ALL NEW | AUSTRALIA'S MULTIFORMAT games magazine of the future | $9.95 inc GST (NZ $11.95) | 06

W50 03 GAMES TM 6 $9.95 GARDENCITY GG 9F 03/11
9 771448 260004

games TM

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

RETRO
AMIGA 500
Commodore's last roll of the dice remembered



FULL REVIEWS
- FINAL FANTASY TACTICS ADVANCE
- HARDWARE ONLINE
- JAK II: RENEGADE
- AFL LIVE 2004
- VIEWTIFUL JOE
- TRON 2.0
- BUFFY 2

He ain't afraid of no ghost.

132 PAGES OF FRIGHTFULLY GOOD GAMING

$9.95 INCL GST
$11.95 New Zealand
"excite, enthuse and inform"
ISSN 1448-2606
9 771448 260004 06
PARAGON PUBLISHING


You Don't Play,
You Volunteer™
MEDAL OF HONOR™
RISING SUN
www.moh.com.au



*Online game play available for the PlayStation®2 computer entertainment system only. Online play requires Internet connection and Network Adaptor for PlayStation 2 (sold separately).

©2003 Electronic Arts Inc. Electronic Arts, EA, EA GAMES, the EA GAMES logo, "You Don't Play, You Volunteer.", and "Challenge Everything" are trademarks or registered trademarks of Electronic Arts Inc. in the U.S. and/or other countries. Medal of Honor is a trademark or registered trademark of Electronic Arts Inc. in the U.S. and/or other countries for computer and video game products. All Rights Reserved. "PlayStation" and the "PS" Family logo are registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. Microsoft, Xbox and the Xbox logos are either trademarks or registered trademarks of Microsoft Corporation in the U.S. and/or other countries and are used under license from Microsoft. TM, © and the Nintendo GameCube logo are trademarks of Nintendo. © 2001 Nintendo. All other trademarks are the property of their respective owners. EA GAMES™ is an Electronic Arts™ brand. E5828.

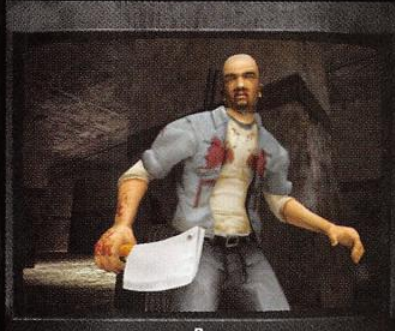
REC

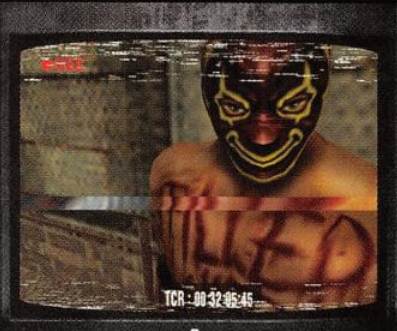
THEY JUST KILLED CASH.
NOW THEY WANT TO KILL HIM AGAIN.

AMERICA IS FULL OF RUN DOWN, BROKEN RUST-BELT TOWNS WHERE NOBODY CARES AND ANYTHING GOES.
IN CARCER CITY, NOTHING MATTERS ANYMORE AND ALL THAT'S LEFT ARE CHEAP THRILLS.
THE ULTIMATE RUSH IS THE POWER TO GRANT LIFE AND TAKE IT AWAY, FOR SPORT. THIS TIME JAMES EARL CASH, YOU ARE THE SPORT.
THEY GAVE YOU YOUR LIFE BACK. NOW, THEY ARE GOING TO HUNT YOU DOWN.

YOU AWAKE TO THE SOUND OF YOUR OWN PANICKED BREATH.
YOU MUST RUN, HIDE AND FIGHT TO SURVIVE.
IF YOU CAN STAY ALIVE LONG ENOUGH, YOU MAY FIND OUT WHO DID THIS TO YOU.

THE FINAL CUT







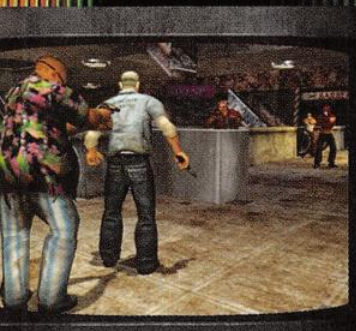


MA15+

PlayStation.2

© 2003 Rockstar Games, Inc. Manhunt and the Manhunt logo, Rockstar Games, Rockstar North and the R* logo are trademarks and/or registered trademarks of Take Two Interactive Software. Rockstar Games and Rockstar North are s











WWW.ROCKSTARGAMES.COM/MANHUNT

of Take-Two Interactive Software, Inc. All other marks and trademarks are properties of their respective owners. All Rights Reserved. "PlayStation" and the "PS" Family logo are registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc.

CONTENTS



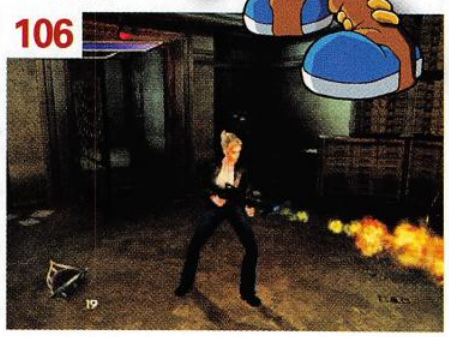
Billy Hatcher and the Legendary Chicken Suit. Really.



72



100



106

FEATURES

30 Community
With another killer app on the way, Bizarre Creations opens its doors and shares the secrets of its success.

40 Character Building
A star is born... **games**™ examines the creation of videogame heroes.

82 Does Exactly What It Says On The Tin
Sequels – who needs them? We go in search of originality.

RETRO GAMING

Age cannot wither them, nor custom stale their infinite variety... our monthly look at the history of videogaming

The latest Retro News	108
This Month In...1995	109
Why Don't They Remake... *Axelay*	110
Look Back In Anger... *Robocod*	111
Family Tree... Mega Man	112
Classic Gaming Platform... Amiga 500	114
Classic Screens... Amiga 500	116
Six of the Best... Amiga 500	118
Greatest Game Ever... *Gunstar Heroes*	119
Step by Step... *Strider*	120



PREVIEWS 48

Project Gotham Racing 2	48
Castlevania: Lament Of Innocence	50
Ratchet & Clank 2	52
Max Payne 2: The Fall Of Max Payne	54
Armed & Dangerous	56
Ghosthunter	58
Killer 7	60
Gran Turismo 4	62
Billy Hatcher And The Giant Egg	64
Rainbow Six 3	66
Gregory Horror Show	68
Syphon Filter: The Omega Strain	70
Metal Gear Solid: Twin Snakes	72
Manhunt	74
Full Spectrum Warrior	76
Showcase	78

REVIEWS 88

Final Fantasy Tactics Advance	90
Hardware: Online Arena	92
Jak II: Renegade	94
Chrome	96
AFL 2004	97
Viewtiful Joe	98
The Simpsons: Hit & Run	100
Bloody Roar Extreme	101
Tron 2.0	102
Pokémon Pinball: Ruby And Sapphire	104
Outlaw Beach Volleyball	105
Buffy The Vampire Slayer: Chaos Bleeds	106

48 Project Gotham 2
Could this be the racing game to beat all others? We think it might be, and that excites us. A lot.

54 Max Payne 2
The man who defines the gaming tough-guy image returns. And this time he's found love. Of a sort.

60 Killer 7
Stylish and unique, but can Capcom's latest adventure live up to the hype?

REGULARS

122 Essentials
If you're reading this magazine then you probably consider yourself a discerning gamer. So make sure you own the games that count.

126 Contact
This is the place to air and share your views on the world of videogames. Assuming, of course, that you steer clear of ranting...

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

70 SYPHON FILTER: THE OMEGA STRAIN

Gabe Logan's back for a fourth and final outing. Or is he? And will the Syphon Filter be revealed?



Have you ever stopped to consider what makes a game great, as opposed to 'just' being really good?

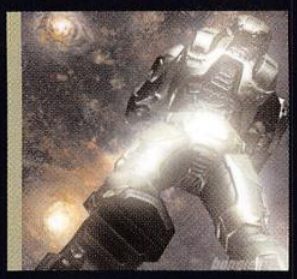
It's a question that applies to all the arts and to some extent the answer is always the same – that indefinable something (call it inspiration, genius, whatever you will) that causes the whole to be greater than the sum of its parts.

Some games definitely have it, even in spite of minor flaws or elements that don't appeal to everyone. These are the games that we remember long after we've finished playing them. These are the games that point the way forward for the industry. And these are the games that inspire us to keep playing, in the hope that we'll find another title worthy of joining their ranks. There are worse ways to spend your free time...

Michael

NEWS

NEWS | **INDUSTRY GOSSIP** | OPINION



CONTENTS

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

10 ASIA GAMES SUMMIT
It's been a busy month for journos. We report from Vivendi's Singapore summit.

16 TIME TO N-GAGE
Is it a phone? Is it a console? Well, it's a bit of both, but also neither. Does that make sense?

18 PHANTOM MENACE
The official website for this mysterious console has launched, but we're still none the wiser. Can it be real or is it a hoax? Either way, it's an interesting story.

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

28 THE PLAYERS: CRITERION SOFTWARE
He doesn't look like a revolutionary, but Criterion's David Lau-Kee has changed the way games are made.

30 COMMUNITY: BIZARRE CREATIONS
The Liverpool-based developer is about to tear onto Xboxes everywhere with the follow up to the acclaimed *Project Gotham Racing*. No gags about missing hubcaps, please.

DO YOU KNOW THE WAY TO ST TROPEZ?

LIVE ROLLS OUT, EPIC SIGNS ON – BUT WHERE, OH WHERE WAS HALO 2?

Nice in the sunny South of France was the venue for X03, Microsoft's third annual showcase event for the European press. It didn't quite deliver on everything we'd hoped for but there was still plenty on offer. Despite the non-appearance of *Perfect Dark* and *Pro Evolution 3* and the lack of playable code for *Halo 2*,



there was still a plenty going on and a few stories worthy of note.

The show's biggest announcement was the revelation that Epic Games has signed an exclusive deal with Microsoft that will see future titles appearing on Xbox and Windows only. "We're delighted to be working with Microsoft," said Jay Wilbur, vice president of business affairs at Epic. "We feel strongly that, in partnership with Microsoft, Epic games and Scion Studios will provide gamers with spectacular entertainment on Xbox and Windows platforms."

Gamers fearing countless *Unreal* games (the franchise, that is) should be pleased to hear that Epic Games and its new Scion Studios will be exploring new franchises after the next *Unreal* game hits the Xbox.

Also announced were two new games: *RalliSport Challenge 2* (from Microsoft Game Studios) and *Race Driver 2* (from CodeMasters).

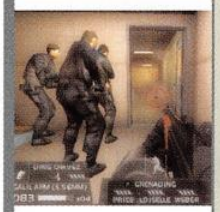
Other notables, many being shown for the first time in Europe, included *Breakdown, Dead or Alive Online, Deus Ex: Invisible War, Full Spectrum Warrior, Ninja Gaiden, Starcraft: Ghost, Steel Battalion – Line of Contact, Rainbow Six 3, Splinter Cell: Pandora Tomorrow, Dancing Stage Unleashed, Grabbed by the Ghoulies* and *Harry Potter – Quidditch World Cup.*

Microsoft's excellent beach party, the balmy weather and a series of exclusive interviews managed to ease our disappointment somewhat; keep your eyes peeled for these and more in-depth coverage of the event in next month's issue of **games™**.



X03 HIGHLIGHTS

It was a feast of software, but there wasn't much we haven't seen before. Still, the Xbox's lineup is looking very strong indeed; look for more coverage on some of these titles in future issues.



RAINBOW SIX 3

PUBLISHER: UBISOFT

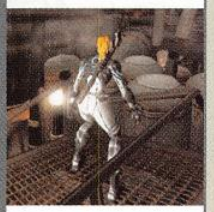
Normally, the gaming press wouldn't go mental for the third game in a well-established franchise. Then again, normally, the third game in a well-established franchise wouldn't be nearly as addictive as *Rainbow Six 3*. An Xbox exclusive, we can't wait to go online to play against live opponents; that said, we're just as enthusiastic about the single-player mode, which promises locations around the world and a brain-teasing battle against a madman with a doomsday plot. Sure, it's a little melodrdamatic, but what's wrong with that?.



NINJA GAIDEN

PUBLISHER: MICROSOFT

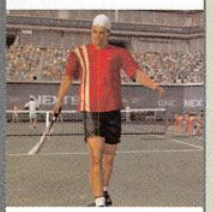
Tecmo's eagerly-anticpated Ninja action game didn't disappoint. The graphics lived up to the hype and the action looks frantic. We would have liked to really sit down with this one, particularly to investigate the story a little more, but so far we can say that if all goes well, *Tenchu* and *Shinobi* players will soon be reaching for Xbox controllers.



STARCRAFT: GHOST

PUBLISHER: VIVENDI

It's a risky move, taking a well-loved franchise and moving it into a new genre on a new platform. But the Starcraft universe's transition from a PC-based RTS game to a console-based shooter looks to be in good hands. With tons of gadgets, cool moves and atmosphere to boot, all *Starcraft: Ghost* needs to be a monster hit is a good story and some enthusiastic players.



TOP SPIN TENNIS

PUBLISHER: MICROSOFT

This game frustrated us – mostly because we couldn't get through the throng to actually play it. Featuring 'our' Lleyton Hewitt (who participated in the motion capture sessions) and a brilliant blend of pick-up-and-play simplicity and just-one-more-game depth, *Top Spin* is our pick for the sleeper hit of the season. Online play with Xbox Live is just the icing on the cake.



STEEL BATTALION 2

PUBLISHER: THQ

***Steel Battalion 2* makes us sad. Why? Because there are no plans to release it in Australia. We understand that the necessity to also purchase the biggest, heaviest, most expensive but also hands-down coolest controller in the history of the industry will limit sales, but you really haven't played a mecha game until you've sat down with this baby. Even the start-up sequence is cool – flipping switches has never been this much fun.**

Data stream

BITE-SIZED STORIES FROM AROUND THE WORLD OF GAMING

JOIN THE GAMETRADE

Still looking for a copy of ICO? If you have a PlayStation 2, Xbox, GameCube, Gameboy Advance or Dreamcast, you might want to check out www.gametrade.com.au. Gametrade has been developed in Australia for Australian gamers who want a safe online environment to trade console games.

All titles are verified (to ensure they're genuine, functioning copies) and all trades are anonymous. Registration at the site is free but a small fee is charged for each trade; games are delivered by registered mail.



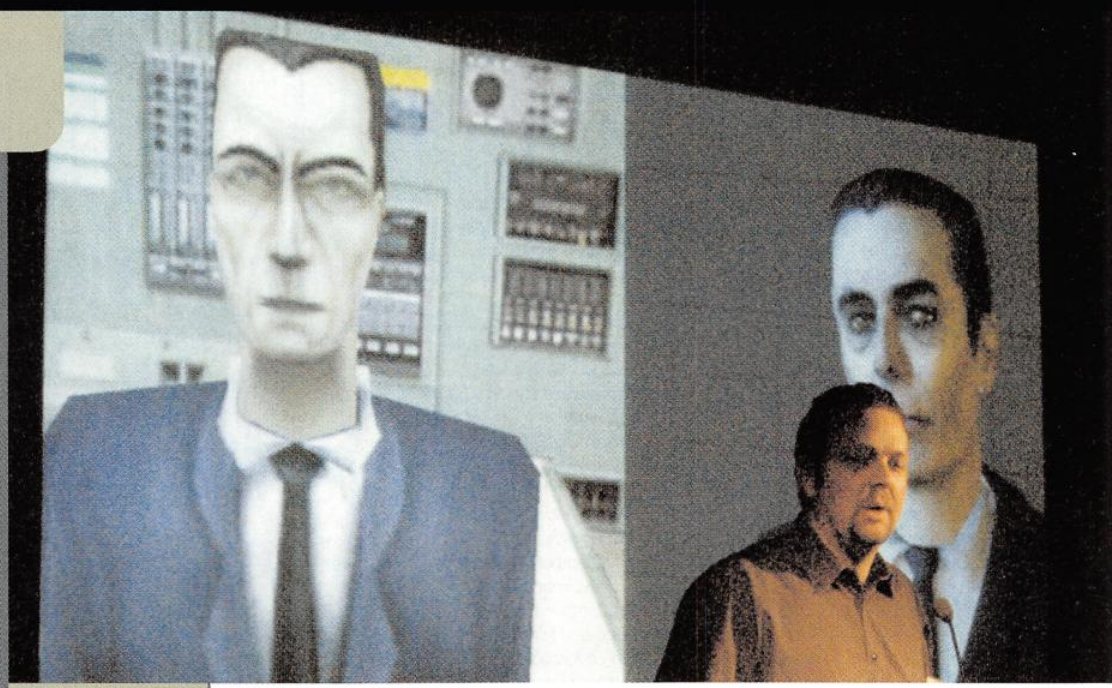
CLASH OF THE...

If you enjoyed *Age of Mythology*, you'll no doubt be pleased to see *Age of Mythology: The Titans* gracing the shelves of your friendly local gaming shop.

***Titans* features an all-new single-player campaign and adds a number of new elements to the game. Chief among these is the Atlanteans and their mythology. With new myth and human units and their own Titan gods (with powers over space and time), Microsoft has added another chapter to the unfolding story and mythology of this popular series.**

Ensemble Studios has set itself a high standard with this series, so we're keen to see what's next.





Before (above left) and after (above right). Half-Life 2 is looking very tasty indeed.

MEANWHILE, IN SINGAPORE, VIVENDI GATHERS THE FAITHFUL

ASIA GAMES SUMMIT 2004

There's nothing like a nice overseas junket to view some forthcoming games and Vivendi chose an excellent end-of-winter location for theirs, lovely tropical Singapore. Held over the 15th and 16th of September, the Summit's prime event was the launch of *The Hobbit* to the Asian games press, but it also covered a raft of new games that we'll be seeing from Vivendi over the next eighteen months.

games™ was looking forward to the launch of *The Hobbit* on Monday night; after spending the entire day on a plane a social event (even a staged one) is a welcome chance to stretch the legs. What we weren't ready for was the attack of the feral hobbits. It's pretty unusual to turn up to a games launch and be immediately ushered into a changing room. When you're handed a set of hobbit clothing, well, you just start to wonder what's going on.

Now, while we had reservations about being dressed like this, we consoled ourself with the fact that a corporate function our chances of being arrested were slim. At least Vivendi understood the need to calm down the stunned journalists – an open tab at the hotel's cocktail lounge went a long way to coaxing a whole room of shy little hobbits out of their holes.

Indeed, after half an hour the fact that we were all wearing brown plus-fours, bright blue shirts, brown vests, green capes and fake furry feet seemed remarkably normal. Even the developers and publishers had joined the hobbit brigade and a good time was had by all.

On Tuesday the Summit got down to business. Held in one of the exhibition halls of the Asian Civilisations Museum, a magnificent old British colonial building, the set-up was nicely relaxed.

Yes, some of us do this for a living. Beats digging ditches.



VIEWTIFUL BORN KILLERS







CAPCOM

VIEWTIFULJOE.CO.UK

NINTENDO GAMECUBE™

MAKE YOUR WORLD MORE VIEWTIFUL...

VIEWTIFUL JOE

© CAPCOM CO., LTD. 2003 ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. NINTENDO GAMECUBE AND THE NINTENDO GAMECUBE LOGO ARE TRADEMARKS OF NINTENDO.

Data Stream

BITE-SIZED STORIES FROM AROUND THE WORLD OF GAMING

THE HOBBIT





There's no doubting it – The Hobbit looks gorgeous. Aimed at a younger audience, its levels are based on the chapters of Tolkien's classic tale. Combat and puzzles are reminiscent of Zelda, but it remains to be seen whether Vivendi's effort will be able to capture the broad audience of children and adults that has made Link a household name among gamers.

WAR OF THE RING





Designed by the team responsible for Battlerealms, the technology for WotR has been built from scratch. The game features many complex battlefields (e.g. Mirkwood, Osgiliath) but interestingly, it features missions from the full span of Tolkien's writings. This was a request made by the Tolkien family, who wanted to showcase the breadth of J.R.R.'s imagination. Each mission features cinematic sequences that explain much of the history and background of Middle Earth.

MIDDLE EARTH ONLINE





Not due for release until the end of 2004 (or thereabouts), this is a project whose scope is hard to fully comprehend. Using the same engine as Asheron's Call, the game is set in the Third Age (the time period of The Lord of the Rings). Characters from the book are NPCs and will rarely interact with players; this is a potential downside but we're assured that the in-game scenarios and encounter engine would ensure that the game is made richer, not poorer by this decision.

JUDGE DREDD





He's our favourite fascist, but so far his videogame outings have been, well, mostly awful. Interestingly, developers Rebellion now actually own 2000AD, publishers of the Judge Dredd comic book. The result, so far, is a game that looks fantastic and promises much. Our main hope is that the tips of the hat to the series' fans will be matched by an equally inventive and absorbing gameplay experience. Watch this space...

Aside from *The Hobbit* the other big attractions were *Middle Earth Online* and *War of the Ring*. For those of us feeling that the Tolkien franchise, no matter how good the books are, is being done to death at the moment there was a range of other games covering a range of genres. Those with representatives present were *Judge Dredd*, *Ground Control 2* and *Tribes: Vengeance*, which is being developed by Irrational Studios in Canberra.

Ground Control 2: Operation Exodus is a real-time strategy game from Massive Entertainment. Like the original, *GC2*'s most notable difference from other RTS games is the use of set forces; no resource gathering or base building is required.

Otherwise, the structure of the game is your standard single-player multi-level experience; multiplayer in particular looks like it could be a lot of fun, given the concentration on actual fighting rather than searching for resources to build units and then using a lot of those units to protect the base that produced them. In keeping with this focus the units in *GC2* have received a lot more attention than in many other RTS games, with the tactical balance of units being crucial.

When *Starsiege: Tribes* came out in 1998 it created a devoted following, one that persists to this day. Unfortunately, as is far too common in our sequel-plagued industry, *Tribes 2* was rushed and the final release showed it.

In trying to get the franchise back on track with *Tribes: Vengeance* the decision was made to build a more substantial single-player experience than was included in the first two games. Irrational Studios got the gig and the result looks impressive at this point in development. **games™** is increasingly of the opinion that a detailed back-story is an essential ingredient in a modern FPS (it sure didn't hurt either *Halo* or *Half-Life*), and *Tribes* has joined the club. The decision to use the *Unreal* engine was a good one and the game looks excellent; the huge stadium level looked particularly impressive.

Also on display was *SWAT: Global Strike Team*. It's more like an FPS than previous titles, though it still has the small-unit strategy element that we have seen previously. The levels were tightly done, though a tad confusing on a quick play, while the combat was deadly and realistic.

In this case, however, the background story leaves more than a little to be desired.

The new *Simpsons: Hit & Run* was a blast on a short play– see our review on page 100 for our thoughts.

The Cat in the Hat, on the other hand, was a disappointment, mostly because the Cat is modeled after Mike Myers' character from the movie, not Doctor Seuss' illustrations. The game seems fairly simplistic (which is in keeping with its target audience), but the parts that were meant to be in tune with the studied oddity of the original books didn't come across too well.

Finally, we tried *Battlestar Galactica*. It's a little to early to tell just yet; the gameplay seems solid and the graphics are gorgeous. Fans of the TV show will most likely love it and it definitely looks promising. We'll keep you posted on this one.



Use the streets of Florence to show your friends the true meaning of art.



BIZARRE CREATIONS

Microsoft game studios

Let the world know how good you look. Project Gotham Racing® 2 is the next level in racing. Take on anyone, anywhere on the Xbox *Live*™ service and show them what you've got. PGR™ 2 is as much about looking good as driving fast and with the cars you have to choose from, you have no excuse. Featuring the Enzo Ferrari and over 100 of the world's most desirable cars in which to take chances, earn Kudos points and climb up the rankings. Tear up the streets of over a hundred courses in 10 realistic international cities including Sydney, Chicago, Barcelona, Yokohama and Moscow. With PGR™ 2, winning never looked so good.

XBOX LIVE

PGR PROJECT GOTHAM RACING 2

XBOX

it's good to play together

www.xbox.com/pgr2

Ferrari Official Licensed Product

SALEEN

Ferrari, Enzo Ferrari, all associated logos, and the Enzo Ferrari distinctive designs are trademarks of Ferrari S.p.A. Saleen®, all its vehicle names, and their designs are registered trademarks of Saleen, Inc. used under license to Microsoft Corporation. Licensed from Dr. Ing. h.c. F. Porsche AG under certain Patents. Porsche, the Porsche Crest, 911, Carrera, RS, Boxster, and Cayenne are registered trademarks of Dr. Ing. h.c. F. Porsche AG. ©2003 Microsoft Corporation. All rights reserved. Microsoft, Project Gotham Racing, PGR, the Microsoft Game Studios logo, Xbox, Xbox Live, and the Xbox logos are either registered trademarks or trademarks of Microsoft Corporation in the United States and/or other countries. The names of actual companies and products mentioned herein may be the trademarks of their respective owners.

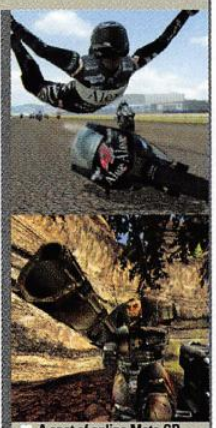
MES02197

Data Stream

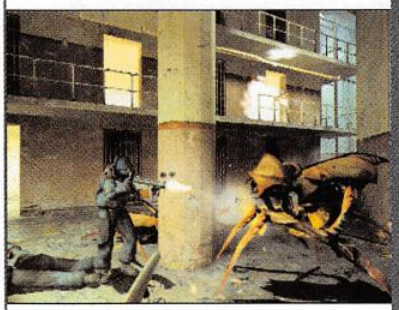
BITE-SIZED STORIES FROM AROUND THE WORLD OF GAMING

NINTENDO AND SONY GET A LIFE

Although the final specs for PlayStation3 and GameCube 2 are a fair way off, Valve's Doug Lombardi has let slip that *Half-Life 2* may be one of the first titles for the new formats. Although the game is expected to launch on Xbox next year, Lombardi stated that Microsoft hasn't signed an exclusivity deal, saying: "We will also see this game on the next consoles by Sony and Nintendo." Of course, it's likely that neither console be on sale until 2005/06, by which time the *Half-Life 2* graphics engine will look a bit dated...

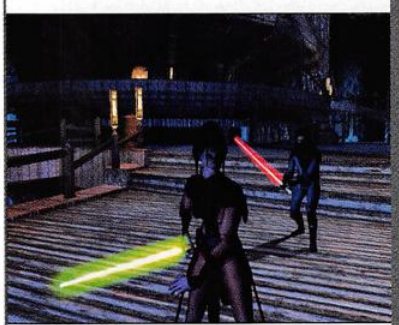


A spot of online Moto GP 2 anyone? Or perhaps Unreal Championship is more your speed?



JEDI RULE, OK?

It looks like there's no stopping *Knights Of The Old Republic*. After setting impressive sales figures in the US (over 250,000 units in three days), the Xbox now enjoys its third all-format-conquering release (previous titles being *Halo* and *Splinter Cell*). With the delay of *Sudeki* and many other Xbox titles until early 2004, it would seem that *Project Gotham Racing 2* and *KOTOR* are going to be the machine's system sellers. That is, until we see *Top Spin Tennis* or *Rainbow Six 3* or *Ninja Gaiden* or *Halo 2* or...





Or if you like cars, Xbox Live has lots of cars – Midnight Club II and Midtown Madness for starters.

AS THE CLAIMS ABOUT ONLINE GAMING FLY THICK AND FAST

MICROSOFT CRIES FOUL

We all love a bit of controversy and our interview last issue with Michael Ephraim (Sony Australia's Managing Director) has certainly stirred things up. We've had a number of queries relating to the interview; to provide some answers to some of the Xbox Live-related questions that were raised, we got in touch with Microsoft's David McLean (Regional Manager, Xbox).

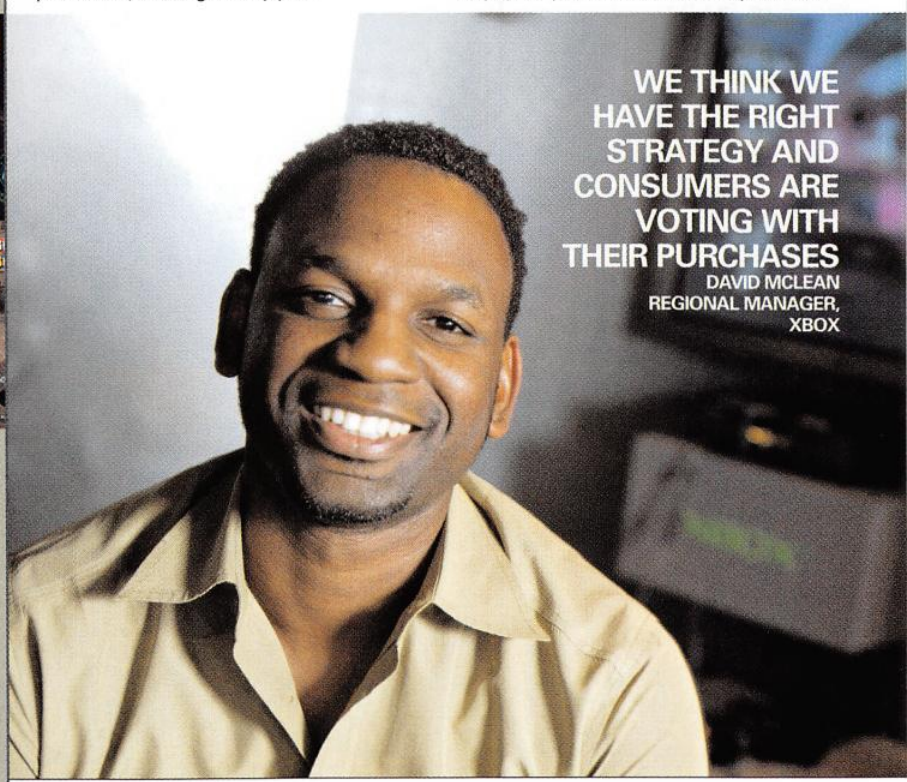
The first question relates to Xbox Live's business model. On the matter of whether publishers will find Microsoft's terms favourable (and we should note that some publishers – EA chief among them – so far have not), David had this to say:

"Obviously publishers make money from Live by virtue of the fact that online games sell better, and for longer, than non-online games. And obviously, Microsoft pays royalties. So it's not a valid statement to say that publishers don't make money on Live. If that were a valid statement... well, it's interesting to note that we have fifty Live-enabled games that are going to be available by Christmas that have been made by a variety of publishers; we've got sixty-plus developers right now making Live-enabled games for us, so there's obviously some value for them to make that investment. We've got far more Live-enabled games available than our competitors and there's a reason for that.

"The other thing to think about is that a small developer or publisher wants to spend their time doing what they're passionate about, which is making games. They don't want to be setting up servers and infrastructure and taking responsibility for the cost of upkeep and maintenance. There's also call centres and customer service issues. The majority of game developers do not want to become online service hosts. Our job is to support them in that and make an environment that the customers want."

A development that has raised eyebrows in some quarters is the possibility that publishers have begun talking about 'premium content', additional downloads that will attract an additional fee.

"We've given ourselves the flexibility to provide the services that consumers are going to demand. So if consumers want to pay for premium content they'll decide



WE THINK WE HAVE THE RIGHT STRATEGY AND CONSUMERS ARE VOTING WITH THEIR PURCHASES
DAVID MCLEAN
REGIONAL MANAGER, XBOX

how much they're prepared to pay and they will create the business model. Do we know what the business model is going to be? No we don't, but we have the facility to service the consumer."

We also asked David if Microsoft would use the unified Xbox Live environment to influence the types of content that would be made available:

"Microsoft has a social responsibility to the community in which it lives. In terms of our in-game content we're prescribed by legislation; we work with the OFLC [Office of Film and Literature Classification] and we take that responsibility seriously. We will put out games that fit within the ratings that we think are appropriate and when you look at the games that are already available, you'll see that there's plenty of game content that consumers are finding enjoyable and want to play.

"We're just trying to create a great gaming experience, where consumers can feel comfortable. So they'll feel that they're playing within a safe environment and that they can deal with inappropriate behaviour or language online, which is something that the divided experience that Sony is touting doesn't offer."

We then asked David what position, if any, Microsoft might take on 'adult' games like Manhunt (see our preview on pp. 74–75). This is an especially pertinent question now it has been revealed that Rockstar's signature games, GTA3 and GTA: Vice city will be coming to the Xbox (see news item, p. 19).

"I'm certainly not in a position to state whether we'd want to host a game like that. What we want to do is host games that generally people can enjoy and are games that people aren't offended by."

Finally, there's the question of lag, clearly a crucial issue for any online gaming service.

"Lag is an issue for anybody who has an application that's connected to the Internet. It's exactly the same for Sony as it is for us. That's why we put a broadband-only solution in place, so everybody has a good speed up and a good speed down to have that experience. That's not the Sony experience, where you could be playing against somebody in the US on a 56k dial-up modem.

"In terms of servers and where games are hosted, our model is peer-to-peer, so every Xbox is a server. So if somebody's hosting a game and you're playing against them, it means you're going to be dependent on their upload time and their download time and your upload and download time. So you're bound to have a better experience if you've got two people playing on 128 up and 256 down versus 56 up and 56 down.

"EA have said they're hosting their services through the US on the Sony platform – why would their experience be any different to ours? We have 600 000+ users around the world right now and we've had minimal experiences with issues of lag. That's why the take up of Live has been 10% of our install base versus 4% of theirs, because we've provided the service from the ground up and taken all of those things into consideration."

"Live is another component of Xbox and we continue to make the investment in what we think is going to be the future of video gaming. The Xbox was built from the ground up with a hard drive and an Ethernet port. Those cost money but it was an investment the company made because we believe the future will be driven to a large extent by online gaming. So we have a plan for this business, we are on track with the plan and we're comfortable with the returns that the business is generating at the moment. We think that we have the right strategy and consumers are voting with their purchases."



Splinter Cell was one of the first games to offer extra content on Xbox Live.



Before the movies came out, we all had our own ideas about what characters like Boromir and Sauron looked like...



EA JOINS THE BATTLE FOR MIDDLE EARTH

We all know that there are two licences to make video games based on Tolkien's works. EA has a licence based on Peter Jackson's movies and Vivendi has the licence for the books.

Not content with producing two free-roaming brawlers (last year's *The Two Towers* and this year's *Return of the King*), EA has decided to release an RTS game based on the massive battles portrayed in the movie version of Tolkien's trilogy.

The Lord of the Rings: the Battle for Middle Earth promises to give Vivendi's *War of the Ring* a run for its money. EA have assigned the *Command & Conquer Generals: Zero Hour* team to the game, so its pedigree is strong and the *Generals* engine has been receiving some major work to make it compatible with a fantasy game environment. We haven't seen any code yet, but so far it sounds promising and our hopes are high.

In the best of all possible worlds, all the games will be great and no matter what your taste in gaming (adventure, action, real-time strategy or role-playing), you'll be able to find something to suit. We live in the real world, however, so in the meantime we'll just keep our fingers crossed.



JENNY
Class: Wizard
Race: Gnome

>Happy go lucky Gnome seeks others for encounters in junkyard. Gnome swinging experience preferred:-)

You can find JENNY@Church of Brell, Norrath.



A unique EverQuest online experience available exclusively on PlayStation®2.
www.eqoa-game.com

PlayStation 2
Real opponents. Infinite possibilities.

SOE SONY ONLINE ENTERTAINMENT

IMPORTANT: A Network Adaptor (Ethernet) for PlayStation 2, memory card and broadband connection is required to play EverQuest Online Adventures. 30 day subscription included. Additional subscription fees applicable thereafter. "PS2" and "PlayStation" are registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. EverQuest is a registered trademark and Online Adventures is a trademark of Sony Computer Entertainment America Inc. ©2003 Sony Computer Entertainment America Inc. SOE and the SOE logo are registered trademarks of Sony Online Entertainment Inc. All Rights Reserved. WLTBWA KSPS5590J

Data Stream

BITE-SIZED STORIES FROM AROUND THE WORLD OF GAMING



SAYONARA TO SONY

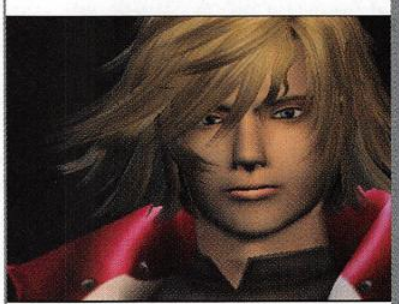
Although Sony has been hyping up its proposed PS3 backwards compatibility over the last month, the company has been somewhat less forthcoming with information regarding the departure of its chief technical officer, Shin'ichi Okamoto. Believed to be one of the key team members working on the development of Sony's next console, Okamoto-san was also responsible for structuring the PS2 online network. Although nothing has been confirmed, rumour has it that Okamoto-san is due to start up his own company focusing on network gaming.





MUSIC OF THE NIGHT

Konami has confirmed that the Japanese version of its 3D *Castlevania* game, *Lament Of Innocence*, will come with a free CD soundtrack when released on 28 October. Details are sketchy, but it's thought that a selection of tracks, composed by Michiru Yamane, will be included on the disc. Yamane-san's work plays a key part in creating the gothic atmosphere of the games. Unfortunately, it's not yet clear whether the US and Australian versions will come with the CD, but we're certainly keeping our fingers crossed.





WE RUN NOKIA'S NEW MACHINE THROUGH ITS PACES

IT'S TIME TO N-GAGE

After Nokia's recent insistence that the N-Gage is "a games machine first and a phone second," we were intrigued by the company's new marketing direction and were keen to try out the newly released machine. Arriving before Sony's PSP but two years after the Game Boy Advance, is this the new king of handhelds?

Away from the noise and non-removable pods of ECTS, the N-Gage is certainly very comfortable to hold. Your thumbs rest instinctively on the raised '5' and chunky D-pad and the rest of the buttons are nicely laid out either side of the 176x208-pixel screen.

With a similar design to the original Game Boy Advance and old-school joypads, the first thing we noticed was the lack of any shoulder buttons. When you realise that the top of the N-Gage is what you'll be speaking into, it's hardly surprising to find them absent. Nevertheless, we still feel that this oversight could have been rectified.

Switching on the N-Gage, you're treated to a tidy menu that includes everything you'd expect to find on a standard phone screen. Games are selected from here and within seconds we were playing *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater*. And we were impressed... After the 3D isometric view of the GBA series, seeing a perfect port of the PSX game is nothing short of stunning. However, in attempting to play a little *Tomb Raider*, we discovered the N-Gage's biggest flaw. Changing games requires you to slide the back off, take out the battery and then change the SIM card-sized game. Despite being told this is necessary due to the small size of the game cards, we can't help but think that this is a great inconvenience that could cost the N-Gage dearly. Add to this the numerical keypad that simply can't cut it when playing the majority of the games we tested and you have to wonder who the N-Gage is aimed at. At $699 it's ridiculously expensive compared to a GBA, and the hassle of changing games, along with the ludicrous way that you have to hold it to your ear when using it as a phone, is likely to make it unpopular with standard phone users (particularly those who are used to simply downloading their games). With the PSP drawing ever closer and the GBA riding high, Nokia's marketing men had better come up with something good.

NOKIA NEED TO KNOW

Q) HOW LONG DOES THE BATTERY LAST?
Three to six hours depending on the game you're playing.

Q) WHAT HAPPENS IF THE PHONE RINGS?
When the phone rings your game is automatically paused. You can also listen to the radio when playing games if you like.

Q) DO I LOSE MY SETTINGS WHEN I CHANGE GAMES?
No, the N-Gage comes with built-in flash RAM.

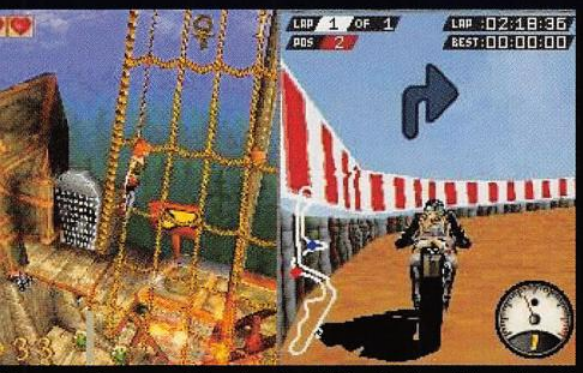
Q) CAN I BUY THE NOKIA ON CONTRACT?
Nokia doesn't set street prices, only the RRP. That said, we've already seen units for as little as $149.95 plus contract costs – the same type of deal you can get on any expensive mobile phone.

TOMB RAIDER

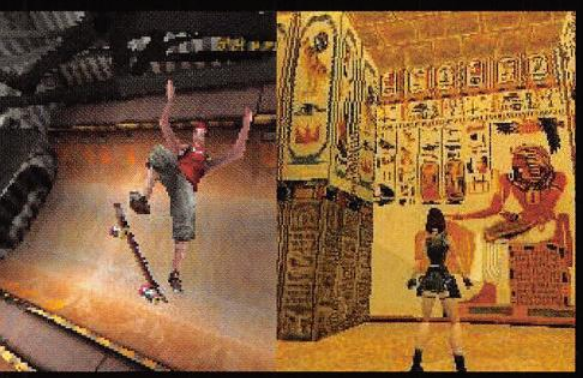
Games like *Tomb Raider* reveal the N-Gage's graphical power – we're treated to a glorious 3D game world. But despite the gloss, *Tomb Raider* simply can't cut it in this generation of adventure games, with the biggest culprit being that numerical keypad – the awkward controls make for a unenjoyable experience.

PANDEMONIUM

Crystal Dynamics' PlayStation title initially seems like a rather poor choice of game to



Famous names, famous games – but can they cut it on the N-Gage? And how will the machine fare?



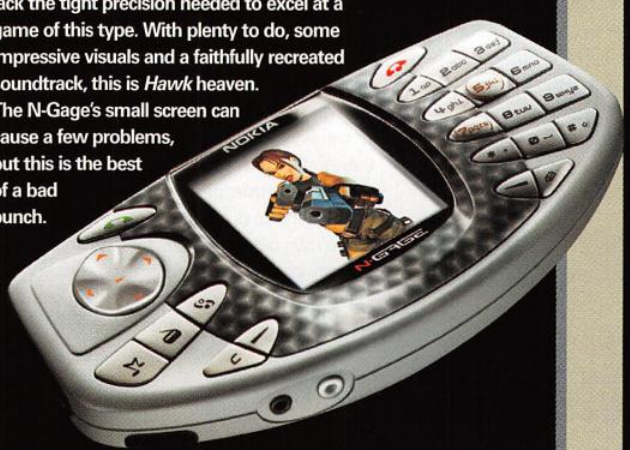
port, but it actually works very well. Visuals are of an extremely high standard, the controls are responsive and there's plenty to do. Niggles are mainly with the small screen – enemies suddenly appear without warning – but it's still much better than *Sonic N*.

MOTO GP

It's a shame to see that the brilliance of this Xbox title hasn't transferred to the small screen. The visuals are very poor, with some shoddy textures and an alarming amount of pop-up. Sound is also pretty atrocious. There is a four-player option, but the twitchy controls and lack of other N-Gage owners means that this is currently little more than a gimmick. Sadly, this racer never gets into first gear.

TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER

Like *Tomb Raider*, *Tony's* fantastic 3D levels are a world away from those found on the GBA so it's much easier to see what your skaters are doing. Controls are reasonably responsive, though they lack the tight precision needed to excel at a game of this type. With plenty to do, some impressive visuals and a faithfully recreated soundtrack, this is *Hawk* heaven. The N-Gage's small screen can cause a few problems, but this is the best of a bad bunch.

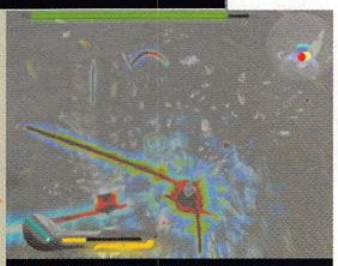


GAMING SPECIAL MOVES



No.5 STREET ALPHA 3

Nobody throws a Super Taunt like



No.4 PANZER DRAGOON ORTA

That shooting will drive you Berserk...



No.3 MOONWALKER

Jacko turns foes into twinkle toes



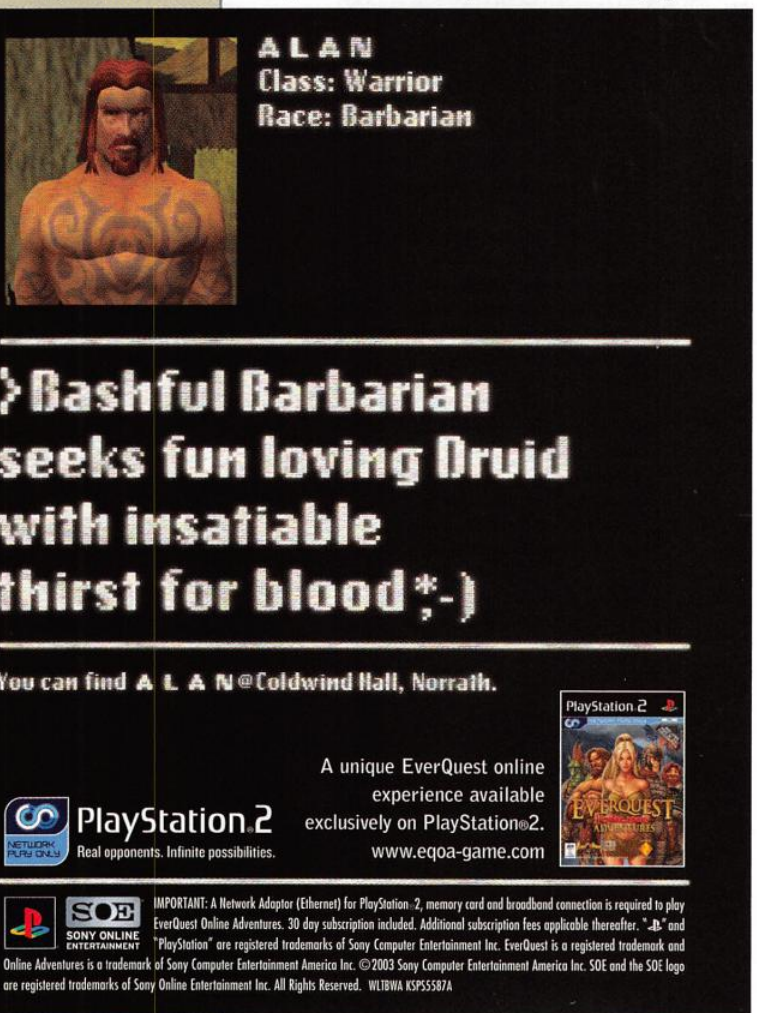
No.2 FINAL FANTASY VII

Knights Of The Round... Is it over yet?



No.1 KILLER INSTINCT

Death by forbidden fruit. Terrifying.



Data Stream

BITE-SIZED STORIES FROM AROUND THE WORLD OF GAMING



NINTENDO DELIVERS THE GOODS

Sometimes we don't think Nintendo loves us any more. How else do you explain the steady but slow release of product? The only thing that saves them is that their games are (almost) always worth the wait. By the time you're reading this, Nintendo will have at last released the e-Card reader . And Animal Crossing should also be on the shelves. After fearing that we wouldn't see it, we can happily report that the game is great – and the e-Card compatibility makes it even better. Look for a review soon.





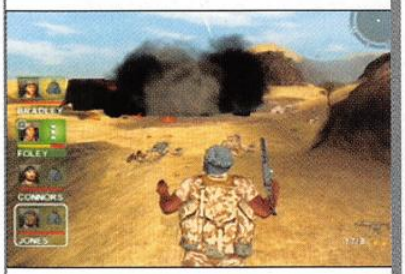
There it is. Well, maybe. Erm, we're not so sure.





KABOOM IMPLODES

It's been revealed that Kaboom Studios has gone into receivership. Behind such hits as *Conflict: Desert Storm*, the company was made up of three separate development houses – Silicon Dreams, Attention To Detail and Pivotal Studios. Kaboom had been struggling for a while, despite its claim of being 'Europe's largest independent, interactive computer games developer'. The first sign of trouble arose in August when Attention To Detail closed, followed by Silicon Dreams. The fate of Pivotal Studios still hangs in the balance as the company has been put up for sale.



AFTER NUMEROUS DELAYS, THE PHANTOM IS FINALLY 'REVEALED'

AS REAL AS IT EVER WAS

While new consoles are usually unveiled at showy press conferences or industry events, Infinium Labs maintained the mystery of its Phantom console by announcing it on the Internet. Launched on 18 August, www.phantom.net revealed the machine's full specifications as well as a few renders of the actual console – something that surprised sceptics everywhere.

Although the site currently states that the Phantom has 256 MB of DDR RAM (which sits awkwardly with the rest of the console's more impressive specs), Phantom's PR, David Frederick, assures us that the eventual retail machine will actually house a more realistic 512 MB DDR RAM. "We felt that this was not only a strong baseline to build from, but provides more RAM than any other baseline technology platform out of the box as a standard component," he explained.

The Phantom will enable users to download the latest games over a secure broadband service, but there are no plans as yet to allow gamers access to any other forms of media. "While the technology platform is enabled to perform that task," Frederick said, "we're currently focusing on delivering the best game experience for our Phantom Game System customers."

Whilst there's a strong chance of the Phantom taking off in America, we can't help feel that things could work out a little differently in the UK. Frederick, however, is confident that this will not be an issue. "Due to the wide proliferation of broadband internationally, we believe that there is a significant international market for providing a broadband gaming device. The baseline market segment will allow us achieve our business goals, while setting the groundwork for when broadband proliferates further."

With a confirmed price of under $300 and a starting subscription fee of $9.95 a month, it all certainly sounds promising. However, there's still much speculation as to whether any of this is true, particularly from those people who've dug a little deeper into the past of the men behind the console. An article recently posted on www.hardocp.com, for example, makes for some interesting reading. Is it all still just a hoax? Hmm...



PHANTOM SPECS

- Up to 3.0 GHz processor with 512MB DDR RAM
- High-performance NVIDIA graphics card
- High-performance Intel motherboard
- Dolby Digital 7.1 Surround sound
- One wireless controller
- Wireless keyboard and mouse



GTA HITS XBOX

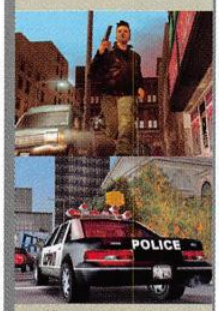
GRANDTHEFT AUTO SCREECHES ONTOTHE BOX

Xbox owners were justifiably excited when Rockstar revealed that its superb *Grand Theft Auto* series would be appearing on Microsoft's machine. Now, after nearly two years of keeping *GTA3* exclusive to Sony's PS2, the wait is over. And perhaps by way of apology for the delay, *Grand Theft Auto* will be released with the acclaimed *Vice City*.

The *GTA* double pack (also available for PS2) will be available from 4 November in the US, but it's highly likely it will appear in the UK by Christmas. Whilst not much information has been revealed, Rockstar Games has confirmed that the Xbox versions will not be straight ports of the PlayStation2 titles, but will instead be enhanced versions of the PC games.

Although Rockstar has announced that *GTA4* will remain a Sony exclusive, XBM's Nick Jones feels that Xbox owners shouldn't be disappointed. "*GTA* on Xbox is important for two reasons. Not only does it represent a chance for Xbox owners to play enhanced versions of the games, but it's also one less reason for people to buy a PS2 this Christmas."





Xbox owners can now go free-roaming at will.



No shoddy PS2 ports here, just, er, PC ports...

GAMES ROOM 101

THE NEGATIVE SIDE OF VIDEOGAMING



NO.6: A YEAR IS NEVER ENOUGH

Okay, so we'll admit that we're not the biggest fans of sequels. What we're now starting to get frustrated with, however, are the number of sequels appearing within a year of the original – mainly because in terms of development, a year isn't enough time to create a game different enough to warrant a purchase.

Sure, so perhaps that rule has some exceptions when it comes to genres like sport – after all, how much more is there to do with football? But even so, we believe that a quality sequel with enough improvement over the original to make itself worth $100 can't be turned around in a year. We appreciate that the industry needs to make money, and sequels rely on gamers remembering the original, but it's still not enough to expect people to pay for a rehash. Don't people take pride in their work any more?

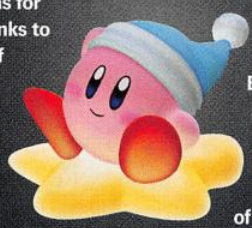
GAMECUBE RULES (FOR A WEEK)

NAMCO'S LATEST RPG HELPS NINTENDO'S CONSOLETOTHE TOP IN JAPAN



Fantasy RPG action is helping the Cube too.

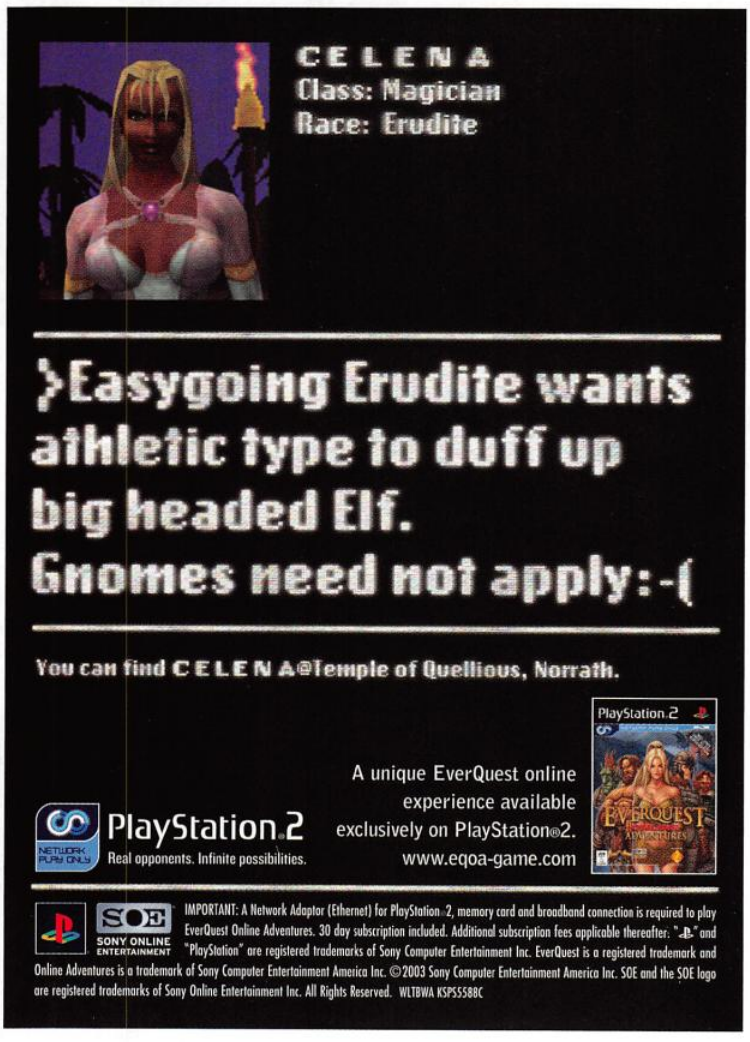
With the indomitable stranglehold that the PlayStation2 enjoys in Japan, it's refreshing to see that the GameCube made it the top of the hardware charts, even if it was for just one week. Thanks to the huge success of Namco's *Tales Of Symphonia*, which sold 176,600 copies in its first weekend on sale, some 35,600 GameCubes were shifted.



Kirby, being a kindly sort of pink blob, is saving the GameCube. How nice.

Although this was only slightly ahead of the PlayStation2's 35,300 units, Nintendo received a further boost thanks to the limited edition Mana Blue GBA SP and Square Enix's much-anticipated handheld title, *Sword Of Mana*. The GBA eventually achieved 40 per cent of the market share and sold 54,700 units.

As far as software goes, *Kirby Air Ride* continues to sell well and has now shifted just over 280,000 units, Square Enix's *Crystal Chronicles* is just short of 300,000 and there were six Nintendo titles in the Dengeki chart as we went to press. With the likes of Natsume's *Harvest Moon: A Wonderful Life* already exceeding 73,000 pre-orders in Japan and Factor 5's *Rogue Squadron III* proving popular in the US and UK thanks to its free bonus disc, the future's looking up for Nintendo's 128-bit machine.



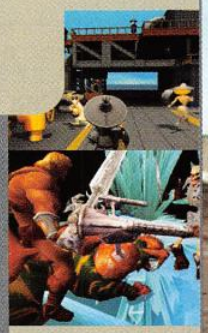
Data Stream

BITE-SIZED STORIES FROM AROUND THE WORLD OF GAMING



HIGH-RESOLUTION RYU

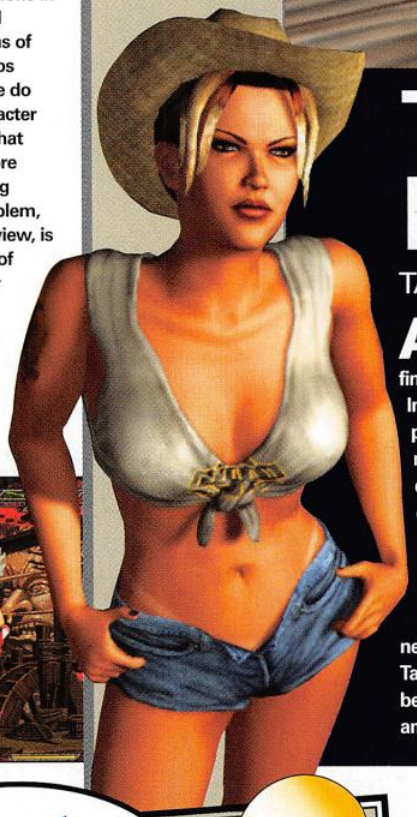
A new agreement between Capcom and *Guilty Gear* developer Sammy will see a selection of Capcom's characters going head to head with Sammy's own creations in a brand new game called *Sammy Vs. Capcom*. Fans of Capcom's 2D beat-'em-ups have always had to make do with low-resolution character sprites, despite the fact that current technology is more than capable of displaying sharper images. The problem, from Capcom's point of view, is that scanning a new set of high-resolution character animations simply wouldn't be cost-effective. After this deal, however, we can expect something along the lines of *Capcom Vs. SNK*, only nicer looking.



Masters Of The Universe? Hell yes.







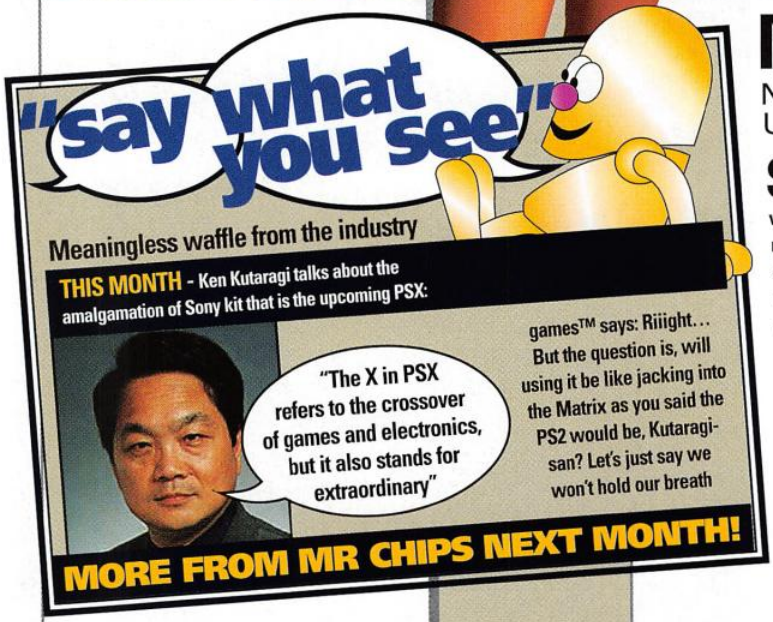
THE BILLION DOLLAR CLUB

TAKE 2 LAUNCHES INTO THE BIG LEAGUES

Although rumours had been circulating for some time, it's finally been confirmed that Take 2 Interactive has acquired games publisher TDK Mediactive in a $22.7 million transaction that took place in early September. An important aspect of the move will undoubtedly be the news that the acquisition may help Take 2 break the billion dollar sales barrier in the coming year.

Another noteworthy benefit is the new market that is now accessible to Take 2. Many of its previous games have been aimed at the more mature gamer and TDK's licences such as *Shrek* and *The Muppets* will allow the company to reach a much broader base. "The addition of TDK's mass-market and children's licensed properties to Take 2's properties will complement our portfolio and provide an excellent platform for Take 2 to further expand and diversify its product offerings," said Jeffrey Lapin, CEO of Take 2.

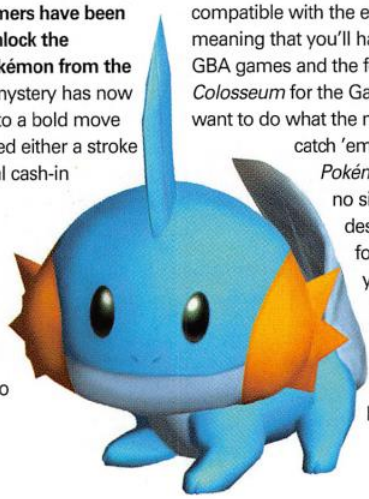
Figures for the financial quarter that ended in July revealed a profit of over $7.7 million for Take 2, much greater than the previous year's $4.8 million. These impressive figures will continue this Christmas thanks to the *GTA* bundle for Xbox and PS2.



MILK THAT PIKACHU

NINTENDO REVEALS ITS FIENDISH PLAN TO UNLOCK RUBY/SAPPHIRE'S EXTRA POKÉMON

Since the release of *Pokémon Ruby* and *Sapphire*, gamers have been wondering how to unlock the remaining hidden Pokémon from the original games. The mystery has now been solved, thanks to a bold move that can be considered either a stroke of genius or a cynical cash-in by Nintendo. It has revealed that *Pokémon Red* and *Blue* will be updated for the Game Boy Advance. Though Nintendo has yet to confirm it, we're expecting these remakes to be fully compatible with the existing GBA titles meaning that you'll have to buy all four GBA games and the forthcoming *Colosseum* for the GameCube if you want to do what the man says and catch 'em all. With the *Pokémon* craze showing no sign of slowing despite being around for the last seven years, this should provide Nintendo with plenty of cash to plough into its next home console.







Miles Jacobson – taking his ball and going home.



Eidos has held on to the brand name but not the code.





She's gone, baby gone.

IT'S ALL GONE QUIET OVER THERE!

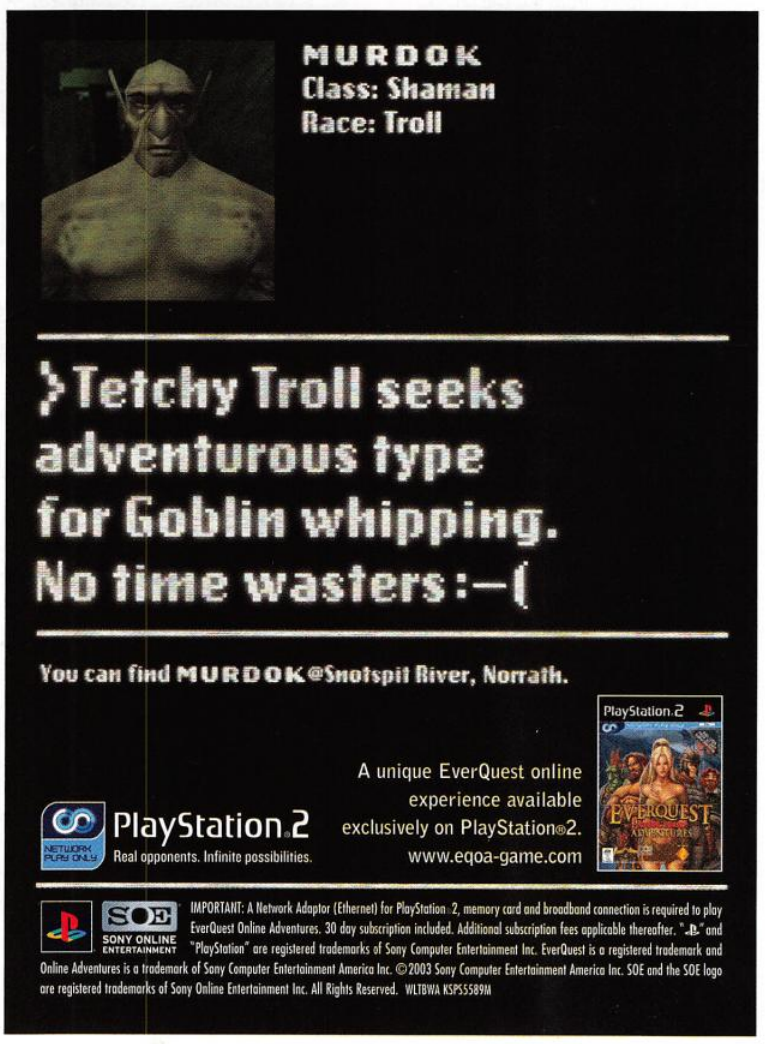
MORE WORRIES FOR EIDOS AS SPORTS INTERACTIVE SAYS GOODBYE

Poor Eidos. After all the problems caused by Core's *Tomb Raider: Angel Of Darkness*, the developers of *Championship Manager* have now also parted company with the beleaguered British publisher. While there has been no official explanation for the split with Sports Interactive, it has been revealed that Eidos has created a new studio that will start working on the *04/05* season update. The publisher was savvy enough to retain the *Championship Manager* brand name, but the actual code and player database will stay with Sports Interactive. What this boils down to is that gamers will find themselves with a very hard decision. Should they stick with a proven game that has constantly delivered (regardless of what name the new game will receive), or will they simply stick with a brand name and hope that Eidos' new studio can deliver?

"Well, that's the risk we've taken, isn't it?" said Miles Jacobson, MD of Sports Interactive. "We'll have to ensure that our next title is the best football management game out there, and we'll be working very hard on educating our customers of the changes. The extra competition is likely to drive us on to improve the game even more." Brave words – let's hope the games live up to them.

Despite arguably losing its best developer, Eidos is confident that its new studio will be able to follow in Sports Interactive's remarkable footsteps. "Moving the development of *Championship Manager* to our newly-created internal studio will enable us to build upon the phenomenal success of the game and develop the brand further," said Jonathan Kemp, Eidos' European Managing Director.

Ultimately it will be the fans who decide how successful the two games will be. But should they choose to go with Sports Interactive and not the popular brand name, it could be a serious wake-up call for publishers everywhere.



THINK TANK

THE PEOPLE IN THE GAMES INDUSTRY TELL IT LIKE IT IS...

WAR – WHAT IS IT GOOD FOR?



When I was a kid, my Nintendo might have been the 'greatest invention known to man', but playing war came in a very close second. Ask any ten-year-old boy and he'll tell you: war is cool. Kids have been playing soldier since the beginning of human history, and anthropologists say it's a natural instinct that prepares us for the battlefields of our adult lives. Sure. Whatever. The point is, when the bullets aren't real and no one is going to die from a chest wound, war is a blast.

This is nothing new. War games have been around for centuries, and military-themed videogames have been around from the beginning (*Combat* on the Atari 2600, anyone?). But what has changed is the amount of realism that the medium can deliver. Ten years ago, *Doom* was the most realistic combat experience around. Today, sofa-bound warriors can charge the beach at Normandy or do long-range recon in Vietnam. So what's next? Consider the latest game I've had the privilege of developing, *Full Spectrum Warrior*.

For the first time in history, the US Army (yes, *the* US Army) has co-developed a military 'game' specifically to teach enlisted soldiers real-world battlefield tactics. Their platform of choice is not some super-secret billion-dollar complex in the Mojave, but an Xbox – straight off the shelf from the local high street. But if the US Army is convinced by the authenticity of an Xbox military sim today, where will military games take us in ten years?

The thing is, gamers will always want war games and we'll want it realistic. We want it visceral. We want to be horrified. We want to be heroes. We want to fight and die and save the day vicariously from the safety of our living rooms. Most importantly though, we want it to be fun.

Brian Gomez
Lead Designer, Pandemic Studios

FROM THE FRONT

PLAYSTATION3 BACKWARDS COMPATIBILITY AND MICROSOFT HAS AN ODD RELEASE SCHEDULE FOR JAPAN...



So you can play *MGS1* and *2* on PS3...?



SONY CONFIRMS PS2 AND PSX COMPATIBILITY FOR ITS NEXT CONSOLE

ONE STEP FORWARDS, TWO STEPS BACK

With all the recent talk about Sony's PSP and PSX, it's little wonder that the company has announced some exciting news about its next home console. Keeping in line with the backwards compatibility of PlayStation2, Sony's president Ken Kutaragi has announced that PlayStation3 will contain the same features. Kutaragi-san also made it quite clear that the Sony name was here to stay.

"PSone runs on the PlayStation2 through emulation rather than actual hardware," he explained. "PlayStation3 will offer the same compatibility for PS2 software and the format will continue forever." Although SEGA had previously allowed gamers to play Master System titles on their Mega Drives, this was achieved with a rather expensive add-on. The PlayStation2 was the first home console to come with backwards compatibility as standard (although, admittedly, Nintendo had already been doing this on the Game Boy for some time).

But how will this affect Microsoft and Nintendo? While many are expecting Xbox 2 to offer some sort of backwards emulation, the recent news that Microsoft has hired ATI may cause problems when it comes to emulating the original NVIDIA chip. Indeed, many developers feel that the subtle differences between the two chips may cause glitching in some titles.

As for Nintendo, we'd be very surprised indeed if it allows its next console to be backwards compatible. In fact, we wouldn't be surprised if it distanced itself from the GameCube name completely.





These games are unlikely to go down well in Japan. They've got *Mario Golf*.





Really? Releasing *Tao Feng* in Japan? You've got to be kidding...

MICROSOFT'S LAUGHABLE MARKETING IN JAPAN

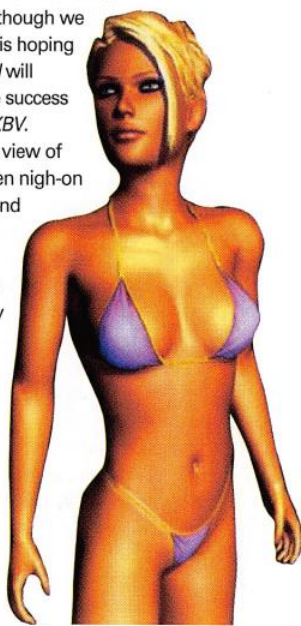
THIS WAS YOUR GOOD IDEA?

It's no secret that the Xbox is a failure in Japan – last month it was outsold yet again by the PSone. With this in mind, Microsoft has announced a new strategy in an attempt to renew interest in its console. And this ingenious new plan? A killer RPG? The announcement of *Winning Eleven*? A remake of *Panzer Dragoon Saga*? Er, no.

Unfortunately, rather than fill the Japanese market with titles gamers actually want, Microsoft has decided to try its luck with five Western titles, complete with original English instructions (although a Japanese manual will be included).

Without the prerequisite drum roll, we'll simply announce the five games. *NFL Fever 2004*, *Outlaw Golf*, *Tao Feng*, *Inside Pitch* and *Outlaw Volleyball*. Hardly cutting-edge titles by any stretch of the imagination. While we can see the possible appeal of *Outlaw Golf* and *Inside Pitch*, the other three simply baffle us, though we expect Microsoft is hoping *Outlaw Volleyball* will achieve the same success as Tecmo's *DOAXBV*.

The Japanese view of the Xbox has been nigh-on hostile at times and this approach of forcing Western sensibilities onto Nintendo-friendly gamers is unlikely to endear the company any further.



PC COMBAT EVOLVES

Unless you've been living under a rock, you've probably heard about an Xbox game called Halo. At long last, the eagerly-awaited PC version of Bungie's hit game has arrived and it's looking like a doozy.

Developed by Gearbox Studios (in conjunction with Bungie), *Halo PC* has all the features of the Xbox original and a number of PC-specific enhancements. "It took time to find Gearbox... it's not just a port," said Bungie's Pete Parsons at X03, "we wanted to really make the PC version something special."

Additions to the single-player game include new weapons (specifically, the Covenant's ruel-rod gun and the much-lamented, shown-early-but-not-included-in-the-Xbox-version flamethrower) and multiplayer maps.

The game also supports high-end graphic cards (displaying at up to 1600x1200 resolution) and keyboard-and-mouse controls.

But the most important addition, without a doubt, is the inclusion of networked multiplayer gaming. We all know how good *Halo* can be when playing split-screen or system link multiplayer on the Xbox. *Halo PC* takes this a step further and now Master Chief can battle his enemies online.

To celebrate the release and to highlight the game's online multiplayer facilities, Microsoft is sponsoring an international online *Halo PC* competition (see sidebar for details).

We're fans already but we do have one complaint – now the game is on our network, how are we expected to get any work done?



The same, yet different. Halo PC is the same game as the Xbox version, but with a few crucial additions – like online multiplayer with new maps, new weapons and more pilotable vehicles.

RED V BLUE?

To celebrate the release of *Halo PC*, Microsoft Games Studios has announced the Halo PC Online Tournament. Gamers across Australia are invited to enter and compete for prizes including $1000 cash and a trip to the US to compete in the Worldwide Halo Tournament in January 2004.

The tournament will begin in mid-November, giving entrants a chance to hone their skills. Sixteen finalists will be flown from around Australia to compete in the national finals to be held on 6 December in Sydney.

To register, simply visit www.cyberslam.com.au.





Want NEW Games Cheap this Christmas?



GameTraders

Pre-order at GameTraders and save when you trade-in your games on any upcoming new release (conditions apply – see instore for details).

Don't pay full retail prices – get into GameTraders and browse our huge selection of pre-owned games where you can

SAVE UP TO 60%!!!

Plus we pay CASH for your games – cash for Christmas!

WE BUY SELL TRADE AND RENT

• PS2 • XBOX • GameCube • PC • GameBoy • Sega • Atari and Much More!

E21257RR

STORES IN SA, VIC, QLD, WA. WWW.GAMETRADERS.COM.AU

games™ USA REPORT





LETTER FROM AMERICA

WITH YOUR FRIENDLY CORRESPONDENT, THE SHAPE

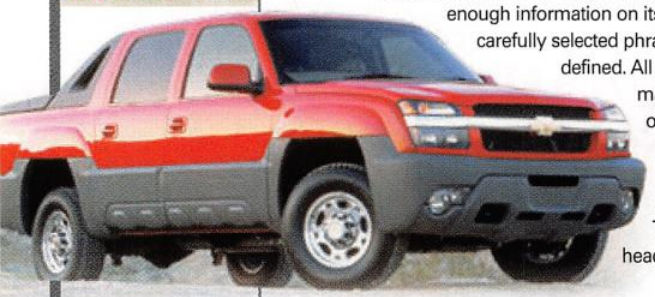
"ALL THE MAJOR CONSOLE MANUFACTURERS NEED TO DO IS SETTLE ON HIT THE AIRWAVES AND THE RELENTLESS MACHINERY

I've got it! Maybe it's the emerging tip of rising genius. Maybe it's the psychoactive additives in all those nutritious meal-in-a-box-for-lonely-people dinners I eat when Mrs Shape is out of the country, as she is now. Maybe it's a lack of cerebral oxygen from watching three hours of Home & Garden TV while lying upside down on the sofa (which also only seems to occur during prolonged abandonment by my significant other). Whatever the cause, the cogs turned, the mind worked, the spirit contemplated, perhaps like no-one else's ever had before, and then, with the brassy 'ding!' of a receptionist's bell, came the answer: slogans. Stick with me.

You're wondering what the question was. Truth be told, so was I, but I think it was possibly the old 'How do we get gaming accepted as mainstream media?' quandary. And there it is. US business is fuelled by slogans. A brand name doesn't carry enough information on its own – it's not until some carefully selected phrase follows that the brand is defined. All the major console manufacturers need do is settle on their own permanent mottoes, hit the airwaves and the relentless machinery of consumerism will do the rest. They work, too. Trust me – my head is full of them.



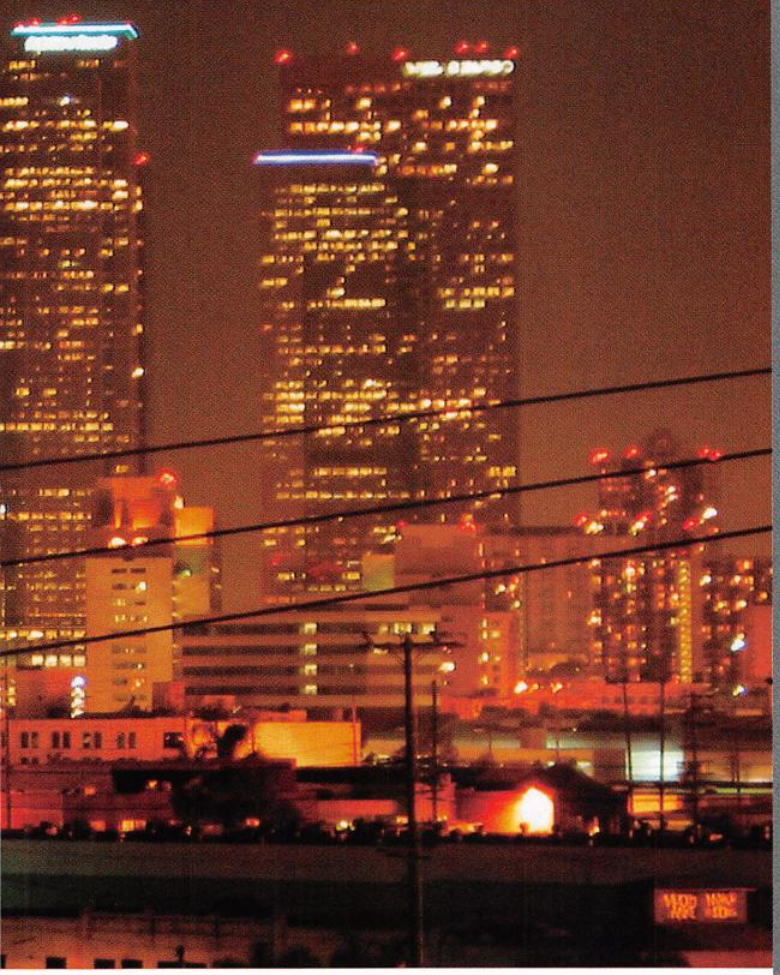
Cheerleaders looking a bit ropey since *Saved By The Bell*.



I don't have to rifle through a crumpled stack of notes to quote any number of lines that have been hammered into my skull. At the darker end of the spectrum we have the sinister 'Clearchannel Radio: We're Everywhere' (with a 1,600-station monopoly, they really are) or 'Hamden Memorial Funeral Home: Don't Drink And Drive, We'll Wait'. I've even noticed a pawn shop in the armpit of town, billing itself as 'The Bank of the 21st Century' – truthful, I'm sure, but depressing enough to induce a sigh in all who pass the sign.

My favourite (and by far the most American) of these is for GMC, or General Motors Corp. Having shown you an enormous vehicle plunging into ravines, scaling frozen mountains and devouring hostile landscape with supertruck-sized tyres – a vehicle of such girth and power that you could transport the entire Dallas Cowboys cheerleading squad through Mogadishu's least appealing resorts in oblivious luxury – comes this: 'It's not more than you need, just more than you're used to.' Bravo! Let's adapt that for our American console, the Xbox: 'It's not too big – just bigger than the others.'

At this point, I should make it clear that I am aware these games giants dabble with mottoes from time to time, but they never stick with them and the terms differ from country to country. This isn't the way to build your brand for the masses. It takes years. EA Sports has got the right idea: 'It's in the game'. I'm not absolutely clear on what this means but they've hung



THEIR OWN PERMANENT MOTTOES, OF CONSUMERISM WILL DO THE REST"

onto it so long, it's caught on. You find people who don't own a single videogame will still know 'it's in the game', in the same way that I'm in no way smitten by the homemaking luxuries sold at reasonable prices by JC Penny's department stores, even though I am aware that 'it's all inside'. It's like water on stone, eventually making an indelible mark.

But what would suit Sony or Nintendo? The trouble is, in the age of the trademark all the best slogans are taken. Millions of companies are badging billions of products all the time. Just search the US Patent & Trademark Office's database online. You almost have to resort to random gibberish to hit upon a phrase that isn't spoken for. 'GameCube: It's Pancake Dilemma Chipmunk', in my view at least, isn't likely to sell much hardware nor weave its way into the tapestry of popular language, but at least it's available should Nintendo feel differently. This, of course, highlights the importance of choosing lifelong trademarks sooner rather than later as more terms are snatched from the public domain each day.

Ah! Here we are: 'PlayStation2: Never Mind The Jaggies!' Oh dear. I've just realised, as you may have, that maybe I'm not so good at this. What can I say? Genius can only stretch so far. Ad executives and brand consultants can take it from here, I'm going back to the sofa.

Many thanks THE SHAPE

MISS ABOUT BRITAIN...

Adam & Joe



LOVE ABOUT AMERICA...

Avoiding HM Customs



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

PIG IN A BLANKET

Can you believe that this is the horrifying name for a simple sausage roll out here? It makes you feel like a right monster, as though you're gobbling an entire piglet right out of its little bed.



US MULTIFORMAT TOP TEN

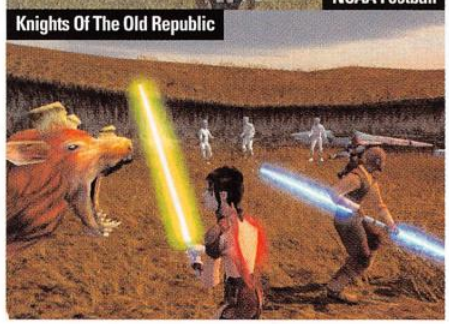
	Title	Publisher	Format
1	NCAA Football 2004	EA Sports	Multi
2	Knights Of The Old Republic	Activision	Xbox
3	Dragon Ball Z: Legacy Of Goku II	Atari	GBA
4	Donkey Kong Country	Nintendo	GBA
5	Pokémon Ruby/Sapphire	Nintendo	GBA
6	Yu-Gi-Oh! Worldwide Edition	Konami	GBA
7	GTA: Vice City	Rockstar	PS2
8	NBA Street Vol. 2	EA Sports BIG	Multi
9	Mario Golf: Toadstool Tour	Nintendo	GC
10	Enter The Matrix	Atari	Multi

(Updated 16/09/03)



NCAA Football

Knights Of The Old Republic



games™ JAPAN REPORT



KONGETSU*

WITH JAPANESE CORRESPONDENT OLLIE BARDER

"MANY OF THOSE GAMERS WHO JUST PLAY GAMES TO EARN LIFESTYLE BADGE MAY WISH THE ACTIVITY WAS MORE CHIC, BUT IT'S

This time, I've got the sucker nailed. He's hiding behind one of those damn buildings but, thankfully, the lock-on system is clearly displaying his cowardly behaviour. I signal to my wingman to give me some cover before I close in for the kill. Unfortunately, my wingman is an utter tool and he lets my opponent's wingman through. What follows can only be described as a 'mecha mosh pit with a topping of extra thick plasma'. Bugger. Be aware that the above almost makes *Virtual On Force* sound good – in reality though, it's average gaming done for mecha fans who don't have anything else better to do (like me, basically). This isn't to say that the *Virtual On* franchise hasn't produced a few gaming corkers – with the original being probably one of the finest games ever made – but, in all honesty, *Force* ain't that great.

At this point, I don't doubt that many of you are already complaining about that damn Barder man, talking about big robots again. Well, yes I am, but there's a reason for this. By the time you read this, I will be back in Blighty. This means that, unfortunately, this is my final Kongetsu column. Also, this means that those of you who have become transfixed with my poor use of the splendid English language will have to get your questionably erotic fixes somewhere else. My detractors will naturally rejoice at this but, for my fans, this may come as truly soul-crushing news.

I have had a very good two years in Japan, though, and they will be remembered fondly for many years to come. Japan is by no means a faultless country but it has been my home and that's the sort of thing a person gets attached to after a while. You see, anime brought me to Japan, but it was Japan that made me a gamer. This isn't to say that I wasn't an avid fan of gaming beforehand, but it was Japan that truly broke me. Much like a fascistic schoolmistress with a fetish for excessive spanking, I was very much owned by Japan. This caused all sorts of problems with my much-cherished personal objectivity – after all, every bloody games store sold four million mecha games. For my first few months I was a non-sensical, deranged otaku (and some would argue this has yet to truly change) but after a while, things chilled and I started to regress to my older and truer roots of gaming taste. This hasn't stopped me from blathering on about mecha gaming to all and sundry, but at least now I'm actually talking from the perspective of someone who plays games rather than some nut who just obsesses over mecha anime. Now I obsess about both.

Yet for all my personal eccentricities, I still remain glad for the games industry. The industry and its market are developing into something innate and almost tangible. Admittedly, many a PR hand will try to convince you that the revolution is now, but I have more faith in the general public not to believe such



Warning: may contain small parts, and peanut traces.



YET ANOTHER SUB-CULTURE NOT A GLAMOROUS PASTIME"

insidious bullshit. Many of the more vapid gamers, as in those who do gaming to earn yet another sub-culture lifestyle badge, may wish it was more chic but gaming is not a glamorous pastime. Selling it as such is just another drop in the well of cognitive dissonance.

Admittedly, gaming will enter further into the mainstream (this is all but unavoidable) but it will never be an entity of social desirability. You see, after my two years in Japan I have realised that the Japanese are not interested in how cool games can be socially, just how cool the games themselves actually are. There aren't the huge misleading song-and-dance campaigns from the media in Japan – unlike the ones we're subjected to here, they just show the games. Of all the things the Western games industry should learn from these genki Nihonjin it is their no-nonsense attitude towards games. Will it ever happen? Perhaps. But then I won't be here to witness it. Think fond thoughts of me, though, as I battle through *R-Type* (on MAME) at 30,000 feet whilst fondling the pert buttocks of some nubile Japanese air hostess. 'Tis a hard life, after all.

Kind regards Ollie Barder

TEACH YOURSELF JAPANESE

LESSON SIX: JAPANESE PLANE ETIQUETTE

How do you open this door?	Kono doa douyatte akerundesuka?
Oh, I can't because it would depressurise the cabin.	Aa korene, konodoawa akeremasenyo – aketara kyabin no kiatsugasagarimasukara.
No, I am not a terrorist.	Iie. Watashiwa terorisutojya.
So can I open the door?	Jya, konodoaaketemoiidesuka?
Dangerous? No my dear, dangeresque!	Abunaidesutte? Chigaimasuyo, danjeresuku!



Ollie's coming home, he's coming home, he's coming...

JAL JALWAYS

JALWAYS AND FOREVER

Flying to Japan is pretty much the only way to get there, unless you're a nutter and try to swim. This means that you shall have to endure the countless multifaceted wonders of many a global airline. I have flown them all to Japan. Most suck. Japan Airlines, however, rocks. My final flight home is on a Japan Airlines (or JAL, to the more experienced air traveller) route. It's comfortable with a range of food that's actually edible. The air hostesses are also rather scrumptious, and there's the added bonus of not having to fear for one's life as the plane is unlikely to fall apart from the inside. The catch? JAL is super pricey, but if you want to get to Japan and not feel like utter crap by the end of the flight, fly JAL. Their in-flight games aren't that bad either.



JAPANESE MULTIFORMAT TOP TEN

	Title	Publisher	Format
1	Tales Of Symphonia	Namco	GC
2	Sword Of Mana	Square Enix	GBA
3	Winning Eleven 7	Konami	PS2
4	Winning Post 6	Koei	PS2
5	Pokémon Pinball: Ruby/Sapphire	Nintendo	GBA
6	Final Fantasy: Crystal Chronicles	Nintendo	GC
7	Kirby's Air Ride	Nintendo	GC
8	Monster Farm 4	Tecmo	PS2
9	Jikkyou Powerful Pro Baseball 10	Konami	PS2
10	Super Mario Advance 4	Nintendo	GBA

(Dengeki Console Game Ranking Top 50, week ending 05/09/03)









FROM THE SIMPLE IDEA OF CREATING EASY-TO-MANAGE DEVELOPMENT SOFTWARE TO BECOMING THE BACKBONE OF WELL OVER HALF THE GAMES COMING OUT TODAY – THAT'S THE RENDERWARE WAY...

"EXPERIMENTATION AND INNOVATION ARE BOTH RISKY ENDEAVOURS, SO THE QUEST FOR A STAND-OUT GAME THESE DAYS DOESN'T COME WITHOUT RISK"

DAVID LAU-KEE, CEO, CRITERION SOFTWARE

DAVID LAU-KEE

CRITERION SOFTWARE

Even though some of you won't remember, it's fair to say that a decade ago the games industry was a somewhat different animal. Two-dimensional titles ruled, games still came on cartridges and Sony wasn't even on the radar as a threat to the likes of SEGA and Nintendo. That's why we reckon if you'd suggested to the people who were busy founding Criterion Software back in 1993 that they would go on to develop a range of tools that would be used to create a ton of games in the US, Japan and the UK, you'd have been laughed out the building. Nevertheless, that's exactly what happened and, not surprisingly, the company hasn't looked back since.

"The game industry really is a global activity these days," says David Lau-Kee, CEO of Criterion Software, the firm responsible for the RenderWare revolution. "There are hundreds of RenderWare games out there now, and hundreds more currently in development."

Although seeing its software being used by a company as influential as SEGA must have come as quite a surprise, we can't help but raise an eyebrow at the claim that the company didn't forsee how big RenderWare was going to become. However, with the games industry now more profit-driven than ever before, it's not a shock to learn that having a 'share and share alike' attitude was the first thing on Criterion's mind.

"Keeping RenderWare for ourselves was never the intention," insists Lau-Kee. "It's been designed from the ground up as a set of extensible components and tools explicitly for others to use. I honestly believe that great games aren't about cool technology – the real value is in compelling game design, great gameplay, artwork, characters and so on. Everyone knows just how much games have advanced over the past few years and a key factor in that is putting powerful tools into the hands of the experts who can handle the rest."

Those of us with a passion for the subject might suggest that it's 'the rest' that's really becoming the important part of games today, with progress starting to slow in the field of graphical development. "It used to be the case that great graphics would get you a long way to differentiating your game, but that's not the case any longer," says Lau-Kee. "Experimentation with artistic or graphical style will, of course, continue to differentiate games, as will innovation. Unfortunately, experimentation and innovation are both risky endeavours, so the quest for a stand-out game these days doesn't come without risk."

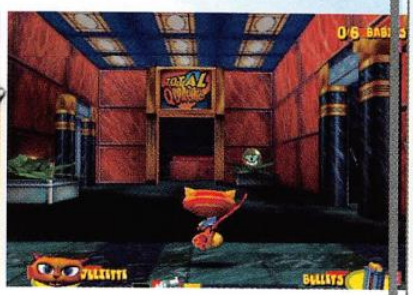
Going on the fact that RenderWare is mere inches from becoming the industry standard, many would believe that this is where its strengths lie – enabling developers to manage the risk of new (and sometimes unproven) innovations by minimising the technology and integration risks involved, giving people the creative freedom to take their games in whichever direction makes sense. "It's easy for people to look at what we've done and conclude that RenderWare is an extremely potent force in development," admits Lau-Kee. "The sheer complexity and scale of game development means that tools and middleware are not a force for change, but rather a solution to a set of fundamental creative and business requirements. Essentially, people wanted to catch mice and so we made a clean, effective mousetrap that works. Obviously, you don't absolutely need a mousetrap – a chunk of cheese and a hammer would probably do the business – but I know which method I'd choose."

It's an odd analogy, but we can certainly see what Lau-Kee's getting at, especially since we can think of more than a few games that look like they've been developed in a 'cheese and hammer' way. But with two more games already in development (currently codenamed *Black* and *Dust Storm*), it looks as though that's an accusation Criterion isn't going to face anytime soon. In fact, the company's possibly in the best possible position to read the ups and downs of an industry that Lau-Kee himself agrees is fraught with turmoil. "With the company being split into two – the middleware part of the business and Criterion Games – we're lucky enough to have quite a wide perspective on what's going on in the industry at the moment. It's great to be in the middle of things where there's so much going on with games right now. I can't think of anywhere else I'd rather be, except maybe on the receiving end of those *GTA: Vice City* royalty cheques."

COMMUNITY

THIS MONTH, games™ GOES 'OOP NORTH' TO LIVERPOOL TO VISIT BIZARRE CREATIONS, HOME OF PROJECT GOTHAM RACING 2







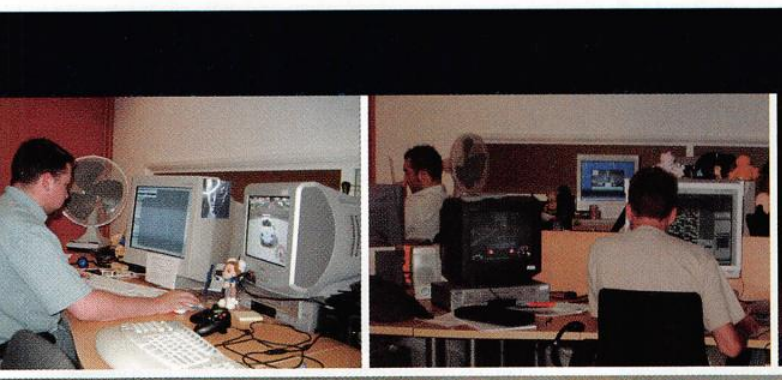


BIZARRE CREATIONS

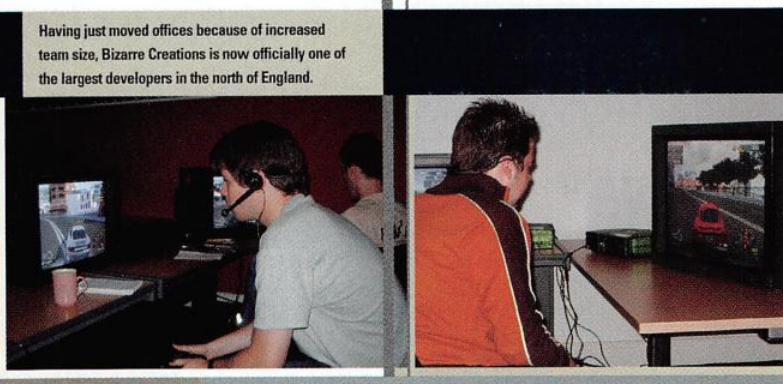
As many of you who fondly recall the eras of the Spectrum, Commodore 64, Amstrad and countless other computer-cum-games machines will remember, the realm of games development was once a very different one compared to the business-driven animal of today. Back then, virtually anyone could become a successful programmer and have games sold at their local Dick Smith°. All it took was a fair bit of coding knowledge, a pack of blank tapes and a friendly word in the ear of the manager. Of course, not everyone who could string together a few lines of code had the calibre to make it as a respected member of the industry. Only the ones who stuck at it and scored a little bit of luck ended up making it beyond the bedroom door. "I started coding purely for fun when at secondary school," reminisces Martyn Chudley, the man responsible for turning a bedroom-based programming set-up into the firm that is now know as Bizarre Creations.

"Computers were the 'in thing' there and whilst never being particularly good at coding, I always enjoyed the creative aspect of it. Games were just a natural progression, I guess. Even though I was a lone coder,

IF IT'S A HIGH-CLASS MIX OF RACING ACTION AND YOUNG TALENT YOU'RE AFTER, THERE'S NO NEED TO LOOK TO JAPAN OR AMERICA – EVERYTHING YOU COULD NEED IS WAITING FOR YOU IN LIVERPOOL. JUST REMEMBER TO HANG ON TO YOUR HUBCAPS...



Having just moved offices because of increased team size, Bizarre Creations is now officially one of the largest developers in the north of England.





The *Gotham* team makes up just a small part of the whole company. Bizarre Creations currently has three teams working under its roof.

though, I never really felt alone as I always felt that I had the full support of Psygnosis in those early days. It was just fun – no worrying about the future or anything, just making games. It wasn't until the reality hit of needing more people to make games that Bizarre basically got started." As additional opportunities for work came along more people was exactly what Raising Hell Software (Chudley's original company) needed, and upon taking on its first three staff members, Bizarre Creations was born. Occurring at a time that could only be termed as a defining moment for the games industry – thanks to the appearance of the PSone – it was a pivotal moment for the company and one that put it onto the path towards bigger and better things.

However, it only takes one brief glance at the titles that Bizarre has produced to notice a rather distinct pattern forming since 1996. One or two deviations aside, the lion's share of titles created by the Liverpool-based developer have all fallen neatly into the category of racing games. This in itself isn't exactly a bad thing – after all, some companies have been sticking to what they're good at for years and it certainly doesn't appear to have done them any harm. Still, you can't help but think that an up-and-coming developer like Bizarre wouldn't want to pigeonhole itself too early and end up doing the same old thing year after year. A view shared by the company itself.

"We definitely feel that one of our key strengths is in the racing genre, but we're not dismissive of other genres," admits Brian Woodhouse, executive producer at Bizarre Creations. "One school of thought would advise not to limit our options and another would have us focus on where our traditional successes have been. We feel as though our recent non-racing titles like *Fur Fighters* and *Treasure Planet* have done well, and although they don't match commercially some of the numbers generated in other areas, we feel that they are successes. It all depends how you want to benchmark success, I suppose." Unfortunately, measuring success is also something that's changed greatly since the days of the bedroom programmer. Whereas word of mouth and a good response from your peers was more than enough for the lone coder, all big businesses are interested in are lots of numbers with a pound sign on the front. In an industry where third-party developers can go from being the talk of the town to floundering in receivership almost overnight, resting on your laurels is something no developer should ever do.

"BY REMAINING STOUTLY INDEPENDENT, WE'VE ENSURED THAT WE CAN PUT OUR 'EGGS' INTO A RANGE OF BASKETS"

MARTYN CHUDLEY, BIZARRE CREATIONS



WAY BACK WHEN

They say that great oaks grow from tiny acorns and in the case of Bizarre Creations, that couldn't be truer. Single-handed 'bedroom' programming is a thing of the past, but the company wouldn't be where it is today without it...

COMBAT CRAZY
(COMMODORE 64, 1988)

The first game in the history of Bizarre Creations, even though it was written by just one person – Martyn Chudley, future MD of the company. Being an example of bedroom programming, the gameplay was rather shallow but it was still fun.



THE KILLING GAME SHOW
(AMIGA/ATARI ST 1990, MEGA DRIVE 1991)

Beginning life as a demo programme called *Robodragon, TKGS* came into being once Psygnosis commissioned it to be made into a full game. However, virtually all the art and coding was still done by Martyn Chudley on his own.



WIZ N' LIZ
(AMIGA/MEGA DRIVE 1993)

A more child-friendly game compared to previous titles, *Wiz N' Liz* was also released by Psygnosis and saw you control one of two wizards in an effort to release 'wabbits' before opening the door to the next stage, all against the clock.





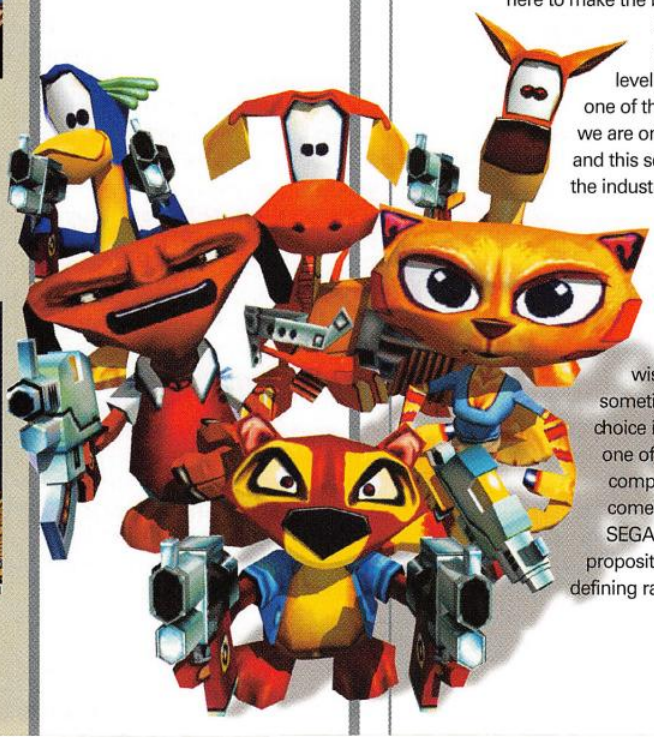


Fur Fighters first hit the Dreamcast before being picked up for the PS2 by Acclaim.



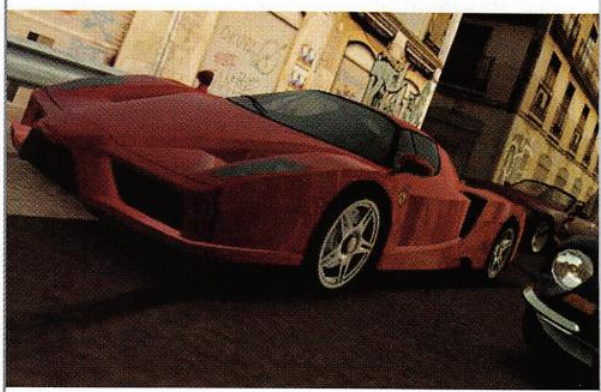
"TO BE HONEST, WE'RE IN A FAIRLY ROBUST POSITION RIGHT NOW"

BRIAN WOODHOUSE, BIZARRE CREATIONS



ON THE ROAD AGAIN

It might be common knowledge that the big title on the horizon for Bizarre Creations is *Project Gotham Racing 2*, but one concern is the announcement that the game will only run at 30fps, against the 60fps rate of the original. It's a fact that many fans have questioned, even though the reasons behind it are more than justified. "It was probably one of the hardest we've had to make during the lifetime of the project," admits Woodhouse. "We wanted to really up the bar on the graphical side of the game over the first game, so this time round we've been able to enable anti-aliasing to smooth off those jagged edges and put a lot more detail into the buildings around the circuits, giving them a lot more depth and realism. We've also upped the number of cars in street races from six to eight – it just made more sense to lock the game to a constant 30fps considering the level of content."



▷Thankfully, that's a problem Bizarre doesn't have to deal with. "To be honest, we're in a fairly robust position right now," says Woodhouse. "The nature of the company isn't to be the biggest or the richest, and we believe that our success has been a by-product of this philosophy. We're essentially here to make the best games we can and we seem to be doing okay on that front, so naturally we expect a level of success to follow. Of course, one of the pillars of the company is that we are only as good as our latest game and this seems to be mirrored throughout the industry, where we've seen good companies fold quickly and dramatically. So, whilst being cautiously optimistic, we're also very keen not to take our eye off the ball."

Exercising caution may be a wise move in this industry, but sometimes developers have little choice in the matter – particularly when one of the biggest Japanese games companies around (at the time) comes knocking at your door. When SEGA came to Bizarre with the proposition of developing a genre-defining racing game for its new

Copyright © 2003 Nokia. All rights reserved. Nokia and N-Gage are trademarks or registered trademarks of Nokia Corporation.

This is where
I took on three guys...
and made them cry like babies.



Wireless multiplayer game play
Game card titles from top publishers
Supports 3D graphics
Bluetooth wireless technology
MP3 music player – FM radio
Triband mobile phone

n-gage.com

N·GAGE
NOKIA

anyone
anywhere



The attention to detail in *PGR2* has cost many man hours. But it's worth it.



Treasure Planet might not have been the most innovative title, but it still sold quite well.

RED EYES

1 MARTYN CHUDLEY–
MD, Bizarre Creations
Previously: Wrote games independently before being commissioned to work for Psygnosis.

2 BRIAN WOODHOUSE –
Executive Producer, Bizarre Creations
Previously: Worked for Sony and has been a producer for the last five years.



Dreamcast console, it was an offer that it couldn't refuse – even if *Metropolis Street Racer* did end up being one of the most delayed games for the machine. "Being chosen by SEGA was very important to us," says Chudley, "as it felt that we had been 'accepted' in the world of games creation. Granted, the *F1* series was successful, but being approached by SEGA to create a racing game showed we had reached a new level. It was a real shame that the hardware wasn't a success – it was a great bit of kit to work with – but it did give us a bit of a starting point with Microsoft when developing *Project Gotham Racing* from its 'parent', *Metropolis Street Racer*. In some ways, it was a shame that SEGA took the decision to go cross-platform so late, just clinging on to Dreamcast for a touch too long. If they had decided to move to PS2 and GameCube sooner then *MSR* may have been on everything. It's strange how the cards fall sometimes, but with our great relationship with Microsoft and the acceptance of *PGR* as an established franchise, things have turned out pretty good."



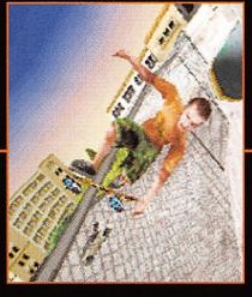
Indeed, they have – having gone from small-time developer to SEGA's 'developer of choice' and finally to one of the key third-party firms under the considerably expansive wing of Microsoft, Bizarre Creations looks to be in a prime spot for the future. Having just relocated to a bigger premises due to the *PGR2* team growing too big as the title draws closer to completion, and with two teams already hard at work on other projects (currently codenamed *Nightmare* and *Smokescreen*), there's little doubt that the company is already looking further ahead than most other developers at the moment. While this could be attributed in part to the involvement of good ol' Bill, the people in charge at Bizarre have more than enough sense to let that go to their heads.

"I think we've made progress massively thanks to the 'structured' approach of Microsoft while completely retaining the ability to constantly innovate," says Chudley. "Microsoft strongly believes in always giving the consumers something new and fresh, and with the changes we've made in *PGR2* I don't think we'll disappoint. However, the 'small company' atmosphere of the company has remained, which is great to see and very much part of our company philosophy." And if that means great games, long may it continue, we say.



TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER







Tony Hawk's Pro Skater® now on N-Gage. Skate as Tony Hawk and nine top pros through vert courses full of half-pipes and street courses full of rails and perils. Engage in head-to-head online competition. **n-gage.com**

N·GAGE NOKIA anyone anywhere

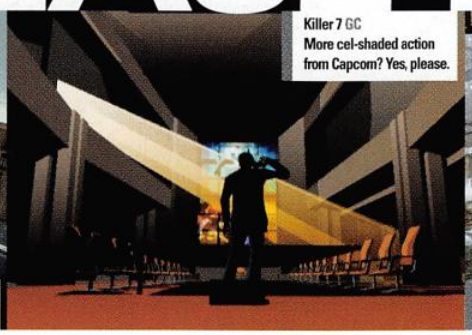
G ACTIVISION. NEVERSOFT idea WORKS3D!

Copyright © 2003 Nokia. All rights reserved. Nokia and N-Gage are trademarks or registered trademarks of Nokia Corporation. © 1999-2003 Activision, Inc. and its affiliates. Activision and Pro Skater are registered trademarks of Activision, Inc. and its affiliates. All rights reserved. Tony Hawk is a trademark of Tony Hawk. All other trademarks and trade names are the property of their respective owners.

RELEASE LISTS



Project Gotham Racing 2 Xbox
The king of Xbox racers returns.



Killer 7 GC
More cel-shaded action from Capcom? Yes, please.



Commandos 3: Destination Berlin PC
Go behind enemy lines. Again.



games™ MOST PLAYED

WINNING ELEVEN 7

Format: PlayStation2
Publisher: Konami

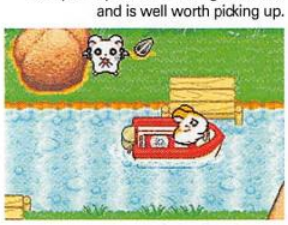
We're not quite sure how Konami manages to continually improve probably the greatest football game of all time, but we're certainly not complaining. New tricks, improved dribbling and the excellent Advantage option are just a few of the treats to expect when the PAL version arrives, but for now we're very happy to play in Japanese.



HAMTARO: HAM-HAM HEARTBREAK

Format: Game Boy Advance
Publisher: Nintendo

It's not every day that you get to save the world from a hamster in a devil suit. And we're suckers for cute, quirky titles, so the popularity of Hamtaro's latest adventure was pretty much a given. This hamster-heavy RPG pushes all the right buttons and is well worth picking up.



SOUL CALIBUR II

Format: Multi
Publisher: EA/Nintendo

Okay, so the UK version may not have knocked our socks off, but there's no denying that the Soul still burns in Namco's classy battler. There are certain benefits with the PAL release though – for starters we can now at least understand everything in Weapon Master mode...





PLAYSTATION2

Month	Title	Publisher	
NOVEMBER			
7 November	Broken Sword: The Sleeping Dragon	THQ	
7 November	Dragon's Lair 3D: Special Edition	THQ	
7 November	Ghosthunter	Sony	Wanted
7 November	Gregory Horror Show	THQ	
7 November	Hot Wheels: World Race	THQ	
7 November	MOH: Rising Sun	EA	
7 November	WWE Smackdown!	THQ	
13 November	Beyond Good & Evil	Ubi Soft	
13 November	NBA Jam 2004	Acclaim	
14 November	Dancing Stage Fever	Atari	
14 November	Dragon Ball Z Budokai 2	Atari	
14 November	Dynasty Warriors 4	THQ	Wanted
14 November	Jimmy Neutron: Jet Fusion	THQ	
14 November	Looney Tunes: Back in Action	EA	
14 November	McFarlanes Evil prophecy	Atari	
14 November	Robin Hood: Defender of the Crown	THQ	
14 November	SpongeBob Squarepants	THQ	
14 November	Terminator 3: Rise of the Machines	Atari	
14 November	Total Club Manager 2004	EA	
15 November	Secret Weapons Over Normandy	EA	
17 November	Cricket 2004	EA	
20 November	Batman: Rise of Sin Tzu	Ubi Soft	
20 November	Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon	Ubi Soft	
20 November	Prince of Persia: Sands of Time	Ubi Soft	Wanted
21 November	Bond 3: Everything or Nothing	EA	
21 November	Harry Potter Philosopher Stone	EA	
21 November	Kya: Dark Lineage	Atari	
21 November	Need For Speed: Underground	EA	
27 November	Ghost Recon Jungle Storm	Ubi Soft	
28 November	ESPN NBA Basketball	Atari	
tbc	Battlestar Galactica	Vivendi	Wanted
tbc	Bloody Roar 4	Atari	
tbc	Crash Nitro Kart	Vivendi	
tbc	EyeToy: Groove	Sony	Wanted
tbc	The Hobbit	Vivendi	
tbc	Legacy of Kain: Defiance	Atari	
tbc	Manhunt	Take 2	
tbc	Megarace 3	QV	
tbc	Metal Arms: Glitch in the System	Vivendi	
tbc	NHL Hitz Pro	Acclaim	
tbc	Pro Evolution Soccer 3	Atari	
tbc	Ratchet & Clank 2	Sony	
tbc	Roadkill	Acclaim	
tbc	The Simpsons: Hit & Run	Vivendi	
tbc	Spyhunter 2	Acclaim	
tbc	SWAT GST	Vivendi	
tbc	Whiplash	Atari	
tbc	WRC3	Sony	
tbc	X-Files: Resist or Serve	Vivendi	
DECEMBER			
05 December	Alias	Acclaim	
05 December	Bad Boys II	Empire Interactive	
05 December	Sonic Heroes	SEGA	
19 December	The Sims Bustin' Out	Electronic Arts	
TBC	Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance II	Atari	
TBC	Final Fantasy X-2	SCEE	
TBC	Gran Turismo 4	SCEE	Wanted



GAMECUBE

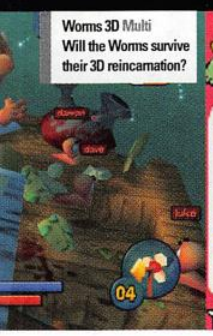
Month	Title	Publisher	
NOVEMBER			
7 November	Dragon's Lair 3D: Special Edition	THQ	
7 November	Hot Wheels: World Race	THQ	
7 November	MOH: Rising Sun	EA	
7 November	Hot Wheels: World Race	THQ	
13 November	XIII	Ubi Soft	
13 November	Batman: Rise of Sin Tzu	Ubi Soft	
14 November	DBZ: Budokai	Atari	
14 November	Billy Hatcher and the Giant Egg	Atari	Wanted
14 November	Jimmy Neutron: Jet Fusion	THQ	
14 November	Looney Tunes: Back in Action	EA	
14 November	SpongeBob Squarepants	THQ	
20 November	Harvest Moon A Wonderful Life	Ubi Soft	Wanted
21 November	Bond 3: Everything or Nothing	EA	
21 November	Harry Potter Philosopher Stone	EA	
21 November	Need For Speed: Underground	EA	
28 November	Beyblade Super Battle Tournament	Atari	
28 November	CDS 2: Back to Baghdad	Atari	
tbc	The Hobbit	Vivendi	
tbc	Crash Nitro Kart	Vivendi	
tbc	Judge Dredd	Vivendi	
tbc	Mario Kart: Double Dash	Nintendo	Wanted
tbc	Metal Arms: Glitch in the System	Vivendi	
tbc	NHL Hitz Pro	Acclaim	
tbc	Pikmin 2	Nintendo	Wanted
tbc	Road Kill	Acclaim	
tbc	The Simpsons: Hit & Run	Vivendi	
tbc	Spyhunter 2	Acclaim	
DECEMBER			
05 December	Mario Party 5	Nintendo	
05 December	Sonic Heroes	SEGA	Wanted
05 December	XIII	Ubi Soft	
19 December	The Sims Bustin' Out	Electronic Arts	



XBOX

Month	Title	Publisher
NOVEMBER		
7 November	Broken Sword: Sleeping Dragon	THQ
7 November	Dino Crisis 3	THQ
7 November	MOH: Rising Sun	EA

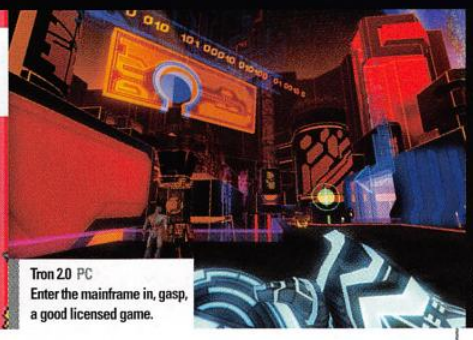
CALM YOUR FEVERISH ANTICIPATION WITH OUR COMPREHENSIVE LIST OF FORTHCOMING RELEASES



Worms 3D Multi
Will the Worms survive their 3D reincarnation?



Pokémon Pinball: Ruby And Sapphire GBA
Even more Pokémon madness? We're in heaven.



Tron 2.0 PC
Enter the mainframe in, gasp, a good licensed game.



X²: The Threat PC
Has Egosoft created the next *Elite*?

7 November	Scooby Doo! Mystery Mayhem	THQ	
7 November	Sega GT Online	Atari	
7 November	Top Spin Tennis	Microsoft	Wanted
13 November	NBA Jam 2004	Acclaim	
13 November	Rainbox Six 3	Ubi Soft	Wanted
14 November	Amped 2	Microsoft	
14 November	Medal of Honor: Rising Sun	EA	
14 November	Robin Hood: Defender of the Crown	THQ	
14 November	SpongeBob Squarepants	THQ	
14 November	Terminator 3: Rise of the Machines	Atari	
14 November	Total Club Manager	EA	
15 November	Secret Weapons Over Normandy	EA	Wanted
20 November	Batman: Rise of Sin Tzu	Ubi Soft	
21 November	Bond 3: Everything or Nothing	EA	
21 November	Grabbed by the Ghoulies	Microsoft	
21 November	MtG: The Battleground	Atari	
21 November	Sudeki	Microsoft	
21 November	Need For Speed: Underground	EA	
21 November	Harry Potter Philosopher Stone	EA	
28 November	ESPN NBA Basketball	Atari	
28 November	Project Gotham Racing 2	Microsoft	
tbc	Battlestar Galactica	Vivendi	
tbc	Crash Nitro Kart	Vivendi	
tbc	The Hobbit	Vivendi	
tbc	Legacy of Kain: Defiance	Atari	
tbc	Metal Arms: Glitch in the System	Vivendi	Wanted
tbc	NHL Hitz Pro	Acclaim	
tbc	Road Kill	Acclaim	
tbc	The Simpsons: Hit & Run	Vivendi	
tbc	SpyHunter 2	Acclaim	
tbc	SWAT GST	Vivendi	
tbc	X-Files: Resist or Serve	Vivendi	
DECEMBER			
05 December	Bad Boys II	Empire Interactive	
05 December	Sonic Heroes	SEGA	
TBC	Counter Strike	Microsoft	Wanted
TBC	Grabbed By The Ghoulies	Microsoft	



PC

Month	Title	Publisher	
NOVEMBER			
3 November	LOTR: Return of the King	EA	
5 November	BattleCruiser Millennium	QV	Wanted
5 November	Kann	QV	
5 November	Salammbo	QV	
6 November	URU Ages Beyond Myst	Ubi Soft	
7 November	Broken Sword: Sleeping Dragon	THQ	
12 November	Sinbad: Legend of the 7 Seas	Atari	
13 November	Beyond Good & Evil	Ubi Soft	
14 November	Horizons: Empire of Istaria	Atari	
14 November	Neverwinter Nights Gold	Atari	
14 November	Robin Hood: Defender of the Crown	THQ	
14 November	SpongeBob Squarepants	THQ	
14 November	Terminator 3: War of the Machines	Atari	Wanted
14 November	Total Club Manager 2004	EA	
15 November	Armed & Dangerous	EA	Wanted
15 November	Desert Rats	QV	
15 November	Secret Weapons Over Normandy	EA	Wanted
17 November	Cricket 2004	EA	
20 November	Need For Speed: Underground	EA	
20 November	Prince of Persia: Sands of Time	Ubi Soft	
20 November	Warlords 4: Heroes of Etheria	Ubi Soft	Wanted
21 November	MtG: The Battleground	Atari	
21 November	Never Winter Nights: Hordes	Atari	
27 November	Alias	Acclaim	
tbc	Contract J.A.C.K.	Vivendi	
tbc	The Hobbit	Vivendi	
tbc	Legacy of Kain: Defiance	Atari	
tbc	LOTR: War of the Ring	Vivendi	
tbc	Max Payne 2	Take2	
tbc	Pro Evolution Soccer 3	Atari	
tbc	Silent Hill 3	Atari	
tbc	X2: The Threat	Koch Media	
DECEMBER			
4 December	Lock On	Ubi Soft	
4 December	Lords of Everquest	Ubi Soft	



GAME BOY ADVANCE

Month	Title	Publisher	
NOVEMBER			
7 November	Hot Wheels: World Race	THQ	
7 November	Munch's Oddyssey	THQ	
7 November	Scooby Doo! Mystery Mayhem	THQ	
13 November	Prince of Persia: Sands of Time	Ubi Soft	
14 November	Jimmy Neutron: Jet Fusion	THQ	
14 November	Medal of Honor: Infiltrator	EA	
14 November	Onimusha Tactics	THQ	Wanted
14 November	SpongeBob Squarepants	THQ	
14 November	Yu-Gi-Oh Dungeon Dice Monsters	Atari	
17 November	Looney Tunes: Back in Action	EA	
20 November	Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon	Ubi Soft	
20 November	Harvest Moon	Ubi Soft	Wanted
21 November	Beyblade Ultimate Blader Jam	Atari	
21 November	Bond 3: Everything or Nothing	EA	
21 November	DBZ: Taiketsu	Atari	
21 November	Mission Impossible	Atari	
21 November	Terminator 3: Rise of the Machines	Atari	
28 November	Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles	Atari	
tbc	Crash Nitro Kart	Vivendi	
tbc	The Hobbit	Vivendi	
tbc	Pro Evolution Soccer 3	Atari	
tbc	Spyro 3: Attack of the Rhynocs	Vivendi	
DECEMBER			
05 December	Crash Nitro Kart	Vivendi	

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

games™ ON THE HORIZON

KARAOKE STAGE

Format: PlayStation2
Publisher: Konami
Karaoke might be some people's idea of hell, but with Konami and Harmonix involved in this game, we're interested to see what they do with the format. *Karaoke Stage* went down a storm at ECTS and looks set to be just as popular as *DDR* and *EyeToy*. It's expected out next year, which should give you plenty of time to brush up on your vocal stylings.



METAL GEAR SOLID 3: SNAKE EATER

Format: PlayStation2
Publisher: Konami
We've been to ECTS and seen the latest trailer (complete with James Bond-style opening) and are getting excited about running Snake through his paces. Hideo Kojima has announced that this will be his last *Metal Gear*, but seeing as he said the same about MGS*2*, we're not that worried.



NINJA GAIDEN

Format: Xbox
Publisher: Microsoft
This is yet another of Microsoft's big hitters which now appears to have slipped out of sight (it was due out this summer, but never turned up). Like *Shinobi*, *Gaiden* started off as a 2D game, but Tecmo seems to be on the ball, and with any luck Hayabusa will fit his new three-dimensional environment perfectly.



TAKE ON THE



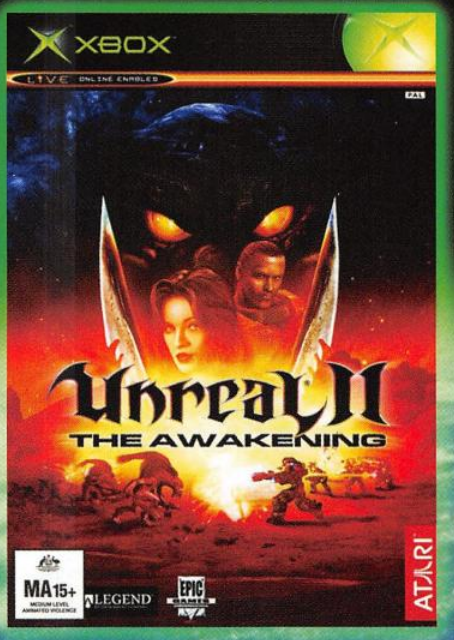
NOVEMBER 03



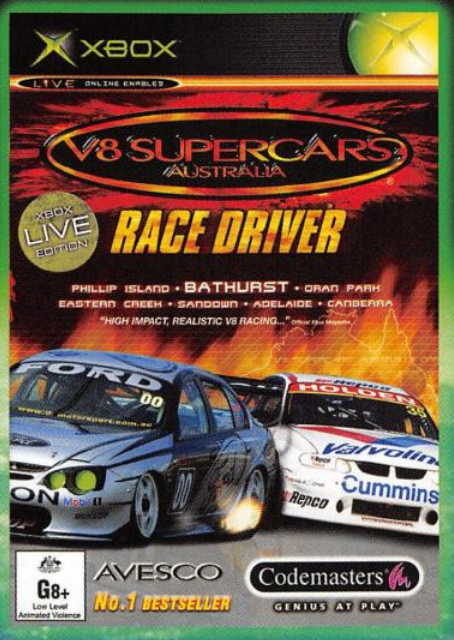
OUT NOW



NOVEMBER 03



DECEMBER 03



NOVEMBER 03

SEGA EIDOS ATARI SCi Codemasters GENIUS AT PLAY

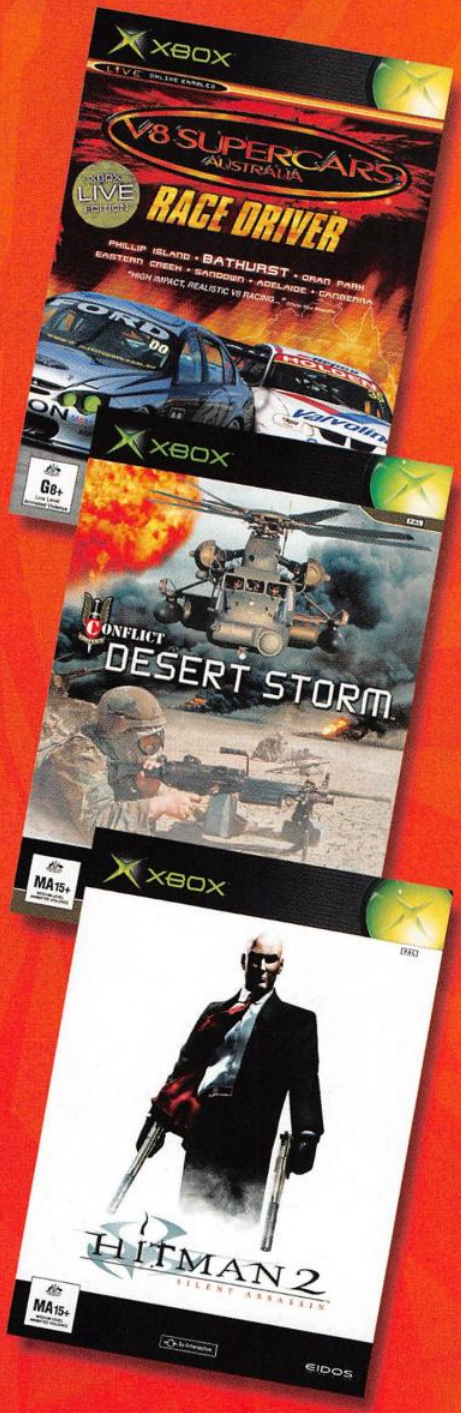
FOR MORE INFO GO TO
WWW.ATARI.COM.AU

WORLD!

XBOX LIVE

CLASSIC GAMES NOW

FROM $49.95 RRP

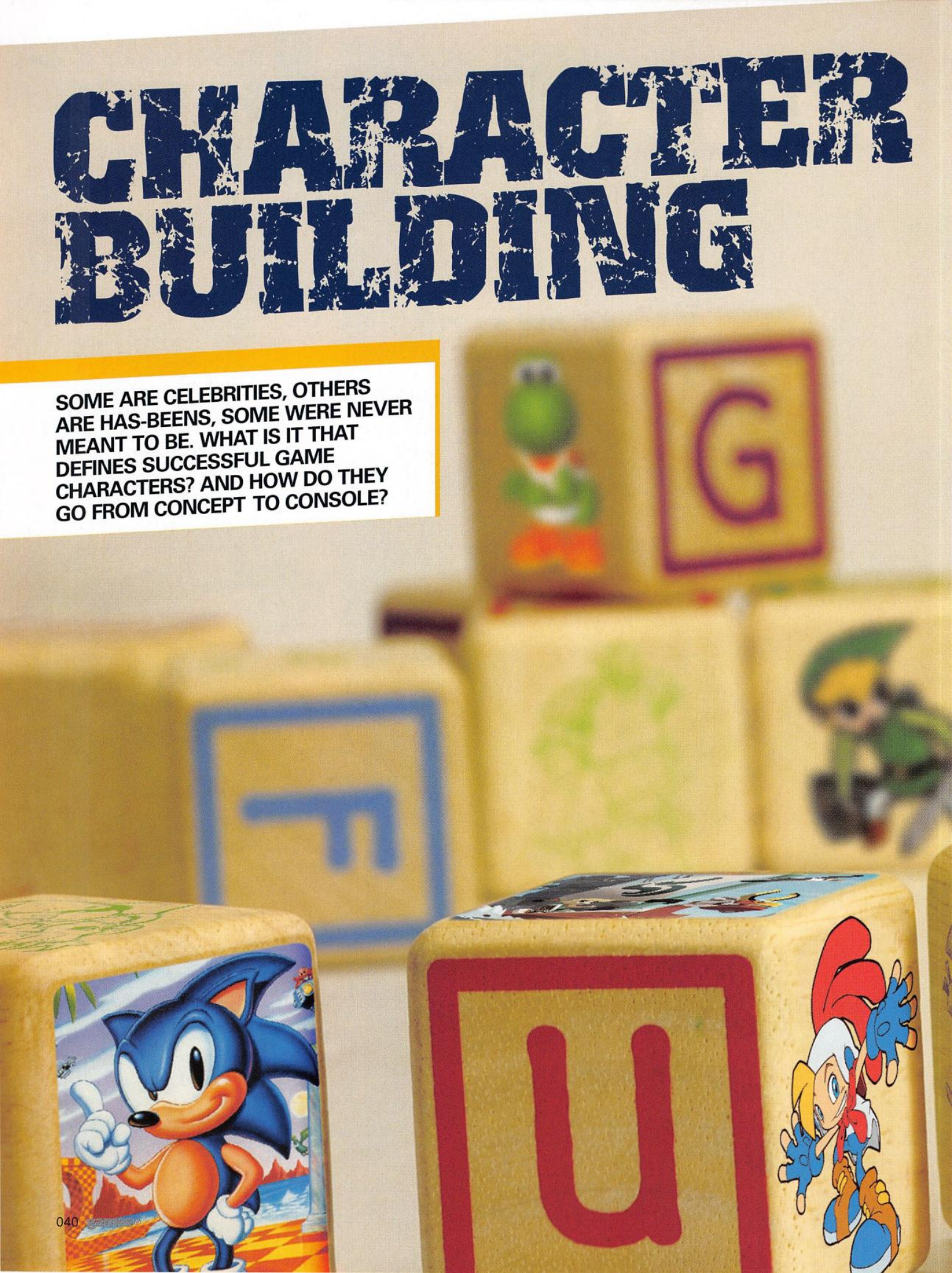


GET 'EM WHILE THEY'RE HOT!

Microsoft, Xbox and the Xbox logos are either registered trademarks of Microsoft corporations in the United States and/or other countries and are used under license from Microsoft. All other trademarks are the property of their respective owners. All rights reserved.

CHARACTER BUILDING

SOME ARE CELEBRITIES, OTHERS ARE HAS-BEENS, SOME WERE NEVER MEANT TO BE. WHAT IS IT THAT DEFINES SUCCESSFUL GAME CHARACTERS? AND HOW DO THEY GO FROM CONCEPT TO CONSOLE?





When Nintendo lifted the lid on *The Legend Of Zelda: The Wind Waker* and its new-look Link, the reaction verged on outrage in some quarters. Critics warned that the future of the *Zelda* series hung in the balance thanks to the plans to give one of the big N's most recognisable characters a radical makeover. Of course, these concerns were misguided, with *Wind Waker*'s critical and commercial success vindicating Link's cel-shaded reincarnation. But the outcry that greeted this graphical overhaul underlines just how important game characters are to players and how much they can influence a game's success. Nintendo succeeded, but its reworking of Link could have easily backfired, destroying one of its key brands in the process.

"Having a good lead character can really make or break a game nowadays," says Guy Midgley, lead character artist at Just Add Monsters, the creators of *Kung Fu Chaos*. "The truth is no-one would have played *Tomb Raider* if it was without Lara Croft. Players want games with interesting characters that are not derivative. It is essential to get a likeable and distinguishable character in a game especially now that there are so many games on the market – it's a key way to make a game stand out."

FAMOUS FACES

While a few genres, notably strategy and racing games, can escape the pressure to be character-driven, most cannot. Even the faceless nature of first-person shooters has spawned notable gaming heroes like JC Denton (*Deus Ex*), *Half-Life*'s Gordon Freeman, Kate Archer (*The Operative: No-One Lives Forever*) and Duke Nukem. Yet creating a memorable game character is no easy feat and almost every character-led game will see a significant chunk of development time spent honing, adjusting and, in some cases, scrapping characters. And the number of failures far outweighs the number of successful characters. Would-be gaming heroes like Ty The Tasmanian Tiger and the Bitmap Kid failed to engage players and vanished into the dustbin of gaming history. Midgley reckons the best clue as to whether a character has any chance of success is in its outline. "If you are able to identify the character from ▷



Billy Hatcher's distinctive chicken suit should make him stand out from other platforming heroes. And most other heroes, for that matter.



The characters in *Kung Fu Chaos* are out of proportion to enable better movement when fighting and running.



its silhouette you are probably onto a winner as it means they look distinctive," he says. It makes sense when you think about it – Sonic's spikes or Lara's pneumatic chest make both characters highly individual, and the same goes for the rooster comb-headed lead character from SEGA's upcoming *Billy Hatcher And The Giant Egg*. "The big red crest on his head, among other things, makes Billy stand out as a unique character," explains Asam Ahmad, spokesman for SEGA's Sonic Team studio. "In the early stages the character of Billy was going to be an angel, reflecting the fact that the eggs were effectively giving birth. Ultimately, his image gradually changed to a rooster which we felt was better suited to the egg connection."

Radical changes to characters during the development process tend to be the norm. Ninja, the main character in Namco's forthcoming *I Ninja*, also underwent a string of changes before developers Argonaut felt happy with him. "I actually did the initial drawings of Ninja years ago, and when we got the chance to develop an original game I dug him up," says Argonaut's Jamie Walker, producer of *I Ninja*. "Our last project was the *Harry Potter* game and we wanted to have a game with a strong character who had a lot of attitude. Ninja seemed to fit in with that."

As well as tweaking Ninja's looks during the development of the game, Argonaut organised a series of focus groups with players who fitted the description of the game's target audience, to get an idea of how Ninja would go down with the public. These groups did prompt some important changes to Ninja. "Originally we used bright colours for Ninja which made him look cute even though he is an aggressive

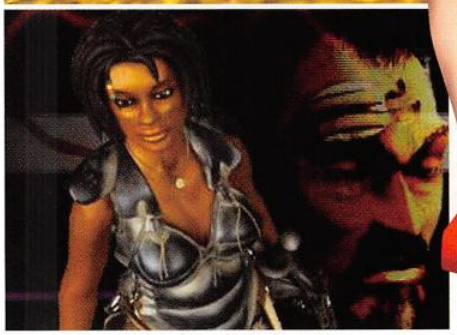
LOST TREASURES

While great characters can give games a much-needed face, until they reach the licence-to-print-money status of Sonic and Mario they are rarely enough to spawn a hit game. As a result, many great game characters end up in games that vanish without a trace. The Sixties chic of *Space Channel 5*'s Ulala is a good example – great character, great game, but the market didn't respond. But at least Ulala gained some level of recognition and in Japan she became a popular face for people to have on their iMode mobile phones.

Others have been less lucky. D'Arcy from PlayStation title *Urban Chaos* may have been dismissed as a wannabe Lara Croft but she had a strong personality (unlike Ms Croft) and the game itself has more in common with *Grand Theft Auto 3* than *Tomb Raider*. The eccentric Twinsen from ageing PC classic *Little Big Adventure* is another much overlooked character.

But for every ignored genius, there are hundreds of mediocre and downright irritating game icons lurking on the shelves. Horrors like Ty The Tasmanian Tiger – a brightly coloured hero complete with reams of grating Australian banter – or the Bitmap Kid, a dumpy child with shades who marked the end of The Bitmap Brothers' golden days.









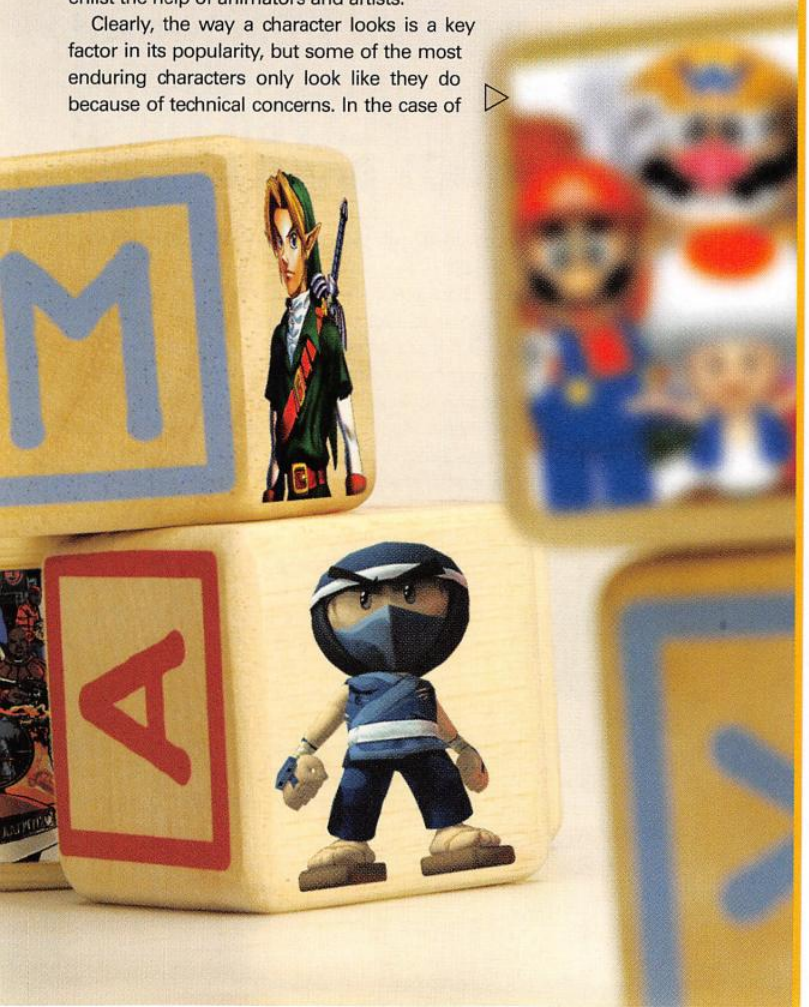
and violent character – we thought it would be a nice contrast," says Walker. "But the focus testing found that while younger players understood the contrast, they did not like the bright colours as they felt it made it too childish and they didn't want to play children's games. So we made the character look older by adding scars, giving him more muscles and using darker colours."

The use of focus groups is now widespread and developers are more than happy to use them. "We want *I Ninja* to be successful and the focus groups gave us a chance to try and find out what people liked and did not like," explains Wayne Binningham, lead artist on *I Ninja*. Midgley agrees: "Together with Microsoft we used focus groups when developing *Kung Fu Chaos* as we didn't want to end up creating characters that no-one wanted to play."

BODY LANGUAGE

This 'design by committee' to ensure that characters will appeal to an audience is a vital part of game design, as an unpopular character can easily deter gamers from buying a product. "The basic idea is to allow the player to identify with the character, hopefully enabling them to enjoy the game more as a result," says Asam Ahmad. "The more the player empathises with the character, the more likely they are to get excited about seeing them develop throughout the game." A great character is no guarantee of a successful game, however. Look at *Space Channel 5* – Ulala was a distinctive and quirky character but the game still didn't sell particularly well. But then perhaps it was this unusual character that put people off the title. Not everyone will leap at the chance to play rhythm action titles, but there are probably even fewer people who fancy being a futuristic Sixties-kitsch news reporter. As Asam Ahmad points out, "There is some truth in saying that by creating characters with strong personalities you risk alienating players." One way around the problem of characters with whom players can't empathise is to make enlist the help of animators and artists.

Clearly, the way a character looks is a key factor in its popularity, but some of the most enduring characters only look like they do because of technical concerns. In the case of ▷



THE MEN, THE WOMEN, THE ANIMATED EGGS...

PAC-MAN (1980)
Inspired by a pizza with a missing slice, Pac-Man became the first game character to really capture players' imaginations. The ravenous yellow ball also blazed the trail for merchandising based around game characters, with a bewildering range of lunchboxes, stickers, books and records (among other things) flooding shops the world over.

DONKEY KONG (1981)
Trust Nintendo to take a character who started out as the all-encompassing evil-doer and turn him into a loveable fan favourite. Before Wario, there was a girlfriend-kidnapping ape turned platform-jumping star. Since then, his family's grown out of control and now there are more Kongs than we'd care to count.

MARIO (1982)
Despite playing second fiddle to Donkey Kong when he first appeared in a game, Mario quickly rose to a level of stardom that makes David Beckham look B-list. At one point, a survey showed that more children recognised the moustachioed plumber than could spot Mickey Mouse.

MINER WILLY (1983)
He might have only been able to walk, jump and die lots, but to an entire generation of gamers he was the epitome of a hero – or the star of a complete bitch of a game, depending on how good you were. Yellow was definitely the new black back then.

DIZZY (1988)
Like Humpty Dumpty, Dizzy stood out from the crowd through sheer simplicity of design. An egg with a face is hardly the most innovative of characters, but that clean, white oval shape and token grin made him popular with gamers of all ages. Of course, it helped that this was the 'ultimate cartoon adventure' that it set out to be.

KEN/RYU (1988)
They might have arrived as a pair, but there's no doubt that more beat-'em-up fans have been split over which of the Street Fighters is the better man than anything else we can think of. Even we can't choose between the red or the white. Can't we just have both?

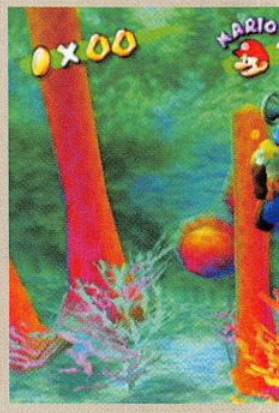
PRINCE OF PERSIA (1989)
The game broke the mould at the time thanks to clever animation techniques that really gave the lead character a lifelike aura. And with Ubi Soft's *Sands Of Time* update soon upon us, it's clear there's still life left in the Prince yet.

continued >>>









The size of a character's stride can be a problem as it makes turning slower and can result in the player revolving on the spot. That's why many characters have short legs.

'cartoony' heroes, their over-large heads or stumpy legs aren't there because they're cute – they're useful. "The less realistically proportioned the main character is, the easier it is to cheat on the tricky bits of design, as people are less aware of how it should move," says Jamie Walker. "With normally proportioned characters, like Harry Potter, the size of the stride can be a problem as it makes turning slower and can result in the player revolving on the spot unrealistically. Characters like Mario and Link follow certain design rules as a result. They are both short and that allows them to move more quickly." This pragmatism is something that remains at the forefront of artists' and animators' minds, mostly because many games would simply be unplayable if their main character was designed from a purely aesthetic point of view. "I think the important thing is to treat the main character like a tool," says Walker. "You have to design the tool properly for it to work well."

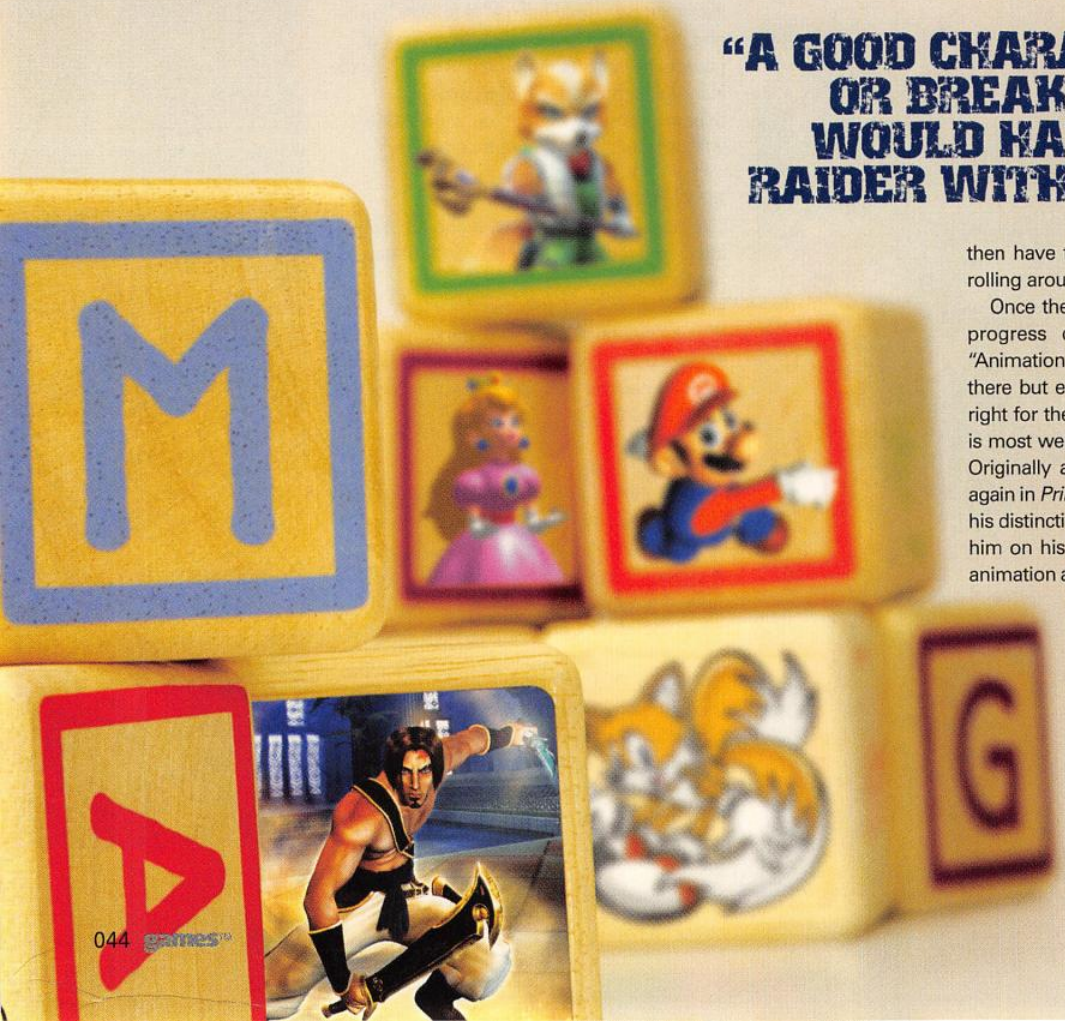
The way in which the character is viewed by the player is also a big influence on how they will look. Given that most titles tend to place the player behind the character, the back of a character is more important than the front. "We spent time designing the character so his back was interesting," says Walker of *I Ninja*'s Ninja. "We added a ninja scarf, strapped weapons across his back and made sure the colours we used in his suit showed up his different body parts from behind."

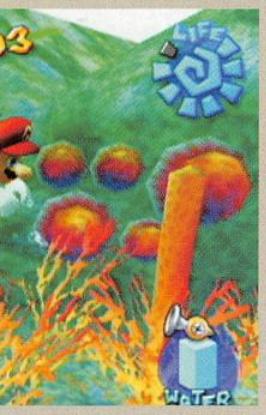
HIGHLY ANIMATED

The distance a character is from the 'front' of the screen is another major consideration for developers. In comic beat-'em-up *Kung Fu Chaos* the characters were set relatively far away from the game camera. "It was a major problem, as being a four-player party game with a lot of action the camera couldn't be as close up as in a typical fighting game, so we had to play around with the proportions," says Midgley. "Using a super-deformed look for the characters was a big advantage here because if the characters were normally proportioned they would just look like stick figures when you viewed them from a distance. Although you then have to cope with the character's big bulbous heads rolling around."

"A GOOD CHARACTER CAN MAKE OR BREAK A GAME. NO-ONE WOULD HAVE PLAYED TOMB RAIDER WITHOUT LARA CROFT"

Once the characters have been designed, the animation progress can add yet more distinguishing features. "Animation is not just a case of getting lots of animation in there but ensuring the animation looks good while feeling right for the player," says Walker. Perhaps the character that is most well-known for its animation is the Prince of Persia. Originally appearing in 1989 he'll soon be on our screens again in *Prince Of Persia: The Sands Of Time*. However, while his distinctively lifelike animation was enough to distinguish him on his first outing, advances in technology mean that animation alone isn't enough to make a gaming hero. Patrice Desilets, creative director at Ubi Soft and one of the key players in the team who are bringing new life to the Prince, says the character has been made more human this time due to the story rather than the animation. "We tried to mimic some Hollywood heroes when creating him," Desilets explains. "We wanted to make him a bit like Bruce Willis in *Die Hard* where he evolves as a character according to how the story progresses."





It takes a combination of great design, animation, sound effects and ease of control to make a character who people like. Focus groups are increasingly used to get it right.

Although this increased emphasis on personality does run the risk of alienating some gamers, there are instances where, according to Asam Ahmad, a strong personality can be useful, particularly in the case of gaming heroes, such as the Prince, who can do things we can't. "We assume that it's hard for players to be emotionally involved, because he or she cannot completely identify with character attributes that may be significantly different from their own personalities," he says. "On the other hand, within the games characters are put in situations that may require their strong personalities or powers. These characters are usually more appealing than others as they serve a purpose." The Prince's swashbuckling antics may be the feature that either entices or annoys players, but they're so integral to the character that they affect the design of the whole game, although Patrice Desilets says this isn't unusual. "You have to build your game around your character when doing a third-person game," he explains. "For example, the palace in the game has got to be really big so that the Prince can jump around , so we had to pay attention to the heights of rooms and the overall architecture."

IT'S GOOD TO TALK

But visuals are just one part of the equation and audio can also have a major influence on a character. For many, the addition of a voice for SonicThe Hedgehog when he went 3D was a character change as radical as Link's facelift. "As players had their own opinion on how Sonic would sound, it was important for us to express how he might talk without alienating the character," says Ahmad. "Rather than affecting his actual personality it allowed the players to better understand Sonic as a character with attitude as well as being a way to make him more recognisable." Sonic's continued popularity suggests that Sonic Team did manage to pull off Sonic's transition from silent hero to mouthy upstart, but there can be little disagreement that some characters are better left speechless. Why have Solid Snake banging on about world peace when you could just play *Pac-Man* and put up with a bit of 'Wacca wacca?'.

Ultimately, the role of a game character is a curious one. They can help sell games that would otherwise sink without trace (step forward, Lara Croft), or become celebrities and branch off into all sorts of genres (*Mario Golf*, *Mario Kart*, *Mario Tennis*...). Yet some very successful games, such as *Tetris*, don't have any characters at all. But without certain familiar faces games would almost certainly be less involving. After all, when your character falls into a fiery pit would you carry on if you didn't care?

In some cases, a character can be enough to help sell a game that would normally bomb. Lara Croft is perhaps the most famous example, but Sonic and Mario also shift the units...



continued >>>

CHUN LI (1990)
Street Fighter II's speedy, long-legged schoolgirl proved an instant hit when Capcom's fighting classic first arrived in the arcades. Probably the first game to prove that female characters could also be popular with gamers.



SONIC THE HEDGEHOG (1991)
SEGA needed a mascot like Mario if it was going to compete with Nintendo. The company was well-known for its arcade games, but needed something extra to appeal to the masses. Instantly recognisable, the blue spikes, red sneakers and enormous eyes made Sonic famous all around the world.



BOMBERMAN (1993)
The simplest characters are often the most effective. Sure, he's not much more than a motorcycle helmet with eyes but then anyone with an infinite supply of bombs in his back pocket can't be all that bad. Over the years, we've got more pleasure from Bomberman than we care to mention.



EARTHWORM JIM (1994)
An unholy fusion of spineless annelid and super-advanced technology, it was more Jim's surreal humour than his heroism that garnered him a place in gaming history. One unsuccessful cartoon series and one ill-founded 3D adventure later, Jim currently resides in the 'Where are they now?' file.

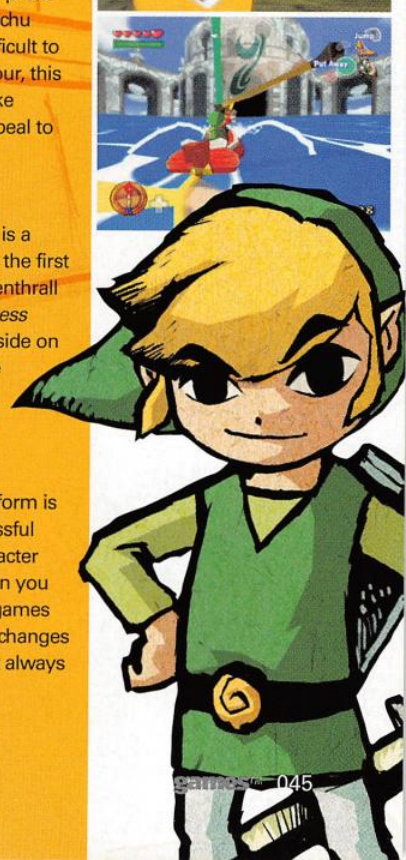


PIKACHU (1996)
Nintendo's Pokémon merchandise has generated millions of pounds of profit around the world, and with Pikachu leading the way it really isn't difficult to see why. Vivid in shape and colour, this cutesy yet aggressive squirrel-like monster has what it takes to appeal to boys and girls of all ages.



LARA CROFT (1996)
Love her or loath her, Lara Croft is a landmark in game history being the first made-for-3D character to really enthrall the world. Sure, *Angel Of Darkness* stank like a glass of milk left outside on a hot day but she has one of the biggest, er, personalities in modern gaming.

NEW-LOOK LINK (2003)
Link's transition to a cel-shaded form is probably one of the most successful overhauls of a major game character ever attempted, particularly when you consider than most cel-shaded games sell abysmally. Proof that major changes to established characters are not always a recipe for disaster.





PlayStation®2 GAME BOY ADVANCE NINTENDO GAMECUBE XBOX PC GAME

M15+
MEDIUM LEVEL
ANIMATED VIOLENCE

© MMIII New Line Productions, Inc. All Rights Reserved. "The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King" and the names of the characters, items, events and places therein are trademarks of The Saul Zaentz Company d/b/a Tolkien Enterprises under license to New Line Productions, Inc. Game code and certain audio visual elements © 2003 Electronic Arts Inc. All rights reserved. Electronic Arts, EA, EA GAMES and the EA GAMES logo are trademarks or registered trademarks of Electronic Arts Inc. in the U.S. and/or other countries. "PlayStation" and the "PS" Family logo are registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. Microsoft, Xbox and the Xbox Logos are either trademarks or registered trademarks of Microsoft Corporation in the U.S. and/or other countries and are used under license from Microsoft. TM, ® the Nintendo GameCube logo and Game Boy Advance logo are trademarks of Nintendo. © 2001 Nintendo. All other trademarks are the property of their respective owners. EA GAMES™ is an Electronic Arts™ brand.

NEW LINE CINEMA

THE LORD OF THE RINGS
THE RETURN OF THE KING

A true hero understands when destiny is calling.

Live the movie. Be the hero.™

Available November 2003







Team up with co-op multiplayer mode.

9 playable heroes including Gandalf, Frodo and Aragorn.

15 interactive environments from Minas Tirith to The Crack of Doom.

Enemies include The King of the Dead, Shelob, and The Witch King.

EA GAMES™

www.eagames.com.au

E57698

PROJECT GOTHAM RACING 2

BIZARRE CREATIONS REINVENTS THE WHEEL. AND THE REST OF THE CAR TOO

DETAILS
FORMAT: Xbox
ORIGIN: UK
PUBLISHER: Microsoft
DEVELOPER: Factor 5
RELEASE: 28 November
GENRE: Racing
PLAYERS: 1-4 (1-8 Online)

■ It's the original game, only more – much, much more. Could this be the game that Xbox Live was invented for?

Every so often in a console's lifespan, a game comes along that can truly be considered a 'killer app'. A title that justifies the purchase of the console alone, contains things that outdo anything that's been seen before and always remains fiercely loyal in terms of exclusivity. There are a few titles that we can think of that fall into that category, such as *Ico* and *Gran Turismo 3* for the PlayStation2, or *Zelda: The Wind Waker* and *Metroid Prime* for the GameCube. Turn your attention to the Xbox though, and there's only one title whose 'killer app' status remains unchallenged – *Halo*. With the console's second birthday less than six months away, isn't it about time people were given another exclusive reason to buy the big black box? Perhaps in the form of one of the most comprehensive racing experiences ever seen on a console?

Of course, if you've already taken time out for a quick glimpse at the screenshots on these pages, we wouldn't fault you for thinking that, a little polish aside, there appears to be little difference between *Project Gotham Racing 2* and the previous game. It's only once you get to see the game in motion and start to play it that you can truly appreciate just how much work has been done to make *PGR2* a challenger for the title of Best Racing Game Ever.

There have been several major gameplay changes since *PGR*'s last outing. You can now enjoy a renovated single-player structure that splits the races into different classes rather than set chapters (meaning you can take on new car classes in the order you choose); more difficulty levels (that regulate how much you're rewarded for success); a new token system that allows you to buy bigger and better vehicles and even an improved Kudos meter that now factors in style combos, for people who really know how to show off behind the wheel.

Just as the important gameplay elements have had an overhaul, so too have the tracks on offer. With at least ten unique cities to visit – including Sydney, Chicago, Florence, Barcelona, Edinburgh and even Nürburgring (the whole city, as opposed to just the Formula One track) – you can expect more than enough courses on which to test your mettle.

Global appeal is something that really matters in *PGR2* thanks to the incorporation of Xbox Live. What's unique is that it's not just limited to the rather obvious inclusion of online races and reaching the finish line in first place. Instead, it's about virtually every aspect of the game. If you're lucky enough to have Xbox Live, then *PGR2* will log on from the second you hit the power button until you switch your machine off again. Everything that you do within the game will be recorded through Live, including all your stats, lap records and overall race times, which will then be added to the online leader boards. Just by looking at the these, you'll be able to see how good you are compared to every other Live-enabled PGR2 player in the world.

On top of all this, the top hundred people on each leader board will have their ghosts recorded for download, so you can see exactly how the masters achieve those top-ranking times. You'll even be able to challenge other players to races through the leader boards.

So could Bizarre Creations have come up with the racing game that leaves the competition standing? It's a definite possibility. Even without Xbox Live, the game's single-player mode should be comprehensive enough for any would-be racing expert.



GRAND THEFT ANAL

When it comes to realistic racing games, one of the most important elements has to be the attention to detail – after all, the last thing you want is criticism from the hard-core contingent who make up a hefty slice of your market. Thankfully, Bizarre Creations has put so much effort into getting everything right in *PGR2* that it borders on the anally retentive (in a good way, clearly). From applying for city blueprints and taking over 75,000 photos to ensure that each track is geographically accurate, to recording the engine, brake and gear noises of every car in the game, it's almost enough to make you think you were actually driving around for real.



DEVELOPER PROFILE

■ After leaving school in 1987, Martyn Chudley set up his own software company called Raising Hell Software. His first project for the C64, *Combat Crazy*, was unmemorable but a demo of his next game, *RoboDragon*, was commissioned by Psygnosis and turned into *The Killing Game Show*.

HISTORY

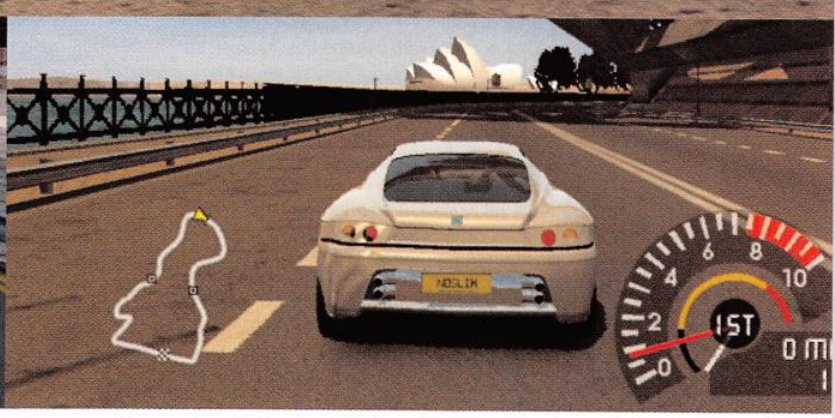
- **WIZ N' LIZ** 1993 [Mega Drive]
- **THE KILLING GAME SHOW** 1990 [Amiga]
- **COMBAT CRAZY** 1988 [C64]

■ So, you want recognisable landmarks, eh? Does this familiar?

"IT'S A FUN-TO-PLAY CHALLENGE THAT CAN BE TAILORED TO YOUR OWN STYLE, TO MAKE IT THE EXPERIENCE YOU WANT"

GED TALBOT, LEAD DESIGNER, BIZARRE CREATIONS

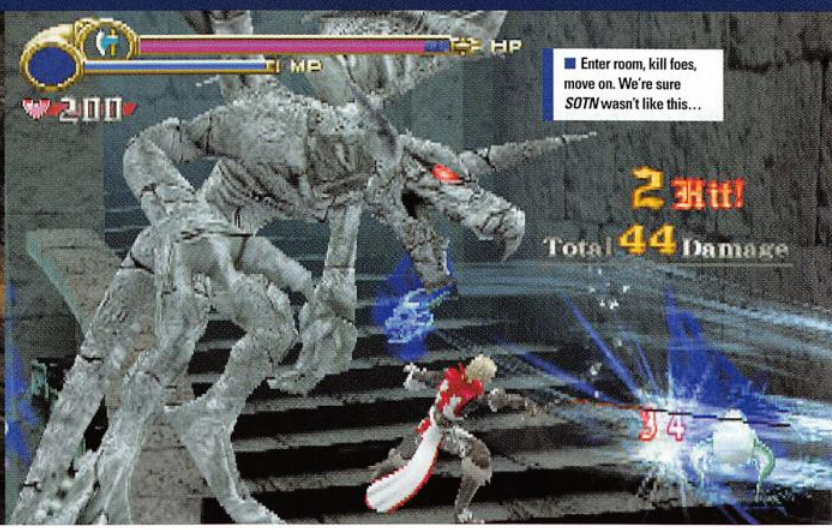




CASTLEVANIA: LAMENT OF INNOCENCE



■ Special attacks like this are handy, but cost you some serious magic.



■ Enter room, kill foes, move on. We're sure *SOTN* wasn't like this…

TRUE LOVE NEVER DIES – IT JUST COMES BACK WITH A BIGGER WHIP

DETAILS
FORMAT: PlayStation2
ORIGIN: Japan
PUBLISHER: Atari
DEVELOPER: Konami
RELEASE: 30 January '04 (Japan: December '03)
GENRE: Adventure
PLAYERS: 1

■ Konami goes all *Devil May Cry* on us in an attempt to try and bring *Castlevania* to life in 3D. Still, at least it's not like the N64 games…

Some gamers rank Konami's *Castlevania: Symphony Of The Night* as one of the greatest games, if not the greatest game, ever released on the PSone. Obviously, that's a mighty brave statement, and in a million years when all the games ever made are forced to justify their existence to whatever genial (yet to our eyes truly horrific) alien intelligence that discovers their code and our dust, then it's possible that we'll find this to be true. It'll all depend on whether *ET* is going through a gothic revival at the time.

What we do know, however, is that *Symphony* has a stalwart following that not only remembers the deft handling and seductive depth of Koji Igarashi's two-dimensional masterpiece, but also still has major issues with *Legacy Of Darkness*, the series' last 3D incarnation. And so with the 2D versus 3D lines drawn across this ancient battlefield we look toward *Lament Of Innocence* with considerable interest. It's in the now-obligatory 3D, Igarashi is overseeing it and it's out almost two years after Capcom's *Devil May Cry*. Somebody, clearly, is going to get hurt.

You'll take on the garb of Leon, the oldest member of the Belmont family line and all-round decent goth, complete with a penchant for pointy boots and make-up (which were mandatory in the 11th Century if you believe *Castlevania* history). The whole story is concerned with how the Belmont family became involved in demon whipping, so we can file it rather comfortably under 'Origins'. This brings with it an interesting question: since the project is being brought to us by the team behind *Symphony*, as well as the Game Boy Advance incarnations, will it keep to the series' 2D or 3D ethos? Considering that ventures into the latter have only caused pain and embarrassment for all concerned (even after reassurances from Igarashi-san himself), we can only pray for the former. Can a game be 'too 3D'? We hope not, but already it appears that *Lament* has lost some of the accuracy found in games with one dimension missing.

Essentially, this is a combat title with puzzle elements, so special mention must go to the mainstay of the action – fighting. On his quest to destroy the evil that hath beset his land, Leon will have the ability of customisation. This allows him to combine his whip with five sub-weapon systems, and by playing with the bonus abilities of Holy Water, Cross, Axe, Dagger and Crystal, new attacks can be brought to bear. But as many professionals will tell you, there are plenty more things to do with a whip than just going round, er, whipping things. Seven Orbs can also be used in holy union with ten special Action Relics in order to give Leon access to attacks that are intended to please the eye and heavily distress a demon in forty different and highly imaginative ways.

The problem here, of course, is that we've already played *Devil May Cry*, a game that has no qualms about simply providing constant action. *Castlevania*'s graphics engine, though solid, doesn't currently provide the kinetic onslaught needed to satiate such violent desires, and there is a definite sense of watching rather than participating in attacks as you wave your whip and the demons die. This is the danger we feared, that by trying to straddle the respected past of *Symphony* and the more current *Devil May Cry*, we could end up with a product which is neither to any satisfactory degree. Thankfully, there's still time for that to change…

SCREAM DRACULA SCREAM

Apparently, you cannot kill that which does not live. Go figure. While it was never like this for Van Helsing, it certainly is for our Leon. Yes, it's time to knock health points out of evil-doers yet again, but now using all the inaccuracy we've come to expect from 3D combat. Igarashi-san has already said that he finds 2D far more appealing to work with, and with memories of *Symphony Of The Night* still echoing we have to agree. Still, *Castlevania* has always been about more than constant aggression and we hope that this extra dimension will give the game more than just a flawed camera. Not that we want to sound pessimistic or anything…

"CAN A GAME BE 'TOO 3D'? WE HOPE NOT, BUT ALREADY IT SEEMS THAT LAMENT HAS LOST A SMALL AMOUNT OF ACCURACY"

CASTLEVANIA: LAMENT OF INNOCENCE

PLAYSTATION2



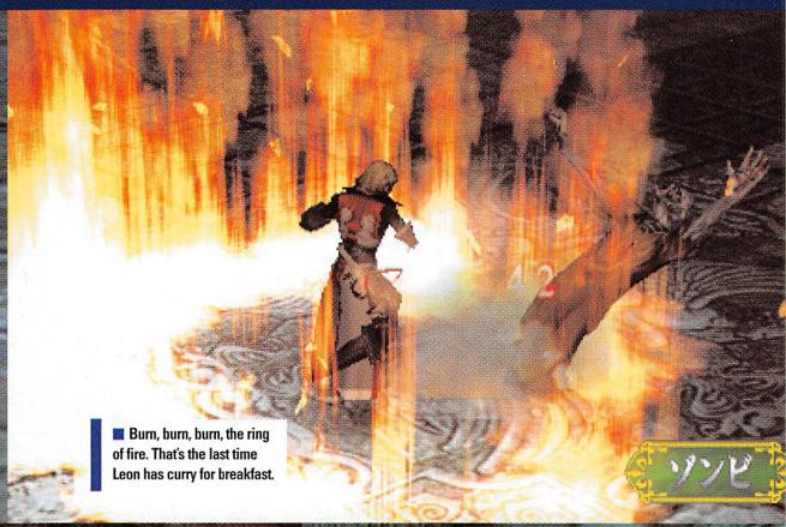
DEVELOPER PROFILE

■ Koji Igarashi has been making *Castlevania* games since 1986, which isn't a surprise since he created the series. He has developed for the MSX, NES, SNES, N64, PSone and now, for the first time, the PS2. That's a lot of time and a lot of consoles. When it comes to fighting vampires, Igarashi-san is the man.

HISTORY

- **CASTLEVANIA: SOTN** 1997 [PSone]
- **CASTLEVANIA** 1987 [NES, C64, Amiga, PC]
- **VAMPIRE KILLER** 1986 [MSX]





■ Burn, burn, burn, the ring of fire. That's the last time Leon has curry for breakfast.



"THE RICH, FULLY INTERACTIVE INTERIORS OF DRACULA'S CASTLES ARE BEAUTIFULLY REALISED"

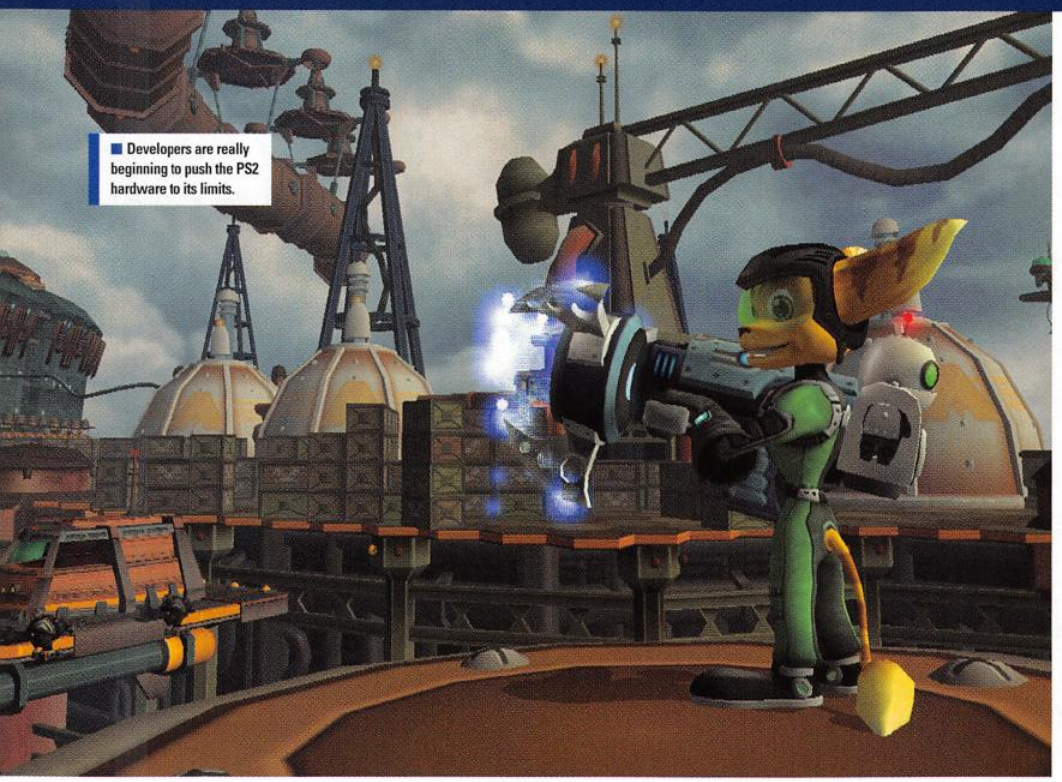
KONAMI PRESS RELEASE

VIDEOGAMES MATHS

CASTLEVANIA WHIPPED INTO SHAPE

DEVIL MAY CRY + RYGAR x SYMPHONY OF THE NIGHT = LAMENT OF INNOCENCE

RATCHET & CLANK 2



■ Developers are really beginning to push the PS2 hardware to its limits.

CAN A HAIRBALL AND A SMART-ASSTIN CAN SAVE THE GALAXY?

DETAILS
FORMAT: PlayStation2
ORIGIN: US
PUBLISHER: Sony
DEVELOPER: Insomniac Games
RELEASE: November
GENRE: Adventure
PLAYERS: 1

■ Sony's unlikely duo return to save the universe again and there are plenty of new toys. Most of which explode.

Ever since *Mario 64* delightfully epitomised 3D platform gaming back in 1995, far too many developers have laboured under the delusion that the key to overthrowing the king of jumping is to add more elements to a game. Even the plumber himself has fallen foul – as much as we enjoyed *Mario Sunshine*, the FLUDD pack watered down the platforming gameplay somewhat (no pun intended). Of course, we realise that if it weren't for these added features in games we'd be swamped by identical titles. Still, it's not the novelty additions *per se* that have incurred our wrath, rather some developers' over-reliance on them. While *Ratchet & Clank* did have a host of quirky extras, it somehow managed to retain the feel of a platformer – a feel similarly encapsulated in its forthcoming sequel.

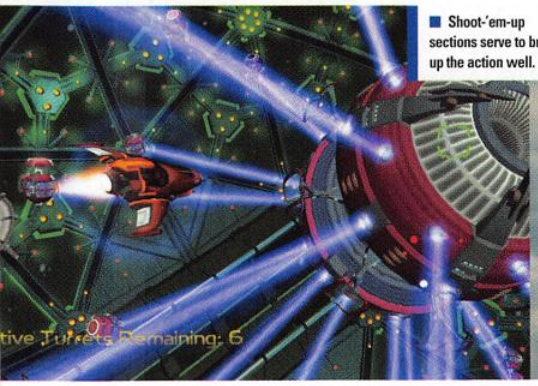
The single most obvious alteration to the formula so far is the darkened mood and palette. As with *Jak II*, it would appear that developers are becoming more reluctant to put out cutesy titles, especially in the wake of relatively poor sales of

"THE GAME'S STILL A WAY OFF, YET ALREADY THE IMPROVEMENTS AND TWEAKS ARE BOTH APPARENT AND APPRECIATED"

decent games like *Sly Raccoon*. Already, the vast array of weapons gives the game slightly more credibility among the *GTA* youth, but by ditching the abundance of primary colours and making the heroes slightly more edgy, Insomniac is clearly trying to change the perception of the budding franchise.

Gameplay-wise, *Ratchet 2* has clearly been tightened up a little but there are plenty of minor changes to set it apart from its lauded predecessor. The weapons, for instance, now gain 'experience' as you use them, eventually evolving into a more powerful or versatile tool and making your destructive life that much easier.

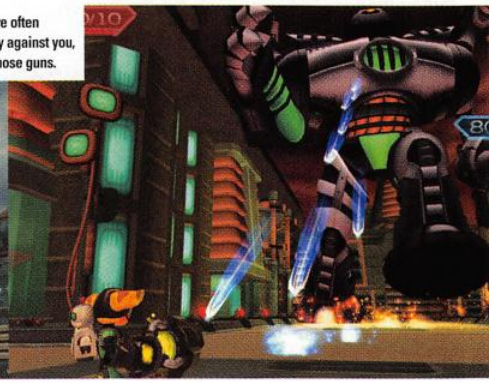
Still, if you weren't a fan of the first game or aren't particularly keen on the idea of scything through hordes of enemies and rounding up thousands of nuts and bolts, there's not much that'll place *Ratchet & Clank 2: Locked And Loaded* (if this latest subtitle sticks) on your wanted list. From what we've played, the foundations of an enjoyable adventure are in place. With a good mix in the gameplay and some more tweaking here and there, this could well surpass its forerunner in every respect.



■ Shoot-'em-up sections serve to break up the action well.



■ The odds are often stacked heavily against you, even with all those guns.



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 AUSTRALIA EDITORS' CHOICE

Netspace - Experts in Broadband, Leaders in Online Gaming.

Netspace
plug.yourself.in

www.netspace.net.au

NET6196

MAX PAYNE 2: THE FALL OF MAX PAYNE

MAX IS BACK – GET READY FOR A WHOLE WORLD OF PAYNE

There's an unwritten rule in Hollywood that states: 'should a film ever make over $1 million, a sequel may, nay, *must* be made'. So imagine how studio executives felt when they realised that killing off one of the lead characters in *Titanic* meant that a sequel would prove impossible (although that didn't stop plenty of scriptwriters coming up with all manner of preposterous ideas). This catch-22 situation was all too apparent when gamers got to the end of Remedy's original runaway hit *Max Payne* – with practically all of the main characters dead, it seemed that Remedy had shot itself (pun intended) in the foot. Fortunately, however, a two-year break seems to have done the Finnish developers a world of good, as Max looks set for a triumphant return (we can already hear low-spec machines groaning in protest).

There have certainly been a few changes since we last met the king of bullet-time – he's back with the NYPD and sports a much more weather-beaten look than before. It's a few years down the line, and although he's slowly getting over the death of his wife and child, it's not long before Max once again finds himself framed for the murder of his partner. This time around though, Max not only admits to the crime (although an earth-shattering plot twist is bound to be revealed) but also manages to fall for someone...

True to form, Max looks very likely to continue his tragic existence. His new interest turns out to be Mona Sax, a murder suspect and hit woman. Max has several run-ins with Mona throughout the course of the game and she's just one of many new characters who will prove integral to this sequel's plot. Max is also able to enlist the help of various other characters, but despite this support Max is still a loner (there will be no co-operative or multiplayer modes).

One of Payne's original downfalls was that the story was over much too quickly (most gamers could complete it in around ten hours). As a result, *The Fall Of Max Payne* will offer many more hour's playing time, although Remedy is quick to point out that not a single minute will be wasted with unnecessary plot padding. Remedy always felt that a romantic interest was something that was missing from the original *Payne*, so it's little wonder that it describes its new epic as a 'film noir love story'. The comic book strips also make a welcome return and are set to contain even more adult content than before. That's not to say the series will fall to the levels of smuttiness, but many scenes containing Mona and Max will feature some 'mature' issues.

Unsurprisingly, *Max Payne 2* has also had a rather large boost in the visual department; a glance at the gorgeous shots over these two pages should be enough to convince you that it's already looking very special. Textures throughout are of an extremely high standard, with fabrics, weaponry and buildings all looking frighteningly realistic. These high standards continue with the incredible amounts of detail seen in the face of each character. The constipated grimace of the original Payne has been replaced by the look of someone who has survived the events from the first game and remains scarred by them.

The series' trademark 'bullet-time' is also undergoing a massive facelift and should give PC owners plenty of bang for their bucks when the game is released in the near future.

DETAILS

FORMAT: PC
ORIGIN: US
PUBLISHER: Take 2
DEVELOPER: Rockstar Games
RELEASE: Q4 '03
GENRE: Shoot-'em-up
PLAYERS: 1

■ Max Payne returns, and though the embittered loner has decided to return to humanity, you can bet it's all going to go pear-shaped very soon.

TAKING IT TO THE MAX

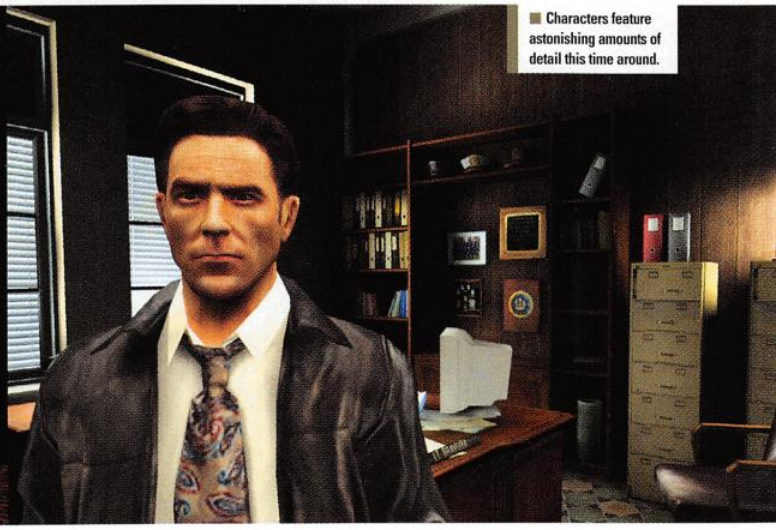
The original *Max Payne* upset many gamers with its processor-consuming specs, and while Rockstar is keeping rather quiet about *Max Payne 2*'s running requirements, we're expecting to have to upgrade our PCs again. A brief look at these screenshots should convince you that if you were considering an upgrade, now would be a good time. Besides, with so many graphics-heavy games due over the next few months (*Half-Life 2* and *Doom III* to name two) we're all going to have to upgrade at some stage...

"REMEDY'S SEQUEL PROMISES MORE PLOT, MORE BULLET-TIME AND PLENTY MORE KILLING"

■ It's not just the lighting that looks good in *Max Payne 2*, check out the amazing texturing on Max's clothing.



■ Characters feature astonishing amounts of detail this time around.



MAX PAYNE 2: THE FALL OF MAX PAYNE

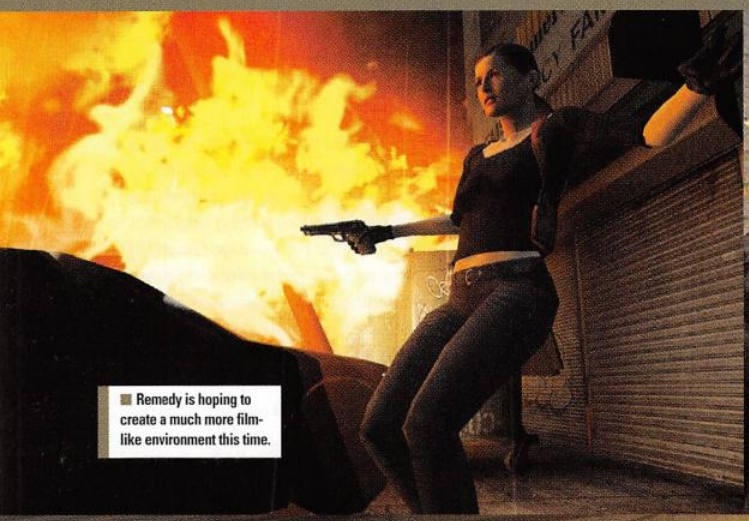
PC

COMPANY PROFILE

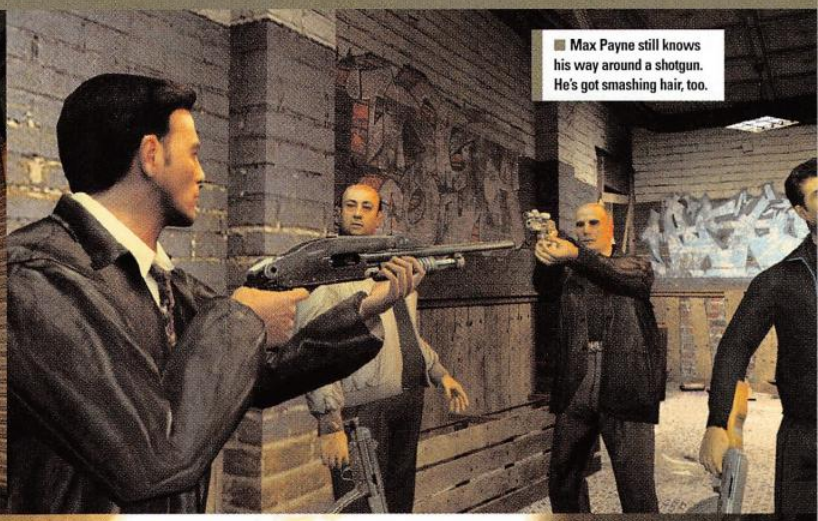
Remedy Entertainment was founded in 1995 and is based in Espoo, Finland. Although Remedy had only previously released two games (*Max Payne* and *Death Rally*), it quickly became famous for its 3D accelerator benchmark program entitled Final Reality. Such was its success, Final Reality eventually went on to sell some 5 million units.

HISTORY

- **MAX PAYNE** Multi [2001]
- **DEATH RALLY** PC [1996]



Remedy is hoping to create a much more film-like environment this time.



Max Payne still knows his way around a shotgun. He's got smashing hair, too.

"MAX PAYNE HAS BEEN ONE OF OUR MOST SUCCESSFUL FRANCHISES TO DATE"

KELLY SUMNER, CEO, TAKE 2

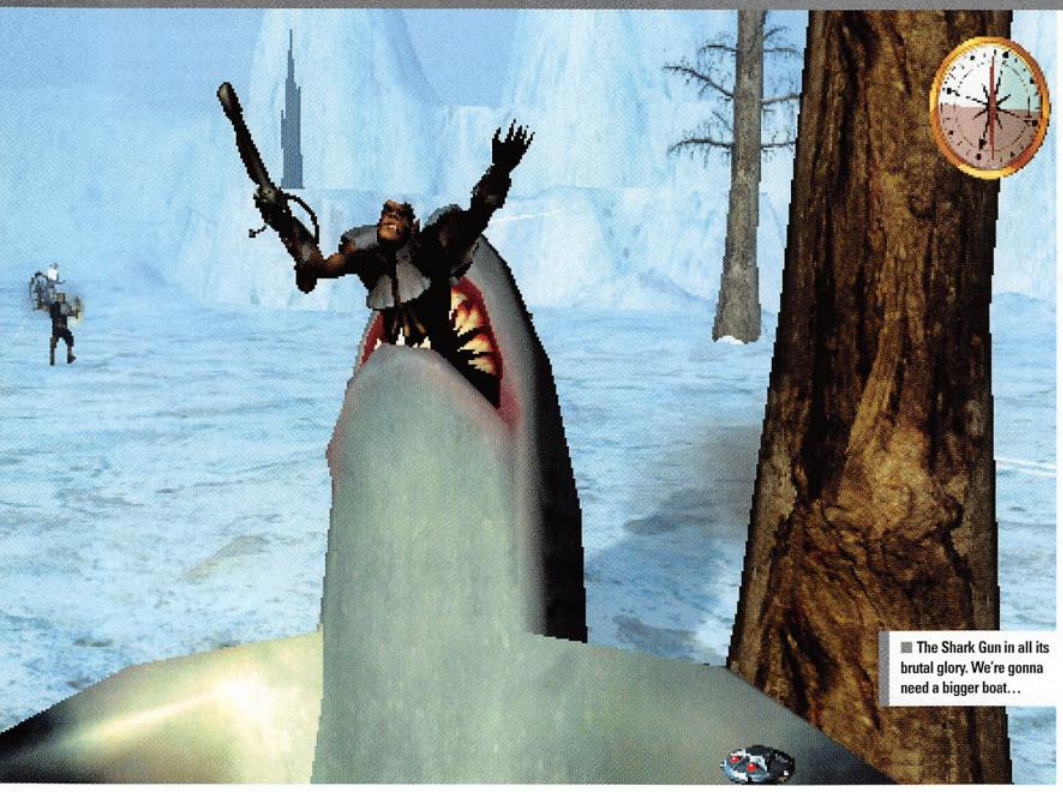
VIDEOGAMES MATHS

TAKING IT TO THE MAX



Max Payne 2 promises to deliver even more high-octane violence than before.

ARMED & DANGEROUS



The Shark Gun in all its brutal glory. We're gonna need a bigger boat...

EXPLOSIONS, GUNS AND BLOODY BIG SHARKS? WE'LL TAKE IT

DETAILS
FORMAT: PC, Xbox
ORIGIN: US
PUBLISHER: EA
DEVELOPER: LucasArts/Planet Moon
RELEASE: November '03 (Xbox: Feb '04)
GENRE: Shoot-'em-up
PLAYERS: TBA

Can this quirky shooter get LucasArts back on track?

"WICKEDLY FUNNY, TECHNICALLY POLISHED AND PLAYABLE TO BOOT, A&D IS WELL WORTH LOOKING FORWARD TO"

We're huge fans of LucasArts, but even we'd admit that its recent output (*RTX Red Rock* in particular) has failed to achieve the same standards as stalwarts like *Day Of The Tentacle* and *Grim Fandango*. Thankfully, *Armed & Dangerous* looks set to bring back that important mix of distinctive comedy and superb gameplay that's been missing from so many of LucasArts' products lately.

Armed & Dangerous doesn't so much have its tongue firmly in its cheek as sticking out the side of its head. A perfect example of this being the new Shark Gun – fire off a shark and a huge dorsal fin snakes its way through the ground. The next moment your unwitting opponent is caught off guard by the huge Great White that erupts through the earth and devours him. Sending out multiple sharks not only guarantees chaos, but also enables you to gain relatively safe passage through some of the more intense firefights.

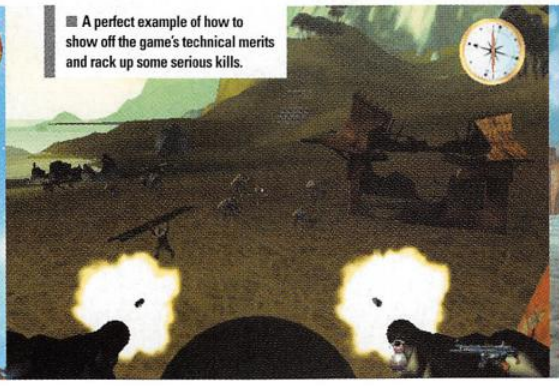
Perhaps the best proof of this game's potential is displayed in the various stages that have you fending off an army. Taking control of a heavily equipped cannon, complete with unlimited rockets and ammo, you find yourself upon an immense wall. Hordes of soldiers stream towards you in an attempt to breach your precarious barrier – allow more than 50 through and it's game over.

Seeing around a hundred battle-weary grunts tearing towards you is an exhilarating experience that's only matched by the sheer enjoyment you get from wantonly destroying them. Should a soldier reach the top, you can always stop them by simply running them over (complete with authentic jerky screen effect). It's all horribly gratuitous, but wonderful fun. Add a camera-friendly jet pack that enables you to attack both on horizontal and vertical planes and you have a title that looks set to be everything that *Brute Force* wasn't.

Outrageous cut-scenes, highly impressive visuals and some imaginative weaponry will hopefully ensure that gamers will give *A&D* more than just a cursory glance when it hits the shelves.



A&D's physics engine ensures every death is a bit OTT.



A perfect example of how to show off the game's technical merits and rack up some serious kills.



LEAD THE BEST !



You're the commander of **Rainbow Six**, an **international elite SWAT team.** With the **new voice communication system,** use your microphone to control your fellow agents and accomplish your mission **together.**

Tom Clancy's RAINBOW SIX® 3

Get the team spirit



MA15+
MEDIUM LEVEL ANIMATED VIOLENCE

www.rainbowsix3.com

XBOX XBOX LIVE UBISOFT

© 2003 Red Storm Entertainment. All Rights Reserved. Red Storm and Red Storm Entertainment are trademarks of Red Storm Entertainment in the US and/or other countries. Red Storm Entertainment, Inc. is a Ubi Soft Entertainment company. Microsoft, Xbox, Xbox Live and the Xbox logo are either registered trademarks of Microsoft Corporation in the U.S. and/ or in other countries.

GHOSTHUNTER

CAN THE PRIMAL TEAM CHALLENGE CAPCOM AND KONAMI IN THE SCARE STAKES?

With the sole exception of Silicon Knights' *Eternal Darkness*, you'd have to go back to the very dawn of the survival horror genre to find a decent scarefest originating anywhere other than Japan. Ever since Capcom's *Resident Evil* took over the reins from *Alone In The Dark* as gaming's definitive horror series in 1996, spine-tingling masterpieces like *Silent Hill* and *Project Zero* have continued the total domination of the market by Japanese developers. But now Sony has enlisted the talents of its Cambridge-based studio in a bid to succeed where the *Evil Dead* and *Blair Witch* games so miserably failed by bringing us a tale of terror set to buck the seven-year trend of Eastern supremacy.

Ghosthunter follows the misadventures of Lazarus Jones, a typically abrasive rookie cop in his first week on the job. While investigating reports of peculiar goings-on at an abandoned school that once played host to a grisly massacre, our naïve hero stumbles upon some bizarre equipment in the basement and inadvertently unleashes a horde of ghoulish nasties upon the world. One malevolent spirit in particular – who happens to bear more than a passing resemblance to the bad guy from the painting in *Ghostbusters II* – will prove to be something of a handful for the novice policeman over the coming levels and begins his reign of evil by whisking away Lazarus' partner, Anna Steele. But if one man can cause so much trouble, then one man can surely put an end to it all. One change of outfit later and Lazarus is reluctantly ready to face all manner of foul monstrosities and spooky apparitions as he attempts to clear up this ghastly mess.

Helping Lazarus on the perilous quest that follows is a mysterious computer system and a virtuous spirit named Astral, who managed to fuse with him when the legions of vengeful spectres were set free. At various stages in the game players will be able to summon Astral from within and make use of her unique spiritual powers to tackle tricky situations. Along with an impressive arsenal of real-world weaponry, Lazarus also comes fully kitted out to deal with his more supernatural adversaries. Artillery powered by a strange ghostly energy comes in very handy for softening up those ghouls that would laugh in the face of regular bullets. Once weakened, you can capture their tortured souls in a *Ghostbusters*-style trap.

From what we've played thus far, *Ghosthunter* appears to be wisely avoiding confronting the Japanese kings of survival horror head-on. Never attempting to outdo the *Silent Hill* series for sheer blood-soaked depravity, and missing the kind of heart-in-mouth cinematic tension of *Project Zero*, *Ghosthunter* seems to be steering clear of the censors with more of a paranormal-themed action adventure. The game isn't without its air of eeriness but, like *Resident Evil*, *Ghosthunter* relies much more on superbly gruesome monster designs and entertaining action than psychologically scarring chills.

It's something of a mixed blessing that echoes of *Primal* are in evidence throughout the game, but, most significantly, the breathtaking visual capabilities of the engine certainly emphasise *Ghosthunter*'s intentions of mounting a serious challenge on Capcom and Konami's prestigious horror franchises.

DETAILS

FORMAT: PlayStation2
ORIGIN: UK
PUBLISHER: SCEE
DEVELOPER: Cambridge Studios
RELEASE: 7 November
GENRE: Survival Horror
PLAYERS: 1

■ Sony's new title in the grisly world of survival horror combines gorgeous visuals with ghost-busting action.

BEAUTY AND THE BEASTS

Although *Ghosthunter* is powered by an enhanced version of the already accomplished *Primal* engine, we were somewhat dubious that the in-game visuals would live up to the standard of rendered shots we'd previously seen. Yet after finally getting to play the game for real, we were nothing short of awestruck by the immense graphical quality our PS2 was somehow managing to deliver – the detailed environments and creature models proudly exhibit some of the most polished visuals ever to grace the system. But despite its remarkable beauty, *Ghosthunter* sadly doesn't appear to be the game that finds a cure for the bane of all survival horror games – the untameable camera.

"GHOSTHUNTER WISELY AVOIDS CHALLENGING THE JAPANESE KINGS OF THE GENRE HEAD-ON"



■ Some of the environments and textures you'll encounter really set *Ghosthunter* apart visually.



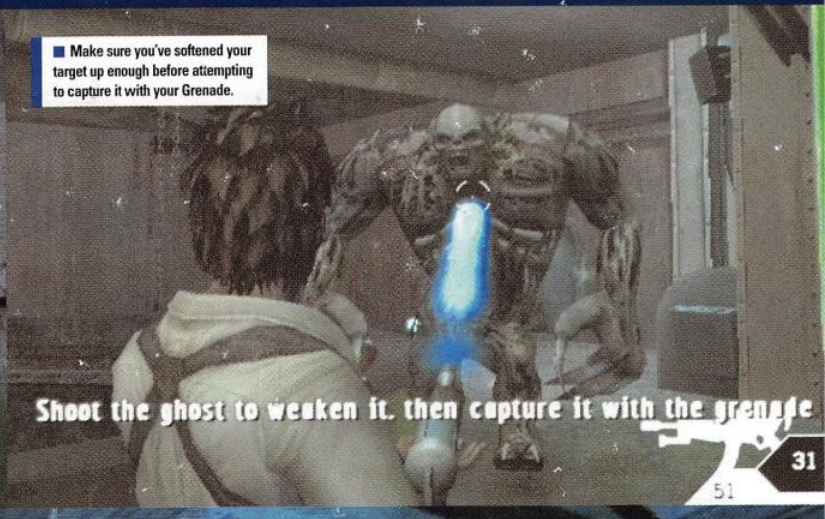
STUDIO PROFILE

■ The Cambridge Studio was acquired by SCEE in July 1997 and enjoyed success a year later with PSone bestseller *MediEvil*. Now comprising 72 development staff, the studio has become renowned for pushing the boundaries of PS2 visuals with *Primal* and forthcoming scare-'em-up *Ghosthunter*.

HISTORY

- **PRIMAL** 2003 [PlayStation2]
- **MEDIEVIL 2** 2000 [PSone]
- **MEDIEVIL** 1998 [PSone]





■ Make sure you've softened your target up enough before attempting to capture it with your Grenade.

31

51

■ As bullets are useless against ghosts, your special ghosthunting gizmos are essential pieces of kit.

"STUDIO CAMBRIDGE HAS CREATED A DARK, ATMOSPHERIC FANTASY THAT WILL APPEAL TO BOTH GAMERS AND HORROR FANS"

CHRIS DEERIN[G], PRESIDENT, SCEE

VIDEOGAMES MATHS

PRIMAL SCREAMS



GHOSTBUSTERS + RESIDENT EVIL - PRIMAL = GHOSTHUNTER

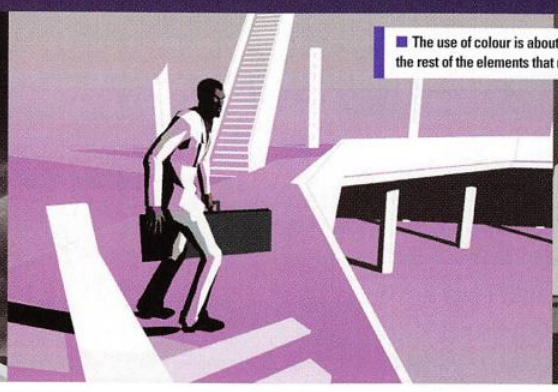
40

22

KILLER 7



■ An extra from *Manhunt*? Looking good, psycho…



■ The use of colour is about as realistic as the rest of the elements that make up *Killer 7*.



LOOK AT THEM YOYOS – THAT'S THE WAY TO DO IT…

Although *Killer 7* was unveiled at the same time as *Viewtiful Joe* and *P.N.03*, it's strange to think that we've finished the latter pair while details remain scarce about this highly ambitious project. Whether Capcom is intentionally playing *Killer 7* close to its chest or whether the game is still in progress is unknown – it's probably a bit of both since we won't be seeing it until well into next year. However, a recent playable demo at the Tokyo Game Show has revealed a few more details about the most ambitious game of the Capcom Five (now, of course, the Capcom Four after the cancellation of *Dead Phoenix*). This looks to be a game that promises five storylines set on four different worlds and spanning two time periods. Confused? You will be…

The main feature of the game is that main man Harman Smith is an ageing hitman with seven very different personalities. By taking on these personas, the gun-toting geriatric can effectively become one of seven alter egos, each granting him unique abilities which must all be used in order to progress. The identities themselves open up some potentially impressive situations. Some, like ex-wrestler Masked Smith, will get through purely on brawn. At the other end of the spectrum, several of the Smith personas have some form of telepathic or telekinetic ability, a sure sign that their sections will be more 'mind over matter'. We're promised mind-reading and conjuring all round for these cranially gifted characters, all of which will undoubtedly help you reach your goal.

It's currently unclear just how much the characters' sections will vary – first impressions suggest they simply force you to play the game differently, though there has been some talk of each scenario differing substantially, almost to the point of each one being a genre in itself. Hopefully this is one mystery that will be solved over the next few months.

Sure, this style of gameplay is far from original but it's more the execution that sets *Killer 7* apart from its rivals – the visual style is intensified by a strangely blasé use of graphic violence (even for a game about a hitman). Pursuing old-friend-gone-bad Kun Lan, Smith's goal is to get to the bottom of the mysterious Heaven's Smile, a terrible condition that turns the afflicted into monsters. Exactly how a schizophrenic pensioner is expected to accomplish such a heroic feat remains to be seen, as does just how Capcom plans to cram so much variety into one game.

But one thing is clear – *Killer 7* will need some programming wizardry if it's to live up to the impressive hype that already surrounds it.

"HATS OFF TO CAPCOM – KILLER 7'S VISUALS ARE NOTHING IF NOT EYE-CATCHING AND UNIQUE"

DETAILS

FORMAT: GameCube
ORIGIN: Japan
PUBLISHER: THQ
DEVELOPER: Capcom
RELEASE: TBC '04
GENRE: Adventure
PLAYERS: 1

Part Eighties pop video, part early VR and a healthy dose of psychological thriller. Capcom continues to break all the rules and split public opinion with another stunning and unique offering.



■ Just looking at the 'blocky' characters could drive the stereotypical polygon-hungry casual gamer to tears.

From Ensemble Studios,
the creators of Age of Empires.®

AGE of MYTHOLOGY® The TITANS EXPANSION

©2003 Microsoft Corporation. All rights reserved. Microsoft, the Microsoft Game Studios logo, Age of Mythology, Age of Empires and Ensemble Studios are either registered trademarks or trademarks of Microsoft Corporation in the United States and/or other countries.
MES02221

A new chapter in battle. A new danger emerges.

Age of Mythology – The Titans is your next great conquest. Utilise the enormous Titans, promote units to heroes, and reuse god powers to lead the Atlanteans to global domination. Embark on a brand new single-player campaign and call on 12 new god powers to lift the Atlanteans to supremacy. Harness and wield the force of 10 new mythological units so that the sun may never set on the Atlantis empire. The battle for heaven and earth continues.



G8+
MEDIUM LEVEL
ANIMATED VIOLENCE



Microsoft
game studios

ENSEMBLE
STUDIOS

www.ageofmythology.com



GRAN TURISMO 4

■ We've seen a lot of the rally section so far, but it's easy to see why Polyphony is pushing it so hard.

VIDEOGAMES MATHS

EVEN BETTER THAN THE REAL THING

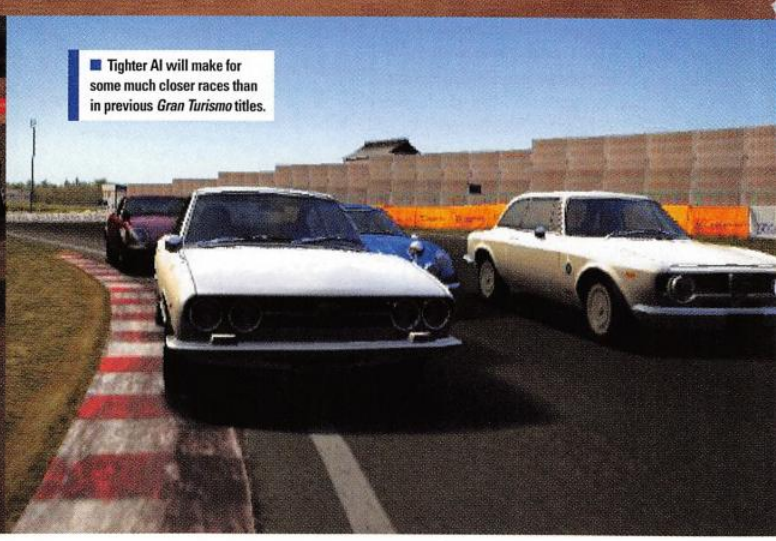


"GRAN TURISMO 4 LOOKS SET TO BE THE SEXIEST RACING SIMULATOR"

JENNIE KONG, PR MANAGER, SCEE



■ Tighter AI will make for some much closer races than in previous *Gran Turismo* titles.



COMPANY PROFILE

■ Not many firms can boast the passion and excellence of Sony's renowned racing developer. Having started as Polys Entertainment with a few forgettable PSone efforts, the developer hit the big time with the first *Gran Turismo* and has earned its place as one of Sony's most treasured development teams.

HISTORY

■ **GRAN TURISMO CONCEPT** 2002 [Multi]
■ **GRAN TURISMO 2** 1999 [PSone]
■ **MOTOR TOON GRAND PRIX** 1996 [PSone]

CAN SONY TEAR AWAY FROM A PACKED GRID OF RACERS?

Like it or not, console racing sims don't come much more accurate or concise than the *Gran Turismo* series. Sure, the minor flaws of the best-selling series are well documented, as is always the way with high-profile products, but these never go so far as to harm the games in a big way. As a genre-leading series, *GT* is under pressure to surpass itself with each successive title – something it looks very capable of doing, provided, of course, that this would-be king of racers doesn't ride the armco instead of staying on track.

With talk of the UK receiving a PS2/*GT4* bundle in time for Christmas, we're hoping that the PAL version will be landing on our fair shores sometime soon. But we're still sceptical about the amount of features that we've yet to see mere weeks from the game's release. Call us doom-mongers, but we're just hoping nothing is omitted or rushed for the sake of an early release – we've seen numerous titles disappoint due to time constraints.

As the first *GT* to get an all-new physics engine, we were obviously hoping for car damage (among other things) – hopes that were dashed at this year's E3. Thankfully, other new details have gone some way towards making up for this. Riding the barriers may not affect your vehicle but new time penalties, speed restrictions and warning flags will make sure that this kind of dark-side play affects your overall race performance. With lap times that vary only slightly from their real-world counterparts and AI cars that actually race safely rather than allowing you to use them as cornering cushions, this is looking more and more like being the 'Real Driving Simulation' that the series' box art so proudly boasts.

Attention to detail is one thing but Polyphony is, as expected, taking it to the next level. Drafting in modern and classic cars from around the world, the firm has photographed, modelled and recorded countless vehicles. Allegedly clocking in at around one man-month of production per car (in a game boasting over five hundred vehicles), the project has been incredibly labour-intensive and, thanks to the inclusion of elements like the Museum and the classic cars, Polyphony is looking to rope in car lovers as well as the usual gaming crowd.

Let's not forget what is arguably one of *GT4*'s biggest selling points – on top of the many hours of solo racing, this will be the PS2's first foray into online racing (on these shores, at least). This is being touted as much more than simply network play, with the developers planning for it to be more a congregation of car enthusiasts, something helped by the game's impressive depth and emphasis on historical racing. It'll be interesting to see whether this aspect of the game proves to be as inviting as Sony clearly believes it is.

With a level of depth and a staggering amount of events seldom seen outside the *Gran Turismo* series, this fourth true title looks to push the franchise even further towards driving nirvana. Offering an enjoyable racing experience for learner drivers and a heavily customisable vehicle system that will appeal to motor sports fanatics, *GT4* showcases exceptional variety and proficiency, even at this stage, so expectations are high for the game's hopefully imminent release.

DETAILS

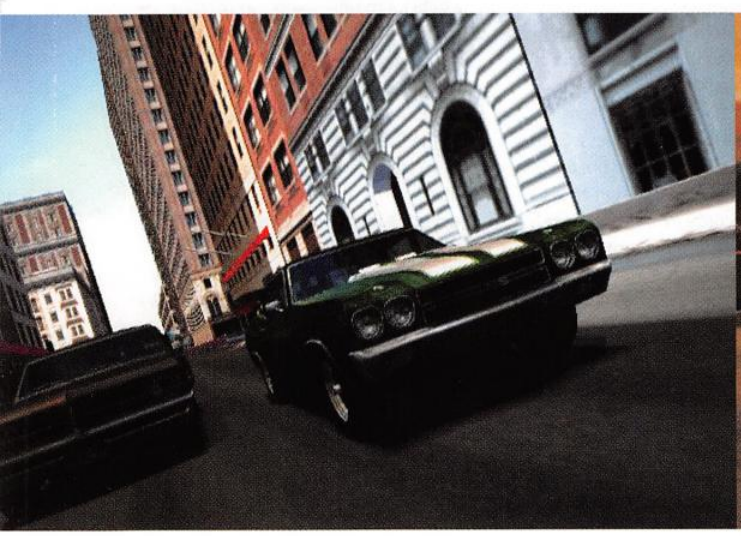
FORMAT: PlayStation2
ORIGIN: Japan
PUBLISHER: Sony
DEVELOPER: Polyphony Digital
RELEASE: December '03
GENRE: Driving
PLAYERS: 1-2 (1-6 online)

■ When Sony needs a game to sell consoles, it can rely on Polyphony Digital, which has been key in the evolution of the PlayStation brand.

TWENTY QUESTIONS

So, over five hundred cars, an ever-increasing track count and online play are all on board, but what's more surprising is how much remains unknown with so little time to the game's release. The inclusion of certain brands still hangs in the balance, as does just how the Museum and other nostalgic features will fit in with the simulation modes (there has been talk of a mode celebrating the history of racing, presumably not unlike *SEGA GT*'s Chronicle mode). The main mode is shaping up to be quite a commitment even though details are far from final. Used cars return for your pocket-lightening pleasure and new AI should make for even more challenging races.

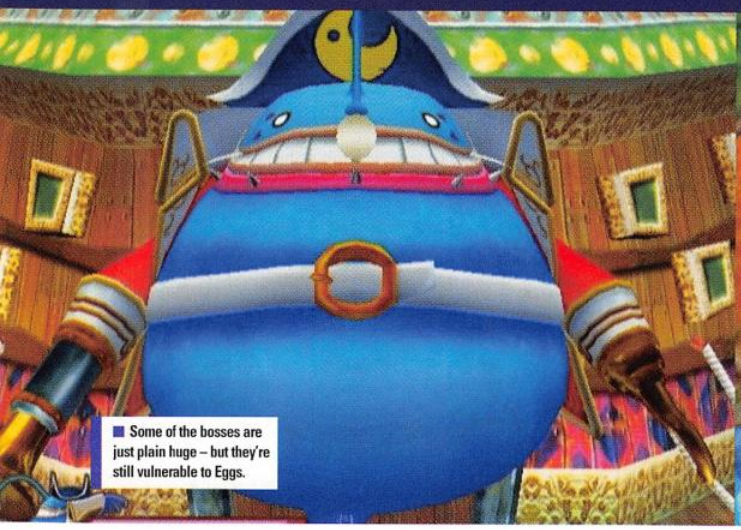
"THIS IS LOOKING MORE LIKE BEING THE 'REAL DRIVING SIMULATION' THAT THE SERIES' BOX ART BOASTS"



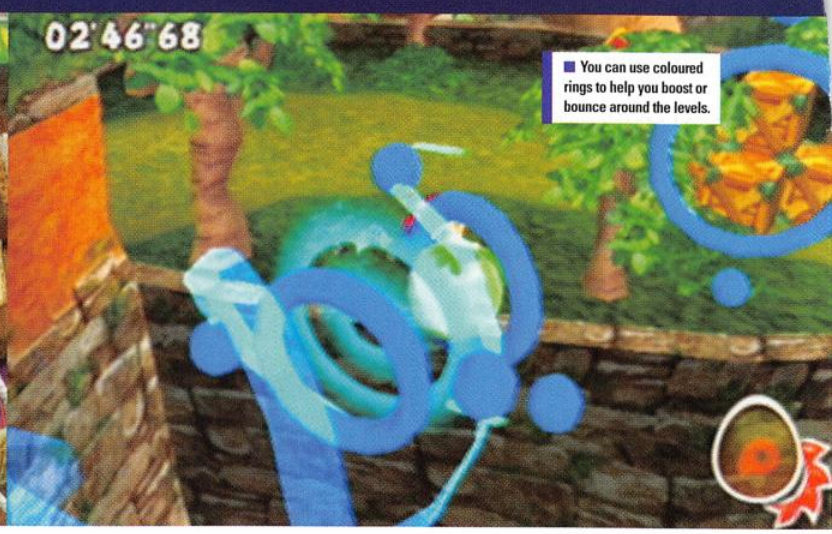


■ It's nice to know that this is one title that has a whole lot of depth beneath the flashy exterior.

BILLY HATCHER AND THE GIANT EGG



■ Some of the bosses are just plain huge – but they're still vulnerable to Eggs.



■ You can use coloured rings to help you boost or bounce around the levels.

DETAILS
FORMAT: GameCube
ORIGIN: Japan
PUBLISHER: Atari
DEVELOPER: SEGA
RELEASE: November '03 (US: Out Now)
GENRE: Action Adventure
PLAYERS: 1-4

■ Billy may not be as fast as a hedgehog, but Sonic Team's egg-based title is certainly different enough to make us sit up and take notice.

WHAT CAME FIRST – THE BILLY OR THE EGG?

As we're hoping a lot of people reading this will know, it takes a certain kind of gamer to spot a decent game just from first impressions. Someone who can look past obvious stereotypes and see quality for what it really is. Unfortunately, first impressions can also cause the shallower contingent of gamers to label something a waste of time before they've even played it, and that's where the problems begin.

With that in mind, we want to clear up some disparaging remarks that we've heard about Sonic Team's latest project, *Billy Hatcher And The Giant Egg*. Despite the outward appearance, *Billy Hatcher* isn't just 'for kids', neither is it 'childish crap' or 'completely dumbass'. It's an example of Japanese originality and development genius at work, and if you still think otherwise, well, maybe you should clear off back to *Vice City* where you belong.

To appreciate all this though, you have to get past the initial premise that *Billy Hatcher* presents and, as you might expect coming from the combined minds at Sonic Team, it's a little bizarre to say the least. The fact that evil crows have taken over Billy's home of Morning Land and brought darkness upon the world serves only as a precursor to the boy's donning of the Legendary Chicken Suit (yes, that's really what it's called), but none of it is actually that important once the game begins. All that matters is that only Billy can save the day, and to do that he's going to need Eggs – lots of them.

Learning to control Eggs (by rolling them around, using them as weapons and eventually hatching them) is the key to playing *Billy Hatcher*, mainly because without them Billy is totally useless. Sure, he can jump around and move but that's about it. It's only with an Egg that all his other abilities become available and you can make some progress. From hitting switches and using Spring Rings (which help you reach higher places) to wiping out crows and squashing all the fruit that's lying around, it's all done with Eggs.

Squashing fruit is one of the most important tasks in the game, as that's the only way to hatch your Egg. The more fruit you roll your Egg over, the bigger it becomes until eventually you can use Billy's special rooster call to crack it open. What's inside depends entirely on which Egg you're controlling. Whether it's a wearable item that gives you special abilities and single-use powers, or one of the 16 'useable' animals that can help solve puzzles, attack enemies or even carry you around, it will always be something useful. However, with 72 different types of Egg for you to find and hatch, it'll certainly take you a while to find them all.

Considering that *Billy Hatcher* has a whole lot to offer people looking for something fun to play (including a sizeable single-player adventure and a seriously enjoyable multiplayer mode that's the most fun we've had since *Power Stone 2* on the Dreamcast), it's clear that Sonic Team knows to stick to what it's good at – albeit with a distinct chicken flavour. We just hope that enough people bother to sample its delights, rather than just dismissing it outright when it hits the shelves next month. In the case of *Billy Hatcher*, we can definitively say that ignorance most definitely isn't bliss. Miss this at your peril.

EGGSTRA, EGGSTRA

This being a SEGA game (and a Sonic Team one at that), it won't come as much of a shock to learn that there's a whole bunch of SEGA-related extras and secrets planned for *Billy Hatcher*. The most noticeable surprise is the inclusion of special Sonic Team Eggs in every level that only become available once you've collected five special tokens hidden throughout each stage. Hatch one and you'll be able to have one of several Sonic Team characters (including Nights, Sonic, Tails and even a Capu Capu from *Chu Chu Rocket!*) as your temporary sidekick. Even more interesting is the recent announcement of several hidden bonus games that can be downloaded to your GBA once you've found them, including *Puyo Pop*, *NiGHTs: Into Dreams*, *Chu Chu Rocket!* and even a GBA version of *Billy Hatcher*.

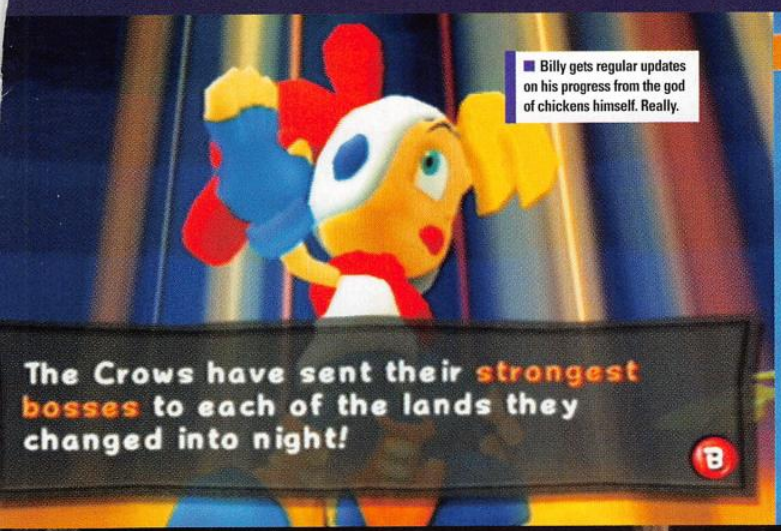
"REFRESHINGLY DIFFERENT AND ADDICTIVE, THIS WILL KEEP YOU GOING FOR AGES. ONE DAY, WE'LL ALL WANT TO BE BILLY HATCHER"

BILLY HATCHER AND THE GIANT EGG
GAMECUBE

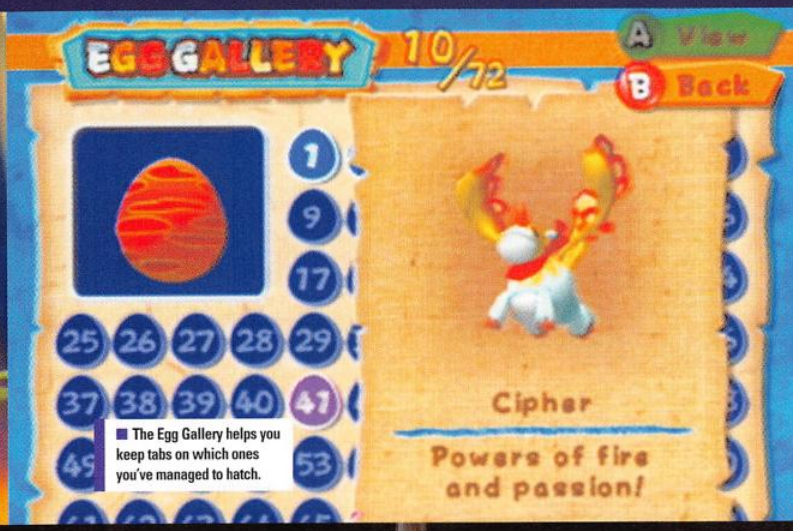


PRODUCER PROFILE
■ Since getting the lucky break of landing a low-level job at SEGA shortly after graduating from school (something he admits he was never very good at), Yuji Naka has become one of the most influential producers in Japanese game development today. And he invented Sonic The Hedgehog. 'Nuff said...

HISTORY
- **PHANTASY STAR ONLINE** 2000 [Dreamcast]
- **NIGHTS: INTO DREAMS** 1996 [Saturn]
- **SONIC THE HEDGEHOG** 1991 [Mega Drive]



■ Billy gets regular updates on his progress from the god of chickens himself. Really.



■ The Egg Gallery helps you keep tabs on which ones you've managed to hatch.

"MOST ACTION GAMES HAVE ONE CHARACTER RUNNING AROUND IN THE WORLD DOING EVERYTHING. I WANTED A DIFFERENT STYLE OF ACTION WE COULD FOCUS ON"

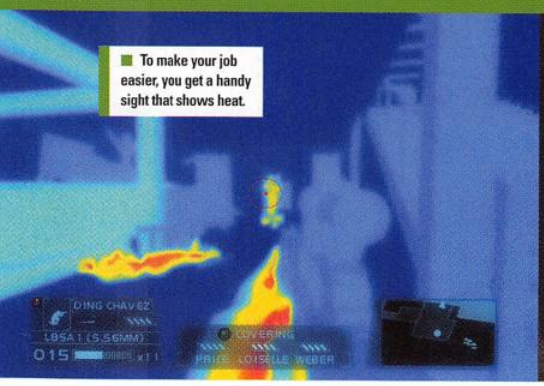
YUJI NAKA, PRODUCER, SONIC TEAM

VIDEOGAMES MATHS
SEGA LAYS A LITTLE EGG FOR US

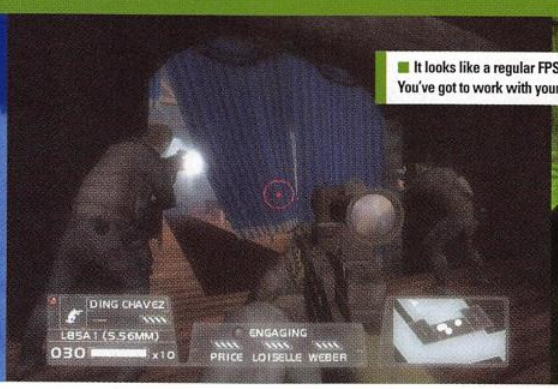


SONIC ADVENTURE 2 + CHICKENS + MULTIPLAYER = BILLY HATCHER

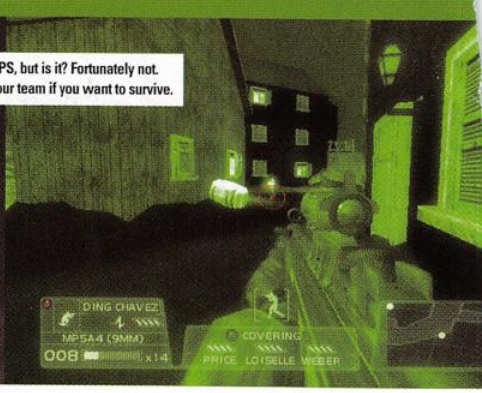
TOM CLANCY'S RAINBOW SIX 3



To make your job easier, you get a handy sight that shows heat.



It looks like a regular FPS, but is it? Fortunately not. You've got to work with your team if you want to survive.



WHERE ARE THOSE TERRORISTS? SOMEWHERE OVER THE RAINBOW NO DOUBT...

DETAILS
FORMAT: Xbox
ORIGIN: Canada
PUBLISHER: Ubi Soft
DEVELOPER: Red Storm
RELEASE: November '03
GENRE: FPS
PLAYERS: 1 (Multiplayer TBC)

Rainbow Six is a right old mixed bag (in a good way). There's first-person action à la *Splinter Cell*, but with a squad to back you up as well.

Unless you've been living under a rock these past few years, you can't have missed Tom Clancy. With successful books, films and now videogames, it would appear that he has the Midas touch. With that being the case then, it goes without saying that you'll have heard of his games too, such as *Splinter Cell*, *Ghost Recon* and *Rainbow Six*, the third instalment of which is coming to the Xbox after its release on the PC earlier this year.

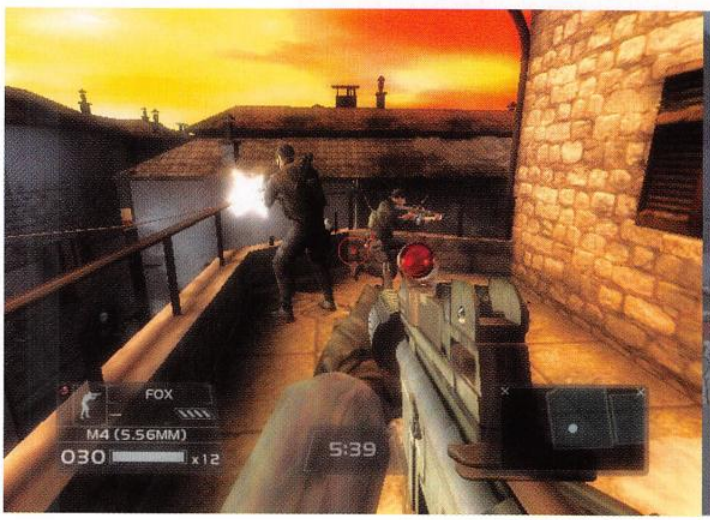
The name has changed slightly for the Xbox release, with the removal of the *Raven Shield* suffix, but the changes aren't just cosmetic. For one, the plot has been changed from the PC version. The exact details are still being kept tightly under wraps, but we do know that the game will revolve around a character called Ding Chavez. He's in charge of a team of European anti-terrorist specialists who have to travel all over the world to deal with a multitude of enemies and, naturally, you'll join him for the ride.

"PART FPS, PART SQUAD-BASED ACTION, ALL UNDER THE BIG TOM CLANCY UMBRELLA"

Gameplay promises to be a mixture of *Splinter Cell*-esque stealth combined with squad action, all wrapped up in a first-person shooter mould. Despite having all these gameplay elements together, though, it would appear that the game doesn't trip itself up. You don't have to plan everything with absolute precision while trying to deal with squad members who have no AI, but on the other hand you can't just leave them behind as you take on the world armed with only an M-16.

As with many games of this ilk, realism is something that *Rainbow Six* is striving for and, thankfully, Red Storm has managed it with some success for the Xbox sequel, both in single-player and multiplayer action. No longer is it the case that you can pop off the bad guys with one shot, whereas you only get a slight limp after being hit by an rocket. In *Rainbow Six 3*, getting hit by a single bullet in a vital area (such as the head) means you'll not only buy the farm, but probably most of the animals as well. So be careful out there.

In what appears to be a very surprising move, however, Microsoft has managed to get *Rainbow Six 3* exclusive for a short while before it appears on the PS2, obviously with the hope that it'll reach the dizzy heights that *Splinter Cell* did before it. Of course, how well all these features have been implemented will have a large bearing as to whether it is such a hit. Fingers crossed, we'll bring you a review next issue.




It's all about teamwork in *Rainbow Six* – your teammates need you just as much as you need them.

NOT OUT!

...UNTIL DECEMBER.






EA SPORTS CRICKET 2004

G GENERAL

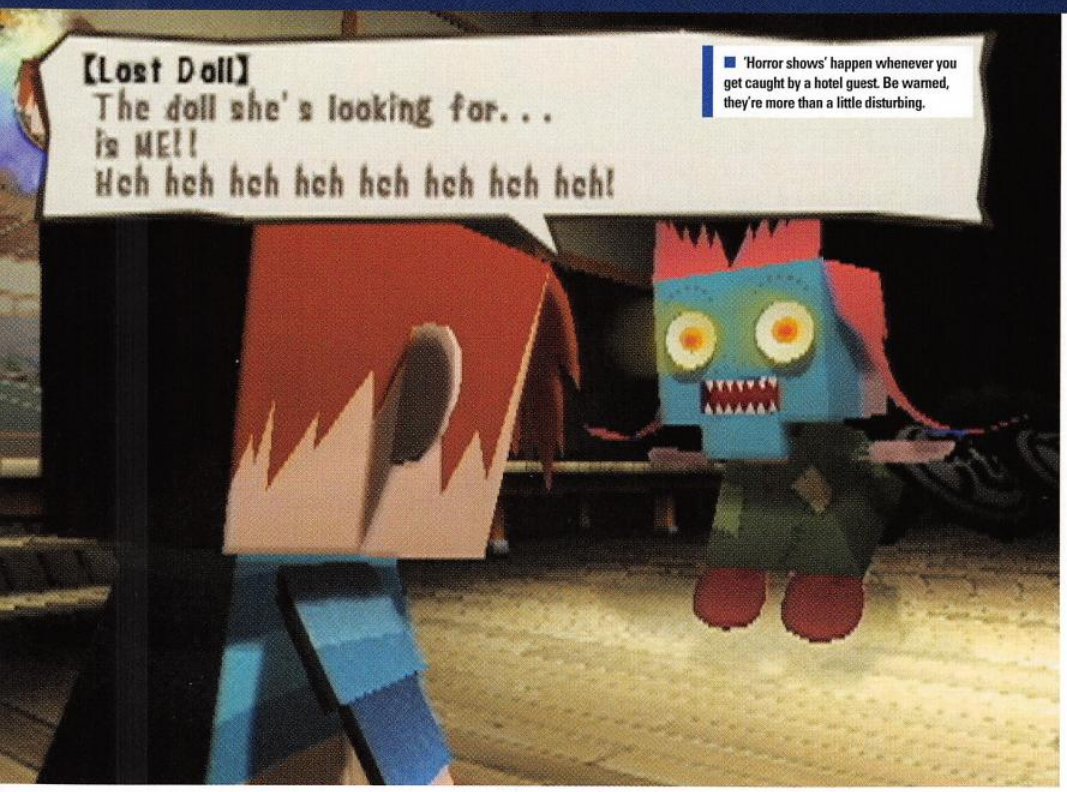
EXCLUSIVE TO THE... PlayStation.2

PC GAME

EA SPORTS

© 2003 ELECTRONIC ARTS INC. all rights reserved. Electronic Arts, EA SPORTS and the EA SPORTS logo are trademarks or registered trademarks of Electronic Arts inc. in the U.S. and/or other countries. Exclusively licensed to and published by Electronic Arts. PlayStation is a registered trademark of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. All other trademarks are the property of their respective owners.

GREGORY HORROR SHOW



■ 'Horror shows' happen whenever you get caught by a hotel guest. Be warned, they're more than a little disturbing.

SURVIVAL HORROR WILL NEVER BE THE SAME AGAIN...

DETAILS
FORMAT: PlayStation2
ORIGIN: Japan
PUBLISHER: THQ
DEVELOPER: Capcom
RELEASE: 21 November
GENRE: Puzzle Adventure
PLAYERS: 1

■ Capcom's latest offers more head-scratching ingenuity than its peers.

"IT MIGHT LOOK HORRIBLY BASIC, BUT THIS GAME HAS A DEVIOUS AMOUNT OF CUNNING BEHIND ITS TWISTED LOGIC"

PS2 **No, your eyes aren't deceiving you, these really are PlayStation2 screenshots, they really are from Capcom's latest survival horror title and this really isn't a game for kids.** So put aside any assumptions you might have made, because *Gregory Horror Show* is looking like a fine example of Japanese originality. And it's rather fun to play too.

Of course, it's easy to say that this is just another example of the survival horror genre, but it's more complicated than that – believe us, *Gregory Horror Show* couldn't be further from *Resident Evil* if it tried. Based on the award-winning Japanese cartoon of the same name, the game sees you as a 'guest' at Gregory House, an unassuming hotel run by a square-headed mouse named Gregory. However, it turns out that Gregory House is a weird inter-dimensional portal where lost souls are doomed to walk forever (much like a Travelodge, then). In order to escape, it's up to you to capture those souls and trade them with Death in exchange for your freedom. Weird? Hell yes.

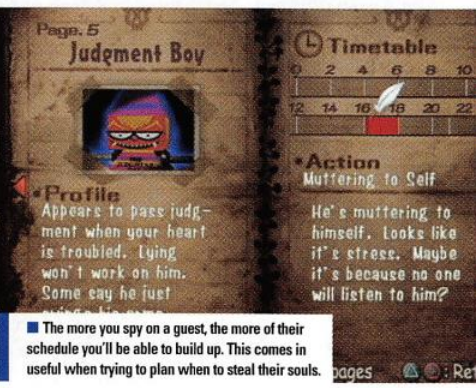
As strange as it sounds, though, this premise makes for some captivating gameplay. While collecting bottled souls might not sound tough, the challenge lies in stealing said bottles from their owners – who are other guests in the hotel – without getting spotted. The key is deducing each guest's weakness and then exploiting it, but to do that you'll have to spy on them constantly to work out their daily routines and decide when to strike. Gregory, for example, takes regular tours of the hotel to check everything – it's only when he's away from his desk that you can pinch essential items like room keys. Naturally, not all the weaknesses are that easy to spot, and when more guests move into the hotel you'll really have to think hard if you want to get your hands on those pesky souls.

Despite being heavily stylised to a point that may deter some gamers (you'll have to overlook your first impressions to appreciate the complexity of the game), we've only got high expectations for *Gregory Horror Show*. Games don't come much cleverer than this – or much more original, for that matter.



■ Once you've stolen a guest's soul, they'll give chase whenever you happen to run into them around the hotel.





■ The more you spy on a guest, the more of their schedule you'll be able to build up. This comes in useful when trying to plan when to steal their souls.



The Government will protect you.
The Government will defeat our enemies.
The Government is your friend.

...OR DO YOU WANT THE TRUTH?

Jade's world is under attack from an alien force. Her government claims to be defending the people, yet more and more of them are becoming enslaved. Fighting oppression, propaganda and deception, not to mention fighting those intent on killing her, Jade's journalistic quest is to unravel the truth and expose the conspiracy. What lies beyond good and evil? You are about to find out...

G8+
LOW LEVEL ANIMATED VIOLENCE

PlayStation.2

PC CD-ROM

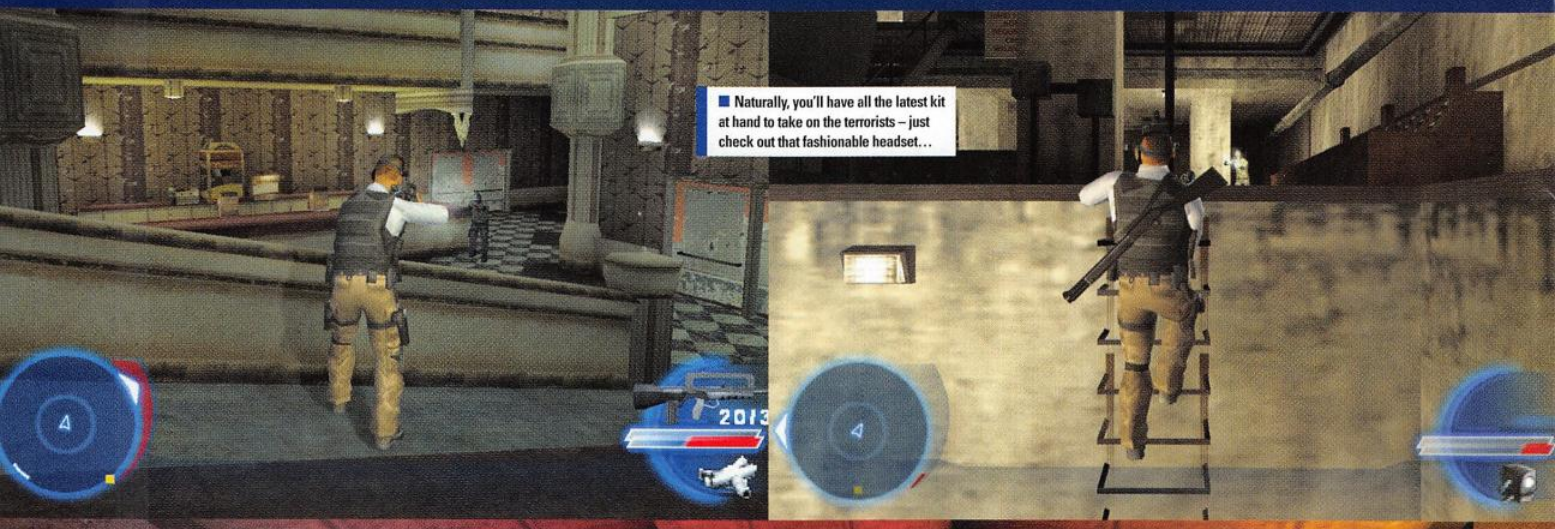
BEYOND GOOD & EVIL™

www.beyondgoodevil.com

UBISOFT™

© 2003 Ubi Soft Entertainment. All Rights Reserved. Beyond Good & Evil, Ubi Soft and the Ubi Soft logo are trademarks of Ubi Soft Entertainment in the US and/or other countries. "Ps" and "PlayStation" are registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. All rights reserved.

SYPHON FILTER: THE OMEGA STRAIN

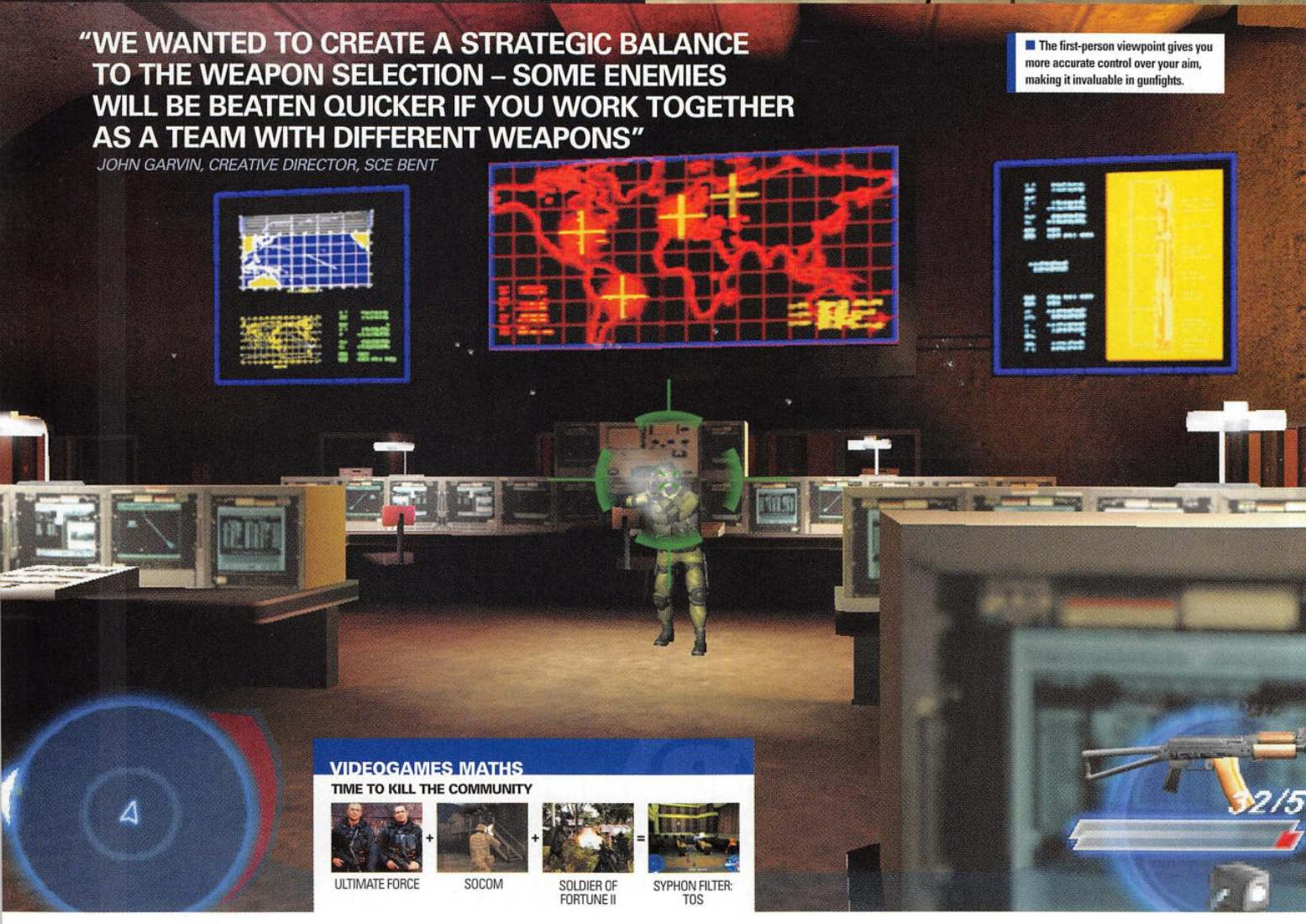


■ Naturally, you'll have all the latest kit at hand to take on the terrorists – just check out that fashionable headset...

"WE WANTED TO CREATE A STRATEGIC BALANCE TO THE WEAPON SELECTION – SOME ENEMIES WILL BE BEATEN QUICKER IF YOU WORK TOGETHER AS A TEAM WITH DIFFERENT WEAPONS"

JOHN GARVIN, CREATIVE DIRECTOR, SCE BENT

■ The first-person viewpoint gives you more accurate control over your aim, making it invaluable in gunfights.



VIDEOGAMES MATHS

TIME TO KILL THE COMMUNITY

ULTIMATE FORCE + SOCOM + SOLDIER OF FORTUNE II = SYPHON FILTER: TOS

SYPHON FILTER: THE OMEGA STRAIN

PLAYSTATION2



COMPANY PROFILE

■ **SCE Bent has been responsible for all three of the *Syphon Filter* games and, as such, comes with a sturdy reputation for delivering playable triple-A titles. Though the past games built a reputation for originality, they were always plagued by technical limitations. Roll on *The Omega Strain*.**

HISTORY

- **SYPHON FILTER 3** 2001 [PSone]
- **SYPHON FILTER 2** 2000 [PSone]
- **SYPHON FILTER** 1999 [PSone]

WHILE PUSHING FOR MORE ONLINE GAMING, SONY COULD STRAIN THE PATIENCE OF ITS FANS...

DETAILS

FORMAT: PlayStation2
ORIGIN: US
PUBLISHER: Sony
DEVELOPER: In-House
RELEASE: March '04 (US: January '04)
GENRE: Action Adventure
PLAYERS: 1 (1-4 Online)

■ Though *Syphon Filter*'s offline mode is strong, it's the online gameplay that will really capture the imagination, while making those without broadband feel sidelined.

Four years ago, bio-terrorism was only encountered in Tom Clancy novels. Now it's a reality on the lips of every politician hoping to ride a wave of paranoia into office. But one developer took the idea of biological terror seriously, or at least seriously enough to make a million-selling action adventure series. In fact, the original *Syphon Filter* was so playable that for many gamers it even overshadowed *Metal Gear Solid*. Now SCE Bent is back with the ambitious fourth game in the series, subtitled *The Omega Strain*.

The latest adventure to feature Gabe Logan is taking some brave steps, not least the decision to exclude Gabe as a playable character. The reason for this commercial madness is down to the premise of *The Omega Strain* as a primarily online adventure. Instead of playing as Gabe, you play alongside him. As one of his agents you'll scour the globe from Toronto to Belarus in search of a bio-terrorist cell aiming to hold the world to ransom. Bent has also confirmed that *The Omega Strain* will be the final chapter in the *Syphon Filter* series. This game will reveal just what the Syphon Filter is and who is behind the long-running conspiracy – which could implicate Gabe himself.

In terms of gameplay, *The Omega Strain* feels very similar to past games, although the bugs have now been ironed out. As before, gameplay is a combination of stealth, aggressive shooting and item management. An auto-lock system aids the flow of action, allowing for some fast and impressively epic street battles, while real-life weapons and gadgets make the action all the more believable. On the other hand, the enhanced weapon management inspired by *Halo*'s two-gun system offers the missions a new strategic edge.

Those familiar with the series won't be too surprised by such action, though the quality of the game may raise a few eyebrows. The *Syphon Filter* titles have always looked a little ragged, but not any more. Subtle animation, like the way your character clambers around the screen, brings the game alive, while the constant bleeding from gunshot wounds will appease the *GTA* generation.

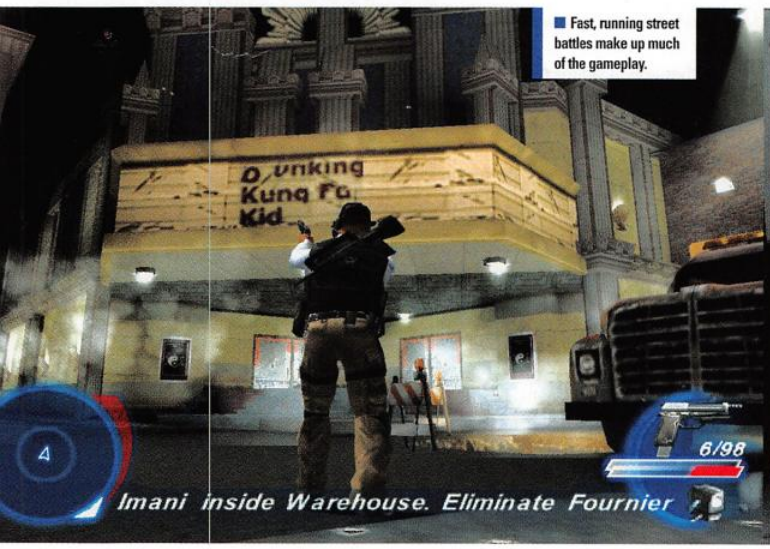
Such things are pretty incidental to the true potential of the game, though. Like many of Sony's forthcoming titles, this is being geared towards the online market, and along with three other players you'll need to work as a team to get the most out of *The Omega Strain*. Though all the levels are playable offline, the game is primarily designed for online play, with every level containing a number of secret routes and objectives that can only be met by playing co-operatively with a full team. Sony plans to promote online play further by setting up a virtual agency where players can sign up their created agents and get together to play, share game secrets and compare stats with the global community.

Of course, this means that Sony is taking some risks with *The Omega Strain*. Withdrawing Gabe as a playable character and focusing on the online features may distance the game from its audience. The future of a great series is in the balance...

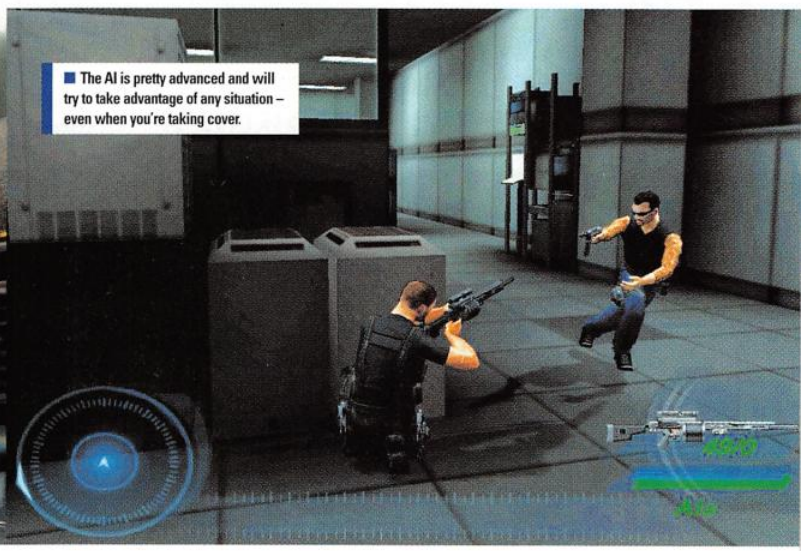
LONE GUNMEN

Though much is being made of the online play, there's still a lot of promise in the offline mode. Playing with another CPU-controlled character, the gameplay will still revolve around teamwork and, so far, the AI looks good and the action is fast. Those familiar with the series can rest assured that the spontaneous objectives, variety of game styles and a focus on strategy as much as action make a welcome return. In fact, though lacking the depth promised in the online mode, the offline game should compare favourably with past *Filter* titles.

"BENT'S LATEST ADVENTURE TO FEATURE GABE LOGAN IS TAKING SOME BRAVE STEPS, PARTICULARLY IN THE FIELD OF ONLINE PLAY"

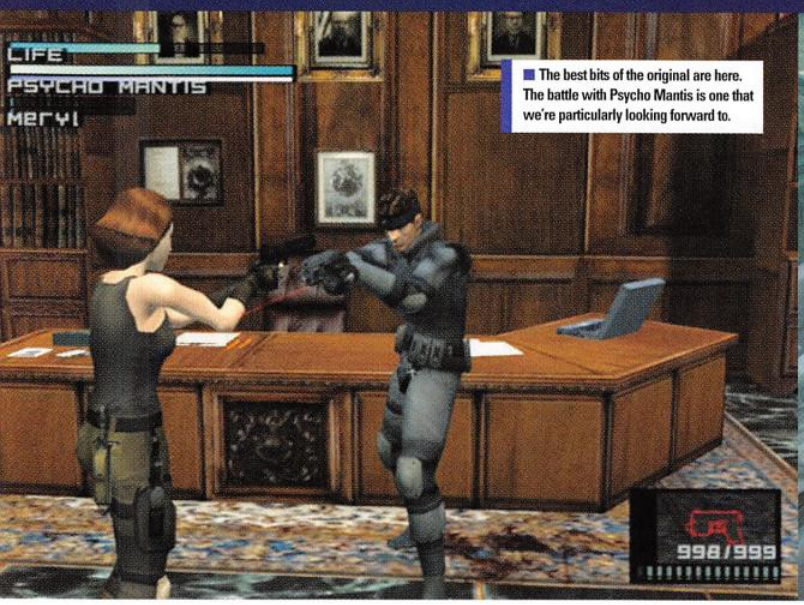


■ Fast, running street battles make up much of the gameplay.

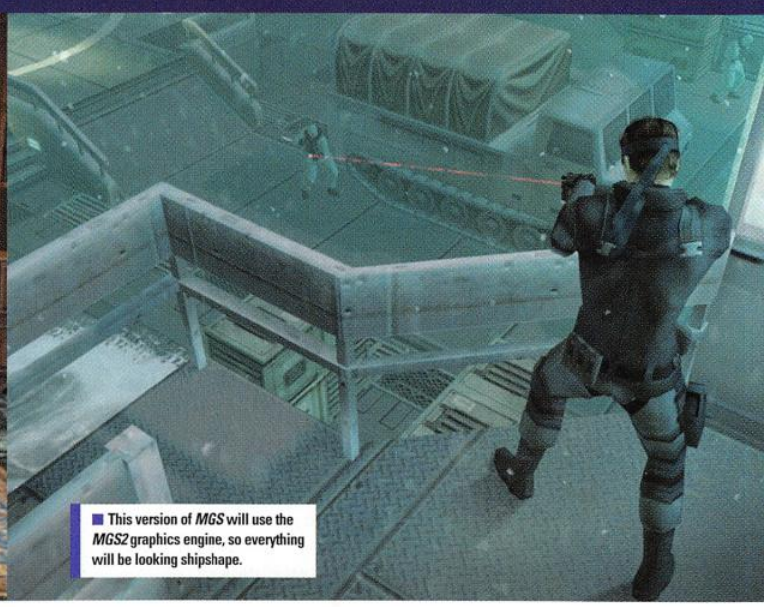


■ The AI is pretty advanced and will try to take advantage of any situation – even when you're taking cover.

METAL GEAR SOLID: THE TWIN SNAKES



■ The best bits of the original are here. The battle with Psycho Mantis is one that we're particularly looking forward to.



■ This version of *MGS* will use the *MGS2* graphics engine, so everything will be looking shipshape.

APPARENTLY, TWO SNAKES ARE BETTER THAN ONE

DETAILS
FORMAT: GameCube
ORIGIN: Japan
PUBLISHER: Atari
DEVELOPER: Konami/Nintendo
RELEASE: TBA '04
GENRE: Action/Adventure
PLAYERS: 1

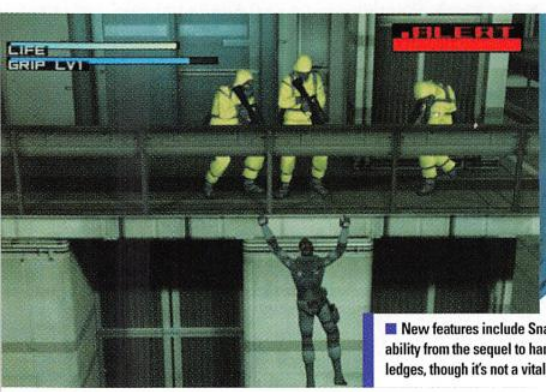
■ Snake goes retro with a GameCube remake of the original PSone game that got us all excited (albeit about five years ago).

Solid Snake's arrival on the GameCube might have been one of the worst-kept secrets in recent times, but few of us expected him to appear in a game that, if you're dedicated gamer, you should have completed five years ago. Of course, that's not necessarily a bad thing considering that said game was something very special that has people going all gooey-eyed with nostalgia every time they think of it. But the question you have to ask is with the GameCube already showing distressing signs of becoming the next Dreamcast, is a remake of an old PSone game going to be enough to revitalise it?

"WE WANT SNAKE'S GAMECUBE DEBUT BUT, HAVING PLAYED IT, WE'RE PRETTY UNDERWHELMED"

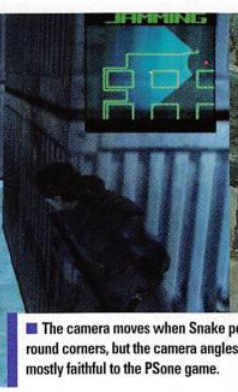
Between Konami proudly boasting about the improvements of the GameCube version over the PSone game (including 'the ability to open and search lockers' – scraping the barrel, anyone?) and us playing through the opening section of the game, we can at least draw some conclusions about how the game is coming on. Obviously, the use of the *Metal Gear Solid 2* engine has done Snake the world of good and everything looks rather nice. However, the fact that the camera still remains quite far out, as opposed to the closer view of *Sons Of Liberty*, means the changes aren't as noticeable as perhaps they should be. Indeed, we were reminded to a point of the Bleem emulation of *MGS* that appeared for the Dreamcast. Yes, the controls have been mapped quite well to the GameCube pad, but other than that, well, it's just *Metal Gear Solid* all over again.

Of course, we can't deny that we're still keen to get our hands on what will prove to be Snake's first appearance on a Nintendo console (Game Boy titles aside, of course), but then having played the preview version and seen how little difference there is to the PSone version, we've got some reservations. After all, our PS2s can play any PSone game we throw at them and any number of local game shops currently have second-hand versions of the original *MGS* for less than a tenner. That's why we can't help but wonder whether Konami is setting its predictions for success a little too high, particularly with a game that'll be well over five years old by the time this version comes out...





■ New features include Snake's ability from the sequel to hang from ledges, though it's not a vital skill.





■ The camera moves when Snake peers round corners, but the camera angles are mostly faithful to the PSone game.

PASSION. PRIDE. POWER.

PURE RUGBY.

EA SPORTS™

EXCLUSIVE TO THE...

PlayStation.2

PC CD

EA SPORTS

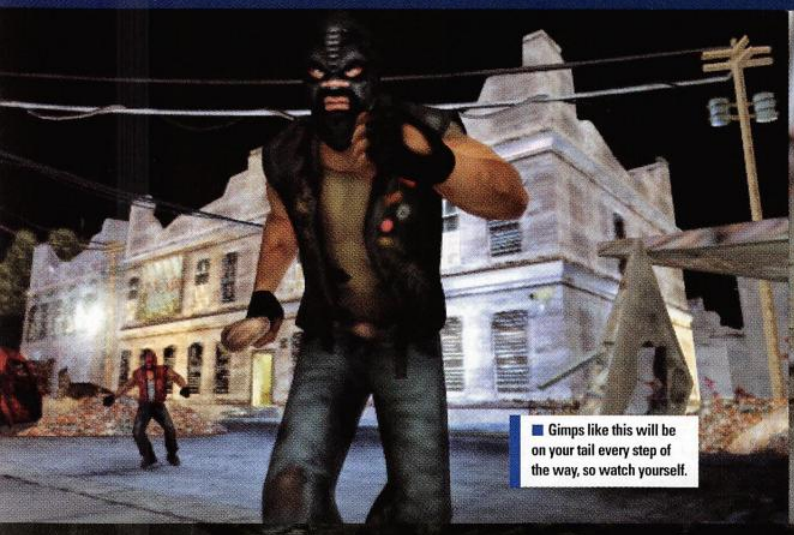
IT'S IN THE GAME

www.easportsrugby.com

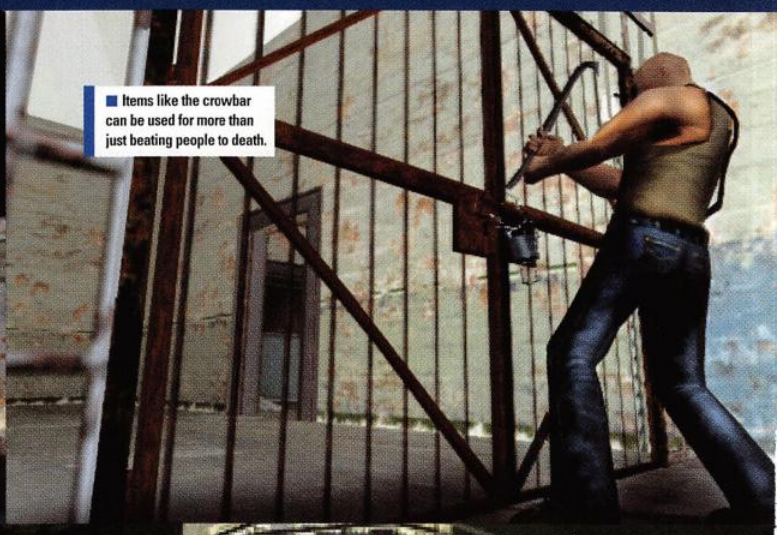


ELECTRONIC ARTS, EA SPORTS and all associated logos are trademarks, registered trademarks or service marks of Electronic Arts Inc. in the U.S. and/or other countries. The SRU logo is the copyright of Scottish Rugby Union plc. The SRU logo and "Murrayfield" are trademarks of Scottish Rugby Union plc. The FFR and the W France logos are trademarks of Federation Francaise de Rugby. The Silver Fern Device, ALL BLACKS and ALL BLACKs are trade marks owned by the NZRFU and are used under license from NZRFU. The Australian Rugby and Wallaby logos are trademarks owned by Australian Rugby Union Ltd., and are used under license. The SA Rugby logo is a trademark of the South African Rugby Football Union and is used under exclusive license. The England Rose, alone and used in conjunction with the England Rugby logo and or "Twickenham" are trademarks of the Rugby Football Union Ltd. Exclusively licensed to and published by Electronic Arts. PlayStation is a registered trademark of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. All other trademarks are the property of their respective owners.

MANHUNT



■ Gimps like this will be on your tail every step of the way, so watch yourself.



■ Items like the crowbar can be used for more than just beating people to death.

"MANHUNT EXPLORES THE DEPTHS OF HUMAN DEPRAVITY IN A VICIOUS, SADISTIC TALE OF URBAN HORROR"

ROCKSTAR PRESS RELEASE

VIDEOGAMES MATHS

WHO NEEDS ARNIE WHEN YOU'VE GOT THIS?



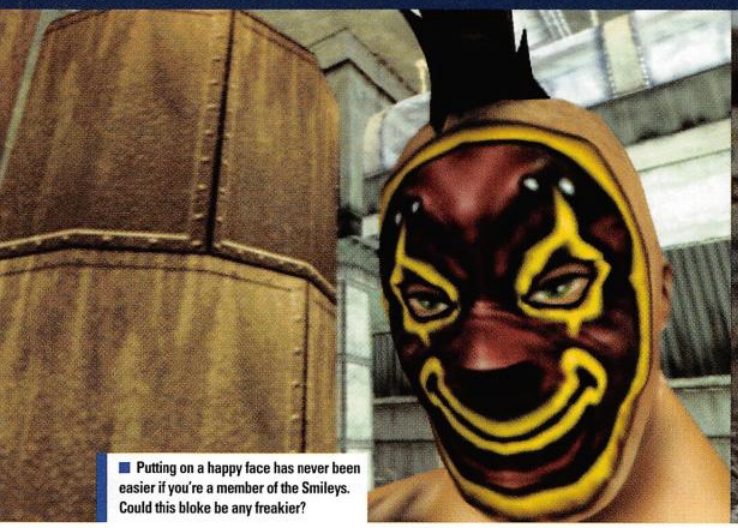
THE RUNNING MAN + TENCHU + GTA3 = MANHUNT

COMPANY PROFILE

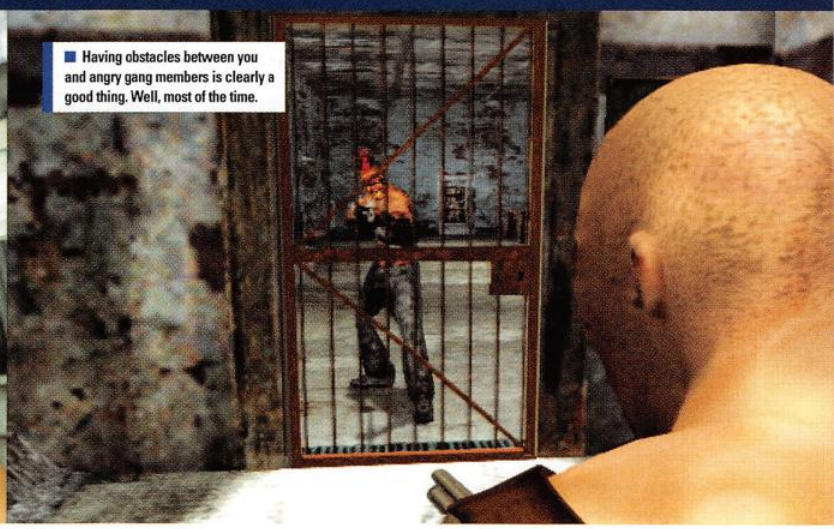
■ Originally starting life as DMA Design before it invented the *Grand Theft Auto* franchise in its original top-down form, Rockstar North is now part of the Rockstar Games empire, which has development houses in locations such as Toronto, Vienna and San Diego in addition to North's Edinburgh studios.

HISTORY

- **GTA3** 2001 [PlayStation2]
- **GRAND THEFT AUTO** 1999 [PSone]
- **LEMMINGS** 1990 [Amiga]



■ Putting on a happy face has never been easier if you're a member of the Smileys. Could this bloke be any freakier?



■ Having obstacles between you and angry gang members is clearly a good thing. Well, most of the time.

ROCKSTAR SAYS DON'T HUNT WHAT YOU CAN'T KILL...

DETAILS
FORMAT: PlayStation2
ORIGIN: UK
PUBLISHER: Rockstar Games
DEVELOPER: Rockstar North
RELEASE: November '03
GENRE: Action/Adventure
PLAYERS: 1

■ Get ready for what Rockstar promises to be its most disturbing game yet. And no, we don't mean that in a State Of Emergency kind of way.

If there's one game that's captured popular attention on PS2 in the last year, it's *GTA: Vice City* – that's why we were more than interested to find out more about the latest game from the same developers, Rockstar North. We knew that it was a darker, more mature game than the last *GTA* offering, but Rockstar Games has been curiously tight-lipped regarding their big hope for Christmas 2003. Until now, that is.

Manhunt is a stealth-based third-person action adventure game built around a premise worthy of a Schwarzenegger movie – indeed, Rockstar Games admits that films have been a source of inspiration, citing *8MM*, *Jacob's Ladder* and *Marathon Man* among its influences. You play James Earl Cash, a convict facing the death penalty by lethal injection, who has been saved from his fate by a shady figure known only as The Director. This is no selfless act, however, as he places you in a series of 20 violent scenes where you must kill or be killed under the ever-present eye of the cameras he has placed around the levels. Basically, The Director wants to film the ultimate collection of snuff movies – all with you as the star. (Yes, *Manhunt* will carry an 18 rating when it's released.)

Set in disused urban environments such as shopping malls and prisons around an industrial rustbelt town, each area will be populated by one of seven street gangs of Hunters – people whose only objective is to kill you before you kill them. It isn't as simple as running in with your shotgun blasting, however. Cash will be able to carry three weapons – from a shard of glass to a shotgun, via crowbars or blackjack clubs – and the weapons on offer in any scene should have great impact on the pace of that level. Although there will be sections where gunplay features heavily, the emphasis seems to be firmly on hiding in the shadows and waiting for the right moment to present itself.

Using the on-screen 'audio radar' you can see where every moving Hunter is located, as well as the direction they are facing and their state of alert. This allows you to plan your attack in advance to minimise the risk of entering into hand-to-hand combat. You'll also have the ability to glance around corners without giving yourself away before moving in for the kill.

In the same way you use sound to detect the Hunters, any noise you make will let them know exactly where you are. Even running across gravel could let a waiting gang member know that you are about to come around the corner. Far better to check the radar, creep up slowly and jump them from behind. You'll see each street assassination as if watching The Director's footage, as the display cuts away from the in-game screen to look through the lens of one of his cameras. Although this is a great concept, it does offer some cause for concern, as control is removed from the player at exactly the moment you are expecting to perform a key action. It seems a shame that with such an atmospheric game, the player is denied any real involvement at these moments.

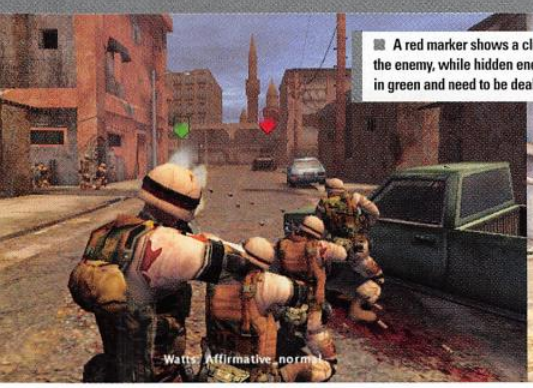
Regardless of this, *Manhunt* neatly sidesteps any suspicion of being a *GTA* clone and gets on with its own agenda of grown-up gaming. If the full game measures up to the depth of atmosphere and well thought out levels we have seen to date, then *Manhunt* looks set to be very interesting indeed.

HORSE AND HOUNDS

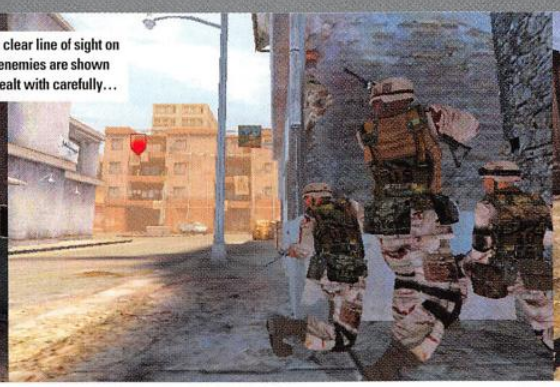
Described by Rockstar Games as a brutal future sport, the premise behind *Manhunt* reminds us of the movie *The Running Man*. Since sport means competition, you'll have to face a series of opponents, and here they're called The Hunters. These men may be paid by The Director or even blackmailed into taking part, but whatever their motivation, their objective remains the same: to kill you. The Hunters come in seven guises, the most distinctive of which has to be The Smileys. Their brightly painted faces are unnerving, to say the least...

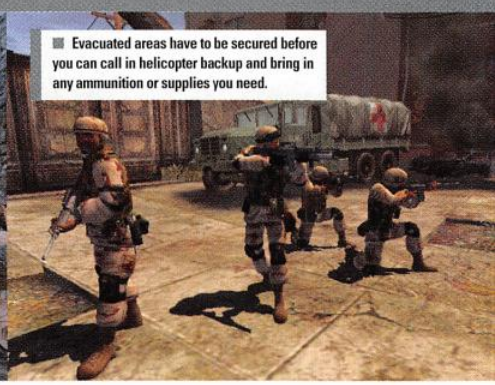
"MANHUNT NEATLY SIDESTEPS ANY ACCUSATIONS OF BEING A GRAND THEFT AUTO CLONE"

FULL SPECTRUM WARRIOR



A red marker shows a clear line of sight on the enemy, while hidden enemies are shown in green and need to be dealt with carefully...





Evacuated areas have to be secured before you can call in helicopter backup and bring in any ammunition or supplies you need.

WE WANT YOU, WE WANT YOU, WE WANT YOU AS A NEW RECRUIT

When the dust of this year's E3 finally settled, few people could have predicted that one of the most impressive games of the show would have been one that started out as an in-depth simulator designed for use by the US Army – but it happened. While the natural conclusion might be that *Full Spectrum Warrior* isn't anything special compared to other squad-based action/strategy games like *Conflict: Desert Storm 2* and *Rainbow Six* though, playing the game makes it quite apparent that this is something far more interesting and individual.

Pitching itself as a real-time squad strategy game from a third-person perspective (rather than one that gives you direct control over your soldiers), *FSW* offers a huge amount of detail and complexity behind its simple user-friendly interface. Switching control between your two squads of soldiers (Alpha and Bravo) or among the different members of each squad (Team Leader, Rifleman, Automatic Rifleman and Grenadier) is done with a single button press and the D-pad, while actually getting your men to move or act is as easy as hitting one of the main face buttons. The big difference between *FSW* and something like *Freedom Fighters* or *Conflict: Desert Storm*, though, is that you never actually have direct control over anyone. Instead, you issue commands that your squads carry out to the best of their abilities depending on the circumstances.

It's the variety of the battle situations that affects how your men react to your commands. Sending them into an unexplored area and having them come under enemy attack, for example, will see them attempt to take cover as best they can and return fire accordingly. You can also tell your men where to fire and even face individual soldiers in different directions should multiple attack angles be a possibility. However, at no time will you be able to actively separate the members of a squad, according to the procedural rules of the real US Army. Thanks to the advanced AI in *FSW*, soldiers react far more realistically according to what's happening around them – the game even gives each soldier a personality that affects how they behave, from language and professionalism on the battlefield to how they react when a colleague is in danger or (if you're unlucky) dies in combat.

Although the lack of direct control might not make it everyone's cup of tea, there's little doubt that Pandemic has something rather special coming together in *FSW*. With the game well on target for its March '04 release date, expect to see more on it in the coming months.

DETAILS

FORMAT: Xbox, PC
ORIGIN: US
PUBLISHER: THQ
DEVELOPER: Pandemic Studios
RELEASE: March '04
GENRE: Action RTS
PLAYERS: 1 (1-2 Online)

Military precision comes to videogames with this intense third-person RTS that began life as a strategy simulator for the US Army.

"THIS OFFERS A HUGE AMOUNT OF DETAIL AND COMPLEXITY BEHIND ITS SIMPLE, USER-FRIENDLY INTERFACE"



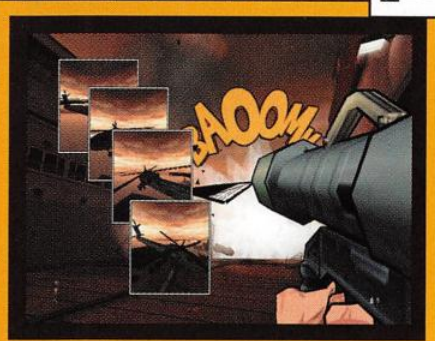
Your squad's formation changes depending on the situation – move them against a fence, for instance, and they'll flank along it.

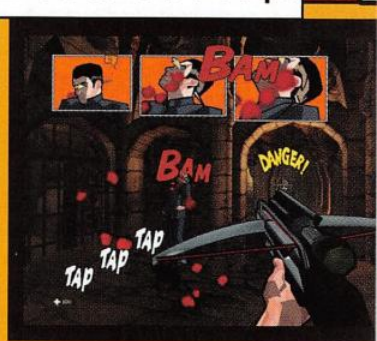
XIII

they know more about you than you do.



your number is up.





DARGAUD

www.XIII-thegame.com

M15+

XBOX

PlayStation.2

PC CD-ROM

Ubi Soft

© 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.

SHOWCASE

YET MORE DIGITAL DELIGHTS TO WARM YOUR COCKLES ON A CHILLY AUTUMN EVENING

BATEN KAITOS

XENOSAGA, TALES AND NOW THIS...

Format: GameCube
Origin: Japan
Publisher: Namco
Developer: In-House
Release: TBC
Genre: RPG
Players: 1





Having impressed us with some of its recent role-playing efforts, it's becoming increasingly clear that Namco has its heart set on making this genre its own as it has with fighters and racers in the past. With a pool of talent that has been involved with everything from *Final Fantasy* to *Resident Evil*, *Baten Kaitos*' team is no stranger to creating stunning titles, and we're hoping this card-based adventure is fair testament to this. With an art style to die for and an original and unique combat system (seamlessly using cards to act, the game can seem more real-time than turn-based), hopes are high for this fantasy RPG that lands in Japan at the end of the year.

OUT RUN 2

PINCH YOURSELF ALL YOU LIKE – THIS IS NO DREAM

Format: Arcade
Origin: Japan
Publisher: SEGA Amusements
Developer: AM2
Release: Q4 '04
Genre: Driving
Players: 1

The years of waiting are almost over, and as early as this Christmas arcades the world over could be home to the most anticipated racing sequel in ages. Sporting official Ferrari vehicles and some 15 courses (the route planning of yesteryear returns), there will be several different play modes on offer. One such mode gauges your ability to win over the fine lady in the passenger seat with some crazy driving, though there are the more traditional modes for the racing purist. Naturally, the fact that the game will run on the Chojiro board has fuelled all sorts of rumours of an Xbox port, but we won't start holding our breath until we hear it from SEGA itself.





ONIMUSHA TACTICS

SQUARE ISN'T THE ONLY ONE GETTING ALL TACTICAL

Format: Game Boy Advance
Origin: Japan
Publisher: THQ
Developer: Capcom
Release: November '04
Genre: RPG
Players: 1





Capcom's ninja-filled adventures may not be the natural starting point for a tactical RPG, nor may the Japanese firm be the obvious creator of such a product, but both these unlikelihoods have come to pass – Jubei, Samasonuke and co have donned their thinking caps and are headed for the GBA. Taking more than a few leaves from the *Final Fantasy Tactics* book, this isometric brainteaser is joining the ever-growing ranks of portable strategy games. Initial impressions would lead us to believe this to be a more streamlined affair than many of its in-depth predecessors, but the real question is will it have what it takes to tackle the big guns of the genre? Watch this space...

BOMBASTIC

MORE SIX-SIDED FRIVOLITY FROM CAPCOM

Format: PlayStation2
Origin: Japan
Publisher: THQ
Developer: Capcom
Release: November '04
Genre: Puzzle
Players: 1-5

When it comes to puzzle games, the PSone has more wannabe classics than most consoles. From *Kula World* and *Kurushi* to the likes of *Suzuki Bakuhatsu*, the machine has a wealth of puzzling sequel potential. This hasn't gone unnoticed and one of the better old-school thinkers, the superb *Devil Dice*, has been brought bang up to date (well, as up to date as rolling around on top of dice can be). Improved multiplayer and a full-on Quest mode rank among the main inclusions with new rules and explosions putting the power of the PS2 to good use, but the idea remains the same – arrange similar dice faces by rolling them around. Puzzling at its simplistic best.







DELAYED – FINAL FANTASY: CRYSTAL CHRONICLES (GC)

■ Again? Unfortunately so. Several of us took this news so badly that we've defied morals, willpower and bank managers to import the game from Japan. Nintendo may be pushing this title for the second Christmas running...



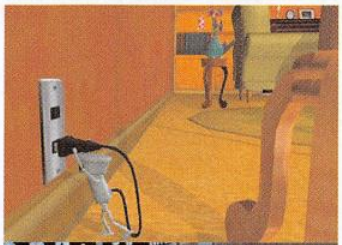
CANNED – DEAD PHOENIX (GC)

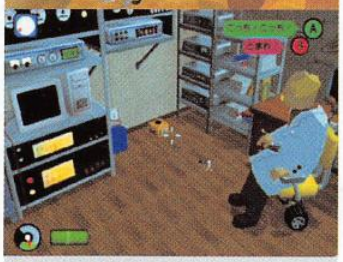
■ That's right, flying fans – Capcom's bid at *Panzer Dragoon*-esque glory has been dealt a blow, largely due to the fact that the game has been cancelled. We'd love to act all surprised and disappointed, but, well, we're neither.

CHIBIROBO

ALL HAIL THE RECHARGEABLE HERO

Format: GameCube
Origin: Japan
Publisher: Bandai
Developer: In-House
Release: TBC
Genre: Adventure
Players: 1





As Feargal Sharkey will tell you, a good heart these days is hard to find. This is why we have faith in Bandai's latest hero because, amazingly, he doesn't have one. Chibirobo is a tiny rechargeable robot who has to juggle adventuring with finding power outlets to keep himself energised. The game is a strange mix of point-and-click, puzzling and (artificial) life sim, requiring you to teach Chibirobo all manner of skills and guide him without ever taking direct control. Any exertion drains the tiny hero's power, so as well as having to steer clear of hazards you'll need to be careful not to stray too far from a power source. An oddity, but one we'll be keeping a close eye on.

KATAMARI DAMACY

ROLLING, ROLLING, ROLLING...

Format: PlayStation2
Origin: Japan
Publisher: Namco
Developer: In-House
Release: TBC
Genre: Puzzle
Players: 1

Just when you thought gaming was falling into a downwards spiral of sequels and licences, along comes the most novel of ideas – take control of a spherical being and roll around a level, assimilating and collecting anything you find. Naturally, this leads to the typical cartoon snowball effect, and as your ball of doom grows in size it becomes able to pick up bigger, heavier objects. Exactly what this achieves is currently unclear, but we'd say it was safe to rest assured that Namco will pull out all the stops when it comes to quirkiness. This is the firm that brought us *Mr Driller* and *Hachiemon*, after all, so we're pretty sure they know what they're doing...



DISGAEA: HOUR OF DARKNESS

YOU THOUGHT UNLIMITED SAGA WAS CONFUSING...?

Format: PlayStation2
Origin: Japan
Publisher: Atlus
Developer: Nippon Ichi
Release: TBC
Genre: RPG
Players: 1



Coming from those stat-loving chaps who brought us *Tactics Ogre*, this dark horse is desperately vying to steal the thunder of every hard-core RPG going. Trashing just about every established RPG principle from the word go, *Disgaea* taunts the humble player with character levels and attack damage that hit five figures, hundreds of varied classes and some of the most complex rules both in and out of battle that the gaming world will ever know. The curious thing is how the game manages to remain playable and, moreover, enjoyable through the sea of figures but it does just that. Expect more on this slice of number-crunching goodness in the near future.

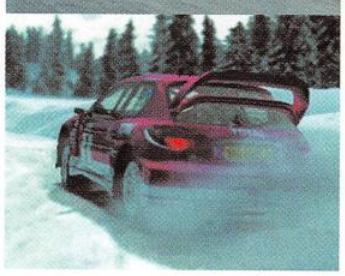
WRC3

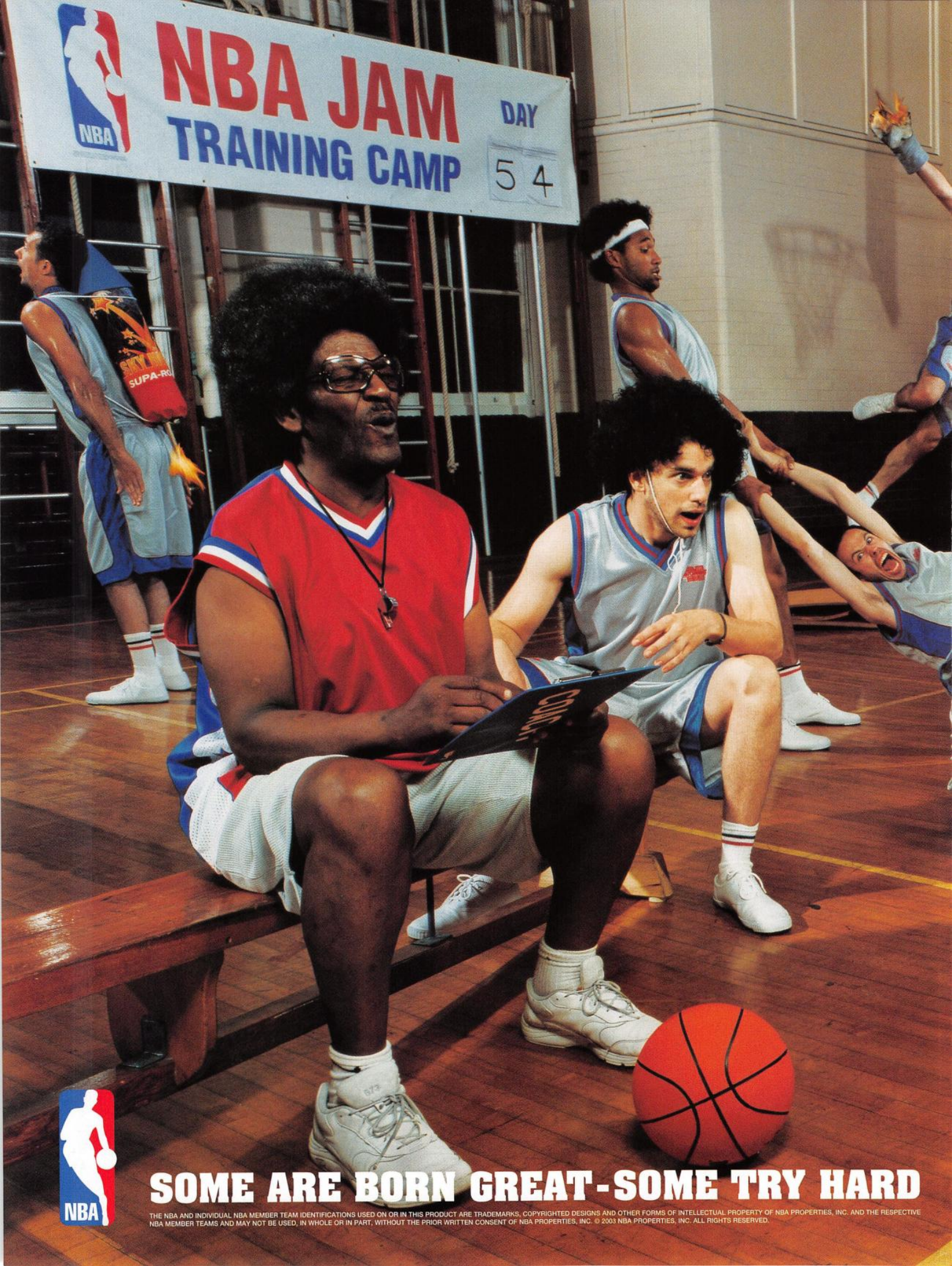
IT'S NOT SO EXTREME THIS TIME

Format: PlayStation2
Origin: US
Publisher: Sony
Developer: Evolution Studios
Release: November '04
Genre: Driving
Players: 1-4

Licensing is a powerful tool, but Sony, on the other hand, is no tool and knows just how to use this in its favour. With the FIA World Rally Championship joining Formula One in Sony's cosy licensing bed, racing fans won't get an official re-creation of their favourite motorsport on anything other than a Sony console. Not content with this safety blanket, Evolution Studios has gone above and beyond the call of duty to make this the perfect accompaniment to the sport, offering real cars and tracks as well as predicted future models and prototypes. All well and good, but does Colin have grounds to worry? All will be revealed when *WRC3* hits shelves soon.





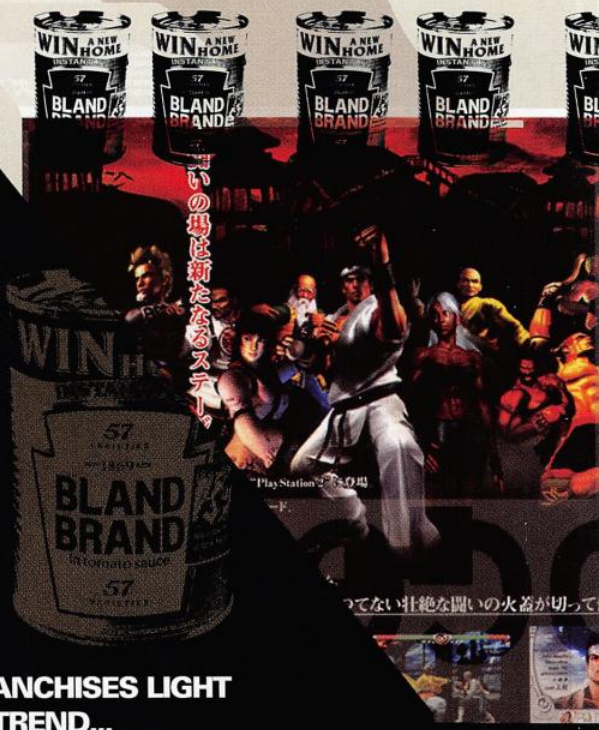


THE NBA AND INDIVIDUAL NBA MEMBER TEAM IDENTIFICATIONS USED ON OR IN THIS PRODUCT ARE TRADEMARKS, COPYRIGHTED DESIGNS AND OTHER FORMS OF INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY OF NBA PROPERTIES, INC. AND THE RESPECTIVE NBA MEMBER TEAMS AND MAY NOT BE USED, IN WHOLE OR IN PART, WITHOUT THE PRIOR WRITTEN CONSENT OF NBA PROPERTIES, INC. © 2003 NBA PROPERTIES, INC. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.


NBA JAM
G
PlayStation 2
XBOX
Acclaim
WWW.ACCLAIM.COM
PLAYSTATION AND PLAYSTATION LOGOS ARE REGISTERED TRADEMARKS OF SONY COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT INC. MICROSOFT, XBOX AND THE XBOX LOGOS ARE EITHER REGISTERED TRADEMARKS OR TRADEMARKS OF MICROSOFT CORPORATION IN THE U.S. AND/OR IN OTHER COUNTRIES AND ARE USED UNDER LICENCE FROM MICROSOFT.

DOES EXACTLY WHAT IT SAYS ON THE TIN





NEW IDEAS FALL INTO THE BARGAIN BIN WHILE AGEING FRANCHISES LIGHT UP THE CHARTS. GAMES™ INVESTIGATES THIS WORRYING TREND...

One glance – that's all it takes. At any given time, a quick look down a sales chart or release list serves up more numbers, subheadings and familiar titles with every passing month. Is this a sign of stagnation in the industry? Has button pressing finally burnt its fuse? Far from it – gaming has changed. Your average Joe wants names he can trust, he wants to play the sports he watches and drive cars he recognises. This year's E3 saw the most sequels in the history of the show, and with few exceptions the games that left the media hordes salivating were updates to familiar brands. Be it *Metal Gear Solid 3: Snake Eater*, *Halo 2* or *Half-Life 2*, the sequel brigade was out in full force in Los Angeles and no matter how good they were, the likes of *Beyond Good & Evil* and *S.T.A.L.K.E.R.* never stood a chance. Eyebrows were raised. Questions were asked. One question in particular was, quite simply, why?

FAMILIARITY BREEDS CONTEMPT

It would be all too easy to look down on the situation and lay the blame squarely on the faceless corporate machine. It seems no-one is taking any chances. Not the developers, not the publishers and, from the titles listed above, the hardware companies certainly aren't either. Even in Japan, the top ten most wanted games at the time of going to press are all follow-ups of some kind. But did you ever consider that it could actually be just as much your fault as it is theirs? If you've ever opted for a familiar brand over a similar unknown quantity without batting an eyelid (we're sure most gamers will have done so at some point) then perhaps you can see the predicament of the development teams. It's not that they don't want to take any risks, more that they can't afford to. "Titles like *Ico*, *Rez* and *Pikmin* represent niche targets within gaming genres," explains Jonathan Rooke, European marketing manager for Vivendi Universal. "Gamers are quite happy to shell out $100 for a sequel to a game they know as opposed to a new and innovative title." Name recognition is tempting to both the developer and consumer. It's safer. Safer for the person sitting in front of a computer screen modelling a character late into the night, and safer for the person eyeing up the shelves deciding on their next purchase. Should I risk a mistake or go for a standard stealth-'em-up? Worry whether I'll like it or choose Generic Racer C? The answer for the cost-conscious (but arguably ill-informed) consumer is obvious.

ON THE RIGHT TRACK

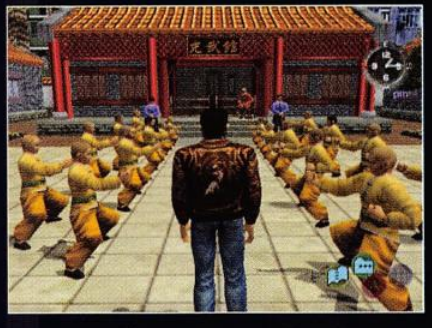
The Dreamcast had some of the freshest, most unique content to grace Western shores during its painfully short lifespan. *Crazy Taxi*, *Space* ▷


MEDAL OF HONOR
RISING SUN
SONICTHE HEDGEHOG
PlayStation 2
TOMB RAIDER
the angel of darkness
バーチャファイター4
9"771478"588000"
games 088

Channel 5 and *Rez* all did things no one had seen before, *Jet Set Radio* wreaked havoc with the games-art divide and *Shenmue* invented a genre whilst pushing the technical envelope farther than anything of its generation. Unfortunately, playability may be one thing but marketability is quite another, as Steve Marks, PR and marketing manager for Koei Ltd, points out. "A healthy marketing budget can help raise awareness of a title," he explains, "But you can throw money at an original game and see no return." Which brings us nicely onto *Shenmue*, a poignant case for SEGA. Millions of dollars of funding, thousands of man hours, years of development and even more years of planning put into one of the most expensive projects ever created. With Yu Suzuki, a sure-fire hit creator with a string of successes to his name, at the helm and SEGA's backing, what could go wrong? Everything, apparently. Sales were far from the figures expected of the title and the game that was destined to change SEGA's future did just that, but not quite in the way it had hoped. The truth is that the game was a severe blow to the Japanese giant, much more than just financially. Its sequel, the most imported game in history, fared even worse at retail, the Xbox port worse still, despite a slew of positive reviews and enormous amounts of funding, both in development and marketing. The dream was over.

THE GOLDEN RULE

The man with the gold makes the rules. So who has the gold? Who's ultimately to blame? Is it the publishers who keep making sequels or the consumers who keep buying them? Welcome back to the famous chicken-egg scenario. Publishers are only releasing the type of games that perform well at retail but as gaming continues to become more mainstream, more 'casual gamers' will buy into franchises they trust. Can you really fault game developers for trying to capitalise on this trend and earn a living? Jon Rooke is quick to defend the 'accused'. "Every industry must react to consumer demand or run the risk of losing sales," he points out, a sentiment shared by Steve Marks. "The benefits to the publisher are massive. If the game engine already exists and is successful, development costs are minimal and therefore return on the investment is huge." As mercenary as this attitude may sound, it's no worse than retail mark-ups or 'special edition' re-releases – in the world of business, making money is more important than keeping the vocal minority happy no matter what the subject matter. So long as paycheques keep rolling in and jobs are secure, the men behind the games will be happy selling Game X to Joe Public.



And so we come back to Joe. The epitome of the casual gamer, he exists in the majority. He sways consumer opinion like a tornado, has the buying power to sell inferior software and is the reason original games are a declining business. You see, Joe is new to gaming. He buys whatever he sees from other media transferred into the gaming sub-stream and then uses a coupon to buy its sequel. He sees crime on the news and buys a crime game. A war goes on, tears through the headlines for a few months and his collection receives a war game of the same name. A blockbuster movie comes out riding the hype train to hell and back and stores are filled with a rushed multi-platform atrocity that outsells bread – straight in to Joe's collection before he's even seen the film. "The casual gamer doesn't have $100 a month to spend on the latest release," Rooke points out. "They may only buy one or two games a year so when they make that purchasing decision, they want something they know will give them value for money." The fact is there are more people turning heads to film conversions than truly unique software ventures. More turning heads to games with numbers, than to games without, more looking for screenshots of the new *Gran Turismo* than they are to *Geist*. Worse still, nothing is changing.

LEARN FROM PAST MISTAKES

Of course, it wasn't always this way. There was a time when fresh content co-existed with the tried-and-tested sequel, each doing as well as one another provided they were genuinely good games. Enter once again the stereotypical arch-villain – sporting a wiry handlebar moustache, a dashing monocle and an evil cackle, there something a little different about this bad guy… he's a grey cuboid known simply as PlayStation.



It's not all doom and gloom, of course. Titles like *Billy Hatcher* are keeping our faith in originality alive.



SERIES: **MEDAL OF HONOUR / LATEST TITLE: MEDAL OF HONOR: RISING SUN**

Now a yearly franchise (apart from the number tag). EA's once original concept is now being stretched over to the Pacific, along with its PC counterpart, the aptly named *Pacific Assault*. Part two comes out next year.



SERIES: **FIFA FOOTBALL / LATEST TITLE: FIFA FOOTBALL 2004**

One of the longest running of them all. Every year for the past decade, at least one new *FIFA* game has come out in time for the new season. The technology may have evolved, but the game is still playing catch-up.

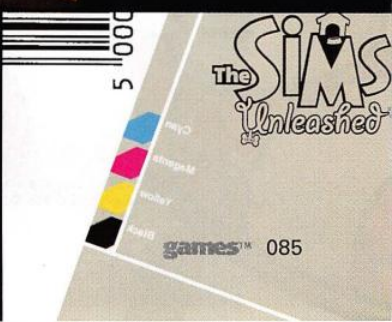
SERIES: **FINAL FANTASY / LATEST TITLE: FINAL FANTASY X-2**

One of the few that has actually evolved over its run, Square-Enix's ever popular RPG has spawned more instalments, spin-offs and remakes than most would care to count. One day it really will be final…

SERIES: **STREET FIGHTER / LATEST TITLE: STREET FIGHTER EX3**

With all the *Zeros*, *Turbos*, *Alphas* and *Exes*, most of us just lost track after *Street Fighter II*. The series goes on, though it's doubtful if it'll reach the success of the originals, no matter how many more Capcom make.

"GAMERS ARE QUITE HAPPY TO SHELL OUT $100 FOR A SEQUEL TO A GAME THEY KNOW AS OPPOSED TO A NEW AND INNOVATIVE TITLE"



WHAT THE PUBLISHERS ARE DOING:

SEGA

SEGA was one of the few major videogame publishers to put the creative desires of its development studios ahead of financial reasoning time after time. Until recently, that is.

With the Mega Drive and Saturn, the company constantly pushed the artistic boundaries, while the success of series such as *Sonic The Hedgehog*, *Virtua Fighter* and *Daytona USA* raised funds with which the necessary research and development of innovative game ideas could be paid for. This tends to be the way that many film companies and musicians work – by producing something they know will sell to the masses so they can raise money to put into more artistic and personal, though perhaps less commercial, ventures.

Unfortunately, in later years a combination of poor arcade sales, a hiatus in the *Sonic* series during the 32-bit era, Sony's domination of the home market, and a number of failed hardware attempts meant that SEGA's funds began to dry up. And although originality was still evident in many of the company's Dreamcast creations, by the time PlayStation2 arrived SEGA's financial situation had hit an all-time low and it was forced to pull out of the hardware market entirely, instead focusing all of its attention on multiformat software releases.

Interestingly, despite such unique games as *Super Monkey Ball*, *Jet Set Radio Future* and *Derby Owners Club* being launched over the past couple of years, it's been the GameCube translation of *Sonic Adventure 2* and the PlayStation2 version of *Virtua Fighter 4* (published by Sony) that have generated the most revenue for the company.







EA's game releases tend to split the gaming community down the middle. For casual players, the likes of *FIFA* and *Harry Potter* are just the kind of games they're looking for, while many hard-core gamers see the sheer number of sequels, franchises and movie tie-ins as nothing more than pointless cash-ins. Even rival publishers have conflicting views about the subject.

For instance, Nalin Sharma, CEO of PuzzleKings (the company behind *ZooCube*), feels that the time and effort used creating such titles could be better used bringing a little originality to the market. He quite openly says, "I would like to see Electronic Arts put something back into the creative good of the industry by way of sponsoring new ideas. Currently they are experts at maximising the revenue from franchises, but what will they do when the five-year revenue per franchise dries up?" If history is anything to go by we expect EA to simply buy into future trends as and when its current franchises do stop being so successful.

Ubi Soft's Faye O'Donohue makes an interesting point about bringing sequels and franchises to the market, as opposed to brand new titles. "It's much more difficult to publicise an unknown game – you need more time to build hype and for people to become familiar with the story, characters and so on," she says. "There is no loyal fan base, no consumer recognition," she adds. For that reason alone it's not difficult to see why some companies take popular franchises and bleed them dry.

EA

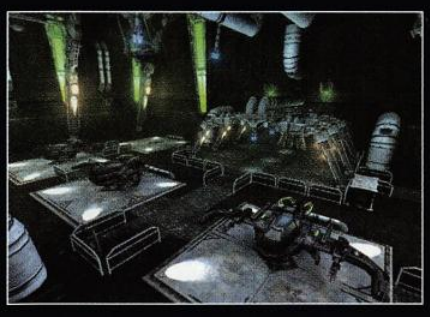
WHAT THE PUBLISHERS ARE DOING:

EA SPORTS FIFA 2002

In yet another 'cause and effect' situation, the same machine that propelled videogames onto the world stage did so at a price. Countless games flooded shelves with sequels following those that proved popular, but all the while the sheer amount of software on offer meant there was also something different and original tucked away behind that battered copy of *FIFA '96*.

With the rise of the Sony console, our friend Joe was born unto this world, but can sequelitis be attributed to this widespread appeal? Head of *ZooCube* creators Puzzle Kings, Nalin Sharma believes quite the opposite. "In my view, it's the hard-core gamers that seem to want sequels because they want better versions of what they had before," he states, adding "The casual gamer has rather caused an increase in movie licences – [they think] 'I've seen the film so the game's got to be good'." As is now obvious, the PlayStation has changed modern gaming both for better and for worse, but most importantly (for the purpose of this article, at least) has led us to situation we're facing today...

The host of sequels and expanding franchises is as much the fault of gamers as developers, with familiar titles outselling new ones.





BUT ON THE BRIGHT SIDE...

However you look at it, the plague of sequelitis sweeping the industry is not without its merits. Where movie sequels often fall short of expectations, game sequels often improve upon the original product – an important difference in the media. A financial success means more money, more people and more resources, all to be injected back into the development teams to make something else, something new. SEGA, for instance, puts out numerous sequels and updates which, in turn, fund its riskier ventures – you only have to look at its line-up to know it can't possibly expect a return on some of its quirkier titles. They're just keeping the industry breathing, the way it should be.

Unfortunately, it ultimately comes down to what Joe wants, and he only leaves us with one question. How long can the public possibly continue to buy into the same game with a different number tacked on the end? It's a worry that's ever-present for developers as well. Ion Storm's Warren Spector, the man behind *Deus Ex*, has argued that there's no reason why sequels and licensed games shouldn't be innovative and entertaining – that ultimately it's the quality of a game, not whether it's a sequel or licensed product, that counts. So while some firms will continue to bang out the same game year after year, it's refreshing to know that many aren't so cynical in their follow-ups. But one thing is for sure – the situation shows no signs of changing any time soon.

In the meantime, be an exception to the rule. Get out there and try something different. You never know, you might be surprised. And it might even get a sequel...

JET SET RADIO

This title pioneered videogame cel-shading but was so niche it appealed to a privileged few. The street skating, graffiti parading and grinding antics that made a name for Smilebit did precious little for its finances.

ICO

Quirky, unique and imaginative – escapism reinvented. Despite worldwide critical acclaim, the game's commercial success was limited and while few copies were sold, most will have been thoroughly enjoyed.

PIKMIN

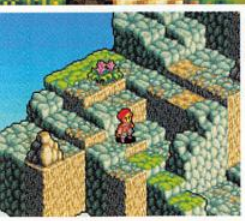
A sound title with a couple of oft-raised flaws, poor marketability didn't help Captain Olimar's cause. A problem which Nintendo is clearly addressing for the 2004 sequel, which sees the return of the strange, brightly coloured Pikmin.

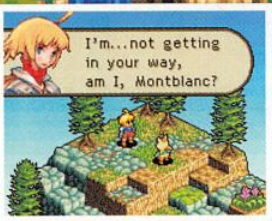
REZ

Rail shooting that reacts to music. Vivid, immersive and oh-so-different, *Rez* has a huge cult following among those lucky enough to own it. As you'd expect, though, while praise was high, sales were low.


It's a big adventure on a small machine. Can the GBA's *Final Fantasy Tactics Advance* keep RPG fans happy on the move? We think so.







































REVIEWS

Final Fantasy Tactics Advance	090	*Game Boy Advance*
Hardware: Online Arena	092	*PlayStation2*
Jak II: Renegade	094	*PlayStation2*
Chrome	096	*PC*
AFL Live 2004	097	*Multiformat*
Viewtiful Joe	098	*GameCube*
The Simpsons: Hit & Run	100	*Multiformat*
Bloody Roar Extreme	101	*Xbox*
Tron 2.0	102	*PC*
Pokémon Pinball: Ruby And Sapphire	104	*Game Boy Advance*
Outlaw Beach Volleyball	105	*Xbox*
Buffy the Vampire Slayer: Chaos Bleeds	106	*Multiformat*

THE AVERAGE

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



At certain points, you get to place new locations on the map yourself – much like in *Legend Of Mana*, another Square title we PAL gamers missed out on. There's no justice…



Nobody seems to know why, but the Moogles in this tactical world are more like rabbits than cats. Genetic engineering? Something in the water? Either way, it's pretty strange.

TAKING TURNS TO KILL EACH OTHER CAN BE SO MUCH FUN

FINAL FANTASY: TACTICS

DETAILS

FORMAT REVIEWED
Game Boy Advance

ORIGIN
Japan

PUBLISHER
Nintendo

DEVELOPER
Square Enix

PRICE
$69.95

RELEASE
Out Now

PLAYERS
1-2

TACTICS OGRE: THE KNIGHT OF LODIS



BETTER THAN

WORSE THAN



ADVANCE WARS 2: BLACK HOLE RISING

It never made it as far as Australian game shops, but *Final Fantasy Tactics* is still a hard act to follow. Square has proved its tactical gaming prowess many times – *Front Mission*, the original *Tactics* and even *Parasite Eve* showcased a level of proficiency seldom seen – but word of a handheld version of one of the best *Final Fantasy* games did funny things to us, things certainly not helped by a healthy taster of the title at this year's E3 show. After what seems like months (most likely because it is months), the game has finally become available and, more importantly, accessible to those of us whose grasp of Japanese is slim. Cue countless quips at the expense of spiky-haired angst-ridden teen heroes and more gaming clichés than you can shake a Stick of Significant Pointing +3 at. But we don't care, because *Final Fantasy* has come back home to Nintendo.

First impressions are all important and, at a glance, *Tactics* is nothing short of stunning. From the wonderful sprites and animation to lavish backdrops and soundtrack, not one aspect of the game's presentation disappoints. Lasting appeal is, of course, equally important, especially with potentially over a hundred hours of gameplay on offer, but *FFTA* always comes up smelling of roses. The only aspect that grows weaker with extended play is the audio, with the same (admittedly excellent) tunes reprised time and time again on maps and in battles. A fairly minor gripe, granted, but one that does annoy more than you may think during extended play. That said, *FFTA* manages one feat that precious few strategy games can boast – it is consistently fun to play.

The obvious comparisons to its big brother will be unavoidable, but despite being of the same family the two games are surprisingly different. Aside from the judicial system employed in each area to promote variety in battles, the main difference is that of story – an area, and possibly the only one, where this game is eclipsed by its

FAQs

Q. HOW MANY MISSIONS?
Three hundred quests in all, but chances are you won't complete them all on your first try. Or your second, for that matter.

Q. TOO CONFUSING?
While RPG virgins may have a little trouble, the game eases you into its many rules brilliantly.

Q. DISPLAY MODES?
Three of them. In the first feature of its kind, tones and colours can be tweaked to suit either model of GBA or even the GBA Player.



The mounted guy on the right is the Judge – abuse the rules of the arena and you can expect an overly harsh penalty from him.



Levelling up your characters will grant access to a whole world of new classes, complete with improved skills and stats.

JUDGE AND JURY

One of the most original new elements here is the Judge system, a way of making each battle even more individual. Basically, this places penalties on certain skills or spells while rewarding others, depending on the district you're in. A football-style yellow and red card system is in place for violators of an area's laws, and penalties range from a slap on the wrist to all-out character exclusion. However, if you manage to appease your overseer you are often rewarded with Judge Points. These allow for the use of powerful combo attacks that can help to turn the tide of battle. So it's often wise to tailor your combat style to suit the ruler in question, otherwise, it's not unheard of for one of your party to end up in the slammer.

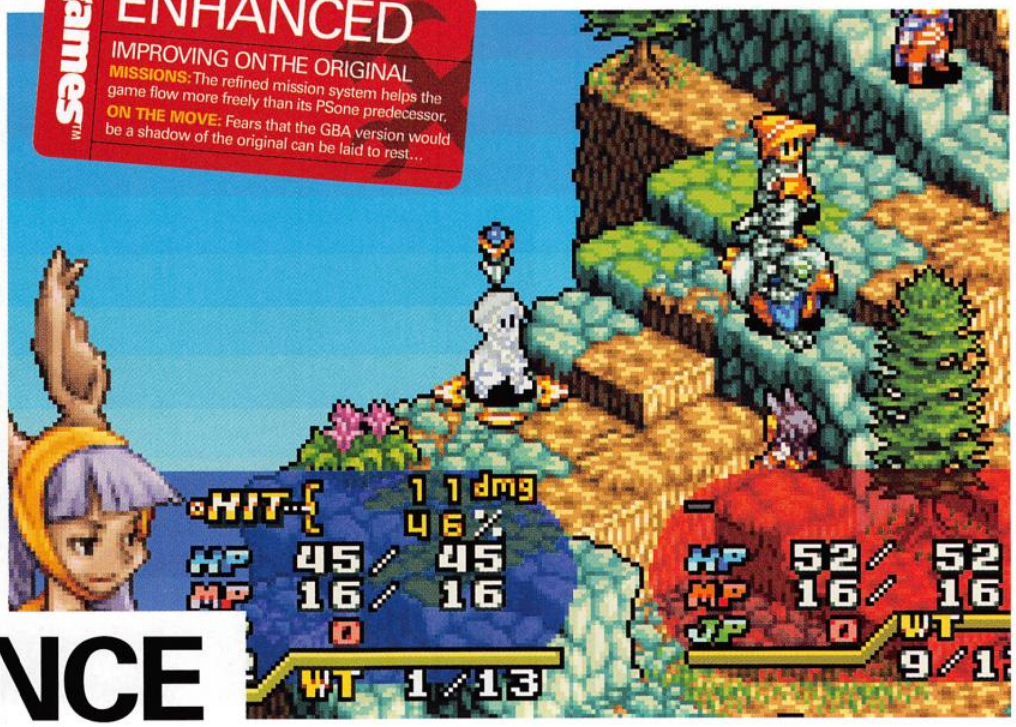
games™

ENHANCED

IMPROVING ON THE ORIGINAL

MISSIONS: The refined mission system helps the game flow more freely than its PSone predecessor.

ON THE MOVE: Fears that the GBA version would be a shadow of the original can be laid to rest...



ADVANCE



Setting up your entire Clan can feel a little clunky but this is hardly surprising given the limited number of buttons available.



A car? In a *Final Fantasy* game? Not something you see every day, but the fairy tale story is quite removed from the usual *FF* fare.



You can find comfort in the fact that some things will never change. Bombs still explode when aggravated. No, wait, that's a bad thing...

predecessor. Where the PSone game had a fairly complex and deep narrative, *Advance*'s plot is much more like what you'd expect on a Nintendo handheld. Aside from its clichéd simplicity, the big problem is that although the entire game is mission-based, it's never clear which missions will advance the story and which are merely frivolous treasure hunts. It's not all changes for the worst, though, as all-human parties are now a thing of the past. Five races are available (including Moogles but not Chocobos, strangely), each of which differ statistically as well as having different professions open to them. You'll need a good mix of species and classes if you want to beat the laws of the land.

The new law system is an interesting addition but may find as many enemies as it does fans. Like Capcom's restrictions on dragon usage in *Breath Of Fire V*, these rules do help to alleviate an over-reliance on certain spells or classes – no bad thing by us. The newly reworked game balance does a similar task, promoting better use of the individual traits of classes, rather than repeatedly selecting 'Fight' – yet another commendable move. The inspired additions don't stop there. How about the multiplayer mode featuring both competitive and co-operative options? Can we tempt you with three hundred different missions perhaps? A deceptively deep array of jobs, items and magic maybe? *FFTA* may be more a parallel title to the PSone game than a true sequel but that doesn't mean it can't borrow and build upon the original's well-laid foundations, which it does with aplomb.

We're used to consoles receiving influxes of certain types of game – just look at the number of volleyball games that followed the release of *Dead Or Alive Xtreme Beach Volleyball* – but such bandwagon jumpers are usually characterised by their mediocrity. The recent glut of portable strategy titles couldn't be further from this stereotype, though. We've seen a few titles now that give even their home console rivals something to worry about. It could be argued that *FFTA* can be a little sluggish, or that the frequent 'random encounters' (which come by way of clashes with other Clans) can get rather frustrating, and even that the game can be too easy at times. But while these things can annoy, they never even come close to ruining the game. If forthcoming titles like *Fire Emblem* turn out anywhere near as polished as this, we'll only have our incredibly high luck statistic to thank. And Square Enix and Nintendo, of course...

VERDICT 8/10

AN EPIC AND ACCOMPLISHED TACTICAL ADVENTURE

Whatever the terrain or the conditions, *Hardware* still manages to deliver some good old-fashioned blasting action.



Airstrikes can be called in on the Area 51 map by picking up a specific icon. Grab it, then take cover because it's gonna get hot up top...





DETAILS

FORMAT REVIEWED
PlayStation2

ORIGIN
UK

PUBLISHER
Sony

DEVELOPER
London Studio

PRICE
$99.95 (with Network Adaptor)

RELEASE
Out Now

PLAYERS
1 (1-16 Online)

SONY MOUNTS ITS ASSAULT ON THE TACTICAL ONLINE GAMING CROWN

HARDWARE: ONLINE ARENA

There aren't many budget titles that can boast the development time of *Hardware*. First unveiled to a salivating gaming press way back at E3 2002, *Hardware* had been a work in progress for some time even then. In the 18 months since, though, London Studio has been hard at work building and perfecting the maps, adding more (and better detailed) vehicles, balancing the weapons and basically getting everything 'just right'. Unlike many other games with long gestation periods, however, *Hardware* is a blast – and your $100 even includes a PlayStation2 Network Adaptor to get you started online.

Assuming that you know by now how the front-end of an online game works, then getting started couldn't be easier. Once you reach the *Hardware* 'garage' you pick from eight different vehicles – each of which has its own strengths and weaknesses – and then the game begins, at which point you can pretty much let instinct take over. Each of the five different arenas (Mayan City, Arctic Research Base, Ruins, Quarry and Area 51) is packed with ramps, obstacles, tunnels and various themed structures, which you can drive into, under, over and around. Every map is also liberally dotted with numerous weapon pick-ups (nine different sorts in all) plus the obligatory health and armour





You pick either a Jeep or a Tank. Both have strengths and weaknesses so you'll get a fair fight.

DESTRUCTION DERBY ARENA



BETTER THAN

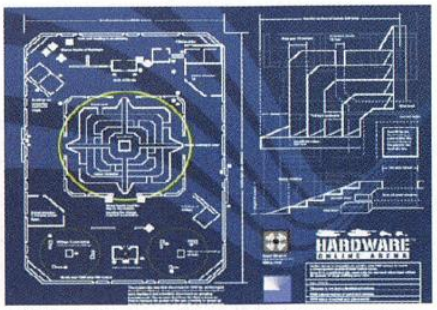
WORSE THAN



COUNTER-STRIKE



Keeping tabs on who you're obliterating is just one of the perks of online play, especially when you're using the headset as well.



Picking the right arena can help give you the edge if you know your way around – practice makes perfect, after all...

TRACKS AND WHEELS

Of the eight different vehicles in the game, each falls into one of two categories: Tank or Jeep. Vehicle specs obviously differ within the categories but, generally, Tanks are slower than Jeeps but have better armour, plus they have a more powerful primary weapon but it takes longer to reload. Tanks can also turn on the spot, which helps counter their lack of speed. Often in games like this, one vehicle will be the best choice with the result that players just stick with the same one. In *Hardware*, however, a lot of work went into balancing the vehicles so that each one is potentially a game-winner.



games™ FINGERPRINT

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME UNIQUE

EASY AS PIE: To call *Hardware* a 'pick-up-and-play' title doesn't do it justice – it's almost idiot-proof.

GRAPHICAL GREATNESS: London Studio has spent a long time honing the aesthetics of the game.

collectables, the use of which is what really makes the difference between winning and losing.

With up to 16 players on the map at any one time, London Studio has worked hard to ensure slowdown is minimal, although you may notice the odd 'teleportation' in a particularly busy game if a player's ping rate isn't quite what it should be. The same goes for clipping – on the whole you won't notice many problems, but as vehicles in the game get bashed, rammed, flipped and hurled into the air at regular intervals, it's inevitable that you're going to spot the odd bit of collision with the scenery, albeit not usually to the detriment of the gameplay.

Just as the action is pretty brainless, so the modes on offer are as obvious as they come, with a choice of Deathmatch or King Of The Hill in either team or individual situations. With the basic idea being to race around, find the enemy and blast them before they get you (whatever mode you're playing in), it really couldn't be simpler. But mastering *Hardware* requires more than a little thought. Simply storming around shooting things might work against inexperienced players, but it soon becomes important to know which weapons do what and which vehicle is best for each type of game. There's also the option of a more complex control system which allows direct control of the turret on your vehicle, and thus allows you to move one way while firing another – something that really requires two brains to do properly in the heat of battle.

FAQs

Q. HOW ACCESSIBLE?
It's a piece of cake to get into, but if you're lacking broadband then there's little point in playing.

Q. ANY VARIETY?
Online, you've got either individual or team versions of Deathmatch and King Of The Hill. Once you log on, it's very difficult to log off again...

Q. BIGGEST PLUS?
Sheer addictiveness. Unlike *SOCOM*, for example, if you die, you're straight back in, so you'll always be right in the thick of the action.



Rockets fire in a spread pattern of five, which means they're good for taking on a group of vehicles or for hammering just one at close range.

Of course, when someone creates a game as simple as this it's either fun from the outset, or it's not. Thankfully, this is fun. However, the big minus point is that it's not enjoyable on your own. Sony has even gone so far as to describe the offline option as a 'training' mode. Although the gameplay is identical to the main game, taking away the human element subtracts a lot of *Hardware*'s appeal. (Maybe it's because you can't hurl insults at your fellow gamers via the USB headset.) It's not terrible, but it's something you won't go back to once you've sampled the online side.

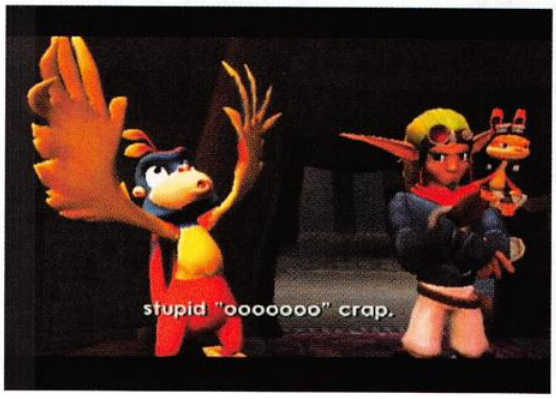
Our only other real criticism would be the ranking system. Instead of being based on kills, it takes into account the ranks of your opponents so it's possible to drop down the ranks just by getting beaten by someone new. Frustrating? You bet. But this minor quibble is the only thing that detracts from an otherwise simple yet highly addictive game. If only every online game could be this much fun.



The Plasma weapon is a devastating bit of kit if you can get a lock with it, although not quite as deadly as the Laser.

VERDICT 7/10

SIMPLE BUT EFFECTIVE FUN FOR ONLINE JUNKIES







CRASH'S SUCCESSOR TRADES COLLECTING FOR SHOOTING AND VEHICLE THEFT

JAK II: RENEGADE

DETAILS

FORMAT REVIEWED
PlayStation2

ORIGIN
US

PUBLISHER
Sony

DEVELOPER
Naughty Dog

PRICE
$99.95

RELEASE
Out Now

PLAYERS
1

Imagine a game that is all games. We're not trying to shift copies of *Haven* here so much as point out a possible eventuality. An online multiplayer world where everything is interactive, every person player-controlled and every event the result of player actions. Such potential would tear down the barriers of genre, allowing you to race, collect, kill or even dance at will, but, obviously, the development times and logistics would be a nightmare. *Jak II* doesn't even approach this ideal but it does take some tentative steps towards the conglomerate gaming dream by blending some very distinct genres.

In all honesty, a direct comparison with the first game proves very little. In terms of structure, *Jak II* owes more to the *Grand Theft Auto* series than it does to its forerunner. And now that our hero, Jak, has been tainted with deadly Dark Eco he's imbued with all manner of unholy powers. The armament of the newly enraged protagonist makes for some great new puzzles and possibilities, and the expanding, free-roaming cityscape does give ample potential for exploration, even if there really isn't that much to do outside of a few optional side quests and a whole lot of wandering. Virtually all the craft you see tearing up the skies of the futuristic environment can be procured for your own ends, each handling differently and having their own uses. Control can be somewhat tricky when in command of these and Jak's hoverboard (Naughty Dog gives extreme sports a go...), but with a little perseverance, both methods of travel can be mastered to some extent.

Those who played the first game will be pretty much prepared for the platforming sections of



Once you've commandeered a ship you'll find it only has two cruise heights, endangering either traffic or pedestrians. Damned if you do...



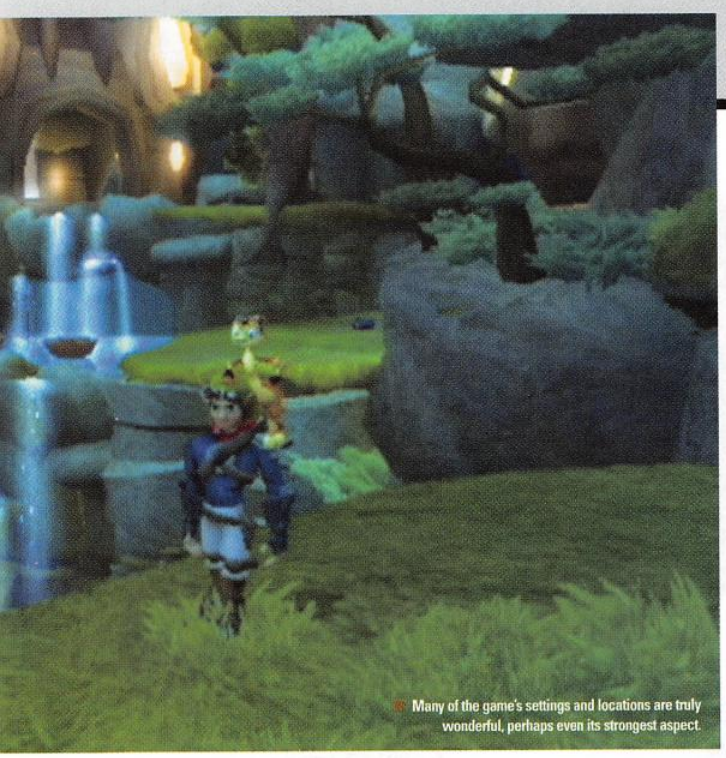
There's a little less collecting in this instalment, but you'll still find remnants of Precursor life lying around. The Precursor Artefacts grant Jak new abilities... for a price.

FAQs

Q. NO MORE COLLECTING?
Oh, there's still collecting to be done – there's just far less of it and you're better rewarded for your trouble.

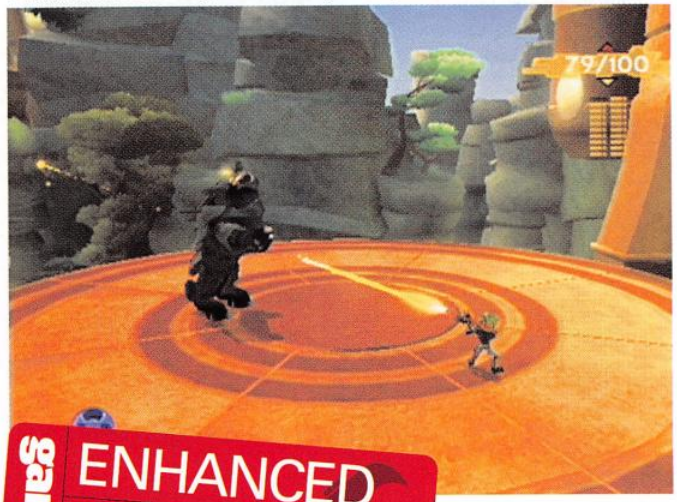
Q. IS IT ACTUALLY FUNNY?
Yes and no. While Daxter's wit consists primarily of shouting the last word of a sentence, there are plenty of genuinely amusing moments.

Q. GUNS, YOU SAY?
Four of them, from a wide-area shotgun-type weapon to a full-on minigun that can tear through crowds.



Many of the game's settings and locations are truly wonderful, perhaps even its strongest aspect.

The giant Metal Head creature gives the universal signal for 'Help! I've been shot in the face'.



games™ ENHANCED

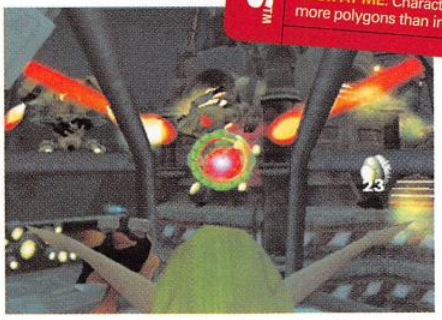
IMPROVING ON THE ORIGINAL

LOADING: With the increased area sizes it's amazing the loading times are almost non-existent.

LOOK AT ME: Characters have up to four times more polygons than in the first game. And it



There's an impressive range of weapons for you to choose from, which suit the mood of the new, darker Jak.



One section sees you jumping in a gun turret to despatch huge enemies and their unborn offspring.

this sequel since, weapons aside, they play very similarly. While some sections are true to their platform roots, others now play out more like *Ratchet & Clank*, and even though the looping level design is often fairly predictable, the variety of locales and activities makes up for it. With no limit on lives or retries, you'll be battling frustration as you're forced to attempt tricky sections until you get them right – just as well really, since some of the later sections get very tough indeed both in terms of platforming and enemy neutralisation. But while we understand the need for a mix of styles, there's something about the *GTA*-cum-platform gameplay that just doesn't gel. The large-scale collecting of the last game has given way to full-on assaults and, fun as they are, without lock-on systems or first-person aiming, fighting the good fight can often be trickier than it really should.

Visually, *Jak II* is extremely accomplished, and aside from a little fade-in in the main city and the odd case of the jaggies, animation and rendering of characters and locations is superb. One of the few criticisms here is that Jak's movement can be painfully slow on foot – a good incentive to take to the sky perhaps, but annoying nonetheless. The quality presentation is continued elsewhere too, with as high a standard of voice acting as you're likely to see in any current game. This is by far the best part of the solid Pro Logic surround soundtrack, though it all serves its purpose with aplomb.

The most prominent thing about *Jak II*, though, is its substantially darker mood – it simply isn't what you'd expect from either having played the first game or seen the starring duo. Featuring more complex subject matter and a much grittier feel than virtually every other platformer out there, Naughty Dog has fully capitalised on the popularity of 'mature' games by producing a similar title that younger players will be legally allowed to buy – no mean feat when you consider one of the game's leads is an orange rodent. Sure, it's not without fault and does feel a little confused in places, but as the platform genre evolves, Jak and Daxter give a fine performance in what is one of the better adventure games of this generation.

VERDICT 7/10

FINALLY – A GENRE CLASH THAT ACTUALLY WORKS

DO IT ALL

It's amazing to look at the PlayStation2's catalogue and think that after two years on the market, it still offers very few quality platformers. Far too many wannabes are so hung up on reinventing the wheel that they end up feeling stale and overly familiar before they hit the shelves. This is why we're impressed with *Jak II*'s variety even though it may not be perfectly bound together. How many other games allow you to jump around mountains, ride hoverboards, steal flying cars and blow the hell out of things in a matter of minutes, let alone do it to a respectable standard? As we've said before, Midway's *Haven: Call Of The King* made a bold claim and arguably had the right idea with its 'all games in one' theory, but it's comforting to know that there are those out there keen to learn from the mistakes of others.

RATCHET & CLANK



BETTER THAN

WORSE THAN



GTA VICE CITY



The impressive visuals aren't quite as polished as they could be, but you can still expect your fair share of picture postcard moments.



The entire landscape is yours to explore, so be sure to make full use of the environment in order to gain the upper hand over your foes.

DETAILS

FORMAT REVIEWED
PC

ORIGIN
Poland

PUBLISHER
Take2

DEVELOPER
Techland

PRICE
$79.95

RELEASE
Out Now

PLAYERS
1 (Up to 32 online)

MINIMUM SPEC
900MHz processor, 256MB RAM, 1.7GB HDD space, 32MB 3D graphics card

ANOTHER CONTENDER VIES FOR THE COVETED 'HALO BEATER' TAGLINE

CHROME

There are so many promising FPS titles on our PC gaming radar at the moment that *Chrome* has somehow managed to evade our attentions until now. Polish developer Techland joins the relatively obscure European studios behind the likes of *Far Cry* and *Breed* in delivering a visually spectacular tactical shooter that uses incredible draw distances to create some breathtakingly expansive environments. Clearly drawing on genre kings *Deus Ex*, *Halo* and *Half-Life* when it comes to the action, *Chrome* certainly has all the right ingredients for gaming greatness.

As hardened mercenary Bolt Logan, you'll tour the Valkyria galaxy doing dirty work for cash and gradually becoming entangled in a corporate war over the valuable resource Chrome. The striking visuals immediately impress – the dense forests have sunlight streaming through the canopy – and the immense outdoor maps can be freely explored, giving your adventures plenty of open-ended scope and allowing full strategic exploitation of the opportunities the landscape offers. You'll find that enemies can be hard to spot in the thick vegetation and shadowy indoor settings, yet are capable of shooting you to ribbons from frighteningly long range while staying out of sight. But closer encounters with your foes reveal the AI's ability to strategically use their surroundings and launch co-ordinated attacks on your position.

Yet after promising so much, the end result falls some way short of excellence. Virtually every aspect of the game seems to lack that final third of polish, with visuals and gameplay feeling somewhat ragged after doing so well up to a point. Similarly, while all the pieces seem to be in place to deliver something special, they never quite gel into a wholly playable experience. That's not to say *Chrome* isn't a reasonably good game, but too many inadequacies across the board prevent the action from seriously challenging the genre's big guns.

games™ GLOBAL

TAKING GAMING ONLINE

ROOM FOR ALL: The massive environments should make the 32-player online skirmishes popular.

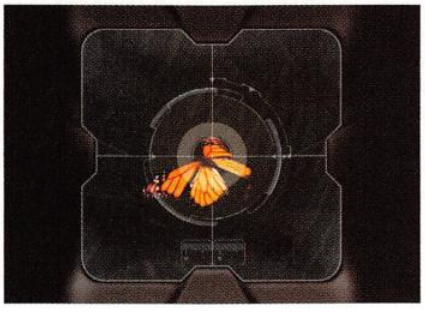
NO SURPRISES: All the usual online game modes are available, from Deathmatch to Team Domination.

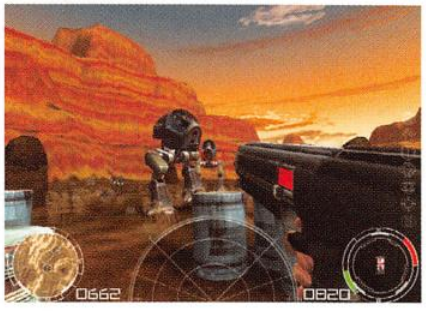
VERDICT 6/10

IMPRESSIVE TO A POINT, BUT LACKS FINESSE

To spot the enemy in dense forests you'll need a keen eye. Being a sharp shot helps too.







AND ACCLAIM TAKES A SCREAMER...

AFL LIVE 2004

games™ ENHANCED

IMPROVING ON THE ORIGINAL

ALL THE SKILLS: Extra moves means you can play the game the way you want to.

ALL THE OPTIONS: There's something to do whether you want to play for 5 minutes or 5 hours.

DETAILS

FORMAT REVIEWED
Xbox

ORIGIN
Australia

PUBLISHER
Acclaim

DEVELOPER
IR Gurus

PRICE
$99.95

RELEASE
Out Now

PLAYERS
1-4

PC $69.95 OUT NOW



The PC version doesn't look that much better than the Xbox version.

PS2 $99.95 OUT NOW



The PS2's graphics aren't quite as crisp but there's not much between them.

Until recently, the appeal of many sports games eluded much of the Australian market. The simple fact of the matter is that when it comes to sports, most Aussies like League, Union or AFL. Acclaim's latest effort, *AFL Live 2004*, represents another solid step forward for the franchise.

AFL is a quick game played on a large field and the sense of movement is well-captured. But we found ourselves concentrating too much on the on-ball action and less on the tactical game. This is definitely something we'd like to see improved with the release of AFL Live 2005. The player models are serviceable from a distance but lacked detail up close; there's some slowdown but the camera is well-executed; the crowd noise and music are atmospheric but the commentary will drive you to distraction; and so on.

The learning curve is steep, especially if you're not very familiar with AFL. This is no doubt true (to some extent) of all sports games, but we found it took us a while to really feel confident in our ability to execute the moves and plays we were after. Once you've got this under your belt, however, the game rewards you with an array of moves – various kicks, sprints, taps tackles and a much-appreciated shoulder charge.

All 16 teams are included, as well as 9 stadia. There are seven game modes: quick game, season, finals, wizard cup, training, mini-games and missions. The missions are intriguing and each team has a historical task to complete

Games based on our local sports will probably never be able to match the development budgets that soccer and gridiron titles can command but it's good to see a solid effort like Live.

AFL LIVE 2003



BETTER THAN

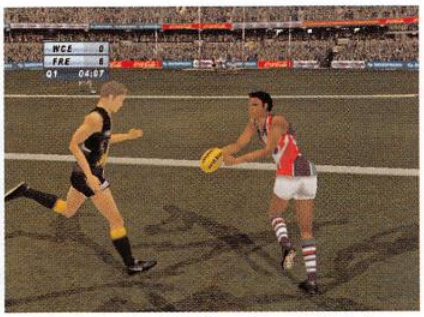
WORSE THAN



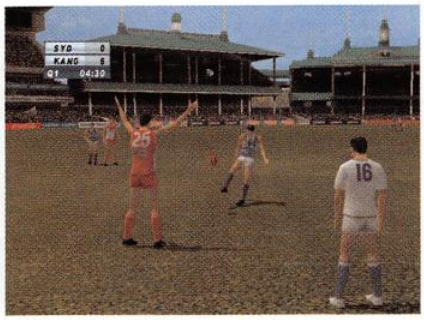
FIFA

VERDICT 6/10

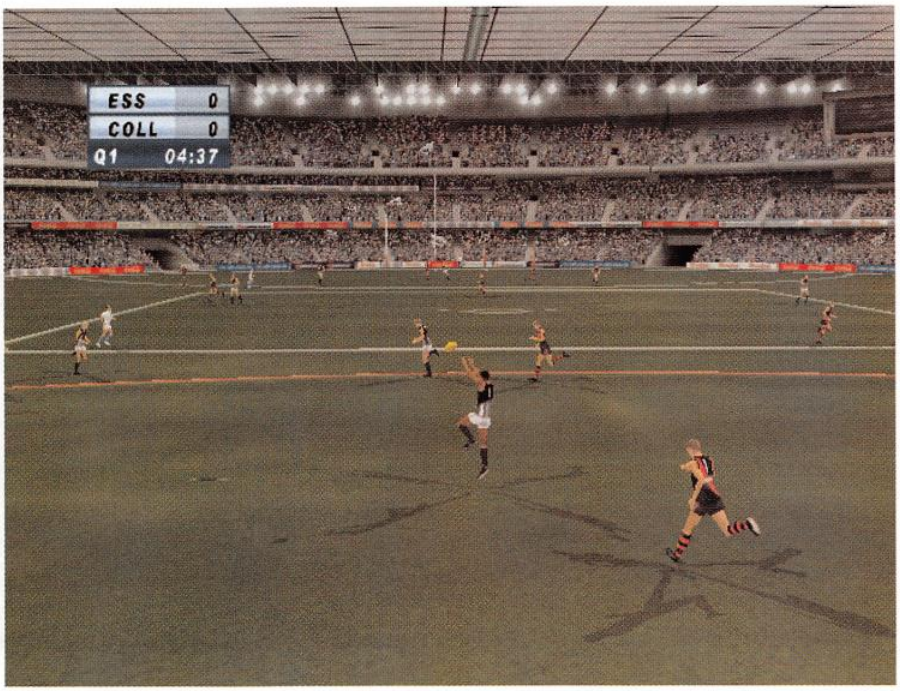
SATISFYING, BUT ENTHUSIASTS ONLY NEED APPLY



Character models are serviceable but animate well. The shadows are a nice touch.



This trick never works... But it's nice to see the SCG modelled with such care.



We like the way the game gives you a feel for the sweep of AFL but found it hard to really concentrate on our overall tactics – we spent most of our time coming to grips with the on-ball action.

VIEWTIFUL JOE

CAPCOM TAKES US TO THE MOVIES...

DETAILS

FORMAT REVIEWED
GameCube

ORIGIN
Japan

PUBLISHER
THQ

DEVELOPER
Capcom

PRICE
$99.95

RELEASE
Out Now

PLAYERS
1

P.N.03



BETTER THAN

WORSE THAN



STREETS OF RAGE

As home consoles continue to grow in processing power, the number of 'style over substance' games has increased exponentially. Developers have picked up on the fact that a decent graphics engine coupled with another strong feature (an established brand or movie licence, for instance) will shift units regardless of content, and a quick glance at current charts and sales figures suggests that this trend shows no sign of slowing. Mercifully, there are still firms looking to champion gameplay as well as focus on presentation; while they may be obvious examples, *Ico*, *Dark Cloud 2* and *Metroid Prime* all succeed due to the quality of their individual elements and the synergy thereof. Taking its inspiration from vintage movie culture, *Viewtiful Joe* is the latest 'wow' title for the GameCube – a console not without its fair share of stunning games, but thankfully, Joe isn't the vain type...

Before you even pick up the controller, *Viewtiful Joe* makes those all-important first impressions count. Taking its place among the best-looking games of this generation, the wonderfully crisp and vibrant visuals are rivalled only by the game's incredible animation. From an aesthetic standpoint, *Joe* does everything right – the superb score and effects perfectly complement the style and action-packed nature, and the voice acting (which is all in English in the main game) is also noteworthy. Mercifully, picking up the pad is not the first step towards disappointment and controlling Joe is every bit as simple and intuitive as it both appears and needs to be. Just watching the action, you'd be forgiven for thinking the frequent dodge moves and taunts were scripted events but once you get into the flow, you'll soon realise that everything Joe does is your doing, your idea or your fault. In terms of basic elements, this is near perfection.

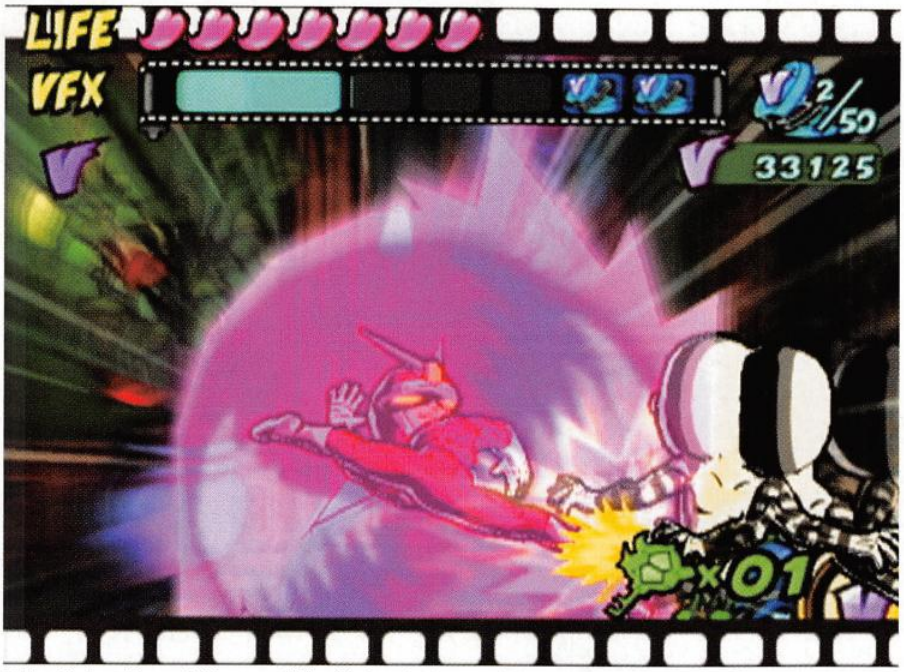
Max Payne carried it off wonderfully, *Blinx* tried hard but ultimately failed and *Enter The Matrix* would have been a disgrace with or without it. We refer, of course, to time control – an element that plays much more of a part in *Viewtiful Joe* than you ever would have guessed at a glance. We'd have been happy just to see the little guy pirouette past projectiles in slow motion but, in reality, there's much more to it than that. From relatively simple uses like speeding up time to get more hits in to more ingenious applications, time control here is a well-integrated element as opposed to a flashy gimmick. Through some truly excellent implementation, altering the flow of time also forms the basis for many puzzles that far surpass what is expected of the genre. It has to be said that it isn't always clear which of your abilities to use, though, and some of these riddles aren't quite as intelligent as they make themselves out to be.

FAQs

Q. IS IT SHORT?
Only when you know what you're doing. Think in the region of ten hours on your first time through Adult mode.

Q. UNLOCKABLES?
Characters, modes and other such goodies are on offer for the more committed player.

Q. IMPORT FRIENDLY?
Remarkably so – voice acting is all in English, as are a lot of the menus.



Most of Joe's special moves don't become available until further on into the game – for instance, this crazy spinning kick can only be used when you're using your Zoom ability. Obviously, it's rather powerful but can end up draining your VFX meter like there's no tomorrow...



Frantic – the one word that best describes how the action gets once you've managed to acquire all of Joe's special powers.



Slowing down time is crucial to your success – this water drop, for instance, will only grow big enough to hit the switch in slow-mo.



games™ FINGERPRINT

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME UNIQUE

HENSHIN-A-GO-GO: Run out of VFX (used in time control) and Joe will revert to his everyday self.

COMIC BOOK: *Viewtiful Joe*'s visuals put the game in a league of its own in terms of style.

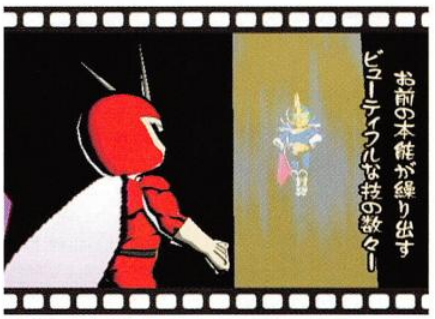


BUST A MOVE

On top of the time control abilities and plethora of special moves Joe can pull off, there's a fair amount of extra skills and augmentations of existing ones up for grabs in the inter-level shop sections. In addition, your stash of Viewtifuls (awarded for stylishly doing away with foes) can be spent on much-needed extra lives, accessories like the Voomerang or extra continues to make your life that little bit easier. Fortunately, even when you die and get sent all the way back to the beginning of a level, you'll keep whatever Viewtifuls you had – at least that way you can grab a few extra energy hearts or continues to help you past the tougher sections, most notably the boss encounters.



Getting three of the same symbol is the key to success here – although the machine's so small, you'll need the Zoom feature to see it.



Captain Blue pops up a lot early on to act as your mentor and teach you new moves. Plus he's also hidden away as a secret character…

BELOW: These FemBots can be a real pain in the neck to beat…



BELOW: Yes, yes, enough posing. Isn't it time to move on, Joe?



And so begins the negativity, but fear not – this is far outweighed by the style and sheer playability of the game. We'd consider ourselves fairly accomplished gamers but we've got to admit that on more than one occasion, *Joe* had us beat. Even on Kids mode, later levels are strangely tough and considering there are settings beyond Adult mode (which itself got to the point of being plain frustrating towards the end), unlocking everything is a major commitment. Unlimited continues are all well and good, but lose your allotted lives and it's back to the start of the stage for you, which can be one hell of a way back in the game. Thankfully, the difficulty rarely strays into 'unfair' territory, although certain sections do manage to simply stop being fun altogether – the repetition of boss battles to add substance towards the end being a prime example.

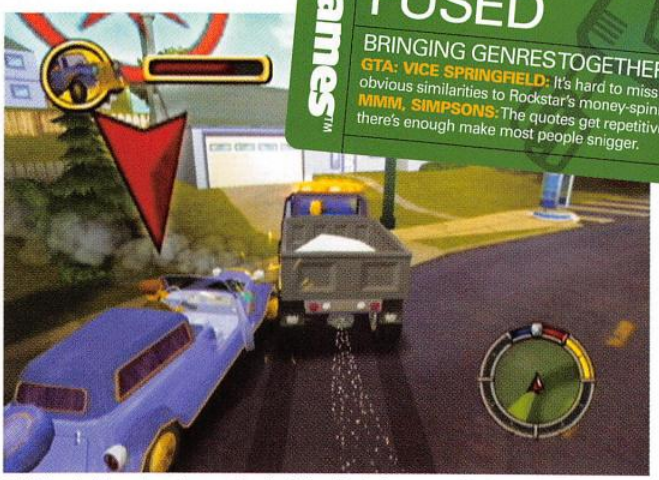
Even with the somewhat erratic learning curve, it'd be downright irresponsible of us not to recommend *Viewtiful Joe*. In terms of pure style and showcasing what the GameCube can do, you won't find a better example than Capcom's latest offering, and so long as you've got the patience of a saint, the infrequent save points and forced repetition shouldn't grate too much. Unfortunately, we're all too aware that after being returned to the start of a level for the umpteenth time, the urge for even the most patient player to make a stylish lunge for the power button is an overwhelming one. Between bouts of sheer frustration, *Viewtiful Joe* is a deeply playable and highly enjoyable title that is verging on masterpiece status – it's just a real shame that the game's biggest (or arguably only) flaw is one that will prevent the majority of those that buy it from seeing much of what it has to offer.

VERDICT 8/10

ROCK HARD – BUT A UNIQUE EXPERIENCE



Hit & Run is packed with virtually every character from the cartoon, even those you don't often see.



Missions include racing against people or the clock, collecting items or smashing into things.

games™ FUSED

BRINGING GENRES TOGETHER

GTA: VICE SPRINGFIELD: It's hard to miss the obvious similarities to Rockstar's money-spinner.

MMM, SIMPSONS: The quotes get repetitive, but there's enough make most people snigger.

THE SIMPSONS: HIT & RUN

IT'S THE BEST SIMPSONS GAME FOR AGES. BUT THAT'S NOT EXACTLY DIFFICULT

DETAILS

FORMAT REVIEWED
Xbox

OTHER FORMATS
PS2, GameCube, PC

ORIGIN
US

PUBLISHER
Vivendi Universal

DEVELOPER
Radical Entertainment

PRICE
$99.95

RELEASE
13 November

PLAYERS
1-4

FUTURAMA



BETTER THAN

WORSE THAN



JAK II: RENEGADE

Yes, we're as shocked as you are. After having to suffer wave after wave of bad *Simpsons* games over the years (some of which bring back memories that we've since tried to repress), someone's finally managed to get something right. Of course, this all ties in with the realisation that stealing other people's ideas and then slapping the *Simpsons* licence on the top of it is the only way for the brand to succeed, but hey, you've got to start somewhere, right?

So after the dismal *Simpsons Skateboarding* (*Tony Hawk's*, but crap) and the vaguely passable effort that was *Simpsons: Road Rage* (*Crazy Taxi*, but in cartoon form), we now have *Hit & Run* – essentially *GTA3*, but with repetitive soundbites, comedy antics and Cletus the Slack-Jawed Yokel. Thankfully, this actually turns out to be one of the better settings for the *Simpsons* licence in terms of a videogame, simply because it means all the characters can be featured in a way relevant to the cartoon without having to give them tenuous reasons for being there (skateboarding? wrestling? why?).

Being a cut-down, almost children's version of *GTA*, the gameplay is as straightforward as you might expect. Each of the seven levels has you exploring a different and admittedly huge region of Springfield as one of five characters in an effort to complete set missions – finish the main ones and you can move onto the next area. Obviously, there's a smattering of hidden objectives (including a main bonus mission and several race-based tasks) but, just as obviously, the amount of scope for going around and doing your own thing is far less than that of *GTA3*. While running or driving around freely might uncover coins, things for you to destroy or even collectable cards, it's only a small matter of time before you're forced to get on with the missions.

And that's probably the game's biggest problem – there's just not enough to do besides the main tasks to justify stealing the *GTA* concept. Certainly, the use of actual *Simpsons* writers, the real actors providing the voices and the inclusion of virtually every single recognisable character, vehicle and landmark gives the game far more appeal than past games. But the distinct lack of content reduces the amount of enjoyment you'll get out of it. A definite renter, but not enough to be a keeper.

VERDICT 5/10

BETTER THAN YOU'D THINK, BUT STILL VERY BASIC

GC/PC $99.95/$69.95



Not surprisingly, both versions look more or less identical to the Xbox one, although PC owners will need a decent machine and a controller to get the same desired effect.

PS2 $99.95 13 NOV



The least attractive, with slightly more draw-in and a touch more slowdown. But given the format, it's also the one that'll definitely sell the most copies. Typical, eh?



Trivia experts will be pleased with the collectable cards that can be found.

DETAILS

FORMAT REVIEWED
Xbox

ORIGIN
Japan

PUBLISHER
Atari

DEVELOPER
Hudson

PRICE
$109.95

RELEASE
November 7

PLAYERS
1-2

SHOULDN'T THE RSPCA BE GETTING INVOLVED BY NOW?

BLOODY ROAR EXTREME

games™ ENHANCED

IMPROVING ON THE ORIGINAL

FURRY: Characters, especially their beastly alter egos, are more impressive than ever.

TWEAKS: Minor adjustments to the game's fundamentals make it easy to pick up and play.

As fighting franchises go, it's a proven fact that Joe Public is more likely to pick up the latest instalment in a recognised series than an original title. It's hard to recall the last original beat-'em-up that was well received – the majority of today's digital brawlers have roots on PSone and earlier hardware. Despite this, there are many franchises that never really get off the ground and while there is, in some cases, good reason for this (as anyone who's played a *Toshinden* game will tell you), what went wrong with the likes of *Tobal* and *Rival Schools* remains a mystery. Similarly, Hudson's shape-shifting fighter has had a decent run thus far, and as much as we're aware that they're far from groundbreaking titles, the series has been consistently solid from the off and shows no signs of falling down now.

The game mechanics are much as you'd expect from the series – combo-by-numbers, over-the-top specials and a soundtrack with the amps turned up to 11. For all its button-mashing faults, though, *Bloody Roar* still manages to be fun, especially with two players. Unfortunately, this enjoyment doesn't last to the later stages of the game. It's not unknown for the AI to suddenly spike on the last few opponents, making for some hair-ripping encounters.

It may not be the most technical beat-'em-up on the market, nor is it the most stylish, but one thing works wonders in *Bloody Roar's* favour – simplicity. Naturally, this works both ways, so while the ease of play makes the game incredibly accessible, it also leaves it open to abuse and lacking any depth. The pre-set combos and primitive mechanics may be enough for groups of *Virtua Fighter* nuts to take up torches and pitchforks and form angry mobs, but the simple truth is that it's all a matter of expectations. If you go into *Bloody Roar Extreme* hoping for the next big thing, you'll undoubtedly emerge disappointed just minutes later. If, on the other hand, you ask no more of a fighter than a few impressive effects and some enjoyable, inoffensive creature combat, *Bloody Roar* could just be worth a look.

VERDICT 5/10

SHALLOW AS THEY COME BUT STILL FUN

TAO FENG: FIST OF THE LOTUS



BETTER THAN

WORSE THAN



DEAD OR ALIVE 3



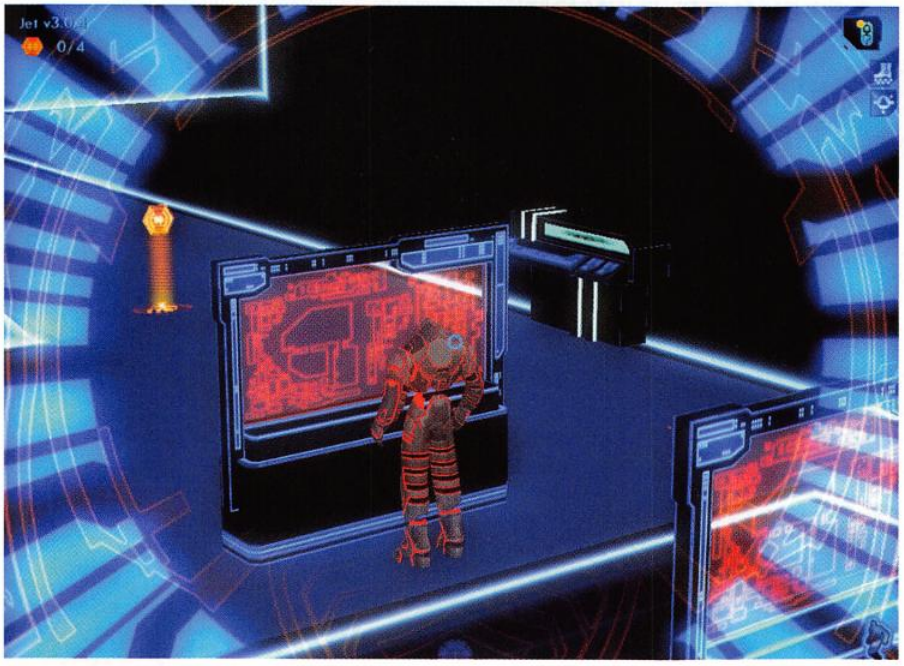
Possibly the only screenshot of a mid-air chameleon you'll see this year. Until *Pokémon Channel* comes out, that is.



As you'd expect, the Transformation Attacks trigger massive, colourful pyrotechnic displays. You know the kind by now, surely?



Most of the animal transformations are pretty self explanatory but we're still unsure exactly what Xion the Unborn is supposed to be. Apart from revoltingly powerful and nigh-on impossible to defeat, at least. And why exactly is a cat called a 'Half Beast'? So many questions....



Your weapons include variations on the Disc, Rod, Ball and Mesh. Our favourite incarnation of the Rod primitive has to be the LOL, which comes complete with sniper scope for those invaluable stealthy approaches.



Fans of more traditional FPS scenarios will be pleased to find an array of familiar weapon types besides your trusty Disc.



The Internet City Hub is one of the visual highlights of the *TRON* universe with its immense scale and suitably varied content.

DETAILS

FORMAT REVIEWED
PC

ORIGIN
US

PUBLISHER
EA

DEVELOPER
Monolith

PRICE
$79.95

RELEASE
Out Now

PLAYERS
1-16

MINIMUM SPEC
500MHz processor, 256MB RAM, 2.4GB HDD space, 32MB 3D graphics card

DOES THE TRON UNIVERSE STILL HAVE WHAT IT TAKES?

TRON 2.0

It's over two decades since *TRON* hit the silver screen, and remembering the state of computer technology in 1982 reminds us just how far ahead of its time Disney's futuristic adventure really was. But when we heard of plans to recreate the *TRON* universe in a first-person shoot-'em-up, we'll admit that our interest levels ranged from indifferent to only mildly intrigued (though no doubt the news was met with rather more enthusiasm among the movie's sizeable cult following). Though the concept would undeniably offer a unique slant on the standard FPS scenario, we couldn't help wonder whether the ageing licence would present more limitations than opportunities for a game entering such a fiercely competitive genre. Brushing first impressions aside, however, we prepared to be digitised into the abstract universe of computer circuitry, with high hopes of *TRON 2.0* delivering a gaming experience that would reflect its striking visuals and our faith in Monolith's expertise.

All the action takes places in and around the corridors of cyberspace some 20 years after events depicted in the film. Players step into the shoes of Jet Bradley when he is unwittingly plunged into the digital realm of the movie following the mysterious kidnapping of his father. But before the impressively deep storyline can even begin to unravel, Jet finds himself fighting for his life against a relentless army of Intruder Countermeasure Programmes (ICPs) who believe him to be the instigator of a destructive virus threatening to corrupt the entire system.

One of the key concerns with staging the game in such an offbeat context was just how receptive the average gamer would be to the bombardment of potentially disorientating computing references they'd come across in the *TRON* universe. While hard-core *TRON* fans and those familiar with computer terminology will no doubt find themselves in metaphor heaven, the game gently introduces newcomers to all the laws and logic of life in the digital dimension. Thanks to the wonderfully engrossing game world Monolith has created, even those least acquainted with the whole *TRON* concept should quickly warm to the mindset of existing as a computer program.

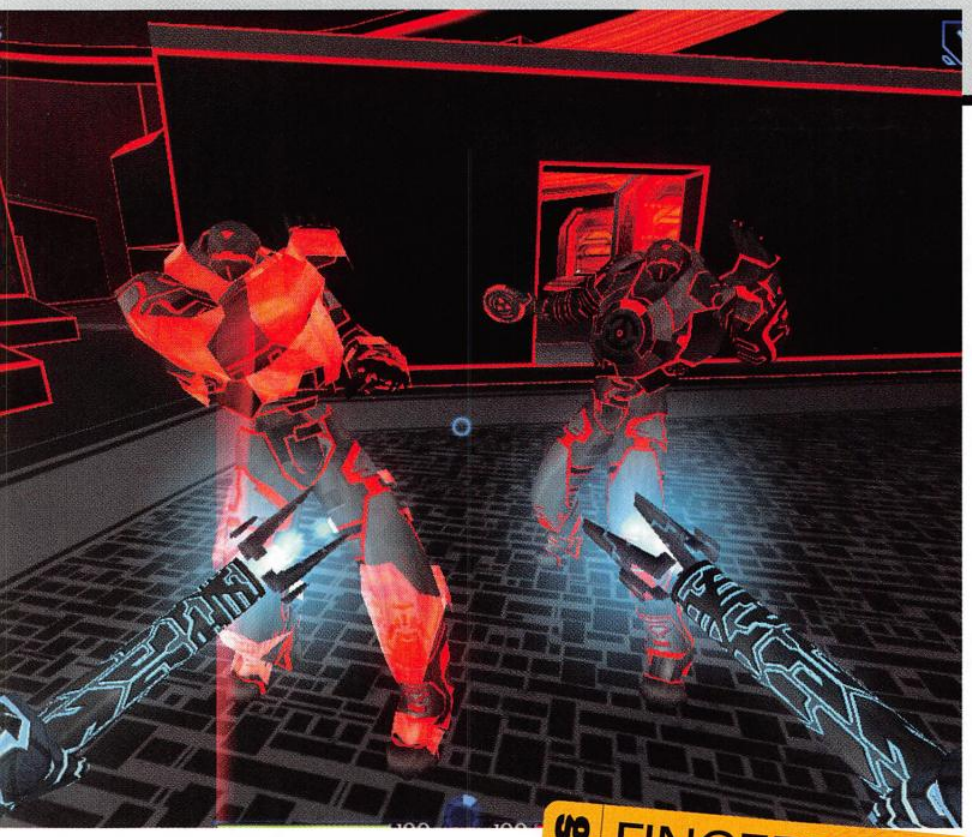
Bringing the highly stylised environments to life has clearly been a labour of love for the design team. Not only does the game's dazzling aesthetic individuality evoke instant appeal, the immaculate attention to detail plays a crucial role in generating the aura of quality that runs throughout the world of *TRON*. This wholesome feel combines with gameplay dynamics of the highest order to

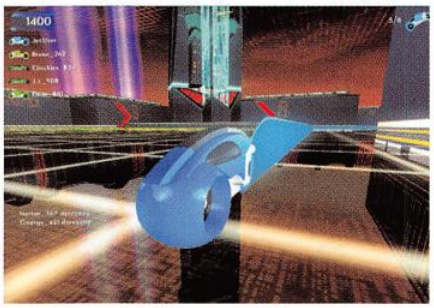
FAQs

Q. ONE FOR THE FANS?
Fans of the cult movie will rejoice at *TRON 2.0*, and anyone wanting a top-notch FPS should give this stylised concept a chance too.

Q. EPIC ADVENTURE?
The game features something like 30 levels spread over 11 missions, along with the Lightcycle and Disc Arena sub-games.

Q. HARDWARE HUNGRY?
Running the game at the highest level of detail is truly breathtaking, but cutting down the resolution doesn't dilute the experience too much.





Lightcycle contests feature at various points in the main game, and there's a separate Circuit mode for those wanting more.

immerse players in some of the most polished action to ever grace the genre.

The fulfilling combat mechanics are perhaps best appreciated by employing the traditional Disc as your weapon of choice against the hordes of ICPs, Z-lots, Resource Hogs and Data Wraiths bent on putting an end to Jet's exploits. The Disc is an invaluable tool for blocking enemy attacks and players can also influence its path during flight, adding elements of tactical depth and skilful timing to the standard point-and-shoot mentality. Three other primitive weapon types feature in the game besides the Disc, which may each be upgraded from their basic form with downloads from archive bins dotted around the game world.

The various incarnations of the Disc, Rod, Ball and Mesh primitives cover all the sniper, automatic and grenade-launching weapon types no FPS should be without, all within the inimitable *TRON* style. Jet will also be able to download a diverse selection of subroutines from the archive bins where the weapons are found in order to enhance his programmed repertoire of abilities. Management of the subroutine interface is another strategic aspect of play due to limited memory capacity, and choosing the right tools for the situation you're facing is paramount. For instance, virus protection software should be installed when battling Z-lots to prevent your subroutines from becoming infected, whilst the Fuzzy Signature is a must for sections requiring stealth.

There's a good deal of variation in gameplay – including the fabulously addictive Lightcycle contests – but inevitably most gamers' opinions of *TRON 2.0* are likely to hinge on its essentially limited theme. Whilst many may find the thought of exploring the innards of a computer system somewhat uninspiring compared with the limitless potential of a more 'real world' setting, those allowing themselves to be drawn into the abstract world of *TRON 2.0* will find the experience rich enough to compete with the very cream of the genre.

games™ FINGERPRINT

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME UNIQUE

CHARACTER MODEL: Rebecca Romijn-Stamos provides the voice of Lightcycle champion Mercury.

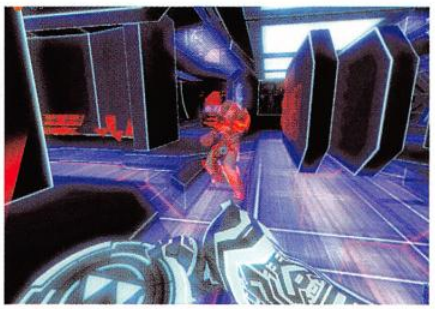
RAISING THE BAR: At last, a game that uses a movie licence to its full potential.

VERDICT 8/10

EXEMPLARY USE OF A MOVIE LICENCE

ON YER BIKE

Whilst dispatching your somewhat limited range of adversaries or mingling with programs going about their routines never becomes tiresome, the Lightcycle portions of the game are nevertheless a welcome supplement to the core FPS action. A simplistic yet immensely entertaining battle of wits, the lightning-paced contests carry all the frustrating but frighteningly addictive hallmarks of retro-style gaming at its best. There's a Circuit mode Lightcycle sub-game outside the main adventure to hone your skills, but, sadly, the split-second timing involved means multiplayer contests are only possible over a LAN network due to the insufficient ping rate online. Multiplayer Disc Arena battles can be played via the web, further highlighting the skilful depth of the combat system and rounding off an impressive package of sub-games.



Thanks to its ability to block enemy barrages, the Disc can be a highly effective weapon in the right hands.



The Firewall level is a prime example of Monolith's imaginative embodiment of computer processes in the game world.



DETAILS

FORMAT REVIEWED
Game Boy Advance

ORIGIN
Japan

PUBLISHER
Nintendo

DEVELOPER
In-House

PRICE
$69.95

RELEASE
Out Now

PLAYERS
1

NINTENDO HAS THE BALLS (LITERALLY) TO RELEASE ANOTHER POKÉMON GAME

POKÉMON PINBALL: RUBY AND SAPPHIRE

Much as we baulk at how the Pokémon franchise has been milked, it's fair to say that each game has managed to improve on the previous versions. Take the original *Pokémon Pinball*, for example – while it managed to combine aspects of the Pokémon world with the game of pinball pretty comprehensively, there was certainly room for improvement, not least because of the limitations of the Game Boy Color. So it was only a matter of time before Nintendo created a GBA sequel – and wouldn't you know it, it's even better than the last one.

Of course, if you're the kind of person who doesn't take too kindly to Pokémon, there's a good chance that this game won't interest you in the slightest. That's a shame though, simply because it means you'll miss out on a game that combines the best of both worlds – Pokémon and pinball – while putting aside a lot of the elements that usually put people off. The pinball aspects win out over the extensive wandering, random battling and other RPG bits of the Pokémon series which, if you're not a fan, can only be a good thing.

If you had the chance to play the first *Pokémon Pinball* on the GBC, though, you'll probably notice that very little has changed in the *Ruby And Sapphire* update. This is hardly surprising, seeing as that's pretty much how the franchise has evolved over the years. But while the basic premise remains the same – catching and evolving Pokémon as before, using the Pokéball provided to hit the relevant targets and drop holes as they become available – it's the delicate enhancements that make the game so much more enjoyable than before, including a new scrolling table over the original's flip-screen version, a wider playing field and plenty more unique features on each table.

The only complaints would have to focus on the fact that there are only two tables to choose from (Ruby or Sapphire) and as far as pinball games go, it's been made quite easy – probably for the benefit of younger fans. However, that doesn't stop the game being frustratingly addictive and one that's hard to put down, particularly if, like us, you have to catch 'em all before you can move on.

games™ ENHANCED

IMPROVING ON THE ORIGINAL

CATCH 'EM ALL: This has 50 more Pokémon than the last *Pinball*, most of them from the new games.

SCROLL LOCK: Rather than flicking between screens, the camera scrolls around to follow the ball.

VERDICT 8/10

A GREAT GAME THAT'LL CAPTIVATE FOR HOURS

POKÉMON PINBALL



BETTER THAN

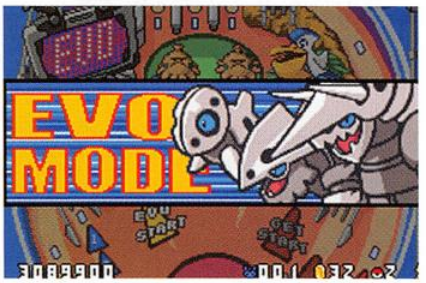
WORSE THAN



PINBALL CHALLENGE DELUXE



Each of the two tables has its own unique elements to play with – *Ruby*, for instance, has this side-tunnel that has to be cleared before power-ups can be collected. However, while each table is packed with hidden extras, it would have been nice to see a few more playfields.



If you want to complete your Pokédex then you'll have to evolve all the Pokémon you catch. Thankfully, it's not as hard as it sounds.



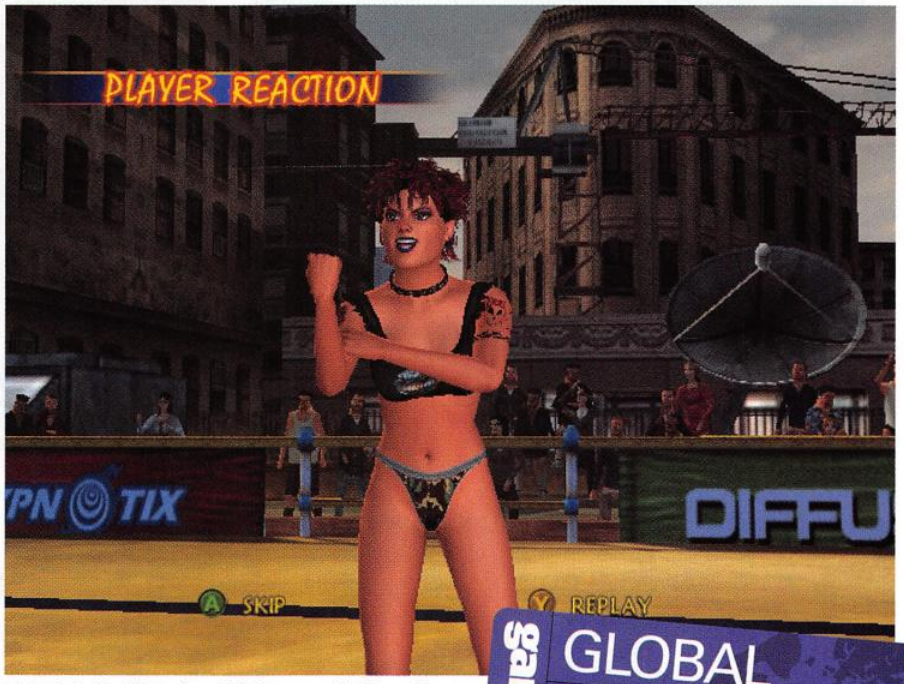
Special bonus stages pop up each time you capture three Pokémon, allowing you to really rack up some serious scores.



Between victory celebrations and colour commentary, it's plain to see why this doesn't have 3+ on the box...



The powered-up spikes and serves are complemented by some rather pretty effects.



Lizzie is the token Brit, complete with dodgy accent, punk stylings and, by the looks of it, a large tub of Immac. Good for her.

games™ GLOBAL

TAKING GAMING ONLINE

VERSUS: Those with an insatiable desire to play volleyball against complete strangers can find solace in *Outlaw Volleyball* as it's the first console spiking game to offer an online feature.

DETAILS

FORMAT REVIEWED
Xbox

ORIGIN
US

PUBLISHER
TDK

DEVELOPER
Hypnotix

PRICE
$99.95

RELEASE
Out Now

PLAYERS
1-4

OUTLAW VOLLEYBALL

FROM COURSES TO COURTS WITH AN IMPRESSIVE LACK OF STYLE

There's no doubt about it – 2003 is the year of beach volleyball. The last few years may have left volleyball fans wanting, but through the efforts of Acclaim, Tecmo and Namco, wannabe spikers have been offered varying amounts of fun and titillation, often in somewhat dubious ratios. Having simultaneously corrupted and livened up the sport of golf, Hypnotix has turned its attention to the year's hippest pastime in an attempt to lower yet more sporting standards.

Unfortunately, it doesn't take long for *Outlaw* humour to go from mildly amusing to downright annoying – with volleyball playing out much faster than golf, the quips and colour commentary soon repeat and grate in the space of minutes. This fleeting comedy appears in all elements of the game although, worryingly, it's the tutorial videos which prove funniest. The variety of modes doesn't disappoint though, allowing you to augment players through Drills, unlock characters and courts on the Tour or just kick back with some online play. And kick back you will – one of the most frustrating things about *OV* is the fact that there's very little feeling of control.

But what seems at first to be a truly pathetic attempt at a sports game does take shape (of sorts) once you put some time into learning exactly how it plays. The targeting system is a novel concept and, once you get used to it, works fairly well, but no matter how good you get, it won't be your own errors that annoy the most. *Outlaw Volleyball* is victim of some horrible AI flaws, from characters failing to notice or reach simple shots to some superhuman heroics that hamper your chances of ever scoring points.

Xbox Live support is obviously one of the major selling points for the game as the online service is noticeably lacking in the sports department. And while it may suffer from the same flaws as the regular multiplayer and, indeed, single-player modes (painfully extended rallies, poor partner AI and repetitive 'humour', among others) it remains a welcome inclusion for when Tour mode has you tearing your hair out. And believe us, it will...

VERDICT 4/10

A DISAPPOINTINGLY MEDIOCRE PACKAGE

SUMMER HEAT BEACH VOLLEYBALL



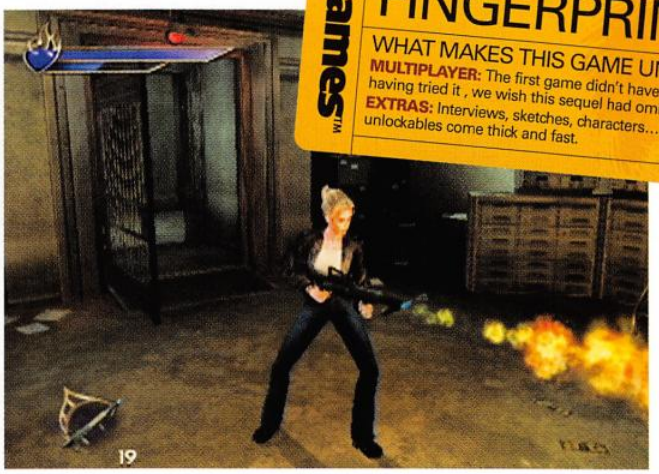
BETTER THAN

WORSE THAN



DEAD OR ALIVE XBV





games™ FINGERPRINT

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME UNIQUE

MULTIPLAYER: The first game didn't have this and having tried it , we wish this sequel had omitted it.

EXTRAS: Interviews, sketches, characters... the unlockables come thick and fast.

DETAILS

FORMAT REVIEWED
PlayStation2

OTHER FORMATS
Xbox, GameCube

ORIGIN
US

PUBLISHER
Vivendi Universal

DEVELOPER
Eurocom

PRICE
$99.95

RELEASE
Out Now

PLAYERS
1-4

BUFFY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER: CHAOS BLEEDS

AND LO, THE SLAYER BECAME THE SLAIN...

When a high-profile sequel is not developed by the same firm as its successful predecessor, it's only natural to be a little wary. There's always the danger that the new team won't capture the magic of the original, will take the game in a direction that in no way benefits it, or could simply bang out a disappointing title and hope for the Robbie Williams effect – if you put a big enough name on the box, it'll sell regardless. Sometimes, though, we're treated to a multitude of these sins...

Frustrating to the point of quashing all enjoyment, it's clear even from an early stage how the 'intelligent' aspects of *Chaos Bleeds* are going to work. When you reach a dead end, it's usually just a case of retrieving a generic puzzle item (usually several of them) from a conveniently inconvenient hiding place before continuing. Cue several minutes of primitive platforming and beating up the undead with a functional combat system before the next 'mash the Triangle button until you find something interactive' session begins. To make matters worse, the six playable characters only serve to make the game even more cluttered. When so many different play styles share the same controls and interface, ease of use is sacrificed in favour of convenience.

For all its faults, *Chaos Bleeds* is not a terrible game. While never approaching the standard of the Xbox original, we have no doubt that at least some fans of the series will see through the stilted dialogue and repetitive one-liners and get a kick out of the excellent re-creations of familiar characters and locations. The trouble is that for every positive element, such as the impressive visuals (for the most part, at least), there's always something waiting to knock it down a peg or two, in this case the diabolical camera. Indeed, the main game is playable enough but between the inconsistencies of the adventuring sections and the needle-in-a-haystack puzzles, Buffy's latest outing manages to frustrate and disappoint more than it inspires or impresses. Not the greatest of claims for an adventure game that needs to hold the player's interest...



Burn, baby, burn. Vampires are susceptible to fire, much like people in general really.

VERDICT 4/10

A DISAPPOINTING FOLLOW-UP TO A SOLID TITLE

XB/GC $99.95 OUT NOW



Owners of the Xbox or GameCube versions can expect little more than a slightly improved graphical showing and the ability to bore three of their friends with the awful multiplayer from the word go.

FIGHTING FORCE 2



BETTER THAN

WORSE THAN



BUFFY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER

A PARAGON PUBLICATION
NO.6 OCTOBER 2003

00c

RETRO

MICRO GAMES AC

STRIDER

A Step-By-Step Guide To Level Two Of Capcom's Classic Ninja Adventure

THIS MONTH IN 1995

Find Out What Was Happening In October '95

AXELAY

Why Don't They Remake Konami's Classic Shoot 'Em Up?



THE GREATEST RETRO GAME EVER MADE!

Are You Cut Out To Be A Gunstar Hero?

AMIGA

CLASSIC 16-BIT COMMODORE GAMING!

THE MEGAMAN FAMILY TREE

JAMES POND II REMEMBERED

RETRO NEWS

FIND OUT WHAT'S GOING ON IN THE HERE AND NOW OF RETRO GAMING...

With the first footage of SEGA's upcoming *Out Run 2* now available on the Internet, it's clear that the game will use a similar control method to that of the original *SEGA Rally Championship* – extreme powersliding is an integral element. This will, of course, result in an exciting gaming experience, but one that may have limited appeal and which is likely to seem simplistic compared to other racing titles on offer today.

Understandably, then, we have to ask if games that feature 'retro' content can be as good as titles released today? The answer, clearly, depends on what you consider to be a 'good' game. If hundreds of cars, tracks and upgrades, combined with a lengthy list of objectives is what you define as good, then the answer is probably no. If, however, you fancy a quick burst of fun that doesn't require an instruction manual the size of the Yellow Pages to play, then some of the titles now referred to as 'retro', or featuring 'retro' content, could be just the thing you're looking for.

Keith Edwards, Retro Editor

THE DREAMCAST LIVES ON

SEGA makes new Dreamcast games

After the likes of *Border Down* and *King Of Fighters 2002*, it's great to see that Dreamcast titles are still receiving a healthy amount of interest in the Far East. Even better news is that SEGA itself is now going to release the latest instalment of its *Puyo Puyo* franchise on its classic machine. It may not be the best-known title in the world, but we're more than happy that *Puyo Puyo Fever* will be appearing on the under-appreciated console.

Of course, a new release on the Dreamcast by none other than SEGA delivers more questions than answers. Will SEGA be planning more titles? Recent games like *King Of Fighters 2002* have sold more units than most Xbox titles. And could this persuade other third parties to return to the Dreamcast fold? More than anything though, we'd love to see SEGA actually re-launch the Dreamcast. The machine itself seems more popular than ever and many titles can still give their 128-bit peers a run for their money. Time will tell, but in the meantime we'll be making some pre-orders...



▲ Wait! Don't chuck it out yet – you can get new games for it, from SEGA no less...

SHINOBI TWO

After *Shinobi* received a favourable response on the PlayStation2 earlier this year, SEGA has decided that it's now time to unleash some screenshots of the swish-looking sequel. Whilst little is currently known about *Kunoichi* (which translates as 'female ninja' in Japanese), it's currently looking like it will be closely following in its predecessors' footsteps.

The Kunoichi herself is looking suitably athletic (although her suit makes her look like she's just appeared in an episode of *Battle Of The Planets*) and early screenshots suggest just as much action as the first game. Overworks is promising that *Kunoichi* will be easier to play than the original, but hasn't revealed if the original arcade game will appear as an extra.





▲ Liked *Shinobi*? Then you might want to start saving up for *Kunoichi*. It'll be like *Shinobi* but easier, and with a lady in it and everything. Want more reasons? Um, get back to us...

Where's the GP32?

The retro handheld seems to have vanished

We're starting to get a little worried about the whereabouts of this fantastic little machine. After it appeared at last year's ECTS we were expecting to see Game Park's retro wonder to go on sale in the UK. Scouring the various stalls at this year's show, however, revealed that the GP32 was nowhere to be seen.

The GP32 is a powerful handheld that can run a selection of emulators, making it the perfect machine for the retro gamer on the move. Although there were some rumblings a few months back about a UK release, we've since heard nothing. This is a real shame as the machine is developing a pretty impressive underground following, something that Game Park would be wise to capitalise upon right now.



▲ We love this machine, but where's it gone?



▲ For retro gamers on the move, this is ideal.

This Month In 1995

Think it's been quiet since 1995? How wrong you are. Since the American launch of Sony's PlayStation in September '95, no fewer than ten new gaming formats have appeared. Though most of them have struggled to keep up with Sony's machine...

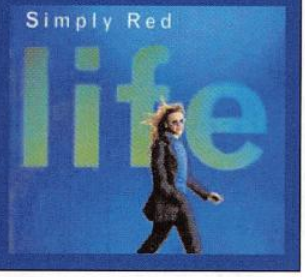
GREAT MOVIES IN 1995 (AMERICA)

1. **Toy Story**
   Grossed $191,796,233
2. **Apollo 13**
   Grossed $172,070,496
3. **GoldenEye**
   Grossed $106,429,941
4. **Se7en**
   Grossed $100,125,643
5. **Die Hard: With A Vengeance**
   Grossed $100,012,499
6. **Braveheart**
   Grossed $75,545,647
7. **Bad Boys**
   Grossed $65,647,413
8. **Twelve Monkeys**
   Grossed $57,141,459
9. **The Usual Suspects**
   Grossed $23,272,306
10. **The Quick & The Dead**
    Grossed $18,552,460



MUSIC CHARTS FOR OCT 1995

1. **Fairground**
   Simply Red
2. **Mr Boombastic**
   Shaggy
3. **Who The F**k Is Alice?**
   Smokie/Roy Chubby Brown
4. **Mis-Shapes/Sorted For Es & Wizz**
   Pulp
5. **You Are Not Alone**
   Michael Jackson
6. **When Love And Hate Collide**
   Def Leppard
7. **Fantasy**
   Mariah Carey
8. **Gangsta's Paradise**
   Coolio
9. **I'd Lie For You (And That's The Truth)**
   Meatloaf
10. **Power Of A Woman**
    Eternal



GAMING NEWS OCT '95

Nintendo's pride can't stop Sony



▶ The Ultra 64 with, erm, wings and stuff.

While many gamers had been awaiting the arrival of Nintendo's much-hyped Ultra 64, by October 1995 it was becoming increasingly obvious that Sony's PlayStation was going to be a far stronger competitor than anyone had predicted. The system had been released in Japan at the end of 1994, and while neither that nor the American launch in September 1995 had been record-breaking, the level of support and excitement in the development community was already obvious.

Of course, while Nintendo's in-house creations had always been of a certain quality, the company would need support from other developers if it was ever going to compete with the number of titles in production for Sony's CD-based format. By this time a handful of the company's closest allies, including Squaresoft and Capcom, had already defected, but, as usual, Nintendo made the best of a bad situation by continuing to add supposedly sought-after developers to its so-called 'Dream Team'.

This list of Ultra 64 supporters was reputedly hand-picked by Nintendo itself, and had begun a year earlier with Rare and Williams. October 1995 would see LucasArts confirmed as a Dream Team developer, along with the announcement of its first Ultra 64 game, *Shadows Of The Empire*. Unfortunately, the game turned out to be average at best, though that didn't stop hard-core European gamers from buying American import copies for as much as $300.

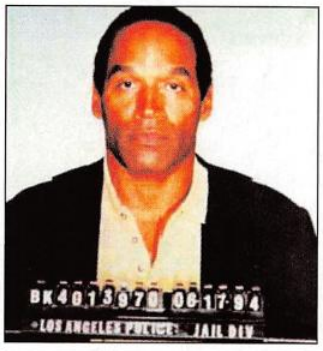
LucasArts' work with the Ultra 64 wasn't the only Nintendo-related news to break during this month in 1995. Aside from Nintendo of Japan changing the name of its upcoming console from Ultra Famicom to Nintendo 64, the company also slightly reduced the price of the Virtual Boy in America from $179.95 to $159.99. Unlike the Game Boy, this innovative piece of hardware (which was developed by Game Boy creator, Gunpei Yokoi) had failed to capture the imagination of the gaming public, mainly due to its cumbersome nature and limited technical abilities. Funnily enough, the new price failed to jump-start sales.

WORLD NEWS

OJ OFF THE HOOK

On 3 October 1995, actor and former American football player Orenthal James Simpson was found not guilty of murdering his ex-wife Nicole and her friend Ronald Goldman. The jury took a mere four hours to reach the verdict, which was remarkable considering that the trial had been one of the lengthiest ever in US legal history at an astonishing 473 days long.

Despite the outcome, the case for murder had been backed up by numerous pieces of physical evidence, including a pair of gloves – one found at the murder scene and the other at Simpson's home. Even so, many felt that the Los Angeles Police Department's integrity was questionable, and that the enquiry was driven by racism.



▶ Frank Drebin, alas, didn't lead the investigation...

Why Don't They Remake...

AXELAY

WE WANT TO SHOOT 'EM UP ALL OVER AGAIN

Released: **1992**
Publisher: **Konami**
Developer: **Konami**
Format: **SNES**

If there's one game that's screaming out for a remake, it's Konami's superb SNES shooter *Axelay*. Back in the golden days of the the Super Nintendo, it seemed the developer could do no wrong. *Super Contra III*, *Super Castlevania IV* and *Cybernator* were just a few of the titles that proved that it was a force to be reckoned with. It was perhaps *Axelay*, however, that will probably be remembered as one of Konami's finest hours on Nintendo's 16-bit console.

The Japanese developer had consistently proven that it knew the SNES's hardware inside out and *Axelay* was the perfect chance to show off just how far the firm's technical skills had progressed. *Axelay*'s first level was like nothing ever seen on a 16-bit console. After powering up your ship you found yourself flying through an amazing 3D stage. Okay, so strictly speaking it was really just some fancy Mode 7, but nevertheless it was simply gob-smacking to look at and created an astounding sense of depth. Enemy fighters, massive boulders and numerous gun emplacements were just a few of the hazards you had to negotiate, and all scaled perfectly as they came into view.

À LA MODE 7

The second level may have been initially disappointing as Konami used a more traditional 2D approach, but within moments it was obvious that it was every bit as good as the first. Levels alternated throughout the rest of the game and all achieved high levels of excellence, with special mention going to level five's incredible lava stage (complete with huge *Dune*-style lava worms). Exquisite level design and stunning visuals were only the half of it, though. Konami had created a host of fantastic soundtracks on previous titles, but the score in *Axelay* was even better. From the eerie second stage opening, to the awesome boss encounters, the game's soundtrack was amazing from start to finish and perfectly complemented the on-screen action.

It was the aforementioned boss encounters that most gamers will fondly remember. A giant robotic ED 209 rip-off (complete with a devastating laser) and a huge fiery Elemental were just a few of the delights to encounter. Most used Mode 7 to stunning effect and all were bloody hard to defeat. *Axelay* was one tough cookie, with even Easy mode offering little respite from the hordes of enemies that would swarm towards you. Fortunately, *Axelay*'s ship came complete with a choice of three interchangeable weapons, although getting hit would render the weapon useless.

Whilst many gamers bemoan the vast amount of SNES ports that turn up on the GBA, this is one title that would be perfect, how about it Konami? We're waiting...





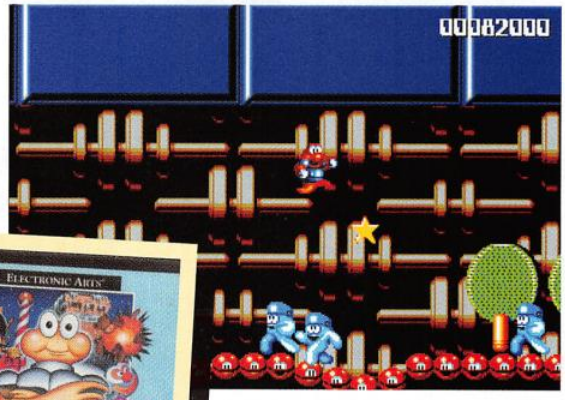


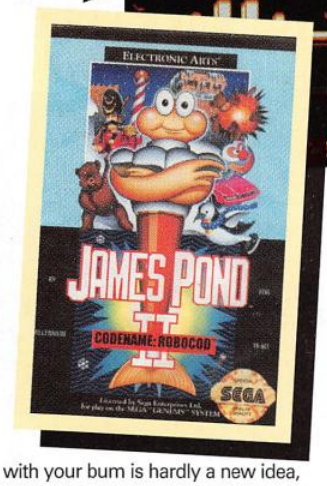




LOOK BACK IN ANGER

If you thought that Electronic Arts' only wrongdoing was selling us yearly updates of its latest sports franchise, you've obviously never played Robocod...





▲ Look at him go, jumping around in his by-the-numbers themed level. Again.

Developed by Millennium, *James Pond II: Codename Robocod* (to give its full title) was another sub-standard platformer in the style of *Rolo To The Rescue*. And, like poor Rolo, Robocod couldn't hold a candle to the moustachioed king of platformers. While the title sequence was fairly amusing – Robocod appears to the strains of some jazzed up *Robocop* music – the game was anything but.

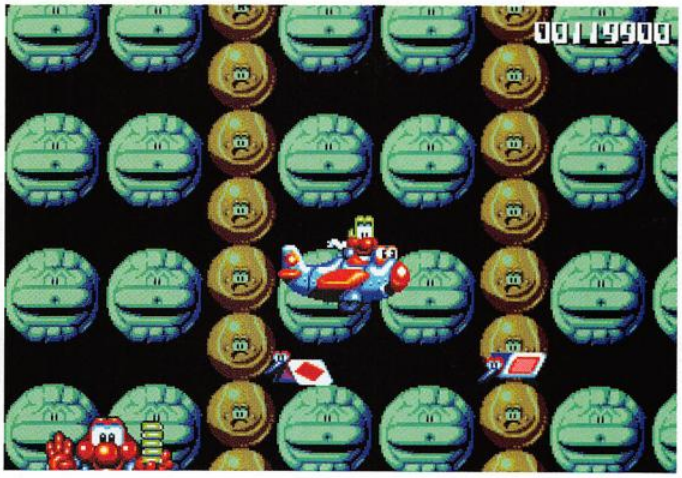
For starters, the James Pond sprite was one of the most charisma-free characters ever created. The idea of seeing a fish dressed as Robocop is funny for about, oh, five seconds. *Robocod*'s plot was similarly inane, seeing you trying to liberate Toyland Castle and rescue Father Christmas, a premise that gave rise to some of the worst elements ever found in a platform title. Toyland Castle consisted of doors that had to be unlocked before you could enter them, but every one concealed a generically bland level. Each was a nightmare to negotiate due to the ridiculously twitchy controls, and it seemed no thought was given to the location of the exits.

Robocod's abilities were poorly implemented and limited to jumping on enemies to kill them, or using his stretchy torso to reach out-of-the-way platforms. While destroying enemies with your bum is hardly a new idea, at least other games featured decent collision detection so that landing slightly to the side of an enemy wouldn't result in the loss of energy.

And did we mention the blatant advertising that saw Penguin bars scattered through most levels?

Robocod's biggest crime, however, was the god-awful music. Millennium had managed to create some of the most nauseatingly annoying tunes ever featured in a videogame. All of this would have been fine if this game stayed dead and buried, but, unfortunately, reports suggest that the metallic one will be appearing on the Game Boy Advance. Save us...





LAST MONTH'S 3DO SCREENSHOTS

Didn't recognise all those 3DO screenshots? It's okay, we didn't think you would...

FIRST ROW
Casper
Way Of The Warrior
Mega Race
Space Ace
Samurai Shodown
Club 3DO Station Invasion
Alone in the Dark 2
Captain Quazar
Ballz
Killing Time

SECOND ROW
Shock Wave 2
Syndicate
Sewer Shark
Star Fighter
Gex
11th Guest
Battle Pinball
Flying Nightmares
Dragon Lore
The Horde

THIRD ROW
Microcosm
Primal Rage
Mad Dog II
Stellar 7 – Draxon's Revenge
Phoenix
Crash N Burn
FIFA International Soccer
Hell: A Cyberpunk Thriller
Super Street Fighter II Turbo
Theme Park

FOURTH ROW
Night Trap
Slopestyle
Creature Shock
Crime Patrol
Space Hulk
Who Shot Johnny Rock?
Balzerion
D
Wing Commander III HOTT
Return Fire

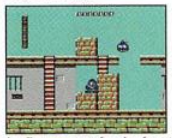
FIFTH ROW
Out Of This World
Off-World Interceptor
Shadow War Of Succession
Ice Breaker
Foes Of Ali
Gridders
Doom
Need For Speed
POed
Who Shot Johnny Rock?

SIXTH ROW
Defcon 5
Waialae County Club
Slam N Jam 95
Demolition Man
Star Wars Rebel Assault
Bust-A-Move
Battle Sport
Myst
Road Rash
The Need For Speed

SEVENTH ROW
Shanghai Triple Threat
Cannon Fodder
The Incredible Machine
StarBlade
Corpse Killer
Brain Dead
Dragon's Lair
Drug Wars
Flashback
Guardian War

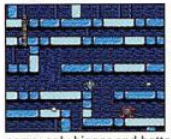
EIGHTH ROW
PaTaank
Alone In The Dark
Immercenary
Total Eclipse
Bladeforce
Novastorm
3D Atlas
Battle Chess
Escape From Monster Manor
Family Feud

MEGA MAN



NES
1987
There had already been Super Man and Batman, so how about a hero called Mega Man? Well, that would be fine, except for the fact the Capcom's hero was actually called Rock Man in Japan…

MEGA MAN 2



NES
1988
Continuing the same formula that Capcom had developed for the first game, *Mega Man 2* was essentially more of the same, only bigger and better. This featured eight bosses and a password system.

MEGA MAN 3



NES
1990
Again a continuation from the first two games, *Mega Man 3* splits fans down the middle. Although there's more to see and do, some feel that what's on offer is a little too much like every other platform game around.

MEGA MAN 4



NES
1991
Although *Mega Man 4* is as popular as its predecessors, it's often seen as a weak link in the series. Offering little in terms of innovation, this looked dated compared to what the SNES was offering.

MEGA MAN 5



NES
1992
Mega Man's fifth outing contained some rather groovy visuals (check out the parallax on display), an interesting plot involving a clone of Proto Man and was a great continuation of the series.

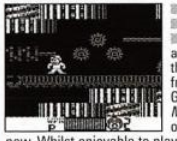
HANDHELDS

MEGA MAN I



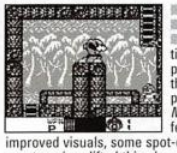
Game Boy
1991
Considering the limitations of the hardware, the first *Mega Man* game on Game Boy managed to emulate the original NES game incredibly well. Less intricate than its NES counterpart, this was still a decent game.

MEGA MAN II



Game Boy
1992
Despite offering a few extra items that went missing from the original Game Boy *Mega Man*, its sequel offered nothing new. Whilst enjoyable to play, it was still a poor second to the original NES games.

MEGA MAN III



Game Boy
1992
The Game Boy titles always ran a poor second to their NES counterparts and *Mega Man III* is no different. Fortunately, improved visuals, some spot-on animation and great remixes lifted this above previous efforts.

THE X FACTOR

MEGA MAN X



SNES
1993
Mega Man X was a complete standalone series from the original NES titles. Dr Light was dead and Dr Wily and his cronies were gone. This was a great debut on the SNES and made full use of the new format.

MEGA MAN 6



NES
1993
With the NES rapidly approaching the end of its shelf life, Nintendo decided to have the sixth *Mega Man* title licensed exclusively to itself. But it never managed to achieve the same status as the rest of them.

PARTY

ROCK BOARD



NES
1993
When *Rock Board* arrived on the NES, it was clear that Mega Man's name was being applied to any old tat. You rolled dice and either built structures or faced the consequences depending on the result.

MEGA MAN IV



Game Boy
1993
Now this is more like it. Digitised pics, some cool level design and an impressive (for the Game Boy) plot meant that the series was now hitting its stride. Though it was still a world away from its NES cousins.

SPORTS

MEGA MAN'S SOCCER



SNES
1994
Unsurprisingly, *Mega Man's Soccer* is as good as it sounds (i.e. not very). Poor controls were one of the many problems in this spin-off. Fortunately, Mega Man stuck to blowing things up in the future.

MEGA MAN X2



SNES
1993
The *X* franchise continued with a title that didn't feel quite so good as its predecessor. The Air Dash seemed to be more trouble than it was worth and the difficulty started leaning towards the frustrating.

MEGA MAN: THE WILY WARS



Mega Drive
1993
Mega Man's only Mega Drive outing was technically impressive, had some great gameplay and is now incredibly tough to track down. Don't be surprised if you're asked a high price if you do find one.

MEGA MAN V



Game Boy
1994
Mega Man's last monochrome outing is also his best. The introduction of the Mega Arm and Tango (Mega Man's green cat) were more than welcome and it was a great ending to the sometimes poor series.

MEGA MAN: THE POWER BATTLE



Arcade
1995
Mega Man's arcade outings may have been beautiful to look at, but a step away from the traditional platforming of old in favour of boss battles meant that this was for the fans only.

MEGA MAN X3



Multi
1995
The third *X* title delivered several enhancements over its peers. Zero was now playable (though he seemed to have been added as an afterthought) and the bosses now changed their attack patterns mid battle.

MEGA MAN 7



SNES
1995
Mega Man's overdue sequel offered plenty of fond memories for fans of the NES games and was seen as a return to form. It's also noteworthy that this marked the first appearance of Bass and his robotic dog.

MEGA MAN GG



Game Gear
1995
Programmed by US Gold, *Mega Man GG* was a fun title but was ultimately marred by poor controls and the fact that it never felt like part of the franchise. Check it out, but prepare to be disappointed.

MEGA MAN FAMILY TREE

Every company needs a mascot and Capcom is no different. Mega Man is easily one of the developer's most recognisable characters, from platformers to cameos in *Marvel Vs Capcom 2* and *Cannon Spike* he's certainly seen a lot of action. Join **games™** as we discover what he's been up to over the last 16 years.

MEGA MAN 2: THE POWER FIGHTERS



Arcade
1996
Unfortunately, Capcom's second arcade title was little better than its first, a shame as the CPSII board meant it looked stunning. Three different missions ensured that it was better received than the prequel.

MEGA MAN 8



PlayStation/Saturn
1996
By now, the mighty Mega Man was beginning to look a little tired. Both versions looked nice enough, but something didn't quite gel. *Mega Man 8* added too much and suffered for it.

RACING

MEGA MAN BATTLE & CHASE



PlayStation
1997
Another spin-off that failed to take the series in a new direction. This was basically a rip-off of *Mario Kart*, but lacked the finesse of Nintendo's classic racer. This never received a US release but did appear in Europe.

MEGA MAN X4



PlayStation/Saturn
1997
Halfway through the series and things are not looking good. While the visuals were excellent in places, the overall game was marred by dodgy controls. Fortunately, things did pick up…

MEGA MAN COMPLETE WORKS



PlayStation
1999
Obviously seeing a hole in the market, Capcom re-released the first six NES titles on one disc. Only ever released in Japan, this featured the original graphics with touched-up loading and display screens.

3D

MEGA MAN LEGENDS



PlayStation/N64
1998
Legends was an arcade adventure and a huge departure for the series, it later appeared on the N64 and apart from slight technical alterations, was exactly the same game. With many of the original characters missing, this is a real oddity.

MEGA MAN & BASS



SNES
1998
Recently available as a port on the Game Boy Advance, *Mega Man & Bass* plays very similarly to *Mega Man X4*. It suffers from the same problems and is another weak link in the *Mega Man* chain.

MEGA MAN X5



PlayStation
2000
The *X* series continued to change its formulae and the latest incarnation added ropes, the ability to change between characters for each stage and the ability to duck as some of its extras.

MEGA MAN LEGENDS 2



PlayStation
2000
Legends 2 offered a few enhancements over *MML*, but was essentially another arcade adventure which offered little to make it stand out from a slew of identical games. Let's hope Capcom doesn't revive the series.

MEGA MAN XTREME



Game Boy Color
2000
Mega Man Xtreme was basically a Game Boy reworking of the *X* series. As a result it shares all the same strengths and weaknesses, but ultimately suffers due to the small screen.

MEGA MAN X6



PlayStation
2001
More of the same, and the series continued its downward spiral. Poor controls and a bug which meant it was possible to get stuck on certain levels did little to endear it to fans.

RPG

MEGA MAN BATTLE NETWORK



Game Boy Advance
2001
Network was an isometric title that fused RPG elements with card collecting to create a unique little game. Once you've got your head around it, it's a pleasant change to the rest of the series.

MEGA MAN XTREME 2



Game Boy Color
2001
Spanning the first three SNES titles, *Xtreme 2* was a marked improvement over *Xtreme* but was still hampered by the games it had been based upon. And, as is to be expected, the small screen didn't help.

MEGA MAN BATTLE NETWORK 2



Game Boy Advance
2002
BN2 improved on the original and, despite its quirkiness, is a welcome break from the *Mega Man* series. There's plenty to collect, some interesting bosses and some slick isometric visuals.

MEGA MAN ZERO



Game Boy Advance
2002
Mega Man Zero kept the same graphical style as its 16- and 32-bit peers and included the raising of Cyber Elves to equip you with new powers. It's a decent title but too difficult for its own good.

MEGA MAN BATTLE NETWORK 3



Game Boy Advance
2003
Battle Network 3 was more of the same, although you now needed to buy two versions (*Blue* & *White*) *à la Pokémon* if you wanted to collect everything available in the game.

MEGA MAN ZERO 2



Game Boy Advance
2003
Due out towards the end of the year, *Zero 2* promises an easier way of raising your Cyber Elves, a co-operative two-player game via system link and improved visuals.

MEGA MAN NETWORK TRANSMISSION



GameCube
2003
The first GameCube title is a cel-shaded extravaganza that combines both *Battle network* and traditional *Mega Man* to great effect. It isn't going to appeal to everyone, but it's worth picking up.

MEGA MAN X7



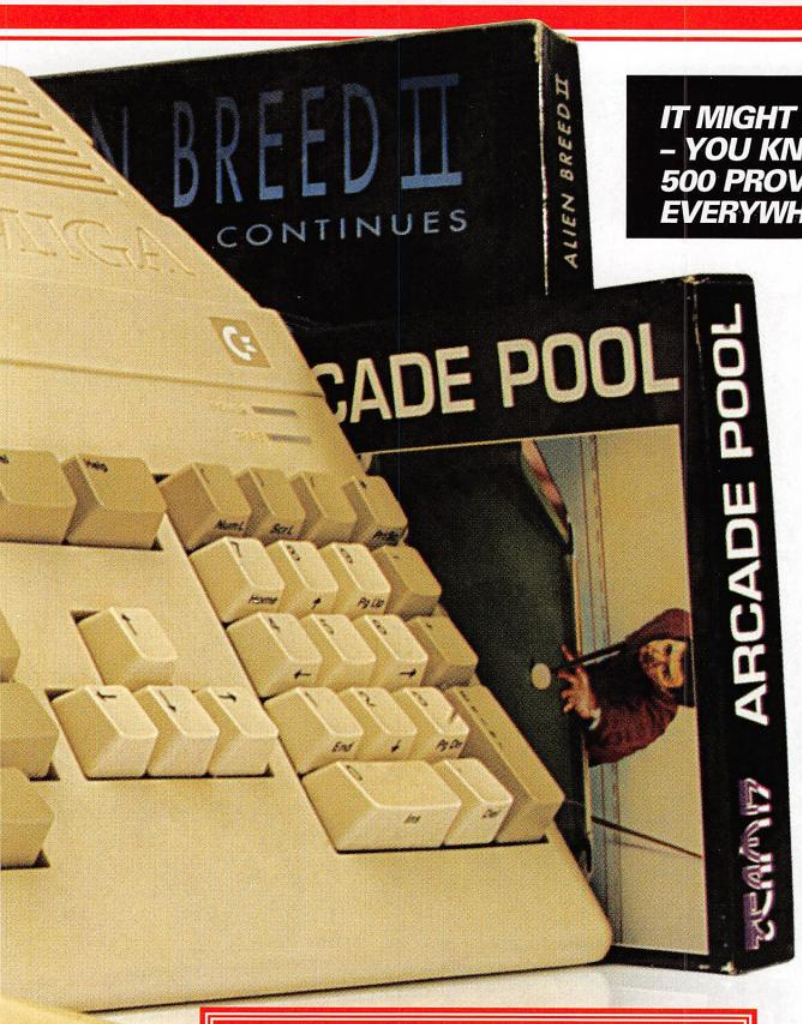
PlayStation2
2003
Containing a mixture of both 2D and 3D levels, and with the handy ability to switch between two different characters at will, this looks like it may well turn the *X* series around once it's released.



SPECIFICATIONS

PROCESSOR: Motorola MC68000
SPEED: 7.16 MHz
RAM: 512 Chip RAM or 1MB Chip RAM on motherboard
ROM: 256K or 512K on motherboard
SOUND: Two stereo audio output ports

Commodore AMIGA 5



IT MIGHT HAVE LOOKED LIKE A PROPER COMPUTER – YOU KNOW, FOR GROWN UPS – BUT THE AMIGA 500 PROVED TO BE A TREAT FOR GAMERS EVERYWHERE (ADULT OR OTHERWISE)

With the Commodore 64 such a firm favourite with gamers, expectations were high when Commodore announced an (unofficial) follow up. Released in 1987, the Amiga 500 instantly became a classic thanks to some savvy marketing by Commodore and it easily set itself apart from Atari's slightly inferior ST.

When the Amiga 1000 had been released in 1985 it was seen more as a business machine and its high price put off many potential buyers. Fortunately, Commodore released a lower spec machine at an affordable price and the Amiga 500 that we all know and love was delivered into the hands of gamers.

Pre-loaded with Commodore's popular (though often bugged) Workbench application, the 500 quickly proved itself to be an extremely versatile machine that was just at home calculating spreadsheets as it was playing the likes of *Populous* or *Shadow Of The Beast*. Gamers were in awe of the fantastic visuals and superior sound that the Amiga offered and it was arguably a key suspect in the death of the 8-bit market.

Unfortunately, Commodore's insistence on bringing out new machines at an alarming rate meant that the company eventually found itself in financial difficulties. Commodore's dream is now long dead but at least we still have fond memories.

"Why I love my Amiga"

I still have vivid memories of walking into my local Adam's World shop and using every penny of my savings to buy my Amiga all those years ago, complete with a copy of *Speedball II*, which the shop assistant assured me was brilliant. It was a real step forward from everything else at the time and can still hold its own as a 'proper' computer as well as a games machine today. Plus it helped keep me off the streets for many of my adolescent years...

Martin Mathers

You've got to be kidding

ANYTHING WITH '32' IN ITS NAME IS GOING TO BE BAD

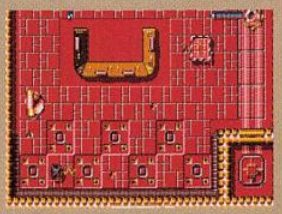


We'll admit to being among the many suckers who were tricked into buying Commodore's ill-fated CD32 that was released in the company's final days. Though technically impressive, the games failed to deliver, with many titles just straight ports of their Amiga 500 or 1200 counterparts. Sure, you may have been able to play the likes of *Worms* and *Pinball Fantasies* with a joypad, but this did little to stop you from feeling pretty ripped off at having paid good money for the privilege.



Classic Machine







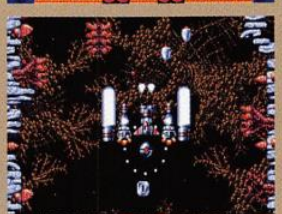










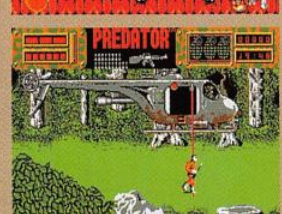



















AMIGA CD



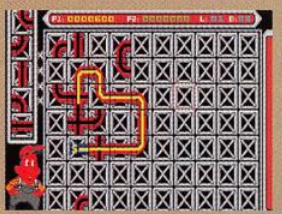




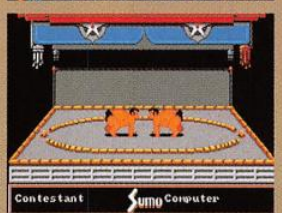






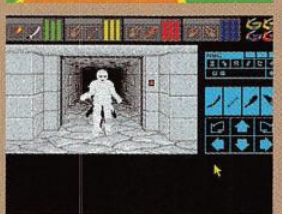
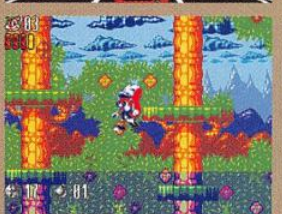




























Six of the Best

The advanced power of the Amiga 500 meant that it was home to a selection of fantastic games, many of which have never been bettered…

SPEEDBALL 2: BRUTAL DELUXE

Developer: **Bitmap Brothers**
Year: **1990**

It seems like we're always harping on about the Bitmap Brothers' classic future sport, but honestly, it's really that good. Nothing can prepare you for the sheer ferocity that a single gruelling match can contain; the action throughout is incredibly fast and frenetic and doesn't let up for a single second. Visuals are extremely well drawn and feature that typical metallic sheen which quickly became the Bitmap's trademark, and who could forget the wonderful shouts for "Ice cream, Ice cream"? If ever there was an instant classic, this was it. You must play this before you die.





THE SECRET OF MONKEY ISLAND

Developer: **LucasArts**
Year: **1991**

LucasArts' first foray into the world of pirates and treachery is one of its best-loved classics and still proves to be an enjoyable romp today. All of the LucasArts trademarks were in place, from the mind-bending puzzles to the quirky storyline that was made even more enjoyable by the fantastic sense of humour that prevailed throughout. Taking on the role of wannabe pirate Guybrush Threepwood, you soon found yourself immersed in an engaging point-and-click adventure that eventually went on to spawn three sequels.





LEMMINGS

Developer: **Psygnosis**
Year: **1991**

Controlling a bunch of suicidal rodents may not sound like fun, but it was sheer gaming heaven. Extremely simple in execution – guide a set number of the little critters to an exit – the fiendish levels took an age to master. *Lemmings* was a massive success and quickly appeared on practically every home system. Although there were many different breeds of Lemming – including Climbers, Blockers and Diggers – nothing was more satisfying than setting a hapless rodent to self-destruct and waiting to hear their customary cries of "Oh No".



▲ It looks easy now, but just you wait…

SENSIBLE SOCCER

Developer: **Sensible Software**
Year: **1991**

Before *Pro Evo*, this was the title that was considered king of football. It might not look like much now, but in its day, gamers couldn't get enough of *Sensible Software*'s classic interpretation of the beautiful game. Every player was superbly animated and could pull off all manner of shots and passes. There were plenty of updates to ensure that each team was as up-to-date as possible and the gameplay throughout the series was unrivalled. *Sensible Soccer* will always have a special place in our hearts.



SYNDICATE

Developer: **Bullfrog**
Year: **1993**

Bullfrog confirmed its reputation for delivering classic strategy titles with the excellent *Syndicate*. Set in the typical 'not too distant future', the game saw you controlling a squad of four androids in an attempt to wipe out opposing Syndicates. Once your androids were suitably equipped, you could unleash them on the wonderfully detailed 3D isometric settings. Missions were extremely involving and would range from kidnappings to complex assassinations. Above all, though, the game was incredibly violent and great fun.

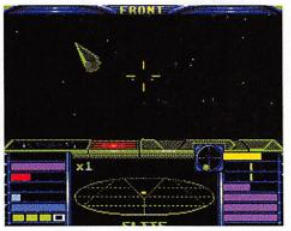


▲ Ignore the map, this was actually great fun.

ELITE

Developer: **Acornsoft**
Year: **1988**

Whilst many will have fond memories of *Elite* on the early 8-bit computers, the arrival of the Amiga meant that gamers could experience the classic trading game in a whole new way. Ships were now easy to identify (thanks to the power of 16-bit graphics) and *The Blue Danube* finally sounded like it was supposed to. Of course, 16-bit power also meant that the game was now finally able to tear away from its original 32K roots. Though many preferred *Elite*'s sequel, *Frontier*, true aficionados will always swear by the original.





▲ Japanese shooter in 'really rather good' shock. All true, apart from the 'shock' bit.





Greatest RETRO Game Ever



G·U·N·S·T·A·R H·E·R·O·E·S

Title: **Gunstar Heroes**
Developer: **Treasure**
Format: **Mega Drive**
Release date: **1993**

In 1993 a development team consisting of ex-Konami employees who were tired of making countless sequels released its first ever title. The team in question was Treasure and the game was *Gunstar Heroes* – now recognised as one of both the Mega Drive's and Treasure's true pinnacles.

From the moment Treasure's spinning logo appeared on-screen, you knew you were in for something special. True to form, *Gunstar* boasted an incredible amount of original content, both technically and from a gameplay perspective. Upon starting a game, you were given a choice of two standard fighting modes – Free Shot (run and fire at the same time) or Fixed Shot (you could fire in eight directions but were unable to move).

Once you had chosen the first of four selectable levels (from a total of seven), *Gunstar*'s full glory became apparent. Every single level was, quite simply, a masterwork of design. One minute you'd be tearing along in a mine cart (complete with handy anti-gravity ability), the next you'd be racing up the scaffolding of a rocket that was getting ready for take-off. But it was level four's superb board game that was arguably one of the game's most treasured moments.

Run to the centre of the screen and a giant die would fall down. One quick throw later (easier said than done when you're fighting over the dice with your opponent) and you'd soon be moving around the board. Squares would contain extra items, boss encounters or mini puzzles, as well as a dreaded final square that would send you all the way back to the beginning.

Another unique aspect of *Gunstar* was its firing system. You were initially able to choose between four different weapon types, but by matching up two icons at the top of the screen your base weapon became much more powerful. Combine two different icons and you could create all manner of exotic firepower with which to annihilate your many foes.

Treasure's masterstroke, however, was the sheer technical flair and inventiveness it put aside for the game's visuals and incredible bosses. Sprite rotation, scaling and parallax scrolling were all used to create amazing levels and gave each boss superb amounts of personality. An excellent soundtrack perfectly complemented the on-screen visuals and helped create one of Treasure's defining moments.

JUST OUR LUCK

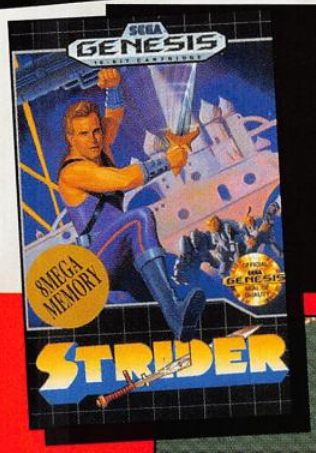
The box art for *Gunstar Heroes* is a perfect example of the Western lack of creativity when it comes to selling a game. Japanese gamers got beautiful anime-styled art that perfectly captured the quirkiness of the game (see above). Western owners, on the other hand, got a rather generic pose of the main characters that failed to make it stand out from hordes of other shooters. Bloody typical.



▲ European and American gamers only got generic Westernised box art, rather than anime loveliness.

Step-by-Step

This Month: STRIDER



STEP 1-3
Starting off in Siberia, your first task is to avoid the many wolves and grab that handy Sword Enhancer. Pick it up then slide under the door before it closes.







STEP 7-9
Your next task is to negotiate this tunnel – watch out for any debris from the dead gorilla, then quickly make your way to the top of the shaft. It's almost too easy...









STEP 13-15
This guy is quite tricky because he constantly shifts around. Your best bet is to jump towards him, then attack at the last moment. Careful how you go, because there's more to come.



STEP 16-18
No time to rest. Run down the mountainside as quickly as you can. Avoid the mines and watch out for that gaping chasm at the bottom – it can catch out unwary gamers.









STEP 22-24
You need to be on your toes here as lots of bombs constantly drop from the sky. Make your way across the skiffs and watch out for the airship's propeller – it can do some damage.









STEP 28-30
Take out this trio of lovely (but oh-so-deadly) ladies and make your way to the control room. Muster all your strength to kill the guard and the level's completed. Nice one.



Every month, we'll take a look at a classic game and give you a walkthrough guide to a specific stage. Our first candidate is the second level of Capcom's Strider

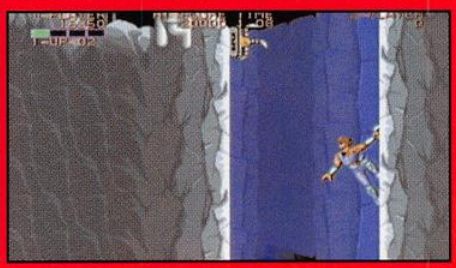


STEP 4-6
He may look tough, but this metal gorilla is a walkover. Simply hammer away at him until he bursts into flames.









STEP 10-12
As soon as you get into this cog room make your way to the land side. Avoiding the spiked platforms, grab as much energy as possible then make your way to the mid-level boss.



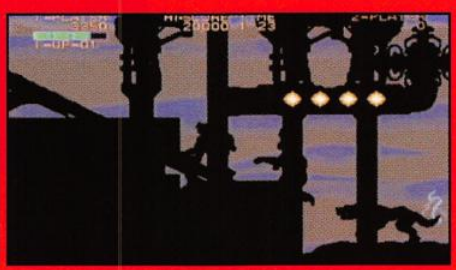








STEP 19-21
You'll now find yourself in a power station (complete with intermittent blackouts). Carefully make your way to the top of the station and make sure you grab the extra life.

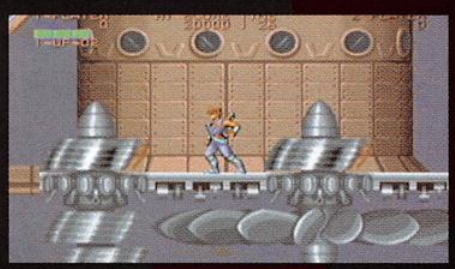








STEP 25-27
Jump over the turbines and then find this handy spot in front of the gun emplacement. From this relatively safe haven you can fire at your foes at leisure – handy, eh?









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

LAUNCH DATE
24 November 2000

MEDIA
4.75-inch DVD Disc

CURRENT PRICE
$329.95

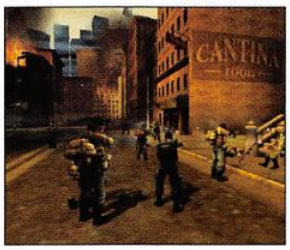
The oldest of the next-generation consoles, having had well over a year's head start over both the GameCube and Xbox. With support across the board from third-party developers, a built-in DVD player and backward compatibility with older PSone games, it's the most popular videogame console available today.



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 3		Konami	In-House
6	Burnout 2: Point Of Impact		Acclaim	Criterion
7	Dark Chronicle	IMPORT	Sony	In-House
8	Rez		SEGA	UGA
9	Amplitude		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	Freedom Fighters		Electronic Arts	Io Interactive
14	NBA Street 2		Electronic Arts	EA Sports BIG
15	Colin McRae Rally 04		Codemasters	In-House
16	Project Zero		Wanadoo	Tecmo
17	Ape Escape 2		Sony	In-House
18	Hitman 2: Silent Assassin		Eidos	Io Interactive
19	XGRA		Acclaim	In-House
20	Virtua Fighter 4 Evolution		SEGA	AM2

VIEWPOINT
FREEDOM FIGHTERS
Surprised that EA could come up with something as impressive and original as this? Don't be – thanks to the talents of developer Io Interactive, *Freedom Fighters* is a real gem of a game. Who needs realism when you've got arcade action, eh?



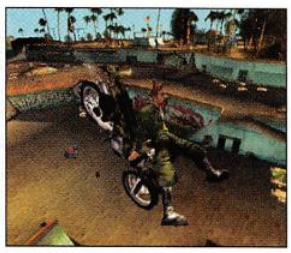
VIEWPOINT
AMPLITUDE
And it's about time too. We've been enjoying the delights of *Amplitude* for months now, so it's nice to know that now you can too. Of course, if you ever catch us online it's best just to run away – we've had far too much practice at it for our own good.



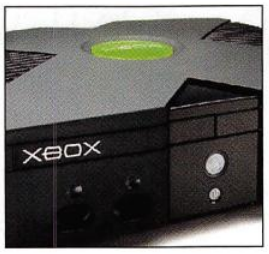
VIEWPOINT
COLIN MCRAE RALLY 04
Another year, another great *Colin McRae* game from those geniuses at Codemasters – did you really expect anything less? Not surprisingly, it's better than ever and if it wasn't for a slightly patchy multiplayer mode is quite possibly the best rally game we've seen.

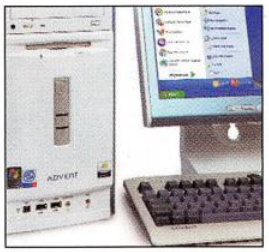


VIEWPOINT
FREESTYLE METALX
While not good enough to make it onto our 'must-have' list, Midway's attempt to create *Tony Hawk* on a bike still deserves a nod – mainly because it's just good, wholesome fun. If you're aching for some motocross action, you could do worse than this.





GAMECUBE

DETAILS

MANUFACTURER
Nintendo

LAUNCH DATE
17 May 2002

MEDIA
3-inch Optical Disc

CURRENT PRICE
$199.95

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	F-Zero GX	IMPORT	Nintendo	Amusement Vision
4	Winning Eleven 6: Final Evolution	IMPORT	Konami	In-House
5	Super Monkey Ball 2		SEGA	Amusement Vision
6	TimeSplitters 2		Eidos	Free Radical
7	Burnout 2: Point Of Impact		Acclaim	In-House
8	Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 4		Activision	Neversoft
9	Ikaruga		Treasure	In-House
10	Super Mario Sunshine		Nintendo	In-House
11	Eternal Darkness		Nintendo	Silicon Knights
12	Soul Calibur II		Namco	In-House
13	Mario Golf: Toadstool Tour	IMPORT	Nintendo	Camelot
14	Resident Evil		Capcom	In-House
15	Resident Evil Zero		Capcom	In-House
16	Mario Party 4		Nintendo	Hudson
17	Viewtiful Joe	IMPORT	Capcom	In-House
18	Skies Of Arcadia Legends		SEGA	Overworks
19	Star Wars: Rogue Leader		Activision	Factor 5
20	Animal Crossing	IMPORT	Nintendo	In-House

VIEWPOINT

F-ZERO GX

Okay, so it might not be the massive leap forward that everyone might have hoped for, but when it comes to polish there's nothing slicker than SEGA's update to the classic franchise. We're still trying to dominate those Diamond courses...



VIEWPOINT

MARIO GOLF: TOADSTOOL TOUR

Those of you who like your golf realistic, turn the page now, there's nothing for you here. If, on the other hand, you like to have fun while ruining a good walk, then *Mario Golf* is a must. Shame it's not out here until next year.



VIEWPOINT

FINAL FANTASY: CRYSTAL CHRONICLES

Yes, we're gluttons for punishment. Not able to wait until the US release in February, we're already plugging through the Japanese version of Square's GC opus – and we haven't the foggiest what's going on.



VIEWPOINT

METROID PRIME

Don't ask us why, but this month we were overcome with a sudden urge to revisit one of the greatest games on the GameCube to date. And you know what? It's still as great as ever. Plus it gave us the excuse to play the NES version all day long. Bliss.



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

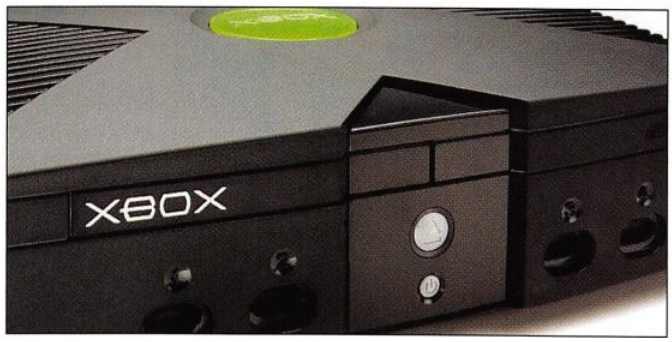
MANUFACTURER
Microsoft

LAUNCH DATE
14 March 2002

MEDIA
4.75-inch DVD Disc

CURRENT PRICE
$329.95

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	Star Wars: Knights Of The Old Republic	Activision	BioWare
7	Project Gotham Racing	Microsoft	Bizarre Creations
8	Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 4	Activision	Neversoft
9	Project Zero	Microsoft	Tecmo
10	Burnout 2: Point Of Impact	Acclaim	Criterion Studios
11	Dead Or Alive 3	Microsoft	Tecmo
12	Soul Calibur II	Namco	In-House
13	XGRA	Acclaim	In-House
14	Moto GP	THQ	Climax
15	Hitman 2: Silent Assassin	Eidos	Io Interactive
16	Aggressive Inline	Acclaim	Z-Axis
17	Freedom Fighters	Electronic Arts	Io Interactive
18	Colin McRae Rally 04	CodeMasters	In-House
19	Wakeboarding Unleashed	Activision	Shaba Games
20	Tiger Woods 2004	Electronic Arts	In-House

VIEWPOINT

CONFLICT: DESERT STORM 2

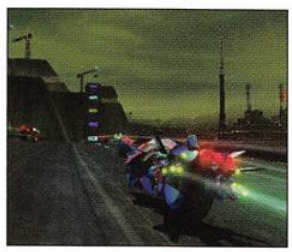
Even though much of our time has been spent with *Freedom Fighters* this month, we still appreciate a bit of desert combat now and then – hence the appearance of *Conflict: Desert Storm 2*. (Although it's not quite enough to rock our kasbah.)



VIEWPOINT

XGRA

So you're not the owner of a GameCube – that doesn't mean you shouldn't be without a damn fast racer. Luckily, Acclaim's bike-based speed freak more than compensates for the lack of Nintendo's franchise. In fact, it's even faster in some places.



VIEWPOINT

STAR WARS: KNIGHTS OF THE OLD REPUBLIC

Don't argue, just listen – this is one of the best *Star Wars* games ever. Yes, ever. Whatever it is they're putting in the water over at BioWare, it must be working. What else could have spawned such a playable *Star Wars* title?



VIEWPOINT

TIGER WOODS 2004

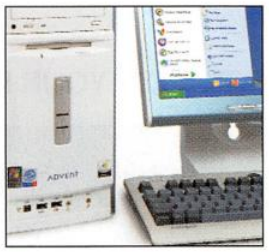
It happens every year, but EA's release of yet another *Tiger Woods* game always seems to coincide with half the people in the **games™** office taking a week off. Lord knows why, though we suspect more than a few birdies get sunk in the process.











GBA

DETAILS

MANUFACTURER
Nintendo

LAUNCH DATE
22 June 2001

MEDIA
Flash Cartridge

CURRENT PRICE
$199.95



Ideal for gaming on the move, the GBA is a cheap and effective way of getting games to those who don't have time to sit down and play. The leaps in handheld technology mean that GBA games are now more accomplished and can even be compared favourably to their console-based cousins. The lovely SP model is available now.

TOP TEN MUST-HAVE GAME BOY ADVANCE GAMES

No.	Title	Publisher	Developer
1	Advance Wars 2	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	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 / Sapphire	Nintendo	In-House
9	Splinter Cell	Ubi Soft	In-House
10	Speedball 2: Brutal Deluxe	Wanadoo	Crawfish

VIEWPOINT
METROID FUSION
Another revisited title that tied in nicely with our sudden desire for all things *Metroid*. For classic Samus, it really doesn't get much better than this. Really.



VIEWPOINT
ADVANCE WARS 2: BLACK HOLE RISING
If the words 'buy' and 'now' haven't formed in your mind after seeing how great *Advance Wars 2* is, you're clearly demented.



PC

DETAILS

MANUFACTURER
N/A

LAUNCH DATE
N/A

MEDIA
4.75-inch CD/DVD Disc

CURRENT PRICE
$variable



While primarily bought as a work platform, the PC has swiftly become the haven of the more 'mature' gamer. With its natural ability for online and LAN play, it's 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	Tron 2.0	Disney	Monolith
9	Age Of Mythology	Microsoft	Ensemble Studios
10	Day Of Defeat	Activision	Valve Software

VIEWPOINT
CHAMP MANAGER 4
Still ruling the roost as far as football management goes, the new season can only mean that we've dug out our boots and started training all over again.



VIEWPOINT
DAY OF DEFEAT
Okay, so it hasn't got a single-player mode, but as long as you've got some kind of online connection you'll have all the friends you'll ever need.



CONTACT

ILLUMINATING THE WORLD OF games™

THIS IS WHERE WE HAVE A REST AND LET YOU LOT DO THE TALKING. TO BE HONEST, MOST OF YOU SEEM MORE JADED THAN US BUT AT LEAST YOU'RE AMONGST FRIENDS...

This month a gloom has set about you all and even the most cheerful among us have been infected with the notion that gaming is just not what it used to be...





☐ **ON THE SUBJECT** of a single-format gaming world, We should keep in mind the fact that competition between developers helps push innovation and diversity. Having a single-format gaming world is very unlikely, possibly impossible. The idea of having all the great games (and bad ones at that) on just the one console is bliss.

Imagine not spending about $200–$500 on several consoles, but just paying for one. That would be heaven. But then if we had a single-platform world, where would the competition come from? As **games™** says, without the different consoles we wouldn't have as much innovation or the will to push games as far as we can. Take a look at the games that come from Sony, Microsoft and Nintendo – almost every first-party release is impressive. But with one console, would each developer strive so hard to produce such superlative software? At present, the impetus to make such high-quality games is to promote and sell their consoles.

So surely the cons outweigh the pros of having a single-platform world? I guess that we have become used to the luxury of choice but I'm fairly certain that's because we've always had the choice of platforms and each console manufacturer has had to vie for our attention. But it seems certain that without the console wars we'd never have the classics we have now, surely?

Damien Thomson

games™: This is pure speculation, of course, and we'd like to think that Nintendo, for example, would continue to make remarkable software whether it produced its own consoles or not. However, as we're great advocates of choice and we do feel that competition drives innovation, we'd tend to agree with you.

☐ **SO INDUSTRY ANALYSTS** reckon that the games industry will be worth $5.5 billion by 2007? I actually wonder if there will be a games industry in 2007. Where can gaming go? Better graphics? Better sound? We're looking at a technological peak in games consoles, particularly with Xbox, so these kinds of advancements should be ruled out. All that's left to improve upon is gameplay, and even that seems unlikely.

Sequels, cash-ins, updates and just a few innovative games seem to be the order of the day. The advent of 3D gaming did deliver a whole new set of genres that weren't possible before, but it seems that 3D gaming has gone pretty much as far as it can go, so how can developers innovate? Gaming is getting stagnant, overcrowded and uninspiring. How much further can current genres be stretched before people give up on gaming, bored of the same old games? If things don't change, I can foresee the demise of gaming and with it, the death of the games industry.

Matty Foster

"IF WE HAD A SINGLE-PLATFORM WORLD, WHERE WOULD THE COMPETITION COME FROM? WE WOULDN'T HAVE THE INNOVATION"

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 your letters to the following fax number: 02 9265 1864



Want to go adventuring on the Xbox? Look no further than *Knights Of The Old Republic* – it's a bit good.

games™: It is hard to imagine where games might go in the future, but it's the job of developers to shape and define that – something they've managed to do for over two decades. Certainly there are bog-standard, middle-of-the-road games that don't innovate, but the same can be said of music or films and no-one is suggesting that either is in decline.

Likewise with technology, one thing that you can be certain of is that consoles will continue to become more powerful and that some of the games that we'll experience on them will be very different than those we play today. Take *Gran Turismo* on the PSone. When it appeared in 1998 it was the very pinnacle of the racing genre, to many it looked 'real'. When compared to *Project Gotham Racing 2* it looks slow, tired and ugly. That's progress for you, and while *PGR2* is infinitely prettier than *Gran Turismo* there are also innovations, and the fact that it supports Xbox Live also sets it apart from older racers. Who can imagine what's to come?

Failing that, if videogames do lose their lustre for you, there will be millions of people who currently aren't old enough to have sampled the joys of games or to remember 'retro' games who'll be more than ready come 2007, and to them gaming will be as fresh as ever.

☐ **I FEAR THE** worst for the GameCube, what with Nintendo's terrible marketing, poor sales and the like. I think Nintendo ought to blah, blah, blah... I bet anyone who started reading this letter will probably have stopped by now. Why? Because people are fed up of hearing about how badly the GameCube is under-achieving. It's not! Nintendo is making a profit and also making great games.

Look at Microsoft – it may have sold more consoles in certain regions but it's losing money on every console it sells. Also, the GameCube may not be doing so well here in Australia, but Microsoft is selling an embarrassingly small amount of Xboxes over in Japan. My main reason for this letter is to try and stop people complaining about the GameCube and its poor sales because it is doing just fine. Oh, and anyone still reading this letter, before you send a letter into some magazine or post a thread on some forum about the GameCube under-achieving, just stop and think – is it doing as badly as we all seem to think?

I have just one question before I finish off my letter. Why does the PS2 continue shifting more consoles than anyone else? I mean, surely the majority of people that have wanted a PS2 will have one by now. You'd think that anyway, with the amount of consoles Sony has sold... There we go, rant over.

Chris Miller

games™: A rant about ranting. Marvellous. And would we be right in thinking that you reckon that there's some kind of conspiracy behind the numbers of PS2s sold? Blimey...

☐ **I'M WORRIED AGAIN.** Ordinarily I look forward to reading reports on all the international trade shows and expos. This year, however, there was a noticeable difference in what was said at these events. Instead of describing the background of a new character, more realistic textures or a new piece of hardware, there seemed to be a lot of talk

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, Tim Empey***
Retro Editor ***Keith Edwards***
News Editor ***Darran Jones***
Senior Staff Writer ***Luke Albiges***
Staff Writer ***Dave Beaumont***

Contributors ***Lee Diviney, Guy Vella, Graeme Nicholson, Oliver Barder, Yukiko Ohno, Steve Takle, Nick Jones, Tristan Donovan, Ian Dean, Henry Tucker, Will Johnston, Roy Kimber, Ammar Altai***

ADVERTISING
Group Advertising Manager
Chris Davey
(02) 9265 7679
chrisdavey@paragonpublishing.com.au

INTERNATIONAL LICENSING
games™ is available for licensing.
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

CONTACT

ILLUMINATING THE WORLD OF games™

IN BRIEF...

☐ You fools! You gave away a major plot twist in Knights of the Old Republic in one of your screenshots! Sheesh!
games™: You're not the only who one who noticed...

☐ Thanks for hiding the plot twists for Star Wars: KOTOR in the screen shots for the review. If you could reveal the story lines for all games this way I could save hours.
games™: Enough already. We didn't do it on purpose and we're very sorry. The fact is that we freelanced out the review – not something that we do very often – to someone who had played and completed the game. He took it upon himself to take a screen grab of that scene and for those of us who had not played the game it meant little, if anything to us. The git.

☐ I am very distressed. My GamesTM was supposed to arrive at least this morning & it has not. How disturbing.
games™: Go and make sure the postman isn't reading it at the bottom of the drive.

☐ I wish Nintendo and Sega would merge, then at least I wouldn't need to be so be disillusioned with gaming.
games™: You'd find something else to complain about. Really you would.

☐ No way was Flashback the sequel to Another World, the lead characters didn't have the same name! They just came from the same developer.
games™: Sorry, we were either too drunk or too young to remember clearly and now you've got the games™ team arguing. Satisfied?

☐ My mates and I have been playing lots of Halo multiplayer on my Xbox and was wondering, who's the best at it in the gamesTM head quarters?
games™: The ad guys. Chris (Bullwinkle) kicks the editorial team's arse every time. Curse him!

☐ Please do an article on games that changed a genre. Do a big article on Quake 3 arena. The best multi-player game ever!
games™: We'll bear it in mind...

☐ Are there any decent RPG's on the Xbox? I've heard Baldur's gate was good but I'm yet to find it or even read a review of it...
games™: You could try *Knights Of The Old Republic*. Mmm, Lightsabers...
Or wait for Sudeki. The preview code we saw at X03 looked very impressive.

☐ Stop putting spoilers in your reviews!!!
games™: Oh, for the love of god... SORRY.

"GAMING IS BECOMING STAGNANT, OVERCROWDED AND UNINSPIRING. HOW FAR CAN CURRENT GENRES BE STRETCHED?"

about about market research and how the key to making gaming more accessible is to make games more fun. I think, in relation to the last point, I speak for everyone with an IQ higher than one when I say 'Well, duh!'

Tackling the second issue first – making games more fun. Apparently, games would be more fun if they were less complex, not as long and were more pick-up-and-play orientated. Well, I played my share of *Pong*, *Frogger* and *Space Invaders* and I don't particularly want to revisit games from back then. More accessible? Surely there is already a substantially large (some would say huge) customer base that's still growing. Why start messing with a formula that's already working? Isn't that just greedy?

Changing the way games are made might put existing gamers off and it'll be harder to win back the dedicated players (and I don't mean the hardcore, I mean regular gamers) than to grab the infrequent gamer's notice for five minutes with a flash-in-the-pan gimmicky game.

As for the reports that have been produced that will allow the industry to more accurately gauge what the player wants – well, so long innovation, goodbye originality and hello repetitive clones. I am not a fan of this way of thinking. Okay, so satisfying the customer will bring in the profits and this makes good business sense, but surely if every company is churning out games that fit the research, the thriving games industry could be in danger of becoming like the music industry.

I can see it now – some fresh-faced marketing executive will create an online show where gamers vote for which games get made and which do not. Why don't we just scrap every game other than *EverQuest* and *Counter-Strike* while we're at it?

Beware these kinds of trends. If Yoda was more than a muppet he'd probably tell me to quit my griping and bugger off, but if he was more than a muppet and he liked games he'd probably say that trends lead to fashions, fashions lead to conformity, conformity leads to lack of substance and there lies the dark side.

Chris Gregg

games™: And here lies the problem. Developers and publishers are in it for the money and developing games is becoming an incredibly expensive business. To ensure that games sell well developers and publishers are being pushed into creating games that will have maximum impact at retail, and that generally means sequels, movie tie-ins and 'safe' genres or copycat titles.

Look at the Dreamcast. There was a powerful, capable machine that was home to a glut of original, groundbreaking games and it failed to make much of an impact against the PlayStation and PS2. It deserved better but that's indicative of what's going on today.

There are signs that companies are looking to make gaming a much more mainstream activity – the EyeToy is a prime example of this – but there are still plenty of great original games that are still worthy of your attention. Carp if you will at the crap that you feel is choking the games industry but there will always be people out there trying to do something different, and as long as we buy their games, we should be okay...



© 2003 Cyan Worlds, Inc. Published by Ubisoft Entertainment S.A. All rights reserved. Ubisoft, ubi.com, and the Ubisoft logo are registered trademarks of Ubisoft Entertainment in the U.S. and/or other countries. Uru™, D'ni™, Cyan®, and Myst® are trademarks of Cyan, Inc. and Cyan Worlds, Inc. under license to Ubisoft Entertainment. NVIDIA, the NVIDIA Logo and the Way It's Meant to be Played Logo are registered trademarks or trademarks of NVIDIA Corporation in the United States and other countries.

It's evolution, baby.

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

PARAGON PUBLISHING

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 ☐

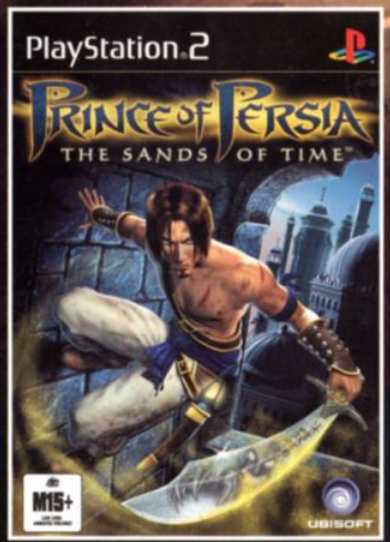
GTM06

Don't get left behind. Subscribe today.



PRINCE OF PERSIA
THE SANDS OF TIME™

We'd all take more risks if we could control time.



The Prince returns with all new abilities. Freeze your enemies in combat, rewind to escape death, see the future to plan your next move.

Time is on your side - but nobody else is.

M15+
LOW LEVEL ANIMATED VIOLENCE

www.prince-of-persia.com

PlayStation.2

UBISOFT

© 2003 Ubi Soft Entertainment. Based on Prince of Persia® created by Jordan Mechner. All Rights Reserved. Ubi Soft and Ubi Soft logo are trademarks of UBI Soft Entertainment in the U.S. and/or other countries. Prince of Persia and Prince of Persia the Sands of Time are trademarks of Jordan Mechner used under license by Ubi Soft Entertainment. "PS" and "PlayStation" are registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. All Rights Reserved.


Halo Invades PC
HALO
Join the battle. Live the epic adventure yourself. Unlock the secrets of Halo to save mankind from the ruthless Covenant swarms. Take the fight online in customisable head-to-head multiplayer competitions against up to 15 rival Master Chiefs. Break open a redesigned arsenal complete with the wicked new fuel rod gun. Then go mobile in the redeveloped Rocket Warthog and Banshee. This is Halo evolved.
Now with online multiplayer
MA15+
MEDIUM LEVEL
ANIMATED VIOLENCE
BUNGIE
gearbox software
Microsoft game studios
www.microsoft.com/Games/Halo
©2003 Microsoft Corporation. All rights reserved. Microsoft, Halo, and the Microsoft Game Studios logo are either registered trademarks or trademarks of the Microsoft Corporation in the U.S. and/or other countries. Other products and company names mentioned herein may be trademarks of their respective owners. All rights reserved. The ratings icon is a trademark of the Interactive Digital Software Association.
MES01995