ALL NEW | AUSTRALIA'S MULTIFORMAT games magazine of the future | $9.95 inc GST (NZ $11.95) | 04

W41 $9.95
13 GAMES TM

games TM

PlayStation2 | GameCube | Xbox | PC | GBA | Arcade | Retro



PREVIEWED

FIRE WARRIOR

You've never played Warhammer 40,000 like this before

FULL REVIEWS

XGRA: EXTREME-G RACING ASSOCIATION [PS2/XB/GC]

AMPLITUDE [PS2]

SPACE CHANNEL 5 [GBA]

FUTURAMA [PS2/XB/GC]

REPUBLIC: THE REVOLUTION [PC]

JET SET RADIO [GBA]

STAR WARS: KNIGHTS OF THE OLD REPBULIC [XB]

GROUP TEST: RPGS [PS2]

SONIC PINBALL [GBA]

FEATURES

NINTENDO AUSTRALIA

Planning for the next generation

MOBILE PHONES

Handsets and games reviewed

132 PAGES OF EVOLUTIONARY GAMING

PREVIEW

THE SIMS 2

EA's talking 'bout an evolution

$9.95 INCL GST
$11.95 New Zealand
"excite, enthuse and inform"
ISSN 1448-2606
9 771448 260004 04
PARAGON PUBLISHING

They are genetically designed to kill...

They are fanatical, fearless and absolutely dominating...

They are YOUR ENEMY.



It is the 41st millenium,

THQ

GAMES WORKSHOP

GAMES WORKSHOP INTERACTIVE

All materials © Copyright Games Workshop Limited 2003 unless otherwise stated. All Rights Reserved. Fire Warrior, the Fire Warrior logo, the GW logo, Games Workshop, the Games Workshop logo, Kais, Space Marine, Space Marine chapter logos, Tau, the Tau caste designations, Warhamm
around the world, and used under license. All Rights Reserved. "Online play requires internet connection and Network Adaptor for PlayStation 2 (sold separately). The Online icon is a trademark of Sony Computer Entertainment America Inc." GameSpy and the "Powered by GameSpy" desig

16 Years in the making

PS2 Online

8 Player I-Link Compatible

Multiplayer Death Match and Co-Operative Play

scenario profiler







combat camera uplink

"...an early contender for the console first- personshooter of the year."

- Gamespy

MMER 00 ARRIOR™

and there is only WAR....

Kuju

PlayStation.2 NETWORK ENTERTAINMENT

PC CD ROM

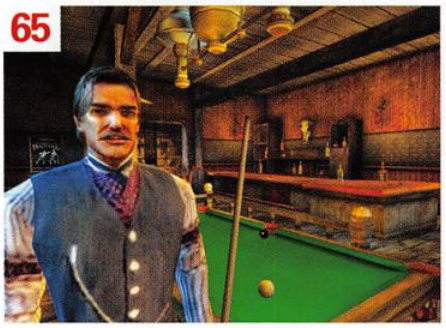
POWERED BY gamespy

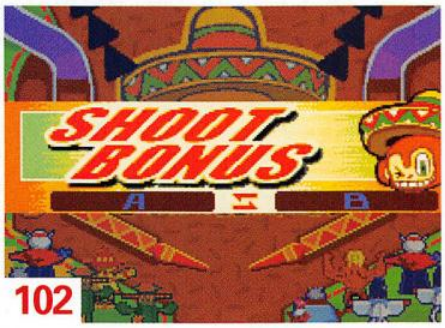
Warhammer 40,000 Device and all associated races, race insignia, marks, places, characters, illustrations and images from the Fire Warrior game and the Warhammer 40,000 universe are either ®, (tm) and/or © Games Workshop Ltd 2000-2003, variably registered in the UK and other countries trademarks of GameSpy Industries, Inc. All rights reserved. The Source Code for the Fire Warrior game © 2003 THQ Inc. THQ and the THQ logo are trademarks and/or registered trademarks of THQ Inc. All Rights Reserved. All other trademarks are the property of their respective owners.



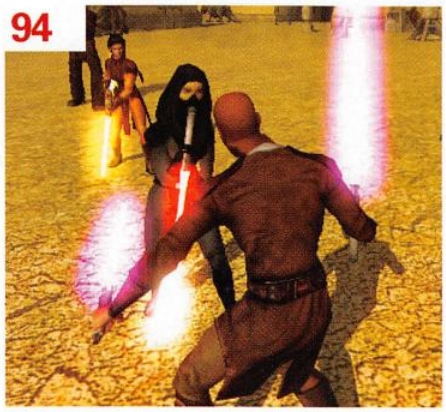

Sgt. Brock Killraven "The Mean Marine" / serial code 94606686
MA15+
MEDIUM LEVEL
ANIMATED VIOLENCE
range: 400m / nil wind factor
target aquired
ammo selection... complete
shoot to destroy

CONTENTS





Light side or dark side? It's up to you, apparently...



FEATURES

22 Community
Canada's Relic Studios are hard at work on Homeworld 2 and they took time out to chat with us about how you make an epic sci-fi RTS game.

36 Body Language
Animation versus motion capture _ each can produce some stunning graphical results. **games™** finds out who's leading the digital movement, er, movement.

74 Sounding Off
Often overlooked but an increasingly integral part of the gaming experience, music in videogames is investigated.

RETRO GAMING

They might be long in the tooth, but they still delight. Old-school games at their very best.

This latest Retro News 104
This Month In... 1991 105
Why Don't They Remake... Golden Axe 106
Look Back In Anger... Zool 107
Company Lookback...Treasure 108
Classic Gaming Platform... Amstrad CPC 464 110
Greatest Game Ever... Flashback 114
Classic Game Ad... Comix Zone 115
Family Tree... Final Fantasy 116
Games That Never Quite Made It... Scud Race 118
Games That Time Forgot... Kid Chameleon 119
Panzer Dragoon Gallery 120



PREVIEWS 44

Commandos 3 44
The Sims 2 48
Sudeki 50
Fire Warrior 52
XIII 54
Medal of Honor: Rising Sun 56
Buffy: Chaos Bleeds 58
Beyond Good & Evil 60
Broken Sword: The Sleeping Dragon 62
Horizons 64
Dead Man's Hand 65
SSX3 66
Final Fantasy X-2 68
Showcase 70

REVIEWS 80

XGRA 82
Amplitude 86
Space Channel 5: Ulala's Cosmic Attack 88
Futurama 89
Republic: The Revolution 90
The Italian Job: LA Heist 92
Jet Set Radio 93
Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic 94
Group Test: RPGs 98
Sonic Pinball Party 102

44 Commandos 3
Bash the bosch once again as you take control of a crack fighting unit in Pyro Studios' stunning strategy shooter.

48 The Sims 2
Ordinary pixels, just like you or me... The videogame phenomenon returns to the PC and this time it's evolving.

98 RPG group test
Hankering for some RPG action? We take a look at three of the best from Japanese design powerhouses Capcom, Namco and Square Enix.

REGULARS

122 Essentials
Want to create the finest games collection around? Head here to find out the games you need to own.

126 Contact
Though most prefer to rant, this is the place where you get to air your views about the current state of the world of videogames.

128 Subscriptions
Missed an issue? Want to get 50 per cent off the cover price? Check out our amazing subscription offer here.



Let's face it, when it comes to video games, we've never had it so good. There has been some concern lately – some of it justified – that the video game industry is in crisis. Developers have closed their doors despite record sales and some say the market is facing a glut of lame sequels and shoddy licenced games. Nostalgia for the 'good old days' (and let's face it, they really were good) is rampant.

But the truth is, there are more great games coming to market now than ever before. And while I love going retro and replaying old favourites, I also love playing the great new games that the current generation of machines make possible.

And that's where games™ comes in. Our goal is to keep you informed about the best, most interesting games, no matter whether they're being released next year or were released last decade. After all, a true classic is a gift to the ages.

Michael

Michael Butler, Group Editor

54

XIII

Unlucky for some perhaps, but Ubi Soft's cel-shaded shooter is looking as though it has brains as well as beauty

NEWS



NEWS | **INDUSTRY GOSSIP** | OPINION

CONTENTS

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

06 ECTS COMES TO TOWN

It's the European E3 but Microsoft won't show up this year. So what's going on without it?

18 REPORTS

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

22 COMMUNITY: RELIC

Canada is home to much more than Bullwinkle the moose and lumberjacks. Relic Studios are hard at work on Homeworld2 and they took time out to chat with us about their new game.

26 THE PLAYERS: CHARLES CECIL

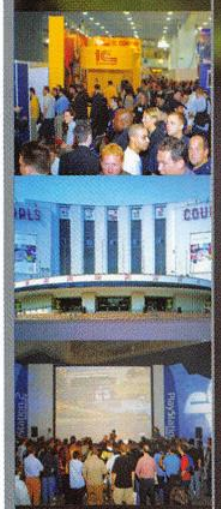
Revolution Software wants to shake up the action adventure game. We talk to its MD to find out how and why.

28 GROUP TEST: MOBILE PHONES

You need a new phone and of course, you want to playgames on it. What do buy? We'll sort you out.

34 RELEASE DATES

After Lara Croft found her way into some homes before her release date, we discover why some stores sell games before they're meant to.



Like E3 but without the sunshine or flight socks.

SONY AND NINTENDO HIT EARLS COURT IN STYLE, BUT MICROSOFT DOESN'T TURN UP FOR THE PARTY

NO-SHOW AT THE BIG SHOW

It may be considered E3's poorer relation, but that doesn't mean that Sony and Nintendo won't be showing off some extremely promising titles at this year's ECTS (European Computer Trade Show). Unsurprisingly, Sony will be dominating the show, thanks to its crowd-pleasing PlayStation Experience event.

"For the second year running, we'll be hosting our PlayStation Experience alongside ECTS," confirmed David Wilson, head of PR for Sony UK. "It will be another major statement about PlayStation and the amazing line-up of games in the pipeline for the coming months. This year's PlayStation Experience will be over twice as big as last year's, with over twice the amount of content, loads more third-party partners, more of everything really."

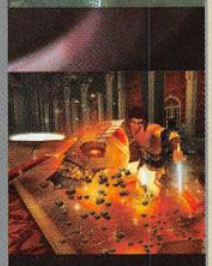
Perhaps the most interesting news about this year's show is that Nintendo will make a personal appearance (as opposed to simply holding yet another breakfast meeting). "Nintendo will be showing off the most up-to-date versions of forthcoming games for the GameCube and Game Boy Advance with a 40-tonne articulated truck packed with consoles and games," said Shelly Friend, head of PR for Nintendo Europe. "The Nintendo truck will be outside the entrance to ECTS on Brompton Road from Wednesday 27 to Friday 29 August and over 40 consoles within the vehicle's trailer will play host to some of the incredible games coming from Nintendo. The completed version of *Mario Kart: Double Dash!!* will also be available to play for the first time ever."

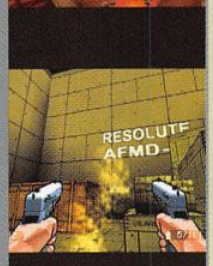
While Nintendo and Sony will be out in force, Microsoft will be keeping a surprisingly low profile. "With regards to ECTS I can confirm that we will not be exhibiting this year, although we will be attending for meetings with retailers and developers," confirmed Marie-Claire Suter, PR for Microsoft UK. "We will be hosting X03, the European Xbox showcase, on 16-17 September. X03 will take place in a fantastic surprise setting and feature some crucial Xbox announcements and the hottest games in the world."

Even though X03 is only a few weeks after ECTS, not having a display at the show seems like a missed opportunity – especially now that Nintendo has revealed its plans. The presence of Sony was never in question, which proves just how closely its finger is on the gaming pulse.

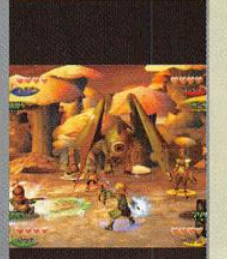












THE CREAM OF THE CROP

This year's ECTS will have some stunning titles on display, and while third-party stalls will have plenty of Xbox titles available, Sony and Nintendo's prominent appearances will be the main focus of the show. Here's a selection of the games we're hoping to try during the three-day event.

PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 3

PlayStation2

A year at ECTS wouldn't be complete without having to elbow your way past all the other journalists who constantly hog the Konami stand. *Pro Evolution Soccer 2* went down a storm last year and we're expecting similar things with the next stunning instalment.

METAL GEAR SOLID 3: SNAKE EATER

PlayStation2

Never mind the lush cut-scenes or the rather questionable subtitle, this is likely to be our first chance to actually get to grips with Snake's latest adventure. He may have defected to various other consoles over the last year, but Snake is now back where he belongs – we can't wait.

PRINCE OF PERSIA: THE SANDS OF TIME

Multiformat

After a 15-year break (and no, we're not including the first hideous 3D translation) the Prince of Persia is finally back. Ubi Soft and Jordan Mechner have done a fantastic job and we predict that, as at E3, the *Sands Of Time* will be one of the highlights of the show.

XIII

Multiformat

With the news that spooky Mulder, aka David Duchovny, will be voicing *XIII*'s amnesiac main character (with support from *Batman*'s Adam West and our very own Merrick & Rosso), ECTS will be the perfect excuse to see Ubi Soft's excellent cel-shaded blaster. It was on show last year, so it will be interesting to see just how far it's come.

MARIO KART: DOUBLE DASH!!

GameCube

Now that Nintendo has definitely confirmed that it's going to be at ECTS, there's no way we're going to miss another chance to race around hectic circuits with Mario and his chums. We got a real taste for this at E3, so we're practically drooling at the thought of putting *Double Dash!!* through its paces again.

FINAL FANTASY: CRYSTAL CHRONICLES

GameCube

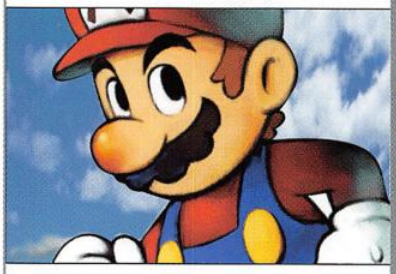
It's a four-player RPG, it's by Square and it's on the GameCube – what more could you want? Finally, a near completed version of Square Enix's *Crystal Chronicles* should be available to play. We've already started drawing straws to see who has to sit out on this potentially fantastic RPG.

Data Stream

BITE-SIZED STORIES FROM AROUND THE WORLD OF GAMING

HOORAY, 20 YEARS OLD

Party hats on – Nintendo's Famicom (NES) has just turned 20. To celebrate this achievement, Nintendo's president, Satoru Iwata, will give the keynote speech at this year's Tokyo Game Show (despite Nintendo not having a display there). It's thought that Iwata-san's speech will focus on the last two decades in the industry since the Famicom's release and where the industry is expected to go in the future. Nintendo of Japan is also giving away a thousand limited edition GBAs in the Famicom's colours to celebrate.



GBA GETS CONNECTED, AGAIN

SEGA has revealed that its new RPG, *Phantasy Star Online III: C.A.R.D Revolution*, will be the latest title to feature GBA to GameCube connectivity. Whilst SEGA is being very vague about how the new features will work, we're expecting to be able to download and trade cards and maybe even get to play another classic Sonic Team game like *NiGHTS*. With the likes of EA pushing titles such as *The Sims: Bustin' Out* and Nintendo's showing of *Pac-Man* at E3, it seems there could be more to connectivity than first thought.





Doom III and *Half-Life 2* could be selling points.









So the machine is real then? Crikey...





MORE DETAILS EMERGE ABOUT INFINIUM LABS' NEW CONSOLE. SO DOES THIS MEAN THE THING ACTUALLY EXISTS?

THE PHANTOM MENACE?

After much speculation, it's been revealed that Infinium Labs' elusive Phantom will finally put in an appearance at the first annual Ultimate Gamers Expo. "We're very excited to be unveiling the Phantom for the first time," said Tim Roberts, CEO of Infinium Labs. "This show is the perfect venue and gives us the unique opportunity to show the system first-hand to over 100,000 gamers and industry insiders."

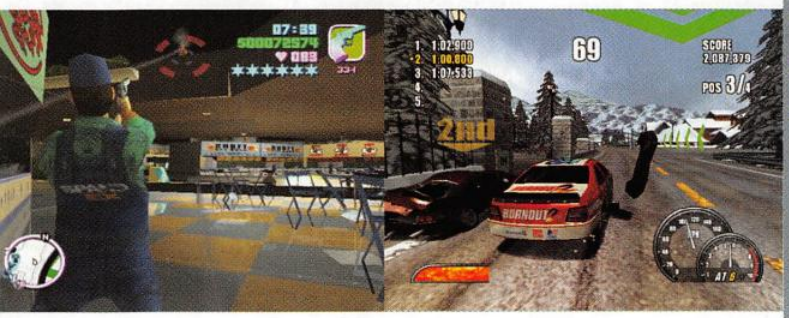
Along with this surprise announcement, more details about the actual machine have been released. The Phantom will dispense with the usual CD drive or cartridge slot and instead appears to be little more than a Windows XP PC without a monitor. Games for the machine will be downloaded from the Internet directly from Infinium via a secure channel (a move which, if it works, could be very beneficial for PC distributors).

Recent rumours are also suggesting that the new machine will be fully capable of running the hotly anticipated *Doom III* and *Half-Life 2*; this in itself could prove to be a major selling point, especially if the console stays close to the rumoured $400 (about $650 Australian) retail price.

With around $25 million ($40 million Australian) of venture capital being spent on the machine it's safe to say that we're growing more interested in this project. An important point to remember though, is that as exciting as the new technology may sound, the machine itself will be on some rather middling ground. On the one side will be console users who won't appreciate the standard problems that come with PCs, on the other will be consumers who already own a PC and don't need another one that can only play games.

Regardless, there are interesting times ahead for Infinium's new console and the show on 15 August should reveal more details.





RENDERWARE 2?

CRITERION ACQUIRES NEW PHYSICS IP

Criterion Software has recently completed the acquisition of MathEngine's physics intellectual property. Criterion – whose RenderWare program has been used on games such as *GTA: Vice City*, *Pro Evolution Soccer 2* and *Burnout 2* – has been in talks with MathEngine since early last year.

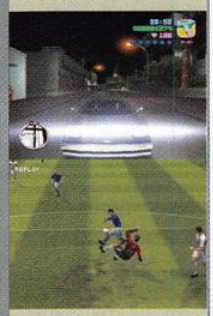
"We plan to do for physics middleware what we did for graphics," said Adam Billyard, chief technical officer at Criterion Software. "Provide an affordable, highly optimised, multi-platform solution that developers can leverage to push the creative envelope. There are also some really exciting technical directions we plan to take, that are just not possible with a standalone physics technology."

"Our goal is to ensure that RenderWare technology supports every part of the game development process," said David Lau-Kee, president and CEO of Criterion Software. "The acquisition of this intellectual property supports this strategy."

At **games™** we feel RenderWare can be a double-edged sword – while we praise its use in the likes of *GTA* and the *Pro Evo* soccer series, it can be a means of producing 'quick and easy' ports.



Burnout 2 has some very fancy physics.



The *Pro Evo* series also uses RenderWare.

DAMN PIRATES

PIRATES ATTEMPT TO BLACKMAIL MICROSOFT, AND THE CUBE'S BEEN CRACKED

Microsoft has come under attack from a group of Australian Xbox pirates known only as Free-X. It seems the group has found a way to run pirated games and third-party applications (including Linux) on the Xbox without any modifications at all.

Free-X originally wanted Microsoft to release a signed 'loader' which would enable Linux to run on the console. Free-X claims that since Microsoft refused to get in touch with them, so details of the hack have been released on the Internet. It's rumoured that Free-X's hack exploits the security of the Xbox dashboard and allows games to be loaded via a simple boot loader. It's too early to know if this will harm the Xbox; however, Microsoft is taking the matter very seriously and the case is now with its piracy division.

It's not only Microsoft that has come under attack from pirates – Nintendo's seemingly impregnable GameCube has also fallen victim. An online piracy group calling itself StarCube has ripped the images (called ISOs) from several GameCube titles and posted them onto the Net. While some will be pleased by this news, it's important to remember that whilst the ISOs themselves have been ripped, there is currently no way to transfer them onto GameCube discs. There are unsubstantiated rumours that the Panasonic Q can play the games if they are burnt onto normal DVDs.



Piracy is a huge concern that threatens the whole industry and we're alarmed at how quickly hackers are able to circumvent the protections built into each console. Microsoft and Nintendo are having a hard enough time as it is without having their potential user bases usurped by unscrupulous individuals looking to make a quick and easy profit

GAMES ROOM 101

THE NEGATIVE SIDE OF VIDEOGAMING



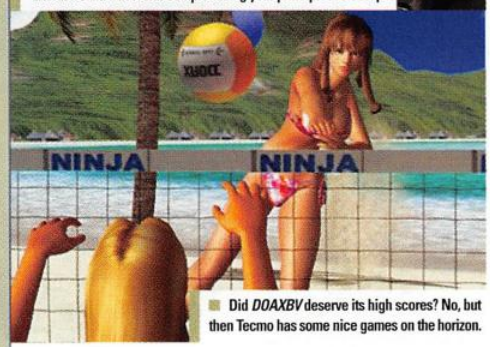
NO.9: YOU SCRATCH MY BACK...

It's a fact that no publisher can consistently produce quality games – a few duffers are always going to sneak through, no matter what. Naturally, it's our job (as journalists and, more importantly, gamers) to tell you which ones don't cut the mustard but not surprisingly, the publishers aren't exactly keen on this; there really is such a thing as bad press and, as such, they'd rather you not review something at all if it's getting a crap score.

Of course, we've learnt to deal with this – you're always going to get the odd PR person who takes exception to a particularly bad score, even if the review itself justifies it. What's really starting to tick us off though are publishers who know they have a quality game on the horizon (one that'll sell by the bucketload, regardless of how much publicity it gets) and therefore use it as a bargaining chip against their lower-quality titles. It's a cheap ploy, but it works with some people – putting a quality game on the cover of a mag will obviously push your sales up, so what's the harm in giving a couple of bad games slightly higher scores? Quite a bit, as it happens; particularly if you take pride in a little thing known as integrity...



Half-Life 2 – one game that most mags would kill to get the exclusive on. But worth compromising your principles for? Nope.



Did *DOAXBV* deserve its high scores? No, but then Tecmo has some nice games on the horizon.

Data Stream

BITE-SIZED STORIES FROM AROUND THE WORLD OF GAMING



GIRLS ON TOP

With Hisao Oguchi being promoted to president of SEGA, it meant that Hitmaker Studio (creator of *Crazy Taxi* and *Confidential Mission*) needed to find a replacement president. The position at the SEGA subsidiary has now been filled by *Virtual Tennis* and *Virtual On Marz* producer Mie Kumagai, who has become SEGA's first female studio president. Considering that many more Japanese women play games as opposed to their Western counterparts, it is surprising that this is the first time that any Japanese game studio has actually had a female president (although SEGA does employ many female artists and designers). Kumagai-san joined SEGA in 1993 and received considerable praise for the *Virtua Tennis* series.





Larry Probst could probably buy your granny.



Don Mattrick isn't short of a bob or two.





HOW MUCH?

ELECTRONIC ARTS HAS RELEASED THE SALARIES FOR ITS TOP EXECUTIVES – PREPARE TO CRY…

Thanks to the Securities and Exchange Commission, the salaries of Electronic Arts' top executives have been revealed to all and sundry. Unsurprisingly, it's EA's chairman and CEO, Larry Probst, who commands the most impressive wage. In 2003 he was paid a cool US $696,535 ($1,069,000). He also received a US $1.1 million ($1.7 million) bonus and options on 400,000 shares.

Don Mattrick, president of worldwide studios, saw his salary expand to US $606,551 ($930,900), a bonus of US $700,000 ($1.07 million) and further options on 300,000 shares.

Last but by no means least is Warren Jenson, executive VP and CFO. While he only received US $375,755 ($576,600) and a bonus of US $400,000 ($613,800), he was able to buy 600,000 shares and was allowed a further US $500,000 ($767,300) for accepting employment at Electronic Arts. Add a further US $100,000 for relocation and housing expenses and a US $4 million (nearly £602 million) loan – which only has to be paid back if Jenson leaves the company – and it's quite clear that many people will feel they're in the wrong jobs.

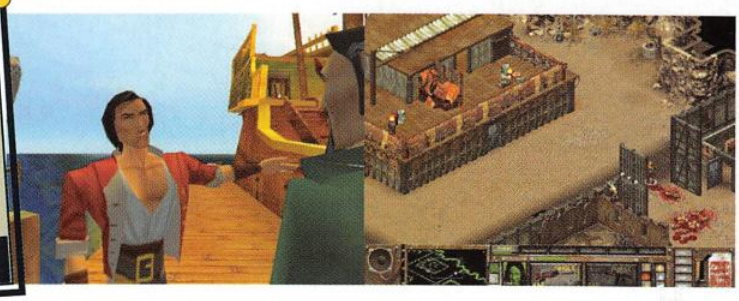


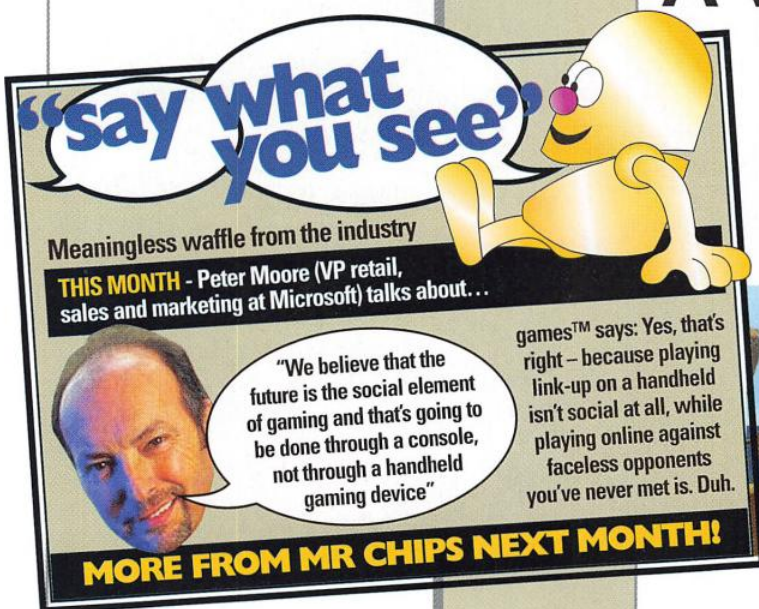
AFTER NUMEROUS PROBLEMS, VIRGIN INTERACTIVE IS NO MORE

A VIRGIN NO LONGER

Titus Interactive has finally put its distribution subsidiary, Virgin Interactive, to rest and renamed it Avalon Interactive. Although it was initially seen as a rival to EA and had the likes of Westwood and Capcom on its books, Virgin Interactive suffered a series of mishaps and racked up debts of nearly £36 million ($90 million).

Games like *Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance II*, *Barbarian*, *Fallout: Brotherhood Of Steel* and Toby Gard's *Galleon* will now be published on the Avalon Interactive label and should be in shops by the end of the year (although in the case of the much-delayed *Galleon*, we'll believe that when we see it).





Meaningless waffle from the industry

THIS MONTH - Peter Moore (VP retail, sales and marketing at Microsoft) talks about…

"We believe that the future is the social element of gaming and that's going to be done through a console, not through a handheld gaming device"

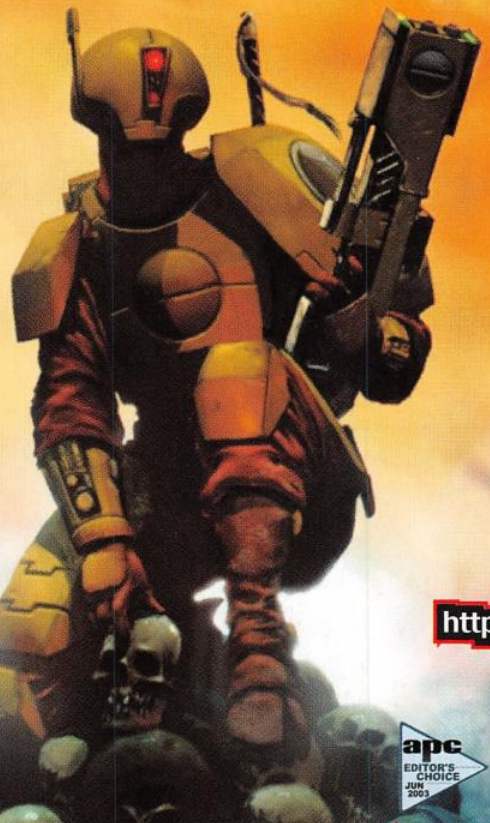
games™ says: Yes, that's right – because playing link-up on a handheld isn't social at all, while playing online against faceless opponents you've never met is. Duh.

MORE FROM MR CHIPS NEXT MONTH!

XBOX AND PLAYSTATION2 OWNERS

PLAY LONGER PLAY HARDER

PLAY ONLINE



On-Line Console Gaming has arrived and Netspace ADSL Broadband Internet is your ultimate weapon in your quest for global supremacy! Netspace Broadband is Playstation2 and XBox compatible, and we offer technical assistance and advice on connecting your games console to the Internet. Netspace offers fast, stable and low ping connectivity for maximum online gaming.

Your Netspace ADSL Broadband connection will also give you high speed internet on your home PC or Mac.

Connect your console NOW by logging on to http://games.netspace.net.au or call 1300 662 991

apc EDITOR'S CHOICE JUN 2003

PC PowerPlay GOLD AWARD

Editor's Choice apcmag HIGHLY COMMENDED

PC MAGAZINE EDITORS' CHOICE

Netspace - Experts in Broadband, Leaders in Online Gaming.

Netspace

plug.yourself.in

www.netspace.net.au

NET6196

THE NINTENDO (RE)GENERATION

NINTENDO ARE DOOMED... THEIR GAMES ARE FOR KIDS... CONNECTIVITY CAN'T COMPARE TO ONLINE GAMING... YEAH, RIGHT.



NINTENDO HAS ALWAYS MANAGED TO DELIVER BRILLIANT GAMES, UNIQUE PRODUCTS AND, MOST IMPORTANTLY, PROFITS. YET DESPITE HAVING BEEN IN THE MARKET LONGER THAN BOTH SONY AND MICROSOFT COMBINED, TIMES ARE TOUGH RIGHT NOW.





F-Zero GX is set to continue the series' tradition of delivering the fastest racing action money can buy.



The GameCube, despite its success overseas, has struggled to sell more than about 75 000 units in Australia and Nintendo's one area of unchallenged dominance—handheld gaming—is soon to be challenged by new systems from Nokia and Sony.

Still, having been with us since the early 80s, Mario and his mates in Kyoto know how to run marathons while their rivals are at the moment little more than a bloody quick sprinter and a maturing middle distance runner.

Will Nintendo win the next console race, or even be declared a finisher in the current competition?

Certainly there has been much talk about the company leaving the hardware maket and becoming a software-only company like Sega, but youthful Nintendo president Satoru Iwata has repeatedly denied that this is where the company is looking and was adamant in a recent interview (in issue 2) with Games™ that GameCube 2 is coming. So that leaves us with the question of 'what is going to happen to the GameCube?'

Even though Nintendo has arguably released a console which is easier to develop for than its rivals, and the company is more developer-friendly these days when it comes to royalties, the console hasn't blown the opposition out of the water. Indeed, when it comes to cross-platform ports of titles it seems that third-party publishers leave Nintendo at the bottom of the list. Very few cross-platform games have led on the Cube and usually the GameCube version of a popular game is launched after it has already come to PS2 or Xbox. And that's assuming it comes to the Cube at all.

That said, there have been encouraging signs too. The greater diversity of GameCube games when compared to the much-maligned N64 is certainly hard to ignore. There have also been some stellar first-party titles and more are coming. Indeed, Metroid Prime and Zelda: The Wind Waker are two of the very best games you'll see this year.

However, Nintendo are having to reinvent themselves on the run, being less able than in the past to rely on Mario's cash-pulling skills to keep their latest console in the race. In this vein there has been a more diverse range of games coming from Nintendo. Many of these are 'mature' titles and this represents a strategic shift to embrace older and more sophisticated gamers in addition to younger (teen and pre-teen) gamers.

FINAL FANTASY: CRYSTAL CHRONICLES

Square broke the hearts of may a Nintendo 64 owner when they announced that they would be taking their games to the then-upstart PlayStation. The decision was a major blow to Nintendo – and a major boost to Sony, as Final Fantasy VII turned many Western gamers on to the RPG genre for the first time.

But the wheel always turns, and Square (now Square Enix) is set to return to Nintendo with the GameCube-exclusive Final Fantasy: Crystal Chronicles.

We don't know too much about the game yet, but the eponymous crystals are vital to survival on a world cloaked in a poisonous mist. The artwork we've seen so far is stunning and the game looks set to draw on the tradition of Square's classic Secret of Mana.

We can't wait.



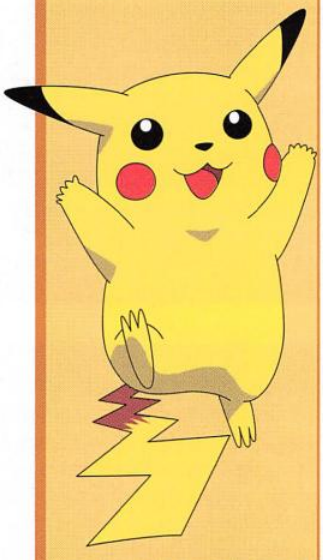


NINTENDO HAS ALWAYS BEEN AND CONTINUES TO BE THE LEADER IN INNOVATION AND QUALITY

DAVID YARNTON
NINTENDO AUSTRALIA

DAVID YARNTON

NINTENDO: RUNNING ITS OWN RACE



You know who this little guy is, don't you? Yup, he's one of the industry's biggest money-spinners. And you thought he was just another yellow rat...

Will Nintendo lose younger gamers in an attempt to attract older joypad junkies? Will the company be able to cope with a games market that seems obsessed with online titles when the GameCube certainly doesn't have such a focus? What about the impending arrival of the handheld games systems getting ready to take on the GBA?

All of this points to tough times ahead, but David Yarnton, Nintendo Australia's Director of Sales and Marketing, is confident that Nintendo is set to prosper in the years to come. games™ had a chat

GAMES™: Nintendo used to be the dominant force in the video game market. In the eighties the company single-handedly restarted the business after the crash and dominated it for years. So why do you think that lead has been eroded?

DY: If you're talking about 'lead' in reference to market share for GameCube, then I believe there are a number of factors that have played a part in this, from being third to market to pricing and having three systems available for the first time. If you're talking about lead overall, I do not believe this has been eroded. Nintendo has always been and continues to be the leader in innovation and quality. Our Game Boy brand is the dominant force in hand held gaming. Our focus is on developing products and games that stretch the boundaries of imagination and innovation, and deliver unique and fun gaming experiences.

GAMES™: Where does Nintendo see itself in the context of the Australian market?

DY: We see ourselves in a very healthy business position with our Game Boy line growing from strength to strength, a strong GameCube software line-up in the lead up to Christmas and the full potential of connectivity between our products being showcased in many upcoming first- and third-party titles.

GAMES™: What are the current numbers here?

DY: We're closing fast on 80 000 units in homes around Australia.

GAMES™: What are the forecasts for local sales?

DY: We're confident that our installed GameCube base in Australia will reach 100 000 by Christmas with key titles such as Mario Kart: Double Dash launching. We'll move further forward in 2004 with the launch of titles like Pokemon Coliseum.

Christmas will also see us well on our way to an installed base of half a million Game Boy Advance and Game Boy Advance SP units in Australia.

GAMES™: How possible is a price drop and what price do you think would help kick start sales?

DY: We've focused on delivering great offers to consumers rather than focusing on reducing the price of standard hardware. Our free software bundles and most recently, the ability to purchase a Nintendo GameCube with free Game Boy Player, are just the beginning. A price drop is not impossible, but we have no announcements at the moment.

GAMES™: Why has Nintendo found it so hard to get established in the Australian market when compared to overseas markets?

DY: I don't believe we've found it hard to get established in the Australian market, in fact Nintendo Australia, since starting in 1994, has shown significant success in this territory.

Our business has been and continues to be profitable. The last twelve months have been an extremely competitive time in the home console business, but people forget that Nintendo is not just a one-product company. We are a multi-platform company that has a lineup of quality hardware and software. Nintendo Australia is committed to this market, our retailers, consumers and business partners.

GAMES™: But surely you'd agree it has been hard to get the Cube established locally? Why do you think this is?

DY: Compared to other parts of the world the consoles in this territory are extremely aggressively priced. In other regions the GameCube has had more of a price buffer, but here the prices have been closer.

GAMES™: What is the way forward given the current state of play with GameCube?

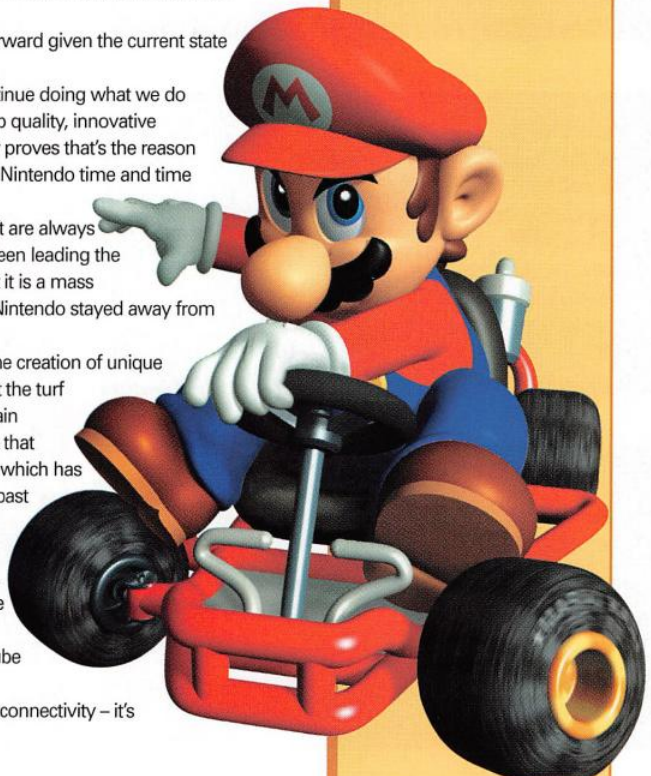
DY: The way forward is to continue doing what we do best – consistent delivery of top quality, innovative products and software. History proves that's the reason why consumers come back to Nintendo time and time again.

GAMES™: Sony and Microsoft are always talking about how they have been leading the industry and growing it so that it is a mass market proposition. Why has Nintendo stayed away from such statements?

DY: Nintendo's main focus is the creation of unique and original entertainment, not the turf battle. Our mission is to entertain people, not brag about the fact that Nintendo is the only company which has been greatly profitable for the past 20 years, while many others who've claimed to lead the industry have come and gone.

GAMES™: How much of a role will connectivity play in the ongoing plans for the GameCube and GBA?

DY: The Nintendo difference is connectivity – it's



TEAM PROFILES

SEIJI TSUKASA



- **POSITION:** Managing Director
- **RESPONSIBILITIES:** Manage all Nintendo operations in Australia
- **FAVOURITE NINTENDO GAME:** The Legend of Zelda (SNES)
- **FAVOURITE NON-NINTENDO GAME:** Virtua Fighter series (Sega)
- **QUOTE:** "Patience and vision are the answer to any decision" – Anon

DAVID YARNTON



- **POSITION:** Director of Sales & Marketing
- **RESPONSIBILITIES:** Managing sales and marketing in Australia, NZ & the Pacific
- **FAVOURITE NINTENDO GAME:** Any game with my boss in it (Mario!)
- **FAVOURITE NON-NINTENDO GAME:** EA's Medal of Honour (on GCN, of course)
- **QUOTE:** "Be happy while you're living, for you're a long time dead" – Scottish Proverb

GREG ARTHURTON



- **POSITION:** Marketing Manager
- **RESPONSIBILITIES:** Marketing Activities and planning for GameCube and Game Boy brands
- **FAVOURITE NINTENDO GAME:** GoldenEye (N64)
- **FAVOURITE NON-NINTENDO GAME:** Galaga – Best Ever!
- **QUOTE:** "Missed it by that much!" – Maxwell Smart

KATE WRIGHT



- **POSITION:** Public Relations and Promotions Co-ordinator
- **RESPONSIBILITIES:** Media communications, promotions, events and third party relations.
- **FAVOURITE NINTENDO GAME:** Super Smash Bros. Melee (GameCube)
- **FAVOURITE NON-NINTENDO GAME:** The Curse of Monkey Island (PC)
- **QUOTE:** "Life must be lived as play" – Plato

JENNIFER SHELDON



- **POSITION:** Trade Marketing Co-ordinator
- **RESPONSIBILITIES:** All trade-related marketing. Point of Sale (POS), interactives and sales promotions
- **FAVOURITE NINTENDO GAME:** Game and Watch Gallery Advance (GBA)
- **FAVOURITE NON-NINTENDO GAME:** CSI (PC)
- **QUOTE:** "Heaven doesn't want me and Hell's afraid to have me!"



Legend of Zelda: The Four Swords is a key release for Nintendo, and the first-ever multiplayer Zelda game. What took them so long?





something no other console can offer. The potential of connectivity was shown at this year's E3 in Los Angeles with titles such as Pacman and Four Swords. We've seen it utilised many different ways in games like The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker, Metroid Prime and Metroid Fusion as well as a number of third-party games. We're only just starting to see the many capabilities this has to offer and it's potential to open up whole new levels of game play experiences.

GAMES™: What are some of the more interesting aspects of this functionality and what do you think is the 'hook' which will get gamers interested in it?

DY: Apart from opening up unique gaming features, connectivity allows competition and cooperative gaming. Players can compete against each other in some games or co-operate with each other to get to the next level or complete an area of the game.

GAMES™: Can there be three successful consoles in the Australian market?

DY: Absolutely. Our local industry is worth $807 million. But there are two levels of success – market share and profitability. Make no mistake: it is not only Game Boy product lines that have been generating profits for Nintendo. GameCube is a hugely profitable business.

GAMES™: Globally?

DY: Again, yes.

GAMES™: What is Nintendo in Australia's strategy when it comes to online gaming?

DY: Nintendo will monitor the demand for this function in Australia. We view this as a niche area that will not be mainstream for sometime. We'll make our on-line decisions based on market demand.

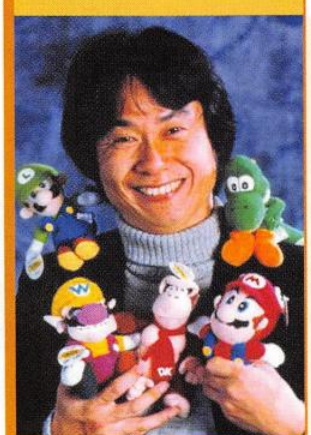
GAMES™: Do you think making the GameCube not DVD compatible was a mistake?

DY: We have always maintained the fact that the Nintendo GameCube is a dedicated gaming machine and have no interest in repositioning our product as a computer, set top box or multimedia device.

GAMES™: So not a mistake then?

DY: No, but in hindsight it is easy to speculate about what might have been better to do in any given situation.

GAMES™: Nintendo has been working to create a selection of games that appeal to a broader demographic. Has this worked for you locally with some of the more mature games, like Eternal Darkness and Resident Evil?



NINTENDO'S NOT-SO-SECRET WEAPON

If the world was fair, Shigeru Miyamoto would be as famous as Steven Spielberg or Michael Jackson. He is one of the great pop-culture creators of the 20th Century (and he's been doing okay the last two years as well). A shy fellow with a bowl haircut, Miyamoto has created everything from Donkey Kong to Zelda and has had a passing hand in almost every other major Nintendo hit of the past three decades. He also plays the banjo and likes gardening. But don't let that fool you – when it comes to game design, Miyamoto is the man other designers pay tribute to.

DY: We now have a much broader first- and third-party line-up than ever before. It caters for many different ages and tastes, all of which have met our expectations in the local market.

GAMES™: What were your thoughts when you were told that Nintendo has halted production of GameCubes for the moment?

DY: We felt it made good business sense. Nintendo focused on lessening market inventory in the first quarter of this Japanese financial year. This has bought GameCube inventory levels back to normal during a quarter that is traditionally a slow sales period.

GAMES™: What would you say to GameCube owners who might be concerned by news that Nintendo has stopped making consoles in the interim as they have a backlog of units to sell?

DY: It shouldn't concern GameCube owners at all. Production has been halted temporarily for good business reasons; Nintendo has continued and will continue to deliver top software and products like the Game Boy Player to our consumers.

GAMES™: How far are we away from GameCube 2?

DY: We have confirmed that work has commenced on our next generation console.



■ Go on, you know you want one...



ONLINE GAMING? BEEN THERE, DONE THAT...

It's no wonder that Nintendo is currently highly sceptical about online gaming. After all, it was connecting its consoles to the Information Superhighway back in the 80s in both Japan and the US.

The most successful of these experiments involved the Bandai Satellaview-X which was a modem that fitted underneath the SNES – rather like the N64's 64DD. Unlike the 64DD, however, the Satellaview-X was highly popular in Japan where you could connect the system up to the St Giga satellite TV station between 4pm and 7pm to view games news, chat online and download games.

The games were the real draw because many of them were exclusives or special editions of already popular games. You could download most of them onto a re-writable memory cartridge, which slotted into the BS-X cartridge, which in turn plugged into the top of the SNES like a normal cartridge.

Most of the games were released in installments over several weeks and included such holy grails as a graphically enhanced version of the original Legend of Zelda, as well as extra tracks for F-Zero and Excitebike. Not only that, but you could play online against virtual friends with those games that had multiplayer modes.

The whole system was such a success that Nintendo was still making games for it right up until March 1999 and only pulled the plug in June 2000. So, when Nintendo says it isn't keen to rush into online gaming, it's not because it's afraid to step into the unknown. Quite the reverse, in fact: it's because it did all its experimenting years ago and knows exactly what it's talking about.



■ Back in the day Nintendo's online facility was used to make some of its classic SNES titles ever better.

"GAMECUBE IS A DEDICATED GAMING MACHINE... [WE] HAVE NO INTEREST IN REPOSITIONING OUR PRODUCT AS A COMPUTER, SET TOP BOX OR MULTI-MEDIA DEVICE."

DAVID YARNTON
NINTENDO AUSTRALIA

games™ USA REPORT



LETTER FROM AMERICA

WITH YOUR FRIENDLY CORRESPONDENT, THE SHAPE

"YOU'D THINK A COUNTRY WITH OVER 20 MILLION PLAYSTATION2 LOOKING AT THEMSELVES, WOULD BE HIGHER ON

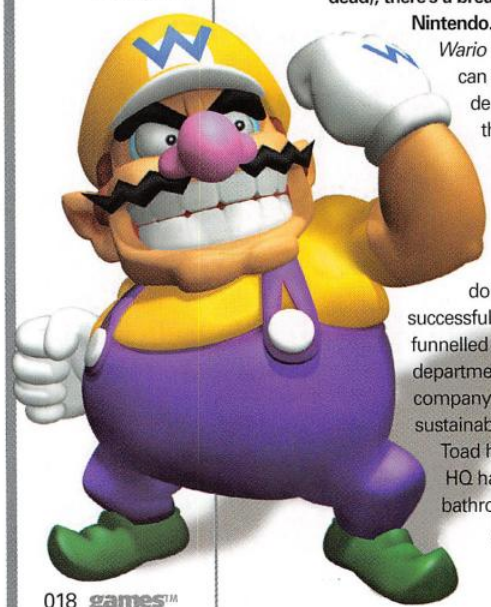
You'd never tell that Nintendo was in dire straits here, judging by the brave face it's putting on. Roughly every 120 seconds (while watching the sort of vapid TV trash that makes you wish either the program controllers or you were dead), there's a break for commercial messages and up pops Nintendo. It likes to tell me about *Wrestlemania XIX* or *Wario World*, but most often it likes to tell me that I can still get a free copy of *Wind Waker* and a demo disc if I buy its machine. Reassured that the offer has not been withdrawn during the previous two minutes of programming, I settle snugly into another *nouvelle cuisine*-sized portion of televisual discontentment.

Not a bit of expertise in corporate finance is required to realise that, clearly, dollars are streaming into Nintendo's raucously successful GBA department – whereupon they are funnelled directly to the GameCube marketing department, which spews them back out of the company like it's eaten a bad clam. This can't be sustainable, can it? Rumours abound that even little Toad has dumped his shares, and that Nintendo HQ has been forced to switch from luxury bathroom tissue to scratchy bog roll.

Any desperation is invisible to Mr Average Gamer, of course, although the paint is beginning to crack. Two details give Nintendo away: the charts (only one GameCube title – namely *Zelda* – is in the top 20) and price (at US $149 with a free game – that's about $230 – the GC is the cheapest console of the three, with both Xbox and PS2 holding at US $179). With the only discernible saviour on the horizon a *Mario Kart* game with no fewer than two exclamation marks in its title, accountants in the GBA department are unlikely to become any happier in the next chapter of Nintendo's unfolding biography.

I wouldn't dare suggest Nintendo was the only one making bad choices at the moment in the United States though, oh no. It may seem like a daft gimmick to you, but – please believe this when I tell you – I really want an EyeToy. Granted, I saw a demo of the system a couple of years back that was more revolutionary than what has finally been delivered (they gave you a bright orange bat, its motions mirrored on screen by a mace – imagine really getting to wallop someone upside the head, *Braveheart* style, or having a Lightsaber fight with no predetermined moves) but I still think it's a thrilling step forwards in terms of innovation and would like to have one on top of my TV, thank you very much.

Apparently, this won't be happening here until at least October. I note with eye-twitching ire that citizens of Europe and your fair isle have been enjoying seeing themselves wash windows and punch little karate men since the beginning of



Would you trust this man to save your ailing console? Someone does...



OWNERS, MOST OF WHOM ENJOY THE EYETOY LAUNCH LIST THAN IT IS"

summer. You'd think a country with over 20 million PlayStation2 owners, most of whom enjoy looking at themselves, would be higher on Sony's launch list than it clearly is. Then again, you'd also think that, living in a country which is physically attached to Mexico, I'd be able to find one brand of tortilla chips tasting at least half as good as those I used to get from Woollies.

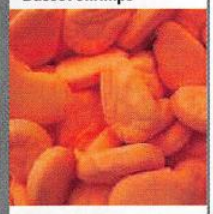
So what of Microsoft? How is the only American company of the big three treating its homeland? The Starbucks of software is guilty only of the same crime as it was on day one of its home console venture: having just one system-selling game with the next a long way off, which is the same story worldwide. Well, okay, that and punishing newcomers to its online gaming service by hiking up the price of new Xbox Live subscriptions by a megalomaniacal 40 per cent, while existing members renew for the original fee. Well, that's welcoming!

Here's an idea: why don't you shove Xbox Live, and I'll donate the $70 towards development of a second game that actually uses the clever bits inside Xbox the way *Halo* did. That's right, not a PC port, a real Xbox showcase. Please have it released sometime this year, in case I die before *Halo 2* comes out.

Many thanks THE SHAPE

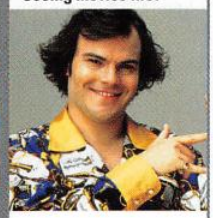
MISS ABOUT BRITAIN...

Basset Shrimps



LOVE ABOUT AMERICA...

Seeing movies first





There's no window-washing fun in the States yet.

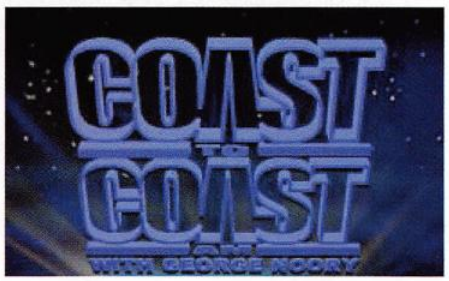
WANT ANY QUESTIONS ANSWERED BY THE SHAPE? THEN DROP HIM A LINE AT: theshape@comcast.net ... HE MIGHT LISTEN, IF YOU'RE LUCKY.

AMERIKAAN

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

COAST TO COAST AM

A four-hour nightly radio talkshow, beginning at 1am, dealing with conspiracies and the paranormal. Lots of crazies phone up with tales of 'shadow people' and the like.

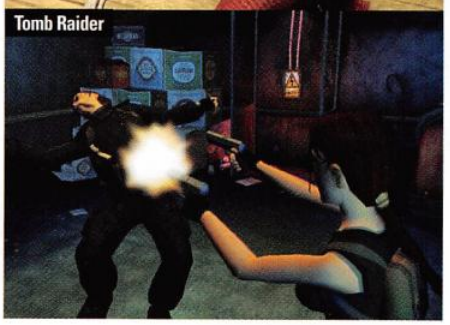


US MULTIFORMAT TOP TEN

	Title	Publisher	Format
1	Hulk	Vivendi	Multi
2	Enter The Matrix	Atari	Multi
3	Tomb Raider: Angel Of Darkness	Eidos	Multi
4	Midnight Club II	Rockstar	Multi
5	NBA Street Vol. 2	EA BIG	Multi
6	Brute Force	Microsoft	Xbox
7	Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell	Ubi Soft	Multi
8	Wario World	Nintendo	GC
9	Def Jam Vendetta	EA	Multi
10	Yu-Gi-Oh! Worldwide Edition	Konami	GBA

(Updated 18/07/03)


Enter The Matrix


Tomb Raider

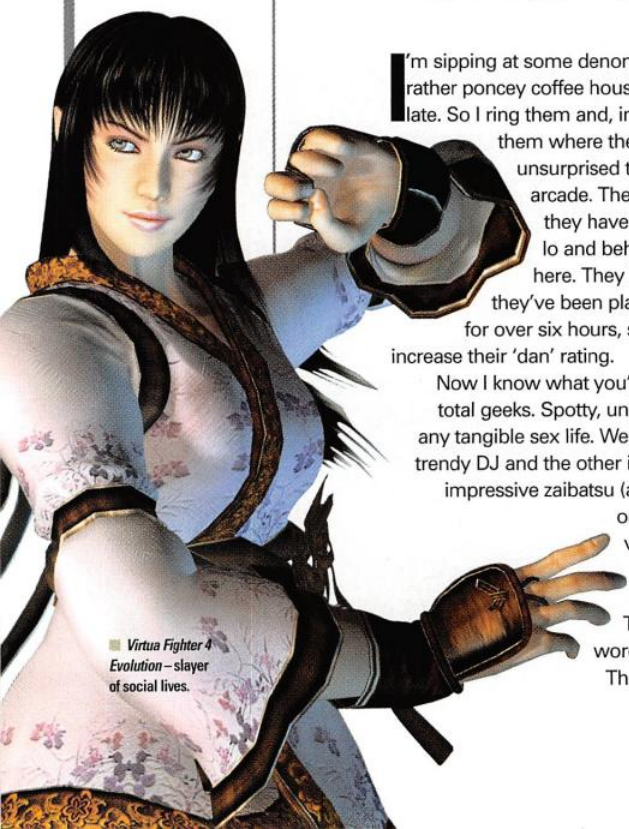
games™ JAPAN REPORT



KONGETSU*

WITH JAPANESE CORRESPONDENT OLLIE BARDER

"BRITISH GAMES JOURNALISTS ARE VERY SENSITIVE ABOUT THEIR THEY DON'T CARE IF THEY SUCK – THEY LISTEN TO THE GAMERS AS



Virtua Fighter 4 Evolution – slayer of social lives.

I'm sipping at some denomination of frappuccino thing in a rather poncey coffee house, and my mates are late. Very late. So I ring them and, in my most polite Japanese, ask them where the bloody hell they are, only to be unsurprised to find out that they're still in the arcade. They say they'll be on their way once they have finished "kicking this guy's ass" – lo and behold, five minutes later they're here. They look tired. I am informed that they've been playing *Virtual Fighter 4 Evolution* for over six hours, simply because they wanted to increase their 'dan' rating.

Now I know what you're thinking. These guys must be total geeks. Spotty, unkempt and seriously lacking in any tangible sex life. Well, you're wrong. One is a very trendy DJ and the other is an executive within a rather impressive zaibatsu (a big corporation, like Microsoft, only scarier). They both have very, *very* pretty girlfriends. They are probably also two of the most skilled gamers in Japan. They are, for want of a better word, hard-core.

They chat for a while, talking crap mostly. As of late these two have been rather self-absorbed with their *Virtua Fighter 4 Evolution* skills; this is hardly surprising considering how Yu Suzuki's opus has raged across arcades here like a credit-eating tsunami. Tangent goodness aside, the game really is testament to Japan's vibrant arcade scene. Regardless of my friends' somewhat narcissistic mutual diatribe, I decide to turn the conversation towards more global pastures. I explain that 'hard-core' gamers are deemed a 'dying breed' by the Western gaming press. An ominous silence follows.

"They can't play games properly," the DJ says of such journalists, looking rather hurt. "They are making allowances for their lack of skill by undermining the people that do." I play devil's advocate and try to explain that the current shift in games design is towards more inclusive titles that offer a world for the player to explore. "So?" replies the DJ. "Just because these games are more inclusive doesn't necessarily make them better. And why are these games thought of as 'replacing' other modes in design?"

"You have to admit that games are more 'showy' now, though," adds the exec. "Most people don't look at the games themselves anymore, more the visual element." The DJ replies: "I know that, but why should that make the games themselves any better?" I sit and watch as all this



unfolds; I try to push it in a new direction by asking how the Western press can be educated.

"Do these journalists listen to gamers?" asks the exec. "No, not really," I reply. "They normally have an agenda of their own as far as I can see. They don't like criticism either." The DJ exclaims: "That's their problem, not the gamers. Your press are very sensitive about their lack of skill it seems. In Japan they don't care if they suck, the press listen to the gamers because their job is to report."

I smile ruefully at all this and promptly explain that I'm a games journalist. They freak. After all, I was merely their mate that was rather crap at *Virtual On Force* (relatively speaking). I assuage their fears through the acquisition of cheesecake and the admission that I'm not here to misrepresent them; if anything, quite the opposite. I explain that I needed their honest take on the matter, and not a loaded 'fist in the face of the gaming press'. They nod and ask for more cheesecake. As we get up to leave, the exec says he'll pay the bill. A bribe, or common Japanese courtesy? He whispers over my shoulder: "kick their ass, and I want a copy of the magazine that our conversation is published in." A bribe then…

Kind regards Ollie Barder

LACK OF SKILL. IN JAPAN THEIR JOB IS TO REPORT"

TEACH YOURSELF JAPANESE

LESSON NINE: BUYING A COFFEE

Can I have a frappuccino please?	Furapechiino hitotsu kudasai?
Oh, would you like one too?	Kimimo hitotsu hoshiikai?
Do you have a boyfriend?	Boifurendo iruno?
Well, I like my women how I like my coffee…	Mmmm, boku, bokuno kohi mitainal onnanokogasukinandayone…
… in a plastic cup.	… purasuchikkuno kappuni haittayouna



Virtua Fighter – it's evolving. Are you?

EVOLVE, DAMN YOU!

The latest admission to the epic *Virtua Fighter* canon, *Virtua Fighter 4 Evolution*, is a truly impressive game. Hear not what others have said – they be the ignorant type. Not only is it disgustingly deep, but with the addition of a sagely implemented card system (from the original *Virtua Fighter 4*) it's inclusive too.

To explain, the card system allows players to seek out opponents as they wish – whether they be of a higher or lower standard, you can tailor your versus experience. So instead of inadvertently going up against an ex-champion, you can challenge equally skilled opponents and learn at your own speed.

Moreover, to increase your rank (or 'dan'), you have to find players of a similar rating to you – and then beat them. The later is a dynamic system too – lose too many matches and you go down a grade. It may sound crazy, but this card system has really helped to make the *Virtua Fighter* scene truly vibrant here. In short, it's bloody great stuff.

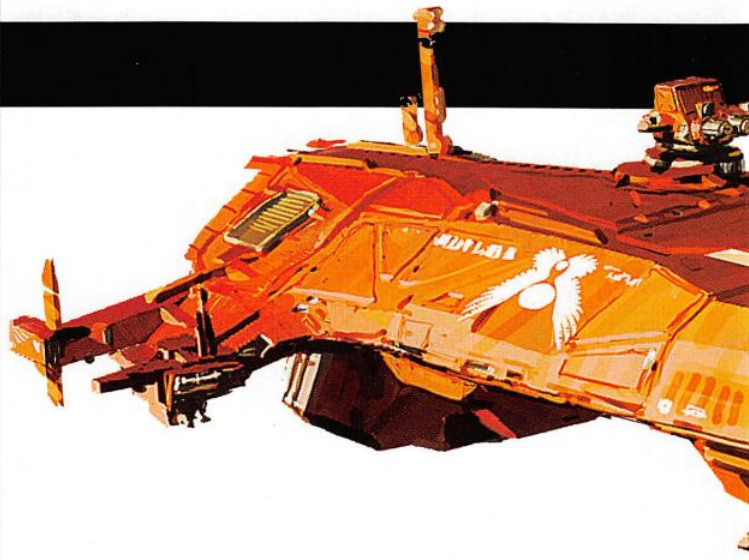
JAPANESE MULTIFORMAT TOP TEN

	Title	Publisher	Format
1	Super Mario Advance 4	Nintendo	GBA
2	Kirby's Air Ride	Nintendo	GC
3	Mother 1 + 2	Nintendo	GBA
4	Silent Hill 3	Konami	PS2
5	Animal Forest e+	Nintendo	GC
6	Initial D: Special Stage	SEGA	PS2
7	Slotter Up Core: Giant's Star	Dorat	PS2
8	Hanjuku Eiyuu Vs 3D	Square Enix	PS2
9	Let's Make A Pro Soccer Club 3	SEGA	PS2
10	Viewtiful Joe	Nintendo	GC

(Dengeki Console Game Ranking Top 50, week ending 19/07/03)







RELIC ENTERTAINMENT

VANCOUVER IS EMERGING AS A CENTER OF VIDEO GAME DESIGN. THIS MONTH, GAMES™ TAKES A LOOK AT WHAT RELIC ENTERTAINMENT HAS IN STORE FOR FANS OF HOMEWORLD, ITS HIT SCI-FI RTS SERIES.





Homeworld was something of a surprise hit when it was released in 1999. By combining a solid space-based RTS game with an intriguing story that unfolded as the game was played, it hooked in enough players to justify an expansion pack and now, a full-blown sequel.

Dan Irish, Homeworld2's producer, and Josh Mosqueira, its lead designer, were generous enough to take time out to chat with games™ about the unique challenges they've set themselves.

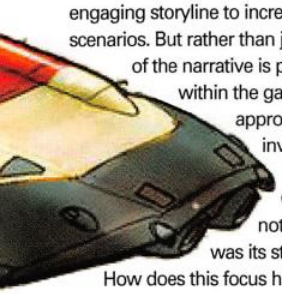
[Actually, we dragged Josh away from a multiplayer game of Homeworld2 – he assures us that playtesting is a crucial part of the game design process…]

Dan is an industry veteran who was responsible for the Myst and Riven game lines before joining the Relic team, whilst Josh has a background in pen & paper RPG design as well as in computer game design.

GOING HOME

If you're not familiar with the Homeworld games, in simple terms they're space-based real-time strategy titles, featuring combat in a true 3D environment. The learning curve can be steep but the games repay the effort you'll put in to learn them.

In addition to providing a deep strategy game, however, the Relic team has prided itself on providing an engaging storyline to increase players' involvement in the scenarios. But rather than just providing cut-scenes, most of the narrative is player-driven as events unfold within the games' scenarios. It's a unique approach and one we were keen to investigate for ourselves.



GAMES™: One of the most noteworthy aspects of Homeworld was its strong emphasis on narrative. How does this focus help the game?

JM: We really wanted to stand out from the RTS pack. In most RTS games the story is something that happens in cinematics between missions and the game rarely has anything to do with what happens in the cut-scenes.

We wanted to create an experience unlike any other game. So we integrated our storytelling devices – animatics, non-interactive sequences, intel events and in-game speech – to make a holistic package.

One of the things that happens in a lot of games is that you watch a cool 3-minute cinematic and then you spend 45 minutes playing a mission that looks nothing like the cinematic at all. We wanted to give our players a truly interactive experience, to make our mark by melding story and gameplay into one package.

DI: It's important to strike the right balance. I'm not sure how much more storytelling would sell actually more games. Homeworld2's story is pretty rich But you need to be careful about actually including it all in the game. You might lose some people – it might not appeal to everyone if you focus things too tightly on story. But if you leave it broad enough that it'll interest lots of people, and support it with a detailed story and background for those who want to explore it, you're going to appeal to a greater market.

GAMES™: How does the desire to have a strong story influence scenario design? How do you design a scenario that tells a story?

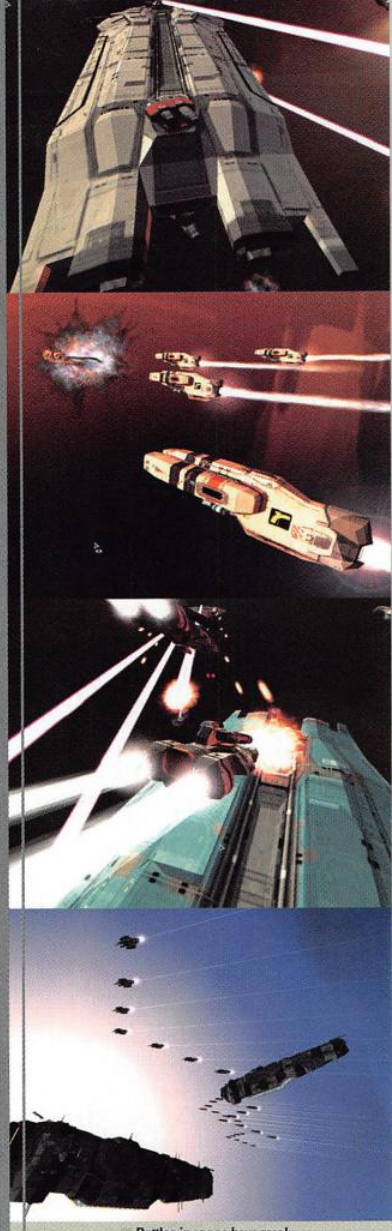
DI: Not to give anything away, but to use Homeworld as an example, in mission 3 when you come back to Carrick and it's burning, it's not something you're experiencing in an animatic, you're there watching it burn, you're there dealing with the consequences, and by dealing with them you're driving the story along; it's up to you to save the survivors.

When we sat down to do Homeworld2 we came up with a lot of high-level 'thought elements' that we wanted to include. But we made sure those would be things that players would actually do in the game. So instead of animatics giving you the story, the player drives the narrative and the animatics deal with the consequences of the players' actions. So we kind of reversed things a little.

JM: As a writer, you're always told to show, not tell. But I think for game design you have to let the player do things, not just show them what's happening. So if there's something integral to the story, you have to have the player driving things forward.

GAMES™: So is there an overall story or story arc for the Homeworld series, or do you create the narrative for each instalment as a new story that builds on the last?

JM: The thing with Homeworld is it has a really rich mythology. When we sat down to start Homeworld we created a huge 'bible' with everything outlined. But our



Battles in space have rarely looked as good as they do in Homeworld 2

"INSTEAD OF ANIMATICS GIVING YOU THE STORY, THE PLAYER DRIVES THE NARRATIVE AND THE ANIMATICS DEAL WITH THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE PLAYERS' ACTIONS"

DAN IRISH
RELIC ENTERTAINMENT

IN SPACE, NO ONE CAN HEAR YOU SING

GAMES™: Another area of the first Homeworld game that drew attention was music. What do you see as the role of music in a game, and how can it be used to enhance the game-playing experience?
DI: Well, if you played Homeworld you'll know how effective the music was in enhancing the drama of the game. We actuallly won some awards for the music, and in Homeworld2 we've tried to take that part of the experience and add both breadth and depth.

The way we did that was to use a real orchestra to record the score. So when Homeworld2 comes out you'll hear a mix of live orchestra and MIDI score and it really adds to the drama of the storytelling.

We've also included the use of a vocalist. Anytime you hear a human voice it brings an element of familiarity with it. We tried to add in elements that would really bring the story out and make players feel the emotion that we wanted them to feel. And the best way to do that really was through the music; few things evoke emotion more than music does.

GAMES™: What input did the sound designer have?
JM: Once the missions were playable, we had a review with our art director and our sound designer. We'd play through them and suggest okay, this'd be a really good moment to queue up some music.

GAMES™: Did the music team come up with any suggestions for styles of music or any other surprises?
DI: In a lot of cases, yes. Josh and the design team had put together very interesting missions and had the basic mission flow in place. And much in like a film score, where you get the rough edit and you have to compose to certain key scenes or areas of the film, or character themes, that's what our composer did. Josh and I put together some ideas about the types of music we liked and what we thought would work well in the game. And he then basically emulated those types of music.

For the dynamic music – that's the battle tracks and the ambients – he really had his own style and he kept on breaking new ground in those areas.



approach is mixed. There are a few elements that are recurring – mostly thematic elements – but we also pick and choose what would be the best thing to do now. And we're following on from the mythology the first game established.

THE ART OF STORYTELLING

GAMES™: A strong narrative isn't really expected in an RTS game, partly because it's not necessarily seen as a genre that allows too much in the way of characterisation. How do you lend character to fleets of spaceships? And how did the art department help you out?
JM: In terms of the art, we took a bit of a leap of faith. Rather than me telling the artists the Vaygr have to be this way, or their ships have to look that way, generally we come up with an idea of the feeling we're trying to get. Then Rob, our art director, took our ideas away and made them his own, so it was a really collaborative process. So rather than have me sit on top of a mountain telling people what to do, we said the Vaygr are sort of nomadic, tribal, definitely lower tech than the Hiigarans, for example.
DI: And then Rob takes those key words and comes up with a bunch of ships and we sit down and decide okay this one's a Vaygr ship, this one's a Hiigaran ship... we choose the best ones.

It's also akin to the way in story development you look at what characteristics a character has and you find ways to communicate that. In our case, we pretty much leave that up to the artists, because Homeworld doesn't have characters as such. There are characters in some of the storytelling elements you see very briefly, but it's not like you're dealing with a Jak and Daxter or a Mario .

GAMES™: So did the art department come up with anything unexpected, any new ideas for the design team?
JM: Oh, totally. A really good example is how the Vaygr use a lot of missiles. That came up when they were doing the initial sketches for the assault frigate. One of the artists decided it'd be cool instead of having the hull defence gun to have a missile launcher. When he put the missile launcher on the ship it looked so cool, we decided that the Vaygr would mostly use missile weapons. But the Hiigarans have ion beams and generally use beam weaponry.

PROGRAMMED FOR SUCCESS

GAMES™: We've spoken about design and art; how do programmers contribute? Have they presented ideas that made the art and design teams sit back and try to work them into the game?
DI: The programmers make everything happen. Josh and the design team come up with an idea for a ship and the artists give it shape. But the programmers put it into the game. So they had to figure out how we were going to make the Vaygr feel tribal. To give you an example, one of the programmers suggested that rather than flying in straight lines, they should flock. So that led to us defining their in-game behaviour in a way that neither art nor design had considered, and it reinforces the basic themes and ideas behind their culture and their ethos.

GAMES™: How then do you make them play differently? How do you come up with different tactics and work them into the mechanics of the game?
JM: By playing a lot of games! It's an iterative process. When we started working on Homeworld2, the Vaygr were described in very simple terms. They're tribal and they value numbers over quality, so they're always going to prefer fighters to frigates.

So we decided to make their fighters better than the Hiigarans'. We wanted them to be different, not just better all-round, so now they have two more types of fighters than the Hiigarans. Every week you just try to tweak things a little more till you've got something with its own unique character.

THE SHAPE OF SPACE

GAMES™: Another interesting design decision is the way you've used astronomical phenomena as 'terrain' in space. Were you concerned that you might lose some of the purity of the space environment by doing this?
DI: Not at all; it's not a hard-core space simulation. In terms of making the environment interactive, we tried to come up with things that could plausibly exist in space like dust clouds, nebulas and asteroid fields, and come up with in-game complications. You can hide inside a dust cloud, so all of a sudden you have three squadrons of bombers jump out and ambush you. It provides more tactical diversity and it's much more interesting than just manoeuvring in an empty 3D environment.
JM: I think it just boils down to fun. A big empty environment that doesn't interact with the player at all may be realistic, but it's not necessarily fun.

HOMEWORLD2

SEQUEL TO PC GAMER'S 1999 GAME OF THE YEAR!

Space. Strategy. Survival.

www.homeworld2.com



Go online for intense multi-player action with up to 6 people







IN STORES SEPTEMBER

A century ago, you led the Hiigarans home. Now, a deadly new enemy threatens all you've fought to create. Build vast fleets and repel aggressors, while exploring the cosmos for secrets to your survival. With intelligent ship formations, unparalleled special effects and an improved interface, this sequel to 1999's Game of the Year will once again set the standard for 3D space strategy games.

SIERRA™ VIVENDI UNIVERSAL games relic ENTERTAINMENT PC CD-ROM SOFTWARE ALIENWARE G8+ LOW LEVEL ANIMATED VIOLENCE

© 2003 Vivendi Universal Games, Inc. All Rights Reserved. Vivendi Universal Games and the Vivendi Universal Games logo are trademarks of Vivendi Universal Games Inc. Homeworld is a registered trademark and "Sierra" and the Sierra logo are trademarks of Sierra Entertainment, Inc. Relic is a registered trademark of Relic Entertainment Inc. ® designates trademarks registered in the U.S.A. which may be registered in certain other countries. All other trademarks are the property of their respective owners.

"WE'RE TREMENDOUSLY EXCITED ABOUT BRINGING THE ADVENTURE GENRE TO A WIDER AUDIENCE USING CONTEMPORARY GAMEPLAY THAT MODERN CONSOLE AND PC OWNERS ARE FAMILIAR WITH"

CHARLES CECIL, MANAGING DIRECTOR, REVOLUTION SOFTWARE

CHARLES CECIL

REVOLUTION SOFTWARE

When it comes to traditional adventure games, there's been much talk lately regarding the genre's demise. However, the reality has proven to be entirely different – recent years have seen surprise hits such as *The Longest Journey* and *Syberia*, while a glance at the release lists shows promising titles such as *Runaway*, *Full Throttle: Hell On Wheels*, *Sam & Max 2* and a *Syberia* sequel all on the horizon. If it's evolution you're after though, you should look no further than *Broken Sword: The Sleeping Dragon* – a game which looks set to not only continue the mythology covered in the previous two games, but take the concept of adventure gaming in a whole new direction.

"We're tremendously excited about bringing the adventure genre to a wider audience using contemporary gameplay that modern console and PC owners are familiar with," says Charles Cecil, managing director of Revolution Software. Of course, when it comes to adventure games, Cecil knows what he's talking about. His career in the games industry started in 1982 while he was at university, writing text adventures for the ZX81 for Artic Computing. Their commercial success prompted Cecil to take up a permanent role writing videogames which, according to the man himself, was "a much more interesting career than engineering".

After a stint at Activision, Charles decided to go back to his adventure game roots, and with the help of fellow industry veterans Noirin Carmody, Tony Warriner and David Sykes, Revolution Software was born. The first games developed under the new company were *Lure Of The Temptress* for the Amiga and *Beneath A Steel Sky* for the Amiga and PC, the latter of which was a particularly ambitious project. For its time, its futuristic style plus the inclusion of a comic book with the game was highly original and meant using the artistic talents of Dave Gibbon, who had previously worked on graphic novels including *Watchmen* and *Batman Vs Predator*.

"We worked closely with Dave on all aspects of the design – in particular he designed the characters and drew the backgrounds," says Cecil. "I was very pleased with the outcome." The best was yet to come, however, thanks to the release of *Broken Sword: Shadow Of The Templars*. A tale steeped in mythology, murder and intrigue, the original *Broken Sword* managed to capture the public's imagination – over a million copies have been shifted so far and it's still selling (thanks to the recent GBA port). According to Cecil, the inspiration for the epic storyline came mainly from an interest in history and a love of Paris.

"Noirin and I were discussing new game ideas over dinner with Sean Brennan, who was deputy managing director at Virgin Interactive," he explains. "He had just read *Foucault's Pendulum*, which is about a Knights Templar conspiracy, and I had an interest in medieval history. I was about to visit Paris, a city that I love, and decided to visit some of the mysterious tombs and catacombs; the subject matter seemed perfect for an adventure game."

Not surprisingly, *Broken Sword 2: The Smoking Mirror* achieved similar commercial success in 1997. However, it was only after a six-year gap that Revolution felt ready to think about releasing a third game. "After *Broken Sword 2*, we felt we'd taken the genre as far as it could realistically go within the constraints of previous technology. We were always keen to move to 3D though, and knew that when we did, the fundamental gameplay would have to change. People have tried point 'n' click in 3D before and it hasn't really worked – the graphics moved on while the games remained the same. Our new direct control interface has allowed us to introduce a much more diverse range of puzzles, from the traditional adventure investigation to more typical action-orientated challenges such as infiltrating a certain building or defeating a particular enemy."

Of course, this talk of action elements and direct character control has raised concerns from fans that moving away from such a tried-and-tested formula will result in a loss of focus for the series. Unsurprisingly, this isn't a concern for Cecil. "It's important to emphasise that *Sleeping Dragon* will not be an action game or even an action adventure," he insists. "This isn't *Tomb Raider*, *Metal Gear Solid* or *Curse Of Monkey Island*. It's a totally new mix of adventure, action and stealth – we hope that people will embrace this as an original gaming experience rather than pigeonholing it into a specific genre."

Broken Sword: The Sleeping Dragon is due out on PlayStation2, Xbox and PC in October, and is previewed on page 62.

BROKEN SWORDS, SMOKING MIRRORS AND SLEEPING DRAGONS – ALL PAR FOR THE COURSE IF YOU'RE THE MAN BEHIND ONE OF THE MOST RESPECTED ADVENTURE GAMES OF RECENT TIMES. THROW IN THE THIRD DIMENSION THOUGH, AND YOU'VE GOT A DIFFERENT CHALLENGE ALTOGETHER...





UPWARDLY MOBILE

STILL ONLY GETTING YOUR HANDHELD KICKS ON A GBA? THEN YOU'RE MISSING SOMETHING BIG – MOBILE PHONE GAMING HAS COME A LONG WAY SINCE THE DAYS OF SNAKE...

Nintendo, take note – the N-Gage is coming. That's the warning from Nokia, the first mobile technology company to set its sights firmly on the handheld gaming market that has belonged almost exclusively to the Game Boy. Is it a move that will pay off for the Finnish giant? Perhaps – though a lacklustre display at E3 means we're withholding judgement on the mobile-cum-console until its launch later this year. However, that a company with no previous experience of gaming feels it can take such a bold step shows how far mobile phone gaming has come in recent times.

Handheld gaming isn't a new concept these days – the Game Boy's been around for well over a decade – but the prospect of playing games on your mobile phone rather than a dedicated handheld console is something that's only just coming into its own. Five years ago, all you had to look forward to when buying a new mobile was a small selection of black and white games. Today though, thanks to the rapid advancement of mobile technology (particularly the introduction of WAP and Java), there are all manner of games available, some of which are actually quite good.

Of course, the idea of using your mobile as a 'proper' gaming platform is one that most gamers would balk at. While this is only to be expected it's a rather naïve reaction to a market that's been quietly blossoming for some time. Nokia's offensive may be enough to make people sit up and take notice of what mobile phones can do for the games industry, but there are more than enough examples around at the moment to show that things are getting better all the time...

TRIED AND TESTED

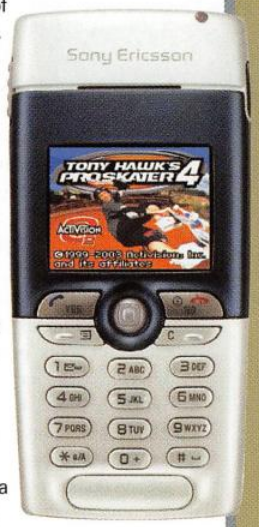
SONY ERICSSON T310

- **Price:** $435
- **Dimensions:** 104 x 49 x 19mm
- **Weight:** 95grams
- **Screen:** LCD, 128 x 160 pixels, 256 colours
- **Battery Life:** Up to 3.5 hrs (talk)/up to 350 hrs (standby)
- **Connectivity:** No

Any phone company launching a new handset these days knows that it needs a hook to draw people in. Colour screens and camera attachments aren't anything new, but *Tony Hawk* on your mobile? Now that's something you don't see every day.

Yes, the T310 is a gaming phone – or so Sony Ericsson would have us believe. With the 'hook' being that the phone is pre-loaded with a specially created mobile version of *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 4* and even has its own joystick, it's obviously targeted at gamers familiar with the series of games and skaters familiar with Tony Hawk. Sadly, while the phone is suitably small and has all the features that you'd expect from an inexpensive handset, it's let down by the gaming – it's 'unique' selling point.

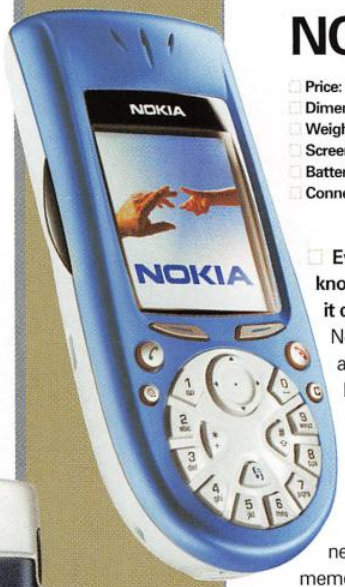
As well as having an incredibly small screen, the mobile version of *THPS4* isn't much fun or even that playable. Sure, there's a selection of skaters and levels, but they're all pretty samey. What's more, you don't appear to have much control over your skater's movements, which takes most of the fun out of the game. Worst of all, the T310 isn't even Java-enabled, meaning it's completely incompatible with any of the better mobile games available on the Net – rather pointless for a 'gaming' phone. As a phone, this is more than competent, but as a gaming platform it doesn't cut the mustard.



"ONE OF THE PROBLEMS IS THAT, AS A GAME, THE MOBILE VERSION OF THPS4 ISN'T MUCH FUN OR EVEN THAT PLAYABLE"

VERDICT 5/10
NICE PHONE, BUT THE GAMES DISAPPOINT

NOKIA 3650



- **Price:** $749
- **Dimensions:** 130 x 57 x 26mm
- **Weight:** 130grams
- **Screen:** LCD, 176 x 208 pixels, 4,096 colours
- **Battery Life:** Up to 4 hrs (talk)/up to 200 hrs (standby)
- **Connectivity:** Yes (Bluetooth/Infra-Red)

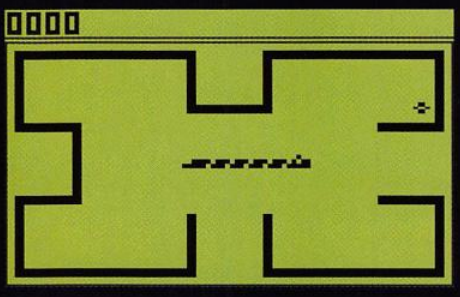
Even if you're only vaguely acquainted with phones, you'll know Nokia has a bit of a thing for interesting designs when it comes to its new handsets. Not surprisingly, the 3650 – Nokia's first mass-market phone with the ability to record and play back video imagery – follows the same trend, by looking less like a phone and more like a remote control for a fancy television. Nevertheless, the design belies a phone that not only holds its own in the areas that you'd expect, but works better than most handsets for people looking to play the latest downloadable games.

Even before you've charged it up and begun putting new Java-based titles into the phone's memory (or optional memory card, which increases your storage size exponentially), you can see that in terms of gaming the 3650 has two things going for it – the overly-large (for a mobile) screen and a handy digital thumbstick. While not specifically designed for games (unlike the joystick on Sony Ericsson's T310), the 3650's is more than adequate, although it would have to be, considering that the unusual keypad layout makes conventional control methods pretty much impossible.

Although the pre-loaded selection of games is disappointing – an upgraded version of *Snake* and a bog-standard slide puzzle – the 3650's ability to handle even the most advanced Java game really makes it shine. Obviously, if you're expecting the same kind of quality gaming that you'd get from a GBA you're going to be disappointed, but all the games we tried ran very smoothly and felt suitably polished. The 3650 is probably as good as mobile gaming is going to get until the next wave of technology.

VERDICT 8/10
A LITTLE PRICEY, BUT GREAT FOR GAMING

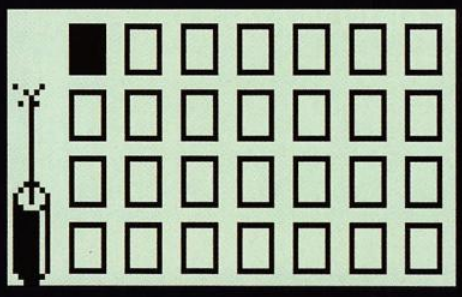
BACK TO BASICS THE BEST GAMES, NOT SO LONG AGO...



Goodness knows why so many people played *Snake* on their mobile phones, but they did. It might have been a devilishly simple concept but in terms of games, *Snake* probably did for mobile phones what *Tetris* did for the Game Boy. Addictive isn't really the word...



Think of decent side-scrolling shoot-'em-ups and *Space Impact* probably wouldn't even register; nevertheless, it was pretty playable for a mobile game. If you've never had the chance to play it, think as difficult as *R-Type* but looking nowhere near as nice and you're on the right track.



Like Snap, do you? Think you're a bit of a memory expert? Then you've probably played more than a few games of *Pairs* (or *Concentration*, depending on your make of phone) in the past. Turn the cards over and match the pairs – not particularly taxing, but still quite fun.

SHARP GX10

- **Price:** $999
- **Dimensions:** 94 x 49 x 27mm
- **Weight:** 110grams
- **Screen:** LCD, 120 x 160 pixels, 65,536 colours
- **Battery Life:** Up to 3.5 hrs (talk)/up to 110 hrs (standby)
- **Connectivity:** Yes (infa-red)



Vodafone have been pushing this phone and it's easy to see why. The Sharp GX10 is a very capable unit, whether you're a looking for a great phone, a handy mobile gaming platform, or both. The GX10 also gives you access to Vodafone live!, an Internet service that allows you to browse the Web, send video messages and swap photos. Video PXT messaging even lets you send video messages to non-video compatible phones (the recipient can view the message on the Web). And it's packed with all the features you'd expect from a quality phone – polyphonic ring tones, WAP (over GPRS), MMS, vibration alert and Java compatibility for business and productivity applications (and, needless to say, games). The physical unit itself fits nicely in the hand and it scores high marks for general functionality as a communications device.

The GX10's display is a real feature of the unit. It runs at a resolution of 160 x 120 pixels and can render 65,536 colours. That means that games look great and importantly, there's a refreshing lack of the 'ghosting' or motion blur that can render games all but unplayable. We remain to be convinced that the aspect of the screen—taller than it is wide—is optimal for gaming, but it's emerging as a standard for mobile gaming devices.

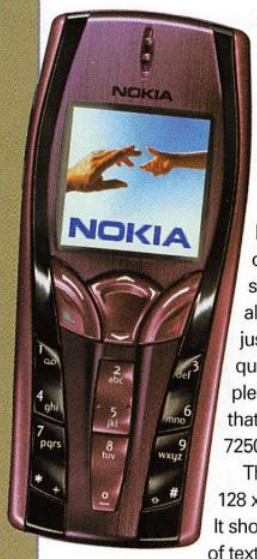
The GX10's d-pad isn't designed for controlling games, but manages to do a serviceable job. The main problem is that the 'M' button, which is used to access many of the Vodafone live! services, is in the center of the pad, which can make it awkward to use at times. This quibble aside (and it probably won't bother many users at all), the GX10 is a pretty handy gaming device.

VERDICT 8/10
NOT CHEAP, BUT PACKED WITH FEATURES

"HAVING TESTED SEVERAL GAMES WE HAVE TO ADMIT THAT SOME JAVA TITLES DON'T RUN AS SMOOTHLY AS WE'D HOPED"

NOKIA 7250

- **Price:** $999
- **Dimensions:** 105 x 44 x 19mm
- **Weight:** 92grams
- **Screen:** LCD, 128 x 128 pixels, 4096 colours
- **Battery Life:** Up to 5 hrs (talk)/up to 300 hrs (standby)
- **Connectivity:** Yes (infa-red)



Money might not be able to buy you happiness or love (unless you know the right women, of course), but it can get you a damn nice mobile. Not only does the Nokia 7250 look cool, it's packed with features. The successor to the popular 7210, the 7250 builds on its predecessor by adding a camera and a brighter, clearer display. The keypad has a more traditional design but it's not optimised for gameplay, so when the on-screen action gets frantic your fingers won't always be able to find the control they need just when they need it. Still, if you want a quality phone (with polyphonic ring tones, plenty of memory, MMS, an FM radio and more) that you can play the occasional game on, the 7250 is a solid choice.

The display is a passive matrix unit featuring 128 x 128 resolution and can render 4096 colours. It shows 5 lines of text and a service line, or 8 lines of text and 2 service lines when messaging. It's clear and bright, especially in low-to-moderate lighting, but it tends to wash out in bright sunlight. Ghosting can also be a problem, especially when you're playing a game with lots of character motion or scrolling.

When it comes to games, you'll find it's easy to load the phone up but the limitations of the screen and controls will soon become apparent. They'll sound great—the internal speaker does a great job—but overall, this is a quality phone for the casual gamer only.

VERDICT 6/10
A GREAT PHONE, BUT ONLY AN OKAY GAME PLATFORM

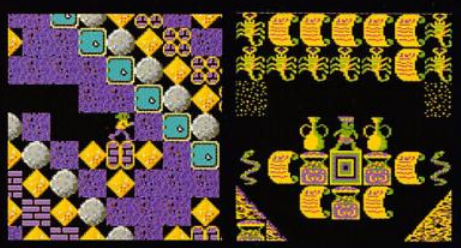
NEW WAVE CURRENT FAVOURITES ON THE LATEST TECHNOLOGY



It might be an old stalwart in gaming circles, but *Arkanoid* is by far the best version of all the *Breakout*-style games around on any mobile phone at the moment. It's a 'pick up and play' kind of game that's perfectly suited to mobiles, best played in short but regular bursts.



Again, it's an oldie but a goodie – we haven't met a single person yet who can find fault with Taito's classic bubble-bursting game *Puzzle Bobble* (or *Bust-A-Move*, as it's bizarrely known over here). Unsurprisingly, it's become the mobile game of choice since the advent of colour screens.



While we're pleased that remakes of *Repton* are currently in the works for the PC, the fact that you can already download the original game to your mobile is even better. If you're after a mobile game that'll have you tearing your hair out in frustration, this is it...

BLUESKYFROG >>

[THE BIGGEST & BEST SELECTION OF JAVA GAMES AND POLYPHONICS]

UNLOCK THE FULL POTENTIAL OF YOUR NEW MOBILE WITH BLUESKYFROG - LOAD IT UP WITH THE LATEST JAVA GAMES & THE MOST REALISTIC POLYPHONIC TONES.

ICONS >>

Nokia handsets only



1902 226 168

SPECIAL - LOWEST PER MIN RATE IN AUSTRALIA

ONLY $2.86 PER MIN (INC GST)
FOR REGULAR TONES & ICONS > > HIGHER FROM MOB&PAY PHONES

THOUSANDS MORE AT WWW.BLUESKYFROG.COM

NEW TONES

21 Questions	50 Cent	5832
Reign	Ja Rule	5833
I'm Glad	Jennifer Lopez	5826

REGULAR TONES >>

Nokia handsets only - excluding 5110

TOP TEN

In Da Club	50 Cent	5771
Rock Your Body	Justin Timberlake	5806
Bring Me 2 Life	Evanescence	5802
Nu Flow	Big Brovaz	5742
Sex & the City	Theme	5507
Feva 4 the Flava	Hot Action Cop	5808
Blister in the Sun	V. Femmes	5667
Bump Bump Bump	B2K	5772
Mesmerize	Ja Rule ft Ashanti	5762
She Hates Me	Puddle of Mudd	5749

ROCK/ALTERNATIVE

Get Free	The Vines	5721
No Reason	Grinspoon	5725
Chop Suey!	System of a Down	5315
Under the Bridge	RHCP	5266
Sk8er Boi	Avril Lavigne	5650
Enter Sandman	Metallica	5260
Smooth Criminal	AAF	5302
Pussy Town	MGF	5728
Here She Comes	The Androids	5759
Cochise	Audioslave	5738
Tribute	Tenacious D	5561
Rollercoaster	MGF	5727
Alive	POD	5433
How You Remind Me	Nickelback	5287
Lithium	Nirvana	5591
London Still	The Waifs	5722
No One Knows	QOTSA	5720
The Wreckening	Boomkat	5780
Somewhere I Belong	Linkin Park	5773

DANCE/TECHNO

Cocaine	Yakooza	5500
Boys of Summer	DJ Sammy	5655
Heaven	DJ Sammy	5563
The Logical Song	Scooter	5602
Breathe	The Prodigy	5291
1 of My Kind	Rogue Traders/INXS	5756
Little Less Conversation	JXL/Elvis	5555
Children	Robert Miles	5167
Resurrection	PPK	5496
Punk	DJ Ferry Corsten	5706
Take Me Away	4 Strings	5707
Where's Your Head At	Basement Jaxx	5430

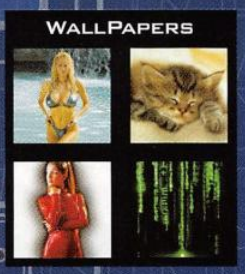
TV/FILM THEMES

Manamana	The Muppets	5583
James Bond 007	Theme	5017
Smurfs	Theme	5270
Muppets	Theme	5180
The Simpsons	Theme	5184
Pink Panther	Theme	5029
Inspector Gadget	Theme	5078
Mission Impossible	Theme	5018
Flintstones	Theme	5178
Neighbours	Theme	5082
Good, Bad & Ugly	Theme	5007
Hawaii Five-O	Theme	5074

RAP/HIP-HOP/RnB

Symphony in X-Major	Xzibit	5783
Bump Bump Bump	B2K	5772
Nu Flow	Big Brovaz	5742
Stole	Kelly Rowland	5702
Work It	Missy Elliot	5332
Thug Lovin'	Ja Rule ft Bobby	5703
What's Your Flava?	Craig David	5659
Cleanin out my Closet	Eminem	5633
Foolish	Ashanti	5540
Always on Time	Ja Rule	5451
Hot In Herre	Nelly	5559
Because I Got High	Afroman	5289
So Fresh, So Clean	Outkast	5241
Work It	Nelly ft Justin Timberlake	5757
Rich Girl	Selwyn	5620
Hidden Agenda	Craig David	5754
Karma	1200 Techniques	5723
Without Me	Eminem	5538
My Neck, My Back	Khia	5631
Real Slim Shady	Eminem	5233
Get Ur Freak On	Missy Elliott	5288
Dilemma	Nelly ft Kelly Rowland	5567
In Da Club	50 Cent	5771
Beautiful	Snoop Dogg	5785

WALLPAPERS



<< NEW >>
COLOUR WALLPAPERS 4 YOUR MOBILE:
GOTO >> WWW.BLUESKYFROG.COM
4 DETAILS

POLYPHONIC TONES >>

$4.95 PER MIN (INC GST) HIGHER FROM MOB&PAY PHONES

call this number for Polyphonic Tones:

1902 226 173

Only the following phones can currently receive these PolyPhonic ringtones: Nokia 3510, 3530, 3650, 5100, 6100, 6610, 7210, 7250, 7650, SonyEricsson p800, Panasonic gd88 Your phone must be GPRS or WAP enabled to receive PolyPhonic ringtones. Your carrier will also charge you their standard WAP or GPRS rates. Please read your mobile's instructions regarding SAVING and SETTING the PolyPhonic ringtone.

POP/DANCE

Jenny from the Block - **Jennifer Lopez**	15125
Just a Little - **Liberty X**	15128
One More Time - **Daft Punk**	15116
Sweetest Thing - **U2**	15036
1000 Miles - **Vanessa Carlton**	15101
Big Yellow Taxi - **Counting Crows**	15017
The Ketchup Song - **Las Ketchup**	15080
Can't Get U Out of My Head - **Kylie**	15034
All the Things She Said - **t.A.T.u**	15013
Cry Me A River - **Justin Timberlake**	15014
The Logical Song - **Scooter**	15093
Sandstorm - **Darude**	15062
Shiny Disco Balls - **Who Da Funk**	15030
Children - **Robert Miles**	15139

TV/FILM THEMES

Mission Impossible - **Theme**	15021
Simpsons - **Theme**	15015
Beverly Hills Cop - **Theme**	15026
Rocky - **Theme [Survivor]**	15037
Sex & the City - **Theme**	15010
The Muppets - **Theme**	15035
X-Files - **Theme**	15109
Hawaii 5-0 - **Theme**	15020
Mission Impossible - **Theme**	15016
Topgun - **Theme**	15042
You're The 1 That I Want - **Grease**	15074

RAP/HIP-HOP/RnB

In Da Club - **50 Cent**	15011
Without Me - **Eminem**	15019
Bonnie and Clyde - **Jay-Z & Beyonce**	15024
Lose Yourself - **Eminem**	15012
Ice Ice Baby - **Vanilla Ice**	15102
California Love - **2Pac**	15043
8 Mile Road - **Eminem**	15065
Dilemma - **Nelly ft. Kelly Rowland**	15084
Sing for the Moment - **Eminem**	15067

ROCK/ALTERNATIVE

No One Knows - **QOTSA**	15138
She Hates Me - **Puddle of Mudd**	15137
Scar Tissue - **RedHotChiliPeppers**	15153
Praise You - **Fat Boy Slim**	15152
In The End - **Linkin Park**	15033
Beautiful People - **Marilyn Manson**	15081
Enter Sandman - **Metallica**	15022
Bittersweet Symphony - **The Verve**	15027

80'S/RETRO

Sweet Home Alabama - **Lynyrd Skynyrd**	15041
Billie Jean - **Michael Jackson**	15082
Brown-Eyed Girl - **Van Morrison**	15039
Tainted Love - **Soft Cell**	15096
Sweet Child o Mine - **Guns n' Roses**	15038
'm Too Sexy - **Right Said Fred**	15091
I Will Survive - **Gloria Gaynor**	15072
Tubular Bells - **Mike Oldfield**	15135
Superstition - **Stevie Wonder**	15156

JAVA GAMES >>

$15.95 FLAT RATE (INC GST) HIGHER FROM MOB&PAY PHONES

call this number for Java Games:

1902 268 060

Only the following phones can currently receive these Java Games: Nokia 3530, 3650, 5100, 6100, 6610, 7210, 7250, 7650. Your phone must be GPRS or WAP enabled to receive Java Games. Your carrier will also charge you their standard WAP or GPRS rates. Please read your mobile's instructions regarding SAVING and SETTING the Java Game.



Mobile Handset Codes:

Nokia 3530:	1010
Nokia 3650:	1020
Nokia 5100:	1030
Nokia 6100:	1040
Nokia 6610:	1050
Nokia 7210:	1060
Nokia 7250:	1070
Nokia 7650:	1080

* = Also available for the Motorola t720
> > mobile handset code: 2010

Directions: simply call the appropriate number, follow the voice prompts and the logo, java game or ringtone will be sent to the mobile phone of your choice. Please ensure that the target phone is compatible. If you are under 14 years of age please make sure you have a responsible adult's permission before using this service. * Offer correct at time of going to press. BlueSkyFrog is an Australian owned and operated company.

BSFGAM1

New Polyphonic Tones, Java Games, Wallpapers, Nokia Tones & Icons at www.BlueSkyFrog.com every week.

POWERED BY BlueSkyFrog.com

SIX OF THE BEST

Of course, gaming on your mobile isn't much use if you haven't got anything good to play on it. While the games that come free with most phones or that can be downloaded from phone manufacturers' websites are passable, the better titles come from companies who concentrate specifically on developing games for mobile technology. While checking out which phones were better for gaming, we tested a number of titles – here's a rundown of the best games we played...

SPLINTER CELL

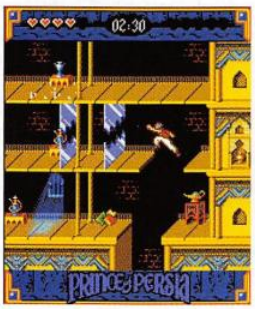
Great on the Xbox, just as good on the Game Boy Advance... but on a mobile as well? Surprisingly, yes – Sam's move into Java has been pulled off with style and it works rather well. You can sneak around, hide in shadows and complete objectives, just like in the 'proper' version of the game – what more could you want?

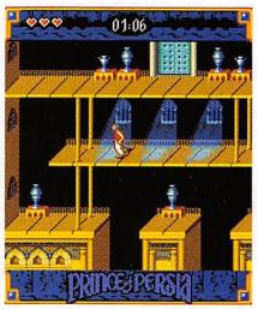




PRINCE OF PERSIA

About as faithful to the original PC game as you're likely to get on a mobile. With seven different stages that'll see you jumping pits, dodging blades and fighting sword-wielding guards, it's certainly a decent take on the classic licence. In fact, it's enough to make us want to go back to the original all over again.





SKATE & SLAM

Despite not having the licence that the T310's *Tony Hawk* game has, this side-scrolling skate-'em-up is still pretty good. It's a simple idea – pull off tricks and earn enough points to move onto the next stage. Of course, avoiding the obstacles, mastering the moves and getting enough points without bailing is another matter entirely...





SIBERIAN STRIKE

If you're looking for a simple-yet-fun shoot-'em-up on your mobile, they don't come much better than *Siberian Strike*. Think Capcom's *1942* but on a smaller scale; it's got wave upon wave of enemies, Smart Bombs, Charge Beams and some pretty big bosses to go up against. Plus it's tough enough to keep you frustrated for ages...





RAYMAN 3

Considering it's running on a mobile phone, the comparisons between the GBA and Java versions of *Rayman 3* are pretty obvious. Sticking to the simple 'jump on platforms, hit enemies with fist' concept championed by the original PSone game and featuring plenty of levels, it'll keep you occupied for quite a while.





GULO'S TALE

Forget the slightly silly story about gods drawing their power from fruit – there's actually a fairly fun platform adventure in here. Help Gulo collect the fruits while attempting to dodge enemies and build temporary platforms with his bubble powers – a bit like *New Zealand Story* meets *Rainbow Islands*. Basic but quite absorbing.





HOLD THE PHONE

The ability to download videogames is a pure revolution for mobile phones. Java technology is now embedded in more than 100 million cell phones worldwide, which means there are far more Java phone users than owners of the Game Boy Advance. The download channels are up and running; the billing process simple, secure and adapted to local habits; even the biggest network operators are starting to let everyone know that phone gaming is a reality.

The quality of the games available from publishers is amazing (considering it's such a restricted format), making those games very similar to current mobile console titles. However, the advantage is that these mobile games are affordable: just $5 to $15 each. And customers are happy with that deal, with more and more convinced to try new games on a regular basis every month.

With new high-end handsets arriving before the end of the year (including the Nokia N-Gage, which offers Bluetooth and 3G games), mobile game quality should overtake GBA game quality before the end of 2003. Of course, mobile gaming is not yet in a position to compete with console and PC games. Today, gamers just play with their Xbox, their PS2 and their PC. In the near future though, there's no doubt that we'll see gamers starting games on their console at home, then continuing to play on their phone after leaving home or while lying in bed, sitting in a waiting room or just in the middle of nowhere on a slow train.

The time is coming when affordable mobile games have their place next to console ones – and it's sooner than you may think.

Michel Guillemot is president of Gameloft, one of the world's leading companies in mobile phone games development.

All games are available for download from www.gameloft.com through most Java-enabled mobile handsets.

There's a place where

even queuing is fun.



There's a place where down time becomes game time. A place where you can download the latest arcade-style games with wild vibrating effects or PXT™ your mates and add your voice to the message. There's a place where you can choose from over 1000 funky ringtones and get up-to-the-minute info from some of the hottest online sites while you're mobile. That place is Vodafone live! *Go There.*


PXT™


Games

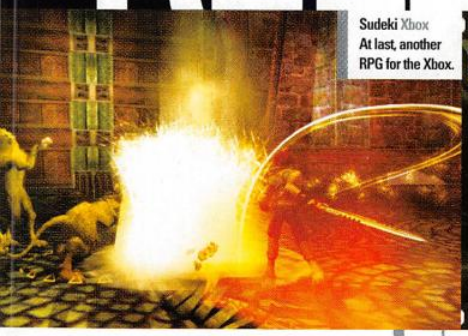

Polyphonic Ringtones


Mobile Internet

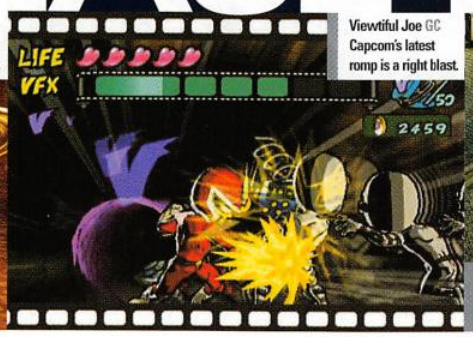
vodafone.com.au

vodafone™ live!

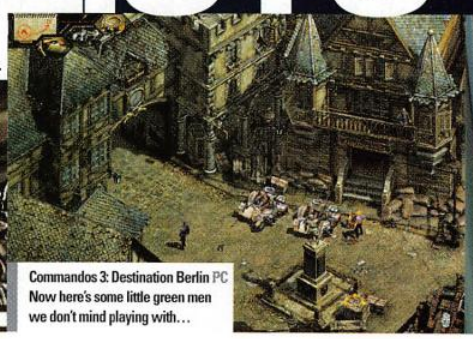
RELEASE LISTS



Sudeki Xbox
At last, another RPG for the Xbox.



Viewtiful Joe GC
Capcom's latest romp is a right blast.



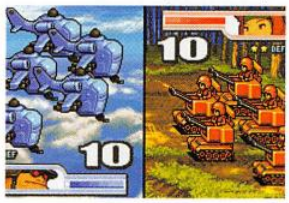
Commandos 3: Destination Berlin PC
Now here's some little green men we don't mind playing with...

games™ MOST PLAYED

ADVANCE WARS 2: BLACK HOLE RISING

Format: Game Boy Advance
Developer: Nintendo

Advance Wars has always been a firm favourite in the **games™** offices, but now we've finally got our filthy mitts on Intelligent Design's superb sequel, food, drink, sleep and even deadlines are getting forgotten on a daily basis. If this issue of the mag turns up a little late, you'll know why...



WAKEBOARDING UNLEASHED

Format: Xbox
Developer: Activision

While we eagerly await the fifth instalment of the *Tony Hawk* franchise, this has fully sated our appetite for extreme spills and thrills. Microsoft's machine does a wonderful job with those stunning water effects and the hard drive puts its music storage abilities to good use.



DAY OF DEFEAT

Format: PC
Developer: Activision

There's nothing we like better than kicking off our shoes after a hard day at the office and settling down for some frantic multiplayer action courtesy of Activision's excellent FPS. Superb level design and some great team-based missions ensure that *Day Of Defeat* is going to get played and played and...





PLAYSTATION2

Month	Title	Publisher	
SEPTEMBER			
1 September	Frogger Beyond	Atari	
4 September	Racing Simulation 3	Ubi Soft	
4 September	Reel Fishing 3	Ubi Soft	
5 September	Dark Chronicle	SCEI	Wanted
12 September	The Italian Job	Atari	
12 September	Breath Of Fire	THQ	
12 September	Splashdown: Rides Gone Wild	THQ	
19 September	Dog's Life	SCEE	
19 September	Unlimited Saga	Atari	
18 September	Hunter The Reckoning: Wayward	Vivendi	
18 September	Judge Dredd	Vivendi	
19 September	Alter Echo	THQ	
19 September	Warhammer 40,000: Fire Warrior	THQ	
25 September	Buffy The Vampire Hunter 2	Vivendi	
TBC	ATV Off Road Fury 2	SCEE	
TBC	Freedom Fighters	EA	
TBC	Zone Of The Enders 2	Atari	
TBC	Amplitude	SCEE	Wanted
TBC	Freestyle MX	Acclaim	
TBC	Virtual On Marz	SEGA	
TBC	Soul Calibur II	EA	Wanted
TBC	Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2004	EA	
TBC	Backyard Wrestling	Atari	
OCTOBER			
TBC	Conflict Desert Storm 2	Atari	
9 October	Alias	Acclaim	
9 October	Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon	Ubi Soft	
9 October	Gladiator: Sword Of Vengeance	Acclaim	
10 October	Risk Global Domination	Atari	
23 October	XIII	Ubi Soft	Wanted
31 October	Asterix & Obelix XXL	Atari	
TBC	Battlestar Galactica	Vivendi	
TBC	The Hobbit	Vivendi	
TBC	Time Crisis 3	SCEE	Wanted
TBC	X-Files: Resist Or Serve	Vivendi	
NOVEMBER			
1 November	Legacy of Kain: Defiance	Atari	
7 November	Mission Impossible 2	Atari	
13 November	NBA Jam 2004	Acclaim	
13 November	Prince Of Persia: Sands Of Time	Ubi Sft	Wanted
14 November	Terminator 3: Rise Of The Machines	Atari	
20 November	Batman: Rise Of Sin Tzu	Ubi Soft	
TBC	James Bond: Everything Or Nothing	Electronic Arts	
20 November	Beyond Good & Evil	Ubi Soft	
TBC	Spy Hunter 2	Midway	
TBC	Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles	Atari	
TBC	Medal Of Honor: Rising Sun	Electronic Arts	
TBC	Whiplash	Atari	
TBC	Roadkill	Acclaim	
DECEMBER			
12 December	Mission Impossible: Operation Surma		
TBC	Rise to Honor SCEE		
TBC	Alias		
TBC	Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon		



GAMECUBE

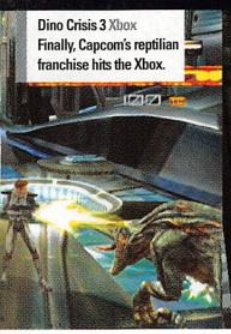
Month	Title	Publisher	
SEPTEMBER			
4 September	Super Bust A Move All-Stars	Ubi Soft	
12 September	The Italian Job	Atari	
18 September	Mace Griffin: Bounty Hunter	Vivendi	
22 September	Harry Potter & The Philosophers Stone	Electronic Arts	
25 September	Urban Freestyle Soccer	Acclaim	
29 September	Disney Party	Acclaim	
TBC	F-Zero GX	Nintendo	Wanted
TBC	Soul Calibur 2	Nintendo	
TBC	WWE Wrestlemania X9	THQ	
OCTOBER			
2 October	The Hobbit	Vivendi	
16 October	Buffy The Vampire Slayer 2	Vivendi	
24 October	Dragon Ball Z: Budokai	Atari	
30 October	Beyond Good & Evil	Ubi Soft	Wanted
30 October	Harvest Moon A Wonderful Life	Ubi Soft	
30 October	The Simpsons: Hit & Run	Vivendi	
31 October	Asterix & Obelix XXL	Atari	
TBC	Dinotopia The Sunstone Odyssey	TDK Mediactive	
TBC	Kirby Air Ride	Nintendo	
NOVEMBER			
20 November	Batman: Rise Of Sin Tzu	Ubi Soft	
TBC	1080° Avalanche	Nintendo	Wanted
TBC	Haunted Mansion	TDK Mediactive	
TBC	NHL Hitz Pro	Acclaim	Wanted
TBC	Roadkill	Acclaim	
TBC	Scobby Doo 3	THQ	
TBC	Spy Hunter 2	Acclaim	
DECEMBER			
TBC	Sword of Mana	Nintendo	



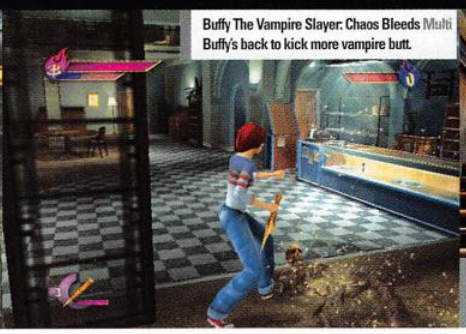
XBOX

Month	Title	Publisher	
SEPTEMBER			
5 September	Group S Challenge	THQ	
5 September	WWE Raw 2: Ruthless Aggression	THQ	
5 September	Voodoo Vince	Microsoft	
8 September	Madden NFL 2004	Electronic Arts1	
2 September	The Italian Job	Atari	
15 September	NHL 2004	Electronic Arts	
18 September	Judge Dredd	Vivendi	
18 September	Ghost Recon	Ubi Soft	Wanted
19 September	NFL Fever 2004	Microsoft	
22 September	Freedom: Soldiers For Liberty Island	Electronic Arts	
25 September	Buffy The Vampire Slayer 2	Vivendi	
25 September	Urban Freestyle Soccer	Acclaim	
26 September	Crimson Skies	Microsoft	
26 September	Pro Cast	THQ	
29 September	Soul Calibur 2	Electronic Arts	
30 September	Outlaw Volleyball	Red Ant	
30 September	Freestyle MX	Acclaim	

CALM YOUR FEVERISH ANTICIPATION WITH OUR COMPREHENSIVE LIST OF FORTHCOMING RELEASES



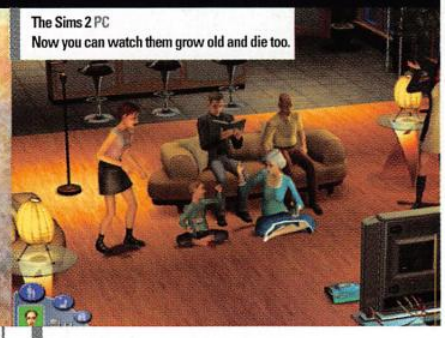
Dino Crisis 3 Xbox
Finally, Capcom's reptilian franchise hits the Xbox.



Buffy The Vampire Slayer: Chaos Bleeds Multi
Buffy's back to kick more vampire butt.



Republic PC
The perfect way to start your own dictatorship.



The Sims 2 PC
Now you can watch them grow old and die too.

30 September	Backyard Wrestling	Atari	
30 September	Alter Echo	THQ	Wanted
TBC	Battlestar Galactica	Vivendi	
TBC	Futurama	Vivendi	
OCTOBER			
9 October	Alias	Acclaim	
9 October	Gladiator: Sword Of Vengeance	Acclaim	
17 October	Sudeki	Microsoft	
23 October	XIII	Ubi Soft	
24 October	NBA Inside Drive 2004	Microsoft	
31 October	Dungeons & Dragons Heroes	Atari	
TBC	The Hobbit	Vivendi	
TBC	Conflict Desert Storm 2	Atari	Wanted
TBC	The Simpsons: Hit & Run	Vivendi	
TBC	Hunter The Reckoning 2: Redeemer	Vivendi	
TBC	X-Files: Resist Or Serve	Vivendi	
NOVEMBER			
7 November	Mission Impossible 2	Atari	
7 November	Top Spin	Microsoft	
7 November	Deadman's Hand	Atari	
7 November	D&D Magic The Gathering	Atari	
12 November	Grabbed By The Ghoulies	Microsoft	
13 November	NBA Jam 2004	Acclaim	
14 November	Project Gotham Racing 2	Microsoft	Wanted
14 November	Counter-Strike	Microsoft	
14 November	Terminator 3: Rise Of The Machines	Atari	
17 November	Amped 2	Microsoft	Wanted
20 November	Beyond Good & Evil	Ubi Soft	
27 November	Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon	Ubi Soft	
TBC	Spy Hunter 2	Acclaim	
TBC	Operation Flaspoint Elite	Atari	
TBC	Road Kill	Acclaim	
TBC	Thief 3	Atari	
DECEMBER			
2 December	Unreal 2: The Awakening (Xbox Live)	Atari	
5 December	Counter Strike (Xbox Live)	Microsoft	
5 December	Fable	Microsoft	
12 December	Links 2004	Microsoft	
TBC	Legacy of Kain: Defiance	Atari	
TBC	Deus Ex2: Invisible War	Atari	
TBC	Whiplash	Atari	
TBC	Conan	TDK	



PC

Month	Title	Publisher	
SEPTEMBER			
4 September	Rainbow Six 3: Athena Sword	Ubi Soft	
18 September	Turok Evolution	Acclaim	
19 September	Temple Of Elemental Evil	Atari	
25 September	Urban Freestyle Soccer	Acclaim	
11 September	Homeworld 2	Vivendi	
18 September	Judge Dredd	Vivendi	
18 September	Lords Of The Realm 3	Vivendi	
TBC	Commandos 3	Atari	Wanted
TBC	The Great Escape	Atari	
TBC	Chrome	Take 2	
TBC	Halo	Microsoft	
OCTOBER			
4 October	Lock On	Ubi Soft	
10 October	Horizons: Empire Of Istaria	Atari	
16 October	Gladiator: Sword Of Vengeance	Acclaim	
17 October	Sinbad: Legend Of The 7 Seas	Atari	
23 October	XIII	Ubi Soft	
31 October	Civilisation 3: Gold	Atari	
TBC	Conflict Desert Storm 2	Atari	
TBC	The Hobbit	Vivendi	
TBC	Hidden & Dangerous 2	Take 2	Wanted
TBC	Warcraft 3: Battlechest	Vivendi	Wanted
NOVEMBER			
14 November	Terminator 3: Rise Of The Machines	Atari	
14 November	Neverwinter Nights Gold	Atari	
20 November	Beyond Good & Evil	Ubi Soft	
21 November	Magic The Gathering – Battleground	Atari	
27 November	Far Cry	Ubi Soft	Wanted
TBC	Celebrity Deathmatch	Take 2	
TBC	Railroad Tycoon 3	Take 2	
TBC	Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles	Atari	
TBC	Thief 3	Atari	
TBC	Max Payne 2	Take 2	Wanted



GBA

Month	Title	Publisher	
SEPTEMBER			
12 September	Mr Nutz	Atari	
12 September	Jet Set Radio	Atari	
12 September	Space Channel 5	Atari	
12 September	Digimon Battle Spirit	Atari	
26 September	Star Wars: Flight Of The Falcon	THQ	
26 September	Monster Truck Madness	THQ	
26 September	Piglet's Big Game	THQ	
TBC	Mortal Kombat: Tournament	Acclaim	Wanted
TBC	Corvette	TDK Mediactive	
TBC	Mario Advance 4	Nintendo	Wanted
OCTOBER			
2 October	The Hobbit	Vivendi	
9 October	Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon	Ubi Soft	
30 October	Harvest Moon	Ubi Soft	Wanted
TBC	Spyro 3: Attack Of The Rhynocs	Vivendi	
TBC	Final Fantasy Tactics Advance	Nintendo	Wanted
NOVEMBER			
13 November	Prince Of Persia: Sands Of Time	Ubi Soft	
14 November	Zoids Legacy	Atari	
14 November	Terminator 3	Atari	
21 November	Mission Impossible	Atari	
TBC	Crash Nitro Kart	Vivendi	Wanted
TBC	Mario & Luigi RPG	Nintendo	
TBC	Justice League	Midway	
TBC	Static Shock	Acclaim	
TBC	Haunted Mansion	TDK Mediactive	
TBC	Scooby Doo! Mystery Madness	THQ	
DECEMBER			
TBC	Sword of Mana	Nintendo	

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.

games™ ON THE HORIZON

KILLER 7

Format: GameCube
Publisher: Capcom

Since becoming smitten with Capcom's wonderful *Viewtiful Joe*, we're desperately looking forward to its next cartoon extravaganza. Although it's not going to be released until sometime in 2004, *Killer 7*'s blend of stylish violence, blood-letting action and intriguing gameplay should be well worth looking forward to.



SPY VS SPY

Format: Multiformat
Publisher: TDK

Here's a blast from the past. Those of you old enough to remember the classic *Mad* magazine Spy Vs Spy comic strip and its superb 8-bit games must be champing at the bit (just like us) for the remake. Despite its new first-person viewpoint, TDK assures us that fans of the original will be very happy indeed.



TRUE FANTASY LIVE ONLINE

Format: Xbox
Publisher: Microsoft

Although *Sudeki* will be first out of the gates, Microsoft is hoping that Level 5's new online game is going to be the massive RPG cash cow the Xbox needs. It's certainly looking extremely nice so far – if there's one title that could crack the Japanese market for Microsoft, it's this.





Ever since Willy Higginbotham created a crude tennis-like game in 1958, technology has constantly driven the games industry forward in a bid to achieve total perfection. A TV screen once rich with sprites of all shapes and sizes now takes backstage to a world of complex 3D character models that attempt to push realism to the very limits. In light of this trend, characters are now normally created in one of two distinct ways – motion capture or traditional animation. While both of these methods achieve the same outcome, the creative process involved is very different…

Animation in its most basic form had to start somewhere, and while Higginbotham may have got the ball rolling (so to speak) it was engineer Steve Russell who is widely credited as using animation to create the world's first videogame. Russell started off with a simple dot that was moved via sine and cosine waves – the nondescript dot soon became a rocket ship that featured its own trajectory and velocity. By adding a second rocket and extra dots to represent missiles, Russell ended up with a creation called *Space Wars*. At first, this rudimentary animation was fine, but as games evolved (*Space War* itself eventually

Body LANGUAGE



YOU MIGHT THINK THAT MOTION CAPTURE HAS SUPERSEDED 'OLD-FASHIONED' ANIMATION AS THE BEST WAY TO BRING MOVEMENT TO GAMES. BUT SOME DEVELOPERS WOULD BEG TO DIFFER...

became the first ever arcade game, *Computer Space*) and as titles became more complex, the animation had to try to keep up.

With the sheer amount of sports and fighting games currently available, realism has never been as important as it is for today's gamers. We're the proud owners of the most sophisticated consoles and, as a result, we expect to see Jet Li pull off one of his trademark free kicks, or believe that the leathery-winged dragon flying majestically in front of us is convincingly portrayed. While there were many distinct forms of animation throughout the Seventies and Eighties, it was Jordan Mechner's *Prince Of Persia* that really helped to propel lifelike animation forward. Rotoscoping in itself was nothing new (after all, Disney animators had been using it ever since they first sketched over pictures of real people for *Snow White*), however, it was the first time that it had ever been employed in a videogame – in this case, Mechner's brother became the basis for the actual Prince. Using rotoscoping in *Prince Of Persia* also highlighted an important consideration that still plagues animators today – the pursuit of realism comes at a very steep cost, and in this case it's time. The creation of Mechner's lifelike Prince was a painstaking process for the then 25-year old college graduate and as animation continued to progress, characters became even more complicated and time-consuming.

Motion capture has undoubtedly pushed animation further than anything before it and, like traditional animation, it has its own unique history. In the very early Eighties, biomechanical labs were using complex computers that could analyse human motion. Before long, these studies eventually caught the interest of computer graphics programmers, who took the collated data and altered it to fit their own needs. During the following years, numerous optical tracking systems were created

Body LANGUAGE



The Pros: Motion Capture

The Defendant: John Klepper, motion capture supervisor and animation studio manager for Starbreeze

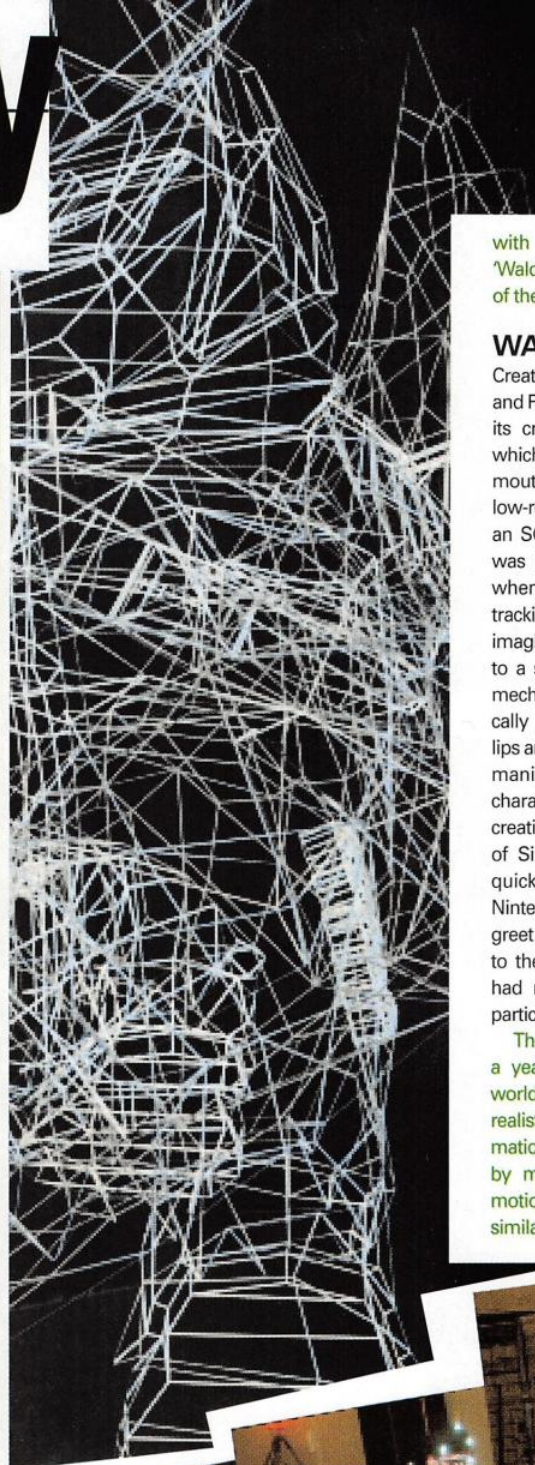
Q – What would you say are the main benefits of motion capture over traditionally drawn animation?
A – It's a lot faster, as long as you can retain the subtleties from the point of motion capture to the raw data to the point where it reaches the engine. One of the problems that you will find in the game industry is that a lot of people don't know how to do motion capture well, or they'll buy the motion capture and it goes to another house that works on the animation. Somewhere along the line the process gets changed and the end result is not what you started with.

Q – What benefits does optical motion capture offer over its peers?
A – Optical motion capture (in my experience) simply has the highest quality. You're calibrating to within a thousandth of a millimetre, so you can retain that amazing subtlety of motion. The markers you use will affect the skeleton in such minute little ways that you can't quite get with magnetic or other forms of motion capture. Optical is also very free – you don't have to have anything attached to you, there's no tethers or suchlike. With magnetic there can be issues with electricity in the air, with mechanical suits you sometimes have bars and other restrictions, with optical capture you can basically move around freely and do what you want.

Q – Will the need for realism ever replace the need for gameplay?
A – This is one of the handy things about supervising the whole project – I'm all for taking motion capture data and adding more to it, to spice it and make it feel richer, faster, more fun to play. As long as you're spicing and not fixing, as long as you're animating to add motion and add something that's really alive versus 'oh we've got problems here and need to redo it', both will prevail.

Q – How different is it to work on a computer game, as opposed to a multi-million dollar film like *Matrix Reloaded* and *Matrix Revolutions*?
A – When you're on set it's incredibly different, but in concept it's very similar because you're basically trying to achieve the same thing. The beauty of motion capture is trying to get those subtle motions that are nearly impossible to traditionally animate (unless you're a god-like animator) – and even then, it would take an incredibly long time. The whole principal of motion capture in either games or films is that you want to get that extra thing that an animator may not be able to.

Q – Do you think motion capture can be taken any further than it already is, or has it reached its full potential?
A – Oh no, there's plenty more room for growth. One of the things that I want to be able to do is spend a lot more time on research and development, I'm always trying to push the envelope and give directors more freedom to do whatever they want to do. I want to continue to push facial, to give it that really subtle depth and really give emotion and life to characters. There's still so much that can be done – the technology just keeps getting better and better so it's a constantly evolving process.

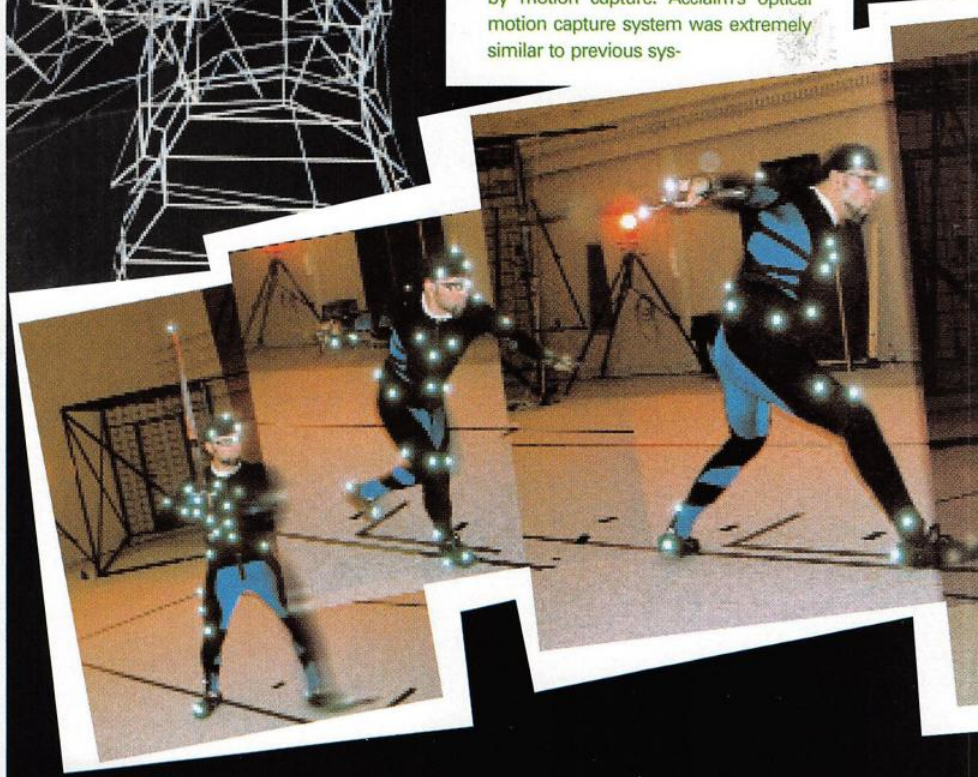


with varying degrees of success – 'Waldo C. Graphic' happened to be one of the most successful.

WALDO WHO?

Created by Jim Henson Productions and Pacific Data Images, 'Waldo' was, in its crudest terms, a mechanical arm which allowed developers to control the mouth movements and position of a low-resolution character in real-time via an SGI dial box (see page 41). Waldo was taken one step further in 1992 when SimGraphics created a facial tracking system (that went under the imaginative title 'face Waldo'). Thanks to a series of mechanical and electro-mechanical sensors that were strategically placed around the chin, cheeks, lips and eyebrows one actor was able to manipulate the on-screen real-time character's facial expressions by simply creating his own. Such was the success of SimGraphics' new creation it was quickly put to impressive use by Nintendo; an on-screen Mario would greet audience members and respond to their questions whenever Nintendo had new product announcements or participated in trade shows.

The final motion breakthrough came a year later when Acclaim gave the world's first ever demonstration of a realistic and complex two-character animation that had been managed entirely by motion capture. Acclaim's optical motion capture system was extremely similar to previous sys-



tems, but had the important difference of being able to track a hundred points simultaneously in real-time. With time being an ever-present factor in both the production of games and films, it was little wonder that motion capture (or mocap, as it is more commonly known) began to find a very appreciative audience amongst certain developers.

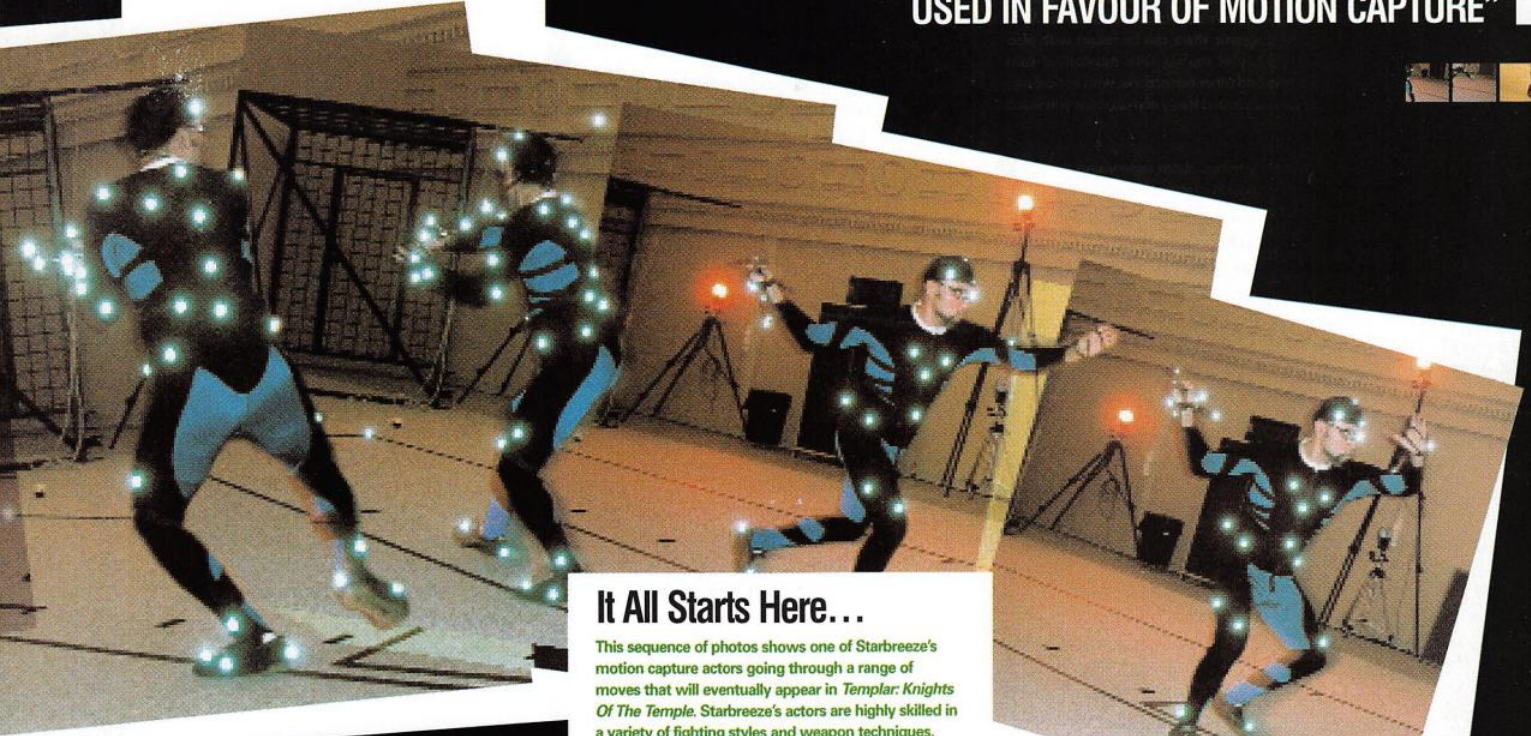
A MOVING TALE

Surprisingly, this new technology and its incredible potential did not dominate the industry as was first thought (or feared in some cases). Cost was an important factor to consider, particularly in the early Nineties, and many animators were far from impressed at the prospect of being replaced by actors and high-tech computer equipment. As a result, the gaming industry now appears to fall into two broad groups – those that use various motion capture techniques to bring characters to life, and others that prefer the organic process that traditional animation can create.

Andy Curtis, studio manager of the Yorkshire-based SIMULA Project, which specialises in CGI and new media technology, has his own thoughts about the benefits of motion capture and why it is so useful in today's industry. "At its best it's all about the emotion and feeling that can be captured in the data," he explains. "It's not all about just capturing a move or two, it's about the actual character of the person you are capturing. Whilst testing the system we had a few friends do some moves for us and applied the data to all sorts of biped shapes and sizes, ugly and pretty. Of the data captured what really continued to surprise us was the fact that we could recognise the person who had acted for us just by their posture and general movement attributes, like pigeon toes, limping and so on. Because of this unique capability, motion capture can be used as an extremely effective tool, especially for computer games."

The biggest argument for motion capture is that with today's ultra-realistic settings, players want ultra-realistic characters with which to participate. Unsurprisingly, sports titles tend to be the most common genre to benefit from the extra realism that motion capture generates. Players can now actually step into the shoes of Tiger Woods, or tear along a virtual football pitch as Harry Kewell and generally find themselves within a truly immersive experience. Even in the most realistic looking of games, however, motion capture may not always be used (although it will often be employed for cut-scenes). Although Konami's *Metal Gear Solid 2* and Ubi Soft's *Splinter Cell* featured very similar ideas, Konami used motion capture to display Snake and Raiden's various characteristics, while Ubi Soft used traditional animation to breathe life into Sam Fisher. Considering the amazing use of real-time shadows and environments in the latter, it may have seemed strange that Sam himself wasn't created as realistically as possible. This couldn't be further from the truth, however. "Sam Fisher was realistic in his mechanics, but if you look at the characters, the textures, the environments and even the lighting, you'll notice that there's

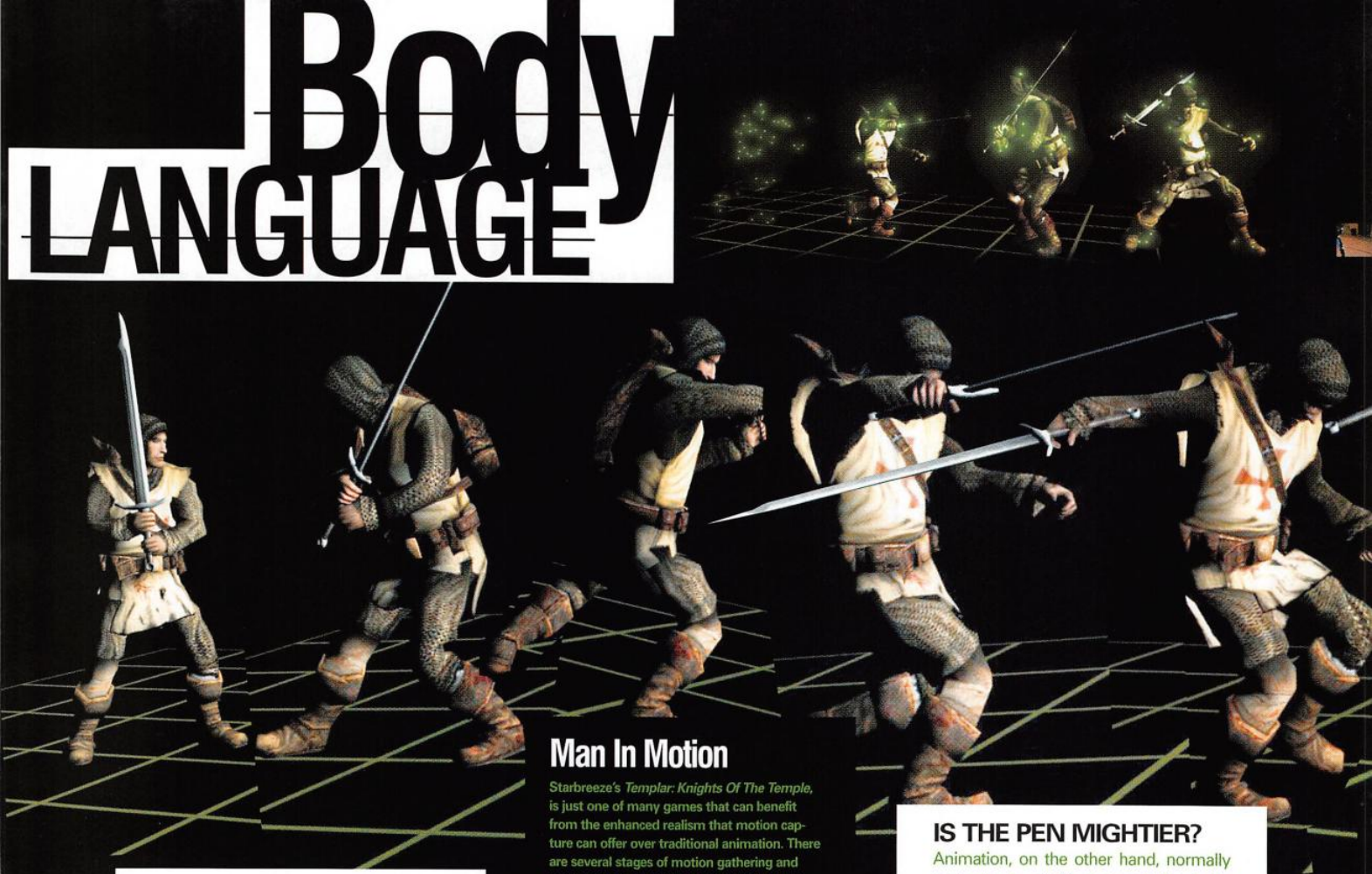
"UBI SOFT'S UPCOMING PRINCE OF PERSIA: THE SANDS OF TIME IS ANOTHER PERFECT EXAMPLE OF ANIMATION BEING USED IN FAVOUR OF MOTION CAPTURE"



It All Starts Here...

This sequence of photos shows one of Starbreeze's motion capture actors going through a range of moves that will eventually appear in *Templar: Knights Of The Temple*. Starbreeze's actors are highly skilled in a variety of fighting styles and weapon techniques, which are all used throughout the many stages of each motion capture shoot.

Body LANGUAGE



Man In Motion

Starbreeze's *Templar: Knights Of The Temple*, is just one of many games that can benefit from the enhanced realism that motion capture can offer over traditional animation. There are several stages of motion gathering and rendering a character will go through before these final results are achieved.

a little something extra," explains Steve Dupont, *Splinter Cell*'s lead designer. "It was the same for the animation; we wanted the possibility to exaggerate reality a little for our own purpose. Motion capture would not have looked very good in *Splinter Cell*'s 'hyper-real' environments."

QUICK ON THE DRAW

Ubi Soft's upcoming *Prince Of Persia: The Sands Of Time* is another perfect example of animation being used in favour of motion capture. This in itself is rather surprising, especially when you consider that it was Mechner's original *Prince Of Persia* that pushed realism in videogames so far forward in the first place. However, as *Sands Of Time*'s head of animation, Pierre-Sébastien Pouliot, reveals, if an animator is skilled enough, motion capture doesn't need to become an issue. "Finding all the technical experts, correct equipment and a mocap studio who can handle everything we need is no piece of cake," he says. "Even if we did manage it, we wouldn't know until much later if it worked properly. By animating by hand, we knew we had the skill to pull it off. In fact, a lot of people believe we used mocap for some of our moves anyway and asked us how we where able to pull it off. I guess we made the right choice."

These varying differences of opinion clearly show that there is a divide between the two art forms – nevertheless, each animation process is only as effective as the people behind them. One of the major problems with motion capture is the way that moves can sometimes appear disjointed and separated as a character goes from one set of moves to another. Many larger publishers now use sports stars and actors to enhance their products on a regular basis and it is normally sports games that can suffer the most. Motion capture cannot always capture the sheer fluidity that many athletes possess and as a result this supposed realism can sometimes undermine all the motion capture artists' hard work. It's also not unusual to have a character's hands and feet not connect properly with their surroundings, which further detracts from the game's realism. This is normally down to poor or rushed programming however, and a major benefit that motion capture holds over standard animation is that it gives a much more accurate representation of a character's weight. This in itself helps to give the character a realism that is normally missing from other, more conventional means of animation.

IS THE PEN MIGHTIER?

Animation, on the other hand, normally manages to avoid many of the faults found in motion capture (not interacting with scenery properly being the main concern) simply because the animator has so much more control over his actual surroundings. "It's all about control," Pouliot confirms. "With key-framed animation, we have absolute control over the characters' poses at each frame – we work really hard on making animations that not only look good, but don't frustrate the player by impairing controls. The technological tools used in so many games just don't cut it. Characters seem to float from jumping to one animation to the other and trying to interpolate them together. There's only one way to go and it's to create all the animation's transitions by hand and that's a huge load. Sure, we still use all the technological tricks available but it's only to smooth things down."

With both forms coming with their own advantages and disadvantages, it's highly unlikely that one will replace the other any time soon. After all, why would players want to simply control an animated Jet Li when they could instead use the real thing? But don't even get us started on how hard it is to motion capture dragons...

"FINDING ALL THE TECHNICAL EXPERTS, CORRECT EQUIPMENT AND A MOCAP STUDIO WHO CAN HANDLE EVERYTHING WE NEED IS NO PIECE OF CAKE"



Glossary

Rotoscoping
A system which allows an artist to use captured video images as the basis for animations – essentially, it's like drawing over a set of film stills. In the days that preceded computers, animators used a stand called a Rotoscope to do this, though computers are now more commonly used.

Motion Capture
A process that captures movement data from a live source that is transmitted to a computer. This information is interpreted by 3D simulation software and then presented in real-time as a simulation of realistic motion.

Animation
A sequence of drawings (frames) that, when run in sequential order, creates a moving image.

Character Rig
A 3D computer skeleton designed and defined to move a 3D computer model of a character. Motion capture data is applied to the bones and joints of this skeleton, which then makes the 3D computer character move just like the motion-captured subject.

SGI Dials (and buttons) Box
These extend the keyboard like a hardware short cut device. The dials box provides the user with independent rotating dial controls that the user can configure to perform functions such as pan, zoom or rotate and then translate with various 3D applications. Dial movements are then instantly presented on the workstation display connection.

Key-framed Animation
Animation that is created by setting different positions of an object (such as a character's head) and creating 'key-frames' that the computer can interpolate itself between them.

Optical Motion Capture (most accurate)
Multiple actions and movements (usually those of a person) are captured simultaneously by a series of up to 240 cameras surrounding them. The captured subject has highly reflective balls attached all over their body – the movement of these balls is interpreted by a Datastation that is connected to all the cameras. This information is then converted to 3D motion data.

Magnetic Motion Capture (less accurate)
Movements are captured by sensors that a subject wears – the sensors detect where they are within a magnetic field. This information is then converted to 3D motion data.

Mechanical Motion Capture (least accurate)
Human motion is captured through a mechanical suit that the subject wears. Information gathered from the suit is converted to 3D motion data, though the suit can interfere with natural human movement.





The Pros: Animation

The defendant: Iain Haskell, lead animator on Climax Solent's *Sudeki*

Q – What are the benefits of traditional animation over motion capture?
A – With traditional animation, we as animators can control everything, making the characters move exactly how we want. Animation is a creative process which brings life to characters, motion capture by design takes away this creative process and replaces it with computer processing which I believe takes out the creative flair that brings a character to life, thus making characters maybe more lifelike but somewhat lacking in life. This is not to say that I think motion capture is all bad, I think it has its place in certain circumstances, but not when your game or film is set in a fantasy environment. I would say that, however, as I'm an animator and it's my job to bring characters to life.

Q – Is one form more time-consuming than the other?
A – Obviously, animating traditionally takes longer than motion capture but you do have to spend a lot of time processing the data that you get from motion capture. By this I mean that there will be a lot of data that is surplus to requirements and an animator will also have to go through all the anims adding life to them and clearing out all the excess data. So in a lot of cases a skilled animator with a good character rig will be able achieve the same if not better results in not much more time than if the moves were motion captured. Motion capture is probably quicker but doesn't always give the desired results.

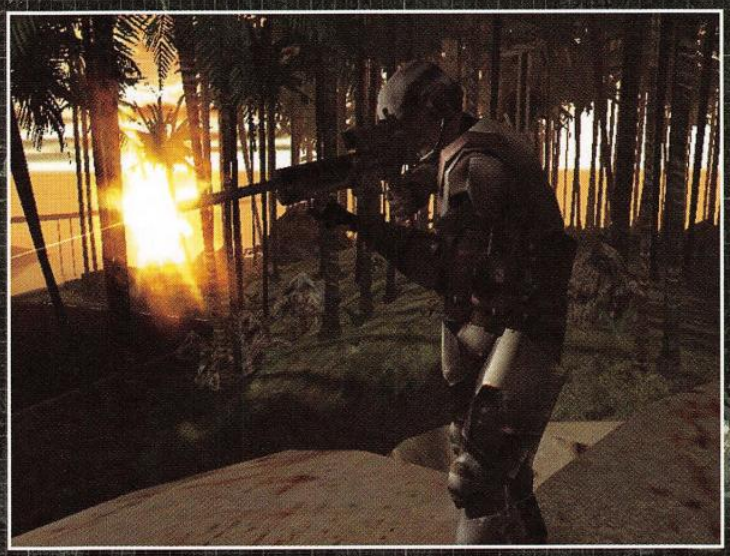
Q – With gamers wanting ever more complex visuals do you think that the need for extremely lifelike motion capture (or animation for that matter) will ever replace the need for decent gameplay?
A – I think it really depends of the style or type of game. Animation is the art of bringing life to characters in their movement and gestures and this nearly always means exaggerating real life. As viewers, if you were to watch straight-out-of-the-motion-capture-suite anims you wouldn't believe them to be realistic because of the lack of life (something that the *Final Fantasy: The Spirits Within* film suffered from – yes, visually it looked great but the characters lacked life and moved around like wooden dolls). This is because as humans we do the bare minimum needed to move around, yet when we see this back our eyes don't read this as true, which is where animators come in.

Q – How do you do go about your animation research?
A – As a traditionally trained animator I spend a lot of time observing people in their everyday environments – how they walk, the way people hold themselves as they talk to others, how little kids move as they run around and suchlike. Before I start an anim I will act out more or less what the anim is going to be to get a feel of how my body is moving and where the weight is and so on. This way I can begin setting out my key poses knowing that at this point the weight is going to be here or perhaps my foot here. I can then build on this research and let my imagination take over to produce some super-human moves that in reality a human couldn't do. But that's the point – creating movement that looks cool but is not achieveable in real life, it's escapism.


CHROME

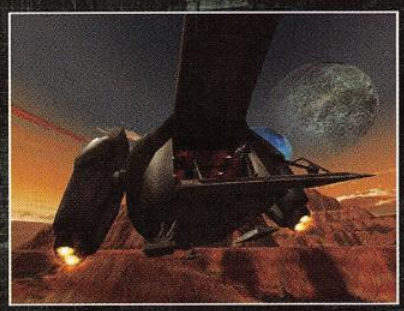
COUNTER STRIKE AND DEUS EX MIXED IN ONE JAW-DROPPING GAME!





Chrome is set at the turn of the 22nd century during the colonisation of Valkyria, a solar system on the edge of the universe. You are Bolt Logan, a former member of the Elite Special Units, a man with a reputation for being the best.

Now he's an anonymous mercenary trying to break free from his past and hoping for lucrative contracts on Valkyria. While on what seemed to be a routine mission, the main characters get mixed up in a world full of twists and intrigue, that includes pirates, colonists, giant corporations and some of Logan's old friends.



- Combines tactical gameplay and a dynamic action-packed plot with a wide range of spectacular weapons, futuristic vehicles and high tech devices.
- 16 challenging missions set in huge outdoor locations and inside futuristic facilities.
- Unique gameplay based on player's freedom of choice, wide open environments and cyber technology that improves character's abilities.
- Innovative multiplayer mixes indoor and outdoor fighting, vehicle combat and the use of implants.

TAKE2interactive

techland

WWW.CHROMETHEGAME.COM

MA15+
MEDIUM LEVEL ANIMATED VIOLENCE

PC CD ROM

COMMANDOS 3: DESTINATION BERLIN

BETTER REPLACE THAT THINKING CAP WITH A THINKING HELMET...

DETAILS
FORMAT: PC
ORIGIN: Spain
PUBLISHER: Eidos
DEVELOPER: Pyro Studios
RELEASE: October '03
GENRE: Strategy
PLAYERS: 1-TBC

■ The popular strategy franchise continues to evolve in this, its third incarnation, adding a greater level of realism and detail and bringing multiplayer elements into the series for the first time.

Strategy games are hardly a rarity on the PC. In fact, the home computer is arguably still the best place for the thinking man to get his gaming fix. Be it due to interface, peripherals or simply a more appreciative audience, the genre excels on the PC to the point of having but two rivals – the RPG (more specifically, the online variety) and the first-person shooter. In such a cluttered and popular genre, it takes a really special game to grab strategy gamers and one example of this has been Pyro's ambitious *Commandos* series. Since the Spanish developer's first offering proved sufficiently popular to spawn expansions, sequels and copycat titles, the military-themed series has built up quite a following with PC gamers and console owners alike and is now set for an impressive return in this third operation.

Visually, the massively high-resolution backdrops and detailed characters make for some of the best-looking visuals we've seen on any format, and once you've seen the particle and weather effects in action, it's hard not to be impressed. It's not even as though the fixed viewpoint presents the same problems as in many other games and you'll find that being able to spin and scroll the camera gives you a decent feel for your surroundings and eliminates blind spots. Interiors are fully rendered and while they're slightly less impressive than their pre-rendered outdoor counterparts, they can be every bit as practical. This may all sound a little familiar to fans of the series, perhaps because it is but believe us when we say that *Commandos 3* is far from simply more of the same...

"BELIEVE US WHEN WE SAY THAT COMMANDOS 3 IS FAR FROM SIMPLY MORE OF THE SAME"

For starters, many minor changes have been made to pull the game right back down to earth. The more light-hearted and under-used elements from the earlier games, such as Natasha and Whisky the dog, make way for an altogether more realistic experience and with good effect – while lightening the mood would seem a good idea, it was hardly necessary, and from what we've seen so far the absentees are not missed. Another key change is the way in which missions are linked – rather than the usual 'move on when everything is done' level design, expect more linked objectives and logical segues tying the missions together. "The whole experience will be much more dynamic than *Commandos 2*," explains Ignacio Pérez, a designer on the project, and just by seeing the way the whole package fits together, we can see precisely what he means.

Currently, *Commandos 3* is planned solely for the PC market – a decision we can fully understand. As good as they were, the console versions of the second game felt strangely removed from the PC original – directly controlling your operatives worked relatively well but couldn't even approach the ease of a mouse/keyboard interface. This is not to rule out a conversion at a later date of course, but at this stage, console owners look set to be left out. Interestingly, Pyro has three as-yet unannounced projects in development and from initial hints, at least one of these may well find its way to one or more consoles – several involved parties expressed to us that the firm was keen to fully break into the console market.

Those who have had trouble with any of the previous games will be glad to hear that getting stuck on a mission is nowhere near as progress-impeding as it has been. "*Commandos 3* is no longer based on a



■ Conclusive proof that the sniper is among the most useful units in the right hands. Sterling work, that man...

TAKE IT INSIDE

While the main play areas consist of fixed-angle cameras and rendered backdrops, things get a whole lot more three-dimensional when you enter a building. Every interior location is fully rendered, allowing you to conduct a thorough search. You're also able to use many structures to your own strategic ends – peeking out of (or into) windows to survey an area, throwing objects and firing through them and even gaining access to upper areas to find the ultimate sniper's nest. As before, you'll also be able to make use of lesser parts of your surroundings, such as shimmying up poles and along wires or hiding out in pipes to maintain that element of surprise.

COMMANDOS 3: DESTINATION BERLIN

PC

COMPANY PROFILE

Based in Madrid, Pyro Studios was founded back in 1996, releasing its first game, *Commandos*, two years later. The firm has been steadily growing in both size and profile ever since and is now a force to be reckoned with in strategy gaming.

HISTORY

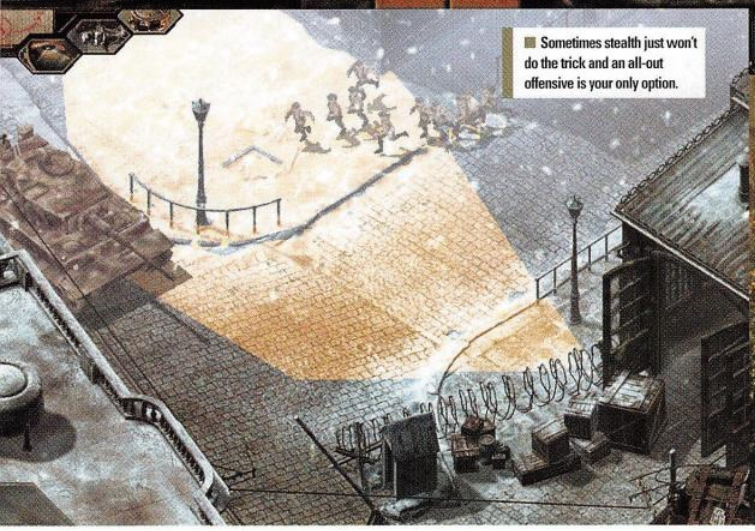
- **PRAETORIANS** 2003 [PC]
- **COMMANDOS 2: MEN OF COURAGE** 1998 [Multi]
- **COMMANDOS: BEHIND ENEMY LINES** 1998 [PC]

The pyrotechnics are absolutely awesome, as if you even need an incentive to blow things to bits.

"MORE NUMEROUS AND CLOSER GOALS MAKE FOR A MUCH BETTER FEELING OF PROGRESSION FOR THE PLAYER"

IGNACIO PÉREZ, DESIGNER, PYRO STUDIOS



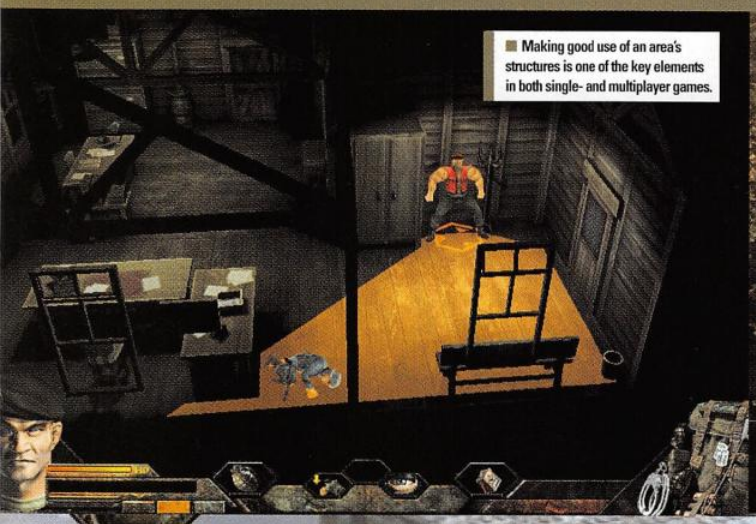


Sometimes stealth just won't do the trick and an all-out offensive is your only option.

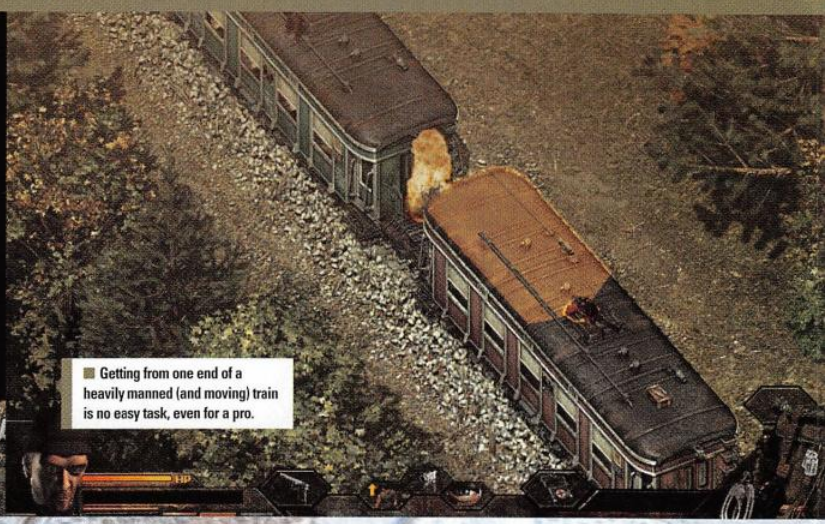


Peeking through windows allows you to get an idea of what's going on inside without alerting guards to your presence.

COMMANDOS 3: DESTINATION BERLIN CONT.



Making good use of an area's structures is one of the key elements in both single- and multiplayer games.



Getting from one end of a heavily manned (and moving) train is no easy task, even for a pro.

VIDEOGAMES MATHS

FURTHER TRAINING FOR THE TROOPS



COMMANDOS 2 + FALLOUT TACTICS + MULTIPLAYER = COMMANDOS 3

"THE GOAL IS NO LONGER GOING THROUGH THE WHOLE MAP OR KILLING EVERYBODY IN IT – IT CAN BE ELIMINATING A SINGLE PERSON"

IGNACIO PÉREZ, DESIGNER, PYRO STUDIOS



PUBLISHER PROFILE

■ Not content with having some of the world's leading titles under its belt, Eidos continues to frequent uncharted waters. Ventures like its Fresh Games subsidiary have opened the eyes of PAL gamers to some Eastern gems which may otherwise have slipped past unnoticed.

HISTORY

- **TIMESPLITTERS 2** 2002 [Multi]
- **MAD MAESTRO** 2001 [PlayStation2]
- **WARZONE 2100** 1999 [PC]

pure mission system, more based on campaigns," explains Pérez, referring to the fact that the player now has a choice of three very different campaigns from the beginning of the game. It's not just the game's structure that has been altered either – the individual missions and objectives have been tweaked to make the experience much more rewarding. "More numerous and closer goals make for a much better feeling of progression for the player," says Pérez, and while the game's maps may be slightly smaller than before, this actually allows for a tighter focus and more structured goals to be realised.

We've touched upon it briefly, but seeing as how the multiplayer aspect is a first for the series, it does rate as a fairly important area. The several multiplayer modes on offer cover all the usual game types – Deathmatch, Team Play, Capture The Flag and even Co-operative – but it's more the execution than the modes themselves that impresses. The Versus game gives each player a basic squad of commandos and a limited number of points to spend on lesser soldiers to make up numbers. It's up to you if these are pistol-wielding grunts or explosives experts, but, as with most things, a healthy mix is usually best. Another option is the FPS stalwart Capture The Flag, giving you just the basic squad and a map littered with said fabric/pole combos, which plays almost exactly as one would expect. A nice touch here is that flags are randomly generated so as well as having to hunt down the other teams and procure their contraband, you'll have to raid every nook and cranny on the map if you seek victory… or flags, in this case.

Best of all, though, is the Co-operative mode. Two to six players can team up to take control of one or more of the merry band and take on any of the single-player missions as a group. With full voice support, this is a wonderful showcase for online multiplayer strategy and instantly earns kudos for game and developer alike. Even in the early build, there was little to no noticeable lag, and with every map from the single-player game usable in not only Co-op but also every other online mode, this inclusion is obviously much more than just the bolted-on extra these modes can often feel like. Now more than ever, we applaud the decision to wait until the game, technology and audience are all ready before jumping in with such an ambitious feature.

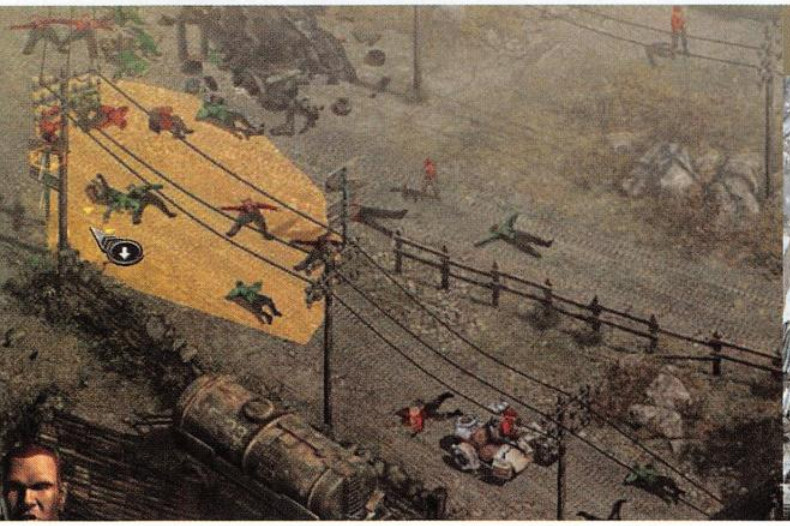
To some, *Commandos 3* may be just another strategy game, but to those who know just how far Pyro is pushing the engine and the genre, it's a hell of a lot more. This is a point Pérez is keen to emphasise. "The spirit of the game remains the same but the way in which you play is different," he says, adding: "We have similar rules and it will seem very familiar to some although we have changed a lot, especially in terms of situations and the way they force you to play."

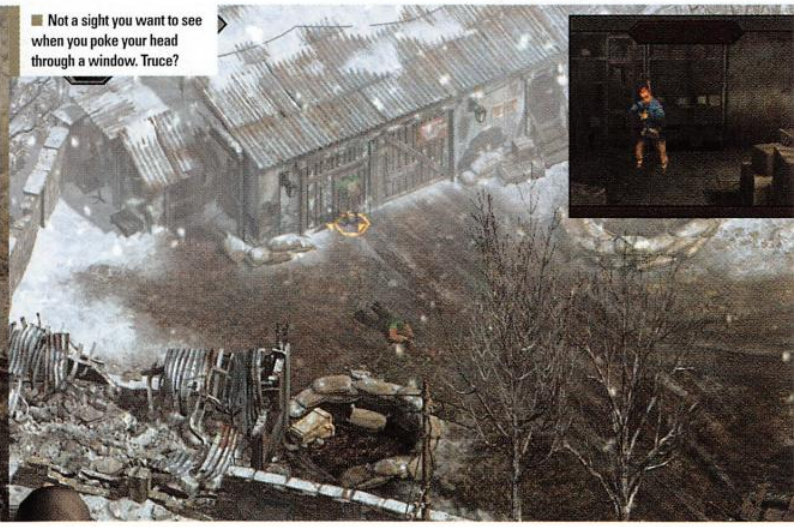
It's not like we've never heard this spiel before, but for once it's actually true – while first impressions may lead you to believe otherwise, just watching *Commandos 3* grow in scale and depth as you play is a wonderful sight. With the right blend of established elements and new material to keep this sequel feeling fresh, we're anxiously awaiting the finished product. Not that we'll even see it sneaking up on us, of course…

"WATCHING THE GAME GROW IN SCALE AND DEPTH AS YOU PLAY IS QUITE A SIGHT"

BE QUIET AND DRIVE

Vehicle fans will be glad to hear that *Commandos* is no longer the domain of the designated driver. This doesn't mean your agents can pop out for a beer, though, just that any of your troops can now take control of any cars, trucks or bikes you find. This makes vehicular assaults much easier to plan, though some treasures can only be operated by certain individuals – mounted guns, for instance, can't be manned by smaller troops due to the immense kickback. For the most part, though, this aspect of the game has been opened up a little and brings another layer of strategy to an already complex brainteaser.





■ Not a sight you want to see when you poke your head through a window. Truce?

THE SIMS 2

The aim now isn't just to keep your Sims happy, you need to give them a purpose.

"THE MORE ENGAGING THE SIMS CAN BE OVER TIME, THE MORE PEOPLE WILL WANT TO BE PART OF THAT WORLD"

TIM LE TOURNEAU, PRODUCER, MAXIS

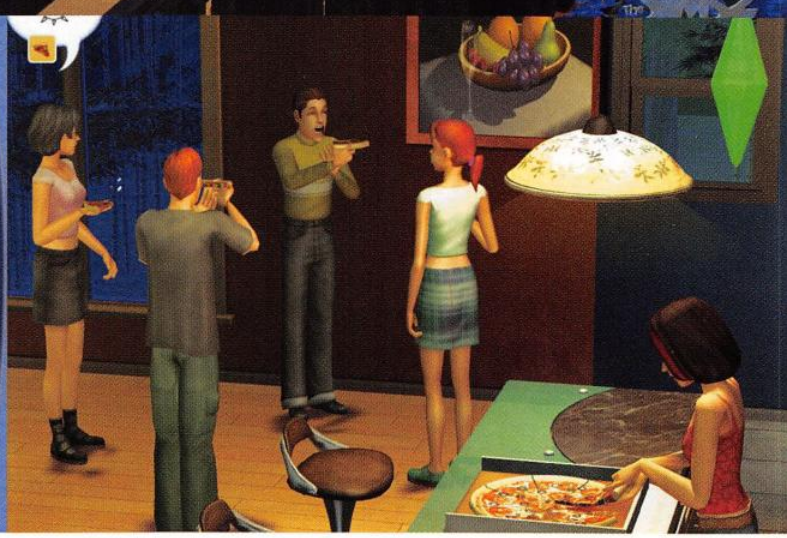
VIDEOGAMES MATHS

LIFE IS THE NAME OF THE GAME...





The degree of character customisation is astonishing – you can almost clone yourself.



COMPANY PROFILE

MAXIS

■ Since being founded in 1987 by Jeff Braun and Will Wright (the mind behind the entire *Sim* empire), Maxis has gone from being a two-man operation to one of the leading simulation-based developers in the world. The company's first game, *Sim City*, became the foundation for a franchise that has gone on to sell over seven million copies worldwide.

HISTORY

- **THE SIMS** 2003 [PS2]
- **SIM CITY 4** 2003 [PC]
- **THE SIMS** 2000 [PC]

THE LIFE OF A SIM WILL NEVER BE THE SAME AGAIN...

DETAILS

FORMAT: PC
ORIGIN: US
PUBLISHER: Electronic Arts
DEVELOPER: Maxis
RELEASE: Q1 '04
GENRE: Simulation
PLAYERS: 1

■ Better graphics, cleverer Sims, more objects and the ability to watch your Sims grow old and die – everything a *Sims* fan could ever want.

When it comes to developing a sequel to a popular game, it needs something that is markedly improved over the original. But while most games plump for a single idea, Maxis has gone overboard with the improvements. You see, with *The Sims 2* there's more – not just of one thing, but of everything. Every single element, from the customisation of your Sim and how they interact with other Sims to what they do, where they do it and even why they do it has been cranked up a notch in order to create a game that surpasses its predecessor in every way.

Of course, much of the enjoyment from *The Sims* comes out of the relationship between you and your Sim, and being able to build him or her up into a character that you can relate to. In this respect, *The Sims 2* makes it easier to build an affinity with your Sim by giving the you almost total control over what they look like, so you could actually recreate yourself with scary accuracy. By taking a basic template that can be tailored to almost any skin and face type, then altering facial characteristics from a selection and finally using sliders to change those features even more, you can turn anyone you want into a Sim. Combine that with the simple method of building your own home (just snap the walls together then decorate to suit your tastes with the hundreds of items on offer) and pretty soon your Sim will be ready to start evolving.

And that's where the fun really starts, as your Sims now have the ability to age. While the key to success still lies in guiding your Sim through 'life's big moments', each Sim also has a Life Score that rates how happy they are with how life is going. Decisions made throughout their life affect how your Sims grow up – from toddler and teenager to adult and pensioner – and therefore determine what they want. Should you choose to pass on certain opportunities like finding love, having kids or getting a successful job (if that's what they want), the Life Score goes down and your Sim becomes unhappy. The game no longer revolves around keeping all your Sims permanently happy for no reason; instead, it's about helping them enjoy a successful and fulfilling life.

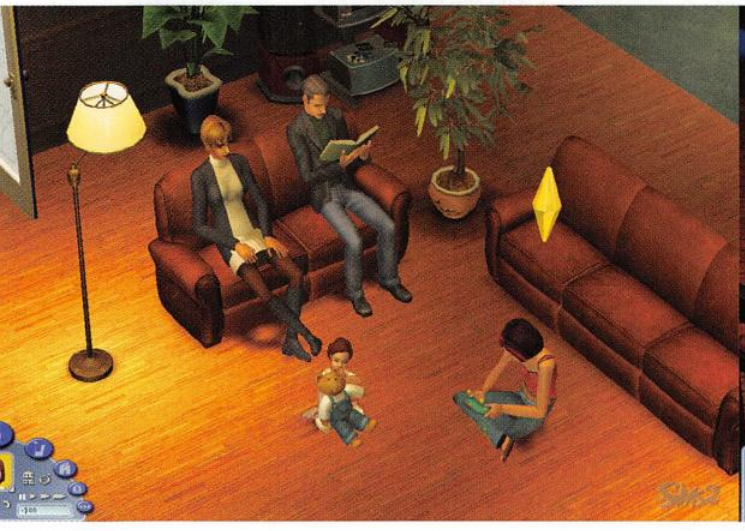
New elements in the environment also have a greater effect on the way your Sim develops (for instance, a Sim with a love of pizza will grow fat while Sims who work out get rock solid abs) as well as their relationships with other Sims. Sims now have a greater recognition for each other and can form complex relationships based on love, friendship or family. This is an integral part of the game now – something newcomers and hardened fans will have to learn if they want to succeed.

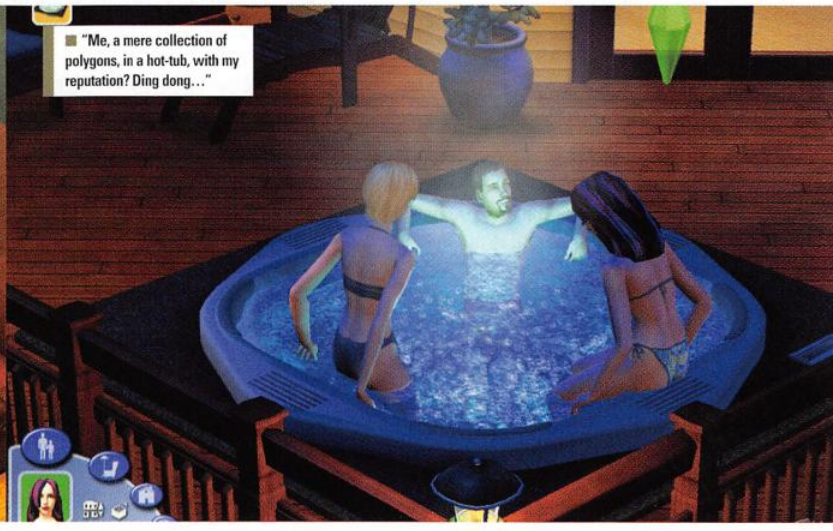
Not surprisingly, *The Sims 2* will only be the tip of the iceberg as far as furthering the series goes. No doubt Maxis already has a long list of things to include in the first few add-on packs to be released throughout 2004. While it may seem a little unfair for fans to have to start from scratch (after all, they've already paid for pets, holidays and celebrities once – why should they do it again?), it's the nature of the beast for an expandable game like this. Maxis has already proven with the seven add-ons for the original *Sims* that it believes in the adage 'Always keep them wanting more', and obviously it'll do it again. After all, *The Sims* wouldn't be the same without add-ons...

IT'S ALL IN THE GENES

With each Sim now able to grow up and establish romantic relationships, it's only right that they can have children too. However, these aren't randomly generated Sim babies – instead, they're a product of the new DNA system that allows each Sim to pass their genes onto their offspring. By entering the DNA simulator and picking two Sims, you can see their child as it would appear and even check out what he or she will look like as they grow older. Of course, this is just the theory – to actually create the child you'll have to let nature take its course...

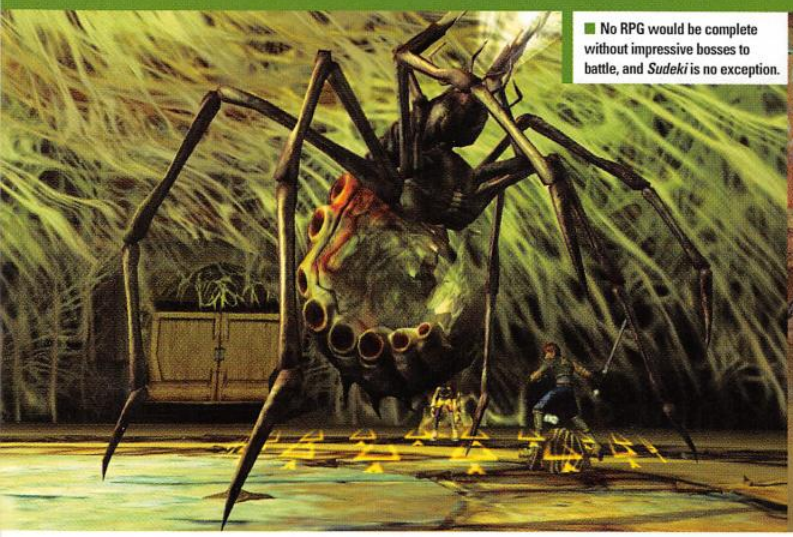
"AFTER SEEING HOW MUCH SMARTER THESE SIMS ARE, YOU'LL NEVER BE ABLE TO GO BACK TO THE ORIGINALS"



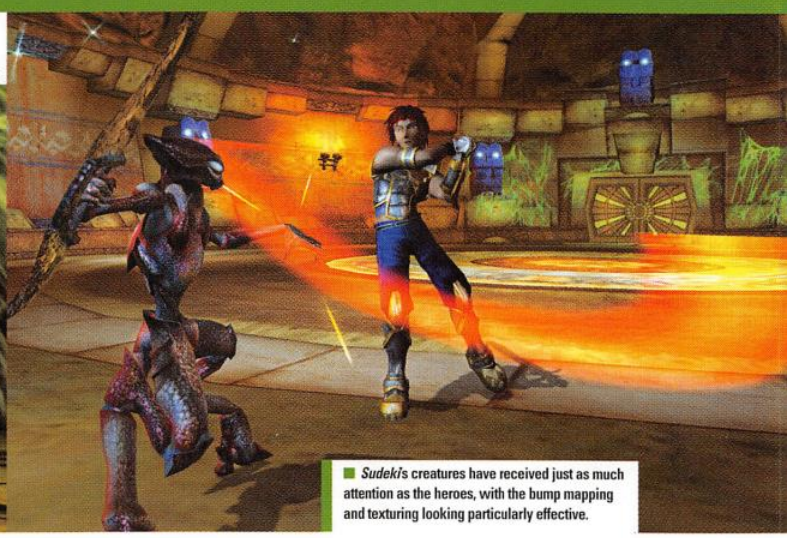


■ "Me, a mere collection of polygons, in a hot-tub, with my reputation? Ding dong..."

SUDEKI



No RPG would be complete without impressive bosses to battle, and *Sudeki* is no exception.



Sudeki's creatures have received just as much attention as the heroes, with the bump mapping and texturing looking particularly effective.

COULD THIS BE THE XBOX TITLE RPG FANS ARE WAITING FOR?

You've got to feel sorry for *Sudeki* – it's still a while from release but has already been criticised on various Internet forums. So what's got everybody's back up? Well, it would seem that developer Climax's biggest sin is that it has the nerve to create a game that's normally the domain of the Japanese. Of course, the sad fact of the matter is that *Sudeki*'s already shaping up into a great title and it'll be a real shame if all this unjustified negativity puts prospective buyers off. Take our word for it – *Sudeki* is great fun and well worth waiting for. From the moment *Sudeki*'s history is played out via some novel shadow puppets (not to mention the superb narration by ex-Doctor Who Tom Baker), you know that a tremendous amount of passion has gone into Climax's latest creation.

The worlds of Hikaria and Kuria have been torn asunder by an age-old war and, in typical RPG fashion, it falls down to a small group of heroes to restore peace to the beleaguered lands. Initially, you only control toughened warrior Tal, but before long you'll meet up with Elco (a steam-punk gunslinger), the sultry sorceress Ailish and Buki, a shape-shifting huntress. While you only ever control one character (sadly, there won't be a multiplayer option) the AI of the remaining heroes is of an extremely high standard and can be easily changed via various D-pad commands.

Visually, *Sudeki* is one of the most breathtaking games we've seen this side of *Panzer Dragoon Orta*. Climax's Trinity System allows real-time shadowing on every character, an incredible array of lighting and particle effects (especially for the characters' *Final Fantasy*-esque Summon abilities) and a staggering amount of impressive textures. Environments are also rich in detail and, while they may include such well-used fantasy locations as snowy mountains and quaint villages, the use of subtle environmental effects and lighting give *Sudeki*'s worlds a refreshingly different look. There are a few frame rate and refresh issues, but Climax assures us that these will be fixed before release.

All this graphical wonderment would amount to nothing, though, if *Sudeki* didn't have the gameplay to back it up – fortunately, Climax has paid just as much attention here as it has to the technical aspects of the game. While all the traditional aspects of RPGs (levelling up, summoning powerful magic and plenty of character interaction) can be found in abundance, it's *Sudeki*'s real-time combat that sets it apart from its peers.

Using a four-tiered combat system that allows for some wonderfully over-the-top moves, Climax is ready to inject some much needed freshness into traditional turn-based combat. There are two attack strengths and by alternating between them you can pull off all manner of flashy combos. One thing we're not too keen on is the bullet-time effect that's used as these moves are pulled off – while they look nice, they do nothing to enhance the gameplay and it smacks of jumping on an ever-accelerating *Max Payne* bandwagon.

With its multiple worlds (Light, Dark and Shadow), an extensive combat and menu system (combat slows to a crawl so you can quickly access various menus) and decent use of the hard drive (so there are no loading times), *Sudeki* could be accused of simply trying to do too much. However, if Climax manages to restrain itself, this could become another essential Xbox title.

DETAILS

FORMAT: Xbox
ORIGIN: UK
PUBLISHER: Microsoft
DEVELOPER: Climax Solent
RELEASE: December '03
GENRE: RPG
PLAYERS: 1

Touted by Climax as a squad-based RPG, *Sudeki* eschews the traditional turn-based combat of most RPGs and adds a healthy amount of Hong Kong-style action to the mix instead.

WITH FRIENDS LIKE THESE

One aspect of *Sudeki* that Climax is particularly proud of is the puzzles that are found throughout the various worlds. Each of your four characters has a unique ability ranging from travelling short distances via a jetpack, to pushing and pulling blocks and heavy objects Lara Croft style. Whilst early puzzles are fairly easy (normally needing just one character), they get pretty fiendish once all four abilities are brought together. Luckily, a simple press of the black button will let you cycle through to whichever hero you need. Each hero's abilities are not just used to solve puzzles either – as your party expands, you'll be able to retrace your steps and reach previously inaccessible areas.

"WITH GORGEOUS VISUALS, MULTIPLE WORLDS TO EXPLORE AND SOME EXCITING COMBAT, SUDEKI IS SHAPING UP TO BE AN EXTREMELY PROMISING TITLE"



COMPANY PROFILE

■ Formed in 1988, Climax has since split into six studios – Brighton, Handheld, Los Angeles, London, Nottingham and Solent (home of *Sudeki*). The company has developed a set of development tools called the Trinity System that's used by its four UK-based studios to enhance racing, character and massive multiplayer online games.

HISTORY

■ **MOTO GP** 2 2003 [Xbox]
■ **DIABLO** 1998 [PlayStation]
■ **R-TYPE** 1988 [Atari ST]

■ *Sudeki* will eventually feature over a hundred different creatures to battle, including both Light and Dark World counterparts.

"THE ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IS ONE OF SUDEKI'S STRONGEST POINTS. I THINK WE'VE GOT IT DOWN PRETTY DAMN WELL"

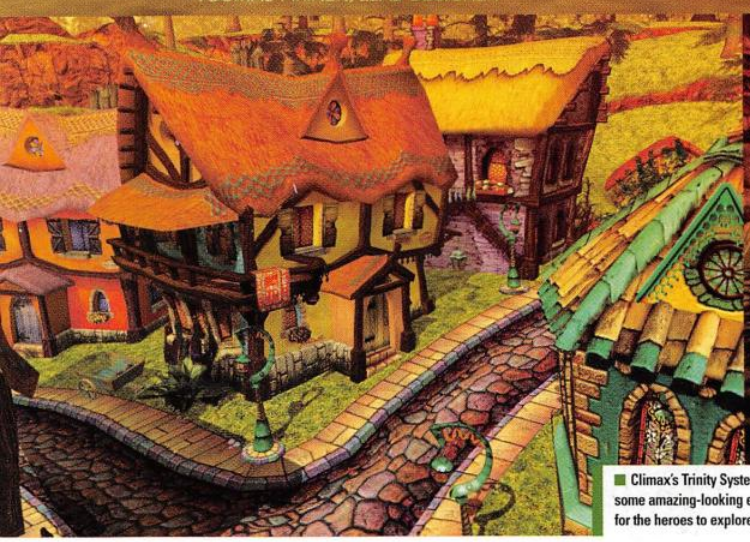
TUOMAS PIRINEN, LEAD DESIGNER

VIDEOGAMES MATHS

CHOPPING SUDEKI INTO LITTLE BITS...



FINAL FANTASY x PHANTASY STAR ONLINE x HONG KONG ACTION = SUDEKI





■ Climax's Trinity System has created some amazing-looking environments for the heroes to explore.

FIRE WARRIOR



Although one of your weapons remains constant throughout the game, you'll be given upgrades for it every so often that'll make it bigger and better.

LESS DICE, MORE GUNS – EXACTLY AS IT SHOULD BE

It's fair to say that when we first heard about *Fire Warrior*, we weren't that keen. Not being fans of Games Workshop's Warhammer 40,000 franchise, images of bearded men rolling dice sent us scurrying away. Thankfully though, it appears our fears were unfounded – aside from being set in the Warhammer universe (with its numerous races, planets, vehicles and weapons), *Fire Warrior* has absolutely nothing to do with the game that has kept tabletop warfare fans busy for years. You won't find any models to paint, hit points to calculate or armies to command here; instead, developer Kuju Entertainment has made the sensible decision to transplant the entire Warhammer 40k concept into a first-person shooter that everyone can enjoy.

In a nutshell, *Fire Warrior* attempts to carve itself a niche by pinching several good concepts from other FPS games and bundling them together, then adding the Warhammer 40k story for maximum effect. From the pacing of *TimeSplitters 2* and atmosphere of *Medal Of Honor*, to the character development of *Half-Life* and strategy of *Halo*, there's plenty here that will ring bells in the heads of FPS aficionados. Essentially though, the best thing about *Fire Warrior* is that you don't need any prior knowledge of the Warhammer 40k universe to get into it.

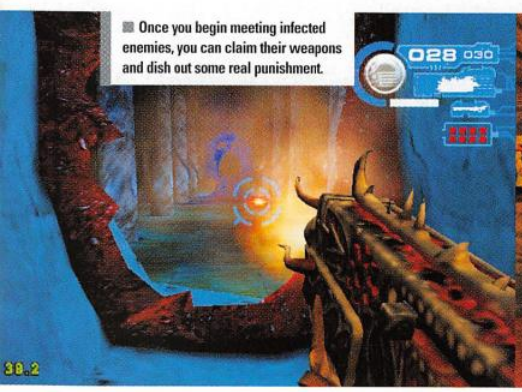
As the title suggests, you play a lowly Fire Warrior among the armies of the Tau – a relatively new race as far as Warhammer history goes, according to Kuju – with very little knowledge of the ongoing universal war, which is the ideal premise for people who don't know their Space Marine arse from their Eldar elbow. What's more, it allows you to experience all the depth and intricate storytelling of the Warhammer 40k saga (an epic tale, to say the least) without having to sift through pages of complicated rules or push metal figures across a tabletop, which can only be a good thing.

Of course, whether the actual FPS side of things proves to have what it takes against the upcoming competition – such as *XIII* and *Medal Of Honor: Rising Sun* – is another matter entirely. From what we've played so far, it's clear that the game is competent in a number of areas (online and link-up multiplayer being the most obvious) but plays somewhat like *Red Faction 2* – a game we weren't overly fond of simply because it felt so bland. Will that be enough to keep all but the most stalwart Warhammer 40k fans away? We'll find out in September…

DETAILS
FORMAT: PC/PS2
ORIGIN: UK
PUBLISHER: THQ
DEVELOPER: Kuju Entertainment
RELEASE: October '03
GENRE: FPS
PLAYERS: 1-4 (1-8 Online)

Tabletop gaming with guns, not tables.

"YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE A WARHAMMER FANATIC TO ENJOY PLAYING THIS"



Once you begin meeting infected enemies, you can claim their weapons and dish out some real punishment.





The multiplayer aspect is suitably fast and frantic, especially when you play online. Even better, you don't need to be a Warhammer fan to appreciate it.

DVD boxoffice.com dvdboxoffice.com

games movies music posters hardware



CS70.95 AS78.75



CS52.95 AS58.77



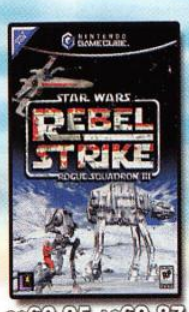
CS49.95 AS55.44



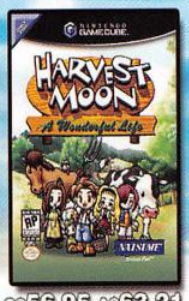
CS78.95 AS87.63



CS74.95 AS83.19

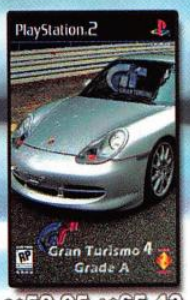


CS62.95 AS69.87



CS56.95 AS63.21

FREE Shipping & Handling Worldwide = Best Price Delivered



CS58.95 AS65.43



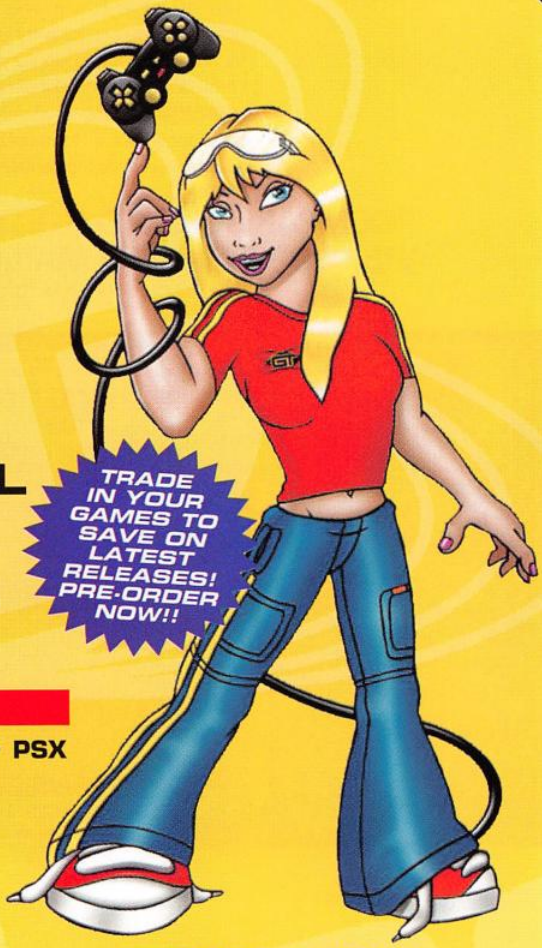
CS67.95 AS75.42

email orders@dvdboxoffice.com fax 1.905.709.4073 tel. 1.905.709.1571 Canadian Owned

Mention GamesTM-AUS when you place your order and be entered for a chance to win a game of your choice.* max. value $80.95CDN

Exchange is approximate. Prices correct at press time. Errors & omission excluded. Prices listed in Canadian Dollars followed by Australian Dollars. Customers can choose to be charged in American dollars if purchase is made with Visa credit card.

Sick of paying FULL PRICE for games?



SAVE UP TO 60% OFF ORIGINAL PRICES AT GAMETRADERS!

• Buying • Selling • Trading • Renting •

Computer and Video Games, Consoles and accessories

WE PAY CASH FOR YOUR UNWANTED GAMES!

Looking for a game? Use our 'game request' facility online!

www.gametraders.com.au

ABSOLUTELY ALL FORMATS INCLUDING • PS2 • X-BOX • GAMECUBE • PC • PSX • GAMEBOY • N64 • SNES • DREAMCAST • ATARI • PLUS OTHERS!

GameTraders

Store Locations

• South Australia • Victoria

• Queensland • Western Australia

Please see our website for your nearest GameTraders outlet!

Franchises available!

XIII

IS NO GENRE SAFE FROM CEL-SHADING?

DETAILS
FORMAT: PS2,Xbox, GC, PC
ORIGIN: France
PUBLISHER: Ubi Soft
DEVELOPER: In-House
RELEASE: Q4 '03
GENRE: First-Person Shooter
PLAYERS: TBC

■ Based on a popular French comic, *XIII* combines a well-structured storyline with a deft mix of stealth and heavy-handed action to good effect.

After the fact that the genre is getting flooded with substandard titles, the worst thing about first-person shooters is the general unwillingness to try anything new. We're sure we aren't the only gamers fed up with practically every shooter going down the generic military route (no, 'space military' is no better) and while we can appreciate the reasoning behind a wartime setting, the genre needs an injection of originality from time to time. Cue *XIII*, the unfolding story of an amnesiac who is found washed up on a beach with just two clues to his identity – a New York bank key and 'XIII' tattooed on his chest. 'What's this?' we hear you cry, 'A shooter with character and a strong narrative?' Oh yes – *XIII* can't come soon enough.

The technique being used to create the stunning visual style is something the clever chaps at Ubi Soft like to call 'Comic Rendering' and it's not just the character models that benefit. Backdrops are obviously geared more towards realism but still use an impressively vivid palette so as to maintain the illusion of a hand-drawn comic-book world. Like it or not, the unique style certainly helps *XIII* stand out from the pack, but as with all forms of cel-shading, stills can never do the game justice.

"COMPARISONS TO GOLDENEYE ARE CLOSER TO THE MARK THAN YOU MAY EXPECT"

Beneath the stylish cel-shaded exterior lies a cunning mix of gameplay elements. As well as the standard guns-blazing sections, some areas require a more subdued approach – hiding bodies and using your 'sixth sense' (a radar of sorts that warns you of nearby enemies) both help you remain inconspicuous. In addition, we've been impressed with the interaction that's been made possible. To save on ammo, how about using bottles, spades and even chairs as impromptu weapons? Throwing smaller objects to cause distractions perhaps? While it may not be the most complex physics integration in the history of gaming, the so-called 'Commando Gameplay' is a damn sight more than most similar titles are attempting and should be applauded.

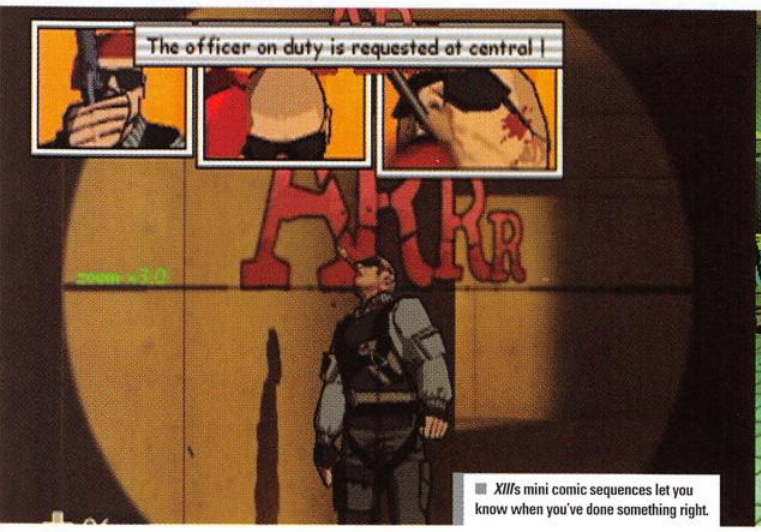
In fact, it's these elements that make *XIII* what it is, not so much as individual features but through the situations that their clever integration can create. The developers are all too aware of this as well, so expect many a moment when an all-out firefight can be prevented with a little brain power. This opens the game up to a much broader audience – while many parts of the game do reward stealth, planning or initiative, those that prefer more straightforward shooters like *Halo* can run in guns blazing. Naturally, this may prove less effective in certain settings but such is the nature of the game and the mere fact that this choice is offered is commendable.

Despite a few minor technical hitches (the game is still relatively young, let's not forget), *XIII* is stylistically unrivalled in its field. From the unique style and appearance to the on-screen 'oofs' and 'bams' that illustrate fights, we reckon this is about as close as you'll get to playing an actual comic. Thanks to the overall look and the attention to detail highlighted by the frame shake caused by explosions and the sequences that occur after an impressive kill, it's easy to lose yourself in the well-realised comic-book world.

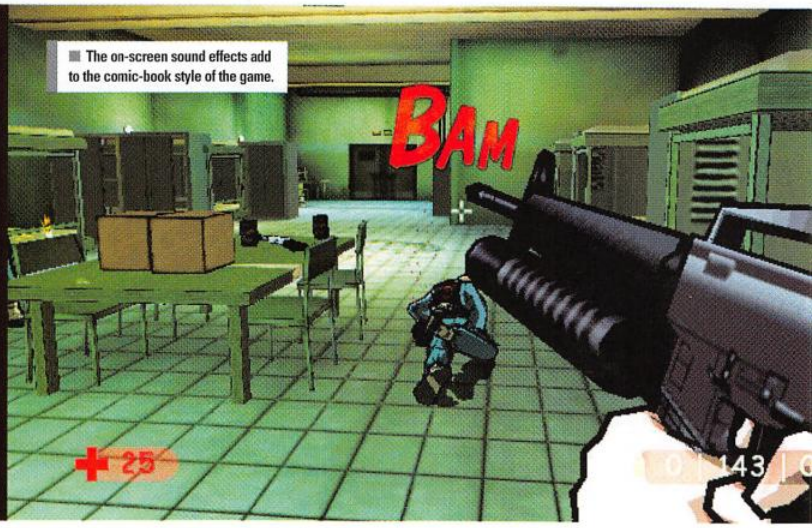
The inevitable comparisons to *GoldenEye* are closer to the mark than you may expect (albeit more due to content than anything else) and if *XIII* turns out anywhere near as good as Rare's seminal shooter, we're in for a real treat come the end of the year.

KEEPING IT REAL

While the cartoon look of the game may be far from realistic, the weapons and locations are remarkably similar to their real-world counterparts. In fact, one of the game's skill settings makes all damage done by weapons realistic, meaning a gunshot wound is more a life-threatening injury than a minor inconvenience. It's not like the game's lacking in realism as it is – you can incapacitate guards with many of the objects you find lying around, hide their bodies or even take foes hostage.



■ *XIII*'s mini comic sequences let you know when you've done something right.



■ The on-screen sound effects add to the comic-book style of the game.

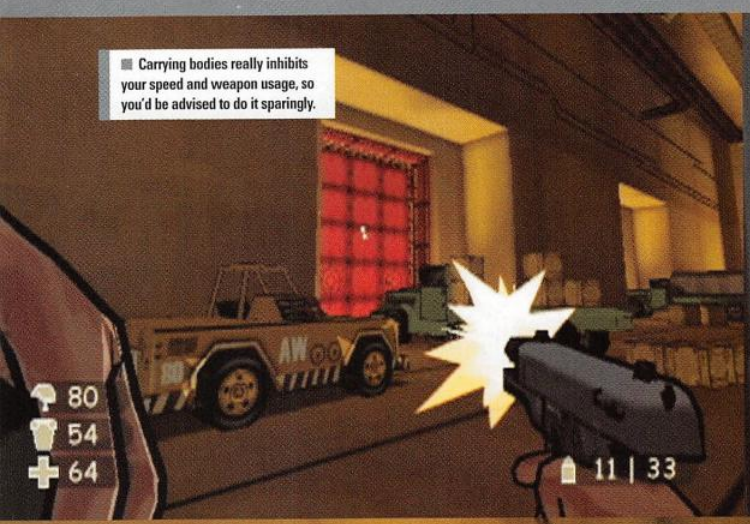
COMPANY PROFILE

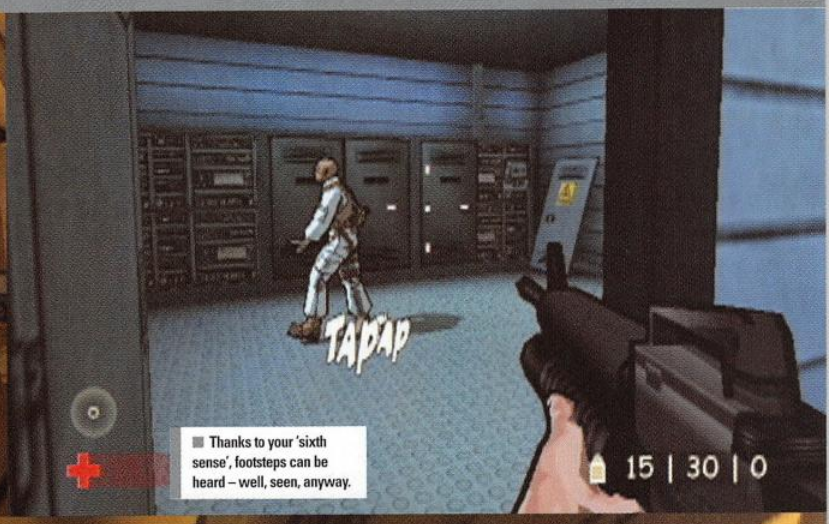
■ Ubi Soft is over 15 years old, having been founded in France in 1986. The firm now boasts offices in no less than 21 countries and has forged its place in the industry as a key player with huge franchises like *Prince Of Persia*, *Rayman* and the *Tom Clancy* games.

HISTORY

- **DEATHROW** 2002 [Xbox]
- **TONIC TROUBLE** 1999 [Multi]
- **STREET RACER** 1994 [Multi]

■ Carrying bodies really inhibits your speed and weapon usage, so you'd be advised to do it sparingly.

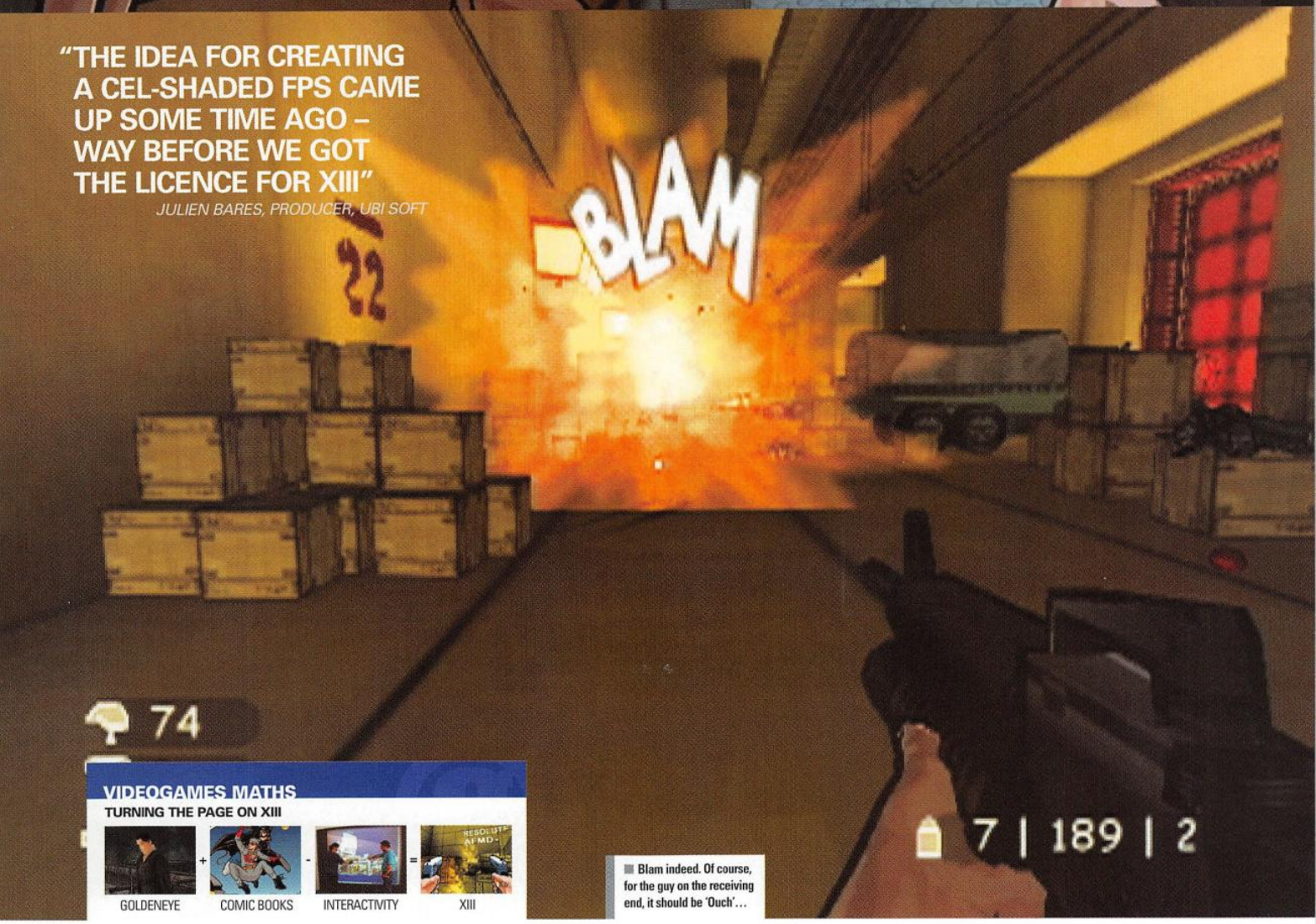




■ Thanks to your 'sixth sense', footsteps can be heard – well, seen, anyway.

"THE IDEA FOR CREATING A CEL-SHADED FPS CAME UP SOME TIME AGO – WAY BEFORE WE GOT THE LICENCE FOR XIII"

JULIEN BARES, PRODUCER, UBI SOFT



■ Blam indeed. Of course, for the guy on the receiving end, it should be 'Ouch'...

VIDEOGAMES MATHS

TURNING THE PAGE ON XIII

MEDAL OF HONOR: RISING SUN

Once again the game will feature a memorable opening mission that looks set to eclipse the intensity of *Frontline*'s Omaha beach landing.

VIDEOGAMES MATHS

SAME TIME, DIFFERENT PLACE



"THE SERIES IS HUGE IN GERMANY, PARTIALLY DUE TO THE FACT WE DON'T DEFILE THE ENEMY SOLDIERS"

CHRIS CROSS, GAME DESIGN DIRECTOR, EA



Thorough research means all the environments have been painstakingly recreated.





DESIGNER PROFILE

■ The mac daddy of the *MOH: Rising Sun Design* team, Chris Cross, began his career in the games industry as a tester for Blizzard. Following a move to DreamWorks/EA he took over as lead designer for the original *Medal Of Honor* and its console successor, *MOH: Frontline.*

HISTORY

- **MOH: FRONTLINE** 2002 [PS2, Xbox, GC]
- **MEDAL OF HONOR** 1999 [PSone]
- **SMALL SOLDIERS** 1998 [PSone, PC]

WELCOME TO THE JUNGLE AS EA TAKES US BACK TO THE FRONTLINE

Anyone who's had the pleasure of spending some quality time with any of the previous *Medal Of Honor* games would agree that EA's definitive World War II series offers one of the most absorbing, atmospheric and authentic re-creations of the conflict ever to grace the gaming world. Yet whilst PC gamers have already enjoyed an expansion to the superb *MOH: Allied Assault* – and can look forward to another before the end of the year – fans of the console incarnation are waiting expectantly for the next outing to the frontline. Ever since the gripping couple of days we spent completing last year's PS2 version we've been thirsty for more of the same, and from what we've seen of forthcoming sequel *Rising Sun* that's pretty much what we're going to get.

EA is sticking firmly to the tried and tested *MOH* formula, yet aims to accentuate the strengths and eliminate some of the weaknesses of previous games. This time the action takes place in and around the Pacific theatre of war, following hero Joseph Griffin through some of the fiercest conflicts of WWII. Fans of the series won't be surprised to learn *Rising Sun* maintains the meticulous degree of authenticity at the heart of the *MOH* experience, which game design director Chris Cross admits may go largely unappreciated by the untrained eye: "We know there won't be a lot of veterans out there playing our game and most of the little details will perhaps go unnoticed by you or I unless someone actually tells us they're in there, but any military types will appreciate the huge attention to detail."

Yet despite expert consultation on everything from historical accuracy to Japanese tactical manoeuvres, the game remains sensitive about the level of violence it depicts. "We made a decision not to go with blood from the first *MOH* game", says Chris. "We had a test version that had spouting blood and blown-off body parts but it took the whole thing to a cartoony level of violence that was very *Itchy & Scratchy*. A lot of our decisions are driven by our relationship with the Congressional Medal of Honor Society and our own respect for those who were involved in the conflict, so we wanted the games to be something a little more serious that veterans could watch or play and not feel like we're stomping all over their memory."

Researchers spent time on location around the Pacific Rim to ensure the sights and sounds of the environments were captured and accurately recreated within the game. By combining this complete sensory immersion with a host of superbly orchestrated cinematic events, *Rising Sun* looks set to provide some of the most breathtaking moments of the series yet. The opening mission amidst the devastating attack on Pearl Harbour sees the first of many linear rail-shooter sequences that takes players on a spectacular yet totally pre-scripted ride around the best of the action. Conversely, in response to criticism over the linearity of the last outing, FPS sections have been designed to include a variety of routes to reach your objective.

Don't expect to see a huge leap forwards for the series when *Rising Sun* hits the shelves later this year, but an enhanced dose of the same winning formula can only be good news for *MOH* fans.

DETAILS

FORMAT: PS2, Xbox, GC
ORIGIN: US
PUBLISHER: EA
DEVELOPER: In-House
RELEASE: November '03
GENRE: FPS
PLAYERS: 1-4

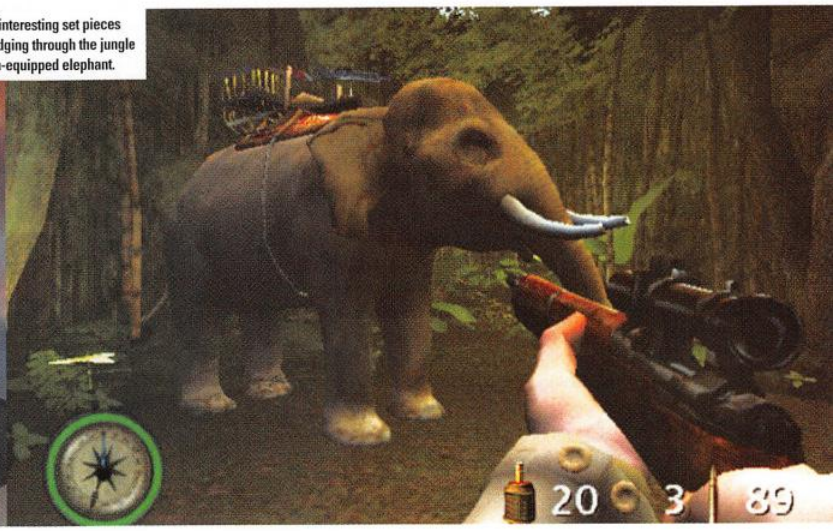
■ The definitive WWII shooter shifts the action to the Pacific theatre for a thrilling console sequel.

HOLLYWOOD BLOCKBUSTER

The Pearl Harbour sequence promises to be one of *Rising Sun*'s most absorbing highlights. The cinematic extravaganza looks set to capture the battle's epic scale along with the terrifying commotion of one man's efforts to escape alive. Manning a cannon on the doomed USS California you'll try to fight off the attacking Japanese fighter planes as most of the US fleet is destroyed around you. According to EA this stunning display is only the first of many sequences designed to keep the excitement level up. We just hope EA has learned from the movie that there's only so much you can achieve with special effects...

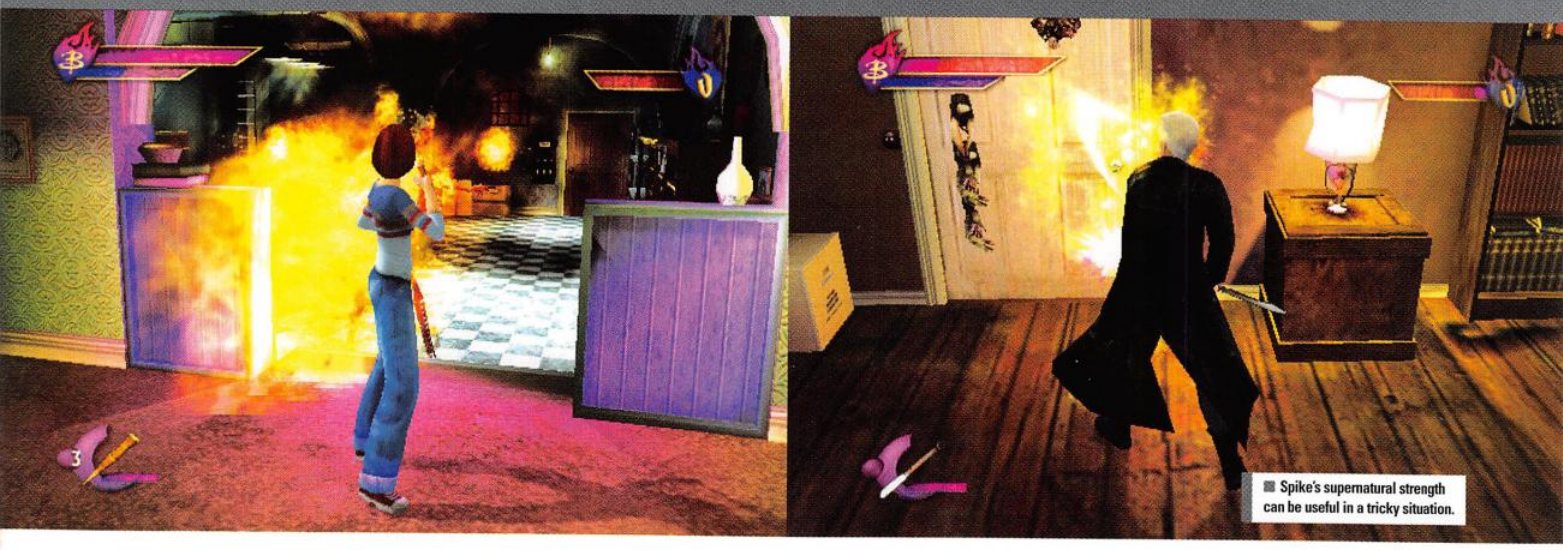
"THE MOH SERIES OFFERS ONE OF THE MOST ABSORBING, ATMOSPHERIC AND AUTHENTIC RE-CREATIONS OF THE CONFLICT"





■ One of the more interesting set pieces will see players trudging through the jungle atop a machine-gun-equipped elephant.

BUFFY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER: CHAOS BLEEDS



Spike's supernatural strength can be useful in a tricky situation.

JUST WHEN YOU THOUGHT THE SLAYER HAD HUNG UP HER STAKE FOR GOOD...

DETAILS

FORMAT: Xbox, PS2, GC
ORIGIN: UK
PUBLISHER: Vivendi Universal
DEVELOPER: Eurocom
RELEASE: Q3 '03
GENRE: Action Adventure
PLAYERS: 1-4

Buffy returns to save the world from the evil undead once again, but this time she's got a little help from her friends.

When some bright spark suggested resurrecting second-rate teen flick *Buffy The Vampire Slayer* as a TV series, no one quite expected the level of success it would achieve. Seven long seasons later and the saga has finally ended, but not before reeling in millions of fans from the 54 countries that broadcast the adventures of the Chosen One. The gaming world was dealt a similar surprise last year when Fox decided to cash in on the *Buffy* phenomenon with an Xbox action adventure title based on the lucrative licence. Far from the lacklustre effort many were expecting, the game was one of the unlikely gems of 2002 and earned a strong following in its own right. Development duties for this sequel are performed by UK-based Eurocom, which seems to have sunk its proverbial teeth into a solid gameplay concept and produced an impressive follow up.

For continuity's sake, the events in *Chaos Bleeds* coincide with the *Buffy* saga between episodes 17 and 18 of season five. Penned by the team behind the TV series, fans can expect the same purposely corny and occasionally witty dialogue to faithfully recreate the tone of the show throughout the game. Further adding to the authentic *Buffy* universe are many of the original cast whose vocal talents combine with some uncanny resemblances to bring their game counterparts to life. Sarah Michelle Gellar and Alyson Hannigan are the only major absentees but are surprisingly not missed as Buffy and Willow, whose parts are played by some talented stand-ins.

As the story unfolds players will not only find themselves taking on Sunnydale's undead in the role of the Slayer herself, but will get to harness the various fighting talents of six fully playable characters. At different stages players are going to find themselves tackling the legions of evil in the shoes of Willow, Xander, Spike, Faith and even Sid the Dummy. Each character has a unique repertoire of combat moves, attributes and special skills that makes for some enjoyable variation in gameplay.

Buffy's own collection of high-kicking combos that brought such celebrated depth to the first game's combat sequences has been enhanced to spice up her slaying abilities. Spike is similarly handy in a fist fight due to his supernatural strength and agility, but the less physically gifted characters must take a different approach to battling the vampire community. Willow, for instance, can use her knowledge of witchcraft and will benefit from an increasingly devastating range of spells as the game unravels. Vertically challenged Sid the Dummy is another interesting case, who hilariously seems to know his way around a stake better than Yoda does a Lightsabre.

All characters can use various weapons from baseball bats to crossbows and you'll never find yourself short of a wooden stake thanks to the many destructible items of furniture that will shatter into pointy shards. But it's not just the action that's been beefed up – the adventure element has also been furnished with more wholesome puzzles. "It can't ever be just a simple key, can it," exclaims Buffy during the early levels, hinting at the increased need to engage those brain cells.

The enhanced gameplay should ensure *Chaos Bleeds* will not only delight fans of the show, but makes the game a pretty hot prospect for any action adventure fan.

YOU'RE NOT ALONE

As well as increased depth of combat *Chaos Bleeds* also features four enticing multiplayer modes. Along with the six unique combatants with whom players will be familiar from the story campaign, 18 additional characters with diverse fighting styles can be unlocked to compete in the multiplayer contests. Survival mode pits players against each other and NPC enemies in a fight to the death, whilst Domination has you competing to capture as many Control Points as possible within a time limit. Slayer Challenge gives one player the role of Slayer and casts all others as creatures of the night, and, finally, Bunny Catcher has players chasing rabbits for points. Weird.

"BUFFY'S HIGH-KICKING COMBOS HAVE BEEN ENHANCED TO SPICE UP HER SLAYING ABILITIES"

BUFFY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER: CHAOS BLEEDS

XBOX/MULTIFORMAT



COMPANY PROFILE

Eurocom was founded in 1988 and released its first title, *Magician*, for the NES in 1990. Since these early days the Derby-based team has produced over 50 titles for all major consoles and handhelds covering such prestigious licences as Harry Potter, James Bond and several Disney movies.

HISTORY

- **007: NIGHTFIRE** 2002 [Multi]
- **MORTAL KOMBAT 4** 1998 [Multi]
- **SENSIBLE SOCCER** 1993 [Game Gear]

Force works well, but characters like Willow can use magic too.

"FANS OF THE SHOW WILL EMBRACE BEING ABLE TO PLAY THE PART OF THEIR FAVOURITE BUFFY CHARACTERS"

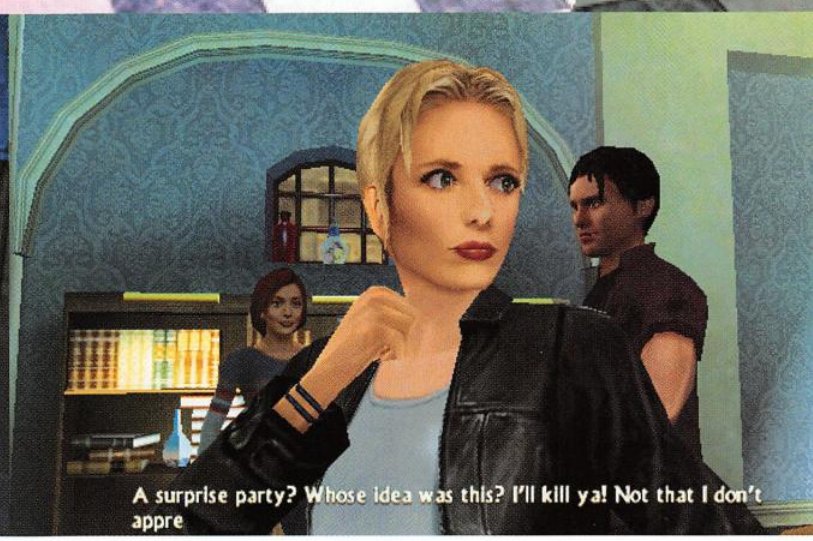
MICHAEL POLE, GENERAL MANAGER, VIVENDI UNIVERSAL

VIDEOGAMES MATHS

PACKING MORE PUNCH



Stakes, axes, baseball bats… if you can swing it or chuck it, it's a weapon.



BEYOND GOOD & EVIL

"ENTER A RIVETING NEW ERA OF GAMING, WHERE DIVERSE GAMEPLAY STYLES BLEND INTO ONE UNIQUELY FLUID AND IMMERSIVE EXPERIENCE"

UBI SOFT PRESS RELEASE

Jade is a consummate multi-tasker: aikido, photography, driving a hovercraft, saving the world... easy.

VIDEOGAMES MATHS

MAKING A GAME THAT REALLY IS ALL GAMES





More pig than man, this is Jade's uncle, Pey'j. Don't be put off by the snout, he's actually very helpful.



DEVELOPER PROFILE

■ Michel Ancel is the creative force behind *Beyond Good & Evil* and is best known for his renowned *Rayman* franchise. *BG&E* has been his main project for three years now but it remains to be seen what he'll turn his attention to once this is completed...

HISTORY

- **RAYMAN 3: HOODLUM HAVOC** 2003 [Multi]
- **RAYMAN 2** 1999 [Multi]
- **RAYMAN** 1995 [Multi]

MY WORD, RAYMAN'S CREATOR HAS DISCOVERED LIMBS

Some of you may remember that not so long ago, Midway put out a game called *Haven: Call Of The King*. Branding it "the game that is all games" proved somewhat inaccurate and the ill-fated title failed to perform at retail, now filling many a bargain bin over here and going for as little as $4.99 new in the States. In fact, the game wasn't that bad, more a victim of its own ambition, but it goes to show that such a diverse blend of genres can be a dangerous thing. The reason we recount this tale of woe is a fairly simple one – *Beyond Good & Evil* sports a similar mix of genres but, unlike *Haven*, it has no illusions of grandeur. Better still, this looks as though it could be one mixed bag that actually works...

Coming from the creator of *Rayman*, we were never expecting something that could be considered 'normal' and sure enough, we weren't disappointed. Characters, settings and themes are all dripping with a fairytale style and influence – the beautifully rendered environments (produced using the Jade engine that powers the equally striking *Prince Of Persia: The Sands Of Time*) are impressive in their scale and variety. This diversity is matched in the tasks and objectives thrown at you – fighting monsters, stealthy investigative sections, speeding down highways and *Pokémon Snap*-style photography sections all feature already, with the promise of much more to follow. These gel wonderfully since no one part is ever overcomplicated by a huge list of controls to memorise. The combat sections, for instance, offer full 360-degree attack potential with just one button and the appropriate direction, yet still work better than many similar efforts.

One thing that has really impressed us with *BG&E* so far is the cinematic feel it achieves. From the superb score to the well-placed and modest use of slow motion (see, it is possible), you're immediately engrossed by the kind of atmosphere that many real Hollywood tie-ins wish they had – the whole package gleams with quality.

You'll have a good idea of what you need to do in each section from the off, allowing you to choose how to best go about your given task, and from what we've seen this is often open to a fair amount of freedom and planning. Sneak through an area, run in and do battle, avoid it altogether... you're never forced into playing a certain way. Similarly, the in-game camera system resembles that of *Dark Cloud 2*, rewarding the player for exploration and maximum participation but obviously this, like many other optional elements, can be skipped if you'd rather rocket through the game.

Fantasy adventures are massively under-represented in this generation, and all too often those that do make it as far as the shelves are either poorly executed, poorly received or both. We're overjoyed that there are still developers out there who are willing to invest time and money into original franchises such as this – without them, the worrying amount of licensed software and sequels-by-numbers would be even harder to swallow.

If every section of the game has the degree of sheen and involvement that we've seen so far, *Beyond Good & Evil* could turn out to be not only a unique product but also a sleeper hit when it launches this Christmas.

DETAILS

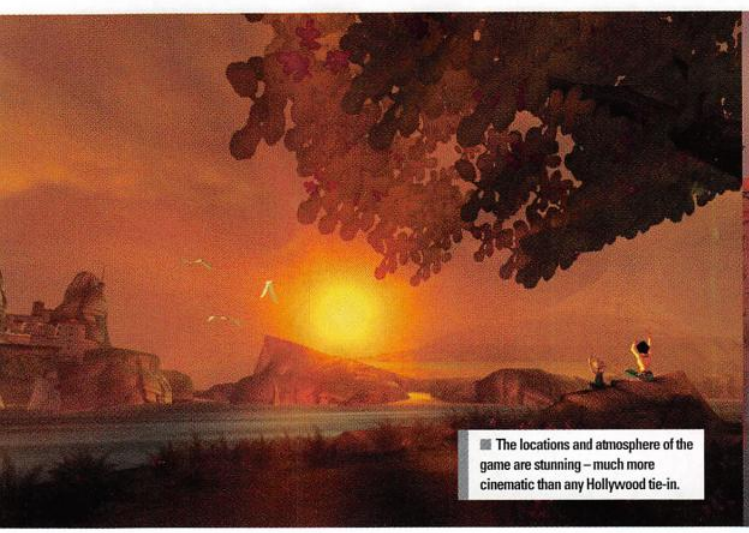
FORMAT: PS2, Xbox, GameCube
ORIGIN: France
PUBLISHER: Ubi Soft
DEVELOPER: In-House
RELEASE: Q4 '03
GENRE: Adventure
PLAYERS: 1

■ A quirky fantasy adventure from an individual and a team that have already shown their prowess in game design. Definitely one to watch.

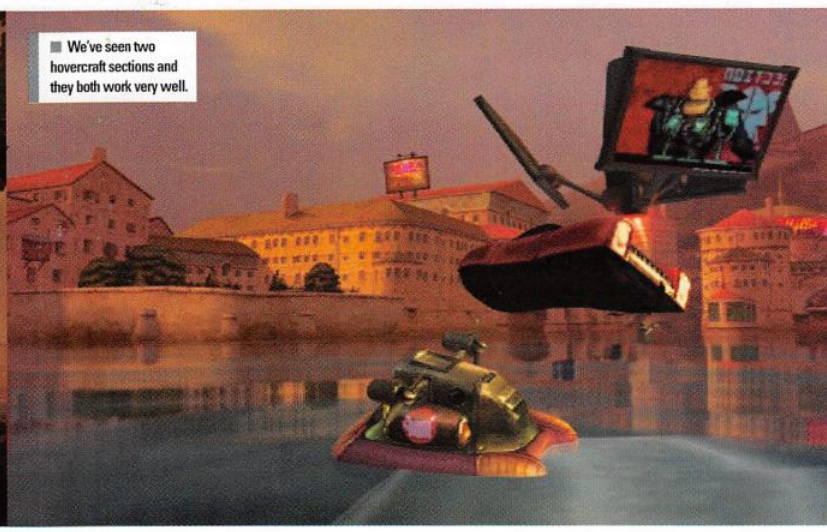
HOW'S MY DRIVING?

Considering that *BG&E* is primarily a character-based action affair, we were pleasantly surprised to find that the driving sections of the game actually work. We're so used to this kind of action being used as a last resort to relieve monotony (*Enter The Matrix*, anyone?) that for it to fit in and play well is a pleasant surprise. Of the two sections we played, one involved a sea battle in a hovercraft while the second saw the same vehicle speeding along a bridge. The former offers a fair degree of choice and freedom while the latter, obviously, is much more linear. Even so, both parts are of an equally high standard as the rest of the game.

"THIS LOOKS AS THOUGH IT COULD BE A MIXED BAG THAT ACTUALLY WORKS"



■ The locations and atmosphere of the game are stunning – much more cinematic than any Hollywood tie-in.



■ We've seen two hovercraft sections and they both work very well.

BROKEN SWORD: THE SLEEPING DRAGON

YOU KNOW WHAT THEY SAY – LET SLEEPING DRAGONS LIE...

The point 'n' click adventure is dead, long live the adventure – so says Charles Cecil, managing director of Revolution Software and man behind the game that it seems the entire adventure game community has been waiting ages for. Of course, the fact that the final part of the *Broken Sword* trilogy is set to arrive nearly six years after the last game shows that Revolution isn't in any rush to conclude a series that has sold over two million copies worldwide (can you blame it?) although it's almost as if the developer takes great pleasure in being able to keep so many people waiting for so long...

Broken Sword: The Sleeping Dragon features the series' heroes George Stobbart and Nico Collard as the main protagonists again and has a storyline so full of murder, conspiracy and ancient mythical legend that you'll need to take an evening class in history just to keep up with the plot. Set several years after *The Smoking Mirror*, the game begins with George in the Congo and Nico in Paris and sees them both drawn into a sinister conspiracy that threatens the entire world. This might sound like the usual adventure game fare (the plot of every *Tomb Raider* game, for instance) but throw in the Knights Templar, a handful of Mayans and a heavy dose of the Voynich Manuscript (a real medieval parchment held by Yale University that even the world's greatest scholars can't translate) and you've got all the ingredients for a gripping and disturbingly realistic plot.

Of course, you've probably noticed by now that *BS: Sleeping Dragon* looks distinctly different from the game's previous incarnations, mainly thanks to the move into third dimension. This obviously conjures up many comparisons (everything from *Resident Evil* to *Tomb Raider*), though Cecil himself compares George's new look to that of Indiana Jones – not just visually, but in the way that he now has the freedom to clamber around and basically act in the way that most third-person action-adventure characters do.

However, before dedicated *Broken Sword* fans go off on a rant about how Revolution has sold the series out by switching from the point 'n' click style to a more action-based game, it should be stated that *BS: Sleeping Dragon* remains a thinker's game at heart. While certain action elements have been incorporated to cover various aspects of movement (climbing walls, moving obstacles and negotiating ledges), these take a back seat to the head-scratching puzzles that appear throughout the game. Even completing some of these lesser action sections requires more mental agility than it does skill with the controller – something which Revolution is keen to emphasise, given that they know how outraged fans of the series would be if it was any other way.

With the emphasis firmly on absorbing gameplay and narrative rather than lengthy cut-scenes and repetitive action sequences, it's clear that *BS: Sleeping Dragon* attempts to take the series (and indeed, the point 'n' click adventure genre) in a new direction, while retaining much of the aesthetic that made it so appealing in the first place. It appears to be working too, but whether that will keep the die-hard fans happy is another question altogether.

DETAILS

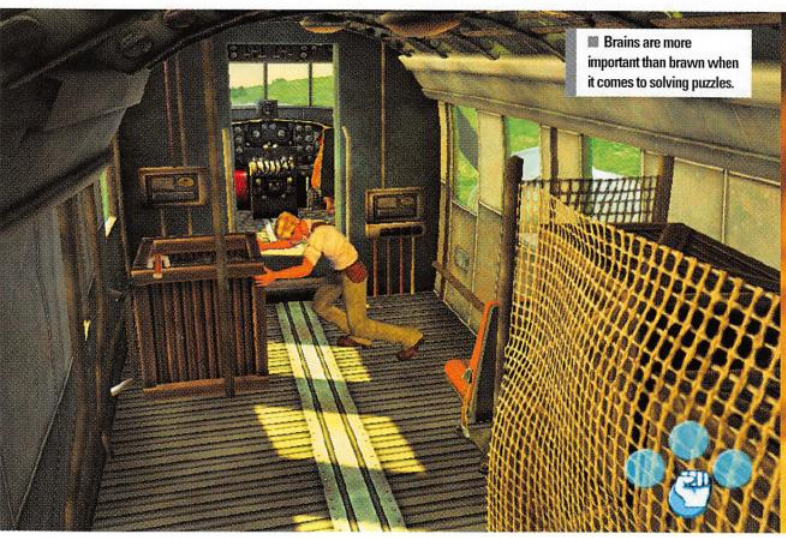
FORMAT: PC/ PS2/ Xbox
ORIGIN: UK
PUBLISHER: THQ
DEVELOPER: Revolution
RELEASE: October '03
GENRE: Adventure
PLAYERS: 1

■ George and Nico step into the third dimension as they return to uncover a conspiracy that could end the world. Again.

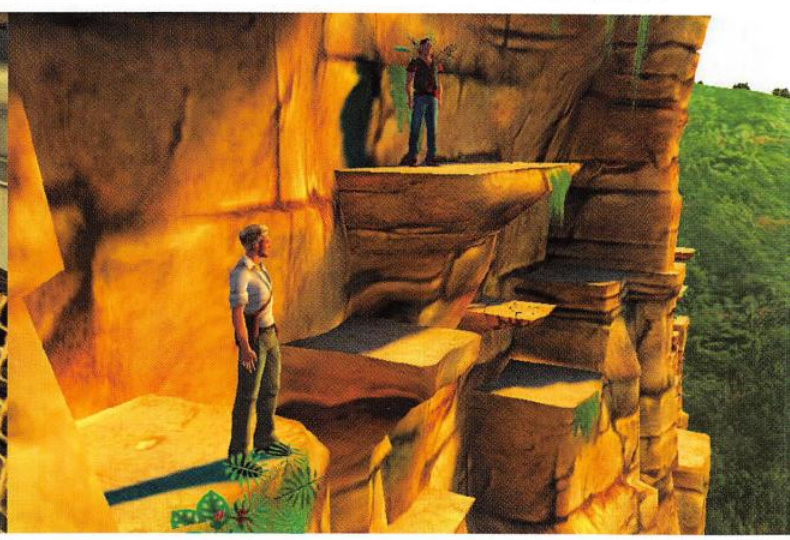
LIGHTS, CAMERA, ACTION

In an effort to spice things up a little, *BS: Sleeping Dragon* features a number of 'action events' that require both sharp thinking and good timing – you'll need to learn to use the right items at the right time in order to avoid a potentially dangerous situation. Early on in Nico's adventure, for example, she finds herself on the business end of a revolver with no visible means of escape. Do nothing and she dies, leaving you to start over from the beginning of the scene. However, the more quick-witted among you would have already grabbed the nearby frying pan to deflect a bullet and then slammed the fridge door in the face of her attacker, allowing Nico to make a run for it. Of course, it's not always as easy as it sounds...

"DESPITE THE THIRD DIMENSION, MANY ORIGINAL POINT 'N' CLICK IDEALS ARE STILL IN EVIDENCE"



■ Brains are more important than brawn when it comes to solving puzzles.



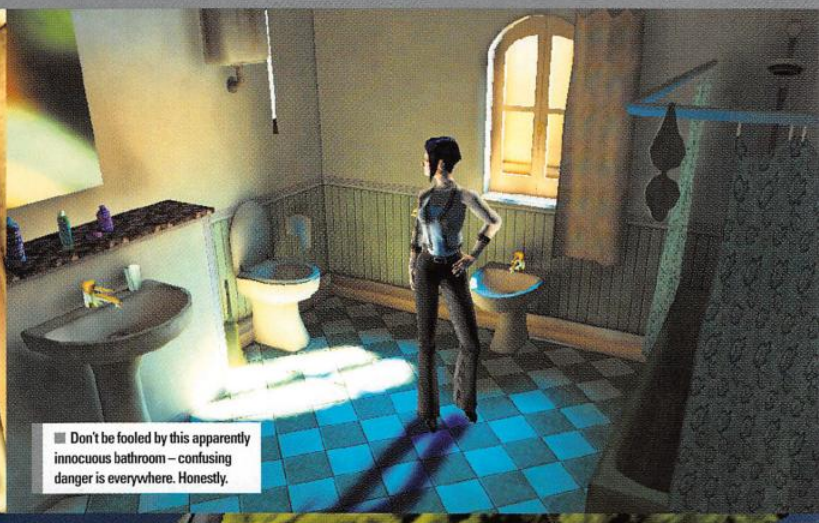
COMPANY PROFILE

■ Based in York, Revolution Software was set up in 1990 by Charles Cecil and three co-founders – Tony Warriner, David Sykes and Noirin Carmody – who between them have over 60 years of industry experience. To date, the firm has five original games and a number of conversions and licences under its belt.

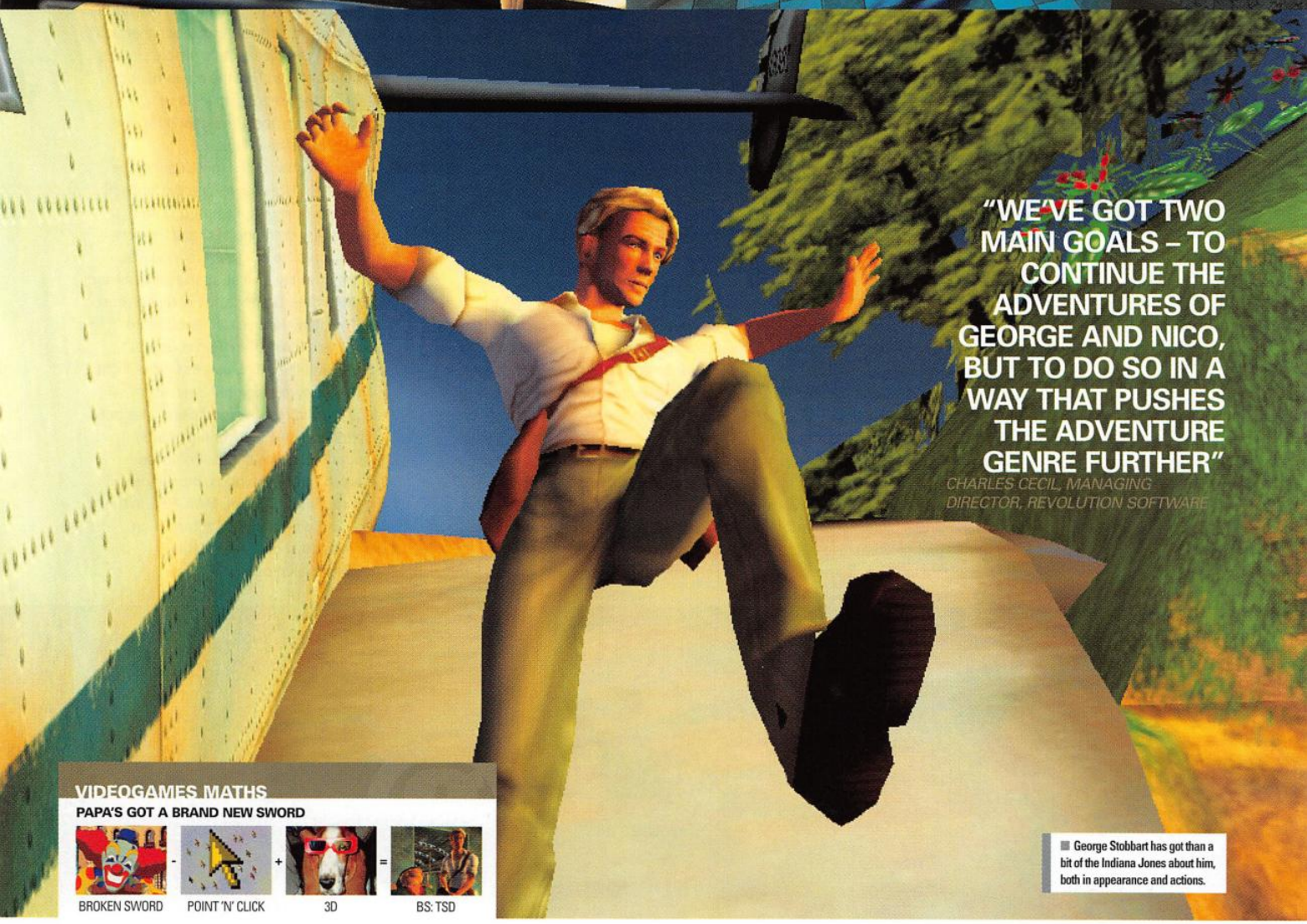
HISTORY

- **BROKEN SWORD** 1996 [PC/PSone]
- **BENEATH A STEEL SKY** 1994 [PC/Amiga/ST]
- **LURE OF THE TEMPTRESS** 1992 [PC/Amiga/ST]





■ Don't be fooled by this apparently innocuous bathroom – confusing danger is everywhere. Honestly.



"WE'VE GOT TWO MAIN GOALS – TO CONTINUE THE ADVENTURES OF GEORGE AND NICO, BUT TO DO SO IN A WAY THAT PUSHES THE ADVENTURE GENRE FURTHER"

CHARLES CECIL, MANAGING DIRECTOR, REVOLUTION SOFTWARE

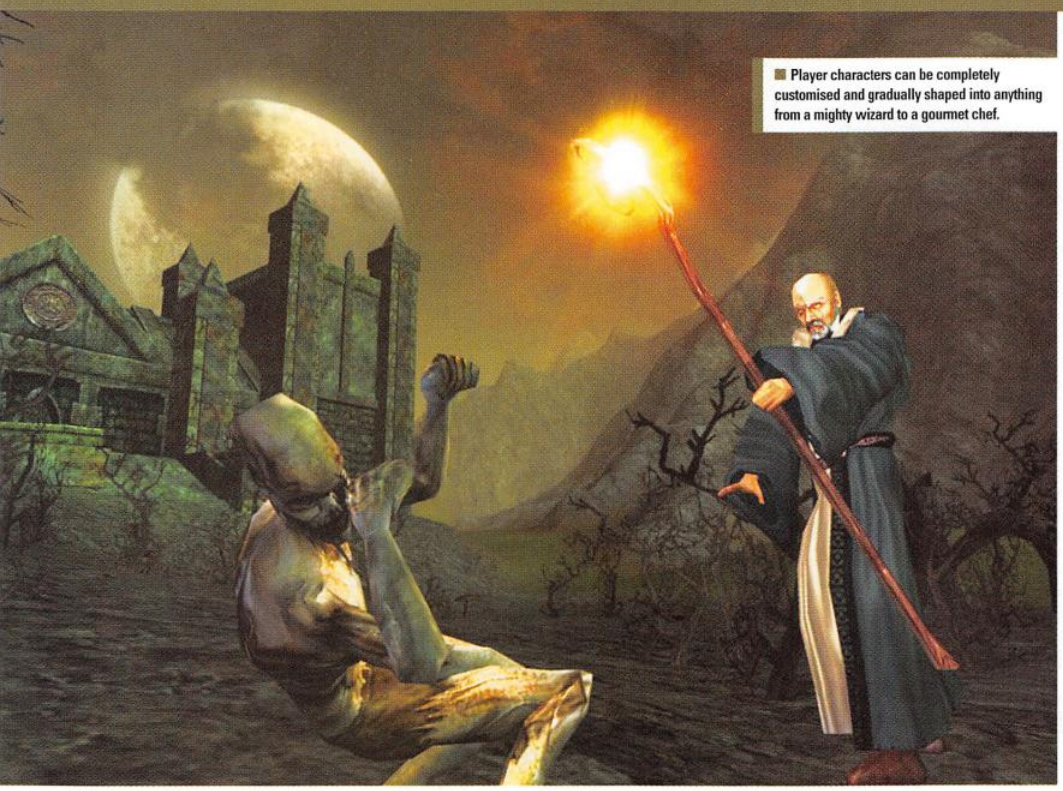
■ George Stobbart has got than a bit of the Indiana Jones about him, both in appearance and actions.

VIDEOGAMES MATHS

PAPA'S GOT A BRAND NEW SWORD

BROKEN SWORD - POINT 'N' CLICK + 3D = BS: TSD

HORIZONS: EMPIRE OF ISTARIA



Player characters can be completely customised and gradually shaped into anything from a mighty wizard to a gourmet chef.

CAN ISTARIA BROADEN ONLINE ROLE-PLAYING HORIZONS?

DETAILS

FORMAT: PC
ORIGIN: US
PUBLISHER: Atari
DEVELOPER: Artifact Entertainment
RELEASE: Q4 '03
GENRE: MMORPG
PLAYERS: Massively Multiplayer

Become a heroic barbarian or peaceful blacksmith and move to the magical world of Istaria.

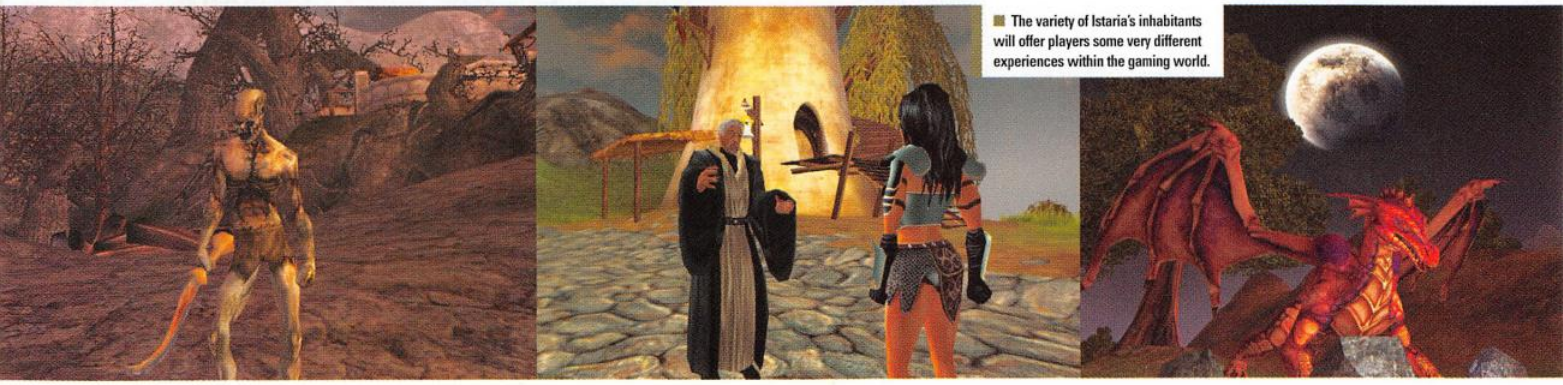
Since *EverQuest* has seen hordes of RPG fans congregating online, the lucrative potential of this gaming concept has prompted some hugely ambitious attempts to create the ultimate MMORPG experience. *EVE Online* took the possibilities for open-ended adventuring into the boundless expanses of outer space, and with hotly anticipated re-creations of both the *Star Wars* and *Matrix* universes in the virtual pipeline gamers will soon have a glut of alternative online existences available to them. So how does *Horizons: Empire Of Istaria* plan to compete with the best of them for our precious evenings and subscription rates?

Horizons returns role-playing to its traditional fantasy setting, yet seeks to bring the magical world to life with greater depth than ever before. The sprawling game environment offers players a collection of varied and imaginative 3D landscapes to explore, whilst allowing characters to shape the world for themselves by getting together to construct their own villages. Indeed, much of the game's immersive quality should come from the vast potential for interaction between various roles. To thrive, the economy needs great co-operation from players, with the gathering of raw materials and skilled craftsmanship needed to forge these into useful items making for a variety of full-time professions in itself. To aid traders and adventurers alike, there's a global marketplace system where players should be able to find the equipment or materials they're looking for, and merchants can post their goods for sale, much like a mythical eBay.

"THE TRADITIONAL FANTASY SETTING IS REALISED WITH MORE DEPTH THAN EVER"

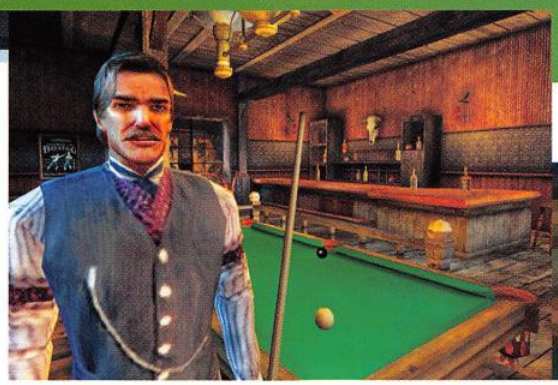
Those in search of a more dangerous online life will, of course, find the lands rife with opportunity for adventuring and combat. A wide range of character races from dwarves to dragons are available, each with vastly diverse special abilities and inherent traits. Dragons, for instance, must begin as fairly harmless infants before slowly developing their ferocious adult powers and the much-coveted gift of flight.

It all looks like a highly impressive stage for endless gaming possibilities but with the massive investment of time required to get the best out of these persistent gaming worlds, most fans will have room for only one MMORPG in their lives. And with such stiff competition, *Horizons* must deliver something pretty special to outgun its rivals.

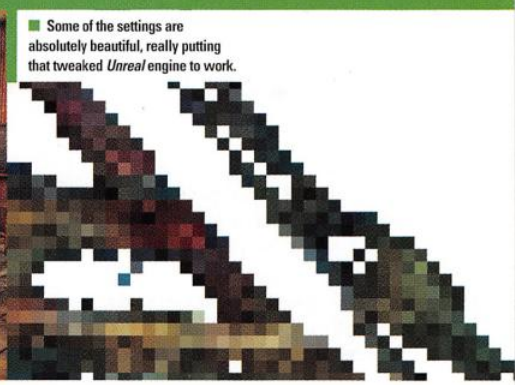


The variety of Istaria's inhabitants will offer players some very different experiences within the gaming world.

DEAD MAN'S HAND



Despite the historical setting, there's still a good range of weapons and equipment on offer from pistols to explosives.



Some of the settings are absolutely beautiful, really putting that tweaked *Unreal* engine to work.

AND THEY SAID THE WESTERN WAS DEAD...

It doesn't take much more than a brief glance around the racks of your local games shop to tell you that the western is heavily under-represented in modern gaming. Most developers these days are more tempted by the freedom of a futuristic setting where any technology can feasibly exist, but with enough commitment and artistic licence, a historical setting is far from restrictive.

With only a few titles to its name, Human Head may not be one of the biggest names in gaming, but that just makes it all the more impressive that this game, currently only at pre-alpha stage, is shaping up as well as it is.

Based on the *Unreal* engine, the graphics are suitably impressive, but what really stands out at this stage is the impressive attention to detail and the superb physics engine. While we know ragdoll physics are the new stealth, lens flare or whatever last month's fashion was (war, judging by the abundance of military titles at E3), this is one title that actually uses the much-touted system to good effect.

A powerful weapon such as a shotgun can sweep a man off his feet, while shooting a man's steed brings both quickly to the ground, and a complete lack of death animations means the physics engine governs the enemies' final throes. As a result, expect to see some spectacular fatalities and cunning strategies (shoot an enemy in the leg and watch him try to retain his balance) that you won't see in many other games. In addition, the game features a scoring system that allows the player to access a range of special moves and trick shots by performing well in combat, distancing *Dead Man's Hand* from its many rival Xbox shooters.

Since it's not released until the end of the year, this technically impressive shooter still has time to grow and evolve and, with any luck, it'll do just that. Promising co-operative play and Xbox Live support for at least versus modes (online co-op is notoriously much harder to code), *Dead Man's Hand* is already looking sufficiently varied and unique so as to stand out in the crowded Xbox FPS market.

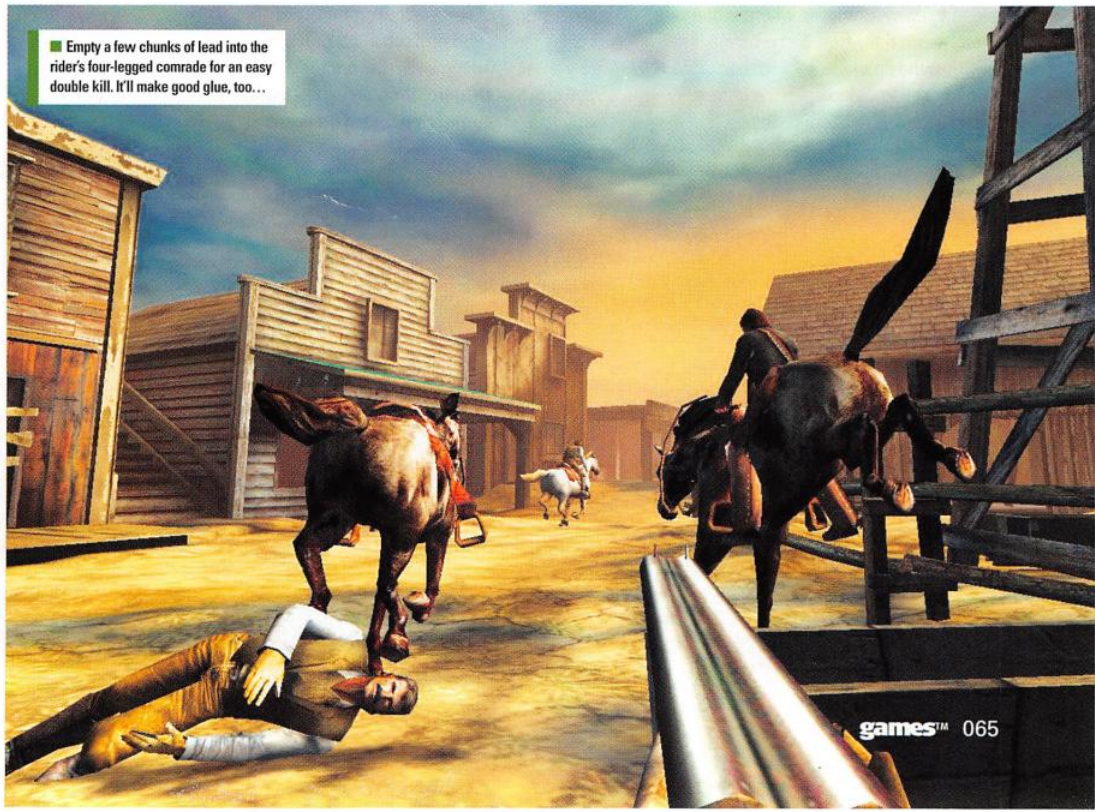
Effectively a more sedate and structured *Serious Sam* in a cinematic wild west setting, we're looking forward to seeing how well the whole package of shooting, riding and revenge can be assembled later on this year.

"A COMPLETE LACK OF DEATH ANIMATIONS MEANS THE PHYSICS ENGINE GOVERNS THE ENEMIES' FINAL THROES"

DETAILS

FORMAT: Xbox
ORIGIN: US
PUBLISHER: Atari
DEVELOPER: Human Head Studios
RELEASE: Q4
GENRE: Shoot-'em-up
PLAYERS: 1-TBC

Journey to the wiki-wiki wild wild west as you blaze into folklore as the most notorious gunman in the west. And no, you don't get to shoot Will Smith.



Empty a few chunks of lead into the rider's four-legged comrade for an easy double kill. It'll make good glue, too...

SSX3 [WORKING TITLE]

THE HILLS ARE ALIVE WITH THE SOUND OF SNOWBOARDING

If you've never played an *SSX* game, then you're missing out. Really, you are. Even if you're not a big fan of EA, there's no denying that it makes a good over-the-top sports game; the EA Sports BIG range has produced some great titles, with the *SSX* series being one of our favourites. However, it's fair to say that while it was a fine game, *SSX Tricky* short changed a lot of the fans – mainly because it wasn't much more than a rehash of the original *SSX* with only two new tracks and slightly prettier graphics. But now that we've sat down for a few hours with the latest game in the series, we can at least feel content that having spent years milking licences for all they're worth, EA is starting to learn from its mistakes. Well, kind of.

With *SSX3* (a working title), the game has been taken back to the drawing board in an effort to improve every element, as well as to add a whole load more. The basics are still in place; you pick from a collection of over-the-top boarders (six returning characters and four new ones, each with their own unique styles) and then race them down various snowy mountainsides, building up their abilities along the way. However, whereas that was pretty much the whole game before, it's now just the tip of the iceberg thanks to EA Canada's attempts to open the gameplay out in a *Tony Hawk*-esque way.

For starters, the mountain is totally open to you in terms of exploration. Split into three different peaks (each with its own selection of areas to explore), you can pretty much go wherever you please – although naturally, travelling uphill isn't possible so you'll have to keep your eyes open for alternate routes along the way. Indeed, you'll often spot grindable logs and floating collectables overhead as you speed along, indicating a missed path for you to find later.

It's this freedom that also offers the choice of what to do on each peak; certain path splits mark the entrances to various events (from regular races and Big Air competitions to Slope Style exhibitions and Super Pipe contests) which you can choose to enter (or not) depending on how you want to play the game. EA is keen to emphasise that while there's an air of structure about the game, players can go about it however they want, picking events and exploring areas in the order they see fit, in pretty much the same way as the *Tony Hawk* games.

A host of improvements have been made to other areas of the game too; for instance, the trick system has been given an overhaul of sorts, allowing for more insane stunts and easier control of rotation, as well as enabling bail recovery for when you crash out. There's also an expanded character customisation system, a licensed soundtrack featuring artists such as NERD and Queens Of The Stone Age, and the visual effects now include swirling snowstorms, crosswinds and even avalanches that can be used to increase your score by doing tricks through them.

Needless to say, this is shaping up to be the best *SSX* we've seen so far. More importantly, we're impressed at how hard EA is trying to get away from just churning out the same game as before. Could this be the start of a new era for the EA brand? You never can tell...

DETAILS

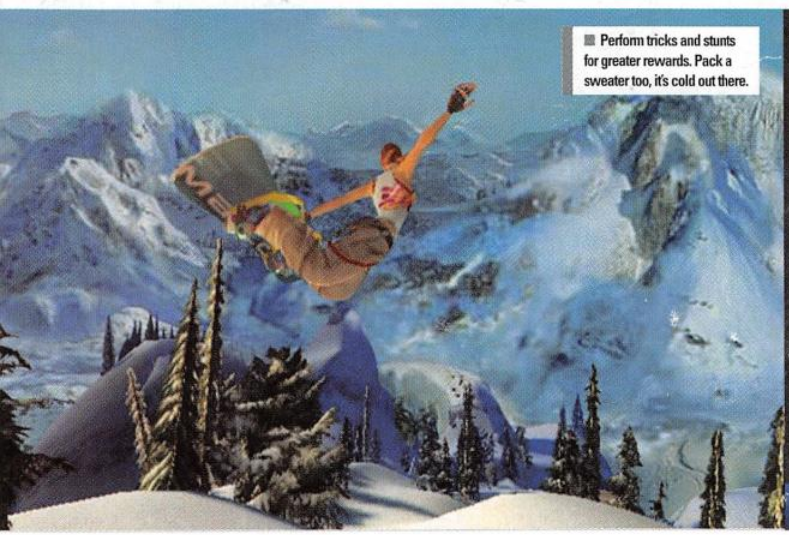
FORMAT: PS2, Xbox, GameCube
ORIGIN: Canada
PUBLISHER: EA Sports BIG
DEVELOPER: EA Canada
RELEASE: Q4 '03
GENRE: Sports
PLAYERS: 1-2

■ It's *SSX*, but more so – players now have the freedom to do pretty much whatever they want.

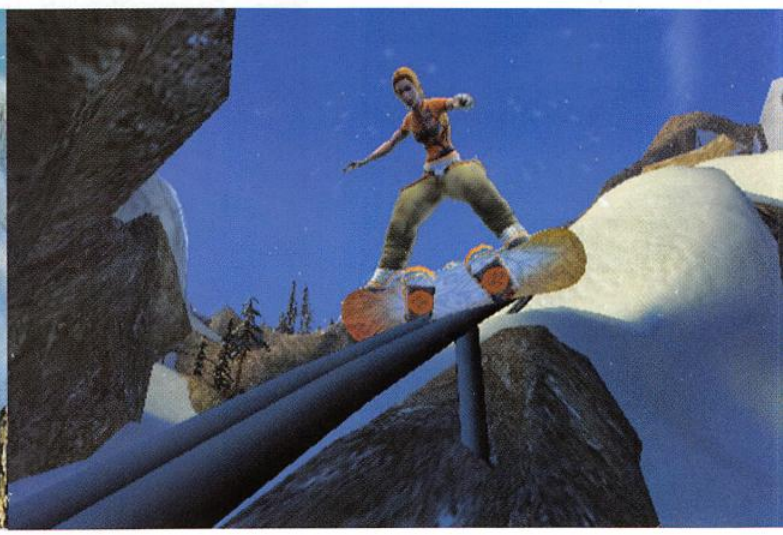
CHALLENGE ANNEKA

While they're not as integral a part of the gameplay as in the *Pro Skater* games, *SSX3* still takes a page out of Tony's book and features unique challenges for you to complete at various stages of your descent down the mountainside. You'll find them in the form of markers that can be grabbed as you speed past, ranging in colour depending on the difficulty of the task. Collect a marker and you'll immediately be presented with a challenge to complete – anything from grinding certain ledges or logs, jumping a certain distance off a ramp or even completing a Big Air contest while getting as little air as possible. With over a hundred different tasks on offer, it'll take you a while to find them all, and even longer to actually complete them...

"IT LOOKS AS THOUGH SSX3 WILL PUSH ALL THE RIGHT BUTTONS AS FAR AS QUALITY GOES"



■ Perform tricks and stunts for greater rewards. Pack a sweater too, it's cold out there.





DEVELOPER PROFILE

■ Founded in 1991 following the takeover of Distinctive Software, EA Canada is the largest software developer in Canada and comprises multiple teams within its Vancouver HQ. In July 2002, it bought Black Box Games – the Vancouver-based developer behind *SEGA Soccer Slam* and *NHL Hitz 20-02*.

HISTORY

- **SSX** 2000 [PlayStation2]
- **NEED FOR SPEED** 1994 [3DO]
- **FIFA INTERNATIONAL FOOTBALL** 1993 [Mega Drive]

VIDEOGAMES MATHS

SLIP-SLIDING AWAY WITH SSX3



"THE SSX TEAM HAS SPENT ALMOST TWO YEARS WORKING TO IMPROVE THE CORE EXPERIENCE BY ADDING LOADS OF NEW WAYS TO PLAY"
EA SPORTS BIG PRESS RELEASE

■ If you fancy it, you can grind logs and other bits of scenery that litter the mountainside.

■ The number of routes open to you as you hurtle downhill gives the game good replay value.

■ The graphics have been overhauled to create a suitably authentic snowy atmosphere.

FINAL FANTASY X-2





■ Quests vary in length and difficulty – something for everyone, then.

A SUMMONER'S WORK IS NEVER DONE...

DETAILS

FORMAT: PlayStation2
ORIGIN: Japan
PUBLISHER: SCEE
DEVELOPER: Square Enix
RELEASE: Q1 '04
GENRE: RPG
PLAYERS: 1

■ The first true sequel to a *Final Fantasy* game, *X-2* follows Yuna after the events of *FFX* as Square Enix embraces its feminine side.

We've heard some impressive videogaming tall tales in our time. Hidden characters, secret areas, ports that could never happen... In this gossip-filled industry it's getting harder to distinguish between curious truths and dirty lies. This is why initial reports of a sequel to *Final Fantasy X* were a little hard to swallow – not only did it seem unlike the sort of thing Square would do but we just couldn't see a sequel to a *Final Fantasy* game working. But we were wrong, and the game has been pleasing Japanese gamers for a while now, meaning we've had ample time to get to grips with the first *FF* sequel.

MATERIA GIRL

While only a fool would write *X-2* off just because it's a sequel, there is some confusion as to why *Final Fantasy X* has been chosen as the first game in the long-running series to receive a true follow-up. Arguments about which instalment would be best suited to a successor have been rife since Yuna's return was announced – a remake of *Final Fantasy VII*, GBA ports of the SNES games and more sequels are all in the pipeline if you believe the rumours. Until we get an official line from Square Enix (who remains tight-lipped as to which will be the final *Fantasy*), we'd advise taking the gossip with a pinch of salt. That said, we'd welcome Cloud's return with open arms...

"THE DRESS UP SYSTEM IS A LOT MORE THAN JUST THE GIMMICKY FAN SERVICE IT FIRST SEEMS"

By now, you'll know that Yuna has stepped up from Tidus' supporting female to fully fledged lead role, but what may not be so clear is that this is far from the same Yuna we know and love. *X-2* is set several years after the finale of the previous game and when the young Summoner stumbles across a sphere that depicts a strangely familiar figure, she sets out to track down Tidus. This leads her to cross paths with former ally Rikku and newcomer Paine, and thus the videogame equivalents of Liu, Diaz and Barrymore (Drew, not Michael) form their unlikely posse and take to the road. By the looks of things, they've brought their entire wardrobes with them too... The Dress Up system is a lot more than just the gimmicky fan service element it first seems – changing costumes has a very real tactical impact. Your party will gradually gain proficiency with their preferred class, meaning more frequent and powerful attacks become possible and new skills can be learned. Switching outfits mid-battle triggers spectacular cut-scenes reminiscent of Yuna's days of Summoning (a power she no longer needs) and as in the previous game, certain enemies will have weaknesses that must be exploited with the right choice of clothes. Quirky maybe, but as a glorified version of *FFV*'s Job system it works remarkably well.

Another key difference between *X-2* and its predecessor is the game's structure. Criticisms levelled at the overly linear nature of *Final Fantasy X* have not gone unnoticed and while the new mission-based flow may still not approach the freedom of some of its rivals, it does go some way to alleviate the feeling of being pushed in one direction. Individual missions are greatly varied in terms of difficulty and length so for every epic quest you embark upon, expect a quick and simple task somewhere down the line. Be it working up to and defeating a boss or simply talking to a few people, one of the best things about this new system is that it really keeps you guessing as to what comes next – no more running from A to B ad infinitum, instead there's choice and variety in spades.

The game manages to improve on *X*'s already impressive style with slightly sharper graphics and cut-scenes that wouldn't look out of place in a Hollywood blockbuster. Music is of the same high standard, encompassing a broader sonic spectrum than ever before, and although differences in style between traditional RPG pieces and the more light-hearted J-pop tunes are obvious, the contrast is curiously effective. This contrast is reflective of the package as a whole – beneath the kitsch-cool surface hides one of the best battle systems Square has given us. We can't wait to get our hands on an English language version of the game – if nothing else, it'll be interesting to see how the localisation process treats Yuna's quest...

FINAL FANTASY X-2
PLAYSTATION2



DEVELOPER PROFILE
■ Square Enix is a relatively young firm but its two component superpowers date way back to the 8-bit era. Between them, they have put out some of the most important RPGs in gaming and continue to do so to this day.

HISTORY
- **DRAGON WARRIOR MONSTERS** 1998 [GBC]
- **CHRONO TRIGGER** 1995 [SNES]
- **FINAL FANTASY** 1987 [NES]

"TRUE TO THE SERIES TRADITION, FINAL FANTASY X-2 HAS ADVANCED GAMING TO NEW LEVELS AND IS SET TO BE A LANDMARK TITLE"
SQUARE PRESS RELEASE

VIDEOGAMES MATHS
UNDERSTANDING THE GIRLS' NIGHT OUT





■ The battle system is Square's most advanced yet, even if the Dress Up system sounds odd.



SHOWCASE

MORE THINGS TO WATCH FOR ON THE GAMING HORIZON

WORLD RACING

VORSPRUNG DURCH TECHNIK AND ALL THAT

Format: PS2/GameCube/PC
Origin: Germany
Publisher: TDK
Developer: Synetic
Release: October '03 (GC: TBA)
Genre: Racing
Players: 1-2





It might already be out on the Xbox, but now TDK's slick Mercedes racing sim is about to appear on PC and PS2, with a GameCube version lurking further down the road. Despite being one of the most aesthetically pleasing driving games on the Xbox, the PC version looks to exceed these heights with some achingly gorgeous scenery and meticulously detailed vehicles. Obviously, you've still got over a hundred Mercedes cars to choose from – accurately recreated and ranging from Thirties racing models to modern day prototypes – but the big difference is the price; PS2 and PC gamers will be able to pick up this quality piece of engineering for an irresistible £19.99.

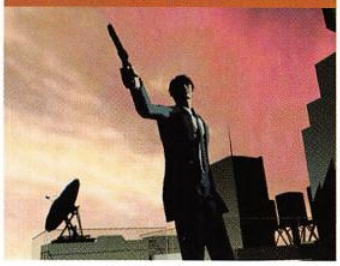
KILLER 7

NUMBER SEVEN WITH A BULLET

Format: GameCube
Origin: Japan
Publisher: Capcom
Developer: In-House
Release: TBA '04
Genre: Adventure
Players: 1

We've waited for ages, but finally Capcom is starting to let out details about its film noir-style action adventure... and it's really weird. Set in a dystopian future where nations have crumbled and the world is plagued by violent people wearing crazed smiles (no, really), it's up to schizophrenic assassin Harman Smith to uncover the truth behind his girlfriend's death. Of course, he'll need the help of his seven individual personalities to do this (hence *Killer 7*), each of which has its own unique abilities and strengths depending on the situation. It sounds bizarre, but with such an intriguing concept and interesting graphical style, we're eager to get our hands on this.





WORMS 3D

AND HIS NAME IS WIGGLY WOO

Format: PS2/Xbox/GameCube/PC
Origin: UK
Publisher: SEGA
Developer: Team 17
Release: Q4 '03
Genre: Strategy
Players: 1-4





Everyone likes *Worms*, right? Of course they do. While it might not be the most complex game around, the frantic action offered by a good four-player *Worms* match is exactly what the doctor ordered when you've got your mates round. And now Team 17 is taking things to the next level with *Worms 3D*; essentially the same game as before, complete with familiar weapons, silly voices and plenty of exploding annelids (worms, to you and me), but in 3D. Obviously, this makes things far more strategic and offers more opportunities for sneaky attacks, which can only be a good thing. Even so though, we can't help but feel slightly anxious that it won't be as good as it used to be...

THE SIMS: BUSTIN' OUT

MILKING THE SIMS COW ONE MORE TIME

Format: PS2/Xbox/GameCube/GBA
Origin: US
Publisher: Electronic Arts
Developer: Maxis
Release: Q1 '04 (GBA: Q4 '03)
Genre: Simulation
Players: 1

Considering the first console version of *The Sims* flew to the top of the charts, you'd be a fool not to think that there'd be a follow-up in the pipeline. Obviously, the main console versions of *The Sims: Bustin' Out* look pretty similar to the last one (no surprise, seeing as that's how it's worked with the PC add-ons since it first came out), but there are several important differences – namely the ability to leave your house and visit numerous other locations, as well as pick different career routes for your character as it progresses through the game. Of course, with the £40 price tag you have to wonder whether people will be prepared to buy a similar game all over again.







DELAYED – HARVEST MOON (GC/GBA)

■ Maybe it's got something to do with the extraordinarily hot weather, but Ubi Soft's crops don't appear to be quite ready yet – both versions of *Harvest Moon* have been delayed in the UK until the end of October.



CANNED – RED DEAD REVOLVER (PS2)

■ With Angel Studios getting snapped up by Rockstar Games and the game vanishing from Capcom's release list, it looks like this western blaster has been axed. Unless Rockstar releases it instead, of course...

TIME CRISIS 3

THE CLOCK'S STILL A-TICKIN'...

Format: PlayStation2
Origin: Japan
Publisher: SCEE
Developer: Namco
Release: Q4 '03
Genre: Shoot-'em-up
Players: 1-2



If there's one PS2 peripheral that's sorely unappreciated, it's the G-Con lightgun – with only one decent game released for it in the last year (*Resident Evil: Dead Aim*), you could be forgiven for letting it gather dust rather than putting it to good use. But now Namco has finally got round to converting *Time Crisis 3* (which we reviewed in issue 3) from the arcade to the PS2 and things are looking up once again for the poor old G-Con. Thankfully, there are additions on top of the original arcade action to keep home players happy – with more Crisis Missions and an all-new Rescue Mission mode (featuring a sniper scope, no less), you'd better get that gun out of retirement pretty soon...

NAVAL OPS: WARSHIP GUNNER

YOU CAN SAIL THE SEVEN SEAS, IN THE NAVY

Format: PlayStation2
Origin: Japan
Publisher: Koei
Developer: In-House
Release: TBA
Genre: Strategy
Players: 1

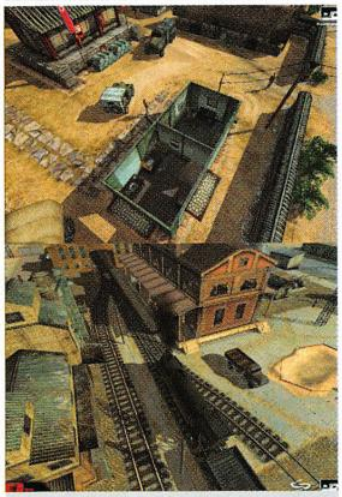
If you're the kind of person that likes blowing things up, but have an aversion to land, there's always the naval option. No, it's not your bellybutton – we're talking about ships, and big ones at that. Sure, so it might not sound like the most appealing console title around, but Koei's *Naval Ops: Warship Gunner* is still a relatively intriguing prospect. Basically, you can design your own hulking battleship, then take it out onto the ocean waves and blow stuff up – then use the cash you get for succeeding to build a bigger, more powerful vessel. Toss in a comprehensive WWII mode and more ships than the British fleet and you've got what could be a unique little title...



KOREA: FORGOTTEN CONFLICT

A HARSH LESSON IN KOREAN HISTORY

Format: PC
Origin: Czech Republic
Publisher: Cenega
Developer: Plastic Reality
Release: Q4 '03
Genre: Action/Strategy
Players: 1-2



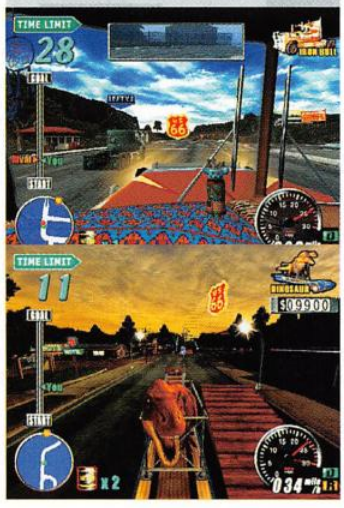
While the sublime *Commandos 3* looks set to dominate the 'squad of crack commandos running around behind enemy lines' genre, it might not be the only example worth looking for in the coming months. Putting players in charge of a team of elite soldiers, *Korea: Forgotten Conflict* gives you a variety of heroic feats to undertake during the war between North and South Korea. In case you'd forgotten all about this particular conflict, Plastic Reality has immaculately recreated the scene with a collection of stunning 3D environments that can be fully panned and zoomed to your heart's content. Mix in the finely tuned AI and the stage is set for some engrossing real-time strategy.

THE KING OF ROUTE 66

UH-HUH-HUH – THANK YOU VERY MUCH

Format: PlayStation2
Origin: Japan
Publisher: SEGA
Developer: AM2
Release: Q4 '03
Genre: Racing
Players: 1-2

Let's face it – while the arcade game was relatively good fun, SEGA's *18 Wheeler* was a major letdown when it hit home consoles thanks to a lack of extras and no real replay value once you'd finished it. So hopefully the same fate won't befall its sequel, *The King Of Route 66*, when it hits the PS2 in September – although from the looks of things, SEGA is trying to cover all the bases. Essentially, it's an upgrade of the previous game – more mini-games, longer tracks, better multiplayer and even a Queen Of Route 66 mode where you race to impress ladies and upgrade your rig. It all sounds okay but given the game's lacklustre performance stateside, we're not holding our breath.





CHOOSE YOUR PATH

It is four thousand years before the Galactic Empire. Thousands of Jedi and Sith are fighting an epic battle between light and dark with you at the epicenter and the fate of the galaxy hanging in the balance. You can side with the light or succumb to the darkness--but in the end you must choose and let the galaxy suffer the consequences.



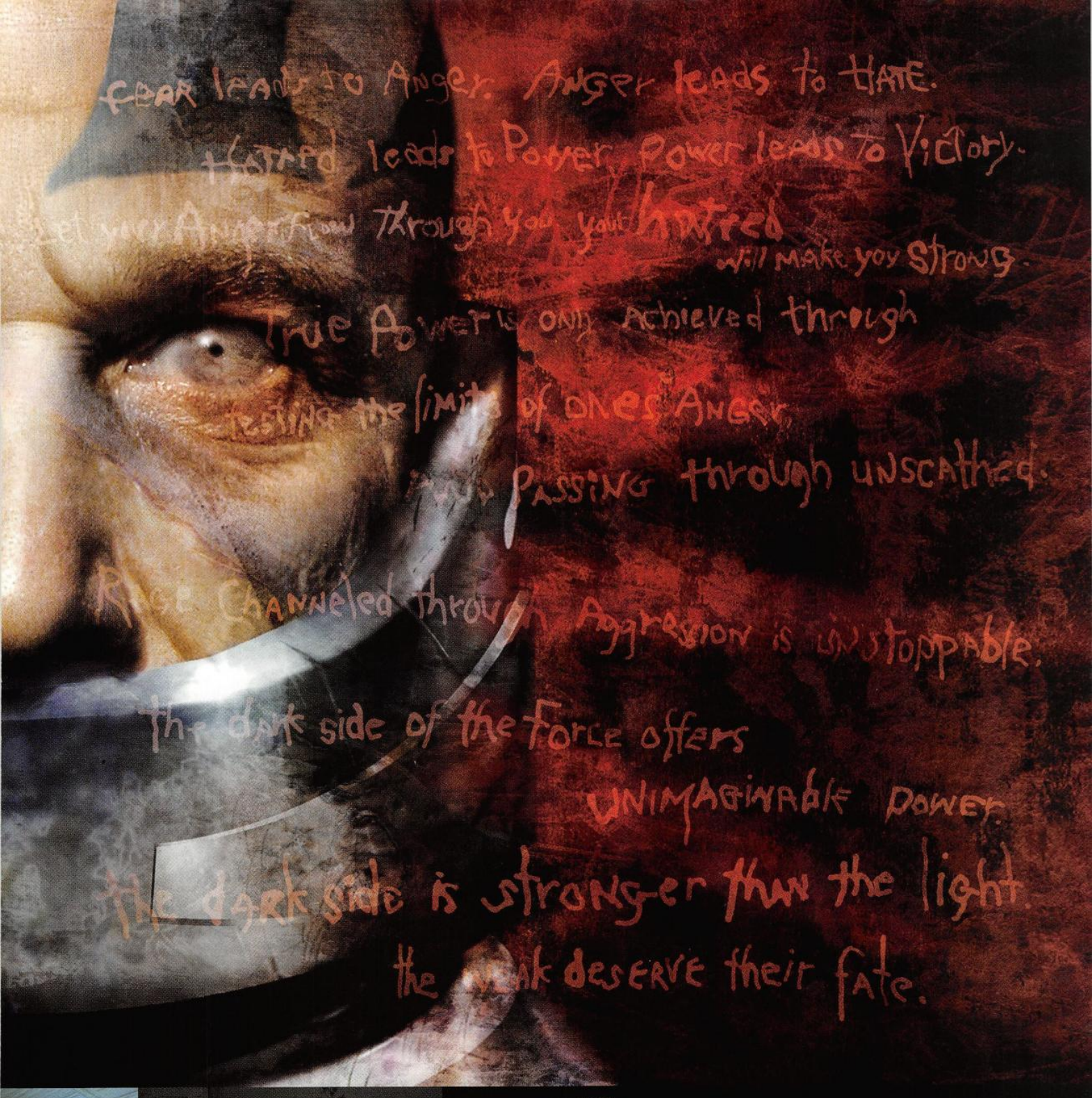


G8+
MEDIUM LEVEL
ANIMATED VIOLENCE

PC CD

XBOX

BIOWARE™ CORP







STAR WARS™ KNIGHTS OF THE OLD REPUBLIC™

WWW.SWKOTOR.COM

Official *Star Wars*™ Web Site
www.starwars.com

LucasArts and the LucasArts logo are registered trademarks of Lucasfilm Ltd. BioWare and the BioWare logo are registered trademarks of BioWare Corp. ©2003 Lucasfilm Entertainment Company Ltd. & (r) or ™ as indicated. All rights reserved.

LUCAS Arts™



Background noise or a key part of the pure gaming it half the time, but game music is more important

SOUNDING OFF

While the focus of games is usually on the quality of the visuals, the polygon count and the amount of FMV sequences that can be crammed into a product, the role of music is often ignored – yet it plays an integral part of the gameplay experience. Would the death of a certain flower girl in *Final Fantasy VII* make such an impact if it wasn't for the accompanying orchestral music? Could the same sense of fear be evoked in *Resident Evil* if not for the eerie silences and gristly skull-crunching noises from a man-eating zombie? Even the thumping, repetitive beats of *Space Invaders* manage to instill panic into the gamer, which increases as the aliens creep down the screen.

Music plays a role in games that can't be overlooked. In order to be successful, the music needs to enhance both mood and atmosphere while at the same time setting the pace of the game so the player feels immersed within the world that has been created. "In videogames, like film, the music has several tasks it needs to achieve," says Inon Zur, a composer for games such as *Baldur's Gate II* and *SOCOM: US Navy Seals*. "First, it should set the right mood for the overall game in general and for the specific part it's being attached to. Second, the music has to pump energy and enhance the drama, again, without attracting too much attention to itself. Third, the music should be the glue for the entire game. It has to bridge smoothly between the scenes and give the game the overall artistic envelope."

"First, it should set the right mood for the overall game in general and for the specific part it's being attached to. Second, the music has to pump energy and enhance the drama, again, without attracting too much attention to itself. Third, the music should be the glue for the entire game"

The Creation Process

Much like an artist painting a masterpiece, the creation process for music varies according to the musician. More often than not, a company will specify what it's looking for in the game and then leave the composers to come up with their own techniques and ideas. Some, like Inon Zur, start off with "a certain concept – an idea, picture story or scene. This evokes in the trained composer some musical ideas, perhaps a short theme or rhythmical pattern. Then the composer will develop this idea into a full piece."

Others, however, like to play the game thoroughly, working closely with the designers in order to achieve the right result. "This way I can get a total understanding of the game's story, characters, atmosphere and so on," explains Richard Jacques, a composer who has written

experience? You might not notice than you may have ever imagined...

Going Solo

Music not only plays a role in games but has also created a genre in the form of bemani titles such as *Vib Ribbon*, *FreQuency* and *Parappa The Rapper*. In addition to this, music creation software is becoming ever more popular – particularly the *Music* series.

The latest edition, *Music 3000*, contains over 16,000 samples ranging across pop, metal, trance, garage and indie. In a new move for the series, a USB sampler and microphone is available which enables gamers to sample sounds from CD, vinyl, cassette, minidisc and their own voice.

Aside from giving gamers some scope to be creative, the results can also be more surprising. "We've had a couple of people go on to sign record deals after writing songs from our software, so there are no limitations," says Martin Kitney, PR manager for the software's manufacturer, Jester Interactive. "People we have shown it to within the music industry have all been impressed with it."



SOUNDING OFF

music for games such as *Jet Set Radio Future* and the award-winning *Headhunter*.

"I like to totally immerse myself in a project before beginning the composition phase, this way I am eating, sleeping and breathing a particular project before I have written a note of music." Allister Brimble, best known for his compositions during the Amiga era, also follows this approach of using the game as inspiration. "It does help a great deal to play the game first," he says. "I'm inspired by good games, which is why my Team 17 work turned out well. Sometimes just the idea behind the game, if it's strong, is enough to help me."

Of course, the type of game plays a huge part in determining the style of music to be composed. A bouncy little ditty would be useless in a horror scene; likewise, you wouldn't expect to hear blood-curdling screams providing the backing to a cutesy platformer. First-person shooters, horror titles and action adventure genres often broadcast a variety of different styles, with the biggest scope for interactive music changing to accommodate the player's actions. RPGs, on the other hand, tend to have the most orchestral of soundtracks like those of a film, with fixed music created to suit a particular scene or dialogue to progress character development.

"Creating music for a game is like finding an address," says Adam Levenson, who was assistant music supervisor/editor on *Enter The Matrix*. "We start with the biggest questions, like finding out what country is the address in, then work your way to the town, the street, and finally to the individual you're looking for.

"The big questions can be 'what kind of a game is this?' Is it a serious RPG, or a complex fight of good versus evil? Is it a high-action shooter, or an adventure game with a humorous slant? The platform is part of your address, as are any stylistic suggestions that come from the designer, developers and publisher."

Andy Brick, who has composed music for the US release of *Arc The Lad Collection* and used a live orchestra for *Sim City 4*, believes that "other games require simply background music to set a feel or an ambience. For example, the music in *Sim City 4* was all about the style. The nature of the game would make it virtually impossible to score to an actual picture so I set out to create a musical environment."

"It's important to emphasise that an orchestra will not make bad music sound any better, nor is it the only way to create decent music"

The Golden Era

When it comes to discussing music in games, it's hard not to refer back to the classic 8-bit period – in particular, the Commodore 64 and its famous SID chip. The MOS 6581 Sound Interface Device chip (aka SID) was groundbreaking for its time and was developed by Bob Yannes, who later went on to form synthesiser company Ensoniq.

"On the C64 you could only play three notes at once," says Allister Brimble. "This was tricky to work with, but what it did mean was that you had to produce much better compositions. One bad note would stand out and a poor melody could be picked up on immediately as you only had two other channels to back it up. Only the best musicians survived in those days, so you tended to get great music all round."

The chip's versatility meant it could imitate musical instruments accurately and plenty of composers made a living out of the format. One of these, Tim Follin (who created music to C64 games such as *Ghouls N Ghosts* and *Peter Pack Rat*) feels that the hardware limitations of the chip

were a positive thing. "Writing music for the Commodore 64 and Amiga was really about doing the best you could within the limitations," he says, "and the limitations were the inspiration. Back then, people had an intuitive sense of what the limitations were, so I think what they liked about game music was the pure innovation within the limitations, which meant you spent your time coming up with purely musical ideas."

Something that could never have been dreamed of at the time was the way that some games were bought just for the music. "It's crazy to think that used to happen," says Follin. "I think it proves that music then was as much about innovation and originality than the games themselves."

"I guess people don't buy games just for the music these days," adds Brimble, "because there are no limitations. The old 8-bit machines had a simple sound chip and you were amazed to hear how far they could be pushed."

While the Commodore 64 is now out of the public eye, its popularity is still strong, with numerous websites dedicated to the machine and its musical chip. The sheer number of sites on the web dedicated to SID files shows just how popular the music is even today.

Setting The Scene

Since the introduction of the PlayStation and other CD-based consoles, the trend towards an orchestra providing the soundtrack to a game is becoming ever more popular. For the composer, the benefits of using a live orchestra are quite extensive – it means that the music is no longer held back as much by hardware limitations and they get to concentrate far more on the musical side of things. It's important to emphasise, however, that an orchestra will not make bad music sound any better, nor is it the only way to create decent music. "More importantly, it's a technique, not a means to an end, the end being great game music," says Adam Levenson.

Primal's soundtrack was composed by studio outfit Bob & Barn after they were approached by Sony. For such an ambitious project, they had five

Musical Maestros

Allister Brimble
Responsible for music in over 230 titles, Brimble is best known for his early works for Team 17 including *Alienbreed* and *Project X*, and for recent titles including the *Driver* series. ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/allister_brimble/

Tim Follin
Beginning writing for the ZX Spectrum, Follin was responsible for the music in games such as *Bionic Commando*, *Ghouls N Ghosts* and *Ecco The Dolphin*. His most recent project is *Starsky & Hutch* and he's just finished work on a game for Zed Two provisionally called *Pillage*.
www.timfollin.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk

Richard Jacques
After finishing his music degree, Jacques became an in-house composer for SEGA for titles such as *Jet Set Radio Future*, *Jet Set Radio*, *Sonic R*, *Metropolis Street Racer*, *Sonic 3D* and the award-winning *Headhunter*. He is currently scoring *Headhunter: Redemption*.
www.richardjacques.com

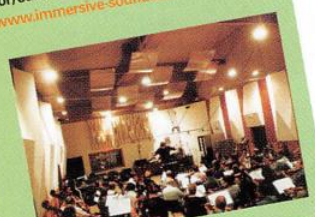
Jesper Kyd
His credits include *Hitman 2: Silent Assassin*, *MDK2* and *Minority Report*. He is currently working on *McFarlane's Evil Prophecy* and *Freedom Fighters*.
www.jesperkyd.com

Inon Zur
He has composed music for games *Run Like Hell*, *Icewind Dale II*, *Baldur's Gate II: Throne of Bhaal* and *SOCOM 2: US Navy SEALS*. www.inonzur.com

Andy Brick
He has contributed music for *Arc The Lad* on PS2 and is at work on music for a new *Sim City* game. www.andybrick.com

Andrew Barnabas
One half of studio Bob & Barn, the pair have collectively worked on *SWIV*, *Aladdin*, *Desert Strike*, *Pinball Dreams* and *Primal*. They are currently working on *Bionicle* and a game for Argonaut.
www.bobandbarn.com

Adam Levenson
The audio director of Immersive Sound who was also assistant music supervisor/editor on *Enter The Matrix*.
www.immersive-sound.com





SOUNDING OFF



And the winner is...

Game sountracks often receive accolades from within the industry – *Icewind Dale II* was nominated for 2002 Soundtrack of the Year Award by Game Industry News, The Game Audio Network Guild Awards nominated *Hitman 2* in four categories while *Headhunter* received the 2002 Game Audio Network Guild Recognition Award (among others).

But it is only recently that recognition of the format has become more prominent. In 2000, the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences (NARAS) decided that game music could become eligible to win Grammy awards, although in order for a soundtrack to be considered, it has to be commercially available as a music CD or stored in Red Book audio format on the game CD-ROM.

As yet, a game hasn't been nominated as not enough composers are voting members of the NARAS, but the potential is clearly there should the industry decide to move in this direction.

weeks and a half hours of cut-scenes in the game. In order for the process to go smoothly, they needed their own posse of specialists including a producer (James Fitzpatrick), orchestrator and conductor (Nic Raine), copyist, an engineer (Jan Holzner) and an editor (Gareth Williams), who creative director Andrew Barnabas admits are the "unsung heroes".

to create 95 per cent of the musical score which was to accompany the two

"With *Primal* we made fundamental leaps," says Barnabas. "We realised that consciously or subconsciously we write orchestral music to the strengths of the sounds we have available – for instance, good string samples means an emphasis on string writing, bad brass samples means ignoring the brass. This is a terrible way to write, since you're not taking full advantage of the instruments at your disposal. With an orchestra, you don't have any of those limitations and the results are way above what you can get with even the best samples available today."

Although the technology is there for orchestrated music and a handful of companies set aside the budget for game music, there are still numerous publishers who don't give music the attention it deserves. While deadlines have improved, the budget hasn't really moved on and the facilities aren't as advanced as they could be. "I started out imagining getting live musicians in for the whole thing and doing an authentic Seventies soundtrack," says Tim Follin of the soundtrack to *Starsky & Hutch*. "Initially, it looked like the producer was willing to up the budget just enough to make it work, but then the hassle of getting people in, having to pay them in advance and the need to hire a studio sort of kicked it all into touch again, so I ended up doing it all at home."

There's also the argument that for all the advances in technology and the use of real instruments, music just isn't as good as it used to be. "Today with CD-based music anyone can basically create music for games," says Jesper Kyd, composer of the *Hitman 2* soundtrack. "I think that today's videogame music is quite boring, predictable and generic. It's mostly about implementation and as long as the music fits, the effort toward creating something memorable and unique seems lost."

Licence To Thrill

The use of licensed or commercial music within a game isn't a new concept. LucasArt's *Loom* in 1990 featured sections of Tchaikovsky's *Swan Lake* transposed into MIDI format – a first for classical music – and was successfully used to evoke emotion throughout important scenes of the villain trying to overpower the player. Michael Jackson's *Moonwalker* on the Mega Drive featured renditions of *Billie Jean* and *Beat It*, albeit in a synthesised form. However, the use of CD-based technology has seen an surge in the amount of licensed music in games, with *Wipeout* featuring artists such as Underworld, Future Sound Of London, The Prodigy and The Chemical Brothers, while extreme sports titles such as *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 4* have licensed tracks by The Offspring, AC/DC and the Sex Pistols. Yet while use of mainstream bands in games can make them more popular, it can have the reverse effect on the gameplay experience.

"Licensed tracks are fine for title tunes, but these artists often lack the skills to be able to conjure up a gaming atmosphere," suggests Allister Brimble. "Of course, that's because they're not game musicians and don't understand how music and gameplay should fit together."

Richard Jacques also feels that licensed music isn't always the right choice for a game. "There have been some games where the music has put me off the gaming experience," he says, "but these games normally feature a licensed soundtrack. In this instance, it is often a producer, designer or marketing executive who picks the licensed tracks, and despite trying to keep an open mind, their own personal preference of styles, bands, artists or DJs seems to have an impact on the licensed track listing. A well-executed soundtrack, be it licensed or original, can truly make or break a game."

"Inappropriate music can create the opposite effect that the designers intended," agrees



The Ultimate Resource

The Internet is a heaving mass of sites relating to game music, whether you're looking for SID files to play your favourite C64 pieces or MP3s of original themes that have been remixed and updated by fans. There are even websites created by the composers themselves, offering their files for download to anyone who fancies a trip down memory lane. It is here you'll also be able to buy soundtracks to your favourite games – whether it's *Wipeout, Halo, Final Fantasy, Parappa The Rapper* or an obscure Japanese release, chances are you'll find it lurking on the web somewhere.

www.c64.org	The C64.org portal
www.hvsc.c64.org	High Voltage SID Collection
www.c64audio.com	C64 audio files
www.vgmusic.com	The Videogames Music Archive
genres.mp3.com/music/electronic/game_soundtracks	MP3.com's game soundtrack charts
remix.overclocked.org/index.php	OverClocked ReMix – the Unofficial Game Music Arrangement Community
www.altpop.com/stc	Soundtrack Central
www.alpha-ii.com/snesmusic	SNES music
www.gamemusic.com	GameMusic.com (soundtrack sales)
gkworld.zoovy.com	GKWorld (soundtrack sales)
www.vgmidi.com	VGMidi (MIDI forum)

Andrew Barnabas. "Worse still, it can pull the player out of the 'world' that he or she is currently in and remind them that they are just playing a game."

Interactive Future

Of course, the thing that most developers should take into consideration is where game music can go from here. While there are many opinions on this, the majority of them suggest that making it truly interactive is the key, with the music matching what is happening in the game. Some games already manage to do this – Jacques, Follin, Barnabas and Brimble all cite the *Medal Of Honor* games as great examples of well-executed interactive music – but in many respects, the industry still has a way to go.

"True musical interactivity means never hearing the same thing twice," says Adam Levenson. "Our nemesis as audio content providers is repetition – this happens in games when we create content using linear production techniques, and then try to make it work in an interactive scenario."

When thinking about the future of music, Allister Brimble says that he'd like to see "soundcards with much higher specs fitted as standard to PCs, thus allowing an interactive MIDI track to sound as good as CD audio but with the flexibility that MIDI offers." In order to progress, though, it may be less about the technology and more about the live aspect of the music. "The interactive nature of games provides the opportunity to make the music an interactive experience," argues Andy Brick. "However, in order for us to achieve the next level in game music, I believe we must take a step away from technology and focus more on the live musicians and live orchestras."

It seems then that the future of music depends a great deal on producers embracing the technology that is available and treating it as an important element of the gameplay, rather than just a sideline. Other ways need to be found to not only create innovative music for the gamer, but also to make it more appealing. "I think that original game music is going to have to evolve into something unique and innovative and be recognised as such by the public," says Tim Follin, "or by the time business realises that the public would much rather have three original tracks by a known artist than thirty by someone they don't know, game music is going to get forced out of the frame."

Let's hope that never happens...

Live And Unplugged

In 2002, a concert was held at the Tokyo International Forum to celebrate the music from the *Final Fantasy* games, which was performed by a live orchestra. While game music performances such as this are a regular occurrence in Japan, and composers like Nobuo Uematsu (*Final Fantasy*) and Koji Kondo (*Legend Of Zelda*) command as much popularity as any pop star, such recognition for music in games in Europe is rare. However, this doesn't mean that there aren't such events to attend. Press Play On Tape (www.pressplayontape.com) are a tribute band dedicated to performing C64 music at live concerts which have already proven to be very successful. For the first time ever in August this year, Richard Jacques' *Headhunter* and *Headhunter: Redemption* musical scores will be performed by the Czech National Symphony Orchestra at Gewandhaus, Leipzig, alongside music from *Final Fantasy* and *Mafia* at the Games Convention (www.gamesconvention.de), the European equivalent of E3.





"True musical interactivity means never hearing the same thing twice"



Saddle up for a supersonic ride as the Extreme-G Racing Association invites you to take part in a little high-speed biking. Sound barriers? They're there to be broken…



REVIEWS

XGRA: Extreme-G Racing Association	082	*Multiformat*
Amplitude	086	*PlayStation2*
Space Channel 5: Ulala's Cosmic Attack	088	*Game Boy Advance*
Futurama	089	*Multiformat*
Republic: The Revolution	090	*PC*
The Italian Job: LA Heist	092	*Multiformat*
Jet Set Radio	093	*Game Boy Advance*
Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic	094	*Xbox*
Group Test: RPGs	098	*PlayStation2*
Sonic Pinball Party	102	*Game Boy Advance*



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 seven (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.







XGRA: EXTREME-G RACING ASSOCIATION

PREPARE YOUR EYES FOR THEIR BIGGEST WORKOUT YET AS XG GOES SUPERSONIC AGAIN

DETAILS

FORMAT REVIEWED
PlayStation2

OTHER FORMATS
Xbox, GameCube

ORIGIN
UK

PUBLISHER
Acclaim

DEVELOPER
In-House

PRICE
$99.95

RELEASE
28 August

PLAYERS
1-2

Although we're awaiting the UK launch of *F-Zero AX* with bated breath, you don't need a violently tilting arcade cabinet to get a genuinely thrilling experience from the better examples of the futuristic racing genre. Hurtling around a gravity-defying racetrack at speeds in excess of the sound barrier remains one of the few gaming concepts with the power to tangibly affect players by subjecting our eyeballs to a virtual rollercoaster ride. While the *F-Zero* and *Wipeout* franchises have dominated the genre over the years with a rich history of rousing titles, Acclaim's *Extreme-G* series has managed to earn itself a similar reputation since making its debut in 1997. Initially dismissed by many as just another *Wipeout* wannabe, the impressive gameplay and blistering pace featured in the *XG* games has gradually established the series as a third serious contender in the extreme speed stakes.

As those familiar with the bracing delights of the three previous *XG* titles will know, players are placed at the helm of a futuristic racing bike and challenged with beating their opponents to the finish line by whatever means necessary. With *XGRA*, however, Acclaim not only takes the reflex-taxing experience itself to sensational new heights, but also aims to put some interesting meat onto the core gameplay bones with an in-depth Career mode and some engrossing rivalry dynamics. Riders entering the game's Career mode join the action at the outset of the 2080 racing season and will become immediately aware of how much effort has gone into bringing this fictional sport to life with incredible authenticity. The Sports Interactive News Network (SINN) commentary talks about the Extreme-G competition as though it really has been around for years, casually throwing in references to a thorough back history and politics that have evolved within the sport.

Established team rivalries and reputations are firmly in place, packaging the races in an impressively wholesome context. The dynamic competitive environment continues to develop in accordance with your actions on the track, and you'll soon discover any enemies you make during a race will be hungry for revenge the next time your paths cross. Riders with personal vendettas against you are helpfully highlighted and will frequently appear in the corner of your screen expressing their intentions to make you suffer. Inevitably, these comments soon become tediously cyclical, further fuelling your desire to eliminate any hostile opponents as quickly as possible.

FAQs

Q. ROCK OR DANCE?
You can speed along to either the uplifting rock or dance music soundtracks.

Q. HOW MANY TEAMS?
Eight in all – each with unique bike models, racing tactics and title aspirations.

Q. SICK BAGS AT THE READY?
The combination of crazy circuit design, relentless speed and powerful visual effects makes for a pretty intense ride.



Hurtling round some of the circuits feels remarkably like a bobsleigh run.



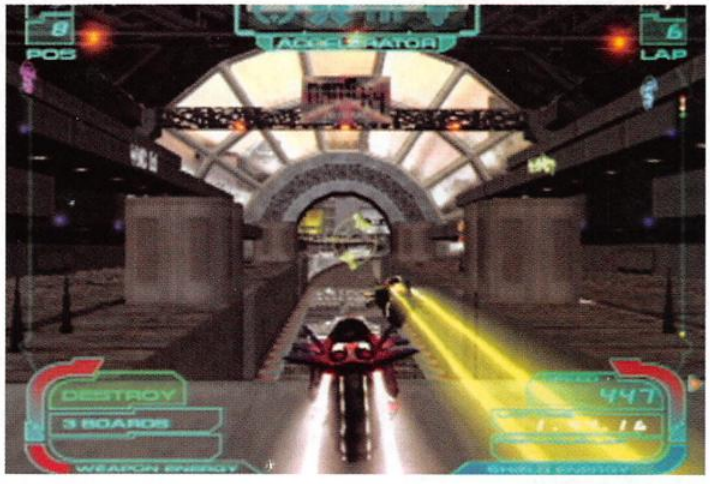
CIRCUIT BREAKERS

The action is brought to you live by SINN from a variety of locations around the globe and outer space. From the icy wastelands of Antarctica to the tropical jungles of South East Asia, the 16 insanely winding circuits are set against some diverse backdrops. While races staged deep beneath the ocean or within a space station are indoor affairs, courses that do expose riders to the elements can be subject to some challenging weather effects. Most circuits have also been designed to feature multi-branching pathways for players to explore and memorise the most effective route to the finish line. Victory ultimately tends to hinge on finding the route with the most boost strips, allowing players to make up ground on those riders taking the more obvious – and invariably least profitable – paths.



Controlling your bike around the twists and turns at electrifying speeds requires razor-sharp reactions.

Some sections of the tracks offer several routes – the least obvious path is usually more rewarding.





As if keeping to the track wasn't tricky enough, there's also the small matter of your bitter rivals to worry about too.



Your adversaries will frequently bombard you with cheesy comments and threats – all the more reason to eliminate them.



Your team will issue secondary objectives like destroying rivals' advertising banners, but don't forget to win the race as well…

24:00 TIMELINE HIGHLIGHTS

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

30 MINS



By now you should have blasted your way through the Invitation Class tournament, caught the eye of a few teams and made the crucial decision of which outfit to join.

3 HOURS



Having honed your reflexes to master the tricky handling and left the sub-sonic division far behind, it's probably time to give your exhausted eyeballs a well-earned rest.

5 DAYS



Hopefully you'll have unlocked most of the bikes, tracks and racing classes so you can share your favourite high-speed spectacles with your mates in multiplayer mode.



Secondary weapons advance with every orb you collect, from simple speed-ups to the devastating Deathstrike.



As you progress through each racing class you'll get increasingly speedy machines, but power is nothing without control.

XBOX $99.95 OUT NOW



As you'd expect, the Xbox version is slightly smoother aesthetically with a crisper feel to the visuals. There's little in the way of a worthy alternative on this console.

GAMECUBE $99.95 OUT NOW



F-Zero GX looks set to put *XGRA* up against some stiff competition with GameCube speed junkies, but for now there's little to match its fast-paced thrills on the Cube.

You'll kick-start your career by entering an Invitation Class competition that gives rookie riders the opportunity to put themselves in the shop window for potential employers over the course of three preliminary races. Achieve a series of respectable finishing positions and you should find a good selection of racing teams eager to acquire your services for the coming season. Each team offers riders a unique approach to racing, featuring bike models with diverse combinations of handling, acceleration, speed, shielding and regeneration capabilities. Beginners may wish to join the ranks of a team whose bikes are particularly easy to handle and come protected with powerful shielding, whereas the more proficient rider may choose a team that focuses on pure speed or aggressive combat depending on your preferred style of play.

However you decide your career should progress, your ultimate aim is to accumulate the points necessary to progress through the various racing classes. The sub-sonic class of machines you'll initially be racing may seem fast enough, but earn the right to shift up a gear into the sonic class and you'll find yourself battling to control a vehicle capable of breaching the sound barrier. Master the art of taming these mechanical beasts and you'll be able to experience the utterly insane speeds of the supersonic, and eventually ultra-sonic, division. Along with the ongoing goal of reaching the chequered flag before anyone else, teams will also issue riders with a secondary objective to be completed during each race.

These 'contracts' will again vary depending on the team you're riding for, but can involve anything from finishing ahead of a certain opponent to attaining a specified top speed. Contracts become increasingly challenging as players move up through the classes and might eventually require you to assassinate every member of a rival team or destroy all their sponsor's advertising billboards. While you can choose to ignore the more complex objectives that might interfere with your racing strategy, their inclusion does add another level to gameplay once you've mastered the basics of navigating the circuits.

Acclaim has attempted to make combat more integral to *XGRA* than in previous versions by tweaking the targeting controls and adding the element of continuity to the rivalry system. Despite some noticeable improvement, however, combat still takes a definite rear seat to the slick racing action at the heart of the game. Though rumours on the gaming grapevine hinted at some of the excessive speed seen in earlier *XG* games being sacrificed to enable greater control over the use of weaponry, we're happy to report

"DRIVE IN THE SONIC CLASS AND YOU'LL FIND YOURSELF BATTLING TO CONTROL A VEHICLE CAPABLE OF BREACHING THE SOUND BARRIER"



Races take place on some crazily designed courses against an imaginative variety of backdrops.

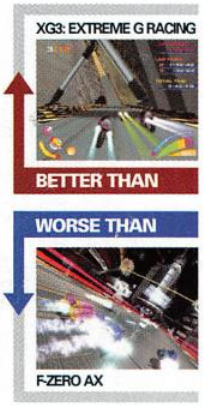


Hitting as many boost panels as possible while staying off the barriers is the only way to reach top speed.

MEET THE ROUGH RIDERS

Your bike comes equipped with a fixed primary weapon specific to the team you're riding for. Adding yet another element of variation to the distinct racing experiences each team offers, their preferred form of weaponry can be anything from rapid-firing lasers to rocket launchers. Reigning XGRA champions Team Starcom, for instance, are renowned for their violent tactics on the track and favour bikes with a particularly effective electricity-based weapon. Their focus on the more brutal side of XG racing, however, means Starcom riders are usually assigned combat-based – and essentially more taxing – contracts to undertake. Further to the primary weapon, players can also obtain a generic range of secondary weapons by collecting glowing orbs from around the circuit. Every orb gathered equips riders with increasingly valuable capabilities that include temporary invincibility and a devastating close-quarters rapier.





no overall slowdown in proceedings. Whilst the rather tame sub-sonic division does offer beginners a little more scope for learning the ropes, the advanced racing classes show no signs of forfeiting the all-important sensation of speed and manage to feature some of the most exhilaratingly fast sequences we've ever seen in a videogame.

The 'pure racing' events players have the option of entering actually remove weaponry from the equation entirely and see riders focusing solely on the insane sprint to the finish. These contests clearly illustrate the game's foremost ability to deliver a breathtaking ride that will leave players feeling like they've just been through a tumble dryer. Track design plays a crucial role in creating the sensation, with all the twists, dips and loops you'd expect from the most intense of rollercoasters. The most thrilling sections of the circuits are carpeted with boost panels and hitting several of these in succession on a machine capable of breaking the sound barrier will send you supersonic, turning the scenery into a blur of light trails and leaving the sound of your purring engine somewhere down the road behind you. Controlling the bike under such extreme speeds with any fluidity can border on the impossible for inexperienced riders, and the reason you were subjected to learning your trade on the lowly sub-sonic machines quickly becomes evident.

games™ FINGERPRINT

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME UNIQUE

FEELING SUPERSONIC: Break the sound barrier and all goes silent as you wildly hurtle onwards.

GRUDGE MATCH: Any opponents you upset won't forget you, creating ongoing rivalries.

The superb track design combines with a good amount of frame-rate ironing and some stunning visual effects to generate the mind-blowing speeds that make *XGRA* such an inarguably entertaining ride. Add to the gripping action an impressive amount of depth from the wholesome career dynamics and you're immersed in something much more than a detached series of single races. Though the combat still feels somewhat peripheral to the core racing action, the dialogue may be rather cheesy and controlling your bike under high speeds can demand some ridiculously sharpened reflexes, the sheer thrills and involving context should keep you engrossed long enough to unlock the post-sonic bikes and tracks needed to make the multiplayer arcade battles more than a little interesting.

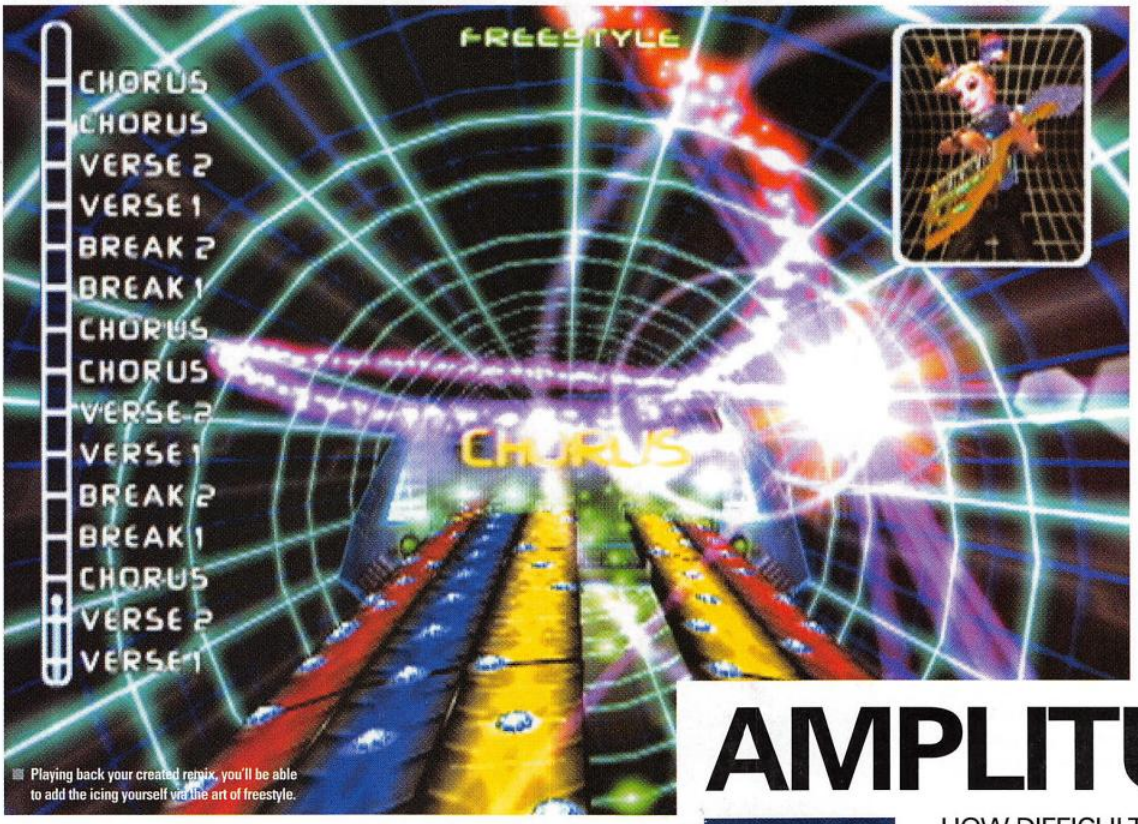
VERDICT 8/10

A THRILLING RIDE IN WHOLESOME PACKAGING

Any riders you're contracted to dispose of will be helpfully highlighted.

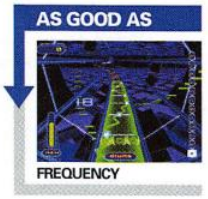






Playing back your created remix, you'll be able to add the icing yourself via the art of freestyle.





AMPLITUDE



DETAILS

FORMAT REVIEWED
PlayStation2

ORIGIN
US

PUBLISHER
Sony

DEVELOPER
Harmonix

PRICE
$99.95

RELEASE
30 September

PLAYERS
1-4

HOW DIFFICULT CAN IT BE TO TAP BUTTONS TO A RHYTHM?

Rhythm action titles are often known for their simplicity and last year's sleeper hit, *FreQuency*, is about as simple as they come. The game consists of little more than tapping three buttons in time with some on-screen prompts – the difficulty comes from the fact that the tunes are split into several tracks that must be activated individually. Why are we telling you this now? Because the concept for this sequel is one of the few aspects that hasn't changed a bit.

One of the most notable differences here is the wider musical spectrum covered by the game's 26 tracks. Gone is the emphasis on electronica, replaced with a far more eclectic mix of pop, rock,



The green arrows point out where to go next to keep your multiplier building. Obey the arrows.



The first game this year where slow motion is more than just clichéd eye candy? Probably.



If you've made it this far, you can probably count on clearing the stage. Or at least we'd hope so…

FAQs

Q. HOW MANY SONGS?
Twenty six in total, but some of the tougher ones are only available in the harder modes.

Q. MULTIPLAYER?
Both online and off, the selection of modes and options is simply superb.

Q. HOW HARD IS IT?
Difficulty varies from the insultingly simple to the impossibly tough, though the learning curve is excellent.



Songs are broken down into smaller sections (fewer and longer than *FreQuency*'s many sectors) and your life bar is boosted for clearing one.

games™ GLOBAL

TAKING GAMING ONLINE

VERSUS: Be it duels or full songs, the addictive online play is the best for PS2 so far.

TOGETHER: If competition doesn't do it for you, grab some friends and transform a song in Remix mode.

dance, jazz, metal, rap and more. This opens up the game to a wider audience and draws in fans of the featured artists – Weezer, Pink, David Bowie and Garbage are all mixed in with a selection of other 'name' artists and a few of Harmonix's own creations. The in-house music often surpasses the 'proper' tunes in terms of quality, but then it was created solely for inclusion in the game.

Perhaps the most common misconception about *Amplitude* is that switching the playfield from a tube to a plane was a mistake. It isn't – it brings an extra element of strategy to the proceedings as you'll now need to be much more careful with route planning and power-up use if you want to beat the tougher songs. This in mind, the new abilities give you a much better chance of bridging wider gaps if things do go wrong – Slo-Mo is the first acceptable use of slow motion in a videogame in months and the Freestyler puts the song on autopilot while you make with some virtual scratching. These items are as impressive as they are useful and the game retains a level of style that many high-profile titles would die for.

Amplitude doesn't just expect you to clear every song on every skill setting and be done with it either – in fact, we're not sure it expects you to clear the later stages of Insane mode at all. Once you've had your fill of being traumatised by a rhythmic pattern, you'll have the option to remix an existing track or take on a friend in one of three multiplayer modes. These take the form of remixing (see 'This Is The Remix'), multiplayer songs and, best of all, a 'duelling banjos' style face-off; one player lays down a pattern that the other must copy. Once again, these are a triumph of simplicity – anyone can pick it up but competition soon gets heated and before you know it, hours will have flown by.

We did stumble across a few flaws, however. These mainly concern online play, where there's a bug that can break up multipliers through no fault of the player. Admittedly, this is a rare occurrence and it seems everyone is susceptible so you won't be at a disadvantage. The online ranking system is also open to abuse – a player can climb the rankings by playing well but if a highly ranked player stops competing, they become very tough to overtake. Offline play is mercifully free of these drawbacks – the only real criticism of this is that it perhaps gives too much away too easily. While *FreQuency* locked entire sets of levels away on lower difficulties, *Amplitude* features a mere three songs that only exist on harder settings.

We don't expect *Amplitude* to fly off shelves or convert non-believers. This isn't the kind of music game that just entertains for a few hours before disappearing to the pre-owned bin; nor does it boast a quirky peripheral. No, *Amplitude* is something different – something so simple that develops into one of the biggest tasks of manual dexterity we've seen. Try it, learn it, love it and spread the word. But don't expect to finish Insane mode any time soon...

VERDICT 8/10
A SHINING EXAMPLE OF THE GENRE



Your created Freq is now rendered in 3D – you'll unlock more parts as you progress through the game.

THIS IS THE REMIX

Even once you've got your nimble fingers around the hardest tunes, *Amplitude* has more tricks up its sleeve. As well as some excellent on- and offline multiplayer modes, the superb Remix mode allows up to four players to deconstruct and reassemble any of the game's songs. This is a lot more confusing than the main mode but with a little persistence and a few ideas it's possible to create some significantly different tunes. Better still, you can save your remix to a memory card, where it becomes another playable track. As if this weren't enough, the Online Remix Repository is full of other people's creations – downloading these is an excellent way to up the song count. Harmonix and Sony are keen to push this online aspect and are drafting in the big-name soundtrack bands to pick out the best reworkings and leave their feedback. Now that's after-sales service...



Boss battles make for some of the game's best moments, both in terms of technical achievements and actual gameplay.



The dance-off against Jaguar just isn't the same without having somebody shouting his name at you…



As much as we respect the effort that has gone into these rendered backdrops, they could never achieve anything like the original style.

DETAILS

FORMAT REVIEWED
Game Boy Advance

ORIGIN
Japan

PUBLISHER
SEGA

DEVELOPER
UGA/THQ

PRICE
$69.95

RELEASE
12 September

PLAYERS
1

LEFT, DOWN, RIGHT, UP, PORT, PORT, PORT…

SPACE CHANNEL 5: ULALA'S COSMIC ATTACK

games™ FINGERPRINT

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME UNIQUE

PORT-A-LICIOUS: Unique? Hardly – this is a direct conversion of the DC original.

NOT AT HOME: Handheld music games have a history of failure, but try telling that to SEGA…

Somewhat obviously, the rhythm action genre is not best suited to a handheld console. From the limited sound capabilities to a general lack of buttons (or at least an odd layout thereof), you can count on one hand the number of times it has been done successfully. Unfortunately, judging by this direct port of the Dreamcast classic, it doesn't look like you'll be needing that other hand any time soon…

You have to admire the ambition and confidence of the developer for even attempting this port. The rendered backdrops and animation may not be a patch on their predecessors, but when you sit back and consider the hardware running the game there really is very little that compares. Speech is also of a generally good standard (a few samples suffer from clarity and timing problems but it is a GBA game) but music is a different matter altogether, never even approaching the standards we know to be possible on the handheld and making some sections quite hard to play. In fact, some later parts of the game even fail to recognise the input of more complicated command sequences – a horrible flaw in a game of this type and one that really drags the whole package down.

That's right, Ulala – groove *is* in the heart. Now hurry up and rescue that captain…



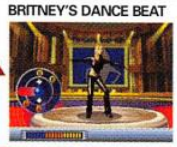
Much like *Crazy Taxi* and *Jet Set Radio*, *Space Channel 5*'s handheld update is more a victim of its own ambition than anything else but it does find itself in something of a quandary – fans of the games will already have played a superior version and newcomers probably won't even see just how much effort has gone into trying to make this work. Even sadder is the fact that there is a lot of fun to be had with the game but a few crucial flaws simply serve to frustrate and annoy until all semblance of enjoyment is gone.

Worse still, it's unbelievably hard to pin a score on *Ulala's Cosmic Attack*. In terms of technical achievement, this is nothing short of phenomenal in places, while in others you do have to wonder why something so obviously taxing was considered as a port. Of all the games to choose for a GBA conversion, picking one so heavily geared towards style, presentation and music does tread the fine line between stupid and clever and, rather frustratingly, falls mostly on the former. We want to love you, Ulala, but you're really not making it very easy …

VERDICT 3/10

TECHNICALLY IMPRESSIVE BUT FUNDAMENTALLY FLAWED

BRITNEY'S DANCE BEAT



BETTER THAN

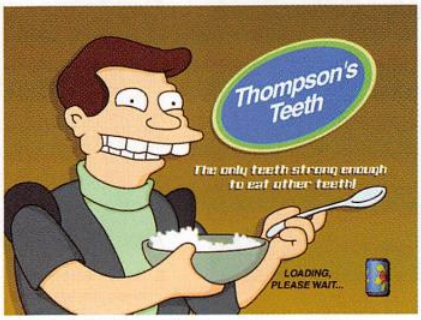
WORSE THAN



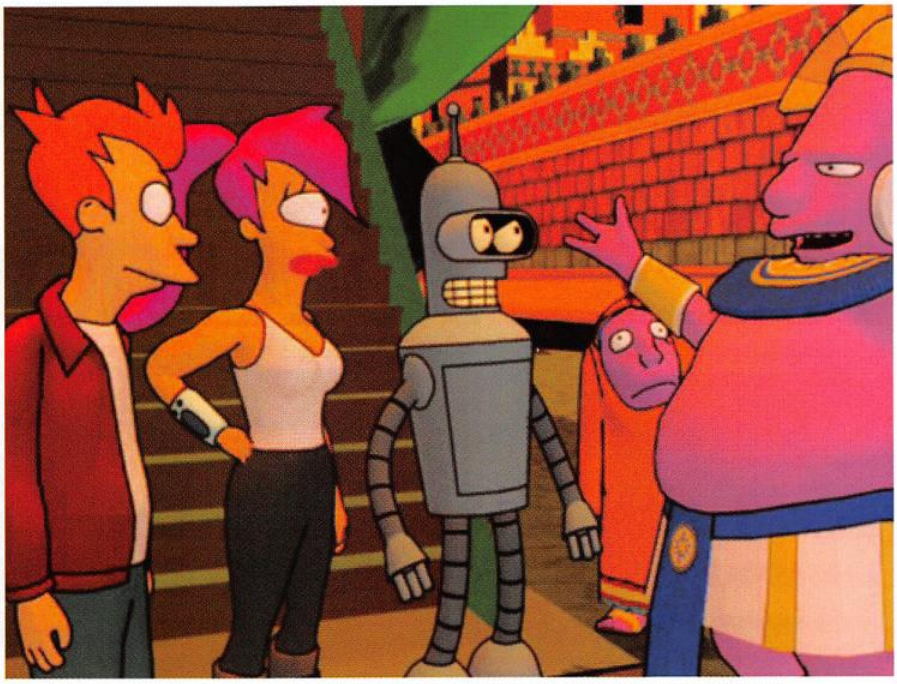
BEATMANIA GB



Precise jumping is needed in much of the game, which is a real pain when the characters and camera seem to have minds of their own.



The loading interludes are funny in a good way, unlike the game.



They're better than the game engine, but the cut-scenes look pretty messy – couldn't new cartoon footage have been created instead?

FUTURAMA

YOU WANT A DECENT FUTURAMA GAME? BITE MY SHINY METAL ASS

DETAILS

FORMAT REVIEWED
Xbox

OTHER FORMATS
PlayStation2

ORIGIN
US

PUBLISHER
SCi

DEVELOPER
UDS

PRICE
$99.95

RELEASE
Out Now

PLAYERS
1

games™ FINGERPRINT

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME UNIQUE

CANDID CAMERA: For a game that requires precise jumping and aiming, the camera is rubbish.

DIE ALIEN SCUM: Lots of things in the game can kill you instantly – as you'll repeatedly find out.

PS2 £39.99 OUT NOW



Unsurprisingly, the PS2 version looks a whole lot worse than the Xbox one – and considering it's not the nicest looking game on the Xbox, that's a pretty bad thing.

While virtually every licence under the sun is fair game when it comes to being turned into a videogame, it really does hurt us deep inside when it's done badly, particularly if it's one we hold dear to our hearts. In this case, it's the turn of SCi to play heretic and offer up *Futurama*, a game based on one of our favourite 'adult' cartoon shows (alongside *Family Guy* and *Dilbert*) that manages to defile everything that is good about the show itself in favour of generic platform action rubbish. Damn their eyes.

Thankfully though, there is in fact one single saving grace – the iron grip of Matt Groening himself. Having seen his precious *Simpsons* licence get flushed down the gaming toilet over and over again, it's not surprising that the creator of *Futurama* wanted to have more control over the content of the game this time around. As such, he ensured that the whole script was written by 'proper' *Futurama* writers as opposed to regular development types, along with getting the real actors to do the voices. This adds an air of authenticity to the whole thing, plus it's funny too; perhaps not quite as funny as the show but certainly enough to make you snigger on more than one occasion. This very sensible move on Mr Groening's part is one that saves the game to a very minor extent, or at least for all the time you're watching the cut-scenes. It's just a shame, however, that the same can't be said about the actual game – rather than being fun, it's just a combination of all the things that can go wrong in a platform game.

For starters the controls feel too clunky, the camera makes it impossible at times to see where you're supposed to be going and the cel-shading, while appropriate, looks quite nasty. Then there's the iffy weapons targeting system (which is pretty naff because you have to stand still to score accurate hits, leaving you open to attack), the repetitive collecting and switch-pulling that gets oh-so-boring, and the numerous instant death situations that are incredibly annoying, not least because dying means you have to do all the collecting and switch-pulling all over again. Need we go on? Probably not. It's just a typical example of another popular licence being wasted on a sub-par game – and no doubt it won't be the last.

VERDICT 3/10
GREAT LICENCE, TERRIBLE GAME

STAR WARS: BOUNTY HUNTER



BETTER THAN

WORSE THAN



HUNTER: THE RECKONING

CAST ASIDE YOUR MORALS AND DELVE INTO A WORLD OF POLITICAL INTRIGUE

REPUBLIC: THE REVOLUTION

DETAILS

FORMAT REVIEWED
PC

ORIGIN
UK

PUBLISHER
Eidos Interactive

DEVELOPER
Elixir Studios

PRICE
$89.95

RELEASE
September

PLAYERS
1

MINIMUM SPEC
800MHz processor; 256MB RAM, 1GB HDD space, 32MB 3D graphics card







■ The 3D gaming world is largely peripheral to the main concept, but the dynamic city setting adds some atmospheric context to proceedings.

Take a former child genius who co-wrote *Theme Park* at the age of 17, add a generous pinch of lead programmer on *The Sims*, simmer for five years and you've got a recipe for potentially the most revolutionary project in gaming history. Yet after such a drawn-out period of hype – during which an inevitable number of corners have been trimmed to turn the ambitious original goals into a more realisable concept – will we be left staring down the barrel of one big disappointment? Or has Elixir's long-awaited debut really got what it takes to run for presidency of the strategy genre?

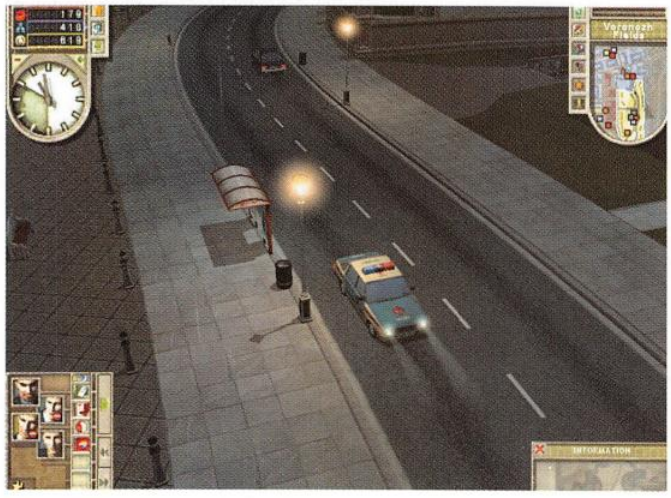
Following the dissolution of the former Soviet Union, one of the breakaway republics, Novistrana, has fallen into the grasp of a power-crazed dictator. Employing a sinister secret police force to swiftly deal with anyone who stands up to his oppressive rule, your only hope of ousting the president is to arduously build your own political faction from the ground up and win the support of the masses. This may sound like a pretty daunting task for the politically inexperienced, but *Republic*'s objective-driven path eases players into the murky world of political tactics by setting goals to gradually establish a strong base of operations. These objectives only loosely guide players on their way, leaving the choice of tactics you'll employ to gather support and diminish that of your opponents entirely at your discretion.

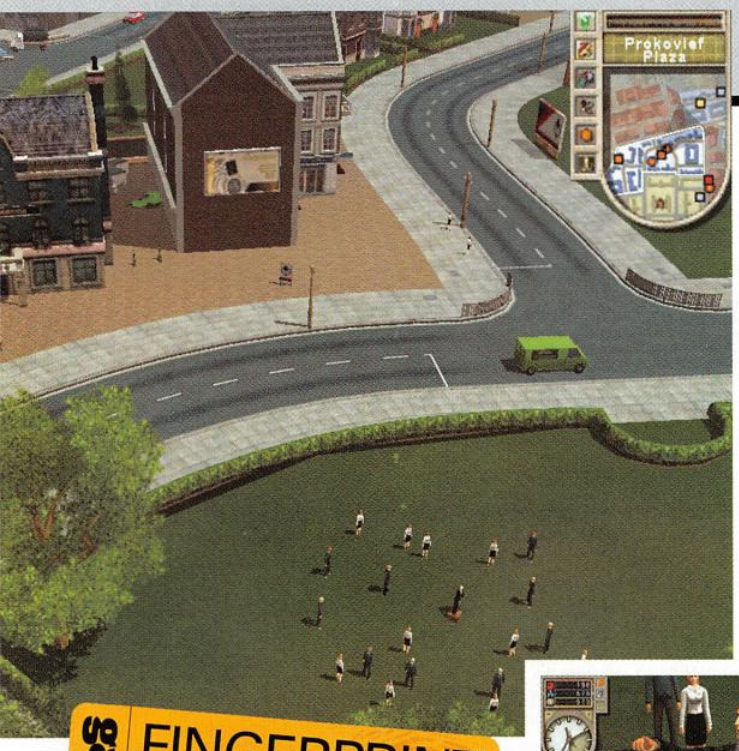
Before entering the action, your responses to a series of psychometric questions are analysed to determine your character's political ideology and personality attributes. Relationships between every party, person, district and political action in the game revolve around their ideological balance of Force, Influence and Wealth. Obviously those who share your basic ideology can be won over most



■ Here's where you'll spend the majority of your time strategically deploying your recruits and gauging the effects of activities on public opinion.







games™ FINGERPRINT

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME UNIQUE

INFINITE POLYGONS: If you've got the hardware, you'll be dazzled by the Totality engine.

AVOID THE HEADLINES: Damaging lies in the paper? Send the boys round to 'have a word'...

easily, whilst actions that involve using muscle, influence or throwing cash around will enjoy different levels of success with people of different ideological stances.

Your first task will be to recruit a right-hand man, and as the game progresses up to four other members can fall under your wing once your party can accommodate them. The turn-based gameplay splits the day into three segments, and basically involves assigning each of your staff to perform a political action. Each recruit is capable of performing a range of upgradeable actions depending on their professional background. Anyone from criminals to religious leaders can offer valuable services to your cause, and the unique palette of followers you'll use to create your masterpiece campaign is entirely up to you. Initially you'll simply need to drum up the support of neutrals, but as other factions increase in popularity the political environment becomes a more complex arena of dirty tricks. Your opponents will stop at nothing to blacken your name in the papers or assault your recruits, so don't hesitate to employ similarly underhand tactics to your own ends.

The initially daunting interface does throw beginners in at the deep end, but orchestrating the actions of your troops around the political battlefield soon becomes surprisingly easy. The constantly ticking clock also shows no mercy as you get to grips with the game's premise, and keeps the pressure on as your role gets more demanding.

BATTLE OF WITS

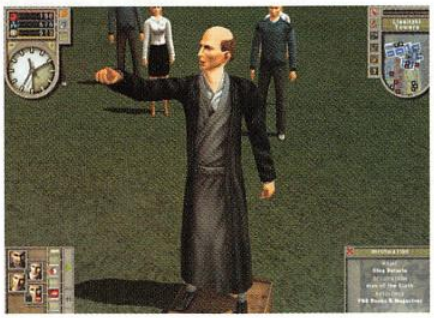
While most of the actions you'll instigate are completely passive, activities such as enlisting the support of a new recruit allow you to influence the conversation through an entertaining mini-game. Long gone are the days of *Theme Park* where negotiations involved giving and taking enough to resolve the matter before the plate of Digestives ran out, yet the card-based system used in *Republic* follows a similar premise. Players distribute the points their character has available across four cards then play these blind against their opponent's hand, earning 5, 10, 15 then 20 points for each round won. This process is repeated now you're aware of the strong and weak cards your opponent has to play in the hope of improving your score second time around. End up with the highest score and the argument is yours.

FAQs

Q. HOW MANY CITIES?
Your rise to power begins in the small town of Ekaterine, before moving on to Pugachev and finally the capital itself, Berezina.

Q. CHANGE OF APPROACH?
Your faction's ideology will alter depending on the amount of forceful, influential or wealth-based tactics you employ.

Q. DANGEROUS BUSINESS?
You may have to relocate your recruits to keep them safe and even provide protection from assassination attempts.



Strategically targeting the right people with the right actions at the right time and place brings all manner of intriguing considerations into play, yet rarely requires you to stray from the tactical map screen during a turn. However, with every move you make around this boardgame-style scenario the resulting action is played out in real time amongst the game's magnificent 3D city streets. Whilst *Republic*'s ambitious graphics engine and thousands of intelligent NPCs create an impressively atmospheric setting, you can't help but feel the technology is wasted as a peripheral feature depicting the pre-set range of political actions. Unless the activity involves dishing out a beating to one of your rivals, you'll generally be far too busy to observe the rather dull sight of your loyal servants handing out their leaflets or making a speech.

Though *Republic* delivers much of the open-ended freedom and strategic depth we'd hoped for, the overall experience somehow lacks the engrossing quality it promises. The 200 separate actions at your disposal keep things varied, but you're only really either gathering support, damaging your opponents' factions or attempting to weaken a rival member of your party. The intelligent tactical basis should certainly make this a massive hit with hard-core strategists, but the average gamer may struggle to be inspired by the map-based gameplay action and heavy subject matter.



One of your few chances to directly influence the actions you schedule are conversation mini-games where your persuasive powers are tested.



If legitimate political activities fail to deliver the desired results, you can spread rumours about opponents or intimidate their supporters.

VERDICT 7/10

NOT QUITE THE SUPER-POWER WE'D HOPED FOR

ENOUGH WITH THE BLOODY DOORS ALREADY, WHAT ABOUT THE GAME?

THE ITALIAN JOB: LA HEIST

DETAILS

FORMAT REVIEWED
PlayStation2

OTHER FORMATS
Xbox, GameCube

ORIGIN
UK

PUBLISHER
Eidos

DEVELOPER
Climax

PRICE
$99.95

RELEASE
19 September (US: Out Now)

PLAYERS
1-2

Not to be confused with SCi's Mini-driving romp inspired by the classic 1969 movie, Climax's latest bout of motoring madness is instead based on this summer's impending Hollywood remake. Replacing the customary Italian backdrop with the modern day streets of Los Angeles, the game's Story mode follows the exploits of Charlie Croker and his gang as they plot to steal back $28 million in gold bullion from the chap who double-crossed them in a previous heist.

Players can expect to be repeatedly tasked with racing frantically from one location to another within a specified time limit, occasionally throwing pursuing cops into the mix to provide a little variation. While the radar will helpfully indicate the general direction of your objective, how you get there is left to your discretion. In fact, your ability to find the quickest route through the maze of city streets and abundant short-cut opportunities has a far greater bearing on your success than the standard of your driving skills.

You'll find yourself behind the wheel of various vehicles as the story progresses, but it's the super-charged Mini Coopers that provide the most entertaining ride. Particularly well suited for carving out those unlikely short-cuts off the beaten track, the ability of these nippy machines to navigate those areas other cars can't reach is at the heart of Croker's plan. All vehicles in the game handle fluently and the smooth frame rate makes for some satisfying high-speed action. Crisp textures and some nicely detailed environments lend proceedings a reasonably high quality appearance, but the absence of pedestrians does make the city streets rather lifeless.

Sadly, the action is incredibly repetitive and frequently retreads the same areas. Each of the game's 15 missions typically contain three or four A-to-B drives and, aside from having to replay the entire level every time you fail the final mission objective, the whole thing can be ploughed through in a ridiculously short time. A few racing circuits and obstacle courses can be unlocked outside the short-lived Story mode, but fail to offer anything original. So many mission-based driving games have presented the tired concept with far more depth and variety than this, and without the movie licence such a straightforward addition to the genre is unlikely to have seen the light of day.

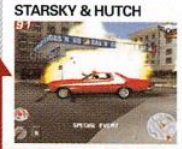
VERDICT 4/10
A SHORT AND BASIC BURST OF FUN

XBOX, GC £39.99



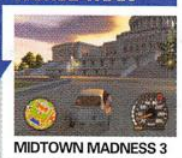
Though the 'Cube version is much the same, Xbox gamers will enjoy the usual crisper visuals. But against *Midtown Madness 3*, the Xbox version needs to try that bit harder.

STARSKY & HUTCH



BETTER THAN

WORSE THAN



MIDTOWN MADNESS 3

games™ FINGERPRINT

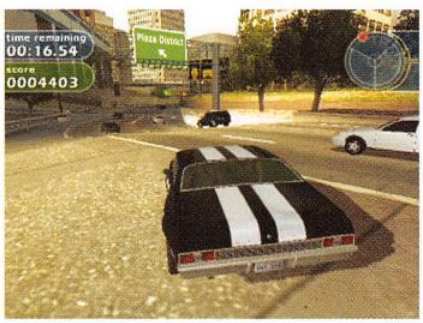
WHAT MAKES THIS GAME UNIQUE

DRIVE CAREFULLY: Avoid car damage to earn a high mission rating in order to unlock new vehicles.

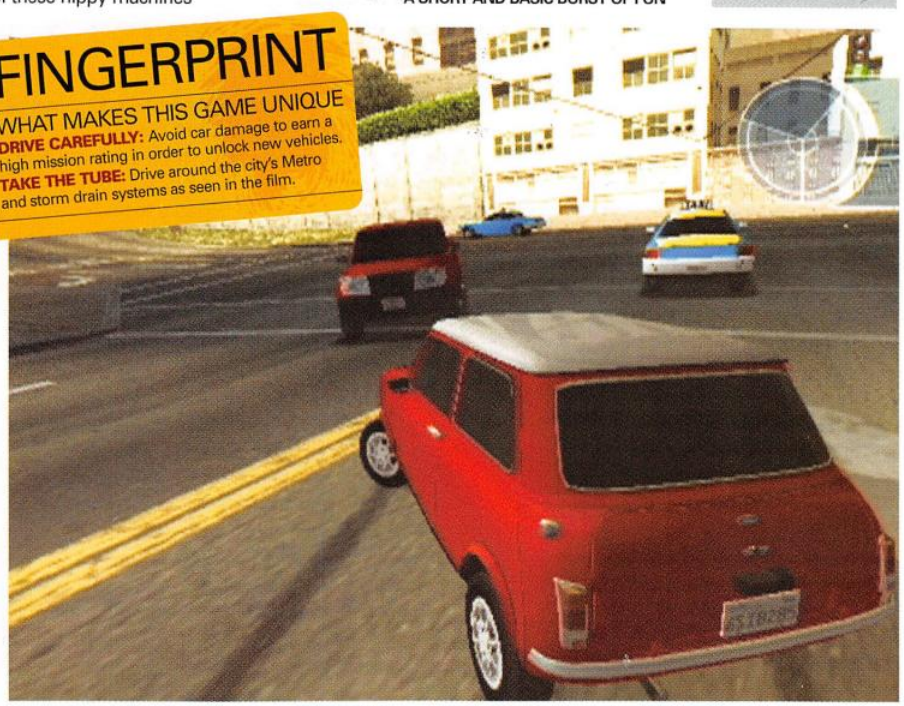
TAKE THE TUBE: Drive around the city's Metro and storm drain systems as seen in the film.



Sadly, you won't be able to cause half the theatrical motoring mayhem we'd have liked, and without a single pedestrian in sight...



You'll have to drive a selection of vehicles, but the Mini's the best.



Although Charlie Croker features in the game, don't expect this to have many similarities to the original film – this is remake territory only.



As in the original, you'll have to input the right commands on the D-pad to spray your tags.



After claiming back your turf, you'll get the chance to tag the invading gang and get rid of them for good.

JET SET RADIO

SEGA GIVES GBA OWNERS THE CHANCE TO PAINT THE TOWN RED

games™ CONNECTED

EXPANDING THE GAMEPLAY

TAG, YOU'RE IT: Link up your GBA to up to three others with *JSR* and you can try various multiplayer modes – these include fighting for control of areas with tags, a basic trick score contest and speed races.

DETAILS

FORMAT REVIEWED
Game Boy Advance

ORIGIN
US

PUBLISHER
SEGA

DEVELOPER
Vicarious Visions

PRICE
$69.95

RELEASE
12 September

PLAYERS
1-4

CRAZY TAXI: CATCH A RIDE



BETTER THAN

AS GOOD AS



VIRTUA TENNIS

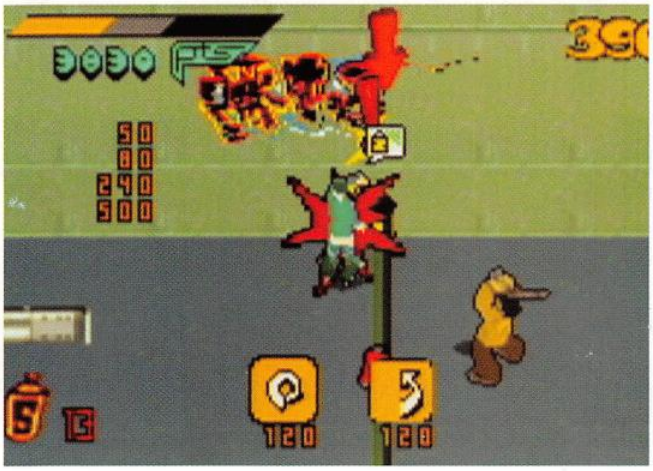
Although SEGA must have had a good reason for bringing the majority of its post-Dreamcast franchises to the GBA, it hasn't had a hundred per cent success rate so far in terms of quality. While some conversions have been more competent than we expected – such as *Space Channel 5* and, to a lesser extent, *Virtua Tennis* – it only takes one awful game (in this case, *Crazy Taxi: Catch A Ride*) to bring the whole house of cards down. Thankfully, SEGA has continued regardless and now presents its most ambitious console-to-handheld conversion yet – a game that, while not perfect, goes some way to making us forget how bad its last effort really was.

Of course, much of the vigorous back-slapping should really go to Vicarious Visions – the same developer behind the GBA's other top skating titles, *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3* and *4*. Having already seen them bring the console versions of both games to the GBA with great success (not only for the game quality, but also in how closely the handheld game mirrored the 'grown-up' version), it shouldn't come as a surprise to learn that it's done the same thing with the Dreamcast release of *Jet Set Radio*. While the isometric viewpoint may make it difficult to tell, even the most cynical gamer should be impressed by the fact that the characters and levels in the GBA version of *Jet Set Radio* replicate those of the Dreamcast game almost perfectly – right down to the extra stages that were added for the PAL release. True, there are subtle differences in places but anyone who's experienced the original game should recognise the different stages almost immediately.

However, it's this careful replication that also creates the game's main flaw. Because the original game had a third-person viewpoint, it was possible to have areas that stretched high into the sky. When shown from the isometric view in the GBA game, the perspective makes it hard to judge angles and distances on occasion, meaning you'll find yourself hitting the Retry option more often than you should. Sadly, the rather twitchy controls don't help matters either, forcing you to persevere through, rather than enjoy, the game. It's a shame, because what's there (from animation and music to overall gameplay) is actually quite impressive. It just seems SEGA has tried to bite off more than it can chew.

VERDICT 6/10

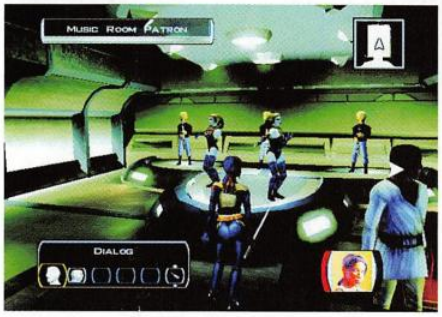
ENJOYABLE, IF A LITTLE TOO AMBITIOUS



The more you spray, the more attention you'll attract – from basic police and SWAT teams to massive tanks and helicopters. It can get a bit hairy out there...

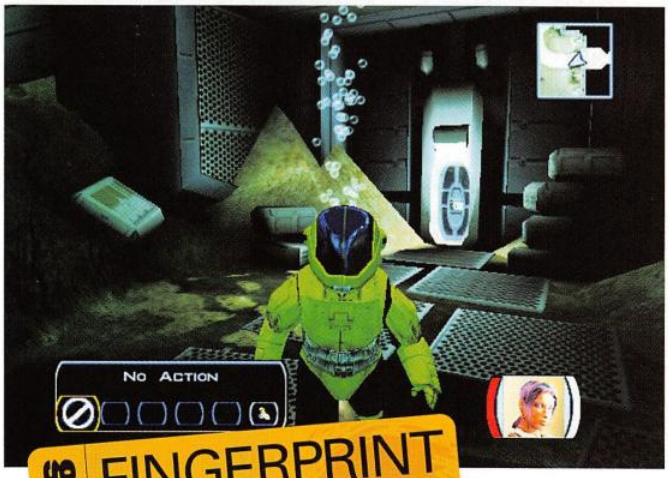


When characters level up you'll often get to add new skills and abilities.



The gates of Anchorhead. No doubt you'll find some power convertors inside. And some charming exotic dancers.





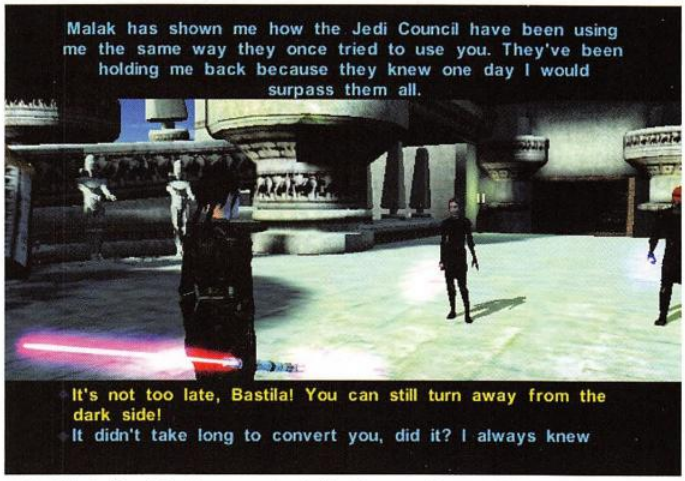
games™ FINGERPRINT

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME UNIQUE

DECIDE, YOU MUST: The choices you make affect absolutely everything in the game.

MORE SEDUCTIVE: Allocating Experience Points means that every player's character is totally unique.

As soon as you encounter an enemy you can choose to engage in battle or, ahem, run away.



Much like the films, the battle between good and evil is at the centre of the game. Which way will you go...?



Nearly every NPC will offer up a phrase or two of recorded dialogue – most can hold full conversations with you.



Perform a bad deed and you'll score Dark Side points. Help an old lady across the street, however, and you'll score for the Light Side.



There are plenty of familiar faces, but chances are they're just the same race as the film characters, rather than yer actual Yoda or Chewie.





CAN BIOWARE SUCCEED WHERE SO MANY HAVE FAILED BEFORE?

STAR WARS: KNIGHTS OF THE OLD REPUBLIC

DETAILS

FORMAT REVIEWED
Xbox

ORIGIN
US

PUBLISHER
EA

DEVELOPER
BioWare/LucasArts

PRICE
$99.95

RELEASE
19 September (US: Out Now)

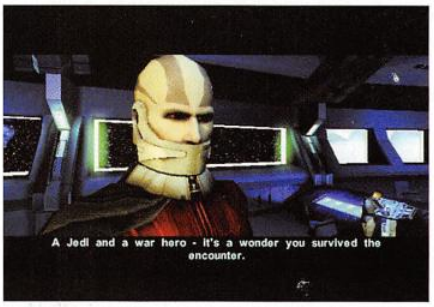
PLAYERS
1

It has become something of a cliché in videogames circles to say that recent *Star Wars* games have failed to capture the heady days of the *X-Wing* series on PC. Admittedly, there have been a few exceptions to the rule – the GameCube's *Rogue Leader* and (soon to be a classed as an online gaming phenomenon) *Star Wars Galaxies* on PC are prime examples – but what makes these two succeed where others have so miserably failed? Perhaps it's that they were both developed out-of-house and LucasArts' input was minimal. Perhaps it's simply that they do what *Star Wars* games used to do: they make you feel like you're part of George Lucas' (and his considerably talented workforce's) fantasy universe. You are Luke Skywalker, you are flying down the Death Star's exhaust trench, you are all clear, kid, now let's blow this thing and go home… And it's this that makes *Star Wars: Knights Of The Old Republic* so, so good – you get to play the role you always fantasised about as a child, by starring in your own *Star Wars* movie.

By following similar themes to those found in the movies (redemption and the temptation of evil) and by setting the story 4,000 years before the events depicted in the movies, *Knights* succeeds in evoking the films without simply plagiarising Lucas' stories and characters. The game also follows the artistic rules of the films with planets having distinctively different feels and colour palettes – the Jedi training camp is located on a suitably autumnal and Oriental Dantooine, while the water world of Manaan is all deep blues and silver and is reminiscent of Kamino, the clone production planet in *Attack Of The Clones*. *Knights* invents rather than copies; it merely hints at, rather than screams, *Star Wars*. Sure, it relies on certain *Star Wars* game traditions (you do get to visit Tatooine, after all) but doesn't need them to make you believe you're in the *Star Wars* universe. Although obviously, it appears to be a recurring theme that the desert planet is highly significant in the fate of the galaxy…

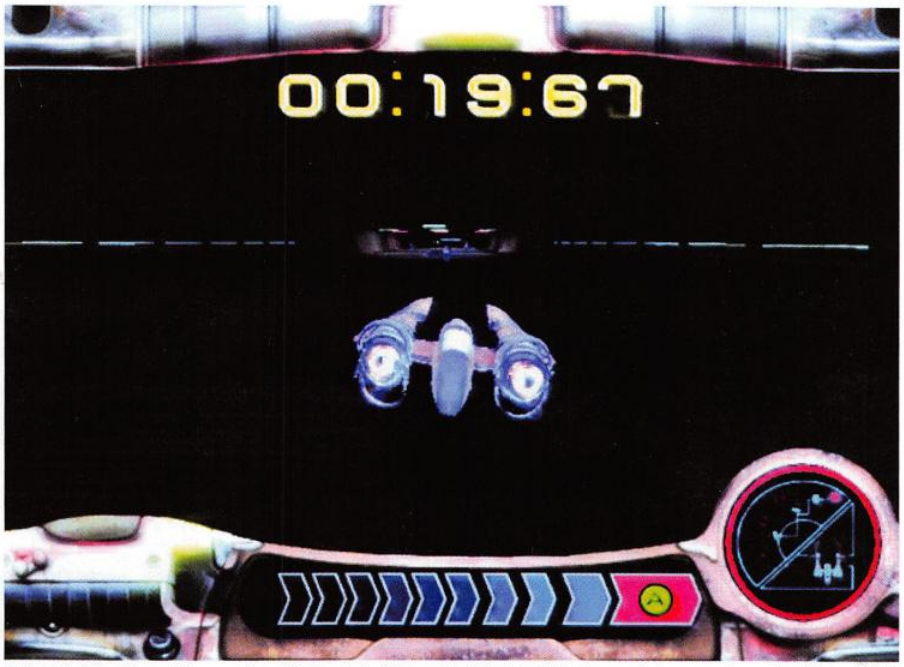
In fact, just a quick note on the whole 4,000 years business. It seems that the *Star Wars* universe is a largely timeless place, with the battle between Sith and Jedi a constant, but BioWare has taken quite a few liberties with *Star Wars*, liberties that may grate with some fans. *Knights* features





Not only do most characters have plenty of dialogue, but they lip-synch in their own language. Not that you can see this guy's lips, of course.





As well as your main quest, there are a few mini-games to stumble across, including Pazaak (a card game where you can win money) and Gunner, which lets you take a ride in the Ebon Hawk and shoot down enemy ships.

LIVE OR DIE?

The combat in *Knights* is Dungeons & Dragons only with accelerated dice throwing. Attacks, defence and specials are successful (or not) depending your character's stats and on the roll of a die. It sounds pretty geeky, but BioWare has managed to implement it so well that it works like the fighting really is in real time. Because things can get complicated, you can pause the action at any time and 'stack' moves for your fighters. We know that it's brilliant because you can tailor the fighting in any way you like so, if you like, you can have the action pause after every throw of the die just like in *Final Fantasy*.

24:00 TIMELINE HIGHLIGHTS

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

00:05 MINUTES



Thrown in at the deep end, you don't know who you are or how you got where you are. No time to think, and there's a Sith attack to escape – time to learn the basics.

03:00 HOURS



You've played through the game's opening act and you've just enrolled in the Jedi Academy on Dantooine, but there's definitely something not quite right about it...

2 DAYS



You're well on your way to becoming a Jedi Master – or Dark Lord of the Sith. It's around this point that your Jedi powers become interesting... very interesting.

technology which is far in advance of anything Lucas has in the films: stealth belts that render the wearer invisible, brain implants that enhance the user's battle abilities and a metal that is Lightsaber-resistant are just a few examples (the latter of which is oddly used to make blades, but not armour). We know why they've done it – largely to shoehorn the BioWare PC RPG into a *Star Wars* universe and afford you more customisable characters. For us, suspending disbelief was fairly easy given all the Wookiees, Lightsabers and Jedi running around, but for anyone who loathes the new movies, it may be a liberty too far.

Still, at least you can't fault the battles. BioWare has managed to make turn-based fighting seem like real time. The fighting system is based on the d20 system but you'd never know it. Hidden 20-sided dice rolls determine the outcome of every attack, defence, Force Power and so on. It's far too complicated to go into any detail here without using up the rest of the space in this review, but you should take our word that it works brilliantly. The beauty is that it remains a fluid process which in turn enables drama and excitement. Oh, and one other thing – the battle animations are so good that when you get a couple of Jedi up against one another, it really is like watching a Lightsaber duel.

Dialogue also evokes Lucas' films – "I'm Shana Denis, I'm here to rescue you," and the ubiquitous, "I have a bad feeling about this," correspond to Lucas' idea that the *Star Wars* universe contains rhyming couplets. Pretentious or not, *Knights* does follow that rule to the letter. Indeed, the use of dialogue is just another area where *Knights* excels. There are some 10,000 lines of spoken (yes, spoken) dialogue and it shows.

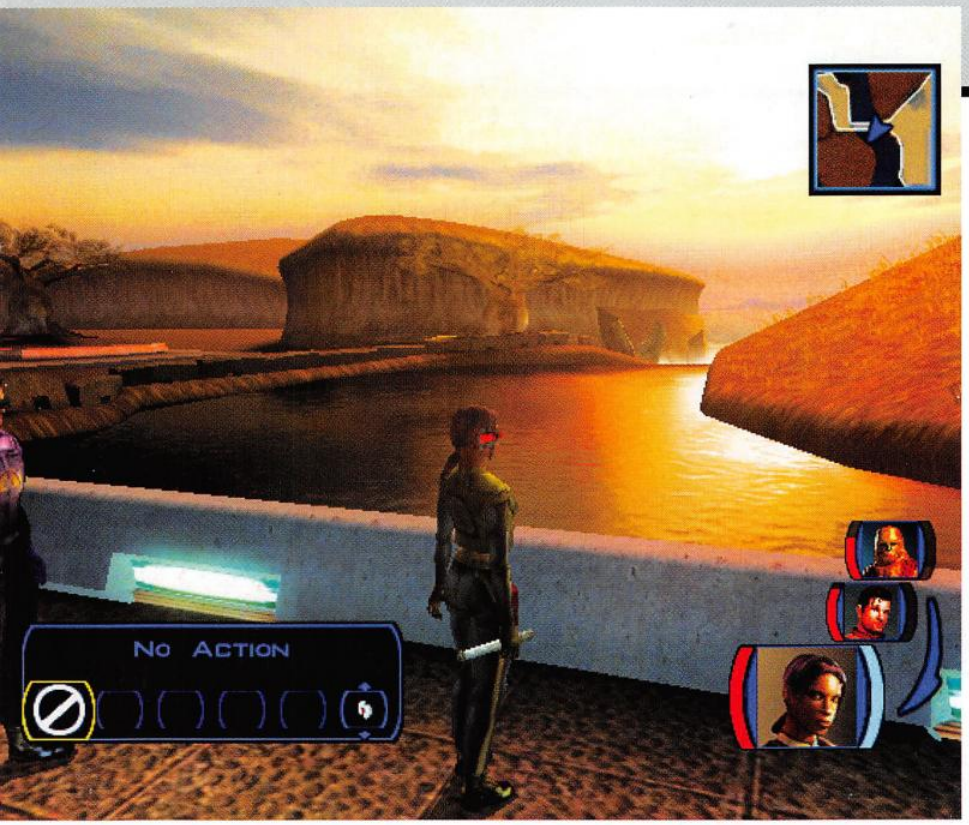
"THERE'S A CONSTANT TUGGING BETWEEN GOOD AND EVIL, NEATLY REPRESENTED BY A SCALE AND BY THE WAY YOUR CHARACTER LOOKS"



The battle system can be completely customised – you can have it turn-based or real time, or every stage in between.



You can control any of the members of your party although conversations and decisions only affect the central characters.



Almost every NPC will offer up at least a single remark – most can be engaged in conversation, while major characters can be conversed with for five or ten minutes at a time. This is just another reason why *Knights* conveys the feeling of being right in the middle of a living, breathing world. There are times when there is almost too much talking and not enough action but, as with much in *Knights*, the choice of whether you sit through it all is entirely yours.

And this is the best part of *Knights*. It's a game that gives the choice to the player. You always feel that it's you, rather than the game's designers, who makes the decisions of where to go, what to say, how to deal with situations, which path to take. Even better, all your decisions invariably have repercussions, and these can can radically change the game's balance. Everything you say and do will affect how the NPCs react to you, or even how an entire planet will treat you. Even if you play for the Republic or the Sith. That's right – it's your choices that determine if you're a good Jedi or a Dark one.

It's all elegantly done too – choose to steal a widower's last opportunity for a meal then you'll score Dark Side points; help her by buying a hunting trophy from her for an inflated price and you'll score for the Light Side. There's a constant tugging between good and evil, neatly represented by a scale and by the way your character looks. Go for the good guys and you'll look healthy, start down the dark path and pale skin, red eyes and bulging veins will be your friends. This has a bearing on almost every aspect of the game – from how the story pans out to how you're perceived in the game (hit the top of the dark scale, for instance, and it's possible that people will simply flee rather than risk speaking to you) and it even goes as far as which objects and powers you can use.

Of course, compared to a Japanese RPG such as, say, *The Wind Waker*, *Knights* is a very different beast. Without any kind of strict structure to hold it all in, it's a very open-ended affair. After the game's opening act, you're pretty much left up to your own devices and can travel freely around the galaxy without the need for a new ability or object. And like many of BioWare's previous RPGs, you can choose to go for the main plot or take your time playing through the numerous side quests, all of which only serve to make the game a much richer experience.

Obviously, we could pick holes in the shocking drops in frame rate, the incredibly obtrusive loading times or even the fact that Lightsabers don't chop limbs or heads off. But the truth of the matter is that there's so much that's right about *Knights*, it would be unfair to do so. It has a captivating story (complete with a few twists), three-dimensional characters made all the more believable by the generally excellent voice acting, and it gives enormous control and freedom to the player. With it, BioWare has cemented itself as the number-one RPG developer outside of Japan… oh, and has made just about the best *Star Wars* videogame ever in the process. And that, on all the previous evidence, is no mean feat.

VERDICT 9/10
AN INSPIRATIONAL USE OF THE STAR WARS LICENCE

CHOOSE YOUR OWN ADVENTURER

Creating your character in the game is one of the most important things you'll do when playing *Knights* – after all, you'll be be stuck with it for at least 30 hours. You can pick from male or female, and then one of three different classes – Scoundrel, Soldier or Scout, each with different abilities. Next, you choose a portrait from a fairly large selection, before selecting specific skills and allotting points to each of your character's abilities. Oh, and you also have to give them a name. Of course, you could get the computer to do all of this for you. The choice, as is the main theme of *Knights*, is yours…





Most conversations will give the option of being nice or nasty to people. Remember kids, hate leads to suffering.

FAQs

Q. CAN MY LIGHTSABER BE PURPLE?
Yep. You can pick any colour (and indeed combination) of Lightsaber: purple, red, blue, green or yellow.

Q. CAN I MAKE FRIENDS?
There are nine characters who can join your team, but only two can be in your immediate party at a time.

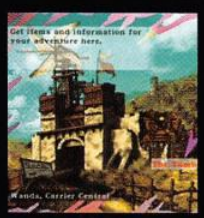
Q. JUDGE ME BY MY SIZE?
Completing just the main story will take between 15-20 hours, but include all the side quests and you're talking closer to 40.

DETAILS



Breath Of Fire: Dragon Quarter

FORMAT:	PS2
ORIGIN:	Japan
PUBLISHER:	Capcom
DEVELOPER:	In-House
PRICE:	$99.95
RELEASE:	Q4 '03
PLAYERS:	1



Unlimited SaGa

FORMAT:	PS2
ORIGIN:	Japan
PUBLISHER:	Square Enix
DEVELOPER:	In-House
PRICE:	$99.95
RELEASE:	Out Now
PLAYERS:	1



Xenosaga Episode 1: Der Wille zur Macht

FORMAT:	PS2
Origin:	Japan
PUBLISHER:	Namco
DEVELOPER:	In-House
PRICE:	$99.95
RELEASE:	TBC
PLAYERS:	1

GROUP TEST

NO EXPERIENCE NECESSARY

THE PLAYSTATION2 IS CERTAINLY THE PLACE TO BE FOR RPG FANS, BUT WHICH OF THIS LATEST BATCH WILL LEVEL UP AND WHICH WILL FALL IN BATTLE?

What makes a game an RPG? Statistics? Dragons and goblins? A spiky-haired lead character perhaps? In truth, it's impossible to pin down just what categorises a game as 'role play' – the term is applied to a more varied selection of titles with each gaming generation. But it's this diversity that makes the genre such a joy, as is wonderfully proved by these three choice cuts. We've battled, adventured and trekked until weary in an attempt to ascertain which of this latest batch of role-players from respected developers can be deemed superlative. Each has made waves previously with PSone predecessors but which can claim 128-bit supremacy? **games™** adopts the position and kicks back for several hundred hours to find out...

AESTHETICS You'll be seeing a fair bit of them, so how do they look?

Breath Of Fire

Cel-shading, eh? It's everywhere. But looking at *Breath Of Fire*, it's plain to see why – when properly used, it can really make a title stand out. Settings look superb and while some aspects of the characters (most notably faces and clipping) are a little disappointing, lighting and other areas make up for it. Music is similarly varied but although much of the score is spot-on, there's too much repetition of samples in battles sequences.

Unlimited SaGa

Unlimited SaGa is very high-res, very beautiful and very distinctive – all in 2D. Unfortunately, while the static sprites and backdrops are excellent, animation is another story entirely. There are simply far too few frames holding the many actions together and when the characters look so good when still, the ropey movement looks even worse. On the plus side, the music and cut-scenes are of the high standard we've come to expect from Square.

Xenosaga Episode 1

We have a winner. *Xenosaga* is one of the most beautiful games we've seen – from the superb character models to some jaw-dropping effects. The only gripes are that a few battle effects and some enemy designs are less than stunning and some areas do suffer a little edginess, but that's nothing major. Audio is equally impressive and the score complements the action beautifully, leaving only a few lines of voice acting to let the sonic side down.

STORY Engrossing plot twists or rehashed nonsense?

Breath Of Fire

Dragon Quarter depicts a sinister future where man must live underground and young Ryu is tangled in a web of intrigue. Thanks to the unique Scenario Overlay system, certain aspects of the plot aren't addressed until a second playthrough, allowing repeat plays to fully explain what goes on. Obviously, not everyone will want to go through twice just to learn more but we have to commend Capcom's decision to try something new.

Unlimited SaGa

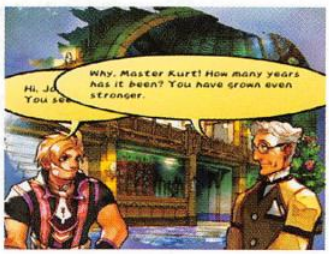
While most RPGs have some huge ultimate task to perform, *Unlimited SaGa* consists of seven more personal stories based upon the so-called Seven Wonders. Depending on which character you select at the start, your ultimate goal will vary from a simple delivery to Armic's quest to bring rain to his town. Whoever you choose, you'll get at least a glimpse of someone else's story, but the quests vary greatly in difficulty, length and quality.

Xenosaga Episode 1

Genetic alteration and moral issues abound in a wonderfully paced and constantly evolving tale. Sadly, *Xenosaga* can't fit this great story into the gameplay – it suffers from what could be called '*Metal Gear Solid 2* syndrome', leaving much of the storytelling to the cut-scenes. While these are stunningly rendered and brilliantly scripted, if you'd rather be playing most of the way, we'd have to suggest you consider an alternative.









Bleak future worlds seem to be popular among RPGs these days. Whatever happened to good old-fashioned cod-medieval adventuring, eh?







Dragon Quarter's Scenario Overlay system is an ingenious way of rewarding repeated play, while *Unlimited Saga*'s stat-heavy gaming goes above and beyond what's normally seen in a console RPG. *Xenosaga* prefers to draw on traditional elements, but does it very well.



All three games will appeal to RPG fans, though some are less accessible for newcomers.

INNOVATION What new elements can our contenders offer?

Breath Of Fire

The best new element here has to be the integration of field and battle. You can set traps to distract or damage wandering monsters before either attacking them or sneaking by unnoticed – something you'll need to do since some foes are too strong to take on. The other key feature is the Scenario Overlay system, which adds extra elements to the story in subsequent playthroughs. As this isn't the longest of games, it's good to see incentives for repeated play.

Unlimited SaGa

The stat-heavy *Unlimited SaGa* is hardly innovative, but there's a lot here that goes beyond what's expected of the genre. Freedom in the true sense of the word is almost non-existent – not once will you control a character or wander around a field or world map as everything takes place in menus, on boards or in battle. But for every great concept there's a letdown – from going against traditional RPG principles to throwing you in at the deep end, this isn't for casual or impatient gamers

Xenosaga Episode 1

Xenosaga is familiarity done well rather than something stunningly new, but there are plenty of good elements. Winning a battle, for instance, earns your party four types of upgrade points as well as the obligatory cash and items. This makes character evolution a very personal thing, allowing upgrades of individual stats as well as the usual level-up bonuses, and even the transferral of skills with enough points. Far from revolutionary, but the game doesn't need anything more.

BATTLE SYSTEMS How easy is it to fight the good fight?

Breath Of Fire

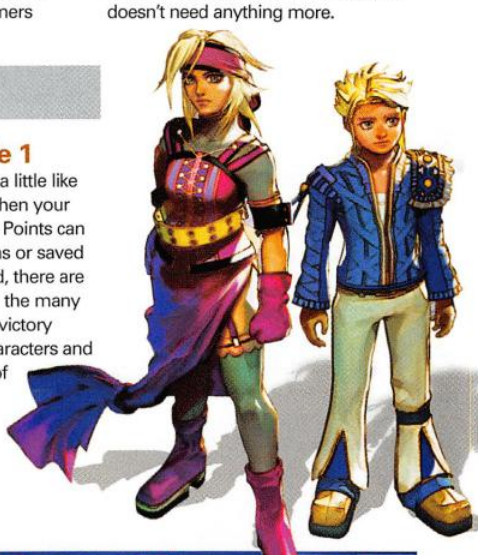
The battles are by far the strongest aspect of *Breath Of Fire*. At each turn, a character receives Action Points that must be spent to do anything – moving, attacking or using items – so you can chain together moves with startling freedom. Probably the most notable change is the reduced use of Ryu's dragon side – transformations to the single dragon are now highly restricted and should your D-counter reach 100 per cent, it's game over. Harsh maybe, but we can see why...

Unlimited SaGa

SaGa's combat uses a set of reels as virtual dice to calculate damage, though the complex system also lets you string combos together and learn super powerful skills. This is the one area of the game (save for character evolution) that offers true freedom, making for some excellent moments in one of the most impressive turn-based systems we've seen. Sadly, random encounters in the dungeons can be annoyingly frequent, and you'll be lucky to survive the onslaughts for long.

Xenosaga Episode 1

Xenosaga's combat works a little like that of *Dragon Quarter* – when your turn comes around, Action Points can be spent on multiple actions or saved for bigger attacks. That said, there are some excellent twists, with the many commodities earned from victory being used to augment characters and share skills. Add a wealth of innovative features and you've got a very solid battle system that carries the game along well.









What would be the point of an RPG without a few good fights? Thankfully, all three titles cut the mustard when it comes to battle systems.

VERDICT Summing up the overall package

Breath Of Fire

The main thing here is that *Dragon Quarter* is a *Breath Of Fire* game only in name – much of what is expected of the series is nowhere to be seen. The Scenario Overlay system is a great concept but somewhat flawed in its execution, showing those that restart the game early the same extras as people who've finished it. Ultimately, it's the ingenious battle system that wins through, allowing for some clever combinations of attacks and skills in a way seldom seen in the genre.

Difficulty is a big problem – items, money and Save Tokens are rare and some encounters are little more than elongated 'game over' sequences, especially early on. This encourages the use of the Give Up option which means you'll see the first hour or so several times before really setting off on your quest.

RATING 7

A very respectable change of direction for this well-loved series

Unlimited SaGa

If RPGs are a niche genre, this intensive number-cruncher is in a minority within it. *SaGa* is far closer to tabletop RPGs than it is to traditional console ones, which will, unfortunately, reduce its audience. 'Hard-core' is perhaps the best word to describe *Unlimited SaGa* as the amount of care, attention and time you'll need to invest in order to make anything resembling progress is vast.

The pages of statistics can prove daunting even for a more experienced player – just keeping track of your diminishing equipment and increasing skills as well as coping with the task in hand treads a fine line of being a thorough experience or just too complicated to be fun. It certainly won't appeal to Joe Public but if you're looking for a huge, stylish adventure with bit of meat on it, *Unlimited SaGa* is worth a look.

RATING 6

A heavy-going epic for seasoned RPG players only – newcomers will be a little overwhelmed

Xenosaga Episode 1

Your overall view of *Xenosaga* depends on your opinion of cut-scenes. We're not talking minute-long interludes here either – the fact that some of the longer sequences offer save points halfway through should be some indication of what we mean. But while we'd prefer to be dragged into the action while playing, the content, direction and polished presentation of these sequences cannot be ignored.

Obviously, we'd be less enthusiastic were the actual gameplay sections (which are far lengthier and more numerous than we may have made out – the cut-scene-to-gameplay ratio balances out as you progress) not so impressive in their detail, but no one area is notably lacking. This makes for a wonderfully rounded RPG package that rivals any similar title of the last few years in every key area and comes highly recommended.

RATING 8

An impressive RPG from an unlikely source – very highly recommended

WINNER

WHICH GAME HEADS UP THE PARTY?

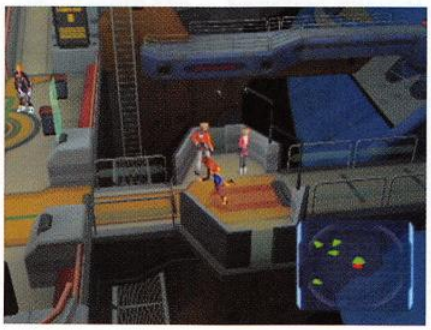
XENOSAGA EPISODE 1: DER WILLE ZUR MACHT

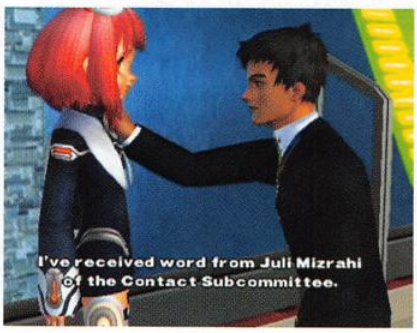
The last thing we want to do is single out one game you should play exclusively – each title will appeal to different individuals and, if you can, we recommend you check out all three. That said, *Xenosaga* did stand out and, while we're aware that the cut-scenes will be seen as a flaw by some, RPGs find it notoriously hard to deliver an evolving story without some degree of inactivity on the part of the player.

With intermittent sequences that play out like glorious mini-movies breaking up the in-depth and heavily customisable character evolution, you'll be hard-pressed not to be drawn into Namco's dark vision of the future. A traditional RPG with plenty of good ideas and interesting themes, *Xenosaga* will no doubt split audiences, but from a technical standpoint and a comparative one, there's very little with which to find fault.

With episode two of *Xenosaga* just unveiled in Japan, we're already looking towards the heavily augmented future. For now though, we're perfectly content going through this game again – curse those horribly addictive mini-games...







IT TAKES MORE THAN JUST SPRINTING AND RINGS, Y'KNOW...

SONIC PINBALL PARTY

DETAILS

FORMAT REVIEWED
Game Boy Advance

ORIGIN
Japan

PUBLISHER
SEGA

DEVELOPER
Sonic Team

PRICE
$69.95

RELEASE
October 17

PLAYERS
1-2

Never one to be outdone, Sonic has obviously seen Mario's karting, tennis, golfing and such and decided to try and keep up. He's partied, driven, raced and spun with the best of them, now turning his attention back to a pastime he hasn't been too fond of since the 16-bit era – pinball. This time around though, he's gone for a more traditional re-creation of the game and he's not playing alone – SEGA has taken the liberty of recreating several of its other franchises for the silver ball too.

Pinball Party is broken down into three separate 'machines' (only two of which are available at first) based around a trio of classic SEGA games – *Sonic The Hedgehog*, *NiGHTS* and *Samba De Amigo*. These tables are faithful to the original games and will see you trouncing Eggman, performing acrobatics and getting down with your bad self all from the comfort of two flipper buttons. This is one of the game's best features – each of the three tables is lavishly crafted and surprisingly different from the others, meaning you'll find yourself switching between them fairly often.

Also impressive is the number of modes on offer, from Story mode (basically a series of increasingly tricky missions) to the ring-guzzling Casinopolis mini-games and a virtual life section – yes, Tiny Chao Garden is back and it's as limited as ever. We can, however, safely say that the two initial tables contain plenty to do and the only reason the third (the *Samba De Amigo* playfield) is any different is because of the way it works, offering a multitude of playable tunes depending on which bumpers you hit last.



Despite the name, *Sonic Pinball Party* also has *NiGHTS* and *Samba De Amigo* tables.

Unfortunately, as good as the game is, the lack of tables is a prime weakness. The game tries to convince you that there's more on the cart than there really is – as you make progress on a table you'll reach 'new areas' which turn out to be nothing more than the same table with a fresh lick of paint. With only three playfields, extensive play is unlikely even though there are a few diversions to keep you entertained – these are mostly just ways to earn Rings for your Chao than they are interesting in their own right, although the three multiplayer party games (which are multi-pak only, unfortunately) fare notably better. If there were a little more meat on this, we'd be looking at one of the best pinball games around, but as it stands, we can't help but want more.

games™ FINGERPRINT

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME UNIQUE

POSE: The *Samba De Amigo* table actually features a miniaturised version of the maraca-shaking classic

GAMBLE: Thrill-seekers can fritter their hard-earned Rings away in the Casinopolis games.

SONIC SPINBALL



BETTER THAN

WORSE THAN



PINBALL OF THE DEAD

VERDICT 7/10

VERY ENJOYABLE BUT LACKS SUBSTANCE



Just like a full-size console table, there are plenty of bonuses and secret areas to unlock.



The Casinopolis mini-games are an entertaining distraction from the business of serious pinball...

A PARAGON PUBLICATION
NO.4 AUGUST 2003
00p

RETRO

MICRO GAMES ACTION



ZOOL
Was Gremlin's ninja ant of the Nth Dimension really such a hero?

TREASURE
We take a look at the work of this lesser known developer

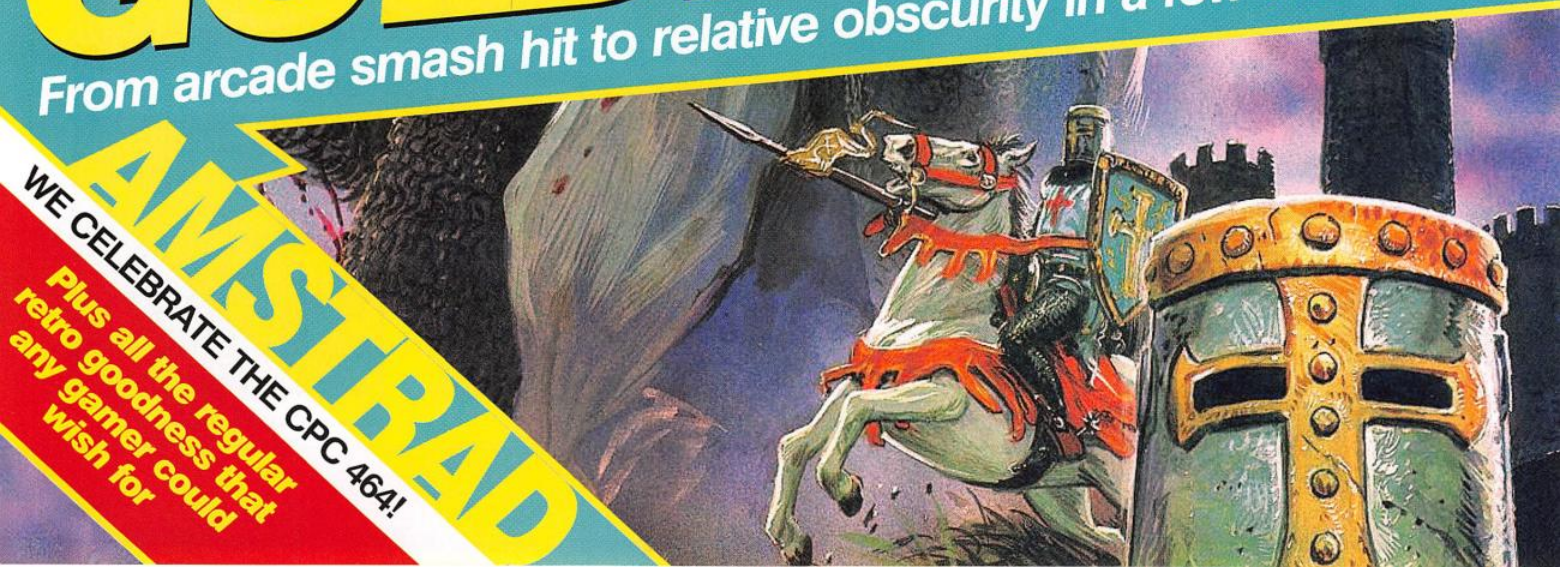
THIS MONTH IN 1991
As Sonic The Hedgehog turns heads around the world, America awaits Nintendo's new console

FLASHBACK
Join us as we explore one of the true retro classics

WHY DON'T THEY REMAKE?

GOLDEN AXE

From arcade smash hit to relative obscurity in a few short years



AMSTRAD

WE CELEBRATE THE CPC 464!

Plus all the regular retro goodness that any gamer could wish for

RETRO NEWS

N·E·W·S· R·E·T·R·O· N·E·W·S· R·E·T·R

FIND OUT WHAT'S GOING ON IN THE HERE AND NOW OF RETRO GAMING...

What makes a game a classic? Well, anyone trying to prove they're a hard-core gamer would probably argue that gameplay is the important factor, though it isn't nearly as simple as that. Some of our favourite games haven't been that great to play, but are still loved by gamers around the world.

Take *Final Fight*, for instance. It was hardly ingenious in terms of game design and there were many other similarly structured alternatives. Even so, something about it kept those 20c coins dropping into the coin-op month after month.

So what gives a game that ability to make people sit up and take notice? Sometimes it's the visuals – *Flashback*, for example, was certainly eye-catching, even for those who didn't think it was the greatest game ever.

But one element that's often overlooked and that can make or break the atmosphere of a game is its music. Thankfully, more companies are now releasing game soundtracks, and with the retro music scene thriving, the selection of CDs available is far more varied than you may realise...

Keith Edwards, Retro Editor

OUT RUN 2 REVEALED

SEGA unveils the retro remake we all hoped it was working on

After months of speculation, SEGA has finally released screenshots of the much-anticipated sequel to its 1986 arcade classic, *Out Run*. Yu Suzuki, the man behind the original, is once again in charge of the project, with AM2 preparing the game for an arcade release this autumn. Although nothing has been confirmed, it's expected that an Xbox version will follow some time later, seeing as the program is running on the Xbox-compatible Chichiro arcade board.

As for gameplay details, little is definite so far, though it's already clear that multiple routes will be available (just like the first game) and that a female passenger will once again be with you in your Ferrari. This time, however, the lovely lady will also act as a grading system for your driving. It's expected that this will work similarly to the passenger system in *Crazy Taxi*, whereby near misses and special moves will be rewarded.

As you can see, *Out Run 2* is already looking gorgeous, with a graphical style somewhere between *Crazy Taxi* and *Burnout 2*. Look out for more details when we get them.



▲ The graphics are a massive improvement over the original, and the gameplay should be just as good.



▲ Your foxy lady friend will award you points for near-misses and stunts. Just like life...

OLD FOR NEW

Midway brings retro classics to current consoles

Rather than going up into the loft and rummaging through all your old computers and consoles in order to relive that classic videogaming experience, Midway will soon be offering a simpler alternative – the *Midway Arcade Treasures* retro selection pack.

Launching on all major consoles this summer, the pack will feature more than 20 arcade classics, completely unadulterated in their original form. The disc will also include DVD-style bonus features, such as developer interviews and behind-the-scenes details on how the games were created.



▲ *Paperboy* will now be available on your fancy next-gen consoles in all its blocky glory.

ON THE DISC

The Midway Arcade Treasure Pack

720°	Rampart
Blaster	Road Blasters
Bubbles	Robotron 2084
Defender II	Satan's Hollow
Gauntlet	Sinistar
Joust	Smash TV
Joust 2	Splat!
KLAX	SpyHunter
Marble Madness	Super Sprint
Paperboy	Toobin
Rampage	Vindicators

DATA CEASED

So long, farewell, auf wiedersehen...

After years of struggling, the once popular Japanese development house, Data East, has declared itself bankrupt. The company was highly regarded within the arcade industry for titles such as *Bad Dudes Vs. Dragon Ninja*, *Boulder Dash* and *Caveman Ninja*, though it began to have difficulties towards the end of the 16-bit era and never really grasped the concept of polygons. At the time of the declaration, Data East was thought to be ¥3 billion in the red.



▲ Data East's *Boulder Dash* was a huge hit.

This Month In 1991



As we were saying goodbye to Kylie and Jason and hello to trance and all-night raves, US gamers were replacing Mario with, well, Mario. Apart from the growing anticipation for the SNES though, it was over the summer period that Sonic The Hedgehog had launched in Japan and the States, so stepping up the rivalry between SEGA and Nintendo…

MEMORABLE MOVIES IN 1991 (AMERICA)

1. **Terminator 2**
   Grossed $204,843,350
2. **Robin Hood: Prince Of Thieves**
   Grossed $165,500,000
3. **Hook**
   Grossed $119,654,900
4. **The Addams Family**
   Grossed $113,502,000
5. **Fried Green Tomatoes**
   Grossed $80,100,000
6. **Cape Fear**
   Grossed $79,100,000
7. **JFK**
   Grossed $70,405,498
8. **Beauty And The Beast**
   Grossed $25,487,028
9. **Don't Tell Mom The Babysitter's Dead**
   Grossed $25,196,249
10. **The Commitments**
    Grossed $14,919,570

UK CHARTS FOR AUG 1991

1. **(Everything I Do) I Do It For You** Bryan Adams
2. **More Than Words** Extreme
3. **I'm Too Sexy** Right Said Fred
4. **Move Any Mountain** Shamen
5. **Now That We've Found Love** Heavy D & The Boyz
6. **All For Love** Color Me Badd
7. **Winter In July** Bomb The Bass
8. **Set Adrift On Memory Bliss** PM Dawn
9. **Things That Make You Go Hmmmm…** C&C Music Factory
10. **Summertime** DJ Jazzy Jeff & The Fresh Prince

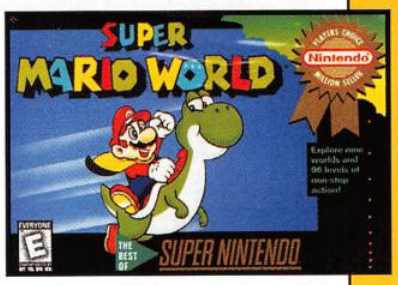
GAMING NEWS AUGUST 91

America Prepares For A Super Launch

Having dominated the games industry for years with its NES, the summer of 1991 would prove to be a test of strength for Nintendo. SEGA had already launched the Mega Drive around the world and although sales had only been moderate, the release of *Sonic The Hedgehog* in America on 23 June and Japan on 26 July had certainly turned a few heads. SEGA's machine was also US $50 cheaper than the SNES at just US $150, making it an attractive purchase for those wishing to play decent translations of the latest arcade games, as well as *Sonic The Hedgehog*, of course.

Even so, with the SNES set to launch stateside in September, the three-month head start that *Sonic* had had over the system wasn't enough to deter many hard-core Nintendo fans from holding out for the latest *Mario Bros.* adventure. As it turned out, *Super Mario World*, which came packaged with the SNES hardware for US $200, turned out to be one of the greatest videogames of all time.

As you can imagine, the amount of hype generated by Nintendo of America was reaching fever pitch by August 1991. The SNES had already been ridiculously popular in Japan since its launch ten months previously, and although the success of the system in North America was looking to be a certainty, Nintendo couldn't afford to take any risks with SEGA breathing down its neck. In a case of history repeating itself, a similar situation arose between SEGA and Sony when Dreamcast and PlayStation2 were in direct competition. Unfortunately for SEGA, Sony did a better job of out-classing the competition than Nintendo had all those years earlier, despite its surprisingly flawed 128-bit technology.



▶ It's *Mario World*. And it's super, thanks for asking.

And while we're on the subject of flawed technology, it was interesting that Nintendo should choose to redesign the SNES casing exclusively for the American market. While the Japanese, Australian and European model featured smooth curves and brightly coloured buttons, the American version was square, angular and had had the multi-coloured buttons replaced with two shades of purple. Ugly as it was though, there's a special place in our hearts for the American SNES.

WORLD NEWS

DANGEROUS DOGS

It was in this month in 1991 that a two-year-old girl was savaged by a Rottweiler dog in Stokesley, North Yorkshire. The incident happened as the child was being carried by her father. According to eyewitness reports, the girl was grabbed by the head and pulled to the ground where her father wrestled the dog away.



▶ This guy? Dangerous? Apparently so…

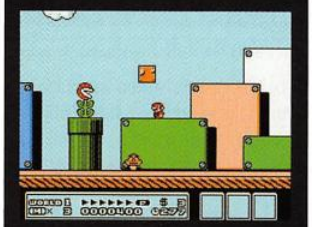
The Stokesley incident was the last in a long line of attacks since 1989, many of which had occurred in the sweltering summer heat. There were so many attacks over that period, in fact, that the Dangerous Dogs Act was passed in May 1991, requiring all notoriously vicious breeds such as Pitbulls and Rottweilers to be muzzled in public places, registered and neutered.

THIS MONTH'S FAVOURITES

The choicest cuts of classic retro gaming that have kept us indoors during these bright summer days. And those summer nights, too…

SUPER MARIO BROS 3

Seeing as *Super Mario Bros 3* will soon be released on GBA, we thought we'd have a quick play to see if it really is as good as we remember. And it is.



PAC-MAN

After playing *Pac-Man* again, it's easy to see why Nintendo's Shigeru Miyamoto is so fond of the game. And the GameCube version? We'll have to wait and see...



STRIDER

For many, *Strider* was just another arcade adventure game in the same mould as *Shinobi* and *Ninja Gaiden*. However, true gamers know that the level designs were superior.



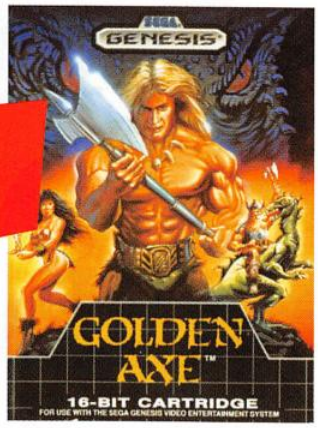
SONIC THE HEDGEHOG

It's amazing how well *Sonic* has stood the test of time. At more than ten years old, it still manages to feel fresh and engaging, for both hard-core and casual gamers.



Why Don't They Remake?

G·O·L·D·E·N A·X·E



Released: **1989**
Publisher: **SEGA**
Developer: **In-House**
Format: **Arcade**



SEGA does some strange things. For a company that's desperately trying to stay afloat, you'd think it would be making the most of all the wonderful licences that it's worked on through the years, yet somehow SEGA has always managed to overlook some of it's most popular franchises… like *Golden Axe*, perhaps.

The original *Golden Axe* arrived in arcades across the world in 1989 and starred a cast of three colourful characters – Ax Battler the Barbarian, Tyris Flare the Amazon and Gilius Thunderhead the Dwarf – each offering slightly different attacks and special moves. Two people could play the game simultaneously, and although progression through the levels consisted of little more than walking right and knocking out a few bad guys, something about the design made for an incredibly addictive experience.

Of course, if *Golden Axe* was ever remade the formula would need to be expanded somewhat to make it worthwhile. However, *Golden Axe* could easily be brought up to date, possibly by incorporating online play.

While some network games offer only one-on-one deathmatches, others are so horribly complicated that they scare off all but the most hard-core players. A game like *Golden Axe*, however, could be the perfect online title for newcomers and those who don't have hours of free time to play. Just imagine being able to enter a magical world where you can ride dragons and other mythical beasts, while working in a team beating up ogres, without pages and pages of stats to sort through.

Unfortunately, such a game doesn't exist right now, but one day, perhaps…

THE NEXT BEST THING

Golden Axe

Although not quite the remake we were hoping for, SEGA is actually releasing an updated version of the original *Golden Axe* in Japan later this year as part of its SEGA Ages PS2 range. Featuring 3D graphics and remixed music, it will be interesting to see how authentic the game turns out.



▶ Well, it looks a bit like *Golden Axe* anyway…

GOLDEN WONDERS

Aside from the original arcade game, a few other *Golden Axe* titles have been released. Do you remember any of these?



Golden Axe II 1991 (Mega Drive)



Ax Battler 1991 (Game Gear)



Golden Axe: The Revenge Of Death Adder 1992 (Arcade)



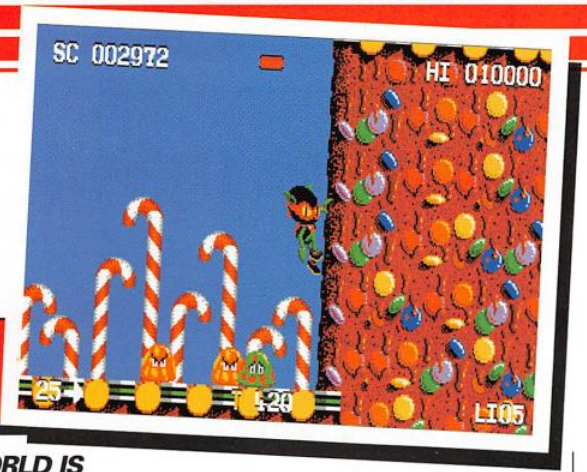
Golden Axe III 1993 (Mega Drive)



Golden Axe: The Duel 1994/95 (Arcade, Saturn)

LOOK BACK IN ANGER





ZOOL: NINJA OF THE NTH DIMENSION

"ONCE EVERY YEAR, THE GAMES WORLD IS ROCKED BY A GAME SO STUNNING, SO FAST, SO COLOURFUL, SO BIG, SO AWESOME, SO VARIED..." AT LEAST ZOOL'S PUBLISHER LIKED THE GAME...

▲ Maybe he is a ninja, but if you have to press Up to jump then we're just not interested. Sorry.

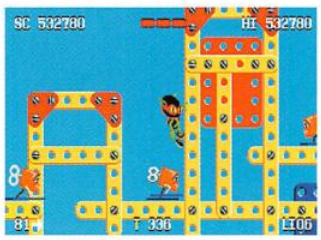


▲ Music World saw no respite from the garish and wackily themed backgrounds and enemies.

Mario is just a plumber, right? A plumber who's sold millions of videogames and consoles around the world perhaps, but still just a plumber nonetheless. And what about Sonic The Hedgehog – he doesn't even look like a hedgehog. Surely that's exactly how the designers of *Zool: Ninja Of The Nth Dimension* must have justified their actions when they set out to create what's arguably one of the most over-rated platform games ever to be forced upon the gaming public.

Initially designed for the Commodore Amiga, it's fair to say that *Zool* didn't really have that much competition; there were plenty of platform games available for the system, but none that could boast the same level of innovation or popularity as the likes of *Sonic* or *Mario*. Of course, a lack of competition is no excuse for launching a half-baked product. To be fair, *Zool* wasn't that awful, but it wasn't much good either. Even so, that didn't stop Gremlin from making out that *Zool* was the next big thing, and for some reason the press seemed to agree.

You see, aside from the eponymous hero, the rest of the game was completely predictable in just about every way imaginable. The themed worlds, which included Music World and the unforgettable Sweet World which was garishly coloured and covered with Smarties, couldn't hide the fact that the levels had been thrown together with very little thought. Add to that some gameplay that revolved around scaling walls and collecting myriad pointless items,



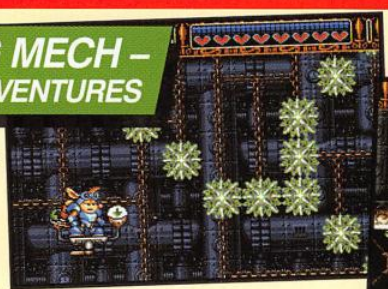
▲ A superhero ant? Oh, please...

and it was suddenly obvious that *Zool* wasn't quite what it was hyped up to be. But the very worst thing about *Zool* was that you had to press Up to jump, and that really was unforgivable.

Amazingly, despite its many flaws, the game was still converted to various other home systems and was even released as an arcade coin-op. A follow-up was also developed and was amusingly ported to Atari's ill-fated Jaguar console. So, a fitting end to what could so easily have been a very horrible series.

GREAT GAME BOSSES

AXLE GEAR/PIG MECH – ROCKET KNIGHT ADVENTURES



▼ An unconventional mech suit, yes, but are you going to argue with it?





▲ Giant metal pigs with arms like maces. Every home should have one.

In a game so full of memorable boss encounters, it's difficult to highlight one as the definitive showdown, but for sheer originality we have to hand it to Axle's Pig Mech.

Having already despatched a giant steel fish, several robot snakes and more pigs than you could ever hope to keep track of, you reach the end of Stage 5 only to be pursued by a huge mechanical suit piloted by none other than your nemesis Axle Gear. Vastly outgunned, you're given no option but to flee for your life so you make a break for it, negotiating a complicated obstacle course all the while fully aware of the metal monstrosity gaining ground on you.

You can't run forever though, and just when it seems as though it could be too late, you stumble across salvation – several tons of salvation to be precise – and suddenly Axle isn't the only one piloting a mech.

The playing field now level, the battle begins and the two behemoths duke it out, wildly flailing ball-and-chain arms at one another in the largest-scale boxing match the videogaming world has ever seen. It may not be the most traditional boss nor is it the most technically impressive, but in terms of pure white-knuckle, adrenaline-pumping action, they really don't come much finer than this.







Treasure Chest

Since Gunstar Heroes on the SEGA Mega Drive, Treasure has crafted some of the most sought-after (and pricey) Japanese videogames. But is the company truly a box of delights as the name would suggest, or does it simply play on target marketing and quirkiness to sell its niche titles?

Another Konami Konnection

Treasure is currently working with the *Tiny Toons* licence on two new videogames – *Tiny Toons: Defenders Of The Loonyverse* for PlayStation2, and *Tiny Toon Adventures: Buster's Bad Dream* for Game Boy Advance. Although details are scarce for either game, it's interesting that this breakaway team of ex-Konami employees should be working with a licence that was once so prolific for Konami itself.



▲ Treasure is currently working with the *Tiny Toons* licence. Can it match the quality of Konami's *Tiny Toon* titles?

Situated in West Shinjuku, Tokyo, Treasure was started up with ¥30 million (approximately $370,000) on 9 June, 1992. Although the company has never been particularly well known among the Western gaming masses, in hard-core circles, especially those in Japan, it's common knowledge that many of the founding members and initial programmers and designers that helped to set up the now 32-strong company were ex-Konami staff. It's a similar situation to when a group of Rare employees broke off to form Free Radical.

Of course, back in 1992 when Treasure was started up, graphics technology and the videogames industry in general wasn't nearly as evolved as when Free Radical split from Rare, though there were many parallels between the two new companies. At the time, Konami was still developing 2D sprite-based games and was highly regarded within the industry for the quality of products such as *Turtles In Time*, *Buster Busts Loose* and *The Legend Of the Mystical Ninja* amongst many others. When Treasure released its first game, *Gunstar Heroes*, it managed to capture all the values that Konami stood for, but at the same time felt new and fresh. Just as Free Radical would later capture much of the spirit and British humour for which Rare was well known, Treasure managed to do exactly the same with Konami in Japan.

Although Treasure's first release came out just one year before Sony launched the PlayStation, the company continued to gain popularity throughout the remainder of the 16-bit era. Further releases such as *Dynamite Headdy* and *Alien Soldier* cemented the Treasure name as one of the premium Mega Drive developers and made it clear that Konami had lost some of its most creative people to this extraordinary little company.

Sadly, the console generation that followed saw a few cracks appearing in some of Treasure's game design. Many of those employed at the company had previously worked predominantly with sprites and 2D scrolling backdrops, while the new line-up of polygon-pushing powerhouses required knowledge of 3D manipulation. Interestingly, Konami also struggled to come to terms with this new type of game – until the questionably average *NBA In The Zone* launched late in 1995, the company's PSone games consisted mostly of retro compilation discs, such as *Parodius*. In fact, it wasn't until

Treasure Softography

Gunstar Heroes
– Mega Drive/ Game Gear (1993, 1995)

Dynamite Headdy
– Mega Drive/ Game Gear (1994)

McDonald's Treasure Land Adventure
– Mega Drive (1993)

Alien Soldier
– Mega Drive (1995)

Guardian Heroes
– Saturn (1996)

Silhouette Mirage
– Saturn/PlayStation (1997, 1998)

Radiant Silvergun
– Arcade/Saturn (1998)

Bangai-O
– Nintendo 64/ Dreamcast (1999, 2000)

Rakugaki Showtime
– PlayStation (1999)

Silpheed: The Lost Planet
– PlayStation2 (2000)

Sin And Punishment
– Nintendo 64 (2000)

Freak Out
– PlayStation2 (2001)

Ikaruga
– Arcade/Dreamcast/GameCube (2001, 2002, 2003)

Wario World
– GameCube (2003)

Beat It

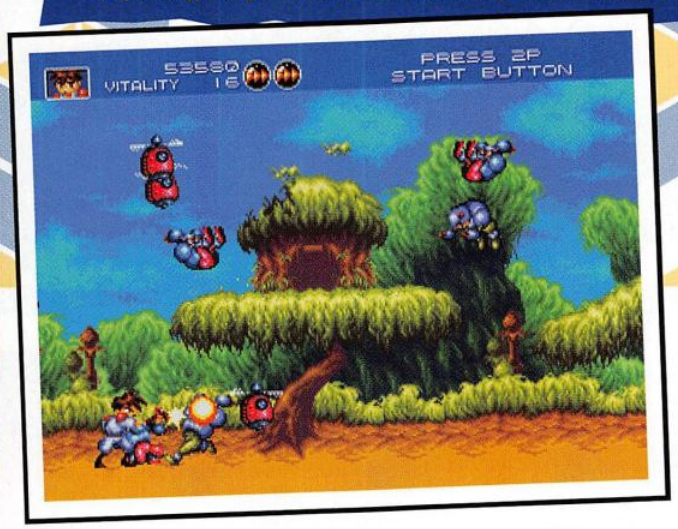
One of the only completely 3D games that Treasure worked on was an arcade title called *Gun Beat*. Running on SEGA's Naomi board, the game was shown in playable form at numerous shows and was expected to be translated across to the Dreamcast following its release in the arcade.

Similar in design to *Panzer Dragoon*, the gameplay revolved around shooting enemies while galloping along on an enormous hamster. Sadly, the project was canned, and despite rumours that it would be included as an extra with *Ikaruga*, the code has never been released.





▲ Despite looking promising (and a little odd), *Gun Beat* was cancelled prior to its planned launch in 1999.





▲ *Gunstar Heroes* for the Mega Drive and Game Gear was perhaps the definitive side-scrolling shooter of the early Nineties.

the release of *Metal Gear Solid* that Konami proved it could cut the proverbial mustard.

For Treasure, on the other hand, the 32/64-bit generation never really gave the company the opportunity to prove itself, other than to the fans who still loved the retro-style titles it was developing. *Guardian Heroes* on the Saturn, for example, was a stunning scrolling beat-'em-up with RPG elements that was massively popular with hard-core SEGA fans, but completely ignored by virtually everyone else. The same can be said for the N64 adventure game *Mischief Makers*, which again only ever received attention from the most hard-core players. But although Treasure never really achieved market saturation with any of its titles, its arcade/Saturn shoot-'em-up *Radiant Silvergun* received plenty of critical acclaim from the press. Only ever released in Japan, this old-school, up-screen extravaganza cleverly used the combined power of the Saturn's 2D and 3D processors to create impressive pseudo-3D environments and some solid 2D gameplay.

The current generation has proved possibly the most difficult for Treasure. With games development costing more than ever before, it's no longer viable for the company to work exclusively on niche market products. With the quality of releases such as *Silpheed: The Lost Planet* and *Freak Out* being questionable at best, if it wasn't for a number of recent partnerships with larger developers, we'd be worrying about the company's future. However, with the GameCube releases of *Ikaruga* (the follow-up to *Radiant Silvergun*) and *Wario World*, Treasure's games certainly seem to be getting more attention than ever before, even if the review scores are generally lower. *Wario World* is widely seen as being worse than most of Nintendo's in-house titles, though the licence alone is helping to shift copies.

Despite its recent success though, Treasure's future is still a potentially rocky ride. The company is currently in a partnership with Konami and is working on the latest instalment in the *Gradius* series. Looking a lot like *Ikaruga*, the game is likely to be a hit with shoot-'em-up fans, though it will be interesting to see if Konami can market it to a wider audience. Who knows, if Konami was to package a playable demo of *Metal Gear Solid 3* with it, we could be looking at Treasure's first million seller...

Classic Machine



SPECIFICATIONS

The CPC's cross-purpose design (it could be used for business and pleasure) meant there was a lot going on under the casing.

Processor: Zilog Z80
Speed: 4 MHz
RAM: 64 KB
Colours: 27
Sound: 3 channels, 8 octaves +1 noise channel

AMSTRAD CPC 464

OFTEN RIDICULED BY COMMODORE 64 AND SPECTRUM OWNERS, ALAN SUGAR'S CPC 464 WAS STILL A CLASSIC MACHINE AND WELL WORTH LOOKING BACK AT...

Upon its release in 1984, Amstrad's unique marketing for the CPC 464 immediately made it stand apart from its two main rivals. For starters, you didn't have to worry about digging out your old tape deck from the garage, or waiting in line to use the TV, because the CPC was an all-in-one-system.

Of course, having the luxury of a built-in cassette deck and colour monitor complete with 27 different colours (or 27 shades of green if you had the monochrome version) came at a price. You could expect to pay a whopping £400 for the colour version of Amstrad's machine – compare this to the relatively low cost of the Spectrum (£175) and it was easy to see why one achieved mass-market success and the other didn't. As far as visuals and audio went, the Amstrad uncomfortably occupied the middle ground between the Spectrum and the Commodore 64.

Whilst arguably a better looking and sounding machine than the Spectrum (although it did suffer from many ports because it shared the same processor), it always seemed to get ridiculed by C64 owners – a shame really, as it was a user-friendly machine and featured some great arcade conversions.

SIBLING RIVALRY

To complement the CPC 464, Amstrad released the 664 and the 6128. Both computers had floppy drives and proved to be very popular as business machines, especially the more powerful CPC 6128. Perhaps the strangest machine was the CPC 472. This was a special Spanish version that was made to avoid the tax on selling computers in Spain with less than 64KB of RAM and no 'ñ' key. Eventually, all computers sold in Spain – even those with less than 64KB – had to have a Spanish keyboard so Amstrad ended up making two versions.

"WHY I LOVE MY CPC 464"

Not only was the CPC 464 the first proper computer I ever owned, it was also responsible for bringing to my attention the 'my machine is better than yours' tirades that have since followed me for the rest of my gaming life.

Even today I'll still dust the old bird off for a quick game (well, as quick as tapes can be) of *Dizzy*, *Target Renegade* or *Solomon's Key*. Nineteen years on and I'm still playing it – that's longevity for you...

Darran Jones

Six of the Best

Though often subjected to hasty Spectrum ports, the Amstrad CPC 464 played host to a range of its own great titles. Like these…

BARBARIAN: THE ULTIMATE WARRIOR

Publisher: **Palace**
Year: **1987**

It's safe to say that prepubescent gamers were as excited with *Barbarian*'s cover (depicting a scantily clad warrior woman) as they were with the game itself. Those that dragged themselves away found a wonderfully playable fighter with copious bloodshed and some very challenging opponents. The best part, however, was undoubtedly the gruesome decapitations that resulted in a goblin dragging the body away whilst unceremoniously kicking the loser's head across the floor.





GRYZOR

Publisher: **Imagine**
Year: **1987**

Known throughout the world as either *Contra* or *Probotector*, *Gryzor* was yet another classic arcade conversion from those talented coders at Imagine. This classic scrolling shooter was packed full of detail and represented a real challenge to anyone with an itchy trigger figure. Once you got to the later levels, things got even more impressive (not to mention hectic) with some great 3D sections and some suitably tough bosses.





TARGET RENEGADE

Publisher: **Imagine**
Year: **1988**

Forget the god-awful versions of *Double Dragon* that plagued all the home machines – this was how to do a perfect two-player beat-'em-up. After the superb Amstrad version of *Renegade*, Imagine's follow-up was a natural progression for the series. Ditching the gritty visuals of the original, *Target Renegade* featured cartoony sprites to complement the over-the-top action and gave you a whole host of weapons with which to attack your assailants. Believe us when we say you'll never look at a pool cue in the same way again…



SKWEEK

Publisher: **Loricels**
Year: **1989**

Every console needs a good puzzler to keep the old grey matter ticking over and this offering from Loricels was no exception. Taking on the role of the eponymous Skweek, you were presented with 99 well-designed levels that had been covered blue by pesky aliens. Moving Skweek across the blue tiles turned them back to a more pleasing looking pink – cover the entire level and you'd move onto the next one. A plethora of power-ups, enemies and different types of tiles meant that *Skweek* lasted absolutely ages.



STORMLORD

Publisher: **Hewson**
Year: **1989**

After the amazing successes of the *Cybernoid* games and *Exolon*, Raffaele Cecco cemented his reputation as a superb Amstrad programmer with the release of the gobsmackingly good *Stormlord*. Set in an amazing-looking fantasy world (complete with massive mushrooms and semi-nude fairies) *Stormlord* was a fantastic platformer that saw you rescuing fairies from four different levels. Even the ridiculously hard difficulty setting did little to stem your enthusiasm for the later levels. All in all, an instant classic.



DRILLER

Publisher: **Incentive**
Year: **1987**

Easily the most ambitious game on the Amstrad, *Driller* was the first title to use the revolutionary Freescape engine (a new 3D program). The Ketars had abandoned their mining expeditions on Mitral and it was down to you to install 18 rigs so that the built-up gas could be safely dispersed. While playing *Driller* was an incredibly laborious process, there was no denying that this was something really special. Later Freescape games like *Dark Side* and *Castle Master* continued to push the CPC to its graphical limits



AMSTRAD

64k COLOUR PERSONAL COMPUTER




























































CPC 464 COLOUR

Classic Machine


































































▶ The lush background art was out of this world (quite literally) but it was Conrad B Hart who stole the show with his rotoscoping.

F·L·A·S·H·B·A·C·K
T·H·E Q·U·E·S·T F·O·R I·D·E·N·T·I·T·Y

IT'S LIKE PRINCE OF PERSIA, BUT WITH ALIENS – WHAT MORE COULD YOU POSSIBLY WANT FROM A GAME, EH?

Greatest RETRO Game Ever

Everyone remembers the first time they were really blown away by a game's outstanding graphics. While it might not have been the very first time for us, one of the instances that stands out most in our mind was when Delphine released *Flashback* for the Amiga. Despite being the sequel to *Another World* – a screen-by-screen adventure game that set a new standard in rotoscoped animation – *Flashback*'s style was clearly influenced more by the earlier *Prince Of Persia*. In fact, replace the alien setting with a Persian palace and the Morphs (alien invaders with the ability to imitate humans) with turban-wearing guards and it could have been the same game…

As was the case with some of Delphine's other products – *Another World* and *Cruise For A Corpse* immediately spring to mind – *Flashback* had a very simple yet compelling storyline. Although you control Conrad B Hart, you don't actually know this at the start of the game – mainly because having uncovered a conspiracy to take over the Earth, you've had your memory wiped and have been dumped in the middle of an alien jungle (happens to the best of us).

It's here that the adventure to recover your mind from the Morphs, reach the alien homeworld and prevent their plans from coming to fruition begins. And while it's nowhere near as hard as its predecessor, it's still a tough (but immensely enjoyable) adventure.

Format(s): **Amiga (first), PC, Mac, SNES, Mega Drive, 3D0, CD-i, SEGA MegaCD, Jaguar**
Publisher: **US Gold/Mindscape**
Developer: **Delphine**
Price: **£Varies**
Release date: **1992**

While the game was highly polished in terms of background art and presentation, these weren't the things that made a lot of people's jaws hit the floor. Instead, it was the animation – using a system that Delphine had branded Cinematique (and had used for a handful of its titles prior to *Flashback*), the star of the game was most certainly Conrad himself, moving in a more lifelike way than any game character had ever done before. Thanks to Conrad having the ability to do everything the Prince could do and more besides – including forward rolls to enter narrow areas and running jumps to access far-off ledges – *Flashback* far surpassed *Prince Of Persia* with regard to the realism of its lead character.

But *Flashback* didn't just boast great visuals. Thankfully, the gameplay matched the standard of the graphics by offering challenging level design, some annoyingly head-scratching puzzles (which often included working out how to take out certain enemies and move on without getting annihilated yourself) and more than a few well-presented, yet not too complicated, cut-scenes to keep the story moving along. It was proof that while presentation was important, a game didn't have to be bogged down with complicated controls and overly important plot threads to be compelling – an art that appears to have been lost somewhat in the mire of today's industry.

If only the rumours of a *Flashback* remake for the GBA were true...



▶ Remind you of anyone? Conrad's movement was very like the Prince of Persia's.

BEFORE & AFTER

Flashback is the second game in a trilogy and the most accomplished of the three titles. But there's no doubt that *Another World* (the game that, with *Prince Of Persia*, brought rotoscoping to the fore of games animation) was a decent experience – even if it did feature numerous *Dragon's Lair*-style 'do this or die' segments and was too short and stupidly hard. Sadly, the same can't be said for the third game, *Fade To Black*. Although the move into 3D was to be expected, it made the game less playable and left fans disappointed.



Comix Zone (Mega Drive) SEGA, 1995 – American advertisement

FINAL FANTASY FAMILY TREE

In 1987, Squaresoft was apparently on its last legs. At the same time, Enix's *Dragon Quest* was proving extremely popular. Mimicking what Enix had achieved, Squaresoft poured its resources into one last 'make or break' title – *Final Fantasy*...

HANDHELDS

FINAL FANTASY



1987
NES
Simple in terms of story and execution, it's unlikely that the designers of *Final Fantasy* on the NES were aware of just how big the game would be. Now, 16 years later, the series continues to go from strength to strength.

FINAL FANTASY II



1988
Famicom
Released just one year after the original, *Final Fantasy II* failed to ignite the same level of interest as its predecessor. Many felt that the game simply wasn't enjoyable to play and an English translation was never discussed.

FINAL FANTASY III



1990
Famicom
With a two-year gap between this and the second game, Squaresoft had used the time wisely to address some of the unpopular elements in *Final Fantasy II*. This would see big developments made with regard to the turn-based battles.

FINAL FANTASY I + II



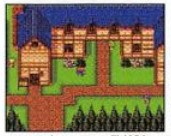
1994
Famicom
Re-released to coincide with the launch of a new, sleeker Famicom, a single cartridge housed *Final Fantasy* and *Final Fantasy II*. Despite the enormous number of Famicoms already sold, over a million units were shifted.

FINAL FANTASY IV



1991
SNES
Here's where it starts to get confusing. As only one NES *Final Fantasy* game had been released in the West, *Final Fantasy IV* was known as *Final Fantasy II* in America. Although unoriginal, this was still a decent game.

FINAL FANTASY V



1992
Super Famicom
Although *Final Fantasy IV* was criticised for its lack of originality, *Final Fantasy V* (which launched one year later) was thought by many to be worse still. With a predictable storyline, the game was never released outside Japan.

FINAL FANTASY VI



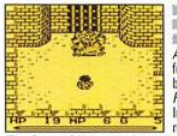
1994
SNES
Getting the series back on track again, *Final Fantasy VI* (*III* in America) is seen as the game that linked the classic hand-drawn titles with the pre-rendered *Final Fantasy VII* on PSone. This title was darker and more mature than its predecessors.

MYSTIC QUEST



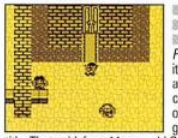
1992
SNES
Going back to basics, *Mystic Quest* was seen as an RPG for beginners, making it too simple for most *Final Fantasy* fans. Released in America in place of *Final Fantasy V*, the game later launched in Japan as *Final Fantasy USA: Mystic Quest*.

THE FINAL FANTASY ADVENTURE



1991
Game Boy
The Final Fantasy Adventure didn't feature turn-based battles like most *Final Fantasy* games. Instead fights were in real-time, much like *The Secret Of Mana*. Incidentally, both titles shared the name of *Seiken Densetsu* in Japan.

FINAL FANTASY LEGEND



1989
Game Boy
It's easy to criticise *Final Fantasy Legend* – it's short, restrictive and has little in common with the other *Final Fantasy* games, aside from the title. That said, for a 14-year-old Game Boy game, it actually isn't that bad.

FINAL FANTASY LEGEND II



1990
Game Boy
Longer and far better looking than the original *Final Fantasy Legend*, the main criticism levelled at this follow-up was that pretty much every gameplay flaw from the first game had been carried across. Close, but still no cigar.

FINAL FANTASY LEGEND III



1991
Game Boy
They say third time lucky, and for many *Final Fantasy* fans that was the case with the third *Final Fantasy Legend* game. As well as far better graphics and a half decent storyline, the game had an overhauled menu system and improved battles.

HANDHELD REMAKES

SPIN-OFFS

VARIATIONS

REMAKES

ONLINE

CHOCOBO DUNGEON



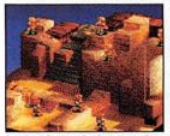
1997
PSone
Concentrating on the ostrich-like Chocobos that had featured in the *Final Fantasy* series, *Chocobo Dungeon* was an RPG with cutesy versions of some of the favourite *Final Fantasy* characters. A follow-up was released a year later.

FINAL FANTASY VII



1997
PSone/PC
As one of the titles that helped Sony to dominate the market, *Final Fantasy VII* was massively popular all around the world with over three million units shifted in Japan alone. A perfect blend of imagination and technology, the game fully deserved its success.

FINAL FANTASY TACTICS



1997
PSone
Stepping away from the usual *Final Fantasy* formula, *Tactics* omitted the dramatic cut-scenes and storyline in favour of level-based battles that took place on abstract 3D battlegrounds. A GBA update is on the way.

EHRGEIZ



1998
Arcade/PSone
Created by Dream Factory (*The Bouncer, Kakuto Chojin*), *Ehrgeiz* was one of the first 3D fighting games to feature interactive environments. The game also featured Cloud from *Final Fantasy VII*, giving it a popularity boost.

CHOCOBO RACING



1999
PSone
Following on from the success of *Super Mario Kart* and *Mario Kart 64*, *Chocobo Racing* was nothing more than a cutesy kart racing game. That said, it did what it did very well and was subsequently popular with *Final Fantasy* fans.

FINAL FANTASY VIII



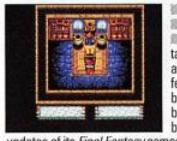
1999
PSone/PC
Taking a different approach from *Final Fantasy VII*, *Final Fantasy VIII* threw out the super-deformed Japanese characters in favour of realism. Despite some incredible graphic effects, many fans were disappointed by the game's linearity.

FINAL FANTASY ANTHOLOGY



1999
PSone
Including *Final Fantasy IV*, *V* and *VI* in Japan, the Western release of *Anthology* only featured *V* and *VI*. However, *VI* was later released as a standalone game, coming complete with a playable demo of *Final Fantasy X*.

FINAL FANTASY



2000
WonderSwan Color
As it was still not talking to Nintendo after the companies fell out over the N64 being cartridge-based, Squaresoft began releasing updates of its *Final Fantasy* games on Bandai's WonderSwan handheld in 2000.

FINAL FANTASY IX



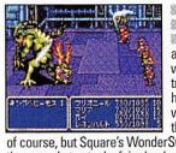
2000
PSone
While initially looking closer to *VII* than *VIII*, *Final Fantasy IX* once again disappointed many fans due to its guided character upgrade system. Whereas *VII* allowed players to tailor their characters' abilities, it was more structured here.

FINAL FANTASY CHRONICLES



2001
PSone
Featuring both *Final Fantasy IV* and *Chrono Trigger*, *Final Fantasy Chronicles* included brand new FMV cut-scenes. Sadly, despite being pencilled in for release two years ago, the game has disappeared from Sony's schedule.

FINAL FANTASY II WSC



2001
WonderSwan Color
Although outdated as far as gameplay went, *Final Fantasy II* translated well to this handheld. Nintendo was still dominating the handheld market, of course, but Square's WonderSwan releases helped the console to steal a fair chunk of trade in Japan.

FINAL FANTASY XI



2002
PS2
Greatly changing the direction of the series, *Final Fantasy XI* was among the first PS2 online games in Japan. The game required an additional hard drive to work, though an updated standalone version is expected in the West this year.

FINAL FANTASY X



2001
PS2
Squaresoft had a difficult task bringing *Final Fantasy* to PS2. The machine was notoriously difficult to program for, and matching the quality of the graphics demos it had prepared for Sony prior to launch was something it only just managed to pull off.

KINGDOM HEARTS



2002
PS2
As well as featuring plenty of Walt Disney characters, *Kingdom Hearts* also included a handful of *Final Fantasy* favourites. Squall, Yuffie and Aeris all featured early on, while a few more diverse characters could be found later.

FINAL FANTASY ORIGINS



2002
PSone
Similar in execution to *Final Fantasy Chronicles*, *Origins* featured both *Final Fantasy* and *Final Fantasy II*, along with a selection of flashy FMV sequences. Unlike *Chronicles*, however, *Origins* actually made it to game stores.

FINAL FANTASY III + IV



2002
WonderSwan Color
Although it would have been more profitable for Squaresoft to settle its differences with Nintendo and release games for GBA, the company continued to support the WonderSwan, despite an ever-decreasing market share.

FINAL FANTASY XI GIRADE NO GENEI



2003
PS2
Girade no Genei was merely an update disc offering Japanese gamers new features to play within *Final Fantasy XI*. Although nothing has been confirmed, we expect the upgrades to be included in the European version of *FFXI*.

FINAL FANTASY XII



2004
PS2
Although no gameplay details have yet been disclosed, Squaresoft has confirmed that *Final Fantasy XII* will be released in Japan before the end of this fiscal year. So far only this piece of *Final Fantasy VIII*-esque artwork has been shown.

FINAL FANTASY X-2



2003
PS2
While each game in the *Final Fantasy* series has featured new characters and locations, *Final Fantasy X-2* follows *Final Fantasy X*. This time Yuna is the main character and the game looks to include more action-based elements than before.

FINAL FANTASY CRYSTAL CHRONICLES



2003
GameCube
Developed by a new company called Game Designers Studio, *Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles* has very little in common with the rest of the series. Interestingly, the game will make use of GC and GBA link-up for co-operative four-player action.

FINAL FANTASY TACTICS ADVANCE

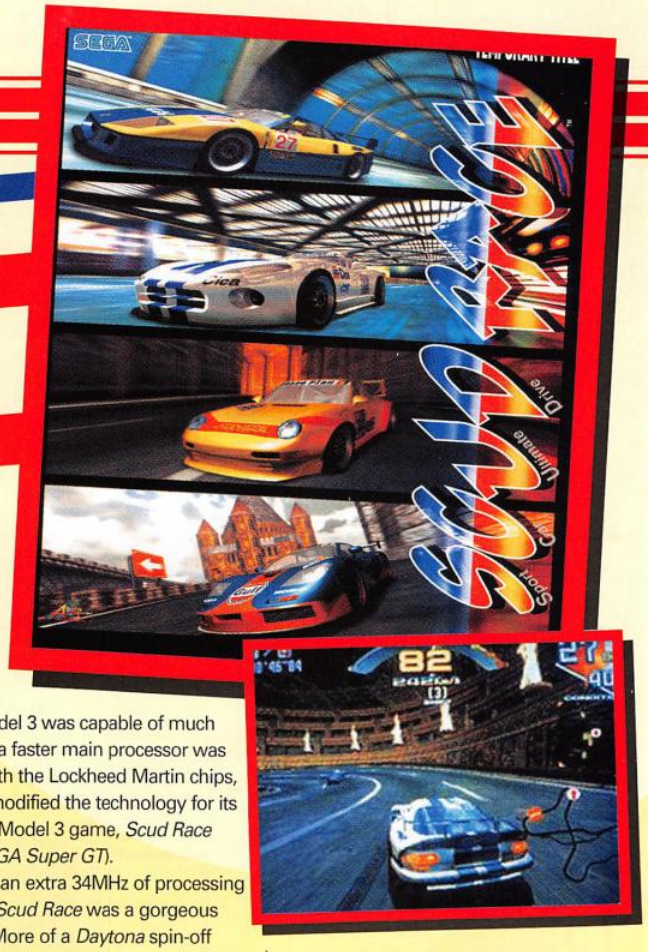


2003
GBA
After climbing into bed with Sony in the mid-Nineties, it's taken a long time for Squaresoft to begin working with Nintendo again. It will be interesting to see how well this six-year-old PSone game translates to the Game Boy Advance.

GAMES THAT NEVER QUITE MADE IT...

SCUD RACE

GAMES THAT NEVER QUITE MADE IT...



Some games come out in Japan but never get converted to English, while others get cancelled before they even make it out of production. And some, like SEGA's Scud Race, get released in the arcade but never make it to home consoles...

Title: **Scud Race**
Developer: **SEGA AM2**
Format: **Model 3 1.5 Arcade Board**
Release date: **1996**

When SEGA's Model 2 arcade board was released back in 1993, it was at the pinnacle of 3D graphics technology. Capable of processing 300,000 polygons per second and with the ability to display plenty of textures, games such as *Daytona USA* and *Virtua Fighter 2* were all possible at a resolution of 496 x 384. But by 1996 the system was looking dated. Other arcade developers' projects were approaching the level of graphical detail of SEGA games and a number of decent SEGA Saturn Model 2 conversions – *Virtua Fighter 2*, *Virtua Cop* and *SEGA Rally* – had already been released. So to stay ahead of the crowd, SEGA launched a new system – Model 3.

Using a twin graphics chip set-up designed by Lockheed Martin, Model 3 was incredibly powerful. Sadly, it was also expensive to make and with a main processor that ran at just 66MHz there were limitations with regards to the amount of data that could be handled at one time. These limitations had to be taken into account when SEGA developed *Virtua Fighter 3*. However, upon realising that Model 3 was capable of much more if a faster main processor was used with the Lockheed Martin chips, SEGA modified the technology for its second Model 3 game, *Scud Race* (aka *SEGA Super GT*).

With an extra 34MHz of processing power, *Scud Race* was a gorgeous game. More of a *Daytona* spin-off than anything else, the game had four varied tracks that took the player through built-up cities, Roman villages and lush countryside. There was also a choice of four flash sports cars – the Ferrari F40, Dodge Viper, Porsche 911, and McLaren F1 – all showing a competent, if exaggerated example of real-life car handling.

So why did *Scud Race* never get released in the home? Well, there are numerous reasons – some that SEGA has admitted to and others that are purely speculation. The most obvious is that the Saturn (which was SEGA's console at the time) simply couldn't produce anywhere near the level of graphical detail of the arcade game. Of course, the Dreamcast was released in Japan just two years later, and despite rumours that the game was running in all its glory behind closed doors at SEGA of Japan, nothing was ever released. SEGA's excuse was that the Dreamcast was a new start for the company and that it was focussing on new, exclusive titles – though that didn't stop it from launching the system with *Virtua Fighter 3*. Judging by the poor quality of Dreamcast *SEGA Rally 2*, we suspect that claims of *Scud Race* running perfectly on the hardware prior to launch were bogus.

So, will we ever see a home translation of *Scud Race*? Well, unless SEGA decides to release the game on a compilation disc it looks like the only way *Scud Race* will appear in the home is via emulation – and it's likely to be a good few years before that happens.



▲ A new chip-set created some superb graphics.



▲ Sadly, the chances of playing this at home are slim.

LAST MONTH'S SEGA SATURN SCREENSHOTS

Trouble remembering names, faces? At least you won't forget what last month's screenshots were...

FIRST ROW
Galaxy Fight
Street Fighter The Movie
Virtua Fighter
The King Of Fighters 96
Metal Black
Virtua Fighter Remix
X-Men: Children Of The Atom
Night Warriors
Pocket Fighter

SECOND ROW
Shining Force
Parodius: Forever With Me
Daytona USA
Sonic Jam
Myst
World Soccer '97
Samurai Spirits 4
Twinkle Star Sprites
Dead Or Alive
Virtua Fighter 2

THIRD ROW
Blazing Tornado
Sexy Parodius
Marvel Super Heroes
Street Fighter Alpha
Virtua Cop
ThunderForce AC
X-Men Vs. Street Fighter
Panzer Dragoon
Strikers 1945
Last Bronx

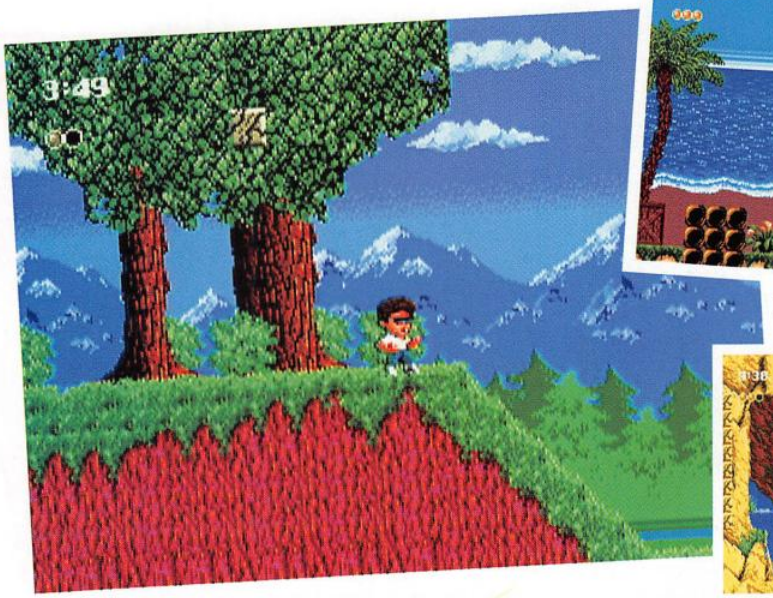
FOURTH ROW
Samurai Spirits 3
Exhumed
Primal Rage
Alien Trilogy
Virtual Hydlide
Wonder 3
Astal
SEGA Rally Championship
Elevator Action Returns
Radiant Silvergun

FIFTH ROW
The King Of Fighters 97
Shinobi X
Guardian Heroes
Vampire Savior
Panzer Dragoon Zwei
In The Hunt
Virtual On
Fatal Fury 3
Scorcher
Virtua Racing

SIXTH ROW
Real Bout Fatal Fury Special
Athlete kings
Nights: Into Dreams
Waku Waku 7
Super Puzzle Fighter
Shining Wisdom
Cyberbots
Sonic 3D Blast
Castlevania: Symphony Of The Night
Manx TT

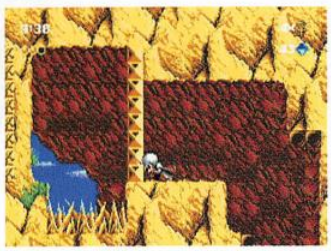
SEVENTH ROW
Layer Section
Saturn Bomberman
Street Fighter Alpha 2
Dungeons & Dragons
Virtua Fighter Kids
Street Fighter Collection
Marvel Super Heroes Vs. Street Fighter
Panzer Dragoon Saga
Real Bout Fatal Fury
Street Fighter Collection (disc 2)

EIGHTH ROW
Clockwork Knight 2
SEGA Ages
The King Of Fighters 95
Titan Wars
Parodius
Virtua Cop 2
Sonic R
Grandia
Metal Slug
Street Fighter Alpha 3





▲ The many faces of the kid they call Chameleon. Who are 'they'? Dunno...



GAMES THAT TIME FORGOT...

KID CHAMELEON

Looking at the Mega Drive back catalogue, it's easy to forget just how many great games there were. Aside from all the *Sonics*, *FIFA*s and *PGA Golf*s, the system was home to beautifully crafted adventure games like *Quackshot: Starring Donald Duck*, and *Castle Of Illusion: Starring Mickey Mouse*. Of course, many people remember these titles once prompted, though fewer are likely to recall *Kid Chameleon*.

Developed by SEGA, this atmospheric platform adventure told the tale of a mysterious amusement machine that imprisoned anyone who played it. Entitled *Wild Side*, this fantasy arcade game was said to use holograms to create an alternative reality, though the limited power of the Mega Drive meant that such imagery could only be represented by a simple *Matrix*-like grid that replaced the scenery at the end of each level.

Of course, every adventure game needs a hero and the central character with the difficult task of destroying the big boss, known only as Heady Metal, was Kid Chameleon. Wearing blue jeans, a white T-shirt and a pair of shades, he was certainly one cool dude... well, cool in a sort of Eighties *Karate Kid* kind of way.

Once into the first level however, he didn't look like an Eighties throwback for all that long, as different headgear would soon morph him into a more effective fighting machine, hence the name Kid Chameleon. These included an iron mask for climbing walls, a spiked helmet for crashing through walls, and a Samurai headdress, complete with sword. Diamonds could also be collected to power special moves, from invincibility through to more unusual ideas, such as the ability to slow down all on-screen enemies.

Aside from these unique touches though, much of the rest of the game was a generic platform affair that involved jumping over gaps and stomping on enemies' heads. It even included all the regular locations – the first area was reminiscent of Green Hill Zone from *Sonic*, while later levels featured caves, lava and a beach. On top of that it didn't even look that special; sprites were generally rather small, and the predictable scenery had a tendency to appear rough and grainy.

Despite its shortcomings, *Kid Chameleon* had a strangely unsettling atmosphere which made the game seem quite unlike anything else. It was also huge, spanning more than 70 levels, so there was certainly plenty to keep you going. Best of all, you can pick it up for a song these days. Which is always nice.

Presentation	75%
Graphics	78%
Playability	85%
Longevity	92%
OVERALL	85%

▼ Though it looks like there's a coal scuttle on your head, you are now blessed with special abilities.



Hat Tricks

Here's Kid Chameleon's complete list of hats and headdresses



Type: Iron Knight – a flat-topped helmet
Special Power: Allows you to climb walls
Diamond Power 01: Circle Of Doom (requires 20 diamonds)
Diamond Power 02: Extra Hit Point (requires 50 diamonds)

Type: Red Stealth – a samurai helmet
Special Power: Arms you with a sword
Diamond Power 01: Samurai Haze (requires 20 diamonds)
Diamond Power 02: Death Snake (requires 50 diamonds)

Type: Berzerker – a metal helmet with spikes on the top
Special Power: Allows you to smash through certain walls
Diamond Power 01: Invulnerability (requires 20 diamonds)
Diamond Power 02: Wall Of Death (requires 50 diamonds)

Type: Maniaxe – a hockey mask
Special Power: Allows you to throw axes
Diamond Power 01: Circle Of Death (requires 20 diamonds)
Diamond Power 02: Extra Life (requires 50 diamonds)

Type: Juggernaut – a samurai helmet with a skull mask
Special Power: Arms you with a tank that fires skulls
Diamond Power: Five-Way Shot (requires five diamonds)

Type: Micromax – a fly mask
Special Power: Lets you stick to walls
Diamond Power 01: Mini-Snake (requires 20 diamonds)
Diamond Power 02: Swift Mini Snake (requires 50 diamonds)

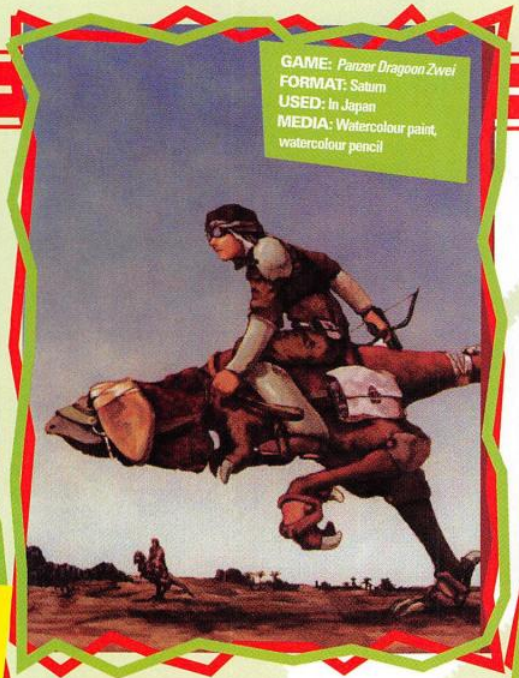
Type: Eyeclops – a green visored helmet
Special Power: Reveals hidden blocks
Diamond Power 01: Fatal Beam (requires two diamonds)

Type: Skycutter – a skateboard helmet
Special Power: Lets you fly upside down
Diamond Power 01: Invulnerability (requires 20 diamonds)
Diamond Power 02: Death Snake (requires 50 diamonds)

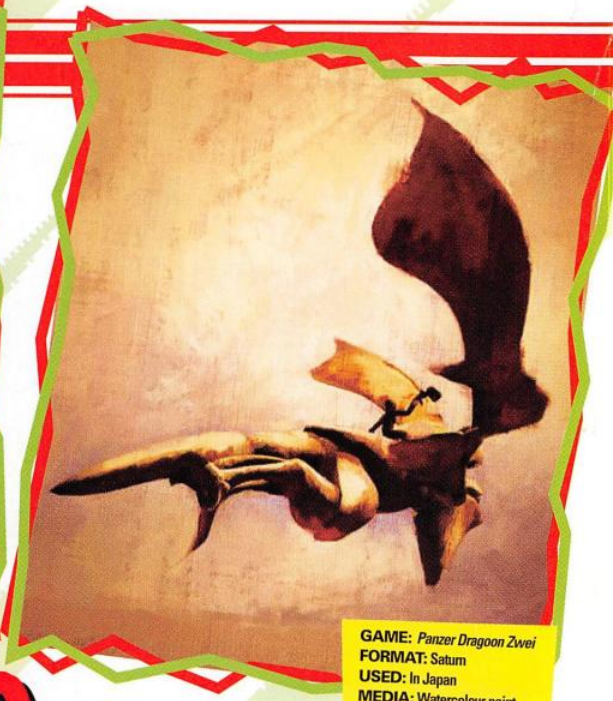
Type: Cyclone – a helmet with wings
Special Power: Allows you to fly
Diamond Power 01: Slashing Rain (requires 20 diamonds)
Diamond Power 02: Tracking Rain (requires 50 diamonds)



GAME: *Panzer Dragoon Saga*
FORMAT: Saturn
USED: Worldwide
MEDIA: Watercolour paint, watercolour pencil, CGI



GAME: *Panzer Dragoon Zwei*
FORMAT: Saturn
USED: In Japan
MEDIA: Watercolour paint, watercolour pencil



GAME: *Panzer Dragoon Zwei*
FORMAT: Saturn
USED: In Japan
MEDIA: Watercolour paint, acrylic paint

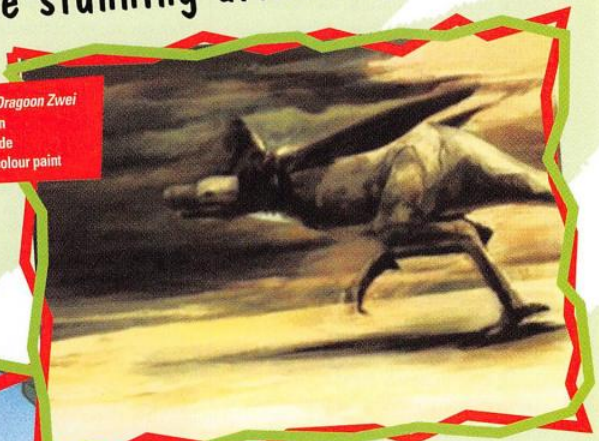
The Gallery

Like the Castlevania series, Panzer Dragoon has always been a firm favourite with hard-core gamers, not just for the wonderful gameplay but also because of the stunning artwork...

When *Panzer Dragoon* arrived on the Saturn in 1995, many were amazed at just how much beautiful imagery had been sculpted into one game. With a gentle, natural colour palette and clever use of the Saturn's complex innards to create crisply textured environments, what SEGA's Team Andromeda had achieved was nothing short of breathtaking. This level of creativity ran right through the game – British composer Richard Jacques (of *Head Hunter* and *Jet Set Radio* fame) commented on how moved he was when he first heard the orchestral soundtrack.

In-game creativity aside, *Panzer Dragoon* was one of those rare games with cover art and promotional illustrations that were just as creative as the game itself. Based on the work of French comic-book artist, Moebius, the main imagery for the original game leaned towards a comic style while maintaining a sense of fantasy and adventure. Interestingly, the style was more reminiscent of Western art rather than Japanese, though later works in the series had a far more oriental flavour. Much of the artwork used for the second game, for example, softened the colour palette to pale greens and browns, favouring a sense of lone, graceful elevation rather than action-packed battle scenes. However, it was the third game that really took videogame artistic creation to new levels...

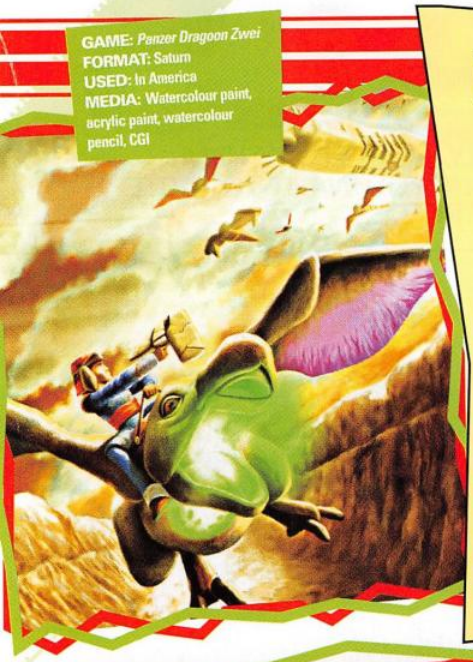
By the time the acclaimed RPG *Panzer Dragoon Saga* arrived in 1998, the Saturn was all but washed up. Even so, Team Andromeda had



GAME: *Panzer Dragoon Zwei*
FORMAT: Saturn
USED: Worldwide
MEDIA: Watercolour paint



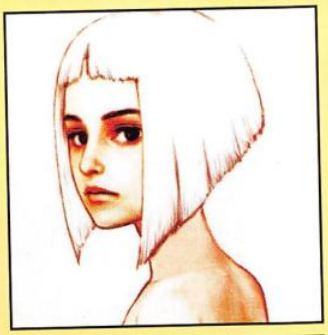
GAME: *Panzer Dragoon*
FORMAT: Saturn
USED: In Japan
MEDIA: Watercolour pencil



GAME: *Panzer Dragoon Zwei*
FORMAT: Saturn
USED: In America
MEDIA: Watercolour paint, acrylic paint, watercolour pencil, CGI

Maybe the pen isn't so mighty...

Although a number of beautiful, hand-drawn illustrations were prepared for SEGA's latest *Panzer Dragoon* game, the company used more modern-looking CGI as cover art. Presumably, this was to appeal to as wide an audience as possible, though sales figures showed that the choice actually made very little difference.



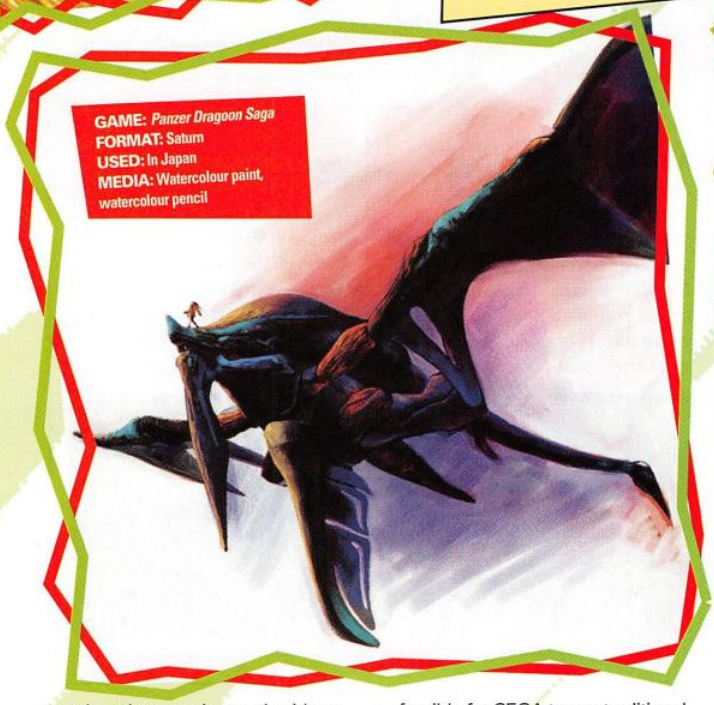
▲ The traditional artwork produced for *Panzer Dragoon Orta* proved that SEGA's artists were still on top form.



▲ Despite some very lovely hand-drawn artwork being available, SEGA used CGI on the *PDO* box.



GAME: *Panzer Dragoon Saga*
FORMAT: Saturn
USED: In Japan
MEDIA: Watercolour paint, watercolour pencil



GAME: *Panzer Dragoon Saga*
FORMAT: Saturn
USED: In Japan
MEDIA: Watercolour paint, watercolour pencil



GAME: *Panzer Dragoon Saga*
FORMAT: Saturn
USED: Worldwide
MEDIA: Watercolour paint, watercolour pencil

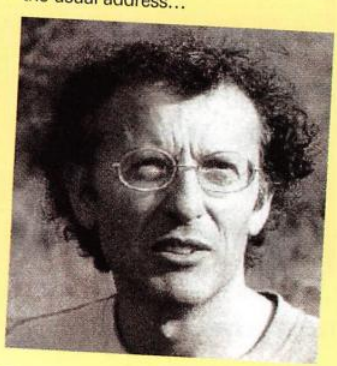
continued to pour innovative ideas into the game, as had the artists responsible for the promotional materials. Featuring richer, warmer colours than the previous two games, *Saga* had more of a focus on emotion than anything else. Featuring close-ups of the main characters' faces, much of the artwork hinted at sadness and oppression, which were two key themes of the in-game story. Seeing as the game included towns and cities that were explored on foot, as well as the usual flight sections, the artists were given the freedom to illustrate the game in ways that wouldn't have really worked before.

Of course, times change and by the time *Panzer Dragoon Orta* arrived in Japan late last year, it wasn't really feasible for SEGA to use traditional hand-painted artwork on the cover. With computer generated imagery (CGI) now widespread, the company was forced to update *Panzer Dragoon*'s image, though judging by the less than stellar sales figures, doing so failed to increase casual interest in the product. However, though CGI was used for the box, a number of traditional compositions were created. A pencil and watercolour image of heroine Orta, for example, was produced, though hardly ever used for promotional purposes. Thanks to **games™**, this hand-drawn *Orta* artwork, along with many other under-used *Panzer Dragoon* illustrations, is now available for your viewing pleasure...

The French connection

Listed in the credits of the original* Panzer Dragoon *game is an artist with the bizarre name of Moebius. But who is this elusive individual?

Born in Paris in 1938 under the name of Jean Giraud, Moebius began creating comic strips at the tender age of 18. Throughout the Fifties, Sixties and Seventies he worked on numerous projects, the most popular being Blueberry. Interestingly, the Blueberry strip was still running during the Nineties, though it's unclear whether Giraud was involved with project at that time. But this still doesn't explain why Moebius was credited in *Panzer Dragoon*. Unfortunately, we're still none the wiser as to how this comic artist was involved with SEGA's creation. The game credited him with 'Image Illustrations', though our research would suggest that Ryuichiro Kutsuzawa was responsible for producing the *Panzer Dragoon* artwork. Could it be, then, that Moebius' work was purely used as inspiration by Kutsuzawa-san, or did he actually create specific *Panzer Dragoon* pieces himself? Answers to the usual address...



ESSENTIALS

TOO MANY GAMES, NOT ENOUGH MONEY. THANKFULLY, 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

UK LAUNCH DATE
24 November 2000

MEDIA
4.75-inch DVD Disc

CURRENT PRICE
£169.99

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: Point Of Impact		Acclaim	Criterion
7	Dark Chronicle	IMPORT	Sony	In-House
8	Rez		SEGA	UGA
9	Amplitude	IMPORT	Sony	Harmonix
10	Devil May Cry		Capcom	In-House
11	Suikoden III	IMPORT	Konami	In-House
12	Metal Slug 3	IMPORT	Playmore	In-House
13	NBA Street 2		Electronic Arts	EA Sports BIG
14	Colin McRae Rally 3		Codemasters	In-House
15	Project Zero		Wanadoo	Tecmo
16	Ape Escape 2		Sony	In-House
17	Hitman 2: Silent Assassin		Eidos	Io Interactive
18	Wakeboarding Unleashed		Activision	Tecmo
19	Virtua Fighter 4 Evolution		SEGA	AM2
20	Kingdom Hearts		SCEE	Squaresoft

VIEWPOINT

METAL SLUG 3

A side-scrolling shoot-'em-up with cartoon-styled graphics might not sound like much, but then you've obviously never experienced the *Metal Slug* series – probably the purest examples of gameplay we've seen in a very long time. It had better come out over here...



VIEWPOINT

WAKEBOARDING UNLEASHED

No, it's not as good as *THPS4* – but then, when you're pulling off stunts off the back of a boat at 60mph, who cares? Shaba's extreme game is the perfect thing for anyone bored of waiting for the next *Tony Hawk* game.



VIEWPOINT

AMPLITUDE

Either you've got the skill to play *Amplitude* or you haven't – according to those in the office who can breeze through the top difficulty with one eye shut, it's something you're born with. Of course, if they let us have a go, we'd soon prove otherwise...



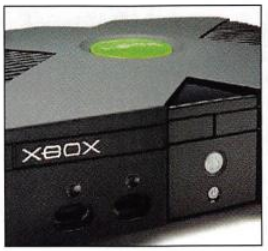
VIEWPOINT

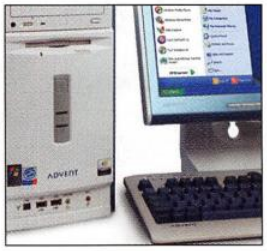
MUSIC 3000

Of course, those of you who prefer something a bit more technical to the 'hit the targets' formula of *Amplitude* will probably have picked up Jester's top-notch music creator by now. Not surprisingly, it's the best of its kind – not just on the PS2, but anywhere. Really.





GAMECUBE

DETAILS

MANUFACTURER
Nintendo

UK LAUNCH DATE
3 May 2002

MEDIA
3-inch Optical Disc

CURRENT PRICE
£129.99

Though the GameCube seems destined to struggle, Nintendo's box of delights is still worth a look. Admittedly, third-party support is rapidly dwindling, but you only have to look at the first-party releases to appreciate the quality gaming on offer – Nintendo still makes some of the finest games you'll ever play and missing out on them isn't an option.



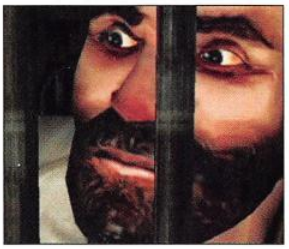
TOP TWENTY MUST-HAVE GAMECUBE GAMES

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	TimeSplitters 2		Eidos	Free Radical
6	Burnout 2: Point Of Impact		Acclaim	In-House
7	Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 4		Activision	Neversoft
8	Ikaruga		Treasure	In-House
9	Super Mario Sunshine		Nintendo	In-House
10	Eternal Darkness		Nintendo	Silicon Knights
11	Soul Calibur II	IMPORT	Namco	In-House
12	Resident Evil		Capcom	In-House
13	Resident Evil Zero		Capcom	In-House
14	Mario Party 4		Nintendo	Hudson
15	Viewtiful Joe	IMPORT	Capcom	In-House
16	Hitman 2: Silent Assassin		Eidos	Io Interactive
17	Skies Of Arcadia Legends		SEGA	Overworks
18	Splinter Cell		Ubi Soft	In-House
19	Star Wars: Rogue Leader		Activision	Factor 5
20	Animal Crossing	IMPORT	Nintendo	In-House

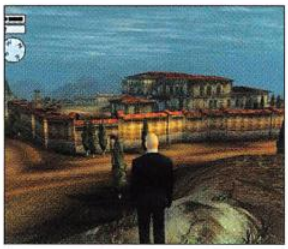
VIEWPOINT
IKARUGA
Still one of the hardest shoot-'em-ups we've ever played (with the exception of *Dodonpachi Dai-Ou-Jou* perhaps), and yet it's only been available to the majority of gamers for a very short while. All the more reason to nip out now and pick up a copy, eh?



VIEWPOINT
ETERNAL DARKNESS
With Hollywood currently going through a phase of buying up every licence that may be decent enough to spawn a movie, it's good to know that in *Eternal Darkness* they've picked a winner. At least they don't have to stray too far from the original plot...



VIEWPOINT
HITMAN 2: SILENT ASSASSIN
Well, it's about bloody time too. Although Eidos has spent absolutely ages getting around to releasing the GameCube version of Io's great assassin adventure, at least it's still as good as we remember it oh-so-long ago.



VIEWPOINT
SKIES OF ARCADIA LEGENDS
Although the GameCube is fairly light on proper RPG titles at the moment, SEGA's epic pirate-based adventure still stands out as one that must be owned simply for the quality of the product. If only it looked a little nicer...



ESSENTIALS

TOO MANY GAMES, NOT ENOUGH MONEY. THANKFULLY, 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...

XBOX

DETAILS

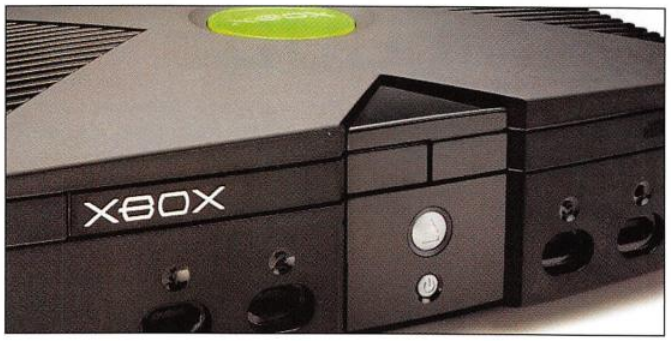
MANUFACTURER
Microsoft

UK LAUNCH DATE
13 March 2002

MEDIA
4.75-inch DVD Disc

CURRENT PRICE
£129.99

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	Project Gotham Racing		Microsoft	Bizarre Creations
7	Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 4		Activision	Neversoft
8	Project Zero		Microsoft	Tecmo
9	Burnout 2: Point Of Impact		Acclaim	Criterion Studios
10	Dead Or Alive 3		Microsoft	Tecmo
11	Soul Calibur II	IMPORT	Namco	In-House
12	Moto GP		THQ	Climax
13	Hitman 2: Silent Assassin		Eidos	Io Interactive
14	Aggressive Inline		Acclaim	Z-Axis
15	Quantum Redshift		Microsoft	Curly Monsters
16	Colin McRae Rally 3		CodeMasters	In-House
17	Wakeboarding Unleashed		Activision	Shaba Games
18	Tiger Woods 2003		EA	In-House
19	Buffy The Vampire Slayer		EA	In-House
20	Return To Castle Wolfenstein: Tides Of War		Activision	id Software

VIEWPOINT

MIDNIGHT CLUB II

While we still prefer a good blast of *Burnout 2* to satisfy our arcade racing thrills, we have to admit that the lure of *Midnight Club II*'s Xbox Live options has seen us playing long into the early hours of the morning. Well worth a go if you're a lucky broadband owner.



VIEWPOINT

F1 CAREER CHALLENGE

While it might not be that different from previous incarnations (not that we expected it to be, of course), it at least proves that EA knows what it's doing when it comes to realistic sports titles. Plus it's the only half-decent F1 game on the market...



VIEWPOINT

JET SET RADIO FUTURE

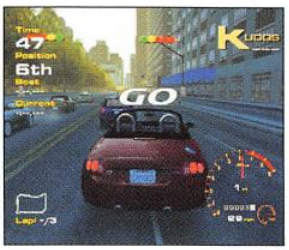
Playing the new version of *Jet Set Radio* on the GBA has made us hanker for a bit of the updated Xbox version, so we dug it out for another quick bash. The verdict? It's still a really great game, even if it did come out well over a year ago now.



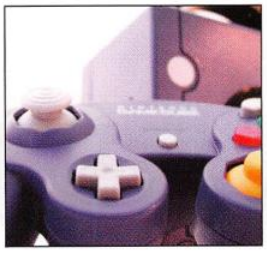
VIEWPOINT

PROJECT GOTHAM RACING

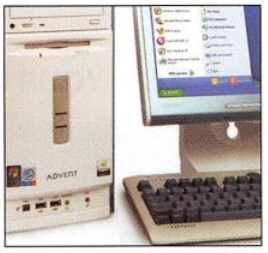
With the extremely gorgeous-looking sequel only a few months away, it looks like now's the last chance you'll have to enjoy the first game before all your attention gets diverted elsewhere – and to miss out would be such a shame.











GBA

DETAILS

MANUFACTURER
Nintendo

UK LAUNCH DATE
22 June 2001

MEDIA
Flash Cartridge

CURRENT PRICE
£69.99



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	Advance Wars 2	IMPORT	Nintendo	In-House
2	Zelda: A Link To The Past/Four Swords		Nintendo	In-House
3	Super Mario Advance 3: Yoshi's Island		Nintendo	In-House
4	Golden Sun: The Lost Age	IMPORT	Nintendo	Camelot
5	Metroid Fusion		Nintendo	In-House
6	Street Fighter Alpha 3		Ubi Soft	Crawfish
7	Castlevania: Aria Of Sorrow		Konami	In-House
8	Pokémon Ruby and Sapphire		Nintendo	In-House
9	Splinter Cell		Ubi Soft	In-House
10	Speedball 2: Brutal Deluxe		Wanadoo	Crawfish

VIEWPOINT

ADVANCE WARS 2: BLACK HOLE RISING

What? Even after we insisted you bought this one on import last issue, you still haven't got it? Hang your head in shame...



VIEWPOINT

YU-GI-OH! STAIRWAY TO THE DESTINED DUEL

Yes, okay, so you might not think it's your cup of tea, being based on a kids' cartoon and all that. Believe us though, it's so damn addictive...



PC

DETAILS

MANUFACTURER
N/A

UK 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	Championship Manager 4	Eidos	Sports Interactive
3	Operation: Flashpoint	Codemasters	In-House
4	Rise Of Nations	Microsoft	Big Huge Games
5	Freelancer	Microsoft	Digital Anvil
6	Half-Life	Vivendi	Valve Software
7	The Sims	EA	Maxis
8	Age Of Mythology	Microsoft	Ensemble Studios
9	Day Of Defeat	Activision	Valve Software
10	Sam & Max Hit The Road	Activision	LucasArts

VIEWPOINT

DAY OF DEFEAT

Damn that ever-popular *Half-Life* engine – is there no stopping it? It would seem not, judging by how popular Activision's war-based take on it has been with us.



VIEWPOINT

RISE OF NATIONS

If it's depth you want from your RTS games, then you really can't go wrong with Microsoft's hefty offering; especially since it caters both for novices and experts.



CONTACT

ILLUMINATING THE WORLD OF games™

THIS MONTH'S THOUGHTS ON SEQUELS AND UPDATES, NINTENDO AND MORE...

There are certain things that we're looking for when we select letters to be included in this section. Praising the mag is always nice, but we're not that shallow. We're really looking to coax some debate out of you all, but if you just want to make some insightful comment about videogames, then that's fine by us.



MAKING CONTACT

☐ **There are many wonderful ways to get in touch with games™; the traditional postal method is perfectly acceptable using the address below:**

games™
Paragon Publishing Ltd
Level 5
162 Goulburn Street
Darlinghurst
NSW 2010

☐ However, there are quicker ways to reach us thanks to the technological marvel that is the Internet. Email us at this address: gamestm@paragonpublishing.com.au

☐ You can also fax us youe letters to the following fax number: 02 9265 1864

☐ **ACCORDING TO SOME** websites, there is a global plot to keep us all poor and stupid. As the slumbering sports franchise dragon awakes once again, churning out 2004 versions of multi-platform mediocrity, I'm beginning to feel convinced that the plot is real. In fact, even the world of Hollywood (where DVDs with an extra unmemorable 17 minutes and a mumbled commentary by the director's best friend's cousin are released at extortionate prices) must gaze slack-jawed in envious amazement at the gaming industry.

Okay, for most of the Eighties and Nineties mainstream Hollywood careered along, merrily tweaking the same template again and again. Take a square-jawed action hero here, a plane hijack there, a sprinkle of bomb countdowns and a pinch of needless explosions and *voilá*! Release another 90 minutes of abject tedium to multi-million pound takings (and a range of bendable plastic characters that choke the under-fives).

But, smug as they were, even the film companies must've been startled to see an emerging world industry where a group of human beings have bought pretty much the same thing, over and over again, for the last ten years just because the year has gone up by one and they're getting 15 new leg animation frames and 40 new teams from Bolivia. Which leads to an interesting conundrum. Either the games-buying public are less intelligent than the film-loving Joes who inhabit your local Blockbuster (which seems doubtful considering the slack-jawed goons who hang around in mine), or there's something else at work.

As I gaze at the 2003 version of a famous footballing franchise, I ask myself the same question: why did I buy it? The conclusion: I've been led to believe by the games industry marketing machine that sports games aren't an event, or an item to be bought and used forever, but a consumable item like toilet paper or a set of disposable razors – I buy some, use them for a while, then have to go out and buy another set. Only this time they're quilted or twice as absorbent, or have six blades instead of three. And rather like a set of disposable razors, I expect the same look of disdain and snorted dismissal when I attempt to trade my earlier versions of said franchise for the latest model: "Look, I'll give you £3.50 and a punch in the face for it, but I'm being generous mate."

Our only hope is that Hollywood doesn't cotton on to us, because I know I'm weak. And *Ace Ventura Pet Detective 2004* with more accurately rendered parrots, commentary from John Motson and a music score from Ms Dynamite seems very tempting...

Ben Thomas

games™: Like addicts in need of a fix, we gamers continue to buy sequels, variants on well-known themes and games we know aren't great, but are cheap or second-hand. And while we can bemoan all of this and pine for more originality in videogames, could you really just stop buying games tomorrow? You see, like Pavlov's dogs we can't help ourselves and are programmed to buy the latest game we've been convinced is going to offer us that little bit more. But, like the odd good movie or classic album, every so often a truly great game is released and suddenly all our suffering seems worthwhile. Let's face it, we're willing victims, aren't we?

"HAS ANYONE STOPPED TO CONSIDER THAT IT MIGHT ALSO BE THAT WE GAMERS ARE GETTING BETTER AND BETTER?"

☐ **SO, THE GAMECUBE** has been underperforming and Nintendo says that it will correct its mistakes and that the next machine will be a winner. But what do you guys think people would pick if they had a choice between the PS3 and GC? I believe that the majority of gamers will opt for the PS3, the safe option. Sure, Nintendo says that its new machine will be impressive but so will Sony and Microsoft.

Nintendo did really well with the initial price of the GameCube, but Nintendo's budget for creating new consoles is considerably smaller than both Sony and Microsoft's. The reason? Both companies have funds coming from sources other than console manufacture. Microsoft, with all its PC software and accessories, and Sony, being the biggest and most well-known electrical entertainment company in the world, generate more than enough cash to sustain any losses in the console market. The only main source of profit Nintendo gets is from videogames, mainly from the GBA but even that market is now under threat from the Sony PSP.

'But the Game Boy has beaten off every competitor it's faced,' I hear you say. How is Nintendo expected to turn itself around when people think like this? Which brings me to my main point – do you think Nintendo should look elsewhere for profits as well as the videogames industry in order to be in direct competition with Sony and Microsoft so it can produce a powerful console and can afford to lose money on it? Face it, it's not like how it used to be – people want their console to do more than just play videogames, and would you buy a TV or DVD player made by Nintendo?

Cumby

games™: Another month, another letter regarding Nintendo's plight. Let's get this straight – Nintendo makes a lot of money from all manner of things, as well as videogames. Think about it for a minute; ever heard of Pokémon? Not just the games but also the T-shirts, books, bags, movies and so on. You can also be sure that whatever Nintendo's current situation with the GameCube and GBA, it is still making money. That means there's plenty of cash in the bank to continue developing consoles and games. Nintendo have been in this game a long time; they're not about to be squeezed out of their primary market.

☐ **EVERYONE SEEMS TO** think games are getting easier these days, and maybe they're right. There don't seem to be that many really hard games around. But has anyone stopped to consider that it might also be that we gamers are getting better and better? I mean, the people that say this have generally been playing games for about ten years (at least) and would have been quite young when they first began to play, so they might have had more difficulty finishing games back then than they do now. So it is not simply games getting easier but games players getting better, as we are all a lot older now than when we first started playing games. What do you think?

Ross Taylor

games™: It's an interesting point – we often hear from distressed gamers who say that games are too easy these days, but maybe the gamers are just too good. It would be nice to think that, like fine wines, gamers improve with age. Your thoughts, dear readers?

games™

Paragon Publishing Ltd,
Level 5,
162 Goulburn Sreet,
Darlinghurst, NSW 2010

Tel: (02) 9265 7679
Fax: (02) 9265 7650
Web site www.paragonpublishing.com.au

CUSTOMER SERVICES
If you have a query regarding a subscription please contact the subscription hotline on
(02) 9660 1864
or email
subs@paragonpublishing.com.au
For all other queries please contact our Customer Services Department at
PO Box1564, Sydney, NSW 2001.

MAGAZINE TEAM
Michael Butler
mbutler@paragonpublishing.com.au

Group Editor ***Simon Phillips***
Managing Editor ***Nick Roberts***
Group Art Editor ***Nick Trent***
Senior Art Editor ***Lisa Johnson***
Assistant Designer ***Ian Holland***
Picture Editor ***Janine Kay***

Deputy Editor ***Martin Mathers***
Sub Editor ***Charlotte Martyn***
Retro Editor ***Keith Edwards***
News Editor ***Darran Jones***
Senior Staff Writer ***Luke Albiges***
Staff Writer ***Dave Beaumont***

Contributors ***Graeme Nicholson, Oliver Barder, Tristan Donovan, Yukiko Ohno, Paul Rebec***

ADVERTISING
Group AdvertisingManager
Chris Davey
(02) 9265 7679
chrisdavey@paragonpublishing.com.au

INTERNATIONAL LICENSING
games™ is available for licensing overseas. For details, please contact...
Mike Frey
(02) 9265 6979
mikefrey@paragonpublishing.com.au

DIRECTORS
Editorial Director ***Damian Butt***
Production Director ***Jane Hawkins***
Circulation & Marketing Director ***Kevin Petley***
Advertising Director ***Peter Cleall***
Art Director ***Mark Kendrick***
Finance Director ***Steven Boyd***
Managing Director ***Mark Simpson***

PRINTED BY
PMP Print, 27-29 Brown's Road, Clayton, Vic 3168

DISTRIBUTED BY
Gordon & Gotch, Level 2, 9 Rodborough Road, Frenchs Forest, NSW 2086.

games™ recognises all copyrights in this issue. Where appropriate, all have been acknowledged. If **games™** has failed to acknowledge the copyright holder, please contact us and we will gladly correct any omission.

PARAGON PUBLISHING

©2003 Paragon Publishing Ltd

ISSN 1478-5889
Cover image supplied by Ubi Soft

SUBSCRIBE TO games™

AND SAVE $20 ON THE NEWSAGENT PRICE

SUBSCRIBE TO GAMES™ AND GET:

- FREE delivery direct to your door – you'll never miss an issue
- A $20 SAVING on the newsagent price
- MONEY BACK GUARANTEE – change your mind and we'll refund you for all unmailed issues





YES, I WOULD LIKE TO SUBSCRIBE TO GAMES™

☐ Australia $99.95 (incl. gst and postage)

☐ New Zealand $129.95 (incl. postage)

PERSONAL DETAILS

Name

Address

Post code Email

Phone number

SUBSCRIPTION AS A GIFT

Name

Address

Post code Email

Phone number Date of Birth

METHOD OF PAYMENT

☐ Cheque/Money order (Please make payable to Paragon Publishing Ltd)

Credit card (tick as necessary) ☐ Bank card ☐ Mastercard ☐ Visa

Card number

Expiry Date

Name on Card

Please return this order form or a photocopy of it together with your cheque/PO (if applicable) to the following address:
games TM, Paragon Publishing Ltd,
PO Box 137, Westgate NSW 2048
Or fax the completed form to
(02) 9660 2150

From time to time you may be sent information about exciting new products and opportunities from Paragon Publishing Ltd and other selected companies. If you do not wish to receive this information, please tick here ☐

GTM03

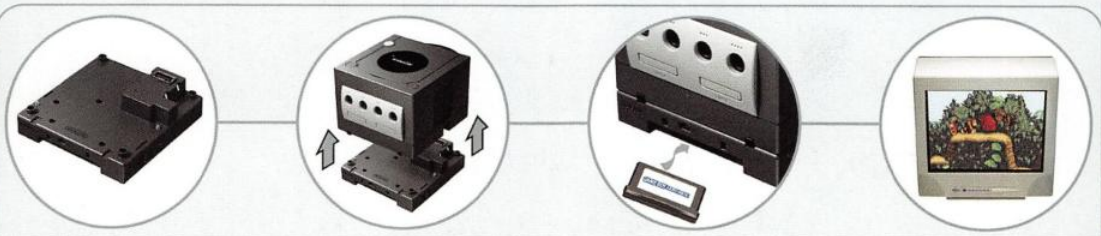
Call the subscription hotline: (02) 9660 1864 or email: subs@paragonpublishing.com.au



games™



GAME BOY PLAYER, NOW YOU CAN PLAY YOUR GAME BOY GAMES ON TV.



NINTENDO GAMECUBE®

GAME BOY™ PLAYER

GAME BOY ADVANCE™

NINTENDO.COM.AU

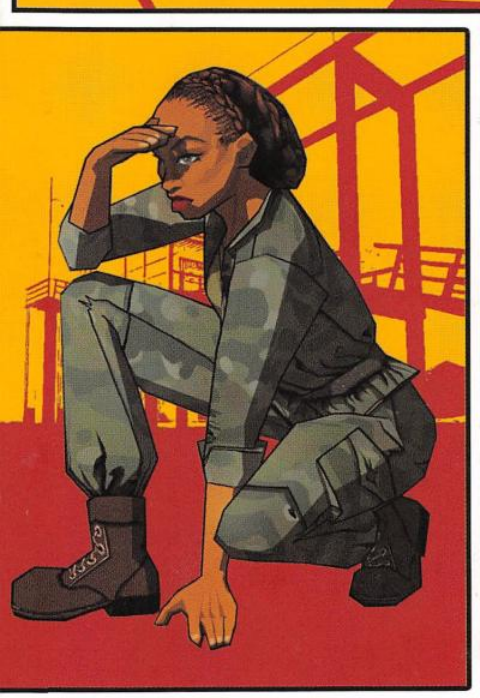
TM, ® AND THE NINTENDO GAMECUBE LOGO ARE TRADEMARKS OF NINTENDO. © 2003 NINTENDO. AUSTRALIAN PATENT NO. 642,398. OTHER PATENTS PENDING.

G

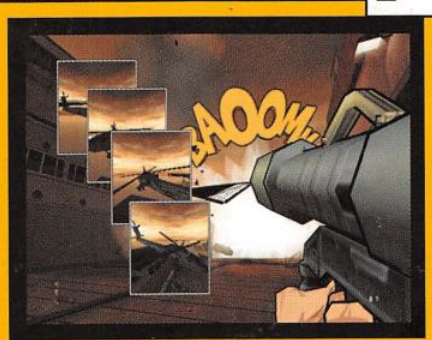
RR3750/G

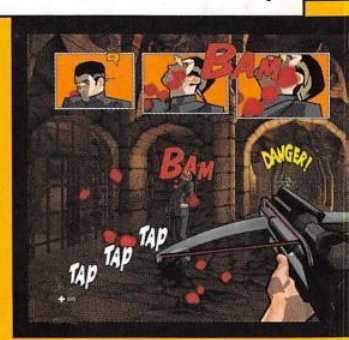
XIII

they know more about you than you do.



your number is up.





DARGAUD

www.XIII-thegame.com

XBOX

PlayStation.2

PC CD-ROM

NINTENDO GAMECUBE

Ubi Soft ENTERTAINMENT

© 2003 Van Hamme - Vance / Dargaud Benelux (EDL-B&M S.A.) 2000 DARGAUD. © 2003 Ubi Soft Entertainment. Ubi Soft and the Ubi Soft logo are trademarks of Ubi Soft Entertainment in the U.S. and/or other countries.
© 2003 Nintendo Microsoft, Xbox, and the Xbox Logos are either registered trademarks or trademarks of Microsoft Corporation in the United States and/or other countries and are used under license from Microsoft. "PS" and "PlayStation" are registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. tm. ® and GameCube Advance are trademarks of Nintendo Co., Ltd.