engine appear to increase this count dramatically and display textures with unparalleled realism.

The sheer richness of the in-game environments never fails to impress, yet in typical *Deus Ex* style nothing is ever just for show and you'll be able to interact with almost every object you come across. The clever physics engine creates an even greater level of realism, where shooting holes in a barrel will leak its contents in the right directions, and sophisticated 'rag doll' modelling ensures the demise of your adversaries is disturbingly true to life.

If the death animations prove too shocking, Ion Storm is striving to enable players to progress through the entire game without ever having to pull a trigger. Of course, choosing whether to rely on stealth or to indiscriminately use the weaponry at your disposal is only a glimpse of the freedom *DE:IW* grants players. One of the greatest strengths of the first game was the number of paths by which it was possible to complete each objective. *DE:IW* has taken this concept to new heights and provided interactive environments filled with possibilities for players to exploit however they see fit.

Your actions also shape your destiny, and decisions regarding your allegiances to the four main factions within the game will govern how proceedings unfold, giving the multi-branched storyline more open-ended potential than ever before. Missions will take place in the same locations regardless of who you're working for, but events will vary greatly in terms of your interactions with characters, opportunities available, and even the doors you'll be able to unlock. Although Ion Storm is remaining tight-lipped about the story, on the merit of the first game's engrossing plot we should be in for another entertaining ride laced with intelligent twists.

Expected to clock in at around 20 hours, *DE:IW* is shorter than its predecessor but anything it lacks in length is made up for in depth. With so much freedom the game should play out completely differently depending on the actions of each player, providing endless replay value. With its dazzling facelift and pioneering enhancements to every area of gameplay, *DE:IW* might just be one of the best games we've ever seen.

### DETAILS

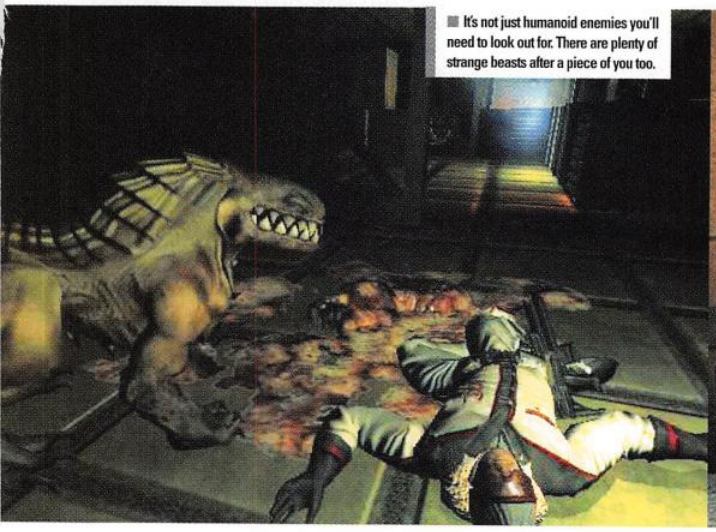
**FORMAT:** PC, Xbox, PS2
**ORIGIN:** US
**PUBLISHER:** Eidos Interactive
**DEVELOPER:** Ion Storm
**RELEASE:** Q3 '03
**GENRE:** FPS/RPG
**PLAYERS:** TBA

■ You want freedom? Then that's what you'll get. There are spadefuls of it in this awesome title.

## CREATE YOUR OWN

**Much of the depth here comes from the RPG elements, and customising your special abilities with various Bio-modifications ensures you're best suited to your preferred style of play. Two types of augmentation are available for each body part, but a third range can be bought on the black market. In addition, each augmentation can be upgraded by up to three levels, allowing players to focus development on a certain ability they plan to use extensively.**

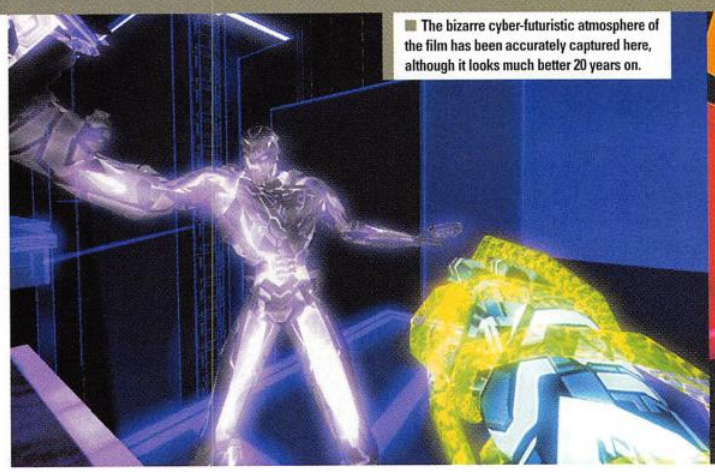
## "WITH SO MUCH FREEDOM, THE GAME SHOULD PLAY OUT COMPLETELY DIFFERENTLY DEPENDING ON EACH PLAYER"



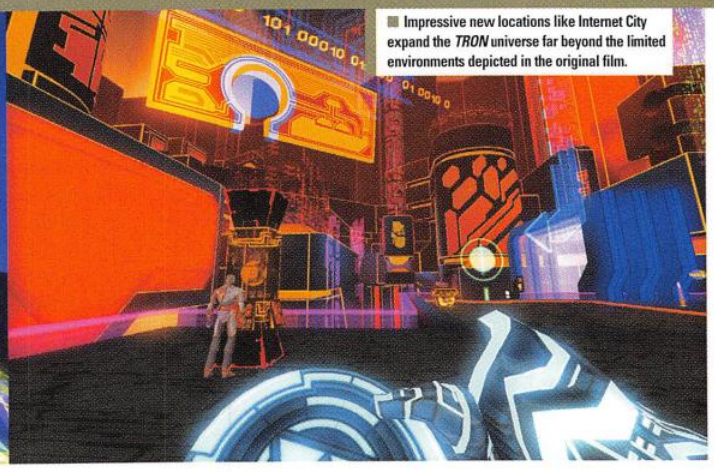
■ It's not just humanoid enemies you'll need to look out for. There are plenty of strange beasts after a piece of you too.



# TRON 2.0



The bizarre cyber-futuristic atmosphere of the film has been accurately captured here, although it looks much better 20 years on.



Impressive new locations like Internet City expand the *TRON* universe far beyond the limited environments depicted in the original film.

## THE TRON UNIVERSE RETURNS WITH A FRESH COAT OF NEON

**After spending much of its time producing a range of lower-priced titles aimed at the younger end of the PC gaming market, Disney Interactive finally resolved to broaden its horizons with the ambitious *TRON 2.0* project.** Under the guise of its new Buena Vista Games label, Disney enlisted the development expertise of Monolith in a bid to ensure a calibre of gameplay that would establish *TRON 2.0* as a serious contender with the more discerning adult gamer.

The 1982 film's cult following will no doubt guarantee the game an instant fanbase, but it's the stunningly individual aesthetics and the unique twist on the standard FPS concept that really justify the resurrection of the *TRON* franchise. All the gameplay takes place in the alternative dimension that apparently exists within our everyday computer systems, where programs walk the corridors of cyberspace as personifications of their creators. Twenty years after the events of the movie, we follow the adventures of Jet Bradley – son of Alan from the original story – as he is forced to journey through this digital realm unravelling the mystery behind his father's disappearance, whilst learning of a sinister plot to wreak havoc on the world's computer networks using a 'digitised' group of elite hackers.

The cutting-edge 3D graphics and lighting technology bring the distinctive luminescent gaming environment to life, whilst retaining the retro feel of the original *TRON* universe. Following consultations with Syd Mead – the concept designer for the *TRON*, *Bladerunner* and *Aliens* movies – Monolith were given plenty of creative freedom to expand on the framework set by the film, bringing the visuals right up to date and ensuring that the gameplay would not be confined by any strict limitations.

For instance, Jet isn't expected to rely on the basic frisbee-style discs featured in the movie to defend himself against swarms of digital adversaries. The disc is just one of four primitive weapon types, each capable of morphing into the whole arsenal of semi-automatic, explosive and sniper options you'd expect in any decent FPS. Of course, in the *TRON* universe, rather than causing bloodshed, weaponry is designed for the purpose of 'deleting' non-human programs, but the effects appear to be much the same.

The traditional disc does, however, form a unique aspect of combat gameplay in *TRON 2.0*. Unlike most standard FPS weapons the trajectory of the disc can be controlled whilst in flight, and when the disc is in the player's hand it can be used to block enemy barrages. Whilst adding a further element of skill to the main game, multiplayer disc battles also make for an entertaining spectacle and can take place in a variety of interactive arenas.

But perhaps the most anticipated sub-game within *TRON 2.0* will be the 3D Light Cycle battles. In addition to races featured in the main story, Circuit mode offers players a whole extra game in itself. Similar to the classic game of *Snakes*, riders hurtle around right-angled grids leaving a solid trail behind them in an attempt to box their opponents into a collision. Sadly, the sheer pace of these battles means the promised multiplayer Light Cycle mode is currently in doubt due to the split-second accuracy in timing this demands.

With the calibre of its sub-games, *TRON 2.0* is shaping up to be a great package. But while the unique look and feel of the *TRON* universe certainly sets the game apart, concerns remain that some may find such a niche concept to be lacking many of the popular real-world elements offered by more mainstream shooters.

### DETAILS

**FORMAT:** PC
**ORIGIN:** US
**PUBLISHER:** Buena Vista Games
**DEVELOPER:** Monolith
**RELEASE:** Winter 2003
**GENRE:** First Person Action
**PLAYERS:** 1-32

Cyber metaphors and fast-paced action as Disney tries to enter the serious gaming market.

### PLUG YOURSELF IN

**If you're going to survive in cyberspace you'll have to get to grips with existing as a computer program. Firstly, Jet won't be able to pick up useful objects, but must instead download capabilities to enhance his programmed skills. This isn't always straightforward, as files can be corrupt and infect other abilities in Jet's repertoire. A wide selection of these modifications, or 'subroutines', is available – from virus protection software to weapon morphing abilities – but only a certain amount of memory is available to hold your active subroutines at any one time. You can therefore tailor Jet's capabilities to your preferred style of play or even adjust the set-up to tackle specific situations.**

**"WITH THE CALIBRE OF ITS SUB-GAMES, TRON 2.0 LOOKS LIKE A GREAT PACKAGE"**

## COMPANY PROFILE

MONOLITH

■ Monolith was founded in October 1994 by a small group of developers in Kirkland, Washington. The team received massive acclaim for the hugely successful *No One Lives Forever* series, and is currently working with movie giants Disney and Warner Bros on *TRON 2.0* and *The Matrix Online* respectively.

## HISTORY

- **NO ONE LIVES FOREVER 2** 2002 [PC]
- **ALIENS VS. PREDATOR 2** 2001 [PC]
- **NO ONE LIVES FOREVER** 2000 [PC, PS2]

■ Fans of the *TRON* movie will be itching to get their hands on the Light Cycles, including a brand new model designed exclusively by Syd Mead.





■ Whilst violence is far enough removed from the real world to keep the censors at bay, FPS fans should still get a rush from eliminating those enemy programs.



**"TRON 2.0 FOLLOWS THE VISION AND TRUE SPIRIT OF THE FILM – MONOLITH HAS DONE A GREAT JOB"**

*STEVEN LISBERGER, WRITER & DIRECTOR OF THE TRON MOVIE*

**VIDEOGAMES MATHS**

**VIRTUAL VIOLENCE**




TRON DOOM BLOOD TRON 2.0

# VIEWTIFUL JOE

## HE'S NOT JUST ANY OLD JOE, YOU KNOW...

**When Capcom announced late last year that it was developing five brand new games exclusively for the GameCube, we were impressed.** Having enough confidence in Nintendo's console to produce not just one, but five unique titles was a bold move for a developer known for its multi-console outings. Of course, we now know that confidence has waned (with *Resident Evil 4* being the only title to remain GameCube-exclusive), but at the time it was the diversity of the games that set tongues wagging. Out of all of the titles on show though, it was *Viewtiful Joe* that caught our attention the most – if only because the trailer created more questions that answers. Who is Joe? Why all the 'bullet time' slow-mo? And what on Earth is a Viewtiful?

Well, now we know. Or at least, we know more than we did before. In a nutshell, *Viewtiful Joe* is exactly what it looks like – a side-scrolling beat-'em-up with platform elements and lovely cel-shaded graphics. Split the nutshell open though and you begin to realise that the game is so much more, with subtle nuances that give it far more character than the usual 'punch anything that moves' games.

For instance, Joe isn't just your average bloke in a tight-fitting lycra costume and silly helmet. Although you start out as plain old Joe (a typically punkish skateboarding-type, complete with backwards baseball cap and annoying media student goatee), you'll soon run into another hero who takes you under his wing and teaches you how to be Viewtiful Joe instead. Each time you meet this mysterious blue-caped hero, you'll gradually learn several all-important super moves; it's here that the distinct superhero flair that Joe displays comes to the fore. Each super move that you learn can be activated at the push of a button, lasting until your Viewtiful FX meter runs dry (at which point you turn back into regular Joe until it fills up again). Of course, you'll need to make sure you use the right move in the right circumstances – when faced with a gun-toting foe, for instance, you can use the Slow ability to reduce the speed of his bullets to a crawl and then smack them back at him to do damage.

Even without his special moves though, Joe's still a pretty nimble chap; he can leap up platforms and cross giant divides without too much trouble. He can even 'predict' attacks to a degree, thanks to the markers that flash up on screen just before an enemy strikes – by pushing either up or down on the analogue stick (depending on whether it's a high or low blow), you can dodge and counter attack. It's a simple system, but one that works incredibly well.

Like we said, though, it's the little things (mostly in the presentation) that help make *Viewtiful Joe* really stand out. Using a pseudo-3D camera style on top of the 2D action, the whole game manages to capture the parallax style that was so popular in the early Nineties when side-scrolling beat-'em-ups were all the rage. When you jump up high the camera stays fixed, giving a worm's eye view of the proceedings, and there are even spiral staircases that let the camera pan round in a 3D style, without ever taking the action out of the second dimension. Combine this with the easy-to-handle controls, hordes of enemies and some extremely over-the-top bosses, and you've got something pretty special. Considering what we've already played was only a taster, the main course can't come soon enough.

**DETAILS**

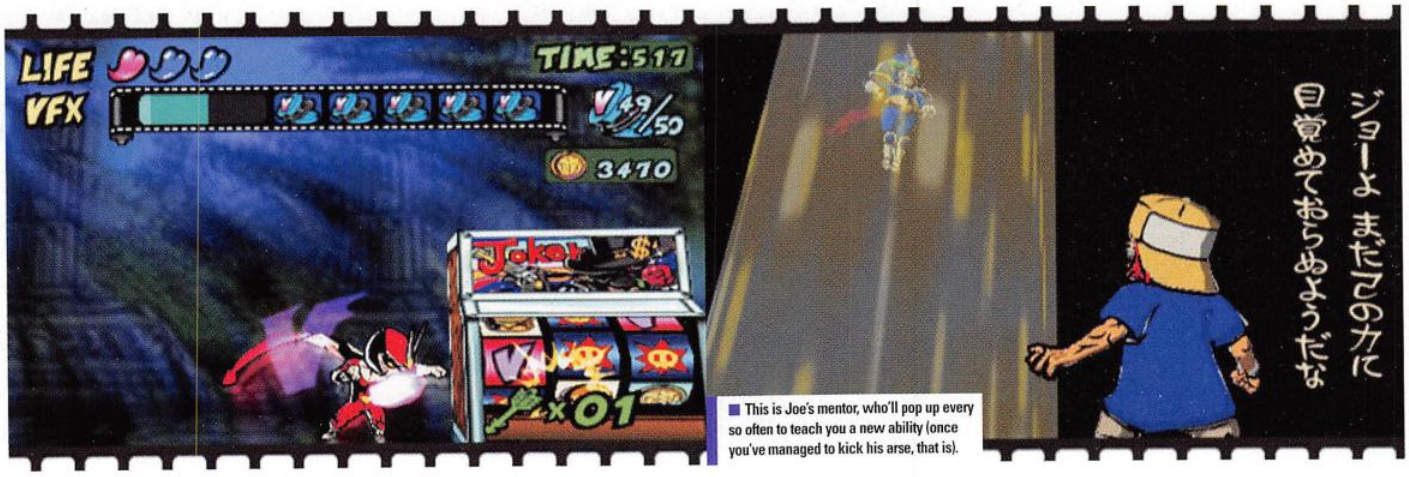
**FORMAT:** GameCube
**ORIGIN:** Japan
**PUBLISHER:** Capcom
**DEVELOPER:** In-House
**RELEASE:** Q4 '03 (Japan: May '03, US: August '03)
**GENRE:** Action/Platform
**PLAYERS:** 1

■ Can Capcom rejuvenate the side-scrolling beat-'em-up with clever moves and stylish graphics?

### GOING TURBO

**Seeing how the whole game features all the typical Japanese superhero stylings that you'd expect to find in any number of *Ultraman* movies, you probably won't be surprised to hear that collecting reels of film is one of the more important things to do in the game. Once Joe manages to acquire his 'viewtiful' powers, the Viewtiful FX meter appears at the top of the screen – this slowly empties whenever Joe uses any of his special moves and then fills up again as you defeat various enemies. Of course, you'll only start out with a small amount of charge in the meter and this is where the film reels come in. Collect 50 of them and you'll get an additional cell for your meter, allowing you to use your powers for longer. Believe us, you're going to need them later on in the game...**

**"IF YOU THINK SIDE-SCROLLING BEAT-'EM-UPS ARE DEAD, THIS COULD CHANGE YOUR MIND..."**




■ This is Joe's mentor, who'll pop up every so often to teach you a new ability (once you've managed to kick his arse, that is).



## DEVELOPER PROFILE

■ Having already worked on a number of Capcom's most successful titles since joining the firm in 1994 (including directing *Resident Evil 2* and *Devil May Cry*), Hideki Kamiya seems to be more than capable of making *Viewtiful Joe* a success – his overt enthusiasm is apparent in the games for which he has been responsible.

## HISTORY

- **DEVIL MAY CRY** 2001 [PS2]
- **RESIDENT EVIL 2** 1998 [PSone]
- **RESIDENT EVIL** 1996 [PSone]

**"A SUPERHERO MUST NOT ONLY BE BRAVE AND STRONG, BUT HE MUST FIGHT HIS FOE WITH A BEAUTIFUL STYLE"**

*HIDEKI KAMIYA, CAPCOM*

### VIDEOGAMES MATHS

**UNDER THE SUIT OF THE BEAUTIFUL HERO**




■ Killing multiple enemies in a chain or generally doing well will earn you Viewtifuls. Yes, they sound odd, but you'll need them, so don't laugh...

■ If you use the Slow ability when you're surrounded, you can use nearby enemies as projectiles to take out a whole crowd in one attack.

# CHAOS LEGION



There's no let-up in the hack and slash action, so don't even think about pausing to catch your breath.

## SOME DAYS YOU JUST WANT TO KILL EVERYTHING...

**DETAILS**
**FORMAT:** PS2
**ORIGIN:** Japan
**PUBLISHER:** Capcom
**DEVELOPER:** In-House
**RELEASE:** Q3 (Japan: Out Now)
**GENRE:** Adventure
**PLAYERS:** 1

What do you get when you combine *Devil May Cry* and *Dynasty Warriors*? Take a look at this...

**What would you expect from an 'intense gothic opera'?** It's certainly an intriguing idea but having played Capcom's latest action-packed offering, we'd be tempted to say that this three-word description isn't that accurate. Intense? Check – taking on 30-odd enemies at a time is hardly a walk in the park. Gothic? Yep – *Devil May Cry* and its sequel have taught Capcom plenty about gothic architecture and enemy design. But it's the opera bit that loses us – with much more emphasis on action than plot (and, er, no fat women singing) *Chaos Legion* is more Hollywood no-brainer than high-brow entertainment. But as far as we're concerned, this is no bad thing.

The frenzied action kicks off as soon as you begin and you're quickly surrounded with things to hit, and they are just that – Things – hideous freaks (and considering the number of these huge oddities that appear at one time, it's a wonder that the game manages to sustain such smooth and impressive visuals throughout). If things get too rough, you'll have the option of summoning Legions – guardian spirits who'll defend you or help you fight. This is where a lot of *Chaos Legion*'s RPG-lite elements come into play, as earned experience is used for increasing the number of Legions summoned, improving their abilities or teaching them new moves. This experience can also be used to enhance the skills of main character Sieg.

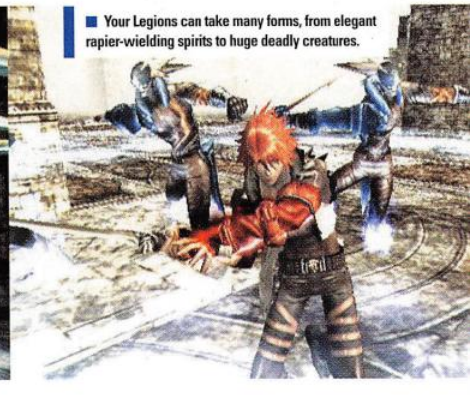
**"THINK DEVIL MAY CRY TURNED UP TO 11 AND YOU'RE ALMOST THERE. FRANTIC IS NOT THE WORD..."**

Parallels with Koei's long-running *Dynasty Warriors* series are inescapable as the two do have a lot in common; with countless enemies on-screen at once, the emphasis on action and the repetitive nature of the tasks at hand, the two titles could have been separated at birth. For what it's worth, *Chaos Legion* does tackle the genre in a more stylish fashion than the *Dynasty Warriors* games and will also no doubt serve as a great release for those who don't want to leap in at the deep end of Koei's *Three Kingdoms* story. In another similarity, we can't see *Chaos Legion* being the kind of game most people would just sit down and play through – the game looks to lend itself more to 'little and often' play and, as such, should work excellently. Response to the title in Japan seems favourable so we'll definitely be taking a more detailed look at the game nearer its Spring release.



Don't worry, you'll get used to being outnumbered (eventually).



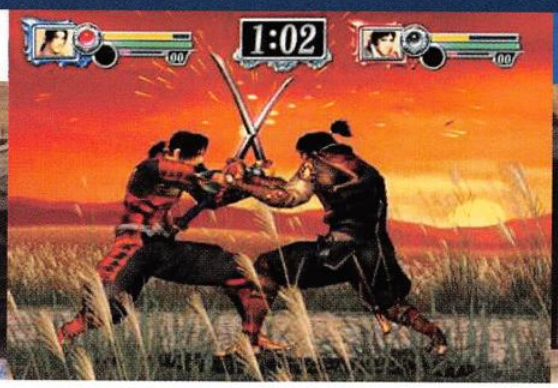


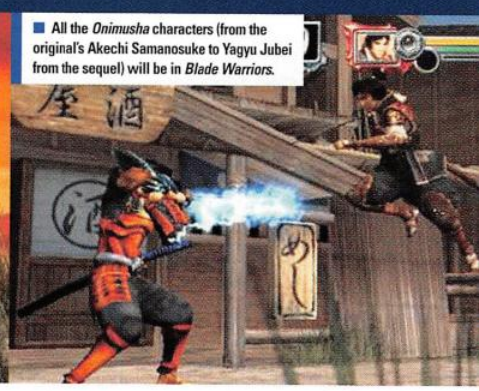
Your Legions can take many forms, from elegant rapier-wielding spirits to huge deadly creatures.

# ONIMUSHA: BLADE WARRIORS




■ Each character has a collection of special moves up their sleeves for performing magical attacks.



■ All the *Onimusha* characters (from the original's Akechi Samanosuke to Yagyu Jubei from the sequel) will be in *Blade Warriors*.

## SLAUGHTERING THE DEMON HORDES OF FEUDAL JAPAN ISN'T JUST A ONE-MAN JOB ANY MORE...

**DETAILS**
**FORMAT:** PS2
**ORIGIN:** Japan
**PUBLISHER:** Capcom
**DEVELOPER:** In-House
**RELEASE:** TBA
**GENRE:** Slash-'em-up
**PLAYERS:** 1-4

■ The *Onimusha* series gets a 3D multiplayer fighter. Is this the *Power Stone* follow-up we've been waiting for?

**"CAPCOM COULD BE REVIVING ONE OF ITS MOST TREASURED TITLES BY COMBINING IT WITH ONE THAT'S TOTALLY DIFFERENT"**

**Capcom's recent announcement that it was already working on the next instalment of the *Onimusha* series didn't come as a shock to most of the people who heard it.** Of course, this might have had something to do with the huge *Onimusha 3* logo that appeared at the end of *Onimusha 2*, and Capcom isn't exactly fond of calling it a day when a series is doing well. What did surprise us though, is that in the midst of announcing the development of *Onimusha 3*, Capcom also let slip about another upcoming title – one that, while based in the world of *Onimusha*, may be a reincarnation of a certain game we've loved since it first appeared on the Dreamcast.

Blending the feudal Japan stylings of the other *Onimusha* games with some seriously intense multiplayer fighting, *Onimusha: Blade Warriors* takes the series in a markedly different direction to what we're used to. It's a brave move for such an established series, especially when you consider the fanbase that may be expecting more of the same (although that's what *Onimusha 3* is for). Basically, you can forget all about the '*Resident Evil* in Japan' adventure elements – in their place comes what Capcom itself describes as "multi-battle action" that offers a combination of gorgeous graphics and hard-core fighting.

Of course, this could mean anything – developers are notoriously vague when announcing games out of the blue – so this description isn't very helpful. But the screenshots tell a different story, especially if you're familiar with some of Capcom's previous work. At first glance, *Onimusha: Blade Warriors* looks just like other feudal Japan-based multiplayer fighting titles such as *Dynasty Warriors* or *Mystic Heroes*. Look closer though, and the similarities between this and Capcom's classic 3D multiplayer beat-'em-up *Power Stone* start creeping in – in fact, the more you look, the more you'll be convinced.

With up to four people on screen at once, a wide range of characters from both *Onimusha* games (including the Genma demons), plenty of magic attacks and massive 3D arenas, could this be the pseudo-sequel to *Power Stone* that Dreamcast-owning fighting fans have been waiting for? We hope so.




■ You don't have to play as one of the good guys – those of you with a dark streak will be dying to take control of one of the Genma...

# STARSKY & HUTCH




Criminals being as they are, you'll sometimes find yourself on the receiving end of a right good battering in the middle of a chase.

In typical Seventies TV cop show style, there are plenty of times when your car will be flying through the air and smashing through boxes.

**"FOLLOWING THE STYLE OF THE TV SHOW CLOSELY, STARSKY & HUTCH WON'T JUST JUST BE SHOOTING GAME"**

*EMPIRE PRESS RELEASE*

**VIDEOGAMES MATHS**

**BAD BOYS, BAD BOYS – WATCHA GONNA DO?**



## ACTOR PROFILE

Having been an actor since the age of 14, Antonio Fargas has worked his way up to being one of the most well-known blaxploitation stars around. Although he has starred in over 50 film and TV roles, he will always be best known for playing streetwise 'gangsta' Huggy Bear in *Starsky & Hutch*.

## HISTORY

- **CAR WASH** 1976 [Movie]
- **STARSKY & HUTCH** 1975 [TV]
- **SHAFT** 1971 [Movie]

# WHO NEEDS THE 21ST CENTURY WHEN THE SEVENTIES WERE SO DAMN COOL?

**So, we've seen everything that *Knight Rider* and *Dukes Of Hazzard* had to offer... does that mean all games based on retro TV shows have to be generic racers?** Not if Empire has anything to do with it. In taking all the high-octane car chase action from the TV show and mixing it with a variety of ideas that we've seen before, Starsky & Hutch's transition into the realm of videogames is much more than the bog-standard driving game it could have been.

The most obvious reference is to the classic Eighties arcade game *Chase HQ*; a fairly simple driving game where the aim was to chase after criminals in their stolen vehicles and ram their car until it burst into flames. *Starsky & Hutch* follows a similar theme of 'stop Mr Bad Guy escaping' for virtually all of its 18 episodic levels, but rather than having you follow a straight route from A to B, Empire has incorporated the more city-based experience of *Grand Theft Auto 3* to give more freedom. The result? A free-for-all chase-fest where smashing through windows, racing down narrow alleys and smashing through flimsy stacks of boxes is strongly encouraged.

This being a TV show though, the exciting stunts are for the benefit of your audience, so you'll have to do as many as you can to keep them happy; if too many people turn off, you'll fail the mission and have to start over. Okay, so it's just an elaborate way of putting a time limit on each stage but it helps give you an incentive to take more adventurous routes on your quest to stop the criminals in their tracks.

The most impressive concept that *Starsky & Hutch* has to offer is unfortunately reserved for PlayStation2 owners only – while Xbox, GameCube and PC players will have to be content with playing with their mates on just pads and steering wheels, people picking up the PS2 version will have the added bonus of being able to use a GunCon 2 as well. Although the multiplayer game (which we've outlined in a separate section just over there) remains the same in principle, the use of the GunCon 2 makes things much more interesting for the person playing as Hutch. It's a really good idea and one that, if implemented properly, will increase the longevity of the game. Unfortunately, we do wonder if it will work or not. At the time of going to press, we still hadn't received code in which the lightgun mode worked properly which, considering the game is due out quite soon, is rather worrying.

Despite all the obvious problems that need to be ironed out, there's some quality *Chase HQ*-style action buried underneath which stands out more than Huggy Bear in a crowd of nuns. It's all a question of time, but that's something that Minds Eye – with the proposed release date of June drawing ever closer – doesn't have much of at the moment. Fingers crossed, we'll be bringing you the final verdict in the next issue.

## DETAILS

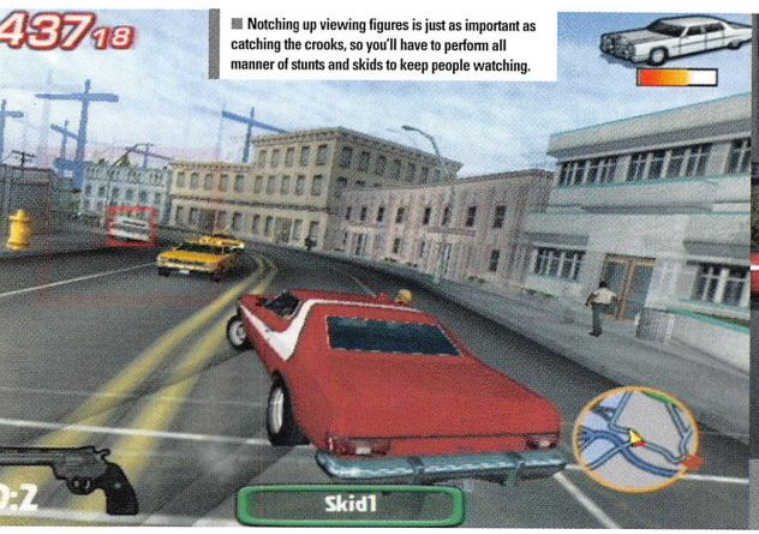
**FORMAT:** PS2/Xbox/GC/GBA/PC
**ORIGIN:** UK
**PUBLISHER:** Empire Interactive
**DEVELOPER:** Minds Eye Productions
**RELEASE:** June (PS2/PC), July (Xbox), Sept (GC/GBA)
**GENRE:** Driving
**PLAYERS:** 1-2

It's *Chase HQ* for the next-generation, with a *GTA*-style city map and the two 'baddest' cops that everyone wanted to be back in 1975.

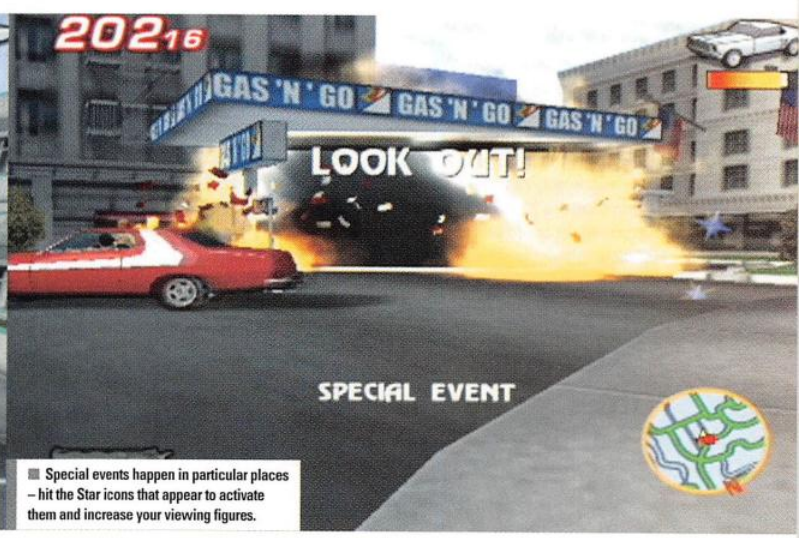
## PARTNERS FOR LIFE

**Ever imagined racing through the streets at high speed with your best mate, smashing through boxes and shooting at passers-by with your trusty revolver? Hold that thought, because Empire reckons that *Starsky & Hutch* will let you do just that. By plugging in a second controller, you can split control of the dynamic duo between the two of you; one plays as Starsky and gets to drive the car, while the other plays as Hutch and takes charge of leaning out of the window, taking pot shots at anything that gets in the way. Those perps are going down...**

**"IF YOU'RE INTO FAST CARS, GUNFIRE AND SEVENTIES ACTION, THIS ONE'S RIGHT UP YOUR CARDBOARD BOX-FILLED ALLEY"**




Notching up viewing figures is just as important as catching the crooks, so you'll have to perform all manner of stunts and skids to keep people watching.




Special events happen in particular places – hit the Star icons that appear to activate them and increase your viewing figures.

# SOUL CALIBUR II



Kilik's back, only now he's carrying an even bigger stick than before.






Most of the secret characters come in the form of familiar faces.

THE LEGEND WILL NEVER DIE – IT JUST GETS MOVED ONTO EVERY FORMAT UNDER THE SUN...

**DETAILS**

**FORMAT:** PS2/Xbox/GameCube
**ORIGIN:** Japan
**PUBLISHER:** Electronic Arts (PS2/Xbox), Nintendo (GC)
**DEVELOPER:** Namco
**RELEASE:** September '03 (Japan: Out Now, US: August (TBC)
**GENRE:** Beat-'em-up
**PLAYERS:** 1-2

■ The third *Soul Blade* game is about more than swords.

**A huge hit when it was originally released on the Dreamcast, *Soul Calibur*'s blend of *Virtua Fighter*'s strategy and *Tekken*'s lengthy combos ensured it sat comfortably between the two heavyweights of 3D fighters.** Of course, it wasn't just gameplay where the title excelled – the game was wonderful to look at and, even now, manages to more than hold its own against the likes of *Dead Or Alive 3* and *Tekken 4*. With this in mind, it's no surprise to find that Namco isn't taking any chances with the sequel by ensuring that every version released has more than enough differences to warrant a purchase over its peers – a refreshing change from the normal quick port attitude that plagues many multiformat titles.

Despite the fact that *Soul Calibur II* looks remarkably similar to the original at first glance, there are quite a few subtle improvements. Take the redesign of the game's levels, for instance. Taking a similar approach to *Dead Or Alive 3*, there are now plenty of opportunities to pummel your opponents into the many objects that litter each playing area. Ring-outs are also harder to achieve, as many of the newer stages are much larger than those found in the original game.

What's more, most of the ridiculously fast combos from the previous game have now been restructured, meaning that it is much easier to disrupt certain strings of attacks and regain the initiative over your opponent. All these changes aside though, it's more a case of a little tuck here and a little nip there rather than a major revolution (although many will argue that when the original was so good, this isn't really an issue).

Despite the many similarities to the original, the arcade version of *Soul Calibur II* actually felt very similar to *Soul Blade*, particularly in terms of musical content and edginess. Fights in general had a much grittier feel than the beautifully choreographed bouts of *Soul Calibur*, so fans of the arcade game will be pleased to know that this style has translated well onto the home versions.

Naturally, the downside of beat-'em-ups is that they normally suffer in the longevity department if there isn't a second player available. Fortunately, Namco is adding more than enough unique modes to ensure that *Soul Calibur II* ends up being a very comprehensive fighter. In addition to the standard Arcade and Versus games, there are stock modes such as Time Attack, Survival, Practice and Team Battle. On top of all that though, there's also the Weapon Master mode – this is similar to the Edge Master mode from *Soul Blade*, but is enhanced by some new RPG elements. The crux of the gameplay will see you completing various tasks and then being supplied with around 200 weapons with which you can equip various characters in the game.

The other big news about Namco's forthcoming release is that each console version will benefit from having one system-specific combatant who you'll no doubt recognise from elsewhere. And they're not the only new characters you can expect to get to grips with – from evolutions of previous characters (such as Alexandra) to brand new fighters like Raphael, Necrid and Charade, there's more than enough variety to keep beat-'em-up purists happy.

Of course, with every console having its fair share of 3D beat-'em-ups at the moment, *Soul Calibur II* certainly isn't going to have an easy job on its hands. Hopefully though, the *Soul Calibur* pedigree will be more than enough to convince gamers that the Stage of History is well worth revisiting.

## DON'T I KNOW YOU?

**The big news about *Soul Calibur II* is the inclusion of one famous character unique to each format – namely Link on GameCube, comic book character Spawn on Xbox and *Tekken* boss Heihachi Mishima on PlayStation2. While the GameCube version is likely to prove extremely popular thanks to Link, we can't help feeling that the 'Cube's tiny D-pad and unsuitable button layout could hinder the game's playability. Heihachi initially looks out of place but can hand out plenty of punishment, even without a weapon. Over on the Xbox, Spawn blends in very well visually, but early footage of his moves suggests that he may not fit into the series as well as we might have hoped...**

**"SOUL CALIBUR II SUCCESSFULLY COMBINES ENHANCED VISUALS WITH IMPROVED GAMEPLAY TO CREATE A WORTHY SEQUEL"**

## COMPANY PROFILE

Founded in Tokyo in 1955, Namco has always been heavily involved within the coin-op industry. Responsible in the early Eighties for the *Pac-Man* phenomenon, it later boosted the PSX by porting titles such as *Tekken* and *Ridge Racer*. Whilst maintaining strong ties with Sony, it has now started to branch out to rival formats.

## HISTORY

- **MR DRILLER** 2000 [Multiformat]
- **FINAL LAP** 1987 [Arcade]
- **PAC-MAN** 1980 [Multiformat]

### VIDEOGAMES MATHS

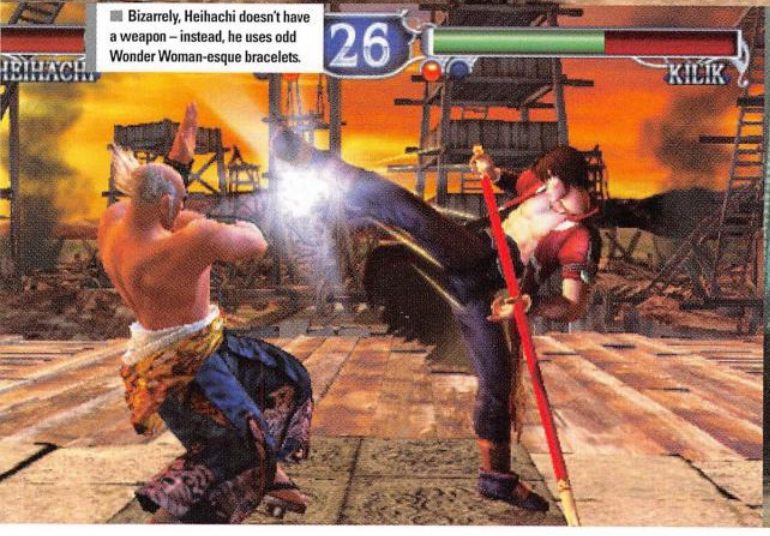
**SLICING SOUL CALIBUR II INTO LITTLE PIECES**



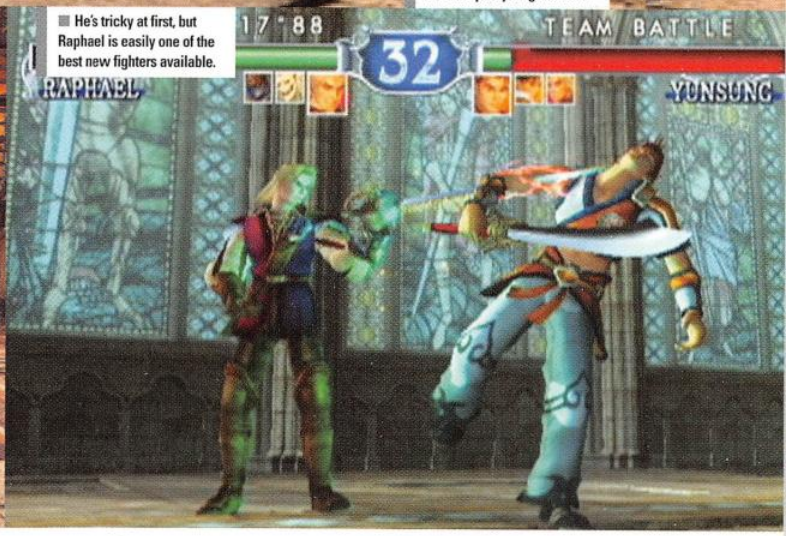
DEAD OR ALIVE 3 + SAMURAI SHODOWN + TODD MCFARLANE = SOUL CALIBUR II




So, does Link really fit in? Well, actually he does – he's fast and pretty tough to boot.




Bizarrely, Heihachi doesn't have a weapon – instead, he uses odd Wonder Woman-esque bracelets.




He's tricky at first, but Raphael is easily one of the best new fighters available.

# WORLD WAR II: FRONTLINE COMMAND

## WAR WOULD BE SO MUCH EASIER WITH SUPER NASHWAN POWER...

**You want to make a game people can identify with, relate to and will actually care about.** Do you a) provide a DVD movie with your game giving new players a detailed back story, b) write off plot as an 'unnecessary extravagance' or c) base your game around a well-known event or place, negating the need for any further information? These days, it seems most developers would rather opt for the latter – a point that the ever-growing number of licensed and reality-based games go a fair way to proving. One of the most popular subject matters, particularly in terms of PC software, is World War 2 – an event so famous that players can just jump straight into the game and know what's going on. So we did.

From the archive footage and lavish presentation that adorns the front end of the game, you already know to expect a fairly accurate portrayal of the events of the Second World War. Sure enough, give or take a little artistic licence to retain playability, those who are even a little clued up on their history will recognise names, campaigns, units and locations – the desired effect is achieved even if just the word Panzer rings a bell. The units have been faithfully realised even down to engine sounds, to the point where a distant unit could be instantly recognised by sound alone.

In a strange and interesting twist, morale is as important to your troops as anything else – taking excessive casualties will turn your remaining soldiers into gibbering wrecks while excelling on the battlefield could be the catalyst for a daring and heroic victory. Forget the 'build huge army, move to point B, clear mission' RTS games of yesteryear – this is war and if you waste what you get, you only have yourself to blame. Removing the ubiquitous resource management aspect is a noble decision and one that has been made to reward true player skill and tactics rather than how fast a person can train infantry or build tanks.

You'll have plenty of other tricks at your disposal, though. Occupying buildings, calling for air support and setting traps will play a large part in your strategic advances. To avoid confusion and a cluttered HUD, much of the display is transparent or nonexistent until required, when it springs into action and serves its purpose quickly and easily. This means you'll have a much better view of the action but, given the unforgiving nature of the game, you'll need as much control as you can get.

Visually, everything is coming together nicely – while no one visual element is outstanding, the complete package is a well-rounded and attractive one. The level of detail is among the game's finer points; from accurate lines of sight for all units (see 'In The Line Of Fire') to fully deformable buildings and landscapes, *Frontline Command* throws around more neat touches than we tend to expect from the genre and benefits greatly for it even at this early stage. It's crazy to think that this gritty realism comes from the same family as *Speedball 2* and *The Chaos Engine* but despite their differences in terms of content, the quality seems as high as it's ever been.

Seeing as how *Frontline Command* isn't just an RTS by numbers, hopes are high for the finished game. Provided that the battalion of ingenious features we've been treated to thus far doesn't go AWOL, *Frontline Command* is shaping up to be quite a treat when it reports for duty later in the year. With an add-on apparently already planned and feedback so far being highly favourable, it looks as though The Bitmap Brothers may just have picked the right game at the right time to explode back onto the gaming scene.

**DETAILS**

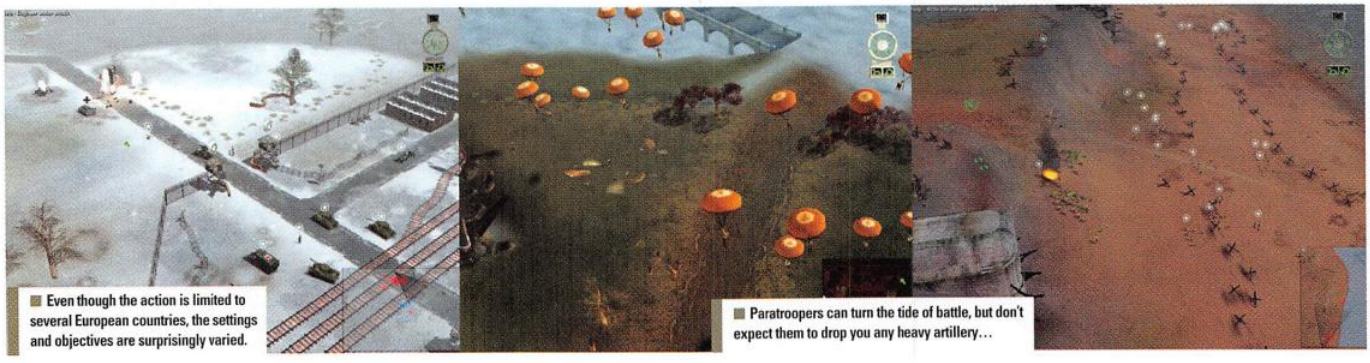
**FORMAT:** PC
**ORIGIN:** UK
**PUBLISHER:** Koch Media
**DEVELOPER:** Bitmap Brothers
**RELEASE:** TBA (Japan/US: Out Now)
**GENRE:** Strategy
**PLAYERS:** 1-4

Better known for 8- and 16-bit accomplishments, The Bitmap Brothers career into 2003 with this ambitious wartime RTS.

> "FORGET THE 'BUILD HUGE ARMY, MOVE TO POINT B, CLEAR MISSION' RTS GAMES OF YESTERYEAR – THIS IS WAR"

### IN THE LINE OF FIRE

**In a time when transparent foreground objects are the norm, it's nice to see a game ignore this logistical improbability. In *Frontline Command* if your soldiers can't see something, you can't see it. As annoying as this may seem, it works very well and adds an extra element of involvement as you'll need to be continually aware of your troops' positioning. In a similar way, the game has a unique line of sight system, granting units a respectable visibility range (expandable using binoculars) which is blocked in by any object that may stand in your way, be it a wall, building or tree. Interestingly, if you're able to hear an enemy nearby, you'll be made aware of his presence accordingly. This adds a whole new level of strategy that puts *Frontline Command* nearer to *Commandos* than to the piles of generic RTS games we're subjected to. We wouldn't be surprised to see this feature more often in the future.**



Even though the action is limited to several European countries, the settings and objectives are surprisingly varied.

Paratroopers can turn the tide of battle, but don't expect them to drop you any heavy artillery...

## COMPANY PROFILE

Founded in 1987, The Bitmap Brothers cut their teeth on some of the best-loved games of the 8- and 16-bit eras, including *Gods*, *Xenon 2* and the mighty *Speedball 2*. Yet to make an impact in the 21st Century, will 2003 see a return to splendour for the Bitmaps?

## HISTORY

- **THE CHAOS ENGINE** 1993 [Multi]
- **SPEEDBALL 2** 1990 [Multi]
- **XENON** 1988 [Multi]




Fed up with squinting at the screen looking for your troops? Zoom all the way in and introduce yourself to each one in person...





If you're not using a building for your own strategic ends, level it before the enemy can pinch it.

# LARA CROFT TOMB RAIDER: THE ANGEL OF DARKNESS

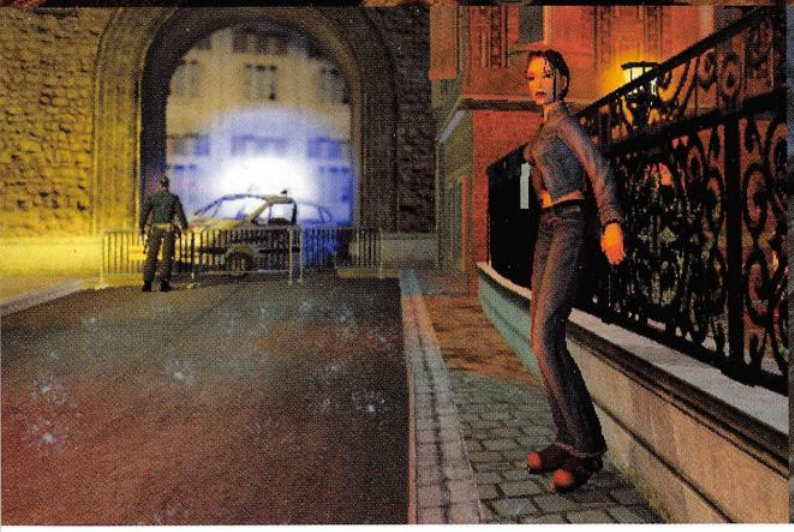
**"A NEW LARA CROFT FOR A NEW GENERATION – THE WORLD'S MOST FAMOUS VIDEOGAME CHARACTER RETURNS IN HER GREATEST ADVENTURE YET"**
*EIDOS PRESS RELEASE*

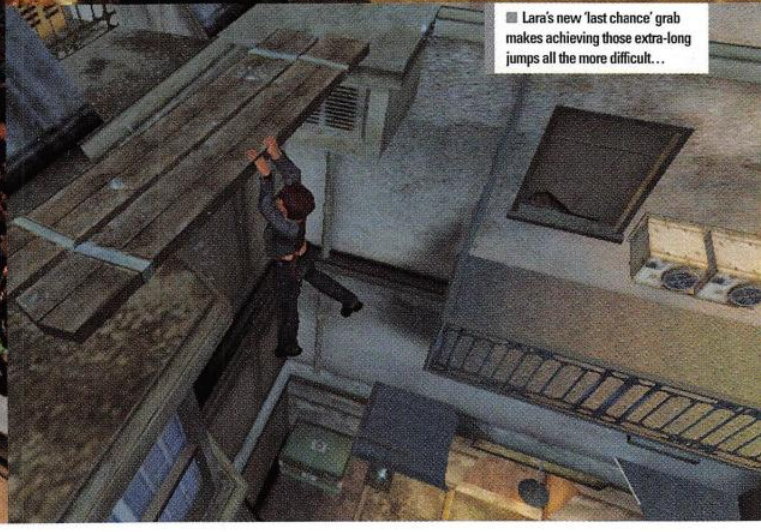
See? We'd rather have undead knights with swords over gun-toting heavies any day of the week.

**VIDEOGAMES MATHS**

**CROFT ORIGINAL? PERHAPS...**





Lara's new 'last chance' grab makes achieving those extra-long jumps all the more difficult...

## COMPANY PROFILE

**Founded by Jeremy Heath-Smith in 1988, Core Design is one of the most well-established UK software developers with over fifty successful titles under its belt such as *Rick Dangerous*, *Curse Of Enchantia* and *Premiere*. However, the company is best known for creating and milking the *Tomb Raider* series for all its worth.**

## HISTORY

- **TOMB RAIDER** 1996 [PSone]
- **CHUCK ROCK** 1991 [Amiga]
- **RICK DANGEROUS** 1988 [Amiga]

# ALL NEW AND IMPROVED LARA – BUT WILL EIDOS EVER GET AROUND TO RELEASING IT?

**Good old Lara Croft – there really is no stopping her in her quest to become the world's most recognisable videogame character.** Sure, she might have been nearly buried alive, shot at, chased by a prehistoric T-Rex and even bled dry at the hands of the Hollywood corporate machine in the process, but it seems to be working. Ask any gamer from the more modern school of thought to name a female game character and you'll most likely hear Ms Croft as a reply. It's strange, considering there hasn't been a new *Tomb Raider* game on a home console since 2000 (and, even worse, a decent one since 1998) – although the fact that Lara's latest outing has been in development for ages might go some way to explaining it.

Anticipation for the latest *Tomb Raider* game (or *Lara Croft Tomb Raider: The Angel Of Darkness*, to give it its full name – yes, the character has grown bigger than the game) has been growing since the game's announcement in March last year. Of course, up until now Eidos and developer Core Design have been very cagey as to what the game actually entails – releasing a handful of screens and a few PR-styled phrases (including 'New Lara, new attitude!', as if that actually means anything) doesn't give an impression of how the game actually plays. Having now sat down for a solid few hours with a proper preview version though, we've got more of an idea.

And the verdict? It's *Tomb Raider* again, albeit in a slightly snazzier shell. Core has chosen to improve what's already there rather than start again from the ground up, which is obviously not that bad a decision. The major enhancements come in several different forms, most noticeably in the depiction of Lara herself. Now more agile than ever, Lara seems easier to control – along with a handful of new moves (such as shimmying along poles and hand-over-hand rock climbing) and a more flexible camera, there's now more variety in how you achieve your goals.

The game also offers several gameplay styles, depending on which level you're on – while pistols at dawn is still the order of the day when faced with evil villains and vicious creatures, stealth is now much more important in certain situations. Moving swiftly between frantic gunplay and more methodical puzzle elements is always something the *Tomb Raider* series has tried to do, though not always with success. This time though, Core appears to have incorporated areas more faithful to the original. Indeed, one stage we saw was strangely familiar – a chamber with four doors, leading to four different themed rooms with puzzles in each. Honestly, it's almost like they've read our minds about what we want...

There's little doubt in anyone's mind that *Angel Of Darkness* is going to do well when (or even if) it comes out in late May/early June. Thankfully, from what we've seen so far Lara might actually deserve her success by offering a decent game to play, rather than simply riding off the back of past accolades. However, there may still a bit too much of the 'more action/less puzzles' formula (the kind that took all the enjoyment out of *Tomb Raider 2*) present in *Angel Of Darkness*. The sooner Lara stops messing around and gets back to actually raiding tombs, the better.

**DETAILS**

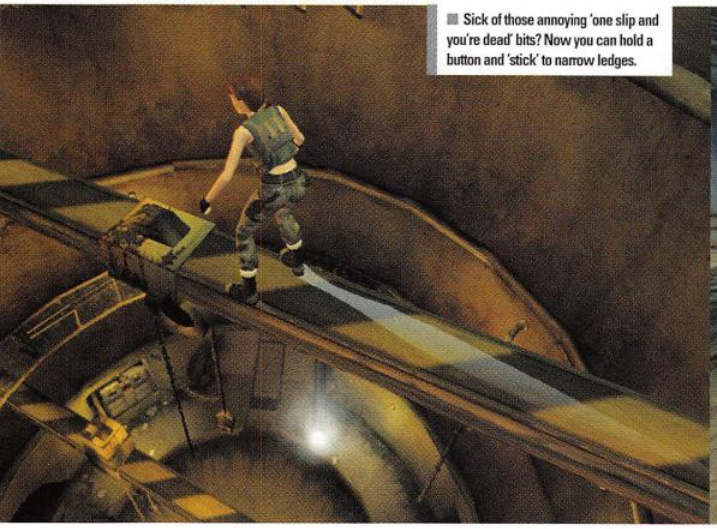
**FORMAT:** PS2/PC
**ORIGIN:** UK
**PUBLISHER:** Eidos Interactive
**DEVELOPER:** Core Design
**RELEASE:** June '03
**GENRE:** Action/Adventure
**PLAYERS:** 1

Lara's back with an all-new adventure, all-new moves and an all-new partner. The question is, will it really be as new as we might be led to believe?

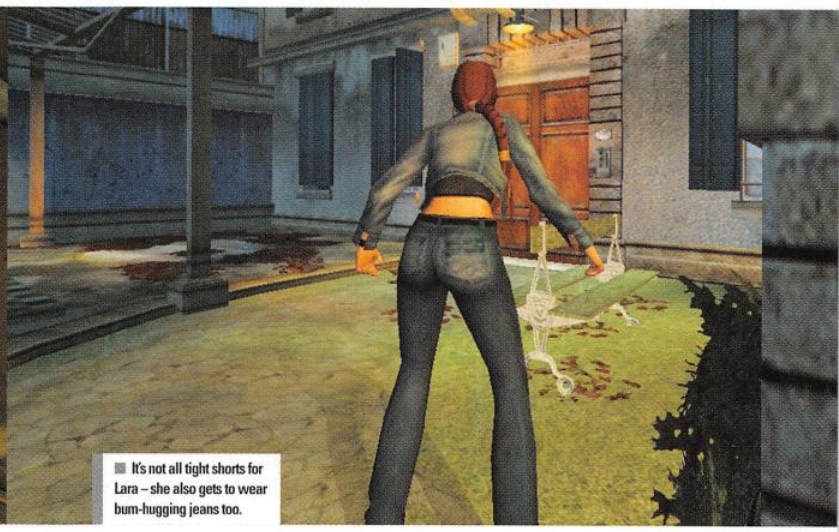
## LARA CROFT: SILENT ASSASSIN

**In a page ripped straight out of the *Hitman* notebook, *Angel Of Darkness* allows gamers to decide how to complete each level of the game. The opening level in Paris, for example, has Lara trying to avoid the attention of the police – do you play it stealthy and sneak through the backstreets, or head up to the rooftops and use her superior jumping abilities to escape that way? The choice, as they say, is yours. However, taking the more complex routes will reward you with increased abilities such as faster running, longer jumps or better grip for hanging onto ledges.**

## "BETTER LOOKING, BUT WITH SIMILAR GAMEPLAY – MORE EVOLUTION THAN REVOLUTION"



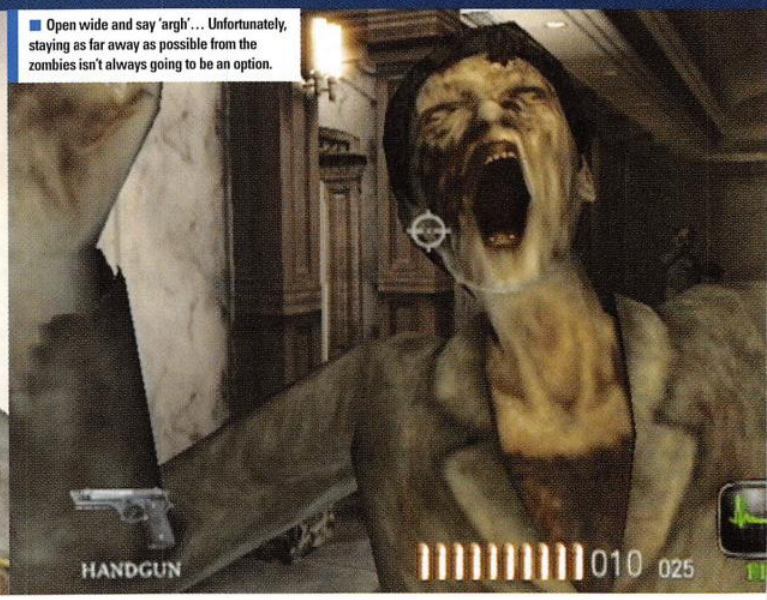
Sick of those annoying 'one slip and you're dead' bits? Now you can hold a button and 'stick' to narrow ledges.



It's not all tight shorts for Lara – she also gets to wear bum-hugging jeans too.

# RESIDENT EVIL: DEAD AIM






■ Open wide and say 'argh'... Unfortunately, staying as far away as possible from the zombies isn't always going to be an option.

**DETAILS**
**FORMAT:** PS2
**ORIGIN:** Japan
**PUBLISHER:** Capcom
**DEVELOPER:** In-House
**RELEASE:** 27 June (Japan/US: Out Now)
**GENRE:** Lightgun
**PLAYERS:** 1

■ Capcom finally pulls its finger out and delivers a game that not only caters for the lightgun fans, but captures the essence of the *Resident Evil* series.

## GODDAMMIT – WON'T THOSE FOOLS AT THE UMBRELLA CORPORATION EVER LEARN?

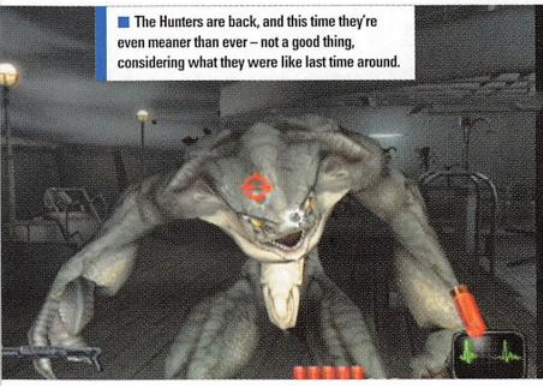
**Lightgun games are all pretty similar these days – you point the gun at the screen and shoot anything that moves (and sometimes anything that doesn't), but the action happens automatically and you're just carried along for the ride.** But it doesn't have to be like that, and the next generation of screen-blasting titles is just around the corner. Along with the impending release of Empire's shooting/driving amalgamation *Starsky And Hutch* to prove that lightgun games don't just have to be about riding rails and reloading ammo, Capcom looks set to take the same step itself – albeit back into the world of survival horror.

**"THE COMBINATION OF LIGHTGUN BLASTING AND RESIDENT EVIL-STYLE EXPLORATION MAKES FOR A SUSPENSEFUL ADVENTURE"**

Having already produced three enjoyable but fairly unimpressive *Gun Survivor* titles for the PS2, Capcom says it's finally "got the *Gun Survivor* series right" with *Resident Evil: Dead Aim*. You see, unlike the previous outings that were rather linear and simplistic, *RE: Dead Aim* is a 'proper' *Resident Evil*-style game. So that means you'll be controlling lead hero Bruce MacGavin (along with a mysterious female character at certain points) from a third-person viewpoint, picking up items, opening doors and solving puzzles in the way only the *Resident Evil* games can. It's even got a suitably twisted plot to accompany the action – a crazed scientist steals the T-Virus and sabotages a cruise liner, so Umbrella sends in its own man to destroy the zombies and take out their creator.

The real twist is that the adventure part of the game is still controlled using the G-Con 2 – the D-pad on the back controls Bruce's movements, while the various buttons allow you to examine your surroundings and pick up objects. If you need to defend yourself then a quick pull on the trigger sends you into first-person mode, meaning you can blast away with the G-Con 2 as per usual. The lightgun element obviously means you'll encounter a lot more zombies than normal – in fact, they're pretty much everywhere.

Combining this with some pretty frightening boss encounters and all the usual *Resident Evil* fare, *RE: Dead Aim* is looking like a game worthy of the *Resident Evil* moniker.



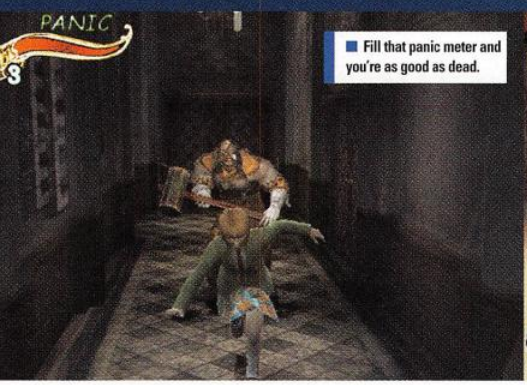
■ The Hunters are back, and this time they're even meaner than ever – not a good thing, considering what they were like last time around.



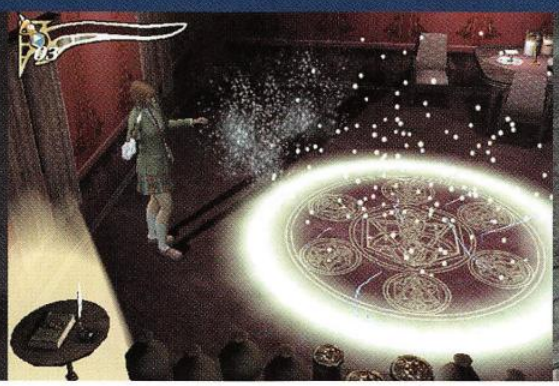


■ Bruce MacGavin isn't scared easily so don't expect him to run crying to his mum. Of course, that doesn't make him indestructible...

# CLOCK TOWER 3




Fill that panic meter and you're as good as dead.





More monster-fleeing action than an episode of *Scooby Doo*.

## WILL IT BE THIRD TIME LUCKY FOR CLOCK TOWER WITH CAPCOM AT THE HELM?

**We have to admit that if, on the off chance, some unearthly beast from hell were to turn up looking for a scrap, we'd be off like a shot.** Yet, inexplicably, our computer generated counterparts seem much more inclined to come over all heroic and opt instead for a spot of fisticuffs. Refreshingly, young schoolgirl Alyssa – star of forthcoming survival horror romp *Clock Tower 3* – shares our sentiments when it comes to life-threatening confrontations.

Granted, a chance stumbling upon some conveniently mislaid firearms would certainly broaden the options for demonstrating her bravery, but unfortunately young Alyssa enjoys no such luxury. Relying only on a vial of holy water and the occasional interactive piece of scenery to keep at bay the hordes of ghoulish nasties intent on bringing a premature halt to her adventures, Alyssa is forced to spend much of her time either running or hiding.

This is quite a departure in strategy for a Capcom horror adventure, considering its flagship *Resident Evil* series provided us with enough artillery to turn any number of undead legions into mulch. Instead, one of the most important aspects of the game for players to contend with is the *Eternal Darkness*-esque Panic Meter, which must be closely monitored when the going gets tough to prevent our heroine slipping into a state of mindless panic. Allowing fear to get the better of Alyssa is not the best idea, as it results in losing control of her movements, placing her at the wicked mercy of her pursuant. And believe us, these aren't the kind of chaps you want to be placed at the mercy of.

The Servants of Evil, as they are collectively known, include a deranged monstrosity wielding a giant hammer and a serial killer who seems worryingly keen on showering his victims in sulphuric acid. Whilst these creations do look fantastically gruesome, their brutal capabilities don't really have the same effect as the psychological chills that cause some horror games to really bring out the goosebumps. That said, focusing gameplay on the racing heartbeat of the lead character causes similar effects for the player. Playing with the lights off and gamepad vibrations reaching an alarming climax as death begins to look inescapable, it can be hard not to feel as though you're right there in Alyssa's shoes.

Can Capcom successfully challenge the likes of *Eternal Darkness* or *Silent Hill* in the scare stakes with this non-heroic slant on the horror survival theme? We'll let you know as soon as we're played the finished version.

**"FOCUSING GAMEPLAY ON THE RACING HEARTBEAT OF THE LEAD CHARACTER CAN'T HELP BUT SIMILARLY AFFECT PLAYERS"**

**DETAILS**

**FORMAT:** PS2
**ORIGIN:** Japan
**PUBLISHER:** Capcom
**DEVELOPER:** In-House
**RELEASE:** Winter '03 (Japan/US: Out Now)
**GENRE:** Survival Horror
**PLAYERS:** 1

Save your family and put an end to the Servants of Evil. And if anyone gets in your way… run away screaming.



Later in the game a magical bow lets you dish out some payback.

# DRIVER 3

"THE PHYSICS ENGINE ITSELF IS A HUGE DRAIN ON THE MACHINE. THERE'S SO MUCH CALCULATION INVOLVED TO ALLOW THINGS TO BE ON TOP OF EACH OTHER AND SO ON"

*MARTIN EDMONDSON, DIRECTOR, REFLECTIONS*

Xbox: Reflections has often won praise for its exaggerated car physics and crash dynamics.

**VIDEOGAMES MATHS**

**SO MANY RACING GAMES, SO MANY INFLUENCES...**



DESTRUCTION DERBY + STUNTMAN + GTA = DRIVER 3

PS2: Despite being the least powerful console on the market, PS2's *Driver 3* still boasts some impressive scenery.

PS2: Fans of the *Driver* series will feel right at home with *Driver 3*. The game treads a lot of familiar territory.

## COMPANY PROFILE

■ Reflections is a UK-based company that made a name for itself on the PSone. Next to *WipEout*, the company's banger racing title *Destruction Derby* was a big selling point for the PSone. Since then, the company has won acclaim for its driving physics and crash dynamics with *Destruction Derby 2* and, more recently, *Stuntman* on PS2.

## HISTORY

- **STUNTMAN** 2002 [PS2]
- **DRIVER** 1999 [PSone, PC]
- **DESTRUCTION DERBY 2** 1996 [PSone, PC]

# GTA MAY BE PS2 EXCLUSIVE, BUT DRIVER 3 IS COMING TO A FORMAT NEAR YOU SOON

**Anyone who owned a PSone will no doubt remember just how impressive the *Destruction Derby* games were.** Although they were hardly flawless, the car dynamics and physics allowed for some impressive stunts and, perhaps more importantly, real-time car damage. The *Driver* series was created by the same developer and now, after a fairly lengthy lay-off, the series is being resurrected with *Driver 3*. Of course, technology has come on in leaps and bounds since the last *Driver* game and this increase in power, combined with the company's experience with newer projects (*Stuntman* on PS2 being the most recent), should mean that *Driver 3* turns out to be something rather special.

You'll be pleased to learn that the team creating the game has taken a lot of inspiration from *Grand Theft Auto 3* and *GTA: Vice City*. As well as being able to get out of your vehicle and walk around, you can also enter a huge number of the surrounding buildings. At this stage it's not clear how this will affect the missions, though you can expect something very close to the *GTA* games. But where this really has the edge over Rockstar's much-loved title is in its car dynamics and impressive graphics engine. Textures are crisp and colourful and clever use of lighting and real-time shadow-casting keeps everything looking fresh and vibrant.

Once again, car damage plays an important part in the grand scheme of things; doors, mirrors, bumpers, windows – you name it, it can be knocked off as you scrape against buildings, lampposts or plough through garbage and other roadside furniture. Sadly, real cars aren't included in the game as most manufacturers wouldn't allow their vehicles to be smashed up, though Reflections has done a good job of creating vehicles that bear a striking resemblance to actual makes and models.

Thirty missions are set to be included across three areas – Miami, Nice and Istanbul – and although that may not seem like a huge number compared to *Vice City*, the areas are enormous (around 30 square miles each) and many missions are broken up into smaller sub-quests. It's likely that a certain amount of hand-to-hand combat will be included – from what we hear, you can expect these sections to be closer to *GTA* than *The Getaway*. Details on the storyline are similarly vague right now, though it's likely to be something more elaborate than either of the previous *Driver* games.

This is the first *Driver* game to be released on four formats and, thankfully, Reflections is putting considerable effort into each. While many companies sit back and let shoddy PS2 conversions launch across multiple platforms, Reflections has allocated separate teams to handle GameCube, PC, PS2 and Xbox development. *Driver 3* is initially being designed for the highest-spec technology available (PC), then scaled-down accordingly to fit onto the other formats.

Although *Driver 3* won't be released until much later in the year, we're already extremely excited about it. As good as *GTA: Vice City* was, it was limited by the restrictions of PS2 and a relatively short development period. Can Reflections successfully resurrect the *Driver* series and give *Grand Theft Auto* a run for its money? Wait and see...

### DETAILS

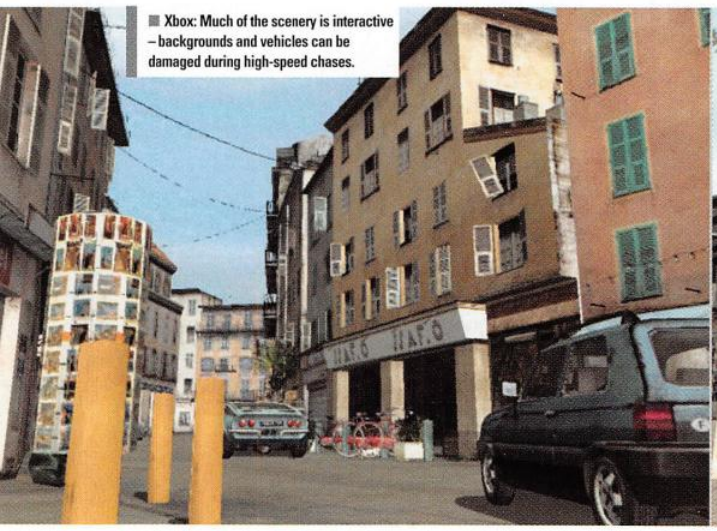
**FORMAT:** GameCube, PC, PS2, Xbox
**ORIGIN:** UK
**PUBLISHER:** Infogrames
**DEVELOPER:** Reflections
**RELEASE:** November TBC (Japan/US: TBA)
**GENRE:** Driving
**PLAYERS:** 1

■ If you're not familiar with the *Driver* series, simply think *GTA: Vice City* with more realism and impressive crash dynamics.

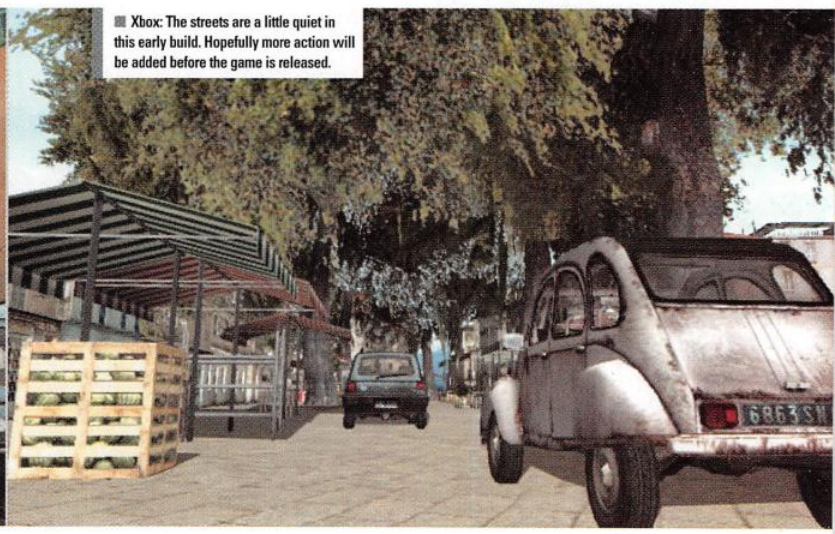
## LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION

**Three cities are included in *Driver 3* – Miami, Nice and Istanbul – and these look set to offer plenty of visual and gameplay variation. Each contains as many as 10,000 buildings, though as you'd expect only a small percentage are accessible to the player. Of course, it would be impossible to draw almost 500 miles of road accurately, let alone interact with it. Instead, Reflections has repeated some of the less important buildings and has also adjusted a few of the road layouts to make *Driver 3* as exciting as possible for the player.**

**"TEXTURES ARE CRISP AND COLOURFUL AND CLEVER USE OF LIGHTING KEEPS EVERYTHING LOOKING FRESH AND VIBRANT"**



■ Xbox: Much of the scenery is interactive – backgrounds and vehicles can be damaged during high-speed chases.



■ Xbox: The streets are a little quiet in this early build. Hopefully more action will be added before the game is released.

# SHOWCASE

THINGS TO WATCH FOR ON THE GAMING HORIZON

## DYNASTY WARRIORS 4

OFF THE TABLETOP, INTO THE FIRE

Format: PlayStation2
Origin: Japan
Publisher: Koei
Developer: In-House
Release: June
Genre: Slash-'em-up
Players: 1-2



**Having already sold more than a million copies in less than a month over in Japan, Koei are quite sure that *Dynasty Warriors 4* is a massive success.** Of course, whether the same will happen when it hits the shelves over here in late June is another matter entirely, but there's no doubting that it's good fun to play. Although it doesn't look that different from the last incarnation, *Dynasty Warriors 4* features tons more of... well, everything. With 50 levels over 17 unique maps, over 40 playable characters, new one-on-one battles with enemy officers, and even the chance to create your own officers and guards, we're keen to get our hands on it...

## FREESTYLE METAL X

PEDAL TO THE METAL, SICK BOY

Format: PS2/Xbox/GameCube
Origin: US
Publisher: Midway Games
Developer: Midway Sports Asylum
Release: June
Genre: Racing
Players: 1-2

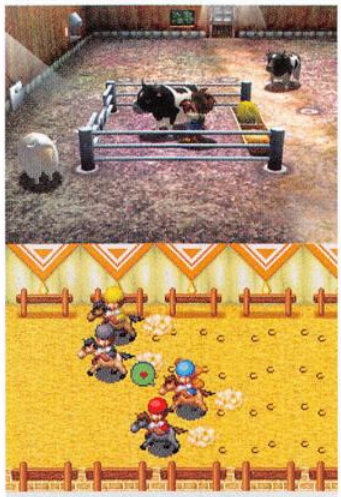
**Forget about actually using motorbikes to race with; these days, you want to be performing stunts and completing goals.** Such is what you can expect from *Freestyle Metal X*, Midway's attempt at leaping onto the extreme sports bandwagon. Ride your dirt bike across eight massive levels, pull off tricks and generally be "as sick as you want to be" (their words, not ours). Sounds a whole lot like THQ's dodgy *Toxic Grind* or Acclaim's dire *BMX XXX*, doesn't it? Well, yes – sadly, it does quite a bit. Still, any game that has a bona fide 'Wall Of Death' and features Mötley Crüe and Megadeth on the soundtrack can't be all bad... can it?



## HARVEST MOON

RED SKY AT NIGHT, THE BARN'S ON FIRE

Format: GameCube/GBA
Origin: Japan
Publisher: Ubi Soft
Developer: Natsume
Release: October
Genre: Simulation
Players: 1



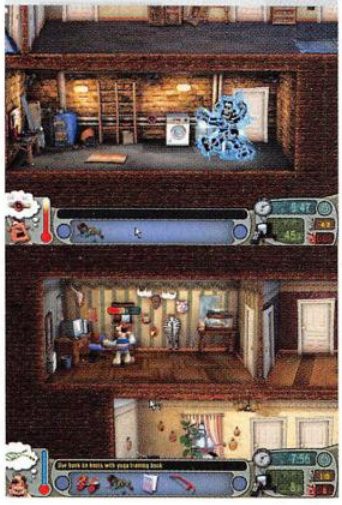
**Fans of nature, rejoice – Ubi Soft has confirmed that it will be bringing both upcoming versions of *Harvest Moon* (*A Wonderful Life* for GameCube and *Friends Of Mineral Town* on the GBA) to Europe later this year.** And if you've never played *Harvest Moon* before, you've really missed out on something special. While both games follow the usual farming action of previous games (tend the animals, plant crops and generally turn the farm into a profit-making success), the most interesting thing is that these new versions will link up with each other to reveal special events, items and other goodies. Here's hoping that'll only be the tip of the soil-covered iceberg...

## NEIGHBOURS FROM HELL

OR 'HOW TO BE A COMPLETE AND UTTER BASTARD'

Format: PC
Origin: Germany
Publisher: JoWood
Developer: In-House
Release: 23 May
Genre: Puzzle
Players: 1

**These days, it takes a lot for a game to make us laugh – and we mean really laugh, in a decidedly dirty, Sid James sort of way.** That's why when *Neighbours From Hell* came into the office, we immediately fell in love with it. Despite being a relatively small puzzle title, it's got everything in it that makes games fun. The premise (breaking into your neighbour's house and playing all manner of harmful pranks on him, *Home Alone*-style) manages to last through 15 levels of head-scratching fun, and it's going to be released at the bargain price of $50 – not bad for a game that'll have you laughing like a hyena. Look for a full review next month...





## DELAYED – HALO 2 (XBOX)

■ Good old Bungie and its 'it'll be ready when it's ready' attitude. Despite anticipation levels going skywards for the sequel to the Xbox's best-selling title, it's now been pushed back to some time in 2004.



## CANNED – TOO MANY GAMES (GC)

■ This month sees not just one, but three games being canned for the GameCube – *Wakeboarding Unleashed* from Activision, *RTX Red Rock* from LucasArts and *Defender 2* from Midway. What a bugger, eh?

# ADVANCE WARS 2

WAR, HUH – WHAT IS IT GOOD FOR?

Format: Game Boy Advance
Origin: Japan
Publisher: Nintendo
Developer: Intelligent Systems
Release: TBA (US: 23 June)
Genre: Strategy
Players: 1-4



**Considering that strategy games focusing on tank combat usually aren't the most exciting titles around, we're still bemused as to how *Advance Wars* ended up being such fun.** In fact, it was easily one of the best games around when the handheld first launched and still ranks as a favourite. Of course, that'll probably change when *Advance Wars 2* arrives. Featuring all the same strategy-based action from the first game (except with more levels, characters and vehicles) and the 'four-players, one cartridge' link-up mode that we loved so much, this is going to be *the* game for the long winter nights ahead.

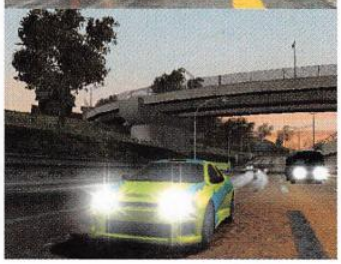
# BURNOUT 2: POINT OF IMPACT

BETTER TO BURN OUT THAN FADE AWAY

Format: Xbox/GameCube
Origin: UK
Publisher: Acclaim
Developer: Criterion Studios
Release: 16 May
Genre: Racing
Players: 1-4

**Good old Acclaim might have released some games that have fallen somewhat short of the mark, but every once in a while it actually gets things right.** There are certainly a few examples of Acclaim's talent – such as *Aggressive Inline* or the N64 version of *Shadow Man* – but our favourite has to be *Burnout 2*, if only because it was an absolute gem of an arcade racer. So what happens when Acclaim makes the decision to bring the game out on GameCube and Xbox in the very near future, complete with even more arcade racing goodness? We get all excited, that's what. It's almost as if there's a blue moon coming or something...



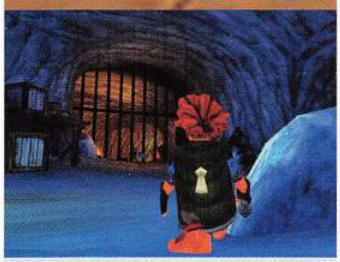


# THE HOBBIT

PACK YOUR BAGGINS – WE'RE LEAVIN'

Format: PS2/Xbox/GameCube
Origin: US
Publisher: Vivendi Universal
Developer: Inevitable Studios
Release: September
Genre: Adventure
Players: 1





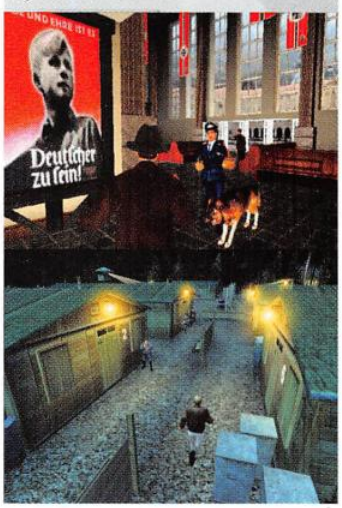
**We all know that EA's *Lord Of The Rings: The Two Towers* dumped from a great height all over Vivendi's book-based attempt at the series.** But that hasn't stopped Vivendi trying to make up for it with *The Hobbit* – a 3D action/adventure game based on the book of the same name. Taking a decidedly different slant on the world of Middle Earth than the last few games (as you can probably tell from the cartoon graphics), the game sticks closely to the story in the novel while also adding new areas to spice up the roaming adventure-style action. It sounds rather intriguing, but whether it'll actually be any good is another matter entirely...

# THE GREAT ESCAPE

WE'VE GOT DIBS ON THE BLIND GUY

Format: PS2/Xbox/PC
Origin: UK
Publisher: SCi
Developer: Pivotal
Release: June
Genre: Action/Adventure
Players: 1

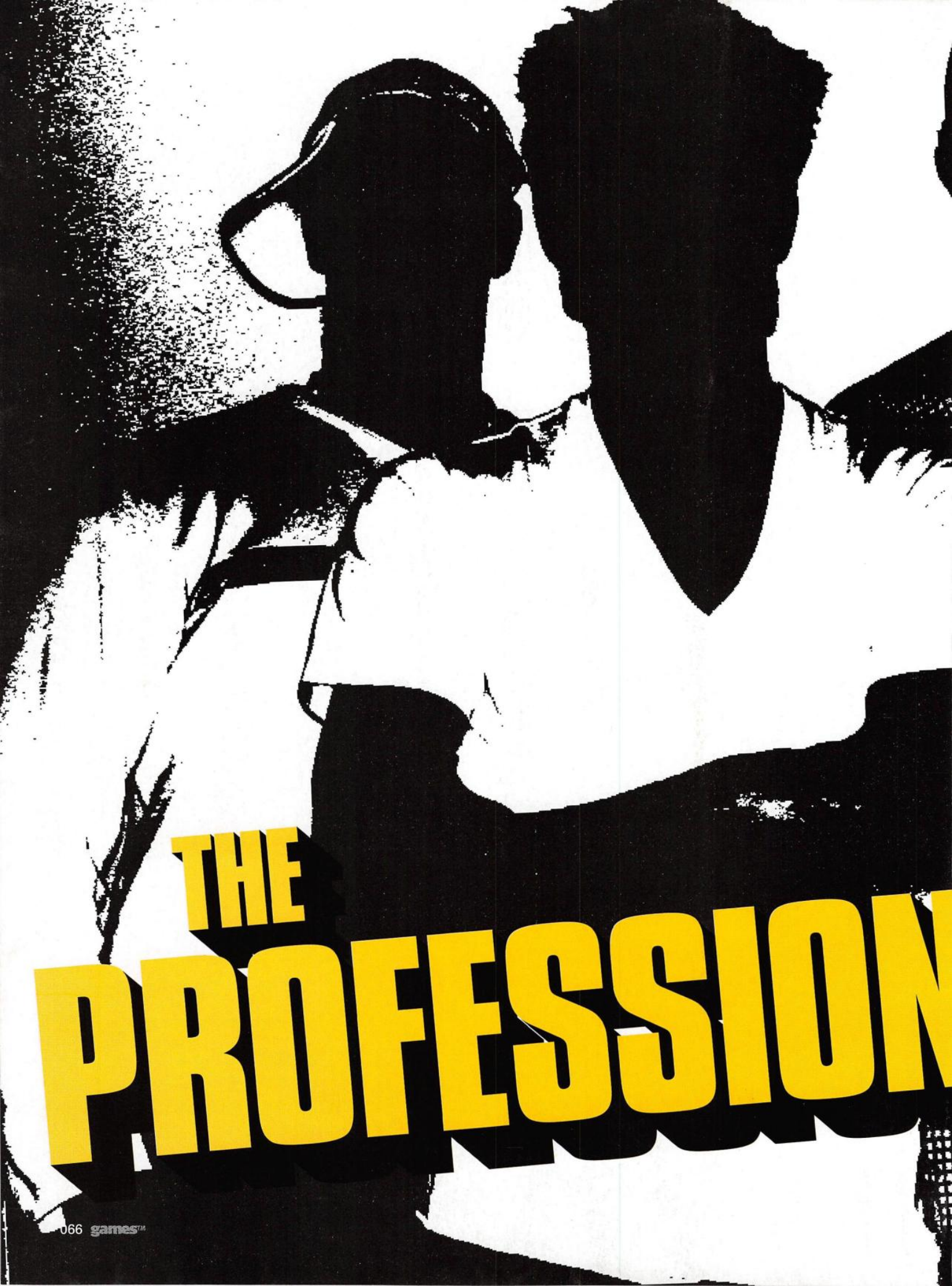
**Forget converting new films into videogames – what we want to see is films that are on TV every Christmas turned into games instead.** At least, that's what SCi must be thinking if *The Great Escape* is anything to go by. Sticking to the plot of the movie quite closely, the action takes the form of a squad-based game similar to *Conflict: Desert Storm* (coincidentally, another SCi game). Taking control of four characters, each with their own unique abilities, you try to escape the nightmare of Stalag Luft III. If the game does play like *Conflict: DS*, that certainly can't be a bad thing – but will it be enough to make the game a success?




x3
100%
x931



The easiest way to make a milkshake **Earthworm Jim SNES [Shiny Entertainment] 1994**



# THE PROFESSION

# ALS

**ALREADY WATCHED BY THOUSANDS AND WITH SIX-FIGURE PRIZES, PROFESSIONAL GAMING IS COMING OF AGE FAR FASTER THAN ANYONE MIGHT HAVE IMAGINED. GAMES™ DISCOVERS HOW PRO GAMERS ARE SET TO STORM THE WORLD**

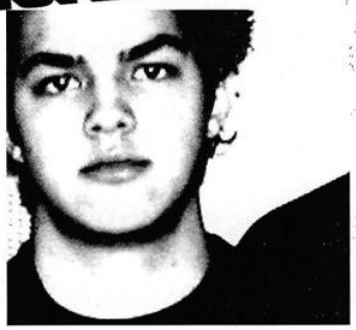
**They must have raised a few eyebrows – this group of people hanging out in five-star hotels, accompanied by bodyguards and chauffered to and fro in a showroom's worth of black cars.** Their behaviour would probably turn heads in London or New York, so it can't have gone unnoticed on the streets of Astana, capital of Kazakhstan. Locals must have wondered who these people were. Diplomats? Maybe a rock band? Rich businessmen perhaps?

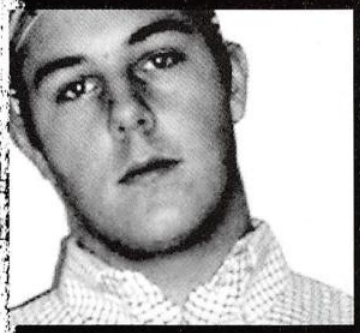
Whatever they thought, it's unlikely they would have guessed that the people being ferried around like royalty were the cream of the world's videogame players; especially seeing that access to videogames is probably not one of Kazakhstan's strong points. But there they were, professional gamers from the world over, poised to thrash it out with each other for the modest prize money and the sheer buzz of it all at a Kazakhstan pro-gaming tournament. And while such excess has yet to happen elsewhere, the way things are going with pro gaming this may well become an increasingly common sight throughout the world.

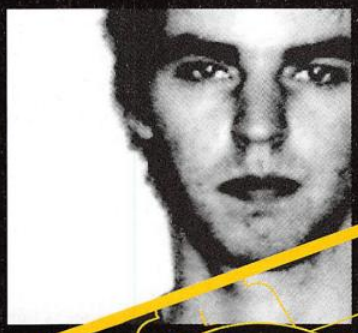
In the space of just a few years, professional gameplaying has gone from just another Internet oddity to a multi-million pound global industry. Top players have become minor stars thanks to this embryonic sport. *Quake* supremos Thresh (aka Dennis Fong) and Fatal1ty (Johnathan Wendel) are familiar names in hard-core PC gaming circles and the number of spectators is rising fast. Although barely out of nappies, pro-gaming is now thinking big with increasing talk of TV deals, professional teams with managers, national leagues and new games made with pro-gaming in mind.

Since its evolution off the back of multiplayer *Doom* and *Quake* deathmatches, pro-gaming has spawned a bewildering array of leagues,

# THE PROFESSIONALS

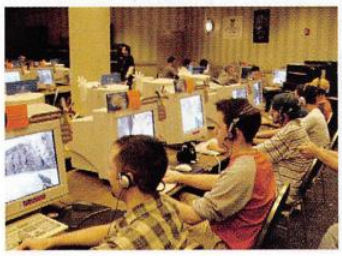








## TEAM SCHRÖET KOMMANDO



**NAME:** Schröet Kommando (or SK to their friends)

**LOCATION:** Stockholm, Sweden

**GAMES:** *Half-Life, Counter Strike*

**FORMED:** 2001 (in present form, but lineage dates back to 1997).

**MEMBERS:** Andreas 'bds' Thorstensson, HeatoN, brunk, Potti, ahl and fisker.

**ADVICE TO WOULD-BE PRO-GAMERS:** "Don't play to become a pro-gamer – play because you love the game, and then become a pro. Dedication is the key to success."

**ORIGIN OF TEAM NAME:** "Basically, schröet is an uncommon synonym for shrapnel. When we started our clan no-one had a clue about a good name, but someone got a crazy idea and SK was born. A pretty bad translation would be Shrapnel Commando."

competitions and tournaments. One of the first leagues to emerge was the Cyberathlete Professional League (CPL) founded by a former investment banker, Angel Munoz.

"CPL really kicked off when it first occurred to me that computer games could be elevated to the level of a sport from going to and watching people playing at LAN [Local Area Network] parties," recounts Munoz. "I talked to people about the idea and found out that it wasn't as far-fetched an idea as I thought it was and the CPL came out of that."

Since its launch, the CPL has exploded in popularity and its twice-yearly contests (one in the summer, one in the winter) are now key dates in the pro-gaming calendar. An estimated 30,000 people watched the last CPL tournament, mainly via the web, and Munoz is hopeful that the next match will attract up to 50,000 spectators.

South Korea's World Cyber Games (WCG), the first international pro-gaming event, has mirrored this explosive growth. Starting with a concept event in 2000 that drew 166 players from 17 countries, the WCG soared in popularity with last year's event in Daejon attracting more than 450 players from 45 countries – whittled down from an estimated 180,000 people who took part in the national preliminaries. On top of this, the event attracted 50,000 in-person spectators and the total prize money available was US$300,000. This year's WCG, set to take place in mid-October, is expected to be even bigger. And with corporate Goliaths like Coca-Cola and Intel getting involved in sponsoring both the events and the players the progress so far looks like the tip of the iceberg.

More than any other nation, South Korea has been willing to embrace the idea of professional gaming as a sport and it is officially recognised by the authorities as an e-sport. Given the success of gaming as a sport and an event in South Korea, the top players are already stars.

"In Korea some of the best *StarCraft* players are treated like celebrities," says Piers Jolley, the UK-based world number one *Age Of Mythology* player. The willingness of nations like South Korea to take professional gaming seriously is also a worry for pro-gamers in the countries that don't. "The Asian players always scare me because it's so big over there they can just sit in PC cafés and practise with each other, which is a really good way to improve," says Jolley. "I think it will get even bigger in Korea and I hope that pro-gaming will take off here, although I'm not sure that it will as the UK isn't really a pro-gamer's paradise."

**"CONSUMERS STILL WANT THE STAR IMAGE AS THEY DON'T REALLY CONNECT WITH BRANDS. WHAT I THINK WE'RE STARTING TO SEE WITH ONLINE GAMES IS THAT THE PLAYERS HAVE THE CHANCE TO BECOME FAMOUS THROUGH PLAYING"**

Yet while the likes of South Korea and Taiwan push ahead with their vision of pro-gaming as a sport, Europe and the US are still stuck at the stage where people aren't sure if it is a legitimate sport. Naturally, Munoz is a strong advocate of pro-gaming being viewed as a sport, although he admits it won't fit the traditional sporting mould perfectly.

"It is a sport but it is not like a normal sport as it is constantly evolving and there are different games to use," he says.

UK Sport, the agency that decides what is officially a sport in Britain, has yet to make a decision either way, but parts of the criteria an activity must meet to be declared a sport suggests that pro-gaming faces an uphill struggle – the degree to which pro-gaming involves physical skill and effort, for example, will no doubt be a potential stumbling block. However, while



**AGE:** 22 **LOCATION:** USA

**GAMES:** *Quake 3, Unreal Tournament 2003*

**ANNUAL INCOME:**
$40,000-$50,000

**THOUGHTS ON PRO-GAMING TEAMS:**
"Everyone wants to be on a team or do something team-orientated. But personally I love all the pressure on my shoulders."

**CAREER HIGHLIGHT:** "The last win I had for *Unreal Tournament 2003* was really great. It shows that I'm not just really good at one game, but really good at playing FPS games as a whole. Also, with MTV following my every move and having that honour I feel fortunate."

**NEXT MOVE:** Currently setting up his own gaming products business, Fatal1ty Inc.

# PLAYER
# JOHNATHAN WENDEL [FATAL1TY]

# THE PROFESSIONALS

the sporting world furrows its collective brow over the concept of videogaming as a sport, pro-gaming's relentless march to greater popularity seems undeterred.

Traditionally, pro-gaming has been focused on the efforts of individual players largely thanks to its roots in *Doom* deathmatches. However, in the past 12 months an increasing number of professional teams complete with sponsors, managers and contracts have been popping up across the world. Andreas Thorstensson, manager of Swedish *Counter Strike* team Schröet Kommando, believes the rise of teams allows players to make a living out of pro-gaming. "Teams are forming for the same reasons they formed in any other sports – to be able to make a living doing the thing you love, in this case playing games," says Thorstensson.

"We are the first team with real contracts and are sponsored by Intel, QSC and Elsa. Full sponsorship means we get travel and hotel costs paid for at all the events we attend."

In the long-run, Angel Munoz sees the current vogue for teams as the initial step on the road to creating professional and closed gaming leagues along the lines of the FA Premiership and NFL.

"There is no question that pro-gaming is moving towards teams in closed leagues," he suggests. "That change is already taking place and there are teams forming with managers and sponsors."

The growth of pro-gaming teams is also inspiring game developers to include features designed to encourage the fledging sport.

*Speedball Arena*, The Bitmap Brothers' forthcoming update of their classic future sports game, is one such game that has put pro-gaming at the heart of its multiplayer mode.

"*Speedball Arena* will be a multiplayer online sport as well as a solo game," says Ed Bartlett, business development director at The Bitmap Brothers. "Games are starting to become like sports and *Speedball* is a perfect game for that. A football game would end up stopping every few minutes but thanks to it having a closed arena *Speedball* makes for a better team videogame."

*Speedball Arena* will also include several features to help pro-gaming including specialist team positions (defence, midfield and attack) to prevent the game descending into a chaotic 'chase the ball' scenario, and the ability for the game to provide TV-style viewpoints designed with spectators in mind.

"On the spectator side of gaming not much has been done," says Bartlett. "*Quake* and other FPSs are corridor-based and that makes for a very disjointed viewing experience. *Speedball Arena* will provide spectators with both the Sky Sports-type views as well as the view from an individual player's eyes – something that will make watching the game a feast for the eyes."

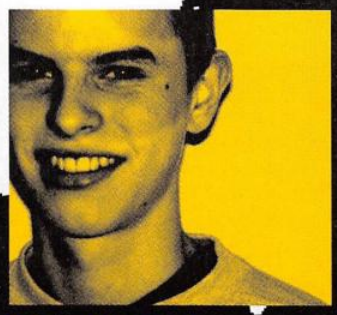
**"SPEEDBALL ARENA WILL PROVIDE SPECTATORS WITH BOTH THE SKY SPORTS-TYPE VIEWS AS WELL AS THE VIEW FROM AN INDIVIDUAL PLAYER'S EYES – SOMETHING THAT WILL MAKE WATCHING THE GAME A FEAST FOR THE EYES"**

The Bitmap Brothers are also in talks with broadcasters about televising *Speedball Arena* matches, although Bartlett remains tight-lipped when it comes to revealing more.

With such rapid progress it is not hard to imagine that at some point a pro-gaming star like Fatal1ty could become more famous than game developers, especially as development teams become ever more numerous and faceless. "When we launched CPL we actually said in the original mission statement that at one point gamers will become as important as those who develop the games," says Munoz. "Developers will always have a certain prestige amongst gamers, but when it comes to the media it is infinitely more interesting to talk to people who have a love of a sport than someone who wants to sell games." Despite being part of the original wave of superstar developers, The Bitmap Brothers also believe the days of developer fame are numbered. "Back in the old days there were people like Peter Molyneux and ourselves who were big names, but now things are much more faceless," says Bartlett. "However, consumers still want the star image as they don't really connect with brands, and what I think we're starting to see with online games is that the players have the chance to become famous through playing."

But will the former development superstars mind being eclipsed by the players? "I don't think it will bother most developers as no-one goes into this industry expecting fame, despite all the talk of games being bigger than film and music," says Bartlett. "And besides," he adds, laughing, "on the whole we're an ugly bunch and you wouldn't want us on TV."

## PLAYER PIERS JOLLEY



**AGE:** 17 **LOCATION:** England

**GAMES:** *Age Of Mythology, Age Of Empires II: The Conquerors*

**NOTABLE SUCCESSES:** The world's number one *Age Of Mythology* player, winner of the *Age Of Empires II* Europe Cup.

**ADVICE TO WOULD-BE PRO-GAMERS:** A lot of practice. "But if they don't want to starve they had better have some skills."

**CAREER HIGHLIGHT:** "Being invited to Kazakhstan and staying in a five-star hotel. It was an amazing experience. Best time of my life."



# PLAYER
# JARED 'chaOticz' GUGNO

**AGE:** 21 **LOCATION:** USA

**GAMES:** *Quake 3: Arena, Unreal Tournament 2003*

**TEAM:** Member of *Quake 3* team Darkside

**ADVICE TO WOULD-BE PRO GAMERS:** "The biggest piece of advice I can give is that losing is not the end of the world. No matter how good you get you will eventually lose a game. The best you can do is learn from each loss to make sure you don't make the same mistake twice."

**TRAINING REGIME:** Plays tournament maps until he feels confident on that map before honing new strategies and techniques to help him make his approach unpredictable.

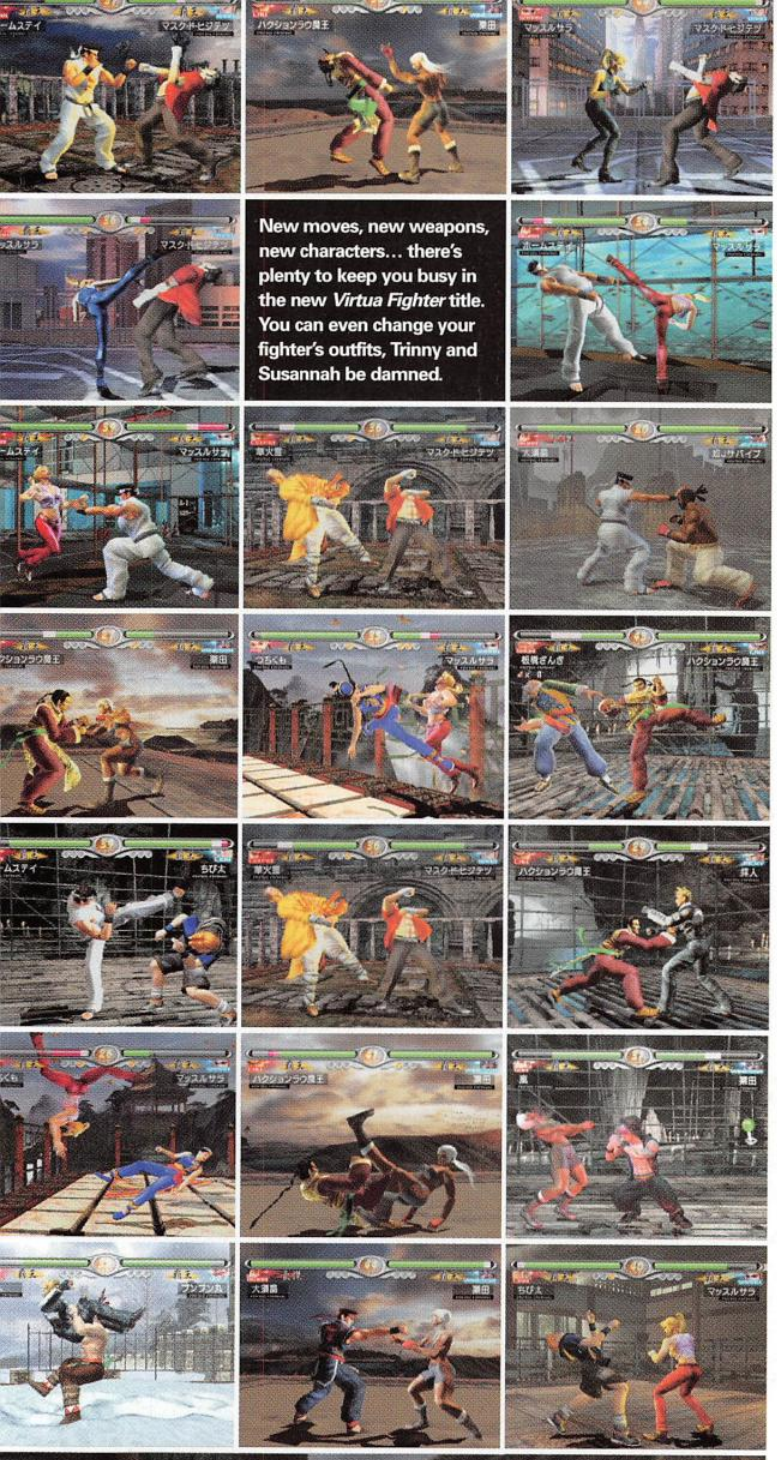
**CAREER HIGHLIGHT:** "Killing [*Quake* champion] Fatal1ty with only one second left in the match to secure the final spot on the World Cyber Games US team. Being able to represent my country at the World Cyber Games was definitely one of the best experiences of my life."








**Does Virtua Fighter 4 Evolution have enough new features to justify its release, or is it just a cash-in? Find out what we think on page 98**



New moves, new weapons, new characters... there's plenty to keep you busy in the new *Virtua Fighter* title. You can even change your fighter's outfits, Trinny and Susannah be damned.

# REVIEWS


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| **Conflict: Desert Storm** | 100 | *GameCube* |





# THE AVERAGE

Despite representing an industry in which high scores mean everything, **games™** is not a magazine that marks with the majority. A lot of people think that anything below 7 (7.0, 70%, whatever) is a bad score – we don't. Going on a scale of one to ten, five is the average – average being a game that does what it sets out to do without attempting to do it better than anyone else. If a game gets five, you'll get some enjoyment out of it but nothing more, simple as that. What's more, we won't be swayed by PR people telling us what a game's like – we only decide once we've played each game to death and, in the majority of cases, to completion. If a game's bad, we'll make sure you know; if it's great, we'll sing its praises. At the end of the day, we're just here to help you decide what's worth your hard-earned cash. After all, if it wasn't for you, we'd be out of a job.

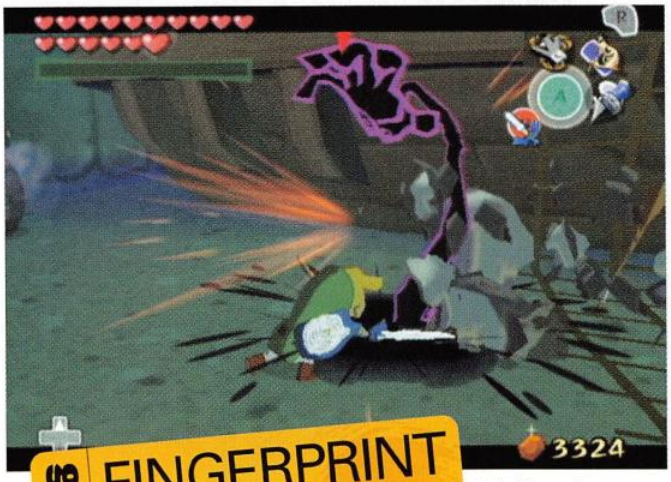



Link's Deku Leaf lets him glide via the magic of, er, magic.




Ignore the structural and physical impossibilities for a moment and just enjoy the horribly oversized Skull Hammer in all its megaton glory.




## FINGERPRINT

games™

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME UNIQUE

**ELEMENTAL:** Need to get somewhere in a hurry? Conjure up a tailwind to speed up your journey.

**COLOURFUL:** With the unique visual style, Nintendo proves that less can be more...

Familiar enemies, groovy new paint jobs. Rest assured that these ghostly hands and their obsession with escorting you out of dungeons is as annoying as ever.




Each foe has its own weakness, but in the case of these guys, you may have to do a little undressing to find it...



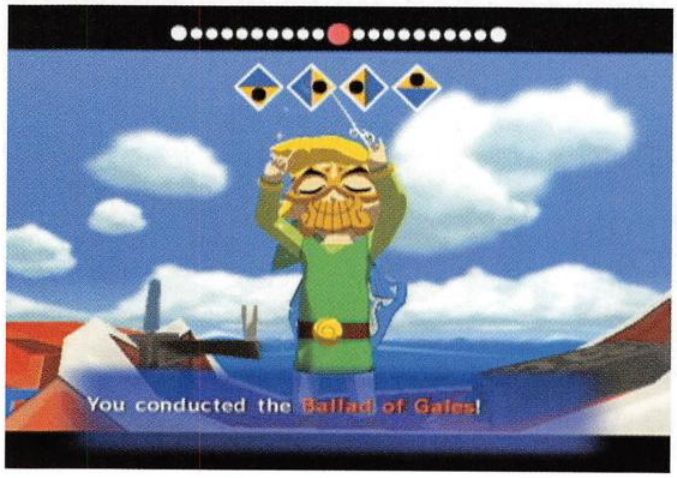

Since it lets you target numerous items at once, the Boomerang is a surprisingly useful tool. And it comes back, too.



The many treasures of the deep come in these sturdy containers which, thankfully, don't seem to be lockable. Those pirates are a trusting bunch.




No, it's not a sniper rifle – it's Link's trusty nautical telescope. Come to think of it, a sniper rifle would be sort of useful though...







# THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: THE WIND WAKER

LINK HAS HIS WORK CUT OUT THIS TIME – SAVING THE WORLD AND THE GAMECUBE? GOOD LUCK, YOUNG HERO…

**DETAILS**

**FORMAT REVIEWED**
GameCube

**ORIGIN**
Japan

**PUBLISHER**
Nintendo

**DEVELOPER**
In-House

**PRICE**
$99.95

**RELEASE**
9 May (Japan/US: Out Now)

**PLAYERS**
1

**If you were to entrust the fate of a console to a single videogame character, who would it be?** Sonic's Dreamcast adventures couldn't save the failing machine and Mario's next offering won't be with us for a while. So all eyes fall on the green-clad, pointy-eared fellow looking bashful in the corner. Could he be the saviour of the system created to house him? In his first starring GameCube role, the pressure is on young Link to excel himself and treat the world to the much-anticipated sequel to his N64 double bill. By harnessing the power of the wind, Link acquires a host of new moves, abilities and equipment with which to conquer the evil that summoned him in the first place (as the legend tells) but will it be enough to sell GameCubes? Quite frankly, yes…

Far from being a catastrophic error, the bold cel-shaded look of the game may have saved the series. How? Two words – *Majora's Mask*. By no means a bad game, *Majora's Mask* was far less successful than the mighty *Ocarina Of Time*, probably because most people saw it not as a sequel but an update to the N64 classic. Had the game differed stylistically from its forerunner, chances are *Majora's Mask* would have had more of an impact, but this aesthetic leap was saved for the first GameCube adventure. As good as screenshots can be, they can't even come close to showing just how astonishing the game really is in action. Throwing around depth of field and motion blur effects effortlessly, the action may be 30 frames per second but it remains rock solid – we'd much rather that than the attempted 60 fps with frequent dropouts that seem so common today.

Anyone who refuses to play this game on the grounds of its simplistic and 'childish' appearance is shooting themselves in the foot – doing so would be as foolish as passing up *Pokémon* or *Harvest Moon* simply because of their 'kiddy' reputation. Beneath the deceptive simplicity lies a level of detail seldom seen in modern gaming, encompassing astonishing animation (it's not often that tassels and hair are coded to fall on and around surfaces rather than glitching through them), incredible use of lighting and countless






The legendary hero swallows his pride and takes on the role of a delivery boy. His kindness truly knows no boundaries.




## GOTTA SCULPT 'EM ALL

**Nintendo seems to like miniature versions of its creations – first there was the Model Lottery in *Super Smash Brothers Melee* and now there's a similar mode in *The Wind Waker*. The Nintendo Figurine Gallery is a side quest during Link's adventure – you'll find it on a small island in the south-east of the Great Sea, run by a strange man who loves making models. Use the Picto Box to take pictures of anything that moves and this craftsman will turn it into a model for later viewing. Seeing as how there's space in the gallery for every character in the game, filling it could take a while…**

### TIMELINE HI-LIGHTS

**THE BEST BITS IN THE GAME AND WHEN YOU CAN EXPECT TO REACH THEM...**

**00:30 MINUTES**



After seeing your sister kidnapped by a giant bird, you should be making your way to the Forsaken Fortress to mount a heroic rescue attempt. You can do it, little fella.

**03:00 HOURS**



By now, you should have reached the end of the first dungeon and started building up your collection of essential items, such as the all-important Grappling Hook.

**5 DAYS**



While you'll probably be coming close to the end of Link's quest, it's unlikely that you'll have managed to find everything there is to discover. You'll soon be back for more…




Sometimes the Wind Waker can be used for purposes other than elemental control, and the dungeons enjoy exploiting this fact.

## "ANYONE WHO AVOIDS THIS GAME ON THE GROUNDS OF ITS 'CHILDISH' APPEARANCE IS SHOOTING THEMSELVES IN THE FOOT"

details that make Link's massive watery world a pleasure to explore. Exploration is definitely the key word here – while you could dramatically cut the length of the game by knowing where to go, you'd lose the enjoyment of discovering a new island, uncovering a secret cave or stumbling across buried treasure – all the elements that complement the main quest so well. The massive areas of the SNES and Game Boy titles and the expansive plains of Hyrule are matched, if not surpassed, by the rolling seas, deserted islands and huge dungeons of *The Wind Waker* – as you climb the village lookout tower and first use your telescope, you'll realise the epic scale of the game. After exploring a large island, you'll consult your map only to find that the huge land mass you just spent hours on isn't big enough to show up on the main map. The apparently endless sailing may not appeal to some, but there are (without wanting to spoil anything) several ways to avoid this.

As usual, Link amasses plenty of useful items but perhaps more impressive than the amount of gadgets are the ingenious ways in which they are used. The Grappling Hook, for instance, doubles as a thieving weapon in battle and a treasure-hunting crane at sea. This multi-purpose implementation is further exploited by the excellent boss encounters, many of which will require use of several of your tools at the same time to emerge victorious. These are some of the best parts of the game and, particularly with later enemies, weak points aren't as glaringly obvious as you may expect. The only slight criticism here would be that in some areas you'll often need access to more than the three items assigned to the face buttons, but as your inventory is only a button press away this isn't really grounds for concern.

From the user-friendly interface to the ambience created by the pairing of cleverly




Not content with his power over the wind, Link can also use light as a weapon against creatures of the night. He's clever like that.




Did you really sail all the way out here just to cut down that shrub? Quit messing around and make with the world-saving, you little scamp.




implemented music and the distinct graphical style, this is a *Zelda* utopia. Familiar items, characters and races keep the all-new antics of Link close to fans' hearts while still taking the series in a new direction. One of the points that is bound to be raised is an apparent lack of dungeons. Gone are the days when everything came in eights (well, sort of...) as there are now only five dungeons, most of which yield equipment for Link's sea quest rather than eight-part collectables. This is a refreshing change from the 'finish dungeon, go to next dungeon, repeat' affair that it could have turned into and, as such, you get a much greater feeling of involvement and accomplishment from unearthing your rewards.

For all its merits, we can't help feeling a bit short-changed by some parts of *Wind Waker*. The painstakingly slow boat trips often feel like their main aim is to bump up the game clock, and there are also a few moments when the game seems rather patronising – repeating important text and highlighting key words in red will ensure mass appeal but more experienced gamers may resent this hand-holding. We'd have liked to have seen an option to reduce this (like the cleverly worked hint system of *Metroid Prime*) but since cases of this are rare and don't really impede gameplay, we'll let Link off with a caution this time.

As is often the case with Nintendo's in-house developments, you'll need to complete the quest several times if you want to thoroughly complete the game. Some sub-quests – particularly the Figurine Gallery – will be impossible to finish in the space of a single adventure but, fortunately, Link doesn't suffer through repeated play. There are plenty of other side missions to keep you going once the main task is out of the way – from recovering the many sunken relics to trying your hand as a trader as you complete your map of the land, there's as much to do after the primary objective as there is during it. There's even solace to be found in just aimless sailing – there's something strangely therapeutic about taking to the waves and seeing where the wind takes you.

*The Wind Waker* is an excellent title both in its own right and as a continuation of one of Nintendo's most hallowed sagas. The wonderful balance of action, exploration and narrative makes for one of the finest adventures of the year and one of the best GameCube games to date. It's easy to pick out flaws in such an ambitious game, but they don't come close to overshadowing the overall package. Miyamoto-san has always stressed that this is all about the gameplay and he couldn't be more right. We could rant about the odd graphical glitch, moan about how the game should be longer or how cel-shading is evil, but nothing is going to alter the fact that *The Wind Waker* is a stunning piece of software. A little easy? Perhaps. A little short? Maybe. A fine testament to the GameCube's capabilities? Definitely. While it won't be universally adored, the only people we can see being disappointed with this are those who find themselves without a GameCube on 9 May.

**VERDICT 9/10**
ANOTHER WORTHY ADDITION TO THE ZELDA LEGACY

## KOOLO-LIMPAH

**When Nintendo announced that *The Wind Waker* would use the GameCube/GBA link cable to enhance the gameplay, no-one was surprised – after all, it was a feature that Nintendo was keen to show off from day one. But when the Japanese version of the game arrived and we tried out the Tingle Tuner (the device that turned the GBA into a mini-radar with added functions), we felt it was more of a minor distraction rather than a necessity. In English though, we have to admit that it's more useful than you might expect. Having Tingle by your side as you explore dungeons and the overworld not only gives you hints about your surroundings, but also helps you uncover hidden treasures that otherwise wouldn't be available. It's almost like an entirely new section of the game that's waiting to be uncovered.**




Link up a Game Boy Advance and a friend can control Tingle, initiating all kinds of mischief and assistance from the comfort of the handheld.




### FAQs

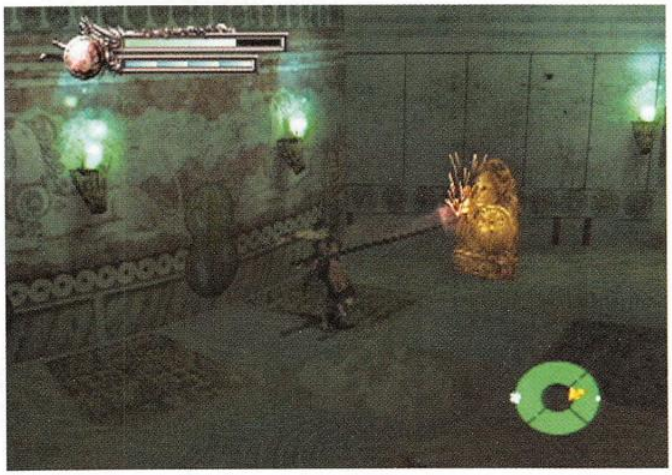
**Q. HOW LONG?**
Although Miyamoto-san admitted that they had to drop three whole dungeons, the game is still pretty big – a first-time player could probably complete the game with just the basics in about 20 hours.

**Q. MUCH TO DO?**
With 49 different islands to visit across the Great Sea, there's plenty to see and do, especially if you take all the numerous side quests into account.

**Q. BUT IT'S CEL-SHADED!**
Yes, and the game is all the better for it. The graphical style that so many people criticised helps give Link and his surroundings more character than ever before. So there.



Given the Greek theme, it'd be rude for a Minotaur not to make an appearance – so here's one complete with horns, mad staring eyes and a damn great sword. Happy now?



The gold statues contain new moves and combos, so you'll want to break as many as possible. As ever, your trusty Diskarmor will do the trick.

IS THIS GREEK EXPEDITION GOOD ENOUGH TO DRIVE DANTE TO TEARS?

# RYGAR: THE LEGENDARY

**DETAILS**

**FORMAT REVIEWED**
PlayStation2

**ORIGIN**
Japan

**PUBLISHER**
Wanadoo

**DEVELOPER**
Tecmo

**PRICE**
$99.95

**RELEASE**
16 May

**PLAYERS**
1

**ENCLAVE**



**BETTER THAN**

**WORSE THAN**

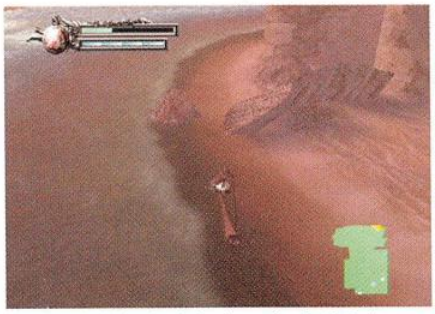


DEVIL MAY CRY

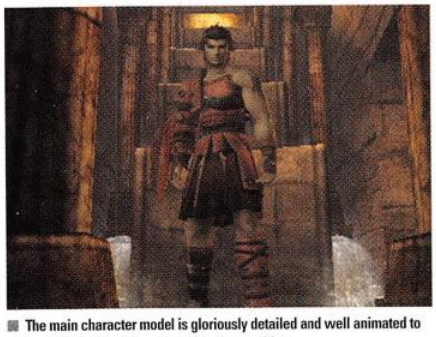
**Familiarity can be a wonderful marketing tool if used well.** In the same way that licensed products usually sell on the name and heritage alone, updates of popular old games will also often catch the eye of the veteran gamer. Playing on your fond memories of what may or may not be a classic may seem like a bit of a low blow, but as long as it continues to work you can expect it to keep happening. The latest in the long line of catalogue-trawling re-workings sees arcade and NES hero Rygar undergo a change of scenery and image for the 21st Century. Wave goodbye to the barbaric, tribal trouser-wearing hero of yesteryear as we introduce you to the new Rygar in all his mythical Greek skirt-wearing glory.

"Its just *Devil May Cry* but a bit more Greek," you may cry, and you'd be pretty much right. Capcom created something sublime with Dante's first effort so it comes as no surprise when another developer attempts a similar formula. What is surprising is when the mimicry results in a similarly high quality product; an achievement that, unfortunately, *Rygar* can't quite manage. The shared elements become pretty noticeable early on when you discover that collecting orbs of Build Up Points can enhance your combat abilities. Even gripes with the camera in Capcom's gothic adventure still ring true in *Rygar* – since it uses a similar fixed camera scenario, the action is occasionally blocked by an object or character that can make it difficult to see what's going on. This is not a problem unique to *Rygar*, but this doesn't excuse it or make it any less infuriating when you're hit by something you never even knew was there.

Tecmo do seem to have a way of getting the best out of the consoles they work with – *Dead Or Alive 2* practically made the Dreamcast sweat, *Dead Or Alive 3* and *Xtreme Beach Volleyball* made Xbox owners very smug indeed, and with *Project Zero* and now *Rygar*, the PS2 has been given a workout the likes of which it seldom sees. Make no mistake, this is a graphical delight of a



It may not look it here, but the beach scene in motion is simply beautiful. It's no Bondi though…



The main character model is gloriously detailed and well animated to boot. Not bad looking either, if that's your thing.

**FAQs**

**Q. HOW LONG?**
Not very, but while you can finish it in well under ten hours, there's lots to find second time around.

**Q. HOW MANY WEAPONS?**
You'll find three regular Diskarmors fairly early on, with an extra one for finishing the game.

**Q. BEST BIT?**
Definitely the bosses. Challenging, imaginative and enjoyable, if only it could all have been this good…

games™ FINGERPRINT

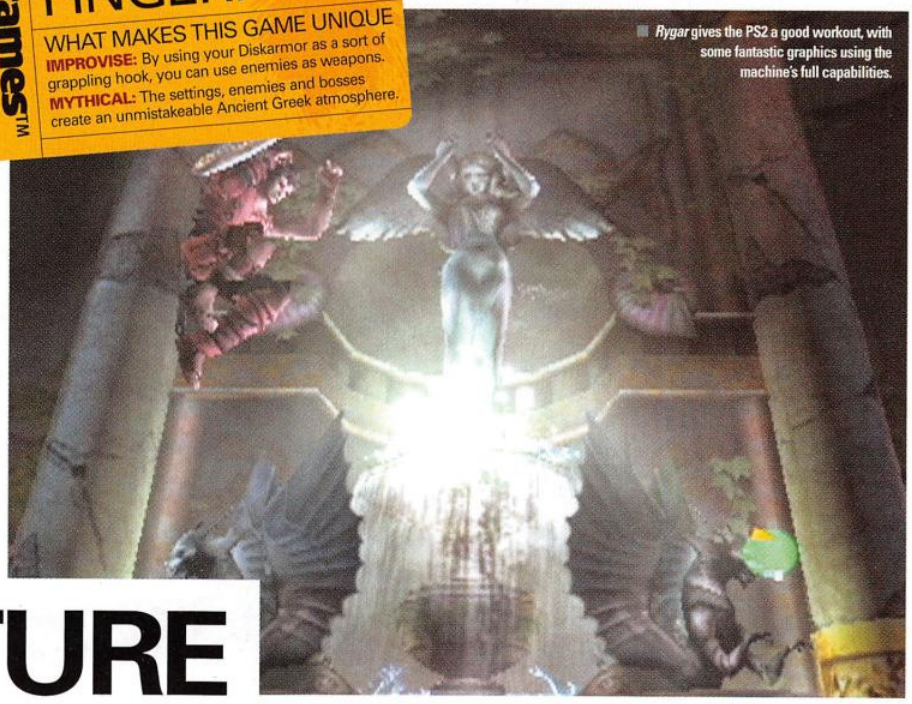
WHAT MAKES THIS GAME UNIQUE

**IMPROVISE:** By using your Diskarmor as a sort of grappling hook, you can use enemies as weapons.

**MYTHICAL:** The settings, enemies and bosses create an unmistakeable Ancient Greek atmosphere.

## SPINNING AROUND

**What sort of hero goes into battle armed only with the world's biggest yo-yo? A clever one, Tecmo would have you believe... Rygar's Diskarmor is one of the most unlikely weapons we've seen but it certainly seems to do the trick. Smashing through walls and enemies alike, Rygar is capable of some stunning combo attacks with the leashed disc blade. Ivy from *Soul Calibur*'s repertoire springs to mind on more than a few occasions as our hero flicks enemies skywards and rudely slams them back down to earth. Better still, the shoulder buttons cause him to raise the disc and use it as a shield to avoid or at least minimise damage. Later on, Rygar is even capable of using this ranged weapon as a primitive grappling hook; this aspect is a little limited but it's nice to see the Diskarmor getting used for more than just beating countless enemies to a pulp.**



*Rygar* gives the PS2 a good workout, with some fantastic graphics using the machine's full capabilities.

# ADVENTURE



*Final Fantasy*, eat your heart out – each Diskarmor can summon its imbued spirit, which is a very nice touch.



Booby traps and deadly contraptions... it's like *Indiana Jones* never happened. Although he might not have looked so good in a skirt.



This massive snake-like creature will give you a run for your money – start wielding your big metal yo-yo like a man possessed.

game and even the orchestral soundtrack is, in places, very special. The somewhat erratic nature of the sound can be slightly worrying though, and while certain themes and the crisp effects carry out their duties with aplomb, other less memorable tracks and the dire voice acting (which makes *Resident Evil*'s voiceover work look Oscar-worthy) do little to further the game's appeal. In all fairness, this takes little away from the stunning look of the game (in terms of PlayStation2 hardware, at least) but however small they may be, these elements do detract from the overall experience.

It'll probably come as no great surprise to hear that there's little variety in the tasks you're asked to perform. Swinging your Diskarmor around like a madman dispatches foes and smashes scenery easily, and while there may be a fistful of new moves to be learned, all of these serve a sole purpose. Other than single use, you'll have no need to slide, tackle or grapple elsewhere, nor will it be in any way beneficial for you to do so. This is a real shame, since controlling Rygar is so simple and such a joy that you really will want to link slides and swings into general combos. But you can't. If nothing else, there's a fair variety displayed by the locations that you'll visit, but when it comes down to it, a flashy backdrop can't hide the fact that the majority of your time will be spent flinging around an oversized yo-yo at groups, sometimes hordes, of identical enemies. The over-the-top boss battles bring some kind of diversity to the proceedings but if variety is the spice of life, *Rygar* left us feeling distinctly unseasoned...

While not really ever troubling the major league, *Rygar* is a solid title that hints at bigger and better things to come. Tecmo is most likely to be associated with the *Dead Or Alive* series but if the potential shown here can be built on in *Ninja Gaiden* and subsequent titles, it'll continue to excel and expand. Plagued by the same camera and repetitiveness issues that mar 90 percent of games of this ilk (*Shinobi*, *Devil May Cry* and the *Resident Evil* series all suffer to varying extents), *Rygar* almost has the style of a real giant-killer but unfortunately never really matches this in terms of content. It's a crying shame too, but as we've said, hopes are now higher than ever for *Ninja Gaiden*. With the more powerful Xbox hardware to work with (which we already know they can exploit... Tina and Kasumi, take an excessively revealing bow) and some experience in the genre, all eyes are on Tecmo's next offering to be an unexpected classic – something that *Rygar* so badly wants to be but can't quite manage.

**VERDICT 7/10**

**AN ENJOYABLE ADVENTURE BUT NOT QUITE ESSENTIAL**

## games™ CONNECTED

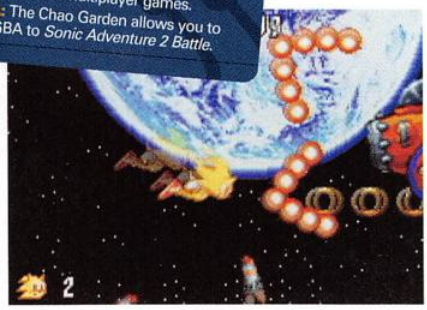
EXPANDING THE GAMEPLAY

**BRING A FRIEND:** Linking up with your friends gives you the benefit of multiplayer games.

**CHAO BELLA:** The Chao Garden allows you to connect your GBA to *Sonic Adventure 2 Battle*.




Meet Cream the Rabbit – she's a Virgo and likes going out clubbing, running very fast and eating as much lettuce as she can get her paws on.



Look, it's a *Sonic* game – did you really expect there *not* to be a level where you get to turn into Super Sonic and fly around a bit? Exactly.




Doctor Robotnik's back, along with his army of mechanical terrors…

**DETAILS**

**FORMAT REVIEWED**
Game Boy Advance

**ORIGIN**
Japan

**PUBLISHER**
SEGA

**DEVELOPER**
Sonic Team

**PRICE**
$69.95

**RELEASE**
Out Now

**PLAYERS**
1-2

SAME OLD SONIC, BRAND NEW GAME – BUT IS IT REALLY ENOUGH?

# SONIC ADVANCE 2

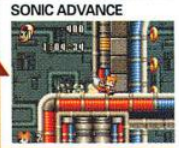
**Like Sonic, do you? Of course you do – it's hard to find anyone who hasn't enjoyed a Sonic game at some point in their gaming lives these days.** Still, while there's no sign of Sonic's next console outing as of yet, at least fans of the spiky blue hedgehog can be placated by the release of his latest GBA adventure, *Sonic Advance 2*. Of course, for those of you that have played the first *Sonic Advance*, there won't be much here that you haven't already seen before. You still control Sonic (or a selection of his friends, including newcomer Cream the Rabbit), you still run through 16 different stages collecting rings at high speed and you still fight against the evil Dr Robotnik before moving onto the next location. It's a formula that's worked for years and it makes a good transition onto the GBA – Sonic Team has worked wonders with the graphics to make them look as good as they do, while there are plenty of added extras (such as the multiplayer link-up mode and the obligatory Chao Garden) to entice owners of the first GBA title into buying the sequel.

However, it's not all fine wine and roses with *Sonic Advance 2*. Yes, it's all incredibly fast and visually impressive, but at times it almost seems that the game is trying a bit too hard to impress without actually delivering anything that improves the gameplay – mainly because a lot of the elements don't actually do very much other than look average. Sliding rails, ramps and vertical corkscrews are all very well, but when using all of them adds up to just holding right on the D-pad… well, it's not exactly the most stimulating thing imaginable. The worst thing is that the gameplay itself hasn't changed all that much since the original *Sonic* games, and yet there just doesn't seem to be any of the soul that made the Mega Drive titles so much fun – a feeling that's magnified by the recent release of *Sonic Mega Collection* on the GameCube.

As it stands, *Sonic Advance 2* is fairly standard *Sonic*-style action which obviously is no bad thing; after all, fans will no doubt lap it up simply for the fact that it's a *Sonic* game. Nonetheless, we can't help feeling that the heart and soul of *Sonic* seems to have been sacrificed here for the sake of a few 'hey, look at this!' elements that don't really add up to much. Call us cynics, but we remember *Sonic* being more fun than this – and certainly more of a challenge as well.

**VERDICT 6/10**
TRIES TOO HARD FOR SUCH LITTLE REWARD

SONIC ADVANCE



BETTER THAN

WORSE THAN



SONIC THE HEDGEHOG

**DETAILS**

**FORMAT REVIEWED**
Xbox

**ORIGIN**
UK

**PUBLISHER**
Microsoft

**DEVELOPER**
Just Add Monsters

**PRICE**
$99.95

**RELEASE**
Out Now

**PLAYERS**
1-4

BANZAI MEETS POWER STONE IN THE DEFINITIVE DRINKING SESSION FIGHTING GAME

# KUNG FU CHAOS

**If you were among the few lucky gamers who bought a SEGA Dreamcast, you may recall a rather special one-on-one beat-'em-up called *Power Stone*.** The game was unique in that it featured fully 3D movement, interactive arenas and many improvised items that could be used as weapons. A follow-up, *Power Stone 2*, was released and, as well as allowing four players to compete simultaneously, the game featured an even larger number of weapons – over a hundred, in fact. It also introduced multi-tiered levels and the occasional scrolling section.

Well, *Kung Fu Chaos* isn't as good as Capcom's masterpiece, but it certainly borrows a lot from the gameplay while adding a distinctive comedy flavour of its own. Level structure tends to be incredibly similar – various arenas are linked together with obstacle-filled scrolling sections, and many makeshift weapons are dotted around. However, where *Kung Fu Chaos* differs from *Power Stone* is that it's almost as enjoyable as a single-player game as it is multiplayer (Capcom's title was far better when played with friends). This is mainly because the game is broken up into training missions, mini-games and actual fights, each of which must be completed to a satisfactory standard in order to progress to the next stage. A star rating system indicates how well you're performing and a *Banzai*-style movie director commentates on the action, as well as highlighting any potentially life-threatening pitfalls that are about to appear.

The problem is that nothing feels as controlled or as strategically paced as the *Power Stone* games; nothing connects with quite the same impact or clarity, despite the fact that many intuitive combos are on offer. This is partially made up for by the fact that the levels are, on the whole, far more exaggerated and the music and sound effects are hilarious, but hard-core players will be disappointed by the lack of structure and timing to the fighting itself. As a quick blast for one to four players, *Kung Fu Chaos* does exactly what it says on the tin, so to speak. It truly is a chaotic experience that involves just a smidgen of Kung Fu. However, anyone expecting the sort of classic gameplay that could potentially match what Capcom achieved three years ago will more than likely be a little disappointed.

**VERDICT 6/10**
FUN FOUR-PLAYER FIGHTER THAT LACKS CLARITY

**LOONS: FIGHT FOR FAME**

**BETTER THAN**

**WORSE THAN**

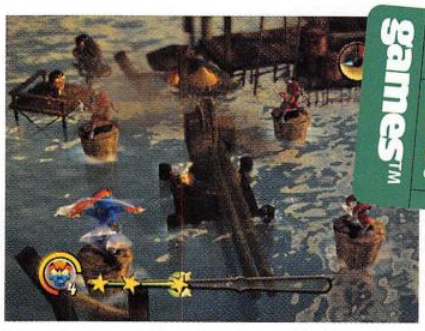
**POWER STONE 2**

## games™ FUSED

BRINGING GENRES TOGETHER

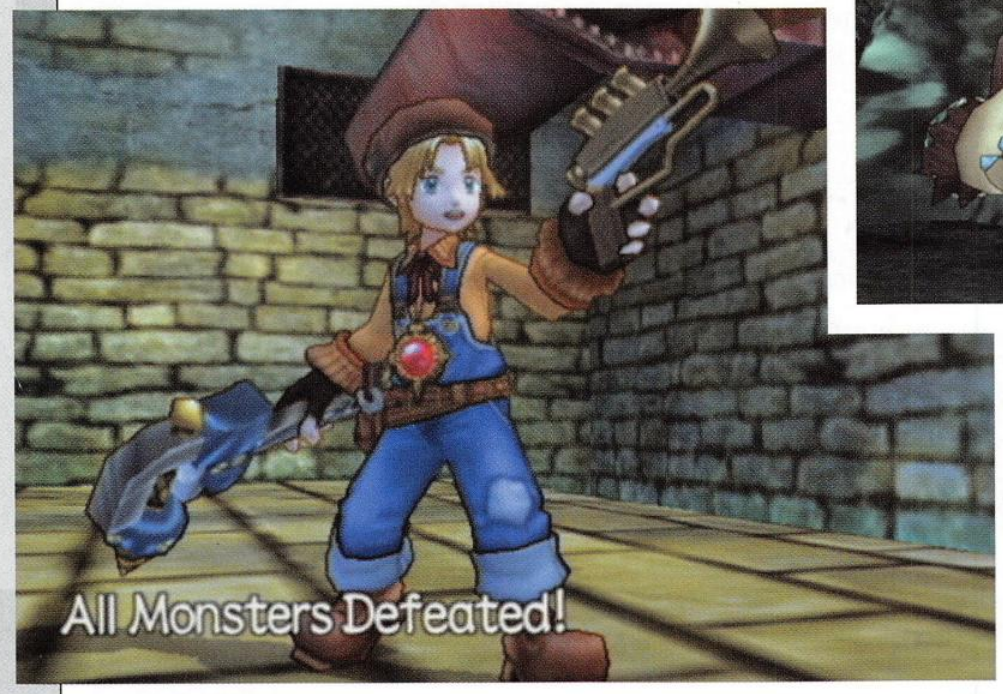
**PLATFORM GAMING:** While this is essentially a fighting game, there's a fair amount of jumping too.

**IT'S PUZZLING:** There are different genres within each mission, like rhythm/action and puzzle.


As well as the main fighting sections, the game is broken up with a range of mini-games.


*Kung Fu Chaos* is cleverly styled to look like a cheesy martial arts movie – right down to the wires holding the actors up as they jump.


Although *Kung Fu Chaos* initially seems like a game aimed at a younger audience, the colour pallet is muted and the humour decidedly adult. Adult in a good way, though, not in a Rodney Rude way.








■ Try taking a picture of that and see if you can 'invent' a million fishfingers with it. Actually, no. That's a stupid idea…

# DARK CLOUD 2

## SO MUCH TO DO, SO MUCH TO SEE, ALL THE TIME IN THE WORLD TO DO IT

**DETAILS**

**FORMAT REVIEWED**
PlayStation2

**ORIGIN**
Japan

**PUBLISHER**
Sony

**DEVELOPER**
Level 5

**PRICE**
$120 (US Import)

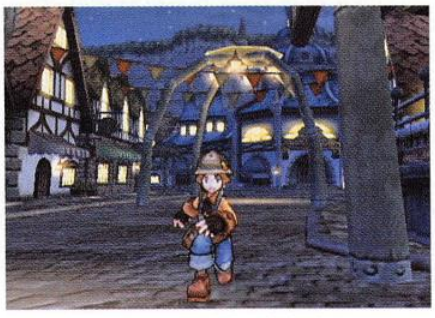
**RELEASE**
Out Now

**PLAYERS**
1

**Some games go down a risky road and revolve around a single unique feature.** Be it 'incredible' slow motion effects or 'groundbreaking' battle systems, such titles will often rest on their laurels after showcasing just one trick – a potentially disastrous move should the key feature not impress. This worry can, of course, be alleviated through the incorporation of several such features, but does that always work? Level 5's *Dark Cloud 2*, a sequel to 2001's respectable RPG effort, is bursting with innovative elements, many of which could almost work as standalone games. And you know what? They *do* impress. Very much.

From start to finish, *Dark Cloud 2* treads a fine line between engrossing and complicated, but thankfully, it's more the former. RPG newbies take note – this will drop you in at the deep end. While none of the independent elements are especially confusing, the combination of weapon maintenance, defeating enemies, rebuilding towns, creating inventions and performing sub-quests (to name a few) can often be a little daunting. Strangely, whether the final product benefits or suffers from the wealth of activities on offer can be argued either way. Yes, many of them are little more than distractions. Sure, there's no real need to confuse matters with unnecessary tasks. But what you have to remember is that many of these activities are optional – you only need to invent a few items and catch a few fish to get to the end of the game and you're encouraged to indulge yourself, but when it's beneficial to your progress (and so enjoyable) why would you not want to?

The look and feel of the game will no doubt also provoke mixed reactions. While it may be



■ You can't stay for the carnival – there's work to be done.




■ Monica is a fully playable (and very useful) character.

**DARK CLOUD**



**BETTER THAN**

**AS GOOD AS...**



**VAGRANT STORY**

**FAQs**

**Q. RANDOM DUNGEONS?**
Half and half. Some of the floors are preset while others retain the random placements seen in the last game.

**Q. HOW MANY CHARACTERS?**
Just the two, although both have 'alter egos' of sorts and you can take a support character with you too.

**Q. HOW LONG?**
Between inventing, fishing, upgrading and the small matter of the main quest, you're looking at upwards of 50 hours of glorious gameplay. Double that and you may be close to seeing everything.

games™

## FINGERPRINT

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME UNIQUE

**CREATION:** The inventing system is among the most imaginative and distracting features in any recent game.

**PRETTY:** The graphical style produces some of the best PlayStation2 visuals to date.



This huge contraption helps you out early on by working its landscaping magic with the Geostones you find.




## THE THINKER

**Necessity, as they say, is the mother of invention; so rather than search through dungeons for something you need, why not just make it? Shortly after the game begins, Max is given a camera with which to take snapshots of anything he feels could inspire him to create the next 'sliced bread'. Once you've snapped all the elements you want to combine, a simple menu allows you to attempt your combination – if you're close to a breakthrough, you'll be given hints on how to finish your creation. Once the thinking part is done, you move onto the hard labour – you need to round up all the raw materials before you can realise your creative dreams. While not quite perfect, this is a wonderful inclusion that'll keep you inventing for the length of the game. If it weren't quite so distracting, we'd have finished the game a whole lot sooner…**

Throwing enemies doesn't harm them unless they hit another foe, in which case all involved are momentarily stunned.




This self-proclaimed Happy Clown hides in chests, waiting to give you gifts. What a guy. Albeit a rather sinister one.




a little busier than many similarly styled titles, it certainly doesn't suffer for it. The sumptuous visuals are well complemented by an accomplished score (which does repeat itself a little between dungeon floors) and some excellent voice acting – it's hard not to be impressed by the game on an aesthetic level. Even animation hasn't been left to chance, running smoothly and at a solid rate. But it's the attention to detail that really earns *Dark Cloud 2* a place in our hearts. Day turns to night with all the expected results, people pose for photographs when you put them in the frame… so many little nuances litter the game world that you have to give credit to Level 5 for creating a believable and involving setting.

Unfortunately, *Dark Cloud 2* can be a victim of its own beauty at times. In certain areas, a few invisible boundaries shatter the mood as you try to throw an enemy into a lake only to have them bounce off something that isn't there. Other times, taking photographs can be slightly erratic and it's not always possible to snap obvious objects (one set of curtains will register while others may not, annoyingly) but if this is the extent of our criticism then you can be sure that there's very little (if anything) seriously wrong with the core game. Save for minor gripes with the amount of re-treading old ground that is required to enhance weapons and earn Medals, there really is little to criticise. The endless dungeon trawling of the first game is all but gone and any lengthy sessions of slaying can easily be broken up with a spot of fishing, a flash of inspirational invention or even a relaxing game of Spheda – a golf-based mini-game that's eaten up a few more hours than we'd like.

The culmination of these varied elements is in an intense gaming experience that sits firmly at the top of its class as not only one of the best PS2 RPGs but also one of the best games of this generation. *Dark Cloud 2* is bound to have its critics – if only due to the sheer scale of the task at hand and the mixture of ways in which it can be tackled – but when each of the individual aspects has been implemented in such an impressive manner, it's hard to fault. By improving on the best bits of the first game, Level 5 has come up with a dazzling example of a dwindling genre. A true sequel should improve on its predecessor while acknowledging its roots – and this is one of the best true sequels we've seen in a long time. Sequel developers and RPG designers alike take note; this is how it's done on both accounts.




Max's Ridepod needs constant maintenance, but by inventing new components you can keep improving it.




Gone is the annoyingly small carrying capacity – you've got a huge bag to fill with goodies this time.

**VERDICT 9/10**

ONE OF THE FINEST RPGS ON THE PS2

**DETAILS**

**FORMAT REVIEWED**
PC

**ORIGIN**
US

**PUBLISHER**
Microsoft

**DEVELOPER**
Digital Anvil

**PRICE**
$99.95

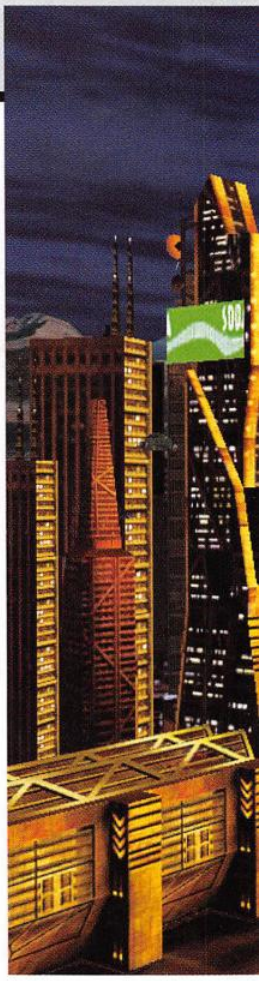
**RELEASE**
Out Now

**PLAYERS**
1-multiplayer online

**MINIMUM SPECS:**
600 MHz processor, 128 MB RAM, 900 MB free hard disk space, 16 MB video card







WITH A GALAXY IN TURMOIL, THE SKY'S THE LIMIT FOR A TALENTED FIGHTER PILOT

# FREELANCER

**Freedom: the one word that really gets our mouths watering in anticipation of the latest groundbreaking step away from gaming linearity.** So when Microsoft promised us open-ended adventuring by the bucket-load in the shape of *Freelancer*, the long-awaited sequel to intergalactic flight-fest *Starlancer*, we were understandably more than a little excited at the prospect of something special coming our way.

It's astonishing to think how the same concepts of boundless exploration and destiny control that make *Freelancer* such a milestone title were pioneered over a decade ago by the fantastic *Elite* series on the Amiga. Needless to say, things have moved on a bit since those days and developer Digital Anvil had a host of new fangled technology at its disposal with which to take a great idea to staggering new heights. After four years in the making, expectations were high as we strapped ourselves in and prepared for blastoff, determined to wring every drop of freeform gameplay from *Freelancer*'s vast universe of possibility.

Far from being a dark and lonely place, you'll arrive in outer space to find it's actually swarming with activity. Particularly around the major space stations and planetary hubs the airwaves are alive with giant cargo ships requesting clearance to dock, police fighters scanning your hull for contraband and even full-on raging battles. Observing the galaxy's inhabitants going about their daily business is quite a sight to behold and lends a real sense of interactivity to the stunningly rendered environments. You'll start off by undertaking a couple of straightforward tutorial missions to get a feel for the controls and offer a taster of the excellent combat system that will make up much of the gameplay to come. Blast your way through these and you'll be left to your own devices, giving you the perfect opportunity to fully explore the first of 48 massive star systems.

After a spot of sightseeing to improve your galactic geography, you'll most likely want to dock at one of the countless spaceports and figure out how you're going to get your hands on the cash needed to really progress in the game. This is

**STARLANCER**



**BETTER THAN**

**WORSE THAN**



**FRONTIER: ELITE 2**



Throughout the *Freelancer* universe, giant space stations and heavenly bodies have a suitably imposing presence.



Designated trade lanes are generally the safest and quickest ways of getting around the game's 48 vast star systems.

**FAQs**

**Q. WHAT'S WITH THE NAMES?**
Planets such as Manhattan and Maine are logically located in the New York System, which really helps in finding your way around.

**Q. A UNIVERSE ON ONE DISK?**
The game's vast environment is astounding, but remember how the *Elite* universe fitted on a single floppy?

**Q. WHAT IF I GET KILLED?**
With the intelligent autosave feature you'll never have to retrace your steps too far.

games™

## FINGERPRINT

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME UNIQUE

**CONTROL:** Using the mouse cursor for movement and FPS-style targeting works like a dream.

**CHOICE OF PATH:** As your own boss, you can pick and choose the opportunities that take your fancy.



Launching to space is automated, so you don't get to soar among those impressive skylines.



As multiple adversaries tend to gang up on our hero, it can take some real skill to avoid the relentless enemy fire.



Your foes can run but, with such excellent manoeuvrability at your fingertips, there's nowhere to hide.

where the decisions are made that will begin to determine the destiny of our opportunistic hero, Edison Trent. Whether to embark on a respectable career with the navy, speculate on the intergalactic commodity market as a deep space trader or look to make a fast buck from your talents within the criminal underworld is entirely up to you. Whilst docked, players are presented with the basic options of consulting the local job market, trading commodities, purchasing equipment to beef up your ship's capabilities or even upgrading to a completely new model of spacecraft. Although the camera follows Trent undertaking these activities, and interactions with the various dealers and potential employers are accompanied by short cut-scenes, the whole process is merely a graphical representation of the simple docking menus in *Elite*.

All of the actual gameplay takes place in outer space and essentially boils down to an entertaining series of dogfights amongst the stars. No matter whether you've chosen to undertake a combat mission for one of the game's warring parties, are protecting your own cargo from the designs of evil pirates or have decided to hijack a trade ship convoy yourself, the only skills you'll need to master are those of an accomplished star-fighter. Fortunately, this restriction is by no means a bad thing, considering the innovative combat interface has to be one of *Freelancer*'s major selling points. The intuitive command bars allow even the most amateur pilot to achieve just about anything with a single mouse-click, and a tap of the spacebar switches both directional control and targeting to the mouse cursor. This sends you soaring effortlessly around the skies and makes for some of the most accessible and exhilarating space combat we've ever seen; well worthy of building such an ambitious freeform concept around.

Until you can afford to kit out your ship with enough firepower to approach battles head-on you're going to have to come up with some pretty nifty moves to outwit your adversaries, which can present a tough learning curve for beginners. But sharpen your dogfighting skills enough to progress in the game and you could spend months immersed in the delights of the *Freelancer* universe. The sheer scale of the game is breathtaking, and there is an undeniable feeling of freedom in roaming the stars at your pleasure between missions. Whilst the missions do tend to play out rather similarly, the endless possibilities for how you can choose to put meat on the bones of the core combat engine create an engrossingly open-ended experience with high replay value.

**VERDICT 8/10**

AN ENTIRE UNIVERSE OF SPACE COMBAT POTENTIAL

### HITTING THE BAR

**In the future, life will revolve around the local pub. No change there then, but wherever you may roam in the *Freelancer* universe it is also the one sure place an out of work fighter-pilot-for-hire can expect to find a whole host of potential employers propping up the bar. It is here that Trent will shape his intergalactic reputation by deciding whose dirty work to carry out and, perhaps more importantly, who he is going make an enemy of in the process. You'll find all the latest news and juiciest plot-related gossip from the regulars and the more you frequent a preferred watering hole, the greater acquaintances you will build. Since just about every settlement in the universe has a decent pub, there's little chance you'll ever run out of employment options – and you'll never be far from an ice-cold beer.**



games™ ENHANCED

IMPROVING ON THE ORIGINAL

**SO MUCH MORE:** The Story Quest of *Lost Kingdoms II* is much larger than the original, at around 25 hours. The two-player option has also been improved, allowing for more balanced games.

DOES THIS RPG SEQUEL PLAY ITS CARDS RIGHT?

# LOST KINGDOMS II

**DETAILS**

**FORMAT REVIEWED**
GameCube

**ORIGIN**
Japan

**PUBLISHER**
Activision

**DEVELOPER**
FROM Software

**PRICE**
$99.95

**RELEASE**
16 May (Japan/US: Out Now)

**PLAYERS**
1-2

**When it came out shortly after the launch of the GameCube, *Lost Kingdoms* came as a bit of a surprise to RPG fans; its fusion of arcade adventure and RPG elements, combined with a clever card system, appealed to gamers looking for something a bit different.** It wasn't faultless however, and although FROM Software has adopted the 'if it ain't broke, don't fix it' approach for the sequel, it has listened to the criticisms levelled at the first title and done its best to solve them.

The plot is standard RPG fare (young girl liberates kingdom from faceless foe... yadda yadda), and while our heroine only starts the game with a deck of limited magical cards, she is soon able to summon all manner of monsters from them with which to do battle in true Trump cards style. The control system is as user-friendly as ever – each of your four available cards are mapped to the pad's face buttons – and there are now over two hundred monsters to scrap with. There's even a new transformational card that enables you to adopt the forms of certain monsters and then use their attacks against designated foes. Actual combat is also more refined – rather than being forced to slug it out in confined invisible boundaries, there are now no such restrictions. This enhanced liberation, along with a sensible camera, ensures that you are always in control – regardless of how intense later battles get. On top of all this, one of the main gripes with the first game – the fact that it was very easy to quickly lose all of your 30-card deck – has been remedied for the sequel.

But although many of the gameplay problems have been ironed out, there's still room for improvement, at least on an aesthetic level. The visuals are as dull as ever with flat, featureless textures and below-par animation, while the audio is just as average, sporting some bizarre scores and the campest voice acting this side of a Bob Downe convention. Not only that, but there is no variety in the gameplay to break up the bouts of card battling. That's not to say that the game itself is bad – indeed, *Lost Kingdoms II* is certainly a step up from the last outing, which itself fitted neatly into the 'good if you like this sort of thing' category. Unfortunately though, it's too much of a niche title to appeal to the majority of gamers. Though enjoyment can be found – especially in the improved two-player game – its unique brand of RPG gameplay may prove its undoing, especially with the *The Wind Waker* now upon us...

**VERDICT 6/10**

**GOOD ENHANCEMENTS, BUT STILL LIMITED APPEAL**

**LOST KINGDOMS**



**BETTER THAN**

**WORSE THAN**



**SKIES OF ARCADIA LEGENDS**




Pick a card, any card – although preferably one that will help you see off these weapon-wielding thugs. Don't use all of them in a hurry, mind – there are over two hundred of these feral scum lining up to get a piece of you.




The fight scenes liven up the card battling system, but the game's graphics are somewhat lacking.




The card system of battling works quite well but is unlikely to appeal to anyone who didn't enjoy the first *Lost Kingdoms* game.




The key to winning is setting up chains and then wiping them all out in one move – picking off small amounts of gems isn't a good tactic.




All the fighters from the game are lifted straight out of Capcom's cutesy *Street Fighter* mini-clone beat-'em-up, *Pocket Fighter.*




Pulling off a massive chain of gem destructive combos makes your character perform their super moves against your opponent.

games™ FUSED

BRINGING GENRES TOGETHER

**CONUNDRUM:** Think of this as a slightly more complicated version of *Columns*, with some strategy.

**HADOKEN:** The use of familiar Capcom beat-'em-up characters gives the game a 'fighting' flavour.

# SUPER PUZZLE FIGHTER II TURBO

## FINALLY, CAPCOM'S PUZZLEY BEAT-'EM-UP FINDS ITS SPIRITUAL HOME

**DETAILS**

**FORMAT REVIEWED**
Game Boy Advance

**ORIGIN**
Japan

**PUBLISHER**
Capcom

**DEVELOPER**
In-House

**PRICE**
$69.95

**RELEASE**
Out Now

**PLAYERS**
1-2

**No matter what format they originally get released on, some games, mostly of the puzzle variety, are just begging to be ported to handheld consoles.** It might sound cynical, but think about it – if *Tetris* hadn't have been released on the Game Boy, would it really have been as successful as it was? Probably not. It's the fact that certain games are meant to be 'pick up and play' that they work so well on handheld consoles – after all, 'pick up and play' is precisely what handhelds like the Game Boy are for.

With that in mind then, it's not that surprising to see *Super Puzzle Fighter II Turbo* being ported to the GBA. Having already appeared on the PSone, Saturn and even in arcades, Capcom's attempt at melding its stock cast of fighting characters with a version of the *Columns*/*Puyo Pop* theme wasn't at all bad – even if doing well at it was more luck than judgement. Obviously, joining coloured gems together and then using special 'crash' gems to destroy them isn't a task that requires a degree in rocket science. However, with the key to success (against the computer, at least) involving having to think at least three, four or sometimes more moves ahead, it's certainly not a puzzle game for everyone (unless you enjoy tearing out your own hair, that is).

As you might expect, the GBA version is a perfect port of the PSone game, which is no bad thing. Unfortunately, this pretty much negates any possibilities for improvements. It's still got a basic Arcade mode, as well as a more interesting Street Puzzle mode where you 'fight' against particularly tough opponents to win bonuses like extra costumes and sound tests. This being the GBA though, there's also the option to link up with your mates and play with them – nothing new there. But what is a good touch is that the game lets two people play at once, even if you've only got one GBA. Admittedly, it sounds bizarre but it does actually work quite well; one person gets the D-pad and L button, while the other gets the A, B and R buttons as both people fight over the screen. Sadly, it's this fact alone that makes the game stand out over other examples of the same genre; other than that, the actual game isn't special enough to warrant more than the usual amount of puzzle fan attention.

**VERDICT 6/10**

**QUITE FUN, BUT FRUSTRATINGLY DIFFICULT AT TIMES**

**COLUMNS CROWN**



**BETTER THAN**

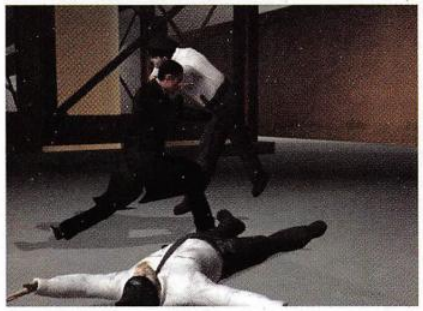
**WORSE THAN**



**SUPER BUST-A-MOVE**



Niobe is one lady that you don't want to mess with – she's as good with her feet as she is with her hands.



Ghost might well be the weapons guru of the rebel cause, but he's just as tough when it comes to hand-to-hand contact. Two guards? No problem.






The 'Bullet Time' feature of the game is unsurprisingly one of the best features of *Enter The Matrix*.




The combos that you can put together when in hand-to-hand combat are as lethal as they are stunning.




There's nothing quite like hanging out of the car window and blowing all and sundry out of your way when playing as Ghost.









# ENTER THE MATRIX

## IT'S FINALLY HERE, BUT WILL YOU STILL WANT TO FOLLOW THE WHITE RABBIT?

**As anyone will tell you, games based on film licenses are normally nothing more than a license to make a complete mess and to disappoint fans.** Take *Minority Report* for example. Or even *Star Wars*. Great licenses, but games that were ultimately only good for frisbees down Bondi beach. So, enter *The Matrix* into the digital world of games - undoubtedly a fantastic license, but have the developers done the job we all want them too, the job we've all prayed they would do? Well, you'll be glad to hear that thankfully Shiny hasn't rested on its laurels and arrogantly expected *Enter The Matrix* to sell on the basis of it's name alone. No, there are hooks and catches galore, signalling that a lot of thought, time and effort has gone into the game, in an attempt to make the game an equal to the film and not just a cheap spin-off.

With a 400-page script written by the Wachowski brothers (complete with movie tie-ins), a musical score from the men behind the film, voice acting by the actors themselves and the legendary Yuen Wo-Ping (*Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*) on hand to help choreograph all the motion captured martial-arts moves, you'd think that Shiny Entertainment couldn't exactly go wrong. So, you'll be pleased to hear that, on the whole Dave Perry and his cohorts have pretty much delivered the goods – *Enter The Matrix* might not technically be anything we haven't seen before, but it is an exceptionally stylish game and, more importantly, a blast to play. By no means is it perfect though – while graphically solid it is rough around the edges, the AI leaves much to be desired and, perhaps more importantly, the game design isn't exactly what you'd call revolutionary. But then it is *The Matrix* and as far as cooperation between film-makers and game designers goes, it sets an hereto unparalleled standard.

There's no denying that *Enter The Matrix* is great fun to indulge in, but it is particularly linear in its approach – it's the nature of the beast when it comes to mission based adventure games. It's a case of completing the mission (as one of two new characters, Niobe or Ghost) and getting out of there as quickly as possible. Of course just how you go about your mission is entirely up to you – you can do it by stealth or you can do it by blasting your way through – it doesn't really matter, as long as you get through. On this level alone the game is unremarkable, but thankfully the game has a saving grace, a saving grace which pulls it from the brink of pending disaster, the beauty of which will almost brainwash you into forgetting the games' otherwise glaring pitfalls.

**DETAILS**

**FORMAT REVIEWED**
GameCube

**ORIGIN**
US

**PUBLISHER**
Infogrames

**DEVELOPER**
Shiny Entertainment

**PRICE**
$109.95

**RELEASE**
May 16

**PLAYERS**
1

**DEVIL MAY CRY 2**



**BETTER THAN**

**WORSE THAN**



**SPLINTER CELL**

**FAQs**

**Q. IS NEO IN THE GAME?**
You will come across Neo in the game (as well as Trinty and Morpheus), but you won't be able to play as his character because he's too damn tough

**Q. DOES IT TIE-IN TO THE FILM?**
The game does indeed have crossover points with the new films. To understand events in the film entirely, you'll have to play the game through to the end as well.

**Q. HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE?**
Not your average walk in the park. You'll have to play the entire game as both Niobe and Ghost to complete it and even then there's plenty of secrets to uncover.



## games™ FINGERPRINT

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME UNIQUE

**BULLET TIME:** Shows Max Payne how it should be done. Dodging bullets has never been so easy.

**LICENSED TO THRILL:** What's this? A game that isn't just a cheap cash in on a flim? Strewth.



## NEW KIDS ON THE BLOCK

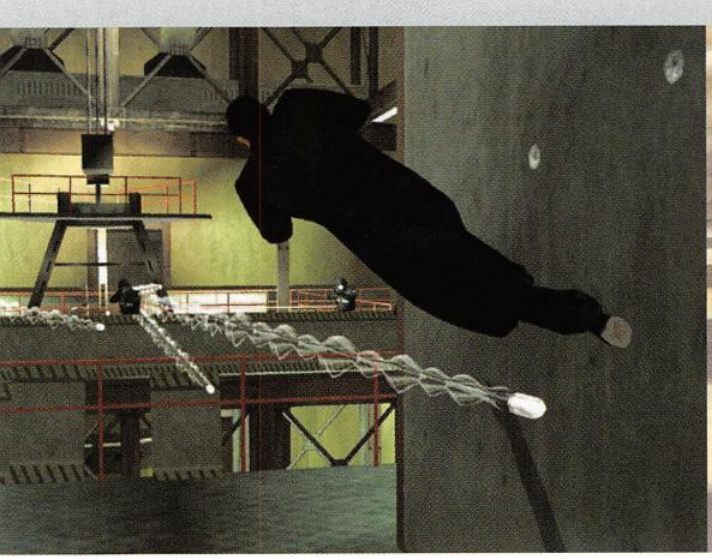
**What? No Neo? No Morpheus or Trinty? That's right – the game focuses on two new characters that will be introduced in The Matrix Reloaded, Niobe and Ghost. Niobe is the rebels' best driver and the pilot of the Logos and she's pretty damn nimble too. Not to mention tough. Ghost on the other hand is a weapons guru and what he doesn't know about firearms, well, it ain't worth knowing. The most notable differences come in the driving levels – when you play as Niobe you'll be driving and when you play as Ghost you'll be hanging out the window blowing up any enemies that get close enough to sniff your exhaust. Cool.**

Essentially it's the gameplay, enhanced by the much talked about 'Bullet Time', which single-handedly makes *Enter The Matrix* such great fun to play and turns an average game into a solid game. But not great. Quite frankly there's nothing quite as thrilling as flying through the air, guns blasting, running up walls, dodging bullets, pulling off unfathomable and mind-boggling moves or even just cart-wheeling around like a Russian gymnast, sporadically letting rounds off. Focus on the job in the hand and you'll forget time, see through the boundaries of *The Matrix* and indulge your every martial-arts whim 'til the cows come home. More importantly you'll forget about the linearity of the game as a whole… which is just as well.

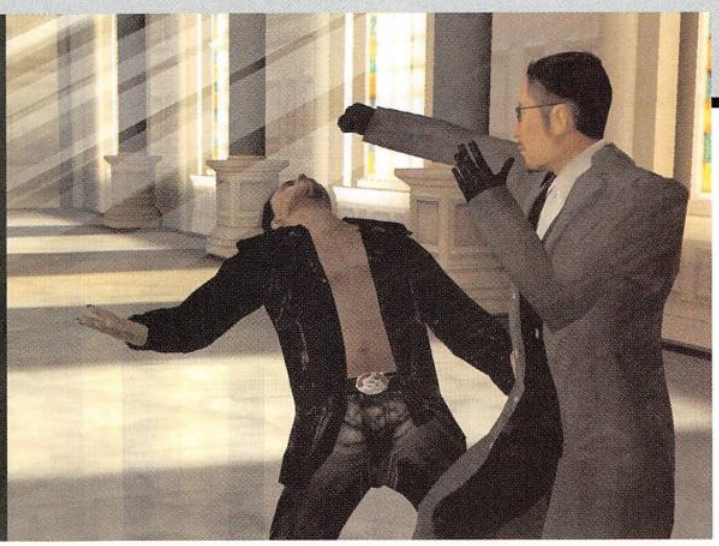
It's not that the game lacks variety, in what it has to offer though, it's just that what it does offer is so… straight forward and ultimately unimaginative. Sure, the levels where you get to drive (if playing as Niobe) or hang out the car window letting off rounds like a madman (Ghost) offer a welcome break from the monotony of blasting through levels, but they too are railroaded, especially if playing as Ghost. Take away the meat of the game – 'Bullet Time' and the whole *Matrix* ideal and you're left with a game that is nothing more than ordinary.

Graphically it's generally fairly impressive but there are too many nuances that draw the attention away from the whole experience, even if they in themselves are not enough to detract from the overall 'feel' of the game for long. There's an almost laughable amount of glitching with the collision detection fairing little better while the animation, though generally fluid, is somewhat stifled at times. That said, visually the game has managed to capture the *Matrix* 'ambience' incredibly well – the 'Bullet Time' animation is particularly effective and equally impressive while the levels are dark, at times menacing and almost always mysterious. The levels themselves are fully interactive and well designed to maximise character movement, allowing you to shoot up pretty much anything that takes your fancy… when you're not being bombarded by enemies that is.

Needless to say you can't go anywhere without someone, or something, wanting to pump you full of lead – that goes with the territory. What's worrying however, is that the AI of the enemies in the game is disturbingly hit and miss. Surely the *Matrix* isn't this dumb? While guards will come at you guns blazing as soon as they see you, when you hide behind a pillar or desk they seem to forget about you until you pop up again. Similarly, when you're in hand to hand combat with a group of enemies, only one of them will bother fighting you, while the others just stand and watch until it's their turn to have a crack. It's this sort of juxtaposition within the



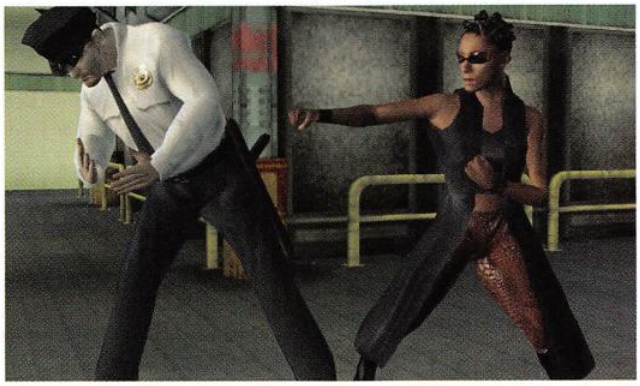
one dreams of defying gravity and running up walls – now you can.



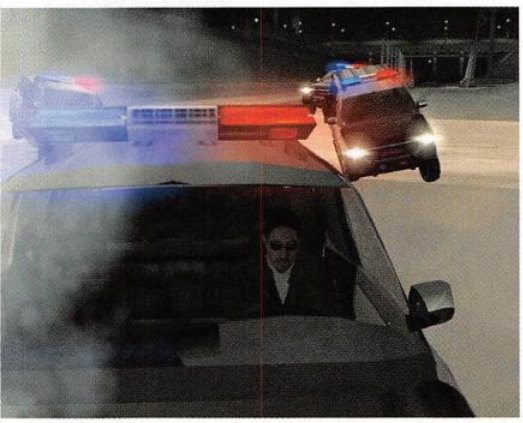
Guns, guns and more guns. But why bother when you have a pair of fists?

## HACKING AWAY

**One of the neat features of the game and certainly one of the most unique is the ability to 'hack' into the game/matrix. It's essentially a small game within a game, in the same as the old-school text adventures whereby you can unlock commands which will allow you to unlock certain features. By typing in DOS commands you'll be able to gain access to, among other things, different fighting styles, cheats and the ability to hack into special areas of the game, all adding to the longevity.**



**"ENTER THE MATRIX MIGHT NOT BE REVOLUTIONARY, BUT IT IS AN EXCEPTIONALLY STYLISH GAME AND... A BLAST TO PLAY"**



to put the pedal to the metal and get out of there before Agent Smith arrives.



various facets of the game that makes the game such a hit and miss affair. On the one hand some areas are superbly done, while on the other it seems that the tight deadline was just too tight for the developers to tweak everything to the levels they might ideally have liked.

One feature of the game which is, dare we say it, faultless is the aural aspect. The musical score is nothing less than wonderful, the orchestra bursting into full tilt when the action kicks in, keeping creepily quiet while you're tiptoeing around, helping to create the perfect atmosphere. Similarly the voice acting is spot on (but then you'd expect nothing less from Hollywood actors), which helps add to the whole authenticity of the game which the developers have striven to keep throughout the whole game.

In the end though, we can't help but be of the opinion that *Enter The Matrix* is a triumph of style over content. By no means is it a terrible game, but neither is it great – there are some wonderful features to the game, its undeniably satisfyingly enjoyable to play and *Matrix* fans will undeniably lap it up and revel in it like kids in a candy store. On the flip-side, from a gamers point of view the game offers nothing new and once you take away the metaphorical make-up you're left with an unremarkable action/adventure game. But then we can't think of anyone who isn't a *Matrix* fan...

**XBOX** $109.95 OUT 16/05/03



Seeing as the Xbox is basically a PC dressed up as a console, there's little difference between the two versions. Of course, you'll need a powerful PC to run it as well as the Xbox.

**PS2** $109.95 OUT 16/05/03



The PS2 version of the game was reportedly the base code for all other platforms. It's pretty much identical to the GameCube version, only the controls are more intuitive.

**PC** $99.95 OUT 16/05/03



Graphically the PC version is the pick of the crop, although there's nothing much in it. As with the other versions you can 'hack' into slightly different aspects of the game.

**VERDICT 7/10**

**TOO MUCH STLYE AND NOT ENOUGH SUBSTANCE**

THOSE CUDDLY COLLECTABLE CREATURES RETURN IN THEIR FIRST ADVANCED OUTING

# POKÉMON RUBY/SAPPHIRE

**DETAILS**

**FORMAT REVIEWED**
Game Boy Advance

**ORIGIN**
Japan

**PUBLISHER**
Nintendo

**DEVELOPER**
Game Freak

**PRICE**
$69.95

**RELEASE**
Q4 '03 (Japan/US: Out Now)

**PLAYERS**
1-4

**Think of some of the biggest selling Game Boy games.** Alongside *Tetris* and the *Super Mario Land* games, the multi-million selling *Pokémon* franchise is one of Nintendo's biggest money spinners, raking in not only software profits but more merchandising money than arguably any other videogame. It's incredible to think that Nintendo has left the GBA bereft of the massively popular series for almost two years now. Most of the other key franchises have surfaced in some shape or form – Mario, Link, Kirby, *F-Zero*... the list goes on. After so long coming, you'd be justified in expecting the longest, toughest and best *Pokémon* adventure to date. And you'll be glad to hear that the game actually delivers in most of these areas – it's exactly what you'd expect from a *Pokémon* game and much more to boot, but at what price?

Even at first glance, lots of updates are apparent – new moves and two-on-two battles make for a much more strategic experience, as do the excellent Pokémon abilities. Ranging from the ability to power up certain moves or create weather effects, to attack absorption and spiny skin that causes damage to attackers, every monster has an innate skill that will help (or sometimes hinder) it in battle. These bring Pokémon to a whole new level of mental warfare that does battles no end of good, meaning a top trainer will need to learn all of these traits as well as how best to tackle or exploit them. New evolutions (and methods thereof) also help keep the experience refreshingly original but purists are still able to train up a humble Pikachu (who is no longer #25, Pokéfans), or any familiar monster for that matter, into a mighty combatant just like we've done so many times before. Side quests have also been made more apparent, so as well as making your way to Pokémon League glory, you'll need to be helping out people along the way – their priceless rewards will be thanks enough.

While in-game visuals may not greatly improve on their Game Boy Color counterparts, Pokémon sprites in battle are noticeably superior, almost to the point of being faithful to their anime depictions. This is all well and good but the battles still look and feel far too static, with nothing but a little idle movement and mostly mediocre attack animations to give a feeling of energy and involvement. This is superficially the game's weakest area – every other aspect of the look and feel has been tweaked to near perfection, with active weather, real-time reflections and as high a level of environmental interaction as we've seen in a handheld title. The end result may not be a mind-

**FAQs**

**Q. MORE MONSTERS?**
Not right now. The wealth of new creatures brings the overall total to 386, but a mere 200 are obtainable across the two games.

**Q. HOW DO YOU GET THEM?**
One of the game's biggest mysteries. Rumours point to e-Cards, the forthcoming GameCube title and/or future GBA titles as viable possibilities.

**Q. HOW LONG IS IT?**
Even with a lower monster count than the previous installation, you'll easily lose 100 hours plus to the *Pokémon* bug.







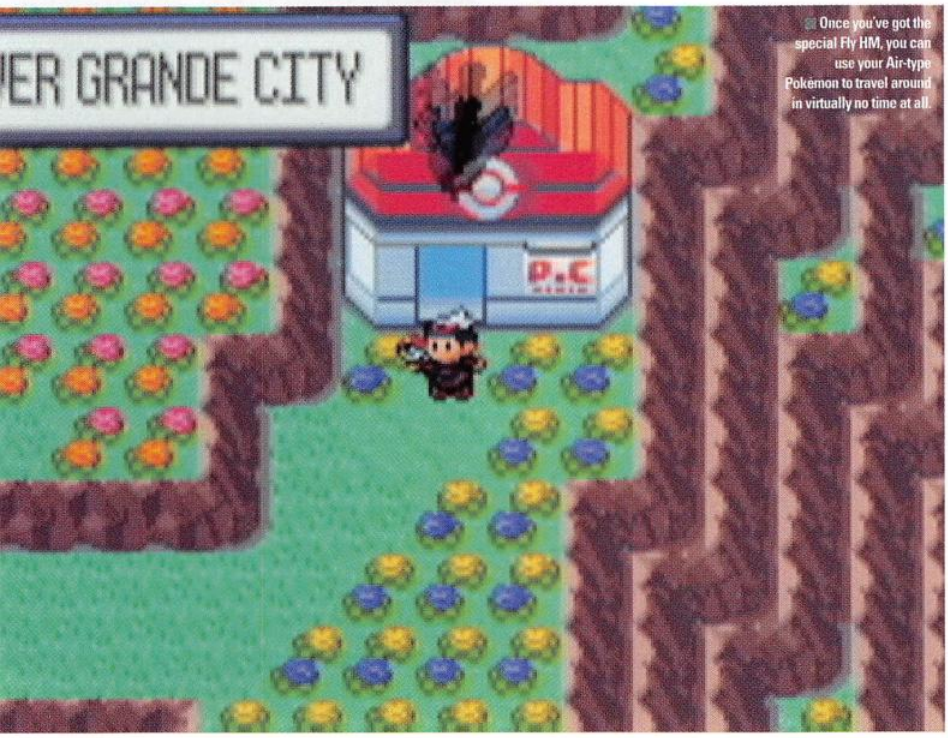
Some Pokémon come in really handy. For instance, get your hands on an Abra and you'll be able to train it to use some devastating Psychic attacks like... well, Psychic. Of course, actually catching one of the little buggers can prove to be a whole lot more trouble than it's worth...




All Pokémon battles are pre-empted by the most pointless comments imaginable – we can only wonder why they even bother.



Looking for wild Pokémon? Then you'll want to be rooting around in the undergrowth then – the natural resting place of all Pokémon wildlife.




Once you've got the special Fly HM, you can use your Air-type Pokémon to travel around in virtually no time at all.

blowing technical achievement, but it still manages to create a charming and stylish world which you'll genuinely enjoy exploring. On that note, don't expect to finish this in a few days – exploring all of Hoenn will take a lot of time and commitment as well as a team of impeccably raised Pokémon, which requires some serious hard graft.

For all the improvements we've seen over every similar adventure out there, there are still a few gripes. The first of these is the lowered monster count – as an integral part of the game, knocking 20 per cent of the monsters out of the equation (200 monsters to *Gold* and *Silver*'s 251, although many of these are all-new creatures) really won't impress potential upgraders. We know that the rest of the old crew are in there too (the Japanese rom was hacked some time ago, revealing a total of 386 monsters programmed into the game) but it's how and if we gain access to these that remains a mystery. Another niggle is that Pokémon cries in the Pokédex are as primitive as ever (we've heard our Game Boys talk before, people – Pikachu doesn't make a muffled digital grunt in the TV show, does he?), and constant backtracking to level up for key encounters is still rife, though often enjoyable.

We've come to the conclusion that even when Nintendo puts out a title that doesn't quite live up to our high expectations, it usually still manages to eclipse most of the competition and make amends for many of its downfalls with innovations and evolutions (no pun intended). We could speculate all day about the countless potential uses for the connectivity that has been so well




It's the most basic rule of Pokémon – always use the right kind of Pokémon for the job. If you don't, you're going to regret it afterwards.

implemented, but until we see some serious use of this (battling and trading is to be expected – Pokédex expansions and new areas are what we're really rooting for), we're holding off with the fireworks. If we knew for sure that there were definitely 186 new monsters (or even new events and areas), this would easily score higher. As it stands, the confusion over just what is in the game means that we can't be overly optimistic yet. A wonderful experience in their own right, *Ruby* and *Sapphire* are well up there with the best handheld games, but until we're given reason to believe otherwise, catching them all could be being exploited a bit too much for its own good.

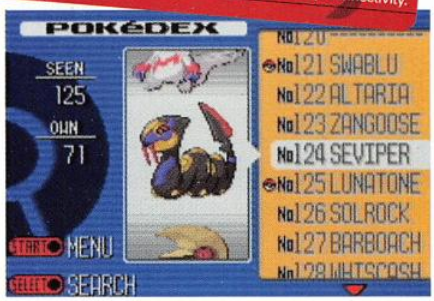
**VERDICT 8/10**
A GOOD STANDALONE GAME WITH MORE TO COME

## games™ ENHANCED

IMPROVING ON THE ORIGINAL

**MULTIPLAYER:** Four man battles aren't that original but the brawls use the link-up potential with aplomb.

**CONNECTED:** Link-ups to GBAs, e-Card Readers and (soon) 'Cubes, give these games top connectivity.



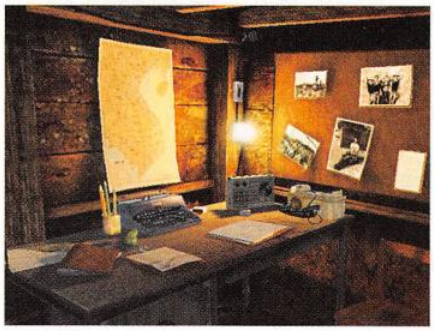

Yes, yes – it's all about catching 'em all. That said though, you don't have to actually catch a Pokémon to have it logged in your Pokédex.



Despite the added power of the Game Boy Advance, the graphics in *Pokémon Ruby* and *Sapphire* aren't all that much improved.

### MYSTERY MADNESS

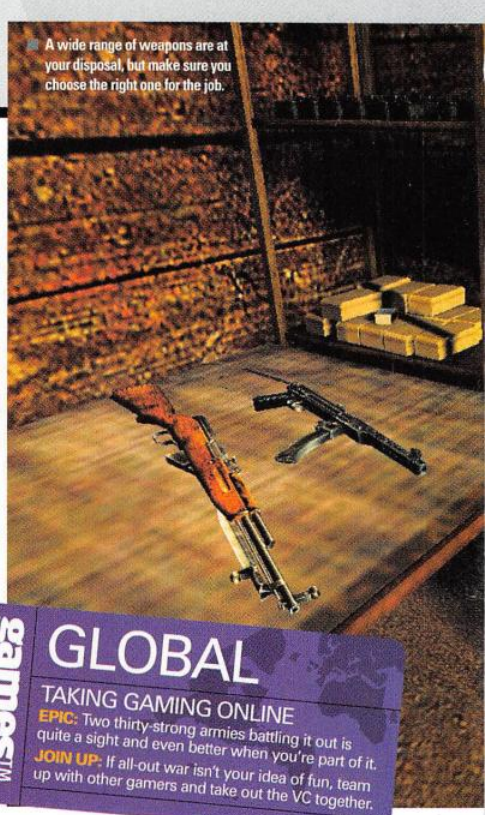
**After reaching a certain point in the game, players can trigger something called Mystery Events. Rather than the item-exchanging shenanigans of *Gold* and *Silver*, this mystery has a lot more scope to it. At the moment it can only be used to battle new trainers via the e-Cards that come packaged with *Ruby* and *Sapphire*, but it's plain to see that this is just the infancy of something that could grow to be as involving as the main game. But what connectivity is planned? At this point, only further Trainer e-Cards are confirmed (by the official website, no less) but to see this connective potential wasted would sadden our hearts in a way that only the absence of Wooper and Quagsire can rival. Still, there's always Jigglypuff…**



Your bunker is your centre of operations where you can read up on missions, backgrounds and equipment to keep yourself up to speed.



Play those VC snipers at their own game – pinch one of their weapons and use it against them.



A wide range of weapons are at your disposal, but make sure you choose the right one for the job.

games™ GLOBAL

TAKING GAMING ONLINE

**EPIC:** Two thirty-strong armies battling it out is quite a sight and even better when you're part of it.

**JOIN UP:** If all-out war isn't your idea of fun, team up with other gamers and take out the VC together.

# VIETCONG

## FANCY DOING YOUR BIT IN THE VIETNAM WAR? AH, GO ON...

**DETAILS**

**FORMAT REVIEWED**
PC

**ORIGIN**
US

**PUBLISHER**
Take Two

**DEVELOPER**
Illusion/Pterodon

**PRICE**
$89.95

**RELEASE**
Out Now

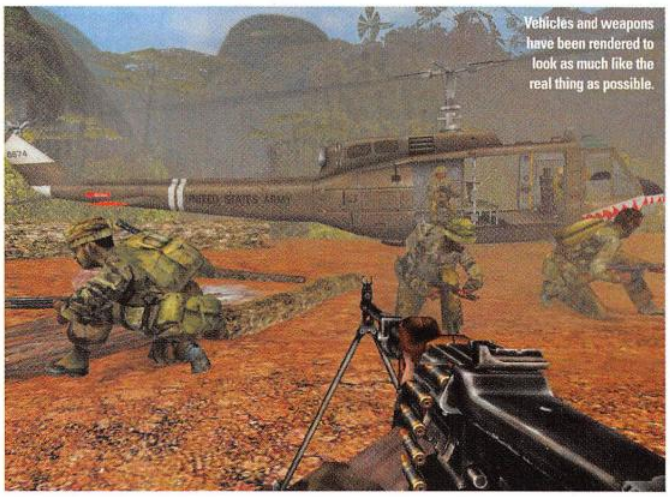
**PLAYERS**
1-64

**MINIMUM SPEC**
Pentium III 700, 256MB RAM, 32MB 3D card

**The PC seems to have a knack of attracting the best war games on the market.** As well as the wealth of strategy titles that would never work with the button limitations of a console controller, games like *Operation Flashpoint* and *Medal Of Honor* have seen their finest hours on the world's most expensive gaming platform. It's hard to pin down exactly why this is, but as long as PC owners are treated to reality-based shooters of such a standard, the trend shows no sign of letting up. The World Wars have been depicted in countless games, leaving smaller conflicts to take a back seat – until now. *Vietcong* drops the player straight into the worn shoes of Sergeant Steve Hawkins and follows his plight through the Vietnam War.

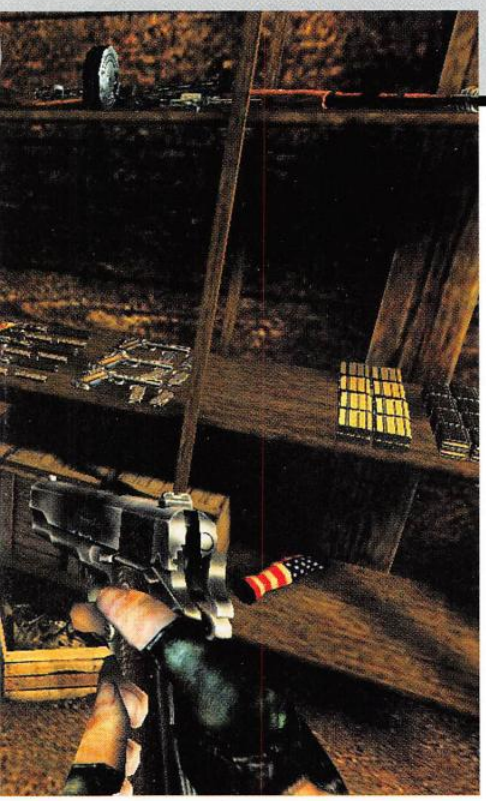
There's no two ways about it – *Vietcong* is a very good-looking game. Surroundings, character models, weapons and vehicles have all been impressively rendered to resemble their real-life counterparts and the likenesses are spot-on. You will, of course, need a respectable gaming-standard PC to get *Vietcong* to look anywhere near its best, but it can be tweaked to run fairly smoothly on a lower spec machine. Sound is very effective and, save for a little repetition in terms of quips and statements from your comrades, speech is well delivered and often useful too. In terms of presentation, it's hard to fault *Vietcong*'s style, but perhaps the best part is the character interaction – soldiers actually step over, round and across obstacles rather than simply jumping or crouching to avoid their general area. Impressive stuff.

To look this good takes ages, and, er, an extremely powerful PC. Luckily, the game will run on lower spec machines.



Vehicles and weapons have been rendered to look as much like the real thing as possible.





## AS REAL AS IT GETS

**It's plain to see that every effort has been put into making the experience as gritty and realistic as possible, and this manifests itself wonderfully. Soldiers climb over logs and rocks realistically and enemies use cover in the most devious places, making sure you're on your guard, not to mention overly cautious and jumpy at all times. Carrying capacity, armaments and terrain are all well within the constraints of realism too – even enemy reactions are splendidly realised and surprisingly intelligent. They'll run away if a comrade goes down, use grenades and react to yours... even set deadly traps that you probably won't find until it's too late. Conversation is also convincing – your squad reacts and informs you of enemies and traps, and you'll need to be in constant contact with those in charge if you want to keep on top of your mission objectives. Better concentrate on keeping that radioman alive then...**



You can almost feel the oppressive heat and humidity of the Vietnamese jungle. You're clearly sitting too close to the screen...



Notice the lack of a HUD? It's amazing we even lasted this long on Vietnam difficulty...



These are a few of the men you'll be in close contact with throughout your operations. Learn what they do and when to make them do it.

Despite the excellent use of graphics and sound, there's still one area that impressed us even more – atmosphere. *Vietcong* is blessed with a rare ability that we haven't truly seen since *Operation Flashpoint* in that it manages to instil a real sense of mortality and dread in the player. The language and realism does a more than serviceable job of maintaining this suspense between fire fights and paranoia, but the excessive use of profanities can verge on the gratuitous at times, cheapening things just a little. There are a few other little niggles that don't do this mood any favours – some mild path-finding problems exist which can make your point man take some rather curious routes, and the game does suffer a little from 'trial and error' syndrome in places. A lot of this is due to enemy snipers, as while you may not see them as they pick you off the first time, the game zooms in on your killer after they've hit you, leaving you free to easily return the favour on a later attempt.

Even to the untrained eye, it's evident that a lot of care and attention has been paid to the single-player side of the game and for once the same is also true of the online multiplayer. Rather than the tacked-on affair that devalues many similar games, the full-scale wars that *Vietcong*'s multi-player modes allow for complement the main game wonderfully – human opponents can be even more devious than the AI, making the experience even more edgy. There is also the ability to tackle quick scenarios and battles in Quick Fight mode, where progress through the main game makes extra firearms, items and areas available for your brief battling needs. These skirmishes are a welcome alternative to the main game as they are usually shorter, simpler and more intense than the main game mode's huge levels and evolving storylines.

Special mention is also in order for *Vietcong*'s hardest difficulty level, Vietnam. Ditching all FPS conventions, this supremely tough onslaught gives you no indication of how many bullets remain in your clip or what your health situation is, not that it'll make much difference since you're always only a few shots away from dying for your country. Vietnam mode will test even the best players, especially considering the game is anything but easy on the default settings. Loitering somewhere between the in-depth planning and tactics of *Rainbow Six* or *Hidden And Dangerous* and the more gung-ho shooters on the market, *Vietcong* fills the middle ground (for which there is definitely a market) more than adequately.

At a time when many similar games fail to live up to expectations, falling onto shelves unnoticed and soon finding their way to bargain bins, we had feared the same fate may befall *Vietcong*. Thankfully, not only does the finished game surpass our early expectations but with the right backing, this gritty shooter should find its way into homes, hard drives and sales charts alike as it deserves to. It's high time PC owners had another respectable shooter to wave in the faces of *TimeSplitters 2*, *Halo* and *Die Hard: Vendetta* (snigger), especially after the disappointment of *Unreal II*. Although we're still waiting for the next bona fide classic PC shooter, *Vietcong* is an exceptional product that stands head and shoulders above much of the competition.

**VERDICT 8/10**
ORIGINALITY IN A STAGNANT GENRE

### FAQs

**Q. WHY THE RATING?**
Aside from the violent nature of shooting people in the head, the game is littered with colourful language.

**Q. LIFESPAN?**
The main game is a decent length, and between the extra difficulty settings, quick fights and massive multiplayer potential, there's plenty to get your teeth into.

**Q. LINEARITY?**
Being mission-based, the structure itself is fairly linear but the way in which you're required to tackle tasks is anything but.

IGI 2



BETTER THAN

WORSE THAN



COUNTER STRIKE

**DETAILS**

**FORMAT REVIEWED**
PlayStation2

**OTHER FORMATS**
Xbox, PC

**ORIGIN**
US

**PUBLISHER**
Rockstar Games

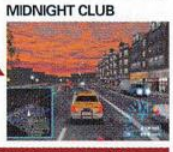
**DEVELOPER**
Rockstar San Diego

**PRICE**
$99.95

**RELEASE**
Out Now

**PLAYERS**
1-4

**MIDNIGHT CLUB**



**BETTER THAN**

**WORSE THAN**



**BURNOUT 2**

IF IT'S ILLEGAL, THEN IT'S GOT TO BE FUN... RIGHT?

# MIDNIGHT CLUB II

**As we all know, crime doesn't pay – unless your idea of payment is earning a few dollars a day doing the laundry inside a medium-security prison.** Of course, there's just no telling some people. Take Rockstar Games, for instance. As of late, the industry golden child seems to be making money hand over fist through the peddling of violence, theft and all-round skulduggery. With the immense success of the *GTA* series and now the release of illegal racing sequel *Midnight Club II*, Rockstar seems to have found its specialist subject and, obviously, there's little chance of a games publisher trying something new when it already knows exactly what it's good at.

The concept from the original game hasn't changed much for *Midnight Club II* – participate in illegal street races through several cities, hit checkpoints and try to reach the finish line in first place. In fact, to the untrained eye it's hard to see where any changes have been made to the game since the last one; you can still go pretty much anywhere you want to (including smashing through scenery and taking imaginative short cuts), you still win new vehicles by taking them from defeated rivals and there's still more than enough arcade-style racing to go round. Sadly, such is the way with sequels – particularly ones that focus on such a specific topic. Just because it's not that different though, doesn't mean it's not better; a fact that *Midnight Club II* proves by being far more enjoyable than the original.

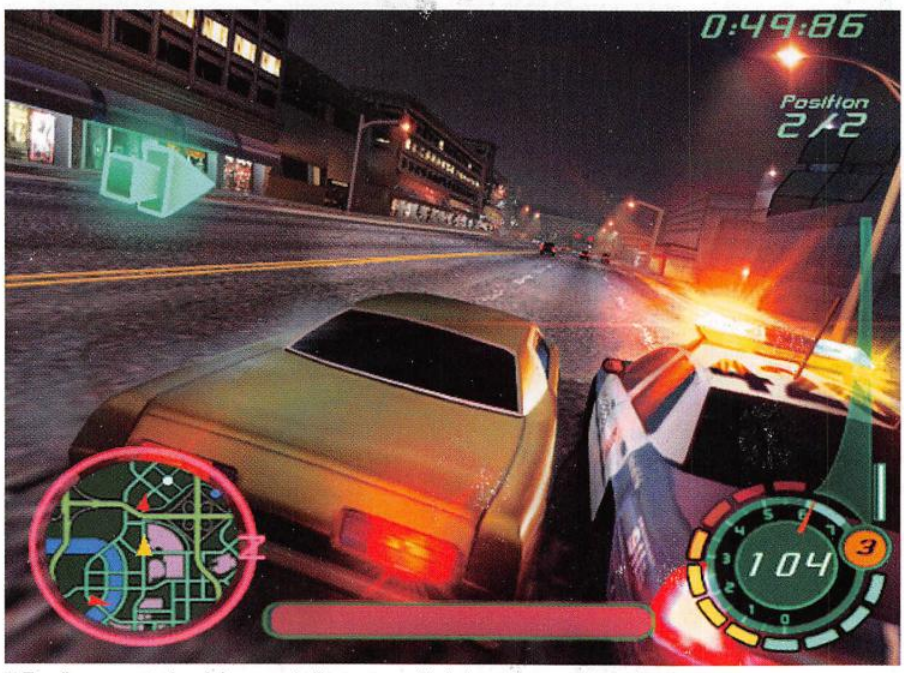
Like we said, the basic game itself hasn't really changed – instead, Rockstar San Diego has gone about improving everything else instead. It really is all about the little things when you look at how *Midnight Club II* is better than the original – there are more cars to earn (plus the now obligatory motorbike), more cities to race in (three, including Tokyo which was dropped from the original), more special abilities to discover for your vehicles and just, well, more in general. The look of the game is much improved, as is the soundtrack and voice acting – not surprisingly, the whole thing has much more of a *GTA* flavour about it. Best of all though, Rockstar has thought far enough ahead to include online play right out of the box – even though Sony hasn't given any specifics about when the PS2's online service will begin. Although PS2 players will only be able to go online against other PS2 owners (ditto for the PC and Xbox versions – damn the difficulties of cross-platform online gaming), the fact that it's there at all makes for some exciting possibilities in the near future. What's more, it's damn fun too; having sat down with all the online modes for several hours, we nearly couldn't tear ourselves away.

**FAQs**

**Q. HOW MANY TRACKS?**
There are only three cities to explore, but more than enough unique courses (and you can even create your own with the handy Race Editor).

**Q. BETTER THAN THE ORIGINAL?**
Most definitely, thanks to the distinctly *GTA* feel that each race has. Rockstar obviously knows where its strengths lie.

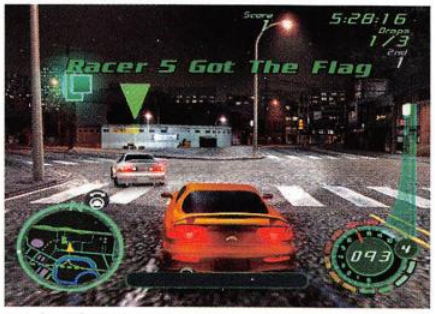
**Q. WHY SO DIFFICULT?**
It's probably less to do with the courses actually being challenging and more about the fact that at least one of the computer opponents in every race takes the perfect line every time. Yes – *every* time.




The police are a constant bane during races and will try to set up roadblocks (or even barge you off the road) in an attempt to stop you. They're no fun...




Riding the bike is damn tricky to begin with, but once you've mastered it you'll be pulling wheelies off like there's no tomorrow.




Capture The Flag is a great laugh against your friends, especially when played online – once you've played it, you'll be hooked.

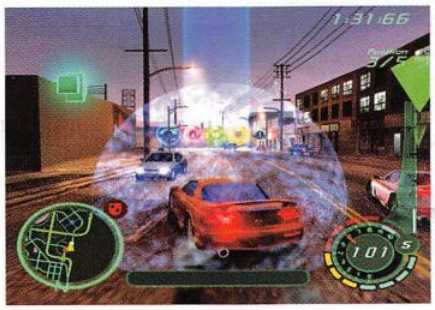
## LOOK MUM, NO WHEELS

**Although you'll start off the Career mode with the most basic of automobiles (and we do mean basic), you'll soon start winning bigger and better cars as you outsmart each of the challengers you meet. While some of these cars are simply slightly faster or more controllable versions of previous models, others offer special upgrades that allow you to increase your driving skills. From the more obvious examples like the Nitrous Boost (*The Fast And The Furious*, we salute you) to impressive techniques like Weight Balance, Slipstreaming and Burnout, each one adds something to the gameplay that you'll have to keep in mind when trying to reach the finish line in first place. If you make it really far into the game, you can even find cars that allow you to go up onto two wheels and race down really narrow spaces. Just like in real life, then.**

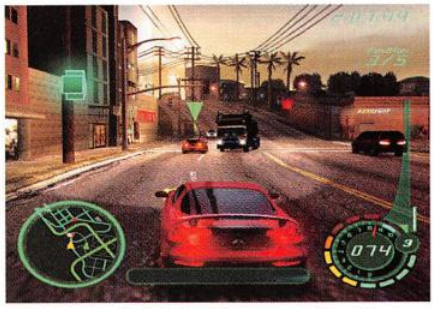


Unfortunately, the one problem that *Midnight Club II* suffers from is one that was present last time around. The free-roaming nature of the game means that there are no set courses to follow. While this is by no means a bad thing, it does mean that you will, without a doubt, lose virtually every race the first few times you play it through not knowing which way to go. Learning the best route for each course is obviously the key to success, but having to run through each race remembering exactly which turn to take and which short cuts are worthy of your attention can become a bit of a chore at times. Indeed, it's particularly bad on the later stages, where you'll always be facing at least one opponent who takes the perfect racing line every single time (using AI that suffers from what we like to refer to as *Mario Kart Syndrome*).

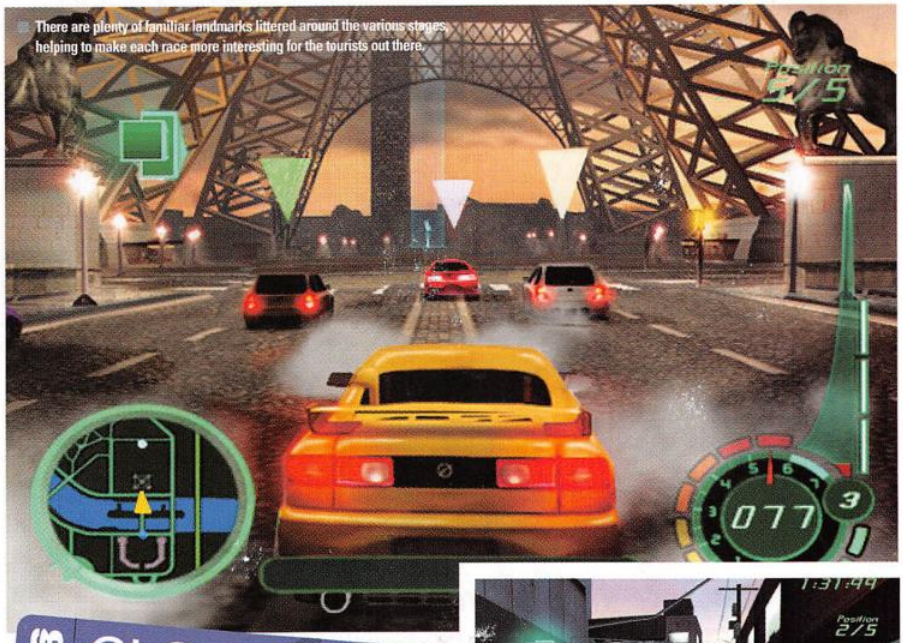
As you get further into the game, making even the tiniest mistake is cause enough to start the race all over again, simply because catching up with the leader becomes nigh-on impossible. If you want a comparison, it's almost akin to a racing version of *Rick Dangerous* – you race until you make a mistake, remember not to make it next time… until you hit another mistake and have to do it all over again. Frustrating? Certainly. But then the structure of *Midnight Club II* makes this the nature of the beast and therefore, it's something you just have to learn to live with. Obviously, *Midnight Club II* isn't going to be for everybody – a lack of realism will put off a lot of driving fans – but as arcade racing games go, *Midnight Club II* is good fun. On the other hand though, because success requires having to learn a lot of the tracks verbatim, the game isn't as immediate or intense as its nearest rival, *Burnout 2* – something that's been compounded in our minds thanks to the imminent release of the GameCube and Xbox versions. In a perfect world, you'd buy both – because it's not though, *Midnight Club II* ends up coming a very close second. Or first loser, in illegal street racing terms.



Some of the power-ups available during the multiplayer modes are pretty unbelievable, but you'll need them if you want to be a winner.



Although taking the shortest route is always a good idea, driving down the wrong side of the road into traffic is going to lead to trouble…



There are plenty of familiar landmarks littered around the various stages, helping to make each race more interesting for the tourists out there.



Falling behind? Then you'll probably want to take a bit of a shortcut down any number of alleyways. Just make sure you don't get lost, eh?

### games™ GLOBAL

**TAKING GAMING ONLINE**

**FIRST PLACE:** *Midnight Club II* takes the award for being the first online racer for three different formats.

**A LA MODE:** You can play against your friends (or enemies) on five different multiplayer game modes.

**VERDICT 7/10**

**FAST, FURIOUS AND FUN, BUT A TAD UNFAIR AT TIMES**

**XBOX** $99.95 OUT NOW



Thanks to the joys of Xbox Live, you can play this one online right now – although the controller isn't quite as good for the lightning-paced action. Still, it's a good start for Live.

**PC** $89.95 OUT NOW



The PC version obviously looks nice and sharp (if you've got a decent machine, that is) but you'll need a wheel or gamepad to get the most out of it or it might feel odd.



The lighting effects have been vastly improved since the standard version of *VF4* on PS2. Things look a lot more dynamic this time around.



The water effects in this arena are stunning. All, er, watery.



Environmental effects, such as sand that compresses beneath the fighters' feet, help to integrate the characters into the backgrounds.

**DETAILS**

**FORMAT REVIEWED**
PlayStation2

**ORIGIN**
Japan

**PUBLISHER**
Sony

**DEVELOPER**
SEGA AM2

**PRICE**
¥6,800 ($120)

**RELEASE**
TBA (Japan: Out Now, US: TBA)

**PLAYERS**
1-2

# VIRTUA FIGHTER 4 EVOLUTION

## WILL THIS UPDATE BRING ENOUGH NEW FEATURES TO WARRANT ITS RELEASE?

***Virtua Fighter 4* was one of SEGA's biggest sellers when it launched on PS2 last year – especially in Japan where more than 500,000 copies were bought.** Interestingly, despite such undisputed popularity, sales of *VF4* were still way behind *Virtua Fighter 2* on SEGA Saturn, which shifted 1.7 million copies following its Japanese launch in 1995. However, the *Virtua Fighter* series as a whole has always been viewed a little more like Vegemite in Australia, in that you tend to either love it or hate it. As 3D fighting games go, *Virtua Fighter* has always been the most complex, with literally thousands of moves available and myriad combos and reversals. However, timing each move so it successfully connects is of far more importance than it is with most other similar titles, and many gamers struggle to grasp the many subtle elements involved with this.

*Virtua Fighter 4 Evolution* continues the trend for tons of skill-based moves, though SEGA is gradually introducing a selection of new, more accessible characters. For example, Lei-Fei, who was first featured in the standard *Virtua Fighter 4*, certainly has more than his fair share of basic combos, while newcomers Gou Hinogami and Brad Burns both look a lot more *Tekken* than *Virtua Fighter*. In fact, a few other *Tekken*-esque elements (such as a flash of light when moves connect, or a camera change when certain throws are used) have also been 'borrowed' here – bringing a little flashiness to an otherwise realistic (and somewhat humourless) game.

However, *Virtua Fighter* fans shouldn't worry about this being any less hard-core than the previous games. Although the game is slightly more accessible, experienced players will be able to outwit newcomers with a few well-timed reversals. The game's designer, Yu Suzuki, points out that characters with many easy-to-perform combos always have weaknesses in other areas. Lei-Fei, for instance, can easily be countered during or after performing a combo as almost all of his attacks take him forwards in a straight line, leaving him open to strikes from the side or behind should his moves be dodged. This really is what *Virtua Fighter* is all about – the many nuances that exist could take years to learn, much to the enjoyment

**FAQs**

**Q. HOW MANY CHARACTERS?**
Fifteen, including newcomers Gou Hinogami and Brad Burns.

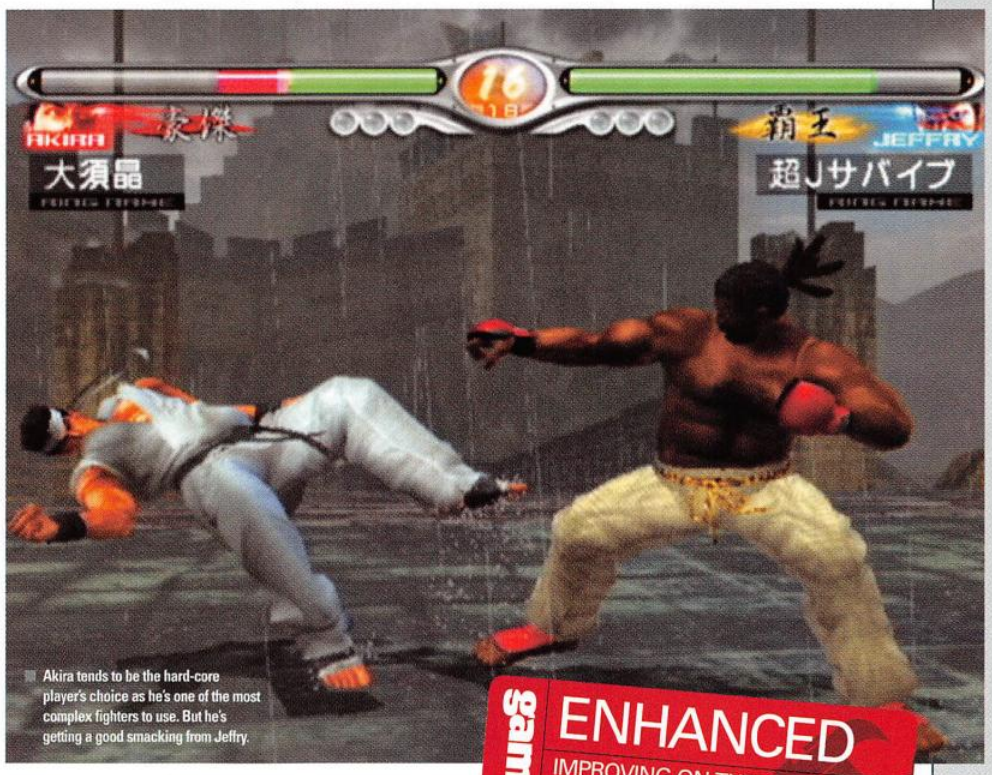
**Q. HAVE ANY CHARACTERS BEEN AXED?**
Taka Arashi, the sumo wrestler from *Virtua Fighter 3*, was removed because Yu Suzuki wasn't happy with the way his fat was simulated. Poor lad.

**Q. SOUND AND MUSIC?**
Interestingly, *VF4 Evolution* has quite an old-school-feeling soundtrack, though the voice samples are bang up to date.

## VALUE FOR MONEY

**Making a welcome return in *VF4 Evolution* is Quest Mode. This option sets certain tasks and missions in order to earn extra costumes, accessories and even artwork. You earn money which can be spent on whatever extras you like – so you could dress Aoi in a yellow jumpsuit, or even highlight her hair. Another fancy extra lets you play against simulated versions of Japan's best *Virtua Fighter* players. SEGA went all over Japan and recorded each of them fighting, then programmed the CPU to mimic their skill level and favourite moves. The game even includes maps of each area, along with photographs of the SEGA Parks where individual players were discovered.**




Akira tends to be the hard-core player's choice as he's one of the most complex fighters to use. But he's getting a good smacking from Jeffry.

of the fans. Of course, the standard version of *VF4* also included most of the elements we've already mentioned, though we couldn't help feeling that the PS2 translation was a little lacking.

Although Yu Suzuki and his team had done a commendable job of cramming almost all of the textures from the arcade version into the PS2's limited memory, the visual display left a lot to be desired. By the time *VF4* was released, most PS2 developers were getting to grips with the hardware's flickery output. But AM2 was new to the hardware, and although the team mastered most elements of the complex architecture, a lot of the work was in vain because so much was lost through jaggies and texture shimmering. It seems the team was well aware of the problem though, as *VF4 Evolution* has been greatly improved. Not only is the image quality faultless, but little details that had been omitted during the original translation (such as the coloured light-sourcing and dual searchlights that followed the fighters in the city rooftop level) have been reintroduced and help to make a much more complete product.

Aside from the visual adjustments, the arenas also benefit from a few quality amendments – most notably the ability to get ring-outs. Although some of the stages allowed this in the previous *VF* title, most arenas were surrounded by perimeter fences. By contrast, almost all of *Evolution*'s arenas feature either breakable barriers or gaps in the fences through which fighters can be knocked out of the ring. When Yu Suzuki was working on the arcade version of *Virtua Fighter 4*, he said that the uneven floors and split-level arenas seen in *Virtua Fighter 3* were to be removed so that more emphasis could be placed on the actual fighting, though we felt that the (mostly) enclosed arenas in *VF4* reduced some of the tension, strategy and excitement that had been so prominent before. *VF4 Evolution*, by comparison, balances all the elements perfectly, as well as a whole bunch of new features of its own – resulting in what's easily the best *Virtua Fighter* game so far.

After *Tekken*'s domination of the top spot for the past few years, it's nice to see the original 3D fighting game leading the beat-'em-up genre once more. However, with *Soul Calibur II* launching so closely behind it in Japan, the chances are that *VF4 Evolution*'s success (if any) will be short-lived.

games™ ENHANCED

IMPROVING ON THE ORIGINAL

**MORE FIGHTERS:** Two new fighters are here – Gou Hinogami, an assassin, and kickboxer Brad Burns.

**MORE MOVES:** All the existing characters have been subtly upgraded and are now more balanced.

VIRTUA FIGHTER 4



BETTER THAN

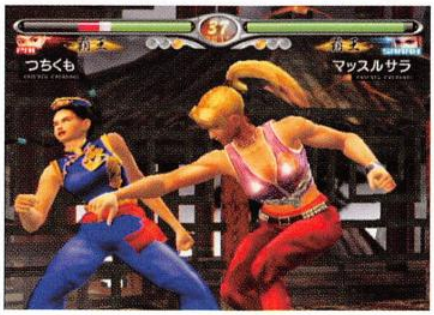
AS GOOD AS



SOUL CALIBUR II (ARCADE)

## VERDICT 8/10

EASILY THE BEST VIRTUA FIGHTER GAME SO FAR




During some throws, the camera moves in to increase the dramatic impact. From their faces, you can see how the fighters are feeling.




Many of the throws and counter attacks are incredibly complex – you can even see individual fingers moving as fighters strike various poses.

IS THIS ART REFLECTING LIFE? WELL, YES – ACTUALLY, IT IS

# CONFLICT: DESERT STORM

**DETAILS**

**FORMAT REVIEWED**
GameCube

**ORIGIN**
UK

**PUBLISHER**
SCi

**DEVELOPER**
Pivotal

**PRICE**
$99.95

**RELEASE**
Out Now

**PLAYERS**
1-4

**When it comes to quality squad-based tactical shooters, the GameCube has been sorely neglected.** Thanks to the disappointment that was *Rainbow Six: Ghost Recon*, the machine has been left lacking a decent example of this season's hottest genre. At least, it has until now. Despite the rather unfortunate timing of its release, *Conflict: Desert Storm* is a great example of not only the genre, but of how to tailor a ported game to a machine's abilities.

Starting the game alone, you'll need to rescue your SAS or US Delta Force buddy (you can choose which nationality to play) from an Iraqi camp before making your escape. By the third of 15 'search and destroy' missions you'll have up to four men under your control and your progression through the game will depend on your tactical use of their individual skills. Snipers, medics and a range of similarly specialist troops are available and you'll need to deploy them wisely rather than wade in, guns a-blazin'. While it may be tempting to send out one of your crew as cannon fodder, any men lost on a mission will be replaced by rookies who won't be as skilled as their fallen comrades. It's in your interests to plan ahead and keep your men alive – after all, they look out for you and will shout to warn you of dangers that you can't see (the allied and enemy AI is excellent, and much improved from the PC, Xbox and PS2 versions).

Although the missions are all rather similar, the way in which you complete them is up to you. This flexibility of approach combined with the unpredictability of enemy forces creates a tense and convincing atmosphere, which is further enhanced by an excellent score and some competent, but not flashy, graphics (although the frame rate and texture work has been tidied up from the previous versions). Where the game really excels, however, is in multiplayer mode. The complexity of the game means it's best to play with someone who knows what they're doing, and then you can team up, cover each other or express some manly grief when your mate takes a bullet. There's no graphical slowdown, and the depth of multiplayer mode more than compensates for the repetitiveness of the regular missions. If you can get over the unease of playing a game that looks like current news reports, you'll find a well-crafted and engaging title.

**VERDICT 8/10**
AN IMMERSIVE BLEND OF ACTION AND STRATEGY

RS: GHOST RECON



BETTER THAN

AS GOOD AS



SOCOM

games™ ENHANCED

IMPROVING ON THE ORIGINAL

**CLEVER BOY:** The enemy AI is smarter than before – no more 'psychic' foes who find you every time.

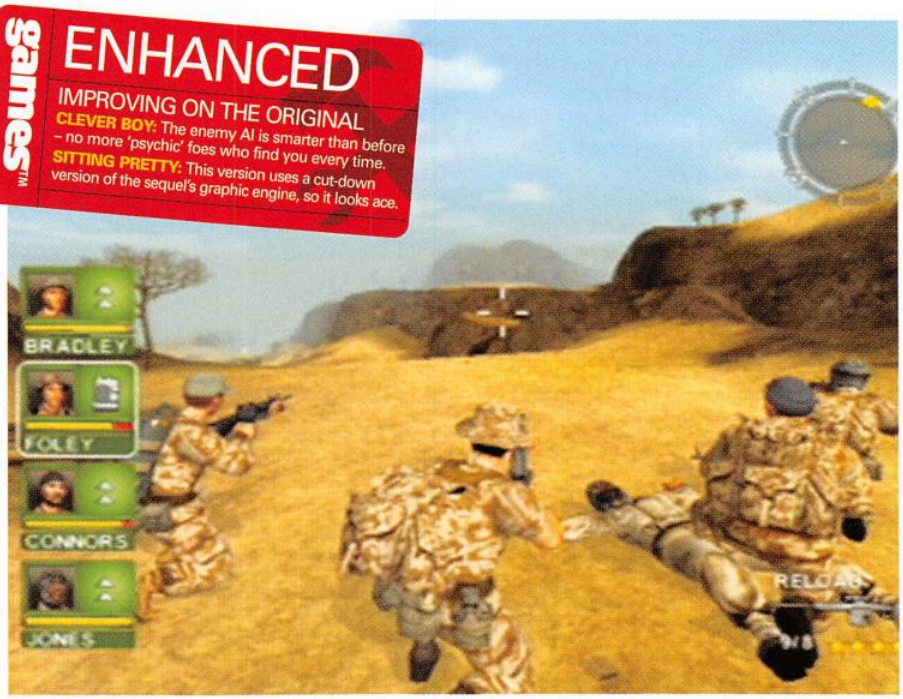
**SITTING PRETTY:** This version uses a cut-down version of the sequel's graphic engine, so it looks ace.




Lying low and aiming carefully will yield far better results than getting all gung-ho.




That map on the table will no doubt prove invaluable for one of your missions. Nick it while no-one's looking.




You've managed to capture one of the enemy, but don't get complacent. Top-notch artificial intelligence means that the opposition could jump out at you anywhere, any time. Then again, your side is pretty smart too so we're sure you'll think of something…

A PARAGON PUBLICATION
NO.1 MAY 2003
$0

# RETRO

MICRO GAMES ACTION



## THE BITMAP BROTHERS

*We speak to the legendary creators of Speedball II and Chaos Engine*

## SONIC THE HEDGEHOG

*Who's on the spiky family tree?*

## GAMES THAT TIME FORGOT

*Remember The Bonanza Bros?*

## THE DEFINITIVE HISTORY OF VIDEOGAMES

*We Take You On A Journey Back In Time*

**PLUS... GREAT GAMES BOSSES FROM YESTERYEAR**

## SUPER NINTENDO

## TETRIS BATTLE GAIDEN

MONTHLY RETRO GAMES REVIEW

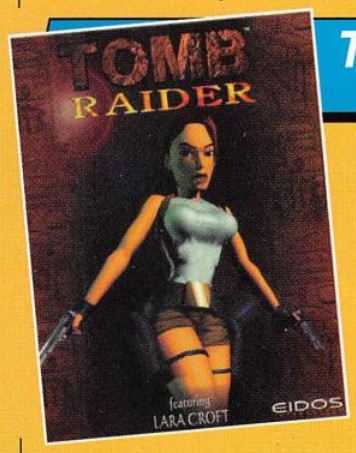
## FINAL FIGHT

Lady-boys in gaming shcoker!

OLIVER FREY

# LOOK BACK IN ANGER

**Along with Mario, Sonic and Pac-Man, Lara Croft ranks as one of the most celebrated videogame characters of all time. But why? Come on, admit it, *Tomb Raider* (and those pesky follow ups) was, is and always will be awful.**

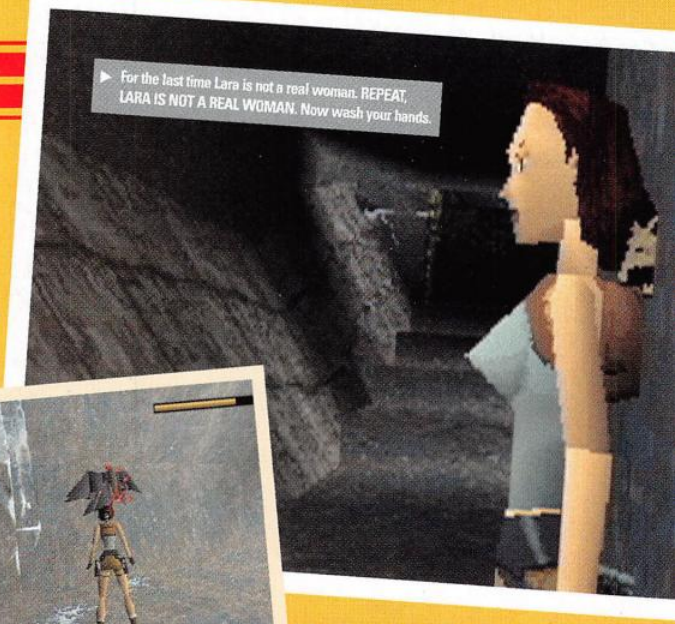



## TOMB RAIDER
*...featuring Lara Croft*

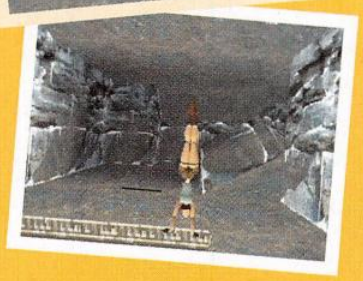
Despite what the marketing men employed by the games industry might say, the majority of people who play videogames are spotty teenage males, who, incidentally, have trouble talking to members of the opposite sex. Indeed, to paraphrase Jona Lewie: "You'll always find me/us/you in the kitchen at parties". Don't write in complaining about our stereotyping of gamers, because that last statement is a scientific fact (or something like that) and if you still don't believe us take a look in that mirror right now. See that pasty, sun-shunning skin, do you? Well, do you? Of course you do. Now pick up that stiffened sports sock lying next to your bed and throw it away before mother sees it. Thank you.

Anyway, when Core unleashed Lara 'big-bosomed speleologist who likes shooting animals' Croft onto an unsuspecting public in 1996, her posh accent combined with her, erm, ample assets ensured that publisher Eidos enjoyed great success with the title. In fact, it's fair to say that the first videogame to feature Ms Croft (yes, for you at the back, we're talking about *Tomb Raider* and its tawdry spin-offs) proved to be a right royal money-spinner.

Now, we probably run the risk of being crucified for saying this, but in spite of the all the plaudits heaped on the original game, we here at **games**™ thought it was little more than a sub-standard *Prince Of Persia* clone wrapped up in a (for the time) mildly impressive 3D engine.





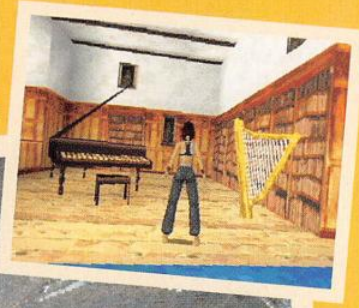
Admittedly, some might say that comparing Core's effort to Jordan Mechner's classic game is tantamount to describing *Halo* as a glorified *Wolfenstein 3D* clone. Well, to those people we say: "Either strut your stuff or bog off".

So why do we hate *Tomb Raider* so much? Where to start? We could fill a tome the size of a telephone directory with criticisms. Sadly, page counts dictate that only a few of our gripes can make it into this piece (see below).

### The case against

The original *Tomb Raider*, and, by turn, Lara herself, represented the most base exploitation of the teenage male market we can recall (even the *Leisure Suit Larry* games showed more taste). The crushingly dull *Tomb Raider* sequels were even worse, although on the evidence of a press release we found in a bin last year (before we'd seen the game in motion) *Lara Croft Tomb Raider: The Angel Of Darkness* shows "a lot of promise".

Of course, if this latest sequel doesn't do well then we'll bet our bottom dollar that Lara will, shortly after, be making an appearance in her very own comedy karting game where she drives around wacky landscapes firing red shells at wolves, bears and wasps. Keep reading the news section of this magazine for more info on the latter title.





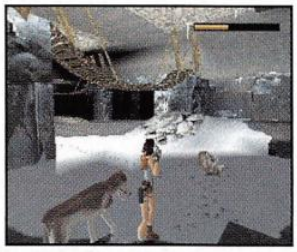

## WE HATE LARA BECAUSE....

**1** The controls were as stodgy as one of grandma's Anzac cookies. If we want to slowly creep up against the edge of a large grid-like platform, only to step a little too far forward and plummet to our doom, then we'll go out (for no charge, we might add) and slowly creep up against the edge of a large grid-like platform only to step a little too far forward and plummet to our doom.

**2** Shooting wolves/bears/wasps by holding down a button and then jumping around a bit is about as much fun as buffing your own pylon with a scourer. If we want to go out and shoot wolves/bears/wasps by holding down a button and jumping around a bit then we'll... (Yes, yes, we get the idea – Ed).

**3** *Mario 64* (which was, by the way, immensely overrated – rescuing baby penguins anyone?) had come out before it and done 3D platforming so much better.

**4** That bloody grunt she made when she hit a wall (which happened almost every minute due, in part, to the awful controls – see point one).



# GAMES THAT TIME FORGOT...

**This month we take a look back at SEGA's visually stunning and highly original steal-'em-up Bonanza Bros.**

## BONANZA BROS.

Format: **Arcade (first), various home conversions**
Manufacturer: **SEGA**
Year: **1990 (home conversions later)**



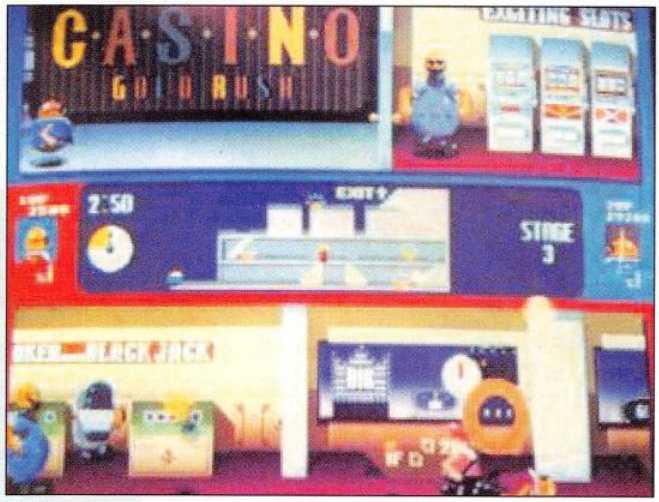

▶ Home conversions (including the MegaDrive port) lacked the original's flair.

When SEGA released its hugely underrated *Bonanza Bros.* coin-op in 1990 it couldn't claim to have pioneered burglary-based gaming – Alligata's *Blagger*, among others, had got there a lot earlier. However, while the title's premise may not have been wholly original its quirky gameplay most certainly was.

Having been employed by a shady character to test the security of his properties, one or two players took control of Robo and Mobo, the brothers of the title. This pair of former cons had to rob a number of heavily guarded pseudo-2D locations (including banks, casinos and mansions) whilst avoiding detection. With the requisite stolen items in their possession, escape could be made via a blimp anchored at the top of each building.

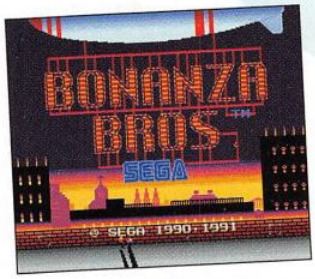
The game screen was divided into three horizontal strips – the top and bottom of these displayed the current surroundings of each brother, while the thinner middle strip contained a shared map that showed the players' location within the building as a whole. As progress was made, the guards you were trying to evade became increasingly vigilant and although each player possessed a stun-gun that could momentarily daze certain foes, the name of the game here was stealth.

The beautiful 2D locations allowed players to tuck themselves up against walls and hide behind parts of the scenery while foes strolled past oblivious to their presence. Learning the guards' patrol patterns was pivotal to success and good timing was required to make your way through the tricky later stages. In addition to the roving guards, innocuous items such as rakes (step on these and they smacked you in the face, temporarily stunning you) also had to be avoided. The game was later ported to a number of home systems – including SEGA's own MegaDrive – but none of the conversions could match the sumptuous visuals and catchy music generated by the coin-op's System 24 hardware. Here's hoping that a perfect translation may appear on a retro compilation in the future as the original isn't currently supported by any coin-op emulators.




▶ This photo may not show it, but the arcade version of *Bonanza Bros.* featured some extremely stylised 2D visuals.

| | |
|---|---|
| **Presentation** | **80%** |
| **Graphics** | **92%** |
| **Playability** | **90%** |
| **Addictive qualities** | **90%** |
| **OVERALL** | **90%** |



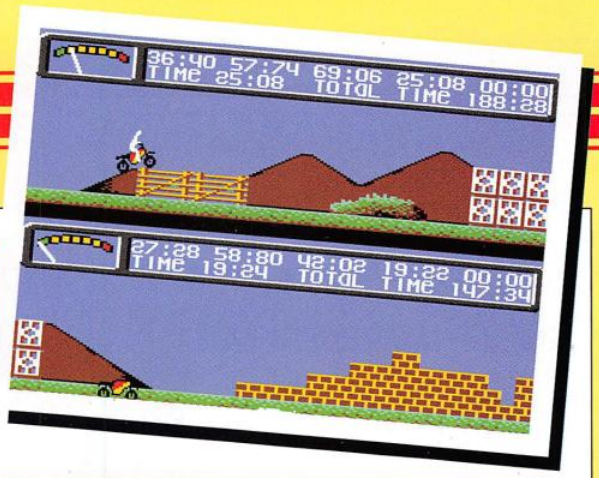

▶ The screen was divided so that you could follow the progress of each brother. The bar in the middle had a handy map in case you got lost while out on the blag.




▶ If spotted by the patrolling security guards your best bet was to scarper and try to hide yourself away until the enemies went back to their normal patterns.



# WHY DON'T THEY REMAKE?



## K·I·K·S·T·A·R·T II–THE CONSTRUCTION SET



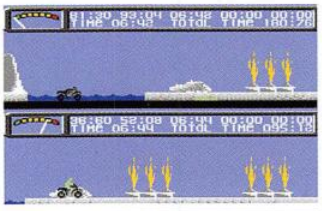

***Back in the golden days of videogaming you didn't need cheap gimmicks such as unlockable footage of naked girls to sell your games – titles stood or fell on their gameplay merits. It may be almost 16 years old but Mastertronic's Kikstart II (which remains highly playable today) is surely a title aching for a next generation makeover.***

Released: **1987**
Publisher: **Mastertronic**
Developer: **Mr Chip Software (Shaun Southern, Andrew Morris and Peter Liggett)**
Format: **Commodore 64, Spectrum, Amstrad CPC**

Following the success of the original *Kikstart: Off-Road Simulator* (1985), Shaun Southern came up with an exceptionally enjoyable sequel, which incorporated a fine construction set option into the bargain. This feature allowed creative gamers to design their own stages – you could construct a course made entirely out of hills, jumps and telephone boxes, or even leave a stage totally flat for speed trials.



▶ Wreckless riding saw your character being hurled from his bike, resulting in a frustrating wait until you could remount.



▶ Races took place in both daylight and night-time conditions. Certain stages were also covered in snow, making things even trickier.

In case you're not familiar with the *Kikstart* games, one or two players rode scrambler bikes over a series of obstacle packed locations via a 2D split-screen display. Racing against either a human or computer controlled rival the object was to get to the end of each level in as short a time as possible. Given that the *Kikstart* games were budget releases it's remarkable to think that both were far superior to many of the full price titles of their day.

The gameplay mechanics were simple enough – accelerate, brake, wheelie and jump – but the way players had to approach each obstacle in a different fashion lent the action a surprising level of depth. Fences and tyres had to be taken slowly or you risked being thrown unceremoniously from your machine, whilst ski jumps and hills could be used to elevate your vehicle over telephone boxes and suchlike.

With two equally matched players, races could be tense affairs that often went down to the wire. Fans of the game will no doubt recall the agonising wait after a crash as the screen scrolled slowly onwards to the next flat section of track where it repositioned you.

A few *Kikstart* clones followed, but the series remains in the past. Hopefully some shrewd publisher will pick up the rights to *Kikstart II* and commission a new next-gen version.



▶ The split-screen view let you keep track of your opponent (and let them see your pitiful mistakes).

### CONSTRUCTION TIME AGAIN

The inclusion of a stage construction option added a whole new element to the action. Once you'd tired of the pre-designed levels you could design your own courses for you and your friends to race on.

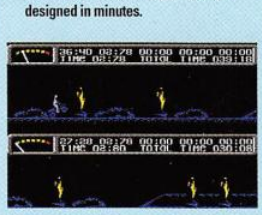
This feature was well implemented and easy to use, allowing you to get on with the task in hand – namely creating the most fiendish track you could imagine; a telephone box here, some bumpy ground there and a few springs just to finish things off.

Indeed, while revisiting *Kikstart II* hours flew by as we tinkered about with ramps, bumps and hills.

Needless to say, this feature added greatly to the game's lifespan. Fine stuff.



▶ Using the construction set was a breeze and complex stages could be designed in minutes.



▶ Items were selected with the simple press of a key button; the size of certain obstacles could be tinkered with too.

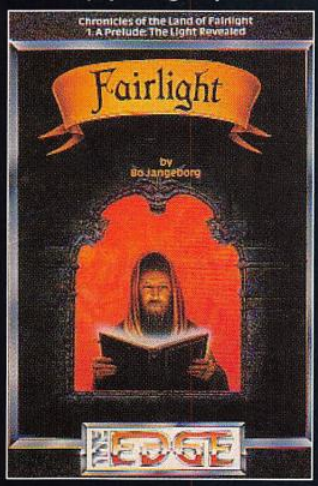
# GONE BUT NOT FORGOTTEN...

We reminisce about things from the videogame industry of yesteryear which have sadly disappeared from the gaming scene

## GAMES ON CASSETTE TAPES

If your first experience of videogames came with the arrival of cartridge-based systems such as the Master System or NES then the bittersweet experience of games being stored on standard cassettes will no doubt be lost on you. Waiting ten minutes for *Fairlight*, for example, to load in (Lord, did that game ever take its sweet time) with only a static loading screen to entertain you was a truly tense experience, and not knowing if the program would crash at the last minute provided thrills that few modern titles could compete with.

Worse still were the multi-loaders (if you weren't there, don't ask). Generally speaking they were less reliable than a rust-riddled VW Campervan with 600,000 kms on the clock.




Fortunately (unless you were a publisher), there was a flipside to all this. You see, less scrupulous gamers could copy their mates' entire game collections onto a blank C-90 tape, thus saving them vast sums of money. Naturally, we at games™ – being the God-fearing sorts we are – never indulged in such shenanigans.

Anyway, as far as we're concerned you can take your DVD storage medium and shove it. Here's hoping Sony reverts to old-fashioned cassette storage for its next PlayStation.

# ALL YOUR BASE...

We look at some of the worst translations of Japanese text inflicted on gamers – starting with the most famous of all.

## ZERO WING

You remember the *All Your Base...* movie that swept across the Internet a while ago, don't you? It was funny the first time round then just became plain annoying. The game footage used in the movie was ripped from the intro sequence of *Zero Wing* on the MegaDrive. It was a fairly entertaining, side-scrolling shoot-'em-up where the player's ship could use a tractor beam to pull in enemy craft and then use them as weapons. All this is academic though – what's important is that the 'All your base...' dialogue stands as a fine example of the dodgy translations that Western gamers had to endure during the 16-bit console era. The amazing thing is that there were even worse offenders out there, which we'll show you over the coming months.




# GREAT GAME BOSSES

## MARIA: JET SET WILLY

Format: **Spectrum, C64, various 8-bit formats**
Publisher **Software Projects**
Developer: **Matthew Smith**
Year: **1984**



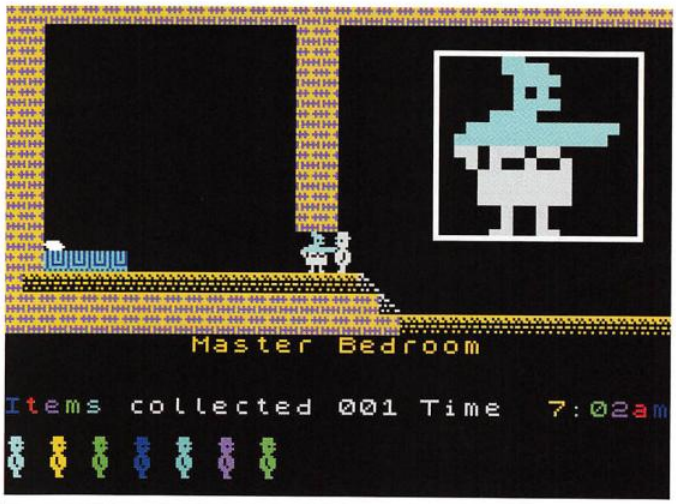

▶ If the clock reached midnight the timer reset itself, allowing you to carry on with the task in hand. Blimey.

The videogame universe is populated by some of the most menacing bosses you could imagine. Whether it be huge, chainsaw-wielding zombies, fire-spitting dragons or massive attack ships (probably on fire off the shoulder of Orion), most games chuck some kind of super tough character in your direction. However, the memory of all these bosses will be lost in time, like tears in rain, when compared to the sheer terror generated by a rather butch housekeeper known as Maria. Oh yes, as videogame bosses go, Miner Willy's disgruntled housemaid must rank as one of the toughest bosses in history.

The title she appeared in was, of course, *Jet Set Willy*, where she blocked the entrance to our hero's bedroom. To paraphrase Kyle Reese in *The Terminator*: "Maria was out there! She couldn't be bargained with. She couldn't be reasoned with. She didn't feel pity, or remorse, or fear. And she absolutely would not stop, ever (well maybe after the game's time limit has expired), until you'd cleaned your newly acquired fancy mansion".

While most bosses give up the ghost after taking a few laser blasts to the head or suchlike, Maria was made of tougher stuff. Before she would make herself scarce, poor Willy (who was suffering from a demon of a hangover) had to collect every piece of rubbish left over from the previous night's raucous party. This meant exploring every last inch of his strange mansion whilst avoiding its bizarre denizens. Only when every last bit of trash had been collected could Willy retire to the comfort of his bed (not that it turned out that way in the end).

No doubt about it, Maria was an intimidating guardian. But the question that always got us was why didn't Willy save himself all the hassle and just fire her? Answers on a postcard please...




▶ As you entered the Master Bedroom, Maria stood on guard. If you tried to barge past her Willy lost a precious life.




classic machine

# SUPER NINTENDO
## ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM

### "WHY I LOVED MY SNES"

The SNES isn't so much like your first girlfriend, but it was definitely the first girl to let you put your hand up her jumper. You knew Nintendo made great games – it had proven that with the brick-like NES, but this time they made games that took over your life. Out were the basic sprites and in was pseudo-3D gaming (thanks to Mode 7) prompting countless 'My one's better than your one!' arguments up and down the country. The SNES was the Escort XR3i to the Mega Drive's Capri: the Capri was there first, but the XR3i was more go and less show.

***Steve Takle***

## PROBABLY THE GREATEST CONSOLE IN THE WORLD... EVER

For many, the Super Nintendo Entertainment System (or SNES to its chums) was, and remains, the best games console ever released – the successor to the NES and direct combatant of the 16-bit wonder, the Mega Drive.

Launched in Japan on 21 November 1990 (it hit the US in September 1991 and Europe in April 1992) along with the highly anticipated *Super Mario World* and *F-Zero* (another classic in the making). In Japan alone, demand for the new console rose to near fever pitch – so much so that Nintendo had to deliver the shipments of consoles at night for fear that the rumours that yakuza gangs might hijack the lorries to sell the consoles on the black market would prove true.

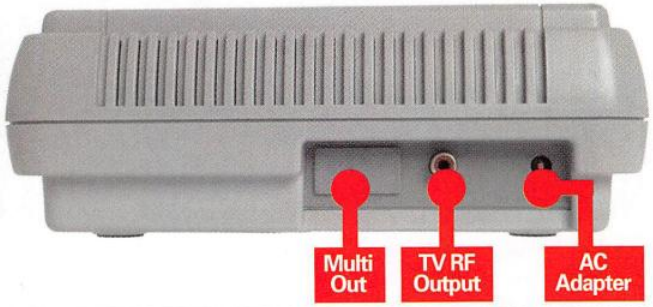
Though the SNES was, by anyone's standards, incredibly successful, it was nowhere near as popular as the NES, which sold upwards of 50 million units in the US alone. The reason for this was twofold: on one hand, the success of the NES meant that gamers were reluctant to give up their old console for the SNES (exacerbated by the fact that Nintendo had decided that it would be too expensive to make the SNES backwardly compatible with NES cartridges). This along with some pretty stiff competition from the Mega Drive ensured that sales, whilst good, were unimpressive when compared to those of its predecessor.

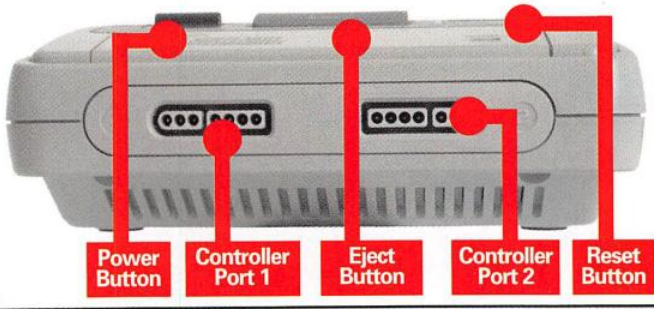
Nevertheless, the SNES is an enduring favourite due to the sheer variety and quantity of games available. Whatever your gaming predilections you could be sure that Nintendo's gaming delight had it covered. The list is endless, but it's hard not to go all moist-eyed at the fond memories of such games as *Secret Of Mana, Street Fighter II Turbo, Contra III, R-Type III, Darius Twin, StarFox, Pilot Wings, Super Bomberman, Super Castlevania* and countless others. What's more, all of the above and the hundreds we have omitted are every bit as playable today as they were then.

The design of the console (certainly the European and Japanese models) is elegant and the joypad is still functional, if a little basic when compared with the sleeker Mega Drive pad. But of all the retro videogames systems, this is the one that any self-respecting gamer simply has to have.



## AROUND THE BACK...



## SUPER METROID

*Super Metroid* places you once more in control of Samus, who has taken the last living Metroid hatchling to the Ceres Base to allow scientists to study it and harness its powers for the benefit of mankind. Naturally, things don't go to plan and upon receiving a distress call from said base Samus has to hot-foot it back to find an escaped Metroid, lots of dead scientists and, of course, Mother Brain in robot form up to no good. Brilliant gameplay fused with some atmospheric visuals and sound effects ensured that this game went down in history as being more than a bit good.




# KEY GAMES

**Picking great games that appeared on the SNES is like shooting fish in a packed-to-capacity barrel. Choosing everyone's favourites is quite another matter...**



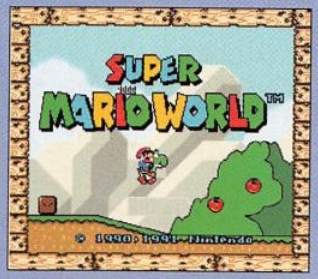

## IT COULD HAVE BEEN SO DIFFERENT...

In a peculiar twist of fate, it was Nintendo that was partly responsible for bringing Sony into the world of videogames. From 1988 onwards, Nintendo courted the skills of Sony regarding a disc-based add-on for the SNES. Over the years, Nintendo flitted from Sony to Philips and back again until deciding to dispense with the idea altogether, due possibly to concerns regarding piracy (always a major concern for Nintendo, particularly N64 and GameCube) and the dismal performance of the Mega CD.

Thanks to this dalliance, Sony, clearly not wishing to waste the time and resources spent developing the add-on, went on to develop something called the PlayStation. At a time when Nintendo had something like a 70 per cent share of the videogames market, some wondered whether Sony could challenge the combined might of Nintendo and SEGA. Little did they know...

## SUPER MARIO WORLD

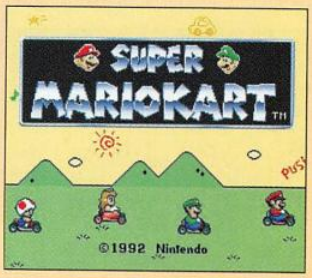
Until recently, you simply couldn't launch a Nintendo console without a *Mario* title and the SNES was home to a corker. Considering that the Mega Drive was already very successful (due to being launched the previous year), *Super Mario World* had to be the kind of killer app that would draw gamers back to the Nintendo fold. Thankfully, Miyamoto delivered one of the most satisfying gaming experiences to date. Although it drew heavily from its predecessors, the marriage of the gaming elements along with finally giving Mario a cape (confirming the plumber as the superhero that we knew him to be) proved to be one of the most satisfying *Mario* titles to date.




▶ The finest *Mario* game to date? We reckon. And while you may disagree, you're clearly wrong.

## SUPER MARIO KART

This game was responsible for blistered thumbs the world over and doubtless many premature deaths of SNES pads. *Super Mario Kart* was a racing game that pitted you against all your favourite characters with added Nintendo fun. Of course, racing as Mario, Luigi et al was the hook but it was the combination of power-ups, precision control and, most importantly of all, the two-player game that proved irresistible to gamers. In fact, many of those who have enjoyed *Mario Kart* maintain that it is the superlative instalment of the series and we wait with limbs and appendages crossed in the hope that the soon-to-be-announced GameCube version eclipses the granddaddy of them all...




▶ Proof that you don't need a fancy coin-op cabinet to make the best racing game ever.

# SUPER NINTENDO
## ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM

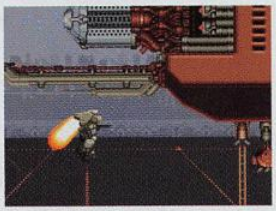
classic machine





















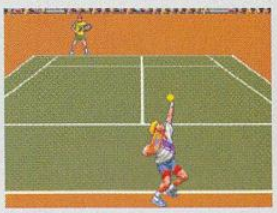
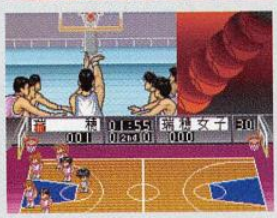


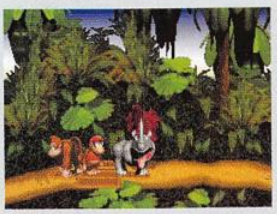






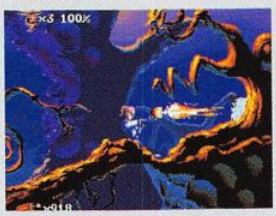






















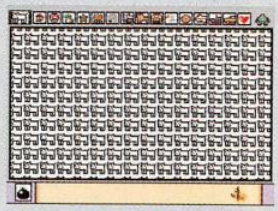






シナリオ選択
幕末編












Do you need a lesson?



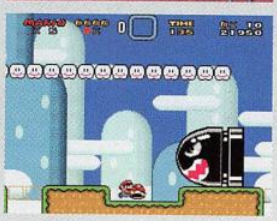















## THIS MONTH'S FAVOURITES

Deadlines always seem to be getting shorter and shorter. But we managed to unwind with this lot...

### FRUIT MACHINE SIMULATOR

**Codemasters (1987)** There's something oddly therapeutic about pumping money into a virtual fruit machine (even if you can't win cash).



### FINAL FIGHT

**Capcom (1989)** It may not offer staggeringly subtle gameplay, but the fantastic character design and fluid fight action still managed to keep us enthralled.



### KIKSTART II

**Mastertronic (1987)** This budget-priced motorcycle game is a damn sight more entertaining than a great deal of the dross that comes into the office each month.



### GUNHED

**Hudson Soft (1989)** Hudson Soft's classy PC Engine shooter is up there with the best. Great visuals and non-stop action combine for a real adrenaline rush.



# DON'T GO CHANGING

Back in the early Nineties, firms like SEGA and Nintendo (particularly) were still somewhat touchy about the manner in which the fairer sex were being depicted in games. We take a look at some of the bizarre changes the US branches of the two companies inflicted on the home conversions of Capcom's *Final Fight*.



▶ Oh, whilst we're on the subject, Poison and Roxy were not (as has mistakenly been reported elsewhere) transvestites, as this little piece of artwork surely proves, or does it?

## FINAL FIGHT

It's remarkable how attitudes can change so quickly, a case in point being the depiction of women in games. Twenty years ago, women in videogames were mostly there to be rescued by men, whether it be by a hunky kung-fu master or a knight in shining armour. In the new millennium all that has changed, with games like *Dead Or Alive*, *Tomb Raider* and *Ready 2 Rumble Boxing* featuring strong female characters who are at least equal in ability to their male counterparts.

However, reaching this point wasn't a smooth ride and even in the Nineties certain videogame firms still weren't entirely comfortable with the virtual female form. A fine example of the unease about female characters is the treatment of Capcom's home conversions of *Final Fight* in the good old US of A. When the game appeared on the SNES in the US it was missing, among other things, a whole level and one of the selectable characters – granted, these omissions were more than likely down to the small size of the game's cart. Less explainable though was the disappearance of the two sleazy female street punks Poison and Roxy, who were replaced with two 'nice' characters called Billy and Sid.

So on their journey to the States the two ladies had undergone a small operation and were now, er, men. Seemingly somebody at Nintendo Of America didn't like the idea of beating up women (scantily clad women at that) so out with the gals it was. A couple of other alterations were also made to protect the naïve minds of young Americans: the names of the first and second level bosses (Damnd and Sodom) were changed to Thrasher and Katana respectively (talk about over-protective).

SEGA were also at it though, and in the US Mega CD version of *Final Fight* (probably the best home conversion of the game) Poison and Roxy fell foul of the censors once again. It wasn't quite so drastic this time round and the pair remained women, although their clothing had been altered so they were showing off less flesh. Of course, in these days of *Dead Or Alive Xtreme Beach Volleyball* few people would bat an eyelid at a bit of skin, but back then the powers that be obviously thought we weren't ready for such filth.



▶ Take a look at the foxy Roxy (sorry) in the Super Famicom version of *Final Fight*. Pretty little thing, isn't she?



▶ Look at the Japanese Mega CD version of Poison (left). Then in come the self-appointed guardians of morality at SEGA USA with a new top for the poor young lady (right).



▶ Nintendo Of America changed the name of Sodom (pictured) to Katana. The name of the first level boss, Damnd, was switched to Thrasher. WHY?



▶ Clearly somebody felt that punching women was un-American, hence Roxy (and Poison) were replaced with Sid and Billy in the US version.

# T·E·T·R·I·S B·A·T·T·L·E G·A·I·D·E·N



Greatest RETRO Game Ever

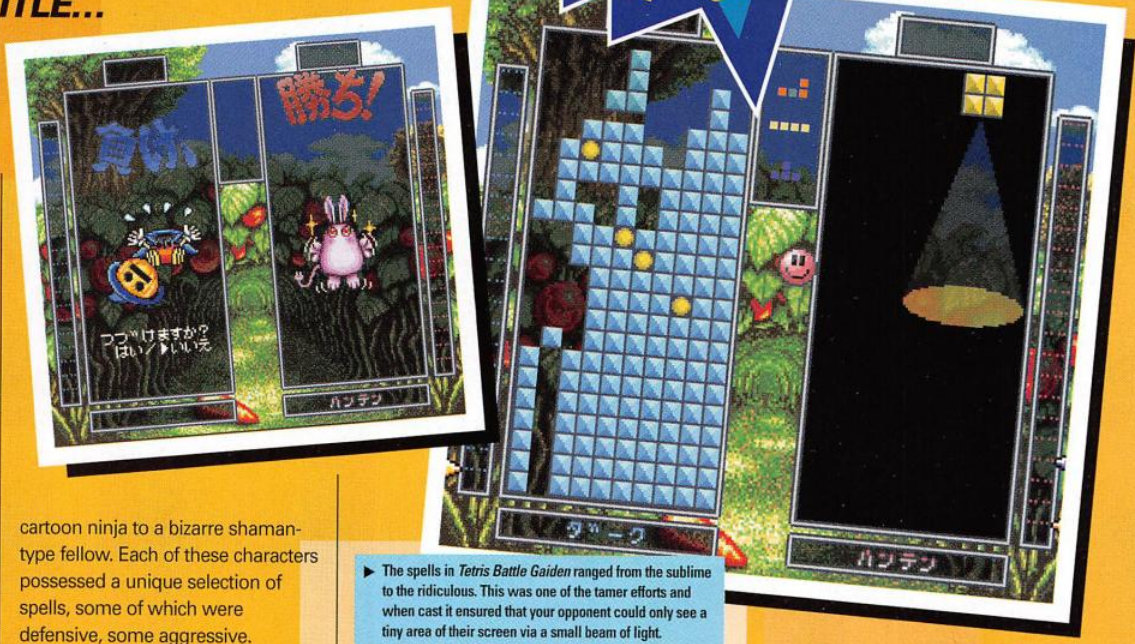
## THIS MONTH WE TAKE A LOOK AT WHAT THE FEW GAMERS WHO HAVE PLAYED IT DESCRIBE AS "THE BEST VERSION OF TETRIS EVER MADE". AND WE'RE NOT TALKING ABOUT THE GAME BOY TITLE...

Format: **Super Famicom**
Publisher: **Bullet Proof Software**
Price: **$100 (approx. import price)**
Released: **1993**

Ask most people to name the best version of *Tetris* they've played and 99.9 per cent will answer: "the Game Boy version". We'd concede that this is certainly one of the best incarnations of Alexey Pajitnov's amazingly addictive puzzle game, but we'd also argue a case for the little-known Super Famicom title, *Tetris Battle Gaiden* – a game which, to the best of our knowledge, never made it outside of Japan.

So, what's so special about it? Well, unlike many *Tetris* variants that have cropped up in the past, *Battle Gaiden* got all the ingredients just right – crucially the controls (which often feel a bit stiff in some versions) were spot on, making for a beautifully fluid gaming experience. But the game's real stroke of genius was the inclusion of eight different selectable characters ranging from a cartoon ninja to a bizarre shaman-type fellow. Each of these characters possessed a unique selection of spells, some of which were defensive, some aggressive.

However, before you could cast said spells (via a double tap of 'up' on the D-pad) you had to keep an eye out for the small orbs that appeared within certain pieces. When you completed a line with such an orb it flew into your magic gauge (a further three orbs could be stored in addition to this), giving you a range of four different spells to choose from. Granted, this may not sound revolutionary, but mastering the art of when to use your magic lent an already strategic game even more depth.



▶ The spells in *Tetris Battle Gaiden* ranged from the sublime to the ridiculous. This was one of the tamer efforts and when cast it ensured that your opponent could only see a tiny area of their screen via a small beam of light.

Furthermore, you had to be mindful of your opponent's spells and consider how you could counteract these with your own. For example, the princess could cast a sneaky level two spell which (temporarily) reflected back the effects of the next spell cast by an opponent.

The pumpkin-like wizard character could summon bats that would steal the magic orbs in your foe's possession, whilst other characters were capable of performing strange, almost hallucinogenic, strikes that would warp and invert the screen. Of course, traditional *Tetris* rules still applied here and if a player's tiles spilled above the top of the playing area then they lost the round.

Unless you've played it, it's very difficult to convey just how good *Tetris Battle Gaiden* was. Trust us, if you own a Super Famicom and ever chance upon a copy of the game then we really do recommend you buy it on sight, as it's a prime contender for the most overlooked and underrated game of all time.




### SPELLING IT OUT...

What really made *Tetris Battle Gaiden* so great was undoubtedly the spellcasting system. Whilst this could have taken away from the purity of classic *Tetris*, it instead served to enrich what was already a deeply strategic and satisfying experience. Knowing your own character's spells was just the half of it though. To enjoy continued victories it was also vital to understand what your opponent had up their sleeves. This meant learning in detail the strengths and weaknesses of each of the game's eight cartoon characters – know your enemy and all that jazz.

> "I want to make interesting games. I want to create something that will make the player happy. I want the player to be surprised and have fun"
>
> YUJI NAKA, CREATOR OF *SONIC THE HEDGEHOG*

## MASTER SYSTEM

### SONIC THE HEDGEHOG



1991
Master System
The success of the Mega Drive version meant that a Master System game had to be released. Though stripped down for the 8-bit system, notable additions included hidden Chaos Emeralds and special stages to make this a must-have game.

### SONIC THE HEDGEHOG 2



1992
Master System
The 8-bit system was still too popular for SEGA to ignore so it got its own *Sonic 2*. Okay, so it was nowhere near as technically proficient as the Mega Drive game but it was much improved upon the original, which was just what was needed.

### SONIC CD



1993
SEGA CD
New hardware (well, an add-on) needed *Sonic* to try to sell it to the masses. Basically, this was *Sonic 2* with a time travel element (i.e. different backgrounds) but it did try to make use of the CD-Rom with much-improved animation and sound.

### SONIC AND KNUCKLES



1994
Mega Drive
Picking up where *Sonic 3* left off, this is essentially more of the same great gameplay. However, thanks to the use of SEGA's lock-on technology, further gaming bonuses could be attained by simply connecting the cart to other Sonic games.

### SONIC 3D BLAST



1996
SEGA Saturn
New console, new *Sonic* game. Well, kind of… This was pretty much the same as the Mega Drive title but with added 3D tunnels. However, at the time it impressed gamers and gave them an indication of what the Saturn was capable of.

## MEGA DRIVE

### SONIC THE HEDGEHOG



1991
Mega Drive
*Sonic The Hedgehog*'s mixture of speed and graphical finesse helped establish the Mega Drive as a serious contender for the hearts of gamers. A winning formula had been created and SEGA finally had a recognisable mascot.

### SONIC THE HEDGEHOG 2



1992
Mega Drive
With this sequel, Hog-loving gamers got a game that had been improved in every way. It was also the first console game to have a worldwide launch when Tuesday 24 November, 1992 became known as 'Sonic 2's Day'. Geddit? Oh dear…

### SONIC SPINBALL



1993
Mega Drive
*Sonic Pinball* was an attempt to cash in even more on the blue speedy one. Once again, deviating from what gamers expected (pinball, anyone?) proved its undoing and the fact that this was a deeply average game didn't help matters.

### SONIC THE HEDGEHOG 3



1994
Mega Drive
A return to form for Sonic with this very impressive outing that not only looked beautiful but also added a greater depth of gameplay. Of special note is that this is the first *Sonic* game to feature a save feature, thanks to the built-in battery.

### SONIC 3D FLICKIES' ISLAND



1996
Mega Drive
The Mega Drive might have been getting on a bit but that didn't stop SEGA from giving it one last *Sonic* adventure. This was standard Sonic fare viewed from an isometric perspective and it was the perfect swan song for the much-loved console.

## HANDHELD

### SONIC THE HEDGEHOG



1991
Game Gear
The battery-eating baby brother to the Mega Drive and Master System was also home to a *Sonic* title. Essentially, it was exactly the same as the Master System version with a few very minor tweaks to compensate for the small screen.

### SONIC THE HEDGEHOG 2



1992
Game Gear
Once again, the popularity of *Sonic* was employed to try to bolster sales of the flagging Game Gear. Again, this version would take its cue from the Master System but a dodgy camera angle ensured much frustration.

### SONIC CHAOS



1993
Game Gear
Handheld gamers rejoiced at Sonic's return to the Game Gear. This time you could play through the game as Tails (curiously, he'd been absent from previous Game Gear outings) and this version showed what SEGA's handheld could do.

### SONIC TRIPLE TROUBLE



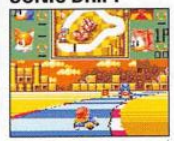
1994
Game Gear
After a glut of badly thought-out Game Gear titles, the ickle Sonic was back on form and doing what he and Tails did best – collecting Rings, Emeralds and racing through bonus stages. As Game Gear outings go, this was mightily impressive.

### SONIC LABYRINTH



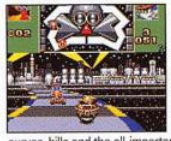
1995
Game Gear
This time SEGA decided that a puzzle game not dissimilar to *Marble Madness* was the order of the day. However, the time limits and puzzle elements converged to help bring down what might have been a half-decent game.

### SONIC DRIFT



1993
Game Gear
What Game Gear fans needed was a *Mario Kart* game, or so SEGA decided. A *Mario Kart*-style racer would have been ideal, but what Japanese gamers got was a slow and uninspired racer that was never released elsewhere, thankfully.

### SONIC DRIFT 2



1995
Game Gear
Compared to the original, *Sonic Drift 2* was a much more considered game. This time it delivered a better Grand Prix mode, banked curves, hills and the all-important link-up mode. Not as classy as *Mario Kart*, but still a worthy attempt.

## ARCADE

### SONIC SPINBALL



1993
Game Gear
If the Mega Drive gamers had to suffer it, then the handheld gamers had to as well. At no point did SEGA consider the fact that the udders might have well and truly dried up as this ineffectual and ill-conceived game showed.

### SEGASONIC



1993
Arcade
With the home market stitched up, SEGA tried its hand in the arcades. But trackerball controls and two new characters failed to inspire gamers. Poor distribution and the fact that the gameplay wasn't the normal 'Sonic-style' didn't help.

### SONIC THE FIGHTERS



1996
Arcade
It had been three years since the last arcade *Sonic* outing so it must have seemed time to have another stab at the coin-op fans. Unfortunately, as it was aimed at kids, it lacked depth and proved to be an unrewarding experience.

# Sonic Family Tree



*In 1990, SEGA charged one of its young programmers with the task of creating a character that would rival Nintendo's Mario. Three months later, Yuji Naka unveiled Sonic the Hedgehog, and in 1991 the first of many hog-based games were released. This month we look at the titles that the blue spiky one has sped through.*

## SONIC ADVANCE

2002
GBA
Having spurned Nintendo's GBA in favour of less popular handhelds, it was great to see the little fella finally getting the small screen attention he deserved and in a new adventure which drew upon elements from all his previous outings.

## SONIC JAM

1998
Game.com
Left without a handheld of its own, SEGA decided to port a version of *Sonic Jam* to the Game.com, a laughable handheld system. This was a truly awful game riddled with slowdown and without the trademark colourfulness.

## SONIC POCKET ADVENTURE

1999
NeoGeo Pocket Color
'Anything but the GBC' must have been the cry at SEGA when it decided to make another portable *Sonic* title. Taking elements from *Sonic 2* and *3*, this had a link-up option so you could race against your friends.

## SONIC R

1997
SEGA Saturn
A cracking Saturn game that offered something different. This was a 3D racer that pitted familiar *Sonic* characters against one another. This title wasn't developed by Sonic Team but by British developers, Travellers Tales.

## SEGA MEGA COLLECTION

2002
GameCube
Replay those old Mega Drive games (again) as SEGA tread the familiar path of collating its classic games for the hordes of gamers clamouring for the titles we played ten years ago. Once again, SEGA missed the opportunity to include *Sonic CD*.

## SONIC JAM

1997
SEGA Saturn
This had nothing to do with preserves, it was more a ploy to get some money from Saturn owners who missed Sonic's *Mega Drive* outings. Aside from a few tweaks and the omission of *SEGA CD*, this was the perfect way to enjoy classic Hog action.

**DREAMCAST**

## SONIC ADVENTURE

1999
Dreamcast
After the demise of the Saturn, Sonic returned faster than ever. Determined to make the new console a success, Sonic Team ensured that *Sonic Adventure* was a big, rollicking adventure that demonstrated the DC's technical proficiency.

## SONIC SHUFFLE

2000
Dreamcast
Hot on the heels of *Sonic Adventure* came *Sonic Shuffle* – a collection of puzzle games not unlike *Mario Party* (which must have partly inspired SEGA's stab at the genre). It was fairly dire but did have some lovely cel-shaded graphics.

## SONIC ADVENTURE 2

2001
Dreamcast
By now the Dreamcast was nearly dead, but it didn't stop Sonic Team releasing one last *Sonic* game on a SEGA console. It was Sonic's tenth anniversary – it would have seemed rude not to. But this wasn't the last we'd see of him...

## SONIC ADVENTURE 2: BATTLE

2002
GameCube
After pulling out of the hardware race, SEGA decided to bring the next *Sonic* game to GameCube. This was completely unexpected, but an updated version of the Dreamcast game complete with a two-player mode was more than welcome.

**GAMECUBE**

# THE BITMAP

***GREAT SHOOTER? CHECK. BEST FUTURISTIC SPORTS GAME EVER? CHECK. HIGHLY RESPECTED PLATFORM AND ADVENTURE GAMES? DOUBLE CHECK. THE BITMAP BROTHERS MADE SOME TOP QUALITY TITLES, SO GAMES™ GOT IN TOUCH WITH THEM TO SEE WHERE IT ALL WENT RIGHT...***

RETRO MICRO GAMES ACTION company Lookback

It's pretty rare that a developer excels in producing products of a consistent quality across multiple genres, but The Bitmap Brothers is a name synonymous with some of the best gaming moments of the 8- and 16-bit era. After its foundation in 1987, the UK based firm went on to release two important games the year after in the form of *Speedball* and *Xenon* (the first Amiga game to enter the multi-format Top 40, in the UK at least).

While these were superb, the best was still to come and in the two years that followed the titles were followed up with impressively superior sequels – *Speedball 2: Brutal Deluxe* and *Xenon 2: Megablast* are widely renowned as two of the finest games of the time and remain supremely playable today. As time went by, games like *Gods*, *Magic Pockets* and the triumphant *Chaos Engine* entertained many gamers across practically every format available, as well as picking up countless awards between them.

The Bitmap Brothers continue to make their presence known in the industry today, releasing brand new titles as well as bringing ports of old classics to handhelds, pocket PCs and the like. To learn more about the men behind the legends, we caught up with Mike Montgomery, Managing Director of The Bitmap Brothers, to get his take on classic games, ice cream vendors and what the future has in store...



▲ By day, quiet, unassuming citizens. By night, creators of some of the greatest games of the 8- and 16-bit eras. Or something like that. These are the Bitmap Brothers (no relation).

## THE BIG CHEESE

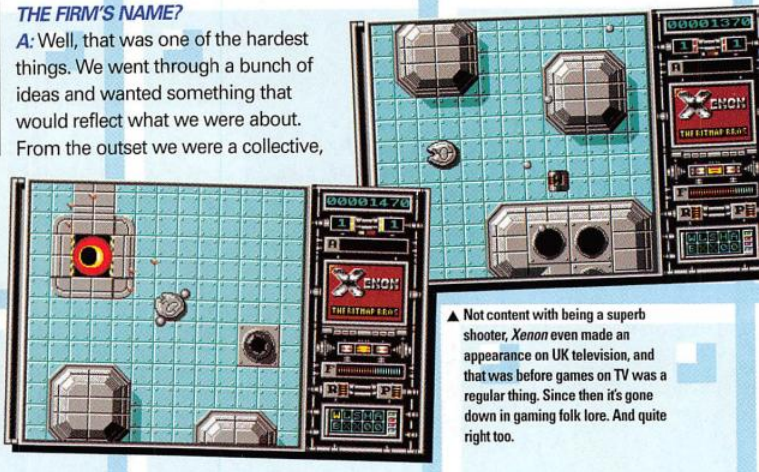
So who is Mike Montgomery? The man who now heads up the firm has worked on every Bitmap Brothers title since the beginning, with a history in programming before that. Starting off as a programming partner, today Montgomery runs the company, and having been with The Bitmap Brothers from the off, who better to reveal the secret of its success.

***Q: HOW DID YOU COME UP WITH THE FIRM'S NAME?***

***A:*** Well, that was one of the hardest things. We went through a bunch of ideas and wanted something that would reflect what we were about. From the outset we were a collective, so we spent a lot of time thinking about how we would communicate this. Eventually one of us came up with the The Bitmap Brothers. At first we thought this sounded a bit crap, but after some time we decided we rather liked it.

***Q: WHAT WAS IT LIKE BEING A DEVELOPER PIN-UP (IF YOU SEE WHAT WE MEAN)?***

***A:*** As developers we felt that publishers often took the limelight, which is strange if you think about it. After all, you buy music albums and singles for the artist not the record label they're published on. Our aim was to push the developer (in this case us) to the forefront. I think we succeeded.



▲ Not content with being a superb shooter, *Xenon* even made an appearance on UK television, and that was before games on TV was a regular thing. Since then it's gone down in gaming folk lore. And quite right too.

## AND THE WINNER IS...

### THE BITMAP BROTHERS MUST HAVE QUITE A TROPHY CABINET

It's not just the public that went crazy for The Bitmap Brothers' games – here's just a sample of the recognition their catalogue has received.

**1989**

Generation 4 D'or – Best Shoot-'Em-Up (*Xenon 2*)
Golden Joystick Awards – 16-bit Game Of The Year (*Speedball*)
Golden Joystick Awards – 16-bit Programmer Of The Year
Indin – 16-bit Technical Achievement Sound/Music (*Xenon 2*)

**1990**

European Computer Leisure Awards – Best Shoot-'Em-Up (*Xenon 2*)
Fnac – Best Original Game (*Speedball 2*)
Fnac – Adventure Game Of The Year (*Cadaver*)
Indin – Arcade Game Of The Year (*Speedball 2*)

**1991**

Golden Joystick Awards – Best Soundtrack 16-bit (*Speedball 2*)
Indin – Budget Game Of The Year (*Xenon 2*)

**1993**

Power Play – Best Multiplayer Game (*Chaos Engine*)
SEGA Third Party Seal Of Quality Award – Product Of The Year (*Chaos Engine*)

# BROTHERS

**Q: WHAT ARE YOUR FAVOURITE BITMAP BROTHERS GAMES?**
**A:** In terms of development I would say *Cadaver* was one of my favourites – I really enjoyed working on that one. In terms of playing, I'd have to say *Steel Soldiers*, although I've got a soft spot for the original *Speedball* and *Xenon 2*. In addition to this, playing the original *Xenon* [the game was released under the Arcadia coin-op label] in the pub also gave me a real buzz.

**Q: IS THERE ANY CHANCE OF A BITMAP BROTHERS RETRO COMPILATION APPEARING ON CURRENT CONSOLES? WE'D PAY $40 JUST FOR A PERFECT CONVERSION OF AMIGA SPEEDBALL 2...**
**A:** We'd love to do something like that, but we need to find a publisher willing to do it [any publishers reading please take note – Ed]. It's a very nice idea but, as I say, we're a developer and not involved in the publishing side of things. Still, if someone came along with the right offer...

**Q: DO YOU THINK THE LARGER PUBLISHING HOUSES ARE STUNTING CREATIVITY WITHIN THE GAMES INDUSTRY?**
**A:** Naturally, I don't want to bite the hand that feeds me, but to an extent I'd agree with that argument. Indeed, it seems that there are one or two publishers who are in there all the time, taking all the money. With that said, licensed games have improved a lot in recent years. On the 16-bit platforms it seemed that publishers would acquire a licence and then push out any old rubbish. Sadly, people still went out and bought such products. The industry needs something to help smaller developers and publishers to be more successful. We've got a bit more clout than some of the smaller developers out there, but often we can't get a green light on certain titles, which is a shame. I remember one time when we were showing a publisher a rough demo of a game that was founded on a really great idea. The guy we were talking with agreed that it was a good idea, but said his boss wasn't buying it. He then added that if the game had been an FPS the deal would have been a 'no brainer'. I always thought Psygnosis tried some leftfield stuff, but look what happened there.

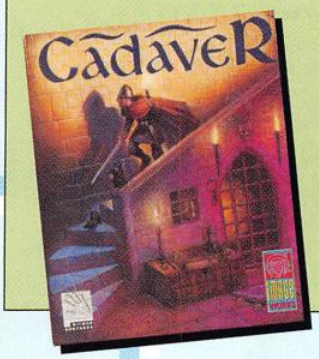


▲ Beautiful to look at but tough as old boots. Was *Cadaver*'s Castle Wulf a tribute to the classic *Knight Lore*?

**Q: ASIDE FROM THE TITLES YOU'VE WORKED ON, WHICH OTHER GAMES DO YOU ADMIRE?**
**A:** My favourite game of all time is *Dungeon Master*, it didn't rely on terribly flashy visuals and audio effects (although they did their job), it got by simply on great gameplay. I consider it to be one of the finest examples of videogame design I've ever encountered. *Thrust* was also a clever game and then of course there was *Oids* [by the same team who did *Dungeon Master*] – that was a fine title too. More recently, I've been impressed by *Project Eden*, *Ghost Recon* and *Giants* – the latter of which I played to completion. Some very weird ideas knocking about there, but a good game all the same.

## CADAVER

A strange (but interesting) change of pace from what you'd normally expect from the Bitmap Brothers. Rather than being a fast-paced action game, *Cadaver* was an in-depth isometric adventure featuring challenging puzzles and labyrinthine levels. As Karadoc the Dwarf, you had to infiltrate Castle Wulf in an attempt to defeat the dark magic of evil wizard Dianos and his fiendish traps, while collecting as much gold for yourself as possible. Unsurprisingly, it was rather difficult, and to this day we still can't complete the damn thing. Despite not being overly popular, the game was received well enough to deserve an add-on disc – *Cadaver: The Payoff* – which offered an additional four levels to play through... and it was even tougher than the original.

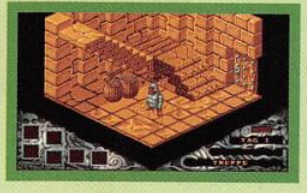





▲ *Cadaver* was an interesting departure for the Bitmap Brothers, being more of a puzzler than a shooter.







## GODS





Strangely enough, the Bitmaps themselves claim that this was their finest hour; even though *Speedball 2* is more revered among the fans. Nevertheless, *Gods* was a damn fine game. You, as a Greek warrior, had to rid your city of demons and prove yourself immortal by solving puzzles and enjoying all manner of platform-style action. However, *Gods* wasn't your average platform game because finding all the bonuses and getting through each level in one piece actually required a modicum of thought, rather than just aimless jumping. The biggest selling-point was the AI coding – the better you did in the game, the tougher the enemies got. Just is why *Gods* so overlooked? Criminal...



▲ *Gods* was a sort of thinking man's platformer, with plenty of leaping and hacking combined with some thought-provoking puzzles and problems.

## XENON 2: MEGABLAST




The Bitmap Brothers' release of August '99, was followed by the sound of multiple jaws hitting the proverbial floor. *Xenon 2: Megablast* had arrived, and in doing so, sent many an Amiga and ST owner into a rabid frenzy.

Incredibly slick to look at and featuring Bomb The Bass' excellent *Megablast* track, *Xenon 2* proved yet again that when it came to getting the best out of the 16-bit computers, the Bitmaps were kings. Light years ahead of the original in terms of both style and sound, *Megablast* took the vertical shooter to a whole new, gorgeously parallaxed, level. Blasting the beautifully rendered enemies resulted in bubbles being left in their wake. These needed to be collected and yielded money you could spend at the end of each level's weapon shop.

As to be expected, the weapons on offer were suitably impressive – with many of the more expensive ones packing an awesome amount of heat. The high-powered weaponry was a godsend, as later levels were heaving with all manner of weird and wonderful beasties. Add some tough as nails bosses and the end result was a wonderfully hectic experience. While converted to many consoles, *Megablast* never received the same critical acclaim bestowed on it by computer owners.



▲ Improving on the original in every possible way, *Xenon 2: Megablast* was the shooter to have if you were a 16-bit computer gamer. And those of you who began with 32 or 64 bits should consider trying this anyway. It's ace.




▲ Lots of weapons, masses of enemies and all to the strains of a fantastic soundtrack.




▲ Not only did *The Chaos Engine* have the Bitmap's unique style, it also proved to be another tough challenge.

***Q: WERE THE GAMES BETTER IN THE OLD DAYS.***

***A:*** It doesn't really matter when a title was released – a good game will always be a good game. I played *Dungeon Master* last year and it still holds up against today's software. I've got fond memories of many of the old classics, but the main thing is that you enjoy what you're playing.

***Q: WHAT PROJECTS DID YOU WORK ON BEFORE CO-FOUNDING THE BITMAP BROTHERS?***

***A:*** I worked on *Monopoly* on the C64 – and, come to think of it, just about every home computer version of *Monopoly* available at the time. I also coded versions of *Scrabble* and *Cluedo* for the 8-bit systems. I also had a small role in the development of the Spectrum and C64 versions of *Dan Dare*. As for the 16-bit systems, I worked on *Amiga Karate* and *ST Karate* for a small publisher called Triangles.

***Q: MANY OF THE BITMAP BROTHERS' GAMES HAD A UNIQUE METALLIC LOOK ABOUT THEM, HOW DID THIS COME ABOUT?***

***A:*** Well, I'm not an artist myself, this look was down to colleagues such as Dan Malone [*Speedball 2*] and Mark Coleman [*Speedball*] – it was just their style. Fortunately, it proved to be a very good one that suited our games perfectly.

***Q: IN THE ORIGINAL SPEEDBALL THE PLAYER GOING DOWN THE PITCH ALMOST ALWAYS SEEM TO LOSE THE BATTLE FOR THE BALL WHEN IT WAS LAUNCHED – WAS THIS A BUG?***

***A:*** [Laughs] No comment. Okay, our random number routines weren't working as well as they might have been. It wasn't on purpose. I've heard that comment a lot so there must be something to it. However the concept of going down-screen generally puts you at a disadvantage in most games of this type, it just doesn't feel as natural as going up the screen. This little glitch was rectified for *Speedball 2: Brutal Deluxe*, however.

***Q: WHY DID XENON 2: MEGABLAST NOT FEATURE GROUND-BASED STAGES LIKE THOSE IN THE ORIGINAL XENON?***

***A:*** I'm not really sure why we changed it, it just happened. *Xenon 2* was more a spacey kind of game, so I guess they just didn't suit the style.

***Q: WHEN YOU WERE WORKING ON MAGIC POCKETS DID YOU GET TO MEET BETTY BOO?***

***A:*** I can't remember meeting Betty Boo, but we met the Booettes [her backing group]. I can't remember much else about that one; I'm not going to say any more. I'll keep quiet.

***Q: WHO CAME UP WITH THE IDEA FOR "ICE CREAM! ICE CREAM!" IN SPEEDBALL 2?***

***A:*** Richard Joseph came up with the idea for that. He was experimenting – you see, crowd noises alone are just

boring. Anyway, he just put the "Ice cream!" thing in one day and as far as the rest of us were concerned it just worked – looking back it was a great touch. On the CD32 version we also added hot dogs ("Get your hot dogs here") and popcorn – I can't remember how the popcorn one went though.

***Q: WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH SPEEDBALL ARENA AT THE MOMENT? WILL WE SEE IT SOON?***

*A:* It's kind of on the back burner whilst we work on our current project, *WWII Frontline Command*, but we're still tinkering away on it and have got some nice ideas kicking about. Watch this space for more details...

***Q:* SPEEDBALL 2100. *ONE QUESTION: WHAT WENT WRONG?***

*A:* What didn't you like about it? The thing is, we weren't trying to make *Speedball 3* and I think that's what a lot of people were expecting from the game. We basically wanted to just bring the whole *Speedball* experience to a generation of gamers who probably hadn't played the original games. People were expecting *Speedball 3* but we never meant to do it. I did a lot of the programming on it and the gameplay is the same as *Speedball 2*, so I'm not sure why certain people had a problem with it. Maybe it was down to the look, which I'll grant had changed a bit. In retrospect perhaps we should have put in a hidden port of Amiga *Speedball 2*. To be honest though, of all the *Speedball* games *2100* is my favourite. In fact I don't enjoy *2* that much, I think when we did it I'd got too used to playing *Speedball*, which is another favourite of mine – but that's possibly because I spent so much time working and playing on it.



▲ Contrary to popular belief, dinosaurs actually died out some time in the mid-19th Century as a result of industrialisation, as this picture shows (perhaps)...

***Q: ANY CHANCE OF BRINGING BACK THE ALIEN IN THE STORE FROM* XENON 2*? PERHAPS HE COULD HAVE HIS OWN GAME? DOES HE MAKE A CAMEO IN YOUR CURRENT TITLE – SOME KIND OF ALIEN INVASION DURING THE WAR, PERHAPS?***

*A:* [Laughs] I can't remember his name, we're sure your readers will, although I doubt he'll be coming back soon. That said, you might well see another version of *Xenon* at some point. However, I have to say that the cheeky chap will not be making an appearance in our current title. In fact, shut up – that's a stupid idea.

## THE CHAOS ENGINE

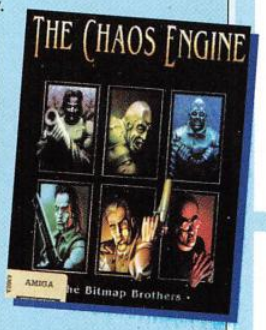




The Bitmap Brothers' eighth release was their seminal shooter, *The Chaos Engine*. It featured many of their trademarks – metallic, stylish visuals, absorbing gameplay and some rocking sound – and still remains a firm favourite with hard-core gamers. The basic premise saw you controlling one of six armed-to-the-teeth mercenaries in an attempt to destroy the titular Chaos Engine – a ridiculously powerful boss who claimed many a gamer's sanity.

What made the game stand out from its peers, however, was the inclusion of your ever-present companion. Controlled by either a mate or the computer, his additional firepower was greatly appreciated (and necessary, as the Chaos Engine was one tough cookie). With a superb selection of weaponry, each character possessing their own unique traits and 16 hellishly tricky levels, its success was assured. Converted to numerous consoles and computers in the mid-Nineties, and later receiving a rather subdued sequel, *The Chaos Engine* remains one of the most impressive examples of its genre to this day.






◀ If you didn't have any friends, the AI would look after your weapon-laden buddy.

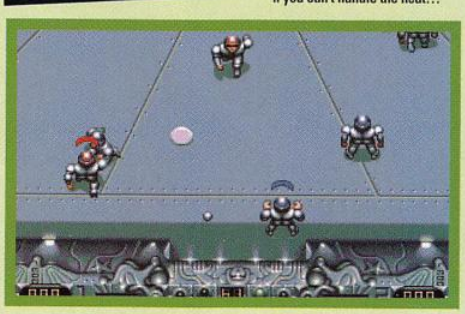
## SPEEDBALL 2: BRUTAL DELUXE




Okay, which smart-arse said that there wasn't such a thing as a good sequel? Just look take one look at *Speedball 2: Brutal Deluxe* for a case in point. Once again, the Bitmap Brothers had taken one of their original games and improved on it beyond all measure. Responsible for the death of many a joystick, *Brutal Deluxe* had it all – savagely addictive gameplay, those familiar metallic graphics and a simply exceptional multiplayer mode. From the flawless points multiplier, to the numerous injuries you could inflict on your opponents, the game was in a league of its own. Shamelessly copied over the years – Ubi Soft's average *Deathrow* being the latest example – nothing has ever managed to capture the sheer frenetic pace found in *Deluxe*. Even the Bitmaps themselves failed to capture the game's elusive magic, when they returned with *Speedball 2100*.

▼ Often copied but never equalled, *Brutal Deluxe* upped the ante considerably over its predecessor and caused many a falling out between friends after one rough tackle too many. Still, if you can't handle the heat...





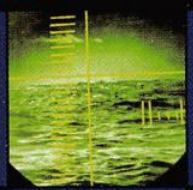


## LLOYD MANGRAM'S

# VIDEOGAMES HISTORY LOOKBACK

TAKE A STEP BACK IN TIME WITH ME, LLOYD MANGRAM, AS I DELVE INTO THE DEEP, DARK BEGINNINGS OF VIDEOGAME HISTORY. I WILL SHARE WITH YOU THE HIGHS AND THE LOWS, THE TEARS AND THE LAUGHTER, THE E.T.S AND THE VICE CITIES. OF COURSE, IT'S A STORY YOU ALREADY KNOW SOMETHING ABOUT, BUT I BET YOU'LL FIND A FEW SURPRISES IN HERE TOO. SO SIT BACK, RELAX AND FOLLOW THE ARROWS FOR THE DEFINITIVE HISTORY OF VIDEOGAMES...

**1889** A card game business is set up in Japan by Fusajiro Yamauchi of Manufuku Co.



**1966** SEGA releases its first hit game in Japan. Called *Periscope* it's a submarine sim.



**1947** The Tokyo Telecommunications Engineering Co. is launched. It is later renamed Sony.



SONY

**1961** The first video-game is born – *Space War* by Steve Russell. It's the size of four filing cabinets.

**1951** The card company is renamed Nintendo Playing Card Co. The name means 'Leave Luck to Heaven'.

SEGA®

**1954** US war veteran David Rosen exports pinball to Japan. His company is SErvices GAmes – SEGA.

Nintendo GAMING 24:7

**1971** Nolan Bushnell devises the first commercial arcade game, *Computer Space*. It flops.



**1972** *Pong* is a huge success and inspires many to copy the formula, including Bally/Midway.





Magnavox launch the first home system, The Odyssey. It plays *Pong* and Magnavox sues Atari, claiming it invented the game.

**1973** Atari follows up its sucess with *Space Race* where starships whizz through asteroids.

namco

Nolan tries again with *Pong*, but Bally/Midway refuse to release it. So he sets up his own games company – Atari.



ATARI

The first videogame peripheral is released. It's an electronic rifle add-on for the Odyssey to play *Shooting Gallery*.

**1974** The first game with a steering wheel is a big hit. It's called *Gran Trak 10* and, yes, it's from Atari.





A major breakthrough in gaming technology – the invention of the ROM chip. *Tank* is the first game to have graphics on ROM.




**1975** Atari employee Steve Jobs designs *Breakout* with Steve Wozniak. They go on to set up Apple.

Nakamura Manufacturing Company is set up in Japan – the name is eventually shortened to Namco.



Bill Gates writes a BASIC compiler for the Altair computer with Paul Allen. They form a new company – Microsoft.




**1976** The first game to be created in Japan is a boxing simulation, *Heavyweight Champ*, by SEGA.





The first shoot-'em-up is released by Midway. *Gun Fight* is one of the first games to use a microprocessor.



The first game to court controversy is *Death Race* by Exidy. It involved running people over with fast cars.

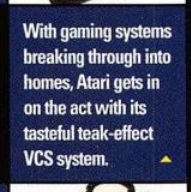


**1977** Nintendo launches its first home videogame system. It plays *Ping-Pong* and works in colour.

The Z80 micro-processor is created by Zilog. It becomes the standard for arcade and home computer systems.




**1978** Obviously embarr-assed by the teak-effect , Atari launches its 400 and 800 series computers.



With gaming systems breaking through into homes, Atari gets in on the act with its tasteful teak-effect VCS system.



The hits keep on coming from Atari. *Asteroids* uses vector graphics to create a spaceship in an asteroid field.



*Pac-Man* is released in Japan under the name *Puck-Man*. The name is changed to stop the 'P' being changed to an 'F'.

Atari pays $21m for the rights to *E.T.* The game is so bad that thousands of copies are buried in a remote desert.




Eventually to appear on every console Nintendo ever made, *Mario Bros* got its debut in the arcades. Turtle cruelty ahoy!




The Apple Mac computer launched this year. The Mac 128K was a little diferent to the Mac I'm typing on now.









Williams's *Joust* was a two-player winner. It encouraged players to team up on one level then compete on the next.





**1982** New from Sinclair, the ZX Spectrum boasted eight colours, but only allowed two per 8x8 square.

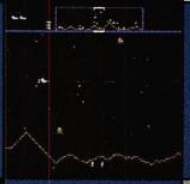


The game that broke a thousand joysticks when it arrived on home computers – *Track & Field* was released in arcades.



A lot of money was spent on *Kung-Fu Master* in 1984. The simple gameplay still has hundreds of folk hooked today.

A big shock for Atari – its four best game creators leave at the same time to set up their own company, Activision.



The first computer from Sinclair Research, the ZX80, was launched and brought BASIC to the masses.



**1983** SEGA's first home console arrived this year. The SG-1000 was 4-bit and came with a small joystick.



Bally/Midway's *Spy Hunter* was an instant hit. Fast cars, machine guns, spiky wheels – this game had it all.






Williams's *Defender* takes arcade gaming to the next level with sidescrolling levels and a map showing enemy locations.




A new PC computer was launched this year by IBM. The keyboard and mouse set-up soon became standard.

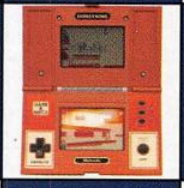



Vector graphics games were really taking off in the arcades. The greatest ever has to be *Star Wars* from Atari.



A new look for *Pac-Man* too – *PacLand* was tied in with a cartoon series and gave Pac-Man a whole personality.

**1979** At last, some serious competition for Atari – Mattel's Intellivision (intelligent television).



**1981** Home computers really took off this year. The Commodore Vic-20 was blessed with a massive 3.5K RAM.




In an era when arcade games had small sprites for graphics, *Dragon's Lair* on laser disc was phenomenal.



*JetPac* was the first game from Ultimate (now Rare), who went on to create some of the greatest games of all time.





**1980** The first handheld game from Nintendo and kids go crazy for it. The Game & Watch is still around today.



The grandaddy of all modern videogames magazines launched in November with a *Space Invaders* cover. How time flies…



The Vic-20 and non-starter Commodore 16 were soon superseded by the Commodore 64. The 8-bit race was on!




Cashing in on the *Star Wars* hype, *Return Of The Jedi* arcade was a departure from the original's vector graphics look.

Meanwhile over in the arcades a legend is born. *Space Invaders* causes a coin shortage in the States.




Sir Clive Sinclair was quick to follow up with the ZX81, complete with a new membrane keyboard and better BASIC.




The first game to use a trackerball control system in the arcades, *Marble Madness* from Atari, was a blast.




**1984** *CRASH* magazine showed the world that gaming could be fun – no long listings here, just lots of games.







*Galaxian* picks up on the *Space Invaders* craze and becomes the first arcade game to be made in colour. Revolutionary!



Meanwhile over at Konami they're creating their own classics. *Frogger* teaches a generation to look both ways.



Written by Matthew Smith, *Manic Miner* was the prequel to *Jet Set Willy*. Both games still have a strong fanbase today.






Nintendo's legendary developer Shigeru Miyamoto creates *Donkey Kong*, starring an Italian plumber, Mario.



Nintendo's first serious contender for the home gaming crown, the Famicom, became the NES outside Japan.



*LLOYD MANGRAM'S*

# VIDEOGAMES HISTORY LOOKBACK

1984 was the year Commodore launched a new computer in the US. The Amiga kick-started the 16-bit era in home gaming.



Created by Alexey Pazhitnov, *Tetris* has gone on to appear on every format known to man. This is Atari's arcade version.

SEGA launched their 8-bit Master System in the US. Later models came with an Alex Kidd game built in!



Written by Jon Ritman and Bernie Drummond for Ocean, *Head Over Heels* allowed you to switch between characters.







Arguably the most popular of all SEGA arcade games, *Out Run* was Yu Suzuki's follow up to *Hang-On* and *Space Harrier*.



The sequel to *Bubble Bobble*, *Rainbow Islands* was an enchanting game where you could climb on rainbows.



Capcom's *Ghosts 'n Goblins* starred a knight who fought the undead. If he got hit, he had to fight on in his underwear.



This year Acclaim became Nintendo's first US developer. It's had its ups and down since, but is still developing today.






Nintendo concentrates on the handheld market. The Game Boy launches and goes on to sell 120 million.

This was the year for great arcade games that were converted to home systems. *Paperboy*, *Bombjack* and *1942* were great.



Atari chose to return to the vector splendour of the *Star Wars* for *The Empire Strikes Back*. Strangely, it came out after the *Jedi* game.



Taito's classic shoot-'em-up *R-Type* set the standard that many games followed. It went on to spawn many sequels.





Multi-format games really took off with arcade, Spectrum and Commodore 64 versions. *Commando* was a big hit.



It wasn't all violence in the arcades though, *Bubble Bobble's* Bub and Bob won many gamers' hearts.



This year Activision became the first console developer to create a game for two systems at the same time.



**1989** SEGA gets a jump on Nintendo and releases the 16-bit Mega Drive, known as Genesis in the US.






Arguably more popular in the home on the Spectrum and C64 than the arcade, *Yie Ar Kung Fu* was an excellent beat-'em-up.



Cashing in on the skateboarding craze, Atari's *720°* gave you a challenging skatepark to tackle at high speed.



Everyone's favourite pill chomper went 3D in 1987. *Pacmania* had all the classic gameplay elements of the original.





After the success of *CRASH*, upstart publisher Newsfield repeated the formula with *Zzap! 64* for the Commodore 64.



Capcom couldn't have known that its *Street Fighter* game would be the first of almost 30 arcade versions!



The Oliver twins' Dizzy burst onto the Spectrum. He had a good run until Codemasters and the Olivers fell out.



The Bitmap Brothers' *Speedball* caused quite a stir with it's ultra-violent twist on the traditional football game.

**1985** Atari followed Commodore's lead this year with the Atari ST – both systems made it big in 1987.



**1986** The NES finally made it out of Japan this year, bringing the great *Super Mario Bros* with it.



Another arcade hit for SEGA – *Enduro Racer* came in a sit-on version where you had to pull the bike up to make jumps.



*APB* was one of the first free-roaming driving games. Its humorous police chases made for an addictive game.





Four-player gaming in the arcades was popularised by Atari's *Gauntlet*. A game of ghosts, keys and running around.





Maxis released *Sim City* on the PC. The game gave everyone the chance to play at being a town planner – compelling stuff!



There were big name Amiga games around in 1988. *Virus*, written by David Braben, boasted a fascinating 3D landscape.

SEGA rocked the arcade world by fitting full motion cockpits to its games. *Space Harrier* was the first to benefit.



**1987** A new hero was born this year – Link. The *Zelda* games were an addictive adventure maze.



**1988** A big arcade hit this year for Taito – *The New Zealand Story* gave a little kiwi the limelight.





**1991** Sonic was hot on Mario's tail this year in a Mega Drive game that left the rest standing.





It may have all started with *Wolfenstein*, but *Doom* was the game that really put id and first-person shooters on the map.




At last PCs were starting to become serious game-playing kit. The advent of the 486 processor was a turning point.



The first person shoot-'em-up is invented by id Software. *Wolfenstein* is a big smash on Nazi-hating PCs everywhere.






First released on the 386 PC, *Prince of Persia* by Jordan Mechner boasted some of the most fluid animation yet.



**1992** SEGA launch their *Virtua* series with *Virtua Racing* by AM2. It used polygons for the first time.



**1993** The age of the failed console. 3DO was a powerful machine, but it just never took off.



Electronic Arts bought Bullfrog this year and was well on the way to establishing EA as a major games force.

Activision is the first software company to release a game on a CD-ROM. It's *Manhole* for the PC. It wasn't very successful.



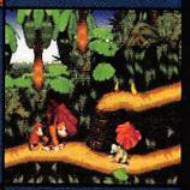
Irem's *Bomberman* brought out a vicious streak. The simple but addictive gameplay was soon converted to all consoles.



*Zelda* from Nintendo gets a major 16-bit update on the SNES. *The Legend of Zelda: A Link To The Past* is a legendary game.




Atari had lost its grip on the games world. Its Jaguar was a 64-bit console, but with lacklustre, 8-bit quality games.





Konami's *Parodius* was a shoot-'em-up with a bizarre twist. The big bosses were dancing pandas and leggy blondes.



Sony and Nintendo were in talks to produce a SNES CD. When talks broke down, Sony created the PlayStation.



The first Pentium processor turned up the heat on PC gaming. PC games finally had the speed to compete.



Rare was doing great things with the SNES. *Donkey Kong Country* had 3D sprites and played brilliantly.

The very first WWF game is released in the arcade. *WWF Superstars* by Technos goes down well with fans.



Nintendo tries to sue Codemasters for its Game Genie cheat code device. It loses the case and crafty cheaters rejoice.



'Finish Him!' and 'Fatality' were the phrases of the moment as Midway's *Mortal Kombat* took over the arcades.

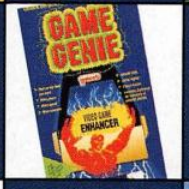


Fighting games moved from 2D to 3D with SEGA's *Virtua Fighter*. Button bashing had never been so much fun.






Laser games were still proving popular in arcades with *Mad Dog McCree* adding a nifty light gun to the package.




Sid Meier's *Civilization* gave would-be Napoleans the chance to build their empires this year.



Sega launched the Mega-CD and we were promised 'interactive movies'. *NightTrap* was nearly banned.




**1994** One of the most popular PC games of all time – *Myst*. It's a bit like playing a set of postcards.

Peter Molyneux and Bullfrog create their first God sim. *Populous* on the 16-bit computers made us all power mad.



DMA Design's death-defying *Lemmings* is an unexpected hit on home computers. Still an original game today.



Take a popular plumber and put him on a go-kart – the result? An addictive mix – *Super Mario Kart* on SNES.



Namco was on to a winner in the arcades with its new racing game. *Ridge Racer* was fast and furious.





Over in Japan, Nintendo was launching its 16-bit Super Nintendo. It took until 1991 to launch in Australia.



Gamers were wowed by the amazing Mode 7 on their SNES that gave games a 3D look. *F-Zero* was fast as well…





The SNES went 3D with the Super-FX chip. Argonaut's *Starfox* was the first game to move into another dimension.

**1990** One of the most popular NES games of all time was released this year – *Super Mario Bros 3*.



*Super Mario World* on the SNES brought the plumber's adventures into the 16-bit era. It was a mammoth game!




Another first from Midway – *NBA Jam* took basketball and added extra twists and quirks to make an addictive game.



*LLOYD MANGRAM'S*

# VIDEOGAMES HISTORY LOOKBACK

id Software does it again with *Quake* on the PC. The game is a massive multiplayer hit on the new-fangled internet.





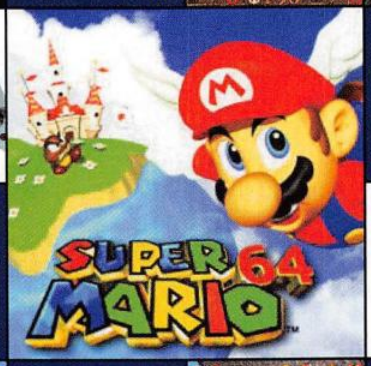
*Starfox* gets an N64 update but strangely has to be called *Lylat Wars* in Europe for legal reasons. Foxes must be popular.



An arcade collaboration between Rare, Nintendo and Midway – *Killer Instinct*. Rare's only arcade game.

But Sony's new PlayStation tapped into the clubbing culture sweeping the nation and stole first place from SEGA.






*Final Fantasy VII* is finally released on the PlayStation and sells two million copies in three days in Japan.

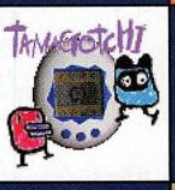


New standards were set in racing with Polyphony Digital and Sony's *Gran Turismo* on PlayStation.





There were great rumblings in the PC world. Microsoft launched *Windows 95* – DOS was dead, everyone rejoiced.




*The House of the Dead* popularises light gun games again. SEGA produce two sequels, one involves typing.



**1995** The next wave of console wars began this year. SEGA Saturn was more powerful than PlayStation.



1.6 million N64s were sold in the first three months, most of them with a copy of *Super Mario 64* – Mario had gone 3D!



**1997** Japan gives us the Tamagotchi and starts the Pokémon craze. We're still trying to catch 'em all…



*Zelda: Ocarina of Time* on N64 made more money than any Hollywood movie over the Christmas period.

Bub and Bob, stars of *Bubble Bobble*, were back. *Puzzle Bobble* was a simple bubble-bursting game, but highly addictive.



After a long run with Nintendo, Squaresoft announced that its next *Final Fantasy* game would be on PlayStation only.



Eidos launches *Tomb Raider* as a SEGA Saturn exclusive. Eventually it becomes the game that sells PlayStation.



Rare and Nintendo score a big hit with *GoldenEye 007* on the N64. The game is seen as a multiplayer masterpiece.





The 2D beat-'em-up was kept alive by SNK and the *King of Fighters* series. It was a massive hit on the Neo-Geo console.




**1996** But Nintendo makes a good come back with the Nintendo 64, originally named the Ultra 64.



Virtual Reality is the buzz word of the moment. Even Pac-Man gets a VR game courtesy of Virtuality. It didn't catch on.



**1998** At last, an FPS with a good storyline and less repetitive action. *Half-Life* was a console and PC hit.

Sensible Software had a real hit on its hands with *Cannon Fodder* on the Amiga. Little graphics but big on gameplay.



*SEGA Rally Championship* is a big hit with arcade driving fans. The corner slides were challenging and loads of fun.





The Saturn was struggling to compete against the PlayStation, despite great games like *Panzer Dragoon*.

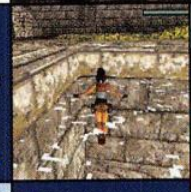


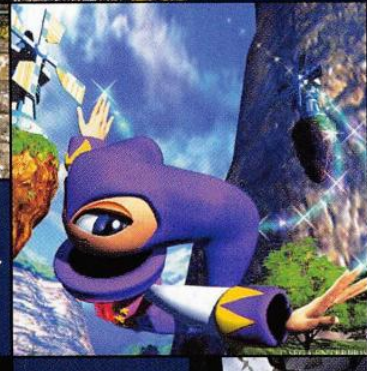


Namco stole the fighting game crown from SEGA with *Tekken* and the two have been slogging it out ever since.

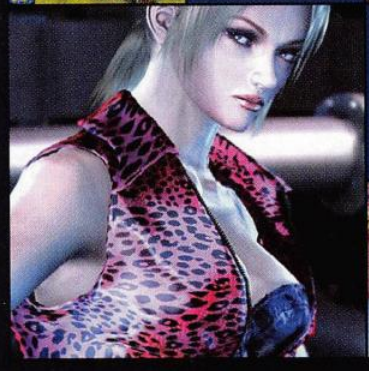


At last, Nintendo screws up! The Virtual Boy was a 3D console that never saw the light of day outside Japan.





*Grand Theft Auto* causes a stir. Questions about its violent content are asked in the House of Commons.



*Street Fighter* is still going strong. The most popular version to date is probably the *Street Fighter Alpha* series.



Capcom invents a new genre – the survival horror game. *Resident Evil* on the PlayStation scares us all witless!





The PlayStation sets new standards in console gaming. *Wipeout* from Psygnosis was a speed rush.



SEGA's Saturn has the first analogue joypad on a console and *NiGHTS* makes great use of it with flying and stunts.



A lyrical dog gets everyone button-bashing on their PlayStations in *Parappa The Rapper*. Word up!



SEGA's *Ferrari F355 Challenge* was an arcade machine with three screens and claimed to be very realistic.

Another update for the Game Boy – Game Boy Advance gave us PlayStation quality games on the go.






Xbox Live launches in the US and Europe, allowing gamers to actually talk to each other while online.



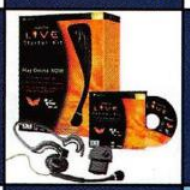








**2002** A new player enters the console war – Microsoft. Xbox is the first console with a hard drive.



**2003** Paragon launches *games™* and creates the definitive history of videogames from 1889 to today.

Konami and Hideo Kojima took the *Metal Gear Solid* series to new heights on the PlayStation.



The *Virtua* series moved from beat-'em-ups to sports games. *Virtua Tennis* is still seen as one of the best.




*Jet Set Radio* on Dreamcast was the first cel-shaded videogame and mixed it with unique gameplay.




Bungie creates the game of the year with *Halo* on Xbox. No-one has ever seen graphics like these on a console before.

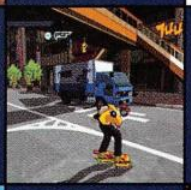




Konami was trying to get everyone dancing in the arcades with their *Dance Dance Revolution* games. Shake your thang.



**2001** *Conker's Bad Fur Day* on N64 was a first for Nintendo – a game with some bad language.



SEGA announces that it is discontinuing the Dreamcast and will become a software developer instead.



Rare continued to work its magic for Nintendo. *Banjo-Kazooie* on the N64 was a lively and fun platform game.



**2000** Sony brought out the big guns to see off SEGA. The PlayStation2 set new sales records.




PlayStation2 was thriving on sequels to great PSone games. *Gran Turismo 3 A-Spec* was fantastic!





The Dreamcast had a unique add-on – the VMU (Visual Memory Unit). It was a mini-console that fitted in the joypad.



Dreamcast made online console gaming a reality. *Chu Chu Rocket* was given away free to gamers!



Rockstar took the 2D PlayStation *Grand Theft Auto* and gave it a 3D look for the PS2 with *GTAIII*.



The best PS2 game of all time? *Grand Theft Auto: Vice City* sells one million copies in a day in the US.

*Pokémon Red* and *Blue* were released for the Game Boy along with a cartoon series on Sky One. It was BIG!



Namco joined forces with Sony to release an update. *Tekken Tag Tournament* had a cool bowling sub-game.



Eidos cashed in on the success of *Tomb Raider* with a movie starring Angelina Jolie. It wasn't too bad, y'know.



Nintendo goes for miniaturisation with the GameCube – its first major console to use discs instead of cartridges.

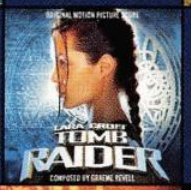




**1999** SEGA stole a lead from Sony in the 32-bit console race and Dreamcast was launched.



Sim games moved from the city into the home. *The Sims* from EA let you control people's everyday lives.




*Phantasy Star Online* allowed players to talk to each other in-game using the Dreamcast keyboard.



Shigeru Miyamoto does it again with *Super Mario Sunshine* on GameCube. A gaming masterpiece!

It was time for an update for Nintendo's classic black and white handheld – hello, Game Boy Color.



SEGA's *Shenmue* on Dreamcast created a whole new genre, FREE (Full Reactive Eyes Entertainment). No, really…





SO THERE YOU HAVE IT. LEARN ANYTHING? PROBABLY NOT, IF WE KNOW OUR READERS – YOU'LL NO DOUBT HAVE MOST OF THESE GAMES IN YOUR EXTENSIVE COLLECTIONS (MAYBE NOT E.T., THOUGH). SO HERE'S TO THE NEXT HUNDRED YEARS OF GAMING JOY. I'M REALLY LOOKING FORWARD TO PLAYING GAMES WITH PROBES IN MY BRAIN…

# ESSENTIALS

**TOO MANY GAMES, NOT ENOUGH MONEY. THANKFULLY THOUGH, NOT ALL OF THEM ARE WORTH SPENDING YOUR HARD-EARNED CASH ON. IF YOU WANT TO TASTE THE CREAM OF THE CROP, YOU'VE COME TO THE RIGHT PLACE...**

## PLAYSTATION2

**DETAILS**

**MANUFACTURER**
Sony

**LAUNCH DATE**
24 November 2000

**MEDIA**
4.75-inch DVD Disc

**CURRENT PRICE**
$399

The oldest of the next-generation consoles, having had well over a year's head start over both the GameCube and Xbox. With support across the board from third-party developers, a built-in DVD player and backward compatibility with older PSone games, it's the most popular videogame console available today.




### TOP TWENTY MUST-HAVE PLAYSTATION2 GAMES

| No. | Title | | Publisher | Developer |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Ico | | SCEE | In-House |
| 2 | Grand Theft Auto: Vice City | | Rockstar Games | Rockstar North |
| 3 | TimeSplitters 2 | | Eidos | Free Radical |
| 4 | Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 4 | | Activision | Neversoft |
| 5 | Pro Evolution Soccer 2 | | Konami | In-House |
| 6 | Burnout 2 | | Acclaim | Criterion |
| 7 | Devil May Cry | | Capcom | In-House |
| 8 | Rez | | SEGA | UGA |
| 9 | Suikoden III | IMPORT | Konami | In-House |
| 10 | NBA Street 2 | | Electronic Arts | EA Sports BIG |
| 11 | Kingdom Hearts | | SCEE | Squaresoft |
| 12 | Colin McRae Rally 3 | | Codemasters | In-House |
| 13 | Wild Arms 3 | | Ubi Soft | Media Vision |
| 14 | Ape Escape 2 | | Sony | In-House |
| 15 | Hitman 2: Silent Assassin | | Eidos | Io Interactive |
| 16 | Project Zero | | Wanadoo | Tecmo |
| 17 | Capcom VS SNK 2 | | Capcom | In-House |
| 18 | The Getaway | | SCEE | Team Soho |
| 19 | Mortal Kombat: Deadly Alliance | | Midway | In-House |
| 20 | Metal Gear Solid 2: Substance | | Konami | In-House |

VIEWPOINT

**SUIKODEN III**

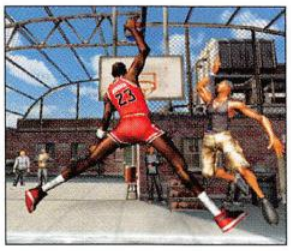
Yes, yes, it's most definitely an outrage that Konami isn't planning to release the third instalment of the *Suikoden* series outside of Japan any time soon. But moaning about it isn't going to get you anywhere – unless enough of you actually bother to do it, that is.



VIEWPOINT

**NBA STREET 2**

Just because we didn't grow up on the street, doesn't mean we're not fond of a little three-on-three b-ball now, does it? Our thoughts exactly, which is why EA Sports BIG's brand new basketball game had us dissing each other and shooting some hoops. Word.



VIEWPOINT

**PRO EVOLUTION 2**

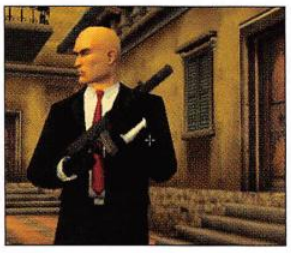
While the more arcadey delights of *ISS3* might be just the footballing tonic for some, we're still of the mind that there's nothing quite like a bit of *Pro Evo* – especially if you're the kind of person who likes to humiliate your friends by being great at it.



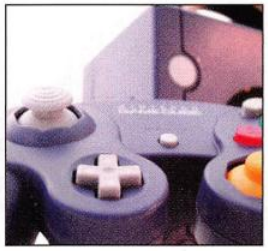

VIEWPOINT

**HITMAN 2: SILENT ASSASSIN**

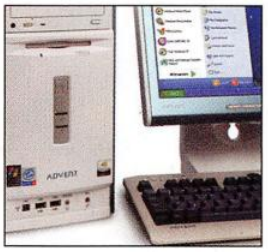
After playing IO Interactive's new game, *Freedom*, this month, we felt compelled to go back and play its last effort, *Hitman 2*, again. The result? Even more lost hours, sneaking around and popping caps in various asses. Bliss.









# GAMECUBE

**DETAILS**

**MANUFACTURER**
Nintendo

**LAUNCH DATE**
17 May 2002

**MEDIA**
3-inch Optical Disc

**CURRENT PRICE**
$289

Although it's the cheapest machine on the market, Nintendo's newest console shouldn't be underestimated. The firm's long-established experience in games means that the GameCube can expect to see many quality first- and third-party games in the future. Primarily a games machine, the GameCube has no DVD function.



## TOP TWENTY MUST-HAVE GAMECUBE GAMES

| No. | Title | | Publisher | Developer |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Metroid Prime | | Nintendo | In-House |
| 2 | The Legend Of Zelda: The Wind Waker | | Nintendo | In-House |
| 3 | Winning Eleven 6: Final Evolution | IMPORT | Konami | In-House |
| 4 | Super Monkey Ball 2 | | SEGA | Amusement Vision |
| 5 | Animal Crossing | IMPORT | Nintendo | In-House |
| 6 | TimeSplitters 2 | | Eidos | Free Radical |
| 7 | Skies Of Arcadia Legends | IMPORT | SEGA | Overworks |
| 8 | Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 4 | | Activision | Neversoft |
| 9 | Ikaruga | IMPORT | Treasure | In-House |
| 10 | Super Mario Sunshine | | Nintendo | In-House |
| 11 | Eternal Darkness | | Nintendo | Silicon Knights |
| 12 | NBA Street 2 | | Electronic Arts | EA Sports BIG |
| 13 | Resident Evil | | Capcom | In-House |
| 14 | Resident Evil Zero | | Capcom | In-House |
| 15 | Mario Party 4 | | Nintendo | Hudson |
| 16 | Mr Driller: Drill Land | IMPORT | Namco | In-House |
| 17 | Star Wars: Rogue Leader | | Activision | Factor 5 |
| 18 | Sonic Mega Collection | | SEGA | Sonic Team |
| 19 | Aggressive Inline | | Acclaim | Z-Axis |
| 20 | Doshin The Giant | | Nintendo | In-House |

VIEWPOINT
### SKIES OF ARCADIA LEGENDS

Those of you who prefer your RPGs to be slightly more stat-flavoured rather than smothered with real-time goodness should give *Skies Of Arcadia* a try – it's got a healthy mix of both styles and offers a great story to boot.



VIEWPOINT
### SONIC MEGA COLLECTION

Okay, so it might not be the brand new *Sonic* game that a lot of people are waiting for. But considering that *Sonic Mega Collection* has the best of what the hedgehog's got to offer, it's still worth your pennies.




VIEWPOINT
### MR DRILLER: DRILL LAND

It might be one of the most basic videogame concepts known to man, but that doesn't stop *Mr Driller: Drill Land* being a damn fun game. We don't doubt that this will be keeping us coming back for more many months down the line.



VIEWPOINT
### WINNING ELEVEN 6: FINAL EVOLUTION

Sony might have a monopoly on the *Pro Evo* licence over here, but if you like a bit of Konami football action then you might want to pick up the Japanese equivalent for the GameCube. Get those FreeLoader discs at the ready, people...



# ESSENTIALS

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## XBOX

**DETAILS**

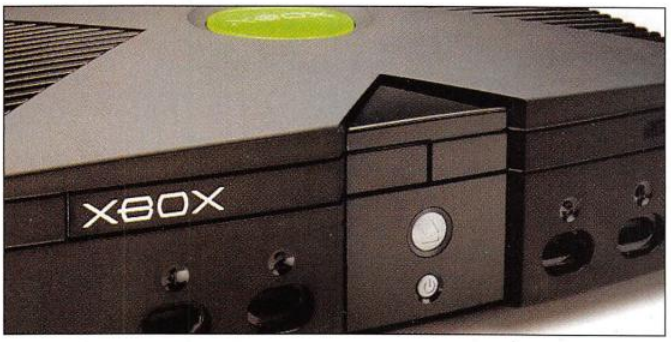
**MANUFACTURER**
Microsoft

**LAUNCH DATE**
14 March 2002

**MEDIA**
4.75-inch DVD Disc

**CURRENT PRICE**
$399

Despite a slow start, the Xbox is swiftly becoming one of the major players in today's console market. Suggestions that the machine is only 'a PC in a box' are founded upon the built-in hard drive, broadband support and DVD player. However, the Xbox is far more accessible to the casual gamer than most PCs.




### TOP TWENTY MUST-HAVE XBOX GAMES

| No. | Title | Publisher | Developer |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Halo | Microsoft | Bungie |
| 2 | Panzer Dragoon Orta | SEGA | Smilebit |
| 3 | Jet Set Radio Future | SEGA | Smilebit |
| 4 | TimeSplitters 2 | Eidos | Free Radical |
| 5 | Splinter Cell | Ubi Soft | In-House |
| 6 | Colin McRae Rally 3 | CodeMasters | In-House |
| 7 | Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 4 | Activision | Neversoft |
| 8 | Project Zero | Microsoft | Tecmo |
| 9 | Burnout 2: Point Of Impact | Acclaim | Criterion Studios |
| 10 | Aggressive Inline | Acclaim | Z-Axis |
| 11 | Dead Or Alive 3 | Microsoft | Tecmo |
| 12 | Hitman 2: Silent Assassin | Eidos | Io Interactive |
| 13 | Quantum Redshift | Microsoft | Curly Monsters |
| 14 | Project Gotham Racing | Microsoft | Bizarre Creations |
| 15 | Buffy The Vampire Slayer | EA | In-House |
| 16 | Phantom Crash | Phantagram | In-House |
| 17 | Mortal Kombat: Deadly Alliance | Midway | In-House |
| 18 | Unreal Championship | Infogrames | Epic Games |
| 19 | Dead Or Alive Xtreme Beach Volleyball | Microsoft | Tecmo |
| 20 | Toejam & Earl III: Mission To Earth | SEGA | TJ&E Productions |

VIEWPOINT

### PANZER DRAGOON ORTA

Games based on old franchises seem to be appearing out of the woodwork at the moment, but none of them are as good as SEGA's update of its Saturn classic. Pure shoot-'em-up action at its very finest, you lucky people.



VIEWPOINT

### TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 4

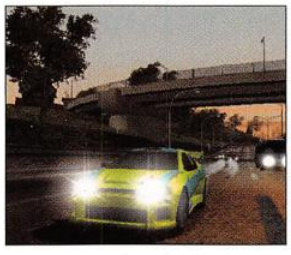
We've been revisiting our back catalogue a lot this month – in particular, the wonders of *Tony Hawk's 4*. Maybe it's because some of us still can't master the Pro Challenges, but we just can't put this one down... again.




VIEWPOINT

### BURNOUT 2: POINT OF IMPACT

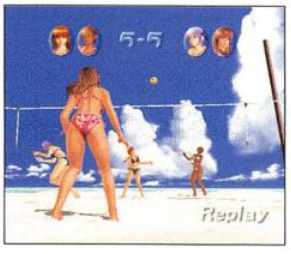
See, Acclaim? You can do good things when you try – especially when they involve fast cars and more crashes than a ZX81. Featuring several improvements over its PS2 cousin, *Burnout 2* is nearly the best racer on the Xbox.



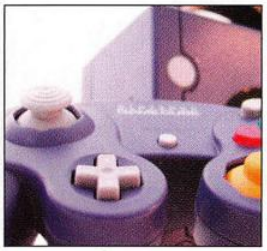
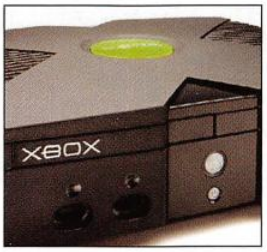
VIEWPOINT

### DEAD OR ALIVE XTREME BEACH VOLLEYBALL

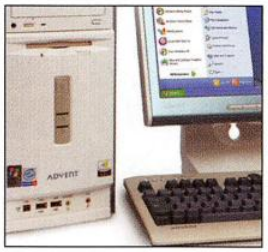
It takes a lot to divide opinion in the **games™** office but *DOAXBV* managed it quite successfully. A few people loved it, while others didn't see the point. Therefore, it's a must-have just so you can see which camp you fall into.









# GBA

**DETAILS**

**MANUFACTURER**
Nintendo

**LAUNCH DATE**
22 June 2001

**MEDIA**
Flash Cartridge

**CURRENT PRICE**
$199.95



Ideal for gaming on the move, the GBA is a cheap and effective way of getting games to those who don't have time to sit down and play. The leaps in handheld technology mean that GBA games are now more accomplished and can even be compared favourably to their console-based cousins. The lovely new SP model is available now.

**TOP TEN MUST-HAVE GAME BOY ADVANCE GAMES**

| No. | Title | Publisher | Developer |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Metroid Fusion | Nintendo | In-House |
| 2 | Speedball 2: Brutal Deluxe | Wanadoo | Crawfish |
| 3 | Castlevania: Harmony Of Dissonance | Konami | In-House |
| 4 | Zelda: A Link To The Past/Four Swords | Nintendo | In-House |
| 5 | Golden Sun | Nintendo | Camelot |
| 6 | Advance Wars | Nintendo | In-House |
| 7 | Street Fighter Alpha 3 | Ubi Soft | Crawfish |
| 8 | Super Mario Advance 3: Yoshi's Island | Nintendo | In-House |
| 9 | Sonic Advance 2 | SEGA | Sonic Team |
| 10 | Super Monkey Ball JR | SEGA | Realism |

VIEWPOINT
**SUPER MONKEY BALL JR**
Monkeys on your GBA? Now you're talking. The digital controls might not be flawless but still, it's as close to its big brother on the GameCube as you could ever get.




VIEWPOINT
**SONIC ADVANCE 2**
Move over, *Sonic Advance* – the hedgehog's back and this time he's got a new friend. More levels, more rings, more speed – what else could you possibly ask for?




# PC

**DETAILS**

**MANUFACTURER**
N/A

**LAUNCH DATE**
N/A

**MEDIA**
4.75-inch CD/DVD Disc

**CURRENT PRICE**
$variable



While primarily bought as a work platform, the PC has swiftly become the haven of the more 'mature' gamer. With its natural ability for online and LAN play, it is perfectly tailored for the FPS, strategy and MMORPG genres. However, it can cost a fortune to keep a PC up to date and running fast enough to support flashy graphics.

**TOP TEN MUST-HAVE PC GAMES**

| No. | Title | Publisher | Developer |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Grand Theft Auto: Vice City | Rockstar Games | Rockstar North |
| 2 | Unreal Tournament 2003 | Infogrames | Digital Extremes |
| 3 | Championship Manager 4 | Eidos | Sports Interactive |
| 4 | Operation: Flashpoint | Codemasters | In-House |
| 5 | Age Of Mythology | Microsoft | Ensemble Studios |
| 6 | Half-Life | Vivendi | Valve Software |
| 7 | The Sims | EA | Maxis |
| 8 | Civilization III | Infogrames | Firaxis |
| 9 | Fallout 2 | Virgin Interactive | Interplay |
| 10 | Sam And Max Hit The Road | Activision | LucasArts |

VIEWPOINT
**SAM AND MAX HIT THE ROAD**
Classic point 'n click adventure games don't come much more hilarious than this… and there's a sequel on the way. Yay, LucasArts.



VIEWPOINT
**GTA: VICE CITY**
It had to happen – having stormed the PS2, Rockstar is releasing the PC version of the *GTA3* sequel and plans to make a shedload of cash in the process. Typical, eh?



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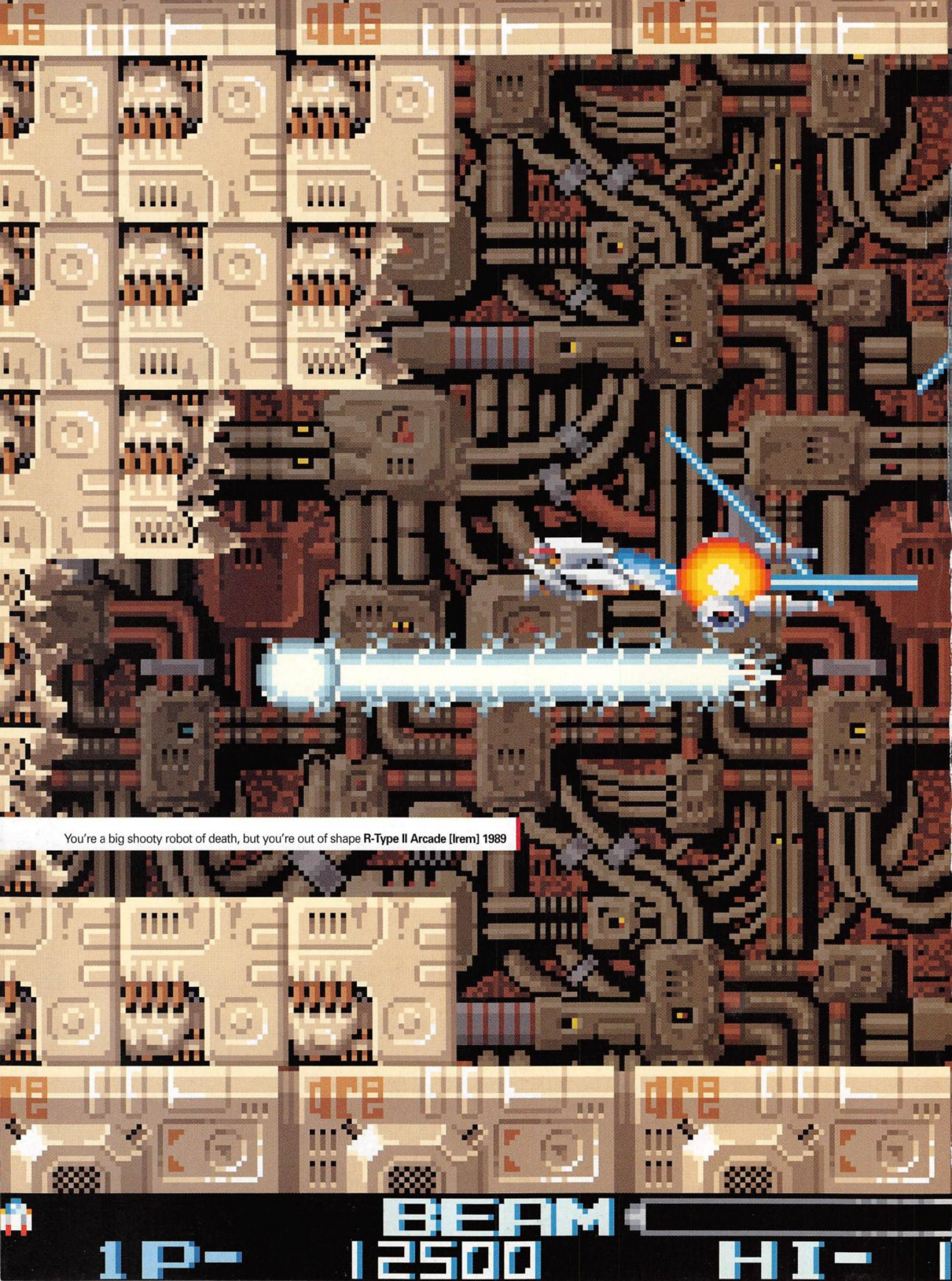
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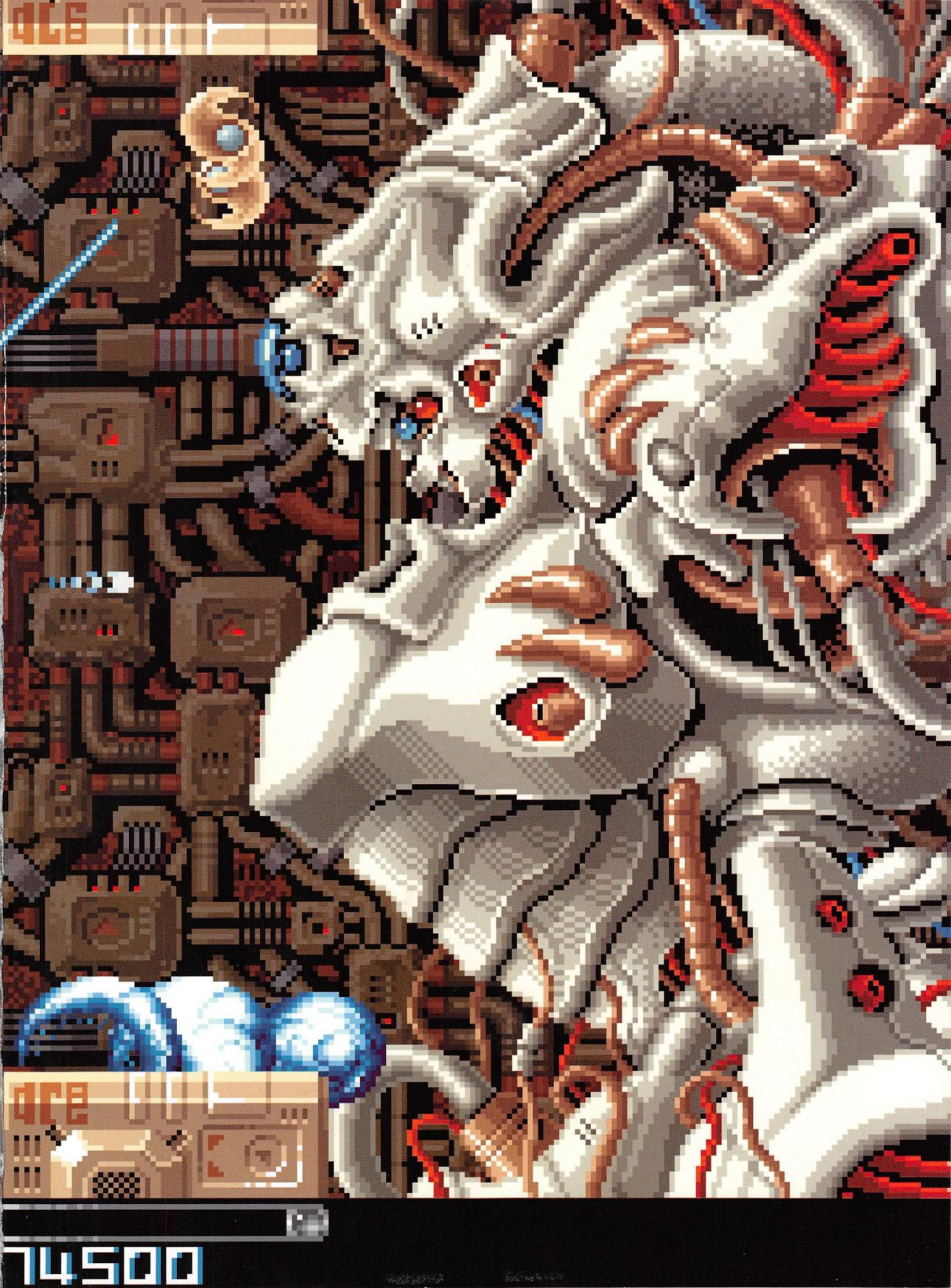
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